

What Is *Efendi* Telling Us?¹

The potential reader who picks up Soner Yalçın's *Efendi: Beyaz Türklerin Büyük Sırrı* ("Efendi: The Great Secret of the White Turks"), a book which hit the Turkish market in April of 2004 amid great publicity and a huge advertising campaign, would find the blurb on the back cover full of mysterious and secretive language, but very little actual information on the book's contents. To get a better idea of the book's subject matter, our reader would be advised to open the back cover and look at the very last lines of the work. There he/she will find the following concise description of the subject at hand:

Ultimately, it is not merely the saga of one specific family that has been written here. [This work] was written with the aim of pulling back the curtain on a 'secret' which is still a taboo [subject] in Turkey... The [book's] conclusion: Sabbateanism is our reality [in Turkey], and we cannot dismiss its importance when writing [our] history. (p. 566)

For those who have followed the writings published by Soner Yalçın under his online alias Uğur İpekçi² on the website www.haberturk.com, the appearance of *Efendi* cannot have been a surprise, because he has long devoted a portion of his writings to the subject of Jews and Sabbateans.³ Furthermore, in a column which appeared before the book hit the market, fellow-journalist Güler Kömürcü, who has devoted a great deal of energy publicizing conspiracy theories, provided sufficient clues as to the book's content.⁴

Who is Soner Yalçın?

Soner Yalçın is a well-known name in Turkish media. Yalçın, who worked in the Ankara office of the Worker's Party (*İşçi Partisi*) press organ *Aydınlık*, has published several other works, all of which were best-sellers. These have treated various 'current affairs' issues, such as the Turkish criminal underground, and a biography of a MİT (Turkey's National

¹ An earlier Turkish version of this article appeared in the June, 2004 issue of Turkish journal *Birikim*. An English version was published in *Kabbalah*, 13 (2005), pp. 109-139. The present has been reedited and expanded.

² Veysel Batmaz, "İnternet Medyası Adlı Mavra Palavra", www.haber3com/VEYSEL.haber3?id=28797 (27 January, 2003); Mustafa Kurdaş – Mustafa Yılmaz, "Efendi ve Uğur İpekçi", *Millî Gazete*, 24 May, 2004. Yalçın's alias is a combination of the names of two prominent assassinated Turkish journalists, Uğur Mumcu of *Cumhuriyet* and Abdi İpekçi of *Milliyet*.

³ [All of the following references found on the website mentioned in the text] Uğur İpekçi, "Kürtçe konuşan ve Arap gibi yaşayan Yahudiler", 20 February, 2003 / Uğur İpekçi, "İsrail Kürtleri Böldü", 21 February, 2003 / Uğur İpekçi, "Bülent Arınç Sabetayist mi?", 24 April, 2003 / Uğur İpekçi, "Kafa Karıştırıran Bir Biyografi: İhsan Doğramacı", 2 May, 2003.

⁴ Güler Kömürcü, "Beyaz Türklerin Büyük Sırrı", *Akşam*, 23 March, 2004.

Intelligence Organization) official.⁵ After starting to work for *CNN Türk* broadcasting, he reached an agreement with Doğan Book Publishers, which belongs to Turkey's most powerful media conglomerate, Doğan Medya Grubu, or DMG.⁶ After this each of his books entered the market accompanied by intensive marketing campaigns. *Efendi* has been no different, and as of September, 2004, the book has gone through 47 printings and sold more than 94,000 copies. In a country in which most investigative books rarely sell more than 2,000 copies, such a figure for a book which retails at the almost unheard of price of US\$17.00 (TL 25 million) must be truly considered a 'publishing event'.

What Is The Book About?

The book *Efendi* tells the story of the İzmirli Evliyazâde family. In addition to claiming that the family itself is of Sabbatean origin, the author asserts that many if not all of those the prominent individuals who have married into this family—and there are many: politicians such as the leading Union and Progress figure Dr. Nâzım, former Unionist and Foreign Minister during most of the Atatürk period Tevfik Rüştü Aras, Democrat Party Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu—were also Sabbateans, or *Dönmes*, as they have until recently been known in Turkey. The meaning of the book's subtitle, 'The Great Secret of the White Turks', is rather clear for those who are familiar with the political and cultural developments in Turkey, and at the same time represents the essence of the message that the book attempts to convey: the concept 'White Turks' has appeared only in the last ten or fifteen years in Turkey and can perhaps be best described as the Turkish equivalent of 'WASP'. These 'White Turks' represent a social group characterized by their urban, western, polyglot, cosmopolitan character, who inhabit the country's upper social and economic strata. The main parameters of this group's political views are a close emotional adherence to the principles of the Republic and staunch defense both of Atatürk and the secular system he established. The Islamist sector, which has enjoyed an increasing popularity in Turkey in the last decade, has characterized itself in this world-view as the 'Black (i.e., 'negro') Turks'. This 'dichotomization' of Turkish society serves their goal of gaining

⁵ Yalçın's previous works include: *Hangi Erbakan* (Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi), n.d. / *Bay Pipo, Bir MİT Görevlisinin Sıra Dışı Yaşamı: Hiram Abbas* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık), 2000 / *Behçet Cantürk'ün Anıları* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık), 2003 / *Binbaşı Ersever'in İtirafı* (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları), 1996 / *Reis Gladio'nun Türk Tetikçisi* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık), 2003 / *Teşkilat'ın İki Silahşörü* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık), 2001.

⁶ A partial list of some of DMG's holdings includes: the television stations *CNN Türk*, which was established in partnership with AOL Time Warner, *Kanal D*, *Bravo TV*, *Star* and *Euro D*, and the radio stations *Hür* ('Free') *FM*, *Radyo Foreks* and *Radyo D*, as well as the print dailies *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Radikal*, *Posta*, *Fanatik*, *Referans*, *Star*, *Gözcü* and *Turkish Daily News*.

support by depicting theirs as a struggle by the ‘oppressed’ masses against the ‘elites’. In their eyes, they are culturally ‘oppressed’ by the exclusion suppression of their own ‘traditional’ and ‘Islamic’ values by those of the secular-based Republic, and by their as-of-yet failure to achieve their ultimate goal, as stated frequently—sometimes openly, sometimes indirectly—by the movement’s advocates, of removing the principle of secularism through a gradual erosion of its legitimacy (through the headscarf debate, for instance). For this group, the ‘White Turks’ are an enemy which must be suppressed. There are two reasons for their position: The first is that, according to the Islamist world view, the White Turks, who control and direct social and cultural life of the republic, are the ones preventing—even by outright oppression—the Black Turks from ascending the social ladder. The second reason is political and ethnic. As a result of almost a decade of intensive anti-Semitic propaganda efforts, nearly the entire Islamist intelligentsia has been brought around to the view that the founders of the Turkish Republic and its western, secular principles—and Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) first and foremost among them—were in fact Dönmes. In addition to the ‘taint of Jewishness’ that therefore surrounds the republic’s illegitimate birth, in the Islamist view this cadre of ‘founding fathers’, due to their crypto-Jewish origins, has no stake in the well-being of the Black Turks, even to the point of being willing to sacrifice them for their own interests.

Both the book’s subtitle—‘The Great Secret of the White Turks’—and fellow journalist and television host Cüneyt Özdemir’s description of Yalçın’s work as the attempt to uncover “the ideological cement of the ‘deep state’”, are loaded with meaning.⁷ Even the most superficial appraisal of Soner Yalçın’s approach makes the meaning of Özdemir’s statement clear: the ‘cement’ uncovered by Yalçın is the state’s Sabbatean origins. Additionally, even though *Efendi* itself tends to underplay the radical Islamist accusations of ‘Sabbateanism’ against those individuals who have defended secularism and the founding principles of the Republic (and Republican People’s Party and Democratic Left Party members above all), labeling them ‘White Turks’ while characterizing themselves as ‘Black Turks’, and their use of the concept of the ‘deep state’ to mean—in addition to all of the negative associations it has possessed in the wake of the Susurluk affair)⁸ —the ‘Dönme clan’ responsible for founding and controlling the Turkish Republic and defending it against any encroachment by the

⁷ Cüneyt Özdemir, “Efendi’nin Macerası”, *Radikal Kitap*, 7 May, 2004.

⁸ On November 3, 1996 an accident involving a Mercedes car and a freight truck outside in northwestern Turkey in what came to be known as the “the Susurluk accident”. It would become part of the political history of Turkey, as the passengers in the Mercedes were discovered to have been a parliamentarian in the ruling coalition, a former police chief of Istanbul, a former beauty queen and known mafia consort, and a leading Turkish Mafioso ardently being sought by Interpol. The proximity of these unlikely companions came to symbolise the

Islamist movement, it's not difficult to envision how the book has been received not in an academic or scholarly but political framework, i.e., as a reinforcement of the *idée fixe* of those who wish to replace the present secular Turkish Republic with an Islamic regime: that the only thing standing in the way of realizing this goal is the Dönmes. Likewise, it is in this connection that we can understand the continued interest shown the subject by Ekrem Dumanlı, the Editor-in-Chief of the Islamist religious leader Fethullah Gülen-owned *Zaman* newspaper and the various televised debate and discussion programs dealing with the subject after the book's publication.⁹ The book *Efendi* rests on this very same political and cultural foundation; in its attempt to establish in the minds of the general reader and thereby popularize the idea, already deeply-rooted in the Islamist sector, that it is these Sabbatean political elites who have seized and occupied the key points within the republic.

The Scope of the Marketing Campaign

In addition to his journalistic activity Soner Yalçın has also actively written and/or produced various television programs, including the documentary series "I was there" (*Oradaydım*) for CNN Türk, and the program 5N1K with Cüneyt Özdemir (for the same station), and acted as 'conceptual advisor' of the series 'Valley of the Wolves' (*Kurtlar Vadisi*) shown on SHOW TV. Both this aforementioned Turkish cultural and political backdrop and the tradition of mutual solidarity and 'log rolling' so prevalent in the Turkish media were on display with the appearance of Yalçın's book, so with its author being greeted with great accolades and much talk about the book itself being 'a first' in the field. This was, of course, over and above the major marketing support given to the book by its publishers. The aforementioned Cüneyt Özdemir, who hosts the 5N1K program on Turkey's leading channel, CNN Türk, introduced *Efendi* on his own program, in the weekly magazine *Haftalık*¹⁰, and in daily *Radikal*'s book review magazine. According to Özdemir, *Efendi* was written with "the conscientiousness of the investigative reporter".¹¹ In addition to these plugs, lengthy interviews have been held with Yalçın in a number of DMG-owned journals and newspapers.¹² Even the Kemalist writer for *Hürriyet*, Emin Çölaşan, showered ebullient

secret network of illicit relations between mafia, intelligence and security services and politicians relations that has become known in Turkey by the euphemism "the deep state".

