

# Notes from the Underground

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## The Historical Underground

### On Terrorism and Counterterrorism in Turkey

By: Khenda Mustafa, Student

At the core of the U.S.-Turkey partnership, for the past several decades, has been U.S. support of Turkey's so-called "war against terrorism." Representatives from both countries seize every opportunity to praise the other side's virtuous and noble counterterrorism efforts, and thus, U.S. assistance continues to flow into Ankara to fight against the Kurdistan Workers Party, known by its Kurdish acronym, PKK.

The PKK, who took up arms in 1983 to carve out an independent Kurdish state, but has since scaled down its demands to greater cultural and political rights for the Kurds within Turkey, is listed as a terrorist organization by both the European Union and the United States – the same list that, until 2008, included Nelson Mandela's name. This is in no small part due to Turkey's strategic geopolitical role in the Middle East and its membership in NATO, for the Kurds across the border in Iraq have traditionally been regarded by the West as victims of tyranny worthy of aid.

Since the international community has yet to develop an accepted comprehensive definition of the term, it is noteworthy that Article 1 of Turkey's Anti-Terror Law defines "terrorism" as "any kind of act done ... with the aim of changing the characteristics of the Republic as specified in the Constitution."

Taking the fascist character of the country's Constitution into consideration, one can infer that in Turkey any act of dissent or advocacy of minority rights is susceptible to classification as "terrorism" and severely punishable under the law. The enforcement of this law has been intensified in recent years, with police regularly raiding the homes and offices of Kurdish activists and politicians, rounding them up in prison for alleged ties to the PKK.

While organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have called for the abolition of the Anti-Terror Law, the United States has nevertheless stood firmly behind Turkey's brutal and repressive campaign against its Kurdish population.

It was Noam Chomsky who stated, "the terrorism they don't like is called 'terrorism' and the terrorism they do like, because they carry it out or their allies carry it out, is called 'counter-terrorism.'" In fact, the term "terrorism", derived from the French *terrorisme*, was originally used to refer specifically to state policies of terror. However, in recent years, we have witnessed a transformation of the definition from denoting a systematic use of violence as an instrument of governance to being synonymous with opposition to a given nation-state. In Turkey, in particular, it is a politically- and emotionally-charged word, used to incite fear and intolerance in the populace.

By branding efforts to crush national liberation and self-determination movements as counterterrorism, state governments cunningly generate the illusion that they are merely defending their sovereignty from violent thugs. By sustaining this facade of righteousness, Turkey has succeeded in rallying domestic and international support for its war against its Kurdish population. The PKK's armed insurgency continues to be a convenient scapegoat for Turkish government officials, who have often repeated that Turkey does not have a Kurdish problem, only a terrorism problem. What is omitted from the government's narrative, however, is the decades of oppression, forced assimilation, and

genocide that were imposed on the Kurds before the PKK took up arms against the state.

Ultimately, Turkey's propaganda machine, coupled with its overly vague Anti-Terror Law, are instruments of institutionalized racism, as they give the government the legal right to arrest Kurdish politicians and activists under the fallacious pretext of wiping out terrorism. Turkey is further emboldened, not only by the United States' continuing silence in regards to atrocities committed against the Kurds, but by its willingness to provide it weapons and military aid. Additionally, the international media continues to regurgitate the Turkish state's propaganda, leading to the utter criminalization of the Kurds' legitimate struggle for basic rights and freedoms. Only after Turkey abolishes its undemocratic Anti-Terror Law and, together with its western allies, decriminalizes the rightful demands of the Kurdish people, will a peaceful and political solution to Turkey's most fundamental and long-standing problem be possible.

So, who is the terrorist and who is the counter-terrorist: the entity that systematically massacres, persecutes and oppresses the people living within its borders, or the disenfranchised masses who eventually stand up and fight back? On the subject of political violence, Nelson Mandela famously stated that, "it is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle, and the oppressed is often left no recourse but to use methods that mirror those of the oppressor."

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The flag of the PKK, which has a red star inside a yellow circle with a thin green lining set in a red background.

## Historical Book Review: *The Jet Sex*

By: Isis Molina, Student

When flying in a typical airplane and being serviced by a flight attendant, many passengers are unaware of the rich history behind the formerly named airplane stewardess. In fact, a large amount of flight attendants are quite possibly oblivious to the iconic significance behind their employment. Victoria Vantoch, a journalist and historian, gathered years of research and interviews in her book: *The Jet Sex: Airline Stewardesses and the Making of an American Icon*.

