



Armeno-Georgian War of 1918 and Armeno-Georgian Territorial Issue in the 20th Century

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Contents

Introduction	3
Restoration of Armenian and Georgian Statehood	4
The Birth of Territorial Conflict	8
Brief History of the Disputed Territory	10
Ethnic Composition of the Disputed Territories	13
In the Foremath of Delimitation: Conceptual Conflict and the Lack of mutual Understanding	17
Beginning of the Armed Conflict: October Clashes	18
Diplomatic Overtures of the Parties in November 1918	23
Escalation of the Conflict: Uprising in Lori and Armenian Offensive	26
Situation at other Frontiers of Armenia and Georgia	31
Interference and Mediation of the Allies	36
The Battles of Ekaterinenfeld and Shulavery; Georgian Counter-offensive	39
Peace Agreement and Temporary Delimitation	46
Results and Consequences of Armeno-Georgian War of 1918	48
06.1919 - 04.1920: Attempts of Normalization and Territorial Compromise	50
1920-1921: The Failed Alliance and Final Delimitation after the Fall of the First Republics	56
Conclusion	64
Recommended Reading	66
Addendum: Prominent Scholars on Armeno-Georgian conflict	68

Introduction

As of today, the territory of the three states to the south of the Main Caucasus, whose independence has been restored as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, is the scene of two unresolved military conflicts: the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Mountainous Karabakh and the Russo-Georgian one the two strategically important regions of Georgia - Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (the latter also known as the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region). However, the potential zones of conflict in the South Caucasus are not limited to Abkhazia, Karabakh and Tskhinvali. Certain influential political forces that are interested in further destabilization of the region are seriously considering the border area between Armenia and Georgia to be a potential centre of another conflict in the South Caucasus. Indeed, the above mentioned area that includes an Armenian-populated Georgia's province of Javakheti is marked by some tension that under certain circumstances can degenerate into an inter-ethnic conflict. Various political groups that are voluntarily or involuntarily trying to provoke a new conflict tend to appeal to the events of Armeno-Georgian War that broke out at the end of 1918 and had a negative impact on the overall situation in the region. The paucity of publicly available information on this historical episode opens up great opportunities for ideologically-loaded and sometimes even instigative interpretation of this little-known war of the early twentieth century.

This paper aims at providing a detailed description of the aforementioned events of the war and to analyze its consequences for both Armenia and Georgia, leaving beyond the framework the ways they are or can be used by destabilising forces, by which we mean primarily the ruling circles of the Russian Federation that, despite internal disagreements on some issues, have a complete consensus in their efforts to keep the South Caucasus within the Russian sphere of political influence at the expense of real independence and democracy of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as to prevent any serious politico-economic presence of the West in this strategically important crossroads of Europe and Asia¹.

We strongly believe that knowledge of the nature and details inter-ethnic and inter-state conflicts having their origins back in the past, is a critical tool for success in their effective and non-violent resolution.

¹ Michael P. Croissant, *The Armenia-Azerbaijani Conflict: Causes and Implications* (London, 1998), p.xiii.

Restoration of Armenian and Georgian Statehood

On October 9, 1918, an independent Transcaucasian Federal Democratic Republic was proclaimed in Tiflis (Tbilisi) facing the collapse of Russian Empire, revolutionary anarchy and devastating Turkish invasion. The new state that virtually embraced all South Caucasian possessions of the former Russian Empire (five provinces and one territory to the south of Main Caucasus range), failed to survive much longer than a month. Insurmountable contradictions between the nationalist parties dominant in the government and parliament of Transcaucasian Federation that claimed to represent incompatible interests of various ethnic groups of the region, led to total collapse, and at the end of May 1918, the independence of the three new republics: Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani, was proclaimed almost simultaneously (at intervals of two days) in the same city of Tiflis.

The fragmentation of federations into the independent states is usually followed by the problems of territorial demarcation. In this case, however, the situation evolved differently. The troops of Ottoman Turkey, whose leadership was planning to take over the entire Caucasus, having overcome the weak resistance of Georgian and Armenian units of the former Russian army, occupied a significant part of the region and forced Armenia and Georgia to sign the Treaty of Batum (June 4, 1918). Under the terms of that "peace treaty", as well as several subsequent agreements imposed by Turkey, the considerable part of the South Caucasus was assigned to Turkey while the two newly formed republics were curtailed to such an extent that they did not even share a common border. The Armenian Republic was cut down to a tiny enclave around the cities of Yerevan and Vagarshapat (Echmiadzin) that included the county of New-Bayazet as well as the eastern parts of Alexandropol, Yerevan, Echmiadzin and Sharur-Daralaghez counties of the province of Yerevan², whereas Georgia that had entered into a separate agreement with Germany, managed to keep the province of Kutais and most of the province of Tiflis, excluding the Ottoman-annexed counties of Akhhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki³. Turkey was also given carte blanche to act in Azerbaijan. As for the county of Alexandropol lying between the truncated republics of Armenia and Georgia, it was partially annexed by the Ottoman Empire in accordance with the Treaty of Batum. The remaining part of that county was also occupied by the Turkish troops that were gradually penetrating into Azerbaijan, the country that was just at the beginning of the process of its territorial formation. (See Map 2).

Shortly after the Treaty of Batum was signed, the Ottoman command insisted on a "temporary transfer under Ottoman administration" of an additional stripe of land in the Lori sector of the county of Borchalo (Tiflis province). That part of Lori sector was lying close to the strategic highway through which the Turkish troops were marching in a continuous stream into Azerbaijan, where the armed struggle between Ottoman-protected Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and the Bolsheviks that had seized power in parts of the province of Baku was escalating. A segment of the said highway between Karaklis and Delijan was lying in such a close proximity to the border of Georgian-controlled province of Tiflis, that according to the Turkish commanders it was extremely important to slightly move the border northwards in order to secure the highway from possible of some Armenian guerrillas that decided to fight the Turks to the end. That "border adjustment", however, was not considered permanent, and the Turkish occupation of a small part of Lori sector was initially intended to be of temporary character

³ Kadishev, A.B., *Interventsia i grazhdanskaja vojna v Zakavkazji* (Moscow, 1960), p. 95.



Click on the map for better resolution

The following excerpt is from a Georgian government document, published one year after the events described:

“Meanwhile, on behalf of Turkey, got the Georgian government a requirement to allow a **temporary derogation** from the provisions of Article II of the Treaty of June 4, 1918, and permit Turkish troops occupy temporarily a part of Borchalo county up to the river Kamenka and the railway segment south of the bridge between the railway stations of Kober and Kalageran (117th mile). This measure was necessary for the Turkish command in view of the movement of their troops up the Karaklis-Delizhan-Kazakh road, in order to ensure that maneuver to be performed unhindered and safe. The demands of Turkish commanders was supported by the representative of the German military mission in Tiflis, and the government of Georgia had no other choice but to satisfy the above demands and sacrifice their claims for the whole province of Tiflis and the railway line to the middle of the tunnel behind the Shagali station. It had to agree to a temporal de-facto possession by Turkey of the above territory.

As a result of **a number of military actions** that have arisen in connection with that demand as well as negotiations with the Turkish command, the Turkish troops were given the right to take over the territory up until the line along the right bank of Kamenka - namely: the villages of Novo-Pokrovka, Jalal-Oglu, Nikolaevka Gergery, Vartanlur, Kurtan, Dar-Kendo - and further until the line starting from the bridge on the 117th mile of the Aleksandropol segment of the former Transcaucasian railway lying at the midway between the stations and Kober and Kalageran, and ending at the villages of Marts and Lorut. The area north of this line was thus secured from the Turkish occupation and in order to protect it from possible Turkish invasion, it was occupied by Georgian military units being located the villages of Vorontsovka, Alexandrovka, Aidarbek, Mgart, the railway station of Kober and the villages and Korinj and Tsater"⁴.

By "**a number of military action**" the author of the above quote most definitely means the series of clashes that occurred in June 1918 between Georgian forces supported by a few German units and Turkish troops that attempted in breach of the Treaty of Batum, to continue their offensive from Karaklis in the direction of Tiflis. As a result of these clashes Turks were stopped at the river Kamenka and near the Red Bridge. The clashes led to a dramatic, albeit short-lived conflict between the already weakening Central power allies: the German and Ottoman empires.



German and Georgian troops on their way to Kamenka

The demarcation line mentioned in the above-quoted document, became de-facto border of Georgia for the period between the signing of the treaty of Batumi and surrender the Ottoman Empire at the end of

⁴ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootnosheniy. 1918 god: pogranichnyi konflikt; peregovory; voyna; soglashenie.* (Tiflis, 1919), pp.12-13.

1918. Thus, as we already mentioned above, there was no common border between Armenia in Georgia up until the late autumn of 1918, as the stripe of territory lying to the south of the demarcation line, was controlled by the Turks.

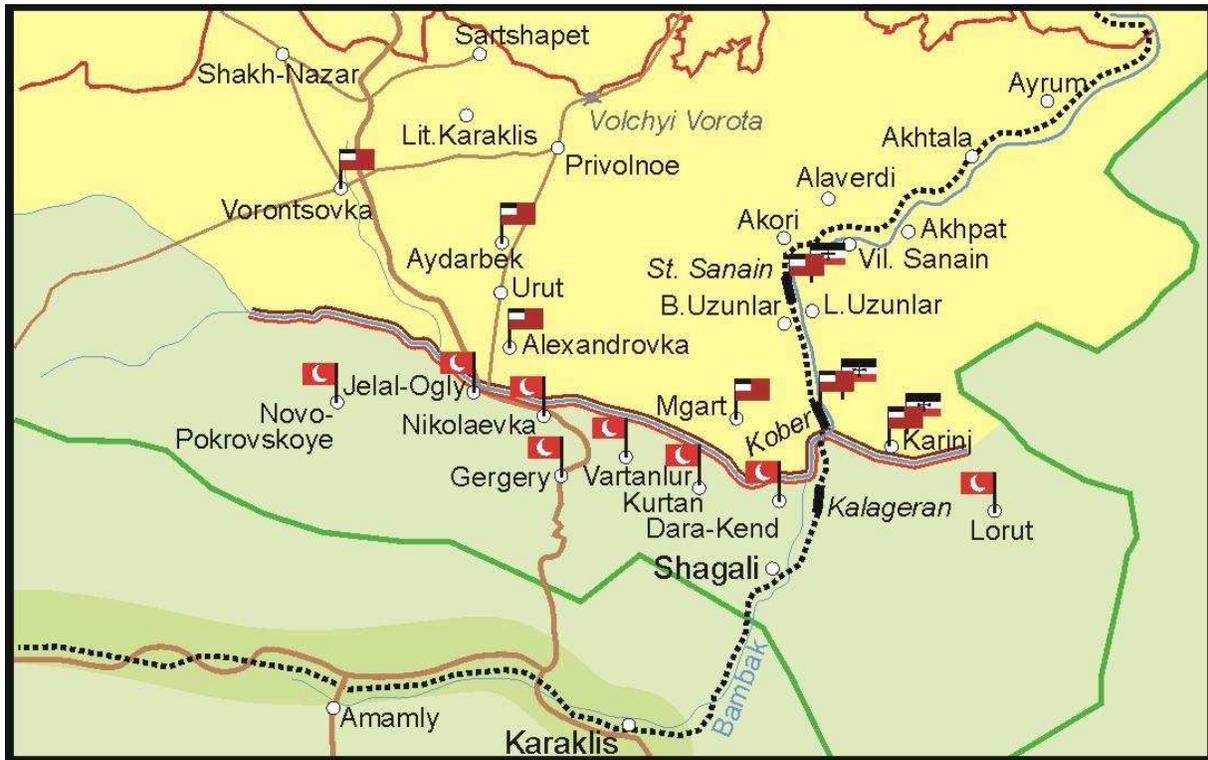


Figure 1: Dislocation of Turkish, Georgian and German troops along the demarcation line (June-September, 1918.)

Explanation:

- *Double red-orange line along the river Kamenka is the demarcation line established at the insistence of Turkey in June 1918.*
- *The green line is the border of the province of Tiflis that was supposed to become the national border of Georgia as per the Treaty of Batum.*
- *The thin red line denotes modern national border between Armenia and Georgia that corresponds to the border between the “Soviet republics” of the USSR up until its disintegration in 1991.*
- *Light green color marks the territory of de-facto Turkish control, as of the summer of 1918; the territory under control of Georgian government during the same period of time, is marked with light yellow color.*
- *The strategically important Kars-Aqstapha road which connected Turkey with Azerbaijan, is marked with broad green stripe.*
- *Red flags with the crescent denote Turkish positions; dark red flags with black and white cantons denote Georgian positions; German positions are denoted with red, white and black flags with black “iron crosses”.*

The Birth of Territorial Conflict

The fall of 1918 was marked with the second sharp change in the international situation during the last 12 months. It influenced both Europe and East Mediterranean area including the South Caucasus. Exhausted by the war the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey) turned to the policy of cessation of hostilities and looking for the ways to surrender. Between September 29 and November 11, all four above-mentioned countries signed armistices with the Entente Powers. Ottoman Turkey surrendered on October 30, 1918, signing the Armistice of Mudros. In accordance with the provisions of the Armistice Agreements, all the Turkish troops that had been stationed in the Caucasus to be withdrawn to the line of the pre-war Russian-Turkish border of 1914.



However, as early as two weeks prior to the surrender, in view of the imminent collapse of the Central Powers, the Turks began gradual evacuation of the territories that had been occupied and annexed in accordance with the Treaty of Batum (04.06.1918). At the very same time, the forces of the Democratic Republic of Armenia acting in coordination with the Turkish command, started to take over the territory of Erivan Province that the Turks were leaving behind. On October 18, 1918 the avant-garde Armenian units entered the strip of Borchalo county of the province of Tiflis to the south of the river Kamenka that was earlier under temporary Turkish control, and also crossed the demarcation line occupied the station of Kober (Koberi), that was in the Georgian-controlled part of the county, forcing out the German-Georgian garrison of the station⁵. It was at that particular moment when the unresolved question of the future state border between Armenia and Georgia rose sharply for the first time (see [Map 3](#)).

One should mention though that as early as during the summer of 1918, a few conferences and organized by the government circles of Georgia and Armenia, as well as several publications in semi-official newspapers Erivan and Tiflis, revealed significant differences on the border issue between the two nations. As of the fall of 1918, the territory in dispute between Armenia and Georgia was limited to the southern part of the province of Tiflis, including mainly the two districts - Akhalkalaki and Borchalo⁶. From the viewpoint of the majority of Armenian national-patriots all the Akhalkalaki county and more than half of the county of Borchalo were to be unequivocally incorporated into Armenia⁷. The most radical nationalists though called for the Armenian claims to be extended even further to the northwest up to the port city of Batum in order to secure for Armenia an access to the Black Sea. On the other hand, most of the Georgian leaders as well as the majority of politically active Georgians the southern border of the province of Tiflis was to become an unquestionable border of their country⁸. Among radical Georgian nationalists, there were also advocates of the annexation by Georgia of parts of the Kazakh district of the province of Elisavetpol and Alexandropol county of the province of Erivan⁹.

In order to justify their territorial claim the parties of the described conflict adhered to the variety of arguments. The Georgian leadership based their claims on the historical background. The Armenian territorial claims, were based on rather new principle of self-determination of peoples, with an emphasis on the ethnic composition of the disputed territories.

The detailed analysis of both Georgian and Armenian arguments in support of their claims for the two disputed counties will be provided below.

⁵ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootnosheniy*, p. 14.

⁶ The Ahalkaki county was annexed by the Ottoman Empire by the Treaty of Batum (June 4, 1918) and had to be evacuated by the Turks as per the provisions of the Armistice of Mudros Agreement (October 30, 1918).

⁷ M. Varandian, *Le conflit armeno-georgien et la guerre du Caucase* (Paris, 1919), p.75.

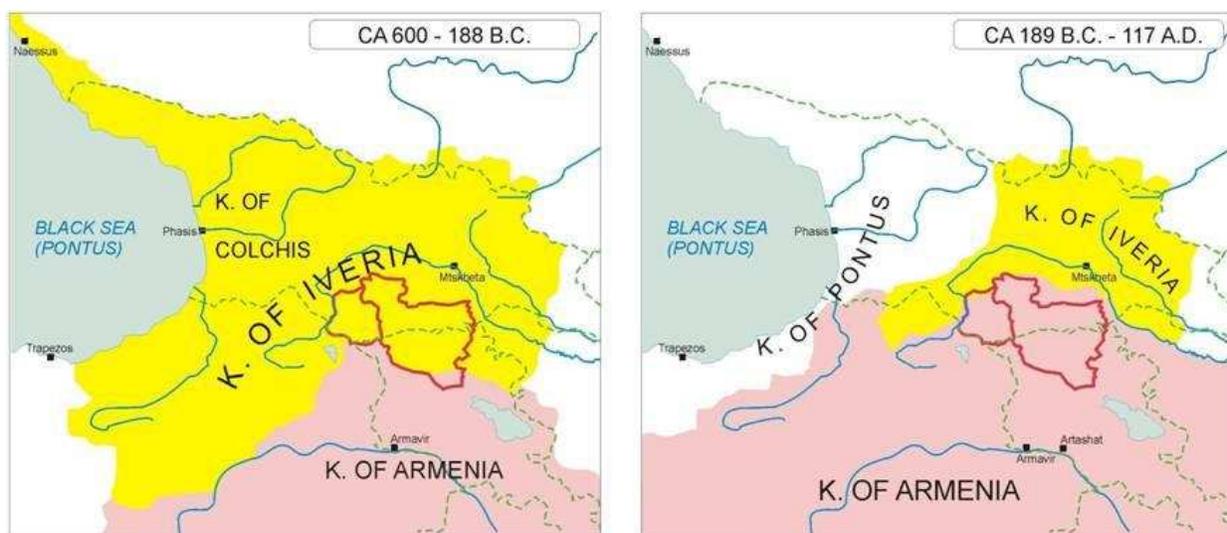
⁸ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootnosheniy*, p.68.

⁹ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootnosheniy*, p.10.

M. Varandian, *Le conflit armeno-georgien et la guerre du Caucase* (Paris, 1919), p.75.
Hovannisian, p. 72.

Brief History of the Disputed Territory

The official status of the territory that formed the counties of Akhalkalaki and Borchalo, can be traced back to ancient times (See [Map 1](#)). Both the results of archaeological excavations and the texts of such ancient authors as Herodotus, Xenophon, Hecataeus, Ptolemy, and others, provide enough evidence to believe that starting at least with the 5th century BC, most of the territory in question was part of the [the early state formations of Iverians and Moskhians](#). After the establishment of the Kingdom of Iveria at the turn of the 4th and the 3^d centuries BC on the basis of the above state formations, the territory of the two future counties for more than a hundred years stayed within the borders of that ancient Georgian state. As a result of major political changes and upheavals that occurred in East Mediterranean area during the 1st and 2nd centuries BC, early Georgian states suffered heavy territorial losses. According to Strabo, a considerable part of modern south-eastern Georgia including the two counties the history of which being traced here, became incorporated into Armenia and stayed for almost 300 years either within ancient Armenian state or the two empires, namely, Rome and Parthia, that to a greater or less degree controlled Armenian territory during the described period of time.

