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Dear Peter,

The other day, I was wandering with two friends through the Sultanahmet district of old Stamboul. We paused at one point for a few minutes to have a handful of pages photocopied from the description Mark Twain gives of 19th-century Constantinople in Innocents Abroad. While the storekeeper was operating the photocopy machine, my friends plopped down in the two chairs he kept set out for the comfort of customers forced to wait. I looked about for a third chair and, not finding one, started to sit down on a box of books that happened to have been left in the middle of the floor. As I began to do so, the storekeeper suddenly intervened. "You cannot sit there!" he exclaimed. "That box is filled with Korans." "Sit here," he added, as he brought a chair out from behind the counter.

Needless to say, I took the man's advice. And while doing so, I once again began to ponder what I take to be the central question of the Turkish regime--the relationship between religion and politics in the secular republic that Atatürk founded as a successor to the old Ottoman theocracy. To my unsuspecting glance, this storeowner seemed at that moment a man of powerful religious conviction. Had I taken note of the fact that he had already betrayed an inexcusable laxness bordering on impiety, first by stacking one Koran on top of another in the box and then by placing the box on the floor, I would have been better prepared for what he said next. "If we don't have Islam," the man grumbled, "we'll have the communists here." It was a remark

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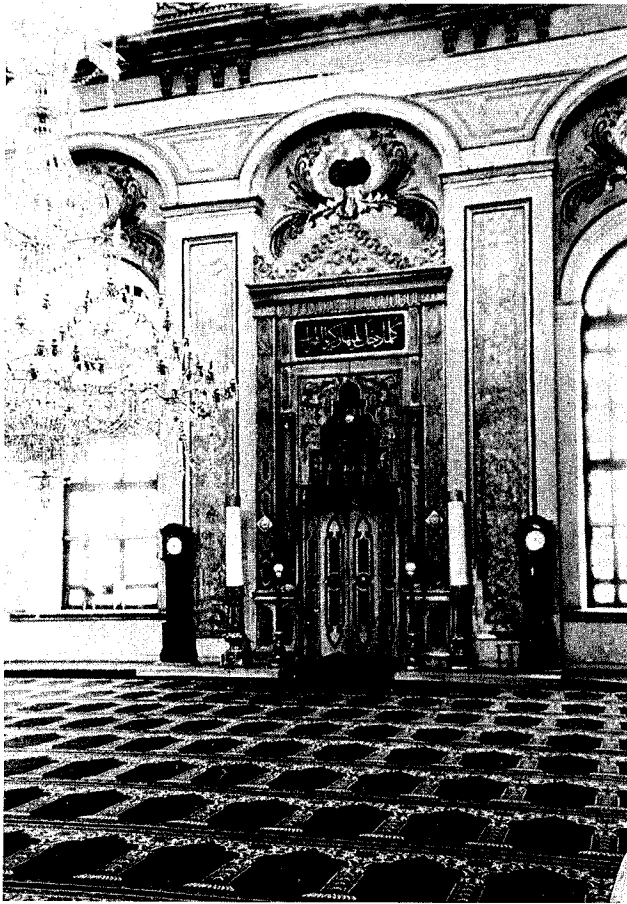
reassuring and intriguing at the same time. In a crude, unsophisticated, and utterly contemporary fashion, he was echoing opinions held by America's founding generation and their immediate successors.

## I

To be sure, the danger posed by communism was not much on the minds of men like George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. These men may have been brilliant, but they lacked the prophetic gift. For the most part, their fears were focussed on dangers already visible at the time. As I tried to make clear in my first letter on the religious question (PAR-6), the American republic, like its Turkish counterpart, is quite consciously founded on a repudiation of Ahmed Etif Efendi's conviction that "the ultimate basis of every state" has to be "a firm grasp of the roots and branches of holy law, religion, and doctrine."<sup>1</sup> In fact, both republics depend for their very survival on strategies designed to moderate religious passion and channel it outside the political arena. Otherwise, as recent events in Iran should remind us, it may be possible for zealots to restore a regime based on divine right and dedicated to using the coercive power of the state to encourage religious faith and enforce acts of pious devotion--all in service to the salvation of souls. Like Atatürk, the American Founders devoted more time to considering the danger of religious reaction than to pondering what might ensue if religious belief were to decay altogether.<sup>2</sup>

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1. For the 18th-century, Ottoman ministerial report from which this quotation is drawn, see Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey (London 1979) 66-67.

