

November 1, 1940

Copy to mother

On Tuesday I cabled you as follows: "All schools closed pending further instructions STOP Boarding department open STOP notify families all well STOP inspiring unity, calm determination prevail".

I am writing in the hope that there will be some means of sending a letter in the near future. I will attempt to give as clear a picture as possible of how matters stand at the moment.

First of all I want to say that the spirit which prevails here is truly most admirable and most inspiring. Angered at unprovoked aggression and proud of the stand taken by Greece, the whole population is rushing to speed the war effort. The reports that Greece has risen as one man are literally true. There is without question complete unity and most genuine enthusiasm. Mobilization has put a heavy strain on transportation and everything on wheels in Athens is full inside out. Everybody tries to help and whenever I have used our car, I've filled it with soldiers whose conversation leaves no doubt of the spirit which animates all.

I was awakened at 5:30 Monday morning by the telephone and was told that the war had started. The immediate question was whether we should attempt to have classes that morning and I decided not to. Our buses, however, reported at the usual places in Athens to bring the day students but the few who appeared were sent home. About ten o'clock we received a telephone message from the Ministry stating that all schools would be closed till further notice. Shortly afterwards very active anti-aircraft fire began, followed quickly by the air-raid siren and we all went to the shelter on the ground floor. Frequent drills had familiarized all with this procedure. The boys behaved extremely well and there was not the slightest sign of panic -then or since. As a matter of fact the only precaution necessary on our part is to guard against the irresistible temptation on the part of the boys to get to a window and see what is happening. There were a number of air-raid warnings that day and the next but since then they have been much less frequent.

As I dictated the above the air-raid siren sounded -but I'm continuing after a very brief interruption.

The boarding department continues to function. About twenty-five boys have been taken by their parents but we still have seventy. Many of these live sufficiently near so that they could go home, but the parents prefer to leave them here. We have quite a satisfactory air-raid shelter that accommodates about hundred and twenty-five. It is the corridor of the ground floor and dormitory wing. The glass

doors leading into the rooms on either side have been protected and the big window at the end is sand-bagged. The ground floor corridor of the main part of the building provides a reasonably safe shelter for three or four hundred. We foresee that if it is necessary to evacuate the building for any reason approximately forty of the seventy boarders we now have can be returned immediately to their homes. Of the remaining thirty, about half would be our responsibility for some weeks at least. We have a refuge on a large farm several miles from the College where we can accommodate thirty or, if necessary, fifty. Since last spring we have had stored there emergency food supplies, camping equipment, medical supplies, etc... We also have tents for use in case we should be obliged to provide for larger numbers than we anticipate or in case it should prove necessary to seek a more distant refuge. It appears, however, that the farm will under all circumstances be an ideal refuge. Excellent water and a great variety of farm products are available there.

Since the telephone message on Monday morning, we have received no information concerning the possibility of reopening. The Ministry is very wisely awaiting developments and it is idle to predict what may seem possible in the near future. The enormous building of the girl's boarding school next to us was commandeered as a hospital on Monday. Permission was given to the school to keep two rooms for their archives and their assembly hall for the storage of equipment. It is impossible to obtain any information concerning the possibility of our building being taken over. It will, of course, depend, on the progress of events.

It is quite possible that schools may reopen at any time or that schools in certain sections will be allowed to operate. If we are permitted to open the problem of transportation for our day students will be serious. We do not know whether buses or gasoline will be available. If not, many of the older boys would come on the public bus lines that would be far from satisfactory as the service will probably be extremely irregular and the buses overcrowded. Many would no doubt come on bicycles and some would probably walk if necessary. We foresee the possibility that a number of day students might become boarders. In that event we might wish to use the Darbishire house as a dormitory.

So far only three of our teachers, Antanassiotis, Deliyanni and Nich. Stavrides, have been called to the army. No doubt others will go soon. Five members of our staff (library and study hall supervisors, secretaries) have been called and about a dozen servants. Naturally we will not take any steps to replace them till we know that we can reopen.

On Monday morning all bank accounts were blocked. On Wednesday we petitioned for sufficient money to carry on for about two weeks and our request was granted immediately.

The College car will not be requisitioned because of special arrangements made by the Legation but of course it is very doubtful whether we shall long continue to have even the small amount of gasoline now allowed.

Blackouts cause us considerable difficulty as the College building has no shutters. We have begun a regime of early dinners and soon shall have a sufficient number of windows darkened so that there can be a limited amount of light in the evening.

The American community has made arrangements at a hotel some miles out of the city where any of us can go and stay. Very few have availed themselves of this and naturally no one from the college as we have our work to do. As a matter of fact we feel just as well off at College and in our own homes.

Whether the College reopens or not all of us, of course, will do everything we can to make ourselves useful. The College has already loaned half a dozen typewriters to the Red Cross. The boys have raised a fund and are preparing individual packages for the soldiers at the front. The National Youth Movement has done a fine job during this first period of mobilization. They have been called upon to help in a thousand ways. Our older boarders and our near-by students have been helping by patrolling the streets of Psychiko at night. Their job is to check on observance of the blackout regulations and to ask to see the identity cards of those who circulate after dark. Presumably most of our day students are doing the same job in the districts in which they live. The Bursar's office is receiving contributions for the general fund for which the Prime Minister appealed. All the women connected with the College are sewing bandages and knitting. My wife has offered her services as a bacteriologist and has been told that they will probably be needed.

With kind regards,

Very truly yours

[Homer Davis]