

GÉRARD DÉDÉYAN

AGO DEMIRDJIAN

NABIL SALEH (+)

Pour mon collègue de l'université d'Athènes, Hervé Georgelin, éminent chercheur et traducteur pour tant de sujets qui m'intéressent, à commencer par Smyrne, mais aussi pour les populations non musulmanes de l'Empire ottoman, Juifs, Arméniens et autres chrétiens orientaux de notre temps, sujets abordés diulement, grâce à une précieuse polyglotie,

The Righteous and People of Conscience of the Armenian Genocide

en très amical hommage, et en souvenir des rencontres avec mon père, Charles Dédéyan, gardien, avec son frère Christian, de la mémoire de Smyrne,

Montpellier, le 4 mars 2024

Gérard Dédéyan

Preface by

YVES TERNON



HURST & COMPANY, LONDON

CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xv
<i>Preface by Yves Ternon</i>	xvii
<i>Authors' Acknowledgements</i>	xxvii
Introduction	1
PRELUDE: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	15
THE HAMIDIAN AND CILICIAN MASSACRES: SOME REMARKABLE INDIVIDUALS	17
1. THE HAMIDIAN MASSACRES	19
2. PIERRE QUILLARD (1864–1912)	21
<i>Poet and playwright who loved classical culture and sacrificed his work and career for the cause of the Armenians</i>	
3. BERNARD LAZARE (1865–1903)	29
<i>Armenian suffering as a mirror of Jewish persecution</i>	
4. JEAN JAURÈS (1859–1914)	39
<i>Prophet of human rights</i>	
5. ALPHONSE CILLIÈRE (1861–1946)	47
<i>Diplomat enamoured of Turkish culture and passionate about justice for the Armenians</i>	
6. ESSAD BEY	55
<i>Forerunner of the Muslim Righteous of 1915–16</i>	
7. ROSE LAMBERT (1878–1974)	61
<i>Compassionate evangelism</i>	
THE OTTOMAN RIGHTEOUS	65
8. THE MUSLIM RIGHTEOUS?	67
<i>Reflections on a denomination: Religion, compassion and social justice</i>	

CONTENTS

9. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS	75
<i>Senior Ottoman officials who refused to take part in the annihilation of the Armenians</i>	
10. HAMID BEY (D.1919)	79
<i>Vali of Diyarbekir</i>	
11. HÜSEYİN NESİMÎ BEY (1868–1915)	83
<i>Kaymakam of Lice, faithful to his religion</i>	
12. ALI SABİT ES-SÜVEYDİ	87
<i>Deputy kaymakam of Beşiri</i>	
13. HILMI BEY (D.1919)	89
<i>Mutasarrif of Mardin, faithful to his religion</i>	
14. ALI SUAD BEY	93
<i>The 'Armenian Patriarch'</i>	
15. FAİK ALİ OZANSOY (1876–1950)	97
<i>Poet and mutasarrif of Kütahya: for the sake of family honour</i>	
16. HASAN MAZHAR BEY	99
<i>Vali of Angora and president of the Mazhar Commission</i>	
17. MEHMET CELAL BEY (1863–1926)	105
<i>The 'Turkish Oskar Schindler'</i>	
18. MUSTAFA AGHA AZİZOĞLU (D.1921)	111
<i>Faithful friend of the German Bethesda Mission for the Blind</i>	
TRIBAL CLANS	115
19. THE CHARISMATIC ALEVIS OF DERSİM	117
20. THE KURDS	121
<i>A rare but valiant defence of the Armenians</i>	
21. THE ZAZAS	125
<i>Protectors of the Armenians</i>	
22. THE YAZİDİS OF JABAL SİNJAR	127
<i>A persecuted community who welcomed the Armenians</i>	
23. SHEİKH HAMU SHIRU	131
<i>An exemplary Yazidi protector of the Armenians</i>	
24. FAİZ EL-GHUSEİN	135
<i>The Great Arab Revolt and testimony on the genocide</i>	

