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✓ THE LIONS OF MARASH by Stanley E. Kerr. 318  
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\$15.00.

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Kerr, Stanley E.

The Lions of Marash: Personal Experiences with American Near East Relief, 1919-1922

Albany: State University of New York Press, 318 pp., \$15.00, LC 73-38001  
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After World War I the victors attempted to repatriate the remnants of those Armenians of Cilicia whom the Turks had driven in 1915 into the Syrian desert to die. The enterprise offered some hope of success because Cilicia was protected by British troops until the French could take over as provided in the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. The hope was vain; the unwillingness of the Allies to make an adequate commitment to the safety of the Armenians whose return to Cilicia they had encouraged (in the case of some orphans, commanded) made inevitable the tragic events of this book.

During most of 1919 the British, although unable to control the Turkish Nationalists and the inevitable bandits in the less populated areas, maintained a measure of order in such major cities as Marash, Aintab, and Urfa. When, at the end of October, the British moved out and the French moved in, the Turks saw that the new force was much smaller than the old. Harassment set in and swelled to warfare between January 21 and February 10, during which time an unknown number of Armenians were killed in circumstances ghastly beyond description. On February 7 a column commanded by Colonel Normand arrived

from Adana to defeat the Turks, who began pulling out of the city. While the Armenians rejoiced at their supposed deliverance, Normand ordered his force back to Adana. This had to be done without consultation with his superior, General Quérette, since wireless equipment was one of the items the military brains at headquarters had failed to supply.

Although the French withdrawal was supposed to be secret, some 3400 civilians, mostly Armenians, joined them in the three-day retreat to Islahiye. Battling the deep snow which covered the rocky terrain and marching at near zero temperatures, they were confronted on the third day with an overwhelming blizzard. About one thousand, many of them children, died on the way.

Involved in these events as witness and participant was a young American chemist, Stanley E. Kerr, who had come to Marash to work for Near East Relief. Faced with the impossible task of tending the wounded and sheltering and feeding those who took refuge on every square inch of the American Mission compound (as thousands of others were sheltered in the Franciscan Mission near the center of the city), Kerr and his companions performed heroically, although his matter-of-fact narrative doesn't say so. While his sympathy for the Armenians is manifest, he never gives way to expressions of outrage, but merely tells us what happened. If he allows himself a critical indulgence at all, it could be a lack of appreciation for the French occupation force. Sent into a hopeless situation by their government, which was ready to make a deal with the Turks, they did

their duty as well as they could and a number of them lost their lives. Kerr's account, however, completely bears out the charge made at the time by the civil administrator, Colonel Brémond, that Cilicia was not lost to Turkish valor but to French lack of will.

Forty years of teaching biochemistry at the American University of Beirut had earned a more restful life for Stanley Kerr when he retired in 1965. He rejected repose in order to relive the horrors of his youth and to write this account. In doing so he has used not only his own notes and recollections but the recollections of survivors and printed and archival materials in English, French, German, Turkish, and Armenian. (For translations from the Armenian he has had the help of Mr. Antranig Chalabian; the rest he did himself.) His well-written account of the destruction of the Armenian people in Turkey is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the subject by authors such as Richard Hovannisian, Marjorie Housepian, Ulrich Trumppener, and a number of others.

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take sufficient account of the humanitarian approach which the President displayed toward the problem (although never forgetting political considerations). In conclusion, one must agree with a statement in a review quoted on the dust cover, that "it is entirely likely that further researches—once more State Department and related materials are available—will disclose that . . . American policy in the Middle East had wider sources and explanations than . . . the Democrats' chase for funds and votes in the 1948 election."

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## TURKEY

THE LIONS OF MARASH: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH AMERICAN NEAR EAST RELIEF, 1919-1922, by Stanley E. Kerr. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973. xxvi + 318 pages. Illus. Appendix. Bibl. Index. \$15.00.

Reviewed by Roderic H. Davison

Stanley Kerr, who retired in 1965 as professor of biochemistry at the American University of Beirut, was a young clinical chemist on the staff of American Near East Relief at the end of World War I. In 1919-20 he served in Aleppo and Marash, and in 1921-22 again in Marash.

The period was troubled. British forces from Syria moved into southern Turkey, including the city of Marash, after the armistice with Turkey and probably in violation of the armistice terms. Then in October 1919 they relinquished the occupation to French troops. In January 1920, nationalist Turks organized a rising against the French occupation of Marash; soon it spread to other cities. Though a French relief column reached Marash on February 7, all French troops were secretly and suddenly withdrawn from the city three days later.

Caught in the midst of the sniping, cannonading and guerrilla warfare were the inhabitants of Marash: sometimes participants, often just victims. Thousands of Turks perished. More thousands of Armenians lost their lives to bullets, fires or in subfreezing blizzards as they withdrew to the south with the French. A more peaceful but precariously stable period followed the Turkish victory. When France agreed under the Franklin-Bouillon Treaty of October 1921 to evacuate Cilicia and the areas north of the Baghdad Railway line, renewed nationalist pressures brought about the emigration of all Marash's remaining Armenians in 1922.

Kerr was a witness to much that happened in Marash in this period, and has used the letters he wrote to his family at the time as the basis for his book. It is not, however, purely Kerr's memoir, since he has added much from other sources. He has delved into accounts published by French military men, into Armenian memoirs which he has had translated, and into some Turkish works. He has also used unpublished memoirs, diaries and reports of contemporaries, as well as interviews in recent years with some former Armenian residents of Marash (no interviews were with Turks).

The result is an account as soberly factual as Kerr can make it, though he sees things mostly from the Armenian side; one gets few insights into the views or activities of the Turkish population of Marash. Sometimes events, especially in the days of fighting between January 21 and February 10, to which nearly half the book is devoted, seem to be tangled in monumental confusion. At other times a personal observation by Kerr of a small corner of the activity clearly illuminates the human qualities of a participant—French, Turk, or Armenian. There were as well about a dozen Americans in Marash in educational, medical or relief work; since Kerr was one, they play a considerable rôle in his story. Many of the individuals caught in the fighting courageously risked their lives, including Kerr himself.

It is in fact the record of bits of action that Kerr himself saw or that he learned first-hand from other participants that is most valuable—the death of Dr. Mustafa, the kindness of

Kiliç Ali, the unceasing work of Dr. Wilson, the skill of the Armenian *usta* in tapping an underground conduit to get water to extinguish fires, the death of pastor Solakian's wife.

This is not the definitive account of the events of the Marash. They need to be placed into a broader context of the Turkish war for independence of 1919-22, of Armenian aspirations, of British and French policy. British, French and Turkish archives should yield much additional information. Meanwhile, this is a useful book, provided with two convenient maps on the endpapers and some good photographs.

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