Pages from My Diary

Edited by Yervant Babayan
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ARCHPRIEST DER NERSES BABAYAN

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FOREWORD

The present work represents the memoirs of Archpriest Nerses Babayan who survived the Armenian Genocide and documented his daily experiences in a diary.

The Armenian Genocide, the first of its kind in history, has been documented by historians, contemporary diplomats and sociologists, and still continues to be documented by researchers in Europe and the United States. If there is one field related to the genocide that has been ignored until a few years ago, that is the memoirs of survivors.

Needless to say, memoirs of survivors have been published since the 1920's. I should add that, for those interested in survivors' histories, there is lots of material in most of the histories and/or memorial books devoted to the various cities, towns and villages in historical Armenia and published largely by their respective compatriotic societies in the Diaspora. These books amount to approximately one hundred in number.

Since the 1970's there has been a systematic recording, either by audio or video tape, of the stories of the genocide survivors by various Armenian organizations. There are several oral history collections on audio tape, the principle ones being as follows: the collection by the Armenian Library and Museum in Watertown, Mass.; audiotape interviews conducted by students of Prof. R. Hovannesian at UCLA; interviews conducted by Prof. Harold Takooshian of Fordham Univ. (all three in conjunction with the Oral History Project of the Armenian Educational Council Inc. of Troy, NY, founded by Dr. Vasken Parsegian); the collection of the Armenian Assembly of America; videotaped interviews conducted by the Zoryan Institute of Cambridge, Mass. The largest collection of videotapes of stories of survivors.
has been compiled by the Armenian Film Foundation of Thousand Oaks, Calif., under the direction of Dr. J. Michael Hagopian. In 1993, Donald Miller and Lorna Miller published oral testimony of survivors in their book, Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide.

Father Nerses Babayan was born in Aintab in 1887. He was educated at Aintab, at St. Paul College in Darso, and in the Armenian Monastery of Jerusalem. In 1910, he was appointed principal of the Armenian school in Jibin, a small town forty miles east of Aintab. In 1913, he was ordained a priest of the Armenian Church. His memoirs, written in Armenian, have been edited by his son, Yervant Babayan, and published in a book entitled "Aradeshneru Heckerov" (Along the Tracks of Memories). The present work is a translation of the Armenian text.

The memoirs of Father Babayan cover one of the most tragic periods of modern Armenian history, in which the planned extermination of the Armenians was carried out by the Ottoman government during World War I. His memories start on May 16, 1915 when he was arrested and imprisoned as a leader of the Jibin community by the Turkish authorities who accused him of all sorts of illegal deeds, such as corresponding with the British, hoarding arms for revolt against the Ottoman government, etc. He was promised freedom if he gave a certain amount of money to the Turkish officials, who, after taking the bribe, exiled him to another town and imprisoned him again. During the first week of August 1915, he was deported by train with his family and other Armenians, first to Aleppo, then Damascus and, finally, to the desert in southern Syria, from where they were driven to the ancient city of Kerek, located forty miles south of Jordan and forty-five miles southeast of Jerusalem. Thus, this group of deportees found themselves, with no housing or food, in the middle of a desert about 500 miles from their native villages, where daytime temperatures during the summer reached 130 degrees F, while nighttime temperatures dropped near the freezing point during the cold seasons.

The Armenians of Aintab, in particular, and Cilicia, in general, were deported to three places during 1915. The first group was sent to the Der Zor region in the Syrian desert, from where very few people survived. The second group was sent to the region of Hama, Homs and Seliymiye, to the central part of the Syrian desert. The vast majority of these survived thanks to the local Arabs, except the very young and old people. The third group was sent to the region of Jebel Druz and the desert areas of Jordan. It is to this place that Father Babayan and his family were exiled. Very few survived these deportation camps, because of epidemics of typhus and typhoid, malnutrition and even starvation. According to Hassan Amdja (*), the Ottoman official responsible for the camps where Armenians were deported, four hundred and seventeen out of the five hundred died in one camp soon after their arrival (**).

Luckily, one of the survivors, who recorded his experiences, was Father Nerses Babayan. His memoirs are important on three counts. First, as far as I know, no survivors of these godforsaken camps have recorded their experiences. Second, his memoirs were written on a day-to-day basis, thus avoiding errors and exaggerations that occur when memoirs are written years after the events. Third, his memoirs are important because he was not only a witness to the event but, as the leader of the Armenian community, he gave spiritual as well as moral support to the deportees. He used to conduct religious services almost every day, and these were well attended.

The second part of the memoirs is devoted to the life of the deportees in the camp in Port Said, Egypt. In August 1918, about three months before World War I ended, the surviving Armenians from Djebel Mousa (Mousa Dagh), Damascus and Jordan were sent to Port Said. This tent-city had about 10,000 refugees. Babayan was appointed one of the two supervisors of the camp's religious and ecclesiastic affairs, as well as teacher at the Sisvan School of the Armenian General Benevolent Union. He describes, in some detail, the daily life in this crowded camp which lasted for fifteen months.

The third part of the memoirs covers the days of the heroic self-defense of Aintab by its Armenian natives who had returned to their birthplace following the Armistice. Babayan reached Aintab on Nov. 21, 1919. As a member of the Welfare Committee, he was given the responsible duty of taking care of 200 poor families, and later was appointed to the important post of Chairman of the Central Committee for Supplies.

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** Thirty two of my close relatives were also deported to the Kerek region. None of them survived.

S.K.
The last part of the memoirs covers the evacuation of the Aintab Armenians and their flight to Aleppo, following the retreat of the French forces from Cilicia. Father Babayan was one of the last to leave Aintab.

He states that when he returned to Aintab in 1919, he found out, to his great sorrow, that "barely 11 persons had survived from our clan numbering between 110 and 120. The rest had been killed, annihilated in Der Zor and Meskenzh."

Babayan's memoirs is one more contribution to the stories of survivors of the Armenian Genocide, and thus an important document to combat such "revisionist" historians as Justin McCarthy, Stanford Shaw, and Norman Itzkowitz who deny that the genocide ever took place.

Sarkis Karayan, M.D.

ARCHPRIEST NERSES BABAYAN
1887–1956

Born in Aintab, Turkey, in 1887, son of Sarkis and Yester who were also born in Aintab. His grandfather, Kevork, had moved from Sassoun and had settled in Aintab around the middle of the 19th century. His father was killed by the Turks in 1896 at the age of forty. His mother, having mastered the art of Aintab needlework, has worked day and night to support the family.

Father Nerses received his elementary education in Haigazian school of Aintab, and his secondary education in Atenagan School. Being a gifted student, his education expenses were provided by the Trustees of Atenagan school.

Upon graduation, he served as teacher in the Haigazian school of Aintab, his Alma Mater, for three years. During his tenure in Haigazian, he befriended Dr. Shepard, the Chief of Staff of the American Hospital of Aintab, and by the personal intervention of Mrs. Shepard, he was admitted to St. Paul College of Darston to continue his education.

Following the decision to become a member of the clergy, he moved to Jerusalem and continued teaching and at the same time started his theological studies. Father Nerses returned to Aintab in 1910 and was appointed as the principal of Jeebin village school.

A well-known intellectual and a long time school principal, Mr. Krikor Bogharian has made the following comments about Father Nerses: "During his tenure in the village of Jeebin, he planned and executed brilliant undertakings, including renovations and new construction projects: which have collectively became instrumental in educating and enlightening the otherwise unsophisticated local population. I have served on several boards with him for twenty years. His pleasant and soft spoken personality, calm and dependable behavior have earned him the admiration and support of the people."

Father Nerses was married to Negdar Basmaidjian in 1912 and was ordained as a priest the following year. In 1915, he was arrest-
ed and exiled with his family and the entire population of Jeebin. After the 1918 Armistice and surviving the Genocide alone with his faithful congregation, he was transported by the British Forces to Port Said, Egypt, where he continued to serve as a priest and Chairman of A.G.B.U.'s day school.

Towards the end of 1919, he returned to become involved with the self-defense operations of the Armenian Aintabtzys, and assumed the chairmanship of the Central Committee responsible for war provisions. He left Aintab with the last Armenian and established residence in Aleppo, Syria, where he serves as a dedicated priest to the survivors of the Genocide for thirty years. The Armenian Church authority of Aleppo sent him on three separate occasions to the Northern Provinces of Syria for a unique mission amongst the displaced Armenians. Following the arrangements made by the Danish benefactress, Miss Karen Yeppe, and starting in 1926, for three years, he visited the Der Zor city environs to reclaim Armenians doomed for assimilation in non-Armenian homes. He has been instrumental in establishing new Armenian churches in Azaz, Hassije and Kamishly in Northrn Syria.

He has been a founding member of the Guiliguiyan Union in 1921, and was elected Chairman in 1923. As a community leader, he served as a member of the Aleppo Board of the Azounich Hospital of Lebanon for many years, and secured the annual wheat requirements of the Hospital from the Kamishly Armenians.

During 1935 to 1951, he served as a member and as the Chairman of the Armenian National Old Age Home Board of Trustees in Aleppo, Syria, now known as Armenian Old Age Home. As a product of his efforts and with the assistance of Dr. Asadour Altoonian's wife, Mrs. Altoonian, as well as the cooperation of the Armenian Evangelical and the Catholic leadership of Aleppo, the Old Age Home became the proud owner of a three story building.

He moved to Beirut in 1953 with his family, where he entered his eternal rest in 1956.
Father Babayan with his mother Yester to his left, and aunt Yeva Kaledjian to his right, 1921, Aintab.
From left to right: Archbishop Ardavazt Surmeyan, Primate of Northern Syria; His Holiness Papken I Gulserian, Catholicos of the Sea of Gilicia; Father Nerses Babayan. This picture was taken in 1934, on the occasion of the visit of Papken Catholicos to 21 Armenian inhabited cities and villages in Northern Syria.

Picture taken on the occasion of the visit of the well known Armenian writer Arshag Chobanian to Guligian School, Aleppo, 1945. Standing from left to right: L. Karapetyan (member, Board of Trustees); M. Tazianian (teacher); Father Nerses Babayan (chairman of Guligian Educational and Benevolent Union); Vatche Vartabed Hovepian (at present Archbishop Vatche Hovepian, Primate of Western Diocese, U.S.A.); Arshag Chobanian (writer from Paris); P. Khazarian (lawyer and teacher); V. Jerejian (member, Board of Trustees); V. Barigian (teacher and actor); Yervant Babayan (principal of the school); and A. Garagossian (teacher).
Seated Dr. S. Khatchadarian (member, Board of Trustees); Dr. K. Tevekelian (teacher); H. Hindoyan (teacher, later Father Zarmayr Hindoyan).
Pages from My Diary

Rev. Father Nerses Babayan and his son Yervant, 1929.
EXILE

On May 16, 1915, I was suddenly arrested as I was preparing to return home from church. The faithful who were present there surrounded the group of soldiers detaining me and tried to free me but in vain. They were obliged to submit to the threat posed by the guns aimed at them and depart upon my request. The resistance of the faithful could have caused death to a few persons. I was not permitted to stop at home. My mother and wife, plaintively weeping, followed me along with the people until a certain point. Finally, they returned in despair to the village. Accompanied by two soldiers on horseback, I was walking to an unknown destination. We stopped here and there along the way to rest. One of the soldiers pulled a piece of white paper out of his pocket and showed it to me, saying "You see? Your mukhtar [ward leader; alderman] has put his signature and seal at the bottom of this paper. We can write whatever at the top and you will be sentenced to death. But we feel sorry for you. If you give us ten Ottoman gold pieces, we'll rip this paper up here, right before your eyes; if not, the consequence, as I said, will be death." The bargaining finished at five gold pieces.
Two hours later, we reached Kalfeti. The same soldiers took me through the marketplace and streets of Kalfeti and then to the jail. I had many acquaintances in Kalfeti, who brought me bedding and food. I remained there for two days. On the third day, along with another Armenian from the village of Ehnes, released from jail, I was handcuffed and put on the road to Berejig, under the watchful eyes of two mounted soldiers. When we left the village, they had me mount a horse, after removing my handcuffs, by arrangement of the commandant who had visited and tried to comfort me in the Kalfeti jail. Through my intervention, they also removed the handcuffs from the Armenian of Ehnes. I dismounted as we entered the town of Berejig. They put our handcuffs back on and took us to the jail. We spent a week in this jail, eating stale dry bread and onions. Nobody asked about or showed any interest in us. I knew that we would be subjected to interrogation. Therefore, I told my fellow prisoner that it behooved us to deny everything, not to state under any circumstances that we belonged to a political party, and we should respond to every question with: "I haven't heard, I don't know." On the eighth day, they took me to the Court Martial. The interrogation began with words of endearment. I was accused of being guilty of maintaining correspondence with the British, having weapons brought from Aleppo, arming the populace, keeping weapons under the flagstone pavement of the church, and Armenianizing the "gesgesis" (half-and-halves) of Jibin.

When I was preparing to respond, they politely invited me to sit down. Upon entering the room, the sight of twelve officers seated in armchairs caused me to feel hatred. Neither their flattery nor the respect shown toward me lessened my revulsion; on the contrary, it increased.

I began to speak in a very self-confident and straightforward manner. At the suggestion of the Primate, a vartabed, I had previously destroyed evidence considered damaging and therefore was not afraid.

