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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cosmopolitan underworld: opiate refinement in inter-war Istanbul

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Abstract

The Turkish government's suppression of private heroin factories and its monopolization of opium exports brought the state into conflict with a large numbers of Istanbul residents who sought to profit from the lucrative trade in opiates. Sites of clandestine drug production spread across the urban and suburban landscape, inspiring public alarm and new policing measures. The article examines the human networks behind these production sites, investigating how they utilized the diversity of their members and contacts in the search for profit and the evasion of the state, and how this diversity was interpreted in press and public debate.

Introduction

Visiting Ankara in January 1932, Eric Einar Ekstrand, head of the Opium Traffic and Social Questions section of the League of Nations, noted a pleasing change in tone. Long seen as obstructing the global drug control regime, Turkish ministers now 'seemed sincerely in favour of collaboration'.[1] Ekstrand was informed by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü that three pharmaceutical factories producing morphine and heroin, whose products had been discovered in numerous global drug seizures, were being closed down. Further welcome news came at the April–May sessions of the Advisory Committee on Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs (OAC) in Geneva, when Turkish delegate Şevket Fuat expressed his government's intention to accede to the 1925 and 1931 opium conventions, which had been opposed in defence of Turkey's large opium production and export sector. In early 1933, the transformation of Turkish opium policy culminated in the creation of the Narcotic Products Monopoly (NPM) to manage the acquisition and sale of the country's opium harvest, promising bureaucratic control over a previously lightly regulated market in the drug.

The motives and consequences of this dramatic change of course have been widely commented on in the growing number of works examining Turkish opium policy in

[1]United Nations Library and Archives, Geneva (LON) R3188/12/34612/3541, 'Report on mission to Turkey by the director of the Opium Traffic and Social Questions Section', 26 Feb. 1932, 4.

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the period.[2] Less studied are the effects of monopolization on the place and population of Istanbul, which had been the centre of the Ottoman and Turkish licit opium market and would continue to play this key role in the illicit refinement and sale of opiates. Hundreds of Istanbul residents sought to continue to profit from the lucrative trade, buoyed by increased prices on the black market created by local and global efforts at suppression. While many continued to covertly sell raw and prepared opium, its refinement into derivatives such as heroin and morphine proved more profitable and easier to conceal. Between 1933 and 1940, at least 23 separate cases of illicit opiate refinement in Istanbul were recorded in reports submitted to the League of Nations and articles in the Turkish press, some of which involved multiple underground production sites. This article asks what the functioning and policing of these opium-refining sites reveals about Istanbulites' responses to the changing economic and political climate in the Turkish capital during the early Republican period.

Istanbul was at the centre of illegal opiate refinement networks due to its human and infrastructural qualities and connections. Its prior prominence in the licit opium trade left in place expertise, equipment and stocks of raw materials easily replenished due to its proximity and transit links with poppy fields in western Anatolia. The city's centrality in maritime and land-based communications also facilitated the distribution of narcotics, with ships and trains daily departing for destinations in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas that offered still greater profits. Once criminalized, opiate smugglers continued to benefit from these advantages, stowing contraband among passengers and commodities transported by land and sea while turning to the complex urban morphology of Istanbul's built environment to conceal sites of narcotic commerce and production. Opiate production proved to be highly scalable, and police uncovered covert manufactories in basements, stockrooms and apartments dispersed across the city and farmhouses, villas and outbuildings in its suburbs and nearby islands. Their location appears to have been opportunistic, based on personal connections with owners and tenants. Production sites were uncovered in both poor and rich neighbourhoods, commercial, agricultural and residential districts, and both predominantly Muslim and non-Muslim areas of the city. This spatial diffusion of the opiate economy proved to be a useful strategy to enhance its resilience in the face of police countermeasures.

These manufactories were developed and connected by hundreds of residents of Istanbul and their interlocutors abroad at a time of economic precarity exacerbated by the Great Depression as well as by étatist and protectionist measures aimed at Turkifying the city's religiously and linguistically diverse merchant, professional and working classes. This combination of plentiful raw materials, infrastructural connections, economic displacement and diasporic trading traditions was shared with other post-Ottoman port cities, including Izmir, Thessaloniki, Athens, Alexandria

[2]W.T.B. McAllister, *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century: An International History* (London, 2000), 108; F.C. Erdinç, *Overdose Türkiye: Türkiye'de Eroin, Kaçakçılığı, Bağımlılığı ve Politikalar* (Istanbul, 2004), 124–9; B. Çıtır, 'Osmanlı'dan cumhuriyet'e Türkiye'de afyon ziraati ve ticareti (1900–1939)', Sakarya University MA thesis, 2015, 120–2; S. Altan, 'Cenevre afyon konferansları ve Türkiye'nin tutumu', *Çanakkale Araştırmaları Türk Yıllığı*, 17 (2019), 45–70, at 59–61; O.B. Gürsoy, 'Losing wealth or restricting the poison? Changing opium policies in early Republican Turkey, 1923–1945', *Historia Agraria: Revista de Agricultura e Historia Rural*, 61 (2013), 115–43, at 126–7; R. Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey* (Oxford, 2014), 72–3; M. Bacci, 'Smugglers and state-builders: opiate trafficking and institutional development in interwar Egypt and Turkey', University of Texas at Austin MA thesis, 2017, 52–3.

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and places further afield, from Marseille to Shanghai, where reports attest to the discovery of parallel narcotic manufactories in the period, some of which were linked to Istanbul through the transfer of materials and mobility of individuals.[3] The extent of popular involvement is hinted at by available statistics, with close to 900 narcotic crimes recorded by Turkish police in the year 1934 alone.[4] Newspapers claimed drug producers and smugglers were 'being arrested like the tearing of stockings', an idiom indicating a rapid succession of events.[5]

The state's pursuit of smugglers generated large numbers of documents that reveal how particularities of the city's human geography and the ways its multiple communities were perceived and governed shaped the local application of the increasingly international norm of narcotics prohibition. Much of the archives of relevant ministries in the Republic of Turkey remain closed to researchers, but international interest in the activities of smugglers operating in Istanbul resulted in significant collections of relevant documents in the United States, Britain, France and Geneva, host to the OAC. Newspaper coverage of smuggling networks frequently included interviews with investigators and transcripts of suspects' testimonies in court. Such sources need to be treated with caution, as both journalists and state officials were prone to exaggerate the cohesiveness, extent and influence of smuggling networks in the interest of sales and bureaucratic aggrandizement, factors that continue to shape conceptions of organized crime.[6] In the case of Istanbul, perceptions of smuggling were further distorted by negative images of the city and its non-Muslim minorities. The large literature on the relationship between drug suppression and the policing of minorities and migrants in other periods and geographic contexts is instructive, revealing the multiple vectors producing the over-representation of specific ethnic groups in criminalized activity, government strategies, legal proceedings and press coverage.[7]

