THE REBIRTH OF THE OTTOMAN COMMITTEE OF UNION AND PROGRESS IN MACEDONIA THROUGH THE ITALIAN FREEMASONRY

Introduction

This article aims at clarifying the data concerning the birth of the Ottoman Liberty Committee (OLC) in Salonica and its further transformation to a second Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in Macedonia in the 1900s. The research done around the Young Turks movement in the Ottoman Empire during its last three decades has seldom dealt with the differences between various Young Turks groups opposing the régime of istidât of Sultan Abdulhamid II. On the other hand, in this article we will emphasize the role of the Freemasonry and Masonic lodges on the foundation and organization of the OLC. The protagonists of the Young Turks Revolution of 1908 were the Young Turks of Salonica who had founded the OLC in 1906 after a preliminary organization in the Masonic lodges of the Italian Obedience of the same city.

The founders and leading figures of the Ottoman Liberty Committee (Osmanlı Hurriyet Cemiyeti) such as Mehmet Talat Bey (later Pasha), Midhat Şükrü (Bleda) Bey, Mustafa Rahmi (Evranos, later Arslan) Bey, Ömer Naci Bey, Naki (Yücekök) Bey, Manyasizade Refik Bey, Ismail Hakki Canbolat Bey, Hakki Bahha (Pars) Bey, Cavid Bey and Kazim Nami (Duru) Bey were (or became) all Freemasons. Except Cavid (he was a member of the Perseverencia lodge of the Spanish obedience in Salonica) and Kazim Nami Beys, they were all members of the Masonic lodge Macedonia Risorta ("Macedonia Resurrected" in Italian, named after Macedonia, the first Masonic lodge of the Italian Obedience founded in Salonica in 18641) of the Italian Obedience conducting its affairs according to the Scottish ritual. This lodge founded by an Ottoman Sephardic Jew, Emanuel Carasso (he later rebaptised himself as Emanuel Karasu) provided a solid, reliable and secret shelter for the revolutionary activities of these Young Turks.

The Salonican Young Turks benefited from a suitable environment for their revolutionary organization. That is, the context was decisively marked by the nationalist and revolutionary currents of Macedonia, the relative freedom of the

cosmopolitan city of Salonica, the secrecy of the foreign Freemasonry, and the participation of young and tremendously ambitious staff officers serving in the region. The organizational expansion of the OLC in the other towns of Macedonia and the further merging with the earlier Young Turk groups in exile brought considerable prestige to the movement of Salonica. The bold and impatient demands of the military wing of the Committee in Monastir in order to re-proclaim the Constitution of 1876 (Kanun-i Esasi) paved the way for the Revolution of 1908.

The Young Turks movement, their committees and revolutionary activities have been subject to several articles and books. Some Turkish and foreign distinguished academicians, such as Enver Ziya Karal, Tarik Zafer Tunaya, Sukru Hanioglu, Sina Aksin, Jan Erik Zürcher, Stefanos Yerasimos, Ernest Edmondson Ramsaur, Paul Dumont, Ilhan Tekeli or Selim Ilkin provided valuable works published in Turkish, English and French. Furthermore, some Young Turks and “Unionist” leading names such as Kazim Nami Duru, Midhat Sukru Bleda, Kazim Karabekir published their own memoirs. The approach to the constitutionalist revolutionary organization of Salonican Young Turks in the 1900s and their connections with the Freemasonry has been also crucial for the analysis of the rebirth of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and the Young Turks’ Revolution of 1908. The outstanding research of Angelo Iacovella and his book II Triangolo e la Mezzaluna (The Triangle and the Crescent) reveal the ties between the Italian Freemasonry and Salonican Young Turks via the documents from the archives of the Italian grand lodge Grande Oriente.

Abdulhamid II, his régime of oppression and the first Ottoman Liberal movements

Sultan Abdulhamid II is undoubtedly one of the well-known sovereigns of the Ottoman history. He reigned as the Sultan of the Ottomans and the Caliph of the world Muslims for 33 years between 1876 and 1909. He was called le Sultan rouge (The Red Sultan) by the Western press blaming him for brutality against his Christian subjects and ordering several massacres of Christians. He was saluted as Ulu Hakan (The Great Emperor) by the religious and pan-islamist circles due to his religious and calm character and pan-islamist ideas. There are numerous publications written by Turkish and foreign authors describing Abdulhamid II according to both of these views. Sultan Abdulhamid II is relevant to this paper because he implemented a harsh oppression policy on all constitutionalist Ottoman movements during his reign. His reign was aptly named by the Young Ottomans and the Young Turks as the régime of istibdât or the régime of oppression.

Abdulhamid was born on 21 September 1842 as the second son of the then Sultan Abdulmedjit (his first son was Murad, later Murad V). Unlike his older brother Murad, he did not have a modern Western-style education and did not study foreign languages but he was a very good observer during his childhood. In his adolescent year, he watched the Western European powers allying with the Ottoman state against the Russian Empire in the Crimean War in the name
of “Balance of Powers”. Thus, he realized the weak position of the Ottoman state and the necessity of pursuing a diplomacy of balance among the Big Powers. After his father’s death, his uncle Abdulaziz ascended to the throne and Abdulhamid became the second heir-apparent prince after his older brother Murad. Abdulaziz ruled 16 years until 1876 when he was dethroned by a coup d’état of the Young Ottomans demanding a constitutional monarchy and replaced by the pro-constitutional Murad. The 34-year old Abdulhamid witnessed the mysterious death of his uncle,2 the former sultan Abdulaziz, after his dethroning. Although he became the heir-apparent prince after the enthroning of Murad, Abdulhamid was irritated by the power and coup d’état of the Young Ottomans and by their desire to restrict the political power of the Ottoman Sultan. When his older brother had to be dethroned due to mental health problems3 after brief reign of 93 days, the Young Ottomans had to hand over the throne to Abdulhamid. Abdulhamid seemed favorable to a constitutional monarchy and was enthroned in August 1876. However, since he was skeptical about the Young Ottomans and the constitution, he tolerated the parliament and the constitutional régime for only 17 months until February 1878 when he abolished the constitution under the pretext of the extraordinary conditions of the Turco-Russian War of 1877-1878.

The abolition of the constitution was only the start of the oppressive régime of Abdulhamid II. After the end of the Turco-Russian War, he sent away the leading figures of the Young Ottomans’ movement and took absolute control of the state. Suspicious about the political loyalties of the army and the navy, he appointed loyal but incompetent subjects to the high commands and eliminated the merit system. He suppressed the press. The remaining Young Ottomans who were not sent to exile to the far-away provinces of the Empire were forced to flee to Egypt or Europe.

However, the failure of the Young Ottomans and the harsh measures of the Palace did not completely extinguish the revolutionary efforts of the Ottoman intellectuals. During the first decade of the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II the Ottomans’ Union Committee (Ittihad-i Osmani Cemiyeti) was founded in 1889 by students of the Imperial Military Medicine Faculty in Istanbul. In the following years, it would be renamed as the first CUP in the Ottoman political life.

