Turkey’s Invitations to Nazi-Persecuted Intellectuals Circa 1933: A Bibliographic Essay on History’s Blind Spot

By Arnold Reisman*

Abstract: In 1933, Turkey set out on a crash process of reforming its legal and health care delivery systems as well as its system of higher education using refugees fleeing the Nazis. By way of formal government invitations these people were given a safe haven. For many America was out of reach because of restrictive immigration laws and widespread antisemitic hiring bias at its universities. As other opportunities availed themselves most of these eminent intellectuals came West and helped catapult America’s academe to still greater heights. This paper documents the fact that Anglophone historians are still unaware of this significant chapter of 20th century history and discusses that episode, its legacy turned epochal, and perceptions thereof in Turkey today.

This article¹ is about a little-known chapter in European Jewish history. It is also about an unknown chapter of Holocaust history, the history of science, and the history of Turkish higher education. It details some significant events that occurred in Turkish history in the 1930s and impacted the world in ways that could never have been predicted and remain immeasurable. Starting in 1933 the Republic of Turkey invited a group of central Europeans unacceptable to the Nazis: Jewish, part-Jewish, and some Aryan intellectuals, scientists, artists, and medical doctors, who were fleeing persecution in their homelands to live, work and find safe refuge within Turkish borders. Turkey wanted to restructure its educational system, as well as various medical and legal systems, thereby modernizing while Westernizing its societal infrastructure beyond what it inherited from the Ottoman Empire.¹

While Nazi Germany’s 1933 “Law for Reestablishing the Position of Civil Servants” caused the dismissal of all Jewish professors, it offered Turkey the unforeseen opportunity to transform the Darülfünun, an Ottoman institution of poor quality, into the University of Istanbul, a “lighthouse” Western-style research university, as well as supply other institutions with first class personnel.²

The luminaries invited would be able, and expected, to continue their research and to publish. “Few realize that the University of Istanbul had the highest concentration of refugee professors in a single institution anywhere in the world.”³ According to Norman Bentwich⁴ some 1200 scholars and scientists were dismissed from German institutions in 1933-1934, 650 of whom emigrated. Considering that 190 of the 650 (29%) emigrated to Turkey this is a significant percentage. Of the 190 who found their way to Turkey a small number came from Austria after the Anschluss in 1938, and one each from Czechoslovakia and France. The few who remained in Turkey are buried there. Most eventually came to the US and catapulted America’s science, humanities, and mathematics, to new heights. Some went to what is now the State of Israel. Émigré Kurt Steinitz built the first artificial kidney in Eretz Israel. Some of the older invitees returned to Germany in order to recoup their pension rights. In the process they helped de-Nazify Germany’s post-war universities. Some were elected to Rektorship positions. Economist

Fritz Neumark served two terms as post-war Rector of the University of Frankfurt.

In 1932 Albert Malche (1876-1956), a Swiss professor of pedagogy, had been invited to Turkey by the young republic’s administration to study the educational system and prepare a report recommending changes. His Rapport sur l’université d’Istanbul, submitted on May 29, 1932, was quickly implemented by the highest echelons of Turkey’s governing elite; President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), Prime Minister İsmet İnönü (1884–1973), and Minister of Education Resit Galip (1893–1934). Displaced University of Frankfurt pathologist Dr. Philipp Schwarz (1894-1977) organized the Notgemeinschaft Zur Emigration deutscher Wissenschaftler (Emergency Assistance Organization for German Scientists.) in Basel, Switzerland, for the express purpose of identifying the leading names among the displaced intellectuals in each of the disciplines that, according to Malche’s plan, Turkey needed for its development. Rather than immigration, the Turks considered this an invitation for a temporary stay for scientific, medical, and technical specialists who, after having accomplished their signed obligations, would leave the country. The German professors were aware that their task was to become superfluous as quickly as possible by transferring professorial chairs to the rising Turkish generation. Their contracts were time-limited, and pension rights excluded. Accordingly, a select group of scholars from Germany with a record of leading-edge contributions to various scientific disciplines and professions found refuge in Turkey, helping to transform its university system and the entire infrastructure of the new Turkish state. Many created and served as directors of several medical institutes. Albert Eckstein became Director of Pediatric Services at the Ministry of Health, Composer Paul Hindemith and opera impresario Carl Ebert created the Music Conservatory, a school for the performing arts as well as a symphony orchestra, an opera, and ballet company.

Turkey Declares War on the Axis
To Get San Francisco Parley Seat

By JOSEPH M. LEVY

By Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES

ANKARA, Turkey, Feb. 23—

Turkey declared war on Germany and Japan today. The Grand National Assembly voted for war unanimously after hearing a request from Foreign Secretary Hasan Saka.