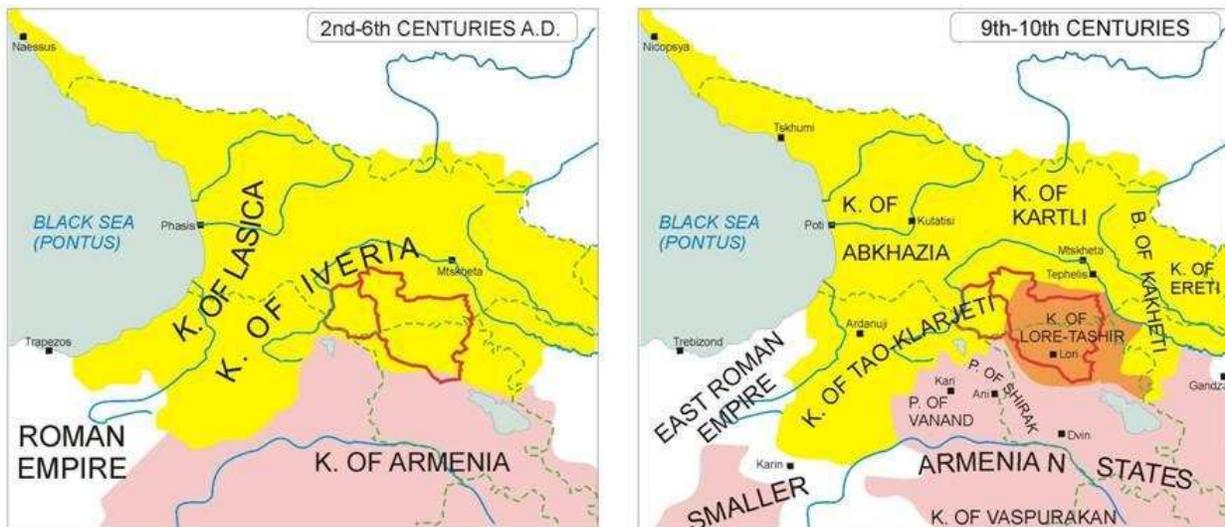


The beginning of the 2^d century AD, was marked by certain consolidation of the early Georgian states and recovering previously lost territories by Iveria. The Kingdom of Iveria managed to keep the territory of the future counties Akhalkalaki and Borchalo for nearly half a millennium – until most of the whole region was conquered by the Arabs in 656 AD. The century of Arab-Byzantine wars and the decline of the Arab Caliphate were followed by the gradual recovery of both Georgian and Armenian statehood in the form of a patchwork of small kingdoms¹⁰ and principalities.

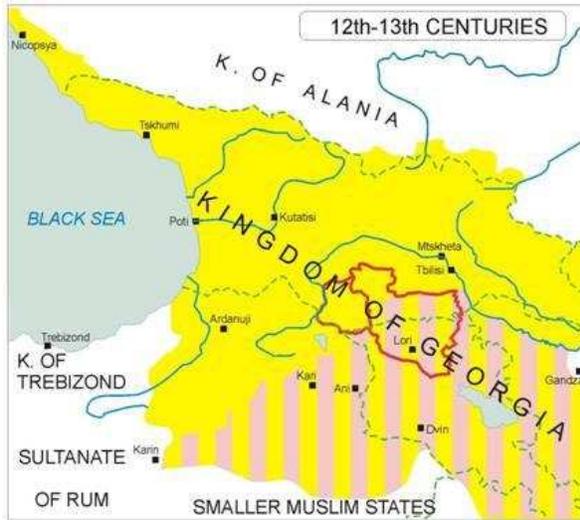
In this context we should mention the Kingdom of Lore and Tashir that was formed at the end of the 10th century in the territory re-conquered by the Christians from the Emirate of Tiflis (one of the fragments of

¹⁰ Here and below, we avoid the term “tsardoms” which is traditionally used by Russian historians in relation to the small Christian states of the South Caucasus. We strongly believe that here it would be more correct to use the word “kingdoms”.

the former Arab Caliphate), as well as in the territories that ceded from the Kingdom of Tao-Klarjeti and the Principalities of Kakheti and Shirak (the first two states were the Georgian ones while the last one was Armenian). The Kingdom of Lore-Tashir whose borders embraced the whole territory of the future county of Borchalo as well as considerable parts of the future counties of Alexandropol and Kazakh, is referred to by many Armenian historians as an Armenian state. At the same time, the majority of Georgian and until recently, Russian historians tended to characterise that state as a mixed Armeno-Georgian formation. Here it would be important to mention that during the Mediaeval period of history to which the Kingdom of Lore-Tashir belonged, neither Europe, nor the adjacent Caucasus were under influence of ethno-linguistic ideologies known today as nationalism. At that time, the states were formed primarily on the basis of the loyalty of the majority of the population to a ruling house (in the case of Lore-Tashir it was the Kvirikid house) and on the front lines of fighting faiths, one of which passed through the South Caucasus, - on commitment to a certain religion or one of the competing churches. According to the chronicle by Matheos Uraetsi and recent studies by Arutyunova-Fidanyan, the Kingdom of Lore-Tashir was dominated by Chalcedonism (i.e., Oriental Orthodoxy) and belonged to the realm of the Georgian Apostolic Church, while all of its neighbours, including the Byzantines, determined the population of that kingdom either as the *Romaioi* (Byzantine Greeks), or *Iviroi* (Georgians).



The wars and turmoil of the period between the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 12th century resulted in the incorporation of Lore-Tashir together with the entire Northern Armenia from the river Aras to the Karabakh mountains into the united Georgian Kingdom. During the "golden age of Georgia," which lasted from 1118 until 1220 It should be noted here that during the described period of time, the province of Tashir (Tashiri), which included most of the future county of Borchalo without Trialeti (the current Tsalka district), was under hereditary governance of the princely family of Zaxarian (also known as Mxargrdzeli) that ruled the lands of northern Armenia on behalf of the Georgian kings. As for the province of Javakheti (the future county of Akhalkalaki) was not included into the domain of the Zaxarids and remained among the crown lands of Georgia proper.



During the following 580 years up until the annexation of East Georgian (Kartli-Kakhetian) Kingdom by the Russian Empire in 1801, the territory of the future Borchalo County did not leave the limits of Georgia (Kartli). As for the future county of Akhalkalaki (Javakheti), this province also stayed within Georgia until the collapse of the centralized kingdom into several states in the middle of the fifteenth century. Starting from the 1460s, Javakheti was part of a fairly strong Principality of Samtskhe in southern Georgia up until the elimination and of the principality and complete absorption of its territory into the Ottoman Empire in 1590. After two hundred and forty years of being part of Ottoman Turkey, Javakheti was invaded and annexed by the Russian Empire in 1829 to be reorganized into the county of Akhalkalaki within the imperial province of Tiflis.

Based on the above facts which were well known to the Georgian leaders as well as to vast majority of educated Georgians, both the Government and the public of Georgia shared strong belief that the counties of Akhalkalaki and Borchalo were integral and undeniable parts of their country.

Ethnic Composition of the Disputed Territories

Armenia in turn considered the two disputed counties Armenian basing on their ethnic characteristics. Indeed, by the beginning of the 20th century, Armenians formed the majority in both counties while their Georgian population was reduced to a tiny minority.

According the Russian census of 1897, the ethnic makeup of the two disputed counties looked as follows:

The county of BORCHALO		The county of AKHALKALAKI	
Ethnic background	% of total population	Ethnic background	% of total population
Armenian	32.1	Armenian	71.1
Tatar ¹¹	31.3	Tatar	10.2
Georgian	3.6	Georgian	6.2
Russian	5.6	Russian	9.4
Greek	16.7	Greek	0.1
German	1.4	German	1.1
Other	9.3	Other	1.9

Table 1: Ethnic makeup of the counties of Borchalo and Akhalkalaki (Source: Russian Imperial Census, as of February 9, 1897.)

Although Armenians as follows from the above table formed a little bit less than one-third of the whole population of Borchalo, they were the largest ethnic group of the county as a whole. Meanwhile, in its southernmost sector of Lori¹², absolute majority of the population was Armenian. The non-Armenian minorities Lori were presented by Russian sectarian colonists (Molokans) who inhabited a few villages in the western part of the sector and Greeks who resided predominantly in the town of Alaverdi and around it. The northern part of Borchalo, in turn, was much more ethnically diverse: besides Armenians, Russians and Greeks, its ethnic palette included significant amount of Tatars as well as German and Georgian communities.

The below table illustrates ethnic composition of the four sectors of Borchalo county, as of the end of the 19th century:

Sector	Admin. centre	Total population	Incl. Georgians	Incl. Armenians	Incl. Tatars	Incl. Russians	Incl. Greeks	Incl. others
Borchalo	Шулаверы	19109	8	6724	12377	0	0	0
Ekaterinenfeld	Ekaterinenfeld	13973	560	1436	10028	8	727	1214
Lori	Jelal-Oghly	32786	27	23339	1657	5315	2368	80
Trialeti	Bashkichet	35989	3578	6333	8974	701	15891	512
Total in the county		101857	4173	37832	33036	6024	18986	1806

Table 2: Ethnic makeup of the sectors of Borchalo county (Source: Family Lists of the province of Tiflis, 1887)

¹¹ Here and below we use the term “Tatars” as it was the only one officially used in the early 20th century to denote the ancestors of modern Azerbaijanis.

¹² The counties of Russian Transcaucasia were further subdivided into sectors (uchastki).

Historically, both Armenians and Georgians inhabited the territory of Borchalo county at least since the early Middle Ages. The above statement can be confirmed by the architectural and cultural heritage. In particular, the architectural heritage of historical province of Lore (the sector of Lori) demonstrates the traces of both Armenian and Georgian styles of mediaeval architecture illustrated by Armenian monasteries of Odzun, Sanain and Akhlat as well as Georgian churches in Akhtala and Aqori. At the same time, the northern parts of the former Borchalo county are clearly marked with the prevailing Georgian elements the examples of which include but are not limited to one of the oldest among existing Georgian churches – that is Bolnisi Zion erected in the 5th century and still bearing authentic scripts.



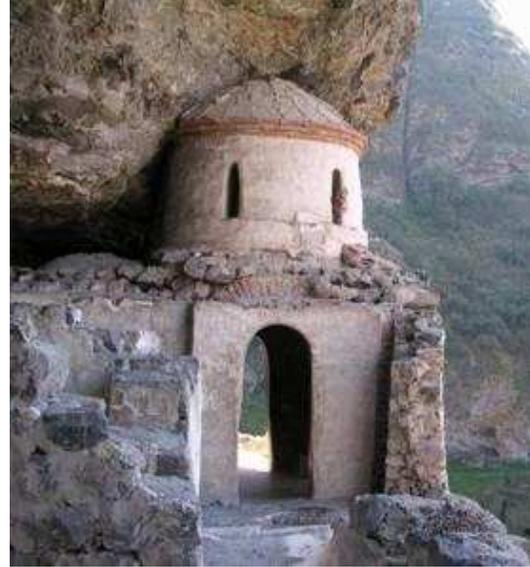
Georgian church / Akhtala



Armenian monastery / Sanain

Four centuries of almost permanent warfare that preceded the absorption of Georgia by Russian Empire, resulted in the drastic changes in ethnic composition of the south-western frontier of the kingdom of Kartlo-Kakheti including historical provinces of Borchalo, Shamshadin and Pambak (After incorporation into Russia, Shamshadin and Pambak were re-organized into the county of Kazakah of the province of Elisavetpol and the county of Alexandropol of the province of Erivan). The expansion of regional Muslim powers Ottoman Turkey and Iran, in combination with regular raids of nomads, resulted in almost total annihilation or exodus of local Christian population that had predominantly consisted of Georgian and Armenian farmers. Later, depopulated Borchalo-Pambak area was settled by Turkic-speaking nomadic tribes whose descendants still reside there nowadays¹³. After the annexation of Kartlo-Kakhetian kingdom by Russia the imperial government launched the program of colonising still partially depopulated Borchalo-Pambak area with Christian refugees from Turkey (mostly Armenians but also Greeks) In order to consolidate Russian dominance in this unstable area the government of Russia also encouraged resettlement of farming communities from central Russia and Germany into the county of Borchalo thus making its ethnic palette even more complicated.

¹³ The majority of these inhabitants of Georgian frontier define themselves as Azeri Turks while some of them prefer to be referred to as the Turcomans despite the fact that during the whole Soviet period all of them were officially defined as Azeri Turks or Azerbaijanis.



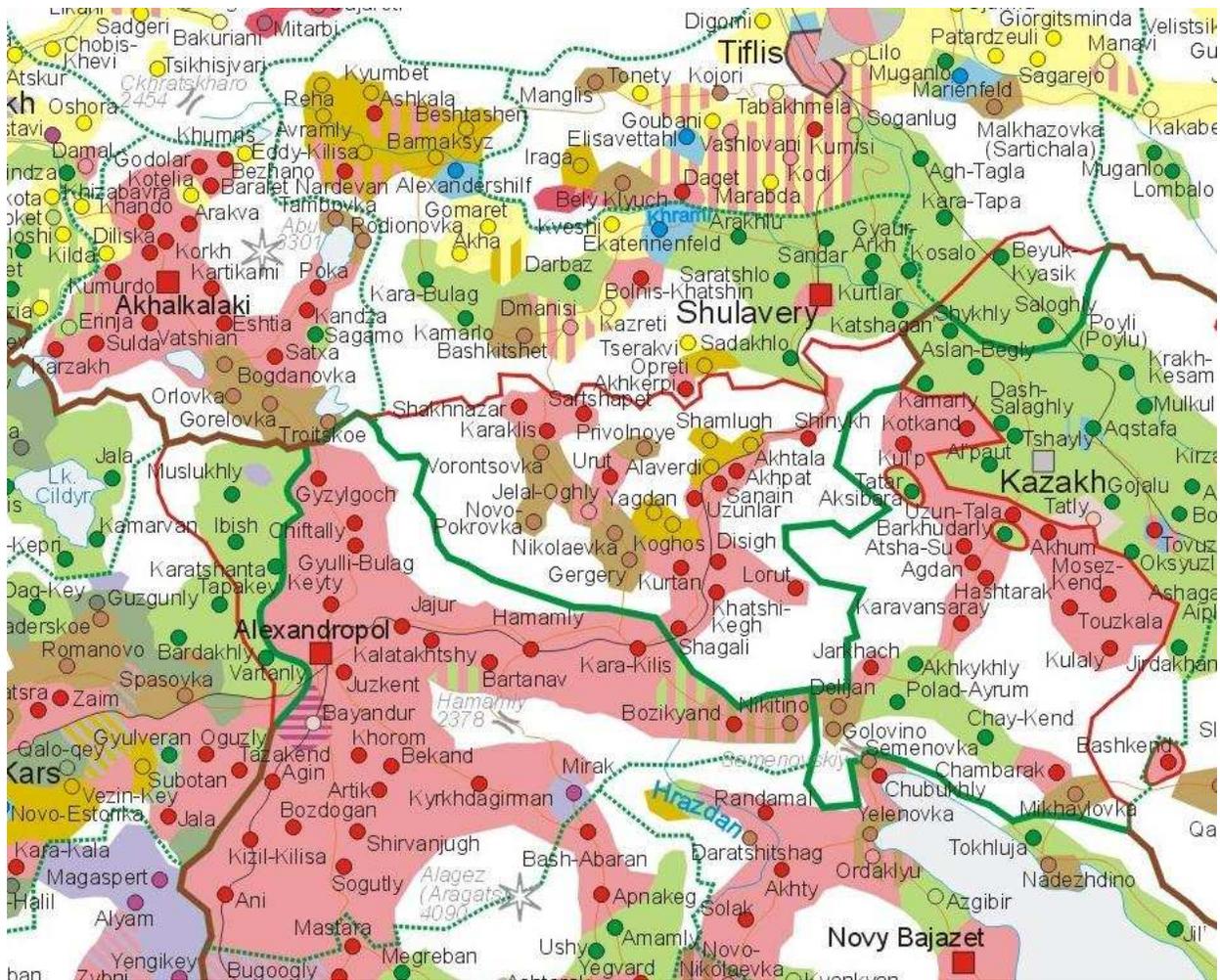
Fresco and chapel in mediaeval Vardzia monastery

As for the county of Akhalkalaki, one can say that by the beginning of the 20th century its Armenian majority formed over seventy per cent of total population. The proportion of Georgians there was larger than in Borchalo but still did hardly exceed six per cent. This ethno-linguistic situation was created within much shorter period of time if compared with Borchalo. In the province of Javakheti (later reorganized into the county of Akhalkalaki) the drastic changes in ethnic composition occurred within the last two thirds of the 19th century when the province was conquered by Russia from Ottoman Turkey. Most of the local Georgians who formed majority in Javakheti as of 1827, just prior to the beginning of another Russo-Turkish war (1828-29), have already been loyal Muslim subjects of the ottoman Empire for several generations only few of them still adhering to Orthodox Christianity or Roman Catholicism. Those Georgians who refused to convert from Orthodox Christianity either to Islam or to Catholicism¹⁴ during the period of Turkish domination (1590-1827), were mostly forced to flee the province. During the war of 1828-29, the Islamized Georgians of Javakheti were actively resisting Russian invasion, and following Ottoman defeat most of them left their native land to find refuge in Anatolia (central Turkey). The victorious Russians almost immediately colonized the empty province with the Turkish Armenians (mostly from the province of Erzurum) who were encouraged by the Russian government to re-settle from the Ottoman lands to the new Russian possessions in the Caucasus.

One could add to the above that during the First World War thousands of Armenian refugees from Turkish Anatolia (the survivors of the ethnic cleansings of 1915-1918) arrived to the two disputed counties many of them settling there permanently.

The architectural heritage of the former county of Akhalkalaki was also significantly different from that of Borchalo. Here one can still find a considerable amount Georgian architectural monuments going back to both Early and High Middle Ages that include fortified monasteries of Vardzia and Zeda-Tmoghvi, the churches in Azaveti, Poqa, Qumurdo and many other famous landmarks. On the other hand, most of the Armenian churches of the former Akhalkalaki county are dated back to the period not earlier than the middle of the 19th century

¹⁴ Following the agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Vatican, Georgian Catholics were exempt from ethno-religious prosecution or discrimination.



