

THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AT THE EPICENTER OF AN ETHNOPOLITICAL CONFLICT: MUSLIM UPRISINGS IN ARMENIA'S KARS MARZ IN 1918–1920 AND THE BRITISH POSITION

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the 1917 Russian revolutions and the collapse of the Caucasus Front, in a tense climate of mutual distrust—and within a foreign-policy environment that outwardly appeared favorable to Armenia—Muslim uprisings erupted. By the Treaty of Batum on June 4, 1918, the Kars *marz* (province), among other regions, was occupied by the Turks. Following its defeat, Turkey was forced to withdraw from Transcaucasia; on November 22, the Turks left Aleksandropol, and on December 4, Armenian troops entered the city. With the annexation of the Aleksandropol *uezd* (district) to the Republic of Armenia (RA), the issue of the Kars province was also raised. According to the Armistice of Mudros, the Armenian-Turkish border was to be restored along the projected 1914 Russian-Turkish border line.

The Turkish-Muslim movements of 1918–1920 in the Kars province and within the sovereign territories of the Republic of Armenia were anti-Armenian and anti-state in nature. The encroachments of the insurgent Muslim population were aimed at redrawing the sovereign borders of the RA proclaimed in May 1918, ultimately leading to the territorial dismemberment of the RA. This aimed to annex not only the regions of Sotk-Basargechar, Karabakh-Artsakh, Zangezur-Syunik, and Nakhichevan to Turkey, but also the Kars province, which held immense strategic importance for the RA.

From the very beginning, Azerbaijan presented territorial claims and ambitions to the Republic of Armenia. The military-political representations of Great Britain and other countries in Transcaucasia carried out an arbitral mission in this matter; however, this mission was fraught with double standards and preconditions. Ultimately, it was not aimed at ensuring the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia, thereby facilitating the activation of Muslim insurgent-separatist movements against the sovereign rights of the RA.

Keywords: Kars *marz*, Republic of Armenia, Muslim movements, Great Britain, Azerbaijan, Turkey

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Acts of violence and encroachments against the sovereign borders of the Republic of Armenia, which had been proclaimed in May 1918, Azerbaijan presented territorial claims and ambitions to the Republic of Armenia from the very outset. This was clearly documented by Ruben Ter-Minasyan:

“...Before moving on to the details, let us see what Azerbaijan practically wanted from Armenia. First, it demanded, in an absolute manner, that the Armenians completely relinquish Karabakh, wishing for the districts of Jivanshir, Shushi, Jebrail, the mountainous part of Gandzak, and Zangezur to be de facto and de jure recognized as part of Azerbaijan. In this manner, the entire province of Gandzak would pass into the borders of Azerbaijan. It tacitly accepted only that the Dilijan and Ijevan regions were part of Armenia, and even that with reservations, because it considered the Bashkend and Karakoyunlu regions as its own. Azerbaijan did not stop there; this was merely a prologue to the realization of its aspirations. It wanted to annex the Nakhichevan and Sharur uezds from the Yerevan province; the regions of Sadarak, Vedibasar (Aygavan), and Zangibasar (a village in the Yerevan uezd of the Yerevan province, now Masis) from the Yerevan and Etchmiadzin uezds; and the entire Surmalu along the right bank of the Araks, by the foothills of Masis, stretching up to the Kars province. If the Kars province was not to belong to the Turks, then it (Azerbaijan) was to extend all the way to the Batum region, from where Azerbaijan would have an outlet to the sea. In addition to this, by connecting the northern shores of Lake Sevan with the Karakoyunlu valley, Azerbaijan demanded the Basargechar region (Vardenis region since 1969), which would secure the rear of Karabakh and the Islamic population annexed to it. This immense project was neither an empty illusion nor a delirium; it was considered an accessible and natural program for the Turkish-Tatars, which was not left as a mere theory for schools, but was put into practice in Transcaucasia starting from 1919, and is still being implemented today.”²

In this regard, the Kars province—along with its districts of Ardahan and Kağızman—which was of strategic importance for the Republic of Armenia, also became a target. It was convulsed by Muslim uprisings, lawlessness, and anti-state, anti-Armenian movements. This was followed by increasingly frequent attacks by the bandit groups of Selim and others against Armenian military units and militiamen in Agbaba, Zod, Zarushat (Zarishad, Zarishat), and elsewhere, where Azerbaijani agents constantly held secret meetings, making provocative calls to overthrow the government of the Republic of Armenia³. Azerbaijan openly laid claim to Kars and its surrounding territories.

Proposing to the British command to occupy Kars as part of its territory, Azerbaijan justified its demand by claiming that the region was predominantly composed of Muslims⁴ who, having been subjected to massacres and pogroms during the Turkish

² Ruben 1982: 182-184.

³ Haraj, May 7, 1920, No. 49.

⁴ Mshak, January 5, 1919.

offenses in early 1918, were forced to flee their native settlements and find refuge in various regions of Transcaucasia. Nevertheless, although the Kars province was an important strategic point for Turkey, it was likewise evacuated by Turkish troops under the terms of the Armistice of Mudros.

In reality, the Muslims of Armenia did not reconcile with the new reality. Less than a week had passed since the signing of the Armistice of Mudros when internal plots were instigated against the RA in preparation for a general uprising. For this purpose, a gathering of Muslim leaders was convened in Kars. On November 5, 1918, a meeting of the Muslim leaders of the province took place in Kars with the participation of Yakub Shevki Pasha, the commander of the Turkish 9th Army stationed in Kars, and Hilmi Bey, the governor of the Sanjak of Kars. By a decision adopted at this meeting, the Muslim Shura of Kars was established, whose most critical political stance was a policy of non-recognition toward Georgia and Armenia.

Furthermore, on November 30, 1918, a new congress was convened in Kars. Muslim representatives from the provinces of Kars and Batum, Akhaltsikhe, Surmalu, Sardarapat, Sharur-Nakhichevan, Ordubad, and several other regions decided to create the "National Muslim Shura" to protect their interests during the withdrawal of Turkish troops stipulated by the Mudros agreement. Ibrahim Bey Jahangir-Oğlu was elected as the head of the Shura⁵.

Failing to carry out the orders of the Armenian civil authorities and seeking to develop a unified resistance plan, the Turkish military command of Kars and the Muslim National Council led the Muslim National Council of Kars to proclaim the "Southwestern Caucasian Republic" on December 1, 1918. It established a provisional government or "Shura," which encompassed the provinces of Kars and Batum, the districts of Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Nakhichevan, Sharur, and Surmalu, as well as the southeastern portion of the Yerevan province⁶.

It was composed exclusively of Muslims and operated under the influence of the Young Turk leaders Nuri and Khalil Pashas, receiving significant military, financial-monetary assistance, as well as weapons and ammunition from Turkey, which directly guided its activities⁷. By the end of December, the Muslim National Council of Kars decided to create a provisional government, with A. Atabayov elected as its president⁸. Refusing to recognize the authority of the Republic of Armenia, the Muslim regions of the republic carried out extensive preparatory work to launch a general uprising.

Bearing this in mind, the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs, S. Tigranyan, informed Av. Aharonyan, the President of the RA Delegation in Paris, about the impending severe events: *"It is necessary for the Allies, in order to avoid the shedding of new blood, to restrain the Tatars through strong and decisive measures, so as to preempt probable*

⁵ Knyazyan 2008: 64.

⁶ Safarov 2018: 176; Gajiyev 2017: 56.

⁷ Gajiyev 1992: 10-11.

⁸ Gevorgyan 2008: 260.

*complications...*⁹, referring to the Muslim uprisings against the legitimate government of the RA. Based on S. Tigranyan's telegram, the Armenian delegation prepared a declaration, which was subsequently published in the French journal "Journal des Débats"¹⁰.

The ethnic composition of the population of Kars at that moment was such that it created fertile ground for anti-state movements and the manifestation of a rejectionist attitude toward Armenian officials. According to data by G. Grigoryan, at the time of its inclusion into the Republic of Armenia in 1919, there were 579 villages in the Kars province, of which 513 were inhabited. Additionally, 207 inhabited villages were not included in the registration. The total population was 162,362 people, of whom the number of Armenians reached 46,814 (including 25,755 refugees), the number of Muslims was 69,121 (including 11,102 refugees), the non-Muslim population numbered 29,965 (including 7,288 refugees), and the mixed population stood at 16,566 (including 5,830 refugees)¹¹.

In essence, the Armenian population constituted a minority, which created significant obstacles for the operations of the Armenian administration. Nevertheless, E. Zohrabyan notes that when the Armenian military unit of General Hovsepyants—accompanied by a British detachment—was finally able to enter the Kars province by order of General W. Thomson (the commander of British forces in the Caucasus) and approached the city of Kars on April 23, 1919, the Armenian and Tatar population welcomed them with bread and salt. He further notes that the Tatar population of the city of Kars subsequently maintained a neutral attitude toward the Armenian administration right up until the Turkish-Armenian war, attributing this circumstance to the presence of the garrison troops and the numerical superiority of the Armenian population (those who had fled in 1918 due to the Turkish invasion had returned in 1919).

Throughout 1919 and early 1920, almost no Kurdish-Tatar rebellions took place either in the city of Kars or in the eastern regions of the province, nor in the districts located north, west, and south of Kars. At the same time, however, he documents the active subversion of Tatars living in the northern regions of Agbaba and Zarushat, as well as agents and Kurds arriving from Azerbaijan and from the south and west—namely Sarıkamış, Kağızman, and Merdenek—who were actively supported by the Ottoman Turks¹².

Ever since the declaration of independence in 1918, the Kars province was convulsed by Muslim uprisings, and the task of establishing the Armenian regime there was implemented under conditions of great complexity, marked by escalations and setbacks. Ensign Hovsepyan, the assistant to the chief of the intelligence department of

⁹ Pan-Armenian Consultations 2004: 456.

¹⁰ NAA, fund 278, list 1, file 4, sheet 52.

¹¹ Grigoryan 2005: 175.

¹² Zohrabyan 2012: 3.

the RA General Staff, reported on Azerbaijani-Turkish designs in the Kars province in a communication addressed to the counter-intelligence department. This was also confirmed by captain A. Poidebard, an officer of the French military mission in Armenia¹³, according to whose data Turkish agents were engaged in active propaganda against the legitimate Armenian authorities in late 1918 and early 1919¹⁴.

That intelligence summary reported that Ali Riza, the former “vice-president” of the “Shura” (the so-called “Milli Shura,” the Muslim “autonomy” in the Kars province), had escaped from the Batum prison, passed through Tiflis to Gharachakh, and from there to the Agbaba region, subsequently moving via Zarushat to the Olti region (July 1919). The report added that there were no doubts that Azerbaijan was striving to create a “second Karabakh” in the regions of Agbaba, Zarushat, Ardahan, and Olti, and that a Georgian-Azerbaijani confederation was also being observed. It provided data on the cooperation of Tatars with Kurds, noting that a conversation on this matter had taken place in Erzurum with Colonel A. Rawlinson¹⁵, a member of the British staff¹⁶.

During a visit to Kars on April 7, 1919, in a private conversation with Lieutenant Bekzadov, an officer for special assignments attached to the British military governor, Colonel Alfred Rawlinson—brother of the commander of one of the British units and a well-known intelligence officer in the East—stated the following:

“We would have thrown our troops into the Caucasus long ago and regulated life here if only the Paris Conference permitted it. We are not allowed to govern this country; in other words, we were denied one of our colonies that should have fallen to us in advance, which we, of course, cannot accept because it was costing us excessively. At the time, we proposed to America and France that they assume the protectorate over the Caucasus, but they did not agree. America has promised to help the Caucasus with money and provisions. And so, we have been sent here only for a temporary military occupation. For that very reason, we will probably leave here soon,

¹³ Poidebard, Antoine (1878-1955) – archaeologist, historian, pilot, cartographer, and missionary, who knew Armenian well and was devoted to Armenia and the Armenian people.

¹⁴ Ter-Minasyan 2004: 97.

¹⁵ It is possible that this is the very fact mentioned by R. Hovhannisyan, stating that while outwardly cooperating with the senior British officer Alfred Rawlinson, it was Kyazim Karabekir Pasha himself who secretly ordered his men to dismantle the railway line, and instructed his bands not to attack those removing weapons, but to plunder the armories unhindered. The seized weapons and ammunition were to be carefully hidden and secretly stockpiled for a 50,000-strong Turkish force, which K. Karabekir considered necessary to concentrate on the border of the Republic of Armenia for the effective defense of the eastern vilayets claimed by the latter, hoping that the Allies’ promises to the Armenians would remain unfulfilled—and in this, he was indeed not mistaken. Hovannisian 1971: 468-469. Interesting materials and testimonies regarding the famous British intelligence officer A. Rawlinson, who operated in the East, and particularly in Turkey, and had numerous contacts with Armenian reality and was well acquainted with Western Armenia, can be found in his own work: Rawlinson 1924.

¹⁶ NAA, fund 201, list 1, file 168, sheet 38.

unless, of course, something unusual happens at the Peace Conference. In general, the war is far from over, and great misunderstandings are possible even among the Allies themselves."¹⁷

Information regarding Turkish activity in the Kars region is also of significant interest, even if strictly from the perspective of the prelude to the 1920 Turkish-Armenian War. Highly compelling in this regard is an intelligence summary (No. 8) from the General Staff, which details the events and various developments that unfolded in the Kars province during the period leading up to January 5, 1919. The author of the summary, L. Bashinjaghyan—an officer on special assignment—addresses the extensive propaganda conducted by Turkish officers among the population of the Kars Province, particularly among the Kurds, directed against the Armenians. He notes that the province's Turkish population was well-armed and documents that large stockpiles of provisions had been accumulated by the Turks in Digor and other villages within the Nakhichevan sub-district of the Kağızman district, as well as at the Kızıl-Chakhchakh (or Ghyzyl-Chakhchakh) station. The final section highlights the activity of the Tatars of Shahthakhti, as well as intense Kurdish concentrations in the Aralykh region (in the villages of Bashkend, Ortakend, Shakhler, and others)¹⁸.