CONTENTS

25. TESTIMONY OF GENERAL JEAN-MICHEL BİLEMDJIAN	143
<i>The story of his father Ovhannes and his rescue by a Righteous Arab</i>	
26. ABDUL HALİM ÇELEBİ	147
<i>Compassion among the Sufi</i>	
FAMILIES	151
27. TESTIMONIES REVEALING A RESPECT FOR OR COMPROMISE WITH THE CONCEPT OF 'ADÂLA	153
28. THE SOMOUNDJIAN FAMILY	163
29. THE KAZARIAN AND SAKOYAN FAMILIES	167
30. THE DERDERIAN FAMILY	173
31. THE DAMLAMIAN FAMILY	177
THE WESTERN RIGHTEOUS	183
32. HUMANITARIANS	185
<i>Missionaries, members of religious orders, health workers</i>	
33. MONSIGNOR ANGELO MARIA DOLCI (1867–1939) AND POPE BENEDICT XV (1914–22)	187
<i>The 'Angel of the Armenians' and the 'Pope of Peace'</i>	
34. PAUL BERRON (1887–1970)	195
<i>'Action Chrétienne en Orient' (ACO)</i>	
35. CLARENCE USSHER (1870–1955)	201
<i>American doctor and missionary in Van</i>	
36. TACY ATKINSON (1870–1937)	207
HERBERT ATKINSON (D.1915)	
<i>The sacrifice of a life, the testimony of a journal</i>	
37. HENRY H. RIGGS (1875–1943)	211
<i>Evangelist missionary and witness to the genocide and acts of humanity</i>	
38. BERTHA MORLEY (1878–1973)	217
<i>Missionary and protector of Armenian girls</i>	
39. RAY TRAVIS (1899–1965)	221
<i>From the defence of Ayntab to the establishment of the Jbeil orphanage</i>	

CONTENTS

40. BEATRICE ROHNER (1876–1947) <i>Swiss missionary who tried to negotiate with the Young Turks</i>	223
41. JAKOB KÜNZLER (1871–1949) AND ELIZABETH KÜNZLER-BENDER <i>'In the Land of Blood and Tears'</i>	229
42. ANNA HEDVIG BÜLL (1887–1981) <i>From Haapsalu to St Petersburg</i>	237
43. MARIA JACOBSEN (1882–1960) KAREN MARIE PETERSEN (1881–?) <i>A charitable and effective partnership</i>	245
44. KAREN JEPPE (1876–1935) <i>The 'Danish Mother of the Armenians'</i>	255
45. BODIL KATHARINE BIØRN <i>Healthcare pioneer and witness in words and images</i>	263
46. JOHANNES LEPSIUS (1858–1926) <i>'Guardian angel of the Armenian people'</i>	269
47. ALEXANDRA TOLSTOY (1884–1979) <i>Continuing the humanitarian legacy of Leo Tolstoy</i>	275
48. AARON AARONSOHN (1876–1919) ALEXANDER AARONSOHN (1888–1948) SARAH AARONSOHN (1890–1917) <i>A genuine empathy with the Armenians</i>	279
DIPLOMATS	287
49. FERNAND ROQUE-FERRIER (1859–1909) <i>Originator of the right of humanitarian intervention</i>	289
50. GIACOMO GORRINI (1859–1950) <i>A diplomatic mission to support the Armenians</i>	297
51. HENRY MORGENTHAU (1856–1946) <i>Denouncer of Turkey's 'crimes against humanity and civilization'</i>	301
52. LESLIE A. DAVIS (1876–1960) <i>American consul moved by compassion to overcome his preconceptions</i>	307
53. OSCAR S. HEIZER (1869–1956) <i>American consul general and witness to savagery and greed</i>	315

