

PROBLEMS IN AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH THE NEAR EAST: A REVIEW ESSAY

Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East, 1820-1960*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University, 1970. 322 pp. \$ 10.00.

Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1971. 395 pp. \$ 13.50.

Roger R. Trask, *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914-1939*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1971. 280 pp. \$ 11.50.

These volumes should be required reading both for those who are familiar with the long-standing and wide-ranging American interests in the Near and Middle East and for those who are not. That the story is none too familiar at best is all too evident from the general assumption that American interest, policy and action in this troubled area are of recent date, stemming largely from the era of World War II. In years past, however, Sydney N. Fisher has written of the "Two Centuries of American Interest in Turkey," in a *Festschrift for Frederick B. Artz* (Durham, N.C., Duke University, 1964, pp. 113-138), Leland Gordon of *American Relations with Turkey 1830-1930: An Economic Interpretation* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 1932, 447 pp.), and John DeNovo has published a comprehensive work on *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1963, 447 pp.). Somewhat more recently we have had such masterly works as A. L. Tibawi's *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work* (London and Oxford, Oxford, 1966, 333 pp.), David Finnie's *Pioneers East: The Early American Experience in the Middle East* (Cambridge, Harvard, 1967, 333 pp.) and James A. Field's *America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882* (Princeton, N. J., Princeton University, 1969, 485 pp.). Laurence Evans has treated of *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey, 1914-1924* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 1965, 424 pp.), while George Lenczowski has directed a more general study of *United States*

Interests in the Middle East (Washington, American Enterprise Institute, 1968, 132 pp.). There have been numerous travel accounts, especially in the Nineteenth Century, memoirs, articles and doctoral dissertations which have dealt with various aspects of the American relationship with the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Moreover, the Harvard Foreign Policy Library has published a number of brief essays on the relationship between the United States and the Near East, Turkey and Iran, Israel, North Africa and the Arab World, and one on Greece is in preparation. John Badeau has given us *The American Approach to the Arab World* (New York, Harper and Row, 1968, 209 pp.). Leaving aside the rich stores of archival materials, to which there is a basic guide, the annual volumes of *The Foreign Relations of the United States* contain thousands of documents bearing upon the area, ranging all the way from Greece and the Balkan region to Turkey, North Africa, the Arab world, Israel and Iran. It should now be clear, therefore—although it does not always appear to be—that the American relationship, whether with one part or another of the area, is deeply rooted, and not merely of recent date or confined to small pin-points. It is true that the United States developed an enduring politico-strategic interest only after World War II, when the Soviet threat—especially in Greece, Turkey and Iran—seemed formidable. It is also true that the long-standing commercial and economic interests were more “aspirational” than “actual” down to World War II. Without serious question, the abiding interest has been in the American missionary-educational-philanthropic enterprise.

Professor Robert J. Daniel, of Ohio University, has given us the first comprehensive historical treatment of *American Philanthropy in the Near East, 1820-1960*, based on the relevant published material as well as on thorough archival research, both in the official sources of the United States Government and in those of the missionary, educational and philanthropic agencies, as his bibliography well indicates. His work must be consulted by all those who seek any real understanding of the development of American interest and concern. He covers not merely the Turkish, Arabic and Iranian parts of the area, but the Greek and the Balkan. He begins with the “Grecian Adventure,” and plunges into the story of the missionary enterprise in Malta and Syria (1820-1861) and Turkey proper (Constantinople and Anatolia, 1831-1861). The reader will find here not merely the essential story of Robert College (1863), the Istanbul Women’s College (1871), and the American University of Beirut (Syrian Protestant College, 1866), but of International College (Izmir, 1891; Beirut, 1934), and Athens College, Pierce Junior College, Anatolia College and a host of other institutions of technical and higher education. Somewhat detailed consideration is given to the establishment of the Near East Relief in the wake of

World War I (1919-1920) and of its successor, the Near East Foundation (1930). As the author well observes, the American record in the Middle East, with some \$ 100,000,000 invested in Near East Relief alone, has rested as much on the quiet and humanitarian enterprise as it has on commercial relationship and official government assistance. He makes some interesting comparisons between unofficial and official assistance, noting the political overtones of the latter, and the fact that prior to 1941 there appeared to be no inherent advantage in government sponsorship, although the relationship to the Near East changed markedly after World War II, when the United States made binding commitments in the area. Private American philanthropy continued to show much vitality after World War II, was put on a more secular basis, thanks to the advent of the great foundations, and faced its greatest challenges and opportunities.