Events appeared to take a slightly different course following the arrival of British troops in Transcaucasia after November–December 1918. In January 1919, the British command decided to address the situation in Kars as well. Arriving in Kars on January 7, they presented Shevki Pasha, the commander of the Turkish 9th Army, with an eight-point directive. This document informed him that, following the model of Batumi, the British intended to establish a military and civil administration in Kars in the coming days. This administration would represent Armenia and operate under the supervision of a military governor appointed by the British command. The directive emphasized that the maintenance of the law and the protection of the population would be undertaken by representatives of the Allied powers, and that the responsibility for any insubordination by Turkish troops, as well as possible clashes with the civilian population, would fall squarely upon the General Command of the Turkish forces.

General J. Forestier-Walker issued a number of other orders to Shevki Pasha regarding the proper reception of the Armenian administration, the opening of borders for the free movement of people and trains, and the total withdrawal of Turkish troops from the province by January 25, among other instructions¹⁹. At the same time, wishing to placate the Muslim population, the British command emphasized in the aforementioned document that the Muslims of the Kars Province were unsettled by the establishment of an Armenian administration, even under the command of a British governor. The document noted that it was the duty of the new administration to act in a manner that would reassure the Muslim population and prove that Armenians could

¹⁷ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, part I, sheets 200–201.

¹⁸ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, sheet 60.

¹⁹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, sheets 38–41, 43.

govern without ethnic prejudices. It also included a caveat that the British command in Transcaucasia might later separate certain districts from the territory of the Kars province that were exclusively inhabited by Muslims²⁰.

Upon his return, J. Forestier-Walker signed an agreement in Alexandropol on January 8 with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, S. Tigranyan. This agreement provided for the appointment of a British Governor-General in Kars, alongside an Armenian civil administration composed of Armenian officials attached to the Military Governor of Kars²¹. However, as D. Knyazyan concludes, the British command temporarily abstained from decisive action and de facto recognized the Kars Shura²², driven by the Shura's resolve to block the return of Armenian refugees to the Kars province, the Muslim Shura's readiness to resist militarily, and the incomplete evacuation of Turkish troops from the province. The traditional pro-Russian orientation of the Armenians was also weighed as a critical factor. Consequently, the British rejected the Armenian side's petitions to permit the unhindered return of refugees and the establishment of a full Armenian civil-military administration in the Kars province²³.

Thus, the Kars Shura temporarily prolonged its existence under the patronage of Azerbaijan and Turkey. Through this arrangement, the Republic of Azerbaijan also aspired to secure an outlet to Black Sea routes, effectively encircling Armenia from nearly all sides. Beginning in January 1919, Turkish agents began hastily concentrating forces in the Potskhov district, launching attacks on Akhaltsikhe²⁴. Simultaneously, Server Bek Atabekov, a representative of the Kars Shura, launched an attack on the Georgian militia under the pretext of countering a Georgian offensive, lodging a protest with the Georgian government and demanding the creation of a commission with British participation²⁵.

G. Anchabadze adds further details regarding the formation of joint Georgian-Muslim military units: *"From January until April 1919, Georgian troops were forced to confront military units of Muslim Georgian separatists in the Akhaltsikhe and Ardahan districts. The insurgents were led by the political and military leader and landowner, Osman Server Bek Atabekov, who came from a family of Georgian nobility that had converted to Islam, and who was a supporter of an independent South-Caucasian Republic. It was a political decision by the authorities to create a Georgian-Muslim cavalry battalion ('division'), as a result of which Muslim and Christian Georgians acted together in the Akhaltsikhe campaign"*²⁶.

²⁰ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, sheets 43–47.

²¹ Vracian 1993: 257; Makhmouryan 2002: 47–48.

²² Knyazyan 2008: 66.

²³ Haraj, February 3, 1919, No. 26; Hovannisian 1971: 206.

²⁴ Mshak, January 28, 1919, No. 20.

²⁵ Knyazyan 2008: 68.

²⁶ Anchabadze 2018: 104.

Nevertheless, it remains a fact that according to General J. Forestier-Walker's memorandum of January 7, 1919, the Kars province was placed under British military administration. The organization of a civil administration and the appointment of civil officials were authorized, with its members to be designated by the Government of the Republic of Armenia. The size of the police force was to be limited, permitted only to the extent necessary, and the Armenian police were to enter the region immediately following the evacuation of Turkish troops, demonstrating tolerance toward the Muslim population. At the suggestion of General W. Beach, Forestier-Walker appointed Captain Clive Temperley—adjutant of the 4th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade of the British forces in Transcaucasia—to the position of British Military Governor of Kars, with the local rank of Lieutenant Colonel (January 1919 – March 1919)²⁷. Meanwhile, the government of Hovhannes Qajaznuni appointed St. Ghorghanyan to the position of Civil Governor (in various years, he had served as an assistant district governor in the districts of Surmalu, Nakhichevan, and Nor Bayazet, and from 1910 to 1915 as the district governor of Qutaisi (in Georgia)²⁸; he held this post until October 30, 1920, when Kars was surrendered by the Armenian armed forces to the Kemalist troops)²⁹. Colonel Pirumyan was appointed commander of the Kars fortress³⁰. On January 8, 1919, Azerbaijan sent a note of protest to General W. Thomson, the commander of the Allied forces, stating that Armenia and Georgia (the latter of which laid claim to the northern districts of the Kars province) wished to forcibly expand their borders at the expense of the Southwestern Republic, whose population was Muslim, and alleging that these lands historically belonged to the local Muslims, who possessed the right to self-determination³¹.

Nonetheless, on January 12, 1919, the British and Armenian civil authorities departed for Kars, where they were met with hostility by the Kars Shura, preventing the Armenian authorities from executing their duties. On January 14, 1919, the Shura Parliament was solemnly opened in Kars under the presidency of Asad Bey; out of 64 deputies, 60 were Muslim, 3 were Greek, and 1 was a Molokan³². The Shura thereby attempted to consolidate its power. In January 1919, the president of the temporary government of the Shura appealed to the government of Azerbaijan several times, asserting that following the withdrawal of Turkish troops, the Armenians might establish themselves in the Kars province and the Georgians in Ardahan. It was deemed necessary to immediately appoint a governor in Kars to prevent the conquest of the province by the Armenians and Georgians with the assistance of the local Turkish population and armed forces. To this end, the Azerbaijani authorities conducted secret

²⁷ Vracyan 1993: 261.

²⁸ Avetisyan 2008: 57.

²⁹ Harutyunyan 2018: 12.

³⁰ Khatisyan 1968: 171–172.

³¹ Gevorgyan 2008: 260.

³² NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, sheet 64; Vracyan 1993: 257.

negotiations in Baku with British representatives, proposing that until the final resolution of the issue at the Paris Peace Conference, the Kars province should remain under Allied control as a part of Azerbaijan, the Kars *status quo* should be preserved, and the establishment of the authority of the Republic of Armenia in the region should be blocked. The long-term objective of this Azerbaijani strategy was to gain time and, should circumstances permit, unify Kars with Turkey³³.

The establishment of Armenian authority in the Kars province was severely obstructed, while the parliament of the Southwestern Democratic Republic of the Caucasus maintained close relations with the British. As a consequence of the British military command's hesitant, mediating policy aimed at ending inter-ethnic clashes, relations between the Muslim and Armenian populations flared up further. The Muslim leaders had been emboldened by the promise made by the British command upon their arrival in Kars to create a separate Governor-Generalship under their own control, which further galvanized the representatives of the Shura.

The British command did not remain steadfast in the agreement reached on January 8 and quickly yielded to local Muslim arbitrary actions directed against the Armenian authorities. The local government created as a result of the activities organized by Turkish-Azerbaijani officers and propagandists was, in essence, recognized by the British military governor, while the Armenian civil governor and his staff were forced to leave Kars. In connection with these events, General J. Forestier-Walker, commander of the British forces in Transcaucasia, informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia that it was not yet possible to implement the agreement between them. He justified this by citing the sharply pronounced animosity of the Kars Muslims toward the Armenians, while claiming that the conduct of the Armenian administrators was not conciliatory. He even deemed it unacceptable that, according to information from a British army officer, the Armenian officials had entered the city displaying a large Armenian national flag:

*"It is clear that they did not properly understand the objectives of their mission. I am certain that Your Excellency will understand that in the presence of mutual animosity from both sides, reconciliation becomes impossible. I am writing to inform you that, to my deep regret, I am forced to cancel the agreement reached between us. I have ordered the British military governor of Kars to send these officials back to Alexandropol, where they will undoubtedly receive appropriate instructions from Your Excellency. I deem it necessary to express my profound gratitude to the Government of Armenia for meeting my request so graciously and promptly, and I infinitely regret that this attempt was marked by failure"*³⁴.

The report of A. Aharonyan's meeting with Forestier-Walker in Alexandropol on January 13, 1919, regarding the Caucasus question, also clearly underscores the explicit pro-Muslim disposition of the British: *"Regarding Kars, there appears to be some*

³³ Gevorgyan 2008: 260–261.

³⁴ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, sheets 77, 123.

*hesitation in British thinking. They consider the entire province of Kars to be a part of Armenia, and find it possible to separate only the western, purely Muslim-inhabited portion to attach it to the Batumi province. It seems that Britain will resolve the issue of annexing the Kars region to Armenia only when it is assured that Armenia will not, willingly or unwillingly, be annexed to Russia. In the latter case, Britain would prefer that at least the Batumi region, along with the Kars region, not be unified with Russia. We must dispel Britain's doubts and insist that the eastern section of the Kars region in particular must constitute an inseparable part of the Republic of Armenia"*³⁵.

Sending a note to Forestier-Walker on February 4, 1919, the Government of the Republic of Armenia reasserted the necessity of establishing an Armenian administration in the Kars province, stating that they would not renounce their rights over the Kars region³⁶.

Driven by this same motivation, the local Muslim population did not unconditionally accept Temperley from the outset. By February–March 1919, the Muslim population exhibited an openly intolerant and insolent attitude toward him, doing everything in their power to ignore him. The government of Qajaznuni had initially described Temperley as an “arrogant and insolent Englishman” who, by reaching an agreement in Kars with the Shura—officially known as the Provisional Government of the Southwestern Caucasus—had in the initial phase of his tenure opposed every attempt to allocate positions to Armenian administrative workers, and had even presented severe demands to the Armenian officials at Alexandropol, the primary railway junction linking Kars and Tiflis³⁷.

By reaching an agreement in Kars with the Shura—officially known as the Provisional Southwestern Caucasian Government—Clive Temperley opposed every attempt to allocate positions to the Armenian administrative staff and even presented severe demands to the Armenian officials at Alexandropol, the primary railway junction linking Kars and Tiflis³⁸. The Shura preferred not to voluntarily surrender authority to the Armenian governor. According to the memorandum of the Governor of Kars, St. Ghorghanyan, Temperley himself was initially not sufficiently confident in his actions, yet he also mistrusted both the words and deeds of the Muslims: *“Colonel Temperley, listening indifferently to what was being said, stated that the country was being handed over to the Armenian Government, to which the Shura was subordinate in the person of its governor, and with that, he closed the audience. But the next day, Colonel Temperley received a new communication in English. This time, writing in a highly unconstrained style, the Shura informed him that it had absolutely no desire to accept any authority coming from the outside, and requested the removal of the Armenians from Kars. In confirmation of this decisive declaration, about hundred armed Turks lined*

³⁵ NAA, fund 200, list 2, file 65, sheets 2–3.

³⁶ NAA, list 1, file 92, sheet 122a; list 2, file 45, sheet 1.

³⁷ Mnatsakanyan A. *et al.* 1957: 256–258; Denikin 1925: 147; Hovannisian 1971: 220–223.

³⁸ Mnatsakanyan A. *et al.* 1957: 256–258; Denikin 1925: 147; Hovannisian 1971: 220–223.

*up for us to see in front of the Shura house, which was opposite our residence, while an agitator—another newcomer from the regions of Gandzak—began to speak emphatically before the gathered crowd regarding the issue of the day*³⁹.

The situation subsequently changed. Once Colonel Temperley became better acquainted with the facts, interacted more closely with representatives of the Armenian officialdom, and became convinced of the provocative nature of the Tatars' maneuvers, he ordered the arrest of Shukri Pasha, who, however, managed to escape. Colonel Temperley compelled the members of the Shura to be summoned before him and gave them three minutes to surrender governance voluntarily, warning them that he would otherwise resort to arms. The Shura replied that they would comply in order to prevent violence. That night, British special detachments arrested 153 local suspects and deported them to the island of Malta⁴⁰. The British then handed over authority in the Kars province to us and withdrew their army of 3,000 men from the area⁴¹. However, to govern the province, the British formed a council of locals under the supremacy of Colonel Prosser (Henry R. Prosser, 82nd Gloucestershire Regiment – H.V.), which consisted of one Russian, one Molokan, two Greeks, and five Turks. The composition of this council was unsuccessful to the highest degree⁴².

Furthermore, the Civil Governor of Kars, St. Ghorghanyan concludes: *“Leaving aside historical and state objectives and tendencies, and leaving aside the core meaning of the issue, it is impossible not to emphasize that quite apart from all that, these Englishmen were succumbing to the detestable, sycophantic flattery of the Turks... Did the English not comprehend our legal concepts and our state rights, or were they doing all this out of political motives? Only one thing was glaringly obvious: within the span of a single day, they would bargain with me regarding the matter of my rights*”⁴³.

