

**The Documents regarding the atrocities of the  
Armenian population of the Vilayet of Erzerum in 1915.**

**Extracted from "THE TREATMENT OF ARMENIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE  
(1915-1916)" (DOCUMENTS PRESENTED TO VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON,  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS by Viscount Bryce, with a preface  
by Viscount Bryce), London, 1916, p. 221-255.**

**VI. VILAYET OF ERZEROU.**

*The Vilayet of Erzeroum lies due north of Bitlis and Van, and is likewise a border province. It consists principally of the upper valleys of the Kara-Su (Western Euphrates) and the Tchorok. The fortress-city of Erzeroum itself is situated in a plain which collects the head-waters of the former river; Erzindjan, a place of almost equal importance, lies further west, about 120 miles down stream; while Baibourt, in the Tchorok valley, is the most important place on the high road from Erzeroum to Trebizond. The districts north of the Kara-Su are as civilised as the rest of Anatolia; but south of the river, in the great peninsula enclosed by the two arms of the Euphrates, lies the mountain-mass of Dersim, inhabited by wild, independent tribes of Kizil-Bashis and Kurds, who played an active part in the destruction of their Armenian neighbours.*

*In the Vilayet of Erzeroum the deportations began at the end of May and during the first days of June. Reports from a particularly trustworthy source state that, by the 19th May, more than 15,000 Armenians had been deported from Erzeroum and the neighbouring villages, and that, by the 25th May, the districts of Erzindjan, Keghi and Baibourt had also been "devastated by forced emigration." Our information concerning Erzeroum itself was at first somewhat scanty, but since its capture by the Russians it has been visited by representatives of various relief organisations in the Caucasus, who have obtained circumstantial accounts of what happened in the city and the surrounding villages. They report that, out of an Armenian population estimated at 400,000<sup>1</sup> souls for the Vilayets of Erzeroum and Bitlis, not more than 8,000-10,000 have survived - in other words, that 98 per cent. of the Armenians in these vilayets have been either deported or massacred.*

*We are also particularly well informed with regard to Baibourt and Erzindjan, and the documents in this section may be noted as a clear case in which independent testimonies exactly bear one another out.*

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<sup>1</sup> The author of Doc. 57 estimates them at 300.000 only; but consult Annexe D. to the "Historical Summary."

**53. ERZEROUM: RECORD<sup>2</sup> OF AN INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE REV. H. J. BUXTON AND THE REV. ROBERT STAPLETON, A MISSIONARY OF THE AMERICAN BOARD, RESIDENT AT ERZEROUM FROM BEFORE THE OUTBREAK OF WAR UNTIL AFTER THE CAPTURE OF THE CITY BY THE RUSSIANS.<sup>3</sup>**

Up to 1914 the population of Erzeroum was between 60,000 and 70,000, of whom 20,000 were Armenians.

In 1914 Tahsin Bey was Vali of Erzeroum (whom Mr. H. J. Buxton had met, as Vali of Van, in 1913).

On the outbreak of war with Turkey (November, 1914) the British Consul, Mr. Monahan, received his passport; the Russian Consul was ejected; the French Consul was absent. All their servants and interpreters were Armenians; these were ejected likewise, and were sent to Kaisaria as prisoners. The three Armenian servants of the Russian Military Attache were hanged. The wife of one of these was sitting up knitting socks and putting things together for her husband's departure, when news came to her, early in the morning, that he was hanging on the scaffold.

In the spring of 1915 Passelt Pasha was Military Commandant of Erzeroum, and he suggested that all Armenian soldiers should be disarmed, withdrawn from combatant service and put on road gangs (yol tabour). These were men who had been conscripted, and, owing to the friendly relations between Turks and Armenians in this district (for the past ten years), had joined readily.

Teachers in the schools were first of all put into hospitals to do the work of dressers and nurses among the wounded. They were men with a good education, and did their work with intelligence. Then came the order that they were to be put on to the road gang, and they were replaced by totally incompetent men, so the soldiers had very poor attention in the hospital.

All through this period, up to May, 1915, military service could be avoided by men of all races and parties upon payment of an exemption tax of £40 (Turkish).

Even Turks themselves obtained exemption on these terms, and for a period (of, say, twelve months) the terms were faithfully observed; but, of course, eventually the need for soldiers made the authorities come down even upon exempted persons. In any case, this exemption only applied to military duties, and afforded no shelter to Armenians in the final crisis.

Stapleton managed to get one Armenian exempted by the payment of this tax.

*19th May, 1915.*

There was a massacre in the country round Khnyss. As the Russians advanced

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<sup>2</sup> Undated.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Stapleton's total period of service at Erzeroum is thirteen years. For a letter from Mr. Stapleton himself, see Doc. 149, page 589. - EDITOR.

from the east a large number of Kurds fled in front of them, bent on vengeance, and carried out a raid on the peasantry which was quite distinct from the organised massacres later on.

Some of Stapleton's teachers, boy and girl students, were at Khnyss on holiday, and perished in this massacre.

#### *6th June.*

The inhabitants of the one hundred villages in the plain of Erzeroum were sent away by order of the Government at two hours' notice. The number of these must have been between 10,000 and 15,000. Of this number very few returned, and very few reached Erzindjan. A few took refuge with friendly Kurds (Kizilbashis), but all the rest must have been killed.

They were escorted by gendarmes, but the people responsible for the massacres would probably be chettis or Hamidia.

One of the Kurds was charged in court for murder, pillage and rapine, and he thereupon produced a paper and laid it before them, saying: "These are my orders for doing it."

It is not certain who gave these orders, but the presumption is that they originated with the Government at Constantinople.

About this time definite orders arrived, by which Tahsin Bey was instructed that all Armenians should be killed. Tahsin refused to carry this out, and, indeed, all through this time he was reluctant to maltreat the Armenians, but was overruled by *force majeure*.

#### *On the 9th June*

he issued an order that the whole civic population were to leave Erzeroum, and many Turks and Greeks actually did leave (the latter being hustled out).

The German Consul was now aware of what was coming, and wired protests to his Ambassador; but he was told to remain quiet, as the Germans could not interfere with the internal affairs of Turkey.

This is what he said to Stapleton, and his goodwill is borne out by his evident intention to help the Armenians. It is an established fact that, in the days following, he used to send bread tied up in large sacks to the refugees outside the city, conveying these large supplies in motor cars.

#### *16th June.*

The first company of Armenian deportees left Erzeroum on the 16th June, having got leave to go to Diyarbekir by Kighi. These were forty families in all, mostly belonging to the prosperous business community.

First of all, after starting, all their money was taken from them, "for safety." After a short halt, when some alarm was expressed, they were reassured of the complete

security of their journey, and shortly after resuming their journey (somewhere between Kighi and Palu) they were surrounded and a massacre took place. Only one man and forty women and children reached Harpout.

Evidence of this massacre comes from various sources: (1) letters to Stapleton from women survivors; (2) evidence of Americans who were living in Harpout at the time of the arrival of the survivors, and cared for them; (3) evidence of a Greek, who passed the scene of the massacre shortly after it took place and described it as sickening.

#### *19th June.*

About five hundred Armenian families left Erzeroum, via Baibourt, for Erzindjan; they were allowed time for preparations - a concession granted throughout the deportations from the town itself. At Baibourt there was a halt, and the first party of about 10,000 people was joined by later contingents, bringing the number up to about 15,000. A guard of gendarmes (up to 400) was provided by the Vali, and these doubtless took their toll of the Armenians in various ways, licentiously and avariciously.

The Vali went to Erzindjan to see after their security, and it is known that about 15,000 reached Erzindjan. Up to this point the roads were good enough to allow transport by bullock carts (arabas), but after Erzindjan, instead of being allowed to follow the carriage road via Sivas, they were turned aside to the route via Kamakh, Egin and Arabkir, where there were only footpaths. The arabas had, therefore, to be left behind, and no less than 3,000 vehicles were brought back to Erzeroum by an Armenian in the transport service, whom Stapleton met on his return.

