

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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POLITICAL MEMORIES

HUSEYIN CAHIT YALCIN

People

Abdullah Zuhtu	Journalist
Babanzade Ismail Hakki	Deputy
Enver Pasha	Soldier and politician
Mehmet Cavit	Writer and politician
Talât Pasha	Soldier and politician

Synopsis

The book consists of Huseyin Cahit Yalcin's memories and reflections about the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918) which were previously published in different magazines and newspapers. After the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, Huseyin Cahit undertakes the advocacy of the new regime as a journalist. However, the hesitation of the Committee of Union and Progress that made Abdulhamid proclaim the constitutional monarchy in taking over the administration, that the statesmen of the old regime remain at their posts, and the fact that the Party of Union and Progress functions as a puppet of the Committee of Union and Progress lead to disappointment. Although the Committee of Union and Progress dethrones Abdulhamid after suppressing the 31 March incident in 1909, it cannot develop a revolutionary administration. The unionists overthrow the Freedom and Accord Party, the winner of the 1911 elections, with a coup d'état in 1913 during the Balkan Wars. Despite his criticism, Huseyin Cahit does not cease to support the actions of the Committee of Union and Progress.

Events

The Second Constitutional Period

On July 24, 1908, a state declaration on the first pages of the newspapers announces the restoration of the 1876 constitution, starting the second constitutional period of the Ottoman Empire. Huseyin Cahit reads the announcement in disbelief that the reign of Abdulhamid II is over. It is a miracle for him, but it happens so unceremoniously. He is thrilled at the prospect of living in freedom, for which many people are jailed, exiled, and murdered by the tyrannical regime. He goes out excitedly to see the difference in daily life, but everyone he sees is almost the same as the previous day. There is nothing extraordinary.

Before the Declaration

Some time ago, Huseyin Cahit's friends visited him at his home and talked about an armed secret society working for constitutionalism in Thessaloniki. The society wanted to organize in Istanbul too, and his friends were willing to support them. He felt uncomfortable with the idea of using a gun and said that it was impossible to organize in Istanbul, a city of whistleblowers.

Celebrating the Constitutional Monarchy

He goes to the neighborhood of newspapers in Istanbul and stops by the bookstore of Karabet. Karabet is astonished like him. While he talks to Karabet, he sees Abdullah Zuhtu walk down the street and joins him. They check if people are aware of what is happening and see that everybody continues their daily routine as if nothing happened. When they remember that it is Friday, they figure out something to break this routine. As is customary, when the sultan returns from the Friday prayer, a salutation ceremony is held. Huseyin Cahit and Abdullah Zuhtu decide to mingle with the crowd and start shouting slogans, but they know that people would not say anything in favor of constitutionalism. Thus, they cry, "Long live the sultan!" provoking everyone else, and eventually, the crowd shouts in unison.

Huseyin Cahit says that it was the only way to welcome the constitutional period in Istanbul at that time. After doing something extraordinary to celebrate the news, they visit Ahmet Cevdet, the owner of *Ikdam*, to discuss how the newspapers will be released. It confuses them that the constitution is restored, but Abdulhamid II is still in power, and he is the one who restores it. However, they determine to cherish it despite everything. Huseyin Cahit and Abdullah Zuhtu write articles welcoming the restoration of the constitution. Yet Karabet and Ahmet Cevdet find Huseyin Cahit's expressions offensive and combine two writings into one by censoring the offensive parts. The next day, their article is published in *Ikdam* anonymously.

Ahmet Cevdet and Karabet hoist the flag at their workplaces, and Ahmet Cevdet sends one of his employees to invite nearby tea shops to do the same thing. However, nobody wants to talk to him, some accuse him of being a spy. Huseyin Cahit and his friends see that the ethos of the oppressive regime is still in its place. Yet they do not give up. They meet the writers of *Sabah* and determine not to submit the drafts of their articles to the censor board prior to publication. They even plan to attack the officer of the board if he comes to examine their writings. However, nobody comes, and the newspapers are published without censor.

