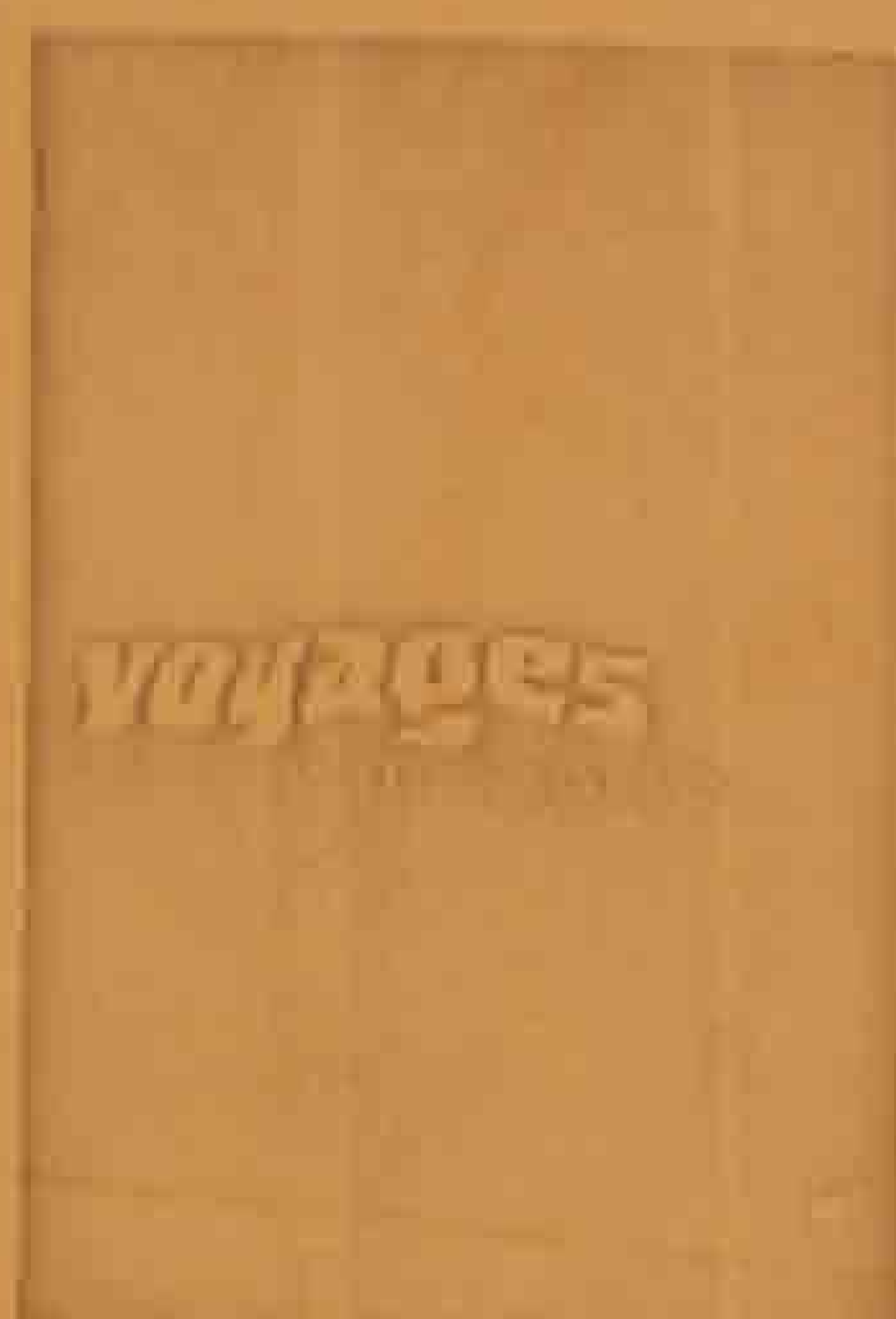


BOOKS

ARARATFall, 1973

THE LAMB WAS LEFT BEHIND

By Bedros Norehad

THE LIONS OF MARASH by Stanley E. Keir.
State University of New York Press: Albany, New
York, 1973. 318 pp. \$15.

The prospects for solving the insoluble Armenian Question had never seemed as bright as they did at the end of World War I. The crushing victory of Armenia's great Allied friends, however, far from ending the woes of a people already bled white resulted in a new series of betrayals and disasters. The siege of Marash and the massacre of the Armenians of the city (and of the Armenian villages in the area) about a year after the Armistice is of special concern: it was there that the post-war ordeals of the Armenian people began and it was there that the Turkish Nationalists openly challenged the French army of occupation in Cilicia.

