Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust

CORRY GUTTSTADT

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12. The Exchange of Turkish Jews in Concentration Camps 299
13. Summary: Rescue Denied 309

Epilogue 315
Bibliography 319
Index 335

Preface to the English Edition

Three and a half years passed between the publication of the German edition and the English edition of this book. Notwithstanding the overwhelmingly positive reception of the academic community, I was especially touched by the numerous letters from people who experienced and suffered through the events described here or are the children or relatives of the people mentioned in the book. Every one of them was pleased and grateful that this issue was finally being researched and is now the subject of a publication. Thanks to their response, I was able to conduct further interviews and collect even more valuable information, for which I thank them very much.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for the Charles H. Revson Foundation Fellowship which was awarded to me for 2008–2009, and to the entire staff at the Center for their invaluable help. Although it is not possible to mention everyone here by name, my sincerest thanks go out to all of them. I especially want to thank Vadim Altskan, Benton Arnovitz, Martin Dean, Michael Gelb, Radu Ioanid, Jürgen Matthäus, Traci Rucker, Paul Shapiro, Vincent Slatt, and many others for their unflagging assistance, their expert advice, important reading suggestions, and many enlightening discussions.

I also want to express my thanks to the Fondation pour le Mémoire de la Shoah in Paris for a grant that enabled me to continue research in French archives, as well as the Herbert-und-Elsbeth-Weichmann Stiftung in Hamburg, whose financial support allowed me to conduct further research in Israel.

Since publication of the German edition, several new works have come out on the subject of this book. I would like to mention here Hatice Bayraktar's work *Zweideutige Individuen in schlechter Absicht* (The Malice of Ambiguous Individuals) on the anti-Semitic riots in Thrace in 1934, as well as Sait Çetinoğlu's book *Varlık Vergisi 1942–1944*. Despite recent publications and my continued research, however, no new facts have come to light that would require me to make any corrections. In fact, just the opposite is the case: several documents that were found recently add further detail to the events described in the first edition. For the sake of enabling a speedier translation, however, I have integrated new facts only in special cases in the English version. A compilation of key sources and documents concerning this subject will be published soon with the support of the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation.

After a Turkish translation was published by İletişim in March 2012, I am very pleased that the book is now available to English readers as well. My heartfelt thanks go to Eric Crahan from Cambridge University Press for his wonderful editorial support, and to Kathleen M. Dell'Orto, Sabine Bartel, and Michelle Miles for the translation.

This book was made possible (in part) by funds granted to me through the Charles H. Revson Foundation Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The statements made and views expressed in it, however, are solely my own. I am also grateful to the Emerging Scholars Publication Program at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, especially to Steven Feldman, for their support with the preparation of the book manuscript and proposal.

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Preface

While traveling in Israel in 1999, I happened to find a document in a kibbutz library about the rescue of 105 Turkish Jews from the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. As Turkish citizens, they had been liberated in March 1945 and had reached Istanbul on the ship *Drottningholm* as part of an exchange of civilian prisoners between Turkey and Germany. The document's author, Rudolf Levy, was one of those civilians. Although I had spent many years researching the situation of minorities in Turkey as well as Jewish history and the Shoah, this was the first time I had encountered Turkish Jews as victims of the Shoah. Until then, the image in my mind of Turkey and the Holocaust was of the many Turkish public institutions, including the university, that took in Jewish scholars who were persecuted in the 1930s.

A few years passed before I was able to follow up on my "discovery" in the kibbutz library. My journey started at the archive of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, where I had the opportunity to study the list of the 105 Turkish-Jewish prisoners more closely. Most of the families listed who were rescued were from Izmir, Istanbul, Edirne, and other Turkish cities. I was then all the more surprised when I realized in the summer of 2003 that in Istanbul people knew very little about this rescue. I also learned that Turkish authorities had refused to allow most of the liberated Turkish Jews to leave the ship in April 1945 until after lengthy negotiations, and even then they were only allowed to stay in boarding houses, where they were interned. In general, it became clear to me early in my research that the fate of the Turkish Jews who lived through the Holocaust years in Europe and were themselves victims of Nazi persecution has not been a subject of research either in historiography or in the Jewish community of Turkey.

My queries were met with greater interest, however, by many Sephardic Jews in Paris, Brussels, and other cities. Within a short period of time, I was able to find numerous children and grandchildren of Turkish-Jewish immigrants, who told me the story of their families and relatives. They introduced me to the world of the Turkish-Sephardic immigrant communities in Europe, a world that is now lost. This was how I learned that most of the first generation of Turkish immigrants who came to Western Europe had been Jews. As a result, what began as a chance discovery in a kibbutz library became a comprehensive study that would take me to roughly fifty archives in eleven countries to do research that would occupy me for many years to come, and which still occupies me today.

I begin the first part of the book by briefly explaining the special circumstances that contributed to the formation of the Turkish nation-state and to Kemalist policies, while I also discuss the consequences these had for the situation of the Jews. The mass emigration of Jews from Turkey, and the policies that Turkey subsequently adopted regarding these emigrants can only be understood against this background.

For Jews during the Holocaust, Turkey became a potential refuge and a possible stepping-stone leading to Palestine due to its policy of neutrality and its geographic location. This meant that Turkish politics played a vital role in the lives of Jewish Turkish citizens all over Europe and in the rescue of Jews in Southeastern Europe in particular. It is therefore important to keep in mind that Ankara's policies concerning "its own" Jews living inside and outside Turkey and its policies concerning Jewish refugees can only be adequately explained in the context of Turkish politics in the 1930s and 1940s.

I would also like to mention a few matters of form. First, one problem I encountered while writing this book was the spelling of surnames. Jewish names were often written in different alphabets – Hebrew, Latin, or Ottoman Turkish – by the different institutions (Jewish religious institutions, Turkish administrative offices, and French schools) in Turkey during the period in question (the Ottoman alphabet was in use until the introduction of the Latin alphabet in Turkey in 1928). This means that most Jewish names had at least three different spellings. Furthermore, when names written in the Hebrew and/or Ottoman Turkish alphabet were transcribed into the Latin alphabet, many different spellings often resulted for the same name and even the same person (see names such as Nissim/Nisim/Nesim and Masliah/Mazliah/Mazliyah). To complicate things even more, when people immigrated to Europe, new variations of these names arose when they were transcribed into various European

languages. Many people also changed their first names to make them seem more European (choosing, for example, Jacques instead of Isaac). Finally, many names can only be found in Nazi documents, such as prisoner and transport lists, which were often compiled by fellow Jewish prisoners, allowing even further new spellings to occur. Therefore, in order to make the identification of each person possible, I use just one spelling for each person throughout the book. Whenever it was possible to deduce from the documents at hand which spelling a person preferred, I chose that spelling. In all other cases, I refer to the spelling used in the country where the person in question lived the longest. For names of well-known Turkish figures or cities that also have familiar spellings in English, I use the English spelling (I use Ismet Inönü, for example, instead of İsmet İnönü, while İbrahim Tali is left in Turkish). Because surnames were not used in Turkey until 1935, I have included surnames in parentheses for the period before 1935 for better understanding by non-Turkish readers.

All translations into English from sources in other languages are either by the author or the translators of this book. Regarding quotes from English documents, minor spelling and grammatical errors in the original have been corrected without marking and without changing the content.

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This book would not have been possible without the help of many friends and people who believed in this project. My sincerest thanks go to Rıfat Bali in Istanbul for establishing contacts and providing documents. Ragıp Zarakolu, also in Istanbul, was always supportive, and his keen interest was a source of constant encouragement while I was writing this book. Michael Studemund-Halévy helped me to better understand the Sephardic world, giving me valuable reading tips and introducing me to many people. I am grateful to Serge and Beate Klarsfeld in Paris for many enlightening discussions and for providing me with many helpful sources. Very special thanks go to Steve N. Sage at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington; his consistent willingness to help me encouraged me enormously.

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I am extremely indebted to the people who witnessed the events described in this book (see the list of sources for their names). I am

sincerely grateful to them for sharing their time and their memories with me. They willingly answered my questions about their experiences during Nazi persecution, although this brought back many painful memories. I especially want to thank Rivka Cohen and Daniel Natan in Brussels, Haïm Vidal Sephiha in Paris, Victor Sarfati in Nice, Victor Algazi in Marseilles, Nathan Ben-Brith in G'nat Shomron, and Jochanan Asriel in Haifa for sharing their family albums with me and for letting me use their photographs and documents. Many thanks go to Claire Romi and Arlette Bules at the organization Aki Estamos in Paris for helping me to find many of the contemporary witnesses.

I am also grateful to the Ertomis Foundation in Wuppertal, whose generous financial support enabled me to visit archives in the United States and Israel.

I owe much of my research to the friendly expert assistance of many archive directors and staff. My sincere thanks go out to Kevin Proffitt at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati for his excellent assistance, Misha Mitsell and Shelley Helfand at the archives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee ("The Joint," or JDC) in New York for their thoughtful support, Atilla Aydın at the Prime Minister's Republican Archives (Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi) in Ankara for his generous assistance finding documents, Anke Kandler at the Landeshauptarchiv Brandenburg (BLHA) in Potsdam for her expert help, Ms. Blumberg and Ms. Völschow at the Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde, Karen Taïeb and Diane Afoumado at the Centre de Documentation juive contemporaine (CDJC) Paris, Liliana Picciotto at the Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea in Milan, as well as Michele Sarfatti, who patiently explained the complex legal situation of Turkish Jews in Italy, Odette Vlessing at the Amsterdam City Archives, Saskia Simons at the Geheime Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStPK) in Berlin, Klaus Dettmer and Bianca Welzing at the Landesarchiv Berlin for their extensive help finding documents, Hubert Berhout at the NIOD in Amsterdam, Mr. Keiper and Mr. Kröger at the Politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes in Berlin for the friendly support over five years, Sophie Vandepontseele and Sylvie Vander Elst at the Service des Victimes de la Guerre in Brussels for their friendly help, Jürgen Sielemann at the Staatsarchiv Hamburg for his generous support finding traces of Turkish Jews in Hamburg, also Ms. Wunderlich in the reading room, and finally Michal Frankl at the Terezin Initiative for providing me with documents and organizing visits to archives in Prague for me. My special thanks go to Michlean Amir at the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

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made him an excellent conversation partner and a vital help in times of crisis. Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to my two wonderful children, Tayfun and Tavga, who put up with all the hardships brought on by writing this book. They never complained and have been a great help to me.

Abbreviations

ADAP	Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik	Records on German Foreign Policy
AIU	Alliance Israélite Universelle	Universal Israelite Alliance
AJA	American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati	
AJB	Association des Juifs en Belgique	Association of Jews in Belgium
AJJDC	American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee	also abbreviated Joint (s. entry "Joint")
BAL	Bundesarchiv, Berlin	German Federal Archives
BCA	Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri	Prime Ministry's Republican Archives
BDS	Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des Sicherheitsdienstes	Commander-in-Chief of Security Police (SiPo) and SD
BLHA	Landeshauptarchiv Brandenburg	The Brandenburg Main State Archive
CDEC	Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea	Jewish Contemporary Documentation Center in Milan
CDJ	Comité de Défense des Juifs	Jews' Defense Committee (in Belgium)
CDJC	Centre de Documentation juive Contemporaine, Paris	Center of Contemporary Jewish Documentation
CGQJ	Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives	(French) General Commissariat for Jewish Questions

CHF	*Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası* (since 1924)	Republican People's Party, formerly the HF *Halk Fırkası*
CHP	*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (since 1931)	Republican People's Party, formerly CHF
CZA	Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem	
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei	German National People's Party
DÖW	Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes	Documentation Centre of the Austrian Resistance
EAM-	Ethnikón Apeleftherotikón Métopon	National Liberation Front
EIF	Eclaireurs israélites de France	Jewish Scouts of France
ELAS	Ethnikós Laïkós Apeleftherotikós Strátos	National Popular Liberation Army
GStAPK	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz	Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation
HICEM	Merging of HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), ICA (Jewish Colonization Association) and EMIGDIRECT (Emigrationsdirectorium)	
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross	
IGCR	Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees	
IKG	Israelitische Kultusgemeinde	Vienna Israelite Community
Joint	American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee	
JTA	Jewish Telegraphic Agency	
KEV	Komisarstvo za Evreiskite Vaprosi	Bulgarian Commissariat for Jewish Affairs
LAB	Landesarchiv Berlin	Archives of the Land Berlin
MBF	Militärbefehlshaber Frankreich	(German) military commander in France
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi	(fascist) National Action Party in Turkey
MJDR	Musée Juif de la Déportation et de la Résistance (Mechlen)	Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance

MP	Member of Parliament	
NARA	National Archives at College Park, MD	
NIOD	Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (Amsterdam)	Dutch Institute for War Documentation
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei	National Socialist German Workers' Party
OJC	Organisation juive de combat	Jewish Combat Organization (in France)
OMBR	Office Militaire Belge de Résistance	Belgian resistance organization
OSE	Oeuvre de secours aux Enfants	Children's Aid Society
OSOBI	"Sonderarchiv" beim Staatlichen Militärarchiv Moskau	"Special Archives," now part of State Military Archives of the Russian Federation, Moscow
OSS	American Office of Strategic Services	
PAAA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts	Political Archive of the Foreign Office, Berlin
Pol VII	(Middle East desk in German Foreign Office)	
PRO, FO	Public Record Office, Foreign Office (London)	
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt	Reich Security Main Office
SA	Sturmabteilung	Assault Detachment (or Storm troopers)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst (des Reichsführers-SS)	Security Service (intelligence agency) of the SS
SiPo	Sicherheitspolizei	Security Police
SS	Schutzstaffel	Protection echelon
SVG	Service des Victimes de la Guerre auprès du service public fédéral Sécurité sociale (Brüssel)	"Directorate-General War Victims" of the Federal Public Service Social Security
TBMM	Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi	Turkish national parliament
UGIF	Union générale des Israélites de France	General Union of French Jews
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum	
WJC	World Jewish Congress	
WRB	War Refugee Board	

Introduction

Turkey on the Edge of the Nazi Period

During the Second World War, Turkey was neither occupied by German troops nor did it actively participate in the war. Turkey also did not apply an openly anti-Semitic policy. So, one may ask, what has Turkey to do with the Holocaust? Turkey's policy during this period was crucial for many Jews: for the roughly 75,000 Jews still living in Turkey at that time, for Jews from Eastern and Southeastern Europe as a possible refuge or stepping-stone leading to Palestine, and for the numerous Jews of Turkish origin living in Central and Western Europe. Turkish politics played a vital role in the (potential) rescue of Jews in Southeastern Europe and particularly in the lives of Turkish Jews all over Europe.

Twenty to thirty thousand Turkish Jews, or Jews of Turkish origin, were living all over Europe in the period between the two world wars. Although this is more than the Jewish population in Turkey today, and despite the fact that many of them were victims of the Shoah, they have received very little attention in international Holocaust research to date. The only book dedicated exclusively to the subject has been Stanford Shaw's study from 1993, *Turkey and the Holocaust. Turkey's Role in Rescuing Turkish and European Jewry from Nazi Persecution.* As can be seen from the book's subheading, Shaw's focal point is Turkey's role in rescuing Jews. According to Shaw, Turkish diplomats all over Europe did their utmost to save Turkish Jews from persecution, "often at the risk of their own lives." These arguments struck a chord in Turkey's politics, and their constant repetition and exaggeration in official rhetoric has turned them into an ossified, self-perpetuating myth which is frequently propagated in international publications.

In such accounts, the fate of the Turkish Jews during the Shoah is only briefly mentioned; they were, after all, mere "extras" in Turkey's efforts to rescue its diplomats. My aim, in contrast, has been to let the perspective of Turkish Jews guide my investigation. The reaction of many contemporary witnesses I interviewed, whose fates had been of little interest until then, encouraged my approach.

I begin the first part of the book by briefly explaining the special circumstances that contributed to the formation of the Turkish nation-state and to Kemalist policies, while I also discuss the consequences these had for the situation of the Jews. The mass emigration of Jews from Turkey during the 1920s, and the policies that Turkey subsequently adopted regarding these emigrants, can only be understood against this background.

This historical background is also necessary for the analysis of Turkey's policies during the Holocaust. Considering that the Shoah is *the* catastrophe of modern human history, many authors tend to look back on past events from the perspective of what we know today and to interpret them anachronistically in the context of the Holocaust. Contrary to this, my analysis emphasizes that Ankara's policies concerning "its own" Jews living inside and outside Turkey and its policies concerning Jewish refugees can only be adequately explained as a consequence of Turkey's own politics.

The Historical Background

In 1933, the first year of National Socialist rule in Germany, Turkey was preparing to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Republic. The chorus of the march in honor of the tenth year of the Republic – "We are Turks; our chest is the bronze protective shield of the Republic; to be at rest is not fitting for Turks" – clearly illustrates the predominant ideology of the time: modernism and nationalism. At breakneck speed, the leadership of the new Turkey attempted to turn the country inside out: factories, schools, roads, and railways were built. Everything reminiscent of the Ottoman past was "revolutionized": the language, the alphabet, the calendar, head coverings, even the country's history. In 1933, Turkish women were given the vote – almost forty years before Swiss women. "Turks to the front, Turks forward, to be at rest is not fitting for Turks."

In 1933, the Nazi regime had already begun to introduce measures that discriminated against Jews and prohibited them from practicing a large number of professions. The National Socialist racial doctrines, which

claimed the superiority of the "Germanic peoples" over Jews and other peoples categorized as "racially inferior," would soon become state doctrine. Over the following years, Jews were gradually excluded from all areas of society; they were forbidden from marrying or entering into relationships with non-Jews and robbed of their property and human dignity.

In Turkey, on the other hand, Jews were urged by Turkish politicians to integrate more successfully by learning Turkish in order to be able to merge with the majority society. In 1933, Jews in almost all of Turkey's larger cities founded associations for the promotion of Turkish culture and made solemn vows to speak only Turkish. In other words, while the Nazis in Germany were organizing the systematic exclusion of Jews from German society, the Kemalists[1] demanded their complete assimilation. It must be asked, however, how sincere this offer of integration actually was. In practice, non-Muslims and "real Turks" were treated quite differently. Furthermore, many Jews perceived the massive pressure of *Turkification* as threatening.

Also in 1933, Sarah Kavayero celebrated her tenth birthday in Paris. She had been born in Izmir on December 23, 1923, eight weeks after the founding of the Turkish Republic. A few years later, she moved with her parents to France, where her sisters Suzanne and Diamante were born in 1926 and 1932, respectively. The Kavayero family was among the twenty to thirty thousand Jews living in France and other European countries during the inter-war period. Numerous families did not leave Turkey until the 1930s. In May 1940, France was occupied by German troops. A mere few weeks later, anti-Semitic regulations were introduced in France, and from 1942 onward, Jews were deported to extermination camps. Sarah Kavayero, too, was sent to Auschwitz with her mother Perla and her two sisters on February 11, 1943, where she was murdered.[2]

During World War II, Turkey was neither occupied nor was it a warring party. Despite leaning toward anti-minority policies, it issued no openly anti-Semitic laws. Nevertheless, Ankara's policies in the years 1933–1945 had far-reaching ramifications for Jews – not only for those living in Turkey, but also for the Jews who came from Turkey and were living in Europe and for those European Jews for whom Turkey, because of its geographic location, was potentially an important country of refuge or transit.

[1] This was the Turkish nationalist movement and its party (first HF, later CHF, from 1924, CHP), which ruled in a single-party government until 1946 and was named after the leader Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk].

[2] See Figure 13.1 on page 310.

In 1933, Germany became Turkey's most important export market. Over the course of the following twelve years, Nazi Germany was at several points Turkey's most important trade partner. However, interpretations that attribute Turkey's policies and especially its anti-Jewish measures primarily to German influence are too narrow. They ignore the course of historical events and are not supported by sources. Furthermore, it was one of the principles of Kemalist policy to reject any meddling and patronizing treatment by European powers. An in-depth examination and assessment of Turkey's policies during the Holocaust is only possible against the backdrop of Turkey's own history and has to take into account the distinct characteristics of the Turkish nationalism that shaped the country's anti-Jewish policies.

Jews in the Republic of Turkey: Between Hope, Assimilation, and Exclusion

The founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 was the final stage in the long dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, which had lost most of its territory in a series of wars against Christian European powers. The crucial factor in the fate of the minorities living in the new republic was the Kemalist project of creating a homogeneous nation-state on the ruins of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. Kemalism attempted to achieve this goal by means of a strict Turkification policy. In this respect, Turkey's policies in the inter-war period did not markedly differ from the militant nationalism of other newly founded countries in Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

In contrast to these other countries, which had come into existence as a result of independence struggles or the breakup of an empire, the Republic of Turkey was itself the successor state to the Ottoman Empire, which, over the course of numerous wars in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, had attempted unsuccessfully to prevent the independence movements from breaking away. Because the European powers had supported the separation efforts of the Balkan peoples and had used the situation of the minorities in the Ottoman Empire as a pretext for weakening and intervening in the Empire, the Christian minorities in particular were viewed as an instrument of the European powers, as the "enemy within" that was supposedly working on behalf of the "enemy without." Equating the two had given the Young Turks an excuse for the expulsion of the Greeks beginning already in the spring of 1914 and the genocide on the Armenians in the shadow of World War I.

This idea of the enemy within initially shaped Kemalist policies as well. The founding of the Turkish Republic was a result of the "War of Liberation," also known as "War of Independence" (*İstiklal savaşı* in the language of the early years of the Republic, in modern Turkish *Kurtuluş savaşı*, War of Liberation) in 1919–1922, which was conducted for the most part against Greeks and Armenians.[3] The Turkification policy was designed to ensure Turkish-Muslim predominance in all areas of society, and in a way, it constituted a continuation of the "War of Liberation" by other means: "This country belongs to you, the Turks. This fatherland has been Turkish throughout history, it is Turkish, and it will always remain Turkish. It has now finally returned to the hands of its rightful owners," Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk][4] declared in Adana in 1923.[5]

At the same time, the Turkification policy was aimed at the homogenization of the ethnically and religiously very heterogeneous population. A large proportion of the Muslim population did not even speak Turkish, among them the Kurds and especially hundreds of thousands of *muhacir*, Muslims who had immigrated to Anatolia from the territories lost to the Ottoman Empire in the last decades of Ottoman rule and after the Empire's dissolution.

[3] Calling it a national "War of Liberation" suggests that it was a war conducted by a country against the imperialist or colonial powers occupying it. In reality, however, the three years of military combat on different fronts were conducted against a variety of opponents. On none of these fronts were the Turkish troops engaged in a mentionable military combat with British, Italian, or French troops, who had left the country for the most part by 1920. To the west, the country was at war with Greece, which had been entrusted with several areas in western Anatolia (whose inhabitants were primarily Greek) by the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. After five years, the fate of these areas was to be decided by referendum. However, before this could happen, Greek troops crossed the borders of these areas advancing to Central Anatolia. As the Turkish-Muslim troops defeated the Greek forces, they did not differentiate between the Greek invasion troops and the Greek civilians in the region and utilized the war to expel the Greeks living in these areas. In southeastern Anatolia, which was under French mandate, the Turkish-Muslim troops also permanently expelled the Armenians, who had survived flight and genocide, after the French troops withdrew. The same happened in the provinces of eastern Anatolia, whose administration should have been entrusted to the Armenians by the Treaty of Sèvres. During this time, the Turkish troops also crushed an uprising of Kurdish Alevis in Koçgiri and expelled the Pontic Greeks settled on the Black Sea. For this reason, the Turkish term "War of Liberation" is cited here in quotation marks.

[4] Family names were not adopted until 1934; they have been in use since the beginning of 1935. To make it easier for non-Turkish readers to understand, for the time prior to 1935 I have indicated the names in brackets.

[5] Quoted in Orhangazi Ertekin, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkçülüğün Çatallanan Yolları," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce*, Vol. 4, *Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora (Istanbul: İletişim, 2002), 355.

The Ambivalent Situation of the Jews

The situation of the Jews was ambivalent. Like the other non-Muslim minorities, they were subject to a number of restrictions and repressive measures. To some extent, however, these laws were not applied to Jews with the same severity as they were to Greeks and Armenians.[6] Kemalist politicians repeatedly used the Jews as a token "model minority." At the peace negotiations in Lausanne in 1922–1923 after the "War of Liberation," for example, Ismet Paşa [Inönü] pointed out the exemplary behavior of the Jews, who, according to him, were loyal to Turkey. The Greeks and the Armenians, on the other hand, he portrayed as potential traitors in order to discredit their demands to have minority rights enshrined in the treaty.[7] At the first economic conference in Izmir in February 1923, M. Kemal said in response to a question by the Jewish attorney Rafael Amato regarding Kemal's attitude toward the Jews: "There are several loyal population groups that have tied their fate to that of the ruling group, the Turks; the Jews are first among them."[8]

Representatives of the Jews in Turkey, for their part, made every effort to establish a good relationship with the Turkish authorities, as had been the tradition since the Ottoman era.[9] In light of the atrocities committed by the retreating Greek troops at the end of the Greek-Turkish War, many of the Jews in western Anatolia had regarded the Turks as liberators. Many of the Jewish intellectuals who acted as spokespeople for their respective communities in the early times of the Republic shared the Kemalists' enthusiasm for progress and secularization. Consequently, most Jews initially considered themselves allies of the Kemalist movement and had mostly positive expectations for the new republic. Atatürk

[6] The regulation that denied repatriation to non-Muslims who had fled or been driven out during World War I or the "War of Liberation", for example, was partly rescinded for Jews.

[7] Seha L. Meray, *Tutanaklar belgeler: Lozan Barış Konferansı*, set 1, vol. 1, book 2 (Ankara: Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1970), 211. Representatives of the Turkish-Jewish community usually played along with the role assigned to them. The former chief rabbi Haim Nahum, for example, served as an advisor to the Turkish delegation during the Lausanne negotiations.

[8] Quoted after Avram Galanté, *Türkler ve Yahudiler: Tarihi, Siyasî Tetkik* (Istanbul: Tan, 1947), 86.

[9] Jews were frequently subject to attacks by the Christian minorities, especially toward the end of the nineteenth century, and therefore relied on the protection of the state. For the Ottoman rulers, the relatively small Jewish minority, which was spread out all over the Empire and did not pursue any separatist goals, was an ideal ally. References to the loyalty of the Jewish community were intended to counter European protests regarding the suppression of non-Muslim minorities in the Empire. This mutual interest led to the emergence of the special "Turkish-Jewish" alliance in the late nineteenth century.

in particular was deeply revered and loved by many Jews and was the subject of many poems and songs.[10]

Prominent representatives of the Jewish community repeatedly voiced the hope that the Jews of Turkey would merge into Turkish society on the basis of equal rights and obligations and become Turks of Jewish faith. But they would soon realize that they, too, would become victims of the Turkification policy.

Anti-Jewish Campaigns

Jews had already become victims of the violence of Turkish troops in various locations during the Greek-Turkish war.[11] In the period between the end of the war and the founding of the Republic of Turkey, parts of the press launched an anti-Jewish campaign. The prelude was an editorial in the *İleri* (Forward) newspaper in December 1922, headlined *Kanımızı Emenler* (blood-suckers), in which Jews were accused of double-dealing, and their declarations of loyalty were declared a lie. The article ended with the words: "Oh, now that the Greeks and the Armenians have departed, if only the Jews would leave the country as well."[12] Several other newspapers, such as the *Türk Sesi* in Izmir, *Paşaeli* in Edirne, and the *Tevhid-i Efkâr* published in Istanbul,[13] as well as several caricature magazines, also took part in the anti-Jewish campaign. Jews were portrayed as exploiters and war profiteers. While the majority of Jews were completely impoverished, some had been able to take over the positions of the expelled Christians and had become prosperous. The Jews were also accused wholesale of having dodged military service and thus also participation in the "War of Liberation."[14]

Anti-Jewish demonstrations, boycotts against Jewish merchants, and threats against Jews occurred in various locations, particularly

[10] See Henri Nahum, *Juifs de Smyrne XIXe–XXe siècle* (Paris: Aubier, 1997), 184ff.

[11] Nahum, *Juifs de Smyrne*, 170; Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1998), 15. In some places, the perpetrators were members of irregular Turkish units; see also Melek Çolak, *Milas Yahudileri* (Muğla: Milas Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2005), 28ff.

[12] Quoted in A. Levi, *Yahudiler*, 26. The editor of *İleri* was Celal Nuri [İleri], a Member of Parliament who would later become head of the commission charged with drafting the constitution.

[13] *Tevhid-i Efkâr* was published by Abdurrahman Velit Ebüzziya, the son of Mehmet Tevfik Ebüzziya. The latter had made a name for himself with anti-Semitic publications since the end of the nineteenth century, and he translated major ideological statements of modern European anti-Semites into Turkish.

[14] Rıfat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923–1945)*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999), 44, 50–51; A. Levi, *Yahudiler*, 41ff.

in Thrace and western Anatolia.[15] The reactions of government agencies varied widely. While they prevented the expulsion of Jews in some locations, in others, Jews were forced by local security forces to leave their homes and cities. The members of the Jewish community of Aydın, which had once numbered 3,000 and was one of the most significant communities in the Aegean region, had fled the city during the terrors of the Greek-Turkish War; now they were not permitted to return. Their houses and their property were confiscated as "abandoned property" and Turkified.[16]

Another reason Jews were now becoming a target of nationalist attacks was that they had become more "visible" as a minority after the murder and expulsion of the Armenians and Greeks between 1914 and 1923. Furthermore, on the basis of the "population exchange" agreed in the Lausanne Treaty, Greeks were not allowed to settle in areas outside of Istanbul, and in many places hardly any Armenians had survived. Before the war, the proportion of non-Muslims in the territory of today's Turkey had been more than 20 percent, the proportion of Jews only slightly more than 1 percent. After the war, non-Muslims represented only 2.5 percent of the population.[17] In the previously mixed regions of western Anatolia and Thrace, the small Jewish communities constituted the largest, or even the only, non-Muslim minority after 1923. Their members were distinguishable from the majority population by their names, language, and religious rites. In Izmir and Edirne, the proportion of Jews in the population during the first years of the Republic was more than 10 percent.[18] The chauvinistic and xenophobic sentiments that during the war were directed primarily against Christian groups now turned against the Jews. Moreover, the bulk of the Muslim refugees and *mucahir*, many of whom had settled in Thrace, were particularly receptive to chauvinistic slogans, as the Jewish population of Thrace would later find out. Foreign diplomats observed that the predominant fear among Jews was

[15] Anti-Jewish activities are documented, for example, for Edirne, Tekirdağ, Uzunköprü, Çorlu, and Urla near Izmir. A. Levi, *Yahudiler*, 34–37; Nahum, *Juifs de Smyrne*, 203; Bali, *Türkleştirme Seriüveni*, 40–45.

[16] Nahum, *Juifs de Smyrne*, 201; A. Levi, *Yahudiler*, 57.

[17] Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, *Die Geschichte der sephardischen Juden: Von Toledo bis Saloniki* (Bochum: Winkler, 2005), 165.

[18] According to Çagaptay, who bases his information on the *İstatistik Yıllığı* (Statistics Yearbook), vol. 11, the proportion of the Jewish population was 15 percent in Edirne and Çanakkale and 10.5 percent in Izmir. Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is a Turk?* (London: Routledge, 2006), 176.

that "their turn will come after the Turks have finished with the Greeks and Armenians."[19]

Economic Turkification: Dismissals and Occupational Bans

One aspect that the theoreticians of the Young Turk movement had considered a crucial weakness of the Turkish national movement had been that no Turkish-Muslim middle class had emerged that could have fueled national development, as it did in Western European nations.[20] In the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, capitalist development had just begun. Capital, banks, insurances, and the few industrial operations that were not owned by foreign companies were owned predominantly by members of religious minorities. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Christians and Jews were by no means capitalists; rather, most of them were workers, artisans, and small tradesmen, and the majority of the Christian Greeks were farmers. This employment situation was the result of the Islamic disposition of the Ottoman Empire, in which the Muslim-Turkish upper class traditionally had occupied leading positions in the army and administration, leaving non-Muslims overrepresented in trade and commerce. The Young Turks criticized the strong presence of minorities in the economy as a "false distribution of labor," since, according to them, the Muslim-Turkish population and the "non-Turkish" element of the population did not belong to the same people.[21] The Turkification of the economy – that is, the deliberate ousting and dispossession of non-Muslims – therefore became one of the Young Turks' most important goals. The expulsion and deportation of Greeks and Armenians during World War I had provided the crucial opportunity for the Turkification of their property.[22]

[19] Admiral Mark L. Bristol, U.S. High Commissioner to Turkey, in a report of December 1, 1923, National Archives at College Park, MD (hereafter NARA, MD), M353 (Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Turkey, 1910–1929), reel 48, document No. 867.4016/967.

[20] See Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de "Millî İktisat" 1908–1918* (Ankara: Yurt, 1982), 33; Klaus Kreiser and Christoph K. Neumann, *Kleine Geschichte der Türkei* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003), 362. Yusuf Akçura, one of the early theoreticians of Turkish nationalism, compared the situation to that of the Polish national movement; in Poland, the middle class was also predominantly German and/or Jewish.

[21] Gökalp, quoted in Zafer Toprak, "Millî İktisat," in *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 3 (Istanbul: İletişim, 1985), 744.

[22] The businesses, shops, and real estate of one million Armenians and one million Greeks were taken over by Muslims/Turks. Çağlar Keyder, "Kayıp Burjuvazi Aranıyor,"

Turkification of the economy remained the most important goal in the early phase of the Republic as well, as the minister of economics, Mahmut Esat [Bozkurt], declared at the first economic conference in Izmir in February 1923. He was not, however, referring to a potential nationalization of foreign-owned capitalist businesses but to the ousting of Jewish and Christian blue- and white-collar workers from the economy. First, foreign enterprises in Turkey were forced to dismiss non-Muslim employees, since the minimum proportion of Muslim employees was legally stipulated.[23] Since the Treaty of Lausanne proscribed discrimination against members of the non-Muslim minorities, and the Turkish Constitution established, at least formally, the equality of all citizens in 1924, it was frequent practice to issue directives below the level of laws that prescribed the hiring of "Turks" – meaning Muslim Turks, not Turkish citizens – in particular branches of the economy or at the regional level.

The Law on Civil Servants of March 1926 stipulated that only "Turks" could be employed in the civil service. The personnel files of public servants were required to contain information on religion, "nationality" (meaning ethnicity), and all names, including aliases, to ensure that these people were "real" Turks.[24] These directives applied to all employees in public service, including occupations such as streetcar conductor and longshoreman. Many of the Jews of Turkish origin living in France, Italy, and Belgium whom I interviewed while researching this book said that their parents had emigrated because they had been laid off from such low-end jobs.[25] The majority of the Jewish population was and remained poor. According to the results of the 1935 census, 45.9 percent of Jewish men were without occupation and relied on odd

Toplumsal Tarih no. 68 (1999): 7. See also Christian Gerlach, "Nationsbildung im Krieg: Wirtschaftliche Faktoren bei der Vernichtung der Armenier und beim Mord an den ungarischen Juden," in *The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah*, ed. H. L. Kieser and D. J. Schaller (Zurich: Chronos, 2002), 347–422.

[23] Esther Benbassa, "Les Juifs de Turquie durant l'entre-deux-guerres," in *Les cahiers de la Shoah*, ed. André Kaspi (Paris: Liana Levi, 1995): 125; Bali, *Türkleştirme Serüveni*, 208.

[24] Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism*, 69. For the text of the law, see (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi or Turkish national parliament) TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, term II, vol. 23:179. Before the law on family names of 1934 was passed, it was usual for people to have additions to their names that indicated their ethnic-religious affiliation, for example, Giorgio the Greek, Avram the Jew.

[25] These dismissals were also described in detail in the reports of the AIU; Lize Tiano, "L'immigration et l'installation en France des juifs grecs et des juifs turcs avant la second guerre mondiale" (unpublished master's thesis, University Paris X, 1981), 32, note 12; also Benbassa and Rodrigue, *Geschichte*, 168.

jobs; 24 percent were employed in commerce and 20.5 percent in industry and trade.[26]

Gradually, by a wide variety of measures, non-Muslims were also excluded from self-employed occupations. The laws regulating the certification requirements for various professions (pharmacists, attorneys, physicians, midwives, nurses, etc.) were revised and stipulations were introduced that impeded or prevented access for non-Muslims.[27]

The Undermining of the Minority Rights Established in the Treaty of Lausanne

According to Articles 37 to 45 of the Treaty of Lausanne, members of recognized religious minorities enjoyed full legal equality as well as the right to free exercise of religion, freedom of movement, and the use of their own language – including in public, in the press, and in court – the right to maintain their own schools and social institutions, and the right to communal self-administration.[28] These internationally guaranteed rights, intended to preserve cultural and/or community independence, were diametrically opposed to the Kemalist interest in forced assimilation and the cultural Turkification of the minorities. As the treaty was to be implemented, at least on paper, under the supervision of the League of Nations, the Kemalists saw these articles as a continuation of the Ottoman *millet* system – which had granted the non-Muslim minorities community self-administration – and as instruments that would enable the European powers to continue intervening in Turkey's affairs. Consequently, the Turkish delegation had signed this section of the treaty only grudgingly. Internally, the leading politicians of the Halk Fırkası (People's Party, later the Republican People's Party, CHP) had made it clear from the outset that they aimed to eliminate this part of the Lausanne Treaty or at least strip it of its effectiveness. Consequently, pressure was exerted on the representatives of the minorities to waive their rights under the treaty. At the

[26] Walter F. Weiker, *Ottomans, Turks, and the Jewish Polity: A History of the Jews of Turkey* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 285, based on the census figures of 1935.

[27] Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism*, 69; *Ofipresse* (Office Israélite de Presse de Documentation), Brussels, no. 27 of November 1945, called these legal measures a "numerus clausus" against members of the minorities.

[28] The Turkish-Muslim minority in Greece had similar rights. The treaty applied exclusively to Christians and Jews whose communities already had recognized *millet* status in the Ottoman Empire. These rights did not extend to other religious groups such as the Yezidi or the Alevi or to ethnic groups like the Kurds.

same time, both the government's line of argumentation and its course of action were double-edged: to a point, limiting the Jewish (and Christian) religious institutions' authority was part of a new Kemalist secularization policy, and in 1924, the caliphate was abolished; Islamic institutions like the *tarikat* (Islamic orders) and the *medrese* (Islamic schools) were closed as well.

Article 42 of the Treaty of Lausanne guaranteed the right of minorities to decide matters of family and private law according to their religious rules and traditions. The negotiations on the practical implementation of this article ran parallel to the drafting of the Turkish Civil Code.[29] Prominent spokesmen of the Jewish community actually welcomed the secularization of family law as an important step forward and even proposed abolishing the jurisdiction of the rabbinate in matters of civil law.

Kemalist policy, on the other hand, aimed to eliminate minority self-administration altogether. However, Article 42 of the Treaty of Lausanne also stipulated the inviolability of community organizations and state subsidies for educational and charitable institutions. Such "privileges," the journalist and Member of Parliament (MP) Necmettin [Sadak] wrote, would create a permanent climate of uncertainty, adding the warning that although these rights were supported by international treaties, the members of the minorities would not stand a chance against the limitless power of the state.[30] Blackmail was resorted to as well. While the negotiations were in process, reports about an ostensible tribute letter from hundreds of Turkish Jews to the Spanish government appeared almost simultaneously in all the major Turkish daily newspapers.[31] In wild attacks, the Jews were accused of betraying their home country. Eventually, under massive pressure, the representatives of the Jewish community "voluntarily" waived their rights to community self-rule under Article 42.[32] In the long run, this led to the marginalization of all Jewish

[29] The provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne were worded in very general terms; their practical implementation was to be worked out by commissions comprised equally of Turkish government representatives and representatives of the respective minority groups.

[30] In *Akşam* (Turkish daily) on September 16, 1925, quoted in Bali, *Türkleştirme Serüveni*, 66.

[31] They had allegedly assured the Spanish government of their solidarity in a telegram on the occasion of a celebration in honor of Christopher Columbus. The accusation was obviously a deliberate provocation. A. Levi, *Yahudiler*, 70–74; Bali, *Türkleştirme Serüveni*, 77–82.

[32] This was hardly a free decision. The Jewish representatives were not elected by the community but appointed by the state and had to negotiate behind closed doors; Benbassa, "Juifs de Turquie," 122.

institutions.[33] Because the government refused to give its approval for a new congregational constitution, no new chief rabbi could be appointed after the death of Haïm Béjérano in 1931. The Jewish community, now without leadership, became scattered and fragmented. Internal disputes within the Jewish community and new legal regulations introduced after the founding of the Republic had already considerably weakened the community's religious institutions, in particular the chief rabbinate.

The right of minorities to maintain their own educational institutions, established in Article 41 of the Lausanne Treaty, was a particular thorn in the side of the Kemalists.[34] Most of the Jewish schools in Turkey were run by the Alliance Israélite Universelle (Universal Israelite Alliance, AIU), an international Jewish philanthropic organization founded in France that was devoted primarily to the education and enlightenment of Jews in the "Orient." In the last third of the nineteenth century, the AIU had established modern schools and educational institutions everywhere in the Ottoman Empire, launching a veritable educational offensive among the Jews of the Empire and contributing crucially to the emergence of a Jewish middle class.[35] The AIU's influence on the Jews of the Ottoman Empire can hardly be overstated: before the beginning of World War I, more than 35 percent of all Jewish youths of school age attended an AIU school. This led not only to the spread of the French language (at the expense of Judeo-Spanish) among the Jews of the Empire but also to the firm establishment of the ideas of the Enlightenment – often in direct confrontation with conservative rabbis. A large part of the progressive Turkish-Jewish elite educated in AIU schools belonged not only to the same generation as the Young Turks but as the Kemalists, their successors, as well and they felt a close connection to them. What an irony of history that it was the Kemalists' policies that led to the closing of these schools, especially as the AIU itself advocated breaking with conservative community structures and promoted the integration of Jews into the majority society.

How much significance the Kemalists attached to the Turkification of the educational system became evident in 1926, when Hamdullah Suphi

[33] At the same time, the chief rabbinate lost an important part of its revenue, the *gabela* (tax on kosher meat, used to cover community expenses), because of the revocation of its authority to declare foods kosher.

[34] In an interview in the Italian *La Gazzetta* on May 4, 1924, Mustafa Kemal called the religious and foreign schools in Turkey "hotbeds of political provocation" and "nests of traitors"; quoted in Tiano, "L'immigration," 25.

[35] In addition to general education schools, the AIU operated numerous vocational schools that prepared Jewish youths for various trades.

[Tanrıöver], the chairman of the nationalist association Türk Ocakları, was appointed minister of education. Gradually, the independence of religious minorities' schools was restricted through a wide range of measures. The schools of the AIU and the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden (Aid Association of the German Jews)[36] had to sever their connection with their umbrella organizations. As a consequence, they lost their financial base, especially since the Turkish state, in violation of the Lausanne Treaty, did not provide any funding for these schools. In 1926, schools were instructed to look for a "nationalist mind-set" when hiring new teachers, and only *öz Türk* – real Turks – could be employed as teachers for Turkish, history, and geography. Eventually, instruction in Jewish religion and history was prohibited as well. The combined effect of these measures, which were frequently accompanied by anti-Jewish propaganda in the nationalist press, led to the closing of most of these schools.[37]

At the end of the 1930s, cultural associations and other secular Jewish organizations, such as youth clubs, sports clubs, and others, were prohibited as well, and the Association Law (Law No. 3512) of June 1938 banned all associations founded on "an ethnic, religious, or class basis." Jews were prohibited both from founding their own associations and from active involvement in international Jewish organizations.[38] These circumstances led to the absurd situation that pro-Turkish lobbying activities by Turkish Jews living abroad were viewed favorably, while no delegates from Turkey were allowed to participate in international Jewish congresses and meetings.[39]

"They Can Never Be Turks"

In order to rob the Jewish population of the minority rights they had been granted in the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkish officials admonished them that in the interest of equality for all citizens, they could not be granted any special privileges. As for their status as citizens, the standard

[36] Originally, German Jews had supported the AIU as well. German-French competition led to the founding of the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden in 1901, which also established educational institutions in the Ottoman Empire, but in much smaller numbers than the AIU.

[37] Vividly described in the case of Edirne by Erol Haker; Erol Haker, *Edirne, Its Jewish Community, and Alliance Schools 1867–1937* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2006), 145–150.

[38] A law decreeing the disbanding of Freemasons' lodges and similar organizations had already been introduced in 1935.

[39] *Le Judaïsme Sépharadi*, the journal of the Confédération universelle des Juifs séphardim, published several ardent vows of loyalty to Turkey by Jews of Turkish origin. However, it is evident from reports about international conventions of Sephardic Jews that these meetings were never attended by delegates from Turkey.

justification given for their exclusion was that öz Turks were Muslims whose native language was Turkish and who furthermore "felt Turkish to the bone."[40]

The distinction between Turks (citizens of Turkey) and öz (real, in other words Muslim) Turks was already evident in the debates regarding the constitution passed in 1924. The majority of the MPs opposed the proposal that all citizens of Turkey be declared "Turks in the sense of nationality" in the constitution. In their view, members of religious minorities might well be citizens, but, as H. Suphi put it, "in words we can find a definition. With this definition, the article can be passed. But the fact is: They can never be Turks."[41]

A de facto distinction was thus made between members of the Turkish nation and those citizens of Turkey labeled by Minister of Justice Mahmut Esat [Bozkurt] *kanun-Türkü* (Turks by law), the latter of whom were excluded through numerous unofficial and semi-official regulations.[42]

Changing Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion

The criteria for inclusion and exclusion changed with the political circumstances. During the "War of Liberation", Islam had served as a mobilizing force used to create a sense of common identity in Muslims belonging to other ethnic groups than Turkish (Kurds, Laz, and Circassians). For the "population exchange" stipulated in the Treaty of Lausanne, religious affiliation was also a central criterion. And despite secularization efforts, Kemalist policy would always return to Islam as the key criterion for belonging to the Turkish nation – "Turkish culture" and a "common history" thereby implicitly referring to Islam.[43]

A further central criterion for inclusion or exclusion was participation in the "War of Liberation." The national "War of Liberation" remains the Turkish nation's central founding myth to this day. Although the Muslim

[40] In 1923, the president of the Türk Ocakları and later minister of education, Hamdullah Suphi [Tanrıöver], replied to the question of who was to be regarded a Turk: "He is a Turk who speaks Turkish, is a Muslim, and is committed to Turkdom." Quoted in Hüseyin Sadoğlu, *Türkiye'de Ulusçuluk ve Dil Politikaları* (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2003), 193.

[41] Quoted in İlhan Unat, *Türk vatandaşlık hukuku: metinler-mahkeme kararları* (Ankara: Sevinç, 1966), 39.

[42] Ibid.

[43] See Eric Jan Zürcher, "The Core Terminology of Kemalism: Mefkûre, Millî, Muasır, Medenî," in *Aspects of The Political Language in Turkey, 19–20th century*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser (Istanbul: İsis, 2002), 106–110.

population was also tired of war after almost eleven consecutive years of warfare and had tried in every way imaginable to evade renewed military service, Kemalist doctrine held that the "entire nation" had participated enthusiastically in the "War of Liberation." Everyone else was excluded as "not belonging to the nation" and as "the enemy within."[44]

A law passed in 1926 called for the dismissal of all civil servants and public service employees who had not participated in the "War of Liberation" (Law 854 b). Another law, Law 1041, passed one year later, empowered the Council of Ministers to strip people of their citizenship if they had not participated in the "War of Liberation" and had not returned to Turkey by the day the law was published. In practice, this law was therefore primarily used to deprive non-Muslims of their citizenship.[45] This discriminatory citizenship policy was supplemented by a population policy that sought to achieve a rapid growth in the Turkish-Muslim population by recruiting immigrants who were Muslim or members of Turkic-speaking peoples and by mounting campaigns aimed to increase the birth rate, while denying immigration to non-Muslims.[46]

"Vatandaş Türkçe konuş!" (*Citizen, Speak Turkish!*)

When Kemalist policy began to curb Islam in Turkey in the mid-twenties, the Turkish language became the new focus of attention as the unifying mark of "Turkdom." Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] said: "The Turkish language is the heart and spirit of the Turkish nation," and warned, "A person who does not speak Turkish is not to be trusted, even if he claims to have a bond with Turkish culture."[47] Vehement campaigns were launched to Turkify the language of the population. Inadequate knowledge of Turkish, or simply the use of another language (for example, Judeo-Spanish) provided the press and politicians with a regularly trotted-out argument for accusing the Jews of lacking loyalty to the state. Jews whose Turkish was not perfect or who spoke with an "un-Turkish accent" were a favorite topic in Turkish caricature magazines. Over and

[44] See, for example, the textbook *Malûmat-ı Vataniye* by M. Adil (1926), 15; quoted in Füsun Üstel, *"Makbul Vatandaş" ın Peşinde: II: Meşrutiyet'ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2004), 211.

[45] Described in detail in Part 1, Chapter 2.

[46] Given the overwhelming majority of Muslims in the population (about 98 percent), these measures to expand the Turkish-Muslim population seem absurd. They are an expression of the prevailing mood of the time and can only be understood against the background of the preceding wars. See Fuat Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999), 44–47.

[47] Quoted in Sadoğlu, *Türkiye'de Ulusçuluk*, 214.

above language, what was demanded was the adoption of "Turkish culture" and a nebulous "Turkish ideal."[48]

An Un-Turkish Accent

The author Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu was one of the most respected and most read authors of the new Turkey. His works, which are still available today, have gone through a large number of editions and are on the mandatory reading list of every Turkish student. In his book *Yaban* (The Stranger), which takes place during the War of Independence, he describes his hero's thoughts as follows: "A Turkish voice could be heard: 'Hello there, isn't there anyone in this village?' But it was a Turkish that immediately reminded me of Galata.[49] I cannot exactly characterize it as Turkish spoken with a Greek accent; rather, the person calling out might perhaps have been an Armenian or a Jew. How sad it is when Turkish is spoken that way, when it is debased and mutilated like this! Just as if a coarse and feeble hand were abusing our body, reaching into the most sensitive and delicate organs of our body and hooking its claws into them."

In fact, educated Jews had, on their own volition, taken the initiative to spread the Turkish language within the Jewish community as early as the Ottoman era. Organizations such as the Türk Kültür Cemiyeti (Turkish Cultural Association) offered Turkish classes; newspapers such as *Üstad* (The Teacher) and *Ceride-i Tercüman* (The Translator) appeared in Turkish, but in Hebrew script, to make it easier for Jewish readers to learn Turkish. Even after the founding of the Republic, the elite of the Turkish-Jewish community promoted the learning of Turkish as an important precondition for the integration of Jews into Turkish society.

However, the aim of the public campaigns for language Turkification that descended on the minorities of Turkey under the slogan *Vatandaş Türkçe konuş* (Citizens, Speak Turkish), was not so much to integrate

[48] See Zürcher, "Core Terminology," 111, and Ahmet Yıldız, "*Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene*": *Türk Ulusal Kimliğinin Etno-Seküler Sınırları (1919–1938)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 146.

[49] A neighborhood in Istanbul which at the time had a very high proportion of non-Muslim residents.

them but in many cases to discriminate against them. In streets and squares and on public transportation, signs and posters went up "calling upon" members of the minorities to speak Turkish. The slogan *Vatandaş Türkçe konuş* was often more a threat than an invitation. In the streets and on public transport, belligerent groups of students and members of the nationalist association Türk Ocakları taunted and attacked people speaking languages other than Turkish.[50] In Izmir, Istanbul, and Thrace, Jews were subjected to particular pressure. The port city of Izmir – in the eyes of Muslim Turks a *gâvur şehir* (a city of unbelievers) – and cosmopolitan Pera (today Beyoğlu) in Istanbul were particular irritants to Turkish nationalists. Accordingly, the campaigns for Turkification were especially vigorous there.[51]

Several proposals were tabled in Parliament to make the use of any language other than Turkish punishable by law.[52] Although no such bill was passed, individual city administrations imposed fines on their own initiative, among them Edirne, Tekirdağ, Bursa, Bergama, and Balıkesir. Also recently, over the last few decades, the Turkish Kurds have been under particular pressure to submit to language Turkification. At the time of the early Republic, however, the Turkish language campaign had a clear anti-Jewish thrust, although it did target other minorities as well. These other groups likewise became victims of verbal abuse and, in some cases, violence.

Nationalist Mobilization and Legal Restrictions

The *Vatandaş Türkçe konuş* campaign was only one element in a state of permanent nationalist mobilization. A host of nationalist holidays, conventions, and campaign weeks produced a heated climate of constant nationalist tension. National censuses, for example, were used to

[50] In 1927, the Fourth Congress of Türk Ocakları had declared the linguistic Turkification of society its main task. This was taken up in 1928 by the national student association of the university in Istanbul, the Dârülfünun. The motto of the third convention of the CHF (*Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası*/Republican People's Party, formerly the HF) in May 1931 was *Tek dil tek ulus*: one nation – one language. Described in detail in Sadoğlu, *Türkiye'de Ulusçuluk*), 275–290; Yıldız, "Ne Mutlu Türküm," 286–290.

[51] On the particularly radical campaign in Izmir, see Nahum, *Juifs de Smyrne*, 197ff. See also the report of the American consul in Izmir, P. George, from July 24, 1934, NARA MD, M1224 (Internal Affairs of Turkey 1930–1944), reel 10, 867.4016-Jews/13, appendix to Skinner's report dated August 2, 1934.

[52] Initiatives to this effect were launched in 1925, for example, and once again at the end of 1927. In November 1937, the member of Parliament (MP) Sabri Toprak submitted a draft law that would have prohibited Turkish citizens from using another language; its violation would have carried a prison sentence. The bill was defeated by a majority vote.

demonstrate the overwhelming majority of Muslim Turks within the population, evoking intense fear among the minorities.[53]

Turkification policies began assuming aggressive tendencies as early as 1925, after the Kurdish-Islamic Sheikh Said (*Şeyh-Said*) Rebellion had been put down. In a statement aimed at Turkey's minorities, Prime Minister Ismet [Inönü] declared bluntly: "In comparison with the Turkish majority, the other segments of the population have no significance. It is our duty to make all inhabitants of Turkey unconditionally Turks. Those who offer resistance to Turks and Turkdom we will eradicate."[54] The Ministry of Education prohibited by decree the use of words such as Kurd, Laz, and Circassian.

Since the founding of the Republic, non-Muslims were subjected to numerous restrictions. Armenians and Greeks were not permitted to settle in certain regions,[55] or even to stay there temporarily, by a provision that was applied to some extent to Jews as well. In June 1923, freedom of movement for non-Muslims was eliminated. In order to travel within Turkey, they were required to apply for a special permit; some areas were generally closed to them. These restrictions remained in force, with some interruptions, until 1930.[56]

Particularly threatening for Turkey's minorities was Article 159 of the Turkish Criminal Code, introduced in 1926, which carried penalties of up to five years of imprisonment for *Türklüğe hakaret* (for insulting Turkishness). This article was the precursor to today's Article 301. Any non-Muslim who dared to complain about an incident of discrimination risked being prosecuted for *Türklüğe hakaret* to boot. Such a small infraction as the use of a language other than Turkish could lead to charges under Article 159. In addition, the law cemented legal discrimination against minorities in everyday life, as Muslim Turks used it as a convenient weapon in neighborhood feuds and everyday incidents.[57]

[53] For a detailed account, see Dündar, *Nüfus Sayımlarında*, 36–39.

[54] Speech for the Türk Ocakları association convention, reported in the newspaper *Vakit* on April 27, 1925; quoted in Üstel, "Makbul Vatandaş," 173.

[55] The population exchange agreed in the Lausanne Treaty only allowed Greeks in the Istanbul area to remain in Turkey.

[56] For Armenians and Greeks, the restrictions were even harsher. The *Zeitschrift der Türkischen Handelskammer in Deutschland*, which was published with the involvement of the Turkish embassy, wrote in November 1930 that the travel restrictions for members of minorities had been lifted "with the exception of the forbidden zones." However, members of the minorities were still not allowed to stay at any location for longer than three months; no. 11 (1930): 18. See also Nahum, *Juifs de Smyrne,* 200.

[57] Examples in Erol Haker, *Bir Zamanlar Kırklareli'de Yahudiler Yaşardı* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2002), 19, and Çolak, *Milas Yahudileri,* 44.

The inventory of the Prime Ministry's Republican Archives (Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi) in Ankara has 1,032 entries relating to prosecution for *Türklüğe hakaret* for the period 1926–1938. In ninety-four of these cases, the accused are either listed as Jews or their names indicate that they are Jewish.[58]

Disappointment, Futile Assimilation Attempts, and Emigration

The positive expectations most Jews initially held for the Republic were not fulfilled; their willingness to adapt was not rewarded. Instead, the Turkification policy prompted fear and disappointment in many of them. Official representatives of the Jewish community kept trying in vain to prove their loyalty to the Turkish state in addresses of devotion and even with donations to the Turkish Red Crescent or the Turkish airline. Their vulnerability to coercion was exploited time and again by the Turks. As soon as tensions arose in Turkish-Jewish relations, representatives of the Jewish community were given the "opportunity" to prove their commitment to the Turkish state through generous donations.

In the heated climate of the *Vatandaş Türkçe konuş* campaign, Jews in Izmir founded an organization in 1932 whose mandate was to support the state's Turkification efforts. It circulated a declaration to be signed by the city's Jewish residents pledging that each individual would "internalize Turkish culture and ... make every effort to ensure the national merging of all fellow countrymen. To this aim, I will only speak Turkish and encourage all my acquaintances to speak Turkish as well."[59] In the course of 1933, one by one, the Jewish communities of other cities followed this example.

As a token of their willingness to adapt, many Jewish families chose "typical" Turkish names, such as Oğuz or Altay, for their children. This attitude found absurd expression in the book *Evâmir-i Aşere* (The Ten Commandments), written by Moïz Kohen (who Turkified his name to Munis Tekinalp), in which he urged his fellow believers to Turkify themselves.[60]

[58] The other 940 entries refer overwhelmingly to Greeks or Armenians. Muslim names rarely occur, or they have additions that mark their bearers as Kurds, Arabs, or Albanians. In addition, a number of cases can be found of prosecution for "insulting Turkish dignitaries," another criminal offense.

[59] Quoted in Bali, *Türkleştirme Serüveni*, 159; first reported in *Milliyet* of November 24, 1932. See Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism*, 95. The Uhuvvet Society in Bursa fined members who spoke a language other than Turkish at the club.

[60] Described extensively in Jacob M. Landau, *Tekinalp, Turkish Patriot, 1883–1961* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul, 1984).

All these efforts did the Jews little good. Time and again, they were reminded that they had been taken in as "guests" because of persecution by the Spanish Crown and were expected to show appropriate gratitude. Erol Haker, a native of Kırklareli, describes the mood in the Jewish population at the time: "The Jews living in the Republic of Turkey attempted to attract still less attention in their private and social lives and behaved as loyal citizens. But ... they could have bent over backwards [literally: they could have caught a bird with their mouth], proclaiming their commitment to the state, it would not have been enough."[61] Furthermore, Elie Nathan, a teacher in an Alliance Israélite Universelle school in Istanbul, who had returned to his home country of Turkey to teach after completing his teacher training in France, noted on November 19, 1937: "There is no doubt that, at the time the Kemalist regime was established, enormous hope seized every heart. The Turks, who were such gracious hosts, so tolerant, for whom the ideology of Islam was the basis of a kind of ethically or spiritually based brotherhood with the Jews, those Turks – *rahmamim y piadosos* [charitable and full of mercy], to use the Ladino expression – who were, after all, masters of their own country, which had been occupied by the Allies but devastated by the Greek army, were supposed to usher in a new era, incomparably more splendid than that of the sultanate.... But instead, we saw the implementation of a plan that sought gradually to suppress everything non-Muslim."[62]

Despite the refusal to accept Jews as citizens with equal rights, the Jews' situation in the early Turkish Republic was more tolerable than it was in most of the other newly created nation states of Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Modern anti-Semitism based on racist arguments was not widespread in Turkey at the time, and violent attacks on Jews were the extreme exception.[63] The Turkification policy targeted the minorities in general, and other groups, such as the Kurds, were – in numerical terms – much harder hit and victims of far more brutal repression than the Jews.

The Kemalist government's behavior toward the Jews remained contradictory. As a consequence of the country's political and social structure at the time, the anti-Jewish campaigns in the Turkish press and the public described above could not have happened without orders from, or at least

[61] Haker, *Bir Zamanlar,* 321.

[62] Quoted in Elisabeth Antébi, *Les missionnaires juifs de la France, 1860–1839* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1999), 133.

[63] No thorough study of the origins, spread, and ideological basis of anti-Semitism in Turkey has been written to date.

the consent of, the government and party leadership. On a number of occasions, they served to establish legal restrictions, like the elimination of the rights stipulated in the Treaty of Lausanne (in the years 1925–1926), or the expulsion of the Jews from Thrace (1934).[64] After the fact – after the Jews had been "successfully" coerced – the government attempted in every instance to contain the damage, and it distanced itself from anti-Jewish slander and activities. This may have been partly because the government had an interest in keeping the Jews as allies on an international level.

Mass Emigration of Jews from Turkey

Faced with the nationalist and, in part, anti-Jewish climate of the young Turkish Republic, many Jews decided to emigrate from Turkey. The emigration of Jews had already begun during the Ottoman era: benefiting from contacts in Europe, Jews from the Ottoman Empire had first settled in various European cities in the last third of the nineteenth century. These pioneers, who were to play an important role in the Turkish-Jewish communities that would develop later in Europe, were predominantly prosperous merchants. However, their number was relatively small, and the main direction of Jewish migration at the time remained from Russia, Italy, and the German Reich into the Ottoman Empire.

After the turn of the century, the number of Jewish emigrants from the Ottoman Empire grew noticeably. The effects of a Western education in the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Hilfsverein, as well as the newly acquired language skills, facilitated emigration. For Jewish migrants at the time, Europe was only one destination of many, which also included the United States and Latin America.

One fundamental reason for emigration was the poverty of the great majority of Jews.[65] However, disasters, such as earthquakes or fires, also drove people to leave their home country. Another factor that prompted young men to emigrate was the introduction of mandatory military service in 1909. And last, the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 entirely depleted the Jewish communities in Thrace. Some small towns in Thrace lost the majority of their Jewish youths to emigration.[66] In addition to political

[64] See Part 1, Chapter 3.

[65] The reports issued regularly by the teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle about the social situation of their students paint a vivid picture of the dismal conditions in which the majority of the Jewish population lived. Reports of the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden confirm this picture.

[66] Haker quotes *La Boz de Verdad* of June 4, 1914, according to which 75 percent of the youths had emigrated to the United States. Haker, *Bir Zamanlar*, 299.

and social reasons, there were private motives for emigration as well – marriage migration, for example. Because of the high mortality rates, the *levirat* (brother-in-law marriage) was not uncommon. According to this tradition, after the death of a married woman with children, her unmarried sister had to marry the widower, her brother-in-law. Conversely, emigration provided women in particular with the opportunity to escape family control or an arranged marriage.

The main wave of Jewish emigration from Turkey, however, occurred after the founding of the Turkish Republic and can probably be attributed largely to the Turkish Republic's anti-minority policy and the associated work restrictions. In Izmir, a wave of Jewish emigration had already begun toward the end of the Greek-Turkish War in 1922, and it continued, propelled by the anti-Jewish campaign, after the founding of the Republic.[67] The subsequent ten to fifteen years saw an exodus of Jews out of Turkey. In many cities, the Jewish communities shrank to half, in some cases to a third of their former size. According to press estimates at the time, the number of Jews in Izmir declined from 40,000 in 1922 to 13,000 in 1934; in Edirne, it declined from 18,000 to 6,000.[68]

Political events and developments in the international arena affected the emigration routes. During the 1920s, the United States gradually imposed stricter immigration rules, which resulted in a significant decline of immigration to the United States, while France became the main destination for Turkish-Jewish emigrants.

The Sephardic World Loses Its Center

A reliable overview of Jewish emigration from Turkey in the period between the two World Wars does not, to my knowledge, exist. No census was conducted between 1914 and 1927. Because the timelines of wars, expulsions, and the de facto dissolution of the Ottoman Empire overlap during this period, it is practically impossible to determine how many people died and how many emigrated. The censuses from the Ottoman period are, for one, very imprecise and in addition were often influenced by political interests, especially with regard to members of the

[67] Nahum quotes from reports about this mass emigration in the archives of the AIU and in records of the French Foreign Ministry, Nahum, *Juifs de Smyrne*, 176 and 184. See also Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), September 9, 1924.

[68] A. Levi, *Yahudiler*, 64, based on estimates and figures from the contemporaneous press and, for Edirne, B'nai B'rith records. However, the figures found in the literature diverge significantly and are contradictory.

minorities.[69] With these reservations in mind, we can estimate the extent of the emigration movement approximately on the basis of the population statistics of the Ottoman Empire. In 1914, about 190,000 Jews lived in the territories that remained part of the Ottoman Empire after the Balkan Wars and the annexation of the Dodecanese by Italy.[70] If we subtract the numbers given in these records for the Jewish population of the Arab territories, in 1914, about 130,000 Jews lived in the territory of what was to become the Republic of Turkey. For the period after World War I, Avner Levi assumes a total number of at least 150,000 Jews in Turkey.[71]

In the first census, conducted in 1927, only 81,872 people were still tallied as Jewish. This would equal a decrease of at least 70,000 – that is, a decrease by almost half – compared to the minimum number estimated by Avner Levi. According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 70,000 Jews left Turkey in the years 1921–1929 alone.[72] The restriction of employment opportunities for non-Muslims as well as explicitly anti-Jewish activities like the events in Thrace in 1934 resulted in the continuation of Jewish emigration from Turkey during the 1930s. By the time of the following census in 1935, the number of Jews had once again fallen slightly to 78,730, while the total population of Turkey had grown by about 18 percent within the eight-year period since the previous census.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire, followed by the forcible creation of a Turkish nation-state, brought about the decline of the once large Jewish community. After World War I, Turkey still had the largest Jewish community of all the successor states of the Ottoman Empire. Not only did the Kemalists' Turkification policy drive a large part of the Jewish

[69] The figures for the minority groups in particular diverge in the population censuses because the various groups used them for propaganda purposes. In addition, the Ottoman censuses display a significant lack of precision. See Justin McCarthy, "Jewish Population in the Late Ottoman Period," in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1994), 375ff; Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

[70] According to the Ottoman population census, the exact number was 187,073; Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 189. These figures do not include Jews with foreign citizenship living in the Ottoman Empire, which explains the rather significant divergence from the figures given by Jewish organizations.

[71] Levi's estimate is based on an evaluation of the Jewish press at the time. According to these sources, 50,000–90,000 Jews lived in Istanbul, 40,000 in Izmir, 15,000 in Edirne, and another 30,000 to 35,000 combined in the other cities of Thrace and western Anatolia. He arrives at a total of 150,000–200,000. A. Levi, *Yahudiler*, 18.

[72] *The Jewish Chronicle*, October 4, 1929: 29.

population to emigration, but the restrictions and the measures aimed at forced assimilation also prevented the survival of Sephardic culture. Consequently, the country lost the significance it had enjoyed for centuries as the cultural center and home of the Sephardic Jews. During the inter-war period, France – the most important destination of Sephardic migration – briefly became a new center of Sephardic life.

PART I

TURKEY DURING THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST ERA (1933–1945)

During World War II, through skillful diplomacy, Turkey was able to successfully maintain its neutrality until nearly the end of the war. However, the danger of war, the strengthening of dictatorial and fascist regimes in neighboring countries, and the influence of Nazi Germany affected Turkish domestic policies and the political climate in Turkey. This, in turn, had consequences for the situation of the Jews and other minorities in Turkey and also influenced Turkey's policies regarding Jewish refugees.

I

Turkey's Foreign Policy

After the heavy losses of the wars at the beginning of the century, the foreign policy of the young Turkish republic focused primarily on maintaining the peace and consolidating the country. The Kemalist leadership officially distanced itself from the expansionist Turanist objectives of the Young Turks.[1] This position was a constituent part of the Turkish-Soviet treaty of 1921, the Treaty of Kars.[2] In 1932, Turkey joined the League of Nations, and by 1935 it had signed friendship or neutrality treaties with almost all its neighboring countries.

Hitler's ascension to power in 1933 and Nazi policy up to 1939 did not at first cause significant concern in Turkey. The systematic violations of the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles by Nazi Germany met with a great deal of understanding, because they were reminiscent of the way Turkey treated the Treaty of Sèvres of 1920. Turkey already had achieved its most intensely desired revisions through the Treaty of Lausanne, and its sovereignty over the Turkish straits was restored in the 1936 Montreux

[1] Turanism – in Turkey frequently used synonymously with Panturkism – refers to a Turkish-nationalist ideology whose goal was the unification of all "Turkic peoples." Turan refers to the supposed cradle of the Turkish race, a mythical region in Central Asia. Among the Young Turks, this ideology played an important role. During World War I, it manifested itself in expansionist goals that were readily adopted by the German allies. (In European parlance, Turanism refers to a theory that postulates a common origin of Turks, Hungarians, Finns, Estonians, Mongols, and other peoples. It developed in the nineteenth century in the context of the research and construction of "races" and language families.) In this book, I will follow Turkish (synonymous) usage and use these terms interchangeably.

[2] The treaty was signed before the new states of the Soviet Union and the Turkish Republic were founded. The treaty still determines the border between Turkey and two former states of the Soviet Union, Georgia and Armenia, today.

Convention. The question of Hatay (Alexandretta), which had been under French mandate in Syria since 1920 and which Turkey wanted back, was already in the process of being settled in favor of the Turks and was resolved in 1939. Hence, German attempts to win Turkey over to the pursuit of a common revisionist policy were rejected by the Turks.[3]

In Turkey's eyes, the potential danger of war came primarily from Bulgaria and Italy. Although Turkey had signed a friendship treaty with Bulgaria in 1925, relations between the two nations were strained in the 1930s. In addition, Bulgaria refused to join the Balkan Pact of 1934. Italy was thought to be especially threatening. In 1934, Mussolini announced his expansionist goals in the eastern Mediterranean area quite blatantly with the words *mare nostrum*, our sea, and Italy's naval fleet maintained bases on the Dodecanese Islands, right off the southwest coast of Turkey.

For Turkey, the Italian attack on Albania on April 7, 1939, marked the beginning of the war. The German alliance with Italy, the "Pact of Steel," was announced in May 1939 and also negatively affected German-Turkish relations. As a consequence, Turkey sought closer relations with France and England, with whom it eventually signed a tripartite pact. Turkey managed to use these treaty negotiations to achieve the cession of Hatay from France. The German attack on Poland on September 1, 1939, which occurred during the negotiations among Britain, France, and Turkey, caused Turkey's attitude to turn decidedly against Germany. At the same time, the unexpected news of the Hitler-Stalin Pact stirred up old fears in Turkey of the "Russian Empire." On October 8, 1939, the tripartite pact between Britain, France, and Turkey for mutual military assistance and cooperation was finally signed. A supplementary protocol to this treaty enabled Turkey, in keeping with the Turkish-Soviet neutrality agreement, to avoid its military treaty obligations to the Western powers. Although France and especially Great Britain attempted to extract Turkey from its dependence on Germany by supplying armaments and promising loans, Germany continued to be Turkey's most important trade partner by far.[4]

[3] Conversations of Numan Menemcioğlu (at the time secretary of state in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, later foreign minister of Turkey) with Joachim von Ribbentrop in July 1938 in Berlin; Lothar Krecker, *Deutschland und die Türkei im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt M.: Klostermann, 1964), 14.

[4] Over the course of the 1930s, Germany had gained a predominant position in Turkey's foreign trade. In the first six months of 1939, for example, German goods accounted for 55 percent of Turkey's imports and 51 percent of her exports; William M. Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774–2000* (London: Cass, 2000), 84.

The German Threat

The twelve months between June 1940 and June 1941 were marked by Germany's rapid military successes on multiple fronts. The defeat of France after only a six-week offensive took Turkey aback and raised the question of whether Turkey had "once again backed the wrong horse."[5] In the Balkans, beginning in the fall of 1940, the altered power structure resulted in the "voluntary" submission to and collaboration with Nazi Germany by these countries. One after the other, the Balkan nations joined the Three-Power Pact among Germany, Italy, and Japan: first Hungary on November 20, 1940, then Romania on November 23, 1940, followed by Slovakia on November 24, 1940, and finally Bulgaria, in March 1941. Italian troops attacked Greece in October 1940, where they had encountered unexpected resistance. On April 6, 1941, Germany invaded Yugoslavia and Greece. After massive air strikes, both countries were occupied within a month.

By the spring of 1941 the entire Balkans were in the hands of the Axis powers – occupied, extorted, or allied. In Bulgaria and Romania, massive German contingents of troops stood ready not far from the Turkish border. In view of this threat, Turkey pulled back its line of defense to western Anatolia and blew up the bridges over the border river, the Maritsa (Turkish: Meriç), at Edirne and Uzunköprü. Istanbul, whose old quarters consisted predominantly of easily inflammable wooden houses, was within range of German bombers. The climate in Turkey was marked by fear of a German invasion, and the government ordered a blackout for Istanbul and Izmir. Part of the population of European Turkey was evacuated.[6] Turkish fears were by no means unfounded: German military leadership had briefly considered the occupation of Turkey, and a plan to this effect, Operation Gertrud, already had been devised.

The Treaty between Germany and Turkey

Due to its geographic location, Turkey played an important role in German war planning. Franz von Papen, the German ambassador in Ankara since April 1939, was instructed to do everything in his power

[5] Selim Deringil, "Hasta Adam'ın Dinç Evlatları," *Toplumsal Tarih* no. 121 (2004): 78; Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Zoraki Diplomat* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1984), 264ff.

[6] Krecker, *Deutschland und Türkei*, 148; however, the blackout was only in effect for four weeks. See Cemil Koçak, *Türkiye'de Millî Şef Dönemi (1938–1945)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996), vol. 1, 341.

to convince Turkey to at least remain neutral. In March 1941, before the imminent invasion of Greece, von Papen handed the Turkish president, Inönü, a personal letter from Adolf Hitler. To assuage Turkish fears, Hitler provided assurances that the territorial integrity of Turkey would be respected. At the same time, however, he threatened that this promise would be kept only "as long as Turkey [took] no measures that would [force] us to alter this position."[7]

In December 1940, German leaders had made the decision to invade the Soviet Union. In the same month, secret negotiations began between Germany and Turkey, leading eventually to the settlement of the friendship and non-aggression pact that was signed on June 18, 1941, four days before the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

Turkish Elation at the Attack on the Soviet Union

The German attack on the Soviet Union triggered elation in Turkey – and not only among Nazi sympathizers. "The German-Soviet war created a sort of celebratory atmosphere in our country," wrote Member of Parliament Faik Ahmet Barutçu in describing the mood in the Turkish Parliament, "All hearts began to beat for a German victory." In the halls of Parliament, the MPs and ministers wished each other a "blessed campaign" (*gazâniz kutlu olsun*).[8] Foreign Minister Şükrü Saracoğlu called the German Ambassador von Papen to explicitly wish the Germans success, and President Ismet Inönü likewise declared that "the sympathies of the Turkish people in this battle [are] on the side of the Germans."[9] In October 1941, high-ranking Turkish military leaders traveled to the German eastern front, and in July 1942 an official press delegation followed. Both groups reported admiringly on the German successes.[10]

[7] Letter from Hitler dated March 1, 1941; ADAP (Akten zur deutschen. Auswärtigen Politik), series D, vol. XII, document 113, 166ff. To reinforce these threats, von Papen instructed Germany's consular representations in Turkey in February 1941 to emphasize the strength of the German troops in the Balkans to Turkish politicians and journalists; letter by von Papen, dated February 24, 1941; Political Archive of the Foreign Office, Berlin (hereafter PAAA), German Embassy in Ankara, 560.

[8] Faik Ahmet Barutçu, *Siyasî Anılar 1939–1954* (Istanbul: Milliyet, 1977), 206.

[9] Krecker, *Deutschland und Türkei*, 190 and 204. The secretary of the German Embassy, Hans Kroll, also mentions that members of the Turkish government congratulated him on the invasion of the Soviet Union; Kroll, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Botschafters* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1967), 123.

[10] The group's members included the editors-in-chief of four large newspapers – all of them MPs as well – and Selim Sarper, head of the state press agency; Koçak, *Millî Şef*, vol. 1, 647.

The reason for the positive mood was, first of all, relief that the two powers Turkey felt threatened by were now fighting each other, and it no longer had to fear an attack. In addition, anti-Soviet sentiments were widespread among the public and parts of the political leadership, sentiments in which anti-communism mixed with old fears of the Russian arch-enemy.

Turanist Ambitions

In Turkey, the initial successes of the Germans against the Soviet Union in 1941–42 gave a boost to the proponents of expansionist pan-Turkish objectives. The Turanists, hoping to pick up the thread of the Young Turk-German alliance from World War I, made themselves available to the Nazi leadership. Nazi policy, for its part, sought to revive the World War I strategy of using Muslims as instruments. In the German Foreign Office and a number of Nazi organizations, various "Work Groups on Turanism" were established in which renowned German orientalists participated. Ambassador von Papen arranged for leading Turanists to be invited from Turkey to Berlin, where they met with German government officials.

On the Turkish side, such expansionist ambitions were by no means harbored only by Turanist outsiders. Hüsrev Gerede, the Turkish ambassador in Berlin, Numan Menemencioğlu, the deputy to the foreign minister and from 1942 foreign minister, as well as Saracoğlu, the foreign minister and from the summer of 1942 prime minister, repeatedly declared their interest in the "pan-Turkish question" to the German authorities.[11] However, as long as a German victory over the Soviet Union was not yet certain, no one wanted to go out on a limb officially. Consequently, "non-official" people were put in charge of maintaining contact with the German government.[12] MPs from the

[11] Krecker, *Deutschland und Türkei,* 210; Zehra Önder, *Die türkische Außenpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1977), 146. Another illuminating source is von Papen's notes about his conversation at the end of August 1942 with Şükrü Saracoğlu, the former foreign minister, who became prime minister after the death of Refik Saydam: Saracoğlu said that "as a Turk" he longed to see the Soviet Union destroyed, and therefore, in his eyes, Germany should kill half of all Russians. However, "as prime minister" he must do everything in his power to keep Russia from attacking the Turkish minority within its borders, which was why Turkey should remain neutral. ADAP, Series E, vol. 3, document 238, 411.

[12] However, one of the main figures in these contacts was General Ali Fuad Erden, who was still incumbent commander of the Turkish military academy, while General Hüsnü Hüseyin E. Erkilet was already retired. See also Önder, *Türkische Außenpolitik*, 146 and 150.

unity party CHP (Republican People's Party, formerly HP) who called for entry into the war on Germany's side remained decidedly in the minority.[13]

The policies of the Nazis regarding Muslim and Turkic-speaking peoples in the Soviet Union were, however, completely contradictory. Because Nazi race ideology saw them as "Asiatic," "inferior," and "subhuman,"[14] Soviet Muslim and oriental prisoners of war were killed in large numbers within the first months of the invasion. On the other hand, Nazis also tried to recruit them as allies in their struggle against the Red Army. In reality, however, they intended to use members of the Soviet Turkic peoples as cannon fodder in the war against the Soviet Union. Berlin was by no means about to grant representatives of the Turkic peoples in the Caucasus or the Crimean Tartars any real say or autonomy after the hoped-for victory over the Soviet Union. After victory, the Germans intended to Germanize those regions by settling people "of German descent" there.[15]

The only one of these projects that was actually implemented starting in the winter of 1941–42 was the transfer of Soviet prisoners of war who were Muslims or of Turkic origin to special camps where they were recruited for use on the German side. As the Wehrmacht, in keeping with the racist Nazi theory about Slavic and "Asiatic subhumans," treated Soviet prisoners of war especially cruelly and left hundreds of thousands of captured Soviet soldiers to freeze and starve to death, "volunteering" afforded a chance for these prisoners to escape death in the camp. As late as May 1945, Turkic-speaking Waffen-SS units were still taking part in the "defense of Berlin" against the Red Army.[16]

[13] Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *İkinci Adam* (Istanbul: Remzi, 2001), vol. 2, 183.

[14] According to a training brochure issued by the SS Hauptamt (head office); Patrik von zur Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern: der Nationalismus der sowjetischen Orientvölker im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1971), 46ff.

[15] Alfred Rosenberg, the head of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories as of July 1941, strongly rejected any idea of granting autonomy to non-Russian peoples. The German Foreign Office therefore dropped most plans of "Turanism" by the end of 1942.

[16] Over the course of the war about 200,000 Soviet POWs of Turkic origin were recruited as "volunteers" for the German forces or, respectively, for the SS (Schutzstaffel [English: Protection Squadron or Protection Echelon]); Krecker, *Deutschland und Türkei*, 220ff; Camilla Dawletschin-Linder, "Die turko-tatarischen sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen im Zweiten Weltkrieg im Dreiecksverhältnis zwischen deutscher Politik, turanistischen Aspirationen und türkischer Außenpolitik," *Der Islam* 80, no.1 (2003): 1–29; in detail, Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz*.

"One-Sided Neutrality" (1941–1944)

In effect allied with both sides, Turkey remained officially neutral almost until the end of the war. Until 1943, both Germany and the Allies were primarily interested in maintaining Turkish neutrality because both sides knew that if Turkey were to be occupied or become involved in the war, it would be difficult to defend.[17] Time and time again, Turkey managed to use the competition between the warring nations for its own goals, obtaining loans and armaments shipments from both sides.

In practice, however, until the summer of 1944, Turkey pursued quite a "one-sided neutrality" that favored Germany. Turkey supplied Germany with chromium ore important for the war, for example.[18] Tolerated by Turkey, German warships passed through the Straits into the Black Sea until the summer of 1944.[19] Both the transfer of Turkish troops to the Soviet border in the summer of 1942 at Germany's request and the close cooperation between Germany and the Turkish secret service constituted support of the German war against the Soviet Union.[20] The German consular offices in Turkey became operational centers for Nazi secret service activities throughout the Near and Middle East. Contacts in the Caucasus and support for Arab Nazi allies, such as the Mufti of Jerusalem or the Iraqi putsch initiator Rashid Ali al-Gailani, were handled through

[17] See Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy,* 84.

[18] Until 1940, Turkey supplied 60 percent of the German chromium imports. A treaty concluded with France and Great Britain in 1940 stipulated that Turkey would from that point on sell its complete chromium production to those two countries. In December 1941, however, Turkey reached a new agreement with Germany regarding chromium supplies in 1943 and 1944. For details, see Gül İnanç, "The Politics of 'Active Neutrality' on the Eve of a New World Order: The Case of Turkish Chrome Sales during the Second World War," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 6 (2006): 907–915; Selim Deringil, *Denge Oyunu: İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1994), 157ff.

[19] The Treaty of Montreux and the treaties with Great Britain and the Soviet Union obliged Turkey to prevent this. The Soviet diplomatic representation protested repeatedly but without success; Koçak, *Millî Şef,* vol. 1, 606.

[20] The Turkish divisions tied up Soviet troops, which made the conquest of Rostow and the area around Kuban easier for the German Wehrmacht; Johannes Glasneck and Inge Kircheisen, *Türkei und Afghanistan – Brennpunkte der Orientpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1968), 88. Walter Schellenberg, the head of the foreign intelligence service of the SS, appreciatively mentioned "the good cooperation with the Turks," which enabled the Germans to smuggle spies into the Soviet Union from Turkey; Walter Schellenberg, *Die Memoiren des letzten Geheimdienstchefs unter Hitler* (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1979), 306. Kroll, the embassy secretary, also mentions that the Turkish government regularly provided the Germans with internal information from the Soviet Union; Kroll, *Lebenserinnerungen,* 123, 128.

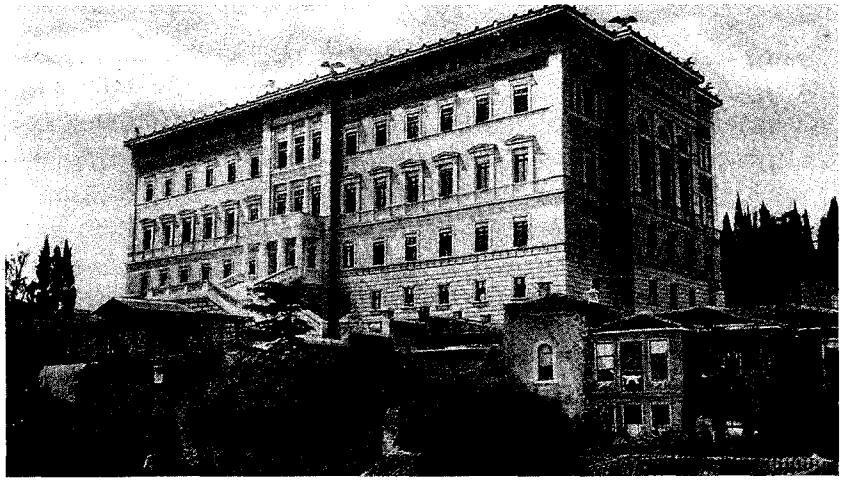


FIGURE 1.1. The German Consulate in Tarabya, Istanbul.

consulates in Turkey.[21] At times, the number of secret service employees of various organizations (the military, the SS, etc.) was so large that both the head of the German Consulate in Istanbul and von Papen complained repeatedly that they could not accommodate any more undercover people (see Figure 1.1).[22]

In the Turkish public, this massing of spies and agents of all stripes aroused fears of "infiltration by a fifth column," fears that focused in part on the brazen activities of the German Nazis in Turkey but also found expression in repressive measures against both Jewish immigrants and native-born Turkish Jews.

Even after the turning point of the war in the winter of 1942–43, Turkey maintained this position. At the conferences in Adana (January 1943) and Cairo (December 1943), the Allies attempted in vain to convince Turkey to enter the war.[23] Not until June 1944 did the pro-German Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu finally resign under pressure from the Allies. On August 2, 1944, Turkey broke off diplomatic relations with

[21] In detail, Karl Heinz Roth, "Berlin – Ankara – Baghdad: Franz von Papen and German Near East Policy during the Second World War," in *Germany and the Middle East: 1871 – 1945*, ed. Wolfgang G. Schwanitz (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2004), 181–216.

[22] Letter by von Papen, dated October 17, 1941; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 552.

[23] The Turkish representatives emphasized Turkey's inadequate armament and used the negotiations to ask for further arms supplies; Deringil, "Hasta Adam"; Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1943–1945: Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 154.

Germany – at a point, that is, when Soviet troops already had advanced into the Balkans, and Bulgaria and Romania also were on the verge of switching sides. On February 23, 1945, Turkey finally formally declared war on Germany – the condition to join the founding session of the United Nations.

Although Turkey itself did not directly participate in the war, the conflict exerted extensive effects on the situation in the country. The number of soldiers increased from 120,000 to much more than one million (out of a total population of seventeen million people). The National Protection Law (Millî Korunma Kanunu) of January 18, 1940, imposed wartime control of the economy. Food for the population was rationed, and in the larger cities, ration cards were introduced for food staples. From May 1940 onward, large portions of Turkey were under a state of emergency that was extended repeatedly until the end of 1945.

2

Nationalistic and Repressive Domestic Policy

The Regime of the Milli Şef

External circumstances aside, the authoritarian and nationalistic characteristics of the Kemalist regime had already become considerably more pronounced since the beginning of the 1930s. The Führer cult and nationalism took on aspects of religious fervor.

In 1935, the congress of the CHP decided in favor of the unity of party and state, assuming the model of the Italian and German fascist states and of the Soviet Union. Gradually, democratic freedoms, such as the freedom of organization and the freedom of opinion, modest in any case, were limited still further or completely eliminated. Over the course of a few days in June 1938, the laws on associations and the press established severe restrictions, and the infamous state security articles, borrowed from fascist Italy, were added to the Turkish criminal code. Over the following decades, these articles would send generations of opposition members in Turkey into prison.

Following the death of Atatürk on November 10, 1938, Ismet Inönü succeeded him as president and party chairman, receiving the title of Millî Şef (national leader). After taking office, "he strengthened the dictatorial characteristics of the regime and created a 'one people – one party – one leader' system... You couldn't breathe," writes Zekeriya Sertel in his memoirs.[1] Intellectuals or workers who attempted to organize were

[1] Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1977), 235 and 221. Zekeriya Sertel and his wife Sabiha were among the most important progressive opposition journalists of the time. Many Turkish authors tie the dictatorial characteristics of the Kemalist regime to Inönü as a person, as he is said to have destroyed Atatürk's "progressive policies." This is only partly correct. At the beginning of Inönü's presidency, there were even brief hopes

persecuted as communists and disappeared in prison or were sent into exile (*sürgün*) within Turkey.

The press was subjected to strict censorship.[2] Newspapers that objected to the party line, whether from the right or the left, were banned for days or months. The publishers of the large daily papers and the leading journalists were simultaneously Members of Parliament for the CHP Unity Party in Parliament. The press received exact instructions on how to report on political events. The party paper *Ulus* was the only national newspaper in Turkey that was not banned at least once from 1939 to 1946.[3]

Niyazi Berkes, who describes the political climate prevalent in Turkey during the 1940s in his memoirs, identifies a number of parallels between Nazi Germany and Turkey: "the foreignness of democratic traditions, the Führer cult, chauvinism, hostility toward foreigners and minorities, fear of communism, enmity toward Russia, ... and – the Nazis would laugh at this – the belief that it was the Turks' mission to rule the world."[4]

Nazi Sympathizers in Turkey

These tendencies were furthered by admiration for the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy. A distinction must be made, however, between real Nazi sympathizers and individuals who were drawn to the authoritarian character of those regimes. Recep Peker, until 1937 the CHP's general secretary and after 1942 minister of the interior, openly expressed his enthusiasm for the Nazi regime in the mid-thirties and proposed adopting fascist organizational models such as the Hitler Youth. Atatürk's confidante Falih Rıfkı Atay, who as chief editor of *Ulus* in fact set the guidelines for the press, described with admiration in a series of articles entitled *Notes from Germany* the capability of the Nazis to mobilize and "the absolute ideological unity of state, party, youth, and the masses."[5] Yet, Atay was by no means considered pro-German.

of democratization. Many people of various political persuasions who had been ousted by Atatürk were allowed to return from exile.

[2] From 1941, the press was subject to double censorship: first, by the press agency in Ankara, which was subordinate to the government, and second – after the announcement of the state of emergency that was in effect from 1941 to 1945 – by the state-of-emergency command office in Istanbul, where almost the entire national press was published.

[3] For a detailed description of the situation of the press during these years, see O. Murat Güvenir, *Ikinci Dünya Savaşında Türk basın* (Istanbul: Gazeteciler Cemiyeti, 1991), and Şerafettin Pektaş, *Millî Şef Döneminde (1938–1950) Cumhuriyet Gazetesi* (Istanbul: Fırat, 2003).

[4] Niyazi Berkes, *Unutulan Yıllar* (Istanbul: Iletişim, 1997), 161.

[5] Quotation in *Ulus*, September 23, 1935.

In contrast, the literature teacher Nihal Atsız was an avid Nazi sympathizer. He called himself a "racist, pan-Turkist, and Turanist"[6] and was an open anti-Semite. From 1934 onward, Atsız published the Turanist journal *Orhun*, in which he advocated a Greater Turkish Empire extending from the Mediterranean to the Pacific. His Turkism was based on ties of blood and race; he advocated a return to pre-Islamic Turkish beliefs. Unlike Atsız, Cevat Rıfat Atilhan can be described as a guiding intellectual figure of anti-Semitic political Islam in Turkey.[7] He also had direct connections with German National Socialists. In the winter of 1933–34, he traveled to Germany, where he presumably met with Julius Streicher, the publisher of *Der Stürmer*. After his return to Turkey he published the anti-Semitic journal *Millî İnkîlâp*. Under the pen name "Djev," several articles by Atilhan were published in *Der Stürmer* and *Weltdienst*, a biweekly anti-Semitic pamphlet published by Ulrich Fleischhauer.[8] However, Atilhan's connections to top Nazi officials have often been exaggerated, as recent research shows.[9]

Atsız and Atilhan, however, only represent the tip of the iceberg, for open sympathy with the Nazi regime was also expressed by politicians in high government and CHP positions.[10] Some, like Selim Sarper, from 1940 onward the head of the government press office, had attended university in Germany. Others, like the MP for Mardin, Muhittin Birgen, who began writing editorials for the pro-German *Son Posta* in 1934, or Burhan Belge, were frequently mentioned in German records as contacts and were probably paid for those services.

There were numerous people who were openly sympathetic to the Nazis in the security apparatus and among leading members of the military; many

[6] His self-penned profile in the newspaper *Orhun*, quoted in Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey: A Study of Irredentism* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1981), 94.

[7] For more on Atilhan, see Hatice Bayraktar, *"Zweideutige Individuen in schlechter Absicht": Die antisemitischen Ausschreitungen in Thrakien 1934 und ihre Hintergründe* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2011), 154–177; Rıfat N. Bali, *Les relations entre Turcs et Juifs dans la Turquie Moderne* (Istanbul: Isis, 2001), 75–106.

[8] Atilhan's book on ostensible Jewish betrayals on the Palestinian front during World War I was published in German in Fleischhauer's publishing house Bodung under the title *Die schöne Simi Simon* (Erfurt: Bodung, 1934).