The Committee and Istanbul

Huseyin Cahit describes Istanbul then as a reckless child running in the streets without a guardian as the government officials are no longer visible. New newspapers mushroom in Istanbul, and new faces advocate constitutionalism. The magazine, *Servetifunun* is the most famous gathering place because of its central location in Babiâli Street, and many unrelated people meet there to discuss the future of the empire. However, the Committee of Union and Progress in Thessaloniki is uninformed about the situation in Istanbul. The committee only knows that Istanbul was in silence, while Thessaloniki celebrated the constitution on 24 July. Thus, a representative of the committee, Rahmi, comes to Istanbul to understand the situation. When Rahmi sees cunning people lecture about things they do not believe, he declares that none is entitled to speak on behalf of the committee.

Huseyin Cahit says that there was a branch of the committee in Istanbul under the leadership of Baha, who was a lawyer and a friend of Huseyin Cahit's professor, Manyaslı Refik Bey from college. But Baha was not in touch with the headquarters in Thessaloniki not to attract attention. Thus, the committee sent another representative to check the situation in Istanbul.

Two Disturbing Things

One day, Huseyin Cahit comes across Huseyin Kazim, his old friend, in *Servetifunun*, and Kazim asks him if he wants to start their newspaper with Tefik Fikret. Then, on 1 August, the first issue of their newspaper *Tanin* is published. Huseyin Kazim is associated with the committee in Istanbul, but Huseyin Cahit prefers to be independent. Until the committee starts its own newspaper, *Surayi Ummet* [council of the umma], *Tanin* publishes its public statements. However, people recognize *Tanin* as the committee's newspaper. Huseyin Cahit is uncomfortable with that because people begin to support the committee for personal interests. His friend Abdullah Zuhtu, for example, joins the association to increase the reputation of his newspaper.

It is confusing to Huseyin Cahit that the statesmen working for the oppressive regime are still in power. People can make the government whatever they want by holding large rallies. The grand vizier declares general amnesty by the pressure of the masses, for example. Undoubtedly, the weak point of the revolution is that revolutionaries are absent. Abdulhamid II retains the authority to appoint the most important ministries. Huseyin Cahit resents that the sultan is to establish a new cabinet on behalf of the committee because the committee consists of young men with little experience in life and politics. He mentions a conversation he had with his friend from high school, Ahmet Suayip, before the revolution to show that the committee's young supporters are also hesitant to take charge. Ahmet Suayip and everyone like him expect some powerful men tormented by the regime to take charge after the revolution. However, nobody comes forward.

Disenchantment

The one that does not hesitate to lead amidst ambiguity is the press. Huseyin Cahit considers the resignation of the grand vizier one of the most important services of the free press. Subsequently, a new cabinet is formed by Kamil Pasha. Yet, the revolutionaries are still absent. Both the government

and the committee are playing a vaguely defined role. Nobody can figure out the principle of division of labor. Even the police are confused.

After a while, the committee's Istanbul branch invites Huseyin Cahit to the clinic of Dr. Esat Pasha. At the clinic, he meets Hasan Riza Pasha, who speaks on behalf of the committee. The committee wants him to be less critical not to stir up people. Although Hasan Riza Pasha conveys their demand politely, Huseyin Cahit fiercely opposes him, saying that he is not a pupil. Thus, his first encounter with the committee turns into an unpleasant experience.

Supporters of the old regime do not hesitate to use freedom of the press, which is guaranteed by the constitution. Indeed, the new government does not dare to bring about a real change. Only one minister out of the former authorities is arrested, and some officials are jailed. Their vulnerable situation makes Huseyin Cahit's grudge fade out when he visits them. Yet he is uncomfortable with that no organization shows presence but the press in Istanbul.

When Recep Pasha who is known for his love of freedom, is appointed as minister of war, Huseyin Cahit's hopes revive. However, Recep Pasha suddenly dies because of an indefinite illness.

An Interview with the Grand Vizier

In honor of the sultan's birthday, Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha prepares a feast for foreign ambassadors in Istanbul. When the Bulgarian representative attempts to join it, he is refused, because it is only for foreign ambassadors. Then, he goes back to Sofia reproachfully. Huseyin Cahit and Abdullah Zuhtu visit Kamil Pasha to warn him about a possible conflict with the Bulgarians. That is Huseyin Cahit's first attempt to interview a politician, like journalists in Europe. However, he is disappointed with the vizier's messy and ugly appearance. The vizier does not take their warning seriously.

