

NEWS BULLETIN

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GEZI PARK IS NOW EVERYWHERE - PROTESTERS DEBATING FUTURE OF THE MOVEMENT

In Turkey, the resistance started in the Gezi-Park in Istanbul. After the violent police attack on the emptied the Taksim Square, protests continued some days in form of demonstrations.

Now, the protesters are debating the future of the movement. For that purpose, they decentralized the protest. They are uniting every evening in every local park of the city, sometimes uniting some 3 thousand people. The demonstrators discuss above all questions of organisation.

The number of these meeting parks in Istanbul alone rose to 18. Other cities follow the example as well.

The economic crisis Turkey is actually heading to and that already shows itself in unstable exchange rates, poses a new momentum for the resistance as well.

Balance of the protest

Turkish Doctors Association declared the results of the police violence, based on people treated in hospitals. According to the report presented, during the uprising 4 people died, 60 were injured heavily and 7832 persons lightly. The association points out that these are only the official treatment numbers.

Declaration of the Ergenekon prisoners on the protests

Among them the Chairman of Workers' Party, Dogu Perincek, the prisoners of the Ergenekon case made a declaration on the protests. The prisoners, among them high level retired officers of the army, journalists, university profesors, made the following statement:

“1. We are greeting our people that has stood up from Edirne to Kars with the Turkish flag in the hand to construct an independent, free and modern Turkey.

2. We are supporting the fight against the interference in everyones private life, fighting for more democracy, justice and human rights.

3. We are very worried about attempts to polarize different sections of our society and intents to position our armed forces against the people. Our armed forces have been born in the middle of our people and are based on the values of our War of Liberation.

The people's movement is uniting our nation and country. We are looking to the future with hope and confidence.

We declare this to the Turkish Nation with all our respect.”

The judicial case of Ergenekon that is going on for more than 5 years already is expected to end soon. This case poses an important part of the attack against the republic and will be treated in a separated news bulletin soon.

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THE TAKSIM SQUARE REPRESENTS THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

The Taksim Square is essentially a project of the young Turkish Republic founded 90 years ago. It is the first example of reorganizing the metropolises in a contemporary way, with a modern understanding.

The Taksim Square, which was a holistic project consists of two main elements:

- The Statue of the Republic,
- The layout of the Square.



The Basic Element the Whole Square Rests on: The Monument of the Republic

The cadres who proclaimed the Republic considered it a civilization project to ornament squares with statues.

The first statue to be erected in Istanbul was the Ataturk Monument in Sarayburnu. In 1926 the Municipality of Istanbul formed the “Taksim Square Monument Committee”. They made a contract with Signor Canonica, an Italian artist. The Monument was built with the contributions supplied by the people and the businessmen who had shops and offices around the Square, upon the invitation of the Municipality (Basak Bugay, *Aydinlik*, 23rd July, 2000).



Signor Cannonica asked Ataturk for his views on the Monument. The point Ataturk emphasized was not that his statue be built but that it dominate the Square. Statues, for Ataturk, were the expressions of modernization. Initially, the only figure in the Monument was Ataturk, but later the Ataturk figure appeared with the other leading cadres of the War of Independence: President Ataturk, Prime Minister Ismet Inonu, Field Marshal Fevzi Cakmak and right behind them the ambassador of the Soviet Union, Aralov. Ataturk himself gave the instruction that Aralov be included in the group (B. Bugay, *ibid*). The Republic Monument was opened by the Speaker of the Turkish Parliament, Kazim Pasha, on 8th August, 1928 with a ceremony attended by 30 000 people.

Why is the Name Taksim Square

It was not a coincidence that Taksim was chosen as the spot the Monument was to be erected. It was going to be an emphasis placed by the very young Republic on a monument which represented the national struggle for sovereignty and independence, right after the proclamation of the Republic. Besides, there was a need for a big public place where people would gather and public ceremonies would be held.

