In 1915 a group of Armenians still lived in the last remaining fragment of a medieval Armenian kingdom. In their inaccessible enclave, this holdout from a remote past dating to the Crusades, Armenians of the town called Zeytun maintained their sense of independence. All around them, and all across the historic provinces of Armenia, Armenians had submitted to Islamic rule. Zeytun singularly held out. Even its autonomy was recognized by the Ottoman Turkish sultans who in the early 1500s extended their empire into the region known as Cilicia.

Even in their remote fastness Zeytun Armenians were in full grasp of the state of anxiety created by the scale of the First World War. Appreciating the risks they faced, they sought to defuse tensions by cooperating with the government, unaware that the Young Turk dictatorship was already seeking occasion to proceed with the implementation of their plans to deport and eradicate the Armenians from their homeland. In contrast, Young Turk officials escalated their provocations through house searches, the abuse of women, arbitrary arrests, false accusations, and harsh imprisonments.

With wounded pride, the divided community resisted providing Turkish officials a pretext for attacking its population. As the oppression of the regional authorities increased, the central government’s decision to disarm the Armenian conscripts in the Ottoman army especially alarmed the inhabitants of Zeytun, who were more alert to the implications of this new policy than the Armenian population at large.

With their hometown surrounded by an armed Muslim population consisting of Turks and Kurds pressing upon the Armenian enclave, and now especially distrustful of the Young Turk government which had opted for war, dozens of Zeytun recruits deserted their units and sought shelter around their hometown. When they gathered in a monastery further above the town, the Young Turk regime seized the moment to declare Armenians in a state of rebellion and began a region-wide systematic deportation.

The April 1915 deportation of the Armenians of Zeytun marked a watershed moment in the unfolding of the Armenian Genocide. The town of Zeytun was emptied of its Armenian population in a matter of days. To Armenians, who as Christians were assigned second-class citizenship, and inferiority as in the eyes of Muslims, Zeytun had remained a symbol of alternative to foreign domination. Its submission after centuries of stubborn resistance sent ripples across the Armenian community of the Ottoman Empire. To the Young Turks, the elimination of Zeytun insured their supremacy and signaled that the Armenian population would succumb to their broader policy of removal, dispossession, and extermination.
The deportation of the Armenians of Zeytun began on April 8, 1915. The evacuation of the town and nearby Armenian-inhabited villages was largely completed by the end of May 1915. Twenty-two thousand Armenians were on the road of exile, starvation and slaughter. More than ninety percent perished. After all the killing ended, less than a thousand remained alive.

Before the empire-wide arrests and deportations began on April 24, 1915, and thereby informed the rest of the world that the Ottoman state had embarked upon an internal campaign of annihilation against its civilian Armenian population, the initial phases of the Armenian Genocide had already been implemented and completed.

The fate of Zeytun might have gone unnoticed but for the decision of the deportation authorities to divide the community and exile the mountaineers into two opposite directions. While one part was sent east toward the Syrian Desert, where hundreds of thousands of Armenians were to follow in succeeding months, another part was marched west to the Plain of Konya, in central Anatolia, an equally flat and barren region.

The city of Konya was located on the Berlin-Bagdad rail line. Under German management, the railroad constituted the main transport route between Anatolia and Syria. As the rail line was still under construction through the Taurus Range, hundreds of German, and Swiss, engineers, and other civilian and military officials, witnessed the deportation of the Armenians. With the removal of the Armenians of western Anatolia starting in July of 1915, many of whom were first shipped by train, Konya station transformed into a massive concentration camp. The few thousand Armenians of Zeytun were soon joined by tens of thousands dispersed across the entire length of the rail line from Konya to Bozantzi, where the line ended. From there the deportees were marched on foot through the mountain passes to head east toward Syria. When the authorities decided to evacuate the camps along the Konya line, the remaining Zeytun Armenians were swept with them to be marched again back across the Taurus mountain passes.

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German witnesses reported and documented the mistreatment of the Armenians. While the German military authorities focused their attention on the construction of the rail line and operations on the military fronts, the scale of the atrocities made the persecution and destruction of the Armenian population unavoidable and many German civilians registered their indignation. Many of the stations along the unfinished stretches of the line were constructed by Armenian slave labor.

Even more compelling evidence was gathered by the American medical personnel who manned a hospital in Konya. One of them, Dr. Wilfred Post, took the risk of photographing the condition of the deportees. His compelling images constitute one of the rare sets of photographs taken in the course of the deportations and attest to the state of misery to which the deportees were reduced before ever reaching their purported destinations. He testified in words and pictures to the exhaustion, exposure, starvation, epidemics, and the brutal treatment by Turkish state and local officials that exacted a rapidly rising death toll among the deportees.

An American-funded school called the Apostolic Institute headed by Dr. Armenag Haigazian, a Yale alumnus, was also located in Konya. As with all American and Armenian educational institutions across Asia Minor, the Apostolic Institute was shut down by authorities in 1915. Miss Emma Cushman from the American Hospital, who remained in Konya throughout the war years, transformed the school into an orphanage whose charges were photographed in December 1919. She was joined by American relief workers who rescued the children. They were unable, though, to save Dr. Haigazian. He survived deportation only to be killed in 1921 by Nationalist Turks, who assumed power in Anatolia upon the flight of the Young Turk triumvirs to Germany at the end of the war.

World War I ended in November 1918. The Armenian Genocide continued.

In a wartime atmosphere inflamed by the proclamation of jihad by the Ottoman Empire, the Islamic declaration of religious warfare against non-Muslims, the leader of the Armenian Christians of the region of Cilicia, the Catholicos Sahag II Khabayan (1849-1939; pontiff 1902-1939), sorrowed that the Young Turk authorities were only seeking an opportunity to repress the entire Armenian population. From his seat in the town of Sis, the former capital of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, he continuously implored the inhabitants of Zeytun to deny Ottoman officials any excuse to ignite mass reprisals. Only six years earlier a general massacre of Armenians in Cilicia had resulted in nearly 30,000 casualties. The Catholicos hoped to avoid a repetition at all costs, unaware that the new policy of the Ottoman government called for the wholesale deportation of all Armenians. Trusting the assurances of Jemal Pablo, governor-general of Syria, and a member of the Young Turk triumvirate, the pontiff’s interventions even persuaded some deserters to hand themselves over to the authorities in order to spare the inhabitants of the town from impending disaster. He had told by fellow Armenians that lower rank officials were less reassuring, some having been told by Young Turk extremists, as he reported: “The goal is your destruction and extinction.” Upon meeting Jemal privately, according to the Catholicos, Jemal informed him that “During the deliberation over this matter in the council of ministers, I tried very hard to argue that instead of deporting and exiling the entire Armenian population, only the writers, intellectuals, and Armenian political party leaders—say fifteen or twenty people from each town—should be exiled. I felt that the helpless common people should be spared, but I am sorry to say that I was not able to make my voice heard.”
"My hometown, the city of Zeitoun, is 3,500 feet above sea level. Mountainsous and surrounded by beautiful scenery, it belongs to the province of Aleppo. It was inhabited solely by 26,000 Armenians. It was built upon rocky hills. The river Shughur flowed from the northeast. This river was formed from the seven cold streams that sprang from the mountains named “Seven Brothers.” The “Dry Stream” flowed from the southeast mountain of Berzinga. It was overflowing in the spring and bone dry in the summer. The city of Zeitoun lay between the Shughur River and Dry Stream.” - Khoren K. Davidson, Odyssey of an Armenian of Zeitoun

"The inhabitants [of the city of Zeytun], some eight thousand in number, deserve mention on account of their courage, in which they happily differ from the rest of their [Armenian] brethren.” - Sir Mark Sykes

"The scenery between Marash and Zeytun is of the 'terribly' impressive order in winter, the ground bare, the trees leafless, and the mountains shining with frosted snow; stunted oak, swart dwarfish pines and an occasional noble cedar form the whole desolate vegetation. This extends over immense vistas of rocky mountain land, and although not beautiful has an effect which pleases more than one would expect.” - Sir Mark Sykes
At the beginning of the war General Fakhri Pasha removed the company of soldiers stationed at Zeytun against the advice from the Vali [governor of the province] of Aleppo, Jelal Bey, and replaced them with Islamic gendarmes from Marash, who were partly personal enemies of the inhabitants of Zeytun. The latter were handed over to them; Zeytun is an exclusively Christian town. Several times men were mistreated and women molested while both the captain of the gendarmerie and the Kaymakam [district governor] tolerated and even favored such abuses.

