

## A bibliography of armistice era Istanbul, 1918–1923

Daniel-Joseph MacArthur-Seal & Gizem Tongo | British Institute at Ankara

Turkey is part way through a spate of centenaries marking critical events in the history of the country, some more forgotten than others. The armistice of Mudros, signed on 30 October 1918, ended Ottoman belligerence in what had been a calamitous four-year war. On 13 November 1918 the Allied fleet entered Istanbul, while on 16 March 1920 the Allies officially occupied the city, imposing martial law and strengthening their grip on the Ottoman administration. The armistice was superseded by the Treaty of Sevres, signed by Ottoman and Allied representatives on 10 August 1920, which brought international control to the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, and divided much of the remaining Ottoman territories into zones of influence or direct control, as in the case of Greek-occupied Thrace and Izmir. The Turkey Grand National Assembly, convened in Ankara on 23 April 1920 to resist what they saw as an unjust peace, signed treaties with Russia on 16 March 1921 and France on 20 October 1921, and achieved military victories over the Greek army, halting their push into Anatolia on 13 September 1921, before launching an offensive beginning on 26 August 1922 that resulted in the entry of Turkish forces into Izmir on 9 September 1922. After months of negotiations, the Allies were compelled to sign a new peace treaty at Lausanne on 24 July 1923, followed by the departure of the last Allied forces from Istanbul on 6 October and the creation of the Republic of Turkey on 29 October.

In Turkey, understanding of these events is framed by the history of the War of Independence (1919–1923), about which a literature of staggering size and detail has accumulated. The history of Istanbul during the same period, however, has at best been seen as the sidenote ('outside the stage' as the novelist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar described it in 1950) to this focus on Anatolia and the leadership of Mustafa Kemal or, at worst, repressed in memory, a point of collective national amnesia.

One characteristic of the historiography of Istanbul during this period has been the enormous influence exerted by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's 1927 *Speech (Nutuk)*. Constituting the main source for the history of the years between 1919 and 1927, *Nutuk* did not attempt to render Istanbul a protagonist in itself; its occupation is mentioned only in passing. After the foundation the Turkish Historical Association in 1931, Istanbul's history in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, in fact the final decades of the Ottoman Empire in general, remained a marginal issue for the Association's journal *Belleten*, as shown by Veronika Hager. Those few historians who approached the history of Istanbul during the armistice period pointed to the 'alliance'

of some sections of the population with the occupying forces as among the key factors why the city was neglected.

While the occupation went largely neglected in the history writing of the early Republican period, a large number of literary works took inspiration from the experiences, lived or imagined, of the inhabitants of the occupied city. The subject attracted the attention of some of the most prominent writers of the early Republican era, namely Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Mithat Cemal Kuntay, Halide Edib Adıvar, Peyami Safa and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar. In contrast to the new Turkey being constructed in Anatolia, Istanbul was portrayed as a city of decadence, collaboration and corruption. Many of the themes of these works would go on to define the research agendas of historians studying the period.

Until 1989, the inaccessibility of archival sources related to the final decade of the Ottoman Empire (1914–1922) had prevented serious scholarly research on this period in Turkey. Indeed, until the 1992 edited volume *Istanbul 1914–1923*, prepared by Stéphane Yerasimos, and most especially the 1993 book *İşgal Altında İstanbul, 1918–1923* by Nur Bilge Criss (later published in English) there had been little research done on Istanbul during the armistice period. From ideological and methodological perspectives, since Yerasimos' and Criss' landmark works, the scholarship has made a significant shift away from nationalist historical narratives. This is partly due to the growing accessibility of archival resources (either physical or digital) and partly a reflection of broader tendencies in late Ottoman history and historiography.

Much promising work has been done on the city's social history during these years, a subject of neglect in previous works focused on the confrontation between Allied imperialist and Turkish nationalist cadres. The housing situation in the overcrowded city, strained by the arrival of refugees and the requisitioning of dwellings and public buildings by the Allied forces, has been addressed by Bilge Ar and Safiye Kıranlar. Büşra Karataşer, Güldane Gündüzöz and Necati Çavdar have examined the supply of food and coal to the city, which was at times critically pressured by the after-effects of wartime blockade and the loss of access to supplies in Anatolia and southern Russia with the victories of the nationalist and Bolshevik movements. Labour organisation and industrial relations during a period of heightened strike action have been explored by Erol Ülker, who, along with Stefo Benlisoy, Paul Dumont, Hamit Erdem and others, has written on socialist and communist political movements that had a brief foothold in the city.