Long before the end of the war the Sykes-Picot agreement between England and France had assigned to the latter certain parts of the Ottoman Empire, including Cilicia. However, the armies which had fought and bled for four years at Gallipoli and on the Bagdad front, and eventually had overwhelmed the Ottoman army in Palestine under Mustafa Kemal, had been preponderantly British, even though the French Legion d'Orient

(composed of three battalions of Armenian, one of Syrian volunteers, and some Franco-African units) had taken part in the rout of the Turkish army in Palestine. Having put forth the major effort in subduing the Turks, the British government felt entitled to a reconsideration in the division of the spoils. The ensuing long drawn out dispute between the two allies, however provided ample time for Mustafa Kemal's Turkish Nationalist movement to gather sufficient strength to unfurl the flag of insurrection in Marash, challenging, for the first time, the French army of occupation, before it had time to consolidate, after having replaced the British garrisons in Cilicia. In this unholy conflict of interests, the greatest losers were not the British or the French, but the Armenians.

The survivors of the Armenian deportations of 1915— an estimated 200,000 souls—had reason to believe that they had gained a new lease on life and liberty under the protection of their Allied friends, who encouraged them to return to their ancestral homes in Cilicia, where a number of cities were under Allied military control. Moreover, France had made promises of Armenian independence, on the basis of which several thousand Armenian volunteers had fought under the French flag on the Palestine front and continued to serve in Cilicia along with other French units.

The Lions of Marash is a detailed and well documented account of these developments. The



hour of victory and other questions related to the French government's policy in Cilicia, as Richard Hovannisian states in his excellent introduction to *The Lions of Marash*, will not be conclusively understood until the official papers dealing with these events are made available to scholars.

When Raphael Kerlekian, the Armenian leader, had suggested, before the hostilities, that Armenians be armed, Gen. Querrette had responded that the maintenance of order and the security of Armenians was a function of the French army. But subsequent developments did not vindicate this assurance.

Despite all precautions to keep Armenians ignorant of the planned withdrawal, however, a large number of them somehow got wind of what was afoot and chose to brave all the hardships and especially the snow and extreme cold—the coldest February in memory—to follow the retreating army all the way to Islahie. No one knows how many people followed the army. It proved another tragic Golgotha in which many persons froze to death.

"These unhappy people," wrote Lieutenant Colonel Thibault, "worn out by the first two stages of the journey and numbed with cold, sank down a prey to an irresistible desire to sleep and never stirred again. The snow formed their shroud. It was truly a hecatomb! The road from Bel Pounar to Islahiyé was staked out by clusters of corpses."

Col. Normand, who withdrew his relief column, while the guerrillas themselves were in flight, defended his action on the basis of Gen. Dufieux's instruction to withdraw if order could not be restored by February 9. But the enemy already had been asking for a cessation of hostilities and he was informed of that fact. "The decision for the retreat remains a mystery," wrote Colonel (later General) Bremond, French High Commissioner of Cilicia. "It was not made in Beirut, nor in Adana, but in Marash. There seems to be no doubt that the order to leave would not have been given if a wireless outfit had been available in Marash, permitting unbroken communication with Adana."

At the same time back in Marash where, until the French retreat, some 7,500 Armenians had been shot, butchered, and burned alive, another 9,500 souls, crowded in American, French, and German institutions, awaited the final act of carnage. But the dreaded hour never came, because of the courage and dedication of a handful of Americans, including the author, who at considerable personal risk, chose to remain in Marash despite the departure of the French garrison.

Remarkable was the Rev. James Lyman's role at a moment when the fate of 9,700 men, women and children hung by a thread. Rev. Lyman, an old missionary who appears to have studied the Turkish psychology well, made a desperate gamble that might make many a diplomat envious. Realizing that the Turks were not yet aware of the French army's retreat, he assumed the role of a bearer of tidings. Along with Dr. Marion Wilson, at

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

By Richard Hovannisian

Among the scores of men and women who responded to the ACRNE call for volunteers in 1919 was Stanley E. Kerr, a slender, bespectacled junior officer in the United States Army Sanitary Corps. First serving in Aleppo in a multiplicity of positions, including clinical biochemist, photographer, and gatherer of Armenian waifs from Bedouin and Kurdish chieftains, Kerr transferred in the Autumn of 1919 to Marash, where he took charge of American relief operations after the French withdrawal. In view of the fact many Turkish notables regarded the Americans as collaborators with the French and Armenians, it was at no small risk that Kerr and his courageous colleagues stayed at their posts to help the thousands of Armenians whom the French had deserted. Indeed the uncertainties of a hostage-like existence did not end until Kerr departed for Beirut with the last caravan of Armenian orphans in 1922.