⁹ Ekrem Dumanlı, "Sabetaycılar ve zehirli ok korkusu", *Zaman*, 4 May, 2004.

¹⁰ Cüneyt Özdemir, "Sabetayist'lerin perşinde", *Haftalık* no. 54 (22-28 April, 2004), pp. 146-47.

¹¹ Cüneyt Özdemir, "Efendi'nin Macerası", *Radikal Kitap*, 7 May, 2004.

¹² Ayşe Arman, "Ben Adnan Menderes'e eşcinsel demedim", *Hürriyet Pazar*, 2 May, 2004 / Yasemin Yurtman, "Sabetaycılar İslam'a da sızdı", *Tempo*, no. 18-855 (29 April-5 May, 2004), pp. 46-49.

praise on the book.¹³ The well-known book critic for *Hürriyet*, Doğan Hızlan, who also hosts the “Scribble Ledger” (*Karalama Defteri*) book program on CNN Türk, and his assistant İhsan Yılmaz both used their regular newspaper columns to heap praise upon Yalçın and his work, claiming that he “had put his signature on a great piece of research indeed” and heartily endorsing the book to their readers.¹⁴ Yalçın’s journalistic colleagues who are outside of the DMG orbit have also mentioned the book with varying levels of praise.¹⁵ *Akşam* writer, Serdar Turgut, for instance, who has developed an all-encompassing passion in recent months for conspiracy theories wrote that he read the book “with great attention and as a great intellectual pleasure”,¹⁶ and that the work illuminates “the true history of Turkey”.¹⁷ For his part, *Milliyet* writer Yılmaz Çetiner claimed that *Efendi* allowed the reader the possibility of learning a great deal of information of the “who’s who in the last century, and what did they do” sort.¹⁸ Afet İlğaz, the writer for *Millî Gazete*, the semi-official organ of the Islamist Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*), put Yalçın’s *Efendi* on the same level as his fellow *Aydınlık* columnist Yalçın Küçük’s *Tekeliyet* (“Monopolia”), claiming that “these books—and especially *Efendi*, because it is being reprinted-- will be a help in influencing certain sectors in the formation of these layers of [political] relationships”.¹⁹ In another article Afet İlğaz wrote that *Efendi* “is a very useful book for avoiding mind confusion.”²⁰

What makes this marketing campaign all the more interesting was the role played in it by author himself. The Turkish television and film industry is notorious for its unrestrained use of ‘product placement’, the practice of ‘placing’ clearly identifiable brand name products, from wrist watches, clothing and cigarettes, even cars, in the scenes of television series or in the hands of popular characters. Yalçın, using his position as advisor to the aforementioned “Valley of the Wolves” series, arranged a scene in which he has one of the main heroes in the series, Aslan Bey, pick up the book, which was sitting beside armchair,

¹³ Emin Çölaşan, “Efendi”, *Hürriyet*, 20 April, 2004 Describing the Sabbateans at one point as “Dönmes, who were previously Jews but later adopted Islam” Çölaşan shows just how little he understands the subject, because the proper name for such authentic converts is *mühtedi* not *Dönme*.

¹⁴ “Doğan Hızlan’ın Seçtikleri”, *Hürriyet Cumartesi*, 24 April, 2004 / İhsan Yılmaz, “Mürekkebi Kurumadan”, *Hürriyet*, 30 April, 2004.

¹⁵ Ayça Atikoğlu, “Menderes Sabetaycı mıydı?”, *Birgün*, 17 April, 2004 / “Türkiye’nin gizli tarihi Efendi’de”, *Akşam*, 18 April, 2004 / Melda Davran, “Devlet gibi ailenin Tarihi”, *Yeni Aktüel*, no. 2 (5-11 May, 2004), pp. 130-31.

¹⁶ Serdar Turgut, “Kaybetmeyi onuruna yediremeyen kuşak”, *Akşam*, 3 May, 2004.

¹⁷ Serdar Turgut, “Sabetayizm ve Tarih”, *Akşam*, 4 May, 2004.

¹⁸ Yılmaz Çetiner, “Nurbanu Sultan Yahudi değildi”, *Milliyet*, 13 May, 2004.

¹⁹ Afet İlğaz, “Efendi ve Tekeliyet”, *Millî Gazete*, 17 May, 2004. The Felicity Party is actually the latest political reincarnation of the father of Turkish political Islam, Necmettin Erbakan.

²⁰ Afet İlğaz, “Büyük ve Küçük Satranççılar”, *Millî Gazete*, 14 Haziran 2004.

and extend it to the other person in the scene saying “Look what’s written in *Efendi*”--even though they are discussing the Cyprus issue at the time, not Sabbateanism. The camera is then brought in for a five-second close-up of the book’s cover.²¹

The Effects of the Marketing Campaign

The most direct effect of the *Efendi* marketing campaign was reopening of the subject of Sabbateanism for debate in the medium of television. On April 27, 2004, the SKY Türk channel’s “Press Conference” show featured a debate over Sabbateanism in response to Yalçın’s book. Participating in the debate were well-known conspiracy buff Aytunç Altındal and *Millî Gazete* writer the notoriously anti-Semitic Mehmed Şevket Eygi, while the channel’s editors listened and asked questions.²² The participants essentially expressed the view during the course of the discussion that Dönmes possessed the control of every part of Turkish society. For his part Altındal stated that the “famous Italian family Fendi,” which ran Italy’s popular FENDI fashion house, “was actually Jews from Istanbul’s Teşvikiye district, which had arrived at the name by slightly altering the word ‘efendi’.” None of the other participants reacted to this outlandish claim. For their part, the SKY Türk editors gave the utmost attention to Altındal’s statements, and as such, they presented an accurate if depressing picture of the impoverished cultural and intellectual state—with a few exceptions--of the country’s media workers, and of the content and context-less internal world in which so many of the country’s ‘opinion makers’ operate, despite their great efforts.

A second event inspired by the book and the following marketing blitz surrounding it was the “Conspiracy Theories” program broadcast on the HaberTürk channel on May 12, 2004. The program’s host was Erol Mütercimler, who, in addition to being a retired naval officer, naval historian and a member of the academic staff of Istanbul Kültür Üniversitesi holds the lengthy title of General Coordinator of the STAM Strategic Research Center and TGAV Foundation for the Study of the Turkish Future. During the program Mütercimler argued that the State of Israel often benefited from books such as Yalçın’s, and were often written at the behest and with the funding of the Mossad.

Yet another of the book’s repercussions was the renewed debate on Sabbateanism in Turkey on the “Frank and Honest” (*Açık Açık*) program on the Islamist-oriented Kanal 7 on May 20, 2004. Participating on the show were Aytunç Altındal and Mahmut Çetin, the author

²¹ www.medyatava.net/haber.asp?id=12899 , 23 April, 2004.

²² The only member of the press to subsequently criticize this program was Kürşat Bumin. See his “Bayar, Menderes, Zorlu...Sıradaki Gelsin!”, *Yeni Şafak*, 9 May, 2004.

of the book “Tribe on the Bosphorus” (*Boğazdaki Aşiret*) about blood and business relations between Turkey’s leading families. During the discussion, Altındal stated that he “found it quite beneficial” for the debate on Sabbateanism to be reopened by means of the book *Efendi*, and that, in this manner, “an alternative history to the official version” had been written. He went on to say that, with the assumption of power by the Islamist-leaning Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), the Turkish Republic had reached a crossroads, and that during this time any Sabbateans then comfortably ensconced in the bureaucracy would be dismissed if they weren’t willing to adapt themselves to the new era. Both discussants were of the opinion that those who had displayed ‘secularist’ tendencies were of Sabbatean origin, and that they would now have to change this behavior.

Dissenting Voices....

Despite the size and scope of DMG’s successful marketing campaign, a few writers were not swayed, and a number of noteworthy critiques of the book did appear. One of these was Haluk Hepkon,²³ who published in the socialist Worker’s Party organ *Aydınlık*. The previous year Hepkon had critiqued similar works by fellow *Aydınlık* writer Yalçın Küçük.²⁴ Another critic was independent scholar Orhan Koloğlu’s strange comments, an historian who wrote on Abdülhamid II and freemasons, insinuating that the organized campaign of pointing out people of Dönme origin could be manipulated by the State of Israel:²⁵

Açık bir kampanya olduğunu görüyoruz! Ne diyorlar: Herkes, “Yahudi – dönme”. Benim aklıma şu soru geliyor: Bu kampanyadan kim yararlanır? Propagandaya bakın siz! Şimdi bir adam “hırsız” dersiniz, o çamuru üzerinden atamaz. Sabetayist dersiniz, öylece kalır. Kanıtı yok ama. Bu mekanizmayı Yahudiler de kullanıyorlar.

Yahudiler, hem dönmeleri dışlıyor hem de kullanıyor! Malzemeyi bizim insanlarımız veriyor, onlar da kullanıyorlar.

Efendi, herkese Yahudi damgasını vuruyor! Yahudiliği de herkesin gözünde de büyütüyorlar! Güçlü oluyor onlar. Kimsenin başedemeyeceği güç!

Ben komplo teorilerine girmem ama, bu yazıları yazarlar bir merkezden kullanılıyorlar. Bu çok açık! Son olarak şunu söylüyorum: Bu yazılar, toplumdaki değerlerimizi zayıflatmak için yazılıyor.

Likewise, the liberal-minded Islamist Ahmet Hakan, who at the June the book was published was a columnist at *Sabah* and is the anchorman of the Islamist Kanal 7 television station, from the outset adopted an approach to the book that could be considered critical. He

²³ Haluk Hepkon, “Siyahı beyaz göstermek”, *Aydınlık*, no. 876 (2 May, 2004), pp. 56-57.

²⁴ Haluk Hepkon, “Tarih Komplolarla Açıklanabilir mi?”, *Aydınlık*, no. 857 (21 December, 2003), pp. 56-57.