The significance of the armistice period to the development of visual art, drama in film and theatre, and music, both in Turkey and the wider world, is still yet to be

grasped fully, but a few works have recently pointed the way. Studies on the popularity of entertainment and other cultural venues have been published recently by Carol Woodall, Vladimir Alexandrov, Charles King and Daniel-Joseph MacArthur-Seal, while Gizem Tongo has written on the unique fine-arts scene found during these years.

Recent works have contributed more nuanced understandings of the positionality and diversity of experiences and views among Istanbul's Armenian and Greek communities, thanks to important contributions by Dimitris Kamouzis, Lerna Ekmekcioğlu and Ari Şekeryan. In addition to these long-resident communities, the population of Istanbul was supplemented during the period by the arrival of large numbers of refugees, including Armenian and Greek Christians from war-torn Anatolia and the Caucasus, Muslims from Greek-occupied Thrace and Rumelia, and, most significantly, arrivals from the southern provinces of the Russian empire as the White Army was defeated by Bolshevik forces. White-Russian refugees, particularly the women, were the subject of significant interest from public commentators at the time and have also been investigated as subjects of historical research, by the likes of Bilge Ar, Bülent Bakar and others.

There is also a burgeoning literature on the relationship between the occupation and Istanbul women. Elif Mahir Metinsoy has written on the expansion of women's roles in fashion and the intellectual discussion that accompanied this, covering also the issues of women's political activism and civic engagement in Istanbul society, while Gökçen Beyinli's focus on gendered power relations in the history of post-war Istanbul, particularly in discussions on 'moral decay' and 'corruption', has provided crucial context. Zafer Toprak has examined issues of prostitution and women's participation in social and cultural life across several recent articles and books that devote major sections to the armistice period. While most scholarship on women's experiences has tended to privilege the actions of Muslim and Turkish women, overlooking the activities of other groups, Lerna Ekmekcioğlu has offered an in-depth study of Armenian feminists and their civil-society organisations, most especially through political discussions in the feminist periodical *Hay Gin (Armenian Woman)*, published between 1919 and 1933.

Part of the reason for this growth in interest in a variety of fields is the realisation by historians of the extent of resources available. Already, a large array of archives for the late Ottoman period is available to researchers, with records from a far larger number of departments of state than are accessible for the study of early Republican Istanbul, given that the ministries of health, interior and security, among others, remain closed to researchers. In addition, extensive archives concerning the occupied city were maintained by the occupying powers. Researchers can consult the records of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Centre des

Archives diplomatiques in Nantes and La Courneuve, and Corps d'occupation de Constantinople at the Service historique de la Défense in Vincennes, those of the British Foreign and War Offices at the National Archives in Kew and Italian diplomatic and military records at the Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri and Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito in Rome. Thanks to their status as Allies and interests in Ottoman lands, both Greece and the United States maintained large High Commissions in Constantinople, the records of which can be read at the Genika Archaia tou Kratous in Athens and the National Archives and Record Administration in College Park, Maryland, respectively.

This multinational diplomatic and military presence in the city also led to the generation of large numbers of private papers by servicemen and officials. Dozens of individual soldiers' accounts of Istanbul can be read at the Imperial War Museum, the King's College London Liddle Hart Centre for Military Archives and the National Army Museum, as well as at local archives in the UK. Prominent individuals have also left collections, such as British High Commissioner Admiral John de Robeck (Churchill College Archives Centre, Cambridge) and American High Commissioner Admiral Mark Bristol (Library of Congress).

With such abundance come challenges, however, namely the geographic dispersal and linguistic diversity of archival documents. Digitisation promises to overcome some of these logistical hurdles, but there remain limits. Though the Ottoman archives are digitised, they are restricted to researchers working from abroad, while digitisation of the National Archives in the UK has not yet reached relevant folders beyond cabinet-level decision-making sessions about the fate of Istanbul. French, Italian and Greek military and diplomatic records on the city are also unavailable online. Turkish publishers have made some archival materials accessible in the country through the reproduction of important collections for the period, most notably the minutes of the weekly high commissioners' meetings, transcribed and collected by Sinan Kuneralp. Given the richness of documentation available, such efforts can only represent a small fraction of materials for the study of the occupied city.

It is with this in mind that we have compiled an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources for the city, soon to be published in interactive form online and as an e-publication. The bibliography contains over 1,400 entries, from Turkish and international archives, to the multilingual newspapers of Istanbul in the period, to memoirs and more recent scholarly articles and monographs on the city. As interest in the armistice era increases, we hope that this resource proves useful to academics, students and the wider public and will support the more comprehensive study of this multifaceted city during a critical and complex period in its history.