In early twentieth-century Istanbul, these vectors were determined by the politics of cosmopolitanism, by which I mean the ways that non-Muslims' opportunities and experiences were shaped by the position these communities had attained in late Ottoman cultural, political and economic life and later attempts to limit and reverse this process. Academic writing on cosmopolitanism spans diverse patterns of trans-communal and transnational socialization, cultural and political exchange and commerce in Istanbul and other Ottoman and post-Ottoman cities.[8] Multiple scholars have called into question the definition and utility of the concept, in part on account of cosmopolitanism's conflicting interpretations as political outlook,

[3]See K. Gotsinas, 'Attitudes towards heroin addicts and addiction in interwar Greece', *Central Europe*, 12 (2014), 174–94, at 183–4; D.-J. MacArthur-Seal, 'The trans-Asian pathways of "Oriental products": navigating prohibition between Turkey, China and Japan, 1918–1938', *Modern Asian Studies*, 56 (2021), 207–49, at 234–5.

[4]Ş.Y. Sarıbaş, *Altıncı Milli Türk Tıb Kongresi: Alkoldan Başka Zehirlerle (Uyuşturucu Maddelerle) Toksikomani* (Ankara, 1935), 55.

[5]*Vakit*, 27 Jun. 1933, 1.

[6]L. Paoli and T. Vander Beken, 'Organized crime: a contested concept', in L. Paoli (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime* (Oxford, 2014), 16–17.

[7]E.C. Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City* (Philadelphia, 2008), 85–92; K. Murji, 'Hierarchies, markets and networks: ethnicity/race and drug distribution', *Journal of Drug Issues*, 37 (2007), 781–804, at 785.

[8]G. Sluga and J. Horne, 'Cosmopolitanism: its pasts and practices', *Journal of World History*, 21 (2010), 369–73, at 371.

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cultural sensibility or mode of commerce.[9] Still, engagement with the term is necessary, not least because it was a category commonly employed to describe, often pejoratively, the cities and peoples of the eastern Mediterranean. In this article, cosmopolitanism is investigated as the practice and perception of commercial strategies characterized by co-operation and exchange across religious and linguistic communal boundaries and national borders that builds on prior research on licit business history.[10] Alternative notions of cosmopolitanism as a shared civic spirit or common political strategy for the bridging of differences cannot be assessed due to the limitations of the sources dealt with here.[11]

Despite its inherently transnational character, smuggling has been largely neglected in research examining questions of cosmopolitanism, reflecting an implicit elitism of associated literature and the ways in which smuggling has fallen between the cracks of national history writing.[12] Writing criminalized opiate refiners into the history of Ottoman and post-Ottoman cosmopolitanism answers the call by scholars to examine what has been called 'cosmopolitanism from below'.[13] It is important to note that although they were criminalized and marginalized after 1933, several producers and traders in illicit opiates left behind prosperous legitimate businesses and careers. Indeed, the networks of individuals around opiate refinement sites exhibited significant social as well as religious and linguistic diversity, with successful merchants and skilled professionals co-operating with bank clerks, waiters, labourers and chauffeurs in the production and distribution of opiates. This diversity served to expand access to contacts and sites that strengthened the chances of commercial success. Their continued trans-communal and transnational commercial engagements reveal the durability of cosmopolitan modalities of commerce.

This article first provides an exploration of the impact of Turkification and étatism on both the licit opium market and broader economy, and shows how such measures pushed Istanbulites to turn to smuggling. Next, the article traces the spread and diffusion of heroin's use and manufacture in Istanbul following criminalization. The third section assesses how the resulting moral and legal censure of opiate production interacted with established narratives of the intoxicating and corrupting role of the city's non-Muslim minorities. Finally, the article investigates how the expanding diasporic scale of these communities facilitated the production and distribution of drugs.

[9]A. Gekas, 'Compradors to cosmopolitans? The historiographical fortunes of merchants in eastern Mediterranean ports', *European University Institute Working Papers*, 29 (2008), 95–114; W. Hanley, 'Grieving cosmopolitanism in Middle East studies', *History Compass*, 6 (2008), 1346–67.

[10]E. Sifneos, 'Cosmopolitanism as a feature of the Greek commercial diaspora', *History and Anthropology*, 16 (2005), 97–111, at 100.

[11]V. Huber and J.C. Jensen, 'Dealing with difference: cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth-century world of empires', *Humanity*, 12 (2021), 39–46, at 39.

[12]K. Fahmy, 'For Cavafy, with love and squalor: some critical notes on the history and historiography of modern Alexandria', in A. Hirst and M.S. Silk (eds.), *Alexandria, Real and Imagined* (Aldershot, 2004), 264; C. Schayegh, 'The many worlds of `Abud Yasin; or, what narcotics trafficking in the interwar Middle East can tell us about territorialization', *American Historical Review*, 116 (2011), 273–306.

[13]U. Freitag, 'Cosmopolitanism in the Middle East as part of global history', *ZMO Programmatic Texts*, 4 (2010), 3.

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Étatism, Turkification and the turn to smuggling

The prior existence of a licit opium market and licensed pharmaceutical factories formed a primer for the development of underground opiate refinement. Individuals with a background as opium merchants or experience managing and working in the licensed factories closed in 1932–33 formed key figures within later drug refinement networks. Nevertheless, they were outnumbered by new entrants to the market. Financial precarity resulting from the Great Depression and government measures that were particularly impactful on the livelihoods of the city's non-Muslims seem to have driven the turn to smuggling. The increasing propensity to illegally evade taxes and the monopoly control of products such as tobacco, salt and alcohol in this period has been cast as a form of resistance to state economic policies, in what Murat Metinsoy terms 'social smuggling'.[14] With the monopolization of opium and the outlawing of derivatives such as heroin, a new category of contraband was introduced, distinguished from the smuggling of legal but state-controlled goods by two key factors. First, the social and health consequences of the consumption of opiates marked out producers and smugglers of these products for particular opprobrium and legal censure, as will be seen in the subsequent section. Secondly, the urban and demographic setting of Istanbul, where opiate refinement was concentrated, shaped patterns of production and distribution, as well as further hardening the response by the government and accentuating public criticism.