At Kamakh, twelve hours from Erzindjan, it is reported that the men were separated and killed, their bodies being thrown into the river. Beyond this place letters come from women only, though Stapleton's account leads us to suppose that, from among thirty families of which he has news, ten men survive. Letters from women to Stapleton do not, of course, give details of what occurred; they only indicate what happened by such phrases as: "My husband and boy died on the road." The destinations reached by these Armenians, as definitely known to Stapleton in January, 1916, were Mosul, on the east; Rakka, on the south; Aleppo and Aintab, on the west. The need in these places has been urgent. German Consuls in Aleppo and Mosul are known to have assisted in distributing relief funds sent by Stapleton, per the Agricultural Bank at Constantinople, to Mesopotamia - in all about £1,000 (Turkish).

Stapleton had previously been able to distribute a sum of about £700 (Turkish), received from America, to poor Armenians before their departure. This he did in co-operation with the Armenian Bishop.

#### *November, 1915.*

Certain Roman Catholic "lay brothers and sisters" (Armenians), claiming to be under Austrian protection, were permitted to remain until November, 1915, when they left Erzeroum in arabas. They were known to have reached Erzindjan, and probably

Constantinople, in safety, where they were housed in the Austrian schools.<sup>4</sup>

From twelve to twenty families of artisans were left to the last, as they were doing useful work for the Government. Also fifty single masons, who were building a club-house for the Turks, being compelled to use gravestones from the Armenians' cemetery.

*February, 1916.*

These masons were sent to Erzindjan, where they were imprisoned for some days and then brought out and ordered to be shot. Four, however, escaped by shamming death, and one of them saw Stapleton on the 16th February and gave an account of what had happened.

The fate of the artisans is thought to have been similar, but we have no details, except that three families were able to return.

One of those to leave the town in the early days was a photographer. He would not wait. Ten hours out from Erzeroum he was surrounded by forty chettis, stripped naked and stoned to death. They mutilated his body. One child was brained. Of the other children, a girl was taken away and only escaped many months later when the Russians came. Very reluctantly she poured out her story to the Stapletons, from which it appeared that she had been handed round to ten officers after the murder of her husband and his mother, to be their sport.

Thirty-five families of Greeks remained in Erzeroum until near the end. They were then hustled out when the Russian approach was imminent, the Turks virtually saying to them: "We are suffering. Why should not you?"

These deportations went on in an almost continuous stream from the 16th June to the 28th July, when the Armenian Bishop left. He is supposed to have been put to death near Erzindjan.

The part which Stapleton took during these events may now be described. In addition to what we have already said about his relief work, he and Mrs. Stapleton sheltered eighteen Armenian girls. It was by the permission of the Vali that these were allowed to stay with him, and on only one occasion was his house actually threatened. This was just on the eve of the Russian arrival, when he was warned by the German Consul that a plot had been made to burn down his house and, in the subsequent rush of panic, to seize the girls. Nothing could have stopped this but the Russian entry, which took place on the very day for which it was planned. This plot, however, was an isolated act, and, on the whole, Stapleton speaks highly of the general conduct of the Turks in Erzeroum itself.

*The Last Days.*

On Sunday, the 13th February, the German Consul left. On Monday, the 14th February, the Persian Consul was forced to go with the Turks to Erzindjan. They

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<sup>4</sup> See Doc. 62.

maintained that, as he was a representative accredited to the Government, he must go with them when the Government moved its headquarters. He went reluctantly, as he was anxious to look after his fellow-countrymen.

On Monday evening (the 14th February) Stapleton was sent for by the Vali, and he went, expecting to be told to leave the town. The Vali said that he and the Turks were leaving on the morrow, but that Stapleton might remain.

Tahsin Bey requested him to ask the Russian Commander to spare the population of the city, as, in general, they had had nothing to do with the deportations.

And that is a fact.

On the 15th, Stapleton was asked by a deputation of all ranks of Turks in the town to go out (three hours' distance) and meet the Russian Commander. He refused to go, but he delivered Tahsin's message the following day, when the Russians entered the city.

On the 15th, Turkish troops fired the Armenian episcopal residence and the market. They also burned schools and arsenals, and looted in the city.

*Wednesday, the 16th February.*

The first Russian to appear was a Cossack with a white apron. He was accompanied by Russian and Armenian soldiers, who shouted: "We are Armenians. Are there any here?" Then the Cossack came into Stapleton's house, and wrote his name in the book as "the first Russian to enter Erzeroum." The house was soon filled, and Stapleton lent eight beds to Russian officers, and also supplied food.

When the Grand Duke came, a few days later (the 20th), the Russians asked for another bed; but this was refused.

Mr. H. J. Buxton asked Stapleton: "Was there a good deal of looting by the Russians?" Stapleton said: "No, I should not say a good deal of looting. They were very hungry, and the stores were all open but, for an invading army, they were quite mild. For the first twenty-four hours they were very short of food."

Armenian Volunteers began to search the city for Armenians, and they did not find very many. Four girls were held by Turks, and these, together with the eighteen with Stapleton, made the full quota of twenty-two Armenians in the town.

The appointment by the Russians of an "Old Turk" (a former agent of Abd-ul-Hamid at Bukarest, who had subsequently been banished by the Young Turks to Erzeroum) is now giving considerable satisfaction to the Moslem population.

In August, 1915, the Turkish Government appointed and despatched a Commission from Constantinople, ostensibly to protect the property of the deported Armenians. During August this Commission took possession of, and sold, this property, including valuables left with Dr. Case (Stapleton's colleague at that period). Stapleton asked the police for their authority, and was turned off his own premises by a high-handed secretary. However, he wired to his Government, and got the official removed, and from that time he was treated with respect and was able to exert considerable

influence with the Vali; in fact, he remonstrated with him on the brutal treatment of the women at the hands of the zaptiehs and Kurds on the road from Erzeroum.

Stapleton is not a Consul, but a Missionary. To the foreigner a "Missionary" always means a Government representative; and as Stapleton was the only American in Erzeroum, he was, *de facto*, Consul. In many ways he was able to do far more than if he had been officially a Consul, knowing the ways of the country and exactly how far he could go, but yet free from official fetters.

**54. ERZEROUM: REPORT, DATED 25th SEPTEMBER, 1915, DRAWN UP BY THE AMERICAN CONSUL-GENERAL AT TREBIZOND, AFTER HIS RETURN FROM A VISIT TO ERZEROUM; COMMUNICATED BY THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR ARMENIAN AND SYRIAN RELIEF.**

I left Trebizond on the 12<sup>th</sup> August on horseback, accompanied by kavass Ahmed and a katerdji with my travelling outfit, also two mounted gendarmes furnished by the Governor-General. I reached Erzeroum about midnight on the 17th August, and was allowed to enter the city gate only after communicating with the Commandant.

I found the two American families well. The Rev. Robert S. Stapleton, who is the director of the American Schools and Treasurer of the Mission Station, is living with his wife and two daughters in the upper storey of the Boys' School building. The lower part is used as a Red Crescent Hospital for lightly wounded or convalescing soldiers, accommodating on an average about 75 patients. Dr. Case and wife and two small children were living in the upper part of the Hospital building, the lower part being used as a Red Crescent Hospital for about 30 patients. The Girls' School building, with the exception of two rooms belonging to the teachers, which are locked up, is also used by the Red Crescent for lightly wounded soldiers, accommodating on an average about 200. These three fine buildings are on the same street, about 100 yards apart. The Red Crescent flag flies over the three buildings, and on Fridays and holidays the Turkish flag is also raised over the Girls' School building, which is entirely devoted to the Red Crescent work, with the exception of the two rooms mentioned above. Over the other two buildings, which are partly occupied by the Americans as residences, the American flag is hoisted, in addition to the Red Crescent flag, on Sundays and holidays, and there seems to be no difficulty raised by the authorities now in regard to the flag question.

I called upon the Governor-General, Tahsin Bey, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Stapleton and Dr. Case, and the Bey received us very cordially. He informed me that he had just received a report from the military authorities that the Russians, upon evacuating Van, had destroyed every building in the city, including the American buildings, in order that the Turkish army should not find shelter for the winter, and had taken the Americans from Van with them on their retirement towards Russia. This information I telegraphed to the Embassy on the 18th August as follows:

"All American buildings reported destroyed by Russians upon their withdrawal from Van, and Americans now in Russia."

He also informed me that all the Americans at Bitlis had gone to Diyarbekir.

