

## 59. BAIBOURT: NARRATIVE OF AN ARMENIAN LADY DEPORTED IN THE THIRD CONVOY; COMMUNICATED BY THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR ARMENIAN AND SYRIAN RELIEF.'

A week before anything was done to Baibourt, the villages all round had been emptied and their inhabitants had become victims of the gendarmes and marauding bands. Three days before the starting of the Armenians from Baibourt, after a week's imprisonment, Bishop Anania Hazarabedian was hanged, with seven other notables. After these hangings, seven or eight other notables were killed in their own houses for refusing to leave the city. Seventy or eighty other Armenians, after being beaten in prison, were taken to the woods and killed. The Armenian population of Baibourt was sent off in three batches; I was among the third batch. My husband died eight years ago, leaving me and my eight-year-old daughter and my mother a large property, so that we were living in comfort. Since mobilization began, the Ottoman Commandant has been living in my house free of rent. He told me not to go, but I felt I must share the fate of my people. I took three horses with me, loaded with provisions. My daughter had some five-lira pieces round her neck, and I carried some twenty liras and four diamond rings on my person. All else that we had was left behind. Our party left on the 1st/14th June, fifteen gendarmes going with us. The party numbered four or five hundred<sup>f</sup> persons. We had got only two hours away from home when bands of villagers and brigands in large numbers, with rifles, guns, axes, etc., surrounded us on the road, and robbed us of all we had. The gendarmes took my three horses and sold them to Turkish mouhadjirs, pocketing the money. They took my money and the gold pieces from my daughters neck, also all our food. After this they separated the men, one by one, and shot them all within six or seven days—every male above fifteen years old. By my side were killed two priests, one of them over ninety years of age. The brigands took all the good-looking women and carried them off on their horses. Very many women and girls were thus carried off to the mountains, among them my sister, whose one-year-old baby they threw away; a Turk picked it up and carried it off, I know not where. My mother walked till she could walk no farther, and dropped by the roadside on a mountain top. We found on the road many of those who had been deported from Baibourt in the previous convoys; some women were among the killed, with their husbands and sons. We also came across some old people and little infants still alive but in a pitiful condition, having shouted their voices away. We were not allowed to sleep at night in the villages, but lay down outside.

{Narrative of Mrs. Victoria Khatchadour Baroutjibashian, American Relief Committee, 4 October 1915 publication, document 18). {ORIGINAL: Copy of Mrs. Victoria Khatchadour Baroutjibashian's testimony in Ambassador Morgenthau to Secretary of State communication dated Constantinople, 10 August 1915. NA/RG59/867.4016/122. —A.S.(  
<sup>f</sup> "4,000-5,000"—Doc. 2.

Under cover of the night indescribable deeds were committed by the gendarmes, brigands and villagers. Many of us died from hunger and strokes of apoplexy. Others were left by the roadside, too feeble to go on.

One morning we saw fifty or sixty wagons with about thirty Turkish widows, whose husbands had been killed in the war; and these were going to Constantinople. One of these women made a sign to one of the gendarmes to kill a certain Armenian whom she pointed out. The gendarmes asked her if she did not wish to kill him herself, at which she said "Why not?" and, drawing a revolver from her pocket, shot him dead. Every one of these Turkish hanoums had five or six Armenian girls of ten or under with her. Boys the Turks never wished to take; they killed them all, of whatever age. These women wanted to take my daughter, too, but she would not be separated from me. Finally we were both taken into their wagons on our promising to become Moslems. As soon as we entered the araba, they began to teach us how to be Moslems, and changed our names, calling me {Nadjie} and her {Nourie}.

The worst and most unimaginable horrors were reserved for us at the banks of the Euphrates and in the Erzindjan plain. The mutilated bodies of women, girls and little children made everybody shudder. The brigands were doing all sorts of awful deeds to the women and girls that were with us, whose cries went up to heaven. At the Euphrates, the brigands and gendarmes threw into the river all the remaining children under fifteen years old. Those that could swim were shot down as they struggled in the water.

After seven days we reached Erzindjan. Not an Armenian was left alive there. The Turkish women took my daughter and me to the bath, and there showed us many other women and girls that had accepted Islam. Between there and Enderessi, the fields and hillsides were dotted with swollen and blackened corpses that filled and fouled the air with their stench. On this road we met six women wearing the feradje<sup>+</sup> and with children in their arms. But when the gendarmes lifted their veils, they found that they were men in disguise, so they shot them. After thirty-two days' journey we reached our destination/

*i.e.*, the Kara Su.

Moslem veil.

(For' our destination read "Constantinople. |