

Selahattin Ülkümen, the Turkish Righteous among the Nations

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By

Yücel Güçlü

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



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This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-8116-0

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8116-6

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the interest, advice and support of many friends and colleagues and staff of various archives and libraries, who together have encouraged and sustained me during my research, writing and revision over a five-year period. My discussions with them enabled me to clarify ideas and avoid pitfalls.

I owe a debt of thanks to a very long list of people who helped me along the way and would like to mention a number of them who were particularly important in the evolution of the book from its early stages.

I am grateful to Mehmet Ufuk Ülkümen and his wife, Betül, who have put family papers freely at my disposal and kindly given me permission to quote from them. They allowed me to peruse their father's photographs, complementing them with their own memories and stories. They have also answered my many questions about their father's career, life and times.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Elliot Turiel for giving me access to documents and publications on his family. His contribution was truly invaluable.

I remain grateful to Yalçın Aka who provided me with archival materials and continued to encourage my research. He sent scans of precious documents and images, pairing them with detailed insights. Special thanks are also due to Ahmet Rıza Demirer for his guidance and assistance.

I want to express my appreciation to Naim Güleriyüz for the time he spent talking to me on this subject. I have found him to be exceptionally learned on all matters pertaining to the Turkish Jewish affairs and on the late Selahattin Ülkümen. I benefited from his own experience in conversing with Ülkümen. He was generous with his insights.

I am especially grateful to Pat Walsh, who not only read the entire manuscript carefully and offered many comments and corrections, but also suggested numerous significant improvements and spent a great deal of time discussing problems of detail with me. He is a rare man and scholar. Despite all his advice, which I have sometimes not heeded, probably unwisely, I am

sure that I have committed errors of fact or interpretation or omission. I hope that other scholars will point them out so they can be corrected in any future revised edition. In any case, I am ultimately responsible for any mistakes or misinterpretations that remain.

My warm thanks are also due to the expert help and information given by Aydın Sezgin. His support and kindness have been invaluable.

I am indebted to Sinan Kunalp who has steadily and faithfully replied to many questions with solid answers and suggestions. Conversations with him helped me think through the challenging historical period covered in this book. He is an invaluable friend and scholar with his multilingual knowledge and professional expertise.

Gökhan Çetinsaya in particular deserves thanks for sharing his expertise on countless occasions. I also benefited from the friendship and extended conversations with scholar Michael Reynolds. My brainstorming with him enabled me to gain a better perspective on the narrative structure of my project—and its present-day ramifications.

For research and fact-checking, I have benefited from the hard work and persistence of a number of people over the years, including İzak Kolman, Moris Levi and Hale Gönültaş.

David Silberklang, Michael Gelb, Glenda Abramson, Paul Kubicek, Amanda Davis Bledsoe, Alan Dobson, Joachim Schloer and Niels Hooper provided insightful and invaluable comments about earlier versions of my work. I thank them for inspiring me to reconsider additional angles and to refine my thoughts.

Archivists are the midwives to scholarship, and archives are indispensable to historical writing. The names of archives, libraries and museums bring to mind faces and names of people I enjoyed working with and for whose help I am immensely grateful. In Ankara, I worked in the Archive and Library of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Library; in İstanbul at the Archive and Library of the Turkish Jewish Museum and the Beyazıt State Library. I would like to thank the staff in each of these institutions for their helpfulness in locating the sources referred to in this book. I am particularly grateful to Cem Emci, Head of References Services at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Library, who always calmly found what was needed and expedited knowledge to me at any time of day; he was simply unstumpable.

The Archive of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was most gracious in providing extensive logistical support in accessing and taking copies of documents. I am indebted to Engin Yürür and İstem Cırcıroğlu for their professional help. Serkan Sönmez deserves particular credit for his expert effort. This volume would not have been possible without his work and goodwill.

My particular appreciation goes to Metin Delevi who made available to me the documents, publications and photographic materials in the Archive of the Turkish Jewish Museum.

Mehmet Tekin helped me generously with information and documentation in the accomplishment of this survey.

I also thank the staff of the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations of Koç University in İstanbul for offering their sources to me. Thanks must to Kürşad Karacagil and Metin Ünver for their guidance in İstanbul. They were generous with their time and conviviality.

Mustafa Özcan is my colleague of many years in exploring the area of Turkey and the Holocaust. Together, we have discovered and discussed a variety of physical, material, and written documents that make the study of Holocaust history so compelling. He has been enthusiastic in providing unstinting support. He has offered constructive comments and advice and facilitated my research trips to İstanbul and Geneva. I feel a special obligation to him.

I wish to record my gratitude to Elif Çomoğlu Ülgen, without peer, for her invaluable help in preparing the text. It is a pleasure also to acknowledge the advice and inspiration of Sabri Ergen, who was full of keen insights, and my ongoing conversations with him helped to bring me to this history and legacy.

