

AMERICAN EMBASSY*
CONSTANTINOPLE

No. 139

November 28, 1916

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the confidential information of the Department, copies of two documents received from Mr. W. W. Peet, the Treasurer of the American Board in this city, dealing (1) with the Armenian relief work carried on at Konia by Dr. Wilfred Post, Miss E. D. Cushman, and Miss North, the American missionaries now stationed at that place, and (2) with the experiences of a survivor of the Armenian deportations, as related to an American missionary. The Department's attention is respectfully called to the fact that no portion of the former document should be made public, as such action would very probably result in the issuance of orders by the Ottoman authorities, prohibiting the continuation of this work in Konia.

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

[signed] Abram I. Elkus

Enclosures:

Two, as above stated.

* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/306

COPY*

ARMENIAN RELIEF WORK IN KONIA

“You and Miss Cushman must come to the Police Station at once!” Such was the curt summons with which we were awakened one midnight during the month of July. It was a fitting climax to an anxious evening for only a few hours before some 90 prominent Armenians had been gathered out from among the exiles and imprisoned. But a few weeks previous had come the news of a frightful massacre of 5,000 Armenians in the Amanus mountains and we feared that this was the beginning of a new deportation from Konia with nothing but destruction beyond. We were taken to the police station and charged with being Armenian conspirators but succeeded in proving our identity and were released. But a restless night and an anxious day followed for we trembled for the Armenians. Must it be that after all the trial and anguish which they had endured—after all the American charity that had been distributed among them, and all the ceaseless and patient toil to keep them alive—must the end of it all be failure for us and annihilation for them? But with the evening came the glad tidings that all but three of the prisoners had been set free, and as the days passed and no deportation took place our hopes revived again. From that day to this the Armenian situation has gradually improved and for the moment the people are enjoying considerable liberty. The Government has practically ceased its supervision of our work and leaves the distribution entirely to us, and even takes us into its council in its new project of general relief. Armenian men are finding work in town and many families that were living on charity have become self-supporting. But what of the thousands of widows and fatherless and orphans—the broken down Armenian soldiers who crowd the clinics shivering with ague, barefoot and in tatters—the helpless families whose only breadwinner has got some pitiful employment only to fall sick as a result of past privation and inability to stand the strain of work—the gaunt women with sickly babies who cry to us as we pass along the streets? Many other classes of misery might be added—here is a girl whose eye has been destroyed by the ruthless beating by a gendarme on her way from the north, here another girl who fled from a Turkish village 10 or 15 hours away to save her honor and perhaps her life—again a man ghastly white trembling, with raging fever and ready pulse just able to stumble into our compound and then collapse on the pavement; there is no one to care for him, the authorities are heedless of our request to have him removed to the city hospital, and so though our hospital is officially closed we take him into the back of our empty drugstore and ease the last few days of his life with such care as the place will allow. In addition to this constant stream of misery we have before us the prospect of a winter of great suffering with prices of food, bedding, clothing and rent relentlessly rising. Surely we are in no position to retrench but rather could effectively use much more than we are receiving. Already a

* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/306

considerable number of Moslem refugees from the north-west are passing through Konia on the way to the surrounding villages and although we have not had many calls from them thus far we are only [at the] border of that problem and the worst is probably yet to come. And will there be a Greek problem also? In some respects it has begun already for there are many destitute families in Konia among the Greeks, but there is the chance of something far worse than mere poverty overtaking them.

Our work at present day may be comprised under four heads—general relief, special relief, medical work and orphans. The most important item under general relief is the regular distribution of money. About 1,100 tickets representing some 6,000 people are presented at the Protestant School building once every four weeks and cash given out on the basis of one piaster per head per day. This sum is used to provide the daily supply of bread but we fear that the time is soon coming when it will no longer do so, for while the price has not greatly risen the flour is being adulterated and represents less nourishment. For several days after each distribution crowds assemble at the Hospital door to present their pleas for additional help, while new cases keep applying to us. The lists have to be revised constantly to eliminate mistake and fraud. All this represents much labor; Miss Cushman devotes a great deal of time to this and keeps a corps of visitors and investigators constantly at work. The Catholic priest acts as committee for his own people and we give him about Lt. 100 a month for distribution. Under general relief may also be classed sums sent to villages from 1 to 20 hours distant, special representatives coming to us from time to time. The condition of Armenians in Turkish villages is usually extremely bad and the whole matter needs touring and investigation, for which we have neither time nor Government permission.