The British continued to maintain a loyal attitude toward the Kars Shura, obstructing potential joint Armenian-Georgian operations against Muslim activities, where common interests might have been found. In this regard, the Armenian side also maintained a certain neutrality, trusting the proposal presented by the British for the regulation of the issue, thereby allowing the Muslims to expand even further into the Armenian-inhabited districts of Georgia, such as Akhaltsikhe and elsewhere⁴⁴.

On January 14, the Acting Minister of Internal Affairs, Al. Khatisyan, reported to his government on his visit to Alexandropol and his directives regarding the creation of an Armenian civil administration for Kars (a civil administration for the province and its districts pending the decision of the Peace Conference, the creation of a militia and

³⁹ Harutyunyan 2018: 31.

⁴⁰ Hovhannisyan 2019: 20.

⁴¹ Harutyunyan 2018: 251.

⁴² Harutyunyan 2018: 35.

⁴³ Harutyunyan 2018: 252, 588.

⁴⁴ NAA, fund 275, list 1, file 114, sheets 1–2.

gendarmerie, the organization of the Kars-Alexandropol railway administration and its staff establishment, etc.). On January 16, the government revisited Khatisyan's report and approved the administrative roster he presented⁴⁵.

However, this first attempt to transfer the governance of Kars to the Armenian administration did not yield much success. The so-called "Shura," which had been established in December 1918, organized a new assembly of Muslim leaders on January 17–18, 1919, where it was decided to merge the national Shuras of all districts and regions to form the "Provisional National Government of the Southwestern Caucasus," headed by Ibrahim Bey Jahangiroğlu⁴⁶. It was precisely these delegates, numbering more than a hundred gathered in Kars, who instigated and organized the protest demonstration of the Turkish inhabitants of Kars against the Armenian administration⁴⁷. The Muslim delegates of the assembly adopted a constitution consisting of 18 articles, according to which the borders of the Southwestern Caucasus were to extend from Batumi to Nakhichevan with Kars as its center, and Turkish as the official language, though outwardly a declaration was also made regarding peaceful coexistence with neighbors⁴⁸.

It must be noted that when presenting this claim over Kars, Ardahan, Batumi, and other regions to the Allies, they justified it through the right to self-determination of the Muslim majority of the Kars Shura⁴⁹, relying also on the military-political support of Turkey and potential reunification with it. In this regard, Azerbaijani historian A. Gajiev attributes a major role to Azerbaijan in the formation of the Kars Shura as an independent state entity, viewing it as a force unifying the Muslims of the Caucasus whose leaders possessed great influence over both the British occupation authorities and the potential orientation of the Muslim population toward Baku⁵⁰; this, however, was a clever political maneuver to strengthen Azerbaijan's role in the Caucasus.

At the instigation of Turkish and Tatar agitators, the Muslims of Kars organized a protest demonstration during which threats were hurled at the Armenians, along with a demand to the British Military Governor of Kars, Colonel Temperley, to expel the Armenian administration from Kars, declaring that they would not submit to it. The English colonel, who had a duty to protect and patronize the administration working under his jurisdiction, succumbed to the threats raised by the Turkish-Tatar mob and advised the Armenian administration to leave Kars. On January 21, in a letter addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, S. Tigranyan, Forestier-Walker announced this development, writing that to his deep regret he was forced to cancel the arrangement made and was issuing an order to the British military

⁴⁵ Galoyan 2000: 84.

⁴⁶ Knyazyan 2008: 65.

⁴⁷ Petrosyan 2011: 175.

⁴⁸ Knyazyan 2008: 65.

⁴⁹ Haraj, March 11, 1919, No. 47.

⁵⁰ Gajiev 2004: 50–51.

governor of Kars to send the officials back to Alexandropol, citing the sharply pronounced animosity of the Kars Muslims toward the Armenians as the reason⁵¹.

The British military mission in Transcaucasia and its field commanders, who suffered from a pronounced, traditional Russophobia, did not trust the Armenians because of their pro-Russian sentiments. The British could in no way reconcile themselves to the idea that Russia might undergo a revival and return to Transcaucasia, a prospect foreseen by Hovhannes Qajaznuni. Experiencing a distinct disillusionment with the shift in British policy, Qajaznuni issued an appeal to General Forestier-Walker on January 25, 1919, imploring him not to cancel his latest directive blocking refugee repatriation, and instead to honor his own promise to oversee the prompt resettlement of refugees. He maintained that the abrupt British reversal had left his government and people completely defenseless, confined to a portion of their territory that had been thoroughly plundered and stripped bare by the Ottoman armies. Indeed, as early as January 1919, under the tenure of Colonel Cl. Temperley in Kars, these forces had transported vast stockpiles of grain and plunder from Kars to Erzurum, exhausting the remaining grain reserves—a process effectively and practically facilitated by the British general, Forestier-Walker⁵².

Thus, as of January 26, 1919, Colonel Clive E. Temperley served as the British Military Governor of Kars. To support his administration, the main body of a British battalion was stationed in the city, having reunited with the initial military escort led by Colonel Frederick Lawton of the 4th Rifle Brigade. Temperley remained in this post until March 2, 1919, after which he was transferred to Yerevan as the British military representative.

During his service in Yerevan, Temperley's attitude toward the Armenians underwent a noticeable shift, which was clearly reflected in the reports he dispatched to the staff of the British 27th Division. In these communications, Temperley expressed profound concern regarding the severe administrative and political difficulties confronting the Armenian government. He frequently attempted to pacify the hostile population of local Muslim settlements that consistently rejected the jurisdiction of the Yerevan government.

Around March 10, when the Muslim population of the Vedichay-Sadarak region resorted to open insurrection, Temperley exerted substantial efforts to calm the region, attempting to halt the increasingly frequent murders, plundering, and bandit attacks directed against Armenians. He sought to restrain the insurgent tribal chieftains and khans, though his efforts yielded no success. Temperley ultimately concluded that this rebellion was not merely an isolated local incident, noting that the military mobilization in the Sadarak region was directly linked to broader, coordinated efforts aimed at unifying and arming the fanatical Muslim populations of Aralykh, Kağızman, and Kars. Furthermore, Colonel Lawton characterized this defiant region as an uncompromising

⁵¹ Petrosyan 2011: 175.

⁵² Hovannisian 1971: 223; Mnatsakanyan *et al.* 1957: 254–255.

territory forming a unified, anti-Armenian chain linked directly to the Kars Shura—an alignment that effectively encircled nearly the entire territory of the Republic of Armenia⁵³.

The restrained efforts of Temperley and Lawton to prevent offensive operations against Armenians and to discipline the lawless Muslim villages met with total failure. The inhabitants of these settlements responded to peaceful British overtures with belligerent aggression, fanatical boasting, and an open, rigid resort to arms. This ominous sign of sedition was further fueled by overt Turkish propaganda and the continuous supply of weapons and ammunition from Turkey to the rebellious Muslim districts. Moving through the Araks Valley from Maku and Aralykh, this wave of destabilization spread rapidly into the Sadarak region, inciting the Muslim population from Böyük-Vedi all the way to Nakhichevan⁵⁴.

On April 28, 1919, Colonel Temperley, accompanied by General Andranik and Major William Gibbon, departed for Tiflis, where on May 1 he temporarily assumed command of the 4th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade⁵⁵, followed by his subsequent military activities in the Zod-Basargechar region.

Ultimately, geopolitical developments around Kars shifted such that by the spring of 1919, with the direct assistance of the British command, the Republic of Armenia successfully extended its authority over the regions of Nakhichevan and Kars. Faced with this stabilization, the Muslim population of Kars formally declared its submission to the Armenian government. Dr. Asad Bey Hajiev, the president of the Muslim National Council authorized by the local population, officially welcomed the extension of the Republic of Armenia's sovereignty and expressed their full readiness to comply with the directives of the Armenian authorities⁵⁶.

During this same period, George F. Gracey, the representative of Sir John Oliver Wardrop in Yerevan, conducted an official inspection tour of the Kars province between March 1 and March 3, 1919. Notably, Gracey reported that he found no evidence verifying Azerbaijani claims regarding Muslim villages allegedly bombarded by Armenian military units. While in Alexandropol, Gracey consulted with Donald Robinson, the regional director of the Near East Relief, who was inclined to justify the defensive actions of the Armenian army. Robinson informed Gracey that a large detachment of Tatars had actually captured the village of Odintsovo, directly disrupting the critical transportation of fuel and other vital supplies from Alexandropol to Kars.

A similar perspective was shared by French officers Antoine Poidebard and Charles de Nonancourt, who likewise justified the actions of the Armenian authorities in the Kars region following their own inspection tour. Concurrently, the local Muslim National Council of Kars officially condemned Zeynalov and other self-proclaimed

⁵³ Hovannisian 1971: 257.

⁵⁴ Hovannisian 1971: 252, 257.

⁵⁵ Hovannisian 1971: 231, 252, 257.

⁵⁶ NAA, fund 275, list 1, file 133, sheet 27.

spokesmen operating in Tiflis and Baku, while also expressing dissatisfaction with the harsh administrative measures implemented by the Armenian General Hovsepyants in Zarushat⁵⁷. This entire friction point constituted a dangerous flashpoint of unnecessary tension, toward the pacification of which Wardrop's mission remained largely indifferent. Captain Poidebard asserted that the British command should have crucially accounted for the formidable strength of the anti-Armenian Muslim organizations established in Kars by the commander of the Ottoman army, General Shevki Pasha, immediately following the armistice, as well as the pervasive propaganda disseminated by Turkish agents⁵⁸.

Broadly speaking, when evaluating the specific nuances of the British geopolitical stance in the region, the observations recorded by Tigran Bekzadyan—who served as the diplomatic representative of the Republic of Armenia in Baku in 1919—are highly characteristic. During a conversation held on March 29, 1919, with General D. I. Shuttleworth (who replaced General W. Thomson as the head of the British Mission in the Caucasus in April 1919), Bekzadyan remarked:

“The role of the English here is exceptionally difficult; they have arrived in a region entirely foreign to them, where they must regulate complex inter-ethnic relations. This task must be carried out with such foresight and insight that the demands of these peoples are satisfied and the principles of justice are strictly maintained.”

In response, General Shuttleworth pointedly emphasized that while Great Britain was a Christian nation, it also possessed “a vast number of Muslim subjects” who “had rendered undeniable services during the war.” Shuttleworth noted that this circumstance imposed specific obligations, stating that the British had arrived solely to restore peace and order, the realization of which required opening trade routes, re-establishing regular communication links, and fostering normal relations between nations. He added that the presence of numerous Muslim subjects obligated them to ensure that the fate of the nations would be decided at the Paris Peace Conference based on global criteria, meaning there was no need to get bogged down in minor local disputes. Nevertheless, Bekzadyan requested the British commanders tasked with resolving these localized matters to carefully consider the distinct psychology of the local population when addressing the Karabakh issue⁵⁹.

Throughout this tumultuous period, both Georgia and Armenia repeatedly asserted their respective historic and administrative rights over the territory, frequently citing the ethnic composition of the population as justification, despite the reality of highly mixed demographic zones. Colonel Clive Temperley initially attempted to establish a framework of compromise with the Southwestern Caucasian (Muslim) Republic. However, he was fundamentally unable to exert effective influence over the heavily

⁵⁷ Hovannisian 1996a: 153.

⁵⁸ Ter-Minasyan 2004: 87.

⁵⁹ Bekzadyan 2025: 69–70, 71.

armed Muslim population, thereby inadvertently enabling the latter's hostile and disloyal policy toward the local Christian inhabitants.

Furthermore, serious disagreements and contradictions regarding the governance of Kars began to emerge within the British military leadership itself. For instance, General Forestier-Walker concluded that the civil administration of both the city and the wider province should be determined by the Armenian government, provided it was closely coordinated with the British military governor⁶⁰. Conversely, General W. Beach bluntly declared to the Armenian government that "the Kars province does not belong to Armenia"⁶¹. Meanwhile, Forestier-Walker saw no obstacle to the Georgians occupying Potskhov—the northwestern sector of Kars province, which the Georgian side viewed as a disputed territory among Armenians, Georgians, and Turks. However, when Georgian troops led by General Giorgi Kvinitadze entered Potskhov, it prompted the British Governor of Kars to issue a stern declaration warning that any further Georgian advance "would be considered an act of hostility against Great Britain."

At the end of March 1919, Clive E. Temperley was succeeded by General William Asser, who promptly overthrew the government of the Southwestern Caucasian Republic. Seizing the opportunity, Georgian forces occupied the northern sectors of this dissolved republic, including Akhaltsikhe and Ardahan, though they subsequently evacuated the area upon the explicit demand of the British⁶². Ultimately, with British consent, Armenian troops occupied the entirety of the Kars province, integrating it into the administrative structure of the Republic of Armenia under a governor appointed by Yerevan. By this time, General George Milne had also emerged as a supporter of annexing the Kars province to Armenia.

On February 7, 1919, General Forestier-Walker, accompanied by General Asser, made his first official visit to Yerevan, holding a lengthy conference with Prime Minister H. Qajaznuni, which was also attended by Foreign Minister S. Tigranyan, Minister of War J. Hakhverdyan, and other senior officials. During this meeting, the question of establishing an Armenian administration in Kars was raised. In response, Forestier-Walker placed the blame for the administrative breakdown entirely on the Armenian regional administrator, labeling him "cowardly and tactless." Notably, the general omitted the fact that Colonel Temperley—whom he had appointed as the military governor of Kars—had taken no measures to restrain or discipline the fanatical Muslim mobs, and had actually been the first to advise the Armenian officials to retreat to Alexandropol.

