

Another Enemy: The *Dönmes* or Crypto-Jews¹

[For those unfamiliar with modern Turkish orthography: apart from the unlauded vowels found in Turkish, ö and ü, which are pronounced like their German equivalents, there are several other letters pronounced differently than their English equivalents: ‘c’ is pronounced like a hard ‘j’ (as in ‘jump’), ‘ç’ is pronounced like the English ‘ch’ (as in ‘church’), ‘ğ’ merely extends the vowel preceding it, while the undotted ‘i’ is darker and more glottal than the English ‘i’ (as in the unwritten ‘i’ sound in trrrr), and the Turkish dotted ‘i’ is pronounced like the English long ‘e’ (as in ‘free’). Thus the word ‘*Bıçakçioğlu*’ would be pronounced: b’chack-chih-owe-loo]

An ‘enemy’ frequently encountered in the anti-Semitic rhetoric that occupies a significant place in the intellectual world of Turkey’s right is the crypto-Jewish community known as the *Dönmes*.² The main reason that they are seen as ‘enemies’ is the opinion, widespread among the Turkish public, that converts to Islam never truly accept the religion of Islam and continue to practice their Christianity or Judaism in secret. This is reflected in the popular saying ‘*Dönmes (religious converts) never change.*’ (*‘Dönmeler aslında dönmez’*).³ But although this view is held towards converts in general, when the term *dönme* is used in rightist parlance, it appears, with few exceptions, not in reference to Greek, Armenian or even Jewish converts to Islam, but more specifically to the followers of the 17th century Jewish messianic claimant Sabbatai Sevi and their descendants. Following Sevi’s lead, many of his adherents outwardly converted to Islam, while continuing to observe the heterodox Judaic practices instituted by their leader.

Why the Dönmes are hated in Turkey

The *Dönmes* have always been the scapegoat of the Turkish right (both Islamist and nationalist), who have considered them as the main source of all the problems that have preoccupied rightist intellectuals. This wide range of problems consists of the advance of Communism in Turkey, the abolition of the Caliphate and the establishment of the Republic in 1923, the ‘degeneration’ of the Turkish society, etc. Recently we have seen that hating the *Dönmes* is no longer the exclusive domain of the Right, and that they have been joined by Kurdish nationalists and Armenians. In this article I will attempt to analyze the rhetoric of these various parties and thereby discover the reasons for this hatred.

¹. A translation of the article ‘Bir Diğer Düşman: Dönmeler’ from the author’s book of collected articles on Turkish Jewry, *Musa’nın Evlatları Cumhuriyet’in Yurttaşları* (‘Children of Moses, Citizens of the Republic’) (Istanbul 2001), pp. 411-46.

². [translator’s note: In Turkish, the word *dönme* can act as a gerund or as a proper noun. In the latter case, it can mean ‘traitor’ or ‘religious convert’, as well as specifically refer to the group of crypto-Jewish converts discussed in this article. As such, there seems to be no set grammatical rule in Turkish for when and when not to capitalize it. Furthermore, even in this article the term is used in a variety of ways, something that the reader will quickly realize. As an attempt at greater clarity, I have attempted to capitalize the word *only* when it refers to the specific group of Salonican *Dönmes*, who are the main subject of this article. As for direct quotations, I have let them stand as they were written.

Additionally, because this article was written for a Turkish-speaking audience, there are numerous references to persons, places and publications that are liable to be unfamiliar to non-Turks. I have therefore, with the author’s permission, taken the liberty of adding explanatory footnotes. Furthermore, due both to the nature of Turkish and the self-evident meaning for the Turkish reader of many of the fleeting references found in the original, I have also made the occasional expansion and expounding of the original text. The latter are all enclosed in brackets, e.g., ‘[...]’.

³. Taha Parla, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Kültürün Resmî Kaynakları, Vol. III: Kemalist Tek Parti İdeolojisi ve CHP’nin Altı Ok’u* (Istanbul 1995), pp. 209.

The Place of the Dönmes in the Turkish World View

As a group, the Dönmes have long been a preoccupation of the Turkish right, and for this reason the terms ‘Salonican’ (*Selânikli*), ‘Dönme,’ and ‘Salonican Dönme’ have become a firmly embedded part of Turkish popular [and] political culture. In addition to Kurdish nationalism, which has seen a revival in recent years, Kurdish writers have also increasingly concerned themselves with the Dönmes.

The Rightist World View

The Islamists

Within Islamist and nationalist thought [in Turkey] the Dönmes are seen to represent a culture that is implacably hostile to [Turkish] nationalist, traditional and conservative values. The reason for this is that, in addition to the [modern and Western] education which they give their children, they are seen to lead Western, which is to say ‘cosmopolitan’ lifestyles. The right thus views they Dönmes as representatives of an ideological worldview that has introduced secularism and a Western way of life [into Turkey], and even imposed such a lifestyle on the more conservative sectors of the population, thereby leading to an erosion of national values and culture.

Salonica was the city in which the majority of Dönmes lived before the Republican era. It was also a city in which, at the beginning of the 20th century, Jews formed a majority of the population, and was therefore referred to by the latter as the ‘Jerusalem of the Balkans’. The second largest community was that of the Dönmes.⁴ Salonica was [also] a cosmopolitan city in which the majority and Western culture reigned supreme.

However, the existence of the Dönme community in Salonica in former times is not the only reason that the mere mention of Salonica calls to mind such negative associations among the Turkish right. There is a more basic reason that is both historical and political in nature. In the latter’s view, Salonica is the city which paved the way for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the place where first arose the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), among whose leading cadres were found both Jews and Dönmes; the city to which the ‘Great Ruler’⁵ was exiled after being deposed by the Committee; and the city in which a new leader was born (Mustafa Kemal ‘Atatürk’), one who would in the future do away with the Caliphate and establish the [Turkish] Republic.

Yet another reason for this enmity against the Dönmes is their [perceived] unreliability. Because they outwardly appear Muslim, but secretly continue to carry out Jewish religious ritual, they are perceived as a cunning lot, never to be fully trusted, and as a fifth column for the Jews, a secret enemy who will ‘conquer the city from within’.

And there are important political reasons for this negative image. With the advent of the era of multi-party democracy that commenced with the end of World War II, the Islamic movement, which had been largely suppressed during the single-party, or ‘First Republican’

⁴. For an overview of the Dönme community of Salonica, see François Georgeon, ‘Selanik musulmane et deunmè’ in Gilles Veinstein, ed. *Salonique, 1850-1918: La “ville des Juifs” et le Réveil des Balkans* (Paris 1992), pp. 105-118; M. Danon, ‘Une Secte Judéo-Musulmane en Turquie’, in *Actes du 10ème Congrès International des Orientalistes*, (Paris 1897); Elçin Macar, ‘Selanik dönmelerinin yaşayan simgesi Yeni Cami’, *Tarih ve Toplum*, (Aralık/December, 1997), pp. 28-29; Marc Baer, ‘Selanik dönmelerinin camisi ortak bir geçmişin tek yadigârı’, *Tarih ve Toplum* (Aralık/December, 1997), pp. 30-34.

⁵. ‘Ulu Hakan’, referring to the last significant Ottoman Sultan, Abdülhamid II (reigned 1877-1909).

period, now revived through the activities of [such] institutions as the Islamic Democratic Party (İDP, *İslam Demokrat Partisi*),⁶ among whose founders was Cevat Rifat Atilhan, The Great East Committee (*Büyük Doğu Cemiyeti*) established by Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, and the Association of Turkish Nationalists (*Türk Milliyetçiler Derneği*). The movement was to exert a significant influence within Turkish society through the writings of Kısakürek, Atilhan, Eşref Edip [Fergan]⁷ and Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti, who all contributed in one way or another to the Islamic publications of the period, such as the İDP organ *Büyük Cihad* ('The Great Struggle'), the Great East Committee's newspaper of the same name (*Büyük Doğu*), and the journals *Hür Adam* ('The Free Man'), *Sebilürreşad* ('The Path of the Rightly-Guided') and *Serdengeçti*. During this same period the owner of the newspaper *Vatan* and staunch secularist Ahmet Emin Yalman provoked a strong reaction from the Islamic sector through his harsh and uncompromising editorials against the Islamists, and against Kısakürek in particular. For their part, the Islamists believed that what drove Yalman to take such an ardently secularist stance in his articles was the spiritual condition peculiar to Yalman's Dönme identity, whereby he had adopted secularism and Kemalism as a religion.⁸ Indeed, in the heated rhetoric that passed between Yalman and the Islamist camp, the latter constantly reiterated the fact that Yalman was a Dönme. An indication of why they placed so much importance on Yalman and his origins can be derived from the memoirs of Hüseyin Üzmez, a young Turkish man who assaulted Yalman with a pistol in Malatya in 1952: 'Yalman was the main representative of those powers which run Turkey from behind the scenes. In the words my mentor, Professor Orhan Türkdoğan, '[h]e was an agent of the American White International for Turkey.' In order to know Yalman, it was first necessary to know of his dönme-ism.'⁹ Üzmez's admonition regarding Yalman's identity is a direct expression [of the belief, common on the right,] that Sabbataeanism actually overlaps with Kemalism and secularism. Yalman's uncompromising line on Kemalism and secularism was, for the right, a symbol of his Sabbataeanism. For the Islamist sector, Yalman was, in Üzmez's words, 'an agent of the system,' that is, of Kemalism and secularism.¹⁰

The debates and polemic surrounding Yalman and his origins, which began in the early 1950s, continued after his death, until it shifted, in the 1970s, to the person of Abdi İpekçi, the editor of the leading Turkish daily *Milliyet*, and his relative, İsmail Cem [İpekçi],¹¹ the editor of the newspaper *Politika*. During this time Turkey was the scene of violent debates and armed clashes between persons on the left and right, reflecting an ardent and uncompromising partisanship that pervaded all levels of Turkish society, including the

⁶. For an interesting research article on this party see Halûk Ö. Karabatak, 'İslâm Demokrat Partisi', *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 134 (Ekim/October, 1994), pp. 4-13.

⁷. [translator's note: During the 1930s the Turkish Republic passed a law decreeing that all persons must adopt a family name. Since persons whose adult lives straddle the pre- and post-law period had often already 'made a name' for themselves, or weren't inclined to use their adopted names, the latter are often given in parentheses or brackets in Turkish works.]

