

129. ADANA: STATEMENT, DATED 9th MAY, 1916, BY MISS {H. E. WALLIS}, A FOREIGN RESIDENT AT ADANA, RECORDING HER EXPERIENCES THERE FROM SEPTEMBER, 1914, TO SEPTEMBER, 1915.*

From the time Turkey began to mobilise in the autumn of 1914, before entering into the war, fear and questioning naturally took hold of the Armenians. First there was the unreasonable and irregular way in which the men were drafted into the Army or Labour Regiments; and then there was the news concerning the harsh and cruel treatment of the male population of Dort Yol, where all from the ages of about 16 to 70 years were suddenly sent away *en masse* to work on the roads in the Hassan Beyli district—this, on the mere rumour that fruit and food had been conveyed from Dort Yol to one of the Allies' warships.

This was followed by a few selected men from Dort Yol being hanged at intervals in the streets of Adana. One night in the winter (1914-15) the Government sent officers round the city into all Armenian houses, knocking the families up and demanding that all weapons should be given up, or actually searching for them. Think of the fright of many of them, thus rudely awakened; this action was the death-knell to many hearts. Soon after this, Armenians whose names had been registered as having escaped or defended themselves during the massacres of 1909, or who were found in possession of arms, or were under some other accusation, were collected and imprisoned. I am not sure what happened to these.

Then came the news of Zeitoun being deported. These hardy mountaineers were destined for Sultania, a low malarial district on the plain beyond Konia. Most of these villagers passed through Tarsus *en route*, save those who had died on the way. A Tarsus graduate from Zeitoun who had hoped to become a teacher, voluntarily followed his mother, a widow, to Sultania, for the reason that she had no one to take care of her, neither she nor his sister with her four children, as the latter's husband was imprisoned in Marash.

"Why imprisoned?" I asked. "I do not know any reason," the boy replied. This boy recounted to me how the people had to live in this sultry region. Some one hundred souls, regardless of any distinction, among them a College Professor and a few leading people from Konia, were for a time crowded into the largest house in the place. They could not sleep, many were sick, children and babies crying, the heat great. Other houses were occupied likewise; probably many people camped around. These poor people were not allowed to do anything to earn money or to go beyond a certain distance. Those who still had money for food helped the more needy as far as they could. This same student told me that while he was in Sultania 750 had died. Then the remainder were all despatched back to Tarsus to be forwarded to the Arabian desert.

{Statement communicated by Miss Wallis to the editor}. {ORIGINAL: "Personal Reminiscences of Happenings in Cilicia, Turkey, from September 1914 to September 1915," by H. E. Wallis. PR0/F096/210/216-223. —A.S.}

I may say here that thousands and thousands of Armenians passed from the north over the Cilician plain, telling heart-rending stories of massacre or brutal treatment on the journey. Some mothers had given all the money in their possession to save their daughters from being violated. One said she had given 22 liras for a certain distance only. Poor women had to leave their babies and young children by the roadside; they were too exhausted to carry them any longer. The suffering of some in childbirth cannot be dwelt upon. One such, not of the poorest class, was thrust out of her house in _____ when deportation began, and cruelly forced along the road. She died after two hours.

As long as I live I can never forget the camp I saw twice near Geulik station, not far from Tarsus. Here there were 10,000 to 15,000 Armenians awaiting further deportation towards the desert. They were in the broiling sun, with no shade or shelter save the rudest arrangements—anything that came to hand thrown over poles or sticks. There were all kinds of people and families of all ages, crowded together within a certain radius, beyond which they might not go. They looked scorched by the sun, their clothes were fast wearing out, and there were poor little children, boys and girls, taken from school, with simply nothing to do but await their fate, which mercifully they could not realise as the adults could. There was a stream of water a little distance off, and if only it had been clean it would have been a boon. It was used for rinsing clothes as well as drinking. There were no sanitary arrangements whatever, and the air was impregnated with foul odours. We witnessed all this from the train, which drew up at the station alongside the camp. The Government would not allow any help in money, food, or medicine to be given; if they knew of anyone so doing, they stopped it. In Tarsus, Mrs. {Christie}, who was working among the refugees all the time, trying to show sympathy and give help in any little way possible, was stopped at last. But I must go back to Adana.

As the Armenian men of Adana were drafted into the Army or Labour Battalions, and the Armenian shops were robbed at pleasure without payment, great numbers of families did not know where to look for food, and even the wealthier business men were beginning to see destitution looming ahead.

I think it was at the end of April (or May) that some thirty picked families (few of them particularly wealthy) were ordered to leave their homes for an unknown destination. This looked like the beginning of deportation; but owing, as we had reason to believe, to pressure being put on the Government at that time by the American Ambassador, who did his utmost to save Adana, Tarsus and Mersina from deportation, all these families save a few young men were allowed to return to their homes within three weeks. No one could understand this strange transaction, but fresh hope awoke in people's hearts. It was short lived.

