

ARMENIAN-AZERBAIJANI TERRITORIAL CONFLICT AND THE KARABAKH ISSUE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MILITARY-AND-POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF GREAT BRITAIN IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND TRANSCAUCASIA IN 1918-1920

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Abstract

In 1918-1920s the steps of the military policy of Azerbaijan were directed toward the frustration of the Armenian State system. With this intention, Andranik's and Dro's forces were taken out with the help of British generals Thomson and Shuttleworth. This allowed Azerbaijan to make the Armenian council in Karabakh temporarily obey the Azerbaijani Government on August 22, 1912, till the solution of this disputable issue by the French conference of allied nations, which was one of the steps of the Azerbaijani government planned beforehand.

In reality, as a result of further important military changes in the Republic of Armenia and the mutually beneficial agreement between Russia and Kemal Atatürk, as well as taking into consideration the evident connivance of allied powers, during 1920-1923 Azerbaijan managed to capture not only Nakhichevan, but Karabakh and other Armenian lands as well, the struggle for which restarted in 1988-1990.

Keywords: The Republic of Armenia, Karabakh-Artsakh, Azerbaijan, Russia, England-Great Britain, Baku

The 1918-1920 Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict was uncompromising and bloody for Artsakh. In order to protect themselves from various Azerbaijani encroachments and simply from anti-Armenian militant actions, the RA government took several steps in 1918-1919.¹ Thus, on November 16, 1918, the report of the Military Minister on the organization of military forces for Karabakh and Zangezur was presented at the session of the Council of Ministers. The session approved the draft. Taking into account that Azerbaijan had taken action without waiting for the settlement of the disputed issues of the borders of Karabakh and Zangezur by mutual consent, and seizing the mountainous parts of Artsakh-Karabakh and Zangezur, used violence against the population, armed

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¹ See Harutyunyan 1996: 11-235.

forces should be organized to defend the above-mentioned Armenian regions and to protect the population from encroachment.²

At the session of January 21, 1919, Minister-President (Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia) Hovhannes Qajaznuni presented to the approval of the Government a plan to establish an interim administration in the Armenian parts of Artsakh and Zangezur. The following plan consisting of 16 articles made with the participation of Alexander Khatisyan, acting Minister of Internal Affairs of Armenia, was adopted at the session of the Government:

1. «The Armenian regions of Zangezur and Karabakh, being an integral part of the Republic of Armenia, are governed by bodies approved by the Government of the Republic, based on the laws in force in Armenia.
2. Due to communication difficulties, the General Administration of the country is temporarily transferred to the existing “Zangezur National Council”, which will be called “Regional Council of Zangezur and Karabakh” ...
3. The composition of the council should be replenished with representatives of the Armenian-populated parts of Karabakh, as well as with the representatives of the Turkish population living in the region according to their number...
4. Until a new order is established, all state institutions of the country and state officials are subject to the council, are established and approved by the council and are accountable to it.
5. Country revenues (state taxes and other state incomes) are spent for the needs of the country, the deficit is filled from the treasury of the Republic...
6. 400,000 roubles will be allocated from the treasury of the Republic to cover the state expenses for February. Regardless of this, the treasury covers the expenses of the soldiers of one detachment...
7. The “Regional Council of Zangezur and Karabakh” will present to the central government a report on the spending of the above-mentioned 400 thousand roubles...
8. The government of the Republic sends a state commissioner to Goris, as its representative, for the Armenian region of Zangezur-Karabakh.
9. The state commissioner is instructed to oversee the activities of the Council and, if necessary, give instructions to the Council on behalf of the government...
10. If the state commissioner is a military person, the command of the Goris detachment must be handed over to him, otherwise the special commander must be appointed by the Military Minister.
11. Assign the election of the state commissioner to the Minister-President, with the consent of the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Military Minister.

It was decided to adopt the program and recommend the Minister-President to make the necessary orders to implement it”.³

² NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 6, p. 9.

³ Ghazakhecyan *et al.* 2000 (ed.): 85-86.

Based on the resolution of the June 16, 1919 session of the RA Council of Ministers and the June 5, 1919 law, the government passed a new law on allocating 1,500 thousand roubles from the 8 million Karabakh fund to organize a military unit of Karabakh. According to the law, the Karabakh military unit was to consist of one infantry battalion, two mountain cannons and 54 scouts. Based on the above-mentioned law, in another document, which is a logical continuation of the above, on behalf of the Military Ministry, the Chief of the General Staff, Colonel B. Baghdasarov asked G. Khojamiryan, the manager of affairs of the RA Council of Ministers, to speed up and put the mentioned sum at his disposal, at the same time noting that out of the sum of 8 million, 3,238,640 roubles remained.⁴ However, all this was either not effective enough, or the Armenian government fell victim to the vain promises and assurances of the military-and-political representations of the Allies in the Caucasus or their governments, who forgot that their small ally had shed blood in the Arabian sands.

Undoubtedly, Azerbaijan took advantage of the opportunities provided by the situation, in particular, the connivance and undisguised support of the British-European military-and-political representations in Transcaucasia and their governments. And this was in the circumstance when the Armenian government was taken aback by its Entente allies, who had made many promises before. The Republic of Armenia was an ally of the Entente, therefore of England. Given this fact, the ruling regions of Armenia naively and unconditionally believed that the allied powers would defend Armenia in the disputed issues with the neighboring Muslim power, and on that ground, especially in the beginning, they did not put a lot of effort into cajoling, showing a diplomatic approach to the heads of representation of the allied powers. Of course, there were some grounds for that. For the Armenians and their leading forces, who had enthusiastically welcomed the entry of allied powers, including the British, into the Caucasus, it was extremely difficult to soberly and unequivocally orient themselves in the context of the British policy and draw the necessary conclusions and be guided by viable and effective tactics. According to R. Hovhannisyan, the similar position of England was conditioned by the following circumstance: "At the end of 1918, they believed that Armenia would be given the Ottoman eastern vilayets. Therefore, it seemed natural to view Karabakh and Zangezur as compensation for Azerbaijan, whose claims to western lands would be rejected. Some critics single out economic exploitation as the primary factor in British politics.

... Britain managed to buy thousands of tons of oil products worth millions of pounds. "Whether or not oil imperialism dictated British policy, in any case, economic factors could not be ignored".⁵

In the current situation, W. M. Thomson,⁶ who replaced G. Forrestier-Walker, the British Commander-in-Chief in Transcaucasia from March 9, and D. I. Shuttleworth,⁷

⁴ See NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 28, p. 86-87.

⁵ Hovhannisyan 2005: 121.

one of his staff officers, who was left in Baku as the head of the imperial armed forces, openly favored Azerbaijan, and were initially intolerant of Armenians and openly sympathetic to Azerbaijanis. In November 1918, with General W. Thomson's intervention, General Andranik's detachment was prevented from entering Shushi and Artsakh, the real story of which is openly falsified by Azerbaijani historians. T. de Waal writes the following about that: "General William Thomson, who headed the expeditionary corps, appointed Dr. Khosrov bey Sultanov (an Azerbaijani who was extremely infamous among Armenians)⁸ governor of Karabakh and "persuaded" Andranik, the commander of the Armenian guerrilla detachments, to return to Armenia. Thomson said it was only a temporary agreement and all the other issues would be resolved at the forthcoming Paris Peace Conference".⁹

According to Azerbaijani historian Jamil Hasanli, Thomson also stated that the coalition government led by Khoyski was the only legal entity for all Azerbaijani territories, and that the Allied Command would provide full support to that government.¹⁰ In talks with Azerbaijani leaders, Thomson cynically tried to make it clear that he was not an "advocate of Armenians".¹¹

Thomson's image is largely negatively perceived by historians as a British man, because of whom Azerbaijan's domination of Karabakh became *de facto* accepted. The opponents of this -European, especially Azerbaijani authors argue that Thomson simply sought stability, rather than hatred of Armenians, that Azerbaijan's control of Karabakh would allegedly contribute to stability and peace in the region. In this respect, F.

⁶ Thomson William Montgomerie (December 2, 1878 - July 23, 1963) - Major General, from November 17, 1918 to March 10, 1919, he was the commander of the 39th Division, which occupied Baku, bringing about 2,000 troops from the British army deployed in India, after which he became Governor of Baku.

⁷ Shuttleworth Digby Inglis (August 23, 1876 - May 15, 1948) - a British brigadier general known for his anti-Armenian activities in Karabakh. In 1905 he received the rank of captain. In 1912-1916 he served as a major in India, Mesopotamia and northwestern Iran; in 1917-1919 he was the commander of the 39th infantry brigade in the Caucasus; in April-August, 1919, he was involved in the withdrawal of British troops from Baku and the Caucasus in general and was in warm relations with the Azerbaijani leadership. D. Shuttleworth commanded all British troops in Azerbaijan, Petrovsk and Krasnovodsk. In 1920 D. Shuttleworth was a member of the Allied Control Council for Military Management of the Ottoman State in Constantinople and the commander of the 83rd infantry brigade during the Chanak and Dardanelles crisis of 1920-1923, during the unstable situation following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In 1936 he received the military rank of Major General. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digby_Shuttleworth. See https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Digby_Shuttleworth. See <https://bit.ly/3y2EYrS>: Isgenderli et al. 2011. 184-185. Azerbaijan: 279.

⁸ Sultanov Khosrov Bek Pasha Bey Oğlu (May 10, 1879 - January 7, 1943) – in 1903 he graduated from the Medical Faculty of the University of Novorossiysk; in 1917 he joined the "Musavat" party; in 1917 he became a member of the Transcaucasian Seim; in 1918 he moved to the "Ittihad" party; in May-June 1918 he was the Military Minister; in June-July 1918 and March 1919 he was the Minister of Agriculture. And from February 12, 1919 he was the governor-general of Karabakh; on April 28, 1920 he was deported to Turkey because of the sovietization of Azerbaijan. See Vekilov 1998: 29.

⁹ Vaal de 4: See <https://bit.ly/306P0hj>: View date 22.10.2021. Vaal de 2005: 181.

¹⁰ Hasanli 2016: 150.

¹¹ Hasanli 2016: 278.

