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Arnavutköy – Küçük Çekmece

- 1 I estimated that the trip from Arnavutköy, the favorite place to stay as well as place of amusement of foreigners living in Istanbul, to Küçük Çekmece, where a refugee camp from which the inhabitants refused to budge had been bulldozed a few days ago, was going to take two to three hours. Close to the station, directly under the Pan-Mediterranean-style facades sluggish anglers hung on their lines and kept pulling out their tiny, wriggling prey from the water full of garbage and jelly-fish. I got on the roundabout line, since there was no more room on the direct line. We left Ortaköy - once inhabited by Jews, but now having an entirely Greek atmosphere - with its baroque-like mosque and hidden synagogue, the giant hotels of Beşiktaş, the eclectic Dolmabaçe Palace, built in the last century by the last Sultans for themselves and their populous harem, because it was embarrassing for a “European” ruler to live in the Topkapı, which was about as comfortable as a tent in a Turkish medieval military camp; then we turned up the hill by the İnönü, Stadion and crossed the Soho-like, bustling streets of the şişli district, finally we stopped on Taksim Square. I hopped on a single-track tram - probably the same make and the same year as those in Lisbon - running down İstiklal Street, which is like a swollen Váci Street in Budapest, flanked by an Armenian Gregorian and Italian Catholic church on either side and interspersed with international brand name shops and cafés which become brothels by night. From the end of the street I walked down to Galata Bridge. « Welcome to Asia », muttered to myself at the next block, at the sight of loitering Arnauts, gray-faced and mustached, with their women hidden under veils - their ancestors had moved into the abandoned houses of Greek merchants once living there. On the other side of the bridge Kurds were pulling at my sleeve to buy tobacco from them, fresh from “Kurdistan”, on my right the Egyptian Bazaar; peeling myself away, I took the fast tram up to the monuments of imperial glory, away from this frantic business center where tourist are milked, and then, leaving Aksaray, dashed through Vatan Avenue which is a miniature

Gorky (now Tverskaya) Street, or so the Russian sign-boards and the ethnic proportions seem to indicate. I hitched a microbus from the immense, muddy and filthy parking-lot of the Topkapi, and off we go again, through the housing estates and the satellite towns, passing Atatürk Airport, passing Avcılar, famous for its casinos, and all the while I keep myself amused imagining that it is not a real tour of a real city, but rather a road movie, edited in counterpoint to make some deliberately didactic point about our Europe sweeping down on Asia, about the frantic fight going on here, between thousands of traditions, between the past and the present, between the secular / profane and the religious / sacred - though in fact this is not at all what the history of the place is about, the projected celluloid tape manipulates the spectator by creating the illusion of temporality: any continuity is mere appearance.

The Cast

- 2 There are about three hundred thousand *dramatis personae* in the following story : the exact number of Turks who emigrated from Bulgaria after 1989 will remain a matter for debate until the parties involved tire of the argument. The question is unanswerable and, perhaps, in the end not that important. The collective misfortune of these migrants is to have lived their lives in two states, as a minority group in one, as an immigrant group in the other, and to have been treated in both as human raw material for experiments in the realization of an “ideal society”. As a minority group in Bulgaria, not only were they generally at the mercy of the majority, which is not uncommon in our part of the world, but they were specifically chosen for sacrifice to an increasingly pathological obsession with a nation-state by those in power. And when, in 1989, they emigrated to Turkey *en masse*, with tourist passports in their pockets, the tables were turned : the rulers of the host country too reckoned that they owned the lives and fates of those who had found a new home there, and that through these new migrants they could influence political developments not only at home, but also in Bulgaria.
- 3 Seven years have passed since the “big trip”¹. According to the long-term *émigrés*, this is enough time to judge whether newcomers have successfully adapted to the new society or live life on its fringes. A series of events – their collective experience – has become history. A discourse about the past, accepted by tacit consensus of the community, has been established. Their former identity as a minority group has also been re-shaped and arguably strongly influenced by “discourse-creating factories” which placed the immigrants under their own guardianship immediately after their arrival.
- 4 Between October and December 1996 I visited cities in Turkey where these immigrants have settled down in droves. I talked as informally as possible to several hundred people, without a dictaphone or obvious note-taking. I sought to grasp the moment when personal grievances are sublimated into a story, when the experience of an individual becomes the history of a community and the sense of banishment and strangeness is replaced by the comfort of familiarity and permanence. In many cases this was not at all difficult – the struggle for survival and even progress, if successful, has invested former humiliations in Bulgaria with a meaning. Those immigrants who have not succeeded can still comfort themselves obliquely that those stuck at home are not doing any better. Yet the trauma will remain. There is no definitive cure: only a

continual treatment which demands a continual reconstruction of memories, although there is no remembrance.

Authorities I

What matters is the direct personal experience that somebody has, rather than their formal position.²

- 5 Apart from Petar Stoyanov, the Bulgarian president, and a few inveterate human rights activists, I've never met a Bulgarian who would admit to being ashamed of what had happened in the country between 1984 and 1989, or who regarded the genocide against the Turkish and the Pomak (Bulgarian Muslim) minorities as anything other than a minor stylistic error. The evacuation of Turks from Bulgaria started immediately after the end of the Russian-Turkish war in 1878. By the end of World War II, approximately five hundred and fifty-five thousand Turks had left Bulgaria. But this is a mere trifle compared to what began after the Communist take-over, when the Turkish minority, like all the others, was placed under the guardianship of the state. Following the first stage beginning in 1948, one hundred and fifty thousand people fled to Turkey in 1951 from the persecution of kulaks and from nationalization. The next period, up to 1960, can be characterized as a period of "tolerant disintegration". This was a time when Turkish-language culture in Bulgaria flourished and when it was practically preferable for a Turk to be Turkish rather than attempting to integrate into the majority society. Then came the miserable 60s, the era of "intolerant integration". Ethnic schools and theatres were closed down, Turkish newspapers were banned, and listening to Turkish folk music in public places was prohibited. After the signing of the Bulgarian-Turkish agreement in 1968, two hundred thousand Turks emigrated, and this was of a quite different nature to the economic emigration of 1951.
- 6 According to a friend of mine, a former Bulgarian diplomat in Ankara, the "valves" (i.e. the borders) were opened from time to time in order to keep the number of "rapidly breeding" Turks constant. But from 1973 on, the concept of a "unified Bulgarian nation" gained overwhelming currency in the Bulgarian press, indicating the beginning of an era of "aggressive homogenization". The Turks were increasingly absented from ethnic and geographical descriptions of the country; the names of Pomaks were forcefully Bulgarianized, mosques were closed down and it was prohibited to wear a salavari, to celebrate Muslim festivities, to organize traditional weddings and funerals, to keep in touch with the motherland or to use the language. Historical novels about the Turkish occupation appeared, which emphasized that nobody but Bulgarians have set foot on the holy Bulgarian soil for thousands of years until the Turks invaded to convert the Christian Bulgarians to Islam or put them to the sword. In 1984, the "rebirth program" sought to eliminate "history's mistake" by changing the name of "Bulgarians with a Turkish name". And eventually in 1985, a sigh of relief was heard: « there are no Turks in Bulgaria ».

You do not exist, O'Brien answered³

- 7 Oddly, even highly educated immigrants were incapable of giving a sensible answer when asked why they thought they had been forced to change their names. They mentioned rumors, they mentioned Zhivkov, party politics, the unified nation-state idea that the Bulgarians suddenly wanted to realize. They tried to explain the whole thing away. They searched for reasons, but they obviously had no ready answer. Even

well informed Bulgarians, some of whom were exceptionally sensitive to the issue, could give no reasonable explanation to the re-naming. My diplomat friend, for example, spins yarns of secret agents, suggesting that in the early eighties the idea that Turks were conspiring for autonomy was invented by big shots in the Bulgarian secret service in order to patch up their reputation with leader Zhivkov. He was by then fed up with the international scandals they had created, through the murder of the author Georgi Markov in London ; and the bungled attempt to murder the Pope. In this theory, then, the Turks were simply the victims of “the survival strategy of an institution”. Unfortunately, the story has a weak point - even this admittedly dreadful secret service could not be so incompetent as not to supply at least one stooge to confess to a plot for Turkish autonomy. But the story illustrates the mentality of those close to power - if it takes the defamation of a few hundred thousand people to humor the boss, so be it.

