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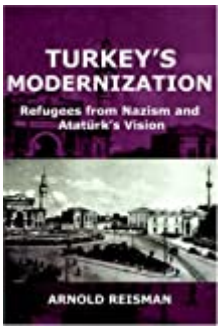

Arnold Reisman. *Turkey's Modernization: Refugees from Nazism and AtatÃ¼rk's Vision.* Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2006. xxvii + 571 pp. $28.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-9777908-8-3.

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Turkey's Accidental Modernizers

This book tells the incredible story of the men and women who escaped the Holocaust to Turkey and who subsequently played a transformative role in the advancement of a wide range of academic disciplines, social reform, and architectural styles in their new home country. Saved from the clutches of death, these Ã©migrÃ©s deeply influenced the future course of Turkish society. Their contributions were so significant, Arnold Reisman argues, that they accelerated Turkey's path to modernization. As the book's title suggests, Reisman credits Mustafa Kemal AtatÃ¼rk (1881-1938) for saving these persecuted individuals by elevating the recruitment of academic refugees to the level of state policy. AtatÃ¼rk's drive for modernization led to the official invitation of some three hundred (mostly) Jewish scientists and professionals from Germany and Austria together with their families, assistants, and staff, numbering some one thousand individuals in all. Once Turkish visas and offers for employment were extended, the *Reichsregierung* granted permission to travel as a way of gaining Ankara's support in other matters. In this way, as Reisman puts it, "the national self-serving policies of two disparate governments served humanity's ends during the darkest years of the twentieth century" (p. 2).

Reisman weaves together dozens of biographies, tracing an impressive network of scholars and scientists often beyond Turkey's borders through correspondence with renowned colleagues such as Albert Einstein in the United States. Austrian Clemens Holzmeister designed the building that today continues to house the Grand National Assembly, the Turkish parliament, in Ankara. Hans GÃ¼terbock's work on Hittite tablets revolutionized the study of cuneiform. Composer Paul Hindemith and theater director Karl Ebert introduced the public to western opera and classical music. Andre Neville, Alfred Heilbronn, and Leo Brauner opened the first zoology museum in Turkey. Ernst Reuter, the future mayor of West Berlin–who was not Jewish but had been arrested for his opposition to the Nazis–expanded the public transportation system and trained an entire generation of students in city planning through his widely read *Social Science: Introduction to City Planning* (1940).

The book's strength lies in the fascinating array of biographic information about the individuals who occupied this world of science, scholarship, and the arts.

Their rescue, Reisman shows, made possible a dizzying list of accomplishments. These include not only major advances across disciplines but also the mentorship of students who would themselves go on to make history. Economist Wilhelm RÃ¶pke, to name just one example, found refuge in Turkey, and he was also instrumental in shaping the thinking and policies of someone like Ludwig Erhard, West Germany's chancellor and economic minister and father of the German "economic miracle." Thus, Reisman has eloquently portrayed this legacy studded with great achievements, and his study is at the same time an ambitious historical investigation and a tribute to the memory and contributions of this Ã©migrÃ© community.

When it comes to stitching these biographies into the history of modern Turkey, however, the reader will find a number of shortcomings impossible to overlook. The study's most problematic point is its presentation of "modernization." Modernization is understood to be equivalent to westernization, and the author's approach suggests that every translation of a western work of literature into Turkish, every performance of a western opera on the Turkish stage, was another milestone on the road to modernity. To measure modernization in this way harks back to an outdated understanding of the concept, one in which modernity is the product of the West, to be disseminated to those in the non-West. Reisman uncritically takes on board the claim, for example, that "mastery of western music serves as a proxy for mastery of western, i.e., modern, culture as a whole" (p. 94). Rather, modernity has been the result of a process of global interaction, one in which European expansion, including imperialism and colonialism, has been pivotal. It was in this space of global interaction that modernity first emerged, as Dror Zeevi, for one, has shown again recently.[1]

A second limitation is the study's strong distinction between the (pre-1922) Ottoman and the (post-1923) Turkish/Republican periods. Despite some mention of Ottoman institutions dating back to the nineteenth century, the accomplishments of the 1920s and subsequent years are presented as entirely new. Doing so certainly adds weight to republican reforms and the contributions of the Ã©migrÃ© community that are Reisman's principal concern. But it also means that *Turkey's Modernization* does not draw on the considerable scholarship in Ottoman and Turkish history that has examined so many of the various strands of continuity from the empire to the republic. It would not detract from the brilliant and dedicated work of Albert Eckstein, in other words, to acknowledge that he did not introduce pediatrics to Turkey in the 1940s and 1950s; after all, the ?i?li children's hospital had been established much earlier, in 1899. In the area of education, the development of a modern school system had been underway for almost a century before the republican period.[2]

Despite these drawbacks, to my knowledge, no other work brings together the lives and works of these refugees as comprehensively as this study. Reisman, who retired from a distinguished career in teaching and research as a professor of engineering from Case Western University, has given us a reminder of the resilience of the human spirit that these lucky few embodied.

Notes

[1]. Dror Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19 (2004): 73-94.

[2]. Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Ak?in SelÃ§uk Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1838-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Boston: Brill, 2001); on Ottoman science, see Ekmeleddin ?hsano?lu, Kostas Chatzis, and Efthymios Nicolaidis, *Multicultural Science in the Ottoman Empire* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); and recently, on intellectual continuities generally, see Elisabeth Ãzdalga, ed., *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005).