Ahmedova writes as if in a telegram sent to London Thomson even wrote that the territories in Eastern Turkey should be handed over to Armenians,¹² which does not correspond to the facts, is based on false claims, and is rejected by certain sections of society: “For the first time the international community forced Armenia to withdraw its Armenian armed forces from Artsakh or to deploy new forces. For example, it is widely known that on December 2, 1918, in the area of the present-day village of Berdadzor, William Thomson, British General, the commander of the federal troops in Western Transcaucasia, handed a letter to Commander-in-Chief Andranik. In the letter, Thomson urged Andranik not to move forward, not to enter Nagorno-Karabakh, as the issue of the borders of the newly formed states of the South Caucasus was to be discussed at the Paris Conference in the near future. The implication was clear that there was no need to create unnecessary complications. And even without that Artsakh could be Armenian, because it was inhabited exclusively by Armenians (very important fact – V.V.). Later, the people of Karabakh could defend their territory completely without Andranik”,¹³ *and Azerbaijan, despite its ambitions and impudence, was not able to establish effective control over Nagorno-Karabakh, even with the support of Turkey*, which was not the case in 2020, and Turkey acted with impunity and more effectively, and as in 1918-1920, it felt the alienation and criminal isolation from the Republic of Armenia of the Entente countries, which were considered allies of the RA. And moreover, despite the fact that on February 19, Major-General G. T. Forrestier-Walker, the commander of the 27th military unit located in Tiflis, informed the Government of the RA that, in accordance with the principle proclaimed by the Allied peacekeepers, “conquest of a disputed territory by force of arms will seriously undermine the aggressor’s ambitions and that everyone must wait for a decision of the Peace Conference”, on February 24, the representative of Forrestier-Walker in Yerevan, Brigadier General Werni Asser, who was the British military representative in Yerevan from February 1 to the beginning of March, handed Foreign Minister S. Tigranyan an official message sent by Thomson from Tiflis. According to it, Dr. Sultanov was going to Shushi as the governor-general of the regions of Zangezur, Shushi and Karabakh, without making any demand on the future administration of Azerbaijan, only in order to maintain law and order in the mentioned territories.¹⁴ Tigranyan immediately drew Forrestier-Walker’s attention to the fact that the Armenian government could not consider General Thomson’s telegram as an expression of indirect recognition of Azerbaijani governance over Zangezur and Karabagh, even temporary rule over the disputed regions of the provinces that were to be subject to Sultanov’s rule. Tigranyan considered the maintenance of the status quo to be the only acceptable thing until the Paris Peace Conference adopted a decision on

¹² Akhmedova 2009: 174.

¹³ The letter was handed on behalf of Thomson by G. F. Squire, English Captain, Commander of the detachment of the 7th battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment of the 39th brigade and Nicholas Gasfid, French Captain, Officer of the 6th Hussar Regiment, Attaché to the French Military Mission in the Caucasus. See Hovhannisyan 2005: 94; Historical cycle.

¹⁴ See Hovhannisyan 2005: 177.

the borders. Referring to the February 19 declaration of the Allies, Tigranyan asked a question whether the declaration on “the conquest of the disputed territory by force of arms” was sent to the Baku government as well”.¹⁵ Afgan Akhmedov, who defended his doctoral dissertation at Lancaster University, considers these actions of Thomson to be a fact of recognition of Azerbaijan’s rights over Karabakh and Zangezur. Thus, he considered Khosrov Bey Sultanov’s rule established by the British to be legitimate, sending telegrams to the so-called Karabagh and Zangezur National Councils on behalf of the British military authorities, which the Azeri author considers sufficient, ignoring the internationally recognized right of the Armenian people to self-determination.¹⁶

On March 11, 1919, S. Tigranyan directly appealed to General Thomson, finding that the Peace Assembly’s instructions would be violated if Azerbaijan took unilateral action, reminding that Karabakh persistently defended its freedom during the war and now saw itself as part of the Republic of Armenia and that any violent attempt by Azerbaijan to impose its will would undoubtedly lead to the most serious consequences and thus considered Thomson’s proposal of a “so-called governor-general” to be unacceptable,¹⁷ although the Armenians of Karabakh were obviously shocked by the British patronage who had arrived as allies.

On March 21, 1919, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RA informed Colonel K. Temperley, the British Military Representative in Armenia, that “Armenia considers the Karabakh issue to be in its vital interests”, finding that “1) Zangezur and Armenian Karabakh should remain independent of the Azerbaijani government and influence, as in the past. 2) If at the moment the British command finds it impossible to include these regions in the Republic of Armenia, it is necessary that Azerbaijan withdraw its troops from that region in any case, establishing an autonomous administration under the supreme authority and control of the British command, deeming it necessary that the governor-general be English”.¹⁸

On March 27, 1919, during a meeting with acting Prime Minister A. Khatisyan, in response to Khatisyan’s request to withdraw the Azerbaijani troops from Karabakh and temporarily keep it under British administration, Thomson sharply objected saying that even if Sultanov was hated by everyone, he still was necessary for the British effort of helping the people.¹⁹

Of course, the weakness of the Republic of Armenia in terms of military, energy, food and other issues left its mark on the whole course of the country, in terms of the success or failure of the steps taken by the Government. Difficulties and possible successful progress in the territorial delimitation depended on the British military-and-

¹⁵ Khatisyan 1968: 154.

¹⁶ Akhmedova 2019: 106-017: See <https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/132565/1/2019afganphd.pdf>. Date of download 13.02.2022.

¹⁷ See Hovhannisyan 2005: 177-178.

¹⁸ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 121, l. 1-4.

¹⁹ See Hovhannisyan 2005: 188.

political mission and the supreme command, which, as advisers, played a negative role in the RA foreign policy calculations and expectations, often contributing to decisions unfavorable for Armenia, which has not significantly changed during the last century. One of the main arguments of the Yerevan rulers in those years was not the flexible, far-reaching diplomatic activity, but the armed forces, which were few in number, poorly armed, including with British-Canadian firearms which were not usable enough, were often defective, which did not allow establishing themselves in Kars and Nakhichevan, Karabakh, Basargechar and elsewhere. The British and the other allies did not show any practical interest in this issue, because for them the priority was the oil of Baku, and the division of Russia, be it Tsarist or Bolshevik. All of this did not allow the Armenian government to at least occasionally oppose the British dictatorship which in many cases was not pro-Armenian, to overcome the slavish devotion to the Allies, as in 2020. Apparently, the Republic of Armenia could not support Karabakh and Zangezur, falling victim to the deceptive and on-the-paper decisions made by the Allies, which very skillfully and toughly passed the strategic initiative to Azerbaijan, to which they were much friendlier.

In her assessment of the British policy implemented in Transcaucasia, F. Akhmedova writes: “Despite the fact that the Armenian government sought to increase the pressure on the leadership of the British Armed Forces in the Caucasus (Walker, Thomson and others), all their attempts were unsuccessful. Colonel Shuttleworth went to Shushi and demanded that the Armenians obey the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan. However, the Armenians continued their separatist activities. At the 15th/ Congress held in late April, 1919, they refused to accept the power of the governor-general of Karabakh. The Armenian government and its representation in Nagorno-Karabakh played a very destructive role in making such a decision. For the first time, international mediators gained experience in participating in the settlement process, following the example of territorial disputes in the Caucasus. The active role of Great Britain and the United States, examples of their participation in special projects are well known. On May 5, 1919, General Thomson announced that he had ordered the deportation of separatists. On June 5, the extremely reactionary Armenians were sent from Shushi to Tiflis accompanied by representatives of the English command. On June 6, at a rally in the part of Shushi where Armenians lived, Armenians declared their recognition of the Azerbaijani government. The Armenians, accepting the principles of the governor-general’s actions, began to enter into negotiations. On August 15, 1919, the Armenians signed an agreement with the government of Azerbaijan, recognizing that the territories inhabited by Armenians are an integral part of Azerbaijan. It was assumed that the Armenians of Karabakh would be given the right to “cultural autonomy”. It should be noted that at that stage, without the permission of the Azerbaijani government, foreigners arrived in Shushi as members of some organizations and did not present any mandate to the local authorities. Following the recognition of the government of Azerbaijan by the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh,

the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan expressed its protest over the arrival of the Americans in Karabakh without submitting any document”.²⁰

In April, 1919, General Thomson, the head of the British mission in the Caucasus, was replaced by General Shuttleworth. According to the assessment of Y. Ishkhanyan, chairman of the Artsakh National Council: “General Shuttleworth, who succeeded General Thomson, surpassed his predecessor, occupying us more and more with the issue of recognizing the rule of Sultanov, or rather, the rule of Azerbaijan. Through the mission he tried to persuade us to obey the governor’s orders”.²¹ Shuttleworth turned out to be so unbridled that in late April, 1919, he personally left for Goris to demand the recognition of Khosrov Bey Sultanov as the governor-general of Zangezur, but he met with persistent resistance. He was forced to return with threats against Armenians, with the threat of air bombardment and the demand to remove A. Shahmazyan²² insisting that the Armenian government must have publicly renounced Shahmazyan, but secretly financed him.²³ Shuttleworth, who had sent a message to Thomson about the resumption of the Armenian opposition in Zangezur in the person of Shahmazyan and other agents associated with Yerevan, insisted on the termination of repatriation to Nakhichevan until the cooperation between Yerevan and Zangezur ceased, which also displeased Thomson, who was angry with General K. M. Davy, the British military representative in Yerevan who in the first place forced to stop repatriation, using the armed forces if necessary.²⁴

After Shuttleworth’s departure, Rasulzade, the founder of Musavat, announced on August 28 that Azerbaijan would soon extend uninterruptedly from Dagestan to Julfa and the Araxes River in the south,²⁵ *thus claiming to achieve their long-cherished strategic goal of gaining control of the Araks Valley, just like today when Azerbaijan and Turkey persistently seek to open the road to Nakhichevan-Turkey through Syunik-Zangezur and to include the entire Araxes Valley in their ambitious plans, isolating Armenia from all active routes with the outside world.*

And the steps taken by the Government of the RA and the strategic pursuits in foreign policy did not yield significant results. The security of Armenian Karabakh was soon significantly endangered, and therefore the national-and-state security of the Republic of Armenia was undermined in this part of the country. In those circumstances, after isolating Andranik and Dro from involvement in the military-and-political events, Musavat Azerbaijan launched large-scale oppressive actions against the Armenian population of Karabakh, its legitimate national-and-state rights, violating the inalienable right of internationally recognized ethnic groups to self-determination, which had

²⁰ Akhmedova 2019: 174-175.

²¹ Ishkhanyan 1999: 378.

²² Shahmazyan A.P. [1883 -1937]. Well known military figure of the RA.

²³ See Hovhannisyan 2005: 210.

²⁴ See Hovhannisyan 2005: 266.