2. Those put off by Atatürk's decision to outlaw political parties of religious principle would do well to consider the American parallel. In Massachusetts and New Hampshire, where the original state Bills of Rights included the claim that religion was a necessary support of republicanism, there was also a clause stipulating that "every denomination of Christians, demeaning themselves peaceably and as good subjects of the commonwealth, shall be equally under the protection of the law; and no subordination of any one sect or denomination to another shall ever be established by law." The participial phrase qualifying the guarantee that each denomination will receive equal "protection of the law" deserves close attention. Those who framed the Massachusetts and New Hampshire constitutions believed that piety in moderation would be a bulwark of republicanism but that religious enthusiasm could easily pose a threat to peace and public order. Where it did so, they thought it proper to deny it legal protection; toleration was not to



INSIDE AN ISTANBUL MOSQUE

But, though they were distracted by what seemed then the greater peril, they did not overlook entirely concerns akin to those of the Stamboul storekeeper I recently encountered.

Virtually every one of the first American state constitutions included a bill of rights, and the majority of these included a statement regarding the props necessary if republican government was to survive. For example, the Virginia Declaration of Rights--the earliest of these documents--denied that "free government, or the blessings of liberty" could be "preserved to any people, but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality and virtue."<sup>3</sup> In similar fashion, the Massachusetts Bill of Rights contended that "a constant adherence to ... piety, justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality are absolutely necessary to preserve the advantages of liberty and to

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 be extended to the intolerant. See Sources and Documents of United States Constitutions, ed. William F. Swindler (Dobbs Ferry, NY 1973-1979) V 93, 95 (Massachusetts), VI 345, 347 (New Hampshire). One can find a similar qualification in Delaware's "Declaration of Rights and Fundamental Rules" and in the first two drafts but not the third and final draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights. See ibid. II 197 (Delaware), and The Papers of George Mason, ed. Robert A. Rutland (Chapel Hill 1970) 274-291 (esp., 278, 284-285, 289); The Virginia Declaration of Rights, 20 May to 12 June 1776. Vermont's decision to provide a constitutional guarantee of civil rights to Protestants but not to Catholics is guided by the same distrust of sects thought to be intolerant of unorthodox beliefs. See Sources and Documents of United States Constitutions IX 489 (Vermont).

3. Sources and Documents of United States Constitutions X 50; Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776, Article 15.

maintain a free government."<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on piety in the latter document and its absence in the first no doubt reflect the fact that religious belief was a stronger force among the descendants of the Puritans in New England than among their Anglican brethren in Virginia. It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that the latter thought piety simply unnecessary and superfluous.

Consider, for example, the case of George Washington. In his Farewell Address, the great man directly addressed the question. "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity," he contended,

religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness--these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them... Let it be simply asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of a peculiar structure, reason and experience forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

In making this claim, Washington was merely stating the common sense of the matter. The Northwest Ordinance justified the establishment of "schools and the means of education" within the Northwest Territory on the ground that "religion, morality, and knowledge" are "necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind."<sup>5</sup> In 1787, Americans considered that claim utterly uncontroversial. On this point, the most vigorous proponents of religious disestablishment were in agreement with their opponents.

Thomas Jefferson is a particularly good example. In his First Inaugural, he celebrated the fact that his countrymen were "enlightened by a benign religion, professed indeed, and practiced in various forms, yet all of them

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 4. Sources and Documents of United States Constitutions V 95: Massachusetts Declaration of Rights, Article 18.