The New York Times February 24, 1945
We declared war on the Axis February 23, 1945. The National Assembly voted to declare war on Germany and Japan unanimously during the historical meeting yesterday. We are party to the United Nations Declaration, we will be going to the San Francisco world order conference.

The Kemalist Cımhurıyet Daily February 24, 1945

Because Turkey was a neutral nation up to the last weeks of World War II, the émigrés served as conduits of correspondence between friends, colleagues, and relatives left behind and those in the free world. Much of this correspondence provides a personal view of life under Nazism as well as the life of the refugees.

For many of the displaced Germans during the 1930s, America was out of reach because of restrictive immigration laws and widespread antisemitic hiring biases at its universities. During the 1920s the University of Breslau faculty was comprised of a large number of Jewish professors, 25% in the Arts, 45% in Medicine and 48% in Law. The University of Berlin had 45% in Medicine alone; Gottingen had 34% in Mathematics, and Medicine respectively, 40% in the Art, 47% in Law and Konigsberg had 7% in the Arts, 14% in Law, and 25% in Medicine while Harvard, Yale, Brown, and Princeton combined had not a single Jewish faculty member up to and through the 1940s. These American Ivy League schools had each kept their faculty as Judenfrei. (Reisman, Turkey’s Modernization, p.312). During the 1930s an offer from a major American university to someone outside the country served two purposes, one of which was helping to secure a visa.

It has become customary and habitual, both in Germany and in Turkey, to designate the collective change of locale of scholars, artists, experts, researchers and technicians who were “transported” from Germany to Turkey in 1933 and the following years by words such as ‘seeking refuge’, ‘refugees’, ‘asylum seekers’. However, these words or expressions suffice to describe neither the extraordinary change in the life of these people nor Turkey’s approach to this subject...[They] do not explain the essence of this very special event.  

The Literature

Until recently this important episode of the Shoah, in which Albert Einstein (1879–1955) played a role, has scarcely been noticed by historians outside of Turkey, least of all in the English language literature. The first, fairly comprehensive account of this migration was published in German by Widmann, in 1973 and translated into Turkish in 1988 but never into English. In 1980 one of the émigré professors, economist Fritz Neumark (1900–1991), published his German-language memoirs, which were translated into Turkish in 1982 – not into English. A well documented exhibition of archival materials dealing with this migration at Berlin’s Vereins Aktives Museum resulted in a well illustrated catalogue, Haymatloz which, too, was never translated into English.

Norman Bentwich (1883-1971) was first to discuss this episode in 1936, briefly yet significantly. Referring to the Notgemeinschaft deutscher Wissenschaftler im Ausland he wrote:

The most remarkable success was with the Turkish authorities. It persuaded them to engage for the reconstructed University of Istanbul no less than 56 German scholars, including technical assistants. They were engaged mostly for five-year periods, but it is hoped that the appointments will become permanent. In the Faculty of Medicine 10 professors, in the Faculty of Science 8, in the Faculty of Law 7, in the Faculty of Philosophy 2 were appointed; and
13 younger men were appointed as lecturers. The scholars, is [sic] developing research institutes, which may give an opening for the engagement of further scholars from Germany or from those who left Germany.\textsuperscript{13}

Bentwich also published a “little book . . . written at the suggestion of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning” in 1953.\textsuperscript{14} Though much of both books are quoted and cited on other issues by historians of science and those concerned with the Holocaust, this particular episode of history has remained unnoticed. Thirty years later Stanford J. Shaw\textsuperscript{15} was the next to discuss it in English and provide biographical details about fifty-four members of this diaspora. It was almost a decade later that Frank Tachau contributed an important chapter discussing these émigrés and their multi-faceted impact on Turkish science, medicine, law, and education. He also provided statistics on the émigrés’ distribution by age, field of specialization, etc.\textsuperscript{16} Mark A. Epstein provides a good discussion of this episode. He begins his chapter: “With one notable exception [here the reference is to Shaw, \textit{Turkey and the Holocaust}] only specialists on Turkey appear to have given much thought to the fact that about 10 percent\textsuperscript{17} of the twelve thousand or so academics who lost their jobs after the Nazis came to power went to Turkey—a surprisingly high percentage given the other possible destinations.”\textsuperscript{18} In 2001 Walter Laqueur\textsuperscript{19} with Judith Tydor Baumel co-edited \textit{The Holocaust Encyclopedia}. In Barry Rubin’s chapter entitled “Turkey” three paragraphs address this episode in general terms without mentioning individuals. Recently both Emily Apter\textsuperscript{20} and Kader Konuk\textsuperscript{21} respectively wrote about Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach who according to Konuk “played a leading role in building up the Faculty for Western Languages and Literatures at Istanbul Üniversitesi and had a seminal influence on the formation of German philology, shaping the canons of both disciplines.”

