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THE UNITED STATES, TURKEY AND THE POPPY

James W. Spain

FOR most of the past year, the Cyprus problem has dominated American relations with Turkey and it may well turn out that this issue will have a decisive long term impact on the relationship. "The Poppy Problem" remains in the background, however; and, both because we can learn something from it and because the chances are that it will reappear even if a satisfactory solution to Cyprus is found, it is worthwhile now to take a look at just what has happened between Turkey and the United States over the poppy.

I

Ironically, the first connection between Turkey and the United States involving opium was a mutually advantageous one. In 1805 the British East India Company forbade its ships from carrying opium to China. At that time the prime source of supply was Turkey, where the poppy plant had been grown for centuries. Aggressive American ship captains immediately moved in on the trade and for a quarter of a century held a virtual monopoly of it, causing at least one mandarin in Canton to think that Turkey was a part of the United States. With the ending in 1839 of the East India Company monopoly of the China trade, British ships quickly recaptured control of the trade in opium from Turkey to China, although American ships continued to participate in trade in Indian opium for some years afterward.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Americans had begun to look at the drug trade from a new standpoint. Many survivors of the Civil War had found themselves afflicted with the "Army Disease," addiction to morphine which was first widely used to reduce pain during that conflict. Others, many of them women, found that the most effective of the patent medicines they relied upon to cure minor ills left them with an addiction for heroin, a new opium derivative which had recently been isolated from morphine (originally as a cure for addiction to it) and was being sold commercially by the respected Bayer Company.

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Here a word is in order about the mechanics of the opium-morphine-heroin process which is still important today. Raw opium is extracted in the form of gum from the head of the opium poppy after it has flowered. An incision is made in the side of the pod, and the gum which oozes out overnight is then collected and formed into bricks. Converting raw opium to morphine base is a relatively simple process involving the boiling of the gum with water, lime, and ammonium chloride, and which, most important from a smuggler's point of view, reduces the volume and weight by 90 per cent. The crystals thus produced can then be turned into heroin by a more complex series of bleaching, distillation and blending processes involving acetic anhydride and hydrochloric acid. The resulting white powder is roughly the same volume as the morphine base from which it has been made. Generally, there are two different kinds of abuse fostered by the illegal traffic. In Asia and Africa the opium itself is smoked or eaten. The effects are far less malignant than when morphine or heroin is injected directly into the blood stream as is the current abuse pattern in Europe and the United States.

In the early 1900s, faced with growing concern for addiction at home and repugnance at "the dirty trade" abroad, the United States government took up the issue and through diplomacy and Congressional resolutions began to call for regulation of drugs. It was apparent that there were two basic approaches to the problem. First, an effort could be made to eliminate or rigidly control the drug at its source. Second, a control program could be directed at the demand in the United States, taking all possible measures to see that none of the drug entered the country illegally and either severely punishing those at home who used or trafficked in the drug or, alternatively, making it available through controlled medical channels to identify and possibly rehabilitate addicts. (Only the most passing thought was given in those days to approaching the problem from the standpoint of the sociological and psychological problems motivating addiction.)

By and large, in the years before World War I, the emphasis was on the second approach. The United States played a leading rôle in the work of the International Opium Commission in Shanghai in 1908 and in the drawing up of the Hague Convention in 1912, both of which aimed more at regulating international traffic than at dealing with domestic addiction problems. In 1914 the Harrison Narcotics Act severely restricted the sale and handling of drugs in the United States but still left it open to physicians to prescribe and dispense narcotics to patients they personally attended, thus leaving the choice of how to handle an individual addict to his doctor. In the early 1920s there were dozens of free heroin clinics in the large American cities.

About this time both government and private thinking on the subject began to change. Federal officials took to interpreting the Harrison Act provisions in a way that made almost any legal prescription for addicts impossible. As the illegal trade continued to flourish, emphasis came to be placed on control of drugs at their source as the only permanent solution of the addiction problem in the United States. One

early effort in this direction has a familiar ring to it. In 1923, the American Consul General in Istanbul, G. Bie Ravndal, suggested that Turkey could be persuaded to eliminate opium production if a suitable substitute crop for the poppy could be found. His research led him to settle on silk as the best alternative, and he urged Washington to offer technical and financial assistance, including establishment of an agricultural bank to extend credit to Turkish peasants to buy mulberry trees. There is no indication that Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes ever responded to Ravndal's imaginative proposal.

