

## SECRET ARABIAN REPORT OF SEPTEMBER 27, 1916 (NIGHT)

ZAVEN MESSERLIAN

During World War I the British and the Commonwealth countries fought the Ottoman Empire on various fronts, Gallipoli, Egypt and Mesopotamia; prisoners of war existed on both sides.

In 1916 Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia sent two Arab officers to the British. These POWs, Lt. Shukri Shurbaji and Lt. Ahmed Shaykha, were interviewed by Sir Mark Sykes. Based on these interviews and others, The Arabian Report, dated September 27, 1916 night, was made.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Mark Sykes wrote in the Foreign office minutes: "The Armenian report, Appendix A,<sup>2</sup> is strongly recommended for careful reading. The story is odious and disgusting, but nevertheless bears out everything that has been reported from other independent sources. Lieutenant Shaykha and Lt. Shorbaji it will be remembered, gave almost word for word accounts of similar scenes and similar policy. They were Moslems and professed to dislike Armenians, the present writer is equally little predisposed to sympathise with Armenians. It is suggested that some means should be taken to give due publicity to this state of affairs, in view of the appeals to "God and Humanity" which the enemy is now making".

The Arabian Report XXII Appendix B,<sup>3</sup> registered at night on 27 December 1916, contained the eye witness reports of Lt. Hassan Maarouf and Lt. Sayied Ahmed Moukhtar Ba'aj. These are of great importance as they show that these officers knew "deportation" meant massacre.

Lt. Ba'aj's testimony in the Foreign Office document published here was quoted by the British historian Christopher Walker in his article "World War One and the Armenian Genocide", printed in Richard Hovannisian's *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times, Vol. II*, 1997, pp. 263-265 and also in my book *The Premeditated Nature of the Genocide Perpetrated on Armenians*, 2001, pp. 34-37, which was first published in article form in the *Hask Armenological Yearbook*, in 1980. The document was given to me by Christopher Walker.

Below, the sections of the report which deal with Armenians are given. Furthermore, another document, Addendum A to "Report of an inhabitant of Athlit, Mount Carmel, Syria," is also given. All the documents clearly show the premeditation of genocide and its perpetration.

### Part I

#### ARAB MOVEMENT - GENERAL SITUATION

The following is the report of a number of interviews between Sir Mark Sykes and the two Arab officers who have been sent to England by the Grand Duke Nicholas, and whose descriptions are as follows:

Name.- Shukri

Family name.- Shurbaji

Age.- 24  
Place of birth.- Damascus  
Father's name.- Mahmoud Bey Shurbaji  
Father's rank.- Lieutenant Colonel: retired Formerly Commandant of Sivas  
Mother's name.- Tamar  
Junior Captain, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 13<sup>th</sup> Corps  
Where educated.- Damascus Lazarist College and Ecole Nationale  
d'Agriculture de Grignon, Seine et Oise

Was in London on short holiday in 1911.

Service in the army.-

During peace: Nil

During war: Damascus first. Transport officer with Egyptian expedition. Then A.D.C. to Place Commandant, Damascus, Junior Captain of a company at Constantinople and Saros. Was sent from there to Mesopotamia and to Kasr Sherin, Persia, with the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Was at Kut-el-Amara for one week after fall as Provisioning Officer: then went to Kermanshah, Persia, with the whole of 13<sup>th</sup> Army Corps.

Joined the Russians at Kermanshah on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August.

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Name.- Ahmed

Family name.- Shaykha

Age.- 24

Father's name.- Mahmoud Shaykha

Mother's family.- Bagdash, from Damascus

Father's business.- mudir of customs at Accu

Where educated.- Accu

Rank.- 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant

Regiment.- 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 13<sup>th</sup> Corps

Service in the Army.-

During peace: two years in military college, two years in regular army.

During war: First in 25<sup>th</sup> Division, 75<sup>th</sup> Regiment, at Gaza then sent to Dardanelles (Saros), where he was transferred to 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment, 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Was two months at Saros: then went to Mesopotamia and to Kasr Sherin, Persia. Was at Kut-el-Amara for one week: then went to Kermanshah, Persia, with 13<sup>th</sup> Army Corps.

Joined the Russians at Kermanshah 2<sup>nd</sup> August.

