

Zeki Kunalalp

Zeki Kunalalp (5 October 1914 – 26 July 1998) was a Turkish diplomat, who was brought up in exile in Switzerland after the murder of his father, Ali Kemal Bey, during the Turkish War of Independence. After his education he returned to Turkey and, with the express approval of President İsmet İnönü, entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At first taking up diplomatic posts throughout Europe, Kunalalp was later appointed Turkish Ambassador to Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Spain, as well as twice serving as Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry. He survived an assassination attempt which claimed the lives of his wife and her brother in Madrid in 1978. He retired, in part due to ill-health, in 1979, renouncing the world and current affairs,^[1] and turning his attention instead to writing and publishing. His autobiography was translated into English in 1992, while others of his books are considered important sources of twentieth century Turkish history. He died in Istanbul in 1998.

Contents

Biography

Bibliography

See also

References

External links

Biography

Born in Istanbul, Ottoman Empire in October 1914, Kunalalp was the second son of Ali Kemal, a journalist, writer, and politician, by his second wife, Sabiha Hanım. Ali Kemal was a political opponent of the nationalists at the time of the British, French, and Italian Occupation of Constantinople, during the Turkish War of Independence.^[1] He was detained when the revolutionaries won in 1922 and taken to Ankara to an Independence Tribunal, but the ferry (or train) he was put on stopped at Izmit and there he was murdered by young Turkish soldiers.^[2] After the kidnap and murder of his father his mother took the family into exile in Switzerland. There he received his education, and a Law doctorate from the University of Bern^[1] in 1938, where he also joined the fraternity "Zähringia Bernensis".

When permission for him to enter the Turkish Foreign Ministry was granted personally by President İsmet İnönü in 1942, Kunalalp began his career there, going on to become one of the most brilliant diplomats of his generation. Early in his career, he was posted to Bucharest, Prague, Paris, and Turkey's

Zeki Kunalalp	
	
Turkish Ambassador to Switzerland	
In office	1960–1964
Turkish Ambassador to the United Kingdom	
In office	1964–1966
In office	1969–1972
Turkish Ambassador to Spain	
In office	1972–1979
Personal details	
Born	5 October 1914 <div>Istanbul, Turkey</div>
Died	26 July 1998 (aged 83) <div>Istanbul, Turkey</div>
Nationality	Turkish
Spouse(s)	Necla Özdilci
Children	2 sons
Parents	Ali Kemal <div>Sabiha Hanım</div>
Relatives	Wilfred Johnson (half-brother)
Profession	Diplomat

NATO Delegation. A strong believer in Turkish-Greek friendship, Kunalalp worked hard but unsuccessfully to repair the damage done to Turkish-Greek relations by the rift over Cyprus between 1954 and 1964.

He was ambassador to Bern from 1960 until 1964 when he was made ambassador to London from 1964 to 1966 and again from 1969 to 1972, while in the interval he served twice as Secretary-General (or permanent under-secretary) of the Foreign Ministry in Ankara. During the latter stage of his diplomatic life in London, Kunalalp began to be afflicted by progressive multiple sclerosis, which left him unable to walk without support.^[1]

In 1978, while Kunalalp was serving as ambassador in Madrid, three gunmen opened fire on his car one morning outside his home. The ambassador's wife, Necla Kunalalp, and her brother-in-law, retired Ambassador Beşir Balcioğlu, were killed in the attack. Responsibility was claimed by a militant Armenian group, variously named as ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia)^[2] or the Justice Commandos Against Armenian Genocide. The attackers opened fire on Balcioğlu, who was using crutches, perhaps supposing him to be Kunalalp. The attack was one of a series of assassinations of Turkish diplomats and officials during the 1970s and 1980s, and the first in which a non-Turk (Kunalalp's Spanish driver, Antonio Torres) was fatally injured.

Despite this tragedy, Kunalalp's intellectual distinction and energy remained as strong as ever. During his retirement he wrote several books, including an edited version of his father's autobiography and an autobiography of his own, as well as works on recent aspects of Turkish diplomatic history. His autobiography, *Sadece Diplomat*, was translated into English and appeared under the title "Just a Diplomat". He died in Istanbul of progressive multiple sclerosis.

An article, "Ambassador Extraordinary", describing his life and personality, was published after his death in Number 16 of the magazine *Cornucopia*, 1998, as well as a short volume of memoirs by his British and Turkish friends giving details of his career. This was published in 1998 by the Isis Press in Istanbul as *Zeki Kunalalp 1914–1998: A Tribute by Friends and Family*. One of his British friends, Sir Bernard Burrows, a former ambassador to Ankara, said that Kunalalp could best be described as a saint, adding that this was an unusual quality in a diplomat. Kunalalp always retained his affection for Switzerland, the country of his upbringing, and spoke the Swiss dialect of German fluently, sometimes startling groups of Swiss visitors.

Kunalalp had two sons who both survive him, Sinan, a leading Istanbul publisher, and Selim, who went into the diplomatic service and has been Turkey's ambassador to Sweden and South Korea.

He is also among founders of a Francophone High School in Ankara called "Lycée Tevfik Fikret"

Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, is Ali Kemal Bey's great grandson and Kunalalp's great nephew.^[3]

Bibliography

- *Just a Diplomat* (in Turkish) (1981) and (in English) (1992)
- *Ali Kemal (1869–1922): a portrait for the benefit of his English speaking progeny* (1993).
- *A footnote to Turco-Greek history: the Keşan-Alexandroupolis talks* (1998)
- *Les debuts de la sovietisation de la Roumanie, aout 1944–aout 1945* (1992)

See also

- [List of Turkish diplomats](#)
- [List of assassinated people from Turkey](#)
- [List of ASALA attacks](#)

References

1. Obituary: Zeki Kunalalp by David Barchard The Independent Wednesday 12 August 1998 <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-zeki-kunalalp-1171140.html>
2. Genç, Kaya (September 3, 2013). "Ali Kemal: Martyred Journalist and Iconic Traitor" (<http://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/ali-kemal-martyred-journalist-and-iconic-traitor>). Los Angeles Review of Books. Retrieved September 8, 2013.
3. Stanley Johnson:'Thatcher set a marvellous example for women politicians in Britain' by Ozkan Tikit <http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/politics/article/stanley-johnson-thatcher-set-a-marvellous-example-for-women-politicians-in-britain.html>

External links

- [Kunalalp, outside the Ambassador's residence in London, in 1963, on his way to the palace \(http://www.cornucopia.net/library/_made/library/issues/Zeki%20Kunalalp%20p1_830_1200.jpg\)](http://www.cornucopia.net/library/_made/library/issues/Zeki%20Kunalalp%20p1_830_1200.jpg)

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Zeki_Kunalalp&oldid=1021993926"

This page was last edited on 7 May 2021, at 20:08 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.