The first Committee of Union and Progress

The organizational efforts of the new generation of the Ottoman revolutionaries were carried out in the Military and Medical schools of Istanbul at the end of the 1880s and in the early 1890s. In 1889, a group of students from the Military School of Medicine (Mekteb-i Tibbiye-i Askeriye) in Istanbul founded a revolutionary organization called Ottomans’ Union Committee (Ittihad-i Osmani Cemiyeti)
mijeti) aiming to dethrone Abdulhamid. 4 The founders were Ibrahim Temo, Abdullah Cevdet, Huseyinzade Ali, Ishâk Sukuti and Mehmet Resid. 5 The Committee renamed as the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (Osmanlı İstidâh ve Terakki Cemiyeti) opposed the régime of oppression of Sultan Abdulhamid II and sought a parliamentary constitutional monarchy through the re-proclamation of the abolished Constitution of 1876. During the following years, many students from the Imperial Military, Medicine, Engineering and Navy Schools joined the Ottomans' Union Committee (OUC), but “the nucleus of the Committee were the Military Medicine Faculty (Tibbiye-yi Askeriye) and the War Academy (Harbiye). 6

In additional, communication was established between the OUC and the Ottoman intellectuals forced into exile after the abolition of the Constitution of 1876. The leading members of these Ottoman intellectuals were Mizanci Murad Bey (a pan-islamist Young Turk named as Mizanci after his weekly newspaper Mizan which he had started to publish in 1886), 7 Ahmet Rza Bey, a positivist Young Turk intellectual, and, Prince Sabahaddin, the cousin of Sultan Abdulhamid II. The Committee was organized in cells of four people based upon the model of Italian revolutionary Carbonaris.

In August 1896, the Committee decided to attempt a coup d'état. However, the existence of the Committee was discovered by the network of spies and detectives of Abdulhamid. Moreover, the outburst of the Turco-Greek War of 1897 that ended with a fast victory of the Ottoman state consolidated the prestige and authority of Abdulhamid II in domestic politics. After the uncovering of the Committee, the Young Turks of the CUP met the same fate as the Young Ottomans: Abdulhamid had them arrested and sent to exile. The arrests and trials of 1896-1897 destroyed the entire infrastructure of the organization within the Ottoman state and for the next ten years the resistance against the régime of Abdulhamid II was carried on from abroad. 8 The defeat of the first CUP was to prove instructive and greatly influenced the further efforts of the Young Turks of the 1900s.

After their defeat in 1896-1897, most of Young Turks fled to Europe, especially to Paris, while a smaller group went to Egypt. Both of these groups linked the Young Ottomans in their respective places of exile. The branch in Paris was

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7 - Sina Aksin, Jan Türkler ve İttihat ve Terakki, İstanbul, Remzi Kitabevi, 1987, p. 34.
8 - Zürcher, Milli Mücadelede İttihatçılık, p. 43.
gathered around Ahmed Riza Bey and his bilingual newspaper Meshveret\(^9\) published in French and in Turkish, and the second and smaller branch in Cairo around Murad Bey (Mizanci) and his Turkish-language newspaper Mizan.\(^10\) Nonetheless, the late 1890s and the early 1900s were a period of passive opposition through the journalism in exile for the Young Turks. These newspapers published abroad were strictly prohibited by the Abdulhamid's régime and secretly reached the Ottoman lands and their mass of readers (high school, military and university students, small and middle bourgeoisie and some bureaucrats) through the foreign postal services and post offices scattered throughout in the Empire due to the capitulations. After the collapse of the organization of this first CUP, the Ottoman constitutionalist movement and the Young Turks had to wait until 1906 in order to establish once again an efficient and well-founded organization that was to be called the Ottoman Liberty Committee.

**A Convenient Political Climate For a New Constitutionalist Liberty Movement: The Social and Political Conditions of Macedonia and Its Nationalist Currents**

At the beginning of the 20th century, Macedonia was a restless region of the Ottoman Empire. Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian nationalists supported by the Russian and Austrian Empires, intent on interfering the region, were claiming this wealthy and cosmopolitan province of the Balkans and fighting the Ottoman administration by using guerilla tactics. Moreover, Macedonia was a region where Bulgarian, Albanian, Greek, Serbian and Romanian ethnicities were living mixed together with Muslim-Turks. Each of the neighbor states of Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, were aiming to annex Macedonia. Under the Ottoman administrative system, the administrative region of Macedonia consisted of three provinces: Salonica, Kosovo, and Monastir (today Bitola). The population of these three provinces was approximately 3,000,000 inhabitants of which half of this number was divided among 900,000 ethnic Bulgarians, 300,000 ethnic Greeks, 100,000 ethnic Serbians and 100,000 ethnic Romanians while the remaining half of the population consisted of 1,400,000 Muslim Turkish and Albanian Ottomans.\(^11\)

The Question of Macedonia started with the annexation of Eastern Rumelia by Bulgaria in 1885 and the first komitas\(^12\) were founded in Sofia and they had become active in Macedonia.\(^13\) Actually, even after the annexation of Eastern

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9 – Meshveret means “consultation” in Ottoman Turkish. The French version of the newspaper was called Meshveret Supplément Français.
10 – Mizan means “balance” in Ottoman Turkish.
11 – For these numbers, see Aksin, Jon Turkler, p. 49. However, it seems that Aksin ignored the Ottoman Jewish community in Macedonia which can be estimated to number around 100,000 inhabitants, mainly living in Salonica, at the beginning of the 20th century.
12 – Komitas was the word for committee in Bulgarian and referred to the armed bands of Bulgarian nationalists using guerilla means in their conflict with the Ottoman administration and the other ethnicities of the Balkans, such as Greeks, Serbians, Romanians and Albanians.
Rumelia by Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, the region continued nominally to be under the Ottoman administration until Bulgaria became officially independent in 1908.

After the creation of the first komitas in Bulgaria, every ethnicity living in Macedonia started to form its own nationalist armed bands and ethnic clashes raised in the region. Moreover, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece were prone at the beginning of the 20th century to exaggerate the number of its compatriots in Macedonia according to its interests in the region and sent them money and weapons.

The komitas’ aim was to incite and to arm their compatriots against the Ottoman administration and the other ethnicities of the region. Their further aim was to provoke the Ottoman administration to take measures (preferably harsh ones) against their guerilla activities and finally to provoke the intervention of the Big Powers, especially of Russia and Austria-Hungary. The Great Powers threatened the Sublime Porte with a common intervention and to disregard the Ottoman sovereignty over the region. Since they did not have a consensus on a peaceful solution to the Macedonian Question, each of the Great Powers was afraid of an intervention which excluded itself. In order to prevent that, they agreed to put pressure on the Sublime Porte to make concessions concerning the administration of the region. These concessions were some comprehensive reforms creating almost an autonomous international administration in 1903 in the vilayet of Macedonia.

“However, the Bulgarians who were ignored in the reforms issues, started the vicious circle of ‘provocation-suppression-reaction’ of the Big Powers.14 Moreover, all these events were presented to European public opinion as a reaction of religious Muslims to the reform plans.”15

The Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires saw the opportunity to intervene in the Macedonian affairs of the Ottoman Empire through the instability in the region. As a prelude for its further expansion in the Balkans, the Habsburg monarchy was looking forward to occupying militarily Bosnia-Herzegovina which was still officially an Ottoman vilayet at that time. On 2 October 1903, after a meeting of Francis Joseph of Austria and Nicholas II of Russia in Mürzsteg, Austria, Vienna and Saint-Petersburg agreed on a reform project concerning the Ottoman administrative region of Macedonia without even asking the opinion of the Sublime Porte. After having received the approval of the other Great Powers, Austria-Hungary and Russia submitted their “reform program” to the Sublime Porte on the 9th of October 1903.