Unlike other cities of the Ottoman Empire where the non-Muslim population had been forced to depart or eliminated during World War I and the War of Independence, notably Izmir, home to the second largest opium market in the region, Istanbul retained its multi-denominational character. Business directories testify to the mixture of Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Jewish and European merchants listed as traders in opium.[15] These merchants operated from *han*s, commercial buildings that specialized in particular crafts and commodities. Their concentration, with dozens of *hans* found in business districts like Eminönü at the mouth of the Golden Horne, and their architecture, with multiple tiers of rooms surrounding common courtyards, served to facilitate conviviality and commerce.[16] For traders in opium, Afyon Han, opposite the main post office in Eminönü, played an unsurprisingly prominent role, its name meaning opium in Turkish.[17] Opium could also be purchased at the nearby Köprülü, Küçük Halep, Horasanciyan and Ankara *han*s, which formed a tight nexus in the vicinity of Sirkeci railway station.[18] After criminalization, this convenient clustering of publicly listed trading houses was succeeded by the dispersal of opium refining and trading to clandestine sites across the urban and extra-urban landscape.

The state's monopolization of opium commerce radically reshaped the ethnic composition and spatial organization of the licit opium market. Rather than the back rooms of *hans* and warehouses in the commercial heart of the city, opium was now

[14]M. Metinsoy, '"Sosyal kaçakçılık": Erken cumhuriyet Türkiyesi'nde tekellere direniş', *Siyasal: Journal of Political Sciences*, 29 (2020), 247–69, at 253.

[15]*Büyük Salname* (Istanbul, 1925–26), 892–3; *Türk Ticaret Salnamesi* (Istanbul, 1926–27), 647; *Ticaret Salnamesi* (Istanbul, 1927), 973; *Büyük Ticaret Salnamesi* (Istanbul, 1928), 528.

[16]A. Yaşar, 'A convivial space: the urban khan in Ottoman Istanbul from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 59 (2023), 539–50, at 541; *İstanbul Hanları: Alfebetik Rehberi* (Istanbul, 1946).

[17]Now known as Meydancık (little plaza) Han.

[18]*Türkiye Salnamesi* (Istanbul, 1927), 992.

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processed in a scientific manner by state employees in white coats in laboratories like that of the Seed Refinement Institute in the quiet western suburb of Yeşilköy, as emphasized in photographs accompanying NPM publications.[19] Sales were managed from renovated offices in the prestigious 4th Vakıf Han under the monopoly's director, Ali Sami Yen, who had been selected by the Turkish cabinet, while the managing board was composed of nominees of the ministries of economy, health and agriculture. All seem to have been Turcophone Muslims, reflecting changing barriers to entry into the civil service.[20] The creation of the monopoly went hand in hand with the organization of poppy growers' co-operatives in the countryside. Government policy was framed around the defence of these peasants' interests against the predations of foreigners and middlemen composed of the non-Muslim merchant classes.[21] The transition to a state monopoly was thus consistent with the government's broader aim of bringing the agricultural and commercial sectors of the economy under state oversight and into Muslim hands, while it also proved a useful deflector of international criticism of the free trade in opium.

In contrast to the NPM bureaucracy, those involved in the newly criminalized production and trade in opiates remained highly diverse. Smuggling groups identified in government and press reports centred on members of the city's Turcophone Muslim, Greek Christian and Jewish communities, variously assisted by Levantine, Armenian, Laz and Circassian co-nationals and the occasional foreign citizen. The ethnicity of criminals was not recorded, reflecting the Republican elite's efforts at constructing a singular national identity, but the names of suspects were widely publicized.[22] Given the city's Greek, Armenian, Jewish and Muslim naming conventions, in most cases a contemporary reader could have instantly grasped the communal identity of individuals implicated in the production and distribution of opiates. The same is true for the contemporary researcher, revealing that all but three of the 23 opiate refinement networks that form the basis for this article implicated members of two or more of Istanbul's religious communities.

The continued ethnic diversity of illicit opium refinement and distribution networks defied broader demographic changes in the period. After the exodus of over 100,000 non-Muslims from the city in the aftermath of the Turkish War of Independence in 1922–23, a slower decline is observable in official censuses for the years 1927 and 1935. Between these dates, the city's Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Jewish population declined from 90,000 to 75,000, from 45,000 to 39,000 and from 39,000 to 26,000 respectively. Their departure contributed to an overall decline in the city's population, which fell from over 1 million at the end of World War I to 691,000 in 1927 before recovering to 741,000 in 1935, largely as a result of the inward migration of Muslims, who by then made up 70 per cent of the population.[23]

[19] *Afyon Türkiye'de ve Dünyada* (Ankara, 1935), 39.

[20] R.E. Güllü, 'Saltanatın kaldırılmasının ardından İstanbul bürokrasisinin T.B.M.M. hükümetine bağlanma süreci ve İstanbul Türklüğü'nün muhafazası tartışmaları', *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları*, 116 (2017), 119–44, at 140–1.

[21] Altan, 'Cenevre afyon konferansları ve Türkiye'nin tutumu', 55.

[22] Gingeras, *Heroin*, 36.

[23] İ. Tekeli, 'Modernleşme sürecinde İstanbul'un nüfus dinamikleri nasış değerlendirilmeli', in M. Güvenç (ed.), *Eski İstanbullular, Yeni İstanbullular* (Istanbul, 2009), 193–4.

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While fear of political persecution and violence during the War of Independence drove many of the 1922–23 émigrés to depart, in the longer-term economic measures, some of them deliberately intended to encourage emigration, proved paramount. Foreign nationals, including a large number of Istanbul-born locals benefiting from European patronage, were subjected to new taxes and import dues after losing their historic legal exemptions known as the capitulations in 1923. Efforts were made to force Turkish Muslim employees to be hired by foreign trading houses and other companies in the city.[24] Requirements for commercial records to be kept in Turkish put further pressure on the employment of foreigners and non-Turcophone locals.[25] As a result, non-Muslim Istanbulites entered a period of hardship and emigration that made illicit trade both more attractive and more viable.