The Vali said that, in carrying out the orders to expel the Armenians from Erzeroum, he had used his best endeavours to protect them on the road, and had given them fifteen days to dispose of their goods and make arrangements to leave. They were not prohibited from selling or disposing of their property, and some families went away with five or more ox-carts loaded with their household goods and provisions. The Missionaries confirm this.

Over 900 bales of goods of various kinds were deposited by 150 Armenians in Mr. Stapleton's house for safe keeping. There are also about 500 bales in Dr. Case's house and stable. The value of the bales is estimated by Mr. Stapleton at from £10,000 to £15,000 (Turkish). He has a good American combination safe belonging to the Mission in his house, and two safes of English make left by merchants, which he filled with paper and silver roubles and jewellery deposited by Armenians, for safe keeping. He gave no receipts and assumed no responsibility, however. The gold deposited by Armenians amounted to £5,559 (Turkish), and of this amount £5,000 (Turkish) was sent to Mr. Peet through the Imperial Ottoman Bank in Erzeroum by telegram. The roubles, however, the Bank refused to transfer, and so they were left in his safes in the shape received, namely, tied up in handkerchiefs or made up in small packages. Afterwards these packages were all opened, and an itemized list was made of the contents of each package. The paper roubles and jewellery were then packed into tin boxes and sealed with the Mission seal and deposited in the Imperial Ottoman Bank in Mr. Stapleton's name for safe keeping....

Many policies of insurance in the New York Life Insurance Company were found in these packages, upon which a separate report will be made. There were also deeds to house and lands, promissory notes and other valuable papers, which no doubt have now lost much of their value.

The Gregorian Armenian Cathedral and the Catholic Armenian Church at Erzeroum were filled with goods of various kinds which had been entrusted to the Imperial Ottoman Bank by the Armenians before they were deported. These goods were entrusted to the Bank, and the keys are in the possession of the Bank....

The Vali of Erzeroum informed me that he had received instructions from Constantinople to allow the Protestants and Catholics to remain where they were for the present. One of Mr. Stapleton's valuable teachers, Mr. Yeghishé, was taken some time ago for military service, and was working upon the roads near Erzeroum. Mr. Stapleton needed this man as an interpreter, since he himself knows very little Turkish. The Vali promised me he would give Mr. Yeghishé a vesika or permit to remain in the city, if his military exemption taxes were paid. I attended to this matter, and on my way to Trebizond found Mr. Yeghishé at Ilidja, three hours from Erzeroum, and delivered to him the vesika, which gave him freedom to return to Erzeroum and remain there.

I also asked for the return of another Protestant teacher who was thought to be in Erzindjan, but this the Vali declined to allow, saying that the order did not permit their



return, but simply allowed them to remain where they were. In case they had already been sent away he could not recall them.

Mr. Stapleton has twenty Armenians in his house now; four of them are women and the balance girls. Dr. Case had six Armenians in his house when he left Erzeroum. Four of these went to Mr. Stapleton, and one he takes with him to Constantinople, and one he expects to leave at Marsovan for training in the Hospital. The Vali granted a special permit for these two girls to travel with Dr. Case, and also handed to him a letter of appreciation for the work he had done in his hospital for Turkish officers.

Mr. Stapleton's relations with the Vali, Tahsin Bey, are good, and indeed the latter, who was Mutessarif of Pera a few years ago, impressed me as being a very reasonable man, who desired to do the right thing and entertain good relations with the Americans....

**55. ERZEROUM: ABSTRACT OF A REPORT BY R. B. H. KHOUNOUNTZ, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE "ALL-RUSSIAN URBAN UNION," ON A VISIT TO ERZEROUM AFTER THE RUSSIAN OCCUPATION; PUBLISHED IN THE ARMENIAN JOURNAL "HORIZON," OF TIFLIS, 25th FEBRUARY, 1916.**

There are between 80 and 100 Armenians left in Erzeroum - according to other reports 130 - and about 25,000 Turks, who dare not come out of their houses. The sanitary condition of the city is deplorable. Mr. Khounountz had interviews with a number of Armenian and foreign eye-witnesses. He met an Armenian officer who had escaped from the Turks, who told him of the deportation and massacre of the Armenians. He said that the attitude of the Turks towards the Armenians was more or less good at the beginning of the war, but it was suddenly changed after the Turkish defeat at Sari-Kamysh, as they laid the blame for this defeat upon the Armenians, though he could not tell why.

After that, they separated the Armenian soldiers from the Turks as a dangerous element, and removed them from the fighting line. They put them on the roads to work as ordinary labourers.

At the same time terror reigned in the city. Mr. Pasdermadjian, a well-known Armenian, was assassinated, and a number of prominent young men were hanged or exiled. A number of Armenians were forced to go to the cemetery and destroy the statue which was erected to the memory of martyred Russian soldiers in 1829. They were also forced to open hospitals for the wounded Turkish soldiers at their own expense.

On the 5/18th April, by an order received from Constantinople, the Turks held a big meeting in which the hodjas (religious heads) openly preached massacre, casting the responsibility for the defeat upon the Armenians. The Armenians appealed to them and implored for mercy, but in vain. The Vali was rather inclined to spare the Armenians, but the order from Constantinople had tied his hands.

The deportation of all the Armenians in the Vilayet of Erzeroum began on the 4th

June. It was carried out promptly, and took the Armenians by surprise. Gendarmes were sent to the Armenian villages at night, who entered the houses, separated all the men from their families and deported them. The deportation of the men of Erzeroum - the city proper - was carried out less cruelly, the Vali giving them 15 days' notice.

But as the refugees were escorted by brutal gendarmes and chettis (bands of robbers) many of them were massacred in a most cruel manner, and very few of them reached their destination, which was the district of Kamakh, west of Erzindjan.

According to the officer, the plan of deportation was exactly the same as in other vilayets. None were spared, not even certain women teachers -Protestant and Roman Catholic - who were foreign subjects and had taught in foreign colleges.

Only 15 skilled labourers were left: with their families as they were needed for war work. These were massacred before the Turks left Erzeroun.

**56. ERZEROUM: ABSTRACT OF A REPORT BY DR. Y. MINASSIAN, WHO ACCOMPANIED MR. KHOUNOUNTZ TO ERZEROUM AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CAUCASIAN SECTION OF THE "ALL-RUSSIAN URBAN UNION"; PUBLISHED IN THE ARMENIAN JOURNAL "MSCHAK," OF TIFLIS, 8th MARCH, 1916.**

Dr. Minassian gathered his information from the following sources: The American Vice-Consul at Erzeroum, Mr. Stapleton; Mrs. Stapleton; Dr. Case of the American Mission Hospital; an educated Armenian lady - Zarouhi - from Baibourt, who escaped the massacres by a miracle; an Armenian soldier who had accepted Islam; an old man from Erzeroum; and many others.

Before Turkey's entry into the war, the Young Turks saw that war between them and Russia was inevitable, so they tried to win the Armenians over to their side by promising them all kinds of privileges.

As soon as war was declared, they confiscated everything from the shops of the Turks, Greeks, Armenians and Syrians, without any distinction of race or religion. The Armenians lost more than the other nationalities, as they were the wealthiest commercially.

The Turks asked the Armenians to join with them, but they declined, saying that if they fought against the Russians they would endanger the lives of their brothers in Caucasia. This seemed reasonable to the authorities, and on the surface, at least, they left the Armenians in peace.

The Armenians performed their civic duties faithfully and opened a hospital for the Turkish wounded; later on they were forced to open others.

Everything went smoothly until the first Turkish defeat, which occurred at Keutag. It was then that the Turks found out that the Armenian volunteers were fighting side by side with the Russians. This was announced everywhere and excited the Turks; but no steps were taken until it was reported that Garo Pasdermadjian, a member of the Ottoman Parliament and one of the deputies for Erzeroum, was commanding a body of

volunteers in the Russian army. The result was that Mr. Pasdermadjian's brother was assassinated. Then Djemal Effendi from Constantinople, with another Turk, Saifoullah, incited the people to massacre the Armenians.

The Governor saw that the excitement was growing, so he called a conference of all the prominent Turks. This was held at Pasha-Kiosk, and Djemal and Saifoullah took part. These demanded an immediate massacre, but the Governor requested them to hold their hand until he could communicate with Constantinople about it.