14 – The agitations of the Bulgarians worried also the Greeks of Macedonia and Greece. It is claimed that during the revolt of the former in Macedonia, some Greek officers offered help to the Ottoman army through the Ottoman ambassador in Athens (see Tekeli and Ilkin, “İttihat ve Terakki’nin Olusumunda Selanik’in Toplumsal Belirleyiciliği ("The Social Key Factor of Salonica in the Foundation of the Union and Progress") in Türkiye’nin Sosyal Ekonomik Tarihi, 1071-1920 (The Social and Economic History of Turkey, 1071-1920), ed. Osman Okyar, Halil Inalcik, Ankara, 1980, p. 370.

"One of the most important articles of the program concerned the appointment of two foreign inspectors, one Russian and one Austrian, to work with the Ottoman General Inspector. Another important article was about the appointment of a foreign general at the head of the Ottoman gendarmerie forces of the region and of foreign officers in the same gendarmerie. The general was an Italian and Macedonia was divided into five districts, and each district was given 25 officers from a Great Power (Germany did not accept to participate). Furthermore, the budgets of the three provinces of Macedonia were to be controlled by the Ottoman Bank."  

In 1902, the Sublime Porte had appointed Huseyin Hilmi Pasha as General Inspector of the Ottoman administration in the three Macedonian provinces (Salonica, Monastir and Kosovo) in order to implement the reform program of the Sultan. The reforms were ineffective, so the General Inspector was compelled to use force to suppress the rebellion. However, the suppression of the rebellion attracted undue international attention to Macedonia.

Under the pressure of all of the Great Powers except Germany, the Sublime Porte had to accept all their demands and conditions. When the Ottoman government asked their permission to increase the custom tariffs by 3% (from 8% up to 11%) in order to finance the reforms in Macedonia, this was accepted by each of the Big Powers only after obtaining further financial concessions (capitulations) from the Sublime Porte. However, the interference of the Big Powers regarding the Macedonian Question did not improve the situation in the region. The komitas, probably encouraged by the fact that the legitimacy and sovereignty of the Ottoman administration in Macedonia was eroding by the arrival of an international intervention corps, increased their guerilla activities.

In spite of the reforms and suppression of the rebellion, disturbances and the guerilla warfare continued in Macedonia. According to the records of Huseyin Hilmi Pasha, there were in the year 1906, 98 engagements between the Ottoman gendarmerie and the komitas in Macedonia, 56 with Bulgarian, 32 with Greek and 10 with Serbian bands killing 530 people. In the following year of 1907, the human cost of the armed conflict was high again: a total of 79 engagements between the gendarmerie and armed bands (46 with Bulgarian, 24 with Greek and 9 with Serbian bands), resulted in the deaths of 435 people.

Reactions inside the Turkish military elite in Macedonia

The permanent intervention of the European Big Powers into the internal affairs of the Ottoman state and their demands stimulated Ottoman-Turkish patriotism in Macedonia. The young staff officers of the two Ottoman army corps sta-
tioned in Macedonia were watching the constant interventions of the European powers with great concern. These idealist young graduates of the Ottoman War Academy, forming the élite of the Ottoman Army, were worried about the future of the Ottoman state and the destiny of its Turkish-Muslim people. They were also irritated by the arrogant interference of foreign officers. These young Turkish staff (erkan-i harbiye) officers, seeing often engagements with the Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian and Albanian bands, risking their lives for the survival of their country, shared increasingly patriotic feelings. They also blamed the régime of Sultan Abdulhamid II and his lack of trust in the military for hindering all kinds of progressive activities in the Empire and for neglecting the needs of the army.

Remembering the role of the Ottoman army and the navy in the dethroning of his uncle Sultan Abdulaziz, Abdulhamid II neglected both and he intentionally kept them in a weak position. He favored assigned (alaylı)¹⁹ officers to the staff officers trained in the Western style at the modern military schools of Istanbul, arguing that the former were more devoted to their Sultan than the latter. However, since the hot region of the Empire was Macedonia due to ethnic conflicts, the Sultan’s government and General Staff were sending the young graduates of the War Academy for their field internships to the élite Ottoman army corps stationed in Macedonia. These young staff officers, the most successful and brilliant students in the Ottoman War Academy, were expected to be the best officers of the Ottoman Army. Moreover, they were gathered in the most suitable region of the Empire for a revolution where the tyrannical régime of the Sultan was smoother compared to the other regions of the Empire. Most of them were strongly critical towards the régime of Abdulhamid II. They had leadership skills and the will to change the destiny of the Empire. Thus, Macedonia became the breeding ground of nationalism of these young and idealist Ottoman-Turkish staff officers. The Turkish officers, by fighting the komitas struggling to achieve their nationalist aims in Macedonia got inspiration from the latter.²⁰ While the latter were all fighting for a national state, the Turkish officers were fighting for a despot sultan.²¹

During their internships²² and services in Macedonia, these officers saw engagements, learned about the guerrilla tactics of the komitas and their nationalisms, lost their brothers-in-arms in ambushes, and all the time had a constant and overriding question on their minds: “How can we save the state?”. Their

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¹⁹ - These officers called alaylı in the Ottoman Army were soldiers or non-commissioned officers promoted to the class of officers after having served in the army for a long time. Since they did not have a professional training of a staff officer, generally, they had poor military knowledge and commanding skills.


²¹ - Ibidem.

²² - In the Ottoman army, newly-graduated staff officers used to make internships in infantry, cavalry and artillery units regardless their branches.
existing revolutionary aims and plans began to take shape and were influenced by what they learned from the Macedonian secret organizations. Moreover, the arrival of foreign officers to Macedonia also stimulated the revolutionary and nationalist feelings of these young Turkish staff officers. The Turkish officers risking every day their lives for their state were receiving their salaries only six months per year and these salaries were clearly low compared to salaries of the foreign officers of the Great Powers sent to Macedonia. The provocative activities and encouraging propagandas of European consuls (at the beginning of the 20th century, the big European states, namely Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Italy, had consulates in almost every town of Macedonia) towards the Balkan ethnicities were also irritating the Turkish officers.\textsuperscript{23}

The mobile combatant life in the pursuit of komitas created a strong solidarity among the young Turkish officers serving in Macedonia and kept them away from the suspicious surveillance of the secret detectives (hafiye) of the Sultan. Their organizational skills and abilities improved considerably. They began to think that the absolute monarchy of the Sultan was the first obstacle to overcome in order to save the Ottoman state.

\textit{The traditional role of the Freemasonry in the Ottoman Constitutionalist movements}

It is essential to emphasize the fact that the revolutionary movements of the Ottoman Turks were the late response of the intellectuals of the Turkish society of the Empire to the ideals of the French Revolution, ideals such as liberty and nationalism. These intellectuals, young officers, medical doctors, academicians, civil servants and merchants of the small \textit{bourgeoisie} knew very well that the collapse of the Empire was getting closer if they did not do something soon. They did not know what exactly to do, but all wished to transform the Empire into a modern state without its dismemberment. These people, concerned about the destiny of the Ottoman nation and of the Empire, were called at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries consecutively as Young Ottomans and Young Turks.

At this point, the role played by the Freemasonry and Masonic lodges for the Ottoman intellectuals needs to be analyzed. Masonic lodges provided organizational facilities for the Young Ottoman and Young Turks movements. The leading figures of both of the Constitutional Monarchist Eras were organized in Masonic lodges consecutively in Istanbul and in Salonica. The Ottoman dignitaries realizing the First Constitutional Era were organized in the Proodos and Envar-i Sarkiye lodges of the French Obedience in Istanbul, and the ones realizing the Second Constitutional Era were organized in the Macedonia Risorta and later also in the Labor et Lux lodges of the Italian Obedience in Salonica. The fact why the Second Constitutional Era was organized in Salonica will be later discussed in this article.

