MY RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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HAGOP A. SEROPIAN

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Translated into English
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Nicosia 2019

NOTE

Dear reader,

a. If you encounter names or persons in the texts, who are known to you

b. If you have taken notes of your recollections or have in your possession your relative's hand notes

Then, we kindly ask you to contact the editor of the Armenian text at the following address:

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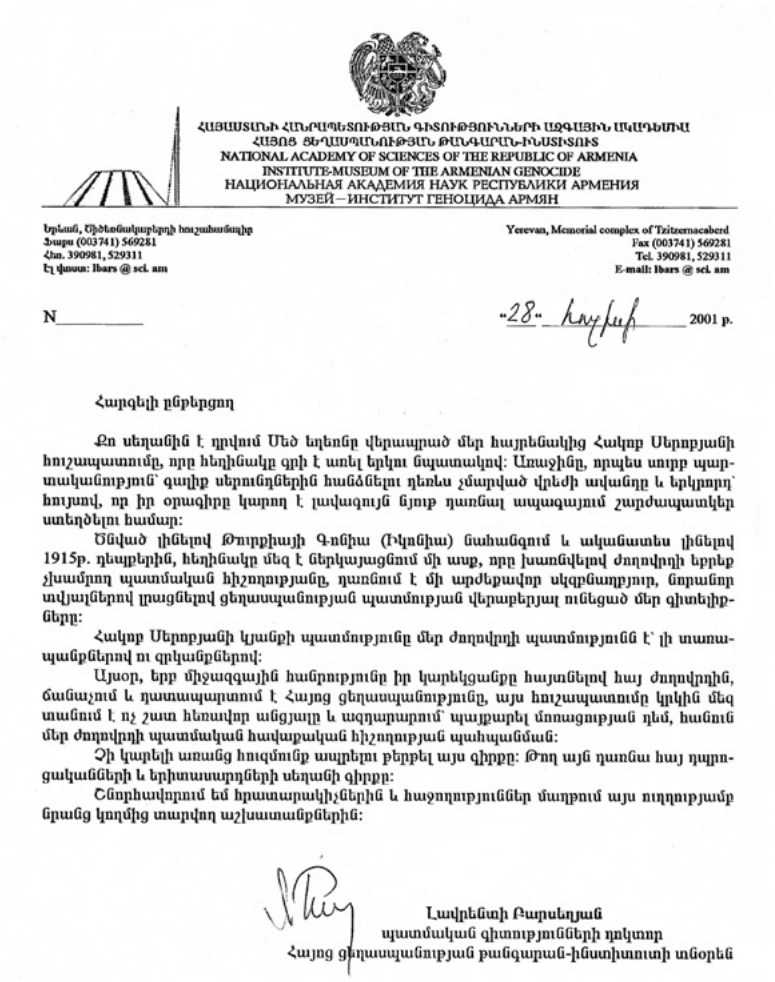
original



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NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
INSTITUTE-MUSEUM OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE
НАЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ АКАДЕМИЯ НАУК РЕСПУБЛИКИ АРМЕНИЯ
МУЗЕЙ–ИНСТИТУТ ГЕНОЦИДА АРМЯН

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Հարգելի ընթերցող

Քո սեղանին է դրվում Մեծ եղեռնը վերապրած մեր հայրենակից Հակոբ Սերոբյանի հուշապատումը, որը հեղինակը գրի է առել երկու նպատակով: Առաջինը, որպես սուրբ պարտականություն՝ զալիք սերունդներին հանձնելու դեռևս չմարված վրեժի ավանդը և երկրորդ՝ հույսով, որ իր օրագիրը կարող է լավագույն նյութ դառնալ ապագայում շարժապատկեր ստեղծելու համար:

Ծնված լինելով Թուրքիայի Գոնիա (Իկոնիա) նահանգում և ականատես լինելով 1915թ. դեպքերին, հեղինակը մեզ է ներկայացնում մի ասք, որը խառնվելով ժողովրդի երբեք չխամրող պատմական հիշողությանը, դառնում է մի արժեքավոր սկզբնաղբյուր, նորանոր տվյալներով լրացնելով ցեղասպանության պատմության վերաբերյալ ունեցած մեր գիտելիքները:

Հակոբ Սերոբյանի կյանքի պատմությունը մեր ժողովրդի պատմությունն է՝ լի տառապանքներով ու զրկանքներով:

Այսօր, երբ միջազգային հանրությունը իր կարեկցանքը հայտնելով հայ ժողովրդին, ճանաչում և դատապարտում է Հայոց ցեղասպանությունը, այս հուշապատումը կրկին մեզ տանում է ոչ շատ հեռավոր անցյալը և ազդարարում՝ պայքարել մոռացության դեմ, հանուն մեր ժողովրդի պատմական հավաքական հիշողության պահպանման:

Չի կարելի առանց հուզմունք ապրելու թերթել այս գիրքը: Թող այն դառնա հայ դպրոցականների և երիտասարդների սեղանի գիրքը:

Շնորհավորում եմ հրատարակիչներին և հաջողություններ մաղթում այս ուղղությամբ նրանց կողմից տարվող աշխատանքներին:

Լավրենտի Բարսեղյան
պատմական գիտությունների դոկտոր
Հայոց ցեղասպանության թանգարան-ինստիտուտի տնօրեն

translation

LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
SCIENCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA,
INSTITUTE MUSEUM OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Dear Readers,

You have before you the memoirs of our compatriot Hagop Seropian, who recorded in writing the Genocide with two objects in mind. In the first instance, he felt it his duty to pass on to future generations the desire for retribution, and, in the second instance, to provide the data for a film on the subject.

Having been born in the province of Konya (Iconium) in Turkey, the author witnessed the events of 1915, and keeps refreshed our inextinguishable memory, by presenting a record of the Genocide with new data.

The experience of Hagop Seropian, so full of suffering and deprivation, corresponds to the experience of the Armenian nation.

Today, the international community, expressing its sympathy to the Armenians, recognizes and condemns this Genocide. These memoirs take us back to the not too distant past and warn us against forgetting what happened, and refresh our collective memory.

We cannot read the pages of this book without deep emotion. May this book become essential reading in schools and for individuals.

I congratulate the publishers and wish them success in their work.

Lavrendi Parseghian
Doctor of History
Director of the Genocide Institute Museum

HAGOP ARMENAGI SEROPIAN

We can always remember him as a father and a diligent man of few words, who was exacting when it came to family honour, "Armenianness" and the Armenian language.

He was very particular about health, and physical exercise and walking were part of his daily routine. He was a non-smoker, who used to gather his grandchildren and get one of them to read aloud from a book bearing the title "The Family Doctor". He could not tolerate the waste of time involved in pointless pastimes. He would not allow backgammon and cards to be played in the house. He had reservations about kissing, and up to a certain age, the children had to wear aprons and napkins bearing the words "don't kiss me" written on them. He would only kiss them on the cheek after they were asleep.

As might be expected, he had a preference for boys as his grandchildren. He was also against corporal punishment.

He was a churchgoer, who pressured his children to attend Sunday School and to serve at the altar. He used to take a keen interest in their lessons, their development, their upbringing, their bearing, the words they used, their behaviour and their cleanliness.

He was a sensitive person with delicate feelings, who never wanted to be a burden on others. He himself wrote his obituary and built his own coffin. A day before he died, he gathered his loved ones around his deathbed, and conscious of the many occasions when his words had been hurtful, though well-meant, he passed away uttering "forgive me if I have offended you".

The Armenian Genocide had left an indelible mark on his personality, and his eyes would fill with tears whenever he remembered it. During the long nights of the fighting in Lebanon, he used to gather his children and his grandchildren, sitting cross-legged around him, to describe the massacre of the Armenians.

Perhaps his own personal survival during the Genocide had a special meaning for him. Possibly he felt he had a special mission to promote family sanctity to mitigate difficulties in other families, to encourage new craftsmen in their career and to teach them their trade, as well as to cultivate self-sacrifice, impartiality and integrity. These are the ideals he sought to teach them.

His experience during the Genocide appears to have taught him prudence. After a life of suffering, his worry during his declining years was how we, his successors, would carry on the mission, which he had undertaken and which he bequeathed to us as a moral obligation. He had said, "I have performed my duty towards you: how will you carry on? I still have a lot to do." He had, however reached the end of his days.

Yet, he managed to record his memoirs in writing, which he wanted to be available to posterity. At an advanced age he gave the file of his memoirs to one of his grandchildren, asking him to take good care of it, with the words: "These contain a summary of the Turkish brutalities."

He knew Konya like the back of his hand, and throughout his life he yearned for his fatherland - a sentiment which he made his children share. He was well aware that a person who has lived through the Genocide must not take a partisan stand, and he never joined a political party.

The years of exile and massacre appear to have created in him a sense of insecurity, and this complex manifested itself in various ways, such as in his prudence, in his desire for perfection and in his pessimism.

He was indeed an extreme pessimist, and, as a result, was unwilling to have his meals without his children: should they be late, he would wait for them outside his house, or even go to various hospitals, looking around the casualty wards in case his loved ones were patients there.

Just as his childhood years were forged in the furnace of massacre and exile, his youth and later manhood were influenced by the strict discipline of the French during the dire years of the Second World War.

It was during these years that he perfected his machine for the production of nails and also invented a press for flattening metal sheets.

Today, about eleven years after his death, his family and his grandchildren are aware of their grandfather's fight for survival during the Genocide: their own existence is due to the survival of their grandfather, Hagop Seropian.

The question is what will be the result of their own struggle to continue to exist, much depending on their own efforts.

His grateful family and grandchildren

THE TESTIMONY OF HAGOP SEROPIAN, A VICTIM OF THE 1915 ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

These memoirs have been written by Hagop Seropian, one of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. We are under the obligation to publish the full, comprehensive and academically sound record of the Genocide in memory of our martyrs.

Hagop Seropian was born in Konya on 23 November 1903 in a large family, which observed traditional patriarchal values. He was educated at the Djenanian College, and had the ambition to become a doctor. However, the Genocide put an end to his daily routine, and he, his family and relatives were forced into exile. This terrible and horrendous uprooting and an uncertain existence in the twilight between life and death, and the struggle to remain alive left its mark on the young developing mind of a bright lad.

According to his memoirs, Seropian settled down in Aleppo, married and had four children. He became one of the founders of the Patriotic Association of Konya. In 1953 he was elected a member of the Railway Management of Aleppo. In 1964 he moved to Beirut, where he lived until his death on 9 April 1992. His remains are buried in the Bourj Hamoud Armenian cemetery.

He was by nature solemn and stood out as a strict person: he was always ready to help. He was an avid reader and collected cuttings from various newspapers.

Literature was close to his heart, and he has written many unpublished poems, dating back to 1923. He also wrote unpublished novels in 1980. His knowledge of French and his love of French literature also led him to translate French theatrical works during the 1950's.

However, even if he has not published any literary and cultivated works, the "Nairi" publishers in Aleppo printed in 1951 a book written by him, dealing with technical matters related to his profession.

Hagop Seropian wrote this book as an eye-witness of the events on the basis of his diary in 1985, which also included the data for a second volume under the title "How Onnig was finally saved". He has not recorded the dates when he commenced and ended, but it appears that he ended his memoirs in the late 1985, or at the latest in early 1986. It also appears that he initially jotted down some of the events, but later worked assiduously and without interruption to present these notes in a comprehensive and chronological form. Probably his oral description of his experience during the Genocide, which he gave his relations in the course of the war in Lebanon, was the stimulus which led him to write his memoirs.

This book of memoirs and testimony is characterized by its vibrant realism. In spite of the decades that intervened between his life in Aleppo and the tragic events, which extended over an approximately four-year period, beginning with his life in Konya, this book fully and uniquely reflects the pain he felt. Seropian describes the national significance of the tragedy, and shows a sympathetic understanding of the victims of the Genocide, whom he presents in a new light. The reader becomes a virtual eye-witness of the events. I personally endeavoured to locate my missing uncles Antranig, Kerovti, Yeprem, Boghos, Sarkis, Simon and my aunt Yester.

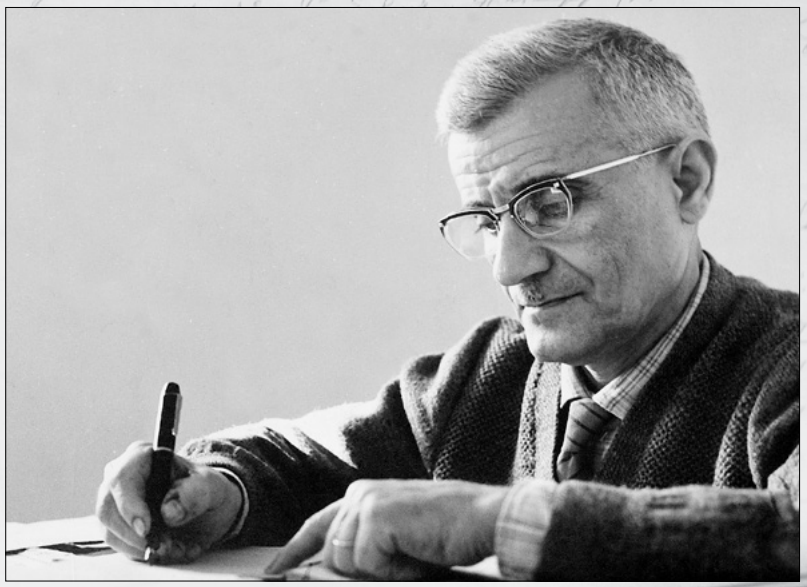
This testimony was legibly hand-written. The manuscript has been preserved in good condition. This testimony of the Genocide has been published thanks to the help extended by Sevag and Vicken.

Absolutely nothing has been added to the 350 page manuscript of the testimony. We have touched up the linguistics, reduced repetitions and omitted quotations by third persons. The same was done with irrelevant family events not related to the Genocide, which refer to a later period.

These recollections were published in weekly installments in the "Zartonk" Beirut daily during the period 22 January to 19 June 1999.

ANTRANIG DAKESSIAN

Sample of the original manuscript by Hagop Seropian



Hagop Seropian while writing his eyewitness accounts

INTRODUCTION

Dear reader, I request indulgence for any linguistic errors that may exist in the text. I am neither a poet, nor a historian, nor a novelist, nor a writer, nor anything else.

I wrote my memoirs with the following objects:

A. As a legacy to future generations so that they may be aware of what my brothers experienced. As an observer of tradition, and conscious of my advanced age, I would like to pass on the desire for retribution to the present and future generations, before such a sentiment dies out. The cup, which the Turks forced me to drink in 1915 was extremely bitter. The journeys we had to face were long and endless and our sufferings immeasurable. The Armenians, young and old, indiscriminately, had to bear the cross of Golgotha during those years. Our misfortunes began the day when the Turks dastardly imposed their dominion over us. This was the bitter result of the unwise policies of our ancestors, who for centuries paid with their blood, suffering, tribulation and slavery.

B. This book may some day be noticed by an enterprising individual. Such a person may contribute to the preparation of a film presenting the tribulations, privations and the torment of the generation which faced the Genocide, or to otherwise make known these events. If such a film of the Genocide is made, our long-standing enemy will be exposed, disgraced and humiliated before the eyes of the world, and at the same time contribute money to help our nation.

I have been a victim of that period and along with hundreds of thousands like me, who rebuilt their lives, I have, with my own diligent efforts, become a machine tool specialist. Over a period of forty years, I have been a useful member of society. In addition, I have offered the children, who had to enter the labour market at an early age, a technician’s handbook, written as best I could.

I spent the long years between 1924 and 1964 as the responsible supervisor of the machine tool workshop of the Aleppo State Railways.

KONYA

I was born in Konya on 23 November 1903. The province of Konya is an important area of the Near East and is situated at an altitude of 3770 feet above sea level. Both the town and the province are known by the same name. Konya is a commercial town, connected to many other towns by rail. It produces grain, wool and cotton textiles and constitutes the largest province in Turkey. It has an area of 47,721 square kilometres, much of it within the limits of the Near East, and is quite close to the Mediterranean Sea. Antalya is its seaport. The town is situated on a hill, and has a population of 90,000. The old part of the town, which lies next to the citadel is the most densely populated area. The buildings there are low mud-plastered timber or mud-brick structures. Nearly every house has a garden.

The local well water contains salt. Drinking water has come from sources further away since Roman times. Water of varying quality has been brought from different sources, the last of which has been from Mukhbili. The Tarla Quarter at the edge of Konya is an exclusively Armenian area, whose water is sweet and potable. I have seen traces of an old Roman fort, with marble columns and sculptures depicting lions and other figures near our quarter: some of these are next to the boundaries of the gardens of our relatives. After Kemal Ataturk took over the government, archaeological excavations on the nearby Alaeddin Hill revealed inscriptions, which showed that Konya had a history of thousands of years. The Hittites, known as a sea-faring nation, had their empire there.

According to a Phrygian legend, Konya was the first city to come into being after the Flood. The first rulers of the city were the Lydians, followed by the Persians and then by the Romans.

St. Paul and Bartholomew lived here when spreading the gospel in the Near East. This was the reason why the city took the name Iconium, which means “holy” in Greek. At one time the city was under Greek and Byzantine rule and there were many caves in the suburbs and the neighbouring villages, housing hermits and pilgrims. Later the region came under the domination of the Arabs, who caused considerable damage and destroyed a number of

historical sites. A quarter, bearing the name “Arablar” still exists in today’s Konya. In 1097, the Crusaders, on their way to the Holy Land, captured and held Konya for a short time. Their presence there was of short duration, as the Seljuks recaptured Konya and turned it into their capital. The Seljuks proceeded to build “medressehs” (religious schools), palaces and minarets. Some of these buildings still exist today, and constitute tourist attractions, with their blue and white sandstone walls and their characteristic style.

Finally, Mehmed II conquered Konya in 1467. From then on Konya became part of the Ottoman Empire. After the 1918 armistice, Konya came under Italian tutelage, which, however, was of short duration. The Italian troops, with their plumed helmets, became the laughing stock of the local populace and deserted after a year and a half, leaving via Antalya. As soon as the Italians left, Kemal Ataturk moved in and took over Konya.

The public gardens are sited on the ruins of the citadel, on the northern side of which the Alaeddin School and mosque are situated. Indjeh, with its slender minaret can be seen in the distance. This minaret, as well as the streets and other minarets in the town are the creations of Sinan, a famous architect of Armenian origin.

Sinan was born in Aghrnasi, one of the villages in Kessaria (Caesaria). In 1573 the Turks forcibly converted to Islam the population of Aghrnas, Isbilia, Esbdun, Gassi and other neighbouring villages in Caesaria, the process of Islamization was carried out by the arbitrary introduction of Moslem immigrants.

At the present time there are two or three Armenian families in Konya: they are mechanics from Constantinople and remain there. Before World War I there were approximately 500 Armenian families, while, at the time the exiles started, there were about 1000 to 1200 families there.

Konya is a Seljuk town, with all its Turkish characteristics. It has it full share of Dervishes (Moslem friars), sultans, tekkes (Dervish convents), cemeteries, mosques, marble baths and fountains, evoking memories of poets and Caliphs.

The local Armenian residents of Konia were brought from Persia, all of them artisans, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, foundry-men, bell-makers, carpenters, shoemakers and tailors. Later, other

Armenians came from Kessaria, who dealt with grain, wool, opium and textiles. They would export these goods to Europe via Izmir (Smyrna), Constantinople and Antalya. There were also Armenians in the larger villages around Konya. Likewise, they, too, were traders, dealing with the export of wheat, barley and other grains. The province of Konya is divided into various regions (one of these regions was turned into a province of its own when Kemal Ataturk took over). The Armenians in these regions mainly came from various parts of Kessaria, such as Talas, Guermir, Beeletsi, etc. In almost every house in all the villages and regions listed below there were carpet weavers. These include Bozgur, Nevshehir, Aksara, Beyshehir, Ilasdik, Ermeneg, Chumra, Karaman, Ereyli, Sileh and Monastir.

During the hot summer days the Armenian and Greek families, who could afford it, would go to Sileh and Monastir for a change of air. "Monastir" is the Greek word for monastery. Around Monastir there are caves, bearing the names of saints. Sileh was a purely Greek village, whose inhabitants wear their own characteristic attire and use a provincial Greek dialect. The women wear long "shalvars" (baggy trousers) with a wide cloth belt across their waists, a long fez on their heads and a shawl decorated with floral patterns. They are beautiful with rosy-white skins. There is a dome-shaped hill called Takgaleh Dagh in Sileh. At the very top of this hill there is a large iron ring. It is said that after the Flood, when the waters began to recede from Konya, the summit of the hill was the first to emerge from the waters, and served as a berth for the boats in the area: this is why the ring was set up for mooring.

THE MONGOL SELJUK DERVISHES

Konya was the seat of the mevlevis (dervishes). Hunkur Oghlu, the Mullah of the remaining dervishes used to live there.

Just as the knights from the Ardzrouni tribe had the prerogative to crown the Armenian kings, the mevlevi Seljuk Mongols had the authority to anoint a new king in the case of Turkish history. This Turkish practice was stopped by Kemal Ataturk, when he founded the Turkish republic.

When Ataturk decreed that men should wear caps instead of fezzes and quaint headwear, Hunkiar Oghlu was unable to emerge from his house, wearing his 50 cm. tall felt hat. He begged to be allowed that he at least be allowed to wear his felt fez, but all his entreaties were to no avail. After being confined to his house for a number of months, Hunkiar Oghlu committed suicide in despair, by jumping from his balcony. That is how he ended his days, which also spelt the end of his sect and its followers.

His children left for Aleppo and elsewhere, where they used their own mosques for several decades. Later, they lost their identity.

Their mosque in Konya is well worth mentioning. The mosque had a gilded dome of green sandstone. The mosque now serves as a museum. Inside the mosque there were two graves side by side: one was draped in green, the other in black. It is alleged that the grave with the black cloth is that of an Armenian vartabed (archimandrite). Incense would be burnt at the graves on Fridays and Sundays. This also has its own story but I cannot vouch for its authenticity.

The story handed down orally over the years runs as follows:-

"Once upon a time, a gentleman wanted to become a hadji (a pilgrim who has been to Mecca), by travelling to Mecca, but he could not trust anyone to look after his wife and children until his return, apart from the then Armenian archimandrite. Before setting out on his pilgrimage, he revealed his plan to the Armenian archimandrite.

The Armenian archimandrite, foreseeing the slander of which he would become the object, had his penis amputated, and after taking the necessary precautions against its decomposition, placed the penis into a box.

Before setting out on his pilgrimage, the gentleman invited the Armenian archimandrite to his palace, so that the latter could stay there until his return. In his turn, the archimandrite gave the gentleman the sealed box with the penis, with the proviso that the box would not be opened until his return. The gentleman left for Mecca, and when he returned, rumours, motivated by jealousy and fanaticism, began to circulate.

After welcoming the gentleman and preparing to return home, the archimandrite asked him to open the box. On opening the box, the gentleman was shocked and surprised by the sincerity of the archimandrite and the great sacrifice he had made, expressing his sorrow. He then suggested to the archimandrite that after they die, their tombs should be placed side by side. This is the reason why the two tombs are located next to each other in the mevlevi mosque: one belongs to the Armenian archimandrite, and the other belongs to the gentleman.

On Fridays the mevlevis play the flute (on a scale of B flat, E flat) and dance in circles to the rhythm of prayers, turning round very fast, but taking care not to collide with each other. Should an Armenian show interest, he would be invited to watch them, but Turks would be turned out.

They respected the Armenians, and Hunkiar Oghlu prevented the Turks from harming the Armenians in Konya during the 1895-1909 massacres. He always stopped the criminals from carrying out their evil designs with the words:- “I cannot allow such inhuman acts to be perpetrated in this place”.

RECOLLECTIONS ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR I

In extending its influence in the East, Germany had taken the Ottoman Empire under its tutelage after 1906. On the other hand, in order to fulfil its future plans, it signed a treaty of alliance with the Austro-Hungarians. Later, Bulgaria and Turkey would join the alliance when World War I broke out in 1914.

In August 1914 Turkey began mobilizing. At the time I was

an eleven year old pupil in the second class of the Konya College. Turkey was then governed by the so-called Ittihad Ve Terakke (i.e. the Union and Progress Party), which was set up by the Young Turks.

The mobilization plan required all males of military age to register their names at the local recruitment centres.

My father was then 42 years old and therefore liable for conscription. Like all other citizens, my father presented himself to the specified recruitment centre to be registered. The first day he went there, the centre was so crowded that he was unable to register. He appeared a second time at the recruitment centre, but returned in the evening tired and dust-covered. This time, after presenting his identity papers, he was given a short note, which stated:- “When your age-group is called up, you should present yourself at such and such centre.”

With this suspense regarding his call up, an atmosphere of acute tension prevailed in our house. The following day, my father started settling the business affairs of his shop. He sent messages to his customers, who had bought on credit, to settle their accounts, asking them to understand the unforeseen situation he faced.

When he approached those who owed him money, some paid only part of their debts, while others said they were unable to pay immediately, but would do so at a later date. Thus, my father faced a hopeless situation. Next, he decided to call on a man called Narinin Yusuf, a wretched member of the Ittihad Party, who owed him an additional one pound for furniture which had been made to his specifications. I accompanied my father to his shop on this occasion.

After a long while, my father said to me, “I am off to Narinin Yusuf: I wonder if I shall manage to get the money he owes me”. He then left but was back half an hour later, but the left side of his face was red. I asked him, “ What has happened? Why is your face red, and why are you in such a nervous state?” At first he was unwilling to answer. The tears dripping from his left eye were bothering him and he kept trying to wipe his face with a handkerchief. My father, who never used swearwords, gave in when I persisted asking for an explanation and told me what had happened. When he went to Narinin Yusuf, demanding that he settle his account, this monster and member of the Ittihad clique got to his feet and struck him on

the face, kicking him out of his shop with the words, “Son of an infidel, tomorrow we shall liquidate you! How dare you ask for money? Get lost!”

What could my father do, and where could he turn for help to claim what was his due? In any case, he had been called up, and within eight days he would be sent wherever the Authorities chose.

These were sensitive times, with the government beginning to rob the people in the traditional Turkish style. The procedure was to send a government-appointed team of military and political persons to inspect the merchandise held by the various merchants and to record whatever the government might require, to be then sent to some specified address. The following were some of the victims of this virtual robbery:- The Yepranossian commercial firm, who had to surrender various kinds of textile demanded by the military, the Afarian-Semerdjian firm (textiles, linen and cotton goods), the Baltayan firm, Greek merchants, our own shop (28 office desks and dozens of chairs), the Setrakian and Ohanian brothers and the Greek merchants Lambro and Demetri. These goods had to be delivered and transported to the required location by the merchants themselves, in exchange for a receipt, stating the price of the goods: the debt was to be settled after the end of the war. Hundreds of Armenian and Greek merchants were robbed in this manner by the government.

Until recently, my mother kept these receipts issued and stamped by the Turkish authorities for the goods they had commandeered.

In the event, the Turks placed the goods that they had seized into the category of “taxation for the war effort”, and that was the end of it as far as they were concerned. This situation and state of affairs drove every Armenian family, including ours, into despondency and was a cause of great concern.

Mother’s eyes filled with tears as she repeated the words, “How shall I cope and support my three children and myself with my husband conscripted in the army?” My grandmother was likewise upset and muttered prayers with tremulous lips and would often breathe out, “Lord have mercy on us”, turning her languid eyes towards Heaven.

Throughout the night, Turkish urchins would ceaselessly bang empty oil cans, drumming tuneless noises, and upsetting

our tense nerves to an unbearable degree. The fanatical Turkish populace declared war on the infidels. They were glad, that by sending the infidels to the front, they would have the opportunity to massacre them, and were confident of returning victorious to deal with the infidels.

I take the opportunity to digress from my main topic to inform the reader about the mentality of the fanatical Turkish Mongols.

At the start of the 1912 Balkan war, the then mevlevi sheikh, Mullah Hinkiar Oghlu expressed the readiness of his community to help defend the fatherland. The Sultan congratulated the mullah and rewarded him with a gift of 300 Ottoman pounds. The mullah returned to Konya, having won the favour of the Sultan.

During the 1914 mobilization, the mullah went to Constantinople to present himself to Sultan Reshad, and to declare that his sect and their followers were prepared to participate in the war in defence of the fatherland.

This time the offer of the mevlavi was accepted. The mullah was forced to send a telegram to the remaining Seldjuk mevlavis to convene in Konya. This consultation went on for days.

They recited verses from the Koran in the Mevlahane Mosque and played the Mevlahane march with flutes. They then marched and danced, according to their custom, twirling around the fountain next to the mosque, wearing their 50 cm. high felt hats.

After the assembly finally ended, orders were issued to the mullah for him to send his irregular army to defend the Suez Canal front. This strange army left Konya in the space of a few days.

They went with the object of crushing the enemy and forcing it to withdraw hundreds of kilometres.

However, these wretches faced a pathetic fate when they reached the Suez front. They started to recite prayers and loudly invoke, “Allah, Allah!”, brandishing their swords, which they pointed towards the venerable Ali, and imploring God. They advanced, relying on the Prophet Mohammed and on Allah.

The British commander of forces protecting Suez, on seeing this strange army with its peculiar garb and 50 cm. hats advancing towards them, shouting and chanting, ordered a barrage of shrapnel to be unleashed on the mevlevis for quarter of an hour.

Instead of the British withdrawing, it was the mevlevis who were routed, with many of them falling like ripe pears. Only a handful of mevlevis survived.

The above incident, involving the sect, was described by Dede, the kebab cook, who had participated in the fighting.

"Dear compatriots," he said, "we made many mistakes, but thank God, we are still alive".

AN ORDER ISSUED TO THE ARMENIANS IN KONYA

The government ordered the Armenians living in Konya to hand in their firearms. Under these delicate and sensitive circumstances, announcements were made such as:- "Anybody in possession of arms should surrender them to the government". This was followed by a warning that failure to comply would entail heavy penalties. They turned the houses of the Armenians upside down on the pretext of searching for arms. Ordinary as well as secret policemen would suddenly knock on the door and barge into houses.

Fortunately, no arms were found. All they found were useless and unimportant papers, books and pictures, for which the owners were sent to prison and beaten. In the case of the Toumanian family, when the Turks found a sporting gun, they beat and stoned the 26 year old son so severely that the poor lad died a few weeks later after vomiting blood.

At the time, the Armenians attached great importance to the Carnival period. Celebrations and merry-making would begin days before Shrovetide (the Sunday before Lent). They used to wear various kinds of masks, made of cardboard or wire, and groups would visit the homes of the rich or of friends to have a good time and to receive gifts before leaving. On the following Monday, during Paguial Khoran (when the curtain would be drawn in front of the altar in the church), people would donate any left-over food, containing oil or fat, as well as pastry to the poor. The above groups, this time without their masks, would stroll around and have their photographs taken.

The Ittihad Ve Terakki (Union and Progress) fanatical and venomous party published a book, alleging that the Armenian secret societies were collecting bombs and weapons, thereby stirring the hatred of the ignorant Turkish masses against the Armenians. One of the pages of this book depicted a supposed Armenian guerilla with the caption "This picture was found in the house of Hagop Giragossian". In actual fact, the picture was a photograph of an Armenian disguised in Carnival garb. There were also dozens of photographs of young Armenians, who had been photographed after forcibly being made to stand in front of piles of guns and bombs, placed there by the Turks. The book also showed similar photographs of Armenians in Aleppo.

This is how the Turks threw dust into the eyes of the simple-minded Turkish populace. True to Turkish tradition, they sought to justify the crimes they had already planned.

NEW INCIDENTS

The times and the incidents were gradually worsening. In 1915 up to a hundred prominent Armenians from Konya were rounded up and sent to Sultanieh in three groups. The first group was sent on 9 May, the second on 11 May and the third on 29 May.

The Police Chief, Saadettin Bey called these Armenians to his office and very politely said:

- "Our government being very busy these days, wants you to leave Konya and to go and stay in Sultanieh for a few months".

These prominent Armenians obeyed this order without raising objections, and moved to Sultanieh, remaining there until the rest of the Armenians were expelled from Konya on 21 August. In our case, we were banished on 9 August. These Armenians then joined the others on their way to exile, to end their days on the roads and in the deserts.

In April 1915 the population of Zeitoun was forced, without any justification, to start their journey to exile, with its first stop in Konya. Approximately 5000 Armenians from Zeitoun , in a poor and wretched condition, were driven to Konya on 15 May.

The Armenians of Konya, on seeing the woeful and pitiable state of their compatriots from Zeitoun, promptly helped them with food and clothing, acting out of brotherly feelings. The people from Zeitoun were crammed into mosques and schools, guarded by policemen. However, these policemen began to prevent aid reaching these exiles. Dozens of orphans and the children of poor families from Zeitoun were adopted by well-to-do families.

After remaining in Konya for a week, these poor and destitute people from Zeitoun were driven to Sultanieh on the pretext of draining marshes. They had to work under severe conditions with no pay, and no consideration given to sex and age.

These people from Zeitoun had to put up with wretched conditions, poverty and illness. Many of them died from hunger and from poisoning through bugs which had lain on the walls for years, as well as from infections caused by the lice of camels.

These poor people from Zeitoun were then sent to Ughlu Kichla, where, with the encouragement of the government they were robbed.

In August they were moved to Mamourieh, where they were again robbed, in accordance with government plans. At the same time, men and women were murdered in Islahieh, Bahche and Shar- Shar. They thus arrived in Katma, trudging all the way on foot.

The survivors among the people of Zeitoun, who had been exiled in Konya, travelled via Meskene, Dipsi and Abou Harar, finally arriving in Der Zor, with their numbers considerably depleted. They were driven to Sivar, Sheddadieh on the banks of the Khabouri, and finally to Abdul Aziz. This, then was the end of the heroic people of Zeitoun.

24 APRIL 1915

On 24 April 1915, the Armenian intellectuals in Constantinople were arrested and exiled to Ayash, where some of them were killed. The deportation of Armenians had also started in the provinces. The fate of the Armenians was dark and the sun no longer shone on them. The Ittihad Ve Terakki plan to exterminate the Armenians had already been launched.

After the exiles from Zeitoun had been sent to Konya, they were followed by the Armenians from the suburbs of Constantinople, Izmit, Adapazar, Broussa, Yelovay, Biledjik, Avadjek, Aslanbeg, Tekirdaghi, Malgara and Gueyvi and finally new caravans from Western Anatolia were on their way to exile. They started coming in railway goods trucks. Some were sent off right away, while others were camped on level ground behind the railway stations. All the Armenian population of western Anatolia from places like Sirihissar, Eskishehir, Afion, Karahissar, Kutahiah, Aksehir, etc. were deported.

The situation was very serious. The result was that hundreds of households were snuffed out, houses destroyed, the hopes and dreams of many families frustrated and prosperous villages reduced to ashes. The fatal and calamitous process to exterminate the Armenians was in full swing.

THE SEIZURE OF THE DJENANIAN COLLEGE IN KONYA

The Evangelical community in Konya did not have its own place of worship, so that their religious services were held on the premises of the Djenanian College. The Djenanian College shut down on 20 May 1915, and the hall in the large building was requisitioned for use as a hospital. All the boarders were sent back to their homes. Two months later, the elementary section of the college, which on Sundays served as a place of worship, was also requisitioned. The Evangelical community, being left without a place of worship, sent a petition to the local governor, asking for the return of the hall in the elementary school.

This hall had been used for services during the past twenty years. This petition had been written by the then pastor, Reverend Hampartsoum Ashdjian, but nothing came of it, as the government was unaware that the place was used for religious services, and had never approved its use for such a purpose. As for the building, it was unsuitable for use as a hospital, and thanks to the efforts and intervention of the American David Dudd, the building was returned to the community.

The Protestants cleaned the building, and religious services re-started on 5 September. The local people of Konya as well as the exiled newcomers, both Protestant and Gregorian, held their services here for about six months, as the Gregorian church had been demolished by the government.

THE ILL-OMENED ORDER FINALLY ISSUED

The plan regarding the fate of all the Armenians was finally applied in Konya.

On Monday 16 August 1915, the Police Chief, Saadettin Bey, invited the archimandrite D. Karekin Khatchadourian (who was later to become the Patriarch of Constantinople) and Reverend Hampartsoum Ashdjian to his office to tell them:- “Inform your communities to prepare to set off on exile within a week”.

Reverend Ashdjian asked, “Honourable Bey, is it right to treat innocent people like this?”

Police Chief Saadettin, dropping his mask, answered, “Right or wrong, it is not up to me to decide. I am only informing you what the government has ordered. The government knows what it is doing. I cannot waste my time with you”.

From this conversation it became clear that there was no question of right or wrong, but that there were ulterior inhuman motives behind this order. The plan was to exterminate all the Armenians.

There was not a single Armenian Catholic in Konya, even though there was a small church there.

The two representatives of the Armenian community were shaken and shocked by the words of the Police Chief. After discussing the matter between themselves and with some members of their communities, they decided to send a telegram to the Sublime Porte in the name of the Armenians in Konya, that they be exempted from the order for their exile.

There is a proverb, according to which, someone in deep water is prepared to grab a snake to avoid drowning.

This telegraphic petition came to nothing, as the decision to exterminate the Armenians was inexorable, and indiscriminate.

THE EX VALI OF ALEPPO, DJELAL BEY APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF KONYA AND HIS ADMISSION

During the above events, the ex-governor of Aleppo, Djelal Bey, was appointed governor of Konya.

This individual refused to carry out the orders of the Ittihad Ve Terakki Party. He sent a telegram to Constantinople with the words:- “Am I the governor, or the executioner of this city? I cannot be a governor and at the same time carry out what you have ordered me.” This telegram resulted in his being appointed governor of Konya.

I have written these lines, not in praise of the Turks, but to indicate how the exile of the Armenians started, and how a conscientious Turk reacted to this inhuman situation.

Djelal Bey was transferred from the governorship of Aleppo to his new post in Konya on 9 June 1915. The displacement of the Armenians in Konya had not yet started, apart from the hundred, who had individually been sent to Sultanieh. When Governor Djelal Bey arrived in Konya, the leaders of the Armenian community, Archimandrite D. Karekin Khatchadourian and Reverend Hampartsoum Ashdjian visited Djelal Bey in order to welcome him. During this meeting, Governor Djelal Bey noticed the downcast expression of the archimandrite, and asked him, "Reverend Sir, why are you so sad? What is the matter?"

In answer, the archimandrite said, "Up to a hundred respectable members of our community have been exiled to Sultanieh, without being accused of anything. How can I be happy when their wives and children are grieving?"

Governor Djelal Bey replied, "Reverend Sir, do not grieve. When a country is struggling for its very existence, such unjustified incidents are bound to happen. I shall go to Constantinople, and do whatever I can for these people".

In fact, Djelal Bey did leave for Constantinople after a few days. We learnt that Djelal Bey spent forty days, trying to spare the Armenians of Konya from exile. In this he was already partially successful.

During Djelal Bey's absence, an accountant deputized for him. Meanwhile, auditor Ferid Bey was sent from Constantinople by the Ittihad Ve Terakki Committee. His mission was to make sure that the Police Chief would not be swayed in favour of any Armenians, and would not show tolerance in exchange for bribes.

The Police Chief at the time was Bahri Effendi. The very day when Djelal Bey was due to be back from Constantinople, the fanatical officials in Konya, no doubt acting under the orders from Constantinople, launched the exile of the Armenians, banishing numerous individuals and families from Konya. When the noble and just governor returned, he faced a fait-accompli. On seeing the crowds of families due to be exiled waiting at the railway station, he wanted to know where they were from. When he was informed that they were from Konya, he ordered their immediate release, so that they might return home. 20-25 thousand people, partly residents of

Konya and partly refugees from elsewhere, returned to Konya. He told those who came to welcome him, "We are now standing on the banks of an enormous flood. This flood is engulfing trees, property, human beings and anything in its path, carrying them away. We are on the edge of this torrent, and must rescue as many people as possible from this dangerous flood".

In fact, Governor Djelal Bey was as good as his word.

He resorted to every device to save the Armenian refugees from exile on various grounds with statements, such as:- "He is old", "He is sick", "He is an artisan", etc.

However, he was forced to leave Konya after scarcely a month and a half of fighting injustice.

The day before he left, he told the visiting Archimandrite Khatchadourian and Reverend Ashdjian, "I shall at last be free from this unjust and unfair administration".

The other two asked him, "What is wrong, what has happened Effendi?"

Djelal Bey answered, "I have just received a telegram from Constantinople. Talaat Bey says that I either obey his orders, or resign. I cannot comply with such iniquitous orders. I am prepared to give up my position and my salary in order not to become a tool of injustice. Note that when I was the governor of Aleppo, I was told to exile the people of Zeitoun. I then went to Zeitoun and was prepared to send anyone found guilty to the military tribunal and to execute them should they be condemned to death. I would take no measures against innocent women, girls and children, and would not exile them. Do you know what they did? They declared that Marash would be placed under an independent administration subject to Constantinople. Under the orders of Talaat, the people of Zeitoun were exiled and exterminated. I was then given the order to exile the Armenians in the region of Aintab. I said that Aintab was a coastal region and was thus at a disadvantage, and asked them to send me a list of provinces where this disadvantage did not exist. In those regions, the Armenians, earmarked for exile, own property. They then said that they would neither send me a list, nor would they provide me with the funds to compensate the Armenians. I was ordered to simply force them into exile. My answer was that I

could not obey such arbitrary orders. Their response was to send me to Konya, where they assured me that the Armenians would not be exiled. However, as you are aware, they began to execute their plans two days before my return from Constantinople, thus confronting me with a fait-accompli. I have been facing these difficulties for some time now. I have to go, as I can no longer be of any use".

The two clergymen implored the governor with the words:- "Sir, if at all possible, do not leave, otherwise we shall be abandoned to our fate, and become the victims of injustice. Apart from you, there is no one to whom we may turn in our distress."

The governor answered, "It is impossible; I have to go, but do not despair. No nation can completely annihilate another nation. I am aware that you will suffer greatly as a result of what is happening, but these events will hurt this country as much as they will hurt you".

Djelal Bey left and lived in seclusion, without holding a post, until the time of the armistice. He waited for events to take their course, and when the French sought a Turkish governor, they accepted none other than Djelal Bey.

Alas, Djelal Bey was unable to remain very long in this post. When he realized that the French, the Turks and the Armenians had different plans, he left Adana to return to Constantinople, where he spent his remaining days.

Had there been ten such governors in Turkey, Turkey would not have followed such a disastrous path, nor would the resulting losses have been so heavy.

MY FATHER'S MILITARY SERVICE

My father's age-group was called up in May 1915. Meanwhile, the system, which allowed exemption from military service with the payment of 48 Ottoman pounds, was still in force. We were prepared to pay this sum, so that our father would avoid conscription. Although we had already applied for exemption and carried the relevant official papers, my father was conscripted.