- 8 Yet defamation was clearly not the sole aim, considering that those at the top maintained the pretence that the Turks actually had been eradicated (by the name-changes). “Ex-Turks” were then drafted into regular army units just like any Bulgarian, something unimaginable beforehand, because according to official phantasmagorias the Turks were internal enemy, and could therefore (with the natural exceptions of party members and the descendants of partisans) be enlisted only for unarmed service. An example is Ibrahim from Istanbul, in his thirties. He was wondering how come he was kicked out of Bulgaria so easily - he who as an electro-mechanical engineer had training which involved personal, strictly confidential information shared by perhaps three other people in the country. Then in 1989 he was suddenly given a passport and sent away to Turkey.
- 9 Some writers go as far as to say that the USSR uses Bulgaria to test a new policy before applying it to her own people. According to the late A. Bennigsen, the forced change of names imposed on the Turks of Bulgaria may be the experimental prelude to a similar policy contemplated by the USSR for the Muslims living there⁴.
- 10 It is not surprising that Western commentators were at a loss to interpret these events and settled on the usual Eastern-bloc conspiracy-theory, but it is curious that Karpát, who is biased and cavalier with facts, but consistent nevertheless, quotes his Western counterparts apparently uncritically. His duty as a historian ought to have been to differentiate between empire and nation-state, but this statement actually undermines the thesis of “continuity” that he, among other people, represents. According to my unofficial sources, the material sent by the Bulgarians to the USSR for consultation did not even reach the top Soviet leaders. At the time their energies were consumed by the need to replace the Party Secretary as well as by the alcohol ban, and it was some mid-level apparatchik who sent the Bulgarians a message to do whatever they wanted.
- 11 There was perhaps only one person I talked to, Kasim - a guy from Istanbul who had lived a very active life and had a peculiar kind of education - who considered it obvious that the “rebirth program” had started much before the early eighties. He was the only one to answer reflexively that it had happened because « there was national-socialism in Bulgaria - literally ». Besides him, Mehmet, the tea-shop owner in Istanbul said that he had had misgivings as early as in the mid-seventies, when he was the regional party secretary’s chauffeur. He was sitting at a big meeting and was suddenly called up to read a speech about the atrocities committed by the Turks in Bulgaria. He emigrated as soon as he could, in 1978.

- 12 The general loss of memory is not to be explained solely psychologically ; it is not simply childhood amnesia. Rather it is social amnesia - memory driven out of mind by the social and economic dynamic of this society⁵.
- 13 The period immediately prior to the most severe trauma – the re-naming – is obscured in the pink haze of “happy, peaceful times” in the mind of practically all emigrants to Turkey. They were earning little money with little work, but they made a living. Their work was appreciated, and they were not made to feel like strangers. Moreover, they had Bulgarian friends, visited one another, went to parties, and enjoyed themselves. And then all at once, in 1984, the landscape changed drastically. Friends were no longer friendly. Nobody would look them in the eye, people even preferred not to address them, because using either their former Muslim or their current Slavic names involved taking a stance. All in spite of the fact that they were, so they claim, thoroughly Bulgarianized by now. Their children barely spoke Turkish, they had neglected their religion and lived like “everybody else”. When I asked them if they realized that they had been gradually deprived of their human and minority-status rights in the previous decades, they returned the question and asked me how on earth they could have known that they had human and minority rights. Under communism nobody spoke to them about such things. In Istanbul's Pendik district Ayten, a female teacher, defended her vision of cheerful Bulgarian multiculturalism so vehemently she drew the “Turkish yoke” into the picture, which got a laugh from her audience.
- Is that what they say ? Well, they are wrong. Economically, perhaps, everything was fine, but otherwise... This is mere nostalgia : old times, stuff like that, everybody wants to be young again, this is the only explanation. Besides they are incapable of thinking things through...⁶
- 14 Yet gradually, different memories also emerged, about what it was like living in a village where the relationship between the two ethnic groups had been functioning according to centuries-old norms, and usually without particular conflict.
- 15 Aseniye, who presently lives in Bursa, begins by talking about her thorough assimilation, but then suddenly remembers that when her family moved to a new home, several people reported them to the police because they spoke Turkish in the family. It was only after she had rescued the son of a hostile neighbor, an army-officer, from a hit-and-run accident that they were accepted. Züleiha in Istanbul is also struck by a sudden memory. When her son won an international pavement-art competition an offended Bulgarian mother had shrieked that a Turkish kid cannot be better than hers, returned to the square that night to cross out the “Bulgaria” under the kid's name and write “Turkey” instead. Ali, an Istanbul-based engineer, remembers a guy at his university who refused to share digs with a Turk, although he said he had never met a living Turk before. They eventually became friends, and the guy invited him to his parents' village, where they enjoyed an evening's merriment. But later on his friend confessed that he had not slept a wink at night out of fear that one of his drunker family members was going to assault their guest.
- 16 Neyran, a businesswoman from Ankara in her mid-forties positively refused to let me interview her at first. It turned out that she had never spoken about the past before, and admitted frankly that she did not wish to revive painful memories. She was perfectly assimilated in Bulgaria, had no contact with Turks and enjoyed a privileged position in a large company in Shumen. When she emigrated, she had to start from scratch, but now she manages her own, relatively prosperous company. She was very

uneasy for the first ten minutes of our conversation as she spoke about the full life she had led up until 1984, when she suddenly « found herself in a vacuum », « everything was suddenly upside down », her presence at the office was unwelcome, and so on. I could see her trembling, her arms covered with goose-bumps - as she spoke. She realized that the opposite of what she had said to herself all these years was true. Eventually she said, « We lived together, but there was no real sympathy between us - the antipathy they were brought up to feel for us could not be eradicated ».

- 17 Almost everyone had a true horror story about the re-naming period. I met people who refused to resign themselves to being re-named. Some would not accept their new documents and chose imprisonment instead, or transportation to the punishment camp on Belene Island. These were the resistance fighters and there were about a thousand of them. They were beaten up by the police, but had - as Mücettin, the waiter in Avcılar told me - the good fortune of the freezing Spring weather, which meant their open wounds did not fester in the unheated tents they were given for accommodation. They were re-settled in ethnically pure Bulgarian villages but, as Sabri in Ankara pointed out, would never have learnt otherwise that there were Bulgarians without racial prejudices. They were imprisoned for years, but - as Zeynep told me - would never otherwise have met that woman who was in for eighteen years for smacking a policeman on the head when her three-years-old son was hit by a tank on the street, and who had to remain silent at visiting hours when her husband came because she spoke no Bulgarian and was not allowed to speak a “foreign language”.
- 18 The re-naming, though it was apparently well organized and methodical, was probably administered by the local forces without central reinforcement unless they asked for it specially. All those who had “foreign” names were given a list with names to choose from. Seliha's entire family chose Russian-sounding names and when she was asked why, she replied : « so that when the Russians come in a few years I would not have to choose a new name again ». Armed security guards surrounded the neighborhood and the lists were handed around, from apartment to apartment. Some people went into hiding but emerged sooner or later, because their old names prohibited them from working, withdrawing money from the bank or driving a car.
- 19 In certain areas, the local “elite” were gathered at random - shepherds and pharmacist alike - and removed to a camp where they were made “politically conscious”, forced to dig several kilometers long trenches and live it rough, shown the more shadowy side of life. Then they were given their new documents and, after signing statements that they would never speak of what had happened, allowed to go home. That was the first their families heard that they were still alive. Most of the university graduates could only get manual work afterwards, but at least they were finally Bulgarians - and the only cost was jettisoning the potential protest they might have made in their last days as Turks. One who did not do so immediately was Recep, a guy I met in Bursa who chose an unusual form of passive resistance. When it became obligatory for ticket-inspectors on the train to wear nametags in 1985, and his brand new name was on display throughout the country, he secretly began to believe in Allah. Perhaps somewhere in the depth of his soul he had always wanted to be different...