Another colleague, Nevzat Uyanık, has equally been a source of incessant and unqualified support all along. He provided inspiration and encouragement. He has been unstinting in sharing his deep historical know-how. I owe him a debt of gratitude. I must also thank Koray Ertaş and Ömür Budak for their much-needed support.

I have benefited from the intellectual curiosity and critical engagement of my associate Y. Turan Çetiner, and I thank him for his ideas and encouragement toward this book's publication.

Alper Yüksel's comments and thoughts were always invaluable, as were our conversations about the subject of the aid and rescue of Jews by Turkish diplomats during the Second World War and many others related to it. Hande Sarı and Resul Şahinol's support and expertise helped this book in immeasurable ways. I have also benefited from conversations with Melek Dilşen Seymenoglu.

I am indebted to Sait Uyanık for the perceptions and hospitality he offered. In Geneva, he helped keep memories alive for me.

Hami Balcı and Okan Ezrak were indispensable. They have been eager in providing research facilities throughout. I would like to thank Selim Seçkin for his assistance and inspiration. Can Perinçek patiently helped in countless ways. Both were continually supportive at crucial times. Hamdi Elkat has been generous in locating maps, and I am thankful to him. Other help came from Recep Özdemir and Hatice Güneş. All of them have repeatedly given their time and energies far beyond the call of duty. It has been a pleasure to work with them.

At Cambridge Scholars Publishing (CSP), I extend my gratitude and compliments to Adam Rummens, Commissioning Editor, for his encouragement and support in shepherding this book through the consideration and decision at CSP.

I am indebted to the Cassell Publishers for permission to print a map from Anthony Rogers, *Churchill's Folly: Leros and the Aegean: The Last Great British Defeat of the Second World War*, London, 2003. I am also indebted to the Book Guild Ltd. for two maps from J. S. Guard, *Improvise and Dare: War in the Aegean 1943-1945*, Lewes, Sussex, 1997.

I gratefully acknowledge *Belleten, Mediterranean Quarterly* and *Middle Eastern Studies* for allowing me to use material I have published in "Fascist Italy's 'Mare Nostrum' Policy and Turkey," Vol.63, No.238 (December 1999), pp.813-845, in "The Legal Regulation of Passage Through the Turkish Straits," Vol.11, No.3 (Summer 2000), pp.87-99 and in "Turkey's Entrance into the League of Nations," Vol.39, No.1 (January 2003), pp.186-206 respectively.

FOREWORD

Selahattin Ülkümen's life and career have not yet been the object of any academic study. Therefore, not many people may be knowledgeable about Ülkümen. However, his story and his example of unfailing courage are sources of inspiration. I hope that this book will generate more interest in the role of Turkish diplomats in the aid and rescue of Jews during the Holocaust, and will act as a spur to further research.

In his nineteen month-stint at Rhodes in 1943-1944, by saving the lives of forty-two Jews, Consul Ülkümen served his country and humanity as a whole while putting himself at a major risk from the Nazi forces. He came through bravely in one of the most sensitive and demanding diplomatic assignments of the Second World War, and saved lives without exceeding or ignoring his government's instructions. His actions were in conformity with the policy of the Turkish government and they chimed with Turkish sentiments regarding Jews.

Ülkümen's performance in the line of duty reflects great credit upon the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His heroic sacrifice and his willingness to serve anytime, anywhere and under any circumstances were an inspiration to his colleagues. I hope that his wise diplomacy in times of crisis, his bravery in advancing the best of human ideals, his ready acceptance of the most arduous tasks and, above all, his unwavering faith in the dignity of man will be preserved for generations to come.

Türkiye remained neutral throughout the Second World War, despite intense diplomatic efforts by other Powers to win it as a belligerent ally. Such neutrality kept the country out of the conflict and prevented likely Nazi aggression against its Jewish citizens.

As a neutral power, Turkish diplomats were placed in a unique position in which they were able to aid Jews who were being persecuted in Nazi-occupied Europe. Türkiye was also one of the few neutral countries in the Continent to maintain diplomatic representation in Germany, as well as in most of the occupied countries, and its diplomats used their position to intervene on behalf of Turkish Jews resident in those countries. The demands and démarches of Turkish diplomats for the exemption of Turkish

Jews from anti-Jewish laws introduced by the Nazi occupation authorities and the Vichy Government of France saved the lives of many Jews.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Ülkümen and to other diplomats at the time for their loyal service to Türkiye and to humanity under difficult, trying, and hazardous circumstances. These individuals put their lives on the line in some of the world's most challenging places. They represented their country and its highest virtues in a tactful, quiet and unassuming manner.

I earnestly appreciate this valuable study by our diplomat-scholar colleague, Associate Professor Yücel Güçlü. His efforts are to be commended for a notable achievement.

Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye

MAPS



South-Eastern Aegean. Source: Anthony Rogers, *Churchill's Folly: Leros and the Aegean: The Last Great British Defeat of the Second World War*, Cassell's Publishers, London, 2003.