According to C. Gulersoy (1) “*The Old Istanbul, i.e. the Historic Peninsula had gone through some*

restoration process but it was still an Eastern city. The Republic Monument had to be placed on a spot far from the Old City, on a fresh and untouched place. Therefore it was put up in the Taksim Square.” (B. Bugay, İbid.)

Demolition of the Taksim Military Quarters

The military quarters which was the headquarters of the reactionary uprising in 1909 was the target of the progressive forces who came from Salonika to suppress it. It was hit by cannons and turned into a ruin where junkies and homeless people started to live.

The Taksim Military Quarters which gradually lost its function as the city started to grow towards Sisli, was turned into a stadium in 1922, after wooden stands were built on the courtyard in the centre.

As Henri Prost, the world-famous city planner was designing the city plan, he suggested turning the Kadırgalar Valley, now the Harbiye Congress Valley into a huge park. The Taksim Stadium which lost its function when the İnönü Stadium was built, along with the Taksim barracks in ruins were nationalized by Governor Lütfi Kırdar, according to the plans made by M. Prost and they were demolished. The Gezi Park which was built in place of the old military quarters was the first park built by the Republic, in Istanbul.

Conclusion

- The Taksim Square is a location created by the Republic.
- What gives the Square its character is the Monument of Republic.
- The Taksim Square has been referred to as the Republic Square by the people and also in official correspondence.

Footnote:

(1) Celik Gulensoy: A writer, lawyer and executive who is celebrated for his efforts of restoring old buildings and building, reorganizing public parks and planting trees in public places in Istanbul.

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THE NAME OF THE THIRD BRIDGE IN ISTANBUL: YAVUZ SULTAN SELIM

The foundation of the third bridge, linking the Anatolian and the European sides of Istanbul, was laid in the last days of May 2013. (The first bridge is the Bosphorus Bridge, and the second bridge is the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge.) The AKP government approved the name of Yavuz Sultan Selim (Sultan Selim the Stern) for this bridge.

The adoption of this name caused reactions within the Alawite population in Turkey as well as in Iran. Moreover, according to some analysts, the selection of this name contributed to the broad participation of the Alawite citizens to the anti-government protests.

Who is Sultan Selim the Stern?

Sultan Selim the Stern lived between the years 1470 and 1520. He became Sultan of the Ottoman Empire in 1512 and remained so until his death. Sultan Selim, the ninth Padishah of the Ottomans, is known for being the Padishah who conquered the holy lands and became the first Ottoman Caliph (Sunni Islamic Caliph). He was also famous for the wars against the Safavids (a Shiah Islamic state ruled on the land which is Iran now) and for slaughtering Alawite people in Anatolia.

The Insistence of the AKP government on “Yavuz Sultan Selim”

The selection of the AKP government of the name “Yavuz Sultan Selim” for such a project is related to its position within the balances of power in the Middle East as well as the message the AKP government wants to give to the Turkish public opinion.

The AKP government positioned itself, in accordance with the interests of the US imperialism, in a “Sunni Arch” against Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria and Iran. Both Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran are of the Shia sect of Islam. Syria is a secular state with an important Nusayri population (a sect related to Shia Islam). The AKP government has armed and provided logistical support and training facilities for Sunni terrorists in Syria in order to instigate civil strife and a sectarian war in Syria via the so-called “refugee camps” in Turkey.

In order to continue its hostile policies against Syria as well as to maintain its support within Turkey (conservative sunnis), the AKP administration needed to bring sectarianism into the forefront.

Therefore, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan insists on naming the third bridge in Istanbul after the first Ottoman Caliph, who is known for its wars against Safavids and for slaughtering Alawite's in Anatolia.

Contact:

Workers' Party (Turkey)

Address: Toros Sokak No: 9 Sıhhiye - Ankara / Turkey

Phone: +90312 231 81 11 * Fax: +90312 229 29 94

<http://inter.ip.org.tr> * <http://www.ip.org.tr>

E-mail: int@ip.org.tr