

6. LETTER FROM THE SAME SOURCE,\* DATED CONSTANTINOPLE, 13/26th JULY, 1915, AND ADDRESSED TO A DISTINGUISHED ARMENIAN RESIDENT BEYOND THE OTTOMAN FRONTIER.

Since the 25th May last, events have followed hard upon one another, and the misery of our nation is now at its zenith.

Apart from a few rumours about the situation of the Armenians at Erzeroum, we had heard of nothing, till recently, except the deportation of the inhabitants of several towns and villages in Cilicia. Now we know from an unimpeachable source that the Armenians of all the towns and all the villages of Cilicia have been deported *en masse* to the desert regions south of Aleppo.

From the 1st May onwards, the population of the city of Erzeroum, and shortly afterwards the population of the whole province, was collected at Samsoun and embarked on shipboard. The populations of Kaisaria, Diyarbekir, Ourfa, Trebizond, Sivas, Harpout and the district of Van have been deported to the deserts of Mesopotamia, from the southern outskirts of Aleppo as far as Mosul and Baghdad. "Armenia without the Armenians"—that is the Ottoman Governments project. The Moslems are already being allowed to take possession of the lands and houses abandoned by the Armenians.

The exiles are forbidden to take anything with them. For that matter, in the districts under military occupation there is nothing left to take, as the military authorities have exerted themselves to carry off, for their own use, everything that they could lay hands on.

The exiles will have to traverse on foot a distance that involves one or two months' marching and sometimes even more, before they reach the particular corner of the desert assigned to them for their habitation, and destined to become their tomb. We hear, in fact, that the course of their route and the stream of the Euphrates are littered with the corpses of exiles, while those who survive are doomed to certain death, since they will find in the desert neither house, nor work, nor food.

It is simply a scheme for exterminating the Armenian nation wholesale, without any fuss. It is just another form of massacre, and a more horrible form.

Remember that all the men between the ages of 20 and 45 are at the front. Those between 45 and 60 are working for the military transport service. As for those who had paid the statutory tax for exemption from military service, they have either been exiled or

{Letter from the Armenian Patriarchate to His Eminence Mgr. Ghevont Tourian, Gregorian Bishop of Philippopolis and Metropolitan of the Gregorian Church in Bulgaria, forwarded to Boghos Nubar Pasha, and communicated by His Excellency Boghos Nubar Pasha}. {Copy of report in U.S. Ambassador Walter Page to Secretary of State communication dated London, 24 August 1915. NA/RG59/867.4016/119. — A.S.} {A separate translation of this report, including a cover letter, appears in Bishop Ghevont Tourian to Boghos Nubar Pasha communication dated Philippopolis, 9 July 1915 in *Boghos Nubar's Papers and the Armenian Question*, trans, and ed. Vatche Ghazarian (Waltham, Mass.: Maireni Press), pp. 149-151. — A.S.}

imprisoned on one pretext or another. The result is that there is no one left to deport but the old men, the women and the children. These poor creatures have to travel through regions which, even in times of peace, were reputed dangerous, and where there was a serious risk of being robbed. Now that the Turkish brigands, as well as the gendarmes and civil officials enjoy the most absolute licence, the exiles will inevitably be robbed on the road, and their women and girls dishonoured and abducted.

We are hearing also from various places of conversions to Islam. It seems that the people have no other alternative for saving their lives.

The courts martial are working everywhere at full pressure.

You must have heard through the newspapers of the hanging of 20 Huntchakists at Constantinople. The verdict given against them is not based on any of the established laws of the Empire. The same day twelve Armenians were hanged at Kaisaria, on the charge of having obeyed instructions received from the secret conference held at Bukarest by the Huntchakists and Droshakists. Besides these hangings, 32 persons have been sentenced at Kaisaria to terms of hard labour, ranging from ten to fifteen years. Most of them are honest merchants who are in no sort of relation with the political parties. Twelve Armenians have also been hanged in Cilicia. Condemnations have become daily occurrences. The discovery of arms, books and pictures is enough to condemn an Armenian to several years' imprisonment.

Besides this many people have succumbed under the rod. Thirteen Armenians have been killed in this way at Diyarbekir, and six at Kaisaria. Thirteen others have been killed on their way to Shabin Kara-Hissar and Sivas. The priests of the village of Kourk with their companions have suffered the same fate on the road between Sou-Shehr and Sivas, although they had their hands pinioned and were defenceless.

I will spare you the recital of other outrages which have occurred sporadically all over the country, under the cloak of searches for arms and for revolutionary agents. Not a single house has been left unsearched, not even the episcopal residences, the churches or the schools. Hundreds of women, girls, and even quite young children are groaning in prison. Churches and convents have been pillaged, desecrated and destroyed. Even the Bishops are not spared. Mgr. Barkev Danielian (Bishop of Broussa), Mgr. Kevork Tourian (Bishop of Trebizond), Mgr. Khosrov Behrikian (Bishop of Kaisaria), Mgr. Vaghinadj Torikian (Bishop of Shabin Kara-Hissar), and Mgr. Kevork Nalbandian (Bishop of Tchar-Sandjak) have been arrested and handed over to the courts martial. Father Muggerditch, locum-tenens of the Bishop of Diyarbekir, has died of blows received in prison. We have no news of the other bishops, but I imagine that the greater part of them are in prison.

We are so cut off from the world that we might be in a fortress. We have no means of correspondence, neither post nor telegraph.

The villages in the neighbourhood of Van and Bitlis have been plundered, and their inhabitants put to the sword. At the beginning of this month, there was a pitiless massacre of all the inhabitants of Kara-Hissar with the exception of a few children who are said to have escaped by a miracle. Unhappily we learn the details of all these occurrences too late, and even then only with the utmost difficulty.

So you see that the Armenians in Turkey have only a few more days to live, and if the Armenians abroad do not succeed in enlisting the sympathy of the neutrals on our behalf, there will be extraordinarily few Armenians left a few months hence, out of the million and a half that there were in Turkey before the war. The annihilation of the Armenian nation will then be inevitable.