

STATEMENT CONCERNING ARMENIANS MET ON  
ROAD FROM BOSANTI TO TARSUS\*

At Bosanti station, terminus of the Bagdad railroad from Konia, I saw about 250 Armenians about to be entrained for Konia. Nothing was known to me then of what had occurred at Zeitoun and other Armenian centers. The crowd seemed quiet enough and in view of the fact that the Turkish soldiers and gendarmes acted very considerately, with one exception, I took at first for granted what a Turkish officer had told me in reply to an inquiry concerning the crowd—that they were “emigrees Armenien.”

The people were badly dressed, however, and appeared in want of food. There was also the odd circumstance that fully 90 per cent of the ‘emigrants’ were women and children. I addressed several of the men and women in French, but received replies only in Armenian and Turkish, languages with which I am not familiar. Later I saw a woman dressed in European style. Addressing her I learned that she spoke French fairly well. From her I learned the story of Zeitoun. She was inclined to blame her own people.

The ‘emigrants’ were ordered into third class carriages, the overflow finding accommodation in a freight car. I then entered upon my journey to Tarsus, through the Taurus. About eight miles from Bozanti, on a little high-plateau called Telek, I saw some forty Armenian men of various ages. They were accompanied by a single Turkish gendarme. None of the men were shackled—a fact which struck me as odd since it would have been an easy matter for the men to overpower the gendarme and take to the mountains which in these parts are particularly well suited for that sort of enterprise.

On the road leading from the high-plateau to the Cilician Gates I met a large number of other Armenians, the first groups totaling about 1,500. The majority of them were women and children, and almost all of them showed signs of want and privation. It had started to rain and later hail fell for almost 30 minutes. The wind was extremely cold. Virtually none of the refugees had good clothing, many, in fact, were dressed in a single cotton garment, now clinging to the body as if the wearer had just been dragged out of the water. Many of the Armenians asked for bread or money, and but few of them seemed to have food of any sort with them.

Those I met first carried their small children and bundles. This seemed to be especially the task of the women I fear. They were getting but scant sympathy from their male companions, who walked beside their groaning women with what appeared to be utter indifference. In many cases the opposite could be observed, however.

The crowd included people of all ages and condition—babes in arm, very young children, young and old women and middle-aged and old men. Young men were

\* Source: LC/HM(Sr.)/Reel 22/474

conspicuous by their absence. It was learned that those who had not been drafted into the Ottoman army had taken to the mountains.

Groups I met further on had been given wheel transportation by the military commander at Tarsus—large ox carts. On these the baggage and children had been placed. One of the men who spoke a little English said that he had paid for the cart. In Tarsus I was assured that none of the Armenians had paid for the wagons placed at their disposal. There I also learned that the ox carts had been commandeered from farmers who were bringing cotton and other produce into the city. In justice to the Turkish commander at Tarsus I must say that some of the carts belonged to Turkish farmers.

Few of the Armenians had been able to bring their cattle or other live stock with them. A few herds were observed, however. Where the family had been able to save a few cows or oxen, the children generally rode on them. In such cases also the few blankets and other things that had been saved were carried on these animals.

The weather continued inclement throughout the day (April 25) and as the result of this suffering among the refugees must have been intense. There is no shelter to be found along the road, except in the 'Hans,' a sort of very dirty Anatolian wayside inn, frequented by wagon drivers and the like. These were overcrowded on this day with men who were taking ammunition south.

The conduct of the Turkish authorities towards the Armenians, so far as I could observe, was one of indifference. I saw a Turkish officer push a begging Armenian woman rather roughly out of his way, but, on the other hand, noticed another officer take a soldier severely to task for having been excessively rude to a woman and an Armenian priest who had come to her assistance at Bosanti station. Greeks and others whom I questioned in relation to the 'emigration' gave me to understand that the affair was not their business. Railroad officials of the Mersina, Tarsus and Adana railroad had been instructed not to discuss the matter with anybody.

At Adana I saw two trains bring in some of the people from Zeitoun. The men and women traveled in cattle cars, and their live stock in coal trucks. This was four days later. The weather was better, and it seemed that the Armenians were better taken care of by the Turkish officials. Such brutality towards the Armenians as was noticed by me was due to drivers of wagons, who often urged their horses through a crowd of women and children when there was no occasion for it.

I heard of many cases where families had been separated through the anxiety of the Turkish officials to get the Armenians out of Zeitoun and the surrounding villages. Due to the fact that I do not speak Armenian, I was unable to verify such assertions. Small children I saw trailing behind groups of refugees may have belonged to families whose adult members were either ahead or behind.

[signed and dated] George Schreiner  
Constantinople, May 25th 1915