

**Benefitting from the Ambiguities:
The ‘Thrace Events’ of 1934 and the Interwar Period Turkish Nationalism**

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Introduction:

This presentation endeavors to contextualize the Thrace Events of 1934 and the anti-Semitic discourse of the Journal *Orhun* in a wider framework of Turkish nationalism in the first decade of the Republic. It will claim that the ruling elite of the Republic concurrently defined ‘Turkishness’ on inclusive and exclusive terms. While in theory, Turkish nationalism was a “civic” nationalism defining ‘Turkishness’ based on citizenship when it came to practice all citizens of the Republic were not welcomed to this identity, some of them especially the Jewish community, was expected to prove their loyalty to become equal members of the nation. This article claims that this contradictory attitude of the ruling elite; keeping the definition of ‘Turkishness’ ambiguous was designated and intended in the way of constructing a cohesive and homogenous national community. In line with this ambiguous definition of ‘Turkishness’ the ruling elite of the Republic developed an ambivalent attitude towards non-Muslim minorities and their place in the Turkish nation. This presentation will further put forth that this ambivalent attitude led to the Thrace Events of 1934 by leaving the racist and so-called ‘extreme’ anti-Semitic discourse especially observable in the Journal *Orhun* a space to act.

Defining ‘Turkishness’ in the first decade of the Republic: An ‘ethnic’ or ‘civic’ category?

After the Second World War, the scholars of nationalism applied typologies in their effort to understand and explain one of the strongest social phenomenon of the century; nationalism. The famous contribution of Hans Kohn is one of the pioneers, which gave an account of nationalism by referring to such typologies. (Kohn 1944) Being a Czech Jew, observing the German-Slav rivalry in the setting of two World Wars, Kohn tried to conceptualize nationalism in this pioneering work by dividing “Western” and “non-Western” nationalism. (Liebrich 2006) According to this dualism, the western nationalisms under the influence of enlightenment were rational and civic nationalisms while the non-western nationalisms were affected by romanticism, emotionally driven, and ethnic nationalisms. Therefore this dualism claimed that western nationalisms were inclusive and constructive while non-western nationalisms were exclusive and destructive.

However, new researches brought to light that these typologies failed to grasp the reality of nationalism. For example; the study of Jaskulowski demonstrated that the so-called 'western nationalisms' may also have a strong ethnic dimension and they can be as destructive as the so-called 'non-western nationalisms'. (Jaskulowski 2010) Studies on the typologies of nationalisms unveiled that such typologies inevitably led to an understanding that there can be good and bad nationalisms. (Spencer Wollman 1998) (Brubaker 2004) By doing so such typologies were overshadowing the destructive forces of some nationalisms that claim to be inclusive and civic. Although such recent researches deconstructed the above-mentioned dualisms in nationalism studies, Kohn's paradigm had a very influential legacy in the effort to explain various national structures. The studies on Turkish nationalism are also among the ones that were affected by Kohn's dualist paradigm to a great extent. Various scholars of Turkish nationalism tended to investigate Turkish nationalism through the lenses of this dualist reading of Nationalisms. For instance, the works of Bernard Lewis (1961), Niyazi Berkes (1964), and Feroz Ahmad (1993) regarded Turkish nationalism of the Republican period as civic nationalism while the works of Soner Çahaptay (2004), Umut Uzer (2011) were regarding the same era's nationalism as ethnic nationalism. Recent studies on Turkish nationalism on the other hand tended to define ethnic/civic differentiation as a grey zone. For instance, the work of Serhun Al (2019) claimed that all nationalisms might contain ethnic and civic elements for that reason one needs to look beyond this traditional dichotomy. Therefore, instead of squeezing into this dichotomy Al's book introduces a novel conceptual framework of nationhood. Accordingly, the Republican elites pursued monolithic Turkishness in which the idea of ethnic pluralism is strictly rejected by the state, and the state at least in theory offers universal citizenship rights regardless of ethnicity and religion.

This presentation advocates that it is necessary to overcome the legacy of the dualist reading of nationalism to understand the Republican nationalism pursued in the first decade of the Republic. In the following pages the obscurity of defining Turkishness emanating from the theory practice differentiation of the ruling elite of the newly founded Turkish Republic will be explained. In that way, it will be clear that Turkish nationalism in the first decade of the Republic was neither ethnic nor civic but a pragmatic mixture of both elements of nationhood.