\textsuperscript{23} – See Karabekir, \textit{Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti}, p. 91 and 101.
The very first pioneers of the revolutionary Young Turks movement were these constitutionalist Young Ottomans who opposed Sultan Abdulaziz and his régime. The Young Ottomans enjoyed the support and protection of the Masonic lodges of Istanbul in the 1870s. Tarik Zafer Tunaya states that "to tell the fact that the Freemasonry has been at the outset of the very first liberal and constitutionalist currents in the Ottoman Empire is not in contradiction with historical realities". The leading and famous figures of the New Ottomans like Midhat Pasha, Ziya Pasha, Namik Kemal Bey, Ali Suavi Bey, Sinasi Bey, Ibrahim Hakki Pasha, Sadullah Pasha, Ali Haydar Bey, Ali Sefkati Bey, Cemaleddin Afgani Bey, Tunuslu Hayrettin Pasha and Ahmet Vefik Pasha as well as the heir-apparent prince Murad (later Sultan Murad V for a 93-day of reign) were freemasons inducted into the ranks of the lodges Proodos ("Progress" in Greek) and Envar-i Sarkiye (the first Masonic lodge conducting its affairs in the Turkish language) in Istanbul. These leading statesmen and dignitaries of Ottoman society were supported by some well-known Freemasons such as Cleanthi Scalieri, an Istanbul Greek by birth, and, François Louis Aimable, then a French lawyer in Istanbul and later a leading figure of the universal Freemasonry and mayor of Paris, in their reformist and constitutionalist activities.

These leading intellectuals and high-ranking bureaucrats of the era managed even to replace Abdulaziz by his nephew, the heir-apparent prince Murad who would reign for 93 days as Sultan Murad V and proclaim the first Ottoman constitution in 1876.

After his dethroning, Murad was kept in the Ciragan palace in Istanbul under a strict surveillance of Abdulhamid’s police and spies. However, freemasons of Istanbul, led by Scalieri, kept in touch secretly with Murad and they even tried to rescue him from the palace in 1878. But, after failed attempt, the Freemasons had to stop their efforts to free and enthrone him once again. Murad had to live in his palace under surveillance for 29 years until his death in 1905 and Abdulhamid II suppressed all Masonic lodges in Istanbul and in provinces under the pretext that they were conspiracy centers of the Young Ottomans.

The birth of the Ottoman Liberty Committee and the role of the Freemasonry

25 - Ibid., 1, p. 381-382.
The Secretary of the Grand Master of the Grande Oriente (the highest national Masonic lodge in Italy) Ettore Ferrari visited the Ottoman cities of Istanbul, Salonica and Izmir in 1900 in order to deliver the private message of the Italian Grand Master. The aim of this trip was to awaken the lodges of Italian Obedience in the Ottoman Empire from their sleep in which they were since the ascension of Abdulhamid II to the thrown in 1876. Shortly after this trip in 1901, the Macedonia lodge restarted to conduct its affairs under its new name Macedonia Risorta in its old temple in the Boulma Giani street in Salonica.29 The first person inducted into the ranks of Macedonia Risorta was Salvatore Modiano, a financier of Salonica, who was inducted on 24 December 1901.30 This resurrected lodge of the Italian obedience was going to play a crucial role in the foundation and efficient organization of the OLC that was the precursor of the second CUP of the Ottoman history. Iacovella states that “under the light of documents and events, the connection between the resurrection of the Macedonia lodge and the birth of the CUP is beyond any doubt. And Ettore Ferrari also confirms this fact in his conference titled La Masoneria e la Rivoluzione Turca (The Masonry and the Turkish Revolution)”.31

The Macedonia Risorta lodge owes its rebirth in Salonica not only to the Grande Oriente and to Ettore Ferrari but also to a young Ottoman Sephardic Jewish lawyer, Emanuele Carasso. Carasso held the post of worshipful master of the new lodge and welcomed later in 1903 three important Young Turks of the future OLC founded in 1906 in Salonica. This Ottoman Jewish lawyer was the person who would connect in the coming years the Young Turks of Salonica to the Italian Freemasonry.32

Ferrari mentioned the connection between the Young Turks of Salonica and the Italian Freemasonry in the French Masonic review Acacia in 1910, quoted by Iacovella in Il Triangolo e la Mezzaluna,33 as follows:

“Abdulhamid who was living with a constant fear of being killed had only feelings of suspicion and hatred. He was carrying out the most cruel revenge, imprisonments, exiles and unjust executions. Perhaps, in doing so he was hoping to eliminate the seeds of the revolution. [...] Turkish law was not recognizing the rights of associations and was forbidding it. Organizations founded secretly were getting abolished after denunciations of spies and their members were getting imprisoned. In that phase, some of leaders of the Ottoman liberty movement found out the existence of our organization and the qualities of its principles. [...] They decided to apply to the Freemasonry and three of them introduced themselves to the high rank-

29 – Iacovella, Gonye ve Hilal, p. 37.
30 – Ibid., p. 60.
31 – Ibid., p. 37.
32 – It is also an important point to bear in mind that the Italian Freemasonry helped and protected Young Italians in their revolutionary efforts in the 1850s.
ing authorities of the *Macedonia Risorta* lodge of the Italian Grande Oriente in Salonica. They told that they were ready for the conducted affairs and asked assistance against the oppression inflicted on them. [...] The lodge accepted these persons who were eligible not only because of their social status but also for the sense that they expressed after fulfilling all rituals. [...] Other two Turkish liberals who had been inducted earlier into the ranks of *Macedonia Risorta* also joined these three new brothers. Thus, they founded the first group of the agitation organization of the Young Turks community. The Freemasonry of Salonica also commissioned five other non-Ottoman brothers to be volunteers. Since they were foreigners, these persons had the freedom to correspond with the Young Turk groups which were living abroad, in France, Bulgaria and Switzerland, and risking their lives in case of return to their homeland. The revolutionary committee was conducting its affairs successfully since they were protected by the efforts of foreign freemasons. As the members of the Committee did not have any place where they could safely meet each other and evaluate the current events, the lounge of the *Macedonia Risorta* lodge became their center. We can tell that that wonderful revolutionary work was prepared and directed hour by hour there."\(^{34}\)

These “some leaders of the Ottoman liberty movement” applying to the Freemasonry mentioned above by Ferrari are to be Mehmet Talat\(^ {35}\) Bey, Midhat Sukru (Bleda)\(^ {36}\) Bey and Mustafa Rahmi (Evranos)\(^ {37}\) Bey who were all inducted into the ranks of *Macedonia Risorta* in 1903. However, it is not easy to name of the “other two Turkish liberals who had been inducted earlier into the ranks of *Ma-

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\(^{34}\) - Ettore Ferrari, “La Massoneria e la Rivoluzione Turca”, *Acacia* 2 (1910), p. 122.

\(^{35}\) - Mehmet Talat (1874-1921) Grand Vizier (1917-1918), Minister of Interior Affairs (1913-1917) and Deputy of Edirne. His birth date is registered as 1869 in the records of the Masonic lodge *Macedonia Risorta* in which he was inducted in 12/06/1903 (see Iacovella, *Gönye ve Hilal*, 60). He joined the first “Committee of Union and Progress” in the 1890s and was sent to exile in 1896 to Salónica where he founded the OLC in 1906. After the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, he was always one of the most influential figures of the Committee of Union and Progress. After the end of the World War I, he fled to Germany and was murdered by an Armenian assassin called Soghomon Tehlirian on 15 March 1921 in Berlin. Although the murderer admitted his crime, he was released by the German tribunal.

