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Dear Peter,

The outsider trying to assess the Atatürk Revolution and its long-term effects would do well to keep in mind one rather peculiar aspect of recent Turkish history. Back in the summer of 1923, when Greece and Turkey negotiated an exchange of populations, Turkish-speaking Christians were classified as Greeks and expelled from Anatolia while Greek-speaking Muslims were driven from Hellas. This dimension of the Greco-Turkish agreement may seem a bit odd to those accustomed to contemplating a world divided into nation-states on the basis of language and culture, and it will certainly seem out of keeping with Atatürk's subsequent establishment of a secular republic. But, from the perspective of the ordinary Turk, the arrangement agreed on by Athens and Ankara was precisely as it should be: whatever men in the future might make of the event, the epic conflict terminated just a few months before had been less a struggle for national liberation than a righteous war (Jihad) against barbarous infidels intent on appropriating for their own use one of the chief regions constituent of the House of Islam (Dar al-Islam). Within the Ottoman dispensation, religion, rather than language, had always been the standard by which one nation (millet) was distinguished from another; and, in 1923, there was no reason why anyone (other than perhaps Atatürk himself) would have expected that fact to change.

In keeping with the religious character of Turkey's war for independence against the Greeks, the Armenians, the British, the French, and the Italians,

a sizeable proportion of the deputies sitting at Ankara in the Grand National Assembly were religious teachers (hocas) and dervish leaders (seyhs) of the old school. In September, 1921, after the Greek offensive had been stopped and turned back at Sakarya, just short of Ankara itself, that assembly conferred on Mustafa Kemal, as Atatürk was then called, the title Gazi, likening their leader to the conquering warriors who had seized Anatolia and the Balkans for Islam centuries before. Atatürk's decision to accept this title was not a whimsical gesture. As the great man recognized at the time, religion was the one force strong enough to enable him to rally the peasants of Anatolia against the Christian invaders. Had he not had the cooperation of the jurists (müftüs) in the towns and the prayer leaders (imams) in the villages of Anatolia, the Gazi would never have been able to gather the men and materiel essential for victory; had he not had firm clerical support, the morale of his army would almost certainly have collapsed.<sup>1</sup>

If Atatürk was soon able to reverse course, drop his Islamic disguise, and discard the old Ottoman theocracy, it was because circumstances were otherwise propitious. A string of dramatic defeats, culminating in the loss of the Balkans and the near loss of the Anatolian heartland, had gradually undermined respect for the inherited institutions; there was something to be learned from the sad fact that the Turks had, in recent times, so often been defeated by the Christian peoples whom they had for centuries ruled. Attempts at reform from above had been made before by the Young Turks and by their predecessors, but these attempts had been half-hearted, they had lacked popular support, and they had failed to take hold.<sup>2</sup> By the early 1920s, no one can have failed to notice that something was profoundly amiss. Even for the simplest of the peasants of Anatolia (and perhaps for them above all others), the decade stretching from 1914 to 1924 had been a wrenching experience. To be sure, the disaster was incomplete. Anatolia had in the end been recaptured; most of the Armenians had been deported (many of them massacred or left to die of starvation and disease), and the Greeks living outside Istanbul had eventually been forced to leave. But the cost had been tremendous: in the course of that decade, one Anatolian Muslim in five had

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1. See Paul Dumont, "Hojas for the Revolution: The Religious Strategy of Mustafa Kemal," Journal of the American Institution for the Study of Middle Eastern Civilization 1:3-4 (1980-1981) 17-32.

2. See Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1979) *passim* (esp., 21-238.)

suffered a loss of life.<sup>3</sup>

The world of the Turks had been turned upside down, and the suffering had been unprecedented. One Sultan had lead the empire down to defeat in the war; and, in the aftermath, when Anatolia itself was at stake, his successor had done nothing to support the cause of national resistance; the man had, in fact, thrown the weight of his office as Caliph and that of his deputy the Seyhü'l-Islam behind the enemy cause. By 1922, the House of Osman was a spent force. In Turkey's time of troubles, the commander who had defeated the British and their allies at Gallipoli had emerged as the one man possibly capable of saving the situation; and, after a savage conflict, he had achieved just that.<sup>4</sup> It should be no surprise that, thereafter, nearly everyone in what must have seemed a rudderless world looked to the Gazi for direction.

