

TREBIZOND AND NORTH-EASTERN TURKEY

BY DENIS A. H. WRIGHT

A lecture delivered to the Royal Central Asian Society on Wednesday, October 24, 1945. In the Chair, Admiral Sir Howard Kelly, G.B.E., K.C.B., C.M.G., M.V.O.

The CHAIRMAN, in introducing the lecturer, said: Mr. Denis Wright is going to speak to us about the port of Trebizond, whose poetical-sounding name suggests the starting-point of the "Golden Road to Samarkand." I had the pleasure of serving with Mr. Wright in Turkey. From September, 1939, to February, 1941, he was British Vice-Consul at Constanta. After the rupture of diplomatic relations with Rumania he went to take charge of the British Consulate at Trebizond. There, for almost two years, he and his wife were the only two English people; for part of that time he was the only British representative on the Black Sea. From May, 1943, until January of 1945 Mr. Wright was our Consul at Mersin. Although he and I had no direct dealings with each other, I know he was one of the most co-operative of all the British officials in Turkey, and that he did everything he possibly could to help the Services.

WHEN in February, 1941, I passed through Ankara on my first visit to Trebizond I was told three things about the place:

firstly, that it was the centre of a very large hazelnut-producing area, probably the largest in the world; secondly, that my British community there would be a very small one; and, thirdly, that Trebizond had for many hundreds of years been the transit port of a most important trade to and from Persia, that that trade still flourished, and that I should see camels arriving daily from Persia loaded with all the exotic merchandise of the East. When I reached Trebizond (or Trabzon, if we are to give it its Turkish spelling) I found that nuts were, indeed, the life-blood of the place; that my British community was extremely small, consisting of one man at Giresun, west of Trebizond, and a small group of four British mining engineers working in the copper mines up on the Russian frontier. I found, too, that the centuries-old Persian trade still went on, but by lorry, and that the last camel from Persia had been seen in Trebizond in 1936. That news had not reached Ankara, and my excuse for addressing you to-day—because I am not an expert—is that I do know that very few European people have been in that part of the world within recent years and that there are many things about the area which may in consequence not be known to you.

Though Trebizond, with its 25,000* inhabitants, is the third largest Turkish town on the Black Sea, it is dismally isolated from the rest of the country. This is one of the reasons why Trebizond and North-Eastern Turkey in general are so little known to the outside world to-day. In the nineteenth century, when steamer and horseback were the only means of locomotion in Asia Minor, the leisured traveller found it no more irksome to wander through Eastern than through Central or Western Turkey; nor were there the modern "military zones" which in the frontier regions now add to the difficulties of travel. Hence the com-

* 1945 Census figures.

paratively large number of British travellers—such as Kinneir, Hamilton, Bryce and Lynch—who then visited these parts and described them for posterity. Another reason why Eastern Turkey was better known to Europe in the nineteenth century was that, after the opening of the Turkish Black Sea ports to foreign shipping in 1830, the ancient caravan route from Trebizond to Tabriz again became, as in the days of the Romans and Marco Polo, the principal trade route between Europe and Persia. Travellers as well as the textiles of smoky Manchester passed through Trebizond on their way to the bazaars of Tabriz and Teheran. Since the 1914-18 war, other routes to Persia have been developed and the commercial importance of Trebizond as a transit port has steadily declined. Travellers in the grand manner of the Victorian Age have disappeared, and comparatively few Europeans have visited North-Eastern Turkey since the First World War.

There is as yet no air service to Trebizond, though it can be only a matter of time before the Ankara-Van airline links up with the Black Sea coast. As things are to-day, it is impossible, under the most favourable conditions, to reach Trebizond in less than two full days from Ankara. The quickest route is by train through Sivas to Erzerum, a forty-hour journey, whence one can motor the 203 miles to the coast. Alternatively, one can go to Samsun by train and there wait for the eastbound ship which calls thrice weekly. Finally, and best of all, if time is no object, one can sail from Istanbul and follow the route that Jason and his Argonauts took. There is no better introduction than this to the beauty and grandeur of Turkey's Black Sea littoral, for the steamer sails close inshore, and, unless she is the weekly "express," stops at all seventeen ports of call between the Bosphorus and Hopa, the terminal port a few miles from the Russian frontier.