The Road to Hell

A narrow gate was set up in the waiting-hall of the station. Policemen stood on either side while masses of emigrants queued in front of it with those who came to see them off. On the other side only those whose passport had been checked. Everyone was allowed as much luggage as they could carry on the way through, because there was no return. I loaded up the children. One of them was twelve years old, the other sixteen. They passed, and then it was my turn. I tried crosswise and lengthwise but did not manage, so I put down one of the suitcases and eventually got through. It was only afterwards that I noticed that I had left the water-can on the other side of the gate. I was not allowed to go back for it or to ask somebody to give it to me. Then we traveled five days in the sweltering heat to the Turkish border.⁷

- 20 On the occasion of the great exodus in 1989 the Bulgarians reinvented hell again. I did not meet a single emigrant who received decent treatment on the Bulgarian side of the border. Yet the majority of them did not leave in euphoria or of their own accord. Many of them were handed their traveling papers in their homes, others were cordially sacked from their jobs or steadily harassed by keen party members until they asked for their passports, and there were also those who were frequently visited by bored functionaries from the Ministry of the Interior until they reconsidered. Most of those I interviewed say they left because others were leaving - hardly anyone answered that they had always wanted to live in Turkey. For they knew very little about life on the other side of the border besides what official Bulgarian propaganda was spreading about it - filth, famine, cannibalism, lice, leprosy, crime, and oppression (I have childhood memories about this process of conditioning) - and the views of their parents: that Turkey must be loved no matter what it was like.
- 21 As it is remembered, the road to hell was paved with misgivings, despite occasional murmuring to the opposite effect. The emigrants knew precisely that with a tourist passport, they were only allowed fifty dollars per head plus their personal belongings - which were restricted to whatever they could carry. Bilal, for example, told me that his Zhiguli for which he had paid six years earlier had just come through, but on showing his ID the car was withdrawn again immediately. There are several versions about how Turks with a purely Bulgarian name were still recognized for a Turk after five years. Some suspect there was a hidden mark in the documents, others opt for the outstanding empathy of Bulgarians. But there are some who explain the "shop discrimination" with the Turks' bizarre-sounding new names. Two more emigrants, friends of mine in Istanbul, were barred from shopping in a neighboring town. Their favorite anecdote concerns the devious methods they concocted to avoid having blankets confiscated from them at the exit of the supermarket where they had just bought them. Neçmi from Yalova, a former electrician in a Varna hospital complains that when he started for the border, his colleagues reported him to the police for not having returned his equipment. The policemen pulled him out of the long line of cars and took him back to Varna where he arranged his affairs and was back at the border three days later, where he got back in line. The man behind him was keeping his place for him - they were advancing surprisingly slowly.
- 22 There was no inferno awaiting them on the far side of the border, despite the assertions of the Bulgarian authorities to the contrary. The emigrants were welcome by helpful border police and the Red Crescent had a kitchen and accommodation set up. Intelligence officers asked everyone individually, though briefly on account of their

great number, whether they had temporary accommodation with relatives and those who did not were transported in daily convoys to various cities where they were put up in empty schools and barracks. Rumor has it that the fate of the emigrants was more or less decided on the spot. Active resistance fighters and ex-prisoners were reportedly given special privileges, though it is hard to imagine how the authorities were able to take account of such details in the turmoil. But I did not meet any emigrants who claimed they had opposed the authorities in Bulgaria and who were not compensated for their resistance in Turkey. They were given apartments or comfortable state jobs: I am sure, though, that their protests had been driven by their own consciences rather than any external encouragement or promise.

- 23 What also emerges from the stories, although unacknowledged in the official Turkish version of events, is that immigrants unable to name relatives willing to put them up were settled in distant regions of Anatolia, inhabited by Kurds. Perhaps the idea was to populate war-torn zones with grateful settlers who would be loyal to the government and whose presence might serve to “civilize” the inhabitants by their presence and different way of life. On the other hand, they could pacify their own people, for whom the state did less in their whole lifetime than for the immigrants in a week. Seven years later, the idea seems to have failed ignominiously - not one immigrant finally settled down in Diarbakir or around the Van Lake, the Kurds continue to be who they always were and the locals keep crying *gıaour* at the newcomers as ever.
- 24 The stories of the border-crossing sound like long, miserable, paranoid dreams where it takes days to cross the few kilometres to the border, loved ones are lost en route, messages are eagerly sought amongst myriad scraps of paper on the walls of Edirne station, and where people wait for a superior power and resign themselves to fate. Still they believed, in their lucid moments, that whatever happened it would be better than the Hell they had just left, because they themselves would at least be able to decide where to live, where to work and for how much, and, not least, what they were to be called and what language they would speak. These are the stories of those who never returned to Bulgaria after the “big trip” - for those who returned the dream may have entirely different colors.
- 25 Edirne station and the camp beside it were the gateway to many things besides Hell - the final horizon that our heroes were obliged to cross. This is where the common past ends: afterwards it there are only individual tribulations in different places in a world which is familiar yet strange, where they are served their own food, but the order of the courses is different, where they were accepted as brothers and sisters but are referred to as heathen *göçmens*.

Küçük Çekmece - Arnavutköy - Arnavutköy

- 26 Şaban accompanied me to the road on my way back, worried that the *dolmuş*-microbus might be too expensive for me. He hugged me and said that he would call me as soon as he had a phone to call from. It was already eight o'clock in the evening. It takes an hour for the microbus to struggle through the traffic jam. I calculated another half an hour in the tram to Eminä, from there at least an hour by bus to Arnavutköy, where I would look for a pub to watch the second half of the Valencia- Beşiktaş match. At half past nine I was still by the Aksaray. I got off, because I saw people running, I thought they were probably running to find a place in a pub where the coded transmission could be

watched. I followed them, but it turned out that they were catching a bus on which the sign said “Arnavutköy” in big black letters. It was just leaving. I was sweating like hell, but happy to have discovered something – a new itinerary – which was perhaps shorter than the coast road. If so, then I could actually get there in time for the second half. There was no traffic on this road. The bus dashed along and when it stopped, which was rarely, only men got on – mustached, dark-skinned men in worn-down shoes, shabby trousers and uniform leather jackets bought in the bazaar. I just started at a book by Isabel Fonseca, happy that I would get home quickly, even taking a detour, because in this monster of a city you never know where you are, you just realize suddenly that you are there, even though you feel that you are going in the opposite direction. When we left the ugly industrial buildings behind, the bus did not stop at all any more, and I started squirming in my seat, put Fonseca in my pocket, took out my map. The Arnauts standing around me started to grin and gesticulate at this – and appeared less and less like people who were heading for my cosy, elegant Arnavutköy. None of them knew how to read a map, of course, they just kept saying “Arnavutköy”, but I could tell from the way they pronounced the word that there was some trouble ahead: either I was completely disoriented, or this bus was not going to get to Arnavutköy before the morning. It was about eleven o'clock when I got off, and they kept gesticulating and saying, here you are, this is Arnavutköy, but there was neither sea nor lights there. There were only these horrid little distant suburbs, a slice of Asia wedged in Europe – the real Arnavutköy, literally the Village of the Arnauts. I tried my luck with the only taxi around. The driver, who knew how to read the map, muttered and showed me that we were not even on it. The radio roared, I asked him how the match was going, he said that it was probably going swell for me, for the Beşiktaş was losing. I looked at him, genuinely offended, and said in my best body language that I was a Beşiktaş fan and wanted to watch the match. We had hardly gone three hundred meters when he stopped by a tea-shop – it was probably his regular hangout –, four hundred square meters with a population distribution of five mustached guys per square meter, all staring at a single screen. Two guys jumped up immediately, the others made some room in the fourth row and they bought me three cups of tannin-tasting tea one after the other, because the driver had explained to them that this Europid knew the names of the entire Beşiktaş team, including the coach. The taxi driver sat loyally through till the inglorious end of the match and then, for a small fortune drove me back to glamorous Arnavutköy. To Arnavutköy, which is exactly as far from Küçük Çekmece as from the other Arnavutköy. It took three quarters of an hour, so I amused myself with the idea that if two neighborhoods can have the same name, in or around a city, and still be diametrically opposed to each other both in terms of architecture and population, then everything in this country can be duplicated without it bothering anyone. Because everybody knows their place there can be two capital cities, two identities, two conceptions of the state, two histories, words and gestures can mean completely different things. Doublethink, Orwell would say, in the terms of which each decision can be implemented in two different ways or glossed over, there can be two stories behind each event, or a story can tell two events at the same time, and this is how it must be, for this cleverly edited film, this road movie is not for broadcasting, only for being spread out, it is no more than a celluloid strip which can be held in the hand and the cuts stuck side by side can be looked at, and thus the illusion that anything follows anything in time can be carefully avoided.