5. A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, ed. James D. Richardson (Washington, D.C. 1896) I 213-224 (at 220); George Washington, Farewell Address, 17 September 1796

6. Sources and Documents Illustrating the American Revolution and the Formation of the Federal Constitution, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (Oxford 1929) 226-233 (at 231); The Northwest Ordinance, 13 July 1787.

inculcating honesty, truth, temperance, gratitude, and the love of man."<sup>7</sup> He had good reason to welcome the influence of religion once it was somehow deprived of political ambition and rendered benign. Prior to his Presidency, in the very year in which Virginia had adopted his Bill for the Establishment of Religious Freedom, Jefferson had published a book asserting that "the only firm basis" for "the liberties of a nation" is "the conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God" and "not to be violated but with his wrath." In writing these words, Jefferson had had slavery in mind.<sup>8</sup> He had already then known perfectly well what he would later put into words: that, if the blessings of liberty were to be bestowed on mankind, "all" would have to "bear in mind this sacred principle that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable." If this principle was to prevail, he was persuaded, Americans would have to be constantly reminded "that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression."<sup>9</sup> Jefferson was a bitterly anticlerical Deist, prepared to sniff the approach of religious tyranny on every new breeze. If he was an eloquent proponent of religion as well, it was because he suspected that his countrymen would be quite likely to mistake the will of the people for the will of God if deprived of religious instruction regarding their duties to their fellow men. The persistence of slavery was a disturbing sign that this danger was only too real.

The attitude evidenced by the American Founders regarding religion persisted and prevailed. When Tocqueville visited America some fifty years after the British had recognized the independence of their former colonies, he found that "religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society." He nonetheless regarded it as the pre-eminent American political institution--"for if it does not impart a taste for freedom, it facilitates the use of it."

Indeed, it is in this same point of view that the inhabitants of the United States themselves look upon religious belief. I do not know whether all Americans have a sincere faith in their religion--for who can search the human heart?--but I am certain

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 7. A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents I 309-312: Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, 4 March 1801.

8. Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, ed. William Peden (New York 1972) Query 18:162-163.

9. A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents I 309-312: Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, 4 March 1801.

that they hold it to be indispensable to the maintenance of republican institutions. This opinion is not peculiar to a class of citizens or to a party, but it belongs to the whole nation and to every rank of society.

Tocqueville could speak with such confidence on the matter because he had interviewed those associated with the various societies that had been organized for the propagation of the Gospel in the new territories to the West. "If you converse with these missionaries of Christian civilization," he reported, "you will be surprised to hear them speak so often of the goods of this world, and to meet a politician where you expected to find a priest." In the course of the discussion, "they will tell you that 'all the American republics are collectively involved with each other; if the republics of the West were to fall into anarchy or to be mastered by a despot, the republican institutions which now flourish upon the shores of the Atlantic Ocean would be in great peril. It is therefore our interest that the new states should be religious, in order that they may permit us to remain free.'"<sup>10</sup> Like my Stamboul storekeeper, these early Americans saw in the virtues and moderation fostered by religion a bulwark against the temptations associated with tyranny. That shopkeeper, like his Christian predecessors from across the sea, is an admirer of religion of just the sort that a secular republic can not only afford to tolerate but may also require. So, at least apparently, Turkey's military leaders now believe.

## II

The coup of 1980, like its predecessor in 1960, marked a hiatus in the debate regarding the place of religion in public life; it did not end the dispute. Three parties contested the election that took place in November, 1983. The parties and their candidates were carefully vetted by the military regime before they were allowed to participate; everything was done that could have been done to prevent the indirect participation of the past political leaders whom the military hold partially to blame for the anarchy of the 1970s. The Populist Party of Necdet Calp, once private secretary to Ismet İnönü, represented the moderate left. The Nationalist Democracy Party of Turgut Sunalp, a retired general, represented the moderate right. The third

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10. I cite Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (New York 1945) by book, part, and chapter, then by volume and page. See I.ii.9: I 316-318.

contender was a new phenomenon in Turkish politics. Like American political parties, the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi) of Turgut zal eschewed ideology and was built on a coalition between a great variety of special interests. President Kenan Evren, the general who had lead the coup, clearly favored Sunalp and evidently preferred Calp to zal, but he was not granted his wish. The Motherland Party won an impressive victory at the polls and repeated the feat in the municipal elections held in March, 1984, when two more parties--the Sosyal Demokrasi Partisi established by Ismet Inönü's son Erdhal, and the Dogru Yol Partisi ("True Path Party") founded by admirers of Süleyman Demirel--were allowed to participate.

