

Caterina Bruno- The Turkey that I like- Turkey, Unesco.

Izmir is an ancient city on the Aegean coast, the first settlement in the city (formerly called Smirne) dates back to the 3rd millennium BC. When we arrive at the airport the city seems everything except ancient: many different faces, kids coming back from school, couples kissing, dogs, cats, very short skirts, people drinking, smoking, laughing... A continuous chaos that from an Italian migrated I missed a little bit .

Met the guys who would host us we followed them home. To get to the house where I would be for 3 days we took first the metro and then the boat (Izmir in fact has a similar shape to the letter C and to pass from one part of the gulf to the other the fastest method is the boat). Arriving home with my host sister Dafne we started to eat with the whole family a typical dish of Turkish meat accompanied by fresh tomatoes, olives and yogurt.

Neither parent knew a word of English but despite this we were talking (with the help of dafne slapping, google and big hand gestures) for hours and hours. They told me about the typical Turkish dances different all over the country, we listened to old Italian music that they knew and most importantly they told me the story of Ataturk: the Turkish revolutionary who in 1923 liberated Turkey from tyranny turning it into a republic, the hero of Izmir. They made me listen to the march dedicated to him and in that moment I realized what Ataturk means for those people. He is a symbol of hope and democracy. It was the first time I realized the situation in Turkish politics. A policy at the head of which there is a tyrant, a man who has imprisoned hundreds of people, who is at the head of the entire media system of the country and who has had no problem imprisoning or killing journalists or members of other parties.

Before Izmir we were in Istanbul for a couple of days and there the atmosphere is completely different. Izmir is hated by the president because she is considered one of the least Islamic and least pro-government places in the country. It's something you can see right away. In the city every house, shop, supermarket, school or hairdresser hangs a picture of Ataturk. There's a different look. An air of rebellion.

On the second day we woke up at 6am, had breakfast with tea, tomatoes, olive oil and cheese and left home to go to school. The boat ride that morning is perhaps my best memory of the trip. The sun was rising, the sea was calm and off the coast you could see dozens of small fishing boats. In the morning at school we spoke to the Turkish children of Hygge, Lego and Danish traditions.

Everything was normal, just like the day before. The only difference is that that morning Turkish troops had invaded Syria and started a war against the Kurds. An offensive called the "source of peace" that once again demonstrates the hypocrisy of the powerful and the terrible truth that history repeats itself in the mechanisms. A story of winners and losers, oppressors and oppressed. The case involving Turkey and Rojava is just another example. The reason for this is the genocidal anger and the desire for unchallenged power of a dictator who aims to conquer new territories and to suppress all forms of diversity at the cost of thousands of human lives. It is surprising to think of how close we are geographically to the places of war and at the same time to how far the Western world is and wants to be away from that kind of reality. The most absurd thing is that that day, learning the news from my facebook home (occupied only by articles regurgitating the topic) I watched the news for hours along with my host dad and not a word or a news story was leaked. I personally experienced what censored means when the news broadcast a twenty-minute service starring the winner of a famous talent show and at 1000 km a war was fought of which the Turks know little or nothing.

The next night was our last night with the family. Me, Leah and Maya went for a tea with our friends. Sitting in a small and cozy café we talked about school and education and after my two Danish friends had

explained the perfect Danish school system The Turkish boys told us that there was a time In which Turkish public schools functioned perfectly but that for a few years everything has changed.

From that moment for about an hour, they began to list all the differences that have occurred since Erdogan came to power, they spoke very fast, they whispered and never mentioned the president's name. Oguz, a 17-year-old boy, even told us about when after the 2016 coup, among the hundreds of arrests was a friend of him, a young 19-year-old held in prison and tortured for two months.

This experience has left me so much. Some strong international relations and also a new perspective from which to see what surrounds me. That's the Turkey that I like, the Turkey of Ataturk, a country that wants to change.

I just want to end by saying that I hope to see my friends again soon. Maybe in a free and incensed Turkey.