CONTENTS

54. GERMANY: A SPECIAL CASE <i>Germany and the Armenian Genocide</i>	323
55. HARRY STUERMER <i>Putting ethics before patriotism</i>	329
56. WALTER RÖSSLER (1871–1929) <i>German consul who went above and beyond the call of duty</i>	333
57. ARMIN T. WEGNER (1886–1978) <i>Righteous on behalf of the Armenians and the Jews</i>	341
THE MILITARY	349
58. REAR ADMIRAL LOUIS-JOSEPH PIVET (1855–1924) AND VICE ADMIRAL LOUIS DARTIGE DU FOURNET (1856–1940) <i>Two men of conscience</i>	351
59. ABBÉ JULES CHAPERON (1877–1951) <i>Army chaplain and pioneering humanitarian</i>	361
JURISTS OF COMMITMENT	369
60. ANDRÉ MANDELSTAM (1869–1949) <i>Russian Jewish lawyer who championed protection of the Armenians</i>	371
61. RAPHAEL LEMKIN (1900–59) <i>Jewish jurist who coined the concept of genocide</i>	377
THE RIGHTEOUS AT A DISTANCE OF PLACE OR TIME	385
62. LEADING FIGURES IN NEAR EAST RELIEF	387
63. ANTONY KRAFFT-BONNARD (1869–1945) <i>From humanitarian dedication to political commitment</i>	391
64. JAMES BRYCE (1838–1922) <i>'Proof in hand': the reality of genocide</i>	397
65. ANATOLE FRANCE (1844–1924) <i>The long struggle for human rights, the Armenian cause and peace</i>	403
66. JACQUES DE MORGAN (1857–1924) <i>A dream of Eurasia, a passion for Armenia</i>	411

CONTENTS

67. AHMET REFIK ALTINAY (1881–1937)	415
<i>A passion for history and historic truth</i>	
68. FRANZ WERFEL (1890–1945)	419
<i>From Armenian resistance on Musa Dagh to Jewish resistance in the ghettos</i>	
69. FRIDTJOF NANSEN (1861–1930)	425
<i>Polymath who devoted his exceptional talents to aiding survivors of the genocide expelled by Turkey and all stateless peoples</i>	
EPILOGUE: THE RIGHTEOUS, AVENGERS AND BRINGERS OF JUSTICE	435
70. THE TRIALS OF THE YOUNG TURKS	437
71. SOGHOMON TEHLIRIAN (1896–1960)	439
<i>Avenger of the Armenians</i>	
CONCLUSION	451
<i>Index</i>	459

KAREN JEPPE (1876–1935)

The 'Danish Mother of the Armenians'

Thousands of Armenians who would otherwise have been condemned to die of starvation or other fatal consequences of the persecutions were saved thanks to Karen Jeppe, who championed the values of humanitarianism and solidarity throughout her life. Educated, open-minded and compassionate, she occupies a special place in the history of the Armenians after the genocide.

Karen Jeppe was born in Gylling, Denmark, on 1 July 1876, the daughter of a schoolteacher father who instilled her with humanist values and a love of nature. Modern in his thinking, he supported the idea of education for women and girls, and when Karen was thirteen, he sent her to live with his parents in Germany in order to learn the language. This she did with great alacrity, displaying a remarkable gift for languages that would enable her to learn six more in due course.

It was when she was teaching at a boarding school in Copenhagen, at the beginning of 1902, that she heard the head teacher H. C. Frederiksen, prompted by an article he had read, speak about the persecution of the Armenians in Turkey. The article, by the great writer and humanist Aage Meyer Benedictsens, described the massacres of Armenians perpetrated by the Turks in 1896.

Aage Meyer Benedictsens and Johannes Lepsius

Aage Meyer Benedictsens (1866–1927), born to a Danish Jewish father and Icelandic mother, was an outstanding figure, a champion

of human rights and one of the first true world figures in Denmark. A philologist by training, he travelled throughout Eastern Europe and Asia and spoke Kurdish, Persian and Hindi, among other languages. He was deeply disturbed by the persecution of the Armenians. On one of his journeys, he met the German Protestant missionary Johannes Lepsius, an encounter that was to prove a turning point for him. In 1902, he founded a secular association called Danish Friends of Armenians.