The *Jet Sex* is a well put together recollection of the surprisingly important role that airline stewardesses played in the years following World War II, and most importantly, during the Cold War. Once a few wealthy businessmen trusted airplanes as a traveling method, the first eight women nurses were hired as stewardesses in 1930, and so their history began. The flight prices were high, ranging from \$260 to \$440, which was, at that time, "about half the price of a new automobile." Women were the preferable choice when it came to airline stewardesses because they were used as a tactic to prove a product was easy and safe to use.

What really motivated many women to strive for a career as stewardesses was the ever-present longing to travel and see new places. For many of them, becoming a much acclaimed airline stewardess was their ticket to freedom and independence. The position of a stewardess was highly requested, but the requisites for a chance to be up in the air were rigorous. To be considered a candidate, the applicant had to fit a specific set of physical characteristics that could seem a little severe or downright absurd. Specifically, "stewardess candidates had to be 21 to 28 years old, unmarried, 5'3"-5'6" inches tall, no more than 125 pounds, with good posture and an 'attractive appearance,' and

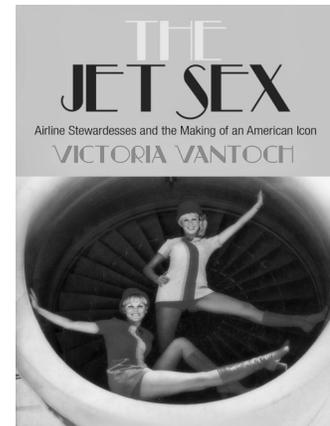
preferably with some college education." Though these requisites did change over time, the hopeful young women dreaming of getting paid to fly still had many obstacles to face before they became stewardesses.

Stewardesses were prominently known for their glamour. These women were trained to be elegant and classy, as they were representing America as a whole. The role of the stewardess triggered more of the well-known rivalry with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, more specifically, after the launching of the Sputnik satellite. At one point, the Soviet Union and America were also competing via airlines and their stewardesses. A lot was said about the obvious contrast between a Soviet stewardess and an American one. While the typical American stewardess was well pressed, educated, timid and beautiful, the typical Soviet stewardess was a hard-working woman too busy to care about dieting or makeup products. In 1968, the cover of *Life* magazine printed a "Cold War hug" between an American stewardess working for Pan Am airlines, and a Soviet stewardess working for Aeroflot. In spite of the famous photograph, there was no amiability to follow between the two different images.

Racism was also an issue when it came to creating stewardesses in America. Many African-American women fought for their right to have the same chance of flying as Caucasian females. In fact, only after many lawsuits and civil rights cases was Carol Ruth Taylor given a position, becoming "the first black stewardess for a regional airline" in December 1958. Many other brave women, such as Patricia Banks and Marlene White, attempted to break the racial barrier that got in the way of their dreams of flying, and their efforts paved the way for the more inclusive system we have today.

As the decades passed, so did the image of the airline stewardess. They went from "future stay-at-home wives" to "glamorous career girls" to "in-flight strippers." The industry, as it continues doing today, pushed to sell the image of the stewardess as nothing but a sex object. It was not until the feminist movement kicked in that stewardesses went back to their usual selves. They were seen "as well-respected professionals, they enjoyed public prestige and came to see themselves as career women, worthy of respect."

As the years went by, the stewardess trend subsided, and in most cases, was completely forgotten. All that remains of the famous American Icon is flight attendants. When Vantoch interviewed some former stewardesses, many of them claimed to miss flying, as well as the thrill of the stewardess life. To them, being a stewardess was one of the highest privileges. They cherished their position, they loved their job, and they will never forget it.



## Random Rants

By: Bradley J Borougerdi, Faculty

Reading Khenda's excellent expose on terrorism in Turkey for this edition of *Notes from the Underground* got me thinking about terrorism and its perception in our society. Since we had this very small space available where no worthy article could actually fit, I thought I would take the time to pose a few thought-provoking questions on this controversial subject.

What is terrorism? For our generation, the word oftentimes evokes images of turban clad, brown skin, bearded-men strapped with bombs who are willing to die for some radical fundamental idea that we as Americans cannot

begin to understand, but in fact the act of terrorism has a long history in this country, and none really fit this perception. One could argue that patriots in America during the Revolutionary War committed terrorism on the loyalist population in America that didn't want to support a rebellion against the crown when they tarred and feathered them. The Klu Klux Klan certainly terrorized Black Americans during the Jim Crow Era in an attempt to get them to stay away from the polling booth as well.

