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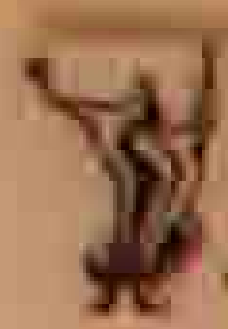
1 Lions Fight in Marash

During the last week in January 1920 two young men-- one a Turk, the other Armenian--who had grown up as neighbors and friends, found themselves leaders of opposing forces in a deadly battle. For the Turks it was the first battle in their War of Independence. For the Armenians it was a battle for survival.

The northwestern section of Marash, known as the Koulaghi Kourtluou quarter, was in flames. The area resounded with rifle and machine-gun fire, with an occasional crash of high explosive shells fired by French 65 mm. cannon on the northern crests of the city. There troops of the Armenian Legion occupied the Turkish barracks, fighting under the French tricolor.

Turkish insurgents under the command of Bayazid Zade Shukru and Kadir Pasha had already destroyed the Armenian churches of St. George and St. Stephen and had annihilated all those who had taken refuge in them. Now they were 'cleaning up' the quarter, burning even the houses of Muslims in order to destroy Armenian neighbors who remained embattled in their walled compounds.

North of the ancient citadel--at whose gate stood the famous Lion of Marash, covered with undeciphered Hittite characters--lay the walled compound of buildings belonging to Evliya Zade Haji Evliya Effendi, who was the highest ranking of all Muslims in Turkey--the Sheikh-ul-Islam. His



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nephew, also named Evliya Effendi, led a group of the Marash fighters from his quarter.

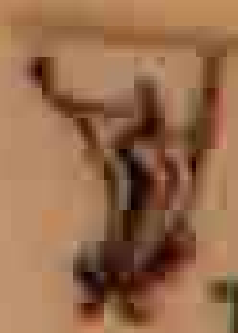
Across the street was the property of the Seferians, a family of Armenian merchants who had always been on good terms with their Muslim neighbors. Six years earlier Avedis Seferian had graduated from a Turkish military academy, but now he commanded a group of volunteers pledged to defend Armenian lives and property in that quarter of Marash. Even during his period of training in the military academy near Constantinople Avedis had maintained friendly contact with Evliya Effendi, who then was practising law in that city.

After three days of fighting the Turkish bands--the ^hqete--had encircled the Seferian property. From a minaret a Turk called to them:

"Surrender and we shall protect you! If not, you will all be killed."

The Armenians understood that surrender meant death, for the promise of protection ~~and~~ already been made to thousands, and all had been slaughtered. Avedis Effendi took counsel with his group of fifteen fighters and with the leaders among the one hundred and fifty citizens who had taken refuge in the three Seferian houses.

"Let us set fire to Evliya Effendi's house! Then all of the Turkish fighters will try to save it, for his uncle is the Sheikh-ul-Islam," suggested Avedis. "Then our people can escape."



"Where can they go?" asked one of the Armenian leaders.
"The churches near us have all been burned."

"Let them scatter--some to the Church of the Holy Virgin, and others to the Tash Khan (the stone warehouse). If they stay here they will be burned to death."

Avedis and his helpers made several bundles of clothing, each one weighted with a stone, and soaked them in kerosene. One by one these were set on fire and tossed across the street on to the house of Evliya and his uncle the Sheikh. The house caught fire. Shouting to each other to help, the Turkish fighters set their rifles aside in order to carry water. Evliya Effendi himself directed the fire fighters.

"Bak! There is Evliya!" shouted on^e_A of the Armenians as he fired. Evliya disappeared. "I hit him!" cried the marksman, but none of them really knew.

While this action was taking place, refugees had been slipping out of the Seferian compound to seek shelter elsewhere. Avedis and his fighters remained until the last to cover their retreat. After dark they divided into groups of three or four, altered their head gear to resemble that of the Turks, and sauntered into the street talking like the Turks rather than with the somewhat different manner of speech used by the Armenians. They found it impossible to reach any of the churches, which were already under attack, but took shelter in an Armenian house near the covered bazaar.