#### JUNIOR CAPTAIN SHUKRI SHURBAJI'S ACCOUNT OF HIS ADVENTURES FROM FEBRUARY 1915 TO SEPTEMBER OF THE SAME YEAR.

On the outbreak of the war I was at the Military College in Damascus and was called up as a cadet. In February 1915 I was made 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, and afterwards promoted to Lieutenant. I remained about a year in Damascus as Instructor first,

and then was made A.D.C. to Place Commandant and Military Police Officer. On the opening of hostilities the Turkish authorities ordered that great demonstrations should be held. The majority of the population, however, did not want war; it was still feeling the disastrous effect from the Tripoli and Balkan wars. The authorities tried to raise the spirits of the people by the promise of swift victories and the conquest of Egypt. Besides they spread news of great German victories over the Allies. Apart from some ignorant people and those were under the influence of the Unionists, the population was not deceived by bombastic promise. The Arab Committee, to which I belong, increased its activities foreseeing the downfall of Turkey, and the emancipation of the Arabs from Turkish misrule, with the assistance of England and France. While at Damascus I was sent to Iben in the Sinai Desert, to accompany 500 soldiers recruited to do railway and road work. One half of this company deserted on the road to Iben, and I was informed afterwards that the other half deserted after the failure of the expedition to the Canal. From Iben I returned to Damascus. At that time Jemal Pasha showed great consideration for the Arabs, and never betrayed his antagonism. He sought the friendship of Arab notables and extended hospitality to them. Jemal's outward benevolence towards the Arabs lasted until the failure of the Daradanelles Expedition, then he unmasked, and began his rule of terror with the wholesale hangings and deportations.

About the middle of June 1915 I received the order to go to Constantinople with nineteen other young Arab officers, all like myself belonging to the Arab Committee. The Turkish authorities began to get alarmed at the spreading of the Arab movement, and tried to undermine it by dispersing the Arab officers. Being in no hurry to arrive at Constantinople we travelled leisurely, and spent about a month on the way. We went by train from Damascus to Aleppo and Rajun. From Rajun to Osmanieh by a carriage, train to Tarsus, carriage to Bozanti, and train to Haidar Pasha. At that time typhus was raging everywhere in Syria, especially in Aleppo. On my way to Constantinople I saw thousands of Armenians being deported south. They were in a pitiful condition, and subjected to cruel treatment by the gendarmes and soldiers accompanying them. Several thousands were killed and others died from exhaustion, starvation, or disease. The highways were strewn with their bodies. A week after my arrival to Constantinople I was attached to the Place Commandant as a military police officer in the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion. On the 15<sup>th</sup> August the battalion was ordered to join the 75<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 25<sup>th</sup> Division at Saros. We proceeded by train in twenty-four hours to Ozun-Kubri, and from there we marched in four days to Saros. After a month's stay at Saros, our battalion was annexed to the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, and ordered to proceed to Mesopotamia.

THE FOLLOWING IS THE NARRATIVE OF THE TWO ARAB OFFICERS,  
JUNIOR CAPTAIN SHURBAJI AND LIEUTENANT SHAYKHA, FROM THE  
TIME THEY LEFT SAROS WITH THEIR REGIMENT ON THE  
1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER, 1915

They proceeded to Uzun Kupri and thence to Derakoi, where they were stationed for fifty days: the country around was very desolate, only old men,

women, and children remaining; here they saw no fighting at all, but were much harassed by the British aviators, who inflicted constant casualties in the troops at Derakoi and in the vicinity, the 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1915, to 10<sup>th</sup> November, 1915. From Derakoi they proceeded to Constantinople. At Constantinople the city was empty and depressed, the quiet gossip was about the systematic drownings and murders of Armenians by night, and the executions of Armenian leaders and notables by day. The city beyond and hope of revolution, the hold of the committee being absolutely complete over every section of the people; both officers are of opinion that no revolution can ever be hoped for at Constantinople, as those who might have led have been exterminated, and those who should have followed have been dispersed.