East of Samsun, stretching to the Russian frontier, there is a narrow and fertile coastal strip, bounded on the landward side by high mountains which rise steeply from the sea. They act as a barrier between the coast and the treeless plateau of the interior, whose long, bitter winter is in marked contrast to the temperate climate and rich vegetation of the coastal belt. No attempt has yet been made to tunnel a railway through these mountains, though for many years there has been much talk of building a line to Trebizond from the interior. The main link between the coast and the towns of the interior is still the old caravan route, now a motor road, from Trebizond to Erzerum, past Mount Ararat to the Persian frontier. The coast road from Samsun to the Russian frontier is in such poor condition that only certain stretches of it are in use, with the result that shipping, despite the complete lack of harbours along this coast, plays a vital life in the everyday life and economy of the coastal belt.

I have already described the chequered history of the caravan route from Trebizond to Tabriz in an article entitled "Trebizond and the Persian Transit Trade," which appeared in the October, 1944, issue of this society's Journal. All I need do here is to say something of its present condition.

Although there was some motor traffic between Trebizond and

Erzerum (and possibly Tabriz) during the early 1920s, the journey was a highly adventurous one, as those who have read Colonel A. Rawlinson's *Adventures in the Near East* will recollect. It was not until 1931 that the Turkish Government, anxious to recapture its lost transit trade, started to convert the old caravan route into a first-class motor highway. Although work on this road is still in progress—for there have been immense physical difficulties to overcome as well as war-time shortages of manpower—it is well on the way to becoming one of the best motor roads in the Near East, with the added attraction of passing through some of the finest mountain scenery in Turkey. With its easy gradients, wide bends and strong bridges of reinforced concrete, it has for some years been capable of taking fully loaded commercial vehicles, and in 1937 a regular passenger and freight bus service was inaugurated between Trebizond and the Persian frontier, while in 1940-41 the Germans were able to use the road to bring lorry loads of Persian cotton to Trebizond, whence it could be shipped to Europe without fear of interference from our naval blockade.

Much credit for the fine engineering on this Transit Road is due to Mr. William Cramer,* a Swiss engineer educated in England, who is in charge of the work and is also responsible for the excellent maintenance system, unique in Turkey, which I described in my article on the Transit Trade. However, though this road serves an essential purpose by linking Trebizond and the coast with the railway 200 miles away, I do not think it will ever succeed in attracting back to Trebizond anything like the old volume of Persian transit trade, which, in so far as it passes through the Black Sea at all, will either use the railway from Samsun or else the Russian route from Batum.

The Hopa-Kars road, almost 100 miles farther east as the crow flies, is the only other motor road leading into the interior from the coast, and was originally built by the Russians after their acquisition of the districts of Batum, Artvin, Ardahan and Kars under the Treaty of Berlin. When in 1921 Turkey regained the last three districts by her Treaty of Kars with Soviet Russia, the road, except for the first few miles from Batum, ran exclusively through Turkish territory. In the 1930s the Turks built a motor road from Hopa across the coastal mountains to Borçka, where it joined the road to Kars, since when the Batum-Borçka section has been allowed to fall into disrepair, as for many years there has been virtually no communication between Russia and Turkey along this part of their frontier. I travelled the length of this road in October, 1941, spending two nights at Ardahan and one on the *Yalınız Çam* Pass on the way, and was impressed by the comparatively good condition of the surface, though, as there is no maintenance system in operation, I got the impression that, in view of the very small amount of motor traffic using the road, it would soon suffer from neglect. It is, of course, closed throughout the winter months, and already, in early October, the lorry in which I was travelling twice got stuck in the slushy snow that then lay on the 8,500-foot *Yalınız Çam* Pass north-west of Ardahan. Words fail me in attempting to de-

* An interesting technical article on the Transit Road, by Mr. Cramer, was published in the May 9, 1940, issue of *The Structural Engineer*.

scribe the beauty and variety of the scenery through which the road runs as it crosses the mountains between Ardahan and the coast—dense pine forests, snow-tipped peaks away in the distance, hairpin bends that twist and turn on the edge of terrifying precipices towering high above the Çoruh river, which looks like a thin green riband as, a thousand or more feet below, it cuts its way by narrow gorges through the rock of the mountains. The only description I have seen published of this little-known frontier road is in *Allah Dethroned*, by Lilo Lenke, who in 1935 travelled over it from Kars to Hopa by lorry, just as I had done.

