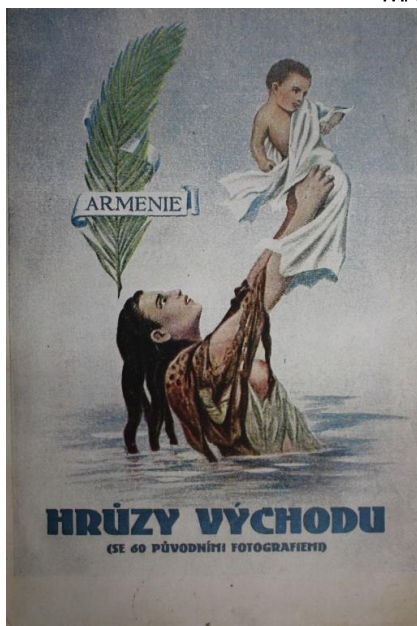


# TESTIMONY OF THE CZECH TRAVELLER KAREL HANSA ON THE CONDITION OF ARMENIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON IN AUTUMN 1922

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Karel Hansa and the cover of his book, *Horrors of the East*. The cover was based on a postcard, “Martyred people” published during WWI in Paris by Russian artist Sergei Solomko

This article presents an English translation of three texts by the Czech traveller Karel Hansa, which relate directly to the situation of Armenian refugees in Lebanon in the autumn of 1922 and are based on his personal experience. These excerpts describe Hansa's meeting with the Catholicos Sahak II (1849-1939), the living conditions of refugees in the Beirut camps, and Hansa's visit to the orphanages in Antelias and Zouk Mikael, later run by Maria Jacobsen. This critical article is accompanied by an introduction containing information about the author and the context of the historical sources presented.

I thank Terézia Klasová who meticulously translated the introduction and the excerpts.

## INTRODUCTION

Karel Hansa was born in 1890 in Vienna, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to ethnically Czech parents who lived there temporarily. He spent his childhood with his four siblings as the son of a postal inspector in České

Budějovice, a city that was the regional centre of southern Bohemia. The young Karel, unusually for that time, frequently changed schools but eventually studied forestry, a field in which he later worked in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a former Ottoman province then annexed by Austria-Hungary. Hansa spoke Czech, German and Serbo-Croatian. He fought on the Austro-Hungarian side during World War I as a sergeant and was seriously wounded in the right arm in the autumn of 1915, which led to him being classified as "three-quarters disabled".<sup>1</sup>



Northern part of the port city of Beirut (Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*)

The beginning of Hansa's career as a traveller can be traced back to 1922, when he left Prague for the southeast to escape problems in his love life. Importantly, from the beginning of his journey, he kept a diary in which he recorded detailed descriptions of a series of minor occurrences, which give his publications a vivid character and, in hindsight, historical value as windows into the history of everyday life. This is evidenced, for example, by the recent publication of Hansa's manuscript of his later journey to France, which was published in Czech with a parallel French translation only in 2020. This travelogue captures, among other things, the interwar life in the city of Lorient, which was practically razed to the ground by Allied bombing during World War II because it served as a German submarine base.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jiří Cukr, Marek Jandák, "Karel Hansa: The Czechoslovak Traveller in Syria and Lebanon in 1922 and His Work for the Benefit of Armenian Genocide Survivors," *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies*, 1(5):2020, pp. 8-11; Anna Karapetyan, "Karel Hansa: A Journey of Development and Self-creation. A Complete View," *Parrésia* XV:2021, pp. 223-32.

<sup>2</sup> Karel Hansa, *Poznatky a Zážitky z Francie - Connaissances et expériences de France*, České Budějovice, 2020.

On his first trip, which initially lacked a clear plan and direction, Hansa found himself in the Syrian city of Aleppo in the summer of 1922. There he met an American Near East Relief (NER) worker, Vahan Melikian, who helped Hansa to arrange accommodation in the home of the Aleppo branch of the humanitarian organisation, run by Hermann Kreider (1898-1967).<sup>3</sup> There, Hansa became involved in the activities of the NER and learned about the humanitarian situation of the Armenian refugees and genocide survivors. They were at that time moving en masse from the territory controlled by Turkish nationalists, led by Mustafa Kemal.<sup>4</sup> Hansa, for example, detailed his involvement in the relocation of Armenian orphans in the care of the NER from the border town of Jarabulus to Aleppo.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, influenced by his experience with modern humanitarian aid,<sup>6</sup> Hansa decided to return to Czechoslovakia to report on the Armenian refugees' situation, raise funds and set up a Czechoslovak relief effort. He later wrote that he had intended to set up an orphanage in Lebanon. His decision to choose this form of aid was probably influenced by his several-week-long visit to Lebanon in the autumn of 1922, where he arrived, already well integrated into the NER organisation, to accompany the transport of children from Aleppo to Beirut. However, he was never directly employed by the NER. During his stay in Beirut, Hansa stayed with the NER staff member Krikor Khahigian, who assisted him in his ongoing efforts to gather material for a book on the deportations and massacres of Armenians and the humanitarian situation of genocide survivors.