- Walter Rössler, German Consul in Aleppo to the Foreign Office in Berlin, April 12, 1915

The whole area is very rough and rocky, but there are wonderful views…Near Zeytun itself, three narrow mountain valleys run together. The entire character of the area is uncommonly desolate and wild. You understand automatically from the sight of these dark mountains that people living here must be hard to tame, war-like and much attached to their freedom. The cottages are stuck onto the steep mountain slopes like swallow’s nests; the very narrow alleys passing between them are so steep that it requires an effort just to climb them on foot.

- Eberhard Count Wolffskeel Von Reichenberg, April 17, 1915

“Contrary to the old-established custom, a levy was made at Zeytun at the time of the August [1914] mobilization, and they did not offer the slightest resistance. Nonetheless, the Government has played them false. In October, 1914, their leader, Nazaret Tchaoush, came to Marash with a “safe conduct” to arrange some special points with the officials. In spite of the “safe conduct” they imprisoned him, tortured him, and put him to death. Still the people of Zeytun remained quiet. Bands of zaptiehs (Turkish gendarmes), quartered in the town, have been molesting the inhabitants, raiding shops, stealing, maltreating the people and dishonoring their women. It is obvious that the Government is trying to get a case against the Zeytunlis, so as to be able to exterminate them at their pleasure and yet justify themselves in the eyes of the world.”

- March 14, 1915, Exiles from Zeytun, from the diary of a foreign resident, M. Pierre Briquet on the staff of St. Paul’s Institute, in the town of Tarsus on the Cilician Plain
“Looming over the city on the east slope are the barracks, a solid stone construction…”

- Eberhard Count Wolffskeel Von Reichenberg, April 17, 1915

By the start of World War I in August 1914, the Ottoman government had seen to it that Zeytun was rendered indefensible. The stone barracks manned by a standing regiment and strengthened by artillery dominated the Armenian city and gave complete military advantage to the authorities in case of conflict. The pulverized remains of the monastery (shown to the right) that was situated at a distance from town attest to the fate awaiting Zeytun had its Armenian population resisted deportation. Given that most deportees perished in the deserts, the survivors bitterly debated whether they should have listened to the admonishments of Catholicos Sahag II Khabayan and instead made common cause with the deserters who had grasped the true intentions of the Young Turk regime.

The main fortress of Zeytun with the Ottoman barracks constructed in the 1890s at a higher elevation visible in the upper left hand corner of the picture

Looking down on the town of Zeytun from the height of the Ottoman barracks.

In 1916 in the course of the First World War, with French diplomat François Georges-Picot, Sir Mark Sykes (1879-1919) signed the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement dividing up the Middle East into French and British zones of influence upon the expected defeat of the Ottoman Empire. More than a dozen years earlier, Sykes, a military officer himself with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, was the guest of the commandant of the Ottoman barracks that had been constructed upon a height overlooking the town of Zeytun. Reflecting British policy of that particular time, in his 1904 account of this visit Sykes wrote favorably of his hosts and the Ottoman government, stating: “while no excuse can be made for the conduct of the Turks in slaughtering Armenians, it should be remembered that massacres is still a recognized method of policy throughout the East.” He wrote less flatteringly of the Armenians, whom he described as “living in deadly and hopeless fear of them,” namely the Turks. The Great War (1914-1918) completely changed the long supportive British attitude toward the Ottoman Turks. By 1917 Sykes was speaking derisively of the belligerence of governing cliques in Germany and Turkey. To the Prussian came by natural attraction the Hungarian and the Turk—the two races which believed in dominion by violence. The Hungarian believed in a merciless minority crushing an enslaved majority. The Turk, who in the last ten years had thrown back to the primitive Turanian conqueror, was not content with dominating, but was now engaged in exterminating the denoument, the Syrian Christian, and the Arabs, and was even now beginning to hate the Jews. The Turk had overthrown Islam as Persia had overthrown Christianity. Persia had replaced God by Thor and the Cross by his hammer. The Turk had replaced Mohammed by Oghuz and Allah by the white wolf of the primitive Turks. No belief was to be placed in that cloak of chivalry under which in exceptional cases the Turk tried to hide his abominable acts.

The deserts entrenched themselves in the former cloister...on the outskirts of town, which is a place of pilgrimage. Attempts to have them turned over by the authorities failed, since nobody believes in the promises of the government anymore...They declared they would have to die anyhow. They would rather do that with weapons in their hands than surrender to the government. Thereafter, the local commander surrounded the cloister using an insufficient number of troops. Had he proceeded in a proper military manner, he would have captured all of the robbers [deserters]. He only had to wait for the arrival of the artillery to starve the robbers into submission...Afterwards the cloister was destroyed by artillery fire.”

- Walter Rössler, German Consul in Aleppo to the Foreign Office in Berlin, April 12, 1915
On 11 April [1915], a transport of families (25) arrived in a sorry state in Marash from Zeytun. Without any mercy she had to continue the next morning with the others. The Turks woman gave birth and, despite many pleas, was not even allowed to stay here for at least a day, but they were all from the better, wealthy people. In the second night before they were transported on, one of them into their houses quickly because they considered it to be a sin, but on the other hand to kill a at all with them and in the eyes of the Turks, they were worth nothing anyway. When recently the all sides, they were brought into a khan where they were kept under strict surveillance. Almost no by pestering them with words and abuse and the others had to calmly submit to all this. Driven from joy in seeing the hated people of Zeytun captured. They could not refrain from adding to their misery day?"

"I think there were some animals for the women and children, but the men and women were separated and one detachment sent away an hour before the other. "The officers openly told the soldiers escorting the first company of refugees out of Marash that they were free to do what they pleased to the women and girls.""}

"About nine o'clock on the following morning, the Turkish Commandant summoned about 300 of the principal inhabitants to present themselves immediately at the military headquarters. They obeyed the summons without the least suspicion, believing themselves to be on excellent terms with the authorities. Some of them took a little money, others some clothing or wraps, but the majority came in their working clothes and brought nothing with them. Some of them had even left their shepherds on the mountains in the charge of children. When they reached the Turkish camp, they were ordered to leave the town at once without returning to their homes. They were completely stupe..."" – Karl Blask, German Christian Charity-Organization for the Orient, Marash Station

"The arrests"
“Then the Armenians of Zeytun and the surrounding villages were deported. A portion of them were brought to the swampy area near Konya known as Sultaniye, and others were sent to Der Zor. This was the first of the Armenian deportations.”

- Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, 1913-1922

“A new batch of Zeytunlis has just arrived. I saw them marching along the road, an interminable file under the Turkish whips. It is really the most miserable and pitiable thing in the world. Weak and scarcely clothed, they rather drag themselves along than walk. Old women fall down, and struggle to their feet again when the zaptieh [police] approaches with lifted stick. Others are driven along like donkeys. I saw one young woman drop down exhausted. The Turk gave her two or three blows with his stick and she raised herself painfully. Her husband was walking in front with a baby two or three days old in his arms.

It is not to Aleppo that the Zeytunlis are being sent, but to Der-el-Zor, in Arabia, between Aleppo and Babylonia. And those we saw the other day are going to Karapunar [Sultaniye], between Konya and Eregli, in the most part of Asia Minor... News has come from Konya. Ninety Armenians have been taken to Karapunar. The Zeytunlis have arrived at Konya. Their sufferings have been increased by their having had to wait—some of them 8, some 15, some 20 days—at Bozanti (the terminus of the Anatolian Railway in the Taurus, 2,400 feet above sea level). This delay was caused by the enormous masses of troops passing continually through the Cilician Gates; it is the army of Syria which is being recalled for the defense of the Dardanelles. When the exiles reached Konya, they had eaten nothing, according to our news, for three days. The Greeks and Armenians at once collected money and food for their relief, but the Vali [governor] of Konya would not allow anything of any kind to be given to the exiles. They therefore remained another three days without food, at the end of which time the Vali removed his prohibition and allowed food to be served out to them under the supervision of the zaptiehs.

A letter has come from Karapunar. I know the writer of it, and can have no doubt of his truthfulness. He says that the 6,000 or 8,000 Armenians from Zeytun are dying there from starvation at the rate of 150 to 200 a day. So from 15,000 to 19,000 Zeytunlis must have been sent into Arabia, the total population of the town and the outlying villages having been about 25,000.”

- May, 1915, Exiles from Zeytun, from the diary of a foreign resident, M. Pierre Briquet on the staff of St. Paul’s Institute, in the town of Tarsus on the Cilician Plain.
“This morning, in an interview, the vali [governor] of Aleppo [Mehmet Jelal Bey] did not deny that this general outline of the plan was correct, or that the Zeytun refugees had been sent to the Mosul-Baghdad region. Marash people say that a massacre would have been preferable to this treatment...This is a plan for the breaking down of the Christian population without bloodshed and with the color of legality. I would add that the Aleppo vali is entirely opposed to this plan and considers that the control of the Marash district was taken out of his hands recently, in order to make possible the execution of a policy of which he did not approve.”

Reverend John E Merrill, April 20, 1915

“The first to be summoned were some families in Zeytun. Early one Saturday morning, as usual, the industrious housewives donned their old washing clothes and began their Saturday’s washing. Without warning, all of a sudden, a terrible knocking was heard at many doors. In a minute the soldiers came pouring in, saying that the people in those houses were wanted immediately at the Government House. Not a moment was given to don dress or shoes, but, in night-clothes or washing rags, the mothers and a few fathers snatched sleeping children out of their beds, the women throwing a shawl over their heads as they ran. Of course, many children were left behind, and there are many pathetic stories of little boys and girls, eight or nine years old, stumbling along the road, hardly able from sheer weariness to walk, yet carrying their little baby brother or sister, because, as their mother was being taken away by the soldiers, she had said, “Look after baby and never leave him (or her).”

Letter from a foreign eyewitness, Miss Kate E. Ainslie, dated 6th July, 1915, communicated to Dr. James Barton of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief

“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 scorchèd 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 realize 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 odors. 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.”

Statement, dated 9th May 1916, from Miss H. E. Wallis, a foreign resident at Adana, recording her experiences there from September 1914 to September 1915.
Upon the disarming of the Armenians drafted into the Ottoman army, many were put to work in labor battalions, often building roads in the more rugged parts of the country. These men were typically worked to death, or upon completion of their tasks executed on mass. Hadly Armenian conscripted to serve in the Ottoman armed forces survived the genocide. By this process the Armenian adult male population was effectively decimated.

In certain locations, German authorities were able to secure a temporary reprieve from deportation and execution for groups of Armenian laborers. The Young Turks had taken the Ottoman Empire into war badly prepared. One of the most glaring deficiencies was the limitations of the rail transport system in the country. German engineering firms with the endorsement of the ministries and banks in Berlin had been contracted to build what was called the Berlin-Bagdad railway. The system was designed to connect the far ends of the Ottoman Empire with Constantinople, and the Turkish capital with Berlin, the German capital, in so doing promote the economic development of the country.

To implement the Armenian Genocide, the railroads were transformed into a mechanism for hastening deportation of the Armenian communities toward destinations closer to the killing centers in Syria. By the time war started the tracks had reached the central Anatolian city of Konya and a number of stations beyond at it places called蛴ezi and Bozanti. Konya served as the terminus of the 1915 Armenian deportations by rail from the western Anatolian cities. From thereon the deportees were sent on foot through the mountain passes crossing the Taurus Range and into the lower plain of Cilicia and yonder into Syria and Arabia.

Constructing the rail line through the Taurus Mountains, and the Amanos Range further east, became wartime priorities for the Germans and Ottoman officials. The engineering challenge required the construction of tunnels, bridges, roads, and power stations in the high mountain passes, and year-round living quarters for the thousands of men needed on the job. Some of the German railway company managers went out of their way to protect their critically-needed Armenian employees, but even these were not spared deportation despite the wartime exigencies. Completion of the railway system through the Taurus Mountains was delayed until 1918, too late to make a difference on the battlefronts of the Middle East.

The photographs at the several train stations that were completed, the truck depots, and other facilities, of General Litan von Sanders, head of the German Military Mission to the Ottoman Empire, of Ahmed Jemal Paşa, Commander of the Ottoman Fourth Army, Governor-general of Syria and one of the Young Turk triumvirs ruling the Ottoman Empire, and of Ismail Enver Paşa, Deputy Commander-in-chief of the Ottaman armed forces (second only to the sultan in rank), another of the Young Turks triumvirs, and as War Minister the principal proponent of the entry of Ottoman Turkey into the war in alliance with Imperial Germany, attending the commissioning of the station bearing his name, attest to the high strategic value of the rail line and the Taurus passes.

While a new rail pathway was being blasted through the mountains, the ancient roads through the Cilician Gates were put to use as the deportation routes of the Armenian population of Anatolia. It was the fate of the Zeytin Armenians to cross those passes twice, once as they were marched west to the Konya Plain and eventually confined to the salt flats of nearby Karapınar/ Subhanı; a second time, those who remained, to be bled east with the rest of the Armenian population of the western portions of the Ottoman Empire, including its European parts, who had been first concentrated in Konya, Bilecik, and Bozanti, the last place described by Turkish soldiers themselves, as “hell on earth.”