Gürol Irzik and Güven Güzeldere published an interview with the widow of philosopher Hans Reichenbach.\textsuperscript{22} Harry G. Day evaluated contributions by biochemist Felix Haurowitz (1896–1987) to the development of chemistry at Indiana University.\textsuperscript{23} Ute Deichmann mentioned chemist Fritz Arndt and biochemist Felix Haurowitz as having emigrated to Turkey\textsuperscript{24} and Laura Fermi provided limited commentary on twelve of the émigrés.\textsuperscript{25} In his web-based autobiography, Arthur von Hippel (1898–2003), the father of nanotechnology, dedicated a chapter to his own tragicomic experiences in Turkey, including some anecdotes involving two colleagues—ophthalmologist Joseph Igersheimer (1879–1965) and dentist Alfred Kantorowicz (1880–1962).\textsuperscript{26} Louise S. Grinstein and Paul J. Campbell provide a good discussion of applied mathematician Hilda Geiringer (1893–1973).\textsuperscript{27} Thus far there is only one book in English that is fully dedicated to the subject at hand, my own \textit{Turkey’s Modernization}, published in 2006. After the book was published I presented some new evidence—notably, a letter from Einstein to Turkish Prime Minister İsmet İnönü (1884–1973) and İnönü’s response to Einstein which subsequently surfaced in Turkey but had not been part of the Einstein archives collection.\textsuperscript{28}
Turkey’s Invitations to Nazi-Persecuted Intellectuals Circa 1933

Letter signed by Albert Einstein to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, dated September 17, 1933, first published in Hürriyet on October 29, 2006. The hand-written Turkish annotation appearing top right ( Teklifin mevzuatı kanuniyle telefı mumkun degildir) indicates that Prime Minister İnönü transferred the letter to the Maarif Vekaleti, Ministry for National Education on October 9, 1933. The other annotations are attributable to Reşit Galip, the sitting Education Minister: "Bu teklif bugünü seriata gore kabule imkan yoktur" (this proposal is incompatible with clauses in the existing laws); and: "Bu teklif bugünü seriata göre kabule imkan yoktur" (it is impossible to accept it due to prevailing conditions). These notes, which echo in Prime Minister İsmet İnönü’s answer to Einstein, indicate that at the outset the proposal was rejected by the Ministry.

In summation, three significant German works were never translated into English; there are ten mentions in biographical notes, three paragraphs in but one encyclopedia, and two chapters in books on expanded issues. Other than the book and follow-on papers by this author and several coauthors, there are five works providing coverage for a small subset of the émigrés.

There are moreover significant published anthologies, monographs, etc, in which one would expect to find information about this subject. Unfortunately they diffuse only a deafening silence. Raul Hilberg's (790 page) magnum opus, The Destruction of the European Jews which, in 1961, prepared the ground for the field of Holocaust studies, never mentioned Turkey's role in saving so much Jewish intellectual capital.  

Moreover, “[i]n May 1991, an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars convened at the Wissenschaftskolleg [Research collegium] in Berlin to discuss the impact of forced emigration of German-speaking scholars and scientists after the Nazi takeover in 1933.” The result of that conference is the cited and referenced book. In its foreword, Donald Fleming critically reflects on the established historical paradigm, e.g., “Germany had been intellectually punished for yielding to the Nazis and America and Britain intellectually rewarded for their political and civic virtues.” The book’s (10-page, double-column, small-print) index has only one entry for Turkey. Page 10 mentions Turkey along with Palestine and
Latin America in reference to studies documenting problems encountered by émigré academics.

H.A. Strauss provides a compendium of “Archival Resources” and organizations that were set up worldwide to aid Jews persecuted by the Third Reich. While the book specifically addresses The Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, founded in 1933 in New York City, it never mentions either the Notgemeinschaft or the work of Philipp Schwarz. “Turkey” does not appear in its 21-page detailed index.

The 1948 book by S. Duggan and B. Drury, *The Rescue of Science and Learning: the Story of the Emergency Committee In Aid of Displaced Scholars* is significant in terms of what is omitted. Philipp Schwarz is never mentioned. The only acknowledgment of a displaced scholar in Turkey appears on page 49 regarding Hans Rosenberg: “He became Director of the Observatory in Istanbul, and died in that city.”

