A Curriculum Guide for Teaching about America's Response to the Armenian, Anatolian Greek & Assyrian Genocides

By Ron Levitsky

in collaboration with the Genocide Education Project and the Near East Foundation

They Shall not Perish

THE STORY OF NEAR EAST RELIEF

"Deportation of and excesses against peaceful Armenians is increasing and from harrowing reports of eye witnesses it appears that a campaign of race extermination is in progress under a pretext of reprisal against rebellion."

—Ambassador Morgenthau in a telegram to the Secretary of State, July 16, 1915

Armenian refugees leaving Ottoman Turkey, c. 1920

Note to Teacher

Teaching involves making choices. With a limited amount of classes and lessons each school year, a teacher must decide what is important. This is especially true for history teachers, since every day adds more content to the discipline. Why, then, include a lesson on Near East Relief in an American or World History class?

Much of history has consisted of conflict—political, economic, social, and military. Often this conflict has been violent. The brutality of human beings toward one another has not been limited to any particular time or place. Long before Raphael Lemkin coined the term "genocide" in 1944,[1] there were many cases of one people systematically and methodically destroying another.

In the last fifty years alone genocides have unfolded in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, and elsewhere in the world. In her book *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide,* Samantha Power, a Harvard University scholar who later became U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, argues that the United States consistently hesitated to act against any of the genocides that occurred throughout the twentieth century.

From 1914–1923 no government, including the United States, tried to intervene militarily or politically to stop the genocide in Anatolia.[2] Christian minorities were forced from their homes, tortured, raped, murdered or driven into the desert to die of starvation and exposure. Approximately three million Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians[3] living in their historic homelands were killed. Their personal and community

1 In *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944), Lemkin defined genocide as "a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves."

2 The Anatolian peninsula, also known as Asia Minor, was traditionally defined as the area bounded by the Black Sea to the north, the Aegean Sea to the west, the Mediterranean Sea to the south, and the Armenian Highland and Euphrates River to the east. The Republic of Turkey considers Anatolia to be coterminous with the borders of modern-day Turkey, which is larger than the historical area.

3 The word "Assyrian" is often used as a general term that includes Syriac Christians and Chaldeans, the latter being ethnically Assyrian adherents to Chaldean Catholicism.

properties were seized with the approval of the Ottoman government and the Kemalist government that followed.

However, even in times of genocide there are people who risk their careers, safety, and lives to help the victims — often in defiance of their own governments. Samantha Power calls these individuals "upstanders." There are perhaps no greater examples of upstanders than the men and women of Near East Relief. During and immediately following World War I, Near East Relief workers courageously bore witness and alerted the U.S. government to the atrocities the Ottoman and Nationalist Turkish governments denied. These workers fed, clothed, and provided medical treatment to thousands of refugees. Near East Relief is credited with saving over one million lives between 1915 and 1930, including 132,000 orphan children. Nearly two-dozen Near East Relief workers lost their lives in service to those people.

The dedication of the Near East Relief workers shows us what individuals can and should do in times of crisis. One is reminded of W.H. Auden's poem "September 1, 1939," written at the beginning of World War II:

> *Defenceless under the night*
>
> *Our world in stupour lies;*
>
> *Yet, dotted everywhere,*
>
> *Ironic points of light*
>
> *Flash out wherever the Just*
>
> *Exchange their messages*[4]

Sometimes international problems appear overwhelming. It is important for teachers to offer historical examples of people who had the courage to be the "points of light" we want our students to emulate. Such were the men and women of Near East Relief.

This guide is designed to help teachers share this heroic story with their students. This publication may be used as a stand-alone teaching tool or in conjunction with *They Shall Not Perish: The Story of Near East Relief,* a downloadable exhibition created by the Near East Foundation. The history of America's Response to the Armenian, Anatolian Greek, and Assyrian Genocides can be taught in conjunction with units on World War I, Holocaust and genocide studies, international relations, civic engagement, and philanthropic history.

4 Auden, W.H. "September 1, 1939." Academy of American Poets. Academy of American Poets, n.d. Oct. 14, 2014.

Resources for teaching about the Armenian, Anatolian Greek, and Assyrian Genocides

Before teaching this lesson on Near East Relief, the teacher may wish to provide students with background information. The following curriculum guides are excellent resources on both content and methodology:

Human Rights and Genocide: A Case Study of the First Modern Genocide of the 20th Century. San Francisco, CA: The Genocide Education Project, 2005. (*For additional lesson plans on the Armenian Genocide, please visit The Genocide Education Project at genocideeducation.org.*)

Crimes Against Humanity and Civilization: The Genocide of the Armenians. Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc., 2004.

The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks (Pontian and Anatolian), 1914–1923. The Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center, 2014. (*To receive a free copy of this unit, contact the AMPHRC at hellenicresearchcenter.org.*)

For more information, documents, and photographs, please visit the Near East Relief Museum at neareastmuseum.com.

DISPATCHES FROM ANATOLIA

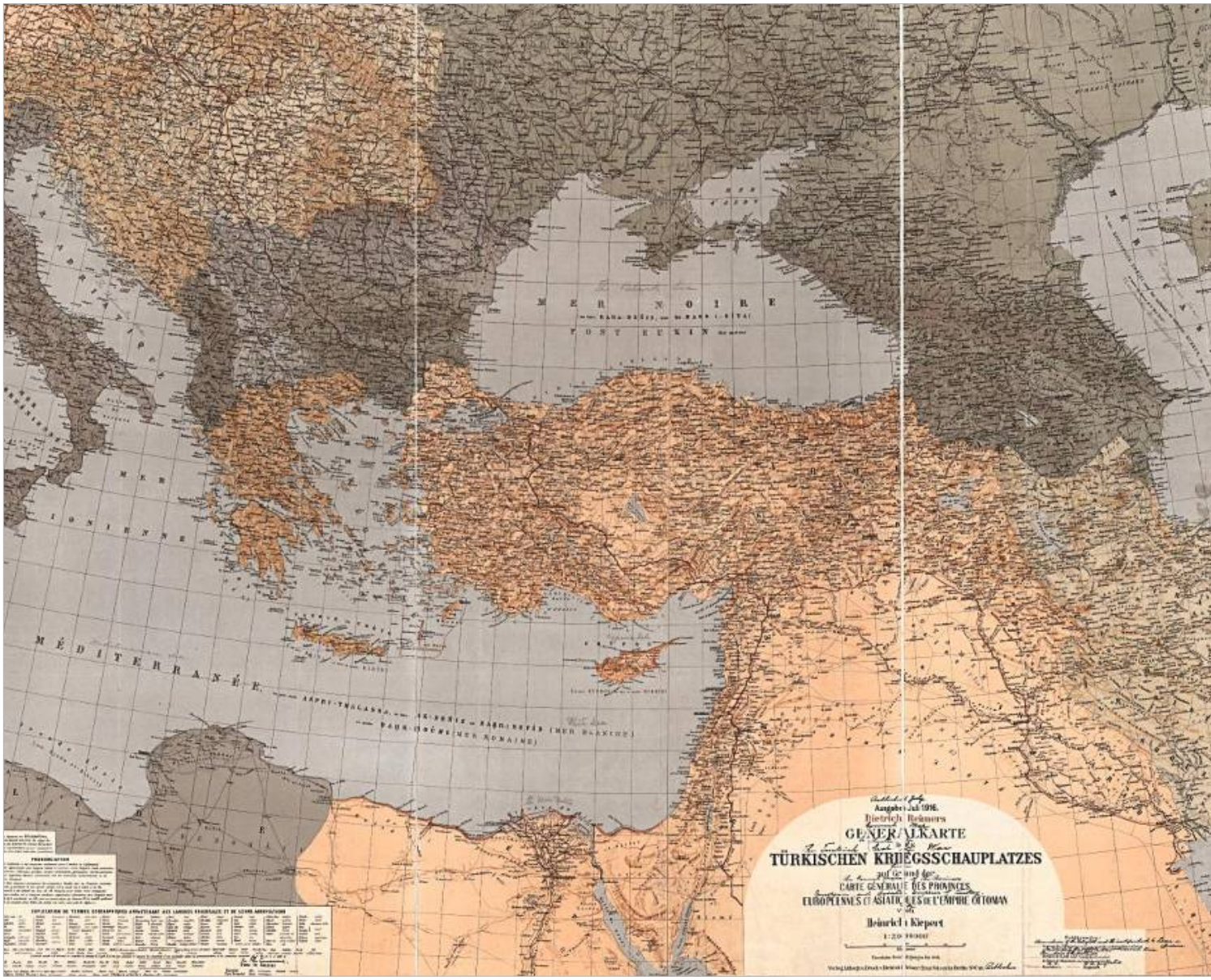
"Picture eight thousand people, mostly women and children, camped out in the glaring July sun with only the remains of the clothing with which they had left their homes two months before and not half enough food to satisfy their hunger. Sometimes they stretched up a bit of gunny sack or an old apron to protect them from the sun. Their bodies were covered with vermin. Often there were great sores on arms, necks and faces from the burning of the sun. Many were sick with dysentery and malaria. The guards surrounded them so that there was no chance of escape." [1]