The extremely rare photographs of the Armenian laborers tell their own story. While labor battalions were to be found in many locations across eastern Anatolia, only the ones working in the Taurus range are documented for certain because of the presence of German photographers, who, like the American Dr. Wilfred Post, flouted Ottoman regulations banning the taking of pictures showing Armenians. With their heavy coats and other protective gear against the elements, the Armenian laborers are seen breaking stones to pave the roads over which Ottoman armies, and Armenian deportees, traveled. The photograph of the laborers with the high mountain to their back already tells another tale, as it shows, almost indistinguishable among the piles of broken stones, two recent graves ringed by natural stones.
"An "Exiles Commission" has come here from Constantinople. It was announced that their business was to be to settle the exiles in this vilayet [province] and not have them go further. Telegrams from Enver Pasha were received stating this, before the Commission came. Now they have come, and it appears that their duty is merely to clear the choked channels and speed up the traffic. They have said that they came not to settle the exiles but to drive them on. Since beginning this letter I have learned that the stream has began to flow again from Eregli and Bozanti to Adana and on, and it is reported that now the destination is Arabia." - Dr. William S. Dodd, Konya, Turkey, September 8, 1915

"Thus on the Baghdad railway line from Constantinople to Aleppo, three points—Bozanti, Kanle-gechid, and Islahiye—had been transitional gathering places for the Armenian deportees who had traversed the roads. Caravans of hundred or thousands had arrived from all sides, successively increasing the total to tens of thousands, and the number of Armenian deportees reaching the tens of thousands had soon doubled and tripled. The distinct intention was annihilation, for in a naturally disorganized country, under a disorganized government, and under such crowded conditions, to provide food every day for all would be impossible. Thus the Turkish government would be exonerated of having planned an extermination." - Grigoris Balakian

"I have heard from a conductor on the railway of the scenes at Bozanti the terminus. He said "Don’t ask me, it is hell on earth, women and girls in groups waiting and shrieking for bread, men lying on their backs too weak to move crying for bread, unburied bodies of the dead lying about." The Pass below is filled with bands and “Chettes” marauders who are waiting to swoop down on them, and these are authorized by the Government, so Turkish soldiers tell us." - Dr. William S. Dodd, American Hospital at Konya, Turkey, August 15, 1915

"There seems to be no end to the convoy which moves over the mountain range from Bozanti south. Throughout the day, from sunrise to sunset, the road as far as one can see is crowded with these exiles." - Itinerary of an American traveler, Mr. Walter M. Geddes, in Asiatic Turkey, November 1915, communicated to the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief

The exhibit THE FIRST DEPORTATION: THE GERMAN RAILWAY, THE AMERICAN HOSPITAL, AND THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE is a project of the Armenian National Institute, Armenian Genocide Museum of America, and Armenian Assembly of America. Concept research and presentation: Rouben Paul Adalian; Exhibit design and project associate: Joseph Piatt; Exhibit graphics: Aline Maksoudian; Project consultant: Aram Arkun

Dedication: In remembrance of Charles N. Mahjoubian (1907 Konya – 2004 Philadelphia) and in memory of Boghos Der Boghossian (1887-1952), an Apostolic Institute graduate. © 2014, Armenian Assembly of America
We got into the carriage and reached Kuleg station, one hour's distance from Tarsus and where the Armenian deportee's tents had been pitched... The whole plain resembled a vast camp. Thousands of tents were pitched in every direction. It's possible that at that time, in Tarsus, there were 30,000 to 40,000 Armenians, generally from Adabazar, Izmid, Bardizag, Broussa, Edirne, Rodosto, Banderma and other places, under canvas. - Yervant Odian, author of Accursed Years: My Exile and Return from Der Zor 1914-1919

The German management overseeing construction of the Taurus tunnels, starting from Bozanti, had established five main stations as construction centers: Belemedik, Tashdurmaz, Kushjlar, Yarbashi, and Dorak. In each, thanks to their industriousness and punctuality, Armenians had succeeded in gaining good positions as civil engineers, draftsmen, blacksmiths, carpenters, joiners, supervisors, clerks, bookkeepers, foremen, and cooks; a very few also joined as laborers. Altogether they were eight hundred... Fortunately, most of the construction workers were noble and humane Swiss who were sympathetic, kind, and friendly to the Armenians. With Christian compassion they shared their grief and protected them on every occasion. One time, a Swiss official, seeing a Turkish laborer beating an Armenian laborer for no good reason, was so infuriated that he charged the Turk and landed him a powerful blow with a hammer, knocking him to the ground, while yelling in Turkish: "You committed all kinds of crimes in the unseen corners of the mountains and valleys. Now you have the audacity to continue your crimes against the hapless Armenians before our very eyes!" The unconscious Turk was in the hospital for quite a few weeks and barely managed to recover. - Grigoris Balakian

More is the pity that an undertaking which from every other except the political point of view spells progress, and which should have been the means of bringing the West back to the East, the daughter back to the mother and source of all civilization, should instead have led to the most violent struggle among the leading nations of the world in all history a struggle in which all the gains made since the French revolution in the direction of the advancement of humanitarian aims, the betterment of the condition of the great masses, popular liberties and the progress in science and the arts, and all the efforts to bring nations closer to one another in a recognition of the common goal of mankind to be dissipated. A railway which, as a medium of exchange of merchandise and of ideas, ordinarily fulfills the function of binding nations together, in this instance has been the primary cause of pulling them apart and of drawing them up in opposing camps, bent on mutual destruction." - Morris Jatrow, Jr., The War and the Bagdad Railway: The Story of Asia Minor and its Relations to the Present Conflict, 1917

Ismail Enver Pasha, Ottoman Minister of War, one of the Young Turk triumvirs and primary proponent of an alliance with Germany and of joining the war, son-in-law of the sultan, and deputy commander-in-chief, second in command to the sultan, being greeted by German military and civilian officials upon his arrival to the commissioning ceremonies of the station bearing his name upon the Berlin-Bagdad rail line in the elevation of the Taurus Range.

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Dedication: In remembrance of Charles N. Mahjoubian (1907 Konya – 2004 Philadelphia) and in memory of Boghos Der Boghossian (1887-1952), an Apostolic Institute graduate. © 2014, Armenian Assembly of America
DESTINATION - THE BARREN PLAIN OF KONYA

"The refugees from Zeytun have been directed to Karapunar, one of the most unhealthy places in the Vizieret [province] of Konya, situated between Konya and Eregli, but nearer the latter. Many of them have died, and the mortality is increasing every day. The malaria makes ravages among them, because of the complete lack of food and shelter. How cruelly ironic to think that the Government pretends to be sending them there to found a colony— and they have no ploughs, no seeds to sow, no bread, no abode; in fact, they are sent with empty hands." - Statement by Fr. W.H. Huntecker, July 1915, communicated to the American Committee for Armenian and Syriac Relief.

"It was used to think that the government’s plan was to put an end to the Armenian Question once and for all by emptying the Armenian provinces of their Armenian population and to scatter the Armenians of Cilicia to prevent a future danger from arising there. Sadly, the project is broader and more radical [than we had thought]: to completely eradicate all the Armenians in Turkey...The project is now being implemented even in Constantinople. Most Armenians living in the provinces of Limri and Brous are now being forcibly taken to the deserts of Mesopotamia, leaving their homes, lands, and belongings. Already the people of Adapazar, Nicomedia [Iznik], the villages of Geyveh, Armash and vicinity, and the villages of Izmit—with the exception of Bardizag [Bahchejik], which has been given a deadline of several days—have been taken away." - Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, 1915-1922

"Of the Zeytun exile in Sultanly [Karapinar] my last account was that over 1,000 had died. Disease and starvation are acquiring increased momentum. The Government forbid any more help being given them, and so those who had been distributing the aid I sent did not dare to continue since they then would have been in the iron grip." - Dr. William S. Dodd, American Hospital at Konia, Turkey, August 15, 1915

"Konya - view toward the mountains, in the west"

"Plains near Konya"

The town of Karapinar, or Sultanly, in the Plain of Konya

"[A] low ridge on the other side of which lies the small village of Karapinar [Karapinar (Sultanly)]. On the right was a line of low hills which appeared to be partly salt and partly sand. At the extreme end of this is Karapinar—we could see the minarets of its mosque long before we reached it... Karapinar is distinctly zift... There is nothing to be got in Karapinar. All the way—the ground was whitish with salt. The barren low hills round Karapinar are all whitish." - Gertrude Bell, Diaries

