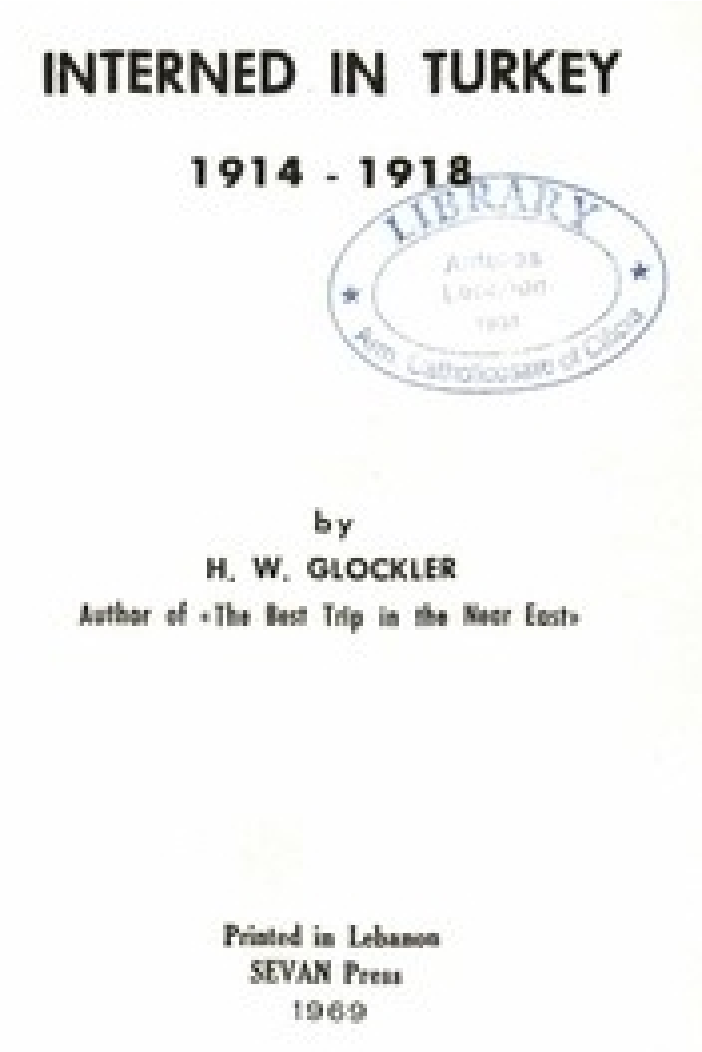
THE SAD ODYSSEY OF A HISTORIC MANUSCRIPT

Posted on March 6, 2013 by Keghart


INTERNED IN TURKEY

1914 - 1918

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by
H. W. GLOCKLER
Author of «The Best Trip in the Near East»

Printed in Lebanon
SEVAN Press
1969

Category: Opinions



> *By Antranig Chalabian*
> *Translated and abridged*
>
> *by Vahe H. Apelian, 6 March 2013*
>
> ***The below article appeared in Simon Simonian's "Spurk" weekly in Beirut (April 19, 1970), at the publication of Henry Wilfrid Glockler's "Interned in Turkey 1914-1918". Dr. Antranig Chalabian narrates the prolonged saga of the historic book's publication. I thank the Vartan and Sassoun Simonian brothers for locating the article from the archives of their late father, Simon Simonian.***

I received a letter from an American professor[1], dated August 28, 1967. In it he informed me that he had a friend in New Jersey by the name of Henry Glockler who had witnessed Urfa's heroic battle and had written a book, in 1918, about the event. He had been unable to publish the book. The professor was asking whether Armenians would be interested in the manuscript. I asked for a copy. I also told him that I would bring the manuscript to the attention of Beirut's Urfa Compatriotic Organization.A copy of the 150-page manuscript arrived soon after. Some of the papers had turned yellow and others were on the verge of falling apart.

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The author was born in Beirut and had spent a part of his life in this city. He graduated from the American University of Beirut in 1908 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He had also taken a two-year business administration course. Later he received M.B.E.[2] Order and Medal from His Highness King George VI and the Order of Cedar[3] from the Lebanese Government.

In 1915, as a Briton and thus a subject of a country hostile to the Ottoman Empire, he was deported to the interior of Turkey. On his way to exile he stopped in Urfa and came across destitute Armenian deportees. Witnessing their miserable condition, he wrote a heart-wrenching but beautiful description of their plight. He became eyewitness to the city's heroic battle.