After this the authorities disarmed and removed all the Armenian soldiers from Erzeroum, and put them on the roads to work as unskilled labourers. A number of wealthy Armenians were forced to destroy the statue which was erected in memory of martyred Russian soldiers in 1828, and transfer its stones to another place to build a club-house for the Young Turks. Some could not stand the hard work, yet could only obtain release from it by paying large sums.

Then the rich Armenians were asked to vacate their homes and to transform them into hospitals. This was done willingly, and the Armenians undertook to care for the wounded.

Then an order came to some Armenians to leave their homes and go. But they begged to remain, and were allowed to do so on payment of £1,500 (Turkish).

A week later, all the rich and educated men were imprisoned; many of them died in prison under terrible tortures.

Then it was announced that they would all be deported. When the Governor was asked where they would be sent, he replied: "To a safe place, where the mob cannot hurt you."

The Armenians packed all their valuables and left them at the American Consulate, the missionary schools, and at the Armenian Church.

To obviate any possibility of resistance, the villagers were first deported towards Kamakh, and when the Erzeroum Armenians followed them they saw heaps of ruins in place of prosperous villages.

The deportation of the Armenians of Baibourt was more terrible. They were all taken by surprise at midnight.

"Where are you taking us?" they asked. "To a safe place;" was the reply, "away from the Turks, where the mob cannot massacre you. It is the duty of the Government to protect its subjects. You will remain there until peace is re-established."

The Armenians believed them and followed the gendarmes without resistance. After they had travelled several miles, they noticed that the attitude of the guards changed and that they had been deceived. By and by they were asked to pay fifty pounds, which they paid. Towards nightfall they asked for two girls. The next day they asked for five hundred pounds. They had to pay that also. That night they asked for five girls and took them. Then every day they were robbed. They lost all their valuables and provisions. The Turkish villagers stole the best looking girls and boys.

Just before they reached Erzindjan, their outer clothing was taken away from them

and they were left in their underclothes. When they reached Erzindjan they protested to the Kaimakam. The Kaimakam promised to accompany them. The next day they started for Kamakh.

After they had travelled a few miles, they were attacked by chettis from all sides. The Armenians wanted to run back to Erzindjan, but the gendarmes opened fire on them. Many of them were thus massacred, and the remainder were driven towards Kamakh.

It was discovered that these chettis had been organised by Djemal Effendi, and it was by deliberate design that all the refugees were left in their white underclothes, so that no one could run away or hide himself.

When the refugees reached a gorge of the Euphrates River they were attacked again, and many of them were drowned in the river.

Zarouhi - who related the above story - said that the river was filled with corpses. She also was thrown into the river, but clung to a rock behind some bushes and remained there until the gendarmes and chettis had gone away.

Coming out of the river she met a kind Kurdish shepherd, who wrapped her in a blanket and took her to the house of a Turk who knew her. The Turk took her to Erzeroum and kept her in his home.

In speaking of the responsibility of the Germans for the massacres and deportations, Dr. Minassian says that, before the deportation, the Armenians went to the German Consul and asked his assistance. His answer was: "I do not want to mix in other people's affairs, and I have no authorisation to do so from my Ambassador at Constantinople."

The German officers at Erzeroum helped the Turks to organize the deportation, and also took their share of the booty. Almost every one of them had kidnapped Armenian girls.

An officer called Schapner, for instance, took with him four girls; another called Karl, two girls; and so on - there was a long list of names which the reporter could not remember.

#### **57. ERZEROUM: STATEMENT BY MR. A. S. SAFRASTIAN, DATED TIFLIS, 15th MARCH, 1916.**

Since last October, when the Armenian atrocities were disclosed to the world at large, we had hoped against hope that, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, all that was said to have occurred might not be confirmed; that there might have been outlying districts in Turkish Armenia where the local Armenians had been spared the horrors that had accompanied their destruction in areas situated on the main roads. Unfortunately, now that the entire provinces of Erzeroum and Bitlis have been cleared of the Turk and one is able to see for oneself what actually has taken place, one is simply staggered at the depth and extent of the great crime, and the unprecedentedly cruel means by which the Armenians were cleared out of those two provinces, as well

as the adjacent districts.<sup>a</sup>

After seeing something with my own eyes in Erzeroum and Van, and compiling the facts about Bitlis, Moush and Khnyss from Russian official and other sources, my impression is that, out of the 250,000 Armenians of the Erzeroum and Bitlis Vilayets that remained under the dominion of the Turk in April, 1915 (exclusive of some 50,000 who saved themselves last summer, either by fighting their way out or by the advance of the Russians, and are now in Trans-Caucasia), only some 10,000 can be accounted: "for since an estimate was made possible by the deathblow which the Turks suffered last month. The remaining 240,000 or so have apparently perished under circumstances of the most extreme violence and inhumanity of which any human being is capable.

I am now in a position to state that all the accounts of Armenian atrocities which have been published in Europe and the United States are not only completely true, but that they represent merely such facts as have come under the eyes of consular officers or missionaries of neutral states; whereas the most ghastly and heinous crimes have been committed in the unfrequented parts of the country, out of sight of any observer.

The city of Erzeroum, the great military stronghold in Turkish Armenia, contained some 50,000 inhabitants before the war, of whom 20,000 were Armenians. The so-called plain of Erzeroum, a fertile alluvial plateau extending north-west of the city, contained some 60 Armenian villages with at least 45,000 inhabitants, almost all of them belonging to a sturdy race of peasants.

As soon as the European war broke out, the Central Committee of the Young Turks sent one Boukhar-ed-Din-Shakir-Bey, one of the Committee leaders, to Erzeroum, to organise the annihilation of the Armenians. Another, Djemal Effendi, a fanatic of the foulest type, was sent later on to help him in the work. These two Committee stalwarts sent from Constantinople were assisted in their fiendish business by two notorious natives - Edib Hodja and Djafer Bey.

At Erzeroum, as everywhere else, the Armenians in particular were ruthlessly robbed of most of the goods they possessed under the cloak of military requisitions. The Turkish defeat at Sarikamysh in January, 1915, and the exaggerated accounts of the part played by Armenian Volunteers in that battle, envenomed relations at Erzeroum. A Turkish officer who returned from Sarikamysh told the Armenian Bishop Sempad at Erzeroum that they chiefly met Armenians on the battlefields: "Many of our soldiers were shot by Armenians," he said, "and it was the Volunteers who destroyed our villages and scouting parties."

Subsequently a campaign of slander and provocation was started by the Young Turk leaders against the Armenian people. Armenian soldiers in the Turkish army were disarmed and sent to labour battalions, and further severe measures were taken to squeeze every available asset out of the helpless people. A great mass meeting was held by the Turks on the 18th April just outside the city, in which the Armenians were publicly denounced as "traitors" and "dangerous to the Empire" and as supporters of the enemies of Turkey. Strict orders were issued to all Moslems who were inclined to shield

their Armenian friends that they would be punished as severely as their protégés if they dared to protect them.

Fully aware of the fate that awaited them, the Armenians of Erzeroum made desperate appeals to Tahsin Bey, the Vali of the province, for protection. The latter's reply was that he could not defy the instructions sent by the Central Government. The answer of Herr Anders, the German Consul at Erzeroum, to whom the Armenians appealed again for protection, seems to have been still more brutal. He definitely stated that the persecutions levelled by the Turkish Government and the mob against the Armenians were quite lawful, and that he could not interfere in the matter.

By an exercise of imagination one may perhaps visualise to some extent the anguish and agony those poor Armenians suffered during April and May. Trapped on all sides by the ruthless enemy and deprived of all means of armed or legal protection, they attempted to make the best of an unprecedentedly tragic situation. Almost all the intellectual leaders and teachers were openly done to death in prison under horrible tortures. Pilos, Atrouni and several others have never been heard of since their imprisonment. Pasdermadjian, a leading citizen of the town, was shot dead in the streets. This reign of terror also prevailed in the villages of the plain.

The capture of Van by the Armenians on the 16th May and the entry of the Armenian Volunteers, followed by the Russian Army, made a great impression on the Turkish authorities at Erzeroum. On the same day, the Armenians of Khnyss and of the neighbouring 38 villages were butchered almost to a man, and the women and children distributed among the Kurds.

During the recent capture of Khnyss by the Russians, some 3,000 women and children were rescued in and around Khnyss. Apparently these represent the remnant of the 22,000 Armenians of the Sandjak of Khnyss.