²⁵ «Nor ashkhatavor», September 1, 1919.

become a reality in some European territories. Azerbaijan had ambitions not only for Artsakh and Zangezur, but also for Sharur-Nakhichevan and even the eastern and northeastern regions of Lake Sevan basin. The command of the British troops in Transcaucasia and their military-and-political representation pursued pro-Azerbaijani policy on this issue. It was with the intervention of the British military-and-political mission in the Caucasus that the advance of Andranik's troops to Shushi was stopped, and for the sake of oil interests the way was paved for the establishment of Dr. Sultanov's repressive power in Karabakh-Artsakh.

In this regard, Azerbaijani historian B. Najafov welcomes Sultanov's actions in Karabakh, expressing satisfaction with the support of the British military-and-political authorities: "However, the confident actions of governor-general Khosrov Bey Sultanov, who was this time fully supported by the British, yielded results very quickly: calm and order were restored".²⁶ Assessing the recent June events in Karabakh, B. Najafov makes a judgement at his subjective discretion: "Dr. Sultanov was appointed governor-general and the British officer and the small British detachment were stationed in Shushi. According to the agreement, Sultanov had to issue his own orders and decrees only with the consent of the representative of England. Even such a governance was rejected by 66 Armenians and when the Azerbaijani messages and proclamations were posted all over the city, the Armenians, provoked by preachers, spoiled them or tore them".²⁷

It was with the knowledge of Great Britain that from the beginning of 1919, Azerbaijan was trying to annex Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan. However, the Armenians of Artsakh have never really recognized the Azerbaijani rule, constantly rebelling against the yoke imposed on them by Azerbaijan, which has had variable success.

The Armenian progress and aspiration for stability were halted by British intervention. On April 3, 1919 Shuttleworth, the representative of the Entente Command, stated that the region would remain as part of Azerbaijan until the Karabakh issue was resolved by the Paris Conference.²⁸

The position and decision of the English side on this issue was unequivocal. Ignoring the complaints of the Armenian government and in order to reaffirm their decision, on April 3 General Shuttleworth, the Commander of the British troops stationed in Baku, issued the following statement: "For the British the fate of Karabakh, as well as Zangezur, was decided. They had decided to annex those lands to Azerbaijan. On January 15, 1919, with Thomson's approval Dr. Khosrov Bey Sultanov, who had a reputation among Armenians as an anti-Armenian and slaughterer, was appointed governor-general. The English Command declared the following to be implemented by the population of Shushi, Zangezur, Jebrail and Jivanshir provinces: 1.

²⁶ Najafov 1994: 66.

²⁷ Najafov 1994: 66-67.

²⁸ Pilipchuk 2021: 132, 136.

by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan of January 15, 1919, Dr. Sultanov was appointed governor-general of the provinces of Shushi, Zangezur, Jibrail and Jivanshir, and he enjoys the support of the English command... 2. All the disputed issues will be finally resolved at the Peace Conference.

Simple and sharp: the Karabakh issue was not only a matter of annexing Karabakh to Azerbaijan, but also annexing Zangezur and Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan. ... And indeed, after “resolving” the Karabakh issue, Azerbaijan began to make feverish preparations to “put Zangezur in a harmless position” as well”.²⁹ In all of Thomson’s subsequent demands in relation to the interim governorate-general, we are dealing not with Karabakh alone but with Karabakh-Zangezur.³⁰

According to A. Khatisyan, second Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, “it was not a purely Muslim policy, but a policy aimed at strengthening a young state with rich oil wells which had been part of Russia. The first steps of the active British policy in the Caucasus were, on the one hand, all kinds of efforts made to include the Armenian regions of Karabakh and Zangezur within the borders of Azerbaijan, to strengthen Dr. Khosrov Bey Sultanov’s authority appointed governor there and on the other hand, the withdrawal of Turkish troops under the command of commander Shukri from the Kars region».³¹

In this connection, at the session of April 3, 1919, the RA government naturally responded that Karabakh could be discussed only with the consent of the representative bodies of the Armenian population of Karabakh.³² However, contrary to the reasonable approach, with the active efforts of the British, in mid-1919 the regime of Khosrov bey Pasha bey oglu Sultanov, a notorious anti-Armenian who had a reputation among Armenians as an executioner, was imposed on the people of Artsakh and Zangezur by force. Naturally, the Azerbaijani politician Sultanov considered it a new “era” in the life of Karabakh. And as S. Vracyan, the last Prime Minister of the First Republic of Armenia quite rightly wrote: “Unfortunately, a new era did not start, but Sultanov had the right to be proud, because, even if temporarily, Karabakh became part of Azerbaijan. Making the “temporary” “permanent” was a matter of the future, and the Azerbaijani politicians did not give up on that idea”.³³

With the active support of General Shuttleworth, in order to establish his power in Artsakh and Zangezur Kh. Sultanov adopted a new strategy, particularly a tactic to flatter the Armenians and to mislead and persuade them with false promises. After the command of the British troops in Karabakh on behalf of Colonel D. Shuttleworth factually confirmed the recognition of governor-general Kh. Sultanov as the sole supreme authority on April 3, 1919, and the population was called upon to

²⁹ Vracyan 1993: 330-331, 342-343. NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 193, part I, p. 40-40 rev.; MK 1992: 83-84.

³⁰ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 244, p. 2, f. 370, l. 1, f. 40, p. 15-17: Khatisyan 1968: 179-180.

³¹ Khatisyan 1968: 179.

³² See NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 43, p. 59.

³³ Vracyan 1993: 341-342.

unconditionally obey all his orders the actions of the British became more purposeful and consistently pro-Azerbaijani. History was repeating itself: ignoring Colonel Shuttleworth's threats and baseless demands, on April 23, 1919, the Armenians of Artsakh convened the 5th Congress of Artsakh in Shushi and resolutely rejected the decision to accept the Azerbaijani authority imposed by the British command in order to create a mood to recognize the Azerbaijani rule.³⁴ As Y. Ishkhanyan wrote: "Sultanov conducted separate work with the Armenians, through well-known Turkish merchants, so that the Armenians would visit the governor, take part in provincial matters, and take up positions... Dr. Sultanov thought that by having Armenian officials, he could create the mood among the villagers to recognize the government of Azerbaijan".³⁵ All the efforts of the British and Sultanov aimed at establishing themselves in Artsakh initially failed. Facing the resolute resistance of the Armenians of Artsakh, Colonel Shuttleworth left for Shushi on April 23 to personally make Artsakh accept the Azerbaijani rule. The Zangezur-Karabakh Regional Council, not fearing at all and not giving in to Colonel Shuttleworth's threats addressed to the Armenians of Zangezur, gave the following sharp response: "...we cannot submit to Azerbaijan, the nomad cannot climb a mountain. Only over the ruins of our province and the corpses of the people can Azerbaijan conquer Zangezur and dictate its terms".³⁶ Following the instructions of General Thomson, who paid an official visit to Yerevan in early April and in a meeting with Prime Minister A. Khatisyan and Foreign Minister S. Tigranyan, tried to persuade them and impose his proposal that Karabakh could not survive without importing food from the Yevlakh station of the Batumi-Baku railway, Shuttleworth did not hesitate to threaten the people of Karabakh with economic arguments to impose Sultanov's regime, reasserting that otherwise Nagorno-Karabakh would starve if it disengaged from the eastern plain.³⁷ General Shuttleworth resolved the Karabakh issue within the framework of the British political course, without expressing any desire to oppose Azerbaijan's aspirations. General Shuttleworth returned to Baku on April 26, 1919 and on April 29 he authorized the government of Azerbaijan to make political arrests and restrict freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Shuttleworth authorized the economic boycott of Karabakh by Azerbaijan resorting to the policy of subjugating Armenians by starvation.³⁸ This pressure on Karabakh was a continuing British behavior that caused some disappointment. It was expressed also in the fact that on the advice and exhortation of Shuttleworth, General Thomson put considerable pressure on the Government of the Republic of Armenia, demanding to put an end to the repatriation of refugees from the regions south of Yerevan until the Armenian government publicly renounced all insurgents in Karabakh and Zangezur. The above-mentioned punitive

³⁴ Ishkhanyan 1999: 393-406.

³⁵ Ishkhanyan 1999: 378-379.

³⁶ «Nor ashkhatavor», July 7, 1919.

³⁷ See Vrcacyan 1958: 285; Sarur 1929: 128-146.

³⁸ See Hovhannisyan 2005: 187-188.

measures were stopped only after receiving the diplomatically formulated answer of Prime Minister A. Khatisyan and the written complaint of General K. M. Davy.³⁹

The sharp response of the Zangezur-Karabakh Regional Council was not at all a surprise to General Shuttleworth, as he had already dealt many times with the events in Artsakh and was well acquainted with the resistance capabilities of the Armenians of Artsakh and the anti-Azerbaijani sentiment. After receiving the sharp response from the Regional Council, General Shuttleworth, accompanied by his guards consisting of British and Azeri soldiers, left Goris, but continued to take steps to impose his position on Zangezur.

The further developments in connection with the approach and decisions adopted by the Paris Conference in 1919 are interesting and in that sense the position of Azerbaijani historians on the political course of their government: "In early April, 1919, the Supreme Council of the Entente in Paris decided to withdraw the British troops from the region. It should be admitted that the Azerbaijani government initially opposed the withdrawal of the English troops from Azerbaijan because they were not sure whether they could defend themselves from the threat from the north, be it Denikin's army or the Bolsheviks. In the telegram of April, 1919 addressed to D. Shuttleworth, M. Yu. Jafarov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic opened up: "According to the official information of my government, the English troops will leave the borders of Azerbaijan in mid-August. In this regard, the Azerbaijani government decided to ask His Excellency to leave the English troops in Azerbaijan. I would like to add that the conditions under which the English troops can remain within the borders of Azerbaijan can be worked out by mutual consent in case of receiving a response from the British government that they principally agree to leave the troops".⁴⁰ After some negotiations, in his letter to F. Smith, US Consul in Tiflis, A. Khatisyan stated: "The Government of the Republic of Armenia is of the same opinion on the fate of Karabakh as before. The Armenian government wants the Armenian-populated mountaneous part of Karabakh to be declared [a territory] outside the Azerbaijani Karabakh governorate-general and its governance to remain in the hands of the National Council according to the will of the population, and the Azerbaijani troops to be immediately withdrawn from the borders of Armenian Karabakh. The Armenian government considers that region an integral part of Armenia. Control over the governance, approved by the British command, can be exercised by an Englishman as the governor-general of the two - Armenian and Azerbaijani parts of Karabakh.⁴¹ It was this approach that was defended by A. Khatisyan as the official position of the Republic of Armenia during the meetings with W. Thomson held on March 28, 1919 in Yerevan and on April 7 in Tiflis.