²⁵ Orhan Koloğlu, “Bu yazıların hepsi bir merkezden kullanılıyor!”, *Aydınlık*, 20 June 2004, no. 8883, p. 14.

leveled criticism at those pitching ‘Sabbatean conspiracy’ theories, evaluated the phenomenon of Sabbateanism itself within the framework of religious freedom, and argued for the necessity of not meddling in the private beliefs of individuals. Nevertheless, Hakan’s approach at times came very close to that of several of the most prominent ‘Sabbatean conspiracy’ advocates he appeared to criticize: the aforementioned Yalçın Küçük, a Marxist professor who has written extensively on the Sabbateans; the Islamist anti-Semitic writer Mehmed Şevket Eygi and the radical Islamist editor-in-chief of *Anadolu’da Vakit* Abdurrahman Dilipak, all of whom share with Hakan the belief that many descendants of the Dönme sect[s] continue to practice their religion in secret.²⁶ In fact, the only significant difference between Hakan and the others is his conviction that the issue of Dönme beliefs and practices should remain their own concern, not that of others.

Another dissenting voice on this issue belongs to Süreyya Su, who has pointed out that the book *Efendi* essentially provides “the most convenient supply of material for building new conspiracy theories”.²⁷ Mehmet Kamış, a writer for the Fethullah Gülen-owned *Aksiyon* magazine wrote, after Haluk Hepkon, probably the most cogent critique of the work yet. In a piece from May 17, 2004, Kamış repeatedly stressed the impropriety that surrounded the fact that people could so easily be labeled ‘Sabbatean’, and called for a closer questioning of the seriousness and accuracy of a thesis that was being proffered to the public on the basis of little more than rumors and hearsay.²⁸ For his part, *Radikal* columnist Nuray Mert commented that the work would no doubt represent a contribution to the large body of anti-Semitic literature in Turkey,²⁹ and reiterated this view in a later piece of criticism.³⁰ Düccane Cündioğlu, a writer for the moderate Islamist *Yeni Şafak* newspaper and supporter of the current Islamist AKP government in Turkey, commented on the book’s inconsistencies in the several pieces he devoted to the work.³¹ One other critique came several months later from a Middle East Technical University professor, Necati Polat, who labeled Yalçın’s work as a product of “the new anti-Semitism”.³² *Radikal*’s columnist Haluk Şahin in his article criticized both Soner Yalçın and Yalçın Küçük in following terms:³³

²⁶ Ahmet Hakan, “Tez ve antitezlerle Sabetaycılık olayı”, *Sabah*, 30 April, 2004.

²⁷ Süreyya Su, “Dönmeler kurtlar sofrasında”, *Milliyet Popüler Kültür*, 9 May, 2004.

²⁸ Mehmet Kamış, “Efendim siz kimlerdensiniz?”, *Aksiyon*, no. 493 (17 May, 2004), p. 68.

²⁹ Nuray Mert, “Efendi”, *Radikal*, 1 June, 2004.

³⁰ Nuray Mert, “Efendi: Bir Mit olarak Tarih”, *Virgöl*, no. 75 (July, 2004), pp. 30-32.

³¹ Düccane Cündioğlu, “Efendi Efendi”, *Yeni Şafak*, 5 June, 2004 / Düccane Cündioğlu, “Kimlere ‘efendi’ denir?”, *Yeni Şafak*, 6 June, 2004.

³² Necati Polat, “Yeni Anti-Semitizm: *Efendi* Üzerine Notlar”, *Doğu Batı*, VII: 29 (August-September-October-2, 2004), pp. 179-194.

³³ Haluk Şahin, “Sabetaycılık ve düzme-bilim”, *Radikal*, 16 Haziran 2004.

Uzun yıllardır dünyada olup biten her şeyi bir Yahudi komplosu olarak gören bazı İslamcı ve milliyetçi çevreler tarafından alçak sesle dile getirilen, ama patlamayan Sabetaycılık savı, Yalçın Küçük ve Soner Yalçın'ın best-seller listelerinin tepesine oturan kitaplarıyla öylesine şişti ki, içindeki havayı taşıyamaz hale geldi.

Ve bazı insanlar nihayet, 'Hadi yahu, bu kadar saçmalık yeter. Gidin siz biraz da başkalarıyla kafa bulun!' demeye başladılar.

Sabetaycılık tartışması, Musevilik'ten İslamiyet'e döndüğünü iddia ettiği halde eski inançlarını gizlice sürdüren küçük bir grubun tarihiyle ve günümüzdeki izleriyle sınırlı kaldığı sürece ilginçti. Ama pompalaya pompalaya, Türkiye'nin 200 yıllık modernleşme tarihini içine alan dev bir komplo haline getirildiği zaman, basılan hava balona sığmaz oldu.

Üstelik atılan çığlıklar bir cadı avını andıran çirkin tonlar kazanmaya başladı:

'Şurada da bir tane var. Bunun da soyadı –er ile bitiyor, demek ki bu da gizli bir dönme, bu da Sabetayist!'

Other columnists also joined their voices to Haluk Şahin and criticized both Soner Yalçın and Yalçın Küçük.³⁴ An answer to these critics come not from Soner Yalçın but from another journalist Oray Egin who wrote:³⁵

Bugünlerde bir de Soner Yalçın'ın *Efendi* kitabıyla ilgili devam eden bir tartışma var. Soner benim en iyi arkadaşım – tam iki yıl boyunca evinden çıkmadan, yüzlerce kitaba, insana gömülerek yakın tarihimizi algılayışımızı değiştirebilecek önemde bir akademik çalışmaya imza attı. Toplumda bir sarsıntı, tartışma yaratması da gayet doğal bu kitabın. Dahası, herkesin karşı çıkabileceği noktaları da mutlaka vardır: Sonuçta akademik kitaplar bu yüzden yazılıyor, tezler bu yüzden ortaya atılıyor. Emin olun, benim binlerce var.

Ama *Efendi* çıktığından beri, kitabı konuşan herkeste bir had bildirme eğilimi. Soner'in harıl harıl çalıştığı günlerde Nişantaşı sokaklarında vitrin bakan pek çok kişi, şimdi *Efendi*'ye acımasızca saldırıyor; pek çoğunun söylemi de demagojiden öteye gitmiyor maalesef. Onunla akademik ürün yarıştıramadıkları, karşı bir tez ileriye süremedikleri için onu başka bir zemine çekmeye çalışıyorlar. Hedef gösterme meselâ.

O zaman burada da bir üretim düşmanlığından başka bir alt metin okumak mümkün değil galiba. Ne garip, önceleri istisnai hadiseler gibiydi kendi köşelerindeki yazarlara saldırılması, giderek bir alışkanlık halini alıyor.

'Dönme' or 'Sabbetean'? – An End to the Argument over Terminology

Until very recently, the terms 'Dönme' or 'Selanikli' ('Salonican' in Turkish) have been used in both scholarly and popular circles to identify the followers of the 17th century messianic claimant Sabbatai Sevi and their descendants. When used alone, the term 'Dönme', although linguistically meaning all religious converts (especially to Islam), has traditionally been used specifically for those followers of Sabbatai Sevi, who, following his example,

³⁴ Yiğit Bulut, "Rakamların Efendi'si", *Radikal*, 17 Haziran 2004 / Kürşat Başar, "Çok bilimsel kitaplar", *Akşam*, 9 Haziran 2004 / Şahin Alpay, "Auschwitz ve Yeni-Antisemitizm", *Zaman*, 29 Ocak 2005.

³⁵ Oray Egin, "Entelektüel düşmanlık", *Haftalık*, no.62, 17-23 June 2004, p. 36.

outwardly converted to Islam while continuing to preserve the beliefs and practices associated with their faith in Sevi as the Jewish Messiah.³⁶ Ever since the mid-1990s, however, the terms ‘Sabetaycı’ and ‘Sabetaycılık’ (‘Sabbatean’ and ‘Sabbateanism’, respectively) have begun to replace ‘Dönme’ in Turkish popular parlance. The main agent behind this shift is no doubt the aforementioned Ilgaz Zorlu, who, possessing Sabbatean roots on his mother’s side, has published a number of articles possessing a near-missionary-like enthusiasm,³⁷ and as well as given countless interviews to the press—particularly the Islamist press, as an ‘expert’ and ‘insider’ on all things Sabbatean. The term ‘Sabbatean/-ism’, while being perhaps less-disparaging than the decidedly negative connotations possessed by ‘Dönme’, nevertheless suggests the persistence of persons believing in/following the teachings of Sabbatai Sevi, in other words, that such a sect or sects are continuing to observe the religious, social and cultural practices of past generations. Even though—or perhaps precisely because—such an assumption is in no way reflected by reality, these terms have been enthusiastically adopted (along with the message they send) by the Islamists in Turkey. This is not as surprising as it may sound, as the sincere belief that the descendants of the Sabbateans continue to practice their religion is well-rooted within the Islamists mind, a belief which has in no way been discouraged or denied by the ‘insider’ Ilgaz Zorlu. On the contrary, he has repeatedly ‘confirmed’ it. The previously mentioned Yalçın Küçük, who shares the conviction that the Sabbateans continue to practice their religion, also uses the term ‘Sabbatean’ in his works. Thus, while its meaning remains current, it appears that the term ‘Dönme’ is largely giving way to ‘Sabbatean’ in both popular and scholarly parlance in Turkey.

Additionally, as a result of the insistent publications of the aforementioned Ilgaz Zorlu, Mehmed Şevket Eygi,³⁸ Abdurrahman Dilipak³⁹ and Yalçın Küçük⁴⁰ (the latter of

³⁶ In this manner, Gershom Scholem, who wrote the is still considered the basic text on Sabbatai Sevi, refers to his followers as the ‘Dönmes’. Abdurrahman Küçük, who wrote the first comprehensive work on the topic of his followers as a doctoral dissertation, later published it as a book, *Dönmeler ve Dönmelik Tarihi*. It is still regarded as the most ‘scholarly’ work on the subject in Turkish and it has seen numerous re-printings in Turkey. For a lengthy analysis of Küçük’s work in English, see: Paul F. Bessemer, “Who is a Crypto-Jew: The Dönme Debate in Turkey”, *Kabbalah*, vol. IX (2003), pp. 133-38.

³⁷ Zorlu later published his earlier, ‘scholarly’ articles as a book, *Evet, Ben Selânikliyim: Türkiye Sabetaycılığı* at his own newly-founded publishing house, Zvi-Geyik Yayınları (Istanbul: 1998). The book something of a rage when published, was eventually expanded to include other articles and debates, going through some 9 printings in all. While the press was established by Zorlu with the aim, among others, of promoting an understanding of Turkey’s religious minorities and of official, government recognition of Sabbateanism as a separate religion, Zorlu himself subsequently petitioned the Turkish courts to be allowed to convert to Judaism, and succeeded.