I hope that when travel again becomes normal the Turkish Government will do more than it has in the past to encourage foreigners to visit North-Eastern Turkey, because it is a pity that so much beauty should be so little known. Already there are in existence at the small mountain towns of Gümüşane, once famous for its silver mines, and Bayburt, whose castle is mentioned by Marco Polo, two of the most modern hotels in Turkey, complete with private suites, central heating and Western bathrooms and toilets. Both towns are on the Transit Road and easily accessible by car. The hotels were built with the idea of catering for passengers travelling to and from Persia, but, owing to war-time shortages of essential fittings, they have not yet been opened. Once they are open they could be used to attract visitors from abroad to a corner of Turkey which has suffered, I feel, from an official unwillingness to welcome foreigners.

There are periods each winter when certain parts of North-Eastern Turkey are, except for the wireless, completely isolated from the rest of the country—roads blocked by snow, ships unable to discharge into lighters owing to rough seas, and telegraph wires blown down (there is as yet no public telephone service between Eastern Turkey and Ankara and Istanbul). At such times the daily papers from Ankara and Istanbul, invariably three or four days old when delivered, may be a week or more out of date, so that in almost all the towns of North-Eastern Turkey, including Gümüşane, with its 3,000-odd souls, a weekly or bi-weekly paper is published, giving local news and small items of national and foreign news picked up on the nightly press summary broadcast from Ankara at dictation speed. Needless to say, circulations are very small, probably not exceeding 500 copies per issue even in the larger towns such as Erzerum (53,000), Trebizond (25,000) and Kars (22,000). During the war these papers, obviously following official instructions from Ankara, refrained from taking sides or expressing views on foreign affairs except when given a lead. I must, however, record one pleasing exception in the shape of *Güzel Ordu*, said to be the only village paper in Turkey, which is published at Uzunisa, near Ordu, on the Black Sea. In December, 1942, the newly appointed German Consul in Trebizond tried hard, by various means, to persuade the editors of all the papers published in his consular district to adopt a more pro-German attitude. Whereas most of them merely ignored his blandishments, though one or two saw fit to print more than a fair proportion of German stereotypes and news items, the peasant editor of *Güzel Ordu* chose to write a virulent article openly attacking the German Consul for sticking his nose into other people's

business. It was a brave thing to do at that time and made headline news in at least one Istanbul paper.

Until communications are developed it is unlikely that any serious attempt will be made to industrialize North-Eastern Turkey, though there has been talk at various times of setting up factories to process local produce, such as the hazel nuts of the coastal belt, the fruit of Gümüşane and Pazar, the anchovies caught each spring off Trebizond, the tobacco of Platana. It is also said that work is soon to begin on the construction of a proper harbour at Trebizond—an essential need if the development of this area is really intended. The main constructive activity that has taken place here during the past fifteen years has been the building of much-needed schools and hospitals, of which those at Trebizond are among the finest in Turkey. The Trebizond district has also been equipped with an excellent water supply and hydro-electric plant, both installed by German firms, while British mining experts have helped the Eti Bank to develop the copper mines at Mogul, near the Russian frontier, and the iron mines at Divrigi, between Erzincan and Sivas. A few years ago two British tea-planters spent a year or so at Rize, east of Trebizond, advising the Turks in their Government-sponsored experiment to grow there sufficient tea to make Turkey one day independent of foreign supplies. Tea is grown nowhere else in Turkey. The wild nature of the country, poor communications and the consequent lack of contact with the rest of the world have tended to retard the modernizing influences that radiate from Ankara and Istanbul, so that it is not surprising to find that many old habits and prejudices still survive here—the *carsaf* is still much in evidence, woman is a long way from being emancipated, there is much suspicion of foreigners, etc. If, despite the coming of the motor-car and the cinema (seen nightly at Giresun and Trebizond but only on rare occasions at Rize and the towns east of Trebizond), the tempo of life has quickened little since the turn of the century, the same cannot be said of the composition of the population of this area.