In the meantime the Russians were advancing towards Melazkerd and Bitlis, and the Turks deported the Armenian peasants from Melazkerd and Passin and drove them towards Erzeroum. These half-starved peasants, exhausted and harried by forced marches, were not allowed to enter Erzeroum; they were kept out in the rain for seven days. Their situation became so shocking in May (1915) that even the German Consul was moved at the spectacle, and took some clothing and bread in his own car to distribute among "these rebellious scoundrels." Later on they were driven towards Erzindjan and drowned in the Euphrates.

On the 4th June, the first batch of Armenian peasants from the plain of Erzeroum, amounting to some 15,000 persons, were forced by the gendarmes to leave their homes and proceed to Mamahatoun, west of Erzeroum. They were escorted by chetti (Moslem Volunteer) bands consisting of criminals released from prison since the proclamation of the Holy War. In the ankle-deep mud and along the rugged roads, children and weak women fell by the wayside amid the laughter of the chettis. Every evening a forced tribute was levied upon the peasants. Gradually they were robbed of

everything they possessed - money, clothing, horses, etc. Girls and women were distributed among the Turks as they passed through Turkish villages. A few hours' distance beyond Mamahatoun, at the entrance of a valley called the Kamakh gorge, this convoy was "ambushed by unknown robbers." The signal was given by a revolver shot, whereupon a volley of fire was poured upon the Armenians. One of the survivors of this batch: a lad of 18 whom I saw in Erzeroum, told me that the shrieks and cries of the women and weeping children under fire were distracting. Many attempted to escape, but they were fired upon by their own escort. In two hours' time the valley had become a vast cemetery of unburied human bodies. Out of the 15,000 thus disposed of, a few escaped and reached Erzeroum in the guise of Turkish peasants.

On the 18th June it was the turn of the city. A fortnight's time-limit was given to the Armenians for settling their affairs; they packed their property in boxes and bales and stored them with Mr. Stapleton, the head of the American Mission, and in the Armenian Cathedral. The Governor took £1,000 (Turkish) from them in payment for a safe-conduct before their departure. A hundred and sixty leading families were selected first for deportation. They were all people of means and education. The German officers in Erzeroum behaved in an outrageous manner towards the Armenian women torn away from their men. The Germans, in fact, seem to have set the example of wrenching women from their homes. One Captain Schapner (?) is said to have forced Miss Tchilingarian, a handsome girl to follow him. On her resisting and crying, she was dragged about in the streets and roughly handled. This worthy German also carried off Mrs. Sarafian, a young woman educated in Switzerland. Another German lieutenant, Karl (?), dragged five women to his rooms, and so on.

The convoy of 160 families started out with carriages and some luggage, and were sent off in the same direction as their predecessors - towards Mamahatoun and Erzindjan. As they travelled they were robbed of everything and even stripped of their clothing. They are reported as having skirted the town of Erzindjan, but beyond that nothing has since been heard of them.

Bishop Sempad was sent off alone in his own carriage to Erzindjan, and never heard of again.

In the last week of June, several parties of Erzeroum Armenians were deported on successive days and most of them massacred on the way, either by shooting or drowning. One, Madame Zarouhi, an elderly lady of means, who was thrown into the Euphrates, saved herself by clinging to a boulder in the river. She succeeded in approaching the bank and returned to Erzeroum to hide herself in a Turkish friend's house. She told Prince Argoutian (Argoutinsky), the representative of the "All-Russian Urban Union" in Erzeroum, that she shuddered to recall how hundreds of children were bayoneted by the Turks and thrown into the Euphrates, and how men and women were stripped naked, tied together in hundreds, shot and then hurled into the river. In a loop of the river near Erzindjan, she said, the thousands of dead bodies created such a barrage that the Euphrates changed its course for about a hundred yards. Several

Armenians of this last party, however, seem to have survived this dreadful journey. Recently some of them wrote from Rakka, in northern Syria, to Mr. Stapleton imploring money and help, as they were in the direst distress.

After the recent capture of the city by the Russians, there were some 100 Armenians altogether in Erzeroum and some 25,000 Turks. Thirty girls and women were protected by Mr. Stapleton in his house. A certain number of women are gradually being rescued from the Turks in the city, and perhaps thousands more may be saved, if the military authorities take the necessary measures and help the Armenians to discover their own people.

Most of the children converted to Islam are quite used to Moslem habits; they speak and behave as if they were Turks by birth. They are now changing these habits again in Armenian hands.

When one stood at the gate called Kars Kapou, the eastern entrance to the city, and looked at the panorama it presented in March, 1916, Erzeroum did not seem to have suffered great changes in its general aspect. But I suffered a rude shock in the interior of the city when I saw Armenian houses occupied by Turks still gloating over their booty, the city deprived of its Armenian element, and the dome of the Cathedral broken away at its base.

The Armenians of Erzeroum to whom I have talked here about their prospects are consoling themselves-though it is a poor consolation-with the thought that thousands of them had left the city before the war, and that they will all return home and take possession of their property as soon as the conditions there become better defined.

**58. ERZEROUM: STATEMENT BY THE KURD ALI-AGHAZADE FARO, PUBLISHED IN THE ARMENIAN JOURNAL "MSCHAK," 19th DECEMBER, 1915.**

Ali-Aghazade Faro, a Kurd, related to some Armenians of St. Garabed, who reached Caucasia as refugees, that he had gone to Erzeroum last September to sell sheep, &c., and to get his share of the booty from the Armenians if possible. Faro remained in Erzeroum for five or six days, during which time he did not see a single Armenian. He only saw Turks sitting in the shops of the Armenians. When he asked how it was that they were in these shops, some answered that they had bought them, while others said that they were gifts to them from the Government.

Faro spent the night in a Turkish house, and asked his host what had become of the Armenians. The latter replied as follows:

"It was at the end of May when the Governor asked all the leaders and prominent Armenians to go to him. He told them that they were obliged to abandon the city to the enemy, consequently the army would retreat from the place. Therefore he instructed them to get ready and join him within twenty-four hours. They had to get ready, but as all means of transport had been requisitioned, they could take practically nothing with them. Before the twenty-four hours were up, they all gathered near the Government



Building without knowing what was impending. Several hundred gendarmes surrounded them immediately and drove them out of the city towards the west. They were taken as far as Charuk-Dersim (Doujik). The Kurds of Dersim had already received their orders. They attacked them and killed everyone. Another batch of Armenians was deported towards Sivas. They were seen passing through the Kamakh Pass, but what happened to them afterwards has never been known. A few hundred of their most beautiful girls were captured by certain Turks, and the Government was still looking for them."

**59. BAIBOURT: NARRATIVE OF AN ARMENIAN LADY DEPORTED IN THE THIRD CONVOY; COMMUNICATED BY THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR ARMENIAN AND SYRIAN RELIEF.**

A week before anything was done to Baibourt, the villages all round had been emptied and their inhabitants had become victims of the gendarmes and marauding bands. Three days before the starting of the Armenians from Baibourt, after a week's imprisonment, Bishop Anania Hazarabedian was hanged, with seven other notables. After these hangings, seven or eight other notables were killed in their own houses for refusing to leave the city. Seventy or eighty other Armenians, after being beaten in prison, were taken to the woods and killed. The Armenian population of Baibourt was sent off in three batches; I was among the third batch. My husband died eight years ago, leaving me and my eight-year-old daughter and my mother a large property, so that we were living in comfort. Since mobilization began, the Ottoman Commandant has been living in my house free of rent. He told me not to go, but I felt I must share the fate of my people. I took three horses with me, loaded with provisions. My daughter had some five-lira pieces round her neck, and I carried some twenty liras and four diamond rings on my person. All else that we had was left behind. Our party left on the 1st/14th June, fifteen gendarmes going with us. The party numbered four or five hundred<sup>5</sup> persons. We had got only two hours away from home when bands of villagers and brigands in large numbers, with rifles, guns, axes, etc., surrounded us on the road, and robbed us of all we had. The gendarmes took my three horses and sold them to Turkish mouhadjirs, pocketing the money. They took my money and the gold pieces from my daughter's neck, also all our food. After this they separated the men, one by one, and shot them all within six or seven days - every male above fifteen years old. By my side were killed two priests, one of them over ninety years of age. The brigands took all the good-looking women and carried them off on their horses. Very many women and girls were thus carried off to the mountains, among them my sister, whose one-year-old baby they threw away; a Turk picked it up and carried it off, I know not where. My mother walked till she could walk no farther, and dropped by the roadside on a mountain top. We found on the road many of those who had been deported from Baibourt in the previous convoys; some women were among the killed, with their husbands and sons. We also came across some old people and little infants still alive but in a pitiful

<sup>5</sup> "4000-5000" - Doc. 2.

condition, having shouted their voices away. We were not allowed to sleep at night in the villages, but lay down outside. Under cover of the night indescribable deeds were committed by the gendarmes, brigands and villagers. Many of us died from hunger and strokes of apoplexy. Others were left by the roadside, too feeble to go on.