It must be emphasized, however, that the primary responsibility for the deterioration of the situation rested with the British command. The combination of indecisiveness and pro-Turkish leaning exhibited by General Forestier-Walker and Colonel Temperley severely impacted the displaced Armenian refugees in Kars.

⁶⁰ Makhmouryan 2002: 65.

⁶¹ Makhmouryan 2002: 220–221.

⁶² Denikin 1925: 266–267.

Enduring extreme cold and starvation, and suffering heavy casualties, these refugees were forced to wait an additional three months until the end of April 1919, when the Kars province was officially united with Armenia by order of General Thomson⁶³.

or the British, this applied to all kinds of Russias—be it Tsarist, Communist, or Republican Russia. This was precisely what the Foreign Minister of the RA, S. Tigranyan, also meant when he considered British policy disastrous for Armenia, believing that the British factor was an obstacle for Armenia to gather its lands. Believing that the Turks were capable of becoming a powerful barrier against Russia, and according to which the Muslim population of the Kars region held an anti-Russian sentiment, the British military-political authorities immediately withdrew from the agreement to establish an Armenian civilian administration in the Kars region. This expressed a lack of trust toward the Armenians, whom the British considered “more Russian than the Russians,” thereby damaging the interests of Armenia. This was a warning message from the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs to European countries, with the expectation that the latter would understand that Pan-Turkism threatened Armenia, and that contributing to it meant supporting the Ittihadist (Young Turk) criminal conspiracy to wipe the Armenian people off the face of the earth, getting rid of the Armenian wedge that was driven between Turkey and Europe⁶⁴.

Thus, on March 2, 1919, Temperley was replaced by Brigadier General Vernie Asser, while Temperley transferred to Yerevan as a military representative. It should be noted that as early as February 1919, General W. Thomson—due to the unfriendly, often hostile expressions of attitude by Fahrudin Piroğlu, the leader of the Southwestern Caucasian Muslim Republic of the Kars region, toward the British military-political personnel—had authorized the RA government to occupy the territory of the Kars region with its troops, relying, if necessary, on the support of units of the British 27th Division⁶⁵. The dissolution and cancellation of the Kars Muslim government or “Shura” by the British was welcomed by Georgia, especially since the Shura claimed control over Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe. Georgia also welcomed the privilege granted by General Thomson for a small Georgian detachment to remain in the northern part of the Ardahan district, although British military observers concluded that they were not very much in favor of the expansion of the Georgians; for that reason, they were forced to withdraw from Ardahan, the peripheral district of the Kars region⁶⁶.

Soon, in connection with the uprising raised in Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki by Server Bek Atabekov on behalf of the so-called “Southwestern Republic of the Caucasus” created in the Kars region and the territory of Ardahan, the Georgians moved around 5,000 troops into the territory, which provoked an inadequate reaction

⁶³ Zohrabyan 2011: 36.

⁶⁴ Vracian 1958: 219-221.

⁶⁵ Hovannisian 1971: 210-213.

⁶⁶ Borba, April 27, 29, 1919; Hovannisian 1971: 241.

from the Armenian side⁶⁷. Taking advantage of the occasion, the Armenian side presented a protest to the British representative in Yerevan, General Cl. Temperley, stating that Georgian troops had entered Akhalkalaki and headed toward the borders of Alexandropol. The Armenian side argued that, according to a temporary agreement, the parties should have small detachments in the specified locations, and that the danger to the borders in that area arose from the presence of a large number of armed forces, which was included in the January tractate⁶⁸. It was then added that Colonel R. N. Stewart had given guarantees that the Allies would consider any attack *ante bellum*, and that a British detachment would be stationed in Akhalkalaki. The Armenian side reminded that it should be clarified whether the Muslims of Western Transcaucasia were informed about the results of the Paris Peace Conference, about which the Commander of the British Armed Forces in Transcaucasia, His Excellency General J. Forestier-Walker, had informed the RA Prime Minister in a letter dated January 19, 1919: "Possessing the disputed territory by force will have serious consequences for the attacker. All issues must be resolved at the Peace Conference"⁶⁹.

The British military mission in Transcaucasia and their field commanders, who suffered from a pronounced traditional Russophobia, did not trust the Armenians due to their pro-Russian sentiments. The British could in no way reconcile with the fact that Russia could revive and return to Transcaucasia, as predicted by H. Qajaznuni, who, experiencing a certain disappointment with the shift in British policy, appealed to General Forestier-Walker as early as January 25, 1919, requesting him not to cancel his recent order hindering repatriation and instead to honor his own promise to supervise the speedy resettlement of refugees. He found that the sharp British turn had left his government and people in a defenseless state, confined to that part of their territory which had been completely plundered and stripped bare by the Ottoman armies, who back in January 1919, under Colonel Cl. Temperley, had moved huge supplies of grain and plunder from Kars to Erzurum, whereby the last supplies of grain were exhausted—something that the British general, Forestier-Walker, had also significantly and practically contributed to⁷⁰. For the British, this applied to all kinds of Russias—be it Tsarist, Communist, or Republican Russia. This was precisely what the RA Foreign Minister, S. Tigranyan, also meant when he considered British policy disastrous for Armenia, believing that the British factor was an obstacle for Armenia to gather its lands. Believing that the Turks were capable of becoming a powerful barrier against Russia, and according to which the Muslim population of Kars held an anti-Russian sentiment, the British military-political authorities immediately withdrew from the agreement to establish an Armenian civilian administration in the Kars region. This

⁶⁷ <http://www.conflicts.rem33.com/images/Georgia/Armeno-Georgian> War18 R. html; Kvinitadze 1985: 89; Denikin 1925: 266-267.

⁶⁸ NAA, fund 275, list 5, file 96, sheets 115-116.

⁶⁹ <http://www.conflicts.rem33.com/images/Georgia/Armeno-Georgian> War18 R. html

⁷⁰ Hovannisian 1971: 223; Mnatsakanyan *et al.* 1957: 254-255.

expressed a lack of trust toward the Armenians, whom the British considered “more Russian than the Russians,” thereby damaging the interests of Armenia. This was a warning message from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to European countries, with the expectation that the latter would understand that Pan-Turkism threatened Armenia, and that contributing to it meant supporting the Ittihadist criminal conspiracy to wipe the Armenian people off the face of the earth, getting rid of the Armenian wedge that was driven between Turkey and Europe⁷¹.

The fact that the RA government was relatively well-informed about the events taking place in the Kars region in June–July 1919, including the intelligence-gathering, politically oriented activities carried out by Colonel G. D. Leslie⁷², representing Denikin’s Volunteer Army, aimed at consolidating the influence of the Russian Volunteer Army in the region, clearly testifies to the sufficient activity carried out by the Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence Department of the General Staff and its corresponding subdivision on the spot, no matter how covertly Leslie operated, maintaining the rules of confidentiality as a military intelligence officer. It became clear to the Armenian side that, under instructions from the so-called “Special Council” attached to the Volunteer Army, Leslie, as its military and political representative to the RA government, was conducting negotiations in Kars with Muslim representatives and the command of the Turkish 12th Army so that after their departure, the region would be handed over to the Russians, bringing facts about the interest he showed in the prevailing relations between the Armenians, the English, and the Russians⁷³. This, we believe, should not be taken very seriously, since by that time it was already obvious both that Great Bolshevik Russia was occupied with internal problems and that the Volunteer Army, General P. Wrangel, and all of them taken together were not in a position to emerge victorious from that conflict. Be that as it may, Colonel Leslie’s meeting in mid-January 1919 with the “Shura” and the Turkish command, of which the RA military authorities, government, and intelligence bodies were again informed, provoked the dissatisfaction of Armenian public-political circles. In this regard, on January 21, S. Tigranyan, in a written communication addressed to Colonel Leslie, demanded an explanation regarding his negotiations with the English governor of Kars, Cl. Temperley, as to whether there was an intention “to establish not an Armenian, but a Muslim administration headed by a Russian governor”⁷⁴. To this, Colonel Leslie replied on January 22 that: “I have held no official conversation on political issues in Kars; however, I advised the English military governor, Colonel Cl. Temperley, that to get out of this difficult situation, it is necessary to appoint a governor of Russian nationality, who will be in immediate contact with the Government of Armenia. For my part, the establishment of a Muslim government in the province has never been demanded”⁷⁵.

⁷¹ Vracyan 1958: 219-221.

⁷² Petrosyan 2005: 156.

⁷³ Petrosyan 2005: 87-88, 156.

⁷⁴ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 164, sheets 4, 10.

⁷⁵ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 164, sheets 5, 11.

This all, however, deepened the dissatisfaction with Leslie's activities, and the Yerevan newspaper "Zhoghovurd", in 1919, No. 10, simply wrote that "General Denikin's representative, Colonel Leslie, has entered into unauthorized negotiations with the English Colonel Cl. Temperley and has conducted anti-Armenian propaganda in Yerevan and Ejmiatsin, and aims to pit the English against us. His goal is to create a Russian-Tatar administration in the Kars province"⁷⁶. Accordingly, the Populist faction of the RA Parliament demanded that the Presidency of the Council of Armenia make an inquiry to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Military Affairs as to whether they were aware that "the representative of the Volunteer Army, Col. Leslie, is overtly conducting agitation against the Armenian people and the Republic of Armenia, and whether it is true that Col. Leslie receives 1,000 rubles per month from the Ministry of Military Affairs, and if he does, from what funds"⁷⁷.

Naturally, the session of the RA Parliament on February 11, 1919, addressed this problem and expressed its attitude, bringing forward facts and trying to reveal who Leslie was, whom he represented, and what position he held⁷⁸, but many questions were still not made public under the justification of inexpediency. Why this was so, becomes apparent from the residues accumulated in the deep folds of the activities of the RA government and military authorities. It was clearly understandable that the RA government, the military department, and the relevant structures, including the intelligence service, were trying to maintain secret ties with the non-Soviet state and other formations of the South of Russia, which could give rise to various parliamentary and political speculations and misunderstandings. Based on this, the heads of the RA Foreign Affairs and military departments assured that the Colonel of the Volunteer Army had not abused his position and had not engaged in specific anti-Armenian activity. The fact of cooperation between the special services of both sides is clearly visible, but it is quite another matter to find out through what negligence this important information leaked to the press and into the sphere of parliamentary gossip, giving rise to the inflammation of passions and the creation of new complications around the RA, which was undergoing processes of formation.

At that same moment, military-political and diplomatic tensions kept the RA government in a state of alarm regarding the processes unfolding in the Ardahan area as well. This is directly evidenced by the letter of the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs dated April 7, 1919 (No. 1107) addressed to the RA Diplomatic Plenipotentiary in Tiflis, which reported the protest of the Governor-General of Kars and the telegram sent from Akhaltsikhe to General G. Kvinitadze by the Georgian Minister of Military Affairs regarding unprecedented movements carried out by Georgian military units in the Ardahan area. On this occasion, a protest had been expressed to the British representation by the English officer Breton regarding the actions undertaken by the

⁷⁶ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 164, sheets 6, 14.

⁷⁷ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 164, sheet 17.

⁷⁸ NAA, fund 198, list 1, file 15, sheet 133.

Georgians, based on which the British officer had paid a visit to General Artmeladze regarding the dissatisfaction handed over to him by the Armenians, which had found its reflection in a number of Tiflis newspapers. In this connection, the task had been set to form a mixed Anglo-Georgian committee to determine the temporary border between Akhaltsikhe and Ardahan, as well as to permit the entry of Georgian troops into the Ardahan district for defensive purposes only, authorizing Colonel R. N. Stewart to accompany the Georgian troops entering the Ardahan district for the implementation of this task. The RA Minister of Foreign Affairs requested the diplomatic representative to clarify the circumstances of the conclusion of the reached agreement and, along with it, its cancellation by General J. Forester-Walker, as well as the demonstrative concessionary step made by him toward the local Muslim population, which was allegedly justified by the threat expressed by the Muslims. At the same time, the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs declared the irrevocable rights of the Republic of Armenia over the Ardahan district, finding that the line of extension of those rights was yet to be determined, requesting to clarify the viewpoint and forthcoming intentions held by the Government of Georgia⁷⁹.

Interesting details regarding the perception of these British calculations and dilemma are revealed in an official dispatch addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs as early as April 9, 1919 (No. 553) by the Chief of the General Staff of the RA, Major General A. Dolukhanyan: "Straight from Paris to Kars has come Colonel A. Rawlinson (Intelligence Corps), the brother of the commander of one of the British armies. He has arrived in the Caucasus specifically to clarify the political situation..."

In a private conversation with the officer for Special Assignments attached to the British Military Governor, Lieutenant Bekzadov, during a visit to Kars on April 7, 1919, Colonel Alfred Rawlinson—brother of the commander of one of the British military units and a well-known intelligence officer in the East—stated the following: "We would have thrown our troops into the Caucasus long ago and settled life here, if only the Paris Conference permitted it. We are not allowed to govern this country; in other words, we were denied one of our previously due colonies, which we, of course, cannot do (ourselves), as it was costing us far too much.

At one time, we suggested to America and France that they assume the protectorate over the Caucasus, but they did not agree. America has promised to help the Caucasus with money and food supplies. And so, we have been sent here only for temporary military occupation. For that reason, we will likely leave here soon, unless, of course, something unusual happens at the Peace Conference.

In general, the war is far from over, and great misunderstandings are possible precisely among the Allies themselves"⁸⁰.