Prior to the 1914 war most of the towns of North-Eastern Turkey contained large numbers of Greeks and Armenians who, as Marco Polo had long since observed, "reside in the cities and fortified places and gain their living by commerce and manufacture." For instance, in 1890 it was estimated that, of Trebizond's 35,000 inhabitants, 8,200 were Greeks and 6,000 Armenians. There were also numerous Greek villages throughout the coastal belt, while Armenian settlements were scattered over the bleak "Armenian" plateau south of the mountains. The Greeks were descended from the pre-Christian colonists and others who had settled within the borders of the independent Greek Empire of Trebizond between 1204 and 1461, while the Armenians had belonged originally to Greater Armenia, which had been overrun by the Seljuks in the second half of the eleventh century. It was estimated by V. Cuinet in 1890 that of the total population of 1,047,700 in the Trebizond Vilayet (whose boundaries roughly included the present-day Vilayets of Samsun, Ordu, Giresun, Trabzon, Gümüşane, Rize and Çoruh) 193,000 were Greeks and 47,200 Armenians. To-day both Greeks and Armenians have almost dis-

appeared from this part of Turkey, though small isolated groups of both still survive, and it is interesting to see how it is that they have remained here.

Apart from place-names of obvious Greek origin found throughout the Black Sea coast of Turkey—*e.g.*, Sinop, Unye, Giresun, Tirebolu, Arakli, Atina, etc.—and the many Byzantine buildings still standing in and around Trebizond, there are other, more animate, reminders of the part once played by the Greeks in the life of this region. In Trebizond, for instance, there are to-day three closely related families, about twelve souls in all, whose names are pure Greek and who speak amongst themselves the curious Trebizond Greek which until 1923 could be heard in the open-fronted shops of the town. These people are of the Orthodox religion, but escaped the exchange of population* because they could claim Russian nationality, which had originally been acquired by their grandfathers some time in the middle of the nineteenth century when the Czar, posing as the protector of the Christians in Turkey, encouraged the Sultan's Greek subjects to acquire Russian protection and nationality by the simple process of travelling to one of the nearby Russian ports (usually by Russian steamer, which in those days regularly called at Trebizond) and there taking an oath of allegiance to the Czar. In due course, the Russian Consul at Trebizond would be informed and would, if requested, issue Russian papers to them.

More interesting and more numerous than these Russian-Greeks of Trebizond are two Greek-speaking groups found in the neighbourhood of Of, some thirty-six miles to the east of Trebizond, and in the mountain valleys between Maçka and Krom to the south of Trebizond. They escaped the 1923 exchange not because of their nationality but because of their Moslem religion. It is important to distinguish between the Oflis and the second group known as Maçkalis or Kromlis.

Of is a Greek place-name (from *ὄφις*, meaning a serpent, used, it is said, to describe its winding river), and there seems little doubt that the area was early colonized by the Greeks. However, the Oflis, unlike their brother Greeks along this coast, are believed to have been converted to Islam at the end of the seventeenth century and, as frequently happens in the case of converts, became fanatic defenders of their new faith, winning a reputation for producing more mollahs than any other district in this part of Turkey, a reputation which they still possess. An Armenian writer Father Minas Bjishkian, in his *History of Pontus*, published in Venice in 1819, described the Oflis as "cunning, fanatic Moslems of Greek origin, skilful in coining money and credulous in sorcery," while in 1886 the Greek Archbishop of Trebizond, having decided to visit the small Christian flock in the Of region (then estimated to number a bare 700 out of 100,000 inhabitants), wrote that since 1837 no Christian prelate had dared to visit the district, which was "thought a wild and dangerous

* By the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne it was agreed that, except for the Greek inhabitants of Constantinople and the Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace, "there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory and of Greek nationals of the Moslem religion established in Greek territory."

one for the Christians, the Musulman inhabitants being supposed to possess a fanaticism against all other creeds. As a consequence no one dared, and scarcely anyone yet dares, venture into those parts." However, much to the Archbishop's surprise, he received an excellent welcome from the Moslem majority, in whose friendliness he felt that " the sentiment of their old Christian origin had awakened in them."

