

AMERICAN EMBASSY*
CONSTANTINOPLE

August 21, 1915

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

Referring further to previous correspondence regarding the attitude of the Turkish Government towards the Armenians in Turkey, I have the honor to transmit to you herewith, for your information, duplicate copies of two despatches received from Mr. Dodd of Konia, dated August 15th and August 16th respectively.

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

[Signed] Morgenthau

* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/137

AMERICAN HOSPITAL*
AT
KONIA, TURKEY

Copy

August 15, 1915

Hon. Henry Morgenthau,
U.S. Ambassador.

My dear Sir:

I have an opportunity to send a letter to-night by special messenger and so I can write freely and fully of the state of things here. It may be that you know some of it, but you can hardly be acquainted with the horrible details as we have seen them.

More than a week ago the Armenians driven out from Ada-Bazar and its region began to arrive here, they came by hundreds on train after train. They had been compelled to pay the railway fare 180 piasters for each person, and then were packed into box-cars forty to forty-five in a car, men, women and children, sick and well, for the journey that took four or five days. There were deaths on the cars, there were babies born in the midst of this crowd, there were those who threw themselves into the lake on the way. Of the beatings and treatment received before starting I have heard much. They had of course to find food for themselves on the journey. Arrived here they were at first put in medresses etc, then left to sleep in the open fields near the station. The whole region about the station became a market place for the exiles had brought what goods they could with them, and now began to sell in order to get money for their further journey for now they learned for the first time that they were to go on "to the Desert". This is what was told them. They had been told before starting that they were to go no further than Konia. Many families therefore used all their ready money to provide the railway fare for the women and children while the men started to come on foot from Ada Bazar. The Turks, especially the women, began to find great bargains and swarmed all about, getting the property of the Armenians at a tenth of its value, compelling them to sell, and finally it degenerated into robbing right and left. This all took place under the guard of the police. I know personally of a Greek who saw a Turk robbing two women of their goods. He stayed by them to prevent any further stealing, and was set on by the police and beaten by them and sent away. At night there were several cases of girls outraged by Turks, and even by the police themselves.

Last Saturday evening notice was suddenly given that all those in a certain

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medressé, about 2,000 in number, were to start at two o'clock in the morning. These were the people who had arrived two days before, who were already hungry and begging for food, and whose men-folk are still on the way here on foot expecting to find their families here. The distress was terrible. One woman had given birth to twins that day, one had died, the other she was trying to give away. Efforts were made to allow her to stay behind, but the answer of the police was "We recognize no child-labor or anything else," and the orders to march to the Station were enforced with whip and club.

On Monday the new lots from Nicomedia etc. began to come, and then I had a steady stream of people begging me to take in their daughters, to take aged and sick parents into the Hospital etc. At first we began to take some girls, one as a nurse, then two daughters of Badveli Hovivian of Ismidt, while he and his wife and the other two girls went on. The daughter of Dr. Athanassian we got into a German family. Greek families took some girls and boys. Then we learned that the Government called all who had taken such children away from them and gave them, both girls and boys, to Turkish families. We therefore felt that our public position would prevent us from concealing any number, and we were compelled to refuse all others. I need not tell you what this meant as fathers and mothers turned away in utter despair. For the reports that we get from the end of the railway at Bozanti are dreadful in the extreme. There is no possible means of conveyance for such a host, all are compelled to go on foot, and in consequence have to throw away all their goods, bedding etc, for they can barely carry the food they need and their children. All reports that the Government are providing food are absolutely false, those who have money can buy, those who have none beg or starve. You can imagine these wealthy and delicate families in this condition of travel. How many can survive it? But their greatest fear is for their daughters who are going to a fate worse than death. Bands of marauders now are appearing on the line of march, robbing and killing and outraging without restraint from the few gendarmes who accompany the exiles to drive them on.

There may be much exaggeration in the accounts, but I have reports from eye-witnesses of seeing these women and children and men driven on to the cars, sometimes box cars, sometimes open flat cars, with leather whip and wooden club, and those who had no money to pay their fare driven in a body to go on foot. Of this company some five or six died before reaching Tchoumra the next railway station, and the rest exhausted stopped there. Then the Government finding their means really becoming exhausted began to put them on the cars irrespective of whether they had tickets or not. Now there are only a few left, mostly of the well-to-do who had taken rooms in hotels etc, and apparently can buy the privilege of being left here awhile, and some sick ones to whom a certain allowance is being made these few days.

I have credible reports also from eye-witnesses of women and children, especially girls from the Everek region having been divided up and given to Turkish villages in the Oulou Kishla region.