"I have never held a gun before, let alone keep guns. I've never written a letter in English. Five years ago I was appointed principal of the Jibin school and, two years ago, I was ordained a priest. For the past five years, I have served God and my people. Aside from that, I have not engaged in any other activity. I have also served the "half-and-halves" when they have needed my services and I've done that in the name of God. If you find weapons beneath the flagstone pavement of the church and can show me any document with my signature and seal to the detriment of the state, I am prepared to hang from the gallows."

Silence prevailed. I was wondering whether or not what I said sounded convincing to them. I was intently watching the faces of the twelve officers, whose expressions struck me as being contradictory.

At that point, the villager from Ehnes having accompanied me from Kalfeti was brought in. Unfortunately, he easily confessed everything; he revealed the locations of concealed weapons and the names of the organizer. After praising him, they removed him from the hall.

Then they recommenced my interrogation, not forgetting to praise that other man's "loyalty." They tried to confuse me, alternating between flattery and severe threats, and thus putting me in a difficult predicament. Nevertheless, I remained unperturbed, continuing to repeat my previous statements. One of the twelve proposed that the interrogation be considered adequate. Revealing that he too was a native of Aintab, he said that he would vouch for me.

The president instructed me to go to the secretary and sign the interrogation paper. I read and signed it. The president subsequently told me that I was free to go. An inner joy enveloped me for I figured that I would be rejoining my family and flock.

1, 2, 3 - Villages near Aintab
4 - This was the name applied to those Armenians of Jibin, who had become bi-religious out of fear of the danger of Turkish fanaticism.
My disappointment, however, was not long in coming. When I walked down the steps, four soldiers armed with bayonets surrounded me and escorted me to the marketplace, where I was greeted with various colorful and insulting remarks and unheard-of curses. With head down, I walked the entire length of the marketplace, extremely perturbed and on edge. Finally, we stopped in front of a khan, went inside, and climbed up a flight of stairs. The bayonet-carrying soldiers turned me over to the custody of two soldiers standing on either side of a closed door, who opened it and pushed me inside. I was glad to have gotten free of the insulting remarks and curses in the marketplace. My joy doubled when I saw friends subjected to the same fate, from Aintab, Nizib, Berejig, Ehnesh and Jibin. Among them were Nerses Kurklian, Nerses Gabrielian, Khacho Khacherian and Krikor Mgrdichian, from Jibin; Sarkis Keyvanian and his father Kevork, Haroutiun Barsoumian and others, from Berejig; Khoren Varjabadian, Hagop Chekijian, Tatoul Kupelian, Hagop and Hovsep Murekian, from Aintab; and Father Der Mgrdich Mardoyan and others, from Nizib. We were twenty-four in all, and all of them were delighted to see me. A short while later, I realized that they had reconciled themselves to the concept of death, convinced that there was no deliverance from this jail. Every day the Armenians of Berejig would bring us kettles of cooked food and other edibles. Krikor Murekian was the transactor. It was he who not only brought the food but also got information about us and brought us news from the outside world. He endeavored to have us set free by bribing the high officials. Our jail cell had one door and two windows; one of them faced the yard while the other opened toward the Euphrates. My God, what a horrible, heart-rending scene! We shuddered as we looked upon thousands of dismembered human bodies endlessly bobbing on the waves of the Euphrates. We were limited to crying and lamenting on account of our useless rage. Some of us were extremely frightened; others were indifferent, seemingly prepared to join the thousands of others in the waters of the Euphrates. Many smoked, wrapping the tobacco in any sort of thin paper they could get their hands on. One time they forced me to smoke too. I had barely taken two puffs before I began to cough badly, my throat was burning and tears were flowing from my eyes.

For a while, we were lulled by a small hope when they told us that they would set us all free on the condition that we pay them 500 Ottoman gold pounds. This sum was paid but our hope was not realized.

One day, a corporal took me outside. He handed me two large pails and took me to the bank of the Euphrates, all the while shouting unspeakable curses at me. I filled the pails and returned under the corporal’s watchful eye. He took me to the bathroom, handed me a broom and commanded me to clean the fetid-smelling facility. When I returned to our jail cell, everybody was crying. I too began to cry owing to my inner turmoil and anger. The corporal made me perform this activity for three days in a row. The close-up view of the human bodies floating on the waters of the Euphrates depressed me and I was not able to close my eyes for three days and three nights. This heart-rending image came before my eyes all the time. On the fourth day, we apprised Krikor Murekian, who brought us food, of the situation.

The next morning, the chief warden-commander came, summoned me and had the corporal, who forced me to bring water from the Euphrates, whipped before my eyes and his clothes removed before sending him to jail. He apologized to me. A while later, at his own expense, he sent a sumptuous breakfast to us twenty-four prisoners. My companions had watched the whipping of the corporal from their cell window and derived pleasure therefrom. As for me, although that worthless scamp received his just punishment, this incident nevertheless left me feeling as if a dagger had been thrust into my heart.

Every day new deportees were coming from Ourfa, Aintab and
other localities. Some of them had walked for days on end. Their feet were swollen and they were crying tears of pain. They had been subjected to beatings and barbaric acts along the way. They were kept for a few days in a room near ours but confined, and then sent away, with new ones being brought in their place. The twenty-four of us, on foot, our faces turned toward the east, were speaking to the newcomers out loud, in the manner of praying, so that they wouldn’t be caught unawares before the Court Martial.

On the morning of July 1, the members of the Court Martial took us out to the yard. They read our names and divided us into two groups. They took the first group of 13 individuals elsewhere, and the rest of us, the second group, back to our cell. Two days later, those belonging to the first group were brought to the yard, handcuffed and taken away. We were suffering from anxiety, wondering where they had been taken and what our fate would be.

One day they took us to the office of the kaimakam (district governor). We waited more than ten minutes before he decided to speak, as he was busy writing. He finally raised his head and, after looking up and down each one of us, asked:

"Where do you wish to go? Der Zor or Raqqa? I’ll send you wherever you wish."

Without waiting for our reply, he resumed writing. Fifteen minutes later, he again raised his head and asked:

"Why don’t you say something? Tell me where you want to go."

"Pardon me, kaimakam bey, we’ll go wherever you send us," I replied.

Without responding, he resumed writing. Ten minutes later, he said:

"Well, you can go now, the government is setting you free; go wherever you please."

I thanked him on behalf of the group. We then hastily assembled our possessions in our jail cell and rushed toward the door, only to encounter a new disappointment. The guardsmen stopped us, stating that they had not received instructions from their com-
mander to release us. Disconsolate and depressed, we returned to our jail cell.

An hour later, the difficulty was ironed out and we were released. We were all overjoyed. The natives from Berejig went to their homes, while those from Jibin returned there with me. It was touching to witness the joy of the people as they tearfully embraced one another. My mother and wife had also come along to welcome us. My wife was holding our two-year old son Yervant who, judging from the way he threw his arms around my neck, had missed me as much as, if not perhaps more than, the grownups.

The next day, I came down with a fever and red spots appeared on various parts of my body. They put a red shirt on me and had me drink fluids made from traditional folk medicines. In two days, I was already cured.

Sad news was arriving from Aintab and Ourfā, causing anxiety among the people. They were wondering whether their deportation was local in scope or widespread, and whether their turn would come and, if so, when.

Here it was in the early morning of July 13, the eighth day after our release, and we noticed movement on the horizon. The sight of horseman approaching the village made us apprehensive. However, when they drew near, our fear subsided for they were the friendly chiefs of the nearby villages. I escorted them to our home, where they revealed that soldiers would come, besiege the village and deport us all, adults and children alike. The village chiefs had come to fulfill their friendly obligation. They suggested that if my family and I ran off with them, they would shelter us until the storm passed. Of course, I declined the offer, saying that I didn’t want to be separated from my flock; I added that I considered it dishonorable to flee and that I would stay wherever my flock was. Meanwhile, I had given the necessary instructions for the meal preparation. A table was set in the school; the members of the vestry were there and I explained the situation to them. Before the meal was over, word spread that the troops had approached the village.
Two of the vestrymen, who shall remain nameless, approached me and declared their decision to convert to Islam and remain there. I advised them against doing so but to no avail. I was compelled to say out loud: "I'm not one to change my religion. I shall gladly accept those who follow me. As for those who wish to convert to Islam and stay here, they are free to do so. I shall pray for them." As he was preparing to depart, one of the four village chiefs took me outside and expressed the desire to give me a pouch full of gold pieces on behalf of all four. When I refused, he still pressed me to accept it, whereupon another of the chiefs came over, yet, despite their insistence, I again refused. They tried to persuade me by saying that I would be forced to give bribes in order to save my life. I assured them that I had sufficient money, whereupon we tearfully embraced each other. Then they hastily departed and disappeared in the opposite direction of the fast approaching troops.

Shortly thereafter, they laid siege to the village. The vestrymen and I were waiting apprehensively inside the walls of the school. Some 10-15 soldiers stormed in and aimed their rifles at us threateningly. They were followed by a few government officials who began to issue orders left and right, one of them being to assemble all the males. We remained within the confines of the schools for two nights, naturally without getting any sleep or food. On July 15, twenty of the prominent families of the village were permitted to have donkeys to carry their bedding and other necessary supplies. Men armed with axes were waiting outside the village. They joined the five soldiers accompanying us and declared that they had come to protect us from thieves and brigands. We didn't know what happened to the other inhabitants of Jibin having remained in the village. Instead of taking the usual, short road to Berejig, the soldiers chose to torment us by making us traverse crooked, rocky roads, all the while showering us with insults and curses. We spent the night in infernal darkness and silent desolation. Nobody could sleep anyway. When we reached the banks of the Euphrates, near Berejig, the soldiers gathered up all the males. The axemen proceeded to tie us together with a heavy rope and began to swing their axes while laughing lewdly. Then they began to search our pockets and took whatever they found, including the three Ottoman gold pieces, gold rimmed glasses, watch and even the pocket handkerchief in my possession. "The Euphrates looked frightful in the darkness of night. Sometimes they would take us near the Euphrates and occasionally farther away as well. They would first pull on one end of the rope and then on the other. We were totally exhausted. We desired death with utmost sincerity. With my eyes closed, I prayed, asking God to consider that we had suffered enough. Death would be a blessing for us. It would be our only salvation. Once, they pulled the rope so vigorously that we all fell upon one another. They left us in that condition and went to rob our families. One of them searched and found my mother, whereupon he said to her, "Your son said that everything is in your possession; give over whatever you have and I shall release your son; if you don't they will kill him this minute." My mother handed him the 150 gold pieces and my wife's gold jewelry, which she kept in her sash. Suddenly the robbers began to fight among themselves and threaten each other with the axes. This gruesome comedy ended when they agreed on the division of the booty. We comforted ourselves in this tragic state of desperation with the knowledge that we still possessed gold pieces hidden in our woolen mattresses. Early the next morning, we continued on our way after the rope tying us together was untied. Finally we reached Berejig. Hagop Aga Pampalian separated from the group and began to walk toward the government house. When he soldiers grabbed him, he shouted, "I will go to the saray (governmental palace; seraglio and protest". The whip lashings sent the poor fellow sprawling on the ground; then, uttering plaintive cries he managed to rejoin the group. We were not permitted to go to the marketplace for even half an hour to buy some food.

We were transported in skiffs to the opposite bank of the Euphrates. I was revisited by the hideous scene which I had
observed from the window of my jail cell. There were no longer any corpses floating on the water’s surface. The thought occurred to me that the massacre must be over and I tried to comfort myself with this thought. However, I couldn’t forget the suffering we had endured, nor could I relax not knowing what our destiny would be.

We were taken to Jarablous, where we took refuge under trees in a garden. The "protectors" accompanying us were replaced by a new group. They permitted us, one by one to go to town and buy food. Despite the presence of soldiers overseeing us, suspicious characters wandered around. Fear gripped us, especially at night, so I had no choice but to have the youths of our group take turns in keeping watch. We remained there seventeen days. On the seventeenth day, the order came from superiors to load us into a railroad car headed for Aleppo.

On August 6, we arrived at the Choban Beg station and after alighting from the car were taken quite some distance away. From afar we saw a wagon burning; it was the one containing our possessions. According to some, the wagon had caught fire on account of large and small sparks sent flying by the burning wood used for lack of coal. Others, however said that the fire was premeditated and had been set on purpose. It made no difference to us, whether it was accidental or deliberate, because the bitter reality was that whatever we had as minimum security was now destroyed for good. Like us, there were many others who had kept their money, including some of their gold, in the woolen stuffing of their mattresses to use in difficult times. No one attempted to extinguish the fire. Right before our eyes everything—our last hope—burned up and vanished. Meanwhile, the bandits were waiting to snatch the melted gold and silver pieces.

Our wagon was detached and the rest of the train departed. When we reached Aleppo, I sent a note to Catholicos Sahag⁶, taken to him by an Armenian employee at the station. In my note, I explained our situation and requested that the Catholicos merely get bread to us. Shortly thereafter, large baskets full of bread were brought to us. There were some 90 persons there, huddled along the walls of the station buildings, and we eagerly ate the bread, finishing it all in a few minutes. Twenty-four hours later, we were again herded into a railroad car. During my days in Jarablous, by chance I had met Dr. Hovhannes Hreshdagian, who had given me a large bottle of anti-malaria pills. These pills were very helpful to many.

Our next stop after Aleppo was Damascus. An Armenian station employee approached and requested information about us. I explained our situation, in response to which he brought a plentiful supply of bread and cheese a half hour later. After we spent twenty-four hours in Damascus, our train got moving again. We didn’t know where we were being taken or when this tortuous journey would end. Our humiliating condition as beggars and the soldiers watching over us had just become unbearable to us.