Beginning from the 19th century the three identity options; Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism dominated the political discussions of the Ottoman political elite. Until the dissolution of the Empire the Ottoman ruling elite used these identity options as social cement interchangeably in a pragmatic way to keep the dissolving Ottoman State together. (Kayalı 1997, Eissenstat 2015) Beginning from the 20th century as the demographic composition of the Empire changed when Ottoman State lost its mostly Christian populated European territory the Ottoman ruling elite started to address more to the Muslim population. Especially after the loss of the Balkan Wars (1912-13) what Zürcher regarded as 'reactive Muslim nationalism' emerged. (Zürcher 2000: 173) Concurrently the Ottoman political elite engaged intensive discussions on how to define 'Turkishness' and how to reconcile this identity with the Ottoman identity. Since historically Turks were regarded as the 'millet-i hakime' (ruling nation) it was not difficult to formulate the superiority of the Turkish nation vis-à-vis other

nations in the Ottoman State. As the Committee of Union and Progress got the upper hand in Ottoman politics Turkish nationalism began to be favored and promoted by various means. During the Great War (1914-1918) and the National Struggle Movement (1919-1923) Turkish nationalism occasionally and pragmatically was defined in terms of religion and in terms of not clearly defined culture and occasionally in terms of race.

When the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 the population was far from being homogenous even if it was not as heterogeneous as the multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious Ottoman State. Although beginning from the 19th century the Ottoman territories lost most of the Christian populated territories in 1923 there was still a huge amount of minorities within the borders of the Turkish Republic.¹ Even after the population exchange of 1923 when a significant amount of the Greek population left the Turkish Republic, it was still not possible to regard Turkey as a homogenous nation-state. According to the population census of 1927, there were 359.682 non-Muslim populations within the total amount of 13.629.288.² Keeping apart the discussion of how transparent the population census of 1927 was, one can argue that there was a considerable amount of non-Muslim population within the borders of the Republic. In the last decade of the Ottoman State, many Ottoman political elite occasionally regarded this non-Muslim minority as a disloyal, enemy element within the State. The Armistice Period (1918-1922) especially fostered this antagonistic attitude of the Ottoman-Turkish political elite. It was very difficult for the Republican political elite who did not yet demonstrate any change of views on non-Muslims to practice an inclusionary approach of nationalism.

After the foundation of the Republic the ruling elite faced the dilemma of defining Turkishness as wide as possible but at the same time catching up with the homogenous nation-state ideal. Goalwin in his article claimed that this seemingly contradictory nature of Republican Turkish nationalism emanated from an ethnic boundary-making process in the pursuit of a cohesive national community. According to Goalwin moving from the experience of the destruction of the Ottoman State System the Turkish nationalists of the Republic believed in the necessity to create a nation-state system constructed on a 'core' Turkish identity. Therefore the new sense of the Turkish national community should be "inclusive enough to garner popular support, but exclusive enough to both foster group cohesion and exclude potential enemies of the new state." (Goalwin 2017 2) Goalwin's approach explains why the Turkish political elite theoretically

¹ The minorities of Turkish Republic were defined in Laussane Treaty (24 July 1923) in religious lines. For that reason while Christian or Jewish population were accepted as minorities and obtained some cultural rights the population such as; Kurdish or Alevite groups were unaccepted as minority groups. That's why it is necessary to highlight the minority as a term taken in this article refers to the officially recognized minorities. The Republican attitude towards the unrecognized minorities is a very broad topic, which would go beyond the intention of this article.

² Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başvekalet İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü, Nüfus Tahriri Fasikül 1, Mufassal Neticeler, 28 Teşrinievel 1927.

embraced an inclusive definition of Turkishness but failed intentionally to practice this inclusiveness.

The Jews of Turkey: a litmus test for the inclusive definition of “Turkishness”

One can give several arguments why it is possible to regard Turkishness of the first decade of the Turkish Republic as an inclusive category. For instance; Article 88 of the Constitution of 1924 defined a Turk basing on citizenship. The article stated; “the people of Turkey regardless of their religion and race would, in terms of citizenship, be called Turkish”³. According to this article, citizenship was the main determinant for being regarded as a ‘Turk’.