The above map shows the complicated ethnic palette of the territories disputed between Armenia and Georgia as it was in 1913. The areas of Armenian majority is marked by pink and red colors while lemon-yellow color goes for Georgian settlements, light brown – for Russian colonies, yellow-gold color marks the areas of Greek colonization, light green goes for the Tatar majority areas, grayish-green goes for Anatolian Turks, light blue – for Germans settlements and lilac denotes the areas of Kurdish concentration. The white color goes for uninhabited or sparsely inhabited alpine and steppe territories

In the Foremath of Delimitation: Conceptual Conflict and the Lack of Mutual Understanding

The fall of 1918 was marked by the territorial expansion of the recently created states of Armenia and Georgia that came into physical contact after Turkish evacuation. That presumed the need for official territorial delimitation. However, as has been mentioned above, the approaches of the parties were far from consensus in terms of the status of the two counties of the province of Tiflis, namely Akhalkalaki and Borchalo.

Official Tiflis firmly claimed the southern border of the province of Tiflis to be the national border of Georgia while the Armenian government refused to accept that approach, and argued that the administrative borders of the former imperial provinces should not be taken into account, as not corresponding to either ethnic or historical boundaries¹⁵.

Armenian officials also reminded their Georgian counterparts that as early as in 1917, during the Transcaucasian Conference for the Reorganization of Local Government in Petrograd, Georgian Socialists, who a year later formed majority government of independent Georgia, assured the representatives of Armenian nationalist parties to support the idea of reviewing a number of administrative boundaries in the region in accordance with the ethnic principle¹⁶. Basing on the above mentioned promises the government of the Democratic Republic of Armenia urged Georgia to give up a number of border areas with the heavy Armenian presence¹⁷. The official Tiflis argued though that the agreement reached at the Petrograd Conference of 1917 was, in fact, not an agreement but rather a manifestation of constructive initiative regarding administrative and economic delimitation within the limits of a single federal stated (the reformed Russian Empire). According to the representatives of the Georgian government, such an initiative took place long before the declaration of independence of Armenia and Georgia and could not be accepted as the basis for the demarcation of state borders¹⁸.

Thus by the fall of 1918, Georgia and Armenia failed to agree on the future status of the disputed territory that included the counties of Akhalkalaki and Borchalo. In addition to the two counties, Armenian government also laid claims to a small part of Gori county proposing the future state border to go through the Tskhra-Tskaro pass.

¹⁵ Georgian officials could hardly argue this statement of their Armenian opponents keeping in mind that during the period between 1801 and 1913 the administrative borders of Russian possessions in the South Caucasus were redrawn many times. As a result of all the “adjustments” such historical provinces as, for example, Pambak or Shamshadin found themselves beyond the limits of the province of Tiflis despite the fact that at the moment of annexation of Kartli-Kakhetian Kingdom by Russian Empire in 1801, they were parts of the kingdom on the basis of which the province of Tiflis was formed. (*Auth*).

¹⁶ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 71.

¹⁷ *Iz Istorii Armiano-gruzinskih Vzaimootnoshenij*, p.63.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Beginning of the Armed Conflict: October Clashes

On 18 October 1918, an Armenian military unit crossed the demarcation line from the south and entered Georgian-controlled railway station of Kober (Koberi)¹⁹.

The German command in Tiflis that was still performing its duties in the region demanded that the Armenians evacuate Kober immediately. However, the Armenian unit refused to withdraw from the station. The situation was becoming increasingly complicated largely due to the limited amount of German personnel in the disputed area. Just like the Turks, the Germans started evacuation from the Caucasus following the Armistice of Compiègne signed on 11 November 1918, despite all the efforts of the Georgian government aimed at extending the presence of German troops at least around Vorontsovka²⁰. It should be also noted here, that both German and Georgian units near the demarcation line were quite small and were supposed to perform exclusively non-combat border guard functions. For example, one mixed German-Georgian garrison in the village of Karinj consisted of only 20 Georgian and 12 German soldiers under command of one officer. Other garrisons were similar in numbers. Facing the development of confrontation Georgians and Germans were contacting Tiflis to appeal for reinforcements²¹.

In response to the calls for help, the Georgian command sent to the conflict zone around Sanain two armored trains and a detachment of 250 men. In view of the significant change of the power balance, the Armenian unit evacuated Kober by the end of October 20 leaving posts on the heights to the west and east of the railroad. However, Georgian ultimatum demanding immediate withdrawal of all Armenian troops operating around Kober towards the station of Shagali to the south of the demarcation line, was rejected. Same day the government of Georgia received a coded telegram from the government of Armenia signed by the Premier Hovhannes Kachaznuni with the following text:

To: Minister-President Zhordania. Copy: Chargé d'affaires of Armenia in Georgia Djmalian. The commander of Delijan detachment reported to me that he received an ultimatum from the Georgian army demanding to leave the station of Shagali. The Armenians received my order not to leave the station and to start a defensive battle in the case of Georgian offensive.

In order to avoid new disasters on behalf of the suffering people of Armenia and Georgia, in the name of truth and justice, I ask you to refrain from aggressive actions and to stop Georgian forces on the existing line. We will resolve all border issues through negotiation. I remind you of your public, solemn declaration at a meeting with participation of Ramishvili, Aharonian and Hatisov, that Georgia had no claim to Lore and kept it only temporarily, in order to avoid its occupation by a third party. Waiting for your reply. Minister-President Kachaznuni.²²

On October 23 three companies strong Armenian forces attacked German garrison in the village of Karinj and forced the Germans to retreat. To support the Germans, the Georgian command in Sanain sent to the conflict area one infantry company and an armoured train. The next day, the Georgian government declared martial law in Borchalo, and General George Tsulukidze was appointed the Governor of the troubled county.

¹⁹ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 75.

²⁰ A.Chachkhiani, *Borba za territorialnuiu tselostnost Gruzii v 1918-1919 godah (Armiano-Gruzinskaya voina). Academic dissertation* (Tbilisi, 2006), p. 82.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.



Figure 2: Dislocation of Georgian and German garrisons to the north of the demarcation line; замена турецких постов армянскими; первые столкновения (октябрь, 1918 г.)

Explanation:

- Double red-orange line along the river Kamenka is the demarcation line established at the insistence of Turkey in June 1918.
- The green line is the border of the province of Tiflis that was supposed to become the national border of Georgia as per the Treaty of Batum.
- The thin red line denotes modern national border between Armenia and Georgia that corresponds to the border between the “Soviet republics” of the USSR up until its disintegration in 1991.
- Light yellow color marks the territory of de-facto Georgian control, as of early October 1918.
- Black and white triangular flags denote Georgian garrisons; white triangular flags with black “iron crosses” denote German garrisons; Georgian and German headquarters are denoted with dark red rectangular flag with black and white canton and with red, white and black rectangular tricolor with black “iron cross” respectively.
- The territory that had been under de-facto Turkish control until early October 1918 and was re-taken by the Armenians in the middle of October upon Turkish evacuation is marked with light green and pink stripes.
- Falling red triangular flags with the crescent together with the flying red-over-yellow triangular flags denote Turkish garrisons replaced with the Armenian ones by the middle of October; red, blue and yellow rectangular tricolor denotes Armenian headquarters.
- Armenian offensive and retreat is marked by purple color while Georgian counter-action including armoured train shelling, is marked with dark blue color.

On October 25-27, fighting continued around the village Karindzh which changed hands several times. The sudden appearance of Georgian armoured train critically changed the military situation in Georgian favour, and on October 26 the Georgian government received a telegram sent from Erevan on behalf of

the Armenian Prime Minister Hovhannes Kachaznuni. The telegram confirmed the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Tsater and Karinj, and the recent capture of the two above villages was described as a misunderstanding. The telegram also contained a proposal to convene a conference to resolve the border issue. On October 27 all the hostilities between the Armenians and Georgians have been temporarily suspended.



German and Georgian officers in Borchalo

According to Georgian researcher Archil Chachkhiani, the October incident was provoked by the Armenian government with the intention to demonstrate loyalty to the Entente at the eve of the surrender of the Central powers by launching combat operations against “pro-German” Georgia, as well as against the German troops stationed on Georgian territory²³. As it will be noted below, the second phase of the war - in December 1918 - began immediately after British landing in Baku, and that may not be a coincidence.

On the other hand, Professor Richard G. Hovannisian assumes that the October incident was just a probe of Georgian defence in an attempt to explore the chances for a successful annexation of the disputed counties by military force.²⁴

Finally, one should also mention here the role of Turkey in the outbreak of the Armeno-Georgian conflict. It was as early as October 5th as the Ottoman Empire was just getting ready to surrender and evacuate her troops from the Caucasus when Turkish General Khalil Pasha a few officers to arrange for the transfer to Armenia not only the Turkish-occupied part of the Echmiadzin County (Bambak) but also the

²³ Ibid., p. 93.

²⁴ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 75.

buffer zone in Lori to the south of Kamenka²⁵. At the very same time Abdul-Kerim Pasha, Turkish representative in Georgia, made a similar proposal to the Georgians²⁶.



Sir William Montgomerie Thomson

Three days after the end of the first round of hostilities in the Lori, Ottoman Turkey capitulated and signed the Armistice of Mudros. Over the next eleven days Austro-Hungary and Germany surrendered as well thus putting the First World War to an end. By agreement between the Entente powers the South Caucasus fell into the British sphere of influence.

In early November 1918, the Commander-in Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in Persia, Major-General Sir William Montgomerie Thomson, who was at that moment in the Iranian port of Anzali on the Caspian Sea preparing for the expedition to the Caucasus, made a series of well-known proclamations, which inter alia contained the following political instructions:

1. No later than 10:00 a.m., November 17, 1918 all the Turkish and German troops must leave the Russian Caucasus within the limits of the Viceroyalty of the Caucasus, as of 1914²⁷.
2. Both the city and the oil fields of Baku as well as the port of Batum (Batumi) are to be occupied by British troops to maintain order, and no other military units will be admitted in the British occupation zone.
3. Britain considers the Caucasus as part of her ally, Russia, and therefore the recognition of any new governments is not considered; however, certain degree of cooperation with the de facto existing local authorities is not ruled out.
4. Britain will monitor the international trade and law enforcement in the Caucasus through her authorized representatives, not interfering into other internal affairs of the region²⁸.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁶ R. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), p. 233.

²⁷ In fact, after long negotiations the Turkish 9th Army was allowed to occupy the territory of Kars up until January 25, 1919.

On November 17 the first British expeditionary force arrived in Baku, and on December 15 followed the occupation of the port of Batum with the territory around it. British commanders in the Eastern Mediterranean also reserved the right to send troops to other strategically important cities of the Caucasus and to have their garrisons there.

This dramatic change in the military and political situation in the region was met with restraint by Azerbaijan and the Mountain Republic (North Caucasus) and with cautious optimism by Georgia. In Armenia, the arrival of the British led to a surge of optimism if not euphoria accompanied by the new hopes for a "bright future" that had been multiple times promised the Armenian people by various representatives of the Entente during the Great War²⁹.

²⁸ F. Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia* (Oxford, 1951), pp.167-170.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.25.

Diplomatic Overtures of the Parties in November 1918

Bilateral talks between Armenia and Georgia started in November 1918, when Georgian MP Simon Mdivani, arrived to Erevan from Tiflis as a special envoy whose mission “was to establish friendly relations with the Government of Armenia”³⁰. Simultaneously, the Georgian government has proposed to the governments of other states of the South and the North Caucasus that recently proclaimed their independence, to organize a conference in Tiflis that would be aimed at “resolution of common ... vital problems, including the issue of delimitation”³¹. To promote the idea of the above mentioned conference to Official Erevan was one of the major tasks imposed on Mdivani’s mission.

In accordance with the proposals of the government of Georgia, the agenda of the planned Conference was to include the following issues:

1. Mutual recognition of the states whose governments were expected to attend the Conference.
2. Resolution of all disputes, not excluding the border issues, on the basis of an amicable agreement between the parties concerned. In the absence of consensus on certain issues - to allow their resolution through arbitration.
3. Mutual commitment not to enter into any agreements with third countries to the detriment of the interests of the nations represented at the Conference.
4. Joint, based on mutual support, presentation of all the nations participant in the proposed Conference, at the “World Congress”³² scheduled for the beginning of 1919, seeking international recognition of their independence as sovereign states and protection of their common interests³³.

Although the idea of the above Conference was generally well received by the government and Khorhurd (legislature) of Armenia, nevertheless, the following two concerns were raised in connection with that proposal of Georgia:

1. The major concern of Armenia was that the government of Georgia set up the time and place for the proposed Conference unilaterally and without prior consultation with Erevan, not to mention that the deadline was quite short and did not leave enough time for the Armenians to form their delegation and arrange its travel to Tiflis.
2. Armenian leaders were not prepared to discuss border issues at any conference, whichever could take place in Georgia’s capital at that particular moment.

Mdivani reported from Erevan that the format itself of Georgian proposal regarding the planned Conference caused protest not only on behalf of Armenian politicians in Erevan but also among the heads of Armenian diasporas all over the world who viewed it as the Georgian claim for political leadership in the whole of the Caucasus. The Armenian concern was shared by Georgian diplomatic representative in London Prince Zourab Avalishvili who wrote that “the tone of the ‘invitation’ signed by N. Ramishvili (Foreign Minister *pro tem*...) reminded one somewhat of a circular of the Ministry of Home Affairs”³⁴. The above concern was neutralized by means of talks between Mdivani and the top Armenian officials during which he explained the urgency of convening the Conference by rapidly changing political realities. However, unequivocal Armenian demand to withdraw the issues of delimitation from the Conference agenda remained fundamentally unchanged.

Meanwhile, the planned conference was opened in Tiflis on November 10, 1918. The hosts of the conference (the government of the Georgian Democratic Republic) were represented by the head of MFA

³⁰ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootnoshenij*, p. 44.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² By the “World Congress” the Georgian government meant the Paris Peace Conference, 1919 (*Auth.*)

³³ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootnoshenij*, p. 46.

³⁴ Z. Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgian in International Politics 1918-1921* (London, 1940), p. 149.

of Georgia Eugene Gegechkori and Interior Minister Noah Ramishvili. The only two delegations to arrive to Tiflis were those of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (Mohammed Yusuf Jafarov and Mustafa Bek Vekilov) and the Cis-Caucasian Mountaneer People's Republic (Pshemakho Kotsev и Vassan-Ghirai Jabaghi)³⁵.

The Armenian delegation did not come to the Conference, which was announced by the representative of Armenia in Georgia Arshak Jamalyan. The explanation provided by the Armenian Foreign Ministry referred to the poor rail service between Erivan and Tiflis, because of which the representatives of Armenia have not been able to arrive to the Georgian capital at the desired time. In response, the delegates to the Conference decided to postpone its work until November 13, and immediately notified Erevan of that change. However, the Official Erevan declined that initiative as well, this time, citing their unpreparedness as well as lack of clarity on several issues - namely, the status of the delegation of the Mountaneer Republic (also referred to as "the United Mountaineers") and Azerbaijan's attitude to the idea of the Conference³⁶.

As a result, the opening of the Conference was postponed, first to the 20th, and then - to the 30th of November, but the Armenian delegation kept postponing its arrival under various pretexts (requiring excluding of border issues from the agenda, the lack of a train available for Erevan-Tiflis trip, etc.). Finally, the Conference was disrupted. Five days later, on December 5, 1918, Mdivani mission departed from Erevan for Tiflis. Immediately after that, the government of Georgia informed Erevan of its readiness to exclude the issue of the boundaries of the Conference program. But even this time an agreement did not take place: the governmental telegram came to Erevan with a delay due to sabotage on the telegraph lines. The text of the telegram was duplicated on the radio, but that happened on December 14 only, when the war already broke out.³⁷

In parallel with the above diplomatic turmoil, there were other frictions between the two countries. One of them was about the denial by Georgian authorities of the admission of Armenian refugees from Turkey and their resettlement in Georgian-controlled part of the Lori sector of the county of Borchalo. Because official Erevan considered Borchalo to be part of Armenia, it viewed the above denial as an unfriendly act, and on October 23, 1918 an official note of protest was issued to the Georgian government³⁸.

The majority of the researchers who studied that period of Armenian history tend to agree that the intransigence of Erevan on the territorial issue was related primarily to the fact that the leaders of both the First Republic and the Armenian diasporas believed that the triumph of the Entente in the war would finally reward the Armenians for their contribution to the Allied victory and for all their sufferings incurred in this connection³⁹. Thirty two years after the events described, Firuz Kazemzadeh defined the state of mind that dominated the Armenian society at the time of the surrender of the Central Powers as follows:

«The capitulation of the Ottoman Empire in November, 1918, seemed to herald a new era in Armenian history. Her hereditary foe was on his knees. Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and the entire Arabian peninsula had been liberated, The victory which had come to Armenia after so much suffering turned the heads of her leaders. They visualized a Greater Armenia, a country stretching from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, and from the Black Sea to the Caspian. (...) Their fantasies were encouraged in Paris, London, and especially Washington. (...) But the Armenians were being misled by their hopes and these promises.»⁴⁰

³⁵ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootnoshenij*, p.53.

R. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia* (Los Angeles, 1982), Vol. I, p. 97.

³⁶ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootnoshenij*, p. 55.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.60.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.62.

³⁹ Hovannisian, Vol. I, pp. 95-96.

⁴⁰ Kazemzadeh, p.213.

There are many reasons to believe that, the leadership of the revived Armenian state hoped that the victorious allies would offer them much more territorial gains than it was possible to achieve through bilateral negotiations with each of the neighbouring countries. Moreover, it seems quite possible to agree with Kazemzadeh, stating that the leaders of Armenia would never dare to use military force in Borchalo at the end of 1918, unless they were completely sure of full and unconditional support from of Britain and France of their idea to "punish" Georgia for her recent, albeit brief, stay in the German sphere of influence⁴¹. Further developments in the Caucasus and around it, clearly showed the fallacy of those calculations, but this lies beyond the scope of our study.

It is also important to mention here that during the talks that occurred in Erevan between Simon Mdivani and the leadership of the Democratic Republic of Armenia, the Armenian side expressed readiness to make concessions in Akhalkalaki and Borchalo, if Georgia agreed to help Armenia reclaim Mountainous Karabakh or part of the Turkish Armenia. However, the Government of Georgia did not seem to possess neither the capacity nor the desire to get involved in new conflicts with her neighbours, thus making it difficult to achieve consensus between the two governments.

