

Afterword

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There is something that journalists should say more in articles. Whereas in many countries foreigners spend a great deal of time criticising the natives and vice versa, this is not the case in Turkey at all. Everybody is very nice about the Turks and foreigners do not spend their time in a kind of foreign ghetto.

It is easy for those with foreign passports and a bit of foreign money to go to an exotic country with touches of backwardness and say, 'What fun!', especially when the food is very good and the landscape is interesting. This is an extremely easy trick. The interesting question is that Turkey is not now to be classed as a backward country. Urfa, for example, ten years ago was a dusty two-bed one-horse town. When one looks at Urfa today, it is still very obviously a Middle Eastern town, it is after all mainly an Arabic and Kurdish settlement, but it wears an air of some kind of prosperity. There is an obvious economic life.

If one takes the road to Mardin one can see that the effort of the Turkish state is getting some kind of return. In that part it is quiet: one does not see any troops or police around. It is all owing to something which could originally have been classed with the Etatist side of the Atatürk Republic such as the Gap Project. An enormous dam is built, there are pictures of sweet little peasant girls with scarves on, and one expects

that one will then get more steel produce than the United States. The Gap Project could slightly be expected to have that sort of air. But when one goes to the top of Nemrut Dağı, the eighth wonder of the world, to see the sheer size of the water which has been dammed and is going to be used to irrigate a part of the world, which has probably not been properly irrigated since the days of Sargon or Syrus, it is obvious that it is going to make a terrific change to the place. Turkey cannot now be classed as a third world country. That period is now over. Inhabitants of Turkey can take a certain amount of confidence and be proud that they have done it.

The question now is where Turkey is going to go from here. It is very interesting to study a comparison of the country to which Turkey should be compared, and this is Russia. At first sight Russia and Turkey are miles and miles apart. When one looks deeper one finds extraordinary likenesses. Some of this obviously comes from the heritage of orthodoxy which seeped into Turkey and which is still very demonstrably there. The habits of Turkey, where politicians set up one party and then desert that party, and the smaller the party the more people it expels, reminds one very much of the sort of political narcissism which one can find very often in the orthodox world as well, in Greece, for example.

There are more interesting parallels to be drawn. In their initial programmes of 1922-1923 they start off with remarkable similarities. The USSR was actually physically set up just a few months before the Turkish Republic was proclaimed. In the back of beyond in Russia or Uzbekistan one will find a Lenin statue. Similarly in Turkey one finds Atatürk. It is curious as to what caused all these statues to be put up. The two set out also with the same sort of modernising project, including literacy. They had in common that they both had to deal with the Islamic world, which meant, in the case of the communists, eventually coming to terms with various *tarikats* and Sufi mystics, who went on existing in the communist time very much under the surface but were still there.

They started out with a common attitude to modernisation: a large number of dams and parks of rest and culture. Now one can see the results. On the Internet the CIA statistics of Russia and Turkey show that the average age on death of a Russian male is 54, in Turkey 68. With women for some reason in Russia it is 71, in Turkey 72. GNP per head in Russia is now one third of that of Turkey. The Turkish economy by any measurable index of size has overtaken Sweden. Russia's foreign trade is still larger than Turkey's, as one would expect with all the oil, gold and timber. But the total turnover of Turkish foreign trade is now two thirds of that of Russia. It is expected by 2010 that Turkey's foreign trade will be greater than Russia's. That is quite a remarkable achievement for a country where in 1923, if one reads the wonderful memoirs of Şirin Devrim, one could not actually get a table made that had legs that did not wobble unless you went to a Greek or an Armenian. Now Turkey makes fax machines!

There are two further facts about this. The first is that the other day a Turkish tile factory was opened in Wales. This has not happened since the seventeenth century. The other point is that the Turkish air force is known to be pretty proficient and has been making good planes all these years. Now the pressure on it is such that it has to farm out the making of spare parts for F16s to Slovakia. This is a strong Turkey which can count as just as modern in the relative sort of way as the Ottoman Empire would have done in the later 16th century. In particular it is overtaking Russia so fast that those ideas of Turgut Özal in the early 1990s of a Turkish presence in Central Asia are not altogether misplaced. The idea of Turkish presence in Central Asia did look fantastical - that the Turks were taking on too much, that it was a great bout of nationalist insanity. But now it looks like it is going to be a reality. Turks know how to handle the business in those parts. They bribe with immense dignity and it would not be at all surprising to find that at some stage a sort of common Turkic market will be found there.