The alarmed RA government sent A. Khatisyan on a business trip to Tiflis where negotiations were held on May 3, 1919. The Armenian side was represented by Deputy

³⁹ See Hovhannisyan 2005: 190.

⁴⁰ DRA 1998: 309-310.

⁴¹ See NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 12, part 2, p. 88, 161.

Foreign Minister Khatisyan and Diplomatic Representative in Tiflis L. Yevangulyan, and on the other side there were W. Thomson, W. Beach, K. Davy and their chiefs of staff. During the meeting accusations consisting of 20 points were brought against the Armenian side in regard to Karabakh and Zangezur based on the report prepared by Shuttleworth and Monck-Mason. Thomson and the others were accusing the Armenian side of destructive activities, they presented the miserable situation of the Tatars in those regions who were faced with obstacles in connection with nomadic movement; they opposed the disarmament of nomadic Tatars believing that otherwise the Armenians would exterminate them, which was an absolute fabrication against Armenians. They condemned A. Shahmazyan for his statement that the Karabakh troops were part of the Armenian armed forces, that Zangezur would help Karabakh in any way it could, demanding that the Armenian government immediately withdraw him from Zangezur, etc.⁴² To oppose this, Khatisyan brought counter-arguments consisting of 11 points, stating that: 1) The Armenian government considers Karabakh an integral part of the Republic of Armenia, but before the Paris Conference it is necessary that the region be governed by a British governor-general, and the Armenian Karabakh - by the National Council, and the Muslim part - by the Muslim Council; 2) Karabakh National Councils should have their own armed forces, which are not military units of the Republic of Armenia, and the Armenian government does not give any instructions; 3) the Armenian government considers it possible to allow the Zangezur National Council to give permission to Muslim nomads to go to the mountains on the condition that they be accompanied by British troops and inspectors selected from Armenians and Muslims; 4) The Armenian government has not sent and does not have preachers in Karabakh, and if there are Armenian officers or local public figures who organize local forces and direct them to disobey the Azerbaijani authorities in Karabakh, it is not the result of the Armenian government's actions or orders, but the expression of the will of the 300,000 population of Karabakh which no one can change; and trying to change it through provocations and agitation contradicts the principles of the English policy in general; 5) the movement of refugees to Nakhichevan should be allowed, etc. After listening to Khatisyan, General Thomson made a few remarks, but resolutely demanded that the issue of Shahmazyan and nomadic movement be resolved, to which Khatisyan replied that Shahmazyan had already left Zangezur to report to the government. As to the nomads, Khatisyan expressed readiness to settle the issue on the condition that it be implemented in accordance with the rules approved by the Armenian government. In the end, Thomson reported that he had changed his mind, that he was convinced of the legitimacy of the Armenian arguments, and thus allowed the resumption of the Armenian troops and migrants, touching upon the issue of handing Nakhichevan over to Armenians, etc., after which it was ordered to send a telegram to Dro and Charles allowing to move forward.⁴³

⁴² See NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 12, part 2, p. 141-143; f. 200, l. 1. f. 309, p. 25.

⁴³ NAA, f. 275, l. 5, f. 133, p. 1-3.

On May 6, 1919, in his letter to A. Aharonyan, the RA ambassador to Paris, A. Khatisyan, the RA Deputy Foreign Minister emphasized the voluntary actions of the British command in Karabakh and Zangezur, who pursued not confederate but their own imperial interests, using the subordinate or dependent peoples as an empire from the point of view of their own interests: "The British command wants to keep the outside world unaware of what is happening in the Caucasus, which may attract the attention of the political world or even make the British command change its self-imposed orders. This is why we think that the British are causing some difficulties in having a regular relationship with Europe, especially with you. The Armenian government can never, even temporarily, accept the rule of Azerbaijan over Karabakh, which is an integral part of Armenia. In the complaint to General W. Thomson, Mr. S. Tigranyan offers to establish the British command in Karabakh which should act with the support of the local Armenian National Council until the Karabakh issue is finally resolved at the Paris conference. The Congress convened on April 23 and unanimously decided not to accept the rule of Azerbaijan under any circumstances, even temporarily. They suggested our government to remove A. Shahmazyan from Goris, objecting that he had disregarded the British authorities and declared Goris a region of Yerevan. The government refused to call Mr. A. Shahmazyan saying that his statement corresponded to the government's views on the Karabakh issue".⁴⁴

Not satisfied with the official telegrams and requests submitted to the Government of the Republic of Armenia, on May 8, 1919, General Thomson again for the same purpose, invited Yevangulov, Armenia's diplomatic representative to Georgia, and informed him that, according to the reports by General Shuttleworth and Colonel Monck-Mason, the situation and order in Karabakh, as well as in Goris and Zangezur provinces was disturbed mainly as a result of Captain Shahmazyan's aggressive policy. According to General Thomson, for some reason Captain Shahmazyan, who had declared himself governor-general in Karabakh, based on the authority and instructions of the Armenian government, injected the local population with the idea of disobeying the Azerbaijani authorities, since Karabakh was an integral part of Armenia.⁴⁵

And the main weapon of Azerbaijan against Armenians became Shuttleworth, the commander of the British troops in Baku succeeding General Thomson. Through him the Azerbaijani Musavatists tried to impose the rule of Azerbaijan on the people of Artsakh. Leo's axiomatic conclusion about the anti-Armenian attitude of Shuttleworth and others is very accurate: "Musavat knew what they were doing, and it was not by chance that the British command was their close, bosom friend. General Shuttleworth, who succeeded Thomson, stubbornly rejects all ... demands (of the people of Karabakh – V.V.), he is Sultanov's agent, he personally goes to Shushi to attend the congress and to demand Sultanov's recognition".⁴⁶

⁴⁴ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 193, part 7, p. 222-225 rev., l. 2, f. 55, p. 1-5, f.c. - 4033, l. 2, f. 963, p. 130-136.

⁴⁵ «Nor ashkhatavor», April 17, 1919.

⁴⁶ Leo 2009: 388.

Azerbaijan used every kind of ambush to break the spirit of resistance of the people of Karabakh, using military force as well, to which Armenians, naturally, responded as best as they could. As we can see, Sultan Bey Sultanov, nevertheless, managed to deceitfully and spitefully overcome the resistance of the Armenians of Artsakh and impose the August 22, 1919 law, according to which Artsakh was obliged to temporarily submit to Azerbaijan until the decision of the Paris Peace Conference. But unfortunately the Armenian government had no doubt that the decision would be pro-Armenian, which was, in fact, the result of political miscalculations by the Armenian side, a gross political mistake and ultimately a defeat in the military-and-political conflict with Azerbaijan, which was greatly facilitated by the pro-Azerbaijani position of the British command in Transcaucasia. In this connection, R. Hovhannisyan noted very accurately: “The regulation of August 22, 1919 was a personal victory for Khosrov Bey Sultanov and a national victory for Azerbaijan. Karabakh eventually came under the temporary rule of Azerbaijan. And the Provisional Government was an influential and big step towards permanent rule. Whatever tactics the Republic of Armenia adopted in the future, it would not be able to force Azerbaijan to leave those Armenian-populated highlands. In addition to its stubborn persistence, Azerbaijan took advantage of the patronage of the British commanders, the delays of the Paris Peace Conference in taking practical action regarding the disputed territory and the general incapacity of the Armenian government. All that was left for Armenians was only the promise of autonomy to Karabakh and the contentment that Zangezur was not included in the general republic”⁴⁷.

During those historical and political upheavals there were also dangerous turns, political slips and deviations: thus, examining the situation and making sure that it could not receive any tangible assistance from abroad and that the British in fact defended the Azerbaijanis and in its turn the Armenian government was not able to provide any serious military-and-political support and real aid (in which case irreparable mistakes and political slips had been made by the Armenian government, particularly by certain military figures), after thorough considerations and weighing their own capabilities, the 7th Congress of Karabakh held on August 12, 1919, decided to accept the agreement with Baku on August 15, as a result of which on August 22, 1919 the notorious agreement was signed, “hoping” as if the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh would be resolved “unconditionally and justly” in the European Peace Conference of the great powers. It should be mentioned that the agreement of August 22, 1919 did not significantly change the situation of Armenians. On the one hand Sultanov, governor-general of Azerbaijan, tried to disunite the Armenians, and on the other hand, he tried to gather military forces to suppress them with weapons. On August 22, 1919, a grave mistake was made and as a result of the unnecessary military-and-political slip of the Armenian government the Armenians of Artsakh agreed to temporarily submit to the Azerbaijani authorities, but soon they were subjugated.

⁴⁷ Hovhannisyan 2005: 205.

As a result, Dr. Sultanov's Musavat administration, with the notorious agreement of August 22, 1919, was able to "persuade" the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh or rather force its will to temporarily accept the rule of Azerbaijan in Karabakh until the final settlement of the issue by the Entente states of the Paris Conference playing the role of "Arbitration" and claiming to be friends of the Armenian people (England, France, etc.), thus radically endangering the interests of the Republic of Armenia in that corner of the region, which was a very huge and gross political miscalculation, reflected in the results of the Assembly of Transcaucasian Republics of April, 1920.⁴⁸

Therefore, it can be concluded that Armenia could not achieve the desired results and strengthen the position of the Republic of Armenia by deploying regular army units in the region. Having strengthened itself in Zangezur, Armenia failed to establish itself in Karabakh, suffering painful failures and defeats, which was significantly facilitated by the British authorities with their pro-Azerbaijani policy, as well as the unpromising and reckless strategy of the Armenian government, which was fully anchored in the results expected from the Paris Conference of the Entente powers, as a result of which at first Andranik's and Dro's military units were deceptively removed from Karabakh, as well as A. Shahmazyan, who had won a number of victories against the Azerbaijanis, etc. This significantly weakened the position of the Armenian army in Artsakh,⁴⁹ which, on January 21, 1919, by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, established the Artsakh-Zangezur Provisional Board and Captain A. Shahmazyan was appointed commissar-general – governor-general of Artsakh-Zangezur, who was to operate in Zangezur in cooperation and in coordination with the National Council of the province,⁵⁰ which stemmed from the concern of the RA Government regarding the appointment of Khosrov Bek Sultanov as governor of Artsakh-Zangezur and the pro-Azerbaijani position of the British on that issue.