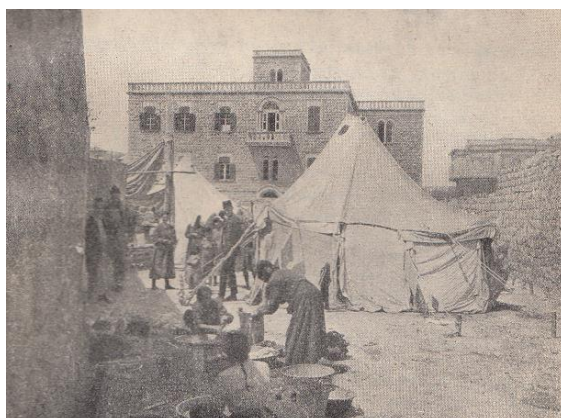
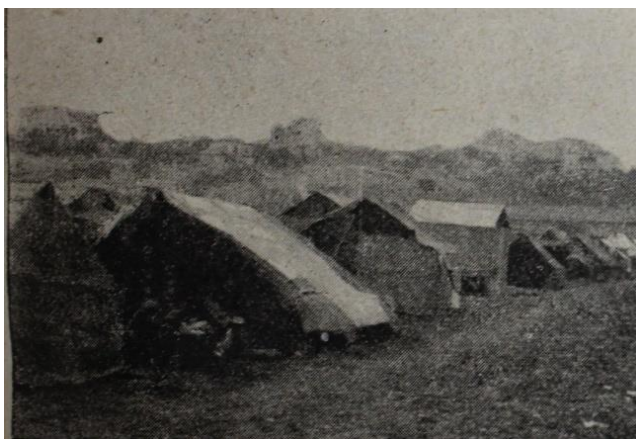
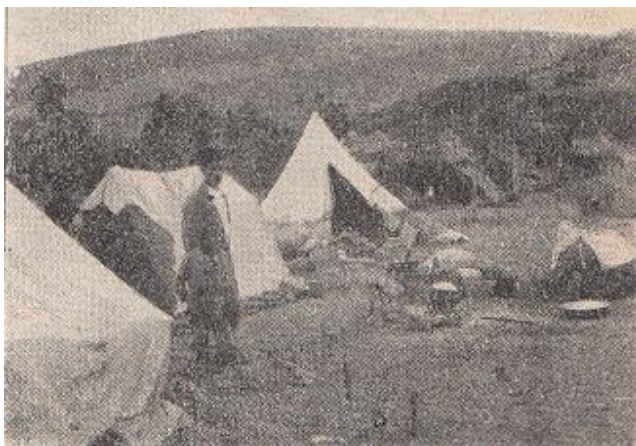
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<sup>3</sup> Karel Hansa, *Z Potulek Orientem*, České Budějovice: self-published, pp. 150-2, 180-9; Karel Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, Josef Šefl, Beroun, 1923, p. 114; Amerikan Bord Heyeti (American Board), Istanbul, "Personnel records for Herman H. Kreider," American Research Institute in Turkey, Istanbul Centre Library, online in Digital Library for International Research Archive, item #13203, at <http://www.dlir.org/archive/items/show/13203>, accessed 10. 06. 2022.

<sup>4</sup> James L Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930)*, Macmillan, New York, 1930, pp. 144-51; Ruth A. Parmelee, *A Pioneer in the Euphrates Valley*, Gomidas Institute, Princeton, 2002, pp. 66-7; Levon Marashlian, "Finishing the Genocide: Cleansing Turkey of Armenian Survivors, 1920-1923," *Remembrance and Denial*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1999, pp. 113-45.

<sup>5</sup> Hansa, *Hrůzy*, pp. 92-5; Hansa, *Z Potulek*, pp. 150-79.

<sup>6</sup> On the ideology and praxis of modern humanitarianism in the context in the Middle East, see Keith D. Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism*, University of California Press, Oakland, 2015, pp. 1-29.



From the life of the remnants of Asia Minors' Christian population. Tents of the refugees [...] in Beirut and Lebanon. The tents are made of rags, sacks, blankets and even pieces of metal sheets" (Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*)

According to Hilmar Kaiser, in the early 20th century, the Armenian population in Beirut was approximately 1200-1300 people, mainly from the middle and upper classes. They did not inhabit a separate neighbourhood in the city or form a significant political force.<sup>7</sup> In the summer of 1915, a few thousand deportees from the north arrived in Lebanon. In the territory of Lebanon, which was under the control of the Fourth Army commander, Jemal Pasha, there were no large-scale mass murders, but forced assimilation of the surviving Armenians through conversion to Islam took place.<sup>8</sup> As Raymond Kévorkian reports, in the autumn of 1918, the French forces discovered 4000 Armenians in Beirut and 1000 in Baalbek and Zahle.<sup>9</sup>

The southward movement of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide was, as already mentioned, linked to France's defeat in the war with Turkish nationalists, fought over the territory of Cilicia (1920-1921), the subsequent Franco Turkish Agreement (October 20, 1921) and the escalating persecution of the Armenian population in the territory of the newly emerging Turkey.<sup>10</sup> Many Armenian refugees arrived in Beirut in 1922, when the NER evacuated its orphanages in Anatolia. Hansa reports that 35,000 Armenian refugees were living in and around Beirut at the time of his visit. Ten thousand of these refugees were placed in the care of NER orphanages, and 8000 to 9000 were living in refugee camps.<sup>11</sup> For comparison, Vahé Tachjian reports that in July 1922, 8000 persons were gathered in refugee camps near Beirut at Quarantine (Karantina). The following year, the number of refugees rose to approximately 12,000 and continued to increase.<sup>12</sup>

After his return to Czechoslovakia, Hansa lectured, wrote and negotiated intensively with the authorities concerning the Armenian Genocide and aid to the survivors. However, his initiative had limited success, and the establishment of a Czechoslovak orphanage in Lebanon never occurred. This was partly caused by clashes between Hansa and some of his colleagues.<sup>13</sup>

The work of Karel Hansa was forgotten after World War II and became the subject of renewed attention by Armenian and Czech scholars in the Czech

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<sup>7</sup> Hilmar Kaiser, "The Armenians in Lebanon During the Armenian Genocide," *Armenians of Lebanon*, ed. Aida Boudjikianian, Haigazian University, Beirut, 2009, pp. 35-6.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History*, I. B. Tauris, New York, 2011, pp. 681-5; Kaiser, "The Armenians in Lebanon", pp. 41-5.