⁸. In the above-mentioned film *Sazanikos*, A woman identified as 'Fatma A.' states that the reason the Dönme community embraced Kemalism and secularism so wholeheartedly was that it enabled them to continue with their Sabbataean beliefs and practices: 'For them, secularism was, in one sense, a life preserver.' For an interview with this woman please refer to the following book by Leyla Neyzi, *İstanbul'da Hatırlamak ve Unutmak, Birey, Bellek ve Aidiyet* (Istanbul 1999), pp. 96-99.

⁹. Hüseyin Üzmez, *Malatya Suikastı*, (Istanbul 1998) [2.ed.], p. 58. Professor Orhan Türkdoğan, to whom Üzmez refers, has written a number of works on sociology in Turkey, such as *Etnik Sosyoloji* (Istanbul 1997); *Değişme Kültür ve Sosyal Çözüm* (Istanbul 1995); and *Alevi Bektaşî Kimliği* (Istanbul 1995). [translator's note: Üzmez is currently a columnist for the Islamic daily newspaper *Anadolu'da Vakit*, which was previously published under the name of *Akit*]

¹⁰. Üzmez, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

¹¹. [translator's note: Cem, a former university professor who has ably served as Turkey's Foreign Minister in successive governments since the late 1990s, dropped the name İpekçi early on in his career, most likely in an attempt to distance himself from his Dönme origins.]

government and bureaucracy. This was well-reflected in the fact that first action of the first so-called ‘Nationalist Front’ government, formed in the mid-1970s from an uneasy coalition of the center-right Justice Party (AP, *Adalet Partisi*), the chauvinistic Nationalist Action Party (MHP, *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) and Islamic National Salvation Party (MSP, *Millî Selamet Partisi*), was to remove the left-leaning Cem—by then appointed to the general directorship of Turkish Radio and Television (TRT)—from his post.¹² As a reason for this decision, Cem was described as having ‘displayed a partisan, far-from-neutral attitude, to have acted in ways contrary to the moral values of the citizenry and to have carried out communist propaganda via TRT broadcasts’.¹³ The belief was frequently expressed in both Islamist and ultra-nationalist circles that the policies followed by Cem during his tenure derived from the fact that he was a Marxist of Sabbataean origin.¹⁴

In the Cold War atmosphere of the 1970s, in which the fear of the ‘Reds’ was pervasive in Turkish society, the right never tired of emphasizing the Jewish origins of Karl Marx. Indeed, the issue was indispensable to the numerous ultra-nationalist and Islamic publications of the period, which saw Communism as a fundamentally Jewish-inspired doctrine, created by them as part of their master plan to rule the world. In an environment in which such a mindset held sway, the names Abdi İpekçi, İsmail Cem, Sabiha Sertel and Şefik Hüsnü [Değmer], the latter a founder of the Turkish Communist Party and all of Dönme extraction, were frequently mentioned in attempts to claim that the Dönmes—that is to say, Jews—were behind attempts to establish a Marxist beachhead in Turkey.¹⁵

But one example of this type of writing is the influential work *Tarih boyunca Yahudiler ve Türkler* (‘Jews and Turks Throughout History’) by Professor Hikmet Tanyu, who for years held the History of Religions chair in Ankara University’s Divinity Faculty. In rightist circles, Tanyu’s massive (+1300 pages) anti-Semitic piece is by now considered both a fundamental work and a classic in the field. In the chapter titled ‘The Detrimental Activities undertaken in Turkey by the Marxist-Socialist of Jewish origin, M.[ehmet] Zekeriya Sertel’, the latter is introduced by Tanyu so:

Th[-at] materialist and enemy of all religions other than Judaism, M. Zekeriya Sertel, [who] carried out Marxist-Socialist [and] Internationalist propaganda through his journalistic and [other] writings, tried to conceal his [true] opinions until 1925, [when he] was ultimately revealed to have come from the Jewish race and who adopted a [Muslim] name by appearing to have converted from Judaism. He is the husband of Sabiha Sertel, who is also originally from a Jewish family and even more extreme in her propagandistic writings, and who serves the Communist cause.¹⁶

¹². Tufan Türeñç, Erhan Akyıldız, *Gazeteci*, (Istanbul 1986) [2.ed.], p. 396. After İsmail Cem was removed from the post, he was replaced by Professor Nevzat Yalçıntaş, who was known for his conservative views.

¹³. ‘TRT Genel Müdürü İsmail Cem görevinden alındı’ 30 May 1975, in *Demokrasinin 50 Yılı 1945-1995*, vol. 2 (Istanbul n.d.), p. 646. to 15 May 1975. His remembrances of the period were published as İsmail Cem, *TRT’de 500 Gün* (Istanbul 1976).

¹³. For example, Mustafa Akgün, *Yahudinin Tahta Kılıcı*, (Ankara 1992), p. 206; Hikmet Tanyu, *Tarih*

¹⁴. İsmail Cem served as Director-General of TRT from 7 February 1974 to 15 May 1975. His remembrances of the period were published as İsmail Cem, *TRT’de 500 Gün* (Istanbul 1976).

¹⁵. For example, Mustafa Akgün, *Yahudinin Tahta Kılıcı*, (Ankara 1992), p. 206; Hikmet Tanyu, *Tarih Boyunca Yahudiler ve Türkler*, vol. 2 (Istanbul 1976), pp. 740-41, 919, 934, 950, 1027, 1058; Yesevîzâde, *Perde Arkasında Kalan Yönleriyle Sosyal Demokrasi*, (Ankara 1975), p. 91. Additionally, such accusations are found frequently in various issues of the journals *Yeniden Millî Mücadele* and *Sebil*.

¹⁶. Tanyu, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 350-51.

Regarding Abdi İpekçi, Tanyu says that: ‘he defends Marxist-Socialists and at times depicts the class struggle as a progressive movement. He advertises for the Socialist International and appears to have adopted the idea of supporting these types.’

Tanyu also insinuates that İsmail Cem has undertaken propaganda on behalf of Judaism:

In addition to being the publisher of the newspaper *Politika*, he is also its editor. As has been seen in this paper, some Jewish-Communist writers are constantly being praised. ... Not stopping there, he has continually served [the Jewish cause] and succeeded in bringing to TRT broadcasts [about] the oppressions and camps and such that the Jews suffered during World War II.¹⁷

[As mentioned,] the presence of persons of Dönme origin among writers and journalists who adopted a leftist or Marxist line is perceived by the right as a phenomenon in agreement with the spirit of ‘World Domination’ found in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,¹⁸ which claims that the Jews have supported Communism and have taken control of the press in order to rule the world. In the 1950s, all of these journalists would be mentioned when certain newspapers were often lumped together as ‘the Jewish Press.’¹⁹

Finally, Dönmes are often branded in the Turkish press —especially by the right—as the source of all evil and the cause of all disasters. In the debate currently raging in Turkey over the ‘*Tehcir*’, or ‘Forced Deportation’ of the Armenians during 1915, some of the country’s scholars and intellectuals have begun to wrestle with the genocide carried out during the operation, and to morally take stock of the events. In this reckoning, however, the Dönmes have often been used as an ‘escape hatch’, or scapegoat, with which to spare [Turkish Muslim] society from the responsibility and accompanying moral and spiritual soul-searching. In a strange coincidence, parts of both the Islamist and Armenian presses have seen it appropriate to foist responsibility for the genocide on the backs of the Dönmes. From the Islamist press, Abdurrahman Dilipak:

Essentially, a good researcher will see that the correct address for the charges of genocide is neither the Ottoman State nor the Turkish Republic. The role of Jewish-Masonic-Sabbataean Unionists within the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) in this matter is a widely-known truth.²⁰

More striking is the example of *Agos*. The paper’s General Press Director, Hrant Dink, has been elevated, due to *Agos*’ appearance in Turkish since 1996 and to Dink’s good relations with the Turkish press, to the unofficial position of spokesperson for Turkey’s

¹⁷. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 741-42.

¹⁸. [translator’s note: Both *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, as well as many other anti-Semitic works have seen widespread and frequent distribution within Turkey. For a fascinating article charting this trend by the author of this article, see “Cumhuriyet Dönemi’nde Antisemitizm” in Rifat N. Bali, *Musa’nın Evlatları...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-86].

¹⁹. M. Talat Uzunyaylalı, *Türkiye’de Basının İslâm’a Bakışı* (Istanbul 1994) [2nd printing], p. 235; Muzaffer Taşyürek, *İslâmın Sisli Yılları* (Istanbul 1995), p. 100. The latter author claims that ‘*Vatan, Hürriyet, Cumhuriyet, Yeni İstanbul, Akşam*: these [are the newspapers that] work under the dictates of Jewish capital and under the influence of cosmopolitanization.’ There is also an article by Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, published in *Büyük Doğu* (pp. 102-103), which attacks Yalman in the most base and vulgar manner imaginable. Yesevîzâde, *Yahudilik ve Dönmeler* (Istanbul n.d.), pp. 375-401. In the chapter titled ‘The General Publishing Policies of the Jewish Press in Turkey’ (*Türkiye’de Yahudi Matbuatının Umumi Neşriyat Siyaseti*), the author mentions the newspapers *Hürriyet, Milliyet* and *Politika*.

²⁰. Abdurrahman Dilipak, ‘Sabataycılık ya da soykırım iddiaları üzerine’ *Akit*, 25 Eylül/September, 2000.