Against the background of almost fruitless negotiations and the failure of diplomatic efforts, the situation in the disputed counties of Akhalkalaki and Borchalo was quite troubled. It was exacerbated by the fact that Georgian military units were deployed in the villages, instead of building temporary military camps. That situation led to mutual dissatisfaction and accusations: ethnic Armenian peasants accused Georgian troops of the lack of discipline and bad attitude, while the Georgians, in turn, blamed local Armenians for provocative behaviour⁴².

⁴¹ Ibid., p.181.

⁴² Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 103.

Escalation of the Conflict: Uprising in Lori and Armenian Offensive

(See Map 4)

On December 5, a Georgian soldier was killed in the village of Uzunlar while the remaining soldiers of the Georgian garrison were disarmed and taken prisoners. Four days later, General George Tsulukidze sent a detachment to Uzunlar to “pacify” the village. However the Georgian troops failed to accomplish their mission facing numerous armed villagers enforced by professional Armenian soldiers who had crossed Kamenka and entered the territory to the north of the demarcation line⁴³. The skirmish near Uzunlar that lasted over 9 hours, resulted in casualties, and the Georgians had to retreat towards Sanain together with the armoured train that had been sent to support them⁴⁴.

General Tsulukidze apparently believed that the territory entrusted to him was an arena of some sort of a local conflict, and the provocative activity of certain armed groups, but not of a large-scale war against the regular army of a neighbouring state. That is confirmed by the fact that he asked the command in Tiflis to reinforce the 200 Georgian troops that he had under his command with just one company that was immediately sent to him.



General George Tsulukidze

Meanwhile, even before the reinforcement arrived, Sanain was approached by regular Armenian units of the 4th Infantry Regiment joined by armed local Armenians, and the area around the railway station turned into a battlefield. Armenian troops and rebels attempted to outflank the Georgian border guards by taking over the outskirts of Alaverdi. In view of the disadvantageous situation that got even worse after the sabotage on the railway line between Alaverdi and Sanain, Tsulukidze sent the company that arrived from Tiflis together with the second armoured train to Alaverdi. As a result of that maneuver, the Georgian forces in the troubled area were split into two isolated groups: one headed by General Tsulukidze remained in Sanain and another one was deployed in Alaverdi⁴⁵.

While the armed clashes continued throughout December 10 and 11 two more companies of the 5th Infantry Battalion with two cannons were sent to the area of conflict. However, the new reinforcement was ambushed by the Armenians, and facing the new development General Tsulukidze decided to transfer his

⁴³ Ibid., p. 104.

⁴⁴ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootmosheniy*, p. 87-91.

⁴⁵ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 104.

staff from Sanain to Alaverdi. That relocation was covered by the batteries of the armed train trapped in Sanain and a small detachment of infantry.

On December 12, the reinforcements that finally came from Tiflis managed to seize control of a few heights around Alaverdi despite the heavy fire. Next day they attempted to break through the enemy lines to the armoured train and the remnants of infantry detachment still blocked in Sanain but had no success because the Armenians dismantled the railway and blew up the railway bridge. The armoured train moving at high speed failed to complete an emergency brake and went off the rails.

Thus the Georgian forces in Sanain-Alaverdi area found themselves in a very difficult situation. The first group consisting of the Sanain detachment of the Provincial Battalion (60 infantrymen) and an armoured train with the team – blocked in the village of Sanain. The second group - three companies of the 5th Infantry Regiment, one company of the 6th Infantry Regiment, an artillery battery, two mortar platoons and the second armoured train (about 600 men, in total) took defensive positions in Alaverdi, at the bottom of the Debed (Borchala) River gorge surrounded by overwhelming numbers of Armenian troops that included the 4th and the 6th regiments of the 2nd Armenian Rifle Division, battalions of the 1st Regiment of the 1st Armenian Rifle Division, three squadrons of the Mounted Brigade and units of local Armenian militia (at least 4.000 men altogether plus 20 artillery pieces)⁴⁶. On December 14 facing the above situation Tsulukidze ordered evacuation of both Sanain and Alaverdi and break through enemy lines towards Sadakhlo station.

By that time, the Armeno-Georgian military conflict was not any longer limited to its main zone in the Sanain-Alaverdi area, and the hostilities spread into two more areas: one – around the villages of Vorontsovka and Privolnoye, and another – further westwards - in the county of Akhalkalaki.

During the three days (December 12-14) Georgian forces under command of General Tsitsianov were involved in heavy and bloody battles in the triangle formed by the villages of Alexandrovka, Vorontsovka and Privolnoye, with the one company strong Armenian formations that invaded Georgian territory across Kamenka from the villages of Jelal-Ogly and Kotur-Bulag. Tsitsianov also reported to Tiflis the spread of the rebellion to Akarak, Ovnagar and other ethnic Armenian villages⁴⁷. Georgian troops in this area were even fewer in number than in Sanain being limited to the 4th company of the Provincial Battalion, an element of National Guard Artillery Battalion and border guard (less than 300 men, in total). Paradoxically, on the 12th of December, already after the commencement of active hostilities, the Guard detachment in Vorontsovka was revoked to Tiflis to take part in a military parade, arranged in connection with the first anniversary of the National Guard.

The main striking force of the Armenians in the direction of Vorontsovka and Privolnoye was the 5th Infantry Regiment under command of Colonel Ter-Nikogosov reinforced with the bands of local Armenian rebels (between 500 and 600 men in total). The general attack on Vorontsovka started early in the morning on December 14 from two directions. After a few hours of heavy fighting Armenians were reinforced with a cavalry unit, and, despite the devastating fire of Georgian artillery using shrapnel shells, the village of Vorontsovka fell by the middle of the same day. The Georgian casualties reached one hundred men killed in action with 3 officers among them. By the end of December 19, the decimated Georgian retreated towards Ekaterinenfeld (Ekaterinovka) while the Armenian vanguard reached the river Mashavera⁴⁸.

In the county of Akhalkalaki the situation was radically different from Lori, largely because the local Armenian population did not seem to object to being under Georgian jurisdiction, and refrained from rebelling against Georgian troops. Also ethnic Russian Dukhobors who inhabited the southern part of the disputed county, were not only loyal to the Georgian government, but preferred Georgian administration to

⁴⁶ Chachkhiani, p. 115.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 105.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 124.

the Armenian one⁴⁹. One could also assume that the county enjoyed relative stability due to the presence of quite significant Georgian forces (more than 6 000 men) under command of General Ilia Makashvili (Makaev).

The significant Georgian military presence in the county could be explained by the fact that it had just been evacuated by the Turks, but there still remained the danger of a new conflict with pro-Turkish elements who were very active in the nearby county of Ahaltzykh and the district of Ardahan. But despite all the above factors, the county of Akhalkalaki was on December 6 invaded by Armenian troops, who occupied several villages (Troitskoe, Efremovka, Gorelovka and Bogdanovka) inhabited by the Russian Dukhobors.



General Ilia Makashvili (Makaev)

Two days later, Gen. Makashvili sent an ultimatum to the Armenian commanders demanding the immediate evacuation of the occupied part of the county. The Georgian officers, who delivered the ultimatum, were accompanied by Mr. Abelian who represented local Armenian Refugee Committee. The ultimatum was followed by a series of maneuvers (mainly with cavalry units) between December 8 and 14. After that the Armenian troops left the county without fighting⁵⁰. Nevertheless, on December 16, Armenian cavalry attacked Georgian positions near the village of Troitskoe and forced the Georgians to retreat towards Efremovka. By the end of the same day, the Georgians received reinforcement, launched a counterattack and recaptured Troitskoe. Georgian casualties were 60 killed in action and missing or taken prisoner. Four days later, on December 20, the Armenian units stationed in the village Kazanchi resumed hostilities by attacking a Georgian detachment on the highway near the village of Troitskoe. The attack was unsuccessful: due to the snowstorm with strong wind combined with heavy Georgian machinegun fire, Armenian troops were repelled and suffered heavy casualties (about 100 killed, including 3 officers). However, the Georgians, in turn, were unable to counterattack because of the strong head wind and snow. That was the end of all combat operations in Akhalkalaki zone of the Armeno-Georgian war of 1918.

Meanwhile, the new Armenian offensive began in the eastern zone of the conflict. In the early morning of December 14, the units of the 4th, 5th and 6th Armenian Regiments under the command of Colonels Levon Ter-Nikogosov, Nesterovsky and Korolkov, advanced in three columns towards the line Vorontsovka – Privolnoye – Opreti - Ayrum. The total strength of attacking force, including reserves, was

⁴⁹ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootnosheniy*, p. 127.

“The Report of General Makaev” (*Georgian Historical Archive*, fund 1946/3, p 123).

⁵⁰ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootnosheniy*, p. 127-128.

about 6000 infantry and 640 cavalry with 26 machine-guns and 7 mountain guns, not including several thousand armed rebels⁵¹. In face of the Armenian attack, Georgian defenders of the area left Alaverdi, in accordance with the above mentioned order issued by General Tsulukidze and by December 15, reached the station Sadakhlo, moving in two directions: the infantry walked along the country road through Shamlug plant, while the armored train covering fire was to retreat by rail. However, the train crashed between the stations of Aghpat and Akhtala, and its crew had to fight their way through Armenian lines to Akhtala on foot. In Akhtala, where this detachment kept the defense for three days, it was joined by civilian refugees – mostly the staff of railway stations of Alaverdi, Sanain and Aghpat together with their families. On December 17, the defenders of Akhtala and the refugees managed to break through towards Sadakhlo with the help of one more armored train (the third one) that came to the rescue from Tiflis. By the end of the second day of the offensive, the Armenians captured Vorontsovka, Privolnoye, Sanain, Mikhailovka and Alaverdi, as well as the heights dominating the village of Aghpat⁵².

During the retreat, Georgian forces suffered heavy losses in manpower and equipment: the advancing Armenians took prisoner hundreds of Georgian soldiers, a significant number of horses, one locomotive, some fifty railcars and a few machine guns and light cannons. The Georgians also lost two of their armored trains: the one - blocked in Sanain – was blown up and the one that went off the rails near Alaverdi – was disabled by its crew due to impossibility of its evacuation⁵³.

It was only on December 16, when the Government of Georgia finally qualified the events in the counties of Borchalo and Akhalkalaki as a war with Armenia, and handed a note to Armenian representative in Tiflis. It took two more days for the approval of a mobilization order that was issued on December 18.

By that time Armenian left flank under the command of Ter-Nikogosov advanced in the direction of Bolnis-Khachen and Ekaterinenfeld (Ekaterinovka), and on the right flank the troops of Korolkov by a surprise maneuver took over the Ayrum station. As a result of the two-day long Ayrum operation, Georgian units of the 5th and 6th Regiments almost miraculously managed to escape from the encirclement, losing more than 500 men killed, wounded and taken prisoner and leaving behind 25 machine guns and 2 cannons⁵⁴.

On December 18, the forces of Tsulukidze (about 200 men strong, not including sick and wounded) entrenched in the foothills around the village and station of Sadakhlo. Due to the small number of troops, the Georgian commander found it impossible to mount some of the dominant heights (such as, for example, Tana-Dagh Mountain located north-east of Lambalo) and had his men dispersed as follows: in the east – on the north-western slope of Tan Dagh Mountain, in the south – the positions just south of Sadakhlo railway station, in the south-west – on the “Height 324”⁵⁵, in the west – on the “Height 436” (Katykh-Dagh Mountain) and on the height over the village of Damia. The same day the station was attacked by Armenian forces, but to no avail. After the first unsuccessful attack on Sadakhlo, the Armenian forces outflanked the Georgian defenders and in the morning on December 19 entered Shulavery. Simultaneously, Korolkov ordered mobilization of all men of military age in Shulavery and the surrounding Armenian-inhabited villages to resume the offensive. On December 20, after artillery preparation, the Armenians launched a new attack on the Georgian, this time taking over the train station of Ashagi-Seral, thereby cutting off the defenders of Sadakhlo from Tiflis. On December 22, after one more attack, the Armenians entered Sadakhlo, but were repulsed by Georgian infantry and the armored train⁵⁶. Next day (December 23), Tsulukidze ordered the remnants of his troops to fight their way north. With the help of artillery, and the armored train, the Georgians succeeded in breaking through the Armenian ring and retreat to the line Baytalu - Ulashlo - Kachagani. On the same day, General Tsulukidze

⁵¹ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 111.

⁵² Ibid., p. 112.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 113.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.113.

⁵⁵ Here and below designation given according to old Russian military maps on scale of two versts (approx., 1.06 km) to the inch, indicating the height in fathoms; on modern maps it is marked as “Height 680, Peri-Tepe”.

⁵⁶ Chachkhiani, p. 139.

departed for Tiflis to the report to the government, while the command over his forces is taken by General Sumbatashvili.

By that moment, the Armenian forces in Borchalo reached the Khrami river, which the Bureau-government in Erevan claimed to be the border of Armenia. As for the county of Akhalkalaki, the troops of the conflicting parties were located along the demarcation line on which the Government of Georgia insisted before the outbreak of the hostilities (that is along the administrative border between the provinces of Tiflis and Erevan).

Situation at other Frontiers of Armenia and Georgia

Escalation of the Armenian-Georgian conflict in the zone of the future border between the two republics took place against the background of quite complicated situation at other frontiers of both Armenia and Georgia.

Situation at Western, Southern and Eastern Frontiers of Armenia

Upon the surrender of the Ottoman Empire at the end of October 1918 and the abolition of the boundaries set by the Treaty of Batum that automatically became null and void, Armenia found itself in conflict not only with Georgia but also with the Azerbaijan as well as a number of quasi-state formations, created by the fleeing Ottoman troops and the local pro-Turkish forces.



The Armenian plans to take control of the whole of “Russian Armenia” that would include the entire territory of the Erivan province, and also the Kars territory - met with resistance on behalf of Kars Islamic Council (*Kars Islam Shurasy*), formed on November 5, 1918 in the city of Kars on the initiative of the commander of the 9th Turkish Army, Gen. Yakub Shevki Pasha and headed by Fahreddin Bey. With the armed support of some 30 to 50 000 regular Turkish troops remaining in the area after the Armistice Mudros, as well as of at least 8 000 local Muslim militias armed and trained by the Turks, Kars Islamic Council, declared its jurisdiction over the entire Kars territory. The *Ittihadist*-oriented Islamic Council made it quite clear that Muslims of the former Russian territory of Kars and other Muslim-inhabited regions of the South-West Caucasus were prepared to accept either Turkish or Russian sovereignty, while any attempts of Armenia or Georgia to establish their administration in the above mentioned area would be met with the mass armed resistance⁵⁷. It should be clarified here that Kars Islamic Council claimed not only the territory of Kars but also all the lands of the South Caucasus that had been annexed by Turkey as per the Treaty of Batum including Nakhichevan and Alexandropol counties of the province of Erevan, the counties of Akhaltsykh and Akhalkalaki of the province of Tiflis and the territory of Batum (See [Map 3](#))⁵⁸.

In the western part of the province of Erevan – in the county of Surmalu (near mountain Ararat) local Kurd tribes launched a guerrilla war against the small Armenian units that tried to secure Erevan, sovereignty of over that strategically located strip of land. In the course of Armenian-Muslim entanglement over Surmalu, Japhar Quli Khan of Nakhichevan proclaimed the so-called “Independent Arasdayan Republic” with its centre in Igdyr. The new quasi-state formation claimed not only the county of Surmalu but also the counties of Sharur-Daralaghez and Nakhichevan, as well as the Muslim-inhabited parts of the county of Erevan⁵⁹. While waging war against Armenia, Arasdayan Republic could boast a few thousand-strong Tatar militia armed and trained by the Turks and a regular Turkish battalion left in the area contrary to the provisions of the Armistice of Mudros. During the first stage of the struggle for the above mentioned disputed parts of the province of Erevan, the Armenians took over Igdyr and Daralaghez while the forces of Japhar Quli Khan managed to keep under stable control only a narrow strip of land narrow strip of land along the left bank of the Araxes between Nakhichevan and Ordubad.⁶⁰ The armed conflict dragged on, creating Armenia yet another front in dangerous proximity to her capital city. If by mid-December, 1918, at least half of the Armenian troops busy in the war with Georgia could be used against Japhar Quli Khan, the entire province of Erevan, including Nakhichevan and Surmalu, could be placed under stable Armenian control no later than the end of the year.

The eastern frontier of Armenia was also quite unstable due to the bitter strife with Azerbaijan over parts of Elisavetpol and Erevan provinces. In order to facilitate the consensus between Baku and Erevan, Major-General William M. Thomson, the commander of the British expeditionary forces that started the occupation of the South Caucasus on November 17, 1918, proposed a temporary boundary between Armenia and Azerbaijan that would run more or less along the former administrative border between the provinces of Erevan and Elisavetpol, Only in Ordubad sector the boundary was to be adjusted in favour of Azerbaijan⁶¹.

Unfortunately, “the Thomson Line” satisfied neither Armenia, nor Azerbaijan. While the government of Azerbaijan claimed not only the whole Elisavetpol province but also a considerable part of the province of Erevan (the three counties that were also claimed by the above-mentioned “Arasdayan Republic”, plus one-thir of the county of Novo-Bayazet east of Lake Sevan/Gyokcha), the aspirations of Armenia were aimed at keeping the whole of Erevan province and annexing the county of Zanghezur and mountainous

⁵⁷ Hovannisian, Vol. I, pp. 199-201.

⁵⁸ Kazemzadeh, p. 199.

⁵⁹ I. Gajiyev, A.A. Guliyev, *Nakhchyvan v proshlom I segodnia*. (Ankara, 1998), p.44.

⁶⁰ A. E. Goytemir, *Yugo-Zapadnoe Kavkazskoe pravitelstvo*, (Ankara, 1989), p.63-66.

⁶¹ W. Thomson, “Obrascheniye komanduyushego britanskimi voyskami v Zakavkazyi, generala Thomsona predsedatelyu pravitelstva Gruzii I predstavitelu Armenii v Tiflise” (Tiflis, 14.04.1919), *Central Historical Archive of Georgia*, fund.200, inv.1, doc.191, p.34 and rev..

parts of the counties of Jevanshir, Shusha, Karyaghino, Elisavetpol and Kazakh in the province of Elisavetpol⁶².