# I

Direction was one thing that Atatürk did not hesitate to give. While others hesitated, he cut the Gordian knot. The majority of the deputies in the Grand National Assembly wanted simply to replace the Sultan. The more imaginative among them apparently pondered the possibility of pushing aside the House of Osman and installing as Sultan none other than the Gazi Mustafa Kemal. Atatürk was himself responsible for the radical break with the past. At his instigation, the Sultanate was abolished on the 1st of November, 1922, and Turkey formally proclaimed itself a republic on the 29th of October, 1923. Four months after the latter event, he persuaded the assembly to abolish the Caliphate and the office of the Seyhü'l-Islam, to close the religious schools (medreses), to establish a national system of secular education, and to hand over all responsibility for religious affairs to an official responsible to the Prime Minister. Atatürk moved soon thereafter to abolish the courts set up to enforce the holy law (Shari'ah); and, when his program of reform provoked a rebellion in Kurdistan, he acted quickly to crush the revolt, execute its leaders, and suppress the dervish orders (tarikats) that had given

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3. See Justin McCarthy, "Foundations of the Turkish Republic: Social and Economic Change," Middle Eastern Studies 19 (1983) 139-151.

4. For the history of this period, see Lord Kinross, Atatürk: The Rebirth of a Nation (London 1964) 27-374, and Michael Llewellyn Smith, Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922 (New York 1973).

it support.<sup>5</sup>

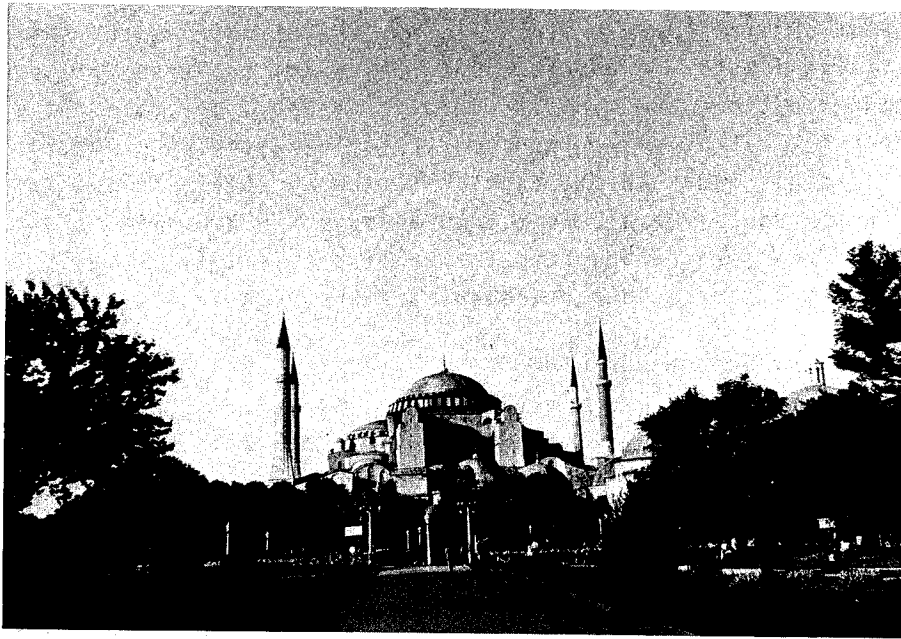
By the end of 1925, the world of the Anatolian peasant had been turned upside down once again. The dervish monasteries (tekkes) and the saints' tombs (türbes) that had played so large a role in the history of Islam had all been closed. Turkey had adopted the Gregorian calendar and the western system of telling time. Atatürk had himself been seen by many--and even photographed--wearing the hat, the hated sign of the infidel; and the Grand National Assembly had made wearing the fez, for decades the symbol of adherence to Islam, punishable by law.<sup>6</sup> Considerable effort was already being made to discourage women from wearing the veil. It was even said that the Gazi drank alcohol in prodigious quantities and relished pork. No one knew what to expect next.

