OUR SOPHISTICATED FASCISTS

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By Orhan Kemal Cengiz, Today's Zaman, 21 July 2010
It is a well-known fact that Talat Pasha was quite talented in mathematics and statistics. In 1915 he sent ciphered telegrams to every corner of Anatolia orchestrating the deportation of Armenians.

He was not only deporting Armenians to the deserts of Syria, but also relocating Muslims to the areas the Armenians left. He knew not only the number of Armenians deported, but also their professions and skills, how many Armenian carpenters, bakers, vinedressers, farmers and so on lived in each town and village. After evacuating a town or village he would try to create an identical population in its place. If, for example, there were three bakers in the Armenian population who were deported, then he would send three Muslim bakers to this region who had immigrated from the Balkans to Turkey.

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Talat Pasha and his supporters in the massacre and deportation of Armenians were well-educated people, speaking a couple of foreign languages, quite secular and had very “modern” lifestyles.

When I think of these Unionists who prepared the architecture of modern Turkey, the image of a Nazi officer who sent Jews to gas chambers by day and played Bach quite enthusiastically on a piano by night comes before my eyes. There are so many parallels between Nazis and our Unionists. Both of them were modern, secular, positivist, progressive and “scientific.”

Actually, our new republic was established based on these values and beliefs in 1923. It also, of course, created its own elite who owed their wealth to the sins committed by the Unionists. Nation building based on the exclusion of non-Muslims on the one hand, and the “civilization” project of the republic on the other created a unique political atmosphere and actors in Turkey. Without knowing this background you cannot understand what is really going on in Turkey today.

I think a perfect example of these Turkish elites is the people who created and directed the Hürriyet daily newspaper, which daily uses the famous motto “Turkey belongs to Turks” beneath its logo.

Hürriyet's founders and directors were also quite modern, secular and educated people like Talat Pasha, who first uttered this motto, "Turkey belongs to Turks."

All these thoughts went through my mind as I read the column of Fatih Altaylı, editor-in-chief of Haber Türk.
Altaylı was explaining the Hürriyet daily's contribution to the 1995 Kardak Island crisis between Greece and Turkey. We have now learned from Altaylı that in the year of the crisis Hürriyet had sent a correspondent to this tiny island to take down the Greek flag and to plant a Turkish flag in its place. And the other day, the photo of this flag was used in a headline story in Hürriyet. Altaylı also told us how Hürriyet's editor-in-chief defended this provocative news story by saying that they had pursued the same policy when covering news in Cyprus.

Actually, Hürriyet and its writers' provocative pieces are not limited to sabotaging Turkey's relations with Greece and creating a crisis in Cyprus. Hürriyet has always whitewashed the deep state and its crimes. Today it is the most talented advocate of the Ergenekon gang. Their campaign sent Hrant Dink to court and made him a target for ultranationalists. During its long life Hürriyet has always been a leading figure in launching smear campaigns against intellectuals and artists who in one way or another crossed the line drawn by the deep state, from Nazım Hikmet to Ahmet Kaya, from Taner Akçam to Osman Can.

Recently, Ayşe Hür, from the Taraf daily newspaper, explained Hürriyet's role in the chain of events leading up to the Sept. 6-7, 1955, pogroms in Istanbul, which had long-lasting and devastating effects on Turkey's non-Muslim population. Hür states: "What was most effective in contributing to the events of Sept. 6-7 were the provocative articles written by journalists on Turkey's Greek population after the Cyprus issue emerged. In these pieces, spearheaded by the Hürriyet and Yeni Sabah newspapers, both the Istanbul Fener Greek Patriarchate and its leader Patriarch Athinagoras were criticized for remaining silent in the face of the Greek operation that was unfolding with Makarios III at the helm. Newspapers were pointing the finger at the patriarch, stressing that Fener represented the whole of the Orthodox world and that with his ecumenical status he could interfere in Makarios' actions, and so, remaining silent meant condoning Makarios."

As a result of these provocations 4,124 houses, 1,004 businesses, 73 churches and many other buildings belonging to non-Muslims were destroyed. Dozens of people were killed, 300 wounded and many women were raped.

Hürriyet not only bears the words of Talat Pasha on its front page, but keeps his spirit alive. They are the founders and owners of modern Turkey. They are the smart, educated and sophisticated people of Turkey. They are progressive, scientific, secular and modern. They are the descendants of Talat Pasha. Until Turkey has an open confrontation with Talat Pasha's sins, we will not be able to understand exactly how these people have ruled this country all these years. Until then, neither will we understand why Turkey's modern, secular elites are so anti-democratically fighting against

minorities and pluralism, nor why they give support to an authoritarian regime in Turkey. To understand our sophisticated fascists and the real nature of the political regime, we have to go to the very foundations.