[9] Atilhan claimed to have personally met with high Nazi officials in Germany (including Rosenberg and even Hitler himself) and to have secured large amounts of money. No evidence of this can be found in German archives. German financing of *Millî İnkılap* also appears to be a product of Atilhan's wishful thinking. See Bayraktar *Zweideutige Individuen;* the author's own research also came to the same result.

[10] Among them Hüsrev Gerede (Turkish ambassador in Berlin), Numan Menemencioğlu (foreign minister as of 1942), Muhlis Erkmen (minister of agriculture), Selim Sarper (head of the state press agency), and a number of MPs.

of them had received their training at the time of the German-Turkish comradeship-in-arms during World War I.[11] When Cevat R. Atilhan was charged with attempting to found a Nazi party in Turkey and trying to bring about a military coup in August 1940, Chief of Staff Fevzi Çakmak ordered the case dismissed.[12] Several former members of the military took on tasks for the German Nazis. The retired general Ali İhsan Sabis, for example, acted as publisher of the Nazi newspaper *Türkische Post*, and the retired general Hüsnü Hüseyin E. Erkilet wrote enthusiastically about his visit to the German "Eastern front" and his reception by Hitler in a high-profile series in the *Cumhuriyet*. In January and February 1943, two high-level agents of the Turkish security service (H. Nihat Pepeyi and Selahattin Korkut) visited Germany and German-occupied territories. At the special request of the Turkish guests, a tour of Sachsenhausen concentration camp was included in the visit itinerary.[13]

Franz von Papen and His Propaganda Fund

The German ambassador in Ankara, Franz von Papen, played a key role in influencing Turkey on behalf of Nazi Germany. From his service as major in the Ottoman army during World War I, he had close connections with the Turkish military leadership, and he knew how to exploit them. In addition, he succeeded in establishing good relations with numerous Turkish politicians. "A very close friendship existed between the German Ambassador and the staff of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which found expression in mutual invitations, receptions, and evening social events at which a holiday mood prevailed... Gradually it came to be considered an honor and great luck by diplomats, politicians, and members of the press to have a good relationship with him," wrote the Turkish author and diplomat Y. K. Karaosmanoğlu.[14]

An assassination attempt on von Papen in February 1942 enhanced his popularity.[15] It can be assumed that the "special funds" available to him

[11] The deputy general chief of staff, Asim Gündüz, had attended a military academy in Germany.

[12] As Atilhan was in the military, he was tried in a military court. Çakmak appointed a military judge for the trial whom he knew to hold views he approved of; preface to Cevat Rıfat Atilhan, *Yahudi Casusu Suzi Liberman (Hâtıra Defteri)* (Istanbul: Aykurt, 1969), 11.

[13] Telegram by Schellenberg, RSHA, (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, Reich Security Main Office) dated January 7, 1943; Centre de Documentation juive Contemporaine, Paris (hereafter CDJC), Document CLXXXVIII-40.

[14] Karaosmanoğlu, *Zoraki Diplomat*, 168.

[15] The Soviet Embassy had hired the Turkish hit men with the intention of disrupting the German-Turkish relationship. However, the effect was the opposite.

for propaganda, bribes, and the financing of pro-German press organs contributed greatly to his influence. In addition to these "special funds," which von Papen received directly from Berlin for propaganda purposes, he also earned a considerable profit from gold trading by German banks in Turkey.[16]

The German Community

Propaganda for the National Socialist regime was spread not only by the German Embassy but also by the sizable German communities in Turkey. In 1939, shortly before the beginning of the war, more than 2,000 Germans and 1,000 Austrians lived in Turkey. The majority were not individuals persecuted by the Nazi regime but rather "quite ordinary Germans" susceptible to Nazi thinking.[17]

After 1933, local groups of the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party) and new groups of other mass organizations (Hitler Youth, German Youth, National Socialist Women's League, etc.) started up in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, organizing the members of the German community. In Istanbul, the German club Teutonia, situated immediately next to the German School, served as the organized National Socialists' meeting place.[18] Most of the local branches of German companies also supported National Socialist policies.

Although any political activities outside the CHP in general and political activities of foreigners in particular were prohibited in Turkey, the activities of the National Socialists were quite generously tolerated. Numerous Nazi events that were also attended by Turkish Nazi sympathizers took place in the Teutonia's clubhouses, at the German School, and at the consulate. The club's meeting place in the city center of Istanbul

[16] In December 1942, stolen gold in the amount of five million Reich marks – money that had been plundered by the Nazis in the occupied territories – sat in the German Embassy in Ankara. It consisted in part of so-called Melmer gold stolen from victims of the Shoah. Von Papen and some of his associates also profited personally from these transactions and transferred their gains to private accounts; Roth, "Berlin – Ankara," 184ff; see also Johannes Bähr, *Der Goldhandel der Dresdner Bank im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Leipzig: Kiepenheuer, 1999). German propaganda activities in Turkey are documented by Johannes Glasneck in his book *Methoden der deutsch-faschistischen Propagandatätigkeit in der Türkei vor und während des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Halle: University of Halle-Wittenberg, 1966), 11ff.

[17] See Dietrich, *Deutschsein,* 175–255.

[18] The Teutonia and the Alemania had been founded in the nineteenth century as clubs for tradesmen who had immigrated to the Ottoman Empire; Dietrich, *Deutschsein,* 87ff. In 1933, the two clubs merged.

flew the swastika flag. The Turkish police seldom bothered enforcing the prohibitions.[19]

For the most part, the arrogant carryings-on of the organized German fascists were disapproved of or considered ridiculous by the Turkish public. The progressive daily newspaper *Tan* in particular reported repeatedly on the propaganda activities of the NSDAP in Turkey in an effort to induce the Turkish authorities to intervene. In January 1940, for example, the paper managed to get the *Türkische Post*, whose print shop printed Nazi propaganda, banned for a short time. The leader of the local NSDAP group in Istanbul, Alfred Guckes, was expelled from Turkey, and criminal investigations were initiated against several Turkish public figures who had collaborated with the Nazis.[20] These bans, however, took place in the period of the "one-sided" alliance with England.

Turkists, Turanists, and Turkish Fascists

Turkish publications tend to view the Turkish fascism of those years almost exclusively as a "German export product" and consider the strengthening of the Turanist movement to be primarily a by-product of the German war against the Soviet Union. This view ignores the fact that Kemalist policies were already taking on racist characteristics in the thirties.[21] In 1931, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) set up the Society for the Study of Turkish History (Türk Tarihi Tetkik Heyeti),[22] which, based on his ideas, developed the Turkish History Thesis (Türk Tarih Tezi). This thesis declared Turks to be the original inhabitants of Anatolia and Mesopotamia and to be the oldest civilized people in the world. The

[19] The head of the German Consulate in Istanbul, Hans Kroll, attributed this relative freedom to engage in activities that were not permitted under Turkish law to the Istanbul NSDAP leader's good relationship with the local police. Kroll mentions that both the Turkish Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs knew about and tolerated these activities. Report by Kroll, dated January 18, 1938; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 539. In order to not put a strain on German-Turkish relations, events of this kind later took place on the enormous premises of the German Consulate in the Tarabya quarter.

[20] Among them Muzaffer Toydemir, the editor of the *Turkish Post*, who was sentenced to a small fine, and Sırrı Bellioğlu, a former MP for İzmit, who had Nazi propaganda material sent to him by his son-in-law in Germany and against whom proceedings were initiated.

[21] See Yıldız, "*Ne Mutlu Türküm*," 158 and 228–236.

[22] The forerunner to this society was the Turkish Historical Committee of the nationalist Turkish Hearth (Türk Ocağı Türk Tarih Heyeti) formed on June 4, 1930. The society (Türk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti) was renamed the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu) on October 3, 1935; it still exists.

intent was to turn away from Ottoman history while simultaneously bolstering the Turkish ancestral claim to the land. Other ethnic groups (Kurds, Armenians, etc.) were declared to be branches of the Turkish race. To provide proof that all known civilizations residing in Anatolia over the course of human history were descended from Turks, Atatürk's foster daughter Afet İnan had about sixty thousand skulls measured in Anatolia. The Turkish History Thesis became mandatory in school curricula throughout the country. A sub-commission, the Commission for the Investigation of the Turkish Language (Türk Dili Tetkik Heyeti) supplemented these teachings with the Sun Language Theory (Güneş Dil Teorisi), which held that Turkish was the language from which all other languages originated. Absurd as these theories seem, they were essentially a reaction to European racist theories, which were copied and modified to fit Turkish purposes.

Despite officially keeping the Young Turks' Turanist movement at arm's length, the Kemalist government had sought from the outset to involve these circles in the politics of the republic. Numerous influential military leaders and politicians belonged to the movement or were associated with it.[23] A law passed in July 1934 introduced family names in Turkey that had to be in the "Turkish language." Whereas names that suggested non-Turkish or non-Muslim affiliation were prohibited, numerous Turkish personalities chose names like Arıkan (pure blood) or Türkkan (Turkish blood), or called themselves Bozkurt (grey wolf).[24] The Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography (Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi, DTCF) in Ankara, which had been established in 1935 on the order of Atatürk to educate teachers in the spirit of Turkish nationalism, became a particular center of attraction for Turkists and Turanists of various persuasions. Niyazi Berkes, for example, describes Besim Atalay, entering the university department and sniffing to the right and left like a police dog and shouting, "It smells like godless people here, it smells

[23] Among them the minister of defense (1941–46) Ali Rıza Artunkal; the former minister of education Hamdullah S. Tanrıöver (ambassador in Bucharest from 1939); the former minister of justice Mahmut Esat Bozkurt (at the time professor at the Law School of the University of Ankara); the MPs Besim Atalay, Ahmet Şükrü Yenibahçeli, and Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, and the Turkish ambassadors Memduh Şevket Esendal (Kabul) and Ruşen Eşref Unaydin (Budapest), to name but a few.

[24] Saffet Arıkan was, in succession, minister of education, minister of defense, and from 1942 to 1944, ambassador in Berlin; Reha Oğuz Türkkan was an author and Turanist activist; Mahmut Esat Bozkurt was minister of justice from 1924 to 1930. The grey wolf is, in mythology, associated with Turkic ethnic origin, and it has been the symbol of Turkish fascist organizations from 1960 to this day.

like godless people" – a jab at the democratic and foreign scientists who worked there.[25]

After Inönü had taken over leadership of the state and the party in 1938, well-known Turanists returned to Turkey from exile. At the end of the 1930s, Turanist associations operated openly, at times with support from the highest levels of the party. In journals like *Orhun*, *Bozkurt*, *Atsız Mecmua*, *Kopuz*, *Gök-Börü*, *Tanrıdağ*, *Çınaraltı*, *Ergenekon*, *Türk Amacı*, and others, nationalist poets published odes about Turkish blood, the superiority of the Turkish race, and the "innate heroism" of the Turks. However, the different groups and movements of Turanists, pan-Turks, and Turkists were fragmented and fought among themselves, locked in acrimonious disputes in their various journals.

Mock Battles

Still, the affinity to Nazi Germany and the connections to the German authorities were not the most important measures of fascist and racist tendencies in these movements. Anyone convinced of the superiority of the Turkish race had to reject the National Socialist ideology, if only because it assigned the Turks a place far below the Germanic peoples. Oğuz Reha Türkkan, one of the most important and radical thinkers of this movement, refused to collaborate with the Germans, and Mahmut Esat Bozkurt dismissed the charge that Turkish racism was a copy of German National Socialism.[26]

Leftist and democratic intellectuals criticized the racism of the Turanists. In the Turkish public, harsh polemics were exchanged between the respective protagonists, resulting in court cases and even violent disputes. In April 1943, a brochure with the title *En Büyük Tehlike* (The Greatest Danger) triggered a public discussion about the activities of the Turanists.[27] In a debate in the Turkish Parliament, the government denied the existence of racism and nationalism in Turkey, which was tantamount to tolerating the movement. Prime Minister Saracoğlu concluded his final

[25] Berkes, *Unutulan Yıllar*, 161. Besim Atalay was a linguist, a lecturer at the DTCF, an MP for about thirty years, and the head of the Turkish Language Institute for nineteen.

[26] Article "Milliyetçilerin Cevabi" in the journal *Gök-Börü* No. 4 (January 1, 1943); Günay G. Özdoğan, *"Turan"dan "Bozkurt"a – Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2002), 235.

[27] The brochure had been written by Reşat Fuat Baraner, a leading member of the (illegal) TKP, Türkiye Komünist Partisi, and published under the name of the attorney and painter Faris Erkman; reprinted in Faris Erkman; Suat Derviş, *En büyük tehlike* (Istanbul: TÜSTAV, 2002).

address to the sixth congress of the CHP – which took place around the time of this debate – with the words, "We are Turks, we are Turkists, and we are becoming a little more Turkist by the day."[28]

Not until May 1944 did the government dissociate itself from the Turanists. On May 19, headlines of Turkish daily newspapers proclaimed the news that a secret Turanist organization had "suddenly" been uncovered. Several journals were banned and twenty-three Turanists were brought before a military court and sentenced to prison. The trial obviously served the primary purpose of presenting scapegoats. The sentences were revoked a few months later.

The most committed critics and publicists, who had tried during the war years to counteract the fascist and pro-German mood, were themselves, as leftists, subjected to persecution, even after the end of the war. In December 1945, the controversy between leftists and rightists conducted in the press escalated. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, a steadfast opponent of Germany during the war, called in his newspaper *Tanin* for a fight against the progressive journals. Nationalist students demonstrated in front of the newsrooms of the deeply committed newspapers *Tan* and *Yeni Dünya*, in the end demolishing them. The lecturers Behice Boran, Pertev Boratav, and Niyazi Berkes, who had been vocal in their stance against German and Turkish fascism, were dismissed from the Faculty of Language, History, and Geography.

Aggressive Turkification Policies

In this climate, the Turkification policy described in the introductory chapter took on even more aggressive traits. Not only were members of minorities subject to the same repressive legislation that applied to everyone, but they were also deprived of their social and cultural rights by numerous laws and provisions. Nationalistic campaigns such as the *Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş* (Citizen, Speak Turkish – see Introduction) campaign repeatedly led to violent assaults. For example, the American consul at Izmir, Perry George, reported to his supervisor, Ambassador Skinner in Istanbul, on July 24, 1934, that the Jews of Izmir had locked themselves in their houses for several days because they feared violent assaults.[29]

[28] Quoted in Koçak, *Millî Şef*, vol. 2, 216–219.

[29] Appendix to Skinner's report of August 2, 1934; NARA MD, M1224, reel 10, 867.4016-Jews/13. Several foreigners had reportedly been beaten and stripped of their clothing in the street.

One of the most severe measures aimed at promoting Turkification of the population was the İskân Kanunu(Settlement Law) passed on June 10, 1934.[30] As its wording indicates, its primary aim was the settlement of Muslim immigrants, *muhacirs*. During the thirties, Turkey continued its policy of recruiting Muslim immigrants, or immigrants viewed as "fit to be Turkified," in the Balkans, to further increase the numerical predominance of the Turkish Muslim population. At the Fourth Congress of the CHP in May 1935, the minister of the interior estimated the number of "Turks" living in Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia whom he regarded as potential immigrants at 1.2 million. The Settlement Law and various supplementary provisions regulated, for example, the granting of tax advantages and the distribution of land to Muslim immigrants.

Forced Resettlement

At the same time, this law gave the Ministry of the Interior the power to forcibly resettle population groups that were viewed as "not belonging to Turkish culture." Depending on their demographic composition and "degree of Turkishness," the regions of Turkey were categorized as follows:

1. Zones in which the "Turkish culture" contingent of the population was to be increased (for example, by settling Turkish immigrants) in order to culturally influence and "Turkify" the region's non-Turkish population.
2. Zones provided for the settlement of population groups that were to be assimilated.
3. Regions that were to be evacuated for military, political, cultural, economic, and other reasons and in which no settlement was permitted.

In the medium term, these forced measures primarily targeted the Kurdish population. In 1937–38, the insurrection of Alevi Kurds in Dersim, who put up resistance to forced resettlement and Turkification, was put down with much bloodshed in a large military operation. Numerous villages were burned by the army and (according to Turkish sources) about 10 percent of the population were killed; tens of thousands of Kurdish

[30] Law No. 2510, Mecburî İskân Kanunu, published in the *Resmi Gazete*, No. 2633 of June 21, 1934. This was a revision of the law passed in 1926.

families were forcibly resettled from this region alone.[31] In 1934, this law played a role in the anti-Jewish events in Thrace (see Chapter 3). During the Holocaust, Turkish politicians repeatedly justified the rejection and expulsion of Jewish refugees with the İskan Kanunu (Settlement Law).

Citizenship Laws: Naturalization and Denaturalization

A further element of the nationalist population policy was the legislation on citizenship and several decrees affecting the naturalization and denaturalization of citizens. In the beginning, this policy was not directed specifically against Jews. Because modern Turkey had emerged from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the founding of the republic necessitated a revision of citizenship law. In the Arab and Balkan regions of the former Ottoman Empire, new countries had emerged.[32] In addition, many people had gone abroad during the long period of consecutive wars from 1912 to 1922, and it frequently remained unclear how final this emigration would be. At the same time, Turkey had taken in several hundred thousand immigrants through population exchanges with Greece (as agreed by the Treaty of Lausanne) and as a result of recruiting Muslims. Naturalization and denaturalization of immigrants and emigrants thus appeared to be logical administrative acts in the context of the state political reorganization that had just taken place.

More careful examination, however, shows that in the early phase of the Republic, too, the citizenship policies were aimed primarily at consolidating the victory in the "War of Liberation" and ensuring the predominance of the Turkish Muslim population contingent. Muslim and Turkic-speaking immigrants from the Balkans or from now-Soviet regions who were considered to be part of the "desirable population increase" could, as a rule, acquire Turkish citizenship without too much trouble.[33] In contrast, several laws and decrees empowered the government to strip "undesirable population groups" of their citizenship.

[31] Forced resettlements of Kurds were carried out repeatedly, on the basis of this and other laws, until the 1990s. During the thirties, Armenians, too, were once again subjected to resettlement.

[32] According to the Treaty of Lausanne, the population of territories formerly part of the Ottoman Empire had the choice of either adopting the new citizenship or retaining Turkish citizenship.

[33] For details, see Soner Çağaptay, "Citizenship Policies in Interwar Turkey," *Nations and Nationalism* 9 no. 4 (2003): 601–619.

Laws and Decrees on Expatriation

Decrees 1514 and 1745, which were enacted by the provisional government in 1922, even before the founding of the Republic, decreed that passports or nationality certificates were not to be issued to non-Muslims who left the country.[34]

Law No. 1041 of May 1927 empowered the Council of Ministers to strip the citizenship of citizens who had not participated in the "War of Liberation" and had not returned to Turkey at the time of the law's publication.

It is relevant in this context that opportunities for participation of non-Muslims in the "War of Liberation" were very limited. The nucleus of the so-called liberation army expressly regarded itself as a Muslim army. After the creation of the "Central Army" (Merkez Ordusu), the members of the minorities were mobilized, but most of them were disarmed a short time later and incorporated into *Amele Taburları* (labor battalions).[35] It must also be kept in mind that the majority of Jews were living in regions which at the time in question were occupied by Greece or the Allies of World War I, where regular mobilization was impossible. Furthermore, after eleven years of almost uninterrupted warfare, in many parts of the country Muslims too could only be recruited using extreme coercion.[36] In the records of the Prime Minister's Republican Archives in Ankara that I reviewed, however, no case is documented in which a Muslim was stripped of citizenship on the basis of this law.[37]

[34] Decree No. 1745 of August 10, 1922 (which quotes Decree No. 1514); TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, Ankara (Prime Ministry's Republican Archives), hereafter BCA, 30..18.1.1/5.24..1.

[35] The non-Muslims drafted into these units were put to work in labor brigades building roads and guarded by armed Turkish soldiers like prison inmates. This was not only discriminatory; it would also doubtless have been perceived as threatening. The practice originated in World War I, and the murder of Armenian members of these units, called *Amele Taburları*, marked the beginning of the genocide. According to Leyla Neyzi, during the "War of Liberation," both Christians and Jews were drafted into these labor battalions. Her article is based primarily on the diary of H. Albukrek; Leyla Neyzi, "Trauma, Narrative and Silence: The Military Journal of a Jewish 'Soldier' in Turkey during the Greco-Turkish War," *Turcica* no. 35 (2003): 291–313. It is unknown how many Jews were affected by this measure. However, we do know from numerous sources that many Jews did fight in the "War of Liberation."

[36] Thousands of deserters were sentenced by special courts.

[37] The only instance known to me is the case of the Turkish shoemaker Ahmed Talib, who had been living in Germany since 1917; documented in Achmed Talib, *Stationen*

The government Decree No. 7559 of December 26, 1928, made it possible to strip the citizenship of women who had not participated in the struggle for liberation, in spite of the fact that there was no compulsory military service for women.

Citizenship Law No. 1312 of May 23, 1928, declared all people born in Turkey or born abroad of Turkish parents to be citizens according to Article 88 of the constitution and promised acquisition of citizenship to children born in Turkey to foreigners when they reached the age of majority. In contrast, Article 10 of the same law gave the Council of Ministers far-reaching powers to strip people's Turkish citizenship for various reasons. This applied, for example, to deserters, to everyone who had not served in the military, and to individuals "who are known to have fled to foreign countries and who cannot provide proof to the contrary" and had not returned within the allotted period. Turkish citizens who lived abroad for more than five years and did not register with the appropriate consulate could also be stripped of their citizenship. In practice, this law, too, was used to strip non-Muslims of citizenship.

Article 11 B of the İskan Kanunu (Law No. 2510) of June 1934 (enforced by law 2848 of 1935, as an amendment to the İskan Kanunu) empowered the Council of Ministers to decide who was "regarded a Turk with regard to culture." Anyone declared by the government to be unworthy of Turkdom could be stripped of citizenship.

In the cases documented in Turkish records, rescinding citizenship under these laws affected predominantly, but not exclusively, people who lived abroad. At least in the first years of the Republic, the main rationale for removing citizenship appears to have been to prevent the return of expelled Armenians or of Greeks "exchanged" on the basis of the Lausanne Treaty. It can be assumed that a significant motive for the legislation was to Turkify the property of those who had been stripped of their citizenship.[38] Under Article 12 of Law No. 1312, the property of people whose citizenship had been rescinded fell to the Turkish state.

des Lebens eines türkischen Schuhmachermeisters in Deutschland von 1917 bis 1983. Kaiserreich – Weimarer Republik – Drittes Reich – DDR (Köln: Önel, 1997). For documents relating to Ahmed Talib, see also PAAA, R 45553.

[38] One of the first Turkish laws after victory in the "War of Liberation" revoked the Istanbul government's law of January 8, 1920, according to which property stolen during the war

Especially disastrous for the Turkish Jews living in Europe was the provision that all people relieved of Turkish citizenship were prohibited from ever again setting foot on Turkish soil (Law No.1312, Article 12). This also applied to people who had given up their Turkish citizenship at their own request and was even extended to their descendants.[39]

Stripping of Citizenship as a Punitive Measure

At the same time, Turkish policy also used the deprivation of citizenship as a repressive measure against internal political opponents. These could be former comrades-in-arms of the Kemalist leaders, communists like the author Nâzim Hikmet, Kurds "incapable of being Turkified," or any "undesirable" person. In some cases, Jews living in Turkey had their citizenship stripped as well. In 1933, one Ilya Ferman, son of Nesim, a native of Istanbul who had left the country in 1917 but had returned, was stripped of his citizenship on the grounds that "he did not possess the necessary qualities."[40] In September 1935, the Turkish government removed the citizenship of three Jewish families living in Erzurum because they had "bad intentions and behaved badly (see Figure 2.1)."[41]

Many of the individuals who lost their citizenship under Law No. 1041 for "failure to participate in the 'War of Liberation'" had not even been old enough for mandatory military service at the time of the war. One of them successfully brought suit to have his citizenship restored.[42] It can be assumed, however, that ignorance and the prevailing political climate of intimidation meant that this path was barred to most of the people affected.

The Complicated Situation Abroad

The situation of Turkish and/or former Ottoman citizens abroad was especially complicated, because many people had left during the long period of war turmoil. During the war, diplomatic contacts between Turkey and the Allies were interrupted, and after the end of World War I, relations between Germany and Turkey were suspended for five years. In

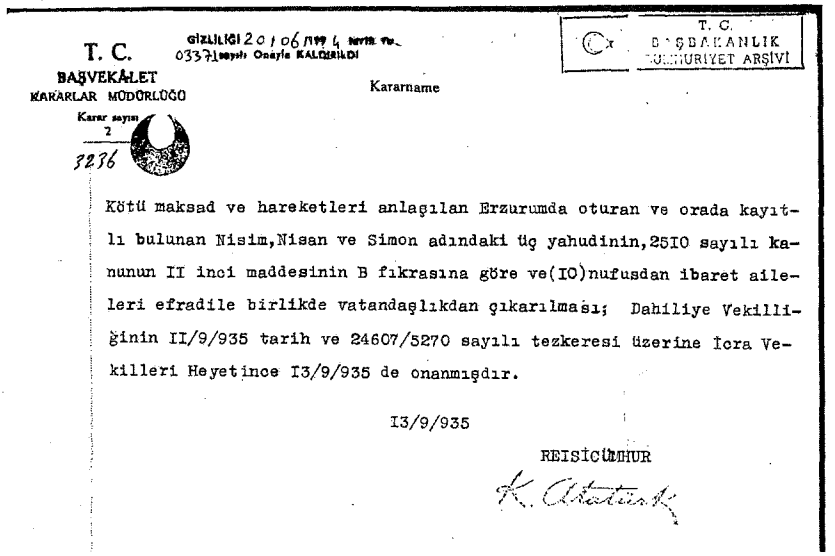
and deportations was to be returned to its original owners. The new law rubber-stamped the expropriation of the Armenians; Taner Akçam, *Armenien und der Völkermord: Die Istanbuler Prozesse und die türkische Nationalbewegung* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1996), 131.

[39] Files no. 666 and 676 of the German Embassy in Ankara held in the PAAA contain a number of such cases.

[40] BCA, Resolution No. 15357 of February 26, 1933, 30..18.1.2/41.84..15.

[41] BCA, Resolution No. 2/3236 of September 13, 1935, 30..18.1.2/02.58.72.12.

[42] BCA, Resolution No. 4/2729 of April 26, 1938, 030.10/124.887.2.


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T. C.
B. Ş BAKANLIK
CUMHURİYET ARŞİVİ

Kararname

Kötü maksad ve hareketleri anlaşılan Erzurumda oturan ve orada kayıtlı bulunan Nisim,Nisan ve Simon adındaki üç yahudinin,2510 sayılı kanunun II inci maddesinin B fıkrasına göre ve(10)nufusdan ibaret aileleri efradile birlikde vatandaşlıkdan çıkarılması; Dahiliye Vekilliğinin II/9/935 tarih ve 24607/5270 sayılı tezkeresi üzerine İcra Vekilleri Heyetince 13/9/935 de onanmışdır.

13/9/935

REISİCUMHUR

K. Atatürk

FIGURE 2.1. Three Jewish families in Erzurum were stripped of their citizenship for "bad intentions." (Reproduced from a document of the Prime Minister's archives (Turkey). This image is cropped; the bottom half of the document contains the signatures of all ministers.)

consequence, contacting the consulates was not even a possibility during this period.[43] Apart from the post-war situation, it was always a problem for Turkish (or, respectively, former Ottoman) citizens abroad to obtain papers and decisions from Turkey regarding their citizenship, as dozens of records on Turks in various German archives attest.

Review of Turkish Citizens Abroad

At the end of the 1920s, the Turkish diplomatic missions initiated a general review of the situation of Turkish citizens living abroad. The Turkish consulates seized the passports of citizens living abroad and issued these individuals nationality certificates instead.[44] For members of the minorities, this review frequently resulted in the loss of citizenship. An example

[43] In the period between the end of the World War I and the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the International Allied Commission, the sultan's government in Istanbul, and the opposition government in Ankara existed side by side. This "multi-state situation" had an effect on the validity of the laws and documents issued by the respective judicial authorities. The German Federal Archives in Berlin hold a number of files that illustrate the resulting tangled situation regarding the citizenship of Turks living abroad; Bundesarchiv Berlin (German Federal Archives), hereafter BAL, R 901/25579–25580; R901/31739–31740.

[44] Letter dated June 9, 1928, from the Turkish Consul General in Hamburg to the police headquarters in Kiel; BAL, R 901–25580.

is the case of the Russo family, a Turkish-Jewish family who at the time had been living in Germany for two generations. In February 1930, a member of the family wrote in a letter to the Foreign Office in Berlin that the family's passports had, until then, been regularly renewed by the consulates, but now they had been "called in and not returned, ostensibly on instructions from Angora [Ankara], and the issuance of new passports refused."[45] The Russo family was not the only one. The records examined in the Prime Minister's Republican Archives in Ankara indicate that from 1929 onward, the Turkish government regularly conducted mass stripping of citizenship.

In November 1930, the Turkish authorities enacted an amended version of the Travel and Transport Law (Seyr-ü Sefer Talimatnamesi),[46] which gave Turkish citizens living abroad the opportunity to have their citizenship status clarified. As the *Zeitschrift der türkischen Handelskammer für Deutschland* explained, the regulations differed for Muslims, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews. Muslims could obtain new passports without difficulty, even if they only had an old passport from the Ottoman era, while Armenians were usually barred from returning.[47] Compared to other non-Muslims, Jews were still in a slightly better position in 1930: if they had gone abroad without a Turkish passport issued by the new government, they could request a review of their situation.[48] As the letter of a Mr. Yakar from Paris to the Turkish prime minister in 1943 illustrates,[49] however, many of those affected were not informed of the new regulations and missed the opportunity to have themselves officially registered. As the following years would

[45] Letter dated February 24, 1930, from Benno Marcus (the son of a woman whose maiden name was Russo); BAL, R 901–25580.

[46] The 1930 decree was an amended version of an earlier decree that had apparently already been issued in 1924 and which regulated, among other things, the issue of the return of former Ottoman citizens to Turkey.

[47] They were only allowed to return to Turkey if they had "gone abroad with a passport issued by the new Turkish government and [had] not lost their Turkish citizenship." This meant, in effect, that no one who had fled the country during the genocide and the subsequent years was allowed to return. The decree quoted here had also expressly prohibited the issuing of nationality papers to non-Muslims, even after 1920.

[48] *Zeitschrift der türkischen Handelskammer für Deutschland* 12 (December 1930): 13. As this journal was published in collaboration with the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, it can be considered a semi-official source. Prompted by protests by Armenians and Greeks who previously had Ottoman citizenship and who were now residing in the United States, the U.S. State Department also took an interest in the issue; see various documents in NARA MD, M1224, reel 3, 867.012 (citizenship) documents 39 and following; see also Çağaptay, "Citizenship Policies," 607f.

[49] See the translation of Yakar's letter in Part 2, Chapter 3.

show, in most cases this review resulted in withdrawal of citizenship for Jews as well.

Stripping of Citizenship for Jews

The mass stripping of citizenship that began in 1929 was continued on a regular basis in the thirties. The government decrees kept in the Prime Minister's Republican Archives in Ankara alone provide evidence that the Turkish citizenship of considerably more than 4,000 people was rescinded in the years 1931–37.[50] Also connected, at least chronologically, to these mass strippings of citizenship is a government resolution of May 1933 that reinforced the citizenship law provision already in effect, according to which the property of individuals deprived of citizenship fell to the Turkish treasury.[51] The Turkish consulates frequently denied these people a certificate confirming that their citizenship had been rescinded, thus blocking their recourse to legal appeals and at the same time making it more difficult for them to acquire the citizenship of their country of residence, because it would have required them to prove their release from Turkish citizenship.

In the mid-thirties, the checks conducted by the consulates of Turkish citizens living abroad were put on a systematic basis, and the Turkish offices sought the assistance of the authorities in the respective countries of residence in this undertaking. In a letter from April 1935, the Turkish Consulate in Hamburg requested that the Prussian Ministry of the Interior provide the names and addresses of the Turkish citizens residing "in the Prussian provinces."[52]

Numerous publications maintain that the citizenship removals can be traced back to a 1935 amendment to the Turkish Citizenship Law.[53] This is not the case. The Citizenship Law of 1928 was not revised until 1964.

[50] The lists of names in these decrees have not been evaluated to date, so no statements can be made about these people's ethnic or religious backgrounds and their countries of residence. People who had been stripped of their citizenship because they adopted the citizenship of a different country or applied to be released from Turkish citizenship are not included in these figures.

[51] BCA, Decree No. 14452 of May 23, 1933, 30..18.1.2/36.39..14.

[52] This request was refused by the German authorities. Letter dated April 26, 1935; BAL, R 901–47052.

[53] Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust: Turkey's Role in Rescuing Turkish and European Jewry from Nazi Persecution 1933–45* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 48; Mirjam Schmidt, "Türkinnen und Türken im Holocaust," in *HAYMATLOZ*, edited and published by Verein Aktives Museum (Berlin, 2000), 156; to give just two examples. This statement is also found in documents of Jewish organizations from the World War II period.

There is no entry to this effect for 1935 in the official publications of the Turkish government (*Resmi Gazete* and *Düstur*) in which laws and government decrees are published. The policy was probably based on an unofficial government regulation. In addition, the fact that the Cabinet decisions regarding removal of citizenship were for the most part not published in the government gazette *Resmi Gazete*, as prescribed by law, underlines the "semi-legal" character of these measures. In numerous European countries, it was primarily Jews who, as a result of these reviews by the consulates, had their passports taken away.[54] Accordingly, almost no Muslims are found in the lists of those whose citizenship was removed. Several documents support the suspicion that, beginning in the late thirties, the citizenship stripping was not random but specifically targeted Jews. In August 1937, the German Consulate General in Istanbul reported on an order by the Turkish government decreeing that Turkish citizenship be taken away from Turks living abroad who "have nothing in common with the Turkish homeland." As the consul had learned from sources in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the individuals in question were predominantly Jews and included people who were officially registered.[55]

There was no causal connection between Turkey's citizenship stripping policy and the Nazi persecution of Jews. Rather, it was a component of a Turkish nationalist population policy that sought to prevent the return of non-Muslims to Turkey. During the Shoah, the consequences of this policy proved to be disastrous for many Jews from Turkey, all the more so since Turkey further intensified the stripping of citizenship after the beginning of World War II.

[54] In detail in the Belgian Jewish bulletin *Ofipresse*, 27 (November 1945): 2–4. For an English version of the article, see American Jewish Archives (hereafter AJA), H 332–9.

[55] Letter from Consul Toepke in Istanbul, dated August 6, 1937, to the German Embassy in Ankara. The report continues, "The consulate has already taken away the passports of many of these people." Attempts by the Turkish Ambassador in Berlin to obtain a number of exemptions from the Ministry of the Interior in Ankara failed, even though "several of the people affected had to date met their tax and other obligations"; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 681.

3

The Jews in Turkey, 1933–1945

Turkey's repressive internal policies and nationalist mobilization were not directed solely or primarily against Jews. Other groups – the Kurds, for example – were affected far more seriously by the drastic measures enforced by the state. Over the course of the 1930s, American and British diplomats repeatedly reported on attacks on foreigners living in Turkey and a growing general xenophobia that was not limited to Jews. Nevertheless, the years 1933–45 can be described as the "blackest years for Turkey's Jews" (Bali).

Imported Anti-Semitism

During the thirties, central works of modern anti-Semitism were translated into Turkish and published in Turkey. The journal *Millî İnkılâp* that started publication in1934 printed the translation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as a series. Articles by the German anti-Semite Theodor Fritsch were also translated into Turkish and published under the title *Yahudilik ve Masonluk*.[1] The influence of Nazi Germany often played an important role: most of the caricatures appearing in the journal *Millî İnkilâp*, published by the previously mentioned Cevat Rıfat Atilhan, came from *Der Stürmer*, with the German-Jewish names replaced by equally common Turkish-Jewish ones (see Figure 3.1).[2]

[1] Theodor Fritsch was one of the central figures of racist anti-Semitism in Germany; he was influential on the NSDAP. The Turkish edition of his book was supplemented by anti-Semitic essays by other authors.

[2] Bayraktar notes that the signature of the *Stürmer* artist Philip Ruprecht (FIPS) can be detected in several of the caricatures published in *Millî İnkılâp*; Hatice Bayraktar, *Salamon*



FIGURE 3.1. The magazine *Millî İnkılâp* published numerous anti-Semitic caricatures taken from *Der Stürmer* (here: front page from June 6, 1934, reprinted from an edition of *Der Stürmer* from April 1934), with names and – in this case – clothing and places of worship adapted to a Turkish setting. Caption: "The Jews are the nightmare of humanity and dirty scum."

Atilhan was an extremist; his poisonous propaganda drew sharp criticism from numerous intellectuals in Turkey, and after the events in Thrace (discussed later in the chapter), the journal *Millî İnkılâp* was banned. But anti-Semitic content found its way into mainstream publications as well. In May and June 1934, for example, the Turkish daily *Vakit* published several openly anti-Semitic articles by Mustafa Nermi, who lived in Germany at the time.[3] In 1935, Falih Rıfkı Atay reported from Germany in an article series for the CHP newspaper *Ulus*. In an article he wrote around the time of the Nuremberg Party Convention, he expressed sympathy for the anti-Jewish policies – "for the Germans, the Jewish question is a question of national defense" – while simultaneously emphasizing that "to us Turks ... racial hostility of this kind is alien." He rounded off his report with a translation of an anti-Semitic poem.[4] The *Cumhuriyet*, the highest-circulation newspaper at the time, had declared the anti-Jewish boycott day organized by the National Socialists for April 1, 1933, an "act of defense" and noted in appreciation that the action had proceeded in a "quiet and orderly" fashion thanks to the "iron discipline" of the

und Rabeka – Judenstereotype in Karikaturen der türkischen Zeitschriften Akbaba, Karikatür und Milli Inkilap 1933–1945 (Berlin: Schwarz, 2006), 36.

[3] Bali, *Trakya Olayları*, 473–489.

[4] F. R. Atay in *Ulus* of September 28, 1935.

NSDAP.[5] After the annexation of Austria in 1938, which was accompanied by a brutal pogrom against the local Jews, Nadir Nadi wrote, with great sympathy, in a series entitled *Dispatches from Hitler's Vienna*: "I know what the poor Austrians have had to suffer from the Jews for years." The Jews, "as people completely foreign to the national character, have, like leeches, dug their suckers into the back of the people."[6]

Increasingly, the Turkish press used classically anti-Semitic topoi. Diatribes against "Jewish traders" and "stateless, wandering Jews" cropped up in the daily press in connection with economic bottlenecks or Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe. When in 1938 – after most of the Jewish schools had been closed – a secret Jewish school was discovered in Bursa, the *Akşam* speculated about what the Jewish children might have learned there: "It can only be haggling methods ... or connectedness and solidarity with their racial comrades everywhere in the world instead of loyalty to the residents of this country."[7] Caricature magazines like *Akbaba* and *Karikatür*, which reached a wider audience than many daily newspapers because of the relatively low literacy rate, stigmatized Jews as greedy, deceptive, immoral, and devoid of love for their homeland (see Figure 3.2). These magazines were by no means associated with the extreme right: *Akbaba* was considered close to the government; its artist Yusuf Ziya Ortaç is also known as an author. *Karikatür* was published by Sedat Simavi, who later founded the daily newspaper *Hürriyet*, for decades the daily with the highest circulation in Turkey. The *Karikatür* artist who created almost all the caricatures of Jews appearing in its pages was Ramiz Gökçe, the best-known Turkish cartoonist of his time. He also worked for *Yeni Sabah*, which was considered critical of Germany. In proportion to these journals' entire contents, the anti-Jewish caricatures were by no means the central theme, but they turned up frequently from 1938 to 1942 and were often used for the title page.[8]

Despite the increase in anti-Jewish and sometimes openly anti-Semitic public attacks in Turkey, the situation was not at all comparable to that in Nazi Germany. While in Germany Jews were chased out of public office and shut out of society, the physician Dr. Samuel Abravaya Marmaralı

[5] *Cumhuriyet* of April 2, 1933, 1.

[6] *Cumhuriyet* of June 13, 1938; the Turkish title was *Hitler Viyanasından Röportajlar*.

[7] *Akşam* of January 25, 1938.

[8] In detail in Laurent Mallet, "Karikatür Dergisinde Yahudilerle İlgili Karikatürler (1936–1948)," *Toplumsal Tarih* no. 34 (1996): 27, and Hatice Bayraktar, "The Anti-Jewish Pogrom in Eastern Thrace in 1934: New Evidence for the Responsibility of the Turkish Government," *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 2 (2006): 95–111.



FIGURE 3.2. A cartoon from the magazine *Karikatür,* October 27, 1938, page 3, accusing the Jews of fake patriotism. Caption: "Thanks to you, I earn my living, selling 1000 flags within two days."

became the first Jewish Member of Parliament in the Turkish Republic in 1935.[9] He did, however, use the (Turkish) surname Özçelik during his tenure as an MP. Despite his declarations of loyalty, he was subjected to extreme hostility by nationalist journalists.[10]

Still, the National Socialists' racist hatred for Jews, with its accompanying call for extermination, was unambiguously rejected by the Turkish public. The German Consular offices repeatedly reported to Berlin that the anti-Jewish propaganda material sent by German party or government agencies was "unsuitable for Turkey."[11]

[9] As the CHP was the only legal party, and state and party offices were amalgamated, "election" is not really the appropriate term here. The CHP leadership appointed the MPs and then had them confirmed by "elections." On the same occasion, the CHP also had a Greek and an Armenian candidate "elected."

[10] Bali, *Devlet'in Yahudileri,* 173ff.

[11] A letter from the German Embassy in Ankara, dated June 10, 1939, to Berlin says: "Distribution of this journal [*Mitteilungen zur Judenfrage,* sent by the propaganda staff in Berlin] to any great extent is out of the question [here] because of the attitude of the Turkish authorities toward the Jewish problem;" PAAA, Ankara Embassy, 540, draft. In April 1944, a German Embassy collaborator in Turkey, Posemann, advised refraining from anti-Jewish propaganda in Turkey, "as this is not wanted and puts a strain

It is notable, however, that statements like these were made during the period of the Turkish-British-French alliance in 1939–40, when strains developed in the relationship between Germany and Turkey. During those years, certain anti-Semitic publications were also banned in Turkey once again.[12] In August 1940, for example, the pro-Nazi owner of the German bookstore in Istanbul, Erich Kalis, was detained for a short time for selling the *Völkischer Beobachter.* The reason for his arrest, however, was not the aggressive anti-Semitism constantly propagated in this newspaper but a cartoon insulting Turkey.[13]

The Turkish government repeatedly denied the very existence of anti-Semitism in Turkey and gave assurances that it would not be tolerated.[14] In reality, however, the state agencies' position was extremely ambivalent. In 1936, for example, the Turkish version of Theodor Fritsch's inflammatory pamphlet and the import of postcards with anti-Semitic cartoons were banned.[15] On the other hand, in 1935, the Turkish General Staff had Atilhan's crudely anti-Semitic book reprinted under the title *Suzi Liberman* and distributed to all military units.[16] In 1937, Atilhan published the work *İğneli Fıçı* (The Nail Keg), which dealt with the accusations of ritual murder common in Christian anti-Semitism. Initially, charges were brought against him for the publication, but the trial came to nothing. The book went through numerous new editions after the war. Within a short period in the forties, Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Henry Ford's *The International Jew*, and, in 1943, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* appeared in Turkish, some of them going through a number of editions. The dissemination of several of these works was financed by German money.[17] In those years, the press was subject to strict censorship, and works of this

on current Turkish foreign policy." He goes on to say that apart from caricatures and joke books about Jews, there was no anti-Jewish writing in Turkey; quoted after Léon Poliakov and Joseph Wulf, *Das Dritte Reich und seine Diener* (Wiesbaden: Fourier, 1989), 166ff.

[12] The brochure *Asrın Gailesi Yahudi* (The Jew as the Plague of the Century), edited by C. Özelli, was banned in 1939, the book *Yahudi Muhaceretleri* (Wandering Jews) in 1940; BCA, 30.18.1.2/85.111.12 and 92.94.10.

[13] Kalis was arrested and tied to a black man, which was probably intended by the Turks as a retaliatory gesture for the racism of the *Völkischer Beobachter.*

[14] The journalist and MP Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın published – probably on government assignment – a detailed declaration repudiating any hostility toward Jews in Turkey in the *Yeni Sabah* of January 24, 1939, which was reprinted in the foreign Jewish press.

[15] BCA, Decree No. 2/4787 of June 8, 1936, 30..18. 1.2/65.49..11; Decree No. 2/4863 of June 19, 1936, 30..18.1.2/66.53..7.

[16] Atilhan, *Yahudi Casusu*, (preface), 13.

[17] Report given by Posemann on April 3–4, 1944, at a conference of "officials in charge of Jewish affairs"; Poliakov and Wulf, *Dritte Reich und Diener*, 167.

type could only be published if tolerated by the state authorities. Thus, modern anti-Semitism moved into Turkey. The end of the German-Turkish alliance and the defeat of German fascism by no means spelled the end of such tendencies in Turkey. The works translated at the time have been constantly reprinted since and are quite widely read.

But the three most traumatic events for the Jews in Turkey during the years 1933–45 – the so-called "events of Thrace," the conscription of non-Muslims to forced labor (dubbed *20 Kur'a İhtiyatları*) and the wealth tax *Varlık Vergisi* – did not occur as the result of pressure from or at the suggestion of Germany at all but were part of the radical Turkification policies.

Trakya Olayları (The Events in Thrace)

This slightly euphemistic term refers to the violent expulsion of Jews from Thrace in the summer of 1934.[18] It is important to note here that Jewish communities had a significant history in the region that dated back as far as the fourth century and continued through Ottoman times. Edirne alone had (until the fire of 1905) fourteen synagogues and produced numerous Jewish scholars. The wars of the late nineteenth century as well as the long period of war from 1911 to 1922 had precipitated the emigration of Jews from the area, which continued after the founding of the Republic. Nonetheless, Edirne and the entire region of Thrace remained an important center of Jewish life in Turkey.

The so-called events in Thrace began on June 21 in Çanakkale, on the Anatolian side of the Dardanelles, with boycott actions against shops owned by local Jews, which were accompanied by abuse and physical attacks on individual Jews. After the Jews turned to the governor and local authorities, they were granted police protection for a few days, but when it was withdrawn, the attacks began anew. Well-known Jewish

[18] Geographically, these events were not limited to the territory of European Turkey (Thrace) but took place on the Anatolian side of the Dardanelles (Çanakkale) as well. *Trakya Olaylari* has become the commonly used general term for the events. Numerous accounts by British, American, Greek, German, Austrian, and other foreign diplomats reporting from Turkey, in some cases directly from Thrace, give a fairly detailed picture of the events. Jewish newspapers abroad (The *Jewish Chronicle*, *JTA*, *Jüdische Rundschau*, and others) published accounts by Jews from the region who had been caught up in them. Compilations of accounts by eyewitnesses, diplomats, and the contemporaneous press can be found in Rıfat Bali, *1934 Trakya Olayları* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2008), and in Hatice Bayraktar, "*Zweideutige Individuen in schlechter Absicht.*" *Die antisemitischen Ausschreitungen in Thrakien und Çanakkale 1934* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2011).

residents of the city received anonymous threatening letters in which they were told to leave the city immediately under threat of death. A large part of the Jewish population left the city precipitously.

Meanwhile, the attacks had spread all the way across Thrace. In Edirne, with a Jewish population of about 7,000, Turkish nationalists occupied the Jewish residential quarter in what appears to have been a premeditated attack. For several days, the quarters were in the hands of the Turkish nationalists. Jewish eyewitnesses reported that looting and violent attacks had taken place under the eyes of the Turkish security forces and that on July 3, the police had demanded that they leave the city within forty-eight hours. In Kırklareli, a virtual pogrom took place: Jewish businesses and houses were attacked by the anti-Semitic mob and plundered; violent acts were carried out against rabbis and women.[19] In Uzunköprü, the state security forces did protect the local Jews from violent attacks but at the same time ordered them – ostensibly on instructions from the government – to leave the city. In Keşan, Tekirdağ, Çorlu, and Babaeski, too, the Jews were told under threat to leave town. In a panic, thousands of Jews fled the region for Istanbul, where they were housed and cared for by the local Jewish community in schools or community centers.[20] Others fled across the nearby border to Greece or Bulgaria. Several Jewish newspapers abroad as well as large international daily papers reported with concern about the events.[21] Only after they were publicly known internationally did the Turkish government react, and it was at this point that the Turkish press also began to publish reports.

The Turkish Government's Reaction

On July 5, Prime Minister Inönü commented in Parliament and to the press on the arrival of Jewish refugees in Istanbul, taking pains to downplay the scope of the events and speaking of "about a hundred refugees." He condemned the attacks, announced that the culprits would be punished,

[19] For a detailed description of the events in Kırklareli based on numerous eyewitness accounts, see Haker, *Bir Zamanlar*, 249–268.

[20] Regarding the number of refugees, the estimates given in the literature range from 3,000 (according to the report by the Turkish government) to over 10,000 (Avner Levi). The British Ambassador Loraine estimated the number of Jews who fled at 7,000 to 8,000; Bülent Gökay, ed., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, Part 2, Series B, vol. 33; doc. 116 (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1997). The Greek Ambassador Sakellaroppoulos gives the same number in a letter dated July 12, 1934; Photini Constantopoulou and Thanos Veremis, eds., *Documents on the History of the Greek Jews: Records from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (Athens: Kastaniotis, 1999), 243.

[21] Among them, the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* in London, and the *New York Times*.

and emphasized that anti-Semitism had invaded the country from outside because Turks were never anti-Semitic. A delegation headed by Minister of the Interior Şükrü Kaya was sent to Thrace to investigate the incidents. After Kaya's return and report to the Cabinet, the government issued a new statement[22] according to which there had been "boycott attempts" in Edirne and the surrounding smaller towns, and in Kırklareli a "plundering rabble [had become] active, invaded the homes of Jews and committed theft and robbery ... looting the homes of sixty-five Jews... One constable lost his life in the events and one Jew was injured."

According to the statement, the government had taken the following steps: The identified perpetrators would speedily be brought to trial. The officials had been found to be free from the influence of propaganda and had exercised due diligence in their duties. Inasmuch as misconduct had occurred, disciplinary action would be taken. Should the Jews who had fled wish to return to their homes, they would not be obstructed in any way from doing so. "In Turkey, the government will not allow any agitation and incitement of hostility against its citizens... There is no longer any reason for the citizens to be worried."

The mayor, the chief of police, and the head of the Chamber of Commerce of Kırklareli, who had participated in the looting, were indeed briefly detained but soon released again. Instead, a few people who, until then, had not been mentioned in connection with the events were sentenced to several months in prison.[23] The inflammatory anti-Semitic publication *Millî İnkılâp* was banned in July.[24] Order appeared to be restored: "The mass expulsions and attacks apparently ceased just as abruptly as they began," the *Jewish Chronicle* wrote in its issue of July 13, 1934, giving the all-clear. But neither did the anti-Jewish activities stop nor had they "abruptly begun."

Background

In the last fifteen years, quite a number of publications have appeared that attempt to reconstruct these incidents and discuss their background.[25]

[22] Numerous Turkish newspapers covered the government declaration in detail. A German Embassy file contains a translation into German; PAAA, Ankara Embassy, 539; an English translation in NARA, Collection 1224: Reel 10.

[23] Bayraktar, "Anti-Jewish pogrom," 97, *Jüdische Rundschau* (July 8, 1934).

[24] However, a report to Berlin by the German Ambassador Frederic von Rosenbeg illustrates that this ban was rather half-hearted. According to von Rosenberg, Atilhan had told him that the Turkish authorities had informed him of the impending ban with enough time to distribute the newest edition before the ban came into effect.

[25] A. Levi, *Yahudiler* 100–129; Bali, *Türkleştirme Seröveni* 243–254 and *Trakya Olayları*; numerous articles in the journal *Tarih ve Toplum*, nos. 146, 151, 155, and 156 (1996),

Especially controversial in these discussions is the extent of responsibility of the state authorities. Avner Levi, and to some extent Rıfat Bali as well, emphasize the effects of German National Socialism and the role of its Turkish apologists Cevat Rıfat Atilhan and Nihal Atsız.[26] A few weeks before these events, Atilhan had started publishing the anti-Semitic smear sheet *Millî İnkılâp*. Immediately prior to the events of 1934, threatening articles directed against Jews had also appeared in the journal *Orhun*, published by Atsız. For several months, starting in the fall of 1933, Atsız was a literature teacher at the boys' high school in Edirne, and he had gathered a considerable fan following within a short time. According to Bali, many of his followers participated directly in the riots.

However, anti-Semitism was by no means new to the Thrace region, as even the government report had conceded. The Edirne-based newspaper *Paşaeli* had published numerous anti-Semitic articles as early as at the time of the founding of the Republic.

The fact that nationalist, anti-Jewish voices found more resonance in Thrace than in many other regions of Turkey was partly attributable to the recent history of the region. During the Balkan Wars and the Greek-Turkish War, the area had been occupied by Bulgarian and Greek troops, respectively, and then reconquered. In the words of Minister of the Interior Şükrü Kaya, "Thrace, this Turkish homeland, [is] the sacred ground that is drenched the most with Turkish blood."[27] With the loss of the Balkan regions, Edirne, once the capital of the Ottoman Empire, had sunk to the level of an economically insignificant border region. *Muhacirs* driven out of the former Ottoman regions, who were especially susceptible to nationalistic agitation, constituted a large portion of the population. And although the proportion of Jews of the region's total

nos. 186 and 187 (1999). Also Bayraktar "Anti-Jewish Pogrom" and "*Zweideutige Individuen*" and Berna Pekesen, "Umumî Müfettiş İbrahim Tali Öngören – Müfettişlik İcraatları ve 1934 Trakya Teftiş Gezisi Raporu," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no.7 (2008): 146.

[26] Avner Levi, for example, claims that the purge of the SA (Sturmabteilung [Assault Detachment or Storm Troopers]) by the SS and the Gestapo on June 30, 1934, known as the "Röhm Putsch" or "the Night of the Long Knives," had had an impact on Turkey (Avner Levi, "1934 Trakya Yahudi Olayları ve Alınmayan Ders," *Tarih ve Toplum* no. 151 (1996): 10–17). This is absurd for a number of reasons. The attacks in Turkey began more than a week before the so-called Röhm Putsch which, in addition, did not target Jews. Levi's claim is in keeping with the government's line of argumentation, which puts the blame for the events on "outside forces."

[27] Statement by Kaya on the occasion of the establishment of the *umumî müfettişlik*, quoted after Halûk Karabatak, "1934 Trakya Olayları ve Yahudiler – Türkiye Azınlık Tarihine Bir Katkı," *Tarih ve Toplum* no. 146 (1996): 7.

population was only about 2 percent, Jews were, after the expulsion and the "exchange" of Christians in Thrace as agreed in Lausanne, the largest non-Muslim group, constituting over 10 percent of the population in the cities.[28] Despite the efforts of the Turkish government to Turkify the economy, many Jews in Thrace had assumed the positions in trade and commerce previously held by Armenians or Greeks. This, too, made them a target.

A crucial factor in the events was the İskân Kanunu mentioned earlier, which had been passed only a week before the riots in Çanakkale. It authorized the government to resettle parts of the population viewed as "not belonging to Turkish culture." People suspected of espionage could be removed from border territories and from regions of strategic military importance. This applied to Thrace in particular and especially to the Dardanelles: the situation in 1934 was characterized by tensions between Turkey and Bulgaria and by Turkish fears of Italy's expansionist cravings. As a border region, Thrace was a military deployment area for Turkey. But the strategically important Straits had been controlled by the League of Nations since the end of World War I. Until 1936, when Turkey regained full sovereignty over the Straits through the Treaty of Montreux, it was prohibited from fortifying the Dardanelles militarily. In view of the perceived threat, however, Turkey began to secretly expand its military presence despite the ban under international law.[29] Given this context, it is not surprising that military and government authorities regarded the Jews residing in Thrace as "unreliable," and the İskân Kanunu permitted forced resettlement of such groups. An Inspectorate-General *(umûmî müfettişlik)* for the Thrace region had already been established in February 1934.[30] Such an Inspectorate-General, which was a form of emergency governance, had first been established in 1927 in part of

[28] In Çanakkale, the number of Greek Orthodox Christians was considerably higher than the number of Jews; see Bayraktar, "*Zweideutige Individuen,*" 53, note 195.

[29] In 1934, Turkey had made a number of unsuccessful attempts to gain international permission to militarily fortify the Straits and the border region. See Bayraktar "*Zweideutige Individuen,*" 62ff. Numerous diplomats reported on these "secret" armament activities. See, for example, the detailed report by the Swiss envoy to Turkey of July 19, 1934; Bern Federal Archives, E 2300–165.

[30] Law No. 1164 of February 19, 1934, on the establishment of an Inspectorate-General for the Thracian territories of Edirne, Kırklareli, Tekirdağ, and Çanakkale, with headquarters in Edirne. Although the Inspectorate's jurisdiction was nominally limited to Thrace (including the districts of Edirne, Kırklareli, and Tekirdağ), it also included the district bordering the Dardanelles (Çanakkale) on the Anatolian side. In other words, it comprised exactly the area in which the violent actions aimed at driving out the Jews had taken place.

the Kurdish territory after the Şeyh-Said Rebellion had been put down. İbrahim Tali [Öngören] was named general inspector (*umûmî müfettiş*) and as such had extensive political and military powers and reported only to the minister of the interior.[31] According to Article 47 of the İskân Kanunu, he had the authority to order the resettlement of parts of the population.

No document has been found so far confirming that the government ordered the resettlement of the Jews of Thrace. Still, the government's insistence after the fact that the Jews had "fled solely on the basis of rumor" seems cynical and implausible.[32] The mere fact that the anti-Jewish activities began almost simultaneously all over Thrace indicates a deliberate orchestration and gives reason to assume that the state was behind it. Numerous Jews who had experienced the riots related that they had been ordered to leave the region by state security forces. Foreign diplomats reporting on the events shortly after emphasized the role of the local branches of the CHP (the governing single political party) as well as the Halkevleri (People's Houses) in organizing the anti-Jewish boycott.[33] Most of the foreign diplomats assumed that the Jews' expulsion was planned by the state. "There was no doubt from the first that the sudden exodus of the Jewish population of Thrace was due to the action of the local authorities, who can hardly be supposed to have acted without the knowledge, even if not on the express orders of the Central Government."[34]

[31] Politically, Tali belonged to the early core group of İttihat ve Terakki; like many of its founding members, he had attended the Askeri Tıbbiye (military medical school). During World War I, he was part of the leadership cadre of the notorious Teşkilat-i Mahsusa, which played a central role in the deportation of the Armenians. Öngören was the first to hold the position (from 1927) of *umûmî müfettiş* in Diyarbakır.

[32] In keeping with the anti-Jewish stereotype, various authors called the Jews cowards, among them the "leftist" Vâ-Nû (Vâlâ Nûrettin) in *Haber* of July 8, 1934; see A. Levi, *Yahudiler*, 121ff.

[33] To give just a few examples: several reports by U.S. diplomats between June 29 and August 21, 1934, in NARA, M1224, reel 10, 867.4016; report by the Greek Ambassador Sakellaropoulos of July 12, 1934, in Constantopoulou and Veremis, 243; report by the British Ambassador Sir Percy Loraine of July 7, 1934, in Gökay, *British Documents*, 131. The People's Houses (Halkevleri) had been founded in 1932 as the CHP's cultural arm, following the ban of the nationalist Türk Ocakları in 1931. In the process, the People's Houses had not only been given the Türk Ocakları's buildings and inventory; in most locations they also inherited the Ocaklar's members, some of whom were openly Turanist. Halkevleri had been founded in Thrace in the years 1932 to 1934.

[34] Report by the British Ambassador Sir Percy Loraine of July 7, 1934, in Gökay, *British Documents*, 131. In a letter of July 22, 1934, Loraine added that he had learned from a reliable source that the Turkish government had decided to drive the Jews out of Thrace

These indications that the state was behind the events are supported by the works of Berna Pekesen and Hatice Bayraktar,[35] who draw attention to the significant role of General Inspector İbrahim Tali Öngören. A few weeks after his appointment as *umûmî müfettiş* for Thrace, Öngören had made a four-week inspection tour of the region. In a ninety-page report to the highest party and government levels, he wrote down his impressions and conclusions. Although the report covers numerous topics, ranging from demographics, the economic situation, and the different agricultural cultures to the military threat (from Bulgaria) and proposals for armament of the (Muslim) population as militias and village guards, Tali seems outright obsessed with the "Jewish problem," which comes up in virtually every chapter. According to Tali, the Jews dominated economic life in the region and exploited the Muslim Turks. Furthermore, they spread communist propaganda and worked for Bulgaria or as spies for other foreign agencies. The planned military fortification of Thrace would therefore have to be kept secret from the Jews. This is Tali verbatim:

"Resolve the Jewish Problem in the Most Radical Way"

(Excerpts from the report of İbrahim Tali about his inspection tour of Thrace)

The Jew of Thrace is so morally corrupt and devoid of character that it strikes one immediately. He is corruptive.

Although [the Jews] underwent natural selection as a result of constant mixing with different blood in the last century and have almost entirely lost the physical characteristics specific to Jewry, they have completely retained the typically Jewish fawning, deceitful character that hides its secret intentions, always applauds the powerful, worships gold, and knows no love of the homeland, and have even developed these harmful traits so much further that they could inflict torment on humanity. [p. 14]

In the Jewish value system, honor and dignity have no place. The Jews of Thrace owe their rise to the destructive effects of the wars

some time before the events; PRO, FO (Public Record Office, Foreign Office) 371/17969, doc. C 209668, quoted after Bayraktar, "*Zweideutige Individuen.*"

[35] Both had, independently of each other, done research into the *Trakya Olayları* at the universities of Berlin (Bayraktar) and Bochum (Pekesen), respectively. Bayraktar's dissertation was published in 2011 as "*Zweideutige Individuen.*"

> on the Turkish population, that is how [the Jews] have become rich and enhanced their influence. [p. 15]
>
> The Jews of Thrace are intent on making Thrace the equivalent of Palestine. For the development of Thrace, it is of the utmost necessity that this element [the Jews], whose hands are grabbing for all the treasures of Thrace, not be allowed to continue to suck out the Turks' blood. In the establishment of new military facilities ... we must keep our administrative and military activities entirely secret from this element [the Jews].
>
> Above all, it is essential that this element [the Jews] be neutralized so completely that they cannot engage in spying...
>
> [The Jews] represent a secret danger and possibly want to establish communist nuclei in our country through the workers' clubs, and it is therefore an indispensable necessity for Turkish life, the Turkish economy, Turkish security, the Turkish regime, and the revolution in Thrace, and for Turkish Thrace to be able to recover, to finally solve the [Jewish] problem in the most radical way. [p. 19][36]

Tali's report is laced with the crudest of anti-Semitic stereotypes. This contradicts not only the government's assertion that anti-Semitism in Turkey was only a fringe phenomenon (Tali was the highest-ranking official of the Republic in this region) but must also be considered proof that the expulsion of the Jews from Thrace and from the Dardanelles was in keeping with the state's objectives, just as foreign diplomats had reported.

In the map of the region appended to his report, he categorized the areas adjacent to the Dardanelles (Çanakkale), as well as the regions bordering Greece and Bulgaria, as Zone III territories, that is, areas whose population – or segments of it – were to be evacuated for military reasons in accordance with İskan Kanunu.[37] However, according to the international treaties in effect at the time, both the militarization of the border region and the forced resettlement of the Jews were proscribed, because the rights of the non-Muslim minorities were protected

[36] Tali's report is held in the Başbakanlık Arşivi, 490.01.643.30.1. I thank Hatice Bayraktar for providing me with copies. An analytical summary can be found in Pekesen, "Umumî Müfettiş."

[37] See Bayraktar "Anti-Jewish Pogrom," 110; a reproduction of the map that was attached to Tali's report can be found in Pekesen, "Umumî Müfettiş," 179.

by the international Treaty of Lausanne, at least on paper. To circumvent these legal obstacles, the Turkish authorities had apparently opted for the strategy of putting the Jews under such pressure with boycott activities and anonymous threats "from the population" that they would leave the area "voluntarily."[38] In light of this, it hardly seems coincidental that Tali himself had traveled the entire region until a week before the events erupted and then remained in Ankara during the boycott activities and the threats.[39] It seems that the operations then "got out of hand" locally, with the nationalist mob putting itself in charge in some places and committing looting and acts of violence.[40]

After the reports of the riots reached the international public, the government was forced to condemn both the events and anti-Semitism in general. In the end, however, the episode achieved, for the most part, the intended goal and largely "solved" the "Jewish problem" in Thrace in the way favored by Tali.

Summary

The events in Thrace can by no means be equated with the anti-Semitic acts of violence and the official, state-enforced persecution that took place in the 1930s in Nazi Germany or even in the countries of Eastern Europe. No Jews were killed in Thrace. The sole casualty was a Turkish gendarmerie private.

But for the Jews of Turkey, the events represented the most significant caesura in their history up to that time. Despite the government's promises to protect the Jews and the appeals for them to return, no means were provided for them to do so, and no reparations were paid. Nor did the government keep its promise to return to their owners the possessions stolen during the riots.[41] Many of the Jews who had fled did not return to their hometowns but remained in Istanbul or left Turkey.[42] Many of them

[38] Exactly this had been reported to London by the British Ambassador Percy Loraine, report of July 22, 1934, note 34, here quoted after the Turkish translation in Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*, 92.

[39] Pekesen, "Umumî Müfettiş," 159.

[40] Loraine had heard that the oral instructions given by the government to local party offices were leaked to other groups; report of July 22, 1934, quoted after the Turkish translation in Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*, 92.

[41] Bali, *Trakya Olayları*, 262.

[42] About 300 families moved to Barcelona, around 650 people to Palestine; N. N. Weynryb, "Die jüdische Einwanderung nach Palästina 1919–1934," *Jüdische Wohlfahrtspflege und Sozialpolitik, Neue Folge* 5 (1935): 112. The numbers refer to 1933 and 1934. A number of publications in Turkey give the number of individuals who immigrated to Palestine as 2,000.

had sold their property under coercion at ridiculously low prices and thus had lost their livelihood. For the small communities in Thrace, the events sealed the end of an existence extending over hundreds of years. The number of Jews in Edirne, previously 7,000, also dropped to 2,500 by the end of the war.[43] The period that followed was characterized by further boycott attempts and intimidation in Edirne and even in Istanbul.

Forced Labor Service for Non-Muslims

Another drastic measure that contributed to undermining the trust of many Jews in the Turkish state was the conscription of non-Muslims into forced labor service, referred to in Turkey as *Yirmi Kur'a* (twenty birth years). Since the founding of the Republic, non-Muslims had performed their military service as ordinary soldiers in regular units side by side with Muslim Turks. They were, however, barred from promotion.[44] In May 1941, during the German advance in the Balkans, non-Muslim men between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five – a range of twenty years – were suddenly, out of the blue, drafted for military labor service, in some cases directly from the street. They were shipped to central Anatolia and housed in camps (at Konya, Yozgat, Eskişehir, Kandira, etc.), where they had to work in quarries or build roads, unarmed and guarded by Turkish military personnel. The poor hygienic conditions and the harsh treatment by the Turkish military caused fear both among the non-Muslims in these units and among their families in Istanbul.[45] The labor units mobilized in this way resembled the labor battalions (*Amele Taburları*) for non-Muslims during World War I and the "War of Liberation."[46]

In the memoirs of numerous contemporary witnesses, the fear felt at the time is palpable. The fact alone that the public mobilization notices

[43] Memo by Wolkowicz on the situation of the Jews in Turkey, January 22, 1946, AJA, H 332–9. A comparison of the census figures for 1927 and 1935 indicates that the Jewish population in these communities decreased by 2,850 (27.4 percent) during this period; Bayraktar, *"Zweideutige Individuen,"* 56. Bayraktar emphasizes that the number of Jews who left the region permanently in the wake of these events was significantly higher and that the figures of 1927 should be corrected upward.

[44] Eli Şaul writes that at the time (1940), Jews were first admitted to preparatory classes for the ordnance examination, but then all of the non-Muslims "did not pass," which caused even greater disappointment; Şaul, *Balat'tan,* 126ff.

[45] Bali quotes contemporary witnesses who said that Turkish soldiers had threatened them saying that they would never see their families again in any case; Bali, *Türkleştirme Seriüveni*, 417.

[46] See Part 1, Chapter 2, note 35.

used the word *gayrimüslim* (non-Muslim) did not fit with the usual political language of the Republic, which was always at pains to avoid discriminatory language in its official publications. Bali quotes accounts of contemporary witnesses who experienced the mobilization in Istanbul as a raid to arrest all male Jews in the neighborhood.[47]

Vitali Hakko, later a well-known businessman in Istanbul, writes in his memoirs: "Although we had just returned from military service, we were taken from our workplaces like criminals and handed over to the military; many of us were not even able to notify our families. Without regard to age, several ages were drafted simultaneously, but this time there was a crucial difference: there were no Muslim Turks among us. This caused great uncertainty among all of us... "Why only non-Muslims?" ... "Why aren't they telling us where we are being taken?"[48]

The people hauled off in this manner were not told how long they would be detained. The uncertainty about what would happen to them was experienced by many of them as no less agonizing than the camp and labor conditions themselves.

The reason for this measure is not clearly documented. A number of government resolutions relating to the draft of non-Muslim reservists for road construction work have survived in the Prime Minister's Republican Archives.[49] Its beginning in May 1941 coincided with the advance of the Germans in the Balkans and with the attendant fears that Turkey might also be attacked. In this climate, the anti-minority mood intensified again. The press warned of the activities of the "Fifth Column" – people purportedly in the service of "foreign powers."

There may also have been a connection with other repressive measures against members of minorities. One indication of such a connection is the existence of a secret 1940 CHP report on minorities that contains recommendations for measures of this kind.[50] Whatever the reason for this measure may have been, in the tense situation of 1941, the people targeted by it perceived it as discriminatory and threatening. In spring of 1942, Prime Minister Saydam also ordered the dismissal of Jews from

[47] Bali, *Türkleştirme Serüveni*, 413.

[48] Vitali Hakko, *Hayatım* (Istanbul: Şedele, 1997), 88ff.

[49] BCA, Resolution No. 2/16363, 30..18.1.2/95.69..8; Resolution No. 2/17556, 30..18.1.2/97.129..3; Resolution No. 2/20507,30..18.1.2/103.63..12. Still, none of these documents give a reason for this measure being specifically imposed on non-Muslims. The same is true of other documents from the Prime Minister's Republican Archives, published by Rıfat Bali, that show that non-Muslims were drafted into such labor units in 1942 and 1943 as well; Bali, *Devlet'in Yahudileri*, 301–307.

[50] Dündar, *Nüfus Sayımlarında*, 52.

various state institutions and ministries.[51] In July 1942, the first "forced labor soldiers" were suddenly discharged – once again without advance notice. However, documents in the Prime Minister's Republican Archives indicate that non-Muslims were still being drafted to perform road construction work in 1943.[52] The Armenian Sarkis Çerkezyan writes in his memoirs that he and the non-Muslims in his unit had to perform four years of forced labor and that this measure also targeted people who had converted to Islam.[53]

The Wealth Tax – *Varlık Vergisi*

The most drastic measure affecting the minorities and especially the Jews in Turkey was the wealth tax, *Varlık Vergisi*. In the summer of 1942, the press had, in a campaign that appeared to be concerted, defamed non-Muslims as profiteers and swindlers and attempted to blame them for the economic crisis. Under the burden of the immense military expenditures, the supply situation of the population had grown dramatically worse. The shortage of goods, in part attributable to forced acquisitions by the state, resulted in extreme price increases. Some sources cite a price increase of almost 500 percent.[54] The population's dissatisfaction was deliberately directed toward the Jews. The newspapers depicted individual black marketers or suspected "usurers" as "parasites of the Turkish people"; those explicitly named were always non-Muslims. Although the smear campaign was directed against non-Muslim minorities in general, it was mostly Jews who were specifically targeted by articles and caricatures, which employed stereotypical anti-Semitic tropes (see Figure 3.3). This, together with the previously described anti-Jewish measures, gave rise to fear and insecurity among the Jews of Turkey as early as the summer of 1942; some sold their apartments, and once again, about 400 Jews emigrated from Turkey to Palestine.[55]

This sudden flood of openly anti-Semitic, inflammatory material astonished even the German authorities. Walter Schellenberg, the head of the

[51] See reports by German agencies in PAAA, R 99446.

[52] BCA, Resolution No. 2/20507 of September 8, 1943, 30..18.1.2/102.63..12.

[53] Sarkis Çerkezyan, *Bu Dünya Hepimize Yeter* (Istanbul: Belge, 2003), 113.

[54] Zafer Toprak, "Türkiye'de Muhalefetin Doğuşu: II. Dünya Savaşı ve Tek Partinin Sonu," *Toplumsal Tarih* no. 121 (2004): 70–75.

[55] Report by Haim Barlas on the activities of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee – Archives (hereafter AJJDC), Collection 33/44, File 1050/20, F2. According to Barlas, thousands of Turkish Jews had applied for entry visas to Palestine.



FIGURE 3.3 Cartoon on the front page of *Karikatür* magazine, October 8, 1942. Caption: "Those who live on the people's back."

foreign intelligence service of the SS, sent Martin Luther, an undersecretary in the Foreign Office in Berlin, a collection of Turkish cartoons with the comment: "All the enclosed cartoons ... show the Jew to be unmistakably a parasite of the people, responsible for all ills. This fact is all the more peculiar considering that Turkey has neither an anti-Semitic movement in the sense we know nor any provisions in its laws that expressly target Jews... It has to be all the more remarkable if the Turkish press, known as it is to be very tightly controlled, attacks the Jew as such in such a drastic manner."[56]

After the preliminary propaganda, the Turkish Parliament passed Law No. 4305, which introduced the Varlık Vergisi, on November 11, 1942.

[56] Letter by Schellenberg, No. 52783/42, dated September 12, 1942; PAAA, R 100889, fiche 2273. Similarly, Julius Seiler of the Press Department of the German Embassy in Ankara in a report on the "State of the Jewish Problem in Turkey," dated October 14, 1942; PAAA, R 99446.

This extraordinary tax was to be imposed as a one-off levy; its purpose was to skim off exceptionally high profits and to curb the black market. It was not the only special measure imposed as part of the war economy: The National Protection Law (Millî Korunma Kanunu) had been passed in 1940; it was followed in 1943 by the Law on the Taxation of Agricultural Products (Toprak Mahsulleri). Unlike the labor service for non-Muslims, the text of the law on the Varlık Vergisi did not discriminate against any specific population group. The tax was to be levied from all shop owners and self-employed people. However, the actual thrust of the law was already evident from the preceding press campaign. Sabiha Sertel, one of the most committed anti-fascist journalists of the time, wrote an account of her trip with the editor-in-chief of *Akşam* and CHP delegate, Necmeddin Sadak, and the owner and editor of the *Vakit*, Hakkı Tarık Us, to the press conference in Ankara at which Prime Minister Saracoğlu was going to elaborate on the Varlık Vergisi bill. During the train trip, Hakkı Tarık Us declared, smiling, "This tax will primarily weaken the capital owners among the minorities. I have it from reliable sources that Turkish capital owners will be protected."[57] Us was to be correct.

The taxes assessed for non-Muslims were many times higher than those for Muslims, so that many Jews and Christians, for all practical purposes, lost their property.[58] The tax levels were set by commissions, which were supplied with different lists for taxation purposes by the Turkish authorities: *M* for Muslims, *G* for non-Muslims (*Gayrimüslim*), *E* for foreigners (*Ecnebi*), and *D* for members of the *Dönme* or converts.[59] Depending

[57] Sabiha Sertel, *Roman Gibi* (Istanbul: Belge, 1987), 233.

[58] On the Varlık Vergisi: Ali Sait Çetinoğlu, *Varlık Vergisi 1942–1944: Ekonomik ve Kültürel Jenosid;* Rıfat N. Bali, *The Varlık Vergisi Affair: A Study of Its Legacy* (Istanbul: Isis, 2005); Bali, *Türkleştirme Seriiveni*, 424–474; Şaul *Balat'tan*, 19 and 90–109; Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*, 135–243; and Rıdvan Akar, *Aşkale Yolcuları: Varlık Vergisi ve Çalışma Kampları* (Istanbul: Belge, 2000). The following information, unless otherwise noted, is from Çetinoğlu, *Varlık Vergisi*, and Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*, 135ff.

[59] The term *Dönme* (literally, "turned around") is generally used in Turkey for people who have changed their religious or national affiliation or their sexual orientation. But in a narrower sense, the word Dönme designates followers of Sabbatai Twi (Sevi), a "false Messiah" of the seventeenth century, who inspired Jews throughout Europe and eventually converted to Islam. Some of his followers, who likewise converted in his wake, founded their own sect whose center was in Salonika. After Salonika had been lost, and once again after the founding of the Republic, almost all Dönme resettled in Turkey. As early as the 1920s and 30s, the Dönme were targeted by a very specific type of anti-Semitism that is particularly virulent today. In the literature, it is usually assumed that Category "D" refers to the Dönme. However, given that during the thirties and forties the Turkish authorities were also recording the names of non-Muslims who had converted to Islam (as the former head of the Turkish Historical Institute, Halaçoğlu, admitted

on the category, different rates were used in calculating the tax amount. According to a calculation by the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) based on 100 randomly selected people, the average tax rate in proportion to assets was 4.94 percent for Muslim Turkish traders, 179 percent for Jews, and 232 percent for Armenians.[60] All reports agree on the arbitrariness employed in the tax assessment process. Some people were even taxed more than once.

For Istanbul, a tax amount of 349.5 million lira was set. Of this total amount, about 90 percent was to be raised from non-Muslims. About 87 percent of the people taxed were non-Muslims, even though their proportion of the total population of Turkey was not even 2 percent. In the lower income groups among the self-employed (people who worked in ambulant professions or at home, salaried employees, and service providers), the Varlık Vergisi was imposed only on non-Muslims in the first place. In Istanbul, 43 percent of the individuals taxed belonged to those groups. The average tax amount to be paid by each of them was 624 or 626 lira, respectively;[61] this was about the equivalent of a teacher's or a salaried employee's annual salary.

On December 18, 1942, the names of those to be taxed, along with the amount to be paid by each of them, were posted publicly at the tax offices and published in the press. They were almost exclusively non-Muslims. The law was thus perceived by the public as a "punitive measure" against non-Muslims. "This tax does not apply to us, but to the nonbelievers in Istanbul," a Muslim businessman explained to Eli Şaul.[62] The *New York Times*, whose correspondent C. L. Sulzberger wrote a number of very critical articles on the Varlık Vergisi, quoted the *Cumhuriyet*: "The majority of those people [the non-Muslims taxed] are not foreigners, but people the Ottoman Empire left as a heritage. They call themselves Turks and we have not yet been able to liquidate them."[63] The architect of the

in 2007) and that other discriminatory measures of those years – forced labor service, for example – extended to converts as well, it is also conceivable that in the context of the Varlık Vergisi, "D" just means "convert" in a general sense. This assumption is shared by Jews who emigrated in the forties. For a detailed discussion of the Dönme, see Marc D. Baer, *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[60] OSS, The Capital Levy, report of May 3, 1944, quoted after Bali, *Varlık Vergisi Affair*, 325. See also Faik Ökte, *Varlık Vergisi Faciası* (Istanbul: Nebioğlu, 1951), 47. Faik Ökte was in charge of enforcing the measure in Istanbul.

[61] Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*, 173.

[62] Şaul, *Balat'tan*, 103.

[63] *New York Times* of September 12, 1943. Quoted in the report by S. D. Wolkowicz, dated March 21, 1947; AJA, collection of the World Jewish Congress, H 332 – 8.

Varlık Vergisi, Prime Minister Saracoğlu, called it "a revolutionary law. It provides us with the opportunity to gain economic independence. We will use it to eliminate the foreigners who control the market and hand the Turkish market over to the Turks."[64] "The foreigners to be eliminated" referred primarily to the non-Muslim citizens of Turkey.

In fact, the wealth tax was imposed on foreigners as well. According to a business report by the Turkish branch of the Deutsche Orientbank, the German colony in Turkey had been obligated to pay a total of 4.5 million Turkish pounds. However, negotiations conducted through the embassy succeeded in reducing this sum by a million pounds. The German businessmen were additionally aided by "the facilitation of transfers from the Reich."[65] Essentially, the Varlık Vergisi was not directed at foreigners but at the non-Muslim citizens of Turkey.

The people affected by the tax were given two weeks to raise the assessed amount. If they failed to do so, their property was confiscated and they were forced into labor service to "work off their tax debt." People who were unable to pay were granted a two-week extension on request, but interest was charged for this period. Many families were forced to sell their shops and businesses, their houses, even their carpets, furniture, and other household articles to raise the tax money. In Istanbul, 543 pieces of real estate were sold in this manner, ten of them by Muslims; all the rest had belonged to members of minorities or foreigners (27).[66] The non-affluent among those taxed had their few goods and furnishings seized. Some people committed suicide in despair.[67] The extraordinary tax was also levied on foreign Jews, and if they were in no position to pay, their property was confiscated down to the beds and cupboards.[68]

Labor Camps

After January 20, the day the extended payment period ended, the police began to arrest those unable to pay. In Istanbul, a total of 1,869 people were arrested by the police between February and September 1943 and

[64] In Barutçu, *Siyasal Anılar*, 263.

[65] Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, *Gold, Bankiers und Diplomaten: Zur Geschichte der Deutschen Orientbank 1906–1946* (Berlin: Trafo, 2002), 260.

[66] Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*, 229.

[67] Letters and reports in Şaul, *Balat'tan*, 92–93; Erol Haker, *İstanbul'dan Kudüs'e bir Kimlik Arayışı* (Istanbul: Kitap, 2004), 59 ff. On the enforcement of the Varlık Vergisi in Ankara, where the measures were implemented with less harshness (probably due to the presence of foreign diplomats), see Beki L. Bahar, *Efsaneden Tarihe: Ankara Yahudileri* (Istanbul: Pan, 2003), 267ff.

[68] Interview with E. Alfandari on March 14, 2004.

initially detained in a holding camp near Istanbul's Sirkeci railroad station. On January 27, 1943, the first group of thirty-two people was transported by train – under military escort – to Erzurum in Eastern Anatolia. From there they had to walk to Aşkale (about 50 kilometers); 1,200 more people would follow them in the weeks to come.[69] A total of about 200 people were also deported to labor camps from Izmir, Bursa, and various cities in Thrace.[70]

Although the law stipulated that people over fifty-five years of age were exempt from labor service, seventy-five- and eighty-year-old men and even sick people were dragged to the train station and deported. The camp in Aşkale between Erzurum and Bayburt was located in the mountains. The winter temperatures in this region dropped to between minus thirty and forty degrees Celsius. The deportees had to work in the quarry or shovel snow, for which they were "paid" 2.50 lira per day. Part of this sum was subtracted for room and board, and half of the "wages" were to count toward paying off the "tax debts."[71] For city dwellers from Istanbul or Izmir, the climate conditions alone were a great hardship. That, and the inhumane conditions in the camps, resulted in disease and death. Twenty-one people died in these camps.

Letter of a Turkish Jew to a Relative Abroad on the Wealth Tax:

For quite a time I have not written to you because I was very nervous and unable to write because of the question of the capital taxes which has been terrifically strong especially for the minorities and for our family.

One of our firm Isaac Ergas & Bros. was taxed	TL	450.000
Jak Ergas		150.000
Salomon Ergas		15.000
our building on the island		5.000
Total	TL	620.000

[69] About 630 people borrowed money from friends and family while in police detention to come up with the shortfall amount; Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi,* 149; Akar, *Aşkale Yolcuları,* 136

[70] Çetinoğlu, *Varlık Vergisi,* 167–173. According to Çetinoğlu, the deportees from Izmir were taken to Sivrihisar. The American Ambassador Steinhardt gave the total number of people sent to forced labor in connection with the *Varlık Vergisi* as 1,443; Bali, *Varlık Vergisi Affair,* 99.

[71] Report by S. D. Wolkowicz, page 8, March 21, 1947; AJA, H 332–8.

You will understand that TL 620.000 is an unbelievable sum, and you have to bear in mind that this amount has to be paid within 15 days after the promulgation of the figures, by the Finance Department...

After two weeks they start to seize and confiscate your store and all your personal belongings of your homes and your properties. If the father cannot pay the son is responsible for him and vice-versa, the same is for brothers and husbands and wife...

I do not know whether you are aware of this terrible plight that fell on the Jewish population and on all the minorities. But the Moslem Turks were taxed very lightly only...

Hüsametin Eren was taxed TL 15.000 (he has more than TL 500.000).

We ourselves, only the firm Isaac Ergas was taxed TL 450.000 (and the firm only has a capital of TL 200.000.)

Brod[72] was taxed TL 600.000. (He only has TL 300.000.) ...

Those who cannot pay at least 50% immediately are sent to Aşkale which is near Erzurum to break stones and clean the roads from snow. These unfortunate people are not allowed to take more than TL 10 to 15 with them. There the Government pays them TL 2 ½ per day of which TL 1 ¼ is deducted by the authorities for payment of their taxes. The remaining TL 1 ¼ is given to them for their living expenses. You must understand that this treatment is certainly going to kill them...

The day before yesterday, Friday February 11, the second group of people have been sent to Aşkale, amongst them are some you know: the old man Satarasvili (seventy-two years old), who was taxed 350,000 lira. The two brothers Joshuah (74) and and Eliah Menda (72 years old, both sick), who were taxed TL 350.000 each. These two brothers have a textile mill in partnership with two Turkish Moslems, the Moslems were only taxed very lightly, but the two Jews had to go into exile...

Although all the above are old and sick people they had to go into exile to the Mountains of Aşkale and Kopdağ where the temperature is 30 degrees centigrade below zero...

Like this we are expecting every day that our belongings and our furniture will be sold. Every day there are public auctions and only

[72] Probably the company owned by Simon Brod (see Chapter 4) and his brother.

> Turkish Moslems are buyers. This is a catastrophe of which we do not see the end... Nobody could have thought that this can happen in Turkey...
>
> (Letter of January 13, 1943, from Salomon Ergas to his brother Jak Ergas, who lived in the United States.)[73]

Public Property Auctions

Meanwhile, bailiffs held auctions of the goods and furnishings seized from the people hit by the tax (see Figure 3.4). The Istanbul press reported in detail on the seizures and sales. Several newspapers published advance lists of the auction dates and the items going on sale as a service to their readers.[74] Aktar writes that more gawkers than buyers attended these auctions, which in Istanbul took place, among other locations, in the covered marketplace (Kapalı Çarşı).

Many of the people taxed had borrowed money from relatives to escape the labor camp by paying the amount demanded. Article 14 of the Varlık Vergisi law empowered the state to confiscate the property of the taxed person's close relatives (including parents, parents-in-law, children, and siblings) and to sell it to settle the tax amount, even if the person had been forced into labor service.[75] In August 1943, a large number of these people were taken from Aşkale to Sivrihisar near Eskişehir in western Anatolia; they were released in December 1943. In March 1944, the Varlık Vergisi law was finally rescinded.

Among the Jews who lost their property were many who had enthusiastically supported the establishment of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s, among them Munis Tekinalp and Avram Galante. The attorneys Gad Franco, Mişon Ventura, and Şekip Adut, who had acted as representatives of the Jewish community, were carried off to Aşkale.[76]

In effect, the Varlık Vergisi was tantamount to state confiscation of the property of non-Muslim minorities. It served to Turkify most of the companies, means of production, real estate, and capital owned by the minority bourgeoisies. By the same token, the use of the Varlık Vergisi

[73] J. Ergas was in contact with the World Jewish Congress (WJC), for which he occasionally worked as an advisor on Turkey. He passed the letter on to the WJC. The translation into English he presumably did himself. AJA, H 333–1.

[74] Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*, 192.

[75] Ibid., 193.

[76] Bali, *Türkleştirme Serüveni*, 456 and 464.



FIGURE 3.4. The furnishings and carpets of people unable to pay the *Varlık Vergisi* were sold off in public auctions. (Photo courtesy of *Milliyet* photo archives.)

against the non-Muslim middle classes spelled their instant impoverishment. According to accounts given later by some of the Turkish-Jewish refugees arriving in Istanbul in April 1945, many of them literally had their residences cleaned out.[77]

Panic among the Jews of Turkey

The measures of forced labor service and the Varlık Vergisi, which directly followed each other and were accompanied by anti-Jewish agitation by a large part of the press, triggered panic among some of the Jews in Turkey. Turkey's good relations with Nazi Germany also played a role in this: rumors sprang up, for example, of ovens being built in Balat, the quarter of Istanbul predominantly populated by Jews, or in the Bahri Baba

[77] Conversation with Moshe Dana on December 23, 2005, in Milan.

quarter of Izmir, to murder the Jews.[78] Even though these rumors were completely unfounded, the mere fact of their existence starkly illuminates the then-prevailing mood among the Jews of Turkey.

International and Jewish aid organizations that entered Turkey after 1943 to organize rescue activities for the Jews of Eastern Europe reported in dismay that the majority of the local Turkish Jews were also completely impoverished and dependent on support.

Summary

The situation of the Jews in Turkey cannot be compared to that of the Jews in the territories controlled or occupied by Nazi Germany. It was also more endurable than it was in most of the countries allied with Germany. Even in 1942, at the most intense period of agitation against the Jews, there was no explicit anti-Jewish legislation in Turkey and – aside from the events in Thrace – no anti-Jewish violence either. Nevertheless, World War II was the darkest chapter in the history of the Jews in Turkey. However, the worst blows for them in those years, the events in Thrace and the Varlık Vergisi, were not so much inspired by National Socialist Jewish policy as they were part and culmination of nationalist Kemalist policies – policies of forced resettlement and dispossession of minorities aimed at putting the country's capital into the hands of Muslim Turks. The number of Jews in Turkey had already dropped by half in the 1920s; the events of the war led to their final marginalization in Turkey. Between January 1943 and June 1944, over 3,150 Jews emigrated from Turkey to Palestine; the total number during World War II far exceeded 4,500.[79] After the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948, the majority of the Turkish Jews followed them.

[78] Rıfat N. Bali, "İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Türkiye'de Azınlıklar: Balat Fırınların Söylentisi," *Tarih ve Toplum* no. 182 (1999): 3–6.

[79] Report by Harry Viteles, dated July 23, 1944, AJJDC, Collection 33/44, file 1051/20 F2.

4

Turkey – A Country for Exiles?

The first days after Hitler's takeover of the government on January 30, 1933, were already marked by violent acts by the SA and other Nazi organizations against Jews and political opponents in Germany. On April 1, 1933, the Nazi leadership organized an anti-Semitic "boycott day" against Jewish shop owners and self-employed individuals. Intellectuals were particular targets of fascist attacks. On May 10, 1933, the works of authors defamed as "un-German" were publicly burned in university towns. The Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, enacted on April 7, 1933, provided the legal basis for the removal of Jews and political opponents from public service. Apart from scientists, lecturers, and professors, the law affected judges, physicians at public hospitals, artists, the artistic directors of state-funded opera houses and theaters, and those working in the media. Even before the passage of the law, the unauthorized, violent actions of the SA (Sturmabteilung/Storm Troopers) and other Nazi organizations had complemented the state authorities' repressive measures against Jews and their dismissal from public positions. The Nuremberg Laws of September 15, 1935, sealed the exclusion of Jews from German society.

Mass Emigration of Jews from Germany

In response to these measures, as many as 150,000 Jews left Germany between 1933 and the beginning of 1938 – this equals one quarter of all Jews living in Germany and those categorized as Jews by the National Socialists.[1]

[1] Michael R. Marrus, *Die Unerwünschten: Europäische Flüchtlinge im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Schwarze Risse, 1999), 147. People of Jewish origin who had converted to

In addition to this number were the relatives and spouses of Jews – who were classified by the race laws as "related to Jews" – who followed their partners into exile. Non-Jews decided to flee as well: some feared reprisals for their opposition to the Nazis, while others did not want to serve the Nazi regime for conscientious reasons. Still, the number of political exiles was far smaller than the number of Jewish exiles. Up until the prohibition on emigration in October 1941, about half of the Jews who had been living in Germany in 1933 fled to other countries.

Routes of Escape – Countries Providing Refuge

The main destination of the first refugee wave in 1933 was, for over 70 percent of the emigrants, the neighboring European countries, primarily France, but also Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and, the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent, Switzerland, Denmark, and, Great Britain. After the occupation of many of these countries by Germany, numerous refugees eventually fell into the hands of their persecutors. In the mid-thirties, quite a number of Jews also went back to Germany after having initially fled, returning because they had been unable to find a permanent place of exile and hoped that the whole "Nazi thing" would soon blow over.

In 1934, Palestine became the most important country to receive refugees (37 percent). Eventually, after 1936, 45 percent of the refugees went overseas to the United States, South America, South Africa, and Australia; in 1937 and 1938, these groups constituted two thirds of the refugees. For the most important destinations – the United States and Palestine – the number of entrance visas was limited, and the visas were granted according to a complicated quota system.[2]

In none of the pertinent statistics on countries providing refuge is Turkey even mentioned. Of the 14,520 Jews who emigrated from Berlin

Christianity or who had left Judaism were also defined as Jews by the National Socialist race laws. The number 600,000 includes everyone categorized as Jewish by the National Socialists. In the following, wherever figures on Jews are cited, they refer to people categorized as Jewish by the National Socialists.