Huseyin Cahit leaves his office with contempt, while Abdullah Zuhtu still believes that the vizier knows what he is doing. However, Bulgaria proclaims its declaration of independence. And Huseyin Cahit goes to Bulgaria to monitor what is going on in Sofia. When he gets off the train, he witnesses the enthusiasm and joy that Istanbul lacked on 24 July 1908. In the meantime, Austria-Hungary announces the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Huseyin Cahit returns to Istanbul in despair. Now, he is disenchanted with the statesmen whom he has respected for many years.

An Incident

In October, a hodja known as Ali the Blind provokes hatred in people against the new regime, and an armed crowd marches from Fatih Mosque to the palace. A group of them conveys their anti-constitutional demands to the palace. Later, Ali the Blind and his friend Ismail Hakki are arrested. It is terrifying to Huseyin Cahit that no law enforcement officials can stop the crowd from Fatih to the palace. Referring to an official statement made on the same day about an ongoing investigation of citizens working against the new regime, he says that Abdulhamid II was behind the event. The sultan, who was secretly trying to undermine the new regime made such statements just in case.

Stepping into Politics

Since Huseyin Cahit's only hope is the new assembly, he announces his candidacy. He prepares a program and presents it to the public in a theatre hall. He says that he was so naïve to believe that he would change something by setting out a program. Yet, he specifies that the most significant part of the program is about education. He considers Turkish language education a national interest. Nevertheless, he condemns himself because his expressions regarding the necessity of education in the program are reluctant.

He criticizes that the constitution suppresses Turkishness by highlighting an Ottoman identity to cover all ethnic groups in the empire. For Huseyin Cahit, Ottomanism is a construction while Turkishness is natural. He considers each ethnic element a threat to the Ottoman Empire, except the Turks, but also claims that they are not the dominant ethnic group. He also regards other ethnic groups' support of Prince Sabahaddin and his idea of decentralized government as a source of anxiety.

A Second Incident

He mentions a second incident indicating the absence of law enforcement. When a Muslim woman elopes with a Greek man, the woman's father informs the police. However, as the police bring them to the police station, a group of men beat the Greek man to death. In an article, Huseyin Cahit denounces the use of violence and asks why people who are afraid of the old regime do not fear the law now.

Being a Member of the Committee

After a while, the committee offers him the opportunity to be a member of parliament. Although Huseyin Cahit prefers to be independent, he accepts it. He joins the committee by taking an oath that he will adhere to the aims of the committee. Yet, he is uncomfortable with the idea that there is the Committee of Union and Progress on the one hand and the newly established Party of Union and Progress on the other hand. The committee was a secret organization. Now, the party members are supposed to be directed by the committee like a puppet, which means a secret organization is to rule the country.

Opening of the Parliament

The election reveals that the committee is not the dominant political entity in the provinces, and the Liberal Party is a power that should not be underestimated in Istanbul. After the election, Abdulhamid II opens the parliament by delivering a speech and then gives a dinner party in honor of the new assembly. During the party, Huseyin Cahit monitors the sultan closely and concludes that he is a cunning person. The whole night, the sultan spends time with Ahmet Riza, who had to live in Europe as a dissident but now is the chairperson. Ahmet Riza refused many offers made by the sultan to persuade him to serve the palace, now the sultan seems to conquer him by just pouring water into his glass. Huseyin Cahit believes that Ahmet Riza is enchanted with the sultan's humble personality, and it annoys him that he talks to the sultan about his experiences in Europe as if he was on vacation. He believes that at the end of the night, Abdulhamid II overcomes his fears regarding the Second Constitutional Period.

The Third Incident

On February 28, 1909, two men begin to collect signatures in support of sharia rule in Grand Bazaar. They do not openly oppose the constitution but demand sharia rule. Upon that incident, Huseyin Cahit writes an article entitled "We Want Sharia" and complains about the religious backlash. Then Grand Vizier Huseyin Hilmi Pasha meets him to tell that his article disturbed the sultan. Huseyin Cahit says that the article has nothing to do with the sultan. But he cannot decide whether Abdulhamid II is preparing something against the constitution.

