

CONFERENCE 3

Yıldız Deveci

ASAM, The Research Institute for
Crimes Against Humanity Expert
ydeveci@iksaren.org

ERCIYES UNIVERSITY I. INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM (EUSAS) THE ART OF COEXISTENCE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE THE EXAMPLE OF TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS 20-22 APRIL 2006

The First International Social Research Symposium (EUSAS) was organized by Erciyes University between 20-22 April 2006 under the title "The Art of Coexistence in the Ottoman Empire: the Example of Turkish-Armenian Relations". The organization committee of the symposium included Prof. Dr. İlber Ortaylı, Prof. Dr. Bahaeddin Yediyıldız, Prof. Dr. Yahya Akyüz, Prof. Dr. Yavuz Ercan, Prof. Dr. Bayram Kodaman, Prof. Dr. Azmi Süslü, Prof. Dr. Ali İhsan Gencer, Prof. Dr. Feridun Emecen, Prof. Dr. M. Akif Aydın, Prof. Dr. Bilal Eryılmaz, Prof. Dr. Hikmet Özdemir, Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Keskin, Prof. Dr. Tuncer Gülensoy, Prof. Dr. Sabri Yener, Prof. Dr. Şükrü Akdoğan, Prof. Dr. Ersoy Taşdemirci, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Uğur, Prof. Dr. Abdülkadir Yuvalı, Prof. Dr. Harun Güngör, Prof. Dr. Alik Aktan, Prof. Dr. Mahir Nakip, Prof. Dr. Kerim Türkmen, Prof. Dr. Bayram Bayraktar, Prof. Dr. Musa Şaşmaz and Prof. Dr. M. Metin Hülagü.

Different from many preceding symposiums, this symposium, to which Armenian Patriarch of Turkey Mesrob II attended, was significant for its novel approach to the Armenian question. As its title indicates, the aim of the symposium is not to examine the Armenian question but the Turkish-Armenian relations within the framework of Ottoman coexistence and tolerance culture. Examination of various aspects of Turkish-Armenian relations, such as literature, history, theology, arts, language or education, resulted in a more productive mutual understanding.

Other than Turkish researchers, there were participants coming from Tataristan, Nakhichevan and India.

CONFERENCE

In the inaugural speech delivered by Patriarch Mesrob II, it was mentioned that examination of the Ottoman system, in which different ethnic communities had lived in harmony, was quite significant. He also emphasized that the perception of history is a matter of ethics and included universal thinking. He argued that a realist perception would be dependent on the degree of our independent thinking from values and subjective prejudices. He said "...reflecting the reality as it is requires courage and freedom. If we are stuck into a definite form, if we are slaves of a particular ideology, if we have a nationalist, racist and militarist character, we would have some problems in expressing the truth and reflecting the reality to the new generations"

Furthermore, Patriarch emphasized the role of Armenian political parties and the Armenian Church in the emergence of the Armenian question and put the responsibility both on the Turks and the Armenians. He also mentioned the influence of the Great Powers of the time and argued that it would not be ethically true for any side to reject its own responsibility and to blame solely the other side. Among many novel and interesting speeches, some of them are to be mentioned here.

To start with, in a speech titled "Pro-Turkish Diaspora Armenians", Assist. Prof. Dr. Ayten Sezer discussed the role of some Diaspora Armenians who aimed to develop friendly relations with Turkey instead of pursuing an endless hatred as others. Another speech by Assoc. Prof. Aftab Kamal Pasha from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India, carried the title of "Ottoman-Tipu Sultanate Relations: The Role of Armenian Merchants in Maysor". Dr. Aftab analysed these relations via using the archival documents that he had reached in Mumbai and Delhi. Another Indian speaker from the same university Prof. Dr. Mansure Haidar delivered a speech on the Ottoman-Armenian relations in the light of Indian resources and emphasized the tolerance of the Ottoman Empire towards Armenians.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Galibe Hacıyeva from Nakhichevan State University presented an article titled "Turkish-Originated Armenian Personal Names" and argued that many Armenian names such as Demirciyan, Koçaryan etc. are Turkish in essence. Accordingly, this shows the degree of integration of the Armenian community to the Turkish society. Güzel Tuymova from Tataristan Academy of Sciences delivered a speech on the similarity of musical instruments used in Armenian and Tatar cultures.

In the concluding declaration of the symposium it was emphasized that Turk-

ish-Armenian relations, which almost have a past of 1000 years, were generally peaceful and harmonious due to the art of coexistence of the Ottoman Empire. Armenians contributed much to the Ottoman art and culture and integrated to the Ottoman society quite successfully. Starting from 18th century onwards, Armenians also took place in bureaucratic and diplomatic circles. However, in the 19th century particularly foreign interventions disturbed these harmonious relations. Attendance of Mesrob II to this conference was quite significant for the realization of the aims of this conference, the most important of which is to contribute to mutual understanding between these two communities.

In the concluding declaration following proposals were accepted for the resolution of the problems between these two communities: organization of similar conferences, establishment of direct contact between these two communities, making common researches and projects, transcription and translation of Armenian and Turkish resources and provision of the contribution of the universities by establishing Armenian research institutes and teaching Armenian language.