[2] Figures taken from Werner Rosenstock, *Exodus 1933–1939: A Survey of Jewish Emigration from Germany*, in *The Nazi Holocaust*, ed. Michael Marrus, vol. 8/1 (Westport: Meckler, 1989),143–155. As Palestine was a British mandate, the acceptance of Jewish refugees hinged on the approval of Great Britain. The United States granted entry visas according to a country quota system: in 1938, for example, 300,000 people from Germany applied for entry, but only 17,340 "quota visas" were available; *Heimat und Exil: Emigration der deutschen Juden nach 1933* [exhibition catalogue] (Frankfurt: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006), 178.

in the course of 1938 – the year in which the number of emigrations rocketed upward because of intensified pressure and the pogrom night on November 9 – exactly three went to Turkey.[3] For the majority of the German Jewish refugees, Turkey was not on the map as a destination of exile. The *Handbuch für die jüdische Auswanderung* (Handbook for Jewish Emigration), published in 1938 by the Jewish Philo Press, mainly mentions bureaucratic obstacles with regard to Turkey and sees "few possibilities" there for Jewish emigrants.[4] The anti-minority policies of Turkey led instead to the continued emigration by Turkish Jews out of Turkey during the 1930s. Thus, in the years 1932 to 1939 alone, almost 2,400 Jews emigrated from Turkey to Palestine.[5] The emigration of Turkish Jews to France and Italy also continued during the 1930s.

The Emigration of Scientists to Turkey

On May 31, 1933 – two months after the anti-Jewish measures in Nazi Germany had reached their first peak – a Turkish government decree announced a university reform that provided for the creation of a modern university and the closing of the Dârülfünun, the university in Istanbul founded in the nineteenth century in the course of the Tanzimat reforms. This decision put a temporary end to a dispute lasting almost ten years regarding the character and future of Turkey's universities in the context of the country's cultural and education policies. One significant bone of contention was the refusal by numerous Dârülfünun professors to accept the Türk Tarih Tezi, which on orders of Atatürk had been elevated to a doctrine, as generally binding.[6]

[3] Wolf Gruner, *Judenverfolgung in Berlin 1933–1945: Eine Chronologie der Behördenmaßnahmen in der Reichshauptstadt* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1996), 96–97. In an article in the *Jüdische Rundschau* of September 3, 1935, that lists the countries of exile of the approximately 90,000 Jews who had emigrated from Germany up to that date, Turkey does not appear. Nor is it mentioned in the pertinent publications on emigration.

[4] *Philo-Atlas: Handbuch für die jüdische Auswanderung*, ed. Ernst G. Löwenthal (Berlin: Philo, 1938), 196.

[5] Weiker gives the number as 2,363; Weiker, *Ottomans, Turks*, 255.

[6] Günter Seufert, "Kritische Einschätzung der Wissenschaftsmigration durch die türkische Zeitgeschichtsschreibung: Bahnbrechende Aufsätze Mete Tunçays und Haldun Özens," in *Deutsche Wissenschaftler im türkischen Exil: Die Wissenschaftsemigration in die Türkei 1933–1945*, ed. C. Kubaseck and G. Seufert (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2008), 166–169. The debate about the Dârülfünun became the crystallizing point of various overlapping political disputes and power struggles that occupied the young republic; their discussion is beyond the scope of this book. Another reason the old university's faculty was sidelined was its members' insistence on the autonomy legally enshrined in 1924.

The reform plan was preceded by a report by the Swiss professor of pedagogy Albert Malche, who in 1932 had been commissioned by the Turkish government to assess the state of Turkey's higher education system. In consequence of Malche's report, the decision was made to create a "completely new" university, which now needed to recruit internationally renowned teaching staff.

Immediately after the beginning of the persecution in Germany, academic émigrés from Nazi Germany came together in Zurich. On the initiative of the Frankfurt pathologist Philipp Schwartz, they founded the Advisory Office for German Scientists (Beratungsstelle für deutsche Wissenschaftler). Schwartz knew about Malche's work and attempted, with Malche's support, to secure positions in Turkey for as many German emigrants as possible.[7] In July 1933, Philipp Schwartz traveled to Turkey, where he met with Professor Malche, the Turkish Minister of Education Reşid Galip, and other high officials of the Turkish government to negotiate possible appointments in Turkey. In his memoirs, Schwartz writes about the meeting as follows: "'Can you recommend a professor of ... ?' This question was asked thirty times in the course of the afternoon and was answered with increasing tension." In the evening, Schwartz sent a telegram to Zurich, "Not three but thirty." Following these initial negotiations, over the following months, more German émigrés were successfully placed as instructors at Turkish universities for the winter semester of 1933–34.[8]

As a result of mediation by the Turkish authorities, the political scientist and sociologist Dr. Gerhard Kessler, who at the time was wanted by the Gestapo and had gone underground, was able to leave Germany for Turkey.[9] In a few cases, Turkish politicians were able to obtain the release of detained relatives of exiled professors from concentration camps in Germany.[10] Strategic and commercial policy interests may well have

[7] Helge Peukert, introduction to *Notgemeinschaft: Zur Emigration deutscher Wissenschaftler nach 1933 in die Türkei,* by Philipp Schwartz (Marburg: Metropolis, 1995), 12.

[8] Schwartz, *Notgemeinschaft,* 45–46. Many of the names on the original list were later replaced by others, because some of the suggested professors had in the meantime entered into contracts with other countries.

[9] Kessler was not Jewish; he was persecuted for political reasons. On Turkey's interventions on Kessler's behalf, see Cem Dalaman, *Die Türkei in ihrer Modernisierungsphase als Fluchtland für deutsche Exilanten* (electronically published dissertation at Freie Universität Berlin, 1998), 178ff.

[10] For example, the children of the astronomer Hans Rosenberg; Dalaman, *Türkei in Modernisierungsphase,* 105, note 267. Bruno Hellmann, the brother of the ear, nose, and throat specialist Dr. Karl Hellmann, was released from Buchenwald concentration

played a role in these concessions, since Nazi Germany wanted to avoid any negative impact on its relations with Turkey.

The Significance of the Emigration of Scholars to Turkey

The concurrence of these two factors – the Kemalist leadership's politically ambitious plans to close the old Darülfünun, oust its teachers, and create modern universities practically overnight, and the sudden expulsion of an entire academic elite from the universities and public institutions of Hitler's Germany – resulted in eighty-two German professors beginning to teach in Turkey in the winter semester of 1933–34 and in the University of Istanbul becoming the "largest and best German university" (Widmann). Since their contracts allowed these professors to hire assistants of their own choosing, including foreigners, they brought in another 70 to 100 people. These were assistants, lecturers, and medical or technical staff, many of whom belonged to a persecuted group themselves, while others followed their professors into exile out of solidarity or because of their anti-Nazi stance. Horst Widmann names 144 German and former Austrian emigrants who were employed as full professors, lecturers, and academic assistants at universities in Ankara and Istanbul. The qualification to this statement is, however, that many of the exiles moved on to other countries after a relatively short stay and were replaced by colleagues – in other words, not all of those 144 were actually residing in Turkey at the same time.[11]

The legacy these professors left behind went beyond their contribution to the establishment of these universities and beyond the textbooks they wrote, some of which are still used today. In addition to their teaching activities, many of them served as experts and advisors in public service. For example, the law scholar Ernst E. Hirsch was involved in drawing up several of Turkey's fundamental laws; the former Social Democratic Party MP and later mayor of Berlin, Ernst Reuter, worked for the Turkish Ministry of Economics and served as a government advisor on city planning. Albert

camp; communication from Hellmann's niece, Miriam Schmidt, to Arnold Reisman; Arnold Reisman, *Turkey's Modernization: Refugees from Nazism and Atatürk's Vision* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publications, 2006), 397. Miriam Schmidt's father, Karl Hellmann, "managed to bring him [Bruno Hellmann] to Turkey based on a status of an employee of the university/government. Maybe he paid some 'Bakshish' [bribes]. Later on, ... the Turks would not let him stay and ... the police came and took him to the Bulgarian border. Again, my father intervened and managed to bring him back... Ultimately, ... he managed to get into the USA."; ibid, 522.

[11] Horst Widmann, *Exil und Bildungshilfe: Die deutschsprachige akademische Emigration in die Türkei nach 1933* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1973), 131 and 167.



FIGURE 4.1. The artistic director Carl Ebert (on the left, in rehearsal with students) was instrumentally involved in founding the conservatory in Ankara and headed its theater and opera training programs.

Eckstein, the director of the pediatric clinic at the Numune Hastanesi (Model Hospital) in Ankara, did extensive research on preventive medicine. The architects Clemens Holzmeister[12] and Bruno Taut designed and built central public buildings, among them the parliament building in Ankara (Holzmeister) and the Department of Literary Studies building (Taut). The influence of the musicians Paul Hindemith and Eduard Zuckmayer, who headed, and were instrumental in establishing, the conservatory, can still be heard in Turkey today (see Figure 4.1).

The positive portrayals of this "knowledge transfer," however, generally make no mention of the fact that the appointment of the exiled

[12] In 1938, Holzmeister was dismissed from his post by the Austrian Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna for his "non-conforming artistic style." Nonetheless, he cannot be easily grouped with the emigrants: in 1931, he had built a large memorial to the "martyr of the National Socialist movement," Leo Schlageter (the "Schlageter Memorial"), near Düsseldorf. which became a place of pilgrimage for the Nazis. He had begun working for Turkish government agencies in 1926; hence, his involvement was not a consequence of his persecution by the Nazi regime.

academics was directly connected to the destruction of the Dârülfünun in Istanbul. In the summer of 1933, over 150 Turkish university teachers were summarily dismissed. They were by no means all "hopeless reactionaries," as Kemalist historiography would have us believe. Avram Galante, for example, the leading Jewish historian in Turkey, was chair of Cultural History of the Eastern Peoples until 1933 but was not employed at the newly founded university.[13] Mişon Ventura, one of the best-known Jewish jurists in Turkey and one of the spokesmen for the Jewish community in Turkey, was briefly engaged at the Istanbul Üniversitesi but was removed from his position as professor of Roman law shortly after, in 1934, on the pretext of an ostensible tax debt.[14]

The paradoxical situation thus arose that at the very time when the Turkish domestic and educational policy was marked by repression, nationalism, and – to some extent – racism, and both left-wing and liberal intellectuals were subjected to repression in Turkey, Jewish and critical academics who had been chased out of Germany were delivering lectures in Istanbul that were positively revolutionary. In a lecture series organized in 1934, Ernst von Aster spoke on "Free Will," Gerhard Kessler on "Politics and Morals," Alexander Rüstow on "The Obligations Arising from Our Revolution, the Customs of the Past, and the Future of the Worker," Erich Auerbach on "Montesquieu and Freedom of Thought," Alfred Heilbronn on the "Origin and Meaning of Sexual Life," and Philipp Schwartz on "Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalysis."[15]

That Turkey took in the exiled academics for utilitarian rather than humanitarian reasons (contrary to public belief in Turkey today) is also evident from the failure of several attempts by Jewish groups and individuals to persuade Turkey to take in a larger number of Jewish refugees. As early as 1933, the head of the Jewish school in Istanbul, David Marcus, had proposed in vain to Prime Minister Ismet Inönü that a large number of physicians and

[13] Baltacıoğlu provides a list of the professors whose employment was not transferred; Ali Y. Baltacıoğlu, "Darülfününun Tasfiyesi," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 167 (November 2007), 40. Seufert, too, points out – referring to the works of Mete Tunçay and Haldun Özen – that among those dismissed were several professors who had received a European education and were internationally renowned; Seufert, *Kritische Einschätzung*, 170.

[14] In 1942, Ventura tried once again unsuccessfully to obtain a university position. In 1943, he was taken to Aşkale for forced labor service in the context of the Varlık Vergisi measures. Ventura had already been prohibited in 1924 – like many other well-known Jewish attorneys – from practicing law on the basis of the Attorneyship Law passed the same year. For detailed information on Ventura, see Bali, *Devlet'in Yahudileri*, 187–220.

[15] Widmann, *Exil*, 194ff.

pharmacists be "imported" from Germany.[16] In 1933, Albert Einstein, in his capacity as honorary president of the international Jewish charity organization Oeuvre de secours aux Enfants (OSE), also applied to Turkey to grant employment to forty Jewish scientists and doctors from Germany. Although he even proposed that these people waive their salary for one year, Einstein's demand was turned down by Prime Minister Inönü.[17] Some time later, the president of the Jewish Agency, Chaim Weizmann, petitioned Turkish government authorities to grant asylum to a large number of prominent and well-off Jews. His proposal was rejected by Turkey as well.[18]

As mentioned, the Turkish government simultaneously employed specialists and academics from Nazi Germany who were loyal to the Nazi regime. Their number was much higher than that of the émigrés; in fact, the majority of the Germans living in Turkey were followers of the National Socialist regime. However, they were, for the most part, technicians, engineers, and members of similar professions. Only at the agricultural college in Ankara were the pro-Nazi German university teachers in the majority. Some institutes, among them the Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography in Ankara, employed both pro-Nazi German and émigré academics; Karl Steuerwald and Annemarie von Gabain were among the former. However, the émigrés generally had significantly higher qualifications and consequently occupied better positions than the Germans who were loyal to the Nazi regime.

"Stellar Moments"

Many of the émigrés were outstanding scholars and scientists who performed important functions for the Turkish government. Consequently, several of them had contacts in the upper echelon of the Turkish regime and gained entrance into the "Turkish aristocracy," as Erna Eckstein puts it in her memoirs.[19] The surgeon Rudolf Nissen treated high-level

[16] Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında*, 331.

[17] Prime Minister Inönü's letter of refusal to Albert Einstein, dated October 14, 1933; BCA, 030.10.116.810.3.

[18] PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 539, several letters. According to a report by the German Embassy in Ankara, dated December 13, 1938, Weizmann had proposed the settlement of 15,000 Jews, each of whom was said to have over 3,000 pounds sterling. According to the report, the Turkish press was forbidden from even mentioning Dr. Weizmann's presence; PAAA, R 99446. Weizmann himself does not mention any such suggestion in his memoirs; Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966).

[19] The pediatrician Albert Eckstein treated the children of several government members. These contacts led to close friendships with ministers and even with the head of state,

government officials and army officers and was on friendly terms with a number of people from this circle. In moving words, Ernst E. Hirsch describes his participation in the official reception on the occasion of the anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic at Dolmabahçe Palace on October 28, 1933, a few weeks after his arrival in Turkey:

> There I stood, a "refugee" disdained in his German homeland for being a Jew, driven out of his official position because of his "inferior" race, having given up home and hearth to emigrate into foreign exile, [now] "off in Turkey, far away," in the middle of a former throne room overflowing with crystal, alabaster, marble, porphyry, and intarsia, and furnished with expensive furniture, carpets, and paintings, as a German professor counted among the upper crust! It was a stellar moment![20]

Financially, the exiled professors were in a much better position than their Turkish counterparts; their salaries – the equivalent of about 1,000 Reich Marks – were considerably higher than those of their Turkish colleagues. Furthermore, the prominent refugees enjoyed a special position that to some extent protected them from the extension of the persecution in Hitler's Germany into Turkey and from Turkey's repressive refugee policies.[21]

This explains why the tenor of the published memoirs is so positive, even though in historical retrospect it may seem astonishing how poorly informed this relatively privileged group was about the generally repressive situation in the country. Scarcely any of them seem to have been aware of the expulsion of Jews from Thrace, of the murder and deportation of Kurds from Dersim – both events that occurred during the years of their stay – or of the difficulties of their fellow Jews in Turkey, or the precarious situation of the non-privileged German Jewish refugees.

Political and Legal Restrictions

The more prominent émigrés were, however, subject to legal restrictions in Turkey as well. Their employment contracts and Turkish residency

Atatürk. Erna Eckstein, quoted in Nejat Akar, *Anadolu'da Bir Çocuk Doktoru: Ord. Prof. Dr. Albert Eckstein* (Ankara: Çocuk Hastalıkları Araştırma Vakfı, 1999), 32.

[20] Ernst E. Hirsch, *Aus des Kaisers Zeiten durch die Weimarer Republik in das Land Atatürks: eine unzeitgemäße Autobiographie* (Munich: Schweitzer, 1982), 191. The phrase "off in Turkey, far away" is a line from Goethe's *Faust* that is frequently quoted in Germany.

[21] When Dr. Eckstein was sent to Vienna by Minister of Finance Şakir Kesebir in April 1938 (a few weeks after the annexation of Austria) to treat Kesebir's sick daughter, President Atatürk provided him with "personal protection" by Turkish security personnel. Under Kesebir's protection, Eckstein even managed to take two persecuted people with him on his return trip from Austria; Akar, *Anadolu'da*, 6.

laws prohibited them from engaging in any kind of political activities, even against Nazi Germany. A violation of this provision would have led to expulsion. Comparable regulations were also in force in other neutral countries, for example, in Switzerland. Edzard Reuter writes that even their freedom of movement was quite limited: "During the more than eleven years of our stay, [we could] never travel in earnest beyond the boundaries of the cities open to us; everything else was more or less without exception a prohibited military zone."[22] Some of the anti-Jewish attacks in the press also directly targeted the exiled Jewish academics.[23]

Despite the prohibition of political activities, Ernst Reuter and Gerhard Kessler founded the Free German Movement (Deutscher Freiheitsbund) in Istanbul in 1943, which was joined by a few other émigrés, but because of the prohibitions imposed by Turkey, the group did not make its existence public. It had no great impact, either in Turkey or internationally. That the Turkish authorities tolerated its activities at all is probably owing to the prominence of its members, particularly Ernst Reuter. The architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, who through the mediation of Bruno Taut worked in Turkey for about two years after 1938, writes in her memoirs that there were also groups of German and Austrian Communists working clandestinely in Istanbul.[24]

Nazi Persecution Abroad

In Turkey, too, the emigrants were subject to constant surveillance by the Reich German authorities (such as the embassy and the consulates) and by National Socialist organizations. Several volumes of records from the German Embassy in Ankara and the consulate in Istanbul show how extensively they were spied upon. In this endeavor, the diplomatic agencies relied on the cooperation of NSDAP members in Turkey and on denunciations by Germans loyal to the regime. Their surveillance was so thorough that the German consul in Istanbul complained to the embassy in Ankara that too much work time was being lost processing inquiries regarding the emigrants.[25]

[22] Edzard Reuter, *Schein und Wirklichkeit – Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Siedler, 1998), 118. Edzard Reuter, the son of Ernst Reuter, went with his parents as an eight-year-old to Turkey, where they spent eleven years. From 1987 to 1995, he was CEO of Daimler-Benz.

[23] Şaul, *Balat'tan*, 80f.

[24] Margarethe Schütte-Lihotzky, *Erinnerungen aus dem Widerstand 1938–1945* (Hamburg: Konkret Literatur Verlag, 1985), 47–58.

[25] Letter by Toepke from the German Consulate in Istanbul, dated June 15, 1937, to the German Embassy in Ankara; PAAA, German Consulate General in Istanbul, *Emigrants*, vol. I.

The spying was by no means limited to German and Austrian émigrés. The files also contain reports on Turkish Jews, among them the rabbi of the Ashkenazi community and director of the Jewish school, Dr. Markus, whose "enemy activities in émigré circles" were minutely recorded.[26]

In May 1938, the German Foreign Office had a questionnaire sent to the Germans living in Turkey via the consulates, in which the recipients were asked whether they were "Aryans or non-Aryans" (Jews) or were persecuted in Germany for other reasons.[27] This survey enabled the consulates to classify the Germans working abroad as either émigrés or Reich Germans, a distinction that had considerable ramifications for their legal status. Individuals considered to be émigrés had to pay a *Reichsfluchtsteuer* (tax for fleeing the Reich);[28] their property in Germany was confiscated, and eventually they frequently had their citizenship revoked.

In May 1939, the Foreign Department of the Reich Ministry of Education sent the senior government official Herbert Scurla on a two-week inspection tour of Turkey to investigate "the activities of German university teachers at Turkish academic institutions."[29] Scurla listed each of the exiled academics working in Turkey as either "Aryan" or "non-Aryan" and meticulously noted their contacts among each other. His conclusion was that the émigrés had "an extraordinary influence," that Istanbul University was "Judaized" (*verjudet*); and that "measures [needed to] be considered to weaken the position of the émigrés at Istanbul University."[30] The repressive measures proposed by Scurla included, for example, passport cancellation or revocation of citizenship. The latter proposal was made in the (justified) hope that stateless Jews would not receive residence permits in Turkey and would consequently be expelled.

On this point, however, the Nazi policies regarding Jewish scholars and scientists abroad were contradictory. For various reasons, it was in the interest of the Nazi government in Berlin not to strip all the dismissed and expelled Jewish scientists and scholars of their citizenship but to

[26] PAAA, German Consulate General in Istanbul, Emigrants, vol. II.

[27] PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 732.

[28] The *Reichsfluchtsteuer* had already been introduced in 1931. Beginning in 1933, it mainly targeted Jews who wanted to emigrate; they had a portion of their property confiscated upon emigration.

[29] His report was published by Klaus-Detlev Grothusen in 1987; *Der Scurla-Bericht: Bericht des Oberregierungsrates Dr. rer. pol. Herbert Scurla von der Auslandsabteilung des Reichserziehungsministeriums in Berlin über seine Dienstreise nach Ankara und Istanbul vom 11. – 25. Mai 1939* (Frankfurt/M: Dağyeli, 1987).

[30] Grothusen, *Scurla-Bericht*, 116 and 125.

maintain, at least indirectly, contact with some of them.[31] This approach was applied in Turkey as well. In a few cases, the German authorities even expressed an interest in the continued stay in Turkey of Jews persecuted in Germany, as they were an asset to Germany's reputation.[32] In reply to warnings from the NSDAP Foreign Organization branch about the unduly large influence of the Jewish professors in Turkey, the German ambassador said that non-Jewish scientists and academics in Germany could hardly be persuaded to give up their positions to work in Turkey.[33] Scurla's attempt at pressuring the Turkish government not to employ any Jewish or opposition academics did not meet with much success, either, which may be partly attributable to the fact that his 1939 visit fell under the period of Turkey's rapprochement with England and France and the concurrent cooling of German-Turkish relations.

Numerous publications have appeared in the past years on the subject of Turkey as a country of exile. Some of the prominent former exiles in Turkey have published their memoirs,[34] several exhibitions and catalogues have been devoted to exile in Turkey,[35] and exile research has produced numerous studies in various academic fields that include Turkey as an exile destination.[36] It is the large number of publications

[31] Several consulate files explicitly emphasize the "loyal attitude" of numerous exiled academics toward Germany during the first years of their exile. The citizenship revocations of the years 1933–38 primarily targeted political opponents of the regime or high-profile personalities who had gone into exile. The blanket revocation of the German citizenship of all Jewish Germans took place in 1941.

[32] Letter from the German Embassy in Ankara, dated December 3, 1935, to the German Foreign Office in Berlin, regarding a Jewish man from Düsseldorf, Dr. Wilhelm Wadler; BAL, R 901–47052. The letter notes approvingly that Wadler had tried, while employed at the Pathological Institute of Istanbul University, to "procure orders from German industry." Numerous consular files show that there was – albeit limited – contact with a number of Jewish emigrants.

[33] Letter by Ambassador Fabricius, dated March 8, 1935. Fabricius had earlier supported the appointment of German scientists "without regard to religion" for the purpose of "spreading our cultural influence in Turkey." Telegram by Fabricius, A 1209, dated August 9, 1933; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 539.

[34] Philipp Schwartz (1995); Rudolf Nissen (1969); Fritz Neumark (1980); E. E. Hirsch (1982); Edzard Reuter (1998), to name only a few.

[35] Jan Cremer and Horst Przytulla, *Exil Türkei: deutschsprachige Emigranten in der Türkei 1933–1945* (Munich: Lipp, 1991) and Verein Aktives Museum, *Haymatloz – Exil in der Türkei 1933–1945* (Berlin, 2000).

[36] Faruk Şen and Dirk Halm, eds., *Exil unter Halbmond und Stern* (Essen: Klartext, 2007); Reisman, *Turkey's Modernization;* Kemal Bozay, *Exil Türkei – ein Forschungsbeitrag zur deutschsprachigen Emigration in die Türkei (1933 –1945)* (Münster: LIT, 2001); Widmann, *Exil und Bildungshilfe*; not to mention the several books and articles dedicated to the exile of scholars of particular academic fields.

alone that contributes to the impression that Turkey was an important country of exile for persecuted Jews, an impression readily fostered by Turkish propaganda.[37] Yet it was the main, extraordinary feature of exile in Turkey that – owing to the fact that the university system was still in development – such a large number of exiled scholars, some of them outstanding, was employed predominantly at a single university, Istanbul Üniversitesi. In several institutes, the exiled German professors and scientists actually constituted the majority of the faculty compared to the small number of their Turkish colleagues. Still, this peculiarity should not be misinterpreted to mean that Turkey was in general a country of exile for persecuted Jews. Evaluation of information collected by the Verein Aktives Museum shows that between 1933 and 1945, a total of eighty-five scholars persecuted in Germany or Austria (sixty-nine Jews or individuals persecuted for anti-Semitic reasons and sixteen individuals politically opposed to Nazi Germany) were employed as professors, institute directors, advisors to Turkish state agencies, or in similar positions. Another seventy-two people (sixty-three Jews, nine Nazi opponents) held positions as lecturers, assistants, editors, laboratory technicians, and similar posts. Another 112 Jews worked in private enterprise or got by with various jobs. Including all the family members and servants who joined them, the total number of people persecuted in Greater Germany for being Jewish who officially found exile in Turkey added up to only approximately 550. Forty of these scholars – who with their families totaled about 100 – stayed in Turkey for less than two years.

The Living Conditions of Non-Prominent Jewish Refugees in Turkey

The other side – the living conditions of non-prominent refugees in Turkey who tried to get by under, for the most part, extremely difficult conditions – is unfortunately scarcely documented. Their fate, as Jan Cremer remarks, is "as good as outside the reach of today's historical research."[38] The total number of these people is estimated to be about 300.

[37] Mesut Ilgım, for example, maintained that Turkey had taken in more than 1,000 scientists and scholars and had thus – family members included – saved the lives of approximately 4,000 Jews; in *Şalom* (a Jewish weekly published in Istanbul), dated February 18, 2009.

[38] Cremer and Przytulla, *Exil Türkei*, 27. See also Anne Dietrich, *Deutschsein in Istanbul: Nationalisierung und Orientierung in der deutschsprachigen Community von 1843–1956* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1998), 260.

This category includes quite a few German Jews who had not reached Turkey as refugees but had already arrived there – in some cases even at the government's request – before 1933 as specialists, scientists, and in other capacities, and who now, being Jewish, were not able to return to Nazi Germany. Many of them also lost their positions at official German institutions or businesses in Turkey. This group includes, for example, the teacher Julius Stern, who in 1929 had been recruited through the German Foreign Office to teach at the German School in Istanbul; the director of the Istanbul branch of the Deutsche Bank, Edmond Goldenberg; and the chemist Otto Gerngross along with his family, as well as laborers, engineers, and others.

The living conditions of the non-prominent exiles were considerably more difficult than those of their more prominent counterparts. The 1932 Law on Activities and Professions in Turkey Reserved for Turkish Citizens generally barred foreigners from obtaining work permits for most occupations, and in 1935, the grace period that had initially applied to some professions expired as well.[39] New Turkish laws aimed at reducing the number of foreign employees in various employment sectors reduced the work opportunities for immigrants still further.[40]

The restrictive Turkish regulations forced many refugees into illegality. Some – primarily women – obtained the right to remain by marrying Turkish nationals. However, if the Turkish authorities learned that the marriage was a "marriage of convenience," expulsion loomed.[41] The daughter of the Jewish bookstore owner Anton Karon, whose bookstore at the Tünel (at the end of Istanbul's famous road İstiklal Caddesi, in the direction of Galata) was a meeting place for exiles (see Figure 4.2), gives a vivid description of the refugees' oppressive situation: "There were so many who were having a hard time... And those, too, I saw at my father's. Many came, read the newspaper from morning to night, warmed up. There were many who tried to commit suicide because they could not go on... This fear, fear for their lives, it's not even imaginable... The professors, they came on a contract, but the others, they could be expelled

[39] Law No. 2007 of June 11, 1932, stipulated that an entire range of occupations would be reserved for "Turkish citizens"; these included skilled professions – such as veterinarian, chemist – as well as various jobs that required little or no qualification, such as maid, janitor, driver; *Düstür*, Tertip III, vol. 13, pp. 649–650.

[40] Law No. 3293 of December 27, 1937, made state subsidies for industrial and insurance businesses contingent on the reduction of the proportion of foreign staff; *Düstür*, Tertip III, vol. 19.

[41] The German Jewish woman Edith Norden, for example, was expelled by order of February 21, 1939; BCA, 030.10/99.641.7.



FIGURE 4.2. Anton Karon's bookstore in Istanbul was a meeting place for emigrants. (Courtesy of the Alfandari family.)

from one day to the next. And then, what happened to them then? ... They had no history and no name, but also a very sad life."[42]

Turkish Measures to Prevent Jewish Immigration

The anti-minority mood in Turkey described earlier was now directed to some extent against immigrants as well. In 1936–37, several Turkish newspapers stirred up resentment against the Jewish émigré professors, throwing into the mix the indignation of dismissed former Dârülfünun lecturers, criticism of the Kemalist regime, and anti-Semitic ideas.[43] The philosophy professor Hans Reichenbach, who was dismissed from the University of Berlin in 1933 and taught at the University of Istanbul from 1934 onward, wrote in a letter from Turkey: "In addition, there is a rather nasty nationalism in the country, and in the student body as well,

[42] Interview with Elfriede (Elfi) Alfandari, née Karon, conducted by Anne Dietrich, *Deutschsein*, 264; also my own interview with E. Alfandari from March 2004.

[43] Alfred J. Fischer, *In der Nähe der Ereignisse: Als jüdischer Journalist in diesem Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Transit, 1991), 124; Bali, *Devlet'in Yahudileri*, 275–284.

that manifests itself in an unpleasant anti-Semitism."[44] In her memoirs, Lieselotte Dieckmann also mentions the "fanatical and horrible nationalism," the atmosphere of mistrust on all sides, and "the presence of the secret police in [university] lectures."[45]

At the end of 1937, the MP and former minister of agriculture Sabri Toprak submitted a draft law aimed at prohibiting the settlement of Jewish emigrants in Turkey.[46] Toprak's proposal was rejected by the parliamentary majority, but the debates in the Turkish press revealed the existence of an anti-Semitic current in Turkey. "The people do not want Jews to come to Turkey again" or "How can we prevent the flood of Jews?" were some of the newspaper headlines. The counterargument held that Turkey was already adequately "protected" by the laws in effect and that furthermore there were – with the exception of the professors – hardly any Jewish emigrants in Turkey.[47]

Toprak presumably did not know that the government had long since taken precautions to fend off Jewish immigrants. The files of the German Embassy in Ankara show that in the spring of 1937 at the latest, an internal decree of the Turkish Foreign Ministry instructed the pertinent agencies to prevent the immigration of Jews to Turkey. After Jews from Germany had repeatedly been denied entry permits, the German Embassy requested clarification from the Turkish Foreign Ministry.[48] In its response letter of

[44] Letter of December 27, 1934, to the physicist Georg Landé, who lived in the United States. Quoted in Reinhard Siegmund-Schulze, *Mathematiker auf der Flucht vor Hitler: Quellen und Studien zur Emigration einer Wissenschaft* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1998), 118. At the same time, Reichenbach's letter bespeaks the arrogance of many emigrants toward the Turkish population. One sentence reads: "Intellectually, it is very disappointing. The country is still very far from being a cultured people." Ibid.

[45] Liselotte Dieckmann, "Akademische Emigranten in der Türkei," in E. Schwarz and M. Wegner, eds., *Verbannung: Aufzeichnungen deutscher Schriftsteller aus dem Exil* (Hamburg: C. Wegner, 1964), 122–126. In contrast to Reichenbach, Dieckmann was aware that the foreign professors had "simply been plonked in front of" the Turkish ones.

[46] In another draft law submitted at the same time, Toprak called for monetary fines or prison sentences to be imposed on Turkish citizens who spoke a language other than Turkish in public. Toprak's explanations clearly reveal the anti-Jewish objective of both drafts; see the *République* (French edition of the daily *Cumhuriyet*) of January 9, 1938.

[47] Detailed reports from the German Embassy in Ankara including excerpts from the Turkish press in PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 539.

[48] Verbal note of April 2, 1937. At first glance, it may seem surprising that the Nazi German agencies abroad would advocate the interests of Jews they themselves persecuted. The reason is that, until the prohibition on the emigration of Jews in October 1941, Nazi policy aimed to drive the Jews out of Germany and therefore encouraged their settlement abroad. Consequently, the German authorities even enquired about settlement possibilities for Jews at a rural estate in Turkey; letters of December 14, 1938, and January 23, 1939. All documents quoted in PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 539.

May 7, 1937, the Turkish Foreign Ministry emphasized that, according to Turkish law, the right to immigrate was reserved for members of the "Turkish race and culture."[49] In a meeting that took place on May 25, 1937, the deputy director general at the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Kemal Aziz Payman, explained to his German counterpart that Turkish policy in this matter was based on Article 4 of the İskân Kanunu (Settlement Law) No. 2510 of June 1934 (see Chapter 3). "Germans in general" – that is, non-Jewish Germans – and other (non-Jewish) foreigners were not, according to Payman, considered immigrants, even if they settled in Turkey for an indeterminate length of time.[50] "In strict confidence" he added that the Turkish Foreign Ministry had issued a secret brief aimed at preventing the immigration of Jews, "as they were regarded to be an undesirable element."

Some Turkish consulates interpreted this brief so broadly that they generally denied Jews from Germany an entrance visa for Turkey, even for short-term stays like business trips.[51] Also, the Turkish authorities already began to expel German Jews in the course of 1937, frequently granting them a period of only a few days to leave the country.[52] As many of the expelled turned to the German consular offices, a number of such cases are documented in the files of the Ankara embassy.[53]

In August 1937, three German Jews went to the German Embassy in Istanbul and reported that a week earlier they had been picked up by the secret police and ordered to leave Turkey. On this occasion, they had learned from a secretary at the Ministry of the Interior by the name of Arif Bey that there were plans to expel a total of 300 to 400 people who had immigrated to Turkey after 1933.[54] Documents from Turkish archives confirm that these plans existed. The statement by the minister of the interior explaining the expulsion order against Edith Norden, for example, notes that German Jews had had to leave Germany after

[49] PAAA, Ankara Embassy, 681, Letter of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs No. 9673/26 of May 7, 1937.

[50] Note from May 26, 1937, regarding a meeting with Payman the previous day; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 681.

[51] See several reports from the German consulates in Athens and Palestine to the German Embassy in Ankara regarding the fact that the local Turkish consulates denied entry visas to German Jews or, alternatively, demanded proof of Aryan descent; various letters in PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 676.

[52] Letter by Kroll, dated September 16, 1937; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 676.

[53] Various documents in PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 676, 677, 679, 681.

[54] Note of August 5, 1937. The three people were G. Seeliger, H. Lewin, and K. J. Lewin. Letter by Consul Toepke, dated August 6, 1937; PAAA, Ankara Embassy, 681. Unfortunately, I was unable to determine the identity of the "Arif Bey" mentioned here.

the establishment of the Nazi regime and that some of them had come to Turkey. "[When] it became evident that they intended to settle here, German Jews in this situation were expelled from our country to prevent a concentration of Jews."[55]

Laws against Refugees

In the course of 1938, the number of Jewish refugees increased heavily on an international level. One reason for this was the annexation of Austria, which was accompanied by extreme harassment against the Jewish population (the Anschluss pogrom) and which also brought with it the adoption of the anti-Jewish laws already in effect in Germany.[56] Adding to the fear of an "onslaught of Jewish refugees" in Turkey were in particular the developments in neighboring Romania, whose government, led by the anti-Semite Goga, planned to issue legislation that would strip about 250,000 Romanian Jews of their citizenship.[57] Starting in August 1938, Italy also enacted anti-Jewish laws, expelling foreign Jews from the country and revoking the Italian citizenship of many of its naturalized Jewish citizens.

Against this backdrop, Turkey's parliament and government passed two laws in June 1938: the Passport Law (No. 3519) on June 28, 1938 and the Law Regarding the Residence and Travel of Foreigners in Turkey (No. 3529) on June 29, 1938. Article 3 of the Passport Law prohibited anyone carrying neither a valid passport nor any other kind of citizenship papers from entering Turkey. The prohibition explicitly included holders of Nansen passports[58] or other refugee papers; at best, they could obtain transit visas. In addition, Article 4 of the Passport Law prohibited all former Turkish citizens who had given up their citizenship or had had it revoked from entering the country. Article 20 stipulated that passports, or even visas, for Turkish citizens abroad who had not registered regularly at their consulate could only be issued with prior approval of the Ministry of the Interior in Ankara. These two provisions had calamitous consequences for Turkish Jews living abroad. In contrast, the Muslim immigrants known as *göçmen* or *muhacir*, who had come in the course

[55] BCA, 030.10/99.641.7 (see note 41).

[56] According to estimates, 300,000 people from Germany and Austria were on the run in the summer of 1938; Dillmann in *die tageszeitung* (Berlin), July 7, 2003.

[57] After Goga's removal, this measure was toned down through mediation of the League of Nations.

[58] The passports for stateless persons issued by the League of Nations were called "Nansen passports" after Fridtjof Nansen, commissioner of refugees for the League of Nations after World War I.

of Turkey's campaign to recruit Muslim immigrants, were allowed under the Passport Law to enter the country, even without a passport. Law No. 3529 on the Residence and Travel of Foreigners in Turkey prohibited the continued stay of foreigners already living in Turkey without a valid passport or citizenship papers. On the basis of this law, Jews who had lost their citizenship while living in Turkey could be expelled.

Turkey Requests a "Secret Mark" in Jews' Passports

Although the wording of these laws targeted undesirable refugees in general, their chronological coincidence with the previously mentioned anti-Jewish measures imposed by many countries indicates that Turkey was primarily concerned with "warding off" a feared massive influx of Jews. This becomes apparent from a Turkish inquiry at the German Consulate General in Istanbul in July 1938, a few days after the passage of these laws: the Turks asked the Germans to apply a "mark known only to the [Turkish] police and the [German] General Consulate" to Jews' passports. Jews, the Turks continued, were now only allowed a brief stay in Turkey, after which they had to leave the country. As German passports (which were now also carried by people who were formerly Austrian citizens) did not indicate religion, the Turkish authorities had no way of telling who was Jewish. The "secret mark" was supposed to remedy this problem while being unobtrusive enough to not be noticed by passport holders.[59]

Turkey was by no means the only country that sought to prevent the immigration of Jewish refugees. After the German annexation of Austria in April 1938, neighboring Switzerland in particular was faced with an "enormous influx of Jews." Starting at the end of June, it introduced various measures to curb their entry into the country.[60] In July 1938, an international conference convened by Roosevelt and attended by delegates from thirty-two countries took place in the French spa town of Evian-les-Bains to address the question of Jewish refugees. With the exception of the Dominican Republic, however, all representatives presented long-winded explanations as to why their country was in no position to take in any more persecuted people. The only result of the

[59] Letter from the German ambassador August F.W. von Keller to the Foreign Office in Berlin, dated July 2, 1938. According to von Keller, the inquiry had been made by the deputy director of Section IV of the Istanbul police; PAAA, R 49005.

[60] Initially, Switzerland introduced mandatory visas for travelers from Austria. This was extended to all Reich Germans a few weeks later. Eventually, Switzerland threatened to terminate the passport and visa agreement with Germany unless Germany marked the passports of its Jewish citizens.

conference was the establishment of an international committee, the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR), which, however, had scarcely any authority or resources and only resumed its activities in 1944, after the U.S. government had set up the War Refugee Board.

Turkey was not represented either at Evian or the successor conference in Bermuda. Doğan Nadi, who covered the conference in Evian for *Cumhuriyet*, the newspaper with the highest circulation in Turkey at the time, expressed his position in a column of July 15, 1938: "Let us wish the Evian conference success without falling prey to undue optimism. And let us pray that the wandering children of Moses ... do not turn their steps toward Turkey. And that, if they do, they under no circumstances come in large numbers." Other newspapers, too, warned in crassly anti-Semitic articles and caricatures of the danger of a flood of Jewish refugees. Then, a mere two months after the passage of the two laws mentioned here, the Turkish authorities went one step further.

Secret Decree No. 2/9498

On August 29, 1938, the Turkish government issued Decree No. 2/9498, which barred "foreign Jews who are subject to restrictions in their home countries" from entering Turkey, "regardless of their current religious affiliation."[61] The decree thus referred explicitly to the people categorized and persecuted as Jews by the anti-Jewish legislation issued by Nazi Germany and its allies.[62] It was a secret decree, published neither in the government gazette, *Resmi Gazete*, nor in the official collection of law texts and government decrees, *Düstur*. However, its objective was unambiguously stated in its title: Decree on Precautionary Measures to Prevent the Entry of Foreign Jews into Turkey.[63]

[61] Quoted in the amended version of 1941. This version, too (Decree No. 2/15132 of January 1941), was not officially made public in Turkey. Haim Barlas, who from 1940 acted as the Jewish Agency's official representative, was able to copy the document, and he published a transcription in his report, with numerous orthographic errors; Haim Barlas, *Hatzalah be-yemei ha-Sho'ah* [Rescue in the Days of the Holocaust] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1975), 228–230. The Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA) in Jerusalem holds a transcription of the original document, S 25/6308. I thank Rıfat Bali for providing me with a copy. That the decree of January 1941 is an amended version of Decree 2/9498 is stated in the first paragraphs. It is also apparent from the fact that several sections (regarding deadlines, for example) refer to the date of the original version – August 1938 – and were obviously incorporated into the new version unchanged.

[62] The anti-Semitic legislation of most countries targeted people of Jewish descent regardless of their actual religious affiliation; this approach was adopted by the Turkish decree.

[63] This was the decree's official name according to the government resolution of June 25, 1947, in which it was finally revoked (in its amended version of January 1941); BCA, Resolution No. 3/6067, 30..18.1.2/114.45..7.

The existence of this decree and its contents are confirmed, first, by Decree No. 2/15132 of January 30, 1941, which is an amended version of Decree No. 2/9498, modified because the "precautionary measures adopted against foreign Jews no longer fully meet the requirements of the current situation." Furthermore, Decree No. 2/9498 is mentioned in a number of government resolutions that are preserved in the Prime Minister's Republican Archives. These government resolutions granted certain Jews – mostly family members of specialists working in Turkey – a limited stay in Turkey, expressly "as an exception to Decree No. 2/9498." Its application is confirmed in practical Turkish policy as described by refugees. Starting in about 1938 – meaning around the time the secret decree was issued – Turkey began to reject Jewish refugees even if they still had passports. The secretary of the German Embassy in Ankara, Kroll, reported in a letter to the Foreign Office in Berlin that the Turkish consulates demanded proof of "Aryan descent" before granting an entry visa to Turkey.[64]

In keeping with this decree, the Turkish diplomatic representations abroad also received instructions not to issue visas for Turkey to Jews from countries with anti-Jewish legislation (that is, Germany, Italy, Romania, and Hungary).[65] However, the stringency with which these instructions were enforced varied, and it can be assumed that cash payments played a not insignificant role in this. It appears that for the consuls in Vienna, issuing visas was a lucrative business.[66]

Francis Ofner, who was born in Novi Sad and later became a well-known diplomat and press advisor for Israel, fled to Budapest after the German occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941. A Jewish activist involved in rescue activities himself, he attempted to reach Palestine, or at least Istanbul: "There was one thing; I was a Jew, and Jews did not get Turkish visas... So you could get a Turkish visa only if you could convince the Turkish consul general that you are an Arian, a non-Jew. Which means that you could provide documental proof that, for at least three generations, you had no Jewish blood."[67] Ofner finally succeeded in obtaining a

[64] Letter by Kroll, dated January 23, 1939; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 539.

[65] Paragraph 2, section 1 of the decree of 1941. Bali does not mention the decree of 1938 but speaks about the corresponding practice; Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında*, 342.

[66] Letter from the DÖW (Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, Documentation Centre of the Austrian Resistance) to the author, dated August 7, 2003.

[67] Video recording of Eli and Francis Ofner, Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (hereafter USHMM) RG-50.120*0115. 1995.A.1272.

Turkish entry visa after presenting forged Catholic papers – down to all four grandparents.[68]

The Turkish authorities also applied this regulation to exiles who had settled in Turkey prior to 1938; they had to retroactively prove that they were not Jewish.[69] This happened to the teacher Julius Stern: after his contract at the German School in Istanbul had expired in 1936, he found a position at the renowned Galatasaray Lisesi (a secondary school). In 1938, the Turkish authorities demanded that he produce a baptismal certificate. Stern had the good fortune to be able to establish contact with the Bishop of Istanbul, Giuseppe Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII, who issued him a forged baptismal certificate.[70] "Specialists whose work is essential for Turkish departments or institutions, or whose stay is considered useful for commercial or economic reasons ..." could, under Article 3 of the secret decree, obtain exceptional permission to stay in Turkey. They could also get permission to have their family members join them. But this was a limited option, if only in practical terms, since it required approval by the entire Cabinet. In the Prime Minister's Republican Archives, eighty-seven individual decisions regarding work, residence, and entry permits for Jews from Germany and Austria, but also for Czech, Hungarian, and Romanian Jews, are listed under the keyword Yahudi (Jew) for the period from 1938 to 1944. These permissions were issued as exceptions to Decree No. 2/9498, a fact explicitly noted in most cases. They also include permissions for a number of émigré professors to be joined by family members, and for a number of Jewish engineers and skilled workers in Turkey to be joined by their wives. Several negative decisions are on file as well. Some of the permits or extensions were granted only for one or two weeks, but most of them were issued for six months or a year. Even mechanics or merchants from Eastern European countries were required to obtain a special ministerial permit for a stay of only one or two weeks, if they were Jewish.

[68] Richard Mayer, also a native of Yugoslavia, independently wrote about his experiences with the anti-Semitic Turkish ambassador in Budapest; unpublished manuscript, USHMM, Ref. No. 2007.218, especially 19ff.

[69] Dietrich Gronau, "Ubi bene ibi patria – ein Lehrer und Kaufmann in Istanbul," in *Das Exil der kleinen Leute: Alltagserfahrungen deutscher Juden in der Emigration,* ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: Beck, 1991), 126 and 129; Verein Aktives Museum, *HAYMATLOZ*, 33.

[70] Gronau, "Ubi bene," 129. Interview with Julius Stern from April 27, 1991, in Dietrich, *Deutschsein,* 308. Stern mentions that Turkey demanded baptismal certificates, but does not mention that he himself was among those affected by this requirement.

Revocation of Citizenship by Germany and Expulsions by Turkey

In October 1938, the German authorities required all German Jews to have their passports stamped with the infamous large red "J." Germany's foreign representations were similarly instructed to put the "J" stamp in the passports of German Jews living abroad.[71] Before the passports of Germans (and former Austrians) living abroad were renewed, the German consulates sought information from the Gestapo in Germany. To forestall the expulsion of Jews, and hence their return to Germany, the passports of many Jews living in Turkey were initially extended for six months or a year with the concurrence of the Gestapo.[72] Expatriated Jews had their residence certificates stamped by the Turkish authorities with the words *HAYMATLOZ-YAHUDI*, thus introducing the German loan word *heimatlos* (stateless) into the Turkish language. Once the laws of June 1938 had come into effect, the Jews expatriated by Germany were also under threat of expulsion from Turkey.

A handful of people – those who were most prominent – were granted Turkish citizenship, among them Rudolf Nissen and Ernst E. Hirsch.[73] It is unknown how many emigrants applied for naturalization, and apparently, applications from German-Jewish refugees were usually turned down.[74] The granting of Turkish citizenship would not only have ensured that the emigrants had a secure place to stay but it also would have enabled them to practice their professions. Other prominent exiles (for example, the Ecksteins and the Eberts) managed to obtain citizenship papers from the Czech exile government in London.[75] While professors and specialists whose services Turkey depended on managed to escape restrictions, the Turkish authorities used the expiration of employment contracts of less prominent people as an opportunity to expel Jewish refugees. In his

[71] The Turkish secret decree was issued two months *before* the introduction of the "J" stamp by the German authorities and was hence by no means a response to this measure.

[72] Documentary evidence including (in some cases detailed) reports can be found in the files of the PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 676. Since up to 1941 Nazi policy primarily aimed to drive the Jews out of Germany, people who did not have valid papers and were even outright persecuted were sometimes issued short-term passports with limited validity.

[73] To the disappointment of the Turkish authorities, however, Nissen left Turkey shortly after his naturalization and accepted an appointment in the United States. E. E. Hirsch was granted citizenship on September 21, 1943, five years after applying, and kept his Turkish citizenship even after resettling in the Federal Republic of Germany.

[74] Letter from the German Consulate General to the German Embassy in Ankara, dated January 28, 1939; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 540. According to research by the Verein Aktives Museum, a total of only six people (along with their families) were granted Turkish citizenship.

[75] Akar, *Anadolu'da*, 83.

memoirs, Chaim Weizmann vividly portrays the depressed and resigned mood among German-Jewish emigrants at the end of 1938.[76]

A note from the German Embassy in Ankara from May 1939 on the effects of the recent legal changes in Turkey states: "At the end of September, almost all residence permits issued to foreigners will expire. This date will not only bring an unpleasant surprise for the majority of the foreigners residing here, but also for the Reich Germans living here, in that the renewal of residence permits will be determined by entirely different criteria. According to these, Jews, unless they are imminently needed as experts or otherwise urgently needed in the service of Turkish interests, will, as a general rule, no longer receive permission [from the Turkish authorities] to stay."[77]

When the eleventh Decree Supplementing the Reich Citizenship Law was issued in 1941 and the majority of Jewish emigrants lost their German citizenship, their situation became worse once again. Many who had escaped expulsion until then were expelled. Academics were not exempt from this: the physician Karl Hellmann, for example, had to leave Turkey, as did the chemist Otto Gerngross and his family. In 1943, when the second round of five-year contracts for academics expired, another large group of emigrants who had become stateless in the course of their stay because they had lost their German citizenship was expelled. Some of them committed suicide.[78]

The Turkish authorities even repeatedly took steps to expel long-term Jewish residents of Turkey with foreign citizenship. In January 1939, a number of Jews residing in Istanbul suddenly received police orders to leave Turkey within a few days. Most of them were Turkish-born Jews of former Austrian nationality who had become German citizens when Austria was annexed. Presumably, Turkey feared that Nazi Germany would withdraw their citizenship in the near future, which would leave them stateless.[79] Their applications for naturalization in Turkey were rejected by the Turkish authorities. As some of the families affected were

[76] Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, 355 and 374.

[77] Note by the Ankara Embassy dated May 9, 1933; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 681.

[78] Verein Aktives Museum, *HAYMATLOZ*, 34f; Dietrich, *Deutschsein*, 269.

[79] Several of the people affected turned for the German embassy asking for intervention with the Turkish authorities on their behalf. The embassy refused but managed to obtain an extension of the departure deadline. Letter by Kroll from the German Embassy in Ankara to the Foreign Office in Berlin, dated January 21, 1939; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 540. Kroll regarded this measure as encouragement to the German authorities to expel Turkish Jews from Germany in return.

respected Jewish residents who had lived in Turkey for generations, expulsion was averted for the majority of them through the mediation of prominent citizens who advocated on their behalf.[80] At about the same time, a large group of Italian Jews was ordered to leave.[81] On the other hand, the Turkish government decided in April 1939 that the Czechoslovak Jews living in Istanbul would no longer be considered stateless even after the occupation of the country by Germany, and that they would not be expelled.[82]

Among the Jews of Turkey, the threat of this impending measure had given rise to concern. A petition by the Jewish community of Turkey on behalf of the families threatened by expulsion had been rebuked by the Turkish government as "exceeding its authority."[83] Several international Jewish newspapers had also reported on the matter. Now the new prime minister, Refik Saydam, made an attempt to contain the damage. In a statement to the assembled representatives of the Turkish press, he emphasized that "Jews of Turkish nationality who reside in Turkey" enjoyed the same constitutional rights as all other Turkish citizens. He once again made assurances that there was no anti-Semitism in Turkey. At the same time, however, he unambiguously and succinctly summed up Turkey's position on Jewish refugees: "Turkey does not permit foreign Jews to move here and refuses to grant entry to Jewish emigrants."[84]

[80] Information given to the author by Robert Schild, whose grandfather was one of the people affected. His uncle's family and other Jewish families had left Turkey abruptly; conversation with Elfi Alfandari, March 2004. In its version of January 1941 at least, the "secret decree" stipulated that Jews who had already permanently resided in Turkey before 1938 were not to be expelled. The number of individuals who were expelled despite negotiation attempts cannot be definitely determined.

[81] This measure was probably connected to Italy's anti-Jewish laws of August 1938 and the consequent revocation of the citizenship of naturalized Jews and the expulsion of foreign (including Turkish) Jews from Italy.

[82] BCA, Resolution of April 27, 1939, 03010.0/206.407.2.

[83] Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında*, 337.

[84] *Ulus* of January 27, 1939. In his speech, Saydam mentioned once again the exemptions granted to specialists who were urgently needed and benefited Turkey but whose stay was strictly limited to the duration of their contracts. He also made it clear that Turkey unambiguously rejected the naturalization of Jews.

5

Turkey as a Transit Country to Palestine

Because of its geographical location, Turkey was also of central importance as a transit country for Jewish refugees. As it was neutral, it constituted an important bridge on the route to Palestine. Both the route by land from Bulgaria and the route by water, first along the Danube then from the Romanian port of Constanta across the Black Sea, led through Turkish territory.

However, numerous obstacles blocked the entry of the Jews to Palestine. Because Palestine had been a British mandate since the end of World War I, Great Britain controlled and limited the immigration of Jews into it. Even before 1933, immigration authorizations, called Palestine Certificates, were issued by the Jewish Agency and the British authorities according to a complicated procedure.[1] Each year, Great Britain set a maximum number of certificates to be issued. These certificates were distributed to the various immigrant groups according to a quota system, after which they had to be verified by the British authorities in London.[2] Thus immigration proved to be a time-consuming bureaucratic procedure, even in peacetime.

[1] The Jewish Agency for Palestine (Hebrew: Sochnut) represented the Yishuv (the Jews living in Palestine); in this capacity, it was the contact organization for the British government.

[2] Visas were issued according to different quotas for "capitalists" (people owning at least £1,000), self-employed individuals, laborers, people with agricultural training, relatives of people already living in Palestine, religious dignitaries, and others. A separate system was in place for young people (the so-called *Youth Aliyah*). As the number of certificates was both limited and subject to quotas, disputes arose between different Jewish organizations about the number of certificates granted to Jews from different countries of origin or with particular political affiliations. Sephardic representatives complained that Ashkenazi received, in terms of percentage, far more certificates; *Le Judaïsme Sépharadi* 24 (1934):161.

Aliyah and the Flight to Palestine

After 1933, the number of immigrations to Palestine shot upward.[3] The reason for this was not only the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany but primarily the immigration of Jews from Poland and other Eastern European countries, whose number was much higher than that of immigrants from Germany.[4] The immigration of more than 170,000 Jews in the years 1933–37 triggered massive protests by the Arab population of Palestine. Between 1936 and 1939, armed uprisings erupted. In response, the White Paper issued by Great Britain in 1939 limited the number of Jewish immigrants to 75,000 over the following five years, with 50,000 of the certificates designated for immigrants and 25,000 for refugees.[5]

During the years 1938–39, both the pressure of persecution and the number of potential Jewish refugees increased sharply because of the intensifying persecution of Jews in Germany, the annexation of Austria and the so-called Sudetenland, and the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Several countries (Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Italy) passed anti-Jewish laws. With the attack on Poland and the establishment of the General Government in the fall of 1939 and the deportation of the Polish Jews to the camps set up there, the Germans began their campaign of murder. They left the deported Jews to starve to death. And yet, the more urgently the Jews needed to flee, the greater the obstacles became. Numerous countries refused to take in Jews. After the beginning of the war, the British authorities stopped granting certificates to Jews from countries that were at war with Great Britain. At the same time, the British navy increased its patrols along the Palestinian coast. Refugees who tried to enter without a Palestine Certificate were turned back by the British or interned in Cyprus, in Mauritius, and sometimes even in Palestine.

[3] *Aliyah* – literary "ascent" – means the immigration of Jews to Palestine/Israel.

[4] Zionism had relatively few adherents among the Jews in Germany. From 1933 to the end of 1937, a total of slightly more than 39,000 Jews left Germany for Palestine; Abraham J. Edelheit, *The Yishuv in the Shadow of the Holocaust: Zionist Politics and Rescue Aliya, 1933–1939* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 56. This number translates into one third of the Jewish emigrants of this time period. By far the most immigrants to Palestine came from Poland, the European country with the largest Jewish population by a large margin. Poland had strong Zionist organizations, and the anti-Semitism virulent there during the inter-war years prompted many Jews to emigrate.

[5] According to British plans, the proportion of Jews in Palestine's overall population was to be increased only with Arab consent and was not to exceed one third; Wolfgang Benz, "Illegale Einwanderung nach Palästina," *Exilforschung* 19 (2001): 130.

Legal Transit Routes through Turkey

With the war, what had been the most important sea route to Palestine, leading from French or Italian ports through the Mediterranean, was blocked.[6] This left the land route, which led from Bulgaria or from Romanian ports to Istanbul and further on through Turkey to the Syrian border. However, in accordance with the regulations in effect in Turkey since 1938, Jews from countries with anti-Jewish legislation (by now, this meant most of the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe) were generally prohibited from entry into, or transit through, Turkey. All exceptions required approval by the Turkish government.

Given British policies, Turkey had every reason to fear that Jewish refugees might "get stuck" in Turkey. Another hurdle was that the land route to Palestine led through Syria, which was under French mandate and granted only a limited number of transit permits. For the year 1940, nine approvals for transit visas for Jewish individuals or families can be found in the Prime Minister's Republican Archives in Ankara. The fact that every transit permit required a separate decision by the entire Turkish cabinet underlines how difficult it was for larger numbers of refugees to transit through Turkey.

At the end of August 1940, the Turkish government granted a transit visa allowing a group of 450 German Jewish children and their escorts to pass through, which they did in December.[7]

In August 1940, Haim Barlas was accredited as the official representative of the Jewish Agency in Turkey.[8] He kept an office at the Pera Palas Hotel in the Beyoğlu quarter of Istanbul. Barlas describes the situation after his arrival in Turkey in the summer of 1940 as follows: "Thousands of Jewish refugees were trapped in Kovno, Bucharest, and other European cities. They held passports and immigration visas to Palestine and had been promised Syrian visas. The only obstacle remaining was the prohibition

[6] With Italy's entry into the war in June 1940, the Mediterranean became part of the theater of war. After the Italian attack on Greece in October 1940, the Aegean Sea in particular became an arena of war. In 1934–39, most of the ships carrying immigrants – legally or illegally – had reached Palestine from France, Italy, Yugoslavia, or Greece. For a list of ships, see Edelheit, *Yishuv in the Shadow of the Holocaust*, 253–254.

[7] Resolution No. 2/14265, dated August 25, 1940; BCA, 30..18.1.2/92.85..5. The children passed through Sweden, Finland, and Russia, boarding a ship in Odessa for Istanbul and continuing from there by train to Palestine. A letter by one of the children (Lizzy Storch) was published in the *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt* (a Jewish newspaper in Prague) on January 24, 1941.

[8] An office that arranged the immigration of Jews to Palestine that had already existed in the thirties and whose reopening was a reaction to the increasing number of Jews trying to reach Palestine via Turkey.

against their passage through Turkey."[9] For four months, Barlas negotiated with Turkish authorities, who continued to raise new objections and refusals. He urgently requested that transit permits be granted at least to those Jews who were in possession of entry certificates, passports, and visas that were issued before the war so they could continue their journey. To dispel possible fears that the refugees might remain in Turkey, Barlas declared that the Jewish Agency was prepared to pay a deposit of any amount demanded by the Turkish government as a guarantee and was willing to assume all costs associated with the transit.[10]

At the end of September, two months after his arrival, Barlas won the consent of the Turkish government to allow the transit of a group of 380 people from Romania "on a trial basis" and to resume discussions on the subject afterwards.[11] Because not all of the refugees in this group met the required conditions and several attempted to obtain authorization to remain in Turkey, the Turkish government once again prohibited the transit of immigrants.[12] Once again, drawn-out negotiations ensued, and not until it had been ascertained that all Jewish refugees from the first group had left the country did the Turkish government issue Decree No. 2/15132 on January 30, 1941. This was an amendment to the secret Decree No. 2/9498. The new decree stated that Turkish consulates could issue transit visas to Jewish refugees if they had an entry visa for Palestine and transit visas for the countries they would cross after Turkey, as well as tickets for the journey and/or adequate financial means.[13]

Although the decree expressly begins with the sentence: "Jews who are subject to restrictions on their life and freedom of movement in their home countries are prohibited from entering Turkey" and lists only a handful of narrowly defined exceptions, it is mistakenly mentioned in several publications in relation to rescue activities during the Holocaust

[9] Barlas, *Hatzalah,* 24f; the English translation of the quote in Tuvia Friling, "Between Friendly and Hostile Neutrality: Turkey and the Jews during World War II," in *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond II,* ed. Minna Rozen (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2002), 332.

[10] Barlas's report of June 15, 1941, on the state of the rescue activities at the AJJDC, Collection 33/44, File 1050/20 F2.

[11] The Prime Minister's Republican Archives in Ankara hold a resolution authorizing the transit of 366 Jews of Romanian, Czech, and Polish nationality; BCA, 30..18.1.2/92.94..19. It dates from the end of September 1940, about two months after Barlas's arrival in Istanbul.

[12] Barlas's report of June 15, 1941; see note 8.

[13] Decree 2/15132, like the original version 2/9498, was never published in Turkey. At the beginning of February, several Turkish press outlets ran short reports on the decree. Haim Barlas published a transcription; Barlas, *Hatzalah,* 228ff.

as a decree permitting persecuted Jews entry into or at least transit through Turkey.[14] This may be attributed to the fact that the decree was indeed mentioned in this way in the Turkish press or was misinterpreted by readers; after all, it did seem like a breakthrough in its slight improvement compared to the previous state of affairs.

In practice, the provisions contained in the new decree mainly affected the Turkish diplomatic representations in Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. The quota of transit visas each of the three consulates was allowed to grant was set by the Foreign Ministry in Ankara. The refugees had to leave Turkey within two weeks. Their stay in Istanbul or other cities was limited to twenty-four hours. Any violation of this regulation or illegal entry into Turkey was punishable by expulsion or a long prison sentence. Turkey also made rescue activities even more difficult by not permitting the export of currency.

While the new regulations by no means indicated a fundamental change of Turkey's position, they did at least reduce bureaucratic expenses for a time because consulates were now allowed to grant transit visas independently – as long as they stayed within the quotas set by the Foreign Ministry.[15] This only applied to Jewish people who had received Palestine Certificates before the war, however. In mid-June 1941, Barlas submitted a report to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (often shortly referred to as Joint) about the success of his work to date. According to his report, 4,850 Jews had reached Palestine via Turkey since his arrival in Istanbul less than a year before.[16] Nonetheless, the

[14] Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel 1939–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 163ff; Friling, "Between Friendly and Hostile," 332; as well as others.

[15] The Prime Minister's Republican Archives in Ankara hold a government decision listed for December 1940 authorizing the transit of "4,687 Jews of various nationalities;" their countries of origin are given as Poland, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Spain, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, France, and Germany; BCA, Resolution No. 2/14907 of December 18, 1940, 30..18.1.2/93.117..7. No mention is made by any of the people involved at the time of any decision to this effect or of organizing the transit of such a large group (or several groups). It can be assumed that the figure refers to the people mentioned in Barlas's memorandum who were "in possession of passports, Palestine Certificates, and visas to continue their journey" and constitutes the total number of visas the three consulates were allowed to issue over the course of the following year. This is corroborated by Foreign Minister Saracoğlu's explanatory statement accompanying the motion for this decision, in which he refers to the negotiations that had taken place. By a resolution of December 30, 1940, another group of 166 Jews, consisting primarily of Romanians, was granted a transit visa; BCA, Resolution No. 2/14980, 30..18.1.2/93.120..20.

[16] Letter of June 15, 1941, AJJDC, Collection 33/44, File 1050/20 F2.

difficulties that Barlas hoped to have overcome were to become more acute again in the following years.

Despite these relaxations, the legal escape route to Palestine was enormously limited during the following years because of high bureaucratic hurdles. In this respect, along with British restrictions and the changing policies of the Nazis' allies in the Balkans, Turkey's restrictive attitude was just one of the numerous mounting obstacles that Jews faced on their flight.

Illegal Immigration by Ship

As early as the 1930s, various Zionist organizations found ways to circumvent legal restrictions and bureaucratic hurdles in order to arrange illegal immigration to Palestine, primarily by ship. These efforts were called *Aliyah Bet*, after the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet.[17] When the war began, the importance of *Aliyah Bet* grew.

Between September 1939 and the beginning of 1942, fifteen ships with more than 12,000 Jewish refugees on board set out for Palestine. About half of them – those traveling from Romania or Bulgaria through the Black Sea – had to pass through the Turkish Straits, which by law were international waters.[18] The sea route was also fraught with unimaginable problems. For one thing, the organizers often had to resort to chartering barely seaworthy freighters at exorbitant prices, which were usually hopelessly overcrowded. Hundreds of people were squeezed together in rotting freighters or excursion boats. From a technical standpoint alone, the passage involved enormous risk, and several ships sank. In October 1940, the *Pencho* ran aground near the island of Rhodes with over 500 Jewish refugees from Slovakia and Bulgaria on board; many of the passengers drowned. Others were saved by Italian coastal ships and interned in Italy until liberation.[19]

[17] Especially active in this was the right-wing Zionist youth movement Betar, founded by Ze'ev Jabotinsky. The disagreements and arguments between the various Zionist organizations do not come into the scope of this book.

[18] Leni Yahil, *Die Shoah, Überlebenskampf und Vernichtung der europäischen Juden* (Munich: Luchterhand, 1998), 843. Jürgen Rohwer, "Jüdische Flüchtlingsschiffe im Schwarzen Meer (1934–1944)," in *Das Unrechtsregime, Band 2*, ed. Ursula Büttner (Hamburg: Christians, 1986), 197–248. Rohwer offers the most comprehensive account regarding the refugee ships. According to a list from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated October 7, 1942, twenty-one ships and motor boats carrying 7,136 passengers had passed through Turkish waters between March 1933 and October 1942; BCA, 030.10.0.0/99641.13.

[19] The ship's engine was already defective when it set off from Bulgaria; it was under quarantine because of contagious diseases on board. Among the passengers were a

In December 1940, the *Salvador,* traveling from Varna in Bulgaria with 327 Czech and Bulgarian Jews on board, was shipwrecked during a heavy storm off the coast of Silivri on the Sea of Marmara after a short stop in Istanbul.[20] Of its passengers, 204 refugees, 70 of them children, drowned, while 123 were saved. Jewish relief organizations provided financial assistance to the survivors, and the Turkish government allowed them to travel to Istanbul and stay there until they obtained entry visas for Palestine and were able to travel on to their destination.[21] Ships traveling from Romania or Bulgaria also had to pass through waters that were in the war zone, which meant that many of the refugee ships came under fire by mistake. This happened to the *Struma* in 1942 and the *Mefkûre* in 1944. Finally, the British sought to prevent the illegal immigration of people not in possession of valid Palestine Certificates by all means possible. In the fall of 1940, the two refugee ships *Milos* and *Pacific* were detained for weeks in the port of Haifa with hundreds of Jewish refugees on board, and the passengers were eventually transferred to the *Patria* and sent to Mauritius by the British. In order to foil this plan, the Haganah launched a sabotage attack that – unintentionally – sank the ship, causing the death of over 250 people.[22]

Turkey made flight along this route more difficult by generally not allowing the refugee ships to put in at its ports on their way. In August 1939, the *Parita,* with 800 refugees from Germany, Poland, and

number of Polish Jews who had been released from concentration camps; Benz, "Illegale Einwanderung," 131; and Rohwer, "Jüdische Flüchtlingsschiffe." Some of the *Pencho* passengers managed to reach Rhodes and thus save themselves. One of the passengers, Hans Goldberger, gives us an eye-witness account of the journey of the *Pencho*; "On the Pentcho," in *Hunter and Hunted: Human History of the Holocaust,* ed. Gerd Korman (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 149–155. According to Goldberger, the Turkish authorities refused even to supply the passengers with water and bread when the *Pencho* passed Istanbul; ibid., 152.

[20] The *Salvador* arrived in Istanbul on December 6, 1940, but was forced to put to sea on December 12, 1940, despite bad weather. On the same day, she ran into a heavy storm in the Marmara Sea off Silivri and sank after both masts broke.

[21] Friling writes, on the basis of Barlas's report, that the Turkish authorities had behaved quite cooperatively toward the survivors of the *Salvador*; Friling, "Between Friendly and Hostile," 333. Rohwer, by contrast, writes that Turkey had wanted to send the survivors back to Bulgaria, which led to an exchange of diplomatic notes between Turkey and Bulgaria. The event also triggered a heated discussion in the Bulgarian parliament, as the Jewish community of Bulgaria blamed the tragedy on the authorities because the expulsion of foreign Jews from Bulgaria had been the reason for the fatal journey; see Rohwer, "Jüdische Flüchtlingsschiffe," 222.

[22] Yahil, *Die Shoah,* 843ff; Arno Lustiger, *Rettungswiderstand: Über die Judenretter in Europa während der NS-Zeit* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), 396, gives the number of drowned people as 254.

Czechoslovakia on board, sat for one week off the coast of Izmir without coal, water, or food. Jewish relief organizations raised donations to supply the passengers with the essentials. The ship was denied berth in the port, and the captain was finally forced under threats from the Turkish police to travel on.[23] Turkish satirical magazines such as *Karikatür* and *Akbaba* ridiculed the Jewish refugees who sought refuge in vain throughout the world (see Figure 5.1).

Only the daily newspaper *Tan* published a three-part article series in which the despair of the refugees was treated with sympathy. After the ship had left the coast of Izmir, the semi-official daily *Ulus* wrote, "The Jews who have been roaming around here have finally left."[24]

The Struma *Tragedy*

The catastrophe of the *Struma* was especially tragic.[25] The *Struma* was a Romanian passenger steamer sailing under the Panamanian flag that reached Istanbul on December 15, 1941, with 769 Jewish refugees on board. Not only was the ship completely overloaded but it was also not seaworthy because of a defective engine. For seventy days over the winter months of 1941–1942, the *Struma* sat in the Bosporus. Every day, the inhabitants of Istanbul could see the banner "Save Us" that was fastened to the ship (see Figure 5.2). Although Jewish organizations offered to assume all costs for housing the destitute passengers, they were forbidden to go ashore. Only a few people received special permission.[26] The Turkish

[23] The *Parita* had already been denied permission to land in Rhodes by the Italian authorities. For a detailed history of the *Parita*, see Bali, *Devlet'in Yahudileri,* 223 ff.; Rohwer "Jüdische Flüchtlingsschiffe," 211ff.

[24] *Ulus*, August 8, 1939.

[25] For more detail on the *Struma*, see Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, *Death on the Black Sea: The Untold Story of the Struma and World War II's Holocaust at Sea* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust,* 147–166; and Stoliar, video interview from 1997 in the archives of the USHMM, RG 50.030*0384.

[26] The Joint had proposed to the Turkish authorities that the refugees be housed in a camp and promised to assume all expenses. But the Turkish authorities, not wanting to set a precedent, prohibited them from going ashore; Friling, "Between Friendly and Hostile," 333, and Yahil, *Die Shoah,* 847. Nine people were allowed to leave the ship: five of them held expired Palestine Certificates that were renewed by the British authorities in Istanbul, one was a pregnant woman, and the other three were M. Segal, a representative of an American oil company, with his wife and child. His Turkish colleague Vehbi Koç had obtained special permission from the Minister of the Interior, Faik Öztrak; Stoliar, video interview (see previous note). Various documents on the fate of the *Struma* and the attempts to rescue passengers, including last letters of the refugees on the ship, can be found in the CZA collection L15 (Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency, Istanbul Office), Folder 472.



FIGURE 5.1. The caricature on the cover of *Akbaba* from August 24, 1939, refers to the Jewish refugees on the *Parita.* The caption has one of the Jews saying: "We are hungry and out of money. For God's sake, allow us to disembark for five minutes to get rich."

authorities hid behind the British position, since the refugees did not have Palestine Certificates. After several weeks of anxious waiting, on February 24, 1942, the Turkish coast guard forced the *Struma* to leave Turkish coastal waters. While massive police forces had entered the ship in order to prevent any resistance of the passengers, the anchor chain was cut and the hapless vessel, without a working engine, was towed onto the open seas. The news that Great Britain had granted the children and youths on board the *Struma* entry to Palestine the day before came too late.

Only a short time after the Turkish tugboat had released the disabled ship onto the sea, it was struck by a Soviet torpedo and went



FIGURE 5.2. The *Struma* with the banner "Save Us" fastened to the ship. (Courtesy of the USHMM.)

down.[27] With the exception of David Stoliar, who managed to save himself by swimming, all refugees died off the coast of Istanbul. Stoliar was saved after almost twenty-four hours in the water; after his rescue, he was locked in a cell at an Istanbul police station for three weeks and interrogated. Only after the intervention of Simon Brod was he finally released (see Figure 5.3).[28]

The Turkish press had called the passengers of the *Struma* "uninvited guests" (*Vatan*) and victims of "greedy ship brokers." Only one telegram by the state news agency Anadolu Ajansı informed the Turkish press that work was stopped in Palestine for two days and commemorative services were held in memory of the *Struma* dead. The sole newspaper that picked up this news report was *Ulus*, in its edition for March 12, 1942. This led to a debate in the Turkish parliament on April 20, 1942, that focused not on the events themselves but on the alleged Jewish propaganda against Turkey. Some MPs remarked indignantly that "foreign foulers of their own nest" had ensconced themselves at Anadolu Ajansı. Prime Minister Refik Saydam declared with regard to the sinking of the *Struma*, "Turkey cannot become the home of those who are not wanted by anyone else."[29]

[27] The Soviets most likely thought it was an Axis ship. Rohwer points out that at the time, the Axis powers were transporting Romanian oil by ship along this route and that the Soviets regularly used submarines against them. Rohwer, "Jüdische Flüchtlingsschiffe," 228.

[28] Stoliar, video interview.

[29] Several reports by the German Embassy in Ankara from April 1942; PAAA, R 99446; see also several newspaper articles from that period in CZA, L15/472; see also Bali, *Türkleştirme Serüveni*, 359ff

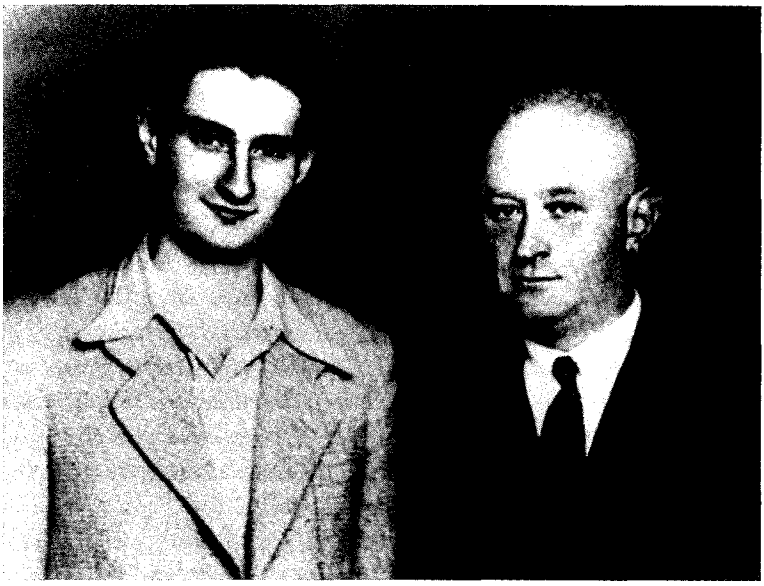


FIGURE 5.3. Simon Brod with the sole survivor of the *Struma* tragedy, David Stoliar. (Courtesy of the USHMM.)

In May 1942, the Jewish Anadolu Ajansı employees were dismissed by decree of Saydam.

"The Most Severe Countermeasures" against Refugees from Romania

Most of the *Struma* passengers came from Bukovina and Bessarabia, where German and Romanian army units, supported by the SS Einsatzgruppen, had murdered 150,000 Jews since the beginning of the attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941.[30] In the old Romanian territories, bloody pogroms had already occurred at the end of 1940 when the "Iron Guard" was part of the Romanian government. Under German guidance, harsh anti-Semitic legislation was introduced. Against this backdrop, Romanian Jews attempted to escape the reign of terror over the course of 1942 by fleeing across the Black Sea. After the German ambassador to Romania, Manfred von Killinger, demanded that the

[30] As agreed in the supplementary agreement to the Hitler-Stalin Pact, these territories had been occupied by the Soviet Union in June 1940. After the Romanian "reconquest" in the summer of 1941, the mass murder of the Jews by joint German and Romanian forces began. Another approximately 150,000 Jews were deported to Transnistria.

Romanian government put an end to the emigration of Jews, smaller ships were predominantly used because they could circumvent checks by the Romanian port authorities.[31] While some of these ships reached Palestine, two small ships, the *Avrupa* and the *Dora*, with a total of thirty-seven passengers on board, ran aground off the Turkish coast in the fall of 1942. Another ship, the *Viitorul*, with 120 refugees on board, was shipwrecked in Turkish waters.

In September 1942, the Turkish Embassy in Bucharest alerted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara that 4,000 to 5,000 Jews were preparing their escape from Romania. The foreign minister replied to the embassy in Bucharest that the refugee ships were allowed to pass through the straits only on the condition that they cross Turkish waters without stopping over. The slightest attempt by the refugees to set foot on Turkish soil would be met with the most severe countermeasures, and the refugees would be sent back to Romania.[32] The minister of the interior went a step further and objected in general to granting Jewish refugee ships passage through the straits.[33] That the ships *Dora* and *Avrupa* had run aground – in his view intentionally – only proved that the Jews were intent on getting into Turkey.[34] Once they reached Turkish soil, it would not only be a problem to get them out of the country again, but by "stirring human feelings" they could also incite the international public against Turkey. For that reason, the minister of the interior continued, the Jews should take the land route to Salonika through countries occupied by Axis powers. Empty ships, he said, could be allowed through the straits – after all, rich Jews could just take a plane.[35] These cynical statements appear to be characteristic of the Turkish attitude prevalent after 1942. Turkish ship owners were prohibited from working with the Jewish Agency and transporting Jewish refugees. Anyone who violated these rules risked a prison

[31] Antonescu had assured Killinger that the emigration of Jews would be prevented. The ships were small, motorized sailboats or motorized launches; some of the passengers had Palestine Certificates, and some even had visas for Turkey; see Rohwer, "Jüdische Flüchtlingsschiffe," 229.

[32] Note from the Turkish Foreign Minister, dated September 14, 1942; BCA, 30.10.00/99.641.13.

[33] This objection by the minister of the interior was tantamount to a call for violation of international law: passage through the straits, as an international seaway, could be denied only to warships.

[34] Rohwer, too, suspects that the Romanian captains ran the ships aground intentionally, since one of the ships that had reached Palestine had been seized by the British authorities; Rohwer, "Jüdische Flüchtlingsschiffe," 230.

[35] Note from the Turkish minister of the interior, dated September 19, 1942; BCA, 30.10.00/99.641.13.

sentence and seizure of their ship.[36] Faced with these mounting obstacles, the *Aliyah Bet* effectively came to a halt until 1944.

During the Holocaust

One after the other, the countries allied with Nazi Germany and its satellite states had introduced anti-Jewish legislation. These included Croatia, Slovakia, Hungary, and Turkey's neighbors, Bulgaria and Romania. The attack on the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 marked the beginning of the systematic genocide of the European Jews. Everywhere in the conquered territories of the Soviet Union, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, either SS Einsatzgruppen or regular Wehrmacht units rounded up Jews and shot and killed them, as they did in Bessarabia. By April 1942, the Einsatzgruppen had murdered more than half a million Jews. Serbia, too, had become one of the first sites of the systematic murder of Jews by the end of 1941. In January 1942, at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin, the further course of the genocide that had already begun was planned and decided. At this point, all of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, including the north coast of the Black Sea, was occupied by the Germans or in the grip of regimes allied with the Nazis. More than 4.5 million Jews lived in this area.

By the late summer of 1942, Jewish individuals and organizations had already received information about the German genocide of the Jews and the existence of death camps and tried to get this information to the Allied Powers. In November 1942, the executive board of the Jewish Agency stated at a press conference in Jerusalem that it had learned of the systematic murder of European Jewry by the National Socialists. Yet it took months for the Allies to believe this information. Since several Jews who had been able to escape from the concentration camps or the ghettos established in Eastern Europe had managed to reach Istanbul, the city was "one of the best-informed places in the world."[37] It can consequently be assumed that the Turkish government was also aware of the extent of the German murder of Jews quite early.

The later mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, recalls in his memoirs:

It was in Istanbul that we started hearing about the mass extermination of Jews... As time went by, the picture looked grimmer and grimmer. Every day

[36] Friling, "Between Friendly and Hostile," 338. Starting in March 1941, Turkish ship owners were prohibited from signing ships over to foreigners; Rohwer, "Jüdische Flüchtlingsschiffe," 224.

[37] Interview with Marianne Laqueur from July 2004. Laqueur worked periodically as a secretary for Haim Barlas; see also Teddy Kollek, *For Jerusalem: A Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), 45–47.

we received news of the Nazi extermination campaign. It was hard to believe or grasp the meaning of it all. Very often we were the first and, for a time, the only people outside the Nazi-occupied world to know... Then rare trickles of Jews – sometimes just two or three individuals who had somehow escaped from the camps and whom we got out of Romania, Bulgaria, or Greece – started arriving in Istanbul. I shall never forget the way they looked and the stories they told... The news about the extermination operations sent us into a state that bordered on insanity. We wrote letters to everyone and his brother – thousands of letters that went out to every country under the sun – in hopes of getting people out of the danger zones and the death camps and of opening the world's eyes to what was happening in Germany... We were the first to get the authenticated facts.[38]

As the Jewish activists were continually monitored by Turkish security forces, it can safely be assumed that the Turkish authorities also knew about the genocide of the Jews early on.

Rescue Efforts and Aid Committees

As a consequence of the dramatic developments of 1941–42, Turkey's significance as a potential escape route for millions of Jews from Eastern or Southeastern Europe had grown exponentially. Numerous Jewish organizations now sent representatives to Turkey to save the Jews. In the winter of 1942–43, on the initiative of the Jewish Agency, a rescue committee was established in Istanbul that brought together representatives of various Jewish groups, including the nationalist Revisionists and the religious Agudat Israel, which were not represented in the Jewish Agency. Eventually, more than twenty activists became involved, among them Teddy Kollek, Ehud Avriel, Yitzhak Gruenbaum, Venya Pomeranz, Menahem Bader, Dr. Jacob Griffel, and many others.[39] Some of them were staying in Turkey permanently; others came and went. Except for Haim Barlas and later Joseph Goldin, who were staying in the country officially

[38] Kollek, *For Jerusalem*, 45ff.

[39] Joseph Goldin joined the committee later as another official representative of the Jewish Agency in addition to Barlas and Gruenbaum; Venya Pomeranz was in charge of organizing the *Aliyah Bet*, and Dr. Jacob Griffel represented the Agudat Israel. He was later assisted by Joseph Levy, who had worked as a correspondent for the *New York Times*. Lists of the activists in Istanbul can be found in Dalia Ofer, "The Activities of the Jewish Agency Delegation in Istanbul in 1943," in *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference – April 1974*, eds. Yehuda Bauer and Efraim Zuroff (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977), 438, and Friling, "Between Friendly and Hostile," 341ff. Some of those named here were also assigned other tasks besides rescue activities – working with the British Secret Intelligence Service, for example, and dispatching Jewish resistance fighters to Eastern Europe.

and with the permission of the Turkish authorities, they all worked in the guise of journalists, businessmen, or tourists.

International Jewish and non-Jewish relief organizations sent representatives to Turkey as well. Edmond Simond in Ankara was a delegate of the International Red Cross, while Reuben Resnik represented the Joint, which funded the activities of most of the other organizations (the Jewish Agency as well as the Red Cross) with its donations. These international organizations, with their lack of knowledge of the country and its language, were also fortunate to be able to rely on the untiring assistance of several Istanbul Jews.

Despite the Turkish restrictions described already, Jewish refugees from various countries managed to reach Turkey during the war by circumventing Turkish patrols. Members of the Jewish community in Istanbul established an aid committee to help house and feed the refugees, many of whom were forced to stay in Istanbul illegally. The committee members helped them to organize their onward journey and obtain the necessary papers. The sick were cared for in the Jewish Or Ahayim Hospital. This group included the former teacher at the German school Dr. Julius Stern; the rabbi Dr. Markus; the former director of Deutsche Bank in Istanbul and board member of the Ashkenazi community, Edmond Goldenberg, who had been removed from his position by the Nazis; and Albert Saltiel. Because of the conditions in Turkey, the group worked "completely illegally, and its members would be severely punished if the government knew of its existence," according to a report by a Jewish Agency representative to the Joint states.[40]

One person who played an outstanding role in these endeavors was the businessman Simon Brod. An Ashkenazi Jew living in Istanbul, he tirelessly traveled back and forth between the city's train station and the port facilities at all hours of the day and night to smuggle Jewish refugees through the checkpoints, making use of both his own financial resources and his connections to the Turkish police and the port authorities. His inexhaustible commitment was of central importance for countless refugees as well as for the relief organizations working in Turkey after 1940. His contacts were indispensable.[41] Because of his activities

[40] Letter from Eisenstadt in Jerusalem to the Joint in New York, dated September 9, 1940; AJJDC, Collection 33/44, File 1050/10 F2. The group's members belonged predominantly to the Ashkenazi community. Some accounts (Beki Bahar's, for example), on the other hand, mention an official refugee commission connected to the Chief Rabbinate. It could not be determined whether the two groups were identical.

[41] Simon Brod is specifically mentioned in the accounts of all the activists (Teddy Kollek, Haim Barlas, Ira Hirschmann, and Francis Ofner, among others) as well as in the memoirs of numerous refugees.

as an "escape helper," Brod was arrested and convicted in 1942, which clearly demonstrates that the fears expressed by the Jewish Agency were not unfounded.[42]

In addition to organizing escape routes to Palestine, the various aid committees working in Turkey also arranged for material assistance for the Jews in Nazi-controlled areas, sending food, money, and forged papers. Edmond Simond of the International Red Cross sent thousands of food packages from Turkey – paid for by the Joint – to Jews confined in the ghettos and camps of Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe.[43] The papal Emissary Giuseppe Roncalli helped the Jews in Greece and the Balkans by sending food. The Turkish authorities tried to prevent this assistance at least periodically. In January 1942, for example, Segal, the representative of Agudat Israel, was prohibited from sending food to Jews in need in Poland.[44]

Turkey as the Eye of the Needle

At the same time the Nazis began their systematic genocide, the war blocked most of the Jews' avenues of escape: at the end of October 1941, the Germans prohibited the emigration of Jews from their sphere of influence and demanded that their allies Bulgaria and Romania enforce this prohibition. Both the Mediterranean Sea, including the Aegean Sea, and the Black Sea had become war zones. For a long time, Great Britain was unwilling to change its unyielding stance on Jewish immigration to Palestine, even though Jewish organizations repeatedly informed the British authorities in urgent terms of the genocide. Not until the early summer of 1943 did the British government finally decree that Jewish refugees who managed to reach Turkey would receive open Palestine Certificates. However, this information was apparently passed on to the Turkish government only after a certain delay.[45]

[42] Presumably due to his good police contacts, Brod managed to evade his sentence by making a "cash payment." By all known accounts, he did not spend an extended period in prison. Brod's colleague David Russo was arrested along with him on grounds of violation of the "National Security Law"; Rıfat N. Bali, *Musa'nın Evlatları Cumhuriyet'in Yurttaşları* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 182.

[43] Memorandum from Resnik, dated March 7, 1944, to Hirschmann; AJJDC, Collection 33/44, File 1051/ 1 F2.

[44] BCA, document dated January 17, 1942, 030..10.0.0/246.664..16. Turkey was not alone in this: during the first war years, the British government did not permit relief supplies to be sent to the Jews trapped in Eastern Europe, arguing that these might potentially benefit the German war economy.

[45] Report from Istanbul by two delegates of the Histadrut (Zionist labor union), dated April 30, 1943; AJA, 6 D-103/4.

To a significant degree, however, it was the policies of the Turkish authorities that obstructed the rescue activities. At the beginning of 1943, Barlas reported that after "months of negotiations in Ankara" he had finally obtained transit visas for a total of 270 children from Romania and Hungary and that the first group of Jewish children had reached Palestine in January 1943.[46] The relaxation of rules in January of 1941 had only resulted in a short-term loosening that benefited the Jews who were already issued Palestine Certificates before the war. It seems that, after the summer of 1941 and after this group of people had passed through Turkey, lists had to be submitted to the Foreign Ministry in Ankara again for every single transit group. This punishing bureaucracy proved deadly. While thousands of Jews were deported to the extermination camps on a daily basis, people working for the aid committees ran from consulate to consulate to procure British entry certificates as well as French (for Syria) and Turkish transit visas. The painstaking examination of the transit visas for Syria by the Turkish bureaucracy alone often took several months.[47] Obtaining all these documents became a race against death. By the time all the necessary documents were assembled, many of the people the certificates and visas had been issued for had gone underground or had already been deported.

The Years 1943 to 1944

In order to evacuate as many Jews as possible under the changing political conditions, the rescue committee in Istanbul kept coming up with new plans.[48] After the turning point of Stalingrad, the Romanian government began tentatively to seek contact with the Allies and in the spring of 1943 declared its willingness to allow Jews to emigrate.[49] Great Britain had agreed to issue Palestine Certificates to 5,000 Jewish orphans from Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania; these were not to be

[46] Circular from Barlas, dated February 19, 1943, about the activities of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul; AJJDC, Collection 33/44. File 1050/20 F2.

[47] Marrus, *Die Unerwünschten*, 308. Hirschmann's report (for 1944) suggests that processing was intentionally delayed because of the antipathy against Jewish refugees prevalent in the Foreign Ministry; Ira A. Hirschmann, *Life Line to a Promised Land* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1946), 42; Yahil, *Die Shoah*, 841.

[48] For more detail, see Tuvia Friling, *Arrows in the Dark: David Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv Leadership, and Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 143–262; and Friling, "Between Friendly and Hostile."

[49] Initially, Antonescu offered to permit the departure of 70,000 Jews, which was refused by Great Britain and also proved organizationally unfeasible. This "offer" by the Romanian government was partly motivated by anti-Semitism: in effect, it meant the "expulsion instead of murder" of the Romanian Jews.

granted additionally but to be counted against the certificates still open under the British White Paper mentioned earlier in the chapter. The Turkish authorities, however, granted transit visas for only seventy-five children and their escorts every ten days, and only on the condition that the next group would not enter until the previous one had left Turkey. Turkish politicians justified these restrictions by claiming transportation problems, but then they refused to establish holding camps near the Turkish-Bulgarian border from which the children could have been transported farther. The transit permits were supposed to be granted alternately for groups from Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. As soon as there was any delay in the departure of one of these groups, which was often inevitable given the repressive measures and the ongoing war in all of these countries, the transit visas expired.[50] In the course of 1943 and 1944, the German authorities repeatedly exerted massive pressure on the Romanian and Bulgarian governments in order to prevent the emigration of Jews, and German diplomats also repeatedly tried to intervene in this direction.[51]

In the fall of 1943, the Turkish government, after renewed negotiations with the Jewish Agency, agreed to grant transit visas to nine families per week in Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary on the basis of lists submitted beforehand to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara. This regulation was to take effect in October 1943. Barlas had calculated that it would allow for the transit of 400 people per month.[52] When the governments of Romania and Bulgaria – under pressure from the Germans – made the emigration of Jews even more difficult by putting up new obstacles, the promised transit visas expired because the Turkish authorities did not allow them to be transferred to other refugees. In the end, the regulation was hardly ever applied.[53] A mere 215 Jewish refugees were able to cross

[50] Friling, "Between Friendly and Hostile," 369. Friling mentions 100 children every ten days; elsewhere, the number is given as only fifty. After the German Putsch in Hungary, Germany and the government under its control prevented Jews from leaving the country; the visa intended for these groups expired. Barlas, Report on "Immigration via Turkey," dated April 24, 1944; AJA, D 108–17.

[51] Hans-Jürgen Döscher, *Das Auswärtige Amt im Dritten Reich: Diplomatie im Schatten der "Endlösung"* (Berlin: Siedler, 1987), 294 and 299; on the Bulgarian position, see Jan Rychlík, "Zweierlei Politik gegenüber der Minderheit: Verfolgung und Rettung bulgarischer Juden 1940–1944," in *Solidarität und Hilfe für Juden während der NS-Zeit, Band 7: Regionalstudien 4*, eds. Wolfgang Benz and Juliane Wetzel (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 79f.