Nevertheless, the United States continued its official efforts to influence Turkey on the subject. On February 29, 1932, Joseph C. Grew made his farewell call as American Ambassador on the Turkish Foreign Minister. According to Grew's memorandum of conversation: "I observed that there was still one unfortunate element which could exact an adverse effect on relations; namely the continued clandestine traffic in narcotics from Turkey to the United States and I hoped that the Turkish Government in the interest of both countries would leave nothing undone to put a complete and permanent end to this traffic."

The United States also eventually overcame its distaste for the League of Nations sufficiently to cooperate with the League's Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs. It participated actively in preparation of a draft convention focused primarily on control at the source. The convention remained unsigned at the outbreak of World War II, but in June 1953 was transformed into an international agreement under United Nations auspices. Work began almost immediately in New York on a more stringent and comprehensive agreement, and on December 13, 1964, the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, under which all legal opium production in the world today is carried on, came into force. The United States Senate ratified the Single Convention on May 8, 1967.

Almost simultaneously, the Poppy Problem began to move toward center stage in American political and policy considerations as Lyndon Johnson, hoping to salvage part of his dream of "The Great Society" from the inroads of the Viet Nam War, began to focus on the fact that heroin addiction was taking a quantum jump in the big cities of America and that an increasing amount of that heroin (some of his own government experts were claiming as much as 80 per cent) was made from Turkish opium. Parker T. Hart, an American Ambassador in Ankara, was ordered to take up the opium problem again with the Turkish government. Hart had several talks with Prime Minister Demirel in the fall of 1966 and the discussions went on into 1967 and 1968. The American position was simple: Turkey must at once take more stringent control measures to prevent illegal leakage and move promptly to total eradication of the crop. Demirel and his ministers did not reject the eradication idea outright but insisted that total elimination of cultivation must be done gradually; at least three to five years would be needed. Meanwhile, his government would undertake to implement the rigid control measures provided

for in the Single Convention. The dialogue continued along much the same lines with Robert Komer who succeeded Hart as American Ambassador, and in September 1968 the United States made a \$3 million loan to the Turkish government for the purpose of improving control procedures and developing substitute crops.

In 1969 the Poppy Problem shot to the top of American foreign policy concerns with Turkey. A measure of the importance now attached to it could be read from the formidable array of other matters which were subordinated to it: the form and future of American economic and military assistance (running in excess of \$200 million a year), Turkey's rôle in NATO, the status of American military installations on Turkish soil, deteriorating Turkish relations with Greece (another NATO ally), and the smouldering Cyprus situation. This importance sprang from increasing recognition of the ravages of heroin in the United States. Deaths in New York City alone were running three or four a day. Parents, social workers, doctors, police and Congressmen began to demand action—any action—as the scourge spread from the big city ghettos to the affluent suburbs. Most of all the initiative in the new all-out war on heroin came from Richard Nixon, newly established in the White House with a strong commitment to ending “violence in the streets,” which was growing as addicts turned to crime to get the \$50.00 or more a day needed to support their habit.

The new Ambassador in Ankara, William J. Handley, arrived at his post in the summer of 1969 with the strongest orders to get the Turks to do something about the poppy. More than ever the American goal was total eradication. Handley was instructed to ask even for ploughing up of the crop currently in the fields. Demirel demurred. There was no legal basis for such action. Besides, total abandonment of poppy cultivation, he now felt, would have too many adverse social and economic implications to make consideration of it feasible for some time. Afyon and the surrounding “hard core” poppy provinces were simply too dependent on the crop. Demirel was going to cut back production from seven provinces to four in 1971; possibly the authorized area could be further reduced to two provinces in 1972. His government was preparing a strict licensing and control bill in accordance with the Single Convention which would be submitted to the current Parliament.

On March 12, 1971, Demirel, unable to cope with discontent and agitation from the left (which had nothing to do with opium), was forced out of office by the Turkish military. He was replaced by a non-party government under Professor Nihat Erim, one of Turkey's leading intellectuals. Erim, deeply devoted to modernization and responsibility in the Atatürk tradition, gave priority to the control and licensing bill and ordered an increase in the prices paid by the government to opium producers in an effort to reduce sales to illicit buyers.