Professor Grabill, of Illinois State University, has much of the same story, and has used many of the same sources, although his stress is much different. *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East*, relates the influence on American policy during 1810-1927, discusses the work of the missionaries and traces a bit of the so-called Eastern Question during this period. Like Daniel he insists that there was much "prelude to Point Four" in the educational and training programs developed by the earlier and later missionaries. He devotes more attention to the impact of the missionaries on the non-Turkish minorities and the stimulation which they gave, willy-nilly, to the national movements in Greece, Albania and Bulgaria and among Armenians and Arabs in Asia. Of much interest is his delineation of the friendship of Cleveland H. Dodge, the New York financier, industrialist and philanthropist, with President Wilson and the influence of this friendship on American policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East during and immediately after World War I. Much interested in the Middle East, Dodge was President of the Board of Trustees of Robert College, and helped prevent an ill-considered American declaration of war on either the Ottoman Empire or Bulgaria in 1917. Grabill traces something of the pressures which leading members of the missionary "establishment" brought to bear in behalf of American mandates, and especially in behalf of an independent Armenia, with ample American assistance, during 1919-1923. The story of the pressures which prevented approval of the Turco-American Treaty of Lausanne of August 6, 1923 is well told. There can be no doubt of the influence which was brought to bear and of the fact that Americans gained a quite inaccurate picture of Middle Eastern peoples through missionary eyes. Except when people like Caleb F. Gates, President of Robert College, or John Kingsley Birge, wrote or spoke of them, the Turks were rather seldom

presented in favorable light—Christians generally were. Mr. Grabill has written well of all these matters, although his strictures against President Wilson during the period of the Paris Peace Conference seem much overdrawn, and it is impossible for this reviewer to accept his negative view relative to the King-Crane Commission. The heroic age of American Protestantism in the Middle East, as Mr. Grabill has observed, ended with the Senate's rejection of the Turco-American Treaty of Lausanne in 1927, although there was an enduring and remarkable heritage which is still at work. The Grabill volume has a comprehensive bibliography of published and archival sources which will guide other students into examination of similar problems bearing on the American relationship with the Middle East. Like the Daniel volume, this one must be read by all thoughtful people who are concerned with the development of American policy and interest in this area.

Roger R. Trask, of Macalester College, in *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914-1939*, covers a more limited period in American diplomacy, beginning with the advent of World War I and ending with the outbreak of World War II. After a brief introduction, the author plunges into the essence of the political, economic, social, cultural and philanthropic aspects of the American-Turkish relationship. The book centers on the response of the United States on the efforts of the Turkish people, under the leadership of Atatürk, which looked toward nationalism, revolution and reform. As Mr. Trask observes, except for a very few, historians have generally neglected the history of American-Turkish relations, largely until the period of World War II, when the United States developed an enduring politico-strategic interest. The author covers well the period of World War I to the Lausanne Conference (1914-1923) and indicates the basic role which the Armenian problem played in blocking approval of the American-Turkish Treaty of August 6, 1923—reminiscent of the Zionist movement later in the Palestine problem. While he traces the slow development of American commerce with Turkey, American investments and technical assistance, he lays special stress on "Unnamed Christianity" in the American educational effort in the interwar period and the sometime troubled relationships with the Turkish nationalists. There is a very good analysis of the problem of the status of citizens, of the United States, Turkey and international politics, with special reference to the Armenian and other minority problems, the Briand-Kellogg pact (1928), and the revision of the Lausanne Convention of the Straits at Montreux (1936), in which the United States professed an interest only in the principle of freedom of commercial passage. There is also a perceptive delineation of the Turkish position on the eve of World War II. Generally, Mr. Trask feels that American

officials and the American people adjusted well to the thrust of Turkish nationalism and reform, partly because of the basic understanding of official representatives like Ambassadors Joseph C. Grew and John V. A. MacMurray and President Caleb F. Gates, of Robert College. He believes that the groundwork for post-World War II cooperation between the United States and Turkey was well laid during the interwar era. This is a very well-written, well-balanced work which should command attention and respect by all who study it. A very useful and comprehensive bibliography adds much to the value of the book.

Together, the three volumes constitute a kind of trilogy on aspects of American policy in the Near and Middle East. They represent a continuation of scholarship in this field which calls for further investigation.

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