In late February 1902, Jeppe attended a meeting at which Benedixsen spoke about the plight of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, which he had witnessed at first hand. So moving and persuasive was his description of these events that Jeppe began to seriously consider joining the Danish Friends of Armenians, whose leaders were determined to continue the struggle and promote the role of Denmark in bringing aid to the Armenians in the Middle East, and which was already working in the field.

Since it lacked the funds and contacts that were needed to operate autonomously in the region, the association set up a partnership with the more experienced Deutsche Orient-Mission, founded by Lepsius, which concentrated its activities around the city of Urfa in south-eastern Anatolia. At this time, the response to human tragedies was shouldered by private organizations and individuals rather than by government institutions and representatives. It was up to ordinary people, moved by the horror of the events that were unfolding, to contribute their efforts to the different initiatives set up to supply aid by various means to the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The work was carried out largely by Christian missionaries, whose motivation was primarily religious.

Teaching and professional training among the Armenians

When Jeppe learned that Lepsius was looking for a female teacher for his school in Urfa, she applied for the post and was accepted. So it was that on 1 October 1903, after a lengthy journey across Europe and Asia Minor, she arrived in Urfa, where hundreds of Armenians had gathered to greet her.

Jeppe was a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher. Using an audio-visual method designed for rapid language learning, she added to the

languages she had learned as a girl and within a year was fluent in Armenian, Arabic and Turkish. Using the same method with her pupils, she was able to reduce the time needed to teach them one language and use it to teach them a second one. Her reputation as both a teacher and an administrator grew daily, and she became a prominent figure in the region. Driven by a determination to educate the children and strengthen the Armenian community, she used her teaching experience and intuitive methods to broaden ideas about teaching and improve the traditional curriculum in Armenian schools. Furthermore, other institutions became aware of the success of her methods and adopted them, and so these gradually became integrated into the educational system for the entire region. In parallel with her teaching activities, meanwhile, Jeppe took over as director of the German orphanage in Urfa.

It is worth stressing that Jeppe's activities were far from limited to the sphere of teaching. She was well known for her enlightened outlook and her practical approach, which drove her to find meaningful solutions to the problems facing the Armenian community. It was for this reason that she gave special attention to the development of professional training programmes, putting the emphasis on gaining specific skills. Convinced that Armenian children who were apprenticed to a trade would be able to earn their own living, she was confident that education and apprenticeships would together keep many young Armenians from a life on the streets.

Jeppe put forward ambitious plans for enlarging existing workshops and setting up new ones, and even raised the idea of buying a plot of land to raise livestock. With other Danes there, she was determined to foster a wide range of economic opportunities for the Armenians by publicizing the quality of their work and the products they made. However remarkable these efforts were, they were not sufficient, nonetheless, to ensure the survival of the Armenian community, which was still under threat and was also vulnerable to diseases, the treatment of which involved further expense. The funds that were made available to Jeppe were therefore of vital importance for the Armenians, who needed them for medical treatment and for food and clothes.

Massacres of 1909, genocide of 1915–16

Jeppé was a witness to the massacres that took place in Adana in 1909, which left many thousands of dead in the vilayet of Adana alone. But even in these extremely stressful conditions she carried on with her work: every day she would take survivors of the massacres into her home, securing food and other essential items for them and providing all kinds of support to the children who were left orphaned and homeless. It was at this time that she adopted an Armenian boy, Missak, and a girl whom she called Lucia. Later she would write a book about her time in Urfa, calling it *Missak* after her son.