Dissatisfied with the official telegrams and requests submitted to the RA Government, on May 8, 1919, again for the same purpose General Thomson invited L. Yevangulov, the diplomatic representative of Armenia to Georgia and told him that according to the reports of General Shuttleworth and Colonel Monck-Mason, the situation and order in Karabakh, as well as in Goris and Zangezur province were disturbed mainly due to Captain Shahmazyan's aggressive policy. According to General Thomson, for some reason Captain Shahmazyan, who had declared himself governor-general of Karabakh, based on the authority and instructions of the Armenian government, injected the local population with the idea of disobeying the Azerbaijani authorities, because Karabakh was an integral part of Armenia. During the meeting with Yevangulov, General Thomson also made baseless accusations against A. Shahmazyan, which were as ridiculous as could be expressed only by a person with a

⁴⁸ See Virabyan 2004.

⁴⁹ See Hovhannisyan 2005: 169-215.

⁵⁰ See NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 38, p. 4.

pronounced anti-Armenian mood, sick and devoid of ideology. As General Thomson stated: “Neither Enver Pasha nor the Young Turks have done or are doing as much damage to the Armenian people as Shahmazyans and their ideologues, whom I want to believe, Mr. Khatisyan will be able to isolate...”.⁵¹

It should be clearly noted that the role of the British military-and-political mission in Transcaucasia in the pro-Armenian settlement of the Artsakh-Syunik issue was rather negative. With their two-faced palliative political decisions they hindered the easing of tensions in the Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and the establishment of the status quo, of course, only after the elimination of the accumulated “wrinkles”. At that time, the withdrawal of British troops began; on August 15 and 18 the 84th Punjab Regiment from Baku stopped in Yevlakh to take with them the detachment of Colonel Reginald Tyler, who had closed the British mission in Shushi two days earlier to allow the Armenians of Karabakh to reconcile with the Azerbaijani army; and the headquarters of Shuttleworth was closed on August 23, in honor of which a sumptuous dinner was organized on August 24.⁵²

In this regard, it is important to mention that in late November, 1919, during the Armenian-Azerbaijani conference in Tiflis, Colonel G. Ray, deputy of Haskel (High Commissioner of the Allies) made a statement and falsifying the real facts claimed that according to his information, Sultanov was appointed by the British temporarily, for the period of the evacuation of the Germans and Turks, and that Sultanov was later recalled by the British, after which he left for Baku and stayed there for a short period of time, and then he returned to Shushi, but already without any authorization from the British. Then Ray went further with his falsification, noting that the British were already preparing to send their troops to Karabakh as if unknowingly claiming that it later turned out that the Italians were to arrive there, occupy Shushi and rule the region. Then it was said that the Italians did not come, the British prepared to go there again, but an order was issued for their total removal through Batumi, and Dr. Sultanov still remained there, already without the British authorization, which was denied by the Azerbaijani leadership. During the conference, in response to Colonel G. Ray’s statement, Usubbekov stated: “All of this regarding the recall of Sultanov by the British is absolute news to me, as Sultanov was not appointed by the British. *He was appointed by the Azerbaijani government with the consent of the British. I had a very long conversation with General Corey before he left and General Corey fully agreed that he (Sultanov – V.V.) should continue to stay in Karabakh*”.⁵³

In February 1920, a large part of the Azerbaijani army, about 10,000 people, were gathered on the Karabakh front.⁵⁴ The people of Karabakh also, receiving some help from abroad, resisted the implementation of those plans. On February 19, Sultanov

⁵¹ «Nor ashkhatavor», April 17, 1919.

⁵² Hovhannisyan 2014: 151.

⁵³ Tumanyan 2012: 248-249.

⁵⁴ See Vracyan 1958: 394 -395.

demanded that Karabakh be declared part of Azerbaijan. The people of Karabakh rejected this illegal demand at their congresses. The Armenians of Karabakh revolted, defending themselves from the atrocities and policy of massacres of Azerbaijan. As S. Vratsyan mentions, the consequences could have been much more catastrophic if Dro's expeditionary unit had not arrived in Karabakh on April 13. He took power in the region, announced a mobilization on April 15 in Varanda and Dizak, strengthened the fronts and stayed in Karabakh for 45 days. On April 22, the 9th Congress of Karabakh was convened in the village of Taghavard where, with 44 votes against one, it was once again decided to reject the Azerbaijani government and to consider Artsakh-Karabakh part of Armenia.⁵⁵

During that time Azerbaijan, not taking into account anything and taking advantage of the permissiveness, continued to implement his anti-Armenian programs step by step. On September 10, 1920, the RA diplomatic representative in Baku wrote: "The Azerbaijani authorities, considering Zangezur, Karabakh, Nakhichevan, Sharur, Surmalu, Ghazakh an integral part of their republic, did not release from conscription Western Armenians living in different parts of Azerbaijan, such as Western Armenian refugees temporarily living in the village of Chardakhlu in the Gandzak region".⁵⁶

In April 1920 gathering at Tiflis the Transcaucasian republics did not make any fundamental and final decisions, but the Assembly's prehistory and its lessons are instructive, revealing the political-and-diplomatic orientations of each side, possible and overt mistakes in foreign policy calculations and why not the failures, which were obvious in the case of the Republic of Armenia. The Assembly was convened at a time when some "shifts" appeared to have taken place in Armenia, which again filled with hope, dulled the elements of sober thinking and restored the blind allegiance to the British-French allies. In January 1920 the government was *de facto* recognized by a group of great powers, and there was relative peace within the borders. The government managed to quell the Muslim uprisings in Zangibasar, Kars-Aghbaba, Zodbasargechar and other provinces, which alarmed the region. It was a temporary and unstable calm on the eve of the catastrophic developments, which weakened the attention of the Armenian government and its analytical capacity to perceive the internally accumulated alarms.

And the reason for convening this assembly of the Transcaucasian republics was the well-known events in Karabakh, which became inextricably linked with other regional issues.

In Tiflis the allies and the Transcaucasian Assembly demanded to end the bloodshed, and the parties were forced to obey. This was also demanded by E. Gegechkori who was concerned about the real dangers of Georgia getting involved in the chaos. On March 27, N. V. Zhordania, the Prime Minister of Georgia, appealed to the representatives of the allies, asking for their mediation to extinguish the fire of

⁵⁵ See Vratsyan 1958: 396.

⁵⁶ NAA, f. 278, l. 1, f. 321, p. 95.

Karabakh and to calm down the Transcaucasian region. On April 1 the representatives of England, France and Italy O. Wardrop, Count de Martel and Colonel Melkiade Gabba sent a collective telegram to Baku and Yerevan “ardently urging” them to peacefully and immediately resolve the issues of Karabakh and other provinces where “peace is at stake”. “If this solemn call for reconciliation is not heard at a time when the fate of the whole Transcaucasia is at stake, it could have very serious consequences for your governments”.⁵⁷ The Armenian government immediately responded on April 2, stating that they fully agreed with the proposal of the representatives of the allies and that on April 5 the deputies would be in Tiflis to participate in the Transcaucasian Conference with the aim of resolving all disputes peacefully. On April 4, the Parliament of Armenia also addressed the events in Karabakh and approved the policy pursued by the government.⁵⁸ On April 4, 1920, Tigran Bekzadyan, the RA diplomatic representative in Tiflis informed in a telegram sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that a meeting with M. Gabba took place on April 2, during which the Commissioner of Italy expressed regret over the Armenians’ uprising in Karabakh at a time when Armenia’s borders were being drawn and that such a step did not make sense, just like Azerbaijan’s interference in the situation in the Kars region. Bekzadyan also informed that he had tried to persuade Gabba and the other representatives of the Allies that the reason for the Karabakh uprising was not external, i.e. the intervention of the Republic of Armenia, but the violation by Azerbaijan of the interim agreement of August 22, 1919 and the illegal attempts to disarm the Armenians of Karabakh.⁵⁹

In its April 4, 1920 issue, “Mshak” blamed the British and others for the unfavorable course of Karabakh’s fate and the establishment of Sultanov’s bloodthirsty regime, considering that it was the British generals who sided with Sultanov against 200,000 Armenians and that Thomson’s, Shuttleworth’s and Corey’s hands were covered in Armenian blood.⁶⁰

The conference began on April 9, 1920. Influential politicians of Transcaucasia took part in the conference: from Azerbaijan - Hasan Bey Aghayev, Olgerd Bey Krichinsky, Faris Bey Vekilov (in this regard it should be noted that Hamo Ohanjanyan was not of this opinion. In his letter of April 8, 1920, addressed to Alexander Khatisyan, he, as we consider through some misunderstanding and erroneously believed that having the above-mentioned representatives in the well-known conference, Azerbaijan did not attach serious importance to that conference,⁶¹ which absolutely did not

⁵⁷ See Hovhannisyan 2015: 200.

⁵⁸ See NAA f. 278, l. 1, f. 321, p. 397.

⁵⁹ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 563, p. 62.

⁶⁰ «Mshak», April 4, 1920.

⁶¹ Fatali Khan Khoyski was expected in Tiflis but he did not arrive, and taking advantage of that, the Azerbaijani delegates by no means agreed to discuss the ceasefire in his absence, citing the lack of instructions. The head of the Azerbaijani delegation explained it by Agha-oghli Ahmed Aghayev’s illness. And despite the protests of the Armenian and Georgian delegates, Aghayev did not yield and the discussion of one of the most vital issues was delayed day by day, at a time when blood was flowing like a river in Karabakh, while the conference was busy discussing secondary issues, such as the publicity of the conference proceedings. See BAA 1996: 74.

correspond to reality and which is simply refuted by an impartial study of the conference materials. The level of the rather high preparedness of the “inexperienced” and “non-serious” representatives of Azerbaijan and on the contrary, both the inexperience and the certain unpreparedness of the Armenian delegates, and the biased unrealistic disposition and assessments of things and phenomena become obvious - V.V.); from Georgia - E. P. Gegechkori, G. S. Lordkipanidze, and from the Republic of Armenia - H. I. Ohanjanyan, T. Bekzadyan, S. H. Khachatryan and others.