I continued praying to God and asking him to deliver us from this endless misery.

The train rushed ahead day and night. We finally reached a station where the soldiers ordered us to get out. There was no place to take shelter. It was frightfully cold. The stationmaster came up to me and said he was Greek. He spoke excellent Turkish. He immediately sent one of his assistants and had him bring us a sufficient amount of bread, tomatoes and onions. I in turn, distributed it among the deportees. Contrary to the stationmaster’s suggestion, the soldiers did not permit us to enter the station house. Thus, we were forced to spend the night huddled at the base of the station walls and shivering from the cold.

The following morning, the Greek stationmaster came over to us, accompanied by a few other individuals who were surely Greek too. They had brought a generous supply of bread and cheese. I

⁶ Sahag II Khabayan, native of Kharpert, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia from 1902 to 1939.
thanked them a thousand times over and praised God. Towards noon, they brought quite a few donkeys, mules and camels. Although many of the deportees, particularly the women, were not used to riding animals, this means of transportation, no matter how difficult, was a thousandfold more preferable than the torture of walking.

We next arrived at the city called Kerek and were taken to a public school which was half burned down. Kerek is a city built on the side of a mountain east of the Dead Sea, 950 meters (3117 feet) above sea level; it is surrounded by mountains and has a pleasant climate which, however, gets torrid in the summer months. It lacks drinking water so water is brought from a half-hour's distance and sold. Kerek has a population of 10,000, the majority of which is Greek and Moslem, and which also includes Catholics.

The biblical name is Kir of Moab or Kir-Hariser. The region is called the land of the Moabs (Isaiah 15). For many years, the Egyptian and Syrian princes vied with each other over control of the city. In 1893, it was captured by Hilmi Pasha and subjected to Ottoman jurisdiction.

In Armenian history, Kerek is mentioned in connection with the Rubenid dynasty. Bishop Asvadzadour mentions in his History of Jerusalem that the Armenians had a church there by the name of Sourp Kevork. Among the manuscripts in the collection of the St. James Monastery of Jerusalem is a menology dated 1316, whose commentary contains the words "I, Levon, king of the Armenians, present this book to the Armenians of Karak [Kerek] for them to read at all times in church."

Following the departure of the Crusaders, many Christians remained in Kerek. In response to their appeal, the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem sent a clergyman there. A Catholic priest also went there but did not achieve success.

At night on the day of arrival in Kerek, a tall man wearing a fez suddenly entered the school. He approached me and introduced himself as Ahmed Effendi, müfis müdürü or general director.

He expressed regret concerning our pitiful condition and tried to comfort us. He approached each one of us separately and offered words of consolation. Fear and mistrust colored my thoughts as I wondered what the intention of this Turkish official was.

He left and returned an hour later with a bundle in hand, saying "this package is for the child." He caressed and kissed Yervant, then suggested that I follow him. We walked quite a distance and, along the way, he continued to offer me solace. Finally, we entered a house whose door was opened by a well-dressed elderly man. Speaking fluent Turkish, he welcomed us in a kindly manner. We were escorted to the living room where Ahmed Efendi introduced him as "my good friend, Avdi Effendi." The host's wife and four children appeared and kissed my hand. My anxiety disappeared. Avdi Effendi was aware of the Turkish atrocities. I was surprised when he blamed the Turkish authorities in the presence of Ahmed Effendi. After a while, a table was set for us and I was asked to bless it. Although I was very hungry, the food just wouldn't go down, no matter how much Avdi Effendi urged. Sensing my emotional state, he said:

"Don't worry, tomorrow morning all your flock will be fed. Rest assured that we will do our utmost to make you comfortable here."

He spoke to me and Ahmed Efendi in Turkish but switched to Arabic when conversing with family members. I noticed that the servants had brought out a rug, mattress, blanket, pillow and food. After spending two hours with this honorable family, Ahmed Efendi took me back to my group. In my room I found the provisions sent from this house but my mother and wife were very worried prior to their arrival. Beating her knees, my mother cried, assuming that the Turkish official had taken and killed me. The Greeks of Kerek, headed by Avdi Efendi, were very helpful to us in
all ways. While the government provided us bread and onions, it was thanks to Ahmed Effendi that the allocated amount was doubled. However, the bread and onions paled in value compared to the generous assistance given to us by the Greeks. Again, thanks to Ahmed Effendi, we were transported to the fort where each family had their own room.

A month after our arrival in Kerek, a few individuals from our group decided to convert to Islam, thinking that, by doing so, they could return to their properties. With that in mind, they went to see the Islamic religious leader of Kerek. When Ahmed Effendi informed me of this unpleasant development, I tried in vain to dissuade them. Then, one day, government officials came, brought white turbans and made their conversion official.

The government proceeded to give us — those who refused to convert to Islam — a hard time. In the days following the conversion, unfavorable rumors began to circulate concerning Ahmed Effendi. The friendly attitude displayed by him toward the Armenians had garnered the attention of certain circles. Avdi Effendi informed me of this and requested that I steer clear of the Armenian apostates. This suggestion to exercise caution made me assume that the apostates themselves had played a role in this matter. This suspicion became more rooted in my mind when I recalled that, with Ahmed Effendi's help, we had sheltered a few Armenian youths who were army deserters and subsequently arranged their safe passage to Jerusalem. If this instance came to light, then both we and Ahmed Effendi would be put in jeopardy.

It wasn't long before my anxiety turned out to be realistic. One morning, a high-ranking officer came to our house and, naturally, I was overcome with fear. Displaying a kindly and polite manner, he inquired about our situation, wanting to know if we were satisfied with our condition and the treatment received from the Turkish government officials. The thought occurred to me that something sinister had to be lurking beneath the surface of his seeming kindness, so I tried not to fall into his trap. I conjectured

the rumors circulating about Ahmed Effendi had most likely prompted this officer's visit. I spoke about Ahmed Effendi's strictness and his official attitude toward us, stressing at the same time that we didn't have the right to expect anything different from him, as he was a good man. He proposed that I accompany him but, in the interim, I had secretly sent word to Avdi Effendi. By the time we reached the latter's house, a marvelous table had been prepared in honor of this high-rank officer.

"What's this, Avdi Effendi, a wedding celebration?" asked the guest in jest.

"Commandant Bey, when I found out that you were in town, I felt obligated to invite you to my humble home. Your Excellency's presence is an honor. Honor us more often with your visits," Avdi Effendi answered.

A running, ordinary conversation ensued during dinner. We were waiting impatiently for the officer to talk about Ahmed Effendi, for we knew that the officer had come as an inspector to ascertain the veracity of the rumors in circulation. While the latter was busy eating, Avdi Effendi said in order to broach the topic:

"Commandant Bey, I wished that Ahmed Effendi could have been here too but I learned that he hasn't been feeling well for the past few days."

"I saw him. He's good man, isn't he? What's your opinion? Papaz Effendi doesn't care for him all that much, right?" he said and turned to me.

The host immediately cut into the conversation. In expressing his opinion about Ahmed Effendi, Avdi Effendi showed that he was astute and circumspect, with enough life experience to be able to speak with the required skill and versatility with this young man having achieved the rank of commandant through a very rapid promotion. He neither praised nor criticized the individual in question and combined as follows:

8 - "Priest Gentleman." Reference is to Archpriest Fr. Nerses Babayan.
"He's not a bad person. He's a good man to the extent that he knows his duty as an official of the Ottoman government and performs it flawlessly."

"And what about his relations with the Armenian refugees?" the officer asked.

"As far as I know, he's not very friendly with the Armenians. Papaz Effendi doesn't complain because he knows that Ahmed Effendi is fully executing the orders given by his superiors and is obligated to do so," replied Avdi Effendi.

The Commandant Bey was quite pleased by the lavish spread. However, he was relieved, of course, and he too confirmed our opinion. In any event, we advised him to be more careful and circumspect. I, in turn, stated that I was obliged to maintain a certain distance from him as a precaution.

Following the commandant's departure, the pressure exerted on us increased; it became more intense, to the point of constituting a threat. If we kept refusing to apostatize, they would exile us. We remained inflexible and the threat of exile was carried out. Traveling by camel and on foot, we reached Khenzireh, our new station of exile. Along the way I was tormented by a myriad of anxieties. I wondered what sort of oppressive life awaited us and whether we would be massacred as punishment for our unyielding tenacity to maintain our faith, to remain Christian.

One can imagine my surprise therefore, when we were greeted by a large number of villagers led by their chief, Sheik Faress, and shouting exclamations. Many women, pointing at us were crying. We subsequently learned that Avdi Effendi had relayed the necessary information about us to the village chief.

Sheik Faress turned the males in our group over to the men of the village to be entertained that night. The women and my family were taken to his tent, which was huge, the size of a chapel. He had a goat slaughtered and barbecued. We ate with gusto, drank aromatic Arabic coffee and slept comfortably. The sheik arranged for night watchmen to stand guard until the next morning.

The following individuals who had refused to convert to Islam came with me to this village, along with their families; Hagop, Nishan, Sarkis and Hovhannes Pampalian; Toros Hagopian; Nerses and Kevork Kurklian; Krikor, Santour and Ohan Mgrdichian; Mgo Karayan; Avak Avakian; Joher Apoyan and Kara Karayan.

In the morning, Sheik Faress called upon the villagers to render assistance to us Armenian deportees. In a few hours' time, a large quantity of wheat, flour, cleansed and cracked wheat, lentils olive oil, butter and salt was assembled in front of the sheik's tent. I couldn't believe my eyes; this station of exile, Khenzireh, became a paradise for us. The sheik divided the gathered food stuffs among us. For eight days, he gave us shelter in his tent while securing lodging for the other 13 families. The respect and hospitality exhibited by this man toward us seemed unbelievable. We were simply astonished. I prayed to God and thanked Him for protecting and taking care of us through this noble, compassionate man and these kind villagers.

Eight days later, I asked Sheik Faress to secure modest living quarters for us too. "No," he said, "you are my guests. God sent you to me. He sent you so that I may have the opportunity to do good." In the end, though, I persuaded him and he put his house in the village at our disposal. He introduced me to the Greek priests in the village, with whom I would go to church every Sunday and participate in the divine liturgy by singing the Armenian hymns. The Greeks liked our hymns very much, especially "Der Voghormia" (Lord Have Mercy) and "Soup Sourp" (Holy Holy). The Sheik also arranged for me to make the rounds of home blessings with the Greek priests.

Many of the members of our group found work and began to earn a little bit of money. Consequently, we no longer required assistance.

During my stay in Khenzireh, the Armenian refugees who had taken refuge in Tafileh wrote several times, requesting that I go there for at least 15-20 days. Although I had difficulty obtaining
permission to leave, I went there. My presence was a source of spiritual comfort. Every morning, I performed the divine liturgy in a house, and the faithful were always present. A typhus epidemic had caused widespread ravage, with hundreds of unburied corpses piled upon each other at a considerable distance from the village, making a deplorable scene. Although quite a bit of soil had been tossed on the corpses, they still remained largely exposed. I had two ditches dug, the bones gathered up and dumped into the ditches. On Sunday morning, I went with the refugees to the burial site and performed a requiem mass.

Tafleh corresponds to Tophel, as mentioned in Deuteronomy (1:1). Located there is one of the seven castles erected during the period of the Crusades, whose stones were used to erect a new one, which presently is in a state of semi-ruin.

During my days in Tafleh, I became infected with typhus. On my return to Khenzireh, I became quite ill and my condition was hopeless. Thank God, I miraculously recovered. No sooner had I recovered when, on the morning of Wednesday, November 2, 1916, there came a knock on the door and someone entered, saying "Bless, Father". The visitor was Father Der Vahan Guldalian in secular attire. He stayed at our house Thursday and Friday. On Saturday, I sent him, accompanied by my brother, to Avdi Effendi in Kerek, with the request that he send Father Vahan on to Jerusalem. A week later, the latter informed us that he had reached his destination safely. Der Vahan of Aintab was one of twenty priests who had been exiled to the village of Buseyra. Of them, the following had refused to apostatize: Fr. Der Nerses Tavoukjian, Fr. Der Karekin Bogharian, Fr. Der Vahan Guldalian, and Fr. Der Mesrob Koshgerian. The others - priests, a Catholic varbabet and a minister - had feigned acceptance of Islam. I consider it unnecessary to record their names.

We were content in the village of Khenzireh as we had practically no trouble earning a living. Moreover, the most important thing was that we felt secure because we had a protector like Sheik Faress. But, alas, everything was turned upside down. One night, the village was unexpectedly besieged. Turkish soldiers rushed into houses, spreading terror and panic everywhere. After conducting a minute search of our house, they took me to the commandant, who greeted me with insults and curses.

"You are sheltering army deserters and thus betraying the government which is caring for you and your ilk. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? But we're the guilty party for not having butchered you. Tell me right now, where have you kept the army deserters?" shouted the commandant.

"I haven't seen any deserters. This is nothing but slander," I replied.

"You're a papaz yet you don't fear God enough not to lie. Take this traitorous giaour (infidel) inside."

I was pushed into a dark cell where I spent the night. Sheik Faress was my only hope.

Toward noon the next day the same commandant ordered, "Let this dirty giaour go."