After the outbreak of the First World War, a new wave of massacres was unleashed, and this time they were clearly organized by the Young Turk government. Once again, Jeppé organized aid for the survivors in Urfa. She also organized the distribution of food and water to the Armenians who were being deported from Urfa to Der Zor in the Syrian desert. Despite the extremely tense situation on the ground, she refused to leave her pupils. Though fully aware of the danger to her own life, she remained at her post and succeeded in saving thousands of Armenians. The enterprising methods she used included disguising some as Kurds or Arabs and hiding others in the cellars of her own house.

Jeppé did not adopt the attitude of a missionary, moreover, never laying the emphasis on the religious aspects of her activities, and always trying to find ways to re-establish cohesion between different ethnic groups by focusing on support, education, trades and Armenian culture. To gain the positive results she sought, she was ready to work not merely with Protestant missionary organizations and patriotic Armenian associations but also with Muslim leaders and the local population. According to her chief biographer, Ingeborg Maria Sick, Jeppé's attitude to the Armenians was 'scientific', or anthropological: in order to help the Armenians in as efficient a way as possible, she wanted to know everything about their language, religion, traditions and attitudes. She wanted to 'observe and be sensitive to the distinctive characteristics of the Armenian people, their faults and their virtues, to listen to the beating of their heart, just like when she and her father used to listen to the secrets of nature'.

In 1918, suffering from physical and emotional exhaustion, Jeppé returned to Denmark. But not for long, as her heart belonged with the Armenians: 'My place is in Urfa', she would say. So she started to look for a way to go back.

In Syria with the League of Nations

In 1921, Jeppé arrived in Aleppo with a mandate from the League of Nations. As the Aleppo director of the Commission for the Protection of Women and Children in the Near East, her mission was to trace Armenian girls who had been forced into slavery during the period of the genocide.

Some 100,000 Armenians—most of them women, orphans or traumatized children, poor, sick or jobless—were scattered throughout the region. Between 20,000 and 30,000 women and children were living in captivity in Muslim households, the victims of abductions, forced marriages, rape and sex slavery, as attested by numerous first-hand accounts and diplomatic reports. Using funds that she raised in Europe, Jeppé managed to buy back large numbers of women and children from Arab slave owners.

In 1922, the situation deteriorated yet further, as fresh waves of Armenian refugees arrived in Aleppo, victims of the abandonment of Cilicia by the French government. In 1922 and 1923, Jeppé set up rehabilitation centres, medical services and food supplies for the refugees, as well as orphanages, clinics and schools. In all these ways, she strove to re-create the elements that go to make up a society, and to heal the wounds caused by the conflicts.

Agricultural colonies and craft centres in Syria

Jeppé also positioned herself as a champion of the cultural identity of the Armenians. Under the auspices of the League of Nations, she worked on a number of projects that in her view would help secure the future of the Armenians. The most ambitious of these was the planned settlement of Armenians in new agricultural colonies set up in rural areas throughout north-eastern Syria.

Far more than just a missionary, Jeppé always adopted a thoroughly practical approach, seeking to find effective and lasting

solutions to improve the economic position of the Armenians. Thanks to her initiatives and her tireless efforts, their economic situation did indeed gradually get better, and they were able to set up more workshops and businesses. The establishment of a tannery, a weaving factory and a dye works not only created badly needed jobs but also generated income to support other important projects. Jeppe even launched a clothes-making venture, with models and designs brought from Denmark, while always taking care to incorporate traditional Armenian techniques. In another successful venture, she bought up Armenian handicrafts to sell them on the Danish market. The initiative she displayed in spotting local resources and building on them ensured that the Armenians were able to take an active part in the reconstruction of their own community.

Another project sprang from an agreement she managed to make with a wealthy Bedouin sheikh, Hajim Pasha, who owned a strip of land on the eastern side of the Euphrates. Jeppe resolved to meet him and make him an offer. After lengthy negotiations, she succeeded in persuading him to agree to rent part of the land to her at a very reasonable price, and an agreement was drawn up between them, based on mutual respect. Hajim was enthusiastic about the idea of supporting this courageous woman. By 1924, Jeppe had amassed enough farming land to feed around thirty families. Hajim Pasha went on to become an extremely good friend to Jeppe, helping her in her missions while also using his social standing and authority in the region to ensure the safety of the Armenian settlers. Jeppe explored every possible means of establishing good relations between the Bedouins and the Armenians, and she succeeded in founding six small Armenian farming villages outside Aleppo that continued to prosper in more recent times.