The Georgian delegation wisely and prudently tried to use the situation to the advantage of Georgia, often finding hidden common ground with the Azerbaijanis, with whom back in June 1919 they signed a military-and-political alliance of a defensive nature. The Georgians did not make a decisive attempt to overcome the Armenian-Georgian issues and to settle the disputes, despite some aspirations of the Armenian delegation, which were not sufficiently consistent and were conditional. This was clear from the very first moment when the issue of the cessation of hostilities was being decided, which was postponed indefinitely from April 10 until the response from the Azerbaijani government.

Then E. Gegechkori expressed the view that the territorial issue was the main source of disagreement, considering the key to its regulation to be the “pacification” of the region with a homogeneous population, which was supposed to put an end to the divisive wars. Based on that, Ye. Gegechkori emphasized the issue of unification against external danger, namely against the Bolshevik threat coming from the north, saying that they had already started it by concluding transit agreements with Azerbaijan and Armenia. And as to how sincere it was, became obvious by Georgia’s further position towards Armenia and Azerbaijan separately, as it became a more or less real opportunity for trade, import of food and fuel, which was vital in Armenia’s case, especially since the necessary weapons and ammunition for the Armenian army, grain and flour were imported on the basis of the agreement on transit signed with Georgia on November 3, 1919. On April 10, St. G. Mamikonyan, a member of the Armenian delegation took the floor at the conference and first of all emphasized the issue of cessation of clashes. T. Bekzadyan joined him, however, according to Gegechkori the session was suspended because the Azerbaijani delegation had not yet received clear instructions from their government on their official position.⁶²

Nevertheless, Hasan bey Aghayev, the representative of the Azerbaijani delegation, announced that his government agreed on the cessation of hostilities in the whole territory of Transcaucasia. Accordingly, Gegechkori proposed to follow up on: a) the measures to be taken by the Assembly to end the bloody conflicts, b) the proposed solutions to the territorial disputes of the Transcaucasian republics, c) the decisions to be taken on the coordination of actions on foreign policy issues, d) the issue of agreeing positions on the establishment of a confederation.⁶³ T. Bekzadyan stated that if the

⁶² See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, p. 158-160.

⁶³ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, p. 164.

Assembly did not reach an agreement on the cessation of hostilities, the Armenian delegation could not take part in the formation of any union, which would cause a deadlock. The fuss and the atmosphere of disunity continued, and it is evident that, for obvious reasons, it was for the benefit of the Georgian and Azerbaijani sides, in line with their interests. G. S. Lordkipanidze offered the following: “The Assembly of the Transcaucasian republics, discussing the issue of the cessation of hostilities between the republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, decides: a) to announce its firm decision to cease all hostilities; b) to notify the governments of the respective republics of the decision of the Assembly; c) to elect a commission to investigate the events that have taken place”.

Meanwhile, Aghayev, the Azerbaijani delegate, showed an ambiguous approach to the issue. In solidarity with the Georgian representative Lordkipanidze, he found it necessary to mention in the resolution that the war was being waged not only in Azerbaijan, but also outside its borders, which was a diplomatically calculated approach and drew the Armenian side into a more difficult phase. It is noteworthy that Aghayev, changing the real content of the national-and-political relations, saw in the ongoing clashes only war between the well-known “nations - Muslims and Armenians”. That is why he insisted on “stopping the hostilities where they were taking place”. Fairly, the Armenian delegation, rightly understanding the bias of the viewpoint of the Azerbaijani side, proposed to replace the word “*Muslims*” with the word “*Azerbaijanis*”. However, the Azerbaijani delegation insisted that the resolution state that hostilities between Armenians and Azerbaijanis were taking place both within the borders of the republics and outside the borders of Azerbaijan, for example, in Armenia. The latest assertion caused the discussion of the issue to reach a deadlock.⁶⁴

The Azerbaijani delegation made a statement, according to which, considering that the conflict was taking place not between the “subjects of the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, but between the Armenians and “Muslims”, so in order to free the border from their or other Muslim immigrants’ actions against Armenia, Azerbaijan proposed to point out in the resolution that it was a matter of clashes between “Muslims” in the Transcaucasian region and Armenians. According to F. bey Vekilov, in the conditions of general clashes there were no guarantees that the conflict zones would decrease, so it was necessary to show clearly and definitely that it was about the native Armenian population in Azerbaijan and respectively, the Muslim population in Armenia. The Armenian delegation offered to point out the places of clashes: “Stop the clashes in Karabakh, Nukhi, Nakhichevan, Ordubad and other places where they are taking place between Armenians and Azerbaijanis within the borders of Transcaucasia”. The Armenian delegation emphasized that in connection with the situation of Muslims in Armenia, as well as that of Armenians in Azerbaijan, the Assembly could express a general opinion that no persecution or violence because of nationality should be allowed within the borders of these republics. As a result of the debate and following

⁶⁴ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, p. 166.

Lordkipanidze's proposals, the resolution was adopted as follows: a) immediately stop all the bloody clashes that are currently taking place in Nukhi, Nakhichevan, Ordubad and Karabakh; b) at the same time, the Assembly urges the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to immediately take decisive action to rule out the possibility of any conflict between the Armenian and Muslim populations within the respective republics; c) immediately inform the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan of this decision for them to take appropriate measures.⁶⁵ However, ignoring the resolution already recorded by the conference to stop the hostile actions, not only the hostile actions, but also the massacre of the disarmed Armenian population continued in different Armenian-populated areas of Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

At its April 12 session the Assembly discussed Lordkipanidze's resolution on restoring the legal status that existed before the military conflict. In this regard, Olgerd Bey Krichinsky, the representative of Azerbaijan considered that there could be no question of full restoration of the August 22 agreement and of the previous status, but only the restoration of the factual situation that existed during the agreement of November 23, 1919, in which the two countries were before the latest clashes. And Aghayev added that it undoubtedly included the August 22 agreement between the Karabakh National Assembly and the government of Azerbaijan, as well as the other acts and agreements that existed before November 23, which was certainly a reasonably calculated approach by the Azerbaijanis.

After Aghayev, T. Bekzadyan took the floor stating that "the November 23 agreement does not say anything about any legal norm and status, but only accepts the non-use of weapons and applying to intermediary arbitration in case of disagreements". According to him, this agreement seemed to include the previous agreement of August 22 between the Armenian National Assembly of Karabakh and the Government of Azerbaijan. In response, Krichinsky made a remark, saying that the November 23 act was already being absorbed by the current Assembly. "The same provisions were adopted there as those we have included in our decision", - Krichinsky stated. He then added that it was necessary to restore the factual situation that existed before November 23, continuing to keep unchanged the stereotype of the position of the Azerbaijani side towards the solution of the problem.

Trying to oppose the Azerbaijani delegation, H. Ohanjanyan made a step back in his speech, saying that the August 22 agreement was violated by the Armenian National Assembly, and only then he claimed that the November 23 agreement and connection was broken by the Azerbaijani government in the sense that the latter turned to weapons instead of arbitration. Therefore, according to him, there were two ways out of that situation - return to the "*status quo*" in both Karabakh and Zangezur, or acceptance of the existing factual situation, assurance of a ceasefire and stopping clashes where they were going on.⁶⁶ Finally, at its April 12 session the Assembly of the republics of

⁶⁵ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 167-170.

⁶⁶ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 167-170.

Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia decided to: “immediately fully restore the legal status that existed before the clashes, based on the agreements reached by the Assemblies of Armenia-Azerbaijan and the Transcaucasian Republics, as well as the agreements of the National Councils with the respective governments”.⁶⁷

Member of the Azerbaijani delegation, Polish Tatar Olgerd Konstantin Krichinsky-Nayman, who was a rather experienced diplomat, opposed this, claiming that the August 22 agreement had been violated in many occasions, and there could only be the question of returning to the borders which existed on November 23 as the last resort, the final chord that they sought to see as the starting point, confirming the factual situation in terms of the borders.⁶⁸ Opposing it in principle, T. Bekzadyan claimed that there had been a certain confusion of concepts, not denying that Azerbaijan had taken over Karabakh (although temporarily, by deceiving the Armenians), so there could be no question of agreement with the population (there is a contradiction here, as the relevant agreement had been reached, albeit temporarily – V.V.). Then, continuing to develop his very contradictory speech, T. Bekzadyan came to the conclusion that this was no longer domination, but a well-known agreement based on special conditions. In his opinion, if that agreement had been violated by one side or the other, the *status quo ante* that existed before the clashes should be restored, i.e. the situation in which Karabakh could be under the rule of Azerbaijan, if there was this or that substantiation, by agreement with the National Council.⁶⁹

Here it is appropriate to state clearly: the Azerbaijani diplomatic delegates did not leave the impression of amateurs at all, especially Krichinsky, while the Armenian delegate-diplomats gave way to sensitivity, misguided and hopeless assessments of the situation. Thus, Krichinsky, speaking immediately after Bekzadyan, insisted on the viewpoint that the August 22 agreement with the Karabakh National Council should not be accepted as an act of an international nature, but as an internal governance act of instructional nature.⁷⁰ Yes, this is a brilliant classic example of diplomatic rhetoric, a good, centuries-old way of fooling others, which has often justified itself and benefited the side that used it. T. Bekzadyan opposed the above-mentioned viewpoint and failing to find a stronger argument, claimed that if the act was not published it would become clear that it was not an instruction of internal governance, but an international agreement, invented and approved by the Azerbaijani government.⁷¹ As expected, Krichinsky did not agree with this view and not without reason noted that the people of Karabakh, albeit temporarily, had agreed to submit to the Azerbaijani authorities, claiming that after Karabakh accepted the rule of Azerbaijan by the August 22 act, the Karabakh issue became an internal issue of the Azerbaijani government. And if it was

⁶⁷ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 167-168.

⁶⁸ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 167-169; Tumanyan 2012: 418, 449.

⁶⁹ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 167-170.

⁷⁰ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 168-170.

⁷¹ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 169-170.

claimed that Karabakh was in a completely isolated condition, then it created a *state within a state*.⁷²

As painful as this is, it is necessary to emphasize here an essential consideration regarding the Armenian historical and political literature that either covered up this fact or avoided the existing problem concealing unfavorable materials, as well as demonstrating an evident attempt to avoid comprehensive coverage and realistic political assessment of the issue. It is obvious that by the act of August 22, 1919, Armenians of Karabakh and Armenia made a grave mistake, albeit temporarily, which is a very questionable, unserious and reckless approach to diplomatic-and-political relations, that by agreeing to accept the rule of the Azerbaijani government, the Armenians of Karabakh, with almost no help from the RA government and hoping for the expected support of its allies of the Entente, found themselves in a deadlock and suffered a painful defeat. It should also be emphasized that the Karabakh National Council gave such a dangerous, politically undesirable consent, having given up all hope of receiving any real help from the metropolis, the Yerevan government. And if they got it, it was belated and incomplete. It is a fact and it should be pointed out that for the Azerbaijani government this “temporarily” had no restrictions; and in this case they were “right” to exploit that circumstance. It is another thing that the Armenians tried not to accept the diplomatic-and-political defeat they suffered in this Assembly (it happens, but it should not happen) or tried to get out of the deadlock. This is already understandable.