Alongside these general measures targeting foreign and local Christian business interests, several specific policies had a particularly marked effect on professionals who would perform key roles in illicit drug production. The 1927 Pharmacists and Pharmacies Law required pharmacists, in addition to holding the necessary qualifications, 'to be a Turk'.[26] While the stipulation legally included non-Muslim citizens, in practice the measure aimed at the employment of Turkish-speaking Muslims.[27] The law further introduced a limit on the number of pharmacies per head of population that had a particular impact on the district of Beyoğlu with its high concentration of minority and foreign-owned pharmacies.[28] As will be seen, several Greek Orthodox pharmacists would later be accused of refining and selling opiates, perhaps influenced by such economic and legal challenges.[29] Measures targeting individual professions were expanded further with the 1932 law 'Restricting Certain Professions and Trades to Turkish Citizens Only', recognized by Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya as completing the process of exclusion begun with the 1927 law on pharmacists.[30] This wide-ranging law excluded foreign nationals, including thousands of Greek Orthodox natives to the city carrying Hellenic passports, from trades that would supply many of the individuals involved in both opiate production, such as chemists valued for their refinement skills, and distribution, including 'the women who performed in bars and the waiters of large restaurants and beerhalls' blamed for the spread of heroin.[31]

Istanbul's multi-ethnic commercial, professional and working classes experienced economic dislocation at a time when smuggling was becoming increasingly lucrative. In response to falling prices after the Great Depression, the Turkish government increased import tariffs, making the acquisition and sale of untaxed products more advantageous and the smuggling of contraband across borders more profitable.[32]

[24]O.C. Okan, 'Projections of xenophobia: the capitulations, employment, and Anglo-Turkish relations in the 1920s', *Yıllık*, 4 (2022), 45–66, at 49.

[25]A. Aktar, *Nationalism and Non-Muslim Minorities in Turkey, 1915–1950* (London, 2021), 124.

[26]*Resmi Gazete*, 558 (6 Feb. 1927), 1.

[27]R. Bali, *Xenophobia and Protectionism: A Study of the 1932 Law Reserving Majority of Occupations in Turkey to Turkish Nationals* (Istanbul, 2013), 13.

[28]R. Bali, *Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni (1923–1945)* (Istanbul, 1999), 218.

[29]Erdinç, *Overdose Türkiye*, 117.

[30]A. Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve 'Türkleştirme' Politikaları* (Istanbul, 2000), 123.

[31]*Milliyet*, 11 Apr. 1933, 1.

[32]R.H. Öztan, 'The Great Depression and the making of Turkish–Syrian border, 1921–1939', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 52 (2020), 311–26.

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Perceptions circulated in the press that increasing numbers of people were turning to crime in response to declining legitimate opportunities.[33] As the judge in the trial of one group of opiate refiners noted:

> since economic conditions do not give a possibility for quick profits and the general economic crisis within which the world is convulsing has narrowed the possibilities for finding work and profit, in recent times in our country and especially in the jurisdiction of the Istanbul court the resulting increase in crimes committed that are forbidden by the 403rd and 404th articles [governing narcotics] of the Turkish criminal code and these crimes' profuse numbers have become blindingly obvious without any need for confirmation.[34]

These general economic hardships were, in the case of Istanbul's minority residents, exacerbated by the aforementioned specific measures targeting their professional and business interests, providing one explanation for their disproportionate turn to smuggling. Operating beyond the scope of such regulations and taxes, the illicit economy of opiate refinement continued to be characterized by the transcommunal and transnational commercial collaboration that had been typical of Istanbul's cosmopolitan business practices, while the potential for international smuggling was enhanced by the expansion of the diaspora of Istanbul-born Greeks, Armenians and Jews encouraged by government measures.

Heroin in the city

As the fortunes of the city's multi-ethnic merchant and labouring classes shifted, the use and production of heroin became increasingly widespread both quantitively and spatially. Public concerns over heroin use soon eclipsed previous scares around the consumption of cocaine and hashish.[35] Studies of addicts who sought treatment suggested heroin could be easily acquired, purchased in so-called *tekke*, a name that usually signified the Sufi lodges closed in the early years of the Republic, or from other addicts encountered among the chauffeurs, boatmen, craftsmen and service personnel of the city.[36] Police reports suggest the existence of a dense web for the purchase and delivery of the drug via post, safety deposit boxes or under the counter sales at pharmacists or even sweetshops.[37]

Heroin addiction appeared to be an urban disease. Statistics shared at the 1935 Turkish medical congress suggested that opiate consumption remained concentrated in Istanbul: against 144 cases of heroin addiction and 49 of morphine addiction treated at neurological hospitals in Istanbul during the preceding years, the number of cases from other provinces remained in single figures.[38] For Turkish newspaper

[33]S. Demirtük and M. Kaya, '1929 dünya ekonomik bunalımı'nda İzmir'de kaçakçılık, yankesicilik, gasp, hırsızlık faaliyetleri ve kökenleri', *21. Yüzyılda Eğitim ve Toplum*, 2 (2013), 163–81, at 170.

[34]*Vakit*, 24 Sep. 1933, 10.

[35]C. Woodall, 'Decadent nights: a cocaine-filled reading of 1920s post-Ottoman Istanbul', in M. Ardizzoni and V. Ferme (eds.), *Mediterranean Encounters in the City: Frameworks of Mediation between East and West, North and South* (London, 2015), 25–7.

[36]Ahmet Şükrü, 'Heroinomani', *Türk Nöro-Psihiatri Gazetesi*, 1 (1933), 1–5.

[37]LON R4796, letter from Refik Saydam to Eric Einar Ekstrand, 11 Jun. 1936.

[38]Sarıbaş, *Toksikomani*, 54.

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commentators, the urban character of opiate consumption reflected the broader corrupting influences associated with the city. Yunus Nadi, the editor of the government-aligned newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, insisted on a division between the innocent village where opium had never and would never be used as an intoxicant, and the city, where 'for us this calamity showed its face'.[39] Such commentary contributed to a distinction between the state's role in opium and opiate exports, framed as aiding the honest poppy-growing peasantry of Anatolia, and that of urban non-Muslim minorities who undermined the interests of the state in collusion with its enemies for personal gain.

