



**Stefan Ihrig, *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), 311 pages, Illustrated.**

**Reviewed by Steven Bowman**

Hitler had two models: Benito Mussolini and Kemal Atatürk. The first taught him the value of street fighting, but Atatürk taught him to be a dictator who fought to create a new nation out of the chaos of the Ottoman defeat and finally to impose a revolutionary restructuring of Turkey into a model national and socialist state. Ihrig has resurrected the influence of the Ottoman Empire and its German acolytes who informed Germany through their early 20<sup>th</sup> century military and diplomatic experiences and others in the 1920s-1930s as ardent Nazis who propagated, taught, and implemented the Turkish role model.

This new perspective on the Anatolian model is based on a comprehensive study of the major and minor newspapers –Left, centrist, Right, and Ultra-Right journals during the period of Nazi birth and adolescence which brings to the reader the extent of Atatürk’s military and political career as a role model in rethinking the defeat of World War I and the four treaties from Lausanne to Versailles. The German Empire was gone, as was the Ottoman, the army destroyed, the economy ruined, the people demoralized; a new leader was desperately needed. And Atatürk was the hero to be emulated, or führer indeed who defeated diplomatically the victors and made Ankara the capital of a new and respected state. Why not follow his methods to achieve Germany’s destiny?

In a startling second chapter Ihrig shows to what extent Hitler was influenced by the journalistic paeans of Atatürk, how these affected the Munich putsch, how Turkey’s treatment of the Greek and Armenian minorities – expulsion and murder – modeled the Nazi treatment of Jews, Communists, homosexuals, and dissidents. He also provides cameos of the fringe right wingers who had military experience in Turkey and those who witnessed the Armenian Genocide, as accurate as it was however anachronistically designated today. As much as Hitler later admitted his admiration for Mussolini shown by his support throughout the war until the latter’s death, western historiography has missed the essential Turkish role model that provided a prime example to Nazis for the

period 1919-1923 and especially throughout the 1930s. For example, see chapter 3 for the SA (Sturmabteilung) bash at the Turkish Embassy for the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic, the Nazi bust of Atatürk by Josef Thorak, and war years until the Gotterdammerung of 1945. Then Nazi Germany thankfully followed the Ottoman Empire to perdition and mutatis mutandis a new Germany was created (by the Marshal Plan) out of the chaos to become the most prominent state in postwar Europe as the Nazis believed Turkey had succeeded in accomplishing.

To return to the Armenian massacres perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire already from the 1890s through World War I, the latter massacres restricted to the eastern frontier under the auspices of the CUP. Ihrig's analysis of the Turkish solution to unwanted minorities, first the Greek expulsions from 1912-1922, the latter completed during the ill-fated Greek invasion of Anatolia after World War 1 which was brilliantly defeated by Kemal Atatürk and Ismet İnönü. Other Christian minorities were also "ethnically cleansed" and the western world was relatively silent, as they later were to be during World War II; the expulsion of the Greeks from Istanbul in the 1950s, so insightfully analyzed recently by Spyros Vryonis: and the contemporary panicked flight of mainly Syrian Christians facing what is now termed genocide and mass migration of other Middle Easterners [Christians and Muslims] seeking economic advantages in a guilt ridden Germany.

The proliferation of Holocaust deniers in the West since World War II and its brutal, though childish, adoption by Muslims in the East and elsewhere is a heritage of the Nazi expulsion of German and Austrian Jews and subsequent destruction of European Jewry during World War II. The recent appearance of Holocaust denial and overt anti-Semitism in Greece has added to the country's woes on the international scene and has become almost respectable through the rise of the Golden Dawn movement with its echoes of the 1930s Nazi tactics. Alongside the denial of the Holocaust a challenge has also developed among Turkish-supported scholars to the well-documented massacre of Armenians at the beginning of World War 2. In recent years, Armenians, namely those victimized by the massacres and especially their descendants in the United States, have adopted the neologism *genocide*, introduced in 1943. This assertion is challenged as anachronistic and inaccurate by a host of deniers ranging from scholars to Turkish nationalists to purveyors of hate.

Interestingly the Kurds were ignored by German commentators at the time who emphasized that Turkey was now a homogeneous state after the removal of Armenians and Greeks save for the tiny minorities who remained in Istanbul, the latter until the late 1950s. We should recall that the Kurds were promised a state of their own implied in President Wilson's Fourteen Points which may finally be recognized due to their

sacrifices and active partition in the war against the contemporary challenge of a barbarous Isis.

We should recall, as Ihrig has clarified for us in this incisive study that Hitler was encouraged to develop his destructive policies toward the Jews based inter alia on the precedent of Atatürk's solution to the problem of the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia whose nationalist yearnings since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century threatened the integrity of the Turkish "homeland."

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