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PAR-11
Türkiyeler

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Dear Peter,

In a recent letter (PAR-9: Elections in Northern Cyprus), I drew attention to the fact that, in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), the National Unity Party (NUP) was in the happy position of being able to form a government in any one of three ways. It could negotiate a coalition with the mainland Turks' New Birth Party (NBP), cut a deal with the leftist Communal Liberation Party (CLP), or make arrangements with both. On the 18th of July, less than a week after I posted my account of the Turkish Cypriot elections, the Istanbul press reported that Derviş Eroğlu, the new Prime Minister of the TRNC, had opted for the CLP.

TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS

Parliamentary Delegations (As of Late June, 1985)

<u>Parties</u>	<u>Out of 50 Seats</u>
National Unity Party	24
Republican Turkish Party	12
Communal Liberation Party	10
New Birth Party	4

I was not surprised. Even to my unpracticed eye, the cleavage between conservative and socialist Turkish Cypriots seemed far less deep than the one separating the indigenous population from the mainlanders who immigrated to the island in the first few years after Turkey's military intervention in July and August, 1974. The simple fact that those native to the island call their new neighbors Türkiyeler--"those from Turkey"--is an indication that these immigrants are still considered foreigners. One Cypriot journalist even

claimed to be able to distinguish his countrymen from the immigrants by their walk. "We are more confident," he said. "They are more formal."

No one really knows just how many mainland Turks reside in Cyprus. There is no official count, and various figures are bandied about. Alpay Durduran, who used to be chairman of the CLP and who was that party's Presidential candidate earlier this year, told me that about 60,000 Turks had come from the mainland in the period stretching from 1975 to 1978. "There were social problems," he remarked. "The Türkiyeler are far more religious than we are. Nearly all of them came from the lowest class. They were all jobless; and, at first, they lived in ruins near the Green Line." Roughly half of these, he said, had eventually returned to the mainland. The rest had been given the use of land or shops or hotels vacated by the Cypriot Greek refugees now living in the South. About 18,000 of the mainlanders were registered to vote.

Others dispute Durduran's figures. The Prime Minister, Derviş Eroğlu, told me that Durduran's estimate was much too high. "I would guess that the Türkiyeler constitute no more than 11,000 of the TRNC's 93,000 registered voters," he explained. When I spoke with Aytac Beşegler, the leader of the NBP, he agreed with Eroğlu. He could not say how many mainlanders had come to Cyprus in the first place, but he asserted that, on the island today, one can find no more than twenty to twenty-four thousand mainland Turks. "And of these," he added, "perhaps five, perhaps six thousand are of Cypriot origin."

That last assertion deserves attention. If Beşegler is to be believed, there are more than three hundred thousand Turks of Cypriot descent in Turkey itself. Between 1917 and 1945, more than fifty thousand Cypriot Turks are said to have left the island for the mainland. When the subject of the settlers from Turkey comes up, TRNC officials invariably draw attention to this emigration. As they see it, the recent immigration merely serves to restore the balance that existed between the island's Muslim and Greek Orthodox populations prior to the First World War and Atatürk's establishment of the mainland republic. Greeks Cypriots reportedly find such arguments unpersuasive--but, then, no one bothers to consult them on the matter. The Cypriot Turks are not unaware that nothing enrages the island's Greeks quite as much as knowing that their homes and businesses are in the hands of barbaric Türkiyeler, but I doubt that they lose any sleep over the mental anguish that this causes their Christian neighbors to the South. If anything, the thought serves to warm the cockles of their hearts and calm their nerves.

I

Of all those I met while touring Northern Cyprus, Aytac Beşegler was the least forthcoming. The leader of the NBP was born in Thrace in 1940, joined the Turkish army in 1960, and retired in 1979 as a Major. His last three years of military service were spent on Cyprus; and, when his term of enlistment was up, he decided to stay on and make a life for himself on the island. Beşegler is a large man--dark, swarthy and, if the eye can be

trusted, rock hard. One would not want cross him and later stumble into him in a dark alley. I doubt that he had any trouble keeping the troops in line.