An Assassination

On April 7, Hasan Fehmi, a writer of the conservative newspaper *Serbesti* [Freedom] is shot to death on the street. The event affects Huseyin Cahit deeply and makes him to question the dark side of politics. When he attempts to join the funeral, his friends stop him because of a possible attack. Indeed, the anti-constitutionalists do not hesitate to use the incident to their advantage. Even soldiers start to protest the government, and some conservative groups demand that the government appoint some people who are close to them to important positions.

The 31 March Incident

On April 13, (on March 31 according to the Rumi calendar) Huseyin Cahit leaves the house as always, but when he cannot find a tram he is puzzled. He thinks of taking a taxi but cannot find it either. He feels something different in the city's atmosphere but cannot name it. While walking down the street he sees his friends Suleyman Fehmi and Hakki Behic. They inform him about the protests of the religious students and soldiers against the restoration of the constitution. Then, he returns home with his friends and spends some time with them discussing the situation.

Later, Huseyin Cahit and Cavit go to the Matrants, a Syrian family whose house is the gathering center for politicians, artists, and activists in Istanbul then. But as they stay there, their curiosity increases and they go to *La Turquie*, a newspaper. Only after their friend Séon tells them that the crowd in Hagia Sophia Square makes demands for sharia rule, and *Tanin* was plundered in the morning, can Huseyin

Cahit grasp the seriousness of the incident. He goes back to the house of the Matrans hoping to see his other friends.

After a short time, politicians start to come and go. One of them is Mehmet Aslan, deputy for Latakia. Yet he leaves to scout around for more information. Upon his leaving, Huseyin Cahit goes to *Cercle d'Orient*, a social club in Beyoglu, but he sees none there. Then he decides to go to another popular place, Tokatliyan Hotel, where he comes across M. Quinet from *Matin*, a newspaper. When M. Quinet tells him that the crowd wants to behead him, he determines to wait in the house of the Matrans. Now, the house is crowded with the members of parliament, but Mehmet Aslan is not back yet. They wait for him for hours yet he does not show up. Alfréde Sursak, a Syrian guest cannot stand to wait anymore and goes out. After a short time, he comes back with a pale face and says that the crowd seeks Huseyin Cahit to kill. Then, Huseyin Cahit gets a note from Séon writing that the crowd mistook Mehmet Aslan for him, and now the deputy is dead.

Huseyin Cahit begins to worry about his wife and children and sends a note to his wife through the housemaid of the Matrans. After his wife goes to her sibling's house with children, he is relieved but cannot determine what to do. When Cavit suggests going to the Austrian Embassy, Nadra Matran helps them reach out to a journalist Weitz. Yet, Weitz conveys an implicit refusal. Upon this, Huseyin Cahit suggests that they take shelter in the Russian Embassy without prior notice. Cavit does not prefer it and takes refuge in the house of one of his friends, who is a Mason broker. Huseyin Cahit goes to the embassy, and his plan works out. Russian Ambassador Zinoviev accepts to host him after being convinced that his life is under threat.

In the Russian Embassy

While staying in the embassy, he follows the news closely. A group of soldiers demands the withdrawal of the chairperson, grand vizier, minister of defense, and minister of the navy. The newspaper quotes a soldier who states that the unionists deceived him and other soldiers like him by promising to carry out sharia rule after overthrowing the sultan. Now they ask for justice in the name of Hasan Fehmi and blame the unionists for hiding the murderer. When Huseyin Cahit reads it, he thinks that the press manipulates people against the government, and the chaos grows in Istanbul. Indeed, the interpreter M. Mandelstam, who takes care of him, verifies his concerns and recommends that he stay on the Russian ship Kolkhida. Huseyin Cahit decides to leave the country and live in Europe. At night, he, accompanied by guards, leaves the embassy in disguise and gets on the ship. Later, Cavit joins him too, and they are transferred to a merchant ship, Queen Olga, to sail to Odessa.

Masonry

In Odessa, Huseyin Cahit and Cavit visit Governor Renenkampf, who is a commander famous for his loyalty to the tsarist regime. The governor helps with their official affairs even though it is Sunday, and they can set out for Thessaloniki. In Thessaloniki, a group related to the committee welcomes them. Yet Huseyin Cahit feels uncomfortable because people around him expect them to give a speech. As a person who is not fond of long lectures, he says a few words and invites Cavit, who is more talkative, to speak.