³⁸ Mehmet Şevket Eygi, *İki Kimlikli, Esrarlı ve Çok Güçlü Bir Cemaat: Yahudi Türkler Yahut Sabetaycılar* (Istanbul: Zvi-Geyik Yayınları) 2000.

³⁹ Dilipak wrote several articles on this matter. As a representative example, see: “Şu Sabatay muhabbetine bayılıyorum”, *Akit*, 11 May 2000.

⁴⁰ Yalçın Küçük, *Sırlar* (Istanbul: İthaki Yayınları), 2004 / Yalçın Küçük, *Tekeliyet, Cilt. 1 ve 2* (Istanbul: İthaki Yayınları), 2003 / Yalçın Küçük, *Şebeke Network*, (Istanbul: YGS , (Istanbul: YGS Yayınları) 2002

whom has produced on the basis of his ‘onomastic studies’ a number of comparative lists of Turkish surnames and their Hebrew equivalents) a number of these texts have been circulated ad infinitum on (largely Turkish) Internet sites containing the claim of the continued existence down to our day of large numbers of practicing Sabbateans, who are said to constitute a significant part of Turkish society.

The Response of the Intelligentsia

The controversy surrounding subject of Sabbateanism has a lengthy history in Turkey, but it has recently reached a high point with the books of Yalçın Küçük and Soner Yalçın. Nevertheless, the attitude of much of the country’s mainstream journalists—those who we would call the ‘opinion leaders’ in Turkey—toward this subject never ceases to amaze. Their stubborn disregard for the most racist aspects of this debate, their utter failure to apply critical thinking to—much less actually criticize--the most outlandish claims and spurious arguments of many of those approaching the subject. All of this stands in stark contrast to their frequent and justified reactions to the hostility and racist demonstrations often shown toward persons possessing Armenian names. A recent example of this myopic attitude is *Anadolu’da Vakit* writer Hüseyin Öztürk. In a piece on the Eurovision song contest he accused the members of the Turkish rock band Athena with being Armenian and the Turkish winner of the contest, Sertab Erener, with being of Sabbatean origin.⁴¹ Those journalists⁴² and non-governmental institutions⁴³ who rightly objected to Öztürk’s use of the term ‘of Armenian origin’ have somehow preferred to remain silent regarding the not-so-subtle anti-Semitic line which this very same newspaper has for years taken in its articles and editorials, and before the campaign of blatantly racist attacks against persons claimed to have Dönme origins. In this environment, in which overtly racist accusations of ‘Sabbatean lineages’ are tossed about with the utmost nonchalance, it is perhaps noteworthy that the overwhelming majority of those who have criticized Yalçın’s book are those in the forefront of those defending both Atatürk himself and Kemalism.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Hüseyin Öztürk, “Eurovision şarkı yarışması, bir Ermeni dayanışmasıydı”, *Anadolu’da Vakit*, 18 May, 2004.

⁴² Nebil Özgentürk, “Athena’cılar birleşin!”, *Sabah*, 22 May, 2004 / Ferhat Kentel, “Çoğul ırkçılığın şahihası”, www.gazetem.net, 27 May, 2004 / Can Dündar, “Su, çatlağını buldu”, *Milliyet*, 30 May, 2004.

⁴³ İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi, press release, 28 May, 2004.

⁴⁴ Haluk Hepkon, “Siyahı beyaz göstermek”, *loc. cit.* / Hanifi Altaş, “Kendine Gel Efendi”, 7 May, 2004, www.internetgazete.com/yaz.asp?id=4158 / Uluç Gürkan, “Ne Mutlu Türküm diyene...”, *Star*, 25 May, 2004 / Uluç Gürkan, “Kim Suçlu?...”, *Star*, 29 May, 2004 / Uluç Gürkan, “Bilinçli mesajlar”, *Star*, 24 Ağustos 2004 / Hadi Uluengin, “Dönmelik”, *Hürriyet*, 27 May, 2004 / Ruhat Mengi, “Hedef şahıslar mı, laiklik ve Atatürkçülük mü?”, *Vatan*, 1 June, 2004 / Ruhat Mengi, “İddia Üzerine Sabetaycılık...Yok yaa?”, *Vatan*, 2 June, 2004 / Hikmet Çiçek – Aytunç Erkin, “Sabetaycı Operasyon’un hedefi Atatürk”, *Aydınlık*, 20 June 2004, no. 883, pp. 14-19 / “Sabetay propagandası yapan gazeteciler”, *Aydınlık*, 27 June 2004, no. 88, pp. 24-25 Namık Kemal

What then can explain this partisan attitude on the part of so many of the country's 'opinion leaders'? To account for this situation it is necessary to recall the ideological battle lines that have been formed within the Turkish intelligentsia. During the past decade or so, Turkey has witnessed sharp debates over issues such as the character and extent of the so-called 'Deep State', the 'Second Republic', the allowance/ forbiddance of head-coverings in state facilities, the Islamicly-oriented 'İmam-Hatip' schools and the 'post-modern military coup' of February 28, 1997 which brought the demise of Islamist Prime Minister's Necmettin Erbakan's Refah-Yol (Welfare Party - True Path Party) coalition government. As a result of these, the leftist-liberal intellectual elites, who view Kemalism as an anachronistic and authoritarian ideology and the Islamists as 'those oppressed by Kemalist authoritarianism', tend react almost reflexively to the slightest attack against Turkey's Armenian population, which for them represents the most 'oppressed' of the minorities due to the tragic events surrounding the 1915 Deportations, while slights or outright assaults against 'the Dönmes' or 'Atatürk's race' (the latter with its implication that Mustafa Kemal himself was of Sabbatean origin), pass without a response, so that leftist intellectual circles won't be seen forming ranks with the Kemalists or identifying themselves with Kemalism in any way. A prime example of this is the widely read columnist and novelist Ahmet Altan, who, writing about a pending bill on Turkey's Council on Higher Education, penned the following statement:

I believe that the government's education policy is extraordinarily wrong-headed, but I also believe that it is absolutely necessary to support the government if this matter becomes the pretext for a power struggle between the government and the generals.⁴⁵

"Efendi is Eliminating the Taboos of Turkish History"

This statement, which was used in the text advertisements for Soner Yalçın's book, has, unfortunately, little or no connection with reality. This approach, whereby a subject frequently debated in the Turkish media is labeled 'taboo' and those who write about it are thereby exalted as heroes, is little more than advertising hype, setting up the straw man of 'forbidden subjects' for its heroes to topple. By now, in fact, dozens of articles and books have been published, both here and abroad, on the subject. If we recall the aforementioned Ilgaz Zorlu, whose articles and interviews were something of a media sensation already in the late 1990s, then it becomes all the more difficult to see Yalçın's work as either 'a first', or to

Zeybek, "Ata'nın soyu soppu", *Ayyıldız*, 9 Haziran 2004 / Hanri Kanditan, "Yahudi ve dönme komplosuna dair", *Aydınlık*, 4 July 2004, no. 885, p. 31 / Dr. Ramazan Kağan Kurt, "Atatürk ve Sabataycılık", *Önce Vatan*, 4 Ağustos 2004, "Sabataycılık nedir?", *Önce Vatan*, 5 Ağustos 2004, "Sabatayizm ve Antisabatayizm", *Önce Vatan*, 6 Ağustos 2004, "Hedef Üniter Milli Devlet", *Önce Vatan*, 8 Ağustos 2004. Ramazan Kağan Kurt also published the same articles in the ultra nationalist newspaper *Ortadoğu* between – 28-30 October 1930.

⁴⁵ Ahmet Altan, "Asıl sözüm...", www.gazetem.net, 17 May, 2004.

understand it as somehow collapsing any social or intellectual taboos. Those familiar with the ‘Dönme debate’ in Turkey will no doubt recognize these claims for what they are: part of a massive advertising campaign for the book, undertaken by a DMG-owned company.

As for the matter of these ‘taboos’ broached by Yalçın, one of these is the nonsensical and racist belief regarding Mustafa Kemal’s ‘true ethnicity’. This belief, as uttered by his father, was given expression by the prominent Turkish writer Aziz Nesin in his memoirs:

In our house the talk was against Mustafa Kemal: Mustafa Kemal’s origins, his true race is Jewish. He’s a Jewish convert. He’s blind in one eye, take a look at the pictures of him, it’s clear that one of his eyes is made of glass....Mustafa Kemal, was going to do away with Islam. My father, who was a devout partisan of Abdulhamid, would never say either Gazi or Mustafa Kemal, he’d call him ‘Blind Kemal’. My father wasn’t alone in this sentiment, there were a whole lot of people who were ever so secret opponents of Mustafa Kemal.⁴⁶

Nor was Nesin’s father an isolated voice. The belief that Mustafa Kemal was a Dönme is one long and widely-held within the Islamist sector, and is a component of a world view which holds that those responsible for founding the Turkish Republic—and above all, Mustafa Kemal—who eliminated the Ottoman Caliphate and established a secular order in its place, and who have in our day taken it upon themselves to preserve both the republic and secularism, were and are Dönmes. The logic that follows such a world view is that the Turkish Republic established by Mustafa Kemal is, at essence, a ‘Jewish Republic’. Another adjunct of this belief is the sole reason for the deposing of Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1909 was his refusal of Theodor Herzl’s request that he be given land in order that Jewish settlers in Palestine, who refused to adopt Ottoman citizenship, could establish colonies so as to establish a Jewish state. In the widely-held Islamist view, this refusal was avenged when the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), which was under the control of the Jews, Dönmes and Freemasons, deposed the Sultan and exiled him to Salonica. The process which began with this act would reach its conclusion with the declaration of the Republic and the abolition of the Caliphate. Because all three of these events are seen as a ‘Jewish plot’, it stands to reason, in the Islamist world view, that the greatest obstacle to the transformation of the current, secular Turkish Republic into an Islamic Republic is this ‘cabal’ of crypto-Jewish Dönmes controlling the country.⁴⁷ It is on the basis of this general outlook that *Akit*’s editor-in-chief Abdurrahman Dilipak sarcastically referred to the book [by this

⁴⁶ Aziz Nesin, *Böyle Gelmiş, Böyle Götmez. c. 1: Yol* (Istanbul: Adam Yayınları), 1998, p. 135.