Within a few days this too was besieged and set on fire. Those who ran out were shot down, and only a dozen of the three hundred in the building escaped. Avedis and two armed



companions made a dash for shelter. Two of them fell, but Avedis reached the Tash Khan, and only there discovered that his trousers were soaked with blood from a flesh wound in his thigh.²

The Turkish historian records the following:

"Muallim Evliya Effendi, who had been fighting since the beginning of the Marash events, took with him enough fighters to clean out the French from the Tash Khan and captured it. After this he turned northward and continued the mopping up--one by one-- of the houses near the barracks where French and Armenians had taken shelter, but an enemy bullet made this son of a Turk a shehit (a fallen patriot)."³

The historian was in error about the Tash Khan, which remained in French hands throughout the siege. Avedis Seferian knew that Evliya Effendi had been killed during their encounter only from the above passage nearly fifty years later.

Evliya and Avedis would undoubtedly be classed as 'lions' by their followers. Each of them fought for what he believed to be the interests of his own people. Thus an old friendship ended. The rift was not between Avedis and Evliya, but between two peoples, the Turks and the Armenians. How had this come about? One can understand this rift only through the history of the two peoples.



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*Two young lions in Marash**Chapt*

[111 Evliya Effendi Goes to Law School]

Evliya^e, nephew of the important Muslim leader Evliya Zade^e, had completed his studies at the Turkish Rushdiya^e School in Marash at the time a son--Avedis--was born to the Seferians, his closest neighbors. Evliya's father had been looking forward to the time when his own son could relieve him of the supervision of ^{the extensive farm lands which he} [his property, for he] owned [a considerable area of farm land] in the vicinity of Marash. Since the tenant farmers paid rent by sharing the crops, someone had to keep an eye on the areas cultivated and on the measurement of wheat or rice harvested. Hence the father protested when his son expressed the wish to study law in Constantinople. Unable to obtain his father's consent, the young man asked ⁱⁿ his neighbor--Seferian-- to intercede.

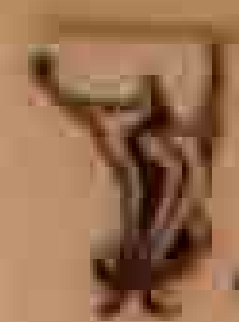
Such an interview required diplomacy, and custom demanded an indirect approach. Accordingly it was Kevork Agha Kherlakian-- the wealthy grandfather of young Avedis Seferian-- who called on the Turkish student's uncle, an important figure in the Muslim community. The two older men discussed the problem.

"Would it not be a great advantage for you to have a lawyer look after your property?" asked Kevork Agha. "Your nephew could be back here within three years to help you. And I would like to have a part in his education. Will you accept this gift for his travel expenses?" Kevork Agha transferred eight Turkish gold liras to the hand of the



boy's uncle.

Influenced by his friend's argument and touched by his generosity, Evliya Zade sent the boy off to Constantinople, where in 1900 he graduated with a diploma in law. But instead of returning to Marash to supervise his family's estate, he accepted a position with the Turkish government and became a witness, and possibly a participant, in the movement known as the Young Turk revolution.



VI

An Armenian Student in Constantinople

After completing his studies
 [In Marash the Seferian's son Avedis completed his studies] at the Armenian Catholic School, *the Seferian, son of Avedis* and enrolled at the Turkish Rushdiya School for one year in order to perfect his command of the Turkish language. *an asset which would give* This gave him a better chance in the competition for government scholarships. Out of two hundred who took the examination he was one of the successful forty, and chose to enter the School of Veterinary Medicine in Constantinople. In the fall of 1910 he made the journey to the capital, taking letters to his neighbor's nephew Evliya Effendi, who ten years earlier had received his degree in law. Evliya Effendi had risen in government service to a post in the cabinet, which in 1910 was dominated by the Young Turks. The lawyer greeted Avedis cordially and urged him to visit him at home regularly.