I was greeted on my way home by one of the sheik's servants who told me that it wasn't only the houses of the Armenians that were searched but those of all the Greeks too. Naturally they had not found anything. The servant conveyed the sheik's greetings and implored me not to leave my house for a few days.

Meanwhile, my mother and wife had spent a sleepless night, weeping dolefully. A few days later, some of the soldiers and the commandant departed. However, the village's status as an autonomous community came to an end. With the establishment of a Turkish guard house, the village was placed under permanent surveillance. For one week, I didn't leave the house, awaiting the sheik's advice. Clearly he was exercising caution. He was right in doing so, for the Turkish soldiers were on patrol day and night. The situation gradually worsened. During daytime, in the absence of the males, the Turkish soldiers began to enter the houses on various pretexts and annoy the women. Two soldiers had attempted
to rape a Greek woman. The villagers, angered, rose up in protest without, however, being able to have the culprits punished or, at least, get them to leave the village. The sheik protested in vain to the lieutenant commander but his pleas fell on deaf ears.

I became very upset over the fact that life was being made difficult for the 250 Greek families of the village on our account. The Catholics and the Moslems, comprising altogether 35-40 families, were exempt from such trouble. After deliberating long and hard in consultation with the sheik, we sent a messenger to Avdi Effendi to explain the situation and have him intervene with Ahmed Effendi, if he deemed it appropriate.

A month later, Ahmed Effendi had succeeded in reaching a decision; namely, the Armenians of Khenzirch should be relocated back to Kerek. In the interim, Armenians had come there from various sites of exile. When we reached Kerek after much tribulation, we found the rooms of the fort were occupied by Turkish soldiers. We were left out in the open, unsheltered. Avdi Effendi had begun to fear the Turkish regime and reluctantly kept his distance from me. The governmental subsidy of bread and onions had ceased. Many of the Armenians who had newly arrived in Kerek had found employment and were working. They helped us get settled in basements, for better or worse. Others were engaged in farming a half-hour’s distance from the city, in a valley called Vadi. A few persons suggested to me that I too pursue farming, with the promise of assistance. My family and I descended to the Vadi valley and built a cane hut for shelter. We cleared the weeds and began planting. The soil was fertile and, in a short period of time, we harvested a good crop of cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplants, beans, etc. My brother, Armenag, would then take this produce to town and sell it to the grocers. Our success was due, in large part, to Hovhannes of Sis, and Krikor and the Vahan Bursalian brothers. In this way, we temporarily made a living for ourselves. However, we couldn’t withstand the excessive heat and humid weather of August, on the one hand, and the mosquito onslaught on the other.

We as a family, along with others, came down with malaria. We had no recourse but to leave Vadi and go back up to the city. Having saved a considerable sum of money, we rented a house. Our money ran out in the course of a few months, however, and we were faced with hunger. My mother and wife began to weave woolen socks, which my brother would take and sell to well-to-do families. Nevertheless, the profit wasn’t enough to sustain us, and we began drifting toward poverty, our stomachs often being more empty than full.

We used to gather in the evenings and chant the Vespers with two deportees from Kayseri, Kevork Katsakhian and Karnig Bakhtiarian, both of whom had served the church as choristers in their hometown. A large number of worshipers would be present. One night, after the service, these two friends of mine, reflecting on my family's situation, offered to help me out. I accepted their offer of assistance and asked them to rent a store in the area inhabited by the Christians. Two days later, they took me to see a store located on one corner of a busy intersection. Then they rented it, paying one year's rent - six mejid (180 piasters) – in advance. The next day, while we were busy cleaning up the store, they came with a wagon full of merchandise. I didn’t expect this at all and I was moved by the kindness and concern shown by my friends. Together, we emptied the wagon and then they helped us stock the store by arranging the lentils, chickpeas, cleansed and cracked wheat, beans, raisins, halvah, soap, candles, etc.

I had amazing and swift success. The customers would often wait in line. My mother and brother would take turns helping me. A priest becoming a storekeeper had probably created interest in town. One person brought three tins of butter, and another three tins of olive oil, for me to sell on their account for a certain profit. In a few months' time, I paid Katsakhian and Bakhtiarian the full sum of money they had lent me. I also paid the cost of the butter and olive oil. With the profit from the store, we not only lived comfortably but also were able to accumulate a small saving.
However, this life bearing a semblance of normalcy was again thrown into disorder. Turkish soldiers sometimes shopped at my store. One day, the commandant of the Turkish troops in Kerek came with two soldiers and demanded payment of a tax which amounted to more than my one-month’s profit. I explained that I was not in a position to pay the desired amount. He threatened me and left after deciding to give me a week’s time. During that period, they had begun to give harsh treatment to the Armenians and, generally speaking, all the Greeks, numbering 5000, approximately half the population of Kerek. With the exception of 5-6 Catholic families, the rest of the people were Moslem Arabs. The Turks had begun to provoke the religious feelings of the Arabs. A week later, when the commandant came, I had no choice but to pay the sum demanded, thinking that I had prevented a misfortune by doing so. I was mistaken. A few days later, my store was robbed at night. The same day a few stores and businesses belonging to Greeks had also been robbed. Fortunately, we had some provisions at home, as well as a sum of money accumulated through saving. A few weeks after these night robberies, word spread that the British had gone on the offensive on the Palestinian front. One day, before dawn, we heard the sounds of gunfire. Shortly, we learned that the Turks had fled and the Arabs had charged the government building and set it on fire, after plundering it. Thereafter, the Arabs had elected to cause the Armenian trouble. Total anarchy prevailed. Fortunately, Avdi Effendi regained his prior authority and prevented the occurrence of more serious damage. Ahmed Effendi had departed two weeks earlier.

When the situation calmed down, I went to see Avdi Effendi. According to him, the victory of the British on the Palestinian front spurred hope for imminent peace. However, this area was still in jeopardy inasmuch as the Turks’ return was probable. In that event, the lives of the Armenians could be in peril. Prior to their final flight, the Turks could avenge their defeat by massacring the Armenians.

"Therefore, I advise you," concluded Avdi Effendi, 'to divide up into groups and gradually proceed toward Jerusalem. If you concur, I’m ready to help you. First, I must send word to the chief the most influential tribe in the region, which is allied with the British, to be prepared to receive you on the border. You shall walk up to that point; I can obtain donkeys and camels, if you wish. Think it over and decide."

"There’s no need to think it over," I said. "You’re well informed about the situation. It’s our place to express thanks to you. I’m perfectly in agreement with you but I must inform a few important individuals so the people won’t be caught off guard. If it’s convenient for you, let’s meet tomorrow to make the final arrangements."

The next day, I invited 13 elderly experienced Armenians to a consultation and informed them of Avdi Effendi’s proposal. They rejoiced and showed their enthusiasm. We decided to proceed with caution in mentally preparing the people for this move so as not to create panic. Those with means volunteered to pay the rental fee for the animals which were to be put at our disposal, as well as to shoulder the cost of having armed men accompany us for security reasons. At the end of the consultation, I suggested that a souvenir be given to Avdi Effendi. Kevork Katsakhian volunteered to have the goldsmith, Garo, prepare a decorative cross in the form of an insignia. The same day, I told Avdi Effendi the outcome of our consultation. It was deemed appropriate that this operation be carried out in groups of 10-12 persons. Ten days later, we dispatched the first group. In the evening, the armed men having accompanied the group brought back a note from the individual in charge, informing that they had arrived safely and had been greeted by chiefman Sherif.

The relocation of all the Armenian refugees of Kerek to Jerusalem took one month. On May 8, 1918, a group of five of us went to see Avdi Effendi before departing. We were accorded a warm and amiable reception around the dinner table. As I pinned
the cross-insignia on Avdi Effendi’s chest, I expressed the gratitude of our people for his paternal care and the valuable assistance rendered to us by him. He was overcome with emotion, and so was I. When we embraced one another, I felt our teardrops mingling. He was 76 years old and I was 31, so we were connected by the mutual affection between a father and a son. His wife and children came and kissed my hand. At the point of departure, I prayed and blessed them.

The final group, consisting of twenty persons, set out the following morning. As we approached the border, we caught sight of the British flag which was waving at the top of Sherif’s gigantic tent. Along with his attendants, Sherif greeted us and escorted us to his tent. A lamb had been prepared, along with rice flavored with almonds and spices. Imitating Sherif, we too ate the pilav with our palms and the meat with our fingers.

The Refugee Station at Port Said - Egypt

We set out at midnight – the men on foot, the women on the donkeys furnished by Sherif. When we reached Khalil Rahman, Father Abraham’s birthplace, British military policemen greeted us and policed us in a large building. They offered us bread and halvah; then they escorted me to the base commander. For more than an hour, he questioned me and I responded, explaining in detail the atrocities committed by the Turks, starting with Jibin and ending with Khenzireh and Kerek. On the other hand, I underscored the noble treatment and various kinds of assistance, both moral and material, offered to us by the Greeks of Kerek and Khenzireh, particularly Avdi Effendi and Sheik Faress. While I was speaking, another officer was taking notes on my statements.

Hospitality was extended to us in Khalil Rahman for eight days. On May 16, we were transported to Jerusalem. Several hundred refugees from all over had sought refuge in the St. James Monastery of the Armenian Patriarchate. It was terribly crowded and disorderly there. From the first day on, we witnessed scenes that were quite moving. Relatives and friends who had lost one another were reunited unexpectedly. The embraces and stirring
stories which ensued defy description. Practically every day there were new arrivals from the liberated regions. After a long wait, we were finally given a room. International Red Cross officials distributed underwear and clothing to the newcomers. On a daily basis, bread, cheese, halvah or olives were given indiscriminately to all the refugees having taken shelter in the monastery.

On August 3, the Red Cross arranged for us to set out for Vadi Serar. After remaining there for 15 days, we reached Kantara on August 18. We were taken directly into karantina (Turkish for quarantine); we bathed in tubs with water saturated with disinfectants. Our clothes and possessions were likewise disinfected.

On August 25, by steam tug, we reached the tent-city of Port Said which was established on an extensive plot of ground along the eastern edge of the Suez Canal. Having arrived there already were the brave Armenian sons of Musa Dagh, who had been rescued from Turkish massacre through the benevolence of the commander-captain of a French steamship. There too were the Armenian refugees from the towns and villages liberated by the British forces. The population of the tent city was close to 10,000. The British Governor, Mr. Haig, had Armenian policemen under his command to maintain order and cleanliness.

The tent city had a huge church made of matting. I joined the eight priests who had previously established themselves there. Canonical hour services and the divine liturgy took place every Sunday. The church was always full of believers. The Governor, Mr. Haig, was often present during the divine liturgy.

The Armenian General Benevolent Union had founded the Sisvan orphanage and Sisvan school. On September 18, 1918, I was appointed catechism teacher, principal's secretary, and calligraphy instructor for teachers at the Sisvan school. Archbishop Torkom Koushagian, Primate of Egypt, had appointed Mampre Vartabed Siroonian diocesan vicar; the latter, in turn, appointed father Vartan Varteresian of Suedye and me as advisors with the function of supervising the religious and ecclesiastic affairs of the tent city.

The tent city had its own – and very well-organized – hospital where Armenian doctors worked. There, I met and became a close friend of Dr. Hagop Bayramian, a native of Kilis; he was a very kind man, whose compassion and readiness to help the people was greatly appreciated. There, too, I became friendly with Mr. Sarkis Yenikomshooian, likewise a native of Kilis and one of the teachers of the Sisvan orphanage.

A regular meal was provided to the tent city's population while cheese, halvah, olives or canned meat was served with bread for supper in the evenings. The children would wait in line in the mornings for a bowl of rice pudding. In consideration of the children's dignity, and based on our appeal, the regimen of rice pudding ceased, and powdered milk was given instead. The affluent inhabitants preferred to prepare their own meals, particularly since many of them could not eat mule meat. Some individuals were quite troubled on that account. The rich used to go to the city of Port Said once or twice a week to do shopping.

Life was practically running a normal course, except for the inconvenience of living in tents. To the credit of our people, I feel obligated to gladly assert that no serious incident to blemish the Armenians' reputation occurred among the 10,000 people occupying this extensive territory. Although trivial problems sometimes arose, incidents of the sort that disturbed the general peace were nipped in the bud. Appreciable in this context were the vigilance, impartiality and zeal of the Armenian policemen. However, the most authority was enjoyed by Governor Haig who was as likable and kind-spirited as he was strict.

Life in the tent city continued in this manner until November 1918. The hearts of the Armenians were overcome with joy over the news of the retreat of the Turks from the war fronts. The imminent total defeat of the Turks seemed inevitable, and all of us were anxiously awaiting that good tidings.

The good news of victory finally came.

On November 11, 1918, the Allied victory was announced to
the world. That day was like a holiday as the entire tent city was in exaltation.

The exhilaration and excitement brought on by the victory soon gave way to extreme disorder. Everybody was seized with the fever of returning home. However, the Governor, displaying his characteristic English reserve and upper lip, remained indifferent to the popular sentiment, which began as a request and became transformed into a demand. He endeavored to calm the people down, appealing to them not to hurry. At his suggestion, we priests, in turn, also tried to persuade the people not to rush. So did the policemen.