South Aegean. Source: J. S. Guard, *Improvise and Dare: War in the Aegean 1943-1945*, The Book Guild Ltd, Lewes, Sussex, 1997, p.17.



Eastern Mediterranean. Source: J. S. Guard, *Improvise and Dare: War in the Aegean 1943-1945*, The Book Guild Ltd, Lewes, Sussex, 1997, p.2.

INTRODUCTION

The World Holocaust Remembrance Center (the famous Yad Vashem also known as the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Authority) in Jerusalem, Israel carefully maintains a database of non-Jews who took great risks to save Jews during the Holocaust.¹ The remarkable individuals whose names are preserved in this database are known as *The Righteous Among the Nations*. Only a single Turkish citizen, Selahattin Ülkümen, is honored by this unique and remarkable distinction. “Whoever saves a single life,” says the Talmud, “is as one who has saved an entire world.” This is the criteria by which those astounding souls who refused to stand by as their fellow human beings were hauled away to the killing grounds are measured by Yad Vashem. They were prepared to see, to judge, to decide to take action. Not only did they not avert their eyes, they set out to do something—to rescue. And whatever they did so unselfishly, at the risk of their lives. It is typical of all of them to deny any heroism. “It was only decent,” they say.²

The Righteous Among the Nations designation is the highest award Israel can bestow upon non-Jews in recognition of assisting people to survive the Holocaust at great personal risk. In general, the basic criteria for awarding the Righteous designation are as follows: active involvement in saving one or several Jews from the threat of death or deportation to extermination camps, risk to the rescuer’s life, liberty or position, the initial motivation

¹ Yad Vashem, established in 1953, has been entrusted with documenting the history of the Jewish people during the Holocaust period, preserving the memory and story of each of the six million victims, and imparting the legacy of the Holocaust for generations to come through its vast archives, extensive library, research institute, international school and new museums. The name Yad Vashem originates from the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 56, Verse 5, “And to them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name (Yad Vashem) ... that shall not be cut off.” One of the principal tasks of Yad Vashem is to convey the gratitude of the Jewish people to those non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews, and to award the title, “Righteous Among the Nations.” What used to be known as the Righteous Christians has been changed to the Righteous Gentiles because a Muslim, Selahattin Ülkümen, was the first non-Christian to receive the award.

² Gay Block and Malka Drucker, *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust* (New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1992), p.xiv.

being the intention to help persecuted Jews, and testimony of those who were helped or at least unequivocal documentation establishing the nature of the rescue and its circumstances.³

Rescuers did not prevent the Holocaust, but without them the number of Jews murdered would have been even greater. These acts of rescue illuminate how people were prepared to take great personal risks and organize help for others. Not everyone stood by idly or silently; not everyone collaborated in genocide. Other forms of behavior were practicable and feasible. Rescue encompassed diverse forms of activity during the Nazi era: asylum, providing passage across borders, transportation, food, clothing, and shelter. An equally diverse range of actors took part: governments, organizations, institutions, individuals, and the victims themselves. Their efforts ranged from legal measures to clandestine operations and changed in form over time. Future research and Holocaust education needs to highlight the diversity of rescue efforts and circumstances, the dilemmas faced by rescuers and those they helped, and the roles that rescuers played in these events.⁴

The extant literature available about the Holocaust grows daily, and it seems to be nearly boundless in scope. According to Leni Yahil, the events and experiences of the Holocaust have been portrayed in thousands of memoirs and testimonies. Countless diaries, letters, newspapers, and other documents have been collected and assembled in the institutions of research and remembrance as well as in the courts that have tried war criminals—the shelves of these archives comprise kilometers of documentation. Historical research has broadened in scope, divided into specializations, and delved deeper into the subject. The publication of sources and documents has greatly expanded, and countless books and articles about general and specific aspects of the Holocaust have been written in any number of languages. The psychological and physical effects of the suffering on Holocaust survivors and their offspring are even a subject of health research, and the period is also being dealt with from the standpoint of sociology and economics. Fiction, poetry, and art from the Holocaust and post-Holocaust periods have expressed the impact of the experience—for many these were

³ Yadvashem.org/righteous/faq.html

⁴ Several major book-length research studies on rescuers have appeared over the last few decades, as well as a number of other discussions of rescuers in both scholarly and popular publications. See, among many others, Deborah Dwork, “Rescuers,” in Peter Hayes and John Roth, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.170 and 181.

the only way that they could confront and convey the terrors of the time. And in terms of confronting the Holocaust, theater and films have, of course, played a significant role. Ever since the Second World War, academics, clerics, philosophers, and other intellectuals have continuously been trying to articulate the meaning of the Holocaust and the conclusions to be drawn from it.⁵

Turkey and the Holocaust

One may perhaps be forgiven for thinking that there is nothing left to be said. That is, however, not the case. The history of the Holocaust is far from complete. New facets of it are continually being discovered and old facets reevaluated. Even with more than seven decades of Holocaust research and writing behind us, there are many specialist topics within Holocaust historiography that have not been dealt with in detail, including the role of Turkey. For about three decades, Turkey's role in rescuing Turkish and European Jewry from Nazi persecution has inspired passionate engagement and heated polemics among scholars.⁶

⁵ Leni Yahil, trans. Ina Friedman and Haya Galai, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932-1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.3.