TWO OPPOSING GERMAN VIEWS ON GENOCIDE: LIBERAL AND NAZI

"The underprivileged German nationals, at present residing in Konya, would hereunto like to present the following report to the Imperial German Embassy. For the past week we have been witnesses of the most moving scenes, which anyone not coming into close contact with them can hardly imagine. Every day long trains of Armenians arrive here, who according to their accounts, have been deported from Izmid, Adapazar, and the surrounding areas. From some of those passing through we have learned that the deportation regulations have already been enforced for many months in Cilicia and North Mesopotamia and as we hear, also other places in Anatolia are being cleared of the Armenians. Today the local Armenians also received the order to leave the town within eight days... The whole of the route from here to beyond Aleppo resembles a caravan of misery and wretchedness. In places such as Karaman, Eregli and Bozanti, where the people themselves are suffering from a shortage of bread, the fate of the deportees is unimaginable; they are destined to suffer a slow, agonizing death by starvation... The whole measure seems to be aimed at a complete extermination of the Armenians. We Germans, who are forced daily to observe this inhumane activity, feel it is our duty as members of a cultural state in the midst of a half-civilized people, to protest against it." - Guenther, Chairman of the Bagdad Railway Company to Konstantin von Neurath, Legation Councilor of the German Embassy in Constantinople.

"The undersigned German nationals, at present residing in Constantinople, 1914-1916, was a career diplomat in the German foreign service. While at the German Embassy in Constantinople between 1914 and 1916, Neurath remained fully informed of the Ottoman government’s policies vis-a-vis its Armenian population. With a large contingent of German military, political, and commercial representatives in Ottoman Turkey during WWI, the German Embassy was probably even better advised of the fate of the Armenians than any other foreign entity, including the American Embassy. Neurath’s career in the diplomatic service culminated with his 1932 appointment in Berlin as Minister of Foreign Affairs. With the rise of the Nazi party to power in 1933, Neurath continued serving in his ministerial capacity until 1938, closely working with Adolf Hitler to undo the Treaty of Versailles, the peace agreement that ended WWI, and expand Nazi control over central Europe. In 1939, with the occupation of Czechoslovakia, Hitler assigned Neurath “Reichsprotector” of Bohemia and Moravia, with Reinhard Heydrich, one of the architects of the Holocaust, as his more powerful deputy. Upon the end of WWII, Neurath was tried and convicted in Nuremberg.

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Neurath, “Reichsprotector of Bohemia and Moravia,” and his deputy Reinhard Heydrich saluted in occupied Prague during Nazi rule

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Neurath, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of Nazi Germany
"The next place where I saw them was at Konya, also a large encampment. There I saw the first brutality. I saw a woman with her baby separated from her husband. He was put on our train, while she was forcibly held back and prevented from getting on to the train. At the next place [Bozanti], where there were said to be about 50,000, their condition was terrible. They were camped on both sides of the railway track, extending fully half a mile on either side. Here they had two wells from which they could get water, one of which was a very long way from the encampment, the other at the railway station platform. At daybreak the Armenians came in crowds—women and children and old men—to the well to get water. They fought among themselves for a place at the well, and the gendarmes, to keep them in order, flogged several people. I saw women and children repeatedly struck with the whips and sticks in the hands of the gendarmes."

- Itinerary of an American traveler, Mr. Walter M. Geddes, in Asiatic Turkey, November 1915, communicated to the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief

"All Armenians from Brusa, Izmit, Konya, and Angora [Ankara] have already been set out on the road. From 200,000 to 300,000 Armenians are concentrated in extreme misery along the Baghdad railroad; they are gradually being moved toward Darsan [Tarsus] and then Aleppo, to be dispersed in the desert after that. Information reaching us indicates that disease and hunger are already causing deaths. Gendarmes and other officials accompanying and supervising the deportees are subjecting them to appalling tortures."

- Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, 1913-1922

"Public fountain opposite Miss Cashman’s orphanage"
Photographed at the American Hospital in Constantinople, seated in the front row, from left to right: Dr. Wilfred D. Post of the American Hospital in Konya; the Mother-Superior of the American Red Cross Hospital in Taksim district of Constantinople; The Honorable Henry Morgenthau, United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire; Mrs. Henry Morgenthau; The Honorable G. Bieravendel, United States General-Consul in Constantinople; Reverend William W. Post, Esq., treasurer of Bible House, Constantinople; with hospital and embassy staff standing.

The photographs taken by Dr. Wilfred Post constitute a unique set of pictorial records of the Armenian Genocide, comparable only to those taken by Leslie Davis, U.S. Consul in Harput [Kharput]. The precise location where the pictures were taken can be demonstrated by comparison with other photographs depicting scenes of Konya, and the captions provided by Dr. Post leave no room for speculation about the people appearing in them.

The pictures reached the United States because they were delivered to Reverend William Peet, treasurer of the American Bible House in Constantinople, who worked closely with the American Embassy to protect the interests of the American missions and to guarantee the personal safety of the American missionaries once war broke out and relations between the United States and Ottoman Turkey became strained, particularly over the mistreatment of the Armenian population. The pictures were transmitted by Ambassador Henry Morgenthau to the Department of State in Washington, DC, through diplomatic pouch, confirming that the ambassador, and his staff, were aware of their existence, and were fully advised of the conditions under which the Armenian people was perishing across the Ottoman Empire.

Dr. Post, along with Dr. William Dodd, and Miss Emma Cushman, ran the American Hospital in Konya. Along with the educational establishments, the medical facilities created by American missionaries, most associated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), constituted part of an extensive missionary network grown through the course of a century and guided by professionals, both men and women, graduated from notable institutions of higher learning in the United States, including Mt. Holyoke, Oberlin, Princeton, Yale, and Harvard.

The teaching staff of the American-funded school of Konya called the Apostolic Institute, with its principal Dr. Armenag Haigazian seated fourth from right. The Institute was founded in 1894 by Reverend Harutune Jenanyan, who earlier had also established St. Paul’s Institute in Tarsus with the support of Colonel Elliott Shephard of New York, husband to Margaret Louise Vanderbilt.
"It is certain that in a matter of months they will be decimated through famine or exposure to this unfamiliar climate. We have an example of this in front of our eyes already: the Armenians from Zeytun and the surrounding areas are now completely transferred, some to the region of [Der] Zor beyond Aleppo and others (about 100 families) to the town of Sultanïye in Konya, where they remain today, naked, hungry, and unsheltered. The area being swampy, contagious disease have already started to take their toll. All applications we have made for communicating with them or sending them aid have gone unanswered."
- Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, 1913-1922

"The entire Armenian population of Andrianople, Rodostos, Malgara, and their vicinity, the large Armenian population of about 110,000 in Iznik, seat of the diocesan bishop; and the nearly 60,000 Armenians of Bilezik, Eskişehir, Katahaya, Afyonkarahisar, and their vicinity—about 170,000 in total—had been put on the road. On reaching Konya, the contrasts of these exits congregated, forming a large encampment on the plain near the town. For the sake of appearances, the Turkish government tried to attribute this crowding of Armenian exiles to the lack of transportation, but actually, by creating an environment of overcrowding and filth, they hoped to start epidemics... Trustworthy eyewitnesses reported the rise of a new tent city on the plain near Konya, tents made from sheets, whose number (according to knowledgeable Armenian and German sources), reached 28,000. This mass of human beings, deprived of any sanitary measures, would obviously be subject to all kinds of suffering and disease."
- Grigoris Balakian
“All reports that the Government is providing food are absolutely false, those who have money can buy, those who have none beg or starve.” — Dr. William S. Dodd, American Hospital at Konya, Turkey, August 15, 1915

