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Tortuous road to freeing Turkey's press

Assignment:

Turkey

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ISTANBUL—The ugly secret about torture in Turkey's prisons is coming out of the shadows and onto the front pages of the increasingly free-wheeling Turkish press.

There has been remarkable reporting in recent months on the sensitive subject that had been declared off-limits. The leading news magazine of Turkey, *Nokta*, which means Point, recently ran a cover story on the confession of a self-admitted torturer. Similarly, the most-respected daily newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*, has carried first-hand accounts by people who said they were tortured while in custody.

The government doesn't deny that such things happen, but it says cases of abuse are isolated and not sanctioned as a matter of policy. Reporting on this subject, and scores of others, was prohibited after the generally welcomed military takeover in 1980.

The move back toward democracy and the lifting of martial law in most provinces have enabled the Turkish press to confront restrictions on what it may print. The newly acquired freedoms have not been popular with the authorities, however.

Two names that most Turks didn't expect to see again in print, former Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit on the political Left and Suleyman Demirel on the Right, now are quoted by the press. They have resurfaced in print despite a government order banning them from political activity.

Even more telling, perhaps, is the lively debate underway on what materials are considered pornographic, typically not a subject open for discussion in a largely Moslem nation. There's a Turkish edition of *Playboy* magazine that debuted last year, but that is not what has people worked up. Several of the daily newspapers, trying to increase their circulation, have taken a page from the British tabloid press and started running nude photographs.

But the wraps remain tight in two areas—criticism of President Kenan Evren, the general who led the military takeover; and the military.

Turkey wants the world to note the plight of Bulgaria's vanishing Turkish ethnic minority. Ten years ago, the official government census in Bulgaria reported about 800,000 ethnic Turks, or about one-tenth of the population.

The results of the latest count, which was just completed, are remarkable: Authorities say there are no ethnic Turks living in Bulgaria. How that happened is no mystery. A year ago, ap-

parently in anticipation of the upcoming census, the government stepped up its "Bulgarianization" campaign to erase the country's largest ethnic minority.

Turkish schools and mosques have been closed, speaking or writing in Turkish has been prohibited in public and thousands of Turks have been forced to change their names to Bulgarian and Christian ones. New identity cards were issued and essential services, such as medical care, were denied to anyone presenting old documents with Turkish or Moslem names.

"They made Turks change their names at gunpoint, and those who objected were incarcerated, threatened and killed," a Turkish diplomat said.

Amnesty International, the human-rights group, said more than 500 ethnic Turks have been killed by security forces in Bulgaria since late last year. Some reports say there has been violent resistance to the changes.

All of this, understandably, has left relations very tense between Bulgaria and Turkey, neighboring countries that have many families who trace their roots to villages in what now is Bulgaria.

"Every family is involved one way or another with this," said Ambassador Turget Tulumen, director general of the Turkish government's press and information office. Tulumen's family comes from Bulgaria.

Turkey is perhaps the most important place for the U.S. to electronically eavesdrop on Soviet military activities. The sophisticated American-manned listening posts have become all but irreplaceable in the wake of the loss of outposts in Iran after the revolution there.

In a recent report, the Congressional Research Service in Washington provided some details on the secret activities of the intelligence sites in Turkey.

Two of the largest and most important radar and communications centers are at Sinop, which is on the Black Sea coast in north-central Turkey; and at Diyarbakir, in southeast Turkey. Sinop collects data on the Soviets' air and naval activities in the Black Sea as well as on Soviet missile tests. A smaller facility, near Ankara in Belbasis, is a seismographic data-monitoring installation that can detect Soviet nuclear tests.

Turkey has on occasion found these sites to be useful bargaining chips with the United States. In 1975, after Congress had imposed a weapons embargo on Turkey after its invasion of Cyprus, Ankara cut off American use of the listening posts. Three years later, President Jimmy Carter signed legislation ending the arms embargo after intense bargaining with Congress. The American ears were back on within two weeks.



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