From Iskidar the battalion crossed the Bosphorus to Kaputash In the dark and with all the lights extinguished, owing to fear of British submarines. After refitting, with battalion preceded to Haidar Pasha Station, entrained, and started for Bozanti; and shortly after starting, the train was delayed four hours by a British submarine which was shelling the coast from the Gulf of Ismid. From Ismid to Bozanti the journey lasted seventy-two hours. The railway rolling-stock was good, but the locomotives showed signs of deterioration owing to the use of wood fuel. At Bozanti the troops were encamped for the night and proceeded to Tarsus in four marches, the battalion carried its own tents and equipment on packs animals. The troops suffered considerably from cold during the first three stages. The rations were Urbswurst soup in addition to Burgul,ghi, and mutton. The officers messes separately, and always had a three-course dinner cooked in European style. At Tarsus the battalion was detached from the division and delayed owing to an expected landing at Alexandretta or Ayas Bay; this delay lasted fifteen days, when the battalion entrained once more and proceeded to Maahmura (Osmanie) in six hours, detrained and marched to Hassan Beg in four hours, where it encamped, and proceeded daily marches to Islahie-Takhta Kubri, Raju, Yeni Kubri, Katma, following the railway from Islahie, but not entraining owing to shortage of fuel and rolling stock. At Katma the battalion entrained, reaching Aleppo in two hours. However, this last stage could only be accomplished by taking two companies at time, as the locomotive could not get up sufficient steam to pull under wood fuel.

Aleppo was reached about the 25<sup>th</sup> December. At Aleppo the battalion was halted about fifteen days, and Lieutenant Shurbaji was sent on duty to Damascus. The journey from Aleppo to Damascus occupied thirty hours by rail, the road was in fair order, the rolling-stock in good condition and the shortage of fuel less noticeable. The main points this officer noticed on the way from Aleppo to Damascus was the result of the locusts in 1915, which had almost destroyed the crops and reduced the country to great poverty, the all-pervading typhus epidemic in Homs, Hama, Baalbek districts, and the forcible migration of Armenians who were swarming south by road and rail. Lieutenant Shurbaji estimates that he saw 1000 dead Armenians during the daylight hours of his journey, lying by the railway at various points. These people had perished from famine and typhus. The survivors were, on arrival at Haimi, near Damascus, dispersed among the various

towns and villages where they were well cared for by the Arabs, but hastened the spread of typhus.

At Damascus, Jemal was ruling by terror and force. The situation was as follows: the papers of French Consulate at Damascus had been obtained early in the war, and the fact was secretly known to nearly everybody, and the Turks were holding the papers in terrorism over the heads of the Arab notables, and occasionally hanging a man here and there. It would seem as if the papers from the Consulate at Beyrut had also been tampered with earlier than is usually supposed, but it is open to question. Faisal, the son of the Sherif, was in attendance on Jemal, and certain notables viz. Ibish and the Emir El Haj were made much of as Turcophiles.

The Arab committee was very powerful in Damascus, and Jemal could never ascertain its actual personnel or whereabouts, nor have the recent executions destroyed it, the violence of the Turks having produced an Arab Committee as occult and elusive as the Committee of Union and Progress itself.

About fifty officers and many sons of notables of Homs, Hama and Damascus had taken refuge in the Leja and Jebel Druse with the Druses, and were protected by the Atrash family. The Arab Committee at Damascus arranged for these peoples' passage from Damascus to Jebel Druse. It is estimated, that deserters and refugees inclusive, that in the Leja, Hauran, and Jebel, there were at that date (1<sup>st</sup> January, 1916) above 30000 armed men ready to rise in event of propitious circumstances. Lieutenant Shurbaji is of opinion that this situation still holds good, and he is satisfied that the recent executions in Syria have not had any fundamental effect on the power of the Arab Committee which is secret enough to survive the disappearance of many individual notables.

As far as the Lebanon was concerned, Emir Arslan was the acting Governor, and favorable to the Turks and Jemal. There was constant communication between the Lebanon and Hauran Druses, the Druse policy was to maintain good relations with the Government, but to give it no opportunity to strengthen its hold on them. A hundred Druses volunteers were sent from Hauran in response to an appeal by Jemal, for a levy en masse, these were low class men who subsequently deserted. Jemal's policy in regard to the Hauran was to let sleeping dogs lie.

While Lieutenant Shurbaji was at Damascus a Moslem was hanged for robbing an Armenian. This farce was enacted to impress the neutral consulates.

On returning to Aleppo Lieutenant Shurbaji rejoined his battalion and found typhus and dysentery raging. Henceforth the narrative gives the joint experiences of the two officers. The battalion left Aleppo on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February and reached Ras-ul-Ain in twelve hours passing the great bridge over the Euphrates, which was well guarded. At Ras-ul-Ain some 12000 Armenians were concentrated under the guardianship of some hundreds of Kurds, drawn not from the local tribes, but from the urban riff-raff of Mosul, Bitlis, and Diarbekir. These Kurds were called gendarmes, but were in reality mere butchers; bands of them were publicly ordered to take parties of Armenians, of both sexes, to various destinations to destroy the males, children, and old women, and dispose of the young women among the villagers of the Urfa plain. These Kurds always returned after absences of three or

four days on such expeditions. One of these gendarmes confessed to killing 100 Armenian men himself on the various journeys he had taken.