Furthermore, Ziya Gökalp who was regarded as one of the most significant spiritual fathers of Turkish nationalism (Kieser 2008: 30) formulated the components of the Turkish nation in cultural lines; accordingly, the ones who speak Turkish and who share the same cultural characteristics should be counted as Turks. In his words;

“What is the nation? What kind of links we have, which would dominate the geographical, racial, political, and voluntary forces? Social sciences show that this link is the participation in education and culture, in other words, participation in the emotions” (Gökalp 1982: 227)

Here Gökalp’s highlight on unifying links other than race and his focus on the culture can be also seen in the official republican nationalism which showed itself with Atatürk’s “How happy is the one who says ‘I am a Turk’” motto, which he expressed in his speech for the celebration of 10th anniversary of the Republic of Turkey. Therefore, the citizenship and Turkish language should in theory function like cement to promote a certain type of unity between the various groups of the Turkish society. Because it was thought only in that way it would be possible to overcome the difficulty of unifying the variety and garner popular support.

The above-mentioned attempts to define Turkishness on inclusive terms inevitably failed when certain practices were exclusionary. Especially the Turkish Republic’s attitude towards its Jewish population was a litmus test for the inclusive definition of Turkishness. The interwar period anti-Semitism within Europe made them the most vulnerable community among the minorities of Turkish Republic. Any possible violations of their rights, which were granted by the Lausanne Treaty as a minority group, would not receive international reaction. Actually the Jewish community requested for the abolition of those rights that Lausanne Treaty gave them on 15 September 1925 stating they wouldn’t need specific rights in a society that they would like to be a part of. (Tokdaş 2005: 398)

³ <https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/tr/mevzuat/onceki-anayasalar/1924-anayasasi/>

The Citizen Speak Turkish! The campaign can be given as a sample for skepticism of the Republic to include the Jewish community in the Turkish nationhood although the constitution of 1924 stated that the determinant of being a 'Turk' was citizenship. The campaign that was started in January 1928 by a group of students in Darülfünun Law School turned out to be a campaign that was supported by various groups of Turkish society and Republican elites against the Jews who speak their idiom Ladino. The head of Jewish community openly supported the idea to adopt the Turkish language and warn the Jewish community not to speak other languages. In Tokdaş's words speaking Turkish was a sign of loyalty in the eyes of Jewish leaders. (Tokdaş 2005: 400) There were even intellectuals within the Jewish community who accepted the Turkish identity and published books to promote Turkish nationalism. For instance Moiz Cohen (1883- 1961) was a Jew who changed his name to a Turkish one (Munis Tekinalp) and published various books to contribute the development of Turkish nationalism. (Tekinalp 1944)

Apart from this campaign the foundation of institutions such as the Turkish Historical Society (1931) and Turkish Linguistic Society (1932), which were searching for ancient and primordial Turkish identity, attempted to give a direction to Turkish nationalism. Especially the attempts to search for the anthropological origins of the Turkish 'race' illustrated that Turkey was influenced by the European race theories of the 1930s. (Ergin 2008) These endeavors of the Republic demonstrated the clear cleavage from the definition of Turkishness in the Constitution of 1924.

The Law of Settlement (No:2510) of 1934 is among those initiatives of the Turkish government which was the result of the theory-practice differentiation of Turkish nationalism mentioned above and fastened the process of violence in the region towards the Jewish minorities. The Law of Settlement (No:2510) of 1934 was accepted by the Turkish parliament on 14 June 1934 and came into effect on 21 June 1934.

