



# Musa Dagh

*Edward Minasian*

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## **Musa Dagh** Edward Minasian

"Musa Dagh" traces the trials and tribulations of Franz Werfel's "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh" in Hollywood. The book is an original work and the first to deal with the historic controversy Werfel's masterpiece stirred since its publication in the United States in 1934. The sight of maimed and famished Armenian refugee children working in a Damascus carpet factory in 1929 gave Werfel the impetus to write his masterwork novel, "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh". During his research of British, French, German and Austrian documents about the Armenian massacres, Werfel came across an incident describing the Armenian defense at Musa Dagh in 1915. Rather than accede to the Ottoman Turkish government's demand to "relocate" to the Syrian desert, 5,000 Armenians chose to defend themselves atop Musa Dagh. Seizing upon this event, Werfel wrote a powerful historical novel. Werfel's novel became an instant best seller in Europe and the United States in 1934-1935. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), the most powerful movie studio in the world, purchased the rights with the intent to make it into a major motion picture. The film project was subjected to protests by the Turkish government. Pressure was applied by Turkey on the U.S. State Department to influence the Hays Office (Hollywood's censor bureau) to exhort MGM to cancel the film production. Until today it has become the most on-again and off-again motion picture production in Hollywood history. This book is thoroughly documented based on research in the MGM archives and the U.S. State Department, the Franz Werfel Papers at the UCLA Special Collections Library, the American Film Institute, and interviews of personalities involved in the film project. The basic components of historical research are covered in a manner that finally unveils-the truth of a film denied.

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