Authorities II

In a way, Atatürk was the first göçmen here: he was also from the Balkans, then he came here and made a country out of this utter chaos... And now we are here...⁸

- 27 In February 1997 the Turkish authorities threatened the world with the expulsion of four hundred thousand Bulgarian Turks. By mid-March they realized what an idiocy it was and called off the action. Although they backed off, the threat is still in the air, creating an atmosphere of constant theoretical and practical danger for the heroes of our story.
- 28 The most conspicuous thing is the offhand manner in which the present decision-makers in Ankara handle the results of the statistical and sociological surveys of the Bulgarian immigrants. It must be acknowledged as a mitigating factor that no two sources publish identical data. Kemal H. Karpat, for example - referring to non-official but reliable sources - estimates the number of "Muslim, especially Turkish" inhabitants in Bulgaria forcibly re-named in 1984 at three million⁹, whereas the Bulgarians claim that before the great emigration wave of 1989, just 847 584 Turks lived in the country¹⁰. The two numbers cannot be reduced to a common denominator, even if we assume that Karpat included Pomaks and Muslim Gypsies in his calculations, since all these together could still not have been more than 800 000 people. The only uncontested point is that 369 839 Turks left Bulgaria in a single year, but even then Vasileva claims that 154 937 people returned within one year¹¹, whereas according to Karpat, 8 000 people did so¹². When the Movement for Human Rights and Freedom (commonly called the "Turkish party") received seven per cent of the votes in the first free elections in Bulgaria, it became clear that talking about millions is absurd. But even Vasileva does not mention in her otherwise thorough study that at least half of those who had returned re-emigrated to Turkey, and the migration has never really come to an end.
- 29 Yet even this statistical mess does not give an adequate explanation of the 400 000 immigrants lined up for deportation by the Turkish authorities. If the contingent to be expelled did not include the approximately 250 000 Bulgarian refugees who had received Turkish citizenship in 1989-1990 (and who knows if it did or not ?), and we use Vasileva's figures for that total Turkish population in Bulgaria before 1989, then we could infer that barely 200 000 Turks were left in Bulgaria. How is it then possible then that according to the latest surveys the "Turkish party" still expects five per cent of the votes at the upcoming elections ? That would mean at least four hundred thousand Turks are present in Bulgaria, since this party is supported only by ethnic Turks and perhaps Pomaks, among the minorities many people vote for other parties.
- 30 The most probable interpretation of the February statement is that it was nothing more than a message, an awkward Oriental code intended for the West, which is apparently more and more repulsed by the idea of letting Turkey into a united Europe. The meaning of the gesture must be something like this : if the West desires to bring about political changes in post-socialist Bulgaria, then they can count on the cooperation of the Turkish government, now as ever. The deportation of 400 000 poor people will almost certainly finish off the neighboring country and accelerate the process of "re-democratization". It would be the role of Turkish politics again to help the country towards the right direction - say towards the victory of opposition democrats -, just like in 1989, when Özal, the head of state, opened the Turkish-Bulgarian border for potential émigrés, and thus started the "avalanche of political changes" in Bulgaria. I

heard this from Vedat Ercin personally, who at that time used to hold the office of Deputy Secretary of State dealing with Turks abroad and who otherwise seemed like a nice guy, utterly incapable of inventing such an impossible idea by himself. Turkey would be willing to do the West this favor even now, despite the fact that the West keeps admonishing Turkey for its bad human rights record, the entrenched corruption of those in power, the Mafia presence and countless other things so familiar and everyday that the local power elite can not fathom why they are considered problems. The fact that this grand gesture involves playing with the life of 400 000 human beings is not regarded as a problem either - preserving "manpower" was never a chief virtue of this state.

The Principles

- 31 This time, however, Erbakan and Çiller – this duet of prime ministers working in rotation – had crossed a line. The lives of ethnic Turks were at stake and they are – according to republican, Kemalist principles and traditional Islam thinking – entitled to refuge in the motherland any time. The idea of expelling brothers in blood and faith had never occurred to anybody in the history of Turkish statehood, and the only thing that could explain it now was the crisis of a state ideology, which has had schizophrenic tendencies ever since its beginnings.
- 32 The late president Özal's decision to receive several hundred thousand Bulgarian Turkish refugees in 1989 was very fortunate. Although still disputed, it had positive ideological, political and economic impact. By initiating the emigration process, he was suddenly given credit by the West for playing a catalytic role in the Bulgarian political upheaval. Human rights organizations were also impressed, first because in the face of such mass emigration the Bulgarians were compelled to admit that there was after all a Turkish minority in their country, and second, Turkey demonstrated that it is not only militant and exclusive, but also tolerant and receptive to those who are deserving. The West rewarded this new image with plenty of aid and support for building projects, thirty per cent of which - according to Ismet Sever, president of the Union of Balkanian Turks and others besides - was used as intended. The rest trickled into the enterprises of government officials.
- 33 Perhaps most importantly, by admitting the Bulgarian Turks Özal temporarily reconciled Islamic and Kemalist tradition, the two poles between which the country has been wavering for decades. Kemal Atatürk, the first President of the Turkish Republic reckoned that all Turks should live in Turkey. Today, whether we admire or revile him for this quite unoriginal idea, whether we curse him as a bloody-minded dictator or respect him as an ardent military leader and founder of a state, it can not be denied that few similar dreamers managed to put the ideal of the modern nation-state so perfectly into practice. And furthermore, he achieved this in such a seemingly unpromising land as Asia Minor, whose diverse population was, as Canefe suggests¹³, hardly an obvious candidate for the national idea. Atatürk did no less than invent "the Turk" - he adapted L. Börne's 1830s slogan for the *Junges Deutschland* ("we want to be free Germans") to local conditions, which, *mutatis mutandis*, sounds something like : « let us all be Turks so that we could be free ». The only thing he added - in thought if not in word - was « and I am going to determine what a Turk is - a European image, women without veils, Latin script, lots of alcohol and sex and as little bowing towards

Mecca as possible ». Albanians, Armenians, Kurds, Greeks and sons of many other nations, whose names are not easily made to sound Turkish were all victims of his conception of the state, but other elements of his conception were only partially realized.

- 34 Özal's 1989 decision did not ruffle many feathers even in Islam circles, which were otherwise not very well disposed towards him. In their conception, hijra is a holy duty for each Muslim. Hijra or hegira is quite a flexible notion, its archetype is the flight of Mohammed from Mecca to Medina, that is, metaphorically, from the place which is not desirable for practicing the Muslim faith to a place where there are no obstacles for the believer. It has three main interpretations : the hijra is a spiritual escape from the profanity of reality, an actual escape from the place where atrocities are committed against the Muslim population (this was the interpretation in the case of the Bulgarian Turks), and finally an exodus from a place of destitution and poverty. Turks, who are mostly believers, unfortunately did not realize that the vast majority of the immigrants were inveterate atheists. Therefore they could regard their exodus as perhaps an unconscious, blood-driven hijra.