Like many a former military man, Beşerler exudes a confidence bordering on arrogance. He is accustomed to command, not to persuade--and his manner has earned him the enmity of quite a few Cypriot Turks. In early July, when I ran into Rauf Denktaş' Secretary Alper Faik Genç on a beach near Girne, he asked how my research was going. I replied that I had learned a great deal and then, as an afterthought, added that Beşerler had been a bit difficult and had betrayed a certain contempt for the press. "I do not like that man," he responded. "He is the only political figure on the island who never calls ahead to make an appointment with Mr. Denktaş. He just barges in and demands to see the President; and he is nearly always rude to me."

Such comments make one wonder how Beşerler manages to hold so prominent a position on the island. When I asked Özker Özgür, the chairman of the extreme left Republican Turkish Party (RTP), he was not slow to state an opinion. "There is no mystery," he maintained. "Aytaç Beşerler is Ankara's man. He obeys orders; they make sure that he advances." Beşerler, it seems, was an NUP candidate in 1981, but he was not elected a deputy. Despite this fact, he was given a cabinet post as Minister of Tourism. Then, Denktaş appointed him to the Constituent Assembly that drew up the TRNC Constitution. "Before 1985," Özgür continued,

the Türkiyeler had a party called the Türk Birlik Partisi--the Turkish Unity Party (TUP). It was run by a man named Ismail Tezer. He was a retired officer as well. But he got himself into trouble. Drugs. Prostitution. There were scandals. This year, his party failed to register. They were not able to complete the formalities.

Özgür did not say that Tezer and the TUP had been deliberately excluded from the recent elections, but he implied as much. "As for Beşerler's party," he charged, "its birth took place in the Turkish embassy." A note of bitterness crept into his voice. "Ankara deliberately created this party on a racist basis. They wanted a key party without which no government could be formed. That would give them a direct say in internal affairs." I interrupted to object that he had earlier dismissed Rauf Denktaş as "Ankara's stooge." "If he really is Ankara's stooge," I asked, "doesn't that suffice?" Özgür was quick to reply. "They don't completely trust Denktaş," he observed. "They don't trust the Cypriots at all."

Perhaps, I thought as I left Özgür's office, when Ismail Tezer proved unreliable, someone from Ankara--or maybe even Denktaş himself--urged Beşerler to resign from the NUP and form a new party to capture the mainland vote; it is clearly in no one's interest that the Türkiyeler become a disruptive force. Perhaps, Denktaş made Beşerler Minister of Tourism to build him up as an alternative to Tezer. As you can see, those who traffic with the Republican Turkish Party are bound sooner or latter to start taking conspiracy theories more seriously than they probably deserve to be taken.

II

Aytaç Beşegler has a simpler and perhaps more plausible explanation for his behavior. He quit the National Unity Party, he says, because of ambition. His hopes had not been met; his political future within the party was not going to be what he thought it should be. When queried, he declined to specify precisely what he meant by this, but later a local journalist filled in the gaps. In 1981, the NUP had nominated Beşegler as a candidate for parliament on the assumption that he could attract a sizeable proportion of the mainland vote. Even then, he was deemed a more respectable figure than İsmail Tezer. But his star fell when the Türkiyeler turned out for the TUP, and he ended up with far less leverage within the party than he had planned.

I questioned the NBP leader further in the expectation that he would mention some issue on which he had been in disagreement with the NUP. He said that there were none. Like his former colleagues, he is a liberal in economic policy (i.e., a conservative as Americans tend to understand the term) and an advocate of federation with the Greek South. "And by federation," he explained, "we mean something rather close to a confederation--a linking of two equal entities." There really is no substantive difference between Beşegler's New Birth Party and the old National Unity Party--apart from the fact that NBP represents the Türkiyeler while the NUP represents Cypriot Turks. But that difference was apparently enough to cause Derviş Eroğlu and his supporters to prefer the leftist Communal Liberation Party as a coalition partner.