Circumstantial stories of all kinds of oppression and cruelty in one place or another kept arriving day after day, but no one even then could foretell what exactly was coming or what special fate was in store for themselves. Gradually the people became hopeless. All hearts were sorely tested, but those that knew their God proved their strength and peace in Him. Some were enabled to go farther—to cast themselves upon God's will and accept this cup of suffering (so imminent) as from the Father's hand. Oh, those were terrible days of suspense and heart-strain. In my house, in a Greek quarter, I was able to

give room to a family I had long known. The wife had been a Bible Woman in the city for twelve years; the son was a graduate of the college, and there were two daughters—one a teacher and the other just graduated from the American school. The husband had care of the Protestant church buildings, and he used to bring back the news daily from the market. Many were the prayers which went up to God from this dear woman and others who sought to comfort the people. Never before had so many meetings been held in the poor city homes among the women, who crowded outside the doors if there was no room inside. Fifty, sixty or eighty were quite usual numbers. The church services also were unusually crowded, and God granted new life to many hearts, especially among the young men remaining.

Then the orders for the deportation of Adana came. The people, of course, did not know what to do with their things, while those who lived from hand to mouth had not the wherewithal to get food even to start with, let alone other necessities. What could be sold was sold, but the things went for a mere nothing, except in a few cases, where goods were bought to befriend and help the sellers. The Missionaries had not money to spare to buy, with all the numbers beseeching help. Those who could sell nothing had to leave all their belongings and stores save what they could carry with them. One Armenian preacher who was constantly appealed to at this time, from morning until night, by the distracted multitude—asking whether their names were called yet, what was to be done, and so on—expressed the situation thus: "It is as if the people were drowning in a sea of trouble and each one were trying to catch at a straw to save himself."

To give an example of the stony-hearted attitude of the Government official in charge of this work of deportation, I may cite the case of a young man of good mental ability, who for many years had been teaching and helping the blind in many ways. Through spinal disease he had become very badly deformed and could not walk. He was taken down to the Sarai in a bath-chair, hoping to elicit pity and not be cast adrift with his deaf mother, whom he supported. The only answer he received was: "Get out with you and be gone; the sooner the better." Some money was given to this crippled young man, but long before reaching Aleppo he had spent all on conveyances.

Another instance of the inhumanity of man towards his fellows in suffering, of which we have since heard and read over and over again until our hearts can bear no more, was the treatment accorded to, and pity withheld from, the Armenian people from all regions who were being transported by railway during the great heat. They were packed like cattle, and as train after train passed through Adana station, the people cried out for water and thrust out their hands beseechingly, but to no avail, although water was actually at hand. No one must show them any mercy. This we heard from witnesses living near the station, who said that they could not endure the sight, and did not know how to remain where they were. When some of our special friends were starting, at the station, one of our party, Dr. {Haas}, tried to give a basket of grapes to a family, but was not permitted. What happened to the crowds after they reached Aleppo we did not then know. From our deported Adana people there came piteous messages for money, as the

{For "our party, Dr. {Haas}," read "the missionary party, Dr. Haas."}

little in hand was soon exhausted. Some short letters came through from the Aleppo centre. One wrote: "Better drown your girls than let them come here." Another, well known to me, wrote to his sisters, who were at the American school: "Be thankful you have such a place to be in as the place where you are, and that you are not here."

It is computed that 20,000 were deported from Adana alone. We can testify to the mercy which permitted our Cilician people to go *en masse*, *i.e.*, in families, save for those members already taken by the Government ostensibly for the Army or the Labour Regiments. As far as we heard, those who were able to obtain means of transit and continued their journey from Osmania (whither they went by rail) to Aleppo, were not attacked or massacred on the way. How many were left behind sick or died in Osmania cannot be said.

Circumstances obliged me and some other members of the Missionary Circle to be away from the heat of the plain for part of July and August, and it was during these weeks that the great deportation *en masse* of the Armenian population took place from Adana. Though absent, one was straining for news all the time. When we were in the hills above Tarsus, details of the refugees and their plight were constantly being sent by Mrs. {Christie} to her daughter and son-in-law, in whose company I was. One could only write "farewells" before the word to start was actually given, feeling sure that the order to depart would be extended to all our friends without exception. Our American friends said, in their kindness "We are glad you were not here; it was too heart-breaking to bear." And, indeed, on our return the whole atmosphere of the place, the empty houses and streets of the city with scarcely an Armenian to be seen, spoke more of death than the burnt, empty city after the massacres of 1909.

I conclude with quotations from a letter written by a fellow-worker of many years standing. He and his wife and other members of his family left with the crowd of Protestants in August, 1915. The letter was given me about two weeks later by a relative. It reads thus:—

"God *can* shut again the mouths of lions. Do you know that God *has* shut the mouths of many lions for many years? We now understand that it is a great miracle that our nation (the Armenians) has lived so many years among such a nation (the Moslems). Oh, how can men become such devils in so short a time? May God restrain them. I am afraid they mean to kill some of us, cast some of us into most cruel starvation, and send the rest into the desert; so I have very little hope of seeing you again in this world. But be sure that, by God's special help, I will do my best to encourage others to die manfully. I will also await God's help for myself, to die as a Christian.

"May this country see that, if we cannot live here as men, we can die as men. May many die as men of God. May God forgive this nation (the Moslems) all their sin which they do without knowing. . . . May Jesus soon see many Mohammedan Christians as the fruit of His blood.

"May the war soon end, in order to save the Moslems from their cruelty and savagery, for they increase in devilry from day to day, and from their ingrained habit of torturing their fellow men. Therefore we are waiting on God, for the sake of the Moslems as well as the Armenians. May He soon appear."