<sup>9</sup> Kévorkian, p. 743.

<sup>10</sup> Marashlian, pp. 113-45.

<sup>11</sup> Hansa, *Hrůzy*, p. 107.

<sup>12</sup> Vahé Tachjian, "L'établissement définitif des réfugiés arméniens au Liban dans les années 1920 et 1930," *Armenians of Lebanon*, pp. 63-4.

<sup>13</sup> Cukr & Jandák, pp., 8-11; Karapetyan, pp. 223-32.

Republic gradually after 2006, when a reprint of his book, *Horrors of the East*, was published in connection with efforts to recognise the Armenian Genocide in the Czech Republic.<sup>14</sup> This interest has increased in the past decade. In 2020 and 2021, two articles were published, one by Jiří Cukr and Marek Jandák and the other by Anna Karapetyan, which build on previous research already developed and provide comprehensive interpretations of Karel Hansa as a historical figure and author.<sup>15</sup>

The following texts come from two of Hansa's books. The first of these, *Horrors of the East* [*Hrůzy Východu*], was published in the autumn of 1923<sup>16</sup> as part of Hansa's intensive efforts to gain the support of the Czechoslovak public for establishing an orphanage in Lebanon, this publication combined an interpretation of Armenian national history, an account of the Genocide based on various contemporary sources, and Hansa's personal testimony about the situation of the Armenian refugees. Hansa's second book, titled *From Wanderings through the Orient* [*Z Potulek Orientem*], is a travelogue. The Czech traveller describes here in detail his entire journey from Prague to Aleppo and back. The travelogue omits some previously published passages concerning the Armenian refugees, yet it also contains a large amount of new information on this topic. This travelogue also serves as an essential source detailing Hansa's journey through the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon, including information about the social networks he was part of there. Thus, it is also essential for researchers, in terms of critiquing Hansa's texts on the Armenian Genocide and the humanitarian situation in Syria and Lebanon as historical sources, as it reveals the context of their production.

The selection of texts in this article has focused exclusively on those directly related to Armenians in Lebanon. Another criterion for choosing the given excerpts was whether the text's focus came directly from Hansa's personal experience. One of the article's aims is to facilitate access to these texts for researchers through their translation from Czech into English.

The first text published in this article is an excerpt from the chapter "Pictures from the Return Journey" (No. 1) from the travelogue *From*

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<sup>14</sup> Jaromír Štětina et al., *Mezinárodní Konference: Arménská Genocida*, Prague, 2006, pp. 41-6; Anna Sochová, "Karel Hansa: Očitý Svědek Následků Arménské Genocidy," *Parrésia* 12:2018, pp. 333-40; Haig Utidjian, *The Art of the Armenian Book through the Ages*, Pavel Mervart, Červený Kostelec, 2016, pp. 210-3; Jiří Cukr, "K Dobrodružnému Životu Karla Hansy (1890-1967)," *Výběr: Časopis pro historii a vlastivědu jižních Čech* 53, 1:2016, pp. 55-7; Marek Jandák, *Arménská Genocida*, Epoque, Praha, 2018, pp. 483-511.

<sup>15</sup> Cukr & Jandák, pp. 7-31; Karapetyan, pp. 221-74.

<sup>16</sup> The first known advertisement for the new book in *Národní listy*, on 23 November 1923, p. 10. The book is also briefly mentioned in *Světobzor*, 11 October 1923, p. 33.



*Wanderings through the Orient*. This text focuses on Hansa's arrival in Beirut with a group of Armenian orphans from Aleppo. It also describes Hansa's friendship with Krikor Khahigian, a NER official with whom he stayed in Beirut, and his meeting with the Catholicos Sahak II.<sup>17</sup> Another text published below is part of the chapter "Pictures of Life in the Refugee Camps" (No. 2) from the book *Horrors of the East*. The source describes in detail the appalling living conditions of the inhabitants of the refugee camps in Beirut, as well as the forms of social organisation and economic activity through which the refugees tried to cope with their desperate situation. The selection concludes with the chapter "Amongst Armenian Orphans in Lebanon" (No. 3) from *Horrors of the East*, which is devoted to Hansa's visit to the Antelias orphanage and his impressions of his encounter with Maria Jacobsen (1882-1960) and the children of the Zouk Mikael orphanage.

Some of the information given by Hansa is inaccurate in detail. For example, Hansa's stated ages of persons are usually mere estimates, or the details of events that Hansa learned about second-hand are written reproductions of earlier oral speech, so there is naturally a partial distortion. Hansa also incorrectly claims that the United States declared war on the Ottoman Empire during WWI, although they merely severed their diplomatic relations. We can, for example, critically compare Hansa's account of Maria Jacobsen's time in Mamuret-ül-Aziz and Harpoot during the First World War with her diaries, other sources and contemporary research.<sup>18</sup> In the author's opinion, this and similar other comparisons reveal some partial distortions or misunderstandings by Hansa but confirm the authenticity of the central narrative.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Sahak II was a Catholicos of Cilicia of the Armenian Apostolic Church from 1902-1939 and not a member of the Catholic Church as Hansa incorrectly claims. He was also more than 12 years younger than the Czech traveller had noted.