[52] Barlas, Report on "Immigration via Turkey," dated December 18, 1943; AJA, H 332–20.

[53] Barlas, Report on "Immigration via Turkey," dated April 24, 1944; AJA, D 108–17.

Turkey in the last quarter of 1943. "There were about a million people in Hungary living in mortal terror of the Germans and about 100,000 victims of anti-Semitism in Romania and Bulgaria," and even if all the promised transit visas could have been used, it would have taken 200 years until the last refugees had passed through, writes Ira Hirschmann. Each of the countries involved blamed the others. But "there seemed to be little doubt that it was the Turks themselves who were obstructing the work of rescue."[54]

In the entire year of 1943, a total of only 1,352 Jews passed legally through Turkey on their way to Palestine. Of these, 327 had fled from Greece through Çeşme and Izmir. Only about 1,000 Jews from eastern Europe had crossed through Turkey via the "official route," which amounted to a rate of a mere twenty people per week. In comparison, considerably more Turkish Jews – namely 2,138 – emigrated from Turkey to Palestine during the same period (January to December 1943), a fact that is attributable to the extensive repressive anti-Jewish measures, in particular the Varlık Vergisi. This situation remained virtually unchanged until the summer of 1944.[55]

In January 1944, under pressure from Jewish organizations and because the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees had proven incompetent, U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt established the War Refugee Board (WRB).[56] In February 1944, Ira Hirschmann arrived in

[54] Hirschmann, *Life Line,* 32ff.

[55] Barlas, report on "Immigration via Turkey," dated December 18, 1943; AJA, H 332–20. According to a report from July 1944, a total of 3,153 Jews emigrated from Turkey to Palestine between January 1943 and June 1944. Only 3,144 refugees from Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Greece reached Palestine via Turkey during the same time period; report by Harry Viteles, dated July 23, 1944, in AJJDC, Collection 33/44, File 1051/20 F2.

[56] The Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees had been established at the Evian Conference in 1938, but it proved incapable of finding places of refuge for persecuted Jews. In April 1943, on the initiative of the United States and Great Britain, a follow-up conference was called in Bermuda; it was equally unsuccessful. In the United States, meanwhile, the pressure of Jewish organizations on the government increased. Especially the exposure of Roosevelt's close advisor Breckinridge Long, assistant secretary of state, and others in the U.S. State Department who had firmly blocked attempts to save European Jews before the end of 1943 as anti-Semites put Roosevelt under extreme pressure. As a result of this situation, the War Refugee Board (WRB) was established in January 1944. It was conceived as an interagency U.S. government office whose mandate was to evacuate and house Jews from Nazi-controlled territory and to provide relief supplies for Jews in concentration camps. On paper, the WRB was vested with extensive authority, but it had hardly any financial means and received no support to speak of from the U.S. government. Its work was financed primarily by private Jewish organizations (especially by the Joint). Due to the dedication of the people working for it, however, the work of the WRB had some impact.

Ankara as its representative, vested with extensive special powers. The rescue committee associated with the Jewish Agency, as well as the Joint, Edmond Simond of the International Red Cross, and the War Refugee Board represented by Hirschmann were now working together closely in Turkey. Hirschmann could also rely on the support of U.S. Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt.[57]

Even in the spring of 1944, when Germany's impending defeat became more and more likely and Bulgaria and Romania, which were still allied with Germany, began to resist German pressure to prevent the escape of Jews, Turkey maintained its restrictive attitude. The report by the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Edmond Simond, dated March 1944, conveys his impression of the situation: Simond regarded it as a success that Turkey, after the intervention of both Ira Hirschmann and the British Embassy representative Bennett, had granted 150 transit visas to be used together with the 5,000 Palestine Certificates granted by Great Britain. Claiming transport difficulties as an excuse, the limit of seventy-five people every ten days on transit permits for the land route that had already been imposed in 1943 was retained.[58] At around the same time, the World Jewish Congress (WJC) made efforts, in agreement with the Refugee Department of the British Foreign Office, to evacuate a group of rabbis, thirty of whom were from Slovakia and a few others from other occupied countries. Although the British Embassy in Ankara applied for transit visas for them, the Turkish authorities delayed answering for several months.[59]

In March 1944, a Jewish delegation organized by the WJC met with the Turkish ambassador in Washington and requested that he prevail upon the Turkish government in Ankara to raise the number of transit visas for Bulgarian Jews to the number of exit visas granted by the Bulgarian government. They presented a statement of obligation to the effect that they would cover all transit expenses.[60] The Turkish promise to no longer turn back Jewish refugees at its borders, made in May 1944 in response to massive pressure from various relief organizations and

[57] On the other hand, those involved in the rescue activities also had their political and personal differences and could be competitive with one another. This was intensified by the enormous mental strain of having so little with to fight the Nazi murder machine with.

[58] Simond, Report No. 11, dated March 14, 1944; ICRC, G 95/5–165.03.

[59] Letter from Isaac Weissman to Easterman, March 1944; AJA, H 296 – 2. Whether the rabbis could be saved in the end is not clear from the files.

[60] Report by Vitalis Nachmias, secretary of the Bulgaria Committee of the WJC, about the conversation on March 23, 1944; AJA, H 322–20.

American agencies, was never really kept. As late as June 1944, Jewish refugees from Bulgaria were still being refused entry into Turkey. In consequence, many Jews in Bulgaria were unable to make use of the Palestine Certificates that Great Britain granted for distribution in the country.[61]

In March 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary. Although the country had been allied with Nazi Germany and had passed anti-Jewish legislation, prior to March 1944, the Hungarian government had refused to turn over the roughly 800,000 Hungarian Jews to the Germans. After the occupation, the Germans immediately set in motion preparations for the "final solution," and in May, the deportation of the Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz began. The efforts to save them became one of the primary tasks of the joint rescue efforts. To evacuate Jews from Hungary, the Jewish Agency in Istanbul authorized Jews who had contacts in Hungary to send letters containing Palestine Certificates to every single Jew in the country who could be identified. The previously mentioned Francis Ofner describes how he and his wife sent letters from Istanbul to Jewish recipients in Budapest, whose names they had found in telephone books, in order to distribute Palestine Certificates to as many Jews as possible.[62] An internal WCJ note comments on this acutely critical situation with regard to Turkey's attitude: "There is no need to stress the increased importance of Turkey as a result of recent developments, as the life line of escape from Hungary, Slovakia and the Balkan countries... There has been no fundamental change in the policy of the Turkish government in the question of transit visas for adults. That Turkey should remain the only neutral country in Europe where it is impossible for a refugee to cross the border without a visa is a revolting and unbearable situation."[63]

Preventing foreign Jews from staying in Turkey continued to be the primary objective of Turkish policy. An American request proposing the establishment of a reception camp for Jewish refugees in the vicinity of Istanbul was turned down. A group of Jews who had been released from Bergen-Belsen concentration camp as part of a civilian exchange arranged between Great Britain and Germany and were traveling to Palestine via Turkey in April were not permitted "to set foot on Turkish soil" and had

[61] Note from Kubowitzki, head of the WJC's Rescue Committee, to its president, Dr. Steve Wise, and to Dr. Nahum Goldman, dated July 25, 1944; AJA H 332–19.

[62] Video recording of Francis Ofner at the USHMM, RG-50.120*0115. 1995.A.1272.

[63] The author suggested that the WJC turn to Roosevelt and request that the Turkish government be approached "at the highest level." Letter from "fh" dated April 7, 1944; AJA, H 332–19. This file also holds a telegram of similar content from Gerhart Riegner, the WJC representative in Switzerland, dated March 30, 1944.

to spend their waiting time in Istanbul on a ship until they were escorted to their train by Turkish police.[64]

Operations to Rescue Greek Jews

Attempts to rescue the Greek Jews on the Aegean coast were more successful. Here, a cooperation that was established in Izmir and Çeşme in 1943 between Jewish activists, the Greek resistance, and the British Secret Intelligence Service led to the rescue of Jews from Greece. The Greek island of Euboea served as a hiding place for many Jews who had managed to escape the deportations from Salonika and Athens. The Greek resistance on the island was well organized, and a high percentage of the partisans were Greek Jews.[65] Greek partisans took Jews and other refugees in small boats through the network of small Aegean islands to Çeşme on the Turkish Aegean coast, where British MI11 Naval Intelligence units were operating. On their return trips, they transported goods and equipment for the resistance back to Greece. The British were mainly concerned with rescuing captured British pilots, and the Greek resistance managed to bring political figures like the later prime minister Andreas Papandreou to safety.[66] The Jewish refugees were supplied with food and housing by the Jewish community in Izmir until their contacts had obtained the necessary papers from the British authorities in Istanbul. For a community already severely bled by the Varlık Vergisi, this was a significant act of solidarity. Given the anti-Jewish climate in Turkey and the aliens legislation in effect, it also required a good deal of courage. Important figures in these efforts were the head of the community, Shabetay Shaltiel, and a small group of Jewish Zionist activists, among them the Viennese native Heinz Ziffer. Ziffer had come to Turkey as a child in 1933 and had joined the Zionist organization Neemane Zion in Istanbul.[67] The operations began in the fall of 1943; more than 1,000 Greek Jews were saved via

[64] Report by Philippe Aubert de la Rüe about the third exchange with Palestine, dated July 11, 1944; Archives of the Bergen-Belsen Memorial Site, reference files of Philippe Aubert de la Rüe, BA 983; also a report by Herbert Kruskal, one of the people involved in the exchange; Bergen-Belsen archives, BA 297

[65] Steven Bowman, *Jewish Resistance in Wartime Greece* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 31ff.

[66] Kollek, *For Jerusalem*, 48. Since the signing of the treaties between Britain, France, and Turkey in 1939, the British maintained a marine base near Çeşme; Koçak, *Millî Şef*, vol. 1, 457.

[67] Heinz Ziffer, "Rescuing Greek Jews under German Occupation: With the Help of the Jewish Community of Izmir (1943–1944)," *Los Muestros* 50 (March 2003): 18–19, and Kollek, *For Jerusalem*, 48.

this route.[68] Activities of this magnitude must have been known to the Turkish authorities, as the regional press also reported on the Jewish refugees. Remarkable is the fact that the tacit toleration of these rescue activities is contradictory to Turkey's otherwise restrictive policies.

Breakthrough: The Sea Bridge in the Summer of 1944

One argument the Turkish authorities kept bringing up to justify the limitation of transit permits for Jewish refugees was the country's lack of transport capacity. As a consequence, the representatives of the Jewish Agency and Ira Hirschmann focused their efforts on chartering or purchasing ships, which allowed for the transport of a far greater number of people. But Turkish ship owners were prohibited from working with the Jewish Agency and transporting Jewish refugees. After many futile attempts by relief organizations to purchase and retrofit ships, U.S. Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt eventually gained consent from the Turkish authorities in the spring of 1944 to lease the transport ship *Tari*, which was suitable for moving 1,500 people. "With Roosevelt's approval," Steinhardt guaranteed the Turkish government that a ship of at least equal value would be provided, should the *Tari* be damaged or lost. Steinhardt had also exerted extreme pressure on the Turkish foreign minister: According to an account by the International Red Cross representative Simond, Steinhardt had threatened to set off an anti-Turkish press campaign in the United States.[69] The ship was to be officially operated by the International Red Cross, but the Germans refused to guarantee its safe passage. In the end, the *Tari* could therefore not be used.[70]

Meanwhile, the rescue committee in Istanbul had succeeded in buying several small ships (the *Milka*, the *Maritza*, and the *Bella Citta*) through a middleman; these were anchored in the Bulgarian port of Varna, from where they were moved to the Romanian port of Constanța. With the

[68] Friling, "Between Friendly and Hostile," 407ff. and 416. Barbara Spengler-Axiopoulos estimates the number of people saved in this manner as 1,500; Barbara Spengler-Axiopoulos, " 'Wenn ihr den Juden helft, kämpft ihr gegen die Besatzer' – der Untergang der griechischen Juden," in *Solidarität und Hilfe für Juden während der NS-Zeit, Band 1*, eds. Wolfgang Benz and Juliane Wetzel (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), 159.

[69] Simond, Report No. 12, dated April 24, 1944; ICRC G 95/5–165.03. In his letter to von Papen in which he asked authorization for the journey of the *Tari*, Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu said that he had to "throw ballast overboard" in the face of American pressure; telegram by von Papen, dated March 31, 1944; PAAA, R 100856.

[70] While von Papen kept putting Simond off with promises of telegraphing Berlin, Ribbentrop had decided from the outset to refuse his approval; PAAA, 100856, and report by Simond, dated April 24, 1944, ICRC G 95/5–165.03.

Soviet troops advancing in the Crimea, the Romanian government gave its consent to the emigration of Jews and to the use of the ships, which were primarily supposed to take Jewish children to Istanbul. The first voyages of the *Maritza* and *Bella Citta* in January and February of 1944 were unsuccessful.[71]

At the end of March and the beginning of April, a breakthrough was finally made. On March 30, the *Milka* reached Istanbul with about 250 Jews from Romania on board; however, neither the ship's nor the passengers' papers were in order. At first, Turkish Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu strictly refused to allow the ship to dock or the passengers to go ashore. According to one of the passengers, Nora Schärf, who was sixteen years old at the time, the ship waited on the Turkish coast near Istanbul for a day before finally entering the port of Istanbul.[72] Combined American and British pressure finally succeeded in the granting of "exceptional permission."[73] Under the watchful eyes of the Turkish police, the refugees were taken from the port to the Haydarpaşa train station, from where they were taken to Syria in special cars coupled to the train to Allepo. This was finally the breakthrough they had all been waiting for.

More voyages of the *Maritza* and the *Bella Citta* followed. In the months of April and May, around 1,000 Jews – predominantly children – were taken to Istanbul, from where they traveled by train to Palestine. In May and June, there were new delays. Not until the collapse of the German front in the Balkans and the severance of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Germany were several thousand Jewish refugees finally able to pass through Turkey on their way to Palestine in August

[71] Barlas writes that the Turkish government had sent back 500 refugees who had arrived on those ships in February 1944 because they did not have Palestine Certificates; report by Barlas, dated April 24, 1944, AJA, D 108–17. This contradicts Rohwer's version, according to which the German navy prevented passage of the ships; Rohwer, "Jüdische Flüchtlingsschiffe," 235.

[72] Interview with Nora Schärf in Geneva, September 2009.

[73] For more detail, see Hirschmann, *Life Line*, 82–86. See also several letters from Hirschman and U.S. Ambassador Steinhardt from March 28 and 29, 1944, in the Archives of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Ira Hirschmann Collection, Box 1, folder 1. Steinhardt believed that President Roosevelt's statement from March 23, 1944, was decisive for the change in Turkey's stance. After the Germans occupied Hungary on March 19, leaving Hungary's Jews in immediate danger, Roosevelt said that no one who was involved in the murder of the Jews would go unpunished, and he called on all countries to take in Jewish refugees. The Turkish press also published passages from his statement. Furthermore the negotiations between the Allies and Turkey taking place at the same time were a decisive factor. On April 21, 1944, Turkey declared that it was "not neutral but allied with the anti-Hitler coalition." In June 1944, Menemencioğlu was forced to resign.

1944. The Jewish Agency had succeeded in chartering larger ships, the *Kazbek*, the *Bülbül*, and the *Mefkûre*. On August 5, another tragic event occurred, when the *Mefkûre* was fired upon by a Soviet submarine and went down with more than 300 Jewish passengers on board. Only five of them could be saved.[74] According to a list compiled by Joseph Goldin, who succeeded Haim Barlas as the representative of the Jewish Agency, almost 6,000 Jewish refugees from the Balkans passed through Turkey in the course of 1944.[75]

Conclusion

In the years from 1940 to 1944, a total of 13,240 Jews passed through Turkey on their flight to Palestine, with visas or at least with Turkey's tacit acquiescence.[76] The total number of 16,474 migrants (given by Ofer and numerous other publications) who, according to the Jewish Agency, reached Palestine via Turkey, includes 3,234 Turkish-Jewish emigrants who did not cross Turkey as a transit country but left their home country. The detailed reports by the Jewish Agency, which kept meticulous records of all Palestine Certificates and transit visas because of the bureaucratic obstacles involved, show that of the 13,000 Jewish transit refugees, 4,850 passed through Turkey between the fall of 1940 and the summer of 1941 (after Barlas had begun negotiating). All of them held Palestine Certificates issued before the war. In 1944 alone, 6,800 Jews passed through Turkey – most of them in the second half of the year, after Romania had changed sides, Bulgaria was in the process of doing the same, and the Balkans were largely liberated. In the crucial years 1942 and 1943, fewer than 2,000 Jewish refugees were able to cross Turkey legally, on average not quite 100 people per month. As illustrated by the accounts of people involved in rescue activities, the escape route through Turkey was largely blocked from the summer of 1941 to the summer of 1944. The Turkish restrictions were only one factor in this; others were

[74] Rohwer, "Jüdische Flüchtlingsschiffe," 238. This happened in the context of the battles between the Soviet Navy and the German Navy retreating from the Black Sea.

[75] *La Boz de Türkiye* of March 1, 1945, 243. Most of these refugees (4,433) were from Romania, 1,392 from Bulgaria, and 163 from Hungary. In addition, 539 Jewish refugees who had reached the Aegean coast from Greece were allowed to depart for Palestine from Izmir. Furthermore, an exchange of 282 Jewish prisoners from Bergen-Belsen and Vittel for Palestine Germans interned by Great Britain was conducted through Turkey as well. This puts the total number of Jews who were allowed to pass through Turkey in 1944 at 6,800.

[76] Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust*, 320.

Nazi Germany's massive intervention efforts to close off Jewish escape routes and the policies of Great Britain and the Balkan states.

Chronologically, the period when Turkey largely closed itself off coincided with the period between the signing of the German-Turkish Friendship Treaty in the summer of 1941 and the breaking-off of German-Turkish relations at the beginning of August 1944. This means that Turkey's restrictive policy toward Jewish refugees is in part attributable to the pressure exerted by Germany. After the turning point of the war in 1943, however, the main rationale of Germany's Turkish policy was to keep the country neutral against the Allies' massive attempts to pull Turkey to their side.[77] Claims that Turkey would have run the risk of being attacked by Germany had its stance toward Jewish refugees been more benevolent seem not very plausible and are not substantiated by documentary evidence.[78] With regard to arms deliveries and loans, Turkey was very adept at playing the two sides against each other for its own benefit.

The years 1941–44 were the period in which the anti-Jewish mood and anti-Jewish measures in Turkey reached a peak. However, the decrees that Turkey passed to prevent the immigration and entry of Jews were issued before the beginning of the war, three years before the country's alliance with Germany; in other words, they were "Turkish in origin." Both Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu and Aziz Payman, who was in charge of visa issues, were known for their anti-Jewish views and are said to have instructed Turkish consulates in the Balkan states as late as 1944 to delay the issuing of visas.[79] Even in the summer of 1944, the Turkish police took great pains to strictly enforce the prohibition on Jews entering Turkey and to prevent transiting refugees from staying in Turkey. Not until two years after the end of the war, on June 25, 1947, did Turkey finally repeal the decree "regarding measures against foreign Jews who might come to Turkey" with Government Decree No 3/6067.[80]

It is true that, because of the anti-Semitic legislation of numerous European countries and especially because of the anti-Jewish measures of its neighbors, Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania, Turkey's fear of a "flood"

[77] The beginning of these Allied efforts can be dated to the Adana Conference in January 1943.

[78] Claims of this type can be found, for example, in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust.*

[79] Friling, "Between Friendly and Hostile," 418f. This is based on a report by Dr. Elias, who accompanied Chief Rabbi Herzog on a trip to Turkey in 1944, during which they tried unsuccessfully to move Turkey to change its position.

[80] Resolution No. 3/6067 of June 25, 1947; BCA 30..18.1.2/114.45..7.

of Jews was not unfounded. However, the measures to prevent the immigration and transit of Jews were clearly not simply prompted by the fear of immigration: in the mid-thirties, Turkey signed agreements with several Balkan states regarding the entry of Turkish Muslim immigrants and even sent government officials to those regions to recruit Muslims for immigration to Turkey. Thus, Turkish restrictions against refugees had a clearly anti-Jewish character.

PART II

TURKISH JEWS AND THE HOLOCAUST

On the eve of World War II, about 20,000 to 25,000 Turkish Jews were living in Europe. Turkish-Jewish communities, some of which operated their own synagogues and schools, existed in many big cities. Compared to the millions of people of Turkish origin who today make up part of the populations of almost all countries of Western and Central Europe, their number was negligibly small. They were also significantly smaller in number than the Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe. And yet, the majority of immigrants from Turkey at the time were Jews. The total number of Turkish Jews in Europe[1] exceeded the size of the Jewish population of entire countries – for example, Switzerland – and was significantly larger than the number of Jews living in Turkey today. The importance of these Turkish-Jewish Diaspora communities can only be properly assessed when we consider that during the same period, Turkey's Jewish population was decreasing steadily as a result of emigration.[2] At the same time that the Jewish communities in Turkey were under enormous pressure to submit to forced assimilation, numerous Sephardic organizations came

[1] In the literature, there are estimates of up to 30,000 and sometimes 50,000 Turkish and previously Ottoman Jews. It is difficult to give more precise numbers because, for one, several countries did not collect any information concerning religion in their censuses and, second, because of the problems associated with relating the results of the censuses in the different countries of residence to one another. Estimates in Sephardic publications usually refer to Jews from the former Ottoman Empire and thus include Greek and Bulgarian Jews. The (estimated) number cited here refers to Jews who were born in the territory of today's Republic of Turkey as well their children who were the first generation born abroad.

[2] In the 1935 census, only 78,730 people were still registered as Jews; about one third to one half of the Jews had left Turkey after the end of World War I.

into being in Europe during the inter-war period, some of which were actively engaged in preserving their cultural identity and traditions.

Several individual Jewish merchants from the Ottoman Empire had already moved to various major European cities in the last decades of the nineteenth century on their own initiative. Many of them were carpet or tobacco merchants. As a consequence, in the years leading up to World War I, small Turkish-Jewish communities arose in Paris, Berlin, Geneva, and Brussels that received a further influx due to a growing number of immigrants after the introduction of obligatory military service for non-Muslims in 1909 and during the long war period 1911–22. However, the majority of Turkish Jews did not arrive until after the founding of the Republic in 1923. This must be emphasized, since Turkish publications frequently maintain that the Jews who were refused support by the Turkish authorities during the Shoah were mostly people who had emigrated "generations ago."

In many cases, the point in time when people migrated also serves as an indicator of their social standing: while the first generation consisted predominantly of prosperous merchants, the immigrants of the inter-war period were, for the most part, members of the lower social classes. Many of them got by as well as they could as street vendors, or they worked in sweatshops or in other precarious jobs in the textile industry (see Figure PII.1).

The distribution of Turkish Jews across Europe was very uneven; the vast majority lived in France. The laws of their respective countries of residence that governed aliens affected the legal status of Turkish Jews: while French-born children of immigrants were entitled to French citizenship (and it was easier in general for immigrants to become naturalized), they remained "foreigners," that is, "Turks," in other countries, even in the next generation.

At least as important as the differences in social and legal status were the differences in cultural identification. While in some cities veritable Sephardic neighborhoods developed, some of which even maintained an attachment to a specific area of origin and whose inhabitants communicated in Judeo-Spanish (Judezmo) and held on to traditions from Turkey, other Turkish Jews assimilated completely into the majority society. There were also several Ashkenazim and even Karaites among the immigrants from Turkey. Many families had completely abandoned their religious traditions and often only became aware again of their Jewish heritage when the Nazi persecution of the Jews began. A small number of Turkish Jews were also actively involved in Zionist or anti-fascist organizations.



FIGURE PII.1. Jews of Turkish origin working in a sweatshop in Paris during the 1930s. (Courtesy of Kaurin Lakajzen-Eskenazi.)

The Turkish Jews' relationship to their country of origin was equally diverse. For some, the connection with Turkey was limited to their identification papers, while others proudly called themselves "Turkish Jews" and wore stick pins depicting the Turkish flag in their lapels. Overall, it can be said that the Turkish-Jewish communities sought to maintain good relations with the Turkish authorities: in Berlin, Turkish Jews were on the board of the Turkish Chamber of Commerce for Germany alongside Turkish Embassy representatives. After the death of Atatürk in November 1938, the communities in Paris and Geneva organized emotional memorial services that were attended by Turkish diplomats. The journal *Le Judaïsme Sépharadi*, a significant number of whose contributors were Jews from Turkey, ran a glowing obituary for Atatürk and devoted the following issue almost completely to his memory and to the praise of Turkey.[3]

With the occupation of their countries of residence by Germany – or, in the case of Germany itself, in 1933 – Turkish Jews also became potential victims of Nazi persecution. Several thousands of them were arrested and deported; many of them were murdered. Turkish Jews are mentioned

[3] *Le Judaïsme Sépharadi*, issues from November 1938 and February 1939.

in several written accounts about the Shoah by other Jews.[4] Although the Turkish Jews in Europe represented a significant group, their history during the Shoah has not been researched to date. So far, Turkey has made no effort to look in depth at the fate of its Jewish citizens or other victims of the Nazi regime.

Before I describe the situation of the Turkish-Jewish communities in their various countries of residence, I will outline Nazi Germany's specific policies regarding foreign Jews as well as Turkey's attitude toward its Jewish citizens in Nazi-controlled territory.

[4] See, for example, the accounts by Philip Mechanicus and Jacob Presser, who were Dutch Jews, about the Shoah in Holland, as well as Nissim Calef's memoirs about the camp in Drancy, Lucia Schmidt-Fels's description of the Ravensbrück concentration camp, Eugene Weinstock's account of the deportation of Jews from neutral countries living in Belgium, and many more.

6

The Bureaucracy of Genocide and the Role of the Foreign Office

In principle, the Nazis regarded foreign Jews primarily as Jews and only secondarily as foreign citizens. In practice, however, the Nazi regime was forced time and time again to take foreign policy considerations into account. As early as 1933 and through 1939, the attacks and acts of aggression directed at foreign Jews triggered a number of interventions by the diplomatic representations of other countries.[5] The resulting fear of repercussions for German foreign policy led repeatedly to discussions and agreements between various ministries and party committees. Consideration of foreign policy implications was called for, for example, at the Olympic Summer Games in Berlin in 1936 and at the Leipzig Trade Fair. As a rule, however, exceptions to anti-Semitic regulations were not legally fixed and were not granted in every case.[6] The Decree for the Registration of Jewish Property in 1938 – a step toward the expropriation of Jewish property – led to protests in numerous countries. In response, the various German ministries involved agreed to record the property of Jews with foreign citizenship "as quietly as possible." In consequence, this meant that foreign Jews living in Germany had to report their property in Germany despite diplomatic objections. However, Jews with foreign citizenship were initially exempt from the closing of stores and workshops that was decreed after the November

[5] Examples can be found, among other places, in the files of the PAAA, files R 100161 and R 100269.

[6] On Hitler's explicit order, there were no special provisions favoring foreign Jews in anti-Jewish laws and regulations; Hermann Graml, "Die Behandlung von Juden fremder Staatsangehörigkeit in Deutschland," in *Gutachten des Institut für Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 1 (Munich: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 1958), 85.

pogrom as a means toward the "elimination of Jews from German economic life."[7]

Since protest notes from the diplomatic representations of other countries were, as a matter of course, submitted to the Foreign Office on Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin, this ministry became directly involved in the issue and would eventually play a central role in the shaping of policy on foreign Jews.[8] Within the Foreign Office, it was Department D (Abteilung D, "D" standing for Deutschland) under Martin Luther that was in charge of "Jewish affairs," and within the department, it was primarily Section D III (Referat D III), headed by Franz Rademacher after 1940.[9] After Luther's failed attempt to unseat his superior, Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, in 1943, Department D was reorganized as Section Inland (Referat Inland) under the leadership of Horst Wagner, with Eberhard von Thadden, Rademacher's successor, placed in charge of "Jewish affairs" in Section Inland II. However, the active participation of the German Foreign Office in the persecution of Jews was by no means limited to Department D; it extended from the Foreign Minister at the top, through the officials of various departments at Wilhelmstrasse, down to the Foreign Office's diplomatic representations and agencies in foreign countries.

With the beginning of the war, and particularly after 1940, the Foreign Office became involved far more closely in the Nazis' persecution of the Jews because the occupation of Western European countries had brought tens of thousands of foreign Jews – citizens of a multitude of countries – under Nazi control. In France, about half the Jews were immigrants, and in Belgium their proportion was considerably higher still. Their legal status as foreigners was complicated. International law guaranteed the life and property of citizens of neutral countries in militarily occupied territories. After the introduction of anti-Semitic measures in France, diplomats from several countries intervened against restrictions imposed against their Jewish citizens. As a result, according to Bernd Rother in his book

[7] Letter from the Foreign Office "an sämtliche Missionen und Berufskonsulate" (to all missions and regular consulates), dated January 25, 1939; PAAA, German Embassy in Ankara, 540.

[8] For the role of the German Foreign Office in the Holocaust, see Eckart Conze et al., *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit: Deutsche Diplomaten im Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik* (Munich: Blessing, 2010); Christopher Browning, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978); and Eliahu Ben Elissar, *La Diplomatie du IIIe Reich et les Juifs (1933–1939)* (Paris: Julliard, 1969).

[9] For more on Department D and a detailed account about Luther, see Döscher, *Auswärtige Amt,* 203–262; Browning, *Final Solution*; and Raul Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden* (3 vols.) (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994), 575f.

Spanien und der Holocaust, the Foreign Office took charge of the "diplomatic side of the persecution of the Jews."

The Cooperation between the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) and the Foreign Office

Even before the deportations began, the Foreign Office had made it clear that it reserved the right of consent to any measures affecting foreign Jews.[10] At the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, Luther, as the representative of the Foreign Office, expressly demanded once again that his office be in charge of matters concerning foreign Jews throughout the Nazi-controlled territories. This was a decision that would be fundamental for the further development of the cooperation and distribution of tasks between the RSHA and the Foreign Office. In a note of August 21, 1942, Luther commends RSHA chief Reinhard Heydrich for having "loyally kept" to this agreement, and in general lauds the "smooth cooperation" between the RSHA and the Foreign Office with regard to Jews.[11]

To cover himself, Luther insisted that all decisions about anti-Jewish measures be countersigned by the Political Department of the Foreign Office – as a rule, by the head of the regional division for the country in question. In the case of Turkey, this person was the head of the Middle East desk, Dr. Wilhelm Melchers (Section Pol. VII).

Wilhelm Melchers entered the diplomatic service in 1925 and joined the Foreign Office in 1939. He did not join the NSDAP until September 1939 and was not a member of any other Nazi organization.[12] While in office, he maintained contact with the conspirators behind the plot to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944.[13] Although this did not make him an anti-fascist, he still proved to be the only person who – by pointing out the potential damage to German-Turkish relations – repeatedly withheld his consent to the deportation of Turkish Jews. On the basis of Luther's directive, for a long time neither Rademacher nor his successor von Thadden offered any opposition to Melcher's objections.

[10] According to Woermann, the head of the Political Department of the Foreign Office, on March 1, 1941; ADAP, series D, vol. XII.1, doc. 116. This was guaranteed by the RSHA; Bernd Rother, *Spanien und der Holocaust* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001), 88.

[11] Secret note from Luther, dated August 21, 1942; Kurt Pätzold and Erika Schwarz, *Tagesordnung Judenmord: Die Wannsee-Konferenz am 20. Januar 1942* (Berlin: Metropol, 1992), 127 ff.

[12] PAAA, H files 009762, vol. 1, Rep IV Personalia, no. 436.

[13] Conze, *Das Amt*, 306.

This illustrates that both German diplomats and the officials at the Foreign Office in Berlin did have means and ways to prevent, or at least delay, persecution measures against Turkish Jews in particular and foreign Jews in general. But with the exception of Melchers, nobody tried. Franz von Papen, the German ambassador to Ankara throughout the war, claimed both at the Nuremberg trials and in his autobiography *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse* (A Breach for Truth) that he had saved the lives of Turkish Jews.[14] As far as can be discerned from the extensive documentary material, von Papen did not object once to the deportation of Turkish Jews from the occupied countries of Europe. In fact, he attempted several times to obtain the Turkish government's general consent to the deportation of its Jews. All von Papen did was suggest a more adroit approach from time to time.[15] Likewise, the attorneys Erich Albrecht and Gustav Rödiger from the Foreign Office's Legal Division, who were consulted whenever objections to anti-Jewish measures against Turkish Jews were raised, generally only made suggestions as to how best to circumvent existing legal regulations rather than voicing objections. Diplomats and Foreign Office representatives in the occupied countries, like Ambassador Otto Abetz in Paris or Otto Bene in The Hague, pursued an especially relentless anti-Jewish persecution policy.

The Murder of Jews "in Consideration of Foreign Policy"

The Foreign Office's position regarding the "treatment" of foreign Jews changed over time and was frequently controversial even within the ministry. Remarks made by Foreign Minister Ribbentrop and the head of the Foreign Office's Political Department, Ernst Woermann, indicate that the consideration of foreign opinion was initially deemed unnecessary.[16] However, interventions of foreign diplomatic representations and fears of possible repercussions for German interests eventually led the Foreign Office to deal almost continuously with the treatment of foreign Jews and devise hierarchies of persecution tailored to particular circumstances. Any given situation was affected by several factors.

One important criterion for the decisions made at Wilhelmstrasse was the nature of the protests and countermeasures that might be expected

[14] Franz von Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse* (Munich: List, 1952), 593 ff.

[15] For example, von Papen recommended the "seamless elimination of the Dönme who were representing German firms by maintaining the standard period for giving notice, thus avoiding lawsuits for damages." Letter from von Papen, dated April 15, 1942: PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5704.

[16] According to Ribbentrop in a letter to his Bulgarian counterpart Popoff in November 1941; ADAP, series D, vol. XIII, doc. 504.

from a particular government if its Jewish citizens were to become victims of anti-Jewish measures. The Foreign Office kept careful records on which countries protested against Germany's anti-Jewish policies and which diplomats intervened on behalf of their Jewish compatriots. Particular caution was called for if there were German nationals living in the country in question who could potentially be affected by "repercussions." This argument was raised repeatedly in the Foreign Office with reference to Argentinean and American as well as Turkish Jews: after all, more than 2,000 Reich Germans lived in Turkey. Another criterion was whether the countries in question had passed anti-Jewish laws of their own. It could be assumed that the governments of countries with anti-Semitic legislation, such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, would hardly put up any opposition to the persecution of their Jewish citizens abroad.[17]

Another factor that affected Nazi Germany's policies regarding the Jewish citizens of other countries was the question of how a particular country ranked within the Nazis' racial doctrine: Denmark, which was classified as "Germanic," was treated differently from the countries categorized as "Slavic."

Finally, commercial and strategic interests related to the war also played a role in Germany's varying attitudes. This was especially so with regard to Ankara. Turkey supplied the German armaments industry with chromium ore, which was critical for the war effort, and Turkey's "pro-German neutrality" was therefore crucial to Germany's military strategy. As a consequence, Berlin was careful to avoid anything that might upset the sensitive German-Turkish relations, especially since, beginning in 1943, the Allies had attempted to persuade Turkey to change course. The already-mentioned head for the Middle East desk of the Foreign Office's Political Department, Melchers, used this argument successfully a number of times.

The different criteria sometimes produced conflicting "considerations." In the fall of 1940, for example, Foreign Minister Ribbentrop protested the decision of the military commander of occupied France to

[17] Department D, which became Department Inland II in 1943, created systems of classification that indicated which countries that were neutral, were allied with Germany, or were puppet states that had their own anti-Jewish laws; see, for example, the "Übersicht über die mit fremden Regierungen über die Anwendung der deutschen Judenmaßnahmen auf fremde Staatsagehörige getroffenen Vereinbarungen nach dem Stande vom 20.4.1943" (Overview of the Agreements Made with Foreign Governments about the Application of German Jewish Measures to Foreign Citizens as of April 20, 1943); PAAA R 100855, fiche 2198.

exempt only U.S. citizens from the newly passed anti-Jewish regulations, while protests by countries friendly toward Germany had initially been rejected.[18] The collaborating governments and rump governments of the occupied countries – for example, the Vichy regime – were prepared to turn foreign Jews over to the Germans in the doomed hope that they might be able to protect their own Jewish citizens with this move. Some of these Jewish foreign nationals, however, were citizens of countries that were either neutral or allied with Germany, and Berlin therefore wanted to handle them with care.

For the persecuted Jews, the question of their citizenship thus became crucial and, eventually, a matter of life and death: the degree of "protection" they enjoyed depended on the particular relationship and power dynamic between the country whose passport they held and Nazi Germany. Discussions about possible exemptions generally pertained to the Jewish citizens of neutral, allied, and enemy states. Stateless Jews were completely unprotected. They were the first victims at every stage of persecution. This was also the case for the Jewish citizens of German-occupied countries considered "non-existent" by Germany, among them Poland and the Czech region of Czechoslovakia. Decisions on persecution measures against the Jewish citizens of these countries and against stateless Jews were made solely by the RSHA, without consultation with the Foreign Office. The situation of the Jewish citizens of countries allied with Nazi Germany – the Soviet Union, Italy, and Hungary, for example – also changed abruptly as soon as these countries were attacked or occupied by Germany.

Precarious "Exemption Regulations"

The Foreign Office on Wilhelmstrasse was certainly aware that there was a difference between using anti-Jewish provisions against foreign Jews "only" to completely deprive them of their rights and property and actually murdering them. In November 1941 – that is, after the beginning of the systematic murder of Jews in the Soviet Union – the Foreign Office's legal department replied to an inquiry of the Reich Commissioner for the Ostland about whether the foreign Jews in this territory could be included in the deportations, stating that foreigners were protected by international law.[19] In the eyes of the bureaucrats of the genocide, human life did not necessarily rank higher as an interest protected by law than

[18] Rother, *Spanien und Holocaust*, 87.
[19] Ibid., 90.

did property. This is illustrated by a report of the Foreign Office's legal department from April 1944, according to which the property of Soviet Jews could not be touched.[20] At the time the report was written, the Germans had already murdered several hundred thousand Soviet Jews. Although there is no direct connection between this example and the situation of the Turkish Jews, it is mentioned here to emphasize the perverse absurdity of the "rules and regulations of genocide" negotiated between the various German agencies involved. Any description of this complex system of "exemptions" and "deferments" runs the risk of becoming entangled in its logic and trivializing the Nazi bureaucrats' perfidiousness. The reason for granting "exemptions" was not "consideration," and it certainly wasn't humanitarianism; rather, it was to advance the goal of exterminating the Jews as smoothly as possible. To this end, the Foreign Office sought to conduct every step of the persecution of the Jews, all the way to their deportation, with the consent of the respective governments, thus making these governments accomplices to the German crimes.

Exemptions from persecution measures were temporarily granted to particular groups or to Jews of certain citizenships and were by no means guaranteed. As numerous documents confirm, the German authorities were very careful not to put these "special provisions" in writing. If the representatives of foreign Jews invoked these "special provisions" in their formal objections, their existence was denied, as shown by a response from the Legal Department to an inquiry by the German Embassy in Paris: a French attorney had asserted on behalf of his client, a Turkish Jew, that "according to a German-Turkish agreement," Turkish Jews living in Germany were exempt from the anti-Jewish "Aryanization Laws." Dr. Rödiger from the Foreign Office's legal department advised the Paris embassy either not to reply to the attorney at all or to inform him that "there was no special German-Turkish agreement regarding said question."[21]

In general, the task of Department D III– the later Section Inland II – within the German Foreign Office was to "thoroughly shield the German anti-Jewish measures against objections and interventions by foreign

[20] For more on this in detail, ibid., 102 ff.

[21] Letter from the German Embassy in Paris, dated February 26, 1943; official statement from the legal department, dated March 17, 1943. In a similar case, Dr. Melchers, who has already been mentioned, expressed his reservations about the intended "forced Aryanization" of a Turkish Jew's property because it might strain German-Turkish relations; official statement by Melchers, Section Pol. VII, dated June 2, 1943; all letters in PAAA, R 99303.

countries," as stated in the description of Department Inland II's area of responsibility. This entailed, for example, "the routine rejection of unjustified intervention efforts of neutral countries on behalf of ... Jews from the occupied territories."[22] As a result, intervention efforts by foreign diplomats were ignored time and time again or met with delay tactics. As the following chapters show, demarches by Turkish diplomats were repeatedly met with this approach as well.

Depending on the situation, the Nazi agencies would disregard their own "rules of exemption" – for example to fill up the next transport because a particularly ambitious commandant was eager to make the territory he was in charge of "free of Jews" especially quickly, or because the local SS authorities ignored the agreements between the RSHA and the Foreign Office in Berlin. Again and again, Jews with neutral citizenship were arrested at a time when they should still have been exempt under the terms of the Germans' interagency agreements. In the case of protests by the respective consulates, other pretexts for the arrests were put forward, such as declaring the arrested to be "enemies of the state." Furthermore, foreign Jews were only exempt from certain anti-Jewish measures, such as compulsory identification (the requirement to wear the yellow badge), while a number of other discriminatory measures, such as registration (the "Jewish census"), certainly affected them as well.

The Ultimatum of "Returning Them Home"

The "deferment" of certain groups of foreign Jews from deportation only constituted a temporary reprieve from persecution, just as it did for certain other groups (such as Jews married to non-Jewish women, war veterans, etc.). At the very least, foreign Jews were also to be driven permanently out of German-controlled territory. Starting in the fall of 1942, countries that were either neutral or allied with Germany were given an ultimatum to repatriate their Jewish nationals from German-controlled areas – in Nazi parlance, to "return them home" (*Heimschaffung*). Otherwise they would be "included in the general measures regarding Jews" – which meant they would be deported and murdered. The countries in question were given the deadline of December 31, 1942. In effect, this deadline

[22] Overview of the duties of the Section Inland II of the German Foreign Office; PAAA, R 100673, fiche 1700.

was extended several times, because most of the countries did not react for a long time.

In retrospect, it is easy to misinterpret the failure of these governments to react: with hindsight, we know that the offered "return home" would have saved the Jews of these countries from deportation and probable death. But in most cases, in the winter of 1942–43 neither the governments concerned nor the Jews themselves could have known this. The governments of the Allied countries and the Jewish organizations were aware of the mass murders very early on – the first reports about the existence of extermination camps had trickled through to them in the late summer of 1942. Nevertheless, it still took several months before they actually started to believe the reports about the extermination camps. The fact that the Germans had built factories designed for the mass murder of human beings was simply unimaginable. And the Germans took care to avoid explaining to the foreign diplomatic representations what the opaque phrase "inclusion in the general measures regarding Jews" actually meant.

It appears that the Foreign Office was aware of the risk it was taking: the simple failure of a country to comply with the ultimatum could hardly be interpreted as a particular government's consent to the murder of its Jewish citizens. As a number of countries, among them Turkey, took no steps to name any Jewish citizens they wished to have repatriated, Fritz Gebhardt von Hahn of the Foreign Office's Department D III asked the RSHA in mid-February 1943 to compile lists of names of the Jewish foreigners living in German-controlled territories.[23] The letter was personally addressed to Adolf Eichmann, the head of RSHA Referat IV B4 responsible for organizing the deportation of the Jews, and initially, he refused to do what amounted to additional work; von Hahn, however, insisted. To avoid "foreign policy complications," he maintained, foreign governments must be given the opportunity to repatriate their Jewish citizens residing in German-controlled territories before the deportations began. Eventually, the RSHA agreed.[24] In keeping with this Foreign Office scheme, the Gestapo or SS offices in the occupied territories now drew up lists of Jews with foreign citizenship living in their area, which were then relayed to the respective countries' representations with the request to name the Jews they were willing to repatriate. In many cases,

[23] Schnellbrief (express letter) from von Hahn, dated February 17, 1943, to the RSHA; PAAA, R 99402, fiche 5591.

[24] Letter from von Hahn, dated February 25, 1943, and a letter from Eichmann, dated March 7, 1943; PAAA, R 99402, fiche 5591.

the consulates were even sent lists of Jews who had already been arrested, so they "could pick" the ones they "were interested in." This way, the German authorities attempted both to cover themselves and to make the foreign governments complicit in their crimes. The somewhat limited willingness of some of the countries that were approached to repatriate their Jews could be used in Berlin for propaganda purposes.

Despite all these qualifications, the governments of neutral countries had many avenues for saving their Jewish citizens if they were willing to stand up for them. The specific situation of the Jews in the Nazi-controlled territories differed from country to country, depending on a number of factors: the different occupation structures; the interaction of the German decrees with a particular country's own anti-Semitic regulations (as in France and Italy); and finally, the attitude of both the respective rump governments and the majority populations. These specific conditions are outlined in the following chapters, which deal with individual countries. With regard to Turkish Jews, their situation was affected not only by Ankara's stance but also by the Turkish diplomats' degree of commitment, which varied from country to country.

Turkey's Stance

A particular obstacle to examining Turkey's policies toward its Jewish citizens in Nazi-occupied Europe is that the Archives of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs continue to be off-limits to independent research.[25] The Prime Minister's Republican Archives in Ankara (Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri, BCA) hold only a few documents that refer to the situation of the Turkish Jews in Europe and the question of their return. Consequently, we do not know what discussions took place between the various government agencies within Turkey or what instructions went out from Ankara to Turkey's diplomatic representations in Europe. The Political Archive of the German Foreign Office (PAAA) hold numerous documents on the treatment of Turkish Jews and Turkey's stance, but for the most part, these are reports by German agencies that only indirectly relay the statements made by the Turkish side. The PAAA's holdings from the German Embassy in Paris are very incomplete due to losses; these records would have been especially valuable because most

[25] Access has only ever been granted to a few "hand-picked" historians, such as Stanford Shaw and the former Turkish diplomat Bilâl Şimşir. At the beginning of 2010, Şimşir published a selection of documents from the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the title *Türk Yahudiler* (Ankara: Bilgi).

Turkish Jews lived in France. Valuable information can be found in the archives of Jewish and other international relief organizations that supported the Turkish Jews and lobbied on their behalf with the Turkish government.[26]

A second obstacle is the myth, which has been perpetuated by Turkey for quite some time, that the country and its diplomats did everything in their power and performed heroic deeds in order to save their Jewish citizens from persecution and deportation. This claim surfaced for the first time in the context of the 500-year celebrations that were organized in 1992, on the occasion of the 500-year anniversary of the acceptance of the Sephardic Jews into the Ottoman Empire, by The Quincentennial *Foundation*. The following year, it appeared "in scholarly form" in Stanford Shaw's *Turkey and the Holocaust*. Although Shaw's book is extremely controversial among experts due to numerous factual and methodological errors,[27] his theories met with enthusiastic reception in official political circles in Turkey and have become an integral component of Turkey's self-promotion abroad. Novels and pseudo-scientific books have taken up the topic, two films have been made about it with the financial support of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and there are countless articles and Internet publications on the subject.[28] Through constant repetition, this version has not only become official Turkish doctrine, but it also continues to be repeated unquestioningly by numerous international publications.

Titles like Shaw's *Turkey's Role in Rescuing Turkish and European Jews from Nazi Persecution* and Bilal Şimşir's *Avrupa Irkçılarına Karşı Türkiye'nin Mücadelesi* (Turkey's Struggle against the European Racists) suggest that a commitment on behalf of persecuted Jews was one of the Turkish government's key policy concerns. This is untrue in many respects.

[26] For example, the archives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC), the Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress (WJC, in the American Jewish Archives, AJA), the War Refugee Board (WRB), and the International Red Cross.

[27] See, for example, Bernard Wasserstein's critical article, "Their Own Fault – Attempts to Shift the Blame for the Holocaust," *Times Literary Supplement* (January 7, 1994): 4–5.

[28] Two films have been made: *Desperate Hours* by Victoria Barrett (2000) and *Turkish Passport* (2011). Ayşe Kulin's novel *Nefes Nefese* is also based on this topic and has been published in English under the title *Last Train to Istanbul*. The book *Büyükelçi* by Emir Kıvırcık (the grandnephew of the ambassador Behiç Erkin) also consists mainly of fictitious scenes and dialogues but was treated in Turkey as a "study." It has also been translated into English (*The Ambassador*, Istanbul: GOA, 2007). The former Turkish ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, Onur Öymen, incorporates Shaw's statements almost verbatim in a chapter of his book *Die türkische Herausforderung* (Cologne: Önel, 2001). The list of examples could easily be expanded.

As described in the first part of this book, Turkey pursued a nationalistic policy of its own at the time that – although it was by no means comparable to the German extermination policy – was still directed against both Jews within Turkey and Jewish refugees.

In general, judging from the Turkish press coverage and minutes of government meetings at the time, the fate of the Jews in Europe hardly figured in the political discussions in Ankara. In this respect, Turkey was no different from most other countries. Only the general events of the war were of interest, a fact illustrated by the few existing memoirs by the Turkish diplomats who were stationed in Europe at the time: the Turkish ambassador Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu witnessed first the German invasion of Czechoslovakia and then, a little over a year later, in his capacity as Turkish ambassador in The Hague, the occupation of the Netherlands. Although Karaosmanoğlu had a negative view of National Socialism, he does not mention the persecution of the Jews once.[29] Feridun Cemal Erkin was undersecretary at the Turkish Embassy in 1934 and general consul in 1938, spending one year in Berlin in each of these capacities. In his memoirs, he describes the Nazi regime as "anti-Semitic, anti-intellectual, and anti-liberal." He does not, however, mention the situation of the Jews in Germany, although he was in the country during events such as the pogrom in November 1938.[30] Hüsrev Gerede, who was known for his Nazi sympathies, quite extensively quotes the anti-Semitic views of German Nazi politicians in his memoirs but does not mention with a single word the fate of the Turkish Jews and the persecution they were subjected to in the German Reich during his tenure (until July 1942).[31] Even Behiç Erkin, who was ambassador to France from August 1939 to July 1943 and personally lodged a number of demarches on behalf of Turkish Jews, only briefly mentions the subject twice in his autobiography.[32]

There certainly were intervention efforts by Turkish diplomats to protect their Jewish nationals in Nazi-controlled territories, and some of them were very determined and courageous. These ranged from protests against the confiscation of Turkish Jews' property, through making demarches in order to obtain the release of detainees, to making arrangements for their evacuation to Turkey ("returning them home"). The form

[29] Karaosmanoğlu, *Zoraki Diplomat.*

[30] Feridun Cemal Erkin, *Dışişlerinde 34 Yıl: Anılar – Yorumlar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1980).

[31] R. Hüsrev Gerede, *Harb İçinde Almanya (1939–1942)* (Istanbul: ABC, 1994).

[32] Behiç Erkin's memoirs can be viewed in digital form in, for example, the archives of the USHMM. It 2010 it was published in Turkey as: *Behiç Erkin: Hâtırat, 1876–1958,* by the Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi.

of this commitment on the part of the Turkish authorities varied greatly from country to country and is examined individually in the following chapters. Still, the crucial factor was the stance of the government in Ankara: by giving instructions to the local diplomats and having the final say on the recognition or revocation of Turkish Jews' citizenship as well as on their right to return from Nazi-controlled territories, the Turkish government left these diplomats very little leeway to intervene.

Revocation of Citizenship ...

Over the course of World War II, the Turkish government withdrew the citizenship of thousands of its Jewish citizens living in Europe, leaving them without any protection. As elaborated in the first part of this book, the policies on the withdrawal of citizenship were originally not connected to the Nazis' persecution of the Jews, nor were they initially directed primarily against Jews. But during the years of Jewish persecution by the Nazis, revocations of citizenship overwhelmingly affected Jews in German-occupied countries, and this seems to have been no coincidence: A handwritten note of April 1939 from the office of the prime minister's secretary lists three laws (1041, 1312, 2848) under the word *Yahudi* (Jew); these laws would be used in subsequent years for the mass revocations of the citizenship of Jews.[33] Since the same sheet of paper also contains notes regarding Jewish refugees and measures to prevent their entry into Turkey, it is a likely conclusion that the question of how the revocation of citizenship might be used to prevent the entry of an increasing number of persecuted Jews had been discussed in the prime minister's office or at a cabinet meeting. Lending further support to this conclusion, the number of citizenship revocations of Turkish Jews rose each time the Nazis' anti-Jewish measures in a particular country became so extreme that the Turkish Jews living there urgently needed the protection of their diplomatic representation and it was "feared" that they might return to Turkey. Most of the Turkish Jews living in Germany and Austria, for example, were already deprived of their citizenship in the 1930s, although these were by no means people who "only remembered the existence of their Ottoman passports under the pressure of persecution" and maintained no contact with the Turkish authorities.[34]

[33] BCA, Dosya, 94C45, 30..10.0.0/110/736..5.

[34] This is asserted in numerous accounts. See, for example, Emir Kıvırcık, *Büyükelçi* (Istanbul: GOA), 20, 37. In Berlin the revocation of citizenship, for example, also affected Turkish Jews who were members of the Turkish Chamber of Commerce and, for that reason, had been in regular contact with the Turkish Embassy.

In most European countries, a valid passport issued by one's home country was required to obtain or extend a residence permit. According to the accounts of people affected by this measure, even people who had, up to that point, regularly had their passports renewed now suddenly found themselves refused and deprived of their citizenship. Once without citizenship, they fell into the category of stateless people, which left them completely unprotected and deprived them of any possibility of escape, even before the prohibition of departure was imposed in 1941.

... and the Prohibition of Return

Revocation of citizenship also entailed a lifelong ban from entering Turkey. The Passport Law of June 1938 had reemphasized the ban imposed by the Citizenship Law of 1928 and expanded it to the effect that former Turkish citizens were prohibited from entering Turkey even if they were in possession of a valid passport or identity papers from other countries.[35] Jews of Turkish descent who had lost or changed their citizenship were thus denied even temporary exile as refugees in Turkey.

Noteworthy in this context is a note from Turkish Minister of the Interior Faik Öztrak, of February 1939, in which he informs the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of an instruction he had given to the Inspectorates-General and the provinces, namely, "that there are no objections to Jews with Turkish citizenship coming to our country if they are traveling with proper papers that are in compliance with the law."[36] On the one hand, that a ministerial order was necessary to remind officials that Turkish citizens had to be treated in accordance with the laws of the country sheds a telling light on the political climate with regard to Jews during those years. It seems likely that border officials, who had been given general instructions not to let Jewish refugees into the country, mistakenly also refused entry to Turkish Jews wanting to return to Turkey whose papers were "correct." The precipitating factor for this may have been the expulsion of foreign Jews by the Bulgarian government at the beginning of 1939.[37] On the other hand, the instruction could also be interpreted as a call to the border and police authorities to allow only those Turkish Jews

[35] Law No. 3519, Article 4.

[36] BCA, Dosya 94C47, 30.10.00/110.736.7.

[37] In February 1939, the Bulgarian government deported 4,000 Jews with foreign citizenship from Bulgaria after a deadline of two weeks. This order was reissued in September 1939. Greek and Turkish Jews were taken, under guard, to the border; Hans-Joachim Hoppe, "Bulgarien," in *Dimension des Völkermords*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996), 279.

into the country who were traveling with "proper papers that are in compliance with the law," in essence, to turn away all others.

All the previously quoted laws, decrees, and statements of Turkish government offices opposing the return of Jews are dated from the years leading up to 1939, that is, the period before the beginning of World War II and the systematic murder of the Jews by the Germans. However, as it turned out, the Turkish authorities would continue to rigorously apply these regulations even after 1942, when the return to or even just temporary refuge in Turkey was the only chance for many Turkish Jews in Europe to escape deportation to the death camps. This became especially evident in the Turkish government's reaction to the German repatriation ultimatum.

The Turkish Reaction to the Repatriation Ultimatum

In a personal conversation with Turkish Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu in October 1942, the German Embassy in Ankara conveyed to the Turkish government Germany's demand for the repatriation of Turkey's Jewish citizens from the German-occupied countries of Western Europe. The report in which Menemencioğlu informed Prime Minister Saracoğlu of the conversation can be found in the Prime Minister's Republican Archives in Ankara.[38] For ostensibly "military reasons," the Germans were going to "forcibly expel" foreign Jews from the Western European countries starting on January 1. The number of Jews with "correct" Turkish citizenship papers living in the occupied zone of France is given at 3,500 (in addition to another 10,000 whose status was "not correct"). No figures are given for other countries.

Although at this point in the fall of 1942, several hundred Turkish Jews or Jews of Turkish origin had already been deported from Germany and France, the wording of Menemencioğlu's memo indicates that he had no idea what the German expression *Zwangsabschiebung* (forced expulsion), actually meant. Nor does he seem to have understood that the conversation effectively constituted an ultimatum on the part of the Germans. On instructions from Luther, the German Embassy secretary had led the Turks to believe that the repatriation request was a "special concession" to the Turks and that other countries would not be notified.

[38] Report by Menemencioğlu, dated October 20, 1942; BCA, Dosya 420264, 30..10.0.0/232.562.20; instructions by the Foreign Office in Berlin to the German Embassy, teletype message from Luther, dated October 12, 1942; PAAA, R 100889, fiche 2272.

The Turkish foreign minister does not mention the reply he gave to the German authorities; instead, he requests instructions regarding the matter from the head of government. The Prime Minister's Republican Archives contain no reference to a reply by the prime minister or to a government resolution regarding the issue.

On October 20, the secretary of the German Embassy in Ankara, Hans Kroll, also gave a report of the discussion with Menemencioğlu, but his account of the conversation is entirely different: According to Kroll's report, Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu had promised to instruct the Turkish consulates in Europe to have the Turkish Jews "return to Turkey voluntarily" and had asked the German authorities for the pertinent transit visas. According to Kroll, Menemencioğlu had also announced that some of the Jews in question would probably be stripped of their Turkish citizenship by the end of the year.[39]

Neither the Turkish government in Ankara nor its embassy in Berlin responded to the ultimatum.

German Pressure for a Turkish "Declaration of Consent"

In the Foreign Office in Berlin, Menemencioğlu's statements, as passed on by Kroll, were termed in several letters an "announcement," and later even a "firm promise" and an "unequivocal agreement" on the part of the Turkish government to repatriate its Jewish citizens.[40] But at the end of January 1943, it became evident that not even the people in Menemencioğlu's own ministry knew anything about the existence of a repatriation order by the foreign minister, as German Ambassador von Papen reported after another conversation in Ankara. Von Papen added that the German communication had been received at the ministry "without any particular interest."[41]

It was Berlin's intention to interpret Turkey's passive attitude, as well as that of other countries, as the governments' consent to the deportation of their Jews. By January, the RSHA was preparing an instruction ordering the deportation of foreign Jews from neutral and allied countries throughout Nazi-controlled territory; after all, the Germans' reasoning went, the

[39] Telegram from Kroll, German Embassy in Ankara, dated October 16, 1942; PAAA, R 100889, fiche 2272.

[40] Report from Luther, dated January 20, 1943, ADAP, series E, vol. V, doc. 64; Report from Klingenfuss, end of January, PAAA, R 99402; teletype message from Luther to the German Embassy in Ankara, dated January 21, 1943, PAAA, R 100899, fiche 2272.

[41] Telegram from von Papen, no. 123, dated January 26, 1943; PAAA, R 100899, fiche 2273.

governments had been given the opportunity to repatriate their Jewish citizens.[42] But the German Foreign Office refused to give its consent, with the result that the repatriation deadlines were extended still further.

Meanwhile, the German Foreign Office now concentrated its efforts on obtaining a formal declaration from the Turkish authorities stating their "disinterest" in their Jewish citizens, which could then serve as a declaration of their consent to the deportations.[43] Simultaneously, the Turkish consulates in the occupied countries were presented with lists of the Turkish Jews registered as living in each respective country along with a demand to either repatriate them or to confirm that their return was "not considered important."[44]

By September 1943, however, Turkey had still not responded. Viewed in the most positive light, Turkey's inactivity can be interpreted as a kind of "passive resistance," because for the Jews affected by the measure, even "repatriation" meant forced expulsion and the loss of the livelihood they had built in their country of residence. It may also be granted that, in the fall of 1942, the Turkish government could not have had any idea (or could not believe) what the laconic phrase "deportation to the East" actually meant.

What Was Known in Ankara about the Holocaust?

The question of which international organizations knew what at exactly which point has been discussed a great deal in Holocaust research.[45] In the fall of 1941, the international press had reported on the mass murder of Jews and Russians, which began around the same time as the invasion of the Soviet Union. Reports of the existence of extermination camps were publicized for the first time in the late summer of 1942. The Jewish Agency released its information on the Germans' systematic murder of

[42] Letter drafted by Eichmann and Hunsche, January 1943 (no specific date), IV B 4 b-2686/42; PAAA, R 1008576, fiche 2203.

[43] Declarations to this effect were demanded from the Turkish embassies and consulates in various countries; note verbale, dated February 17, 1943, PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702; letter from Woermann, dated February 23, 1943, PAAA, R 99446.

[44] Letter from von Hahn, dated March 12, 1943; letter from the German Embassy in Paris, dated March 12, 1943; both in PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702.

[45] See, for example, Breitman, Richard, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); Robert Moses Shapiro, ed., *Why Didn't the Press Shout? American and International Journalism during the Holocaust* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2003); Frank Bajohr and Dieter Pohl, *Der Holocaust als offenes Geheimnis: die Deutschen, die NS-Führung und die Alliierten* (Munich: Beck, 2006).

Jews in November 1942. On December 17, 1942, the Allies issued a formal declaration confirming and condemning Nazi extermination policy toward the Jews.

As early as 1941, journalists who were accredited in Turkey had reported about the systematic murder of Jews by the SS Einsatzgruppen in Romania. Jews who had managed to escape from concentration camps or ghettos in Eastern Europe and had reached Istanbul spoke about their experiences to the local aid committees that looked after them, and their accounts were passed on from Istanbul to other organizations all over the world. In addition, the officially accredited representatives of the Jewish Agency repeatedly tried to draw the Turkish authorities' attention to the murderous events in an attempt to prompt them to loosen their restrictive refugee policies. In its edition of February 19, 1943, the London newspaper of the Polish government-in-exile, *Dziennik Polski*, quoted the Istanbul-based *Réalité*, which had covered the mass murders of Jews in Poland on its front page.[46] In March 1943 – at the time when the German authorities repeated their repatriation ultimatum – the government gazette *Aym Tarihi* reported on a speech by British Foreign Secretary Eden about "the destruction of the Jews in Poland."[47] It can thus be assumed that by March 1943, the Turkish government knew about the systematic murder of the Jews by the Germans.

Turkey's consular representations in the German Reich and the occupied territories had also been witness to the persecution of the Jews there from the outset. In Hamburg, for example, the Turkish Consulate and the residences of most of the consuls and consular employees were located right in Hamburg's Jewish quarter, Grindel-Rotherbaum. The anti-Jewish measures, the arrests, even the deportations took place right before their eyes. The same is true of Turkish diplomats in other European countries who, by way of requests for help from Turkish Jews, were constantly confronted with the persecution these people were subjected to. However, the available sources do not show whether or how the Turkish diplomats in Hamburg, or in Europe in general, passed on what they knew to the government agencies in Ankara. Several appeals for help from Turkish Jews living in Europe were addressed directly to the president or the Parliament in Ankara.[48] But Ankara's stance reveals that its inactivity

[46] *Dziennik Polski* (February 19, 1943): 2. The newspaper *Réalité* was published by the British Embassy.

[47] *Aym Tarihi*, no. 112 (March 1943): 251.

[48] See the letter from Mr. Yakar from Paris in the chapter on France (Chapter 8), and the letter from Avram Beşuşe from Amsterdam in the chapter on the Netherlands (Chapter 9).

with regard to the Jews of Europe, even from 1943 onward, was most definitely calculated. Indeed, the diplomats on location were explicitly instructed not to send Jews back "in large numbers."

"A Mass Immigration of Jews Is to Be Prevented"

As Turkey was not the only country that had let the German ultimatum deadlines pass without action, these were extended several times. Under pressure from the RSHA, they were eventually set for the end of August and (for Turkey and Portugal) September 10.[49] At the request of the secretary of the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, Kemal Koç, the deadline for Turkey was ultimately extended two more times: to October 10, 1943, and (for the Turkish Jews in France) to the end of May 1944.[50] At the end of September, Koç announced to von Thadden (Section Inland II) of the Foreign Office that "his government had now decided to instruct the Turkish consular representations to accept into Turkey all Jews with Turkish citizenship who were willing to return after examination of each individual case. This was to be done bearing in mind that a mass immigration of Jews into Turkey was to be prevented, especially by Jews who had correct Turkish papers but had not had any contact with Turkey for decades."[51]

Ambassador von Papen, too, reported from Ankara on October 28 – one week after the arrests of Turkish Jews in several European countries following the expiration of the extended ultimatum deadline – that the Turkish government had declared it was "interested only in those Jews ... whose Turkish citizenship had been verified beyond doubt by the Turkish Ministry of the Interior." Von Papen's telegram reveals that the verification process with a view to possible repatriation included only about 330 people in the first place, whose names had been provided by the Turkish Embassy in Berlin.[52] Yet the number of Turkish Jews in Nazi-controlled

[49] This "last ultimatum" was intended for ten countries: Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Hungary, Romania, and Turkey. Letter from Wagner, Inland II 1947g, dated August 12, 1943, to the German embassies and consulates in these ten countries; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702.

[50] On September 9, the day before the departure deadline expired, Koç reported that he had just received his first instructions from Ankara; Schnellbrief (express letter) from von Thadden to the RSHA, dated September 9, 1943, PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702.

[51] Memo from von Thadden, Inland II A, dated September 22, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703.

[52] Telegram from von Papen in Ankara to the Foreign Office, dated October 28, 1943; PAAA, 100889, fiche 2273. In order to give the Turkish government the opportunity to repatriate these people even after their arrest, those arrested were not taken to

areas who still held Turkish citizenship at the time can be estimated at 5,000 to 10,000.

Until the end of the war, Turkish Jews who, individually or collectively, wanted to return to Turkey not only had to have their exit permit checked by the Nazi authorities but they also had to apply for a permit from the Turkish authorities (called a "return trip visa" in documents and accounts of contemporary witnesses). The processing of these return trip applications took place in Ankara and cost valuable time, which in some cases resulted in arrest. Moreover, on several occasions, the Turkish authorities denied the permission to return to people who had received approval from the Germans to leave the country. Children of Turkish-Jewish parents who in their youth had opted for the citizenship of their country of residence were refused entry to Turkey. Frequently, this meant that their families remained as well because they did not want to leave their relatives behind unprotected. As far as it is known, non-Jewish Turks were not required to have such a "permit" to return home.[53]

In order to prevent the feared "mass immigration of Jews," the government now made increased use of the citizenship revocation policy – just as Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu had announced to Embassy Secretary Kroll. Between 1942 and 1944, a total of more than 2,600 people were deprived of their citizenship, 1,293 of them in 1943 alone, in the wake of the repeated German ultimatums.[54] Insofar as the lists of people deprived of their citizenship in the Prime Minister's Republican Archives in Ankara were available for examination, more than 90 percent of the people expatriated during this period were Jews, and more than 90 percent of those, in turn, lived in France.[55]

extermination camps but to the Ravensbrück and Buchenwald concentration camps. But Turkey never demanded their release.

[53] For example, Turkish university students in Europe, most of whom were not Jewish, were quickly evacuated during the war on many occasions. (Those studying in Germany were evacuated at the beginning of the war but returned to their places of study in Germany after a short while later. Turkish students in Belgium were – after the occupation of the country – first evacuated to France, but at least some of them later returned to Belgium.) In 1939, the Turkish citizens residing in Poland were evacuated by the embassy without having to be checked beforehand.

[54] People who had been naturalized in their country of residence are not included in these numbers. Revocation of citizenship was justified with the "failure to participate in the War of Liberation" (Law No. 1041), or if the person in question had not reported to the consulate within the last five years (Law No. 1312, Article 10).

[55] Concerning the year 1943, the names and countries of residence of those whose citizenship had been revoked were only given in half of the decisions, and for 1944 one of the eight lists of names was missing.

7

The Fate of the Turkish Jews in Germany and Austria

An estimated 700 Turkish Jews lived in Germany during the period of the Weimar Republic (1919–1933), the great majority of them in Berlin. In 1905, several Sephardic merchants founded the Israelitisch-Sephardischer Verein zu Berlin (Israelite-Sephardic Association in Berlin) and established a private synagogue on Lützow Street (see Figure 7.1).

Among the founders of the congregation were numerous well-known carpet merchants, most of them from Istanbul: David Leon Haim, Eli J. Uziel, Isidoro Covo, Nissim Zakouto, and the brothers Alfandary. As carpets had just become part of middle-class home décor in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, the carpet trade was booming.[1] Turkish Jews were also active in the tobacco trade as well as in cigarette manufacturing, which experienced an enormous boom at the time. In addition, the close German-Turkish relations before and during World War I facilitated Jewish immigration from the Ottoman Empire to Germany. A few Turkish Sephardic Jews did not come to Germany directly from Turkey (or rather from the Ottoman Empire), but via Vienna, where a significant Turkish-Israelite community had existed since the eighteenth century which began to lose influence with the collapse of the Habsburg Empire.

During and after World War I, poorer Jews from Turkey also began to move to Berlin, and the community grew. From 1915, the rooms of

[1] Between 1894 and 1912, the number of oriental carpets imported from the Ottoman Empire to Germany increased nine hundred-fold. Well-known carpet companies operated by Turkish Jews could also be found in other cities in the German Empire, such as the businesses operated by David Benezra and Haim Isaak Bessoudo in Hamburg and the Gabai family in Munich.



FIGURE 7.1. The Synagogue of Turkish Jews in Berlin in Lützowstreet.

the Israelite-Sephardic Association hosted religious instruction according to the Sephardic rite. At the beginning of the 1920s, the Sephardic Association had a membership of about 150 families and also served as a social meeting place. With the decline of the long-established Portuguese Sephardic community in Hamburg, the Turkish-Sephardic community in Berlin now became the largest Sephardic community in Germany. At the beginning of the 1930s, the more than 500 Turkish Jews in Berlin also represented more than half of the Turkish nationals living in the city, with their number fluctuating between 600 and 1,100 in the period from 1924 to 1934. The same ratio applied to Germany as a whole during the Weimar Republic: in 1933, 45 percent (753 of 1,673) of the Turkish nationals living in Germany were Jewish.[2]

Turkish-Jewish merchants involved in the Israelite-Sephardic Association were also among the founders and active members of the Turkish Chamber of Commerce in Germany, founded in December 1927 and located on Lützowufer in the immediate vicinity of the Sephardic Association.

[2] Results of the 1933 census; *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* (Statistical Yearbook of the German Reich) (Berlin, 1935), 15.

Foreign Jews under the Nazi Regime

In 1933, at the end of the Weimar Republic, about 100,000 foreign Jews were living in Germany, about one fifth of Germany's overall Jewish population. Their circumstances during the Shoah would prove to be in many respects more difficult than those of the foreign Jews in other European countries. For one thing, Germany was naturally the country in which the Nazi bureaucracy was the most efficient. The anti-fascist resistance was largely crushed in the early years of Nazi rule. As a result, there were no forces comparable to the resistance movements that existed in France, Greece, or Italy. In addition, the vast majority of Turkish Jews were living in Berlin where, generally speaking, the persecution of Jews was especially severe, although some of them managed to make use of the anonymity of the big city and survived in hiding.[3]

More than half of the non-German Jews were Polish nationals; another 20 percent were stateless. While foreign Jews enjoyed some degree of legal protection as citizens of their country of origin, which was guaranteed by international or bilateral agreements, they were, on the other hand, subject to a number of discriminatory restrictions under the aliens' law. This meant that they were particularly disadvantaged as a result of the combined effect of anti-Jewish and aliens' legislation.

In this respect, the Nazi bureaucracy seamlessly continued the conservative tradition of the Weimar Republic. Anti-Semitic, anti-foreign sentiment already existed in right-wing, nationalist political circles prior to 1933, as tellingly illustrated in records of parliamentary debates and statements by various police and other agencies on the "problem of the Eastern Jews." Indeed, the first proposals for anti-Jewish laws in 1933 came not from the Nazis but from members of the national conservative DNVP (German National People's Party), who formed a coalition with the Nazi party, the NSDAP, in January 1933.

In July 1933, the Nazi government enacted a law that made the revocation of German citizenship considerably easier. Its purpose was, first, to take away the German citizenship of German exiles abroad as well as to confiscate their property. At the same time, it created a basis for revoking naturalizations that had taken place during the Weimar Republic. Between the Nazis' coming to power in January 1933 and the summer of 1934 alone, about 10,000 Jews were deprived of their citizenship. Most of them were from Eastern Europe; in a few cases, Jews of Turkish origin

[3] See the autobiography of Isaak Behar, "*Versprich mir, dass du am Leben bleibst,*" (Munich: Ullstein, 2002).

were affected as well. Rıfat Avigdor, born in Istanbul in 1895, was one of these; his German citizenship was revoked in 1939. Another person affected was Harald Assaël, son of the tobacco merchant Sabatai Isidor Assaël from Salonika.[4] Now stateless, these Jews were powerless and unprotected against the regime's policy of persecution. In the summers of 1935 and 1936, numerous stateless Jews were expelled from the German Reich for petty crimes. As generally no country was willing to accept stateless people, they were carried off to concentration camps.

Nazi Persecution and the Community's Obliteration

As of 1933, the Turkish Jews in Germany were potential victims of anti-Jewish measures and attacks. In the spring of 1933, the Turkish Embassy in Berlin protested to the German Foreign Office about two events:[5] A Turkish citizen by the name of Mahim Seidmann who ran a shop in Berlin had been prevented by his business partner Gnilka and his sons from entering their shared shop; the police had not come to his aid. Presumably, Mr. Seidmann had become a victim of the anti-Semitic boycott actions of April 1933 and had been boycotted by his own partner.[6] The case of a group of Turkish students in Göttingen, also in the spring of 1933, who were beaten up by Nazis, attracted more attention. As Turkish newspaper articles emphasized, the Turkish students had tried to explain that they were Turks, not Jews, "and that there was no racial relationship between Turks and Jews."[7] The Turkish press also reported on incidents in which non-Jewish Turks in Germany were insulted and subjected to anti-Semitic attacks as supposed Jews. Compared to the numerous interventions by other countries in response to attacks and discrimination against their (Jewish as well as non-Jewish) citizens, scarcely any records of Turkish interventions on behalf of Jewish Turkish citizens can be found in the files of the German Foreign Office.[8]

[4] For more on Avigdor, see BLHA, (Landeshauptarchiv Brandenburg, Brandenburg Main State Archive) file Rep 36 A II, no. 1434. Sabatai Isidor Assaël had already tried in vain three times to obtain German citizenship. His son Harald Assaël had been naturalized in November 1929, but in December 1934 his citizenship in the German Reich was withdrawn due to the law mentioned earlier. Hamburg State Archives, files 95733 and B VI 1929, no. 384.

[5] See correspondence, PAAA, R 100161.

[6] The official statement from the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, dated July 4, 1933, to the German Foreign Office regarding the Turkish note verbale states that Gnilka broke off his business relationship with Seidmann "because of the boycott."

[7] Turkish daily *Haber*, dated August 27, 1933.

[8] Examples of Turkish demarches can neither be found in the extensive collection of files concerning the "Jewish Question (Foreign Opinions)" in the archives of the German

At first, many Turkish Jews did not feel affected by the anti-Semitic persecution, which initially targeted mainly self-employed people and intellectuals. Their Turkish citizenship initially protected them from a number of measures. Isaak Behar, for example, writes in his memoirs:

> Up to that point [until the summer of 1938], most of the restrictions that affected the Jews had not touched us. None of us Behars held a high-level position in politics and society. My father was neither a physician nor an attorney, judge, notary, or teacher. None of us thought of attending university, let alone getting a doctorate. None of us were actors, journalists, or authors. All these occupational bans and restrictions did not affect us.... We saw what the other Jews had to suffer, how they were increasingly driven into poverty, isolation, and despair, but it did not touch us to the degree it should have because it all seemed so far away from our life....
>
> Even when a quota for Jewish children was introduced in our school, I did not think much about it because it did not affect me. I belonged to the first of three groups that were exempt from it: foreign children, children from so-called privileged or mixed marriages, and children of World War I veterans.[9]

Eventually, the anti-Semitic measures affected the Turkish Jews as well: in 1938, Isaak Behar and other children of Turkish Jews were barred from attending public schools.

With the German Decree for the Registration of Jewish Property issued in April 1938, non-German Jews, too, were forced to declare and register their property. However, neither this decree nor the anti-Semitic pogrom of November 9, 1938, prompted reactions or protests from Turkish diplomats, while other countries' protests fill entire folders – even though the number of Turkish Jews in Germany affected by these events was presumably considerably higher than the number of Jews from countries such as Guatemala or Chile.[10]

One intervention by the Turkish Embassy in Berlin that is documented concerns the Turkish businessman Mümtaz Taylan Fazlı, whose company, Orak, was located on the Kurfürstendamm. Fazlı, a board member of the Turkish Chamber of Commerce in Berlin, was not a Jew but a Dönme. In

Foreign Office, which document the international protests against the anti-Semitic laws (PAAA, R 98476–78), nor in similar Gestapo files in the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, hereafter GStAPK) Rep 90 P, no. 72.

[9] Behar, *"Versprich mir,"* 58–59.

[10] PAAA, files R 99300-R 99303. Department D wrote a report on December 20, 1938, regarding reactions from abroad, listing the protesting countries. Turkey is not among the countries mentioned.

1942, the Turkish Embassy protested the classification of Fazlı's business as a "Jewish business." Between April 1942 and June 1943, a lively correspondence took place between the various Nazi and government agencies regarding the "racial classification" of the Dönme.[11]

One reason for the lack of involvement of Turkish diplomats in Germany on behalf of their Jewish citizens may be that the Turkish diplomats accredited to Germany were markedly close to the Nazi regime.[12] This was particularly true for Hüsrev Gerede, ambassador to Berlin until August 1942, and subsequently also for Embassy Secretary Kemal Koç, who was in charge of consular affairs.

Beginning in the mid-thirties, the economic ties between Turkey and Germany became closer. The meetings of the Turkish Chamber of Commerce in Berlin, which had originally been co-founded by Turkish Jews, were now dominated by the big banks of both countries and by steel and arms manufacturing companies.[13] A brochure published in 1938 on the occasion of the Chamber of Commerce's tenth anniversary is dominated by the theme of Turkish-German friendship and rhapsodizes about the "astonishing similarity" between the two great men (Hitler and Atatürk) and the parallels in the histories of the two nations (see Figure 7.2).[14]

Disinterest and the Deprivation of Citizenship

The Turkish authorities' disinterest in the Jews they were supposed to protect is also evident in another incident in August 1940, when the Berlin police arrested five Turkish nationals in response to the earlier arrest of the German bookseller Erich Kalis in Istanbul.[15] The events briefly caused a serious strain in German-Turkish relations and were handled on both sides at the highest level, as the Turkish ambassador to Germany at the

[11] PAAA, R 99447. Those involved included Dr. von Coelln from the Reich Ministry of Economics, von Thadden and Roeppke from the German Foreign Office, Ambassador von Papen from Ankara, and an expert whose name cannot be determined from the document. For a short explanation regarding the Dönme, see Chapter 3.

[12] This is in keeping with the "balance" of Turkey's neutral foreign policy. Likewise, the diplomat who had been accredited to Great Britain, Tevfik Rüştü Aras, was also well known for his pro-British attitude.

[13] The 1936 attendance list for the annual meeting includes not only the names of companies such as Rheinmetall, Krupp, Dyckerhoff, Degea, and the like, but also the names I. Cohen, Alfandary, N. Zakouto, N. Behar, Asriel, and Farchy, who were all members of the Israelitisch-Sephardischer Verein (Israelite-Sephardic Union); List from February 28, 1936; Landesarchiv Berlin (Archives of the Land Berlin, hereafter LAB), B Rep. 042, no. 26815.

[14] *Zehn Jahre Türkische Handelskammer für Deutschland,* Berlin, 1938.

[15] On the arrest of Kalis, a bookseller who was loyal to the Nazis, see Chapter 3.

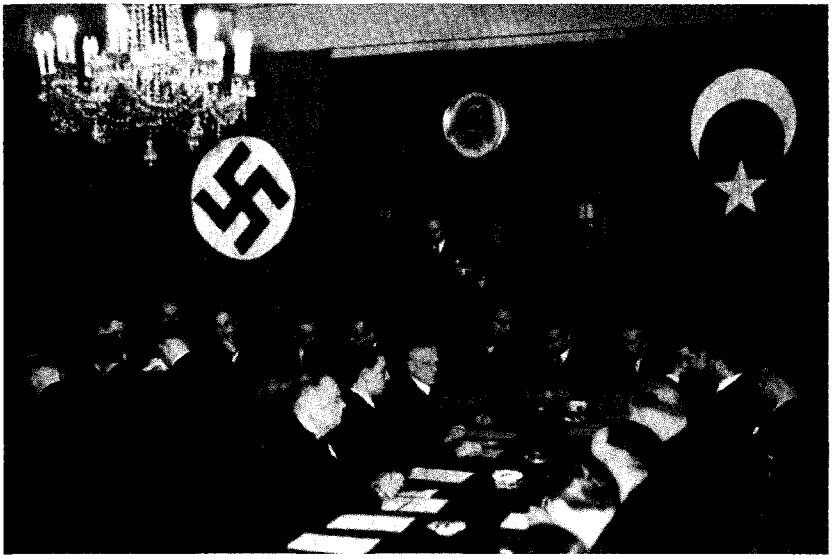


FIGURE 7.2. General meeting of the Turkish Chamber of Commerce in Berlin, 1938.

time, Gerede, writes in his memoirs.[16] Among the five people arrested in Berlin was Davisco Asriel, the last head of the Sephardic community in Berlin.[17] The Turkish Consulate in Berlin intervened for the release of only the other four people while taking no action on behalf of Davisco Asriel, even though Asriel was not only a Turkish citizen but also an active member of the Turkish Chamber of Commerce in Germany. In the minutes of Chamber of Commerce meetings, Asriel's signature appears alongside those of Turkish Embassy representatives. That Asriel was the only one of those arrested whose release was not demanded by the Turkish Embassy was attributed by the German Foreign Office's legal department – probably rightly – to his being Jewish. After the crisis had been resolved, Asriel was released along with the four other Turks.

We know of Davisco Asriel that, at the beginning of 1940 at least, he still held Turkish citizenship.[18] Most of the Turkish Jews living in

[16] Gerede, *Harb İçinde Almanya*, 100–102.

[17] The other four people arrested were Dr. Ömer Faruk; Kemal Kumbaracılar, who was also a member of the Turkish Chamber of Commerce; the journalist Emrullah Gün; and the student Fethi Ülgen; file of the Legal Department of the German Foreign Office, PAAA, R 50886.

[18] See a letter from the Berlin Chamber of Industry and Commerce, dated January 22, 1940, to the District Court of Berlin; LAB, A Rep. 342–02, no. 23430.

Germany had already had their citizenship revoked in the mid-thirties. The May 1939 census recorded only 101 Jews with Turkish citizenship remaining in Berlin, less than one quarter of the number of 1933.[19] This decrease can only be attributed in very small part to flight or emigration. These options were open to very few people. Ankara had stripped most of the Turkish Jews living in Germany (and Austria) of their citizenship, and they now appeared in the statistics as stateless.

Isaak Behar's account, as well as a number of German agency files, reveals that the Turkish authorities availed themselves of administrative assistance from the Nazi authorities in stripping their Jewish citizens of their citizenship: in Berlin, and later in occupied Prague as well, the Turkish Jews were summoned and interviewed by the foreign police (which was subordinate to the Gestapo), which subsequently also delivered the "notification of revocation of citizenship."[20] This means that the Nazi authorities were immediately able to determine which people had lost Turkey's protection and were now at their mercy as stateless people without rights.

During the November 1938 pogrom, Abraham Behar (no relation to Isaak Behar), a native of Istanbul, was arrested in Stuttgart and taken to Dachau concentration camp. Isaak Behar's cousin, also named Isaak Behar, who was still a youth at the time, was arrested in Berlin and taken to the Buchenwald concentration camp. Both had previously been stripped of their citizenship by Turkey.[21]

In August 1939, the Turkish Jews living in Germany called attention to their desperate situation at a conference on the problem of the Jewish refugees organized in Paris by HICEM[22]:

[19] *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches* (Statistics of the German Reich), no. 552/4 (1944): 4/72. The number of Jews in the entire German Reich (with annexed Austria) who were still considered Turkish citizens had fallen to 263.

[20] Behar, *"Versprich mir,"* 74; and the file of Isaak Behar's uncle Elia Behar: LAB, Pr. Br. Rep. 30 Berlin C Tit. 170–18035.

[21] Both persons were unrelated to each other; Behar was a prevalent name among Sephardic Jews. Like many of the Jews arrested in the November pogrom, A. Behar was released after a few weeks. Despite this experience, he remained in Stuttgart with his family. His marriage to a non-Jewish woman probably protected him. He died on September 27, 1944, in Stuttgart. Isaak Behar's cousin, after his release from Buchenwald, was evacuated to Denmark with a transport of Swedish children. He lived in Israel until his death.

[22] HICEM was a Jewish relief organization for emigrants. It was formed when the emigrant HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), ICA (Jewish Colonization Association) and EMIGDIRECT (Emigrationsdirectorium) were merged. Its headquarters were in Paris until 1940.

Memorandum

The Turks of Sephardic-Jewish religion living in Germany take the liberty to submit to the conference the following facts: In Germany there are living at present about 150 families of Turkish nationality to whom the Turkish consulates on the strength of § 1041 refuse to give the necessary certificates regarding their native country (Heimatschein) and to make out new passports for them.

Of the persons to whom these measures apply are about 97% Sephardic Jews, who are placed thereby in an especially awkward position. They are running the danger to become "staatenlos," i.e., citizens belonging to no country, and are losing hereby at the same time the possibility to emigrate. Nowhere can they find a new existence and they are not in a position to return to their native country, Turkey. Being citizens belonging to no state, no country will allow them to enter their territory and will not give them the necessary permit....

Many of these persons have been war participants; others are war widows and orphans. None of these persons have ever done anything detrimental to their native country and have always been proud of their Turkish nationality and have always made much of the reputation of Turkey abroad.

We submit these facts to the Turkish delegate with the request to bring about [?] a solution of this problem, through which the Turkish nationality of these persons in question will be kept up, so that they will get in possession of a proper passport and not run the risk of being declared as citizens belonging to no country, so that they will have the possibility to return to their native country as Turkish citizens.

Having regard to the material, which the conference will have to deal with, this subject seems not to be voluminous; however, it belongs in any case to the burning questions, just for which the conference has been called in. On the other hand, one should take into consideration, that the sorrows and troubles of the persons in question are not small, and that, as has been shown, there is a possibility to bring about a fair and proper solution without difficulties.

We therefore, trust that our appeal will be paid attention to.

The Turkish citizens living in Germany who are concerned by § 1041.[23]

[23] The document can be found among other assorted papers that were presented at the HICEM conference in Paris; "Special Archives," now part of State Military Archives of

Among the Jews whose citizenship Turkey rescinded were people who had close ties with the Turkish Consulate through the Turkish Chamber of Commerce, in some cases even maintaining private contact with consulate staff. The conference at which this memorandum was presented took place in Paris on August 22 and 23, 1939. Eight days later, with the German attack on Poland, World War II began, and with it the immediate intensification of anti-Jewish persecution by the Germans.

Deportation of Turkish Jews Deprived of Their Citizenship

Now stateless, the formerly Turkish Jews were among the first to be deported to their deaths.[24] The very second transport to leave Berlin, on October 24, 1941, included three Turkish Jewish women with their children, 13 people in total, none of them returned. In total, about eighty Jews of formerly Turkish citizenship were deported from Berlin alone, including Isaac Behar's parents and sisters and his uncle's family. In the course of 1941, some of them had attempted in vain to buy their way back into Turkish citizenship and return to Turkey. This is revealed by the record of a Gestapo interrogation of Davisco Asriel from January 20, 1942, a few days before he was deported as well.[25] He, too, had in the meantime been stripped of his Turkish citizenship. In January 1942, he and his wife were deported to Riga and murdered (see Figure 7.3).

The lists of deportees were kept in the records of the finance office (*Oberfinanzdirektion*) of each region, the agency in charge of pillaging the property of deported Jews in Germany's individual federal states at the time. Many of these files thus contain the last documentation of the lives of those arrested before they were deported in the seizure notices for the few household items they still possessed.

Emigration and Attempts to Return to Turkey

At the end of 1942, at the same time the Nazi authorities gave Turkey the ultimatum to repatriate its Jewish citizens, many of the now stateless

the Russian Federation, Moscow (former Osobi), Ф116k, Опис 6 5 6 42. The § 1041 mentioned in the memorandum is one of the laws Turkey used to strip people of their citizenship (explained in Chapter 2).

[24] Starting in October 1941, Jews from Germany were sent to the ghettos in Lodz, Minsk, and Riga, from where they were later transported off and then murdered. Some deportation trains took the Jews directly to their deaths as early as 1941.

[25] Asriel names five families. According to his statements, each family had to pay 4,000 Reichsmark plus travel costs. Their hope of obtaining Turkish papers was not fulfilled, and all five families named were deported from Berlin the following year; BLHA, Rep 36 A II, no. 1296.



FIGURE 7.3. Davisco Asriel, the last head of the Turkish Sephardic community in Berlin. The stick pin with the Turkish flag is visible on the lapel of his jacket. (Courtesy of Jochanan Asriel.)

Jews of Turkish descent had already been deported. No references could be found in any of the archives investigated as to an organized return operation for the few Jews remaining in Germany who still held Turkish citizenship in the fall of 1942.

About thirty Turkish Jews had been able to emigrate before the deportations began. The flight from Nazi persecution took Turkish-Jewish families from Berlin to Brazil or Bolivia in Latin America, to Tangiers in Morocco, and as far as Shanghai. For the poorer among them in particular, the options were limited to the neighboring European countries – France, Holland, Belgium – where Hitler's henchmen would catch up with them again a few years later. It is noteworthy that very few of them considered a return to Turkey an option: The numerous sources examined yield references to a total of three people or families who remigrated to Turkey.

The Arrest of "Regular" Turkish Jews in October 1943

As mentioned, the German Foreign Office and the RSHA set October 10, 1943, as the last deadline for the departure of Turkish Jews. The RSHA ordered the arrest of all foreign Jews remaining in the Reich, Holland, and Belgium, effective October 20. For Berlin, no information could be found on the time and circumstances of the arrests. On October 26, 1943, twelve Turkish-Jewish women and three children under the age of eight were taken from Berlin to the women's concentration camp in Ravensbrück. Simultaneously, nine Turkish-Jewish men, most of them the husbands or relatives of the deported women, were taken to the Buchenwald concentration camp.

Although those arrested still held Turkish citizenship, which meant that Turkey could have demanded their release after having been notified of their arrest by the German Foreign Office,[26] no references can be found to any activities by Turkish diplomats on behalf of their citizens either in the files of the German Foreign Office or in the archives of concentration camp memorial sites. Two days after they had been transported to concentration camps – that is, presumably more than a week after their arrest – von Papen reported from Ankara that "according to the Turkish Embassy in Berlin" only one person in Germany had been reported as having been affected by the anti-Jewish measures "as a Turkish citizen."[27]

Buchenwald and Ravensbrück were not extermination camps; the majority of the prisoners there were not Jews. But in those camps, too, the conditions were deadly. Five of the eight Jews taken from Berlin to the Buchenwald concentration camp lost their lives in the camp. Of the fifteen Turkish-Jewish women and children who were taken to Ravensbrück we know that ten of them were able to take part in a Turkish-German exchange of civilian prisoners in March 1945 and reached Turkey (see Chapter 12).

Several elderly Jews who still held Turkish citizenship were deported from Berlin to the Theresienstadt ghetto with a so-called *Alterstransport* (transport of elderly people); most of them did not survive internment in Theresienstadt.

The case of the married couple Dr. Max and Gertrud Naphtali (née Friedenstein), German Jews who had worked for the Turkish Embassy, illustrates that Turkey was certainly in a position to protect people and

[26] Memo from von Thadden, September 22, 1943; PAAA, R 99446.

[27] Telegram from von Papen from Ankara, dated October 28, 1943; PAAA, R 100889, fiche 2273.

even to issue them papers when inclined to do so. The embassy intervened on behalf of both of them, and the Turkish government issued a decision tailor-made for the Naphtalis: on the condition that they held Palestine Certificates, they would be granted entry visas for Turkey. Since German Jews were prohibited from leaving Reich territory at the time (1942–43), the Turkish Consulate in Berlin issued them Turkish papers that allowed them to leave Germany. However, their visas for Turkey were valid only for transit to Palestine.[28]

The Turkish-Israelite Community in Vienna

The Turkish-Jewish community in Vienna was a special case: its origin dated as far back as the eighteenth century. While for native-born (Ashkenazi) Jews, strict anti-Jewish regulations were in force in the Habsburg Empire until the 1782 Edict of Tolerance, the Ottoman Jews benefited from treaties between the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires that reciprocally granted the other country's subjects freedom of movement, the right of residence, and, to a great extent, freedom from taxes. These were rights enjoyed not only by the Ottoman Sultan's Jewish subjects but by his Christian and Muslim citizens as well.[29] As a result, a Sephardic (Ottoman) congregation could establish itself in Vienna as early as 1736. Initially merely tolerated, it officially constituted itself as the Türkisch-israelitische Gemeinde zu Wien (Turkish-Israelite Congregation in Vienna) in 1778. To become a member, one had to have Ottoman citizenship and have resided in Vienna for at least two years.[30]

While native-born Jews were prohibited from establishing public synagogues until 1852, the Turkish-Israelite congregation was able to build a synagogue as early as the mid-nineteen century. The flourishing trade between Austria and the Orient brought in still more Ottoman Jews in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Turkish community was further bolstered by Viennese (Ashkenazi) Jews who obtained

[28] Letter from von Thadden, June 17, 1943, PAAA, R 99447; and information from the archive of the Centrum Judaicum in Berlin given to the author; and BCA, Resolution No. 2/19069, dated November 17, 1942, 30..18.1.2/100.98..20.