⁶ See, for instance, by order of date of publication, Stanford Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust: Turkey's Role in Rescuing Turkish and European Jewry from Nazi Persecution, 1933-1945* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, *Death on the Black Sea: The Untold Story of the Struma and World War II's Holocaust at Sea* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003); Arnold Reisman, *Shoah, Turkey, the US and UK* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2009); idem, *An Ambassador and a Mensch: The Story of a Turkish Diplomat in Vichy France* (Lexington, KY: CreatSpace Publishers, 2010); Bilal Şimşir, *Türk Yahudiler Avrupa İrkçılığına Karşı Türkiye'nin Mücadelesi Belgeler (1942-1944)* (Turkish Jews: Turkey's Struggle Against European Racists Documents [1942-1944]), 2 Vols., (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2010); Corry Guttsstadt, trans. Kathleen Dell'Orto, Sabine Bartel, and Michelle Miles, *Turkey, Jews, and the Holocaust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); İzzet Bahar, *Turkey and the Rescue of European Jews* (Abington, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2015); Stuart Roth, "The Politics of Turkey during the Holocaust," *Journal of the Oxford Centre for the Study of Law and Public Policy*, Vol.1, No.1 (2015), pp.87-128; Corry Guttsstadt, Thomas Lutz, Bernd Rother and Yessica San Román, eds., *Bystanders, Rescuers or Perpetrators? Neutral Countries and the Shoah* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2016); Rifat Bali, *Türkiye'de Holokost Tüketimi (1989-2017)* (Holocaust

However, not much has been written about the subject in the Turkish language, except those by Bilal Şimşir, Rıfat Bali and İzzet Bahar. This has caused the Holocaust researchers in other countries to often include limited, outdated, and sometimes incorrect information about Turkey in their studies. This is all the more apparent when considering countless books on various aspects of the Holocaust, in which Nazis and their allies killed most of Europe's Jews. Within the plethora of publications on Holocaust history that has been rising since the 1990s and which has maintained its momentum ever since, studies on the role of Turkey remain comparatively underexplored. But the paucity of scholarly studies is not an accurate reflection of the intrinsic value of this aspect. An awareness of new narratives of this chapter of Turkish history will offer novel insights and hopefully facilitate a better understanding of the Turkish-Jewish past.

Selahattin Ülkümen, a hitherto former inconspicuous cog in the wheels of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has suddenly had the spotlight of publicity focused upon him on June 26, 1990, in ceremonies at Yad Vashem as the result of his courage and resourcefulness in July 1944 on the island of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea. Momentarily thrust into prominence, he should excite a certain curiosity. However, current scholarship has failed to produce a single monograph or even an article in periodical literature on the family and educational background, personality traits, and professional career of Ülkümen: the Turkish recipient of the Righteous Among the Nations. The remarkable story of Ülkümen is an important but little-known aspect of Turkish history in the Second World War period. He is an individual who has not received the attention he deserves. Neither Turk nor Westerner has devoted more than a passing gaze at his significant exploits. But he was no ordinary man. What follows is an attempt to fill this unfortunate historiographical void.

Sources

The work draws on the previously unused files of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Yad Vashem archives together with the available primary and secondary sources in Turkish, English and French languages. (I might comment at this point that a number of secondary sources were

Consumption in Turkey [1989-2017]), (İstanbul: Libra Yayıncılık, 2017); Robert Neurath, *Protected by Muslims during World War II* ([United States]: Robert Neurath, 2018); İzzet Bahar, *İkinci Dünya Savaşında Türkiye ve "Yahudi Meselesi"* (Turkey in the Second World War and "the Jewish Question"), (İstanbul: Libra Yayıncılık, 2020).

used that are not, however cited in the notes; and, of course, there were other secondary sources, hopefully few, which for various reasons I was unable to use.) Secret files exist. Nevertheless every day new material is coming to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive that will hold significance for future generations, as these documents of a former time bear historic interest in our day. Officials create documents for all sorts of reasons. Minutes or summaries of meetings provide a record of decisions or discussions useful for later reference.

But documents from archives are, of course, not the only means of understanding the past. Under the best circumstances, institutional records cannot wholly reflect diplomats' motivations, critiques, personal analyses and private thoughts about their role. In contrast, memoirs provide a wide range of reminiscences and commentary which collectively bring Turkish diplomacy to life. Equally important, the memoirs survey all aspects of Turkish diplomacy—not just adventures and crises, but also the less glamorous aspects of representing one's country abroad and dealing with bureaucracy. The main recurring themes are the relationship between foreign policy making in Ankara and policy implementation in the field, and the role of personality in shaping Turkish policy. Decades later, most of the diplomats still had strong feelings about the countries they served in, the issues they handled, and (last but certainly not least) their colleagues at all levels and stages of their careers. Nor are they shy about giving their assessments of past bureaucratic battles, particularly if they lost them. (To be sure, candor comes much more easily to retired diplomats who no longer have to fear professional opprobrium or retaliation from their peers.)

