

## ANGLO-TURKISH RELATIONS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Pioneering a new research agenda on the history of UK-Turkey relations, the British Institute at Ankara introduced this strategic research initiative in 2015 in combination with the undertaking of a major research project, entitled *Turkey and Britain 1914–1952: From Enemies to Allies*, that ran until 2019. This strategic research initiative aims to build on this project in order to create an active and sustainable network of scholars from Turkey, the UK and other countries that will promote diverse approaches to the study of the early Turkish Republic, especially its foreign policy, its relationship with Britain and its place in the world order. Research and funding administered under this initiative will support diversity and collaboration across different historiographic traditions (for example, diplomatic and military history, oral history and microhistory) with the aim of unearthing and accessing a full range of archival and other source material in the UK, Turkey and elsewhere. The objective is to promote the exploration of new themes significant for the understanding of bilateral relations in the past, as well as their development in the present and future.

doi:10.18866/biaa2022.12

### Displaying the Occupied City: Istanbul 1918–1923

Daniel-Joseph MacArthur-Seal | British Institute at Ankara

The exhibition *Occupied City: Politics and Daily Life in Istanbul, 1918–1923*, which I am co-curating with 2018–2020 postdoctoral fellow Gizem Tongo, opens at the Istanbul Research Institute on 10 January 2023. It represents the first major exhibition to tackle directly this long-neglected period in Istanbul’s history, during which British, French, and Italian armies and navies were present in the city and exerted control and influence over its governance.

The exhibition builds on my long-standing research interest in the occupied city, beginning with my doctoral thesis, published last year as *Britain’s Levantine Empire, 1914–1923*. This summer, after a two-year delay due to Covid, the conference ‘Occupied Istanbul: Urban Politics, Culture, and Society, 1918–1923’ was held at Salt Galata and Boğaziçi University. A joint effort of Boğaziçi University Department of History, the British Institute at Ankara, the American Research Institute in Turkey, the Institut Français des Études Anatoliennes and Salt Research, the conference brought together some 30 speakers from universities in Turkey, Britain, France, the United States and further afield. They shared ongoing research on topics as diverse as cinema, policing, urban planning, music, commerce, religion, labour and fashion. Preparations are now being made for an edited volume based on papers presented at the conference.

More recently, the BIAA published *A Bibliography of Armistice-Era Istanbul*, prepared by Gizem Tongo and myself, which provides sources for the study of the city during its occupation, many of which are featured in the exhibition. The

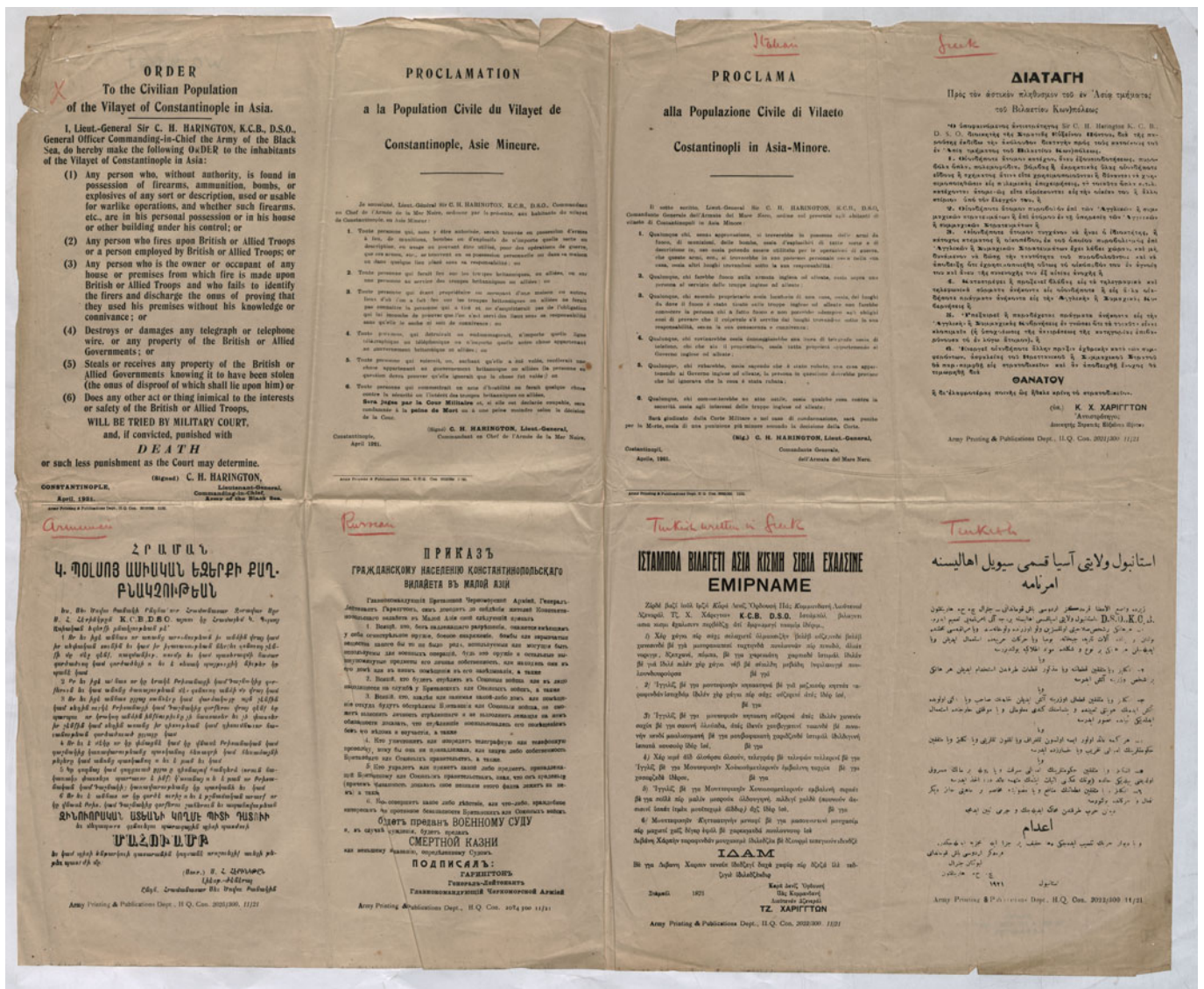
bibliography stands at more than 1,400 items, in languages including Turkish, Armenian, Greek, Ladino, Arabic, French, Italian, English and Russian. It spans state archives, memoirs, newspapers and journals produced at the time, as well as the growing number of scholarly articles and books written on the city in the period. The scale of archival sources produced by the multinational authorities and multiple communities present in the city during these years was unprecedented, while restrictions on access to archives for the study of post-1923 Istanbul make this period the most richly documented in the history of the city.