\(^{36}\) - Midhat Sukru (Bleda) (1874-1956) Founding member of the OLC, General Secretary (kâtip-i umumi) and member of the Central Board (merkez-i umumi) of the CUP (1917-1918). He has been the deputy of Serez (1908), Drama (1912) and Burdur (1916) in consecutive Ottoman Parliaments and sent to exile to Malta by the British after the occupation of the latter in Istanbul. He was elected in 1935 deputy of Sivas to the Great National Assembly of the Turkish Republic. He was inducted in *Macedonia Risorta* on 19/09/1903 (ibid. idem).

\(^{37}\) - Mustafa Rahmi (Evranos, later Arslan) (1873-1947) Governor of Izmir (1913-1918), Deputy of Salonica (1908-1912). Member of the wealthy family of Evranos of Rumelia. He was inducted in *Macedonia Risorta* in 19/11/1903. His name is mentioned as Rahmi bin Riza (Rahmi, son of Riza in Arabic) in some sources and in the records of the *Macedonia Risorta* lodge as well (see ibid., p. 61).
cedonia Risorta”. Nevertheless, since he was the person who supported the revolutionary activities of the Young Turks of Salonica, Emanuele Carasso (who later adopted the Turkish family name Karasu) must be one of those two Turkish liberals.

Mehmet Talat, Midhat Sukru and Mustafa Rahmi Beys had all been members of different branches of the first CUP in the 1890s, Talat Bey in Edirne, Midhat Sukru Bey in Geneva, Mustafa Rahmi Bey in Salonica and Talat Bey had kept in touch with the members of the Committee living abroad in the late 1890s and early 1900s through the connection of Bulgaria. He had even been arrested once for that. Furthermore, Midhat Sukru and Mustafa Rahmi Beys had been before in touch in Genoa with the leading figures of the first Committee who escaped from the régime of Abdulhamid II, and, also with the Freemasonry. Midhat Sukru Bey had worked with Mizanci Murat Bey and been in touch with Ishak Sukut and Abdullah Cevdet Beys in Genoa.

After the start of the revolutionary activities of these Young Turks of Salonica in the Macedonia Risorta lodge, many elite officers of the II. Ottoman Army stationed in Salonica as well as some notables of the city such as Manyasizade Refik Bey joined them in the ranks of the lodge in the following years. Since 1903, the year Mehmet Tālat and his friends were inducted, until 1908 when the Young Turk Revolution emerged, eighteen officers of these Army Corps were inducted in Macedonia Risorta.

After the preparatory phase of a revolutionary committee in the Masonic lodges of the city, ten Salonican Young Turks founded the Ottoman Liberty Committee in September 1906. They were namely Mehmet Tālat Bey, a young officer (later the secretary general) of the Postal and Telegraph Services of Salonica; Midhat Sukru Bey, the director of the municipal hospital in Salonica; Mustafa Rahmi Bey, a young merchant from the well-known, wealthy Salonican family of Evrenos; First Lieutenant Ismail Hakki Canbolat Bey, Major Naki

38 - For the connections of Mehmet Talat Bey with Bulgaria, see the memoirs of Kazım Karabekir (Karabekir, İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti, p. 168-171.
39 - See Zürcher, Millî Mücadelede İttihatçılık, p. 43.
40 - Manyasizade Refik (1855-1909) Zürcher is seemingly confused about the birth and death dates of Refik Bey stating them as 1853 and 1908 (see ibid., 74), Iacovella quotes his obituary declaring his date of death on 04/03/1909 released by Rivista Masonica in Italy on 31/03/1909 and the records of members of Macedonia Risorta (see Iacovella, Gonye ve Hilal, p. 41-42 and for records 62). Minister of Justice (1908) until his death, professor at the Political Sciences Faculty (Millîiyet) in Istanbul and lawyer in Salonica. He joined the OLC after his moving to Salonica from Istanbul. Although he was not one of the founding members of the Committee he became a leading figure of it. He was the first “Unionist” serving in the Ottoman Cabinet. He was inducted in Macedonia Risorta on 17/11/1906.
41 - Ismail Hakki Canbolat (1880-1926) Founding officer member of the OLC, Minister of Interior Affairs (1918), Ottoman Ambassador to Sweden (1918), Governor of Istanbul (1915) and Deputy of İzmir (1912). He was sent to exile to Malta by the British after their occupation in Istanbul (1920). He was sentenced to death and executed in 1926 due to his connections to the assassination attempt to Mustafa Kemal. He was inducted in Macedonia Risorta on 21/09/1907 (ibid., p. 60).
(Yucekok) Bey, instructor of French at the Salonica Military High School; Major Mehmet Tahir Bey, the director of the Salonica Military High School; Captain Edip Servet (Tor) Bey, the Ottoman aide-de-camp of the Italian general Degiorgis, who was the commander of the international gendarmerie stationed in Macedonia; Captain Kazim Nami (Duru) Bey, the aide-de-camp of the Ottoman Field Marshal Ibrahim Pasha in Salonica; First Lieutenant Hakki Baha (Pars) Bey, First Lieutenant Omer Naci Bey.42

The joining of Turkish officers into the Masonic lodges of Salonica following Mehmet Talat, Midhat Sukru and Mustafa Rahmi Beys made the revolutionary group in the lodge and later the Committee not only more influential but also secure. This connection between the Masonic lodges of Italian Obedience and some Turkish staff officers seems to have served crucially the revolutionary aims of the Committee. Once again the records of the Grande Oriente d’Italia concerning the conferences of Ettore Ferrari released by Iacovella throw light on the grave danger that the Young Turks Committee of Salonica faced only four months before the Young Turks’ Revolution of 1908. According to these records, Ferrari stated in a conference in the Goffredo Mameli lodge in Genoa in 1910 this danger as follows:

“When the government found out about the fact that the officers of the army adopted the cause of liberty and thus joined the Young Turks party and all officers of the 2. and 3. Army Corps chose the Freemasonry, it reacted very severely. The government sent two generals (pashas) assigned to the army corps to Salonica in order to suppress the liberty movement which was growing continuously [...] Since Salonica was known as the center of the revolutionary movement, these two generals sent by the government were ordered to find out the headquarters of the Young Turks Committee and the list of its members. Masonic lodges and especially the Macedonia Risorta lodge were being observed continuously. However, this was not enough to reach the goal set by the government: in a morning of March of 1908, the lodge was found with broken gates and disrupted inside. The archives and the personal closet of the worshipful master which contained the list of the brothers and the dangerous documents of the agitation committee had been emptied. This arrogant stroke made the brothers worry, however they felt relieved by a sudden letter of the worshipful master. The night before, a brother of ours who was an aide-de-camp of one of the pashas was able to inform the worshipful master about the night raid of the lodges and the worshipful master had taken away the list of the brothers and all the documents which could be considered as a proof of crime of the archives and his personal closet…”43


43 – See Iacovella, Gonye ve Hilal, p. 7.
This aide-de-camp who was also a Freemason is to be Kazim Nami Bey who was a young captain in the 3. Ottoman Army and the aide-de-camp of Field Marshal Ibrahim Pasha in Salonica.

