

“TURKISH-EUROPEAN RELATIONS IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE”
2 DE JULHO DE 2007

1. ILBER Ortayli is a leading turkish historian, professor at the University of Galatasaray in Istambul and at Bilkent University in Ankara. Professor Ortayli graduated from Ankara University and completed his postgraduate studies at University of Chicago and Vienna. He obtained his doctorate at Ankara University in the Faculty of Political Sciences.

His doctoral thesis was Local Administration in the Tanzimat Period (1978). After his doctorate, he attended the School of Political Sciences of Ankara University, where he was appointed Associate Professor in 1979.

Prof. Ortayli has published extensively, articles and books on Ottoman and Russian history, particular emphasis on cities and the history of public administration, diplomatic, cultural and intellectual history. In 1981, his book on the German influence on the latte Ottoman Empire was published.

After teaching at several universities in Turkey, Europe and Russia, in 1989 he returned to the Ankara University and became professor of history and the head of the section of administrative history.

2. ILBER Ortayli is the director of the Topkapi Museum in Istambul.

There in its beautiful courtyards stands the Sublime Porte, used to refer to the Divan, the court of the Ottoman Empire where government policies were established. The particular term was used in the context of diplomacy by the western european powers, as their diplomats were received at "porte" (meaning gate).

This is where I suppose, the Portuguese envoy stood in 1844, as Portugal opened its Legation in Constantinople , effectively ending Portugal's ages-old absence from the Eastern Mediterranean

'our sovereigns not having maintained political relations of any kind with Turkey',

as the Portuguese negotiator of the Trade and Shipping Treaty commented. That Treaty, signed in 1843 had established diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire

So it is particularly fortunate to have the opportunity to listen to a learned expose on "TURKISH EUROPEAN RELATIONS IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE" in the day that the PPEU COUNCIL starts, at the outset of a period when, we all know, the Turkish accession is going thru a rough patch

3. The history of the struggles over the eastern borders is the very same history of the political Europe.

From the Baltic to the Mediterranean, each inch has been discussed.

With the enlargement of the European Union to the East, the happy conclusion and plain contractual emancipation of the States that succeeded the Austro-Hungarian Empire (and others that were part of the so-called "arch of nationalities" and contributed so many refugees and dead to Europe) has been reached. The Russian Border? And to the South? And South-East?

When the Cross was replaced by the Crescent in Constantinople in 1453, people had assumed for a thousand years that the Byzantine Christian Empire was a permanent gift of Divine Providence.

The Greeks of the time called the Sultan Mohammed II "the precursor to the anti-Christ and the second Sennacherib".

Some four hundred years later, in November 1912, it was the turn of an Ottoman Salonika to yield to the Greek cries of *O Christos anesti*, the reborn Christ.

4. The Ottomans remained in Central Europe until the 17th century and in Eastern and Southern Europe until the 20th century.

A hundred years has not yet passed since Turkey ceased to be a European power and already one is living a new crisis over Eastern Question, now going under the name of Middle East Conflict. It is still part of the war of partition over the Ottoman legacy.

Turkey stands between the nations of the Caucasus and Central Asia that belong to the same cultural and linguistic families, and the EU. Beyond the Caucasus and Central Asia, Turkey is the natural interface between Europe and Muslim nations, especially in the Middle East. To all this must be added

Turkey's role as Europe's principal line of defense for the past half a century — a role illustrated by the fact that the Turkish Army is the largest of any NATO member after the United States.

Turkey is the only major nation on the peripheries of Europe to have made a conscious decision to Europeanize itself since the 1920s.

5. The constant wars with the Ottomans, the endless threat of conquest, the tribute paid by virtually all European countries to that superpower are an essential component of the Continent's history.

Ancient enmities can and do disappear. The French and Germans have ended the rancor that started with Charlemagne's death, and the English are now taking over France with summer houses instead of armies.

All across Europe, the slights and grievances of the past have been set aside in favor of the greater good.

Will the same happen with Turkey?

Conferência promovida pelo Instituto Português de Relações Internacionais (IPRI), em parceria com o Centro de Informação Europeia Jacques Delors (CIEJD).