



Book Review by Alice von Bieberstein

Corry Guttstadt, *Turkey, the Jews and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 370 pp. 30 illustrations, 2 maps.

Five years after the German original, Corry Guttstadt's study on *Turkey, the Jews and the Holocaust* has finally appeared in English. Even in shortened form, its main research findings have lost none of their value: "During the Holocaust, between 2,200 and 2,500 Jews of Turkish origin were deported to the Auschwitz and Sobibor extermination camps." (p. 309) Another 300 to 400 were sent to concentration camps. More even lost their lives in detention centres or at the hands of the Gestapo. A few Turkish diplomats intervened on behalf of Jewish Turkish citizens, at times even securing their release. Yet, on the whole, such is Guttstadt's conclusion, "Turkey violated its obligation to protect its citizens abroad." (p. 312) It did so mainly by revoking the citizenship of thousands of Turkish Jews living in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. Even when the Nazi authorities had issued a call in late 1942 to repatriate any remaining Jews of Turkish citizenship, Ankara responded with hesitation and delays, instructing its embassies not to organise any group repatriations. "In all, 850 to 900 Turkish Jews were able to enter Turkey in the context of repatriation or prisoner exchanges." (p. 311).

An interest in the fate of Jews of Turkish origin, around 20,000 to 30,000 of which lived in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, was Guttstadt's point of departure and remains the big focus of her book. For a simple reason: they have so far been literally absent in Holocaust research. Yet the programmatic title points to several more dimensions of this thematic triangle. These include the situation of Turkey's Jewish community after the founding the Republic of Turkey and during World War II and the role of Turkey as a destination for Jewish refugees and as a transit country to escape to Palestine. Without ever relativizing Germany's responsibility for the persecution and murder of European Jewry, Guttstadt thus approaches Turkey not as a peripheral "re-

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actor" to anti-Semitic violence in Europe. Instead, her important contribution lies in bringing to the fore Turkey's own political agenda especially vis-à-vis its own long-standing Jewish minority.

The book thus opens up (pp. 1-27) by showing the background to Jewish emigration from Turkey to Europe, which had already begun in the late 19th century, but intensified in a "climate of constant nationalist tension" (p. 18) after the foundation of the Republic. Part of the Jewish community had been supportive of the Kemalist project, but many saw their hopes crushed in the face of 'Turkification' policies that targeted minority rights and properties. Non-Muslims and non-Turks faced economic hardship, were subjected to assimilation pressures and restricted in their freedom of movement and residence. Until Turkey broke of diplomatic relations with Germany in August 1944 and eventually declared war in February 1945, Turkey's foreign policy (Chapter 1, pp. 29-37) was marked, according to Guttstadt, by a "one-sided neutrality" (p.35) towards Germany. Turkey provided chromium ore, essential for Germany's war efforts, permitted the passing of German warships through the Straits and continued its close cooperation with Germany's secret service. Domestically (Chapter 2, pp. 38-55), the government permitted the formation and activities of local NSDAP (National Socialist German Worker's Party) groups. Guttstadt describes how the Kemalist one-party rule of the 1930s and 1940s was characterised by nationalism and authoritarianism, not unmarked by admiration for Europe's fascist regimes. It pursued an aggressive population policy whose principle tools were forced resettlements and a series of citizenship regulations in 1927 and 1928 by means of which Muslim and Turkic-speaking immigrants from the Balkans were naturalised *en masse*, while thousands of non-Muslims were stripped of their citizenship 'because' they had left the country or not participated in Turkey's war of independence. Guttstadt argues that the initial rationale for these laws was to prevent expelled Armenians and Greeks from returning and to confiscate their property. Yet, as persecution intensified throughout Europe, these laws started to disproportionately hit Jews. For the Jewish community in Turkey, the war years (chapter 3, pp. 56-81) were characterised by more violent anti-minority and anti-Jewish measures, most notably the attacks on Jews across Thrace in 1943, the forced military labour conscription of non-Muslim men in May 1941 and the infamous Wealth Tax of 1942, which "served to Turkify most of the companies, means of production, real estate, and capital owned by the minority bourgeoisie." (p. 79) Nonetheless, Guttstadt emphasises, anti-Semitism in Turkey never gained the widespread and violent proportions it had in Germany and occupied Europe during those years.