Most of the Oflis, being Moslems, were left untouched by the exchange of populations, and it is certain that round Of to-day there is still a considerable Greek-speaking element, though I have no clue to their exact numbers except the 1935 Turkish Census,* which records that there were 2,265 people in the Trebizond Vilayet (in which Of is situated) who acknowledged Greek as their mother tongue. Elsewhere in North-Eastern Turkey there are, according to the same Census figures, only very small, Greek-speaking groups, the largest being 109 and 19 in the Vilayets of Erzerum and Samsun respectively.

There used in the old days to be several Greek villages in the mountain district between Maçka and Krom. Cuinet states that there were nine such villages, with a combined population of between 12,000 and 15,000, and records a local legend that these Greeks were descended from stragglers of Xenophon's Ten Thousand who passed this way in 402 B.C. These Greeks, who were described in 1819 by Father Minas Bjishkian as " a special sect of half-Musulman, half-Greek," appear to have resisted conversion to Islam, but, in order to avoid persecution, to have professed to be Moslems whenever there was a danger that by not doing so they might suffer, though secretly they maintained their Christian faith and worshipped in churches whenever they could. The ambiguity of their position, in which they sought to make the best of both worlds, was ended in 1858 when the Sultan decreed that all those who did not declare themselves Christians would be liable for military service, with the result that all but 500 families are said to have declared themselves Christian. It is the descendants of these 500 families who escaped the 1923 exchange, though as far as I could learn few of them now live in the mountains but seem to have migrated to the coast.

No one, as far as I know, has yet made a serious study of these Greek-speaking Moslems of Eastern Turkey. What little has been written about them[†] is based on conflicting second-hand reports. Cuinet refers to the Oflis as Moslem Lazes who speak Greek, while Pears writes of " some 30,000 Stavriotai" between Batum and Trebizond openly professing Mahometanism while secretly practising Christian rites, yet he makes no mention of the Kromlis and Maçkalis. I can, unfortunately, add nothing to our scanty knowledge beyond confirming that Greek is still spoken round Of to-day. How many Greek-speaking people there now are in this area, whether or not they secretly practise certain Christian rites, to what extent the Kromlis still survive in the mountains (in 1930 an English visitor to Stavri in the Krom region found the villagers talk-

* Detailed statistics of the 1940 and 1945 Census have not yet been published, so that all the figures I quote (except town populations) are from the 1935 Census.

[†] Cf. F. W. Hasluck's *Islam and Christianity*, Sir Edwin Pears' *Turkey and Its People* (1911) and V. Cuinet's *La Turquie d'Asie* (1890).

ing Greek among themselves), are questions the answers to which it would require many months of patient research to discover.

In view of the large number of Armenians who once inhabited North-Eastern Turkey and the fact that they suffered no official exchange as did the Greeks, it is not surprising to find still, in various part of this area, small groups of Armenians who somehow escaped the fate of their fellows—*e.g.*, the 1935 Census gives the following figures under the Armenian mother-tongue heading:

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|------------------|-------|
| Vilayet of Sivas | 3,094 |
| „ „ Çoruh | 2,031 |
| „ „ Ordu | 592 |
| „ „ Erzincan | 46 |

As far as I know, these and other Armenian-speaking groups recorded in the Census are almost all found in the bigger towns of their Vilayets. The only exception that I know of is the comparatively large group of 2,031 in the Vilayet of Çoruh which, since 1935, has been divided into the two separate Vilayets of Çoruh and Rize. I never came across or heard of any Armenians living in the towns of either of these two Vilayets, which lie between Trebizond and the Russian frontier, and my guess is that this group is probably to be found in the wild mountain district of Hamsheen south of Rize. I was unfortunately never able to visit this region, but various nineteenth-century writers and travellers, including Father Minas Bjishkian and Cuinet, mention that the Hamsheen area is inhabited by Armenian-speaking Moslems. It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that these Armenians, who, according to Father Minas, came from Ani, the ancient capital of Greater Armenia, were converted to Islam in the seventeenth century, at the same time as their close neighbours the Greeks of Of. In the case of both the Armenian-speaking Hamsheenlis and the Greek-speaking Oflis, it has been said that they retain some of their Christian practices and beliefs, though no first-hand evidence of this has ever been forthcoming as far as I know. Just as the Oflis escaped the 1923 exchange because of their Moslem religion, so, if my guess is correct, did this Armenian-speaking group continue to stay on in the mountains.