The reforms of 1925 were but the beginning. By the end of 1926, the revolution had been carried forward yet further. Turkey had adopted a civil law code based on that of Switzerland, a criminal law code based on that of Italy, and a commercial code based on that of Germany. It was now possible for a man to convert from Islam to Judaism or Christianity without subjecting himself to arrest and execution; monogamy was the law of the land; women had the same rights with regard to inheritance and divorce as did men; and there was no longer any prohibition against the paying of interest. Furthermore, in Istanbul, the government had broken the Islamic taboo against graven images by setting up a statue of Mustafa Kemal looking out on the Bosphorus from Seraglio Point just below the old palace built by Mehmet the Conqueror.

In April, 1928, almost as an afterthought (or so it now seems), the Grand National Assembly formally completed the revolutionary process by deleting from the constitution the article proclaiming Islam the state religion and by substituting for it a declaration that the Turkish state was henceforth to be

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5. One useful survey of developments in the period covered in this letter is Dankwart A. Rustow, "Politics and Islam in Turkey, 1920-1955," Islam and the West, ed. Richard Frye (The Hague 1957) 69-107. See also Serif A. Mardin, "Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution," International Journal of Middle East Studies 2 (1971) 197-211.

6. There was a certain irony in this. The fez was itself introduced by reformers in the 19th century as a halfway house between the traditional turban and the European hat. As an innovation, it provoked bitter opposition; and, when that opposition faded, the fez came to be associated with Islam.



#### CHURCH, THEN MOSQUE, AND FINALLY A MUSEUM

a strictly secular entity.<sup>7</sup> A few years later, Atatürk turned Istanbul's Ayia Sofia Camii into a museum. What had been, for nearly a millenium, the mother church of Eastern Christendom and what had subsequently been, for nearly half a millenium, the glory of Islam was now a mere tourist attraction. It would be hard to imagine a symbolic act more in keeping with the deeply anticlerical character of the Kemalist regime.

#### II

It was, of course, one thing formally to disestablish Islam; it was something entirely different to break what Thomas Jefferson had once called "the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded" men

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7. It may deserve mention that the Kemalist term for "secularism" is layıklık--literally, "laicism." Atatürk's thinking was deeply anticlerical. See Paul Dumont, "The Origins of Kemalist Ideology," Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey, ed. Jacob M. Landau (Boulder, Colo. 1984) 25-44.

"to bind themselves."<sup>8</sup> As I tried to explain in my last letter,<sup>9</sup> the task facing Atatürk was in this regard far more daunting than the one that had faced his 18th century predecessors in the fledgling American republic. The Gazi commanded the support of his compatriots--but he could not easily persuade them that Islam was peripheral to the question of political loyalty, and he could not adopt the strategy employed by Jefferson and James Madison more than six score years before. In a country 97% Muslim, one could not depend upon the rivalry and mutual fear of a multitude of religious sects to serve as a prop for religious freedom and the secular state.

Had Turkey been a democracy in the early 1920s, Atatürk would never have been able to institute his great reform. The vast majority of the new republic's citizens were illiterate peasants educated in the traditions of Sunni Islam to the extent that they were educated at all. They revered the man who had saved them from Christian rule; but, if they had been given the opportunity, they would certainly have chosen to overturn his reforms by reinstating some form of Islamic theocracy. A number of those who had been prominent in launching and conducting the struggle for independence resented the authoritarian tenor of their former colleague's rule. Late in 1924, they resigned from Atatürk's People's Party and founded the opposition Progressive Republican Party. This venture was destined to be shortlived. Six months later, the government outlawed the new party on the grounds that, by including a clause in its program stressing respect for Turkey's religious traditions, the party's leaders had encouraged the theocratically inspired Kurdish revolt. The charge was unjust, but Atatürk and his associates were undoubtedly correct in their estimate of the consequences of allowing the opposition's continued existence.

In 1930, Atatürk encouraged his friend and sometime Prime Minister Fethi Okyar to found the opposition Free Republican Party. The enthusiastic, almost hysterical popular reception given Okyar soon caused Atatürk and his closest associates to have second thoughts. Fearful that the new party would quickly become the vehicle for an obscurantist reaction, they persuaded Okyar to disband it a mere three months after it had first been established. However much the advocates of Westernization may have wanted to institute full-fledged parliamentary democracy in Turkey, the time was not yet ripe for an end to the dictatorship of what was now called the Republican People's Party (RPP). The

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<sup>8</sup> The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York 1892-1899) X 390-392: Letter to Roger C. Weightman on 24 June 1826.