[29] A conscription list from 1767 includes only nineteen Jews, compared to 103 Christians, among the total of 135 Ottoman citizens registered and "accepted" in Vienna.

[30] According to its statute, which had been rewritten in 1868; Ruth Burstyn, "Die Geschichte der türkisch-spaniolischen Juden im Habsburgerreich," in *Ist jetzt hier die "Wahre Heimat": Ostjüdische Einwanderung nach Wien,* ed. Peter Bettelheim and Michael Ley (Vienna: Picus 1993), 35.

Ottoman passports in order to be able to benefit from the privileges enjoyed by the "Turkish" Jews.

A marked symbol of the respect and influence enjoyed by the Turkish-Israelite community was the new Sephardic synagogue, built in Moorish style on the Zirkusgasse, which opened in 1887 (see Figure 7.4). Designed by the prominent architect Hugo Ritter von Wiedenfeld, it was one of the largest and most splendid temples in Vienna. Portraits of the Austrian Kaiser and the Ottoman Sultan hung on opposite walls in the reception room. The opening ceremony, which was attended by government representatives, members of Vienna's city council, and the Ottoman envoy, attracted public attention far beyond the city of Vienna and Austria's borders.

However, the heyday of the Turkish-Israelite community at the end of the nineteenth century, symbolized by the magnificent synagogue, was simultaneously the beginning of its decline. In the wake of the Emancipation Acts that allowed the Ashkenazi Jews to establish the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (Vienna Israelite Community, IKG) in 1852, the Turkish-Sephardic community began to lose its special status. Further contributing factors were an increase of "mixed marriages" between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews and linguistic assimilation into the majority society. In 1890, the Sephardic community also lost its autonomy as a separate organization when it was ordered by law to join with the IKG, a decision it fought for decades. Not until 1918 did the community formally reestablish itself as an independent congregation, in a ceremony attended by the Ottoman consul, as the Verband der türkischen Israeliten (Sephardim) zu Wien (Association of Turkish Israelites – Sephardim – in Vienna).

The influx of Sephardic refugees from former Ottoman territories in the Balkans at the beginning of the twentieth century, and once more after World War I, delayed the decline of the Viennese Sephardic community. In 1915, the number of Sephardic Jews in Vienna was estimated at about 1,000.[31] The association Esperanza,[32] founded in 1900, supported Sephardic students from the Balkans who had come to Vienna to attend university and also organized cultural and academic events and published numerous literary works written in Judeo-Spanish (Judezmo).

[31] Michael John and Albert Lichtblau, *Schmelztiegel Wien einst und jetzt: zur Geschichte und Gegenwart von Zuwanderung und Minderheiten* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1993), 34.

[32] Sociedad Academica de los Judios Espanoles en Viena – Academic Association of Sephardic Jews in Vienna.

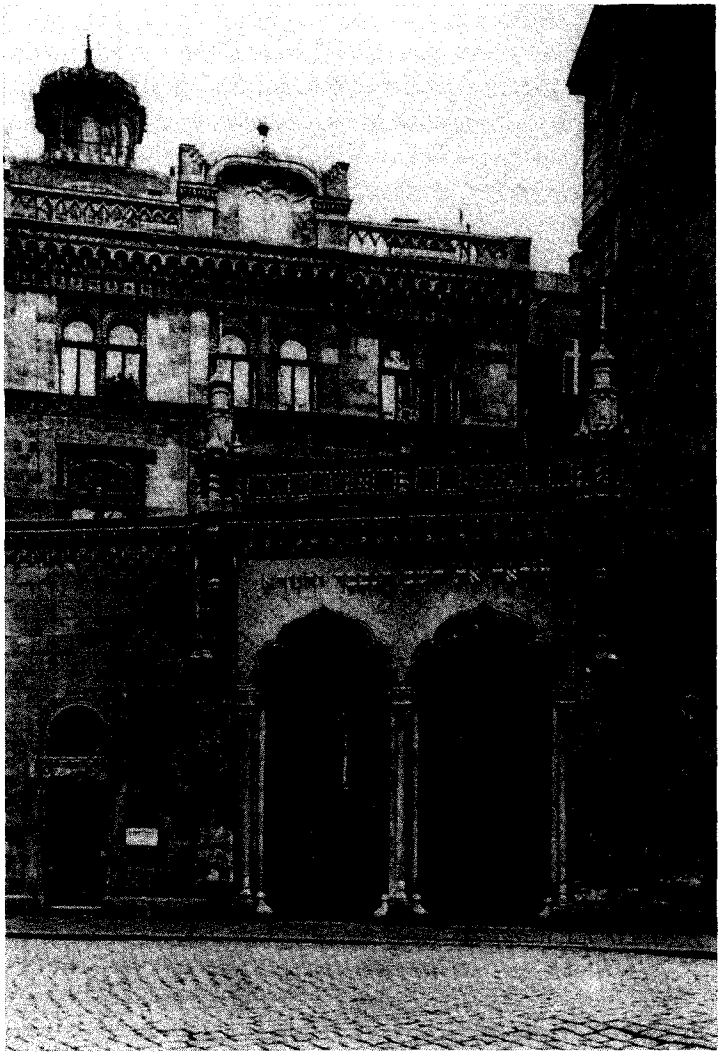


FIGURE 7.4. The splendid Turkish temple in Vienna opened in 1887 and was destroyed by the Nazis in 1938.

The newly arrived, "non-assimilated" Jews from the Balkans significantly contributed to Vienna's briefly becoming an important center of Sephardic culture. Various journals in Judeo-Spanish were published there: *El Dragoman*, *El Nacional*, *El Correo de Vienna*, and, starting in 1923, the journal *El Mundo Sefardi*, whose readership extended beyond Vienna.

Close Ties with Turkey

The community's close ties with the Ottoman Empire, or, respectively, with Turkey, were part of its identity into the first decades of the twentieth century. They found expression, for example, in a special annual celebration in the synagogue in honor of the Sultan's birthday. The Ottoman Consulate was also notified of all important community decisions. In case of conflict with the Austrian authorities, the Sephardic Jews turned to their protecting power in the person of the Ottoman envoy to Vienna, who successfully intervened on their behalf on several occasions. During World War I and the German-Austrian-Ottoman alliance, the Turkish synagogue flew the Turkish and Austrian flags side by side.[33]

After World War I, this protective relationship continued.[34] The issues of the community newsletter, *Mitteilungen der türkischen Israelitengemeinde (Sephardim) Wien*, from the years 1919–20 contain several news items that refer to the special legal status of Turkish-Ottoman nationals and to their right to be represented by the embassy. Short news pieces on current events in Turkey also attest to the community's close ties with Turkey. As a further illustration, even after World War I, a significant portion of Vienna's Sephardic Jews still had their Turkish citizenship, even though many of them could have long since obtained Austrian citizenship.

In the twenties, the Turkish-Israelite community still had about 500 to 600 members.[35] In relation to the total number of Jews in Vienna – approximately 172,000 – this was a diminishingly small number. The decline of the once-thriving community could no longer be stopped. While some of Vienna's "Turks" assimilated into the majority Ashkenazi community, others – not least because of the growing anti-Semitism in Vienna – left the city: the 1920s saw an increasing number of Turkish Jews from Vienna in Berlin, Hamburg, Paris, and other European cities. As a result, the Turkish-Israelite community had shrunk so much, even

[33] Manfred Papo, "The Sephardi Community of Vienna," in *The Jews of Austria*, ed. Josef Fraenkel (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1967), 342. During the nineteenth century, the Sephardic Jews in Vienna followed the reform developments in the Ottoman Empire closely. The journal *Wiener Israelit* published a number of articles on the reformer Midhat Paşa. A letter from the community to Midhat Paşa is reprinted in *La Boz de Türkiye* 184 (August 1, 1947): 14.

[34] For example, in 1919 the Turkish members of the community turned to the Turkish Consul, General Dr. Husny Bey, when the Austrian treasury ordered them to report the value of their domestic property; Mordche Schlome Schleicher, "Geschichte der spaniolischen Juden (Sephardim) in Wien" (Vienna, 1933), 119ff.

[35] Five hundred according to Burstyn's calculations; Burstyn, "Geschichte der türkisch-spaniolischen Juden," 132; 600 according to John and Lichtblau's calculations; John and Lichtblau, *Schmelztiegel Wien*, 34.

before the Holocaust began, that worship services were no longer held regularly in the 1930s.

During the Shoah: Vienna as the "Model for the Final Solution"

After being invaded by German Wehrmacht and SS units on March 12, 1938, Austria was annexed to the German Reich. All anti-Jewish laws and regulations issued in Germany up to that point now took effect in Austria as well. During the *Anschluss* pogrom – which actually began the night before the German troops marched in – the Jews of Austria became victim to extraordinary brutality and discrimination. Particularly in Vienna, the persecution and public humiliation of Jews was even more extreme and sadistic than it was in Germany. Under Adolf Eichmann and the Central Office for Jewish Emigration (Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung) headed by him, Vienna became the laboratory and "model for the final solution."

During the November pogrom of 1938, the splendid Sephardic temple of 1887 along with all other Viennese synagogues were burned to the ground, plundered, and completely destroyed. "I heard that they had to use explosives to carry out their unscrupulous destruction because fire alone would never have completely destroyed the solid building," writes Manfred Papo, who served as rabbi. "This beautiful temple, the pride of the Sephardic community of Vienna, was destroyed by the barbarians; today it is nothing but a pile of ruins. Would that it could be avenged one day by the just and unrelenting rage of God!"[36]

The following day, Papo and many other prominent community members were arrested and deported to the Dachau concentration camp. According to Papo, Jews with foreign citizenship were exempt from arrest. After his release from Dachau, Papo and the last cantor of the Turkish-Israelite congregation, Isaac Asseo, managed to escape to the United States.

We do not know how many Turkish Jews were still living in Austria in the spring of 1938 and how many of them still had Turkish citizenship. The Nazi-organized census of May 17, 1939, lists 121 Turkish Jews for the city of Vienna.[37] Those whose citizenship Turkey had revoked were all included in the figure for stateless Jews, which was 5,885 for Vienna alone. At the time of the census in May 1939 – a little over one year after

[36] Papo, "Sephardi Community of Vienna," 346.

[37] *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches*, no. 552/4 (1944), 73.

the *Anschluss* – many Austrian Jews had already left the country. A total of 128,500 Jews were able to flee Austria between 1938 and the prohibition on emigration that came into force in October 1941. A mere 150 of them (about 0.1 percent) went to Turkey. Presumably, Sephardic Jews with Turkish citizenship were among them.

Just as in Germany, Turkish Jews whose citizenship had been revoked were among the first victims of the Nazis' murderous policies. Among these were the married couple Richard and Regina Russo, who were stripped of their citizenship by Turkey on September 30, 1939.[38]

It seems that the Turkish diplomatic representations in Austria did not respond to the Nazi authorities' ultimatums of 1942 and 1943 to "return their Jewish citizens home" any more than they had in Germany. The correspondence relating to Turkish Jews in Austria and to interventions by Turkish diplomats that can still be found in German and Austrian archives contains no reference to an organized repatriation operation. A list of Viennese Jews by nationality, compiled on the orders of the RSHA, still lists fifty-four Jews with Turkish citizenship for March 1943.[39] At the end of October – at the same time as the arrest operations in Berlin, the Netherlands, and Belgium – thirty Turkish-Jewish men and women were arrested in Vienna. They were deported to the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Ravensbrück on November 5, 1943. Eight of the fifteen men deported to Buchenwald died there.

In a letter dated November 22 – two weeks after her arrest – the Turkish Consulate General in Vienna intervened on behalf of the Turkish citizen Anna Ellmann, who suffered from tuberculosis and "whose relocation to Turkey [had] already been initiated," as the Reich governor of Vienna wrote to the Gestapo in a letter of December 8, 1943.[40] At the time of the consul's letter, Anna Ellmann was already dead. She died five days after her arrival in Ravensbrück. No further reference could be found in the records that I examined in German and Austrian archives and memorial sites as to any efforts of Turkish diplomats on behalf of Jewish nationals who had been deported from Vienna to Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, or other concentration camps.

[38] BCA, Resolution 2/12051, 30.18.1.2./No:88.95.13.

[39] Letter from the RSHA to the Foreign Office in Berlin, dated March 27, 1943. The letter referred to the lists of foreign Jews in Vienna, which were compiled in July 1942, according to a directive issued by Department D III. The accompanying letter states that only those Jews were counted who were listed by the Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland; the lists of names were not in the file; PAAA, R 99402, fiche 5591.

[40] DÖW, archive number 19400/23 (original in the Austrian State Archives, AVA, Reich Governor a Pol KJ, Turkey, 1943).

Intervention Efforts by Turkish Diplomats on Behalf of Individuals

The diplomatic inactivity described here stands in marked contrast to the protection the Turkish Consulate in Vienna granted certain individual Jews. Especially noteworthy is the intervention of the Turkish consul in Vienna, Behçet Özdoğancı, on behalf of the art dealer Bertold Löwenstein. Löwenstein had given up his Turkish citizenship in 1928 at his own request; in addition, he had converted to Protestantism. But according to the Nazis' racial laws, which from 1938 were in effect in Austria as well, he was nonetheless considered Jewish. He now attempted to have his Turkish citizenship reinstated, but according to Turkish citizenship law, this was not possible. Nevertheless, in March 1941, the Turkish Consulate issued Löwenstein a written confirmation stating that, pending a reply from Ankara, he could not be issued a passport but was considered a Turkish citizen in the interim.[41] But as early as December of the same year, Vienna's chief of police decreed a "residency ban" against Löwenstein and his wife, based on the assumption that he had "only become a Turkish subject in 1938." The implementation of this residency ban would have meant deportation and death. In the winter months of 1941–42, about 10,000 Jews from Austria were deported to Riga and Minsk, where they were murdered almost without exception by SS Einsatzgruppen upon their arrival. From 1942, Löwenstein was an employee (or was, at any rate, passed off to the Germans as an employee) of the Turkish Consulate. In May 1943 – that is, long before the repatriation ultimatum against Turkey had expired – Löwenstein was arrested in his apartment in Vienna by the Gestapo and taken directly to a deportation train. The Turkish consul general intervened and managed to secure the release of Löwenstein and his wife, getting them off the transport that was ready to depart. The tug-of-war over Löwenstein between the various Nazi agencies in Berlin and Vienna on one end and the Turkish diplomats on the other lasted until the summer of 1944, that is, until diplomatic relations were broken off. While the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, acting under German pressure, repeatedly instructed the consulate in Vienna to dismiss Löwenstein – which would have meant delivering him to the Germans – the consul in Vienna actually increased his protection, even providing him accommodation on the premises of the consulate.

[41] In the Archives of the Turkish Prime Minister, there is an entry about a "Bernold Ledenştayn" living in Vienna who requested to have his Turkish citizenship withdrawn in 1928; BCA, 30..18.1.1/27.78..20. This was very likely Löwenstein. The detailed correspondence regarding Löwenstein can be found in PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5705. All of the statements and letters in the following pages can also be found there.

According to a report by the Nazi agencies in Vienna, the Vienna consul even had identification papers in the name of "Aslankaya" prepared for him – the Turkish translation of Löwenstein.

Whether the Turkish consul's motives in protecting Löwenstein were altruistic is another matter – Löwenstein was an art dealer and advised the Turkish Consul General Özdoğancı on art acquisitions[42] – but the fact remains that his protection saved the lives of Löwenstein and his wife. In March 1945, he and his wife were able to leave Austria as part of a Turkish-German exchange of civilians and made his way to Istanbul, where he was, however, initially denied entry (see Chapter 12).

Also documented in the files of the German Foreign Office is the case of the Turkhof family.[43] In October 1943, the siblings Harry and Renée Turkhof, who were twenty and twelve years old at the time, received passports from the Turkish Consulate in Vienna that would enable them to leave for Turkey. A few days later, the Turkhofs' apartment was sealed by the Gestapo. Although the German authorities would have assumed that the Turkhofs were Turkish citizens, all the family's property was confiscated and the parents were denied permission to leave, even after giving in to blackmail by the Gestapo and the Reich Ministry of Finance and agreeing to pay ostensible "tax debts," as this robbery of property was called in Nazi parlance. On the initiative of the Turkish consul in Vienna, the Turkish Embassy in Berlin also tried to obtain permission for the two children to leave for Turkey. With regard to the parents, however, the Turkish Embassy in Berlin informed the German authorities that their Turkish citizenship was "contested" and that the Turkish government had ordered the embassy not to intervene on their behalf.[44] On December 13, 1943, von Thadden wrote to the RSHA that, with regard to the children, he considered "one last concession with a very short deadline politically necessary"; the parents, on the other hand, could be

[42] Behçet Özdoğancı was the brother of Fikret Şefik Özdoğancı, the Turkish consul in Paris from summer of 1942. Based on a report by the Gestapo, it is clear that after Özdoğancı left Vienna, the succeeding consul general, Okday, continued to protect Löwenstein. Both of them acted counter to the instructions of the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, to which they were accountable. As a result, Löwenstein was not officially employed by the consulate and did not receive a salary; but he lived on the consulate premises and acted as a dealer in art objects on behalf of the consulate employees.

[43] Also spelled Turkhoff or Tourkof. Correspondence between Section Inland II a of the German Foreign Office, the RSHA, and the Turkish Embassy in Berlin between October 1943 and the end of February 1944; PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5704.

[44] Note from von Thadden to Eichmann, dated October 27, 1943; and communication from von Thadden to Section Pol VII of the Foreign Office (head of the Middle East desk, Melchers), dated December 13, 1943.

deported.[45] The further fate of the parents is unknown. The stamps in Harry Turkhof's passport show that he did in fact arrive in Turkey in April 1944.[46]

André Asriel, who was born in 1922 in Vienna to a well-known family in the Turkish Jewish community, also received a Turkish passport that enabled him to reach exile in Britain, while his mother, Paula Asriel, was refused a passport by the Turkish authorities.[47]

Far more than 100 Sephardic Jews were deported from Vienna to extermination camps and murdered. That some of those deported were regarded, at least by the German authorities, as Turkish citizens, is evident from correspondence within the German Foreign Office regarding the question of how to deal with the assets of deceased Turkish nationals in Austria.[48]

The Turkish-Israelite community in Vienna was not restored after liberation. Some of the few surviving community members revived the association Esperanza, but it was disbanded again a short time later. Along with the synagogue and most of the historical documents, the Nazis had also destroyed the community's heritage. A few Sephardic gravestones in the Jewish cemetery are the only remaining evidence of the once esteemed Turkish-Jewish community in Vienna.

[45] Letter from Inland II a, dated December 13, 1943, to the RSHA.

[46] Many thanks to the DÖW in Vienna for providing me with a copy of the passport. One reason the Turkish authorities may have issued the passport for the children may have been that Harry Turkhof was of military service age. See also interview with Harry Turkhof by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute.

[47] Interview with André Asriel in July 2007 in Berlin. Paula Asriel escaped deportation by committing suicide.

[48] Letter from the legal department to Department D, dated March 12, 1943. A number of letters from May 1943 deal with the question of whether and how a piece of property belonging to the Turkish citizen Paul Halfon in Vienna could be "Aryanized." All letters in PAAA, R 99303.

8

France

With the occupation of France in the early summer of 1940, the largest Turkish Jewish community by far in Western Europe fell under the control of the Nazi barbarians. On the eve of the war, the community numbered around 20,000.[1] Many factors contributed to France's becoming the main destination of immigration for Turkish Jews. Many Jews in the Ottoman Empire had attended the Alliance Israélite Universelle schools and consequently knew French. They also felt very attracted to France because it was regarded as the land of Enlightenment.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, roughly 8,000 Ottomans were living in France. Many of them were Jews. When France and the Ottoman Empire found themselves on opposite sides during World War I, Ottoman Jews who had acquired French citizenship or were under the protection of French consulates were expelled from the Ottoman Empire.[2] After World War I, when the Republic of Turkey was founded, the influx of Turkish Jews to France became a mass phenomenon due to the new republic's nationalist policies. It was also encouraged by France's liberal immigration rules, generated by the great shortage of labor France experienced after its tremendous loss of population during World War I.

[1] Exact figures are difficult to determine, as no information about religion was collected in censuses in France. In the literature, estimated figures range between 20,000 and 50,000. Moch estimates that half of the Turkish immigrants were Jews while Roblin assumes 75 percent; Maurice Moch, "Les étrangers de religion juive en France" (unpublished thesis, Lyon, 1942), 10, and Michel Roblin, *Les Juifs de Paris: démographie – économie – culture* (Paris: Picard, 1952), 87. In the 1931 census, 41,237 Turks (Muslims and Jews; Armenians were not included) were counted. Depending on whether the assumed proportion is 50 percent or 75 percent, it can be argued that about 20,000 to 30,000 Turkish Jews were living in France at the beginning of the 1930s.

[2] It is not evident from the literature how large this group was.

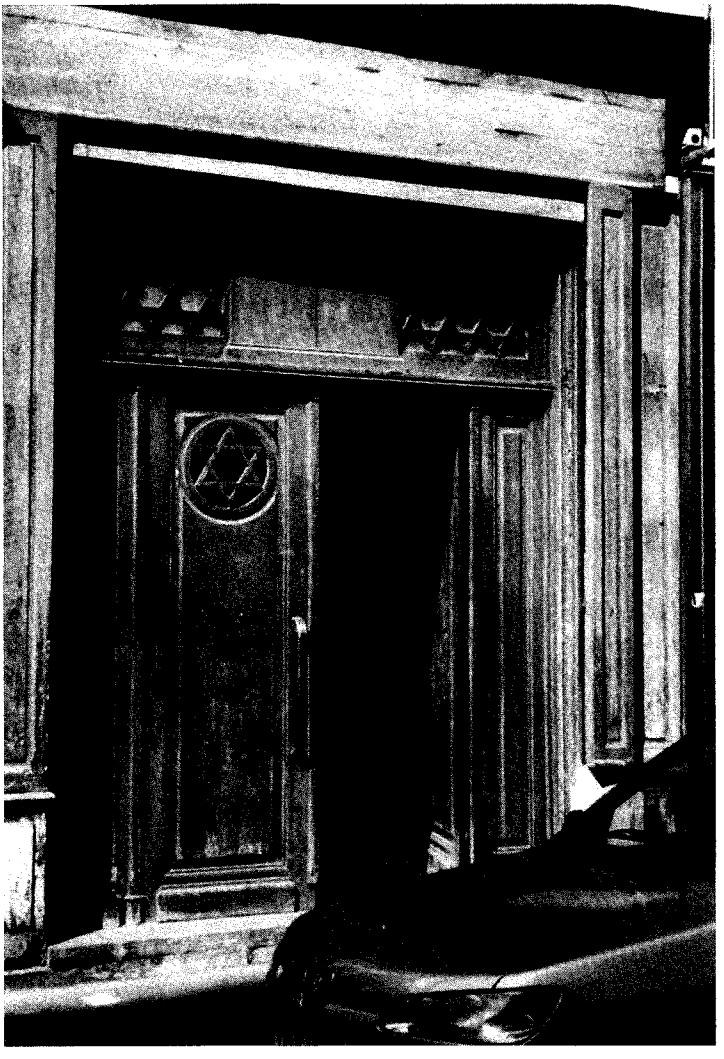


FIGURE 8.1. The synagogue in the rue Popincourt served as a point of orientation for newly arrived Turkish Jews.

Because of their large number, the Turkish Jews in France largely built their own social infrastructure. As early as 1909, Nissim Rozanes, a jewelry merchant from Istanbul, helped found the Association cultuelle-orientale Israélite de Paris, which established a synagogue at rue Popincourt No. 7 in the 11th arrondissement (see Figure 8.1). During the twenties and thirties, a Talmud Torah school was also located there.

During the following decades, the association – with its synagogue and the cafes and shops that sprang up one after the other in the area – worked as a point of orientation for newly arrived Turkish Jews. A kind of Sephardic *shtetl*, or a Little Turkey, thus developed in the 11th arrondissement around the streets Popincourt and La Roquette.[3] Most of the Turkish Jews in this quarter worked in occupations typical for immigrants. They were street vendors or had jobs that required very little capital or space, for example, as tailors or as hat- or shoemakers. Many helped with family businesses or worked for acquaintances.

This microcosm represented only one side of Turkish Judaism in Paris, however. The Sephardic Jews from Turkey who were export merchants and carpet merchants and had a higher social standing lived in the 14th and 9th arrondissements. This social and physical barrier between the different groups of Turkish Jews corresponded, for the most part, to the linguistic divide between French and Judeo-Spanish. In addition, their place of origin was also an important criterion of distinction. Jews from different cities in Turkey established their own separate social and religious associations, which were in competition with each other.

In the process of creating an awareness of Sephardic identity at the end of the 1920s,[4] these animosities were set aside. The temple on rue St. Lazare was enlarged and became the principal synagogue of the oriental Jews. The renowned rabbi Dr. Nissim Ovadia who had been rabbi in Vienna before he was appointed in 1929, brought much prestige. José Papo, who had originally aspired to be an opera singer, was appointed cantor. Papo's voice is considered legendary among the Sephardic Jews of Paris to this day. The famous cantor Isaac Algazi from Izmir also sang in Paris for a short time.[5]

The second largest Turkish Jewish community after Paris was in Marseilles. The city on the Mediterranean coast was the port of entry to France for many of the Turkish Jews. In the period before World War II, their numbers can be estimated at roughly 2,000.[6] Most of them were from the lower social classes and lived in the quarter near the opera and

[3] As described by Annie Benveniste in her study *Le Bosphore à la Roquette: la communauté judéo-espagnole à Paris (1914–1940)* (Paris: L' Harmattan, 1989).

[4] For more on this, see Nicole Abravanel, "Paris et le séphardisme ou l'affirmation sépharadiste à Paris dans les années trente," in *Sephardica – Hommage à Haïm Vidal Sephiha*, ed. Winfried Busse and Marie-Christine Varol-Bornes (Bern: Lang, 1996), 497–523.

[5] Isaac Algazi came from a famous Jewish family in Izmir; he was a descendant of Rabbi Salomon ben Abraham Algazi (around 1610–1683).

[6] Calculation based on figures found in Renée Dray-Bensousan, *Les Juifs à Marseille pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale Août 1939–Août 1944* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2004), 26.

the old port. As in Paris, the Turkish Jews in Marseilles established their own social welfare organizations. They used a room next to the large synagogue belonging to the Comtadin[7] community in the city district of Breteuil for prayer services.

Lyon was also home to about 400 Sephardic families during the 1930s. The vast majority of them came from Istanbul. The first Sephardic association was founded there in 1909, and in 1919 it was reestablished as the Communauté Sépharade de Lyon. A community hall and a synagogue were founded on the rue de trois Rois. Other noteworthy Turkish Jewish communities could be found in Nice – where the "orientals" represented the majority of the Jewish community, which numbered about 500 to 600 members in 1934 – in Toulon, Grenoble, Nîmes, and Toulouse. As the results of the "Jewish census" ordered by the German occupiers show, Jewish immigrants from Turkey were spread all over France, including smaller towns and villages. Furthermore, Turkish Jewish refugees came to France from Germany, Austria, and Italy in the thirties, where the Nazi executioners began to catch up with them in 1940.

France under German Occupation in 1940–1942

On May 10, 1940, German combat forces attacked France. Five weeks later, they marched into Paris. Millions of people, especially Jews, fled to the south in panic. The French government resigned. Marshal Philippe Pétain formed a new cabinet that signed an armistice with the Germans on June 22, 1940. The northern part of France and a wide strip of land along the Atlantic coast were placed under German military administration while the smaller southern part of the country remained unoccupied and was under the administration of the new French government residing in the spa and resort town of Vichy.[8] This government was formally independent and officially retained authority over the state institutions throughout France, but it was obliged to cooperate with the occupiers. Consequently, laws passed by the Vichy government applied throughout the French territory, but they had to be approved by the German

[7] Also called "the Pope's Jews."

[8] In addition to the German-occupied zone in the north and the "free zone" in the south, an Italian zone was set up in the southeast. Furthermore, the Germans annexed the *départements* of Alsace and Mosel, and subordinated the northern *départements* on the Belgian border to the German military administration in Brussels. The administrative structure varied in all these regions, and the population was forbidden to cross the demarcation lines between the zones.

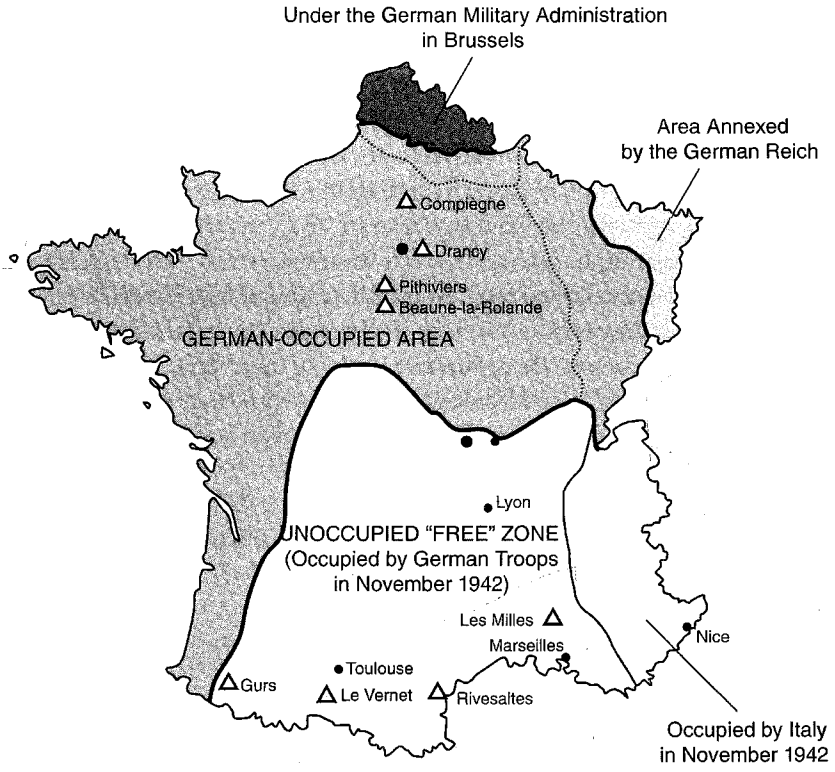


FIGURE 8.2. Zones in occupied France. (Copyright Klaus Viehmann.)

military commander (MBF) first. In the occupied zone, the German military administration issued its own regulations, which overrode those of the French government (see Figure 8.2).

The co-existence of German occupation structures and the Vichy regime was further complicated by the competition among the different offices within the German authorities as they vied with one another for power. Among these was the military administration, which – as the highest level of the occupation forces – was officially in charge of the persecution of Jews in France until 1942. Other competing offices included the German Embassy, the SS Security Police (Sipo) and Security Service (SD), and the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, which acted largely on its own authority and, as in other countries, also looted Jewish property and cultural treasures.

Despite contradictions and rivalries, a general consensus existed among the German authorities regarding the persecution of the Jews.

They were also in agreement that the persecution measures should be delegated as much as possible to the French authorities. Initiatives for anti-Jewish measures were usually elaborated in detail by the German authorities before the actual strategy of implementation had to be negotiated with the Vichy authorities. The Vichy government was mostly willing to relinquish stateless and foreign Jews for persecution, and about 90 percent of the 76,000 Jews deported from France to the death camps were foreigners, naturalized immigrants, or the French-born children of immigrants.[9]

Registration and Depriving Jews of Their Rights

On September 27, 1940, three months after the French had capitulated, the German military commander issued the first anti-Jewish decree, which ordered that all Jews in the occupied zone be registered and their shops and commercial establishments clearly marked. An order followed on October 13, requiring Jews in the occupied zone to have their identification papers stamped with a large red *J*. The Germans continued to issue decrees in rapid succession up until the early summer of 1942, causing the situation of Jews in France to deteriorate as much in only twenty months as that of the Jews in Germany in the nine years from 1933 to 1941.

Even in the so-called free zone, the Jews were gradually deprived of their rights, interned, and, in the end, handed over to the German occupiers. The majority of the anti-Jewish Vichy laws were imitations or extensions of the laws of the Germans. The French government, however, did take the additional step of implementing a series of anti-foreigner, anti-Semitic measures of its own, thus feeding on the xenophobic sentiment prevalent in the 1930s. Especially fatal were the Vichy laws regarding the expatriation and internment of foreign Jews. On July 22, 1940, even before the Germans passed the first anti-Jewish orders, the Vichy government issued a law that revised the naturalization of citizens after 1927.[10] Officially, the law did not single out Jews, but the denaturalization measure affected Jews in almost 40 percent of the cases involved – in other words, roughly 6,000 people – despite the fact that only about 7.5 percent of all the people naturalized in France after 1927 were Jews. As stateless individuals, they were easy targets of persecution by the Germans.

[9] Ahlrich Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich 1940–1944, Widerstandsbekämpfung und Judenverfolgung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 34.

[10] The law of 1927 had made naturalization in France easier.

The Vichy law of October 4, 1940, regarding the internment of foreign Jews, had equally devastating effects. In 1938, the first camps had already been established in southern France for the internment of Republican refugees from Spain. After the beginning of the war in September 1939, thousands of political and Jewish refugees from Germany were taken to these camps, where they were locked up as "enemy aliens." Beginning in the fall of 1940, 6,500 Jews who were expelled from southern Germany by the Nazi government followed, together with Jews from Belgium who had either fled or had been expelled to France, as well as demobilized foreign Jewish volunteers.[11] In February 1941, about 40,000 foreign Jews were being held in French camps in Gurs, Rivesaltes, Les Milles, Vernet, and other places. The catastrophic conditions and chronic malnourishment in the completely overcrowded camps led to the death of roughly 3,000 Jews in the Vichy camps between 1940 and 1942. The vast majority of the Jews interned in these camps were (formerly) German, Austrian, or Polish citizens. Reports by international delegations that visited these camps also make note of the many Turkish citizens among the internees.[12]

The Hunt for Foreign Jews in 1941

In May 1941 – one year after the German invasion – the hunt for foreign Jews began. The first mass arrest took place on May 14, 1941. In Paris, 3,700 foreign Jewish men were summoned to the police department under false pretenses, where they were arrested and sent to the camps in Beaune-la-Rolande and Pithiviers, which the Vichy government had established in the northern zone by order of the Germans. Almost all of those arrested were Polish, Czech, and stateless Jews.

At the end of August 1941, on orders from the German military authorities and flanked by the German military police, the Parisian police carried out a large-scale, five-day raid to round up foreign Jews in Paris. During the raids, entire city districts were closed off. The operation began on August 20 in the 11th arrondissement, where many Sephardic Jews and Jews from

[11] In 1939, 30,000 to 40,000 foreign Jews had enlisted to fight against Hitler's troops, including numerous Jews of Turkish origin.

[12] Dr. A. Cramer of the ICRC mentions twenty-six Turks in the camp in Vernet; Serge Klarsfeld, ed., *Recueil de documents des archives du comité international de la croix-rouge sur le sort des Juifs de France internés et déportés 1939–1945* (Paris, The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation: 1999), vol. 1, 266. In May 1944, a committee of the ICRC counted twelve Turks in Vernet; Klarsfeld, *Recueil de documents du comité international*, vol. 2, 903 (to name only a few examples).



FIGURE 8.3. Raid on August 20, 1941, in the 11th arrondissement of Paris. (Courtesy of Serge Klarsfeld.)

Turkey resided (see Figure 8.3). By August 25, a total of 4,230 Jews had been arrested and taken to Drancy, north of Paris.

The detention camp in Drancy was a huge, U-shaped public housing unit. It was first used by the Germans after the occupation of France as a prisoner-of-war camp. After the raid in August 1941, it became an internment camp for Jewish men. Starting in the summer of 1942, women and children were also delivered to the camp. For the following two years, it served as a kind of "waiting room" for deportation and death. Ninety percent of all the Jews deported from France to extermination camps passed through Drancy. Because of the systematic malnutrition there, numerous prisoners died before leaving the camp; five Turkish Jews died there before the end of 1942.

Officially, the camp was under the control of the Prefecture of Police until the summer of 1943. In actuality, however, the German military commander for all of Paris, Ernst Schaumburg, and the Office of Jewish Affairs of the Gestapo (Section IV B 4 of the RSHA), headed by Theodor Dannecker, made all the decisions about internment and release.

The third large wave of arrests that took place in Paris in 1941 explicitly targeted French rather than foreign Jews. Otto von Stülpnagel, the German military commander in France, ordered 100 "communist and anarchist" Jews to be shot and 1,000 "respected French Jews" to be arrested; the

latter he also ordered to be deported to forced labor "in the East" as a "measure of reprisal" for operations by the leftist French resistance. As a consequence, on December 12, 743 Jews, among them numerous well-known public figures, were arrested and taken to the Compiègne camp.

1942: The Blackest Year in the History of France's Jews

On March 27, 1942, the victims of the December raid were deported from Compiègne to Auschwitz together with several hundred Jews who had been interned in Drancy. This deportation, which took place four months before any other Western European countries began deportations, occurred not on the initiative of the Gestapo but of the military administration. More than 90 percent of the people deported with this transport died during the first five months in Auschwitz, although there were no gas chambers there at that time.

On March 4, 1942, just weeks after the Wannsee Conference, representatives from the Offices of Jewish Affairs (Sections IV B 4) in Paris, Brussels, and The Hague met with Eichmann at the RSHA in Berlin to launch the "final solution of the Jewish question" in the occupied Western European countries. Since the beginning of that year, the Germans had been preparing for the arrest and deportation of Jews from the occupied zone with intensified anti-Jewish measures. Jews were forbidden to change their address or to leave their homes at night. In May 1942, the police executive power in France passed from the military administration to the SS, and a network of offices of the Security Police (Sipo) and Security Service (SD) of the SS was created. Starting in June, the "yellow badge" was introduced in the occupied zone of France. With the second deportation train that left on June 5, 1942, the systematic deportation of Jews from France began. According to Eichmann's plans, 40,000 Jews were to be deported from the occupied zone of France "on special trains of 1,000 people each that will leave daily."

The German occupiers reached an agreement with the Vichy government to implement their murder program. In exchange for the German authorities' promise that only foreign and stateless Jews would be deported for the time being, the French police was to make the arrests and turn over to the Germans an additional 10,000 foreign and stateless Jews from the "free" zone. In accordance with this agreement, foreign Jews were hunted down in sweeping raids throughout the occupied and the "free" zone which lasted the entire summer of 1942. The largest of these operations took place on July 16 and 17 in Paris, when 12,884 foreign and stateless Jews were arrested and held at a cycling stadium north

of Paris, the Vélodrome d'hiver, for several days until they were sent on to the internment camps.

After the raid in July, the Germans also orchestrated raids in Bordeaux, Angers, Rouen, and other cities in the German zone. As agreed with the occupiers, the Vichy government also began delivering thousands of Jews from the camps in the "free" zone to the Germans in August. On August 26 and 27, five weeks after the major operation in Paris, the French police in various *départements* of the "free" zone carried out a large-scale raid, in which roughly 7,000 foreign and stateless Jews were arrested. In July, August, and September 1942 alone, thirty-four deportation trains ran from France to Auschwitz. By November of that year, ten more transports had followed. In 1942, a total of 40,000 Jews were deported from France to extermination camps. This was more than half of all of those deported from France during the German occupation.

Precarious Protection for Turkish Jews

Because of the especially large number of foreign Jews living in France, the introduction of anti-Jewish measures produced protests by foreign embassies and consulates regarding the violations of their Jewish citizens' rights from the outset. Turkish diplomats also intervened on various levels for the protection of Jews.

At first, their protests were primarily directed against the registration and confiscation of the businesses of Turkish Jews in France. The Turkish Consulate General in Paris sent a letter of protest on December 28, 1940, to the German Embassy regarding the decree requiring that businesses operated by Jews be registered and provisional trustees appointed. The letter referred to the fact that the Turkish Constitution did not differentiate between citizens of different religions.[13] Using the same argument, the consulate intervened on behalf of several individual Turkish Jewish

[13] Letter from the Turkish Consulate General in Paris, dated December 28, 1940; copy in USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202. The phrase pointing out that their respective constitutions did not distinguish between citizens of different religions is found in all notes on the matter from neutral countries. It was presumably previously agreed among the diplomats and did not constitute an individual response on the part of the Turkish consul. I thank Bernd Rother for providing me with his notes on the Spanish consul's corrspondence and Izzet Bahar for pointing me to a written note to the same effect by the American representative.

The signature "Acc. 1995.A.1202" denotes a collection (three folders in total) of documents from the correspondence between the Turkish consulates in Paris and Marseilles and the Turkish foreign minister in Ankara, copies of which Stanford Shaw gave to the USHMM.

entrepreneurs.[14] The German Embassy emphasized in its reply that the orders issued allowed for no exceptions, but signaled willingness to accommodate the "wishes of the Turkish Consulate General."[15] While these negotiations conducted in writing between the Turkish and German authorities were still going on, the French government also ordered the registration of all Jews in the unoccupied zone in June 1941. With a law passed on July 22, 1941, it also ordered that the businesses and real estate property owned by Jews be put in the hands of French trustees.

Once again, the Turkish Ambassador, invoking the Turkish Constitution, objected to the subjection of Turkish Jews to these discriminatory provisions.[16] The Vichy Foreign Ministry replied that, as foreigners, the Turkish Jews in France had to comply with the laws of their host country and that these laws applied to all Jews, regardless of nationality.[17] Eventually, both the German authorities and the Vichy government agreed to a provision according to which the Turkish Consulate would appoint Turkish trustees for the businesses of Turkish Jews and later for their property and real estate as well.[18] A list that probably originates from the files of the Turkish Consulate General in Paris includes the names of nine Turkish citizens who were to act as trustees for roughly fifty businesses belonging to Turkish Jews in the Paris region alone.[19] A compilation by the French General Commission for Jewish Questions (Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives, CGQJ) lists roughly 370 Turkish Jewish enterprises in the Paris region that were most likely subject to the regulation in question.[20] It is evident from numerous documents that, starting in 1942, the French and German authorities in larger cities sent the Turkish Consulate names of Turkish Jewish businesses,

[14] Letter by the Turkish Consulate in Paris regarding the enterprises Castoriano and Castro & Nergin and another private person, dated December 1940/January 1941; CDJC, documents XXXVI-91a and XXXVI-92a.

[15] Letter from the German Embassy, dated February 28, 1941, to the Turkish Consulate General; USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

[16] Letter from the Turkish Embassy to the French Foreign Ministry, dated July 31, 1941; facsimile in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 81.

[17] Letter by the French Foreign Ministry, dated August 8, 1941; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 82. See also letter of the General Commissariat for the Jewish Question (CGQJ) (CDJC, Sign: CXCV-161). In further letters, the Turkish authorities also cited the bilateral treaties between Turkey and France.

[18] Letter from the German military commander in France (Militärbefehlshaber Frankreich, MBF), dated December [day illegible], 1941, No. 9241/41, to the Turkish Consulate General in Paris; USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202. and Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 119f.

[19] List without title or letterhead in USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

[20] CJDC: XXXVI-111d.

often of their own accord, for which the consulates were expected to appoint Turkish trustees.

Interventions of Turkish Diplomats for the Release of Turkish Jews in 1941

Turkish diplomats were also repeatedly able to successfully intervene for the release of their Jewish citizens who had been incarcerated in the raids in 1941. Shaw quotes a letter from the Turkish Consul General Cevdet Dülger, dated May 15, 1941, the day after the first mass arrests of foreign Jews in Paris, to the Turkish ambassador in Vichy. According to Dülger, several Turkish Jews had been arrested in the roundup but he had managed to obtain their release by calling the police prefecture.[21]

On August 21, 1941, the day after the raid in the 11th arrondissement, the Turkish consul in Paris demanded in a letter to the German Embassy that sixteen Turkish Jews who had been arrested during the raid be released.[22] The Jews were finally released from Drancy after two more letters had been written by the consul on September 5 and 25, 1941.

The fate of Lazar Rousso and Albert Saül in 1941 is a case that is often presented by the Turkish media as yet another example of successful intervention by Turkish authorities.[23] The two men had been arrested independently of one another during the raid on December 12, 1941, and had been taken to Compiègne. In their accounts, both Rousso and Saül describe the inhumane prison conditions in Compiègne that led to the deaths of thirty-two incarcerated Jews between December 12, 1941, and April 2, 1942. According to the two men, their families alerted the Turkish Consulate in Paris, which then intervened for their release from Compiègne, saving both their lives.[24] The majority of the people arrested in the raid on December 12, 1941, were deported on March 27, 1942,

[21] Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 91.

[22] Letter from the Turkish Consulate General, dated August 21, 1941; USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202, A 1202.

[23] Extensive accounts by Rousso in *Milliyet* (July 5, 1992), by A. Saül in *Milliyet* (August 5–9, 1992), as well as interviews with both in the film *Turkish Passport*. The two did not know each other and knew nothing about each other's fate. As already mentioned, this raid explicitly targeted "respected" French Jews.

[24] Proof that Turkish diplomats had intervened could not be found in either French or German archives. Rousso's name is found on a list dated February 1, 1942, with the names of Jewish prisoners in Compiègne who were deemed "fit for work" in a medical examination, and his release was perhaps the result of this; CDJC, XXVI-6. Finally, the staff of the military commander in France issued the order in mid-February that all citizens of neutral states be released from Compiègne; CDJC IV – 182. The list of the people to be released also contain the name of Albert Saül.

with the first transport of Jews from France to Auschwitz; only twenty-three of them survived.

Turkey was not the only country that intervened to prevent the violation of the rights of its Jewish citizens in France. The raids of August 1941, in which foreign Jews from more than thirty countries were arrested, prompted numerous diplomats to intervene. As a result, the regulations for exemptions concerning foreign Jews described in Chapter 6 were devised by the Nazi authorities in Berlin and Paris. According to these regulations, Turkish Jews and Jews from other neutral countries and countries allied with Nazi Germany were to be exempted and were hence relatively protected. They were exempted from various anti-Jewish measures, including the subsequent requirement to wear the yellow badge, resulting in their being designated by the Nazis as "non-wearers of the yellow badge" (*Nicht-Sternträger*). However, numerous discriminatory and restrictive regulations still applied to all Jews, regardless of their nationality. Accounts in the literature and by contemporary witnesses are contradictory on this subject. Whether foreign Jews were subject to anti-Jewish measures, and to which ones, depended on various factors. Application of the measures was inconsistent and contradictory because of the chaotic division of responsibilities between the French and German authorities, and even among the German authorities themselves. The local Gestapo and SS offices often disregarded the prescribed measures. And in rural areas, the rules of exemption were often not followed, probably because neither the agencies of repression nor the Turkish Jews there knew about them.

No Recognition from Turkey: Muntazam and Gayri Muntazam

The pivotal criterion according to which Jews were categorized as "wearers of the yellow badge" or "non-wearers of the yellow badge," or as "deportable" or "not deportable," was citizenship. Jews of Turkish origin were of various nationalities – sometimes within a single family – and were hence represented in several categories. Several thousand of them had been naturalized in France. French-born children usually had French citizenship, regardless of whether the parents still had Turkish citizenship.[25] As a result, in many families, the children had to wear the yellow badge, while their parents, who were Turkish citizens, were exempted. When the Vichy law was passed in July 1940, the French citizenship of roughly

[25] According to French law, all children born in France had the right to French citizenship; according to Turkish law, children born abroad to Turkish parents were entitled to Turkish citizenship.

300 Jews from Turkey who had been naturalized in France was no longer recognized.[26]

By the mid-thirties, the government in Ankara had also begun to strip many Turkish Jews living in France of their Turkish citizenship. The number of Jews who still possessed Turkish citizenship after 1940 is difficult to determine. Shaw estimates that there were approximately 10,000, and possibly another 10,000 Jews who had previously had Turkish or Ottoman citizenship. However, Shaw does not cite any sources for these figures.[27] When the Germans ordered the registration of Jews in the fall of 1940, there were 1,859 Jewish heads of families of Turkish nationality registered in the Paris Metropolitan area alone. Multiplied by an assumed factor of 3.5, this would mean there were 6,500 Turkish Jews in Paris and its suburbs alone.[28] This figure does not include those who fled before the arrival of the German troops and had not (yet) returned to Paris and those who were not registered. At the end of 1942 and in 1943, the Nazi authorities gave the estimated number of Turkish Jews in connection with the "repatriation" ultimatum (meaning people sixteen years and older) as 3,046, while in another reference they estimated their number to be 5,000.[29] The Turkish Jews in communities in the southern zone are not included in these numbers; over 1,500 Turkish Jews were registered in Marseilles alone in 1941.[30] In addition to the communities in Lyon, Toulon, and Nice, Turkish Jews also lived in other cities in, for example, Western France. The total

[26] In 1940, the number of Turks who had been naturalized in France was 9,113; after 1940, 629 previously Turkish citizens had their citizenship revoked. Both numbers also include Muslims and Christians; Bernard Laguerre, "Les dénaturalisés de Vichy, 1940–1944," *Vingtième siècle* no. 2 (1988): 10. Using Laguerre's calculation that 40 percent of those denaturalized were Jews, about 300 Jews of Turkish origin were denaturalized – far fewer than has been assumed in the literature until now.

[27] Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 46, n. 89.

[28] On the basis of the "Jewish census" of October 1940, Dannecker prepared a seventy-six-page report on the Jewish population of the Seine *départements*; USHMM, UGIF RG 43.005 M, film roll 6. I have taken the number 3.5 as the factor for calculation from André Kaspi, *Les Juifs pendant l'Occupation* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 88.

[29] The number of 3,046 Turkish Jews in the Paris metropolitan area is found in numerous publications. Schleier, the consul at the German Embassy in Paris, estimates the number of Turkish Jews in the occupied zone toward the end of 1942 to be 3,500 and in March 1943 about 5,000; telegrams, dated December 11, 1942, PAAA, F 100867; and dated March 12, 1943, PAAA, R99446. The difference may result from Abetz's number referring to the Seine *départements*, while Schleier's data probably refer to all of occupied northern France. Furthermore, the figure used by Abetz did not include children less than sixteen years of age.

[30] *Enfants cachés*, Bulletin No. 37 (December 2001): 14.

number of Jews who were registered as Turkish citizens at the beginning of the German occupation of France was probably between 7,000 and 10,000. The completely unprotected stateless individuals, now including Jews whose citizenship had been revoked by France or Turkey, were recorded by the Nazi and Vichy authorities in their own category; however, we do not know how many of the Jews registered as stateless had originally been Turkish citizens.

For the Turkish Jews, it turned out to be fatal that the Turkish authorities recognized the citizenship of only a small portion of the people registered as Turkish Jews by the Vichy or Nazi authorities. During the years of German occupation, the government in Ankara continued to strip another 2,000 to 3,000 Jews living in France of their Turkish citizenship. The reasons for Ankara's expatriation policies are discussed in detail in Part 1. These policies were especially devastating for the Turkish Jews in France, not only because there were so many of them, but also, as is evident from the accounts of contemporary witnesses, the consulates there had inadequately informed them of the changes in Turkish law, which led to a massive removal of citizenship. Under increasing persecution, many people who turned to their Turkish consulates for help suddenly learned that they had already been stripped of their citizenship. This affected thousands of Jews who had been registered as Turks by the Vichy or German occupation authorities.

Consulates Issue only a Certificate Confirming the Revocation of Citizenship

Elvira Ovadya, née Profetta, witnessed the German occupation as a child:

My father was a soldier in World War I [in the Ottoman army]. In 1918, after the war, he left Turkey for France. My mother went a little later. They met there. I was born in 1929 in Paris....

One day, the Germans ordered that we be registered and that *Juif* (Jew) be stamped on our food ration cards. Because my parents were Turks – they had a foldable *carte d'étranger* [foreigner's card] that identified them as Turks – they did not receive a stamp in their cards. The regulation that Jews had to wear the yellow badge came later. But that only applied to French citizens, stateless people, and a few other foreigners, but not to Turks. My parents were Turks, but I was French and had to wear the yellow badge.

There were many such regulations. We were only allowed to use the last car in the Metro. In the evening, we were not allowed to leave the house after eight o'clock; during the day, we could only go shopping between noon and one in the afternoon.

We lived on the rue du Faubourg du Temple, on the border between the 10th and 11th arrondissements. Our side belonged to the 10th and the opposite side of the street was the 11th. When the big raid took place in the 11th, we were not affected; we watched it from dark windows. Opposite us, on the other side of the street, was where Polish Jews lived who were arrested. In that raid they also arrested my uncle, but they said he was old and let him go again.

My father went to the Turkish consulate. It is always claimed that they saved people. But when my father went to the consulate, they said to him: "Oh, now it occurs to you to report to the consulate; before now, you never came!" They had never thought of going there. Instead of getting help, they were given a certificate saying that they had been released from Turkish citizenship. My father also had a stick pin with Atatürk on it, and they even took that away from him. My father then went to a French police commissioner he knew. The commissioner extended his *carte d'étranger*, which identified him as a Turk. I do not know what my father had to pay for this favor, but he stamped the paper.[31]

Because immigrants used the *carte d'étranger*, the French identification card for foreigners residing in the country, for everyday life in France instead of their passport from their homeland, many of the Turkish Jews living in France probably saw no need to have their Turkish papers renewed on a regular basis. There is evidence to suggest that the Jewish census in October 1940 (and June 1941 in the "free" zone) was based on the nationality stated in the *cartes d'étrangers*.

Some publications on the subject of *gayri muntazam* – Turkish Jews who were not recognized as Turkish[32] – maintain that this category was primarily reserved for people who had been naturalized in France but

[31] Interview with Elvira Ovadya-Profetta on March 20, 2004, in Istanbul.

[32] In Turkish sources, those Jews recognized as Turkish citizens are called *muntazam* (meaning "in accordance with the law") as opposed to *gayri muntazam* ("not in accordance with the law").

were then denaturalized by the Vichy regime and were in the process of reapplying for Turkish citizenship, or people who had been residing in France "for generations" and who now, under the pressure of Nazi persecution, "remembered" their earlier Ottoman or Turkish citizenship.[33] These descriptions are misleading.

The mass immigration of Turkish Jews to France took place during the 1920s and 1930s. The rejection and deprivation of citizenship by the Turkish authorities affected many first-generation Jewish immigrants in France. The vast majority of these immigrants belonged to the lower social classes. Many of them had failed to have their papers renewed or to do their military service out of ignorance or lack of financial means. The better-off Turkish Jewish business people were often in contact with the consular offices for business reasons and were therefore better informed and more likely to be in a position to press their cases. The situation of Turkish Jews and whether their Turkish citizenship was recognized therefore often reflected their social situation.

Furthermore, under the conditions of the occupation and the persecution of the Jews, it was not possible for many Jews to have their papers renewed regularly. The Turkish consulates in Bordeaux, Cherbourg, and Le Havre had discontinued their services in September 1941 and transferred their services to the Consulate General in Paris.[34] The anti-Jewish laws took away the freedom of movement of Jews, making it extremely difficult for Turkish Jews living outside Paris or Marseilles to contact their consulate or embassy. At the end of 1942, French authorities refused to allow Isaac Castoriano to travel from his place of residence in St.-Jean-du-Bruel (in the Pyrenees) to his Turkish Consulate in Marseilles.[35] Under the conditions of the Nazi persecution of Jews, even the delays caused by the "normal bureaucracy" of Turkish consulates proved dangerous for the people involved.[36] Before the Turkish authorities would actively intervene

[33] For example, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 60–61; Mirjam Schmidt, "Die Türkei und der Holocaust" (unpublished master's thesis, Freie Universität Berlin, 1998), 110; Kıvırcık, *Büyükelçi,* 21.

[34] After the occupation of France, Turkey moved its embassy to Vichy, while the consulate general moved to the Boulevard Haussmann in Paris. The consulate in Marseilles continued to exist, but after the occupation of the southern zone, it moved to Grenoble. An honorary consul resided in Lyon. All other diplomatic offices were closed.

[35] Castoriano file; USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

[36] Yuda Farhi waited for more than six weeks for his certificate of nationality to be sent back, but he was arrested before it arrived; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 229–250. Refca Yeruşalmy was arrested while her papers were at the consulate in Grenoble for renewal. For a number of weeks her brother tried to get the Turkish authorities to send her papers on to Drancy, where she had been sent. By the time the consul general in

on a person's behalf, they first checked the person's citizenship. This could take weeks, even months, as many Turkish Jews had fled northern France during German occupation, and for them, this check involved first sending an inquiry to the consulate where the person had been registered before having fled. Some Turkish officials were also inclined to generally assume that Jews from Turkey were deserters or had lost their citizenship.

Protected by Turkish Papers

Despite the limitations mentioned, the papers that identified Jews as Turks – the entry "Nationality: Turkish" on their *carte d'étranger* – granted them a certain degree of protection for a long time. Many were also able to survive with forged Turkish identification papers that could be obtained on the black market (see Figure 8.4). One interviewee, Annie Benveniste, also reported that the Muslim imam of a mosque in Paris issued Turkish Jews the appropriate papers.[37]

After a while, the Gestapo and Vichy police became aware that only a minority of the Turkish Jews were recognized as Turks and protected by the consulates. In January 1943, the Turkish consul in Marseilles informed the French General Commission for Jewish Questions (CGQJ) in response to an inquiry that only whoever possessed photo identification documents issued by the consulate would be recognized as Turkish Jews.[38]

Assertions that Turkish diplomats in France also protected Jews of Turkish-Ottoman origin who no longer possessed Turkish citizenship cannot be supported by the facts.[39] Shaw and Kıvırcık, for example, maintain that Turkish consulates had generously issued nationality certificates (*vatandaşlık ilmühaberi*) to people who had had no connection to Turkey for generations, thus placing them, at least temporarily, under consular protection.[40] Such descriptions attempt to give the impression

Paris finally intervened for her release, she had already been deported; Yeruşalmy files, USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

[37] Benveniste, *Bosphore à la Roquette,* 151.

[38] Instructions from the CGQJ, dated January 23, 1943, referring to the notification of the Turkish Consulate General; CDJC, Sign. XVIIa, 43(227).

[39] İlter Türkmen, who was the Turkish ambassador in Paris during the 1980s, related this expressly to Shaw after looking through the files from World War II that were kept in the Turkish Embassy in Paris; letter by Türkmen, dated August 5, 1988; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 334f.

[40] Kıvırcık, *Büyükelçi,* 10. See also Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 127ff. Most likely, applications were distributed that people could use to apply for retroactive regulation of their status according to the regulations in place during the 1930s. This, however, led in most cases to the final revocation of citizenship, however.

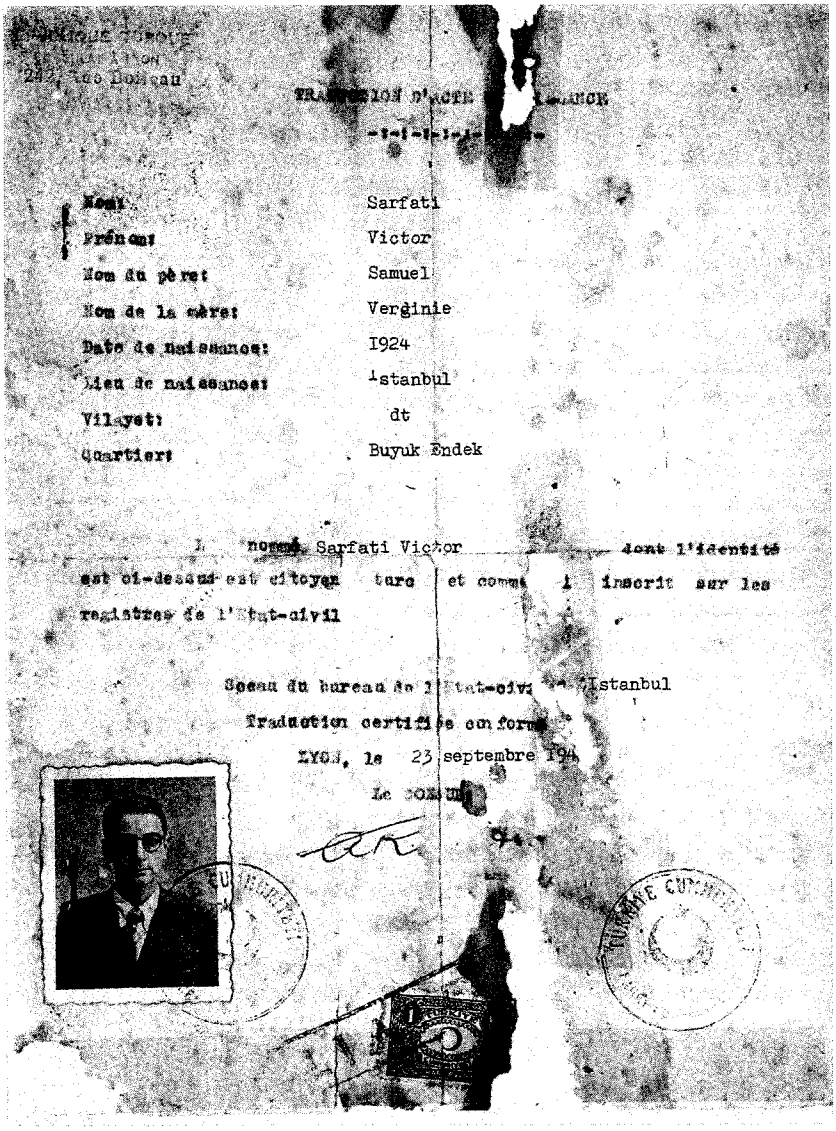


FIGURE 8.4. Victor Sarfati survived thanks to papers he obtained on the black market. (Courtesy of wife of the late Victor Sarfati.)

that these certificates were issued as a reaction to the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis and were meant to protect the Jews. That is not correct. Nationality certificates were as a rule given to Turkish citizens who had resided abroad for longer than six months, normally in exchange for

their passports, which were seized by the consulates.[41] However, one positive note that should be mentioned is that, after Jewish persecution had begun, some Turkish consulates at least noted expressly on the nationality certificates issued in French that the holders of the certificates were, under international law, not to be subjected to discrimination of any kind for being Jewish.[42]

It is possible that during the German occupation such certificates were also given out or sold to some Jews who were "not officially registered," but this has been documented only in the case of the Turkish honorary consul in Lyon, Albert Routier.[43] Behiç Erkin, the Turkish ambassador in Vichy at the time, writes in his memoirs that he reported this "improper behavior" to the government in Ankara and launched an investigation against Routier. The results of the investigation indicated that Routier "had acted for purely humanitarian reasons" and he was allowed to remain in office on the condition that he not violate regulations in the future. Although Erkin expresses understanding for Routier's behavior in his writings, his reaction underlines that this was neither the policy prescribed by Ankara nor was it the usual practice in the other Turkish consulates. On the contrary, numerous reports show that the Turkish consulates did not take any steps whatsoever to help unregistered Jews and even went as far as to denounce Jews.[44]

That, quite to the contrary, the Turkish showed little accommodation toward Turkish Jews whose citizenship had expired, or was unascertained, is evident from a desperate letter from a Turkish Jew in Paris, Mr. Yakar, to President Ismet Inönü in October 1942. In his letter, Yakar complains that

[41] Correspondence between Turkish consulates in Germany and German authorities regarding the identity papers of Turkish citizens living abroad; BAL, R 901–25580.

[42] The vice-consul in Marseilles issued such certificates in February 1943 to Luiza and Salomon Karel, for example. This sentence had not been included in nationality certificates before. Thanks to Serge Klarsfeld for providing copies.

[43] Behiç Erkin, "Hatırat 1876–1958," unpublished memoirs, 1959 (quoted after the digital copy in the USHMM archives), 542. After the publication of my book, they were published in Turkey: *Hatırat*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2010). Amipaz reports that Routier issued forged papers to Rabbi Benjamin Assouline from Algeria under the Turkish name of Ahmet Elma; Gitta Amipaz-Silber, *Sephardi Jews in Occupied France: Under the Tyrant's Heel, 1940–1944* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1995), 19 and 21.

[44] In response to an inquiry from the French General Commissariat for Jewish Questions (CGQJ) regarding Vitalis Behar, who was born in Ortaköy (Istanbul) in 1902 and had passed himself off to the French authorities as a Turkish citizen of the Greek Orthodox religion, the Turkish Consulate in Marseilles not only reported that Behar was not registered there but added that Behar was definitely a Jew, which amounted to a death sentence; CJDC, XXXII 152ter.

Turkish Jews abroad had been inadequately informed by their consulates about legal regulations and that they were not even granted provisional protection for the time it took for their applications to be reviewed.[45]

Petition of the Jews of Turkish Origin Living in Paris to President Inönü

Our National Leader, our kind Father, because of the lack of knowledge of local consulates and their failure to make known the travel and transport law at the time, a very large number of Jews with Turkish citizenship in France could not be properly registered; consequently, they do not have any consular protection and live in very difficult circumstances.

We do not understand how the government of the Republic of Turkey, whose brilliant policies with regard to keeping Turkey out of this terrible war are admired and praised by the entire world, could have made a decision causing us, the unfortunate Jews with Turkish citizenship who are "not properly registered," to be excluded from protection....

Should the reason for our lack of protection be our being accused of the crime of treason, we cannot find among the poor, innocent, and loyal citizens one person who could be accused of treason, nor can we imagine such a person.

We have never forgotten, and will never forget, ... our loyalty, our commitment, and our thankfulness to the noble and magnanimous Turkish nation; ... In every situation, at every time and every place, we have always carried with us this intrinsic loyalty and the honorable designation "loyal Jewish *millet*," declaring this to the world with great pride at every opportunity.

We ask the merciful and kind and, in the truest sense of the word, modern and humane citizens of the Turkish nation for general and encompassing grace and forgiveness in our desperate and unprotected situation.

Forgive us, merciful and kind Father, in memory and honor of our ancestors and forefathers, ... and for the souls of our brothers in faith who died in 1914 for the holy Fatherland in the Battle of

[45] BCA, Dosya, 94C52/Fon Kodu: 30..10.0.0/Yer No: 110.736..12.

Çanakkale and in other wars. If we have earned this punishment, we have atoned enough for it and lost many brothers in faith along the way. Please, for the love of God, forgive those of us who remain, our national leader.

FORGIVENESS BELONGS TO THE NOBLE!

How Yakar's cry for help was received by the authorities in Turkey can be concluded from the entry with which his letter was recorded in the Prime Minister's Archives in Ankara: "Letter from a Jew by the name of Yakar informing that the Jews living in France and guilty of treason would like to return to Turkey."[46] A letter of response or a reference to any other reaction from the Turkish authorities to Yakar's letter is not known.

As is evident from a telegram from the German Embassy in Paris, Jews whose repatriation applications were with the Turkish authorities for review were only issued certificates valid for three months in October 1943.[47]

Deportation of Turkish Jews, March 1942 to February 1943

The deportation of hundreds of Turkish Jews from France to Auschwitz in the summer of 1942 is an example of just how uncertain the situation of the Turkish Jews had become. Among the people deported on the first train on March 27, 1942, were twenty-one Jews of Turkish origin.[48]

[46] The letter is not dated, but it is probably from October 1942. A thank-you note from Yakar to Ambassador Erkin for forwarding his letter is dated October 30, 1942; Kıvırcık (2007), 218. The letter was forwarded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Office of the President and the Prime Minister on February 17, 1943.

[47] Telegram by Schleier, dated October 26, 1943; PAAA, R 100889, fiche 2273.

[48] Information regarding numbers, citizenship, and place of birth of deportees in this chapter are based on the commemorative book *Le Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de France*, ed. Serge Klarsfeld (Paris: self-published, 1978). By Jews "of Turkish origin" I mean Jews who were born in Turkey or were designated as Turkish citizens in the deportation or arrest lists, as well as their spouses and minor children who, according to Turkish law, were entitled to Turkish citizenship. Preciado and René Eskenazi, who were among the deportees of March 27, were born in Bulgaria but had Turkish citizenship,

Of the nineteen born in Turkey, seven possessed French citizenship; the citizenship of the others was either "unascertained" or not mentioned. One of the deportees on this transport was Maurice Saranga, who was born in Istanbul in 1916. He received the prisoner number 28431 in Auschwitz. Maurice Saranga died on April 25, 1942, less than four weeks after his arrival in Auschwitz.[49] The seventh transport train from France, which left for Auschwitz on July 19, 1942, was the first one upon whose arrival a selection was conducted. The murder of the Jews in gas chambers had begun in Auschwitz. Seventeen of the deportees on this train were either born in Turkey or, according to the entry in the commemorative book edited by Serge Klarsfeld, *Le Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de France*, they had Turkish citizenship. In the thirty-seven deportation trains that summer and fall, more than 500 Jews of Turkish origin were deported from France to Auschwitz by the end of September 1942. According to the entries on the deportation lists, 262 (more than half of them) were Turkish citizens while fifty had assumed the citizenship of their new home country; the nationality of eighty people was "unascertained." In November 1942, and again in February 1943, another 204 Jews of Turkish origin followed, of whom seventy-three were of "Turkish nationality," according to the deportation lists.[50]

The "rules of exemption" for Jews from neutral countries agreed on by the German bureaucracy of genocide were in reality often ignored. The German murderers of Jews ignored their own rules and hierarchy of persecution whenever they pleased. Despite agreements with the Vichy regime to the contrary, thousands of French Jews were arrested and deported in the summer of 1942. Because raids in provincial areas resulted in far fewer arrests than planned by the Gestapo, scores of women, children, and the elderly were deported to fill up the transports, although at this time deportations were officially designated for "forced labor," and women, children, and the elderly were not (yet) seen as "deportable."[51]

"Protected" Jews could be arrested for such minor violations of the anti-Jewish provisions as living at a different address from the one they

according to a letter from Lucie Eskenazi. However, they were not recognized as citizens by the Turkish authorities. Correspondence by Eskenazi, October 1942 to January 1943; USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

[49] Archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Site.

[50] Between November 11, 1942, and February 1943 there were no transports.

[51] Ahlrich Meyer, *Täter im Verhör: Die "Endlösung der Judenfrage" in Frankreich 1940–1944* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 158.

had given in the census, or by not registering. In July 1943, five members of the Hatem family were arrested for owning a telephone, which Jews were forbidden to do according to the anti-Jewish regulations. It was several months before the Turkish authorities were able to get the Hatem family released.[52]

Isaac Bitran was arrested on October 1, 1942, in front of his residence on the rue Sedaine. The Gestapo accused him of "anti-German behavior" and refused to release him, despite the Turkish Consulate's demands. According to records, on the day of his arrest on the Boulevard Voltaire, in the immediate vicinity of his residence, a protest had taken place, although Isaac Bitran had not participated. As a result of multiple interventions, the consul was finally able to achieve Bitran's release.[53]

The files of the mandatory Jewish association Union générale des Israélites de France (UGIF), founded by order of the Germans in November 1941, contain petitions on behalf of incarcerated Jews; among them are petitions concerning three Turkish Jews who were arrested independently of one another because they went to restaurants that were off-limits to Jews. They were taken to the Beaune-la-Rolande camp. The requests by the UGIF for their release were not granted. All three were deported to Auschwitz and murdered.[54]

The German military and the SS conducted "reprisal operations" against the French resistance, for which they took Jews of any age and nationality. In the course of such a reprisal measure, Victoria Salmona (née Mitrani) was arrested in January 1943 with her two small daughters and her seventy-year-old mother in Tréport, not far from Rouen. They were all deported.

The Fate of the Salmona-Mitrani Family

Victoria Mitrani was born in Istanbul in 1913. Her parents, Joseph Mitrani and Calo (née Léon), lived in Ortaköy. In 1919, the family of six immigrated to France and found a place to live on the rue Popincourt, where Joseph soon opened a small restaurant.

[52] Correspondence regarding the Hatem family; USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

[53] USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

[54] Their names were Joseph Frandji, Moice Yacar, and Moise Arouete. USHMM, RG-43.005M, roll 22. Although Frandji and Arouete were Turkish citizens, according to the letter from the UGIF, the applications for their release were not based on their neutral citizenship but on their "Aryan" wives.

After completing school, Victoria worked as a seamstress and sold textiles in marketplaces. There she met Vitali Salmona, who also came from Istanbul. He had been living in France since 1922 and repaired and sold tin cooking pots and kitchen utensils.

After they married, Vitali and Victoria moved to Tréport, in northwestern France, where Victoria worked as a seamstress. On November 5, 1933, their daughter Rachel was born. In 1939, after the death of Victoria's father Joseph, her mother Calo moved in with them in Tréport. A few months later, France was occupied.

To avoid difficulties, the Salmona family registered themselves and their small business at the police station in Tréport, in accordance with German regulations. Vitali, Victoria, and grandmother Calo were registered as Turkish citizens, their daughter Rachel as a French citizen. *Juif/Juive* [Jew] was stamped in large red lettering in their identification cards. On November 23, 1940, daughter Colette was born.

Although the Salmonas were registered as Turks, the French CGQJ ordered the "Aryanization" of the Salmona family's business. In May 1941, both were prohibited from working and their business equipment was confiscated. In August 1941, their account was also seized.

The family tried to keep their heads above water by doing sewing work in the neighborhood and through secret purchases at marketplaces nearby. Vitali drove to Paris once in a while to purchase new goods. During such a visit, he was arrested on August 20, 1941, during the major raid in the 11th arrondissement, and was taken to Drancy where he spent the next months. For ten months, Vitali stayed in the Drancy camp, block V, hallway 2 T, room 43. Then early one morning, on June 22, he was crammed into the third deportation train, which reached Auschwitz on June 24. Vitali received the prisoner number 41,107. On August 15, 1942, not two months after his arrival, he was dead.

Victoria was not informed of either the deportation or the death of her husband. She was prohibited from working. Left to her own devices, she tried to provide a living for herself, her mother Calo, and her two daughters, Rachel and Colette. After the Germans ordered that the "yellow badge" be worn after June 1942, Victoria had her two daughters baptized, hoping that she could protect them in this way.

On January 14, 1943, the local Gestapo commander ordered the arrest of all Jews of the Seine-Inférieure (now Seine-Maritime) *département*. The pretext was an attack on a German officer. On the list of the 225 people to be arrested were the names of Victoria Salmona, her mother, and her two small daughters. In front of her classmates, eight-year-old Rachel was wrenched from school during class. Then the gendarmes picked up Victoria, her seventy-year-old mother Calo, and the two-and-a-half-year-old Colette. Victoria tried in vain to hide her small daughter under the bed.

On January 18, 1943, the four were imprisoned in Drancy. Victoria still did not know that her husband had been deported from there to Auschwitz six months earlier. Three weeks later, Victoria, her mother Calo, and her daughters Rachel and Colette were deported to Auschwitz on transport number 47 on February 11, 1943. A total of sixty-eight Jews who were either born in Turkey or were the children of Turkish immigrants were in the same convoy. More than half of them were women; twenty of them were children or youths. They were murdered in the gas chambers of Birkenau immediately after their arrival in Auschwitz.[55]

Most of the Turkish Jews who were deported in the summer of 1942 were arrested in the raids during the summer of 1941, most of them in the major raid in August 1941. Between these large-scale operations, arbitrary checks and arrest operations were also repeatedly carried out in the parts of the city that were predominantly inhabited by immigrants, such as the 11th arrondissement (at places like the Café Le Bosphore, a meeting place for Turkish Jews).

In mid-October 1941, 365 Turkish Jews were incarcerated in the three camps of the occupied zone, Pithiviers, Beaune-la-Rolande, and Drancy, as the head of the Office of Jewish Affairs at the Gestapo, Dannecker, reported in his response to an inquiry from the German Embassy.[56] After the 3,469 Poles and 368 "emigrants" (as Germans and Austrians were called), Turkish Jews constituted the third largest group of foreign Jews. Quite a few of the 624 incarcerated Jews with "unascertained" citizenship may well also have been people of Turkish origin.

[55] This summary is from Claude Mitrani-Echaubard, *Rachel Salmona: Convoi 47* (Paris: Èdition Bertout, 2004).

[56] Dannecker's response, dated October 20, 1941; PAAA, R 100869, fiche 2231.

Most of these people had most likely been arrested before the rules of exemption concerning Jews from neutral states had been established among the Nazi authorities. However, even after the instructions to this effect had been issued from Berlin, the Jews from neutral countries were not automatically released but were instead gradually transferred to Drancy.[57] Releases were granted only when the diplomatic representatives explicitly intervened for certain individuals, and even then in some cases only after repeated interventions. The determined intervention by the Turkish Consulate that resulted in the release of sixteen Turkish Jews in September 1941 has been discussed earlier. However, there is no indication of such commitment for the several hundred remaining Turkish Jews who were incarcerated in the three camps.

In the course of 1942, Turkish Jews were repeatedly arrested in raids and taken to Drancy or other camps, as confirmed by the arrest lists of the Parisian police prefecture, which were discovered by Serge Klarsfeld, and entries regarding "arrivals" in Drancy.[58] The German and French authorities often sent the Turkish Consulate lists of the names of the Turkish Jews who had been arrested, asking for confirmation of their citizenship. On March 24, 1942, for example, the Turkish Consulate General in Paris wrote that it could "not acknowledge the twenty-nine people of Jewish religion born in Turkey whose names are on the enclosed list compiled by the camp administration in Compiègne as regular Turkish citizens" and therefore could not issue them passports or other documents.[59] As many Turkish Jews in Paris, many of the Jews incarcerated in Drancy probably did not learn that the consulate did not recognize their citizenship until they were imprisoned and waiting in detention, while in several cases, the consulate did not even bother to react.

A letter from the director of the French "Jewish police," Jacques Schweblin, to Dannecker, who was in charge of the deportation or release

[57] Other Jews who fit one of the "criteria of exemption" were also treated in this manner. On June 24, 1942, 163 Jews belonging to various "protected" groups arrived at Drancy from Compiègne: 96 of them were married to "Aryans," 11 Jews were over fifty-five years old, 16 were Hungarians, and 10 were Turks; Serge Klarsfeld, *Le calendrier de la persécution des Juifs en France: 1940–1944* (Paris: F.F.D.J.F. and Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1993), 246.

[58] Thanks to Serge Klarsfeld for providing the documents of the police prefecture. The *Calendrier* of Jewish persecution in France compiled by Serge Klarsfeld contains, for example, the following entries on "new arrivals" in Drancy for the months after October 1942: October 11, three Turks; October 18: one Turk; October 25: one Turk; November 6: two Turks; November 22: three Turks; November 30: three Turks; December 3: two Turks; December 4: one Turk; December 11: three Turks, and so forth.

[59] USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

of Jews, on June 17, 1942, is evidence of this. In it, Schweblin writes: "And another issue is that approximately 250 people are interned in Drancy. 150 of them who are fit to work are still waiting for recognition of their Turkish citizenship by their consulate. How are these people to be regarded as to the transport on June 20, 1942?"[60] Schweblin's letter probably refers to the third deportation train, which transported 934 people from Drancy to Auschwitz on June 22, 1942. Only thirty-four people survived. Of the seventy-nine deportees born in Turkey, twenty-two had French citizenship, while the names of most of the fifty-seven others bear the remark "nationality unascertained." One of these fifty-seven deportees in the third transport who had waited in vain for recognition by the consulate was Vitali Salmona, whose story was told earlier.

Another arrestee whom the Turkish Consulate refused to recognize was Alexandre Bali, who was born in Menemen in 1922. Bali had come to France as a child in 1928. In 1942, he was arrested in Paris and sentenced to six months in prison because he had not registered as a Jew. From prison, he was transferred to Drancy. His relatives turned to the Turkish Consulate in Lyon for help in November 1942, but they did not receive an answer until two months later, in January 1943. They were told to notify the consulate in Marseilles to have Bali's Turkish citizenship confirmed there. Even though an uncle emphasized in a letter to the Turkish Embassy in Vichy that Alexandre Bali's father had fought as a staff sergeant in World War I and in the Greek-Turkish War, the Turkish Embassy refused to afford Bali protection because he "was not registered in accordance with regulations." In contrast, his younger brother was permitted shortly afterward to travel to Turkey to perform his military service.[61] It can be assumed that at the time the letter was written, Alexandre Bali had been dead for some time. He had been deported on November 11, 1942, with the forty-fifth transport to Auschwitz. Only two of the deportees on this transport survived.

The intervention of Turkish authorities on behalf of arrested Turkish Jews in 1942 is documented in four cases: for the married couple Albert and Lilly Gattegno, Isaac Bitran, the Niego Family residing in Poitiers, and a man named Israel Avidor. In three of these cases, the interventions of

[60] Letter by Schweblin, director of the anti-Jewish police, dated June 17, 1942; CDJC, Sign. XXVb-37. The letter is addressed to the "head of IV J," in other words, Dannecker. Up to this point, Turkish Jews had only been arrested in larger numbers in the raids in August 1941, meaning most of them waited over ten months in vain for a reaction from the Turkish Consulate.

[61] Correspondence regarding Bali, USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

the Turkish authorities were successful. They helped to obtain the release of the Niego family as well as Bitran.[62] As to the Gattegnos, they were not released from Drancy until January 1943, after five months of detention and repeated pressure from the Turkish Consulate.[63] The fate of Israel Avidor is unclear. The French authorities refused to release him on the grounds that he was supposedly a communist.[64] The Gattegno, Bitran, and Niego families, for whom the Turkish Consulate so vigorously intervened, were also Turkish Jewish businesspeople whose businesses were managed by trustees appointed by the consulate. Other interventions besides the four cited here have not been documented for 1942.

A list by the Parisian police prefecture that lists incarcerated Jews along with their nationality contains in its entry for January 18, 1943, in addition to the previously mentioned Mr. and Mrs. Gattegno, the names of fourteen other Turkish Jews from Rue Popincourt No. 8 in the 11th arrondissement. No diplomatic steps were taken for the other fourteen people. They remained in Drancy and were deported from there to Auschwitz.

The disinterest of the Turkish authorities regarding many of their incarcerated Jewish citizens can be gathered from the report of José Papo, the cantor of the Sephardic community in Paris. Papo had initially fled south with the rabbi Nissim Ovadia and other leading members of the community while the German troops were advancing on Paris. However, he returned to Paris after a short time, where, during the occupation, he organized support for the Sephardic Jews in Paris with incredible energy and courage.[65]

José Papo was arrested in September 1942 and taken to Drancy, where he experienced for himself the inhumane imprisonment conditions. Immediately after his release, he contacted the consulates of the neutral countries and the countries allied with Nazi Germany in Paris. He informed every single consulate about its Jewish citizens interned in

[62] Bitran had been among the sixteen people whose release had already been obtained by the consulate in September 1941.

[63] Files in the USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202. Gattegno and his wife were included in the repatriation in the spring of 1944.

[64] Letter from the French Foreign Office to the Turkish Embassy in Vichy from August 24, 1942; files regarding Bitran in the USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202. See also Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 99.

[65] At great risk to his own life, Papo went to police stations to take care of the people who had been arrested. Papo and his helpers obtained forged food ration cards for Jews who were living in hiding and therefore did not have any. They also found housing for Jewish children in homes in the country, arranged meals for people without means, and sent food packages to people interned in Drancy who were starving. For more, José Papo, *En attendent l'Aurore – Activité de la Communauté Séphardite de Paris pendant l'occupation 1940–1945* (Paris, 1945); and Amipaz-Silber, *Sephardi Jews*.

Drancy and demanded that they go to the German authorities and intervene for the prisoners' release. Papo later wrote that the Italian consul and the Portuguese vice-consul showed great commitment and were able to achieve the release of numerous Jews from those countries. Papo does not mention the Turkish Consulate specifically. He only writes that other consulates did not take action, even though he approached them many times. Because a large part of his community consisted of Turkish Jews, it is not hard to guess who Papo's remark refers to.[66]

The Repatriation Ultimatum and the Reaction of Turkish Authorities

By the end of September 1942, the Jews who had been arrested in 1941 and in the raids during the summer of 1942 had almost all been deported. On September 30 of that year, 1,401 Jews, 956 of whom were French and 67 Turkish, were still in Drancy.[67] Because the French government was under pressure from the growing opposition of the population and the church and was therefore not willing to agree to the deportation of Jews with French citizenship, the Nazi authorities in France now demanded that the Vichy government denaturalize all Jews who had been naturalized after 1927. At the same time, they pushed the Foreign Office in Berlin to approve other groups of foreign Jews for deportation. The German Ambassador, Otto Abetz, was especially eager in this. He had complained in a number of telegrams to the Foreign Office about the "presumptuous" behavior of foreign Jews whose "privileged" treatment made it extraordinarily difficult "to carry out Jewish measures."[68] First, Berlin pressured the governments of its allies Bulgaria and Romania into agreeing to the deportation of "their" Jews.

Another result of these measures was the ultimatum that was sent to the neutral countries in October 1942, demanding that they repatriate their Jewish citizens from the northern zone. Because of their large numbers, the Turkish Jews played a central role here. The number of Jews from Turkey alone, more than 3,000, was approximately as large as the combined number of Jews residing there from Italy, Spain, Greece, Hungary, and Switzerland.[69]

[66] Papo, *attendent l'Aurore,* 47.
[67] Klarsfeld, *Calendrier,* 667.
[68] Telegrams by Abetz, dated September 7 and 15, 1942; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2225.
[69] Telegram from the German Embassy in Paris, dated September 24, 1942; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2225.

The extortion by Germany aside, Turkish consuls in France had repeatedly called the attention of their embassy in Vichy and the government in Ankara to the difficulties that made it next to impossible for Turkish Jews to return to Turkey on their own.[70] Jews had been prohibited from leaving France since May 1941. They required a departure permit, which the French authorities often denied Turkish, as well as other, Jews. Returning through the Mediterranean was not possible because of the war situation, and the route over land was scarcely passable for sole travelers and bore considerable delays and risks. Croatia and Bulgaria granted transit visas to Jews only with great reluctance, and an application had to be submitted in occupied Serbia to obtain a permit from the German military. In September 1941, the consul general in Paris, Dülger, reported to the Turkish Embassy that numerous Jews had asked the consulate to help them with their return. Dülger suggested that this subject be handled "at a higher level" in order to achieve a bilateral solution.[71] A reaction from the embassy or the Foreign Ministry to Dülger's petition is not known.

In April 1942, Turkish Consul General Bedî Arbel in Marseilles pointed out to the embassy in Vichy that male Turkish Jews liable for military service ran the risk of having their citizenship revoked if they did not return to Turkey to perform their military service.[72] The Turkish authorities apparently soon found a solution for the return of men liable for military service. Lazar Rousso, who had been released from the camp in Compiègne, returned to Turkey on a Turkish railway car that was mostly occupied by men up for military service.[73]

Despite the difficulties, some Jews managed to travel back to Turkey on their own. James Taranto describes the adventurous trip of his uncle Salvador Taranto, who managed to make his own way from Marseilles to Turkey in 1942, prior to the occupation of the southern zone of France.[74]

[70] Letter from the Turkish honorary consul in Lyon, Routier, dated November 24, 1941, and letter from the consul general in Marseilles, dated April 22, 1942, as translated in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 136f.

[71] Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 140, n. 158. According to Shaw, this question was addressed to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[72] Letter by Arbel, dated April 22, 1942, as translated in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 137.

[73] Interview with Lazar Rousso on March 13, 2004, in Istanbul. Shaw also mentions a group of Turkish Jewish men who were sent to Turkey for military service.

[74] "He Didn't Say Uncle," *Wall Street Journal* (January 20, 2006). Stella Ventura also made her own way back to Turkey with her mother in the winter of 1941–42; interview on March 22, 2004, in Istanbul.

The total number of Turkish Jews who returned to Turkey individually or with other non-Jewish Turks is not known.

Turkish Reactions to the German Ultimatum

As the letters by the various German agencies in Paris illustrate, the repatriation ultimatum concerned between 3,000 and 5,000 Turkish Jews in the occupied zone of France.[75] Because of this large number alone, the decision of whether or not they would be evacuated or allowed to remigrate was incumbent on the government agencies in Ankara. We have hardly any information about the internal Turkish decision processes. In his many responses to the repeated inquiries from the German authorities between November 1942 and January 1943, the Turkish consul general in Paris declared every time that he had not yet received instructions on this matter from his government.[76]

By the end of 1942, certain Turkish consuls in France had already begun their own initiatives for the repatriation of Turkish Jews from France. The Turkish Consul General in Marseilles, Arbel, for example suggested to Ambassador Erkin in December 1942 that convoys be organized, in light of the intensified repressive measures against Jews and the difficulties for individuals trying to return.[77] In his answer sent to Marseilles, the Turkish ambassador rejected the suggestion of group repatriation and instructed the consul to support only people who wanted to return to Turkey to perform their military service, for example.[78] Erkin was apparently acting on orders from his government, which had explicitly instructed diplomatic offices *not* to repatriate groups of people.[79] Erkin also wrote in his memoirs that he received instructions from Ankara at the beginning of 1943 not to send back Jews "by the train load."[80]

[75] In the letters of various German authorities, the number of Jews affected by the "repatriation" ultimatum varied; see footnote 29.

[76] Telegram from the German Embassy in Paris, dated December 11, 1942, to the Foreign Office; and teletype message from the embassy in Paris, dated January 20, 1943, to the Foreign Office about a discussion with the Turkish consul general; both in PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2226.

[77] Letter by Arbel, dated December 30, 1942; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 141.

[78] Letter by the Turkish Embassy in Vichy, January 7, 1943, in English translation in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 142.

[79] A letter from the Turkish Consulate General in Paris, dated January 26, 1944, mentions the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' order from the previous year not to conduct group repatriations; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 153f.

[80] Erkin (1959), 542. Erkin forwarded these instructions in a letter dated January 7, 1943, to the consulates subordinate to him; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 142.

Despite, or possibly even contrary to, the instructions from Ankara, the Turkish consul general in Paris, Dülger, applied on December 19, 1942, for transit visas with the German authorities for 100 Jews to return to Turkey.[81] Behiç Erkin writes in his memoirs that Dülger organized their repatriation on his own initiative. This also correlates with a statement from the second secretary of the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, Fikret Belbez, to the Foreign Office.[82] On March 15 and 16, two groups of Turkish Jews, which now numbered 121 people, were able to depart for Turkey.[83]

Permission from the Turkish Consulate for this return trip could also be purchased, as the example of David Catarivas, a son of Turkish Jewish emigrants, shows.[84] Likewise, this repatriation of Turkish Jews was not financed by the Turkish authorities but rather by Jewish organizations, such as the UGIF and the Comité Amelot.[85] Several Sephardic organizations also helped finance the journey.

However, the Turkish authorities refused to allow the overwhelming majority of Turkish Jews to remigrate to Turkey. As mentioned, the Turkish foreign minister had already announced in October 1942 in reaction to Germany's ultimatum that Turkish Jews abroad would be stripped of their Turkish citizenship. This was exactly what happened in February 1943, when the Turkish consul general in Paris recognized as Turkish citizens only 631 of the 3,000 to 5,000 Jews in the French northern zone, whose names the German authorities had sent to him. The remaining more than 2,400 Jews, the consul general referred to as people "who had up to now been Turkish citizens" for whom no steps could be taken.[86] Even regarding the repatriation of the approximately 500 "recognized" Turkish Jews, in addition to the 121 mentioned who had already left for Turkey in March 1943, no steps of any kind were taken during the next few months. Shaw mentions the return of only

[81] Telegram from the German Embassy in Paris to the Foreign Office, dated February 16, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702. It is unclear whether or not Dülger knew about the negative order from Ankara at the time of the application.

[82] Erkin, "Hatırat," 542: in a note dated February 17, 1943, von Hahn quotes a communication from Belbez regarding whether this repatriation could be accomplished without an "order from Ankara"; PAAA, R99446, fiche 5703.

[83] Telegram from the German Embassy in Paris (Schleier), dated March 12, 1943, to the German Foreign Office; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702.

[84] Amipaz-Silber, *Sephardi Jews*, 109ff.

[85] Named after its location in the rue Amelot; USHMM, RG 43005 M, film roll 10 (UGIF).

[86] Telegram from the German Embassy in Paris (Aschenbach), dated February 16, 1943, to the Foreign Office in Berlin; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702.

one group of fifteen Turkish Jewish businesspeople and their families in June 1943.[87]

Many Turkish Jews who applied to diplomatic offices for repatriation, or at least assistance for their return journey, were turned away.[88] At the beginning of 1943, Jews of Turkish origin in Marseilles, for example, went to the local UGIF office several times to ask the organization to intervene on their behalf at the Turkish Embassy in Vichy to be allowed to return to Turkey after initially having been refused.[89]

Also documented are several unsuccessful appeals by the UGIF to obtain the departure of one Henri Saul who was incarcerated in the Vernet camp and later in the sanatorium de la Guiche, but the Turkish authorities refused to repatriate him because "his citizenship will most likely be revoked."[90] Isaac Castoriano applied for repatriation in a letter dated March 10, 1943. More than fourteen months later, at the end of May 1944, the Turkish authorities suggested that he take part in a convoy. But Castoriano was unable to join the convoy because he was arrested on the way to Paris and deported by the Germans.[91]

The evidence on whether and how the Turkish authorities informed the Jewish people under their protection of the dangers inherent in the German ultimatum is contradictory. Madame Z., who lived with her parents directly opposite the Turkish Consulate on Boulevard Haussmann in Paris during the war, said that the consulate issued no information whatsoever. This correlates with statements from other people who were interviewed. In contrast, the German Embassy in Paris telegraphed Berlin on February 18, 1943, passing on information by a liaison of the Security Police (Sipo) and Security Service (SD) of the SS, according to which several members of the Turkish community in Paris had been told by their consulate to return home.[92]

[87] Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 149.