Nevertheless, Bekzadyan and Krichinsky did not come to an agreement on the viewpoints, mutually accepting that it was just an ordinary legal act. After that, Gegechkori made a confusing statement, as if trying to bring the parties to their senses, reconcile them or find the key to an interim solution to the issue. According to him, it was necessary to restore the situation that existed before the clashes, as the agreement of November 23, 1919 was also based on it which was accepted by both parties. Continuing to hold his point of view, he considered that a mistake had been made on Karabakh or another issue and in order to restore that status the parties should be called to order. Then he concluded that whether there was an uprising in the known region or an attack on the guards by the population or violence, disarmament - these must be resolved in the Assembly. Concluding his statement, E. Gegechkori, the well-known Georgian diplomat and skillful politician concluded that it was necessary to return to the well-known starting point, which was once again confirmed by the November 23 agreement, emphasizing the fact that the agreement included that of August 22.⁷³ This was just a “brilliant” classic example of verbose diplomacy, demonstrated by Menshevik Gegechkori, one of the patriarchs of Georgian diplomacy. In response to the latter, Hamo Ohanjanyan only insisted that the August 22 legal act be included in the agreement.⁷⁴ Finally, a resolution was adopted accepted by both parties, which was as

⁷² See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 10-170.

⁷³ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 171.

⁷⁴ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 171.

follows: “Immediately fully restore the legal status that existed before the clashes, based on the agreements reached by the Assemblies of Armenia-Azerbaijan and the Transcaucasian Republics, as well as the agreements of the National Councils with the respective governments”.

It seemed that the ice started moving, but immediately after that (at first glance, it seems accidentally) the Azerbaijani delegate Aghayev published a telegram about the violation of the ceasefire by the Armenians in the Ghazakh region. This once again shows that very often one thing can be said, but another thing can be done, at the same time moving one’s own case forward, which the Azerbaijanis did, while in Armenia they often only engaged in diplomatic card game, not seeing the real process of the development of events, and Azerbaijan often saw the way out of the undesirable situation by escalating the situation in this or that area and creating explosive hotbeds in different parts of Transcaucasia like the Allies.

Of course, it did not end there. It is noteworthy that on April 13, Krichinsky, the representative of Azerbaijan, presented the next Azeri “surprise”, making a statement on the resolution adopted by the Assembly on April 12. In his speech it was emphasized that regarding the resolution adopted by the Assembly on April 12, 1920 on the need to restore the legal “*status*” on the basis of the agreements reached by the National Councils with the respective governments, the Azerbaijani delegation, in order to avoid “being misunderstood”, considered it necessary to state that the legal status stemming from the act of August 22, 1919 led to the subjection of the known parts of Karabakh to the Government of Azerbaijan within the known territorial boundaries, if they had changed as a result of the clashes, and measures should be taken to eliminate them in accordance with the known resolution.⁷⁵

In his letter of April 14, 1920, addressed to the RA Prime Minister A. Khatisyan H. Ohanjanyan mentioned the Azerbaijani viewpoint, saying that the Azeri delegates to the Assembly had stated that by saying restoration of the *status quo ante* (initial state – V.V.) they meant only the restoration of the borders, and they understood the internal status of Karabakh only in terms of submission of Karabakh to Azerbaijan and nothing more.⁷⁶ In response, T. Bekzadyan objected arguing that it was unnecessary to make changes in the already adopted resolution. Gegechkori offered to eliminate the issue, to hand over the adopted resolution to the press, and not to start a debate about the statement made.⁷⁷ For obvious reasons Krichinsky opposed the publication of the resolution in the press, and this was opposed by Gegechkori, whose proposal was accepted. The Azerbaijani side declared that its government could never agree to that decision, renouncing its own consent given on April 12. The Armenian delegation involuntarily agreed to postpone the announcement of the resolution for two days. As a

⁷⁵ See NAA f. 200, l. 1, f. 516, p. 44-45.

⁷⁶ See BAA 1996: 80.

⁷⁷ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 175-176.

result, because of the Georgian neutrality and Azerbaijani insistence the Armenian side found itself in a deadlock.

At the April 14 session of the Assembly the issue of sending commissions (consisting of 6 people) to the locations of the clashes was discussed. The Armenian side insisted that first a commission be sent to Ghazakh, after which they went on to review the April 12 decision. Krichinsky emphasized that at that time they did not have the object of international discussion, in case of which they had the right to insist on abiding by any agreement. According to Bekzadyan, the agreement had lost its validity due to the violation of the terms of military actions and the amendment concerning the legal status proposed by Krichinsky should be rejected (i.e. concerning temporary demarcation lines). Krichinsky believed that if until the known time the state power in Karabakh belonged to the Armenian National Council, then, since the moment of recognizing the power of Azerbaijan, albeit temporarily, the power of that council was abolished, dissolving into the sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and at the mentioned time only that sovereignty existed in Karabakh because legally there could not be two sovereignties in the same territory. The Azerbaijani government did not refuse that viewpoint.⁷⁸ It must be admitted that Krichinsky's point of view was really somewhat invulnerably substantiated from the legal point of view, which the Azerbaijani side skillfully clung to and oppressed the Armenian side with its counter-arguments. Moreover, it is undeniable that it was a unique approach from the political point of view as well, which was perfectly comprehended by Krichinsky and the Azerbaijani delegation, building each calculation from the position of priority of their own national-and-state interests. And if Azerbaijan managed, albeit temporarily (it was not eventually clear what was the duration of that "*temporarily*") to persuade the Armenian National Council of Karabakh to accept Azerbaijan's rule, it should be considered a diplomatic-and-political defeat for Armenia and for Azerbaijan - a unique victory.

In response, S. Khachatryan continued to insist that in case the Assembly failed, the Armenian government might agree to the above provision, but the Assembly should discuss the issue of the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan's sovereign rights over Karabakh and if the Azerbaijani government had violated the terms of the agreement, it already lost its rights. Besides, there were contractual relations, relations between the known regions and the government. Instead, Aghayev said that they did not want the Assembly to affirm the right of force, that there had been no war, but a riot, and the government had established order through the armed forces, and he offered to pass their resolution. Then Lordkipanidze claimed that, undoubtedly, the Karabakh issue was of international nature. According to him, the contractual act of the agreement stated that the Armenian population submitted to the government of Azerbaijan before the decision of the Peace Conference (this is, of course, a remarkable approach – V.V.), and it should be taken into account as an international document. And since the ratification document on that agreement was violated, the interests of the case demanded that the two governments

⁷⁸ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 178-179.

restore the previous situation. And if the Assembly could maintain the purity of international law, the case might benefit from it.⁷⁹ Mamikonyan, the Armenian delegate who took the floor after him, claimed that the Azerbaijani government had taken over Karabakh only temporarily. Receiving no support from the Armenian government the Armenian population had been forced to agree only to temporarily submit to Azerbaijan, stating that if the Azerbaijani government found it difficult to agree to that provision, it must ratify it publicly, otherwise there could be no question of an Assembly. Gegechkori not accidentally inflamed the situation by suggesting whether the Azerbaijani delegation could guarantee the rights of the Armenian population of Karabakh. Naturally, the Azerbaijani side immediately expressed certain readiness and in this regard Aghayev, speaking on behalf of the government of Azerbaijan, declared that his government would provide all the national-and-cultural rights they enjoyed before the clashes to the loyal Armenian population of Karabakh that would return.⁸⁰ In response, the RA delegate H. Ohanjanyan emphasized in this regard that the mention of the words “loyal” and “national-and-cultural rights” in the declaration did not satisfy them, since besides those rights there were other rights in Karabakh as well. It should be pointed out that this was a very verbose and unprincipled approach to the complex political issue, which the Azerbaijanis would obviously cling to, offering an approach convenient for them. Nevertheless, the Armenian delegation insisted that the declaration include a reservation, i.e. all the rights and responsibilities enjoyed by the Armenian population be ensured. In this regard, the Armenian delegation stated that they were not satisfied with that declaration, therefore, they could not agree with the above-mentioned decision. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan Aghayev, agreeing with Lordkipanidze’s new proposal stated that the Government of Azerbaijan would preserve the previously enjoyed national-and-cultural rights of the Armenian population of Karabakh who would return to their homes. Taking note of this statement, the Assembly decided to send telegrams to the places where the bloody clashes were still going on, and also to address the peoples of Transcaucasia with a special statement.⁸¹

In its further work (April 17 session), the Assembly heard the opinion of the commission that had gone to Ghazakh. G. Makharadze, member of the commission, reported that the clashes started on April 5 and ended on April 9 at the initiative of the local population. 10 villages were burnt, 9 of which were Muslim and one Armenian. These events took place between April 10 and April 17. It was informed that the commission had called for an end to the clashes and for returning to their places of residence. In this regard, Khan-Khoyski published the telegram from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan. According to Vekilov, the Muslim population in Ghazakh was in a state of alarm and was afraid of new attacks.⁸² S. Mamikonyan, not so sure of

⁷⁹ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 180.

⁸⁰ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 180.

⁸¹ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 548, 180.

⁸² See NAA, f. 200, l.1, f. 576, p. 4.

the completeness of his own approach, stated how such a telegram could have been received, as they were there on the eve of the clashes, talked to both sides, the villagers and the governor-general, and no such statement was made.⁸³ In response, Krichinsky offered his own solution, stating that the Karabakh issue should be separated from the issues under discussion, and that there could be no question of the legal status of Ghazakh, but only the borders should be restored. Instead, the RA delegate S. Mamikonyan said that they were guided by the principle of expediency, and he wanted the Assembly to clarify what status should there be in Ghazakh (as if Ghazakh were an indisputable Azerbaijani territory since time immemorial. Such an approach of the Armenian delegation is very strange or were they unaware of history or? – V.V.).