That evening my father did not return home. We learnt later

that my father had been sent to an indefinite location, without any preparation or a uniform. We did not know where he was.

We were worried and afraid. Life was a torment for my mother and the three children. My mother and close relatives were overwhelmed with worry.

A week later, a letter arrived from my father from Siluiri (a suburb of Constantinople). Next day, after leaving my mother with my grandmother, my uncle wrapped the 48 Ottoman pounds, for exemption from military service, in a handkerchief, paid the sum to the appropriate authorities, obtained a receipt, expecting my father to be back within a few weeks.

A week, two weeks and three weeks went by, but there was no news from my father. After four weeks, a telegram came from my father, asking why we had not paid the exemption fee, so that he could return home. This only increased our anxiety. My mother, accompanied by my uncle, went to the office dealing with exemption fees.

My mother presented the receipt for the exemption fee, and asked for the necessary steps to be taken for my father to be able to join his family. My uncles spared no effort to get my father out of this difficult situation, so that he would be back with his wife and children as soon as possible.

From the letters and postcards sent by my father, we gathered that he had been enlisted in a labour battalion, engaged in unbearably hard work.

After a long wait and weeks of despair, there was a knock on our front door at about 8.30 a.m. on 17 October 1915, and my father appeared on the threshold. My younger sister, my brother and I ran to embrace our dear father. Thanks to the exemption fee, my father was allowed to return home.

When, on stepping in, my father asked why we were so upset, we told him what had happened, i.e. that we had been notified to leave our house and everything in it, and to proceed wherever the government indicated. My poor father was taken aback by this unexpected development, not knowing what to do. He was quite dumbfounded.

Turkish women, accompanied by their husbands, began entering the houses of Armenians, and unashamedly laid their hands on various household items, saying, "Give me this as a

souvenir!" They would go round the house, to inspect what they were planning to plunder.

Next morning, my father wanted to have a look at his shop, which had remained closed for a long time. My father was in a confused state and lost in thought: he was all nerves, and occasionally cursed, even though he never had the habit of using bad language. It pained him that 48 Ottoman pounds had been paid so that he would be exempt from military service. He wondered whether it was the right decision, and what would have happened if the money had not been paid.

It was noon. He sat on the step in front of the shop, watching the passers-by. I noticed Professor Armenag Haigazian, making his way to our shop.

My father's Christian name was also Armenag.

The professor greeted my father, and turning to me, said, "Hagop, the school is closed, but do not stop reading."

I respected him deeply, remained silent and blushed with the behaviour of an adolescent of those days.

The professor, after discussing the difficult and oppressive prevailing situation with my father, added, "Dear Armenag, I would like to make a proposal: you consider me a good person. What I have to say has, of course, to depend on your permission and good will. In view of the situation and the uncertainties which exile entails, do not take your son with you: leave him with me. I shall look after him like my own son and take care of his education. At the moment there is no immediate danger to life, but you never know what the future may bring."

These words of the professor weighed heavily on my father, who, after remaining silent for a few minutes, said, "Professor, I shall not entrust my child to anybody. Wherever we are sent, my children will remain with me."

After again trying to persuade my father, Professor Haigazian shook hands with him and said goodbye, leaving him with a pained look.

Next day, my father and I opened our shop, but were unable to sell anything. In the evening, before closing the shop, my father called our neighbour, the saddler Kemal and told him with a choking voice and tearful eyes the following:-

"Kemal, tomorrow, in accordance with government orders, we shall be on our way to an indefinite and unknown destination chosen by the government. I entrust you with the keys of this shop. Should I return alive, the shop will, of course, revert to me, but if I were to die, you are free to do whatever you like with the shop." He then handed him the keys.

When Kemal saw the state of my father, he said the following:-

"Armenag, do not get excited: this situation will not last long, and I am hopeful that you will soon be back. This state of affairs has been created by the nasty ex Jews who converted to Islam. They are the root cause: may they go blind! May God be with you!"

We then went home.

THE LAST NIGHT

That evening all our relatives gathered in our house. The families of soldiers were not subject to deportation, but my father, having secured exemption from military service was no longer a soldier. We felt sorry for having paid 48 Ottoman pounds for this exemption. To have remained a soldier was a problem, but his return to civilian life was another problem, in addition to the financial loss it involved. Those present that evening, all expressed varying opinions, but nobody could tell which of these opinions was the right one. We, the children, fell asleep.

In the morning we rose from our comfortable beds: we were not destined to sleep again in such comfort until 1919. When we got up, we saw packages and three hessian sacks filled with essentials and dried foodstuffs.

At around 7.00 a.m. policemen in a threatening posture and armed with martini rifles appeared. We then loaded our belongings onto two horse-drawn carts and immediately proceeded to the railway station.

In our childhood innocence, we were happy to look forward to the experience of rail travel. In reality we were quite unaware that we were about to begin a death journey.

IN THE RAILWAY STATION

On arrival at the station, we met those who had gone there before us. There was no room for us in the passenger coaches, as the Armenians were barred from travelling in them. We bought tickets for places in the goods trucks, and moved in to sit on top of our belongings. The tickets were valid up to Ereyli. We hoped that we would meanwhile be "pardoned" by the Sublime Porte, especially in view of the efforts of Djelal Bey, the governor of Konya, who had gone to Constantinople to intercede on our behalf and annul the deportation of the Armenians in Konya.

There were scenes of quarrelling for space on the trucks, shouting, tears, farewell kisses and extreme sadness in the goods trucks. These people were being torn away from their loved ones and relatives, their land, their homes and their environment. They did not know where they were going. Where were they bound for?

What can compare with your birthplace or the place where you have grown up? How hard it is to be forced to abandon your work, your home and your loved ones, be they alive or already dead!

The locomotive approached and was coupled to the train. These were the last moments, and our normal heartbeats gave way to irregular palpitations. The station bell rang a second time, there was a hiss, and the train started moving. There was crying and weeping in the crowds. The scene was heart-breaking as the train picked up speed.

A shout could be heard from one of the trucks: it was the voice of one of my uncles, Setrag Afarian, a well-known Konya businessman, who addressed the policeman standing at the station with the words:-

"Where is your freedom, justice and equality? To hell with your freedom, justice and equality, and to hell with you!"

The train moved faster, travelling across a level plain, leaving behind the Seldjuk city with its domes and the Alaeddin hill. After covering some distance, the train suddenly slowed down, moving with difficulty. We understood that the wood, used as fuel, could not raise enough steam for the locomotive to function properly. We passed through Kelin Khan, Chumra, Mandassoun and finally

reached Karaman. This is the place where Ertoghlu, an ancestor of the Turks, established the nucleus of what was to become the Ottoman Empire, when he arrived in the Near East with his tent-dwelling followers.

KARMAN (LARANDA)

We arrived in Karman in one day, but we could go no further due to the military rail traffic. Our train was shunted in the warehouse area of the station. The goods trucks were uncoupled from the rest of the train and left there, leaving us inside the trucks.

During the month of August the heat and dust in Karaman is unbearable. In the afternoon ten to twelve Armenian youths from Konya left the trucks and sat cross-legged in the shade of the warehouse, which was four to five metres away. There, they began discussing the day's events and the misfortune that befell the people, the families, the young and the old. One of the youths produced a bottle containing 50 grammes of brandy, which he passed round to the others.

Suddenly, two mounted gendarmes appeared and warned them to immediately return to their trucks. The policeman shouted, "Sitting outside is prohibited!" and advanced on horseback towards the Armenian youths, just as the latter began moving. He then struck them indiscriminately with his whip, swearing, shouting and abusing them with "Sons of infidels!" He was joined by the other mounted gendarmes, who vented their bile by trying to shatter the bones with the hooves of their horses.

The Armenians made no attempt to oppose or resist the gendarmes. We know that at no time can a Turk resist the urge he inherited as a baby by sucking his mother's milk and the impure blood flowing in his veins. He well knows how to exploit opportunities. One of the youths suffered a cut on his head caused by a whip handle, while another, Giragos Djamouzian, was dragged to the police station.

Seeing what had happened, some elderly Armenians went to the kaimakam (local governor), to request the release of the youths being

taken to the police station, and for them to be allowed to return to their families in the trucks. The heat generated by the sun's rays falling on the thin metal roofs of the trucks created a hot stifling atmosphere, causing intense discomfort to those inside. It was now getting dark.

A train arrived from Konya with the carriages chock-full with Armenian deportees from Ovadjik, Aslanbeg, Gueyveh, Sevlez, Broussa, etc. The newcomers were forced to get off their carriages and ordered to join us in our 22 trucks.

How was this possible? Our 22 trucks were already full with our group, along with their belongings. As it was almost impossible to remain in these trucks, the grown-up men and youths secured the permission of the kaimakam to shelter under and next to the trucks to be able to breathe some fresh air. The gendarmes threatened to place the newcomers in our trucks, but the orders were disregarded. Instead, they first removed the women and children from the trucks, and then transferred the newcomer's belongings into the 22 trucks. They next ordered 40-45 persons to climb into each truck. Already the people could only fit in, bent double on top of the belongings. It was pure torture for them. Permission was sought from the gendarmes in charge, for two of the deportees to be allowed to approach the kaimakam with the request that the menfolk be able to spend that one night outside in the open air next to the trucks.

This permission was obtained with difficulty, and as a gesture, each gendarme received two boxes of cigars, a bottle of brandy and a medjidieh (a silver coin) as a gift. The two-man delegation came back from the kaimakam about half an hour later with a short note requiring the gendarmes to let the deportees spend the night outside the trucks. The gendarmes complied and left when they saw the kaimakam's signature.

This behaviour of the gendarmes in Karaman and their inhuman acts was sufficient proof of their bestial character, to make the deportees realize that matters were entirely different from what they may have envisaged earlier. The Turkish authorities had hypnotized the naïve Armenians by telling them, "Your displacement is only temporary and will be of short duration. As soon as the war is over, you will return back to your property. A commission has been established to take care of your property until your return."

These premeditated false re-assurances had been contrived by the monsters in the Yildiz Palace to lull the naïve Armenians to sleep and to allay any possible suspicions of what was in store for them.

OUR JOURNEY FROM KARAMAN TO EREYLI

At around 7.30 a.m. the sharp hissing whistle of the locomotive raised the heartbeat of the deportees. There was confusion. Everyone tried to squeeze into the tight spaces allocated. After a long while, the locomotive finally arrived after a long trip. It took half an hour to noisily marshal the trucks on the appropriate railway line, with the locomotive at the head of the train.

At around 8.00 a.m. the train set off with the puffing and the whistle of the locomotive adding to the deafening din.

Due to the very limited space, there was shouting and uproar in the tightly packed trucks. The doors were not allowed to be opened wider than 10 cm. The air inside the trucks was stifling. The gap of 10 cm. was not enough for people to breathe properly. All the way to Ereyli people took turns to stand next to the doors to revive by breathing fresh air.

I do not quite remember when we reached Ereyli, but when we arrived, it was already dark. There, the people were led to a level field. Our group consisted of five related families. We placed our belongings together without opening the packages, and the grown-ups leant on them, while we, the children, placed our tired heads on our mothers' knees and fell asleep.

There were two stations between Karaman and Ereyli, namely Sidir Ova and Ayrandji-Derbend. We travelled through both these stations without stopping.

Ereyli, in the province of Konya should not be confused with Ereyli on the Black Sea coast, with its famous coal-bearing hills. There is abundant water and the land is fertile: the region is related to Konya. It was formerly part of the Seljuk principality of Konya. In 1271 the region was conquered by Levon II, the Armenian king of Cilicia. For a period, the region also came under Mongol domination. In 1467 it finally became part of the Ottoman Empire.

The historical tomb of Hercules was discovered there in 1902.

We spent the night lying on the hard ground in the open air along with the children of hundreds of other families, whose fathers and mothers had been uprooted from their homes.

The field was crowded with the deportees who had arrived before us. Many had set up various kinds of tents. We, too, planned to pitch our own tent, but as we had arrived late, and we feared that our belongings would be stolen in the darkness, we considered it wiser to spend that night out in the open, without pitching our tent. Early in the morning our parents woke us up. They found the place where we were staying unsuitable, and decided to pitch our tents further away from the adjoining road. An hour later our whole family and relatives, settled down inside our tents, in the new location, together with our belongings.

Our fathers left us, the children with our mothers, and furtively went to the nearby town to buy provisions and, at the same time, to look for accommodation, to free us from the unbearable conditions in the dusty fields. On arriving in the town, they heard that Djelal Bey had returned to Konya after his successful mission in Constantinople. He had managed to get the decision to deport the Armenians in Konya annulled. On his return from Constantinople, as Djelal Bey alighted at the station, he discovered that the Konya Armenians would be on their way to exile the following day. He immediately ordered them to return home.

The Armenians waiting at the station felt great relief and gratitude and returned to their homes. In our case, however, we had left Konya two days earlier on the orders of the Ittihadist Police Chief Saadeddin, and had already arrived in Ereyli. Our menfolk, on hearing all this when they came to the town, endeavoured to contact various people, and to find ways and means to be allowed to return to Konya. They hoped, with the help of acquaintances, to bribe the local governor or his minions. This proved impossible. At least, thanks to an acquaintance, they rented a room in the khan (inn) of a Tcherkez innkeeper called Hadji, to enable them to leave the camp site, and to remain in the inn as long as possible. From there they would try to seek permission to remain in Ereyli or to return to Konya.

Our family contacted Hadji the Tcherkez and hired a room, paying a weekly rent of six pounds in gold coins. The following day at about 5 p.m., all the five members of our family clandestinely left the camp and entered the inn through the small (secondary) entrance of the inn. The innkeeper stipulated that, if the male members of the family wanted to leave the room, they should do so early in the morning and keep the door of the room shut, so that nobody should be aware that people were hiding in the inn.

We prepared to enter the town by taking down our tents and loading our baggage and packages on carts. Each and every one of the thousands of families in the camp was in distress. Some sheltered in proper tents, while others had to manage under makeshift contraptions consisting of bed-sheets supported on four poles. They had to put up with the scorching sun, with some families having sick members. Others had run out of money. The youths and girls of these families would only wander from tent to tent, begging for money or food, only after dark, covering their faces with their hands in embarrassment, so that they would not be recognized. The people felt growing misery. One can only imagine the misfortune of the families who used to live from hand to mouth. Take, for instance, the case of the villagers: how many kilogrammes of provisions could they carry on their shoulders, and how long could these provisions last?

How long could such a displaced family survive for days and months? Money was needed to hire a cart to move from camp to camp. If you could not afford the six to seven gold coins, you had to go on foot. Nobody would concern himself with your illness, your hunger or your exhaustion. This, at any rate, was what the Turkish gendarmes wanted - your death as soon as possible.

You had to cover great distances under continuous harassment, without the opportunity to work and earn some money.

Both the Turks and Nature were harsh in their treatment of the Armenians. The winds and storms blew away tents and bed-sheets, while the dust was so thick that you could see nothing.

We loaded our belongings on handcarts, and our group started off towards the refuge of the inn, with my father, my uncles and the young children in the lead. We, too, made our way towards

the inn, by following an indirect path under the leadership of one of my uncles. All of a sudden, eight mounted gendarmes, holding whips and armed with martini rifles, invaded the camp, lashing indiscriminately and wildly with their whips and driving their horses to trample under their hooves the people sheltering under their tents and bed-sheets. There was confusion in the camp with pathetic shouts and weeping.

There were countless persons lying on rags spread on the ground, too ill and exhausted to move. It is impossible to tell the number of broken legs and smashed skulls of those in the torn tents, who were trampled under the hooves of the horses that day. There were nightmare scenes of hell, created by this typical Turkish behaviour. It is impossible to visualize and to describe what happened there.

Families had been separated, with some searching their wives, some their children and some their husbands. The gendarmes, striking the innocent people with their whips, kept shouting, "Move on! You have to travel to Ulu Kishli!" After witnessing this brutality, we made our way through the gardens, under the guidance of my uncle. We moved away in the hope of finding shelter in the inn of Hadji, the Tcherkez, with the vision of the terror and torment of our beloved Armenian brothers alive in our minds, and their cries of anguish rending our hearts. Fear and panic seemed to wrench our eyes out of their sockets, while our hearts were throbbing violently as we continued on our way to an unknown destination.

There were 22 of us. Although my uncle was leading us, he, too, was not familiar with the town. Ereyli is a town with abundant water and small streams next to the old houses. Whenever we looked back, we could see clouds of dust, and could hear plaintive sounds, which followed us, haunting us with fear.

As we strode along the river bank and across leafy gardens, a Turkish soldier aimed his gun towards my uncle with the words:- "Stop! Where are you going?" Without losing his sang-froid, my uncle approached him with, "Hello compatriot!" and after offering him a cigar, added, "We would like to cross the river, but do not know where the bridge is situated." The soldier changed his expression, refused the cigar and said:-

"Go back right away! I have orders not to let anybody here. If you

insist on remaining here, I shall deal with you in a different manner." With these words, he seized my uncle's arm and pushed him.

My uncle again remained cool and said, "Compatriot, I shall satisfy you, and you will be pleased, while we and these children will pray for you."

These words of flattery produced a slight change in the soldier's expression. My uncle took a step towards the soldier, held the latter's hand and slipped something into it, saying, "Consider this small token as worth more than its real value: you, too, have parents. These children and we, the grown-ups, will be grateful and will pray for you." After this, he drew back.

The soldier had one look at the coin my uncle had placed in his hand and threw the coin down in a rage, saying:- "It is impossible, just go back! I accept nothing less than one medjidieh (a gold coin worth one pound). Turn back immediately!"

My uncle again remained cool. He picked up the coin from the ground and said he did not have a medjidieh. He returned the coin, which happened to be worth a quarter medjidieh, adding a second quarter medjidieh to the first. This time, the soldier indicated the bridge, which was a short distance away and said, "Be quick and move on!" We walked on gladly, leaving the soldier after thanking him.

After crossing the bridge, we saw a waterfall, bubbling with froth at its base. It took us only ten minutes to reach the house of our acquaintance Manoug Effendi, where we stayed until dark in the evening, when our Armenian friends led us to the inn of Hadji the Tcherkez. Everywhere was deserted and it was completely dark, with only a few quarters of the town lit by the dim gas lamps installed by the municipality. These lights were flickering as if about to go out. The small door of the inn was opened and we stepped in.

There, four to five "Broussa" type carts with four wheels were standing in a row in the courtyard of the inn. We could occasionally hear the neighing of the horses in the stables. We entered the room that had been prepared for us. Our belongings had already been taken there before our arrival.

We were all regarded as members of a single family. Some of the sacks were opened and the required contents spread on the floor,

and we had “kata” (a kind of Armenian biscuit) and some other food for dinner. We then slept. There were twenty-five of us in the room: young and old, we spent the night in complete silence.

We could hear voices coming from outside, as the coachmen were harnessing their horses and getting out one by one. They were ready to transport the Armenian deportees from camp to camp. My father and uncles occasionally peeped through the key-hole, waiting until the courtyard of the inn was deserted. They wanted to get out and endeavour to contact various people, who could make arrangements for them to either remain in this town or to return to Konya.

When they saw that the courtyard was finally deserted, they emerged, closing the door as they left. The women and we, the children, remained confined in the room, waiting for the return of our beloved fathers. That day, time seemed to be dragging on very slowly for us. In the evening, other coaches and carts positioned themselves in the courtyard. The drivers tethered their horses, hung bags of straw and barley from the necks of the animals and then left.

The main door of the inn was closed, although the small door was sometimes open and sometimes closed. It was now time to get out and freely breathe some fresh air. After peeping through the key-hole and making sure that it was safe, they opened the door and we went out noiselessly.

Soon, there was complete darkness. My father and uncles appeared, looking tired and downcast: they were soon surrounded by their loved ones, and began to tell us what they had done and what they had heard.

They said that the mounted gendarmes had burst into the camp, where we had been, creating hell. That day, they forced 300 people from the poor and unfortunate families to go on foot to Kishli. An hour after they had left, news was received that on the way they had been attacked by Turkish brigands, who robbed them, killing seven of them. The same evening, two of the Armenian youths in the group escaped to Ereyli with wounds on their heads and arms.

Unfortunate descendants of our forefather Haig! In just one day you lost your homes, your work and your living, because these monsters wanted to lay their hands not only on your gold, but even on the few pennies you may have possessed. They robbed you in accordance with a premeditated plan to exterminate you. They

released from the prisons criminals to let them loose on you—a talented and innocent people. They used typical traditional Turkish methods to pollute their history even further!

We had hired our room as a hiding place, paying a weekly rent of six pounds. Had the Tcherkez innkeeper ever seen a sum of six, or even two pounds in his life? However, taking into account these evil times, we had to pay, and indeed did pay this sum to save our lives. We had the means to pay, but how could those poor people, who could not afford to pay, endure the harassment and the tribulations of a long journey? We heard that they had been forced to proceed on foot. Our own group decided at all costs to secure tickets for travel by rail, or either to remain in Ereyli, or to return to Konya.

Although our hiding place had little room and the air inside was stifling, we were willing to remain there for the sake of our survival. However, we had unfortunately been betrayed. We were in despair, as we could neither remain there or go back to Konya.

Mr. Sarkis Ehmalian was the Ereyli railway station store-keeper at the time. Mr. Sarkis Ehmalian was related to my father, who met him, and bought tickets for all of us, thus ensuring that we would travel all the way to Bozanti by rail.

We were worried about what would happen after Bozanti , as the railway line went no further. We had to travel from Ereyli to Bozanti in goods trucks. In accordance with the orders issued by higher authority, tickets for travel in goods trucks were priced as if they involved travelling in first class passenger carriages. We had to submit and comply willy-nilly with the plans of the Turkish Vandals, who were leading us on the path of death.

Time flies on such occasions: At last it was time to move to the railway station. After bargaining, we agreed to pay the Tcherkez inn-keeper eight medjidiehs for him to arrange the transportation of our belongings to the station. He placed four carts at our disposal. We again packed and tied our property and placed it on the carts. We travelled through various quarters of the town and, after crossing some fields, arrived at the station. There was turmoil at the station, with people quarrelling and shoving each other in a struggle to buy tickets, while the gendarmes intervened by striking them with whips, creating an intolerable situation. The poor people,

who had earned their money by the sweat of their brows, were now trying to gain a breathing space and safety from these robbers: in spite of so many difficulties, this was not always possible. The porters transferred our belongings from the carts to the train, and we were allowed to sit on them.

These events prove the duplicity of the Turks, who declared Equality, Fraternity and Liberty in the 1908 Constitution, with hypocritical embraces, feigning brotherhood.

Here is the proof of Turkish double-dealing! These criminal gypsies from Mongolia proved that they were in reality executioners of the abandoned and unarmed Armenians, and had nothing to do with equality, fraternity and liberty. As if six centuries of inhuman treatment and barbarity against the enslaved Rayahs (non-Moslem subjects) by their Vandal ancestors, followed by the massacres perpetrated by the blood-stained Abdul Hamid had not been enough, the Young Turks, hiding behind the mask of the 1908 Constitution, went on to complete this unfinished business.

The Armenians, a nation with a three thousand year history, had attained a much higher level of civilization, with their literature, etc. than the Turks. These are the people which the gangsters known as the "Ittihad Ve Terakki" tried to exterminate.

Once the Turkish government had taken the decision to utterly destroy the Armenian nation, they basely resorted to duplicity and lies.

If the Armenians had been aware of the perfidious method used by the Ittihadists to perpetrate their crime, they would have been prepared to die on the spot, rather than face the terror and slow death of deportation. What could an unarmed people do when confronted by a well-equipped army? For centuries they had been docile and obedient subjects of the state, prepared to make all kinds of sacrifices for its advancement and progress. Unfortunately, it was the Turks who, prompted by religious fanaticism, discriminated between their citizens, using terms like, "Giaour" (Infidel) and Rayah (non-Moslem). How could they suddenly deny their long-standing hatred of the Armenians with the provisions of the 1908 Constitution? This is simply impossible.

What the Turks did to the Armenians during the past six to seven hundred years will not be forgotten for many hundreds of years.

The Armenians never had the capacity or the means to help the enemies of Turkey. How could they stab Turkey in the back? They had no arms, and all the men of military age had been conscripted. How could the elderly and babies constitute a threat? The small number of rusty pistols and shotguns belonging to a number of people could hardly be of use to wage a war. A war could only be fought by properly equipped young men of military age. This propaganda was a Turkish ploy to mislead the gullible public.

The further we moved from our homeland, the worse the behaviour of the brutal officials in charge of the deportations, and, as the days went by, it became abundantly clear that the real aim of the Yildiz Palace (i.e. the government) was to exterminate us.

BOZANTI, OR BYZANCE

The railway line from Ereyli extended only as far as Bozanti. As the line stopped at Bozanti, the deportees had to make their way to Tarsus on foot or on horse-drawn carts or ox-carts.

At the Ereyli railway station a locomotive came to marshal the trucks carrying the deportees. The area beyond Bozanti lay in the province of Cilicia.

The trucks were finally assembled, and the locomotive took up its position with a heavy and noisy impact on our trucks, with the violent jolt causing a woman to fall out of the truck. A number of young men jumped out to bring the woman back into the truck. The poor woman had a swollen arm. Nothing could be done to help her, as the train would be on its way within a few minutes.

The accursed locomotive hissed and set off puffing. There was turmoil, shouting and weeping in the trucks. The gendarmes allowed the truck doors to be opened by only 20cm. We were all full of anxiety and crossed ourselves, with our hearts throbbing, while mothers and grandmothers muttered prayers with tremulous lips. The train picked up speed, with the wheels rolling faster and faster. The roofs of the trucks got hotter and hotter, creating an unbearable stifling atmosphere within the trucks.

The train slowed down as it approached a station, but without

stopping there. I only managed to open the truck door a little wider, to be able to read the name of the station, which was Avanseman. Nobody got off at this station. Our train consisted of 24 or 25 goods and cattle trucks, loaded with Armenian deportees.

After leaving the station, the locomotive again sounded its fateful whistle and gathered speed. We arrived at another station, whose name, which I could easily read, was Oulou Kishla. The train stopped there for twenty minutes, where some logs were tossed into the locomotive's firebox to raise steam. We were strictly prohibited from getting out. The locomotive whistled and the train set off. The locomotive seemed to be panting.

I laid my dizzy head on my mother's knees, and would occasionally approach the gap next to the partially open door to throw up, as I was nauseous with travel sickness and the contaminated air in the truck. We went successively past Chifteh Khan and Kara Koy. After that, I fell asleep on my mother's knees.

We finally arrived in Bozanti. They woke us up as it was morning. Everybody unloaded his belongings. The people spread out in the fields, wherever they were directed by the gendarmes. The places to which they were assigned were full of human filth. There was nowhere where one could step. We immediately went to the person in charge, requesting him to let us settle in a clean spot. Our request was accompanied by a bribe, so that we might enjoy relative comfort during the coming weeks. The response was:- "We shall think about it!" and our representatives were sent back. Later, we were directed to a spot on the edge of a forest where we pitched our tents. We were exhausted. We had a breakfast of dry food, which we had brought from Konya and slept soundly under the pine trees on the edge of this forest in Bozanti.

When evening came, there was nobody around, but we could occasionally hear shooting. We were among the 78 Armenian families which had become tent-dwellers. The solitude and the distant noise of firing struck terror in our hearts.

Our relatives and my parents decided to act as watchmen during the night, and attached a ball of bee-wax to the tent-pole to serve as a candle. We could barely see each other in the dim light it spread in the tent.

Next morning my uncles and father went to the railway station to meet the person in charge of the deportation, so as to bribe him. They came back, having secured the permission for sixteen families to be separated from the rest and to be allowed to remain there for fifteen days. Every day 25 to 30 railway trucks would arrive, crammed with Armenian deportees. As the railway lines did not extend beyond Bozanti, the deportees would have to continue their journey in two-wheeled ox-carts, some of which had been used earlier by the Turkish refugees from Rumeli. These carts had wooden instead of iron axles. When the cart-wheels began to rotate, the creaking could be heard from afar. The noise was irritating to the ear.

Every family had to pay its own money for the use of the carts as they travelled from camp to camp. Those who could not afford were beaten with whips to force them to continue their journey on foot. They included the elderly and the very young. They were subjected to all kinds of abuse, violence and barbarity by the gendarmes who were in charge and who led the way. Day by day the deportees suffered increasing poverty and misery.

Criminals, sentenced to long-term imprisonment, were released from prison on government orders, and sent to valleys and mountain passes with official orders and encouragement to commit acts of brigandage.

By exposing the Armenian deportees to robbery, these people were dispossessed even further. By such means, they reduced the Armenians, who were not used to begging, to their own abject level.

Unfeeling Turks like Saadeddin and Bahri Bey would boast:- "We have reduced the richest Armenians to the level of shoe-blacks."

During fifteen days we enjoyed relative comfort, thanks to the bribe we had paid.

The air we breathed was healthy, and the water which my father collected from a spring was cool. The water which seeped through the roots of the pine trees carried the smell and taste of trees. We witnessed the movement of thousands of unfortunate and wretched Armenians during our fifteen days in Bozanti.

A day before our fifteen days of grace were up, the man in charge of the camp, whom we had bribed, sent a gendarme to warn

us that he had orders from higher authority for us to unconditionally leave the next day.

We too were also worried by remaining in this desolate place. The nights were getting bitterly cold, and we had not brought the necessary warm clothing in order to reduce the load we had to carry on our way. Not only we, but the others were also worried when it became obvious that we were on a death march. Death could come any moment: for some, death was immediate, while for others it was a slow process of attrition. Not a single Armenian knew where he was going, or where he would stop. Death always accompanied them, as privations, suffering and torment took their toll. Death was the lot of both the breast-fed baby as well as the centenarian.

FROM BOZANTI TO TARSUS

The railway line had not yet been extended beyond Bozanti. The Germans strove to complete the Intilli tunnel as soon as possible. The Armenian deportees worked day and night to open the tunnel so that military reinforcements could be sent to the front. The men constructing the Intilli tunnel were at the time considered lucky, as they were exempt from further deportation and received two loaves daily for their labour.

The men working there came from all walks of life and included merchants, businessmen, artists, artisans, townsfolk and villagers. Some, such as the clerks, professionals, teachers, college graduates and professors had never handled picks and shovels.

This long tunnel was the product of the labour of Armenians, and thousands perished in the process. After the tunnel was completed, the supposedly lucky Armenians were exiled to Ras-El-Ayun, from where not a single one of them came back alive. They were all massacred by the Tchechens.

We and the group of our relatives were on very affectionate terms, with sincerity, close bonds and the readiness for self-sacrifice. We decided to stick together and to help each other in every possible way, wherever we went.

The orders issued by the gendarme in Bozanti were very strict.

The deportees had to use carts ordered by the government from the nearby villages. Ox-carts lined up at our camp.

After bargaining, we agreed to pay seven Ottoman pounds in gold coins for each cart which would transport us from Bozanti to Tarsus. The four pounds were to be paid in advance and the remaining three pounds on arrival in Tarsus.

The gendarmes informed us that we would set off in half an hour. We immediately removed the pegs holding the ropes of the tents, and with all of us helping each other, we tied our belongings and loaded them onto the carts, ready to obey the order to set off. A little later, our 16 families, who, thanks to the bribes they had paid, and having been separated from the others, were led to the departure site by the gendarme.

There, too, the people were busily loading their belongings onto the carts. We had to wait there for three to four hours.

Finally, the caravan began moving under the orders and the guidance of the gendarme. Other gendarmes took up positions in the centre and the rear of the procession. We and our relatives were at the centre, following those in front, loudly urging the oxen to move. That day there were 46 families in the caravan. 24 of the carts were tumbrils drawn by buffalos, while the rest were ox-carts of Rumeli origin. As the buffalos were stronger and faster than the oxen, the second group of carts lagged behind the tumbrils. The gendarmes would stop the former until the latter could catch up with them.

We travelled along a gravel road, which had potholes and was dusty in places. In any case, we were on a terrifying and bewildering path to death.

We were thankful that we had the money to hire these carts. What about the unfortunate families with their young and old, who had to go on foot, urged on by the whips of the gendarmes? They kept falling from exhaustion, but had to get up again. Their legs were swollen to the size of their waists.

You pity, feel pain and suffer witnessing the condition of these innocent people. But what about you? You, too, are scapegoats about to be sacrificed. You, too are shocked with feelings of indignation, revenge and helplessness, but you still have to submit and follow the path of death.

We go past neighbouring villages, from which Turkish villagers occasionally emerge, offering to sell food. Even before we are there, the loud creaking of our cartwheels seems to announce the approach of our caravan. Bread, eggs and other foodstuffs are soon sold to the Armenian deportees, who have to continue their journey along unfamiliar paths with emaciated bodies and little money left.

We traverse narrow and dangerous paths. These tracks along the slopes of inaccessible mountains are scarcely wide enough for a single cart. These tracks are bordered by precipices which literally you cannot view without apprehension. There are many stretches with no room for two carts to stand side by side. On the way up the buffalos and oxen would often run out of breath and stop, with the risk of the carts moving backwards and falling into the precipice. In such cases, the families being transported were in grave danger. The men would then hurriedly alight from the carts and place large stones behind the cartwheels, and push the carts with their shoulders to block them from rolling further back.

When this happened, the whole procession of the carts behind them would have to stop, and become exposed to the same danger. The carts were not equipped with brakes. On the way down, the unbridled draught animals had difficulty restraining the carts from rolling forward out of control.

Countless Armenian deportees disappeared in these bottomless precipices, along with the drivers and the buffalos or oxen.

We witnessed these tragic scenes with grief-stricken wailing, as the unfortunate victims were abandoned to their fate, with nobody able to help or even look, as the gendarmes drove us on, striking us with rifle butts.

There is no corner in the whole of Turkey not stained with Armenian blood, and not covered with the remains of Armenians.

The shadow of death has darkened the lives of each and every Armenian individual and family. We trudge on, but how long can we endure? One can only endure as long as one has the necessary material means for survival and as far as his physique allows him.

One is bound to run out of money, when there are no means to replace what has been spent. One cannot remain healthy without

some relaxation and having enough to eat, while under constant pressure and persecution.

Dear reader, these conditions will last not only for days, but for weeks, months and even years. Each of these years consists of spring, summer, autumn and winter. Just try to experience and consider the situation faced by Armenian grandparents, parents, youngsters and girls and innocent children without any experience of life!

In just one day, these people lost their land and the warmth of their homes to remain homeless, abandoned and at the mercy of the barbarous Turkish government and populace, subject to their bestial whims.

Dear reader, do not be tempted to regard the Armenian men and women, lads and lasses, who experienced these horrors of the past, as less deserving than similar Armenians living at the present time! You are wrong and criminally guilty if this is your erroneous judgement.

I can go further and declare that the Armenians of those days, who were the victims of the Ittihadists, proved to be more genuine Armenians than those living today, who regard themselves as superior beings.

In the past our generation had good manners and moral values and were devoted to their church, their home and their relatives. They valued their nation and their schools and were bound to their families and patriarchal traditions with unbreakable bonds. I have heard from the mouths of both the young and the more mature members of the new generation the criticism that hundreds of Armenians had submitted like sheep to a few gendarmes.

Such a criticism is based on poor reasoning and mental aberration - I shall say no more about such people. It pains me when I compare the new and old generations.

Dear reader, do not make the mistake of not taking the Turks seriously! They are cunning hypocrites, and deceitful diplomatic slanderers. Irrespective of your innocence, they are always prepared to blacken your character. If they find nothing against you, they can still accuse with words such as :- “You have insulted our nation, our faith and Mohammed!” If you deny such accusations, you will be soundly beaten, suffer hunger and face imprisonment etc. in the police station.

The truth is that the Turks have contributed nothing to civilization: they only have a genius for inhuman behaviour.

We travelled eight to nine hours daily at the leisurely pace of the ruminating oxen, under a scorching sun and along dusty paths. On the way we would meet caravans of destitute families which had started earlier, trudging on foot.

The men carried whatever they could on their shoulders, holding the hands of their aged grandparents. Some carried children on their shoulders or in their arms. They were soaked with perspiration and caked with dust, terrorized by the worthless gendarmes, who would strike them with the butts of their martini rifles.

We travelled on our carts along the deserted slopes of mountains and in valleys, leaving behind the poor Armenian deportees who had to proceed on foot.

Suddenly, rumours began to circulate, and we were told that there were dangers at the next bend of the path: as a result, fear and terror spread throughout the caravan. The gendarmes hinted that the danger lay in the very next bend, which was as lair of brigands. In order to protect us, they demanded that we collect money to pay them, otherwise, they would not protect us.

This was yet another problem to worry the deportees. How much money did the deportees have to be able to make this payment? Paying up was one choice, and refusing payment was another. In the end we had to pay. We satisfied the demands made by the gendarmes, and we proceeded through the Amanus mountains, with the hillside on the right and a bottomless precipice on the left. More and more mountains, covered with leafy trees among which we could see the brigands. We went past such locations in panic. We had heard that these brigands had robbed the deportee caravans which had preceded us.

We would occasionally go past telegraph poles. The wind would cause the wires between them to vibrate, creating a sound, which, in combination with the rustling of the leaves on the trees and the thunder from the cloudy sky, was frightening. During daytime we felt unease due to our isolation, while at night we slept in fear.

We slept in the open air at night, exposed to all kinds of deadly illnesses. Only yesterday we were sleeping under woolen blankets

and enjoying the warmth of our mothers, but, alas, these blessings are no longer with us as, as we lie on the bare earth or under the carts as a partial protection from the cold and dew of the night. As soon as we wake up in the morning, rubbing our eyes, we see the gendarmes in our midst, eying us with beastly looks.

They prepare their plans for the day, casting nasty glances. Their lecherous eyes are a threat to the honour of Armenian women and girls.

As it dawns, there is feverish activity and preparations for the caravan to continue its journey. There is confusion. Every family obeys the orders to load its belongings on the carts. The oxen and buffalos are harnessed to the carts.

The gendarme gives a hand signal and the caravan starts moving. The cart drivers hold sticks provided with protruding nails. Should the buffalos slow down, they are struck on the rump to suddenly rouse the poor animals and get them moving faster.

We left behind us the village of Hadji Kili, and were on our way to Kelebeg. We were 43 families in the carts, travelling along difficult paths.

Once or twice daily, the gendarmes, as was their custom, demanded monetary contributions to protect us from the brigands lurking along dangerous sections of our path.

The gendarmes were just as bad as the brigands when it came to robbing us. They used the established Turkish tactics to extort money by exploiting our fear of the brigands.

On one occasion the caravan stopped suddenly as we were travelling. Many of the deportees alighted from their carts, wondering what had happened. Many of them came back with the news the third cart behind the one on the lead had a broken spoke in one of its wheels.

The caravan was forced to stop for about an hour. Although they repaired the wheel after much effort, we arrived in Kelebek with great difficulty.

On realizing that the cart could not continue carrying its load, they had to transfer the family on it and its belongings to other carts. After being unloaded, the cart in question followed us behind the caravan.

Those capable of walking would often get off their carts and accompany on foot the slow-moving oxen. Sitting in the carts was boring and tiring.

On our way we would see human corpses, bloated and green. The unbearable stench from the corpses forced us to cover our noses. It is with horror that we contemplated and realized that these blood-stained bodies belonged to the beloved son or the father of a family, killed by cruel hands.

Towards evening, as the sun was setting, we spotted the place known as Kelebeg. What we saw consisted not of houses, but of hundreds of tents belonging to Armenian deportees. We were led to one side of this camp, where those who had preceded us were camped. The first question we asked these people was where we could find the nearest spring or well. Many of us suffered from sunstroke and we were all covered with dust. Cold water, poured on the head, was expected to relieve the effects of sunstroke. There were no doctors or medicines. In those days the life of an Armenian was worth very little.

We were told that there was a well and, further away, a spring. My father immediately made his way towards the source of water indicated, carrying a pitcher and a tin. The people rushed to the same spot, carrying whatever they had to fill with water, wash their hands and faces and slake their thirst.

Having scarcely recuperated, my weary mother placed some cheese between two slices of bread for us to eat. We prepared a place under a cart for some protection from the night dew.

My dear mother sat next to us and said the Lord's Prayer. We listened to our mother's entreaty and prayer to God and as we ate our bread and cheese, my sister Takouhi and my brother Garabed closed our tired and sleepy eyes, holding our mother's skirt, with the remaining bread and cheese still in our mouths. My father fell asleep, lying on one of the sacks containing our belongings. Just as in our case, hundreds of fathers and mothers in the camp spent the night half-awake and half-asleep, watching over their beloved children.

FROM KELEBEG TO DURAK

It was not in our interest to spend time in such places. Whenever we were ordered to move from camp to camp, we would be in a hurry to arrive in a large town, in the hope of finding somewhere to stay there.

That day the gendarmes again entered the camp, often behaving harshly towards the deportees, and ordered them to get ready to move, as the cart drivers were in a hurry to reach Tarsus as soon as possible, in line with what had been agreed with them. Every day that they waited before setting off meant a financial loss to the cart drivers. My father immediately went off to fill his pitchers with water, while, we, the children, collected our belongings, and took our places on the carts. Before setting off, my father wanted to make sure that our jars had been filled with water, so that we might not suffer from thirst on the way.

Before we were off, a caravan, consisting of 28 carts with Armenian deportees passed by. They had come from various locations such as Tekirdagh, Malgarah, Eskishehir, Kutahia, Konya, Brussa, Biledjik, etc. These deportees were escorted by four armed gendarmes.

Within a quarter of an hour, our caravan left the camp, with the carts positioned in line, and the drivers urging on their horses, after a hand signal given by a gendarme. There were 59 carts in our caravan that day, which meant that the carts carried a total of at least 59 families. As we proceeded, clouds of dust raised by the passage of the previous caravan had not yet settled. The horses drew their carts at a brisker pace. After travelling for three hours, we spotted a large gathering, which was at a standstill in the distance on the path we were soon to follow. As our carts drew closer, we had a clearer view of the scene. The people in our caravan started speculating on what was going on ahead of us. This gathering was not advancing. We could occasionally hear the pitiable voices of weeping and lamentation.

Our own caravan stopped. One of the gendarmes at the head of the caravan rushed to the scene on horseback to secure information on what had happened to the group, which turned out to be the

caravan which had preceded us. Half an hour later, the gendarme returned with news of what had befallen this caravan.

The caravan in question had been attacked by bandits hiding in the forest. The seven brigands stopped the caravan and stole 270 gold coins from the deportees and killed the son of an Armenian family from the village of Askara in Konya, who had tried to resist them. They also wounded three persons. They disappeared with their spoils, after additionally stealing eight blankets and a carpet, which had caught their fancy. The escorting gendarmes made no attempt to protect the caravan.