According to historian Walter Laqueur “since the 1960s a number of comprehensive [Holocaust] histories have been published in the English language.” The 1990 four-volume *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust,* “presents the history of the Holocaust topically, with approximately 1,000 entries of diverse size and scope. The encyclopedia has emerged as a central reference work for students of the subject.” Searching all the relevant key words and names in its index and browsing through the pages, nothing was found on this rather significant migration of intellectuals. Also according to Laqueur, “in The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry [Leni Yahil] has tried to integrate the scholarship of the 1970s and 1980s into a one-volume history of the Holocaust.” The book’s 800 small print pages do mention Turkey in several contexts but this life-saving migration of Europe’s eminent intellectuals is not mentioned. The online *Holocaust Encyclopedia* produced and maintained by the United States Holocaust Museum makes no mention of Turkey as a destination for Jewish intellectuals in a section entitled “Escape to Neutral Countries”. Turkey is discussed only in the unrelated “Voyage of the Struma” section. The same is true in the museum’s printed *Historical Atlas of the Holocaust.* The World Must Know: *The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,* moreover, makes no mention of this migration.

Given Walter Laqueur’s reputation as a historian of note, his statement that “[d]espite the legion of books that have appeared about Nazi Germany, no single comprehensive history of the German Jews during the war has been written,” is worth mentioning. However he follows that assertion with: “Marion A. Kaplan’s *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (1998) is the most serious contribution to date of German Jews under Nazi regime.” Saul Friedlander, in *Nazi Germany: and the Jews: The Years of Persecution* (1997), has woven together the history of the persecution through 1939 and its effect on the Jews in a masterful fashion. Read together these two books approach a comprehensive picture of the situation of German Jewry up to the outbreak of the war.” Neither book, unfortunately, provides any mention, much less discussion, of the German intellectuals’ by-invitation migration to Turkey. The same is true among “the legion of books that have appeared about Nazi Germany.” One of these was penned by the most acclaimed Holocaust historian, Yehuda Bauer. His *A History of the Holocaust* dedicates two pages to Turkey. Oddly, the discussion involves only the “Genocide of the Armenians,” while the rest of the book deals strictly with the Shoah. Although many pages are dedicated to rescue efforts nowhere is this safe haven mentioned and Bauer’s *Rethinking of the Holocaust* follows the same pattern. “To mark the centenary of Mustafa Kamal’s birth” an international symposium “on Ataturk and the modernization of Turkey …was held at the Harry S. Truman
Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in October 1981” involving “scholars from six countries.” The proceedings of that conference make no mention of this high thrust engine of Turkey’s modernization; nor does this migration with its monumental impact on Turkey’s history get honorable mention in Landau’s 2004 book on the subject.

Lucy S. Dawidowicz’s highly documented 450 page book The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945 is silent on this subject. In the literary arena, Emily Apter, “'Invention’ of Comparative Literature, Istanbul, 1933” focused on the works of émigrés Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach. She laments:

There are few traces of of the Istanbul chapter of literary history in the annals of comparative literature; there are scant references to the intellectual collaborations among émigrés colleagues and Turkish teaching assistants at the University of Istanbul in the 1930s, and there are really no full accounts of what happened to European philological pedagogy when it was transplanted to Turkey.

Nora Levin’s highly documented book (768 pages), the subject of several printings, contains extensive discussions of rescue efforts. The chapter entitled “The Struggle to Leave Europe” begins: “With the exception of the panic exodus of 1933, Jewish emigration from Germany up to the end of 1937 had been fairly well organized.” Yet its 23-page double-columned index containing many entries for rescue efforts mentions neither Turkey, Istanbul, the Notgemeinschaft Zur Emigration deutscher Wissenschaftler, nor its founder Philipp Schwarz.

All of the above omissions are also true in the case of Saul Friedlander’s encyclopedic work. In this case, however, there are some other significant omissions. The names of philosopher Hans Reichenbach, Turkologist Andreas Tietze, sinologist/sociologist Wolfram Eberhard, and the renowned theatrical producer and opera director Carl Eber, all of whom helped to make UCLA (Friedlander is a professor of History at UCLA) the great institution it is, are never mentioned.

So, in 2008 there is still ample justification for saying, “although the emigration of German scholars and writers to other European countries and particularly to the United States has been fairly extensively studied, the long-term sojourn of many noted academics, artists, and politicians in Turkey has received scant critical attention.”

What Was the Intellectual Caliber of Those Turkey Saved for Posterity?