By the beginning of the Armeno-Georgian war, the situation east of “the Thomson Line” was follows:

- Much of the Zangezur county was under the control of semi-guerrilla forces of Armenian General Andranik, who not only led successful battles against the Turkish troops and local Muslim militias, but also planned an invasion of Mountainous Karabakh (the mountainous part of the three counties of Elisavetpol province) in order to put it under a stable Armenian control. Being not subordinate to the government of the Armenian Republic Andranik acted in his sole discretion, coordinating his plan and actions only with the local Armenian authorities in Karabakh and Zangezur. The fighting in the western frontier of Karabakh was terminated on December 4, 1918 under pressure of the British representatives immediately after the Armenian victory at Abdallar. After the withdrawal of Andranik's forces from Karabakh, local Kurdish and Tatar militias massacred three fortified villages at the junction of Karabakh, and Zangezur thus complicating subsequent Armenian attempts to regain control over Mountainous Karabakh via Zangezur⁶³.
- In the mountainous part of the counties of Jabrail, Karyaghino, Shusha and Yelizavetpol - the self-appointed Armenian National Council of Karabakh (ANCK) took charge of the administration of the area and sought to unite with Armenia. However, the ANCK power was quite fragile, and its Armenian militias had to fight against the armed Muslim nomadic tribes and some regular Turkish troops that remained in the area in breach of the Armistice of Mudros⁶⁴. The British representatives that arrived to Shusha from Baku in early December, at first recognized ANCK as de-facto administration of Mountainous Karabakh, but a few weeks later the British sympathies reversed in favour of oil-rich Azerbaijan, and ANCK was forced to share power with the Azerbaijani governor Sultanov appointed by General Thomson⁶⁵.
- Contrary to Thomson's plan, the mountainous part of Kazakh county of the province of Elisavetpol came under the control of Armenian troops almost immediately after the evacuation of the Turks from the South Caucasus⁶⁶.

By the end of the Armeno-Georgian war (in mid-January 1919) the British command in the Caucasus confirmed its firm decision to leave Mountainous Karabakh and Zanghezur under the formal jurisdiction of Azerbaijan until the final decision on the demarcation between the new states in the region is made at the Paris Peace Conference⁶⁷.

⁶² The mountainous districts of the counties of Jevanshir, Shusha and Karyaghino were commonly known as Mountainous Karabakh (Please note, though, that both historical and geographical Mountainous Karabakh was much bigger than the autonomous unit of NKAO formed within Azerbaijan upon Sovietization). The mountainous districts of the county of Elisavetpol and sometimes even of the county of Kazakh, were known as Northern Karabakh.

⁶³ X. Politidis, I. Zaia, I. Artemov, «Rytsar Vizantizma», *Russkiy almanakh*, Issue 3 (Moscow, 1999).p.84. Hovannisian, Vol. I, pp. 88-89.

⁶⁴ *Nagornyi Karabakh v 1918—1923 gg.: sbornik dokumentov I materialov* (Erevan, 1992). Michael P. Croissant, *The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict: Causes and Implications* (London, 1998), p. 15. Hovannisian, Vol. I, p.89.

⁶⁵ Hovannisian, Vol. I, pp. 89-90.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁶⁷ Kazemzadeh, p. 215.

Situation at North-Western, Eastern and Southern Frontiers of Georgia

During the same period, Georgia could boast of relative stability on the northern frontier only, where the Big Caucasian ridge served as a natural protection against her passive involvement in the escalating civil war in the Northern Caucasus. The situation in all other Georgian frontiers was tense and unstable.

In the area of Georgian-Azerbaijani junction a territorial dispute arose immediately after the evacuation of Turkish forces that, fortunately, did not degrade into armed confrontation. The government of Azerbaijan laid claims on Zakatala district as well as on the predominantly Muslim-inhabited parts of the counties of Signakhi, Tiflis and Borchalo⁶⁸. After the above claims were strongly rejected by official Tiflis, the government of Azerbaijan, lacking means to start a war against Georgia, decided to drop claim to all the disputed territories except Zakatala, where a semblance of condominium was established⁶⁹.

In the southern frontier of Georgia her troops entered the counties of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki following the Turkish evacuation and established full control over them by December 5, 1918⁷⁰. Nevertheless, the atmosphere in Muslim-inhabited parts of the two counties remained tense⁷¹, while further Georgian expansion – into the districts of Batum and Ardahan - was blocked by the British, who simultaneously began to occupy the district of Batumt, declaring it a special administrative unit under temporary British protectorate⁷².

The most sensitive area of Georgia before the beginning of the December war with Armenia, was the zone of contact between Georgian troops and the armed groups in southern Russia (both "red" and "white" ones), fighting against each other and being quite hostile towards any state and quazi-state formations breakaway from the former Russian Empire.

The first Russo-Georgian clashes occurred as early as in March, 1918, when the units of Bolshevik Red Army invaded Abkhazia (until then known as the district of Sukhum of the province of Kutais) and took Sukhum (Sukhumi). In view of the spread of anarchy, the self-appointed Abkhazian National Council (ANC) appealed to the Georgian government and later, on July 24, 1918, signed a treaty that confirmed the incorporation of the district of Sukhum into Georgia providing that it would enjoy local autonomy⁷³. By that time, regular Georgian troops under the command of General George Mazniev (Mazniashvili) expelled the reds from the whole district (which was from that time called Abkhazia, as that was how the region had been called prior to its incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1864⁷⁴), repelled Turkish interventionist corps that landed at the end of June at the mouth of Kodori near Ochamchira⁷⁵, and advanced further to the northwest along the Black Sea coast, taking over the districts of Sochi and Tuapse at the request of ANC and the local council of Sochi⁷⁶. One should mention here that at that moment the government of Georgia was considering to get some compensation for the territories lost to the Turks as per the Treaty of Batum by annexing the Black Sea province up to Anapa basing on the fact that the above territory had been part of historical Abkhazia that, in turn, was part of Georgia for a few

⁶⁸ Kazemzadeh, p. 155.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 226.

⁷⁰ Kadishev, 463.

⁷¹ G. Kvinitadze, *Moi vospominaniya v gody nezavisimosti 1917-1921* (Paris, 1985), p. 88.

⁷² Ibid., p. 166.

⁷³ A. Andersen, *Abkhazia and Sochi: The Roots of the Conflict; 1918-1921* (Toronto, 2014), pp. Kazemzadeh, p. 233.

⁷⁴ Andersen, pp. 26-29.

David Marshall Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia* (New York, 1962), p.97.

⁷⁵ Andersen, pp. 36-40 and 55-56.

Central State Archive of Armenia, fund. II-39, inv.1, doc. 6, p.7..

⁷⁶ Andersen, pp. 41-46.

Kadishev, p. 76.

centuries⁷⁷. In September, 1918, the Georgians were defeated in Tuapse by the Taman Regiment of the Red Army,⁷⁸ which was retreating from the north under the pressure of the anti-bolshevist White Army of Generals Alekseev and Denikin that took Tuapse a few days later. By late November, Alekseev- and Denikin's troops completed the defeat of the Red forces in Kuban and came into contact with the Georgian troops under Mazniashvili in Sochi district. The last delimitation line established prior to the outbreak of the Armeno-Georgian war, was the river Loo near the village bearing the same name⁷⁹.

Georgian claims on Abkhazia and the Black Sea province were opposed by the leaders of the Mountain Republic, who wanted to get access to the Black Sea. They were also strongly rejected by the command of the Russian anti-Bolshevik Volunteer Army, also known as the Armed Forces of the South Russia (AFSR). The re-deployment of more than half of most of Mazniashvili's forces from Abkhazia to Borchalo in December, 1918, due to the beginning of the Armeno-Georgian war, facilitated further advance of AFSR in that area.

⁷⁷ P. Ingorokva, *O granitsah territorii Gruzii* (Constantinople, 1918).

A. Menteshashvili, *Istoricheskie predposylki sovremennogo separatizma v Gruzii* (Tbilisi, 1998), p. 42.

⁷⁸ Andersen, pp. 49-53.

Kazemzadeh, p. 234

⁷⁹ Andersen, pp. 53-68.

I. Voronov, "Kavkazskaya missiya Denikina", *Krasnoyarskiy rabochiy*, August 16, 2008.

Interference and Mediation of the Allies

As early as in the middle of December, an Allied mission following the instructions of the above mentioned Major-General William M. Thomson, who at that moment, was the most powerful British representative in the Caucasus. The mission headed by the Deputy Quartermaster General of the British Army of Thessaloniki, Major General Sir William Henry Rycroft, also included British Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Price Jordan and French Colonel Pierre-Auguste Chardigny⁸⁰. The Allied officers had a long list of tasks to accomplish including but not limited to the inspection of Tiflis-Baku and Tiflis-Alexandropol railways, as well as preparatory work for the arrival of British headquarters with the elements of British 27th Division⁸¹. In view of the war between Armenia and Georgia, the group of Sir William Rycroft offered their mediation to the government of Georgia in order to stop the war as soon as possible. That proposal was made when the Georgian army was retreating, and official Tiflis readily started the talks. The initial idea of the Allied representatives was to create a vast neutral zone that would embrace the whole of the county of Akhalkalaki together with the considerable part of Borchalo and place it under British protectorate until the final delimitation decision was made at the Paris Peace Conference. The government of Georgia rejected that idea and, in its turn, proposed that the troops of both Georgia and Armenia be moved back to where they had been before the beginning of the hostilities (i.e., return to the preliminary border along Kamenka). Georgia also insisted on defining “the aggressor-country” that could be forced to compensate the damage caused by the war⁸².

On December 25 (1918) after a few days of debate, compromise and work on the text, the following telegram was finally sent to Erevan:

«To: Erevan. Attention: the Chairman of the Armenian Republic Kachaznuni. British Major General Rycroft who is now in Tiflis and Colonel Shardigny who is the head of French mission, made a decision at the conference held together with the Chairman of the Government of Georgian Republic Mr Jordania in presence of Mr. Djamalian, to stop all military actions immediately. Despite the protestes expressed by Mr. Djamalian General Rycroft, Colonel Shardigny and the Chairman of the Government of Georgian Republic Mr. Zhordania decided that:

The Joint Commission, which would include English, French, Georgian and Armenian representatives, will go to the frontline as soon as possible, to enforce following conditions achieved by the Agreement:

The Commission shall determine the strength of the garrisons, which must be left by the Georgians in the northern part of the county of Borchalo and by the Armenians in the southern part of the above county, as well as by the Georgians in the county of Akhalkalaki. The garrisons should be small. Georgian troops will stay on the line, they occupy at the present time, the Armenian troops must withdraw to the Turkish line Disikh – Jelal-Ogly. British pickets will be stationed on the railroad in the space between the Georgian and Armenian force, administration in the disputed part will be mixed. Georgian administration in the county of Akhalkalaki is to be monitored by the Allied commission, which includes representatives from the local Armenian and Muslim populations. Representatives of both countries, Georgia and Armenia, will soon be sent to Europe, where the whole border-related issue will be resolved of the Great Powers. Signed by: General Rycroft, N. Zhordania»⁸³.

⁸⁰ Lieutenant-Colonel Jordan, who had served as a commander of the 7th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment up until the beginning of his mission in Tiflis, was later appointed a commander of the 39th Infantry Regiment stationed in Baku, while Chardigny was Head of the French military mission in the South Caucasus.

⁸¹ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 114.

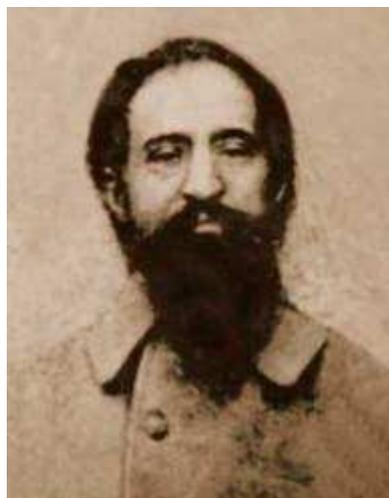
⁸² Ibid., p. 115.

⁸³ *Iz istorii armiano-gruzinskih vzaimootmosheniy*, p. 131.

At the same time, the mission that included British Captain Wipers, French Captain Gasfield and Georgian Colonel Japaridze left for Karaklis, to the headquarters of the Commander of the Armenian forces, Major General Movses Silikov (Silikian).



Major General Movses Silikov (Silikian)



*Sirakan F. Tigranian,
Foreign Minister of Armenia*

Against the background of the Georgian counter-offensive that started at the end of December (see below), the Armenian government, initially opposed the conditions of the above-mentioned proposal, agreed to accept them in view of the rapidly changing military situation, and on December 30, Captain Wipers sent the following radiogram from Karaklis:

«To: Tiflis. Attention: British Mission. Copies: Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Minister of War.

The Armenian government agrees to cease the hostilities immediately and withdraw its troops, as per the decision of General Rycroft. Military action must cease, with the consent of the representatives of the warring countries, on the 31st of December 1918 at 24:00. The decision regarding the day of the withdrawal of Armenian troops to the new line will be made in Tiflis. The Armenian government is not entirely clear in regards with some of the proposals by Gen. Rycroft, but it agreed, in principle, with the terms and signed them. It would like to get a more precise explanation, and therefore commissioned two delegates, one civilian, the other - military, who are to accompany me to Tiflis for the final clarification of these issues by the Allies. After examining these issues, I completely agree with the Armenian government, that some of the detail related to these issues need to be more accurately explained for the sake of satisfactory and peaceful work on the terms proposed by General Rycroft. The Armenian government expressed the deepest generosity and sincere desire for peace. Sent from: The Allied Commission, Karaklis. Signed by: Captain Douglas Wipers, the Chairman of the Allied Commission. December 20, 1918.»⁸⁴.

On December 31, 1918, all the Georgian commanders at the Armenian front received the following directive signed by the Commander-in-Chief of all the armed forces of Georgia, Major General Alexander Gedevanov (Gedevanishvili) under the registration number 01384:

«Following the decision of the Government I hereby order you to stop military actions tonight, December 31, at 24:00. The troops must stay where that moment finds them. The commanders of the vanguards

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 132.

must get in touch with the Armenian command to notify them of the decision of our Government, and the Armenian commanders must be informed that the Armenian army must withdraw back to the line, which they occupied before the outbreak of hostilities. By the time specified above, the order to stop our military operations must be carried out at all costs. The receipt of this order must be confirmed immediately»⁸⁵.

In addition to a series of successful military operations of the Georgian army in Borchalo, there is another explanation for the unexpected change in the attitude of the Armenian leadership to the conflict with Georgia in late December 1918 and their willingness to make peace. In his memoirs, General Anton Denikin, who led at the time the anti-Bolshevik Armed Forces of the South of Russia (AFSR), refers to an open threat of Major General Sir George T. Forestier-Walker to use military force against Armenia. According to the above memoirs, Gen. Walker informed both Denikin and the Foreign Minister of Armenia Tigranian that he was aware of a secret agreement between the Armenian government and the AFSR command regarding a possible joint attack on Georgia that would be followed by her territorial dismemberment. Gen. Walker also warned that if such an attack on Georgia ever occurred, Britain would stand on the Georgian side and send her troops against Armenia⁸⁶. Gen. Denikin himself flatly denied the existence of such an agreement between the Armenians and the command of the Volunteer Army (AFSR). However, the escalation of the conflict between Georgian forces and Denikin's Volunteer Army that took place in the Sukhumi-Tuapse sector of the Black Sea coast in summer and late fall of 1918, suggests the existence of at least some common interests between AFSR and Armenia.

It should be noted here that despite the fact that at the end of 1918 Britain did not have any significant military contingents disposed in the Caucasus and around it, the emergence of an Armenian-British conflict would put an end to any possible support of Armenian territorial ambitions in Azerbaijan and Turkey on behalf of the Allies. That was a serious challenge for Armenia keeping in mind that her leaders counted on such territorial acquisitions at the expense of the Muslim neighbours that could hardly be compared with the small stripe of territory in the contested county in Georgia.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 132.

F. Kazemzadeh, p. 181.

⁸⁶ A.I. Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, T. IV (Berlin, 1924), p. 154.

The Battles of Ekaterinenfeld and Shulavery; Georgian Counter-offensive

Ekaterinenfeld Operation

During the second half of December, while the peace negotiations were nearing the final stretch in Tiflis and Karaklis (see above), the hostilities went on in the areas of contact between Armenian and Georgian troops. The most fierce fighting was taking place near the German colony of Ekaterinenfeld (now part of Bolnisi). On December 19, Armenian troops and rebels approaching from Vorontsovka entered the village Bolnis-Khachen (now also part of Bolnisi) to the south of the colony. Meanwhile, predominantly Armenian-speaking villages of Belyj Klyuch, Samshvilde and Daghet to the north of Ekaterinenfeld turned into one more zone of anti-Georgian uprising. The armed rebels that were in control of the above three villages were, in fact, the Armenian vanguard stationed at the closest distance to Tiflis. And although that direction was not the major one, but nonetheless, a possible Armenian advance from Daghet - Ekaterinenfeld area could represent an additional threat to Georgian capital. Thus, situated on the banks of the river Khrami Ekaterinenfeld became a strategically important point on the way of the Armenian vanguard in the direction of Tiflis from the west.

As early as on December 18 (on the day when the government of Georgia finally issued mobilization order) all the Georgian troops deployed in Ekaterinenfeld were put under command of National Guard officer Vladimir (Valiko) Jugheli, while General Akhmetelashvili was appointed the commander of the newly formed army. At the dawn of December 19, a 600 men strong contingent of Georgian National Guard from Tiflis under the command of Jugheli was deployed in the village of Ekaterinenfeld in order to block any Armenian expansion in the area^[1]. However, the first hours of the presence of Jugheli's troops in Ekaterinenfeld demonstrated poor discipline and lack of organization typical of Georgian National Guard: the camp was not properly pitched, the guard duty was not organised and the artillery was placed not in the second or third echelon where it was supposed to be, but at the forefront, within extremely short distance of the enemy lines^[2]. The Georgian troops went to sleep without putting the guard and not knowing that the village had been at dusk surrounded by the Armenians, and the attack was scheduled for the early morning. During the night the Armenians took over the Georgian artillery (8 cannons) and placing their machineguns on the roofs of the tallest houses of the village opened fire at the Georgians. But the seeming Armenian victory was nullified by the actions of Vladimir Jugheli whose personality was marked by both carelessness and bravery: he managed to put the situation under control and led his soldiers and guardsmen into close combat as a result of which the Georgians took over Armenian machine gun positions and later regained their canons thus re-establishing full control over Ekaterinenfeld. At that very moment, a Georgian cavalry unit under the command of Colonel Kakutsa Cholokashvili which unexpectedly appeared at the battle scene, charged the retreating Armenian troops and dispersed them.

Total casualties of Georgian forces in the above battle were about 30 killed and 70 wounded. Armenian forces lost about 100 killed and the same amount taken prisoner.