The Armenians were dying of typhus and dysentery and the roads were littered with their decomposing bodies. The empty desert cisterns and caves were also filled with corpses. Both officers agree that this was the most appalling state of affairs, and that unless it had been a matter of ocular demonstration, it would be incredible. The Turkish officers of the battalion were horrified at the sights they saw and the regimental chaplain, on coming across a number of bodies, dismounted his horse and publicly prayed that the Divine punishment of these crimes should be averted from Moslems, and by way of expiation, himself worked at digging graves for the dead bodies. When marching from Ras-ul-Ain to Er-Radi the soldiers of the battalion often put up their hands to avert the sight of the numerous bloated naked corpses of murdered women who lay by the roadside. Two sayings were common among the common soldiers: "Ras-ul-Ain is a shambles" and "No man can ever think of a woman's body except as a matter of horror, instead of attraction, after Ras-ul-Ain." Ras-ul-Ain was used as a place of concentration for Armenians, and 12000 was the number usually there. The average number of the incoming parties and outgoing parties (viz, those going to be murdered) cannot be estimated accurately.

#### APPENDIX (B)

##### ARMENIAN MASSACRES

###### *Report of an Eye-witness; Lieutenant Hassan Maarouf*

In August 1915 in the suburbs of Mush I saw large numbers of dead bodies of Armenians, men, women, and children lying in the fields. Some had been shot; some stabbed and most of them had been horribly mutilated. The women were mostly naked.

In the villages around Mush I saw old women and children wandering in the streets, haggard and emaciated.

In the same month, in a camp outside Bitlis I saw collected about 500 women, girls and children guarded by gendarmes. I asked the latter what was to become of these people. They said that they were being deported but that they had orders to let the Bands deal with them on the way. The Bands had been organized by the Turkish Government for the purpose of massacring the Armenians. They were formed by Kurds, Turkish gendarmes and criminals who had been specially set free.

On the river at Bitlis I saw a number of bodies of Armenians floating on the water, and some washed up on the banks. The smell was pestilential and the water undrinkable.

In the same month of August in the country at a distance of about two hours from Zaart, I saw the bodies of about 15000 massacred Armenians. They were piled up on top of each other in two ravines. The Armenian Bishop of Zaart was, at his own request, taken to a cave nearby and shot.

On my return from Zaart to Mush in a village of the suburbs of Mush over 500 Armenians, mostly women and children, were heeded up in a stable and locked in. The gendarmes threw flaming torches, through an opening in the ceiling. They were all burnt alive. I did not go near, but I distinctly saw flames and heard the screams of the poor victims.

I heard from reliable persons that women in the family way had their bodies cut open and the child snatched out and thrown away.

At Mush the streets out of doors were strewn with bodies of Armenians. Every time an Armenian ventured out of doors he was instantly spared.

Even men of great age, blind and invalids were not spared.

From Mush to Himins, at short distances from each other, I saw piles of bodies of Armenians in the fields alongside the road.

Between Sherkes-Koi and Hinis I saw two ravines filled with corpses of Armenians about 400 in each ravine, mostly men. Another ravine was filled with bodies of little children.

At Khara Shuban I saw a large number of bodies of Armenians floating on the River Murad.

When I went to Erzinjian I was told that wholesale massacres were perpetrated at Erzinjian, Mamakhatoun and the whole country round. Besides those that the Turks had killed and burnt alive they threw thousands of them into the Euphrates. A large number of Armenians seeing that their death was inevitable, and fearing worse atrocities preferred to throw themselves into the Euphrates.

## *2. Report by an Eye-witness, Lieutenant Sayied Ahmef Moukhtar Baaj*

In April 1915 I was quartered at Erzerum. An order came from Constantinople that Armenians inhabiting the frontier towns and villages should be deported to the interior. It was said then that this was only a precautionary measure. I saw at that time large convoys of Armenians go through Erzerum. They were mostly old men, women and children. Some of the able-bodied men had been recruited in the Turkish army, and many had fled to Russia. The massacres had not begun yet. In May 1915 I was transferred to Trebizond. In July an order came to deport the interior all the Armenians in the vilayet of Trebizond. Being a member of the court martial I knew that deportation meant massacres.