The remainder of the book essentially forms Guttstadt's third major contribution, a well-founded argument against widespread depictions of Turkey as a destination for Jewish refugees and more specifically against Stanford Shaw's claim that Turkish diplomats in Europe engaged in broad-scale efforts at rescuing persecuted Jews. It is true that educational reforms and utilitarian motives led to the appointment of dozens of academics who had had to flee Nazi Germany. Yet, Guttstadt points out (chapter 4, pp 82-106), the majority of Germans in Turkey were actually followers of Nazism; many were also employed by the Turkish state. Not only did the Turkish authorities reject requests at hiring more persecuted academics, the government also passed a series of decrees effectively preventing the immigration of Jews and also threatening those Jews with expulsion that had no valid papers, which applied to academic émigrés once their German citizenship was revoked by the Nazis. Turkey also imposed restrictions, changing in response to foreign policy priorities and under pressure of international rescue efforts, on Jewish refugees who sought to escape through Turkey to Palestine (chapter 5, pp. 107-133).

The remaining chapters present meticulously researched case studies on the fate of the Turkish Jewish communities in Germany and Austria (pp. 159-179), France (pp. 180-247), Belgium and the Netherlands (pp. 248-272), Italy (pp. 273-284) and Southeastern Europe and the Aegean Islands (pp. 285-298). On the basis of a wealth of documentation, Guttstadt traces as closely as possible the history, size and character of the local Sephardic communities, how they became subject to anti-Semitic measures and then, if at all, to intervention by Turkish embassies. Guttstadt highlights particular cases to illustrate how the fate of Europe's Turkish Jews was tied up not only with the genocidal policies of Nazi Germany, but with a myriad of other factors: gaps between official regulations and local practice, local anti-Semitic policies prior to occupation, the attitude of the local rump government and the majority population, the efforts by individual Turkish consular representatives, broader infrastructural issues and detrimentally long bureaucratic procedures. What stands out (chapter 6, pp. 135-158) is how the question of citizenship became the central issue in a bureaucratic tug-of-war between Germany's racist exterminatory programme on the one hand and diplomatic relations on the other, such that "the degree of 'protection' [persecuted Jews] enjoyed depended on the particular relationship and power dynamic between the country whose passport they held and Nazi Germany." (p. 144) Stateless Jews and Jewish citizens of occupied countries considered 'non-existent' like Poland and the Czech region were completely unprotected and the first to be deported. Temporary exemptions applied to Jews of neutral, allied and enemy states. Turkey was given a first repatriation order in 1942, but despite several reminders and extensions, Ankara failed to respond with clear

consular instructions. Citizenship papers were checked individually, often over many months. Individual efforts by ambassadors remained the exception as the Turkish government sought to prevent the mass immigration of persecuted Jews. Instead of facilitating the return of Jewish citizens to Turkey, thousands had their citizenship revoked and were thus rendered stateless in the years of 1942-44. These people were further barred from ever entering Turkey again, even with other papers. The consequences of these policies have been summarised above.

Guttstadt thus successfully shows how Turkey's stance regarding its Jewish community in Turkey, Turkish Jewish citizens in Europe and Jewish refugees was motivated by nationalist and anti-minority politics in a way that dismantles the myth of tolerance vis-à-vis Jews as it has been propagated in recent years in order to fend off international criticism and to deny the Armenian genocide. Her contribution will be of immense value to all those interested in (a transnational perspective on) nationalism, anti-Semitism and the history of minorities in Turkey. It fills a gap in Holocaust research by extending the geographic horizon towards Turkey and its Jewish community. Tangentially it also revises the history of Turkish-German migration, letting it begin with late 19th/early 20th century Jewish migrants. One can only wish the book a large readership.

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