The gendarmes merely uttered words of consolation, saying. “They were more powerful than us. They are criminals. We are no match for them.” They got the caravan moving again, so that it would arrive in Durak as soon as possible and according to schedule, promising to report the attack to their headquarters for the appropriate action. The State and the government are unprincipled: how far could one trust the equally unprincipled gendarmes?

Where could they take the body of the murdered youth? This was a cause of great concern. The families of the three wounded persons washed their wounds and bandaged them with strips of cloth. The deportees had neither picks nor shovels to dig a grave for the dead youth.

Eventually, they found a small axe belonging to one of the cart drivers, located a spot on the hillside where the soil was soft, dug a grave and buried him there, leaving him incompletely covered. His parents and relatives recited the Lord’s Prayer, grieving with tearful eyes, and continued their journey in constant fear of further attacks by robbers.

The caravan with horse-drawn carts continued on its way, with the gap between us and them widening, as we followed them in our carts drawn by ruminating buffalos and oxen. We finally arrived in Durak. We could not remain there very long, so we spent the night without pitching our tents. As on previous occasions, we took shelter under our carts for protection from the cold night and the dew.

FROM DURAK TO YENIDJEH

When we arrived in Durak we did not see the caravan with the horse-drawn carts which had preceded us. They left Durak and proceeded to Yenidjeh. In the morning we were ordered to travel to Yenidjeh. The people, young and old, immediately began to gather and climbed into the carts.

When we set off, our escort was reinforced with an additional gendarme. We later learnt that this man was a member of the team of gendarmes who had accompanied the caravan with the horse-drawn carts, which had preceded us. We realized that he was an agent of the robbers who had attacked that caravan, and that he had stayed behind at the site of the attack to collect his share of the spoils.

That morning he started with our caravan, but scarcely ten minutes later, he hurriedly left our caravan, to join his former colleagues, escorting the other caravan.

THE CONDITIONS FACED BY THE ARMENIANS - A PEOPLE PARTICULAR ON CLEANLINESS

The perspiration due to the hot days, the dust from the roads, the impossibility of changing our underwear and clothing for days, our matted hair, the lack of soap and water or the time to wash reduced these people, who were so keen on cleanliness into filthy tramps.

There were no comforts and no security, and not only the money they might carry, but their very lives were not safe. They had to cross inaccessible mountains, with dense awe-inspiring forests and babbling streams gushing from the precipitous hillsides and tumbling down towards the villages. It was in these streams that Turkish women would wash their clothes by beating them with clubs.

When these women saw us, some would take pity on us, and offer us some water: some would demand money, while others, seeing our condition, would refuse payment, saying, “May those who reduced you to this state suffer blindness.” Still others were filled with hatred against us shouting, “You deserve what you are suffering.” You Turkish monsters! Who is it who has sinned and is being punished? If anything, it is the long arm of the government that is to blame. What have the common people, town-dwellers and villagers, the merchants, the artisans, the young and old, the children and the adolescents been guilty of? They face relentless persecution as part of a relentless plan to exterminate them, in line with Turkish mentality.

We come across human corpses on the way. We are struck with horror and shudder as we contemplate our past, with our prosperity and the comfort of our homes, and contrast this with the present uncertainties and what misfortunes and horrors the future has in store for us.

We traverse innumerable mountain passes and valleys and go through villages, whose names are difficult to remember, the reason being my illness. I may be confused about the names of a series of villages, but I remember some of the more frightening and menacing names of some of them, such as:- Kanli Dere (Bloody Valley), Kanli Guechid (Bloody Mountain Pass), Djehennem Deresi (Hell Valley), Tahta Kopru (Wooden Bridge), Tahta Oluk

(Wooden Channel), Tekir, etc. These place-names are an indication of the dangers associated with these localities.

We spent a night in Yedidjeh. That day my father worked to secure some food, but as it was late and the place was some distance from the village, he returned with only a loaf and fourteen eggs.

KULEK BOGHAZ

When we reached Kulek Boghaz, the gendarmes who escorted us were relieved and replaced. This happened every time we reached a new camp. The new gendarmes were even more shrewd and crafty. Before we set off, they spread rumours that the paths we would follow were extremely dangerous, thus creating panic among the deportees. After we had progressed for twenty minutes, the gendarmes stopped the caravan, and called four to five elderly persons to hint that danger was imminent. These hints soon scared the people into believing that there was in fact the danger of an attack by robbers at the next mountain pass. We collected money, with everyone in the caravan prepared to pay at least three to four pounds each to the gendarmes, so that they would protect us. Otherwise, they could abandon us and gallop safely past the danger zone. Everybody was beset with anxiety, confusion and fear.

After much thought, it was decided to satisfy the demands made by the gendarmes, so that they might accompany us. The elderly deportees mentioned above started collecting the money, with every family in the carts contributing willingly. 64 medjidiehs were thus collected. We handed this sum to the gendarmes, asking them to be satisfied with our modest contribution. This request appeared to satisfy the gendarmes, who got the caravan moving again.

On the way we met impoverished and emaciated Armenian deportees, trudging on foot, guarded by a number of mounted gendarmes. We came across grandfathers and grandmothers in despair, who were too weak to walk, and had to be abandoned by their loved ones. They begged us for bread and a place in our carts, so that they might rejoin their loved ones. We also met Turkish cavalrymen of Arab origin, as well as infantrymen, also Arabs,

proceeding on foot. They had been assembled from Syria, Palestine, Amman and Iraq, and were on their way to Chanak Kale in order to defend the Dardanelles.

The sight of these companies scared us, but we were never molested by these Arab soldiers. It was the first time we heard their singing with cries of "Ya-leyli" as they proceeded.

Under the pretext of conscription, the Turks destroyed the lives of about a million young Arabs by sending them to fronts, where the fighting was at its heaviest and the climate at its coldest. These Arab soldiers perished, frozen stiff by the cold. According to the Turkish mentality, you either had to become a Turk, or you had to perish.

We finally arrived in Kulak Boghaz, oppressed by the fear of being attacked by robbers on the way. It was late and getting dark. We were led to a spot close to the road in an exhausted and subdued state. Our driver unharnessed the buffalos, and we again took up our positions under our cart, half-sated and half-hungry. We spent the night under a star-lit sky, holding our mother's skirt. In our child-like innocence, we at first looked forward to our journey to exile, just as we joyfully anticipated our trips to summer resorts in the past.

This time, our journey had a different meaning, which we could not understand.

I gradually began to understand that the severity with which we were treated, the scenes we witnessed, as well as the words exchanged by the grown-ups, meant that we were facing a situation entirely different from the carefree trips we used to make on our way to the summer resorts. My little sister and brother would tell our parents, "Mum and Dad, it is enough! Let us return home, to our own home." Just like my sister and brother, hundreds of thousands of innocent children longed for their sweet and warm homes, their comfortable beds and dreamt about sleeping in their cradles and beds.

That night I woke up and opened my eyes to see a star-spangled sky, just like what I used to see, lying on my back on the roof of our house, or during our trips to the holiday resorts. While dreaming that we were lying on our soft beds, I felt like asking endless questions to my father and mother in connection with the geography lessons we had learnt at school, such as the Great Bear,

the Little Bear and the Polar Star. I would remember them during these moments. But, on seeing that my dear mother was tired, I did not wish to disturb her sleep, and as I moved closer to her and felt her warm breath, I fell asleep.

It was bitterly cold at night, and we were all frozen when we woke up in the morning and our clothes were wet and sticky with dew. In spite of my efforts, I could not help trembling, with my teeth chattering. My mother placed a warm shawl on my back and we made a small hearth with two stones and placed twigs and thistles between them. My mother lit a fire and brewed some tea in a pot used for cooking, which we drank hot to regain our strength. Meanwhile, the whole camp had been ordered to be ready to be on its way to Tarsus.

TOWARDS TARSUS

Our cart driver had fair hair, beginning to turn white, and blue eyes. He had come from the Rumeli region and told my father that these deportations were temporary. He was obliging and ready to help the other cart drivers when they faced difficulties. What was the origin of his blue eyes, fair hair and his European features?

This man had none of the Mongolian features and lacked Turkish fanaticism. That day my father felt unwell, with little energy left in him. When the cart driver realized that my father was unwell, he was the one to transfer our belongings into the cart, and to take my little sister and brother in his arms to seat them into the cart. I had already got used to climbing into the cart by stepping on one of the spokes of the wheels.

We and our relatives were ready to go, and only waited for the order to be given. As soon as the order was given by the gendarmes, the caravan started moving, with the carts following each other. The buffalos and oxen had regained their strength, and moved at a lively pace, carrying us to undefined camps on undefined dates, and along roundabout paths to emaciate and torture the Armenian race.

The further we progressed, the more frequent were the heart-rending scenes before our eyes. The unfortunate human masses we

met on the way were walking with swollen feet, mostly bare-foot. Some wore the remains of stockings, carrying packages of food on their shoulders. Some carried blankets, while others carried their beloved children or their aged parents, as long as their ebbing strength allowed them to do so. Their destination was not revealed so that these poor deportees might know how far they had to go. The only certainty was simply death.

They faced exhaustion, hunger and harassment by the gendarmes. There comes a time when one is forced to abandon loved ones, without even being able to look back. At the same time that person receives a blow on his emaciated shoulders or back by the heartless Turkish gendarmes. Entreaties and pleas for mercy are of no avail.

You have to keep walking. The Turk does not recognize what you have or what you lack, whether you are hungry or ill, or your desire to walk in the company of your loved ones. He is not concerned with your inability to continue walking. His sole aim is to eliminate you.

We continue our way with the ruminating buffalos and oxen drawing our carts at a leisurely pace in the empty landscape of hills echoing with the creaking of our wheels.

Day by day we come across an increasing number of human corpses belonging to both sexes and of varying age.

We and our relatives proceed towards Tarsus with high hopes. The reason is that Tarsus is a city, where we can find ways and means at all costs to remain there for a time, enabling us to recuperate from the exhaustion of our journey. This arduous journey had left its effects on all of us in the shape of illness and debility, and all of us needed to regain our health. We had not changed our clothes after leaving Bozanti. We used to sleep at night wearing the same clothes, as we did not have beds and lacked the opportunity to wash ourselves and launder our clothes. Going to bed and stretching ourselves between a mattress and woolen blankets, which we used to enjoy during those happy days, was now no more than a dream.

Our driver pointed with a finger to indicate Tarsus with its mosques and minarets in the distance, saying, “We are approaching Tarsus and will be there in half an hour.” After making this announcement, he jumped back into the cart and urged on the buffalos.

My uncles, my father and my father’s cousins alighted from the carts and gathered together to discuss their next course of action. They decided to request the cart drivers, on approaching Tarsus, to try, without fail, to drive their carts to a place close to the city, so as to facilitate their entry into the city itself.

When we arrived, we saw before us a vast field with thousands of tents housing the Armenian families who had arrived before us. Before reaching Tarsus, we were met by eight mounted gendarmes, by whom we were directed and forced to camp on one side of the field. Thus, our plans to enter the city were frustrated. Like the rest, we too, had to comply with the orders of the gendarmes.

Even before we had unloaded our belongings, the cart driver demanded the payment of the remainder of our fare.

FROM TARSUS TO ADANA

At the camp near Tarsus, we deliberately took our time to pitch our tents and to shelter within them, as some of our people had gone to the city, planning to find some means to be able to remain there. Unfortunately, we were under strict supervision, and did not have a single acquaintance in Tarsus. An hour later, these persons came back in despair, having to postpone our plans.

After their return, we immediately prepared to pitch only two of our tents. Our aim was to shelter only temporarily in these two tents. We had scarcely partially set up one of the tents, when the local official in charge of the deportations, accompanied by some of his men, suddenly appeared before our tent. After taking a thorough look at my father, he flew into a rage and prevented us from completing our work on the tent. He then turned to my father, saying, “You should immediately go and be on your way without any further delay.”

My father was a hale and hearty handsome and presentable man. We could not understand why the official had loudly ordered his assistants to make sure that we would leave immediately. The official, by the name of Hussein, was fat and had lost one of his eyes. I well remember my father’s respectful entreaties to grant

us a day's grace before leaving. We could not understand what had happened. Had we been betrayed, or was it a case of mistaken identity, with my father supposed to be someone else? We never got to the bottom of this puzzle.

We gathered together with our relatives, and took our decision. Within an hour and a half a train was to leave, carrying deportees to exile. We all decided to buy tickets so as to travel by rail. We had to move fast not to miss the train.

The railway line from Tarsus extended as far as Osmanieh or Mamouret.

We immediately prepared our packages and proceeded to the Tarsus railway station, bought tickets and took our positions in one of the trucks. There was a crowd and tumult at the station. They were all Armenians from various parts of Asia Minor.

Those who could afford certainly preferred to travel by rail. Travelling in carts drawn by oxen or buffalos was extremely tiring and excruciating. Although we had to endure overcrowding in cattle trucks, we were free from the fear of being attacked by brigands. We were also spared from the physical exhaustion of spending days of travel in carts.

In any case, it was not up to the deportees to choose rail travel. Firstly, railway lines did not exist everywhere, and secondly, once the deportation orders had been issued, the deportees would immediately be sent on their way, with the object of exhausting, harassing and wearing them down.

Neither your money nor your life belonged to you. You never knew what would happen to you the next minute. Neither your life, nor what you owned was secure. The money you might carry on your waist could be robbed during the next hour or during the next minute, leaving you penniless.

Sheikh Ul Islam, who had religious authority, had distorted the precepts of the Koran to conform to the orders issued by the Sultan or the government.

After checking the trucks in the train, which had been scheduled to proceed to Adana, the ticket holders rushed to their places. Before long and after a whistle from the locomotive, the train loaded with passengers, began moving. However, the gendarmes rushed to the

train to make sure that all the doors had been completely shut, treating the people harshly. The train gathered speed after repeated whistles from the locomotive.

FROM ADANA TO OSMANIEH

We covered scarcely two kilometres, with the doors shut tightly. Cries of wailing and moaning rose from every truck. The train was stopped and the gendarmes were forced to partially open the doors, leaving a gap of about 15 cm. The air inside was stifling. We were sitting on top of our belongings. There were four sick people in our truck, who had been placed near the doors, so that they could breathe fresh air. As the train progressed, the heat from the ceilings of the trucks beat down on the people within, causing headaches.

The train consisted of 32 trucks. After covering some distance, the train slowed down and stopped. We were told that we had arrived at a station close to Adana. The gendarmes approached the gaps next to the truck doors, saying "Getting out of the trucks is prohibited" and shut the doors. The entreaties and shouting from within the trucks were ignored and all the gendarmes did was to lock the doors and leave.

Soon the train started moving, with the locomotive whistling and puffing, but then it stopped again. There were crowds, turmoil and movement outside. We begged them to open the doors and to provide us some water, shouting from the small windows just below the ceiling of the trucks. We implored them in the name of God and the Prophet, but to no avail, as there was no response. Nobody paid any attention to the shouting and wailing in the 32 trucks.

The train finally set off again, leaving Adana behind us. From the small top windows I looked at the fields, which were white, supposedly with snow. I then turned to my mother, who could not move on account of the crowding around her, saying, "Mummy, all the fields are covered with snow."

She answered, "No, my boy, what you are seeing are the bolls of cotton plants. It never snows in this town." And, indeed, the fields were full of cotton plants. Suddenly there was a whistle and the train

slowed down: it became apparent that the arrival of the train at a station was being announced.

From the small top window we could read the name of the station, which was Indjirlik, Kurdjiler. Here, the shouting and moaning from the trucks had the effect of the chains on the doors being reset to leave a 20 cm. wide gap. Calls for drinking water could be heard from these gaps.

Turkish urchins offered to sell water. After being paid, some of them would run away without giving the water, while others would provide us with water only after being paid. This was a business opportunity for the urchins. There was a whistle from the locomotive which started puffing, and the train was on its way again. Being tired, I let some other person take my place, laid my head on my mother's knees and fell asleep.

We passed through Missis and Djihoun. I had lost all sense of time. We also went past Toprak Kale. My mother woke me up, saying, "Wake up my lad! We have arrived at the last station and we shall soon be in Osmanieh." Our tickets were valid as far as this station, as the line did not extend any further. The journey beyond this point worried us.

My little sister and my brother clung to my mother, and both said, "Mummy, tell Daddy that we should go no further. Let us remain here. We have had enough! Why have we left our home? I want my toys. I have left them in a corner of the balcony. Mummy, are the toys still there?"

Both my parents were moved by what the children said, and their eyes filled with tears. In order to conceal her sobbing, my mother turned towards me, and I felt two tears from her eyes drop on my hand. She swallowed to suppress her nightmarish feelings, that were choking her, and changed the subject by announcing that we were approaching Osmanieh.

Before long, the train stopped. The truck doors were opened, and we and our relatives proceeded to a vast field to camp along with thousands of exiled families.

We immediately found a suitable site to pitch our tents. My mother and aunt promptly started work, by finding three stones of moderate size to construct a hearth on which to cook our food, while

we, the children, collected dry twigs to make a fire on which to place the cooking pot. Within half an hour, the rice we had brought from Konya was ready. We added locally-purchased yoghurt to this rice and we and our relatives, a total of 25 persons, ate to our hearts' content under a tent. It was the first time after leaving Konya that we enjoyed such a meal, sitting cross-legged on the ground.

After this meal our menfolk made their way to the town in order to make some purchases and to become more familiar with the place. They came back in the evening. Like the others in the camp, we too, lit our candles. The grown-ups gathered together to discuss the situation and to talk about what they had seen. After that, we dispersed to our tents and lay on our beds, consisting of quilts laid on the ground. That evening the grown-ups decided not to remain long in Osmanieh, but to try to stay there for, say, ten to fifteen days, to have enough time to recover from the exhaustion of their journey.

By paying bribes, they managed to secure permission to remain only six days in Osmanieh, to rest and regain their strength.

As we used to live in a cold climate, there were no citrus trees in our homeland. It was here that we saw our first orange and lemon trees.

We were camped on a vast field which was very dusty, having been previously ploughed. Finally, after a stay of six days, we had recovered sufficiently, and made no effort to stay there any longer. The reason was that we could hear the sound of firing from the Mamourieh locality of the nearby Bahdjeh village. There was news of brutal treatment, robbery and murder, with eight to ten persons being killed daily. We therefore thought that it was preferable to leave as soon as possible.

We began our preparations when the official in charge of the deportations warned us, saying, "Tomorrow you have to go!"

Here, also, we faced problems and difficulties. Our next move would take us from Osmanieh to Katma. There were neither trains, nor horse-drawn carriages on this route. We had to travel in Rumelian type ox-carts.

My father, my Uncle Bedros Semerdjian, my Uncle Setrag Afarian, my father's cousins Parsegh, Garabed and Vartan Izmirlian hired carts for each of which they agreed to pay eight pounds after

some bargaining. The caravan, which was due to travel to Katma that day consisted of 50 carts, which would carry 50 families.

An hour before we left, a group of 235 persons were already on their way. Young and old, they were in despair, carrying their possessions on their shoulders, and being flogged with whips.

Our caravan set off, escorted by five gendarmes. Our cart driver was an old man with a thin beard and a felt hat, bordered with a white turban.

After Osmanieh, our next stop would be Amanus, or Hassan Beyli.

The ox-carts continued in procession along the road. As before, we and our relatives followed each other in the middle of the caravan. There was no indication of where this forced journey would ultimately take us, and where we would all end up. Day by day it became clear that a black unhappy fate awaited us.

We walked and rode on in the carts, downhill and uphill. The going was difficult for the buffalos and the oxen: the descents were especially difficult, as the animals could scarcely restrain the weight of the carts. On such stretches we would get off the carts and follow on foot. On some occasions, the cart drivers would immobilize one or both of the rear wheels with ropes, so that we could safely move down the steep roads. There was also the danger of the carts running over the draught animals during these steep descents. What the Armenian deportees suffered on these roads is beyond description. The Intilli climb was particularly harrowing for them.

We would travel seven to eight hours daily, coming across human corpses on the way. These sights oppressed us and crushed our spirits. Who knows whose loved ones these poor victims, lying on the ground, had once been?

The gendarmes suddenly stopped the caravan. In typical Turkish style, they started begging tips from the unfortunate Armenian deportees for having led them safely and without incident through these dangerous regions.

We travelled for days along desolate mountainsides and valleys, which for centuries had not been trodden by human feet.

The caravan suddenly stopped again, and the grown-ups got off their carts. They came back with the news that the ox of one of the drivers had become ill. All the drivers gathered together to decide

what to do with the moaning ox. They all had different suggestions and finally decided to drag the ox aside and apply a soapy water enema and get the ox to run to help it evacuate its bowels. However, the ox merely sat on its haunches: it was difficult to get it to stand. When they saw that the ox's belly was slowly beginning to swell, they decided to place the ox on the cart it had been pulling, after distributing the people and their belongings between the other carts. We finally arrived in Hassan Bey or Amanus after being scorched by the hot sun and much suffering.

AMANUS

The officials in charge of the deportations led us to a site near the gardens, where the water was plentiful. There was a crowd of refugees, some, still in good shape, and others dispirited and in poor condition. We pitched our tents some distance apart, as the site was unsuitable, narrow and overcrowded.

Wherever we went, the first thing my mother did was to prepare our meals. We had a satisfying meal with the food we had brought with us. Two elderly women appeared in front of our tent, as we were resting inside.

At first we thought they were beggars. Such was not the case, however, as the two women were Armenians from Amanus: one was called Terfanda, the other Tamam. The two women were in a miserable state. They sat down in a sunny spot inside the tent and told us their sorry tale. They told us about the disaster that had struck their town and the deportation of their own young sons, and how the town had been emptied. They pointed at the magnificent Armenian church, which stood in a dominating position on top of a hill just like a fortress.

They said that so far, they had no news from their loved ones, who had been exiled. They wiped the tears flowing from their dark eyes onto their red cheeks with the edge of the kerchiefs on their heads. They wore baggy trousers (shalwars) instead of skirts. Both carried small parcels under their arms, each of which contained five eggs, which they gave us as a gift.

My parents wanted to know the price of these eggs, but the two women refused payment. My father did not want to get these eggs for nothing, and placed some money, more than the eggs were worth, in the hands of both women. These two grandmothers from Amanus, behaving like typical Armenian grandmothers, left after thanking and praying for us.

Amanus has abundant water. There was a spring under a rock with the shape of a human body some way beyond our tents. The air in Amanus is healthy, but we could not remain there, as we had hired our cart to take us as far as Katma. At the same time, as such small places were more dangerous, we made no effort to remain there.

Our journey from Bozaanti to Amanus took weeks. What we saw on the way is hard to imagine. We saw poor families, with the young and old, lying on the ground. Every step of the way required the payment of money, while many of the deportees used to live from hand to mouth. Even well-to-do families, after paying their way from camp to camp, would eventually run out of money: how long could they last after that? Try for a moment to picture the condition of a tent-dweller, or even that of a person without shelter, suffering under the hot sun during daytime, and under the dew and cold during the night! At the same time, this person has to face hunger and thirst, with only a bed-sheet or blanket for protection against the elements. These wretched conditions are beyond the power of imagination.

I became ill on the way, but there were no doctors or medicines. The only available medicine was quinine. I cannot remember the name of the place, where, feeling very thirsty, I drank some water. Although I did not realize it at first, it left a nasty taste in my mouth. After that, the mere memory of that taste made me vomit, and I could not drink any water, even the cleanest water. For a long time I drank no water. I would push away the glass of water my mother used to offer me. Wherever we went, the first thing my father would do was to find juicy fruit such as melons and water melons as a substitute for water. The addition of cinnamon to tea reduced the bad taste of plain water.

I frequently threw up during our journey which kept growing longer. My illness started with severe abdominal pain. They would

not remove me from the cart, even when we travelled along steep and difficult roads. There was a long line of carts, loaded with innocent Armenian families and their bedding and only the most essential belongings. The line was so long that that both its ends were lost to view. Tired mothers and fathers, pale children, teenagers and youths wore expressions of despair, with no hope of deliverance, or of ever reaching a safe haven. They had no protection, and were the victims of a black fate, driven for days and months to be slaughtered like a flock of sheep. They were constantly under the watchful eye of two armed gendarmes in front of the caravan, two at the back, and, on occasion, another two in the middle. The deportees were treated as if they were criminals.

We met twenty-five to thirty youths, all tied together by their arms, with wounds on their heads and swollen legs. They had all suffered bastinado and were exhausted and in no condition to walk, all of them ill, hungry and thirsty. They walked on until they collapsed. This is how the Turks treated their law-abiding submissive subjects, who, according to the Constitution, were Ottoman citizens.

Due to my illness as we travelled, I may be excused for not remembering the names of the places we encountered in the correct sequence. We went through Takhta Kopru, Takhta Oluk, Tekireh, Ayran, Intilli, Islahieh, Meydan, Ekbez, Radjoy and Kurt Kolak, before finally arriving in Katma. We did reach Katma, but in what condition? It was very late. The dim flickering light of bee-wax candles from the tents of the Armenians, who had now become tent-dwellers, could be seen in the distance.

The weather was harsh during this season, and this accentuated our apprehensions. It was windy and stormy. Suddenly, the sky filled with clouds, with the threat of rain and lightning. We were in unfamiliar surroundings. The gendarmes finally stopped our caravan by standing in front of our carts. Rumours began to spread that the caravan would be directed to Kilis, as there was no room in Katma for newcomers. We were told to wait there until new instructions were issued.

Nature also seemed to conspire to add to our misery. A torrential rain, with large raindrops, started falling. The open carts offered

no protection. My father pulled up our tent, which had been spread under our cart, and placed it over our heads to partially protect us from the rain. Although the heavy downpour was of short duration and our clothes were wet, there were other unfortunate families who were soaked to the skin. In spite of the fact that we were supposed to wait for half an hour, we were there for a full hour.

KATMA

My mother and aunt, always aware of their obligations, immediately distributed "katas" (a kind of Armenian biscuit) which had been kept for emergencies. We all remained in the cart that night. That was where we ate our biscuits and spent the night half-asleep and half-awake in our wet clothes.

As my father crossed the camp on his way to buy some bread in the morning, he saw one of our compatriots. The latter told my father, that having arrived in Katma two days earlier, he had discovered a vacant site in the camp after the deportees there had been sent to Aleppo. My father soon came back with this news, and, without losing time, we paid what we owed to the cart drivers, and we and our relatives moved to the new site along with our belongings. We soon pitched our tents, while my mother and my aunt immediately placed a pot on the makeshift stone hearth to prepare tea.

The evening rain was followed by a cold early morning, which made us shiver. A little later, we drank our tea, surrounded by our relatives.

We left our tents to stroll around, in the hope of finding acquaintances in the neighbouring tents. The Katma camp was immense. The scene in the field opposite the station was mind-boggling. This camp, housing the Armenian refugees, extended endlessly in all directions. Pedlars, selling tea, milk and pastry would go round the camp from tent to tent. Most of those crowded in the Katma camp were Armenians from Asia Minor, who were being sent to Aleppo.

In the course of the day it was possible to buy all kinds of foodstuffs if one had the necessary money. Those going round the

camp selling provisions also included Arab merchants. Those who were short of money sold their gold articles and other valuables to these merchants. What they sold for a song, included Beshibirliks (ornamental Turkish five-lira gold coins), Mahmoudiehs (25-piastre commemorative gold coins) etc., as well as golden rings necklaces, jewel-studded crosses and all kinds of valuables.

We spent fifteen days in Katma. Hundreds of exiles were driven to Aleppo. They were sent there in ox-drawn carts or on foot two, three or four times daily.

The single young men, who were prisoners, were tied together by their arms and forcibly separated from their loved ones. The Turks regarded those young men who had run out of money as idiots. These so-called idiots were in fact honourable young men from modest families. As young men, they ran a greater risk, as they were targeted by the Turks. Many of these supposed idiots were college or university graduates, pharmacists, teachers and specialists, whom the Turks, with their Turkish mentality, wanted to humiliate with this word of contempt.

Day by day, we became better acquainted with what went on in the camp. Various diseases were creating havoc in the camp. During the next few days some compatriots visited our tent. Our conversation focused on the day's events. In Konya we had a neighbour, called Hagop Martayan, with whom we were close friends. He used to come every day, holding a Bible, and interpret the biblical prophecies. He would often repeat the words, "Blessed is the man who will be alive in 1920." His family scarcely managed to reach Aleppo. Having run out of money in Aleppo, they faced extreme poverty, and all died, apart from their son Simon, who now lives in France. Typhus, paratyphoid, dysentery, robbery and destitution took their toll. Hundreds died daily.

My own illness kept getting worse, but there were no doctors. We did not know what would happen as a result of my debility. I had to get out four or five times daily to answer the call of nature. I suffered from abdominal pain, there were traces of blood in my stools and I ran a high temperature, etc.

There were plenty of people who claimed to be doctors, but none were qualified. These self-proclaimed "doctors" took on the airs of

doctors. The genuine qualified doctors were serving in the army, while many of them had been murdered by the Turks.

Even if qualified doctors had been available, they could do little without medicines and pharmacies.

When orders were given for the deportees to move on, no consideration was given to people with serious illness, or those close to death, and no permission was given for their loved ones to remain with these people for at least one more day in order to look after them or to be with them during their last few hours. None of this was permitted. Irrespective of circumstances, one had to abandon one's flesh and blood. You had to move on and leave behind your husband or wife, who was unable to travel, or was on his or her death-bed. If you failed to move, you would be struck on the head or back, or anywhere else with a whip. You would either die with your loved one, who was close to death, or you had to abandon him: this was the order of the day!

I have seen mothers, fathers and children torn away from their dying loved ones by gendarmes or the officials in charge of the deportations. After deporting these people, the officials would move in to collect those on their death-beds, or incapable of moving, or in a delirious state on account of a high fever to bury them - some already dead and some still alive - in graves which had been previously dug.

Here, in Katma, we witnessed movement of the thin layer of soil covering the graves, followed by the emergence of the arms and legs of those still alive. For days on end, these unfortunate Armenians suffered the inhuman fate of being buried alive. These wretched people would perish, trying to shift the earth covering them.

My mind becomes paralyzed when I picture these scenes. My mind becomes obsessed with the effort to obliterate these pictures. I am tormented for hours and days, as I unsuccessfully try to free myself from these nightmares. I wonder how men can treat each other with such inhumanity. In my judgement, no nation or people are as barbaric as the Turkish nation and the Turkish people. I wonder how I managed to witness these scenes for weeks, months and years, and survived in this genocidal hell created by the Turks. Was all this a dream or the stark reality?

Indeed, dear reader, those who died on the way, had families just like you: they were decent, sensitive and staid people, fathers, mothers and children.

I have seen a new-born baby, wrapped in rags, abandoned in the barbed wire barrier surrounding the camp in Katma. This was only the beginning. All along the road to Der Zor there were hundreds of abandoned babies: the parents did not want to see with their own eyes the suffering and death of their offspring. The mothers had left them in the hope that they would be safe there. Your heart breaks to pieces when you hear the screams of these babies.

What a world we live in, when in this twentieth century, we allow these hyenas, thirsting for human blood, to remain unpunished! It is a shame on your modern civilization and your supposed greatness. Again, shame on you!

The Turkish monsters continue to deny this satanic crime, without blushing or feeling the least shame. After being guilty of exterminating over a million and a half Armenians, Turkey cynically distorts the truth, rewriting a fictitious version of history.

What we saw on the way from Konya to Katma was only a shadow of what we witnessed in Katma itself.

My dear brothers and children, I wish to strongly warn the future Armenian generations that the Turks remain the same as they were in the past, and will not change in the future.

Psychology teaches us that a wolf always remains and dies a wolf. A snake may change its slough without any change in its nature.

FROM KATMA TO ALEPPO

The destitution in Katma deteriorated by the day. It is here that I came in contact with lice. It is only after our arrival in Katma that we noticed these creatures creeping on our clothing. I exclaimed, "Mummy, a small insect is crawling on me!" Those around me, who carefully examined the insect, declared that it was a louse. It appeared that those who had arrived before us had introduced the lice into the camp. These parasites helped spread typhus, typhoid and other diseases.

Our group unanimously decided to make every effort to stay in Aleppo as long as possible, and at all costs.

Twenty to twenty-five families from Aleppo had settled in Konya in the past, where they were engaged in commerce. These families had been successful, and had become very rich, thanks to their business acumen. They were Yusuf Shar, Rezkallah Khayat, Kuchuk Yusuf, Nikola Djemal etc.

As my aunt's husband, Uncle Setrag Afarian, was a businessman, Rezkallah was his godfather. The latter wanted to help my uncle by sending a card in which he wrote:- "When you reach Aleppo, remember that I have a brother there. As soon as you arrive there, do not fail to present this note to him: he will then help you." The note in question was on a card with the words:- "Dear brother, I am the godfather of the bearer of this card. Do whatever you can to help him."

In Katma, my uncle, father and my father's cousins, in line with their previous plans, decided to send two persons to Aleppo to find and meet Selim Khayat, the brother of Rezkhallah Khayat, so that, on our arrival in Aleppo, he would secure lodgings and make the necessary arrangements for us.

When we saw the official in charge of the deportations in Katma and paid him a satisfactory bribe, my uncles were allowed to travel to Aleppo, on condition that they would come back. The genocide proper had not yet commenced: we were still in the stage of attrition by disease, hunger, destitution, poverty and extortion. Although there were occasional massacres on the roads, they were not yet on the massive scale that was to come later, such as was to occur in Der Zor and Ras-ul-Ayin.

My uncles returned from Aleppo three days later. They had easily found Selim Khayat. Selim Khayat was very obliging and promised to do all he could to help. He hired a second-floor flat in an area close to his house for a monthly rent of seven pounds. This flat had two large rooms and could accommodate five families. On their return from Aleppo, my uncles hired five carts to take us from Katma to Aleppo. After bargaining, it was agreed to pay five pounds in advance for each cart. We were confident that we could enter Aleppo without facing obstacles.

It was Sunday. The drivers, who knew how long the journey to Aleppo would take, came to collect us at the appointed time. We placed our belongings in the carts and took our places in them. The driver in the leading cart cracked his whip, and the five carts moved briskly in procession towards Aleppo. This time we were migrating voluntarily.

The carts moved so rapidly that we neared Aleppo before the expected time. When Aleppo came into view from the distance, the drivers decided to wait until dark, so that we might enter the town safely. After a long wait, it looked as if it was time for us to move into the town.

We planned to enter Aleppo through the Sebil entry point, situated in front of a large coffee shop. However, misfortune unexpectedly struck us. Suddenly, five policemen emerged from the police station just before the Sebil coffee shop and blocked our way, saying that it was strictly forbidden to enter the town. They forced the drivers to take us to the camp, known as Karlik.

We had heard that the Karlik camp was the gateway to Hell. Our group left the carts and entered the police station. After a long talk with the Police Chief, and the payment of a five pound bribe, he gave us permission to go to the Djemilieh camp instead of the Karlik camp. Under the escort of two policemen, we were led to a vast field, where Armenian deportees were camped in thousands of tents, next to the partly ruined derelict St. Louis hospital in the Djemilieh area. There, we were handed to the camp authorities.

It was late when we arrived at the camp. As on previous occasions, we placed our belongings in a circle, leaving enough space for us, the children. After having something to eat, and

without the tents being pitched, we, the children, fell asleep, while the grown-ups, as was their wont, spent the night, lying half asleep, half awake on our belongings.

Early in the morning, the first thing our group did was to look for a suitable site for our tents. Hundreds of families would arrive daily and hundreds would be sent to Ras-ul-Ayun, to Der Zor and to Havran and Dera in the region of Damascus. There, they would be killed or allowed to rot away and die.

We were again lucky: as we were on the look-out for a suitable site for our tents, we met one of our compatriots. He led us to the derelict St. Louis hospital, where he had settled temporarily. Our group found a convenient place in the hospital and moved in. As there was a roof, we did not need our tents. Many families had settled side by side in the hall, along with their belongings, without having to pay rent.

Those Armenian deportees, who had recently arrived, and, who could secure a place in the hospital, settled there, only to be forcibly evicted by the police. Outside the hospital, thousands of tents, housing the Armenian deportees, extended as far as the vast Sebil plain.

We could not remain here. We had already rented a house in the town, and had already paid the rent in advance. We thought of ways and means to move to a house. It was extremely difficult to enter the town. There were police stations on all the roads leading to the town, with those venturing to enter, risking arrest. Should we be arrested, we would be sent straight to the Karlik camp, and from there to Der Zor. Claiming to have a family and small children would have no effect. They would lock you into the police station lavatory. After the number of prisoners, thus locked up, had risen to five or six, you would all be tied together at the arms, reduced to the category of "idiots" and sent to Der Zor, thus adding insult to injury.

My uncles hired a landau and went to Aleppo to meet Selim Khayat, to find some means to enable all of us to move into the town.

Selim Khayat had a shop in the Khan Etri inn with two rooms (one in front and an inner one at the back) behind the largest mosque in Aleppo and close to the entrance of the covered market. He emptied the contents of the inner room and transferred them

to the front room to create space for us and our belongings in the inner room. He then personally transferred our group to his shop in a hired landau, carrying us two at a time, starting with the women and the children.

The first day seven of us were thus taken to Selim Khayat's shop, while the rest of us arrived there the second day. We had, however, a difficulty. My uncle's father-in-law was 80 years old and close to death: we had to leave him behind with his wife, as he was about to die and was in his death-bed. If we had taken him along, and he were to die in Khan Etri, we would be in great trouble. He was in a hopeless state and died two days later. His name was Khatchadour Hodja, as he had been a teacher. He was known as "Hodja", which is an honorary title for teachers. Along with hundreds of others, who died daily, his body was thrown in a cart, used for carrying stones, along with twenty to twenty-five other bodies. We do not know where he was taken, or where he was buried.

My uncle paid the cart driver his due for carrying the body. The following day my uncle fetched Khatchadourian Hodja's widow, who had been left alone, to join us in the room in the shop.

We spent exactly one week in the shop of Khan Etri Khayat. As in the earlier case of our stay in the inn belonging to the Tcherkez in Ereyli, here too we would remain indoors in complete silence during the day, venturing outside in the courtyard only at night to breathe some fresh air. Like many others, we too suffered from sore eyes. There was an epidemic of eye infection in the town as a result of the filthy conditions.

HOW WE MOVED FROM KHAN ETRI TO SOKAK AL ARBAEEN

From the room in the shop in Khan Etri we moved to the house of Abu Seman in the Sokak al Arbaeen Quarter, which Selim Khayat had rented for us. We used the same tactics as those during our move from Djemilieh hospital in Khan Etri to avoid being too conspicuous. Thus, we travelled in twos or threes in a landau, with our belongings split up into small lots. This involved about ten trips and cost us about ten times more.

My illness got worse, because, ever since I had been infected, I was left without medical treatment. I was wasting away and in the end I had to remain in bed. I was in a desperate condition. I was emaciated and very weak. The doctors who examined me, at a time when human life hardly counted, would say, "Let him eat whatever he wants, as he is not expected to live." They would add a few words of comfort and leave after writing a prescription.

I had a craving for bread, tomatoes and bitter and sour foods, which, as I have now come to understand, were all harmful to someone in my condition.

My mother was extremely careful with the food she offered me, and would prepare rice and vermicelli soup for me. She was right in not giving me what I desired, because my real problem was dysentery: there were traces of blood in my stools.

Meanwhile, my cousins from one uncle and Hrant, the two-year old and only son of another uncle and the eight month old daughter of a cousin of my father's were running very high temperatures. The number of sick persons grew day by day as a result of our exhausting journey, the cold, inadequate food and the shock of the terrible scenes we witnessed on the way. Sick beds took up half the floor space in our room.

My nineteen year old cousin Jano suffered a sudden and severe attack of fever. We decided to call Doctor Altounian, one of the prominent doctors in Aleppo. Altounian used to charge a fee of one gold pound every time he visited a patient. I must confess that this fee was exorbitant and bothered us in view of the money that was stolen by robbers, or extorted by the gendarmes and policemen, or

the sums we had to spend to be able to enter Aleppo. Day by day our purses were emptying.

My uncle called doctor Altounian to examine his son, and paid one medjidieh to the coachman who used to take the doctor on his rounds. At last, we managed to bring doctor Altounian. When he came and saw the beds sprawled on the floor, he asked, "Which is the patient you want me to examine?" He spoke with an American accent when the patient was shown to him. After examining the patient and writing a prescription, he turned to go. My uncle slipped a pound into the doctor's hand. My uncle's mother-in-law, who was holding her two-year grandchild, approached the doctor, saying, "Now that you are here, could you please also examine my grandchild?" The degenerate doctor said in Turkish, with an American drawl, "I have come to examine just one patient. I shall not deal with a second patient," and was on his way out. My uncle and his mother-in-law, who doted on the child, and were worried about its health, said to the doctor, "We are prepared to pay whatever fee you charge." The doctor turned back, examined the child and wrote a prescription. As the doctor was about to leave, my uncle paid him twenty piasters instead of one medjidieh from his almost depleted purse.

The behavior of Doctor Altounian for the sake of twenty piastres, and his attitude towards his suffering fellow-Armenians filled us with sorrow. His utter indifference hurt us.

Getting out of the house was very dangerous. Our menfolk had to be extremely cautious when emerging from the house to make purchases. God forbid, if the authorities realized that Armenian families were living in the house: it would offer the corrupt police a source of income.

Berjouhi, the daughter of my father's cousin, was ill and died during the night. We were worried about how we could bury her body without attracting the attention of our landlord. Should the landlord realize that one of our number had died as a result of illness, he would suspect that a contagious disease was the cause and inform the police.

The gendarmes or the police would exploit the opportunity to extort bribes. Should we refuse to pay bribes, they would throw our

families and our belongings into the streets. The families would be kept under surveillance, and sent to Karlik and then on to Der Zor.

There were cases of some local Christian families, who let rooms in their houses, collected a month's rent in advance, only to inform the police a week or two later that Armenians were living in their houses. The police would come and evict these poor families and throw out their belongings. Such landlords would repeat this process with other Armenian families, without the least compunction. This was the form of robbery that some of the local Christians resorted to.

What could we do with Berjouhi's tiny body? After much thought, my father wrapped the body in a parcel, and emerged from the front door with it. He gave a medjidieh to the first poor Armenian he met, and said to him, "My lad, this parcel contains the body of a little child. Take this money and bury the body!" My father could not leave the quarter in which we lived and, at the same time, did not know where the cemetery was situated. We could not even shed a tear for this poor mite. The body had been entrusted to a total stranger: what this person would do was uncertain. Would he bury the body as requested, or would he dump it in a corner? This question weighed heavily on our conscience.

I, myself, was the great cause of concern to my parents. I had been almost reduced to a skeleton. Whenever my father called a doctor, a look at the doctor's facial expression was enough to convince me that my condition was hopeless. The doctors would examine and write prescriptions for my sick cousins, but would not bother to do the same for me.