The Armenian Bishop of Trebizond was ordered to proceed under escort to Erzerum to answer for charges trumped up against him. But instead of Erzerum he was taken to Baipurt, and from there to Gumush-Khana. The governor of the latter place was then Colonel Abdul-Kader Aintabli, of the general staff. He is famous for his atrocities against the Armeinans. He had the bishop murdered at night. The Bishop of Erzerum was also murdered at Gumush-Khana.

Besides the deportation order referred to above, an imperial "Iradeh" was issued ordering that all deserters, when caught, should be shot without trial. The secret order read "Armenians "in lieu of "deserters". The Sulta's "Iradeh" was accompanied by a "fetua" from the Sheikh-ul-Islam stating that the Armenians had shed Moslem blood, and the killing of them was lawful. Then the deportations

started. The children were kept back at first. The Government opened up a school for grown-up children, and the American consul at Trebizond instituted an asylum for infants. When the first batches of deported Armenians arrived at Gumush-Khana all able-bodied men were sorted out with the excuse that they were going to be given work. The women and children were sent ahead under escort with the assurance by the Turkish authorities that their final destination was Mosul, and that no harm would befall them. The men kept behind, were taken out of town in batches of fifteen or twenty, lined up on the edge of ditches prepared beforehand, shot and thrown into the ditches. Hundreds of men were shot every day in a similar manner. The women and children were attacked on their way by the "Shotas" [chéte], the armed bands organized by the Turkish Government, who attacked them and seized a certain number. After plundering and committing the most dastardly outrages on the women and children they massacred them in cold blood. These attacks were a daily occurrence until every woman and child had been got rid of; the military escorts had strict orders not to interfere with the "Shotas." The children that the Government had taken in charge were also deported and massacred.

The infants in the care of the American consul at Trebizond were taken with the extent that they were going to be sent to Sivas, where an asylum had been prepared for them. They were taken out to sea in little boats. At some distance out they were stabbed to death, put in sacks, and thrown into the sea. A few days later some of their little bodies were washed up on the shore to Trebizond.

In July 1915 I was ordered to accompany a convey of deported Armenians. It was the last batch from Trebizond. There were in the convey 120 men, 700 children, and about 400 women. From Trebizond I took them to Gumish-Khana. Here the 120 men were taken away and as I was informed later, they were all killed. At Gumish-Khana I was ordered to take the women and children to Erzinjian. On the way I saw thousands of bodies of Armenians unburied. Several bands of "Shotas" [*çetes* (irregular forces)] met us on the way and wanted me to hand over to them women and children. But I persistently refused. I did leave on the way about 200 children with Moslem families, who were willing to take care of them and educate them. The "Mutessarîf" of Erzinjian ordered me to proceed with the convoy to Kamach. At the latter place the authorities refused to take charge of the women and children. I fell ill and wanted to go back, but I was told that as long as the Armenians in my charge were alive I should be sent from one place to the other. However, I managed to include my batch with the deported Armenians that had come from Erzerum. In charge of the latter was a colleague of mine, Mohamad Effendi, from the gendarmerie. He told me afterwards that after leaving Kamach they came to a valley where the Euphrates ran. A band of "Shotas" sprang out and stopped the convoy. They ordered the escort to keep away, and then shot every one of the Armenians and threw them in the river.

At Trebizond the Moslems were warned that if they sheltered Armenians they would be liable to the death penalty.



Government officials at Trebizond picked up some of the prettiest Armenian women of the best families. After committing the worst outrages on them they had them killed.

Cases of rape of women and girls even publicly are very numerous. They were systematically murdered after the outrages.

The Armenians deported from Erzerum started with their cattle and whatever possessions they could carry. When they reached Erzinjian they became suspicious, seeing that all the Armenians had already been deported. The Vali of Erzerum allayed their fears, and assured them most solemnly that no harm would befall them. He told them that the first convoy should leave for Kamach, the others remaining at Erzerum until they received word from their friends informing of their safe arrival to destination. And so it happened. Word came that the first batch had arrived safely at Kamach, which was true enough. But the men were kept at Kamach and shot, and the women and children were massacred by the "Shotas" after leaving that town.