One morning we saw fifty or sixty wagons with about thirty Turkish widows, whose husbands had been killed in the war; and these were going to Constantinople. One of these women made a sign to one of the gendarmes to kill a certain Armenian whom she pointed out. The gendarmes asked her if she did not wish to kill him herself, at which she said "Why not?" and, drawing a revolver from her pocket, shot him dead. Every one of these Turkish hanoums had five or six Armenian girls of ten or under with her. Boys the Turks never wished to take; they killed them all, of whatever age. These women wanted to take my daughter, too, but she would not be separated from me. Finally we were both taken into their wagons on our promising to become Moslems. As soon as we entered the araba, they began to teach us how to be Moslems, and changed our names, calling me X. and her Y.

The worst and most unimaginable horrors were reserved for us at the banks of the Euphrates<sup>6</sup> and in the Erzindjan plain. The mutilated bodies of women, girls and little children made everybody shudder. The brigands were doing all sorts of awful deeds to the women and girls that were with us, whose cries went up to heaven. At the Euphrates, the brigands and gendarmes threw into the river all the remaining children under fifteen years old. Those that could swim were shot down as they struggled in the water.

After seven days we reached Erzindjan. Not an Armenian was left alive there. The Turkish women took my daughter and me to the bath, and there showed us many other women and girls that had accepted Islam. Between there and Enderessi, the fields and hillsides were dotted with swollen and blackened corpses that filled and fouled the air with their stench. On this road we met six women wearing the feradje<sup>7</sup> and with children in their arms.

But when the gendarmes lifted their veils, they found that they were men in disguise, so they shot them. After thirty-two days' journey we reached our destination.

**60. BAIBOURT: STATEMENT, REPRODUCED FROM THE ARMENIAN JOURNAL "HORIZON," OF TIFLIS, IN THE ARMENIAN JOURNAL "GOTCHNAG" OF NEW YORK, 18th MARCH, 1916.**

On the 15th May, some of the prominent Armenians of Baibourt - north-west of Erzeroum - Hadji Simon, Hamazasb, Arshag and Drtad Simavonian, Hagop Aghparian, Vagharshag Lousigian, Garabed Sarafian, Garabed Duldulian, and the Bishop were arrested. They were then taken to a place called "Ourbadji Oghlou Dere" and killed. When the Armenians heard of this they were terrified, but the Government declared that

<sup>6</sup> i.e. the Kara Su.

<sup>7</sup> Moslem veil.

these were traitors, that they had sent money to the enemy and tried to persuade the people to revolt - that consequently they were punished, but that nothing would happen to the other Armenians. They were, in fact, really left in peace for some time, but after the retreat from Van Turkish soldiers came and disarmed them. They were then deported and massacred.

Forty armed young men from the village of Lsounk and 20 from Varvan escaped to the mountains. They were pursued by regular soldiers and forced to fight. Both sides lost heavily, and finally 12 of the Armenians, by the help of Greek villagers, reached Caucasasia.

**61. BAIBOURT, KEGHI, AND ERZINDJAN: LETTER<sup>8\*</sup>, DATED ERZEROUM, 25th MAY /7th JUNE, 1915; COMMUNICATED BY THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR ARMENIAN AND SYRIAN RELIEF.**

The districts of Erzindjan, Keghi, and Baibourt have been devastated by forced emigrations. The Armenian population of the city of Erzeroum has also received categoric orders to leave the city. They will be deported en masse; 160 merchants are already en route with their families. The Government has confiscated their goods. We have no information about the deported people; they say they -will be sent to Mosul.

**62. ERZINDJAN: STATEMENT BY TWO RED CROSS NURSES OF DANISH NATIONALITY, FORMERLY IN THE SERVICE OF THE GERMAN MILITARY MISSION AT ERZEROUM<sup>9</sup>; COMMUNICATED BY A SWISS GENTLEMAN OF GENEVA.**

In March, 1915, we learnt through an Armenian doctor, who died later on of typhus, that the Turkish Government was preparing for a massacre on a grand scale. He begged us to find out from General Passelt whether the rumour were true. We heard afterwards that the General (a gallant officer) had his own fears of it, and asked, for that reason, to be relieved of his post..... We fell sick of typhus and..... in consequence of a number of changes in the hospital staff ..... we were obliged to leave Erzeroum. Through the good offices of the German Consul at Erzeroum, who also possessed the confidence of the Armenians, we were engaged by the Red Cross at Erzindjan, and worked there seven weeks.

At the beginning of June, the head of the Red Cross Mission at Erzindjan, Staff-Surgeon A., told us that the Armenians had revolted at Van, that measures had been taken against them which would be put into general execution, and that the whole Armenian population of Erzindjan and the neighbourhood would be transported to Mesopotamia, where it would no longer find itself in a majority. There was, however, to be no massacre, and measures were to be taken to feed the exiles and to secure their personal safety by a military escort. Wagons loaded with arms and bombs were

<sup>8</sup> Name of author withheld.

<sup>9</sup> They were at work in the German hospital at Erzeroum from October, 1914, to April, 1915. - EDITOR.

reported, he said, to have been discovered at Erzindjan, and many arrests were to be made. The Red Cross staff were forbidden to have any relations with the exiles, and prohibited any excursions on foot or horseback beyond a certain radius.

After that, several days' grace was given to the population of Erzindjan for the sale of their property, which was naturally realised at ludicrous prices. In the first week of June<sup>10</sup>, the first convoy started; the rich people were allowed to hire carriages. They were to go to Harpout. The three succeeding days, further deportations followed<sup>11</sup>; many children were taken charge of by Moslem families; later on, the authorities decided that these children must go into exile as well.

The families of the Armenians employed in our hospital had to go with the rest, including a woman who was ill. A protest from Dr. Neukirch, who was attending her, had no effect except to postpone her departure two days. A soldier attached to our staff as cobbler said to Sister B.<sup>12</sup>: "I am now forty-six years old, and yet I am taken for military service, although I have paid my exemption-tax regularly every year. I have never done anything against the Government, and now they are taking from me my whole family, my seventy-year-old mother, my wife and five children, and I do not know where they are going." He was especially affected by the thought of his little daughter, a year and a half old; "She is so sweet. She has such pretty eyes"; he wept like a child. The next day he came back; "I know the truth. They are all dead." And it was only too true. Our Turkish cook came to us crying, and told us how the Kurds had attacked the unhappy convoy at Kamakh Boghaz<sup>13</sup>, had pillaged it completely, and had killed a great number of the exiles. This must have been the 14th June.

Two young Armenian teachers, educated at the College of Harpout, whose lives were spared, related that the convoy had been caught under a cross-fire by the Kurds on the flanks and the Turkish irregulars in the rear. They had thrown themselves flat on the ground and pretended to be dead; afterwards they succeeded in finding their way back to Erzindjan by circuitous paths, bribing some Kurds whom they met on the way. One of them had with her fiancé in woman's clothes. He had been shielded by a Turkish class-mate. When they reached Erzindjan a gendarme tried to abduct the girl and her fiancé interfered. He was killed, and the girls were carried off to Turkish houses, where they were treated kindly but had pressure put upon them to change their religion. They conveyed this news to us through a young doctor who attended some Armenian patients in our hospital, and was thereby enabled to get into touch with us; he brought us an appeal from them to take them with us to Harpout. If only they had poison, they

<sup>10</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> June - *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift*, November, 1915.

<sup>11</sup> Amounting to about 20,000 - 25,000 people in all - *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift*, November, 1915.