Criticism of heroin consumption domestically and Turkey's place in international smuggling led the government to implement a series of laws of increasing scope and severity. The 1928 Law on Narcotic Substances expanded the piecemeal provisions of the earlier Criminal Code and the laws on pharmaceutical companies to cover a wider range of substances. It subjected the production and preparation of these narcotics, in addition to their import, export and sale, to authorization by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.[40] Despite increasing sanctions on processed drugs, the purchase and sale of raw opium remained unrestricted until the promulgation of the Narcotic Products Monopoly Law of 1 June 1933.[41]

The first news of underground opiate production came to light before the completion of this legal transformation, in March 1932, when police raided a building on Çamaşırcırlar Street, Tahtakale, at the heart of the commercial district of Eminönü.[42] The building was apparently being used as an opium processing site by the Taranto family, prominent traders in the drug with offices at the nearby Afyon Han. The search led police to the offices of Soloman Eskinazi, where a further 45 *okka* (a measurement equivalent to slightly more than a kilo) of opium was found, and Richard Taranto, where it was claimed police uncovered a kilo of heroin.[43] These two Jewish merchants remained the focus of reporting, despite the manager of the production site being named as Şeref Çavuşoğlu, likely the noted Unionist officer and memoirist of the same name.[44]

Long-term traders in opium struggled to adjust to the new atmosphere of legal and political censure. In a letter to *Cumhuriyet*, Nesim and Leon Taranto complained that newspaper reports 'were entirely opposed to reality'. They defended the honour of their customer Soloman Eskinazi and noted that the site where the drugs had been uncovered was a licensed opium processing centre, and that 'The free trade in opium is legal.'[45] The case highlights the continuity between licit and illicit production and commerce in opium and opiates. Indeed, it should be noted that the Tarantos had managed the Etkim pharmaceutical factory before its closure in 1932, and would go on to invest in an opiate factory in Bulgaria. Numerous other individuals lower down the ranks at Etkim and Istanbul's two other foreclosed opiate factories were later

[39]*Cumhuriyet*, 4 Oct. 1933, 1.

[40]S. Kayıhan, *Afyon ve Diğer Uyuşturucu Maddeler* (Istanbul, 1946), 324.

[41]G. Çakır, 'Türkiye'de uyuşturucu maddelere yönelik geliştirilen politakalar (1920–1950)', *Akademik Tarih ve Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 5 (2021), 106–37, at 115.

[42]*Cumhuriyet*, 29 Mar. 1932, 2.

[43]*Milliyet*, 29 Mar. 1932, 3.

[44]E.J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905–1926* (Leiden, 1984), 104.

[45]*Cumhuriyet*, 30 Mar. 1932, 3.

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involved in underground production. The financial difficulties resulting from the legal regulation of narcotics led figures such as the Tarantos to search out new, more profitable ventures in the illicit market.[46]

Criminalization necessitated the dispersal of opium storage, refinement and sale away from centres of licit commercial activity in Eminönü, such as the Tarantos' warehouse on Çamaşırcılar Street, to private spaces spread across Istanbul's urban and suburban districts. An apparently unconnected case of morphine production uncovered in a building in Cihangir reported on the same day as the March 1932 raid indicated the changing geography of heroin refinement in the city. The large apartment block on Susam Street was typical of the prosperous residential district, which had been rebuilt in stone after a 1916 fire, its development benefiting from its close proximity to the diplomatic, financial and commercial hub of Pera.[47] Ahmet Nuri's apartment in the building was reported to be 'equipped like a chemistry laboratory', with 'glass tubes, beakers, scales, opium, cocaine and heroin beakers and related tools'.[48] This and future cases would show the adaptability of Istanbul's built environment to opiate production. The limited tools and minimal space required to produce what had become a highly profitable substance allowed such facilities to be easily concealed. Likewise, the number of people required to operate these temporary laboratories was low, with the number of individuals involved in the production process ranging from one to four in the cases assessed here.

The potential for high profits from such minimal investments led covert opiate manufactories to mushroom across the city. Most were located in modest apartments, such as two sites uncovered in Tarlabaşı and one in Galata.[49] These neighbourhoods, down the hillside from more prosperous Pera, were known for their brothels but were in large part residential and inhabited by local Christian workers and professionals.[50] Though most of the clandestine urban manufactories identified were located within the broader districts of Beyoğlu, Şişli and Beşiktaş, which comprised the entirety of the built-up area north of the Golden Horne and included the city's most religiously diverse neighbourhoods, other apartments-turned-opiate laboratories were discovered south of the Golden Horne, within the walls of the historic peninsula that composed the district of Fatih. Two smuggling networks were centred on production facilities in the predominantly Muslim neighbourhood of Aksaray, which nevertheless comprised both Muslim and Christian smugglers.[51]

To avoid the attention of neighbours, these urban drug manufactories were frequently concealed in basements and attics, where the smell of opiates might go unnoticed. Covert operations were more easily achievable in isolated farmhouses and villas outside the city. Opiate refineries were discovered in rural districts west of the

[46]Gingeras, *Heroin*, 71–5.

[47]R.E. Kocu, *Istanbul Ansiklopedesi*, vol. VII (Istanbul, 1963), 3568.

[48]*Milliyet*, 29 Mar. 1932, 3.

[49]LON R4800, 'Illicit traffic in and clandestine manufacture of drugs discovered at Istanbul in August 1937', 9 Sep. 1937; LON R4792, 'Discovery at Pera, Istanbul, on 28th April, 1934, of a new clandestine narcotic drug factory controlled by Armando Borzalini and other persons', 22 May 1934; LON R4790, 'Discovery of a clandestine morphine factory at Pera on June 22nd, 1933', 8 Jul. 1933; LON R4799, 'Clandestine manufacture of heroin by Mihail Calogridis and Caliopi Nicolaidi, recently discovered at Istanbul', 11 Feb. 1937.

[50]A. Özil, 'Skyscrapers of the past and their shadows: a social history of urbanity in late Ottoman Istanbul', *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 21 (2015), 75–94, at 88.

[51]LON R4799, 'Discovery of a clandestine drug factory at Istanbul', 10 May 1937.

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Theodosian walls in Yenibosna and Yeşilköy, in villages of the Upper Bosphorus such as Kuruçeşme, Arnavutköy, Bebek, Çubuklu and Emirgan, and on the islands of Heybeliada and Büyükada.[52] These places were still close enough to offer access to the production expertise, consumer market and opportunities for export available in Istanbul. Turkish newspapers and archives in the period offer little evidence of opium refinement beyond the immediate environs of Istanbul, though the presence and priorities of police may have contributed to this apparent concentration. Both the use and production of heroin appeared to be a distinctly metropolitan phenomenon.

Contraband compradors

Increasing moral castigation and legal censure set the scene for a clash between the state and private individuals who invested and profited from these centres of opiate production. Traders in opium previously given little public attention were attacked for 'poisoning of the youth', a charge of particular severity in a political context that placed major emphasis on the formation of a new generation of idealized healthy Republican citizens.[53] An article on the perils of smuggling in the newspaper *Ulus* damned this 'poison spreading nest', harmful to 'our national treasury, our economic life and the health and morality of the people'.[54] The prominence of Istanbul's minorities among the individuals implicated only served to increase public opprobrium, as would be illustrated by reporting on an apparently far larger network for the procurement of opiates that hit the press in April 1933.