Historians mine memoirs for material to cover gaps in archival documentation while comparing their contents to other sources to catch errors in fact and expose biases. Therefore this narrative also benefits from the memoirs of Turkish diplomats from the 1980s to the present, some of whose experiences add context with the complexities of the wider world. Careful scrutiny of this literature and the comparison of various accounts, statements, and allegations proved fruitful.

The history of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is written almost as much as in colorful personalities as in the documents stored in its repositories. Through the years they have stamped their individualities on the organization and the traditions of the ministry. The Turkish diplomatic reminiscences abound in references to these personalities, some of whom are numbered among the great figures in Turkish history; others known only to the Ankara of their time and the narrow ranks of professional diplomacy.

The authors usually do not make the mistake of giving tiresome biographical sketches; the references appear casually in their descriptions of some phase of the ministry's activities, but they are made in a manner that adds to the reader's interest and at the same time emphasize the authors' points.

Researchers are bombarded today by memoirs and artifacts of later years which are constantly appearing. Those coming from Turkish diplomats and statesmen are of interest, not only to our contemporaries, but are intended to serve the future by reconstructing events and explaining the origin of the troubled and agitated epoch through which those individuals passed. Successful memoir-writing, like any other literary effort, requires discipline and careful analysis. What did the prospective author do that is worthy of committing to paper? Which audiences is the memoir intended for? What issues should it cover? For example, should the memoir focus on criticizing Turkey's policies? Should it comment on the way the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs operates? Is the author going to try his hand at an analysis of one or more of the societies in which he served? And finally, how personal should the memoir be? Good memoirs usually contain all the elements listed above, but achieving a balance is difficult. Temptations abound. The desire to settle scores with individuals or institutions is frequently too strong to resist. Self-justification normally ends up by discrediting the author with his readers. Similarly, spinning tales often produces a disjointed and not very interesting read. And, writing for insiders almost always spells doom for the manuscript, publishers are wary of touching it.

The memory of one who is pursuing or has retired from a career in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is uniquely valuable for researchers. Indelibly etched upon it are recollections of one-of-a-kind (for better or worse) individuals and of events which could have happened only when and where they did. These primary recollections, further, reveal more about points in the course of history and the nature of cultural differences than could any second-hand sociological treatise or official dispatch. However, these are a mixed bag. All of them add to the understanding of Turkish diplomacy and diplomatic life since the proclamation of the republic in 1923, but their contribution is uneven. At one extreme are those few (like Feridun Cemal Erkin's) that make an important scholarly addition to the diplomatic history of our age. Erkin wrote the account of his life in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Dışişlerinde 35 Yıl* (Thirty-Five Years in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), which is not merely a memoir but a serious and first-rate examination of Turkish foreign policy. Likewise, Semih

Günver and Mahmut Dikerdem left useful memoirs. They fill in the missing chapters in the history books with the inside story of a unique career. Those familiar with the memoirs of countless British diplomats will find their Turkish counterparts in these. They will remain a major record and source for history, which no serious student of the Turkish republican diplomacy can ignore. The material they bring to light and the interpretations which their authors offer should be evaluated and integrated into the corpus of ongoing archival and other research on this subject.

At the other extreme are those that are little more than personal reminiscences and serve mainly to indulge the author's vanity. In between are memoirs in which authors have some solid things to say and where a fortunate reader can gain both education and enjoyment at the same time. Taken together, these provide useful insights into the complexities of Turkish diplomatic history and life. Equally important, they give illuminating glimpses of the affairs of (and life in) the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in an earlier age.

In his slim volume of only 156 pages, Selahattin Ülkümen has related what he recalls of his experiences and impressions of a diplomatic career. He was a modest man and his *Bir Dönemin Dışışlerinin Bilinmeyen Yönleri* (A Period of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Its Unknown Aspects) is not like a conventional memoir, in which the goal is a registry of all the events in the individual's life. Because of this we have only a limited visibility of his life and the part he played in the important events of his time. He has written in an informal, narrative style, which is easily readable. The reader must not expect elegantly felicitous writing such as flows from the pen of Semih Günver. As in many memoirs, the role of the author is writ large while that of his associates is more obscure. Ülkümen reflects considerably on his deeds on Rhodes in 1943-1944. But his readers should not look for any searching analyses of overall Turkish foreign policy or its objectives. Moreover, he did not test his memory against the available archival materials and scholarly writing of the period. The book sometimes has the flavor of oral history, unencumbered by footnotes or corroborating sources. One wishes he had made more of an effort to convey the motivations of key persons with whom he dealt and to tell more of his own reactions and thoughts as he confronted major events. Possessed of a strong personality himself, he seems to have made a deliberate effort to avoid making critical comments about other persons or events. He is frank in his judgments but reticent about the facts. Ülkümen wrote little about his life and the world in which he lived. There is practically nothing of an autobiographical nature which might reveal his character in his work other than a few anecdotal

paragraphs. The book has a documentary appendice but not a bibliography or an index. Lay readers may find its pluses outweigh the minuses.⁷