Armenian community. Dink has also on occasion implied that the genocide was carried out by the Dönmes, i.e., by Jews:

Some historians have indirectly said that there might be ‘Jewish hands’ involved behind the scenes in the 1915 Armenian Genocide, as well as in a series of events which preceded it. It has been shown that among the leaders of the CUP were a good number of Jewish descendents of Sabbatai Sevi, such as [Dr.] Nazım Bey, and that they played an important role in the decision to [carry out] the deportation of 1915. There are even those who claim that ‘German Jewish Capital’ was [the power hidden] behind the German Militarism that manipulated the CUP during this period. The research is still inconclusive on this subject, but new claims are appearing daily. I don’t know if the Jews played an important role in [the events of] 1915, but it should be remembered that both Jewish ‘palace’ merchants and Armenian ‘*Amira*’ merchants were in competition for the Sultan’s favor, and the [two communities’] bazaar merchants waged an momentous struggle to secure themselves contracts from the palace.²¹

The Ultra-Nationalist View

In the [1930s and] 1940s, [the main theoretician of ‘racial’ Turkist nationalism] Nihal Atsız and his followers propounded a world view based on the principles of racial purity, blood and Volk. Within such a view, the Dönmes were naturally seen as Jews. Already in an article from 1934, Atsız makes this clear:

There are two types of Jews. One is the authentic Jew, who can be recognized by his speech. Another is the Dönme, who cannot. In order to identify this [type] it is necessary to look carefully for the degenerate Jewish features of his face. There is no difference whatsoever between the Jew and the Jewish Dönme. One says ‘We Jews,’ while the other says ‘You Turks.’²²

Just as with the Islamist camp, the individual who embodied the Dönmes for the Turkists was Ahmet Emin Yalman. The latter even appears as the protagonist (as a ministerial aide) in a novel by Atsız.²³

The Turkists blame the Dönmes for ‘minority racism’ because, in their view, they have refused to become ‘Turkified’ and continue to practice their faith in secret. This view is clearly expressed in a book by Atsız’s brother, Nejdet Sancar:

The most typical example of minority racism in Turkey is the racism of the Dönmes. They are a community that promotes the most powerful minority within Turkish society. As is known, they are very devoted to their own traditions. They don’t want to intermarry with Turks. The Dönmes take pride of place among those who stealthily form a systematic front against Turkish nationalist movements. If we call on them [to participate] in the duties of citizenship and warn them not to continue in [their tradition of] Sabbataeanism, we will quickly be confronted with a frightful Jewish clamor and uproar. They

²¹. Hrant Dink, ‘Gerçek maskaralık’, *Agos*, 20 Ekim/October, 2000.

²². Nihal Atsız, ‘Komünist, Yahudi ve Dalkavuk’ *Makaleler IV* (Istanbul 1992), pp. 171-75 (originally published in the periodical *Orhun*, no. 5 (12 Mart/March, 1934).

²³. Nihat Atsız, *Z Vitamini* (Istanbul 1992), p. 134.

[will] try to stifle the voice of the nation with eloquent words like ‘revolution’ and ‘republic,’ which are never absent from their lips and pens.

Turkish racialism is merely a weapon of defense against the wounds that the racists of this minority wish to inflict upon the body of the Turk[-ish nation]. Turkish racialism is an idea that calls on the nation to awaken in order to ensure that those who refuse to become Turkified—even though they are fellow citizens, who insist on carrying a different racial identity than that of Turkism, and who oppose the Turk and his racial principle, are unable to bring disaster upon this land and state.²⁴

In 1949 Yalman began a campaign calling for the release of [the jailed Communist poet] Nâzım Hikmet at the end of his 10th year of incarceration. According to Yalman, Hikmet had been unjustly convicted of having instigated rebellion in the army and navy in 1938 and sentenced to 28 years, 4 months in prison. The series of articles that Yalman wrote and published in his paper *Vatan* proclaiming Hikmet’s innocence and calling for his pardoning found much support among the Turkish press and intelligentsia.²⁵

However, the campaign caused much ire within rightist circles, such as in the branches of the Turkish Association for Fighting Against Communism, and ultimately provoked a reaction from them. Yalman’s actions were actually seen an effort by Hikmet, who, due to his having been born in Salonica and having earlier collaborated with Sabiha Sertel on the journal *Resimli Ay*, was claimed to be Jewish on his mother’s side (although she was actually of Polish origin),²⁶ to secure his own release through the labors of a fellow ‘crypto-Jew.’ This analysis was in line with the myths of ‘Jewish-Communist collaboration’ and ‘Communist Jews’ that were [and still are] popular in Turkish rightist circles.²⁷ The atmosphere of fear and of the ‘Red Scare’ then prevalent in Turkey ensured that such ideas would fall on fertile ground.

Another of Yalman’s rightist foes was the nationalist writer and publisher of *Serdengeçti*, Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti, who refers to Yalman as a ‘Mandate-ist’ and ‘a Jew’, and claims that ‘*Vatan* (‘the homeland’) was up for sale.’ In his attacks, which included

²⁴. Nejdet Sancar Çiftçioğlu, *Türklük Sevgisi* (Istanbul n.d.), pp. 57-58.

²⁵. Yalman’s first article on this subject was ‘Fikret and Nâzım Hikmet’ *Vatan* 19 August, 1949 [reprinted in Memet Fuat, *Nâzım Hikmet* (Istanbul 2000), pp. 434-38, n. 11.

²⁶. Mustafa Akgün, *Yahudinin Tahta Kılıcı*, *op. cit.*, p. 188. Hikmet’s mother, Celile Hanım, who emigrated to the Sultan’s realm from Poland and Germany and converted to Islam, was in reality not Jewish, and within her very large family there were even several Ottoman ‘Pashas’.

²⁷. Hikmet Tanyu has related the affair thus: ‘Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel, Zekeriya Sertel, and Ahmet Emin Yalman, who had converted from Judaism, along with Kıyam [Haim?] Levi (Jewish), a whole row of Masons, minority racists who didn’t [even] think of themselves as Turks, communists, as well as a number of unaware persons, ignoramuses and others who had been taken in, all collaborated to have the communist traitor Nâzım Hikmet Verzanski pardoned and released from prison.’ *Tarih Boyunca Yahudiler ve Türkler*, vol. 2, *op. cit.*, p. 796.

Turkish Association for Fighting Against Communism Chairman İlhan Darendelioğlu wrote the following about Yalman and his defense of Hikmet: ‘Yalman himself is not really a communist, but he’s the most significant and influential person in the incitement of the communists in Turkey. He is the person who, in his newspaper, gives the most space to communist writers. He’s also the person who would bring disaster upon the Turkish nation by trying to make a hero out of Nâzım Hikmet, that lackey of Moscow and red traitor to his homeland who today lives behind the Iron Curtain. Not many could do this today in Turkey, only a single journalist of Jewish origin. May God protect our nation from all manner of secret and insidious incitements and from Jewish ruses. Amen.’ İlhan Darendelioğlu, ‘Komünist Yahudiler’ *Bugün*, 13 Eylül/September, 1967. Yalman, in a conversation he later made with his would-be assassin, Hüseyin Üzmez, was asked the following: ‘Your signature is on 158 signed petitions that were prepared for the purpose of freeing Nâzım Hikmet. Didn’t you know he was a communist?’ Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim*, c. IV (1945-1971) (Istanbul n.d.), p. 292. For further information on reactions within rightist circles to Yalman’s efforts, see Fuat, *Nâzım Hikmet*, *op. cit.*, pp. 440-41.

anti-Yalman poems²⁸ (24 in the original) that he penned, Serdengeçti would deliberately use the word *vatan* (homeland--also the name of the Yalman-owned daily) ambiguously.²⁹ According to Serdengeçti, in addition to the fact that they weren't true Turks, the Dönmes were incapable of understanding the patriotic sentiments of the extreme nationalists: 'The minorities, the dönmes, those lacking a homeland, and the Bolsheviks cannot understand our pain!...Only those who are from among us understand our pain!'³⁰ In one conversation Serdengeçti even expressed the opinion—which has since firmly taken root in the minds of both the nationalist and Islamic right--that the Dönmes and Jews were the reason for the abolition of the Caliphate.³¹

One other nationalist and conservative writer, Samiha Ayverdi, has given ample place in her memoirs and in her other works to the Dönmes, whom she views with a particular disdain. In her memoirs, however, Ayverdi, in order to provide a more credible and legitimate foundation for her opinions, stresses that the antipathy that she feels toward the Dönmes doesn't stem from personal reasons, but from the oral testimonies of Dönmes themselves as to how untrustworthy they are.³²

The Kurdish Nationalists' View

Kurdish nationalism has seen a revival [within Turkey] with the establishment of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK, *Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan*) in the mid-1980s. The views of Kurdish nationalists toward the Dönmes tends to be largely negative, [a phenomenon] for which there are two main causes. The first is Coşkun Kırca, a retired Turkish diplomat, columnist and former True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*, or DYP) deputy, who has approached the Kurdish question from a vehemently nationalistic standpoint, and who, it has been claimed, is of Dönme extraction. The second reason is the deeply entrenched belief, widely held in Turkey, that the Dönmes have long controlled Turkey's economic life, and are thus directing the country according to their pleasure.

Abdülmelik Fırat, a former DYP deputy from Erzurum and a grandson of Sheikh Said, the executed leader of the 1925 Kurdish-Islamic rebellion, relates that at one point Kırca warned off then-President Süleyman Demirel after the latter spoke of the need to recognize the 'Kurdish reality', and claims that Demirel never again repeated such statements. In an article in the pro-Kurdish *Özgür Ülke*, Fırat penned his response to Kırca:

²⁸. Cemal Oğuz Öcal, 'Ahmet Emin Yalman'a' and 'Aşık Fedai', 'Bu dönme' reprinted in Hüseyin Üzmez *Malatya Suikastı* (Istanbul 1998) [2nd ed.], pp. 9-10. Another poem about the Dönmes that is full of negative content is Rüştü Çelebi, 'Masonnâme'den', in Mim Kemal Öke *Kutsal Topraklarda Siyonistler ve Masonlar İhânetler...Komplolar...Aldanmalar...* (Istanbul 1990), p. 8.

²⁹. Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti *Bütün Eserleri, 1: Mabetsiz Şehir* (Istanbul 1995), p. 213. A study of Serdengeçti's life and ideas in Rasih Yılmaz, *Toros Yüzlü Adam: Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti* (Istanbul 1998). Yalman did support the idea of an American mandate for Turkey during the Turkish War for Independence.

³⁰. Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti *Bütün Eserleri 4: Bu Millet Neden Ağlar* (Istanbul 1995), pp. 10-11.

³¹. A friend, with whom he had debated the matter of whether persons from Eastern Turkistan should be accepted into the Association of Turkish Nationalists, said the following:

'These [persons] come from the East. For them to be accepted, it's also necessary, no matter what, for them to make such an approach to Salonica.'

Upon the objection [to this view] by the audience, this person stood by his [previously expressed] view: 'These Salonicans, did they not expel the House of Osman because it came from the East?'

Toward the complaints of the crowd, which called on him to 'Be careful, it's against the law to be pro-Sultanic and pro-Caliphal' he was again unbending:

'My dear fellow, this is not stumping for the Caliphate. Is not the House of Osman Turkish? Did they not come from the East? Were they not hustled out by the Salonicans, the majority of whom are Jewish Dönmes?' This is an historical truth!'

Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti, *Bütün Eserleri 2: Gülünç Hakikatlar* (Istanbul 1995), p. 90.

³². Samiha Ayverdi *Ne İdik Ne Olduk Hatıralar* (Istanbul 1985), pp. 85-90.

Just like the *devşirme*³³ during the Ottoman period, the Dönmes direct the Turkish Republic. When the word ‘dönme’ is mentioned, the first association is usually with the Jews who entered the religion of Sabatay Levi [sic] and act like Muslims. But as for me, I mean more generally anyone who hides their ethnic identity or religion, and thereby acquires an inferiority complex. Persons who [attempt to] conceal the particularities that have been bestowed upon them by Allah and by nature are the cadavers who cause the corruption of society. There are clinical cases [of such] reported by sociologists and psychologists. There are Kurdish dönmes, Laz dönmes, Circassian, Albanian, Bosnian, Georgian, Arab, Greek Armenian, and finally, Jewish dönmes. All of the dönme tend to stick close together. If there is one among the Turks who should wake up, they all attempt to return him to a mindless slumber by tossing out slogans, such as ‘Fatherland, Nation, Sakarya,’³⁴ and ‘One Turk is worth the whole world.’ The Sabetay Levi [sic] dönme Coşkun Kırca is very powerful. 1 -- He married the daughter of Democrat Party (DP) [member] Mehmet Fuat Köprülü³⁵ and later divorced her; 2 -- He was the reason that DP Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu was executed, by testifying against him at Yassıada;³⁶ 3 – He has been the apologist and inciter for all the juntaists and coup plotters; 4 – He was the main architect of all the anti-democratic laws that will bring Turkey back to [the period] before 1925;³⁷ 5 – He warned that [Süleyman] Demirel’s phrase ‘Kurdish reality’, which he had uttered several months earlier from the rostrum of the Turkish Parliament, was the result of absentmindedness, and Demirel never repeated it. Although he once said in Parliament that ‘In this chamber, only Turks speak. It falls to non-Turks to remain silent,’ he was the one who spoke the most, [even though] the [correct] writing of his name, according to the alphabet of G. [sic] Sabetay Levi [sic], is Cosh-Qun Kir-Ca.³⁸

In another piece Firat gives a slightly different account of the encounter. He relates that he personally visited Demirel, and that during their conversation the president said that

³³. [translator’s note: The *devşirme* refers to the Ottoman practice wherein non-Muslim children were forcibly converted and made to serve in the Imperial Court and military, and ultimately became the backbone of the Empire’s administration].

³⁴. [translator’s note: Sakarya is the name of a large river in NW Anatolia near which two of the great battles of the Turkish War for Independence took place].

³⁵. [translator’s note: M. Fuat Köprülü, who was a descendant of the well-known family of 17th century Ottoman viziers of the same name, gained renown in the early years of the Republic as one of the eminent Turkologists of his day. After becoming increasingly disenchanted with the ruling Republican People’s Party (CHP), he left to become one of the four founding members of the Democrat Party (DP) in the late 1940s. Although he served as foreign minister during the early 1950s, he became disgusted with the Party’s excesses, and left the party and politics altogether. In doing this he inadvertently saved his own life, as his successor was executed, along with the country’s Finance Minister and Prime Minister, after the 1960 coup. Interestingly, it has recently been claimed that Köprülü’s executed successor in the Foreign Ministry, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, was also of Dönme origin. See ‘Sabetarycı Ilgaz Zorlu: Derin devlet biziz’ (interview: Özlem C. Atik) *Eğitim Bilim* no. 26 (Kasım/November 2000) pp. 60-63].

³⁶. [translator’s note: A small island in the Marmara Sea where the overthrown DP leaders were tried and executed in 1961. (See previous note)]

³⁷. [translator’s note: 1925 was the year of the Kurdish-Islamic Sheikh Said Revolt. The reference, then, would seem to be an attempt to compare the policies of Kırca and his DYP comrades to those of Mustafa Kemal against the Kurds, and thus lay the blame on the current government for the PKK’s activities, and more generally, the ongoing unrest in the Kurdish areas in the country’s south eastern provinces]

³⁸. A. Melik Firat, ‘Pis Yahudi’, *Özgür Ülke*, 30 July, 1994. Firat’s mention of ‘Sabetary Levy’ reflects his level of knowledge of the topic. [translator’s note: perhaps more telling than the misspelling of Sevi is the syllabic respelling of Kırca’s name in a manner which turns it into a rather prurient joke for his Kurdish-speaking readership. ‘Josh’, ‘Qun’, ‘Kir’ and ‘Ja’ are all words in Kurdish and together could mean something like: ‘Overflowing anus, due to the penis’ or, with some Turkish left in: ‘Filthily overflowing anus.’]

‘The Turkish Republic does not accept the Kurdish reality. I described this reality for the first time as prime minister, but Turkish nationalism was so strong that I was unable to go beyond this mere mention’. Continuing, Fırat claims he

...had never supposed that Coşkun Kırca would be the representative of Turkish nationalism. Because during my visit, Mr. Demirel had uttered the statement that [Kırca] was the child of a dönme family. After having told Demirel at the foreign ministry that they hadn’t given him the ambassadorship due to his family background, they said that he would be installed in this position by their special order. How sad that those who currently want to ascend to Turkishness are Kurdish, Arab, Laz, Circassian, Albanian and Jewish, as well as other dönmes. [And this is] because dönmes are afflicted with an inferiority complex. A country run by persons suffering from this type of mental condition will always fall into disorder and disaster.³⁹

In his memoirs, the Kurdish intellectual Musa Anter⁴⁰ criticizes Turgut Özal for being a Turkified Kurd, and İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil for having taken part in the suppression of the Dersim revolt as a member of the state security apparatus:

If you dig for the roots of any person like these [you’re sure to discover] that He is either a Jewish dönme or an immigrant from the Caucasus, Crimea or from Salonica, Rumelia.⁴¹ And we’re thankful for [the fact] that they aren’t true Turks or Kurds. They’re all dönme, I say, and some of them are angry with me [for saying it]. Yes, brother, I understand being a dönme as [having] weak morals. The dönme is either a coward is self-seeking.⁴²

Giving his account of his meeting with the son of the aforementioned Sheikh Said, Anter claims that the son gave the following assessment of the revolt:

I won’t call them Turks, but the dönme, who have no connection with the Turks and Kurds that ruled Anatolia, wanted to depict my father’s movement as a reactionary revolt, simply to advance their own private interests.⁴³

In his column in *Yeni Ülke*, Anter frequently expressed his views on the subject of Dönmes. He confirms the loyalty of Turkey’s Kurds with the statement: ‘If we are not mad or perverse, [then] have we betrayed these lands in which our ancestors are buried? Of course we haven’t.’ And then, continuing:

But the bones of the ancestors of most of those who calumny us are not buried

³⁹. Fırat, ‘Kürt realitesi’ *Özgür Ülke*, 7 May, 1994. Also found in his book *Fırat Mahzun Akar*, (Istanbul 1996), pp. 17-18.

⁴⁰. [translator’s note: Musa Anter was a well-known Kurdish philologist and author who wrote the first Kurdish-Turkish dictionary. He was murdered at an advanced age in 1992, and his name has since been given to an annual Peace Day (September 1) procession that attempts (often unsuccessfully) to proceed from Istanbul to Diyarbakır to highlight human rights abuses against the Kurds in Turkey].

⁴¹. [translator’s note: Literally, ‘the Province (*il*) of the Greeks (*Rum*)’, Rumelia, or *Rumeli* was the Ottoman name for their Balkan holdings].

⁴². Musa Anter, *Hatıralarım*, vol. 2 (Istanbul 1992), p. 41.

⁴³. *Ibid*, c. II, pp. 153. For İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil’s remembrances of the Dersim Revolt, see: Tanju Cılızoğlu, *Çağlayangil ‘Kader Bizi Una değil, Üne İtti’: Çağlayangil’in Anıları Çağlayangil’le Anılar* (Istanbul 2000), pp. 68-78.

here. Now, we have no inclination to bicker over someone's ancestors or lineage. Let them be buried in Salonica, the Balkans, or even somewhere in Central Europe. May they rest in peace! But as the Turkish saying goes, we have a way to run off 'those who come down the mountain to the vineyard.' And if you notice, the heartless actions of these persons toward us and toward our lands derives from this. Look, for instance, at the press founded by the Salonican dönme Sedat Simavi. God knows that it was established with his money and with a rotating press given [to him] by means of the Burla brothers. It is natural that part of the bargain was to defend Israel's interests in the Middle East. Simavi suddenly became a press mogul from the sexy *Yedigün*, that he had been publishing for years. I'm not writing this so that what I'm saying will be pilloried. Anyway, Sedat Simavi said that he doesn't deny his Jewish roots, and that when he dies he shouldn't be buried in a Muslim cemetery.⁴⁴

Anter also makes the connection between Kırca and Dönmeism, and is harsh in his criticism of both. He lambasts Kırca for his uncompromising stance toward Kurdish demands for cultural rights, and in his adamant defense of the principles of the nation-state:

There is a Turkish citizen and fellow-Turk called Coşkun Kırca. This strange Creature cries 'impudence' at defenseless persons who oppose him. And if the person in his sights is a Kurd, he becomes positively rabid. Thus 'Insolent Barzani', 'Impudent Talabani', and 'the most impudent of all, Apo, or A. Öcalan'...

Now let's look at the social make-up of Coşkun Kırca (according to Turkish custom he should be called 'Efendi', as that was the form of address for Jews):

1. He is of Israelite descent. His [family] line had turned away from cowardice and self-seeking and ostensibly became a Turk and a Muslim. Perhaps his forefathers had before that been Phoenicians, Copts or such, who became Jews during the era of David and Solomon. This superficial rancor and impudence cannot [merely] be the result of one or two *batman*.⁴⁵
2. Coşkun Kırca is a *dönme* of such chameleon-like ability that he was able to deceive the late Fuat Köprülü into becoming his father-in-law. In truth, when he was finally found out he was driven off. But [in the meantime] he had sullied a noble family.
3. Naturally, [Kırca] possesses no love for humanity or homeland. That's because the Turkey of today is not his motherland. And I suppose that the principled (!) Yitzhak Shamir wouldn't accept him into Israel like the Ethiopian Jews that he brought in.