There was talk of a skilled, experienced and conscientious doctor in Aleppo during those days. This doctor suffered from seven physical defects: he was a hunchback, one of his eyes was blind, his face was pock-marked, he was short, he limped, he was bald, and was almost beardless. This doctor was called Hovagimian, but was nicknamed "the hunchback doctor". He used to go on his rounds, riding a white donkey. As a last resort, my parents decided to try this doctor as well.

Apart from me, my three cousins were also afflicted with jaundice, so they decided to call this doctor. The doctor examined the other patients first, made the appropriate recommendations

and wrote prescriptions. My late mother then turned to the doctor, suggesting, "Doctor, can you have a look at this lad?"

The doctor answered, "I shall certainly examine him: he represents our future generation."

The doctor then crouched next to my bed and said to my mother, "Can you please remove the blanket covering this lad and take off his shirt?"

My mother immediately complied with the doctor's request. The doctor knelt and placed his ear on my breast and then on my abdomen, listening carefully. He left after writing the appropriate prescription, making the necessary recommendations and wishing me good recovery. He accepted the fee he was paid with a satisfied smile, without asking for more.

The medicines prescribed by Doctor Hovagimian had the desired beneficial effect, and within two weeks I was able to move around slowly and getting stronger day by day.

At this point I feel the need to digress from my story, and to state that many Armenian doctors did not make the necessary sacrifices to mitigate the effect of the epidemics that broke out as a result of the deportations ordered by the Turkish government during the World War. In making this statement, I am not implying that the doctors should offer their scientific expertise free of charge, but that they should match their fees to the prevailing conditions, and to take into consideration what their patients were able to pay. This would have been their greatest sacrifice in favour of our nation and humanity.

Being confined indoors made things very difficult for us. We had trouble getting out to buy what was needed.

It was winter and it rained ceaselessly. The people had no real protection in their tents, while those without tents were left in the streets, huddled in corners, the mothers with their one or two children and their tiny tots, too overwhelmed to shed tears. It was impossible for those in the neighbouring homes to sleep comfortably when they heard cries imploring, "A scrap of bread, mother! A scrap of bread, sister!" these heart-rending cries haunted your ears, but how many of these people could you help? There were thousands of them, abandoned and helpless. These tormented people were too hungry to be able to sleep. They suffered from

the cold, the wind and the rain. They lay under the arcades of the Armenian and other Christian churches in the Salibeh Quarter of Aleppo. They were on their last legs, suffering from hunger, with their palates dry from thirst and would soon die in torment.

If the walls of the houses on the road between the "Karasoun Mangants"church and Djidedeh could speak, they would describe the scenes there, with thousands of poor Armenians, grown-ups and children, in a pitiable state and in agony. Every day hundreds of bodies would be collected from the roads in the Djidedeh Quarter of Aleppo next to mansions, and loaded in horse-drawn carts. The criminal genocidal plans of Sultan Hamid were being inexorably implemented on an even larger scale in 1915.

NEW PLANS TO DESTROY THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE

The Ottoman Bank, as well as other banks had orders whereby the gold currency deposited with them would be drawn by their clients in the form of paper currency of the same nominal value. As the paper currency had already been devaluated, one gold pound was worth much more than one pound in paper currency. A few days later, a new decision was taken, on the strength of which the money deposited by Armenians would be regarded as public property. This was a new trick to impoverish and hurt the Armenians in a single day. This was a typical Turkish tactic to plunder billions from the thousands of Armenians who had earned this money by the sweat of their brows.

Day by day the harassment of Armenians became more severe. As in every case, the arrest of a member of a large family was a misfortune not only to the individual involved, but also to the rest of the family.

It was impossible not to emerge from our hiding place, as we had to get out to make our purchases. While out shopping, my uncle overheard two Armenians in the shop, who were talking about the plans of rich Aleppo landowners, who possessed farms, to be allowed by the government to take Armenian deportees to

their villages, so that they might work the land as farm labourers. My uncle obtained more details from these Armenians. One of the two men, who had registered to be sent to a farm, wanted to spread this information to other Armenian families so that they, too, might benefit from this plan, and that he might not be alone in the village.

My uncle returned, accompanied by a young man. This young man, a native of the town of Hadjin, was called Dikran Yakoubian.

Our group surrounded Dikran and encouraged him to talk. The situation was as follows:- A dozen or so of wealthy Aleppo land and farm owners held documents, signed by Djemal Pasha, authorizing them to collect Armenian deportees and to arrange their settlement in their villages. Some of the names of these wealthy landowners, which I remember, include Djebrizadeh, Muderiszadeh, Hanifeh, etc. The aim of the plan was to fill the villages with hard-working Armenians to promote and develop agriculture. However, it later became apparent that the wealthy landowners had merely devised another method of exploiting the Armenians. After about three months in these villages, they expelled us. After cultivating and sowing, we had to leave behind the resulting harvest and were deported to Der Zor. The landowners made no effort to mediate or to protect us.

Conditions in Aleppo grew more severe. It became impossible to settle there, or even spend a few weeks there. Our group took the final decision to settle in one of the villages belonging to the Muderiszadeh family. Through Dikran Yakoubian, we informed the landowner the number of families in our group and presented our identity papers. The landowner, in his turn, presented his own papers to Djemal Pasha, so that we would be permitted to settle in the villages. There, together with the local villagers, we would cultivate and sow the fields and develop the villages. We would remain there until the end of the war. When the war was over, we could stay on if satisfied, or go back to our home-towns.

Dikran Yakoubian visited us five days later with the requisite document signed by Djemal Pasha. Our destination was the village of Messoudieh in Djezireh north-east of Aleppo, on the left bank of the Euphrates river.

Our group began the preparations for the journey. Finally it was time for us to go. The landowner sent one of his agents to show

us the way. Our destination, Messoudieh, was one of the dozen villages belonging to Muderiszadeh Said Bey, Fuad Bey and the Ahmed Bey brothers. We were not villagers and had no idea about ploughing, sowing and threshing wheat and other aspects of village life. Those of us who went to Messoudieh comprised a total of 28 families, consisting of deportees from Konia, Karaman, Kessaria, Hadjin, Sis etc. The families included that of Setrag Afarian, and the Seropians, the Semerdjians, the Izmirlians, the Balikdjians, the Yakoubians and the Nazarians.

FROM ALEPPO TO THE VILLAGE OF MESSOUDIEH IN DJEZIREH

The date and the hour of our departure had already been fixed. Our five families hired five horse-drawn coaches with springs, for each of which we paid five pounds in gold coins. The coaches stood in a row in front of our door early in the morning at the appointed hour. We were all ready and all the family members took their seats, along with their belongings.

It was 6 a.m. when we set off. We had managed to spend exactly 40 days in Aleppo, under very difficult circumstances. After leaving Aleppo, the first camp we encountered was in the small town of Bab, where we arrived at sunset. That night we slept in the coaches. Within half an hour, the coach carrying the Balikdjian family joined us.

My father and mother slept on their seats, while we, the children, slept with our heads on their knees.

Outside there was a storm with incessant rain, thunder and lightning and the noise of utter confusion. However, when we woke up in the morning, we saw the dire conditions created by the accumulated water from the downpour for the Armenian deportees who had to live in tents.

The next village on the way was the small Tcherkez administrative centre called Mumbuj.

The village towards which we were heading was under the jurisdiction of Mumbuj.

FROM BAB TO MUMBUJ

Early in the morning the coachmen harnessed the horses and we set off. Eight other coaches, carrying families, started to follow us. When we asked them where they were going, they named the village that was to be our destination. The prospect of being with a fairly large group of Armenians in the village was encouraging and pleasant.

After progressing two or three hundred metres beyond our stop near the inn, we caught sight of a vast camp with Armenian deportees. The camp was in an indescribable state, as a result of the flooding caused by the downpour of the previous night. Whatever belongings these people had, were completely submerged in knee-deep rainwater. The wretched people were pinned down by hunger, exhaustion and disease. They mourned their loved ones who had drowned in the filthy water and mud and grieved over their misfortune.

Thousands, who were too weak to move as they lay on rags spread on the ground under the tents, which collapsed on them during the night's downpour, suffered immensely. They were in a hopeless situation. There was no Red Cross, or anybody to help them. It was a case of everybody having to fend for himself. Who can be so unfeeling as to dismiss from his mind and forget the sight of so much suffering borne by his compatriots.

After the lapse of seventy years, I am still haunted by these images, which bring tears to my eyes when I am alone. During these moments, I wonder whether I am only dreaming.

As we approached this revelation of hell, I met my compatriot Peniamin Stambolian. It appeared that our coach was going past his collapsed tent. When he noticed us, he approached our coach.

The poor man could hardly be recognized. When he left Konya, he weighed 120 kilogrammes and was a healthy, robust and self-sufficient businessman with three children. He was now in a confused state. He began describing the disaster that they suffered, as a result of the night's storm and torrential rain.

We begged the coachman to stop for two to three minutes. On the basis of our permit, we were entitled to stop wherever we wanted.

Stambolian described his odyssey as follows:-

"Last night, as we lay under our tent during the storm and heavy rain some thieves appeared. We were half-asleep and half-awake when our tent collapsed. As I was trying to repair our tent, I noticed that someone from outside was raising the rear flap of the tent. We had a package in the middle of the tent. The package began to move. I had tied the package to my waist, to enable me to wake up and protect it should the need arise. The package contained our clothing and a couple of carpets woven in Kershehir. The rope was being pulled, with my wife and me inside the tent at one end and the thieves outside at the other end. Shouting and calling for help had no effect. The thieves finally managed to pull the package outside. When they saw that the package was tied to my waist, they used a knife to cut the rope, seize the package and load it on the back of a mule before disappearing.

There was no response to our loud calls for help. Now, my three children, who are suffering from typhus, are lying on the ground on wet rags."

Tears streamed from the sunken eyes of the poor man.

We could stop no longer, because the carriages accompanying us might create problems for us by waiting. In the end, my uncle took a medjidieh from his pocket and placed it in Stambolian's pocket. We left with broken hearts.

I can state the camp in Bab was comparable, if not worse, to that in Karma, as far as misfortune and destitution are concerned.

That day we arrived in Mumbuj. We spent the night at the entrance of this small town, as suggested by the bey's agent. At about 8 a.m. the representatives of the families called on the kaimakam (i.e. the district governor). The kaimakam received us in his office, where we were led by the bey's agent.

Everyone of us held Djemal Pasha's permit, which authorized us to engage in agricultural work in the Messoudieh village, which belonged to the Muderszadeh brothers. Hussein Fehmi, the kaimakam of Mumbuj, hated the Armenians virulently. This beast in human shape had a boy of ten or eleven whipped and then buried alive, simply because the boy had run away from the caravan.

Hussein Fehmi carefully examined the permits, a process which took almost two hours. After checking the names and surnames of

everyone, the places they came from, their ages, the names of their fathers and mothers, etc., he allowed us to leave.

We saw Armenian orphans between the ages of five or six. There were one or two of them in every house. They had been collected and brought here by the Tcherkezes. They could be distinguished by their bearing, their sad faces and their unfamiliarity with the local language. We spoke with some of them in Armenian, asking them where they had come from. They answered that they were from Sebastia (or Sivas).

FROM MUMBUJ TO THE VILLAGE OF MESSOUDIEH

After this strict examination, we were shown the way by the steward of the village headman. We followed the steward who led us on horseback. On the way, we occasionally encountered small dirty houses built of mud, and resembling bee-hives. The more we progressed, the more our worries grew. However, there was no point in regretting the decision we had already taken. Willy-nilly, we had to submit to the destiny that lay ahead. Like the rest of the Armenians, we, too, were already marching to our death. There was no going back: we had to keep going towards death and towards slaughter.

As we approached the villages, the inhabitants of the mud-huts, young and old, would emerge and start running after our coaches. They were hungry and extremely dirty. I would not be exaggerating if I were to say that never in their lives had they washed their faces and their hands. From the curiosity these villagers, known as fellaheen, showed as we approached, we realized that they had never seen horse-drawn carriages: our coaches were probably the very first to appear in this area. Whenever we stopped, these people would approach and run their fingers on the wheels of the coaches, or admire the leather saddles on the horses. They felt the bells hanging from the necks of the horses, as well as the blue beads and the mats on them. They even touched our clothes. All this worried us and we kept thinking. We regretted that we had preferred to choose village life, but, alas, there was little we could do at this stage.

The fellaheen, young and old, chased our coaches. The grown-ups wore ragged long robes that were filthy all over. They ran with their robes raised and held up with their teeth, with nothing else covering their private parts. They ran until they were tired, begging bread, cigars and cigarette paper. If one gave them these items, they would kiss the edges of the jacket worn by this person.

These scenes reminded me of what happened when Christopher Columbus landed in America. The episodes in those by-gone days were now being repeated here. These villagers had never seen money. They used barley and white millet flour for their bread. They used approximately 50 cm. diameter millstones to grind barley and millet into flour. The lower stationary millstone had a wooden pivot to fit into a hole in the upper millstone. There was a second hole in the upper millstone, through which barley would be introduced to be ground by rotating the upper millstone. The bread would be cooked on a sheet of iron, heated by a fire. Barley bread is very sustaining.

If you were to peer into a fellah's hut, you would see nothing. You might spot a worn-out straw mat or a rag in this revelation of extreme poverty. The women would be clad from top to bottom in a loose linen robe which would invariably be blue; there was no underwear under this robe. Living in utter poverty, they remained barefooted, quite unaware of the existence of stockings. Poor as they were, they had little to eat. Their only diet consisted of rice and cracked wheat with or without olive.

A villager usually had a few hens and turkeys and one or two donkeys, but if, in addition, he owned two or three sheep, he would be considered well-off.

Their only source of living and income was related to the owner of the village, who would spend a few days there during harvest-time.

Their annual food requirements and payment in the form of wheat and barley, in return for their labour, depended on the good will of the village owner. After having granted what was due to the villagers, the village owner would leave and usually return during the next harvest.

The village-owner would visit the village during the sowing season, call the villagers and distribute seeds. The village-owner

had a nice house, built of stone, in the village, where he would stay during his visits, but the permanent home, where he lived and had his business was in Aleppo. Next to the villages, we would meet almost naked children, aged four to seven, boys and girls, who had been kidnapped from their Armenian parents. Their faces bore blue spots. These children would stay away from the children of the fellaheen, and it was obvious that they were different. We were aware of the situation, but what could we do? Which of them could we look after? We, too, would face similar problems. Who knows where we would end up, and with which fellah our fate would be linked? We could never know which shore the stormy sea would take us to. A shipwreck was inevitable, but we could not know when the fatal wave would strike us with the coup de grace.

Our coaches reached the banks of the Euphrates River after dark late in the evening after a long drive through insignificant villages. The sky was overcast and there were flashes of lightning, harbingers of a storm. The noise of thunder struck terror in our hearts.

Our group carefully chose the highest spot to unload our belongings from the coaches. We placed our packages in a heap, without opening them and without pitching our tents, we huddled under the tent canvas spread over our heads. As soon as we had finished this hurried arrangement, it started raining torrentially. It is impossible to describe the intensity of this rain.

One of the coachmen, taking advantage of the darkness and confusion created by the rain, stole two of my uncle's Zileh-style carpets, which had not yet been unloaded, and concealed it in the coach. Suddenly, there was an uproar and loud arguments. Some of our people emerged from under the tent canvas, and after exchanging some harsh words with the coachman, and with the help of the steward, retrieved the carpets, which had been concealed in the bags of fodder for the horses, over which the scoundrel had been sitting.

The torrential rain continued until the following morning, after which the storm abated. It felt as if the storm had collected the water from the Euphrates and poured it on us. The water had worked its way under our packages, soaking them together with their contents. After sunrise the sky became clear: the sky had spent its fury!

The village we were heading for was on the opposite side of the

Euphrates. The muddy water in the river was rough, and the strong current frightened us. The river was wide and obviously deep. We waited for half a day for the river to somewhat calm down. The village headman's steward spoke to the Arabs on the opposite bank, asking them to clear a space on their side and to tie two boats together and to bring them to our side at noon, so as to transfer us across the river.

The steward had difficulty in shouting loud enough for his voice to be heard on the opposite bank. Towards noon and at the agreed hour, we could see five or six fellaheen, who started crossing the river, uttering, "Allah! Allah! Allah! Allah!" Two of them were rowing, while one of them stood in front with a long pole, which he poked into the river bed to guide the boats in the required direction. The others were using rusty petrol cans to incessantly bail out the water, which kept leaking into the boats. Fighting against the strong current of the Euphrates was an arduous task.

They finally arrived on our side about 100-150 metres downstream, and had to tow the boats upstream to our location, using a rope.

Crossing the raving Euphrates in such a pair of flimsy boats required strong nerves.

HOW WE CROSSED THE EUPHRATES AND SETTLED IN MESSOUDIEH

The left bank of the Euphrates is called Djezireh. The village headman's steward spoke to the fellah boatmen in Arabic. As instructed, these Bedouin fellaheen loaded the boats with two families and their belongings. How far could we trust this leaking pair of boats, which were reminiscent of Noah's Ark? On reaching the centre of the river, the boatmen would intensify their calls of, "Allah! Allah! Allah! Allah!" and make the utmost use of their skill to control the boat.

Finally, we all safely crossed the river in successive groups. In line with the village headman's arrangements, half the barn was placed at our and one of my uncles' disposal, while the other half

was occupied by the three brothers who were my father's cousins. My other uncle was given a mud-house at some distance from us, while 26 families were accommodated in various parts of the village. Our barn had a single window, as well as a skylight or opening in the ceiling, about the size of a petrol can.

Each family managed to settle down with some difficulty. We would have been satisfied even if we were housed in a stable instead of our barn, as we no longer had to fear arrest by gendarmes and policemen. A week later, the two brothers, Said Bey and Fuad Bey, who owned the village, moved to their stone-built house. This house was built on high ground behind our barn. Below our barn there was a large stable with two or three fine horses. There was not a single tree or blade of grass or garden in the village. There were only vast field for cultivation as far as the eye could see. The village and the farm were a village and a farm in name only. The villagers did not have goats, sheep or cows, and were in a pitiable state. All they had were some hens. There was nothing in their houses apart from a tattered straw mat and one or two table-cloths of rough felt. They were the serfs of feudal lords.

We found a hole on the right side of our barn in the direction of the Euphrates. After cleaning the hole, we discovered an elliptical mosaic floor, 2 metres long and 1.5 metres wide, on which there was a stone chair, on which there was a stone statue. The hands of the statue rested on its knees, but the statue was headless.

A few weeks later we found clean tiles, made of red clay, in the same spot. We used these tiles to build an oven in which we began to bake white bread for all the Armenian families, without trying to make a profit.

Later, excavations by the Syrian government on the same site uncovered a large number of antiquities, which demonstrated the historical significance of the area.

A few days later, the steward asked all the families who had arrived for a meeting with the landowners at about 8 p.m. The representatives of every family turned up at the meeting at the appointed time.

Said Bey welcomed the representatives, and after discussing the prevailing destitution and the misfortunes with them, he changed the subject, addressing them with the words:-

"You have come here of your own free will. You are aware of our conditions. We secured authorization from Djemal Pasha for you to settle in this village, and in return, we expect to benefit from your skills to develop this village and to bring progress. You presented yourselves as villagers, but we know that you are not villagers. We therefore thought it best for each one of you to become a partner with one local fellah. I shall provide you with seed and barley. You will pay us the price of the seed. I shall indicate the field where you will work and the fellah who will be your partner. The fellaheen will do the sowing, and when the time comes, you and the fellaheen will harvest the crop. I shall be entitled to half the crop, with the fellaheen and you each getting a quarter of the crop. You will pay the tithe to the government according to your share of the crop."

He promised to confirm this agreement in writing to each one of us.

Next morning he called the fellaheen and indicated the Armenians with which each of them would become a partner on a one-to-one basis.

Every Armenian paid the equivalent of 16 bushels of wheat and 10 bushels of barley to Said and Fuad Bey, as the price of the seed. We did not see the wheat or barley seed, neither of which interested us: our only concern was to put off the next stage of our deportation as long as possible.

When we were in Aleppo, we received a letter, sent from Konya, Haigazoun and Garabed Semerdjian, the cousins of one of my uncles. They wrote, "Always avoid deportation!" On receiving this letter, our group had the ardent desire to stay put as long as possible, by paying bribes.

Many Armenian families registered with these landowners and were brought here, but they were more unlucky than us. Within a short time they were deported to Der Zor, where they were robbed, tortured and annihilated.

We ran out of our original provisions, including what we had bought in Aleppo. There was no possibility of finding or buying food in the village. We therefore asked to be allowed, with Said Bey's permission to go to Beredjig to bring foodstuffs and coal. Said Bey found this request reasonable and sent by boat five or six persons, accompanied by the steward, so that he would not be

held responsible if they were to be arrested either on the way, or in Biredjig. The Armenian families gave lists of their requirements to these five or six persons. The latter returned four days later with the provisions to the delight and great relief of the people in the village. It was wintertime.

THE CUSTOMS OF THE ARAB FELLAHEEN

All the responsibilities in the homes of the fellaheen had to be shouldered by the women. It is the wife who has to walk for hours to collect dry thorny grass to bake bread for the home. It is the wife or daughter who fetches water from the Euphrates, and even feeding the hens is the duty of women. It is beneath the dignity of the menfolk to perform such tasks.

The women carry the water from the Euphrates in round wooden buckets or in copper tubs balanced on their heads. Sometimes these vessels are so large, that two persons are needed to place them on the woman's head. The woman or girl carries this vessel on her head, without using her hands to steady such a heavy load.

In their view, it is unbecoming to carry any load in their hands or on their backs. Whatever is being carried must be carried on the head. They go around on bare feet both in summer and in winter.

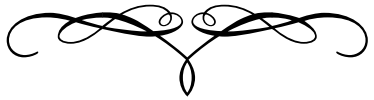
They do not go out on cold and rainy days, while on bright days, groups of people stand side by side, waiting to warm up. On the other hand, they sleep in the shade in summer. During the sowing season, it is the duty of the men to plough and to sow. Men and women work jointly during the harvest, although most of the work is done by the women. While walking along a road, women may suddenly squat without raising their skirts. This implies that they are urinating or having a bowel movement. Neither the women, nor the men wear shirts.

To cross the Euphrates, an inflated goatskin is used somewhat like a life-belt. The person who wants to go across chooses the easiest crossing-point and enters the water, holding the inflated goatskin by its neck, and carrying whatever he wants on his head, with about three quarters of his body immersed, paddling with his

feet and drifting in the current. He thus crosses the river safely, with a small load on his head. After reaching the opposite bank, he continues on his way on sand and earth with his clothes drenched. His robe thus acquires the texture of a tarpaulin. In the case of a woman's skirt, the skirt becomes so stiff with the caked dirt and dust, that it can be made to stand erect without crumpling.

Like the Arabs, we, too, draw our drinking water from the Euphrates. The water is sometimes muddy and sometimes fairly clear. There was a time, when human bodies would float and tumble like toys in the waves of the Euphrates. We would wait for the corpses to disappear downstream before filling our pots. Decapitated, disemboweled and shattered bodies would drift past in the river. The waves would deposit mutilated bodies, with the eyes gouged out, of female bodies with the breasts cut off on the banks of the river.

Even the fellaheen in the village would say, "These are your brothers." and feel sorrow.



THE EUPHRATES

Just watch the Euphrates as it flows fast,
There is no going back as it hurries past,
No gods or idols in its waters vast,
In them the poor Armenians breathe their last.

Men and women tied together back to back,
By bloody Turkish hands that mercy lack,
Helped by the river in this deed so black,
Drowning people in waters fast or slack.

Seven-headed cruel greedy monsters,
Turanian Tcherkez, Tchechen blood-tasters,
A curse on you, evil German gangsters,
Who share the guilt of so many murders.

O, Euphrates! Born in the high mountains,
You meander your long course to the plains,
Your waves full of blood carry the red stains,
And your water dead Armenians contains.

The path you carved for many centuries,
From the mountains to the fields and prairies,
Gliding over the hillsides like fairies,
Why this hatred of Armenians sustain?

Aleppo, 13 June 1952
HAGOP SEROPIAN

LIFE IN MESSOUDIEH

There was a serious food shortage in Messoudieh: there was absolutely no meat. There were no sheep for meat to be available. When the fellaheen in the surrounding villages realized that Armenians had settled in Messoudieh, they began bringing chicken and turkeys for us to buy. Every Armenian built poultry houses next to their homes and began keeping twenty to thirty chicken and turkey for food.

On one occasion, as my uncle was taking the chicken out of the poultry house in order to feed them, one of the three or four fellaheen, who were watching him, said, "Khawadja (Sir), why are you feeding the chicken? In our society it is a shame for men to do women's tasks."

Before long, the village was beset by a typhus epidemic, and in every home an increasing number of people became ill. Before leaving Konya, we had taken along seven or eight medicines, bought from Doctor Dudd, the American pharmacist. These consisted of quinine, lactic acid, castor oil, iodine tincture, laxatives, etc. In these sparsely-populated places of exile, we faced a difficult situation, with no markets, no doctors, no pharmacies, and nobody with whom one could exchange visits. The number of sick persons was growing by the day. Some of the fellaheen also caught typhus.

This illness causes headaches and is so oppressive that one cannot raise one's head: it is extremely dangerous and often lethal. A person suffering from typhus is at the mercy of God. There were deaths both among the Arabs and among the Armenians. The very first to die was a young fellah. It could even be regarded as a blessing in disguise, as there were only one or two in every house to take care of the patients. In our family, my father, mother, aunt and uncle were in a confused state as a result of high fever.

I was a lad between the age of eleven and twelve. How far could I look after them and see to their needs, as regards food and cleanliness? I would hover around them from morning till evening and administer quinine twice daily, which I would wrap in cigarette paper for them to swallow, not knowing whether quinine was beneficial or harmful to a typhus patient. The fellaheen from the

surrounding villages began bringing milk and yoghurt. I would offer the patient milk and yoghurt, as they could eat nothing else.

In my uncle's house the only healthy person was his mother-in-law, who took care of the patients there. These patients, who lay side by side, were in such a state that they were completely unaware of each others' presence, or of what was happening anywhere else. My uncle's wife approached me and informed me that my uncle had died. As an eleven to twelve year old boy, what could I do? I passed on the sad news to my father's cousin and to two Armenian families who were our neighbours. We took a ladder from the landowner's house, on which we placed my uncle's body, and used it to carry the body to a spot about a hundred metres away. There, we dug a grave, in which we buried my uncle after reciting the Lord's Prayer. One, two or even three deaths occurred daily in every house. Patients, infected with this disease would have to survive for 20-25 days before the danger was over.

In our family, my father was in a grave condition and unconscious. The only sign of life was that he was still breathing. I said to my mother, when she was better, "Mummy, Daddy is very ill. He eats nothing and does not move. What can I do?"

After listening, my mother said, "Go and call your father's cousin. Let him come and have a look."

I went and informed my father's cousin. He came, and after standing next to my father, said, "There is nothing we can do. May God's will be done!" He left with tears in his eyes. Without giving up hope, I continued, within my limits, to provide food and do the cleaning. My father was in bed for forty days, at the end of which he finally recovered. Meanwhile, my mother, sister and brother began to improve and to regain their strength after 20-26 days. I also caught typhus. I was almost unconscious, but after 17-18 days I was better and began to get out of bed.

In a way, we were lucky in that we caught this illness while still in the village, because if we were to fall ill in a deportation camp, the deportation authorities would not spare the sick, nor even those on their deathbeds. We would have to continue our journey, irrespective of our condition. It is true that there were deaths in the village, and that we lost loved ones, but no one forced us to get up

and move on while we were on our sickbeds. If we were to fall ill while travelling, three quarters, if not all, of the members of the 26 families would have perished on the way.

THE SINISTER GENDARMES

We had scarcely spent a total of three months in the village, when we saw three horsemen approaching the village. The older persons among us regarded the appearance of these horsemen as a bad omen. The nearer they came, the clearer it became that they were gendarmes. They went straight to the house of the village headman. In the course of three months, nobody had taken any interest in us, and not a single gendarme or government official had visited the village.

None of the village headmen were available: only the steward was there. Three quarters of an hour after the arrival of the gendarmes, the steward sent a fellah to inform us that a representative from each family should present himself in the landowner's house within half an hour.

The requirement that the representative from each family should appear in the landowner's house in the presence of the gendarmes worried us. Everyone, young and old, began to speculate and to draw conclusions. Before long, the representatives left the landowner's house depressed, with long faces and in a pensive mood.

The gendarmes had come with the message that we should get ready to be on our way to Meskeneh within three days at the latest. Our people immediately decided that five or six of the family representatives should remain at the meeting with the gendarmes, to continue to negotiate with them and to bribe them, so that they would not report the presence of Armenians in the village.

One of the gendarmes produced a document which stated:- "In spite of the temporary authorization for you to remain in this village as agricultural workers, the kaimakam of Mumbuj, Fehmi Bey, now orders you to leave the village and to proceed to Meskeneh.

This order froze and petrified us, and we tried to persuade the gendarmes to let us stay in the village. However, the gendarmes

remained adamant. After long negotiations and the payment of eight gold pounds, they allowed us ten days to prepare for our departure.

Time flies when it is limited. We spent ten days in anxiety and with our hearts beating fast. The day finally arrived and the gendarmes appeared. Those, who had represented the Armenian families on the previous occasion, had a long talk with us, and decided to offer brandy to the gendarmes, which the latter accepted. One of the gendarmes was a Turk and the other an Arab. The Arab did not speak good Turkish, while the Turk, after getting drunk, said, "Is there anyone among you who can sing?" There was a 15-16 year old youth by the name of Haigazoun from a family which had come from Sis. One of those present went and fetched Haigazoun. Haigazoun could only sing the song known as "Kozan Oghlu", which he sang for the tipsy gendarme.

After "Kozan Oghlu" had been sung, our people changed the subject and asked the favour for a delegation of five or six of us to be allowed to meet Fehmi Bey, the kaimakam of Mumbuj, and to bribe him, so as to be allowed to remain in the village.

After receiving a bribe of 10 gold pounds, the gendarmes were finally persuaded to allow the delegation to meet the kaimakam. It was stipulated that the gendarmes would not appear in the village for a week. A three-man delegation was chosen on the spot to go to Mumbuj to negotiate with the kaimakam.

Early in the morning, the gendarmes left the village, while the three-man delegation proceeded to Mumbuj for a personal meeting with the kaimakam. Unfortunately, the mission failed. When the three men presented themselves to Kaimakam Hussein Fehmi Bey, the latter flew into a rage and stood up like a rabid dog, started shouting without even listening to the words and petition of the three. He expelled them with the words:- "You dogs! You have not left the village and are still alive. I shall accept no mediation and no petition. The deportation orders have come from above. You shall be deported immediately. To hell with you, you infidel pigs!" He then ordered the doorkeeper to throw out the three "infidels".

Next day the three men came back in despair and in an oppressed and confused state. They seemed to have aged in the course of two days. In the village we had no news of what was happening in the

outside world. In the meantime, two Armenian women arrived in the village after escaping the massacres in Ras-ul-Ayni and Der Zor. They described the condition of the exiles in Ras-ul-Ayni and Der Zor. Our people tried, at all costs, to have their departure delayed and to gain time. It was impossible to persuade the authorities to put off our departure, and our pleas and entreaties, on the grounds that many of us were still sick or too weak and exhausted for the journey fell on deaf ears. Our people again resorted to the use of bribes. They won a twelve day extension, but that was the final concession, and no further pleas were accepted. To gain these twelve days, they had to pay twelve Ottoman pounds. This sum was collected from the Armenians in the village, who contributed according to their means. The gendarmes softened their attitude whenever they smelt money. They could not resist the lure of money, but, at the same time, they had to obey strict orders. The gendarme said, "When the twelve days are up, you have to start moving the very next day, because no further extension can be granted." He then produced a second document with this order, bearing the signature of the kaimakam of Mumbuj.

Neither the landowner Said Bey, nor his brother tried to protect us or to mediate on our behalf.

This was yet another Turkish tactic to rob us. We had paid large sums to secure authorization to settle in this village, agreeing with the village headman to work in partnership with the fellaheen. We had also paid the Muderis brothers for wheat and barley seed. The wheat and barley seedlings had already grown to a height of 10-15 cm., but we had to leave the crop to this usurer landowner. We had no choice but to shut our eyes to this injustice.

The gendarmes came after exactly twelve days, saying, "Tomorrow you will immediately set off. Any mediation, pleas or entreaties will not be accepted. We shall not consider any justifications. We did what was humanly possible within our power. Tomorrow you shall be on your way to Meskeneh."

To go to Meskeneh, we had to re-cross the Euphrates, to reach the right bank, but we had no means of transportation. The Armenians in the village were as yet incapable of travelling on foot. The required effort would have finished us off. How many kilogrammes of

essentials could a man carry on his shoulders, when he had to walk from morning till evening? Without some means of transportation, we would have to leave behind our belongings and our foodstuffs.

We again resorted to bribing, and requested the gendarmes to secure means of transportation for us from the surrounding villages. The gendarmes accepted our request, and said that they would meet our requirements. We gathered together and began our preparations. Two days later, the gendarmes returned with 24 camels and 28 donkeys. The Armenian families hired these animals from the owners on the basis of the amount of their belongings.

The steward again made arrangements for the boats to transfer the people and their belongings from the left bank of the Euphrates to the right bank. This operation took a whole day, and the following day we set off for Meskeneh.

My father, who had just recovered from typhus, was extremely weak and unable to stand up. My mother placed me on the back of a camel, and my father on the back of a donkey. The donkeys had no saddles: it was almost impossible to sit on the bare back of a donkey, especially for a sick person. My little sister and my brother were placed on other donkeys, while my mother would flit between my father, my sister and my brother to adjust their positions on the animals. This dainty lady, who had sacrificed so much for my father, her life's companion, and who was a dutiful mother, would run from one to the other and help and shield young wives from the lustful eyes of the fellaheen, and donkey drivers whom she would scold.

We crossed uninhabited deserts, guided by these two gendarmes. We took turns on foot as well as on camel-back to keep a watchful eye on the camel and donkey drivers, who were known to be thieves and pilferers. We had spent two days on the way to Meskeneh, and needed another two days to get there.

The camel drivers told us, "We cannot enter Meskeneh during the daylight hours, because the government will requisition our animals for two months and force us to work for them without payment."

As we approached Meskeneh, both the camel drivers and the gendarmes created such pretexts to make things difficult for us. They terrorized us with stories of thieves and robbers in these isolated deserts, and would stop the caravan. We had to satisfy the gendarmes

with contributions, so that they would not abandon us. Finally, as we were about to arrive in Meskeneh, on the fourth day, we started late in the morning, and the camel drivers slowed down the caravan.

We did not know what they were up to, but their behaviour raised our doubts about their ulterior motives.

The weather changed, and the sky looked threatening, while the caravan moved on at a slow pace. It began to get dark as we made our way to Meskeneh. During these hours, the caravan should have stopped. We continued on, guided by the camel drivers under the gathering clouds and ominous noises in our ears.

A severe storm broke out. The wind was so strong that the sand it carried hurt our skins and eyes. Suddenly, we could see dim lights in the distance, while the stench of corpses penetrated our nostrils. At this moment, one of the gendarmes spurred on his horse and rushed off. Soon, the second gendarme followed suit.

We were left in the darkness with the donkey and camel drivers. The course of events indicated that there was an agreement between the gendarmes and the camel drivers. After a few minutes, the camel drivers stated that they could advance no further.

The camel drivers got their camels to kneel and began untying the loads they carried, while the others, taking advantage of the darkness, ran off with the loaded camels. My uncle shouted, “My brothers, watch out! We are being robbed. They are about to escape with the loaded camels. Take care of your property. Look out!” An uproar broke out, there were pathetic voices, with children shouting, “Mummy! Daddy!” The husbands called their wives, and the wives their husbands. Sobbing and whistling could be heard. There were echoes, and we suddenly discerned lighted candles which shone dimly in the distance. As these lights were approaching, we could hear voices. Fortunately, the guards from the Meskeneh camp were soon with us. They had been alerted by the shouting and noise from us, and came to investigate what was happening and to ascertain who we were.

When we heard that they were speaking in Armenian and using Armenian names, we were delighted. We could not see each other in the darkness. When they came closer and joined us, we explained what had happened. These young men pursued the camel drivers,

managed to arrest one of them and retrieved three of the camels with their loads and two of the children sitting on them. However, seven of the camels had disappeared with their loads.

The guards, who had come to our aid during the night, took the three camels with them. They ordered us saying, “Remain here during the night. We shall return next morning to take you to the camp, where the exiles are staying.” They then left.

We remained with our belongings and all the family members. In this difficult situation, Nature showed us its teeth. Until morning, we suffered a severe and terrifying storm. The violent wind pelted us with sand, followed by torrential rain. We were soaked to the skin in the darkness. We did not know where we were. Innocent children and old people looked up to heaven for compassion, but there was no response. The place was soon flooded. In the darkness, the flood waters rose up to our knees and the flowing icy water froze us.

It was a very long night, and we were wet through, along with our belongings. We could not actually see the sort of water swirling around us, but the smell was unbearable and extremely offensive, like that of corpses.

Next morning, three persons appeared. One of them was the chief of the guards, a young man from Izmir (Smyrna), called Yervant. They ordered us to pitch our tent and temporarily stay on a site next to the other exiles, who had become tent-dwellers. Our people became friends with Yervant, who held the post of chief guard, and in the name of our caravan, we asked him to provide us with a clean site.

MESKENEH AND THE MESKENEH CAMP

We were led to the site chosen for us by the Armenian guards, some way from the main camp, and began pitching our tents. The entire caravan, which had come from Messoudieh, was accommodated together on the same site. The three camels that had been retrieved, along with their loads, were placed in the care of two families, namely, the Aivazians from Kessaria and the Nazaretians from Sis. They were told not to return the camels to the camel

drivers, unless the latter restituted what they had stolen. They got the three camels to kneel and tied their knees, to prevent them from being led away.

After three days, the leader of the camel drivers turned up and without mentioning what they had stolen, demanded unashamedly the return of the three camels to their owner. However, the Armenians objected. The local official in charge of the deportations and the Armenian guards mediated. After two days of contacts with the Armenians, the leader of the camel drivers realized that he could not have the camels back without paying compensation for what the camel drivers had stolen. He started to bargain about the value of the stolen property and promised to pay compensation. It was agreed that he could have the camels back by paying seven Ottoman gold pounds. The following morning, he came, accompanied by someone, paid the seven pounds and left with the three camels. Although the stolen property was worth much more than seven pounds, we were in a weak position and had to be satisfied with the seven pounds.

Later, we became better acquainted with these Armenian guards. They were the lackeys of the Turkish official in charge of the deportations. The episode with the three camels, followed by their capture and their return to the thieves, was motivated by their desire for profit, rather than feelings of solidarity with their Armenian compatriots.

They had forced 40,000 Armenian deportees to camp in those sandy wastes during the time we were there. Armenian deportees would keep arriving, while others would be sent to Dipsi, Abou Harar, Hamam and on to Der Zor once or twice daily.

While there, we met some families who were our compatriots , such as Garabed Papazian, Dikran Shahinian, and Panos Boyadjian (the family which had adopted and provided shelter to Aram Andonian) from Konya. They joined us and pitched their tents next to us.

Early every morning, the families, due to be deported, had their tents dismantled and their belongings forcibly loaded on horse-drawn carts. A caravan of thirty to forty families, with all their members, would be formed and sent on its way. These were the well-off families who were in a position to pay for their transportation. Those

who were ill, unable to travel and could not pay, were subjected to inhuman treatment. They faced thrashing with whips, kicking, boxing, beating with truncheons, and worst of all, splitting of their families, whose members were placed in different carts. Even the rags they might possess were transported in other carts. Not anyone can sink to the vile level of these Armenian guards. Such persons hate their brothers, are traitors and are the cold-blooded scum of society, bereft of any human or national feeling.

These Armenian guards were prepared to do the meanest acts simply to save their skins. These young men were nominally Armenian, whose treachery was the cause of misfortune and death suffered by many fairly well-to-do individuals or families. They were capable of kidnapping respectable families, pretty ladies and older girls for the sake of material gain.

They would seek the favour of the Turkish, Arab or Tcherkez deportation officials, by humiliating and bringing misfortune to others, and thus save their own skins.

During our exile, I met many such renegades. I can recall the names of a dozen such persons, but I shall only list the names of the vilest of them:- Yervant from Izmit in Meskeneh, Setrag with the pock-marked face from Ereyli in Abou Harar, Hagopos from Izmit and Hovhanes from Adapazar. This Hovhannes would say in Turkish, “I want to see you dead. I am like God in Hamam.” I also recall Hagop Getsoyan from Askara and his uncle Artin Asdourian and others.

We had already seen the condition of the Armenian deportees in Katma and Bab, but what we witnessed on our way from Aleppo to Messoudieh was far worse as regards inhumanity. There were more people under demolished, and collapsed tents than those under proper tents. Many people were condemned to live under collapsed tents, where it was impossible to stand erect. Some were ill and some were hungry. All lived in torment.

It is impossible to find words to describe either orally or in writing or to visualize the scenes of misery that unfolded before our eyes.

There were two or three deaths in every tent. I once saw an old woman standing at the entrance of a tent, shedding bitter tears and begging for someone to remove the bodies of her loved ones, who had died two days earlier.

Those with the job of burying the dead could not cope with the number of daily deaths. They would dig vast mass graves to accommodate100-200 bodies, which they would then cover with mounds of earth. As a result of the rotting corpses, the earth covering them would turn black, as if black oil had been poured on the earth. Often, parts of the corpses would be removed and devoured by jackals. An arm, a leg, human skulls and entrails would abound around or over these graves. Our camp was situated half an hour's walk from the Euphrates, and to fetch water from the river, we had to cross fields full of buried or exposed corpses. The foul stench was unbearable, but eventually we got used to it, and our noses lost their sense of smell.

The dogs and curs from all the surrounding villages would come to Meskeneh to devour human flesh. These curs had become so ferocious, that they would stare at you, ready to attack you.

These diabolical scenes would unfold every morning. The deportees would be sent on their way three or four times daily, depending on the orders from the Der Zor deportation official. As the number of deportees in Der Zor diminished, the camp official would demand more people to be sent to replace them.

In the desert there is not a single tree under which to shelter. The caravans would proceed close to the banks of the Euphrates. This would breathe new life in the prisoners, who wanted to rush to the water to quench their thirst. However, the gendarmes would prevent them from drinking a single drop, even though the prisoners had been thirsty for days.