At the Institute for Veterinary Medicine located on the European side of the Bosphorus near the Sultan Ahmed Mosque the capable professor of physiology--Salih Zeki--caught the interest of the new student from Marash. However, Avedis found time for other interests, among which was politics. As might be expected in the capital city there were branches of each of the Armenian revolutionary societies.

as well as
Turkish or
in the Ottoman
empire
 Avedis's brother Hagop was active in the Marash branch of the Reformed Huntchak society, and [presumably] Avedis made contact with this group in Constantinople. Word reached him that representatives of the Huntchaks, Dashnaks and Reformers were to meet in Constantinople, and that

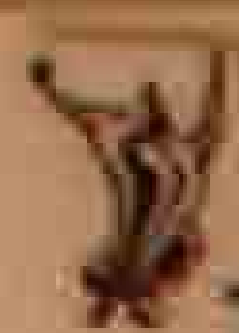


reached him that representatives of the Huntchaks, Dashnaks and ^{HAVAS} Ramvagers were to meet in Constantinople, and that two delegates were coming from the United States. Since these societies usually quarreled with each other, Avedis was curious to learn the reasons for such a gathering, and so with two other students attended it.

The purpose of the inter-party meeting was to put an end to their conflicts, and to work for a common goal-- Armenian autonomy or independence. Turkey was at that time at war with the Balkan states, and a Greek army was advancing on Constantinople. An opportunity--it seemed--might arise for the Armenians to strike for independence. That night Avedis wrote his brother Hagop to convey to the members of the Marash Huntchaks the resolutions adopted at the union meeting. In closing the letter he added:

"Be sure to burn this letter!" At that time there was no censorship, but it was not wise to allow such a letter to fall into the hands of the police. Unfortunately Hagop neglected to burn the letter.

During the second year of his studies the School of Veterinary Medicine was commandeered by the army for use as an emergency hospital. The Turkish army had been defeated in a battle with the coalition of Balkan States, the wounded were being carried into Constantinople, and the students were assigned to assist the military surgeons in attending the wounded. In the summer of 1914 Avedis was given three months leave of absence and returned to his home in Marash.



VIII

Seferian Attends the Turkish Military Academy

Only one month ^{later} after Avedis Seferian had returned to ~~his~~ ^{his} home in Marash on vacation in the summer of 1914 a general mobilization was declared, for Enver Pasha-- Minister of War-- was planning for war against Russia. All young men were obliged to register for military service, and college students were called for training as officers. Avedis was obliged to hasten back to Constantinople, and asked his parents to pack his personal belongings for storage.

The Seferian's neighbor and friend Evliya Zade' had only recently been elevated to the highest post in the Muslim hierarchy--that of Sheikh-ul-Islam--and had moved to Constantinople to administer that office.

After four months of study at the Military Academy Avedis Effendi was commissioned mülazim sani, equivalent to 2nd lieutenant, and transferred to a training camp on the Sea of Marmora where Hassan Tahsin Pasha's summer palace with eighty rooms provided accommodations for the young cadets and their officers.



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Russia had declared war on Turkey--October 28, 1914--after her ports on the Black Sea had been bombarded by Turkish warships. Within the next two months Enver Pasha's army of 100,000 men on the Caucasian front had been destroyed, not more than 10,000 men escaping alive. Humiliated by this defeat, Enver Pasha abandoned his army early in January 1915 and returned to Constantinople to plan his next moves.



X

Seferian Arrested

On a spring day in 1915 Enver Pasha, accompanied by his staff and ~~the~~ head of the German military mission,--
Marshal von der Goltz--attended the closing exercises of the Military Academy, [on the shore of the Marmora] On that day the newly trained cadets were to stage a war manoeuver. They were divided into two detachments, {one to attack and the other to defend}. Commanding the attacking force was Lieutenant Avedis Seferian, ^{who} For that day ^{had been given the rank} [his rank was] Binbashi or Major. The visiting officers watched the manoeuver from their horses on a hill near the villa of Prince Yusuf Izeddin.