The Turkish officials in charge of the deportation and extermination of the Armenians were; At Erzerum ,Bihaa Eddin Shaker Bey; at Trebizond, Nail Bey, Tewfik Bey Monastirly, colonel of gendarmerie, the commissioner of police; at Kamach, the member of Parliament, for Erzinjian. The Shotas headquarters were also at Kamach. Their chief was the Kurd Murza Bey, who boasted that he alone had killed 70000 Armenians. Afterwards he was thought to be dangerous by the Turks and thrown into prison charged with having hit a gendarme. He was eventually executed in secret.

#### Appendix (A)

##### ADDENDUM TO "REPORT OF AN INHABITANT OF ATHLIT, MOUNT CARMEL, SYRIA"<sup>4</sup>

The writer, when speaking of the treatment meted out to the Armenians by the Turks since the beginning of the war, fears that he will be accused of exaggeration. He has kept this in view when describing atrocities committed by the Turks.

The writer has not been in Armenia proper, but has lived in Syria since the war began, and has visited Konia and Constantinople, and has many acquaintances including Germans.

##### THE FIRST NEWS OF THE MASSACRES. TURKISH POLICY. OPINION OF LOCAL GERMANS

During October and December 1915 several Germans, established as farmers in Palestine, returned to Haifa and Jaffa, and they were the first to bring the news of wholesale massacres among the Armenians. Nothing has been said on the subject in the Syrian and Palestine press. At first these Germans maintained that they knew little about the matter: that they only heard some reports, which they considered much exaggerated. But from these and other Germans he met at

Damascus, he gathered that the Germans themselves thought that the Turks had determined to exterminate all the Armenians, with the exception of about half a million. The Germans at that time, to give them their due, were horrified at the thought of such wholesale slaughter: there was, however, a notable exception, a Major Pohl, who was heard to say that he was sorry that as many as half a million Armenians should be spared. A number of Germans in Palestine sent their families away, openly saying that the Turk might one day treat Germans as they were using the Armenians.

#### ARMENIANS DYING ALONG THE RAILWAY

There were a number of reports of thousands of Armenians lying dead by the side of the railway between Anatolia and Syria, and the writer is able to corroborate these rumours by accounts given by his sister, who traveled from Constantinople to Palestine in December 1915.

#### THE STATE OF ARMENIANS ORDERED SOUTH

She saw the bodies of hundreds of Armenian men, women, and children lying on both sides of the railway. Sometimes Turkish women were seen searching the corpses for anything that might be of value: at other times dogs were observed feeding on the bodies. There were hundreds of bleached skeletons.

At either Gulek or Osmanieh she saw thousands of starving and fever-stricken Armenians. They had been ordered southward, but had been provided with no transport, and had been waiting there for weeks. They were lying about the station, on the sidings, and some on the track itself. Some were jostled on the line when the train arrived, and the engine ran over them to the joy of the engine driver, who shouted to his friends "Did you see how I smashed about fifty of these Armenian swine?"

#### ATTITUDE OF TURKISH OFFICERS

The writer's sister fainted at the sight, and on recovery two Turkish officers, speaking French, remonstrated with her on her lack of patriotism since the Armenians were enemies. She also gives details of the misery and death caused by over-crowding railway carriages and trucks when transport was from time to time provided.

#### TYPHUS

The greatest havoc was caused by typhus. Those who died from it were left unburied for days. One reason for this, as given to the writer by a superior Turkish officer, was to increase infection in order that there would be greater mortality among the living. The Armenians, however, can claim some revenge, for the plague naturally did not confine itself to Armenians only, and the whole country through which these refugees passed was devastated: The writer saw dozens of villages in Syria empty of all inhabitants, killed off by typhus. No sanitary measures to combat the epidemic were taken.

## PROPERTY PLUNDERED

The Armenians were ordered from their homes at the shortest notice, and no time was given for them to provide transport for their belongings or to dispose of their property. The Turks took possession of all, and relieved the unfortunate people of such things as they attempted to carry with them.

## LACK OF ROAD TRANSPORT

The demand for road transport became so great that price ran to a prohibitive height. The writer saw thousands of Armenians near Hassan Beylu, in the Taurus Mountains, lying out in the snow waiting for vehicles, and the same state of things prevailed at Aleppo and other transfer stations. There was no organization to meet the situation created by the forcible evacuation of the Armenian population, partly the result of Turkish incompetence and partly through deliberate neglect.