<sup>12</sup> One of the authors of the present statement, which has been drafted in the first person by the other witness, but represents the experiences of both. The Editor is in possession of the drafter's name, but does not know the identity of Sister B., Dr. A., or Mr. G. - EDITOR.

<sup>13</sup> A defile, 12 hours' journey from Erzindjan, where the Euphrates flows through a narrow gorge between two walls of rock.

said, they would poison themselves. They had no information whatever as to the fate of their companions.

The day after,<sup>14</sup> Friday, the 11th June, a party of regular troops (belonging to the 86th Cavalry Brigade) were sent out "to keep the Kurds in order."

We heard subsequently from these soldiers how the defenceless Armenians had been massacred to the last one. The butchery had taken four hours. The women threw themselves on their knees, they had thrown their children into the Euphrates, and so on.<sup>15</sup> "It was horrible," said a nice-looking young soldier; "I could not fire, I only pretended." For that matter, we have often heard Turks express their disapproval and their pity. The soldiers told us that there were ox-carts all ready to carry the corpses to the river and remove every trace of the massacre.<sup>16</sup>

Next day there was a regular *battue* through the cornfields. (The corn was then standing, and many Armenians had hidden in it.)

From that time on, convoys of exiles were continually arriving, all on their way to the slaughter; we have no doubt about their fate, after the unanimous testimony which we have received from many different quarters. Later, our Greek driver told us that the victims had their hands tied behind their backs, and were thrown down from the cliffs into the river. This method was employed when the numbers were too great to dispose of them in any other fashion. It was also easier work for the murderers. Sister B. and I, of course, began at once to think what we could do, and we decided to travel with one of these convoys to Harpout. We did not know yet that the massacre on the road had been ordered by the Government, and we also thought that we could check the brutality of the gendarmes and stave off the assaults of the Kurds, since we speak Kurdish and have some influence over the tribesmen.

We then telegraphed to the Consul at Erzeroum, telling him that we had been dismissed from the hospital, and urging him, in the interests of Germany, to come to Erzindjan. He wired back: "Impossible to leave my post. Expect Austrians, who are due to pass here the 22nd June...."

On the evening of the 17th June, we went out for a walk with Mr. C., the druggist of the Red Cross Staff. He was as much horrified as we were at the cruelties that were being perpetrated, and expressed himself very plainly on the subject. He also received his dismissal. On our walk we met a gendarme, who told us that, ten minutes' distance away, a large convoy of exiles from Baibourt had been halted. He narrated to us, with

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<sup>14</sup> i.e., after the departure of the last convoy of exiles from Erzindjan (10<sup>th</sup> June), not after the narrators were informed of the massacre by their cook and by the two Armenian girls. The passages about the cobbler, the cook, and the two girls are evidently in parenthesis, and interrupt the sequence of the narrative. - EDITOR.

<sup>15</sup> The further details are given in the *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift*, November, 1915: "When we exclaimed in horror: 'What could we do? It was our orders.' One of them added: 'It was a heart-breaking sight. For that matter, I did not shoot.'" - EDITOR.

<sup>16</sup> On the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup>, we saw soldiers returning to town laden with loot. We heard from both Turks and Armenians that children's corpses were strewn along the road.

appalling vividness, how one by one the men had been massacred and cast into the depths of the gorge<sup>17</sup>: "Kezzé, kezzé, geliorlar! (Kill, kill, push them over)." He told how, at each village, the women had been violated; how he himself had desired to take a girl, but had been told that already she was no longer a maid; how children had had their brains battered out when they cried or hindered the march. "There were the naked bodies of three girls; I buried them to do a good deed," was his concluding remark.

The following morning, at a very early hour, we heard the procession of exiles passing in front of our house, along the high road leading in to Erzindjan. We followed them and kept up with them as far as the town, about an hour's walk. Mr. G. came with us. It was a very large gang - only two or three of them men, all the rest women and children. Many of the women looked demented. They cried out: "Spare us, we will become Moslems or Germans or whatever you will; only spare us. We are being taken to Kamakh Boghaz to have our throats cut," and they made an expressive gesture. Others kept silence, and marched patiently on with a few bundles on their backs and their children in their arms. Others begged us to save their children. Many Turks arrived on the scene to carry off children and girls, with or without their parents' consent. There was no time for reflection, for the crowd was being moved on continually by the mounted gendarmes brandishing their whips. On the outskirts of the town, the road to Kamakh Boghaz branches off from the main highway. At this point the scene turned into a regular slave market; for our part, we took a family of six children, from three to fourteen years old, who clutched hold of us, and another little girl as well. We entrusted the latter to our Turkish cook, who was on the spot. She wanted to take the child to the kitchen of Dr. A.'s private house, and keep her there until we could come to fetch her; but the doctor's adjutant, Riza Bey, gave the woman a beating and threw the child out into the street. Meanwhile, with cries of agony, the gang of sufferers continued its march, while we returned to the hospital with our six children. Dr. A. gave us permission to keep them in our room until we had packed our belongings; they were given food and soon became calmer. "Now we are saved," they had cried when we took them. They refused to let go of our hands. The smallest, the son of a rich citizen of Baibourt, lay huddled up in his mother's cloak; his face was swollen with crying and he seemed inconsolable. Once he rushed to the window and pointed to a gendarme: "That's the man who killed my father." The children handed over to us their money, 475 piastres (about £4), which their parents had given them with the idea that perhaps the children, at any rate, would not be shot.

We then rode into the town to obtain permission for these children to travel with us. We were told that the high authorities were in session to decide the fate of the convoy which had just arrived. Nevertheless, Sister B. succeeded in getting word with someone she knew, who gave her the authorisation to take the children with her and offered to give them false names in the passport. This satisfied us, and, after returning to the hospital, we left the same evening with baggage and children and all, and

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<sup>17</sup> Every day ten or twelve of the men had been killed and thrown into the ravines. - *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift*.

installed ourselves in a hotel at Erzindjan. The Turkish orderlies at the hospital were very friendly, and said: "You have done a good deed in taking these children." We could get nothing but one small room for the eight of us. During the night there was a frightful knocking at our door, and we were asked whether there were two German ladies in the room. Then all became quiet again, to the great relief of our little ones. Their first question had been, would we prevent them from being made Mohammedans? And was our cross (the nurses' Red Cross) the same as theirs? After that they were comforted. We left them in the room, and went ourselves to take our tea in the hotel cafe. We noticed that some discharged hospital patients of ours, who had always shown themselves full of gratitude towards us, behaved as if they no longer recognised us. The proprietor of the hotel began to hold forth, and everyone listened to what he was saying: "The death of these women and children has been decreed at Constantinople." The Hodja (Turkish priest) of our hospital came in, too, and said to us, among other things: "If God has no pity on them, why must you have pity? The Armenians have committed atrocities at Van. That happened because their religion is *ekzik* (inferior). The Moslems should not have followed their example, but should have carried out the massacre with greater humanity." We always gave the same answer - that they ought to discover the guilty and do justice upon them, but that the massacre of women and children was, and always will remain, a crime.

Then we went to the Mutessarif himself, with whom we had not succeeded in obtaining an interview before. The man looked like the devil incarnate, and his behaviour bore out his appearance. In a bellowing voice he shouted at us: "Women have no business to meddle with politics, but ought to respect the Government!" We told him that we should have acted in precisely the same way if the victims had been Mohammedans, and that politics had nothing to do with our conduct. He answered that we had been expelled from the hospital, and that we should get the same treatment from him; that he would not stand us, and that he would certainly not permit us to go to Harpout to fetch our belongings, but would send us to Sivas. Worst of all, he forbade us to take the children away, and at once sent a gendarme to carry them off from our room.

On our way back to the hotel we actually met them, but they were hurried past us so quickly that we had not even a chance to return them their money. Afterwards we asked Dr. Lindenberg to see that this money was restored to them; but, to find out where they were, he had to make enquiries of a Turkish officer, and just at the moment of our departure, when we had been told that they had already been killed, and when we had no longer any chance of making a further search for them, the aforementioned Riza Bey came and asked us for this money, on the ground that he wanted to return it to the children! We had already decided to spend it on relieving other Armenians.

