

# The neo-Ottoman trap for Turkey

by Joseph Brewda

On Jan. 16, 1996, a nine-man team of Chechens and Abkhazians based in Turkey, seized a ferry boat carrying 100 Russian tourists, in the Turkish port of Trabzon. In an interview, the terror team leader, Mohamed Tokhan, demanded, "We want the complete independence of the northern Caucasus, otherwise there will be war." He said he was acting in sympathy with the Chechen terrorists then holding 3,000 civilians hostage at a hospital in Kizlyar, Dagestan. Tokhan himself is a veteran of the Chechen militia, and fought in both Chechnya and Abkhazia.

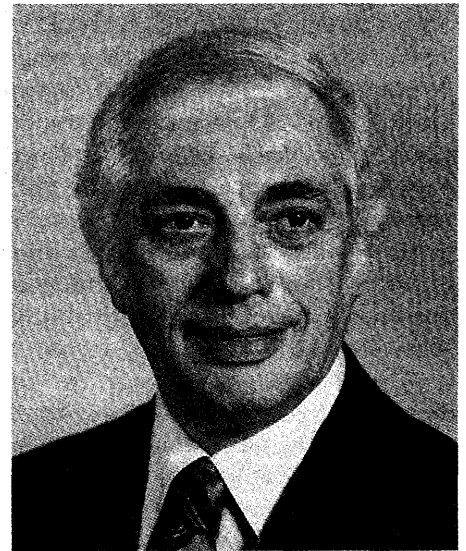
The Russian Foreign Ministry reacted quickly to Tokhan's provocation, warning the next day: "We have informed the Turkish side more than once about the dangerous anti-Russian activity of the extremist part of the Chechen diaspora and emissaries of [Chechen rebel leader Gen. Jokhar] Dudayev on the territory of Turkey. It is this activity which has led to this big-scale act of terrorism." Two days later, Russian President Boris Yeltsin complained to the press that Turkey was "dragging its feet." He said he had sent 150 military scuba-divers to Trabzon for possible use against the Chechen terrorists. A few hours later, the ferry boat hijackers surrendered without bloodshed.

Nevertheless, the incident highlights how swiftly local wars in the Caucasus can become a point of conflict between two far greater powers, Russia and Turkey. That was the Chechen aim in seizing the ferry. "If the events which are now taking place in Chechnya continue, the balance of forces will change, and the war will spread to Turkey," Dudayev told the Turkish daily *Sabah*, from his hideout on Feb. 11. "This is how the Third World War will start."

Such a spread of the war is also an objective of British intelligence. The geopolitical aim is not only to use the Caucasus's ethnic conflicts to bring about a reactive neo-imperial tilt in Russia, but to use the Caucasus proxies to accomplish the identical shift in Turkey, to a neo-Ottoman impulse—setting both countries once again on the track toward confrontation.

## The Bernard Lewis network

The senior British case officer for accomplishing the neo-Ottoman revival in Turkey is retired professor Bernard Lewis, a career British intelligence official originally ensconced at the London School of Oriental and African Studies (formerly the School of Colonial Studies), who transferred to Princeton



*British intelligence officer Bernard Lewis (above) is determined to bury the legacy of Turkish nationalist leader Mustapha Kemal Ataturk (left), who blocked British plans to completely destroy the Mideast after World War I.*

University in New Jersey, where he is now a professor emeritus. Lewis's writings, such as *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, published in 1960, have long functioned as encouragement for Turkey to step forward as a regional superpower. In January 1996, for instance, Lewis insisted to a bankers' conference in Ankara, Turkey, that there is a "vacuum in the region which Turkey should and must fill."

To revive dreams of an Ottoman empire, Lewis must first destroy the legacy of Mustapha Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, who decisively blocked British plans to shatter the Mideast in the aftermath of World War I. Ataturk combined his strategic outflanking of British designs in the 1920s, with a strong emphasis on the necessity of Turkey's adopting Western science, technology, and education—a stance that has further incensed the British. Ataturk had crushed the Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic movements of the 1920s, and banned the various religious and freemasonic orders that fed them.

Ataturk knew well that both the Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic movements had as their source his nation's primary enemy: London.

Hence, for Lewis et al., the burial of Ataturk's legacy is no academic matter. On March 8, 1996, Lewis was present at a conference of the American-Turkish Council in Washington, D.C., dedicated to goading the Turkish military into a neo-Ottoman stance. Alan Makovsky, a former State Department official and now an executive with the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), called on Turkey to expand its horizon, now that the Soviet Union is eclipsed. Ataturk's slogan of "Peace at home, peace abroad," is "passivist and

isolationist," Makovsky told his audience, which included senior Turkish military officers. Turkey, Makovsky urged, must ally with Israel and Jordan to check Syria, and must also pursue its own designs for hegemony in the Balkans and Central Asia.