Governor Haig told us: "It's true that the war ended with the Allied victory. Turkey and its allies were defeated but the fate of Cilicia and the countries of the Near East has yet to be decided. Black clouds have gathered in the sky above that region. Our government and the International Red Cross are willing to keep you here for a certain period of time. It is prudent to stay here until the status of Cilicia and the countries of the Near East becomes clear. I understand the popular psyche. They wish to immediately return to their towns and villages and regain possession of their homes and properties. They look to see them. This is a natural phenomenon, following two oppressive years of exile. However, unfortunately, probable dangers exist in that area. Please explain to the people, make them understand that rushing back there is wrong. Persuade them to stay here a while longer."

This is how the Governor formulated his point of view and suggestions during a meeting with some individuals who enjoyed a certain authority in the tent city.

Meanwhile, the Armenian National Delegation in Paris sent three successive letters, exhorting the people not to rush and confirming the dangers pointed to by the Governor.

Unfortunately, all these measures were ineffective. The inhabitants of the tent city stubbornly persisted in their demand to immediately return to their hometowns. They refused to accept the fact that dangers existed. Nostalgia prevented the application of reason as the long-suffering people shouted "Home, home!" The popular demand rose like an uncontrollable wave.

This indefinite situation continued for months. Finally, the Governor was obliged to yield and the people departed, on group after another, in the span of a few weeks.

For the last time, Mr. Haig had come to the station on November 5, 1919 to wish us a good journey. His final words of farewell were the following:

"I'm glad that I succeeded in being helpful to wretched Armenian refugees. I consider that more than mere humanitarian work. I loved you because I had the opportunity to get to know you, to know and appreciate your merits as a civilized people. I loved you in your misfortune not with pity but with admiration. I regret that it was not possible to persuade you against hastening your departure. I'm afraid that you too shall be subjected to the fate of your one and a half million martyrs. May God be with you."

As the Governor spoke, his voice was trembling and his eyes were moist. I sensed that he was having difficulty keeping his emotions in check. I wished to respond and say that we had understood him very well and shared his apprehension but we too, like him, were powerless in terms of dissuading the people. I was barely able to whisper a few words of gratitude. When we embraced, he said, "Farewell, may God protect you." With the steam engine hissing, the train slowly began pulling out of the station. The final stop of our exile was fading in the distance. However, the joy I felt over returning home was clouded. I was pondering the severity of the admonitions of Mr. Haig and the National Delegation, inasmuch as the existence of danger was clear and eminent.

Mr. Haig occupied an important, even primary, place in my thoughts. This man was, without question, an Armenophile. However, he never expressed his feelings in words. He listened to the complaints and protests presented to him without becoming
vexed, and he spared no effort to satisfy everyone to the greatest extent possible. He gladly provided the necessary supplies for the church, orphanage and school.

And, behold, this reserved thoughtful man was no longer able to restrain his emotions in the final hour of the last day and expressed himself in words and tears. That notwithstanding, it must be admitted all the same that our people earned this noble man's sympathy through their orderliness and politeness.

Absorbed in mixed thoughts, I didn't realize that we had come all the way to Damascus. After stopping there for a few hours, the train continued on its way and, on November 9, we reached Aleppo. We were taken to a garrison abandoned by the Turkish soldiers; thousands had flocked together there. The Executive Committee of the National Union, having a compatriot of ours, Mr. Sarkis Krajian, as chairman, was in charge of resolving the issues of temporary shelter, food, etc. Numerous groups having arrived in Aleppo before us were waiting in line. Our turn came twelve days later.

We reached Aintab on November 21, 1919.

**During The Heroic Self-Defense of Aintab**

Aintab, November 21, 1919.

After the weariness of deportation and a series of wanderings having lasted four and a half years, I was finally glad to be back in my birthplace again. However, my joy was not pure. Recalling the words of Mr. Haig, the Governor of the tent city-refugee station of Port Said, I became sorrowful; I was wondering, were misfortunes and new tribulations lying in wait for us? This apprehension of mine became more pronounced when it was said that it wasn't safe outside of Aintab. I fell into despair, despite being so impatient to immediately go to Jibin, my post, to regain possession of my house and garden, to rejoin my beloved flock and praise God, kneeling in front of the altar of my church. Alas, there was neither a flock left nor the church. Eyewitnesses stated that the Turks had destroyed the church in order to use its polished stones. My sorrow became heavier, when a few days later, it became apparent that barely 11 persons had survived from our clan numbering between 110 and 120. The rest had been killed, annihilated in Der Zor and Meskench.

My mother's sister, Eva Kabakian, was exempted from deportation but had lost her husband two years earlier; now she was living
with her six children. My family was confined to one room in my aunt’s house. We had nothing – neither beds nor chairs or kitchen utensils. My aunt immediately gave us the necessary items.

Two days later, I went to church. Three priests, who had returned to Aintab before me, were there: Der Nerses Tavookjian (Senior Der Nerses), Der Karekin Bogharian and Der Vahan Guldalian. I became the junior Der Nerses. We would perform the canonical hour services every morning and the Divine Liturgy every Sunday in our well-built St. Asdvazadzkin (Holy Mother of God, or Holy Virgin) church. Large numbers of the faithful would be in attendance. The Armenian population was estimated at 17,000-18,000. An administrative body named National Union was formed with representatives of the three denominations and three political parties for the purpose of managing community and religious affairs. The senior Der Nerses, an educated, wise and active clergyman, was the president of the National Union.

A month after the Armistice of November 11, 1918, British forces occupied Aintab. In effect, the Turks were crushed. Two or three weeks prior to our arrival in Aintab, the British forces had been replaced by French forces. The general impression was that the latter adopted a weaker — and it is even possible to say, friendly — attitude toward the Turks.

I was 18 to 22 years younger than the three other priests, such that the more difficult tasks, both inside and outside the church, were assigned to me. In the first place, I was entrusted with the responsibility of distributing letters. Then I undertook the obligation of opening the door to the church every morning before dawn, together with the chorister Nazar and the sexton Murek.

A month after my arrival in Aintab, the National Union appointed me chairman of the Welfare Committee, whereupon I was handed the roster of two hundred indigent families. Every Thursday, I would distribute relief with the assistance of my dutiful and conscientious co-workers. I soon noticed that the majority of the indigent families were wearing torn or patched clothes. I took the matter up with well-to-do manufacturers of striped cotton cloth and secured from them a sufficient quantity thereof. The clothiers Manoushagian, Nazarian, Yaghsezian and Deirmanjian were particularly generous. A month later, all the indigent individuals had new clothes.

The political situation was getting tangibly worse. In order to prevent any probable danger, the National Union undertook the task of assembling the Armenian population around the church. The Armenian families, which were living in distant areas, were very cautiously relocated to the Armenian neighborhoods.

This was more foresight than precaution. In addition to the Welfare Committee, a Military Committee was formed, whose responsibility would be to organize and conduct military operations, as required. The Military Committee arranged for armed youths stationed on the rooftops of the taller buildings to keep watch in order to subdue any surprise attack.

And then the inevitable occurred.

April 1, 1920 – In the morning, my fellow Welfare Committee members and I were busy distributing relief. Suddenly we heard gunfire. We figured that something sinister was likely to have occurred. Shortly afterwards, a few persons came running into the church short of breath and related how Turks had attacked Armenians in Arasa (central marketplace). Father Der Nerses also arrived at the same moment and, after hearing the account of the eyewitnesses, dispatched me to the French army headquarters to put them on alert. Running all the way, I was out of breath when I reached the army headquarters and presented myself to the commander who informed me that he was aware of the incident and had sent troops to Arasa bazaar. On the way back, I stopped at the American hospital where a few injured compatriots were being treated. They too told what had happened. I comforted them, said a prayer and returned to the church. The National Union was holding a meeting with Father Der Nerses presiding; in the meantime, men and women, young and old alike, had already under-
taken the construction of barricades, in accordance with the previously prepared plan. The dividing line between the Armenian and Turkish quarters lay two streets' distance from my aunt's house where we were living. Worried, I rushed home. My mother was overcome with dismay and anxiety. My wife and seven-year old son weren't home. I ran towards the barricade construction that was closest to us. My son was there; he had difficulty walking toward the construction workers as he was carrying a heavy pail full of mud. My wife was also there, handing stones to those erecting the wall. There too were the men from our street as well as the relatively young women, juveniles and children, all of them engaged in work. After offering a few words of encouragement, I proceeded to visit the barricade construction workers at the entrance to the next quarter. Consecutively I visited all the entrance areas of the various quarters. Amazingly enough, in an unbelievably short period of time, the Armenian-inhabited sections of Aintab were already separated from the rest of the city with barricades higher than the average human height. By arrangement with the Military Committee and with the same speed, men bearing arms were positioned behind the barricades. Many of them had performed military service in the Turkish or other armies. Together with my fellow priest Der Vahan, I moved about till morning, encouraging our gallant soldiers standing guard at their posts.

As the supreme authority, the National Union formed a municipal council, police force, central provisions committee, judiciary body, sanitary commission, firefighters' group, financial committee and a group to distribute flyers.

The Military Committee having come into being two months earlier, under the command of Adour Levonian and Avedis Kalemkarian, was engaged in feverish activity from the very beginning, albeit with complete secrecy.

It was so enjoyable and encouraging to see all the Armenian people, regardless of denominational or political affiliation, come together with one heart and one soul, old and young alike, to defend themselves, their honor and their dignity. Everybody sensed the upcoming danger. Our fierce enemy had decided to massacre the Armenian survivors of the 1915 Genocide in order to finally seize control of Aintab. The Turks thought for sure that we Armenians who had returned from exile possessed neither weapons nor money. Moreover, they were aware that the majority of the French soldiers having reached Aintab on March 26 had departed yesterday for Aleppo, taking with them all the soldiers of the Armenian Legion.

I think that it was for these reasons that the Turks attacked us today and, fortunately, they took a beating, thanks to our serious preparation.

April 3 – The National Union had invited me to a meeting. There it was officially announced that the Welfare Committee was being dissolved and a Central Provisions Committee was being formed in its place, with me as chairman. My fellow workers would be Hovhannes Araratian, Haroutiun Basmajian, Krikor Demirjian, Asdvazadour Gulcessarian, Father Der Karekin Bogharian and Naum Dasho.

At night, a meeting of the newly formed Central Provisions Committee took place in our house. It was decided that Krikor Demirjian be put in charge of the warehouse, Asd. Gulcessarian be made treasurer and Hovh. Araratian auditor. The following decisions were also made:

1. To inventory and take charge of ready provisions;
2. To have ration cards prepared in triplicate;
3. To have arm sleeves made for all the workers;
4. To carry out the distribution of provisions on Thursdays;
5. To periodically visit the homes of indigent families.

April 6 – For the past six days, we have been fighting alone against the Turks. The fearlessness and resoluteness of our brave youths have been transformed into a prodigious force. Omnipotent God kept us under his powerful protection until today.
Today the French began to help us, knowing full well that if we are defeated and annihilated, it will be their turn next. In particular, they knew how the 500 soldiers of the French army near Ourfa were massacred by the Turks.

April 7 – The skirmishes continued yesterday and today, sometimes heated, other times light. Tonight’s victory shall remain indelible in my memory. As an Armenian, I record this with pride. Credit goes to our brave fighters. The episode is as follows. The Turks launched a full-scale attack on our positions. Our matchless soldiers not only pushed the attackers back, leveling a few of them, but also destroyed a certain quantity of their ammunition.

They celebrated this victory with rather demonstrative courage. They woke up people at sunrise by singing Armenian songs from the tower of the mosque seized by our side. The strains of “Aravon Louso” (Morning Light) as sung by our brave hero Smpad Chakhmakjian echo in my ears. This is the same Smpad who, on April 2, risked his life by throwing the first test bomb made in our arsenal on the mob which had assembled right behind the Turkish demarcation line.

April 11 – Easter. Today is the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. As usual, I went to church before dawn; the chorister Nazar and sexton Murek were there. A large number of worshipers gradually assembled. My three brother priests came. The officiating priest at mass was Father Der Nerses; in his sermon, he exhorted the people to be courageous, patient and circumspect. During the divine liturgy, cartridges fell on the church; we didn’t know if those cartridges fell accidentally or were fired deliberately. It is cause for joy that the people did not panic; rather, their reaction was largely one of indifference. Many took communion with characteristic Armenian Christian piety.

My God, why is our devout Christian people being tortured? Is it because it became the first nation to accept Christianity as a state religion and has remained faithful to its faith, a marvelous people still clinging firmly to it until the present? Proof thereof is offered by our one and a half million martyrs. Oh, I don’t want to commit a sin. However, my soul is agitated. I am having difficulty answering the very questions I’ve raised. Sometimes, against my will, I revolt like this but then I calm down, taking refuge in our Creator. During this difficult self-defense struggle we shall pray. We shall pray to God to have pity on us and consider the misery suffered by the Armenian people to be sufficient. We shall pray that He give strength to our brave and protect them.

In the evening, I attended the National Union meeting. It was decided to make changes in the composition of the Central Provisions Committee. The functions of the members were also decided on the spot. It was stated that martial law was in effect; arrangements had to be made through written orders and everybody was obliged to obey.