At Erzindjan we were now looked askance at. They would no longer let us stay at the hotel, but took us to a deserted Armenian house. The whole of this extensive quarter of the town seemed dead. People came and went at will to loot the contents of the houses; in some of the houses families of Moslem refugees were already installed. We had now a roof over our heads, but no one would go to get us food. However, we

managed to send a note to Dr. A., who kindly allowed us to return to the hospital. The following day, the Mutessarif sent a springless baggage cart, in which we were to do the seven days' journey to Sivas. "We gave him to understand that we would not have this conveyance, and, upon the representations of Dr. A., they sent us a travelling carriage, with the threat to have us arrested if we did not start at once. This was on Monday, the 21st June, and we should have liked to wait for the Austrians, who were due to arrive on the Tuesday morning, and continue the journey in their company; but Dr. A. declared that he could no longer give us protection, and so we started out. Dr. Lindenberg did us the kindness of escorting us as far as Rifahia<sup>18</sup>. During the first days of our journey we saw five corpses. One was a woman's, and still had clothes on; the others were naked, one of them headless. There were two Turkish officers on the road with us who were really Armenians, as we were told by the gendarme attached to us. They preserved their incognito towards us, and maintained a very great reserve, but always took care not to get separated from us. On the fourth day they did not put in an appearance. When we enquired after them, we were given to understand that the less we concerned ourselves about them the better it would be for us. On the road, we broke our journey near a Greek village. A savage-looking man was standing by the roadside. He began to talk with us, and told us he was stationed there to kill all the Armenians that passed, and that he had already killed 250. He explained that they all deserved their fate, for they were all Anarchists - not Liberals or Socialists, but Anarchists. He told the gendarmes that he had received orders by telephone to kill our two travelling companions. So these two men with their Armenian drivers must have perished there. We could not restrain ourselves from arguing with this assassin, but when he went off our Greek driver warned us: "Don't say a word, if you do..." - and he made the gesture of taking aim. The rumour had, in fact, got about that we were Armenians, which was as good as to say condemned to death.

One day we met a convoy of exiles, who had said good-bye to their prosperous villages and were at that moment on their way to Kamakh Boghaz. We had to draw up a long time by the roadside while they marched past. The scene will never be forgotten by either of us: a very small number of elderly men, a large number of women - vigorous figures with energetic features - a crowd of pretty children, some of them fair and blue-eyed, one little girl smiling at the strangeness of all she was seeing, but on all the other faces the solemnity of death. There was no noise; it was all quiet, and they marched along in an orderly way, the children generally riding on the ox-carts; and so they passed, some of them greeting us on the way - all these poor people, who are now standing at the throne of God, and whose cry goes up before Him. An old woman was made to get down from her donkey - she could no longer keep the saddle. Was she killed on the spot? Our hearts had become as cold as ice.

The gendarme attached to us told us then that he had escorted a convoy of 3,000 women and children to Mamahatoun (near Erzeroum) and Kamakh Boghaz. "Hep gildi,

<sup>18</sup> This was not the route followed by the convoys of exiles.



bildi," he said: "All gone, all dead." We asked him: "Why condemn them to this frightful torment; why not kill them in their villages?" Answer: "It is best as it is. They ought to be made to suffer; and, besides, there would be no place left for us Moslems with all these corpses about. They will make a stench!"

We spent a night at Enderessi, one day's journey from Shabin Kara-Hissar. As usual, we had been given for our lodging an empty Armenian house. On the wall there was a pencil scrawl in Turkish: "Our dwelling is on the mountains, we have no longer any need of a roof to cover us; we have already drained the bitter cup of death, we have no more need of a judge."

The ground floor rooms of the house were still tenanted by the women and children. The gendarmes told us that they would be exiled next morning, but they did not know that yet; they did not know what had become of the men of the house; they were restless, but not yet desperate.

Just after I had gone to sleep, I was awakened by shots in our immediate neighbourhood. The reports followed one another rapidly, and I distinctly heard the words of command. I realised at once what was happening, and actually experienced a feeling of relief at the idea that these poor creatures were now beyond the reach of human cruelty.

Next morning our people told us that ten Armenians had been shot - that was the firing that we had heard - and that the Turkish civilians of the place were now being sent out to chase the fugitives. Indeed, we saw them starting off on horseback with guns. At the roadside were two armed men standing under a tree and dividing between them the clothes of a dead Armenian. We passed a place covered with clotted blood, though the corpses had been removed. It was the 250 roadmaking soldiers, of whom our gendarme had told us.

Once we met a large number of these labourers, who had so far been allowed to do their work in peace. They had been sorted into three gangs - Moslems, Greeks and Armenians. There were several officers with the latter. Our young Hassan exclaimed: "They are all going to be butchered." We continued our journey, and the road mounted a hill. Then our driver pointed with his whip towards the valley, and we saw that the Armenian gang was being made to stand out of the highroad. There were about 400 of them, and they were being made to line up on the edge of a slope. We know what happened after that.

Two days before we reached Sivas, we again saw the same sight. The soldiers' bayonets glittered in the sun.

At another place there were ten gendarmes shooting them down, while Turkish workmen were finishing off the victims with knives and stones. Here ten Armenians had succeeded in getting away.

Later on, in the Mission Hospital at Sivas, we came across one of the men who had escaped. He told us that about 100 Armenians had been slaughtered there. Our informant himself had received a terrible wound in the nape of the neck and had fainted.

Afterwards he had recovered consciousness and had dragged himself in two days to Sivas.

Twelve hours' distance from Sivas, we spent the night in a government building. For hours a gendarme, sitting in front of our door, crooned to himself over and over again: "Ermenleri hep kesdiler - the Armenians have all been killed! "In the next room they were talking on the telephone. We made out that they were giving instructions as to how the Armenians were to be arrested. They were talking chiefly about a certain Ohannes, whom they had not succeeded in finding yet.

One night we slept in an Armenian house where the women had just heard that the men of the family had been condemned to death. It was frightful to hear their cries of anguish. It was no use our trying to speak to them. "Cannot your Emperor help us?" they cried. The gendarme saw the despair on our faces, and said: "Their crying bothers you; I will forbid them to cry." However, he let himself be mollified. He had taken particular pleasure in pointing out to us all the horrors that we encountered, and he said to young Hassan: "First we kill the Armenians, then the Greeks, then the Kurds." He would certainly have been delighted to add: "And then the foreigners!" Our Greek driver was the victim of a still more ghastly joke: "Look, down there in the ditch; there are Greeks there too!"

At last we reached Sivas. We had to wait an hour in front of the Government Building before the examination of our papers was completed and we were given permission to go to the Americans. There, too, all was trouble and sorrow.

On the 1st July we left Sivas and reached Kaisaria on the 4th. We had been given permission to go to Talas, after depositing our baggage at the Jesuit School; but when we wanted to go on from Kaisaria, we were refused leave and taken back to the Jesuit School, where a gendarme was posted in front of our door. However, the American Missionaries succeeded in getting us set at liberty.

We then returned to Talas, where we passed several days full of commotion, for there, as well as at Kaisaria, there were many arrests being made. The poor Armenians never knew what the morrow would bring, and then came the terrifying news that all Armenians had been cleared out of Sivas. What happened there and in the villages of the surrounding districts will be reported by the American Mission.

When we discovered that they meant to keep us there - for they had prevented us from joining the Austrians for the journey - we telegraphed to the German Embassy, and so obtained permission to start. There is nothing to tell about this part of our journey, except that the locusts had in places destroyed all the fruit and vegetables, so that the Turks are already beginning to have some experience of the Divine punishment.

### **63. KAMAKH AND ERZEROUM: STATEMENT<sup>19\*</sup> PUBLISHED IN THE NEW YORK JOURNAL "GOTCHNAG," 4th SEPTEMBER, 1915.**

The Armenian villages of the Kamakh district have been visited with the most

<sup>19</sup> Source unspecified.

ghastly horrors. The Turks began by perpetrating massacres, and subsequently deported the survivors to various places - the men in one direction and the women in another. The houses and property belonging to the Armenians have been taken possession of by the Turks and Kurds, who have come to this district as refugees from the Vilayet of Van.

The Armenian villages in the plain west of Erzeroum have all been cleared of their inhabitants. After all the men who were physically fit had been mobilised, the remainder were deported. The Armenian houses are being handed over to Turkish immigrants. The Archimandrite Kevork Tourian, Metropolitan of the Armenians of Trebizond, has been brought to Erzeroum, where he will be tried by court-martial.