

New York, New York

August 28, 1943

To the Members of the Families  
of the Robert College and  
Girls' College Staff

Dear Friends:

It is almost a month since I reached Washington, after flying all the way from Cairo, by the route across Central Africa and South America. On June thirtieth, I left Istanbul and spent a day in Ankara, before going on to Cairo, by way of Aleppo, Beirut, and Jerusalem. When I left Istanbul, the affairs of both Colleges were in reasonably good order and, while I am on leave of absence, will be in the hands of the experienced vice-presidents, Huseyin Pektash, Dean Burns, and Dean Scott.

The other College travelers coming toward America this Summer are: Dean Lynn A. Scipio, who is retiring at the age of sixty-six, after a magnificent record of service in building up the Engineering School; Professor and Mrs. J. Gardner Bennett, who are coming for reasons of health; and Miss Elizabeth Tank and Mr. Thomas A. Dickey, whose contracts have terminated. In New York, I have found that Miss Tesar and Mrs. Potts are already on their way back to Istanbul; while Mrs. Seelye and Miss Gurney are expecting to leave any day.

Regarding people who remain at the Colleges, I can report that all are well and doing a fine job. Both institutions have been very crowded during the past year, for the kind of education that we have to offer is now very highly thought of in Turkey. At Robert College, the number of Turkish military officers taking engineering studies continues to be in the neighborhood of 150, which places a great burden on our teaching staff. At the Girls' College, we really ought to auction off places for boarding students, for even before I left, we had approximately a hundred applicants for a handful of beds. Dean Burns, Dean Scott, and Dean Bliss will have their hands full keeping the enrollment down to numbers which we can handle, even though we have raised entrance requirements and raised the fees to what must seem to many families to be almost astronomical heights. This we have had to do because inflation of the Turkish currency and the decline in local production resulting from the mobilization of the Army have led to a rise of prices which probably averages well over three-hundred per cent. All kinds of imported materials are practically unobtainable in the country, and costs of living have risen so high as to make life very difficult for those of our Staff who do not live in College buildings and eat at the College table. However, we are finding means to ease this situation somewhat and feel sure that it will improve in the course of the current year.

Turkish opinion is now even more pro-United Nations than in the past. The first real turning-point came when our forces

occupied North Africa, and the second when Tunisia was overrun in a single rush. Doubters have practically disappeared, and every one is now convinced that our side is going to win the war. Personally, I doubt very much that Turkey will be involved actively in the war. We must not forget that the Turks have a right to look out for their own interests, which certainly do not include fighting in some one else's cause. They are asking nothing except to be left in peace and are paying a high price in the disorganization of their economy for this privilege.

Ever since last Christmas, the Government has been engaged in collecting a capital levy, which was assessed in a very discriminatory manner against the Christian and Jewish minorities, and this has led to much bitter feeling and to the loss of much of the good name which the Turkish Government had accumulated under the regime of Ataturk. However, I hope that this situation will improve as the general world situation becomes less acute and as the influence of broadminded, far-sighted Turks makes itself more and more felt in Government circles. In consequence of this capital levy, the past year has been very hard for all foreigners living in Turkey and especially hard for those of us who are interested in humanitarian and educational work. For the time being, the clock has been turned backward, but I feel that the low point of the cycle has been reached so that the future can only bring improvement.

If you could visit the College campuses, I am sure you would be astonished to see how normally activities are being carried on. During term time the Staff are kept exceedingly busy by the large enrollment and have more classes to meet and more papers to correct than we would have believed teachers able to handle. Diversions remain much the same as in the past. The tennis courts are in use, with tennis balls manufactured three or four years ago in Britain, and not too lively. Some of the tennis rackets and shoes are of even more ancient vintage. Clothes are almost all of pre-war style and have a tendency to be a bit shiny or to show that curious, rough effect which results from the "turning" of woollens. Travel around the city is very difficult because no cars have been imported since before the war, and repair parts for automobiles and trams are practically unobtainable. Fortunately, the ferry boats of the Shirket still continue to function as usual. Travel in the interior of Anatolia is still possible and quite popular, although the expense has risen appreciably and the number of buses has been reduced a great deal.

The standard of work at both institutions is being kept up very well, thanks to our arrangements for selecting entering students and our ability to be very particular about the academic records of those that we keep. The next year will certainly not be easy for we shall certainly not have as many American teachers as we should like, although there is every prospect of improvement in facilities for travel from the United States. But the prospect, in general, is much brighter than it was a year ago, for we can have justifiable hopes that the end of hostilities in Europe will take place before another year has passed. The immediate post-war period will probably bring its own peculiar difficulties, but at least we can feel that we have reached the present point with colors flying and can have every prospect of continuing our work under increasingly satisfactory conditions.

Your friends and relatives in Istanbul would wish me, I am sure, to give you their warmest regards and best wishes and would wish me also to assure you that they are well and getting on with their jobs far better than we could ever have hoped. They look forward, always, to hearing from you, and I doubt whether you can possibly realize how much letters are appreciated. Airmail letters usually arrive about six weeks after they are posted here but occasionally get through in four weeks. Of course, when a major military operation is in preparation there are long "droughts" - sometimes as much as five or six weeks. In fact, we have learned to expect a major military enterprise to follow every period of letter-less weeks, for this condition has prevailed previous to the landing in North Africa and to the attack on Sicily and has become a sort of barometer for us. Five-cent letters usually require nearly three months to arrive. Magazines and newspapers take about the same length of time, and you should be skeptical about believing statements by our post office authorities that second-class mail is not being sent to Turkey. I have seen too much of it in Istanbul with my own eyes during recent months to be convinced by such statements made here.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) Walter L. Wright, Jr.  
President

**Boğaziçi Üniversitesi**

**Arşiv ve Dokümantasyon Merkezi**

**Kişisel Arşivlerle İstanbul'da Bilim, Kültür ve Eğitim Tanıtı**

**Scott Ailesi Koleksiyonu**



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