Attention was heightened due to the dramatic nature of the sting which brought the smuggling ring to light. According to reports, an American named Singer or Sinclair residing at the Pera Palas hotel had contacted Bernard Blumenthal,[55] scion of the well-known Blumenthal recording company, asking to buy 100kg of heroin at a price of 400TL per kilo. Whether this American tourist was a Turkish agent in disguise or a foreign investigator seconded from Egypt remained the subject of speculation.[56] Blumenthal had accepted an advance of 4,000TL and turned to the

[52]LON R4794, 'Discovery of a clandestine drug factory at Istanbul on June 13th to 14th, 1935', 5 Jul. 1935; LON R4800, 'Discovery of the clandestine manufacture of heroin in a villa at Yechilkeuy, near Istanbul, during the night of June 15th–16th, 1937', 17 Aug. 1937; LON R4803, 'Discovery of a factory for the manufacture of drugs at Kouroutchechme, Bosphorus, on June 2nd, 1938', 31 Aug. 1938; *Akşam*, 13 Feb. 1935, 1; LON R4794, 'Discovery of a clandestine narcotic drugs factory in a house at Bebek (Bosphorus), on March 3rd, 1935 (Nico Borzalini case)', 4 May 1935; LON R4806, 'Discovery of a case of clandestine manufacture of drugs at Istanbul on March 7th, 1939', 8 May 1939; LON R4796, 'Discovery of two clandestine drug factories in Turkey in November 1935, the first at Emirghan (Upper Bosphorus) and the second at Bakirkeuy near Istanbul, with a branch at Sorgun near Akchehir', 8 Jan. 1936; LON R4796, letter from Refik Saydam to Eric Einar Ekstrand, 11 Jun. 1936; LON R4800, 'Discovery of a clandestine drug factory at Prinkipo, Princes Islands, Turkey, on May 12th, 1937', 12 Jul. 1937.

[53]*Stamboul*, 13 Apr. 1933, 2; U.B. Bayraktar, '(Social) Darwinism for families: the magazine *Muhit*, children and women in early Republican Turkey', *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 16 (2013), 7.

[54]*Ulus*, 30 Nov. 1934, 6.

[55]Bernard Blumenthal was sometimes written as Bernar Blümental or Blumentali in the Turkish press. It should be noted that there was little consistency in the spelling of non-Turkish names in Turkish print. The situation is further complicated by differences between English and French transliterations of Turkish, Greek and Armenian names. To the best ability of the author, names are transliterated here according to modern standard conventions of transliteration for each language.

[56]*Cumhuriyet*, 14 Apr. 1933, 2.

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brothers Nikos and Georgios Tzamadanis, cheese merchants who ran a stall at Balık Pazari in Pera, to supply the heroin.[57] A contact of the Tzamadanis, Vasilis Stefanidis, whose father managed the important Pera pharmacy Droguerie centrale d'orient, was then arrested crossing the border into Greece, with some reporting that heroin was recovered from his car.[58] A modest 250gr of heroin was found by police at an apartment in Fener belonging to a banker named Dimitris Dimitriadis and 11kg more at an apartment in Kurtuluş, two neighbourhoods noted for their Greek and Armenian Orthodox institutions and inhabitants respectively. Kadri Bey, whose home on the banks of the Golden Horne in Sütlüce was alleged to have been used for more drug manufacturing, was a Turkish engineer working for the public ferry company. An Istanbul Greek chemist, Konstantinos Artakis, was said to have provided instructions in the refinement of the drug. Additional materials were found in a basement of the Tarabya branch of the Tokatlian Hotel, where they had been stored by an electrician who claimed to be acting on Blumenthal's instruction and with the connivance of the hotel's Serbian manager Nikolai Medović.[59]

The presence of such names among the 90 or so individuals questioned during the investigation made for attractive newsprint, with dozens of articles published at the time of their arrests and later trial, where all pleaded their innocence in the affair. Their denials did little to temper the tone of the Turkish press, which was drawn to conspiracies that incorporated non-Muslim smugglers into a panoply of traditional bogeymen. Dubious claims emerged as to the extent and influence of the network, which alleged it maintained 'relations with the enemies of the country', with centres of operations in Egypt, Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.[60] Distribution of the opiates was said to be aided by broader classes of criminals, dancers, prostitutes and corrupted border guards.[61] The press painted a picture of a coalition of foreigners and minorities, noting how 'it appears that it is proven that several Jewish and Armenian merchants who gave a large amount of capital to the heroin producers were partners'.[62]

Blaming outside forces served to minimize the state's culpability at a time of heightened international criticism of the Turkish government's anti-smuggling efforts. Yunus Nadi, editor of *Cumhuriyet*, suggested that those paraded on the front pages were merely small players while the 'team of ghosts shifting behind the curtain' was ignored, and warned that 'one day this curtain will be torn and the full extent of smuggling would leave us dumbfounded'.[63] His statement was somewhat ironic, given his prior appointment to the board of one of Istanbul's three foreclosed opiate factories.[64] Newspapers reminded readers how 'Among the first smugglers we saw people of wealth and class', 'smugglers with luxury cars' who 'may have made their wealth through smuggling'. Another group was described as 'formed by Jews, among

[57]*Le Journal d'Orient*, 11 Apr. 1933, 1.
[58]*Akşam*, 10 Apr. 1933, 2.
[59]*Ibid.*, 11 Apr. 1933, 1–5.
[60]*Ibid.*
[61]*Vakit*, 10 Apr. 1933, 1.
[62]*Ibid.*, 13 Apr. 1933, 6.
[63]*Cumhuriyet*, 4 Oct. 1933, 1.
[64]Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes 258 PO/B/42, 'Memo by N.I.B.', 23 Dec. 1931; Erdinç, *Overdose Türkiye*, 112–13.

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whom some are very rich'.[65] Smugglers joined a longer list of alleged profiteers who were targeted in the press between World War I and World War II.[66] Producers and traders in opiates were cast as part of a wider comprador class of local non-Muslims allied with foreign interests who profited from the suffering of the majority of people.[67]

Drug diasporas

Whatever the Turkish press's exaggeration of the importance of Christian and Jewish Istanbulites implicated in the illicit production of opium, their involvement in opiate production and smuggling networks linking Istanbul with cities abroad requires explanation. In examining available snippets of biographical information and evidence of how smuggling networks operated, it appears that Istanbul's minority and foreign-national residents' trans-communal and transnational networks facilitated access to materials, expertise, capital and markets, which increased the potential rewards of opiate refinement. Two further cases of opiate production illustrate the relevance of the diasporic connections of non-Muslim merchants and professionals that connected Istanbul to sites of drug consumption and re-export in Western Europe.