## FOREIGN PUBLIC OPINION JEMAL PASHA

After a time European and more especially American public opinion began to be heard on the subject of Armenians, and upon this Jemal Pasha (the Great!) went to Constantinople and insisted that the massacres should cease, urging that it was not only a crime but a mistake. In addition he foresaw that a useful source of forced labor could be tapped for his public works in Syria and Palestine. It was reported that Talaat was not disposed at first to listen, but that Jemal was powerful enough to override opposition, and it is said that in this way the lives of over 100000 Armenians were spared but only on the condition that they should be sent to Syria. Jemal Pasha was promptly nicknamed the "Armenian Pasha" in Constantinople, but the Armenians were grateful and neutral Ambassadors were duly impressed.

The Armenians, wishing to show their appreciation of Jemal Pasha's action, and being prohibited from uttering their thanks, decided to march past his house in Constantinople in silence, and in this manner 40000 Armenians paraded in front of Jemal, who stood on the balcony of his house for three hours with his arms folded like Napoleon the Great. The train by which Jemal returned to Syria was frequently stopped for him to receive the thanks of Armenians, which, however, the writer thinks a mere farce to impress the outside world and to increase the importance of Jemal. The treatment of the Armenians under Jemal's administration confirms him in this opinion.

## THE ARMENIANS UNDER JEMAL

Jemal having thus got a large number of Armenians into his clutches, decided to send them to remote parts of Syria and Palestine. The writer considers that his motive for this action was to prevent them from contaminating the existing population, and also to minimize the chances of neutrals witnessing their treatment.

They were sent to various camps where 3000 to 5000 were herded together, and the writer visited such camps in Hauran, Adflun, and South East of the Dead Sea.

## ARMENIAN CAMPS

The inmates of these camps are entirely dependent on food and water supplied by Government: they were forbidden to enter towns or villages, or to work for pay: they are made to live in the desert. Men, women, and children were put to hard labor, and each working man and woman received 2d. a day. That was their sole income on which they had to live.

In some cases there was no water nearer than six miles, and it had to be brought to the camp by rail. The trains frequently failed to run, the fact that there was a war in progress was a convenient excuse, and was made to cover deliberate neglect.

The writer has seen an overdue train carrying water arrive. The Armenians, parched with thirst, rushed to the halting place, each carrying an earthen jar on tin. As soon as the train stopped it was besieged by the mob, which was beaten back by the Turkish guard with the butt end of their rifles. Having thrust the crowd back, all the taps of the tanks were then turned on and the water allowed running to waste in full view of the hundreds who are dying for want of it. The Administration duly dispatched waters to the desert; that was enough as far as Jemal Pasha and his friends were concerned. An accident might have happened subsequently, but that was no fault of theirs. Such was the view taken of the above incident by Jemal when he heard of it, according to a report which reached the writer.

Hunger and thirst swept away half the number in these camps in a few weeks. Those that live lead a wretched existence; all family life had been broken up, husbands, wives, children had been separated, and there were no means of finding out what had become of those who were missing. Immorality flourished; sanitation in its most elementary form did not exist.

In the meantime Jemal loudly proclaimed that he was colonizing waste lands with thrifty Armenians, which was enough for the inspired press of the Central Powers to give out to the world that in the last two years Syria and Palestine, under Jemal's administration, had flourished more than in the whole of the preceding fifty years.

A flat refusal was given to representatives of neutral countries who asked to go to Syria to witness the conditions under which the Armenians lived.

## SLAVE MARKETS

In the track of the Armenians, as they were driven along, female slave-markets were established. The price of an Armenian girl from 12 to 14 years of age was from 2 mejideiehs to [Br. Pound] £1. The writer saw such a market in Damascus, and he was told by his relatives in Aleppo and by American missionaries that thousands of young girls had been sold in the open markets. The so-called intellectual leaders of the Moslem world, the Khojas, Ulemas, Padis, and Muftis, were not slow to avail themselves of the opportunities that these markets offered, and these frequently saved their pockets and increased the numbers of their slaves by claiming to have made converts, in which case no money transaction was demanded.

## CONVERSION TO ISLAM

These alleged converts were usually young women who were driven into harems ostensibly for the purpose of being instructed in the "true faith"! Conversion to Islam was attempted on a large scale, among men as well as women, and with some success amongst those Armenians from some parts of the Caucasus who had long practiced some Turkish customs, and whose belief in Christianity was not deeply rooted, but the writer knows of a number of educated and wealthy Armenians of Constantinople and the coast towns who have professed their conversion. The later seem however to have taken this step in the hope of preserving at least some of their property from confiscation.