<sup>9</sup> See PAR-6: Republicanism and Religion-I.

problem was particularly perplexing: liberal democracy introduced too soon might prove permanently fatal to liberal democracy itself. How could one persuade a people still bound in chains by "monkish ignorance and superstition" to accept "the blessings and security of self-government?" How could one prevent them from consciously and deliberately choosing the rule "of a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God?"

For the solution of this problem, Thomas Jefferson looked ultimately "to the general spread of the light of science."<sup>10</sup> So, in the long run, did Atatürk as well; that is why he had committed the state to the founding of a system of secular education.<sup>11</sup> But he needed a strategy for the intervening years. Force no doubt had to be used in cases like the Kurdish revolt, but Turkey's rulers could hardly continue to depend on force if they were ever to allow their dictatorship to lapse. Something would have to be done to awaken the townsmen and peasants of Anatolia from their dogmatic slumber. Turkey required a cultural revolution.

To speed the event, Atatürk abandoned his uniform, put on the hat of the infidel, and became the schoolteacher of the nation. In this new role, he made a profound impression. An early biographer described him as "a man born out of due season, an anachronism, a throwback to the Tartars of the Steppes, a fierce elemental force of man." Then this writer added a second observation. "With the mind of an Emperor," he noted, "he lives in brutal royalty ... a primitive chieftain in a morning-coat with a piece of chalk and a blackboard for his weapons."<sup>12</sup>

Atatürk first took up that piece of chalk and wrote letters on that blackboard in 1928 just a few months after the formal disestablishment of Islam. Up to that time, Turkish had always been written in Arabic script--despite the fact that this script was extremely ill-suited to the language. From the 1st of December, 1928, it came to be written exclusively in a version of the Latin alphabet crafted by Atatürk himself to meet the peculiar needs of the language spoken by the ordinary people of Anatolia. By wielding chalk, the new nation's President had eliminated the one remaining

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10. The Writings of Thomas Jefferson X 390-392: Letter to Roger C. Weightman on 24 June 1826.

11. See Michael Winter, "The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey," Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey 183-194

12. H. C. Armstrong, Grey Wolf (London 1932) 333.

tie binding Turkey to the heartland of Islam; in the process, he cut future generations of Turks off from their Ottoman past. He was intent that his people look forward rather than back, and that the new republic become culturally a part of Europe.

To this end, Atatürk's government acted in 1929 to eliminate Arabic and Persian from the curricula of the schools. Three years later, he founded the Turkish Language Society to institute a linguistic reform aimed at substituting words of pure Turkish origin for the Arabic and Persian terms and phrases that had entered into the language over the preceding centuries. This reform had the effect intended: by the 1950s, students would need dictionaries if they were assigned to read the Turkish Constitution or one of the speeches of Atatürk himself. The door was to be closed on Turkey's past. It was to be left to the dead to bury the dead.

Atatürk recognized that something would be required to fill the void that he had so deliberately created. In 1931, he founded the Turkish Historical Society. Up to this time, the residents of Anatolia and of European Turkey had thought of themselves first and foremost as members of the Muslim *umma*. The new historical society was formed with the purpose of making the citizens of the new state aware of their identity as Turks. They were not to see themselves primarily as the heirs of the Prophet Muhammad. To understand the roots of their own culture, they were to look to the Sumerians, the Assyrians, the Hittites, the Phrygians, the Lydians, the Lycians, the Carians, the ancient Greeks, the Romans, and all of the peoples who had inhabited Asia Minor or otherwise contributed to its culture since the beginning of time. This was the doctrine that would be taught in Turkish schools. Nationalism was to replace religion as the source of self-understanding.

At the same time, Atatürk sought to transform Islam. Unable to pursue the strategy suggested by Adam Smith and adopted by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, he turned to one akin in some respects to that endorsed by David Hume. In his History of England, the Scottish philosopher had contended that "the interested diligence of the clergy" was a condition that "every wise legislator will study to prevent." Where the civil magistrate was absolutely neutral regarding religious questions, the rivalry of the preachers would inevitably infuse into religion "a strong mixture of superstition, folly, and delusion."