So wrote Mrs. Tacy Atkinson in 1915. Mrs. Atkinson and her husband were American missionaries near the city of Harput in the Ottoman Empire. They witnessed the robbery, beating, kidnapping, and murder of Armenians at the hands of Ottoman Turkish soldiers. The soldiers were carrying out the government's plan to eliminate the empire's Christian population, which included Armenians, Assyrians, and Anatolian Greeks. Scholars recognize these massacres as the first modern genocide of the twentieth century.[2]

Chilling reports from diplomats and missionaries like Mrs. Atkinson came to the attention of Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. Morgenthau was based in the capital city of Constantinople, a diverse metropolis far from the isolated interior of Anatolia.

1 Barton, James L. *Turkish Atrocities: Statements of American Missionaries on the Destruction of Christian Communities in Ottoman Turkey, 1915–1917.* Ed. Ara Sarafian. London, England: Gomidas Institute, 1998.

2 Balakian, Peter. "The Armenian Genocide and the Modern Age" [online]. *The Sydney Papers*, Vol.20, No.2, Autumn 2008: 144–161. The Armenian Genocide is considered the first modern genocide of the twentieth century because of the Ottoman Turkish government's extensive use of governmental apparatus, such as bureaucracy, military, technology, communications, and nationalist ideology in order to demographically target and isolate a minority ethnic group that had no means of self-protection, for the purpose of elimination in a concentrated period of time. Pre-modern genocide, such as the German army's campaign of race extermination against the Herero and Nama people of German South-West Africa (now Namibia) from 1904–1907, took place within the context of war or colonialism.



Map 1. *Ottoman Empire, 1916. Courtesy of the U.S. Library of Congress*

THE AMBASSADOR'S DECISION

World War I had broken out in 1914. Great Britain, France, and Russia were fighting against the German Empire and its allies, which included the Ottoman Empire. Germany did nothing to stop the massacres in Turkey (although many German missionaries and diplomats protested the killings). Great Britain, France, and Russia were not in a position to aid Ottoman Christian subjects. The United States remained neutral. Ambassador Morgenthau knew that the U.S. was in an excellent position to help: there were already American consulates and missionary schools throughout Anatolia.

Historically, a government's actions against its own people were viewed as the country's private affairs. Yet the American ambassador could not simply watch these events unfold. Morgenthau had a difficult decision to make.

On September 3, 1915, he telegraphed the U.S. State Department. He asked for the formation of a relief organization to help Armenian victims of the Ottoman massacres. Americans had already created several relief organizations to help victims of World War I in countries such as Belgium and Russia. Learning of Morgenthau's telegram, James L. Barton, foreign secretary to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Boston, and Cleveland H. Dodge, a businessman in New York City, created the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief.

The Committee's mission was to provide direct relief in the form of food, clothing, and shelter. At its first meeting, the committee raised nearly $60,000, before appealing to the public for donations. Eventually the committee would raise over $116,000,000—equivalent to nearly two billion dollars today. The Committee was incorporated by an act of Congress in 1919 and renamed Near East Relief.

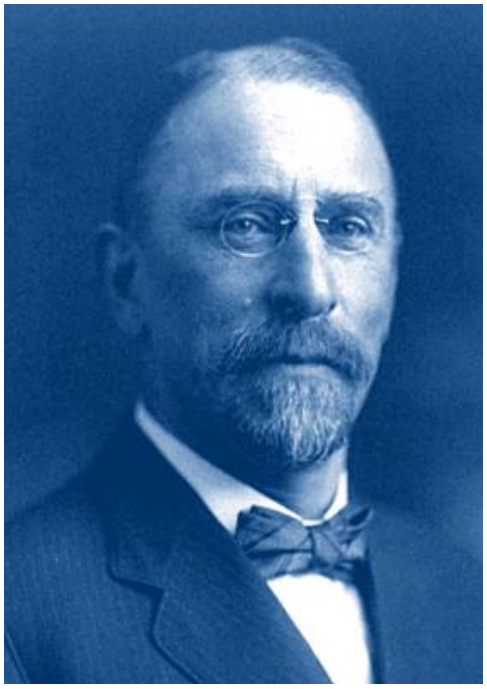


Photo 1. *Henry Morgenthau, U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, c. 1913. Courtesy of the U.S. Library of Congress*

Photo 2. *Members of the board of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, c. 1916. Left to right: Henry Morgenthau, Charles Dutton, Cleveland H. Dodge*

Photo 3. *A city of tents sheltering 6,000 Armenian refugees in Beirut, Syria (now Lebanon)*

THE COMMITTEE TAKES ACTION

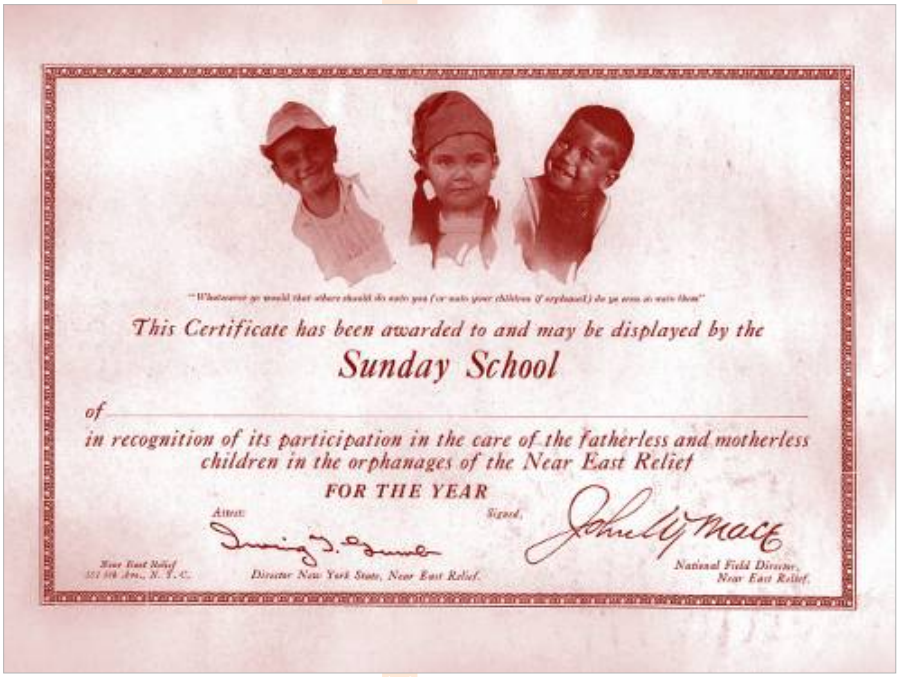


Photo 4. *Near East Relief Sunday school certificate, 1924*

The Committee received correspondence on the atrocities from educators and missionaries living in the Ottoman Empire. The group shared these communications with the American people through the press. In 1915, the *New York Times* alone published 145 articles on this topic. The American public learned about what the *Times* called "systematic race extermination."