Makovsky's attack on Ataturk went unchallenged at the Turkish-American Council meeting, a measure of the progress in forcing the adoption of a neo-Ottoman geopolitical vision within the Turkish military establishment. The neo-Ottoman revival was first heralded with the May 1992 conference in New York City of the World Turkic Congress, under the chairmanship of Ata Erim, former leader of the New York Turkish Federation. Also leading the event was Heath Lowery, who succeeded Lewis as the premier Turcologist at Princeton University, after serving as a CIA section chief in Istanbul during the Carter administration.

The keynote address was given not by a Turk, but by Justin McCarthy of the University of Kentucky, who remarked during his speech that "Lowery is everything he is today because of me." The target of McCarthy's oration was Russia, which he accused of having used "exemplary terrorism" to drive the Turks out of the Caucasus and Europe, from the eighteenth century up to the present. Russia's inflicting of massacres and genocide against Turkey, he said, through forced migrations and insurgencies, can no longer be ignored. The demise of the Soviet Union has changed nothing, he said. "The U.N. intervened to protect the Croatsians, but will do nothing about the Bosnians, or the Azeri victims of Armenian aggression. No one is doing anything about Serbian and Armenian expansionism."

Two hundred participants were on hand to hear McCarthy's incitements, including many from Turkey, the Central Asian republics, and also Xinjiang, the northwest province of China. The map of "Turkestan" handed out at the conference encompassed all of Central Asia, including Tajikistan, which is Iranic, and Xinjiang itself, renamed on the map "Uighurstan."

With such encouragement, "neo-Ottomanism" is now a coin of the realm in Turkey, as elaborated by Turkish journalist Cengiz Candar, who wrote in 1992 that "Turkey is facing an historic mission. We must develop an imperial vision which means the free movement of people, ideas, and goods in the lands of the old Ottoman empire." To accomplish this mission, Candar says, Turkey must give up the policies of Ataturk, who made Pan-Turkism a taboo. "The time has come to reconsider this policy. We cannot stick to the old taboos, while the world is changing and new opportunities are arising for Turkey. We have to think big."

Candar's ideas resonate within the Turkish intelligentsia. "The growing tendency to go back to our roots is likely to change the whole system of foreign relations," wrote Prof. Nur Bergin of Bilkent University of Ankara. "Turkey's strength will increase with the traditions coming from the Ottoman era." Prof. Aydin Yalcin, another Ottoman visionary, agrees: "Pan-Turkism and Pan-Turanianism as an ideology has gained a pragmatic and practical dimension."

Today, there are two intersecting Pan-Turkic organizations that are known to be directly militarily involved in the Caucasus and Central Asia. One is the Gray Wolves, led by Gen. Alparslan Turkes. The other is Nizami Alem (the "Order of the World"), led by a former youth group leader of the Gray Wolves, Muharrem Yazicioglu.

Although Ataturk had crushed the Pan-Turkish and Pan-Islamic movements in the 1920s, German intelligence was keen for their revival during World War II, as a flank against Russia. That was when Gray Wolves' supremo Capt. Alparslan Turkes first came into prominence; he was jailed on charges of being a provocateur, after leading protests demanding that Turkey enter the war on Germany's side.

After the war, Turkes's network was picked up by NATO, which hoped to utilize Turkey, the only NATO member bordering the Soviet Union, as a base for running insurgencies in the Soviet southern tier. Turkes's career rapidly advanced, and Pan-Turkic liberation networks proliferated.

Throughout much of the postwar period, Turkes has been a close associate of Asil Nadir, the wealthy London-based businessman and arms dealer. In 1991, Nadir was charged with 66 counts of theft and fraud, relating to the collapse of his firm, Polly Peck. He fled Britain, where he had been one of the chief brokers for arming both Iran and Iraq during their decade-long war. He now aids Chechen rebel operations from North Cyprus.

Although Turkes himself had to leave Turkey after the military coup of 1960, he returned in 1963 to enter politics,

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# BOZKURT



The cover of *Bozkurt*, a World War II Pan-Turk journal, showing the projected Pan-Turkic homeland. The "bozkurt"—the gray, steppe wolf—displayed next to the map, is the Pan-Turk symbol.