<sup>18</sup> Maria Jacobsen was a prominent Danish missionary, nurse and humanitarian whose diaries are among the most important sources on the Armenian Genocide (Maria Jacobsen, *Diaries of a Danish Missionary: Harpoot, 1907-1919*, Taderon, Reading, 2001; Inger M. Okkenhaug, "Scandinavian Missionaries, Gender and Armenian Refugees during World War I. Crisis and Reshaping of Vocation," *Social Sciences and Missions*1(23):2010, pp. 64-71. Revised and expanded translation of Chapter 8: "Maria Jacobsen, KMA og Fuglereden i Libanon" - "Maria Jacobsen, KMA, and the Birds Nest in Lebanon" from Matthias Bjørnlund, *På Herrens Mark: Nødhjælp, Mission og Kvindekamp under det Armenske Folkedrab*, Kristeligt Dagblads Forlag, Copenhagen 2015),  
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[https://www.academia.edu/42881210/Birds\\_Nest\\_on\\_the\\_Danish\\_orphanage\\_for\\_Armenian\\_genocide\\_survivors\\_in\\_Lebanon](https://www.academia.edu/42881210/Birds_Nest_on_the_Danish_orphanage_for_Armenian_genocide_survivors_in_Lebanon), accessed 12.06.2022.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the paragraph mentioning the murder of 10,000 Armenian children probably refers to the massacres committed near Lake Hazar Gölü (arm. Մոլթ լիճ). See also: Leslie A. Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province*, A. D. Caratzas, New York,

**No. 1:** Pictures from the return journey (*From Wanderings through the Orient*, pp. 210-3.

[...] At two in the morning, we arrived in Beirut. Several committee employees awaited the transport at the train station, but numerous women were also huddling in the crowd. They had come motivated by the desire for reunion with their children, hoping their child would be among them. Only one of the women was blessed with this luck. She found her beloved daughter, an eight-year-old girl returning from Malatya. The woman left young Sofia there in the protection of a trusted Greek family when she had to leave the town together with other Armenian citizens and was deported. When Americans commenced rescue works in favour of the people of Asia Minor, Sophia was also accepted into the care of the Committee. The mother recognised her beloved daughter thanks to a mark on the child's neck. [211] With cries of inexpressible joy, she embraced her child, sprinkling her cheeks with a stream of tears. These are the moments I shall never forget.

I was also awaited at the train station. Already in Beirut, many Armenians knew about me and the work I was doing in some places for the children of their nation. I was warmly welcomed by them, and many of them wished for me to accept their hospitality. They assumed that I would stay in Lebanon or that I had only gone with the children to Beirut to be their guide. They did not know that I had started my journey to my homeland.

After being placed in the spacious rooms of several buildings built by the Americans, where thousands of children were accommodated and slept on mats spread on the floor, I also went to rest. Everything was already prepared for my stay in the house of the Committee, where the Armenian Krikor K[hahigian] was the administrator. A cosy little room with a clean bed awaited me. I slept once again "European style" on a feather bed with snow-white pillows. Excellent dinner and tea, all served in the early hours of the morning. The attention paid to me was surprising, and I felt that I did not even deserve that. During my whole stay in Beirut, Lebanon, I was a guest of the Committee, by whose orders I received every attention from many employees. I felt as if I was among my own. The sincere friendship with the entire family of Mr Kr[ikor] K[hahigian], the administrator, is one of the fondest memories of my stay of several weeks in Lebanon. Long into the night, we sat in my little room, drinking cups of tea and working out [212] my notes, which I was preparing as material for my future book. Day by day, the material multiplied, and my diary filled up, for there were many who had gone through all the horrors and hardships of the deportation of Armenians in 1915-1919. Every evening women came, broken under the weight

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1989, pp. 79–87; Tacy Atkinson, "The German, the Turk and the Devil Made a Triple Alliance": Harpoot Diaries, 1908–1917, Gomidas Institute, Princeton, 2000, pp. 55, 58; Tacy Atkinson, "Statement," James L. Barton (ed.), *"Turkish Atrocities": Statements of American Missionaries on the Destruction of Christian Communities in Ottoman Turkey, 1915–1917*, Gomidas Institute, Ann Arbor, 1998, pp. 51-2; Henry H. Riggs, *Days of Tragedy in Armenia: Personal Experiences in Harpoot 1915–1917*, Gomidas Institute, Ann Arbor, 1997, pp. 151-3.



of hardship, poverty and deprivation. They came to confess their infinite horrors to an unknown stranger. Among them were blind older women sinking under the terrible blows of fate. They lived with the other refugees in huge camps on the seashore in tents made of rags, sacks, or in huts nailed together from pieces of tin. They told of the horrors they had experienced, trembling but not crying. The empty sockets of their eyes had no tears, for all life had been extinguished in them. The sight of those poor victims of human bestiality was terrible. Their mouths did not lie, and their whole condition was a living testimony to the tragedy of their nation but, at the same time, an indictment of the cultural West, to which the Armenian nation has for centuries been directing its vain pleas for the preservation and granting of human rights.

Often, I was invited to various high-ranking friends of Armenians. I received a heartfelt welcome on the occasion of my visit to the head of Armenian Catholics - Catholicos Sahak Khabayan, the spiritual leader of the Armenians of Cilicia. An older man of more than 85 years of age, tall, hairy, but with sparkling, very loving eyes, welcomed me in the delegation of Mr Kr[ikor] K[hahigian] in his residence in his study. He already knew of my voluntary effort and that I planned to work to benefit the Armenian nation's orphaned children. He did not thank me - but [213] urged caution. The Turks have friends and admirers everywhere, he said. They will be the ones who will try to win you over, and if they fail, they will silence you. Your idea is a beautiful one, but your efforts to carry it out will find opponents in Czechoslovakia, too, who will care much that you do not speak, you who have seen with your very eyes the sufferings of my people. They believe that my nation - as it seems - is not supposed to be granted human rights by Europe, for there are many strong individuals there who care a great deal that the old order is preserved in these countries....