⁷⁹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, part 1, sheet 191; Borba, March 22, 1919, No. 5, March 23, 1919, No. 6; Kavkazskoe Slovo, April 24, 1919.

⁸⁰ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, part I, sheet 200-201.

The Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (RA), Al. Khatisyan, was dispatched to Tiflis from April 4 to 11, 1919, to meet with U. Thomson, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces in the Caucasus. During this trip, from April 6 to 8, he participated in a consultation attended by General W. Beach, Head of the Political Department of the British Command in the Caucasus; General Brough, Head of Railways for the British Command; Colonel P. Chardigny; Smith, the American Consul; Colonel Benjamin Burgess Moore⁸¹, the US military-political representative in Transcaucasia; and Captain Poidebard. The center of gravity of the discussed issues focused both on transferring the Kars region to the Republic of Armenia, and on resolving the disputed issues concerning the Borchalu and Akhalkalaki districts through a peaceful agreement with the Government of Georgia, as well as matters relating to the provinces in Georgia⁸².

On April 6, Thomson sent the following note to RA Prime Minister Qajaznuni, who was in Tiflis:

1. The return of the population to the villages of the Kars and Nakhichevan provinces constitutes the most vital issue. Wherever it is not possible to return them to their own villages, they must be allocated a place of residence and must also be given the opportunity to engage in agriculture...

2. Following the return of the refugees, which I hope will be completed by the end of this month, British troops will be withdrawn from Kars and Nakhichevan, but the British mission will remain. Therefore, by May 1, an administration must be organized in every district and maintained by the necessary number of Armenian troops..."⁸³.

General Thomson emphasized the importance of organizing the return of refugees without violence, bloodshed, or religious and national discrimination. He simultaneously added that General Edmund L. Dalie was in Kars conducting preparatory work to ensure the unhindered entry of Armenian troops into Kars and to neutralize the Kars "Shura" (Council). With this proposal, Thomson was essentially drawing a temporary border line between Armenia and Azerbaijan, since it also mentioned that Karabakh-Zangezur would be administered by Azerbaijan. Despite this, the RA Government approved Thomson's proposal during its April 12 session and also found it desirable for British troops to remain in the region for a longer period. The decision also discussed allocating 5 million rubles to the Ministry of Military Affairs for "military needs" in Kars, Sharur, and Nakhichevan; organizing five new companies (composed of individuals free from service, providing a monthly salary of 300 rubles); establishing a commandant position for the Kars district upon whom the duties of governor would also be placed;

⁸¹ From March 17 to October 20, 1919, he served as the US military-political representative, with his seat in Tiflis. He prepared reports on Transcaucasia for the American delegation in Paris. Ghambaryan 2017: 331, 473.

⁸² NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 11, sheet 153.

⁸³ Ghazakhetsyan1993: 89.

organizing a civil administration in Kars, and so forth⁸⁴. On April 12, 1919, the RA Government, having heard the report of A. Khatisyan's mission, decided to occupy Kars and return the refugees there. The Kars and Kağızman districts of the Kars province were to pass to the RA. The region of the Ardahan district lying northwest of the Kura River was handed over to Georgia, while the remaining part, along with the Olti district, was to be administered by the British command⁸⁵.

Upon receiving this decision from the Armenian government, Thomson handed a note on April 14 in Tiflis to the diplomatic representative of Armenia (with a copy to the President of the Government of Georgia), in which he communicated his ruling regarding the territorial demarcation between Georgia and Armenia. Along with other matters, it placed the Kars and Kağızman provinces and the Nakhichevan district—bounded by northern and southern watersheds right up to the Julfa station—under the administration of Armenia, while placing the Olti okrug (district) and the part of Ardahan on the right bank of the Kura River under the Military Governor of Batum⁸⁶. As we can see, of the Kars province, only the Kars and Kağızman districts were given to Armenia, while Olti and Ardahan were not. This caused dissatisfaction within the RA Government. However, the extremely grave condition of the refugees and the necessity of settling them quickly in their native hearths—and despite protesting against the demarcation—the government was forced to accept the temporary borders drawn by Thomson. By these borders, apart from Olti and Ardahan, Karabakh and Zangezur, as well as the Alaverdi and Akhalkalaki regions, remained outside the borders of Armenia. Thomson declared that his demarcation bore a temporary character until the decision of the Paris Conference, that administration in the these provinces must be introduced from May 1, that it must carry an exclusively civil character, and that only a minimum number of troops should be kept in those places to maintain law and order, etc.⁸⁷

Thus, Armenia was preparing to establish its authority in the province, which Azerbaijan and the Shura categorically opposed. On April 18, Khan Tekinski, Azerbaijan's diplomatic representative in Yerevan, reported in a secret telegram to his government: "According to rumors, the English have given Kars to the Armenians and are preparing to hand over Sharur and Nakhichevan to them as well. I request that you verify this and inquire with the English, and if it is true, then I believe it is necessary to protest before the entire Muslim world—India, Turkestan, Afghanistan, the Malayan islands, and the Caucasus—as well as before the peace conference, against the desire of the English to subject several million Muslims to half a million Armenians"⁸⁸. The Government of Azerbaijan instructed Tekinski as follows: "It is necessary to urgently

⁸⁴ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 43, sheet 65.

⁸⁵ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 92, part II, sheet 230.

⁸⁶ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 191, sheet 311; NAA, fund 275, list 5, file 183, sheet 36-37.

⁸⁷ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 191, sheet 34.

⁸⁸ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 358, sheet 6.

establish contact with the Kars authorities, render every type of assistance, find out what they need, and telegraph us so that we can take the necessary measures”⁸⁹.

Such was the course of the issue regarding creating an administration for the districts of the Kars province handed over to Armenia and the return of the refugees. In this manner, the British Command in the Caucasus severed Armenia’s rights in the matter of the Olti district and Ardahan on the right-bank of the Kura River, annexing them to the General-Governorship of Batum, thereby paying tribute to the anti-Armenian aspirations of the Muslim population of those districts.

W. Beach informed that the issue of the borders between Georgia and Armenia remained pending until the arrival of General J. Milne in Tiflis on April 15, about which General W. Thomson had informed Al. Khatisyan⁹⁰. At the center of the discussed issues were both the transfer of the Kars region to the Republic of Armenia and the resolution, through a peaceful agreement, of the disputed issues with the Georgian Government concerning Borchalu and Akhalkalaki, and the provinces in Georgia⁹¹. On April 10, a meeting took place between Al. Khatisyan and the members of the Georgian Government in full composition, which was also attended by General G. Ghorghanyan and Evangulyan. During this meeting, N. Ramishvili spoke about the close unity between Georgia and Armenia against the Muslim government of the Kars Shura and the intrigues of Azerbaijan, as well as about the satisfaction of services rendered by Georgia to the Republic of Armenia—such as military equipment, railway rolling stock, the removal of Armenian property from Tiflis, and so forth. The following day, Ramishvili met with the Armenian delegation and expressed readiness to give Armenia 3,000 sets of military uniforms, as well as to provide rolling stock and locomotives for the necessary occupation of Kars and Nakhichevan⁹².

As for the Batum province, it and a part of the Olti province remained within the zone of British occupation. In Kars proper, parallel to the Armenian regime, there was also a strong British garrison. Back in mid-March 1919, when a tense military-political situation had arisen in the Kars province and stubborn battles were underway, General W. Thomson established new demarcation lines in the competitive demarcation zone that was the object of the Armenian-Georgian conflict, and attempted to establish terms of peace between the Armenians and Georgians in his own way, striving to smooth over the differences between them. According to Thomson, until a just and final arbitral decision was rendered by the Paris Peace Conference, only the Kars and Kağızman provinces passed into the jurisdiction of the RA, while Georgia took under its subordination the northern part of the Ardahan province, including the village of Alaverdi and its mines. Moreover, the demarcation line passed approximately along the Kura River, while the Olti province and the remaining part of the Ardahan province were

⁸⁹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 358, sheet 16.

⁹⁰ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 100, sheet 72.

⁹¹ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 11, sheet 153.

⁹² NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 11, sheet 162-163.

handed over to the subordination of the British administration stationed in Batum, under the jurisdiction of the British Military Governor of Batum⁹³.

Regarding the South-Western Muslim Republic of Kars, the government of Khan-Khoyski continued its support until the very end to make the South-Western Republic a political reality in Transcaucasia, even suggesting in the spring of 1919 to invite its representatives to the Transcaucasian Conference. In a note addressed to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 2, 1919, Azerbaijan's ambassador to the RA, M. Khan-Tekinski, directly stated that a "5th republic" had emerged in the Kars and Batum provinces, whose interests were closely intertwined with the interests of the other Caucasian republics⁹⁴. Therefore, the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) found the participation of that republic in the conference desirable, which the Armenian side categorically rejected. A similar proposal was made to the Georgians, which was also rejected⁹⁵. Ultimately Azerbaijan issued a statement on April 3 that it would refrain from inviting the South-Western Republic to the conference⁹⁶, not wishing to aggravate the situation and become isolated in the region.

During that period, the Shura reached a dead end, because at that stage of the development of events, the Allies, and specifically the British, based on certain considerations of expediency, began to discourage the leaders of the South-Western Muslim Republic or Shura. Having decided to hand over the Kars province to the Republic of Armenia, the Muslim insurgency and anti-Armenian sentiments began to wane. It was decided to turn over the Kars province to the disposal of the RA authorities by May 1, 1919, with the deployment of Armenian troops⁹⁷. This had its justification: first and foremost, it was due to the fact that the Muslim leaders of the Kars province were obstructing the export of grain from the province, launching attacks on the militia composed of local Russians, and even daring to attack British military detachments while maintaining ties with the command of the Turkish 9th Army⁹⁸.

The authorities of Azerbaijan took military and political measures to disrupt the unification of Kars with Armenia. Instigated by Shevki Pasha, the Shura attempted to resist the RA authorities, but in vain. All members of the Shura government and many members of parliament were arrested and sent to Batum⁹⁹.

On April 12, 1919, the members of the Kars Muslim Shura and Majlis were arrested and deported from the province; it was simply abolished. By order of the British command, a temporary council was created under the leadership of Esad Oktay. Included within the composition of the established council were 4 Turks, 2 Greeks, 1

⁹³ Hovannisian 1971: 213.

⁹⁴ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 149, sheet 15.

⁹⁵ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 149, sheet 34.

⁹⁶ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 149, sheet 35.

⁹⁷ Ghazakhetsyan 1993: 88-89.

⁹⁸ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 243, sheet 99; Borba, 1919, April 15, N 77; Hovannisian 1971: 216-217.

⁹⁹ NAA, list 2, file 55, sheet 3-4; Vracyan 1993: 261.

Kurd, 1 Russian, and 1 Molokan, and General W. Thomson informed the General Staff in Constantinople about this¹⁰⁰. In the created situation, the Muslim population of the Kars province was compelled to declare submission to the RA authorities and even outwardly welcomed the arrival of the RA administration, requesting Governor St. Ghorghanyan to also allocate places for Muslims in the administration formed by him¹⁰¹.

On April 17, 1919, Armenian troops arrived in the Kars province, and on April 23, they entered Kars city. The following day, members of the Armenian civil administration arrived in Kars and entered upon the execution of their duties; however, the military control of the province, until the arrival of the Armenian military units, remained under the control of the English. On April 28, both civil and military authority passed entirely to the RA Government. On May 2, the Alexandropol–Sarıkamış railway line was handed over to the RA authorities; on May 9, the Armenian army captured Merdenek; and on May 12, it captured Kağızman. Armenian refugees began to return to the Kars province. On May 5, 1919, the Muslim National Council of Kars telegraphed the RA Prime Minister and, on behalf of the Muslims of the Kars province, welcomed the RA Government. Assuming the governance of the region, the RA authorities endeavored to demonstrate equal treatment toward both the Armenian and Muslim populations of the province, avoiding the deepening of inter-ethnic tension when forming local bodies of authority¹⁰².

Be that as it may, Azerbaijan's attempt to establish Muslim influence in the Kars and Batum provinces failed; the desire of the Khan-Khoyski government to bring the region under the subordination of Azerbaijan yielded no results, even though British policy possessed shades of tolerance or connivance in a certain sense. Azerbaijani calculations came to naught, a result furthered by the joint counteraction of Georgia and Armenia; consequently, Baku's attempts to consolidate the Muslims of the Kars and Batum regions did not lead to the desired results.

A certain role in this issue was also played by the firm stance of the President of the Government of Georgia, N. Zhordania, who back on February 15 simply demanded that General Forestier-Walker, Commander of the British forces in Transcaucasia, abandon the idea of any possible support for a South-Western Muslim Republic, and even more so the intention of handing it over to Turkey or subjecting it to a British general-governorship; practically, no clash of Armenian-Georgian interests took place here. At Forestier-Walker's demand, Denikin's representation was removed from Armenia, and more or less favorable conditions were created for the political decision of uniting the Kars province with the Republic of Armenia. Most of the Kars and Kağızman provinces were occupied by Armenian troops, with the exception of separate parts of

¹⁰⁰ Makhmouryan 2002: 64; Hovannisian 1971: 319-320; Kavkazskoe Slovo, 1919, April 15, 25, 30, May 12, 18, 28, N 70, 75, 79, 89, 94, 101.

¹⁰¹ Makhmouryan 2002: 64; Hovannisian 1971: 319-320.