At the close of the exercises, Lieutenant Avedis was called to the office of the Director. "Enver Pasha wishes to speak with you," ^{he} [the Director] announced, and escorted the young officer to the group of visiting generals. Enver Pasha--commander-in-chief of ^{the Ottoman armies} ~~all the Turkish forces~~--congratulated him on his performance and asked his name.

"Avedis Effendi Seferian!"

"You are an Armenian?" asked Enver Pasha in surprise.

^{Source} ^{Reply:} "Evet, Hazretleri--Yes, Your Excellency!" replied the lieutenant and saluted.

Enver Pasha shook hands with him and the proud young officer returned to his room. An hour later he was again called to the Director's office, ^{where} ~~There~~ an officer asked his name, and announced that he was under arrest.



"What is the charge against me?" asked the lieutenant.
The officer shrugged his shoulders and replied: ^{that he did} "I do not know." He was taken ^{first} to the guard room, and the next day transferred to the military prison in Istanbul where he found many of the Armenian notables of the city, one of whom he knew. That night fourteen of them were taken out, and he learned later that they had ^{and} been executed on the charge of treason.

^{After} A month later he was transferred to the prison of the Chief of Umuru Police--concerned with affairs of State. There he joined several hundred of the Armenian notables--lawyers, doctors, members of Parliament--the intelligentsia of the capital city. They understood the motive for their arrest. Removal of the leaders, ^{and even} [or] the potential leaders, had always preceded a move against their people. But why had this young officer, still in the Turkish uniform, been included? A few days later all but Seferian were deported to the region north of Konia known as the Salt Lakes.

Three days later a police officer had a message for Lieutenant Avedis. "You are to go to Marash to be tried by court-martial. If you can pay the fare for yourself and a guard you ^{for} ~~may~~ ^{now} travel on the railway. Otherwise you ^{are to} ~~will~~ go on foot with a gendarme for escort!"

The journey on foot would require twenty days, and what gendarme would endure the hardships of such a journey when an accident in the mountains would end his responsibility?



During the three days that he was given to arrange for travel expenses, his thoughts turned to the Sheikh-ul-Islam, his friendly neighbor from Marash. On the third day the officer came to Avedis.

"Pack up whatever you need for the journey. We start tomorrow!"

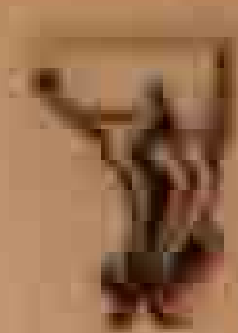
"I wish to see the Sheikh-ul-Islam," replied Avedis. The police were astounded to learn that their prisoner knew this exalted figure, and took him at once to their Chief [of Police]. There ^{Avedis} [he] explained that the Sheikh had been like a father to him. With some misgivings the officer ordered one of his men to take the prisoner by carriage to the Sheikh's rooms.

^{Evliya Zaki - now Sheikh-ul-Islam}
[The Sheikh] received Avedis courteously and listened to his story. He then telephoned to the Chief of Police, stating ^{of} that the Seferian family had always been loyal citizens, and asked that no harm should come to the young officer on his journey. Finally he handed the escort ten Turkish gold liras, and said:

"Eight of these are for the train fare of Avedis Seferian and his escort. The other two will cover the expense of food and shelter along the way."

The Sheikh had not forgotten that Avedis' grandfather--Kevork Agha Kherlakian--had contributed eight gold liras for the journey of his nephew Evliya ^{ev} when he first went to Constantinople to study law.

Within three days Avedis was handed over to the Marash police. There in prison he found that his father was also in chains.