In 1933, after a visit to Denmark, Jeppe fell ill with malaria but made a partial recovery. In 1935, however, she suffered a more serious recurrence of the disease while staying at her 'White House' in the agricultural colony. She was taken from Tineh, one of the villages she had founded, to the French St Louis Hospital in Aleppo. There, on 7 July 1935, despite the efforts of the medical team, she succumbed to her prolonged struggles with illness and exhaustion, leaving behind a void in the Danish humanitarian presence in Syria that it would prove impossible to fill.

A short but highly constructive life devoted to the Armenians

At her death, Karen Jeppe was only fifty-nine years of age, but although her life was short, her legacy remains immense. She devoted her life to the Armenian people, and she had no regrets. In a letter to her friend Ivara Nyholm, she explained that her life and the tasks she set herself were hard but not complicated, because her goal was always clear: to improve the living conditions of the Armenians. She had found her place, quite literally, and her only major anxieties were her fragile health and the constant pressure she put on herself through her conviction that she could never afford to lose a political battle. She was buried in the Armenian cemetery of Aleppo according to the rites of the Armenian Apostolic Church, as was her expressed wish.

Over three decades as a social worker with specialist understanding of Armenian affairs, including six years as the director of a League of Nations refugee agency, Jeppe displayed an unwavering spirit of innovation, humanity and compassion. She invariably stressed the importance of preserving the ethnic and cultural identity of refugees, while also balancing this with the need to resettle and reintegrate them into the wider community. Her ideas have undoubtedly contributed to the development of modern humanitarian aid programmes.

In 1946, the orphanage Jeppe founded in Aleppo became the first Armenian high school in the city, the Karen Jeppe Djemaran, later the Karen Jeppe Armenian College. The Yerevan International Film Festival (also known as the Golden Apricot Festival, after the fruit that according to legend is Armenian in origin), set up in 2004 under the presidency of the Canadian director Atom Egoyan, has honoured Karen Jeppe with the title 'Danish Mother of Armenians'.

Sources and further reading

Studies

- Bjørnlund, Matthias, 'Before the Armenian Genocide: Danish Missionary and Rescue Operations in the Ottoman Empire, 1900–1914', *Haigazian Armenological Review*, 26 (Beirut, 2006), pp. 141–56;
- Bjørnlund, 'Karen Jeppe, Aage Meyer Benedictsén, and the Ottoman Armenians: National Survival in Imperial and Colonial Settings', *Haigazian Armenological Review*, 28 (2008), pp. 9–43.

THE RIGHTEOUS AND PEOPLE OF CONSCIENCE

Donikian, Denis, 'Carl Ellis Wandel (1871–1940), diplomate danois' and 'Lettre à son ministre de l'ambassadeur danois en poste à Constantinople datée du 4 septembre 1915', in *Petite encyclopédie du génocide Arménien*, p. 316; pp. 156, 158.

'Karen Jeppe: A Righteous Woman for the Armenians', Gariwo, <https://en.gariwo.net/righteous/armenian-genocide/karen-jeppe-7530.html>

Lous, Eva, 'Karen Jeppe (1876–1935) Jeppe Karen Vel', *Dansk kvindebiografisk leksikon*, 2003, <https://www.kvinfo.dk/side/170/bio/825/>

Shemmassian, Vahram L., 'The League of Nations and the Reclamation of Armenian Genocide Survivors', in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003.

Storr, Katherine, *Excluded from the Record: Women, Refugees, and Relief, 1914–1929*, New York: Peter Lang, 2009.