Though scarce, information is provided from the pages of Turkish and foreign newspapers. The archives, memoirs and the press are supplemented by a number of interviews with key individuals. The material from these interviews contributes to the book's authenticity and adds new information. A fair number were "on background," a term of art meaning that the material can be used but its source can not be identified. I believe I have honored all requests for such protection. When no request was made, I assumed the material from the interview was mine to use without restrictions.

All Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents cited here exist in archives either as original typescripts or manuscripts, or, in the case of many summary reports, as typed copies. The authenticity of these documents is not in question. The records of the retired foreign service officers in the Personnel Department of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs contain information to be found nowhere else. They include: name, rank and grade, duty status, date of rank, geographic location of assignments, source of assignment, educational level, awards, medals and decorations, date of birth, official photograph, dependents' names, genders and ages, and type of discharge. Some of these subjects are of great personal delicacy and will remain so for many years. All of this valuable information lies buried in the files identified only by the name of the officer. Depending on the richness of the file, one can collect anything from a few details to a fairly complete life history and character sketch of an individual. These files are of historical value not only in relation to the personal information they contain, but also, and far more importantly, as evidence of the way in which the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself actually worked. Additionally, the accessible political and economic files in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive contain a great deal of other potentially useful miscellaneous information.

The files are scattered and fragmentary and somewhat difficult to piece together. The historian, of course, has no right to complain of such a state of affairs, since archives are not collected or arranged for his benefit. Taken together, these original materials comprise a body of work enabling the

⁷ Selahattin Ülkümen, *Bilinmeyen Yönleriyle Bir Dönemin Dışışleri* (A Period of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Its Unknown Aspects), (İstanbul: Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A. Ş., 1993).

researcher to form a judgment about the quality of Turkish foreign policy and its representatives.

Purpose and Scope

This study has a double purpose. The first is to document an account of the progress of Selahattin Ülkümen's life and reputation and the second is to place him properly in historical context. Consequently, the outlines of his life are fitted into the events of his time in order to merge these two purposes.

Surveying a diplomatic career presents special problems for the biographer. Given the migratory nature of diplomats' careers, the thread of continuity does not lie in the narrative of events in the various postings, but rather in the account of the over-arching problems found in the multifaceted foreign policy of a country. Ülkümen's life is considered at three levels: the personal views and experiences of a diplomat in the service of his country; the nature of Turkish relations with the countries in which Ülkümen was posted; and the overall evolution of Turkish foreign policy in the period of Ülkümen's service.

The investigation attempts to cover the full scope of Ülkümen's career. It casts light upon his times as well as his life, and upon the way events transpired as much as upon the way he reacted to them and behaved. In contrast to some biographies in which the central figures emerge rather dimly, the character of Ülkümen stands out with clarity throughout, a character reflecting, above all, a single-minded devotion to professional duty which motivated his entire life. Due attention is paid to his early life in Antakya and İstanbul, to the atmosphere of his upbringing, and to the nature of his lycée and university education. Happily, more than a few details of his youth and early manhood are known to give some idea of the circumstances which molded the mature diplomat. There is a brief survey of his military service. Since language competence is a tool of diplomats' profession enabling them to communicate and negotiate with their counterparts in the host country, Ülkümen's special aptitude for foreign languages is extensively discussed. The role of the ambassadors, ministers, and consuls general and the superiors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Ankara under whom Ülkümen served are investigated. Because of the importance of his exploits and the difficulties he encountered on Rhodes, more space is given to Ülkümen's time on there than those of other posts where he served. Not many people perhaps knew this man and his background, yet his story, with

its human interest and its example of unfailing courage, is at once a challenge to write and an inspiration.