When Beşegler denied that his party was in any way at odds with the NUP, I asked him what gave the New Birth Party such an appeal for the mainlanders. Derviş Eroğlu had remarked that fully three-quarters of the immigrant population had voted for the NBP; the party had apparently attracted the support of virtually all the mainlanders except those of Cypriot descent (many of whom had come to Cyprus after having married Cypriot Turks). Beşegler denied that Eroğlu's estimate was accurate, contending instead that the NBP had drawn only sixty per cent of that vote. But, as I pointed out, even if the lower estimate were correct, it was surely a sign that the Türkiyeler were not entirely happy with the way things were being run. Derviş Eroğlu had himself acknowledged that the mainlanders "felt neglected by the NUP." But Beşegler would have none of it. He vehemently denied that the immigrants were subject to any discrimination. Their loyalty to his party could be explained simply on the ground that his supporters had "made a calculation of the benefits they would gain if the NBP were to become part of a coalition government." When I pressed him further, he doggedly repeated one refrain over and over again: "We are not," he insisted, "a separatist party." It was clearly a case of the gentleman protesting too much.

The isolation of the Türkiyeler is evident from the behavior of the main Turkish Cypriot parties. Each party put up fifty candidates in the election--one for each of the seats in the TRNC parliament. The NUP won twenty-four of those seats, but did not elect a single deputy of mainland origin. Alpay Durduran's CLP and Özker Özgür's RTP each nominated a single

immigrant. As Durduran put it, "it is very hard to find even one candidate to nominate. We cannot trust them; very soon, they break away and join other parties."

Beşegler's NBP is the mirror image of its chief Cypriot competitors: forty-six of its fifty candidates were of mainland origin. Though intent on papering over the obvious divisions on the island, Beşegler had only one piece of evidence to present: the fact that three of the four NBP deputies elected in late June are married to Cypriot Turks. That suggests that the party leaders are becoming an integral part of the community of Turkish Cypriots, but it reveals little about the NBP rank and file.

In the recent poll, even the exception proves the rule. The one party that made a serious attempt to bridge the gap between the two communities was Irsen Küçük's Communal Endeavor Party (CEP). In the Magousa (Famagusta) region, where most of the Türkiyeler have been settled, the CEP nominated ten Cypriots and ten mainlanders. That strategy failed. In the end, the party received a mere 6.08% of the total vote. Because it failed to pass the 8% threshold, it was excluded from parliamentary representation.

III

I found out a bit more about the sources of intercommunal tension in the North while pursuing another, apparently unrelated question. When Rauf Denktaş persuaded the parliament of the now defunct Turkish Federated State of Cyprus (TFSC) to issue a declaration of independence in November, 1983, Bangla Desh and Pakistan were reportedly ready to recognize the new state. Denktaş asserts that they were dissuaded from doing so by American pressure; others claim that word was passed from Ankara that the time was not yet ripe. Before the declaration, Denktaş tended to give considerable emphasis to Northern Cyprus' Islamic heritage; since then, he has done so to an even greater degree. The members of the EEC are not likely to break with Greece on the Cyprus question; the United States and the Soviet Union are bound to try to pacify both Greece and Turkey at the same time; and, both under Archbishop Makarios and under Spyros Kyprianou, the Republic of Cyprus has done a splendid job of lining up support among the non-aligned. If the TRNC is ever to break free from its status as a pariah state, it will have to begin by securing recognition from the Islamic world.

It was, then, no accident that the TRNC invited reporters from Pakistan and Bangla Desh to cover the elections and paid all their expenses. Nor was it surprising that, in his press conference after the event, Denktaş sounded the Islamic theme. "This country is 100% Muslim," he remarked.

The practice of Islam is encouraged; Islam is more and more taught in the schools. But we need funds from the Islamic countries to build more mosques. The Greek Cypriots destroyed 107 mosques in the period stretching from 1963 to 1974. Our difference in faith saved our land as a Muslim land. We need support, real financial

support, and recognition. The Muslims of the world must help us to be heard.