Kazim Nami Bey states in his memoirs the role of the Masonic lodges for the OLC as follows:

“At the beginning, the Masonic lodge served to hide our meetings, but in these meetings we were mostly criticizing the administration and if there were some people listening to us, we made them join our criticisms. In so doing, we were gaining sympathy also among non-Turkish masons and trying to understand whether we could take advantage of them in case of need.”

According to these statements, Kazim Nami Bey is also to be a Freemason, however, his name is not among the members of the Macedonia Risorta lodge in the lodge records released by Iacovella. He is supposed to be an adherent of either the Labor et Lux lodge or the Veritas lodge. Prior to that, he had belonged to the Tirana branch of the first CUP until 1897. He was also the informer of the OLC in the headquarters of the Field Marshal in Salonica and was letting Talat Bey (who was then the general secretary of the Postal and Telegraph Services in Salonica) know the contents of the coded messages sent to the headquarters from Istanbul. Furthermore, it is interesting to see that he mentions the activities of the founders of the OLC in the Masonic lodges of Salonica only in a small paragraph in his memoirs. This is probably due to the fact that the Young Turks who were freemasons did not want to make their connections with the Freemasonry known by the public afterwards.

Iacovella inserts a table (see Table 1) prepared according to the records of the Macedonia Risorta lodge which are in the Archivio Storico del Grande Oriente d’Italia (Historical Archives of the Great Orient of Italy) and which illustrates the accession of officers to the lodge between 1901 and 1909 in his book Il Triangolo e la Mezzaluna. According to this table, 23 adherents of the lodge out of 188 persons inducted between 1901 and 1908 were officers. Nevertheless, all of these officers were not Turkish. According to the lodge records released in the same book of Iacovella, there were also in the lodge one foreign officer and four non-Turkish military doctors. In this case, we can state that only eighteen per-

45 – Tekeli and Ilkin seem to be mistaken for mentioning the name of Kazim Nami Bey among the members of Macedonia Risorta. They seem also confused since they state the names of Emanuele Carasso as the worshipful master and of Talat, Naki and Ismail Canbolat Beys as adherents of the Veritas lodge from the French obedience (see Tekeli and Ilkin, “Ittihat ve Terakki’nin Olusumunda Selanik’in Toplumsal Belirleyiciligi”, p. 373).
46 – Yet it is more probable that he was from the Veritas lodge of French Obedience since he was a good francophone and an instructor of French.
47 – Hanioglu, Preparation For A Revolution, p. 213.
48 – Duru, Ittihat ve Terakki Hatiralarim, p. 28.
sons out of 188 adherents of the lodge were Turkish officers from the Ottoman Army.

The OLC accepted its new members through some secret rituals that can be easily viewed as being inspired from the mysticism and symbolism of the Free
masonry. When the Committee decided to accept a person as a member, his
guide (a member of the Committee knowing the candidate personally) used to
take him to the house of a Committee member at a definite hour in the evening
while the eyes of the candidate member were bound by a tie. In order to confuse
the candidate about the location of the house, they would walk in zigzags. After
reaching the house, the guide would tell the password Hilal (Crescent) to the
watchman waiting behind the door. The watchman would proceed to take them
to a waiting room where the guide opened the eyes of the candidate and asked
him if he was sure about his decision to join the Committee. After the confirm-
tation of the candidate, the guide reblindfolded the candidate and took him to the
“oath ceremony room” and sat him down on a chair in front of the table of the
“oath team”. While the guide waited standing behind the candidate member,
one of the members of the “oath team” whom the candidate member did not
know gave a speech about the situation of the Ottoman state. At the end of the
speech, the “oath team” used to ask for a last time if the candidate was sure
about his decision of joining the Committee. Following the positive answer of
the candidate member, the “oath team” members put the right hand of the for-
mer on a Koran and his left hand on a revolver on the table and made him take
the oath of the Committee word by word. After having taken the oath, the new
member of the Committee was allowed to see his new comrades of the “oath
team” dressed with long red clothes and black masks in the gloomy light of the
“oath ceremony room”. He was told his membership number of the Committee
and also that he was to receive the help of his brothers and the punishment of
treason of his brothers was death. He was also told the password Muin (which
means “helper” in Ottoman Turkish) which was used to recognize the members of
the Committee. The new member was supposed to say a sentence starting with
the letter “MIM”49 and to receive a sentence starting with the letter “AIN”,50
the former was supposed to reply with a sentence starting with an “YE”51 this
time and receive a sentence starting with the letter “NOON”.52 Thus, they were
to create the word “Muin” together. After the end of the membership ceremony,

49 – In the Arabic alphabet used by the Ottoman Empire the Arabic letter of “." is pro-
nounced as “MIM” and refers to “M” when the word “MUIN” is written by the latin alpha-
bet.

50 – The Arabic letter of “ ” is pronounced as “AIN” and refers to “U” when the word
“MUIN” is written by the latin alphabet.

51 – The Arabic letter of “.” is pronounced as “YE” and refers to “I” when the word “MUIN”
is written by the latin alphabet.

52 – The Arabic letter of “.” is pronounced as “NOON” and refers to “N” when the word
“MUIN” is written by the latin alphabet.
the new member of the Committee used to be taken back blindfolded once more to the place where he had first met his guide that night.\textsuperscript{53}

All these rituals, symbolism and secrecy of the Ottoman Liberty Committee which was to be the famous Committee of Union and Progress in the following years, are supposed to be inspired from the Masonic rituals and symbolism adopted by the freemason Young Turks of the lodges of Salonica.

\textit{The features of the center of the OLC in Salonica and of the Monastir branch and their roles in the foundation of the second CUP}

The role of officers was to be crucial in the OLC due to the fact that a branch of the Committee was established in Monastir (Bitola) by some elite and idealist young staff officers, namely Enver and Kâzım (Karabekir) Beys. This was the first branch of the OLC and mainly made up of officers serving in Monastir region. The Center of the Committee itself in Salonica was relatively more civilian oriented compared to its first branch although there were several officers among its members. Moreover, all members of the Central Board of the OLC\textsuperscript{54} in Salonica were civilians and freemasons as well as a considerable portion of members of the Committee. Most of the civilian members were either part of the middle bourgeoisie or civil servants of Salonica.

The group of Salonica had a liberal political tendency while the group of Monastir had a nationalist tendency. These different political tendencies seemed to pose a dilemma in the organization of the OLC. For instance, while the officers of the group of Monastir were fighting the komitas of the Balkan ethnicities in the field and consolidating their nationalist feelings, the Center of the Committee in Salonica had ties with these komitas and celebrated the proclamation of the Constitutional régime with Greek and Bulgarian bands in Salonica.\textsuperscript{55}

In order to better understand the cosmopolitan structure of Salonica at the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the large community of Sephardic Jews living in the city for centuries must also be taken into consideration. This Jewish community was composed of the descendants of Jews of Spain who together with Muslims of Spain had to leave the country after the fall of the last Moorish kingdom in 1492. They had enjoyed the protection of the Ottoman Turks and were settled in the wealthy coastal towns of the Ottoman Empire such as Salonica. At the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century the Sephardic Jewish population in Salonica was estimated to be approximately 60\% of the total population of the city. Since they were regarded as a particular millet (nation) by the Ottoman administration and enjoyed large religious, communitarian and commercial lib-

\textsuperscript{53} - For the rituals of the entry in the OLC, see the memoirs of the following: Duru, \textit{Ittihat ve Terakki Hatiralarım}, p. 15-16; Karabekir, \textit{Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti}, p. 169-181 and 183-185; Midhat Sukru Bleda, \textit{Imparatorluğun Cokusu} (The Collapse of the Empire), Istanbul, Remzi Kitabevi, 1979, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{54} - Mehmet Talat, Midhat Sukru, Mustafa Rahmi and Ismail Canbolat Beys.