The book is composed of an introduction, thirteen intermediary content chapters, and a conclusion. Chapters discuss: “Ignorance of the Role of Turkish Diplomats in the Aid and Rescue of Jews”, “Selahattin Ülkümen and the Jews in Rhodes, 1943-1944”, “Accordance of the Title of Righteous Man Among the Nations to Selahattin Ülkümen, June 26, 1990 and Conferral of Several Other Honors on Him”, “Family and Educational Background”, “Entry Into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1934: Recruitment, Training and Organization”, “Alexandria Consulate General, 1937-1940 and Ankara, 1940-1943”, “Rhodes Consulate, 1943-1944”, “Berne Legation, 1945-1946 and Rome Embassy, 1946-1947”, “Prague Legation, 1947-1949 and Oslo Legation, 1949”, “First Department, 1949-1952 and Amman Legation, 1952-1953”, “Second Department, 1953-1957 and Cairo Embassy, 1958-1961”, “Teheran Embassy, 1962 and RCD, 1968-1971” and “Retirement, 1979 and Beirut Embassy, 1962-1964”. Five appendices follow: “Statement by Retired Ambassador Necdet Kent to the Quincentennial Foundation, İstanbul, about Helping Jews in France during the Second World War”, “Testimony of Retired Ambassador Namık Yolga about Helping Jews in France during the Second World War”, “The U. N. Need Not Be Heroic, Just Humane”, “Reply Letter from Selahattin Ülkümen to Mr. and Mrs. Amato Whose Lives He Had Saved from Death at Rhodes in July 1944” and “Selahattin Ülkümen: Muslim Diplomat Who Saved 42 Jewish Families from Auschwitz and Became Known as ‘The Turkish Schindler’”.

This study, which seeks to rescue Ülkümen from relative obscurity, is the offspring of a marriage of biography and diplomatic history. In addition to being a biography, the book serves as a description and explanation of the importance of professional diplomacy, practiced by those who possess area expertise, cultural awareness, balance, empathy and the ability to present and defend their country’s interests in a proper manner.

Methodology

The book adopts a roughly chronological approach, from Ülkümen’s birth in Antakya in 1911 to his death in İstanbul in 2003. The compilation of the vital events that took place behind the scenes in those historic years is carried out with care as to authenticity and with accuracy. Useful and salient background material on each country where Ülkümen was assigned are offered. Depending on the interests and expertise of the reader, this material may well be too little or too much. Nonetheless, its inclusion is surely

necessary on the principle that history, including the making of Turkish foreign policy, does not exist in a vacuum.

The text and the conclusions are supported by evidence provided in the notes. The notes contain not only references and cross references but also descriptions of sources and brief identifications of scores of officials, and other persons whose names cannot be found in the standard biographical dictionaries. These help other researchers to find sources where they may obtain additional details and pursue other subjects. And they allow others to check the accuracy of information the author puts forward. But, most important, notes give some sense of the quality of the sources on which the author's information is based. Readers need as much information as possible to find their way through the difficulties of comprehension and the competing interpretations of the aid and rescue of Jews by Turkish diplomats during the Second World War.

Titles of Turkish books, journals, and newspapers are given in the original language, followed by a translation. Several texts are too long to have been reproduced in full. Thus where I have omitted material from the original text, I have placed three-dot ellipses.

Professional diplomats are not the easiest subjects for biographers and Ülkümen is no exception. For the most part they work behind the scenes, as François de Caillières (1645-1717) put it more than three hundred years ago, in his treatise entitled *De la Manière de Négociier Avec les Souverains*, negotiating the affairs of their prince (sovereign) and discovering of others.⁸ The book, that has rarely been out of print in French since its publication in 1713, is entertaining as well as profound, and most of its observations are pertinent today.

Despite persistent research, much of Ülkümen's life and career remains undiscovered; and in the hope of laying the foundation of a complete biographic sketch, I offer these fragmentary chapters.

⁸ See François de Caillières, *De la Manière de Négociier Avec les Souverains: De l'Utilité du Choix des Ambassadeurs et des Envoyés et des Qualités Nécessaires pour Réussir dans ces Emplois* (Paris: Mercure Galant, 1713 [reprint Broché, 2002]). The author is described on the title page as "Councillor-in-Ordinary to the King in Council, Private Secretary to His Majesty, formerly Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of His Late Majesty Entrusted with the Treaties of Peace Concluded at Ryswick, One of the Forty of the French Academy."

CHAPTER ONE

IGNORANCE OF THE ROLE OF TURKISH DIPLOMATS IN THE AID AND RESCUE OF JEWS

Turkish diplomats were in a position to provide invaluable assistance to aid Jews and other persecuted minorities to leave Nazi-occupied zones for safety. This assistance included issuance of passports, visas (entry, exit and transit), letters of transit, proof of citizenship or nationality. Papers issued were not necessarily for the destination marked on passports or visas. Often times, visas or documents were used to merely as a ruse to assist an escape or transit through Nazi-occupied Europe. Turkish diplomats issued these documents to more than just a few individuals, and to people they actually did not know. As well as issuing documents to help Jews to escape Nazis, many also prevented Jews from being arrested or deported to worse fates. Twenty-three Turkish diplomats, all of whom were Muslims, were active saving Jews across Europe.⁹