The first was apparently centred on the Istanbul opium trader and milliner Markos Theodoridis. According to police reports, Greek national Nikos Sakellaris had come to Istanbul from Paris and entered into negotiations with Theodoridis and another local opium merchant, Leandros Konstantinidis, to establish a heroin factory in Istanbul. The factory was estimated to have been in operation for a year in a rented house on Kalyoncu Kulluğu Street, a main artery of Tarlabaşı.[68] A League of Nations report named 'Konsantin Arnaki', most likely the Konstantinos Artakis named in the Blumenthal investigation, as the factory's principal chemist, where he joined other former staff of Istanbul's three shuttered opiate factories.[69] Theodoridis' role was to supply the group with opium, while the finished products were transported to Konstantinidis' house by two Italian women, from where they were sent to France by ferry and train. During the period it functioned, the factory produced an estimated 150kg of morphine.[70] Most was sent to Marseille, hidden with the help of sailors on board ships belonging to the Messageries Maritimes shipping company, whose almost weekly sailings from Istanbul were key to the entry of opium and refined narcotics into France. Sakellaris, Konstantinidis and Theodoridis, likely aided by Theodoridis' son residing in Marseille, thus established a transnational trade network

[65]*Stamboul*, 13 Apr. 1933, 2

[66]A. Aktar, 'A critical analysis of the Turkish press discourse against non-Muslims: a case analysis of the newspaper coverage of the 1942 wealth tax', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 47 (2011), 605–21, at 612.

[67]E. Eldem, '(A quest for) the bourgeoisie of Istanbul: identities, roles and conflicts', in U. Freitag and N. Lafi (eds.), *Urban Governance under the Ottomans: Between Cosmopolitanism and Conflict* (Abingdon and New York, 2014), 163–5.

[68]*Cumhuriyet*, 25 Jun. 1933, 2.

[69]LON C.498.M.251, 'Summary of illicit transactions and seizures, 1 Apr.– 30. June 1933', 4.

[70]*Ibid.*

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that was in many respects typical of a longer tradition of Istanbul Greek diasporic business practices.[71]

The trials of the group followed the promulgation in June 1933 of the new Law on the Control of Narcotic Products that intended to resolve the unsatisfactory results of previous cases by establishing a special court and increasing penalties.[72] Like Nesim Taranto, Theodoridis acknowledged his past in the legal export of opium but denied any involvement in its refinement into heroin and threatened to sue the press for defamation.[73] The court did not agree and sentenced Theodoridis to six months in prison in August 1933.[74] Leandros Konstantinidis was sentenced to two years in prison and a 500TL fine, while two factory staff received one year sentences and 100TL fines.[75] Theodoridis and Artakis attempted to claim pardon but the measure was over-ruled by the court of appeal and their sentences maintained.[76] Given the potential profits involved, such fines appear to have been a poor deterrent to engagement in the opiate trade.

While the trials of Theodoridis, Blumenthal and their associates were taking place, another site of covert heroin production was uncovered that again underlined the value of the diasporized minorities' international horizons. On 5 September 1933, police arrested Albert Calderon, a cashier at Safra Frères Bank, when they discovered 8kg of heroin in his safety deposit box at the neighbouring Ottoman Bank.[77] The authorities eagerly pursued the potential connection to such an important banking firm as Safra Frères. David Safra denied that the Safra Frères Bank had 'any relation whatsoever' with the heroin trade, but searches of the company's printing presses in Sanasaryan Han and David Safra's residence uncovered smuggled playing cards and alcoholic drinks, which led to a separate court case launched against him.[78] Several branches of the Sephardic Calderon family were apparently established in Istanbul, while others had moved, like members of the banking Safra family, to the Levant and Latin America.[79] The widening horizons resulting from the diffusion of Istanbul residents abroad proved equally useful for the Calderon brothers' attempts at international smuggling as they did for the Safra brothers' more successful global banking and finance empire.

While maintaining advantageous international connections, expatriated Istanbulite families' local knowledge enabled them to secure contacts and partnerships within the urban geography of the city and its neighbouring regions. Calderon revealed to police that his supplier was the Circassian mining engineer, Izzet Bey, who owned a coal depot in Küçükçeşme, lying some 20km west of the city along with properties in the Bosphorus village of Bebek and the town of Bandırma on the

[71]G. Harlaftis, 'Greek maritime business in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: a paradigm for comparative studies on family capitalism and diaspora networks', in F. de Goey and J.W. Veluwenkamp (eds.), *Entrepreneurs and Institutions in Europe and Asia, 1500–2000* (Amsterdam, 2002), 83.

[72]*Resmi Gazete*, 2435 (24 Jun. 1933), 2777–8.

[73]*Cumhuriyet*, 20 Jul. 1933, 4.

[74]*Ibid.*, 10 Aug. 1933, 2.

[75]*Ibid.*, 23 Apr. 1934, 2.

[76]*Ibid.*, 26 Feb. 1934, 2.

[77]*Ibid.*, 6 Sep. 1933, 5.

[78]*Ibid.*, 4 Oct. 1933, 2.

[79]D. Gross, *A Banker's Journey: How Edmund J. Safra Built a Global Financial Empire* (New York, 2022), 60; M. Caraco, *La famille Calderon, ou, chronique de la vie juive de Constantinople au debut du 20e siècle* (Istanbul, 2002), 7.

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opposite shore of the Marmara Sea, where another covert factory was suspected to be located.[80] Izzet sent a Laz associate, Hikmet Bey, with an additional kilo of heroin to meet with Calderon, only to be arrested by waiting police. A suspiciously high electricity bill led the police to search Hikmet's apartment in Bomonti, a neighbourhood on the urban periphery of the Şişli district in northern Istanbul, where they discovered 20kg of heroin alongside nearly 50kg of morphine base, opium and other ingredients along with a cache of tools and implements. Comprising five rooms on the basement floor of the residential building, it was the largest covert refinement factory to be discovered thus far.[81] Its staff included Ilias Faras, an Istanbulite Greek chemist with Argentine nationality, and three Turkish workers, who produced 35kg of heroin in the seven months it was believed to have operated. The prominence of Circassian and Laz individuals like Izzet and Hikmet within Calderon's network of opiate suppliers reflected the longer-term involvement of these two migrant communities originating from the Caucasus and Black Sea coast within criminal networks in and around Istanbul.[82] Multiple other 'gangs' composed of foreign-national Istanbulites and Turkish Circassians would be intercepted in later years.[83]