We have been expecting that all the Armenians of Konia would be driven out for

Turks have warned some of their Armenian friends to be ready. But yesterday we were cheered by a report that orders had come for all movement of Armenian exiles to stop, all should remain wherever they happened to be. But this news may have another explanation. There is a sudden movement of troops back again to the south, 40,000 going to Mersine it is said, although up to the very end of last week Arab regiments were going through here toward Constantinople. I cannot but suspect that the railway is so fully occupied with troops that other travellers must wait. This too is in accord with what other Turks tell us, that it has been decided to wait a few days, or as some say, until the new Vali arrives.

Since writing the above I have heard from a conductor on the railway of the scenes at Bosanti the terminus. He said "Don't ask me, it is hell on earth, women and girls in groups wailing and shrieking for bread, men lying on their backs too weak to move crying for bread, unburied bodies of the dead lying about". The Pass below is filled with bands of "Chettes," marauders who are waiting to swoop down on them, and these are authorized by the Government, so Turkish soldiers tell us.

The Turks here are saying, "The Armenians must die and we are sending them down there for that purpose". The Turks of Konia have been noted for their mildness and opposition to such measures, but their temper we can see is changing. The papers are publishing articles against the Armenians as traitors, as revolutionists, telling of atrocities committed by them in Van, 60,000 Turks killed by them etc, everything to inflame their minds and poison their thoughts. It is the same course that I saw at the time of the massacres twenty years ago.

It is true that for a few days past the exiles have not been sent beyond Eregli, probably because of the congestion of the roads. At Eregli there are now perhaps 10,000 "encamped" in fields, that is with no protection and nothing but what they have with them of their own for sleeping and eating. And what their sanitary condition will become in a week (with not even the semblance of military sanitation) can be imagined. Eregli is a noted malarial region, as is also Bozanti, malaria that is actually deadly. Dysentery is already among them. I expect to hear of cholera any day.

I am writing in haste for the time is short, and I have tried to give you simply the facts, I would write much more to beg and plead. Is there no way of stopping this awful slaughter? The purpose is simply that, the utter destruction of the Armenians. Turks themselves tell us so. It is massacre but concealed, and in a more devilish form, more cold-blooded and calculating. It is cunningly contrived to bring out all their money and make them spend every cent in hope of coming through, and then death in the end. There are Turks who are opposed to it all, and who do not hesitate to say that it is the plan of minds more acute than the Turks. I have heard of reassuring telegrams from Enver Pacha ordering every protection to be given, saying that every provision would be made for them on the way, that they would be sent no further than Konia, etc. All are lies and mere blinds to have them to show to inquiring friends.

You can see in this crisis how impossible it was for me to go to Talas. Dr. Hoover passed through here on Monday, and I hope to see him on his way back.

Of the Zeitoun exiles in Sultaniye my last account was that over 1,000 had died. Disease and starvation are acquiring increased momentum. The Government forbade any more help being given them, and so those who had been distributing the aid I sent did not dare to continue since they themselves were in the iron grip.

May I ask you to give the accompanying note to Dr. Post?

I received your telegram about the three girls whom Miss Holt sent on. The girls arrived, a telegram was sent to their friends in Tarsus to meet them at Bozanti, an answer was received, and they have now gone on. I had nothing to do for them, for their friends here managed it all.

With best regards,
Sincerely yours,

(Signed): William S. Dodd.

I suppose you have heard of the massacre at Sivas. A German physician coming through here brought what seemed to be authentic news although we had been hearing of it from others. Reports of what is done in that region and further east are appalling.

To-day the streets are being cleaned and the usual things being done that are done when the authorities want to make a good impression on someone. But some extras are added now in the way of imprisoning two or three policemen and others. We understand it is the expectation of seeing Consul Engert here on Tuesday that is responsible for this zeal. Rumor has it that you are coming in person and to-day the Spanish and Swedish Ambassadors are added.

I have just had a note from Mihran Chalukian whom Mr. Peet will know, written from Eregli, saying they are ordered to leave there tomorrow to start on their further journey, and asking me for a loan of money for expenses. This is sufficient evidence of the falseness of the promises about "not going beyond the Konia vilayet" etc. Elzor is the destination, beyond Aleppo, in the desert.

(Signed): W.S.D.

The Armenian Patriarch will have further news. Letters are going to him by the same messenger.

Copy.*

Monday evening, August 16

Today the crier has published through the city that all the Armenians of Konia are to be ready to leave in eight days, that is, on Monday August 23. The scenes that are taking place are simply like the wailing for the dead. Is there no help to prevent this awful crime? I have new details of the horrors of the march beyond Bozanti, 50,000 on foot between there and Aleppo, and the road beset by robbers and dead bodies everywhere.

(Signed): William S. Dodd

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