“Many of the villagers are mountaineers and lying out on the hot dusty plain by day and exposed to the cold of night they quickly succumb... It is all horrible, horrible—no more description can adequately portray the awful suffering of these unfortunate people whose only crime is that they are Armenians... Whether these unfortunate people are sent on towards the East or whether they remain where they are along the road their future is very dark and it means annihilation for the whole race unless they can be quickly reinstated in their homes with permission to carry on their business or else taken out of the country altogether. Even if they are left just as they are two or three months will probably see the end of most of them.” — Dr. Wilfred M. Post, Konya, September 3, 1915

“In Konya, I met a former colleague from Harput, Sister Laura Möhring, who had come from Baghdad and told me of the nameless misery of the deportees in the desert, where they were situated without bread or water... 5,000 Zeitunli were brought to the unhealthy Sultaniye in the area around Konya. In the beginning, the government distributed bread there, but after this was all gone the misery there is supposed to be dreadful. According to statements by Dr. Dodd from Konya, the wealthy people from there were also deported to Sultaniye; for the period in which their money lasted they shared their bread with the poor. Naturally, this only lasted for a while. Then Dr. Dodd asked the government for permission to give the hungry people bread, whereupon the governor answered that the government was handling this and the people were not in need! If, as friends of Turkey, we Germans keep silent with regard to all of this, then we are the barbarians of whom the newspapers write, “Tell me who you associate with and I will tell you who you are.”” — Report by Miss Wolf Hunecke, July 13, 1915, Pera, Istanbul, forwarded by German Ambassador Hans von Wangenheim to Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg in Berlin
"Three parties without shelter. Old man in foreground is blind and had almost everything stolen from him."

"One of the tents—about a dozen people occupy it."

The exhibit THE FIRST DEPORTATION: THE GERMAN RAILWAY, THE AMERICAN HOSPITAL, AND THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE is a project of the Armenian National Institute, Armenian Genocide Museum of America, and Armenian Assembly of America.

Concept research and presentation: Rouben Paul Adalian; Exhibit design and project associate: Joseph Piatt; Exhibit graphics: Aline Maksoudian; Project consultant: Aram Arkun

Dedication: In remembrance of Charles N. Mahjoubian (1907 Konya – 2004 Philadelphia) and in memory of Boghos Der Boghossian (1887-1952), an Apostolic Institute graduate. © 2014, Armenian Assembly of America
DEPORTED CHILDREN

“For the first time, in Eregli, I saw the life of Armenian deportees living under canvas. The people there were mostly from Adabazar, Izmid, Bardizag, Arslanbeg and Chengiler. Most of them were well-to-do families. Very few had been able to make proper canvas tents for themselves. Most had made hasty shelters from sheets or pieces of cloth. It was forbidden for those living in tents, in the camp, to go beyond certain defined boundaries without special permission. It was even necessary to get a permit to go to the market.

It was dreadful for the crowd to be herded together in a small area where they had to sleep, cook, and cope with their natural needs. But in spite of this oppressive situation, the deportees had not lost hope and had even retained all their moral strength.

Armenian songs were to be heard from the tents right up to the end. Individuals had even brought their violins, karnans, or guitars, and played them. Men played backgammon or cards. In the evening, trays of arak [arak] would be set in many tents. Everyone was convinced that in a little while everything would end and they’d return to their homes. The children had brought their school textbooks with them and it was a moving sight to see little girls, seated on the ground near their tents, learning their lessons so that they wouldn’t fall behind. How many of those poor little ones survived?” - Yervant Odian

“A mother and her three children at the clinic – all sick.”

“Another party without shelter – notice baby in old woman’s lap.”

“The information that I have from Eregli is reliable... There were about 15,000 exiles in Eregli, but there has been a steady stream pouring in that direction, and the number must be larger now, except for the number sent on into the mountains from there. How many there are at Bozanti the terminus of the railway I have not been able to learn.

In Eregli the exiles are encamped in the open fields in the neighborhood of the railway station. No protection is provided for them, and they have none except such shelters as they can make up for themselves out of carpets, coarse matting, cloaks, gunny sacks, sheets, cotton cloth, tablecloths, handkerchiefs, all of which I have seen used here in Konya. There are no sanitary arrangements for this crowd, and every available spot is used for depositing excrement. The stench of the region is described as appalling. Here in Konya I have seen how the field adjoining entirely open was so thickly covered with excrement that it seemed impossible to stop anywhere, and women and girls as well as others defecating there in the day-time simply because there was absolutely no screen or protection. When it is considered that diarrhea and dysentery are rife, you can imagine the results. The region there as well as here is exceedingly malarial, and this is the time of year for it. I have no knowledge of how many deaths have taken place.” - Dr. William S. Dodd, Konya, September 8, 1915

“Watermelon cutting(s) served to refugees in the clinic – the beginning of our free meal enterprise.”
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“3 men driven from Constantinople to Konia (750 kilometers) mostly on foot. Middle man 74 yrs old – others 48 and 24 respectively. Younger man was stripped of most of his clothes – older had only his shoes taken from him.”

“We also felt obliged to attend to the needs of Armenian soldiers whose families had been deported. In particular, the Armenian soldiers at the Dardanelles front, when ill or wounded, were sent to their hometowns for one or two months to recuperate. Because the families of many of these soldiers had been deported, the young men came to Constantinople and relied on the Patriarchate’s charity. I designated the school just outside Kum-Kapu as a place for them to live, and I gave them five piasters daily from the Patriarchate’s Treasury.

Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, 1913-1922

“Another dying child brought to the clinic – father is a soldier, mother died in camp a few days ago. Woman holding child is a friend.”

“Dr. and Mrs. Dodd went through the massacres of 1894 and 1896 and they and Miss Cashman and I have been through two revolutions, one massacre and two wars since then, but we all agree that we have never seen anything like this. Another outrageous side of it is that many of the fathers and brothers of these women and children are in the army fighting the country’s battles…Unless political circumstances allow of their speedy restoration to their homes or their bona fide establishment in new places, transportation to America seems their only hope, or else the nation will be annihilated, and that very soon.” – Dr. Wilfred M. Post, Konya, September 3, 1915

“A mother with her dying child – the father is a soldier.”

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Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, 1913-1922

“A crowd about a fountain – later the crowd became very much larger.”

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Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, 1913-1922
“Today the crier has published through the city that all the Armenians of Konya are to be ready to leave in eight days; that is, on Monday August 23. The scenes that are taking place are simply like the wailing for the dead. Is there no help to prevent this awful crime? I have new details of the horrors of the march beyond Bozanti, 50,000 on foot between there and Aleppo, and the road beset by robbers and dead bodies everywhere.”

- Dr. William S. Dodd, American Hospital at Konya, Turkey, August 16, 1915
"Warning from Zeitun: In previous years on many occasions the Armenians of Zeitun had been under Turkish attack. They had fought courageously and resisted several weeks each time until exhaustion and European intervention had ended the siege, permitting the people of the city to resume life as usual. I had seen such an incident in my year at Zeitun.