Day by day, the news reaching us became more and more disturbing and terrifying. Some young men, who had escaped from Der Zor, told us stories of misery, savagery and killings on the way to Der Zor.

There was little the people could do. Their only salvation was to have sufficient material resources to bribe the officials so that they might show some tolerance. A dozen well-off Armenian families put their heads together, and decided to bribe the official in charge of the deportations, so that they would be the last to leave and be sent to Der Zor.

The following six families from Konya, G. Papazian, D. Shahinian, Izmirlian, Seropian (our family), Semerdjian and Afarian, the Gostanians from Marash, the Balikdjian brothers from Karaman, the Parseghians and others put together 100 Ottoman gold pounds in a handkerchief. A group of four from the above families presented themselves to Hussein Bey, the Tcherkez official in Meskeneh in charge of the deportations. Hussein Bey accepted the plea of the four men to put off the departure of these families, and authorized them to leave their camp and to move to the new site he indicated. Hardly a month and a half later, the Armenian minions of Hussein Bey came to inform us that the time for us to leave was approaching, and that we should prepare to go. This development filled us with anxiety, because we had witnessed their treatment of the deportees throughout our stay in Meskeneh.

It was the Asdourians of Akshehir who provided the carts and their drivers for the transfer of the exiled families from camp to camp. There were also some drivers from Afion Karahissar. I believe that no one, who has witnessed these scenes, can describe the savagery with which the Armenian guards treated their compatriots, and what they did to the sick and hungry fathers and mothers and their abandoned orphans between the ages of three and ten, on whom their dead parents had placed so many hopes.

It is painful for me to have to state, that if the Turks had some sense, they would have chosen Armenians to act as deportation officials. Not a single Armenian would then have been left alive.

THE CRUELTY OF NATURE CONTRIBUTES TO THE MISFORTUNES OF THE ARMENIANS

Nature seems to have accentuated the suffering, destitution, misfortune and affliction of the Armenians during these days of agony and despair.

One day, as a result of torrential rain, the flood waters from a valley invaded the site of the camp occupied by the deportees. Many of the tents collapsed under the fury of the storm, and filthy water inundated the area. As the water level rose, the sky demonstrated its merciless character with, thunder and lightning, completing the pathetic scene.

Woe to the gifted members of the noble Armenian nation, men, women, girls and boys, some of whom drowned in the flood. O God, is our suffering at the hand of the Turks not enough? O Lord, have mercy on us!

You rained manna on the Jews, the parasites of mankind, but there is not a single crumb for us. You named the Jews "the Chosen People", while you regard us with contempt. Alas, for this judgement and justice decreed by God!

Exactly seventy years have elapsed since those days of torment. I shall not forget those days, even if I were to live another seventy years. I cannot forget the courage and magnanimity of my large and noble family, who were natives of Hadjin, and the service offered by the young and old of our family to our compatriots. I also feel it is my duty to write about the honourable and courageous Guertmenian family, also from Hadjin, who were always ready to serve people in a brotherly spirit.

The Guertmenians were a large family. They had brought more than one horse, mule and donkey from their hometown for the transportation of their family and their belongings from camp to camp. This family had pitched its tent very close to ours.

When the flood waters began to rise, they immediately moved their family and their belongings to a safe place. After that, the young and old of the family used their animals to fight against the depredations of Nature and the flood waters in order to transfer to high ground hundreds of unfortunate people, along with their belongings, who were too weak to move.

Every morning, the deportation officials created an infernal situation in the camp. It was hell. We watched as the families due for deportation were driven with whips and blows. After their departure, the camp would calm down, with those still in the camp breathing a sigh of relief, busying themselves with what they would eat and cleaning.

I should not be misunderstood when I use the word "cleaning". What could people on the move do for cleanliness? What did they have which required cleaning? They just had the clothes and the shirt they were wearing. Over the years, they had neither the proper necessities, nor the space in which to keep them. They had no soap and no pots. All they had were one or two cushions, some blankets, one or two kettles, one or two plates, and nothing else. Many did not even have these items. The only real effort at cleanliness was to fight off the lice. Everybody with lice tried to get rid of them. The presence of lice was no secret: it was public knowledge. These parasitic creatures were as loathsome as the Turks.

Not a single person among the thousands of Armenian exiles was free from lice. The places, where we were forced to camp, had already been occupied by other families, and the earth itself was lice-infested.

Irrespective of your efforts at cleanliness and if you could not change your shirt daily, you could not escape these lice under these circumstances.

THE PLACE CALLED MESKENEH

The place called Meskeneh, although now a desert, was not always a desert, and is not destined to always remain a desert. Meskeneh is divided into two parts. The old part is an underground town. There are arches, and in places there are towers built with red bricks. The towers are as high as the minarets of mosques. The interiors of these towers have winding staircases just like those in minarets, and have withstood the ravages of centuries. I myself have climbed to the top of one of these towers, in the interior of which I spotted inscriptions and signatures in Armenian. I added my own

name, surname and place of birth to these inscriptions. This tower is very close to the Euphrates, hardly five minutes' walk from the river. Excavations by the French in this area have uncovered many historical antiquities. Excavations have also been carried out by the Syrian government.

The new part of Meskeneh is about 30 minutes' walk from the old part and has an inn with two upper rooms. When the place was under Turkish rule, the inn served as a resting place for the horses used for the mail coaches, while one of the upper rooms would accommodate the gendarmes, with the other upper room used by the telephone operator. The inn was situated on the road to Dipsi about 30 minutes' walk from the Euphrates.

Behind the inn there was a knoll with 12-15 houses built of mud, belonging to Arabs. This, then was the New Meskeneh.

Under the administration of the Arab Syrian government, a water purification plant was built in Meskeneh, and pipes laid to supply clean water, drawn from the Euphrates, to Aleppo. This system replaced the unhealthy hard water, on which Aleppo used to depend.

WHAT THIS MULTITUDE HAD TO EAT IN THE DESERT

The Arabs from Aleppo would come to our place in their own carriages and coachmen to sell us fruit. Dozens of horse-drawn carriages would arrive daily carrying bread, pastry, lentils, dates, currants, figs, barley and millet flour etc. for sale.

White millet and barley flour would also be available. This flour would be roasted on a sheet of tin and serve as food to satisfy the demands of our stomachs. Some of the Arab suppliers would also bring cows, calves and oxen. Armenian butchers would buy these animals, slaughter them and sell the meat. The blood of the slaughtered animals would be collected in tins or jars by the famished exiles, who would congregate around the butchers like a flock of sparrows. They would not let a single drop of blood go to waste. Those with enough money would buy the meat. Those with no money were condemned to die of starvation.

There was an epidemic of typhus, eye disease and dysentery. As a result of dirt and filth, scabies and leprosy became prevalent. Leprosy would manifest itself between the fingers, behind and around the ears, around the nose, under the armpits in the toes and in the area of the genitals. Leprosy causes unbearable itching and purulence. This loathsome disease took a heavy toll of this ill-fated generation during these years. Eye disease left thousands of young people and children blind for life.

OPPRESSION AND PLUNDER FROM ALL SIDES AND IN EVERY FORM

The material wealth (or whatever could be taken along or carried) of the Armenian deportees from Western Anatolia and Cilicia was completely used up in Syria. Starting from Katma and Aleppo, the Arab businessmen, taking advantage of the dire situation faced by the Armenians, bought whatever the unfortunate people were forced to sell at rock-bottom prices. The Armenian exiles were unfamiliar with the country, did not know the language, and were always on the look-out for gendarmes, fearing arrest. They had little choice in the price they were paid for what they sold. They needed money badly. Businessmen of various nationalities would come from Aleppo to buy the gold and valuables of the Armenians at a quarter of their real price.

There were no markets in the desert, nor a demand for such valuables. These businessmen had an agreement whereby they would all offer the same price for what they bought. The poor and confused Armenians had to accept the prices offered. The Armenians had to part with the valuables, they had so lovingly bought in the past, for whatever they were paid, as they sorely needed the money. I have seen a "beshibirlik" Turkish 5-pound coin used as an ornament) sold for three mejidiehs i.e. at one fifth of its real value.

The poor and confused Armenians would swallow gold coins in order to conceal them from the robbers who lurked on the way. Two days later, they would collect these coins from their excreta, wash them and swallow them again. In a way, the Armenians were robbed twice. I once saw a young woman from Sis, barely 18-19 years old, who swallowed 18 gold coins, and then collected and washed these coins from her excreta two or three days later, only to re-swallow them to prevent them from falling into the hands of brigands.

The agonizing journey made by the Armenian people was long and painful. It went on not just weeks and months or a year, but for four years, yet, in a sense, it continues to the present time. This harrowing four-year journey, during which the hungry and almost naked Armenians had to face the rigours of the four seasons, was very cruel. In summer, the scorching sun turned the humidity

in the sand into a stifling vapour, while the sandstorms were suffocating and blinding.

Sandstorms were the main cause of eye irritation. On a certain day you would see a sand dune created by a windstorm, but a few days later, the sand dune would be shifted to a new location by another windstorm. Even if bread were kept in a protected place, the loaf would be covered with sand, which you would feel under your teeth when chewing the bread.

The desert fellaheen and the Arab Bedouins do not know the meaning of money, and those who have some idea, cannot distinguish between the different denominations. On one occasion I bought a lamb for a mere four piasters. There used to be nickel one-piaster coins. While bargaining, I pretended that these coins each represented five piasters, so that the seller was under the impression that he had been paid twenty piasters. I bought this lamb from the chief of the Anez tribe.

The Anez tribe is nomadic. They take their camels and flocks of sheep to pastures in the regions of Baghdad and Mosul, and return around autumn. They live in the desert in tents. They often quarrel about grazing rights for their livestock.

The Hashuimi, Vichemi, Anezi and Bakkara are the richest of the nomadic tribes. Some of these tribes treated the Armenians conscientiously. They used to help the Armenians saying, "Miskin Ermen" which means "Poor Armenians". There were also others who were cruel, and given to stealing and robbing. Many of these desert Arabs offered shelter to Armenian boys and girls. It is thought that the Bakkara tribe consists of the remnants of the Pakradounis.

When the fellaheen met Armenians in a deserted place, they would go as far as to steal their shirts and even their pants: they were cruel and hungry. At first, they used to kiss the hem of your tunic if you gave them a cigar, thus demeaning themselves. However, their appetite grew during the massacres.

Hollows, like animal dens, have been dug on the mountain-sides of Meskeneh by the lean fingers of orphans. These orphans lie, gathered side-by side in these hollows. You get the impression that they are guided by an instinctive sense of brotherhood, and that they are friends ready to help and protect one another.

Every day these children wander from refuse pile to refuse pile and from tent to tent to beg. In the evening, as they huddle together in their hollows, they wheeze, breathing laboriously all night, but in the morning the wheezing stops, with one of the orphans already dead. None of these children, aged three to sixteen, are aware of the fate that awaits them. If one of them were maliciously to try to wrest what another one was holding, the others would join forces to beat the offender. Those families, which were not yet desperately short of bread and food, would not let these children leave empty-handed. How many of these children could they help? It was simply impossible, because within weeks or months, these families would also face the fate of these children.

The exiles on this route usually originated from Western Asia Minor and Cilicia. They came from Nicodemia, Adapazar, Broussa, Biledjik, Ovadjik, Aslanbeg, Gueyveh, Malgara, Eskishehir, Afion, Karahissar, Akshehir, Konya, Nigdeh, Bor, Kessaria, Ankara, Zeitoun and Marash. How could these people endure under such conditions?

While sitting in your tent, you would hear a faint thin voice uttering, “Spinach! Spinach!” The voice would be that of a young Armenian woman carrying a handful of greens, collected for sale, so as to earn some money to buy a scrap of bread or barley to fill her stomach. A little later, another spasmodic voice would be heard, this time with the words, “Can I sift for you?” On this occasion, it was a woman who wanted to feed her family. She would hold a flour sieve with which to sift your flour. She was also ready to knead your dough. In exchange, she would take the bran remaining on the sieve.

From your tent you would see an emaciated young man, holding a pot and calling, “Tea! Tea, flavoured with cinnamon, cloves and black pepper!” There was also a milk vendor, boldly shouting, “Milk! Milk from the black sheep!” He kept praising the milk he was selling. There were people, selling various kinds of food, clothing, shirts, trousers and dresses, which had once been part of a woman’s trousseau. The poor exiles needed money to buy food.

We were running out of our material assets. My father had bought a bag containing soap from a coachman from Aleppo, in order to sell the soap, by going round from tent to tent. It was dangerous for us to keep the soap in our tent: The soap had to be

sold as soon as possible to stop us worrying that it might be stolen. One day my father said to me, “Hagop, my boy, take five or six cakes of soap and go from tent to tent, shouting “Soap! Soap!” at the top of your voice.”

I obeyed my father, having seen the worsening condition of the families, young people, youths and children. The prospect of our own family soon having to share the misfortune of those around us, brought tears to my eyes and my throat choked. I had difficulty breathing. However, I soon recovered, and having taken ten cakes of soap, I strode away from our tent, without a clear idea of where to go. After covering some distance, I started shouting, “Soap! Soap!” The result was encouraging right from the outset.

The fact, that at this early age I had become a tent-dweller in Meskeneh, and that my career was that of a soap vendor, was very upsetting.

THE CRUELTY OF THE GERMAN SOLDIERS

One day, I learnt that a detachment of German soldiers had camped at the entrance of Meskeneh, about ten minutes’ walk from our camp. They had arrived via Beredjig and Djarablous, and would soon travel to Baghdad.

I approached them. The Germans had large green tents with internal partitions and the comforts of a regular house. There, I saw a hundred to a hundred and twenty Armenian children sitting at some distance from the German camp. The children were waiting for the soldiers to throw empty sardine, tunny fish and jam tins.

I saw the starving children vying for these tins in the hope that a scrap of meat was still left in a corner of the tins, so that they might lick the edible remnants.

Can you imagine what these supposedly Christian and civilized Germans did? Just for fun, they would throw empty tins in order to watch the emaciated children rush to gather the tins. The poor children were greeted with the nail-studded boots of the Germans, who ran among those living skeletons, kicking the poor orphans, as if they were footballs. As a result of this treatment, some of these orphans died.

The Germans were accompanied by some fine horses which they had brought with them. These horses would be kept in stables within the tents at night, where their dung would accumulate. The orphans would then sift through the dung with their hands to pick out the undigested barley, which they would then eat.

These unfortunate children would flit from place to place, like sparrows, pushing each other and fighting for the barley in the dung. Dear reader, this is where the partnership between the Turks and Germans has brought us to!

Both our grown-ups and our children used to have a high opinion about the Europeans in the past.

Another day, German soldiers travelled by boat along the Euphrates and camped on one of its banks. I had some old coins in my pocket, which I had taken with me when we left Konya. I made up my mind to sell these coins to the German soldiers, if they were to re-appear. I went to the bank of the Euphrates, where the Germans had camped. A fair number of Armenians had gathered there, some of whom traded with the Germans. I approached the place to use the opportunity to sell my coins, which I soon removed from my pocket. I drew close to a huge red-faced soldier with a shaved head and eyes like blue beads. I was cautious and wanted to prove that I was a Christian. With child-like and Christian innocence, I crossed myself and using the English I had learnt at the Djenanian College, said, “I am an Armenian.” By the look on his face, and before I had finished my sentence, I felt that he had evil intentions and so I drew away. His red face became even redder with his anger. As this tiger-like beast muttered a few words in German, I ran away.

A little further, another German, who wore spectacles and was abnormally tall, was in the process of buying an egg from an Armenian. I approached the German and said in English, “Sir, we are Armenians. We are Christians.” I then showed him the coins with the same innocence. He took the coins and gave me five piastres in return. I was satisfied, not knowing the relative value of my coins and the piastres I was given.

Apart from not giving a scrap of bread to other human beings, including children, who were tormented by hunger as a result of the massacre by the Turks, who had been encouraged by the Germans,

the German soldiers used their slices of white bread as if it were toilet paper.

The German military camp had special lavatories in their tents. These lavatories consisted of the usual seat placed on top of an enamelled bucket. The soldiers would sit on the seat, and after the bowel movement, they would wipe their bottoms with slices of bread. They would throw these slices away, and yet they never bothered to give some clean bread to the starving Armenians.

You, my incomparable Armenian nation, never expect any humanitarian sympathy from any nation or people! You have primarily to rely on your own inner strength. This strength comes from your brotherly solidarity, your faith, your traditions, your yearning for freedom and your courage.

WHERE HAVE CONSCIENCE AND HUMANITY GONE ?

Today, exactly seventy long years have gone by since those difficult years, and I still suffer when I remember the eerie image of the children of my gifted nation, afflicted by hunger and disease during those days.

Christian Europe and America remain silent, in spite of the reality of what was perpetrated against the Armenians.

A LETTER FROM DER ZOR

Life in Der Zor was good before the start of the massacres. Everybody was free, and was at liberty to run a private business. Armenians had also established themselves beyond Der Zor in Miadin, Kirkuk, Mosul and Baghdad, depending on their choice.

One day, a letter came from Der Zor.

The letter was from Kevork Kerdjemanian, who used to live in our quarter in Konya.

He had seen us in Meskeneh. He and his family had been sent direct to Der Zor, without a stop on the way.

The letter ran as follows:-

"My dear friends and neighbours, Setrag Afarian and Armenag Seropian in Meskeneh,

I am writing this letter as a duty in the name of our long acquaintance as neighbours, of our patriotic feelings and the fact that we are blood relations.

I am very surprised that you are spending months in the desert and using up all your material resources. Why let your family have to put up with the intolerable conditions of living in a tent?

Here, I have rented a house, and have even started my own business. After receiving this letter, do decide to come and live here as soon as possible, and free yourselves from life in a desert. I feel that I am fulfilling a brotherly obligation by writing this letter……"

This letter was delivered by a coachman from Konya, called Toukour, who owned a two-horse coach, which he used to carry deportees from camp to camp.

When we read this letter, there was dissension in my uncle's family. My uncle was absolutely against any move to Der Zor, while his children Jano, Ferdinand and Loghofet argued, saying, "We have had enough of these uncertain conditions in the desert. Daddy, the writer of this letter is not our enemy: he wrote this letter for our benefit. Let us go Daddy!" However, their father was against the idea and said, "Let us remain here. The crowding in Der Zor does not bode well." As was to be proved later, after Zeki Bey was sent there, the Turks carried out their inhuman plans.

A FUGITIVE'S ODYSSEY

Only three blankets remained in our possession. We would spread one of them under us as a substitute for a mattress, and use the other two to cover ourselves. Under this "mattress" we would place two carpets joined together. We had managed to carry these carpets, which were of the Boz Kri type, all the way to Meskeneh. I do not know how, but one edge of one of the carpets happened to protrude outside our tent. Hussein Beg, the Tcherkez administrator of Meskeneh, spotted the edge of the carpet as he was passing by our tent. After a few paces, he came back and stood in front of our tent. He indicated the carpet with the whip he was holding and said, "Get the carpet out of your tent!"

My father did as he was told and presented the pair of joined carpets.

Hussein Beg ordered, "Sell this carpet to me!"

There was little we could do. At first, my father objected, saying, "These carpets serve us as mattresses." However, he then considered the consequences of not giving in, and remembering the advice of the chief guard not to resist, was forced to shut his mouth.

Hussein Beg, along with the deportation officials, Emed Bey and Sarikli Hassan, who were both his subordinates, as well as Yervant, the 30-35 year old chief guard, called a young man to carry the carpets on his shoulders and then left. Before leaving, Hussein Beg and Sarikli Hassan turned to my father and said:-

"Compatriot, this is quite legitimate. Go on and say that it is."

My father was forced to say, "It is legitimate, Sir."

We remained about two and a half months in Meskeneh, being among the last to leave, thanks to the bribes we paid. This enabled us to witness the diabolical scenes which unfolded daily in the camp. The Gostanian family from Marash were our camp neighbours. One day, chief guard Yervant and Sarikli Hassan came to the tent in which the Gostanian family lived. From there they called the responsible members of the families in the camp to state:- "As you can see, the number of deportees being sent to this camp from Aleppo is diminishing. Hussein Beg has ordered that the time has come for you to leave Meskeneh and proceed to Der Zor. You have to be on your way in two days' time." We had seen and knew

the daily routine in the camp. We were in a difficult situation. We were faced with swords, fire and death. Pleas and entreaties were to no avail. Sarikli Hassan turned down our pleas, got up and said, "There is no way and no possibility for you to stay any longer: you will have to go." He then left the tent. Some of those present winked at each other, and after a few polite and flattering words, drew Sarikli Hassan aside, and promised to satisfy him materially.

When Sarikli Hassan became aware of the promise of material gain, he changed his tone.

They all returned to the tent and began bargaining. This time, however, we were granted only an extra fifteen days' reprieve.

With every family contributing its share, 35 Ottoman gold pounds were collected, wrapped in a bundle and handed to Sarikli Hassan. The viper Yervant stood next to him, beaming with satisfaction. They both left, stating that they could not refuse our entreaties, but reminded us that the extra time they had granted us was their final concession.

These limited days slipped away very quickly, but, all the same, the fifteen days of grace gave us a breathing space. The news coming from Der Zor was disturbing and terrifying. Occasionally, there were young men and youths who had escaped to Meskeneh from the massacres in Der Zor. They would describe the robberies, kidnappings and killings and all kinds of inhuman and criminal acts that took place there.

On one occasion we were suddenly woken up during our sleep. Somebody called with a quiet voice, "Mother, father, do not be afraid. I am an Armenian." We saw a young Armenian in rags, who said in a barely audible voice, "I took advantage of the dark night and escaped on foot. I have had nothing to eat for two days. For God's sake, let me have something to eat."

Could you remain indifferent to this tearful plea? You would be prepared to share the little you had, not to let such a person go away hungry. You expect him to tell his story before going away. We asked him his name and surname, where he came from and about his family, speaking in whispers.

He described how he had taken advantage of the darkness and how he had escaped, using roundabout routes, as well as the

massacre of the Armenians by the Tcherkezes, Tchechens, Arabs, Kurds and Turks in the deserts of Der Zor. Our hearts bled and our eyes filled with tears, as we heard the story of these events.

He told us how axes, butcher's knives and iron bars were used during the massacres, and how the bodies were thrown into pits and tunnels, which were used as passages in the past.

A few days later, we again heard a voice calling, "Father, father!" We immediately got up. It was from a youth, whose beard had just started to grow. With a high-pitched voice, almost like that of a girl, he begged us to admit him into our tent, saying:-

"Please, have mercy on my youth and help me! This is my third escape from Sheddadieh and Der Zor. They arrested me tied me to about ten men and took us to Der Zor, but I managed to escape, without leaving any trace.

This time, two friends and I used a suitable opportunity to run away from a group of deportees. On the way we met three others. As they were Armenians, we joined their group.

We arrived together as far as the entrance to Meskeneh, when we decided to disperse, each one choosing a different tent to find refuge. I happened to come to this tent. Please do not turn me out. You will save my life by letting me in."

Could you refuse such a plea, or could your feelings of compassion allow you to do so? We invited him to sit down and have something to eat. We spoke in whispers and closed the entrance flap of the tent. The youth sat on a corner of the bed blankets.

We wanted him to leave as soon as possible, but as we were afraid of being heard, we kept silent. Towards dawn, as it became light, and everything became faintly visible, my mother noticed a wet streak on the left side of his head, which extended from his hair to his jaw.

Almost in tears, my mother asked him, "What is this? Is it blood?"

In answer, the youth gave the following account:-

"Yes. About 250-300 people would be arrested daily, and surrounded by Tchechens, Tcherkezes, Turks, Kurds and Arabs, driven like cattle to the deserts of Sivari, Sheddadieh or Maarat and massacred.

One day, I, too, was among those arrested. After forcing my two brothers, me and my father to run and then to walk, they

stopped us and said, "Whoever has money, gold chains, watches and jewellery must place these items here." With these words, they indicated a blanket spread on the ground, next to which stood a bearded Tchechen.

It was obvious that things were critical. Money, rings, watches, etc. accumulated on the blanket. Soon it was the turn of our clothes.

They ordered all those, whose clothes were in a good or usable condition, to take off their clothes. After this process was completed, they separated four persons and led them behind a hill, scarcely 15 metres away. They then came back to take four more people. This process was repeated until almost no deportees were left. The Armenian deportees were surrounded by Tchechens, and around them Turks, Kurds and fellaheen formed a second ring. There was no escape. How could we resist, tired, hungry and terrified as we were, without even a razor we could use in self-defence? Every time these criminals came to collect the next batch of four Armenians, I would move a few paces further back in the crowd of Armenians. They took my brothers and father away. I finally decided that when my turn came, I would walk to my death and be spared further agony. The next time they came to take more Armenians, I no longer drew back. When we reached the rear of the hill, one of us, a strong youth, was attacked with axes, clubs and yataghans (the short swords of Muslim countries) before he could utter a word. Meanwhile, I spotted the wide opening of a pit and threw myself inside. I fell on corpses. There was writhing and moaning, together with an offensive stench, dripping blood and naked bloated bodies. After killing a person, they would throw the body in the pit. The body would slither on a pile of bodies, resting on one side of the pile.

When I threw myself into the pit, I heard a voice which said, "Come brother, come to this side!" I moved towards the voice and discerned two persons in the dark. Like me, they, too, had the courage or the opportunity to throw themselves into the pit. The two were the ones who had escaped the massacre during the previous day. I was the youngest among them.

Before long, an hour later, another person fell into the pit. The light from above was getting dimmer. It appeared that a mist

was coming. We heard a voice from above, shouting, "If there is anyone alive there, let him hold this rope, so that we can pull him out. The king has pardoned you." In spite of our beckoning and calls to join us, one of the survivors, trusting the words of the executioners, seized the rope and was pulled out. Alas, two minutes later he was thrown back into the pit in two pieces, with his head chopped off. When it was all over, they collected the shirts and pants, which were of no use to them, set them alight and threw them into the pit on the bodies of the dead and dying within. It is hard to imagine such barbarity.

We were tormented by hunger. How could we get out of this pit, and after getting out, would we be left alive? This was also another problem which exercised our minds.

I knocked my head on the sides of the pit in an effort to commit suicide. This explains the wound on my head".

My mother applied some salt on the wound on his head and, after cutting the hair around it, she bandaged the wound. There was nothing else that could be done in the desert.

After carefully listening to his odyssey, I asked the youth, "How did you get out of the pit?"

The youth continued his story as follows:-

"Two days after I had fallen in the pit, we decided to get out of it, to leave the place and to think of ways to save ourselves.

The opening of the pit was quite wide, with a diameter of about one to one and a half metres . The interior of the pit was quite spacious, like a road, as well as being deep and dark. We placed the bodies side by side in five to six layers, and the other two told me, "Come, let us lift you so that you may have a look. If you see nobody around, we shall lift you still higher, but do not get out until the coast is clear. If on the other hand, you see anybody, we shall let you drop down on the bodies. Take this "rope" consisting of trousers tied together with you, lie prostrate on the ground, and lower the rope to us. One of us will stand on the shoulders of his companion to make it easier for you to pull the one of us on top. When he joins you, there will be two of us to pull up the one remaining in the pit."

We acted as planned. First, one standing on the bodies, and

supporting the other on his shoulder, helped me approach the edge of the pit and confirm that there was nobody around. With their help, I climbed out of the pit. I spotted bodies near the mouth of the pit, with shirts and trousers strewn around.

I reported what I had seen to the ones inside the pit, and tied the trousers together to form a "rope" which I lowered into the pit. My first companion climbed on the shoulder of my second companion and held the bottom of the "rope". I pulled the "rope", thus enabling him to climb to the surface. Getting the remaining man out was a problem. He was not very tall. We extended the "rope" by tying two more trousers to it, but the "rope" was still not long enough. The man dragged two more layers of bodies on top of the others, thus enabling him to stand a little closer to the mouth of the pit. With the two of us lying prostrate on the ground, he was able to grab the lower end of the "rope" and we finally succeeded in pulling him out of the pit.

What should we do now, and in which direction should we go without losing our way? We did not know the way along which we had come to this place, nor where to go for our safety.

We had to find a path in the desert, free from the risk of encountering these murderers. We were not sure whether to turn left or right, and at the same time we were extremely hungry and thirsty.

We decided to take a fortuitous direction and began walking. We walked on for possibly three and a half to four hours in darkness, when we suddenly felt that we were going towards Der Zor. We promptly changed our direction. After walking for a fairly long time, we heard the barking of dogs, and as we progressed, we clearly discerned the black tents belonging to Arabs.

It was obvious that we were approaching an Arab camp. What should we do? After surveying the situation, we began moving towards the tents, with feelings of anxiety and trepidation.

As we got closer, we saw a group moving towards us. We were afraid and wanted to turn back. However, in order to conceal our fear, we decided to stay put. We could see in the dim light what the group consisted of. The group consisted of four boys, three girls and four donkeys. Only one of the boys, aged fourteen to fifteen, must have been an Armenian, to judge from his features. One of

us asked the boy in Armenian, "Where are you from?" The boy had bushy eyebrows. His white skin was proof that his parents were Armenians. He was taken by surprise and answered, "I am from Broussa. My father and my mother have been killed, and I have been taken by these Arabs. I now live with them and work for them." He then pointed at a girl among the children and added, "She too had Armenian parents, but does not know where she came from. The Arabs took this girl before me. Her original name was Nver, but she is now called Aysheh." The little girl was shy and moved away. Little Nver, or Aysheh, had a round face, with her chin entirely covered with spots. She no longer looked like the daughter of Armenian parents.

There were some empty goatskins on the back of one of the donkeys, but it could be seen that there was still some water in one of the goatskins. It was clear that the children and the four donkeys were on their way to replenish their supply of water.

I said, "Dear brother, we are thirsty and hungry. Can you let us drink the water remaining in one of the goatskins to quench our thirst?"

The children of the fellaheen surrounded us, shouting, "Ermen, Ermen." (Armenians, Armenians). The Armenian boy took the goatskin from the donkey's back, and we drank to our hearts' content. We then asked him whether we could go to the tents, and be accepted as servants to the Arabs.

The Armenian boy answered, "I am not so sure. I can only tell you that apart from me, there were five other Armenian youths working for the Arabs. When two gendarmes arrived a couple of days ago, the Arabs delivered the five youths to the gendarmes. In my case, one of the Arab women hid me until the gendarmes left. There are three Armenian girls here. One of them is ill: they will take her away and kill her tomorrow. This is what I heard them say.

"We are hungry," I said, "Will they give us some bread if we beg?"

The answer was :- "If you take my advice, do not go and do not appear before them. Remain hidden behind that hill. In the evening I shall bring you some bread." With these words, the boy left along with the group.

In spite of the pang in our stomachs and our exhaustion, we had to take the boy's advice. We lay half-buried in the sun in the scorching mid-day heat of the desert until evening.

As it was getting dark, we waited with our eyes focused on the tents in the distance. Suddenly, we saw a figure moving towards us in the dark.

Our joy knew no bounds. The boy handed us the bread without a word and then disappeared in the dark. What he had brought consisted of six loaves of flat barley bread, which we immediately and insatiably devoured. We decided to take advantage of the dark to return to Meskeneh, and started on our way. We arrived here after travelling by night and hiding during the day.

Our plan is to gather together and escape to Aleppo, travelling over the hills, and following roundabout routes."

This, then, was the odyssey described by the youth from Malgara. He mentioned that one of his companions hailed from Zeitoun, and the other form Adapazar.

We kept the entrance flap of the tent closed that day. The youth left after dark that evening, with six flat loaves baked on a metal sheet by my mother.

THE DIVINE LITURGY ON THE MESKENEH DESERT SAND

Do not be surprised if I cannot quote the day, the month or even the year of what I am about to describe. I think the year must have been 1916. We had lost all sense of time in terms of days, months and years. We were not even aware of our own selves.

One day, an elderly Armenian wandered round the tents of the Armenians, who had now become tent-dwellers. Now and then, he would loudly announce, "Tomorrow an open-air service will be held near the tents, with a priest officiating. During the service the congregation will hear the message Jesus Christ revealed in a vision seen by this girl. The priest will communicate this message, received only by this girl, to the congregation. He said that the tribulation we were suffering was due to our sins. We must pray

and say "Mea Culpa", so that God may forgive our sins and free us from adversity.

The crier went round the whole camp in Meskeneh until sunset. Those close to the crier heard his words, while those who were too far to hear him properly asked each other what was being said. Some repeated accurately what they had heard, but others maliciously distorted the message, saying, "The king has pardoned us, and everybody can go back home." Such a naïve expectation became the topic of the day for the unfortunate people. Next day, my father, mother and we attended the service. Like us, thousands also attended. They spread a bed-sheet on the ground, and placed sets of five or six candles at various spots on the bed-sheet, while clouds of incense rose from the censer. The priest swung his censer left and right and blessed the congregation.

There was a sudden whisper. The girl, who had received the message approached the priest. She was in a trance for about quarter of an hour before regaining consciousness and passed her message to the priest, who, in his turn, communicated it to the congregation.

THE MESSAGE

The suffering of the Armenian people was entirely the result of their sins. This calamity had been brought on the Armenians by God. We should therefore acknowledge our sins and pray for deliverance and the forgiveness of our sins.

The congregation began dropping money and other items in the traditional collection salvers. There was no lack of spontaneous contributors, who gave 5, 10 or 40 paras (Turkish coins).

The name of the priest was Reverend Nerses A. E. Soghanemezian. Later, we became his neighbour in our camp. The priest owned a two-horse carriage. His wife had died. After the Armistice, he was given a post in the Sourp Nishan church in Beirut. Thanks to the carriage he owned, he was not deported beyond Meskeneh. He was a native of Ereyli in Konya.

ANOTHER DISAPPOINTMENT

One day, a poor man, who was a fisherman by profession, using the fishing tackle he had brought from home and, thanks to his skill, managed to catch a big fish, the size of a human, in the waters of the Euphrates. The people around him rained questions, such as, "What is up?" They finally said, "The king has pardoned us and everybody will be allowed to return home." When we approached, making our way through the crowd to reach the centre, we were again disappointed. Somebody thrust his hands into the fish's gills, as the fish was writhing in agony, trying to escape. There were some in the crowd, who rushed to help. After carrying the fish to a suitable place, it was cut up and sold, allowing the fisherman to earn some money.

NEW TIDINGS FROM DER ZOR

The news from Der Zor was more and more terrifying and sinister as the days went by. My uncle's opposition to going there was fully justified. His sons, my father and my father's cousins took the final decision to, at all costs, resort to all possible means to be among the last to be deported to Der Zor, and to stay where we were as long as possible.

The number of people escaping from Der Zor grew by the day. Late at night we again heard, "Mother, mother!" being uttered in a low voice near our tent entrance. My aunt Haiganoush woke up and informed her children and husband accordingly. We all woke up immediately and saw the person near the tent was Krikor Ankout. He was a man living on his own, with whom we had been acquainted in the past. Krikor Ankout and our family would often meet to discuss the day's situation. Krikor Ankout belonged to the category of "vagabond" as far as the Turks were concerned. He had again managed to escape from Der Zor. It was his seventh escape. He would travel at night along roundabout mountain routes to return to Aleppo. On many occasions, he had reached as far as the entrance to Aleppo at Karlik, which was the most dangerous centre from

which deportations would set off. There, he had been repeatedly arrested and sent back to Der Zor. He asked us for some food and advised us to avoid going to Der Zor at all costs. Meanwhile, the massacres were intensifying.

FAMILY SOLIDARITY AND FELLAHEEN BEHAVIOUR

My uncle Bedros Semerdjian died of typhus during our stay in the camp of Messoudieh in Djezirieh. His wife, three children, mother and sister lived in the same tent. We began living together in the same tent with my aunt's family. We gathered together to avoid being too conspicuous. Our tent was quite large and could accommodate two families. My aunt's family consisted of the six people referred to above, while there were five in our family, i.e. my father, mother, sister, brother and I. In the case of the Izmirlian brothers, the three brothers, sister and two wives, all gathered in one tent. Wherever we went, we were always together and inseparable.

My father's cousins were materially well-off, while my uncle's family was still self-sufficient. My aunt's family, i.e. the Setrag Afarian family, was very well-off. The same was not true in our case, as we had run out of money in Meskeneh, and my father and mother were worried. Just one Ottoman gold pound remained in my mother's possession.

However, my uncle and aunt said to my parents, "Do not worry! As long as we are together, we shall share the same money."

This was proof of noble sentiments and the spirit of sacrifice, which these people demonstrated, while we were living under the shadow of death.

No stage of the transportation from camp to camp, all the way from Konya to Aleppo and Meskeneh was free of charge. We had to pay six to eight pounds to travel from one camp to the next.

The horse-drawn carriages, used for the transport of deportees from Meskeneh to Der Zor, belonged to Armenian families. There were about forty to fifty Armenian families in Meskeneh, who owned private horse-drawn carriages. They were allowed to remain

there and to serve in the transportation of the deportees. These coachmen would report to us the criminal acts they witnessed on the way, while they were carrying the deportees.

Day by day, these reports were more terrifying and disturbing. Robbery, killings, the kidnapping of women and girls and all manner of inhuman crimes were widespread.

We became aware of the scale of the massacres, when we saw fellaheen, who never wore pants, wearing blouses, dresses and robes. The number of fellaheen wearing laces and embroidered or pleated skirts kept growing.

I shall never forget the pathetic scene we witnessed, as my mother and I were on our way to the Euphrates, which was ten to fifteen minutes' walk from us, to fetch some water.

An Arab fellah was standing next to a ramshackle tent consisting of bed-sheets. An Armenian mother and her seven to eight year old pretty daughter were lying on a ragged blanket in this tent.

The fellah was speaking in Arabic, but the woman could not understand Arabic and was too feeble to open her mouth. The fellah held two 5-piastre coins and was trying to imply that he wanted the woman to sell her daughter to him. He held the girl with one of his crude hands, while his other hand held the ten piasters he was offering the mother. The poor girl was terrorized, and kept clinging to her mother's emaciated leg. When we saw the tragic scene, my mother told the fellah, "Go away and leave the girl alone!" in Turkish—which he did not understand—hoping he would let her go. However, the fellah drew a cudgel, with a nail at its end, from his cloak and assumed a threatening posture. We immediately withdrew, with our hearts throbbing at the sight of a poor child crying and the state of the paralyzed mother of an Armenian family.

WHAT COULD WE DO ?

What could an unarmed people, enslaved and uprooted from its land and country do? They were but lumps of flesh, facing the yataghan, fire and sword by a government, which had planned to exterminate the Armenians from the youngest to the oldest.

Day by day, the conflagration spread. Throughout Syria there was not an inch of soil without the stain of Armenian blood. Every part of Syria had been turned into a slaughter-house, with an increasing number escaping with wounds inflicted by axes and daggers. Such slaughter-houses included Der Zor, Djezireh, Ras-ul-Ayoun, Sheddadieh, the areas of Sindjar and the banks of the Khabour River, Sivar and locations and unnamed villages not shown on maps. The deserts of Syria became a vast field of carnage.

THE ODYSSEY OF PANOS OF ZEITOUN

Our immediate neighbour in the camp sent his child to invite us to visit them. My father, mother and I entered his tent. There, we saw a young man of average height with a white face and blue eyes, aged between nineteen and twenty, who dressed as a girl.

This man had begged for bread, saying, "Sister, I have fled from the massacres, please, give me a scrap of bread." As soon as our neighbour realized that the young man had escaped from the massacres, he took him in and then called us.

In reply to our questions, he began describing his odyssey. He had difficulty speaking the Turkish language. We asked his name and where he had come from. He answered that his name was Panos and that he was from Zeitoun. This was his story:-

"Things were very good when we went to Der Zor. They even gave us food and bread, and, like all Armenians, we looked for work, and some of us even opened shops. Later, when the criminal Zeki Bey came, the local people changed their attitude towards us. We began hearing children say, "We shall kill you" but we paid no attention to these words. Even if we had taken these words seriously, what could we do? Eight to ten days after the start of

these rumours, the arrests began, with people tied arm to arm being led away, never to return.

Arabs, gendarmes and Tcherkez, Tchechen and Kurd robbers started circulating in the camps. Where could these Armenians, who had become tent-dwellers escape or hide? You suddenly saw a hand opening the entrance flap of your tent, and a man who appeared asking. "Have you clothing or anything to sell?" What the man was looking for were young wives, girls and women. Should he scent some sign of prosperity, he would return at night to rob and to kidnap girls and women, dragging them to unknown places. After satisfying his beastly lusts, he would kill the victims, and return to the camp for more girls and women.

Within two weeks, not a single male remained in the camp. The rounding up of men grew more thorough as the days went by. Every day, my mother would dismiss the gendarmes by bribing them. Towards the end, there were almost no males left. The gendarme seized me by the arm and dragged me, forcing me to join a group of men, who were on their way to be killed. There were 400-425 persons in the group. "Get a move on!" they said. A mounted Tchechen led the way. We were surrounded by gendarmes, around whom the fellaheen formed a second circle.

The scene was pathetic and poignant. Now and then we were lashed with whips and forced to run.

We were beset by the scorching sun, the hot sand and the fear of death. We finally arrived at a spot, where a coat lay on the ground. We stopped there and were told, "All those who have money, valuables, watches, rings, etc. should place these articles on the coat."

There was a hill in front of us. Axes, yataghans, bayonets, truncheons and cudgels were used for the murders, which took place behind this hill. They would take ten to twelve people at a time to kill them behind this hill, and then come back to repeat the process. Every time they came for the next lot of victims, I would take one step forward and two steps backward, merging in the crowd, racking my brains to think of a way to save my skin.

There was a moment, when, as I moved forward, I was struck with dizziness when I saw two persons killed with axes. Having

momentarily lost consciousness, I suddenly found myself in a pit in the midst of bodies. My head was wounded. I do not remember what happened and how I had been hit. When I came to, I saw that chopped heads and headless bodies were being thrown into the pit.

I had hardly drawn aside, when I heard a voice which said, "Brother, come here next to me!" The pit was deep and dark as I moved towards the voice. Three persons were sitting there side by side. I sat next to them. We could occasionally hear guns being fired.

For hours on end, dismembered bodies kept falling into the pit, but later fewer bodies came in. We then saw a rope being lowered into the pit and heard a voice which shouted, "The king has pardoned you. If there is anyone alive, let him take hold of the rope, so that we can pull him out." The rope hung there for a while and the same words were repeated. There was no sound from the pit apart from the groans of the dying men. The rope was then withdrawn and burning clothes, grass and totally useless rags were thrown into the pit.

A little later, the voices stopped. The light, which could be seen from the mouth of the pit, faded and we felt that it was evening. We spent the night there. The following morning we heard voices and the massacres re-started.

That day they killed another thirty men, whose naked bodies they threw into the pit. After remaining in the pit for two days and one night, we had to think of getting out.