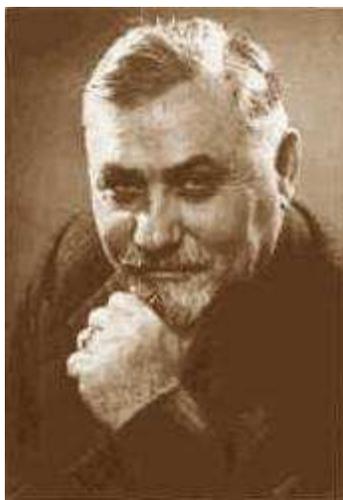
December 19-20 The Ekaterinenfeld group of Georgian troops got reinforcements and started preparing for an offensive in northern direction against the rebel enclave in Daghet-Samshvilde area in order to secure their rear. The offensive started in the morning on December 23 from Ekaterinenfeld. The Georgian troops when Georgian forces crossed the river Khram near the village of Karakend-Kosalari and advanced westwards and north-westwards towards Daghet. The Georgians were opposed by some 500 rebels firmly entrenched in rocky terrain. However, the Georgian attack was supported by the fire of artillery, deployed on the right bank of the river Khram, near the hill of Kanonenpickel. On December 24 the rebels were outflanked from the north and on December 25 the village of Daghet-Khachen fell to the Georgians. Three days later, on December 27, the Georgian troops took the village of Samshvilde - this time without any fight, and the whole rebel enclave north of Ekaterinenfeld was thus liquidated and pacified.

Shulavery Operation

By December 22 the Armenian troops reached the river Khram to the north of Shulavery thus coming to the furthest extent of their main advance aimed towards Tiflis. By the end of the next day (December 23), after the successful breakout of the remnants of General Tsulukidze's forces from the Sadakhlo pocket, the Armenians could boast de-facto control over the whole disputed portion of the Borchalo county to south of the rivers Khrami and Mashavera, excluding the small area around Ekaterinenfeld.

On December 24 General Drastamat Kanayan ("General Dro"), the commander of all Armenian forces in already conquered Borchalo sent an ultimatum to the Georgians demanding the immediate transfer of Georgian controlled Akhalkalaki county to Armenia. In his message General Dro also threatened the spread of the hostilities to the north of Khrami if the ultimatum was rejected. That was tantamount to the threat of direct Armenian attack on Tiflis^[3].

The government of Georgia rejected the ultimatum and decided to switch from purely defensive doctrine to an offensive one. In order to facilitate the transition to more active military operations an experienced General George Mazniev (Mazniashvili) was appointed commander of all Georgian forces on the Shulavery direction with Generals David Sumbatov (Sumbatashvili) and George Kvinitadze appointed his deputy and Chief of Staff, respectively. In addition, the announced mobilization resulted in the formation of new Army, National Guard and militia units.



General Dro (Drastamat Kanayan)



General George Mazniev
(Mazniashvili)

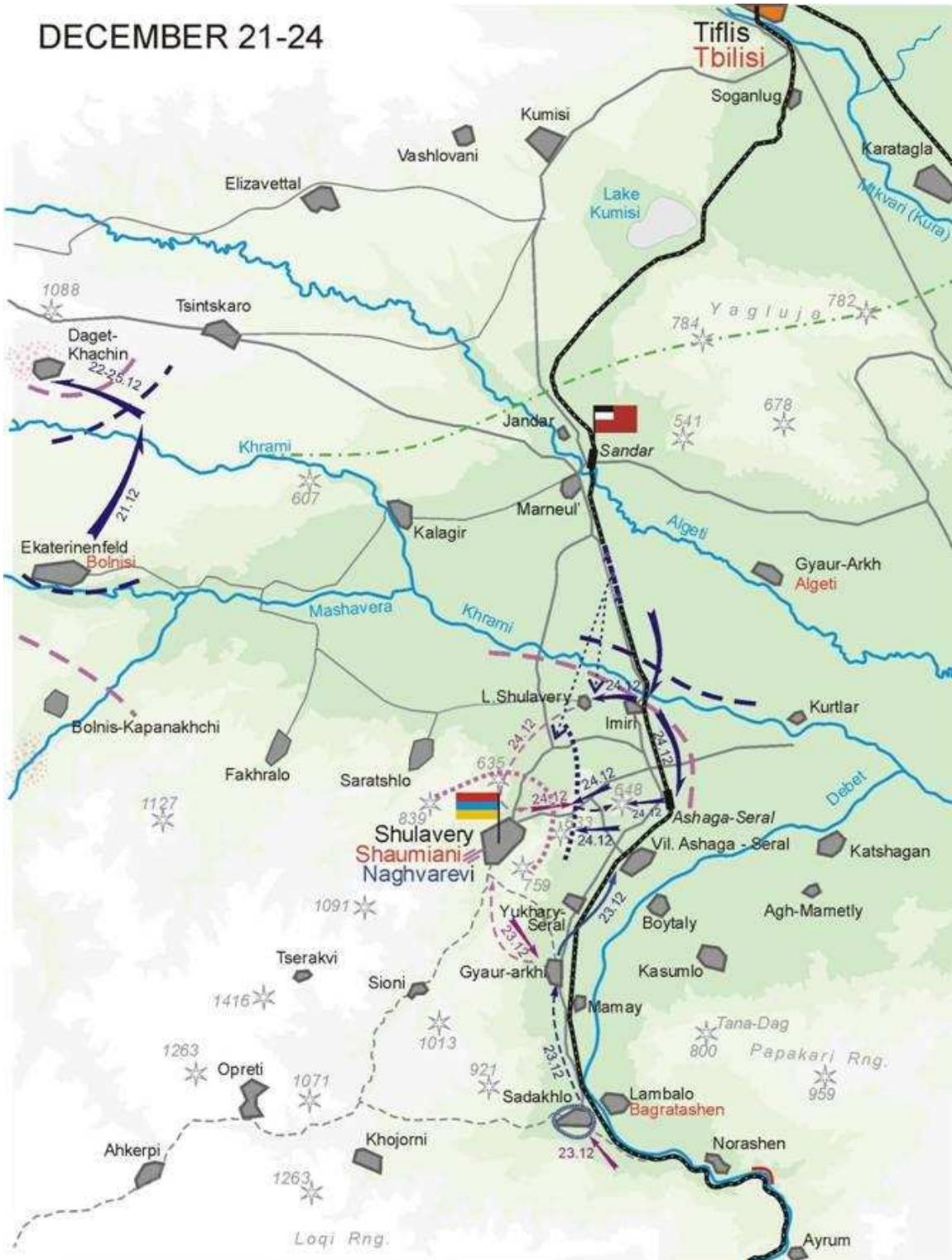


General George Kvinitadze
(Chikovani)

Since the Armenian forces still had a considerable numerical advantage on the Shulavery direction and also owned the initiative, the Georgian command sought to pin the enemy troops down by means of active manoeuvres with the existing small forces until the arrival of major reinforcements and thus exclude the possibility of Armenian assault on Tiflis.

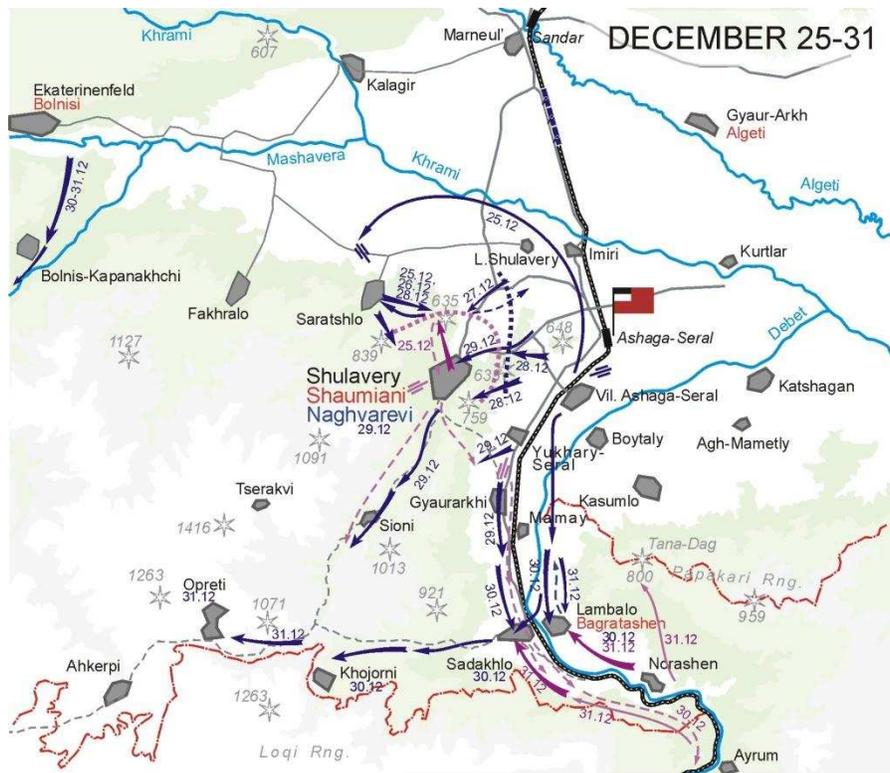
In the morning of December 24, Georgian cavalry with the artillery support from the armoured train, crossed the river Khrami and took the station Ashaga-Seral with a surprise attack. Few hours later, detachments of Georgian infantry entered the village of Little Shulavery on the right bank of Khrami and secured control over the railway bridge in the village of Imir^[4]. On the same day, one battalion of the Georgian army took over the mountain that separated Ashaga-Seral from Shulavery. That allowed the Georgian Staff to move from the station of Sandar to Ashaga-Seral, closer to the war theatre, where it was stationed until the very end of the war^[5].

DECEMBER 21-24



Now, following Mazniev's plan, the Georgians were supposed to draw the main Armenian forces away from the Tiflis direction which was the most dangerous one at that moment. In case of an Armenian attack on Tiflis across the river Khrami, the Georgians would be unable to withstand it due to their limited number of troops available until the arrival of significant reinforcements. Following the above situation, the Georgian forces on the right bank of Khrami were ordered to carry out a diversionary attack at Shulavery west of the railway, to attract Armenian forces away from the major direction^[6].

Facing the Georgian attack on Shulavery, the Armenian command committed a serious error and acted exactly the way Mazniev expected: practically all available Armenian troops were re-grouped and concentrated for the defence of the town, Colonel Korolkov also ordered mobilisation of all local Armenian men able to fight to present themselves for the service of the Armenian Republic^[7]. Meanwhile, new Georgian reinforcements from Kakheti and Western Georgia kept coming by railway to the train station of Sandari. By December 25, Mazniev's force increased in total by 1000 men^[8]. The danger of an Armenian attack on Tiflis was nullified, and the Georgian command began to plan a counter-offensive, the main element of which was to recover Shulavery and destroy the bulk of the Armenian forces deployed therein.



In order to take Shulavery the Georgians undertook deep outflanking manoeuvre from the west with one National Guard battalion and an artillery battery. On December 25, the outflanking group entered the muslim village of Sarachlo whose residents were hostile to Armenians and loyal to the government of Georgia. While the Georgian artillery was stationed at Sarachlo the National Guard battalion fought its way to the top of the dominating mountain to the north of Shulavery. According to Mazniev's plan the capture of the above mountain that gave the Georgians total control over all the approaches to the town, was to be followed by the general attack. At that moment all Georgian artillery (14 howitzer cannons) launched massive barrages of the Armenian positions^[9]. The same day two Georgian airplanes dropped bombs on the Armenian positions near Shulavery^[10]. That marked the first use of combat aircraft in the

history of Georgian armed forces as well as in the history of all national armies of the South Caucasian states.

However, the attack on Shulavery scheduled for December 26, did not take place because of the following incident: an ill-disciplined National Guard unit that had taken the above-mentioned mountain to the north of Shulavery, left its positions at night, and despite the best efforts of its commander - General Christopher Chkhetiani – to stop that action, went down to the village Sarachlo “in order not to freeze in the trenches, and have some tea”^[11]. Early the next morning, the opposing Armenian detachment re-occupied the unguarded mountain. During the day, the Georgians took the mountain back, but again refused to spend the night in the cold trenches, and lost the strategically important position to the Armenians for the third time. When General Chkhetiani, informed the headquarters of those events, he accompanied his report with his resignation application feeling unable to be in command of such an irresponsible and ill-disciplined contingent^[12].



This type of soldier, dressed in slightly modified uniform of the former Russian Imperial Army and equipped with Russian or German weapons, dominated the war on both sides

Thus, the operation scheduled for December 26, was foiled. The next day (December 27) Mazniev attempted to take Shulavery by frontal attack and personally led his troops into the battle, but the assault was repelled by the Armenians.

Then another scheme was developed for the capture of the town and new precautions taken to ensure the success of the planned operation. For example, ill-disciplined National Guard units operating in the north-western section of the front were replaced with regular army detachments. By that moment the reinforcements that had arrived from Tiflis allowed Mazniev's forces to act in two directions simultaneously: one group was strong enough to finally capture Shulavery at the third attempt while another one could attack down the railway line on Sadakhlo and thus isolate the Armenian forces

in Shulavery from possible reinforcements and prevent their organized retreat. Armenian commanders also realized the importance of the Sadakhlo direction, and on December 28 they deployed artillery to the positions south of Ashaga-Seral station, but its fire on the train station brought no tangible results. At the same time, Armenian troops in Shulavewry were reinforced with a Rifle Regiment that just arrived from Baku^[13].

The decisive battle for Shulavery started at noon, on December 28. After a two-hour artillery barrage the Georgian troops numbering about 3,500 started general offensive on a 10 km long front line^[14]. During the fierce battle Armenian units several times undertook unsuccessful counterattack, but by evening of the same day, the Georgians managed to capture the heights east of Shulavery and thus dominate over the town.

In the morning of December 29, a Georgian detachment manned with the former officers entered Shulavery. The defeated Armenian troops withdrew to the south in two groups: one group retreated through the village of Sioni while another one tried to reach the railway line through the valley where it was ambushed and scattered by Georgian cavalry. That operation was followed by the Georgian offensive to the south along the railway section Ashaga-Seral – Sadakhlo, in two columns advancing on both sides of the river Debed, lasted about 24 hours, until finally the station Sadakhlo was taken in the morning of December 30 at the same time with the village Lambalo.

Both Georgian and Armenian commanders were simultaneously developing plans of deep outflanking of the enemy. The Armenian plan was to capture the heights east of Lambalo and after that to attack the Georgian troops in Sadakhlo from the flank and from the rear. The Georgian plan, in turn, consisted of a manoeuvre in the western direction across the Loki ridge and further - down to Sanain station, thus also cutting the enemy off from the rear.

The Georgian command was not timely informed by their government on the ceasefire scheduled to begin at midnight December 31, and planned to launch a new offensive on the first of January. The Armenian commanders possessed an advantage in this respect, having been clearly informed on the time frame left for the warfare and used it on December 30, concentrating all Armenian troops retreating from Sadakhlo together with the fresh reinforcements, near the station Ayrum, and preparing a counter-offensive on Lambalo. While the Georgians began to re-deploy most of their troops from Sadakhlo to the west, concentrating around the villages of Sioni and Opreti, in order to subsequently move across the Loki Range the Armenian command, knowing that December 31 was the last day for possible combat operations, were preparing the recapture of Sadakhlo. The attack began at dawn on December 31. The Armenians were advancing in two columns from Ayrum - along both sides of the river Debed. The left column stormed the village and station Sadakhlo, while the right moved towards the village Lambalo and the mountain Tana-Dag. The left column had no success: after hours of fierce fighting, the Georgians managed to knock the Armenian detachments out of Sadakhlo. The right column of the Armenians acted more successfully captured Lambalo, despite several Georgian counterattacks with their reserves that came from the village of Mamay.

The disposition of the opposing parties, as of the end of December 31, can be determined accurately enough on the existing document, signed by the commanders of both Georgian and Armenian forces in the area of the conflict:

«As of December 31 / 24:00, the territory under control of the Georgian forces includes: the village Opreti, the village Khojorni, the village Gulli-Bagh, the village Sadakhlo, the village Lambalo, the ridge to the north of Sadakhlo station from the Height 1554 to the north-east upto the Height 2660, and further to the graffiti saying "the Spring" which is to the north of Kaji-Kala^[15].

Original signature: General Mazniev.

Note: As of December 31 / 24:00, the village Lambalo and the Height 2660 were under my control and were evacuated by 8:00 of January 1, exclusively following the Letter Nr.139 from

General Mazniev dated by January 1, 1919, in order to exclude direct contact between our forces and Georgian units and thus avoid unpredictable consequences. On the other clauses agreed.

Dro.

Confirmed by: Colonel Natsvalov»^[16]

One could add to the above that the delimitation line, as specified in the above quotation, is almost identical to today's state border between Georgia and Armenia in the disputed area.

Peace Agreement and Temporary Delimitation

By midnight of January 1 1919, all military actions were ceased, and the peace talks began under British and French patronage. The talks took place in Kara-Kilis with the participation of the top commanders of both Armenian and Georgian armies. A few days later, all the participants moved to Tiflis where the talks went on.

Meanwhile, on January 3, an additional 300 strong British expeditionary force landed in Georgian port town of Poti and headed for Tiflis and Borchalo.

On January 9 1919, a tripartite Armenian-British-Georgian Conference was open in Tiflis with the purpose of official ending of the war and working out the conditions of peace between the two nations. The Chairman of the Conference was British Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Neil Stewart. The work of the Conference started on January 10 and went on until the night of January 17 1919, when during its final session, a provisional peace agreement regarding the end of the war and the creation of a neutral zone in the sector of Lori was signed by representatives of Armenian and Georgian governments. The Armenian government also dropped their claims over Akhalkalaki county⁸⁷ under the condition that the county is monitored by the representatives of the Allied powers and local Armenians are guaranteed participation in county administration⁸⁸.

The northern boundary of the Neutral Zone between the two “sister republics” was declared to be the line of the furthest counter-advance of Georgian troops as per the beginning of the ceasefire (December 31, 1918, 24:00):

“... the straight line from the mountain of Deli-Dagh through the mountain pass towards the village of Irgan-Chay; further – along the straight line till the hillock number 798 and further to the hillock of Kuludash (855.5), hillock number 676, through the village of Saatly, hillock number 694, then through the village of Akhkerpi and from there – the straight line to the hillock number 492, the village of Opreti, church ruins of the village of Baradzor near the village of Khojorni, the village of Sadakhlo, the railway station of Sadakhlo, hillock number 1554 to the north of Sadakhlo, then further on to the hillock number 2660 (the mountain of Tana-Dagh), then further to the sign denoting a spring which is to the north of the sign denoting the mountain of Khalutly-Bashi. The villages of Irgan-Chay, Jandari, Akhkerpi, Opreti, Khojorni, Baradzor and Sadakhlo remain to the north of the above line”⁸⁹.