These were the words of the honoured older man. With these words, he foretold everything I encountered as soon as I returned and began my work. It was as if he had foreseen and known beforehand.

The prelate Suryen<sup>20</sup> in Beirut judged similarly. And a great many were of the same mind, that the Armenian nation was suffering and was being annihilated under the patronage of Europe. A great distrust of Europe stared from the eyes of all. Today, as I write these lines, the whole situation and the so-called "Armenian Question" is clear to me. But the governments of nations which themselves oppress their citizens cannot and do not have the understanding and will to help the rights of others. This is the "alpha and omega" in the history of nations.

**No. 2:** Pictures from life in refugee camps, *Horrors of the East*, pp. 103-7.

[...] Beirut has two refugee camps immediately adjacent to the seashore. Only a narrow road, winding over the precipitous places of the seashore, washed by water with the roar of crashing waves, or the railroad tracks of a narrow coastal railway leading to Antilyas and on to Lebanon bounds these two human anthills. Innumerable

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<sup>20</sup> Father Suren Kemkhadjian was the priest and representative of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem at the Armenian Orthodox Church of Surp Neshan in Beirut.

tents made of various materials and huts [104] patched together from pieces of planks or from kerosene or gasoline cans are offered; if we gaze over the camps from the hill above the city covered in beautiful villas and palaces built in the Arabian architectonic style, in the shadows of palm trees and cypresses, a pictorial, but immensely tragic sight. The riddle is, what will become of the thousands of human souls who live, languish and hope down there? And the stormy sea, rolling its foaming waves vast as mountains and crashing with a terrible roar and shriek against the lofty shores, from which only a narrow road separates the camps in the basin - a sweep—a dangerous place, especially for the little children who seem to be all over the camp. But there was no other place for the poor refugees to retreat to, so only the waves of the sea delayed further escape. There, on the former landfill for construction waste, the people, many of whose possessions formerly included palaces, pitched their tents and huts. During my stay in Beirut in November and December of the last year, in a time of heavy rains and freezing winds, nights very cold and frosty, when I visited the camps there almost daily, I experienced terrible misery, sickness and suffering beyond description. The streams of water, flowing incessantly from the clouds, poured an immense torrent of water into every corner of the flimsy tents and huts, in which, on the soaked and variously mud-stained remaining possessions, but often on the bare ground, shivering mothers, protecting their crying children with their flimsy clothing, were huddled. The daily rush of water made the camp an actual quagmire. There were no spades or shovels to deepen or make new drains. The fierce, freezing, northerly wind, which had been blowing incessantly for weeks, mercilessly tore the soaked and rotten remains of blankets and sacks from the tents, which threatened at any moment to pull themselves from their pegs embedded in the sodden soil. For weeks the weather was furious, and the stay in the camps was absolute torture. It was impossible to see the camp at night, when I used to go to the seashore to watch the awful spectacle of the stormy sea. Everything around was flooded with water and mud, through which it was only with tremendous effort that one could get forward. The weeping and wailing, the voices of the men guarding the camp, were only occasionally carried by the swirling wind to my ears.

A sight no more comforting by day than by night. All coming out of drenched tents and huts, shivering with cold in flimsy suits. Most of them are barefoot, skinny children's feet shivering with cold and red as lobsters. The children are crying - they are hungry. And the mothers, with tears in their eyes, helpless, run through the camp, looking for food for the children, or fuel on which they could cook the essentials. There is no stove, no heater, and so the poor women help themselves to an empty kerosene can, in which they cook breakfast, lunch, - and often dinner at the same time, on a piece of charcoal. There is no milk, eggs, or grease, so a simple rice soup is the only and usual meal. To add to the scarcity, there is not even enough drinkable water. The filthy water flowing through the camp does not even give the possibility [105] of being used. The aqueduct brought into the camps provides only an insufficient quantity of water and is besieged by those waiting for a can of water. Hundreds and hundreds of kerosene and petrol cans are lined up day and night at the waterworks, and the boys charged with filling them take turns day and night like soldiers on guard.

The narrow, winding paths and lanes leading through the camp are so muddy that it is only with great effort that walkers wade forward in the mass of mud. In one of the tents, tiny and made of rags, I found a blind older woman lying on the bare ground. Poor thing, she had no one else left in the world....

In another tent, on the soggy ground, children lay half-naked on spread-out wet blankets, terribly dirty, dishevelled and with eyes festering. The mother, I was told, had gone to look for work! They had nothing to eat. I looked at more and more tents, and all of them were full of nothing but misery, hunger and sickness. In one tent, made of pieces of canvas, sacks and paper, an older man lay on a soaked mattress. He was very ill, with a raging fever, and he was coughing. His wife was sitting cross-legged beside him. They were the parents of two sons who had fought in the Turkish army and never returned. They were also the parents of a daughter who had been taken to a Turkish harem at the age of eleven during the deportation and, before that, raped in front of their eyes. What the refugees tell of the days of persecution and killing that had no end is harrowing. Many were only miraculously, they say, saved and escaped death. Thus, one Armenian, speaking good German and from Marash, formerly the owner of a thriving farm, told me how 120 members of his family and relatives were slaughtered or died of various diseases and starvation during the deportation. And another boy, a pupil of the former German orphanage in Harpoot, told me how he had seen his father, mother, and brother being murdered. I shuddered to see the terrible misery and thought, will there be a man in my country, free and happy, who, when he hears of this terrible misery, will not want to help...? Lack of knowledge of Arabic is a significant handicap in finding employment, even for many very intelligent refugees. They cannot practice their crafts; there is no money to buy materials and no tools. There are already so many daily wage workers or porters that they can hardly find employment.