The word “philosophy” denotes a fairly well defined and established discipline. It also applies to a paradigm in other bodies of knowledge such as “philosophy of science,” “philosophy of economics,” and even the “philosophy of art.” Thus a change of an established paradigm in any field of knowledge is tantamount to a change in the philosophic approach within and across that field. It is well known that paradigm shifts in any discipline are not established easily. Philosopher of science Karl Popper claims that it takes a revolution. Nobelist Max Planck (1858 - 1947) stated: “A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.”

Arguably, individuals offering new paradigms or paradigm shifts can be thought of as philosophic innovators or reformers in that field. According to Albert Einstein, "Great spirits have always found violent opposition from mediocrities. The latter cannot understand it when a man does not thoughtlessly submit to hereditary prejudices.
but honestly and courageously uses his intelligence.\textsuperscript{56}

Given the well documented “natural drift” toward academization or narrowing of disciplines and professions\textsuperscript{57} and given the difficulty of such innovation being appreciated by the respective establishments, it is mind-boggling to note the number of innovators—breadth expanders/cross disciplinary bridge builders—applied scientists among those invited during the 1930s by the Turkish government to help create its infrastructure.

Among individuals who easily\textsuperscript{58} so qualify are:

- Archeologists Benno Landsberger (1890 - 1968) and Hans Güterbock (1908-2000).
- Zoologist Kurt Kosswig (1903-1982).
- Architects Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897 – 2000), and Bruno Taut (1880-1938).
- City planner and first mayor of post war Berlin Ernst Reuter (1889–1953).

The Albert Einstein archives at Princeton and the Hebrew University yield one indication of the caliber of the people involved. The fact that Einstein personally knew, and maintained a personal correspondence with, at least sixteen of the émigrés to Turkey speaks to the level of their intellects. Moreover, quite a few were at all times in personal correspondence with one or more of over a dozen Nobel laureates because they had been colleagues in both the renowned Vienna Circle and the Berlin Circle prior to 1933. Although none of the émigrés ever achieved Nobel laureate fame, many had direct working relationships with those who did. Some examples\textsuperscript{59} are: Hanz Reichenbach worked with Albert Einstein, Neils Bohr, Max Planck, Max Born, and Bertrand Russell; Felix Haurowitz with Linus Pauling; E. Finlay Freundlich with Albert Einstein; Max von Laue and Erwin Schroedinger; Richard von Mises with Neils Bohr and Albert Einstein; Benno Landsberger, and Hans Güterbock were Enrico Fermi’s colleagues and friends at the University of Chicago; Philipp Schwarz was instrumental in bringing James Frank and Max Born to Turkey as consultants; Wilhelm Liepmann corresponded with Einstein; and, of course, von Hippel was James Frank’s son-in-law and had worked with Neils Bohr in Denmark. According to Albert Einstein’s hand-written correspondence, one of the émigrés, E. Finlay...
Freundlich, was the first to show that the relativity theory was borne out by empirical observations. Nobelist Enrico Fermi’s wife, Laura, a prolific writer about the history of science, mentions no fewer than twelve of the émigrés by name in her Illustrious Immigrants that had been published in 1968 by the prestigious University of Chicago Press.

Given the scientific eminence of some of the émigrés it is interesting to note that with the exception of Laura Fermi, this episode in Jewish history is not found in histories and encyclopedias of science, nor of scholarship, except for some entries placed there by this author in the much maligned but often referred to Wikipedia.

Although without documenting it, Mark E. Epstein recognized this blind spot in 1998. He offered the following explanations:

1. This part of history fell behind what I perceive as a curtain of prejudice toward Turks and perhaps more broadly toward Muslims.

2. [A] Muslim country, Turkey was simply beyond the comfortable reach of Europe-oriented scholarship. For the most part, we do see East through the historical eyes of the Europeans, hence as an infidel, threatening, morally corrupt place.

3. Turkish enlightened self-interest and a measure of generosity toward individual Jews and German non-Jews seems to be viewed by many non-Islamicists and non-Turkologists as curious exceptions within a larger picture.

4. These motivations and actions are seen as crass and self-serving, despite the fact that the Turkish record is far more admirable than most [countries].

5. Since Turkey remains a relatively distant place, on the other side of an historical divide between Christianity and Islam, it receives short shrift at best."

Stanford Shaw suggested that “Turkey’s role in helping European Jews during the Holocaust has been largely ignored or deprecated in studies and conferences on the subject, if for no other reason than that of the number of individuals involved.” The disinclination of some Askenazi Jews today, along with a number of non-Jewish groups who for their own reasons wish to suppress all mention and recognition of Turkey’s important role in assisting Jews during the Holocaust ...is a cause to regret.”

