

Activities - The Making of Modern Turkey Seminars 2007-2008

Third Saturday of each month from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Presented in association with Bogazici University

The 1908 Young Turk Revolution and the Second Constitution.

● **October 20, 2007** - Prof. Zafer Toprak

Constitutional Monarchy and the Tragedy of the Committee of Union and Progress

Because of their actions in the period from 1908 to 1918, the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress were tried three times after they fell from power. They were first interrogated after World War I in the Fifth Section of the Ottoman Parliament; in April 1919, they testified before a Court Martial and in the summer of 1926, following the Izmir assassination attempt, they were finally brought before Revolutionary Tribunals in Izmir and Ankara. This trial duration constituted perhaps the longest and most extensive political lawsuit in Turkish history. An era that articulated the transition from empire to nation-state, a generation who lived this era, and a political group who symbolized that generation, all served as a laboratory for the Republic. In fact, this period of interrogation, which encompassed the fall of the Ottoman State and birth pains of a new nation-state, signed the tragedy of the Unionists, a generation who had closed an era to usher in a new one.

● **November 17, 2007** - Taner Timur

An Inquiry into the Place of the Second Constitution in Recent Turkish History

The seminar investigates the Young Turks' 1908 "Proclamation of Liberty" for the Ottoman Empire and the contributions it brought to international conjuncture, intellectual life, and the foundations of social life. Other areas of inquiry include whether the movement created a break in recent Turkish history and whether it can be considered an actual 'revolution.'

● **December 15, 2007** - Assoc. Prof. Nadir Ozbek

War and Social Mobilization: Civic Society and Public Space under the Second Constitution

This seminar examines state-society relations during the second constitutional period from the standpoint of Ottoman charities. Founded after the Young Turk Revolution, the Ottoman Association of the Red Crescent, the Ottoman Navy Fund and the National Defense League were important instruments of the Young Turks' political activities. In other words, the Young Turks shaped the existing 'political public space' according to their own ideological framework. By focusing on the above-mentioned charities, the lecture effectively reveals state-society relations and the boundaries of the 'political public space' during the late Ottoman period.

● **January 19, 2008** - Sacit Kutlu

Philosophical Currents during the Second Constitutional Period

Although the re-institution of the Constitution had unleashed a feeling of great intellectual freedom and promoted an atmosphere conducive to lively discussion, schools of thought during this period maintained the intellectual superficiality that had characterized them as well during the Tanzimat. In Ottoman society, where philosophy held no great significance and there was no tradition of research and experimentation, existing philosophical currents were far from representing the original thoughts of intellectuals or scholars. The task of conveying or translating Western ideas fell to newspapers and magazines. The journalists, writers or bureaucrats who had assimilated these ideas then introduced them to Ottoman society. These Ottoman intellectuals, who were all familiar to varying degrees with Islamist, Westernist, Ottomanist or Turkist trends, imported - as ready-made formulas from the West and without much scrutiny - certain philosophical currents that had favorably impressed them and to which they became passionately committed, thus falling into the trap of embracing a different kind of fanaticism while attempting to escape religious dogma.

● **February 16, 2008** - Dr. Fuat Dunder

1908 Diyarbakir, Ziya Gokalp and the Definition of Kurdism as an Issue

The seminar focuses on the upheaval that the 1908 Revolution brought about in Diyarbakir and its impact on the emergence of the "Kurdish Issue." We will hear from the *Şaki İbrahim Destanı* [The Epic of the Brigand İbrahim] how Ziya Gokalp, who had organized the first resistance against the dominance in that region of İbrahim Pasha Milli - Abdulhamid's privileged "Kurdish Sword" - was able to bring down this supremacy with the 1908 Revolution. Following the reading, there will be a discussion of Gokalp's account of the Kurdish issue through the writings he published in the magazine *Peyman*, and of the part this played in shaping the Kurdish policy adopted by the Unionists.

● **March 15, 2008** - Assist. Prof. Yavuz Selim

Karakisla The 1908 Strikes

When the decree reinstating the Constitution appeared in the papers on July 24, 1908, a wave of demonstrations and strikes broke out all over the Ottoman Empire. Only two weeks after the proclamation of the Constitution, the Committee of Union and Progress - whose operations in Rumelia had triggered the re-establishment of the 1876 Constitution - was forced to broadcast an announcement entreating the Ottoman people to stop all demonstrations of joy and return to their jobs and occupations without further delay. However, the wave of demonstrations and strikes grew still further in scope and continued, unremitting, until 1909. In discussing the topic, the seminar takes as its starting point the temporary law on the right to strike (*Tatil-i Eşgal Kanun-i Muvakkati*), which the Ottoman government, wary that the strike wave might grow still further, was forced to pass on October 10, 1908, only two months after the "Proclamation of Freedom" (reinstitution of the Constitution) and before the Ottoman Parliament had even managed to hold its first session.

● **April 19, 2008** - Prof. Sina Akşin

Why did Europe's leading nations dislike the Committee of Union and Progress?

"There are bound to be so many who will immediately object to this question. In the March 31 incident, Germany stood by the Committee of Union and Progress. Later, when the Unionists came to power, they accepted the Ottoman State as their ally during World War I. Nevertheless, it can be said that Germany didn't really like the Committee of Union and Progress 'all that much.' The main topic of the seminar will be of course why Europe's leading nations disliked the Unionists."

● **May 24, 2008** - Assist. Prof. Ahmet Kuyas

Winds of War in Istanbul

Despite Mustafa Kemal's claim in his *Nutuk* - a claim that Ahmet Emin Yalman reiterated in his *Turkey in the World War* - it is not true that Turkey entered World War I under the coercion of a small minority group. The great majority of Ottomans, although perhaps for different reasons, were in favor of the war that began in the summer of 1914. A number of factors - the fear that Russia inspired, the wish to put an end to the capitulations, the desire to avenge the Balkan Wars, and Nationalist (Turanci) expansionist dreams - made this war appear a good option. In effect, even when Turkey still remained neutral, plans were being made with Bulgaria to attack Greece. The lecture focuses on how this hostile atmosphere developed and on various of its aspects.