⁴⁷ For more on this subject, see the article Rifat N. Bali, “Another Enemy: The Dönme” *Kabbalah*, vol. IX (2003), pp. 77-108 [translation of the article “Bir Diğer Düşman: Dönmeler”, in Rifat N. Bali, *Musa’nın Evlatları Cumhuriyet’in Yurttaşları* (Istanbul: İletişim) 2001, pp. 411-456].

author], “The Jews of Turkey During the Republican Era: An Odyssey of Turkification” (*Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni*) as “The Jews of Turkey During the Republican Era: An Odyssey of Judaizing” (*Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Yahudileştirme Serüveni*).⁴⁸ Nor was this due to a slip of the pen, or a typesetting error. Indeed, it derives from this very belief in Mustafa Kemal’s ‘Dönme-ism’ that for Turkey the entire Republican period has been in which Turkish culture and society have become ‘Judaized’.

Nor is this view the exclusive domain of the Islamist camp. Like Ilgaz Zorlu, who for his own reasons has characterized the Turkish Republic as the ‘Sabbatean Republic’,⁴⁹ Soner Yalçın has made not-so-veiled allusions in various talks, given in the wake of his book’s appearance, that would indicate that he shares such a belief.⁵⁰ For instance, in an interview with Yalçın, *Hürriyet* writer Ayşe Arman asked the author the question “And what was Mustafa Kemal?”, to which Yalçın replied, “I don’t know. Someone else should research this!”⁵¹ The aforementioned Abdurrahman Dilipak, who share’s the belief in Atatürk’s Dönme origins but, like many others in his position, dares not to transgress Turkey’s “Law Regarding Crimes Committed Against [the Memory of] Atatürk (*Atatürk Aleyhinde İşlenen Suçlar Hakkında Kanun*) by stating so openly, has instead limited himself to the comment “It’s not easy to operate in the face of certain realities”.⁵²

An Idée Fixe: “The Dönmes founded the Republic and are running it”

Following the examples of Yalçın Küçük and Ilgaz Zorlu in their interviews with the Islamist press, Soner Yalçın continually alludes to a ‘Jewish conspiracy’ in his book, yet he refrains from stating so clearly. Nevertheless, through the generous sprinkling of exclamation marks found throughout the book, the author makes the clear insinuation that nothing is coincidental, all the events he mentioned are connected to one another. Yet, apart from perhaps the occasional detail, there is, in the final analysis, very little new in what both Küçük and Yalçın have written. Already in the mid-1970s, the notoriously anti-Semitic author Şakir Alpaşlan Yasa, writing under the alias ‘Yesevizade’, wrote the first of such works, “Judaism [alt.: Jewishness] and the Dönmes” (*Yahudilik ve Dönmeler*). Basing his work on obituary

⁴⁸ Abdurrahman Dilipak, “İster inan ister inanma!”, *Akit*, 4 April, 2000. The newspaper’s name has subsequently been changed to *Anadolu’da Vakit*.

⁴⁹ Hanifi Altaş, “Dedikodu Tarihçiliği ve Yahudi-İslamcı Paslaşması”, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁰ Ayşe Arman, “Ben Adnan Menderes’e eşcinsel demedim”, *loc. cit.* / Yasemin Yurtman, “Sabetaycılar İslam’a da sızdı”, *loc. cit.*

⁵¹ Ayşe Arman, *ibid.*

⁵² Abdurrahman Dilipak, “Türkiye’de garip şeyler oluyor”, *Anadolu’da Vakit*, 5 May, 2004.

notices for persons being buried in the Bülbüldere Cemetary in Üsküdar, which is commonly known as the Dönme cemetery Yasa attempted to establish family links and published lists of suspected Sabbateans, as well as membership lists of organizations he believed were rife with Jews and Dönmes. In like fashion, the head of Ankara University's Faculty of Divinity, Professor Hikmet Tanyu, attempted to establish such a causality by publishing 'Dönme lists' in his massive, 2-volume work "Turks and Jews Throughout History" (*Tarih Boyunca Türkler ve Yahudiler*) which also appeared in the late 1970s. What Küçük and Yalçın have done then, is simply to provide a more 'comprehensive' and 'scientific' tone to what is essentially the same abiding belief that the Dönmes run Turkey. By merely substituting the word 'Jews' for 'crypto-Jews' and 'France' for 'Turkey' we can find the same claim in the century-old works of the *fin de siècle* French anti-Semite Edouard Drumont (1844-1917), whom Yalçın cites as a source (p. 26, n. 7). A similar stance can be seen in the Turkish context in the works of the aforementioned Hikmet Tanyu, the 'Foundation for Scientific Research' (*Bilim Araştırma Vakfı*) and Cevat Rifat Atilhan. This view has been and continues to be repeated *ad nauseum* by radical Islamists both within Turkey and abroad.

Nor does the author refrain from resorting to disinformation. He claims, by the most simple-minded logic that Zionism and its advocates are anti-Semitic (p. 106), and devotes special effort to pointing out which famous Turkish personalities are actually Jewish, such as the son-in-law of journalist and historian Cemal Kutay (p. 369) and the advertising executive Jefe Medina (p. 379). Although Yalçın is no expert on Ottoman history, he lists several names on which he bases the claim that Köprülü Fazıl Ahmet Paşa's being brought to the Grand Vezirate in 1661 were connected to the existence of "a powerful Jewish lobby in the Palace" (p. 416). In similar manner, the author claims that, when Sabbatai Sevi proclaimed his messiahship, there was a "powerful lobby of Jewish converts in the Palace" (p. 418). One of the previously mentioned exclamation marks that litter his book follows Yalçın's noting of the fact that Ayten Alpman has adapted an Israeli pop song to Turkish with the name "My Country" (p. 463). Yalçın also insinuates—with that inflammatory tone all his own-- that, during the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1570-71, it was actually this powerful Jewish lobby which influenced the Palace to take the decision to conquer the island, with the goal of turning it into a future Jewish State.

What is less noteworthy than these wild claims themselves is the fact that they are actually 'old hat': the same claims can be found nearly three decades before in the writings of

Yesevizade.⁵³ And, like Yesevizade, Yalçın's thought world seems dominated by the preconceived notion of 'Jewish and Dönme control' of every aspect of political, cultural and intellectual life. Thus, from his viewpoint, it was only Jews and Turks who stayed behind on the Ottoman lands abandoned by the Greek and Armenian communities after World War I. According to the author "[It was] the Sabbateans who formed the majority of the Turks" (p. 228). The logical conclusion of this utterly fanciful determination is clear: During that period Jews, either open or secret, controlled the Ottoman State. By this sort of scattering of such 'fact-lets' that Yalçın practices throughout his work, the author implies, through the overall picture that emerges, that both the Ottoman and Turkish States have long been under some sort of 'Jewish' control. Nevertheless, he usually refrains from going that far, instead he indirectly maneuvers his readers toward this conclusion.

Another Idée Fixe: The Jews control America

Yalçın's view of Jewish control extends far beyond Turkey's present borders in both time and space. In one place he writes that:

American President W. Wilson was emotionally bound to Zionism....Throughout the war years the American administration adopted Zionism as state policy. Doubtlessly, The domination of the financial and publishing worlds by American Jews had a great role in this. The United States even specially selected the ambassadors that were sent to Istanbul in order to bring these Zionist policies to life.(p. 246).

Thus, Yalçın writes, of the 54 U.S. ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire and its Turkish successor state so far, 90 percent of them have been Jewish. He lists the James Spain, Robert Strausz-Hupe, Morton Abramowitz, Marc Grossman, Robert Parris and current ambassador Eric Edelman as Jews (p. 246, n. 5), and, while this in itself says nothing, it does share a striking similarity to the claims of the Islamists sector that American bureaucrats and politicians of Jewish origin have been directing U.S. foreign policy in accordance with the interests of the State of Israel.⁵⁴ Over and above the fact that the United States Foreign Service website contains no biographical information regarding the religious or communal affiliations of its ambassadors (of which there have been 53, not 54), Yalçın's claim is both arbitrary and, as it turns out, wrong. At least two of those identified as Jewish (Mark Parris and James Spain) are not. As for President Wilson's Zionist policies, it is well known that he

⁵³ Yesevizade, "Kıbrıs harekâtının perde arkası", *Sebil*, 1 October-12 November, 1976.

⁵⁴ To find such claims one need look no further than the publications of Radio Islam and the Islamic Party of Great Britain. See, for instance: "Capitol Hill: Mount Zion of Diaspora Jews", Winter, 1999, www.islamicparty.com/commonsense/27capitolhill.htm and "The Jewish U.S. Ambassadors", 22 April, 1998, www.radioislam.net/islam/english/jewishp/jambas.htm

looked favorably upon—even proposing at one point—the idea of a Jewish homeland, but there was no ‘hidden hand’ of powerful Jewish financiers and publishers at work here. Wilson simply believed in the protection and independence—or at least autonomy—of all religious and ethnic minorities, not only the Jews. If Yalçın had simply shaken off his preconceived notions about Jews long enough to read a couple encyclopedia articles about Woodrow Wilson he could have surely perceived this.

Soner Yalçın and the Capital Tax Law

Another of the books many astonishing claims are found in the section dealing with the notorious Capital Tax Law of 1942 and the manner in which it was implemented.⁵⁵ In our day, when there is a general consensus that when the idea of equal citizenship that the founders of the Turkish Republic desired to create was destroyed by the Capital Tax Law, and when the only groups who defend and praise the Capital Tax are the Worker’s Party, the Nationalist Action Party and some others on the right fringe, Yalçın takes issue with non-Muslims who complain over the discriminatory treatment to which they were subjected by the Capital Tax and its unequal imposition:

The Jews, Armenians, Greeks and Sabbateans in Turkey have all made a ‘big deal’ out of the Capital Tax. So much so that they have created the [false] impression that the country was a place of peace and harmony and the state fleeced the minorities without mercy! No one [ever] mentions the wartime economy! (p. 394)

But his colorful description of the ‘impression created’ is only half correct. While the country may not have been a placid and secure place in the years 1942-43, his description of the state’s role is not far from the mark. The truth of the matter, of which the public is now aware and Yalçın inadvertently states, is that by means of the Capital Tax Law and its unequal imposition the Turkish State taxed its non-Muslim minorities in the most relentless and unjust of manners. Yet the denial with which the author expresses this fact reflects an attitude of anti-minority enmity more often held by the country’s extreme nationalists.