## WHOLESALE MASSACRES

So far description has been given of the destruction of the Armenian nation by organized deportation accompanied by neglect and by the unchecked ravages of disease but in addition there is systematic butchery in which boys and men. The unusual method employed was to organize labor in which boys and men were collected together and these were sent under a guard of about twenty Turkish soldiers to some out-of-the-way place where no provision was made for rations or water. The guard was given orders to use their rifles without hesitation in case of desertion, or any sign of mutiny, on the part of those put under their charge. After a day or two the guard would return alone. The story given was either the Armenians as a whole attempted to desert, or that there had been a mutiny and the guard in self defence had compelled to kill the lot. The writer never witnessed such a scene himself but he had reports from trustworthy sources. One of his informants was an Armenian who speaking and dressing like a Turk had travelled from Armenia to Jaffa. There he mixed with a number of Turkish soldiers who had just executed the butchery of about 400 Armenians in the manner described above and who regaled him with many repulsive details. This man on the following day came upon a heap of murdered Armenians, and journeying on to Aleppo he made a full report of his experience to the American consul there.

## GERMAN OPINION

The writer discussed these murders with German officers in Constantinople, and they admitted that unfortunately they were entirely true.

## ARMENIANS IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Orders were issued that only Armenians who had been born in Constantinople should be allowed to remain there. This was signal for a house-to-house search by the police as well as arrests in the open streets. The witness has seen batches of Armenians being led through the streets, the victims of the zeal of the police in fulfilling this order. The raids are usually carried out at night, but he saw a wealthy and influential Armenian arrested in broad daylight and hurried away. Nothing more is seen or heard of those whom the police take, unfortunately there are some Armenians who act as police spies, and sell their countrymen.

The writer can give details of hundreds of young Armenian girls who have become prostitutes in Constantinople, the only means left to them by which they can support their parents. One he quotes in particular a well-bred girl recently married, whose husband was killed before her eyes, and who was driven to her present position only after months of struggling to live decently.

#### THE MASSACRES CONTINUE

Lately there has not been so much heard of Armenian massacres, but they continue nevertheless; it is only that there are fewer means by which the outside world can hear of them.

The writer considers that the reason for this treatment of the Armenians is that they are an easy prey, and that Mahommendans, rich, or poor, high or low, are by nature wedded to murder and robbery. The Turk, in addition, is still an invader, who treats others under his power as subject races.

The Armenians, morally and economically, are utterly ruined; probably the most industrious and thrifty race (and it is a Jew who described them as such) in the Turkish Empire has ceased to exist.

#### ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> F.O.371/2781/201201

<sup>2</sup> F.O.311/2781/4815

<sup>3</sup> F.O.371/2781/264888

<sup>4</sup> F.O. 371/2781.

#### ԱՐԱՐԱԿԱՆ ԳԱՂՏՆԻ ՏԵՂԵԿԱԳԻՐ 27 ՍԵՊՏԵՄԲԵՐ 1916Ի (ԳԻՇԵՐ) (ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ)

ԶԱԻԷՆ ՄՍԸՐԼԵԱՆ

Համաշխարհային Ա. Պատերազմի ընթացքին ցարական Ռուսիան, որոշակիորեն՝ 1916ին իր գերեվարած օսմանեան բանակի երկու արաբ սպաներ յանձնած էր իրեն դաշնակից Մեծն Բրիտանիոյ։ Այս սպաները՝ Շուրքի Շուրպաժի եւ Ահմէտ Շէյխա, 27 Սեպտեմբեր 1916ին հարցաքննութեան ընթացքին ահաւոր իրողութիւններ կը պարզեն ի միջի այլոց Հայկական Յեղասպանութեան մասին, յատկապէս թէ «տեղահանութիւն» կը նշանակէր բնաջնջում։

Բրիտանական պաշտօնատար Մարք Սայքս, որ հայասէր մը չէր, կ'ուզէր հրապարակայնացնել փոխանցուած տեղեկութիւնները քանի որ թշնամին՝ Գերմանիա, Ասսորո-Հոնգարիա եւ Թուրքիա, «Աստուծոյ եւ մարդկութեան» անունով կոչէր կ'ընէին նոյն օրերուն։

Հայկական Յեղասպանութեան պատմութեան համար շատ կարեւոր վաւերաթուղթ մըն է այս՝ կանխատրամադրութիւն փաստող։