This time the pattern changed. The Turks did not attack directly but resorted to treachery. They coerced several leaders of the Armenian community in Marash to join a delegation of Turkish officials to Zeitun. Their mission was to convince the Armenians of Zeitun that they would enjoy peace and security if they would, firstly, give up their guns to the government and secondly, migrate to a new region several miles away. The Protestant minister (Rev. Aharon Shiragian) and Apostolic priest (Rev. Sahag Der Bedrossian) were among the delegation forced to come from Marash. The director of the trade school at the German orphanage, Herr Blank, accompanied them. The clergy and other delegates from Marash had been threatened with dire consequences to themselves and to Zeitun if they refused. They had no choice. Neither did the people of Zeitun. Most of the young fighters had been drafted. Refusal to turn over guns or leave the city meant instant annihilation. This time fully activated Turkish army with powerful weapons, including German Mausers, was on hand to see to that. The Allies were certainly in no position to intervene. Both the visiting Armenians from Marash and the local Armenian leaders in Zeitun reasoned that exodus might mean survival for some. Thus the caravan started out warily but hopefully. The few able-bodied men who had not been taken into the army were placed in a separate caravan and sent away, some toward Konia and some to Bagdad. Very few of them survived the ordeals they experienced. The rest of the population—including women, children and a few old men—were directed towards Urfa.

The young men of Zeitun who had been conscripted into the Turkish army had been placed into work battalions. Some of them appeared in Urfa among a group of 1,200 Armenian soldiers brought in late spring to build a road. These soldiers included natives of Marash, Amash, Gabas, and other Cilician towns as well as Zeitun. Their guns had been confiscated and replaced with shovels and picks. The first week at Urfa they were given liberty to move about the city at will. Some of them were friends of mine from school and orphanage. One morning I invited about twenty-five of them to my home and listened to their stories. They told us of the destruction of their towns and begged me, "Tell the Armenians of Urfa to prepare to defend themselves right now. We are ready to fight and die with them. Giving in to Turkish demands will not guarantee their safety. Let them not be fooled like us. We should have stayed in our towns and fought to defend them. At least we would have died honorably." These men had gone into the army believing they had been conscripted to participate in the war. Now they realized that they had been conscripted just to be removed from their towns so their homes would be defenseless."

Reverend Ephraim K. Jerizenian, Judgment unto Truth: Witnessing the Armenian Genocide

"Paralytic from Afon-Kara-Hissar- not exempted from deportation. Cannot stand straight and has to be carried by his wife - see no 14 (a Protestant)"

"Archbishop Stepannoss, the various prelate of Ismit, had refused an exemption from deportation that the government had granted him. He responded to the governor: "Thank you for the benevolence of the government, but I cannot abandon my flock, which I have tended for forty-five years, proceeded to the head of the deportation caravans, and like a modern-day Moses, he led his people toward Bozanti. From there he put his cart at the disposal of the sick members of his flock and went on foot as far as Aleppo... Especially the priests, whom Archbishop Stepanos ordered to remove their habits and shave their beards so as to escape beatings and persecution by the police soldiers." - Grigoris Balakian
While countless Ottoman officials and Young Turk party operatives ruthlessly implemented the central government’s program of deportation and depredation, a number of professional administrators and military officers disapproved of the treatment of the Armenian population. One governor by the name of Jelal Bey stood out and is reported to have taken measures to ameliorate the condition of the Armenian deportees. It is said that he was governor of Aleppo province when Zaven Amramian was deported against his wishes. He was transferred to Konya, which by the summer of 1915 had been transformed into a massive deportation camp. While Konya turned out to be only a way-station to the deserts of Syria, witnesses were unanimous that Jelal Bey was a man of principle. He did not take long for the Young Turk triumvirate, Enver, Jemal and Talat, to neutralize dissenters within the ranks of officialdom. For the time that Jelal Bey governed in Konya, his benevolence allowed even for the surreptitious delivery of relief to the deported. In the end his views and actions could not alter the intended outcome of the deportations, but his conduct distinguished him from the host of predators that so violently persecuted their defenseless quarry.

"The Vati [Governor Jelal Bey] is a good man but almost powerless. The Ilhids Committee and the Sakarya clique rule all. TheChief of Police seems to be the real head. The Vati [Governor] came here on the promise that Konya should be spared. Then he was delayed in Constantinople long after day until the deportation here should be accomplished. He was furious when he heard of it on his way here, and he is likely to resign soon." – Dr. William S. Dodd, Konya, September 15, 1915

At Konya about the same conditions exist although we are fortunate in having a good Vati [Governor Jelal Bey], however it is much handicapped by some powerful men of the Committee who are opposed to him and accuse him of undue clemency." – Dr. Wilfred M. Post, Konya, September 3, 1915

"The Vati [Governor Jelal Bey] said that he could do nothing as Marash had been taken out from under his jurisdiction, a fact which he deplored and which had occurred without his previous knowledge. He thought that the trouble might have been avoided, if Marash had been under his control. He said that he would telegraph to the Department of the Interior and to Jemal Pasha of the 4th Army, but that he had no authority." – Jesse Jackson, American Consul, Aleppo, April 12, 1915

The Armenians of Western Anatolia who had been deported were able to stay for several months in Konya and its surroundings, thanks to Governor Jelal Bey, who behaved in a humanitarian manner toward the Armenian refugees. I was told that, one day, Jelal Bey personally toured the areas where the deported people were staying. Seeing their misery, he was unable to hold back his tears and moved away quickly, cursing those who had caused this situation to come about. Witnessing Jelal Bey’s humanitarian behavior, the Sublime Porte [Young Turk regime] removed him from Konya and appointed in his place another, who would act according to its position by persecuting the refugee Armenians and pushing them toward the desert. Indeed, Jelal Bey’s successor committed a great cruelty by pushing the Armenians that were living in crowded but sheltered conditions in Konya toward the Arabian desert. – Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, 1913-1922

Because the rail system was relied upon to deliver the Armenian population of western Anatolia, the terminus at Konya and at Bozanti served as the first concentration camps where deportees from the tens of thousands were initially dumped. In the end some 500,000 Armenians were exiled by this route. Bishop Mesrob Naroyan who was also exiled succeeded for a brief period in creating an underground railroad for the delivery of relief funds from the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople and its distribution among the Armenian deportees. By October 1915 the Armenians had been force-marched out of the Plain of Konya, through the Taurus passes and onto Syria, there to die of thirst, hunger or massacre. Eventually Patriarch Zaven Der Yeghiayan too was exiled through Konya and Bozanti to witness for himself the plight of his people dispersed across the Syrian desert. Another deportee, Gregor Balukian, went into hiding disguised as an engineer because he spoke German and found refuge in the remotest construction sites of the rail line. He lived to author a thrilling eyewitness account of the Armenian Genocide titled Armtenische Gutachten, invoking the agony of the Crucifixion as his touchstone. Bishop Naroyan survived, but he was one of a handful of high clergy to have escaped death. When a memorial volume was prepared on the eve of the first commemoration of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 1919, it filled a number of pages to prepare the list of the Armenian prelates who succumbed to the atrocities. Naroyan succeeded Der Yeghiayan as Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople.