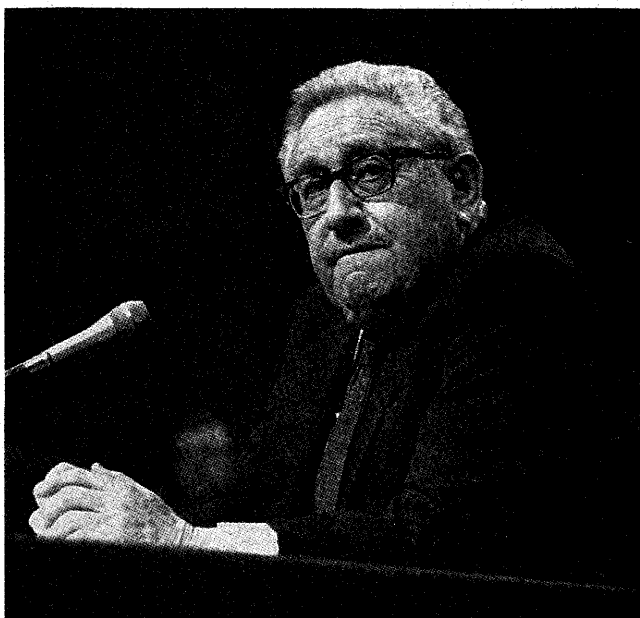
with his National Action Party, his parliamentary vehicle ever since. The Great Unity Party is the electoral arm of the allied Nizami Alem and a coalition partner of the Motherland Party of the late President Turgut Özal.

Behind the parties are the terrorist and military wings of the Pan-Turkic movement: the Gray Wolves and the Nizami Alem.

Both groups have been the receptacle for returning Turkish veterans of the 1980s Afghan civil war. After the expulsion of Russia from Afghanistan in the early 1990s, these youth, now battle-hardened, and often corrupted by Afghan drug-trafficking, constituted a new labor pool for use in disavowable terrorist operations. According to Turkish sources, there are some 1,000 Nizami Alem cadre involved in mercenary and volunteer operations in Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Bosnia. The Nizami Alem are also suspects in the Jan. 16 ferryboat incident in Trabzon.

Nizami Alem and the Gray Wolves began operating in Azerbaijan in 1992, after Abulfaz Elcibey's Azeri Popular Front came to power. Elcibey named Iskender Gamidov, head of the Azeri branch of the Gray Wolves, as his interior minister. Turkish national Gray Wolves and Nizami Alem volunteers (including many former Afghan mujahideen) flooded into Azerbaijan, where they were put to fight Armenia.

In 1993, upon coming to power in Azerbaijan, Heidar Aliyev outlawed the Nizami Alem and Gray Wolves, and had



*Master of ceremonies for the Quincentennial Foundation's celebration was British agent of influence Henry A. Kissinger.*

Gamidov imprisoned.

Russia is not the only target. Iran has captured Pan-Turkic nationals agitating Iranian Azerbaijan. Reportedly, Nizami Alem is active there, with the Turkish military's commando group Counterguerrilla.

The republics of Central Asia are also targets. Enver Altayli, the former head of the Gray Wolves in Germany and a former editor of the group's newspaper, has been an adviser to the Uzbek President Islam Karimov since 1993.

## The Quincentennial Foundation

Despite its neo-Ottoman fanaticism and unsavory activities, the Gray Wolves/Nizami Alem nexus in Turkey has very prestigious international backers, who emerged into the light of day at the April 1992 gala celebration of the Quincentennial Foundation. The foundation had been created in 1989 to organize the 500th anniversary celebration, in 1992, of the Ottoman Empire's acceptance of Jews who had fled Spain. Both President Özal and Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel came to the New York event, where they received awards from the event's master of ceremonies, Henry Kissinger, a man who professed in May 1982 that his first loyalty was to the British Foreign Office, even above his loyalty to the American President.

According to Steve Shalom, a member of a prominent Ottoman family and the gala's organizer, Quincentennial's other goal was to foster a strategic deal between Turkey and Israel, against common enemies in the Mideast, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

Quincentennial's founder is Jak Kamhi, a wealthy businessman in Turkish-occupied Northern Cyprus, a depot for

arms and mercenaries for the Caucasus. His son, Jefe, is a business partner with Tugrul Turkes, son of Gray Wolves chief Gen. Alparslan Turkes.