The United States kept pressing for an end to cultivation. The Executive Branch focused on an intensive educational campaign to bring home to the Turks the truly formidable damage that was being done to the United States by heroin and the relatively minor advantages to Turkey of opium production. Every American

official in Turkey became a walking encyclopedia on the subject and both socially and professionally their Turkish contacts heard about little else. Congress also was heard from. More than a hundred different bills were introduced calling for punitive action, mostly the cutting off of aid, if Turkey did not cease production. On June 14, 1971, Richard Nixon presided over a Presidential Conference of Cabinet Members and Ambassadors on Narcotics. Handley, called home from Ankara for the meeting, spoke eloquently of the peculiar nature of the Turkish problem, and came away with a Presidential commitment to provide assistance in establishing alternative sources of income if the Turks would end production immediately. After the commitment had been staffed by Treasury and the bureaucracy, Handley was given a maximum of \$35 million with which to work.

Erim, after considerable soul searching, decided that the time had come to try to end opium production in Turkey. A ban could not take effect immediately, he pointed out; the previous year's government decree had specified production in 1971-72 in four provinces. However, he would see to it that the 1971 decree would provide for a total ban for 1972-73. Such a decree was issued on June 30, 1971, together with an announcement that the United States had undertaken to help cushion the economic effects of the ban. The \$35 million figure, sure to be considered too small by many Turks, was kept secret, but arrangements were worked out between the Prime Minister and the Ambassador that \$15 million would be for compensation to the Turkish government for its loss of foreign exchange earnings from legal export of opium (\$3-5 million a year), and \$20 million would be devoted to a development program to provide alternate sources of income to the former poppy growers.

The Turkish government indicated its intention to use the \$15 million to pay direct compensation to farmers who chose not to grow poppy in 1971-1972 and to all who had formerly grown it in the four provinces but would be forbidden to do so in 1972-1973 and succeeding years. Due to Turkish political sensitivities, these arrangements were never welded into a single formal document but were incorporated into various exchanges of letters. In what seemed like an anticlimax, the Turkish Parliament (which had had no rôle in the Handley-Erim negotiations) finally passed a stringent licensing and control bill on August 25, 1971.

Another anticlimax came in November when a high level American mission headed by Secretary of Agriculture Clifford Hardin came to Turkey. From the beginning Prime Minister Erim had put great premium on the application of American skill and technology to the income replacement program. He had been a member of the Turkish Cabinet in the 1950s and seen a concentrated American effort in road building transform Turkey's transportation system. He hoped for similar spectacular results in the former poppy growing areas. The Hardin mission was to be the opening step toward this. However, the \$35 million figure was still secret, and all but a few Turks around the Prime Minister thought that Hardin had come to negotiate the compensation agreement.

It soon became clear that Hardin was not there to negotiate money but to explore with Turkish experts ideas for substitute crops and sources of income for the farmers. This he and his Turkish collaborators did very effectively, although the unfortunate fact turned out to be that there simply was no single substitute crop and that much time and work would be needed to develop a variety of alternatives. Simultaneously word began to leak out that the total sum had already been agreed upon and that it was far less than many Turks had hoped. In addition, the United States came to the conclusion that it did not want to get deeply and directly involved in the development program and made it clear to Turkey that it expected the Turks themselves to devise and implement it with only limited numbers of US Department of Agriculture personnel being available under contract to advise.

Erim went ahead with the compensation and development programs as best and as quickly as he could. In February 1972, he announced details of the compensation plan for farmers, raising prices again for those who were still growing poppy and setting a higher compensation payment for future years when cultivation would be completely ended. In March the Poppy Region Development Organization was established. In May compensation payments to the farmers began. Throughout the public discussion and controversy over the ban, Erim stressed that the decision was a unilateral Turkish one, consistent with Turkey's obligations and honor and reflecting Turkish humanitarianism. It was not, he insisted, dictated from abroad. His position on the issue was bolstered in March 1972 by popular revulsion over the arrest in France of a Turkish senator, Kudret Bayhan, caught attempting to smuggle a large amount of morphine base across the border. The enthusiasm and gratitude with which Turkey's decision was greeted in the United States during Erim's official visit there about the same time also increased his prestige.