Those Who Have Made It

The migration of peoples always has a good effect on the economy, because a lot of energy is liberated, which is then transferred into work. Just take a look around - here in Turkey it is mainly the immigrants who are making it.¹⁴

- 35 Sami, Sabahatin and Turgut are three brothers who run a family enterprise: they sell building material and whatever else is needed in Russia. After they immigrated, they spread around and worked on constructions. It was a hard life, but they gradually made their way onto the social ladder through hard work. They were offered state jobs and apartments for which they had to pay some money, but only a nominal amount. They were promoted to technical manager, then company manager, until they eventually launched their own company with the money they had saved up. Today each of them has a car and a house. But they have retained their state-owned apartments as well, since they have got used to them. They dragged me proudly from one of their customers to the other - here everybody respects them, they say, they have credit, they do not have to pay for everything immediately; here the first thing is work, everything else follows, money makes things happen here. They explained the basics of business to me as if I had just wandered out of Communism for a management-training course. It took them two or three years to find their feet here, but everything has been going smoothly ever since. They are beginning to forget their Bulgarian ; even their Russian is better. They invited me to their place in Pursaklar, to the housing estate that the government had built for the immigrants, and showed me the small but comfortable apartment. Sami introduced me to his wife who also works - I had already met the daughter who worked as the company's secretary. This was the only way to make a living, he continued, to have all the family work, otherwise they would become like the locals who would not let their wives go to work under any circumstances, and would rather « starve along with their million kids ». They were grateful to the state and would always remain so for allocating them the apartment - the locals are able to live their whole lives in digs, but never attain anything. Thus it happened that I met the ideal socialist family while the wildest capitalism was raging "outside".

- 36 There must be hundreds of stories like that of Sami and his family amongst those who live on the Pursaklar housing estate. The main motifs are repeated by everybody I talked to : the first years of hardship and toil, the determination to stay, the helping hand of the state arriving just in time, work, permanent income, subsidized apartment, the women starting to work, only a few children in a family, so their education need not be spared, the cooperation in the family ; the lazy, uneducated locals and the hard-working, highly-educated Bulgarians who are quick to adapt and who have learned how to earn money that they immediately re-invest, mostly in goods and real estate. The opening up of the Russian market came in handy, because the knowledge of the language became a valuable asset.
- 37 Thus, the immigrant is nothing more and nothing less than the Kemalist ideal of a human being - at least according to the self-interpretation of those in Ankara.
- 38 TIKa is a company founded by young and ambitious immigrants. They counsel first-time entrepreneurs abroad, mainly in Central Asia, about acquiring capital for a particular project. The conversation tends to be mostly in Russian, but the boys speak several foreign languages. Deniz, the blond, hardly thirty-year-old young man completes Sami's story with the general and theoretical particularities of the immigrant's life. He reckons that immigrants are successful precisely because they are rootless in the country, and therefore cannot count on anybody but themselves. This increases their potential, he thinks, because they want to integrate and to prove that they have a place in this society through hard work. The state has helped a lot, it must be said - their entrance exam into the university was easier than the regular one. They were given free food and accommodation, all of which he is grateful for. Although the locals are often jealous, employers tend to prefer immigrants, because they do not steal or shirk and do the same job for less money. Consumer society came to Turkey at the same time as he did - that was when privatization began, when bank services started to develop, and he, along with the locals, learned what a credit card was. Four or five years later he felt completely at home, his thinking switched to local concerns—that is, all he thought about was business. He bought a decent apartment in town and ceased to be frustrated about being a mere immigrant. Of course, there are great losers among the immigrants, he says – for example older people or agricultural workers. Because the land is private here, everybody cultivates his own without help. Those who could not get used to living in an apartment in the city and working in industry or commerce went back to Bulgaria. Those who manage to make a living are saving up to buy a plot of land and, if necessary, spend years building a house, brick by brick, with a little garden where they can grow some vegetables for their jars of pickle.
- 39 The Turkish authorities, according to hearsay allocated apartments and state jobs in Ankara to those who had “earned” them in their previous lives, that is, to resistance fighters and informers to the Turkish intelligence, while the official version has it that the apartments were allocated by drawing lots. As a matter of fact, it is hard to tell how certain people were appointed to their present positions, because they had certainly not been trained for them. I met a guy in one of the outskirts of Istanbul who told me (after his fourth raki) that he had been loitering around in Turkey for a year and a half when he was found (he did not mention by whom) and questioned as to whether he had been really imprisoned in Bulgaria, and when it turned out that he had refused to accept his new name, he was immediately allocated an apartment – that other immigrants had to pay for – because he was a former resistance fighter. Still, knowing

the people in Pursaklar, this cannot have been the only criterion, especially because the number of apartments built in Ankara by far exceeded the number of Turkish rebels in Bulgaria during the forty-five years of Communism. The Ankara community seems homogeneous not because people with similar pasts and educational backgrounds, and of similar age and social groups were gathered here (although these things were probably taken in account : the Turkish state, being an ardent supporter of “natural selection”, did not bother to aid the uneducated and the elderly ; they also took great care not to let Gypsies who pretended to be Turks enter the country), but rather because everyone here lives in one great communal narrative. The stories about the immigrants' life in Bulgaria were as varied as those about the life in Turkey were similar - lives which were hard, but in the final analysis successful - a precisely measured balance which makes it impossible to interpret the contempt for the locals as an antipathy for the country. I felt all along that whatever one of them was saying could have equally been voiced by any other - as though they were narrating one other's lives, giving voice to each other's ideas.

Settlers and Settlements

- 40 The inhabitants of Pursaklar love the place, but they would leave it immediately if they could. They are attached to it in the same way as you are attached to a second-hand jacket - you feel it would be a betrayal to get rid of a piece of clothing which served so well at its prime, but you do not feel like wearing it in front of others. Objectively speaking, Pursaklar is a bizarre place indeed: five thousand people live in sixty-two blocks on top of a hill in the midst of a wasteland about ten kilometres from Ankara and two or three kilometers from Pursaklar village. Apparently that was the only place where the government could find land for sale. None of the immigrants living in the capital city believes that they wanted to lock them up in a ghetto. There are no mosques here, only a loudspeaker in the bus stop, from which the voice of the muezzin from the neighboring village can be heard. There are no pubs, no cafés, clubs or restaurants. « Why should there be », asks Sezer, my faithful guide over this period. « People only come here to sleep, and if I go out, I do not mind spending ten dollars for the taxi to take me home ». There are some stalls, however, selling alcohol, soft drinks, tobacco and basic food. I talked to some of the owners of these, who are satisfied with the business, but « if the wife could get a better job », says Ibrahim, who only covers for his wife over the weekends, « I would hand in my license immediately ».
- 41 During the day potatoes are sold from trucks, the old ladies in salavaris and shawls - pensioners - stand in queues with patience they learned in the old days. One third of the inhabitants of Pursaklar are pensioners, supported only by the families, because they do not get a pension from either the Turkish or the Bulgarian state : the former does not even have a stipulation to do so, whereas the latter will not remit the three or four dollar allowance per month out of pure spite. Should they attempt to go to Bulgaria and fetch it themselves, they will be compelled to wait in offices for months, spending several times the amount of their pension on food and accommodation. Many of them try to cultivate the land between the buildings, trying to grow vegetables on the pebbly soil, more, it seems, for the sake of working in the garden than with any genuine expectation of success. « You will never see the locals do that », Sezer points at the gardens, « they've never even held a hoe in their hands ».