[88] Joseph Kaputo, for example, received the answer from the Turkish Embassy that he should rather try to reach Turkey on his own. Letter dated January 8, 1943, quoted in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 140, note 259.

[89] Letter from a Mr. Habib from Marseilles from March 31, 1943, and an undated memorandum "concerning the return home of the Turkish citizens of the Jewish religion" in the files of the UGIF in Marseilles. Thanks to Serge Klarsfeld for providing these documents.

[90] Two records of the UGIF, from January and May 1942, USHMM, UGIF RG 43.005M, film roll 10.

[91] Files on Castoriano, USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202; see also Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 212–219.

[92] Conversation with Mrs. Z. in November 2004 in Paris; telegram from the German Embassy in Paris to the Foreign Office in Berlin; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2226.

Postponement to the End of 1943

The German authorities interpreted the massive rejection of Turkish Jews by their consulates as a license to arrest and deport anyone whose citizenship was not recognized. As early as the end of October 1942, after Turkey had announced that it would be revoking the citizenship of a number of individuals, Luther sent a telegram to the German Embassy in Paris, instructing it to deport expatriated Turkish citizens.[93] On February 16, 1943, after Turkey had declared that it would recognize only 631 of the Turkish Jews as citizens, Ernst Achenbach, the head of the Political Department of the Embassy in Paris, telegraphed Berlin the following message: "The general measures ... will now be carried out at an accelerated pace against the remaining Jews who until now have had Turkish citizenship."[94] Department D III, the "Jewish Department" at the Foreign Office, supported the "wish" of the German Embassy in Paris, von Papen in Ankara also had "no objections", as long as the recognized Turkish Jews were exempt from deportation.[95]

Only Wilhelm Melchers, the head of the Middle East desk in the Political Department of the Foreign Office, raised objections and requested that the deportation of the 2,400 Jews not recognized by the Turkish authorities be suspended for foreign policy reasons. "In the current mood, which is marked by the Adana Conference, we *must* be especially careful not to create any pretexts that could cause us problems with Turkey. There are fewer disadvantages associated with 2,400 Turkish Jews remaining in the western regions, in my view, than the political disadvantages that will result from removing them," he warned.[96] Melchers's supervisor, Woermann, then demanded that the Turkish authorities be forced to produce a "precisely worded statement" about their "disinterest" in the Jews of Turkish origin who had not been recognized.[97]

Melchers's opposition resulted in Turkish Jews – and after the discussions in Berlin, this group also included the people whose citizenship remained unascertained – continuing to be exempted from arrest and

[93] Telegram from Luther to the German Embassy in Paris, dated October 24, 1942; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2225.

[94] PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702,

[95] Memo by von Hahn (D III), dated February 17, 1943, and telegram by von Papen, dated February 27, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703.

[96] Note from Pol VII, dated February 19, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703.

[97] Answer from Woerman to D III, dated February 23, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703.

deportation. In the instructions given by the SS and Gestapo about who was to be arrested in raids, there was no mention of Turkish Jews, and when Turkish Jews were arrested, the Turkish diplomats were able procure their release in numerous cases. However, Turkish Jews continued to be taken to Drancy repeatedly during 1943, and if the Turkish authorities did not intervene, they were deported.

Occupation of the Free Zone and the Year 1943

After the Allies had landed in North Africa, the Germans occupied the zone in the south, which had been "free" until then, on November 11, 1942. Officially, the Vichy government retained legal authority in the southern zone. The demarcation line also remained, and Jews were still strictly forbidden from moving between zones. Within a few weeks, the situation for Jews in the southern zone became dramatically worse. The SS reinforced their commandos in the cities of southern France. Escape by way of Marseilles or over the Pyrenees became virtually impossible by the end of 1942. As in the northern zone, the freedom of movement for Jews was abolished in the southern zone, and the Jews residing in the coastal *départements* were driven out, including a number of Turkish Jews living in southwestern France. The identification documents and food ration cards for Jews were stamped with the letter *J*.

The intensified anti-Jewish measures in southern France resulted in a series of protests by the consulates and embassies of neutral countries, including Turkey. Consul General Bedî Arbel protested in a number of letters against the drafting of Turkish Jews for forced labor, and he was finally able to obtain an exemption.[98] The embassies and consulates of Italy and Portugal managed to have their Jewish citizens released from the requirement of having their papers and food ration cards stamped with the word *Juif/Juive* (Jew). Following suit, on January 25, the Turkish Embassy in Vichy also protested against applying this regulation to Turkish Jews.[99]

The French government, for its part, refused to introduce the yellow badge in the southern zone, despite demands by the Germans. This was an inestimable advantage for the Jews in this zone, enabling many of

[98] Letter by the police prefecture Alpes Maritimes, dated December 19, 1942; USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

[99] Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 85 and n. 181.

them to go into hiding and survive unrecognized. However, the French government soon also ordered the embassies and consulates of neutral and German-allied countries to "repatriate" their Jewish citizens who were still residing in the now occupied area.[100]

Marseilles, January 1943

As a port city, Marseilles's population had always had a high proportion of immigrants. During the war, the city became a safe haven and place of transit for refugees from all over Europe. As a result, the number of Jews in Marseilles grew to 18,346 by the summer of 1942; of these, 10,346 were French citizens.[101] In the "Jewish census" conducted by the Vichy government in 1941, as many as 1,573 Turkish Jews had been registered.[102] This means that the proportion of "Turks" in the Jewish population of the city was considerably higher than in Paris.

Marseilles was a particular thorn in the side of the Germans because of its cosmopolitan character. Many Jews resided there, and it was a center of political resistance and the headquarters of a number of relief organizations. Carl Oberg, chief of the SS and German police in France, called Marseilles the "cancerous tumor of Europe."[103]

Two months after the occupation of the southern zone, one of the largest wartime operations to be carried out in France began in Marseilles, jointly conducted by German and French forces. Tens of thousands of French policemen from all over France were deployed. In contrast to the raids of 1941 and 1942 in Paris, the operation targeted not only Jews, but also so-called asocials, meaning homeless people, foreigners with an irregular status, and people who were unemployed. The operation began in the night of January 22 and continued into January 23, 1943; it primarily targeted the cosmopolitan city districts *Quartier d'Opéra* and *Vieux Port*. During the six-day operation, 400,000 people were checked, 5,656 temporarily detained, and 1,642 taken to the Baumettes prison in Marseilles.

[100] Letter from the French foreign minister to the Turkish Embassy in Vichy, dated January 13, 1943; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 143, n. 264.

[101] Anne Sportiello-Boursaus and Esther Fouchier, eds., *Janvier 1943–Janvier 1993: Marseille se souvient du temps des rafles* (Marseilles: Ville de Marseille, 1993), 21.

[102] *Enfants cachés*, Bulletin No. 37 (Paris; December 2001), 14. For January 1944, the Turkish Consulate General in Marseilles estimated the number of Turkish Jews who were residing in Marseilles and were registered at the consulate at 1,000; letter from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the 500 Year Foundation, dated July 14, 1995; Yad Vashem, Necdet Kent file.

[103] Sportiello-Boursaus and Fouchier, *Marseille se souvient*, 23.

Victor Algazi describes the raid in January 1943 in Marseilles[104]

Victor Algazi grew up in the quartier de l'Opéra, where many Maltese, Italians, Armenians, and Jews from Greece, Turkey, and North Africa lived. His parents came from Turkey.

"January 22, 1943. It began at night. We heard the steps; the boots were studded with nails. When they knocked at our door, they said 'Open up!' My mother got up and opened the door. 'Who lives here? How many of you are there? Papers! Where is your husband?' – 'I have no husband; I am a widow.' While the French official looked at my mother's papers, he glanced around and stuck his foot in the door, 'Your name is Léon, Luna, and you were born in Asia Minor, in Smyrna?' My mother was shaking like a leaf. 'I did my military service in Smyrna; I got to know some very nice people there. Close the door, extinguish the light, and don't answer to anyone for twenty-four hours.'

My mother did what he said. A short time later, there was another knock at the door, and we heard the same voice from below, 'It's taken care of; they already went down.'

We heard the steps of the neighbors on the stairs. Probably the Aroutos, Mr. Leon, Mr. Cohen, Mr. Mechulam? We heard steps running up and down.... I think of my cousins, and the Mizrahis and the Behars who never returned.... I think of families like the Arrovas – the poor woman had eight children; only two are left....

But where were we to go without money? Armenian friends invited us to their house. 'We know what persecution is,' they said. Then we walked the entire way to La Gavotte [a suburb on the outskirts of Marseilles] on foot, because there were also checks on public transportation. We had nothing left, no food ration cards. We couldn't renew them, because they were waiting for us there to arrest us.

In La Gavotte, there were six of us living in a small room. Our friend was named Caroline Kaldiremdjian, God rest her soul. She died at the age of 103. She was from Ankara, and the Armenians from Ankara [were not allowed to] speak any Armenian, otherwise their tongues would have been cut out. So it came about that after

[104] Interview with Victor Algazi on January 17, 2004, in Marseilles, supplemented by the manuscript of his 1993 speech on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Marseilles raid.

two or three generations they were only able to speak Turkish. She had a heart of gold. I see her before me, the way she rolled a cigarette. I collected butts for her outside. She suffered from insomnia and sang the entire night. She sang and I listened. She sang songs in Turkish.

She was a grandmother to me. I will never forget what she did for me. She said in Turkish, 'Ye, oğlum, ye' (Eat, my son, eat). What was there to eat? I ate the little piece of bread that she saved for me from her own mouth."

Victor Algazi died in 2005. He was one of the founders of the Amicale des Déportés d'Auschwitz et des Camps de Haute-Silesie (Association of the Deportees to Auschwitz and Other Camps in Upper Silesia) in Marseilles.

On the morning of Sunday, January 24, 782 of the Jews arrested during the raids were brought to the Arenc freight train station at the port of Marseilles and crammed into cattle cars and taken to Compiègne camp (see Figure 8.5). Among them were seventy Jews of Turkish origin. Most had been naturalized in France.[105]

The remaining of those arrested in the raid were also initially taken to the Fréjus camp via Arenc, from where 800 people were deported to Compiègne on January 31. Turkish diplomats intervened several times in order to procure the release of nine of the Turkish Jews arrested in the raids.[106]

In the beginning of February, the German occupation troops completely demolished the old city district near the old port, blowing up 1,494 buildings and leaving behind fourteen hectares of ruins. The Jews who still managed to stay alive lost their homes and all their property.

In the beginning of March, the Jews who had been deported from Marseilles were transferred from Compiègne to Drancy. There are several accounts of the pitiful state of Marseilles's Jews in Drancy. Many had hardly any clothing because they had been dragged from their homes at night. They were extremely weakened from undernourishment

[105] Evaluation of the brochure compiled by Serge Klarsfeld on the deportations from Marseilles; Serge Klarsfeld, *Les transferts de Juifs de la région de Marseille vers les camps de Drancy ou de Compiègne en vue de leur déportation, 11 Août 1942–24 Juillet 1944* (Paris: F.F.D.J.F., 1992).

[106] Copy of the letter by Ambassador Behiç Erkin in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 89f. Nevertheless, despite the Turkish interventions,most of these nine people remained detained in the camps of Compiègne and Drancy until May of 1944, when they were eventually released or, respectively, repatriated to Turkey. One of the nine – Lazar Hassid – was deported to Auschwitz in May 1944 and later evacuated to Buchenwald, where he remained imprisoned until the liberation of the camp.



FIGURE 8.5. Deportation from the Arenc freight train station in Marseilles on January 24, 1943. (Courtesy of Serge Klarsfeld.)

at Compiègne. After three weeks of confinement in Drancy, most of the people who had been arrested in Marseilles were deported on transports number 52 and 53 to the extermination camp Sobibor on March 23 and 24, 1943, where they were murdered almost without exception. Among the deportees who were on these two transports were seventy-one Jews born in Turkey and their nineteen children who were born in France. Most of them had French citizenship, while twelve were of Turkish nationality.

Necdet Kent, the "Turkish Schindler"

The Turkish vice-consul of Marseilles at the time, Necdet Kent, plays a central role in all descriptions of the "outstanding commitment of Turkish diplomats to rescue Jews." According to Kent's own report, he was visited one night by Sidi I., a Jew from Izmir who worked for the consulate as an interpreter. Completely distraught, Sidi I. told him that the Germans had arrested roughly eighty Turkish Jews and had taken them to the train station, from where they were about to be deported. Kent had then without delay run with Sidi I. to the main railroad station St. Charles in Marseilles, where the deportation train stood. Despite the protests of a Gestapo officer, Kent himself had boarded the deportation train with the interpreter. After the train had traveled for several hours,

it had stopped, and all eighty Turkish Jews had been allowed to leave the train with Kent. In this way, he had saved their lives.[107]

Necdet Kent's account plays a central role in *Desperate Hours*, a film about the positive role of Turkey during the Holocaust. In the film, Kent's words are repeated by the then head of the department "Righteous among the Nations" at Yad Vashem, Dr. Mordecai Paldiel. Stanford Shaw also published Kent's statement in his book, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, and it can be found in several collected volumes of Sephardic and Turkish Jewish institutions, in hundreds of articles and publications, and on countless Internet sites. In 2005, Necdet Kent was honored posthumously with the Raoul Wallenberg Medal for his deeds. In 2008, Turkey issued a postage stamp to honor Necdet Kent. In the Turkish public, Kent is usually called the "Turkish Schindler."

Attempts of the Turkish Jewish 500-Yil-Vakfi (500 Year Foundation)[108] and other organizations to have Kent honored at Yad Vashem for his commitment as one of the Righteous among the Nations have failed to this day because Kent could not name a single survivor as a witness. Since 1987, the employees at Yad Vashem have tried in vain to find witnesses to Kent's feat among Turkish Jews in France and Israel.[109] The Turkish Consul General in Marseilles also wrote in 1989 that there was no evidence of Kent's feat.[110]

Kent's heroic story is hardly credible for a number of reasons. First, the only train that deported Jews directly out of Marseilles was the train that went to Compiègne on the morning of January 24, 1943. It left from the Arenc freight train station, not from the stately St. Charles station in the center of the city.[111] It is impossible to confuse the magnificent building of St. Charles station with the pitiful environment of the Arenc station. Second, as already mentioned, Turkish diplomats intervened for the release of nine Turkish Jews who were arrested during the raid and taken to Compiègne. Why would they demand the release of people who

[107] Kent first described this in April 1987 to Jak Kamhi, a prominent member of the 500 Year Foundation; Necdet Kent file at Yad Vashem. Stanford Shaw published a similar version of Kent's report; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 341ff.

[108] This organization was founded in 1989 by prominent Turkish and Turkish Jewish businesspeople, politicians, and representatives to celebrate the 500-year anniversary of the arrival of the Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire.

[109] Kent file at Yad Vashem. My own search among Jews of Turkish origin in Marseilles yielded the same negative result.

[110] Letter from Consul General Kutlu Özgüvenç in July 1989 to a Mr. Kerem; Yad Vashem, N. Kent file.

[111] The transport from Marseilles to Fréjus on January 24 also left from Arenc; the transport from Fréjus to Compiègne on January 31/February 1 passed through Arenc.

apparently had already been rescued by Kent? Both Serge Klarsfeld and the Amicale des Déportés d'Auschwitz have reconstructed the events during and after the raid in Marseilles in minute detail. The volume published by the Amicale on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the events includes a number of reports by people who witnessed the raid firsthand, including a number of Turkish Jews. None of them mention Kent's actions in their accounts about the situation at the Arenc freight train station and the trip to Compiègne. Elie Arditti, who was born in Izmir and was nineteen years old at the time, even succeeded in escaping from the deportation train which Kent claims to have boarded.[112]

Change of Vichy's Position in 1943 and Germany's New Strategy after the Arrival of Brunner

The operation in Marseilles was the last time the Vichy government placed its police forces at the disposal of the Germans to arrest Jews. In the summer of 1942, the Vichy government's handing over of Jews had increasingly met with protest by the French population. A number of bishops called the collaboration policies of the Vichy government regarding Jewish persecution a disgrace for France. The occupation of the southern zone, the growing resistance movement with its various factions, and the turning tide of the war in 1943 led to the Vichy government's clearly dwindling willingness to collaborate. Despite massive pressure from the Nazi authorities, in the summer of 1943, virtually at the last second, the French government refused to issue an extended law on the revocation of citizenship that would have denaturalized tens of thousands of Jews who had been naturalized in France after 1927, thus making them stateless and subject to deportation.

Nonetheless, the German commanders soon issued instructions to arrest and deport Jews of foreign origin who had been naturalized in France after 1927. A large portion of the Jews of Turkish origin who were deported from France in 1943 were naturalized French citizens.

Heinz Röthke, Dannecker's successor as head of the Office of Jewish Affairs of the Gestapo in France from the summer of 1942, expressed the position of the SS in March 1943 as follows: "The transport of Jews out of France must not stop until the last Jew has left French soil; ... this matter is not dependent on the pro-Jewish and therefore completely

[112] Amicale des Deportés d'Auschwitz et des Camps de Haute-Silésie, *Marseille, Vichy et les Nazis: Le temps des rafles. La déportation des juifs* (Marseilles: self-published, 1993), 125ff.

irrelevant attitude of the French government, but on the unequivocal orders of the *Führer*."[113]

After the French police would no longer participate in Jewish raids under German supervision, the Germans had to rely on their own forces and were thus able to arrest far fewer Jews in 1943 than before. Forty thousand Jews were deported from France in 1942; in 1943, this number dropped to seventeen thousand. The German occupiers began to forgo all consideration and started resorting to wild, terror-inducing measures. The central figure in this new method of Jewish persecution was Alois Brunner, one of Eichmann's closest assistants, who had already organized the annihilation of the Jewish communities of Vienna, Berlin, and Salonica. Brunner arrived in Paris on June 1, 1943, with a ten-man Sonderkommando (special detachment). In the beginning of July, he took charge of Drancy camp. On Brunner's initiative, rewards for informers who facilitated the capture of Jews were introduced. Numerous employees of the mandatory Jewish organization UGIF, who had been protected until then, were arrested on Brunner's orders, and he ordered raids of UGIF offices. The Gestapo forced its way into Jewish homes for the elderly, hospitals, and family centers to take away Jews and send them to their deaths.

On October 20, 1943, the Gestapo stormed the Centre de la Rose in La Verdière in the south of France. The UGIF had established this center in May 1943 as a home for women and children. Because of their age or their citizenship, they were "not deportable." Sultan Arrovas, born in 1903 in Istanbul, with her five children, and Fortuné Tordjman, born in 1914 in Istanbul, with her three children, were among the people who were arrested and later deported to their deaths. The youngest child, René, was not yet a year old.[114] In the nearly fourteen months between Brunner's arrival and the liberation of Paris in August 1944, another 24,000 Jews were deported from France.

Simultaneous with the occupation of southern France by the Germans, the Italians lso expanded their zone of occupation in southeastern France westward to the Rhone. Between the end of 1942 and September 1943, this Italian zone, with Nice as its center, became a protected area for tens of thousands of Jewish refugees. Although they were allied with the Germans, the Italian authorities refused to apply such anti-Jewish Vichy

[113] Note by Röthke, dated March 27, 1943; Klarsfeld, Serge, ed., *Die Endlösung der Judenfrage in Frankreich, Deutsche Dokumente 1941–1944*. Paris: CJDC, 1977; doc. 117, 192ff.

[114] Klarsfeld, *Calendrier*, 897.

laws as marking Jews' identification documents or drafting foreign Jews for forced labor. With the support of the Italian authorities, Jewish relief organizations built reception centers for Jewish refugees arriving in the Italian zone from other parts of France. The Italian military also prevented a number of arrest operations conducted by the French police.[115] Angelo Donati, the managing director of the Italian-French Bank, played a central role in helping Jews. Because of his position, he functioned as an unofficial advisor to the Italian military and was also able to win the support of the Italian Foreign Ministry. Meanwhile, the SS and Gestapo commanders were becoming increasingly disconcerted and reported to Berlin that the Côte d'Azur was "flooded with Jews." Even under enormous pressure from the Germans, the Italians did not alter their position significantly.

Nice had been the center of an active Turkish Jewish community in the 1930s, whose spokesman was, Eli Eskenazi, author of the journal *Judaïsme Sépharadi* and chairman of the *Colonie Turque* of Nice. Among the more than 10,000 Jews who had fled to the Italian zone were many Turkish Jews.

On September 8, 1943, simultaneous with the occupation of northern Italy, the Germans also occupied the Italian zone of France. The evacuation of 10,000 Jews to North Africa, which had been prepared by Donati, thus became no longer possible. The retreating Italian troops were mostly uncoordinated and in great haste. Several hundred Jews joined the Italian soldiers or attempted to get across the Alps on their own. On September 10, Brunner and Röthke arrived in Nice with a Sonderkommando. For more than three months, Brunner's men combed the region around Nice and chased down Jews in hotels and apartments, in the streets, in hospitals, and in orphanages. The anti-Jewish raid organized by Brunner in Nice was one of the most terrible that occurred in Western Europe. The Sonderkommando wounded or tortured many of the people when they arrested them. A total of 1,819 Jews were captured. Between September 16 and December 15, 1943, they were taken to Drancy on more than twenty-five transports.[116] Among them were more than ninety Turkish-born Jews (their children born in France are not included in this count).

[115] Kaspi, *Juifs pendant l'Occupation,* 287 and 289.

[116] Klarsfeld emphasizes that the raid must be regarded as a failure on Brunner's part, based on the approximate number of 25,000 Jews in the Nice region. The willingness of the French population to help and the activities of Jewish resistance organizations saved numerous Jews; Serge Klarsfeld, *Nice – Caserne Auvare, Nice– Hotel Excelsior* (Paris: F.F.D.J.F., 2003), 59–64.

The transport on November 30, 1943, included Eli Eskenazi, born in Istanbul in 1889, who was mentioned earlier. On the transport that took place on December 15 was Davud Şalom, born in Edirne in 1909, with his wife Daisy and baby Jean Marc, who was just one year old.[117]

The Deadline for Repatriation: Fall of 1943

In September 1943, the extended deadlines for the repatriation of Jews from neutral countries also expired. On September 23, the German Embassy in Paris reported that the repatriation of Jews from neutral countries was for the most part complete. At this point, the Turkish Consulate General had still not taken measures to enable the approximately 500 Jews whose papers were said to be "in proper order" by the consulate to return to Turkey. At the same time, he also continued to refuse to declare that the remaining Jews had lost their Turkish citizenship, despite German demands. A few months before, at the end of July, the German Embassy in Paris had already reported failed attempts to obtain an official confirmation from the Turkish Consulate General of its disinterest regarding "possible measures affecting these people." Verbally, according to the German Embassy, the Turkish consul general had hinted "that the Turkish government could not provide an answer to this inquiry because it did not officially distinguish between Jewish Turkish citizens and citizens of other races."[118] The latter remark, which has only been preserved indirectly in the report written by the German Embassy, allows for two explanations. The consul general, in referring to the Turkish constitution, may have been protesting against a special agreement to discriminate against Jews as demanded by the Germans. However, this statement could possibly also be taken to mean that the "disinterest" shown by Turkey, in practice, was indeed directed at Jews, but the consul did not want to put this in writing. The latter explanation is in keeping with the previously described way Turkish policies worked in practice, which usually sanctioned discrimination against Jews and other minorities but kept these sanctions outside official legislation.

The German Embassy, once again at the vanguard of the persecution of Jews, suggested that the Jews recognized by the Turkish Consulate be forcibly expelled to Turkey. As for the remaining more than 3,000

[117] The spelling in the *Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de France*, published by Serge Klarsfeld in 1978 (and possibly also on the deportation list), is "Chaloni."

[118] Note from the German Embassy in Paris to the Foreign Office, dated June 23, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703.

people, the consulate was to be given a four-month period to clarify their citizenship status. After that time, all Turkish Jews whose citizenship had not been recognized through the issue of Turkish passports were to be treated as stateless, meaning they would be arrested and deported.[119] This initiative was rejected by Berlin, where it was pointed out that the government in Ankara had in the meantime agreed to repatriate Turkish Jews.[120] On September 21, the secretary of the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, Kemal Koç, gave an account of instructions issued by Ankara to repatriate Jews of undoubted Turkish citizenship "after examination of each individual case"; however, "massive immigration of Jews to Turkey [is] to be prevented."[121]

About 90 percent of all Turkish Jews whose repatriation the Germans demanded and whose "mass immigration" the government in Ankara sought to prevent lived in France. At the end of October, after Turkish Jews had already been arrested in a number of European countries when the extended deadline for repatriation had expired, the Turkish consul general returned to Paris, apparently with new instructions from Ankara. As he explained to the German Consul General, Schleier, he planned to conduct repatriation in groups and asked for an additional period of four months, because the applications for return had to be reviewed by the government in Ankara first. The repatriation of Jews with valid passports would begin at once.[122] Regarding this matter, the Turkish government evidently initially assumed that the Turkish Jews to be repatriated from France numbered only a few hundred; von Papen wrote of three hundred.[123] The consul now also made the declaration that the Germans had so long pressed for: "A number of other Jews have valid certificates for three months; according to those certificates, travel applications have been submitted for examination. If after three months no passport has been issued, the Turkish government has no interest."[124]

Following discussions at the Foreign Office and an agreement with Eichmann, the deadline for repatriation to Turkey (and Romania) was

[119] Letter from the German Embassy, dated September 23, 1943; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2227.

[120] Telegram from von Thadden to the German Embassy in Paris, dated September 24, 1943; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2227.

[121] Memo from von Thadden, dated September 22, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703, see Chapter 1.

[122] Letter from the German Embassy in Paris (Schleier), dated October 26, 1943; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2227.

[123] Telegram from von Papen, dated October 28, 1943; PAAA, R 100889, fiche 2273.

[124] Letter from Schleier, Paris, dated October 26, 1943; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2227.

extended yet again. By the end of 1943, the Turkish Consulate was to name all Jews in France who were eligible to "return home." They were to depart from the country by January 31, 1944.[125] Although the German Embassy had already announced at the end of October that from this point on, all Turkish Jews without papers would be arrested,[126] Turkish (and Romanian) Jews in France were, according to the new decree, initially exempted from arrest and deportation. However, the release of people who were already incarcerated was expressly "not requested" by the Foreign Office.[127]

Not only foreign policy considerations but also the undefined status of foreign Jews played a role in this last extension of the deadline in southern France. Officially, the region was still under French authority, and the original German ultimatum to repatriate the Jews applied only to northern France. Along with Turkish diplomats, the embassies and consulates of other countries, such as Switzerland, Hungary, and Spain, also intervened against the arrest of their Jewish citizens in the southern zone. For that reason, the Foreign Office argued in favor of granting neutral countries a new deadline to repatriate their Jewish citizens from southern France.[128]

These developments in 1943 meant that the situation of the Turkish Jews in France had deteriorated considerably. During Brunner's hunt for Jews in Nice and in the many raids in rural areas, a large number of Turkish Jews were arrested, regardless of their citizenship, and deported to Drancy. Interventions by Turkish diplomats for the release of incarcerated Jews were repeatedly rejected or delayed by the Germans. Releases were now granted only on condition of a return to Turkey, which means that they were linked to expulsion from France.[129] A number of people therefore remained incarcerated in Drancy until the Turkish government agreed to their repatriation in the spring of 1944; some of them spent an entire year there.

[125] Letter from von Thadden to the German Embassy in Paris regarding the agreement he reached with the RSHA, November 8, 1943; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2227.

[126] Letter from Schleier, dated October 26, 1943; PAAA, R 100889, fiche 2273.

[127] The latter agreement that was concluded between Eichmann and the Foreign Office related to Romanian Jews. Turkish Jews were not explicitly mentioned; letter from Eichmann to the Foreign Office, dated November 13, 1943; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2227.

[128] Telegram from Wagner, Foreign Office in Berlin, dated November 9, 1943, to the German Embassy in Ankara.

[129] Letter from the German Embassy in Paris to the Turkish Consulate General, dated September 16, 1943, regarding the Hatem family; files on the Hatem familiy, USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202; English translation in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 161f.

Avram Menassé had been arrested and taken to Drancy in January 1943. Despite repeated interventions by the Turkish Consulate, he was not released. Instead, his wife Simha and his ten-year-old daughter, who was seriously ill, were also arrested the following week. Five weeks later his daughter died in the Drancy camp. Although Menassé, with the consulate's support, sought approval for his and his wife's departure to Turkey, the German Embassy refused to approve their release. Both of them remained incarcerated in Drancy until the spring of 1944.[130]

With the agreement by the Turkish government now to begin conducting repatriations, and the renewed extension of deadlines that went with it, the Turkish Jews in France had won one last reprieve. The Turkish Jews remained exempt from the raid on November 25, 1943, which targeted Jews from neutral countries and those allied with Germany.[131] However, the thousands of Jews of Turkish origin whose citizenship or whose applications to return were not recognized by Ankara now found themselves in acute danger because Turkey had officially taken away their protection. According to the agreement between the Foreign Office and the RSHA, they were to be arrested and deported starting in January 1944.

International Protests and Pressure on Turkey

In this precarious situation, a veritable wave of international appeals went out that winter, demanding that Turkey grant entry to Jews who currently, or had previously, had Turkish citizenship. It was initiated by Isaac Weissman, the representative of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) in Portugal. In December 1943, he alerted the offices of the WJC in New York and London, as well as the offices of the Jewish Agency, to the threatening situation of the Turkish Jews in France. Weissman himself was born in Turkey and had studied in Berlin. He had lived in France as an immigrant during the thirties before reaching Portugal as a refugee.[132]

In identically worded telegrams to these offices, he wrote that in France "approximately ten thousand Turkish Jews" were in extreme danger and were at risk of being deported because of Turkish laws "similar to those in Poland in 1938" that did not recognize their

[130] Correspondence relating to Menassé between February 1, 1943, and May 20, 1943, in the USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202. No proof of Menassé's release could be found. A letter from 1947 indicated that he survived the Shoah.

[131] This raid targeted Jews from all countries affected by the repatriation ultimatum except for Turkey. Two hundred seventy-five people were arrested; Klarsfeld, *Calendrier,* 916.

[132] Notes on Weissmann in AJA, H 295–6.

citizenship.[133] Weissman emphasized that the people in question were born in Turkey, and many were even Turkish war veterans. Because the French and German authorities had always viewed these people as Turkish citizens, this recognition had protected them up to that point. Weissman called for immediate action. Ankara was to be induced to recognize the Jews at least temporarily for humanitarian reasons to prevent their deportation.[134]

Within a very short time, Weissman's telegrams prompted several interventions at Turkish embassies and consulates in all corners of the world.[135] Haim Barlas, the representative of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul, wrote a memorandum asking the Turkish government to extend its protection to Jews who had previously had Turkish citizenship "to protect them from deportation, which is the equivalent of death."[136] U.S. Ambassador Steinhardt lodged a complaint with Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu. Stephen Wise, president of the WJC based in New York, intervened several times with the Turkish ambassador to the United States, Mehmet M. Ertegün. Chaim Weizmann, president of the Jewish Agency in London, and the representative of the WJC in Great Britain, Easterman, turned to the Turkish Embassy there. Sephardic communities in several Latin American states sent telegrams to Turkish agencies. The community in Uruguay was even able to persuade the Turkish ambassador there, Abdullah Aksim, to telegraph an appeal to the Foreign Ministry in Ankara. In February 1944, a delegation of Sephardic Jews in Washington approached Ambassador Mehmet Münir Ertegün and asked for protection for the Jews of Turkish origin living in France.[137]

Despite the many interventions, the Turkish government did not change its policy for the next few months. Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu

[133] Telegrams from Weissman, dated December 13, 1943, and the following days, and December 20, 1943; AJA, H 296–1. Weissman here refers to a law passed by the Polish government in 1938, according to which Polish citizens abroad who had had no connection to Poland for five years could have their citizenship revoked. At the end of October 1938, the Polish government annulled the passports of tens of thousands of Polish Jews living in Germany and Austria. The Germans deported 17,000 Jews who were now stateless and took them to the Polish border, where they were not allowed in. They camped under miserable conditions in the border area until the occupation of Poland ten months later.

[134] Telegram from Weissman to Barlas, dated December 20, 1943; AJA, H 296–1.

[135] Overview by Leon Kubowitzki, member of the Rescue Committee of the WJC, on the activities undertaken with regard to the Turkish Jews, dated February 25, 1944; AJA, H 296–2.

[136] Memorandum from Barlas, dated December 15, 1943; Barlas (1945), 306ff.

[137] AJA, H 333–5.

cynically assured U.S. Ambassador Steinhardt in January 1944 that he would make every effort to protect the Turkish Jews who could prove their Turkish citizenship and "afford them the same treatment as other Turkish citizens."[138] On April 12, 1944, Ertegün wrote to the WJC representative in Washington, James W. Wise, that Jews who "really fulfil all conditions regarding their citizenship" would now, "on application to Turkish Consular Offices," be granted visas to return to Turkey. Individuals whose Turkish citizenship would not be recognized or had been revoked would be forbidden from entering Turkey.[139]

The Year 1944

The persecution of Jews intensified in the beginning of 1944. After the "return" deadlines had expired, raids were conducted regionally throughout France, targeting Jews of almost all nationalities, including Jews from France. Only Turkish Jews continued to be exempted.

The non-Jewish French population was also subjected to increasing repression that turned into the unfettered terrorization of anyone who was even remotely suspected of collaborating with the resistance. At the end of December 1943, Aimé-Joseph Darnand, the leader of the French militia and a fanatic anti-communist and anti-Semite, took over command of the French police, giving the Germans additional support. The French militia, which numbered 30,000 to 40,000 members, served as auxiliary troops to the SS in the fight against the resistance and in the hunt for Jews. After January 1944, the militia was authorized to court-martial and execute resistance fighters, or people they believed to be resistance fighters. The militia was responsible for the capture of thousands of Jews during 1944.

In 1944, repression and terror also affected representatives of Turkish agencies. The Turkish journalist Hüsnü Savut was arrested in Vichy by the Gestapo and released only after diplomatic protests.[140] In March

[138] Telegram from Traver (U.S. Department of State), dated January 14, 1944, to Stephen Wise. This cleverly phrased refusal to protect Jews of formerly Turkish citizenship was initially interpreted by Ambassador Steinhardt and the U.S. Department of State as a "concession" by Turkey. Stephen Wise, the president of the World Jewish Congress, pointed out the true meaning (rejection) of the Turkish declarations in a letter dated July 27, 1944, and asked that Ambassador Steinhardt once again persuade Turkey to protect all Jews of Turkish descent; all letters in AJA, H 333–5.

[139] AJA, H 333–5.

[140] Telegram from Jenke, German Embassy in Ankara, dated March 31, 1944; PAAA, R 29783.

1944, German police officers or members of the French militia attacked the Turkish Consulate General, which had been moved from Marseilles to Grenoble. They forced their way into the consulate rooms, searched them, and threatened the consul with a machine pistol. Ostensibly, the purpose of the operation was to search for an escaped Jew by the name of Papo. But the search was not a one-time operation. As the Turkish Embassy's counselor in Vichy reported to his German colleague, Werner von Bargen, police guards were posted in front of the consulate to check visitors. For further intimidation, armed forces patrolled in front of the consulate.[141]

The Repatriation of Turkish Jews from February to May 1944

After the government in Ankara had agreed to repatriate Jews of "indisputable Turkish citizenship" in the fall of 1943, several hundred Jews whose return the Ministry of the Interior had authorized were finally able to leave France. Between February and May, 414 Jews from France reached Turkey: 314 from the northern zone and 100 from the southern zone.[142] However, the international pressure on Turkey had produced little effect. The number 314 (those from the northern zone) was approximately equal to the number of Jews whose papers, according to von Papen's message in October 1943, had been checked by Ankara. This means that Turkey repatriated less than 10 percent of the 3,900 Turkish Jews from the northern zone whose repatriation the German authorities had requested.

The return trip was conducted in eight groups of roughly fifty people. Each group was given a collective visa by the Foreign Office in Berlin and the appropriate transit visas for countries along the route (see Figure 8.6).[143] Each group was named after a person who acted as the "head of the train" during the return trip.

The first group to leave Paris on February 2, 1944, for Turkey was the Gattegno group. Albert Gattegno and his wife Lilly were arrested twice

[141] Telegram from Bargen, dated April 7, 1944; PAAA, R 29783. The incident was also a subject of discussion in Ankara. Von Papen demanded an explanation and possibly an apology to the Turkish authorities; in his response, Bargen said that the French militia had been responsible for the attack. This is entirely possible, but it makes no difference to either the threatening situation for the Turks or Germany's responsibility. I was unfortunately unable to find out any further details about the incident or who the consul in question was.

[142] Documents regarding the returning groups of people can be found in the files of the Foreign Office; PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5704 and R 100856, fiche 2202. A total of eight groups of 414 Jewish people overall who were repatriated (as well as thirteen Christians or Muslims) is mentioned in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 210.

[143] Various letters regarding visas in PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5704.

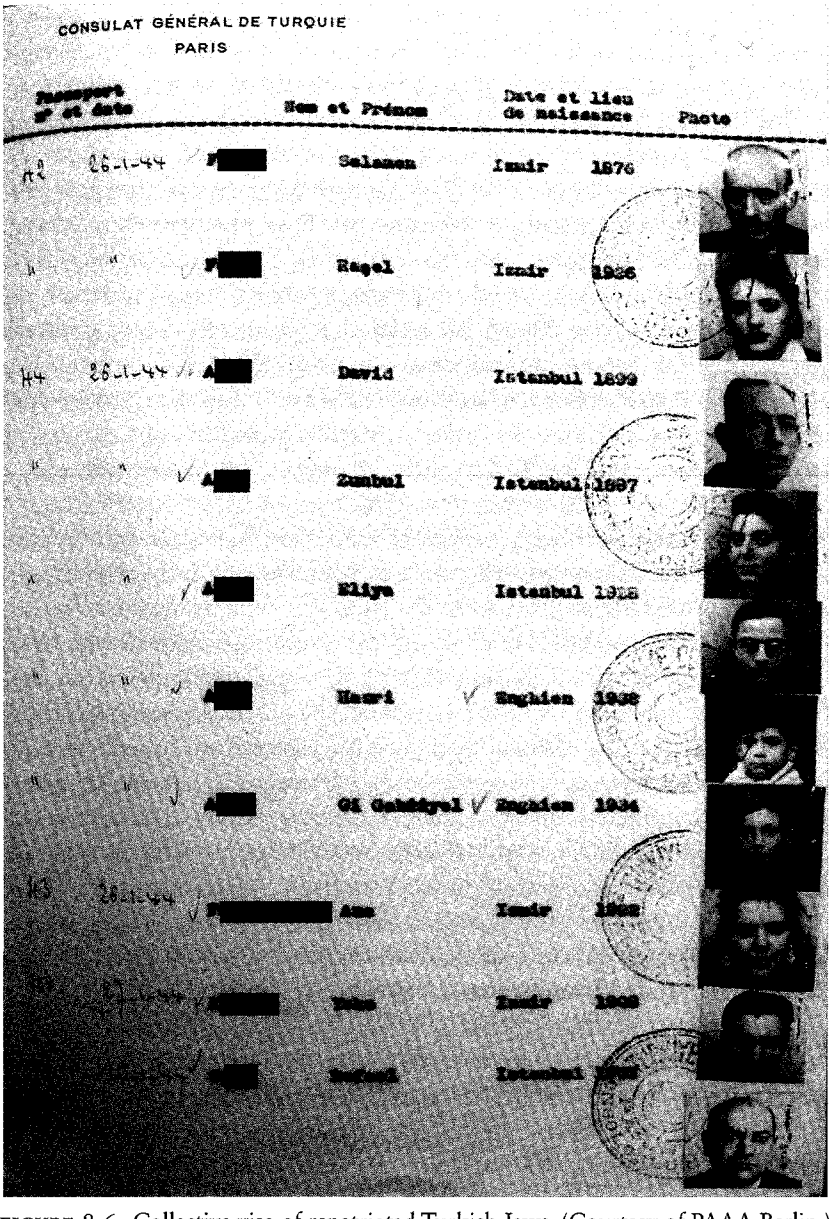


FIGURE 8.6. Collective visa of repatriated Turkish Jews. (Courtesy of PAAA Berlin.)

in 1942 and were released both times after interventions by the Turkish consul. The head of the train of the second group was Chaim Gabay. The Nessim Arditti group followed in March.

As had been the case for the returnees in 1943, the UGIF financed the return of people who were not in a position to do so

themselves.[144] Several Turkish Jews who were arrested in 1943, and for whose release the Turkish Embassy and consulates had intervened, were now released from the Drancy camp to join in the "return home."

The Turkish government still tried to keep the number of returnees as small as possible; this is evident from a confidential letter from the Turkish Consulate General in Paris, dated January 26, 1944, to the Turkish Consulate General in Marseilles.[145] First, the consul noted that one year earlier the government in Ankara had ordered that no group repatriations were to be conducted, and for that reason most of the Turkish Jews had been denied permission to return to Turkey, while the Jews from other neutral countries and countries allied with Germany had already left France. Now the government was issuing instructions stating that Jews of indisputable Turkish citizenship could be issued visas to return to Turkey. But the Turkish Jews should not all return at the same time. Ankara had given permission to issue visas based on the assumption that the total number of returnees would not be especially high. For this reason, the consul general wrote to his colleague in Marseilles, the repatriation of Turkish Jews from the southern zone was still to be conducted on an individual basis. The only Jews to be repatriated were those who were obligated to perform their military service, who were relatives of returnees from the northern zone wanting to be repatriated with their families, and third, the return of people whose return was beneficial to the country could be granted. Fourth, Turkish Jews who had been arrested in the southern zone and taken to concentration camps would be released by the German authorities only on condition that they return to Turkey, and for this reason, their repatriation was also to be guaranteed.

Although by now it was widely known that for most Jews deportation meant death, Turkey systematically refused to allow people whose papers had expired to return and was even willing to tolerate the arrest of Turkish Jews by the German or French authorities, because they still "could be repatriated from detention." In January 1944, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs once again gave explicit instructions to the diplomatic representatives in France not to issue Turkish entry visas even to the children of Jews who were not properly registered.[146]

[144] USHMM, RG 43.005 M, film roll 23.

[145] English translation in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 153ff.

[146] Letter from the Turkish ambassador in Vichy, dated February 3, 1944. The instructions from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs were dated January 19, 1944; USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

Avram Şalom Yeruşalmy, who was born in Istanbul in 1923, was issued a passport by the consulate in Grenoble that would expire in November 1943 and which he was to travel to Turkey with to perform his military service. But Yeruşalmy did not want to leave his widowed mother and his sister behind. After the deadline for his return had expired, the Turkish Consulate confiscated his passport and even his birth certificate. After his mother and sister had been arrested, Yeruşalmy appealed repeatedly to the Turkish authorities to intervene for the release of his family and asked for consular protection for himself. The consulate replied tersely, "The Turkish consulates regard you as a deserter." He was also told that his mother was not properly registered, and that for this reason the consulate refused to take any action. The consulate merely intervened a few times in July 1944 for the release of his sister.[147]

The departure deadline for Turkish Jews that had been set in November 1943 for January 31, 1944, was quietly extended several times by the Germans until the end of May. In mid-May, Consul General Özdoğancı informed his embassy in Vichy that the return transports had come to a standstill because the arrival in Istanbul of the train from March 29 had been delayed. He was waiting to arrange further return transports until he had confirmation of the train's arrival. In the meantime, he had applied to the German Consulate for permission to dispatch more trains on May 23 and 24. Enough Turkish Jews and other Turkish citizens had applied for repatriation to warrant sending another two cars to Turkey. Karl Klingenfuß from the German Embassy had already informed him that this was the absolute last deadline. After May 25, Turkish Jews would be arrested and demands by the Turkish authorities for release would be refused. Özdoğancı wrote that he had informed the Turkish citizens about this situation by posting a notice in the consulate.[148]

However, only one last repatriation convoy took place, on May 23, 1944. The Turkish Consulate canceled the train scheduled for May 25, because many of the people from the southern zone who were supposed to be on this convoy did not show up, and several Jews whose release had

[147] Avram Yeruşalmy files, USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202. The interventions of the Turkish authorities to release Yeruşalmy's sister Refca Yeruşalmy came too late and were explicitly rejected. Yeruşalmy's sister and mother had already been deported in March 1944.

[148] Letter from Consul General Özdoğanci, dated May 17, 1944, to the Turkish Embassy in Vichy; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 204ff; and a letter from the German Embassy (Klingenfuß), dated May 11, 1944, to the Turkish Consulate General; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 202.

been demanded for repatriation had not been released from Drancy by the Germans.[149]

On May 31, 1944, the consul generals Özdoğancı in Paris and Mehmet Fuat Carım in Marseilles informed the embassy in Vichy in two parallel letters about the numbers of Turkish Jews who had been repatriated so far and those who were registered with them and still remaining in France. According to these estimates, 628 Turkish Jews were still registered in the area of responsibility of the Consulate General in Paris at the beginning of the year. Of that number, 314 had been repatriated. Of those remaining, thirteen were Karaites, but because the Germans did not categorize them as Jews, they had apparently asked to be removed from the consulate's list.[150] Three families had not been repatriated yet due to illness but could now make up a new convoy. Of the remaining approximately 290 people, many had not reported for repatriation despite the consulate repeatedly providing information about the measures announced by the Germans. The consul suspected that many of these people were still in the southern zone or had gone into hiding.

According to the Marseilles Consul Carım's report, 896 Turkish Jews were registered in the Consulate General of Marseilles's area of responsibility; 374 of them had been issued passports. For seventy-four, the passports were issued only so that they could perform their military service in Turkey. Carım suspected that roughly 700 Jews from within the consulate's district were still in France.[151]

Persecution of Turkish Jews up to May 1944

Jews who had not been registered by the Turkish Consulate for repatriation were completely without protection after the beginning of 1944. In December 1943, the Foreign Office in Berlin issued instructions to reject all objections from foreign consulates and embassies against arresting Jews in the northern zone and to direct consulates to the Foreign Office in Berlin. When Jews from neutral countries or countries allied with Germany were arrested, their identification papers were to be confiscated. In the case of interventions on behalf of arrestees, these were to be

[149] Letter from Özdoğanci, dated May 31, 1944; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 208ff.

[150] The question of whether Karaites should be viewed as Jews and therefore murdered was intensely discussed among Nazi racial researchers and orientalists up until March 1945. Examples of assessments are found in BAL, Reichssippenamt R39/152. For more on the treatment of the Karaites, see Amipaz-Silber, *Sephardi Jews*, 276 and 289, nn. 41 and 42.

[151] Separate letters from the consulates general in Paris and Marseilles (relocated to Grenoble in 1943), dated May 31, 1944, to the Turkish Embassy in Vichy; English translation in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 207–209.

forwarded to the appropriate consulate to determine whether they qualified for reaptriation. Jews from these countries could be released only on the condition that they leave France within two weeks.[152]

Turkish Jews were still exempt in the raids on January 22 and February 4, 1944.[153] However, the Gestapo knew that the protection of thousands of Jews had been withdrawn by the Turkish authorities. Furthermore, the SS and Gestapo no longer troubled themselves particularly with the agreements reached in Berlin and also ignored the interventions by local Turkish diplomats. On January 17, 1944, the Turkish consul general in Paris, Fikret Şefik Özdoğancı, wrote a letter to Röthke, the head of the Office of Jewish Affairs at the Gestapo (Judenreferat), demanding the release of twenty-six Turkish Jews and their families, altogether thirty-nine people.[154] Thirteen of the people named had been held captive since the middle of 1943, and the consulate had already demanded their release. The others had been arrested at the end of 1943 during raids in France's southern zone. As a result of the letter, several of the Turkish Jews listed by the consul were released from Drancy so they could be repatriated in February. However, many people whose release the Turkish authorities had demanded were still deported. The first deportation train to leave in 1944 took 120 Jews of Turkish origin, more than 30 of them children, to Auschwitz on January 20, 1944, three days after the letter from the Turkish Consul in Paris. Among those deported were the Şerez family from Istanbul, with their daughters Nelly and Denize, who was just four years old, Leon Yuda Farhi from Erdirne with his wife Reyna and daughter Arlette, and the couple Isaac and Fortune Halfon, with their six-year-old son Moris. All of them had been arrested at the end of 1943 during the raids in southwestern France, and the Consulate General in Paris had demanded their release on December 30, 1943. Eli Eskenazi as well as Davud Şalom and his family were also among the deportees on January 20, 1944. They had been arrested during Brunner's raid in Nice. All of these people were on the Turkish consul's list of January 17, 1944.

[152] Telegrams from von Thadden to Eichmann and from Wagner to the German Embassy in Paris, dated December 11, 1943; PAAA, R 100856, fiche 2002.

[153] On January 22, 1944, a raid took place in Paris targeting Jews of all nationalities with the exception of Poles and Turks; Klarsfeld, *Calendrier*, 943. In the night of February 3 to February 4, a large-scale raid was conducted by the French police in Paris and its suburbs. The orders of the police prefecture in Paris included detailed instructions regarding the groups of people to be arrested: Turkish citizens were to be exempted; CDJC, XXXVI–231. However, according to information given to me by Serge Klarsfeld, Turkish Jews were also arrested in this raid.

[154] Quoted in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 129ff.

From January to the end of May 1944, simultaneous with the repatriations, 700 Turkish Jewish men, women, and children were deported to the extermination camps.[155] One hundred fifty-six of them were deported on transport no. 74 on May 20 alone. Because nationality was not noted on the deportation lists after the summer of 1943, we do not know how many of the people listed were Turkish citizens, and how many had been naturalized in France or were stateless.

The commander of the Security Police and the Security Service (BDS) in France, Helmut Knochen, issued a decree dated April 14, 1944, "to increase the number of arrests of Jews." He ordered the arrest of all Jews, regardless of nationality. This was to include Jews from labor camps, care homes, and sanatoriums and Jews protected until then by their marriage to non-Jewish spouses, who were all to be taken to Drancy for deportation. According to Knochen's order, Turkish Jews and other Jews with "foreign citizenship" were not to be deported to Auschwitz, but were to be arrested and taken to Drancy, from where they "would be allowed to return to their own countries."[156] But in practice, it was Brunner who arranged the deportations, and he did not comply with this order.

After multiple demarches by the Turkish consul in Paris, twenty-two more Turkish Jews were released from the Drancy camp on May 17, 1944. Consul General Özdoğancı informed the ambassador in Vichy that only nine of the people in question were "recognized" Turkish citizens and that the Turkish authorities had not requested the release of the other thirteen people.[157] As to the whereabouts of the other people, whose release the Turkish Consulate had repeatedly demanded, the German authorities either provided no information or they feigned ignorance. In reality, most of them had already been deported in January and February. The German Consulate was also similarly "uninformed" regarding the looting of homes and businesses that had belonged to repatriated Turkish Jews. To protests by the Turkish authorities, the German consulate responded that it knew nothing of the matter, or that the thefts constituted a "confiscation" and had been carried out by "unknown agencies."[158] Some of the

[155] Transport no. 73, on May 15, 1944, went to Kaunas and Tallinn; all others traveled to Auschwitz.

[156] Order from Brunner and Knochen, dated April 14, 1944, in Klarsfeld (1978 b), doc. 136, 224.

[157] Letter from Consul General Özdoğanci, dated May 31, 1944; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 208f.

[158] Valuables worth 750,000 francs were stolen from Bohor Levi's residence by five people, two of them Germans in uniform. Numerous other examples in PAAA, German Embassy in Paris, 2387.

Turkish Jews who returned to Turkey by train were also robbed of their personal possessions during the journey.[159]

The Last Months of the Occupation from June to August 1944

During the two and a half months between the landing of the Allies on June 6 and the liberation of Paris on August 25, it was the goal of the Germans by all means necessary to send as many Jews as possible to their deaths. The last deportation train left France on August 17, 1944, only one week before the Germans left Paris. Under Brunner's direction, 16,000 Jews were deported from France during the seven and a half months of German occupation in 1944 alone.

Turkey was under rapidly growing pressure from the Allies to enter the war. Jewish relief organizations and American and British diplomats pushed Ankara to revise its restrictive policies regarding Jewish refugees. As mentioned earlier, Turkey had indeed facilitated the transit for Jews on the way to Palestine in the early summer of 1944. The Turkish government was also evidently beginning to rethink its position and increase its engagement with regard to the Turkish Jews in Europe.

At the beginning of June, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the Germans for permission to repatriate another 100 Jews of "indisputable Turkish citizenship."[160] Three weeks later, the secretary of the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, Koç, raised the number of people to be repatriated from France to 250. The Foreign Office inquired whether these were "Jews from the northern zone or from the southern zone," but it simultaneously issued orders to halt the deportation of the people in question "to the eastern territories until final clarification of the matter." Von Thadden emphasized in two letters to the RSHA that, in the current foreign policy situation, "resentment between Germany and Turkey due to one hundred Jews from France [should be] avoided" and called on the RSHA not to deport the Turkish Jews (yet) until a final agreement on this issue had been reached. Instead, they were to be held ready in internment camps within the German Reich for a "potentially necessary transport home."[161] He had not made the Turks "any real promises,"

[159] Arlette Bules took part in a repatriation convoy as a child. She relates that the families were supposed to load their possessions into a special car. During the journey, the car was uncoupled. Interview with A. Bules, March 2004, in Paris.

[160] Telegram from von Papen, dated June 3, 1944, to the German Foreign Office; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2228.

[161] Telegram from Wagner, dated June 5, 1944, to the German Embassy in Paris, and letters from von Thadden to the RSHA (Eichmann), dated June 6, 1944, and June 14, 1944; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2228.

he continued, but depending on how the political situation developed, it would "probably be inevitable to move the Turkish Jews [... from] the holding camps in the Reich to Turkey in a collective transport." In his answer, Eichmann's deputy, Günther (from the RSHA), characterized the Turkish attempt as part of a rescue operation resulting from "Anglo-American pressure," which had to be countered by all means. Nevertheless, he wrote that he had given orders to continue to forgo the deportation of Turkish Jews "to the East."[162] Contrary to this promise, which was also made in similar form by Abetz, there is no indication that deportations of Turkish Jews from France to Auschwitz were halted after June 1944, or that the Jews were taken to camps within the Reich – for example, to Bergen-Belsen, where Turkish Jews from other German-occupied states were transferred in 1944.[163] Another 180 Turkish Jews, among them many children, were deported to Auschwitz on train no. 76 on June 30, 1944, and no. 77 on July 31, 1944. (see Figure 8.7)

In June 1944, Turkish authorities took the fate of the arrested Jews, who despite intervention had not been released to a higher level for the first time. At least from the beginning of February 1944, the Turkish Consulate General in Paris had known of "rumors" that Turkish Jews whose release it had demanded, had been deported.[164] It was not until four months later, on May 31, that Turkish Consul General Özdoğancı suggested to the embassy in Vichy that the Turkish Embassy in Berlin intervene to determine the whereabouts of these people in order to enable their return to France. He said he had not openly addressed this topic before "because of its sensitivity."[165] After another four weeks, the Turkish Embassy in Berlin finally demanded clarification from the German government regarding the fate of Leon Yuda Farhi and his

[162] Letter from Günther, RSHA, dated June 14, 1944 to von Thadden. He called the attention of the Foreign Office to an intercepted report regarding pressure on Turkey from Great Britain and the United States; PAAA, R 100867, fiche 2228.

[163] In May and July 1944, four groups of Jewish women from France (wives of prisoners of war) were deported to Bergen-Belsen. There is no indication that Turkish Jews were among them. Berlin appears to have assumed, however, that Turkish Jews from France were interned in Bergen-Belsen. In a macabre twist, the names of thirty-nine Turkish Jews, almost all of whom had been deported from France to Auschwitz despite Turkish intervention, on a list compiled in the spring of 1945 of "Turkish citizens from Bergen-Belsen willing to return home" as possible participants in the exchange of interned civilians between Turkey and Germany; PAAA, R 41676.

[164] Letter from the Turkish Consulate General in Paris to Röthke, dated February 3, 1944; English translation in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 239.

[165] Letter from Consul General Özdoğanci, dated May 31, 1944, to the Turkish Embassy in Vichy; English translation in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 208ff, here 210. The letter refers to the Jews who had been deported at the beginning of 1944.

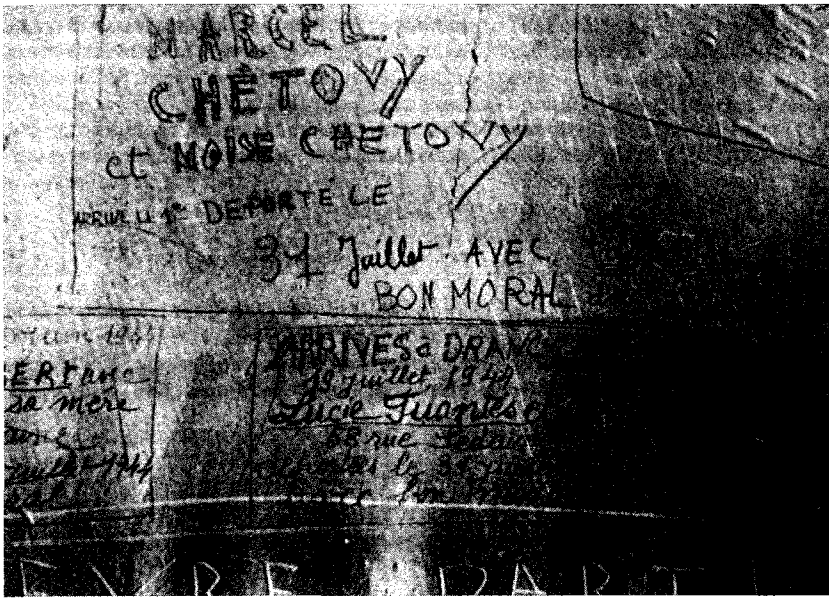


FIGURE 8.7. Inscriptions by Marcel Chétovy and Lucie Fuentes, both of Turkish Jewish origin, scratched in a wall at Drancy before their deportation on July 31, 1944. (Courtesy of Serge Klarsfeld.)

family.[166] As mentioned, Farhi had been deported to Auschwitz with his wife and daughter on January 20, 1944, although the Turkish Consulate had demanded the family's release. The reason for Turkey intervening this once on behalf of deported Turkish Jews on a high political level was probably that Farhi's father, an influential businessman in Istanbul, had urgently asked the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to become active on his behalf.[167] Also, the Turkish Embassy's inquiry exclusively concerned the fate of Leon Yuda Farhi and his family alone, although by this time, the Turkish diplomats in Paris knew, or at least suspected, that roughly thirty Jews had been deported despite their demarches. When no answer had been received from the German authorities after a month had passed, the Turkish Embassy renewed its inquiry to the German Foreign Office on July 26.[168] A week later, Turkey broke off its relations with Germany. Switzerland took over as protecting power, representing

[166] PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5705.

[167] Letter from Salomon C. Farhi, dated February 26, 1944; English translation in Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 241.

[168] Letter from the Turkish Embassy, dated July 26, 1944; PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5705.

Turkish interests vis-à-vis the German Reich. On September 6, 1944, the consul general handed the Swiss Consulate in Paris a list with the names of forty Turkish Jews and the request that the Swiss Consulate intervene for their repatriation to Turkey. Among these were the names of the thirty-one people mentioned earlier who had already been deported but regarding whom the German authorities had been providing false information for months.

Conclusion

During the twenty-nine months from March 1942 to August 1944, 2,080 Jewish men, women, and children of Turkish origin were deported from France to extermination camps. This number included Jews who had been born in the territory of the Republic of Turkey and their children as well as Jews who were designated as Turkish citizens on deportation lists, even if their birth place was located outside the borders of the Republic of Turkey. The actual total number of Jews of Turkish origin deported from France is presumably much higher, because information on birthplace is missing in many entries, and I only included children in my count where family relationships could be ascertained.[169]

In the case of 1,338 of the people deported – more than 75 percent – the information on citizenship is missing from the deportation lists, because that information was no longer noted after the summer of 1943. Of the 753 people whose citizenship is noted, 357 are given as "Turkish," 167 as "French," 103 as "unascertained," and only 5 as "stateless." Of the people born in Turkey, 109 held the citizenship of a country other than Turkey or France.

According to statistics on the Jews deported via Drancy that were compiled by Georges Etlin, a detainee in Drancy who worked as a clerk for the camp administration, 949 "recognized" (*reconnu*) and 333 "not recognized" (*non reconnu*) Turkish Jews were deported, altogether 1,282.[170] Even if we assume that many of the Jews of Turkish origin deported from France possessed French citizenship or the citizenship of another country, a considerable discrepancy still exists between the total number given by Etlin and the number that I determined on the basis of

[169] In the lists, family relations can only be determined between people with unusual surnames, while they are unclear for common surnames such as Behar, Levy, and Cohen.

[170] These statistics were published a number of times by Klarsfeld. Klarsfeld and Rother point out significant inaccuracies in Etlin's statistics; Klarsfeld, *Calendrier,* 1127; and written information by Bernd Rother to the author.

the deportation lists. It is unclear what Etlin's distiction between "recognized" and "not recognized" refers to. Many of the Turkish Jews are designated as Turks on police arrest lists or in Drancy, but they were not recognized as Turkish citizens by the Turkish authorities. During the entire period of German occupation, Turkish authorities are documented as having intervened on behalf of only 112 arrested Turkish Jews, 40 of whom were deported despite Turkey's demarches.[171] The Turkish authorities did not intervene for the other 1,170 Turkish Jews deported from France (if we take Etlin's numbers as a basis) – in other words, 90 percent, even though, according to Etlin, more than 900 of them were "recognized" Turks. In response to inquiries from the German and French authorities, the Turkish Consulate expressly answered multiple times that it did not recognize the people listed as Turkish citizens. The Turkish authorities also frequently demonstrated their lack of interest by failing to react at all to such inquiries.

The Turkish Jews who were arrested and deported were, however, certainly not people who had emigrated "generations ago," as Turkish publications like to claim. More than 1,700 of the people deported were born in the territory that constituted the Republic of Turkey after 1923. Two thirds (1,240 people) were younger than fifty years old at the beginning of World War II, and 502 of the deported Turkish Jews had been born in Turkey in 1905 or later and were consequently fifteen years old or younger at the beginning of the "War of Liberation." This fact is noted here because in most cases, the reason given for the stripping of citizenship was "failure to participate in the 'War of Liberation.'"

Not included are any of the Jews of Turkish descent who were deported for forced labor in Germany or other locations, were locked up in concentration camps as political prisoners or who served as volunteers in the French army and became German prisoners of war.

The number of Turkish Jewish victims must also be supplemented by the number of those who died from the inhumane conditions of imprisonment in the camps in France (at least twenty-four people) and those who were executed as hostages, tortured or beaten to death, or murdered after being arrested (at least ten people). The names and birth places of most of the execution victims of the Gestapo, the SS, and the French militia are missing. Consequently, the actual number is probably much higher.

[171] Evaluation of the demarches documented in the files preserved in the PAAA and by Shaw; USHMM, Acc. 1995.A.1202.

Approximately 550 Turkish Jews were repatriated from France to Turkey.[172]

A few Jews of Turkish descent survived the Holocaust because they had passports from Latin American countries. When the camp in Vittel was liberated, there were twenty-one people there who were born in Turkey and had Latin American passports.[173]

The committed engagement of Turkish diplomats in France saved the lives of roughly eighty Turkish Jews who were released from detention because of their frequent, tenacious interventions and thus escaped deportation.

Turkish diplomats were presumably under pressure from three sides: from their government, which wanted to prevent the return of Jews to Turkey; from the Nazi authorities and their persecution; and from the Turkish Jews and their calls for help. As long as the Archives of the Turkish Foreign Ministry remain closed to research, the contradictions between the actions of the local diplomats and the instructions from the government in Ankara can only be surmised from a few examples. The suggestion of the Turkish consul in Marseilles at the end of 1942 to organize the repatriation of Turkish Jews was rejected by his superiors. As late as in 1944, the consulate received instructions to register Jews residing in the southern zone for repatriation only in individual cases. The threat from the Germans that Turkish Jews would be arrested and deported after the end of May 1944 and that objections would no longer be accepted was announced by the consulate in Paris to the people under its protection only with a notice posted in the consulate. At the same time, it must be emphasized that, despite pressure from the Germans, the Turkish consul in Paris refused until September 1943 to declare that it was "not interested" in the Jews not recognized by Ankara.

The bureaucracy of the Turkish authorities also proved to be a dangerous obstacle for the persecuted Turkish Jews. The Turkish authorities frequently only reacted with considerable delay to the cries for help of Jews who were incarcerated or threatened with deportation. Before intervening, the diplomatic offices first checked the citizenship of the person being persecuted, which took weeks, even months. For some, intervention came too late. Also, Turkey revoked the citizenship of 2,000

[172] Telegram from the Chief Rabbinate of Istanbul to the WJC in New York, dated March 15, 1945; AJA, H 332–19. This more or less corresponds to the number of known cases of repatriation described here.

[173] AJA, D 49–15, Jewish holders of Latin American passports, 1943–45.

to 3,000 Jews in France during the occupation years, often on fabricated grounds.[174]

Most of the Turkish Jews in France who survived the Shoah did so under the most difficult of circumstances without the help of the Turkish authorities. They lived under false names, stayed in attics or secret rooms, or hid in the countryside, in monasteries, or in the woods. Many were supported by the resistance or received the help of committed Christians. Often this was in exchange for money, however, and they were always in danger of being discovered or betrayed. Thousands of children were sheltered by the brave activists of the Children's Aid Society OSE (Œuvre de secours aux Enfants) and the Jewish Scouts (Eclaireurs israélites de France, EIF) in Christian families, in centers, and in church facilities.

"Like an Animal in the Woods."

The Account of a Jewish Woman of Turkish Origin from Grenoble[175]

We were not registered as Jews at first. My father simply did not go to get registered at the [police] department, although they knew that he was a Jew. At first there were no consequences. Later we were denounced.

The German occupation occurred in 1943. We were completely depressed. My father took me out of the *lycée* (secondary school) for girls, because it had become too dangerous in Grenoble. There were too many raids, too many friends arrested. Every evening my father arranged a place for me to stay with Catholic friends. But he could not find room for all of us, so he and my mother stayed at home.

My father had an acquaintance who was a police commissioner. This commissioner warned him one day that a large-scale raid was going to take place that evening in Grenoble. He suggested to my father that he come to his house that night, and in fact all three of us, my father, my mother, and I, spent the night in the apartment of the police officer.

[174] In 1944 alone, at least fifty-three Jewish women had their citizenship revoked by Turkish authorities for "non-participation in the 'War of Liberation'"; BCA Decisions No. 3/1849, No. 3/723, and No. 3/558, Fon 30..18.1.2.

[175] Interview with Eliane U., née Chiprout, on January 19, 2004, in Grenoble.

> Then we left Grenoble. Together with a childhood friend of my father's, Mr. M., who was also a Jew from Turkey, who lived in Lyon and was quite wealthy, we all went to Vercors. My father's friend rented hotel rooms for both families for three months. We were only able to stay there for ten days. Vercors had been a base for the *maquisards* [guerilla resistance fighters], but shortly after we arrived, it was occupied by the Germans. And after the Germans had captured the town, they shot down anyone they liked.
>
> We could not stay in the hotel. At eighteen, I was suddenly responsible for the whole family, because I was the only one who could do anything. It was far too dangerous for my father to show himself outside, as a man. So I found a place for my mother and Madame M. in a children's home, for money, lots of money.
>
> My father hid in the woods. He slept like a wild animal under the trees and wandered around in the woods.

We do not know how many of the more than 2,000 Jews of Turkish origin who were deported from France survived the death camps. Of the total of almost 76,000 Jews deported from France, only roughly 3 percent, 2,564, survived.[176] Those who returned were first provided for at the Hotel Lutetia in Paris, which the German secret service (Abwehr) had used as their headquarters during the occupation of France. One of the Turkish Jewish women who returned from Auschwitz and was housed in the Hotel Lutetia was Rebecca (Rifca) Soulam, who had been deported on June 30, 1944, with the next-to-last transport, train no. 76. When she returned, she was in such poor shape that her own son scarcely recognized her.[177] Another survivor was Esther Arditti. She had been deported to Auschwitz with her husband Albert and her daughters Rachel and Regina, all born in Turkey. Esther was the only one who came back. For years, she tried in vain to find her family members and eventually committed suicide.[178] Some of the Turkish Jews deported from France were taken to perform slave labor in other camps, or they ended up in concentration camps in Germany with the evacuation transports in 1945. We find their

[176] Klarsfeld, *Calendrier,* 1125.
[177] Interview with Madame Z. on November 4, 2004, in Paris.
[178] Amipaz-Silber, *Sephardi Jews,* 393.

names on the prisoner lists of Dachau, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, and other concentration camps.

In contrast to the self-portrayal and the legends Turkey has created about its ostensibly heroic commitment to save the Jews, the commitment of many Turkish Jews in the resistance against Nazi barbarism has so far been very little studied and remains to a great extent unknown.

Turkish Jews in the Resistance[179]

As in other countries all over Nazi-occupied Europe, Jews played an eminent role in the resistance in France. The majority of these activists came from leftist and Zionist Ashkenazi backgrounds. However, numerous Sephardic Jews were also members in Jewish resistance groups, such as the Jewish Army (Armée Juive), the Jewish Combat Organization (Organisation juive de combat, OJC), or the Jewish Scouts, EIF. As representatives of the many whose stories are still waiting to be researched and written, I will mention the following people.

David Catarivas was a member of the EIF in Paris. Starting in 1941, he organized summer camps for children whose parents had been arrested. As a Turkish Jew, he was not required to wear a yellow badge and was therefore entrusted with special missions, such as placing children in the care of farmers or in monasteries. He also forged papers and distributed leaflets.

Israel (Izy) Mitrani was active in the Zionist underground in Paris. His family lived in the 11th arrondissement. After the occupation of France, he turned to the Turkish consulate for protection. However, his family – his mother, brother, and two married sisters – were classified as *indeterminé* (unascertained). In 1944, Izy Mitrani joined the resistance movement and participated in the liberation of Paris.

Suzanne Catarivas, born in 1925, was the daughter of a Turkish Jewish immigrant. She was a member of the EIF in Lyon. Among other tasks, she escorted Jews to hiding places, sent food packages to prisoners and people who were ill, and forged various types of

[179] Information from Amipaz-Silber, *Sephardi Jews;* Annette Wieviorka, *Ils étaient juifs, résistants, communistes* (Paris: Denoël, 1986); and Organisation juive de combat, *Résistance / sauvetage: France 1940–1945* (Paris: Autrement, 2002).

identification papers. In 1944, she was responsible for fifty children between the ages of five and twelve who were hidden in a castle near Grenoble.

Corinne Diamant, born in 1917 in Bursa, fought from 1940 to 1944 in Lyon, Grenoble, and neighboring areas in the OJC. One of her code names was "Neige" (Snow). In May 1944, she escorted a group of thirty children from Limoges to Annemasse. This group was taken over by Marianne Cohn, who was to take the children to the Swiss border. Marianne Cohn was arrested and brutally murdered, but she succeeded in saving the children.

Habif Léon, born in Turkey in 1909, was the instructor of an OJC group in Lyon starting in the spring of 1943. He instructed young Jewish communists in weapons handling.

Salvator Hassid also survived in Marseilles thanks to his Turkish citizenship. In December 1942, he was arrested in a café along with five friends and taken to the Gestapo. Salvator had valid Turkish papers and was released the next day. He never saw his friends again. Salvator joined the resistance organization French Forces of the Interior (Forces Françaises de l'Interieur) and was involved in bomb attacks on railroad tracks and bridges used by the Germans.

Régine Gattegno, born in 1923 in Lyon, was the child of Turkish Jewish immigrants. From 1942 on, she participated in the resistance through the EIF. She, too, was responsible for accompanying Jewish children to hiding places, taking forged papers to Jews in hiding, or warning them about imminent raids. In February 1943, on the day of the major raid in Lyon organized by Klaus Barbie, she was arrested. On March 25, 1943, she was deported to Sobibor, where she was murdered.

Benjamin Farhi (Beno) was born in 1919 in Kırklareli, in the European part of Turkey. From 1942 to 1944, he was a member of the resistance in Marseilles, Moissac, and Carmaux. Through his contact to a city hall employee, he obtained forged identification papers and food ration cards. When he was drafted for forced labor in the Compulsory Work Service (Service du travail obligatoire), he used his position to disable the cannons aimed at Marseilles from the opposite side of the harbor. Beno led the attack on the German military post in Merlan.

It is not the numbers alone that make France the place of the greatest Turkish Jewish loss. France, especially Paris, had also developed into a new center of Sephardic culture in the period between the world wars, and this center was destroyed. After the war, the journal *Les cahiers séfardis* published the names of the Sephardic Jews who had been deported from Paris in several successive issues. The attitude of Turkey toward its Jewish citizens in France was described there as follows:

> In these lists of Sephardic victims, which we have the painful task of publishing, the following can be seen: ... about one-third of the Sephardic people deported who were captured in France were born in Istanbul, in Edirne, in Bursa, in Mersin, in Adana, in Ankara, in Manisa, in Çorlu, in Adapazar, in Çanakkale, at the Dardanelles, and in a number of other places ... in Turkey. They grew up there and settled in France, retaining their language, their habits and customs, the traditions and everything that constitutes the cult of the fatherland. These poor people failed to comply with a few regulations of the registry offices without, however, ceasing to say with a certain pride, "I am a Turk!"
>
> The war swept over them. They tried to place themselves under the protection of their country of origin. The Turkish consulates kept their distance, referring to the official instructions of their superiors. They rejected the people seeking help who shed their tears in the consulate offices.
>
> Petitions, requests, and delegations were sent to Ankara and Istanbul. Nothing came of these. All steps were in vain. The Turkish government remained unrelenting toward all the petitions, all the requests, and all the offers to pay even the highest fines.[180]

[180] "L'attitude des Turcs," *Les cahiers séfardis* Nos. 7/8/9 (1947): 277.

9

Belgium and the Netherlands

Significant Portuguese Sephardic communities had existed in the port cities of Amsterdam and Antwerp since the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, compared to France, the number of Turkish Jews in Belgium and the Netherlands was rather small.

Belgium

Among the first Ottoman Jews to settle in Belgium were the three Natan brothers, whose family ran a cotton manufacturing business in Bursa. In 1870, they started a textile business in Antwerp that soon opened branches in other Belgian cities. The majority of Jewish-Ottoman immigrants settled in Brussels, and in 1913, they were already sufficient in number to hold their own religious services. The carpet merchant Eli Benezra, originally from Salonika, played a central role in organizing the small community, just as carpet merchants and carpet menders in general were well represented in the Brussels community (see Figure 9.1).

Through the 1920s – especially after the founding of the Republic of Turkey – the number of Turkish-Jewish immigrants to Brussels continued to grow. In 1927, they founded the Sephardic Worship Society of Brussels (Société culturelle sépharadite de Bruxelles) as well as a welfare organization, the Sephardic Benevolent Society of Brussels (Société de bienfaisance de sépharades de Bruxelles). The community also functioned as a social organization and a first point of call for newcomers and people in need.[1]

[1] For a detailed description of the Turkish Sephardic community in Brussels, see Rivka Cohen, http://www.sefarad.org/publication/lm/011/rivca.html.



FIGURE 9.1. Prior to the German occupation: Esther Sephiha and her daughter Germaine repairing a carpet. (Courtesy of Haïm Vidal Sephiha.)

The congregation appointed its own rabbi, Maïer Passy from Istanbul, who had previously worked in Antwerp. The Turkish-Jewish community in Brussels comprised around 150–200 families, which points to a likely overall figure of about 600–800 people. In Antwerp, the most important center of the diamond trade in Europe, Turkish Jews were active not only in the carpet trade but in the diamond industry as well. The 50 to 100 Turkish-Jewish families living there did not establish their own congregation but frequented the Portuguese Sephardic synagogue in the Rue de Jardenier (Hovenierstraat).

Belgium during the Shoah

On May 10, 1940, German troops simultaneously invaded Belgium, France, and the Netherlands. Unconditional surrender followed on May 28. The Belgian government went into exile in London, while King

Leopold III remained in the country but withdrew from affairs of state. The German occupiers set up a military administration that extended to part of northern France and to which the Belgian (and French) authorities were subordinate. In Belgium, too, the persecution of the Jews was planned and organized in a collaboration that involved the military administration, the SS, and the Foreign Office representatives in Belgium, all consulting with each other.[2]

In its essential steps, the German measures to exclude and disenfranchise the Jews of Belgium paralleled those taken in France: on October 28, 1940, the Jews were ordered to register, they were driven out of public office and numerous professions, and those who had fled during the country's invasion were prohibited from returning. Starting in May 1941, Jewish businesses and property were "Aryanized" down to the confiscation of radio sets. At the end of August 1941, Jews were barred from moving anywhere except to big cities, and a nighttime curfew was imposed. In October 1941, they were prohibited from leaving the country, and in November, all Jews were ordered to join the mandatory Association of Jews in Belgium (Association des Juifs en Belgique, AJB), the Belgian version of the Judenrat, the "Jewish Council." It was directly subordinate to the "official in charge of Jewish affairs" (Judenreferent) of the Security Police (Sipo) and the Security Service (SD); its function was to involve the Jews themselves in the organization of the Shoah. In December 1941, Jewish children were barred from attending public schools, and finally, in May 1942, the yellow badge was introduced, and thousands of Jews were drafted into forced labor. Three months later, in August 1942, the first deportation train left Belgium for Auschwitz.

Foreign and Belgian Jews

One particularity of the situation in Belgium was that only about 5 percent of its Jews were Belgian citizens. The Jewish population of the Kingdom of Belgium had just begun to grow rapidly when immigrants from Eastern Europe began to arrive in the 1920s and 1930s. Because the naturalization policies were restrictive, most of these newcomers retained the citizenship of their country of origin. Starting in 1933, but particularly after 1938, several tens of thousands more Jewish refugees came

[2] The chief of Military Administration Eggert Reeder was an SS member anyway. The military administration ordered the measures to disenfranchise and dispossess the Jews in eighteen decrees from October 1940 to September 1942; the SS (Sipo/SD) organized the deportation of the Jews starting in the summer of 1942.

into the country from Germany and Austria. As a consequence, about 70,000 to 100,000 Jews were living in Belgium on the eve of the German occupation; 90 percent to 95 percent of them were immigrants or refugees. Belgium's policies regarding the refugees were extremely ambivalent: before the occupation in 1940, Jews were tolerated and not expelled, but starting in 1938, Jewish refugees no longer received residence permits, and after April 1939, they were denied entry. Anyone who entered the country regardless was considered an "illegal refugee." After the German invasion, 8,000 Jewish refugees (primarily Germans and Austrians) were deported to France as "enemy aliens"; an equal number of Jews fled there from the Germans of their own accord.

Only 42,000 Jews over the age of sixteen followed the German military administration's order to register; of these, 38,000 were not Belgian citizens. The huge discrepancy between these figures and the ones mentioned earlier cannot be attributed solely to expulsion or escape to France. A fairly large number of Jews did not register, among them many of the refugees who already had illegal status in the country. The Nazi authorities estimated the number of Jews living in Belgium (both legally and illegally) before the beginning of the deportations in 1942 at 50,000 to 60,000.[3]

The Attitude of the Belgian Authorities and Population

In Belgium, as in other countries, the German authorities took advantage of the local authorities' ambivalent attitude toward foreign Jews. Petitions from politicians and the royal family calling for the protection of Jews only applied to Jews with Belgian citizenship. So as not to endanger cooperation with the Belgian administration, the German occupiers initially reserved the most extreme persecution measures – deportation to forced labor and to concentration camps – to foreign Jews. As in the other occupied countries, the Jewish citizens of neutral countries and of countries allied with Germany were initially exempted from arrest and deportation. However, they were still subject to numerous anti-Jewish measures – the confiscation of radios and bicycles, the marking of their identity documents with the word "Jew," or the curfew. In order to maintain their registration as "non-wearers of the yellow badge," they had

[3] Fifty-six page "Special Report on Jewry in Belgium" by Ernst Ehlers, head of the Sipo-SD in Belgium, of January 1942. Serge Klarsfeld and Maxime Steinberg, ed., *Die Endlösung der Judenfrage in Belgien: Dokumente* (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1980), 10.

to report to the German military headquarters every three months, as Jacques Sephiha writes.[4]

In Belgium, in contrast to France, the German occupiers could not rely on the support of a collaboration government. However, some Belgian government agencies participated in the implementation of anti-Jewish measures on orders of the German authorities, while other agencies resisted.[5] The German occupation authorities repeatedly reported to their superiors in Berlin that anti-Semitism did not have much foothold in the Belgian population.[6] Yet in reactionary clerical and nationalist circles, a xenophobic anti-Semitism had already begun to spread in the thirties. In response, leftists and Catholics had formed various groups in opposition to anti-Semitism and in defense of Jews. These organizations were of little significance before the war, but following the German occupation, the resistance was able to build on the contacts and organizational structure that was already established.[7]

The Deportation of the Jews from Belgium

At the previously mentioned meeting of Judenreferenten (officials in charge of Jewish affairs) at the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) in Berlin in March 1942, the number of Jews to be deported from Belgium in 1942 was set at 10,000. A transit camp was established in the Dossin barracks in the small city of Mechlin (French: Malines), halfway between the urban centers of Brussels and Antwerp, where the victims were interned before deportation. The camp's function was similar to those at Drancy in France and Westerbork in the Netherlands.

On August 4, 1942, the deportation of Jews from Belgium to Auschwitz began. The few Jews with Belgian citizenship and those from neutral, allied, and enemy countries were initially spared. The Sipo-SD ordered the AJB to send out summons for deportation disguised as "labor

[4] Written account by Jacques Sephiha in André Goldberg et al., *Le Passage du Témoin: Portraits et témoignages de rescapés des camps de concentration et d'extermination nazis* (Brussels: La Lettre Volée and la Fondation Auschwitz, 1995), 142.

[5] In Antwerp, the city administration took on the task of distributing yellow badges and in August 1942 also made police forces available for raids to arrest Jews. The Brussels city administration absolutely refused to do either; Lieven Saerens, "Die Hilfe für Juden in Belgien," in *Solidarität und Hilfe für Juden während der NS-Zeit*, vol. 7, Regionalstudien 4, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Juliane Wetzel (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 218–223.

[6] Letter from von Bargen, the representative of the German Foreign Office in Belgium and Northern France, to Berlin, dated July 9, 1942; ADAP, series E, vol. III, doc. no. 74. See also "Special Report on Jewry in Belgium," dated January 31, 1942; Klarsfeld and Steinberg, *Endlösung der Judenfrage*, 10.

[7] Saerens, "Die Hilfe für Juden in Belgien," 197.

deployment orders." Over a period of three months, between August and October 1942, 17,000 Jews – two thirds of all the Jews deported from Belgium – were carried off in seventeen deportation trains to be murdered in Auschwitz or to be put to work in forced labor projects.

In September 1943, Jews with Belgian citizenship lost their protection as well. In simultaneous large-scale raids in Brussels and Antwerp, about 800 Belgian Jews were arrested and deported to Auschwitz on deportation train 22B. In the two years 1943 and 1944, until the liberation of Belgium in September 1944, the Germans deported another 8,000 Jews from Belgium to Auschwitz. Significantly fewer people were deported in 1943 and 1944 than in the initial three months in 1942, probably because thousands of Jews had gone underground. As early as the fall of 1942, rumors had been circulating that the objective of these transports was not "labor deployment" but mass murder. The underground press also reported on the genocide quite early. In June 1944, the Sipo-SD representative estimated that 80 percent of the Jews who were still in Belgium were in possession of forged identity papers and "are supported to a great extent by many Aryan Belgians."[8] This was only possible because Belgium had a very broad resistance movement that made it easier for Jews to go underground.

Resistance

The resistance movement consisted of various strands. In the Independence Front (Front d'Indépendance), founded in March 1941, the Communist Party played a central role, but it also included Catholics and liberals. Other groups active in the resistance movement were, among others, the Secret Army (Armée Secrète), which was considered rightist, and the Belgian National Movement (Mouvement National Belge). Out of a population of only eight million, about 70,000 people were estimated to be involved in the organized resistance. In the summer of 1942, a Jewish defense committee, the Comité de Défense des Juifs (CDJ), was established in Brussels; it encompassed all political forces from the left through religious groups and Zionists to the established Jewish upper class, and it maintained contact with the various individual resistance groups as well as with the AJB. Initially, the majority of the Belgian population had responded with indifference to the German occupiers' anti-Jewish

[8] "Reports from Belgium and Northern France, No. 12/44" of the official representative of the chief of the Sipo and SD in Brussels; Klarsfeld and Steinberg, *Endlösung der Judenfrage*, 86.

measures, but their occupation policies soon triggered a growing animosity and hatred against the Germans, who thus became the common enemy of Jewish and non-Jewish Belgians alike. With the help of the different resistance factions, about 25,000 Jews survived in hiding in Belgium, while several thousand others were taken to Switzerland. Through the collaborative efforts of the CDJ, the children's welfare organization Oeuvre Nationale de l'Enfance, and Catholic groups, 3,000 to 4,000 Jewish children were hidden.

Turkish Jews in Belgium during the Shoah

The number of Turkish Jews in Belgium fluctuated as people fled to and from Belgium. Some of the Jews who escaped to Belgium from Germany had (or had previously held) Turkish citizenship.[9] The registration of Jews conducted by the AJB in March 1942 yielded fifty-one Turkish Jews in Antwerp and fifty-five in Brussels (a total of ninety-two Turkish nationals and fourteen stateless people of previously Turkish nationality). The small number – only 106 people – suggests that many Turkish Jews did not register and that Jews who had already been stripped of their Turkish citizenship prior to 1940 were included in the large group of "other stateless persons." In addition, a considerable number of Turkish Jews had fled Belgium during or following the occupation. This is corroborated by the names of Turkish Jews from Belgium who were arrested in France and deported from there. My own research yielded the names of more than 170 Jews from Turkey or of Turkish descent living in Belgium during the years of Nazi occupation. This number includes stateless (*apatride*) Jews and Belgian-born children of Turkish Jews, some of whom had opted for Belgian citizenship and were hence counted as "Belgians."

In Belgium, as elsewhere, the first victims of the deportations to the extermination camps were the stateless Jews. We can therefore assume that most of the thirty-nine Jews of Turkish descent who were deported from Belgium to Auschwitz had previously lost their citizenship.[10] Out

[9] In Antwerp in December 1940, the foreign police registered fifteen Jews of Turkish or former Turkish nationality who had come to Belgium from Germany; Archives of the *Musée Juif de la Déportation et de la Résistance* (MJDR), Mechlin, doc. nos. A001910 and A001786.

[10] The commemorative book *Mémorial de la déportation des juifs de Belgique*, edited by Klarsfeld and Steinberg, contains no information about the nationality or birthplaces of the deportees. The number given in note 9 is based on my own evaluation of the lists of the names of the deportees and records of the Service des Victimes de la Guerre auprès du service public fédéral Sécurité sociale (Directorate-General War Victims of the Federal Public Service Social Security; hereafter SVG). For another group of about thirty Jews deported from Belgium to Auschwitz, a Turkish background can be assumed.

of those thirty-nine, we only know of two who survived the deportation. At least five of the Turkish Jews who had fled Germany for Belgium fell into the clutches of the Nazis there and were likewise deported to their deaths. Several of the Turkish Jews who had fled from Belgium to France were also arrested there and deported from France. One of them was Joseph Escojido Muhar, born in 1894 in Istanbul, who was deported to Auschwitz on July 31, 1943. Muhar had tried in vain to get a Turkish diplomatic representation involved to attain his release. But the Turkish Consulate in Belgium had closed, and all the AJB managed to procure was a certificate from the Belgian foreign police attesting to Muhar's Turkish nationality. There is no evidence of an intervention effort by the Turkish Consulate in Paris, which had taken over the duties of the diplomatic representation in Belgium in April 1942.[11]

The Comité de la Colonie Turque en Belgique

As the case of Muhar shows, the situation of the Turkish Jews in Belgium was rendered more difficult by the closing of the Turkish consulates in Brussels and Antwerp in the fall of 1941. Their affairs were taken over by the Turkish Consulate General in Paris. As a consequence, it was impossible for Turkish Jews to maintain regular contact with their diplomatic representation, since special permission from the occupation authorities was required to cross the border. In addition, the consulate in Paris now in charge did not provide the Turkish Jews in Belgium with adequate information. This became evident when several Turkish Jews in Belgium only learned by accident in February 1943 that, according to the German ultimatum, they were supposed to have left Belgium by January 31, 1943. Raphaël Bile, born in Izmir in 1893, had petitioned on the basis of his Turkish citizenship to be exempted from the newly issued anti-Jewish measures. The reply from Group XII (Enemy and Jewish Property) of the military administration's Economic Department, which was "in charge of" the theft of Jewish property, stated that Bile was no longer entitled to protection as a Turkish Jew because he had not left the country. Up to that point, neither the German occupation authorities nor any of Turkey's diplomatic representations in Paris or Berlin had informed the

[11] The UGIF wrote to the Belgian AJB in June 1943 with the request that it contact the Turkish Consulate in Antwerp on behalf of Muhar. As the UGIF reported, Muhar possessed a Turkish passport that was issued in 1936 by the Turkish Consulate in Antwerp, a family register, and a certificate attesting to his having satisfied his military obligation; MJDR, Mechlin, documents A 4298, 4299 and A 4308.

Turkish Jews in Belgium of the repatriation ultimatum or the order to return to Turkey.[12]

The Economic Department's stance was most likely prompted by an instruction from the German Foreign Office representative in Brussels, Werner von Bargen. Without waiting for the outcome of the discussion at the Foreign Office in Berlin regarding the appropriate response to the Turkish authorities' disregard for the ultimatum demanding repatriation of "their" Jews, von Bargen had informed the military administration in mid-February "that the Turkish Jews living in Belgium and Northern France are, with immediate effect, to be subject to the anti-Jewish laws, but that expulsion [that is, deportation] will, for the time being, not be carried out."[13] After the deadlines for the ultimatum against Turkey had been extended by Berlin at the beginning of March 1943, Jews with Turkish citizenship were reinstated to the special status of "protected Jews" in Belgium, too – a status quo that was to last until October 1943.

This was the situation in which the Turkish migrants in Belgium founded the Committee of the Turkish Colony in Belgium (Comité de la Colonie Turque en Belgique) at the beginning of March 1943 "to legally represent the interests of the colony with Turkish and foreign authorities," as the founding statement put it.[14] The committee's headquarters were in Antwerp; its chairman was Joseph Fachler, who had fled from Berlin to Belgium, spoke perfect German, and was also in contact with the Belgian resistance. Although the initiative to found the committee came from Turkish Jews, who also made up the majority of its members, a few Muslim Turks were members of the group as well. As a result, Fachler was able to refuse the demand of the new "official in charge of Jewish affairs," Fritz Erdmann, in June 1943 that the Comité de la Colonie Turque join the mandatory AJB association because, as Fachler pointed out, the Comité was not a purely Jewish organization.[15]

The protection afforded by Turkish papers until the fall of 1943 facilitated, as elsewhere, the resistance activities of several Turkish Jews in

[12] Letter from Jacques Pollert, dated February 19, 1943, and a cover letter from the AJB in Antwerp to the central office of the AJB in Brussels, dated February 22, 1943, Archives of the MJDR, doc. no. A 002882 and A 005334

[13] Letter from the Foreign Office branch in Brussels (von Bargen) to the Foreign Office in Berlin, dated February 23, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703.

[14] Archives of the MJDR, document No. A 003039.

[15] Letter from Fachler, dated June 1, 1943, and confirmation by the secretary general of the AJB, dated June 11, 1943; Archives of the MJDR, doc. A 006913 and A 006915.

Belgium. Fachler wrote articles for left-wing underground newspapers such as *Het Vrije Woord*, which he helped distribute on a regular basis, and he worked with Ernest Mandel (the later Marxist theoretician and leading member of the Fourth International) and his father Henri Mandel, who had fled to Antwerp from Frankfurt am Main.[16] Jacques Sephiha, a member of the Zionist group La Gordonia, was initially in charge of providing housing and supplies for people in the underground. On his initiative, the various Jewish groups joined together to form the Hechaloutz; he was also in contact with the Belgian resistance movement Mouvement National Belge. He was arrested a number of times and released again because of his Turkish citizenship.[17] Ezra Natan worked for the military arm of the Belgian resistance (Office Militaire Belge de Résistance, OMBR), providing medical care to injured people and people who had fled from Mechlin.[18]

Futile Attempts at Repatriation

In February 1943, von Bargen had reported to Berlin that the Turkish authorities had not provided any names of Jews from Belgium for repatriation.[19] In the face of German coercion, the Comité de la Colonie Turque now also began urging the Turkish authorities to grant Turkish Jews in Belgium permission to return – a goal explicitly stated in the committee's founding statement as one of the motives for its establishment. At the end of March, the German Embassy in Paris informed the Foreign Office in Berlin that, as per communication from the Turkish Consulate General in Paris, the Foreign Office representative in the office of the military commander in Brussels had now been provided with a list containing the names of Turkish Jews slated for repatriation.[20] This information probably refers to a list with the names of nine Turkish Jews residing in Belgium and six children that was forwarded on April 21, 1943, from von Bargen's office to the Foreign Office in Berlin and from there to the

[16] Statement by Mandel in the Fachler file, SVG in Brussels, dossier 17591. The file also contains statements from other Jews who accused Fachler of collaborating with the Germans, in particular, of obtaining diamonds for the Devisenschutzkommando (Foreign Currency Control Unit), a subsidiary of the RSHA whose aim was to rob the Jews; however, the majority of the statements are in Fachler's favor.