Turkish diplomats, Turkish relief agencies, and the Turkish government do not receive the credit they deserve for their actions on behalf of European Jewry during the Holocaust. Many of their accomplishments have been ignored in the literature. Moreover, appreciation and gratitude for Turkish efforts were in short supply even among Jewish beneficiaries. Alas, as the late historian Stanford Shaw ruefully noted, such beneficiaries as responsible Jewish representatives of the United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's World Refugee Board, or Zionist organization agents, who were assisted materially by the Turkish authorities, or even participants in the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference (Jerusalem, April 8-11, 1974), showed scant awareness of and even less appreciation or gratitude for the sustained and daring efforts of individual Turks, Turkish relief agencies, and, most of all, the Turkish government in protecting and

⁹ Eric Saul, Fact Sheet—Diplomatic Rescue in the Holocaust, 1933-1945, October 8, 2017. <https://www.holocaustrescue.org/diplomatic-rescue-fact-sheet>

aiding European Jewry before and particularly throughout the Second World War.¹⁰

Earlier Research

There is fierce in-fighting among Jewish historians over whether more Jews might have been saved during the Second World War. Some say they could have been while others insist they could not. These arguments obscure what most have in common—they either ignore or dismiss scornfully the Turkish contribution to saving Jews. The great exception is Stanford Shaw's *Turkey and the Holocaust*. The book rescues a little-known topic from oblivion and neglect, and adds another important detail to the vast literature on the Holocaust.¹¹ Shaw is the first scholar writing about Turkey during the Holocaust who had access to the archives of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Turkish Consulate General in Paris. Even a cursory glance at the footnotes reveals the extent which this work is based upon archival material. It is clear that he delved deeply into Turkish documentation in order to elucidate the position of Turkey on the rescue of Jews in general during the Holocaust, and in particular the rescue of Turkish Jewry.

Professor Shaw's wife, Ezel Kural Shaw, was the daughter of a Turk who was a wartime frontier official near Edirne (a city on the main road from the Bulgarian border to İstanbul). His father-in-law first aroused Shaw's interest when he told him of all the Jews he had let into Turkey in the course of his daily—and particularly nightly—work during the war. Shaw recounts how, at the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference (1974), after a talk on how Numan Menemencioğlu, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1942-1944, and the Turkish Consulates in France had saved 10,000 Turkish Jews, one Joseph Friedman rose. Admitting: "I am not a historian, nor am I involved in research," Friedman continued: "I must admit I know nothing about the 10,000 Turkish nationals. It seems to me that there must have been a mistake and that the number was not more than 1,000. As far as the matter itself is concerned, as I mentioned, I know nothing."¹²

¹⁰ Howard Reed, "Review of Stanford Shaw's *Turkey and the Holocaust*," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.27, No.1 (February 1995), pp.127-128.

¹¹ Feroz Ahmad, "Review of Stanford Shaw's *Turkey and the Holocaust*," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, Vol.28, No.1 (July 1994), p.88.

¹² Osman Streater, "The Monsignor and the Minister," *Cornupia*, Vol.4 (2001), p.74.

Arnold Reisman's *Shoah, Turkey, the US and UK* was a subsequent publication that addressed the issue. The author of this book was not a historian, though he had spent long years in many libraries and archives gathering evidence for his work. Relying upon this accumulated evidence and his personal experience, the author intended to highlight the Holocaust, Turkey, and the West. History and sentiment combine to make Reisman's contribution to the literature worthwhile and substantial. His knowledge of the subject clearly runs deep and his many invaluable insights help to set the bar high for all future studies. In his earlier *Turkey's Modernization: Refugees from Nazism and Atatürk's Vision* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2006), Reisman echoed the notion that the Ankara government provided a safe haven for Jews and other refugees fleeing Nazi oppression. Their arrival proved beneficial to both sides, since many of those newly arrived people were academics and professionals who would contribute to the intellectual capital of the country.

In Bilal Şimşir's *Türk Yahudiler* the first section of the Introduction provides a short survey of the history of the Turkish Jewish community. The central part of the book contains 301 documents in Turkish and French from the archives of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Turkish Consulate General in Paris. The documents are published in their original appearance. For anyone seriously interested in Turkey and the Holocaust, the book opens up the often remote universe of archival sources and gives ample opportunity to gain insight into historic reality.

Corry Guttstadt's *Die Türkei, die Juden und der Holocaust* (Berlin: Assoziation A, 2008) was first published in German and later a slightly revised English edition *Turkey, the Jews and the Holocaust* appeared. Guttstadt's narrative follows three principal lines of inquiry: the meaning of tolerance and integration under the Ottoman rule; the evolution of antisemitism in early republican Turkey and Ankara's attitude toward Nazi Germany; and the fate of Turkish Jews in Europe and Turkish responses to the Holocaust. Most of the book's explanations are questionable. The author shows a lack of serious knowledge of the recent Turkish past, and misconceives Turkey's approach to its Jewish citizens. She opposes the view that the Turkish diplomats made every effort to protect Jews of Turkish nationality.¹³

¹³ See Yücel Güçlü, "Review of Corry Guttstadt's *Turkey, the Jews and the Holocaust*," *Middle East Policy*, Vol.31, No.1 (Spring 2014), pp.175-179. Also the