The southern border of the Neutral Zone was drawn exactly along the former Georgian-Turkish demarcation line, as per the beginning of July of 1918.⁹⁰ The Neutral Zone later referred to as “the Neutral Zone of Lori” (because it embraced a considerable part of the Lori sector of the county of Borchalo) included the copper mines of Alaverdi, as well as 43 village communities and some 40 km of railway line with six stations⁹¹.

The decisions of the Conference also regulated the strength of Armenian and Georgian military contingents stationed in the area of conflict:

«To the north of the Neutral Zone of the county of Borchalo Georgian troops are to be stationed. The total amount of border guard troops not to exceed 200 men.

⁸⁷ Kazemzadeh, p. 181.

⁸⁸ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 120.

⁸⁹ Chachkhiani – p. 193.

⁹⁰ Ibid. – p. 193.

⁹¹ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 121.

At the station of Ashagi-Seral the strength of Georgian troops should not exceed one battalion with not more than 360 men with 4 cannons. Out of that battalion two 60 men strong groups should be deployed to establish picket lines near the villages of Opreti and Sadakhlo. A few border guard units with not more than 50 men each are to be deployed between the village of Rodniki and the confluence of the rivers Khram and Kura;

The deployment of Armenian troops: one 125 men strong company will be stationed in Kolageran and in Shynykh. In Jelal-Ogly sector and in the villages of Gergery and Nikolaevka one battalion consisting of three companies with not more than 360 men will be stationed together with an artillery company with 50 men and 4 cannons. One 125 men strong company will also be deployed in Novopokrovka.

Neither Georgian forces in the northern sector of the county of Borchalo, nor the Armenian troops in the southern sector of the same county, may exceed the strength of 660 men;

Both parties are entitled to replace infantry units with the cavalry ones;

In the county of Akhalkalaki the Georgian garrison will not exceed two companies consisting of 225 men and one artillery unit;

Both parties undertake to fulfill the conditions as prescribed by the above paragraphs, no later than midnight of January 14 of the year 1919»⁹².

While the work of the conference went on, the British forces in accordance with the agreement began to take over the Lori sector with its copper mines and railway. On January 16 Major General G.T. Forrestier-Walker, the new commander of the British forces in the Caucasus, arrived in Tiflis together with his headquarters and a guard detachment. He was followed by an additional 1000 men strong British contingent.

On January 27, 1919, the Neutral Zone of Lori was reorganized by the British into three districts: Uzunlar, Vorontsovka and Alaverdi. At the head of each district a Resident Commissar chosen from local residents was appointed. All the three Commissars were subordinate to Captain A.S.G. Douglas who was formally appointed the Allied Commissioner General (i.e. British governor) of the Neutral Zone.⁹³

It is also important to mention here that the peace agreement of January 17, 1919, was of preliminary character. It was specified in it that the final resolution of the conflict between Armenia and Georgia was to take place at the Paris Peace Conference together with final border delimitation between the two countries⁹⁴.

⁹² Chachkhiani – p. 193-194..

⁹³ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 122..

⁹⁴ Kadishev, p. 173.

Results and Consequences of Armeno-Georgian War of 1918

The four-week military conflict, cost Armenia and Georgia thousands of human lives, caused severe material damage and added serious complication to the bilateral relations between the two nations born out of the Great War and the Russian turmoil, whose international status had been questionable even before the beginning of the hostilities. None of the parties of the conflict that signed the provisional peace agreement on January 17, 1919, was satisfied with its terms. Georgia not only failed to establish the border line, which they considered fare and indisputable, but even lost a small section of prewar-controlled land that was reorganized into the Neutral Zone. The territorial gains of Armenia (a tiny strip of land in the county of Borchalo) were negligible, compared with what Armenian leaders expected to achieve as a result of the war. In addition, having concentrated almost all their forces against Georgia, the Armenians lost their opportunity to gain a stable control over much larger and strategically important territory in the south of Erivan Province (Nakhichevan and Sharur)⁹⁵.

The military leadership of both Armenia and Georgia – strongly believed that the war was actually won by them and blamed the Entente Powers for their interference and "snatching victory from the winners' hands". In the societies of both countries emerged alienation, bitterness, and some old prejudices against the neighbour nations revived. One of the clear results of the war was the destabilization of the transport connection between Georgia and Armenia, which added further complication to the already miserable economic situation in Armenia, putting the republic in almost complete isolation from the outside world⁹⁶.

In addition to the above mentioned consequences of the war on the regional level, the Armenian-Georgian conflict also had a negative impact for both countries on international level. As of today, the vast majority of historians who have seriously studied the described conflict agree on the fact that the December 1918 war caused severe damage to the reputation of the two newly independent countries and substantially reduced their chances for success at the Paris Peace Conference, including the recognition of their independence⁹⁷.

Here we would like to take a liberty of expressing an alternative opinion. Not in any way questioning the axiom that piece is better than war, it should be noted that the politics of Georgia and Armenia during their first years after regaining independence did not differ much from the politics of both new and old nations of Europe of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Here it would suffice to recall the bloody conflicts between the Balkan states during the two Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and later - the territorial conflicts between the countries that emerged from the wreckage of the collapsed Austro-Hungarian Empire (conflicts between Poland and Czechoslovakia, Poland and western Ukraine, or the conflicts of Hungary with all her neighbours, etc.). And would it be easy to figure out the major differences between Armeno-Georgian strife over Borchalo-Akhalkalaki and much older conflict between France and Germany over Alsace-Lorraine? We find it difficult to explain why the territorial claims of Armenia and Georgia in 1918-20 could be considered more immoral than "land-collecting projects" of other countries that took place during the same historical period. Therefore, reading the harsh criticism of the South Caucasian states on behalf of the European politicians of the early 20s as well as a number of historians, who accuse the entire population of the region of "inability to live in peace" and "the struggle for a few dozens of square miles of territory with a few villages", inevitably brings to mind such terms as "double standards".

⁹⁵ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 1229-230.

⁹⁶ J.G. Harbord, "American Military Mission to Armenia", *International Conciliation*, No. 151, June 1920 (New York, 1920), pp.13-54.

⁹⁷ Kazemzadeh, pp. 182-183.
Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 93.

Summing up the events of Armenian-Georgian war of 1918, it is also important to note that, despite the number of incidents that are inevitable in any military conflict, that military conflict was not accompanied by mass killings and ethnic cleansing, which distinguishes it from other wars that took place in the South Caucasus in 1918-1920.

06.1919 - 04.1920: Attempts of Normalization and Territorial Compromise

The December war of 1918 and provisional Peace agreement of January 1919 did not result in the resolution of the territorial conflict between Armenia and Georgia. New delimitation disputes arose in February-July 1919, in the course of the two sister republics' expansion the territories of Kars and Batum. Basing on a number of arguments of ethnic and historical character, a detailed description of which requires a separate study, Georgia claimed the entire territory of Batum (the districts of Batum and Artvin), as well as the districts of Ardahan and Oltu (Olti) of Kars territory, while the Armenian side also claimed the whole of Olti and most of Ardahan districts considering them part of the former "Russian Armenia", leaving open the question of the status of Batum.

Both Armenian and Georgian claims for the former Russian territories of Kars and Batum were unequivocally opposed by the South-West Caucasian Republic (SWCR), a puppet-state created in Kars on January 18, 1919 by the Turkish military administration that ran the area between April 1918 and December 1918. The pro-Turkish SWCR government of Fakhreddin (Erdoghan) Pirioglu stationed in Kars, claimed effective control not only over the four districts of Kars territory but also over all the former Russian territories annexed by Turkey as per the Treaty of Batum including but not limiting to Nakhichevan and Alexandropol counties of the province of Erevan, the counties of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki in the province of Tiflis and Batum territory (former Batum district of the province of Kutais)⁹⁸. The Kars government rejected both Armenian and Georgian authority and rather effectively exploited the principle of self-determination declared by the USA, Britain and France. Indeed at the beginning of its existence, the SWCR enjoyed some favor on behalf of the British mission in the Caucasus⁹⁹. The British troops even blocked the roads leading to Kars from the province of Erevan and prevented some 100 000 Armenian refugees from returning to their homes¹⁰⁰. At the same time the Azerbaijani government of Khan Khoisky tried to urge British approval for at least temporary annexation of the SWCR territory by the Republic of Azerbaijan¹⁰¹.

The sympathies of allies turned around in early February of the year 1919 when the paramilitary forces of SWCR under the command Server Beg started attacking British military and civil personnel and went so far as to invade Georgian administered counties of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki in order to expand the Kars-controlled area¹⁰². That action of the SWCR forced General Thomson to allow Armeno-Georgian takeover of the troublesome Kars territory during his meeting with Armenian and Georgian officials on March 14¹⁰³. Following the Georgian counter-offensive of early April 1919, the British units that had already been stationed in the province of Erevan, entered Kars on April 6. Four days later, on April 10 1919, the SWCR leaders were arrested and deported while nine days later, the city of Kars was handed to the Armenian governor. By April 22, the Georgians completely crushed the resistance of Server Beg's paramilitaries in the county of Akhaltsikhe and the district of Ardahan and put both counties under their control. The South-West Caucasian Republic was abolished, and the districts of Kars and Sarykamysk were annexed by the Democratic Republic of Armenia while the county of Ardahan was taken over by Georgia¹⁰⁴. The British command in the Caucasus did not allow either Georgian or Armenian troops to enter the territory that included the district of Oltu (Olti) which was claimed by both nations and the sector

⁹⁸ Hovannisian, pp. 205-206.

Kazemzadeh, p. 199.

⁹⁹ Kazemzadeh, pp. 199-200.

¹⁰⁰ A.S. Lukomsky, , "Denikin I Antanta" in *Revoljucija I grazhdanskaja vojna v opisaniyah belogvardejcev: Denikin-Yudenich-Wrangel* (Moscow, 1927), p. 92.

¹⁰¹ Hovannisian, p. 211.

¹⁰² Hovannisian, pp. 210-211.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 213.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 220-221.

of Karaqurt claimed by Armenia leaving it in the hands of local Muslim chieftains until it was once again taken over by the Turks during the Turkish-Armenian war of late 1920. A few months later Georgia conceded part of the district of Ardahan (part of Okam sector and most of Chyldyr sector) to Armenia¹⁰⁵.

As for the territory of Batumi, it found itself under British governorship that spread over to the parts of the districts of Oltu (part of Olor sector) and Ardahan (part of Okam sector evacuated by the Georgians)¹⁰⁶. A small British garrison was also stationed in the city of Kars (See Map 5).



As early as in the middle of March 1919, when the battles were still being fought to the north of Kars, Major General William Montgomery Thomson introduced his border proposals to Armenian and Georgian officials. Aiming at at least temporary (prior to the final decision of the Paris Peace Conference) resolution of the counter-productive border dispute between the two sister republics, Thomson proposed that the Armenian sovereignty over Kars territory would be limited to the districts of Kars and Kaghyzman only, while Georgia would administer the northern half of the district of Ardahan. The district of Oltu and the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.221.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.221.

remainder of Ardahan were to be placed under the British administration together with the whole of Batum territory. Thomson also recommended the abolition and partition of the Neutral Zone Lori: the northern part of the zone with the village and copper mines of Alaverdi was to be returned to Georgia whereas Armenia could administer the rest of it. Armenia was also expected to acknowledge the Georgian rule over Akhalkalaki and drop all further claims to that county ([See Map 5](#))¹⁰⁷.

Being accepted in Tiflis as a provisional delimitation and with limited enthusiasm the Thomson plan was protested by Erevan as unfair and illogical. The government of Armenia was prepared to accept the proposed delimitation in Kars territory but it categorically opposed the idea of dropping claims for Akhalkalaki and Lori. This position of Armenia was supported by the head of the US mission in Tiflis Benjamin B. Moore and British Governor of Batum, Brigadier General William Cook-Collis¹⁰⁸. As a result, the Georgian troops withdrew beyond “the Thomson Line” leaving the considerable part of the disputed Ardahan district under Armenian and British control.



¹⁰⁷ Hovannisian, Vol. I, p. 213.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 218-220.

During the second half of 1919 the governments of both Armenia and Georgia started looking for normalisation of bilateral relations. Exchange of delegations and talks between the two sister republics that occurred in summer and early fall of 1919, resulted in a series of agreements signed in such spheres as trade, transit and the rights of minorities. A few public speeches made by the leaders of both nations (Ramishvili, Vratzian, Zhordania, et al.) were marked with the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration¹⁰⁹. Some progress was also reached in terms of possible territorial compromise by attempting to adjust the claims of the two nations in the counties of Borchalo and Akhalkalaki as well as in Kars territory. That task was far from being easy as the Armenian borders proposed by «the Delegation of Integral Armenia» at the Paris Peace Conference were only slightly modified if compared with Erevan’s territorial aspirations at the beginning of the Armeno-Georgian War in late 1918, while Georgia still insisted on her rights to the whole of the former province of Tiflis and the two districts of Kars territory (Ardahan and Olty)¹¹⁰.

Nevertheless, the compromise became possible in July 1919, when Armenian Defence Minister General Kristaphor Araratian submitted a new border proposal in accordance with which Armenia was to drop claims to almost two-thirds of Akhalkalaki and the northernmost stripe of the Neutral Zone (to the north of Alaverdi) and to agree with Georgia’s possession of some 40 per cent of the district of Ardahan (Kars territory) to the north of Kura. “The Araratian Line” was to run along the Somkhete Range¹¹¹ to the south of the northern border of the Neutral Zone and after running a few miles further to the north along the Javakhi Range, it was to go west along the border of the highland part of the county of Akhalkalaki embracing the village of Bogdanovka (Ninotsminda), and further on – to the north of the lakes Khinchalo and Khozapin (Kartsakhi) but to the south of lake Toporovan until it touched Kura river at the administrative border between the province of Tiflis and the district of Ardahan. In Ardahan it was identical with already existing Armeno-Georgian demarcation line up until the border of British-administered Batum territory (see [Map 6](#))¹¹².



General Kristaphor Araratian

¹⁰⁹ Hovannisian, Vol. II, pp. 159-167.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 193.

¹¹¹ According to Hovannisian (Vol. II, p. 154), the compromise border was to pass “along the Borchalu mountains”. However, we could not find any mentioning of such a mountain range either in geographic literature or in the topographic maps of the period described here. At the same time, there is the Somkhete Range located along the line coincident with the compromise boundary described by Hovannisian.

¹¹² Hovannisian, p.154.

Robert Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, 2001), p.235.

Being presented to the Georgian Delegation in Paris this project was, nevertheless, not accepted as the basis for the future state border between the two nations. The Georgians failed to see any major concession in the above proposal largely due to the fact that most of the disputed territory “granted” to Georgia by Araratian was already under firm Georgian control. Nevertheless, the official Tiflis came out with a counter-proposal reflected in a foreign ministry memorandum stating that Georgia could be satisfied with the northern half of the Neutral Zone (with Alaverdi copper plants) along “the Thomson Line” (see above) and was prepared to drop her claims to the district of Olti (Kars territ.), especially keeping in mind that the above district was de facto controlled by the Muslim militias of Japhar-Bey¹¹³.



Georgia was, however, not prepared to cede any part of Akhalkalaki to Armenia and claimed not just the northern part of Ardahan district but the whole of it¹¹⁴. The Georgian compromise proposal was, in turn, rejected by Armenia. Despite the above disagreement, the leaders of the two sister republics of the South Caucasus facing numerous internal and external problems kept looking for some settlement. An Armeno-

¹¹³ Ibid., p.154-155.
¹¹⁴ Hovannisian, p.154.

Georgian conference that took place in Tiflis in September, 1919, was marked by the spirit of reconciliation and resulted in signing of a number of new agreements vital to both countries in November, 1919. However, the two nations failed to achieve territorial settlement that would be mutually satisfactory despite the fact that at the very last moment Armenian delegation agreed to drop all claims to Akhalkalaki in exchange for Alaverdi copper mines¹¹⁵.

Half a year later, an additional territorial dispute arose between Armenia and Georgia, this time regarding the future status of the Turkish Lazistan east of Trebizond and British-administered Batum territory and Armenian claims for a part of the port of Batum with the left bank of Chorokh River (the so-called "Chorokh-Imerkhavi Corridor") and the full extritorial control over the Georgian part of the railway branch from Alexandropol to Batum (see [Map 6a](#))¹¹⁶. The prospective incorporation of Chorokh-Imerkhevi corridor and Lazistan into Armenia caused protests on behalf of Georgian delegation and in Georgia proper where the whole territory of Batum was considered unequivocally Georgian province of Achara (Ajaria) and Lazistan was referred to as historically Georgian province of Chaneti. As a result, Georgian troops were sent in late March of 1920 across the administrative border between the district of Ardahan and the territory of Batum to occupy eastern half of the territory up to Khulo-Ardanuch line¹¹⁷. Meanwhile the Allied Commission dismissed Georgian claims to Lazistan asserting that despite some Georgian origins of the Laz people they never express any willingness to be incorporated into Georgian state¹¹⁸.

The San-Remo Conference that held from 19 to 26 of April, 1920 and saw the new territorial strife between Armenia and Georgia, signalled the divestiture of the Allied leadership away from most of their obligations in regards with both nations of the South Caucasus including the refusal to provide and use a military force necessary to guarantee their safety and integrity. The conflict over the "Chorokh-Imerkhavi Corridor" and the projected ex-territorial railway in San-Remo, resulted in another destructive blow to the reputation of both Armenia and Georgia at the Peace Conference. The disputed area was finally annexed by Georgia in July, 1920, but that conflict significantly undermined the future Western support of both Armenian and Georgian cases¹¹⁹, and the diplomatic representatives of the two nations were asked to refrain from appealing to the Allied Powers until they resolved all the disputes bilaterally¹²⁰.

As of today, it would hardly be an exaggeration to state that of both the December war of 1918 and the new territorial disputes between Armenia and Georgia that remained unresolved until the fall of 1920, not only severely damaged the reputation of the two South Caucasian republics but also gave the leading Entente Powers grounds to withdraw their support of the two new democracies and delay even de-facto recognition of their independence (Armenia, for example, was granted de-facto recognition only in January 1920, less than a year before her fall, whereas de-jure recognition of Georgia occurred less than a month before her capital fell to the Soviets on February 25, 1921).

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.162.

¹¹⁶ Hovannisian, Vol. III, p. 114.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.54.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.34.

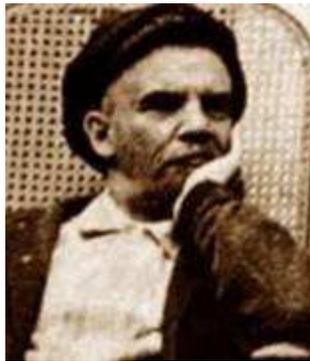
¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 266.