Each ghostly practitioner, in order to render himself more precious and sacred in the eyes of his retainers, will inspire them with the most violent abhorrence of all other sects, and continually endeavor, by some novelty to excite the languid devotion of his audience. No regard will be paid to truth,



morals, or decency, in the doctrines inculcated. Every tenet will be adopted that best suits the disorderly affections of the human frame.

Only where there was an official religious establishment would the fanaticism of the clergy be greatly reduced. In Hume's opinion, "the most decent and advantageous composition" that the authorities can make "with the spiritual guides is to bribe their indolence, by assigning stated salaries to their profession."<sup>13</sup>

Atatürk was far less concerned with religious persecution than Hume had been. His problem was far more severe. Islam was less a faith than a way of life; political rule was a central tenet of the religion. If the government of a secular republic failed to maintain firm control over the religious establishment, that establishment would inevitably oppose the regime itself. In the long run, it would be essential either to break the hold of Islam over the people or to transform what had always been a religion of law and public action into a religion of private faith.

In the very year in which the new government shut down the old mosque schools (medreses), it established twenty-nine Prayer Leader and Preacher Schools (İmam-Hatip Mektepleri) to provide officially sanctioned training for religious personnel. At the same time, the medrese of Istanbul's Sülemaniye Mosque was reconstituted as the Faculty of Divinity (İlahiyat Fakültesi) at what was then called the Darülfünun and is now known as Istanbul University. This institution, the first modern institution of higher learning in the Islamic world, had been established in 1900. By locating Turkey's only Faculty of Divinity on this campus, Atatürk sought to link the study of Islam with the study of philosophy and science.

In 1928, the new faculty appointed a committee including professors of logic and psychology as well as theology to propose a general reform of the Islamic religion. That June, the committee issued its report. The recommendations concerning the forms of worship called for the establishment of pews and cloakrooms within the mosques; those entering the building were to be instructed to clean their shoes rather than remove them. In discussing the language of worship, the committee insisted that prayers be conducted and sermons delivered only in Turkish. Regarding the character of worship, it urged the introduction of musicians and musical instruments so that Islam would be endowed with sacred instrumental music. Finally, the committee

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13. David Hume, The History of England (New York 1878) III 129; Chapter XXIX (near the beginning).

members urged that those giving the Friday sermons be trained in philosophy. If the committee had had its way, the Turkish mosque would have become a church--complete with pews, organ, and a preacher educated on lines familiar in the West. Atatürk is reported once to have said that he would have made the Turks Christians if he had been able to do so. The evidence suggests that he actually attempted something of the sort.<sup>14</sup>

In this endeavor, the great man failed. None of the recommendations of the committee were ever fully implemented. The only substantive change made was due to the government's insistence that the call to prayer (ezan), which was chanted by the müezzin outside the mosque in public from the minaret, be sung in Turkish rather than in the traditional Arabic. By the mid-1930s, the Faculty of Divinity had itself been shut down, and the İmam-Hatip Mektepleri were closed as well. Except in private, religious education ceased altogether. Having attempted and failed to initiate a thoroughgoing reform of Islam, Atatürk apparently decided to encourage its gradual demise. In time, "the general spread of the light of science" would do the necessary work. In this endeavor, Turkey's Founding Father was successful only in part. The establishment of democracy would be the test.

### III

Real democracy finally came to Turkey in the wake of the Second World War--largely because the Turkish leaders were eager for support from the United States and the various countries of Western Europe against the pressure being exerted upon them by the Soviet Union. After considerable internal debate, İsmet İnönü, Atatürk's closest supporter and his successor as President of the Republic, succeeded in persuading the Republican People's Party that the time had come not only to legalize the establishment of a formed opposition but to give that opposition a fair chance in the electoral contests to come.

