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IN MEMORIAM

Malcolm H. Kerr, 1931-1984

On January 18, 1984 Malcolm Kerr was shot dead in Beirut. The brutal and sudden death of a friend or relation is always a shock, even when it comes in the midst of a civil war that has lasted for nearly ten years in Lebanon. But the death of that specific man has stunned us all.

Malcolm was born and raised in Beirut by parents who were both members of the faculty at the university. His father was a biochemist and his mother a dean. They had spent forty years, their entire professional lives, at the American University in Beirut (AUB) and had built up, over several generations, a devoted circle of friends and students who loved and admired them. Malcolm's father set a high standard of dedication to humanity when at risk to his own life he saved Armenians from the massacres of that time. Malcolm followed in his parents' footsteps, emulating their example of dedicated service.

The bond between Malcolm and the AUB was a constant recurring theme throughout his life. Having spent the first ten years of his life in Beirut, he returned there, once he had obtained his B.A. from Princeton, and received his M.A. from the AUB in 1955. On completing his doctorate at Johns Hopkins in 1958, he returned to Beirut for his first teaching assignment at AUB. He met his future wife, Ann, at AUB; thus, the university and Beirut were enshrined in their collective memory as places of happiness, success, and fulfillment.

Later in life Malcolm was employed at the University of California in Los Angeles, where he eventually became chairman of the Political Science Department, Dean of Social Sciences in UCLA's College of Letters and Sciences, and then Director of the Gustave E. von Grunebaum Center for Near East Studies. But throughout the intervening years he frequently travelled to Lebanon, his other home, to Egypt and the other Arab countries, and to Israel, so that he never lost touch with the region. His wife, Ann, and their four children became as familiar with the Middle East as they were with California.

These were productive years for Malcolm. He wrote *Islamic Reform* (1965), *The Arab Cold War* (1971), *Economics and Politics of the Middle East* (1975), *The Elusive Peace in the Middle East* (1975), and *Rich and Poor States in the Middle East: Egypt and the New Arab Order* (1982). Before that last book was published, Malcolm was approached with an offer to become president of the AUB. By then his reputation as a scholar had been firmly established among the leaders in the field, and he was greatly respected, both in this country and in the Middle East. The offer of the presidency was a dream come true, for even as a child he had wanted to become president of the university. The dream, however, had some aspects of a nightmare, for Lebanon had been, and was still, entrenched in a bloody civil war from 1975. This did not deter Malcolm or make him waver from his strict sense of duty. In spite of world wars, civil disturbances, and other calamities in the past the university had survived and, if it rested with him, it would continue to survive and to act as a bridge between the United States and the Arab world. This he believed to be the mission of the university. Knowing the dangers that hovered round that position, he accepted to serve where he was called and felt needed. Ann and

QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING

ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

IN MEMORY

OF

MALCOLM H. KERR

Taraneh
Ersoval

EDITORS

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FOREWORD

This volume of essays in Middle Eastern studies is a tribute to Malcolm Kerr — scholar, university president, and friend. The essays are dedicated to a man whose devotion to scholarship was matched by his affection for Lebanon and for all the countries of the Arab world.

The themes that dominate the essays also dominate the bibliography of Malcolm's own scholarly work: the politics of the Middle East, the history of Lebanon, and the history and philosophy of Islam. His is a work that is well-known and highly respected. Both his master's thesis on Lebanon in the nineteenth century and his doctoral dissertation on Muhammad 'Abdu and Rashid Rida were published and received wide attention, as did *The Arab Cold War* which subsequently went through three editions, was revised and brought up-to-date. Turning his attention to questions of political and socio-economic development, he edited volumes in these fields. Throughout his career, he wrote essays on other topics, especially on the relations between the Arab countries, Israel and the United States. On that most difficult and intricate of topics, he wrote clearly and thoughtfully, refusing to bow to pressure from any quarter.

Malcolm's excellent knowledge of Arabic enabled him to speak directly and easily with people at all levels of society. He was able to present lectures in Arabic, and to speak to radio and television audiences. Thanks to his parents' involvement with the Armenian people, he had a deep compassion and sympathy for their interests and concerns. He was quick to feel injustice and to attempt to right a wrong.

It is fitting that this volume should be published by the American University of Beirut. In 1931, Malcolm began his life on its campus, where his father, Stanley Kerr, and his mother, Elsa, were both members of the faculty. Later, he began his graduate study at the University, receiving his master's degree in history in 1954. He held his first university teaching post there from 1958 to 1961. In later years, he returned often to the University, becoming a member of its Board of Trustees in 1977. He served as the University's president from July 1, 1982 until his tragic death from an assassin's bullet on January 18, 1984.

Malcolm Kerr's attachment to Cairo and the American University in Cairo led to exciting and productive years in Egypt, teaching and