Finally, at the end of his reply, Anter pulls out his 'ultimate weapon,' posing the following question to Kırca:

Mesut Barzani's lineage goes back 1,400 years. He's both a Kurd and a Muslim.

⁴⁴. *Yeni Ülke*, 13-19 January, 1991. Reprinted in Musa Anter, *Fırat Marmara'ya Akar* (Istanbul 1999), s. 29. The Burla Brothers company mentioned by Anter was owned by the Jewish Burla brothers, who acted as the Turkish agent, importer and distributor of various printing machine manufacturers. For an explanation of the claim that the Turkish daily *Hürriyet* was founded by Jews, see note 48, below.

⁴⁵. [translator's note: The meaning of the term *batman*, which in Ottoman times it referred to a weight, varying according to time and place between 2.5 and 10 kilos, is unclear here. The author (Bali, not Anter) was also unsure of its meaning here. It may be a typo or misuse of a word deriving from the Turkish verb *batmak*, which can mean to sink, founder, decline, become ingrown (as in nails) or go bankrupt, and if that is indeed the case, Anter may have intended to convey the sense of a corrupting of blood lines, a concern which, as the article shows, occupies a prominent place in the minds of many Turks and Kurds].

How about you?⁴⁶

Nor was all of Anter's wrath reserved for Kırca. In a response to a lead article by *Hürriyet* editor Oktay Ekşi containing the sentence 'Everyone who feels themselves to be Turkish is our brother; such a thing had not existed up to now', Anter claimed that, just like [many] other Kurdish writers, Ekşi's mind had been shackled by the conspiracy of 'the Jews, who strive for a world domination.'

Do you see this man, who is coiled up like some viper in the corner of the Jewish *Hürriyet* newspaper, and who knows who his master is in the Turkish press? He declares with a pen that 20 million Kurdish compatriots are the enemy, he stifles others. What's it to him? He relies on Israel for protection, and his duty is to sow discord among the obedient peoples of Anatolia. Like Erbakan, I'm practically convinced that all [the world's] evils come from Zionism and Israel. But I differ from him on this one point: when I say 'Jew' I don't mean the State of Israel. My message is meant for those unprincipled converts from Judaism. They are in the dominant position in every field in Turkey. For instance, this year we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the coming to Turkey of Coşkun Kırca, Sami Kohen, Ahmet Emin Yalman and other Jews. Why did we save them from massacre in Spain and bring them to the Ottoman [realms]? Personally, I'm sorry it happened. In those 500 years they have so destroyed the brains of the Turks and Kurds that neither understand a thing about either trade or politics. And they still can't. They [The Jews] made such advances in commerce that even the Sultan took out loans from them. And they also understood politics. It's still so today. It's forbidden to write [the names of] the big Jewish dönmes. But look at Coşkun Kırca, that enemy of the Anatolian peoples who has entered the ranks of [government] ministers. As if there was no Turk or Kurd, no one other than himself who could run the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Anyway, among the Jews there is an historical belief. They say that 'God shall give all the world's wealth and its government to the Jews.' Moses, David, Solomon, even Jesus were Jews. For him [the Jew] it doesn't matter in whose hands they are, or in what manner they are taken, because, since both the property and the administration belonged to the Jews long ago, they have no compunction against taking it [back].

One note: We were overjoyed to see that it wasn't the Jew Coşkun Kırca, but the Kurd Hikmet Çetin who was appointed to the Foreign Ministry.⁴⁷

This perception of 'Jewish-Dönme control' of Turkish public life is not only confined to the margins of Kurdish political life. The approach of Yaşar Kaya, former General Secretary of the banned Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi – DEP), is nearly identical to that of Anter and Fırat. Kaya's following critique of the Dönmes has two points of departure: 1) the Dönmes, or crypto-Jews, dominate the press and [thereby] direct public opinion; and 2) the Dönmes dominate commercial life in Turkey:

Sedat Simavi, the owner of *Hürriyet*, is a Salonican dönme. The competition between the family of *Sabah* owner Dinç Bilgin and the Simavi family has continued from the same [dönme] neighborhood of Salonica down to today. The *Feyziye* Schools Foundation (i.e., the *Işık* Lycee)⁴⁸ in Nişantaşı was established long before the

⁴⁶. *ibid.*, p. 162. Originally appeared in *Yeni Ülke*, 6-12 Ekim/October, 1991.

⁴⁷. *ibid.*, pp. 180-81. Originally appeared in *Yeni Ülke*, 1-7 Aralık/December, 1991. The political commentator Sami Kohen is not a Dönme, but rather, as his name suggests, a Jew. Anter's belief in Kohen's 'Dönme-ness' is perhaps reflective of the obsessive nature of his belief in a 'Jewish-Dönme plot'.

Republic for the education of the dönmes' children. The İpekçi family, which is to say Abdi İpekçi and İsmail Cem İpekçi, are Salonican dönmes. This wealthy colony, this capitalist class, which emigrated to Turkey after the Balkan Wars, is Salonican. As is well-known, the foundations of the Turkish bourgeoisie were laid in those Salonican masonic lodges: very simply, it continued to grow and progress. It's aim was to raise up a class of the wealthy that would be able to maintain a friendship with the State of Israel, whose establishment was being planned. Likewise, when the question of Israel came before the UN in 1948, Turkey was the first [country] to recognize it. While the children of Anatolia were unaware, this elite class of Salonicans got rich in Anatolia. The great banks of Turkey, its large companies, its imports and exports were all in their hands for years. They are of Jewish extraction, perhaps they chose Islam so as to enable themselves to become established. Their most prominent personality, both as ideologue and as politician, was Sebastiyân Levi [sic]. If in one sense Communism is, in Stalin's well-known phrase, the brotherhood of workers and laborers, then Masonry is, in a sense the brotherhood of bosses. This dönme-ism [also] has such a class character, [it believes in] the accumulation of large capital.⁴⁹

The imprisoned PKK Chairman Abdullah Öcalan has mentioned the Dönmes in the following terms: "They have imposed [themselves] in order to detach the Turks from Islam. They have done this in order to isolate them, in order to [be able to more easily] pressure them from abroad."⁵⁰

The Reasons for Hostility toward the Dönmes

A significant segment of Kurdish, Turkish nationalist, as well as Islamic thinkers view the Dönmes with a hostility that borders on anti-Semitism. The reasons are different for each sector, although certain commonalities exist.

Reasons particular to Kurdish Nationalists

For Kurdish nationalists, the main source of hostility is the Turkification policy pursued by the founders of the Turkish Republic toward the country's ethnic and religious minorities—and in particular, toward the Kurds—during the process (and perhaps as the price) of the establishment of a nation-state. Since the establishment of the PKK in the 1980s, Kurdish nationalism has returned to armed struggle [against the Turkish state], and the 'Kurdish question' that has emerged as a result of these actions has thereby opened the way to intensive discussion of the issue within Turkey, and has come to occupy an increasing share of the country's political and intellectual discourse.

Coşkun Kırca has, through his vehement and unwavering defense of the the Turkish Republic as a nation-state, become a reason for the reawakening in the minds of Kurdish nationalists certain negative opinions about the Dönmes. Among the dozens of writers, journalists and politicians who have taken a harsh stance against Kurdish nationalism and the

⁴⁸. [translator's note: This foundation is the heir to the educational tradition of the *Feyziye* and *Terakki* schools founded by a group of Sabbataean educators in Salonica in the last quarter of the 19th century. Besides their long-held reputation for being some of the premier schools in Turkey, they are also famous for having been the school attended by Mustafa Kemal—even if only for one year—during his childhood in Salonica.]

⁴⁹. Yaşar Kaya, 'Dönmelik nedir?' *Özgür Ülke*, 14 Ağustos/August, 1994.

⁵⁰ www.pwdnerin.com/not40825.htm Öcalan's conversation with his attorneys, 25 August, 2004.

demands of Kurdish intellectuals for cultural autonomy, the fact that only Coşkun Kırca's ideas [are claimed to] derive from his religious and/or racial identity is an example of this viewpoint. Another source of rancor is the belief in the nonsensical claim that *Hürriyet* is a newspaper belonging or subservient to Jewish capital, and that the negative attitude of its editor, Oktay Ekşi, toward Kurdish cultural autonomy is the result of this.⁵¹

A further, more political reason for the hostility is the assumption by Kurdish nationalists that the Jews, who have lived scattered among other nations for thousands of years, would support the independence movement of the Kurdish people. Needless to say, bitter disappointment was felt when this did not come about. This bitterness is clearly expressed in the following column by Abdülmelik Fırat:

Now, throughout history there has never been a conflict or falling out between the Jews, who are the children of Abraham's descendent, Israel, and [therefore] the nation of Abraham, and we Kurds, who are [also] of his stock. [But] your joining the ranks of the oppressed and the oppressors against we Kurds, who for centuries have been oppressed and treated with contempt by the Turks, Arabs and Persians, have been subjected to assimilation and genocide, this causes us deep sorrow and regret. As a community that has seen and experienced this much oppression, it is unbelievable that you would now take the side of the oppressors. I do not wish it, but the wrath of God will again overtake you as before, [and] this campaign will not leave you unscathed. We Kurds are a new and vibrant force that has just sprouted forth from the roots of the centuries-old tree of Abraham. We have enmity toward none. We [merely] want to take our place, like other nations, within the community of mankind. International Imperialism has offered [us] as a slave to [its other] slaves, because of its own baseness, and for the sake of its own personal advantages. They don't want to alter the status quo. The situation that strike us Kurds as strange is the wholehearted support that the Children of Israel give to this status quo, and the sight of all their lobbies world-wide appearing beside the oppressive powers who crush the Kurds and bring genocide upon them.

Th[is] behavior toward the Kurds by the Children of Israel, who have seen this much oppression [themselves], this I cannot comprehend.⁵²

In a conversation with Nuriye Akman after his (Fırat's) release from prison, Fırat gives further vent to his sense of Jewish betrayal:

[N.A.] Did Yaşar Kemal call you?