\textsuperscript{55} - See Duru, \textit{Ittihat ve Terakki Hatiralarım}, p. 34.
erties, they were prone to support revolutionary efforts of the Ottoman Turks to reform and consolidate the Ottoman state. The Salonian Jewish community was worried about the growing unrest in Macedonia and did not want to see Macedonia occupied and ruled by any neighbor state. Moreover, Greeks were the main competitors of Salonian Jews in commerce and finance. Furthermore, there were not any main conflict of interest between Turks and Jews since the former were soldiers, farmers and civil servants while the latter were mainly merchants, financiers and craftsmen. Under these circumstances, the Jewish community of Salonica was in favor of the continuation of the Ottoman administration in Macedonia at the beginning of the 20th century and they supported the Salonian Young Turks and their Ottoman Liberty Committee starting with the preliminary organization of the latter in the Masonic lodges of the city.

Besides the cosmopolitan feature of the center of OLC in Salonica, its peaceful environment differs it from the Monastir branch. At the beginning of the 20th century, Monastir was one of the restless towns of Macedonia due to the ethnic conflicts and the fact that it was home to the headquarters of the III. Ottoman army. Important numbers of young and brilliant graduates of the Ottoman War Academy were assigned to the troops stationed in or around Monastir. In the Ottoman army, in order to be eligible for the War Academy, there were some strict criteria and among the graduates of the War Academy, only the most successful one third were graduated as staff officers. These officers had a modern Western-style education and intellectual skills and were exposed to the ideas of modernism, constitutionalism and nationalism. Most of them were critical about the Sultan and the Sublime Porte and were also determined to struggle for the salvation of the Ottoman state. After their assignments to the hot regions of Macedonia and seeing engagements against the komitas, they began to see each other as brothers-in-arms. Moreover, since the armed struggle were their daily life, they were prone to use force if necessary to achieve their revolutionary cause.

The group of Monastir was welcomed to the revolutionary group of Salonica at the end of 1906 but the officers forming the Monastir branch did not join any Masonic lodge of Salonica. Rumors concerning the bad health of Sultan Abdulhamid II peaked during 1906. The interference of the Big Powers into the internal affairs of the Ottoman state in Macedonia was another reason for the accession of Turkish officers to the OLC. Duru states this fact as follows:

“This situation was the leading factor for the creation of the Ottoman Liberty Committee, that was to cause to win the hearts of the young Turkish officers. As a matter of fact, it happened so. The friends whom we trusted and wanted to welcome to the Committee were eager to join the Committee with great idealism…”

56 – He refers to the foreign interference in Macedonia.
When Enver Bey founded the branch of the OLC together with Kazim (Karabekir) Bey in Monastir at the end of 1906 following the entry of the earlier to the Committee on 9 October 1906 in Salonica, he had no difficulty in finding idealist members. This very first branch of the OLC grew very fast and many staff officers and officers serving in the III. Ottoman Army joined it in the following months.

Other groups in several towns of the Ottoman Macedonia followed the group of Monastir and founded their local cells of the Committee. Yet, the Monastir group was not only the most active branch among the newly-created ones but was even more active than the center of the movement in Salonica. Moreover, every local branch of the OLC was autonomous in its activities. In time, the local branches used this freedom of activity and action efficiently and since they were dominated by bold staff officers of the Ottoman army, they began to lead the constitutionalist movement. As Duru states in his memoirs, the center of the Committee in Salonica "knew well the big love of freedom and the patriotism of the young officers of the army". He also says:

"This movement could not be considered as an intervention of the army in the politics. The only force to thrust for granting liberty and establishing the constitutional order in the Ottoman lands was the young graduate officers in the army. Only they could end the struggle with victory.

When we founded the Committee, we did not expect such fast developments bringing us to a full achievement. I had though that we would work for many years and suffer many casualties..."

The dynamism of young staff officers, particularly of the ones of Monastir, seems to have been underestimated by the Center of the Committee in Salonica. On the other hand, the newly-created Monastir branch overestimated the power and the number of members of the Committee in Salonica. In order to give a stronger impression, the Center of the Committee gave numbers starting with 111 to new members after establishing the Committee with the first ten members. They even gave numbers to new comers starting with thousand later on. Actually, until the creation of Monastir branch, only 42 new members joined the first ten founder members of the OLC in Salonica. By the time, the Monastir branch realized its overestimation concerning the network of the Committee in Salonica and decided to become more and more active in the efforts of enlarging the network of the Committee in Macedonia and to proclaim the Constitutional régime. The proclamation of the Constitutional régime was fixed for 24 July 1908 in Salonica by the center of the Committee and the decision was to proclaim it everywhere in Macedonia at the same time. However, the

58 – See ibid., p. 21.
59 – Ibid., p. 29.
60 – Ibid., idem.
61 – For these numbers see Karabekir, İtihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti, p. 176-180.
group of Monastir did it one day earlier on 23 July through 101 rounds of cannon fire.\textsuperscript{62}

In a short period of time, the Monastir branch became even stronger than the center of the Committee in Salonica and this led to some dramatic differences between the political aspirations and goals of the two groups. The group of Salonica had a liberal political tendency while the group of Monastir had rather a nationalist tendency. These different political philosophies posed a dilemma in the organization of the OLC. For instance, while the officers of the group of Monastir were fighting the komitas of the Balkan ethnicities in the field and consolidating their nationalist feelings, the Center of the Committee in Salonica had ties with these komitas and celebrated the proclamation of the Constitutional régime with Greek and Bulgarian bands in Salonica.\textsuperscript{63}

However, the role of the Center was crucial in having connections with the Young Turk groups in exile abroad. The Monastir branch appreciated this role of the Center because Salonica was the gate of the Ottoman Empire to the Western world and the OLC. The connections of the Center of the Committee with the Young Turk committee in Paris brought prestige and élan to the movement. The coalition made up of the cosmopolitan structure of the OLC Center in Salonica, the dynamic and the militarily powerful Monastir branch of the OLC, and the experienced Committee of Progress and Union of Paris, gave birth to a second CUP in the Ottoman history. The OLC renamed itself in the spring of 1907 as the Ottoman Committee of Progress and Union (\textit{Osmanli Terakki ve Ittihad Cemiyeti}) after this Young Turk committee of Paris having merged with them following the clandestine visit of Dr. Nâzim Bey to Salonica as the representative of the latter, and then, definitely, as the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (\textit{Osmanli Ittihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti}) after the re-proclamation of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908.

\textit{Conclusion}

The Committee and later the Party of Union and Progress is the first well-organized political party in Turkish political history. It is the revolutionary organization of the Young Turks movement. However, its genuine history is not well known enough and the role of the OLC in the rebirth of the CUP, which ruled the Ottoman Empire in the eve of and during the WW I, is often ignored. There has been a continuous confusion concerning the first Committee of Union and Progress founded by the students of the Imperial Military Medicine Faculty in Istanbul in the 1880s and the second CUP revitalized by the OLC of Mehmet Tala\r\n Bey and his friends, founded in Salonica in 1906, and adopted later respectively the names of “Progress and Union” and “Union and Progress”.