Urfa's battle for existence is unique. The heroes of Van had a glimmer of hope that they would be rescued by the advancing Russian Army. The Mussa Dagh Armenians had the sea backing them and thus had a semblance of hope for rescue. When the Armenians of Urfa waged their decisive battle for existence they were cut off from the rest of the world and could harbor no hope from anywhere.

The names of heroes, such as Mgrdich Yotneghparian, Sako, Rasdgelenian are not mentioned in "Interned in Turkey". The author, a young foreigner, does not recognize them. However, whatever is mentioned in the book it's about the Armenian plight and the decisive battle of the lion-hearted Armenians of that city, waging a battle to death without the slightest hope of rescue. The splendid and yet agonizing descriptions make the book a very valuable eyewitness account. The book heightens and broadens for posterity the memory of Urfa's heroic battle from the confines of its historical record in Armenian.

It is such a heroic battle's eyewitness account, by a non-Armenian, that we had at hand. I approached the Urfa Armenian Compatriotic Organization.

The presence of wealthy Urfa Armenians in the compatriotic organization was a hopeful sign and I had no doubt that the manuscript would generate a lot of interest. I naively thought that the descendents of the Yotneghparian and Rasdgelenian heroes would find the manuscript a treasure trove.

I wrote a letter to the Committee of the Urfa Compatriotic Organization. After a long delay, the committee members asked to see the manuscript. I sent it.

Thirteen months after submitting the manuscript to the committee, I was hopeless. I approached Garbis Kazanjian, a committee member, and asked him to have a meeting with the rest of the members. This sympathetic Urfatsi told me outright, "My friend, do not rely on others; do it yourself."

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At an exhibition about Yeghern[4] , in the West Hall of the American University of Beirut, I met Kersam Aharonian[5] . I said, "Mr. Kersam, there is a valuable manuscript ……."

"Let the Urfatsis have it printed," he answered, without taking his eyes off of the exhibits.

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I collected the manuscript and headed to Antelias to meet Archibshop Karekin Sarkissian[6] and ask for his advice. "Antranig, I know few people who will be interested. They have set aside a little money as well for projects such as this. I will personally hand the manuscript to Vahe Oshagan[7]."

I got in touch with Oshagan. He read the manuscript and was very enthusiastic. "This is very good and should be published. However, the other committee members must read to make a decision," he said.

The second reader of the manuscript was Vartkes Der Garabedian[8]. He spoke positively about the manuscript and about publishing it.

It was time for a third committee member, Prof. Shavarsh Torigian[9], to read. He was away in Japan. Upon his return, I handed the manuscript to him.

In a telephone conversation, he said, "It is good and should be published. Presently we are engaged in the publication of the works of Lepsius[10], therefore we cannot assume the responsibility of publishing the manuscript."

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The elderly author of the manuscript, having come to his wits' end, wrote to me, "I am sending you $500 dollars. Have the manuscript printed and distributed. I will donate the proceeds of the copies sent to me to a worthy Armenian cause."

We came to an agreement with the printer[11] and printed the manuscript that had waited to see the light of day for the past 50 years.[12]

Notes:

[1]Prof. Stanley Kerr, the author of "The Lions of Marash".

[2]Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

[3]The National Order of the Cedar is a civil and military State Order of Lebanon. Established on Dec. 31,1936, the order is the second highest honor bestowed by Lebanon.

[4]Refer to the attached link regarding the term: http://www.armenianweekly.com/2013/01/04/the-great-calamity-hoax-what-medz-yeghern-actually-meant-for-the-survivors/

[5]Kersam Aharonian (1916-1981) was an author and the longtime editor of "Zartonk" Armenian daily in Beirut.

[6]The late Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin I Sarkissian.

[7]Vahe Oshagan (1922-2000) was a prominent Armenian author, poet and editor.

[8]Vartkes Der Garabedian was a community leader and the first elected chairperson of the Homenetmen 1st World Committee, a post he held until he was gunned downed in West Beirut during the Lebanese Civil War.

[9]The late Prof. Shavarsh Torigian was a prominent political scientist and the author of the “The Armenian Question and the International Law”.

[10]Johannes Lepsius (1858-1926) was a German Protestant missionary, Orientalist, and humanist with a special interest in trying to prevent the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire.

[11]The late Simon Simonian, editor and publisher of "Spurk" weekly in Beirut.

[12]Sevan Printing Press was owned and operated by Simon Simonian.