There are, as is to be expected of a frontier district, a fair number of Georgian-speaking people in the Çoruh Vilayet (15,000 in 1935), while in the adjoining frontier Vilayet of Kars, settled in the towns of Ardahan and Kars and intervening villages, there are small colonies of Russian-speaking peasants, known locally as "Molokans," but probably also including some of the Dukhobortsy sect mentioned by Lynch in his classic *Armenia*. Both the Molokans and the Dukhobortsy, as dissenters from the Russian Orthodox Church, were banished from the home provinces of the Russian Empire between 1841 and 1845 and, after 1878, moved into the newly acquired districts of Kars and Ardahan where, as I saw in October, 1941, they still reside, the women in particular being conspicuous by the gay colours they wear and their uncovered faces. According to Lynch, the doctrine of both sects "represents an extreme and logical form of the Protestant faith . . . singing psalms appears to be their principal method

of spiritual expression," and he adds that they hold their services in plain wooden buildings without pulpit, altar or religious pictures. I was told by Turkish officials in Kars and Ardahan that the Molokans are an industrious people, and from what I saw they seemed to be on excellent terms with their Moslem masters.

The non-Turkish Moslems of North-Eastern Turkey consist, in the main, of Kurds, Lazes and Circassians. The Kurds are by far the largest minority in the country and were, until recently, found all over North-Eastern Turkey except along the coastal belt. In 1935 the Census recorded 70,776 in the Vilayet of Kars and 57,627 and 64,048 respectively in the Vilayets of Erzerum and Erzincan, though since the 1937 revolt I believe that the Turkish Government has adopted a policy of keeping them farther south, so that there are fewer Kurds in North-Eastern Turkey to-day than there were ten years ago.

The Lazes are, to my mind, the most interesting of all the Turkish minorities, and it is a pity that so little is known about them. The resourceful Father Minas Bjishkian suggests that they are the descendants of the Colchians, to whose land Jason went in search of the Golden Fleece; while Lynch, writing at the end of last century, states that they "may represent the aboriginal occupants of their country, the wild tribes who harassed the army of Xenophon." According to Finlay,* the district between Trebizond and the Phasis, previously known as Colchis, was renamed Lazia in the time of Justinian; he also records that the Greeks of Constantinople were wont to refer contemptuously to the Comneni Emperor of Trebizond as the "Prince of the Lazes," just as to-day the Turks are apt to nickname anyone coming from this part of the country as "Laz."

The vast majority of the Lazes (54,000 out of 63,000, according to the 1935 Census) are settled in the coastal region between Rize and the Russian frontier. They are recognized as good orthodox Moslems and the finest seamen on the Black Sea. They are also crack shots, and go out in their schooners hunting porpoises which they shoot as they leap from the sea; they then bring them to Trebizond, where they are boiled down for their oil. The Laz language, which belongs to the Mingrelian-Georgian group, is unrelated to Turkish. They also have a national dance of their own, the Horun, which is danced by the men jerking and stamping in a circle round a fiddler or bagpiper; often one can see it being performed by steerage passengers on the Black Sea steamers.

Under Ottoman rule Rize, now famous for its tea, tangerines and linen, used to be the capital of the Sanjak of Lazistan, which, until 1878, included Batum and district. When Batum was ceded to the Russians the Lazes there, unwilling to remain under Christian rule, moved westwards to join their brethren on Turkish territory, after having made various picturesque but unsuccessful appeals to Queen Victoria, Lord Salisbury and the Lord Mayor of London to proclaim a British protectorate over Lazistan. In return for such a declaration the Laz Beys, in October, 1878, offered to send a contingent of 4,000 Lazes to fight for Her Majesty in her war with the Afghans! To-day Lazistan no longer exists as an

* G. Finlay, *Medieval Greece and the Empire of Trebizond*.

officially recognized district, though locally the term is still in common use, but the Lazes have no political ambitions or separatist ideas and are loyal Turkish subjects.