The new body of the Central Provisions Committee was as follows:

Father Der Nerses Babayan – Chairman
Garabed Karghayan – Warehouse Manager
Haroutiun Panjarjian – Treasurer
Yeghia Demirjian – Accountant
Hovhannes Araratian – Advisor
Asdvazadour Gulessarian – Advisor
Krikor Demirjian – Advisor
Naum Dasho – Advisor

April 13 – Considering the paucity of provisions and for the purpose of preventing a probable crisis over foodstuffs, the National Union had invited the Central Provisions Committee, Police Chief Sarkis Karamanoukian and 46 other prominent individuals to a meeting. The following decisions were reached unanimously:

Each family shall keep a 30-day supply of provisions and sell the rest to the Central Provisions Committee. All the provisions in the possession of those families which disobey this policy shall be forcibly seized. On the spot, the police chief was given the corresponding power of attorney to enforce this decision.
A 30-day supply of wheat shall be given free to the indigents, whose roster has been approved by the National Union. The cost of wheat or other provisions shall be charged to well-to-do families in need of them, again based on a 30-day limit.

The execution of these decisions was entrusted to the Central Provisions Committee, under the supervision of the National Union. All these decisions shall be written up in a notice bearing the National Union’s signature, copies of which shall be affixed to the walls of the church, prayer rooms and schools; they shall also be officially announced from the church’s pulpit.

April 14 – Today, the Central Provisions Committee held a meeting in the office adjoining the warehouse. We formed committees for appraisal, buying and selling. We also formed an investigative committee comprising trustworthy discreet persons, who shall secretly attempt to identify those who are storing their provisions.

April 19 – This morning, we had the provisions which arrived yesterday transferred to the warehouse. All the members of the Central Provisions Committee were present. After being inventoried, the provisions were placed under G. Karghayan’s charge, as always.

Toward noon my archpriest brother, Father Der Nerses, came to the church, where all of us were diligently engaged in work. After uttering a few words of praise, he gladly informed me that large quantities of flour, salt and rice would soon arrive by convoy. These provisions were purchased through the following donations: Armenian General Benevolent Union, 250 Ottoman pounds; National Union of Aleppo, 250 Ottoman pounds; and Khoren Bey Nazaretian, also from Aleppo, 500 Ottoman pounds.

April 22 – Hovh. Araratian and Yeghia Demirjian received the rice, salt and flour having arrived by convoy two days earlier and had these foodstuffs transferred to the warehouse through the efforts of 15 porters.

April 26 – Today word spread that the French troops had soundly defeated the Kemalist ruffians. Every day, a French airplane is circling above the city.

Two members of our secret investigative committee came to inform that there is a large quantity of pistachios at Mr. So-and-So’s house (I shall not record the name here, although many know who he is, but I don’t want my son or others reading my diaries to know). Immediately I advised the members of the National Union and, with their approval and accompanied by the police chief and five policemen, I went to see this individual. I said, "We have come on behalf of the National Union and people to request that you keep a sufficient quantity of pistachios for your family and turn over the rest." The man bluntly refused and shouted, "Get out of my house!" The police chief ordered the policemen to open the door to the room indicated. The man began to make a fuss. When the policemen broke the door down, what came into our view was a spacious room filled entirely with sacks of pistachios. I had not seen such an immense quantity of pistachios before. We were storing pistachios in the warehouse to be used in case there was a shortage of bread and meat. The women of Aintab, in turn, would prepare various meals with pistachios, even kofte (meatballs).

The transfer of our rich yet abject man’s pistachio sacks began two hours after our visit, under the supervision of policemen.

April 29 – The National Union had invited the official bodies to a meeting whose agenda was the Turkish threat. A letter had been received, qualifying us as traitors to the fatherland and ingrates. It went on to warn that our cooperation with the French would have disastrous consequences, and demand that we hand over our weapons and surrender. After deliberating, we decided to send a suitable reply, stressing that our action was not sedition but self-defense. The meeting decided unanimously to continue the fight.

It must be noted here that a mood of despair had arisen among the people during the past couple of days. Some are planning to leave Aintab.
April 30 – Today, H. Panjarjian and I visited the arsenal. We were downright amazed. It was so well organized and the work was being conducted with such close attention that we couldn’t help but be astonished. The workers took a break from their work and gave us explanations about their activity.

The expert smelter, Manuel Bagdasarian, said, "These bombs are often more powerful than the old French bombs." The master gunsmith, Nazar Kiurumlian, in turn, remarked, pointing to a finished bomb, "I’ll bet that at least ten to fifteen Turks will be smashed to smithereens from this." And my close friend, Garoudj Lalayan, who had gained extensive experience preparing bombs in the arsenal of the Ottoman army, was the one who came up with and executed the idea of making bombs. He handled the most dangerous aspect of this job; namely, to place the explosive material and insert the wick. "See, I am gaining revenge for the martyrs of my clan with these bombs," he said, in a mood of patent contentment.

We stayed with our master craftsmen in the arsenal for more than an hour. After expressing our appreciation and congratulations, we wished them success. As we were leaving the arsenal, my friend Lalayan requested that I say a prayer. They stood up and listened to the "Babhanich" (Benediction) and the "Lord's Prayer" with noticeable piety. I could not hold back my tears of joy, seeing the patriotism and devoutness of these wonderful men.

May 6 – I appeared, together with H. Kharajian, at the meeting of the National Union to confer over the matter of the insufficiency of provisions, especially flour. Father Der Nerses informed us that the director of the American Red Cross, Dr. Lambert, and his assistant, Dr. Boyd, had come to Aintab yesterday to transfer the 1,600 orphans located here to Beirut. Thus, our concern about the shortage of provisions would be alleviated for a while. At this meeting, we also stated that we had noticed a lack of cleanliness on our visits to homes. We suggested that a committee of women be formed with the responsibility of inspecting the cleanliness of the homes. Those in charge of the meeting promised to take our useful suggestion under consideration.

May 11 – Four Armenians imprisoned by the Turks, taking advantage of Sunday's hailstorm and the darkness, managed to flee and take refuge in caves. This morning, they were taken inside the posts in the Kozanli district and turned over to the Military Committee. They related important information. After being given a physical examination, they were turned over to us. H. Arararian and I escorted them to their homes; after studying their situation, we sent them a sufficient quantity of foodstuffs and clothing in the afternoon. All four of them said that they were ready to immediately sign up as soldiers.

In the evening an airplane circled above the city, dropped bombs and used artillery against the Turkish positions.

May 15 – For a certain period of time now, a meeting has been held every Saturday in the Ibn Eyoub mosque. Information is given about events and the overall situation. Today it was my turn to speak. After explaining the situation, I advised the people to be restrained, patient and cautious. "Tolerance," I said, with special emphasis, "is extremely important these days. Everybody is tired, pensive and on edge. Love and respect one another. Respect your opponent's opinion. It is a source of joy that we are struggling through joint efforts during these difficult days. Because, I concluded, today, more than at any other time, we need mutual understanding, trust and love."

At the end of my talk, I answered the questions posed by curious attendees.

May 24 – Yesterday, 40 wagons loaded with provisions, accompanied by French forces, were subjected to attack by the Turks. After an hour-long exchange of gunfire, the convoy reached Aintab. The French rescued the 36 wagons belonging to them, whereas the four wagons belonging to us were left on the road. The French assured us that the region was cleansed of Turks and there was no danger. This morning Naum Dasho and I, together with ten sol-
There is nothing favorable therein for the Armenians. According to the disposition of Article 2, the French troops will leave the city and be housed in the garrison. A new misfortune is inevitable with this article of the truce. Once again, I recall the words of Mr. Haig, the Governor of the tent city of Port Said: "I'm afraid that you too shall be subjected to the fate of your one and a half million martyrs."

In the evening the National Union had invited the representatives of official bodies and thirty prominent individuals to a meeting. President Der Nerses gave explanations regarding the agreement reached between the French and the Turks. Dr. Shepard reported on the result of his meetings and contacts, which was disappointing. After lengthy discussions, it was decided to present the following proposals to the French authorities:

1. The present status quo must be maintained.
2. The Armenians shall remain at their positions and, if necessary, prevent the entry of the Turks into the Armenian section.
3. The French must ensure our provisions.
4. In the event these proposals are rejected, the French must transport the entire Armenian population to Aleppo.

May 31 – Colonel Abadie rejects our proposals. He considers the departure of all the Armenians to be a mistake. He recommends that only certain responsible persons depart, first of all Adour Levonian. And the other commander, Avedis Kalemkarian. Previously, a position with a good salary was offered to Levonian with the aim of removing him from Aintab, but he refused. Our valiant president, Der Neres, peremptorily rejects the colonel's proposal, stating that he, together with Levonian and all the responsible persons, have decided not to abandon the people; Der Hayr concluded, "Either we shall die together with our people, or we shall be rescued together."

Again, a consultative meeting was held in the evening, and after being informed of Colonel Abadie's point of view, we decided not to abandon our positions, and to maintain vigil behind the barricades and fight till the end.

diers and fifteen porters, set out to bring the four wagons back. We ascended to Kurban Baba and walked eastward for a half hour. Suddenly the Turks opened fire on us. Panic-stricken, we hit the ground. Our soldiers began to fire in the Turks' direction while we crawled through thorny bushes and over rocks, trying to find a hiding place. This tribulation lasted a half hour. My hands and knees, as well as a few others', were bloodied. Finally, blazing their machine guns, the French attacked the Turks who were firing upon us, and put them to flight. Until then, bullets were flying over us, producing a frightful whistling sound. When we felt that the danger had passed, we continued walking toward the wagons. Upon reaching our destination, we were disappointed to find only one wagon; the Turks had taken the other three. We brought the fourth one back safely.

May 25 – This morning we visited those Armenians preparing to depart in a convoy for Aleppo. The majority of them were women and children. We distributed food to them all. At the suggestion of the French, 6000 persons departed. According to Major Renon, the objective was to facilitate the distribution of provisions to the people. Although it is true that there was difficulty in this regard, one may conjecture that the real goal of the French might well be to surrender Aintab to the Turks by sending the Armenians away. If that's the case, then why was this much blood spilled? Why did they push us to fight? Is this not diplomatic duplicity? Alas, the Christian Great Powers have turned the small weak nations into a trading commodity. God, where is your justice? When, oh when, shall you grant peace and tranquility to the tormented and afflicted Armenian people? When and where will the misery of the Armenian people end?

May 29, Saturday – General De La Motte, along with his staff, visited the church. Following a meeting with the National Union, it was revealed that a truce had been signed between General Goureu and Mustafa Kemal.

May 30, Sunday – Today, the terms of the truce were explained.
June 1 — The decision of yesterday's meeting was communicated to the colonel this morning. This is his reply: "I don't have the authority to make changes in the conditions of the truce. Being a military man, whether I agree or not, I am obliged to carry out the orders of my superiors."

Faced with this discouraging situation, the National Union and Military Committee invited the people to take part in a plebiscite. There were more than two thousand people present. First, representatives of the official bodies spoke and then people from different social classes made statements. The question was to emigrate or stand firm on the positions? The last to speak was Adour Levonian who, after explaining the gravity of the situation, directed his words at the soldiers, saying "Dear brothers, I greatly appreciate the courage and sacrifice displayed by you until now. Now, if you wish to continue to defend the honor and dignity of the Armenian people with me at the cost of your own blood, please raise your hands." All the soldiers raised their hands collectively, shouting "We're ready", in conjunction with the thunderous applause and "hurrahs" of the people.

June 5 — By decision of the clergymen, a three-day fast occurred with the approval of the National Union. In the mornings, over the next three days, the people assembled at the Armenian Evangelical Meeting House, while the Sourp Asdvazadzin Church was the evening gathering place. There were vespers and prayers. It was so stirring to see the fervency with which the women, men, youths and children prayed, soliciting help from God.

June 8 — With the 20-day truce period having ended, the French announced that the city would be surrendered to the Turks. The colonel said, "You are Turkish citizens. From here on, we do not have the right to interfere in your affairs. You are free; you can continue the fight or surrender. Don't expect help from us any more if the Turks attack you." Then he ordered that all the French flags in the Armenian sector be taken down.

Thus, "chivalrous" France was delivering us survivors into the hands of the Turks so the latter could complete the April 24th massacre. What a horrible betrayal! When they need you, they command, "Raise the flags." When it's necessary to win the Turks' favor, they command, "Take the flags down."

The representatives of the National Union, headed by Father Der Nerses, had no choice but to meet with the high-ranking Turkish authorities. Oh, don't be surprised that they were given a cordial reception. This was simply a sham concealing Turkish deceit, and nothing else. They immediately demand that a few buildings be turned over to them "amicably."

The National Union invited 150 persons to confer on the current critical situation. After lengthy debates, it was decided to form a council of twenty-eight with the authority to negotiate with the Turks.

June 9 — Today, the twenty-eight leader-negotiators met with the Turks. The result was that Turkish soldiers took over three positions in our sector which had been abandoned by the French.

June 12 — Armeno-Turk relations are developing gradually. The Armenians are continuing to do business in Arasa bazaar. The Turks began to visit our sector too. The Turks demolished their barricades along the way.

June 13 — At 10:30 a.m., the Turkish governor, along with a few soldiers, visited the Evangelical Meeting House and made optimistic remarks, the gist of which was: "We have to join forces and liberate the fatherland from foreign control."

It's very clear that the Turks are playing a diplomatic game. Their ulterior motive is clear.

June 24 — Last week, the director of the American Red Cross, Dr. Lambert, and his assistant, Dr. Boyd, returned to our city. Today, their wagons loaded with foodstuffs and clothing arrived. I was busy with Welfare Committee affairs until noon. In the afternoon, Hovh. Araratian and I visited the homes of the families contained on the Welfare Committee's list. Last week the National Union formed a Welfare Committee with me as chairman, in conjunction with the Central Provisions Committee.
July 1 – Along with Asdvazadour Gulessarian, I spent the whole day visiting the homes of the families receiving subsidies.