Special relief is given to those whose regular allowance is insufficient and under this head may be included loans to reliable and well investigated cases and distribution to some who for various reasons cannot present themselves with the rank and file at the school. Likewise special relief is given to transient exiles, to sick Armenian soldiers who are sent here for a “change of air” but with no provision from the Government, and to men in prison.

As regards medical work this should naturally be carried on in the Hospital, but since the wards and clinics are closed by Government order, Dr. Post has turned the first floor of his house into a clinic where some 1,500 cases, new and old, are seen every month. Dr. Post and Miss North conduct the clinic assisted by three American nurses and a doorkeeper, the latter functionary being by no means the least important because mentioned last for it is a continual quarrel at the door to keep the crowds down to manageable numbers and it is with a pang that we have to turn many people away. Another physician is sorely needed but none is to be had for love or money as all the available doctors are on military duty. Most of the cases are admitted free; the rest are made to pay a fee of ten piasters but this remitted in many cases and the medicines are free to all but the well-to-do. 40 or 50 dressings are done daily, most of them sores and abscesses resulting from privations and neglect or else cases of eye

disease resulting from the same causes. Free operations are done as we find time; also we give money to some of the needier patients who come to the clinic, with which to buy milk and yoghurt. As time permits Miss North and Dr. Post visit the sick in their homes.

The work for orphans is in many ways the most important of all. The mass of people are composed of families, much broken to be sure, but the members clinging together and helping one another all the more in consequence. But the orphans are a problem both for the present and the future. They are our adopted children and we must take good care of them. Already we have 70 or 80 entirely under our care and 20 more we are helping in the part. Most of the children are from 4 to 14 years of age. Many have been rescued from Turkish houses and have had thrilling experiences. One girl arrived in Konia on a freight cart tied up in a bundle of bedding, a kindly Greek train-man having devised this ingenious rescue. Two more girls whose families were all massacred in the far East were being spirited off to Constantinople destined for Turkish harems but they escaped from their captors while being held in Konia and fled to us. Strenuous search was made for them, first by the negro slave-girl who belonged to the people with whom the captives had been, and later by the excited black-veiled lady herself who came to the hospital cursing and swearing that we had given the girls asylum and threatening us with the police. But we blandly invited her to bring the police and make search, for we assured her the girls were neither in the Hospital nor did we know where they were, for a trusty go-between had hid them for us in the city—just where we took pains not to know!

A boy of 12 came to us all the way from Zor. Father and mother, brothers and sisters had all been killed by the Kurds and thrown into a shallow grave, the boy stunned but not dead thrown in with them and partly covered with earth. Coming back to consciousness he crawled out and after months of pathetic wanderings he found us here.

Others of our orphans, little girls of 6 and 7, were kicked about from house to house, no one desiring them, until they were rescued by our workers. Ragged, filthy, pinched and prematurely old looking, many are being nurtured back to natural childhood and are a witness that there is still some mercy to be found in Turkey. If that happy day soon comes when the yoke of the oppressor is broken no doubt thousands of such Christian children now imprisoned in Turkish homes may yet be saved and won back to life and freedom.

In addition to bedding and clothing for our orphans, made of course at great expense on account of war prices, “private” schools have been opened for them—“private” is used advisedly for the Government does not permit any Armenian education and the children gather in no less than four different places for lessons. There is one male teacher, and the elder orphan girls who are mostly graduates of American schools, help in the teaching. The children are taught Armenian, Turkish, English, French, Arithmetic, and Bible. Other studies will follow as we get the textbooks.

The expenditures for last month were as follows:

General Relief	Lt.1245.55
Special Relief	143.12
Medical Work (excluding special funds for this purpose	114.43
Orphans	222.73
Service, loss on change & miscellaneous	<u>45.80</u>
	Lt.1771.63

Under special relief is included about Lt. 7.5 for clothing; a donation of Lt. 50 from another source has enabled us to lay in a small supply of quilts, sweaters, stockings etc. but on account of the terrible prices this sum goes only a little way. Thus far the clothing problem has been in abeyance but now that the cold weather is before us we make a special plea for an extra grant for clothing and bedding for we have no further funds for this purpose nor can we cut out other appropriations without causing actual suffering to many.