From the American point of view also, things seemed to be going well. While it had not been able to prevent poppy cultivation in 1971-72, that crop appeared to be reasonably well under control. The provisions of the new licensing and control law were being enforced vigorously. A substantial number of poppy farmers who were entitled to grow in the final year had elected for compensation instead. Cooperation between the American Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD), later reorganized as the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), which had a number of agents stationed in Turkey, and the Turkish National Police and *Jandarma* was closer than ever before. Turkish narcotics officers were going through BNDD training courses in Turkey and training in the United States. In October 1972 the Turkish National Police aided by BNDD agents made the single largest seizure in Turkish history of illegal opium, considerably more than a ton. The final year's crop turned out to be about 75 tons of raw opium with far fewer indications of illegal diversion than in earlier years.

Erim left office (again on issues having nothing to do with opium), but the government's determination to maintain the ban was expressed by his successors,

Prime Ministers Melen and Talu, and by President of the Republic Sunay himself. The United Nations Committee on Narcotic Drugs and the International Narcotics Control Bureau hailed the Turkish decision as a milestone in the history of drug control. Pakistan and Afghanistan (major potential sources of illegal opium) were obviously attracted by the Turkish example. After a slow start, the Poppy Organization began to move and a number of small scale income replacement projects got underway. By the spring of 1973 the United States had transferred \$10 million of the \$15 million promised for compensation and \$5 million of the \$20 million intended for development projects.

True, the Turkish press was still sniping at the opium ban, interviewing discontented villagers and pointing up mistakes, for instance, the failure to provide for compensation to the 1200 or so oil pressers whose livelihood depended primarily on converting poppy seeds to oil. Visiting American newspapermen were emphasizing the tremendous financial losses to those in the illegal trade and expressing doubt that total suppression would work under any circumstances. For that matter, most of the diplomats and officials who had been responsible for bringing about the ban had a feeling that the 1971 arrangement would not hold forever. However, Turkish officialdom was pleased by the international kudos that was coming to their country, and many American officials felt that any new raising of the issue would come in the form of Turkish demands for more money. This, they speculated, would be manageable. Additional loans could be considered through the regular AID program, and, if all went to all, American technical specialists could be thrown in to straighten things out. Besides, only half of the \$35 million had been obligated and there was still plenty within the existing agreement to fund any promising new projects that came along.

In 1973 a new American Ambassador, William B. Macomber, was appointed. He sensed soon after his arrival that the honeymoon might be a brief one. He was concerned by continuing criticism in the Turkish press and suspected that popular discontent on the opium issue would find ready expression in the national election in October 1973 which was to end the interim, military-backed governments. As the process of phasing out the quarter-century-old AID program began, he carefully kept the door open in it for contingency requirements for new income projects. Particularly sensitive to legislative attitudes, he made sure that all the Turkish party leaders remained acutely aware of the strength of American feeling on the opium question.

Nevertheless, almost all of the parties made the poppy ban an issue in the election campaign. While it did not take up as much time and oratory as might have been expected, Bulent Ecevit, the young, dynamic new leader of the Republican Peoples Party, made clear his intention to revise the ban, at the same time asserting Turkey's obligation to prevent illegal leakage of the drug. Former Prime Minister Demirel, leader of the Justice Party and generally considered the favorite in the race, was less direct in his statements but left little doubt that his position

was similar. Ecevit won a plurality and when, after taking almost three months to put together a coalition with the National Salvation Party, he assumed the Premiership in January 1974, the question of whether or not Turkish political leaders kept their campaign promises became an acute one in terms of Turkish-American relations.

It became clear almost immediately that Ecevit and his ministers had every intention of rescinding the ban and no interest in trying to extract more money from the United States to maintain it. The Ministry of Agriculture started work on cultivation plans for 1974-75; the poppy seed was replenished; a succession of visiting American Congressmen and journalists were told that the ban would be ended. Repeated strong approaches by Macomber and other American officials elicited polite but unyielding responses.

Arguments that Turkey had an agreement with the United States on the ban were met with insistence that the ban had been a unilateral act and that no duration had been specified for it. Economic data showing how little benefit had accrued to the impoverished farmers in the past from poppy cultivation and how little might be expected in the future were answered by the declaration that however little benefit there was, that was all many farmers had. Perhaps, most importantly of all, the farmers and the people wanted a return to cultivation. The ban had been the act of a non-representative government; a freely chosen one had no choice but to follow the will of the people. The assertion that illegal traffic could never be fully controlled if cultivation was resumed and that only Turkish and foreign criminals would benefit was met by the assurance that illegal leakage would be controlled and by requests to assist in that control.

