

THE YOUNG TURK REVOLUTION

Ottoman Empire, 3-23 July 1908



Timeline

1889



Ottoman students conspire against the sultan, but are discovered and flee to Paris. Two years later, they form the Committee of Union and Progress.

1906



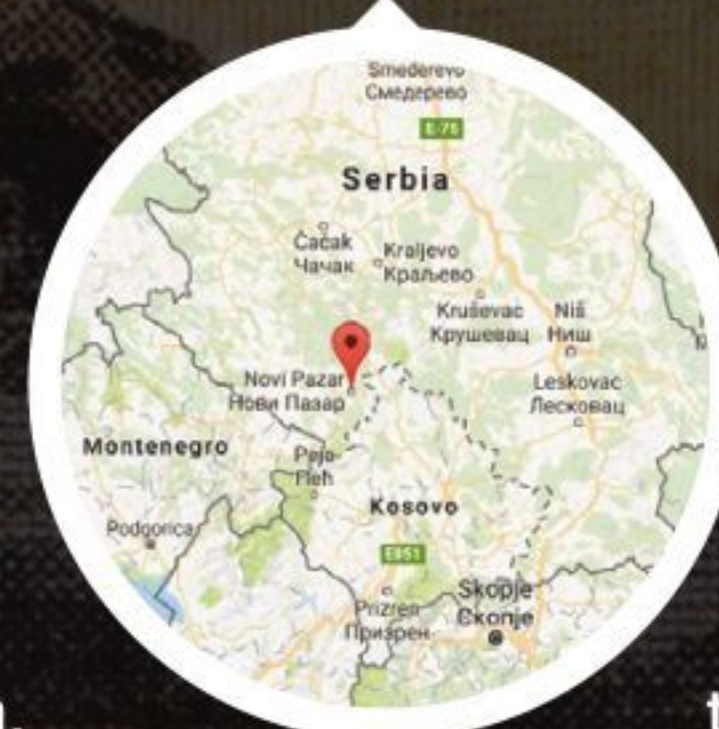
Young educated Turkish officers of the Third Army Corps garrisoned in Salonika, Macedonia, form another revolutionary group called the Ottoman Liberty Society.

1907



Both groups join in a shaky alliance with the League of Private Initiative and Decentralisation, led by the aristocracy under Prince Sabahaddin.

FEBRUARY 1908



Austria announces a railway link through Novi Pazar. This would bring the western Balkans under Austrian influence, threatening the Ottoman Empire.

Did you know?

The '31 March Incident' coup actually occurred on 13 April. In 1909, the Ottoman Empire was using the older Rumi calendar system.

What was it?

The Young Turks weren't one political party. As their rather vague name suggests, it was a loose alliance of several different organisations that arose around the turn of the 20th century. The Ottoman sultan, Abdul Hamid II, had started out as a moderniser, and introduced the first democratic constitution in the Islamic world. However, within two years, he had returned his empire to absolute dictatorship. The bureaucratic and educated classes were concerned that economic and political manoeuvring from the British, Russian and French could break up the Ottoman Empire, and only a strong constitution could save it. In 1891, a group of radical student exiles formed the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in Paris. They studied previous successful revolutions and allied with other disaffected Ottoman groups.

The Ottoman army in particular was being kept deliberately underfunded by Abdul Hamid, who preferred controlling the country with his network of spies. In July 1908, Major Ahmed Niyazi, fearing the sultan would discover his political views, launched a pre-emptive revolt. Within three weeks, the constitution was restored.

What were the consequences?

Once they gained power, the Young Turks had no clear plan for running the country. In 1909, there was a counter-coup (known as the '31 March Incident') by the rank and file soldiers, over pay and the increasing secularisation of the country. This was suppressed, but foreign European powers saw the weakness of the new state and used these upheavals as pretext for military incursions. In quick succession, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria declared independence, and Italy occupied Tripoli in Libya. Then in 1912-13, the two Balkan Wars resulted in the loss of almost all of the rest of the empire. When Britain and France refused to come to its defence, the Ottomans sided with Germany during World War I, which resulted in the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire at the Treaty of Sèvres. The Young Turks had overthrown their dictator to preserve their empire but instead had brought about its dissolution.

Who was involved?



Abdul Hamid II

1842-1918

The 34th Ottoman sultan introduced the empire's first democratic constitution in 1876, but two years later reinstated his dictatorship.



Ahmed Niyazi Bey

1873-1913

A senior captain in the Third Ottoman Army, he mutinied with 200 officers and civilians, sparking off the Young Turk revolution.

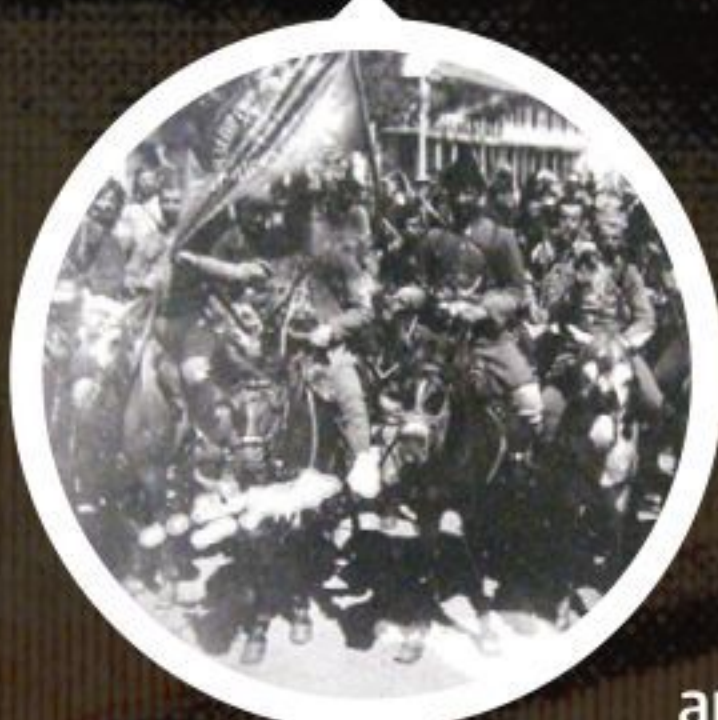


Ahmed Riza Bey

1859-1930

A prominent member of the Young Turk movement, he became president of the Chamber of Deputies after the revolution.

3 JULY 1908



Major Ahmed Niyazi of the Third Army Corps leads a revolt against the provincial authorities in Resen, Macedonia. The uprising spreads rapidly around the empire.

23 JULY 1908



In the face of overwhelming popular support for the revolution among the army and populace, Abdul Hamid agrees to recall parliament and restore the constitution.