For all the scarcity, the school has not been forgotten, so in the middle of the camp, a hut made of planks and slats, about six metres long and two and a half metres wide, with no floor inside, serves as a school. It is not only a school but also a hospital and, at night, a lodging house for the older people and blind women, of whom there are more than a hundred in the camp. There I found the children feverish, hot, shivering with cold, and wrapped in wet blankets. During my stay, a doctor came twice a day, for the mortality rate among the children was high. Those who can build a hut of planks and enclose it with sheets of tin and a raised floor are considered wealthy. [106] In the "main street" of the camp, a lane no wider than three yards, several huts have been built by the town or clerical authorities. In the booths are found shops with really "mixed" goods.

Different kinds of goods are hung on wooden wedges stuck into the smallest hole in the hut, and the goods are displayed in an unruly, indeed "oriental" mixture by the shed's owner. It is a proper oriental bazaar, and it is difficult to see how the camp's inhabitants could have procured cheaply everything they needed from the town if it had not been for this little self-help. The merchandise is not of the first class; the various kinds have already given out their "odd smell," but the scarce necessities can be bought relatively cheaply, for the mixture gives a good choice. Conspicuous to me was the appearance of several women as well as men strolling in the bazaar, decently dressed, differing in the healthy colour of their faces from the

conspicuously pale, unhealthy and sad faces of the women of the camp, and making their purchases. On my asking whether they were also members of the camp, I was told that they were people from the town, who, because the various goods in the camp were much cheaper than in the shops in the town, went there to buy for themselves. Thus, the Armenians, men who in their former home had cultivated only the clods of their fields, from desire or being driven to carry on business there, have taken up the same, and being content with a small income, are doing good business and becoming formidable competitors.

The organisation, which can be spoken of under the present circumstances, despite the lack of men and women capable of maintaining order and peace in the camps, is exemplary despite all the difficulties. I have witnessed the stern action of the superintendent of the camps, the clergyman Bohas Aris,<sup>21</sup> a teacher in the town orphanage, with whom I have often visited the camps, in closing several shops and cafés at the same time. Some of the shacks sold black coffee, soda, tea and other drinks. It was strictly forbidden to sell spirits, especially arak (a type of spirit). But the ban was broken, and arak was sold. As soon as the manager, Mr Aris, learned of this, he did not delay his intervention and, requesting an escort from the local chief of the police department, had the huts and cafés closed. Everything was carried out smoothly after a proper discussion with the offenders, which, I understand, was a helpful lesson on the extent of the harmful effects of drinking spirits; the cafés were turned into dormitories for older men and boys who did not have tents. In a bakery built in the middle of the camp and sunk deep in the ground, bread of reasonably good quality is baked. In one of the larger tents, on one of my nightly visits to the camp with my friend Krikor Khahigian, I found a "factory" of handmade combs of various shapes and sizes made from camel bones. The very cleanly crafted combs, made day and night, found their outlet, thanks to their moderate price and neatness, even in London.

I encountered the same picture of misery and deprivation in my inspection of the various khans and houses in which the fugitives are lodged. The only difference is that they are accommodated under a roof in [107] dry rooms. The quarter of the city called Sorsuk [Sursock], in which there are many magnificent palaces built in gardens, where crowns of date palms rise above the roofs of the palaces, cypresses, various cacti, olives and orange trees, and other vegetation afford a splendid sight, is also crowded with refugees. The atmosphere in the crowded rooms was terrific. The air, mixed with the fumes of human bodies and the effect of cooking smoke spreading, made the atmosphere so dense it was almost possible to cut it with a knife. All the rooms, even the smallest, were inhabited. In the cradles made of ropes, often imperfectly twisted, from which it seemed that the child must fall out at any moment, the never-ceasing crying of children greeted me on my visits. The cradles, of which I counted seven in one large room occupied by 19 families but only two men, were fixed between the windows or suspended from the room's ceiling. The

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<sup>21</sup> Boghos Aris was an Armenian Catholic priest, who selflessly used his connections for the settlement of the Armenians in Lebanon and was instrumental in establishing orphanages in Beirut and finding sources for their survival.

cradle was swung employing a cord the same way a bell is swung. It is perhaps unnecessary to point out how, in such an environment, the health of adults and especially that of small children is endangered.

Many families have taken refuge in half-demolished houses and live in cellars or alcoves, which they have enclosed with boards and laths nailed together with metal sheets. In one such hole in a house in danger of falling down, returning from the seashore late at night, I found two women and an older man with three little children. Drawn by the children's cries, I crawled into the burrow and surprised the inhabitants with the light of a pocket torch during prayer...

**No. 3:** Amongst the Armenian orphans in Lebanon, *Horrors of the East*, pp. 115-8.

The joyous cries of innocent children's souls greeted me on my visits to the orphanages on the seaside in the settlement of Antilyas [Antelias] - where I went by a narrow railway, at times passing in the vicinity of the roaring sea tide or the shadow of the date palms, olives and banana trees - during my few weeks' stay in Beirut.