After waiting there from morning till evening, we made our way to the mouth of the pit, from which we could see the moonlit sky. There was no time to lose.

We immediately built a platform, by assembling a pile of bodies on which to step. We had to make a special effort, as we were not yet completely exhausted from hunger. We raised one of our companions, who stepped on our shoulders and wrists to climb to the surface. He re-appeared three or four minutes later, to report that a large number of bodies were scattered on the ground. He immediately formed a "rope", by tying end to end the trousers, jackets, shirts, etc. that had been thrown all over the place. He then lowered this "rope" into the pit, while we raised the

platform further up, by piling more bodies on it. With difficulty we managed to get, out one by one, by stepping on the bodies and using the "rope".

The first problem, which we had already solved, was how to get out of the pit, but the second and even greater problem was what to do next and where to go. Wherever we were to go in Turkey, we, as Armenians, would be treated as enemies. In our despair, we even thought of those killed as the lucky ones!

After a long hesitation, we decided to retrace our steps back to Der Zor to join our families. We set off.

In the morning twilight, we began to discern our camp in the distance. One of us muttered a prayer in the Zeitoun dialect. I immediately looked at his face, and recognized him as Mihran, my fellow countryman from Zeitoun. He, in his turn, took a look at me and recognized me, saying, "Are you Panos?" We embraced and kissed each other. Meanwhile, we were getting close to the camp. We then parted company, with each one of us going to the tent of his respective family.

My mother woke up as I raised the flap of our tent. She let me in and we embraced cautiously and silently. After hearing my story, my mother and sister said that the gendarmes had intensified their surveillance, and that they had been ordered to leave the camp the following day and proceed to an unknown destination.

As no men had been left in the camp, it was now the turn of the women to be cleared out.

We immediately decided that I would wear my sister's skirt and blouse, and that I would join the women in order to cover up my tracks.

That night, I scarcely had an hour's sleep. An uproar broke out with shouts and calls. Women were beaten, girls were kidnapped and tents were pulled down, with mounted Tchechens and the fellaheen creating hell.

Soon it was the turn of our tents.

There was not a ray of hope for us, or for any of the others. Like the rest, we left the tents and joined the crowd.

I had shaved my beard, smudged my face and covered my head and nose with a veil. We began walking. The stragglers were

killed. Young and old, we were on our way to the place where they had planned to commit their crime.

We stopped after walking for a few hours. At every stop, the exhausted people would eat if they had some food: those without food went hungry. After scarcely two or three hours, there was a fusillade, with hundreds of bullets hitting the crowd. Dear Lord! Those who fell dead were spared further suffering, while the wounded died in agony. There was pandemonium, with mothers and children embracing each other and the children crying, "Mummy, I am dying," as they lay writhing on the ground.

Early in the morning, we had to abandon the dead and the wounded in the desert and forced to walk on. My mother was killed, while my sister and I were among the survivors, walking on in anguish at the thought of our loved ones who had perished. We were heading towards the Khabour river, whose water we drank thirstily. We were apparently to cross the river. We were shown a ford some way off for the crossing.

Two Tchechens and four fellaheen were standing next to the ford, supposedly to help the people cross the river, but with the real intention of kidnapping pretty girls and women.

There was a sudden uproar at the ford when they removed the veil from the face and a hat from the head of one of the disguised Armenians. The fellah took off his head-dress and used the rope rings on it to beat the Armenian.

I had already crossed the river without being noticed. As I was following the women, I turned round and saw that it was Minas who was being beaten. He, too, had been disguised like me. He was wearing a woman's dress and his head was covered with a veil. Minas was tall and solidly built, and the fellah realized that he was a man from his build and his deportment.

A gendarme ordered Minas to stand aside, where he stood until all the women had crossed the river. Although I had joined the women to conceal my identity, I would sometimes look back to see what they would do to Minas. I saw that he was being led in a different direction, escorted by a mounted gendarme. Without a doubt, the poor fellow was being taken somewhere to be killed. We

continued on our way, with five gendarmes leading us. We finally arrived in Sheddadieh.

Of the original 459 persons, only 80-85 remained. There was nothing to eat or drink. If one were to spend two days there, one was automatically condemned to die of hunger. I assumed that this was our final stop. This was obvious, to judge from the thousands of corpses that lay unburied on the ground. Knowing that according to their custom, the Turks would fire a hail of bullets on us, I lay crouched in a hollow, together with some others. I had guessed correctly. It was close to midnight, and the process of exterminating the remaining 80-85 human wrecks began. When it ended, the only sounds to be heard in this desolation were the groans of the dying. There were no other sounds.

I waited and listened carefully, but could hear nothing. More bodies had been added to the thousands that already lay there in their eternal rest. They were now in peace. They had died once instead of dying daily, and were spared from further suffering. It was morning, but nothing stirred. Human bodies lay on the ground. Only five were alive and there was not a single gendarme. The gendarmes had all left. When I got up and looked around in the distance, I spotted Minas, who rose and began walking towards me. Three women had also survived.

What could we do? We were in a confused state. All five of us decided to go together and seek shelter with the Arabs.

I asked Minas to tell us how he had managed to re-join us. He told us the following:- "I walked on, followed by the mounted gendarme. We had covered a fair distance from the caravan and the crowd, and I expected any moment to be shot and freed from further suffering. After proceeding further, I stole a glance behind me to see if the gendarme was preparing to fire, but there was nobody there. I was stunned. I was not quite sure whether I was alive or dead. I could not continue to walk in the same direction. After stopping briefly, I retraced my steps, and then saw a group of women deportees. By the time I reached them, it was already dark. I wanted to see my sister at all costs. I found her. My sister, who was in the group, followed me from a distance, and wanted to send me a message with cautious hand gestures and with winking, but I was too far away to understand what she was trying to tell me. However, we both had the satisfaction of seeing each other alive.

The three women and we, the two men, walked on chatting. Our greatest worry concerned the women. After walking for about an hour and a half, we saw the black tents of the Arabs. In the hope of not being turned away by the Arabs, we decided to approach the large tents. Minas made his way to the very largest tent, on the assumption that the tent belonged to the Sheikh—and indeed it was the Sheikh's tent!

These nomads belonged to the Bakkara tribe. Minas and the women were each offered refuge, but no one accepted me, so I decided to go to Aleppo. I arrived here in Meskeneh, begging for bread from the Arabs on the way. I shall be very grateful if you can offer me some food and some money."

All of us, who heard this odyssey, dispersed to our tents and soon returned with every one offering him a small bundle with food. We also gave him two medjidiehs. He spent the day in our neighbour's tent. In the evening he crossed himself and left. We have had no further news from Panos. It is not so easy to escape from Der Zor to Aleppo.

FROM MESKENEH TO DIPSI

The period of grace, allowing us to remain in Meskeneh, by bribing the deportation official, ended. Willy-nilly, we were forced to move on. The cost of seeking a further extension was prohibitive, and there was no guarantee that an agreement to let us stay on would be respected.

It was now our turn to suffer the fate borne by so many others. We left the camp with dozens of families. The Turkish executioners, helped by the Armenian chief guard and other guards, pulled down our tents by removing the pegs which held the tents. They then forced us to immediately join the caravan, either on foot or on hired carriages. In despair and at the eleventh hour, our people hired four horse-drawn carriages from the Asdourians of Akshehir. After bargaining, they paid three Ottoman pounds for each carriage to take us to Dipsi.

Soon, we collected our belongings, consisting of several items, loaded them onto the carriages and my father and mother took their seats next to us, waiting for the caravan to start its journey.

The same day, there were poor and unfortunate persons, who shared our fate, but could not afford the cost of hiring carriages. They had to go on foot, driven by whip lashes, with young and old carrying what was left of their belongings on their shoulders. What they could not carry was left behind, as they walked to their deaths.

The caravan began to move, with those in the carriages, leaving behind those who were trudging on foot. We were among the families in a caravan of 28 carriages travelling to Dipsi, with three gendarmes leading the way. Just as we left Meskeneh and some way beyond the old part of Meskeneh, the road was uphill and very steep, making it difficult for the poor horses to make headway. We had to stop twice on this long uphill stretch to allow the horses to have a rest. After this climb we stopped for half an hour, after which the caravan arrived in Dipsi - a Hell on earth.

It was now August 1916.

Dipsi was a narrow valley between two hills near the Euphrates. The place was reminiscent of Hell. It was a place where Nature itself was cruel.

There was not a single Arab to be seen. The place was normally almost empty. The only people there at the time were five or six hundred emaciated, contorted ghost-like figures, too feeble to move, and on the point of dying. As mentioned above, from the very start of the deportations and until now, with our arrival here, our policy had been, at all costs, to be among the last to leave the various locations where we would stop on the way. Here, though, it was sheer folly to try to stay as long as possible in this world of living skeletons and the dead.

Here, the children of the creative Armenian race were reduced to begging for bread, with their faces disfigured and too weak to stand up or speak.

This is where we saw children gathered round a mule, which had been dead for days, using their thin emaciated fingers to gouge out pieces of meat for them to eat. It was a heart-rending sight, which drove my uncle and some others to approach the deportation official

with the request to be allowed to continue on to the place known as Abou Harar, using the carriages which had carried us this far.

The deportation official gave his consent.

We could scarcely spend three hours in this macabre place, and re-hired our carriages, paying two gold pounds for each carriage, to take us to Abou Harar. The caravan, with 28 families, escorted by two gendarmes, arrived in the desert of Abou Harar, where 40,000 exiled Armenian families were waiting to be led to their deaths, like sheep to a slaughter house. We joined these people, who were our brothers, to share their ominous fate.

ABOU HARAR

Like Meskeneh, Abou Harar is located on a bank of the Euphrates, and consists of a single inn. While the name Abou Harar exists, no real village exists. During our presence there, we saw not a single house belonging to Arabs, apart from that inn.

As in the case of Meskeneh, bread, flour and dried foodstuffs would be brought from Aleppo and other places. There was not a single tree under which to shelter from the sun.

In Meskeneh, we had camped on some flat sandy land between a hill and the Euphrates.

In the case of Abou Harar, the flat area was bordered by the Euphrates, while the road from Haman to Rakka, Tabka and Der Zor ran on the other side.

When we reached Abou Harar, we were told that forty two thousand Armenians were camped there. In fact, the following morning we saw the vastness of the camp. It would take hours to walk from one end to the other.

Quite often, people could not find their own tent if they strayed too far from their immediate area. Yet, people had to move a good distance away from their surroundings several times a day to answer the call of nature.

The Euphrates was not far: it was seven or eight minutes' walk from our tent. Here, the Euphrates branched into two, with an island in between. The island was fairly big and covered with vegetation.

At night we could hear the howl of jackals. From our position in the camp, if one looked carefully in the distance, he could discern a castle on the left bank of the Euphrates, which went by the name of Djafar Kaleh.

The deportation official in Abou Harar was a dark-haired beast of a murderer of medium height. This monster had been guilty of numerous criminal and beastly acts. He was literally degenerate. This blackguard, whose name was Rahmeddin Muhammed, had the rank of a corporal. Words cannot describe his brutality. There was, however, something more disturbing. Can you guess what I am referring to? It pains me to give the name of Muhammed's assistant. It is none other than Hagopos from Izmit, the chief guard.

My God! How many Armenian youths, how many families, how many decent Armenian mothers, how many helpless orphans age three to fourteen, who represented the future of the Armenian nation, were killed, or had their lives ruined as a result of his false accusations and his betrayal?

You, the mother of Hagopos, why did you give birth to this viper, this indescribable calamity? If only he had died in your womb! If only you had miscarried and dropped your stillborn baby into the lavatory, where he belonged! If this afflicts you, it will also afflict your ancestors. May your husband never have been born, so that such a Hagopos would not have been such a curse!

Such thorns have unfortunately raised their ugly heads during these days of adversity and tribulation. These thorns have unashamedly betrayed their compatriots in complicity with the Turks, without the least compunction in the hope of saving his own skin.

The morning after we arrived in Abou Harar, we could hear a deafening uproar from a fair distance from our tent. We could hear the pathetic voices, the entreaties of mothers, the appeal of fathers, the sobbing and pleading of children, some of whom were ill, some of them hungry and some of them delirious.

26 horse-drawn carriages appeared and lined up on the orders of Mohammed, (a man prepared to shatter the bones of his victims) and the cur Hagopos, who shouted, "Get into your carriages and go to your deaths!" His voice was hardly human: it could best be described as the howl of a jackal. Your hair would stand on end if you heard

such a voice. Hagopos was rather a short and fat man, with a most unpleasant voice, holding a whip made of the sinew of oxen. His whip lashed indiscriminately the heads and faces of the poor people, as he repeated, "Get into your carriages and go to your deaths!"

He ordered his subordinates to load the belongings of the deportees into the carriages, while his subordinates scattered each individual's belongings in different carriages, as if to show how "clever" they were.

As soon as the carriages were loaded, the caravan was ordered to proceed to Hamam.

This was the daily situation of the poor people. When the number of deportees fell, more would be brought in from other camps two or three times a week. On the other hand, when their numbers grew, many deportees would be sent to Der Zor daily.

There were many, who were sent on foot daily. They would collect the "vagabonds" who were on their own and drive them on, threatening them with guns and beating them with whips.

Whenever the deportees were either sent away, or scheduled to be sent away, two or three persons would invariably be killed with whips and truncheons, often by Rahmeddin Muhammed (the "bone shatterer") personally.

That day, I witnessed with my own eyes the killing of two Armenians. How could these people defend themselves? They were so weakened by hunger and illness, that they could scarcely move. They were killed with whips and truncheons.

When our group saw this criminal act committed by this beast in human form, my uncle, Garabed from Karaman, the Alex Balikdjian brothers, the Izmirlian brothers, my father Armenag Seropian, Garabed Tedjirian, Parseghian, Gosdanian from Marash and the families from Kessaria, 34 families in all, unanimously decided to have a meeting with "bone shatterer" Muhammed Rahmeddin and to bribe him, so that we could stay put, and be the last to be sent to Der Zor. We waited until things had calmed down before arranging this meeting.

We chose a five-man delegation to call on Muhammed in his room in the inn and present our petition.

He accepted us and listened, but, in return, he demanded the payment of 300 Ottoman gold pounds to grant this favour to the 34

families. He swore by God to keep his promise, even though the assurance of this ungodly beast in human form was of doubtful value.

An hour later in the evening, the delegation returned with the 300 Ottoman gold pounds wrapped in a handkerchief to pay the bloodthirsty "bone shatterer" monster Muhammed Rahmeddin, who had never seen more than two pounds at the same time.

We remained there for about five long months. Every day we would witness the murders committed by corporal Rahmeddin Muhammed and chief guard Hagopos the viper, whose sharp voice was full of scorn for his compatriots. He was a killer of his brothers, just like Cain.

THE DEATH OF HAROUTUNE BOYADJIAN

Haroutune Boyadjian was the son of a poor native of Konya family, hardly 22 or 24 years of age, and was a graduate of Djenanian College in Konya. Two or three years before 1915, he had successfully completed his studies at the college, where he later became a teacher.

His mother had brought him up by working as a laundress, while Professor Armenag Haigazian helped him materially.

Haroutune and his little brother Haig managed to reach Abou Harar, although they lost their mother on the way.

We met them in the camp, with the two brothers under a bed-sheet, which was inadequate to protect them from the scorching sun. Haroutune lay there almost motionless. He was thin and weighed down by illness and exhaustion from the journey.

My cousins Jano, Ferdinand, Loghofet Afarian and I knew him well as students of the Djenanian College. When we saw the sorry state of the two brothers, we visited them as old acquaintances and uttered some words of comfort. When the two brothers explained that they were penniless, my cousins could not leave them in such a desperate condition, without leaving enough food for a few days under Haroutune's pillow. We left, with the inconceivably wretched state of Haroutune haunting us.

Two days later, it was their turn to be sent away from the camp.

It is difficult to picture the uproar that the prospect of going to Der Zor caused.

Who could intercede with these beasts? Rahmeddin used his truncheon to strike left, right and centre. Haig had already left when it was the turn of Haroutune, who lay on his back, pleading that he was incapable of moving. However, the unfeeling Rahmeddin ignored these pleas and kept hitting the skeletal arms of Haroutune.

To protect himself, Haroutune held his thin arms above his head, and, as a result, blood ran from his arms and elbows. The degenerate Hagopos took the bed-sheet and ragged blanket which he then threw into a carriage. He then placed Haroutune who was covered with blood into the carriage with the help of four persons, who handled him like a bundle of bones. It was obvious that the young man could not survive much longer.

We fortuitously met his brother Haig eight months later. He said that Haroutune Boyadjian had died in the carriage before they reached the next camp.

DESPAIR AND DEATH

The overwhelming majority of the people were no longer what they were when they first arrived. There were no more attractive faces. Nobody was left to charm outsiders into offering rations in exchange for persons with pretty features, or to tempt outsiders to kidnap them. There were no more beautiful women or modest girls or chubby children. All the exiles gave the impression of ghosts who had escaped from their graves.

The afflictions of the long trek, the typhus epidemic, eye infections, leprosy, dysentery, hunger and thirst had turned these people into vegetables. Hunger had led them to eat hemlock and other harmful kinds of grass and to suffer from poisoning, resulting in swollen abdomens, feet, heads and hands. Innocent little children, suffering from dysentery, with their intestines partly hanging out, would approach you for a scrap of bread. Hundreds were too weak to move due to hunger. They were living skeletons, with deformed heads and dull eyes. They lay abandoned, close to death, but still

breathing. Some way off, there were scattered piles of bodies. The noxious stench of these corpses sickened us, but our noses got used to this smell, as we wandered amidst them.

Businessmen would come from Aleppo, Bab and Mumbuj to Abou Harar, this God-forsaken place, to buy whatever of value which the exiles still possessed at rock-bottom prices.

THE SHATTERED SKULL

In 1916 45,000 thrifty Armenians were crowded like cattle in the desert of Abou Harar, from where many were daily sent to the slaughter-house of Der Zor.

One early morning I had to leave our tent and go to an open space in response to a call of nature, as I was suffering from diarrhea. I had scarcely gone 25-30 metres from our tent, when I saw a human body lying on the ground.

I was terrified by what I saw, and ran back, distraught, to our tent. When my mother saw my fright, she caught my hand and asked, "Why have you come back so soon, my lad?"

I told her what had happened, and my mother repeated what I had said to my cousins.

After hearing me, the Afarian brothers asked me to lead them to the spot where the crime had been committed. They wanted to have a look from some distance.

It was, however, dangerous merely to have a look. They suggested that I approach the body, so that they might follow me-which is what we did. The body was that of a young man, lying on his back, with his skull broken open at the forehead and his brain outside.

Two truncheons, as thick as a human arm, broken and blood-stained, had been thrown on his body. He wore a black frock-coat and a starched shirt. It was obvious that he was a prominent person.

One of my cousins called me next to him and said, "Hagop, have a look! There is a small notebook with a black cover near his leg. We shall go back to our tent. Meanwhile, go and take the notebook, without stopping there." After these words, they turned back to their tents.

After looking round, I grabbed the notebook very carefully and withdrew, with my heart pounding. I reached them before they had time to enter the tent. When we were inside the tent, I gave the notebook to Jano, one of my cousins.

The notebook was a diary, but I can remember little of what was written in it.

The diary stated that the owner was from Tchangir. I cannot recall the surname, but do remember that the Christian name was Krikoris. He had been a pharmacist in Konya, who had worked in the pharmacy of Doctor Dudd, and had also worked with Doctor Zhamgotchian. In his diary he described his journey all the way to Der Zor after his arrest.

The last few lines ran as follows :- "I have decided to walk by moonlight along roundabout routes to Aleppo to escape from the great massacres." He managed to reach Abou Harar, but he then became a victim of the blood-thirsty criminal beast, who smashed his skull, leaving a gash extending from his forehead to the back of his skull. Thus ended the life of a worthy professional who had brightened the life of an Armenian family.

MARIAM AND ONNIG

They were just two of the thousands of innocent children, who had become orphans. They were both two or three years old. They were devoted to each other, as if they were brother and sister, or at least related to each other.

They both wore parts of shirts of undefined colour on their backs, while their hands and feet were dirty. They both held plates full of holes, and were inseparable.

A week after our arrival in Abou Harar, they appeared before our tent to beg. They could not yet speak properly. They always took care of each other, and protected each other. They shared whatever food they could find, and slept together wherever they could hide.

From the very first day that we saw these two mites, we felt sympathy for them. We gave them food on several occasions, after which the two would not go away from the front of our tent. They

would even sleep under the rear flap of our tent. We would not forget them and always let them share our food.

The two mites had swollen tummies: they were insatiable. Indeed, it was said that in times of poverty and famine, people become greedy and can never have enough.

They would go round various tents, but in the evenings they were always our neighbours.

One day, Onnig came and paused alone. We asked, "Where is Mariam?" He was unable to explain or say where Mariam was.

We speculated whether Mariam had been thrown into a carriage to join the next group of deportees, who were being sent away that day, and we all felt sorry.

After this, Onnig became like an adopted son in our family, and we never forgot to feed him, but always outside our tent.

I would often tell my mother, "Let us adopt this boy." My mother would answer, "My lad, let us see what will happen to us. Shall we survive the storm? We are already doing what needs to be done for Onnig. We cannot do much more, my lad. If we survive, Onnig will become our son."

Time went by, with days turning into weeks, and weeks turning into months. On the one hand, there were arrivals from Meskeneh, on the other hand, there were departures for Der Zor. After sending groups to Der Zor in the mornings, quiet morning prayers and "Lord, have mercy!" would be heard in the tents. Untold thousands prayed for the salvation of the Armenian people. At the same time, hawkers would sell their wares by shouting, "Spinaches!", "Do you have anything for me to sieve?", "Creamy milk!" "Hot tea!" etc.

In desperation, one would seek medical treatment for one's loved ones, but neither doctors, nor medicines were available. We had to rely on Divine Providence.

AN UNEXPECTED SURPRISE

One day we unexpectedly heard the voice of a crier. The crier called all artisans to present themselves at a certain tent and then be registered at another tent. They were interested in registering carpenters, joiners, blacksmiths, masons, etc.

We had been frequently deceived by the announcements of these criers. At first, we paid no attention to this crier, but later we showed some interest, as the announcement appeared to be genuine.

After the registration of the artisans, some would be sent to Meskeneh and some to Rakka. A certain Arshag from Karaman was authorized to register us. My father and his three cousins were carpenters by profession, but as we could not dissociate ourselves from my uncle Setrag Afarian and the family of my other uncle, who had died on the way, we wanted the four families to be registered, as each family having one member as a carpenter (although in fact one family had one carpenter, the other family three carpenters and the remaining two families had no carpenters). We paid Arshag five gold pounds to register us on this basis.

Three days after the registration, horse-drawn carriages arrived from Meskeneh, and we took our seats in them. In Meskeneh we would be working for the government - which is what happened.

When little Onnig saw us seated in the carriages, he began to cry, as he wanted to join us. We, too, wanted him to come with us.

As the carriages began moving, I caught Onnig by his hands and placed him in our carriage. However, when we arrived at the deportation official's office, the official stopped the carriage to "check the persons inside the carriage", but in fact someone had betrayed us. They also stopped another carriage, in which a family was accompanied by the unregistered widow of a clergyman, whose presence had been betrayed. The poor widow was dragged out and arrested.

When our carriage was checked, they removed little Onnig. The poor boy could not understand what was happening, and kept crying and trying to climb back into the carriage, which he was incapable of doing.

No matter how earnestly we promised Onnig that we would get him back into the carriage as soon as the gendarme left, he understood nothing and continued crying and wandering round the carriage.

They kept us waiting there for about an hour, and without checking the other carriages, finally gave the order for the caravan to start its journey to Meskeneh.

A somewhat elderly gendarme, called Djumaah, saw the little boy standing between the carriages and crying. I immediately said to the gendarme, "Sir, take pity on this boy! He will be run over by the carriages." It was a miracle. Djumaah grabbed Onnig by the arms and threw him into our carriage, saying, "Let him go with you!" We were all overjoyed that Onnig was coming with us.

As soon as we arrived in Meskeneh, the carriages with the 23 families with artisans stopped in line. Once more, the officials said, "Let nobody get out of the carriages until we have checked."

We immediately got Onnig out of the carriage. He held the plate full of holes, started crying and kept close to the carriage.

This time the betrayers were unfortunately from our family.

Hussein Avni Bey ordered the four families, including ours to return to Abou Harar in the carriages with which we had come.

Going back to Abou Harar in four carriages in those days meant certain death for the four families - nothing but death.

Setrag Afarian and the two boys, Jano and Ferdinand left the carriage to have a meeting with Hussein Avni.

It would have been extremely dangerous if we were forced to go back to Abou Harar, as the nomadic tribes, known as the Anez, with their numerous camels and flocks of sheep, used to move from pasture to pasture. Should we meet them on the way, they would seize and kill us.

After six hours of efforts, trying hard to convince Hussein Avni, the four came back, extremely tired and depressed.

The decision was that we would remain there temporarily, provided that we stayed in the camp set aside for those due to be sent to Der Zor. We would then join the caravan to Der Zor as far as Abou Harar. We had to pay 20 Ottoman gold pounds to Avni Bey and his minions for this arrangement.

When we first came to Meskeneh, the deportation official was Naim Bey. This time, Naim Bey had been assigned other duties, and had been replaced by Sefa Bey. As the camp, from which the deportees used to be sent away, had changed, they took us to a new

camp 500 metres away, but again on the edge of the Euphrates.

We found only one family on the new site. They had been told what we had also been told. When we pitched our tent and had the opportunity to meet the people in the other tent, we were in for a surprise. One of them was Panos Boyadjian, a compatriot, friend and neighbour in the quarter where we used to live. At the time a stranger used to live with them, whose name we knew to be Aram Andonian. It appeared that Aram Andonian had now changed his name to Aram Boyadjian.

MY COUSIN FERDINAND'S DEATH

After that day's fatigue and perspiration, Ferdinand, taking advantage of the absence of anyone in the camp, took off his clothes and took a dip in the cold waters of the Euphrates in order to have a bath. However, as soon as he emerged from the water, he had a bout of diarrhea and vomiting and ran a high fever.

Unfortunately, there was nothing we could do for him, and within 24 hours, this promising young man died, like hundreds of thousands of other Armenians. We buried him, reciting the Lord's Prayer.

As soon as we had buried him, Sefa Bey entered our tent. He was rather shorter than an average man, and spoke good Turkish. After a few words of comfort, he added, "I am sincerely sorry, and I have taken this opportunity to meet you and to inform you that I realize the difficulties your large family will face if you are sent to Der Zor. To spare you the evil that will surely befall you, and taking into account that you came here from Abou Harar as artisans, I would like to transfer you to the camp of the artisans. As you are no doubt aware, such measures have to be paid for.

My uncle's grief at the loss of his son was still very deep, and with tears in his eyes, he uttered a few words in an agitated, yet measured tone. Sefa Bey stood up and was on the point of leaving, but he said, "I understand your pain, but I sincerely believe that you will not miss this opportunity to avoid an even greater calamity. I really believe that it would be most unwise not to take up my offer." At the prompting of the Izmirlian brothers, my father and his

cousins offered a seat to Sefa and asked the women and children to leave the tent for a while.

After protracted entreaties and pleas on behalf of every family, it was agreed for each one of them to pay seven gold pounds. Sefa Bey then left. Two days later, we were all transferred to the artisans'camp, where the number of the families of carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, plasterers etc. rose to 75-80.

Although we had been transferred to the artisan's camp, we were still worried: other difficulties and pretexts could crop up any moment.

To free ourselves from these problems, we thought of ways and means to enable my uncles and their families to escape to Aleppo.

The family of one of my uncles had a secret meeting with Maim Bey, who presented to them a Christian coachman from Aleppo, called Nahleh, who used to bring bread and other provisions from Aleppo to Meskeneh. On the way back, he would secretly carry Armenian families to Aleppo with the connivance of Naim Bey.

I cannot remember the sum my uncle paid Naim Bey, nor what he paid the coachman. One evening, a two-horse coach stopped in front of our tent and my uncle and his family stepped in and set off for Aleppo.

A week later, my other uncle, together with his family, managed to travel to Aleppo in a similar manner and with the same coachman. They then settled there.

After entering Aleppo, the first of my uncles was betrayed and even sent to Karlik. After considerable difficulty, they managed to return and settle in Aleppo. This cost them an additional 200 Ottoman gold pounds.

As for us, we, my father's cousins and the Izmirlian brothers felt more confident and free, and remained in Meskeneh for thirteen months, working as carpenters.

RAYS OF HOPE AND NEW VENTURES

Our compatriots, Garabed Papazian and his cousin Dikran Shahinian were with us in Meskeneh. As they had been building contractors in the past, they were entrusted with the erection of a

small hospital in Meskeneh, as well as a number of structures for use by the military.

For these constructions, they searched the area for raw materials and bricks, and began manufacturing bricks.

Those engaged in this work received two kilogrammes of wheat in lieu of wages.

A month later, Garabed Papazian had his son Bedros and me registered as labourers.

Although we were young, our job was to take hods of bricks and mortar to the masons.

We had run out of money. God forbid that we should be sent away. Our whole family would face conditions too dire to describe.

The two kilogrammes of wheat that my father and I each earned covered our needs, and by selling part of the wheat, we were able to buy some meat and dried food.

Although we were hard up, our tent neighbours would say, "What problems do you have? You are rich." Although we spent half-hungry days, they regarded us as rich! My late father would sometimes tell my mother, "Do we look like bankers for us to be considered rich?"

It is true that my uncle's family was well-off, and that they had been lucky not to have been robbed by bandits on the way. Another point was that my uncle and cousins had a large firm in Konya. As the cousins were Protestants, they were able to run the firm and to send my uncle's share of the profits to him.

What we had was limited. We had already paid the "bedel" (the sum paid for exemption from military service). As temporary artisans, we were fairly well-off, but with five in our family, we could not have much in the way of reserves.

We had spent substantial sums as we travelled from camp to camp. What we had, had hardly been enough for us to reach Abou Harar.

The massacres had not yet ceased, but they were now on a smaller scale. They continued to bring in gendarmes and to arrest people. One day they brought a tall man aged 40-45, who was carried like a sack on the back of a donkey. They then took him off the donkey, handling him roughly like a sack. I just about learnt that he was from Constantinople and that his name was Beyazian. Next morning, as we were on our way to work, he was already dead.

Thanks to their skill, my father and his cousins began to repair carriages. They won recognition for their skill as wheelwrights.

Until then, we used to live in tents. The authorities wanted to transfer those who had carriages and the artisans elsewhere. They indicated a new site for the artisans.

In the end, those with carriages and the artisans were ordered to the same camp site, and everybody began pitching his tent wherever he chose on this site.

Our tent was to be pitched right back on the slope of a hill. When we tried to drive in a tent peg, the peg sank into the ground up to its top with the very first blow of the hammer. When we dug round the peg, we found a large stone. When we removed the stone, a subterranean dwelling came to light. There were ten to twelve similar cases on the slope of the hill. The owners of horses used these subterranean dwellings as stables for their horses.

We shifted our tent further up and banked some soil to form a low wall round the tent to protect it from flooding during heavy rains.

We had almost solved the problem of fuel, by collecting the dung left by the camels of the nomadic Anez tribe during their wanderings. We would dry and store the dung, which was as effective as charcoal as a fuel.

ONNIG FINALLY SAVED

Little Onnig had not forgotten us, just as we had not forgotten him. Dikran Shahinian, who was the foreman of the workers was married, but had no children. Whenever my mother saw him, she would say, “Sir, adopt the boy! Take pity on him. You, your mother and your wife will thus save a life.” Dikran Shahinian would remain silent without answering.

Onnig had been collected, along with six or seven hundred Armenian orphans, by an organization headed by a Turkish woman called Edineh Hanim. The organization set up large tents, where the half-hungry children were sheltered.

One day, as my mother and I were on our way to the Euphrates to fetch water, we met Dikran Shahinian. We had some family

relationship with him. Mother again raised the subject of the adoption of Onnig, saying, “I shall bring along this lad, but if you refuse to take him, I might as well spare him the unpleasantness. It is a pity for him to feel rejected!” On hearing my mother’s words, Dikran could not refuse her request.

He said, “Very well then, If Hagop (i.e. I), were to see the lad, let him fetch him.”

Dikran had secured a mud-brick house in the village. The place, where the orphans were kept, was some distance from where we stayed. It was about half an hour’s walk from us, and the path leading to it was deserted.

One day, we noticed that the only pot we had for cooking, which we kept under the rear flap of our tent, had been stolen. When my father found this out, he wondered whether the thief had gone to the camp with the intention of selling the pot. Hours went by and my father failed to return. The way to the camp was dangerous.

We began to worry. We decided that I should go to look for my father. Our neighbours, the Bedros family, had a donkey. I took the donkey and rode on it to the camp from which the deportees would be sent away. After a long search, and having failed to find my father, I turned back. On the way back, I came across the site, where Edineh Hanim had collected the orphans. It was, however, a difficult task to find Onnig in such a large crowd of orphans. As I was looking around, I suddenly felt someone hold my hand. It was Onnig himself! I said, “Come Onnig, let me take you to our home. We shall ride on the donkey on our way.” Even as I uttered these words, Onnig clung on to me, and we rode to our tent.

Meanwhile, my father had also returned. The gendarmes had arrested him, and began to drive him, along with hundreds of others to Der Zor.

My father approached the gendarme, who was following the caravan and said, “I am one of the artisans from the artisans’ camp. If you let me go, I shall satisfy you,” whereupon, he produced a medjidieh, and slipped it into the hand of the gendarme.

The gendarme let my father go, saying, “Be off as fast as you can.” The thief may have upset us by stealing the pot, but, on the other hand, the loss of the pot led to the rescue of Onnig.

My mother immediately took Onnig to the house of Dikran Shahinian. Before admitting Onnig into their house, the Shahinians wanted to replace his dirty shirt, but Onnig did not let them throw it away. He clung to it and cried. Once inside, the Shahinians washed him and gave him some food, but Onnig was recalcitrant, insatiable and disobedient. After eating, he went to the dustbin to collect the left-overs, which he kept for eating later.

The poor boy had lived for years, on what he could find in garbage heaps. He had survived on discarded bones and other filth, which he would collect and keep for his next meal. It took the Shahinians a month to train him to get rid of such habits.

After the 1918 armistice, when this abnormal state of affairs ended, the Shahinians went to Aleppo, and from Aleppo to Konya. When Kemal Attaturk took over, the Shahinians had to leave Konya and go to Rumania. After Rumania, they settled in Beirut. Onnig is now married and has children.

THE FATE OF THE HAPLESS ORPHANS

A month and a half after Onnig was rescued, those owning carriages and the coachmen were ordered to be ready to go to Meskeneh on a certain day to transport the 647 orphans assembled there to Der Zor. On that ill-fated day, the coachmen harnessed their horses, and guided by gendarmes, proceeded to the tents where the orphans lived. They were told that the orphans would be cared for in stone-built houses, and the coaches set off towards Dipsi, Abou Harar, Hamam, Rakka, Tabra and Der Zor.

On the way they also collected more surviving orphans, loading them into the crowded carriages. This order had been issued by the monster Hakki Bey.

On arrival in Abou Harar, they stopped the carriages with the orphans, to collect the surviving orphans and to place them in the overfull carriages. Muhammed Rahmeddin was there on his horse to supervise the proceedings. Meanwhile, the horse on which Muhammed Rahmeddin was riding defecated, and some of the orphans, collected from Abou Harar, rushed to collect grains of barley in the dung. The horse was suddenly frightened and reared up on its hind legs, thinking it was in danger. The beast in human form, Muhammed Rahmeddin, flew into a rage and drove his horse into the crowd of emaciated orphans, for them to be crushed under the horse's hooves, lashing out at these innocent children with his whip at the same time.

Many of the orphans were trampled upon at the same time, and lay on the ground in a disemboweled state, with shattered skulls and fractured legs: some of them were killed instantly, while others died in agony. The wounded were left behind, while those still standing were placed in the carriages, which then set off for Hamam.

The poor innocent scraggy orphans, who were half dead and languishing, or too badly wounded to move, lay on the ground, trampled under the hooves of Muhammed Rahmaddin's horse. While still alive, they were devoured by birds of prey during the daytime and by jackals at night. This is testified by the fellaheen in the surrounding desert.

They had collected 647 orphans from Meskeneh, the oldest of whom was 10-12 years old. They collected 280 from Hamam and Dipsi and another 340 on the way from Hamam to Rakka and Der Zor. Another 2500 orphans from Der Zor were added to the above 1267, whom the blood-thirsty executioner Zeki Bey delivered to Abdulla Pasha, who was the deportation official, and had them sent to the desert of Maarat near Der Zor. They were transported there in four groups. After the last trip, the Armenian coachmen were also left there. They unharnessed the horses and set fire to everything and everybody after dousing them with petrol. Not one of the coachmen came back alive. I can remember the names of some of the coachmen, such as Hagop Bastermadjian from Konya, Artos and Karnig from Karaman, Soghanemessian, the son of Der Nercessian from Ereyli, the coachmen working for the Asdourians from Akshehir, etc.

The horses were sold in Der Zor, with the proceeds going to Zeki Bey.

WIDESPREAD DEATH

This is how these children, who promised a bright and hopeful future for our tormented and ill-fated nation, perished. Guided by some unknown and unfashionable power, Onnig was the only orphan to survive death by fire and sword.

As already stated, the majority of the Armenians, who travelled to exile along the Euphrates on the road to Baghdad came from Western Anatolia, the region of Constantinople, Nicodemia, Bardizag, Adapazar, Aslanbeg, Ovadjik, Gueyveh, Rodosto, Broussa, Sirihissar, Eskishehir, Afion Karahissar, Konya, Kesaria, Nigdeh, Terkidagh and Malgara. There were also those from Cilicia (Marash, Tarsus, Mersin, Adana and Sis).

Those who were more or less well-off tried, at all costs, to gain time, hoping that this situation would end, and convinced that the coming days promised unexpected surprises. However, no one could tell when these developments would occur.

We heard of the massacres in Ras-ul-Ayun from the fellaheen during our stay in the Messoudieh camp.

Hundreds of families from Ras-ul- Ayoun, Hasicheh, Sheddadieh along the Euphrates were forced into boats, supposedly to cross the river at Beredjik and Djamblous and drowned when the boats were deliberately sunk. The news coming from Der Zor and Sheddadieh through youths and youngsters, who had managed to escape, grew worse every day. They would tell us, “Do not go there! Things are very bad. It is a place of death and massacres.” The words “very bad” struck us with terror, as it meant certain death. “Do not go there” was easier said than done. How could we avoid going there? Who would support us and how could we resist?

The Armenian deportees had to obey orders and continue moving to an unknown destination.

On a late morning, a caravan of deportees arrived in Meskeneh. It was close to midday, when a human flock arrived with young and old, exhausted, oppressed by the scorching sun and too weak to walk. Covered in dust, they were made to stop at the camp for sending the deportees away.

The poor people were in despair, hungry and thirsty. Some ran

to the Euphrates to drink water, while others spent the little money they had to buy some food. Still others, who had scarcely managed to drag themselves up to here, stood motionless as if petrified.

We saw a clergyman with a black cassock, a long white beard and an aquiline look brought to the artisans’ camp by the chief guard, after staying with his flock for two and a half hours. They found a vacant site two to three metres from our tent, pitched a tent and placed him there.

It was rumoured that the clergyman was the Archbishop Stepanos and Prelate of Nicodemia (Izmit), who had been the victim of a misunderstanding by being sent up to here.

We later realized that his presence here was not a misunderstanding, but that, true to his calling, he had refused to be separated from the members of his flock and had accompanied them. He had withstood the sight of his unfortunate people being tormented, and was prepared to let his own innocent blood to be mixed with the blood of his flock which was shed during the massacres. However, he was separated from his people and installed in Meskeneh on orders from Djemal Pasha. After a few weeks with us, he was sent to Jerusalem. After the armistice he was appointed Prelate in Bulgaria.

MASTER BUILDER HAGOP FROM IZMIT

A master builder called, Hagop, was entrusted with the responsibility of some construction work. There was a wall running in a certain direction, which existed from Roman times. Orders were given to build a parallel wall, and to join the two walls with a vault. As a master builder, this braggart, made the necessary preparations and we began work. We cast mud-bricks and began to use them to build the new wall next to the existing stone wall. Our mud-bricks consisted of straw-reinforced earth. When the new wall reached the height of the existing wall, we built wooden formwork, and began covering it with light-weight soil. As soon as the vault was ready, orders were issued by the government, that all those who had horses could use the vaulted space as stables. Meanwhile, Ahmed Effendi, an army captain from Constantinople, had a black

thorough-bred mare, for which he chose a corner of the vaulted space as its stable.

Water and a roller were used to compact the soil forming the roof. All of a sudden, there was a noise like thunder, and a cloud of dust covered the sky. We ran to the site to see what had happened. The mud-brick had been unable to withstand the thrust from the roof, which collapsed. We could only see the heads of the poor horses. The weight of the soil from the roof pressed hard on them. Everyone rushed to rescue his horse. Only three or four horses had died of strangulation. Ahmed Effendi's mare had suffered fractures in both hind legs. This thorough-bred mare had to be put down by shooting.

Kalfa Hagop was punished with a few lashes with an ox-sinew whip to atone for his incompetence. We then spent a whole year on the construction of military barracks. Our wages consisted of two kilogrammes of wheat daily.

Although we lived in the artisans' camp, our minds were never at peace, and we never felt safe from Turkish acts of vandalism.

During our time in Meskeneh, we spent days of mourning and tears, as we witnessed the masses of humanity in the opposite camp being whipped and sent to Der Zor.

One day, as I left the camp and proceeded along the slope of the hill, I noticed movements in a hollow dug in the ground. When I approached, I noticed four youngsters, about as tall as me, who were emaciated and hardly able to move. Two of them were motionless and scarcely breathing.

When I drew nearer, I asked them where they came from. One of them was from Solez and the other from Biledjik.

My feelings could not stand the sight of these youngsters so close to the door of death. I immediately went back to our tent and urged my mother to prepare some of our soup with cracked wheat, and began crying. I tearfully spoke to her about the indescribable condition of these poor helpless youngsters.

My mother immediately prepared the soup and both of us took it to the youngsters. We filled the small pots two of them held. The other two, who could not move, had little hope of surviving. My mother fed these two, and we returned to our tent with moral satisfaction.

I could not sleep that night. It was the same with my mother. When we got up in the morning, my mother understood why I was crying. I again asked my mother to prepare some soup.

My mother did not object, and we took the soup to them, but, alas, two of them had already died. Thousands of Armenian youngsters had also dug small hollows in the hillside with their emaciated fingers, and there to waste away in hunger and thirst.