⁵⁵ The Capital Tax Law was passed on 11 November, 1942. The law, which aimed to tax the excessive profits made by black marketeers and war profiteers under the difficult wartime conditions, was ultimately implemented in the most discriminatory of fashions. Non-Muslims and those identified as descendants of the Dönmes were taxed at rates far higher than the rate for Muslims. Those of the former groups who were unable to pay the tax, which was often assessed arbitrarily, were sent to labor camps, such as Aşkale in Eastern Anatolia as punishment, where they were forced to perform hard manual labor such as road building. By imposing the law in this manner, the goal was to weaken or eliminate the presence of non-Muslims in the fields of commerce and industry and to enable a Muslim bourgeoisie to emerge in its place. There is as of yet little material available in English on these events, but one of the most important primary sources on the period, the memoirs of the Istanbul Province’s Director of Finance during the war years, has been translated. Faik Ökte, *The Tragedy of the Turkish Capital Tax* (London: Croom Helm) 1987 [transl., by Geoffrey Cox].

Even more astonishing is Yalçın's portrayal of the Capital Tax as a 'Jewish plot'. Yalçın takes a single court case, one between a Jewish (Leon Taranto Tur'arlan) and a Sabbatean-descended (Refik Bezmen) partner of the firm Mensucat Santral, Inc. which arose after the war from events surrounding the Capital Tax and which has since passed into Turkish legal history as a textbook case, and makes broad generalizations so that he is able to deduce that the Dönmes actually benefited from the taxes that the Jews were forced to pay.(p. 395). Such a statement fits nicely into Yalçın's conspiracy-laden world view, in which Faik Ökte, the Director of Finance for the province of Istanbul during the war, who was one of the central figures in the implementation of the tax and subsequently published a *mea culpa* in the form of memoirs, is also identified as a Dönme.(p. 398) Not only does Yalçın appear to accept with a straight face the truth of the wildly nonsensical theory published in *Millî Gazete* by Afet Ilgaz,⁵⁶ which claims that the Capital Tax was imposed by the Dönmes with the aim of encouraging the emigration of Jews to Palestine in order to be able to bolster their numbers there for the creation of the State of Israel, he then turns around and accuses those Jews who actually emigrated to Israel as having acted disloyally toward the Turkey. (pp. 396-97) Yalçın's accusation of 'disloyalty' against non-Muslim emigrants is one of the trademarks of extreme rightist and chauvinist thought in Turkey. What Yalçın thinks of hundreds of thousands of Muslim Turks who have left and settled in other countries such as Germany and Australia is never mentioned—only that he feels the Jewish citizens who have emigrated have somehow behaved disloyally by doing so.

Yalçın next makes the amazing assertion that non-Muslims made no investment in industry during either the Ottoman or Republican periods, while the contribution of the major Jewish investors "hardly amounted to anything", either in the Ottoman or the Republican eras. Basing himself on this foundation he is able to determine that "there is not a shred of truth [to the claim] that they gave up investing in Turkey", in the wake of the Capital Tax Law.(pp. 397-98) But the author has not examined a single one of the actual historical sources concerning this subject, for had he done so, he would have seen that, until the year 1950 the Turkish private sector had never invested greatly in industry. And just as Yalçın has revealed his ignorance even of the published sources concerning commercial and industrial companies in the early Republican period⁵⁷, he also shows himself unaware of another scholarly source

⁵⁶ Afet Ilgaz, "Varlık Vergisinin İçyüzü", *Millî Gazete*, 23 August, 2002.

⁵⁷ For example, A. Gündüz Ökçün, *1920-1930 Yılları Arasında Kurulan Türk Anonim Şirketlerinde Yabancı Sermaye* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları) 1971 / Remzi Saka – Hasan Tahsin,

which, by examining the example of the textile industry, arrives at the conclusion that non-Muslim entrepreneurs did indeed refrain from investing in Turkish industry in the wake of the Capital Tax.⁵⁸

As for the phenomenon of many Jewish emigrants returning to Turkey after the DP took power in 1950, the only explanation that Yalçın provides for this is the DP's appointment—against the opposition of the Arab states--of the venerable former Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras⁵⁹, whom Yalçın claims to have been appointed merely due to his having been a Dönme, as Turkey's representative on the Palestine Conciliation Commission. The book also hints that this was also the sole reason for Tevfik Rüştü Aras' original appointment as Foreign Minister (1925-1938). In one of his many moments of excitability, Yalçın states: "Both the Democrat Party Government [1950-1960] and Aras were of like mind regarding the subject of the independent State of Israel! Sometimes it's difficult to understand the reasons behind this type of political preferences!" (p. 455) Or not. While space limitations prevent the citation of the full text, Yalçın's tone and the structure of his argument are meant to persuade the reader that the reasons are not so hard to find after all: DP Prime Minister Adnan Menderes is also suggested to be of Dönme origin, and thus, the connecting thread in this consistency in Turkish foreign policy is neither geographic nor political interest, but rather the Jewish blood flowing through the veins of its leading politicians. In this same way, Yalçın suggests that these same Dönme politicians subsequently brought those same Jews who left Turkey for Israel to return again, after the emigrants took heart upon seeing the positive atmosphere created by the ascent of the Dönmes to power after 1950.

The Dönmes and the Cosmopolitan Lifestyle

Sermaye Hareketi (Istanbul: Amedi Matbaası) 1930 / Ayhan Aktar, "Şark Ticaret yıllıklarında Sarı Sayfalar: İstanbul'da Meslekler ve İktisadi Faaliyetler Hakkında Bazı Gözlemler, 1868-1938", *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 76 (Bahar, 1998), pp. 105-143 / Murat Çokgezen – Hamdi Genç – Murat Koraltürk, "Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında İş Dünyasının Profili", *İktisat, İşletme ve Finans*, no. 216 (March, 2004), pp. 62-75 / Mete Tunçay, "Tercim-i Ahval Ansiklopedisi'ne göre Atatürk Türkiye'sinde Yabancılar", *Atatürk Döneminin Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Sorunları, 1923-1938* (Istanbul: İktisadi ve Ticari İlimler Akademisi Mezunları Derneği), 1977, pp. 85-112.

⁵⁸ Edward C. Clark, "The Turkish Varlık Vergisi Reconsidered", *Middle Eastern Studies*, May 1972, Vol. 8, issue 2, pp. 205-216.

⁵⁹ Tevfik Rüştü Aras (1883-1972) was the doyen of Turkish foreign affairs for much of the Single-Party period (1923-38). Born in Çanakkale, he studied at the medical school in Beirut, after which he worked as a doctor and was an early member of the Committee of Union and Progress, subsequently serving as member of Central Committee. He was an early friend of M. Kemal and served as a deputy in nationalist assemblies from 1920 on, first for Muğla, later for Izmir. From 1925-1938 he served as Foreign Minister of Turkey, but since he differed with İsmet İnönü over foreign policy matters, he was appointed ambassador to London, where he remained until 1942. Although he officially retired from public service the following year, he wrote frequent columns for the dailies and actively supported the DP after 1946. He served as the Chairman of the Board of The Labor Bank of Turkey (*Türkiye İş Bankası*) from 1952-59, after which he spent most of his remaining years writing his memoirs.

One of the persistent reasons for the Islamists loathing of the Dönmes has been their belief that their ‘cosmopolitanism’ has brought a ‘Western’ lifestyle to Turkey and the dissolution and decadence that have been a direct result of this. Among the foundational ‘proofs’ of this subjective opinion are the facts that the people who first introduced cinema into Turkey, the İpekçi brothers, came from Sabbatean stock, as did the owner of *Vatan* newspaper, Ahmet Emin Yalman, whose paper organized a beauty contest to select Miss Turkey in the early 1950s.⁶⁰ In explaining the lifestyle and social changes that took place in Turkey in the 1950s Yalçın, borrowing another page from the Islamists book, suggests that it was the Dönmes who were at the forefront of establishing a western lifestyle in the country. Among the claims he produces to support this theory are that Dönmes and Jews were among the founders of the first Turkish branch of the Rotary Club—an favorite on the Islamist sector’s list of ‘arms of the international Zionist conspiracy’, and that the person who he claims to have been instrumental in bringing jazz to Turkey was also of Sabbatean origin.

Factual Errors

Apart from the questionable opinions and shaky logic of *Efendi*, the work is also riddled by numerous factual and clerical errors. The fault for this ultimately lies with the publisher, Doğan Kitapçılık, which apparently failed to submit the book for review, either to experts in the field or even to editors and fact checkers. Among the errors I found are the following:

1. When mentioning the palace physician Hayatîzade Mustafa Fevzi Efendi (a.k.a. Moses ben Rafael Abrabanel) on pp. 38-39, Yalçın refers to him with the Turkish term *Yahudi dönmesi*, with the intended meaning a Jew who has converted to Islam. The proper Turkish term is *mühtedi*. Using the term *dönme* in the manner that Yalçın has done blurs the distinction between actual converts and the Dönmes who outwardly converted but secretly continued in their faith in Sabbatai Sevi and his teachings.
2. On page 42, footnote 17 the author cites Yalçın Küçük’s *Tekeliyet* (p. 243) for the claim that the word *Kapani* in Hebrew means ‘my Izmir’. This is incorrect. Depending on its Hebrew spelling it could theoretically mean ‘he forced me’ or the more obtuse ‘he skimmed (as in: cream or scum) me’
3. The Ladino language is not a mixture of Spanish and Hebrew (p. 57). It is essentially 15th century Spanish with a number of loan words from Turkish, French and Greek.

⁶⁰ Rifat N. Bali, *Musa’nın Evlatları Cumhuriyet’in Yurttaşları* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları), 2001, pp. 435-437.