Other founders of the foundation include:

- Edmond Safra, the Aleppo Syrian Jew who has reportedly come under U.S. federal investigation for laundering drug money through his banks, American Express, Republic National Bank, and Safra Bank;
- Meshulam Riklis, the now bankrupt Turkish Jewish patron of Israeli Gen. Ariel Sharon;
- Turkish businessman Selahattin Beyazit, the head of the Turkish affiliate of the World Wildlife Fund of Britain's Prince Philip;
- Ahmet Ertegun, the Turkish founder and chairman of Atlantic Records;
- Howard Squadron, the New York attorney for Ariel Sharon and former head of the American Jewish Congress; and
- Abraham Sofaer, the former counsel for the U.S. State Department during the Reagan-Bush administrations, currently being investigated for influence-peddling.

## Sufi orders revived

In 1995, the Quincentennial Foundation's Ahmet Ertegun traveled to Turkey with Kissinger. During the trip, Ertegun led ceremonies to reopen an Uzbek *tekke*, a Sufi monastery that had been outlawed by Atatürk.

Ertegun's purpose was political rather than religious. The Sufi orders had dominated the old Ottoman Empire, especially the military. This is well understood in both London and Moscow. On March 19, the Russian newspaper *Chas Pik*, which supports the Dudayev rebellion in Chechnya, advertised a volume of the Sufi mystic of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Ibn Al Arabi. The ad enthusiastically notes that in the late 1960s, "British young people founded the Ibn Al Arabi Society in Oxford," and relates that the mystic's teaching "served as a base for the struggle of Muslims with the Russian culture, and the political invasion into the Caucasus and Central Asia long before the revolution. . . . The bitter reality of the last year demonstrates that, although political clashes are motivated by also political and economic mercantilism, the process and the outcome of this struggle is to a greatest extent defined by the conflict of mentalities, philosophies, ideologies."

In that regard, it is London's hope that a Sufi revival will advance British geopolitical aims.

The Naqshbandi order, formed in Central Asia in the sixteenth century, is today the most powerful Sufi order in Turkey and includes many Dagestanis and Chechens; it promotes the cause of Chechen secessionism internationally.

One branch of the Naqshbandi is the Fathullahcilar Order, named after its leader, Imam Fathullah. In the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Fathullahcilar has been funding schools. Its media empire centers around the newspaper *Zaman*, which

has a circulation of 300,000 and editorially supports Dudayev's revolt. The Fathullahcilar Order works with Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, whose activity in Central Asia has recently been registered. One of the case officers for the Fathullahcilar is Graham Fuller, who worked at the Mideast desk at the National Security Council during the Reagan-Bush administration and had a hand in Bush's Iran-Contra operation. Fuller, now with the Rand Corporation, traveled to Turkey last fall to help mobilize the Sufi orders in support of the Welfare Party.

The Helveti-Jerrahi order is another Turkish-based Sufi organization that has far-flung and prestigious international connections. Its premier financial patron is Philippa Frederick, daughter of Jean and Dominique (née Schlumberger) de Menil, of the Texas and French-based Schlumberger oil-drilling equipment firm. The Schlumbergers have a long history of involvement in Anglo-French intelligence operations in Russia. The family's Rothko Chapel in Houston, through which the Helveti-Jerrahi Order works in the United States, played a key supporting role in bringing Ayatollah Khomeini to power in Iran.

### **A popular cause**

The main route, however, through which the visions of an Ottoman revival have come into the consciousness of the Turkish people is through the Welfare Party, led by Prof. Necmettin Erbakan, son of an Ottoman cleric and a member of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. The party, which puts itself forward as Pan-Islamist, won the highest plurality of votes (23%) in the December 1995 election. Erbakan campaigned with the promise to "liberate Bosnia, Azerbaijan, Chechnya, and Jerusalem." He has also called for forming an "Islamic NATO," presumably including Iran, the former Soviet Central Asian republics, Azerbaijan, and the breakaway Russian Muslim republics.

The Welfare Party came to the fore following the 1991 Persian Gulf war, which bankrupted and humiliated Turkey. The savage economic policies of Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, a protégé of Margaret Thatcher, have also fueled the party's rise.

The party's director of intelligence is Gen. Sami Karasimir, the former head of the Turkish Army's Special Warfare Department, who joined the Welfare Party in 1992, and has since recruited some 50 high-ranking officers, including generals.

The foundation of the party's foreign policy was summarized by deputy chairman Abdullah Gul, in a March 20 interview with the Swedish Radio Network: "We would most of all like to create a new Ottoman Empire again, where Turkey would be heading the previously Turkish Islamic provinces in southern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. . . . They were our provinces, just 80 years before." The interviewer noted that Gul is "regarded as one of the moderate, least anti-Western forces in the Welfare Party."