

# Alex Manoogian

## A Biographical Note

It is not accidental, nor is it a simple outcome of successive events that the highly responsible office of President of a providential organization, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, should be occupied since 1953, without interruption, by Alex Manoogian, the most benevolent of the generous sons of the Armenian people. A future historian will not hesitate to call him one of the greatest Armenian philanthropists in the twentieth century, for his benevolence is many sided and inspired by patriotism and germinates from a pure spirit.

Alex Manoogian's characteristics are numerous. But the one which is more characteristic of him is none other than God-given initiative which, as in the instance of others, is the key to the success of his own enterprises, which he has applied with the same care and zeal to his endeavors in collective life in the interest of our nation.

Mr. Manoogian was born in Kesab, in the vilayet of Izmir, to the devout and patriotic family of Takvor and Takouhie. After graduation from the local national school, as per custom, he became coworker and assistant to his father who was a small businessman.

In 1920, before the Smyrna Disaster, he directed his steps towards the land of freedom. Here in America he tasted all the bitterness and disappointments of a young immigrant, but undaunted, he was able to climb ever high to a position in American industry, which brings honor to the Armenian name.

An inquisitive and creative mind, industrious and always aspiring for perfection, he finally became settled, in 1924, in Detroit where he succeeded in establishing his own small industrial plant which today has grown to twelve modern companies scattered in various cities in the United States.

In 1931 he married Miss Marie Tatian. They were blessed with a daughter, Louise, and a son, Richard, who have received university education and are married.

In 1930 Mr. Manoogian became a member of the AGBU and of the Knights of Vartan. Ten

years later he was elected national commander of the latter group, and since 1943 has been a member of the AGBU Central Board of Directors and its President since 1953.

In the course of his presidency the national question of the AGBU corporation was satisfactorily concluded, the philanthropic work of the Union was expanded on all fronts, and the capital of the organization was increased from eight million to twenty million dollars.

Manoogian's benefactions during the past decade—exclusive of his recently announced AGBU Cultural Fund with an initial capital of \$1,000,000—to the hierarchal sees of the Armenian church, the Armenian press, Armenian schools, needy Armenian intellectuals, cultural centers, youth movements, Armenian clerics studying in American institutions of higher learning, philanthropic institutions, needy persons, bright students, and to various national campaigns, total one million dollars.

From 1954 to 1967 his donations to the AGBU amounted to \$440,000, to the St. Vartan Cathedral in New York, \$250,000, and to St. John's Church in Detroit, \$220,000.

During the past forty years Alex Manoogian has been the foremost leader of the Detroit community. The magnificent golden domed St. John's Church with the adjacent cultural hall, which together cost two and a half million dollars, are a product of his efforts, leadership and artistic taste.

In 1966 the Armenian people with rarely seen unanimity, greeted the establishment of the Alex Manoogian Cultural Fund of the AGBU with an initial capital of one-million dollars—an eloquent testimonial to his unusual sense of responsibility to his people.

In recognition of his services Mr. Manoogian was honored with the first degree Order of St. Gregory the Illuminator by Vasken I Catholicos of All Armenians; the first degree Order of the Cedars, by the government of Lebanon; and the Cross of St. James, by Patriarch Yeghishe Derderian of Jerusalem.

M. H.