Thousands of children of both genders and all ages are placed in rented buildings or in tents set in the shadows of cedars and cypresses and also in barracks built in haste on the seashore and on the foothills of the immense mountains of Lebanon. These are shelters for children with no one in the world! The shelters were built by the charity of people from far away America, who brought month after month a certain amount of money, voluntarily subscribed and donated for the benefit of the orphaned children.

Even the tiny hands of the little children help in the building of the houses, and the whole camp gives the impression of a great anthill, in which every member of the great family of orphans contributes its penny to the altar of the common good. It seems to be the realm of the elves - who build the palace of children's love. The observer, whoever he may be, is in the way, for there is work to be done. Each one carries and fiddles with either a block rolled from a nearby rock or a basket of sand from the seashore as his contribution to the great work of the new orphanage! Admiration, genuine admiration, is created by the little workers, who know neither rest nor repose.

The children's lives are busy there all day long. Outside of school and the various exercises, the children help with the work described above in building the barracks. Swimming and fishing for many crabs and shells in the sea are unlimited. Cries of admiration or horror accompany the "good hunt" of the little fishermen wading in the silty sand, which is washed by the water of the waves that quietly spill over the long and wide quay. A happy life, one would think, for the children there. Yes, if it can be called a happy child's life—a child's life [116] without a mother's love and tenderness? Love, which most of these children have scarcely known, and who, in the earliest days of their earliest childhood, were deprived of it by a murderous hand....

A beautiful road, winding in places close to the seashore, winding, gently ascending, and running through many gardens of orange trees, olive trees, banana trees, and

whole fields of sugar cane, dominated by the magnificent crowns of slender date palms, leads to the settlement of Zuk Michaelat 27 km. from Beirut.

Quietly and regularly worked our car engine, which carried us, Mr Khahigian, his wife and me, to visit the orphanage in the settlement of Zuk Michael [Zouk Mikael], which was in the care of a Danish charitable association based in Copenhagen.

On the day of our visit, 25 November 1922, 136 orphans were in the care of the Danish orphanage there, led by Madame Maria P. Jacobsen, a lady of about 35 years of age, of beautiful stature, with clear blue eyes. This woman has devoted her life to the children's souls, to become their caring and self-sacrificing foster mother. What brought her to those wild and dangerous lands so many years ago? To the places where she experienced all the horrors of the deportation of the Armenian people to the Arabian desert? It was love for the poor, flowing from the pure heart of a woman who had once loved and sought solace and oblivion. Her heart had found what it was looking for, confirmed by the bright gleam of her twinkling eyes, coming from the depths of her soul, content with work done well!

After the warm welcome we received, not only from Madame Jacobsen but also from the children, who greeted us respectfully, a short tour was made of the rooms, which were very airy and exemplarily clean and which serve efficiently for all the needs of the orphanage. The building itself is built of stone and has only one floor. It stands alone as if glued to the hillside that crouches beneath the range of the boundless mountains and mountain ranges of Lebanon. The view from the hill and the balcony of the building over the surface of the open sea on the west side, and the view of the row of buildings of the French school, which stands in the immediate vicinity of the orphanage on the east side, under the shade of cypresses and olives, is magnificent. The building is surrounded by a high stone wall, and the garden, neatly laid out and full of orange and olive trees and the various flowers the children cultivate, makes the best impression.

At the time of our visit, 136 girls of various ages were in the care of the orphanage. The only male was Abraham, a boy two years old, who was the darling of all. An adorable boy with beautiful black eyes and a curly head. Six girls, aged two or three, slept on spread mats in one room. The institution's inmates are mostly children abandoned by their mothers during the deportation when caravans of unfortunate mothers passed through Harpoot. There many a mother, trusting that her child's life would be preserved, abandoned her, often an infant, on the steps of the local American orphanage. There Mme Jacobsen [117] collected the children and saved the lives of many of them. She collected more than 3000 children, whom she nursed, washed and cooked for. After the departure of the American staff, who were immediately expelled by the Turkish authorities after America declared war on Turkey, she was the only one left in the orphanage. Thanks to the respect she enjoyed among the Mohammedan population of the town, some people came to help her, so she managed to raise the children with a superhuman effort. She told me with a smile what a struggle it was to feed the children when there was a terrible shortage of the necessities of life, which could not be supplied from anywhere. And it was more than hopeless to attempt to get help from the Turkish authorities. So, she cooked a meal for the children only once a day, the small ration of which, as she expressed it, was quite insufficient to feed the children, and she distributed it in

closed rooms to prevent the children from running around and thus avoided the possibility of some of the children receiving food twice at the expense of others. Similarly, she had to herself wash the clothes, of which there was an absolute shortage, as there was not such an ample supply, and she picked up many a child from the street in a single torn shirt. So, she shut the children up in a room in the building while she washed and dried the clothes. The mass of lice that the children brought with them, and which had nested under the children's skin, made the work of the selfless woman very difficult.

Her and the children's departure from Harpoot in 1920 was a timely deliverance, for the hardships they had endured resulted in severe illness. With a sad smile, she added that although the difficulties had ceased with the arrival in Lebanon, the uncertainty of the future remained. The children's stay in Lebanon seems not to be permanent, although the stay of the French troops in Syria seems to be a guarantee. Her favourite is a girl eight years of age, the daughter of a professor from the American school at Harpoot. Her father was murdered, and her mother was deported after several days of terrible torture. Little Berdji [Beatrice], as she is called, was then a child of three months. Today she speaks several languages and plays the piano very skilfully and beautifully.