- 42 The settlement in Yalova and the Kestel neighborhood by Bursa are not very different from Pursaklar. In Yalova the immigrants' territory is separated from the outside world by a fence. The place has a decent entrance opposite the tea-shop, which constitutes the only local spot for community life. There used to be a pub, but it was locked up by the gendarmerie, because, Ilyas tells me, on one occasion some locals turned up, got drunk and called the immigrants to account for why they got everything free. It ended in a fight. « The locals do not even know how to drink - they get drunk immediately, and then have to prove themselves », he adds with contempt.
- 43 The inhabitants of Kağıthane, one of the immigrant settlements built in an inner neighborhood of Istanbul have no doubt that the wire fence is not merely a symbolic but a very real defense against the locals, who jealously call the place a “resort”.
- They came to bully our kids the other day, but our kids are in much better condition than theirs and they don't like to be called *giaoours*. We complained to the police that they kept coming here to disturb us, and the policeman told us - not officially, of course - to knock any intruders on the head, then he would take the matter in his hands and stitch the thing up. Only those we invite, he says, get beyond the fence, everybody else is an intruder or a burglar. This will not happen of course, but it is not hard to understand our people : they are more irritated, not only because they live a hectic life, but because the place itself is oppressive.
- 44 The problem with the settlement is not that the buildings are not standard (the ceilings of the apartments are low, the rooms are confined), they are still alright to live in and the immigrants are happy to have anything at all, but the buildings are built so close together that the only space between them is a corridor-like alley. There is no public lighting, a punishment from the Islamist local government for the immigrants from whom they got merely three votes at the previous elections. « We are living in a ghetto, the families just maintain contact with each other - our culture is just too different from theirs », Ali remarks finally. But by night, even in the darkness, there is a bustling social life, light streams from the open doors of pastry-shops, the children amuse themselves by playing leapfrog, badminton and football, boys chat up girls, adults stand in groups, talking in the shafts of light, travelers sell cheap brandy, cigarettes and dry pork sausage smuggled in from Bulgaria.
- 45 Mehmet, the owner of the tea-shop urges me to enter the store-room of a food store which is on the ground floor of a half-constructed building. We sit down with the others, drinking thin Turkish beer and chewing greasy, thick-cut Bulgarian salami to go with it. Eight of us are listening to Sali, who is telling stories about the Chanti and the Vogul he worked with on a construction site in the Soviet Union, earning relatively good money, but then how he left everything behind in Bulgaria. He could not get used to the cramped apartment he was given, so he decided to build a house for himself here in Kırâç, a distant suburb of Istanbul. Whatever the cost, he would like to restore to his family the standard of living that they were used to “back home”. He saved up some money, bought a plot of land, and then spent a week digging the foundations and putting up the walls with the relatives. They finished a room, moved out, rented out the apartment, and ever since he has been buying building materials with the rent, and building a little more each weekend. In two years the house already has a roof - two or three more years and everything will be in its place.
- 46 There are several hundred immigrants living like that in Kırâç, in the one completed room of their house, designed to be a palace. No days of rest and recreation – they subordinate the entire life of the family to a single cause. Those who were able to even

got their parents move into the single room with them : more rented apartments, less expenditure, faster progress. Some others whom I drank beer with, in the storeroom that doubled as a speakeasy, were also wearing denim tainted with lime and oil-paint, the company changed completely three times till the evening. They quickly finished up their working hours in the city, then after a two-hour trip back and a quick beer, got stuck into working on their house.

- 47 And when the house is finally ready one day and they have a road and light and shops and pubs, they will have built another city within the boundaries of Istanbul, the inhabitants of which are now re-creating the world from which they fled seven years ago, or rather a world that existed only in their memories.

The world must change here or we will never adapt to it in our lifetimes.¹⁵

- 48 In Istanbul and in the cities of the Western coast of Asia Minor I realized how the content of the word göçmen had changed over the previous years. Ali, the well-to-do computer engineer from Istanbul lived in the Kağıthane camp together with several hundred other families for two years after he immigrated, in a site building made of plywood and tin. In spite of the miserable conditions they lived a cheerful life in the camp, Ali recalls. In the evenings they sat together, talked, listened to music and danced - they were a real community and he made some true friends.

Economically I integrated quickly - I found work immediately, because I knew a hundred times as much as the best local computer engineers, but I will never manage to adapt culturally. We came from a country where everyone was equal and we did not have to bow in front of someone just because his position was higher, whereas the locals cannot think of anything but their position in the hierarchy.

- 49 In his opinion, the göçmens are openhearted and never say yes if they mean no. They do not play roles, they are not hypocritical - their aim is not to cheat the other. The locals are used to living in misery and have no special needs, whereas the göçmen considers it very important to have an apartment, a house and a plot of land. He would never mix with these people, because there is nothing to talk about with them. When he goes abroad or to conferences, Ali talks only to Bulgarians and does not pay attention to his new countrymen. He recently read in a newspaper that the immigrants were not really Turks, yet the state gave them everything. « It was probably written by a Kurdish bastard », Ali commented, « who wants to lick the ass of the Refah party and be more Turkish than the Turks ».

- 50 Levent, the medical student from Istanbul asked me in absolute seriousness, if I really thought it possible that they - the immigrants - belonged to the same gene pool as the natives. Historically, Bulgarians considered the prohibition against ethnic and religious mingling as more imperative than the prohibition against incest. They laughed even at Kemal Atatürk himself for proposing to Dimitrina Kovacheva, the daughter of a Bulgarian minister in the years before World War I, when the later founder of the Turkish state was serving as a military attaché in Sofia. I responded by bringing up the Jews living in the Chinese diaspora, who do not differ from the locals in color or the shape of their eyes, yet are just as Jewish as their Ethiopian co-religionists who happen to be black as tar. It does not therefore, I concluded, seem to be a good idea to bother too much about the origins, because no good has ever come of it. « Still, being a Jew would be different », the guy said meditatively, « at least I would not have to identify with such riffraff ». « Wouldn't you marry a local girl if you fell in love with her ? » I

attempted, unsuccessfully, to provoke him. « That is absolutely out of question, that would be unhealthy », he said without thinking.

- 51 I addressed Nazme, as I did everyone, in Bulgarian. We met in Kestel, by Bursa. He introduced himself - his name was Sergei. That was what he had been called in the last few years and he liked it. He used to be the manager of a restaurant in Kirjali. He was untouched by the re-naming, and he thought it was fair enough that only the official language was allowed to be spoken within the territory of a certain state. Kurds are not allowed to babble in Kurdish in Turkey either. The only reason he was stupid enough to move out here was this mass psychosis that affected them all. So he rushed out after his relatives and did not know that he would be transported immediately to the Wild East among the Kurds, because the state had this idea of sending them all over the place. I came to slowly : it was as though the road movie had been cut for a moment, and a Bulgarian propaganda film, unmasking the sly machinations of the Turkish state, was being broadcast in its place by mistake. Nazme talked about the locals as Gypsies and beasts - they ought to look in a mirror before they call us *giaours*, he said, « they reckon all *göçmens* are thieves and their women whores, because they do not cover themselves in veils. But if these people knew what morons they were, they would hide for shame ». « We were Turks in Bulgaria and are *giaours* here : as soon as I have paid off my debt to the state I will buzz off from here immediately... »
- 52 Nazme-Sergei drove me back to the city, cursing the *Arnauts* all the way - they had paid for their driving licenses with sheep, but had never learnt how to drive. He also told me that here in Bursa, the most European Turkish city, which had started to prosper after the arrival of the first immigrants from the Balkans at the end of the nineteenth century, unskilled and elderly *göçmens* were left to their fate. The “human market” was full of them every day early in the morning and you could get a woman for the whole day for ten dollars. They did hard physical labor for pennies, lived in dumps and starved, but could not return, because there was nowhere to return to.
- 53 When I arrived at the human market in Bursa at six o'clock, there was already a lot of bustling. One area was swarming with old women in *salavaris* and young, but run-down women, the other was full of stubbled men wearing torn overalls. It was a weird hunt : every so often a truck would grind to a halt and a crowd would mill around it pushing and shoving - the chosen ones jump up on the truck, the crowd disperses and nobody gets angry at anybody else ; they offer each other cigarettes and carry on loafing. Some employers make their choice within seconds, others get out of the truck and eye the candidates for several minutes, making a big fuss and enjoying the chaos, playing for time, almost touching their future employee's biceps and belly muscles. As the daylight increases so does the crowd, lining up on either side of the road, some of them crossing from time to time to see whether business is better on the other side today. The transactions take place absolutely dispassionately, according to a set of pre-practiced gestures and strategies, without overbearing emotions. When nothing is happening they are willing to talk to me - there is hardly anybody who does not speak Bulgarian. They ask me if I have any news about their native village - I must, if that is where I have come from. They cannot understand how someone who speaks the language is not Bulgarian. *şaban* comes from a village close to Kirjali - nobody wants to employ him full time, because he is too old and not trained for anything except tobacco-growing, which is no good to him since he hasn't got a plot of land.

