SAIT HALIM PASA (1863-1921)

Sait Halim Pasa was the eldest of four sons of Prince Abdulhalim Pasa and the grandson of Kavalali Mehmet Ali Pasa, Governor of Egypt. Born in Cairo in 1863, his early schooling was in the form of private tutelage where he was taught Arabic, Persian, English and French. He later studied political science for five years in Switzerland.

In 1888 he was appointed Provincial Governor and became a member of the State Council being awarded the Mecidi decoration. In 1889 he received the 2nd order and in 1892 the 1st order of the Ottoman Empire. In 1899 he received the special Mecidi decoration and in 1900 was appointed to the post of Governor General of the European provinces.

He was removed from his post as State Council member in 1908. Meanwhile he was appointed mayor of Yeniköy in the municipal elections and later elected Vice-President of the General Municipality Corporation. In 1908 Sait Halim Pasa was elected to the Senate and was appointed as President of the State Council in 1912.

Sait Halim Pasa resigned from the presidency of the State Council in 1912 and elected post of general of the Committee of Union and Progress. During the Grand Vizierate of Mahmut Sevket Pasa he was elected president of the State Council for the second time and appointed as the Minister of Foreign affairs in the following three days. After Mahmut Sevket Pasa’s death he became the official representative of the Grand Vizier with the rank of Vizier.

In September 1913 by a treaty signed between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, Edirne was restored to the Ottomans with the Maritza River established as the border. For his achievement in the conclusion of the this treaty an order of special privilege was bestowed upon Sait Halim Pasa by the Sultan.

In 1914 the Ottoman Empire joined the First World War. The Ottoman-German alliance treaty was signed in Sait Halim Pasha’s mansion with the German Envoy Baron Wangenheim.

In March 1919, Sait Halim Pasa was arrested together with several members of the government and of the parliament. Following his release Sait Halim Pasa went to Rome, where, on Tuesday, 6 December 1921 he was assassinated by an armed Armenian agent as he stepped out of his car to enter his house. His corpse was brought to Istanbul and on 30 December 1921 was taken from his mansion at Yeniköy to be buried in gardens of the Sultan Mahmut Mausoleum.
HISTORY OF THE SAIL HALIM PASA MANSION

The first owners of the mansion are believed to be the Duzogullari Family. The Aristarhis Family who acquired the mansion from the Duzogullari demolished it to construct a completely new one around 1863.

Abdulhalim Pasa bought the mansion, which was considered to be a wreck and not big enough to suit Egyptian aristocratic taste, from the Aristarhis Family and instructed architect Petraki Adamandidis of Canakkale to rebuild it. After Abdulhalim Pasa's death in 1890 the property was inherited by his four sons. Sait Halim Pasa, gathering all shares from his brothers came into the sole ownership of the mansion in 1894.

In 1968, the mansion was purchased by Turizm Bankasi (Tourism Bank) and converted into a casino serving only foreign guests. For fire safety precautions, the operation of the mansion was handed over to Hilton. Although some minor alterations were made in 1974, a major renovation was held during the years 1980-1984 by TAC Foundation under the instruction of Turizm Bankasi.

Turizm Bankasi merged with Turkiye Kalkinma Bankasi (Turkey Development Bank) thus making the mansion the property of the latter. The garden was used as a restaurant during the summer and the mansion itself partially as a museum. Later on the mansion became the summer residence of the Prime Ministry and was used for government events and meetings.

The mansion suffered a fire in 1995 and its restoration as "Official Guest House of the Prime Ministry" was completed in 2002. The restoration was done according to the original architectural style of the mansion the 1890's. The mansion has not been in use since the restoration and its operation has been turned over to Gcttur Tourism in 2006. The Sait Halim Pasa Mansion is operated by Yeniköy Tourism since 2007.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF THE MANSION

The structural and decorative characteristics of the building are typical innovations of its time, with the building set back off the waterfront by a jetty and the façade and windows typically neo-classical (empire-style). The mansion's plan includes a central grand hall-sofa with an alcove overlooking the seafront with a stairway on the opposite side.

There are two gates leading to the Selamlık (Men's quarters) and Harem (Ladies' Quarters) from the quay. There are two lion statues in front of the Selamlık gate which is why the mansion is also referred to as the "Mansion of the Lions" by the public. According to Nubar Horanyan of Yeniköy, the female lion was a gift from Italy for Sait Halim Pasa's first promotion and the male lion a gift from Germany for his second promotion.

Towards the northern side of the Harem garden, there was a Bathing House used by the residents for swimming. The enclosed bridge built between the mansion and the estate on the slopes behind was demolished like all other annexes which were expropriated during the widening of the road in 1958. There was also a boathouse in the garden of the men's quarters which does not exist any longer.

One might describe the late period of Bosphorus mansions and pavilions as "empire-baroque" both in terms of their architecture and their decoration. It was a stylistic trend which took hold during the reign of Abdulmeid (1839-1861), weakening towards the reigns of Abdulaziz and Abdulhamit II, when an eclectic amalgam of western styles started to take over towards the end of the 19th century.

The building recessed from the waterfront without bay-windows and the empire style of the façade and windows are all examples of the new style of that era.

The mansion is decorated in typical empire style, with traces of eclecticism alternating and sometimes combined. The Cubist style in the furniture and exaggerated curves in the decoration were rare between 1800 and 1830. Gilded wood disappeared, although mahogany with bronze plaque appliquéd became popular. Walls were divided into panels with raised bands, with occasional pilasters. Egg and dart and garland friezes decorated the cornice and the ceilings were framed with a band of decoration with a similar circular band in the center. This interior design is seen throughout the mansion, with the single exception of the ground floor reception room which carries the Egyptian-Arabian influence in decoration.