¹⁰² NAA fund 200, list 1, file 231, part I, sheet 64, 274; file 131, sheet 99a; fund 200, list 2, file 36, sheet 1; list 1, file 242, part II, sheet 234.

these territories that remained under the influence of Kurdish-Tatar-Turkish marauding bands, while the entire Ardahan province was occupied by Georgian troops. On April 23, the military unit of General Hovsepyants, accompanied by a British detachment, crossed the border and moved toward Kars, and on April 24, the administration headed by St. Ghorghanyan also arrived in Kars. Prior to that, General Davie, executing Thomson's order, had arrested the members of the Muslim "Shura" and sent them to Tiflis. Thanks to the presence of Armenian troops, the return of the refugees also proceeded in an essentially peaceful manner¹⁰³.

The Kars province was at the epicenter of events. The formation of Kurdish bands by Turkish instructors in the villages of Kyalpinkar and Mehkerek south of Merdenek, and their concentration west of the village of Agu Dar, is discussed in General Hovsepyants's telegram of May 15, 1919, sent to General Silikyan. Their goal was an attack on the Derbinsky district, taking advantage of the small numbers of the Merdenek detachment. To reinforce it, two detachments (90 soldiers) were sent from Sarıkamış, which did not neutralize the pending danger to Sarıkamış, in the direction of which Eyub Pasha's marauding band of 1,500 men was operating. Taking this into account, on June 12, a part of the Merdenek detachment was sent to Sarıkamış, considering this sufficient to crush Eyub Pasha's band, which operated in a highly coordinated manner with other bands, continuously gathering information about the movements of Armenian troops and communicating them to one another, etc. This is evidenced by the circumstance that on June 13, a detachment consisting of 200 people launched an attack in the direction of Merdenek upon the village of Kayli Ogrdara, and on June 15, in the direction of the village of Muzarat, both of which the Armenian detachment of Merdenek succeeded in repulsing¹⁰⁴.

From the operational summary of General H. Hakhverdyan dated June 18, 1919, we learn about the activation of Kurds and their attacks on the Armenian population of the Kağızman, Sarıkamış, and Merdenek regions; the slaughter on June 6 of 5 militiamen returning to Kars in the Kağızman gorge; and anti-Armenian propaganda conducted by Turkish officers among Muslims. It also documents the activities and preparations of Kurdish bands hidden in Gechevan, Gyumushhana, Olukhlu, and other mountainous villages, as well as their refusal to negotiate with the Armenian authorities. Furthermore, it details the subversive work of Turkish agents in the Muslim villages of the Ardahan-Olti, Bardus, and Sarıkamış-Kağızman regions, and in the Kurdish-inhabited parts of the Bartoghian mountain range—acts which were in many cases prevented by the counterintelligence bodies of the RA, with the Allies being duly informed of these unlawful steps¹⁰⁵.

The British command was repeatedly informed of the Turkish-Tatar and Kurdish activation, and the Armenian government expected real support. In the end, however,

¹⁰³ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 191, sheet 34.

¹⁰⁴ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 50, sheet 15, 18, 48-49.

¹⁰⁵ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 50, sheet 48-49; Vracian 1993: 314.

the Allies confined themselves to feeble reassurances or affirmations. A vivid reflection of this is General Cory's briefing of June 19, 1919, to Al. Khatisyan, stating that he would report the matter to the High Command, while simultaneously openly misleading him by asserting that there was no need for alarm, since the great Turkish nation was fundamentally defeated, possessed neither an army, nor ammunition, nor any power, and would decisively achieve nothing¹⁰⁶. This did not correspond to the realities and caused significant harm, contributing to the weakening of the Armenian potential.

In the summary of the Intelligence Department of the General Staff of the RA Troops dated June 26, 1919, Lieutenant Colonel Shneur, noting the Kurdish attack on the Armenian and Greek population of the Merdenek region, provides facts regarding the movement of Tatars in the Nakhichevan region (about 400 people), also reporting that the latter possessed a machine gun purchased from Armenians in Yerevan¹⁰⁷. In the military overviews compiled by Shneur, and the Chief of the Operational Department, Captain Medvedev—which concern the military situation of the Republic of Armenia during the period leading up to September 20, 1919—mention is made of the noticeably intensified activity of Turkish agent-officers and soldiers in Sharur-Nakhichevan, as well as in the Kars province and elsewhere, aiming to organize armed forces and propagandizing to raise a rebellion against the Armenian government¹⁰⁸.

During this time, preparatory work was underway in Azerbaijan to unite with Turkey, striving to encircle Armenia in a tight ring by instigating Muslim uprisings in Nakhichevan, Zangezur, Vedibasar, and the Kars region¹⁰⁹.

From August 7, 1919, battles with alternating success also unfolded in the Koghb and Dashburun regions¹¹⁰. The situation became even more critical when official news arrived from Paris that British troops would evacuate Transcaucasia on August 15¹¹¹. In a telegram sent on August 8 to the President of the Paris Conference, Georges Clemenceau, protesting against the decision to withdraw British troops, Prime Minister Al. Khatisyan wrote: "The Turkish-Tatar movement is already beginning to threaten the very existence of the Armenian people. The presence of British forces partially restrains this movement. With their departure, an inevitable catastrophe will begin. In the name of human justice and the existence of Armenia, I demand that urgent and energetic measures be taken to avoid disaster"¹¹².

On August 15, 1919, this time it was an extraordinary session of the RA Parliament that addressed a similar appeal to the Paris Conference and the parliaments of the Allied powers, describing the miserable state of the country and the lack of

¹⁰⁶ NAA, fund 275, list 1, file 120, sheet 134.

¹⁰⁷ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 155, sheet 60a.

¹⁰⁸ NAA, fund 204, list 1, file 133, sheet 2.

¹⁰⁹ Haraj, May 9, 1920, N 95.

¹¹⁰ Zohrabyan 2012: 7.

¹¹¹ Virabyan 2024: 185-195.

¹¹² NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 201, sheet 72.

military force, alongside the incursions of Kurdish-Tatar marauding bands and local Muslims in the provinces of Sharur, Nakhichevan, Surmalu, Yerevan, and Kars. However, all of this remained unanswered, and the British decision to withdraw troops stood. Neither Azerbaijani nor Turkish agents ceased their anti-Armenian actions; on August 18, Kurds captured the heights around Kağızman, and it was only in the morning, with great difficulty and the help of artillery, that the forces succeeded in driving the Kurds away.

Nevertheless, toward the end of August, Kağızman was once again exposed to danger, where the Kurds even intended to establish their own government¹¹³, about which the British Captain Prosser, passing through Kağızman to Surmalu, had reported, and the Governor of Kars, St. Ghorghanyan, in his turn, had telegraphed the RA Minister of Internal Affairs¹¹⁴. It is noteworthy that Captain Gross, in a telegram sent to the Commander of the Armenian troops dated June 12, 1919, documented that Turkish provocateurs were spreading rumors that the Armenians were allegedly slaughtering Muslims, thereby rendering the occupation of our territories more difficult¹¹⁵. This was undoubtedly further abetted by the mutual distrust existing between General D. Bek-Pirumyan—who headed the military administration of Kars and enjoyed the confidence of R. Ter-Minasyan—and the head of the civil administration, Governor St. Ghorghanyan. As E. Zohrabyan concludes, the looting widespread in that environment and the self-enrichment carried out under an official mask resulted in the violation of state foundations, radically disrupting the legal order¹¹⁶.

The alarm over Muslim insurgencies was even more perceptible in a region serving as the focus of such a clash of diverse interests as the Ardahan district, where the Turkish factor had become a real threat to the Armenian authorities. Local Armenian authorities complained extremely about this, attempting to counter the Tatar-Turkish, Georgian, and other aspirations with the altogether limited capabilities of the local administration, Internal Affairs bodies, and the militia. To understand this, let us cite just one example. Thus, in a report (No. 16) sent to the Governor of Kars on August 16, 1919, the chief of militia of the Ardahan region reported that the general political situation tied to inter-ethnic relations was in an extremely alarming state and inspired serious anxiety. The author of the note reported that the territorial interests of the governments of Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey clashed extremely sharply in the Ardahan-Olti region, and that intensive propaganda was being conducted by the Georgian government and the Muslims of the Olti region, while a widespread concentration of troops was simultaneously taking place in the border areas. The report also noted that diplomatic negotiations were being conducted with Erzurum, and that representatives from Azerbaijan were also present at the congress of representatives of

¹¹³ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 50, sheet 123, 138-139, 141.

¹¹⁴ NAA, fund 201, list 1, file 2, sheet 16.

¹¹⁵ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 50, sheet 43.

¹¹⁶ Zohrabyan 2012: 13.

the Turkish vilayets. The author further informed the Governor of Kars that military units continuously continued to arrive from Erzurum, the initiation of operations by whom the latter linked to the outcome of the conclusion of the Peace Conference. It was also noted that besides the 9th Turkish Division stationed in Erzurum and executing border service, volunteer military units—consisting of about 10,000 bayonets, complete with artillery and cavalry—were also deployed. The report stated that the mobilization encompassed those aged 20 to 60, which enabled achieving maximum results. The report also documented that all these formations were headed by Shevki Pasha, whose headquarters was located in Erzurum, while the commander of the leading vanguard detachment on the Olti front was Binbashi Jafer Bey, whose headquarters was in Olti. The chief of militia of the Ardahan region concluded his report with a summary deduction regarding the political situation, according to which, in order to prevent a possible uprising of the local Muslim population, the government had to take decisive measures to reinforce the rear and the Armenian military unit operating in the direction of Merdenek, and carry out a decisive operation in the region¹¹⁷.

Of interest is also the operational-intelligence summary of the Commander of the RA Troops, which provides data on the situation prevailing in the Kars province up to August 23, reporting that the temporary government formed in Erzurum had decided to capture the Kars province right up to the Arpachay River. It noted that all uprisings of Muslims on the territory of Armenia took place under the instructions of Turkish agents, who had organized widespread espionage in the Republic of Armenia by relying on the local Muslim population. It further reported that, having been thrown out by Armenian military units from the Nakhichevan and Sharur regions, the leaders of the Tatar bands had transferred their activities to the Kars province. The summary was sent to the RA Diplomatic Plenipotentiary in Georgia for delivery to the Supreme Commissioner of the Allies in Transcaucasia, Colonel W. Haskell¹¹⁸.

While the press was occupied with spreading misinformation, the Erzurum government under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, together with Rauf Bey, was moving its forces into the Kars province, while Azerbaijani and Turkish agents called upon the Muslims to rebel against the RA. The Armenian-Muslim commission, established for the purpose of investigating the events, having gathered information from prominent local Muslims, presented a report in which they placed the entire responsibility for the organization of the uprisings upon spies and agents arriving from the outside, who, while raising the local Muslims to rebellion, threatened to punish all those who should evade it.

At the end of August and beginning of September 1919, the Third Armenian-Georgian Conference opened in Tiflis. Participating from the Armenian side were St. Mamikonyan (president of the delegation), S. Khachatryan, the RA Diplomatic Plenipotentiary in Tiflis L. Evangulyan, and the military representative and advisor on

¹¹⁷ NAA, fund 201, list 1, file 62, sheet 63.

¹¹⁸ NAA, fund 200, file 427, part II, sheet 387.

military affairs of Armenia in Georgia, General H. A. Kishmishyan (Kishmishev). From the Georgian side, participants included Minister of Internal Affairs N. Ramishvili, K. Sabakhtarashvili, member of the Constituent Assembly S. Mdivani, and the Assistant to the Military Minister, General Gedevanov (Gedevanashvili). The representative of the Allied Command, General W. Beach, intended to preside over the conference; however, General J. Milne's headquarters, located in Constantinople, had advised him to participate only as an observer¹¹⁹.

The main problems of the conference became the management of the Neutral Zone after the withdrawal of British troops. At the conference, W. Beach declared, among other matters, that the British troops were prepared for final evacuation, and that in this contingency, the territorial aspirations of the Armenian and Georgian republics in the western direction up to the 1914 Russian-Turkish border line had encountered a categorically negative opposition from the side of the so-called "South-Western Caucasian Republic" in the Kars province, which had published its declaration of independence on January 18, 1919, at the initiative of the Muslim National Council and the Turkish 9th Army¹²⁰.

The suppression of the Muslim uprising in the Kars region coincided with the arrival of US Colonel W. Haskell, appointed Supreme Commissioner for Armenia by the Council of Five of the Peace Conference. In this connection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan addressed an official protest on September 26, 1919, to T. Bekzadyan, the diplomatic representative of the RA in Baku, asserting that the RA government was obliged to assume the entire responsibility for the events. In response, T. Bekzadyan replied that national discrimination and persecutions against other nationalities did not exist in the RA, that they were convinced that all these events were instigated from the outside by various agents, and that the RA had taken appropriate measures for the purpose of maintaining internal law and order in its country¹²¹. However, the government of Azerbaijan was not satisfied with this; the diplomatic representative of Azerbaijan in Tiflis also turned to General J. Cory, requesting him to halt the "massacre being carried out against Muslims" in Armenia. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani government, Jafarov, addressed a remonstrance to Colonel W. Haskell, complaining of the persecutions being implemented against the Tatar population in Yerevan, and requested that an investigatory commission be sent and influence exerted upon the Armenian government to organize an impartial inquiry, including within the composition of the commission representatives of neutral states as well¹²². M. Tumanyan, the counselor of the RA diplomatic representation in Georgia, informing RA Minister of Foreign Affairs AI. Khatisyan about the application addressed by the government of Azerbaijan to Colonel Haskell, reports the latter's reply that he

¹¹⁹ Hovannisian 1982: 334.

¹²⁰ Hovannisian 1982: 2; Hovannisian 1971: 205.

¹²¹ Hovannisian 1982: 180.

¹²² Haraj, October 19, 1919.

“does not recognize the right of one state to interfere in the internal affairs of another state” and expresses the hope that the rights of citizens will be secured both in Armenia and in Azerbaijan, while requesting the RA government to carry out an investigation, punish the guilty, and communicate the results¹²³.