⁵¹. Years after the rumors began to circulate in nationalist and Islamic circles that *Hürriyet* had essentially been 'sold' to the Jews and that its founder, Sedat Simavi, was a Dönme, journalist Necati Zincirkıran identified the chief editor of *Tasvir*, Cihad Baban as their source. One day, after Simavi decided to publish *Hürriyet*, Baban's brother Haldun mentioned that he was considering recruiting *Tasvir*'s typesetters en masse to work at *Hürriyet*. Irritated at the suggestion, Baban gave the following reply: 'Sedat, Sedat, you should know that I'm not going to let you get away with this! I'll sling some mud at you that you won't be able to wash off for as long as you live!' The calumny was eagerly snatched up by rightist circles and accepted as authentic. According to Zincirkıran, 'During the years that I worked at *Hürriyet*, one of the questions most frequently asked of me was whether the paper was founded with Jewish capital. One person tossed out this accusation out of jealousy, and it spread from mouth to mouth. Even in the mosques imams would preach that the Jews were behind *Hürriyet*...Religious types, those who were suspicious of *Hürriyet*'s rapid growth, rival newspapers and some owners and editors who couldn't stand Simavi's success all utilized this rumor.' The rumors got so bad that at one point Simavi even felt the need to disprove such rumors that he published a lead article about it. (Necati Zincirkıran, 'Hürriyet ve Simavi İmparatorluğu' *Sabah*, 14 Ağustos/August, 1994).

⁵². Fırat, *Fırat Mahzun Akar*, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-53. Originally appeared as 'Beni İsrail' *Demokrasi*, 4 Mart/March, 1996.

[A.F.] He didn't. [But] he could have. Yaşar Kemal's wife is a sister of Miriam, of the Children of Israel. He won't leave her. Otherwise he would love me.

[N.A.] What's his wife's interest in the matter?

[A.F.] He didn't call because she wouldn't let him. In the world the Children of Israel have lobbies against the Kurds. Yaşar Kemal is [one of] our Kurdish intellectual[s], [but] he's been corralled by a Jew[-ess], [so] he doesn't seek us out.⁵³

Finally, Kurdish intellectuals look negatively on the Dönme, whom they consider to be Jews, because of Tekinalp, a.k.a. Moise Kohen. Kohen was a Jewish-Turkish intellectual who, with his 1928 work 'Turkification' ('*Türkleştirme*'), provided the ideological impetus to the Turkification of all ethnic and religious minorities within the newly-founded state. This work, as well as the person of Tekinalp himself, have contributed greatly to the negative association of Jews--and by extension, Dönmes—in the minds of many Kurdish thinkers. As an example of this attitude, a recent book on Kurdish history included a complete transcription of Tekinalp's book under the heading 'The Turkification Program submitted by the Official Ideologue of Jewish origin, Moise Kohen (Tekinalp), to the Turkish Hearths'.⁵⁴

Reasons Particular to Rightist Thought

'The process has been completed'

The anti-Dönme sentiment that is found among writers tied to the Islamist sector derives from the conviction, often encountered within that sector, that recent Turkish history is the result of the machinations of a secret cabal. According to this view, the process that began with the unseating of Abdülhamid II, and whose principal catalyst is believed to be a Jewish-Dönme-Freemasonic triangle, has achieved its aims through the establishment of Mustafa Kemal's Republic and the dissolution of the Caliphate. In the Islamist sector's view, the chief protagonists, both in this [historical] process and in the present regime, are Dönmes. Among this sector's important writers on this topic are Mehmet Şevket Eygi, the columnist of *Millî Gazete*, who frequently alludes to the Dönme as 'those who have destroyed the order of Sultan Abdülhamid'.⁵⁵

The belief in the Dönmes as the root cause behind the Ottoman Empire's collapse finds expression in the memoirs of Hüseyin Üzmez, mentioned previously in connection with his attempted assassination of Ahmet Emin Yalman.

[The Dönmes] have never forgiven us. They have tripped us up throughout history. In every age they have brought a thousand calamities upon our heads. In the end, they [even] succeeded in toppling our great empire. Of course, their power alone was insufficient for this. They allied with all of the internal enemies of Islam and the Turks. Externally, they incited all of the great powers against us. The servants of the Masons, by means of the generals, thrust us into the First World War. In their way they hastened

⁵³. Nuriye Akman, 'Boynumuz suç gülleri' *Sabah*, 17 Mart/March, 1996. Yaşar Kemal's wife Tilda Mandil, who died a few years ago, was Jewish.

⁵⁴. Mehmet Bayrak, *Kürtler ve Ulusal-Demokratik Mücadele Gizli Belgeler-Araştırmalar-Notlar* (Ankara 1993), pp. 524-574. For more on Tekinalp, see Jacob Landau's *Tekinalp, Turkish Patriot 1883-1961* (Leiden 1984).

⁵⁵. Mehmet Şevket Eygi, *İki kimlikli, gizli, esrarlı ve çok güçlü bir cemaat Yahudi Türkler yahut Sabetaycılar* (Istanbul 2000), p. 35. [translator's note: for more on Eygi and on this book, in particular, see my article 'Who is a Crypto-Jew?' which also appears in this issue]

the collapse. For almost two centuries they have been running [our lives]. And today the reins [of power] are still in their hands...⁵⁶

Part and parcel of this theory is the belief that the founders of the Kemalist regime are themselves Dönmes. Again, Eygi:

It is impossible to understand the political structure of Turkey, its official ideology, the nature of the secrets they bear without [first] knowing the Sabbataeans, without taking their power and influence into account.⁵⁷

The high point of this theory, of course, is the belief that Mustafa Kemal himself is of Dönme origin, due to the fact that he was born in Salonica.⁵⁸

The Dönme as a Representative of Cosmopolitanism

In much Islamist and Nationalist thought, the Dönme are [perceived as] striving to drive a society possessing conservative and nationalist values to remove the headscarves and veils [of their women] and to [force them to] walk around bareheaded, as well as encouraging its men and women to socialize over alcoholic drinks, to laugh and pursue [frivolous] entertainments such as dancing—in short, coaxing them into debauchery and dissolution.⁵⁹ The event which [more than any other] forms the foundation of this view was the beauty contest organized in 1952 by *Vatan* newspaper and its owner, Ahmet Emin Yalman. Pan-American Airlines and Universal Film Studios had not previously invited Turkey to [participate in] the Miss World Beauty Pageant, which they now hoped to organize jointly. The reason for this was the country's nascent Islamic movement, which had reappeared in 1946 and which was feared would oppose any attempt to arrange a competition among Turkish girls. For his part, Yalman, who was also aware of this situation, saw Turkey's participation in such a contest as a great opportunity for a public relations coup among American public opinion. In order to take advantage of this opportunity, *Vatan* assumed responsibility for organizing the contest to select a Turkish beauty.⁶⁰ At the end of the

⁵⁶ Üzmez, *Malatya Suikastı*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁵⁷ Eygi, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ This belief is not new, however, and its roots stretch back to the period of the founding of the Republic. See Rifat N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul 1999), p. 53. Two writers mentioned this claim and both explained it to be without foundation. See Andrew Mango, *Atatürk* (London 1999), p. 611, n. 50; and Abdurrahman Küçük, *Dönmeler Tarihi* (Istanbul 1997), pp. 465-66. See also a letter to the editor written in reaction to the constant depiction by the far right of Atatürk as a 'Salonican,' (i.e., Dönme). Mehmet Ali Ceylan, 'Atatürk'ün şeceresi...' in Yalçın Bayer's column 'Yeter Söz Milletin' in *Hürriyet*, 17 Haziran/June, 1997. [translator's note: although the author doesn't mention it specifically, a prime intention behind such assertions is to de-legitimize the secular Turkish Republic. Thus, tendency has been far less evident within the more strictly nationalist circles. Although the latter's exaltation of the Turkish 'race' and their obsession with its purity would seem to make them amenable to such speculations, it appears that in the quasi-fascist ideology so prevalent among the ultra-nationalists the psychological need for a 'great leader' or 'strong man' along with their unquestioning chauvinism have pre-empted it. Alparslan Türkeş, for example, Turkey's leading ultra-nationalist politician for the last four decades of the century was affectionately referred to by his followers as 'Başbuğ', or 'The Head Chieftain'.]

⁵⁹ [translator's note: Accusations regarding the loose morals and corrupting influence of the Sabbataeans can be found in some of the earliest known anti-Dönme literature. See, for instance, [anon.] *Dönmeler: Honyos, Kavayeros, Sazan* (Istanbul 1335-1336/1919) (in Ottoman)]

⁶⁰ For Yalman's reasons for organizing the contest, see Ahmet Emin Yalman, 'Medeni bir maç', *Vatan*, 18 Haziran/June, 1952. In his memoirs, Yalman recounts the event thus: 'It was decided to organize and

competition the winner was sent to America. This event provoked furious reactions in the Islamic and nationalist press, especially in *Büyük Doğu*. Without so much as a word about the contests that *Cumhuriyet* had been holding for years, the Islamist press directed their ire wholly at the promoter of the present contest, Ahmet Emin Yalman. The reason was, again, Yalman's Dönme origins. They portrayed the contest as an attempt to push young Turkish girls into prostitution, and to 'sell them to American Jews'.⁶¹ The sentiment that caused this reaction was also the cause for the attack by Hüseyin Üzmez on Yalman. In their encounter, arranged by Yalman after the attack, Üzmez asked: 'Why [did you] organize a beauty contest in order to present Turkish girls as gifts to foreigners?'⁶²

The right in Turkey also believes that it was no coincidence that the İpekçi brothers, who are of Dönme origin, were the leading importers and distributors of foreign films, as well as the main operators of theaters showing them. Their introduction into Turkey of foreign films, which reflect a more cosmopolitan lifestyle [than that practiced by most Turks], was thought to have been undertaken with the ulterior motive of propagating this culture in Turkey and [thereby] destroying its national values.⁶³ The right, in particular, sees the Dönmes as having striven to introduce [images of] a Western lifestyle into the mind of the average Turk, whose traditional values are more conservative, and to 'cause him to stray from the path'.