If one takes the trends from 1923 to the present and

extends them somewhat then the future looks very bright indeed. Any journalist in Turkey looking at the various problems should always bear this in mind. It is a pity that there is not actually a book in the English language which puts this sort of thing in black and white. The books that exist in English are often quite well written. People like Turkey, they are very interested in it but they tend to absorb all too easily a rather two-dimensional view of Turkey without appreciating quite what has been achieved after all the ups and downs, particularly since 1950 and the arrival of democratic politics.

Turkey's problems cannot be denied. It is a country in which the educated classes very often make no bones at all about criticising a great deal of what goes on. This has to be put in some sort of perspective. The educated classes very often depended on a state bureaucracy which had its modernising projects in the 1920s and 1930s and was remarkably successful at it. To make the population literate with a language like Turkish, and written in Arabic by a very tiny number of people, is phenomenal. However, the problem with all state enlightenments is that they get eaten by their grandchildren. Scotland is a very good case in point. Scotland produced the very first state modernising project. As a hypothetical example, the Edinburgh new town is built up, the canals formed, everything in the modern world from television to sociology is invented, economics along the way, and one then finds that a torrent of peasants are released who pour into Glasgow and pull the enlightenment down.

In his book *On the Holy Mountain* William del Rumble writes about orthodoxy and does not portray Turkey in a very good light. His good ancestor was a Scottish enlightenment character called the Master of Stair. He applied himself in Argyll to a digest of Roman law brought up to date for the purposes of the modernisation of Scotland. It required a formidable amount of knowledge of absolutely everything in sight. The wind howled, the servant made sour cocoa, the rats scampered around and into the middle of this comes a piper

and a large Christmas pudding. He says: 'The McDonalds have asked the Campbells for sanctuary in Glenco.' That was William del Rumble's answer. There was an original twist to this in that the granddaughter of this man was Lucia di Lamemor. This is an example simply to say that the enlightenment state cannot carry its project through by debate and if it had been left to the methods of democracy as it was then understood, Turkey would have remained stuck where she was. What she has managed to do is to produce a successful enlightenment and then to face the problems.

The problems started coming thick and fast after 1950. They came particularly in the shape of the shanty towns round Izmir, Istanbul and Ankara. It is still a big problem. Enlightenments have this sort of effect. People arrive fresh from the village thinking the streets are paved with gold in a place like Izmir. The families stick together and help each other. They put up a house during the night and they are often not too bad. Turkish left-wingers look at the shanty towns and *gecekondu*s and say 'Is this not a terrible blot on the face of civilisation?' No, it is not. If one looks at the equivalents in Moscow nowadays, they are not that bad. The death rate really tells that particular story. They pour into the shanty towns. Islam is what they very strictly believe in. Some of them become quite well off and some of the parents of students say, 'If my daughter does not wear a headscarf, she will be regarded by all her relatives as a prostitute'. Everyone has gone through this sort of period of European history. In France the battles were fought in 1890s, and in parts of Germany and Northern Ireland to this day there is a kind of religious conservatism.

A democracy sometimes produces things that one does not like. That is what has occurred to some extent in the successful modernisation of Turkey in the last seventy years. Some of the people who defend the Atatürk enlightenment state do not really very much like it. On the whole they are the people whom a lot of foreign journalists meet, with very good

manners, very interesting people with a hypocritical attitude towards the Turkish state and what has happened to it, in particular, a critical attitude both towards the army and to the Islamic side. Some posters, which have been put up say, 'Our battle is with the gangs, the mafia in politics. Our battle is with terror, the PKK and our battle is with *karanlık* (darkness)', meaning that kind of backward Islam.