The first and most important of the opposition parties to emerge was the Democrat Party (DP), which was founded by a number of dissident RPP deputies. Of these, the two most important figures were Adnan Menderes and Celâl Bayar, who had been prime minister at the time of Atatürk's death. Other parties--the National Resurgence Party; the Social Justice Party; the Farmer's

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14. See Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey 401-442.

and Villager's Party; the Turkish Conservative Party; the Land, Real Estate, and Free Enterprise Party; and the Nation Party--openly espoused the need to reaffirm Islamic mores and to reverse at least in some measure the secularist trend. Menderes, Bayar, and the other principal leaders of the DP took care to distance themselves from this tendency. Mindful of the fate suffered by their predecessors in the Progressive Republican Party and the Free Republican Party, they vigorously reaffirmed the secularist principles of Atatürk.

The first breach of those principles came not from the opposition, but from the Republican People's Party itself.<sup>15</sup> The RPP had defeated the DP in the 1946 elections--but, to achieve this, party functionaries had apparently had to fix the vote. Rightly fearful that the RPP's position on the religious question was contributing to the resentment that imperiled its rule, the delegates to the 7th General Congress in 1947 voted to reverse course. In short order, the türbes of the religious saints were reopened. The parents of students in the primary schools were soon given the option of enrolling their children in non-credit courses in religion taught by teachers certified by the Ministry of Education from texts prepared jointly by that Ministry and by the Presidency of Religious Affairs. The government announced a plan to establish private religious seminaries providing a five-year program for middle-school graduates and a two-year curriculum for those who had graduated from high school. Prayer Leader and Preacher Courses (İmam-Hatip Kursları) were to be set up in ten cities, and the University of Ankara decided to establish a Faculty of Theology (İlahiyat Fakültesi). For the first time, foreign exchange was made available to those intent on making the pilgrimage to Mecca. The period of repression was at an end.

These changes were welcome, but they were not sufficient to save what many considered "the godless Republican People's Party" from popular ire. Religion was but one source of trouble for the RPP. İnönü and his associates had made many enemies over the course of the preceding quarter-century. Thus, when the first, fully free and fair elections were held in 1950, the Democrat Party won a landslide.

Once in office, Menderes and Bayar abandoned their earlier insistence on a rigid adherence to Atatürk's strategy of secularism. While presenting the new government's program, Menderes emphasized that his administration would

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15. My discussion of the period of the late 1940s and the 1950s owes much to Binnaz Toprak, Islam and Political Development (Leiden 1981) 70-90. See also Richard D. Robinson, The Turkish Republic: A Case Study in National Development (Cambridge, Mass. 1965) 201-206.

oppose obscurantism while respecting freedom of conscience. He pointedly distinguished between the principles of Kemalism that had taken root and those that had not; the Democrat Party would preserve the former and abandon the latter. In practice, that meant that the Democrat Party would tolerate, if not lend its support to an Islamic revival.

The very first act of the new government--an act evidently designed to set the tone for the Menderes administration--was to lift the ban on reciting the ezan in Arabic. Some RPP deputies argued that this was a betrayal of the Kemalist reforms, but in the end the vote in favor of the bill was unanimous. When a journalist asked one RPP deputy whether his party would initiate a nation-wide campaign against the government bill, the latter replied, "We should do that and lose the 1954 election as well. Is that what you want?" As the RPP leaders had recognized even before their defeat, in a democracy, no one can afford to ignore the power of popular religious sentiment.

During the campaign, the religious press had attacked the leaders of the Democrat Party. But, once it became clear that Menderes was prepared to exploit the religious issue, the friends of Islam rallied to his side. Earlier, in the religious journal Sebilürreşad, Eşref Edib had denounced the DP deputies for supporting an amendment to the Turkish Criminal Code that outlawed organizations intent on changing the government in line with religious principles. Now, he argued that the Democrats were the "real representatives of the people." The "real Republic," he contended, had been established on the 14th of May 1950, when the Democrats won their landslide. The first President of the Republic was the one chosen on that date, and the only legitimate laws were those that would be passed by the assembly elected on that date. To many, it appeared that the counterrevolution had begun.

In some ways, they were right. A month after it lifted the ban on reciting the ezan in Arabic, the Menderes government decided to permit the broadcasting of readings from the Koran over the radio. For the optional, non-credit courses in religion, which the RPP had instituted in the primary schools, the DP substituted courses for credit and made them mandatory for all students but those whose parents had submitted a written request that their children be exempted. No one who failed the course could advance to the next grade. By 1955, the government had established Prayer Leader and Preacher Schools in sixteen cities and towns; by 1960, it had built more than fifteen thousand new mosques. Over the decade of DP rule, the budget of the Presidency of Religious Affairs increased fourteen-fold. There was even an occasion in 1951, when a delegate to the DP Congress in Konya publicly advocated the return of the veil, the fez, and the Arabic script.

