

Pelin Batu donned the black veil

Pelin Batu donned the black veil during the filming of the documentary in which the Canadian director tells the life story of Halide Edip Adıvar...



Pelin Batu is one of the actresses whose work I admire. These days, she told me that she is acting in a documentary about Halide Edip Adıvar, one of Turkey's important female heroes. The film is being directed by Canadian director David Rabinovitch. I also visited the set of the documentary, which is currently being filmed in Beylerbeyi. Seeing Pelin Batu on set in a black veil for the role was truly surprising.

PELİN BATU PLAYS HALİDE EDİP

These days, a documentary about the women who left their mark on our history is being filmed in Istanbul. The architect and director of the project is the much-awarded David Rabinovitch. Pelin Batu, who met David and his daughter Zara last summer, is also playing Halide Edip Adıvar, one of the cornerstones of the documentary. Pelin also introduced me to David. The two, who have been in constant contact with Batu for the past 6 months, have really paid close attention to making the project true to reality. Pelin Batu and director David Rabinovitch kindly visited me at my home. Afterwards, I went to their set in Beylerbeyi.

* How did you meet the director?

Pelin Batu: At the end of the summer, the team came from Canada and wanted to meet with me. At first, I was going to be one of the project consultants. But after meeting me and looking at my acting career, they said I needed to play Halide Edip Adıvar. I had also done research on that period. Since Halide was a figure who deeply influenced me, I accepted

without thinking twice. I was facing a world-class team. They had been researching and working on this project for 5 years.

* What was the biggest reason for choosing these women and the final period of the Ottoman Empire?

David Rabinovitch: For one thing, I was intrigued by the fact that these were untold stories. When we researched, we found a great deal of information about them. I wanted to do something different from the stereotypical generalization of the Ottoman woman. Usually, in documentaries, the Ottoman woman is portrayed in a one-dimensional and Orientalist manner. When we began researching, I realized that Hatice Sultan, the daughter of Sultan Murat V, and Halide Edip were two extraordinary women and that there were certain parallels in their lives. In this documentary, we wanted to show a kind of ending of one life and a new beginning. In a sense, we put modern Turkey before the viewer. Both women are strong, emotional, intelligent and smart. We also worked with important scholars such as Professor İlber.

* How did you discover Halide Edip during this research?

David Rabinovitch: We discovered her while researching the final period of the Ottoman Empire. When the British and French occupied Istanbul, we began researching female figures. We then realized that women belonging to the Ottoman dynasty did charitable work during the war, and Hatice Sultan emerged. From there, we came to Halide's famous speech in 1919. We read about her as the woman who ignited this entire war and started the War of Independence. This excited us. In a sense, for Americans that speech is equivalent to Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. A speech that instills faith in people. Another reason we chose these characters is the certain documents that are now coming to light. Halide has many letters and diaries. We had the chance to use her own words verbatim. They left behind a great deal of documentation.

The film will first be released abroad

* How do we see Hatice Sultan and Halide Edip Adivar together in the documentary?

Pelin Batu: The lives of Hatice Sultan and Halide Edip are not connected. But they have similar fates regarding the period they lived through. In some way, they have to leave the country in exile. They also had significant troubles concerning marriage. Also, in the film we did not have a special prosthetic nose made for me to resemble Halide.

* Do you believe you can reach the points you are aiming for with the documentary?

Pelin Batu: This documentary will be broadcast abroad. We hope it also receives good reactions in Turkey. We filmed the movie in Sultanahmet and Beylerbeyi.

Our director suggested that I go into politics

I was very excited while reenacting Halide Edip Adıvar's public speech in 1919. There was quite a large cast of extras in front of me. In 1919, there were reportedly more than 200 thousand people in front of her. Planes were flying over the minarets while Halide Edip was giving that speech. She was constantly facing the danger of death. In the square, she says, "Governments are our enemies, peoples are our friends, the righteous rebellion in our hearts is our strength". For the first time in the war, such a belief comes into play. It is said that everyone was sobbing uncontrollably. I was trembling after we shot the scene. In fact, after I came down from the stage, my director came up to me and said, "I think you need to go into politics".

The veil and black chador eliminate the feeling of being different

I wrote my thesis about the late Ottoman period, that is, the 19th century. As a result of my research, I saw that the most exciting period was the end of the Ottoman Empire. Within 10-20 years, women were getting rid of their veils and becoming modern. The transition was really very fast. Under the chador, I felt like a Catholic nun. Joking aside, the chador gives a person a strange feeling. On the one hand, you feel protected. On the other hand, your identity disappears. It is boring to be under it. But being anonymous is something comforting. The feeling imposed by the modern age that you must be different is instantly erased by the veil and black chador.