

Book Reviews

PASSAGE TO ARARAT

By Michael J. Arlen. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 1975.
Pp. 293. Price \$8.95.

This impressionistic book by the son of the popular British Armenian writer of the Twenties, Michael Arlen (*né* Dikran Kouyoumjian), is a narrative of travel on one level, an exploration of Armenian history on another, and a discussion of the psychological aspects of genocide on a third.

Michael J. Arlen had an ambivalent attitude towards a father who consistently ignored his Armenian heritage and sought to appear completely British. The father's attitude seems to have been an expression of the sort of self-hate which members of powerless persecuted peoples often develop when they unconsciously identify with their persecutors.

"Who still talks today about the extermination of the Armenians?" Hitler once asked rhetorically. The persecution occurred in two waves. The first, under the paranoid Sultan, Abdul-Hamid, involved the bestial massacre of an estimated 300,000 Armenians in actions initiated by the armed forces and carried out by the Turkish *hoi polloi*. Often "priests and schoolteachers had clearly been singled out beforehand for special attention, of which death by hanging was not always the unkindest form" (p. 177). Although these atrocities occurred in a remote corner of the earth, they aroused the indignation of a civilized world which had not yet been anaesthetized by Auschwitz, Dresden and the Gulag Archipelago. Clemenceau characterized the Sultan as a "monster" and the 86-year-old Gladstone called him "the Great Assassin."

Twenty years later, the Young Turks proceeded to exterminate the rest of the Armenian population. Being revolutionaries, they did this with more thoroughness and savagery than the effete Sublime Porte. Men, women and children were starved and cudgelled to death. Bodies were slashed open, breasts cut off, skulls broken, fingernails torn out, nails hammered into feet. The survivors were starved in concentration camps, then marched endlessly without medicine or food under military guard. En route, they were handed over to Kurdish and Turkish peasant mobs to be enslaved, raped, butchered or all three. In the 1915-16 genocide, over half the Armenian population of Turkey, or about a million people, was slaughtered.

The obvious analogy is with the extermination of European Jewry. Both Armenians and Jews were peoples with their own language, culture, religion, history, institutions and physical appearance whose traditional homelands had been conquered by more primitive stocks.

In each case, the victims were people whose average ability was markedly higher than that of their persecutors. The Armenians contributed highly skilled craftsmen and artists, moneylenders, bankers and financial experts, businessmen, traders, professionals and administrators. Before the Ottoman Empire degenerated, it was ruled by Sultans who were almost entirely Christian by birth,* defended by an élite force of Janissaries recruited from Christian peoples, administered by Greek Phanariots and Janissaries,

* The mothers of the Sultans were slaves and by Koranic law only those born infidels could be enslaved. Hence, all mothers of Sultans were of infidel, generally Christian, birth. The proportion of Turkish blood in the veins of any Sultan was $(2)^{-r}$, where r is the number of predecessors the Sultan could boast. Thus, the 10th Sultan in a dynasty would be $1/1024$ th Turkish by blood.

and endowed with artists, writers and savants who were also of alien stock. The Turks and Kurds served as peasants, herdsmen and foot soldiers. They paid tribute, tilled by traditional methods and cut throats.

The usual interpretation of the persecution of able minorities—Eurasians, Chinese in Indonesia and Indians in southeast Asia, for instance—is that they are hated because they are tax collectors, small tradesmen and money-lenders—exploiters of the masses.

I believe the more basic reason is that they are hated because they are envied and they are envied because they are more able than the peasant peoples among whom they live. This hatred becomes persecution and genocide only when the economic privileges of the élite group are not matched by corresponding political and military power.

One of the fundamental factors determining the severity of the persecution is the ability and civilization-level of the persecutors. The fury unleashed against the Armenians was much more savage than what the European Jews endured. The engine of Jewish genocide was a largely impersonal death machine. Even so, draconian measures were taken to conceal the crime from the German people. The extermination camps were mostly located in Poland. The death camps, the *Einsatzgruppen* and the lynch-mobs were manned in the main by Slavs, and less frequently by either Germans or Hungarians. In the case of the Armenians, however, the genocide was one of the most bestial and sadistic face-to-face confrontations in modern history. Little effort at concealment was made. The slaughter was apparently done, not only willingly, but enthusiastically, by entire Turkish rural communities.

As a young man, the philosopher of history, Arnold J. Toynbee, assisted Lord Bryce in compiling a harrowing and exhaustive report on the 1915-16 massacres. These events may well have influenced Toynbee's subsequent conclusion—one which I believe has never received the serious attention it deserves—that civilizations are destroyed by the combined action of their internal and external proletariats.

NATHANIEL WEYL

RACE AND I.Q.

By Ashley Montagu. Oxford University Press, 1975. Price £2.00.

Since Professor A. Jensen put the cat among the pigeons in his famous *Harvard Educational Review* article, in which he discussed in some detail the evidence for the inheritance of intelligence, and suggested in two brief pages that possibly genetic differences between races, particularly American Blacks and Whites, might also to some extent be inherited, there has been a plethora of books and articles trying to controvert his claim. Practically all of these books have been factually misleading, politically motivated, and useless from the point of view of the disinterested scientist eager to discover the facts.

This book pretends to deal with the topic which forms its title, but the reader must not be misled into thinking that this set of reprinted articles constitutes an unbiased, scientific examination of the arguments for and against the hypothesis that genetic factors contribute in some measure towards the differences in intelligence found between different races. It is simply a collection of arguments against Jensen's hypothesis, slanted in a rather virulent manner so as to make it quite impossible for the reader to discover what Jensen said, or how he would counter the arguments presented. To the connoisseur, however, the book is a goldmine of information on how to bias arguments, construct and destroy men of straw, disregard your opponent's strongest points, and steamroller the reader into submission to a false conclusion. Let us look at just a few examples, taken at random.