The prediction that, whatever the American Executive might want, Congress would surely cut off aid, did not dent the Turkish position: "We think there is more to our relationship than the opium question alone. However, if aid is cut off, we will try to understand and to continue our friendship." News stories that the United States was encouraging expanded production of opium in India and considering going into production itself strengthened Turkish determination. When a new decree providing for the resumption of cultivation in seven provinces was promulgated on July 1, 1974, American reaction was bitter.

And so, in the summer of 1974, the Poppy Problem had come full cycle—or worse, since cultivation was now authorized in seven provinces (as opposed to only four in 1971-72) and Turkish government spokesmen were talking of a 200 ton crop, well over the 75 tons harvested in 1972. In an obvious and classic indication of official American displeasure Ambassador Macomber was called back to Washington. Congress moved to begin legislation cutting off aid. Newspaper reaction to the ending of the ban was vitriolic in the extreme, a *New York Post* column on July 10 calling it "an act of war" and advocating bombing of the poppy fields by the United States Air Force. Parents, doctors, law enforcement officials, all felt the gains that had been made were being wiped out. Naturally, Turkish public

opinion replied in kind. Domestic feelings on both sides were stronger than ever the second time around and the diplomatic problem appeared even more difficult.

II

In looking back over American policy *vis à vis* Turkey on the Poppy Problem, certain landmarks stand out. The first, the decision in the 1920s to seek to control or eradicate opium at its source and to forbid its legal sale to addicts, is now deeply embedded in American law and tradition. Its implications must be understood as equally fundamental. It means that the United States, as long as it has a drug problem, will be asking or demanding that other countries to some degree fit their policies to its needs.

The next major turn of events came in 1969. Until then the Poppy Problem was not the most important of American concerns with Turkey. Thereafter it became the primary interest to which all others were subordinated.

After having given Turkey \$5 billion in aid over the years with the flow still moving at the rate of \$200 million a year, most Americans felt that Turkey "owed us one." Apart from that, they thought, it was obvious that Turkey's legal income from opium production was small and that the potential danger of it from heroin addiction on its own soil great. If the Turks were really as sensible and pragmatic as they had always seemed, they would be reasonable. Even specialists in international affairs, who knew that concentrating a bilateral relationship on one issue almost inevitably damages the rest of the relationship, were less concerned than they might earlier have been as *détente* with the USSR became an apparently permanent factor in world affairs. They knew also, of course, that Turkey was simply not living up to the rigid control procedures prescribed by the Single Convention, on the approval of which American diplomats had placed so high a premium.

As the campaign to deal with the American heroin problem at the Turkish source geared up, efforts were made to enlist the support of NATO allies, many of which were also beginning to suffer from heroin addiction among their youth. However, none of them were as convinced as Washington that eradication at the source was the only answer to their drug problem, and they were not eager to disrupt friendly and useful relationships with Ankara by aligning themselves with the all-out American effort there.

By 1973 it was clear that the US-Turkish opium agreement had holes in it and that the development program was proceeding slowly with relatively little impact on the Turkish peasants. But it was also known that the four key provinces were far from famine or rural revolution and that, since Turkish organizations bore direct responsibility for implementing the program, little criticism for its deficiencies could be directed against the United States. There was also the example of the

three provinces which had ended cultivation in 1971 and the ten more which had ceased between 1967 and 1971 without compensation or special development programs and without economic dislocation or political agitation.

Most important of all, signs were appearing that the ban was having the desired effect in the United States. The international illegal drug network was disrupted. There was still plenty of illicit opium in Turkey hidden from previous crops but, for the big traffickers, long term future profits depended on the development of new sources further east, and when they got to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, they often found American agents and local enforcement officials already organized to make life difficult for them. In New York the price of heroin on the street shot up and the quality deteriorated. The rate of new addiction seemed to be decreasing and more and more addicts faced with ever-increasing difficulty in finding and financing their daily "fix," were turning themselves in for treatment.