The continuing discovery of historical compendia that exclude any mention of this fascinating, and significant, historical episode which impacted several countries, is astounding. Here are three somewhat paraphrased responses from knowledgeable people in this area who were surveyed on this subject by this author:

- This piece of history is a blind spot, I guess, because it will otherwise haunt the “barbaric Turk” image, which has very much been of help, and is still in use to create, fuel and mobilize the "modernistic other.”

- I think the reason for the blind spot is unfortunately the perception of Turkey in Europe, which recent developments regarding the European Union show have not changed very much.

- A correspondent who chose to remain anonymous said: “Clearly your research..."
has highlighted an important neglected period in history. Ignorance of it may indeed be part of suspicion towards the Islamic world (despite Turkey’s secular government).

Arguably one could add to these explanations the fact that Holocaust scholarship has been overwhelmingly about Ashkenazi (East and Central European Jews’) experience and Jewish writers on the subject tend to be Ashkenazi. Turkish Jewry, on the other hand, has been predominantly Sephardi. Notwithstanding the fact that this historical episode involved intellectuals at the very pinnacle of their disciplines with many having Ashkenazi lineage, the locale was Turkey, a Muslim country, and the association was made with the Sephardi community. One could also argue that many of the émigrés never looked at themselves as Jews. Mathematician Richard von Mises and radiologic physicist Friedrich Dessauer98 converted to Catholicism; others had their children baptized and, although some have expressed gratitude to Turkey for having been saved from extermination, others felt a sense of shame. They were ashamed because they were brilliant leaders in their respective fields, known all over the world for their contributions to knowledge. Yet when it came to saving their lives, the “civilized” world wanted no more Jews and a poor underdeveloped Muslim country invited them and their families.

The latter is evidenced in the fact that only a few of the émigrés have ever mentioned that they spent time in Turkey. Post-war PhD students at America’s best universities were astounded to learn, when being interviewed by this author, that their beloved mentors had never said anything about their years in Turkish exile.

The majority of Holocaust/genocide historians are squarely behind the Armenians’ side of the dispute and are uninterested in any acts on the part of Turkey which are favorable to that country’s history. And, Turkey is not within the radar screen seen by historians of science and of technology. All of these explanations are plausible but the list, it appears, is still not complete.

Memories of the émigré professors and appreciation for their contributions to Turkey’s modernization linger on in and among educated Turks at home and abroad. This topic is of particular relevance set against the current backdrop of Turkey’s tug of war; her sustained efforts to enter the European Union while struggling to remain a secular state within a democratic framework and having a mostly traditional Islamic population with hostile theocracies as neighbors. Recently several symposia were devoted to keeping the memories alive. One conference organized by the Turkish Academy of Science (TÜBA) addressed “The Evolution of the Concept of University in Turkey (1861-1961)” (November 18, 2006). At the meeting, the “university” concept during a 100-year time span was discussed with focus on Atatürk’s university reforms, the realization of which was attributed to the émigrés from Germany. On April 7, 2006, the University of Istanbul conducted a symposium on the 1933 University Reform. The conference opened with a welcoming speech by Dr. Mustafa Kaçar, Dean of the Çapa Medical Faculty, who reiterated that “Turkey owes a great debt to the émigrés. They did great work here, although some jealous colleagues tried to denigrate them.” He recounted a story about the émigré Ernst E. Hirsch, which was told by Kamran İnan, a former minister of foreign affairs, in his memoirs.

“When Kamran İnan was at the Political Sciences Faculty of Ankara University, he was a Hirsch student. One day Hirsch asked him whether he was interested in politics. İnan, who was a very good student, replied that he was interested in academic subjects only. Upon this Hirsch said: ‘Once we did the same thing. We were interested in academic work only. We were wrong. Lucky for us that a
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Reiner Möckelmann (b. 1941), Germany’s recently retired Consul General in Istanbul, organized a symposium at the Consulate on November 29, 2005, focusing on contributions to Turkey’s legal system by the émigré contingent of legal scholars.

Recently Turkish media published a number of articles on the larger subject of the émigré professors. On the front page of Hürriyet, a high-circulation, Turkish daily, on October 29, 2006, the Republic’s 83rd anniversary. The headline by Murat Bardakçı read: “A Request from the Great Genius to the Young Republic.” The article concerned Einstein’s appeal to İsmet İnönü to accept 40 German intellectuals who are ready to come and work for one year at no pay, and then juxtaposed Turkey’s current body politic and its preoccupations with those prevalent during the early ideological Republican years:

Now, here is the difference between the Turkey of the time when the Republican regime was only 10 years old and the Turkish Republic now aged 83. The first one is a young state with great promise for the future from which Einstein requests jobs for his friends; the other is where the daily agenda is shaped only by discussions about parks restricted to women, and wearing of the “cübbe” [a loose kimono-like garment originally worn only occasionally] by sect members, or whether shaking women’s hand is sinful or not...