Feeling threatened, Khan-Khoyski wisely expressed the opinion that such a divided approach to the issue (to Ghazakh) could complicate its solution. Khan-Khoyski expressed the opinion that the well-known demarcation line had been violated in Ghazakh, and it had been violated by the Armenians, who occupied a part of the territory of Azerbaijan. Therefore, according to him, Armenians should go back to their place of residence, and it should not be confused with Karabakh. According to Khan-Khoyski, Karabakh was also a territory of Azerbaijan, and the matter concerned the internal law of the Azerbaijani government, and it was about the legal status of the Armenian population of Karabakh, about the attitude of the Azerbaijani government towards the known part of its population (interesting wording - the emphasis is ours – V.V.), and in Ghazakh it was only about the demarcation line. According to Khan-Khoyski, it was about the uprising in Karabakh, and there was an opinion that the commission going there might be able to expand the privileges of the Armenian population and thus solve the issue.⁸⁴ This is the way to approach the diplomatic-and-political issue, this is the way to manoeuvre and confuse the other side, which was not badly demonstrated by the Azerbaijani delegates to the Tiflis Assembly of the Transcaucasian Republics. This time Ye. Gegechkori considered that it was pointless to link one issue to the other: the issue of Ghazakh to that of Karabakh, that in the case of Ghazakh it was necessary to return to the old demarcation line and return the refugees, and in the case of Karabakh it was necessary to return the population to the old places of residence after which raise the issue of the legal status of the population and thus pacify the region.

According to the Azerbaijani delegation, the Assembly should have its opinion on the report of the commission on Ghazakh, and suggested the following resolution: “After hearing the report of the commission on the events in Ghazakh, the Assembly decides that in the parts of Ghazakh where Armenian-Muslim clashes are taking place, the territorial situation before the clashes must be restored”.⁸⁵ Instead, the Armenian delegation, in the person of Ohanjanyan, proposed its own resolution: the Armenian

⁸³ See NAA, f. 200, l.1, f. 576, p. 4.

⁸⁴ See NAA, f. 200, l.1, f. 576, 5-6.

⁸⁵ See NAA, f. 200, l.1, f. 576, 7-9.

delegation proposed to adopt a general resolution on the restoration of the legal status, adopted unanimously on April 12, to take it as a basis for both Ghazakh and the other regions, which was mentioned in Resolution 1 of the Assembly (April 11).

On the same day, on April 17, after the Yerevan odyssey, when Tekinsky's espionage and destructive activities against the Republic of Armenia were revealed, Mammad Khan Tekinsky, already as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, sent a telegram to A. Khatisyan, in which he protested against the non-implementation of the decisions of the relevant commission by the Armenian troops. On April 18 Khatisyan responded to this by denying Tekinsky's information, and on his part pointed out Azerbaijan's continuation of hostilities in Karabakh, asking to stop them.⁸⁶

Khan-Khoyski immediately disagreed with the resolution, objecting to connecting the two issues, arguing that in Ghazakh it was a matter of conquering foreign territory, and in Karabakh it was an uprising within the state itself and that the Azerbaijani government would take every measure for the population to benefit from all the opportunities of national-and-cultural autonomy.⁸⁷ Then, Ohanjanyan answered positively to Khan-Khoyski's question whether the Armenians wanted to "liberate" Ghazakh, i.e. by withdrawing their own military units from the mentioned territory. Thus, from H. Ohanjanyan's letter of April 18, 1920 addressed to the RA Prime Minister A. Khatisyan, it becomes obvious that the Armenian side had some concerns related to both Karabakh and other related issues. In the above-mentioned letter H. Ohanjanyan directly emphasized the following: "In the current conditions, it is absolutely impossible to achieve more. Judging by your letters and telegrams from the ground on the current military situation, we are forced to make the biggest concessions."⁸⁸ At the April 18 session of the Assembly, Ohanjanyan noted that the Assembly did not want to dwell on the April 12 resolution, which was a fundamental basis for resolving the issues of Karabakh, Ordubad, Nakhichevan and other disputed territories, and suggested that the demarkation line be drawn where the Assembly's April 11 decision on ending the armed conflict was reached, and in each separate case, the Assembly should adopt a special decision which is agreed by the Foreign Ministers of Georgia and Azerbaijan. In addition, at the 10th session on April 18, a resolution was adopted which envisaged the restoration of the factual situation in Ghazakh before the clashes and the return of the population to their homes.⁸⁹

The British command in Transcaucasia, like in the other places where the implementers of its policy were mainly officers of the "Indian school", began to pursue a policy of all possible concessions to the Muslim element, persistently seeking to strengthen their authority in the Muslim world. The same idea was emphasized by H. Ter-Hakobyan, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic

⁸⁶ Tumanyan 2012: 300.

⁸⁷ See NAA, f. 200, l.1, f. 576, 8-9.

⁸⁸ BAA, 1996, N 1 (98): 82.

⁸⁹ Tumanyan 2012: 300.

of Armenia in his message of September 16, 1919 (No. 3741) addressed to the Armenian diplomatic envoy in Tiflis: "It turns out from the messages of our delegation in Paris that during their entire presence in the Caucasus, the British have been insincere to us and have systematically pursued a Muslim policy. The reports of both Thomson and other generals (even those of General W. H. Beach, the head of the political bureau of the headquarters of the British occupation forces in Transcaucasia who was considered pro-Armenian by us) particularly on Karabakh and generally on issues concerning us have always been to our detriment".⁹⁰

Naturally, there was a conflict of interest, and no agreement was reached. Soon there were developments, events off the "agenda", which nullified the efforts made, which was not a coincidence at all. After the departure of Great Britain, consequently, Soviet Russia and the reviving Turkey were the two countries that were to fill that emptiness in the Caucasus. But due to the state of affairs Armenia could not come to an agreement with any of those countries. There was the "ghost" of the Treaty of Sèvres between Armenia and Turkey, and between Armenia and Soviet Russia there was the deceptive hope of the Republic of Armenia regarding the support of great allies; and as British Caucasiologists D. M. Lang and K. I. Walker accurately noted, those allies skillfully fed Armenians and the political leaders of the Armenian people with "*the dream idea of creating an Armenia extending from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea*".⁹¹ Those hopes led to the fatal isolation and decline of the Republic of Armenia. There was never any significant help from the allies, there were only empty statements and encouragement. And for various reasons, it was not possible to find common ground with the neighbors.

And yet it was only after the defeat of Denikin's army by the Bolsheviks in January 1920 that the Allies recognized the Transcaucasian republics as independent states, with the aim of keeping the Caucasus and Persia out of the Bolshevik influence. Changes in the situation and the significant change in the attitude of the allies towards the Republic of Armenia were accurately noticed by D. M. Lang and K. I. Walker: "*During 1920 the situation in the world underwent such dramatic changes that the promises made by the allied powers to Armenia became meaningless... After heated disputes... the ARF government decided to peacefully hand over the power to the Bolsheviks and as the saying goes, they preferred "to be red rather than dead"*".⁹² Already in the spring of 1920 the situation in the Transcaucasian region changed dramatically and the events started to develop rapidly, in particular in Artsakh, Zangezur and around them: a) the *de facto* power in Artsakh, starting from mid-1918 was in the hands of the local Armenian National Council. From May 1918 to May 1920 during the ten congresses it convened and even after that, until the infamous decision of July 5, 1921 of the Bureau of the Caucasus Territorial Committee of the Central Committee of

⁹⁰ See NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 62, p. 45; f. 275, l. 5, f. 97, p. 126.

⁹¹ Lang, Walker 1992: 31.

⁹² See Lang, Walker 1992: 32.

the Russian Communist Party (Kavbyuro), the Armenian National Council did not accept and did not recognize the rule of Azerbaijan. But there were also dangerous turns of events and political slips. Thus, the 7th Congress of Karabakh held on August 12, 1919, examining the situation and making sure that they could not receive any help from outside, that the British were supporting the Azerbaijanis, and that the Armenian government was unable to provide serious assistance, considering and weighing their own capabilities decided to accept the agreement with Baku on August 15, and thus, the notorious agreement of August 22, 1919 was signed “hoping” that the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh would be resolved “unconditionally and justly” at the European Peace Conference of the great powers. Naturally, Dr. Khosrov Bey Sultanov considered it a new “era” in the life of Karabakh. The joint Azerbaijani-Turkish armed forces responded to the liberation struggle of the people of Artsakh with mass massacres of Armenians: on March 22-26, 1920, the Musavat government organized the massacre of the Armenians of Shushi, as a result of which thousands of Armenians were killed.

In this situation, with Denikin’s final defeat, Russia became a new factor in Armenia and Transcaucasia. The Red Army, breaking down the barrier against it, entered the North Caucasus and descended to Transcaucasia and Baku. And this was at a time when the government of independent Azerbaijan had concentrated most of its military force to crush the uprising of Armenians in Karabakh and to finally annex Karabakh, as well as Zangezur and the other Armenian territories to Azerbaijan. And the Revolutionary Committee of Azerbaijan, which was already Bolshevik, sent an ultimatum to the government of Yerevan, declaring war on the Republic of Armenia, if the Armenian troops did not empty the “indisputable lands” of Azerbaijan immediately, by April 30. The Revolutionary Committee did not even find it necessary to mention the names of those lands, and it immediately made military-and-political preparations. These radical developments were the main reasons that led to the failure of work of the Assembly of Transcaucasian republics in April 1920 and, of course, the conditionality of the decisions taken. It was the period when Bolshevism, as a military-and-political and social current in Russia was in the process of strengthening and was moving towards stabilizing, but at first it was incomprehensible. As a result of that the Armenian diplomatic and political circles counted on Vrangel, Kolchak, Denikin and others, losing precious time and all hopes of using strategic opportunities, relying on the abstract assurances of the great European powers, absolutely not guessing what catastrophic geopolitical situation would be created by the fast changes and developments in the near future, first of all for the Republic of Armenia. It was this unfortunate circumstance that left its mark on all the actions of the RA Government, which did not follow the spirit of the time and did not comply with the altered geopolitical situation.

The situation changed dramatically in late April 1920, after the Sovietization of Azerbaijan. The local Armenians gave in to the Bolshevik slogans, and Karabakh was Sovietized. And later, on July 5, 1921, by the decision of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP(b), under I. Stalin’s pressure, Armenian Karabakh was

annexed to Azerbaijan, grossly violating the decision made the previous day, on July 4, 1921 on Karabakh-Artsakh joining Soviet Armenia, grossly distorting the content and essence of the Leninist-Bolshevik ideology of free self-determination of nations. This was categorically opposed also by the prominent Soviet statesman Alexander Myasnikyan who assumed the position of the party-political leadership of Soviet Armenia.

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