These are serious problems and are produced by the success of the Turkish state, not its failure. As far as the religious side is concerned, some degree of optimism can be allowed because it is quite likely that in ten years, with the growth of the country generally, Islam will lose that extreme 'shariah' approach to things and will produce what has been seen on the Islamic side even in the days of the Welfare Party, and that is some very sensible talking about the place of Islam in the modern world.

What is of concern is that people say the army should step in and stop extreme Islam. The army deserves much sympathy in this but the job should really be done by the political parties. Eighty per cent of Turks vote for parties which may to some extent sympathise with Islam but believe in the secularist state. The crippling weakness at the moment is that these politicians fight each other and it is very difficult to hit them on the head, as one would do with Italian politicians, and say: 'You must not go on like this because it is dangerous', and it means that the army will be put into a position, which armies should not really be in, not least for the sake of Turkey's public opinion and Turkey's effect on Europe.

As to the Turkish position in Europe the nature of the Turkish population in Germany is very worrying. It is a German problem, not a Dutch problem, certainly not a British problem. If one says one is Turkish in the UK it sounds slightly exotic but that is that. It is certainly not a French problem. But Germany is a problem. If one goes wandering through the back streets of Köln one sees the third generation of Turks. They have lost that natural style and self-composure

that the Turks have, even in the back of beyond in places like Göreme. They have become German in the sense that they are loud and rowdy, they wear these absurd modern clothes and they have sown up the protection rackets. About 13,000 of a population of nearly 3 million go to university and it is a pretty dismal sight.

What is causing it is not clear but it took the Poles in the Ruhr four generations to become integrated. Germany is just that sort of place. In the fifth generation they become integrated into the Hamburg football team and the politbureau of the DDR. There is a fear that the Turkish minority in Germany, far from being a help, is going to be a great ball and chain giving Turkey a bad name, as to some extent has happened with Chancellor Kohl's otherwise desperately clumsy rejection of the Turkish claim to be part of the European Community.

As to the business of the appeal, there is one suggestion that can be made. Rather than asking to join Europe in its present state with its enormous agricultural subsidies, with its fantastically elaborate *acquis communautaire*, 80,000 pages of detailed issues about Telecoms and sardine tins and the wording of warnings on cigarette packets of unbelievable gobbledygook, there is one change that must be made and that is to get Turkish students in western universities on the same level as the natives. It is grotesque that Turkish students, who want to come to an English university, have to pay fees which are designed for rich Malaysians. It is terrible that this country can continue to do this. That is a case that could be sensibly argued. What Europe is going to find on its doorstep is a country of 100,000,000 people, which is growing at eight per cent per annum, a country which supplies a growing market for European goods and one which will become increasingly important in all sorts of ways. This country and Turkey are very well placed to co-operate and personally get along very well.

How Turkey stood up to the First World War to get to

the point of Kut el-Amara in May 1916 is an extraordinary mystery. General Townshend led his troops up the Euphrates, arrived at Kut and found himself cut off by floods and mud and surrounded by Turks led by Hilmi Pasha. After a time he surrendered with 10,000 men. In Anatolia at that time people were dying of malnutrition, disease and so on. A large number of these British prisoners died. Townshend's men were taken over and the officers went to officers' camps in Merzifon and Afyon. The men worked, as prisoners of war do, on the Taurus mountains part of the Berlin to Baghdad railway and many of them died.

Charles Brandon, a journalist for the Sunday Times, wrote a book in 1965 about that battle in (and it was the 1960s) the period of, *Oh, What a Lovely War* and one would expect a book like that to be written very much in the spirit of silly old fire-eating generals, brave men singing songs and general wickedness of establishments. No doubt that is what Brandon wanted to do. Then he spoke to 1960s' survivors of Kut el-Amara and there were sixty of them still alive that he could get in touch with. They all said that Townshend had been a very brave man and they actually cheered him as he went into captivity. But the interesting thing was that those sixty survivors all spent their summer holidays in Turkey with the families of the people who had looked after them on the Berlin to Baghdad railway. That was an extraordinary moment showing the closeness in misfortune that could come about. One hopes that that spirit survives.