

BOOK REVIEW 1

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COLLECTED PUBLICATIONS: I RESEARCHES ON ARMENIANS (TOPLU ESERLER: I ERMENİLERLE İLGİLİ ARAŞTIRMALAR)

Prof. Dr. Yavuz Ercan

Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi Yayınları, 2006, 449 Pages.

This book entitled Researches on Armenians (Ermenilerle İlgili Araştırmalar) and written by Prof. Dr. Yavuz Ercan is composed of seven chapters. The first chapter is a translation of a twenty-seven page report entitled 'The Armenians Unmasked' and authored by Charles Boswell Norman on the reforms demanded by Hunchaks, which were perceived as being not innocent. In order to provide the reader with this significant report Prof. Ercan put a translation of it in his collection.

These demands can be enumerated as such: (1) In all the cities and villages of the Empire Armenians would be given the right of proportional representation. (2) Their freedom of speech and press would be granted. (3) The government would donate-for poor segments of Armenians from the revenues allocated from state-owned lands. (4) Forced labor would be abrogated. (5) Education would be free of charge. (6) All direct taxes paid by Armenians would be abrogated.

Prof. Ercan criticized this report as well. He argues that, although Norman stipulated that the negative image of the Turk has appeared in Europe with the emergence of Armenian question, this pejorative image can even be traced back to the Crusades.

Norman argues that the Hunchak Committee had a significant impact on the deterioration of Turkish-Armenian relations. Accordingly, he writes: "Within the last five years, the Hunchak Committee has had a direct responsibility on the bloods shed in Anatolia". Norman also rejects the perception that the clashes in

BOOK REVIEW

Anatolia were nothing but the atrocities committed by Muslims on the Christian population: “Perceiving these bloody and sorrowful events as causeless atrocities committed by Muslims on Christians is not true...The events were started by Armenians.”

Captain Norman also argues that Armenians declared exaggerated numbers on the population of Armenians in Anatolia and the Armenian losses, and added that British and other European nations believed these numbers as well.

The second chapter of the book is entitled as ‘Armenian Allegations in the Light of Archival Documents’ and includes a brief evaluation of the history of Armenian people. The third chapter on the other hand, is about the emergence of the Armenian question in the late 19th century. Prof. Ercan argues that this question has emerged in the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the responsibility of this question has rested on the policies of Great Powers of the time, namely Russia, the United States, Britain and France, as well as Armenians themselves.

The fourth chapter of the book is about the publication activities against Armenian terror, which has done so far. Prof. Ercan emphasizes that Armenian terrorist activities has been intensified after 1965, the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian ‘genocide’. He writes that at that period European states as well as the international public opinion had supported these terrorist activities. The author also tries to answer why Turkey was unable to prevent these activities and why European states had supported Armenian terrorists, and argues that Turkey was not active enough about scientific and propagandistic publications. In this chapter, the publications on Armenian question are reviewed thoroughly and the reader is informed on the literature on Armenians from the ancient times to the second half of the nineteenth century.

The next chapter entitled as “Armenian-Bulgarian Cooperation”, the efficient and continuous efforts against the Ottoman Empire in the centers like Etchmiadzin, Rome, Jerusalem, Vienna and France are examined. The author emphasizes that these efforts were carried by rooted and effective organizations and spread to the world in a short time. Within this framework, the author also focuses on the convergence of Armenian and Bulgarian interests against the Ottoman Empire.

The sixth chapter is on the Armenians living in Iran. The author examines the Armenian community living in Iran and the Iranian policy towards this commu-

nity. He accordingly reviews the book entitled “Armenians and Iran” and written by Mehmetzade Mirza Bala, who focused on those Armenians fled to Tabriz after the collapse of Armenian Republic and subsequent transformation of this city as a significant center of Armenian activity. Mirza Bala also wrote that anti-Turkish activities of Armenians had been known by the Iranian government, which installed Armenians on significant posts in the army and the parliament, and argues that these activities have continued until today.

The seventh and last chapter of the book is about the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. The author examines the Egyptian Campaign of Yavuz Sultan Selim, his imperial edict including the concessions given to the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem and compared the views of Turkish and foreign historians on these concessions. In this chapter, the rivalry between Greek and Armenian churches is also focused. This chapter is significant for its particular emphasis on the Ottoman policy of tolerance against non-Muslim population.

All in all, it can be said that this book is a valuable source for the students of Armenian question. Armenian question is a very popular theme today and everyone has a say on that matter. However, it is a must to understand the history of this question in order to comprehend its contemporary ramifications accurately. Prof. Ercan’s book is also significant because of its strong emphasis on different historical aspects of the Armenian question.

