

AMERICAN CONSULATE\*

No. 19

Trebizond, Turkey, July 29, 1915

**Subject: Deportation of Armenians from Trebizond**

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose, for the information of the Department, a copy of a despatch to the Embassy concerning the deportation of the Armenians from Trebizond.

According to information received from the Consular Agent at Samsoun about 5,000 Armenians were deported from Samsoun, and many of these were massacred on the road. About 150 families were converted to Mohammedanism.

I have the honor to be, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

[signed] Oscar S. Heizer  
American Consul

Enclosure:

As stated above.

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\* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/128

AMERICAN CONSULATE\*  
TREBIZOND

July 28, 1915

Honorable Henry Morgenthau,  
American Ambassador,  
Constantinople.

Sir:

I desire to write to you confidentially in regard to the events which have taken place here recently. I realize that it is absolutely essential for this consulate to maintain good relations with the Vali and other local officials otherwise it will not be in a position to render any service whatever to the interests confided to it to protect. This taken in connection with our isolated position and the general spirit of the Turks here which is very hostile to all outside suggestion and interference in their internal affairs, and a feeling that they are now masters of the situation, makes it necessary that one should be very discreet and prudent. It seems to me however that you should be kept fully informed of what is going on here although it may not interest us directly, being an affair between the Ottoman government and its own subjects.

On Saturday, June 26th, the proclamation regarding the deportation of all Armenians was posted in the streets. On Thursday, July 1st, all the streets were guarded by gendarmes with fixed bayonets, and the work of driving the Armenians from their homes began. Groups of men, women and children with loads and bundles on their backs were collected in a short cross street near the Consulate and when a hundred or so had been gathered they were driven past the consulate on the road toward Gumushhané and Erzingan in the heat and dust by gendarmes with fixed bayonets. They were held outside the city until a group of about 2,000 were collected then sent on toward Gumushhané. Three such groups making about 6,000 were sent from here during the first three days and the smaller groups from Trebizond and the vicinity sent later amounted to about 4,000 more. The weeping and wailing of the women and children was most heartrending. Some of these people were from wealthy and refined circles. Some were accustomed to luxury and ease. There were clergymen, merchants, bankers, lawyers, mechanics, tailors and men from every walk of life. The Governor General told me they were allowed to make arrangements for carriages but nobody seemed to be making any arrangements. I know of one wealthy merchant, however, who paid Lt. 15 (\$66.00) for a carriage to take himself and wife to Djevizlik and when he arrived at the station where they were being collected at Deyermenderé, about 10 minutes from the city, they were commanded by the gendarmes to leave the carriage which was sent back to the city. The whole

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Mohammedan population knew these people were to be their prey from the beginning and they were treated as criminals. In the first place from the date of the proclamation June 25, no Armenian was allowed to sell anything and everybody was forbidden under penalty (see the text of the proclamation) to buy anything from them. How then were they to provide funds for the journey? For six or eight months there has been no business whatever in Trebizond and people have been eating up their capital. Why then should they have been prohibited from selling rugs or anything they had to sell to secure needed money for the journey? Many persons who had goods which they could have sold if they had been allowed to do so were obliged to start off on foot without funds and with what they could gather up from their homes and carry on their backs. Such persons naturally soon became so weak that they fell behind and were bayoneted and thrown into the river and their bodies floated down past Trebizond to the sea, or else lodged in the shallow river on rocks where they remained for 10 to 12 days and putrefied to the disgust of the travellers who were obliged to pass that way. I have talked with eyewitnesses who state there were many naked bodies to be seen on snags in the river 15 days after the affair occurred and that the smell was something terrible.

On the 17th of July while out horseback riding with the German Consul we came across three Turks digging a grave in the sand for a naked body which we saw in the river near by. The corpse looked as though it had been in the water for 10 days or more. The Turks said they had just buried four more bodies further up the river. Another Turk told us that a body had floated down the river and out into the sea a few moments before we arrived.

By July 6th (Tuesday) all the Armenian houses in Trebizond, about 1,000, had been emptied of inhabitants and the people sent off. There was no inquiry as to who were guilty or who were innocent of any movement against the government. If a person was an Armenian that was sufficient reason for being treated as a criminal and deported. At first all were to go except the sick who were taken to the municipal hospital until they were well enough to go. Later an exception was made for old men and women, pregnant women, children, those in government employ and Catholic Armenians. Finally it was decided that the old men and women and the Catholics must go and they were sent along towards the last. A number of lighters have been loaded with people at different times and sent off towards Samsoun. It is generally believed that such persons were drowned. During the early days before the deportation commenced a large caique or lighter was loaded with men supposed to be members of the Armenian committee and sent off towards Samsoun. Two days later a certain Vartan, a Russian subject and one of those who left in the boat, returned overland to Trebizond badly wounded about the head and so crazy he could not make himself understood. All he could say was "boom, boom". He was arrested by the authorities and taken to the municipal hospital where he died the following day. A Turk said this boat was met not far from Trebizond by another boat containing gendarmes who proceeded to kill all the men and throw them overboard.