Most of the heroin produced in the Bomonti apartment had been purchased by the Istanbul-born Greek Georgios Baklatzioglou, who had also supplied the raw opium used in its production. Baklatzioglou had been arrested and released in the earlier investigation of the Blumenthal ring, and would go on to attract American attention in connection with a string of factories in the Balkans.[84] Much of the heroin purchased by both Calderon and Baklatzioglou was directed to Paris, where it was handled by 'another rich Rum' (a term designating Ottoman Greek Christians) named Sotiriadis and his younger brother. Calderon had also made previous purchases of heroin produced at a smaller factory uncovered earlier in Gedikpaşa, which he had sent to his brother, Nesim, living in Paris. From there, it was reported to have been 'dispatched to all corners of the world'.[85] Nesim had already been arrested the previous year after the discovery of 45kg of morphine in his possession thought to have come from either Bulgaria or Turkey. In February 1933, he was on trial in France along with another former Istanbul resident, Kimon Kokinos, who had allegedly begun to smuggle heroin after the failure of his carpet business.[86] Calderon sent the drugs to Paris with help from an attendant on the Wagons Lits Orient Express train, which, like the regular Messageries Maritimes packet boats connecting Istanbul and Marseille, provided a key means of transport for contraband.

[80]*Cumhuriyet*, 7 Sep. 1933, 1.

[81]*Vakit*, 7 Sep. 1933, 10.

[82]R. Gingeras, 'Beyond Istanbul's "Laz underworld": Ottoman paramilitarism and the rise of Turkish organized crime, 1908–1950', *Journal of Contemporary European History*, 19 (2010), 215–30, at 224; C. Yelbaşı, 'Civil war, violence and nationality from empire to nation state: the Circassians in Turkey (1918–1938)', SOAS Ph.D. thesis, 2017, 33.

[83]See for example LON R4794, 'Discovery of a clandestine narcotic drugs factory in a house at Bebek (Bosphorus), on March 3rd, 1935, (Nico Borzalini case)', 4 May 1935; LON R4794, 'Discovery of a clandestine drug factory at Istanbul on June 13th to 14th, 1935', 5 Jul. 1935.

[84]Gingeras, *Heroin*, 69–70.

[85]*Cumhuriyet*, 7 Sep. 1933, 1; LON R4790, 'Discovery of a secret drugs factory at Istanbul in September 1933', 27 Sep. 1933.

[86]National Archives and Records Administration consular files Istanbul vol. 474, letter from Charles E. Allen to secretary of state, 22 Dec. 1932; LON C.498.M.251, 'Summary of illicit transactions and seizures, 1 Apr.– 30. June 1933', 4; *Marianne*, 22 Feb. 1933, 8.

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Theodoridis and Calderon relied on an expanding diaspora of Istanbulite Christians and Jews for the distribution of opiates to more profitable markets. The Turkish nationalist economic and political agenda that dominated late Ottoman and early Republican Istanbul limited non-Muslims' legal avenues for the maintenance of their living standards while dispersing former Ottoman subjects across the globe and so both motivated and facilitated smuggling. Given the global price disparities that resulted from the uneven pace of prohibition, those with access to the most geographically extensive networks had the greatest opportunities to profit. As Gingeras and Block note, long-established transnational commercial practices and kinship ties eased the adaptation of individuals to the arena of smuggling.[87] Much as the production of heroin had been diffused across the urban and extra-urban landscape of Istanbul and its environs after criminalization, so too had Istanbulites been dispersed across the globe.

Conclusion

These early cases of clandestine opiate refinement in Istanbul set the tone for Turkish discussion of the issue of drug production and smuggling over the coming decades as illegal manufactories continued to be uncovered. Traders in the drug were ostracized and exoticized, a task made easier by their designation as minorities, and their practices distanced from the scientific, supposedly beneficial role of the NPM. The press, as some complained, reported on all suspects in such cases as if they had been convicted.[88] In any event, most of the individuals mentioned here were acquitted after a general pardon was granted in November 1933 to suspects whose trials had begun before the most recent smuggling law had been enacted. The acquittals, criticized in the press, saved Blumenthal and the Tzamadanis brothers among some 450 others as well as the opium refiners based in Bomonti who had supplied Albert Calderon.[89]

Whatever their eventual outcome, the arrests and trials (re)established the notion of a general conspiracy involving foreigners, minorities and a few corrupt Turks aiming to reap profits at the expense of the general population. As one of the official publications of the NPM claimed, 'foreign elements involved in opium, morphine and heroin smuggling were a cause for ugly propaganda against our nation abroad as they endeavoured to concentrate their activities in Turkey'.[90] Ankara made efforts to further minimize and externalize the problem while trumpeting its anti-smuggling measures. Ali Rıza, a government spokesman, complained of 'exaggerated' reports 'showing our city as a drug manufactory on a grand scale', and defended government counter-trafficking measures which had limited the production of heroin to 'a few workshops of no importance'.[91]

While their malign influence and nefarious connections may have been exaggerated by the press, such stories highlight Istanbulites' increasing mobility across local and international scales that facilitated the turn to smuggling. The coalition of

[87]Gingeras, *Heroin*, 75; A.A. Block, 'European drug traffic and traffickers between the wars: the policy of suppression and its consequences', *Journal of Social History*, 23 (1989), 325.
[88]*Cumhuriyet*, 14 Apr. 1933, 2.
[89]*Ibid.*, 2 Oct. 1933, 1; *ibid.*, 13 Nov. 1933, 1–2.
[90]*Afyon Türkiye'de ve Dünyada*, 30.
[91]*Cumhuriyet*, 14 Apr. 1933, 2.

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individuals behind the network of opiate refinement sites brought access to capital, equipment and materials as well as to foreign markets and places of refuge. Moreover, the politics of cosmopolitanism in the early years of the Republic of Turkey as the state closed off traditional sources of sustenance for many of the city's non-Muslims led some minority and foreign-national residents to engage in narcotics production and distribution. With the evolution of government policies to homogenize the population of Istanbul in the second half of the twentieth century, participation in the illicit narcotics trade also shifted. As a result, opiate refinement and smuggling in the city became the domain of mostly Muslim Turkish, Laz and Kurdish individuals whose backgrounds were embroiled in a new racial politics and spatiality of smuggling.[92]

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[92]M. Galeotti, 'Turkish organized crime: from tradition to business', in D. Siegel and H. van de Bunt (eds.), *Traditional Organized Crime in the Modern World* (New York, 2012), 53.

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