Some researches on the Thrace Events claim that possible Italian aggression triggered the Thrace Events. (Aktar 1996) Mussolini regarded the Mediterranean Sea as 'mare nostrum' (our sea). As a result of this move the Turkish ruling elite perceived an expansionist threat of Italy and tried to strengthen the strategically 'sensitive' regions. The Thrace region was regarded as one of the strategically sensitive regions. The direct target was to open room for the Turkish or Muslim emigrants coming from the Balkans and make the Thrace region a "secure" territory. The indirect aim of the law was to reorganize certain territories of Turkish Republic so that the minorities in the region will not be a "problem" in the future. In that regard, that Law of Settlement (No.2510) of 1934 demonstrates the population engineering mentality of the Republican Elites. Especially Article 11 of the Law demonstrates the obscure definition of culture and the arbitrary usage of culture for exclusion of the minorities. This highlight of the law to define the "other" had a crucial impact in fueling the Thrace Events. Article 11 of the Law of Settlement (No.2510) of 1934 was as follows;

Article 11: “A. It is forbidden for the people with a mother language other than Turkish to form collectively a village, a district, a workers’ or artisans group, and it is also forbidden for them to restrict artistry only to their ethnic group. B. It is an obligation for the Ministry of Interior to take the necessary precautions regarding cultural, military, political, societal and disciplinary matters, decided by Council of Ministers against the ones who do not belong to Turkish culture or the ones who belongs to Turkish culture but speak a language other than Turkish. C-The number of foreigners living in a town or a city cannot exceed 10 percent of the total population of that municipality or they cannot construct a separate district.”⁴

Here at first sight language seems to be the determinant factor. However, the confusion arises when later the point B culture was also added to the calculation. Here without any definition or criteria apart from the language, culture is seen as a distinct category. And the confusion got even increased with defining the people “who belongs to Turkish culture but speak a language other than Turkish”. In that regard all theoretical efforts of the Republican elites to equate culture with language fell apart, and theory and practice differentiation became inevitable.

Although a column published in the newspaper *Vakit* by Sadi Etem stated that the Thrace Events did not have any connection with the Law of Settlement (*Vakit*: 18 July 1934) it is possible to argue that this law triggered the Events in one week time. On July 6th 1934 the newspapers were informing their readers about the ‘Events’ that took place in the Thrace region resulted in the migration of several Jewish families to Istanbul. The so-called ‘Events’ were the Jewish pogrom started on June 21st and finalized on July 4th. The mainstream publications of the Republic were guaranteeing their readers that the government will investigate the ‘Events’ and the criminals would be punished. For the investigation the interior minister of the era Şükrü Kaya and İbrahim Tali (Öngören) who was appointed as the Inspector General of the newly established Second Inspectorate-General in 1934 moved to the region. In the following days daily newspapers announced that the Events were brought under control by the government and several Jewish families returned to their hometowns. (*Akşam*: 8 July 1934) The *Cumhuriyet* regarded the Events as the exaggeration of the Jewish community and they should have stayed in their hometowns easefully and should have waited for the intervention of the government. (*Cumhuriyet* 8 July 1934)

Moreover, the newspapers presented various statements in order to prove that there is no room for anti-Semitism in Turkish society. The German-Jewish émigré academics that were invited to lecture at Istanbul University were given direct evidence of this lack of anti-Semitism. Prime Minister İsmet Paşa stated that the oppressed Jews were finding asylum in Turkey and this demonstrated the absence of anti-Semitism in Turkey. (*Akşam*: 6 July 1934) *Milliyet* interviewed Nisim Toronto Efendi who claimed that there was no Jewish issue in Turkey and Turkishness got in the Jews’ blood from children to elder people.

⁴ TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi I: 68, 14.6.1934, C:l, p.141. Article 11

(Milliyet: 6 July 1934) Also Yunus Nadi highlighted that the government and state did not play any role in the flow of Events. According to Yunus Nadi by not embracing Turkish language the Jews were staying distanced from Turkish culture and anti-Semitic circles were using this. (Cumhuriyet 16 July 1934) In a similar vein Mehmet Asım advocated that the Jews should leave no room for doubt for their loyalty to the state in order not to be blamed 'as spies and as the men that are dangerous for the safety of the Nation' (Vakit: 16 July 1934) Thus proving their loyalty to become members of the nation was the task of the Jews in the region. And language and loyalty to the Turkish culture were the determinants of this loyalty justification. Tekin Alp (Moiz Kohen) the president of Turkish Culture Association gave a statement to the newspaper Akşam mentioning that the abettors of Hitler were trying to import anti-Semitism to Turkey. According to him in order to prevent this Turkish Jews should abandon their habits remaining from the Ottoman times and truly should be Turkified. (Akşam, 7 July 1934)

Although the mainstream Turkish periodicals regarded the Thrace Events as insignificant local events initiated by a few individuals encouraged by extreme anti-Semitic circles the Events traumatized the Turkish Jews to a great extent. This pogrom can be regarded as one of the first steps that alienated the Jewish population from the newly founded Turkish Republic and contributed to the homogenization of the Turkish Republic in the interwar period.

