

inction between terms like *tesettür* or *türban* difficult to express in English. However, names of institutions like *Danıştay* or *Yargıtay* can be used in their English equivalents of Council of State and High Court of Appeals.

Overall, this book is recommended to the neophytes of Turkish politics because it

shows an unpleasant aspect of secularism in Turkey and the tribulation of ‘*başörtülü kadınlar*.’ Usually the academic literature on the subject fails to explain the duress of the ban in full, but Kavakci Islam does it competently.

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## Turkey in the 1960’s and 1970’s Through the Reports of American Diplomats

By *Rifat Bali*

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Rifat N. Bali has done us a great service by publishing reports of American diplomats about Turkey in the 1960’s and 1970’s. The book consists of 35 reports and cables prepared by American consulates in Istanbul, Adana Izmir, and the American Embassy in Ankara. Bali has organized the classified reports into five categories: the “political and social situation in Turkey,” “the situation after the May 27, 1960 Coup,” “the Turkish general staffs ultimatum of March 12, 1971,” “the Kurdish issue” and finally reports concerning minorities. It should be noted here that these reports did not exactly represent the views of the US government, but the views of serving American diplomats. Failure to distinguish between these two categories might lead to unwarranted conclusions.

It has always been interesting to hear the views of foreigners. The observations of an external actor, who does not belong to the local national culture and who can free himself/herself from the inevitable limitations on the perceptive abilities of a native citizen, can be highly informa-

tive. For example, *Democracy in America*, written by a visiting French man Alexis de Tocqueville, became an indispensable classic and a unique source in understanding America since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In a country like Turkey, which gives great weight to what the Westerners’ think about it, what would look like a curiosity gains further impetus. These reports are significant for other reasons. They provide insights into what the Americans expected from Turkey, how they gathered information, and why they perceived Turkish affairs in the way they did.

An interesting report dated May 20, 1963, notes “...the conscious effort of educated Turks to avoid discussion of basic human values, of the ‘good life’ of the place of a man in the universe, i.e., of ‘religious’ questions.” It notes that “attempts to discuss such subjects in an open, academic way with the ‘enlightened’ Turks often produce suspicion that the questioner is a secret reactionary. Or a conservative is likely to retreat to orthodox Islam; yes we should build more mosques.” (p.66) Another re-

port dated June 12, 1964, accurately describes the autocratic tendencies of Turkey's reformist elite, which were revitalized after the May 27<sup>th</sup> Coup in 1960.. Here are some excerpts: "...the reformers of Turkey have a deep-seated distrust of the masses," (p.80) and "... one seldom meets a Turkish reformer with any sense of compassion for the people whose lives he claims to be endeavoring to improve." (p.81) In another report dated March 9, 1965, which analyzes anti-Americanism, notes that many in the Atatürkist elite "see that the American advocacy of democracy and the open society is a threat to their own position." (p.103) It also characterizes the prevailing mood, as a "retreat into isolation, economic autarchy, disillusion with the United States, maintenance of the political power of a relatively small oligarchy, all properly adorned with suitably nationalistic slogans." (p.105)

Observations on the Kurdish issue are also realistic. One diplomat on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1965 - after a tour of Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Siirt, Bitlis, and Van - wrote that he was "struck by the essentially colonial nature of Turkish administration." (p.227) "These people," who "are trained to ignore, in fact hold in contempt, the ethnic difference which are keys to the economic, social and political patterns of the area," he continued, "live together, eat together in the officers club, and feel themselves alone among an alien population. Most of them do not bring their families, and live for the day they can return to western Turkey." (p.227) It continues that "... the Turkish presence in the area is too light to be an effective instrument of 'Turkicizing.'" (p.227) And ends with a warning that "... Kurdish nationalism does pose a threat to the integrity of Turkey as now constituted..." (p.228)

This compilation of reports reveal that since 1945 politically ambitious Turks attempted to influence the United States and US diplomats were ready to establish contacts with potential political dissenters. We learn, based on a Report dated January 16, 1971, that General Muhsin Batur, an air force commander, told the American diplomat that "the Turkish military would be extremely reluctant to 'intervene directly' (read take over) and would do so only in extremes, after every alternative had been exhausted." (p.204) This meant that the military might intervene "indirectly," as it did two months later. General Batur, most possibly in an effort to ensure US support for upcoming coup, also stressed that "even if the military did take over as a last resort, it would not affect Turkey's relations with NATO and the US." (p.204).

Another report, dated March 28, 1965, includes acute observations about General Cemal Madanoğlu, who was amongst the perpetrators of the May 27<sup>th</sup> Coup (a life time member of the Senate) and implicated in various post-coup attempts to retain power. The report said that Madanoğlu thought that Süleyman Demirel's becoming head of the JP was a good thing, while İnönü and Gürsel should have been retired from politics long ago. He even went as far as to describe Gürsel's term of presidency as "a mockery of the office and a national disgrace." (p.188) Madanoğlu's ambition for presidency was an open secret, as he was trying to impress everyone that he was the most qualified man around! We also learn that on March 11, 1971, Aydın Yalçın, a member of the JP and Demirel's rival, told the diplomat that 15 to 20 of the JP MPs were determined to force Demirel's early resignation. Yalçın also said, "a military takeover is inevitable in a not too distant

future if Demirel does not depart scene in the meantime.” (p.206)

At times, the accurate diagnosis of Turkey’s political issues by these US diplomats is impressive. The report, dated March 11, 1971, says that they do not expect a direct military coup, but “the imposition of heavy pressure” upon Sunay and Demirel, “almost making the National Security Council the de facto government.” (p.208) Another report, dated March 15, 1971, notes that just because the March 12<sup>th</sup> Coup (year) came at the moment when the JP Government was beginning to crack down in earnest on disorderly and extremist elements, suggested that “pressure form military ranks for change” was very important. (p.213)

Diplomats are also on point when they emphasized, in a report dated April 26, 1963, that the Turkish peasant is not fanatical but conservative and is not a “...serious menace to the basic reforms of Atatürk that many educated city-bred Turks are wont to picture.” (p. 47) Another report, dated April 30, 1971, touched upon the heart of the matter when it said that just because the JP Government was the focus of attacks, extremist movements “managed to obtain a sort of tacit tolerance from Turkey’s traditional military bureaucratic elite, who while decrying violence saved the sharpest censure for the JP governments’ inability to control it.” (p.176) The Turkish businessmen’s tendency “to keep a foot in more than one camp” was well noted in a report dated June 18, 1964. (p.87). The danger of overreact-

ing to the threat of communism from the JP Government was regarded as the chief threat to continuing improvement of the quality of Turkish democracy” was written in a report dated July 31 1967. (p.141) One report, dated July 26 1963, observed that “...there is considerable discrimination (towards non-Muslim minorities) of an unconscious ‘folk-habit’ nature.” (p.253)

However, there are also mistakes of facts and (what “now” appears) misjudgments. In one report, dated May 20, 1963, Tercüman newspaper is said to be successful “mainly by appealing to nations Alevi (Shiite) minority.” (p.56). One diplomat, in his June 12, 1967 Report, concludes that “...the ‘minorities’ of Istanbul have an important role to play for the next generations.” (p.266)

Those who unrealistically expect that this collection would reveal unknown groundbreaking truths or novel facts will be disappointed. Nevertheless, the collection is a good read for both the students of Turkish politics and cultural studies as well as curious amateurs. Not only does it capture the moods of some American diplomats regarding Turkey of the 60’s and 70’s, it also provides an interesting perspective and information for those who seek to find an answer to the question of whether the observation and analysis of outsiders (i.e. foreigners) can sometimes produce superior accounts.

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