When his speech came to an end, I interjected a question. I had found the emphasis he placed on religion a bit odd. So, I asked whether Turkish Cyprus had abandoned the secularism of Atatürk and whether Islam was the established religion of the TRNC. The question caught Denktas off guard and left him visibly annoyed. "Islam is our religion," he shot back. "Just look at the Constitution." When queried, Hüsrev Çağın, who directs the TRNC Public Information Office, loyally confirmed what Denktas implied.

Later, I managed to get my hands on a copy of the new Constitution. Article 15 of the old Constitution of the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus reads as follows:

- (1) Every individual has freedom of conscience, religious faith and opinion.
- (2) Forms of worship and religious ceremonies and rites are free provided they are not against public order or public morals or the laws enacted for these purposes.
- (3) No person shall be compelled to worship or participate in religious ceremonies and rites or to reveal his religious faith and belief. No person shall be reproached for his religious faith and belief.
- (4) Religious education and training is subject only to the individual's own or, in the case of minors, to their legal guardians' free will and desire.
- (5) No person shall exploit or abuse, in any manner whatsoever, religion or religious feelings or things considered sacred by religion for the purpose of basing wholly or partially the social, economic, political or legal fundamental order of the State on religious dogmas or of securing political or personal interests or power. Persons or corporate bodies violating this prohibition or inducing others to do so shall be subject to the provisions of the respective law and political parties shall be permanently closed down by the Supreme Court sitting as the Constitutional Court.

The first three clauses of Article 23 of the new Constitution of the TRNC are taken verbatim from the old Constitution; so is the fifth and last clause. Only the fourth clause is changed. It now specifies that "Religious education and teaching are to be carried out under the supervision and control of the State." Islam is nowhere mentioned. Denktas and his minions had deliberately mislead their Pakistani and Bangla Deshi guests. The leaders of the TRNC were eager that their supporters in the Islamic Conference not learn what most visitors to Turkish Cyprus discover sooner or later: the citizens of the TRNC are among the least devout of the world's Muslims.

Later, I learned that one group forms an exception to this rule--the Türkiyeler. Shortly after Denktaş' press conference, I stopped in to see Cemal Ilktaş, the Chief Müftü of Cyprus, the man in charge of religious



CEMAL ILKTAŞ, CYPRIOT MÜFTÜ

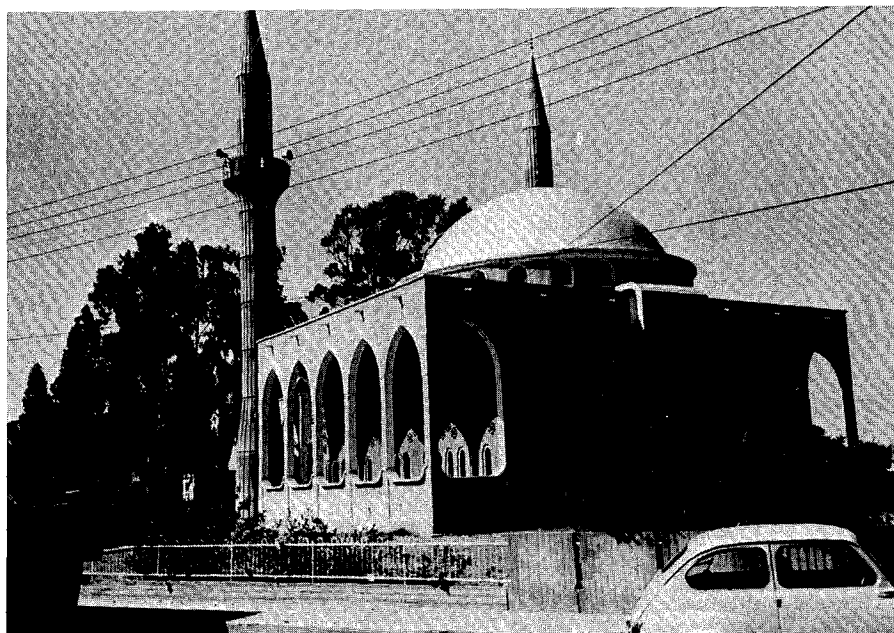
affairs in the TRNC. He confirmed that Northern Cyprus was a secular state on the Turkish model and remarked that the island's Turks had taken Atatürk's principles to heart in a way their cousins from Asia Minor had not. "In theory," he observed, "the Turkish Cypriots are Muslims--true Muslims; in practice, however, not many people go to the mosques. The mainland Turks are something else; they are extreme Muslims." Like Denktaş, the Müftü was eager to raise money abroad for the building of mosques. Like the President, he mentioned the 107 mosques that the Greeks had destroyed. Since 1974, he added, the TRNC had built twenty new mosques and repaired twenty. Shortly after the Turkish intervention, Saudi Arabia had constructed a large new mosque in Güzelyurt (Morphou), and Libya had built an Islamic cultural center. Then, the money dried up. Libya still provides the funds to send fifty Cypriots on the pilgrimage (hac) to Mecca, but that is all.