Evren may have had many reasons for hoping that zal would lose. One among these was undoubtedly the role played within the Anavatan Partisi by former supporters of Necmettin Erbakan's National Salvation Party. zal had never himself been a member of the NSP but he had run for parliament as an independent in 1977 on the NSP ticket. He had been given the party's endorsement chiefly because his brother Korkut was one of the party's chief leaders. After the 1980 coup, Necmettin Erbakan and Korkut zal were charged with exploiting "religion in order to change the social, economic, political, or legal structure of the state according to religious principles." They were convicted, then jailed for a time. They are now barred from active participation in politics until November, 1992, and they work in Istanbul as businessmen in close association, helping to run Turkey's first Islamic Bank. Korkut zal's political influence is now indirect, but no one doubts that it is tangible. Turgut zal is very much a family man. Quite a number of members of the zal clan--including a brother, a brother-in-law, and a cousin--have held or now hold high office in the Motherland Party government. The same can be said for a number of men formerly prominent as supporters of the NSP. In fact, it is widely rumored that as many as six of the current ministers, including Vehbi Dinçerler, the Minister of Education, Youth, and Sports, are members of the outlawed Nakşibendi dervish order (tarikat), the group that had been the backbone of the NSP.

When the Motherland Party opened its headquarters in Ankara in May, 1983, the leaders present sacrificed a sheep "in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful." When he campaigned for office, Turgut zal took a similar care in displaying his piety. The party platform discreetly does the same, pledging that its members will preserve "the values of secularism," but then adding that "we do not accept this as a restriction on the development of religious culture or the exercise of freedom of conscience, religious belief or worship."

On the face of it, this plank in the party platform is unexceptionable. In a regime that strictly separated church and state, it might even be welcome. In Turkey, however, these phrases have implications that are somewhat disturbing. Atatürk meant to eliminate religion from politics; to accomplish this, he established political supervision over religion. In practice, this meant that Turkey's secular republic had an established religion controlled and funded by the state; and, of course, that religion was Sunni Islam. In practice, then, the Anavatan pledge was not a promise to refrain from restricting "the development of religious culture"; it was a promise to promote that culture; and that is precisely what is going on.



#### UPPER REACHES OF A SEASIDE MOSQUE

This takes many forms. At least until the eve of the 1980 coup, the National Salvation Party never openly claimed to represent a religious point of view. It took, instead, "the national point of view," and it called for a return to "national tradition." Above all else, it claimed to be a defender of the family. As Binnaz Toprak put it in a book recently published,

The NSP vehemently criticizes the Western orientation of the Turkish elite in terms of social customs. This includes such details as criticisms of long hair, mini skirts, pornography (the sculpture of a nude erected in an Istanbul square was considered pornographic and dubbed "the sculpture of shame" by the NSP and was later lifted from the square by an order of the Interior Minister, an NSP member, during the RPP-NSP coalition government in 1974; similarly a documentary film about the Amazon tribes,



which was shown on TV, prompted the Minister of Justice, then an NSP member, to take legal action against the General Director of the state-owned television with the charge of having used pornographic material); TV, movie, and theatre programs which are influenced by Western culture rather than the National one, wearing of shorts by women students during gym classes, tourist accommodations (the Minister of Commerce in 1974, who was an NSP member, refused to sign an application for government credit to construct tourist resorts on the grounds that although tourists bring in foreign exchange, they corrupt the morality of the Turkish people), the youth's lack of respect for parents and older people, the elite "illness of imitating Western culture," lack of religious belief among the youth, the disappearance of traditional family life, and the mushrooming of nightclubs "where the youth are initiated into drinking and sexual liberty." To the NSP, these changes in social norms and systems of value are one indication of the corruptness which has inflicted Turkish society as a result of Turkey's opening to the West.

Many of the current ministers have followed the same tack. Alcohol advertising has been banned from radio and television; girls are no longer allowed to wear shorts in gym class; during Ramadan, most of the ministries closed the cafeterias associated with the state offices under their control; this May, schools were barred from holding the traditional end-of-the-year dances. Arabic is scheduled to be re-introduced in the schools--at least theoretically as a substitute for the Western languages now studied; students will reportedly learn the language by studying the Koran. The government is even trying to reverse the trend towards language purification. At the moment, two hundred five words are banned from Turkish radio and TV; the preferred words are of Arabic origin.