Reasons Common to All

The 'Jewish Press' accusation

The label 'Jewish Press' has been directed at various newspapers and journals in Turkey throughout the country's history, with the targets changing in accordance with the period and with political developments. The phrase "Jewish Press" has also [been used to] describe newspapers whose owners or writers are claimed to be of Dönme origin. During the single party era (1923-1946), the targets were the dailies *Tan* and *Vatan*. The charge was often

international beauty contest together with the Pan American Airlines and the Universal Film Company. Due to the reactionary press and [their] incitement, which had grown and assumed increasingly ugly forms in recent times, Turkey had been left out of the competition. Yet, for the last ten or fifteen years [the daily] *Cumhuriyet* had been holding its own beauty contests...I was angry that the mark of reaction had now been stamped upon the country through its suddenly being left out of the contest. I wrote a protest letter to the organizers informing them that there was no obstacle or hindrance to Turkey's participation, and that our newspaper was prepared to take control of the matter. They were delighted, and accepted [our] participation.' Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte...*, vol. 4, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

⁶¹. Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Turkey in my Time* (Norman, OK 1956), p. 252. For the right's reaction, see Üzmez, *Malatya Suikastı*, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-82.

⁶². Yalman's response is very expressive: 'A beauty contest does not mean forcing a nation's girls into prostitution. *Cumhuriyet* has been holding such contests for twenty-five years. One of these [contestants], named Keriman Halis, was chosen Miss World, something that was a source of great pride and satisfaction in our country. Similar sentiments were expressed when Günseli Başar was chosen as Miss Europe. We reacted to Pan American Airlines leaving Turkey out of the competition it held because it was thought to be a backward country. Therefore, we took it upon ourselves to hold this contest, which has been favourably received and seen as normal here for the past twenty-five years. If [such contests] are hateful, where for the past twenty-five years have they been, these persons who would use this contest as a weapon with which to attack me?' Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte...* vol. 4, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

⁶³. The İpekçi brothers' activities in the field of Turkish cinema are cited in many of the popular anti-Semitic works published in Turkey. See, for example, Akgün, *Yahudinin Tahta Kılıcı*, *op. cit.*, p. 207. Akgün claims that the daily *Milliyet*, then under the editorship of Abdi İpekçi, also held beauty contests and ran ads encouraging young girls to participate: 'Young girls who had not received a good Islamic upbringing would read these ads and, dying to be models or burning with the desire to be artists, would participate in them. They participated, but anything they possessed in the way of honor or belief quickly left them. These and similar events are the services provided in the Turkish press by Abdi İpekçi and his ilk.'

repeated that the Turkish press was run by Jews because both Sabiha Sertel and Ahmet Emin Yalman, who both wrote for *Tan*, were of Dönme origin.⁶⁴

In the maiden issue of the journal *İstanbul Sesi* ('The Voice of Istanbul'), claims were put forward that the Turkish press was controlled by the Jews and that the owners of *Tan*, *Son Posta* and *Akşam* were all Dönmes, and that *Cumhuriyet* owner Yunus Nadi was a Karaite Jew.⁶⁵ In 1945, during a journalistic dispute that erupted between Sabiha Sertel and *Ulus* columnist Nurettin Artam, the newspaper *Tasvir* and the latter Maraş deputy Rasih Kaplan accused the dailies *Vatan* (which was owned by Yalman and the Sertels) and *Tan* of being 'Jewish newspapers'.⁶⁶ Between 1946-1961, *Hürriyet* and *Vatan* were the targets. Then, in the 1970s, it became *Cumhuriyet*'s turn. In our day the accusations are directed toward *Sabah* and the *ATV* television station. Both of these companies are part of the media empire owned by Dinç Bilgin, who descends from a venerable line of Salonican journalists that began with the now famous *Yeni Asır* in Salonica at the turn of the century.⁶⁷

Today, however, the phrase 'Jewish press' is no longer merely used to denote newspaper owners or journalists who are thought to be Dönmes, but is also used for Turkish publications that are claimed to be controlled by the State of Israel, and have thus taken a hostile toward Islamic movements. Some of the more populist Islamic press frequently uses the term 'Moses media' (*Moşe medya*) to refer to papers under the control of 'Mişon' ('Moishele').⁶⁸ Throughout the Republican period, the common thread linking all of the papers and journalists tarred with the brush of being 'Jewish press' has been their unwavering defense of secularism, Kemalism, and the principle of the nation-state.

Economic Reasons

The negative approaches of both Kurdish nationalist and rightist thinkers to the Dönmes possess a socio-economic element, as both groups tend to see the Dönmes as the reason for the underdevelopment within their own milieu, and resent them for their economic status.

In comparison with the rest of Turkish society, the Dönmes' level of education and culture gives [them] the appearance of an elite group that has risen above the masses. The Dönmes, who along with the non-Muslim sectors of Turkey's population dominated the country's economic life in the first years of the Republic's founding, were viewed as powerful

⁶⁴. Among the Dönmes, just as among Orthodox Jews, the lineage passes through the mother. For that reason, Sabiha Sertel, who refused to marry within her community and instead married Zekeriya Sertel, was among those whose actions began the process of assimilating the Dönmes into Turkish society. On their wedding and its political significance see: Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatıradıklarım* (Istanbul 1977) [3rd pr.], pp. 77-81; and Yıldız Sertel, *Annem Sabiha Sertel Kimdi Neler Yaptı?* (Istanbul 1994), pp. 65-68.

⁶⁵. N. P., 'Türkiye matbuatı Yahudi kontrolünde!...', *İstanbul Sesi*, no. 1 (1936), pp. 3-7. In his memoirs, Abidin Nesimi claims that the journal's publisher, Habil Adem, worked for Turkey's intelligence service MİT (*Millî İstihbarat Teşkilâtı*), and that journalists in mention eventually sued Nesimi over these accusations. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında...*, *op. cit.*, p. 531. Due to this article, which was said to have 'incited citizens against one another,' the journal was closed down by a decision of the Council of Ministers. T.C. Başbakanlığı Cumhuriyet Arşivi, no. 030.9-36.55.74.1. A study of this case and others can be found in Mustafa Yılmaz, 'Cumhuriyet döneminde Bakanlar Kurulu Kararı ile yasaklanan yayımlar 1923-1945: I', *Kebikeç*, 3rd year, no. 6 (1988), pp. 53-80.

⁶⁶. Orhan Seyfi Orhon, 'Türk azlığı' *Tasvir*, 13 Eylül/September, 1945; 'Dinimize dahleden...', *Tasvir*, 7 Ekim/October, 1945; 'Rasih Kaplan'ın bir demeci', *Tasvir*, 15 Ekim/October, 1945; S. O. 'Hem suçlu, hem güçlü', *Tasvir*, 20 Ekim/October, 1945.

⁶⁷. For a history of *Yeni Asır*, see Türkmen Parlak, *Yeni Asır'ın Selanik Yılları* (Izmir 1986) and *Yeni Asır'ın İzmir Yılları* (Izmir 1989).

⁶⁸. Hasan Karakaya, 'O tencerede Müslüman Kanı Kaynıyor', *Akit*, 18 Ekim/October, 2000. Mişon is a diminutive of Moshe and is used in a pejorative manner.

competitors by others who desired a greater share of the economic pie. They were also seen as an interest group that collaborated with the Jews, with the two communities looking out for one another.

[This perception of the Dönmes as a separate ethnic and religious group was so persistent and widespread that] during the implementation of the infamous Capital Tax (*Varlık Vergisi*) in 1942, Dönmes were not accepted as Muslims for taxation purposes, instead being categorized as a separate group, taxed at a higher rate than other Muslims (although still lower than that of non-Muslims).⁶⁹

Conclusion

The negative connotations surrounding the word ‘dönme’ in Turkish have retained their currency until our day. Both in the field of politics and in intellectual debates, the final and most effective card with which to trump one’s opponents is to call them a ‘Dönme.’⁷⁰ Although, as has been seen, this type of accusation is most frequently used by Kurdish and rightist circles, there have been enough examples throughout the Republic’s history to show that it has never limited to these two groups. This is because the negative image of the Dönmes is so widespread in Turkish society.

During the inter-war years, a dispute between rival newspaper owners Ahmet Emin Yalman of *Tan* and Yunus Nadi of *Cumhuriyet*—at the time, the country’s most influential daily, after Yalman accused *Cumhuriyet* of carrying out pro-Nazi propaganda, and Nadi of behaving like a ‘derebey’.⁷¹ In reply, Nadi accused Yalman of being of Dönme origin. In an open letter to the latter Nadi wrote:

O.K., let’s say I come from a derebey family. And who are you? [Are you not] a descendent of that Jewish troublemaker Sabbatai Sevi, who found deliverance in falsely changing his religion in order to avoid being [publicly] impaled on a stake in Tekirdağ?⁷²

The following day, in an unsigned article published in *Cumhuriyet*, another shot was fired, this time against both Emin and his collaborator at *Tan*, Sabiha Sertel:

The Ahmed Emins and Sabiha Sertels who congregate around *Tan* are not Turks. Behind [their] Turkish names lurk a different race, mentality and identity. They are

⁶⁹. For more on the Capital Tax, see Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve ‘Türkleştirme’ Politikaları* (Istanbul 2000); Rıdvan Akar, *Aşkale Yolcuları—Varlık Vergisi ve Çalışma Kampları* (Istanbul: 1999); Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 424-495.

⁷⁰. A very recent example of this is the criticism directed at İsmail Cem, who was one of the leading contenders in Turkey’s last presidential election. See Mehmed Şevket Eygi, ‘Yahudi Alay’, *Millî Gazete*, 1 Nisan/April, 2000; ‘Ürdün gazetesi: Abramovitz, İsmail Cem’in cumhurbaşkanı olmak için çalışıyor’, *Aydınlık*, no. 664 (9 Nisan/April, 2000), p. 20; Ali Eyvaz, ‘Yahudiler Cem için seferber’, *Akit*, 10 Nisan/April, 2000; Hasan Karakaya, ‘İsmail Cem İpekçi, Sabetaycılık ve MHP’, *Akit*, 12 Nisan/April, 2000; Hasan Karakaya, ‘Yine İsmail Cem İpekçi...Yarası olan gocunur!’, *Akit*, 14 Nisan/April, 2000; Selim Topraksu, ‘MHP’li İsmail Köse: İsmail Cem Sabataist...Olmaz’, *Akit*, 16 Nisan/April, 2000; ‘MHP, İsmail Cem’e soğuk’, *Milliyet*, 23 Nisan/April, 2000; Hasan Karakaya, ‘Sabataist’i gösterip Sabahattin’e razı edebilecekler mi?’, *Akit*, 24 Nisan/April, 2000; Burak Orhan, ‘Cem’in dedesi haham!’, *Akit*, 25 Nisan/April, 2000.

