

A Statement of Conditions in Sivas,

July 13th 1915.

by Rev. Ernest C. Partridge.

To begin with the all important fact, which may have reached you by now, the Armenians of the interior are being deported in the direction of Mosul. At the time we left Sivas, two thirds of them had gone from the city, including all our Protestants, our teachers, and pupils and all our side of the city. Those left were the orphan girls and teachers, and a few boarding girls, three nurses and two orderlies in the hospital, Ardashes Eff and his family, and a few women servants. According to my best knowledge and opinion, with the exception of Armenian soldiers and prisoners (all of whose families have been sent) and a very few exceptions, who for various reasons were necessary to the government, all Armenians are gone from Sivas. According to what I consider good authority, I believe it to be true that the entire Armenian population from Erzroom to and including Gemereh near Cesarea and from Samsoun to and including Harpoot, has been deported. There is also a movement in the central field which had not become general but will doubtless become so. More than 100,000 Greeks from the Marmora and Mediterranean coast have been deported.

We heard many rumors of massacres, but I have no evidence on the subject. To my knowledge no general massacres have occurred in the Sivas villayet. Not a few men have been killed in one way and another.

This general movement against Armenians began months ago in arrests for alleged revolutionary activity and in search of guns and bombs. In Sivas the winter passed rather quietly, and it was late spring before much was done. About two months ago a

general effort was carried out to imprison all leading Armenians, and within a week more than 1000 were arrested. I estimate the whole number of Sivas men in prison to be between 1500 and 2000. The only person taken from our circle was Michael Eff Freugulian who was taken by name the first day, not we think as from us but as a resident of the city. Strict orders were given not to molest us or our people, though all our efforts to do anything for Michael Eff failed. Up to the time of our departure from Sivas, these men had been in prison a month, were well and as comfortable as could be expected in a Turkish prison, but no examinations had been held, no charges made, and no one knew what was to be done. The Vali assured me again and again that they would be released, and sent with their families, but this was not done for at least ten days after the deportation was begun, and I have no confidence that it will be done at all. We could not believe that this outrage would really take place, but when on Monday hundreds of families were loaded on to ox-carts and sent and our Protestant people were told that they were to start on Wednesday, Miss Graffam said she was going to try to go with them, and in this she succeeded. She bought a spring wagon, a common wagon, 8 ox-carts and 6 donkeys, so that our pupils and teachers went by their own conveyance. The government furnished on an average an ox-cart to a family, but how far they went that way and how soon they were obliged to walk, we do not know.

The advice of the Vali was that the orphans should remain for the present, and we have no idea what they will do to them in the end. This was one of our motives in getting to Constantinople. I represented to our ambassador the fear we had that after all the others were gone, these girls might be forcibly taken from us and

put into Turkish families. I talked with Mr. Peet about the possibility of bringing them all out of the country. Mr. Morgenthau promised to have strict orders sent to Sivas for their protection. I presume you will hear from Mr. Peet on the subject, if his letter gets through. At the time we left Sivas, the orphanage circle (female) was complete with the exception of Oriot Haigamish who went with the Protestants. I think they deemed it wise to keep as few teachers as necessary. Miss Fowle and Miss Rice expect to go with them if they go, and take care of them if they remain. We understand that since we left, the orphans have been moved up to the college building with the ladies, and probably the old building is vacant and likely sealed by the government to insure its safety. The Clarks are probably sleeping in our house, and going to the city for hospital work in the day time.

The only men besides Dr. Clark, are Hallel, our cavass, Ardashes Eff and two or three orderlies in the hospital, of whom you will remember only our old teacher Hagopos Eff of Divick. All the Protestants except Kiriaho the Greek and his family, most of the boarders (boys and girls) and all our teachers excepting Michael Eff who was in prison and Armenchi Sharigian who is with us, went on the road together on Wednesday afternoon, July 7th. Six or eight of the larger boys ran away a day or two before, and we got no word from them. Roupen Eff and Hampartsoom Eff went with their families, and the others Michan Avedikian, Senecherian Kalioujian, Tocos Kurhjian and Yegheshi Soojian went the same day.

After we had seen thousands of people start out, and especially after ours had actually gone, we came to the conclusion that if anything could be done to stop this terrible crime, which impresses us as ten times worse than any massacre, it would be done in Constantinople. Our work in Sivas seemed to be terminated,

at least for the present, and it seemed to the other members of the station, that in view of the fact that our furlough was due, and that Dr. Clark because of his knowledge of Turkish and his medical work should remain, so it was decided that we should go. We had been getting neither letters nor telegrams for some time and I did not believe that those we sent arrived. In Constantinople we found that the whole plan of deportation is one of the central government and that no pressure from the embassies had been able to do anything. Mr. Peet felt that the most we could do now was to work for raising relief funds for the Armenians, and in view of the uncertainty of travel from Constantinople to the border, he was anxious for us to get out of the country as soon as possible. So we started on at once on receiving our passports.

We believe there is imminent danger of many of these people, whom we estimate for the Sivas, Erzroom and Harpoot villayets to be 600,000 starving to death on the road. They took food a few days, but did not dare take much money with them, as if they did so, it is doubtful whether they would be allowed to keep it. From Mr. Peet we understood that the Rockefeller Foundation people are in Geneva or Berne, and we hope that all possible will be done to make them recommend relief appropriations at once. Mr. Peet and our Ambassador promised to do what they could and gave me some hope that some relief funds might be sent to Harpoot at once. It is questionable whether relief work will even be allowed but it ought to be undertaken if possible. We shall do all we can in the United States with the aid of our Board.

So contrary to all our plans and wishes we are on our way to the United States. We had many half perfected plans for the future, and it was my desire and our decision to remain in Sivas



a year or two more until Mr. Camp got settled into the work and buildings and grounds were put in better shape. We also planned to raise our course of study a year, this having only a year short of our neighboring colleges in Turkey. Now we shall try to get a vacation, and to do what can be done for the Armenians, and for our future work. If our constituency comes back to Sivas, we shall hope to return after a year, if not we shall try to go where they have gone or go, and build up a new educational work there. At least this is our desire.

If it is true that the Armenians have gone not to come back, which I doubt, then the Board ought to strengthen the medical work in Sivas, and to send a new young man for work among the Turks, and in that case we shall try to persuade them to give to the medical work the college property and grant us its value for a new start somewhere else.

I started out from Sivas with several hundred addresses of people to whom we promised to give word about their friends. Then my own list of some 700 names of my constituency I brought, but we were obliged to leave them in Constantinople. It was impossible to carry out of Turkey, one address or a scrap of writing of any kind. I bought an empty account book and started a new traveling expense account after crossing the border.

We met on the road near Talas people of two villages of which the people were going on foot with less than a donkey to a family, no food, nor bedding, hardly any men, and many of the women barefooted and carrying children. A case in Sivas worthy of notice was that of Hampartsoom, Effs sister. Her husband had worked in our hospital as a soldier nurse for many months. She contracted typhus and was brought to our hospital. Her mother, a woman of 60-70 got up from a sick bed to go and care for their 7 children,

the oldest of which was about 12. A few days before the deportation the husband was imprisoned and exil~~ed~~ without examination or fault. When the quarter in which they lived went, the mother got out of bed in the hospital, was put on an ox-cart to go with her children.