In some cases, reforms are announced, then quickly reversed. There is a shortage of qualified teachers for high school religion courses. Despite this fact, the Higher Education Council proclaimed in March that women would no longer be accepted as students in the theology departments of the state-run universities. When questioned on the matter, Professor Ihsan Doğrmaci explained that an education in theology is of no use to women "because they stay home and just do housework after graduation." Within a week or two, the Council reversed its decision. There had been an uproar in the press, and there may have been grumbling in the officer corps, the guardian of Atatürk's legacy.

Something similar has happened regarding the sale of beer and

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11. See Binnaz Toprak, Islam and Political Development (Leiden 1981) 101.

intoxicating spirits. Early last Fall, the  zal government decided to re-define beer as a form of alcohol, which meant that restaurants lacking liquor licenses (and most do) could no longer sell beer; at the same time, the leaders of the Motherland Party acted to ban the sale of all alcoholic beverages from villages and rural areas as well as from any establishment built within 100 meters of "holiness" (i.e., a mosque). In the cities and towns, tourist establishments were allowed to continue serving spirits--as long as everyone under the age of eighteen was barred from the restaurant, which effectively eliminated the family trade. This Spring, the decrees were amended. Too many small businesses were in danger of bankruptcy, and those associated with the tourist industry were up in arms.

The most recent event may be the most revealing. In mid-June, the Motherland Party secured the passage of a controversial new law defining in very broad terms the power of the police. Among other things, the law empowers local gendarmes to shut down movies and plays considered immoral and to take into custody loafers, "those able to spread disease" (a euphemism for homosexuals), and anyone who acts "in a shameful way not tolerated by others or contrary to good morals or traditional good manners." Many fear that, in practice, the new law will encourage the police in places where religious feeling is strong to enforce those strictures of the Shari'ah that the Islamic fundamentalists hold most dear. There was a real uproar in the secular press when the mayor of a provincial town in the Aegean region, a member of the ruling Anavatan Partisi, announced that he would see that anyone caught eating or drinking during the daylight hours in Ramadan was fined. Similar objections were raised when the police in Adapazan recently detained a group of young people who had been having a tea party to celebrate their graduation from school. Their parents were summoned to the police station and told of the "improper attitude" taken by the youths, who had been "dancing and listening to music on a Ramadan day." In keeping with this trend, there are reports that some members of the Motherland Party intend to introduce a bill stipulating a three-year prison term for anyone found guilty of blasphemy.

### III

There was a time, before 1947, when there was no religious instruction in Turkey's public schools. Then, there was a brief period, in the late 1940s and right at the beginning of the 1950s, when instruction was optional and the courses were given without credit. Thereafter, until the coup of September, 1980, the study of religion was required for all but those whose parents

objected, and credit was given. Since the recent coup, parents who are not Christians or Jews have been denied the option of shielding their children from religious instruction. In short, the children of Alevis, not to mention the irreligious, are now required by law to accept instruction in the tenets of Sunni Islam. This reform is of particular interest chiefly because it was introduced not by the Anavatan Partisi of Turgut Özal but by the military government of Kenan Evren.

At the same time, that military government instructed university administrations to enforce vigorously the campus dress codes stipulating that women not cover their heads with scarves.<sup>12</sup> On one front, it moved to encourage religious belief; on another front, it moved to block anything that might smack of a public demonstration in favor of religious rule. More recently, the generals have followed much the same cautious policy in their dealings with the Anavatan administration. President Evren has had himself photographed praying in a mosque, and not long ago he represented Turkey at a meeting of the Islamic Conference. This was the first occasion in which Turkey was represented by a head of state. If I read events correctly, the guardians of the Atatürk tradition have come to the conclusion reached by George Washington, by Thomas Jefferson, and by the Americans whom Tocqueville met. The emergence on Turkey's university campuses in the 1970s of a myriad of Marxist terrorist groups had a sobering effect on the old Kemalist elite; the most influential among them appear to have concluded that Atatürk had been wrong and that Kemalism itself could not fill the ethical gap left by the waning of Islam. One way or another, the longing for transcendence would give rise to belief; and, dangerous though it might be, Islam was preferable to the Marxist alternative. In this fashion, the defenders of the Atatürk revolution have carried Turkey one step further than their predecessors in attempting to reach an accommodation with the religious forces that had underpinned the old Ottoman regime.<sup>13</sup>

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 12. Though still on the books, this ban has this year in practice been relaxed.