July 6 – The lectures continued with short-lived interruptions. As chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Atenagan School, I visited the school and tried to be as helpful as much my time permitted. The year-end graduation ceremony (hantess) of the united schools took place, with large numbers of parents present. Also present were representatives of official bodies and French officers.

The program was very rich in its diversity. Father Der Nerses delivered a concise yet meaningful speech, in which he praised the devotion of the Armenian people, and particularly the Armenians of Aintab, to education. I addressed my remarks to the graduates, emphasizing the importance of education and patriotism. Father Der Karekin offered the closing remarks and the benediction. At the conclusion of the hantess, the French officers expressed their admiration with words of praise and appreciation. My son graduated from kindergarten.

What a people we are! Isn’t the fact of our keeping the schools open with bombs exploding and cartridges showering down, and continuing the work of education and learning, deserving of admiration?

July 13 – A few days ago I requested Dr. Boyd to provide employment for needy women and foodstuffs for fifty extremely poor families. Today he personally brought one thousand cartons of milk and five hundred packages of butter. In addition, he brought a large quantity of thread to be used by fifty women for weaving socks. He promised that the women would remain employed for the time being.

Every day the Turks are demanding that this or that building be turned over to them. Until now, the council of twenty-eight has delayed the execution of their demand. Finally, considering the sinister intent of the Turks, it was decided to reconstruct the barricades at the entrances to certain quarters.

July 27 – The council of twenty-eight rejected the Turkish demand, written in strong language; in return, the Turks rebuilt the barricades they had taken down. We, in turn, continued with the reconstruction of our barricades. The resumption of hostilities is inevitable.

July 29 – The Franco-Turkish clashes resumed. The cannons began to roar. At his request, the Turkish governor had a meeting with the National Union. It was said that the Armenians shall remain neutral.

July 31 – French airplanes are continuously flying around and are sometimes bombing the Turkish positions. For the past fifteen days the Central Provisions Committee and the Welfare Committee are meeting uninterruptedly to deal with issues involving provisions and subsidies.

August 11 – The bombardment continues. The French completed the siege of the city. We are continuing our neutrality and our relations with the Turks. Der Vahan, H. Saatjian and I toured the Teghin (Yellow) Hospital, [the hills of] Mardin and the mosque. There was desolation everywhere.

August 16 – The bombardment continues on both sides. The French want us to break off our neutrality. I don’t know the extent to which it is possible to trust the fickle policy of the French. At the same time, the Turks cannot be trusted either. Thus, the difficulty in choosing sides is quite evident.

I told the National Union meeting that the number of those in need of nourishment is 6,000. Our supply can suffice for no more than eight to ten days. Father Der Nerses promised to ask Colonel Abadie tomorrow to get us provisions by the next convoy.

August 23 – I went to the French army headquarters with H. Panjarjian. We took possession of the provisions sent to us by convoy and transported them to the church in 20 wagons. The transfer of provisions lasted until late at night.

September 4 – I celebrated Divine Liturgy and gave a sermon. In the afternoon I went with A. Gulessarian to the French army headquarters. We took possession of the fifty sacks of wheat plus
seventy goats and calves brought by the convoy. Transporting all this was quite a task.

September 24 – Father Der Nerses left for Aleppo today with the mission of securing help. May God be with this courageous, active and indefatigable Pastor.

September 29 – French forces unexpectedly seized some of our positions. They insist that we enter the fight.

October 20 – Father Der Nerses returned. There’s discussion in Turkish circles about the formation of a Kemalist government. The Turks are very glad.

We had a meeting with the local subgroups and jointly reviewed the roster of needy receiving subsidies.

November 6 – Early in the morning I went with G. Karghayan to wish farewell to the three hundred individuals departing for Aleppo. Yesterday we had distributed sufficient foodstuffs for the journey to more than one hundred needy persons.

November 9 – I went to Atenagan School. We had new glass installed in the windows to replace the smashed ones.

November 15 – I spent the whole day distributing subsidies with the members of the Welfare Committee. Some of the recipients expressed profuse thanks, as always, while others left glum faced. The latter cannot be blamed for no one knows what mental and spiritual pains are afflicting these poor people in the midst of these oppressive difficulties.

November 17 – The convoy finally arrived after two days’ delay; it was attacked along the way by bandits. H. Panjarjian and K. Demirjian went and received the provisions sent for us. H. Araratian and I met with the Military Committee to discuss giving additional subsidies to the soldiers’ families and providing hot food to the soldiers. Then we met with the Women’s Committee to discuss the preparation of hot food for the soldiers.

November 18 – Asd. Gulessarian and I went, took possession of the clothes sent by Miss Forman and turned them over to the Women's Committee for distribution to needy families.

November 22 – We distributed flour, lentils, chickpeas and salt to those receiving subsidies. The French laid siege to the city. Two airplanes circled above for hours.

December 10 – On Wednesday, we took possession of the 230 sacks of provisions brought by convoy. That night a Welfare Committee meeting was held at our home. Last night a meeting of the Central Provisions Committee was held at G. Karghayan’s home.

Today, along with Asd. Gulessarian, I visited all the positions; I encouraged our soldiers, expressing my appreciation for their patriotism and self-sacrifice.

December 30 – My comrades on the Central Provisions Committee and Welfare Committee engaged in the distribution of subsidies. I spent the entire day with our wounded soldiers, giving them raisins, figs and pistachios. Asd. Gulessarian was with me. I sat down next and comforted each of the soldiers, prayed and tried to raise their spirits. I returned home in the evening with a contented heart.

January 5, 1921 – The bombings and gunfire continue. Nobody noticed that the old year had passed and the new year had arrived. The National Union had invited me to a meeting concerning the reorganization of the Central Provisions Committee inasmuch as a few members had departed for Aleppo and probably would not return. K. Baboyan, T. Barsoumian and A. Renjian were appointed as new members.

From December 5th to 20th, I was busy distributing provisions and subsidies with my co-workers. On December 27th, 28th and 29th a general audit was conducted by auditors Taroul Kupelian and Hagop Hamalian who had been appointed by the National Union; they found all the accounts to be in order and accurate. Considering the scope of the work, the auditors greatly appreciated the legitimacy of the accounts and reported as such to the National Union.

January 6 – Today is Christmas. Large numbers of believers were present in church. Father Der Nerses celebrated the divine
liturgy and gave the sermon. He exhorted the people to be courageous and endure, and expressed the hope that Christ would invariably help us. Many were crying. It was a sad, sorrowful Christmas.

_April 4_ – The clashes are continuing; bombardment varies from heavy to light. The French responded to yesterday’s bombardment by the Turks with heavy bombardment of their own. I went to the Atenagan School and stayed there until noon. I visited the classrooms and spoke with the pupils. A joint meeting of the Central Provisions Committee and the Welfare Committee was held at our home.

_April 9_ – The entire Armenian community is in jubilation today. God made us worthy of seeing the Turks suffer such an inglorious defeat. Prominent Turks came and declared their surrender to the French. After signing the surrender agreement, they departed with heads bowed. In the afternoon, the French gave large quantities of flour and salt to the Turks.

_April 11_ – Yesterday and today the Turks handed over to the French five wagons full of various kinds of weapons. We don’t know how favorable the Franco-Turkish agreement will be for us Armenians. It is hard to be optimistic, considering the fickle policy conducted by the French so far.

_April 2_ – The relations between the Armenians and the Turks continue in an almost normal manner. K. Baboyan and I toured Arasa and the other bazaars; many Armenians were shopping. The Turkish shopkeepers displayed a kind attitude. Kind? Are the Turks really kind? Is it possible to be so naïve, to use a polite word, as to believe this? The Turks will hack us to pieces tomorrow if they get the chance.

In the afternoon the National Union had organized a reception in honor of Adour Levonian on the occasion of his departure for Aleppo. Members of official bodies were present. Father Der Nerses and Nazareth Fusdikjian spoke on behalf of the National Union. Others spoke too. All of them praised Levonian’s military prowess and valor. In his acknowledgment, he expressed thanks to the Armenian community for the love and affection shown to him. He lauded the spirit of unity, discipline and sacrifice. He concluded his remarks, saying “I fulfilled my obligation toward you, dear brothers. I am ready to return should you need me again.” The audience rose to their feet and applauded vigorously in a show of appreciation and to express their love and respect for the heroic leader.

_April 20_ – Rumors circulated yesterday and are still circling today, according to which the French shall surrender Aintab to the Turks. On the heels of this disturbing news, Father Der Nerses left at noon for Aleppo to verify this news as well as to secure assistance. May God be with this selfless modern-day Ghevont Yeretz.

_April 25_ – The rumor regarding Aintab being surrendered to the Turks will be confirmed or denied when Father Der Nerses returns. Until then, everybody is worried. Father Der Karekin and I try to dispel the people’s concern, suggesting that they wait until Father Der Nerses’s return, but to no avail. Although there is no panic, nevertheless new people depart daily and others are preparing to depart follow suit. Father Der Vahan left for Aleppo a few days ago with the intention of going to America.

_April 29_ – Considering that a certain number of people had departed, I saw fit that the Central Provisions Committee and the Welfare Committee have a joint meeting. The meeting took place at our home. After verifying the quantity of available provisions in the warehouse, we came to the conclusion that there was no immediate crisis as regards provisions. It was decided to invite the local subgroups to a meeting the following Friday to again review the list of those receiving subsidies.

_April 1_ – A year has passed already and confusion reigns. The fighting had begun on April 1, 1920. My God, there were so many ups and downs during this one year! Hopefulness was followed by despair. The crisis is more severe today. There are always people departing. Who can stop them? Who has the right to prevent them or who can take responsibility for such prevention?

After the brilliant victory achieved by us over the Turks, which
was rightfully called herosamard (war of heroes, or heroic self-defense), we entertained the hope that from then on we would live in peace and comfort under the protection of France. However, after giving that guarantee, "chivalrous" France, alas, acted with perfidy. The coming days are portentous. Black clouds are gathering.

Today, a joint meeting was held involving the Central Provisions Committee, the Welfare Committee and the local sub-groups, and it lasted until late in the night. Each name on the list of those receiving subsidies was minutely scrutinized. The meeting confirmed that those departing from Aintab are ones with means. Those in need don’t have the finances to depart.

April 14 – The members of the Welfare Committee distributed subsidies. I went to the school for a few hours. Everybody is worried and ill-disposed. Although there isn’t any fighting, there is the fear of fighting, there is fear of the worst... God forbid!

April 20 – Father Der Nerses returned today. Adour Levonian also arrived a few hours later.

April 22 – In the morning, Father Der Nerses summoned Father Der Karekin and me. He explained what he had accomplished in Aleppo and Beirut. He wrote letters to the leaders of the three denominations and the Armenian General Benevolent Union, requesting assistance. He had the National Union of Aleppo send a telegram to Boghos Nubar Pasha, requesting him to appeal to the French premier to resolve the conflict involving the Armenians of Aintab. Then he gave me a letter from Vartabed Ashod, Prelate of the Diocese of Damascus. Aware of its contents, he suggested that I accept Vartabed Ashod’s proposal to relocate to Damascus.

"Der Hayr," I said, "as an experienced older brother, I’ve considered your suggestion, particularly since Vartabed Ashod was my close friend in Jerusalem. However, I do not want to nor can I leave my flock. I will go to Aleppo and be helpful to my flock having settled there."

Father Der Nerses did not object. He will decide the date of my departure to Aleppo.

April 24 – Today a public gathering took place. Father Der Nerses reported on the work he had done. He explained the situation and exhorted the people not to panic. Some of those present asked questions. He replied, giving additional details. It was evident, however, that everybody was disconsolate and sad.

May 3 – The number of people departing from Aintab has increased considerably since the April 24 public gathering, although there is no panic.

Today I met with Father Der Nerses. He spoke at length about his meetings in Aleppo and Beirut and the political situation there. He recommended that I put my affairs in order and leave with my family within the next ten days. He also said that Avedis Kalemkarian would be departing in a few days.

May 15 – Before my departure, I wanted the accounts of the Central Provisions Committee and Welfare Committee to be examined. The audit took five days. The balance sheets were ready on Friday, signed by auditors Hagop Hamalian and Tatoul Kupeljan, who registered their appreciation for the accuracy and regularity of the accounts pertaining to such an extensive and difficult task as this. I gave one copy of the balance sheets to Father Der Nerses for the National Union, I took another copy, and turned over two more copies to the respective bodies.

At dawn this morning, I set out with a French convoy, along with my mother, wife and son Yervant. We took with us our pitiful bedding and kitchen utensils. We arrived safely in Aleppo in the afternoon and were greeted by H. Basmajian. I had previously sent word to him to rent a modest house for us so, upon our arrival, he took us to a house on a narrow street behind Khandek Boulevard. I knew that there was a housing shortage on account of the refugees pouring into Aleppo from all directions. At any rate, we managed to get settled in two small rooms.

May 17 – On the recommendation of Father Der Nerses, I presented myself to Catholicos Sahag, who had come here at the request of the National Union. I gave him information about the
situation in Aintab. He listened attentively and then expressed appreciation for the courage and diplomacy of the Armenians of Aintab. I observed that he had closely followed all the stages of the fighting and negotiations in Aintab. I kissed his right hand with filial reverence, and he blessed me. Visibly moved, he offered words of encouragement. I was preparing to leave when he stopped me.