In each endeavour, we have aimed to represent the plurality of images and voices that characterised Istanbul at a time when the city’s already multicultural population was supplemented not only by soldiers from the Allied nations and their colonies who effected the occupation, but by prisoners, labourers and refugees who arrived in Istanbul from Thrace, the Balkans, Anatolia, the Caucasus, Ukraine and southern Russia as a result of multiple conflicts which continued well beyond the 1918 armistices. Gathering such diverse sources has required the collaboration of numerous scholars with expertise in different local and global archives.

The exhibition is based around the rich photographic collection of the Istanbul Research Institute, which captures key features of the occupied city: in one photograph taken from an Allied aircraft, multiple nations’ warships can be seen anchored at the mouth of the Golden Horn; in another,

Allied soldiers sit drinking beer at one of the city's nearby beaches, evidence of a penchant for drinking that led to numerous incidents between servicemen and civilians in the city. Further photos show French barracks in requisitioned buildings and British military camps in the vicinity of Maslak, then well beyond the urban periphery; soldiers marching through the city streets and marines parading in the open artillery ground that today forms the hotel district by Taksim Square; and Allied officers standing alongside recruits to the Ottoman police force, which they had taken charge of supervising early in the occupation. These photos are contextualised with information from documents from British, French and Ottoman state archives, including agendas of the weekly meetings of the Allied High Commissioners, and missives issued to the Ottoman government on the occasion of the city's official occupation on 16 March 1920.

These photos and documents are supplemented with a variety of additional materials that speak to social developments of the time. Cartoons satirised the impact of high prices that resulted from years of high inflation, while the memoranda of charity organisations detailed their efforts to mitigate the hardships faced by the city's local and refugee populations. The exhibition features important documents produced by the latter, such as the guidebook *Le Russe à Constantinople*, which provided information on the city's transport network, restaurants, monuments, hotels and embassies for the tens of thousands of refugees who arrived in the Ottoman Empire fleeing the Russian revolution and civil war. In addition, we have selected excerpts from sociological investigations such as Police Academy head Mustafa Galib's *Life of Prostitutes*, which details statistics and regulations related to prostitution and speculates as to the reasons for and consequences of women selling sex in the



Proclamation by General Charles Harrington, Commanding Allied Forces in Turkey, to the population of Istanbul, April 1921 (UK National Archives).



city, and the wide-ranging survey *Constantinople To-Day*, produced by a team of researchers connected with Robert College and the American Red Cross. Alongside these stand reports on the city's orphans and refugees written by the city's Greek and Armenian authorities and the Turkish Red Crescent.

The period also witnessed significant cultural activities, and the exhibition includes musical scores by the likes of Ali Rıfat Çağatay, who composed the music that accompanied the new national anthem selected by the Grand National Assembly in Ankara until its replacement by the familiar tune of Osman Zeki Üngör in 1930. There is also a concert programme for the Constantinople Philharmonic Orchestra led by Constantinos Floros, who like many of the city's Greek population later moved to Greece, where he taught at the Macedonian Conservatory in Thessaloniki. Documents, drawings and publications detail archaeological excavations carried out with French and Ottoman participation in Bakırköy and in the grounds of Topkapı palace. Evidence of the revived art world of the period is provided by paintings featured in reports from multiple communal exhibitions held by Turkish, Armenian and Russian artists.

Spread throughout the exhibition are cuttings from the city's multilingual press of Armenian, Greek, Turkish, English and French journals and newspapers, which reflect the dynamism of publishing in Istanbul at the time despite the continued intrusion of censorship. Significant memoirs from the period are also drawn upon. These include those of refugee musicians such as Yuri Morfessi and Alexander Vertinsky, who ran clubs which entertained an audience of soldiers and civilians before they departed for Europe; İ. Hakkı Sunata, who returned from the frontline to complete his studies at the Darülfünun, as the university was rocked by strikes and protests; Mary Mills Patrick, who observed city

life while running the Constantinople School for Girls; and Harold Armstrong, a British prisoner of war turned military attaché, involved in efforts to disarm the Ottoman army and suppress brigandage in the rural areas beyond the city suburbs of Beykoz, Üsküdar and Kadıköy.

As Turkey celebrates the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, declared weeks after the departure of foreign forces from Istanbul, the question of the city and its residents' place in the history of the period deserves re-examination. Encouragingly, an increasing number of scholars are investigating developments in Istanbul, employing new sources and approaches in collaborative projects that acknowledge and reflect the complexity of the city during these years. I hope that the exhibition, conference and bibliography contribute to this process and provide tools for future scholars.



A milliner employing Russian refugees (Harvard Law School Library).



Armoured cars parading at Talimhane, Istanbul (Istanbul Research Institute).