[17] Report by Jacques Sephiha, in Goldberg et al., *Passage du Témoin*, 142.

[18] Report by Ezra Natan, in Goldberg et al., *Passage du Témoin*, 252.

[19] Letter from the Foreign Office branch in Brussels (von Bargen) to the Foreign Office in Berlin, dated February 23, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703.

[20] Telegram from Schleier at the German Embassy in Paris, dated March 24, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703.

Turkish Embassy in Berlin.[21] Below the list, von Bargen had made a note saying that the visas had been approved and the passports for these people were presently at the Turkish Consulate General in Paris. As soon as the passports were ready, "further steps would be arranged." There is no indication, however, that the Turkish authorities actually took steps to initiate the return of these or the other Jews residing in Belgium. For months, the Comité de la Colonie Turque importuned the Turkish authorities to have the Turkish Jews repatriated; Joseph Fachler and other members of the Comité made a number of trips to Paris in this matter. No information has survived on the results of these talks. The only information on record is contained in an AJB report dated May 6, 1943, which merely states that "M. Fachler has returned from Paris and has brought back more detailed information regarding the protection the Turkish Jews will enjoy until their situation has been conclusively resolved."[22]

After liberation, committee members recounted with bitterness an event that had taken place during one of their visits to the Turkish Consulate in Paris. Two Gestapo officials brought a Jewish person to the consulate to have his papers checked, which, for the person in question, was a matter of life or deportation. The vice-consul, who was negotiating with the delegation of Belgian Jews, received the Gestapo officials and promptly informed them that he did not acknowledge this person's Turkish citizenship. And yet, "To free him, it would have been sufficient to pretend to be unclear about the document's authenticity – even if it was only pretense."[23]

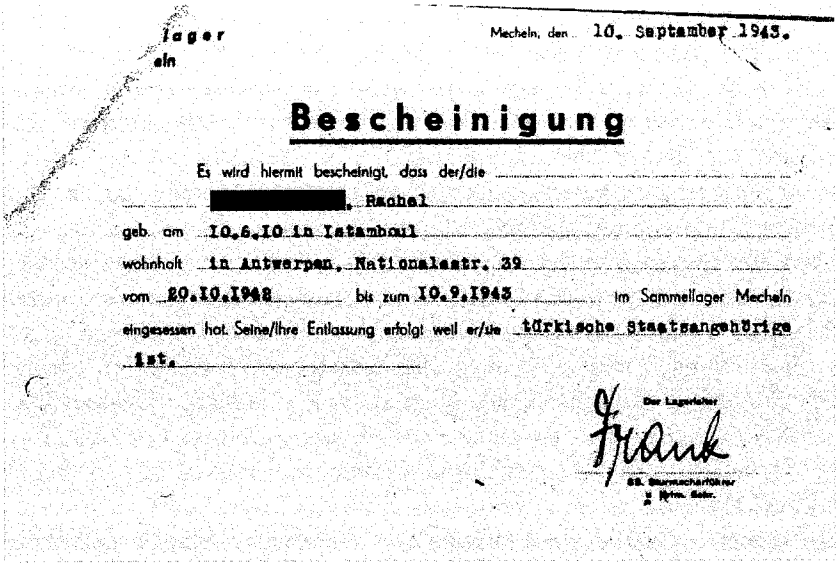
Joseph Fachler made two more trips to Paris – one at the beginning of August and one at the end of September 1943 – to negotiate with the local consulate about protection for Turkish Jews in Belgium and the question of their repatriation.[24] Two letters from members of the committee emphasize the "enormous difficulties" that needed to be overcome in the process. One positive outcome of the talks with the Paris Consulate

[21] Foreign Office branch in Brussels, dated April 21, 1943, and a handwritten draft of von Thadden's cover letter to the Turkish Embassy in Berlin; both in PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703.

[22] Record of a conversation of the AJB leadership with the occupation authorities, dated May 6, 1953, MJDR, document A 007446.

[23] From the appeal of the Union Européenne des Juifs Turcs; CZA, Doc. C2/468. I would like to thank Rıfat Bali for providing the document.

[24] Letter from the AJB to the UGIF in Paris that introduces Fachler as the "head of the Colonie Turque in Belgium" and asks the UGIF to support him; USHMM, UGIF, RG 43 005 M, film roll 87. Also circular of the Comité de la Colonie Turque, dated September 15 and 20, 1943; private ownership (Daniel Natan).



Lager
ein

Mecheln, den 10. September 1943.

Bescheinigung

Es wird hiermit bescheinigt, dass der/die [redacted], Rachel
geb. am 10.6.10 in Istambaul
wohnhaft in Antwerpen, Nationalestr. 39
vom 20.10.1942 bis zum 10.9.1943 im Sammellager Mecheln
eingesessen hat. Seine/Ihre Entlassung erfolgt weil er/sie türkische Staatsangehörige ist.

Der Lagerleiter
SS-Sturmscharführer

FIGURE 9.2 Release certificate for Rachel M.; release obtained through the Comité de la Colonie Turque. (Courtesy of Service de Victims de la Guerre.)

that is mentioned there were certain documents Fachler was said to have obtained from the consul. These were presumably certificates (or forms) the Turkish Jews could use to prove their citizenship to the German authorities.[25] These papers apparently allowed the Comité de la Colonie Turque to intervene directly on behalf of the Turkish Jews in Belgium instead of involving the consulate in Paris (see Figure 9.2). In September 1943, the committee succeeded in gaining the release of eight detained Jews from Gestapo imprisonment and the Mechlin camp, respectively, on the basis of their Turkish citizenship.[26]

However, the consulate in Paris did not grant its support for free. Consequently, the committee's September 20, 1943, circular asked for "larger donations" from its members in Belgium, for one, to pay the consular fees of Turkish Jews without means, and second, to donate to the Turkish Red Crescent. Just as the Jews within Turkey had to time and again buy the "tolerance" of the Turkish state with "voluntary donations,"

[25] These may have been blank forms that were filled out by the committee itself. Its circular of September 20, 1943, states that people should turn to the committee member by the name of Sotil for help filling out their *beyanname* (Turkish for declaration). But it is also possible that they were application forms (e.g. for repatriation applications).

[26] SVG in Brussels, dossier 17591.

Turkish Jews in mortal danger were now apparently supposed to buy permission to return to Turkey.

Despite considerable efforts, the great majority of Turkish Jews in Belgium did not succeed in obtaining the Turkish authorities' consent to return to Turkey. Shaw writes that Turkish Jews had been repatriated by train from Brussels in groups of about twenty people, but he does not back up his claim.[27] There is not even evidence of the repatriation of the fifteen Jews whose return to Turkey had already been authorized by the German occupiers in March. At least six of the people named in the March 1943 list later became victims of arrest and deportation.

A few people may have been able to return to Turkey individually or with the group from Paris. It seems that a Monsieur Kütan went to Turkey during the war to meet his military obligation; to this day, the Sephardic community of Brussels remembers that he had to "break stones" there.[28]

Numerous Turkish Jews now learned that the government in Ankara had in the meantime withdrawn their citizenship.[29] Esther Sephiha says that she did not participate in the repatriation from Paris in 1943 because some of her children had acquired Belgian citizenship and she had not wanted to abandon them, because even the children of "properly registered" Turkish Jews were denied entry to Turkey if they had taken on the citizenship of another country.[30]

Arrests and Deportations in the Fall of 1943

After the last ultimatum deadline for the repatriation of Turkish Jews had passed in October 1943, about seventy Jews with Turkish citizenship were arrested on October 20 in Antwerp and Brussels and taken first to the respective local Gestapo prisons and then, on November 10, to Mechlin camp. Among those arrested was a number of people whose repatriation had been authorized by the German authorities and who had been waiting for the Turkish authorities' reply ever since.

[27] Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust,* 199.

[28] Conversation with Daniel Natan in November 2003 in Brussels. The chair engraved with the name of Mr. Kütan in the synagogue has been preserved until today. On November 29, 1943, the Turkish Consulate General in Paris protested the seizure of furniture from the dwelling of Mrs. Regine Kütan in Brussels, who was probably his wife; PAAA, Paris 2387, a number of letters. The fate of Regine Kütan is not known.

[29] Appeal by the Union Européenne des Juifs Turcs; CZA, doc. C2/468.

[30] Witness statement by E.S. (i.e., Esther Sephiha); Haïm Vidal Sephiha, *L'agonie des Judéo-Espagnols* (Paris, Entente, 1977), 114.

The Turkish Consulate General in Paris intervened on behalf of two of those arrested, Nessim Sephiha and Preciado Gormenzano, demanding their release on the grounds that they had valid Turkish passports.[31] Although the official at the Foreign Office in Brussels, Georg Keim, initially refused to release them, pointing out that the deadline for Turkish Jews to leave the country had expired, Preciado Gormenzano was released or, at any rate, not deported. The other Turkish Jews, Nessim Sephiha among them, were deported, along with Hungarian and Romanian Jews, on separate transports for men and women to the concentration camps at Buchenwald and Ravensbrück on December 23, 1943.[32] The keys to their residences were handed over to the Turkish Consulate General in Paris.[33]

Thirty-two Turkish-Jewish men were deported from Brussels to the Buchenwald concentration camp; at least twelve of them lost their lives there. In April 1945, Nessim Sephiha, along with his son Jacques and thousands of other prisoners, was forced on one of the death marches organized by the SS four days before the arrival of the U.S. Army in an attempt to clear out the camp. Fewer than two hundred of them reached the Dachau concentration camp three weeks later. Jacques Sephiha survived, while his father Nessim survived the ordeal of the death march only to die in Dachau shortly after liberation. Of the thirty-five women and children who were deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in December 1943, seven died there; one of them was Bulissa Shahon (see Figure 9.3). Two were deported to Auschwitz. Marie Eskenazi was taken to the Uckermark concentration camp, where prisoners from Ravensbrück who had been classified as no longer fit to work were murdered in gas vans.

Fourteen of the Turkish-Jewish women from Belgium as well as six children were released from Ravensbrück on February 28, 1945; along with Turkish-Jewish prisoners from Bergen-Belsen, they were part of the *Drottningholm* exchange (see Chapter 12).

[31] Letter from the Foreign Office branch in Brussels (von Bargen) to the German Embassy in Paris, dated December 22, 1943; PAAA, Paris 2387.

[32] A description of the departure from Mechlin and the transport can be found in Eugene Weinstock, *Beyond the Last Path* (New York: Boni & Gaer, 1947), 63ff. According to Weinstock, one of the Turkish Jews died on the transport (p. 68).

[33] Letter from Ludwig Mayr-Falkenberg (von Bargen's successor) to the Foreign Office in Berlin, dated January 13, 1944, in which he mentions that the Turkish Consulate General in Paris had intervened to gain the release of some of the Turkish Jews arrested in Brussels, which presumably refers to the two people mentioned above; PAAA R 100889. Fiche 2273.



FIGURE 9.3. Bulissa Shahon died on February 2, 1944, five weeks after being sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. (Courtesy of Serge Klarsfeld.)

Several Turkish Jews were interned in the Mechlin camp until liberation in September 1944.[34] Ita Levy, who had also applied for repatriation in March 1943 and had waited in vain for approval from Turkish authorities, was deported to Auschwitz on July 31, 1944, on one of the last transports. In October 1944, she was moved on to Dachau, where she survived to see liberation.

[34] Rivka Cohen, *Mon enfance sépharade* (Paris: Harmattan, 1996), 162.

Ezra Natan, who had unsuccessfully applied for repatriation to Turkey in March 1943 and was incarcerated in the Buchenwald concentration camp from December 1943 until March 1945, wrote after liberation: "In many cases, the Turkish government could have prevented all this for most of its nationals. But despite all the demarches and petitions before and during detention (by people who had remained in Belgium), the consular authorities did nothing, no help was sent by the Turkish government, no humanitarian aid measures were initiated to save the lives and property of human beings (or did the representatives perhaps do this out of hatred?)."[35]

The Netherlands

In 1930, roughly 5,200 Sephardic Jews were living in the Netherlands, but only a few of them were from Turkey. According to Amsterdam's civil registry and records kept by the Nazi authorities during the time of occupation, roughly ninety Jews with a "Turkish background" were living in the Netherlands during the period between 1930 and 1945.[36] Most of the Turkish Jews lived in Amsterdam, but a few also lived in The Hague, Rotterdam, and other cities. As was often the case, Turkish-Jewish carpet traders played an important role in the community; among them were Avram Beşuşe, who was born in 1893 in Constantinople (Istanbul) and came to Amsterdam from Turkey with his wife and daughter in 1926, and Michon Alboukerk, who came from the Ortaköy district of Istanbul.[37] Besuse and Alboukerk as well as Mercado Yohai from Galipoli (Gelibolu) were listed members of the Portuguese Israelite community in Amsterdam in the 1930s.[38]

Around 1931, Avram Beşuşe moved into the elegant gabled house, Amstel 113, which had been built in 1892 (see Figure 9.4). From there he also ran his carpet business and repair shop. The house was located

[35] Note by Ezra Natan (undated); private ownership (Daniel Natan). Ezra Natan was born in 1910 in Istanbul; as a youth he went to live in Belgium with his uncles, the previously mentioned Natan brothers.

[36] It is not possible to search the civil registry by nationality or birthplace; consequently, I had to resort to chance hits based on known Sephardic names. A summary is provided in the Internet article "Turkse joden in Westerbork," http://www.bevrijdingintercultureel.nl/bi/turksjood.html.

[37] Family cards (i.e., a register of residents) in the *Gemeente Archief* (Municipal Archives) of Amsterdam, now Amsterdam City Archives (*Stadsarchief*).

[38] *Register der Contributie van Uidmaten der Port.-isr. Gemeente te Amsterdam*, Amsterdam City Archives.

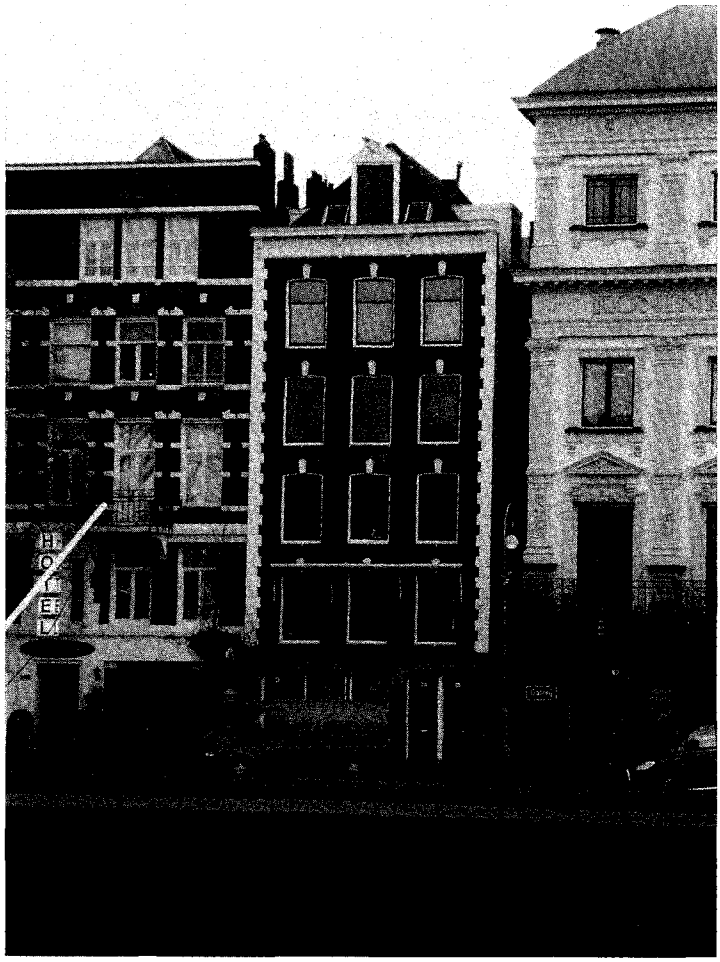


FIGURE 9.4. Amstel 113, where Avram Beşuşe lived and worked.

in the immediate vicinity of the old traditional Sephardic synagogue at J. D. Meijerplein, which he likely attended regularly. In the following years, numerous relatives also moved into the house.

The initially small group of Turkish Jews in the Netherlands grew to about 100 people after 1933 through the immigration of Turkish-Jewish refugees from Germany and later also from Austria. In all, the entire Jewish community in the Netherlands grew by almost 22,000 to roughly 140,000 during this time through the influx of refugees from Germany and Austria. After the German occupation of their country of exile, they could no longer escape Nazi persecution.

The Netherlands are marked by the active solidarity with the persecuted Jews during German occupation that was exhibited by a large part of its population. Nevertheless, the Netherlands are the western European country whose Jewish population, in terms of percentage, suffered the greatest losses by far during the Shoah. Over 100,000 people – about 75 percent of the Jews there – were murdered by the Germans. One reason for this was that members of the Nazi bureaucracy of murder in the Netherlands were especially effective in involving both the Dutch rump administration and the Jews who were forced to join the Jewish Council (Joodse Raad) in the organization of the genocide. An intricate system of hierarchies and "exemptions" for certain groups of Jews (such as workers in the armaments and diamond industries, holders of "exemption certificates" available for money, and the up to 17,500 employees of the Joodse Raad) protected the members of these groups from arrest and deportation until the Germans revoked these "privileges." In the end, this system enabled the Nazis to carry out the murder of the Jews in the Netherlands especially smoothly and in a particularly radical manner.

The head organizer of the murder of the Jews in the Netherlands was Wilhelm Zöpf, who established the Netherlands branch office of Eichmann's Section IV B 4 of the RSHA that was to "serve as an example for the solution for the Jewish question in all European countries." Otto Bene, the representative of the Foreign Office at the Office of the Reich Commissioner of the occupied Dutch territories, was also a fervent anti-Semite who sent numerous telegrams to his superiors in Berlin, urging them to speed up the frequency of deportations. Gertrud Slottke was Zöpf's secretary. As the Dutch historian Jacob Presser states, she was responsible for "monitoring and keeping records of exemptions from deportation." In order to be exempted, the people in question actually had to report to the very authorities in Amsterdam that were persecuting them. In November 1942, thirty-five Jews had themselves registered in Amsterdam as Turkish citizens.

As was the case in Belgium, the situation of the Turkish Jews in the Netherlands was rendered more difficult by the closing of their embassy in The Hague after the German occupation, leaving the Turkish Consulate General in Hamburg and the Turkish Embassy in Berlin responsible for representing Turkish citizens in the Netherlands. Under the conditions of the occupation and the restrictions for Jews, contact with their consular representative was more or less impossible, and

the passports of many of them had expired in the course of 1940–41. However, the absence of a Turkish consulate possibly also enabled some Jews to survive with expired or bought Turkish identification papers, because it was also more difficult for the German persecutors to verify their papers. Rudolf Levy, for example, had been a student in Berlin and Hamburg and afterward had himself naturalized in Germany, but he went back to using his old Turkish papers after the occupation of the Netherlands because for a while they protected him in street checks and even house searches.[39] The Mogroby family from Damaskus was also able to survive until the end of 1943 with Turkish papers they had purchased.

But at the beginning of 1943, the machinery of persecution also turned on Turkish Jews. The correspondence from February to October 1943 between various German offices illustrates the meticulous bureaucratic thoroughness with which the registration, surveillance, arrest, looting, and finally the deportation or repatriation of the Turkish Jews was conducted.[40] On February 17, 1943, Otto Bene sent the Foreign Office in Berlin a list with forty-two names of Jews with Turkish nationality "still residing in the Netherlands"; the list was forwarded from there to the Turkish embassies in Berlin and Paris.[41] Bene demanded that the checks be speeded up so the foreign Jews still in the Netherlands could be "deported as soon as possible." Notes on some of the names on the list indicate that Gertrud Slottke, Zöpf's assistant, had already done a preliminary check of their papers on her own.[42] Several people whose Turkish citizenship had already been challenged by the German authorities in the Netherlands were arrested, and their papers were not submitted to the Turkish consulates for examination. For example, Rudolf Levy recounts that as of September 22, 1943, he was no longer protected as a "Turk" after Gertrud Slottke had checked his papers, and he and his

[39] Rudolf's father Heinrich Levy was one of the founding members of the Sephardic community in Berlin in 1905.

[40] More than sixty different letters with about ten lists of names have been preserved in the PAAA and in the NIOD.

[41] In the cover letter to the Foreign Office, Bene states. "Up to now, no citizens have been named by the Turks for the purpose of return.... ; Turkey has neither diplomats nor consular representatives here"; letter from Bene, dated February 17, 1943, PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5703. Two weeks later, Bene sent a more detailed list which also included the respective passport numbers and expiration dates. Letter from Bene to the Foreign Office in Berlin, dated March 9, 1943; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702.

[42] List by Slottke, dated March 5, 1943; NIOD, Arch 77, 1286.

wife were arrested.[43] Samuel Eskenazi, who was born in Istanbul in 1885 and worked in The Hague as a carpet mender, and his son Albert, born in 1914, and other relatives were also arrested in the spring of 1943. In the Westerbork camp, Albert's son was born on July 16, 1943, and was named Samuel after his grandfather. Albert Eskenazi was deported to Sobibor on July 20, 1943, where he was murdered immediately. His son Samuel Eskenazi died on August 6, 1943, two weeks after his birth, in Westerbork.[44]

As the situation became increasingly threatening, Avram Beşuşe turned to the Turkish Consulate in Hamburg and to the Turkish Embassy in Berlin for help. Because of his economic status and his position in the community, Beşuşe served as a kind of spokesman for the Turkish-Jewish families in Amsterdam.[45]

On May 5, 1943, the RSHA in Berlin sent a list with the names of forty-six Turkish Jews back to Otto Bene in The Hague after they had been examined. Thirty-nine of the people named were authorized by the RSHA to depart for Turkey. Seven people were not recognized as Turkish citizens.[46] The thirty-nine "recognized citizens" received an "exemption stamp for foreigners" on June 19, 1943 that protected them from arrest and deportation.[47] The "exemption" lasted exactly four months.

It is not known whether the Turkish Jews themselves had been informed of the ultimatum demanding repatriation by October 20, 1943 that the Nazi government had given the Turkish government. But on September 30, three weeks before the deadline, the Turkish Jews in the Netherlands sent a desperate cry for help to Turkey's parliament, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, and to the president in Ankara.[48]

[43] Rudolf Levy, "Das Neutralenlager Bergen-Belsen," typescript, Istanbul 1945, 15.

[44] Registration cards of the family in the Amsterdam City Archives; Westerbork prisoner card file in the Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (Dutch Institute for War Documentation, NIOD), and index of Dutch Holocaust victims on the Internet (www.joodsmonument.nl).

[45] *Sabah*, May 6, 2000. Ahmet Özay, who published a series about Turkish Jews in the Holocaust in the Turkish daily newspaper *Sabah* in 2000, writes that Beşuşe addressed a letter, dated January 17, 1943, to the Turkish Embassy in Berlin to obtain help for Turkish Jews arrested in Holland.

[46] Letter IV C 1 ZS, dated May 5, 1943, NIOD, Arch. 77, 1850; also in PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702. The higher total number (forty-six versus the forty-two mentioned by Slottke) derives from some family members being listed separately. The RSHA also authorized the departure of people whose papers Slottke had classified as "not valid."

[47] Letter IV B 4 B, NIOD, Arch. 77, 1850. The names of these people as well were later sent to the Turkish Embassy for "checking and confirmation."

[48] See the letter in the box, dated September 30, 1943; *Sabah* (May 6, 2000).

Amsterdam, September 30, 1943
To the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey
Grand National Assembly, Ankara
Your Excellency, Mr. President,

We, the undersigned Turkish citizens residing in Holland, beseech you to grant us one minute of your attention and to find a way to rescue us and our families from the catastrophic situation in which we find ourselves. We, who as Turkish citizens are genuinely and for all time bound to our homeland, are in dire need. Because we are subject to coercion and repression, we have decided to turn to you with this petition. If forced to give up our current homeland and return to Turkey, we would, by doing so, agree to the annihilation of our relatives and would thus bring annihilation upon ourselves as well. The headquarters of the occupation troops here are forcing us to sign declarations saying that we are leaving this country voluntarily. The demand is being made that we use the word "voluntarily." We have already turned to the Embassy in Berlin and to the Consulate in Hamburg and have tried everything in our power. We, Turkish families with men, women, and children, hope that in this situation of need the government of the Turkish state to which we belong will confirm our Turkish citizenship and thus prevent our being deported. We find ourselves in a very dangerous situation. With the wish that you grant our request and find a solution, we pray to God for you.

In the name of the Turkish families,
Avram Beşuşe

This letter makes it evident that the German authorities in the Netherlands were forcing Turkish Jews to sign a "voluntary declaration of consent" regarding their return to Turkey. The content of the letter also underscores that, although the repatriation offered by the Nazi authorities would protect the Turkish Jews from being deported and murdered, it meant their forced expulsion and the loss of the livelihood which they had built for themselves abroad. Furthermore, they were obviously also aware that family members who did not have "recognized" Turkish papers and whom they were supposed to leave behind would be sent to their deaths. How this letter was received in Turkey is not documented. Four weeks later,

in other words, after the Turkish Jews had been arrested, the German ambassador in Ankara, Franz von Papen, reported that "the Dutch list" would be checked by the Turkish Ministry of the Interior.[49]

The Arrest of Turkish Jews in the Netherlands

On October 20, 1943, on the RSHA's order, Turkish Jews were arrested in the Netherlands as well. In Amsterdam, about forty Turkish Jews were taken to the detention camp in the former Jewish theater, the Joodsche Schouwburg.[50] While still in the Schouwburg, they were urged by the Nazi authorities to send written requests to be repatriated to the Turkish diplomatic representations.[51] On October 30, G. Slottke sent these applications, along with their identification documents and the report on their arrests, to the Foreign Office in Berlin; from there, it was forwarded first to the RSHA and then, not until December 2, 1943, more than a month later, on to the Turkish Embassy.[52] Immediately after their arrest, Wilhelm Zöpf, as Eichmann's representative in the Netherlands, ordered the seizure of the property of the arrested Turkish Jews.[53] Their furniture and furnishings were sold and their bank accounts plundered. With German thoroughness, it was noted that the sale of the property stolen from the arrested Turkish Jews had yielded a total of 16,401.21 gulden; 1,325.50 and 1,147.09 gulden of this was from the sale of the furniture belonging to the Yohai and Beşuşe families, respectively.[54]

After ten days of detention in the Schouwburg, the arrested Turkish Jews were taken to Westerbork camp, which served as a holding and transit camp that Jews were taken to before deportation to the extermination camps.[55] The presence of Turkish Jews in Westerbork concentration camp

[49] Telegram from von Papen, dated October 28, 1943, to the Foreign Office; PAAA, R 100889, fiche 2273. According to von Papen, referring to a report by the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, this refers to twenty-eight Turkish citizens in the Netherlands.

[50] The report by Section IV B 4 of the RSHA on the arrest contains a list of thirty-five people; letter, dated October 30, 1943, NIOD, Arch. 77, 1850. One of the people arrested, Mercado Yohai, writes of about fifty arrestees. Some of the arrestees were those named on the lists sent to the Turkish Embassy; some were other people.

[51] Letter by Mercado Yohai on board the *Drottningholm* to Philippe Aubert de la Rüe (see Chapter 12); Swiss Federal Archives, Berne, J.I. 176. 1984/18; Papers left by A. de la Rüe, box 2, folder 4.

[52] Letter IV B 4e B No. 14229/43, dated October 30, 1943, NIOD, Arch. 77, 1850. Letter from the Foreign Office, dated December 2, 1943, to the Turkish Embassy; PAAA, R 100856, fiche 2200.

[53] "Certificate of appointment," dated October 21, 1943, in NIOD, Arch. 77, 1850.

[54] Documents, "Financial status" and "Compilation," NIOD, Arch. 77, 1288.

[55] According to orders from Berlin, the arrestees, as well as the Turkish Jews arrested on the same day in Brussels, Vienna, and Berlin, were to be transported to the Ravensbrück

since the beginning of November 1943 is also mentioned in the diary kept by the Dutch journalist Philip Mechanicus entitled *In Depot.*[56] In the course of the fall of 1943, the number of arrested Turkish Jews rose to a total of somewhere around sixty to seventy.[57] Although the conditions in Westerbork were not as terrible as in the concentration camps in Germany, at least three Turkish Jews still died from the conditions of detention.

The Position of the Turkish Authorities

Immediately on the day after the arrest of the Turkish Jews in the Netherlands, Turkish Consul General Galip Evren in Hamburg intervened by writing to the German occupation authorities in the Netherlands, demanding the reason for the arrests.[58] His letter was ignored. A second letter from Evren, dated January 17, 1944, addressed again to the German Nazi authorities in the Netherlands, also remained unanswered and was not forwarded by Bene to Berlin until the beginning of April 1944, eight weeks later.[59]

The Turkish Embassy in Berlin was likewise very slow in responding to the various lists that arrived during 1943. It had the Turkish citizenship of each individual checked by the Ministry of the Interior in Ankara and the consulate in Hamburg first. In the process, the Turkish consul in Hamburg, Evren, succeeded in obtaining naturalization retroactively for some of the non-Turkish wives of Turkish Jews. But overall, of the fifty-nine people who are documented in the files as having been checked, twenty-seven were not recognized as Turkish.[60] A number of people whose departure for Turkey had been authorized by the RSHA were refused entry to Turkey by the Turkish authorities. Twelve of the people

and Buchenwald concentration camps. This was prevented by a quarantine imposed on Westerbork camp; Letter IV B 4e, dated October 30, 1943, NIOD, Arch. 77, 1850.

[56] Philip Mechanicus, *In Depot, dagboek uit Westerbork*, here translated from the German version: *Im Depot, Tagebuch aus Westerbork* (Berlin: Tiamat, 1993), 256, 281, and 325.

[57] This is evident from the various lists of names that were sent successively to the Turkish Embassy, from the Westerbork card file archived in NIOD, and from the lists of names of deportees.

[58] Letter from the Turkish Consulate General in Hamburg, dated October 21, 1943, NIOD, Arch. 77, 1850.

[59] Reference to Evren's second letter in a letter from Bene, dated April 6, 1944, to the Foreign Office in Berlin; Bene's letter mentions both of Evren's letters. The letters are not in the file; PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5704.

[60] Letters from the Turkish Embassy, dated February 2, 1944, and May 11, 1944. The latter was the answer to a new inquiry regarding other Turkish Jews arrested in the Netherlands. Both documents in PAAA, R 100856, fiche 2201.

refused had been stripped of their Turkish citizenship, several of them, as the records show, only after the German inquiry: Sara Benaderet, who was born in 1910 in Izmir, was deprived of her citizenship by a decision of June 15, 1943.[61] On this day alone, the Turkish government stripped a total of 202 people of their citizenship.[62]

After the Turkish Embassy finally authorized the return of a number of the Turkish Jews in a letter dated February 2, 1944, the Nazi authorities sabotaged the promised repatriation. As usual, the Foreign Office and the RSHA acted in tandem. First, they told the Turkish Embassy that the letter received had not contained any lists of names.[63] In a note from the same day to Bene, the representative of the Foreign Office in the Netherlands, von Thadden, wrote bluntly that the RSHA was planning to delay the return of the Turkish Jews from the Netherlands "in light of the recent developments."[64] The Turkish Jews were therefore forced to remain in Westerbork, although Turkey had since agreed to their repatriation, until they were taken to Bergen-Belsen in September 1944 – after German-Turkish relations had been broken off.

Deportation and Murder

All Turkish Jews whose citizenship was not recognized by Turkey were deported to Auschwitz starting in the spring of 1944 on instructions from the Nazi "official in charge of Jewish affairs" in the Netherlands, Wilhelm Zöpf. On March 16, 1944, after Turkey had responded to the repatriation ultimatum, Zöpf instructed the commander of the Westerbork camp to treat those Turkish Jews whose Turkish citizenship had not been recognized as stateless and to deport them "on the next transport."[65] At

[61] Letter from the Turkish Embassy, dated February 2, 1944, to the Foreign Office in Berlin; PAAA, R 100856, fiche 2201.

[62] Government decisions on expatriation in the BCA: decree no. 2/20102 Dosya: 2–583 regarding 10 people; decree Nr. 2/20107 Dosya: 2–584 regarding 135 people; decree Nr. 2/20108 Dosya: 2–585 regarding 67 people (all three in Fon: 30..18.1.2.)

[63] Verbal note, dated February 9, 1944; PAAA, R 100856, fiche 2201. The list is in the file which means that it had been received.

[64] Letter dated February 2, 1944; PAAA, R 100856, fiche 2201.

[65] According to Presser, Zöpf sent a telex containing the names of twenty-four Turkish Jews who were not recognized; Jacob Presser, *Ondergang: de verfolging en verdelging van het nederlandse jodendom, 1940–1945*, 2 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff 1965), 426ff. The location of this document has not been established to date. The correspondence that I was able to examine between the Turkish and German authorities indicates that the Turkish authorities did not recognize twenty-seven people who claimed Turkish citizenship; twelve of them were marked as having been expatriated.

least fourteen Jews of Turkish descent were deported from Westerbork to Auschwitz. Luna Fanny Yohai (born in Gelibolu in 1910) – daughter of Mercado Yohai – was the only one among them to survive Auschwitz. From there, she was sent to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp on an evacuation transport in January of 1945. She later immigrated to the United States.

10

Italy

The Kingdom of Italy had been under the rule of the fascists, led by "Il Duce," Benito Mussolini, since 1922. However, the policies toward Jews in fascist Italy cannot be compared to the genocidal anti-Semitism in Germany. Before the establishment of the Rome-Berlin Axis, Mussolini's regime did not openly pursue anti-Semitic policies.[1] Instead, much like the Kemalist regime in Turkey, it advocated the complete assimilation of its small Jewish minority. There were numerous prominent Jews in the Italian army, and even in the Fascist Party. Berlin, in 1933, mocked pro-Jewish Italy, where a Sephardic Jew, Enrico Salem, was elected mayor of Trieste, and a certain Signor Levy held the rank of a military colonel.

Anti-Jewish Laws of 1938

In July 1938, Mussolini published the Manifesto of Race (Manifesto della razza) and set up a Department for Demography and Race within the Ministry of the Interior, which as early as the following month took a census of the Jews in Italy. It also established detailed registers of Jews living in the larger cities. These lists contained exhaustive information, including address, age, occupation, citizenship, and family relations.

[1] However, earlier, glorifying depictions of a "decent Italy" have been significantly revised by recent research. See MacGregor Knox, "Das faschistische Italien und die 'Endlösung' 1942/43," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55, no. 1 (2007): 53–92; Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).

In October 1938, the Fascist Grand Council passed the Declaration on Race (Dichiarazione sulla razza); during the following weeks it enacted a series of racial laws that contained the Italian definition of members of the "Jewish race" and placed multiple restrictions on the country's Jewish population. Like the German model, this definition did not derive from religion but from ancestry. Marriages were forbidden between Jewish and non-Jewish people. The laws expelled Jews from schools and universities and drove them out of public administration. Jews were also prohibited from working in a number of professions. This unexpected development caused much consternation both in and outside of Italy. Nevertheless, until the Germans occupied Italy in September 1943, the persecution of Jews in Italy could not be compared to the situation in Germany. There was no physical threat, no burning of synagogues, and no agencies of repression specializing in anti-semitic violence.

Measures against Foreign Jews

In Italy, as in other countries, anti-Semitic measures specifically targeted foreign Jews. As early as September 7, 1938, all Jews who had immigrated to Italy after 1919 were, by government decree, ordered expelled within six months' time: by March 12, 1939. The order affected 9,000 people. The decree also revoked all naturalizations of Jews after 1919. As a consequence, 900 Jewish people were stripped of their Italian citizenship. But as most of these 900 were people who had immigrated to Italy before 1919, most of them were spared from expulsion. Jews were also not denaturalized in parts of the country that were not ceded to Italy until 1919 or 1924 respectively.[2]

In practice, the Italian government was not very rigorous in imposing the expulsion of Jews or the anti-Semitic laws in general. After initially threatening and arresting several foreign Jews, the government halted the practice of expulsion in March 1939, although roughly half of the foreign Jews who should have left the country were still in Italy at that point. As a result of the intensification of Jewish persecution in the German Reich and the beginning of the war, more Jewish refugees began entering Italy on tourist visas in 1939. Starting in 1940, Italy interned foreign Jews who had disregarded the expulsion order in camps in the south of the country. This measure primarily affected stateless individuals and Jews

[2] Trieste, Rhodes, and the Dodecanese Islands did not belong to Italy until 1919, and Fiume until 1924.

with German, Polish, or Czech citizenship, and not, as far as we know, Turkish Jews.

Turkish Jews in Italy

According to Isacco Papo, more than 1,000 Jews from Turkey were living in Italy around 1938, although it must be remembered that Papo's figures are based on birthplace, and not on citizenship.[3] The vast majority lived in Milan, the financial capital of Italy, which also had the largest Jewish community overall. Other large groups of Turkish Jews lived in Livorno and Trieste. Of the 9,000 foreign Jews who were to be expelled after the Jewish census of August 1938, the 533 Turks constituted the fourth-largest group, after the almost 2,900 German Jews, 1,800 Poles, and 908 Greeks. Most of them had immigrated to Italy at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s.

In addition, there was a significant number of people who had lived as Italian Jews in the Ottoman Empire for generations and had left under the pressure of nationalism after the founding of the Turkish Republic. As a result, several hundred Jews who were born in Turkish territory had Italian citizenship.[4] Furthermore, we can assume that many of the 509 Jews who were recorded as stateless had previously been Ottoman or Turkish.

It is not possible to reconstruct exactly how many Turkish Jews returned to Turkey after the expulsion decree was issued and the anti-Semitic laws were passed.[5] Several Turkish-Jewish families left Italy for Spain or France instead. In February of 1939, the Italian government ordered that the expulsion of Turkish Jews be halted after the Turkish government for its part, had threatened to expel Jews from Turkey.[6]

[3] Isacco Papo, "L'immigrazione Ebraica in Italia dalla Turchia, dai Balcani e dal Mediterraneo orientale nella prima metà del XX secolo," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 69, no. 1 (2003): 109. Papo himself grew up in a Turkish-Jewish family in Milan. In addition to his two articles on Turkish Jews in Italy published in *La Rassegna*, he wrote his memoirs in the book *Viaje en el ocaso de una cultura ibérica – recuerdos y reflexiones de un médico sefardi* (Barcelona: Tirocinio, 2006).

[4] Papo, "L'immigrazione Ebraica," 118. The relationship between the Jewish communities in Italy and the Ottoman Empire was often one of "coming and going." There were also families that had one branch living in an Italian port city and another in a Levantine city in the Ottoman Empire. The number of Italian Jews residing in Turkey was roughly 1,500 during the 1930s. Many Jews did not come to the Ottoman Empire until the nineteenth century and left Turkey again during the thirties.

[5] Papo makes two mentions of Turkish Jews who returned to Turkey; Papo, *Viaje*, 131; Papo, "L'immigrazione Ebraica," 111. The Azaria (Turkish: Acar) family left Milan and remigrated to Turkey; interview with Mr. Acar, April 26, 2009, in New York.

[6] Sarfatti, *Ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 171, note 208.

As in France, the Turkish Jews living in Italy now found themselves ground between the anti-Semitic expatriation practices of both states. While the total number of Jews in Milan who were born in Turkey was still recorded as 490 in 1942, the number of Jews who actually had Turkish citizenship had dropped by more than 40 percent, from 324 in 1938 to 188 in 1942.[7] This was presumably due primarily to Turkey's withdrawal of their citizenship. Mosé Dana says that his father Salomon, after losing his Italian citizenship, regained his Turkish citizenship from the Turkish consul in Milan "for appropriate fees."[8] This is surprising, because the citizenship law in force at the time in Turkey strictly prohibited the reinstatement of citizenship of former Turks who had lost their citizenship. Most of the poorer Jews could not raise the money for such a "re-acquisition." Stateless, they were deported after the German occupation and murdered.

All foreign Jews who were supposed to have left the country were unable to work legally after March 12, 1939, the deadline for expulsion.[9] In June 1939, self-employment was further limited for Jews by additional decrees, and the prohibition was extended to include even street vendors. Although the Italian authorities did not forcibly implement expulsion, foreign Jews were condemned to a life on the fringes of society, without the possibility of employment.

The Persecution of Jews after the German Occupation of Italy

After Sicily was taken by the Allies in July 1943, the fascist regime in Italy collapsed. On July 25, 1943, Mussolini was deposed and arrested and the Fascist Party disbanded. The king appointed Marshal Badoglio head of the government. On August 1, German troops crossed the Brenner Pass and invaded northern Italy. When, on September 8, the Italian government concluded a truce with the Allies, German troops occupied northern Italy and, subsequently, southeastern France, Yugoslavia, and Greece – territories that had, until then, been under Italian control. In northern and central Italy, the Germans created the Italian Social Republic (Republic of Salò), a satellite state led by Mussolini, who had been freed by German paratroopers.

[7] Papo, "L'immigrazione Ebraica," 117.

[8] Conversation with Mosé Dana, December 2005 in Milan. Because reinstatement of citizenship was not allowed, this was most likely in effect a form of bribery.

[9] Hilberg, *Vernichtung*, 706; Klaus Voigt, *Zuflucht auf Widerruf: Exil in Italien 1933–1945* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1989), 342.

With the German occupation, the murderous German version of Jewish persecution began in Italy as well. The onset was a series of massacres committed by an SS battalion of the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler (a special SS unit) between September 15 and 23 in a number of villages on Lake Maggiore. Fifty-four Jews were murdered, including many elderly people and children, among them guests at the Hotel Meina.[10] The owner of this hotel was a Jew from Istanbul named Alberto Behar, who ran a carpet business in Milan. He and his family were saved by the determined intervention of Turkish Consul Nebil Ertok, who was close with the Behar family.[11] Sixteen Jews, predominantly from Salonica, who had been staying at the hotel were slaughtered in the night from September 22 to September 23, 1943. Among those murdered were three Jews from Izmir.[12]

The Germans did not wait for the puppet government they had put in place to adopt radical anti-Semitic measures. Already on September 25, 1943, the RSHA sent a circular to all its offices stating that from this point on, in agreement with the Foreign Office, Italian Jews too, who so far had been spared as citizens of a German-allied country, were to be deported.[13] During the months of October and November, the Germans conducted anti-Jewish raids in a number of large cities. Over 1,000 Jews were arrested in Rome on October 16, 1943. They were deported directly to Auschwitz to be murdered. Raids followed in Trieste, in Florence, and, on November 8, in Milan. On December 6, 1943, and January 30, 1944, deportation trains ran directly from Milan to Auschwitz. Both transports included numerous Turkish Jews who were considered stateless.

On November 14, 1943, the reconstituted Fascist Party in Italy declared all Jews "enemy aliens." Two weeks later, the Italian puppet government ordered all Jews to be sent to concentration camps and their property confiscated by the state. In December of 1943, the

[10] For a detailed account, see Marco Nozza, *Hotel Meina: La prima strage die ebrei in Italia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1993) as well as the account by the daughter of Alberto Behar; Becky Behar, *La strage dimenticata – Meina settembre 1943* (Novara: Interlinea, 2003).

[11] Nebil Fuat Ertok (frequently referred to in Italian sources as Niebil Hertok) held the office of consul general in Milan in 1941–44. After the consulate was destroyed during the German invasion of northern Italy in September 1943, he lived in Alberto Behar's villa in Milan.

[12] Nozza, *Hotel Meina*, 65. According to Nozza, of the three people from Izmir, two (Cori and Pompas) were employees of Alberto Behar.

[13] Hilberg, *Vernichtung*, 711.

construction of the largest Italian concentration camp in Fossoli in the Modena Province began. From that point forward, the various Italian police and repression agencies of the fascist government participated in persecuting Jews.

Eleven thousand Jews, 5,000 of them foreigners, were able to flee Italy. Neighboring Switzerland was the most important destination. Although the Swiss border officials caught numerous refugees crossing the border and chased them back, according to Papo, about 300 oriental Jews were able to save themselves via this route.[14] At the same time, in September 1943, more than 1,200 Jews left the previously Italian-occupied zone in southeastern France with the Italian Fourth Army and made their way across the Alps into Italy. It can be assumed that Turkish Jews were also among this group, since we know that numerous Turkish Jews had tried to survive in the Italian zone around Nice. The total number of Turkish Jews in Italy in the fall of 1943 can thus be estimated at 600 to 800; at that time, about one third of them may still have been "recognized" Turkish citizens.[15]

German Guidelines regarding Foreign Jews

Two months after the German occupation of Italy, in mid-November 1943, Eichmann demanded the consent of the Foreign Office to also deport foreign Jews in Italy and the zone in Greece previously occupied by Italy, and not to treat them in accordance with the "general rule" (the repatriation ultimatum) agreed between the RSHA and the Foreign Office. In case the Foreign Office did not agree, Eichmann suggested that foreign Jews be expelled to their home countries without waiting for the consent of the respective governments.[16] After agreements were reached between the Foreign Office and the RSHA, the Foreign Office ordered the German embassies in the neutral countries and those allied to Germany on December 7 to present the governments in question with the following ultimatum: either their Jewish citizens could be expelled to their respective home countries immediately, or they could be interned in a camp within the German Reich first, in case their governments wanted to inspect their

[14] For more, see Renata Broggini, *La frontiera della speranza* (Milan: Mondadori, 1998). Papo's figure includes not only Turkish Jews but also Greek and Levantine Jews.

[15] In the 1942 census, 490 Jews born in Turkey were registered in Milan alone and over 100 in Trieste; of these, 188 in Milan and 40 in Trieste still had Turkish citizenship, roughly one third, respectively.

[16] Eichmann's letter to the Foreign Office, dated November 15, 1943; ADAP, series E, vol. VII, doc. 94. Jews from "enemy countries" were exempted; they were to be interned.

papers and return certificates first.[17] Von Papen wrote back from Ankara on December 10, 1943, to say that the Turkish government's response was expected to be delayed because of holidays. For his part, he assumed that the Turkish government would repatriate Jews only after their citizenship had been verified by the Ministry of the Interior in Ankara.[18] Von Papen recommended that the names of the Turkish Jews in Italy and Greece be sent to the Turkish authorities for validation. Based on the available documents, it is not clear whether the German authorities also informed the Turkish Embassy in Rome or the Consulate General in Milan, where most of the Turkish Jews lived, about the imminent arrest of Turkish Jews and the ultimatum regarding their "repatriation" to Turkey. At any rate, there is no indication of any response by the Turkish government to this ultimatum.[19]

Activities of Turkish Consul General Nebil Ertok in Milan

The activities of Consul General Nebil Ertok in Milan to protect persecuted Turkish Jews were not limited to the previously mentioned Behar family. In the fall of 1943, he successfully intervened at least twice to have Turkish Jews released who had been arrested.[20] On December 9, 1943, Ertok wrote to Gustav Adolf von Halem, the German consul general in Milan, asking about the conditions regarding the repatriation of Turkish Jews, "who, after the law of November 30 has been passed, will be viewed as undesirable on Italian territory by the authorities in charge." In practical terms, he asked for assistance with granting exit and transit visas.[21] Ertok most likely made this inquiry on his own initiative, as it occurred before von Papen had informed the Turkish government of the ultimatum. Also, he did not refer to the German ultimatum in his letter; instead he mentions "the law of November 30," that is, the law of the Italian fascist

[17] Telex from Wagner at the German Foreign Office, dated December 7, 1943, to the German embassies in Madrid, Ankara, Lisbon, Berne, Stockholm, Bucharest, Budapest, and Helsinki; PAAA, R100856, fiche 2201.

[18] Telegram from von Papen, no. 1793, dated December 10, 1943; PAAA, R 100856, fiche 2201.

[19] This is based on my research in German archives. As long as the archives of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs remain closed to research, it is impossible to ascertain whether the Turkish government issued any instructions to Turkish diplomats in Italy.

[20] Transcript of interviews with Lina Ventura-Jaffe and another Turkish-Jewish woman (anonymous transcript) from Izmir; Archives of the Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (Jewish Contemporary Documentation Center; hereafter CDEC), Milan.

[21] Copy of the letter with two cover letters requesting forwarding; PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5705.

puppet government to send all Jews to concentration camps. Ertok did not receive a response, however. Halem, his German counterpart, did not send Ertok's letter to the German Consulate General in Fasano on Lake Garda until December 21, 1943. From there, it was forwarded "with a request for instructions" to the Foreign Office in Berlin.

The Absurdity of the "Diplomatic Rules" Regarding the Murder of the Jews

The events in Italy underline once again how erratic and absurd the "rules of exemption," were that the Foreign Office and the RSHA had established for Jews from certain countries: according to the correspondence between Berlin and Fasano that followed Ertok's inquiry and Halem's letter to Berlin, it is evident that the German authorities in Italy had not been informed of the order from Berlin regarding Jews from neutral countries, or they were simply ignoring it. [22] If not even the German Consulate General was aware of, or interested in, the agreements between the RSHA and the Foreign Office regarding the Jews who were citizens of neutral states, it can hardly be assumed that the members of the SS or the Gestapo had the least concern for diplomatic considerations during their raids. Long before the RSHA and the Foreign Office in Berlin had reached such "agreements," the SS and other organizations in Italy had begun to implement persecution measures. The same can be assumed of the Italian police units and the fascist Brigate Neri (Black Brigades), which also began hunting Jews in December 1943.[23]

The Behar family was rescued by Turkish Consul Nebil Ertok because he was friends with the Behars and was immediately informed of their arrest. But many Turkish Jews belonged to the lower classes or were impoverished because of the anti-Semitic laws and work prohibitions. The Jewish community in Milan supported its needy members with alms, which were given to them at the synagogue. Their German pursuers knew this and lay in wait for them near the synagogue. One of the victims was Lea Rebecca Dana (née Behar) (see Figure 10.1). After the death of her husband, she depended on this support. She was caught and deported to Auschwitz on December 6, 1943. The persecutors took her daughter Sara, who was born in 1927, out of a sanatorium in Pietra Ligure and deported her to Auschwitz as well on January 30, 1944.

[22] PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5705, various letters.

[23] Of the Turkish Jews deported from Italy, 44 percent were arrested by Italian units. Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria – gli Ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943–1945)* (Milan: Mursia, 2002), 29.



FIGURE 10.1. Lea Rebecca Dana with her daughters Estrea and Sara. (Courtesy of Moshe Dana.)

It can also be assumed that Turkish Jews who were not allowed by their pursuers to contact their consul or who were arrested in cities where there was no Turkish representation were deported regardless of their citizenship. An analysis of the commemorative book for the victims of the Shoah in Italy compiled by Liliana Picciotto shows that many of the Turkish Jews previously residing in Milan or other big cities were arrested in rural towns and villages; that is, they were trying to hide within Italy.[24]

[24] After the first major raids, many Jews fled the cities and tried to find hiding places in remote villages in the countryside. Most foreign Jews, however, had little chance of hiding successfully. This meant that although only about one fifth of the Jews registered in Italy in 1938 were foreigners, they made up almost 40 percent of the deportees. Evaluation of the statistics by Picciotto, *Libro della memoria*, 28.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether Ertok was aware of the danger the Turkish Jews were exposed to, for he was still assuring them at the end of December that that they would come to no harm.[25]

The Persecution of the Jews in 1944

At the beginning of January 1944, the Nazi authorities established an Amt IV B 4 (the department in charge of the persecution of the Jews) of the RSHA in Verona, which specialized in arresting and deporting Jews. At the end of February, they also took over the Fossoli camp, which from then on served as a temporary way station before deportation to the extermination camps. During these months, the advance of the Allies succeeded in liberating the south of Italy and with it the Jews interned there. However, the vast majority of Jews were in the northern part of Italy, which was controlled by the Germans and the fascist government.

Starting in the spring of 1944, fewer and fewer exceptions were made during the raids: hospitals, care facilities, and convents were combed for Jews. Children and the elderly were arrested as well as Jews who were citizens of neutral states.[26]

Raids in 1944: Arrests of "Protected" Jews

On May 8, 1944, one of the largest raids took place in Milan, in which numerous Turkish Jews were arrested as well. The Turkish Consul intervened in vain for their release. At this point, there was nothing more he could do.[27] Thirty-one of the Turkish Jews arrested during the raids in Milan were deported to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp on May 19, 1944, along with Jews from other neutral countries, holders of South American passports, and Hungarian Jews.[28] Three days before, seven Turkish Jews had already been taken to Bergen-Belsen from the Fossoli camp. While the majority of the people on this transport (581) were

[25] Transcript of interview with Lina Ventura-Jaffe, CDEC.

[26] Hilberg quotes a note by Steengracht (state secretary in the Foreign Office from 1943), dated July 29, 1944, to von Papen about the arrest of Jews with neutral citizenship; Hilberg, *Vernichtung*,722.

[27] Elia Jaffe (the husband of Lina Ventura-Jaffe), who was also among the people arrested on May 8, described the arrest of twenty-seven Jews of "neutral citizenship" on May 8, 1944; David Benbassat, *Je reviens du camp de Bergen-Belsen* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1992), 18ff.

[28] Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria,* 52; also information from the Bergen-Belsen Memorial as well as my own evaluation of Picciotto's commemorative book. The names and dates given in the following section refer to Picciotto, unless otherwise noted.

deported to Auschwitz, another part of the train holding 166 Jewish prisoners with "protected citizenship" (including numerous Libyan Jews with British citizenship) was uncoupled en route and sent to Bergen-Belsen.

Because the front was advancing farther and farther north in the summer of 1944, the Nazi authorities decided to clear the camp in Fossoli and move it to Bolzano, close to the Austrian (German) border. In the course of this evacuation, 246 Jews were deported to Auschwitz on August 2, 1944. Once again, on the other side of the border, cars carrying Jews in "privileged positions" (Jews in "mixed" marriages or of "neutral citizenship") were uncoupled and sent to the Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps. As a result, on August 6, 1944, another sixteen Turkish Jews arrived in Bergen-Belsen, where now a total of fifty-four Jews (from Italy) were interned. Forty-five of these were transferred to the camp for citizens of neutral countries and were able to depart for Turkey in March 1945 in a civilian prisoner exchange (see Chapter 12).

Turkish Jews were also among the prisoners in the newly established transit camp in Bolzano. Of the 165 men and women who were transported on the last deportation train from Bolzano to Auschwitz on October 24, 1944, five were from Turkey. None of them survived. In December 1944, the remaining Jews in Bolzano were deported on two small transports: the men to Flossenbürg[29] and the women and children to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. These transports also consisted, for the most part, of Jews in so-called privileged positions. Of the thirty-nine Jewish men who were taken from Bolzano to Flossenbürg, five were from Turkey. All five lost their lives in Flossenbürg. Nine of the thirty-one women and children taken to Ravensbrück were of Turkish descent. Six of them died there. In keeping with the agreement between the German Foreign Office and the RSHA, Jews with Turkish citizenship were not taken to Auschwitz but to concentration camps inside Germany. With the exception of Sara Cittone-Ojalvo (born in Istanbul) and her children, this "privileged deportation" spelled death for the other eleven Turkish Jews.

[29] Because of its location, the Flossenbürg concentration camp in Bavaria became one of the final stations within the concentration camp system in the winter of 1944–45. Thousands of people who had been moved out of the evacuated camps in the east on so-called "evacuation transports" arrived in the already massively overcrowded camp, where, on top of everything else, a typhus epidemic had broken out.

Summary

In all, 250 Jews of Turkish descent were deported from Italy. Of these, 191 were actually born in Turkey: 88 in Istanbul, 68 in Izmir, 7 in Gallipoli/Gelibolu, 7 in Edirne, and 21 in other towns in Turkey (Çanakkale, Aydın, Samsun, Tekirdağ, Kasaba/Turgutlu, and Menemen). The remaining sixty were wives and underage children who were born in Italy but whose fathers or husbands were Turkish citizens and who were therefore eligible for Turkish citizenship. Of the 250 Turkish Jews, about 100 had been living in Milan, 55 in Livorno, and 27 in Trieste.[30]

The initiative of Consul Nebil Ertok in Milan to repatriate Turkish Jews was a failure. This was probably not only because the Germans were stalling; there is also no indication that steps were taken by the Turkish government or the embassy in Berlin to intervene on behalf of the Turkish Jews in Italy. Still, Ertok's repeated interventions are most likely the reason that at least some of the Turkish Jews in Milan were taken to Bergen-Belsen, which saved them from being deported to Auschwitz.

[30] All figures are based on my evaluation of Picciotto's commemorative book *Il libro della memoria*. The persecution of Jews was especially brutal in Trieste. The city was directly annexed by the Germans as part of the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral in 1943 and placed under a special administrative structure. In a suburb of the city, the Risiera di San Sabba concentration camp was constructed, where the Germans murdered several thousand prisoners, including Turkish Jews from Trieste.

11

Southeastern Europe and the Aegean Islands

A certain number of Turkish Jews also lived in the countries neighboring Turkey, primarily in Greece and Bulgaria, as well as on the Aegean Islands, which had belonged to Italy since 1923. In the region around the Aegean Sea, the close cultural, economic, and family ties that had existed between the Jewish communities for centuries continued to live on in the respective border areas after the creation of the new states. In addition, the Treaty of Lausanne gave the inhabitants of the areas, which were previously part of the Ottoman Empire the option to choose for either citizenship. As a result, some Jews in these areas retained their Ottoman, that is, Turkish citizenship after these regions had been ceded, while still others had emigrated to the area after World War I or had moved to join relatives who now lived on the other side of the border.

Greece

When Italy attacked Greece at the end of October 1940, it encountered unexpectedly strong Greek resistance and asked its German Axis partner for help. On April 6, 1941, German troops attacked Yugoslavia and Greece, which were occupied within a month. Greece was then carved up between Germany, Italy, and Bulgaria. On the basis of German-Italian agreements about their respective zones of influence, the greater part of Greece, including Athens, became an Italian-occupied zone, and Germany occupied the region of Central Macedonia around Salonica (today Thessaloniki), most of Crete, and the port of

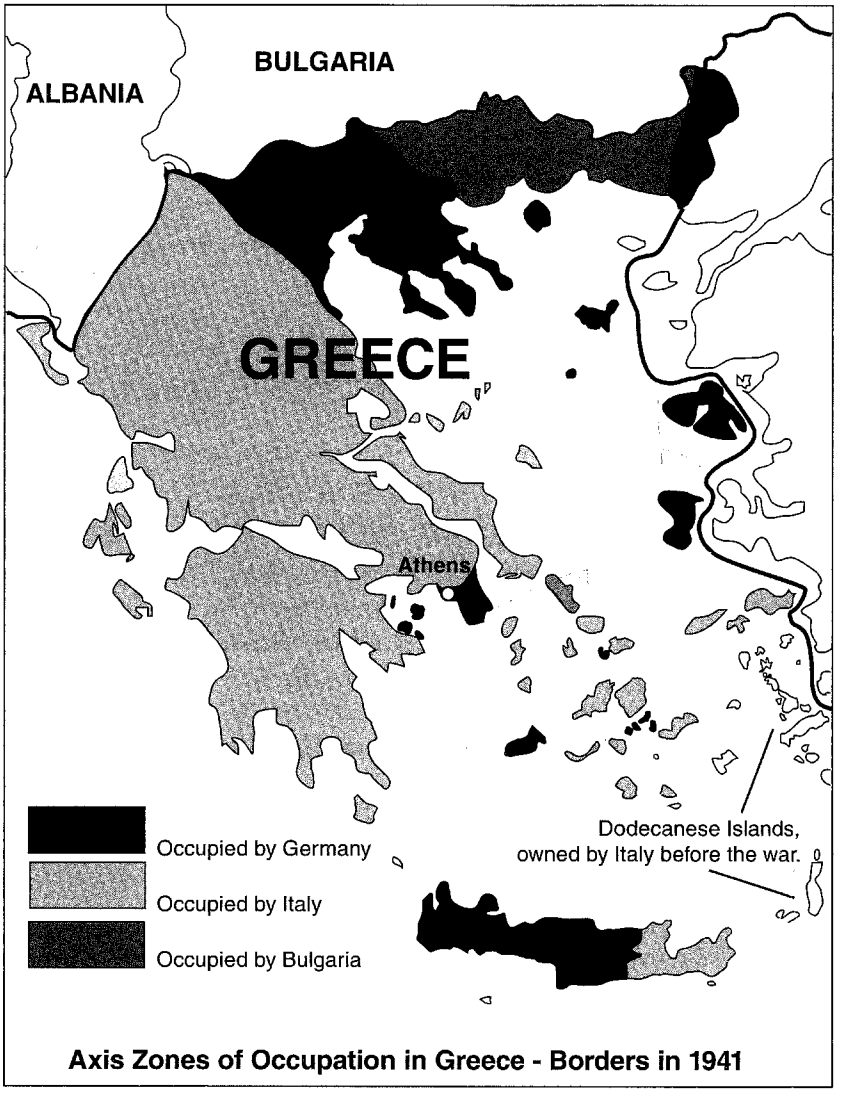


FIGURE 11.1. Zones of occupation in Greece. (Copyright Klaus Viehmann.)

Piraeus. Bulgaria got Greek area south of its border on the northern coast of the Aegean Sea. To assuage Turkish fears, the border strip next to Turkey, which included the city of Didymoteicho, was not militarily occupied. However, German police and SS units did operate there (see Figure 11.1).

Salonica

Although Germany initially occupied only a relatively small part of Greece, the largest Jewish community in Greece in Salonica came immediately under German occupation in April 1941. The community had already lost some of its significance because of its separation from the Ottoman Empire and had been greatly weakened by the fire of 1917. It had also been hit hard by the influx of Greeks who had been driven out of Asia Minor in 1923 in the "population exchange" agreed in the Treaty of Lausanne. About 20,000 Jews had already left the city during the 1920s and 1930s. Nevertheless, the Jews of Salonica still constituted the largest Sephardic community in the world. About 55,000 Jews lived in the city in 1940, more than three fourths of the approximately 70,000 Jews in Greece. It is not known how many of the Jews in Salonica still held Turkish citizenship in 1941. Traditionally, these Jews felt a strong allegiance to Turkey, which is why, in times of Turkish-Greek hostilities, they had repeatedly been accused by the Greeks of disloyalty. In the census of October 1940 – a few months before the German occupation – 145 Jews had claimed Turkish as their mother tongue,[1] which is astonishing, because the language in everyday use was Judeo-Spanish as well as French among the educated classes.

The Persecution of the Jews in the German Zone

Immediately after the invasion of the Wehrmacht, the persecution of the Jews began. In Salonica, Jewish dignitaries were removed from office, newspapers forbidden, and houses owned by Jews seized. The anti-Semitic Greek National Union (Ethniki Enosis Ellados), which had been banned in 1936 by the Metaxas government, was legalized again. The men of Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg stole art and valuables and plundered several tens of thousands of books and prints from synagogues, archives, and Jewish libraries, including historical works of inestimable value, and took them to Frankfurt to the anti-Semitic Institute for Study of the Jewish Question (Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage).

In July 1942, under demeaning circumstances, 9,000 Jews aged eighteen to forty-five years were forced to register as forced laborers on Freedom Square in Salonica, where the Young Turk revolution had once begun. Within just a few weeks, about 400 of the men who had been hauled away for slave labor had died as a result of inhumane working conditions.

[1] Hagen Fleischer, "Griechenland," in *Dimension des Völkermords*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996), 249.

The Germans extorted two billion drachmas from the Jewish community for their release from this torture. But drastic anti-Semitic measures started later in Greece than in other Nazi-controlled countries, because the Germans attempted to organize a unified approach of the three occupying forces toward the Jews, but the Italians refused to agree.

In February 1943, Eichmann's deputies Dieter Wisliceny and Alois Brunner arrived in Salonica.[2] In cooperation with the military administration, represented by Max Merten, they immediately began to prepare the murder of the Jews. Within a few weeks, the complete disenfranchisement of the Jews had taken place in Greece as well – the result of the introduction of the German anti-Semitic laws, the introduction of the yellow badge for children from the age of five, and an evening curfew for Jews, the prohibition of the use of telephones and public transportation, and finally, forcing Jews into three ghettos, one of which was near the freight depot and became the transit camp for deportation. On March 15, 1943, the deportations from Salonica began. By August 1943, about 46,000 Jews had been transported to Auschwitz. Eighty-five percent of them were murdered in the gas chambers immediately upon arrival.

Foreign Jews from Neutral Countries in Salonica

Jews from neutral countries were exempted from the deportations (and from measures such as the badge requirement and confinement to the ghettos). This included Spanish, Italian, and Turkish as well as several Portuguese, Argentinean, and Swiss Jews. Earlier, the German occupation authorities had forced the city's Jewish community to compile a list of Jews with citizenship of neutral countries, and the list had been handed over to the embassies or consulates of those countries. While the number of Turkish Jews (39) was significantly smaller than the number of Spanish (511) and Italian (281) Jews, Turkish Jews still constituted the third largest group of foreign Jews in Salonica.[3] The Portuguese, Argentinean, and Scandinavian Jews were immediately repatriated by their countries. Despite massive intimidation attempts by the Germans, the Italian consul insisted that, in addition to the 281 Jews with "recognized" Italian citizenship, another 48 Jews be exempted from deportation. These he had issued Italian papers, and eventually had them evacuated to the Italian zone on his own

[2] Dieter Wisliceny was a member of Section IV B 4 of the RSHA from 1940 to 1944 and played a major role in the genocide of the Jews in Slovakia, Greece, and Hungary; Alois Brunner had been one of Adolf Eichmann's closest associates since 1938.

[3] The small number may be due to the fact that some of the Turkish Jews in Salonica either had not registered or had fled to the Italian zone or other places in Greece.

authority.[4] The Spanish consul also insisted on protecting the 511 Spanish citizens in Salonica, but the Spanish government in Madrid was not willing to let those Jews actually enter Spain, so 366 of them were deported to Bergen-Belsen in August 1943. From there, with the support of the Joint, they eventually reached Palestine via Barcelona and Casablanca in February 1944. Most of the remaining 150 Spanish Jews were able to escape to Athens with the help of the Italians, but there they were protected from German persecution only until September 1943.

The Fate of the Turkish Jews in Salonica

On April 30, 1943, von Thadden at the Foreign Office in Berlin passed on the list with the names of the thirty-nine Turkish Jews in Salonica to Fikret Belbez, a secretary at the Turkish Embassy in Berlin. This was accompanied by the usual blackmailing attempt to the effect that Turkey must accept these people before June 15, or they would be deported. Ambassador von Papen sent the same list to the Turkish foreign minister. On May 7, 1943, von Papen telegraphed that the Turkish government was interested in repatriating nine of the Jews, but that it viewed the citizenship of the remaining thirty people as not verified.[5] But while the Turkish government was ready to hand over these thirty people to the German murderers, the Turkish consul general in Athens, İnayetullah Cemal Özkaya, decided to take action. On May 30, 1943, a further message from von Papen stated that Turkey now recognized the citizenship of additional Jews from Salonica. On June 9, the Foreign Office forwarded a telegram from Özkaya in Athens to the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, in which Özkaya stated that twenty-two of the Turkish Jews were registered with the respective Turkish consulates.[6] Just how many people were recognized by the Turkish government in the end is not known. Fleischer has come to the assessment that the

[4] Hilberg, *Vernichtung*, 746. According to Eckert, after massive Italian protests, the Germans also released an additional seventy-five Jews who had already been arrested; Rainer Eckert, *Vom "Fall Marita" zur "wirtschaftlichen Sonderaktion" – Die deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Griechenland vom 6. April 1941 bis zur Kriegswende im Februar/März 1943* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1992), 182ff; this figure is in agreement with Knox, who writes that Italian diplomats evacuated 350–400 Jews from Salonica into the Italian zone; Knox "Das faschistische Italien," 64.

[5] Telegram from von Papen to the German Foreign Office, Section Inland II, dated May 7, 1943; PAAA, R 100889, Fiche 2273.

[6] Verbal note from the Foreign Office, dated June 9, 1943, quoting the telegram from Özkaya; PAAA, R 99446, fiche 5702. Özkaya mentions that only five of these people had applied for and received passports, perhaps because some of these families were in hiding.

Spanish and Turkish Jews "were rescued despite the lukewarm attitude in Madrid and Ankara because at least the local diplomatic representatives [showed] alert interest."[7]

The Zone Occupied by Bulgaria and the Border Strip Occupied by Germany

Already in 1939, the Bulgarian government had driven foreign Jews, among them an unspecified number of Turkish Jews, out of their territory. The occupation of East Macedonia and Thrace had brought the northern Aegean Jewish communities in Kavala, Drama, Komtini, Xanthi, and other towns under Bulgarian control.

Whereas Bulgaria, as an ally of the Axis powers, protected Jews with Bulgarian citizenship in the state's original territory from deportation, in February 1943, the "Bulgarian Commissioner for Jewish Affairs," Alexander Belev, agreed with Theo Dannecker (known as France's butcher of the Jews),[8] to turn over the Jews living in the parts of Greece and Yugoslavia occupied by Bulgaria. In a swift and sudden operation in the night from March 3 to March 4, 1943, about 4,000 Jews from this region were literally yanked from their beds and initially taken to Bulgarian holding camps. According to Rychlík, the Bulgarian arrest units also took foreign Jews. Only in Komotini Jews with Italian, Spanish, and Turkish citizenship were spared.[9] More than 4,000 Jews were taken by the Bulgarians to the port town of Lom on the Danube, where they were handed over to the Germans and deported via Vienna to Treblinka to be murdered.

Because the Bulgarian zone was in the immediate vicinity of Turkish Thrace, with families living on both sides of the border, it can be assumed that several of these Jews had Turkish citizenship. One Bulgarian source refers to the determination of the Turkish consul in Komotini in Greek Thrace to rescue persecuted Jews. During one raid by the Bulgarian

[7] Fleischer, "Griechenland," 255. None of the other studies on the Shoah in Greece mentions Turkish efforts on behalf of Turkish Jews in Salonica. However, Eckert, Hilbert, and Spengler-Axiopoulos describe the positive activities of consuls from neutral countries. The office of the Turkish consul general in Salonica was held by İdris Çora until the consulate was closed in November 1943.

[8] Dannecker had been one of Eichmann's men since 1937. From 1940 to 1942, he was head of the Office of Jewish Affairs in Paris.

[9] Rychlík, "Zweierlei Politik," 81. Rychlík writes that twenty-one Jews with foreign citizenship were deported.

occupation troops, a Jewish family was granted refuge in the consulate building, and the consul refused to turn them over to their persecutors.[10]

Yitzchak Kerem, who has researched the activities of various individuals and groups to save Jews in Greece, mentions that on several occasions, Jews were able to escape from the German-occupied border strip to Turkey. From his description, it is evident that some of the Turkish border guards disregarded the government's decree prohibiting the entry of Jews or even helped them, while others enforced this rule.[11]

Athens and the previously Italian-Occupied Zone

On the eve of the war, the Jewish community of Greater Athens (including the nearby port city of Piraeus), which came under Italian occupation in 1941, numbered about 3,500. Because of Italy's protective stance, many Jews from the German-occupied part of Greece fled to Athens after the occupation in 1941. As a consequence, the number of Jews there doubled during the following two years to about 7,000.[12] Of its German ally, the Italian government also demanded that the Turkish Jews residing in Greece be treated prudently, because Rome feared countermeasures by the Turkish authorities against the numerous Italian Jews residing in Istanbul.[13]

[10] Testimony by Pencho Lukov in the trial against members of the Bulgarian Commissariat for Jewish Affairs (KEV) in 1945. In his testimony, Lukov does not mention the name of the consul and whether the Jewish family were Turkish citizens; USHMM, microfilm, Bulgarian Ministry of Internal Affairs, reel 1. Thanks to Steven Sage for pointing me to this information.

[11] During the German advance in April 1941, Rabbi Ya'acov El Kavetz and his sons succeeded in fleeing to Turkey, from where they traveled on to Palestine. A second group that tried to flee by the same route was sent back by the Turkish border authorities. Together with his cousin Nissim Tarabulus, the Jewish officer Nissim Alkalai from Nea Orestiada in Greek Thrace was able to get to the Greek town of Amori on the Evros River, the border to Turkey, with the help of Greek partisans, from where a Turkish border guard took them over to the Turkish side of the river. A second group that tried to flee from Didymoteicho to Turkey was turned back by the Turkish border guards, arrested by the Germans, and deported to Auschwitz. All examples from Yitzhak Kerem, "Darke Hazala schel Yehudim be-Yawan be Milchemet-ha-Olam haschniya" [Ways of saving the Jews in Greece during World War II], *Pe'Amim*, no. 27 (1986): 86–87, and 93. I would like to thank Barbara Spengler-Axiopoulos for providing the German translation of Yitzchak Kerem's article, which was written in Hebrew. See also Spengler-Axiopoulos, "Wenn ihr den Juden helft," 146.

[12] Spengler-Axiopoulos "Wenn ihr den Juden helft," 161.

[13] Telegram from Mackensen (German Embassy in Rome) to the German Foreign Office, dated December 10, 1942; PAAA, R 100870, fiche 2233.

In the wake of Mussolini's fall, the German Wehrmacht occupied Italy in 1943 and with it the previously Italian zone, and immediately began organizing the murder of Jews. At the end of September, Wisliceny left Salonica and arrived in Athens, followed by Jürgen Stroop, the executioner of Warsaw, a few weeks later. Fortunately, Rabbi Barzilai refused to hand over the lists of community members to the German persecutors. Initially, many Jews did not register. Barzilay and many others managed either to flee to partisan-controlled territories or to hide with the help of non-Jewish neighbors. Nonetheless, the Germans still succeeded in deporting about one third of Athens's Jews.

At the end of September 1943, the German Foreign Office set the neutral countries a period of two months to repatriate their Jewish citizens from the previously Italian-occupied zone of Greece.[14] The German embassy in Sofia reported to Berlin on November 6 that the Turkish consul general in Athens had applied to the Bulgarian authorities at the beginning of November to obtain transit visas "for the return to Turkey of roughly 100 Jews with Turkish citizenship from Athens and surroundings." The Turkish consul general in Athens at the time was İnayetullah Cemal Özkaya, who served in this capacity from March 1940 until April 1945 and who had already taken action to have the Turkish citizenship of Jews from Salonica recognized. It can be assumed that Jews from Salonica, who had escaped to the Italian zone around Athens were among these "roughly 100 Jews with Turkish citizenship." Nevertheless, the figure of "roughly 100" is almost three times as high as the number of people registered as Turkish Jews in Salonica (39), although the community in Salonica was much larger and had closer contact with Turkey than the one in Athens. This leads us to believe that Özkaya passed off many more Jews as Turkish citizens so they would be under his protection.[15] When asked by the Bulgarian authorities whether the German government had any objections to the departure of the Turkish Jews, Wagner, who was Undersecretary Luther's successor in the Foreign Office, answered that the departure of the Turkish Jews had been instigated by the Germans.[16]

Despite these initiatives taken by the Turkish consul, the RSHA and the Foreign Office agreed in December to expel foreign Jews in the former Italian zone of occupation in Greece and to either send them to their

[14] Letter from von Thadden to von Weizsäcker, dated September 29, 1943, quoted in Eckert, *Vom "Fall Marita,"* 186 and 296.

[15] This was probably done in exchange for money. Kerem, "Darke Hazala," 86–87

[16] Telegram from Mohrmann in Sofia, dated November 6, 1943, to the Foreign Office, and Wagner's response, dated November, 11, 1943; PAAA, R 99447, fiche 5704.

countries of origin without giving the nations in question the opportunity to inspect their "eligibility for repatriation" (*Heimkehrberechtigung*) or to arrest them and take them to concentration camps within the German Reich.[17] In the second week of December, the countries in question were informed accordingly.

In letters dated December 16 and 29, 1943, and January 27, 1944, von Thadden informed "Special Representative of the Foreign Office for the South East" in Athens, Kurt-Fritz von Graevenitz, of the response of each country. Sweden, Romania, Switzerland, Spain, and Hungary ordered the immediate evacuation of their Jews, while the Portuguese, Argentinean, and Turkish governments wanted to inspect the papers of potentially eligible people first.[18] The engagement of Consul General Özkaya stands in marked contrast to the hesitant attitude of the Turkish government in Ankara: according to von Graevenitz, the Turkish consul general in Athens initiated the repatriation of seventy-two Turkish Jews at the beginning of February 1944.[19]

But it did not come to that. In the night from March 24 to March 25, 1944, Greece's Independence Day, the SS arrested more than 500 Jews in Athens, among them 132 Spanish and 40 Turkish Jews, as well as people with citizenship of neutral or allied countries, and took them to the Haidari concentration camp in Greece.[20] This led to resolute interventions by the representatives of Spain, Turkey, and Hungary. The Turkish consul general was able to obtain the release of thirty-two of the arrested Turkish Jews from Haidari on March 26. They were then sent to Turkey.[21] Von Graevenitz writes that some of them were people for whom the consul had already obtained passports and tickets. As for the Spanish Jews, they were deported to Bergen-Belsen in April 1944, where they were interned in the prisoner exchange camp until the entire camp was liberated.

[17] This agreement was the same one that had already been reached for the Italian mother country.

[18] PAAA, R 100856, fiche 2201.

[19] Letter from von Graevenitz to the Foreign Office in Berlin, dated April 3, 1944; ADAP, series E, vol. 7, doc. 317. We can assume that these were the same people whose repatriation he had initiated six months earlier.

[20] Von Graevenitz's letter mentions 500. Fleischer speaks of the arrest of a total of 1,300 Jews, 800 of whom the Germans had lured to the synagogue with a ploy (the announcement that food was going to be distributed); Fleischer, "Griechenland," 263.

[21] Letter from von Graevenitz to the Foreign Office in Berlin, dated April 3, 1944; ADAP, series E, vol. 7, doc. 317.

The total number of Jews who could be saved from the German murderers and moved out of Greece either with Turkish help or by claiming Turkish citizenship is not known. Fleischer writes of "several dozen Turkish citizens" who survived the Shoah and did not return to Greece after liberation.[22] The study by Yitzchak Kerem indicates that Turkish papers could be purchased at the consulate in Athens and that members of the resistance, who arranged the escape of Jews by route of Euboea Island bought Turkish papers for fleeing Jews.[23]

Spengler-Axiopoulos and Bowman emphasize the support that Jews in Greece received from the Greek resistance movement and the partisans of EAM-ELAS (Ethnikón Apeleftherotikón Métopon–Ethnikós Laïkós Apeleftherotikós Strátos / National Liberation Front–National Popular Liberation Army) whose ranks included numerous Jews. As a result of the cooperation between the Greek resistance, Jewish activists in Turkey, and the British Secret Intelligence Service, about 1,000 Jews were rescued out of Greece and taken to Turkey.[24]

Rhodes

The island of Rhodes and the other Dodecanese Islands located near the coast of the Turkish Aegean had belonged to the Ottoman Empire since 1522, for almost 400 years. In 1912, the islands were annexed by Italy and officially belonged to Italy after the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. As the Turkish mainland was very near, the large Jewish communities on the islands continued to stay in close contact with the mainland communities.

At the beginning of the 1930s, about 3,400 Jews were living on Rhodes. Many of them had only moved to the island from Greece, Turkey, and Bulgaria after World War I. As it was Italian territory, the announcement of Mussolini's anti-Jewish laws meant that 480 Jews (103 families) were declared foreigners and ordered to leave the island. Thanks to the intervention of a delegation from the AIU (Alliance Israélite Universelle), these measures were not implemented. However, the anti-Semitic governor, Cesare Maria De Vecchi, maintained the threat of expulsion to some degree and generally applied Mussolini's anti-Jewish legislation more

[22] Fleischer "Griechenland," 271, note 151.

[23] Kerem, "Darke Hazala," 86–87.

[24] The literature on Greece mentions between 1,500 (Spengler-Axiopoulos) and 3,000 (Kerem) rescued Jews. The people involved in these rescue activities, such as Heinz Ziffer and Teddy Kollek, write that approximately 1,000 Jews were brought to safety in this manner (see Chapter 5).

strictly than was the case in the Italian mother country. This contributed to a sharp decrease in the Jewish population on the island after 1939. In September 1943 – when Rhodes was occupied by the Germans – only about 1,900 Jews still lived there.

The Obliteration of the Jewish Community on Rhodes by the Germans

"Germans! Read what your people have done, and give them the name that they deserve, then take pride that you belong to the master race!" With this "Dedication to the Germans" the Turkish historian Avram Galanté begins his detailed description of the events on Rhodes.[25]

After the removal of Mussolini in July 1943, it appeared for a short time as if Rhodes would be handed over to the British forces, which already held a number of Greek islands in the Aegean Sea, under the terms of the armistice reached between Italy and the Allies at the beginning of September 1943. This was forestalled by the German troops, which occupied the island on September 16 and disarmed the Italian forces. In February and during Passover in April 1944, a number of Jews whose houses were located in the immediate vicinity of the military fortress were killed inadvertently in British air raids. It is likely that bombs dropped by an aircraft on February 18 destroyed the Turkish Consulate building. Two consulate employees were killed in the attack. The wife of Consul Ülkümen and another employee were seriously injured.[26]

Since the island's separation from Turkey, the Jews of Rhodes had been an isolated community. In the context of the anti-Jewish measures of Mussolini's regime, their radios had been confiscated in 1941. They were consequently completely uninformed about the murder of Jews perpetrated by the Germans, and the German murderers insidiously exploited this ignorance.[27]

[25] Avram Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs de Turquie*, vol. 7 (Istanbul: Isis, 1986), 280. Galanté was the most famous Turkish Jewish historian and a sometime MP in the Turkish National Assembly. He had been a teacher on Rhodes before World War I. Many of his relatives lived there, and his daughter Victoria, whose married name was Soriano, witnessed the German occupation.

[26] Selahattin Ülkümen, *Bilinmeyen Yönleriyle Bir Dönemin Dışişleri* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1993), 103. Ülkümen's wife later died from her injuries. Ülkümen himself wrote that the attacking planes had been German, not British. Stanford Shaw and several Turkish authors maintain that the attack was intended by the Germans "as revenge for Ülkümen's committed efforts on behalf of the Turkish Jews" in Rhodes; Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 253. This is absurd, for the reason alone that the arrest of the Jews (and Ülkümen's committed efforts) did not occur until five months after the bombing.

[27] Account by Alberto Israël in Goldberg et al., *Passage du Témoin*, 270. See Hilberg, *Vernichtung*, 754.

In July 1944, one of Eichmann's associates, Anton Burger, arrived in Rhodes. An order issued on July 2 allowed Jews to reside only in three towns. On July 18, 1944, military commander Kleemann ordered all male Jews over the age of fifteen to report to the German headquarters the following day for an "identity check."[28] When the men showed up the next morning, their papers were taken away. and they were used as hostages, because now the Germans ordered the women and children to show up within twelve hours as well. They were forced to turn over all valuables, jewelry, money, and even watches.[29] For three days, the Jewish men, women, and children were held in the courtyard of the headquarters without food or drink. Greek and Turkish island residents, who saw these people waiting in the burning sun and wanted to give them something to eat or drink, were chased away. An order issued on July 20, 1944, prohibited the population under threat of being shot and killed from helping or hiding Jews.[30]

On July 24, the entire Jewish population of Rhodes, along with 120 Jews from the neighboring island of Kos, was deported on four barges. A week later, 1,800 Jews arrived at the Haidari transit camp near Athens; from there, they were deported to Auschwitz on the last Greek transport on August 3, 1944. Twenty-three people already died during the two-week trip. Of the 1,820 Jews deported from Rhodes and Kos, only 179 survived.

The Rescue of the Turkish Jews

More than forty Jews from Rhodes were saved by the determination of the Turkish consul in Rhodes, Selahattin Ülkümen. Pointing out Turkey's neutrality, he demanded the release of the Turkish Jews, referring to some of the spouses and children as "Turkish citizens" as well who themselves did not have Turkish citizenship.[31]

[28] Account by Salomon Galanté quoted in Miriam Novitch, *Le passage des barbares: contribution a l'histoire de la déportation et de la résistance des juifs grecs* (Israel: Ghetto Fighters House Publishers, 1982), 108.

[29] They were told to take their valuables with them to be able to survive in exile. According to Galanté, this plunder of Jewish property was carried out by Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg; Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs,* 283.

[30] Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs*, 284.

[31] Ülkümen, *Bilinmeyen Yönleriyle,* 104. The literature and eyewitness accounts give different numbers with regard to the people rescued and the Jews "recognized" as Turkish in any case. According to Victoria Soriano, only ten of the Jews were "real Turkish citizens"; Novitch, *Le passage des barbares,* 112. Maurice Soriano told Lea Rosh that a total of forty-six Turkish Jews had been saved, of whom twenty-six held Turkish citizenship.

Maurice Soriano's Account of the Rescue of Turkish Jews by Consul Ülkümen

The Turkish Consul came personally with a register to show the Germans that everything was in order and legal. He said to me, "Mr. Soriano, here is paper and a pencil. Please write down the following names that I will give you." He looked at his list and said so-and-so, so-and-so, and so-and-so, and it was obvious to me that some of the people did not have Turkish citizenship. So I put my parents, who were not Turkish, on the list as well.

Question: Didn't the Germans get suspicious?

No, they were not suspicious.

The Consul saved forty-six people. Twenty-six of them actually had Turkish passports. Among those saved was a lady, not from Rhodes, whose father was in the Turkish army. So the Consul saved her. There were Jews who were Turks but had lost their citizenship, and the Consul had the humanity to save them as well.[32]

In 1989, Ülkümen was honored for his commitment as "Righteous among the Nations" by Yad Vashem.

However, the Jews who were spared deportation were still subjected to the brutality of the Germans. Every morning at eight they had to report to the Gestapo, where they were always held for one or two hours without reason. Around August 8, 1944, they received the order to get ready to travel: They would be taken to Athens to have their Turkish citizenship checked. Those whose Turkish citizenship was contested would be deported.[33] Fortunately, it never came to that.

In the meantime, Turkey had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany on August 2. Ülkümen was taken to Athens and, according to the plans of the German occupiers, was supposed to participate in a bilateral exchange of civilians, along with the other Turkish diplomats in the European countries still occupied by Germany. However, a few weeks later the Greek mainland was liberated and Ülkümen and his wife were able to return to Turkey.

[32] Quoted in Lea Rosh and Eberhard Jäckel, *"Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland": Deportation und Ermordung der Juden; Kollaboration und Verweigerung in Europa* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1990), 84.

[33] Account by Victoria Soriano, daughter of Avram Galanté, in Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs*, 287.

Rhodes, on the other hand, remained under German occupation until the end of World War II. Victoria Soriano described how several Jews succeeded in hiding with the help of the local population. Her father-in-law was housed in an Italian hospital as a surgical patient. The local imam took the community's Torah scrolls and religious objects to the mosque for safekeeping and returned them to the surviving Jews after the war. At the end of January 1945, the Germans chased the last remaining Turkish Jews off the island of Rhodes. Their only choice was to return to Turkey in a boat that was much too small and scarcely seaworthy.[34]

The Joint's records document that in the spring of 1945, fifty-five Jews from Rhodes were housed by the communities of Izmir and Istanbul and cared for with the help of the Joint.[35] Some of them were likely most likely Jewish people who were saved from deportation because of their Turkish citizenship, while others were likely refugees. Several Jews had succeeded in escaping from the island of Kos in small boats and had reached the city of Bodrum on the Turkish mainland. One of these people was Hizkia M. Franco, who played an important role in the island's Jewish community. After the autumn of 1943 – that is, after the Germans had occupied the Italian Aegean islands and the Greek areas previously occupied by Italy – hundreds of refugees had managed to reach Turkey. Some of them were Turkish citizens who had lived in those areas, but there were also Greeks and Italians, including Italian soldiers, among them. It is possible that a number of Jews from Rhodes, too, managed to flee to safety with these refugees.

After the liberation, about fifty Jews returned to Rhodes. Many of them did not want to remain on the island. "I have known the island in all its beauty. To me, it is just a giant cemetery now," Salomon Galanté described his feelings.[36]

[34] Rosh and Jäckel, "Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland," 85ff

[35] AJJDC, Istanbul Collection, documents regarding the refugees from Rhodes in the records IS 2/11 and IS 2/22, among others. Documents on Jews from Rhodes who were able to flee to Turkey can also be found in the archives of the WJC; AJA, D 108–117.

[36] Not to be confused with Avram Galanté, the historian. Novitch, *Le passage des barbares,* 110.

12

The Exchange of Turkish Jews in Concentration Camps

A few weeks before the end of World War II, roughly 130 Turkish-Jewish prisoners were freed from the Bergen-Belsen and Ravensbrück concentration camps. Within the framework of a German-Turkish exchange of civilian internees, they arrived in Turkey on board the *SS Drottningholm*.

Bergen-Belsen

The Bergen-Belsen concentration camp,[1] which was not constructed until 1943, had a special function in the plans of the Nazis. Initially euphemistically designated as a "residence camp" (*Aufenthaltslager*), certain groups of European Jews were to be collected there and "kept available for exchange purposes" for a certain period of time. The head of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, in his capacity as Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of German Nationhood, attached particular importance to exchanging certain groups of "privileged" Jews for Palestinian Germans interned by Great Britain.[2] Aside from this, the Foreign Office had plans

[1] A prisoner of war camp existed in Bergen-Belsen from July to November 1941, where about 20,000 Soviet prisoners of war were incarcerated; 18,000 of these had died of the miserable imprisonment conditions by the spring of 1942. Eberhard Kolb, *Bergen-Belsen: Vom "Aufenthaltslager" zum Konzentrationslager 1943–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 2002), 24.

[2] The Palestinian Germans were primarily descendents of the German Templars, a Protestant sect founded in Württemberg that began building settlements in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century. During the thirties, most of them had become supporters of the Nazi system. As early as 1941 and 1942, Jews who possessed British or Palestinian passports were exchanged for Palestinian Germans in two exchange operations.

of its own: to use the Jews as hostages to be exchanged for captured Germans, or possibly to be "ransomed" by the Allies.[3]

Starting in the summer of 1943, Jews who belonged to various "special categories" were taken to the Bergen-Belsen camp. These were, for example, Jews with citizenship of neutral countries, Jews who were leaders in Jewish institutions, and holders of protective passports, or certificates to emigrate to Palestine. Also included were those carrying *promesas.* Promesas (Spanish for "promise") were letters by consuls of the respective Latin American countries saying that the holder was granted citizenship of the state represented by the consul and that a passport would follow soon.

There, several individual camps were established one after the other, each separate from the others and with its own specific functions and conditions. One of these was the so-called neutral camp, in which Jews from neutral countries were incarcerated. However, not even the Jews eligible for potential exchange were safe, and most of the Jews taken to Bergen-Belsen from Poland in the fall of 1943 were ultimately deported to Auschwitz, where they were murdered without exception.[4]

Turkish Jews in Bergen-Belsen

As mentioned in Chapter 10 on Italy, beginning in May 1944, thirty-eight Turkish Jews from Italy were taken to Bergen-Belsen. On June 7, 1944, thirty-two of them were transferred to the "neutral camp." On July 24, 1944, two months after the incarceration of the Italian group, the RSHA sent an inquiry via the Foreign Office to the Turkish authorities, asking whether they would be interested in the "return" of these thirty-two people.[5] This letter was never answered, because Turkey broke off diplomatic relations with the German Reich one week later, on August 2, 1944.

Between August and October 1944, many more Turkish Jews from camps and prisons in Italy, the Netherlands, and Austria, as well as Prague and Belgrade, were brought to Bergen-Belsen. This group

[3] For a detailed account, see Kolb, *Bergen-Belsen,* 21–34; Alexandra-Eileen Wenck, *Zwischen Menschenhandel und "Endlösung": Das Konzentrationslager Bergen-Belsen* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000).

[4] Kolb, *Bergen-Belsen,* 27ff. They were predominantly holders of Latin American passports.

[5] Letter from the RSHA to von Thadden, dated July 10, 1944, and letter from von Thadden to the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, dated July 24, 1944, with a list of thirty-two Turkish Jews from Italy incarcerated in Bergen-Belsen; PAAA, R 100889, fiche 2273. It is unclear why the inquiry referred to only thirty-two of the thirty-eight Turkish Jews from Italy interned in Bergen-Belsen.

included both recognized and unrecognized Turkish citizens.[6] In the end, 105 of the Turkish Jews were in the neutral camp at Bergen-Belsen, while several of the Turkish Jews, who had been in the same transports to Bergen-Belsen, were not placed with this group in the neutral camp.