Small wonder then, that when Prime Minister Ecevit's new Turkish government made known its intention to resume cultivation, the outcry in the United States was prompt, harsh, and virtually universal. The Turkish Poppy Problem reappeared on front pages and in editorials. Television reran old films and crews headed out to make new ones. Congressional statements, resolutions and visits to Turkey were frequent in the first half of 1974, despite the competing demands of the Arab-Israeli crisis, the oil problem, and other major developments. As it became clear that another major turn in the long opium road was ahead, Congressional leaders who had not hitherto been intimately involved in the drug problem joined their voices with those who had been active in the earlier rounds with Turkey to try to convince Ankara that repeal of the ban would be met by strong American counteraction. Under usual circumstances diplomats working on the problem would have had to make an important tactical choice at this point. If it were not possible to prevent repeal of the ban, when and how should they drop back to a second best position of trying to work with the Turks to ensure as limited cultivation and as strong control measures as possible. This question was swept aside, however, against the background of intense domestic feeling, and, almost willy-nilly, the United States found itself "stone-walling" right down to the evening of July 1, 1974, when the new decree authorizing a resumption of production was promulgated in Ankara.

In the immediate wake of repeal of the ban, the Administration, at some sacrifice of Secretary of State Kissinger's popularity in Congress, managed to fight off a flat cut-off of aid and to introduce consideration of control into the handling of the issue. This task was not made easier by a feeling that Turkey had reneged on an agreement and that half of the \$35 million approved by Congress had already been lost. To acerbate the situation further, within two weeks a coup against Archbishop Makarios had set off a Turkish invasion of Cyprus. As Turkey expanded its forces on the island, Congress reacted strongly with a measure to cut off aid, and, after two delays, all aid was indeed stopped on February 5, 1975.

III

The Turkish view of the situation is, of course, quite different. The opium poppy has been grown in Anatolia at least since 1900 BC. In modern times its product has had international commercial importance for two hundred years. In Afyon and the surrounding provinces almost half of the farmers grew poppy, *i.e.* about 75,000 farm families. Although this number was small in terms of Turkey's total farm population, the poppy was an integral part of the way of life in the area. It provided the main cash crop. Opium gum, which lasts almost indefinitely, was stored from year to year toward a daughter's dowry or other anticipated essential expenditure. Apart from the profits to be had from the narcotic gum, the young leaves were a favorite salad ingredient. The seeds flavored the local bread. When pressed they made the oil in which food was cooked. The stalks of the plant provided cattle fodder and fuel for the household. During the brief harvest period for the gum, otherwise excess skilled labor, much of it female, was utilized profitably in incising and scraping the poppy pods. In some remote and impoverished mountain villages, the poppy was the only crop that made a subsistence existence possible. To Afyon (the very name means opium in Turkish) and the other hardcore provinces, the poppy meant at least as much as tobacco to Kentucky.

As far as illegal usage was concerned, the Turks could truly say that, although there might be a little old fashioned eating or smoking of raw opium among the country people, there was no significant addiction to opiates in Turkey. Informed Turks were prepared to admit that in the 1968-70 period there had been considerable illegal leakage of opium gum, which was converted into heroin outside Turkey, and that they had failed to live up to their obligations as a legal producer of opium under the Single Convention. However, they had constantly cut back the area in which cultivation of the poppy was permitted, increased the government price for legal opium, and expanded the official collection organization in order to improve control. They were enacting into law a licensing and control bill which was compatible with the standards of the Single Convention and which was welcomed by the International Narcotics Control Board. It might be true that their enforcement capabilities were weak and that it would always be extremely difficult to prevent the poverty-stricken farmers, who had no moral attitudes of their own toward the drug, from yielding to the temptation of the higher prices offered by illegal dealers. However, the government had from the beginning cooperated with American narcotics agencies, even subordinating national pride and permitting the stationing in Turkey of more American Drug Enforcement Agency personnel than in any other countries except Mexico and Thailand.

Many informed Turks regretted the damage done to American youth by heroin and would within reason do anything they could to help check it. For awhile, when the ban was in effect, some even saw in it protection for the future of their own children who might eventually be attracted to the heroin subculture of the West

as they had been to Western music, movies and fashions in dress. However, they resented American charges that Turkish opium was killing American youth, suggesting instead that American drug addicts were killing themselves for reasons peculiar to their own society. It was pointed out that automobile accidents were the leading cause of unnecessary deaths in Turkey, that most automobiles in Turkey were American-made, but that no Turks were demanding that the United States shut down Detroit. They found it strange that in between demands for an end to opium cultivation in Turkey, American officials and journalists were constantly pressing for a reduction in the stiff sentences awarded American narcotics offenders convicted in Turkey.