They thought they had killed them all but this Vartan who was a big powerful man was only wounded and swam ashore unnoticed. A number of such caiques have left Trebizond loaded with men and usually the caiques return empty after a few hours.

Tots, a village about two hours from Trebizond is inhabited by Gregorian and Catholic Armenians, and Turks. Boghos Marimian a wealthy and influential Armenian together with his two sons, according to a reliable witness, were placed one behind the other and shot through. 45 men and women were taken a short distance from the village into a valley. The women were first outraged by the officers of the gendarmerie and then turned over to the gendarmes to dispose of. According to this witness a child was killed by beating its brains out on a rock. The men were all killed and not a single person survived from this group of 45. It is believed that Apik Missir, the dragoman of the French Consulate and the Agent of the Paquet S/S Co. at Trebizond together with his mother and relations who were spending the summer at Tots were included in the above group. Mr. Missir was married in Paris about two years ago and his wife and sister are now in Russia.

The plan to save the children by placing them in schools or orphanages in Trebizond under the care of a committee organized and supported by the Greek Archbishop of which the Vali was President and the Archbishop Vice President with three Mohammedan and three Christian members has been abandoned and the girls are now being given exclusively to Mohammedan families and thus scattered. The suppression of the orphanages and the scattering of the children was a great disappointment to this Consulate and to the Greek Archbishop who had worked hard for the plan and secured the support of the Vali, but Nail Bey the head of the Committee of Union and Progress who was opposed to the plan succeeded in thwarting it very quickly. Many of the boys appear to have been sent to Platana to be distributed among the farmers. The best looking of the older girls who were retained as care takers in these orphanages are kept in houses for the pleasure of members of the gang which seems to rule affairs here. I hear on good authority that a member of the Committee of Union and Progress here has ten of the handsomest girls in a house in the central part of the city for the use of himself and friends. Some of the small girls have been taken into respectable Mohammedan houses. Several of the former pupils at the American Mission are now in Mohammedan homes near the Mission and have been visited by Mrs. Crawford but of course the majority of them are not so fortunate.

The 1,000 Armenian houses are being emptied of furniture by the police one after the other. The furniture, bedding and everything of value is being stored in large buildings about the city. There is no attempt at classification and the idea of keeping the property in "bales under the protection of the government to be returned to the owners on their return" is simply ridiculous. The goods are piled in without any attempt at labeling or systematic storage. A crowd of Turkish women and children follow the police about like a lot of vultures and seize anything they can lay their hands on and when the more valuable things are carried out of a house by the police

they rush in and take the balance. I see this performance every day with my own eyes. I suppose it will take several weeks to empty all the houses and then the Armenian shops and stores will be cleared out. The commission which has this matter in hand is now talking of selling this great collection of household goods and property in order to pay the debts of the Armenians. The German Consul told me that he did not believe the Armenians would be permitted to return to Trebizond even after the end of the war.

Large herds of cattle which have no doubt been collected in the villages from the Armenians for the army have been driven through Trebizond by soldiers.

Armenians with Russian, Persian and Bulgarian passports have all been sent away regardless of the representations made on their behalf. The Arabians who claimed British protection were also deported. John Arabian, the dragoman of the British Consulate here, was sent with what he could carry in his hands.

If the soldiers could not find food on the Erzeroum road, and many are reported to have died of starvation, how could from 6,000 to 10,000 Armenians who were looked upon by the Mohammedans as their legitimate prey expect to secure food?

I have just been talking with a young man who has been performing his military service on the "inshaat tabouri" (construction regiment) working on the roads out toward Gumushané. He told me that fifteen days ago all the Armenians, about 180, were separated from the other workmen and marched off some distance from the camp and shot. He heard the report of the rifles and later was one of the number sent to bury the bodies which he stated were all naked having been stripped of clothing.

A number of bodies of women and children have lately been thrown up by the sea upon the sandy beach below the walls of the Italian Monastery here in Trebizond and were buried by Greek women in the sand where they were found.

From the window of the consulate I saw a corpse thrown up by the sea at a point nearby where the Turkish children bath. A rope was tied about it and it was towed out into the deep sea.

A Turkish gentleman holding a high position under the government in Trebizond expressed himself to the Vice Consul very frankly and with deep emotion concerning the terrible, inhuman treatment accorded the Armenians of Trebizond.

Further details might be added of atrocities committed upon the Armenians but it is difficult to verify all the stories circulated and I have confined myself to those I believe to be correct.

I have the honor to be, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

[signed] Oscar S. Heizer  
American Consul