In any case, there were expectations toward the Allies that were illusory, yet lacked any alternative. The Governor of Kars, St. Ghorghanyan, vividly described this moment of illusion:

*“...recognized by Europe, by the great ‘Allied’ allies, we believed that one way or another, we were under the pan-European mantle. And all these conditions compelled us to believe that those exploding bombs, the nervous comings and goings, the panic, and the rattle of weapons everywhere were but a sweet dream. This threatening and feverish atmosphere predisposed people to be charmed anew by native ideals, and all of us, in high spirits toward right and truth, followed that current which was so easy and so merciless”*¹²⁴.

Nevertheless, the Armenians cherished hopes that “against the allied forces of our internal and external enemies, we had to counterpose our nationally educated and predisposed army, and we had to steer our state sails in that same direction”¹²⁵.

In the summer of 1919, the Turkish-Kurdish anti-Armenian uprisings in the southern districts of the Kars province—namely in the Kağızman, Sarıkamış, and Merdenek regions—were largely quieted by the RA armed forces. The province as a whole remained under the control of the Armenian administration. However, the situation was more complicated in the Zarushat, Shoragyal, Aghbaba, and Childır regions, where RA authority was virtually nominal, and where Turkish-Tatar agents operated actively among the Muslim population, keeping the Alexandropol-Kars railway under their surveillance.

The greatest danger to the RA was posed by the predominantly Tatar-inhabited districts of the Kars province—Aghbaba, Zarushat, and Childır—which were well-armed and subject to the propaganda of Turkish, Azerbaijani, and partly Georgian agents. On October 4, 1919, Captain V. Muradyants of the Intelligence Department reported that in the Aghbaba, Shoragyal, and Zarushat regions, the Tatars continued to organize and thoroughly defend themselves against a sudden Armenian attack. He noted that emissaries arriving from Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia were inciting the Tatar masses against the Government of Armenia, while qualifying that there were also those asserting the opposite view. For instance, Yalbala Mamed oğlu (a resident of the village of İbgi), an influential figure among the Tatars of Aghbaba, was allegedly a proponent of peaceful coexistence with the Armenians and had advised the Tatars not to submit to the influence of various emissaries. During a meeting with the district commissioner, he reassured him that the Tatars were not thinking of rebellion and were armed solely for

¹²³ Ghulyan 2011: 119.

¹²⁴ Harutyunyan 2018: 442.

¹²⁵ Harutyunyan 2018: 101-102.

self-defense¹²⁶. General Pirumyan's November 1919 telegram to the Commander of the RA Troops also clearly testifies to the aggressive aspirations of the leader of the Aghbaba Tatars, Kerbalai Mamed. After staying in Azerbaijan for two months, Mamed arrived in the Aghbaba, Childir, and Zarushat regions with a large bodyguard, compiled lists of those capable of bearing arms, and prepared gendarmes and local regiments. Notably, those registered were to wear shoulder straps featuring the crescent moon¹²⁷.

Undoubtedly, the weakness of the RA in terms of military, energy, food, and other issues left its mark on the country's entire course, affecting both the successes and failures of the steps taken by the RA government. Difficulties in territorial delimitation and any potential positive developments remained dependent on the military-political missions and the High Command of the British and other powers. Operating as advisors, they played a dual role in shaping and directing the foreign-policy calculations and expectations of the RA, frequently contributing to the rendering of decisions unfavorable to the RA—a pattern that has undergone no substantial change throughout the entire past century. During those years, one of the main pillars for the rulers in Yerevan became not a flexible, far-sighted diplomatic activity and a desire to maneuver, but rather, partially and insufficiently, a military force. This force was deficient in both quality and quantity and was poorly armed, including with British-Canadian firearms that were inadequate for use and, in many cases, defective. These and other factors and circumstances did not allow for a firm establishment in Kars, Nakhichevan, Karabakh, Sotk-Basargechar, and elsewhere. The British and other allies demonstrated no practical, vested interest here, since their primary concern was Baku oil and the partition of Russia—be it Tsarist or Bolshevik. All of this prevented the RA government from being able to counter, even occasionally, the frequently non-Armenophile British dictates, or to overcome a servile devotion to the Allies.

It was evident that following the end of the First World War and the forced withdrawal of Turkish troops from Transcaucasia, the anticipated conditions for the realization of Armenian plans were not created. Nevertheless, although the narrow borders imposed on the newly created Republic of Armenia by the Treaty of Batum were incomparably expanded to include several sectors of the Ararat plain, the districts of Surmalu and Alexandropol, and parts of the Kars province—increasing the RA territory from 10–12 thousand sq. km to around 45 thousand sq. km—it still proved impossible to restore the ethnic-territorial integrity of the RA to any reasonable degree. Chiefly through British efforts, Akhalkalak-Javakhk, the Lori Neutral Zone, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Sharur-Nakhichevan remained excluded. All of this took place with the assistance and connivance of the Allies, whose arrival in Transcaucasia had been so eagerly awaited. Great Britain and the other allies, looking after the creation of a large and powerful Azerbaijan that would act as a barrier against Bolshevik Russia, had no practical interest in a strong Armenia. On the contrary, they predisposed Armenia to

¹²⁶ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 50, sheet 164.

¹²⁷ NAA, fund 199, list 1, file 110, sheet 21.

stand against the danger coming from the north until the very end, but at the moment of peril, they abandoned it and subordinated its interests to an Azerbaijan bolshevized on the advice of M. Kemal, an act which would also enhance Great Britain's prestige in the Muslim world. Throughout their entire stay in Transcaucasia, the military-political representatives and generals of Britain and other countries, with certain reservations, only encouraged the separatist sentiments of the rebellious Muslim districts. This undermined the positions of the RA in the region, causing immense material and moral harm to the Armenian people, who, thus weakened, were unable to withstand the cruel trials of the future. By and large, the Azerbaijanis understood this well and endeavored to exploit the loopholes in the British position, an interesting observation of which is found in the work of S. Safarov. According to Safarov, through the use of diplomatic and military means, Great Britain sought to control the conflicts existing between the independent republics as much as possible, using cunning to convince them that it was loyal to national-democratic ideas and would support their independent course. Citing a British correspondent in Tiflis, Safarov notes:

*"An Armenian bureau operates in London, and there are similar offices in France and the USA. The use of the word 'Christian' as a cheap advertising tool, of course, led to a pro-Armenian tendency in British foreign policy conducted in favor of Armenia. However, the growing aggression of the Ararat Republic against sovereign Azerbaijan weakened Great Britain's position among its allies and led to an increase in the demands of the American government. In July 1919, the American Colonel Haskell was appointed Supreme Commissioner for Armenia by the Allies, though prior to this appointment, the US had been conducting behind-the-scenes negotiations with the Armenian side"*¹²⁸.

All of this was vividly manifested in the events that unfolded in Kars in June 1919, which are also attested by the British military representative in Kars, Captain H. R. Prosser. Describing their desperate situation, he noted that by August 30, when he intended to depart, the Armenians attempted to block his departure:

*"The Armenians are depressed by the departure of the British, whom, despite frequent assurances to the contrary, they viewed until the end as providers of tangible assistance from the Allies. They speak of fighting to the end and so forth, but I believe that most of the fighting spirit among them vanished with our departure. On the whole, the position of the Armenians in the Kars province at the present moment is not favorable... They are surrounded by a hostile population, and with the arrival of the Turks, Kars as a part of Armenia will, in all probability, cease to exist"*¹²⁹.

Colonel John Plowden, the British military representative in Yerevan, finding that the Armenians as a people were greatly slandered, noted that being virtually barefoot and without uniforms, they had fought alongside the best European troops who

¹²⁸ Safarov 2020: 6-7.

¹²⁹ Hovannisian 1982: 100.

surpassed them in number; he maintained that if weapons and ammunition were available, Armenia would be able to keep the Turks and Tatars away from its borders¹³⁰.

In June 1919, the British Governor-General of Baku, D. Shuttleworth, “unburdened himself” in a conversation with high-ranking Russian generals:

“We shall soon leave here, and the Italians will replace us. The picture will change; their main goal will be the exploitation of the country, since Italy is a poor country and they need to improve their financial affairs. I do not know for certain, but it is possible that Italy may even receive a mandate over Transcaucasia. In that case, obviously, the burden of the occupying troops will be placed on local resources. The Italians are extracting oil at a rapid pace on profitable terms.”

In his zeal to discredit Italy, Shuttleworth “forgot” that the British had already done all of this on a much more significant scale—plundering Kars and Transcaucasia, particularly the oil and the rest of Azerbaijan’s goods on “profitable terms,” even though England was not a poor country¹³¹.

In the opinion of E. Andersen and G. Egge, a large-scale anti-Armenian campaign based on a pan-Islamic and pan-Turanian agenda, initiated in July 1919 by Turkish nationalists and numerous delegates of the Azerbaijani government, was coupled with massive supplies of weapons arriving from Erzurum through Barduz and from Baku through Northern Persia into the predominantly Muslim-populated Yerevan province (in the districts of Surmalu, Sharur, Nakhichevan, and Yerevan) and throughout the territory of Kars¹³².

According to data from the same authors, the fierce battles that took place during July and August in the Kars territory—around Karaorgan, Karakurt, and Bashköy to the west of Kağızman, and in the area of Merdenek - Novo-Selim - Begli Ahmed to the west of Kars—led to a series of Armenian successes against Kurdish and Turkish-Tatar tribes. These tribes were directed by regular Turkish troops and were often led by Turkish officers acting as commanders. According to E. Andersen and G. Egge, by September 1919, Armenian control was restored over most of the Kars territory, with the exception of the northern part of the Ardahan district under Georgian control and the Olti district under British control, which was still dominated by the Muslim militias of Ayyub Khan and Server Bek. At the same time, as E. Andersen and G. Egge conclude, Armenian control in Surmalu was limited to the Ararat plain, while the strategic heights around Kulp, Orgov, and Aralik remained in the hands of the Kurdish-Tatars¹³³.

In January 1920, the RA government was recognized de facto by the concert of Great Powers, and a comparative peace prevailed on the borders. The government had succeeded in quieting the uprisings of the Muslims of Zangibasar, Kars-Aghbaba, Sotk-Zod-Basargechar, and other districts that had kept the region in a state of alarm. This

¹³⁰ Hovannisian 1982: 100.

¹³¹ The US and Allied Supreme Commissioner in Armenia William Haskell. Ohanyan 2010.

¹³² Andersen and Egge 2018.

¹³³ Hovannisian 1982: 77, 79, 85, 104-105.

was a temporary and unstable calm on the eve of catastrophic developments, which relaxed the attention of the RA government and weakened its analytical capacity to perceive the anxieties accumulating from within.

On January 24, 1920, an uprising broke out in Kars. Its instigators were the Muslim notables of Aghbaba and Zarushat who had met earlier on January 12 in the village of Gegharchin—namely Kurd Selim, Kerbalai Mahmed Aghababekov, and an Azerbaijani officer named Nazaraliev. As a result of this rebellion, officials and police of the RA were expelled from Childır (the Ardahan region of Kars province) and from the greater part of Zarushat and Aghbaba. The Muslims captured the strategically important Zurzuna pass and dispatched 500 armed men to Ardahan with the objective of capturing it. In response, Armenian military units led by Colonel Hovhannes Mazmanian advanced from Merdenek toward Ardahan to defend it, even though the district governor, Kadimov, sent a delegation to the mutineers to persuade the rebels to lay down their arms. Nevertheless, military operations flared up across the Kars province. This drew the attention of the Allies, and Zeynal Abdal Zeynalov—a member of the Kars Council or Shura, which had been dissolved back in May 1919—appealed to the Allied representatives, and particularly to the British High Commissioner Oliver Wardrop, requesting that immediate measures be taken. Furthermore, from February 8 onward, Fatali Khan Khoyski addressed the RA government with a call to put an end to the offensive¹³⁴.

This state of affairs could not be tolerated for long; therefore, in early 1920, the RA government decided to suppress the insurgent movements by force in the Muslim settlements of Zarushat, Aghbaba (Amasia), and Shaynalyar within the Kars province, compelling them to recognize RA authority. Initially, however, they attempted a peaceful resolution to the confrontational situation by appealing to the mediation of representatives of the American Committee. Following this, a Muslim commissioner was appointed in that region as a compromise. However, the latter took advantage of the overt support of the Azerbaijani diplomatic mission in Yerevan and relied on an armed insurgent band of more than 3,000 men trained with the help of Turkish instructors. This presented a real threat to Armenia and its capital, Yerevan, forcing the Armenian troops to remain in a constant state of readiness. This entire situation initially left an impression on Wardrop when Zeynalov first publicly presented the complaints. Upon reviewing them, Wardrop came to conclusion that the accusations were greatly exaggerated and reported that the main cause of the unrest was visibly Turkish instigators¹³⁵.

George Gracie, who possessed a certain sympathy toward the Armenians, believed that a coalition government should be established to reduce the influence of the militant Dashnaks—who were distrusted in European and particularly British diplomatic circles—and that no additional steps should be taken to disarm or otherwise suppress the Muslim population until the Supreme Council in Paris made a decision

¹³⁴ Hovannisian 1996a: 150-151.