If it were at all possible to collect all the skeletons and skulls of the Armenians who were martyred in Bab, Meskeneh and on the road to Der Zor, and then to stack them up to the height of the Sphinx, they would form hundreds of piles. These piles would constitute a symbol of twentieth century of Turco-German cooperation.

After returning to Meskeneh from Abou Harar as artisans, we stayed thirteen months there, where we saw caravans of deportees on transit in Meskeneh on their way to Der Zor. I wonder whether what we saw there was the hard reality or just a dream. I cannot be sure whether we are alive or dead. It is impossible to reconcile the heart-rending scenes that parade before my eyes, and the behaviour of men towards their fellow-men, with our concept of humanity.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE TURKISH "LIGHTNING" CORPS

When the Allies reinforced their troops on the Iraqi front, the Germans and Turks were forced to react by sending their own forces in order to defend their positions there. Where could these forces be accommodated? There were neither camps nor houses.

At this stage, the massacres diminished.

One day, Turkish soldiers began to wander between the Armenian deportee camps. They begged bread, while some of them had come to buy bread.

We understood that these soldiers belonged to the so-called "Lightning Corps", who had come here on their way to the Baghdad front. Where were the Ittihadists sending these gallant hungry soldiers? Whose whim was it to send these men to be sacrificed? It was the likes of the traitors Enver, Talaat, Djemal, Djavid, Said Halim, Sheik-ul-

Islam Ibrahim and similar criminals, gangsters, who were like wine which had degenerated to vinegar. As a result of their fanaticism, they were sending these Turkish soldiers to be sacrificed and butchered.

Even as soldiers, the Turks were hungry and reduced to become beggars and thieves, while the Germans were well-fed, and adequately supplied with their tea, coffee and all kinds of food.

GLIMMERS OF HOPE

After working for thirteen months in Meskeneh as artisans, some families in our camp were ordered to report to army captain Ahmed Bey.

My father, his three cousins and master builder Hagop from Izmit and Movses and Armenag, the blacksmiths from Aintab, together presented themselves to Ahmed Effendi.

Ahmed Bey had ordered that these artisans be sent to Djarablous (Garguemish) to start building a factory, which was to be established there. He ordered these artisans to be ready to go there within two days in horse-drawn carriages driven by Armenian coachmen.

There was little in the way of preparation for an exiled tent-dwelling family. They could be ready to move with a moment's notice.

This good news gave us unbounded joy.

The lucky day finally came, and the horse-drawn carriages lined up on the edge of the road. We took our places, along with our belongings in the designated carriages, and impatiently waited for the kaimakam's order to start our journey to Djarablous.

Our principle and our desire not to move on and to stay away from the carnage of Der Zor had now become a concrete reality.

The order finally came, and we were given papers, stating our names, ages, the places we came from and our professions. The carriages started moving, but we could not believe our luck, and kept asking ourselves, "Is this a dream or a hallucination?"

We were travelling in open carriages, with the sun beating down on us. Such was our joy, that we could have tolerated not just this discomfort, but also being scorched by the sun. Our hearts beat faster in anticipation.

Tears came to our eyes, as we dreamt of the future.

We finally arrived in Djarablous. It was such a joy and pleasure to see green trees and verdure, to hear the crowing of cocks and the cackling of hens, or to hear the puffing of trains. Djarablous is a village, but such was our joy and happiness, that we felt that we had reached the gates of Heaven, that we had moved from darkness into light and that we had risen from our graves. How else could we describe our feelings?

The residents of this quarter of Djarablous were surprised at the favour shown to us and asked, "Have you become Turks to deserve such an honour?"

Our answer would be, "Absolutely No! We have not sunk so low. They are treating us well solely for their own needs."

We had been deprived of a home with four walls for three years. That day, my late mother knelt with tearful eyes and thanked God that all the members of our family now had a roof on their heads.

The following day, my father, his three cousins and the other artisans, who had come with us, gathered together to see Ihsan Bey, the official in charge of the constructions.

Ihsan Bey was an army captain, who was fat, with a yellow beard and green eyes. He was a two-legged cur from Roumeli, and a "donmeh" i.e. a Jew, who had converted to Islam.

When we presented ourselves to him, he had a quick glance at us and then turned to my father to say, "You have come to the wrong place." He turned pale and repeated the same words with tremulous lips. He made my father to stand aside and added, "You should go to Der Zor."

My father answered, "I am Armen Seropian, whose name is on the list of artisans. How could I come from Meskeneh to Djarablous on my own initiative? It is beyond my ability to do such a thing. We have not come here on our own volition. They brought us here in response to your request. We cannot afford to hire a carriage."

Our joy was short-lived, and black clouds began to darken our lives, because of the malice of this scoundrel Ihsan Bey.

This fanatical Ittihadist began to speak openly by saying, "You are among those to be massacred."

My father was conspicuous by his handsome physical

appearance and his bearing. We cannot understand how the matter ended with a bribe of only three Ottoman gold pounds, and my father started work, together with his colleagues in constructions for the government.

As already mentioned, my father had run out of money. When the problem of paying a three pound bribe cropped up, my father's cousins helped to save him at this moment, when he faced a life and death crisis, with the three pounds they lent him. We gratefully accepted this offer, but repaid our debt within a short time.

We were glad that my father worked for the military, as this gave us security. Here also, those, engaged in constructions for the army, were daily given two loaves of white bread prepared from millet (similar to the millet fed to pigeons), about the size of two hands. In the evenings, we were offered turnip soup.

We would divide the two loaves into five portions, with which we had to be content, as we had no other means to earn money. We were not free to work wherever we wanted, and there was no paid work in Djarablous anyway. Our fate depended on the good will of the Turkish government.

A week after we arrived in Djarablous, 50-60 additional Armenian families were brought here as artisans and labourers. The newcomers were from Rakka, Abou Harar and Meskeneh, and they were accompanied by their families.

The site of the factory had been selected by master builder Hagop from Izmit, and the preliminary work had already been completed before the arrival of the newcomers. With this reinforcement of the work-force, the foundations were laid that much faster.

Master builder Hagop was the foreman of the masons and was also in charge of the general construction. My father and his cousins were responsible for the carpentry work.

THE PRODUCTION OF SPINNING WHEELS AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE BUILDING

A spinning wheel for wool, as well as a carding comb, were sent from Aleppo, as models for us to reproduce, and, in the first

instance, 25 of each were ordered. Our people produced one as a sample, and tested it. It functioned very successfully, and when they saw the result, they ordered 100 spinning wheels, instead of the 25 originally envisaged. Our people progressively delivered the spinning wheels and the combs before the specified deadlines.

Meanwhile, the walls of the factory were being built. As the available beams were not long enough to span from wall to wall, six intermediate columns on brickwork bases were erected. Beams were placed, spanning from column to column. These beams supported cross-beams, one end of which rested on these beams, with the other end, supported on the walls. They then covered the cross beams with earth to complete the roof. My father and his cousins did the required carpentry for the ceiling and the roof. I helped by supplying them with nails and other items. Many worked standing on ladders, supported by the walls, while others placed earth on the roof.

I saw how one of the brickwork column bases gave way. The result was the progressive collapse of the columns, like a house of cards. As a result of the collapse, I was the only one to be injured by falling beam, which hit my head. I was spared from further injury, as I was standing in the triangular space created by the falling beams, the upper ends of which leant on the walls, with the lower ends resting on the ground. Our people and I were saved, thanks to this triangular free space.

The others emerged from the collapsed building and called me. Although I heard their voices, I could not answer them. I finally managed to stand up. There was a side door, which I approached, and shouted with a broken voice. When they heard me, they came and pulled me out of the wreckage. The men, who were placing earth on the roof came down unharmed.

I was the only person to suffer injury. The falling beam had left a gash on my head. The wound was washed and bandaged by my mother. Within a week, the gash had cleared.

We restarted work, but this time we used hewn stone for the column bases. We soon completed the factory, which was now ready to function. About 150-200 girls and women carded the wool, spun and hand-knitted the stockings for the soldiers. Every woman received two loaves of millet bread.

When cutting this bread, strands like a spider's web would hang from the cut surfaces, but we had no choice, but to eat the bread. There was nothing else to eat. It was clear that the bread and food provided to the soldiers in the larger towns was of reasonable quality, but in the smaller towns and villages, the quality grew progressively worse.

The responsibility for running the factory properly was carried by a member of the military. This person was Ali Bey from Constantinople, who was 55-60 years old and was an army reservist. He had four soldiers to assist him.

By his behavior and character, Ali Bey proved to be a decent and honourable man. After taking on the responsibility for the factory, he dismissed three of the four soldiers, and sent them back to their units.

He replaced them with the two Armenian brothers, Megerditch and Nazaret Baltayan, who were proficient in reading and writing in Turkish. He assigned the responsibility for running the factory to Nazaret, the younger brother, who was more skillful, active and educated. We were related to the Baltayan brothers. They came from our region, and we were well acquainted. Day by day, Nazaret organized the running of the factory. The remaining soldier was Fettah Chavoush (i.e. Sergeant Fettah). He was 40-42 years old, and very particular about behaving properly to women.

A gap had been left by the dismissal of the three soldiers, who had to be replaced by persons, whose duties would bring them in close contact with the working women.

Segeant Fettah asked Nazaret to recommend a youth to take up this duty, and who would not molest women.

Nazaret mentioned my name to Sergeant Fettah, and recommended me as an honourable and capable person. Having obtained Fettah's consent, Nazaret came to our house and informed my parents and me accordingly, asking me to take up my new duties the very same day. My joy knew no bounds. I would be given whatever was given to a soldier. I would be entitled to bread and cress.

The following day, after being briefed on my duties, I started work with the carders and spinners, weighing the balls of wool handed to the carders, re-weighing the carded wool passed on to the spinners and weighing the hanks distributed to the women

who knitted the stockings. These were my orders. In the evenings, I would collect Ali Bey's food from the soldiers' mess near Djarablous station and deliver it to him.

Sergeant Fettah was the inspector of the wool and hanks, who checked these departments four or five times, and, on ascertaining that I was doing my job properly, stopped checking the work in the factory. I had won the full confidence of Ali Bey. He would sometimes present me to his military visitors, saying, "This lad is doing the work of three soldiers. He is skilfully organizing the output of so many female workers."

ALI BEY'S SURPRISE AND WORDS OF APPRECIATION

My shoes were worn out. I did not have enough money to buy new or second-hand shoes. There were no shoe shops in the village. One day, my toes protruded from my shoes, when the tip of one of my shoes struck a stone.

My father fashioned soles out of plane tree wood, while my mother used knitted wool for the upper part of the shoes. I went to work, wearing these shoes.

At noon, Ahmed Effendi came on a visit to his friend, Army Captain Ali Bey. Ahmed Effendi had the habit of meeting Ali Bey to chat for hours about the day's political issues.

As soon as I heard "Agop,Agop!" I ran to Ali Bey.

"My lad, "he said "fill this jug with fresh water, and bring us two glasses." I immediately took the jug from the table, filled it with water, washed the glasses and presented them to both of them.

I noticed Ali Bey's gaze focused on my shoes. When I took the glass from Ahmed Effendi, Ali Bey turned to the latter and said, "Just have a look at the shoes he is wearing. Who made these shoes?"

"Sir," I said, "my father made the soles, and my mother the upper part."

Ali Bey remarked, "Ahmed Effendi, this nation will never die! It will not die! Just think: if we were in their position, believe me, we would not have endured more than three months. They can create,

even when isolated on a mountain-top. I congratulate this nation."

Army Captain Ahmed Effendi, who was younger, answered Ali Bey with the following words:-

"I second your statement. Our Turkish women will require many years before they can equal the Armenian women. Our women are lazy and dirty. I have seen Armenian family women, who, due to the present circumstances, have become servants in Turkish families. During their service in Turkish homes, these Armenian housewives earned respect for their skill as cooks and especially for their cleanliness. We are a long way behind them, when it comes to hospitality, manners, posture and the sense of honour. There is not a single Armenian woman, who cannot embroider. We are a lazy lot, Ali Bey!"

I spent about 14 months, working successfully in this capacity under satisfactory conditions.

One day, a major, called Ata Bey, and his entourage came to inspect the factory and its products. They found everything very good and satisfactory, and expressed their appreciation in extravagant terms. This conversation brought a smile on the wrinkled face of Ali Bey.

At that moment, Ata Bey approached the place where the wool was stored. He glanced inside and saw me weighing the wool, whose weight I recorded before distributing it to the women. Ata Bey pointed his finger at me and asked, "Who is this lad, and where does he come from?"

Ali Bey began speaking about me, stating that I was doing the work of three soldiers, and that I was the son of one of the women working there. Ata Bey's expression changed, his face turned sour and he said:-

"Don't let me see this boy working here any longer. Tomorrow, he must go. He is much too young. Such things are prohibited in the army."

Ali Bey was aggrieved and called me in the evening to say:-

Major Ata Bey, who came this morning, told me that it is against army regulations to employ persons below military age to perform the tasks of soldiers. It hurts me greatly that I have to obey the orders of my superiors. Therefore, starting from tomorrow, do not report for work."

"Very well, Sir," I said, "if these are your orders, what else can I do? May God grant you a long life!" I then kissed his hand. Ali Bey's eyes became moist, when he saw my reaction and heard my words.

Next day, I did not report for work. However, for someone accustomed to work, idleness was tantamount to punishment.

During the week, my father worked as a carpenter, while I had nothing to do.

On Sunday, my father and I decided to go down to Djarablous. It took us half an hour to get there on foot. Our intention was to get acquainted with Djarablous, and to buy two hens.

In Djarablous, my father became acquainted with the village headman, called Hadji Ibrahim. Hadji Ibrahim asked what my father's profession was.

My father answered, "I am a carpenter."

Hadji Ibrahim said, "I have a few things that require repairing: can you help?"

My father said, "Let me first see what is involved." We entered Hadji Ibrahim's house. Five or six dogs surrounded us and began barking, until their barking was stopped.

We saw an ancient ramshackle sideboard, in such a state, that it would go to pieces if touched.

"Repair this sideboard," said Hadji Ibrahim, "and come again next Sunday, as I have some other jobs for you."

My father said, "Very well! But I shall need some timber: can you provide me with the necessary material?"

"Yes!" said Hadji Ibrahim the sheikh, who was a villager, and showed us pieces of wood in various shapes and sizes. He added, "These pieces of wood drifted onto the banks of the Euphrates during the construction of the Djarablous bridge.

My father and I began work to strengthen the sideboard, while a large pot of rice soup was being prepared. When we finished our work, Hadji Ibrahim's wife Aysheh brought a large saucepan containing the rice soup and some barley bread. Not having tasted rice soup for many years, we soon emptied our plates. We were never to taste the excellent smell of the oil that had been added to the soup.

During the next 10-12 Sundays, I would accompany my father to the sheikh's house to help him in his work, where we would enjoy

the soup prepared by Aysheh to our hearts' content. Aysheh did not cover her face: she would only cover her hair, and had a row of gold ornaments on her bosom.

I was worried about my mother, my sister and my little brother. While my father and I were having our fill of rice soup, I felt uncomfortable in the knowledge that my mother, sister and brother could not also enjoy Aysheh's rice soup.

I contemplated asking Aysheh to send a plate of rice soup to my loved ones, but did not have the courage to make such a request to her. I was in two minds: should I ask her, or should I not? Finally, I plucked up enough courage to tell Aysheh, "Can you give me a plate of rice soup for me to take to my mother?" blushing as I uttered these words.

Aysheh smiled, brought a large plate and said, "Help yourself, and take as much as you like." My joy was boundless. I filled the plate with the contents of the pot and added a large piece of meat containing fat. I then took the plate to a corner, and covered it with a handkerchief.

We bought two hens and placed them in a hen-house we built next to our house. The hens would wander in the dirt and lay their eggs. Although our hens would lay eggs regularly, we would find 12-16 eggs daily instead of the expected two eggs. After a day or two, I was curious to find an explanation.

I noticed that the military hospital behind our house had several hundred hens, and that some of these hens would come to our hen-house to lay their eggs.

I immediately called on Ali Bey to report the situation with the eggs. Ali Bey smiled and pinched my ear, saying, "My lad, this is your good luck. You are not the one to take these hens and to confine them in your hen-house: they come to your hen-house of their own accord, so do not say anything to anybody. If anyone questions you, just say you have no idea." With these words, he patted my back.

ALI BEY WAS A SIMPLE MAN WITH A FLAWLESS CHARACTER

Ali Bey was a simple and kind man with a decent character. He called me one day and said, "Go to the women's workplace. There is an old one-eyed woman in a corner on right-hand side of the entrance door. Ask the woman to come here, as I would like to have a word with her".

I immediately went to the workplace, where I was known to everybody. I told the one-eyed woman that Ali Bey wanted to see her. The woman was carding wool. As she got up with a blushing face, she shook her apron, and we went together. I informed Ali Bey that the woman had arrived.

Ali Bey said, "Bring her in, close the door and wait outside."

As soon as the woman stepped in, Ali Bey shouted at her, and used some words, which, young as I was, I could not understand.

"Vulgar woman!" he shouted, "How dare you behave immorally in this place, where I am responsible, you dirty prostitute? Are you not ashamed to lead our young men astray at your advanced age? You have acted as a go-between for a certain woman and a certain young man."

I heard slapping several times.

Ali Bey opened the door, and said with an agitated voice, "Go to the market place, find the cobbler who works there and get him to come here immediately.

I informed the man, who accompanied me to Ali Bey. Ali Bey admitted him into his room, while I waited outside. Ali Bey was in such a nervous state, that his lips trembled. Ali Bey slapped the cobbler on both cheeks, spat on him and made him confess that he had committed adultery with a woman from Erzerum, after being introduced to each other by the one-eyed woman. "I shall have both of you sent to Der Zor." said Ali Bey, and took them to the gendarmerie, where he had a writ prepared for their dispatch to Der Zor.

Meanwhile, the cobbler's father, mother and brothers appealed to and begged Ali Bey not to send their son to Der Zor. Ali Bey's conscience did not allow him to carry through his threat. On being assured by the cobbler's parents that their son would not repeat what he had done, Ali Bey relented and tore the writ.

Next day, he had the woman who had erred brought to him and told her, "Other women and girls threw themselves into the Euphrates to save their honour, while you behaved immorally. Shame on you!"

He sacked the one-eyed woman, saying, "With your nasty character, you can lead others astray. I do not want immoral persons like you in this place, where I am responsible."

THE GERMAN SOLDIER OF HIGH RANK

One day, a high-ranking German soldier pushed the door, entered our house and started speaking in German. He then showed us a bottle he was holding. We smelt the bottle and realized that it contained petrol. We assumed that he wanted to sell it to us.

As there was no fuel, we had to spend the moonless evenings in darkness. On moonlit evenings, however, my mother and sister would take advantage of the light to knit stockings for the army.

We were pleased when the soldier brought us the petrol. The soldier was happy to receive four eggs in exchange for the bottle of petrol before he left.

It then became routine for the German soldier to visit us every two or three days to obtain eggs from us in return for a bottleful of petrol.

My father had found a wine bottle which he adapted to serve us as a lamp, which enabled my mother and sister to knit stockings for the gallant Turkish army.

DJARABLOUS OR GARGUEMISH

Djarablous is a small village, which had a 50-60 metre long market place. After the arrival of the French, it developed into a small town, thanks to the Armenians who came from the region of Beredjik and sold all sorts of vegetables, melons, water melons, cucumbers and grew various kinds of fruit, thus contributing to the development of the local population.

There was a spring with abundant water in the centre of

the village. Before 1915, there was a man, called Nebikli, who exploited the village.

Djarablous is situated ten minutes' walk from the Euphrates. The Germans built an iron bridge across the Euphrates to connect Djarablous with the village of Zor Maghara on the opposite bank of the river.

When the Turks withdrew in 1918, they blew up this bridge. Later, the French re-built the bridge, and restored it to Turkish control.

The bridge carries a railway line. The bridge consists of ten spans, with each span long enough to carry ten railway trucks. This means that the bridge as a whole can accommodate 100 railway trucks.

The other side of the railway line lies in Turkish territory, while on one bank of the river and close to the bridge there are ancient ruins, reputedly, the capital of the Hittites. The British carried out excavations before 1914, from which they took away many antiquities.

There were many statues of black stone, as well as two bulls, also carved from black stone. There are mosaic-covered steps leading to clearly visible low-relief figures of helmeted soldiers, and two-wheeled chariots with soldiers armed with spears. This ancient site is connected to the railway line. The Turks are responsible for the preservation and protection of these antiquities.

UNEMPLOYMENT IS STIFLING AND LIKE DEATH

Unemployment stifles me. There was a Jewish family in Djarablous. They lived on the first floor, while the ground floor served as a shop.

One day, I went near the shop belonging to this Jewish family, and began looking at their wares. These Jews had a son called Azrah, who, on seeing me, said, "Aren't you the person who worked for Ali Bey, who distributed work for the women? Why have you now stopped working?" I told him what had happened. After a while he said, "Wait here, I shall soon be back." After talking with his father, who was in the shop, he came back and said:-

"If I give you 20-25 different articles, are you willing to go to a certain spot in the market, and sell these articles?"

"Why not?" I said, "I shall do so most willingly, and be grateful to you." He then went in and returned with a tray with a wooden edge with a height of four fingers. He placed the articles to be sold on the tray, and specified the price of each item. I then went to the spot he had indicated. Before long, I sold a cigarette lighter.

There was not much variety in my wares, and I had little that was in demand. I continued this job for 10-15 days, but had to give up in despair.

One day, we could hear a crier going round in Djablous. His message was that all males should assemble in the field next to the factory.

Soon, there were rumours, which were close to reality. The rumours could be summarized with the words, "There will be a massacre: we shall be sent to Der Zor." The order for all men to gather together in a field was certainly a bad omen.

An hour later, all the men gathered together, and were soon surrounded by gendarmes. They were ordered to march four abreast.

The wives and children of these men wailed in grief. This gathering took place in the evening, as it was gradually getting dark. The women and children went back home. Nobody knew where the men were being taken.

At about the same hour the following day, the men were slowly coming back.

We do not know why the men were sent off and then allowed to return. We did, however, learn that the men had been gathered in the same manner everywhere, in order to give a coup de grace to the remaining Armenians. It was said that an Austrian general in Aleppo had intervened to frustrate this plan.

I cannot be sure how far this allegation corresponds to the truth.

MY UNEXPECTED ESCAPE TO ALEPPO

My escape was quite unexpected. As I have already said, I felt stifled. My father worked for the army, while my mother and sister knitted for the army. The village was extremely poor. Even if you had money, there were no grocers from whom to buy provisions.

Orders were given to transfer the woolen stockings produced in Ali Bey's factory to Aleppo. Nazaret Baltayan, who was trusted by Ali Bey, presented my father's cousin, Garabed Izmirlian to Ali Bey.

We took bales containing the knitted stockings to the railway station. There were enough bales to fill three railway trucks. Nazaret, Garabed and my father jointly decided to go to Aleppo one by one. I was to be the first to escape.

Following the decision and the consent of my parents, I immediately got ready and went to the station. Two of the trucks had already been coupled to the train, but the third truck had not yet been coupled.

My cousin showed me the truck in which I was to hide. I got into the truck after entering the station through the back door. My cousin then slowly closed the truck door, which he then sealed with the seal he held, and gave me the following advice:- "If you hear footsteps, or people talking, hide behind the bales until the train starts moving."

As the train started moving, I lay on the bales and fell asleep. The train moved very slowly, because they were using wood as a fuel in the locomotive fire-box.

Towards noon the following day, we arrived in Aleppo. Waiting inside the sealed truck with a throbbing heart, I strained my ears to hear the voice of my cousin, who would give me new instructions. We had to wait until the soldiers and the railway personnel had left.

I suddenly heard my cousin calling, "Hagop, Hagop!" and immediately responded. My cousin said, "I shall open the rear door of the truck. You shall then get out very quickly, and leave the station through the entrance, pretending that you do not recognize me. I shall then take you to your aunt's house".

I jumped down, crept under the truck and left the station via its entrance. Before long, my cousin turned up and led me to my Uncle Setrag Afarian's shop which was situated on Bab el Faradji Square. The shop sold brandy and other alcoholic drinks.

After waiting there for about an hour, Setrag Afarian's son, who was two years older than me, appeared. He treated me with great affection. I looked very shabby and had only two piastres in my pocket.

We then went to their house. My aunt wanted to know more about myself. In the evening, we dined. They laid a mattress on

the floor and a light cover for me to use as a bed. As I laid down to sleep, I kept thinking about my father, mother, sister and brother.

I got up early the following morning, washed and had breakfast with them.

I accompanied my uncle to his shop and sat there for a while. There was a lot of movement in the market, with large crowds and soldiers and civilians rubbing shoulders.

After a while, I asked my uncle whether there was a suitable job I could do to help him.

"You are much too young." he said, "Whatever I let you sell will be grabbed from your hands, as people are very hungry. There is little you can do for me."

These words were very discouraging, but I had to keep my mouth shut.

As I kept thinking, I caught fever. First, I suffered a fit of trembling, which was followed by my temperature rising to 40-41 degrees. I felt delirious. I was in an intolerable condition, and regretted having come to Aleppo. I longed for my mother's care. Deprived of parental warmth, I would cover my head with my bed-cover and weep silently, as my thoughts turned to Meskeneh, Abou Harar and the situation of the youths and children, who had lost their fathers and mothers.

There were days when I was feverish and days when I felt better. As a result of the fever, unbearably painful sores appeared on the edges of my lips.

A week later, my uncle said, "Hagop, my lad, I have an acquaintance, who repairs carriages. I spoke to him about you, so that you may start work with him tomorrow."

I remained silent, as I had no other choice. The following morning, I went to the craftsman Tavit, my uncle's acquaintance. Tavit gave me a 5 cm. thick board on which a pattern had been drawn.

Tavit said, "The pattern represents parts of a wheel: you should cut these parts accurately, without deviating from the pattern."

I secured the board on the workbench, and began cutting. The four or five pieces were in the form of an arc. Fitted end to end, they would form a circle. There was a hub at the centre. A carriage wheel would be built by fitting wooden spokes between the hub

and the periphery. I worked non-stop for a week and was paid one medjidieh (i.e. 20 piastres). In the evening, my uncle asked me how much I had earned, and I said what Tavit had paid me.

Although I was not satisfied, I had no other choice, as I lacked the capital to buy wares I could sell. I kept repeating to myself my uncle's words:- "What you seek to sell will be stolen and wrested from your hands."

I worked for six weeks with Tavit, earning six medjidiehs. It was intolerable working for this miser, who paid so little.

During the sixth week, while I was working, lost in thought, I heard a voice which said, "Hagop!" It was the voice of my cousin Garabed, who said:- "I have again been assigned the dispatch of goods. I have brought my family, your mother, your sister and brother and the members of two other families, by getting them to sit on the goods. This evening, I shall get them out of the trucks. Do not report for work today, so that we may go to the station. As soon as they get out of the truck, you will take your mother, sister and brother to your aunt's house.

After making the necessary preparations, my cousin and I went to the station. He opened the sealed door of the truck, and all those inside emerged. We dispersed in groups, and I took the members of my family to my aunt's house, where I had been staying since my arrival in Aleppo.

According to a proverb, "Mountains can support other mountains, but one family cannot support another family". We might stay as guests in my aunt's house for one, two or even three days, but after that, we should rent a house of our own, in order not to disturb their comfort, or abuse their hospitality.

We rented a room in the Sokak Arabayin Quarter, for which the weekly rent was 4 medjidiehs, I paid this rent out of the 6 medjidiehs I had saved. I was left with 2 medjidiehs. My mother also had 2 medjidiehs. With this money, we bought some lentils, bread, etc., leaving us penniless. What could we do to survive?

I continued working for Tavit, the carriage repairer, but what I was paid was inadequate, and almost nothing, compared to our needs. In Djarablous, my father's daily wage consisted of two loaves of millet bread. Meanwhile, I, the eldest son, racked my

brains, on how to fulfil my responsibilities towards my mother, sister and brother to enable them to survive. I felt that my hands were tied with no support or hope.

I had no other acquaintances or relatives. Within two days, we would inevitably go hungry. I again turned to my uncle with tearful eyes, in spite of my self-restraint.

"What's the matter Hagop?"asked my uncle, "Why have you come?"

"Uncle," I said, "We have enough food for only two days. After that we shall go hungry. I do not want to be a burden on you at times like these. I have only come for help in finding a job with better pay."

My uncle's answer was, "My lad, you are much too young. Whatever you do, they will rob you and seize what you have earned. Whatever I do for you, you will always be the loser."

I had heard that the Turkish military of higher ranks were entitled to 40, 50 or 60 kilogrammes of bread monthly, but, as a youth, who would pay attention to me, if by buying a ration card, I would be able to sell the bread secured with the ration card for a profit?

"Please buy me a ration card held by a high-ranking officer," I requested my uncle, "and I shall sell the bread."

My uncle repeated that I would be robbed.

"In that case," I said, "let your son, Loghofet, who is my friend, follow me from some distance."

"Very well," said my uncle, "Come tomorrow morning. I have a friend who is a Turkish officer. I shall buy his ration card. Let us see what you will achieve!"

The following morning, I arrived outside my uncle's shop, and waited until it was opened. He arrived a quarter of an hour later. My uncle had found the Turkish officer, and bought his ration card, which entitled him to obtain 60 kilogrammes of bread every month. He gave me the card and explained how I was to find the bakery where I was to present the card. I again asked my uncle to tell Loghofet to follow me from a distance and check any possible complications, as I had already been terrorized by the idea of being robbed.

Loghofet was smartly dressed with a clean collar and tie. Even though we were cousins and had grown together in our birthplace, Loghofet was so embarrassed by my shoddy clothes and shoes and

the fact that I was selling bread, that he did not want to walk too close to me.

I had to fill a large sack with 60 kilogrammes of bread, which I would sell in Bab el Faraj Square. It was so crowded with people and soldiers, that one could hardly move. I went to the bakery and presented the ration card, while Loghofet followed a few paces behind me.

Some people were already at the bakery. When they left with their bread, it was my turn. I opened the sack, which the baker filled with bread. However, the weight of the bread was greater than my own weight. I twisted the top of the sack and tried to lift it on my back, but I fell with the sack on top of me. When my cousin saw what happened, and that I could not carry the sack, he called a porter and paid him a few piastres to carry the sack to the spot, where I would sell the bread.

The porter laid the sack on the spot where I would sell the bread in Bab el Faraj Square. I opened the sack wide enough to take out one loaf at a time, and began selling the bread. My cousin watched me as he stood leaning on a wall about four metres away. Within three hours, the sack became lighter. I wondered if I had earned enough to cover the cost of the ration card, and tried to feel the money in my pocket during moments when I had no customers. I roughly estimated the sum I had earned and then called my cousin to whom I said, "I shall hand you little by little the money in my pocket. Count the money and let us see how it compares with what my uncle paid to buy the ration card." He did what I asked and soon came back and said, "You have made a profit of 5.5 medjidiehs with the bread that you have sold. Sell the rest and let us go."

18 loaves remained at the bottom of the sack.

"I shall sell no more bread" I said, "I shall take what is left home, as we have nothing to eat this noon. I carried the sack and went straight to my uncle. I paid him the sum he had spent to buy the ration card, thanked him and requested him to keep buying ration cards from the military officers to enable me to continue selling bread.

He shared my happiness and promised to do what was necessary. My success that day was very encouraging for me, and, for some time, I began buying and selling bread without outside help.

I carried the remaining 18 loaves home with feelings of joy and triumph. I counted the 5.5 medjidiehs I had earned, and presented the money and the 18 loaves to my mother. I explained that the 5.5 medjidiehs represented that day's profit from the sale of bread. My mother started weeping, but such was our emotion, that my sister, my brother and I also shed tears of joy.

"My dear son," said my mother, "what have we come down to, with the very first sum you have earned at such a tender age being spent on us!"

She blessed me with her tender motherly lips, and prayed to God that I might live to a ripe old age, and to enjoy the blessings of God.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE WAR FRONTS

Bulletins were issued every half hour from the war fronts, describing the victorious course of the war. However, it was clear that the Turkish and German armies were in retreat. Many of the soldiers admitted as much.

The Turkish troops from the surrounding towns and villages began gathering in Aleppo. Bab el Faraji was crowded with these troops.

That day, having sold my bread, I was on my way home, carrying the empty sack on my shoulder, when I suddenly met Ali Bey and his friend Ahmed Effendi: I immediately approached them.

They asked, "When did you come, and what are you doing for a living?"

"I am selling bread." I said, "I have finished my work and am on my way home."

Ali Bey turned to those next to him and said:- "For God's sake, just look at the little boy! This is a nation of industrious and resourceful people. If we were in their shoes, we would not last longer than three months, and not a single one of us would remain. Keep it up, lad, and may God help you on your way!"

The army, which was in disarray, gradually stopped paying the soldiers their due. I had already developed into a business-man, and would buy the bread I sold directly from the bakers, thus securing a satisfactory daily income.

One day, as I was on my way home, I saw my father, who had escaped from Djarablous. Half an hour before the departure of the train from Djarablous for Aleppo, my father went to the station, and began wandering behind the rear of the trucks and coaches, holding an adz and a saw. When the station bell sounded to announce the departure of the train, my father boarded a coach and sat down in a compartment. Soon, someone else boarded the coach and tried to open the door of the compartment. My father asked the man who he was and what he wanted. The man, who happened to be a railway official, said to my father, "You have no business to be here! Get off the train!"

"I am a carpenter," said my father, "and I am travelling on an assignment."

"When we arrive in Aleppo," said the man, standing next to my father in the compartment, "I shall show you whether or not you are on an assignment."

When the train stopped at the station in Aleppo, the man alighted from the coach from the side facing the station, while my father got off the train from the opposite side and crept under the coach, without leaving a trace. After that, he joined us.

It is true that my father was with us, but he could not help with the household expenses. The reason was that people in his age group would be arrested and forced into the army. What could we do? After being confined in the house for two weeks, my father grew a beard and ventured out to look for work with the Germans.

On reaching the station, he revealed that he was a carpenter. He was offered a job in return for a loaf of white bread daily. He accepted the offer, because, as an Armenian, he could not move around freely and work.

That evening, my father came home after dark and told us what had happened. We were pleased. Every week, he would stay two or three days at the station and two or three days at home. The German officer gave him a paper to certify that he worked for them, so that he would not be arrested.

With the confidence gained by the fact that my father was working at the railway station, I took twenty eggs and three melons there to sell to the German soldiers. There were Italian prisoners

of war in the area around the station. The Italians bought the eggs, while a German soldier bought one of the melons, paying the full price. I waited near the railway line with the remaining two melons, when a burly and brutish German, with his yellow hair shaved and with eyes like blue beads, approached me. I did not like his demeanour. He bent down, took one of the melons and walked off. I ran in front of him and, with a smile and a plea, asked him to pay for the melon. He continued walking stolidly and silently.

I realized that his intentions were not honest, and stretched my hand towards the melon he held. Suddenly, this robber, a Prussian soldier in the service of Kaiser Wilhelm, kicked me on the coccyx with his iron-tipped boot. I rolled on the ground seven times, writhing in pain, and for a week my coccyx was numb. This was daylight robbery by a civilized soldier from civilized Germany.

MOB RULE, INVASION AND BOMBARDMENT IN ALEPPO

The military were engaged in serious and feverish activity. There was an increase in the number of German troops. The Turkish troops had dispersed. The Arara front had crumbled. It was obvious that the war was going badly for Turkey. However, false bulletins were being issued to raise the morale of the population.

During these days it became difficult to buy and sell bread in bulk, and it was impossible to buy direct from the bakers. I therefore stopped dealing with bread. Without despairing, I bought a length of rope, and went to the market place to offer my services as a porter.

I carried the goods of two persons in the Djideidi market to their houses, thus earning a few piastres. As I was proceeding to Bab el Faraji, with the rope on my shoulder, a man called me saying :- "Boy, find two or three persons to clean a house here." I immediately found two young Arabs, and after bargaining, started work. As we were sweeping and scrubbing, we heard the sound of an airplane. Outside, everyone was looking up at the sky to find the identity of the airplane.

The German gunners started firing at the airplane, which then disappeared. A little later, six planes appeared in formation. The

guns again opened fire on the airplanes, which fired and dropped bombs on the railway station. People started stampeding. We left the cleaning of the house half-finished, and I ran home.

My father had not yet returned home, and we were worried. I told my mother that I would be off to look for my father and went out. The station was about 45 minutes' walk from our house. When the airplanes left and the bombing stopped, I went off. I was out of breath, panting and perspiring. I was wondering in what state I would find my father. I finally arrived at the railway truck, which he used as a workshop, which was on a siding near the Aleppo water supply storage tank. I entered the truck, but there was nobody around though, when I came out, I saw my father holding a saw.

My dear father and I embraced.

I said, "Dad, let us go home."

"No," said my father, "I cannot leave without the permission of my boss. Hagop, just empty the pieces of wood in this basket onto the floor and wait for my instructions." He added, "Place whatever I shall give you into the basket. My German boss told me, "You can have these tools, since you kept working to the very end. Here is the key. Take away as much as you can carry right now. Come back again tomorrow to collect what you had to leave behind.""

When it grew dark in the evening, my father and I took some of the items, deciding to return the following day with a hired carriage to collect the remaining tools.

I turned to my father and said, "If we can take home all the tools, which you have received as a gift, we shall be able to rent a shop, and run our own carpentry workshop." We went to bed, pondering on these prospects.

Early in the morning we left for the station, but things turned out differently. There were crowds and mobs and disorder, with everybody plundering what they could.

"My lad," said my father, "Let us see if the tools are still there."

When we arrived at the site where my father used to work, we found that the truck which had been his workshop, had its lock broken and all the contents of the truck gone. Only a board and some glue had been left. We were dumb-founded. There was nobody around.

We took the board and the pot of glue with us, simply not to return home completely empty-handed. Suddenly, we came face-to-face with a German officer. Although the officer used to see my father every day, he pointed a pistol at my father and shouted at him in German. We dropped the saw and the glue, and tried to make him understand that we were not thieves and gave the name of the German, who had authorized us to collect the contents of the truck. We also showed him the key of the truck. We later realized that his words meant that we should move away from the truck. However, the man was furious, waved his arms and shouted abuse. We feared that the officer was up to no good. My father and I moved off, running zig-zag on our way home. I must admit that we were afraid. My father then took me by the arm, saying, "Let us go straight home. There is only trouble for us today." At that very moment, we heard a loud explosion. The stone water storage tank next to the truck, which used to be my father's workshop, had just been blown up. The sun was eclipsed by the clouds of dust and smoke from the explosion. We realized that the German officer had saved our lives by driving us away in this harsh manner.

We later understood that the officer was the last German to leave. He had the responsibility to blow up strategic facilities, such as bridges to prevent the enemy from pursuing them.

As soon as we had crossed the bridge, a terrific explosion demolished the railway bridge leading to Baghdad. This was followed by another explosion, which destroyed the bridge on the way to Damascus.

We quickened our pace to reach home as soon as possible. We saw a mob moving in the opposite direction and attacking the military installations. There was looting and plunder. The mob went as far as to steal the doors and windows they tore from the buildings. The people who had gone hungry for years, stole whatever they could lay their hands on. We directed our steps towards our house in Bab el Nasr Quarter.

This time we witnessed even more horrific scenes. When we reached Khandek Djaddesi Avenue, we saw more looting by the mob. The inns in that area had been turned into workshops for the needs of the army. The mobs invaded these premises to loot the sewing machines that were there. Some of the looters held

knives. The stronger looter would grab any valuables carried by the physically weaker thieves, and then run away.

We finally arrived home next to Kazandji Bazaar in Bab el Nasr Quarter. My mother, brother and sister were worried that we were late.

At the time there was hardly any water in Aleppo. Every summer, the water was supplied from wells. That summer, the well next to our house had run dry. Because of this, my father and I were forced to bring our water in a tin from the Khandeki spring.

As we strode along and turned round a corner, we saw the body of a dead black Arab, lying next to a wall. We reached the spring, walking along the pavements and skirting walls. Nobody was interested with the water, as everybody was too busy looting. My tin was scarcely half-full, when I noticed twelve horse-drawn carts, loaded with sacks of wheat and guarded by three soldiers, being driven to Bab el Nasr. Suddenly, the mob rushed towards the carts, disarmed the soldiers, whom they took off the carts, and began looting the carts. Things reached such a climax, that guns began to be fired. A looter, carrying a sack of wheat on his back, would be followed by another person, who would rip a hole in the sack with a knife, causing the wheat to spill out.

That person would hold his robe under the spilling wheat, and run away after filling his rolled-up robe. Another person would do the same thing, using the sleeves of his tunic instead of his robe.

We reached the weaving factory and stores. This place was also crowded, and knives could be seen flashing in the air, and the deafening report of guns could also be heard.

We wanted to be back home with our tin-full of water as soon as possible, but were slowed down by the crowd.

The mob invaded the textile factory and stores. They grabbed rolls of cloth from each other, while others wrapped the cloth around themselves, holding the free end with their hands. They looked fatter, wrapped as they were with the stolen cloth, and went home with their shoulders and hands held high.

We finally arrived home, and, from the roof of our house, had a look at the government house and the fortress.

People were behaving like madmen. Many had endured hunger during the war years. They were at the end of their tether.

Airplanes again appeared in the sky, and the Germans fired at them, but failed to hit them. That evening we fell asleep with new dreams.

THE FALL OF ALEPPO ON 6 NOVEMBER 1918

The following morning, we again got up on our roof to have a second look at the government house and the fortress. We saw armed Arab soldiers on camels moving towards the government house. The number of these soldiers grew so much, that the avenue was not wide enough to accommodate them.

These soldiers constituted the vanguard of the Sherif's army. We could no longer stay at home, so we stood next to a wall at a cross-road in Bab el Nasr Quarter for a better view. The camel corps were followed by a vanguard of British troops on motor-cycles, who, in their turn, were followed by a man looking like Santa Claus, and behind him there was a detachment of mounted Indian soldiers, armed with spears.

We were very happy when we saw these troops, and I shed tears of joy. The British troops marched past for hours, and after them came the kilted Scots with their bagpipes. They were followed by infantry-men in smart uniforms. Motor vehicles, artillery and mules loaded with a variety of weapons came next. The procession seemed to be never-ending and limitless.

We began to feel secure. We had our dinner in the evening. I was soon overcome with emotion and, with my throat choking, began to cry. I could not restrain myself.

My father and mother asked me, "Lad, why are you crying? Thank God, we have been freed from the Turks. What makes you cry?" It was indeed true that we had been freed. But where were our liberators until now? Why did they not act when we suffered in the deserts in torment and hunger, facing butchering and death from scimitars, cudgels and axes in Ras-ul-Ayoun, Bab, Katma, Meskeneh, Dipsi, Abou Harar, Hamam, Rakka, Tabka, Der Zor, Sivari and Maarat? Although they are no longer alive, the victims of the criminal Turkish nation and those killed at the whim of the savage Turks, lying unburied in the deserts, now parade before my mind's eye.