The constitutionalist movements in the Ottoman Empire were a late response of the Ottoman intellectuals to the French Revolution. A western-style educated generation of Ottoman intellectuals formed the first Young Ottomans


\textsuperscript{63} – See ibid., p. 34.
movement in the 1870s and they aimed a régime of constitutional monarchy for the government of the Ottoman Empire. By the time, they became influential in the domestic political life of the Empire in the leadership of liberal and reformist administrators such as Midhat and Ziya Pashas. These Young Ottomans opposed the absolute monarchy of Sultan Abdulaziz and they replaced him by the liberal heir-apparent prince Murad who accepted to proclaim a constitutional régime. However, Murad’s reign was very short due to his mental health problems and the leading names of the Young Ottomans had to offer the crown to the then heir-apparent prince Abdulhamid only 93 days after the dethroning of his uncle Abdulaziz. Abdulhamid seemed prone to a constitutional régime at the beginning but he abolished it during the Turco-Russian War of 1877-1878 with the pretext of the extraordinary conditions of the war. The new Sultan sent the leading names of the Young Ottomans to exile, suppressed their press and took absolute control of state. That was the beginning of the infamous régime of oppression of Abdulhamid II.

However, the constitutionalist movement of Ottoman intellectuals did not disappear and went on in exile in France and in Egypt. Besides a committee was established in 1889 among the students of the Imperial Military Medicine Faculty in Istanbul. Although this committee, named first Ottomans’ Union Committee and later Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress, had connections later on with the leading figures of the first Ottoman constitutionalist movement, its creation was an independent initiative of military medicine students having liberal and constitutionalist ideas. The founders of this very first organized Young Turks’ committee were Ibrahim Temo, Abdullah Cevdet, Mehmet Resid,64 Is-hak Sukutiti and Huseyinzade Ali Beys. The Committee started to gain power in Istanbul at Imperial Military, Medicine, Engineering and Navy Schools and also in provinces in the early 1890s through his opposition to the absolute monarchy of Abdulhamid II and gathered around itself a large group of military and medi-

64 – For a brief biography of Dr. Mehmet Resid Bey and his role in the organization of the first CUP see Ahmet Mehmetefendioglu, İttihat ve Terakki’nin Kurucu Üyelerinden Dr. Resid Bey’in Hattıraları (Memoirs of Dr. Resid Bey, One of the Founders of the Union and Progress), 2nd ed. (Istanbul, Arba Yayinlari, 1993), p. 9-20.

Table 1. Joining to the Macedonia Risorta lodge in the 1900s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of adherent</th>
<th>Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>20. Labor et Lux</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1909</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Angelo Iacovella, Gonye ve Hilal, p. 43.
cine students as well as civil servants and medium and even high-level officers and bureaucrats. The Committee decided to make a coup d'état in August 1896. However, the large and imprudent network of the CUP was uncovered by the spies of Abdulhamid II and the attempt of the coup d'état was informed. Many Young Turks of the Committee were either arrested or sent to exile. The outburst of the Turco-Greek War of 1897 and its end with an Ottoman victory consolidated the prestige and the régime of Abdulhamid II in domestic politics and helped to the suppression of the Young Turks' movement.

The third generation of the Ottoman constitutionalist movements on which this article is focused was officially initiated to their revolutionary activities by the foundation of the OLC in 1906 in Salonica by Mehmet Talat Bey and his friends. However, the preparations for the creation of this Committee dated back to 1903, two years after the foundation of the Macedonia Risorta Masonic lodge of the Italian obedience in Salonica. This lodge founded in 1901 and its first worshipful master Emanuele Carasso, an Ottoman Sephardic Jewish lawyer of Salonica welcomed Mehmet Talat, Midhat Sukru and Mustafa Rahmi Beys who were to form the nucleus of the future OLC, and provided a solid shelter for the revolutionary activities of the latter. Later, the creation of a second lodge of the Italian obedience in 1906, named Labour et Lux, gave a further relief to the organization of Salonican Young Turks.

Actually, the Young Ottomans had also enjoyed the secret organization of the Freemasonry for their revolutionary aims in the 1870s. Many of the leading figures of the Young Ottomans and even the heir-apparent prince Murad (later Sultan Murad V) and his sons were inducted into the ranks of the Proodos lodge of the French obedience. It is interesting to see that the Young Ottomans who paved the way for the First Constitutional Era in the 1870s were organized in the lodges of the French Obedience in Istanbul and the Young Turks who prepared the Second Constitutional Era in the 1900s in the lodges of the Italian obedience in Salonica. The fact that the Masonic lodges played a crucial role in both of the preparations of the Constitutional Eras in the Ottoman political history cannot be denied.

However, although the OLC was a continuation of the ideals of the constitutionalism of the earlier Young Ottoman and Young Turk generations in terms of ideological context, it was founded as a completely independent society from the earlier revolutionary Ottoman committees. This revolutionary Young Turk organization of the cosmopolite city of Salonica adopted first the name of “Ottoman Committee of Progress and Union” after the unification with the veteran Young Turks branch of Paris in 1907 and, later, after the re-proclamation of the Ottoman Constitution, it named itself “Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress” after the first revolutionary committee of the Young Turks of the 1890s.

Macedonia and its port city Salonica provided a very suitable social and political environment for the revolutionary activities of some Young Turks as Mehmet Talat, Mustafa Rahmi and Midhat Sukru Beys. These young revolutionaries had all connections in the 1890s with the earlier CUP and in the early
1900s in the relatively liberal environment of Salonica, the most sophisticated city of the Ottoman Empire after the capital at that time, they joined the Italian Freemasonry in order to have a solid shelter and to meet influential people of the city. Since the most of the members of the Masonic lodges of Salonica were Jewish and Christian Ottomans or foreigners enjoying the protection of foreign states, they had large immunities in front of the Ottoman law because of the capitulations and the lodges’ properties enjoyed the same status. These people had close relations with abroad and used the foreign post offices settled in the Ottoman Empire thank to the same capitulations. All these circumstances and the secrecy and solidarity of the Freemasonry facilitated the organizational efforts of the Young Turks of Salonica. At the end of 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries, Macedonia was a region where there were many revolutionary committees and organizations of different ethnicities of the Balkans. However, the Turks did not have any after the collapse of the first CUP until the creation of the Ottoman Liberty Committee in 1906.

The founders of the Committee in September 1906 were Mehmet Talat, Mustafa Rahmi, Midhat Sukru, Kazim Nami, Ismail Canbolat, Mehmet Tahir, Naki, Ismail Hakki, Omer Naci and Edip Servet Bey. Other famous names of the future CUP, namely Ahmet Cemal Bey (later Pasha) and Enver Bey (later Pasha) joined the movement in the following months and Enver Bey founded the first branch of the new committee in Monastir together with Kazim (Karakibir) Bey. This branch was composed predominantly of young officers and staff-officers fighting the Macedonian bands and played a crucial role in the realization of the Young Turks’ Revolution in the late July 1908. This fact explains also how the then leader of the Monastir branch, young and ambitious staff captain Enver Bey became increasingly influential in the future CUP and challenged Talat Bey who was the real founder and the leader of the civilian wing of the OLC in the control of the CUP. The creation of the OLC by a handful young and ambitious Ottoman intellectuals and officers enjoying the secrecy and the protection of the Freemasonry in the cosmopolitan city of Salonica and the further organizational expansion of the Committee in Macedonia awoke and stimulated the Young Turk movement, revitalized the CUP, and, paved the way for the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Then, the preponderance of the military wing in the CUP characterized the policies and the administration of the Committee during the following years of the Revolution. Finally, the emergence of the Turkish military elite in the Ottoman political life created the oligarchy that was to dominate politics in the eve of the World War I.