Three years after his separation from the Near East Relief, Kerr earned his doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Pennsylvania and returned to Beirut in 1925 as chairman of the Department of Biochemistry at the American University. During their four decades in Lebanon Professor Kerr and his wife, Elsa Reckman Kerr, a former teacher at the Marash College for Girls and later at the Beirut College for Women and the American University, counseled hundreds of students whose parents had been the refugees from Marash and other Cilician cities. In recognition of his service, the American University conferred upon Dr. Kerr the rank of Distinguished Professor, and the Lebanese government honored him with the Order of Merit.

some personal risk, he went to see the chief of the Turkish Nationalist forces, a Kurd named Kluj Ali Bey. The Turkish leader was incredulous when told of the enemy's departure, for he had been laboring under the delusion that the unusual activities



and the French lines were but part of a maneuver of encirclement. But when the accuracy of Rev. Lyman's report was established, taking advantage of the opportunity, Rev. Lyman turned to Kluj Ali, "You have a custom," he said, "that one who brings good news has the right to ask a favor."

"Whatever you demand I shall grant it," replied Kluj Ali, to which Lyman's response was, "I ask that you stop killing the Christians."

Kluj Ali turned to the junior officers and commanded that the order should be taken to all units. There was to be no more killing of civilians.

During the succeeding long months of uncertainty, fear, and ever present intimidation, the American staff of NRA used all its facilities and Yankee ingenuity to keep their Armenian charges from the threat of fresh reprisals and starvation. The final exodus took place upon the signing of the treaty between Franklin Bouillon and Kemalist Turks, which assured, but did not guarantee, the security of the Christians, and of course, it could not be accomplished without the denial of property rights to Armenians who were forbidden to sell their homes, and were relieved at every turn of whatever little they had.

With the departure of the last group of orphans and the second mass exile of the people of Marash within five years, as well as the cruel liquidation of a few Turks who had become Christian, Marash, the ancient Hittite city, had become, *el-hamd-ul-illah*, one hundred per cent Moslem!

Out of an Armenian population of 85,000 which had existed before World War I in Marash and surrounding villages, there had survived or managed to return to their homes only 22,000 in the city and 2,000 in the villages. Very few villagers survived the second holocaust. The city fared comparatively better, thanks to the presence of the French garrison, part of the time, and of the Americans to the very end. According to Kerr, some 11,900 died in the city, the villages, and on the road to Ishahie. The number of those who finally left the city body and soul intact was about 9,700.

"At the gate of the old Hittite citadel," writes Stanley Kerr, there once stood a stone lion. No people whether Turk, Armenian, or French can claim that it stands for their bravery . . ."

However, I would suggest that, that stone lion, which is now on display in the Ankara Museum, stand as a reminder of the courageous little group of Americans—Rev. James Lyman, Dr. Marion Wilson, and Stanley Kerr and their dedicated

colleagues of the Near East Relief—who chose, at much personal risk to remain at Marash with the seemingly impossible hope of proving helpful to some 9,700 people who had been deserted by their military protectors. Their success in achieving what had appeared totally impossible, makes their action so much more impressive. It was an incredible performance beyond the call of duty.

NASIR'S LEGACY

By Margaret Mirabelli

EGYPT UNDER NASIR: A STUDY IN POLITICAL DYNAMICS by H. Izair Dekmejian. Albany: The State University Press of New York, 1971, 380 pages, \$10.

Jamal Abdal Nasir was the first ethnic Egyptian to rule in Egypt since the demise of the Pharaohs. His sudden death ended the first phase of the Egyptian Revolution that began in 1952. Egypt under Nasir evaluates the events under his regime that led to the present "critical juncture in Middle Eastern history."

Dr. Dekmejian traces the evolution of events in Egypt during the past twenty years, scrutinizes the aftermath of Nasir's death, and cautiously analyzes future possibilities. Nasir's personality dominates the scene and raises the question: what is charisma and how did Nasir attain it? Dekmejian relates the complexities of Nasir's charismatic leadership to Egyptian ideology and the nature of elite and various social groups. The legitimacy derived from charisma, combined with his military regime's coercive ability, helped Nasir to exercise a substantial degree of control and stability.

Dr. Dekmejian goes back to the days of Farouk and the British presence in Egypt, and proceeds through the Suez Crisis of 1956 and other aspects of the Arab-Israel conflict, the Bandung Conference, the arms deal with the Soviet Bloc, and the development of Arab Socialism.

In turn, the Pan-Arab movement sponsored by Nasir helped to establish him as a hero in his own right. Averse to both the West and the Soviet Union, he borrowed from various ideologies and bent them to Egypt's specific need. Nasir's pragmatism, his stated policy of neutralism, his ability to convert military defeat into seeming victory, all helped to insure his political dominance and charisma.

Professor Dekmejian, whose work is based on original Egyptian sources and contacts, was obliged to reexamine his conclusions after Nasir's death.