During the 1950s, there was a massive religious revival.<sup>16</sup> There was an extraordinary increase in the number of religious books and pamphlets published. The number of pilgrims going to Mecca jumped. Local shrines were thronged, and mosque attendance increased. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to measure this development, but it may be indicative that the number of private religious organizations leaped from 154 to 5104, from 7.1% of the total number of private organizations to 29.7%. No one really knew just how far the revival would go.

In the same period, the tarikats, though illegal and forced to remain underground, became increasingly influential. In 1949, the Ticani order caused a disturbance by reciting the ezan in Arabic from the visitor's gallery of the Grand National Assembly. After the 1950 elections, they began systematically doing damage to the statues of Atatürk that had been set up in virtually every town and village of the land. This outrage was too much for even the DP to tolerate, and it prompted the government to sponsor a law designed to protect the great man's memory. As a consequence, the Ticani leader Kemal Pilavoglu was sentenced to fifteen years in jail and restricted to the island of Bozcaada for the rest of his life. Soon after Pilavoglu's trial, the government initiated similar proceedings against the Nakşibendi, Mevlevi, and Kadiri orders.

Though unwilling to turn the clock back to 1922, Menderes and his associates were generally prepared to look the other way--particularly when the tarikats and local clerics supported DP rule. In 1954, when Saidi Nursi, the founder and leader of the influential, theocratically oriented Nurcu sect, urged his followers to work for a DP victory "in the interests of the Koran," Menderes and his supporters made no objection. In 1957, they were deterred only by vehement RPP opposition from conferring amnesty on a Kirsehir imam who had been convicted of using his sermons to spread political propaganda favorable to the Menderes government. During the election campaign later that year, Menderes gave speeches in which he read from the Koran and promised that Istanbul would become a second Kaaba--an object of pilgrimage equal to the sacred enclosure at Mecca itself. Many of his supporters followed his example. İnönü staunchly objected to the political use of religion in the campaign, but his colleagues quite often imitated the opposition. In a speech given in Adana, the party's secretary-general claimed that it was the RPP that had "transformed the country into a second Kaaba" through its support of Islam. One former prime minister emphasized that it was the RPP that had

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16. For an early discussion of this phenomenon, see Bernard Lewis, "Islamic Revival in Turkey," International Affairs 28:1 (January 1952) 38-48.

initiated the abandonment of radically secularist policies in the late 1940s.<sup>17</sup>

The dispute concerning religion did not cease when the DP won the 1957 election. In February 1959, Menderes escaped without serious injury from an airplane accident in London that killed a number of others. At a DP conference held in Adana shortly thereafter, one delegate suggested that, while Menderes had been appointed Prime Minister in 1950 by the Turkish people and by President Celâl Bayar, he had now been elected by God; another emphasized that Menderes had been sent to Turkey by Allah and by the Prophet Muhammad. Local cells of the party celebrated their leader's good fortune by acts of religious significance, sacrificing lambs and organizing readings from the Koran. Local DP leaders attacked the RPP again and again as a party of unbelievers. In the months preceding the 27th of May, 1960, the debate concerning the alleged atheism of the RPP leaders and the purported support given by the government to Saidi Nursi and the Nurcu sect became increasingly bitter. It took a coup d'état to quell the uproar.

The new Turkish Constitution, formulated in the wake of that coup, included a provision that read, "No individual can exploit religion in order to change the social, economic, political, or legal structure of the state according to religious principles; neither can he use religion to further his personal or political interests." As future events were to demonstrate, it was easier to formulate such a law than to enforce it.

#### IV

The period of military rule marked a hiatus in, not an end to the conflict regarding the proper role for religion in public life. The government continued to construct mosques at the rate of 1500 a year, and no one objected. The trouble began not long after Süleyman Demirel became the leader of the Justice Party (JP), the clear successor to Menderes' DP.<sup>18</sup> His

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17. In general, see Kemal H. Karpat, "The Turkish Elections of 1957," Western Political Quarterly 14 (1961) 436-459.