Most of all, even pro-American Turks were getting a little bit tired of being told what they had to do by their large ally. They might well "owe the US one" for its great contribution to their security in the years after World War II but they felt they had made a good payment on that debt in their substantial contribution during the Korean War. They had been rebuffed sharply by the United States in 1964 when they tried to gain their own objectives on Cyprus. If Turkey still needed NATO and the United States, America and its allies needed Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean also. The Soviet threat to Turkey seemed less imminent. Most of the American installations remaining on Turkish soil were directed against aspects of that threat which were of less than immediate interest to Turkey. Other American military rights, *e.g.* landing and overflight privileges, appeared to be of primary importance to the United States and were at the same time an encumbrance in Turkey's efforts to improve relations with its Arab neighbors. United States grant aid was decreasing sharply, \$7 million economic and \$76 million military in Fiscal Year 1974. As many Turks saw it, a cut-off of American aid (which they suspected was going to end in a few years anyway) would be painful but not disastrous—as would have been the case some years earlier.

In purely domestic terms, most Turks were exhilarated by the return to representative government symbolized by the October 1973 election. Despite two military interventions, democracy was proving practical after all. Almost inevitably, this feeling carried with it a reaction against the military-supported interim governments of the past 30 months. Former Prime Minister Erim was still held in high personal respect, but many of the actions of his government which had hurt popular sentiment or pocketbooks came under criticism as having been made without the consent of the people. Foremost of these was the poppy ban. The exact terms of the \$35 million agreement were not clear to most Turks, and the feeling that they had somehow been "taken" by the rich but parsimonious United States persisted. One of Erim's strongest arguments in favor of the ban, that it was a sovereign, unilateral act taken in consonance with Turkish honor, was now turned to call for an end to the ban. What Turkey had freely done, it could undo. Confirmation of this theme by Erim himself, now a senator, together with steadfast insistence by the Ecevit government that in fact no agreement existed, and the general assumption that a way

could be found to handle questions about the money involved, combined to leave most Turkish consciences clear as to "honoring obligations," a subject on which Turks and their governments were generally very scrupulous.

Finally, there was a question in the minds of many Turks as to what the real facts were in the complex world opium problem anyway. Some Western sociologists were saying that the heroin scene of its own accord was passing away among American youth, as other phenomena of the turn of the decade had already disappeared. Others insisted that the situation was worse than ever with Mexican "brown" heroin, earlier confined to southwestern America, taking over the East Coast market as the availability of European heroin declined. In any event, the illegal flow of opium from South and Southeast Asia to the American continents was clearly continuing and the United States was not forcing a crisis in its relations with Burma, Thailand or Viet Nam. Additionally, LSD and other synthetics were always in the news of the American drug scene. Turkey had been the world's second largest legal exporter of opium. From a medicinal standpoint, its opium had been the most valuable of all with a 9-14 per cent morphine content. Now that it was out of production a world shortage of medicinal opium seemed to be developing. Turkey itself was finding it increasingly difficult and expensive to acquire its own requirements of opiates for medicinal use. The United States was having to meet some of its requirements from strategic stockpiles, and at the Geneva meeting of the International Narcotics Control Board in March 1974 it seemed to be encouraging India to expand its production as a result of pressure from American pharmaceutical manufacturers. Turks were convinced that when it came to control they could be as efficient as Indians, and American explanations that the large indigenous Indian addict population sopped up illegal diversion there hardly saved anyone's honor. Reports appeared in the American and international press that the United States itself intended to go into poppy cultivation with the areas already selected in the Far West. Despite flat and strenuous denials by US officials, these lingered in Turkish minds. So did old fears, common to many Asian and African countries, of economic imperialism. The real reason the United States wanted Turkey out of the opium business, some speculated, might be that this would enable Washington to divert the profits to itself by promoting synthetics or by other means.

All of this led to a virtually unanimous popular and political rallying behind Prime Minister Ecevit when the end of the ban was announced; whatever obligation Turkey had to the world seemed to be met by his firm assurance that every means would be used to prevent illegal diversion and his invitation to others to help in this effort. The strong American response (which some Turks had never been in fact convinced would come) engendered equally high feelings in return. These were acerbated by the tone of the popular reaction in America. Having carefully kept their tempers in the face of allegations that they were "barbarians" and "cruel Orientals" during the American campaign that had preceded the 1971 ban, and

proud of their modernist traditions established by Atatürk, influential Turks who had supported the ban turned against it in response to the even stronger language that was used in the United States after Ecevit's announcement.