4. The author states that the deputy for Salonica during the Unionist period (1908-1918), Emanuel Karasu/Carasso is the father of novelist Bilge Karasu. (p. 84). In his article “Emanuel Karasu Biyografisine Bir Başlangıç” (“The Beginnings of a Biography of Emanuel Karasu”) [*Toplumsal Tarih*, September, 1995) author Roni Margulies lists the names of the Salonican-born attorney’s children and Bilge is not among them. A widespread rumor in literary circles has Bilge Karasu as the son of *Le Journal D’Orient* publisher Albert Karasu and his Greek wife, Angèle Lorelay.
5. Yalçın states that two persons who bear the same surname (‘Toledo’, in this case) are ‘probably’ related.(p. 86 n. 18) This is incorrect.
6. The statement that “Ottoman Jewry were opposed to Zionism” (p. 105, n. 2) does not accurately reflect the truth of the matter. There were among Ottoman Jewry those both for and against Zionism. The author would do well to refer to the work of Esther Benbassa.⁶¹
7. On page 153, Yalçın states, in regard the 1919 work by Col. Sadık Bey *Dönmelerin Hakikati* (“The Truth [About] the Dönmes”) that it was “a book that in those days never left the hands of (i.e., was widely and enthusiastically read by) the Ottoman intelligentsia”. But this assessment is utterly arbitrary and unfounded, because the author has not the slightest evidence (mention of it in the contemporary press, for instance) as to whether or not the work was actually popular at the time.
8. The author’s fixation with names leads him to imply that, since the name ‘Nejat’ was coincidentally carried by an Iranian Jew, there must be some ‘Jewish connection’ to an Ottoman individual of the same name living nearly a century before. (p. 172, n. 3).
9. On page 245 the author asks, “Was it just a coincidence that most of the founders of the [Turkish] “Committee for Wilson’s Principles” were Sabbateans?” and answers himself with “Certainly!” In fact, out of the six names that Yalçın has selected from the lengthy list of founding members, only one, Ahmet Emin Yalman, is actually of Sabbatean origin. Despite the author’s claims to the contrary (pp. 245, 350, n. 2), Halide Edib was not from a Sabbatean family. Rather, her father had been a Muslim convert from Judaism. This has been stated by Mina Urgan in her memoirs, *Bir Dinozorun Anıları* (“The Recollections of a Dinosaur”, p. 266). As previously mentioned, Yalçın repeatedly uses the terms *mühtedi* and *dönme* interchangeably,

⁶¹ Esther Benbassa, *Une Diaspora Sépharade en Transition, Istanbul XIXème-XXe Siècles* (Paris: Cerf) 1993. In English there is also: Esther Benbassa “Zionism and the Politics of Coalitions in the Ottoman Jewish

despite their different connotations. The claim that the aforementioned Committee for Wilson's Principles was under the influence of the Jews was originally thrown out by the British High Commissioner during that era. Stanford J. Shaw's recent *From Empire to Republic, The Turkish War of National Liberation, 1918-1923: A Documentary Study* dismisses this claim as so much nonsense⁶², but Yalçın is apparently unaware of this work as well. Otherwise he would have no doubt refrained from repeating this false 85-year-old claim.

10. Yalçın wrongly refers to İsmail Hakkı Okday as 'Pasha' (p. 252) evidently confusing him with one of several other prominent 'İsmail Hakkı's in late Ottoman history.
11. While not exactly an error, Yalçın's conspiratorial world view is on display in the case of the long-running historical debate over whether or not Hasan Tahsin (a.k.a. "Osman Nevres") fired the first shot against the invading Greek forces in Izmir as an internal Sabbatean dispute: In his breathless fashion, he states: "I suspect that this debate is the result of falling out of the [different] Sabbatean groups between themselves!" (p. 262, n. 10)⁶³
12. Basing himself on a passage from the controversial novel by Liz Behmoaras, *Mazhar Osman Kapalı Kutudaki Fırtına* ("Mazhar Osman: The Tempest in the Teacup"), Yalçın asserts that the historical Yusuf Mazhar Osman was a Dönme. (p. 299, n. 4) In fact, the passage to which Yalçın is referring in the book occurs at his mother's funeral, where the young Mazhar Osman is drawn aside by an elderly watchman who attempts to explain to him Sabbatean belief. But the final sentences of this section, wherein his father draws him away telling the watchman "These aren't our beliefs, pops, we're not of your[people]..." are left out by Yalçın, leaving the reader with the impression that Osman was indeed 'of theirs'.
13. In the section on the Capital Tax Law, the author provides wrong information explaining the various rates at which the law dictated the tax should be levied. (p. 393) In fact, there were no such different rates listed in the law: it was only in its actual

Communities in the Early Twentieth Century", *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership* [Aron Rodrigue, ed.], (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 1992, pp. 225-251.

⁶² Vol. I, (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu) 2000, p. 190.

⁶³ This 'totalizing' view of the Jewish-Sabbatean conspiracy recalls the equally simplistic conspiratorial thinking of Mehmed Şevket Eygi. Eygi, faced with cracks in the vast 'Dönme conspiracy' he had previously thought monolithic when he perceives that three of the five candidates for President of the Turkish Republic are 'Sabbateans', doesn't even consider that maybe there is no such conspiracy. Instead, he writes: "The matter that has got me thinking is this: why don't the Jews and Sabbateans come out with one candidate instead of three? In my view, the answer is that they are divided among themselves, and are having internal disputes". Mehmed Şevket Eygi, *İki kimlikli...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-94.

- imposition that the different rates were applied. Because the author fails to explain that, as written, it was not the law which was discriminatory but rather the manner in which it was executed, the reader is left with the opposite impression.
14. At one point Yalçın, relying on his colleague Yalçın Küçük's 'onomastique' obsession, hints that, since the word 'Uz' is actually found in Hebrew and means 'light', the physician and DP-period government minister Behçet Uz must have been a Dönme. (p. 362) In fact, there is no such word in Hebrew. The closest match might be 'Oz', but it means 'strength' or 'might', not 'light'.
 15. Yalçın's reference to [my] book *Musa'nın Evlatları, Cumhuriyet'in Yurttaşları* on page 390 is incorrect. The proper reference is rather another book of mine, the aforementioned *Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni*.
 16. Chaim Barlas is mentioned as "one of the leaders of the Jewish community" [in Turkey]. Chaim Barlas was not a Turkish Jew. Rather, he was the Director for Refugees for the Jewish Agency in Palestine and served as the Agency's representative in Istanbul during the war years.
 17. The author criticizes the several 'Islamist' newspapers and journals from the Single Party Period (1923-1946) leveled criticism at other periodical and journal owners for having been of Sabbatean extraction. (p. 392) But this is historically inaccurate, because there was no overt Islamist movement during this period, and thus, by extension, no 'Islamist' press. The Islamist movement only reemerged in the year 1946, at which point it did indeed begin making such claims.
 18. Contrary to Yalçın's claim (pp. 414-415), Yılmaz Çetiner has clearly shown in an article in *Milliyet* (13 May, 2004) that Nurbanu Sultan was not Jewish.
 19. The field of expertise of the Turkey-based American writer John Freely is not, as Yalçın would have it, Sabbatean cemeteries. (p. 439) Freely is best known for his travel guides for Turkey, most notably *Strolling Thru Istanbul: A Guide to the City*, and his *A History of Robert College*. His work *The False Messiah*, which deals with the history of Sabbatai Sevi and the Dönmes, was written with the goal of providing a general knowledge of the subject to the foreign reader. It is neither original nor scientific in character, and has been criticized on these grounds.⁶⁴
 20. On page 472 the author states that Germany gave up her colonies after 1945. Incorrect. Germany gave them up after the First World War.

⁶⁴ Marc David Baer, "Kayıp Mesih Aramak!", *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 223 (July, 2002), pp. 71-72.

21. Zeki Kunalalp was not, as Yalçın would have it, Assistant to the General Secretary of Economic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry, (p. 485) but of Political Affairs. Furthermore, his son Sinan Kunalalp was never a diplomat. Since both Sinan and his brother Selim are still living, it is puzzling that the author mentions them in the past tense.
22. Yalçın has apparently not read the English translation of Gerschom Scholem's classic work *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystic Messiah* or in any other language. Instead, he appears to have read the badly butchered and selective pirate translation without any awareness of its flawed character.⁶⁵ Thus he can claim that Scholem wrote *Mesih mi, Sahte Peygamber mi?*, ("Messiah or False Prophet?") which is the misleading title of the aforementioned Turkish translation, in 1971 (p. 490, n. 19), not in 1957, when the Hebrew original appeared, or even in 1973, when the translation by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky was first published. Additionally, this footnote shows just how random and arbitrary are the workings of Yalçın's mind in its name fixation. After mentioning Sebati Ataman, who Menderes appointed Head of Coordination [between his government's various quarreling ministries], the author places a footnote, in which he says "This has no connection with the subject, but it just came to me:", that in the book...."Scholem wrote in 1971 [*sic*] he writes the name...as 'Sabatai [*sic*] Sevi' "No connection? So why mention it, unless one wishes to place in the reader's mind the false association between Sabbatai Sevi and Sebati Ataman?"
23. Yalçın's report of Hikmet Bayur's parliamentary tenure is incomplete. The author writes that he served in the 4th, 6th, 10th and 11th Republican parliaments (p. 147, n. 3), whereas the *TBMM Albümü 1920-1991* places him in the 4th through 7th as well as 10th and 11th parliaments.
24. The scholar Yona Sabar is described as a Hebrew language professor at Yale University (p. 185), whereas he is actually on the faculty of the University of California at Los Angeles (U.C.L.A.).

Questions Concerning the Book's Preparation for Publication

a) Questions Concerning Methodology: Because the author does not systematically cite his sources, it is utterly impossible to determine the sources for most of the author's statements, and which sections are the author's opinions and which are those of his

⁶⁵ For a review and critique of this translation, see: Rifat N. Bali, "Bir Kitap Nasıl Katledilir", *Virgöl*, no. 40 (April, 2001), p. 32.

sources. While the use of footnotes is not mandatory, their absence makes it difficult to make accurate assumptions as to which sources were used for which passages. What's more, many of the Turkish sources that the author does use—and without the slightest hesitation—are books by authors notorious for their anti-Semitic and conspiratorial outlooks, such as those by Cevat Rifat Atilhan and the 'Science Research Foundation' (Bilim Araştırma Vakfı).

a) **Questions Concerning Publishing Principles:** In his bibliography the author includes the names and dates of the journals he has used, but no information whatsoever regarding which articles found in these journals that he might have used. Under the section 'Unpublished works and books not for purchase' he lists one doctoral thesis and three other pieces, one of which is cited in the same manner he uses for books. This title is confusing: what does it mean, for a 'book' not to be for sale? Is it printed and bound, even if not put out on the market? In such bibliographies the term 'unpublished works' is usually used to refer to archival documents and other materials, doctoral or masters' theses, hand-typed, computer printed or handwritten manuscripts. Furthermore, these are to be identified as such.

