

Yusuf Malek

By Fred Aprim
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He is Yusuf Jajjo Francis Malek, An Assyrian from the Chaldean Catholic Church, born in 1899 in Baghdad, Iraq from a family from Telkaif. Studied in St. Joseph College transferred to Al-Rashidiya School in Basrah after closing the school amid the start of WW1. He later joined the American school there until 1915, when he joined the British army, at a very young age, as a translator.

Became the personal assistant for the governor in Samara'a, Baghdad, Rumadi then in Mosul. He was nominated for the position of qa'imaqam (mayor) of Shikhan, but he refused the position preferring to go from town to town and fight in defense of the oppressed within the Assyrians. Was forced to flee to Aleppo, Syria, then to Beirut, Lebanon, because the Iraqi government forces started to chase him. In Beirut, he published in 1932 his first book "Fawajia Al-Intidab Fi Hikomat Al-Iraq" (The mandates tragedy in the Iraqi governments). Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun, bless his soul, on a stop in Damascus, while on his way back to Baghdad from Geneva, in December 1932, met with Yusuf Malek. Yusuf Malek began to write in the Lebanese Newspapers about what was going on inside Iraq during the 1933 Simmel massacres, it was because of his critics that he was exiled to Cyprus. In Cyprus, he met again with the exiled Assyrian Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun, and together they prepared the Assyrian case which was presented to the League of Nations. He packed his bags and traveled to Geneva with the Mar Shimun in late September 1933. It was at this time and place where he finished his second book "The British Betrayal of the Assyrians".

Many efforts were made by Yusuf Malek's friends in Lebanon to permit him to return to Beirut. Those efforts finally succeeded to convince the Lebanese Government, and Malek returned to Beirut in October 8th, 1934.

In June 15th, 1938, he publishes "Athra" or "Homeland" in Assyrian, Arabic, English and French languages.

He was imprisoned for eight days in September 3rd, 1941 by the French authorities for standing against the occupation of Lebanon.

Malek made friendship with Husni Al-ZaAeem while they were both in prison as political prisoners, later when Husni Al-ZaAeem became president of Syria, Yusuf went to Damascus to congratulate him. The new president promised that he will work hard to find a just solution for the Assyrians of Khabor, but then the Syrian president was assassinated before having a chance to do anything about the Assyrian question.

In May 15th, 1956 he reaches an understanding with the publisher of the "Al-Wijdan" or "The Consciousness," to publish special issues containing views of condemnation to the policies of the British and the French, their mandates and the injustice and oppression they had committed against all the Middle Eastern nations.

In January 18th, 1957, he issued his weekly political newspaper "Al-Hurriya" or "Freedom".

Yusuf Malek passed away in Beirut on Friday, June 26th, 1959, at 6:00 PM at the age of sixty. It was as if that al-Mutanabbi, the famous Arab poet, was talking about Yusuf Malek when he wrote:

If you are going to gamble with something honorable,
then don't settle for anything less than the stars,
because the taste of death for a despised matter,
is just like the taste of death for a great cause.

(The poem was translated from Arabic by the author of this book)

Introduction to his work

1. Fawaji'a Al-Intidab Fi Hikomat Al-Iraq (The mandates tragedies in the Iraqi's government), Beirut, 1932.
2. Khiyanat Al-Ingiliz Li Al-Ashooriyeen (The British Betrayal of The Assyrians), Completed in Geneva, 1933, published in the US in 1935.
3. Simmel, Maqbarat Al-Jababira Al-Mugharar Bihum (Simmel, the Cemetery of the Betrayed Giants), article published in 1938.
4. Kurdistan Ao Bilad Al-Akrad (Kurdistan or Kurdish countries), published 1945.

5. Khalifat Iblees (Devil's successor), published in 1945.
6. Qubrus wa barbariyat Al-Atrak fi Al-Qurin Al-Aaishreen (Cyprus and the Turkish barbarism in the 20th century), published in 1955.
7. Man Huwa Abdullah Al-Haj (who is Abdullah Al-Haj) speaking about a friend, member in the Lebanese House of Deputies.

In Fond Memory of a Genius in the Service of the Assyrians; Yusuf Malek

Muster

What shall we say of each in turn
When the travail of each is done ...
These men of the bold fraternity
Who held they could touch the sun,
This breed which lifted its face aloft,
This clan of the high frontier ...
Oh, what shall we say at the end of day
When we muster the pioneer?

How shall we rate them one by one
As the final approach is made ...
These sons whose faith was the common bond
In the varied parts they played?
Shall we check each out with epitaph
As the props turn low and cease,
Or leave them knit as their faith was knit
As they park in eternal peace?

Let them who will in time to come
Judge who was the great or small;
But we who walked on the sky with them
Can only be judge of all,
For the glory is not that one by one
Each carved for himself career
But that none lost faith while he drew a breath
In his trek to the high frontier.