- 54 Ali, a young man of twenty-five or so is also unskilled. He has tried his luck in several jobs, but did not succeed at any of them and earned practically nothing. Now he rents out a room with his wife and two children and comes out here every day. Somehow they managed to get by. None of them have social insurance - this, he says, is a way of life - no worse than having a regular job. Here everybody is boss for one day, you are not obliged to do anything you do not want to, and if you do not feel like working you simply don't come out. And what's more, nobody can sack you. « I get work every single time I come out here - these guys know that we work much better than the locals », he said, finally giving voice to his göçmen identity.

The Dernek

- 55 The Balkanian Turks' Union for Solidarity and Culture, or, the Dernek (Union) as it is better known is an independent organization for the protection of civil interests. It was established in 1983, but only started to function legally in 1985, when those in power realized that it was worth paying attention to the warnings they were receiving that something was about to explode in Bulgaria. Bulgarians have always considered the Dernek as a branch office of the Turkish secret service and the military lobby, which may even be true - the Dernek world-view is undeniably reminiscent of that of the Kemalist soldiers and the armed forces. However, if that is the case, it is hard to explain how the organization dared to defy the late President Özal - a latter-day Atatürk - in 1989, advising that it would be better not to let all those people enter the country, and that the question of emigration would be better settled by a treaty between the two states. « Now you can see what it has come to », İsmet Sever, the president of the Dernek explains impetuously,

three hundred thousand people at the border, a tumult, a chaos - anybody who wants to enter the country can find a way to do so. The problems should have been solved there, locally, but instead, they shifted the responsibility onto Turkey, and this state is simply incapable of solving problems.

- 56 Listening to Mr. Sever it sounds as though someone even more powerful than the government must be behind him - it would be more than irresponsible to give voice to one's disdain for the Islamist government so spectacularly and boldly. But then again, his opinion of the previous regime is no better - they unscrupulously stole the foreign money that was intended for building apartments. He estimates that barely five per cent of the immigrants received the apartments they were promised. At least three hundred thousand people entered the country illegally since then, just as they had predicted. It was only reasonable to expect that many families could not put up with being torn apart.
- 57 As we talked the impression grew on me that this rather offhand treatment of information concealed political ambitions. The Dernek, although it does not receive any budget subsidy, is rapidly expanding. They currently have their branches everywhere except in Ankara, they have opened offices also operating as clubs and cafés in almost every district of almost every town of the West coast. In half-built Kırâç, for example, they have already opened an office, while the Dernek in Yalova is the most dazzling building of the neighborhood, designed with guest rooms on the top floor. Its café also serves as an employment agency. The membership fee covers full-time agents who meet regularly in the center of Istanbul, in my friend Mehmet's tea-shop.

58 The organization in Bursa publishes its own paper. I had a long conversation with the editor-in-chief, Sami Kocao lu a retired army officer, amateur poet and journalist. Mr. Kocao lu said exactly the same things as Mr. Sever, perhaps the only difference being that he estimated the proportion of those immigrants who received some aid from the government at ten per cent. The rest were hard hit by the transmigration, he says, the old people found themselves in the void and those who could make it, owe their existence exclusively to their own abilities and skills. Finally he says a few words about Atatürk. The Balkanian immigrants are the repositories of Kemalist traditions; it is with them and through them that the dream of the founder of the republic, a European Turkey, can be best realized.

There are lots of göçmens in this neighborhood. This is where we had Mrs. Çiller elected, because her parents were also immigrants from Dobruja. In the beginning she worked well, but then she had a row with Mesut Yılmaz, the president of the Kemalist party, and hitched up with Erbakan's Islamists. Here the MP will be whoever we propose. Now we are about to give a push to Yılmaz, because we are really fed up with the rest here.¹⁶

59 However, it seems that the governing parties are fed up with the göçmen-discourse spreading as rapidly as the Dernek offices. One of the activists took me to the camp in Kağıthane, where refugees have been living for seven years. Water and "French loo" in the courtyard, each family lives in their narrow box. There are some vegetables planted in the area between the barracks, as usual, but otherwise there is mud and filth everywhere, the stale odor of misery inside, and sheep grazing beside the buildings. « The first thing we built for ourselves was the mortuary », my guide says, pointing at a green building, « because the older folks couldn't put up with these conditions, even though they were given free medical care ». It soon turned out that in the Pendik district, in the Asian part of Istanbul the apartments of forty or fifty families had been ready for two years, all except for the public utilities. The only people who visit the place nowadays are officials from the Kemalist Anap party, to reassure the locals that everything would be alright the moment they get into power. But this does not depend on the göçmens : the only moral they could draw from politics so far is that if they do not vote Refah, i.e. the Islamists, they won't have water and will have stay where they are, in the camp.

60 In the beginning it was hard to understand why the Anap spent so much energy taking care of the souls of Balkanian immigrants, since the number of göçmens who arrived in the successive waves cannot have much exceeded two million, even taking account of their direct offspring - a small proportion in a country of sixty million people. They do not even try their luck in Ankara - in Pursaklar nobody has ever heard about the Dernek, and further to the east the Kemalists have no chances in the present climate. However, the continuing loss of credibility of the governing Islamists is creating new hopes that they will be able to compensate for their loss on the national level on the West coast of Asia Minor and the European areas at least on the more limited level of the local governments. Experience to date has demonstrated that the political elite elected in Istanbul or the surrounding area generally comes to possess the real power in Ankara sooner or later. The republican myth has it that this region serves as a model for the Asian territories and - according to the Islamist myth - Istanbul continues to be the spiritual capital. Therefore in the struggle of possession of this territory and the mythological consciousness that accrues to it, the göçmens' vote could actually be crucial.

Küçük Çekmece

- 61 This was not the first time I had visited the ruined camp in Küçük Çekmece. The night before I had stumbled along the concrete debris in the moonlight, a somewhat bizarrely romantic scene, with the sound of the waves in the background : again, hardly the scenery fit for a road movie - more reminiscent of a low budget disaster film really.
- 62 The light was on in Mehmet's hut but nowhere else - God knows where he got the electricity from. One of the kids is sickly, he says, the wife could not go to work as a result and the biggest daughter has just got a job as a secretary. The two smaller kids were already asleep. The older girl was sitting on the edge of the bed, relatively neat and with make-up on. They shifted up on the bed for me. In the tin stove, they were burning the drift-wood found on the seashore.
- We haven't been able to leave the camp, although we were warned half a year ago that they would pull it down. We have paid the installments for the apartment, but we have not been allocated one yet, and we have no relatives in Turkey. If we had any, we would have gone to them straightaway in '89.
- 63 The wind blew through the gaps in the walls of the hut, Mehmet tried to stick a piece of newspaper into one of the gaps in the tin roof.
- When they came with the machines, nobody believed that they would bang into the huts while people were living in them. But they did. We were told to get out - that everybody could take whatever they were able to carry. The furniture, things like that, were left inside.
- 64 An hour later it started to rain, the water was trickling down the inside of the wall. It seemed impossible to insulate those walls.
- Then we collected a few doors, straightened a few tin plates and set up our house on a large concrete block. With the kids, we cannot live like Mustafa, who just lies down on his bed under the big blue sky and covers himself with a few cardboard pieces. He is there now, you can look at him.
- 65 I looked at him. Mustafa was sleeping under the rubble on some kind of mattress, the rain was pouring down on him, but the nylon sheet he had over the paper kept his den dry. « We were told that the camp had to be pulled down because of the city-planning, you know, it used to be military barracks before and it was not very pretty here, on the seaside. But for us it was OK, we had a room, heating and water. »
- 66 The next day, on the day of my long trip, I met Mustafa and his buddy Özer personally. Özer had more self-respect, he had built his hut closer to the sea and kept a portrait of Atatürk in it. They had just arrived from the market where they had picked out the best of the leftover rotten vegetables and fruits. They had also gone to the butcher to pick up whatever was left after the dog-owners had been. « We were too old for them, we weren't accepted for any jobs. When the camp was pulled down, they told us that we could go fuck ourselves. » Among the ruins six or seven people haunted the place, hoping to find something, anything. A few hundred meters further two Gypsy families put up their tents, reckoning that they would also find something under the panel pieces. « We cannot even hope to get an apartment », Özer says, « because we didn't even have the money to pay the first installment. But as a matter of fact », he grins, « those who paid didn't get it either ».