By October 1915, the Committee had sent $100,000 to Ambassador Morgenthau. These funds were distributed throughout the Ottoman Empire to American diplomats, medical personnel, and missionaries. The Committee used existing missionary schools and other buildings as relief centers, hospitals, and orphanages. Missionaries who had returned home from Anatolia often spoke at meetings, rallies, and other fundraising events.

In less than a year, local committees were raising funds in sixteen U.S. states. Eventually, every American state and territory would have at least one committee. Mass meetings were held throughout the nation. By the end of 1916, the Committee had raised an astonishing $20,000,000. According to the secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the Committee was assisting as many as 500,000 women and children. Still, the leader of relief work in Constantinople warned that hundreds were

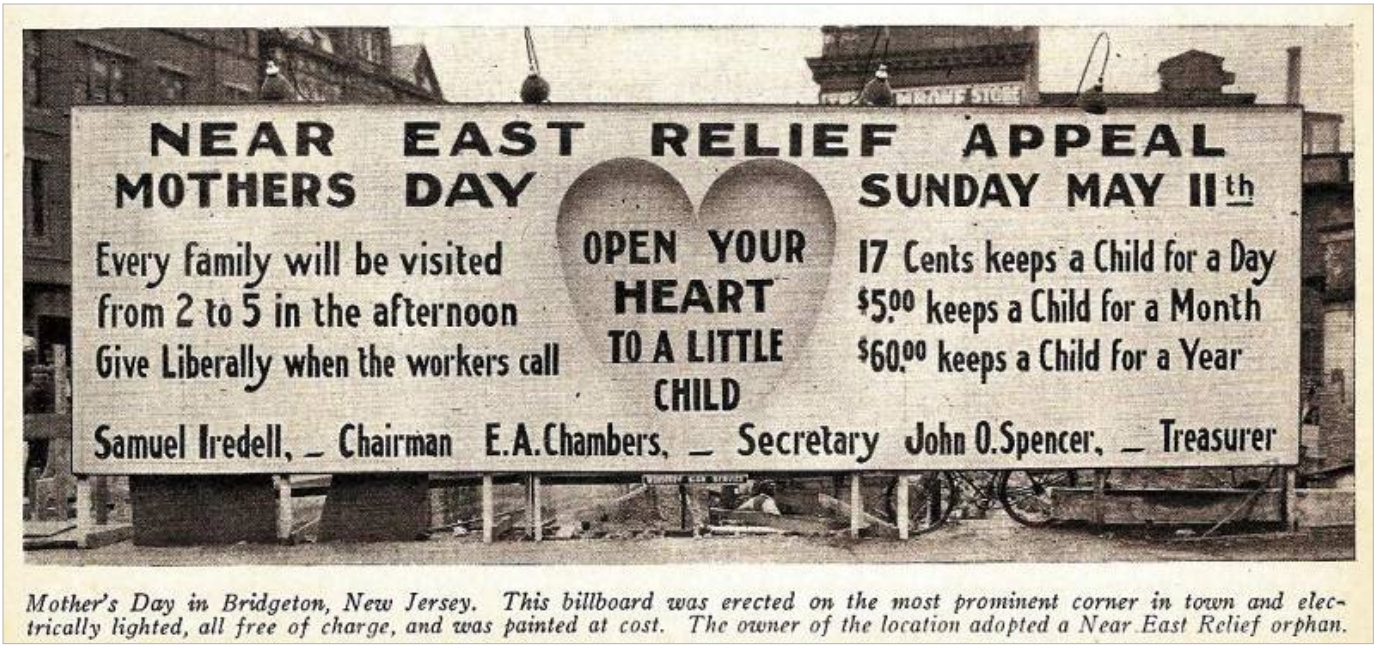


Photo 5. *Mother's Day banner, New Jersey, 1924*

dying of starvation, having nothing to eat but grass.

President Wilson declared that October 21–22, 1916 were "joint days for Americans to make contributions for the Armenians and Syrians." Churches, synagogues, and service organizations like the Rotary and Lions clubs raised donations. Children's Sunday schools sold lemonade and pies. Parents told children to "remember the starving Armenians" and not to waste food at mealtimes.

World War I continued and the Allies defeated the Ottoman Turkish armies. The Committee worked to alleviate the suffering of refugees in Palestine (part of which is now Israel), Syria (part of which is now Lebanon), Mesopotamia (now Iraq), Tehran (the capital of modern Iran), and areas of the Caucasus Mountains near Russia and the Black Sea. Thousands of children had lost their parents to violence, exposure, and disease. These orphans were of special concern to the Committee.

America had been founded, in part, on a doctrine of religious liberty. In the early 1900s, a large segment of the American population identified as Christian. This added to the public's sympathy for the oppressed Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire. Katharine Lee Bates, author of "America the Beautiful," wrote a poem about Armenia which began:

Armenia! The name is like a sword

In every Christian heart. O martyr nation,

Eldest of all the daughters of the Word,

Exceeding all in bitter tribulation! [3]

3 Peterson, Merrill D. *Starving Armenians: America and the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1930 and After.* Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004.

THE GREAT WAR ENDS, BUT THE SUFFERING CONTINUES

World War I ended in November 1918, but life remained the same for hundreds of thousands of refugees and orphans. Violent persecutions continued throughout Ottoman Turkey. Near East Relief increased its efforts to raise awareness in America by making use of new technology: the motion picture.

In February 1919, Hollywood distributed a remarkable silent film entitled *Ravished Armenia*. The full-length feature film was based on the experiences of a young Armenian refugee named Aurora Mardiganian. Aurora immigrated to the United States as a sixteen-year-old in 1917. She had lost her parents and all but one sibling in the massacres. The movie illustrated the horrors Aurora had endured, including death marches, tortures, and witnessing brutal murders. Aurora suffered greatly while playing herself in the film. Near East Relief helped advertise the film and received part of the profits for its relief efforts. *Ravished Armenia* helped to raise millions of dollars for direct relief.

The Committee produced other films to engage the American public. *Alice in Hungerland* and *Stand by Them a Little Longer* were shown in theaters, schools, and churches. The Committee created striking posters featuring Armenian children reminding Americans to "Give or We Perish."

The winter of 1919 was especially harsh. Herbert Hoover was the U.S. official in charge of European relief. He reported that 200,000 people in the Caucasus had died of starvation. Near East Relief transported massive quantities of donated grain in an urgent effort to save lives.

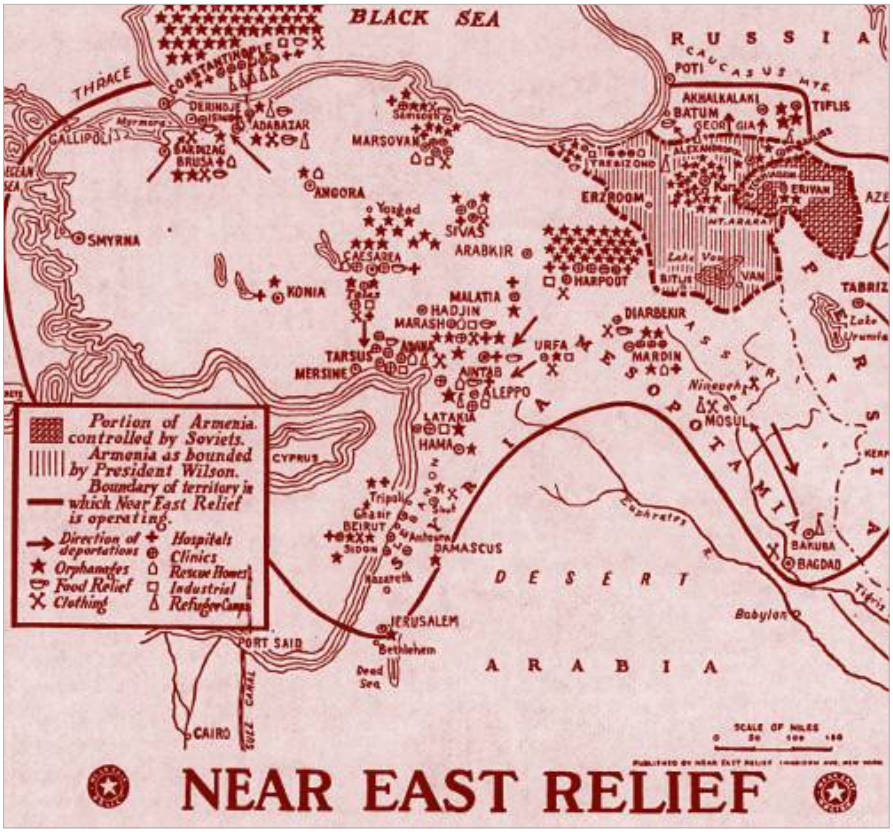
Turkish troops under the command of Mustapha Kemal revolted against the Ottoman government and also attacked the newly formed independent Republic of Armenia. Turks and Kurds (another ethnic Muslim group) prevented Armenians who had survived the Ottoman massacres from returning to the homes that had been taken from them. Near East Relief,