IV

As for the future, Turkey's ability to keep the illegal leakage down and perhaps eventually to choke it off entirely is going to depend on the government's willingness to enforce politically and economically unpopular control measures—which it will find less easy to do if it is embroiled in acrimonious controversy on the subject with foreigners. Even if the government does all that can be expected of it, it will need international, and specifically American, support and cooperation to carry out an effective control program.

Ankara also needs to take a truly objective look at the economic consequences of the resumption of poppy cultivation and the alternatives to it. Poppy has not done much for the peasants who grew it in the past and it does not promise to break them out of their present impoverished state. With the additional expenses and restrictions of a new and stricter control system, the game may very well not be worth the candle. And, as long as Turkish opium seeps into the illegal trade, Turkey's name and honor will be blackened abroad.

From the American side, the heavy emphasis on coping with a domestic drug problem through eradication at the source of the drug should be reviewed. So should the absolute conviction that addiction must be dealt with as a crime rather than a disease. We will probably come up with the same answers, but there are sociologists, psychologists and medical doctors who argue that controlled legal supply (whether of heroin or methadone) may be a better way of handling addiction. There are also some experienced law enforcement officers who doubt that the present drug problem in the United States can ever be solved by stricter laws and harsher punishments at home or by the elimination of one, or even several, sources abroad.

In terms of the present situation, Turkey made a good start on September 12, 1974, when it announced that henceforth its poppies would go into the straw process. This method completely bypasses the production of gum opium by incision. The entire plant is cut in the field and run directly into a sophisticated chemical and mechanical process which eventually separates its various ingredients. For a few years, until Turkey can build such a plant, the harvested, unincised poppies will be exported to Western Europe. Thus there should be none of the readily merchandisable gum in Turkey. However, like almost every other aspect of the Poppy Problem, the situation is not simple. There is still the possibility of illegal incision by peasants before the plants are harvested; the investment of \$8-\$10 million in a straw plant will have its own effect on perpetuating cultivation.

Another promising approach centers on a little-known cousin of the opium poppy, called *papaver bracteatum*. This plant has long grown wild in parts of Turkey and Iran. Unlike the poppy, it is a perennial. It has no pod from which gum can be extracted by incision. It does have a very high thebaine content. Recent research has established that it is possible through chemical processing to extract codeine directly from it, and codeine is the most important derivative of the poppy for legitimate medical use. *Bracteatum* may well turn out to be the main source of codeine for the future and obviously control of illegal diversion will be much simpler. Turkey could well get in on the ground floor of a new industry and it would almost certainly find enthusiastic international support for its doing so, but again there would be disadvantages to the peasants from the absence of seeds and oil and the reduced use for existing skilled labor.

It would probably be wise also for both Turkey and the United States in the future to rely more on international organizations and third countries as middlemen and arbiters of the problem. The United Nations Committee on Narcotic Drugs and the International Narcotics Control Board in Geneva are as deeply concerned as the United States about drug addiction and are not without expert knowledge and experienced personnel. They also represent a wider constituency than the United States alone. Turkey may have to be more agreeable to their proposals and the United States may have to settle for the kind of measures and approaches deemed acceptable by the international community rather than insisting on its own very demanding ones.

Although it has passed almost unnoticed in the storm over Cyprus, the United States now appears to have quietly revised its objective *re* Turkish opium to control rather than eradication. If this is to be successful, continuation and even expansion of American and Turkish cooperation in enforcement is essential. The work of the Drug Enforcement Agency in Turkey has been significant and appreciated by the Turks themselves. Continuation of this work with all the resources and expertise it involves could make the difference between success and failure in any system of control. The question of the \$35 million provided under the 1971 agreement must be cleared up. The total sum was committed by the United States to end Turkish production permanently and the resumption of production undoubtedly means that it should not all be paid. However, the two year suspension of cultivation does seem to have accomplished something and, if an adequate control system can be devised for resumed production, the money may turn out to have made an important contribution toward solution to America's drug problem, perhaps justifying Turkey's retaining those funds already expended.

Paradoxically, now that cultivation has resumed, the two countries, if they are to avoid frustrating each others' objectives, will more than ever have to trust each others' good intentions and be cautious in condemning each others' actions.