"Der Neres," he said in a sweet paternal voice, "Der Neres Tavookjian had spoken to me and I, in turn, spoke with Dr. Altounian. The National Union needs a suitable person to manage the affairs of the Welfare Committee. I'm certain that you can be useful; accept the position." I expressed thanks for his confidence and left in a good mood.

May 23 – Today I took charge of the Welfare Committee office. I met with my assistants and became acquainted with the work done so far. There are five hundred names on the list of subsidy recipients, some of whom are families from Aintab. I decided with my assistants that we would carry out the distribution of subsidies on Tuesday and Friday mornings.

July 27 – My experience with the work of subsidy distribution helped me to perform this work with ease and pleasure. The first day I put the office in order. I arranged the dossiers thrown about here and there. I bought a new ledger for keeping records. I prepared the list of subsidy recipients in alphabetical order. Everything is proceeding well.

Now it is time to alter our residence. My mother and Yervant became ill in these jail cells called rooms. It is hot and humid, the heat downright stifling; there is neither sunlight nor air. This new refugee experience is likewise tortuous, but at least one's life is secure, and we take comfort in that.

July 31 – After a two-day search, I found and rented this house in the Sharasous sector. We moved yesterday. The reader should understand that, in this instance, the word "house" means a rather large room, with a small adjoining room, which we converted into a kitchen. There are seven rooms in the spacious courtyard (who knows which prince's property or residence this was). Six of them were already rented. We became the seventh tenant. I spent the whole day putting the house in order and because of that I was unable to go to church.

October 26 – His Holiness Catholico Sahag had sent word for me to go and see him. When I presented myself, he was not in a good mood. He remained silent for a few minutes, his eyes staring at the letter he was holding. Then, turning to me, he said, "Der Neres, I'm going to entrust you with a new mission. You must return to Aintab." Then he continued, "France has decided to leave Aintab; the situation is very grave; the difficulties, all the more so. Der Neres Tavookjian will soon come here and then go to Beirut to carry on negotiations with the French authorities on behalf of the Armenians of Aintab. I came a few days ago; I shall wait here for Der Neres and then depart for Beirut. You must return to Aintab in order to relocate here our compatriots still lingering there. The National Unions of Aleppo and Beirut shall send you provisions. You should know that a new era is beginning, fraught with dangers. Be careful. May God be with you."

I kissed his right hand and received his blessing before leaving with my mind occupied with weighty concerns.

As a soldier of the Armenian Church, I was obliged to obey. My God, what sort of fate is this! I had barely crossed the threshold to a peaceful life, and now I was being jolted anew. I found anew the remnants of my flock during the past five and a half months. I was comforted by them and, in exchange, I comforted and encouraged them. I would go to Sourp Karasoun Manoug (Forty Infants of Sebastia) Church every Sunday to pray. This, even though the diocesan vicar did not give me the right to celebrate the mass even once . . . after all, I was a refugee, wasn't I? Every man must account to his conscience, if he has one, of course. I performed my work flawlessly in the Welfare Committee office yet, alas, I am obliged to leave this work which I love so much and shall depart, trusting in God.
Perilous Return and Final Abode Aleppo

October 27 — This morning I went to take my leave from the National Union president Dr. Altounian. At his suggestion, I turned over the accounts, ledger and dossiers of the Welfare Committee to my compatriot and friend S. Krajian.

November 2 — The separation from my family was difficult, very difficult indeed. My mother and wife wept bitterly. I took my son with me. K. Baboyan, R. Yaghsezian, P. Topalian, A. Der Sahagian, A. Markarian and H. Misirian accompanied us as far as Sebil. I embraced each one of them and took my leave; I hugged my son and kissed him a few times, perhaps for the last time. I couldn’t hold back my tears; I tried to hide them, but he noticed them and began to cry.

When I reached Kilis, I was greeted by the Megerians. I spent the night at their home, but I couldn’t sleep because I was too worried and emotional.

November 3 — In the morning I joined the convoy which set out an hour later. Gunshots suddenly began to be fired near Oulou Mahsere. The French soldiers returned fire intensely. Apprehension and fear prevailed for an hour. Finally the French put the bandits to flight.

November 4 — Behold, I’m back in Aintab again. Thank God, we were saved from yesterday’s mortal danger. My first order of business was to report to my elder brother priest concerning my activity in Aleppo over the past five and half months. He was appreciative of my sacrifice in returning to Aintab. He stated that he would depart for Aleppo on Tuesday for the purpose of having political discussions and engaging in negotiations with the high-ranking French officials.

At this point, Der Karekin also came. Addressing both of us, Der Nerses said, "The situation can get worse. Therefore, I suggest that you be circumspect. Work together, consulting each other as older and younger brothers. I will try to send provisions and money so that our poor people won’t face distress. Let me say that I may return. Everything depends on the result of my negotiations. May the Lord be with you."

November 8 — Father Der Nerses departed today. I wish him success in his difficult mission.

On Saturday, I resumed responsibility for the distribution of provisions.

Father Der Karekin and I have two concerns, along with the physical safety of our people.

1) To enable needy families to subsist.
2) To furnish the expenses for their relocation to Aleppo.

We hope that Father Der Nerses succeeds in persuading the French to ensure the relocation of those remaining in Aintab to Aleppo without danger. Until then, I’m certain that he will get provisions and money to us.

January 18, 1922 — This New Year also passed almost unnoticed and in an atmosphere of sadness. The same holds true for Christmas. Barely thirty to forty women had come to take part in the divine liturgy. At present, our relations with the Turks are normal. We are continuing the distribution of subsidies, thanks to the provisions that arrived on December 20.

February 20 — It is bitter cold. It’s been snowing for the past
three days. Father Der Nerses sent a letter, informing us that the French will soon give the Armenians permission to enter Syria. They had been forbidden to do so since January 1.

March 5 – Today seven hundred individuals departed for Aleppo with French laissez passer (pass, permit). Yesterday we had distributed sufficient food to the indigent.

March 14 – The Turkish authorities in Antab are trying to save appearances, owing to unclear considerations. During daytime there is security to a certain extent. Policemen make their rounds and, when necessary, intervene in the Armenians’ favor, even helping them. The robbers and brigands come out at night. During the night a few Armenians were murdered in their homes. Father Der Karekin and I were forced to find a new hiding place every night. The police arrested a few culprits and supposedly punished them, but we have no way of verifying that.

July 20 – Der Karekin and I are using the French passes to send the people to Aleppo in groups. Although there are no longer bandits on the roads, as they all have become soldiers under the Kemalist authority, nevertheless we are verifying that the previous group has safely reached Aleppo before sending a new group on its way. Some individuals wish to remain in Antab, thus displaying astonishing naivete by being deceived by the Turks’ seemingly friendly attitude. On top of everything, we face the difficult proposition of dissuading such individuals. More than 2000 departed in the space of four and a half months.

August 9 – I received a letter two days ago. My mother is seriously ill. After consulting with Father Der Karekin, I decided to leave immediately for Aleppo. As it is, our job was finished. He, in turn, can come with the next group.

Today I set out with sixty persons. We reached Aleppo in the evening without difficulty.

August 15 – My mother’s illness greatly concerned me along the way; I was tormented by pessimistic suppositions. I prayed and, thank God, the danger passed with the medicines prescribed by Dr. Altounian. Today she’s feeling well. I can say that I am happy today. Safe and sound, I became reunited with my family, after the tribulations of recent months. I’m also glad that a segment of my flock is here; serving them shall give meaning to my life.

Nevertheless, my jumbled thoughts often torment me. I am jotting them down for my son and also for those who shall perhaps read them one day when I shall have departed from this world. Thus, through their evacuation from Antab and the rest of Cilicia, the Armenians once again became victims of the ignoble policy of the Christian Great Powers. After the brilliant victory which our fearless braves won against the Turks, those treacherous so called re Great Powers cynically abandoned us. After the martyrdom of our one and a half million victims, which began on April 24, 1915, with their complicity, several thousand survivors were massacred, again as a consequence of their complicity. Furthermore, those who are still alive survived on account of heroic struggles, an example of which is the Heroic Self-Defense of Antab that saved the lives of approximately 18,000 Armenians.

And to say that those Great Powers present themselves to the world with deceitful slogans of justice, human rights and Christian principles! We saw how they are capable of destroying countries for nominal profit and massacring millions, or having them massacred without the slightest compunction.

I am still apprehensive that the generation following us survivors will probably have to bear, God forbid, the consequences of the Armenian Genocide and the horrors of the deportations. My apprehension is justified and appropriate because the Armenians on foreign soil will always be subjected to various dangers. I hope I will be mistaken.

I did not have a single peaceful day from 1915 to 1922. I was tormented by the threat of immediate death or I suffered from nightmares. How can you expect me not to be harassed by my apprehensions?

Following these bitter reflections, my thoughts now cling to our
newly created homeland, Armenia. Thank you, God, for finally granting the Armenian nation its own homeland. My only wish is to live the remainder of my life in Armenia, naturally if God wishes, and to serve my fatherland and church.

If that happiness is denied me, my dear child, then I wish for you and your generation to be fortunate enough to become Armenian citizens and work on Armenian soil, fortified with the pride of being Armenian.

YERVANT BABAYAN

Yervant Babayan was born in Aintab in 1913. He is the son of Archpriest Der Nerses and Yeretzgin Negdar Babayan. He received his primary education at the Guigliuian and Haigazian schools in Aleppo and his secondary education at the French Lycée Weygand. He served seven years as faculty member and thirteen years as principal of the Guigliuian School in Aleppo. In 1953, together with his family, he moved to Beirut where he served as principal of the Vahan Tekeyan School for thirty-two years. From 1953 to 1956, he was engaged in the program of study in Armenology and Oriental Studies at Saint Joseph University and received the corresponding diploma. In 1961, he took education courses in Paris.

Yervant Babayan was one of the founders of Armenian General Benevolent Union Youth Association and became its chairman in 1935. In 1934, he also became one of the founders of the Arek Cultural Society, headed by Professor K. Mikayelian. During World War II, he actively participated in the fund-raising efforts for the David of Sassoun Tank Division. He served as secretary of the Repatriation Committee of Syria, as well as the Armenian National Council, which was formed to pursue the Armenian Case; in that capacity, he participated in the assembly which took place in Alexandria in 1946, and visited Cairo, Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa and Beirut. In 1953 he moved to Beirut with his family. From 1967 to 1971, he was chairman of the executive committee of the Tekeyan
Cultural Association (TCA). In 1970, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of poet Vahan Tekeyan's death, he visited the United States and Canada on a lecture tour and organized a fund-raising drive to benefit the construction of the Tekeyan Center in Beirut. During the most horrendous years of the Lebanese civil war (1977-1978), he was chairman of the Regional Committee of the Democratic Liberal (Ravangvar) Party. In 1972, in his capacity as representative of the Central Committee of the Union of the Armenians of Aintab in the U.S.A., he performed the ground breaking of the Curtain and Lace factory in the Yerevan suburb of Nor Aintab, Armenia. In 1974, as representative of the AGBU and TCA, he visited South America. In 1976, together with Mr. Y. Grbayan, he organized a fund-raising drive in the Arab countries and Iran to benefit the Lebanese civil war victims.

In 1986 Yervant Babayan moved with his family to Los Angeles. From 1987 to 1993, he held the post of TCA executive director. Starting in 1986, he visited Australia three times on behalf of the AGBU and TCA and succeeded in having the AGBU Alexander Day School built in Sydney. From 1971 to 1978, he edited the Nor Aintab (New Aintab) quarterly. He has contributed to numerous newspapers such as Ararat, Zartonk, Nor Or, Nor Gyank, Arev, Mioutine, Baikar, Massis.

He has published the following books all in Armenian:

Jubilee celebrations marking Yervant Babayan's fifty years of educational and national public activity were held in Beirut in 1983 and in Los Angeles in 1989. On that occasion, His Holiness Vazken I, Catholicos of All Armenians, bestowed upon him the St. Sahag - St. Mesrob medal of honor, along with a special encyclical.

The Lebanese Ministry of Education awarded Babayan its "merit" medal; the municipality of Sin-el-Fil (Beirut) and the V. Tekeyan School both awarded him gold medals, while the Committee for Cultural Relations with Armenians Abroad of Soviet Armenia presented him with a certificate of honor. On the same occasion, he received letters of commendation from lifetime President of AGBU, Mr. Alex Manoogian, California Governor George Deukmejian, the Mayors of Glendale and Pasadena, TCA Central Executive Committee, TCA Glendale-Pasadena Chapter, Cilician Charitable Union, AGBU Sydney chapter, the executive committee of TCA of Syria and Jordan, the Board of Trustees and principal of the Guiliguian School of Aleppo and the Armenian Aintabty Cultural Association of Los Angeles. The American Armenian International College conferred upon Babayan the title of Honorary Member of the President's Circle, and the teacher's room of the college's Dadian Wing was named after Yervant and Rosine Babayan. Babayan has been an AGBU member for 80 years and repeat veteran.

Babayan is married to Rosine Kabakian. They have three children: Silva (Karayan), Neres and Ara, and five grandchildren.

On the occasion of the publication of his latest book, "Hishandagru Arahednerov" (Tracks of Memories), his jubilee was celebrated in Los Angeles during October 1998.

A ceremony also took place in Yerevan, Armenia, during October 1999, honoring him as an educator, writer, and dedicated national figure, as well as on the occasion of the publication of the above mentioned book.