The Circassians, who migrated in large numbers into Turkey in 1863-64 following the "Russification" of the Caucasus, are found in small colonies all over Turkey to-day, and apart from 7,000 odd in the Samsun Vilayet there is no especially large group of them in the area I have been discussing.

In concluding this sketchy survey of North-Eastern Turkey, I should add that even in the prosperous days of the nineteenth century, when the transit trade was at its height, there were very few "Franks," apart from an impressive array of Consuls, settled in Trebizond or elsewhere in the area. Most of the transit trade and shipping was in the hands of local Greeks and Armenians, though there was an English family called Stevens engaged in business, also a Swiss named Hochstrasser, whose firm, after almost a hundred years of existence, is now the only foreign concern engaged in trading along the Turkish Black Sea. The number of Europeans now residing in North-Eastern Turkey can be numbered on the fingers of one's hands, and the Consuls who still remain—British, French and Persian—have only themselves and their clerks to look after.

Mr. E. H. KING asked if Mr. Wright could give any information as to the condition of the castle at Bayburt, largely rebuilt by the Seljuk Turks. Mr. King believed that the covered way down to the river was of Armenian origin, whereas the remainder dated partly from the time of Justinian or at least from the Seljuk period in the thirteenth century.

Mr. WRIGHT replied that he was last in Bayburt in October, 1943, but had not had time to go over the castle.

Mrs. BELL asked when most of the work on the Transit Road had been completed. She had been over the road twelve years ago, and the difference between her recollection of it then and what she had seen on the screen was most marked. There must have been enormous difficulties overcome in the building of so fine a road in war-time.

Mr. WRIGHT said the work on the old caravan route to and from Persia was started in 1931 and had continued at an accelerated rate until 1939; he imagined the bulk of the work was done between 1936-39. Work had continued during the war, and when he last motored down the road in October, 1943, the 150-mile stretch between Trebizond and the Kop Pass was, except for small patches, completed. The photographs he had shown were taken by himself and were not propaganda photographs. It really was an astounding and first-class piece of road-building. The road was normally kept open in winter as far as Erzerum, but not beyond.

Mr. BARBOUR asked what was the effect of the exchange of population in the coastal area. There had been the disappearance of the Greeks and the Armenians; had the population increased or diminished, or what were the general effects of the exchange?

Mr. WRIGHT could not give the figures of the population immediately prior to the exchange, but certainly he could say that, Istanbul excepted, Trebizond was now by far the most densely populated Vilayet in Turkey.

He imagined that the Turks from Greece who came into the country in 1923-24 had been settled in the area to some extent. One effect of the exchange had been that certain industries had tended to decline. For instance, west of Trebizond there was a place called Tirebolu which in the old days had been well known for its wine; no grapes were now grown there and no wine was made. Otherwise there did not seem to have been any epoch-making change which could be attributed to the disappearance of the Greeks and Armenians.

Mrs. BELL asked in what sort of state was Amasya at the present time; how far had it survived the 1939 earthquake? and Mr. WRIGHT replied that he had not been there, but he had been in Erzincan in 1942 and that had been completely destroyed by the earthquake. Although the earthquake had happened nearly three years before, he found that the entire population was still living in wooden army huts built very neatly in row after row, the streets being numbered 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on. No building had been left after the earthquake fit to live in. Since the disaster a new station had been erected; also a new hospital and new barracks. Otherwise it was like a typical " Wild West" country town, with about half its pre-earthquake population.

The CHAIRMAN, in proposing a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Wright for his admirable lecture, which had revealed an entirely different aspect of Turkish life for those who only lived in Ankara and Istanbul, said that if the audience had had the intense pleasure that he had had in listening to the lecture they would then all agree with him that they had spent a most enjoyable afternoon.