But terrorism has not always been used for evil purposes. For example, John Brown's raid on

Harpers Ferry in Virginia in 1859, was designed to use force to get America to liberate slaves, which most today would argue in was a noble cause. So, this brings me to the questions at hand: do people have the right to perpetrate violent acts based on conscience? Does a noble end justify bloody means? Is there a difference between people who use violence to accomplish good versus people who use it to accomplish evil? Can we attempt to galvanize public opinion with violence to force political and social change? Why or why not? I hope pondering these questions will get you to think more complexly about this seemingly contradictory word.

## Historical Biography: Swarmi Vivekananda

By: Caleb Hinojos, Student

Born into a wealthy Bengali family as Narendra Nath Datta, Swarmi Vivekananda's life began on January 12, 1863. As a young boy, he took interest in a variety of subjects, including philosophy, art, religion, and history. Although not known for his academic achievements, Swarmi was said to have been quite a ravenous reader. This passion led him to read some of the most notable Hindu scriptures, such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas*, among others. He studied in schools from 1871-1884 and finally completed his bachelor's degree from the now named Scottish Church College in Calcutta.

While at university, Swarmi met a man named Ramakrishna, who was a fascinating character with an exceptionally high reputation among his disciples. Over the next few years, Swarmi visited this scholar frequently, oftentimes asking him deep questions about philosophy and the meaning of life on his search for the ever-expanding truth of the universe. Though he did not agree with or condone Ramakrishna's teachings of life and religion initially, over time he began to make more sense of it all. Eventually, he came to see that "religion could be given."

In 1884, the future seemed to be quite open for Swarmi. Little did he know that, within the next two years, his father would die unexpectedly, leaving the family bankrupt and on the verge of

poverty. Faced with such hard times, Swarmi decided to accept Ramakrishna as his guru (religious guide or spiritual teacher) in pursuit of God and the universal truth. Another devastating blow occurred in 1885, when his guru died of throat cancer. These events shaped him in ways that would have a lasting affect on his personality.

After letting bills accumulate at the Cossipore Math (monastery,) Swarmi and his fellow monks decided that it was time to move elsewhere, so they relocated to the city of Baranagar. After a few years of hard work getting the monastery up and running, he left it to become a Parivrājaka (wandering Hindu monk). With nothing but a kamandalu (water pot), staff and his two favorite books, Swarmi set out to travel throughout India. He traveled for five years, visiting many people from all walks of life and learning a great deal about different religions, cultures and people within the caste system. While in Madurai he met a man named Bhaskara Sethupathi who eventually become his disciple and helped sponsor Swarmi's visit to the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893 as a representative of India and Hinduism.

Swarmi's speech at this international world event was so powerful that he received a two-minute standing ovation when he finished. This no doubt helped jumpstart his international

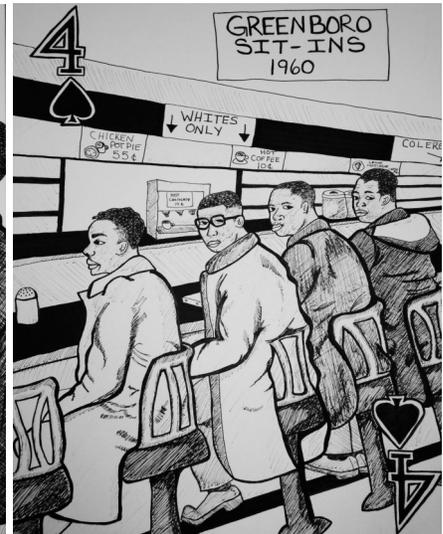
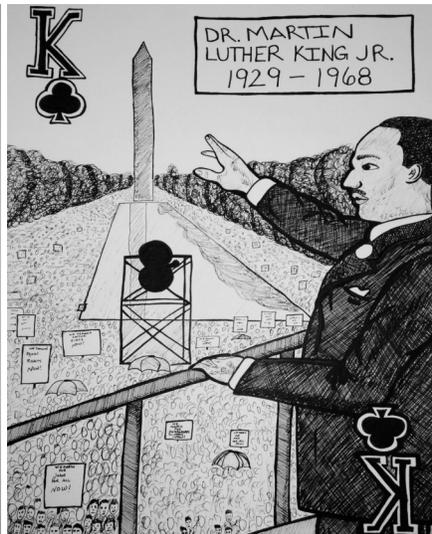
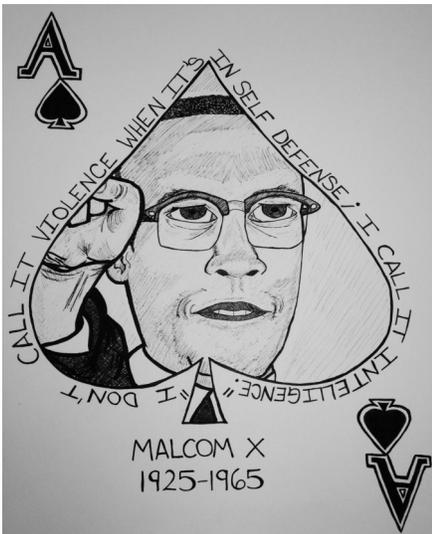
lecturing career, which became so successful that he was offered full-time positions at both Harvard and Columbia, both of which he declined. He finally returned to India in 1901, where he continued teaching how people of the world need to come together. Equalizing the playing field for everyone would allow the masses to be at harmony with each other as opposed to a few people at the top controlling everything.