Nihal Atsız and the “extreme” anti-Semitism of the Journal *Orhun*

During the course of Thrace Events, a Turkish literature teacher (Hüseyin Nihal Atsız) enrolled in Edirne High School published a periodical entitled 'Orhun' which was openly expressing anti-Semitic views. Hüseyin Nihal Atsız was born in 12 January 1905 in Istanbul. He attended the Medical Military School in 1922, an institution most of the elder generation Young Turks had graduated from. However, he was expelled from the school due to disobedience to the higher ranks. (Uzer 2002: 121) Afterward, he was registered to the Darülfünun Faculty of Literature, again an institution of high importance to raise Turkish intellectuals. After graduation he became the assistant of Fuad Köprülü. However in 1933 he was dismissed due to his sharp criticism of the discussion that appeared after the First Turkish Historical Congress convened on 2 July 1932 about the question how to periodize Turkish History. According to his understanding of history there was no room for objectivity when it was about national history. Accordingly national historiography should glorify the nation and Turkish history should be evaluated as a whole. (Uzer 2002: 124)

During his assistantship, he was also engaged in publishing activities such as the Journal Atsız Mecmua. After he dismissed from the Darülfünun he had a short duration in Malatya as Turkish Language and Literature teacher and then he was appointed to the Edirne High School. Here in Thrace region he started to publish the periodical *Orhun*. According to one of his students *Orhun* became to be a popular periodical within the literate circles of Edirne. (Bali 2008: 48) Later he published a couple of short-lived periodicals such as; *Orkun* and *Ötüken*, however due to his sharp criticism of the “moderate” nationalist views of the Kemalist rule he was isolated in the single-party era. From 1934 to 1944, he taught in various

schools in Istanbul. With the support of his students Atsız introduced a campaign against the leftist intellectuals such as; Sabahattin Ali. The government in line with the policy to curb extremes engaged a process of alienating the political activities of the extreme right. When by 1944 it became clear that Germany would lose the war, the government changed its attitude to a denial of racist proposals. A court process against the racist circles had begun which was known as “Turancılar Davası” (Turanists Processes). In that regard, Atsız was sentenced to prison due to his expansionist ideas.

In the 1940’s he focused on literature and wrote various nationalist history novels and poems. *The Death of the Grey Wolves* (1946) and *The Rebirth of the Grey Wolves* (1949) were the most known among them in which he concentrated on Turkish heroism in history. Afterward, in 1963 he founded the society named “Türkçüler” and he built close contacts with leading Turanists including Alparslan Türkeş. In 1973 he was imprisoned due to his insults of some deputies for their Kurdish ethnic origins however he was released when president Fahri Korutürk remitted the penalty. Finally, he died in 1975 at the age of seventy.

The periodical entitled *Orhun*⁵ appeared nine times from 5 November 1933 to 16 July 1934 once a month. Atsız wrote most of the articles in the Journal. In that sense, it won’t be wrong to take the periodical as a direct indicator of his views during the Thrace Events. Although the *Orhun* was published in Edirne in the middle of Thrace Events there was no information positive or negative on the flow of Thrace Events.

The cover pages of the *Orhun* gave a clear idea about the ideological orientation of the periodical. The first five issues of the cover pages had the slogan; “There do not exist I, You, S/he... there exist we...” (Orhun 5 November 1933, 5 December 1933, 5 January 1934, 20 February 1934, 21 March 1934) Apparently the ‘us’ symbolizes here a communitarian worldview which blesses the community against the individual, which was not surprising considering the journal’s nationalist orientation. The other cover pages added a militarist aspect to this communitarian understanding. The cover page of the 6th issue used a citation from Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, who was a leading Turkish nationalist and a deputy in the great Assembly.