"The Armenians of Western Anatolia who had been uprooted were able to stay for several months in Konya and its surroundings, thanks to Governor Jelal Bey, who behaved in a humanitarian manner toward the Armenian refugees. I was told that, one day, Jelal Bey personally toured the areas where the deported people were staying. Seeing their misery, he was unable to hold back his tears and moved away quickly, cursing those who had caused this situation to come about. Witnessing Jelal Bey’s humanitarian behavior, the Sublime Porte [Young Turk regime] removed him from Konya and appointed in his place another, who would act according to its position by persecuting the refugee Armenians and pushing them toward the desert. Indeed, Jelal Bey’s successor committed a great cruelty by pushing the Armenians that were living in crowded but sheltered conditions in Konya toward the Arabian desert." – Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, 1913-1922

Jelal Bey, Ottoman governor of Konya

“Jelal Bey used the law of nationality of Armenians – Ermeni [Orthodox], Catholic, and Protestant – recognized by the Ottoman Government. He ordered Konya to be an encampment center to sort out the Armenian deportees of Turkey and named only “Ermeni [Orthodox] Armenians” in the proclamation of deportation. Also, he ordered all the Protestant and Catholic leaders already deported returned home from Kayseri. This was effective as a civilian order, but not applicable to those who were deportees. The “deportees” in sample: the 12,000 deportees that had...flowed the fields near the Stavron (train station) with “deportees” coming from as far west as Konya as Rodwino (Tekeliğah) in European Turkey and other collection centers to speed up the deportations. Jelal Bey was going according to the law of the country, justice, his conscience and mercy, and his courage to defy the Government order. He was merciful to the sick, the lame, and the blind, and courageous to defy the illegal order of the government to “deport” every Armenian, Catholic, Protestant or Ermeni [Orthodox], and, families of soldiers.” - Charles Mahbjoubian, Garbi to America

It is not possible to create a complete list of the martyred clergy. Their number is very great, as even the smallest village had its church and married priest. But it is possible to select some who had intellectual gifts and were well known, not only for their ordination, but also because of their writings. Among them were about ten from Armash [Young Turk regime] removed him from Konya and appointed in his place another, who would act according to its position by persecuting the refugee Armenians and pushing them toward the desert. Indeed, Jelal Bey’s successor committed a great cruelty by pushing the Armenians that were living in crowded but sheltered conditions in Konya toward the Arabian desert." - Zaven Der Yeghiayan, Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, 1913-1922

Bishop Mesrob Naroyan

Patriarch Zaven Der Yeghiayan (1913-1922)

Voices of Conscience

VOICES OF CONSCIENCE

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Patriarch Zaven Der Yeghiayan (1913-1922)
By remaining in Konya throughout the war despite the break in U.S.-Turkish relations, Miss Emma Cushman maintained oversight of the American hospital and of the American school, called the Apostolic Institute. By so doing she succeeded in transforming the institutions into orphanages and care centers. Much as once Armenian deportees were shipped to Konya by train, after the war, American aid and relief workers arrived by rail to support Cushman’s humanitarian efforts. Joining the transport of one such relief mission was George Robert Swain, a professional photographer accompanying University of Michigan professor Francis Willey Kelsey on an archeological expedition. Besides antiquities, Swain documented the orphans of Konya thereby adding another set of photographs attesting to the Armenian Genocide, in this case its aftermath. As with Dr. Willard Price’s photographs, Swain’s photographs are reproduced with the captions he provided.

"A new boy coming to the school"

"Miss Cushman talking to some boys"

"A poverty stricken woman"

"Part of kindergarten section in action"

"A group of “relief” kindergarten children in Miss Cushman’s care"

"Children doing kindergarten exercises."

"Major Arnold with scores of orphan children under Miss Cushman’s charge."

"So Miss [Emma D.] Cushman gathered the six hundred Armenian children together into an orphanage, that was half for the boys and half for the girls. She was a hundred times better than the “Woman who Lived in a Shoe,” because, though she had so many children, she did know what to do. She taught them to make nearly everything for themselves. In the mornings you would see half the boys figuring away at their sums or learning to write and read, while the other boys were hammering and sawing and planing at the carpenter’s bench; cutting leather and sewing it to make shoes for the other boys and girls; cutting petrol tins up into sheets to solder into kettles and saucepans; and cutting and stitching cloth to make clothes. A young American Red Cross officer who went to see them wrote home, “The kids look happy and healthy and as clean as a whistle.”

From all over the Turkish Empire prisoners were sent to Konia. There was great confusion in dealing with them, so the people of Konia asked Miss Cushman to look after them; they even wrote to the Turkish Government at Constantinople to tell them to write to her to invite her to do this work. There was a regular hue and cry that she should be appointed, because everyone knew her strong will, her power of organizing, her just treatment, her good judgment, and her loving heart. So at last she accepted the invitation. Prisoners of eleven different nationalities she helped—including British, French, Italian, Russian, Indians and Arabs. She arranged for the nursing of the sick, the feeding of the hungry, the freeing of some from prison. She went on right through the war to the end and beyond the end, caring for her orphans, looking after the sick in hospital, sending food and clothes to all parts of the country, helping the prisoners. Without caring whether they were British or Turkish, Armenian or Indian, she gave her help to those who needed it. And because of her splendid courage thousands of boys and girls and men and women are alive and well, who—without her—would have starved and frozen to death.”

“After no school for four years, education was precious; and by now [Dr. Armenag] Haigazian proved his fame in what he did in reopening Jemanyan College (so-called first founder but formally The Apostolic Institute)… Leaving Mrs. Haigazian and daughters in Smyrna, he occupied by the Greek army, he was willing to risk his life for the education of the Armenian children who had been denied education for four years, and, of some of them had returned from the jaws of suffering and death.

To us they were inspirational for human rights and justice, but to the Turks it was dangerous for Armenians to learn about them. To the Turks the greatest danger turned out to be Haigazian, American educated and running a school on the American system and supported by American money inspiring Armenian students... Haigazian was called to Court Martial hearings. Condemned and given few days to close the school and return to jail. Also a few days later it was announced that all Armenian and Greek men between 5 and 60 were to be deported. I was thirteen years old and was free to go all over and watch the proceedings. After all the men were on the train, I was returning home. On Stacyon Jaddus [Station Road] I saw a group of convicts going toward the Stacyon tied together at their ankles with chains and balls. Right in the middle was Haigazian—a wise of a man, philosopher, theologian, prophet, humanitarian and the greatest product of American education and evangelism.

I was amazed at the site of the staff of Jemanyan College in chains, with Haigazian in their midst to ease the burden of chains and balls on him. The staff represented all the educational benefits of the Catholic and Protestant missions, and of the education of many European schools of higher learning... They had been condemned as hardened criminals with the intention of eliminating the influence of Christian powers. I wondered how an Armenian who had spent all his life in Turkey, in the form of a former Vali [Governor], and that it formed an accessory to their place of worship. The Government thereupon proceeded to tear down the bell and tear down the tower, which was of simple construction, accessory to their place of worship. The Government thereupon proceeded to tear down the bell and tear down the tower, which was of simple construction, accessory to their place of worship. The Government thereupon proceeded to tear down the bell and tear down the tower, which was of simple construction, accessory to their place of worship. The Government thereupon proceeded to tear down the bell and tear down the tower, which was of simple construction, accessory to their place of worship. The Government thereupon proceeded to tear down the bell and tear down the tower, which was of simple construction, accessory to their place of worship.

The Government some time ago ordered the Protestant Congregation to take down the bell-tower, which they refused to do, saying that it had been put up by permission of a former Vali [Governor] and that it formed an accessory to their place of worship. The Government thereupon proceeded to tear down the bell and tear down the tower, which was of simple construction, accessory to their place of worship. The Government thereupon proceeded to tear down the bell and tear down the tower, which was of simple construction, accessory to their place of worship. The Government thereupon proceeded to tear down the bell and tear down the tower, which was of simple construction, accessory to their place of worship. The Government thereupon proceeded to tear down the bell and tear down the tower, which was of simple construction, accessory to their place of worship.

“On Alaeddin Hill (Alaeddin Tepe) of Konya, there was an Armenian church. Soon after the deportation, I saw that church demolished.” — Charles Mahjoubian

Top: Orphan girls; Bottom: Orphan boys

“Ruins of the Armenian church” — Charles Mahjoubian