Regrettably, Swarmi died on July 4, 1902. The cause of death is officially listed as a ruptured blood vessels in his brain, but it is said that he achieved a state of Mahasamadhi (the art of consciously leaving the body.) Indeed, according to his disciples, the rupture occurred because his magnificent soul pierced the crown of his head. His teachings on yoga have traveled all around the world, and his work in the Hindu religion transformed it into globally-recognized theology.



## Historical Art

By: Jennifer Aleman, Student





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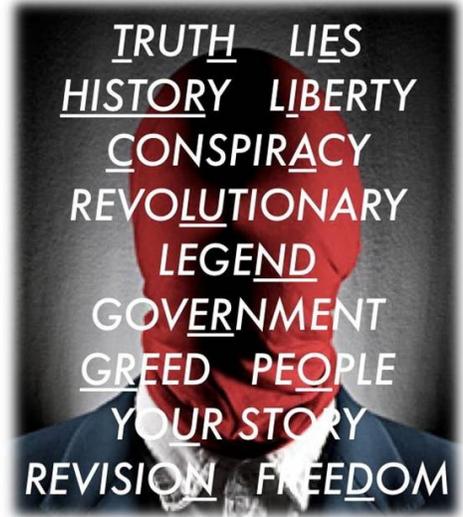
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**“HISTORY IS OUR WEAPON OF CHOICE”**



Join Us: Fridays/2:00pm/ESEE 1222

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## Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

First and foremost, allow us to apologize for our editorial mishap in the spelling of a contributor's last name in our November issue. Megan Heck not *Megan Hick*, wrote an informative article on the life and times of the Grimke Sisters and their involvement in the abolitionist movement. It was a solid read and we hope it was not diminished by our oversight. We have taken proper action against the editor at fault (BRAD!) and have placed him on historical leave. After thorough reflection for his actions and completion of *THE GAUNTLET*, Mr. Borougerdi may return to his privileged duty as Mr. Salas' assistant!

Back to the business at hand! This edition is composed of articles that are diverse and interesting. Some of them have actually been on backlog for a while, just waiting to be published. The issue of terrorism obviously takes center stage in this issue, but religion and gender figure prominently as well. This semester has seen more student written articles than ever before, and we still have a few awaiting publication. This means you can expect to see *Notes* clandestinely distributed throughout campus for at least another semester. Thanks to funding from Mike Cinatl and the History Department, we hope this project will continue for much longer, but it requires you all to keep reading and others to keep writing. We truly believe in this project and think it is an excellent way to get students prepared for the publishing world. We spend a great deal of time editing these articles, sending them back and forth as correction need to be made. This helps improve your writing and increases valuable skills that we hope will stick with you for life.

It also needs to be stated that we are in the process of rolling out our official website that will include every edition every published! Mike Cinatl has graciously offered to help defray the costs of this site, so as soon as all the logistics are in place you can expect to have yet another outlet through which to showcase your work if you decide to write. Please consider contributing. We want to know your thoughts, and want to display your work, whether faculty, student, or administrator. Some faculty have been using *Notes* in their classrooms as a teaching tool, and we can help you with that if you are interested. We have all the issues to date in PDF format. Thanks again for reading, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts on our project.

~ Bradley J Borougerdi, Eric Salas and Greg Kosci