"My dear mother," I said, "After allowing us to be massacred, the British have now stepped in as our saviours. Where is their Christianity? Where is their civilization? Young and old, we base our dreams on the assumption that they will save us. Where were they when we were being massacred and decimated?"

My passionate words brought tears to my father's eyes and he said the following:-

"Indeed, my son, your thoughts and feelings make sense. Mark my words. Do not trust or expect kindness from those with crowns on their heads or on those wearing crosses. After the massacres of Abdul Hamid, the Red Sultan, in 1895, 1896 and 1909, which went unpunished, the Turks were encouraged to go ahead with the diabolical massacres of 1915. However, who will understand our pain and suffering?

After the elimination of Armenia as a state, we spent the next six or seven hundred years struggling to maintain our existence and identity as a nation. We have been conspicuous by our contributions in the East, and have always had a strong bond with our land and the snow-topped Ararat mountain.

There is more. We have stirred the envy and become the victims of the religious fanatics in the lazy and barbaric Turkish populace. In all the lands of the Turkish Empire, the Armenians were the progressive element and pioneers in many fields of the cultural life. This made the Turks jealous.

They lacked Turkish individuals who could address a welcoming speech to a visiting dignitary, and had to use the services of Armenians.

When Enver visited Ankara, it was from an Armenian that he was officially welcomed. It was also the same when he visited Kessaria.

Enver, unable to contain his rancour, told the local governor, "How come that you did not find a Turk to welcome me, and instead called an Armenian for this purpose?"

It was the Armenians who taught Turkish to Turkish students in their leading institutes. The first Turkish opera and theatrical work was written by Armenians. The same was true in other cultural fields. These pioneers included Baba Hampartsoum, Dikran Choukhadjian, violinist and composer Tateos, Noubar, Bimen, Garbis, Noubar Tekeyan, etc. The Turks themselves acknowledge these people as the founders of their culture.

As a nomadic people, what kind of culture could they create? They are descendants of the Uygur tribe, who lived on the plains bordering the Caspian Sea, a savage, barbaric people, who indulged in stealing each others' donkeys.

In a few words, the Turks are parasites in human shape, who are an obstacle on the path of civilization.

When have the Turks kept their word? When have they honestly paid for what they have taken? Cheating and falsehood has characterized them and kept them going."

STARTING A NEW JOB

After the arrival of the British, everybody began to venture out, and large numbers of Arabs, who had escaped conscription, began to emerge. The people breathed a sigh of relief. The staff, who used to work in military institutions, now went back to their jobs, but this time working for the British troops, who remunerated them generously and, in addition, gave them boxes of delicacies.

After wandering round the inner market in search of a new job, I approached a shop, whose floor was at a height of 80 cm. above street level. An old man was sitting cross-legged on an armchair in the dark interior. Next to him was a youth who was busy with something.

"Good day, uncle!" I said. The old man raised his spectacles to his forehead and responded with "Good day!"

I felt that this man was a Jew.

"I would like to have a job," I said, "What about buying the goods I intend to sell from you? Can you help me to do this?" The old man scrutinized me carefully and remarked, "You are an Armenian, am I right? I assumed this on the basis of your accent when speaking Arabic."

"That is correct." I said.

"Very well, then," he said, "Inside I have a tray with a 5cm. lip, provided with a sturdy leather strap. You can hang the tray from your neck and go round the markets selling the contents. If you sell some items, I shall renew your stock: if, on the other hand, you fail

to sell certain items, I shall take them back. Now tell me how much money you have."

I asked him, "How many medjidiehs' worth of articles can you put on this tray?

"You will require 15-18 medjidiehs." he answered.

"But I do not know what kind of articles can be sold successfully." I said.

"Do not worry about that," he said. He then took the tray from the youth in the corner, and started filling it with cigarette paper, matches, lighters, wicks for lighters, etc.

He then recorded the prices on a piece of paper, as well as the prices at which I was to sell them on another piece of paper. I hung the tray with these articles from my neck, paid him and left.

I sold some boxes of matches and some cigarette paper on my way, but Bab el Faraj was some way from the inner market, and my shoulders were getting sore from the weight of the tray. I felt that it would be difficult to go around with this tray. There was a stone fountain, called Djemal Pasha's fountain right in the middle of Bab el Faraj Square. In spite of its name, I had never seen any water in the "fountain". I sat next to the fountain wall. There was a coffee shop opposite me. The customers, moving in and out of the coffee shop, saw what I had in my tray, and those who needed some of the articles came and bought them.

That fountain then became my "shop". I would free myself from the weight of the tray, by sitting down and placing the tray next to me. I was thus able to have a reasonable profit.

One day, a burly man approached me, and, just like many customers, asked my name, adding:-

"Lad, I too am an Armenian. I have a device at home for rolling cigarettes. Would you like me to give you several packets of cigarettes for you to sell?"

"Such a thing is dangerous." I said, "The cigarette monopoly has inspectors to check and prevent competition. If I am caught, I shall be sent to prison."

He reassured me by saying, "I shall show you how not to get caught." and added, "Is the boy next to you your brother?"

"That's right." I said.

"Your brother should stand some distance from you," he

said, “When you have sold all the cigarettes, call your brother to replenish your tray with another 100 cigarettes. You should always re-stock my cigarettes through your brother. This arrangement is very profitable.”

He then added, “This evening we shall meet again. I shall show you the way to my house. When you run out of cigarettes, come to my house and collect some more cigarettes.”

I agreed, and took ten packets, each containing twenty cigarettes. I began to trust my customers, and would quietly tell them that I had cigarettes for sale. Indeed, with this additional article on my tray, my income grew. The sale of cigarettes was a profitable business.

One day, an Armenian-speaking Assyrian from Urfa, accompanied by four Armenian boys, approached me.

“Listen, ”he said, “If these boys ask you for cigarettes for them to smoke, let them have the cigarettes. You can always find me in the coffee shop. Come here and I shall pay you for the cigarettes.”

Each of the boys got two packets of cigarettes, and the Assyrian paid for them.

I began to wonder who this man and the four boys were. A few weeks later, I realized that this man was a crook. He used the four Armenian orphans as cat’s paws to steal for him, forcing them into a dangerous career of crime, unbecoming for an Armenian.

This Assyrian would wander around the British military camps to reconnoitre during daytime, while in the evenings, he would plan how best to direct the boys how and what to steal from the camps. The pickings consisted of clothing, shoes, etc.

The boys would hand the stolen goods to the Assyrian, who would reward them with whatever he felt like giving. When I realized what was happening, I called the boys separately and advised them, saying that what they were doing was not good. It was dangerous and unbecoming, and that the Assyrian was using them as tools and jeopardizing their lives. I also reminded them that, as remnants of their massacred families, they had an obligation to rebuild a flourishing future on the ruins left by the criminal Turks.

Whenever the boys came for cigarettes, I did my best to convince them to stop working for the Assyrian.

The Assyrian came one day and told me, “From now on, I shall not pay you for the cigarettes you give the boys. Whether they pay you or not, don’t ask me to pay.”

Next day the eldest of the four came to see me and said, “Hagop, I have no money. However, I have a beautiful Tcherkez sword. I shall leave it with you as a security. Tomorrow, or the day after, I shall bring you the money for the cigarettes, and take the sword back.” I could not resist his request and agreed.

We went to a corner, where he removed the sword from his waist and gave it to me to conceal it in a similar manner on my person. However, the sword was long and my trousers short, with the result that the bottom of the scabbard protruded from my trousers. I could not sit down with the sword in this position.

When I returned home in the evening and put the sword aside after undressing, my father and mother asked me in an aggressive tone, “What is this? Where did you get it from?”

I told them what had happened. They scolded me and said, “Tomorrow you must return it to the owner.”

The following day I wore the sword and went back to the place, where I used to sit. I kept looking round, expecting the boy to turn up for me to return the sword, and for me no longer have to worry. Until noon no one appeared.

THE BETRAYAL

It was dangerous to sell tobacco and cigarettes without the authorization of the Tobacco Monopoly. The Monopoly had special inspectors to enforce their rules. If you were caught with illegal cigarettes, you would be sent to prison or fined. I used to recognize many of the inspectors and always avoided them.

Late in the afternoon, I saw one of these inspectors approaching me. I moved away from where I was, so that he would not see me and entered the quarter opposite, walking with long strides. I saw that he was following me with even longer strides. I turned round a corner, and threw away the cigarettes in my tray after crumpling them and began running. However, the sword prevented me from

running faster. The burly inspector, who was short of breath, caught me by the collar of my tunic, and, while searching me, his hand touched the sword.

He grabbed my hand and took me straight to the Bab el Faraj police station. The police commissioner slapped me twice on the face, took off my sword and placed it on a table. I began crying. Nobody was aware of my ordeal, so as to come to my rescue. They opened a door and kept me there for an hour. It was almost evening and I was very upset, thinking of my father and mother, and where they would look for me.

A little later, they opened a door and the commissioner said, "Come here!" He sat at the end of a table and said, "Just repeat how and from where you found this sword."

I repeated what had happened. He asked me my name, surname, my father's name and the address of the place where I worked. After obtaining this information, he said, "Don't do such a thing again. If you do it again, I shall have to send you to the big prison." He released me and kept the sword.

The town and the world looked different after I walked out of this oppressive environment. I even breathed better. It is then that I understood the meaning of the gulf which separated free men from prisoners. I went straight home with my nerves relaxed and with a smile on my face. My father and mother asked me about the sword. I told them about what I had been through. They were sorry and happy at the same time.

A week went by without the owner of the sword appearing, but at the end of the week, he turned up and asked about the sword. I told him the whole story. His eyes filled with tears and he began crying.

"Why are you crying?" I asked, "The sword is at the police station."

"No, no!" he said, "the sword is worthless. The only problem is that they hit Arshavir on the head, and my poor friend died instantly."

When I heard this, tears came to my eyes also. He begged me to give him some money so that he could buy some food. He went on to say, "While Arshavir was trying to creep into the army stores through a window, he was hit on the head. Poor Arshavir!"

I felt very upset, and could only say, "Keep away from the Assyrian.

He will ruin your life, just as he caused the death of Arshavir."

Syria had been conquered by the British. A week later, there were rumours that everybody would be free to return to his homeland. A railway service was organized to transfer people to their original homes free of charge. This service was available for weeks.

The French took over Cilicia as far as Bozanti. Konia was under Italian control, while Constantinople was under the jurisdiction of international forces.

People started coming to Damascus, Havran and Aleppo from many places, in order to continue their journey by rail to Adana, Sis and Tarsus. The survivors from Marash, Aintab,Kilis and other places were all keen to return to their homelands.

We were one of the only two families from Konya, who remained in Aleppo without returning to Konya.

My father expressed his final decision not to go back with the words:- "Not only shall I not go back to the land under Turkish rule, but I shall not even place my pillow where there are Turks. Let the Turks keep whatever I possessed there. After the death of so many Armenians, I have no wish to go there.

After some time, when the freedom to travel had been restored, some of our surviving relatives from Konya came to Aleppo to visit us. Before being deported, my mother had given her valuables to my grandmother for safe-keeping. The relatives, who came to Aleppo, brought some of these valuables here at the request of my grandmother.

THE MASSACRES IN ALEPPO ON 28 FEBRUARY 1919 ON THE DAY AFTER THE VARTANANK COMMEMORATION

I was at my usual place in Bab el Faraj Square early in the morning of that day. Nobody could imagine that Armenians would be massacred in the presence of the British army. There was a sudden alarm and turmoil. There were shout of "The Armenians are being massacred!" The place where I was sitting was close to the Armenian quarter. I held my brother's hand hung the tray from my neck and began running towards Solibeh Quarter, where my aunt

and her family lived. We entered the house panting. We were safe there for the time being. However, our house was in the Kazandji Quarter, which was a Moslem quarter. My mother and sister were there, while my father was on his way to Djumaa Bazaar to sell the cloth my grandmother had sent from Konya.

This was a cause of grave concern and it was impossible for us to feel reassured. The massacres in Djumaa Bazaar had already started.

At this juncture, I shall let my Father describe the massacres in Djumaa Bazaar in his own words, as follows:-

"On Fridays there is a "Friday market" in Aleppo close to the fortress, and next to the present Government House, while on Sundays there is a "Sunday market" near the Ramadieh hospital.

According to the popular custom, sellers would start gathering in the market place at midnight to secure a place, where they could set up their stands to sell their wares. There was a wide variety of merchandise, such as food, clothing (new or second-hand), cloth, shoes and even animals, such as horses, donkeys, cows, oxen and poultry. You could buy and sell all sorts of articles not available elsewhere.

Like the others, I, too, set up my stand to sell the valuables sent in a packet from Konya by my mother in law. It was the evening of Vartanank Day (an Armenian commemoration day). It had rained heavily during the day, the streets were muddy and there was a bitterly cold wind. As the crowds were gathering in the market, there was turmoil, and the traders began taking down their stands. There were shouts, "That one is an Armenian! The other one is also an Armenian!" in Arabic, with the mob pointing at various people. When I felt that I was one of the targets, I quickened my pace towards the government house, which was on my way home.

Suddenly a man, riding a horse, tried to run his horse on me. Although I stepped aside from the horse, some pedestrians rushed at me and grabbed the packet I was holding and struck me on the head with a knife, and I fell down unconscious. Thinking that I was dead, the mob dragged me by my hands and feet and threw me into the moat.

25-30 cm. of water had accumulated in the moat as a result of the previous day's rain. I regained consciousness when I rolled

in the water. As I noticed the muddy water around me, I heard a voice which said, "Brother, roll yourself until you come here in the grass, so that you may not be seen." I did exactly that, as I became conscious. My head was aching. I felt blood when I touched my head. The youth who had been thrown in the moat before me, asked me, "Where have you been wounded?"

"I don't know," I said, "but I cannot raise my head. Where have you been wounded?"

"I was stabbed in my ribs," he said, I saw them grab you by your hands and feet and throw you over the wall into the moat."

He then added, "My friend, I shall get up. Let us proceed to the Government House, by walking along the moat."

Suddenly, a gendarme jumped into the moat from the wall around it. He was accompanied by two Arab fellaheen, who approached us as we were walking.

The gendarme started shouting, "Attention, attention!" when he came near us saying, "Come on, get moving!" We felt somewhat safer in his presence, but when we started going uphill and reached the wall, he unsheathed his sword, and stuck both my arms with the flat of his sword.

I was incapable of raising my hands and climbing over the wall to continue on our way. He called the two fellaheen to help me. They had taken my tunic and my trousers, and I was left wearing only my underwear. I could only climb half-way up, when one of the fellaheen started undoing my shoe laces. When I resisted, the fellah started hitting me with the rope band of his headgear, while the gendarme stabbed my elbow with his bayonet. I had to remain silent. The fellah took off my shoes, and threw his slippers in front of me, saying that I could have them.

I began walking without wearing his slippers. The fellah walked in front of me, insisting that I take his slippers.

We finally reached the Government House. When we entered, we saw 130-140 persons who had been brought before us. All of them were wounded: some were lying down, some were sitting and some were standing. They then began bringing in the dead.

Meanwhile, they ordered us to stand in two rows. We were unrecognizable with our blood-stained and muddy faces. There

was a strong wind and the cold February wind pierced us. Having lost blood and soaked with muddy water, as well as almost naked, wearing only our underwear, we froze and trembled.

We walked up into the government building and turned round a corner. They ordered us to go down the stairs. However, the room below us was so dark, that we could not see ahead of us. As we were jostled by those behind us, we tumbled down to the bottom of the stairs. They then opened a door connecting the main prison to a fairly bright room. Everybody settled in this room, with some sitting and some lying on the floor.

The door opened again, and another 15-20 persons were crammed into the room. I saw my cousin, Garabed Izmirlian among the newcomers, and he also saw me. Watery blood dripped from his wounded nose.

He told me his story, saying, "When I saw that they were attacking the Armenians, I ran towards our home. On the way I saw a turbaned sheikh holding an umbrella, with which he struck me on the nose. The blow was unexpected. I seized the umbrella and threw it aside. Meanwhile, a gendarme appeared, arrested me and brought me here.

Three more groups were brought and pushed into our room. Once again the door was opened, and this time two gendarmes, a barber and a doctor in a white overall came in.

The doctor said, "We shall now treat and bandage your wounds, and, if necessary, send the more serious cases to the hospital, for urgent treatment. What happened was the work of irresponsible and inexperienced hotheads."

The doctor was a Turk, and went on to say with typical Turkish guile:-

"Never mind, my boys! You will all be treated, but priority will be given to those with deep and serious wounds, which will be lightly washed before the patients are sent to hospital for urgent treatment." The barber shaved the hair on the wounds and the doctor applied bandages.

The barber had a tin pot full of water to deal with the wounds, but the water was not enough for so many patients. He used the water sparingly, without completely getting rid of all the blood and mud on the wounds. He then placed a wad of cotton

containing tincture of iodine on the wounds before bandaging them. Meanwhile, British troops appeared on the streets. Those with heavy wounds were taken in ambulances, guarded by British troops, to the school next to the Armenian Catholic church, which had been converted into a hospital. The dead were also taken there.

I was among the heavily wounded. I had seven gashes on my head caused by knives. The doctor wanted to send me to hospital, but I implored him to send me home.

They shaved my head completely and bandaged the wounds after cleaning them. Garabed and I were escorted home by a gendarme. The doctor advised me to go to hospital, and wrote a short note, so that I would be admitted into the hospital by the doctors there. This is what politics is all about! Who could imagine that after the narrow escape from the Turkish scimitar, the Armenians would be massacred in Aleppo under the very eyes of the British army? This was just one aspect of the game of politics!"

DETAILS OF THE ALEPPO MASSACRE

The killings and massacres began at 6.30 a.m. under the eyes of the British, who may well have incited what happened.

In spite of the timely information communicated to the British army authorities of what was about to happen, not only were measures not taken to prevent the massacre, but that very day General True, the Chief of Staff, rose on the roof of the Baron Hotel, using it as a vantage point to watch the massacre with a telescope, with utter indifference, as if it were a football match, or as if he were watching a film from a cinema seat. When the Armenian deputy prelate, Reverend Horoutune Yessayan appealed to the general for the British forces to intervene, he received the following answer:-

"My troops are now having their tea. There is nothing I can do."

A few hours later, Indian mounted troops began forcefully patrolling the streets and arresting suspicious Arabs.

When they began carrying the dead and wounded to the Tilleli hospital, I stood before the door for about three hours to see whether my father would be brought dead or wounded.

After waiting in front of the hospital door for about three hours, I sent my little brother home, dressed as an Arab boy to bring news from my father, in case he had gone home.

As soon as I sent my brother home, our neighbour Rebecca came to inform me that my father had indeed returned home.

I ran home, leaving old Rebecca alone. My father was sitting there, wearing nothing apart from his pants. He was in such a state that he could hardly be recognized. His face was swollen and his head completely covered with bandages. There was not a single spot on his body with the normal colour of skin, which had become blue and black.

On account of the bayonet wound on his elbow, he would never be able to move his right arm.

My mother had already wiped and cleaned his wounds before I arrived home.

As a result of pain, my father was unable to lie down in bed, so he spent two or three days sitting on a chair, sleeping in this posture. After 22 days, my father went to hospital, accompanied by my mother to have the bandages on his head changed.

As if the Armenians had not shed enough blood between the years 1915 and 1918, the perfidious British unashamedly shed more innocent Armenian blood by using the Armenians as tools in pursuit of their ulterior motives. As a result of the Aleppo massacre, 75 Armenians died and 250-300 were wounded. 75 butchered Armenian bodies were brought to the courtyard of the Armenian Catholic church in the Tilleli Quarter of Aleppo.

On the day of the massacre, the mob came to our quarter but the local councilor resisted the mob and prevented it from robbing and killing the two Armenian families living there. The mob attacked four families hardly 20 metres from our quarter. The four families immediately barricaded their front door with props, and took refuge in the store-room. They secured the store-room door as best they could and, in addition, leant with their shoulders on the wooden props behind the door. One of them, who was confused, hid under a table outside the store-room.

After breaking the entrance door, the mob ransacked the four rooms in which the four families lived, and stole everything they possessed. One of the thieves picked up the table under which the

Armenian was hiding. The thieves attacked and killed the Armenian. The thieves outside the store-room kept shouting, “Surrender”. Those inside answered, “We shall not surrender until the arrival of a British officer.” A member of the mob, wearing the uniform of a soldier in the service of Sherif, and, wielding a scimitar, crept under the window of the store-room, but as he was on the point of getting in, he was killed by a pistol shot fired from within.

As a result of this unexpected shot, not a single member of the mob remained outside. Towards noon, a British soldier, accompanied by some Indian soldiers and an Armenian interpreter arrived, following a plea by the mukhtar (headman), and the store-room door was opened.

The British paid compensation to these four families, and individual rations and wages, which were also given to the families, which had been robbed in the Akaba and other quarters.

THE REASON BEHIND THE ALEPPO MASSACRE

On the evening of 28 February 1919 the Social Democratic Henchakian Party Cilician Union celebrated Vartanank day.

Next day, after the Friday prayers in the mosque, the mob launched an organized massacre.

There was growing hatred against the Armenians in the heart of a group of Syrians, which escalated day by day. The reason was that the soldiers of the Armenian Legion, who held the Adana-Islahieh line, which extended as far as Bozanti, thoroughly scrutinized the Turks crossing that line.

In this way, many of the bloodthirsty Turkish officials in Aleppo were caught and punished.

The massacre by the Islamic fanatics was incited by the Turkish element in Aleppo.

It was said at the time that British politics were also involved in the massacre.

The Lausanne Conference took place during that period. The Arab Sherif Hussein intended to present his demand to become the supreme leader of all the Arab nations. They silenced Sherif by telling

him, “Your hands are stained with blood, and you lack the necessary ability for such a position.” Sherif had to go back empty-handed.

THE DEMAND FOR ARTISANS

One day one of our acquaintances came and told us that the British army needed artisans. Next day he came to our house and we went to the relevant British army office. The official there welcomed my father and asked him why his head was bandaged. My father told him the whole story. The British foreman gave my father a minor job.

A little later, he appeared with a drawing in his hands and told my father:-

Construct 8 of the items shown on this drawing. Two of them are urgently needed, and should be ready in three days. After moving a few paces away, he turned back and asked, “Do you know what the thing you are about to make is for? It is a scaffold for execution by hanging. You are now going to build an instrument which will strangle to death those who wounded your head.”

My father worked in a team of six persons. It was a comfortable and well-paid job. His daily pay was one Egyptian pound.

As a matter of fact, the British made use of the scaffolds built by my father to hang in the Sherbtji inn in the Bab el Ezhnein market those who perpetrated the massacre.

Well-paid new jobs became available everywhere. Old women and boys were paid wages for the job of collecting cobble stones. In addition to the wages, tinned jam was also distributed to the workers.

During the British administration, there was nobody who had not tasted English jam, or worn army boots. Woolen stockings and drill trousers, etc. were plentiful.

Even if the items were second hand, they were fit for wearing.

When some Jewish boys saw a soldier dismounting from his horse, they would use the little English they knew, and hold the horse’s head. They would also rush to make themselves useful, whenever they saw a soldier trying to obtain or look for something. They would be rewarded with 20-25 Egyptian piastres for these minute-long services.

A shoe-black would earn 10-15 Egyptian pounds daily. Payment was generous.

MY FATHER TAKEN TO HOSPITAL

My father had been working for two months in a British camp behind the Baghdad station in Aleppo.

One evening, as I returned home, I saw that my little sister and brother were sitting down and crying. They said that father had been hit by a train and that mother had gone to the camp.

The camp had been placed at the disposal of the Armenian displaced persons, while one part had been converted into a hospital. I had to stay at home with my sister and brother, as it was already dark, while the camp was in a Moslem area, and a long distance from our house.

Much later, my mother came, accompanied by one of my father’s colleagues. My father’s right arm had been injured. It was the working elbow. The flesh had been lacerated and the bones at the elbow shattered. It had been decided to amputate his arm.

The following day, we were lucky, when an American lady doctor came, wishing to visit the hospital and see the patients. The local Armenian doctor described to her what had happened to my father and the decision to amputate his arm. The American doctor was against the amputation, and undertook to perform the necessary treatment herself. After thoroughly cleaning the shattered bones, she performed the operation. After lying in the hospital for two months, the scars on his arms cleared, but he was unable to bend his arm, or raise his hand to his mouth for a long time. After the accident my father was unable to continue working, or to be useful to us.

After the injury sustained by my father, his military boss asked my father’s colleague about me, and suggested that I might replace him. One of my father’s colleagues came to give us this news, and the following day I went to the workplace accompanied by him. I was paid the wages father used to be paid. This continued until the British left Aleppo.

I got rid of the tray with which I used to sell various items and returned it to the Jew.

EPILOGUE

THE PROPOSAL BY MY FATHER AND MOTHER

When the French came to Aleppo, my father already could not exercise his profession, on account of his arm. After the British left, I, too, became unemployed. My mother was very good at sewing. She was well-versed in this line, and was an intelligent woman. The decision was then taken for her to work at home as a seamstress. My father bought cloth suitable for trousers and brought the material home. My mother then made various sizes of trousers, which my father carried round on his shoulders to sell.

They realized that there was demand for these trousers, which made the business profitable. My mother would sew and my father would sell. They were encouraged by the initial results, and decided to continue with this work.

A week after they started, my parents called me and said, "We have decided that you should go to school and improve your education. You must try to remember what you had learnt at the Djenanian College, which you forgot during the years spent in the desert.

What my parents said and suggested appealed to me. It was hard for me to just sit in front of my mother's sewing machine and to watch her working. On the other hand, it was very important to be more or less educated.

At no time had we applied to charitable institutions for help. Those who saw us would say, "You are rich".

It is true that we were never greedy. We wanted to be clean and tidy, and were aware of our possibilities and limitations. We were happy with what God had granted us. In spite of the fees for three children, the cost of books and other school requirements, our clothing, the day-to-day needs and the fact that my father was incapacitated, we never tried to obtain anything free of charge.

Many families who enjoyed good health and had their own shops and work, were a burden on Armenian charitable organizations, to spend on cinemas, entertainment and to have a good time.

I graduated from the Haigazian School after three years there. I now faced a worrying and difficult problem: it was the choice of a career.

After graduating, I spent six months as a money-changer in the market. On the basis of the Stock Exchange, the Syrian pound was unstable. I was encouraged by my work, but there were risks. I was always worried by the inadequacy of my capital: this worry was shared by my parents.

I decided to learn wood-carving for the decoration of furniture. I was good at drawing, which was very important for a wood-carver. I applied to a cabinet-maker, who accepted me, and within three months I began to produce quite respectable carvings. I would carve Louis XV and Louis XIV style floral and leaf decorations. However, within a year, this style went out of fashion, to be replaced by furniture and armchairs decorated with light Chinese carving. This led to my unemployment.

I could not remain idle. I therefore decided to learn carpentry, which is related to wood-carving.

My decision was apt, as my father had been a carpenter, and I already had some experience, and knew all about the profession. I worked for two and a half years, and was respected for my skill.

A WORKER IN A RAILWAY COMPANY

There was a demand for workers in the carpentry shop of the railway station. I applied for the job and presented myself. They gave me something to make to test my competence. I completed the assignment in time, and was given the job. I worked on carpentry items in railway carriages, and constructed bookcases, tables and other furniture for the company offices. A year later there was a vacancy in the railway depot for lathe operators. I applied for the job, saying that I would like to learn that profession. I was then transferred to the depot.

In two years' time I attained Level "C" as a lathe operator. After a number of years, my skill attained Level "B" and still later, I climbed to Level "A", which meant that I had become a specialist in this field.

In 1951 I published a handbook bearing the title "A practical guide on lathes and milling machines and useful tips on machine

tools" The handbook consisted of 240 14.5cm x 20cm. pages. Mohammed Alim, the director of the railway company appreciated my work and appointed me as foreman of the machine tool workshop.

I retired from work in 1964, although I needed another 5 years before reaching retirement age. The prevailing situation forced me to take this step, and, as a family, we decided to settle in Beirut. I had spent exactly 40 years with the railway company.

SUPPLEMENT A

A RECORD OF THOSE WHO DIED IN THE GENOCIDE

The following fell in the three main locations:-

A. Ras ul Ayoun	70,000
B. Intilli where the Armenians were concentrated to construct tunnels, the rail tunnels to Baghdad, after which they were massacred	50,000
C. Der Zor, those killed by Zeki Bey: the figures refer to those massacred	200,000
D. Those who died from typhus	150,000
E. Katma, Islahieh and Azez	60,000
F. Bab	100,000
G. Deaths from starvation, illness in Aleppo, Meskeneh, the banks of the Euphrates, Dipsi, Abou Harar, Hamam, Rakka, Tabra and Der Zor	250,000
H. When we were in Meskeneh, there were 400-500 daily deaths from starvation and typhus	
I. Of 200,000 deported from just Aleppo, Ras ul Ayoun and Meskeneh only 5000 survived	195,000
J. On the pretext of sending people to Mosul from Der Zor, they were to be taken to Sheddadieh, but Zeki Bey preferred to have them massacred in the deserts of Maarat and Soumar	

K. 550 Armenian youths were kept hungry and thirsty for seven days in a camp in Der Zor so that they would kill each other. 550
Hardly 200,000 managed to survive in the desert

L. The governor of Rum Kalek was ordered to form bands of Kurdish robbers who killed the deportees on the roads in Samousat, Behesni and Adyaman and threw their bodies in the Euphrates 14,000

M. Bloodthirsty Abdulahad Nouri Bey. Those killed or died in and around Bab and Meskeneh 35,000
Those killed or who died in the regions of Aleppo, Karlik, Dipsi, Abou Harar and Hamam 195,000
According to the records by the Der Zor official who organized the deportations, the 1,500 adults in Der Zor and 500 orphans (aged 8-10) from Meskeneh, were sent to the scorching desert to be massacred by the elderly Arab criminal Abdullah Pasha 2,000
Nouri Bey and Eyoub Bey expelled 17,500 deportees in a single day. Without carriages and on foot, they all died of cold and of hunger 17,500
Another monster, Enver Pasha (the WarMinister, and uncle of the scoundrel Djevdet Bey), after perpetrating the massacre in Van, went to Moush and Bitlis. After that, he went to Ras ul Ayoun, where he ordered the massacre of the remaining 50,000 Armenians 50,000
Those killed near their homelands and towns in the region of Constantinople, all the way to Katma, numbered about 250,000 250,000

TOTAL - 1,634,050

In actual fact, more people lost their lives. We must not forget those who died at or near the places where they lived. If we were to investigate the cases of those killed by criminals deliberately released from prisons, the number of Armenians killed may well exceed 2,000,000.

SUPPLEMENT B

TWO PISTOLS AND A SWORD

When the order was issued in 1914 for the collection of the weapons in the possession of the Armenians, my uncle took his two pistols and sword in his home and carried them to his shop, where he placed them in an insignificant corner without informing anybody in his family.

Two days before being deported in 1915, my uncle went to his shop and took the hidden prohibited weapons, placed them in a large basket, covered the weapons with pieces of cloth and brought the basket home. Two days later, when the deadline for the start of the deportation had almost ended, the grown-ups were very worried, although the children knew nothing about the weapons.

My uncle called my aunt, my mother and my other uncle and said, “Tomorrow we shall set off along unknown paths. You should understand that we are not going on a holiday, nor for a stroll in the park, but we shall be on our way to death. I do not know what will happen, therefore, také these pistols, without arguing, and conceal them on yourselves: I want to see how you will look with these pistols. Try to conceal these pistols right now. Let us not wait until the last minute tomorrow, when, in your hurry, you may fail to conceal them properly. He therefore had my mother and aunt rehearse tying the pistols on their person.“

The rehearsal was successful: these two ladies had the task of carrying the pistols from camp to camp. There was a Browning with 64 bullets and a six-shooter with 52 bullets.

Along with the above, we had three blackened soot-covered stones for a hearth. Whenever we stopped to camp, we would immediately place these stones in a corner of the carriage in which we travelled, and after pitching our tents, we would bury the pistols on the right-hand side of the tent entrance, arrange the three blackened stones on top, to look like a hearth, on which we would place a pot with some water, to give the impression that we were cooking or brewing tea. The actual hearth would be on the left-hand side of the tent entrance.

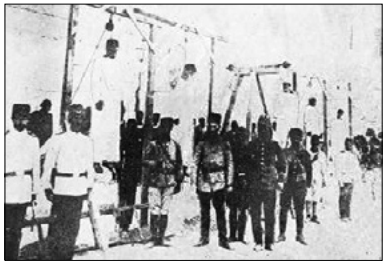
We kept these pistols until we reached Aleppo.

A BRIEF SUMMARY
(Based on Testimony)

November 24, 1903 - Birth of Hagop Seropian.
August 1914 - Turkey declares mobilization.
April 24, 1915 - The Armenian intellectuals in Constantinople arrested and exiled to Ayash.
May 9, 11, 29, 1915 - Almost 100 Armenian intellectuals from Konya sent to the village of Sultanieh.
May 15, 1915 - Almost 5000 residents of Zeitoun brought to Konya. After a week they are sent to the village of Sultanieh, and then to Ulu Kishla. In August they are sent to Mamourieh and continue on to Katma in diminishing numbers. Finally they are taken to Der Zor up to Abdul Aziz, where they are eliminated.
May 20, 1915 - Closure of the Djenanian College in Konya.
May, 1915 - The father of Hagop Seropian conscripted.
July, 1915 - The elementary section of the Djenanian College commandeered.
July 9, 1915 - Djelal Pasha, the governor of Aleppo, transferred to Konya as the governor of Konya.
August 16, 1915 - Saadeddin Bey, the police chief in Konya, calls Reverend Archimandrite Karekin Khatchadourian, the local prelate and Reverend Apraham Adjemian, ordering them to tell the Armenians to be ready for deportation.
August 17, 1915 - The father of Hagop Seropian returns home.
August 9-21, 1915 - The deportation of the Armenians in Konya begins.
August 21, 1915 (approximately) - The first day of exile spent in Karaman.
August 22, 1915 (approximately) - The trip from Karaman to Ereyli takes a day (presumably) about a week's stay in the inn of Cherkez Hadji.
One day's train journey from Ereyli to Bozanti.
15 days in Bozanti.
September 5, 1915 - The main building of the Djenanian college returned to the Armenian Protestants, who resume their religious services, followed by the Armenian Gregorians for the next six months.

September 25, 1915 - Djelal Bey resigns from his post as governor of Konya.
Six days in Osmanieh.
From Bozanti to Amanus and on to Katma - a journey of many weeks.
15 days in Katma.
From Katma to Aleppo Djemilieh in one day.
Transferred from Djemilieh to Aleppo in three days.
December 1915 - January 1916 - Exactly 40 days in Aleppo.
From Aleppo to Bab in one day.
From Bab to Mumbaj in one day.
From Mumbaj to Messoudieh in two days.
Mid January to May 1916 - About four months in Messoudieh.
From Messoudieh to Meskeneh in four days.
1916 - Divine Liturgy in the desert of Meskeneh.
May-August 1916 - Three months in the deportee camp in Meskeneh.
August 1916 - From Meskeneh to Dipsi and then to Abou Harar in one day.
About 5 months in Abou Harar.
13 months in Meskeneh a second time.
From Meskeneh to Djarablous in one day.
Three years elapse from the beginning of the deportation to the arrival in Djarablous.
14 months spent in Djarablous.
November 6, 1918 - Aleppo captured by the British army.
February 28, 1919 - The massacre in Aleppo.
1924-1964 - Hagop Seropian works with the Aleppo-Baghdad railway company.

NAME LIST



TO MY PARENTS

Dear parents, we bring you water and soil,
Collected from our homeland with much toil,
From Artsakh-Garabagh the undaunted,
From hills and vales and fields cultivated.

From the Khor Virab pit and Etchmiadzin church,
From Stepanaguerd and Garni, another church,
Sardarabad and the Piuragan telescope,
Shushi, Sbidag and Yerevan full of great scope.

From the banks of the Arax river and Lake Sevan,
The crystal fountains of the capital Yerevan,
The Arpa river, the Chermoug waters for cures right,
The snow on Arakadz mountain-top, spotless and white.

This is the birthplace of our forefather Haig,
Not forgetting Pel and Vartan and Vasag,
Long is the list of our authors and writers,
Brilliant scientists and medical doctors.

Trodden underfoot by the Turkish invaders,
The Tatars, Azeris and other usurpers,
From the West came the Greeks and the Roman legions,
The Persians, Kurds and Mongols from far regions.

With the holy blood of our brave youths sanctified,
Are our fields where also our villagers perspired,
The holy monks in monasteries with incense prayed,
The green pastures with lilies and roses perfumed.

You left your homeland homesick and longing,
To kiss its holy soil ever waiting,
You are confident that there is still time,
However, the years went by in no time.

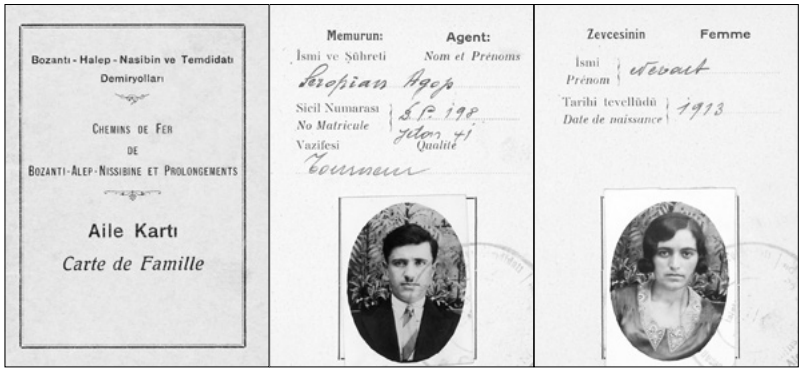
Your father and mother rest in peace in Peria,
Your grandfather and grandmother in Kessaria,
You and your wife are not far here in Boutj Hamoud,
Will your children continue to live in Beirut?

Raphael H. Seropian

Family photograph: seated, mother Haigouhi and father Armenag
Standing, left to right, brother Garbis, sister Takouhi, Hagop

Family photograph: in the courtyard of our house in Salibeh Aleppo 1938

Hagop and Nevart Seropian, 1932



Bozanti - Halep - Nasibin ve Temdidati Demiryolları

Chemins de Fer de Bozanti-Alep-Nissibine et Prolongements

Aile Kartı

Carte de Famille

Memurun: Agent:

İsmi ve Şöhreti — *Nom et Prénoms*: Seropian Agop

Sicil Numarası — *No Matricule*: 8.S. 198

Vazifesi — *Qualité*: Yolcu 41

Kondoktör

Zevcesinin Femme

İsmi — *Prénom*: Nevart

Tarihi tevellüdü — *Date de naissance*: 1913

Railway staff family card

932/80

ARCHEVÊCHÉ ARMÉNIEN
DU LIBAN
B. P. N° 409
BEYROUTH-LBAN

Beyrouth, le 13 Juin 1932

N° 56

Certificat de Mariage

Nous, Soussigné Archévêque Yéghiché Jeroyan Vicaire Catholicossal des Arméniens du Liban, certifions que Monsieur Hagop fils de Arménak Séropian, originaire de Konia, et Madame Nevart fille de Jesabet Aboudès-Serian, originaire de Konia sont mariés, suivant les rites de notre eglise, à Beyrouth le 8 Mai 1932 et que la bénédiction nuptiale leur à été decrée par le Prêtre Nersès Zoghayemezyan

En foi de quoi nous délivrons le présent certificat de mariage pour servir aux fins requises.

LE VICAIRE CATHOLICOSSAL
DES ARMÉNIENS DU LIBAN

Archévêque Yéghiché Jeroyan

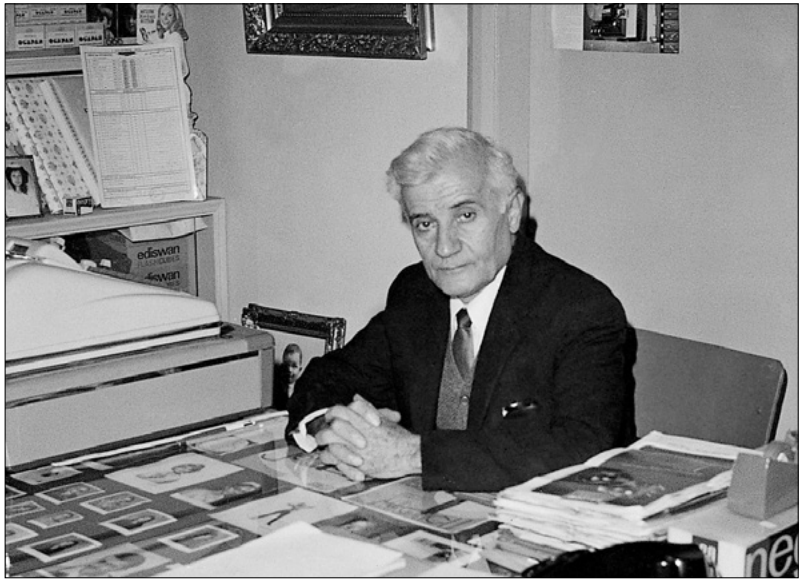
Vicariat Catholicossal Arménien du Liban

Marriage certificate

The family of Hagop and Nevart Seropian, Aleppo, 4 March, 1961. Seated, centre, mother Haigouhi. Standing, left to right, Armenag, Zareh, Arsenouhi-Sirvart and Raphael

Hagop and Nevart Seropian, Beirut, 1965

The children: left to right, Armenag, Raphael, Zareh and Armenouhi-Sirvart, Beirut, 1967

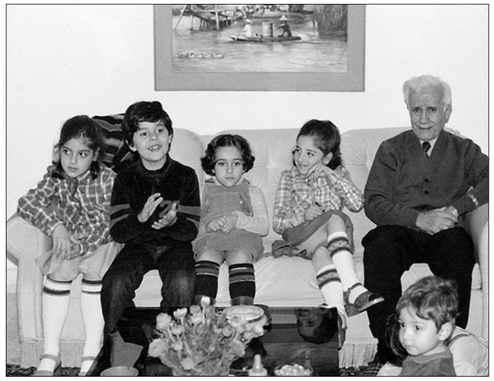


Hagop Seropian in his office, Beirut, 1974

Cover of manual written by Hagop Seropian

Membership document of the railway management, Aleppo, 1953

Hagop Seropian operating his lathe, Beirut, 1972



The second post-Genocide generation members of the Hagop Seropian famil

Seropian Family Tree

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