⁷¹. [translator’s note: historically, an Anatolian feudal lord, but in this sense Yalman probably meant is ‘despot’ or ‘bully’].

⁷². Yunus Nadi, ‘Ahmed Emin Yalman’a’ *Cumhuriyet*, 22 Ekim/October, 1937. On this literary dispute see Emin Karaca, *Türk Basınında Kalem Kavgaları*, (Istanbul 1998), pp. 109-146; Tekin Erer, *Basın Kavgaları*, (Istanbul 1965), pp. 18-61.

individuals who are ‘Dönmes’, and who are as spiteful and angry as only a people or tribe possessing no hope of having ties to the Turks can be.⁷³

Ironically, the ‘Dönme card’ played against Yalman was used against Nadi himself three decades later.⁷⁴

In a conversation with the journalist Cengiz Çandar published in the Turkish-Jewish paper *Şalom*, Çandar, who is known as a ‘Second Republican’ for his critical views of Kemalism, was asked whether, with such a family name,⁷⁵ he felt himself to be a pure Turk. His reply, ‘Essentially, I consider myself Rumelian. My mother was Salonican, and probably a Dönme’,⁷⁶ was picked up by the leftist weekly *Aydınlık*, known for its opposition to America, Israel and ‘Second Republicans’, under the headline: ‘Key player in Turkey-Israel relations Çandar says: ‘I’m a Dönme’’,⁷⁷

Another recent example concerns Coşkun Kırca, who, as we have seen, has come to symbolize the Dönmes for many in Turkey. In an interview, Kırca asks the rhetorical question, ‘What is Kurdish? According to one version, there are seven different dialects. Even more, according to another. It is a primitive affair, one-third Persian, one-third Turkish, and one-third Arabic’.⁷⁸ The response came from an unexpected place. Columnist Hadi Uluengin of *Hürriyet*, a symbol of liberal, modernist and Western consciousness in Turkey, wrote the following:

Mr. Coşkun Kırca has forgotten that if Sabbatai Sevi had not declared himself Messiah in 1666, he would himself be speaking the Judeo-Spanish dialect, which belongs to an inferior culture like the Kurdish he denigrates. He looks down on cultural richness and legal rights such as [those possessed] by these types. Thus it is all the more difficult to understand to which tolerance Mr. Kırca was alluding during The Quincentennial Foundation, which was indeed guided by such a spirit.⁷⁹

⁷³. Anon., ‘Matbuat ve millet’, *Cumhuriyet*, 23 Ekim/October, 1937.

⁷⁴. See ‘Cumhuriyet çevresinde Yahudi ve Dönmeler’, in Murat Gencoğlu, *Anarşinin Basındaki Yuvası ‘Bir Darbenin Anatomisi’*, (Istanbul 1973), pp. 17-20.

⁷⁵. [translator’s note: The name ‘Çandar’ would seem to indicate that, at some point, his father’s family hailed from the same place as the well-known Çandarlı family of Ottoman Grand Viziers of the 15th century, whose name became infamous after the fourth in their line, Halil Paşa, was executed by Mehmet the Conqueror for taking bribes from the Greeks during the siege of Constantinople. The question is misinformed, however, as the Çandarlı were a venerable Anatolian Turkish family—one of the few authentically Muslim Turkish families to in fact fill the vizier’s post during that period. Beyond Çandar’s response, what is interesting about this exchange is that even a non-Muslim Turk seems to have assimilated the popular view of Ottoman and Turkish history that those who betrayed the state were always non-Muslims. For more on the Çandarlı, see Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time* (Princeton 1978), pp. 8, 14, 439.]

⁷⁶. Lizi Behmoaras, *Türkiye’de Aydınların Gözüyle Yahudiler (Söyleşiler)* (Istanbul 1993).

⁷⁷. *Aydınlık*, 30 Haziran/June, 1993. A regional Islamist daily favoring former Prime Minister and Islamist politician Necmettin Erbakan would later make a similar claim: ‘Çandarlı Halil’den Cengiz Çandar’a ihanet’, *El Aziz*, 27 Eylül/September, 2000.

⁷⁸. Dilek Önder, ‘Son günlerin olay adamı Coşkun Kırca anlatıyor’, *Hürriyet*, 25 Temmuz/July, 1993.

⁷⁹. Hadi Uluengin, ‘Sivil general-Palyaço general’, *Hürriyet*, 27 Temmuz/July, 1993. Coşkun Kırca was a founding member of The Quincentennial Foundation, which was established under the direction of the leaders of Turkey’s Jewish community. The Judeo-Spanish to which the author alludes and which is also known in Turkish as İspanyolca, Ladino and Yahudice, was the tongue spoken by the majority of Ottoman Jewry, and which over time came to assimilate words from the local languages with which it came into contact, such as Turkish, Greek and French.

Another earlier example, found in the memoirs of Mina Urgan, concerns the late Halide Edip, who has been claimed to have come from a Dönme family. During a visit to the home of an Istanbul University Law professor, Urgan relates the following:

When this fellow learned that Halide Edip was my assistant, wouldn't you know that the first question he asked was, 'Miss, is it true that Halide Edip's father was Jewish?' I replied in an icy tone, 'I have no idea, sir; but what would it matter if he was or wasn't?' The professor then said 'Miss, you really don't think it makes a difference? It's a shame to have a Jewish father,' at which point I blew a fuse. I rose to my feet and headed for the door, saying to the wife of the professor, who—rightfully--never invited me back, 'I didn't know that some anti-Semitic jackass was going to be here.'⁸⁰

The presence of persons of Dönme—that is, Jewish—descent has had an exacerbating effect in at least two important events in Turkey's journalistic and political history. One was the armed attack on *Vatan* owner and editor Ahmet Emin Yalman in Malatya on 22 November, 1952.⁸¹ The second was the assassination of *Milliyet* editor Abdi İpekçi on 1 February, 1979. When one considers the rightist press's continual harping on İpekçi's Dönme origins, these origins must, as his daughter has claimed, be considered a possible factor in motivating his assailants.⁸²

One of the most fascinating aspects of the 'Dönme debate' is that, despite the almost three-and-a-half centuries since Sabbatai Sevi's conversion (as well as that of his followers), this community, which outside of their distant forefathers has no connection with Judaism whatsoever, and which sees itself as Muslim, is nevertheless insistently seen as Jewish by a significant part of the Turkish population. This attitude, although perhaps most frequently encountered within the Islamist sector,⁸³ has been seen in other, often unexpected quarters. A recent example of the latter appeared during a speech given in Germany by Turkish Human Rights Association (İHD) Chairman Akın Birdal.

⁸⁰. Mina Urgan, *Bir Dinozorun Anıları* (Istanbul 1998), pp. 266-67.

⁸¹ On this subject, it is sufficient here to quote the words of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek to fellow Islamist Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti: 'This nation has died. I've been writing and depicting this for months. A brave young fellow can't even go out and fire off a popgun at that lout! [Yalman]' Exactly one week after these words were spoken, Hüseyin Üzmez carried out his attack on Yalman. Üzmez, *Malatya Suikastı*, *op. cit.*, p. 23. When asked in custody why he had done it, Üzmez replied:

We used to memorize everything [that was printed] in Necip Fazıl's *Büyük Doğu*:
--Yalman is a Jewish dönme. He wanted an American mandate during the War for Independence. He fanned the flames of the Eastern [Sheikh Said] Revolt. He was convicted by the Elazığ Independence Tribunal in 1925, but was pardoned because he pleaded, saying 'I'm a Jew, I did all of these things because I was compelled by the qualities of my race, pardon me Father,' and licked Atatürk's boots.
In 1951 he sent a beauty queen to America and made her kiss American naval officers. The Russians duplicated this photo and dumped copies of it on our units that were fighting in Korea. Our holy flag, for which hundreds of our martyrs gave their lives over there, was wrapped around the legs of this beauty queen...
Did he or didn't he do all these things? Naturally I didn't know. But if *Büyük Doğu* wrote it, we would believe it.

Hüseyin Üzmez, *Şu Bizimkiler*, (Istanbul 2000) [7th printing], p. 180.

⁸². Hülya Ekşişgil, 'Operasyonun adı gibi umutlanıyorum', *Yeni Binyıl*, 21 Mayıs/May, 2000.

⁸³. A striking example of this occurred during a recent television talk show in which İpekçi's daughter Nükhet participated. Despite her repeated insistence that she saw herself as a Muslim, both Mehmed Şevket Eygi, who was one of the panel participants, as well as a number of Islamist writers that participated by phone insisted on the fact that she was Jewish. 'İskele Sancak, 'Sabetaycılık' programı, *Kanal 7*, 22 Eylül/September, 2000.

In Turkey new enemies are always being created. Previously it was Communism and the Soviet Union. Later, it was the Armenians, the Greeks and, after them, the Kurds. Peace is as vital for Turkey as bread and water. Everyone knows what was done to the Armenians. Turkey must apologize for the genocide carried out against the Armenians, and for those things done to other minorities. İsmail Cem, a Jew himself, should come out and say these things. Turkey can liberate itself along with its Turkish, Kurdish, Circassian, Laz and other minorities.⁸⁴

One of the clearest and best-known characteristics of racism and discrimination is the branding of political or ideological opponents by their religious or racial identity, and the explaining of historical events with assertions emphasizing the racial or ethnic identity of the actors. It is worthy of attention that the use of the racial or religious weapon in Turkey has over the years found adherents over such a broad political and intellectual pallet as to include Yunus Nadi, the owner of the erstwhile Kemalist mouthpiece *Cumhuriyet*, *Ulus* writer Nurettin Artam, a variety of Kurdish nationalists, *Hürriyet* columnist Hadi Uluengin, Islamists, law professors, human rights advocates and even non-Muslim journalists. In a Turkish Republic that claims to be secular this is clear sign of the significant—perhaps central—role played by religious and racial factors in determining the country’s social relations. In a social milieu in which populism, mass culture and conspiracy theories reign supreme, the continuation of such factors to play a ‘key role’ in explaining political or historical events, as well as long-term historical processes, is practically assured.

⁸⁴. Kemal Doğan & Recep Seplin, ‘Bu kadarına pes artık’, *Hürriyet*, 22 Ekim/October, 2000.