- 67 şaban, at whose place I spent the rest of the afternoon, was approaching me with a bucket full of mushrooms. « I just picked them, they grew real big after the rain yesterday. » Above the hut there was a Turkish flag on a pole several meters long. In the beginning he mingled lots of Russian words in his Bulgarian, he had not spoken the language for years, as he explained. Originally he worked as an electric mechanic, then as a leather merchant. He had two shops in town, but his friend and business partner who happened to be a Kurd, ruined him unwittingly. One day armed people came and said that they would shoot the guy in front of his eyes, because he had deserted their terrorist group. şaban signed a check with which he bailed out the guy, but to cover it he had to sell the shops with the goods within an afternoon. In the meantime his wife left him and moved to another camp with the child. He bought some leather on credit and went off to sell the stuff in Georgia, but the moment he crossed the border, two mafias clashed for his leather, they kept him in custody for four months, then finally he escaped back to Turkey with the help of a Georgian girl after a thousand adventures.

The whole thing is like the script of an action film, sometimes I myself find it hard to believe that it happened. But the nervous breakdown I had afterwards was very real. While I was in hospital, the girl who had saved my life several times in Georgia became a whore, and ever since she's been walking the streets around Aksaray.

- 68 Then he went to find a job in a factory. He had to pass an entrance exam in connection diagrams, the last time somebody asked him about such things had been at the age of fifteen, but everything went all right, up to the moment when they realized he was a göçmen, then they said sorry, but they couldn't employ him. He could not be familiar with the local terminology, he was told. « Anyway, I am happy to be alive, it is like a gift », he said, and invited me to taste the mushrooms he had cooked in the meantime. But I had to get on. I had to look for a pub to watch the second half of the Valencia-Beşiktaş match...

Amnesia and Solidarity

- 69 According to Richard Rorty « Orwell's vision was of a world in which (...) human solidarity was - deliberately, through careful planning - made impossible »¹⁷. The people I talked to recalled, almost without exception, that after the re-naming none of their former friends expressed their sympathy, or if they did, it was without words, only by a look in their eyes. Yet even the most radical of them did not speak about their former neighbors, friends or colleagues with hatred. They understood their fear and exonerated them of the charge of betrayal.

It had to do with party politics, because the Turkish population was underdeveloped in every sense. When they heard “Ahmed, Hassan, Mehmet” - nobody paid attention to them, but as soon as they had a Bulgarian name, nobody noticed that they were Turks. This was party politics, so that we wouldn't feel that we were slighted.¹⁸

- 70 They felt instinctively what Rorty tries to prove over several hundred pages, that people are what “the mass of small, contingent facts” make them. In the critical times there were no “fellowship-inspiring descriptions” - as the American moralist says - on the grounds of which some people could have taken a stand for them. And they always wanted to differ, if not consciously (« in a few years we would have been absorbed », almost each of them said), at least involuntarily, like Recep, the railway worker mentioned above, who after the re-naming suddenly started to believe in Allah.

If you want to get ahead here, forget what you had there.¹⁹

- 71 The fact that the immigrants unconsciously protest against the idea that they were continually deprived of their civil rights, idealize conditions before 1984, and refer to the forceful re-naming as a sudden eruption of madness or “an event outside the system”, is a typical example of communal amnesia. This usually happens after a fatal shock – those memories which are authentically told begin after the shock, everything that had happened before is merely “a memory about the memory”, a subsequently reconstructed picture, which, by embellishing the past, grants self-justification to those who had suffered the blow but could not take a stand against it. Yet at the same time, the process in which the minority identity is replaced by göçmen identity could not have taken place without this amnesia. The borderline between “us” and “them” is no longer drawn according to ethnic particularities, but rather according to a supposed “level of civilization”. The distinction “we Europeans” - “those obscure Asians” must inevitably be accompanied by a sense of community, and in certain exceptional cases, by an identification with Bulgarians in whose environment they “grew up” to become Europeans. But in order to feel this way they must dispense with the unfortunate fact that the Bulgarians did not declare solidarity with them in hard times.
- 72 I asked everybody who had visited their birthplace since they had emigrated how they felt when they saw the first Bulgarian policeman at the border, or met that functionary in their native village who had conducted the re-naming. Only those who went back one or two years after emigrating reported a minor anxiety, the rest merely shrugged at the whole business. On the other hand, I heard numerous stories about prison officers, former party secretaries and propagandists that they met by chance. Either they refused to recognize each other or the Bulgarian joked cheerfully about how much good they had unwittingly done to the Turks when they had expelled them, because now they were living much better than their ex-countrymen. There was not one single case of calling somebody to account, of contempt or repressed thirst for revenge, however natural it would seem to an outsider. For the emigrants to Turkey now reappear invested with a completely different identity in the old place. They are no longer a minority group, the residuum of despised Asian hordes who had somehow got stuck there, but the champions of the European ideal in obscure Asia. Their life-saving instinct to differ has found new reference points in the meantime.
- 73 And this is precisely where the “moral development” of which Rorty dreams gets stranded. In their case, the sense of solidarity does not grow in a straight line, but more like the water level in communicating vessels : it has to diminish in one place so that it could increase in the other. The most shocking illustration is their inability to notice that the Kurds' deprivation of civil rights is parallel to their own former situation. If there is one community they all hate without exception and in unison, it is precisely this minority struggling - today by extreme means - for their rights, and their contempt for the locals also originates to a great extent from the fact that they unwittingly identify Anatolian Turks with Kurds.
- 74 And is there one politician who, in full consciousness of his vocation, does not feel the impulse to place these potential voters under his own guardianship ? Which Kemalist could resist the temptation to titillate the göçmens' vanity by claiming that they are the ones destined to complete the Master's creation ? And would these people, in constant conflict with the world outside, believe someone who said that they were

chasing a century-old, cruel ideal of the state, the basic principle of which was opposition rather than solidarity ?

- 75 şaban hoisted up the flag with the crescent high, so high it left me wondering where on earth he could find such a long pole in that heap of rubble. He does not blame the Bulgarians – whatever happened was due to the Communists. He has nothing against the Kurds – it was not them who robbed him, but their terrorists. There is nothing wrong with the locals – it is not their fault that their Islamists practice their split consciousness on the göçmens. The Georgians are also OK, because there were at least as many people among them who risked their lives for him as those who wanted to kill him. The Dernek, and göçmen identity ? - what for ? In this hut ? « I say it again : I hoisted the flag so that nobody would forget that we are all in Turkey here ».

NOTES

1. The ethnographic present of this paper is 1996, when the research on which it is based was conducted.
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4. **Karpat (Kemal H.)**, « Introduction : The Bulgarian Way of Nation-Building and the Turkish Minority », in Karpat (Kemal H.), ed., *The Turks of Bulgaria : The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority*, Istanbul, 1990.
5. **Jacoby (Russell)**, *Social Amnesia*, Harvester Press, 1975.
6. Zeynep, Ankara, November 1996.
7. Züleiha, Istanbul, December 1996.
8. Neçmi, Yalova, December 1996.
9. **Karpat (Kemal H.)**, loc. cit., p. 17.
10. **Vasileva (Darina)**, « Bulgarian Turkish Emigration and Return », *International Migration Review*, 26 (2), 1992, p. 348.
11. Ibid.
12. **Karpat (Kemal H.)**, loc. cit., p. 20.
13. **Canefe (Nergis)**, « The legacy of forced migrations in modern Turkish society » (this volume).
14. Sami, Ankara, October 1996.
15. Ali, Istanbul, December 1996.
16. Mehmet, Avcilar, November 1996.
17. **Rorty (Richard)**, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 189.
18. Kevser, Ankara, October 1996.
19. Sabahatin, Ankara, October 1996.

INDEX

Index géographique : Bulgarie, Turquie

Mots-clés : Migrations, Turcs (Bulgarie)

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