The next day, their curious visitors inform them about the Action Army heading to Istanbul from Thessaloniki to suppress the uprising. Huseyin Cahit and Cavit begin to wait for more information. While spending their time in Thessaloniki, Cavit suggests Huseyin Cahit that he should join the Masons. At first, Huseyin Cahit refuses it, but Cavit persuades him by mentioning Masonry's humanistic values. Next evening, he becomes a Mason in the Masonic lodge. Huseyin Cahit does not describe what he witnessed in the Masonic lodge because he promised to keep it a secret.

He values that Masonry strives for establishing a universal fraternity; however, he says that it is ridiculous to impress people through some old-fashioned secret ceremonies. He also complains of hypocrisy. Many calculating people join the Masons because the committee is associated with the Masons. That alienates him from the Mason lodges in Istanbul.

Tanin in Thessaloniki

Babanzade Ismail Hakki visits Huseyin Cahit and Cavit in Thessaloniki. When people see Huseyin Cahit and Babanzade Hakki together, they encourage them to publish an issue of *Tanin* in Thessaloniki. On April 26, they publish an issue of *Tanin* in which Babanzade Hakki describes what he witnessed from the window of the parliament building on March 31. In his article, entitled "A Day in Hell," he writes that some protestors entered the parliament. While the members of parliament discussed the situation, armed protestors put pressure on them. Furthermore, he saw how the crowd beat a member of parliament to death in Hagia Sophia Square. His account demonstrates the extent of violence that Istanbul witnessed on that day.

After the 31 March Incident

Party of Union and Progress gets stronger after it suppresses the reactionary uprising. When Sultan Resat replaces Abdulhamid II, the uprising politically ends as well. Sultan Resat is an ineffective personality, like new Grand Vizier Huseyin Hilmi Pasha, who is condemned for his inability to suppress the uprising.

When Huseyin Cahit returns to Istanbul, he finds a collapsed printing house and a closed newspaper. His first job is to rebuild *Tanin* with limited means. However, the new administration's scapegoat is the press. Newspapers' critical voices are condemned to silence. Huseyin Cahit says that people who fight for freedom cannot digest freedom. He criticizes the leading characters of the party because they act in fear of appearing anti-religious. Whenever they are afraid of losing their ground, they stick to conservative rules related to women or children. Thus, he says, none supports freedom of conscience in reality.

In Yildiz Palace

Now, Abdulhamid II's palace is under the control of the Action Army. Huseyin Cahit visits the palace with curiosity. He looks into the rooms. In the bedroom, he sees big pillows laid at the foot of the bed to prevent Abdulhamid II from a deep sleep. The room is full of informant letters. Huseyin Cahit reads one of the letters and realizes that the letter was written by a young dissident, who used to organize meetings at his house to curse the regime. Yet what surprises him is the bad taste of the palace. He says that the palace was like the work of a sick architect.

When he has a chance to talk to the chief clerk, he learns that Abdulhamid II never worried on March 31, when the protestors fired their guns. The chief clerk says that he drafted a letter addressing the protestors, but the sultan tore it. He also says that if the sultan did not know what was going on outside, he would be extremely alarmed. Huseyin Cahit states that he cannot be sure if the sultan was not involved in the uprising.

Execution Orders

One day on his way to the parliament building, he sees a crowd in Hagia Sophia Square. At first, he thinks of another uprising, but people are silent. They walk as if they were ghosts. A few minutes later, he sees that the square is full of hanged people. At the moment, he says, he feels disgusted with politics.

Talât Pasha

In July, Talât Pasha becomes minister of internal affairs. Since he was previously a telegraph clerk, many people underestimate him. Huseyin Cahit meets Talât Pasha to write about him in *Tanin*. During the interview, the Greek archbishop comes to see the new minister too. Talât Pasha asks Huseyin Cahit to wait in another room. Huseyin Cahit waits in the room, but after a while, he gets bored. Intending to leave, he walks toward the door but realizes that the door is locked. Then, he begins to listen to their conversation. The archbishop says things that put the minister in a difficult situation. Yet Talât Pasha makes skillful maneuvers. After the archbishop leaves, Huseyin Cahit congratulates Talât Pasha for his new position because he thinks that the old telegraph clerk is smart enough to lead the interior ministry.