This article rekindled renewed interest in the 1933 émigrés. Within a week of the Bardakçı article, Melih Aşık published an article in Milliyet, another mass-circulation newspaper, which compared the attention given by Turkish media to the Einstein letter with the ignorance of this episode outside of Turkey.

An article by Ilhan Selçuk, December 19, 2006, also appearing in the Cumhuriyet was titled “Is the harem going up to Çankaya?” Selçuk discussed the contributions made to Turkish civil law by Andreas B. Schwarz.

This discussion was continued in an article published in yet another large circulation Turkish daily.

The article states that in 1933 about 50 scientists, close to 1000 German (Jews) in total, began taking refuge in Turkey. Mustafa Kemal [Ataturk] was in the process of having the “University Reform” implemented. In rebuttal to those who think that “all Mustafa Kemal accomplished was of native origin,” the reform was prepared by Swiss Professor Malche. Darülfünun was abolished, along with some of its teachers, and Istanbul University was founded. Refugees such as Neumark, Hirsch, and Hindemith established faculties and made laws. They trained great numbers of good students. This was “a wonderful country where the Western plague of fascism had not penetrated.”

It can be rightfully stated that the émigré professors first introduced Western law as a university level curriculum in Turkey, writing the necessary textbooks. Some of the German professors, like Hirsch, received Turkish citizenship as an expression of gratitude by the Turkish government. Honorary doctoral degrees were later bestowed upon several others.

Concluding Remarks

Given that almost every intellectual discipline was represented in this migration and the representatives were all at the intellectual pinnacle among their peers worldwide, it is a glaring omission that Anglophone historians have overlooked this historic epoch.

Without a doubt, all of the émigrés had made major contributions to knowledge in their respective fields prior to being exiled. Some
like Reichenbach, Auerbach, Von Mises, Rüstow, and Röpke, made contributions to knowledge while in Turkey and all continued to be paradigm shifters after leaving Turkey.

The Turkish nation, including members of its diaspora, remember and continue to acknowledge the émigrés’ impact on Turkish society. There is a plethora of writings documenting the gratitude still felt for the émigrés’ contributions.\(^7\) There are also a few memoirs written by the émigrés themselves and by their progeny who were old enough at the time to remember.\(^7\)

There are legions of graduate students, past and present, who read books and papers authored by the émigrés. Those who later became professors taught and are teaching future generations, still using materials the émigrés created, as is the case with the *Mimesis* that Erich Auerbach wrote while in Turkey, the younger generation being largely ignorant until now that had it not been for Turkey these materials would not exist.

Lastly, this was not the first time that Turkey had invited Jewish intellectuals being expelled by governments in their homelands. In 1492, when the king of Spain forced all Jews who did not convert to Christianity to leave, Sultan Beyazid II welcomed them with open arms. The sultan is supposed to have said "the king of Spain's loss is my gain." That migration brought the first printing press to the Ottoman Empire as well as personal physicians who served the court for several generations.\(^7\)

In this case the Nazis’ plans to rid themselves of Jews, beginning with intellectuals with Jewish roots or spouses, became a windfall for Atatürk’s determination to modernize Turkey. The select group of Germans and later Austrians with a record of leading-edge contributions to their respective disciplines came to Turkey to transform Turkey’s system of higher education and the new Turkish state’s entire infrastructure, with the Reichstag’s understanding. Occurring before the activation of death camps, this arrangement, served the Nazis’ aim of making their universities, professions, humanities, and their arts *Judenrein*, cleansed of Jewish influence and free from intelligentsia opposed to fascism. Because the Turks needed the help, Germany could use this situation as an exploitable chit on issues of Turkey’s neutrality during wartime. Thus, the national self-serving policies of two disparate governments served humanity’s ends during the darkest years of the 20th century.

**About the Author**

*Arnold Reisman received his BS, MS and PhD degrees in engineering from UCLA. After 27 years as professor of operations research at CWRU, Reisman retired in 1994. He is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. His most recent book is Turkey’s Modernization: Refugees from Nazism and Atatürk's Vision. Two other books on Turkey are due out in late 2008.*

**NOTES**

1 This article was motivated by research done for Arnold Reisman, *Turkey’s Modernization: Refugees from Nazism and Atatürk's Vision* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishers, 2006). Subsequent references to this work are to be found in the text.

