

source of additional information on how the press reflecting the popular identities perceives the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement). Notwithstanding other minor flaws (the Turkish constitution was ratified in 1982, not a year before - p.32; the chief of staff in Turkey did not hold the post of secretary - General of the National Security Council as suggests Gareth Jenkins quoted by Alexander Murinson - p.157), Murinson's original and though-provoking work is a major contribution to the existing (and in recent years proliferating) scholar-

ship on modern Turkey and the emerging strategic, geopolitical, and military constellations in the Middle East and the Caucasus. The book, as a whole, stands out not only as a valuable source of facts not widely known even among scholars studying modern Turkey and regional developments, but also as an inspiring work which helps readers look at international politics from a different theoretical angle.

Jakub Wodka

Polish Academy of Sciences

Shoah: Turkey, the US, and the UK

By *Arnold Reisman*

Charleston: BookSurge Publishing, 2009, 345 pages, ISBN 9781439240229.

"I was alive only because I had a Turkish passport," tells Lazar Russo in Arnold Reisman's *Shoah: Turkey, the US and the UK*. Lazar Russo was living in France when the Nazis occupied it. As with the other Jews, it was impossible for him to leave the country. However, remaining meant certain extermination. Only after the Turkish Consulate in Paris offered him a passport could he escape. He went to Turkey. It was an unusual move from a foreign country those days. But according to the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, France was only "one of the countries where Turkish diplomats worked to save Jews."

Thanks to Professor Reisman's extensive research, many personal stories of European Jews who, like Russo, made it to safety through Turkey are accessible to the reader. Professor Reisman, a Holocaust survivor himself, combines archival documents with individual testimonies

throughout his book. The result is a work that bears the features of both a novel and a documentary. A plethora of first hand historical materials, previously unpublished, is undoubtedly an added value for future academic reference.

Professor Reisman argues that Turkey played an overall positive role during the Holocaust and that this fact has been widely omitted in English language literature. He goes even further, implying that Turkey was a prime player in helping Jews escape the Holocaust. Although not always in a consistent sequence, the author proves his point quite well. Supported by statistics, cables, individual stories and other valuable documentation from the archives of Yad Vashem, the FDR Library, the USG Shoah Foundation, the British Foreign and Colonial Offices (sic) and others, this work indeed shows that Turkey did much more than has been traditionally believed.

To explore and determine why and how Turkey behaved the way it did, Professor Reisman casts light on Turkey's official and unofficial policies in saving Jewish lives and compares them with the practices and laws effective in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada during the same period of time. Even though he acknowledges that Turkey could have done much more, as a place of refuge and a transit country for those escaping Nazi persecution, he stresses that in comparison to the restrictive policies of other states many immigrants considered Turkey a place of real refuge.

The huge waves of Holocaust refugees resulted in immigration unfriendly behavior in many countries. Immigration laws became stricter, sometimes even draconian, sealing virtually the borders. The question of immigration to Palestine also played a role, occupying countries that had high stakes in maintaining good ties with the Arab authorities and public, particularly the United Kingdom were reluctant to accept immigrants. Although many countries rarely accept immigrants en masse, even in days of prosperity, Professor Reisman's data in *Shoah* is striking in showing how restrictive immigration policies were towards the Jewish population trying to escape the Nazis during the 30s and 40s. For instance, 90% of quotas available for immigrants to the United States from Nazi territories were never filled.

The British policy, on the other hand, was largely based on the "White (Churchill) Paper," which aimed at keeping Jews out of Palestine entirely and, when that was no longer possible, a policy to halt "illegal" immigration was adopted. As for Canada, Professor Reisman's research reveals that only 5,000 Jewish refugees were able to enter the country between 1933 and 1948.

On a less "official" note, Reisman writes: "Surprising as this may sound to the current generation, Princeton University, like some of its ivy-league counterparts e.g. Harvard, Yale, and Brown, has *Judenfrei* faculties as a matter of policy. These institutions did not hire Jewish faculty members until after WWII." While this was a policy implemented on the American continent, "[I]n 1933 the Turkish government began inviting intellectuals who were fleeing Nazis and unable to go to America because of restrictive immigration laws... to live and work in Istanbul and Ankara." The move was a part of an official decision to modernize Turkey's higher educational system, which resulted in over 1,000 Jewish intellectuals and their family members settling in Turkey. Some other decisions were either personal choices, like in the case of the Turkish Consuls who risked their lives to help Jews, or they were penned officially. Some were at least tacitly accepted, occasionally at the level of ministries.

Despite extremely meager economic resources for its own population, Turkey in many cases granted citizenship to Jews. When other countries were sabotaging transits, Turkey was issuing transit visas to those who wished to continue to Palestine or allowing many of them to stay in Turkey when the transit visas expired.

Professor Reisman pays special attention to the research on the destinies of ships carrying the refugees. Altogether, fifteen refugee ships carrying Jewish immigrants to Palestine in the period between 1939 and 1942 were either given permission to pass Turkey, or the trips were orchestrated from Turkey. The author makes a great effort to relate the story of each and every one of these ships, be it the *Assimi*, *Velos*, or infamous *Struma*.

The book gives many opportunities to understand the author's appreciation of Turkey's Jewish policy. He also offers plenty of evidence to demonstrate that unlike other countries, Turkey substantially facilitated immigration to Palestine. Mossad (Mossad Le'aliyah Bet), for instance, when it was still "a small unorthodox organization whose main mission was to bring Jews to Israel," operated between 1938-1948 from Turkey. Other Jewish organizations from Palestine also had their offices in Turkey, which were under the supervision of Chaim (Charles) Barlas. Even the War Refugee Board, established only after the refugee scandal and Du Bois' memo, operated from Turkey, with Istanbul as the epicenter.

All these organizations were working with the Turkish Government's full knowledge, and many times clandestine operations were implicitly supported. Operation "Baptism" – a plan to baptize Hungarian (and other Central European) Jews in order to save them from annihilation – was created in and organized from Turkey. 80,000 certificates were granted as a result of the successful conduct.

Yet, the picture was not that "rosy." "Turkey had to be valued against the background of (its) geo-political scenario within and outside of Turkey," Professor Reisman writes. "Economic conditions coupled with stirring nationalist passions

gave rise to Law Number 4305, the Capital Tax Law (Varlik Vergisi Kanunu) passed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November 11, 1942." This law was used as an excuse for running anti-Semitic cartoons (Akbaba) and stories in the media. "Because of its coercive and discriminatory practices," Reisman continues, "the law was thankfully short lived, primarily due to external pressure.

Ultimately, the book demonstrates with academic precision the positive role Turkey was playing in the years prior to the establishment of Israel, and it should be included among the literature on Turkish-Israeli relations. Around 70 years have passed since these stories unfolded, today few would remember them. Perhaps, some may recollect that Turkey was the first Muslim-majority country to recognize Israel only one year after the Declaration of Independence. Instead, the latest developments in Turkish-Israeli relations, such as the "Davos incident" and the "Mavi Marmara crisis" are absorbing much of the popular attention in Turkey and abroad. It is, therefore, timely that this well versed account reminds us of another dimension of Turkey-Israel relations and tells us, as Stanford Jay Shaw said and Arnold Reisman quotes, "Turks and Jews have always collaborated in times of great crisis."

Sylvia Tiryaki, *Istanbul Kültür University*