13. In the 1970s, two Turkish political scientists have recently argued, the National Salvation Party

touched on a number of issues to which other parties and groups have had to respond. The most fundamental of these issues was the ethical lacunae left by the secular-positivism of the republican outlook, and the frustration of a large number of people uprooted from their traditional habitats and caught in the confusion of the counter-pressures of the old and the new. Although the republican reforms have released the individual from the shackles and the

Whether this will work remains as yet unclear. In a recent book, Daniel Pipes argues--quite rightly, I think--that, to make its peace with modernity, Islam must undergo a transformation comparable to that undergone over the last two centuries by Judaism. As the latter became (for all but Orthodox Jews) a religion of faith and morality and ceased thereby to be a religion of ritual and law dictating a complete way of life, so also must Islam take on a form familiar to students of modern Christianity. Pipes is sanguine that such a transformation will eventually take place.<sup>14</sup> I have my doubts.<sup>15</sup> As I write these words, the Knesset is reportedly preparing to ban pork from Israel. Most Israeli citizens may think such a prohibition silly, but in this matter and in others they seem willing to acquiesce. Where one religion remains predominant within a state--particularly where that religion has historically been a religion of ritual and law--it seems almost impossible to restrict that religion to the private sphere. In his later years, James Madison was reportedly accustomed to quote often and "with great approbation" Voltaire's claim that "if one religion only were allowed in England, the government would possibly be arbitrary; if there were but two, the people would cut each other's throats; but, as there are a multitude, they all live happy and in

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 bigotry of the small, traditional community, it has left him wandering and deprived of an ethos grounded in a symbolism believed to be true. With the rapid increase in social mobility, urbanization and incorporation of the masses into the national life of the country, this problem has become more acute than ever before. This is why there are now hurried attempts by even secularist official circles to introduce an Islamic morality and larger doses of nationalism into the socialization process of the young.

See Ilkay Sunar and Binnaz Toprak, "Islam in Politics: The Case of Turkey," Government and Opposition 18 (1983) 421-441 (at 441).

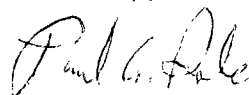
14. See Daniel Pipes, In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power (New York 1983) *passim* (esp. 29-47, 107-113, 195-199).

15. Sunar and Toprak seem to me to be engaging in wishful thinking when they write that, as a consequence of the Kemalist elite's growing awareness of "the ethical lacunae left by the secular-positivism of the republican outlook, ... Islam ... will continue to play an important role in society--not, however, in the form of a mass movement, an Islamic revolution or revolt, but largely as an ethical guide to promote good civic behaviour and social peace, and as a private experience for individuals." See Sunar and Toprak, "Islam in Politics: The Case of Turkey," 441.

peace."<sup>16</sup> In this, as in so many other matters, the old Virginian knew whereof he spoke.

It is unclear what the Turkish generals think regarding this question; they may not even know themselves. But it is worth noting that, under their increasingly distant and discreet stewardship, the Turkish government has not hesitated to imprison those who publicly advocate a return to theocracy. Naksibendi dervishes may be serving as ministers in the Özal government. If so, this has not prevented other more intransigent and less politic members of the order from being jailed. Eighteen members of the outlawed tarikât, including four women, are on trial in Ankara right now. In Istanbul, the members of another religious group that advocates a boycott of the mosques until the government moves the day of rest from Sunday to Friday are similarly in the dock. So also is the celebrated Imam Ali Riza Demircan.<sup>17</sup> The fourth printing of his best-selling book Sexuality in Islam has been confiscated by the state prosecutor, and Demircan has been charged with exploiting "religion in order to change the social, economic, political, or legal structure of the state according to religious principles" by openly advocating polygamy. It is a good bet that the religious question will continue to play a role in Turkish politics for many years to come.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Rahe

Received in Hanover 8/7/85

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16. William Cabell Rives, History of the Life and Times of James Madison (New York 1859-1868) II 220-221.

17. See PAR-8.