Anglo-Turkish Society online lecture, 25 January 2022, 6.00 pm (UK time)
Speaker: Ahmet Çullu
Platform: Zoom with link provided to those who register
Title: 'The Life of Hüseyin Kavalali'



My maternal grandfather Ibrahim Paşazade Hüseyin Hüsnü was born in in 1882 and at a young age was very active in the tobacco trade business in Kavala. His grandfather Hadji Şakir Ağa and his three sons İbrahim Paşa, Ömer and Mehmet Efendi became one of the leading families in the tobacco business with multi "Tobacco Shops" in Kavala (8 still standing). The family also possessed 4 farms in Macedonia growing tobacco and keeping large flocks sheep.
He was the Honorary President of the workers union called "Kavala Welfare Association of Tobacco Workers" in 1909, also representing the Kavala merchants in the 1910 Drama and 1911 Kavala Tobacco Congresses. His ideology was close to the CUP.
The family had to leave Kavala after the first Balkan War when the Bulgarians occupied Kavala. They left with the Khedive Abbas II yacht Al-Mahrousa and stayed as his guest in Ras-el-Tin Palace in Alexandria for two years and then moved to İstanbul.
In İstanbul while continuing the tobacco trade he was appointed to the BoD of the Mim Mim secret organization by Atatürk in 1921 during the Independence war. The organization was responsible for collecting information, smuggling weapons and soldiers to Anatolia to support the Turkish army.
In 1922 gathered the Turkish (Muslim) businessmen, formed the MTTB (National Turkish Trade Union) to activate Turkish businesses and set on a mission to introduce the Turkish business people to European markets. He was chosen the president. This group under his leadership holding meetings in Istanbul prepared a 12 clause proposal to be submitted in February 1923 İzmir Economic Congress which was totally accepted and put into action with important consequences for the newly established Republic.
He was chosen to become the President of İstanbul Chamber of Commerce (İTO) in 1923 and remained so until 1927 when was elected as an MP. Upon his departure the BoD unanimously voted to award him the status of Honorary Member of the Chamber. During his presidency he has organized the Chamber and held regular meetings which were all recorded something that had not been done since its foundation in 1882.
After the Lausanne Treaty the population exchange took place and he was appointed as the head of the Turkish Exchange Delegation for the Kavala/Drama region when he stayed in Kavala from November 1923 till June 1924 to oversee the orderly dispatch of the Turkish population from the region. As an MP he was also active in the Parliament to obtain the rights of the exchange population and founded societies for the cause. He was against the establishment of Monopoly for tobacco and wrote a book "Against Monopoly".
Some of his entrepreneurial investments were: 1924 T. İş Bank, one of the first 14 founding partners; 1924 Tütün Bank; 1924 İtimad-ı Milli Insurance Co.; 1924 Türk Ticaret ve Sanayi Bankası Co., Inc. together with ex-Khedive Abbas Hilmi II; 1929-Turkish Japanese Silk Textile Factory in Bursa in partnership with Japanese Count Otani and Memduh Bey, MP of Bursa.
He was one of the founders and was on the boards of Turkish Aviation Institution (THK) and Turkish Educational Society (TMC/TED).
With the Great Depression of 1930 the family tobacco company declared concordat and he moved to İzmir to start a new company Yerli Ürünler for trading tobacco and Sultana dried grapes. Once re-established he bought a house in Bornova (a Levantine house where I was born) and a 425 hectare farm to grow his beloved tobacco. He passed away in November 1960.

Booking essential: https://ahmet-cullu-lecture.eventbrite.co.uk

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Ahmet Çullu, now retired was born in Bornova in 1946. Went to the English High School for Boys, is a graduate of Robert College (B.Sc in Physics and Mechanical Engineering) and Stanford University (M.Sc. Applied Mechanics). Worked for BP in Istanbul, in a Dunlop warehouse in London, Hoover factory and IBM in Istanbul during summer breaks at school.

After graduation from Stanford worked as an engineer designing and building equipment for heavy industry, later moving on to managerial jobs. Have served as Managing Director of companies since 1981 and have been appointed or selected to serve as a Director/Chairman of companies Tekfen & Komili), investment funds (Fidelity & Alliance Capital), professional and social organizations. Retired in 2014.

He played golf with a minimum handicap of 11! He served as the Captain and later as the President of the Kemer G&CC as well as active on the board of the Turkish Golf Federation. Enjoyed rowing on a single scull on the Golden Horn until had to stop due to a back problem. Today working on his grandfather's biography and re-homing stray Golden Retrievers in the U.S.A. and Canada (ca. 1700 saved so far).