

## BOOK REVIEW

**SADETTİN PAŞA'NIN ANILARI, ERMENİ-KÜRT OLAYLARI  
(VAN, 1896)  
(THE MEMORIES OF SADETTİN PAŞA, THE ARMENIAN-  
KURDISH EVENTS (VAN, 1896))**

Author: Sami ÖNAL

(İstanbul: Remzi, 2003), 166 pp. ISBN 9751409379

**Hasret DİKİCİ\***

The memories of Sadettin Paşa refer to the last period of the Ottoman Empire, when the Empire is in decline; and when there is ethnic unrest and corresponding foreign intervention. The Empire had responded to the Western critiques with two major reform packets (*Tanzimat and Islahat Reforms*), and then Inspection Committee is established in order to investigate the claims of the minorities in Anatolia. The book is composed of the diaries of Sadettin Paşa, who is the director of the Inspection Committee.

The reader is surprised about the writer of the book since it is not unusual to expect the writer to be subjective in such conditions of conflict and tension especially when he is one of the actors. Nevertheless, Sadettin Paşa tries to remain neutral, and criticizes both parties boldly. He gives important clues about the reasons of 1915 Expedition and Relocation; and makes a system critique between the lines.

The Inspection Committee had begun its journey from Trabzon in March 17, 1895; and visited Gümüşhane, Erzurum, Bitlis and Van where Armenians live densely. The Inspection Committee had finished its mission on November 21, 1896; and Sadettin Paşa as the director had written a final report to the related Ottoman

---

\* ASAM, Institute for the Armenian Research, Assistant, Ankara. E-mail: hdikici@eraren.org

authorities. However, he also wrote diaries that include what could not be written to the official report.

In the diaries, there are two main arguments. First of all, the Hamidiye regiments were corrupted and the population under the rule of them was really restless. Secondly, the prominent members of the Armenian community had taken advantage of the events in order to get privileges by informing the English, Russian and Persian consuls and American missionaries.

The first situation that the regiments lead to social unrest is explained by the facts that the soldiers mistreated the non-Muslims both because of poverty and the pressures of the clans they are affiliated with. Sadettin Paşa criticizes the situation of the regiments and states that their clothes were untidy, they were poor and they were undisciplined. His observations give clues about the decline of the Ottoman army, which was one of the greatest powers of the world a few centuries ago. He had seen the soldiers selling their bread given by the army itself. He had also witnessed serious and willful misconduct in office; even they had mistreated the Ottoman *kaymakams*. He writes that they committed many crimes, and there was neither a government to punish, nor officers to investigate.

On the other hand, he also mentions about the ill-mannered members of the Armenian community. He thinks that some Armenians victimize themselves in order to guarantee the shelter and mercy of the Western powers. He emphasizes that the Armenians themselves provoked the Kurdish clans. According to him, the leaders of the Armenian community took advantage of disobedience of the Armenians, and they provoked the Kurdish clans to attack on the ordinary Armenian population arguing that the Armenian gangs were disturbing the peace in the region. The rumors were wandering around that the Sublime Port issued a decree for Muslims to acquire the properties of the non-Muslims and their blood was not worthfull for the Empire. This point also shows the ignorance of the regional tribes. In return, when the attacks were realized, Sadettin Paşa argues, the same leaders victimized themselves in their negotiations with the other countries.

Sadettin Paşa thinks that the events were the fruits of the developments in long years, and he gives advises to both parties. He warns the Muslim Kurdish clans attacking the Armenians that

they should not believe the rumors, even such rumors are in contradiction to Islam, and they are provocations of the Armenians themselves. Then he warns the leaders of the Armenian community and reminds them the powerful days of Ottoman when they benefited from the Ottoman services like education, welfare and public occupations. He calls them to loyalty to their Empire.

The Memories of Sadettin Paşa is a very important source to understand the 1915 Events, and ethnic conflicts (not only Armenian, but also the Kurdish one). His practical observations and neutral gaze expressing the faults of both sides make the book worth reading.