The background for the Turkish Jews being rounded up was obviously the severing of political relations between Germany and Turkey on August 2, 1944. Two days later, two meetings took place on this matter at the German Foreign Office.[7] The main issue at hand was the expulsion and internment of German citizens by Turkey.[8] Berlin feared that Ankara would retain a group of Germans for a "one-for-one exchange." The authorities in Berlin were especially concerned about the numerous members of the German Secret Service in Turkey. Also, the Germans in Turkey outnumbered the Turkish civilians in Germany by far. The Foreign Office estimated that there were about 1,700 Germans in Turkey, while the number of Turks was 355 in Berlin and 250 in Vienna, and most of these were students. Therefore, the likely reason for bringing the Turkish Jews to Bergen-Belsen, an action which followed the meetings, is that the Germans wanted to intern as many people with Turkish citizenship as possible in order to use them as "bargaining chips" for an exchange.

Another decision resulting from the meetings in the Foreign Office was first to expel a group of Turkish citizens in Germany, including "roughly fifteen Jews with Turkish citizenship," to "counteract" the expulsion of 200 Germans from Turkey. In this measure, "the Turks in whom Turkey had the least interest [were to be] expelled first." Whether this expulsion actually took place cannot be determined; there were hardly any Turkish Jews left in Germany at this time. They had all either fled, were incarcerated in various concentration camps, or had been murdered.[9]

[6] On August 6, 1944, sixteen Turkish Jews were taken to Bergen-Belsen as part of the effort to clear the Fossoli camp in northern Italy; however, only thirteen of them were transferred to the neutral camp. On September 15, 1944, forty-five Turkish Jews were taken from Westerbork in the Netherlands to Bergen-Belsen. As mentioned earlier, for the most part, these were people whose repatriation had already been authorized by the Turkish authorities after their arrest.

[7] Records of both meetings in PAAA, R99447.

[8] Ambassador von Papen, several of his colleagues, and around 670 other people returned to Germany before August 16, while roughly 600 German citizens, including emigrants, were interned at three locations in Turkey.

[9] The record mentions "about fifteen Jews with Turkish citizenship" in Berlin, including "the extended family of one businessman, several elderly Jewish women, and one student."

Exchange Negotiations

After diplomatic relations between the two states had been broken off, Switzerland took over the representation of Turkey in bilateral relations with Germany and vice versa. The exchange and return of the two nations' interned civilians in 1945 was therefore arranged by Swiss diplomats. We have little information about the actual negotiations, and for this reason it is impossible to reconstruct the extent of the Turkish authorities' participation in determining the number and selection criteria of the people to be exchanged.[10] The Turkish exchange group consisted of 319 people: the "official group" of 64 people who were either members of the diplomatic corps or private individuals, 127 students "and other citizens," and 128 Jews from the Bergen-Belsen and Ravensbrück concentration camps.[11] We have no information about whether Turkish diplomats or Jewish relief organizations in Switzerland played a role in the inclusion of the Turkish Jews in the exchange, or whether this happened only on German demand. It is also unclear why other Turkish Jews in Bergen-Belsen and other concentration camps within Germany were not included in the exchange.

The Inferno of Bergen-Belsen

The Jews who were held prisoner in Bergen-Belsen had received no information about the exchange negotiations between the fall of 1944 and February 1945. During the winter months of 1944–45, the conditions of their imprisonment in Bergen-Belsen worsened catastrophically. Although certain special regulations applied to the Turkish Jews in the "neutral camp" – they were exempted from forced labor and the conditions were less brutal than in the rest of the camp – in his detailed report, Rudolf Levy describes the hunger, cold, disease, and fear of starvation

[10] In the Archives of the Foreign Office, there is only one file, R 41676 Drottningholm, about the civilian exchange with Great Britain, which occurred at the same time and whose participants left on the same ship. This file also contains several documents on the German-Turkish exchange, but these do not provide any information on how this exchange was settled. The reference file of Philippe Aubert de la Rüe, who assisted in the exchange as the representative of the Swiss protective power, reported in detail about how the exchange was carried out; Swiss Federal Archives in Bern, J.I. 176. 1984/18 Papers left by Philippe Aubert de la Rüe, box 2, folder 4. However, de la Rüe was not personally involved in the exchange negotiations; he only filled in for his colleague Naville at short notice. Naville's file has not been preserved.

[11] These numbers are found in Philippe Aubert de la Rüe's report from April 17, 1945 (see footnote 10). Files from the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Joint (AJJDC) estimate the Turkish-Jewish passengers on the *Drottningholm* as being more than 130, in some cases even 142.

that were characteristic of incarceration and also affected Turkish Jews in the neutral camp,[12] where two of them died.

After the end of 1944, the number of prisoners in Bergen-Belsen grew by several tens of thousands when the evacuation transports from Auschwitz and other concentration camps arrived. Hunger, epidemics, and cold temperatures made Bergen-Belsen a site of mass death. Although the Turkish-Jewish prisoners in the neutral camp were kept separate from the newcomers, they could still witness their arrival. Among the women who were evacuated and brought to Bergen-Belsen was Luna Fanny Yohai, who was born in Gallipoli in 1910. She had been deported from Westerbork to Auschwitz. Her parents, Mercado and Signora Yohai, were members of the Turkish group in the "neutral camp."[13]

Unexpected Liberation

On March 4, 1945, 105 Turkish Jews from the neutral camp were suddenly told "to ready themselves to travel." From the reports of people in this group, it is clear that they were completely surprised by these instructions,[14] unlike the Spanish group, for example, who had been waiting for their departure every day for some time. The group was first taken by train to Lübeck, where they joined roughly twenty Turkish-Jewish women and their children who had been liberated from Ravensbrück concentration camp (see Figure 12.1). Most of these women had been deported from Brussels to Ravensbrück in December 1943, while others had lived in Vienna and Berlin before their arrest. From Lübeck, the group was taken by train through Denmark to Gothenburg, Sweden.

The voyage by sea to Sweden is best described by Elia Jaffe, who was from Çanakkale. He was living in Milan at the time of his arrest:

For the passage from Odense to the Island of Copenhagen, the mayor of the capital had placed a ship at our disposal whose luxuriousness stood in macabre

[12] Levy, "Neutralenlager Bergen-Belsen," 11. Rudolf Levy's Turkish citizenship was not recognized by the German authorities in the Netherlands. At first a candidate for a Palestine exchange, he was sent to Bergen-Belsen with his wife and daughter but was then not allowed to be exchanged. After August 1944, he was assigned to the Turkish group in Bergen-Belsen and was transferred to the neutral camp.

[13] She survived and later immigrated to the United States. Her father Mercado Yohai, who took part in the exchange, died on the vessel *Drottningholm* and was buried in Port Said.

[14] Levy, "Neutralenlager Bergen-Belsen," 12; Benbassat, *Je reviens* 26; interview in Istanbul with a person liberated from Bergen-Belsen; *La Boz de Türkiye,* May 1, 1945; and my own conversation with Mosé Dana on December 23, 2005 in Milan.



FIGURE 12.1. Report in the Swedish press on the arrival of the women liberated from the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Gothenburg.

contrast to the passengers dressed in rags. On board, we were offered a meal. When I looked down at myself sitting at a well-laid table, a plate before me and a fork in my hand, I was so overwhelmed with feeling that I could not get a single bite down.... We reached Gothenburg around midnight. It was the first illuminated European city I'd seen in years. The Turkish Consulate, the President of the city's Jewish Community, M. Julius Hüttner, and the Red Cross placed themselves at our disposal for everything we needed. Every person who had been saved – man, woman, and child – was clothed from head to foot.... I was afraid to look at myself in the mirror. I had the appearance of a human being again. I began to cry.... In the evening, a special streetcar was made available to us; it took us to the synagogue, where the entire Jewish "community" of Gothenburg attended a solemn and humble service giving thanks to God.[15]

[15] The account by Elia Jaffe, which was recorded in April 1945 in Istanbul by the journalist David Benbassat and appeared as a series in the daily paper *Le Journal d'Orient*, was reprinted in 1992 as the book *Je reviens du camps de Bergen-Belsen*. It must be noted, however, as became clear from my own interviews with members of this group, that the presence of the Turkish consul in Gothenburg had less to do with the liberated

Their return to Turkey continued on the *Drottningholm*, which put out to sea from Gothenburg on March 15, 1945. Besides the Turkish group, a British and an Argentinean exchange group were also on board, so the route took them to Liverpool, Lisbon, and Port Said, where the respective groups left the ship. In Port Said, fifty Germans boarded the ship for the return exchange.

In Liverpool, the city's chief rabbi came on board accompanied by Samuel Sydney Silverman, British MP, and Lev Zelmanovits, representing the World Jewish Congress in London. They brought the liberated people gifts and prayer books, as well as wine and unleavened bread for the upcoming Passover feast, which was celebrated the following night on board.

During the voyage, several quite ugly scenes played out among the passengers of the various Turkish groups. More than a few of the Turkish students had become infected by anti-Semitism during their studies in Germany. They insulted the Turkish-Jewish women on board, who had been liberated from Ravensbrück, calling them "dirty Jewesses," and demanded that the Jews be barred from the common dining room, which the captain, in outrage, refused to do.[16]

Arrival in Istanbul

After almost four weeks, the *Drottningholm* reached Istanbul on April 10 at around nine in the morning. The governor of Istanbul, Dr. Lütfi Kırdar, and the last Turkish ambassador to serve in Berlin before relations broke off, Saffet Arıkan, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, local dignitaries, and the press showed up to greet them. The Joint (AJJDC) had informed the relatives of the liberated concentration camp prisoners living in Turkey about the arrival of their family members as well as they could with the names and addresses they had received. Representatives of Jewish relief organizations were also present when the ship arrived.

It was a stark contrast to the heartfelt reception in Sweden, however. The group of diplomats, the students, and the other Turkish passengers

concentration camp prisoners than with the group of Turkish officials and the students who had arrived for exchange.

[16] Report by Philippe Aubert de la Rüe (see footnote 10) and conversation with Germaine Sephiha, who was in the group from Ravensbrück. Several Turkish students who participated in the exchange on the *Drottningholm* describe in the book *Türk Promethe'ler* their stay in Germany and return on the *Drottningholm*. (Kansu Şarman, *Türk Promethe'ler: Cumhuriyet'in Öğremcileri Avrupa'da (1925–1945)* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2005). None of them mentions the presence of the liberated Turkish Jews on the ship.

left the ship, but the Turkish authorities refused to allow most of the Jewish exchange group to enter Turkey. After time-consuming checks, nineteen of the Jewish passengers were finally allowed to leave the ship, while 118 people were still detained on board.[17] They had to spend the next several days on a tender off the Istanbul coast. In his report, Aubert del la Rüe describes the obvious randomness with which the Turkish border police recognized Turkish citizenship: "The Turkish students without passports were accepted by the Istanbul police without any problem while people who possessed citizenship certificates issued, for example, by the Turkish Consulate in Milan, were turned away."[18]

The Turkish press also did not mention the presence of Turkish Jews who were liberated from concentration camps among the newcomers at all. The *Vatan* – which had been one of the newspapers that were most critical of the Germans during the war years – had sent three journalists to the arrival of the *Drottningholm*. They reported extensively on several pages with photographs about the diplomats and students who had arrived, but wasted no words on the freed concentration camp prisoners.

Thanks to the Jewish Agency's and American diplomats' interventions with the Turkish authorities, after five days of anxious waiting, permission was granted for the Jews to conditionally leave the ship. They were then interned in three small boarding houses under police supervision at the expense of Jewish organizations, while the Joint assumed the costs for room and board.[19] Even those who had relatives in Istanbul were prohibited from leaving the boarding homes for months.[20] In the beginning, they were not even allowed to receive visits from their relatives.[21] Meanwhile, all attempts to change the minds of the Turkish politicians failed. Thus, the International Red Cross representative – who, together

[17] Figures given by Philippe Aubert de la Rüe. The Joint representative Arthur Fishzohn writes there were a total of 148 Jewish passengers, 31 of whom ultimately were allowed to leave the ship and 117 were not; letter from Arthur Fishzohn, dated April 20, 1945, in the files of the ICRC, G 59/5/R.

[18] Report by Philippe Aubert de la Rüe. Among the passengers on the *Drottningholm* were also thirty-one Jews from the Netherlands whose papers had been examined for months by the Turkish authorities and found to be valid, but they, too, were denied entry.

[19] Statement by the Joint dated May 3, 1945, and letter from Arthur Fishzohn, dated May 24, 1945, in the files of the ICRC, G 59/5/R.

[20] Conversations with O. Benbanaste (March 2004 in Istanbul), M. Dana (December 23, 2005), and G. Sephiha (2006 in Brussels); Benbanaste's relatives came with the *Drottningholm* while the latter two interviewees were themselves part of the exchange.

[21] Letter from Arthur Fishzohn, dated April 20, 1945, in AJJDC, Istanbul Collection, IS/1/25.

with the Joint, the Jewish Agency, and the Istanbul Assistance Committee, was managing provisions for the repatriated people – wrote as late as June: "The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs categorically refuses to discuss the subject or to recognize these deportees as Turks."[22] Despite this, however, the Joint's extensive records provide documentary evidence that the majority of the Turkish Jews who arrived on the *Drottningholm* possessed proper Turkish papers, which they had even had renewed (insofar as the conditions of the war and occupation allowed). Many stated that their identification documents had been taken from them after they were arrested by the Germans or sent to Turkish authorities in Europe in preparation for repatriation. Among the internees were Jews whose repatriation had been approved by the Turkish Embassy in Berlin or the consulate in Hamburg or Milan.[23] Many of the people liberated had been born in Istanbul, and a number of the men had performed military service in Turkey. Now they were treated like undesirable foreigners by the police information services and interned. The representatives of the Joint suggested in vain that Turkey should allow the people who did not have Turkish citizenship to at least enter as refugees.[24] However, the decree that prohibited the entry of Jews remained in force.

How the former *Drottningholm* passengers fared in Istanbul can be surmised from the records of the international relief organizations, which continued to provide for a large part of the group until the spring of 1946. Many of them had family members who had been deported to concentration camps. Moving letters in the records of the Joint and other relief organizations attest to their desperate efforts to obtain information about the fate of their husbands, brothers, and other relatives. Twenty of the former *Drottningholm* passengers went to Palestine in August 1945. The Jewish Agency also attempted, in vain, to recruit others for the Palestine project. After many months, several families were finally allowed to leave the detention centers and move to the homes of their relatives in Istanbul. Mosé Dana and his family found housing with one of his father's cousins who lived in Balat. "However, the home of this family was completely bare and almost without furniture. The father owned a business in the Istanbul bazaar, the Kapalı Çarşı. This business was

[22] Letter from Simond, representative of the Red Cross, dated June 13, 1945, in the files of the ICRC, G 59/5/R.

[23] See, for example, the form with questions answered by Moise/Maurice Eskenazi, who belonged to the group of Turkish Jews from the Netherlands; AJJDC, Istanbul Collection, IS/1/25.

[24] Letter from Arthur Fishzohn, dated April 20, 1945; AJJDC, Istanbul Collection, IS/1/25.

seized as the result of the Varlık Vergisi, and after that he had to work as an employee in the shop that he had previously owned. The furnishings and furniture of his home were "confiscated to pay off tax debts," Mosé Dana reported.[25] Many of the liberated Turkish Jews remained interned in Istanbul until the spring of 1946, that is, until the Red Cross could arrange for their passage to their new European home countries.[26]

[25] Conversation with Mosé Dana in Milan on December 23, 2005.
[26] Files of the ICRC, G 59/5/R.

13

Summary: Rescue Denied

During the Holocaust, between 2,200 and 2,500 Jews of Turkish origin were deported to the Auschwitz and Sobibor extermination camps[1] (see Figure 13.1). Another 300 to 400 were sent to the Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Theresienstadt, Dachau, and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps, where many lost their lives. Others succumbed to the conditions of detention in the Drancy and Westerbork camps, or were shot or tortured to death by the Gestapo.

Any attempt to put a number on the Jewish victims is ultimately trivializing because it does not take into consideration the suffering of all those who spent years living in constant fear of arrest; who had to hide in attics, crawl spaces, or forests; or who committed suicide to escape deportation. How is it possible to measure the grief of those who escaped deportation but whose children or spouses were murdered?

The significance of neutral Turkey for the German war effort as well as the large number of German citizens of the Reich living in Turkey provided tremendous opportunities for Turkey to protect its Jewish citizens who were living in Europe. A number of Turkish diplomats successfully used this situation, obtaining exemptions from anti-Jewish measures for the Jews under their protection and, in several cases, making determined efforts to secure the release of arrested Jews. In a few exceptional cases, non-Turkish Jews or former Turkish citizens were placed under the protection of the Turkish Consulate as well. Even if these acts were not always motivated by humanitarian concerns and consular protection had, in some cases, to be bought with money or other favors, the cases

[1] It is difficult to ascertain how many of those deported held Turkish citizenship.



FIGURE 13.1. Photo of the Kavayero family from Izmir. The family was deported on February 11, 1943, to Auschwitz. (Courtesy of Serge Klarsfeld.)

described in the sections on individual countries emphasize the leeway that Turkish diplomats had for taking action. As shown by the example of the consul of Rhodes, Selahattin Ülkümen, simply recognizing a Jewish person's Turkish citizenship could be enough to save that person's life.

In contrast to the involvement of individual local diplomats, the policies in Ankara primarily sought to prevent the immigration or re-immigration of Jews to Turkey. In August 1938, the Turkish government had issued the secret Decree No. 2/9498, which barred persecuted Jews from entering the country. Also, in the 1930s Turkey had already withdrawn the citizenship of many Turkish Jews living abroad, and the laws to that effect imposed a lifetime ban on their returning to the country. Although these policies were not originally based on anti-Semitism but were the consequence of forced nation-state building, their main target during the Holocaust was Jews. For Turkish Jews living in Nazi-controlled territory, the recognition or non-recognition of their Turkish citizenship became a matter of survival.

When, in October of 1942, the Nazi government issued an ultimatum to neutral states and its allies regarding the repatriation of their Jewish citizens, the government in Ankara responded by stripping the citizenship of thousands of Turkish Jews living in Europe and by instructing its consulates not to conduct any group repatriations. Some of the local consuls undercut the restrictive directives issued by Ankara and also lobbied the Turkish government for repatriation of the Jews. The return of Turkish Jews from Paris in March 1943 and from Athens was likely due to the personal initiative of the local consuls. Until Turkey opens the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we can only speculate on the discussions that took place between the various Turkish agencies.

The government maintained its restrictive attitude even after it was known to be aware of the German genocide of the Jews, and it did not significantly change its stance in the fall of 1943. Not even months of concerted pressure from the Allies and Jewish relief organizations succeeded in effecting a fundamental change in Turkey's policies. As late as in April 1945, for example, the majority of a group of 130 Turkish Jews who had been released from concentration camps and taken to Istanbul as part of an exchange of civilian detainees were permitted entry by the Turkish authorities only because Jewish relief organizations put up a bond for them. In all, 850 to 900 Turkish Jews were able to enter Turkey in the context of repatriation or prisoner exchanges.

Despite all the criticism of the limited willingness of Turkish authorities to repatriate their Jewish citizens, it cannot be overlooked that, for the people affected, the repatriation ultimatum also amounted to forced expulsion that robbed them of the lives they had built for themselves in Europe. Initially, many of the Jews did not want to return to Turkey; their reluctance was very likely caused by news from relatives living there who told them about forced labor service and special taxes. Several chose to stay abroad with their family members whom the Turkish authorities would not permit to return.

In spite of their government's hesitancy, Turkish Jews in Europe were relatively protected from persecution for an extended period. For a long time, having Turkish papers was the only relatively secure protection for Turkish Jews in the occupied territories. In occupied Belgium, Turkish Jews even formed a committee that managed a number of times to arrange the release of Turkish Jews who had been arrested. Toward the end of 1943 at the latest, however, most of them were able to survive, like Jews of other nationalities, only in extreme, clandestine circumstances.

By no means did the majority of the Turkish Jews who survived the Shoah owe their escape to the Turkish authorities. In most cases, it was the willingness of non-Jewish neighbors, anti-fascist or Jewish resistance movements, Christian organizations, and often mere chance that saved them. Turkish Jews survived by hiding in monasteries and on farms, with forged papers, by going into hiding, paying bribes to officials or concierges, or they succeeded in escaping into exile, far from Turkey.

Through its passive stance, Turkey violated its obligation to protect its citizens abroad. Even in the case of Turkish Jews who had been deported in spite of diplomatic protests and the official recognition of their citizenship by the consulate, Turkey intervened – as far as is known – only once on an ambassadorial level. Ankara's indifference toward its Jewish citizens in Europe was also evident in the financing of the evacuation of Jews from France; this operation was paid for not by the Turkish government but by Jewish relief organizations. Likewise, it was up to the Red Cross and the Joint, aided by the Jewish communities of Izmir and Istanbul, to provide for the people who were repatriated. Surviving Turkish Jews in France and Belgium voiced their bitter disappointment with the policies of Turkey, whose passiveness had delivered the Jews to their German murderers.

Turkey was not the only country, during World War II, that barred its Jewish citizens abroad from returning and withdrew its protection by revoking their citizenship. As the chapters on individual countries have shown, more often than not, it was Jewish immigrants who became the first victims of Jewish persecution in the countries of Western and Central Europe, and being deprived of their citizenship by their countries of origin or residence made them a "stateless people"[2] without rights or defense against their persecutors.

Criticism of Turkey's position must not, under any circumstances, be misused to mitigate the crimes committed by the Germans.[3] From the

[2] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*; see also Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War through the Cold War*.

[3] One example of this line of argumentation can be found in the essay "Tauziehen zwischen Berlin und Ankara um das Schicksal türkischer Juden im 2. Weltkrieg" (The Tug-of-War between Berlin and Ankara and the Fate of Turkish Jews in World War II) by Ahmad Mahrad, which was first published in Hanover in 1988 and caused a huge stir in Turkey when it was published there in translation in 1992; (*Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 108 [1992]: 16–27). In it, Mahrad claims that the SS had an interest in "saving Turkish Jews from extermination" and even goes so far as to characterize Eberhard von Thadden, the Foreign Office official in charge of facilitating the murder of the Jews, as an individual exhibiting "open-mindedness and courage" while calling Turkey's conduct "inhuman"; *Hannoversche Studien über den Mittleren Osten* 3 (1988): 113–181.

planners at their desks in Berlin through the unscrupulous diplomats, such as Abetz and Schleier, to the executioners, such as Brunner and Dannecker, the Germans were responsible for the persecution and murder of the Jews. We have no way of knowing how the German agencies would have responded if Turkey had indeed undertaken the repatriation of all Turkish Jews living in the German sphere of control.

Despite all restrictions, Turkish policies during World War II can in no way be compared to the anti-Semitism of the countries allied with Germany. The German authorities also repeatedly noted that Turkey did not issue openly anti-Semitic laws and was not susceptible to anti-Semitic hate campaigns. It is therefore all the more astonishing that, even compared to fascist states or states allied with Germany, Turkey made relatively little effort to save its Jewish citizens.

Epilogue

For more than forty years after the war, the fate of the Turkish Jews was of little interest to anyone but their families.

The majority of the German perpetrators responsible for the murder of Turkish Jews were not held accountable. Important figures, such as Heinz Röthke (head of the Office of Jewish Affairs [Judenreferat] of the Gestapo in France from July 1942 onward), Kurt Lischka, Helmut Knochen (commander of the Security Police and the SD in France), and Kurt Asche (head of the Office of Jewish Affairs in Belgium) lived their lives undisturbed as legal advisors, business executives, or insurance salesmen in Western Germany. Ernst Heinrichsohn, an employee of the Office of Jewish Affairs of the Gestapo in Paris, even became the mayor of Bürgstadt, Bavaria, while Ernst Ehlers served as a court judge in Schleswig, Western Germany.

It was not until the 1970s that Serge and Beate Klarsfeld and other Jewish activists from France and Belgium successfully brought at least some of the perpetrators before a court, a feat that occasionally required them to use spectacular means. But the majority of those perpetrators who had been sitting behind desks in the Foreign Office and in the diplomatic service escaped prosecution.

In Turkey, meanwhile, a multi-party system was introduced in 1946. In 1947, the decree that had denied persecuted Jews entry into Turkey was annulled. The Varlık Vergisi law had already been abolished in 1944, but although now, after the war, there was public criticism of this tax in Turkey, property was never returned to those who had been forced to pay the tax. Turkey's anti-Jewish policies during the war years were

grounds for 35,000 to 40,000 Jews to immigrate to Palestine (Israel) after 1945, especially after the state of Israel was founded.

Of the roughly 850 Turkish Jews who had been repatriated to Turkey or had been part of prisoner exchanges during the Holocaust, most left Turkey and returned to Europe or immigrated to Palestine (Israel) after the war. Often, those who continued to be regarded as Turkish citizens in their countries of residence received "compensation payments" only after a long struggle, if they received any at all, due to the absurdity of German compensation bureaucracy.

Anti-Semites and fascists, inspired by the German example, became a constant in Turkey's political system in the period after World War II. In 1962, Nihal Atsız, along with like-minded people, founded the Türkçülük derneği, a forerunner of the fascist National Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), which was responsible for countless murders of leftist students, unionists, and intellectuals during the seventies. The leader of this movement was Atsız's comrade in arms Alparslan Türkeş, who had been one of the defendants in the 1944 trial against the Turanists.

Cevat Rıfat Atilhan was able to expand his role as the leading anti-Semitic writer in Turkey after 1945 until his death in 1967. During that time, he helped found several Islamist political parties. New editions of his books continue to be published today and appear on the best-seller lists of Islamist and fascist newspapers and websites. Until 2008, Atilhan was also one of the authors showcased on the webpage of the Turkish Ministry of Culture.

With the rise of the Islamist and right-wing radical mass movements in the period of political polarization during the 1960s and 1970s, anti-Semitism gained strength as well. It was also widespread among leftists and nationalists with a "left-leaning" demeanor, who were receptive to conspiracy theories. Holocaust and genocide research, on the other hand, despite its growing importance within international historical research from the 1980s onward, has received very little attention in Turkey to this day.

The end of the eighties saw a configuration develop that was not unlike the one at the end of the nineteenth century. Once again, Turkey received international criticism because of its policies toward minorities. Whereas then the issue had been the situation of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, now it was human rights violations in the Kurdish region that were constantly in the European public eye. The Jews – who at the end of the nineteenth century had sought an alliance with the Ottoman Empire

because of growing attacks by Christian minorities – were now subjected to aggressive anti-Semitism from rightist, Islamist, and "leftist" circles. In 1986, twenty-two people were killed in an attack on the Neve Şalom synagogue in Istanbul. This was the context in which the "Turkish-Jewish alliance" was revived. In 1989, prominent Turkish businesspeople and politicians, along with representatives of the Turkish Jewish community, founded the 500-Year Foundation in Istanbul. The immediate occasion was the forthcoming 500-year anniversary of the arrival of Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire; the foundation's purpose was to promote Turkey's image abroad by showing it as a humanistic and tolerant country.

It was in this context that now, sixty years after the events, the Holocaust and Turkey's supposed rescue of the Jews were suddenly discovered as topics of discussion. But to date, this has not led Turkey to truly face its past. While the critical research conducted in almost all countries involved in the Holocaust has led to a reassessment of the role of the bystander in recent years, and while several governments have issued apologies to Jewish survivors for their respective countries' policies at the time, Turkey has produced a "rescue myth" that makes a mockery of the historical events.[1] The Jews whom Turkey refused to rescue during the war are now being used to fend off international criticism of Turkey. And frequently, Turkey's alleged support of the victims of the Holocaust is used as an argument for denying the genocide of the Armenians.

Many questions could be addressed only briefly in this book or had to be left out altogether. The issue of what happened to the property of Turkish Jews who were repatriated has not been investigated here, nor has the issue of hidden Nazi gold in Turkey. Other questions left open for further research concern the role played by German orientalists in the Nazi system; the role of Turkish, and more generally, of Sephardic Jews, in the resistance; and Turkey's policies during the Holocaust years toward Roma, who were likewise denied entry.

[1] Case in point: the book *Büyükelçi* (in English: *The Ambassador*), whose author, Emir Kıvırcık, has in the past been invited by the Turkish government to attend meetings with the Israeli government and representatives of the Jewish community in the United States to impress them with Turkey's "story of rescue," in spite of the fact that the book is in large part fictitious. (For a comprehensive critique, see Corinna Guttstadt, "Hakikaten 'İnanılmaz Bir Öykü' – Emir Kıvırcık'ın Behiç Erkin Hakkında Yazdığı *Büyükelçi* Kitabı Üzerine," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 168 [2007]: 56–65.) See also the film *Turkish Passport*, a partly dramatized documentary that was released in cinemas in 2011. (For a review, see Uğur Ümit Üngör, "Review of Burak Arliel, *The Turkish Passport*," H-Genocide, H-Net Reviews, March 2012. www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=35380.)



FIGURE E.1. A plaque commemorating the Sephardic Jews murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau, written in Judezmo (their traditional language) and donated by a delegation of Sephardic Jews in 2003.

Over the last fifteen years, many studies have been published in Turkey that critically dispute Turkish nationalism and address issues that had previously been taboo. On January 27, 2011, Turkey held its first Shoah Memorial Day, attended by government representatives. In November 2011, a small demonstration took place at Haydarpaşa Station in Istanbul on the occasion of the sixty-ninth anniversary of the passage of the Varlık Vergisi. This was the place from which the transports to the work camps in the East had left. The demonstration, organized by some of the descendants of those deported, was intended as a call for a state apology for the wrongs that had been done. So far, they have not received a response.

It is my hope that this book will contribute to an open discussion of Turkey's policy during World War II and its attitude toward its Jewish minority. It is to be hoped that the Turkish government will make continued study of this subject possible by opening the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for international research.

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Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv, Brandenburg Main State Archive (BLHA), Potsdam
Bundesarchiv Berlin /German Federal Archives (BAL)
Centre de Documentation juive Contemporaine, Center of Contemporary Jewish Documentation (CDJC), Paris
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Yad Vashem, Jerusalem
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Interviews

Interview with Elfi Alfandari on March 14, 2004, in Istanbul
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Interview with Jochanan Ariel in May 2008 in Haifa
Interview with Albert Barbouth in January 2004 in Marseilles
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Interview with Olga Benbanaste on March 14, 2004, in Istanbul
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of Haïm Vidal Sephiha on July 13, 1995
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Video recordings by the USHMM
of Eli and Francis Ofner on March 1, 1992
of David Stoliar on August 20, 1997

Index

Abetz, Otto, 142, 209, 238, 312–13
Achenbach, Ernst, 214
Adana conference (1943), 36
Adut, Şekip, 79
Advisory Office for German Scientists (*Beratungsstelle für deutsche Wissenschaftler*), 85
Agudat Israel, 122
Aid Association of the German Jews. *See* Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden
AIU *See* (Alliance Israélite Universelle; Universal Israelite Alliance
Akbaba caricature magazine, 58, 113–14, 115
Akçura, Yusuf, 9
Akşam journal, 58, 74
Aksim, Abdullah, 228
Aktar, Ayhan, 79
Albania, Italian attack on, 30
Alboukerk, Michon, 263
Albrecht, Erich, 142
Alemania club, 42
Alfandary brothers, 159
Algazi, Isaac, 182
Algazi, Victor, 217–18
Aliyah Bet, 108–17
  end of, 119
  illegal immigration by ship, 112–14
  legal transit routes through Turkey, 109–12
Alkalai, Nissim, 291
Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU; Universal Israelite Alliance), 13–14, 22, 180, 294
Alterstransport (transport of elderly people), 170
Amato, Rafael, 6
The Ambassador (*Büyükelçi*) (Kıvırcık), 149
Amelot relief organization, 212
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. *See* Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)
Amicale des Déportés d'Auschwitz, 221
Anadolu Ajansı news agency, 116–17
Anschluss pogrom, 99, 175
anti-Jewish legislation
  Bulgaria, 119, 132–33
  Croatia, 119
  France, 148, 185–86, 188–201, 203, 215
  Greece, 132–33
  Hungary, 119
  Italy, 99, 106, 148, 273–76
  Rhodes, 294–95
  Romania, 119, 132–33
  Salonica, 288
  Slovakia, 119
  Turkey, 18–20
Antonescu, Ion, 118, 123
Aras, Tevfik Rüştü, 164
Arbel, Bedî, 210, 211, 215
Arditti, Albert, 244
Arditti, Elie, 221
Arditti, Esther, 244
Arditti, Nessim, 230–31

Arditti, Rachel, 244
Arditti, Regina, 244
Argentina
  Argentinean Jews in Salonica, 288–89
  Foreign Office dealings with Argentinean Jews, 143
  repatriation ultimatum, 293
Arif (secretary at Ministry of the Interior), 98
Arıkan, Saffet, 44–45, 305
Armée Juive (Jewish Army), 245
Armée Secrète (Secret Army), 253
Armenians
  citizenship deprivation, 50
  expulsion of, 5
  forced resettlement of, 48
  genocide of, 4, 49
  portrayal of as potential traitors, 6
  return denied, 53
  settlement restrictions, 19
  travel restrictions, 19
  Turkification of property, 9–10
  visibility of Jews after genocide of, 8
  wealth tax and, 74–75
Arouete, Moise, 203
Arrovas, Sultan, 222
Artunkal, Ali Rıza, 44
Asche, Kurt, 312, 315
Ashkenazi communities
  in Austria, 171–73, 174
  in Turkey, 136
Aşkale labor camp, 76–79, 88
Asriel, André, 179
Asriel, Davisco, 165, 168, 169
Asriel, Paula, 179
Asrın Gailesi Yahudi (The Jew as the Plague of the Century) pamphlet 60
Assaël, Harald, 162
Assaël, Sabatai Isidor, 162
Asseo, Isaac, 175
Association culturelle orientale Israélite de Paris, 181
Association des Juifs en Belgique (AJB; Association of Jews in Belgium), 250, 254, 255, 258
Association Law (Law No. 3512) (1938), 14
Association of Turkish Israelites (Sephardim) in Vienna. *See* Verband der türkischen Israeliten (Sephardim) zu Wien, 172
Atalay, Besim, 44–45
Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal, 5, 6–7, 13, 16, 38–39, 43, 44–45, 90, 137
Atay, Falih Rıfkı, 39, 57
Athens, 291–94
Atilhan, Cevat Rıfat, 40, 41, 56, 57, 60, 63, 64, 316
Atsız, Nihal, 40, 64, 316
Atsız Mecmua journal, 45
Aubert de la Rüe, Philippe, 128, 302
Auerbach, Erich, 88
Auschwitz concentration camp
  commemorative plaque, 318
  deportation of Jews from Belgium to, 250, 252–53, 254–55, 262
  deportation of Jews from France to, 188, 189, 191–92, 201–2, 203, 204, 205, 206–7, 208, 235, 238
  deportation of Jews from Hungary to, 127
  deportation of Jews from Italy to, 277, 280, 282–83, 284
  deportation of Jews from Netherlands to, 271–72
  deportation of Jews from Poland to, 300
  deportation of Jews from Rhodes to, 296
  deportation of Jews from Salonica to, 288
  number of Turkish Jews deported to, 309
  transfer of prisoners to Bergen-Belsen, 303
Australia, as destination for Jewish exiles, 83
Austria
  Austrian communities in Turkey, 42, 105–6
  Austrian Jews in Belgium, 250–51
  Austrian Jews in Netherlands, 264
  deportations to Belarus, 177
  deportations to Bergen-Belsen, 300–1
  deportations to Latvia, 168
  as "model for the final solution", 175–79
  Nazi German annexation of, 99, 108
  Turkish Jews in, 151, 171–79, 300–1
Avidor, Israel, 207–8
Avigdor, Rıfat, 162
Avriel, Ehud, 120–21
Avrupa (ship), 118
Avrupa Irkçılarına Karşı Türkiye'nin Mücadelesi (Turkey's Struggle against the European Racists) (Şimşir), 149
Aydın (Jewish community), 8
Ayın Tarihi gazette, 156

Babaeski, 62
Bader, Menahem, 120–21
Badoglio, Pietro, 276
Bali, Alexandre, 207
Bali, Rıfat, 64, 71
Balıkesir, 18
Balkan nations
  Balkan Jews living in Austria, 172–73
  emigration of Balkan Jews, 127, 131, 132
  European support for separation efforts, 4–5
  Nazi German advance in, 70, 71
  submission to Nazi Germany, 31
  Turkish Muslim immigrant agreement, 133
Balkan Pact (1934), 30
Balkan Wars (1912–1913), 22, 64
Baraner, Reşat Fuat, 45
Barbie, Klaus, 246
Barlas, Haim, 101, 109–10, 111–12, 120–21, 123, 124–25, 228
Barrett, Victoria, 149
Barutçu, Faik Ahmet, 32
Barzilai (rabbi in Athens), 292
Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi (Prime Minister's Republican Archives), 19–20, 53, 54, 71, 72, 103, 109, 148, 153, 154, 158
Bayraktar, Hatice, 67
Beaune-la-Rolande transit camp, 203, 205, 206
Behar, Abraham, 166
Behar, Alberto, 277, 280
Behar, Isaak, 163, 166, 168
Behar, Vitalis, 199
Béjérano, Haïm, 13
  Belarus, deportation of Jews to, 168, 177
Belbez, Fikret, 212, 289
Belev, Alexander, 290
Belge, Burhan, 40
Belgian National Movement. *See* Mouvement National Belge
Belgium, 248–63
  arrests, 170, 260–63
  attitude of authorities and population, 251–52
  Comité de la Colonie Turque en Belgique, 255–57
  deportations, 186, 252–53, 260–63
  as destination for Jewish exiles, 83
  evacuation of non-Jewish Turkish citizens, 158
  foreign and Belgian Jews, 250–51
  futile attempts at repatriation, 257–60
  immigrant Jews in, 140
  overview, 249–50
  repatriation ultimatum, 255–56
  resistance, 253–54
  Turkish Jews in, 254–63, 311
Bella Citta (ship), 129–30
Bellioğlu, Sırrı, 43
Benaderet, Sara, 271
Bene, Otto, 142, 265, 266, 267, 270, 271
Benezra, David, 159
Benezra, Eli, 248
Bennett (British Embassy representative), 126
Benveniste, Annie, 197
Beratungsstelle für deutsche Wissenschaftler. *See* Advisory Office for German Scientists
Bergama, 18
Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, 299–308
  conditions in, 302–3
  deportation of Jews from Belgium to, 261
  deportation of Jews from France to, 238
  deportation of Jews from Italy to, 282–83, 284
  deportation of Jews from Netherlands to, 271
  deportation of Jews from Salonica to, 289
  deportation of Turkish Jews to, 300–1
  exchange negotiations, 302
  number of Turkish Jews deported to, 309
  repatriation of Turkish Jews from, 127–28, 305–8
  rescue of Turkish Jews from, ix
  unexpected liberation from, 303–5
Berkes, Niyazi, 39, 44–45, 46
Bermuda Conference, 125
Bessoudo, Haim Isaak, 159
Beşuşe, Avram, 263–64, 267–68, 269
Betar movement, 112
Bile, Raphaël, 255
Birgen, Muhittin, 40
Birkenau concentration camp, 205, 318
birth rate, campaigns to increase, 16
Bitran, Isaac, 203, 207–8
Bolivia, emigration of German Jews to, 169
Bolzano transit camp, 283
Boran, Behice, 46
Boratav, Pertev, 46

Bowman, Steven, 294
Bozkurt, Mahmut Esat, 10, 15, 44, 45
Bozkurt journal, 45
Brazil, emigration of German Jews to, 169
A Breach for Truth. *See Der Wahrheit eine Gasse*
Brod, Simon, 116, 117, 121–22
Brunner, Alois, 221–24, 226, 236, 237, 288, 312–13
Buchenwald concentration camp
  deportation of Jews from Belgium to, 261, 263
  deportation of Jews from France to, 244–45
  deportation of Jews from Italy to, 283
  deportation of Jews from Netherlands to, 269–70
  deportation of Turkish Jews to, 157–58, 166, 170, 176
Bülbül (ship), 131
Bules, Arlette, 237
Bulgaria
  anti-Jewish legislation, 119, 132–33
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 108, 111, 112, 113, 123–25, 126–27, 129–30, 131
  expulsion of foreign Jews from, 152
  flight from "events in Thrace" to, 62
  Foreign Office dealings with Bulgarian Jews, 143
  German troops near Turkish border, 31
  prohibition of emigration of Jews, 122
  strained relations with Turkey, 30
  submission to Nazi Germany, 31
  transit visas, 210
  zone in Greece occupied by, 285–86, 290–91
Burger, Anton, 296
Bursa
  discovery of secret Jewish school, 58
  pressure to speak Turkish, 18
  wealth tax, 76–77
Büyükelçi. See The Ambassador; Kıvırcık

Cairo Conference (1943), 36
Çakmak, Fevzi, 41
caliphate, abolition of, 12
Çanakkale
  Christians in, 65
  "events in Thrace", 61–62
  proportion of Jews in, 8
Carım, Mehmet Fuat, 234
carte d'étranger (foreigner's card), 194–95, 197
Castoriano, Isaac, 196, 213
Catarivas, David, 212, 245
Catarivas, Suzanne, 245–46
CDJ. *See* Comité de Défense des Juifs
Ceride-i Tercüman (The Translator) newspaper, 17
Çerkezyan, Sarkis, 72
Çeşme
  emigration of Jews through, 125
  rescue of Greek Jews, 128
CGQJ. *See* Commissariat Général aux Questions
Chétovy, Marcel, 239
Children's Aid Society. *See* Oeuvre de secours aux Enfants [OSE]
China, emigration of German Jews to, 169
CHP. *See* Republican People's Party (CHP)
Christians
  attacks on Jews by, 6
  help from Belgian, 252, 254
  help from French, 243
  Jews converted to Christianity, 82–83
  Turkification of economy, 9, 10
  viewed as "enemy within", 4–5
  wealth tax and, 74–75
Çınaraltı journal, 45
Citizens, Speak Turkish. *See Vatandaş Türkçe konuş* campaign
citizenship
  deprivation of, Armenians, 50
  deprivation of, Greeks, 50
  deprivation of, Jews in Nazi Germany, 92, 104–6
  deprivation of, Kurds, 51
  deprivation of, Turkish Jews in France, 158, 193, 194, 196, 242–43
  deprivation of, Turkish Jews in Germany, 164–68
  deprivation of, Turkish Jews in Italy, 276
  deprivation of, Turkish Jews in Turkey, 54–55
  deprivation of, Turkish Jews living abroad, 50–51, 54–55
  deprivation of, Turkish political opponents, 51
  distinction between citizens of Turkey and öz Turks, 15
  revocation of, Jews in France, 185–86, 221
  revocation of, Jews in Italy, 274

revocation of, Jews in Nazi Germany, 161–62
Citizenship Law No. 1312 (1928), 50–51, 54–55, 151, 158
Cittone-Ojalvo, Sara, 283
Cohn, Marianne, 246
Comité de Défense des Juifs (CDJ), 253–54
Comité de la Colonie Turque en Belgique (Committee of the Turkish Colony in Belgium), 255–57, 258–59
Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives (CGQJ; General Commission for Jewish Questions), 190, 197, 204
Commission for the Investigation of the Turkish Language (Türk Dili Tetkik Heyeti), 44
Communauté Sépharade de Lyon, 183
Compiègne transit camp, 188, 191, 206, 210, 218–19, 220
Comtadin community, 183
Çorlu, 62
Covo, Isidoro, 159
Cremer, Jan, 94
Croatia
  anti-Jewish legislation, 119
  transit visas, 210
cultural associations, prohibition of, 14
Cumhuriyet newspaper, 41, 57–58, 75, 101
Czechoslovakia
  Czech Jews in France, 186
  Czech Jews in Italy, 274–75
  Czech Jews in Turkey, 105–6
  as destination for Jewish exiles, 83
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 108, 111, 113–14
  Foreign Office dealings with Czech Jews, 144
  Turkish Jews transferred to Bergen-Belsen from, 300–1

Dachau concentration camp, 166, 175, 244–45, 261, 262, 309
Dana (née Behar), Lea Rebecca, 280, 281
Dana, Estrea, 281
Dana, Mosé, 276, 307–8
Dana, Sara, 280, 281
Dannecker, Theodor, 187, 205, 290, 312–13
Dardanelles, 65, 68
Darnand, Aimé-Joseph, 229
Dârülfünun (later became Istanbul Üniversitesi) 18, 84–91
Declaration on Race (*Dichiarazione sulla razza*), 274
Decree for the Registration of Jewish Property (1938), 139, 163
Decree No. 1514 (1922), 49
Decree No. 1745 (1922), 49
Decree No. 7559 (1928), 50
Decree No. 2/9498 (1938), 101–3, 310
Decree No. 2/15132 (1941), 102, 110–11
Decree No. 3/6067 (1947), 132
Denmark
  as destination for Jewish exiles, 83
  Foreign Office dealings with Danish Jews, 143
  repatriation ultimatum, 157
Der Stürmer newspaper, 40, 56, 57
Der Wahrheit eine Gasse (A Breach for Truth) (von Papen), 142
Dersim, 47–48
Desperate Hours (film), 149, 220
Diamant, Corinne, 246
Didymoteicho, 285–86
Die türkische Herausforderung (Öymen), 149
Dieckmann, Lieselotte, 97
Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi. *See* Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography
Dispatches from Hitler's Vienna (Nadi), 58
DNVP (German National People's Party), 161
Dodecanese Islands, 24, 30, 274, 286, 294–98
Donati, Angelo, 223
Dönme, 74–75, 142, 163–64
Dora (ship), 118
Drancy detention camp
  Alois Brunner and, 222, 223
  deportation of foreign Jews to, 186–87, 236
  deportation of Jews to Auschwitz from, 188, 208
  deportation of Jews to Sobibor from, 218–19
  deportation of Turkish Jews to, 204, 205, 206–7, 208–9, 215, 226, 227, 309
  interventions for release of Turkish Jews from, 191, 206, 207–8, 231–32, 235
  number of Turkish Jews deported from/via, 240–41
  wall inscriptions, 239

Drottningholm (ship), ix, 305–7
Dülger, Cevdet, 191, 210, 212
Düstur government publication, 55
Dziennik Polski newspaper, 156

EAM-ELAS (Ethnikón Apeleftherotikón Métopon-Ethnikós Laïkós Apeleftherotikós Strátos; National Liberation Front-National Popular Liberation Army), 294
Easterman, Alex, 228
Ebert, Carl, 87
Ebert family, 104
Ebüzziya, Abdurrahman Velit, 7
Ebüzziya, Mehmet Tevfik, 7
Eckstein, Albert, 86–87, 89–90
Eckstein, Erna, 89
Eckstein family, 104
Eclaireurs israélites de France (EIF; Jewish Scouts), 243, 245
Edirne
  anti-Jewish campaigns, 7
  effect of emigration on population of, 23
  "events in Thrace", 62, 63, 64, 70
  Jewish community in, 8–9, 23, 24, 61
  during Nazi German threat, 31
  pressure to speak Turkish, 18
educational institutions
  closing of Jewish, 13–14
  discovery of secret Jewish, 58
  emigration of scholars to Turkey, 84–91
  university reform, 84–85
Ehlers, Ernst, 315
Eichmann, Adolf, 147, 175, 188, 269, 278
EIF (Eclaireurs israélites de France; Jewish Scouts), 243, 245
Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, 184, 287
Einstein, Albert, 89
El Correo de Vienna journal, 172–73
El Dragoman journal, 172–73
El Kavetz, Ya'acov, 291
El Mundo Sefardi journal, 172–73
El Nacional journal, 172–73
Eleventh Decree of the Reich Citizenship Law (1941), 105
Eliane U., 243–44
Ellmann, Anna, 176
emigration/immigration
  countermeasures against refugees from Romania, 129–31
  countries providing refuge, 83–84
  of foreign Jews in Germany, 168–69
  of German Jews, 82–83
  illegal immigration by ship, 112–14
  legal transit routes through Turkey, 109–12
  living conditions of non-prominent Jewish refugees in Turkey, 94–96
  during Ottoman Empire, 22
  to Palestine, 107–33
  prevention of Jewish immigration, 157–58
  recruitment of Muslim and Turkic-speaking immigrants, 16, 47, 99–100
  of scholars to Turkey, 84–91
  of Turkish Jews, 22–23
En Büyük Tehlike (The Greatest Danger) brochure, 45
Enrico Salem, 273
Erden, Ali Fuad, 33
Erdmann, Fritz, 256
Ergas, Jak, 77–79
Ergas, Salomon, 77–79
Ergenekon journal, 45
Erkilet, Hüsnü Hüseyin E., 33, 41
Erkin, Behiç, 150, 199, 211, 212
Erkin, Feridun Cemal, 150
Erkman, Faris, 45
Erkmen, Muhlis, 40
Ertegün, Mehmet Münir, 228, 229
Ertok, Nebil, 277, 279–80, 282, 284
Erzurum, citizenship deprivation of Jews in, 51, 52
Esendal, Memduh Şevket, 44
Eskenazi, Albert, 267
Eskenazi, Eli, 223–24, 235
Eskenazi, Marie, 261
Eskenazi, Samuel, 267
Esperanza association, 172–73, 179
Eşref, Ruşen, 44
Etlin, Georges, 240–41
Euboea, 128
Evâmir-i Aşere (The Ten Commandments) (Kohen), 20
"events in Thrace" (*Trakya Olayları*), 61–70
  background of, 63–69
  refugees, 62
  Turkish government's reaction to, 62–63
Evian-les-Bains conference (1938), 100, 101, 125

Evren, Galip, 270
"exemptions" from anti-Jewish measures, 144–46, 192, 202, 206, 265, 267, 280, 309

Fabricius, Wilhelm, 93
Fachler, Joseph, 199, 256–57, 258–59
Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography (Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi), 44–45, 46, 89
family law, secularization of, 12
Farhi, Arlette, 235, 238–39
Farhi, Benjamin (Beno), 246
Farhi, Leon Yuda, 196, 235, 238–39
Farhi, Reyna, 235, 238–39
Faruk, Ömer, 165
Fazlı, Mümtaz Taylan, 163–64
Ferman, Ilya, 51
Finland, repatriation ultimatum, 157
500-Yil-Vakfi (500 Year Foundation), 149, 220, 317
Fleischer, Hagen, 289–90, 294
Fleischhauer, Ulrich, 40
Flossenbürg concentration camp, 283
forced labor service, 70–72
Ford, Henry, 60
Foreign Office. *See* German Foreign Office. *See* Turkish Foreign Office
foreigner's card. *See carte d'étranger*
Forward (*İleri*) newspaper, 7
Fossoli concentration camp, 277–78, 282–83, 301
France, 180–247
  anti-Jewish legislation, 148, 185–86, 188–201, 203, 215
  citizenship deprivation of Turkish Jews in, 158, 193, 194, 196, 242–43
  citizenship revocation of Jews in, 185–86, 221
  deportation of Turkish Jews in, 3, 201–9
  as destination for Jewish exiles, 83
  as destination for Jewish immigrants, 23, 84, 140
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 111
  flight of Turkish Jews from Italy to, 275
  Foreign Office dealings with French Jews, 143–44
  hunt for foreign Jews in, 186–88
  Marseilles, 216–19
  Nazi German occupation of, 31, 183–89, 215–24, 276
  persecution of Turkish Jews in, 234–37
  protection for Turkish Jews in, 189–201
  registration of Jews in, 185–86
  repatriation of Turkish Jews from, 230–34
  repatriation ultimatum, 153, 157, 209–15, 224–29
  resistance, 245–46
  tripartite pact with Turkey, 30, 60
Franco, Gad, 79
Franco, Hizkia M., 298
Frandji, Joseph, 203
Free German Movement (Deutscher Freiheitsbund), 91
Freemasons, 14
Fréjus camp, 218
Fritsch, Theodor, 56, 60
Front d'Indépendance (Independence Front), 253
Fuentes, Lucie, 239

Gabai family, 159
Gabay, Chaim, 230–31
gabela (tax on kosher meat), 13
Gailani, Rashid Ali al-, 35–36
Galanté, Avram, 79, 88, 295
Galanté, Salomon, 298
Galata, 17
Galip, Reşid, 85
Gattegno, Albert, 207–8, 230–31
Gattegno, Lilly, 207–8, 230–31
Gattegno, Régine, 246
gayri muntazam, 192–97
General Commission for Jewish Questions. *See* Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives
George, Perry, 46
Gerede, Hüsrev, 33, 40, 150, 164–65
German Foreign Office, involvement in persecution of Jews, 139–58, 178–79, 214, 237–38, 271, 289, 292, 315. *See also* repatriation ultimatums
German Templars, 299
German Youth, in Turkey, 42
German-Italian alliance (Pact of Steel) (1939), 30
German-Soviet alliance. *See* Hitler-Stalin Pact
German-Turkish treaty, 31–33
Germany. *See* Nazi Germany
Gerngross, Otto, 95, 105
Goga, Octavian, 99

Gök-Börü journal, 45
Gökçe, Ramiz, 58
Goldenberg, Edmond, 95, 121
Goldin, Joseph, 120–21, 131
Gormenzano, Preciado, 261
Great Britain
  control of immigration to Palestine, 107, 108, 113, 114–15, 122, 123–24, 126
  as destination for Jewish exiles, 83
  rescue of Greek Jews, 128
  tripartite pact with Turkey, 30, 60
Greece, 285–86
  anti-Jewish legislation, 132–33
  Athens, 291–94
  border strip occupied by Germany, 290–91
  emigration of Jews from, 48
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 125
  expulsion of foreign Jews from, 278–79
  fleeing "events in Thrace" to, 62
  Greek Jews in Italy, 275
  Italian-occupied zone, 285–86, 291–94
  Nazi German occupation of, 31, 276, 285–86
  operations to rescue Jews from, 128–29
  repatriation ultimatum, 292
  Salonica, 287–90
  self-administration by minorities in, 11
  zone occupied by Bulgaria, 290–91
Greek National Union (Ethniki Enosis Ellados), 287
Greeks (Turkish Greeks)
  citizenship deprivation, 50
  expulsion of, 5
  portrayal of as potential traitors, 6
  settlement restrictions, 19
  travel restrictions, 19
  Turkification of economy, 9–10
  Turkification of property, 9–10
  visibility of Jews after expulsion of, 8
Greek-Turkish War, 5, 6–7, 23, 64
Griffel, Jacob, 120–21
Gruenbaum, Yitzhak, 120–21
Guckes, Alfred, 43
Gün, Emrullah, 165
Gündüz, Asim, 41
Güneş Dil Teorisi. *See* Sun Language Theory
Günther, Rolf, 237–38
Gurs camp, 186

Haidari concentration camp, 293, 296
Haim, Leon David, 159
Haker, Erol, 21
Hakko, Vitali, 71
Halfon, Fortune, 235
Halfon, Isaac, 235
Halfon, Moris, 235
Halfon, Paul, 179
Halkevleri (People's Houses), 66
Halkçı Fırkası (People's Party), 11. *See also* Republican People's Party (CHP)
Handbuch für die jüdische Auswanderung (Handbook for Jewish Emigration), 84
Hassid, Salvator, 246
Hatay (Alexandretta), 29–30
Hatem family, 203
Heilbronn, Alfred, 88
Heinrichsohn, Ernst, 315
Hellmann, Bruno, 85–86
Hellmann, Karl, 85–86, 105
Het Vrije Woord newspaper, 257
Heydrich, Reinhard, 141
HICEM organization, 166, 168
Hikmet, Nâzim, 51
Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden (Aid Association of the German Jews), 13, 14, 22
Himmler, Heinrich, 299
Hindemith, Paul, 86–87
Hirsch, Ernst E., 86–87, 90, 104
Hirschmann, Ira, 125–26, 129
Hitler, Adolf, 31–32, 139
Hitler Youth, in Turkey, 42
Hitler-Stalin Pact (German-Soviet alliance), 30
Holzmeister, Clemens, 86–87
Hotel Lutetia, Paris, 244
Hungary
  anti-Jewish legislation, 119
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 108, 111, 123–25, 127, 131
  Foreign Office dealings with Hungarian Jews, 144
  Hungarian Jews deported from Italy to Bergen-Belsen, 282–83
  repatriation ultimatum, 157, 293
  submission to Nazi Germany, 31
Hürriyet newspaper, 58
Husny (Turkish Consul General), 174
Hüttner, M. Julius, 303–4

I., Sidi, 219–20
IGCR (Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees), 100–1, 125–26

İğneli Fıçı (The Nail Keg) (Atilhan), 60
IKG. *See* (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde; Vienna Israelite Community
İleri (Forward) newspaper, 7
İleri, Celal Nuri, 7
immigration. *See* emigration/immigration
In Depot (Mechanicus), 269–70
İnan, Afet, 44
Inönü, Ismet Paşa, 6, 19, 31–32, 38–39, 45, 62–63, 89, 199–201
Inspectorate-General (*umûmî müfettişlik*), 65–66, 152
Institute for Study of the Jewish Question (Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage), 287
Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR), 100–1, 125–26
International Allied Commission, 52
The International Jew (Ford), 60
International Red Cross, 121, 122, 126, 129, 303–4
İskân Kanunu (Settlement Law; Law No. 2510) (1934), 47–48, 50, 65–66, 68, 98
Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG; Vienna Israelite Community), 172
Israelitisch-Sephardischer Verein zu Berlin (Israelite-Sephardic Association in Berlin), 159–60
Istanbul
  aid committee, 121
  anti-Jewish campaigns, 7
  "best-informed" as to systematic murder of Jews, 119–20
  expulsion of foreign Jews living in, 105–6
  fleeing "events in Thrace" to, 62
  Nazi German mass organizations in, 42–43
  during Nazi German threat, 31
  pressure to speak Turkish, 18
  proportion of Jews in, 24
  rescue committee, 120, 129–30
  wealth tax, 75, 76–77, 80–81
Istanbul Üniversitesi (formerly known as Dârülfünun) 18, 84–91
Italy, 273–84
  after German occupation, 276–83
  anti-Jewish legislation, 99, 106, 148, 273–76
  arrests of "protected" Jews, 282–83
  attack on Albania, 30
  attack on Greece, 31
  as destination for Jews emigrating from Turkey, 84
  "diplomatic rules", 280–82
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 108
  expulsion of foreign Jews, 274–75, 278–79
  Foreign Office dealings with Italian Jews, 144
  Italian Jews in Salonica, 288–89
  Italian Jews in Turkey, 105–6
  Italian zone of occupation in France, 183, 222–23
  Polish and German Jews in, 274–75
  repatriation ultimatum, 157, 292
  threats of war from, 30, 65
  Turkish Jews in, 275–83
  Turkish Jews transferred to Bergen-Belsen from, 300–1
  zone in Greece occupied by, 285–86, 291–94
Izmir
  anti-Jewish campaigns, 7
  effect of emigration on population of, 23
  emigration of Jews through, 125
  fear of violent assaults, 46
  Nazi German mass organizations in, 42
  during Nazi German threat, 31
  pressure to speak Turkish, 18, 20
  proportion of Jews in, 8–9, 24
  rescue of Greek Jews, 128
  wealth tax, 76–77, 80–81
Izmir economic conference (1923), 6, 10

Jabotinsky, Ze'ev, 112
Jaffe, Elia, 282, 303–4
Jewish Agency
  alerted to situation of Turkish Jews in France, 227
  drawing attention to systematic murder of Jews, 155–56
  efforts to aid emigration to Palestine, 107, 109–10, 118–19, 124–25, 127
  learns of systematic murder of Jews, 119
  overview, 107
  petition to Turkey to grant asylum, 89
  rescue committee, 120, 125–26
  sea bridge, 129, 131
Jewish Army. *See* Armée Juive
Jewish Chronicle, 24, 63
Jewish Combat Organization (Organisation juive de combat [OJC]), 245–46

Jewish Scouts (Eclaireurs israélites de France [EIF]), 243, 245–46
Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee), 122
  repatriation of Turkish Jews, 305, 306, 307, 312
  representatives in Turkey, 121
  rescue committee, 122
  Rhodes, 298
  Struma tragedy, 114
Joodsche Schouwburg theater, 269–70
Judaïsme Sépharadi journal, 223
Judeo-Spanish (Judezmo), 136, 172–73, 287, 318

Kaldiremdjian, Caroline, 217–18
Kalis, Erich, 60, 164
kanun-Türkü (Turks by law), 15
Kaputo, Joseph, 213
Karaites, 136
  exception from deportation, 234
Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri, 17, 41, 150
Karel, Luiza, 199
Karel, Salomon, 199
Karikatür caricature magazine, 58, 59, 73, 113–14
Karon, Anton, 96
Karon, Elfriede (Elfi) Alfandari, 95–96
Kavayero, Diamante, 3
Kavayero, Perla, 3
Kavayero, Sarah, 3
Kavayero, Suzanne, 3
Kavayero family, 310
Kaya, Şükrü, 63, 64
Kazbek (ship), 131
Keim, Georg, 261
Kemalists
  assimilation of Jews, 3
  closing of Jewish educational institutions, 13–14
  contradictory behavior, 21–22
  distancing from Young Turks, 29, 44
  elimination of minority self-administration, 12
  Jews as "model minority", 6
  Jews' efforts to establish good relationship with, 6–7
  opposition to freedoms guaranteed in Lausanne Treaty, 11, 21–22
  overview, 3
  participation in "War of Liberation" as criterion for inclusion, 15–16
  racist characteristics of, 43
  rejection of meddling by European powers, 4
  Turkification policy, 4, 5
Kent, Necdet, 219–21
Kerem, Yitzchak, 291, 294
Keşan, 62
Kesebir, Şakir, 90
Kessler, Gerhard, 85, 88, 91
Kırdar, Lütfi, 305
Kırklareli, 62, 63
Kıvırcık, Emir, 149, 197, 317
Klarsfeld, Beate, 315
Klarsfeld, Serge, 202, 206, 221, 315
Kleemann, Ulrich (Nazi military commander on Rhodes), 296
Klingenfuß, Karl, 233
Knochen, Helmut, 236, 315
Koç, Kemal, 157, 164, 225, 237
Koçgiri uprising, 5
Kohen, Moïz (Munis Tekinalp), 20, 79
Kollek, Teddy, 119–21
Köprülü, Mehmet Fuat, 44
Kopuz journal, 45
Korkut, Selahattin, 41
Kos, 296, 298
Kroll, Hans, 32, 35, 43, 102, 154, 158
Kulin, Ayşe, 149
Kumbaracılar, Kemal, 165
Kurdish-Islamic Sheikh Said (*Şeyh-Said*) Rebellion, 19, 65–66
Kurds
  citizenship deprivation, 51
  Dersim insurrection, 47–48
  forced resettlement, 47–48
  human rights violations against, 316
  Koçgiri uprising, 5
  pressure to speak Turkish, 5–6, 18
  Turkification policy, 5–6, 21
Kurtuluş savaşı. *See* "War of Liberation" (*Kurtuluş savaşı*)
Kütan (Turkish Jew from Belgium), 260
Kütan, Regine, 260

labor camps, 76–79
Last Train to Istanbul (*Nefes Nefese*) (Kulin), 149
  Latvia, deportation of Jews to, 168
Lausanne peace negotiations (1922–1923), 6
Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (1933), 82

Law No. 854 b (1926), 16
Law No. 1041 (1927), 16, 49, 51, 151, 158, 167
Law No. 1164 (1934), 65
Law No. 1312 (Citizenship Law) (1928), 50–51, 54–55, 151, 158
Law No. 2007. *See* Law on Activities and Professions in Turkey Reserved for Turkish Citizens (1932)
Law No. 2848 (1935), 50, 151
Law No. 3293 (1937), 95
Law No. 3512 (Association Law) (1938), 14
Law No. 3519 (Passport Law) (1938), 99–100, 152
Law No. 3529 (Law Regarding the Residence and Travel of Foreigners in Turkey) (1938), 99–100
Law on Activities and Professions in Turkey Reserved for Turkish Citizens (Law No. 2007) (1932), 95
Law on Associations and the Press (1938), 38
Law on Civil Servants (1926), 10
Law on Taxation of Agricultural Products (*toprak mahsulleri*) (1943), 74
Law Regarding the Residence and Travel of Foreigners in Turkey (No. 3529) (1938), 99–100
Le Judaïsme Sépharadi journal, 14, 137
Le Mémorial de la déportation des Juifs de France (Klarsfeld), 202
League of Nations, 29, 65, 99
Leipzig Trade Fair, 139
Léon, Habif, 246
Leopold III (king of Belgium), 249–50
Les cahiers séfardis journal, 247
Les Milles camp, 186
Levi, Avner, 24, 64
Levi, Bohor, 236
levirat (brother-in-law marriage), 23
Levy (Italian military colonel), 273
Levy, Ita, 262
Levy, Joseph, 120
Levy, Rudolf, ix, 266–67, 302–3
Lischka, Kurt, 315
Long, Breckinridge, 125
Loraine, Percy, 66–67
Löwenstein, Bertold, 177–78
Lukov, Pencho, 291
Luther, Martin, 72–73, 140, 141, 153, 214
Madame Z. (Turkish Jew living in Paris), 213
Malche, Albert, 85
Malines (Mechlin) transit camp, 252, 258–59, 260, 262
Mandel, Ernest, 257
Mandel, Henri, 257
Manifesto della razza (Manifesto of Race), 273
Marcus, David, 88–89
Maria De Vecchi, Cesare, 294–95
Maritsa (Meriç) river, 31
Maritza (ship), 129–30
Markus (rabbi of Ashkenazi community), 92, 121
Marmarali, Samuel Abravaya (Samuel Abravaya Ozçelik), 58–59
Mauthausen concentration camp, 244–45, 309
Mechanicus, Philip, 269–70
Mechlin (Malines) transit camp, 252, 258–59, 260, 262
medrese (Islamic schools), closing of, 12
Mefkûre (ship), 113, 131
Mein Kampf (Hitler), 60
Melchers, Wilhelm, 141, 143, 145, 214
Melmer gold, 42
Menassé, Avram, 227
Menassé, Simha, 227
Menda, Eliah, 78
Menda, Joshuah, 78
Menemencioğlu, Numan, 33, 36, 40, 129, 130, 132, 153, 154, 158, 228–29
Meriç (Maritsa) river, 31
Merkez Ordusu ("Central Army"), 49
Merten, Max, 288
Mesut Ilgım, 94
Milka (ship), 129–30
millet system, 11
Millî İnkılap journal, 40, 56, 57, 63, 64
Millî Korunma Kanunu. See National Protection Law (1940), 74
Millî Şef (national leader), 38–39
Milos (ship), 113
Mitrani, Israel (Izy), 245
Mitteilungen der türkischen Israelitengemeinde (Sephardim) Wien newsletter, 174
Mitteilungen zur Judenfrage journal, 59–60
Mogroby family, 266

Montreux Convention (1936), 29–30
Morocco, emigration of German Jews to, 169
Mouvement National Belge (Belgian National Movement), 253
movement, freedom of, 19
Mufti of Jerusalem, 35–36
muhacirs
  Passport Law, 99–100
  receptivity to chauvinistic and xenophobic sentiments, 8–9
  in Thrace, 64
  mass immigration to Turkey of, 5–6
Muhar, Joseph Escojido, 255
muntazam, 192–97
Mussolini, Benito, 30, 273, 276, 295

Nadi, Doğan, 101
Nadi, Nadir, 58
Nahum, Haim, 6
names
  additions indicating religious affiliation, 10
  choice of Turkish, 20
  introduction of family names, 44
  use of in book, x–xi, 5
Nansen, Fridtjof, 99
Naphtali, Gertrud, 170–71
Naphtali, Max, 170–71
Natan, Ezra, 257, 263
Natan brothers, 248
Nathan, Elie, 21
National Liberation Front-National Popular Liberation Army (Ethnikón Apeleftherotikón Métopon-Ethnikós Laïkós Apeleftherotikós Strátos [EAM-ELAS]), 294
National Protection Law (*Millî Korunma Kanunu*) (1940), 37, 74
National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), 42, 43, 91, 93, 161
National Socialist Women's League, in Turkey, 42
Nazi Germany, 159–79
  alliance with Italy, 30
  attack on Poland, 30
  attack on Soviet Union, 32–33
  deterioration and severing of relations with Turkey, 30, 301
  emigration of Jewish academic elite to Turkey, 85, 86
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 108, 109, 111, 113–14
  evacuation of non-Jewish Turkish citizens, 158
  exclusion of Jews from society, 82
  German community in Turkey, 42–43, 76, 91–93, 301
  German Jews deported to camps in France, 186
  German Jews in Belgium, 250–51
  German Jews in Italy, 274–75
  German Jews in Netherlands, 264
  mass emigration of Jews from, 82–83
  persecution of Jews, 91–94
  policy toward Jewish émigrés, 91–93, 97
  race ideology and Muslim and Turkic-speaking peoples, 34
  racial doctrines, 2–3
  secret service activities, 35–36
  threat to Turkey, 31
  trade relations with Turkey, 4, 30, 35, 143
  Turkey declares war on, 36–37
  Turkey's "one-sided neutrality" and, 35–36
  Turkish Jews in, 151, 161–71
  use of Turanist ambitions as instrument, 33, 34
  violations of Treaty of Versailles, 29–30
Neemane Zion organization, 128
Nefes Nefese (*Last Train to Istanbul*) (Kulin), 149
Nermi, Mustafa, 57
Netherlands, 263–72
  arrest of Turkish Jews in, 269–70
  Austrian Jews in, 264
  deportation and murder, 271–72
  as destination for Jewish exiles, 83
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 111
  German Jews in, 264
  order for arrest of foreign Jews, 170
  position of Turkish authorities, 270–71
  Turkish Jews in, 263–72
  Turkish Jews transferred to Bergen-Belsen from, 300–1
The New York Times, 75
Niego family, 207–8
Nissen, Rudolf, 89–90, 104
Norden, Edith, 95, 98–99

November 1938 pogrom, 83–84, 139–40, 150, 163, 166, 175
NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party), 42, 43, 91, 93, 161
Nuremberg Laws (1935), 82

Oberg, Carl, 216
Oeuvre de secours aux Enfants (OSE; Children's Aid Society), 89, 243
Oeuvre Nationale de l'Enfance, 254
Ofner, Francis, 102–3, 127
OJC. *See* Jewish Combat Organization
Olympic Summer Games in Berlin (1936), 139
Öngören, İbrahim Tali, 66, 67–69
Operation Gertrud, 31
Or Ahayim Hospital, 121
Organisation juive de combat (OJC; Jewish Combat Organization), 245
Orhun journal, 40, 45, 64
Ortaç, Yusuf Ziya, 58
OSE. *See* Oeuvre de secours aux Enfants
Ottoman Empire
  break-up of, 4–5
  emigration during, 22
  Jewish educational institutions, 13–14
  millet system, 11
  new countries emerging from, 48
  "Turkish-Jewish" alliance, 6
Ovadia, Nissim, 182, 208
Ovadya (née Profetta), Elvira, 194–95
Öymen, Onur, 149
öz Türk (real Turks)
  citizenship distinctions, 14–15
  employment as teachers, 14
Özdoğancı, Behçet, 177–78
Özdoğancı, Fikret Şefik, 178, 233, 234, 235, 236, 238
Özelli, C., 60
Özkaya, İnayetullah Cemal, 289, 292, 293
Öztrak, Faik, 152

Pacific (ship), 113
Pact of Steel. *See* German-Italian alliance (1939)
Paldiel, Mordecai, 220
Palestine
  countermeasures against refugees from Romania, 117–31
  emigration to, 83, 84, 102–3, 107–33, 170–71
  illegal immigration by ship, 112–14
  legal transit routes through Turkey, 109–12
  Struma tragedy, 114–17
Panturkists. *See* Turanists (Panturkists)
Papandreou, Andreas, 128
Papo, Isacco, 275, 278
Papo, José, 182, 208–9
Papo, Manfred, 175
Parita (ship), 113–14, 115
Paşaeli newspaper, 7, 64
Passport Law (Law No. 3519) (1938), 99–100, 152
passport stamps, 100–1, 104
Passy, Maïer, 249
Patria (ship), 113
Payman, Kemal Aziz, 98, 132
Peker, Recep, 39
Pekesen, Berna, 67
Pencho (ship), 112–13
People's Houses. *See Halk Evleri*
Pepeyi, H. Nihat, 41
Pera (Beyoğlu), 18
Pétain, Philippe, 183
Picciotto, Liliana, 281
Pithiviers transit camp, 205, 206
Poland
  citizenship revocation, 228
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 108, 111, 113–14
  evacuation of Turkish citizens, 158
  Foreign Office dealings with Polish Jews, 144
  German attack on, 30
  Jews in Nazi Germany deported to, 168
  murder of Jews in, 156
  Polish Jews in France, 186
  Polish Jews in Germany, 161
  Polish Jews in Italy, 274–75
Political Archives of the German Foreign Office (PAAA), 148–49
Pomeranz, Venya, 120–21
"population exchange", 8, 15, 19, 48, 64–65
Portugal
  Portuguese Jews in Salonica, 288–89
  repatriation ultimatum, 157, 293
Posemann (German Embassy contact in Turkey), 59–60
press, censorship of, 39
Prime Minister's Republican Archives. *See* Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi
The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, 56, 60
public property auctions, 79–80

Rachel M., 259
Rademacher, Franz, 140, 141
Ravensbrück concentration camp
  deportation of Jews from Austria to, 176
  deportation of Jews from Belgium to, 261
  deportation of Jews from Germany to, 170
  deportation of Jews from Italy to, 283
  deportation of Jews from Netherlands to, 262, 269–70
  exchange negotiations, 302
  liberation of Turkish Jews from, 303, 305
  number of Turkish Jews deported to, 309
Realite newspaper, 156
Reeder, Eggert, 250
Reichenbach, Hans, 96–97
Reichsfluchtsteuer (tax for fleeing the Reich), 92
Reichssicherheitshauptamt. See RSHA; Reich Security Main Office
repatriation ultimatums, 146–48
  Argentina, 293
  Athens and Italian-occupied zone of Greece, 292
  Austria, 176
  Belgium, 255–56
  Denmark, 157
  Foreign Office, 146–48
  France, 153, 157, 209–15, 224–29
  Greece, 292
  Hungary, 157, 293
  Italy, 157, 292
  Portugal, 157, 293
  Romania, 157, 225–26, 293
  Spain, 157, 293
  Sweden, 157, 293
  Switzerland, 157, 293
  Turkey, 153–55, 211–13, 311
Republican People's Party (CHP)
  censorship of the press, 39
  "events in Thrace", 66
  fascism, 38
  forced labor service for non-Muslims, 71
  Jews in parliament, 58–59
  siding with Germany, 33
  Turkification of language, 18
Resmi Gazete goverment publication, 55
Resnik, Reuben, 121
Reuter, Edzard, 91
Reuter, Ernst, 86–87, 91
Rhodes, 294–98
  obliteration of Jewish community on, 295
  rescue of Turkish Jews, 296–98
Ribbentrop, Joachim von, 129, 140, 142
Risiera di San Sabba concentration camp, 284
Rivesaltes camp, 186
Rödiger, Gustav, 142, 145
Röhm Putsch ("Night of the Long Knives"), 64
Romania
  anti-Jewish legislation, 119, 132–33
  citizenship revocation, 99
  countermeasures against refugees from, 117–31
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 108, 111, 112, 113, 123–25, 126, 129–30, 131
  Foreign Office dealings with Romanian Jews, 143
  German troops near Turkish border, 31
  prohibition of emigration of Jews, 122
  repatriation ultimatum, 157, 225–26, 293
  submission to Nazi Germany, 31
Roncalli, Giuseppe (Bishop of Istanbul), 103, 122
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 100, 125–26, 130
Rosenberg, Alfred, 34
Rosenberg, Hans, 85–86
Rother, Bernd, 140–41
Röthke, Heinz, 221–22, 223, 235, 315
Rousso, Lazar, 191, 210
Routier, Albert, 199
Rozanes, Nissim, 181
RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*; Reich Security Main Office), 140–46, 147, 154–55, 157, 170, 176, 178–79, 237–38, 252, 267, 277, 278, 280, 282
Rupprecht, Philipp, 56
Russo, David, 122
Russo, Regina, 176
Russo, Richard, 176
Russo family, 52–53
Rüstow, Alexander, 88
Rychlík, Jan, 290

Sabis, Ali İhsan, 41
Sachsenhausen concentration camp, 41
Sadak, Necmettin, 12, 74
Salmona (née Mitrani), Victoria, 203–5
Salmona, Vitali, 203–5, 206–7
Salmona-Mitrani family, 203–5
Şalom, Daisy, 223–24

Şalom, Davud, 223–24, 235
Şalom, Jean Marc, 223–24
Salomon Dana, 276
Salonica, 287–90
  foreign Jews from neutral countries in, 288–89
  persecution of Jews in, 287–88
  Turkish Jews in, 289–90
Saltiel, Albert, 121
Salvador (ship), 113
Saracoğlu, Şükrü, 32, 33, 45–46, 74, 75–76, 111, 153
Saranga, Maurice, 202
Sarfati, Victor, 198
Sarper, Selim, 32, 40
Satarasvili (labor camp internee), 78
Saül, Albert, 191
Şaul, Eli, 70, 75
Saul, Henri, 213
Savut, Hüsnü, 229
Saydam, Refik, 71–72, 106, 116
Schärf, Nora, 130
Schaumburg, Ernst, 187
Schellenberg, Walter, 35, 72–73
Schleier, Rudolf, 225, 312–13
scholars, emigration of, 84–91, 92, 94
Schütte-Lihotzky, Margarete, 91
Schwartz, Philipp, 85, 88
Schweblin, Jacques, 206–7
Scurla, Herbert, 92
sea bridge, 129–31
Secret Army. *See* Armée Secrète
Security Police-Security Service (Sipo-SD) of the SS, 184, 188, 250, 252–53
Segal (representative of Agudat Israel), 122
Seidmann, Mahim, 162
self-administration by minorities, 11–13
Sephardic Benevolent Society of Brussels (Société de bienfaisance de sépharades de Bruxelles), 248
Sephardic communities, x, 136
  in Austria, 171–73, 174
  in Belgium, 248–49
  decline of significance of Turkey as cultural center, 23–25
  in France, 182–83
  in Germany, 159–60
  in Netherlands, 263–64
  in Salonica, 287
Sephardic Worship Society of Brussels (Société culturelle sépharadite de Bruxelles), 248
Sephiha, Esther, 249, 260
Sephiha, Germaine, 249
Sephiha, Jacques, 251–52, 257, 261
Sephiha, Nessim, 261
Serbia, murder of Jews in, 119
Şerez family, 235
Sertel, Sabiha, 38–39, 74
Sertel, Zekeriya, 38–39
Settlement Law. *See İskân Kanunu*
Sevi, Sabbatai (Sabbatai Twi), 74–75
Seyr-ü Sefer Talimatnamesi. *See* Travel and Transport Law
Shahon, Bulissa, 262
Shaltiel, Shabetay, 128
Shaw, Stanford, 1, 148, 149, 189, 191, 193, 197, 220, 260
Silverman, Sidney, 305
Simavi, Sedat, 58
Simond, Edmond, 121, 122, 126, 129
Şimşir, Bilal, 148, 149
Sipo-SD. *See* (Security Police-Security Service) of the SS
Skinner, Robert P., 46
Slottke, Gertrud, 265, 266–67, 269
Slovakia
  anti-Jewish legislation, 119
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 112, 127
  Foreign Office dealings with Slovakian Jews, 143
  submission to Nazi Germany, 31
Sobibor extermination camp, 218–19, 309
Société culturelle sépharadite de Bruxelles. *See* Sephardic Worship Society of Brussels
Société de bienfaisance de sépharades de Bruxelles Sephardic Benevolent Society of Brussels, 248
Society for the Study of Turkish History (Türk Tarihi Tetkik Heyeti), 43
Son Posta, 40
Soriano, Maurice, 297
Soriano, Victoria, 298
Soulam, Rebecca (Rifca), 244
South Africa, as destination for Jewish exiles, 83
South America, as destination for Jewish exiles, 83
Soviet Union
  Foreign Office dealings with Soviet Jews, 144–45
  murder of Jews in, 119, 144–45
  Muslim and Turkic peoples of, 34

Soviet Union (*cont.*)
Nazi German invasion of, 31–32
prisoners of war in Bergen-Belsen, 299
Struma tragedy, 116
Turkish support for German war against, 32–33, 35–36
Spain
emigration of Jews to Palestine, 111
flight of Turkish Jews from Italy to, 275
repatriation ultimatum, 157, 293
report of tribute letter to, 12
Spanish Jews in Salonica, 288–89
Spengler-Axiopoulos, Barbara, 294
SS Einsatzgruppen
annexation of Austria, 175
disregard for "rules of exemption", 146, 192
murder of Jews in Italy, 277
murder of Jews in Romania, 117, 155–56
murder of Jews in Soviet Union, 119, 177
state security articles, 38
Steinhardt, Laurence, 122, 129, 228–29
Stern, Julius, 95, 103, 121
Steuerwald, Karl, 89
Stoliar, David, 116, 117
Streicher, Julius, 40
Stroop, Jürgen, 292
Struma (ship), 113, 114–17
Sulzberger, C.L., 75
Sun Language Theory (*Güneş Dil Teorisi*), 44
Suzi Liberman (Atilhan), 60
Sweden, repatriation ultimatum, 157, 293
Switzerland
as destination for Jewish exiles, 83, 100
flight of Jews from Italy to, 278
repatriation ultimatum, 157, 293
Swiss Jews in Salonica, 288–89
takeover as power representing Turkish interests, 239–40
Syria
land route to Palestine through, 109, 130
obtaining transit visas for, 123

Talib, Ahmed, 49
Tan newspaper, 43, 46, 113–14
Tanin newspaper, 46
Tanrıdağ journal, 45
Tanriöver, Hamdullah Suphi, 13–14, 15, 44
Tarabulus, Nissim, 291
Taranto, James, 210
Taranto, Salvador, 210
Tari (ship), 129
tarikat (Islamic orders), closing of, 12
Taut, Bruno, 86–87, 91
Tekinalp, Munis (Moïz Kohen), 20, 79
Tekirdağ
"events in Thrace", 62
pressure to speak Turkish, 18
Teutonia club, 42–43
Tevhid-i Efkâr newspaper, 7
Theresienstadt ghetto, 170, 309
Thrace
anti-Jewish campaigns, 7, 24
effect of Balkan Wars on, 22
"events in Thrace", 61–70
expulsion of Jews from, 21–22
pressure to speak Turkish, 18
proportion of Jews in, 8–9, 24
Settlement Law, 48
wealth tax, 76–77
Three-Power Pact (German-Italian-Japanese alliance), 31
Toprak, Sabri, 18, 97
Tordjman, Fortuné, 222
Tordjman, René, 222
Toydemir, Muzaffer, 43
Trakya Olayları. *See* "events in Thrace" (*Trakya Olayları*)
transport of elderly people. *See* *Alterstransport*
Travel and Transport Law (*Seyr-ü Sefer Talimatnamesi*) (amended 1930), 53
Treaty of Kars (Turkish-Soviet treaty) (1921), 29, 30
Treaty of Lausanne
Articles 37 to 45, 11–12
Article 41, 12
Article 42, 12–13
citizenship issues, 48
generality of provisions, 12
opposition to freedoms guaranteed in, 11, 21–22
"population exchange", 8, 15, 19, 287
proscribing non-Muslim discrimination, 10, 68–69
undermining of minority rights established in, 11–15
Treaty of Montreux, 35, 65
Treaty of Sèvres (1920), 5, 29
Treaty of Versailles, 29–30
Treblinka extermination camp, 290

Turanists (Panturkists), 29, 33–37, 43–46
ambitions of, 33
government disassociation from, 46
Nazi sympathizers among, 40
Türk Amacı journal, 45
Türk Kültür Cemiyeti (Turkish Cultural Association), 17
Türk Ocakları nationalist association, 13–14, 15, 18, 66
Türk Sesi newspaper, 7
Türk Tarih Kurumu (Turkish Historical Society). *See* Society for the Study of Turkish History
Türk Tarih Tezi (Turkish History Thesis), 43, 44, 84
Türk Tarihi Tetkik Heyeti. *See* Society for the Study of Turkish History
Türkeş, Alparslan, 316
Turkey, 29–37, 38–55, 82–106, 107–33, 148–53
anti-Jewish campaigns, 7–9
assimilation of Jews, 3
changes in non-Muslim population, 8
citizenship policies, 48–55
citizenship deprivation, 51, 54–55, 151–52
countermeasures against refugees from Romania, 117–31
decline of significance as Sephardic cultural center, 23–25
elation at attack on Soviet Union, 32–33
emigration of scholars to, 84–91
estimation of Jewish population changes, 23–24
expulsions, 104–6
fascism, 43–46
flight to Palestine through, 108–17
forced labor service for non-Muslims, 70–72
forced resettlement, 47–48
founding of Republic, 4
German community in, 42–43
German-Turkish treaty, 31–33
government's reaction to "events in Thrace", 62–63
importance of policies to European Jews, 3
imported anti-Semitism, 56–61
Jews' efforts to establish good relationship with, 6–7
knowledge of Holocaust by government, 155–57
laws preventing Jewish immigration, 96–106
living conditions of non-prominent Jewish refugees in, 94–96
Millî Şef regime, 38–39
"multi-state situation", 52
Nazi sympathizers in, 39–43
"one-sided neutrality", 35–37
operations to rescue Greek Jews, 128–29
preventing Jewish immigration, 157–58
prohibiting repatriation, 152–53
repatriation ultimatums, 153–55
rescue efforts and aid committees, 120–22
revolutionary changes in 1933, 2
role in rescuing Jews, 1
sea bridge, 129–31
threat from Nazi Germany, 31
trade with Nazi Germany, 4, 30, 35, 143
Turanists, 33–37, 43–46
Turkification policies, 9–11, 46–48
Turkish citizens living abroad, 51–54
undermining of minority rights established in Treaty of Lausanne, 11–15
Vatandaş Türkçe konuş (Citizens, Speak Turkish) campaign, 16–18, 20, 46
Turkey and the Holocaust (Shaw), 148–49, 220
Turkey's Struggle against European Racists. *See Avrupa Irkçılarına Karşı Türkiye'nin Mücadelesi*; (Şimşir)
Turkhof, Harry, 178–79
Turkhof, Renée, 178–79
Turkification policies, 4, 46–48
economy, 9–11
language, 5–6, 16–18, 20
property, 9–10, 50–51
"War of Liberation", 5
Türkische Post newspaper, 41, 43
Turkish Chamber of Commerce in Germany, 160, 163–64, 165, 168
Turkish Constitution
Article 88, 50
equality of citizens, 10
reference to in protests against anti-Jewish laws in France, 189–90
Turkish Criminal Code, 19–20
Turkish Foreign Office, 32, 33, 98, 130, 132, 153, 154, 158
Turkish History Thesis. *See Türk Tarih Tezi*

Turkish Jews, 1–25, 56–81
ambivalent situation of, 6–7
anti-Jewish campaigns, 7–9
assimilation attempts, 4–5, 20–25
in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, 300–1, 305–8
changing criteria for inclusion and exclusion, 15–20
citizenship revocation, 54–55
economic Turkification, 9–11
"events in Thrace", 61–70
exclusion as citizens, 4–5, 14–15
forced labor service, 70–72
imported anti-Semitism, 56–61
mass emigration of, 22–23
nationalist mobilization and legal restrictions, 18–20
undermining of minority rights established in Treaty of Lausanne, 11–15
wealth tax, 72–81
Turkish Jews living abroad (Turkish-Jewish Diaspora communities)
in Austria, 151, 171–79, 300–1
in Belgium, 254–63, 311
citizenship deprivation, 50–51, 54–55
cultural identification, 136
early migrants, 135, 136
in France, 3, 158, 189–215, 224–29, 230–37, 242–43
in Germany, 151, 161–71
in Italy, 275–83
lobbying activities by, 14
in Netherlands, 263–72
overview, 51–54
relationship with country of origin, 137
in Rhodes, 296–98
in Salonica, 289–90
size of, 135
social and legal status of, 136, 137
in Spain, 275
vows of loyalty by, 14
Turkish Passport (film), 149
Turkish Straits, sovereignty over, 29–30, 65
Turkish-Israelite Congregation in Vienna (Türkisch-israelitische Gemeinde zu Wien), 171
Turkish-Soviet treaty. *See* Treaty of Kars (1921), 29, 30
Türkkan, Oğuz Reha, 44–45, 45
Türklüğe hakaret (insulting Turkishness), 19–20
Türkmen, İlter, 197
Uckermark concentration camp, 261
UGIF (Union générale des Israélites de France), 203, 212, 213, 222, 231–32, 255, 258
Uhuvvet Society in Bursa, 20
Ülgen, Fethi, 165
Ülkümen, Selahattin, 295, 296–97, 310
Ulus newspaper, 39, 57, 113–14, 116
umûmî müfettişlik. *See* Inspectorate-General
Union générale des Israélites de France. *See* UGIF
United States
as destination for Jewish exiles, 83
Foreign Office dealings with American Jews, 143–44
immigration restrictions, 23
Universal Israelite Alliance. *See* Alliance Israélite Universelle
"un-Turkish accents", 17
Uruguay, 228
Us, Hakkı Tarık 74
Üstad (The Teacher) newspaper, 17
Uziel, Eli J., 159
Uzunköprü
"events in Thrace", 62
during Nazi German threat, 31

Vakit newspaper, 57, 74
Vâ-Nû (Vâlâ Nûrettin), 66
Varlık Vergisi. *See* wealth tax (*Varlık Vergisi*)
Vatan newspaper, 306
Ventura, Mişon, 79, 88
Ventura, Stella, 210
Verband der türkischen Israeliten (Sephardim) zu Wien (Association of Turkish Israelites [Sephardim] in Vienna), 172
Du Vernet camp, 213
Vernet concentration camp, 184, 186, 213
Vienna Israelite Community (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde [IKG]), 172
Viitorul (ship), 118
Vittel concentration camp, 242
Völkischer Beobachter newspaper, 60
von Aster, Ernst, 88
von Bargen, Werner, 230, 256, 257–58
von Gabain, Annemarie, 89
von Graevenitz, Kurt-Fritz, 293
von Hahn, Fritz Gebhardt, 147
von Halem, Gustav Adolf, 279, 280

von Killinger, Manfred, 117–18
von Papen, Franz, 31–32, 33, 35–36, 41–42, 129, 142, 154, 157, 170, 214, 225, 230, 268, 279, 289, 301
von Rosenberg, Frederic, 63
von Stülpnagel, Otto, 187–88
von Thadden, Eberhard, 140, 141, 157, 178–79, 237–38, 271, 289, 293
von Wiedenfeld, Hugo Ritter, 172

Wadler, Wilhelm, 93
Wagner, Horst, 140, 292
Wannsee Conference (1942), 119, 141
"War of Independence" (*İstiklal savaşı*). *See* "War of Liberation" (*Kurtuluş savaşı*)
"War of Liberation" (*Kurtuluş savaşı*)
  accusations of dodging military service, 7
  citizenship policies, 48, 49, 51, 241, 243
  overview, 5
  participation in as criterion for inclusion, 15–16
War Refugee Board (WRB), 125–26
Wealth Tax Law (Law No. 4305) (1942), 73, 79
wealth tax (*Varlık Vergisi*), 72–81
  abolition of, 315
  commemoration of, 318
  effects of, 80–81, 307–8
  emigration due to, 125
  labor camps, 76–79
  letter of Turkish Jew to relative abroad regarding, 77–79
  public property auctions, 79–80
Wehrmacht
  annexation of Austria, 175
  murder of Jews in Athens, 292
  murder of Jews in Soviet Union, 119
  treatment of Soviet prisoners of war, 34
Weissman, Isaac, 227–28
Weizmann, Chaim, 89, 104–5, 228
Weltdienst pamphlet, 40
Westerbork concentration camp, 269–70, 271–72, 301, 303, 309
western Anatolia
  anti-Jewish campaigns, 7
  line of defense against Nazi Germany, 31
  proportion of Jews in, 8–9, 24
Widmann, Horst, 86
Wise, James W., 229
Wise, Stephen, 228, 229
Wisliceny, Dieter, 288, 292
WJC (World Jewish Congress), 126, 127, 227, 305
Woermann, Ernst, 142, 214
women
  citizenship policies, 50
  marriage migration, 23
  refugees' marriage to Turkish nationals, 95
  right to vote, 2
World Jewish Congress. *See* WJC
WRB. *See* War Refugee Board

Yaban (The Stranger) (Karaosmanoğlu), 17
Yacar, Moice, 203
Yahudi Muhaceretleri (Wandering Jews), 60
Yahudilik ve Masonluk (Fritsch), 56, 60
Yakar (Turkish Jew living in Paris), 53, 199–201
Yalçın, Hüseyin Cahit, 46, 60
"yellow badge", 146, 188, 192, 250, 251–52, 288
Yeni Dünya newspaper, 46
Yeni Sabah journal, 58
Yenibahçeli, Ahmet Şükrü, 44
Yeruşalmy, Avram Şalom, 233
Yeruşalmy, Refca, 196–97, 233
Yohai, Luna Fanny, 272, 303
Yohai, Mercado, 263, 269, 272, 303
Yohai, Signora, 303
Young Turk movement
  Kemalist distancing from, 29, 44
  Turkification of economy, 9
Yugoslavia
  emigration of Jews to Palestine, 111
  Nazi German occupation of, 31, 276, 285–86
  zone occupied by Bulgaria, 290

Zakouto, Nissim, 159
Zeitschrift der türkischen Handelskammer für Deutschland journal, 19, 53
Zelmanovits, L., 305
Ziffer, Heinz, 128
Zionism, 108
Zöpf, Wilhelm, 265, 269, 271–72
Zuckmayer, Eduard, 86–87