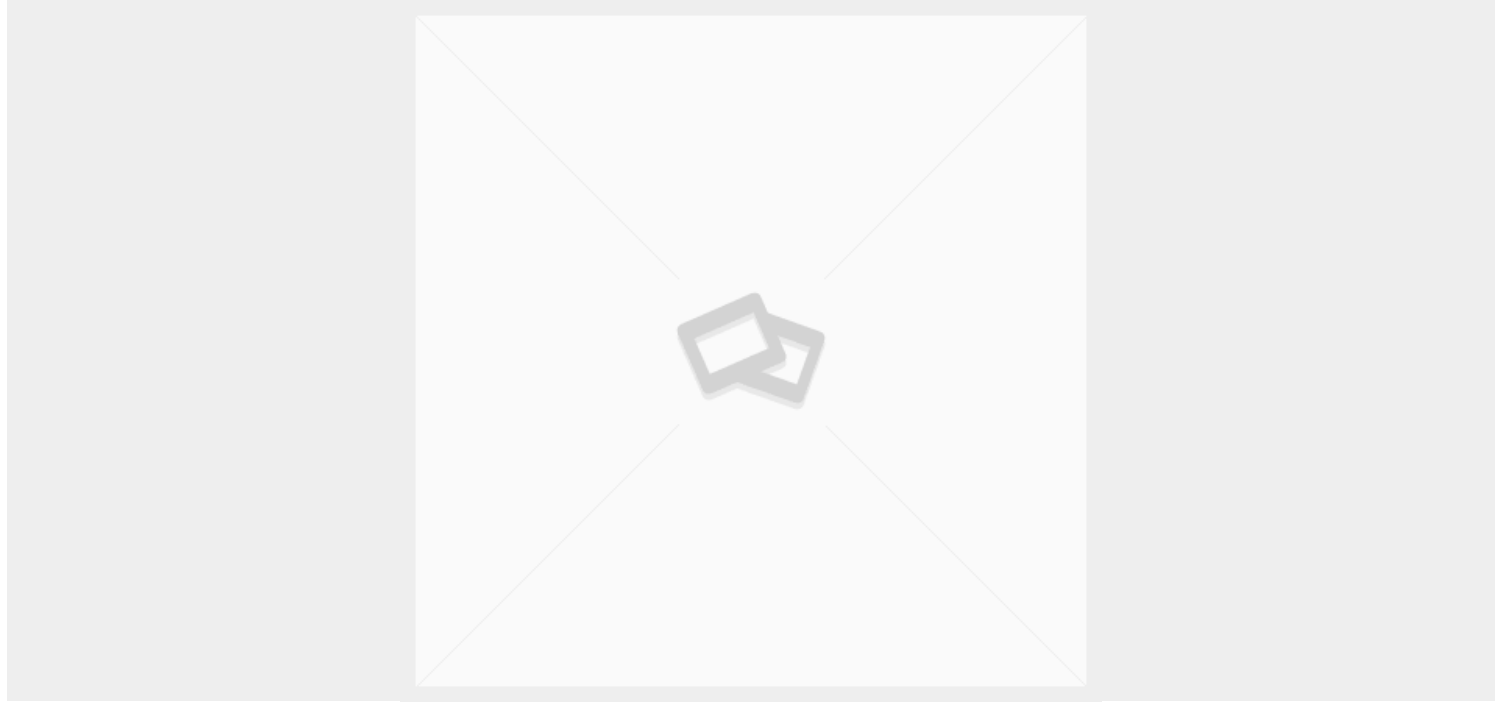


GERMAN SCHOLAR EXPOSES TURKISH PROPAGANDA ABOUT JEWS

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By Harut Sassounian, Publisher, The California Courier, 5 June 2009

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Turkey's Jewish leaders obediently carried out the dictates of the Turkish government in order to assure the safety of their community and to safeguard their own business interests.

Very little research has been done, however, on the true conditions of the Jewish community in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. German scholar Corry Guttstadt recently filled that gap by publishing a comprehensive study of 520 pages on Turkey's reprehensible actions during the Holocaust. The book's title in German is: "Die Türkei, die Juden und der Holocaust" (Turkey, the Jews and the Holocaust). Based on archival materials located in several European countries, she was able to document the tragic fate of Turkish Jewry during the Holocaust.

In an interview conducted by Sonja Galler and posted on www.Qantara.de, Guttstadt explains why the Jewish community in Turkey dwindled from 150,000 strong during World War I to only 20,000 at the present time.

"To portray the Ottoman Empire as a 'multicultural paradise' is absurd and ahistorical," Guttstadt says. "As non-Muslims, the Jews were subject to countless constraints. Like the Christians, they had to pay a poll tax and were obliged to behave in a submissive manner towards Muslims."

Having witnessed the genocide of the Armenian people, Jews were terrified that they might suffer the same fate. To ensure their safety and survival, Jews did everything possible, including conversion to Islam, to prove that they were loyal Turkish subjects.

"Most Jews initially regarded themselves as allies of the Kemalist movement and looked to the new Republic with largely positive expectations," Guttstadt explains. "These hopes were quickly dashed because despite their attempt to adapt and their declarations of loyalty, the Jews quickly became a target for the rigid nationalism of the young Republic. One of the defining policies of the young Republic was the 'Turkification' of state, economy, and society," Guttstadt says. As a result, Jews

were "successively driven out of a number of professions and economic sectors. This prompted many Jews to emigrate" from Turkey.

In the period between the two world wars, there was increasing intolerance in Turkey against Jews and other minorities. According to Guttstadt, "Anti-Semitic tracts like the 'Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion' reached Turkey and were translated into Turkish in the 1930's. Following a visit to Germany, Cevat Rifat Atilhan, who could be described as the father of Islamic anti-Semitism in Turkey, started publishing the anti-Semitic newspaper 'Milli Inkilap' (National Revolution) in Istanbul, which contained anti-Semitic caricatures that had been lifted directly out of the Nazi newspaper, 'Der Sturmer.' Both the 'Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion' and 'Mein Kampf' have gone through umpteen new editions to this day. Nationalist measures that affected not only Jews, but also Kurds, Armenians, and Greeks, included forced settlement, the so-called 'wealth tax' -- which led to the confiscation of assets of those who were not in a position to pay the arbitrarily fixed and frequently astronomical sums they were required to pay -- and forced labor in camps in eastern Anatolia."

Prior to World War II, close to 30,000 Turkish Jews fled to Europe to escape unfair and sometimes brutal treatment at home. Little did they know that an even more tragic fate awaited them. In 1942, Nazi Germany asked Ankara to remove its Jewish citizens from territories occupied by the German Reich, so they would not be rounded up along with the rest of European Jewry. Ankara, however, refused to allow their return by revoking their Turkish citizenship. As a result, several thousand Turkish Jews perished after being dispatched to German concentration camps.

Guttstadt also exposes the oft-repeated lie that Turkey provided a safe haven to many European Jews during the Holocaust. She states that some Turkish consuls in European countries, who intervened to obtain the release of incarcerated Turkish Jews, did not always do so "for purely humanitarian reasons," but "to line their pockets."

Corry Guttstadt's revealing book should be translated and published in several major languages in order to expose the Turkish government's racist and criminally negligent policies vis-à-vis its Jewish citizens during the Holocaust.