This week brings rumors that Armenian exiles are to be called for military service, which would be a calamity and an outrage. We trust it may not be. We dare not think of the consequences to the people here if all the men were taken away. With all our endeavors we cannot provide adequately for half the 12,000 Armenians here and what shall we do if we have the multitude upon us? But is [not] a Turkish characteristic not to bring to completion any enterprise—not even so congenial a plan as the extermination of a subject Christian race—so we trust that our optimism will not be ill-founded but that Konia which stood almost unique in Turkish history as a city unsoiled by massacre may prove to be a safe asylum for its 12,000 Armenians until the end of these terrible days.

(Signed) E. D. Cushman
Wilfred M. Post.

COPY*

STATEMENT OF A SURVIVOR

In May 1915, and without notice or warning, the entire Armenian quarter of Samsoun was one morning surrounded by gendarmes. The Armenian population at Samsoun was larger than the Greek population.

For a week the houses were closely guarded, and the inmates lived on what they had, as no one was allowed to go to his shop or to buy food, except that on the second day of the guarding all the men were allowed to go to the market, but upon returning were all imprisoned until the day when the deportation was made. Then one man from each family was let out to accompany the family—the rest being retained in prison until sent out later in the direction taken by their families. The families were taken to a mountain. Those retained in prison were later brought to a valley in which was a stream in sight from the mountain. Their arms were tied behind their backs and they were commanded to kneel down, when their heads were cut off and their bodies thrown into the stream. Later some of the butchers brought some of the bloody shirts up the mountain and showed them to the families, saying, “Now you will believe that we have killed them all. Now give us your girls.” They carried off the girls they selected from seven years of age and upward. Also at different places on the road, but especially Malatia, girls were taken to houses. At Malatia girls were kept in the houses for longer or shorter times, and when those who took them became tired of them they were brought to Feroonjilar mountain where the deportation was encamped for several days and thrown down a precipice. Also, while remaining there, batches of the deported were taken off and disposed of. This was done with not only those from Samsoun but also with those from Erzeroum, Sivas, Tocat, Marsovan, and other places, who were collected on that mountain. Some of these deportations bribed the guards and were permitted to go to Malatia.

Near Old Malatia, some two and a half hours north of Malatia, there was a kind of pit into which the bodies of the dead victims were thrown. It became filled up with them until the stench was so bad that they had to cover the pit with earth.

Personal Account

The family started from Samsoun, five in number.

The father and brother were disposed of on the way.

The sister died on the road, and the mother in Malatia.

After the mother's death she went to the Tocat family with which she had become acquainted at Malatia, and who were instrumental in getting her here. She had escaped being appropriated through the use of money and by making herself undesirable. Here the Tocat family had friends to whom they went and took her with

* Source: NA/RG59/867.4016/306

them. There she asked for the Americans, as she has many friends in America, and through a shoemaker, who knew these friends and also the Americans, she was brought.

Revised statement of a survivor.

As to the first statement that the Armenian quarter at Samsoun was surrounded, she saw gendarmes guarding houses as she went to the church, at the end of the week of their imprisonment in their houses, to partake of the communion, as they were all allowed by the authorities to go. She heard many at the church speak of their having seen the same thing at other quarters of the town where Armenians resided.

She was with the families that were taken to the mountain, and saw that, every evening they were there, a batch of men were brought, with their hands tied behind their backs, to the valley. She saw the killing of the men and when their bodies were thrown into the stream in the bottom of the valley. She also saw some of the butchers come up the mountain with bloody garments in their hands and heard them say, "Now believe that we have killed them" and, "Give us your girls." She saw them select girls when on the mountain, at different places on the road she saw men select girls, and also at Malatia. She related an instance. They had come to a place where there was a bridge. A man took her under the bridge. She saw the girls struggle to be free from the man until in his rage he drew his sword and whacked her on the head and killed her. She said that she saw several such instances on the road and also at Malatia.

She said that she herself, when on the Feroonjiler mountain, saw several girls thrown over a precipice. Also she saw along the road and at Malatia, little children thrown into the river alive, and also others thrown alive into pits and earth thrown over them to drown their cries and suffocate them. She also saw the large pit at Old Malatia, which contained so many Armenian bodies and was covered with earth to escape the stench.

She and her mother, together with other women, at the same time bribed the guard to permit them to go to Malatia. At Malatia she with her mother, she said, paid money to a Turk, who kept them in his house until her mother died, when, as she said when testifying of her own family, she went to the Tocat family and came on here with it.

She saw and conversed with many who had been deported from Erzerroom, Sivas, Tocat, Broosa and other places.