18. After the 1960 coup, Menderes and Bayar were tried and condemned to death. Menderes was executed; Bayar, ostensibly because of his advanced age, was spared. The latter is still alive, and to this day conservative politicians pay him court.

supporters made much of the fact that he came from a village called İslamköy (Village of Islam). They noted that his father had made the Hajj to Mecca and that the Koran was read each day in the Demirel household. By now, the RPP had identified itself as a party left of center. At the time of the 1965 elections, Demirel supporters sometimes suggested that the RPP was pro-communist and therefore anti-religious. The bitterness of public discourse did not abate.

During the Senate by-election campaign the next year, Demirel hammered away at the theme that the secularism of the old Kemalist elite was in fact a cloak for hostility to Islam. İnönü replied by pointing to the support given the Justice Party by Saidi Nursi's Nurcu sect and demanded that Demirel repudiate the support of such obscurantists. The religious press charged that these attacks merely revealed the anti-religious bigotry of the RPP.

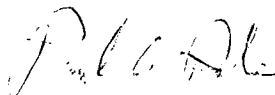
During the period, stretching from 1950 to 1966, the Republican People's Party did not do particularly well at the polls. Not surprisingly, then, when İnönü was replaced as the party leader by the social democrat Bülent Ecevit in 1972, the RPP abandoned the secularist theme. By the following year, in fact, the RPP was part of a coalition government with the National Salvation Party (NSP) of Necmettin Erbakan, the first Islamic fundamentalist party to play an important role in Turkish politics.

The NSP was the heir to the National Order Party (NOP), which Erbakan had founded early in 1970 at about the time that a clique of Islamic fundamentalists had been expelled from the Justice Party. The NOP had made a name for itself by attacking both left and right, socialist and capitalist, and by arguing that Turkey, if true to its traditions, could blaze an entirely different trail. Erbakan's party contended that modern technology was not specifically Western in character; that much of that technology had, in fact, been stolen from the Muslim countries; and that the Ottoman Empire had collapsed because the reformers of the time had adopted the corrupt cosmopolitan culture of the West. It called at the same time for the expansion of industry and for a return to traditional (i.e., Islamic) norms, and it sought supporters by discreetly enlisting the aid of religious functionaries and members of the outlawed sects, particularly those resident in eastern Turkey. Though generally careful to use code words and to avoid explicitly sounding the Islamic theme, the NOP ran afoul of the law when its youth wing published some material that cut too close to the bone. In 1972, the Constitutional Court closed the party down, ruling that it was in breach of the constitutional ban on the exploitation of religion for the purpose of changing "the social, economic, political, or legal structure of the state according to religious principles."

After this setback, the NSP was quickly cobbled together. It monitored its publications with greater care than had been exercised by the NOP, and in the elections held in 1973 the new party managed to secure 11.8% of the votes and a comparable proportion of the deputies elected to the Grand National Assembly. As a consequence, it ranked as the third largest party, it held the balance between the Justice Party and the Republican People's Party, and it was able to exercise considerable influence through its participation in coalition governments. The NSP's proportion of the national vote dropped to 8.6% in 1977, and it lost one-half of its assembly seats--but it was still the case that neither the JP nor the RPP was able to form a government without its support. Like the religious parties in Israel, the National Salvation Party was in a position to dictate terms as long as the two major parties found it impossible or undesirable to form a grand coalition.

It would be a mistake to suppose that Turkey is in great, immediate danger of undergoing an Islamic Revolution, but it would be an error as well to neglect the importance of the religious question as a cause of the political instability that continues to plague the country. The military coup that took place on the 12th of September 1980 was occasioned by a general breakdown in law and order throughout the country; its timing seems to have been determined by the fact that National Salvation Party leaders issued a public call for the establishment of an Islamic state at a rally held in Konya just six days before the army intervened. In my next letter, I will look at the developments that have taken place since September, 1980, and I will attempt an assessment of the larger question. The partial failure of the Kemalist strategy for eliminating Islam from the public arena should give one pause. Piety of a sort may be necessary to the health of republican regimes.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Rahe

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