This quote was like follows;

“Turkish Youth! Turkish lands are very sacred. The destiny of those who set foot there is to put to the sword. You will be waiting for the ideal of the revolution against the whole world with the light of knowledge and with the sword in your hand. You will never let go of the sword, and you will know that the means that lead to the domination of the mind and the elimination of the spirit and logic is the sword. (Orhun 19 April 1934)”

⁵ The title of the periodical was a clear reference to the ancient Turkish history. The Old Turkic script used between 8th and 10th centuries was also called Orhun script. Orhun Inscriptions (Orhun Yazıtları) were the first known Turkish written texts at the beginning of 8th century. So the reference to those ancient texts was one of a clear sign of Atsız’s Turkist approach.

This quote reminded the Turkish youth of the permanent existence of the enemy and the inevitability of the war and this is a call to make preparations for constant war. In this context, it was recommended in this quotation that the Turkish youth should not give up the sword to protect the Turkish territory, which added a new dimension of militarism by introducing the duty of the youth in the protection of the land.

In the 9th issue, the cover slogan was a quotation from Ziya Gökalp the theoretician of Turkish nationalism who was mentioned above, here the emphasis was again on the militarist character of Turkish people.

“All Turks are an army... The ones who do not participate is fugitive... It is written in our law: Anyone who escapes from a war is a scoundrel, ...”
(Orhun 10 July 1934)”

This constant war preparation idea and the altruistic behavior one should have in that war preparation was also the main motive in Atsız’s articles all throughout the periodical. With this pursuit, he mentioned the inevitability of war and the necessity to be ready for it.

For instance, in an article he wrote in the 7th issue of *Orhun* he equated war with everyday struggle or gaza;

“ Here everything is a war. Against nature, enemy and even God, each day is a Gaza.” (Orhun 25 May 1934)

Nihal Atsız’s worldview was ascertained by the existence of friend-enemy dualism. According to him potentially all the world constitutes the external enemy while the Turks spread all through Central Asia were to be the main friends. The fact that the Turkish Republic was not a homogeneous/organic entity irritated him to a great extent; this variety led him to search for internal enemies. In his article entitled, “*Komunist, Yahudi ve Dalkavuk*” which was published on 21 March 1934 he described this internal and external enemy differentiation and listed the internal enemies as the communists, Jews, and the sycophants. (Orhun 21 March 1934)

As a natural outcome of his distaste of variety in the Turkish Republic, Atsız was in total denial of cosmopolitanism. He highlighted this distaste to introduce the readers to the main goals of the periodical in the first issue. Accordingly, he promised that the periodical would give a healthy, uncosmopolitan, masculine, and national voice to the readers.

“The voice reaches us from *Orhun* is not diseased and cosmopolite but rather a voice which is masculine, nationalist and full of life.” (Orhun 5 November 1933)

He did not believe in the ideals that can be shared by various nations or people. To him, the readers of *Orhun* would prefer good Turks instead of good people. (Orhun 5 November 1933) Apart from this distaste of cosmopolitanism, he defined a specific mission for the Turks and it was the Turkification of the universe;

“Turk is created for the fulfillment of a mission. This mission ends when the universe would turkicized” (Orhun 5 November 1933)

This mission he had introduced seems to raise a controversy. According to Aktar “Turkification” practices of the Republic and racism were concepts that could not come together due to their contents and they even negate each other. (Aktar

1996: 54) Because the Republican practices of Turkification would in theory melt the variety in the pot of “Turkishness”. However, the racist views, because of their special reference to the blood and race, would not deserve the mixing of various groups within Turkish identity. Therefore the following question is legitimate to ask; what was the purpose of Atsız in mentioning such a mission, can it be an annihilation of the diverse “races”? However, in this article, he gave no further accounts about his intentions of annihilation.