Paying Respect to the New Sultan

In a religious feast, the members of parliament visit Sultan Resat to pay respect. While some members greet the sultan and kiss the throne sash as before, some only greet the sultan. Huseyin Cahit is from the latter group. The next day, he writes an article to defend that paying respect is respectful only in a decent way. However, his view causes protests among people.

In The Ottoman Public Debt Administration

Huseyin Cahit becomes the Ottoman creditors' deputy in the Ottoman Public Debt Administration at the request of Cavit. Cavit prefers a person of Turkish origin instead of Greek or Armenian to negotiate with the government on behalf of the Ottoman creditors. When the World War erupts, French and English deputies leave the country, and Huseyin Cahit becomes the chief executive working with German and Austrian deputies. In the meantime, he joins a group of members of parliament, officials, soldiers, merchants and intellectuals to visit Germany in pursuit of strengthening Turkish-German friendship. However, he does not enjoy it because it takes so much time to translate conversations that they sometimes have to leave dinner table almost at midnight.

The Freedom and Accord Party

Huseyin Cahit calls the new party a sinister organization consisting of people who are different from each other in every sense. He says that they acted together to destroy what the unionists built, and unfortunately they succeeded.

The Raid on the Sublime Porte

Huseyin Cahit regards the raid as the victory of patriots. However, in his article in *Tanin*, he criticizes some unionists who seek an act of personal revenge and maintains that the country is in need of peace and reconciliation. Indeed, the unionists found the National Defense Society and invite their opponents to join it. In this manner, they believe that they end hostilities, and to prove their goodwill they declare an amnesty.

However, Huseyin Cahit considers it naivety and says that the opponents are always ready to betray their country. He tells that one day, they heard some news regarding a secret scheme concocted by Prince Sabahaddin's private clerk Satvet Lutfu to bring down the government. But the plot fails, and some people get arrested. While telling the story, he states that the incident still influences him. Yet he also criticizes himself because he celebrates the *coup d'état* of the unionists and asks to what extent a person can be objective in his judgments.

An Assassination

The unionists come to power with a coup to succeed in the Balkan Wars. Thus when Adrianople falls, the opponents take advantage of it and concoct a plot to recapture the power. They fail, but in this turmoil, Grand Vizier Mahmut Sevket Pasha, who is the leader of the Action Army, is murdered. Huseyin Cahit appreciates the unionists for their adherence to the law. Although they have the power to judge and punish those they want, they seek evidence not to punish anyone innocent. However, he is estranged from politics because the revolutionary atmosphere does not exist anymore. He writes a letter to Talât Pasha informing him about his exit from the committee.

Enver Pasha

When Enver Pasha becomes minister of defense, he calls Huseyin Cahit to learn the source of some news on the army in *Tanin*. Yet Huseyin Cahit refuses to share their source of information. Upon his answer, Enver Pasha closes *Tanin* for two days. Huseyin Cahit appreciates Enver Pasha for not doing nepotism. He also adds that when Attorney-General Ibrahim Bey asks Enver Pasha for a small favor for his relative through a letter, Enver Pasha frames the letter and hangs it on the wall of the ministry to condemn it.

However, Huseyin Cahit disapproves of Enver Pasha's conservative lifestyle. The pasha believes that religion is indispensable for military success and demands religious observance from each soldier. For example, he expels a soldier from the army because he lets his wife spend time with some German soldiers. Huseyin Cahit argues that an army based on religious differences contradicts with civic

society. He compares Enver Pasha with Talât Pasha and says that although Talât Pasha is also a believer, he is not bigoted.

Leaving Tanin

Until the coup, the committee does not intervene in what Huseyin Cahit writes in *Tanin*. However, after the coup and assassination of Mahmut Sevket Pasha, different committee members visit Huseyin Cahit to ask him not to produce critical content about the government. At first, Huseyin Cahit does not take them seriously. Yet as the visits become more frequent, he realizes that his desire to write might be an obstacle for his friends. Then, he decides to leave *Tanin* unwillingly.