There are also a number of errors in name transcription in the bibliography: Avner Levi is written 'Anver Levi' (p. 575); Jacob M. Landau is given as 'M. Jacob Landau' (p. 575); Rifat N. Bali is 'N. Rifat Bali' (p. 569), Bilal N. Şimşir is 'N. Bilal Şimşir' (p. 578). Edouard Drumont and his book *La France Juive* are faithfully—and thus wrongly--copied from Tanyu's work as 'Edvaro Drumont' and '*La France Juwe*' (p. 26, n. 7); Eczacı Danon Efendi is written 'Donan Efendi' (p. 150). The British Chief Dragoman during the Unionist Period, G. H. Fitzmaurice is transformed into 'Fitz Maurice' (p. 151). Leon Taranto comes out 'Leon Tozanto' (p. 395); Yusuf Salman, a Jewish merchant and DP deputy who died while imprisoned on Yassıada after the 1960 coup, is written as 'Yosef Salomon' as per his source (p. 539). The previous style is that found in the parliamentary almanac *TBMM Albümü*, 1920-1991. Washington is misspelled 'Wasinghton' (p. 437). Although some of these errors may ultimately be the publisher's ultimate responsibility, they are certainly no source of pride to the author.

b) **The Question of Proper Personal Statistics:** While Soner Yalçın is the sole author listed on the cover and inner title page, the bibliographic data lists "Writer: Soner Yalçın; Assistant: Beste Önköl". Likewise, in the books credits (oddly given at the end of the bibliography, not in a preface), Beste Önköl is again cited as "having served as

assistant over the course of three years”.(p. 582) What does this mean? Did she assist in the writing of the book? In researching it? Or is Yalçın simply stating that Önköl has been his assistant on the documentary series “Oradaydım”? The book gives us no indication of which of these is correct.

How Can a Book Be Published in Such a Manner?

At first glance it is baffling that a company like Doğan Kitapçılık, which is a leader in its field can publish a “investigative research” book that it claims to be “the first in its field” and to have been written “with the meticulousness of [a piece of] investigative journalism” without first subjecting it to the scrutiny of editors and fact checkers. Yet one should bear in mind the sad fact that, in the final analysis, the marketing muscle of Doğan Kitapçılık’s parent company DMG, the ‘star’ status of the book’s author, and the utter ignorance of the great mass of readers and critics on the topic at hand all help to produce a climate in which little or no regard is given to the reader, in which the prevailing assumption is something like “This is Turkey, our readers don’t understand anything. If it’s written we’ll publish it. The important thing is just that the author be well-known, then it’ll sell well” and in which a discriminating attitude is [seen] as defiance. This book, whose text is full of factual and other errors, whose author doesn’t shrink from blithely introducing conspiracy theories, even writing this plainly (p. 487, n. 17) is actually uncomfortably (one hopes) close to the thought world of that notoriously anti-Semitic popularizer of the ‘Jewish World Conspiracy’ theory, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and yet, with the its softer pedaled anti-Semitic tone and idiom, and in such an atmosphere of partisanship, this book is received as ‘respected opinion’, having been praised by the big names at DMG—something which has served to highlight the knowledge level of many of those persons thought of in the Turkish media and culture as ‘leading opinions’. And Yalçın’s work is not an isolated example: another recent unforgettable example was that of ‘opinion leader’ Güneri Cıvaoğlu, the Editor-in-Chief of *Milliyet* and main news commentator for the Kanal D channel, who made the work *Illuminati* by the Christian-based anti-Semitic conspiracy theorist Texe Marrs a leading story in his paper.⁶⁶

Conclusion: The ‘Routinization’ and Spread of anti-Semitism

⁶⁶ Güneri Cıvaoğlu, “Ordo ab Chao”, *Milliyet*, 23 May, 2004. This piece was well-received by other ‘opinion leaders’, such as *Yeni Şafak* general publishing consultant and columnist Fehmi Koru. See: Taha Kıvanç, “Komplocular çoğalıyor”, *Yeni Şafak*, 24 May, 2004.

Until Soner Yalçın and Yalçın Küçük published their books the subject of the Dönmes was something that only Islamists⁶⁷ and ultra nationalists were obsessed with. The subject was not something discussed in the mainstream media and was subject of discussions in the Islamist press only known with then obsession of Jews and Dönmes. The books of Soner Yalçın and Yalçın Küçük drastically changed this and helped to spread the Dönme obsession to all parts of the Turkish society. At first glance, the works of Yalçın Küçük and Soner Yalçın, at least in their more moderate tone, cannot be classified among those of those well-known anti-Semitic writers of the 1960s and 1970s, Cevat Rifat Atilhan, Yesevizade and Hikmet Tanyu. Yet, upon closer inspection the gaps begin to narrow. Even though Soner Yalçın mentions in a footnote “I wrote the book with the constant fear that it would be utterly misunderstood. I know that it would bother me greatly if the book were to appear or be understood as anti-Semitic” (p. 236, n. 4), and though he also levels criticism at those within ultra rightist and Islamist circles who argue on the basis of Karl Marx ethnic origins that Communism is a Jewish ideology (p. 276, n. 2), these reservations, which are in any case necessary insurance against any potential accusations of anti-Semitism, in themselves they are not enough to make the book ‘respectable’ or to pass it off as a work of “investigation and research”. Neither Soner Yalçın nor Yalçın Küçük do not to openly and unambiguously state the conclusions they draw from all this. Instead they prefer to allow the reader to arrive at his or her own conclusions after having bombarded them with thousands of names and a web of family connections, to opinions and analyses that are replete with not-so-subtle hints and insinuations. In a subject as high a degree of accumulated information as this one, the result at which the average reader, lacking in such knowledge is practically certain: the Dönmes run the Turkish Republic. Thus, the one connection which both authors do succeed in establishing is their own ideologically relationship to the likes of Atilhan, Yesevizade and Tanyu.

The ‘Turkey is controlled by the Sabbateans’ theory, which began to take form several years back with the compilations of articles and ‘confessions’ by ‘Dönme insider’ Ilgaz Zorlu and of those by the Islamist columnist Mehmed Şevket Eygi in *Millî Gazete*, then continued with the Marxist professor Yalçın Küçük, has finally reached its pinnacle with the ‘leftist’ Soner Yalçın—and it has become ‘one of the leading arguments used by Turkish anti-Semites. As was explained above, from the viewpoint of Turkey’s mainstream Islamists, who not only believe that the Dönmes continue to secretly observe their religion and customs and remain in close contact with each other, the Republic of Turkey is a ‘Jewish Republic’. There

⁶⁷ Ali Ünal from the Islamist newspaper *Zaman*, confirms that books on the Dönmes were mainly consumed by Islamists. Ali Ünal, “Sabetayizm üzerine son çalışmalar”, *Zaman*, 14 June 2004.

has perhaps always been an undercurrent of anti-Semitism in Turkey; but it only began to emerge more openly in parallel with the reappearance of the Islamist movement in the multi-party period, and has eventually become one of the major ideological pillars of political Islam in Turkey, something which entered politics and thereby gained wider popularity in 1970, with the establishment by Necmettin Erbakan of the National Order Party (*Millî Nizam Partisi*). This Islamist world view sees the Turkish Republic itself as a ‘Jewish plot’ to control Turkey and Muslims. This plot, which is seen to begin with Sultan Abdülhamid’s ‘being punished by the Dönmes, Freemasons and Zionists’ for having refused the requests of Theodor Herzl, is brought to a successful conclusion through the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate and the establishment of the secular republic. Gradually, this world view has begun to believe that it is the Dönmes, or secret Jews who founded the republic and to have taken it upon themselves to defend it, who represent the greatest obstacle to the Islamist end goal of ‘Islamifying’ Turkey. This idea of the ‘Crypto-Jewish domination’ of Turkey has itself become a pillar—perhaps as an ideological ‘retooling’ and ‘Turkifying’ of the classic ‘Jewish conspiracy’ theory to suit local conditions—of the anti-Semitism that has been internalized by so much of the Islamist and ultra-nationalist streams.

It is interesting to note that in 2001, Doğan Kitapçılık at first printed the novel *Seninle Güler Yüreğim* (“My Heart Laughs With You”) by the Turkish expatriate Kemal Yalçın, then destroyed all of the copies before it went to market. The reason was that the work, which its author has styled a ‘documentary novel’, contained interviews with eyewitnesses to the Armenian Deportations of 1915.⁶⁸ By its strict observance of the Turkish state apparatus’s sensitivity to the subject of the minorities and its red lines in this regard, the company carried out the act of destroying its own book in a manner seen most often in totalitarian regimes like Nazi Germany. Yet, now, only three years later, in a situation in which boycotts and slander campaigns can be organized under the name *Sabataycı Yapılanmaya Karşı Bilinç ve Tercihli Alışveriş İnsiyatifi* (“Initiative for the Consciousness and Preferential Trade Against Sabbateanization”), or *S.B.T.A.I.* for short, against Turkish citizens of Dönme origin, much like was done in Nazi Germany,⁶⁹ it is nothing short of astonishing that this company can with a clear conscience publish this book by Soner Yalçın, which so easily lends itself to Nazi-like

⁶⁸ An account of the events can be found in the forward to the work’s expanded second edition: Kemal Yalçın, *Seninle Güler Yüreğim* (Bochum: self-published), 2003, pp. 5-6. See also: Alev Er, “Seninle Güler Yüreğim”, www.gazetem.net, 20 May, 2003 / “Kemal Yalçın New York’ta *Seninle Güler Yüreğim*’in hikâyesini anlattı”, www.hyetert.com, 19 April, 2004.

⁶⁹ This initiative was first mentioned in the Islamist press. See: Mehmed Şevket Eygi, “Sabataycılıkla İlgili Önemli Bir Rapor”, *Millî Gazete*, 12 June / and Abdurrahman Şen, “Oradan, buradan”, *Yeni Asya*, 27 November, 2003. Information regarding the initiative can be found on www.angelfire.com/es/sbtai

racist and exclusionary demonstrations against persons because of their alleged ethnic origins or suspected beliefs. Such a move screams for an explanation. But even with one, it is an extremely disturbing phenomenon that a book attempting—however poorly--to research the question of which of the country's citizens are of 'pure' Muslim Turkish blood, can be published by one of the most powerful publishing houses of the largest mainstream media group, and can then post banner sales (and not only by Turkish standards, but by Western ones as well) of more than 101.000 copies in an incredibly short time, all the while being roundly applauded by the great majority of the country's 'opinion leaders'.