

101. BROUSSA: REPORT BY A FOREIGN VISITOR TO THE CITY* DATED 24th SEPTEMBER, 1915; COMMUNICATED BY THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR ARMENIAN AND SYRIAN RELIEF.

It was inevitable that the Armenians, whose deportation from Broussa and the environs had been ordered a few days before my arrival, should occupy some of my attention. It is doubtful whether the full significance of this measure can be realized without a visit to the interior, where the results may be seen in all their appalling details. Words are inadequate to describe the utter misery and destitution of these hordes of emigrants who are to-day roaming all over Asia Minor. The roads are crowded with thousands upon thousands of these unfortunate wretches, considering themselves lucky if they are able to procure—at the sacrifice of a small fortune—an ox-cart for their families and a few belongings; many of them journeying on foot—men, women and children, tired, haggard, and half-starved—the pictures of want and desolation. Broussa was among the last of the more important cities to receive the order for the deportation of the Armenians, so that I had occasion to see the application of the measure from the very beginning. Thus I met the first contingents of the exiles between Broussa and Yeni-Shehr. The authorities had given them three days in which to clear out, with the result that they could not sell any of their property, even had there been buyers. All personal property, such as furniture, clothes, tools, etc., which they could not take with them, had to be left behind, and the Turks quite openly distributed them among themselves, often even in the presence of their owners! As regards the houses evacuated by the Armenians, a little more red tape was gone through, but the effect was the same. The Armenian proprietor was called before a magistrate, made to sign a document that he had sold the house to a certain individual (of course always a Moslem), and was given a roll of banknotes. No sooner had he left the room than the money was taken from him by the police and returned to the magistrate, to be used in hundreds of similar cases!

I realised, of course, that I was quite powerless—even unofficially—to interfere with these proceedings. But there were certain other points which came to my knowledge and about which I did not hesitate to speak to the Vali—always quite informally only—as they seemed to me a useless and senseless aggravation in a situation which was already trying enough. In the first place, hundreds of Catholic and Protestant Armenians had been ordered away—many of them had even left—although, according to the decision of the Government, they had a right to remain. I obtained from the Vali the promise that in future these two denominations should not be disturbed, and that those who had "by mistake" been sent away should be called back. This was done, and during the next few weeks a number of Catholic and Protestant families returned. I then asked that those ordered to leave should be given at least a week, and in a few cases even two weeks, in which to get ready. This enabled many families to make the most necessary preparations for the journey. A few casual remarks to the Vali about flogging and forcible conversion of women and girls to Mohammedanism seem to have put a stop also to these two

{Report by a member of the U.S. diplomatic or consular service (exact identity unknown)}.

outrages—at least, so I was informed at the American School, which was in close contact with everything going on in the Armenian community. I cannot but refer in this connection to the altogether admirable work done by the ladies of this institution in helping the unfortunate exiles in the most unselfish and efficient manner. But for their devotion and practical assistance, the sufferings of many families must needs have been much greater.

Unfortunately, the hardships of exile and privation are not the only dangers to which the Armenians are exposed. There can be no doubt that many of them—chiefly men—have been massacred in cold blood. Although no instances of this seem to have occurred during my stay in Broussa, I was informed by very trustworthy sources that, shortly before my arrival, about 170 of the most prominent Armenians from Broussa and neighbouring towns had been shot near Adranos, whither they had been exiled in June. I have all the more reason to credit this report because, when I made inquiries concerning two of the men, the brothers {Dingilian}, whose relatives live in America and who are insured with American companies, the Vali replied evasively, but finally said that he had heard that they escaped from custody and had disappeared!

However, even if no Armenians had been killed outright, the result would be the same, for the deportation as carried out at present is merely a polite form of massacre. Unless the whole movement be stopped at once, there is, I am firmly convinced, not the slightest chance of any of the exiles surviving this coming winter, except possibly the very wealthiest amongst them.

Nor do the authorities make any secret of the fact that their main object is the extermination of the whole Armenian race. The Vali admitted quite frankly: "We are determined to get rid, once and for all, of this cancer in our country. It has been our greatest political danger, only we never realized it as much as we do now. It is true that many innocents are suffering with the guilty, but *we have no time to make any distinctions*. We know it means an economic loss to us, but it is nothing compared with the danger we are thereby escaping!"

Without commenting on the truth or falsity of these remarks, the fact remains that the Turks are rapidly depleting their country of some of the thriftiest, most intelligent, and, in many respects, the most valuable elements of their population. One has only to walk through the streets of any town in the interior to realize how this deportation has wrought havoc with the life of the community. Nearly all doctors, dentists, tailors, carpenters are gone—in short, every profession or trade requiring the least skill has been stopped, not to mention the complete stagnation of all business of any consequence. Even Turks are realizing the danger, and in some villages they petitioned the authorities to allow certain Armenians to remain! It is therefore all the more surprising that the Ottoman Government persists in this shortsighted policy, for there can be little doubt that every place left vacant by an Armenian will—irrespective of the outcome of the European conflict—have to be filled by a foreigner, as the Turk has proved himself totally incapable of doing this kind of work.

(After "institution" insert "—particularly Miss Annie T. Allen and Miss Edith Parsons—")