¹³⁵ Hovannisian 1996a: 150-153.

regarding the borders of the Transcaucasian republics¹³⁶. In a report sent to the British Foreign Office on March 4, 1920, the head of the mission, Wardrop, noted that the unrest in Kars had caused deep resentment in Azerbaijan, placing the blame on Armenia:

*"I think it my duty to inform Your Lordship strictly confidentially that if the agreement signed between Armenia and Azerbaijan on November 23, 1919, fails to serve its purpose, the blame lies with the Government of Armenia, whose behavior within its own territory and in Zangezur at least to some extent justifies the countermeasures taken by the Government of Azerbaijan. Without hesitation, I can say that from a humanitarian standpoint, it seems inadvisable to entrust the Dashnak government of Armenia with authority over the lives and property of Muslims, and I believe that the Armenians would be much safer under Muslim authority than the Muslims under the Armenian Dashnaks"*¹³⁷.

In January 1920, the Deputy Governor of Kars, Chalkhushyan, in a communication addressed to the RA Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Malkhasyan, reported that Zarushat was the most restless area, where Azerbaijani agents were operating under the leadership of Ismayil Bek Nazaraliev, Kasum Halilbekov, and Aghali Bek Kaziev¹³⁸. The situation escalated further when a January 1920 consultation of the Muslims of Zarushat and Aghbaba decided to sever commercial and other ties with the RA authorities, expel the Armenian administration, and declare a mobilization. As a result, on January 24, the Armenian administration was driven out of the district, several Armenians were killed, and General Hovsepian's punitive detachment was forced to enter the region. The detachment restored law and order and compelled the population to declare their submission to the RA authorities¹³⁹, while those who refused to reconcile, primarily the ringleaders, departed for Tiflis and Baku.

In January 1920, the RA military launched punitive operations in the districts of Shoragyal, Zarushat, and Childır—which had fallen under the influence of Azerbaijani propaganda—in order to suppress the anti-government rebellions of the Kars Muslims. This caused a major uproar in Azerbaijan¹⁴⁰. In this connection, the newspaper "Azerbaijan", touching upon the events in Kars, protested against the violence toward Muslims and petitioned European countries to direct their attention "upon this small, dark corner of Transcaucasia"¹⁴¹.

The British position carried double standards and preconditions, regarding which the conclusion of General Anton Denikin, Commander of the Volunteer Army of the South of Russia, is highly significant:

¹³⁶ Hovannisian 1996a: 154.

¹³⁷ Hovannisian 1996a: 154.

¹³⁸ NAA, fund 201, list 1, file 281, sheets 20-21.

¹³⁹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 249, sheet 79; Ruben 1982: 248.

¹⁴⁰ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 486, part 1, sheets 20, 49-51.

¹⁴¹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 486, part 1, sheet 113.

*“Regarding the Kars issue, the English command generally had no policy of its own, or else it was excessively Machiavellian. Toward Russia, in any case, this policy was quite definite: for the return of Russian refugees to the provinces of Kars and Batum, General Walker set a condition that the returning refugees must not conduct propaganda for Bolshevik ideas or toward reunification with Russia...”*¹⁴².

However, peace was not established. The representative of the National Council of Kars Muslims in Tiflis presented a protest memorandum to the Allies regarding the Armenian side's policy of exterminating the Muslims of the Kars province. Azerbaijan reacted to this, and on February 8, 1920, a protest note was presented to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that Azerbaijan could not remain indifferent to the violence perpetrated against Muslims in Kars¹⁴³. Replying to Azerbaijan, the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that this constituted an interference in the internal affairs of the RA. As evidence, it cited a telegram from the Chairman of the Muslim National Council, Meshadi Mamed Hajiev, to Al. Khatisyan, in which the former testified to the instigation of disorders and the looting of Muslim villages by outside newcomer elements, and welcomed the dispatch of troops by the RA government to restore order¹⁴⁴.

Azerbaijan went deeper, raising the issue during the March 8–9, 1920 sessions of its parliament regarding “the destruction of 10 thousand Muslims in the Kars province by the RA authorities under the pretext of disarmament,” and deciding to voice a protest to the entire world against the actions of the RA. In this regard, Ruben wrote: “The Zarishat issue was digested; despite the protests from Azerbaijan, it was digested because Haskell was partly responsible, and during that period, the Allied plenipotentiary Haskell still represented a force and prestige for Turkey and Azerbaijan”¹⁴⁵.

Azerbaijan also brought up the issue of the Kars Muslims at the conference of Transcaucasian republics convened in early April 1920, wishing to place the Kars issue on the agenda alongside the Karabakh issue. Accordingly, at the session of April 19, the delegation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic presented telegrams from the Yerevan-Kars Compatriotic Union regarding the unceasing violence, arrests, and killings perpetrated against Muslims in the Kars province, as well as the confiscation of one million rubles from Muslim residents, demanding that the Armenian authorities pay two million rubles as an indemnity. The Azerbaijani delegation succeeded in having the investigation of the clashes in the Kars province included in the scope of the commission's activities, though this did not affect the political situation in the province¹⁴⁶. Desiring Allied intervention, the Azerbaijani government demanded the creation of an international commission to investigate the events in Kars, but received a

¹⁴² Denikin 1925: 147.

¹⁴³ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 249, sheet 221; Ashkhatavor, February 13-14, 1920, N 35-36; March 2, N 49.

¹⁴⁴ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 427, sheets 64, 81.

¹⁴⁵ Slovo, March 12, 1920, N 58; Ruben 1982: 250.

¹⁴⁶ NAA, fund 441, list 1, file 94, sheet 106; Virabyan 2004.

refusal on the grounds that the Allies did not have free representatives available to form such a commission¹⁴⁷.

This intelligence operational report dated March 20, 1920, reported on Muslim activity in Surmalu, noting that in Kulp, alongside local outlaw bands, Shamil-bek Ayrumlinsky had 200 Turkish soldiers and 2 cannons. It added that ammunition had been dispatched to Kulp from Bayazet using 7 camels¹⁴⁸. Valuable information regarding the Kars province is contained in the summary (No. 14) of the Intelligence Department dated April 5, 1920, in which T. Devoyants and M. Dodokhyan reported that on the eve of the Childır rebellion, a Turkish regiment of 700 men was dispatched toward Merdenek, 300 of whom left for Olti. However, the events in Dersim forced them to be redirected toward Erzinka (Erzincan). It also reported that on the eve of the Childır movement, Eyub Pasha was summoned to Erzurum and instructed to organize a *chetnik* (irregular fighter) group to operate toward Sarıkamış. Furthermore, Khalil Bey, the former commander of the 3rd Caucasian Rifle Division, along with several Turkish officers and soldiers, was conducting a mobilization of men aged 18 to 40 in the Olti region, training them and sending the prepared detachments to border villages¹⁴⁹.

In a telegram (No. 00322) sent from Kars to the Commander-in-Chief and the Minister of Internal Affairs on April 14, 1920, Major General Hovsepyants reported that following the battles in Childır, he had arrested the leaders of the rebellion, Kyamil Abdul Oğli and Veysal Yusup Oğli. At the request of the governor, they were handed over to the latter. Valuable information was extracted from the detainees regarding the participation of Azerbaijani and Turkish agents in organizing the rebellion, prompting Hovsepyants to demand that they be subjected to severe judicial punishment¹⁵⁰. An intelligence report dated June 3, 1920, testified to coordinated actions between local Muslims of the Kars province, and even Molokans, with the army of the Turkish Kyamil Pasha. For this purpose, 4 Turkish officers and 15 soldiers arrived in Bashköy and Bekköy, while a consultation was held in Nor Selim with representatives of the Molokans of the Kars province¹⁵¹.

In response, however, Azerbaijan—once again shifting the blame onto Armenia and emphasizing its own political stance toward a peaceful resolution of disputed issues—welcomed the formation of the Allied Commission. It proposed that the commission had to investigate the root causes of the mutual Armenian-Muslim massacres and clashes in Transcaucasia chronologically, starting from 1918, arguing that separating the Karabakh events from previous Transcaucasian developments would misdirect the investigation. It should be noted that the Allies hypocritically

¹⁴⁷ Knyazyan 2008: 144.

¹⁴⁸ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 486, part 1, sheet 113.

¹⁴⁹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 427, part II, sheet 249.

¹⁵⁰ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 271, sheets 172-173.

¹⁵¹ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 33, sheet 33.

rejected Azerbaijan's request to send a commission to investigate the issue of the massacre of Muslims in the Kars province on February 29, 1920¹⁵².

On April 4, 1920, Tigran Bekzadyan, the diplomatic representative of the Republic of Armenia in Tiflis, reported in a telegram sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that a meeting had taken place with M. Garbaccio (Gabba) on April 2. During the meeting, the Italian High Commissioner expressed regret that the Armenians had rebelled in Karabakh at a time when the borders of Armenia were being drawn, stating that such a step made no sense, just as Azerbaijan's intervention in the situation in the Kars province lacked justification¹⁵³. Simultaneously, a special commission was established in Baku under the leadership of Mahmed Khan-Tekinski—the Assistant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs who had been accused of espionage in Armenia—which was tasked with presenting a comprehensive conclusion summarizing all the territorial demands of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic within a short period¹⁵⁴.

During the years 1918–1920, the Republic of Armenia exerted immense efforts to prevent hostile forces and intrigues in Kars and other regions, which were fundamentally aimed against the territorial integrity of the RA. Colonel P. Chardigny, representing the French mission in Transcaucasia, displayed a critical attitude toward the British, accusing them of being so heavily invested in opening routes to the East and establishing profitable markets, as well as creating stable Georgian and Azerbaijani states, that they turned a blind eye when Turkish-Azerbaijani agents provoked rebellions in Kars and Nakhichevan. Chardigny assessed these events as part of a larger movement, expressing regret that General J. Cory had ignored his advice to transfer two British battalions to Armenia, and emphasizing that the Armenians were in dire need of weapons and ammunition¹⁵⁵.

There was an impression that Haskell might create yet another neutral zone in the Kars province, yielding to the wishes of Muslim beks and agents, and that the Allied powers were simply allowing the richest lands of Russian Armenia to be torn away from the RA¹⁵⁶.

Nonetheless, attacks and border violations by Turkish-Azerbaijani and Kurdish Muslim predatory bands intensified in the regions of Kars and Surmalu. The task of subjugating the rebellious Muslim-populated regions served as a pretext for intervention by external forces who exploited the circumstance—particularly Azerbaijan and Turkey, closely followed by Soviet Russia.

Almost the same outcome resulted from the Georgian-Soviet Moscow Treaty of May 7, 1920, which made reservations regarding the de facto borders of Georgia, particularly in the Ardahan region of the Kars province, which was disputed with

¹⁵² NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 563, sheets 66, 80–84, 89; Ashkhataavor, April 9, 1920.

¹⁵³ NAA, fund 200, list 1, file 563, sheet 62.

¹⁵⁴ Mshak, March 14, 1920.

¹⁵⁵ Hovannisian 1982: 107.

¹⁵⁶ Nor Ashkhataavor, September 11, 1919; Hayreniq, November 23, 1919.

Armenia. The treaty ignored the border between Georgia and Armenia, which at the time of signing did not coincide with the southern boundary of the Tiflis Governorate in the Borchalu district¹⁵⁷. This was ultimately resolved at the height of the Turkish-Armenian war in November 1920, when, as the leading contemporary researcher V. M. Mukhanov justly notes, none of the Great Powers had the desire to intervene in the conflict, and Armenia was left to the mercy of fate¹⁵⁸.

Retrospectively, these nuances of the political process were generally correctly observed by Al. Khatisyan:

*“On the other hand, the Paris Conference delayed dealing with the issues of Turkey for far too long, giving the Kemalists time to grow stronger. And later, when Russia concluded its internal civil strife, the Allies feared complications and withdrew, leaving the newly formed republics to their own fate”*¹⁵⁹.

He stated that he had:

*“...come to the unshakeable conviction that the Allies abandoned Armenia, and the Turks took wide advantage of this. However, the main allies of the Turks were the Bolsheviks, who provided the Turks with the strength and opportunity to attack Armenia. This is an indisputable fact. It is likewise a fact that after helping each other, they divided Armenia between themselves. And the Bolsheviks did this not out of distinct hostility toward Armenia, but driven by their ‘world’ policy, for which they felt the need to win the friendship of the Turks by sacrificing Armenia. And the Bolsheviks gave the Turks what they wanted—Kars, Surmalu, Ardahan—and the remaining part, what the Turks did not need, i.e., the regions populated by Armenians, the Russians took”*¹⁶⁰.

It all culminated in the fact that, as recorded in the official reports of the diplomatic representative of Armenia in Tiflis dated November 7 and 12, 1920, the extremely grave situation created for Armenia—and specifically the facts of the rebellion of the Muslim population in the rear, in the Aghbaba region of Kars province—initially forced the command to transfer a part of the Armenian troops located at the approaches of Aleksandropol to the Kars province to suppress the Muslim revolt. Ultimately, they were compelled to abandon even this option, as a result of which the military command proceeded to accept the ultimatum presented by the Turks on November 8¹⁶¹. T. Bekzadyan’s efforts did not yield the anticipated results in practice, nor could they have.

The government of Armenia and its political leaders also failed in army-building, proving unable to create a combat-ready army, within which the *fedayee* commanders were in deep antagonism with the generals who favored a regular army. They were “forced” to solve tasks beyond their strength using a powerless and unreliable army, and found themselves incapable of restraining the anti-Armenian actions of the massive

¹⁵⁷ Andersen 2020: 1, 6-8, 11, 14, 22.

¹⁵⁸ Mukhanov 2019: 142.

¹⁵⁹ Khatisyan 1968: 193.

¹⁶⁰ Khatisyan 1968: 293.

¹⁶¹ Galoyan 2000: 333, 338.

Muslim population within the republic's borders—in the Kars province, Zangibasar-Vedibasar, Sotk-Basargechar, and other regions—who were patronized and received significant military-material support from Turkey. Moreover, as a result of subjugating the Muslim regions, the Armenian army became weakened and exhausted.

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