An Offer

The day before he leaves *Tanin*, a committee member visits Huseyin Cahit and offers him the position of general secretary for the committee. He kindly declines the offer. Later on, when Cavit talks about a conversation he had with Talât Pasha about the offer Huseyin Cahit understands that the offer was made to him because the committee wanted to propitiate him. Indeed, a man called Mithat Sukru is the one Talât Pasha wants for the position.

World War I

One morning, Cavit comes to Huseyin Cahit's house to inform him about the agreement with Germany. Huseyin Cahit is surprised by the news and criticizes England and France because of their uncompromising policy. He says that it is neither the result of successful German diplomacy nor incompetent Turkish diplomats. It is the outcome of the uncompromising attitude of French and English powers.

While describing the days before the war, he says that few people thought of war as a disaster. Everyone, including him, expected a victory. Even people who blamed Enver Pasha and Talât Pasha for joining the war were supporters of it too. He maintains that the Second Constitutional Period ended in 1914. During the war, the members of parliament could not fulfill their primary duty.

At the Front

As he learns that Enver Pasha prepares to go to the Gallipoli campaign, he decides to join him. When he arrives at the front, he sees soldiers with beer bottles filled with water in their hands because they cannot find water bottles. In headquarters, a soldier warns them about a nail-throwing aircraft, and then they wait in a pit. After the danger is gone, they have lunch and go to see the trenches. In Ariburnu, he meets Mustafa Kemal. While they have some buttermilk, a music team that they cannot see sings Carmen.

A Trip to Germany

After a group of German deputies' visit to Istanbul, some members of parliament visit Germany. Huseyin Cahit thinks that Germans are not hopeful about the course of the war. But they are proud of the achievements of Turkey. While they visit central places like Munich, they see that cities are decorated with Turkish flags.

When they prepare to meet the emperor, they discuss whether they are supposed to wear the medals that the emperor granted them before. Although Huseyin Cahit refuses it feigning that they are not allowed to wear any medal without the sultan's permission, Seyit, Izmir MP, does not support him. In the end, they wear medals.

At the dinner, everyone exchanges their ration cards for bread, but Prime Minister Bethmann-Holweg cannot get a slice of bread because he does not have his ration card with him. Then, a person gives up his bread to the prime minister. Huseyin Cahit and other members of parliament observe what happens and find it admirable.

The Armenian Problem

One day, while Huseyin Cahit works in the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, a clerk who has just come from his duty in Anatolia talks to him about Armenians in Anatolia. Huseyin Cahit is surprised by what he hears and remembers what Enver Pasha said to him about the Armenian problem. Enver Pasha mentioned a plan to force Armenians to migrate to places where they would not conflict with Turkish citizens. However, what the clerk says is different from what Enver Pasha said, and Huseyin Cahit's neither Armenian nor Greek friends have said anything to him about what has been going on in Anatolia.

One morning, MP Zohrab's wife visits him at home to ask for help. Her husband Zohrab and his friend Vartkes, an MP, were taken to Diyarbakir to stand trial. She asks Huseyin Cahit if he can talk to Talât Pasha about his husband's situation. Huseyin Cahit goes to Talât Pasha's house with the woman. Talât Pasha listens to the woman and suggests to her that she should not worry about her husband. Yet neither Zohrab nor Vartkes come back from Diyarbakir. Later, the man who killed Zohrab and Vartkes is executed by Cemal Pasha.

An Amendment and a Discussion

In the assembly, when freedom of conscience is suggested to be added to the party program, Huseyin Cahit gets angry and blames his colleagues for being hypocritical. He asks them whether they know what freedom of conscience is and accuses them of not having the courage to implement it. He questions them about what they would do if he wore a hat, the symbol of infidelity among the Ottomans. Upon his question, an MP condemns him with his facial expressions, while Ziya Gokalp states that collective conscience is against it. Then, Huseyin Cahit asks them what they would do if he permitted his daughter to marry a non-Muslim man. Ziya Gokalp gives the same answer. This time Huseyin Cahit specifies that even if he behaves against collective conscience, the law has to protect him, and if they support freedom of conscience, they have to inform the society about the law, about that nobody has a say on anyone's personal decisions. After he finishes his speech, his colleagues make fun of him, and the discussion ends.