2 The Istanbul *Darülfünun* was abolished by the University Reform Law No. 2252 passed on May 31, 1933, and Istanbul University was founded on August 1, 1933. 157 of the 240 professors of the Darülfünun were relieved of their duties and were retired.


4 Norman Bentwich, *The Rescue and Achievement of Refugee Scholars: The Story of Displaced Scholars and Scientists, 1933-


Unfortunately, the “twelve thousand” number must be in error. Other places in Epstein, A Lucky Few (e.g., p. 540) it is shown to be “twelve hundred.” Other sources corroborate the lower figure, making ten percent closer to the mark, inasmuch as the best count of the émigré professors number is 190.


11 Haymatloz, Schriftenreihe des Vereins Aktives Museum (Berlin: 2000), volume 8. The word haymatloz is a Turkish transliteration of the German heimatlos.


13 Published in 1936, this was a prophetic statement indeed. Ultimately the head count exceeded 190, with many coming from Austria after the 1938 Anschluss and at least one each from Czechoslovakia and occupied France.


16 P. Schwarz, Notgemeinschaft Zur Emigration deutscher Wissenschaftler nach 1933 in die Türkei (Marburg: Metropolis-Verlag, 1995).


18 Harvard had two. Neither were at Harvard College and both were hired during the 1920s prior to James B. Conant’s becoming president in 1932. See Reisman, Turkey’s Modernization, p. 312.


22 Haymatloz, Schriftenreihe des Vereins Aktives Museum (Berlin: 2000), volume 8. The word haymatloz is a Turkish transliteration of the German heimatlos.


44. Ibid., pp. 307-31 and 338-56.


Turkey’s Invitations to Nazi-Persecuted Intellectuals Circa 1933


54 History shows that only a "revolution" will redirect the course of many academic disciplines. T. Kuhn, Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).


58 One could argue that most if not all of the 190 invitees were paradigm shifters. They were handpicked by their peers in the first place and selected by the Turkish government’s most senior ministers from a larger list provided. It was this author’s judgment call based on the accumulated evidence as to who should be included in this paper. Having said that it should be noted, if but parenthetically, that a recent statistical analysis of all invitees and the family they brought with them shows the incidence of familial linkages to be higher than would have been expected had the choices been made strictly on merit from a random pool of candidates. See B. H. Küçük and A. Reisman, “Family Connectivity of Refugees from Nazism (1933-1945) Who Were Invited to Help Westernize Turkey’s Higher Education: A Statistical Analysis,” International Migration (2007).


60 Ibid., p. 468.


62 Epstein, A Lucky Few, pp. 536, 537.

63 The late Stanford Shaw an eminent Ottoman historian, who was Jewish, has been somewhat vilified for being among that school of historians who question whether the loss of over a million Armenian lives during WWI and the ensuing war of independence was due to a deliberate genocide. Moreover, in his Turkey and the Holocaust he cites the number of Jews saved by Turkey during WWII to have been 100,000. This author has not been able to find any source to substantiate this number. Most estimates fall between 16,000 and 20,000. See Reisman, Turkey’s Modernization, p. 511.

64 Shaw, Turkey and the Holocaust, p. xi.

65 Ibid., p. xiii.

66 Cimen Gunay-Erkol, PhD Candidate, Universiteit Leiden, TCMO Turkish Studies.

67 Leyla Neyzi, Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabanci University, Istanbul, Turkey.


in der Turkei ab 1933. Generalkonsulat der Bundesrepublik Deutchland in Istanbul.


72 See M. Bardakçı, “A Request From the Great Genius to the Young Republic,” Hürriyet, October 29, 2006.

73 The location in Ankara of the official president’s residence is called Çankaya. “To go up” is used when talking about going there since it is on top of a hill in otherwise flat Ankara, aside from the Citadel. “Çankaya” in Turkish means more than that, since it is where most reform decisions were made by Atatürk and his friends. For example, there is a phrase “the Çankaya spirit,” meaning progressive thought. Neumark also refers to “getting to understand the spirit of Ankara” in his memoirs (p. 170). Incidentally, the building was designed by Viennese architect Clemens Holzmeister (1886-1983), who was in Turkish exile from 1938 to 1954, at which time he returned to Austria.


76 Most of these are discussed or fully captured in Reisman, Turkey’s Modernization.

77 See Reisman, Turkey’s Modernization, pp. 9, 12, 440 and 484.