Quietly and inconspicuously, all the children gathered in a spacious room and created a remarkably picturesque group; they sat in front of the piano. A few taps on the piano keys with little Berdji's tiny fingers and the pleasant sound of the music brightened everyone's faces. The head of the whole family of children, the adorable Abraham, presided over the entire choir. The little children's throats sang song after song in rapture—moving pieces full of devotional tenderness and love. The melodies are simple and purely childlike, which I wish I could understand. But the shining eyes of the little singers were a testimony that the children's souls fully accompanied the singing. The little beauty Amine, a girl about four years old, had her solo after the choir finished their songs, and she gave us a lullaby in a casual, stunning, mellifluous voice, in which she sang daily to her doll. But how painful was the fate of little Amine? Her father, Madame Jacobsen told me, [118] was a wealthy merchant in Malatya. He had been imprisoned during the deportation and had been horribly tortured in prison. After being tortured for several days, he was taken out of prison and publicly crucified. The mother was later deported, and no further news from her ever came. The fate of little Asnif, a girl of four who recited several poems in Armenian and Turkish to us, was no more comforting. Similarly, the life of the little Kreysi, whose mother was raped multiple times by the leader of a horde of Turkish volunteers, Haji Khaya, was full of terrible hardships and suffering.

Soon the children's shyness disappeared, and they performed several round dances and figures for us. One, two, three - the tiny hands of the little dancers clapped as they danced the dances of their own choreographies. There is no end to the ingenuity of the children in the manner of their various games, and so the hearty display of the little ones grew more and more varied. My sincere love for the children could not be stifled, and I soon became a participant in that rejoicing, which brought me a genuine and most beautiful friendship - the love of the little children! But it was jealousy, unfortunate jealousy - or regret, that was almost the cause of a rupture in a friendship hardly acquired. I soon observed that some eyes were moistened with



a barely concealed tear of regret. The childish regret, awakened by the neglect of a stranger, and wholly undeserved, almost moved the children to tears. The remedy, however, was made at once, and I, who did not understand their words but fully comprehended them, gave each a piece of love and attention and made amends for unsuspected wrongdoings.

With the kind hospitality of Mme. Jacobsen, and in the course of further conversation about the events of recent years, when she herself confirmed to me various statements made by Mr Khahigian, I learned many valuable stories about events which took place during the general deportation of the Armenians. Thus, she has confirmed to me the terrible death of about 10,000 Armenian children, who were taken from Malatya by the Turks to the desolate mountains most of them aged about ten, and left there to starve and die of thirst. She did not want to believe it, but she convinced herself by a personal visit to the places, where she found and saw sun-baked piles of children's bones. The case happened in the summer of 1915.

Late in the afternoon, we bade farewell to our gracious hostess, who accompanied us to the border of her magnificent and unique kingdom....

Leaving through the garden door, I was gifted a small bouquet of Lebanese flowers from little Amine with the words: "Return soon to us".

Impressions, which I carried with me from the unforgettable visit, are a picture of the fact there is in the end "Love" in this world!

**ԼԻԲԱՆԱՀԱՅ ԳԱՂԹԱԿԱՆՆԵՐԸ 1922Ի ԱՇՆԱՆ.  
ՉԷԽ ՃԱՆԱԴԱՐՀՈՐԴ ՔԱՐԷԼ ՀԱՆՍԱՅԻ ՎԿԱՅՈՒԹԻՒՆՆԵՐԸ  
(ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ)**

ՄԱՐԷՔ ԵԱՆՏԱՔ (Marek.Jandak@ff.cuni.cz)

ՉԷԽ ճանապարհորդ Քարել Հանսան անձնական պատճառներով լքելով իր ծննդավայրը Կ'ուդլովի Միջին Արեւելք: Առանց յստակ երթուղի մը ունենալու, ան ինքզինք կը գտնէ Հալէպի մէջ, 1922ի ամռան, երբ քեմալական շարժումին հետեւանքով հայութիւնը դարձեալ Կ'արտաքսուէր իր պապենական հայրենիքէն: Ան աւանատես կը դառնայ շուրջ 10,000 որբերու փոխադրութեան՝ Ճարապլուսէն Հալէպ: 1922ի աշնան զինք կը գտնենք Պէյրութի մէջ, իբրեւ ընկերակից Հալէպէն Պէյրութ փոխադրուող Նիր Իսթ Րիլիֆի որբերուն:

Իտես այս կացութեան, Հանսա Կ'որոշէ նուիրուիլ մարդասիրական ծառայութեան. կը վերադառնայ հայրենիք՝ հանգանակութեան նպատակով, որպէսզի կարենայ անելի լայնածիր ծառայութիւն մատուցել հայ գաղթականութեան: ՉԷԽիդ մէջ, 1923ին, ան կը հրատարակէ երկու գիրք, ուր կը նկարագրէ իր ճանապարհորդութիւնը եւ լուսարձակի տակ Կ'առնէ 1922ի հայ գաղթականութեան վիճակը՝ Հալէպի եւ Պէյրութի գաղթակայաններուն մէջ, ինչպէս նաեւ հայ որբերուն կացութիւնը, իր հանդիպումները Սահակ Կաթողիկոսին, Մարիա Ճէյքըպսընի եւ այլ նուիրեալներու հետ:

Այստեղ հրատարակուող նկարագրութիւնները քաղուած են Հանսայի այդ զոյգ գիրքերէն: Անոնք հազուագիւտ վկայութիւններ են Լիբանանի մէջ գաղթական հայութեան դիմագրաւած դժուարութիւններուն, գաղթակայաններու կեանքին եւ որբանոցայիններուն իրավիճակին: