



PETITION

IN BEHALF OF THE ASSYRIANS IN IRAN

From

HIS HOLINESS MAR ESHAI SHIMUN XXIII
CATHOLICOS PATRIARCH OF THE EAST
AND OF THE ASSYRIANS CXIX

To the

UNITED NATIONS

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To the Secretary-General,
The United Nations,
Lake Success, New York.
Excellency:

On May 17, 1946, I reported to you a "well planned systematic persecution in the form of massacre, conducted by certain units of the Iranian military forces against the Assyrian Christians in the district of Rezaieh, Iran." In your letter, Reference 1100-1-4/MEJ dated October 17, 1946, you stated, "I am to inform you that your communication will be referred to the Commission on Human Rights for the information of its members when the commission next convenes."

News has now reached us of a massacre of Assyrians in Azerbaijan of far greater proportion than that which occurred in 1945.

This latest massacre has been reported by Assyrians who suffered the consequences and also by impartial observers who visited the scene of this pogrom which took place during the month of December, 1946. According to these reports, twenty-four Assyrian villages were wholly or partially looted and burned, and some hundreds of Assyrians were brutally slaughtered.

However, before proceeding with the details of the horrors committed upon this defenceless ancient Christian community during this period, it is necessary to acquaint you with the events preceding the tragedy itself.

The history of the independence movement of the peoples of Azerbaijan is no doubt well known to your Excellency. Of the estimated 2,000,000 population of Azerbaijan, there were perhaps about 15,000 Assyrian Christians. The majority of these were located in the district of Rezaieh, where they had lived from time immemorial. These Assyrians have always been the most loyal, law-abiding and faithful subjects of Iran. Moreover, they were totally unarmed and at the mercy of a fully armed Moslem majority. Therefore, their place in the independence movement of Azerbaijan was totally insignificant; they had no say in the matter and were merely swept by a tide of events which they were powerless to resist. The Iranian Government was fully aware of this fact.

This was the situation of the Assyrians of Azerbaijan, when last December the Teheran Government reoccupied that district. For the rest of what happened during this period, I will quote reports received from the spot:

"On December 11th, Radio Tabriz announced of an understanding with the Teheran Government that its armies would enter Azerbaijan. On the same day, Radio Teheran announced that its troops had forced their way through the mountains and had entered Mayanah.

"December 12th, the leaders Rezaieh confirmed the report, adding that they were our brothers and that we should be saved from the fate of the other villages."

"However, no sooner than this was made, the Assyrians noticed the hostile population as a whole toward them and to lock their doors and seek refuge of deliverance. Nevertheless, on December 11th and 12th, He is should be no murders, and that they should be kept in custody until the troops. But in the meantime, the came a scene of large organized and with every conceivable weapon and equipment fit for looting purposes, in order for murder and pillage.

"In the meantime, Nusratizadeh, the first World War, advocated that rebels be put to death by the police. objected to this procedure, was deposed. Thus, the democratic leaders, along with their families, were killed, beaten or stoned to death. forces into the City of Rezaieh on December 16th. The army was under command of Sarhang Zanghanai (the officer who led the troops during the massacre of 1919 in Tabriz."

It is to be noted that nothing happened after the entry of the Army into the City of Rezaieh.

"The town of Charbakha, a village in the community, was looted on December 16th. Assyrians 'don't be afraid, we have no loot.' Everything the Assyrians possessed on their backs, were taken away.

"During the last thirty years, the Assyrians returned following the events of the 1919-20. Their industriousness coupled with their courage received from Assyrians in America.

"Among the looters were to be seen a *commission*, signified by the white flag. His duty was to see that there was no more. Already been stated, the looting and the entry of troops into the City of Rezaieh. The presence of one single soldier prevented the murder and pillage.

"The village of Diagala is a village saved from the fate of the other villages."

of a Iranian Moslem Sayid from a place called Sadqua. The Sayid, along with his sons, prevented thousands of Moslems who had gone there to loot.

"On Sunday, December 22nd, Sarhang Zanghanai entered the City of Rezaieh. Nevertheless, until a few days after his entry, looting continued and in some villages murders were committed. Dozens of children who had fled into the open during this terror, days after, were all found frozen to death, two or three clutching each other.

"About two weeks ago a band of Moslem Iranians broke into the Assyrian village of Mushawa and having pillaged the village, all the men were taken and locked up in a stable, and the women and girls were subjected to the most humiliating fate."

This report is dated, 1st of February, 1947. Therefore, it shows the persecution had continued into the third month. The report continues:

"One of the officials told me, 'I reported to Sarhang Zanghanai concerning the fate of the Assyrians,' but he answered, 'are you not ashamed to plead again for this people?'

"Following the persecution and pillage, the government tax collector visited the Assyrian villages and as a pretext demanded past taxes, and as they had nothing left to pay with, they beat them mercilessly and at the end made them sign statements promising to pay them in the future.

"During this persecution, more than 300 Assyrian men from Rezaieh alone were murdered. A majority of these had been conscripted into the Azerbaijan Army, and practically all of these were killed, following the cessation of hostilities between the Teheran and Azerbaijan governments. The report adds that according to what the Assyrians are now learning from reliable sources, plans for their extermination had been made, but how and why it failed, they are unable to understand. One hundred innocent Assyrian men are now in jail awaiting trial. The least sentence is expected to be ten years imprisonment. There were also rumors that the Assyrians as a whole will be moved to the interior and to the most desolate part of Iran where the heat is unbearable. The last and only hope for surviving Assyrians in Iran is their removal out of that country; the request is unanimous and irrevocable."

Mr. Hugo A. Muller, an American Presbyterian Missionary stationed in Teheran, who visited the scene of this pogrom, in his report to the Protestant Church and the American Mission in Tabriz, dated February 4, 1947, states:

"But the impassionate speech of a woman of Irawa, the very first village we visited, was what we heard everywhere we went, 'Take us out of this environment' she begged; 'we will go anywhere you send us. We lost what we can't tell. Only take us where we can make a new start and live, where the fruit of our labor will not be the prey of plunderers.'

"A French Military Attache in have visited the City of Rezaieh or persecution was still in progress."

In the town of Adda, both of the named Charles, were cut publicly; he was of kerosene.

In the town of Mushawa, Eramyah alive and then tortured to death.

In the town of Khananisha, Abraham cut off and then forced to eat them in the

In the town of Salmas, Father Giv Church (Mart Mariam). In the same girls were raped and numerous men tort

In the City of Rezaieh, the parade little girls put to shame ~~even the~~

Is this to be our reward after year two World Wars?

The above are the facts reported sources from the scene of the tragedy, the heart, I am in turn transmitting the

CONCLU

The Assyrian question, which I, *Church of the East* and the historic the Assyrian Nation, have already presented in a petition dated May 7, 1945, submitted at San Francisco, does not begin or cul This question in its present aspect da through World War II.

The bitter fruits, which the Assyri the result of its loyalty and the unequ the Allied cause. In return, they have b promises and eleven massacres since the innocent victims of power politics most glaring example of broken pledge latest massacre of the Assyrians in A shadow of a doubt, the fears which I to above, and which apply to even a g Assyrians in Iraq and those now to be Syria.

The growing hostile attitude being those two countries has increased their a facing them. Therefore, if a repetition just occurred in connection with the A prevented, the Assyrian question as a immediate consideration of the United a lasting solution to the problem as a

In the meantime, the question of the Assyrians of Azerbaijan remains of the utmost gravity, both from the political and economic points of view. A state of tension and fear of a fresh wave of persecution are a constant reality to these Assyrians. Having been robbed of all their worldly possessions, they are hungry, ill-clad and cold; their fear of an epidemic is not less than that of the pogrom which has just been experienced.

The Assyrians in the United States of America are doing all they can to assist financially these their unfortunate compatriots, but the problem is not one that they can solve. Therefore, I am requesting your Excellency to see that this question is immediately included on the agenda of the Council of the United Nations to the end that:

1. Immediate relief measures be taken by the U.N.R.A. with a view to relieve the suffering of the Assyrians in Azerbaijan.
2. The Iranian Government be required to give the necessary undertaking to safeguard the life and property of these Assyrians until such time as a solution is found to their problem; and to put a stop to the murders, plunders, and maltreatment that are still going on.
3. The Iranian Government take immediate measures to restore to these people the property of which they have been robbed, whether it be material or monetary.
4. That an impartial commission be dispatched by the United Nations to Azerbaijan to investigate into the cause of the massacre and to see that the victims are properly compensated for their innumerable losses in life and property. This Commission should stay in Azerbaijan until such time as a final solution is found to the Assyrian question.
5. The Iranian Government proclaim and enforce a complete amnesty for the Assyrians who are confined to prisons and are said to be awaiting trial. But, if the Iranian Government claim that the imprisoned Assyrians are guilty of some crime, then the latter should be tried by an international tribunal and not by the Iranian Courts.

It is not without regret that we feel now obliged to ask for United Nations protection from the hands of a people and a government, under whom the Assyrian minority, during the reign of the late Riza Shah Pahlavi, had enjoyed a considerable measure of security and justice and had looked forward to a peaceful future in that country. But now they find this a mere disillusionment and their hopes shattered.

The United Nations was born out of the greatest conflict in history; a conflict which was proclaimed to be for the freedom, equality and justice for all men and Nations, big and small alike; and it was for this principle that the men of the Assyrian Nation fought and died side by side with those of other Allied Nations, thereby, in proportion to their numbers, contributing to the final victory more than any other

single nation. I refer especially, to the V in 1941.

The United Nations through its charter principle. The small Assyrian Nation on the United Nations, asking for no more than the principle; the justice that is indivisible.

With this end in view, I offer my eulogy to *Kul*, the Almighty God, Author of all Justice, to direct the efforts of the United Nations to the end that:

I have the honor to be, Excellency,

Eshai Shimun

ESHAI SHIMUN

By Grace,

Catholicos Patriarch of the Church of the East and the Assyrian Nation

Dated March 13, 1947

THE ASSYRIANS IN WORLD WAR II

"Every one admits the Assyrians have given fine, loyal service to Britain, and have earned our gratitude and the rewards of good soldiers. The British Empire, and indeed all the Allied nations, owe the Assyrians a heavy debt following their key-victory at Habbaniyah in 1941, which checked German expansion to Asia Minor and stopped a rapidly growing danger of linkage in force with Japan *via* the Persian Gulf at a time when the latter was poised for attack. But for the Assyrians' historic stand at Habbaniyah, Rashid Ali and Nazism would certainly have controlled Iraq; the Allies would thus have been split at a critical phase of affairs before they had mustered their strength, and the vital oil region would have been lost—as probably would have been the war itself—for both India and Russia would have been isolated and the Mediterranean outflanked."

"Their loyalty and gallantry at Habbaniyah may well, some day, be claimed as their greatest contribution to mankind."

—ROYAL CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL

May 1945, vol. XXXII, part 2, p. 216.

From A. M. H.'s Review of David B. Perley's
Whither Christian Missions?