The Müftü's annual budget is only 21 million Turkish liras, not much more than \$40,000--and the country needs fifty more mosques. When I expressed surprise that the villagers do not construct the mosques themselves, he smiled. "Only the mainlanders do that," he explained. "They usually collect the money among themselves and build their own."

The enterprise shown by the Türkiyeler points to the real reason why the fourth clause of Article 23 of the new Constitution is not taken verbatim from the fourth clause of Article 15 of the old Constitution. As one local diplomat explained to me, the Turkish Cypriots fear the religious zeal of their new neighbors. Where they once left religious education and training up to the family, they now impose state control. Denktaş may play up to the Islamic fundamentalists in the outside world, but in Cyprus he intends to prevent the emergence of religion as a political force. The leaders of the TRNC will not tolerate in their country the establishment of anything like the Islamic fundamentalist National Salvation Party that caused so much trouble in Turkey before the coup that took place on the 12th of September, 1980.

III

In the first years after the Turkish intervention on Cyprus in the summer of 1974, when immigrants from the mainland flooded the island, there was a considerable uproar. The newcomers were for the most part poor peasants from Anatolia and Thrace, rough in their manners, illiterate, and otherwise uneducated as well. Their women kept their hair and sometimes their faces covered; in the streets, when the mainland men encountered Turkish Cypriot women, who generally dress in the European fashion, they sometimes accosted them as prostitutes. Fistfights between Turks and Turkish Cypriots were not unknown. Last year, the brother of one Turkish Cypriot girl murdered the Turk she was engaged to marry. To make matters worse, most of the original immigrants were Sunni Muslims, but some were Alevis, and there was occasional violence between the two sects.



GÜZELYURT MOSQUE BUILT WITH SAUDI ARABIAN FUNDS

One can still get a sense of what many Turkish Cypriots thought early on from reading the editorials published by Dr. Fazıl KÜÇÜK in his paper Halkın Sesi ("The People's Voice") in May, 1978. With his longtime colleague and rival Rauf Denktaş in mind, the former Vice-President of the Republic of Cyprus wrote,

We warned the officials once again. We told them that these newcomers will be a nuisance to our decent citizens; we told them to halt the influx before it becomes too late. They turned a deaf ear to us and did nothing. On the contrary, the newcomers were given houses, land, food, and money. They were even given

'bonuses' amounting to tens of thousands of Turkish lira under the cover of settlement credits... We are writing bitterly because we have to. Those who opened the door without thinking are primarily responsible for the malice brought to the Turkish Cypriot community as well as to the newcomers, and they will never be able to shrug off this historic responsibility. Piling people on the island without planning has been of primary influence in the creation of the present situation on the island. We could not let the places we had won remain empty. However, without planning and without calculation, people were brought who were involved in sectarian conflicts, who lived away from each other because of blood feuds, and who belonged to two different faiths. All these people were put together, and 'Oriental sultanates' were established in many of our villages.