Against Profiteering

Since the Ottoman Empire relies on imports to meet its basic needs, the war badly affects its commercial traffic. Sellers can only import German and Austrian goods. Although German and Austrian sellers sell their goods at the same price, prices constantly increase in the empire because of greedy traders. Thus, a commission of three people is established to keep imported goods under control. Huseyin Cahit becomes the second chief of the commission and works without payment. To work efficiently he does not allow bureaucracy and takes action on a verbal complaint. For example, if a man thinks that he is cheated, he comes to the commission with the product in question and gives the seller's address. Then the officer brings the seller to the commission for investigation. He says that even a relative of a deputy had to stay in prison for one night because of their anti-nepotism policy. As an example, he describes an event between him and Talât Pasha. One day, Talât Pasha asks him to give two boxes of matches to a former ambassador. Yet Huseyin Cahit refuses to grant a privilege to anyone saying that they have never done it before. Talât Pasha asks in surprise if he is serious, Huseyin Cahit assures him, and then Talât Pasha suggests that they should keep going like that. Huseyin Cahit attributes the success of the commission to their strict attitude against nepotism.

He also refers to a long-lasting discussion about the lack of a shroud cloth during the war. He says that those, who blame Republican People's Party because people could not find a winding sheet during the war, should understand two things; first, at that time, Republican People's Party did not exist. Second, if a country does not have a textile industry it will be deprived of textile products during a long war.

A New Cabinet

When Grand Vizier Sait Halim Pasha retires, Talât Pasha is assigned to create a new cabinet. Huseyin Cahit's friends insist that he become a minister in the new cabinet, and Talât Pasha asks him for which ministry he prefers to work. Huseyin Cahit wants to be minister of external affairs. Yet pro-German Enver Pasha objects to him because of his pro-British and pro-French attitude. Then Huseyin Cahit prefers to be minister of internal affairs. This time, Talât Pasha asks what he would do as a minister of internal affairs, and Huseyin Cahit says that he would carry out an unbiased investigation

on the Armenian problem. Talât Pasha does not like his answer. In the end, Huseyin Cahit decides not to take part in the new cabinet.

Themes

Disenchantment Huseyin Cahit repeats that politics is not his thing. He explains how he was disgusted with politics on different occasions. Executed people, hypocrite politicians, and intrigues of politics alienate him from political life. In that regard, his political memoir is a long story of disenchantment with what he has dreamed of for a long time. He starts his narration by describing the day the Second Constitutional Period is announced. It surprises him that the day he has been waiting for years is such a dull day. His description gives an idea of the future of the constitutional period. Most people are not aware of what is going on, and those who are aware do not know how to react.

In the coming days, he witnesses the enthusiasm he has been waiting for. Yet, he is gradually disenchanted with the revolutionaries because they hesitate to govern the empire. They do not ask crucial men of the old regime to account for anything. Instead, they conceal in shadow and permit Sultan Abdulhamid II, who suppressed them for years to protect his reign. They get stronger after the 31 March Incident and the raid on the Sublime Port, yet, their revolutionary persona is deformed by their strong attachment to the committee. For the committee remains as a secret power governing the political party. Thus, their sole purpose becomes to suppress the opposition like the regime of Abdulhamid II.

Critical Thinking Huseyin Cahit portrays a critical political personality thanks to his journalist identity. He does not refrain from expressing his disapproval of the representatives of the ideology that he supports. His memories reveal that his journalist part weighs more than his politician part. For example, when he finds himself surrounded by strangers in Thessaloniki, he realizes that people expect him to lecture as a deputy, who had to leave his country because of a reactionary protest. He says a few things and then invites Cavit to talk more. He considers expecting people to lecture about significant events sickness and convinces himself that he cannot be a politician who is never tired of talking about something.

He denounces members of parliament who pay respect to the sultan like obedient servants. He notices that the party cannot detach from the committee, driving people who care about independence away from the party. He criticizes himself because he celebrates the raid on the Sublime Porte while denouncing Prince Sabahaddin's attempt to overthrow the government.

When different committee members visit him to ask him not to produce critical content about the government, he leaves *Tanin*, stressing his reliance on opinion journalism and saying that news reporting would not satisfy him. After *Tanin*, he describes himself as an aimless and empty person. Therefore, his memories exemplify the viewpoint of an observer and a critic rather than a politician.

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