along with the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia, urged the U.S. government to support the newly independent nation by creating a mandate that would place Armenia under temporary U.S. protection.

The mandate failed and no official assistance came from the U.S. government. Turkish forces and Russian troops attacked Armenia. The small country was unable to maintain its independence. In 1920, Armenia became part of the Russian Republic, which would emerge as the Soviet Union in 1922.

Near East Relief had an important presence in the Armenian city of Alexandropol (now Gyumri). It created a massive orphanage complex that took care of as many as 25,000 orphan and refugee children. Alexandropol was sometimes known as the "Orphan City." Near East Relief set up a modern hospital run by Dr. Mabel Elliott. The hospital treated about one-third of the children for trachoma, a highly

Photo 6. *Poster for the American Committee for Armenian & Syrian Relief, c. 1917. The organization was renamed Near East Relief in 1919. Courtesy of the U.S. National Archives*



Map 2. *Locations of Near East Relief stations, 1921*

contagious eye disease. Most children had to be treated for severe malnutrition before they could be allowed to eat normal meals. Near East Relief also created special clinics to treat children for emotional trauma.

At the "Orphan City," as in most Near East Relief orphanages, girls were taught sewing, needlework, weaving, and homemaking skills. Their handicrafts were sold in Near East Industries shops in the United States. Gifts of embroidery and pottery were especially popular during Easter and Christmas. Older girls could attend a Near East Relief nursing school. Boys learned a wide variety of trades, including shoemaking, tailoring, and farming. Near East Relief also tried to reunite children with relatives or to place them with families of the same nationality and religion.

SHOULD THE U.S. HAVE DECLARED WAR ON THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE?

Photo 7. *Robert College on the Bosphorus, Constantinople, 1880. Courtesy of the U.S. Library of Congress*

On April 6, 1917, the U.S. declared war on Germany. Many Americans also called for war against the Ottoman Empire, Germany's ally. The Senate seemed to favor a second declaration. Former President Theodore Roosevelt was a vocal supporter, famously stating that "the Armenian massacre was the greatest crime of the war, and failure to act against Turkey is to condone it."[4]

Secretary of State Robert Lansing argued that if the U.S. declared war, Turkey might confiscate the American missionary schools. The school properties were worth millions of dollars. A declaration of war might trigger additional massacres. Lansing also argued that unlike Germany, the Ottoman Empire had not attacked the U.S.

Cleveland Dodge, cofounder of the committee that became Near East Relief, opposed war against the Ottoman Empire. Like Lansing, Dodge feared that a declaration of war would prompt Turkey to take over the American missionary schools and jeopardize relief efforts. Dodge was an important financial supporter of these schools. Dodge advised his close friend President Wilson against a declaration of war. It is unclear whether Dodge influenced President Wilson's opinion on the matter.

In the end, President Wilson did not ask the Senate for a declaration of war against the Ottoman Empire. American relief efforts continued, and the American missionary schools were preserved. But the question remains: could the U.S. have helped more people by declaring war?

4 Morrison, Elting (editor), The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954. pp. 6328.

THE GRECO-TURKISH WAR AND THE BURNING OF SMYRNA

In May 1919, Greece sent armies into the predominantly Greek coastal city of Smyrna (now Izmir) at the request of the Allies. In response to attacks by Turkish forces, the Greek army advanced into the Turkish interior. This conflict became known as the Greco-Turkish War. The Turkish army killed approximately 360,000 Greeks living in an area near the Black Sea known as the Pontos. Major Forest Yowell, Near East Relief field director at Harput, witnessed these atrocities. Yowell wrote that "[a]ll along the routes taken by Greeks are the bodies of the dead which are being consumed by dogs, wolves, and vultures."[5]

In August 1922, the Greek army retreated from Anatolia, leaving Smyrna defenseless. Turkish forces entered the city on September 9, 1922. Four days later a fire raged through the Christian quarter. Three hundred thousand Greeks and Armenians were forced to the shore. Many drowned while trying to swim to ships in the harbor. American and European ships did not intervene. Finally, Greek ships began rescuing the refugees. Approximately two hundred thousand people were rescued and taken to Greece; between 50,000 and 100,000 people died in the fires and accompanying massacres.

Many Near East Relief workers found themselves caught between the Greek and Turkish armies. They continued to perform their duties with great courage. Miss Edith Cold ran an orphanage with three other women just outside the village of Hadjin in Cilicia. When the Turkish army took over the orphanage, a Turkish officer saved the women. Miss Cold returned to Hadjin and was able to locate twenty girls from the original orphanage.

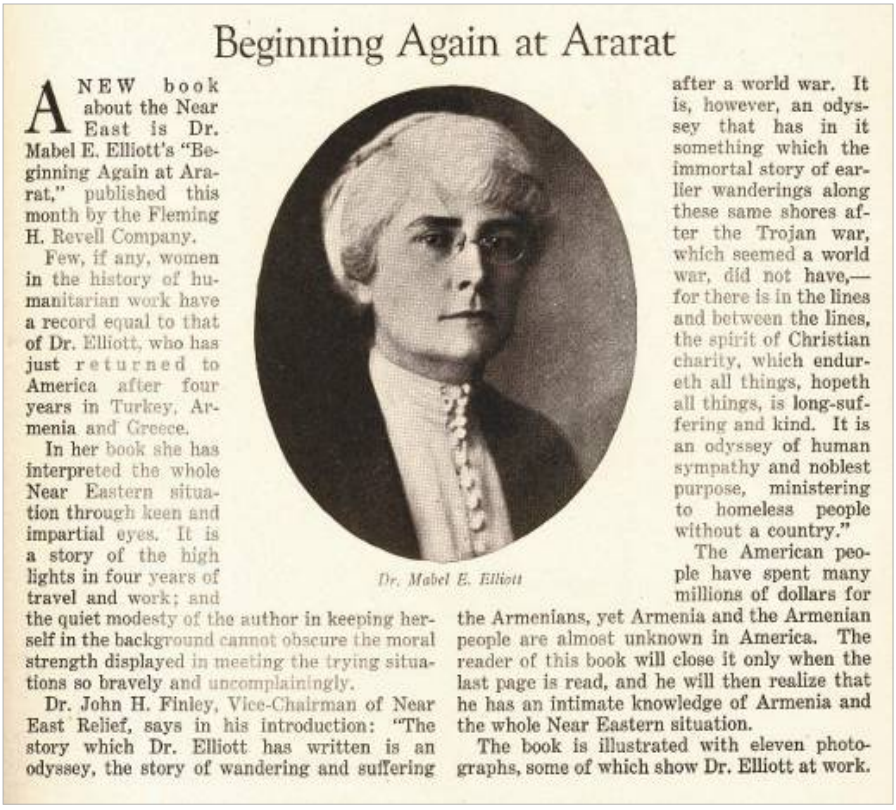
In 1921, Miss Pauline Allen was injured while rescuing a wounded soldier. After the burning of Smyrna, she helped refugees

5 Peterson, Merrill D. *Starving Armenians: America and the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1930 and After.* Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004.

in Constantinople and Athens. The following year found her in charge of nearly five hundred refugees in four camps. Even typhus couldn't stop her. While still recovering, Miss Allen helped six hundred refugees escape a burning building.

In 1920, Dr. Mabel Elliott evacuated a hospital in Marash when the Turkish army attacked the town. She helped to lead five thousand refugees on a three-day march to safety through bitter cold and snow. Half of the refugees died on the march. The following year Dr. Elliott established a hospital at Ismid that included a nurses' training program and a soup kitchen. After the fire in Smyrna in 1922, Dr. Elliott became Medical Director of Near East Relief in Greece. She established seven hospitals and many more clinics. Dr. Elliott and Dr. Esther Lovejoy, another Near East Relief physician, were the first women to receive the Greek Cross for Valor.

Admiral Mark Bristol, U.S. High Commissioner in Turkey, tried to downplay the severity of Ottoman Turkish massacres of Christian subjects in hopes of making trade agreements between the U.S. and the new Turkish government. But the women of Near East Relief insisted on telling the truth about the atrocities they had witnessed. Miss Ethel Thompson, working in Samsun, wrote:



Beginning Again at Ararat

A NEW book about the Near East is Dr. Mabel E. Elliott's "Beginning Again at Ararat," published this month by the Fleming H. Revell Company.

Few, if any, women in the history of humanitarian work have a record equal to that of Dr. Elliott, who has just returned to America after four years in Turkey, Armenia and Greece.

In her book she has interpreted the whole Near Eastern situation through keen and impartial eyes. It is a story of the high lights in four years of travel and work; and the quiet modesty of the author in keeping herself in the background cannot obscure the moral strength displayed in meeting the trying situations so bravely and uncomplainingly.

Dr. John H. Finley, Vice-Chairman of Near East Relief, says in his introduction: "The story which Dr. Elliott has written is an odyssey, the story of wandering and suffering after a world war. It is, however, an odyssey that has in it something which the immortal story of earlier wanderings along these same shores after the Trojan war, which seemed a world war, did not have,—for there is in the lines and between the lines, the spirit of Christian charity, which endureth all things, hopeth all things, is long-suffering and kind. It is an odyssey of human sympathy and noblest purpose, ministering to homeless people without a country."

Dr. Mabel E. Elliott

The American people have spent many millions of dollars for the Armenians, yet Armenia and the Armenian people are almost unknown in America. The reader of this book will close it only when the last page is read, and he will then realize that he has an intimate knowledge of Armenia and the whole Near Eastern situation.

The book is illustrated with eleven photographs, some of which show Dr. Elliott at work.

Photo 8. *Profile of Dr. Mabel Elliott, The New Near East magazine, January 1924*

"Our house was surrounded by these poor [Greek] women, hammering at our doors, holding out their children, begging us to take the children if we could not save the women."[6]

On her way to Harput, Miss Thompson watched refugees struggle "like a march of corpses."[7]

6 Shenk, Robert, "Ethnic Cleansing, American Women, and the Admiral: Deep in Anatolia during the Turkish Nationalist Revolution." Presentation given at "The Ottoman Turkish Genocides of Anatolian Christians: A Common Case Study," Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, May 10–11, 2013.

7 Id.

SAVING THE CHILDREN

Soon after the catastrophe at Smyrna, Turkish leaders refused to guarantee the safety of the children in Near East Relief orphanages. As a result, Near East Relief began evacuating children from Anatolia to Greece in October 1922. Within two months Near East Relief had transferred more than 15,000 children across the Aegean Sea. The Near East Relief also helped over 300,000 other Christian refugees to places of safety outside of Turkey. The organization created what Professor Harry Psomiades called "service stations" to provide food, warm clothing, and shelter during the dangerous journey to safety.

Photo 9. *Boys at the orphanage in Syra, Greece, built their own small houses, c. 1923*

Assisting refugees to safety was an extremely difficult task. Most people traveled on foot through harsh weather conditions. H.C. Jacquith, one of the Near East Relief's managing directors, wrote:

"Moving over the worst mud roads in the world, I saw a crowd of broken civilians more depressing than an army in hard-pressed retreat. Women about to become mothers tramped in snow up to their knees. Tired children dropped weary by the wayside, and girls of tender years bore men's burdens." [8 (p. 17)]

Although thousands died of illness and disease at refugee camps and on ships bound for Greece, Admiral Bristol reported that without the actions of Near East Relief another 100,000 refugees would have died.

HOLLYWOOD'S FIRST HUMANITARIAN

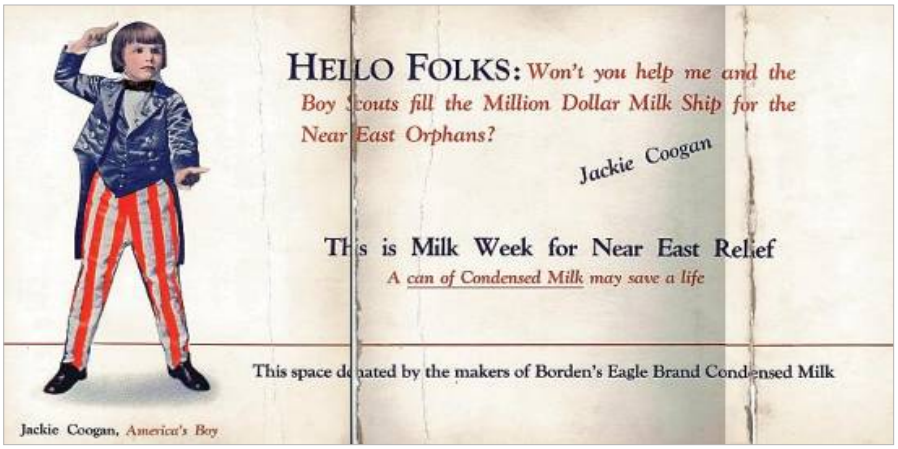


Photo 10. *Jackie Coogan campaign brochure, 1924*

Jackie Coogan was a popular child star in Hollywood, having appeared in many films, including Charlie Chaplin's 1921 silent movie "The Kid." In 1924 Jackie's parents allowed their ten-year old son to work with Near East Relief on a project called the "Children's Crusade." The goal was to raise one million dollars worth of food for orphans in the Middle East. Jackie toured the United States by train. Newspapers, movie magazines, and newsreels followed his travels and publicized the campaign on a national level. Thousands of his fans donated to the project.

Jackie crossed the ocean to Europe, where he toured several European cities. In Rome, Pope Pius XI blessed Jackie and his relief project. In Athens, Jackie delivered receipts for over one million dollars' worth of relief items. The Greek government awarded him the Silver Cross of the Order of St. George. Near East Relief produced a film called *Jackie in the Near East* that highlighted the movie star's travels to help orphans and refugees.

8 (p.16) Psomiades, Harry J., "The American Near East Relief (NER) and the Megale Katastrophe in 1922." Hofmann, Tessa, Matthias Bjornlund and Vasileios Meichanetsidis, *The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks*. New York: Melissa International Ltd., 2011.

ONE FAMILY'S STORY

Like thousands of other Armenians, Lucia Elmjian Karjian was deported from Marash, Turkey in 1915. Her husband Garabed had previously been sent to Syria. Lucia marched with her four-year-old son Manase and one-year-old daughter Vartouhi, eventually finding safety in Damascus, Syria. Lucia and Garabed miraculously found one another in Damascus.

Their happiness was short-lived. The young and beautiful Lucia caught the eye of a Turkish gendarme. The gendarme killed Garabed and took Lucia and her children as his captives. At the time of her husband's death Lucia was expecting a third child. She gave birth to a son, Antranig, on a snowy winter night in 1920.

Lucia and her children were prisoners in the gendarme's home for several years. She finally escaped to Aleppo with the children. She found a cousin through the Armenian Presbyterian Church. Lucia soon realized that she could not support her family on her own. The Reverend Aharon Jirejian gave Lucia a little money and a letter of introduction to the Birds' Nest, a Near East Relief orphanage in Sidon, Syria (now Lebanon). With a heavy heart, Lucia made another long journey. She took her two younger children to Sidon — nearly 200 miles from Aleppo.

Vartouhi (also called Gulania) and Antranig came under the care of Maria Jacobsen, a Danish missionary, and her staff of relief workers. Nellie Miller Mann, a Near East Relief worker in Beirut, traveled to the Birds' Nest often. She adored the children and took many photographs of them. One of the pictures of Antranig was featured in a New Near East magazine spread. An Armenian teacher presented Antranig with a photograph of him saying grace with other children as a souvenir. This was the only tangible memento from his time in the orphanage.

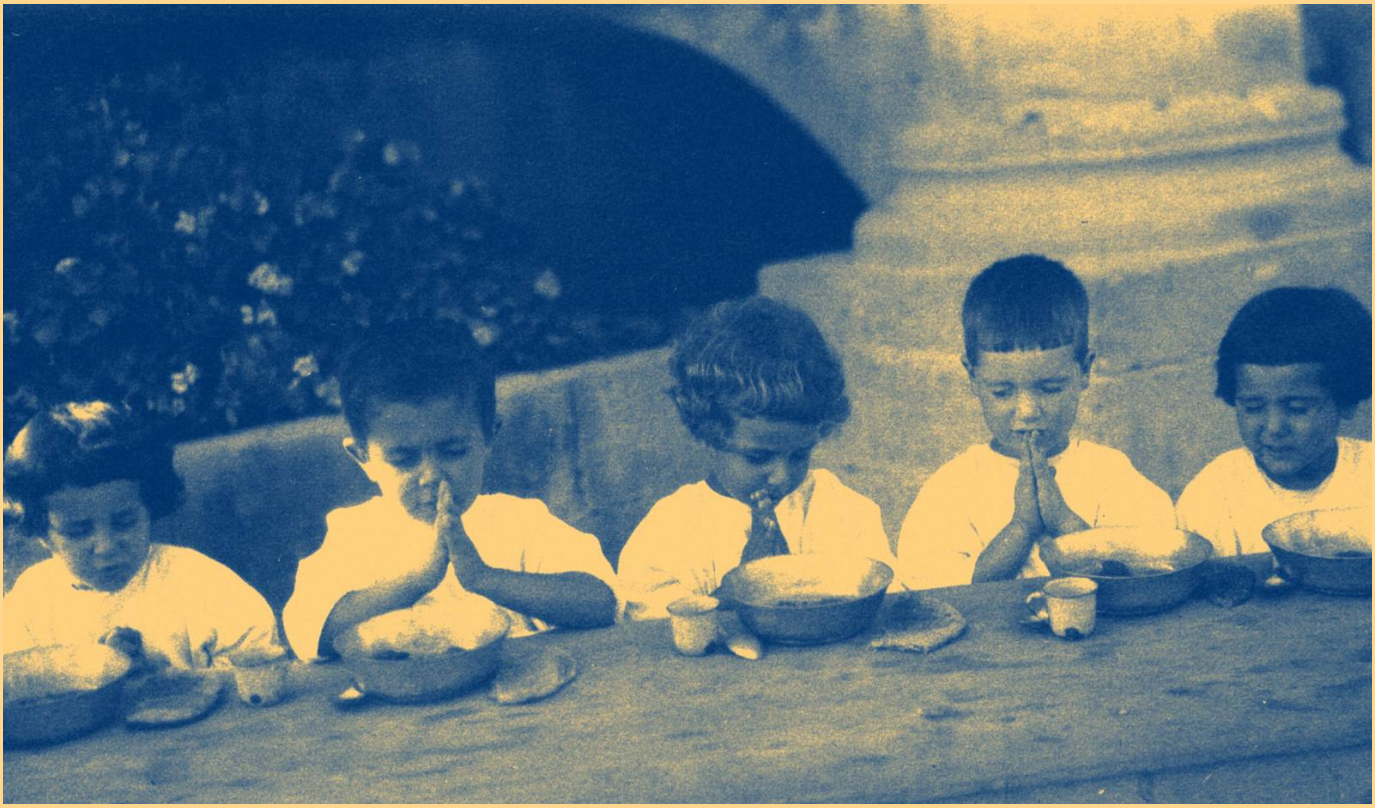


Photo 11. *Children at the Birds' Nest Orphanage. Sidon, Syria (now Lebanon), c. 1924. Antranig Karjian is second from the right*

Lucia secured a job as a maid in Aleppo. She saved her meager wages with the goal of reuniting her family. Lucia was finally able to bring Vartouhi and Antranig home to Aleppo in 1926 or 1927. Vartouhi went to work in a tailor's shop. Antranig attended the Armenian Presbyterian school. Manase enlisted in the French Army and left Syria.

The family moved to Baghdad, Iraq a few years later when Vartouhi married an Armenian refugee from Erzurum in eastern Anatolia; he had also survived the Genocide. As an adult, Antranig immigrated to the United States with his wife and four daughters. He rarely spoke of his time in the orphanage, but he was known to sing "Silent Night" in Armenian, a carol that he learned at the Birds' Nest, at Christmas time.

Special thanks to the Karjian family for sharing this story.

NEAR EAST RELIEF FINISHES ITS WORK

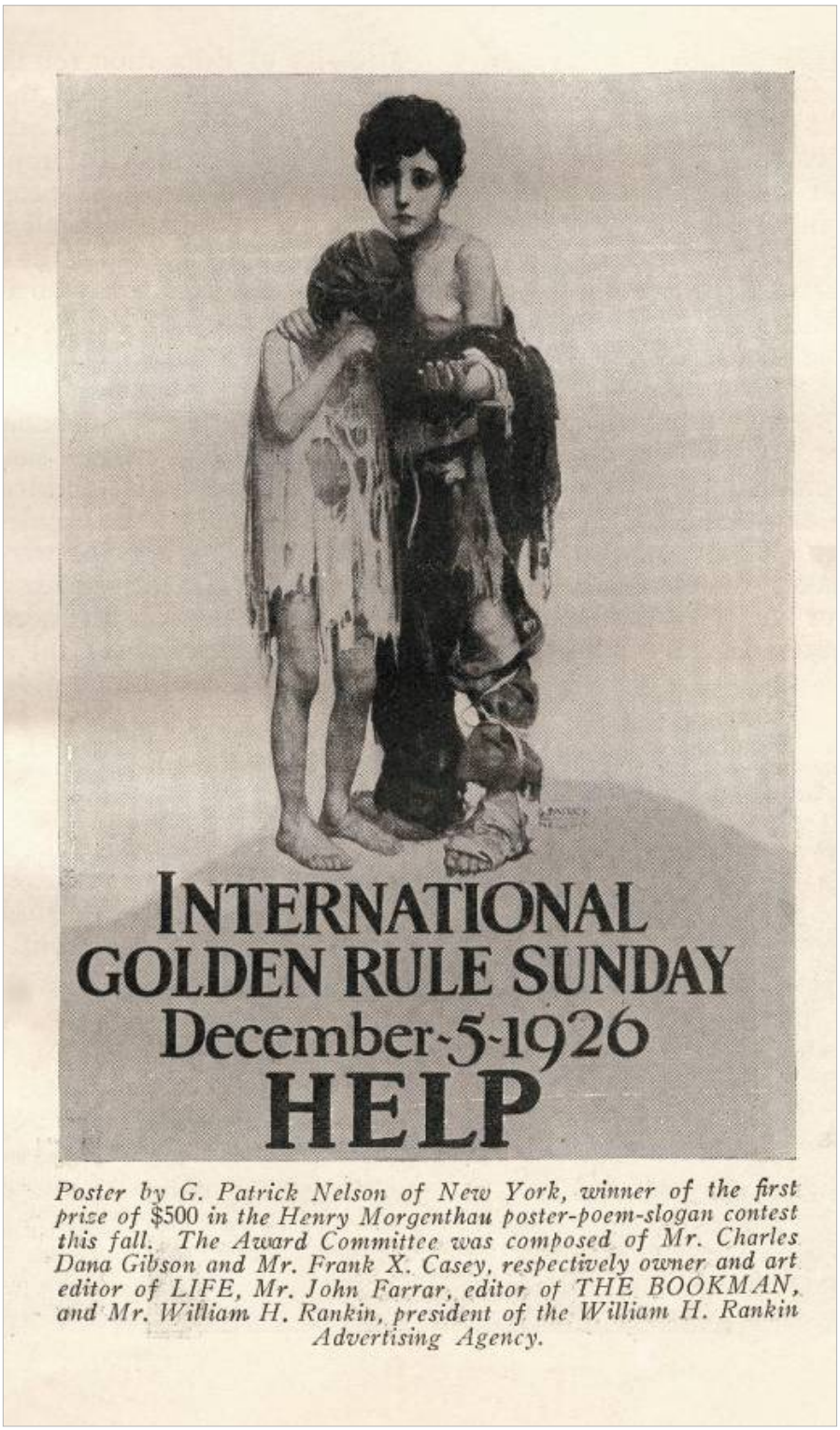
As necessary as they were, relief efforts could not go on forever. Something permanent had to be done.

Near East Relief faced a large debt due to its massive relief efforts following the Smyrna Disaster; it also faced the enmity of the new Turkish government, which was created in October 1923. Under the new government, Near East Relief was no longer permitted to work in Turkey. Near East Relief moved its overseas headquarters from Turkey to Athens, Greece. The organization focused its relief efforts on orphans and refugees in Greece, Syria (now Lebanon), and the Russian Caucasus.

One million people contributed to Near East Relief each year. One of the most popular fundraisers was the Golden Rule Sunday dinner, initiated in 1925. Churches, families, and community groups sponsored Golden Rule dinners. Guests enjoyed a simple but nourishing four-cent meal (the cost of an orphan's meal) and were invited to make contributions to help relief efforts.

The organization was eager to create permanent change in the region. In 1929, Near East Relief chose to focus on long-term economic and technical assistance rather than emergency aid. In 1930, Near East Relief was renamed as the Near East Foundation to reflect a broader mission of promoting peace through economic development. The Near East Foundation has worked in more than 40 countries in its long history.

Nearly one thousand Americans represented Near East Relief overseas. They came from all over the United States and were moved by deeply held religious and humanitarian beliefs. They showed incredible bravery, resourcefulness, and humanity. Not all of the Near East Relief workers returned home. According to organization records, twenty-three workers died while serving in Asia Minor. Most succumbed to typhus, cholera, and pneumonia.



Poster by G. Patrick Nelson of New York, winner of the first prize of $500 in the Henry Morgenthau poster-poem-slogan contest this fall. The Award Committee was composed of Mr. Charles Dana Gibson and Mr. Frank X. Casey, respectively owner and art editor of LIFE, Mr. John Farrar, editor of THE BOOKMAN, and Mr. William H. Rankin, president of the William H. Rankin Advertising Agency.

Photo 12. *Golden Rule Sunday poster designed by G. Patrick Nelson, 1926*

Reverend Lester James Wright was shot and killed by bandits.

Near East Relief was unable to return the Christian peoples of Anatolia — the Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks — to their ancient homelands. Nor was Near East Relief able to prevent genocide. An estimated 1.5 million Ottoman Armenians were murdered in the historic Armenian homeland. The Ottoman Turks seized the Armenians' personal and community property. More than 700,000 Greeks and 365,000 Assyrians suffered the same fate.

MID-WEEK PICTORIAL

Flight of Orphan Host From Turkish Persecution;

THE group of Armenian orphans here pictured formed only part of a procession of more than 5,000 who, in order to escape from the massacre that threatened after the victory of the Turkish Nationalists, sought safety in Syria, to which they had to travel a distance of 500 miles. The begira was carried on under the direction of Near East Relief workers, one of whom, Lester James Wright, formerly professor in the University of Wisconsin, was killed by bandits in the vicinity of Aleppo. Another American, Enoch R. Applegate of Jersey City, N. J., was wounded in the same attack, but escaped with his life.

The refugees here shown are only a small portion of the hundreds of thousands who thronged the roads of Asia Minor and later of Eastern Thrace, fleeing before the triumphant advance of the Turkish Nationalists. They knew too well what they had to expect from a lawless soldiery drunk with victory. How well founded were their fears is told in news dispatches giving detailed accounts of Turkish butcheries of the fleeing populations.

Recrudescence of the Turkish power during the present year has completely changed the political situation in the Near East and seriously threatens the peace of Europe. Turkey had emerged from the war shorn of her fairest provinces, deprived of her control of the Dardanelles, immensely diminished in population and apparently only a shadow of her former self. The Sultan in Constantinople exercised only a nominal power as the allied control. The revolt of her people against the terms imposed by the Treaty of Sèvres led to the formation of a Turkish Nationalist Government at Angora under the leadership of Mustapha Kemal. The military forces, however, that the latter had been able to assemble were poorly equipped, largely undisciplined, and against any strong European power would have proved a negligible factor. Kemal's opportunity was given to him by the ill-advised military advance of the Greeks under Constantine in Asia Minor. The battles between the Greeks and Turkish Nationalists in 1921 resulted virtually in a draw, each side having alternate victories and reverses. The resumption of hostilities in the Summer of 1922 showed that the Greek ranks were honeycombed by mutiny and insubordination. They were unable to withstand the onset of the Turkish troops and fled in utter rout. Kemal, whose military abilities seem to be of a high order, took instant advantage of the situation, followed in quick pursuit, captured Smyrna, the chief Greek city of Asia Minor, and advanced close to the gates of Constantinople.

Here for a time his march was stayed. The allied powers, alarmed by this new threat to the peace of the Near East, forgot for a time their divergent policies and drew close together. Up to that time France had rather favored the Kemalists, while Great Britain, rightly or wrongly, was supposed to be extending at least her moral support to the cause of the Greeks. Both powers, however, realized that a time had come to call a halt to excessive Turkish claims and ambitions. Great Britain hurried troops to reinforce those already in Constantinople and served notice on the Turks that she would not permit the invasion of the neutral zone about the Turkish capital. Negotiations ensued and a conference was held at Mudania, the chief result of which was the concession to the Turkish demands for occupation of East Thrace. The occupation was to take place under the auspices of the allied powers, who were also to maintain law and order and protect the safety of the subject population. Arrangements also were made for the calling of a conference in November at Lausanne, Switzerland, in which representatives of eight European powers and the Turkish Nationalists were to take part.

A new and startling turn was given affairs when the Turkish Nationalist Assembly, sitting at Angora, abolished the Sultanate on Nov. 1. The action was prominent

Part of the 5,000 orphans who marched 500 miles overland from the Near East Orphanage in was attended by

LESTER JAMES WRIGHT American Near East Relief worker who was killed by bandits near Aleppo.