If Rauf Denktaş and the National Unity Party suffered a considerable reverse in the 1981 elections of the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus, it seems largely to have been because of the turmoil caused by the mainlanders' presence. Denktaş, in his interview, alluded to the fact that both Alpay Durduran of the Communal Liberation Party and Özker Özgür of the Republican Turkish Party had exploited the issue quite effectively when they ran against him for the Presidency that year. Even today, though many of the Türkiyeler have returned to Asia Minor and Thrace, Durduran still tends to wax rhetorical on the subject, charging that Northern Cyprus is threatened by a new form of enosis--this time to Turkey. "We want to be free from Turkey, independent of Turkey," he explains. As for the immigrants, "most of them are settled now; it is not necessary to send them back--but we do not want newcomers, we do not want an inflow of jobless people."

In the long run, the problem will probably solve itself. If the Türkiyeler are still strangers in Cyprus, the reasons are largely cultural and will gradually disappear as they adopt the habits and customs of those among whom they reside. The mainlanders in mixed villages are apparently doing so already. Özker Özgür remarked that the girls of mainland descent living in those villages often refuse to marry mainland men. "We are much more civilized," he explained. Unfortunately, he added, those settled in the Famagusta area in separate villages tend "to keep to their customs and ways." But, even there, education is beginning to have an effect. The rate of illiteracy among Turkish Cypriots is 3%; on the mainland, even today, the figure approaches 40%. Most of the immigrants cannot read or write, but their children are learning to do so; many will at one time or another find jobs outside their villages; and there are no real obstacles to intermarriage. Denktaş once told me that, in his lifetime, there had not been more than a dozen cases of intermarriage between Cypriot Greek and Turk; in virtually every case, the woman had had to convert to her husband's religion. The mainlanders now living on the island and their Turkish Cypriot neighbors can intermarry without anyone having to change faiths. In any given year, there will be many more than twelve such unions in the TRNC.

There is also a persistent rumor that, if there is a settlement with the Greeks in the South, many of the Türkiyeler will be sent back to Asia Minor and Thrace. Denktaş denies that any such thing is in contemplation; Özgür and others assert that the matter has been openly discussed. The Türkiyeler are



AHMET ZEKI GENÇ, AND HIS COUSINS WORKING IN THE FIELD

by no means unaware of the possibility. While travelling with some journalists east along the coast stretching between Girne and the Karpas peninsula, I stopped along the road to chat with some mainland Turks working in a nearby field. Ahmet Zeki Genç, aged 19, told me that he had come in 1974 with his eight brothers, his father, and his mother from a village called Çaykara on the Black Sea near Trabzon. After a year, they were given land to farm--but it was rocky and not particularly fertile. In his village, which lay nearby, Beşegler's New Birth Party had secured ninety of the one hundred eight votes cast. The government, he explained, had failed to dredge the harbor as promised, and the villagers wanted a minibus to run from the village to Girne each day. For that reason, all but a handful had voted against the NUP and supported the NBP. As for leaving, well, yes, they had heard that they might receive gold in compensation. He could not speak for the others, but he would not mind going back to Turkey himself.

As he spoke, I noticed that he was blonde and his eyes were blue. Like most Pontic Turks, Ahmet Zeki Genç was probably of Greek extraction--the descendent of a Christian converted to Islam in the 17th or 18th centuries when the Muslim missionaries first began to be successful in the Pontic

region. I wondered whether his father or grandfather customarily swore in Greek, as many Pontic Turks of the older generation do.

I was not to find out. Young Genç had duties to perform and soon ran off to the other end of the field. There, a beaten-up, old truck moved slowly



TURKIYELER LOADING HAY INTO A TRUCK

across the land and his cousins, working beside it, hurled pitchforks full of hay atop the load. It was easy to tell that they were mainland Turks. Two of the women wore the brightly colored, baggy pantolons so common in the Turkish countryside; and, just as in Anatolia, the women were doing the taxing, dusty work of loading the truck while a man did the driving and his young son arranged the hay so that it would not fall off.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Paul A. Rahe'.

Paul A. Rahe

Received in Hanover 9/9/85