He was charged with treason, his father told him, because of the letter he had written his brother in 1912, instructing him to pass on to the leaders of the Marash revolutionary societies the decision taken at the congress in Constantinople --that the three revolutionary societies should concentrate on the establishment of an independent Armenian state, rather than to quarrel with each other. [His final request--that the letter be burned--had not been heeded.] Shortly after Avedis enlisted in the officers' training school, his former neighbor *the lawyer* Evliya Effendi had passed word to the police that the young cadet had connections with one of the revolutionary societies. The Marash police had searched the Seferian house and those of his relatives and found the suitcase in which his books and papers had been stored. *Among these was the incriminating letter.*

On
Arrival
at Marash
finds his father
in the prison

Kerr

The Court Martial



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A few days ^{later} after his imprisonment in Marash, ^{lt.} Avedis [Seferian] was brought before the military court. The prosecutor, Major Husein Bey, handed a letter to Zakaria Effendi, clerk of the court, and asked that he read it aloud.

"Did you write that letter?" asked Major Husein.

"I don't remember it," replied Avedis, for the language --Turkish-- was not his own. The Major then displayed the original, written in Armenian.

"That is my hand-writing," acknowledged Avedis. The letter had been translated into Turkish by an Armenian whom Avedis knew.

"Are you not ashamed to have written such a letter? The government gave you a free scholarship, free clothing and food, and still you worked against it!"

"Beyim, I wrote that letter two years ago, and I was too young to have good sense. Please judge me by my service to the country!" Avedis was formally charged with treason and taken back to the prison. Zakaria Effendi, the court secretary, told his friend Mihran Kherlakian about the proceedings. "Your cousin the lieutenant is in serious trouble!" Mihran was only too aware of the fate in store for his cousin, for every week men charged with treason were being hanged on the scaffolds at the Kanli Dere bridge.

"Your family is rich. You should do something to save him," said Zakaria Effendi. Mihran reached for his purse, but Zakaria laughed. "You cannot buy the life of Avedis with money! Invite the judge to your home. Cultivate his friendship."

On receiving an invitation to dinner at the home of Mihran's wealthy grandfather Kevork Agha Kherlakian, Major Husein was surprised but pleased. After several visits he felt at home.

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"Bring the golden nargila for our guest!"

In 1896 the Sultan Abdul Hamid had invited Kevork Agha and his wife Khatoun to his palace in order to honor him for services in providing food and clothing for the Turkish armies. On that occasion the Sultan had presented a number of gifts, and among them was the golden water-pipe. The Major admired the beautiful pipe already filled with tobacco and an ember of glowing charcoal.

"It was a gift from our Sultan," commented Kevork Agha. "I want to present it to you!" The Major was overwhelmed. A few days later he met Mihran Effendi and asked: "What could I do for your grandfather Kevork Agha? He has been very kind to me."

After a moment's hesitation Mihran Effendi replied: "He would be greatly pleased if you could give the lieutenant Avedis Seferian a light sentence. He belongs to our family."

Major Husein confided in his secretary. The lieutenant had already been in prison for thirteen months, waiting for Jemal Pasha's confirmation of the court's sentence of six years imprisonment. But Jemal Pasha had ordered that the prisoner should be hanged. Major Husein ordered that Avedis be brought before him.

"Lieutenant Avedis Seferian, the Commander of the Fourth Corps has ordered that you are to be executed by hanging." He then



studied a document on his desk. "However, I have ^{here} a report that you have already been hanged. Now get out of Marash! Change your name, and do not return until the war is over."

The file of papers referring to Seferian's case was conveniently lost. Avedis Seferian no longer existed, but that night a young man slipped out of the city, taking the road to Islahiye. It was Salih Zeki--a name possessed by Avedis' favorite professor at the School of Veterinary Medicine. When he reached the railway station at Islahiye Salih Effendi inquired for his cousin Mihran Kherlakian who served as contractor for the Germans engaged in construction of tunnels on the Bagdad railway. At the village of Ayran he found Mihran, who soon arranged with the head German engineer for the employment of his cousin as a courier between their offices along the construction route.

The German engineers had discovered the reliability of the Armenian workers, and from the hordes of exiles passing along the railway bed towards Mesopotamia twelve thousand had been employed as laborers--not only the men but thier wives and children also. These had settled in camps near the towns of Ayran and Intilli.

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