Photo 13. *Article about Lester J.Wright. The New York Times, November 1921*

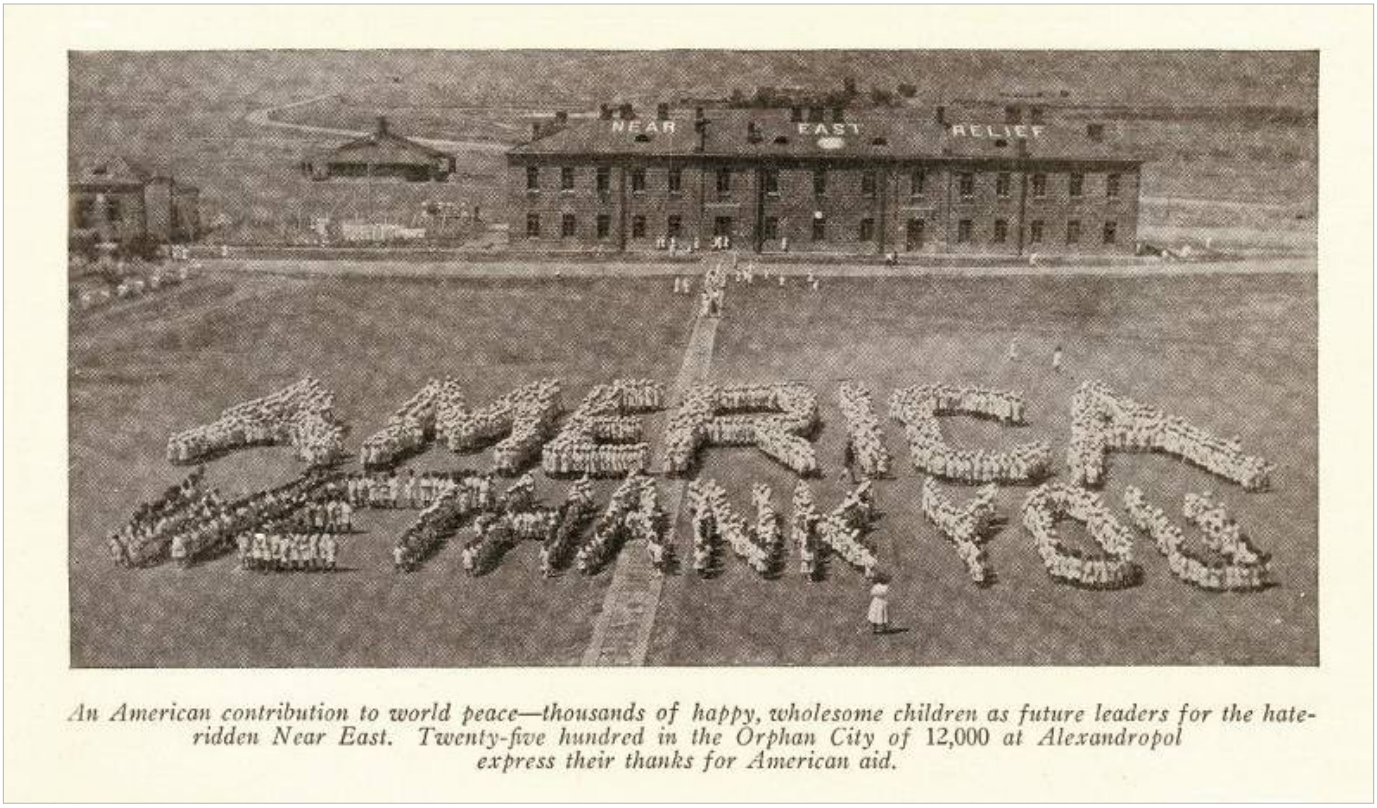


Photo 14. *Seversky Post orphanage, Alexandropol (now Gyumri), Armenia, c. 1922*

Nevertheless, what Near East Relief did accomplish was extraordinary. By 1930, Near East Relief had:

- ***Raised more than $116 million for humanitarian work***
- ***Fed more than twelve million people***
- ***Provided medical care to six million people***
- ***Cared for and educated more than 132,000 orphans***
- ***Saved at least one million lives***

In the words of American author Rose Wilder Lane, "the world's history has never before recorded such a moment as this reaching out of sympathy — of charity, which is love — from the masses of us to the masses of other peoples whom we have not seen." [9]

9 Peterson, Merrill D. *Starving Armenians: America and the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1930 and After.* Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004

Study Guide

Questions from the reading:

1 ***What was occurring in the Ottoman Empire that so disturbed U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau?***

2 ***Why was Morgenthau placed in a difficult position?***

3 ***Morgenthau's efforts, helped by James L. Barton and Cleveland H. Dodge, led to the formation of what organization?***

4 ***What did the Committee do with the money it raised?***

5 ***How did American children help with this effort?***

6 ***Why were there so many orphans?***

7 ***Why didn't the end of World War I solve the refugees' problems?***

8 ***What was the "Orphan City" and how did it help refugee children?***

9 ***How did the war between Greece and Turkey affect the lives of the Armenians and Greeks living in Turkey after World War I?***

10 ***Give some examples of courage shown by Near East Relief workers.***

11 ***How did Near East Relief help to rescue thousands of orphans after the catastrophe at Smyrna?***

12 ***How did Near East Relief use the entertainment industry to help raise funds for its relief efforts?***

13 ***Why did Near East Relief finish its work? What has replaced Near East Relief?***

Identify the following:

PEOPLE

Tacy Atkinson

Ambassador Henry Morgenthau

James L. Barton

Cleveland H. Dodge

Edith Cold

Pauline Allen

Dr. Mabel Elliott

Admiral Mark Bristol

Jackie Coogan

Reverend Lester J. Wright

The Karjian family

PLACES / EVENTS / ORGANIZATIONS

Anatolia

Ottoman Empire

American Committee for Armenian & Syrian Relief

Near East Relief

Ravished Armenia

"Orphan City"

Smyrna

Turkey

Further Discussion

1. In a democracy, advocacy groups rely on public support to accomplish goals. What methods did Near East Relief use to gain the support of the American people? How were these methods similar to those used by advocacy groups today?

2. In its campaign to help Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks, Near East Relief received tremendous support from the American people. Yet, more recent genocides in Rwanda and Darfur have not gained similar public support. How do you account for this difference?

3. In April 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. Near East Relief opposed a declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire, Germany's ally, arguing that in such circumstances Near East Relief would not be allowed to continue its relief efforts. Others argued that the U.S. would help more people by entering the war against the Ottoman Empire on the side of Great Britain. Which argument is more persuasive? It should be noted that the United States did not declare war on the Ottoman Empire.

4. Ambassador Morgenthau risked his diplomatic relationship with the Ottoman government to protest the government's treatment of Christian minorities. Later, U.S. High Commissioner Admiral Mark Bristol emphasized cooperation with the Ottoman Turkish government in hopes of gaining economic benefits (e.g., oil leases) for the United States. Imagine a discussion between these two men. Whose argument do you think would be more persuasive?

5. In *A Problem From Hell,* a book about the failure of American foreign policy on genocide in the twentieth century, author Samantha Power found people she calls "upstanders." These people risked their careers, safety, and lives to fight genocide. Explain how Ambassador Morgenthau and the representatives of Near East Relief were upstanders.

Near East Relief Posters

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word "propaganda" as "the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person."[1] Propaganda can be positive or negative. Author David Crowley has identified several characteristics of a successful propaganda poster.[2] These include the following:

1. The need to persuade people. This is especially true in a democracy in which people can make their own choices.

2. The use of emotion (feelings). This often includes appeals to patriotism, or the love of one's country.

3. The use of common symbols and popular images that are widely understood (for example, Uncle Sam or an eagle).

4. The need to be simple and direct.

5. The combination of image (picture) and text (writing) to appeal to a strong emotion, such as love, hate, fear or hope.

Near East Relief made effective use of posters during its fifteen-year effort to help victims of the Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek Genocide. Choose one of the posters that accompany this lesson (see pages 11, 17, and 21). Using the information above, explain why the poster is an effective piece of propaganda. How did the poster help Near East Relief to gain support for its relief efforts?

1 Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d. March 8, 2015.

2 David Crowley, "The Propaganda Poster," from Margaret Timmers (editor), The Power of the Poster. London: V&A Publications, 1998.

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A few of the children of Near East Relief, Alexandropol (now Gyumri), Armenia, c. 1921

On cover. *Volunteer Nellie Miller with orphans at the Birds' Nest Orphanage, Sidon, Syria (now Lebanon), c. 1922*

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