

"THE TURKISH POET ALI FAIK BEY WHO ALONE SAID "NO" TO TALAAT"

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(A brief resumé)

Ali Faik Bey was a Turkish poet and "Mutasarruf" (governor) of Keotahia when the deportations started in 1915. He was between 32 and 35 years old. He prevented the deportation of approximately one thousand Armenian families living in Keotahia, thus saving their lives. Mr. S. Stephanian, a teacher in Keotahia during those days, writes a long article (about 4 half-newspaper-sized pages), praising this noble Turkish poet for his heroic stand.

Other Armenians from the neighboring villages, hearing that there will be no deportations from Keotahia, take refuge in this town. One of those Armenians was S. Stephanian, from Adapazar. Those outsiders collect a few hundred gold pounds to present it to the Turkish Red Cross. They form a delegation to go to Ali Faik Bey to present the money. Ali Faik Bey tells ~~that~~ them that the Turkish Red Cross does not need the money and distributes it to the miserable Armenian refugees at Alayound, 4-5 kilometers away.

He asks the Armenians, "Why don't you open your school?"

They answer, "We are not sure that we will not be deported."

He tells them to go ahead with their school. They open the school and Mr. and Mrs. Stephanian teach in that school until 1918. They had 300 students.

Mr. Stephanian always thought that it was through the central government's consent that they were not being deported. That is, until, "It was ~~October~~ a Friday in October, 1915. My wife and I paid him a visit. When we entered the house, Ali Faik Bey was about to leave. "Excuse me" he said, "I will be back soon." After he left, his wife said, "He went to the telegraph office. Talaat Bey has asked for him".

After some time Ali Faik Bey ~~returns~~ ^{returns} back smiling, and ~~says~~ says, "The government consented that the Armenians of my sandjak will be exempted from deportations" and tells this story:

Talaat asks him why ~~the Armenians~~ ~~of~~ he hasn't deported the Armenians of his town.

He answers that the Armenians of his sandjak have always been faithful Ottomans and that they have always lived with the Turks like brothers.

Talaat points out that the decision for deportations is for all Armenians and there can be no exception to this rule.

"Women, old men, the disabled and also ~~the young~~ children?" asks Ali Faik Bey.

"All of them without exception" answers Talaat.

"In that case send my successor."

Only then Talaat says, "Take your Armenians and sit down."

Mr. Stephanian wondered on the mystery that made Talaat yield to Ali Faik Bey and thought that the latter must have enjoyed the backing of a mysterious force but he never dared to inquire about it. All he knew was that Ali Faik Bey was a capable poet and that his elder brother was a government official and a writer.

Towards the end of 1917, Ali Faik Bey leaves for Istanbul for a short visit, and appoints the police chief, a certain Kemal Bey, as acting "mutasarruf." This Kemal Bey, a "tcherkez", takes advantage of Ali Faik Bey's absence and prepares

*A Caucasian race, living in northern Syria and Eastern Turkey. I don't know much about their origin.



a list of 12 Armenians to be deported individually, since orders for deportations had stopped at that time. Those 12 Armenians, (one of them Mr. S. Stephanian) in order to avoid being deported, accept the Moslem Faith. When Ali Faik Bey returns back, he forbids the 12 Armenians to change their religion, and deports Kemal Bey, instead.

Shortly Ali Faik Bey was transferred to Istanbul to become "mutasarruf" of the city's Pera quarters. Mr. S. Stephanian pays a visit to Istanbul in December 1918. He tells about the noble deeds of Ali Faik Bey in the Armenian circles. The Pera Branch of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul makes a tea party and honors Ali Faik Bey. On this occasion they present him with a valuable rug, and to his wife they give a precious jewel.

S. Stephanian

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