Charles Tilly defined activation and reinforcement of the boundaries as one of the important elements in the process of collective violence application. In his words;

“A significant share of collective violence involves activation and reinforcement of boundaries. Claims to be or represent a certain “we” always identify a boundary separating us from “them”, whoever they are” (Tilly 2003: 75)

This type of boundary activation was very apparent in Atsız’s discourse. As mentioned above Republican Turkish nationalism adopted in theoretical level an inclusive definition of “Turkishness”. Although in practice an ambiguous acceptance of the Turkish identity took place at least in the discursive level the culture was the determinant factor. In his article “Türk Irkı=Türk Milleti” (Turkish Race=Turkish Nation) he emphasized the need to reach a definition based only on Turks because he said he only recognized Turks as a nation

“According to us there exists only the Turkish nation. For that reason it is necessary only to define it” (Orhun, 16 July 1934)

Unlike the inclusiveness of Turkish nationalism at a theoretical level, for Nihal Atsız race was the determinant factor. Blood was the only way to get included in the category of “Turkishness”, which he expressed as;

“There is and there can be no other way of being a Turk but only the blood should be Turkish” (Orhun, 16 July 1934)

He was bitterly criticized for the ones who claim the language as a determinant factor in the formation of “Turkishness” as an identity. To him, Turks should have sympathy towards the Turkish people in other regions who cannot speak Turkish. The ones who do not according to him belong to the Turkish race should be totally excluded even if they speak only Turkish;

“The person who has a foreign blood is not Turkish even if s/he speaks no other language other than Turkish.” (Orhun, 16 July 1934)

He openly expressed his distaste against the societies founded by the Jewish population with the pursuit of embracing the Turkish identity by the Jewish population. He evaluated these societies as attempts to deceive the Turkish population. For him, the Turkification of the Jewish population in Turkey was neither desired nor possible. In his words;

“No matter how much clay can stay in the oven it cannot be transformed into iron, likewise no matter Jew efforts s/he cannot be a Turk.

“Turkishness” is a privilege that will not be given to every individual, especially would not be given to the Jews.” (Orhun 21 March 1934)

Atsız was extremely suspicious about the Jewish community's desire to embrace the Turkishness, according to him they had a secret agenda and their acceptance of Turkish identity was only a trick.

According to Atsız, the 'dönme'⁶ constituted the most dangerous group among the Jewish population. Equating the "dönme"s to snakes he highlighted the danger that one cannot realize easily that they are Jewish, in his words;

"The most dangerous type among the snakes is the one with the same color as the ground" (Orhun, 16 July 1934)

In that regard he recommended taking the physical appearance, the shape of their face into consideration; "It is necessary to check carefully the distinct Jewish character of her/his face" (Orhun 21 March 1934) In order to support this argumentation he claimed that a Turkish child and a Jewish child who would be raised in the same environment would be different from each other. The result would be in his words;

"Of course the Turkish child would be brave, right and the Jewish child would be coward and two-faced." (Orhun, 16 July 1934)

After this boundary activating accounts Atsız adopted a stereotyping discourse against the Jewish population, which resulted in the concrete usage of violence. One reference Nihal Atsız took was the overall hatred and discrimination towards the Jewish population. According to Atsız this overall hatred normalized and legitimated the discrimination against the Jewish population.

By reproducing the typical interwar period stereotypes for the Jewish people he intended to show them as a target.

"Jew is the sample of ignominy, cowardice, devilry and untrustworthy" (Orhun 21 March 1934)

Referring to the lack of patriotic feeling among them he stated in his article in the 5th issue of the journal that they (the Jews) can easily engage in treason even for small material gains.

"Jew is a corrupted merchant that can sell the flag of the land he belongs just for a little material gain" (Orhun 21 March 1934)

The list of stereotyping accounts he made against the Jewish population can be extended however it is possible to conclude that the openly anti-Semitic accounts of him found it his atmosphere to grow in the interwar period Turkish national structure. As mentioned above Nihal Atsız easily used the room left empty by the Republican understanding of "Turkishness" for racist purposes. While official Turkish nationalism left the definition of the "Turkishness" as a category empty Atsız in his anti-Semitic accounts in *Orhun* filled this gap. Although it is difficult to measure to what extent his anti-Semitic accounts in *Orhun* led to the flow of Thrace Events it is still possible to evaluate his stance as an important catalyzer of the Events.

⁶ The Ottoman Empire settled the Sephardic Jews after the expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. In the mid-17th century a religious movement was formed around Shabbatai Tzevi who claimed to be the Messiah. He was imprisoned by the Ottoman authorities and together with his followers they converted to Islam and obtained Turkish names. This Jewish population was labeled as 'Dönme', which means 'the converted' a pejorative term in Turkish language.

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