¹²⁰ Z. Avalov, *nezavisimost Gruzii v mezhdunarodnoy politike; 1918-1921 gg.* (Paris, 1924), pp. 270-276.

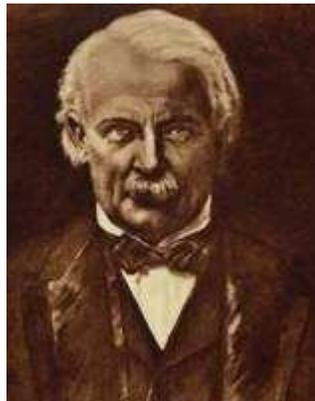
1920-1921:

The Failed Alliance and Final Delimitation after the Fall of the First Republics

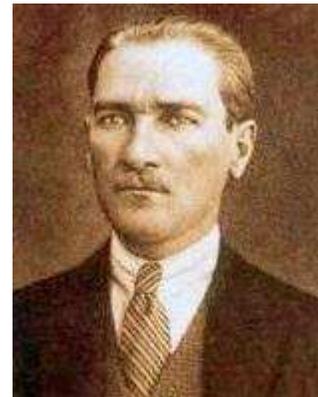
In the beginning of 1920 the East Mediterranean was once again the scene of dramatic geopolitical change. The decisive victories of the Soviet Russia in the Civil War and the defeat of Russian anti-Bolshevik armies, on the one hand, and the simultaneous rise of the Nationalist movement in Turkey, on the other - led to the formation of alliance between Moscow and Ankara by the spring of 1920. Russian Bolsheviks under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and Turkish Nationalists led by Kemal Ataturk, were united by their hatred of the Entente and by their expansionist aspirations. Both the Russian Bolsheviks and Turkish Nationalists aimed at the restoration of their countries' pre-revolutionary borders, and if possible - to extend their spheres influence even further. Strengthening of Russian-Turkish alliance required among other things, to establish a common border. Therefore, it was decided in Moscow and Ankara to share the Caucasus, ending with the independence of South Caucasian democratic states (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan)¹²¹. The Allied Powers did almost nothing to prevent the new partition of the South Caucasus. The British government of David Lloyd-George, seeking to establish economic relations with the Soviet Russia, did not consider it necessary to interfere with the above plans¹²². At the same time, the governments of France, USA and Italy – although having some desire to limit Soviet-Turkish expansion in the East Mediterranean - did not see a real opportunity to do so lacking sufficient forces, funds and public support for any major military projects in that region¹²³.



Vladimir Lenin



David Lloyd-George



Kemal Ataturk

By late summer 1919, the British forces completely evacuated from the South Caucasus, with the exception of the Batumi region in which they remained until mid-summer of the following year¹²⁴. This evacuation was followed by the Soviet blitzkrieg of April, 1920, against Azerbaijan and the rapid Sovietisation of that country performed with the help of Turkish Nationalists¹²⁵. In turn, the fall of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan signalled the beginning of an undeclared Soviet-Armenian war that

¹²¹ Richard G. Hovannisian, "Caucasian Armenia between Imperial and Soviet Rule: the Interlude of National Independence" in Ronald Grigor Suny (Ed.) *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays on the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia* (Ann Arbor, 1996), p.287.

¹²² Kazemzadeh, p.331.

¹²³ Kazemzadeh, pp.97, 260-263, 271-272.

¹²⁴ Kadishev, p. 470.

¹²⁵ *Godovoy otchet NKID k VIII S'ezdu Sovetov / 1919—1920* (Moscow., 1921).

lasted more than four months. Finally, on August 10 1920, the cease-fire agreement was signed in Erevan by the representatives of Soviet and Armenian governments leaving Armenia without most of the territories disputed with Azerbaijan¹²⁶.

In the same month “the Treaty of Peace” was signed in Sèvres (France) by the representatives of 14 “Allied and Associated nations” including Armenia and the Sultan’s government of Turkey¹²⁷. Article 89 of the Treaty of Sèvres virtually gave Armenia some territory in Eastern Turkey that encompassed a considerable part of the former Western (Turkish) Armenian lands¹²⁸. Legally satisfying about 40% of the Armenian claims to the “Ottoman estate” at the Paris Peace Conference the Treaty, however, it did not specify the exact borders between Armenia and Turkey as well as Armenia and Georgia delegating that decision to the US President Woodrow Wilson¹²⁹. Ironically, the Republic of Armenia was in no position to put the legally acquired lands under its control. The Treaty of Sevres was signed by the government of Sultan Muhammad VI whose real power did not go beyond the Allied-occupied Constantinople, while the Nationalist-dominated Grand National Assembly and the new nationalist government formed in Angora by Kemal Ataturk, rejected it. By the end of summer of the year 1920, Turkish Nationalists were in real control of the most of Anatolia and Western Armenia, and the Muslim (Turk and Kurd) population of the territories assigned to Armenia were ready to take up arms against anyone who would attempt to enforce the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres on them and what they believed to be their land.

The fragile *status quo* was dissatisfactory to both Armenia and Nationalist Turkey, and in early September of 1920 the Turkish-Armenian war broke out. The first two weeks of military operations resulted in the series of military defeats that brought Armenia to the edge of collapse. The Turks were on advance, and while Woodrow Wilson, sitting in the Oval Office of the White House and drawing the maps of a virtual Armenian state that would include Erzerum, Van and Trebizond, the troops of Karabekir-Pasha were taking over Penyak, Sarykamysch and later on – Kars and Alexandropol...

One should mention here that the war could have been avoided if the governments of Armenia and Georgia would have succeeded in the establishment of a military alliance aimed at preservation of their independence and territorial integrity. The government of the First republic undertook some demarches in that direction in mid-August, 1920¹³⁰ largely under the influence of Lt.-Colonel Claude Stokes (new British chief Commissioner in the South Caucasus) who was a strong believer that Armeno-Georgian alliance could have not only secured the area from the new Turkish expansion but could have also resulted in forcing the Soviets out of Azerbaijan¹³¹. The possibility of such an alliance was a great concern for the Turkish Nationalists even in the midst of the Turkish-Armenian war¹³². Nevertheless, the projected Armeno-Georgian defence block was never created due to the inability of the governments of both nations to overcome their differences and due to the efforts of Turkish diplomacy in Tiflis.

Meanwhile, in a two-week lull that followed the loss by the Armenians of Sarykamysch, Kagyzman, Penyak and Merdenek, the Georgians attempted to take control of another part of the disputed district of Ardahan

¹²⁶ Kazemzadeh, p. 309.

¹²⁷ It is important to mention here that it was the government of Sultan Mehmed VI that signed the Treaty of Sèvres. The government could hardly boast any effective control even over Constantinople and vicinity, not to mention the Turkish core lands that were under the stable control of Turkish nationalists with their own government in Ankara who peremptorily rejected the treaty signed by Mehmed’s representatives.

¹²⁸ “Treaty of Peace between the British Empire and Allied Powers (France, Italy, Japan, Armenia, Belgium, Czecho-Slovakia, Greece, the Hedjaz, Poland, Portugal, Roumania and Serb-Croat-Slovene State) and Turkey-Sevres, August 10, 1920” in *British and Foreign State Papers*, CXIII, 1920, ed. Edward Parkes et al. (London, 1923), p. 672.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 673.

¹³⁰ Richard G. Hovannisian. *The Republic of Armenia, Vol. IV: Between Crescent and Sickle: Partition and Sovietization*, (Berkeley, 1996), p.98.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp.245-246, 249.

(see [Map 7](#) and Figure 3). On October 1, 1920, Georgian troops entered the area of Lake Chyldyr (Chrdili), as well as the village of Okam (Gel') on "the Armenian side" of the river Kura.

On October 1 1920, Georgian troops occupied the small area near Chyldyr lake and entered the village of Okam (Gyole) on the "Armenian side" of Kura.

The above demarche caused indignation and protests on behalf of the Armenian Foreign Affairs ministry especially keeping in mind that the capture of disputed area was taken place during the negotiations Tiflis regarding the possible Armeno-Georgian alliance aimed against Soviet and Turkish expansion. The talks ended up with no result partially due to the efforts of Turkish diplomats in Tiflis who in fact encouraged the government of Georgia to take over the disputed territories to the south of Ardahan.



Figure 3: The first phase of Turkish-Armenian war and Georgian occupation of the disputed Chyldyr-Okam area (August, 1920)

Explanation:

- *Gray-green color indicates Turkish troops and their advance in Armenia during the first phase of the Turkish-Armenian war.*
- *Purple color indicates Armenian troops and their defensive and offensive operations.*
- *Dark blue color indicates the maneuvers of Georgian troops (without a fight).*
- *The yellow color indicates the territory under de facto control of Georgia, orange color - the territory controlled by Armenia, and gray-green - the de facto possessions of Turkey.*
- *Thin red lines indicate modern national boundaries.*

Against the background of Turkish “support”, Georgian acting Foreign Minister Konstantin Sabahtarashvili made an open statement that the disputable status of Ardahan district made the presence of Georgian administration in it as legitimate than the Armenian one. A few days after the Georgian incursion south of Kura, the Armenian command ordered the West Armenian regiment of Sebough to move into Okam. In order to avoid military confrontation, the Georgian troops evacuated Okam on October 6 and retreated back to Ardahan. The Chyldyr sector with the town of Zurzuna remained under Georgian control, and on October 13 it was ceremonially declared Georgian¹³³. The very same day the lull at the Turkish front was broken, and the Republic of Armenia was in no position to re-take Chyldyr from Georgia. Ironically, just four months later that was taken over by the Turks as a result of the Soviet-Turkish conquest of Georgia.



¹³³ Hovannisian, pp. 222-226.

In the course of the second phase of Turkish-Armenian war (Oct.-Nov./1920) the Turks were on the offensive along the line of the border between Armenia and Georgia. On October 30, the Armenians left Kars¹³⁴. Seven days later the Turks were already in Alexandropol, and the Armenian troops were in retreat to the east along Alexandropol – Karaklis railroad, while the Turks were getting ready for the final spurt on Erevan (Ironically enough, it was the beginning of November when US President Wilson was done with the final sketches of the Sevres-based Turkish-Armenian borders¹³⁵). At that moment, the troops of Georgia took over the Neutral Zone (the Shulavera Condominium) established between the two countries in early 1919. The Government of Armenia gave permission to that Georgian action in order to prevent the occupation of this disputed territory by the Turks. However, the Georgians marched a bit further southwards taking over the whole of the former Lori sector which Tbilisi considered unequivocally Georgian from the first day of independence¹³⁶ (see [Map 7](#) and Figure 4). After a very quick plebiscite the whole sector was annexed by Georgia to stay within that country for another twelve months¹³⁷.



Figure 4: Georgian occupation of the Neutral Zone and other disputed territories within the former Borchalo county of the province of Tiflis (November / 1920)

Explanation: the whole legend is exactly the same as in Figure 4 (see above)

¹³⁴ Hovannisian, pp.253-261; Kadishev, p.325.

¹³⁵ Kazemzadeh, p. 265.

¹³⁶ Hovannisian, p. 287-289.

¹³⁷ Kadishev, p.368.

We do not possess any information that would confirm or refute whether the Armenian government permitted the Georgians to take over the whole of Lori sector or only that part of it that formed the Neutral Zone, or whether the procedure of the plebiscite was properly organized but in any case, the vote of local Armenian, Greek and Russian population in favor of Georgia was rather logical keeping in mind the circumstances of the Turkish-Armenian war and the defeat of the First Armenian Republic. Incorporation into Georgia at least guaranteed inviolability of Christian lives and property in the sector while possible Turkish occupation definitely meant the loss of both. It was also reported that on November 15 1920, Turkish Nationalist envoy in Tiflis, Colonel Kiazim Bey gave the Georgian government guarantee of Georgia's territorial integrity as the reward for her neutrality in the Turkish-Armenian war and ask to grant his country an exclusive right for the railroad sector from Sanain to the Azerbaijani border at Poily¹³⁸. It might be important to mention here that Georgian annexation of the territories claimed by Armenia were never subjected to any forms of ethnic cleansing unlike the Armenian territories taken over by Turkey and, to a certain extent, Azerbaijan. In any case, the border between Armenia and Georgia moved one more time, and remained unaltered for another year¹³⁹.

By early December 1920 the remainder of Armenia not yet taken over by the Turks, was occupied by the Red Army and sovietised. The Democratic Republic of Armenia ceased to exist and turned into one more Soviet republic only nominally independent of Moscow.

The question about the Lori sector was again raised on the 3rd January 1921 when the government of already Soviet Armenia enjoying the support of Soviet Russia began negotiations with the government of Georgia regarding the transfer of the above territory to the Armenian SSR¹⁴⁰. These negotiations were held, with interruptions, during two months and were finally halted by the Soviet-Georgian war, which broke out on February 11, 1921 (just 16 days after the recognition of Georgia's de jure independence at the Paris Peace Conference on January 26 of the same year)¹⁴¹.

The war waged against Georgia by Soviet Russia in alliance with the Soviet Armenia and Soviet Azerbaijan (formally independent, but in fact Russian protectorates¹⁴²) began with the Red Army invasion of the Lori sector of Borchalo county under the pretext of support for the "popular uprising" initiated by the Bolshevik agents in a few ethnically Armenian villages of that frontier area¹⁴³. After four weeks of fierce resistance by Georgian army and militias, the last independent country of the South Caucasus was taken over by the Soviets by March 18, 1921, becoming another Soviet puppet republic.

Within a few months upon the fall of Georgia (until the end of 1921), the Soviet Armenia was given no opportunity to annex any parts of the disputed county of Borchalo. The Kremlinite logic behind keeping the whole of Borchalo within the borders of Soviet Georgia was based on the fact that it was the sector of Lori (Borchalo county) where the pro-Soviet uprising in Georgia started in February 1921¹⁴⁴, and thus

¹³⁸ Hovannisian, p. 347.

Archives de l'Armee, 7N/829, dossier 3, Corbel's Nov.16, and Political report, Nov.30,1920.

20N/183, dossier 4, Revue de la Presse, 16-30 Nov. 1920.

20N/187, dossier 1, Report on political situation, Nov. 1-15, 1920.

¹³⁹ Kadishev, p. 368.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.307.

¹⁴¹ A. Andersen and G. Partskhaladze, "La guerre soviéto-géorgienne et la soviétisation de la Géorgie (février-mars 1921)", Revue Historique des Armees, No. 254 - 1, 2009 (Paris, 2009), pp.68-70;

Kazemzadeh, p. 313.

Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Indianapolis, 1994), p.207.

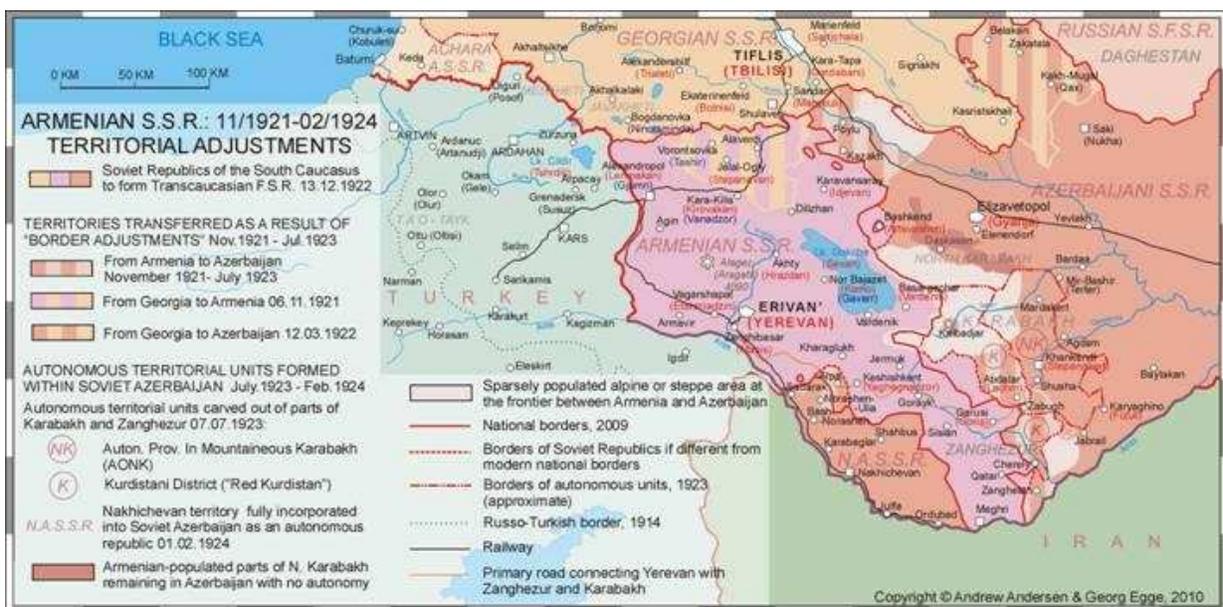
¹⁴² In accordance with the principle of party discipline the Bolshevik-dominated governments of the new Soviet republics of the South Caucasus were required to unquestioningly obey the directives of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) that were coming from Moscow through a special body called the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

¹⁴³ F. Kazemzadeh, pp. 318-319.

¹⁴⁴ A. Andersen and G. Partskhaladze, "La guerre soviéto-géorgienne et la soviétisation de la Géorgie (février-mars 1921)", Revue Historique des Armees, No. 254 - 1, 2009 (Paris, 2009), pp.68-70.

ceding that territory to Armenia immediately after the end of the Soviet-Georgian war, could question the legitimacy of the Sovietization of Georgia¹⁴⁵.

In late December, 1922 the Russian Empire was re-born under the new name and on the basis of a new ideology (Communism/Bolshevism) through the creation of the USSR – a constitutionally federal socialist state in Eastern Europe and Northern Asia. In fact though, that meant the absorption of some short-lived independent states carved out of the ashes of the fallen empire under the umbrella of the ARCP(B)¹⁴⁶-run Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic.



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In order to soften the loss of formal independence of the new-conquered Soviet republics of the South Caucasus an instruction was given from Moscow to their leaders to form a pseudo-federation of three units that later were to be incorporated into the Soviet Union - a prototype of the “Global Soviet Republic” planned by the architects of “the world revolution”¹⁴⁷. It is important to keep in mind that as soon as the short-lived states of the South Caucasus were sovietised, they were run by the local communist parties that, in fact, were not independent communist parties but constituent parts of ARCP(B), local branches of “highly-centralized political organization directed by a small group of men in Moscow”¹⁴⁸ and bound by strict party discipline. Following the orders from Moscow and *Zakkraykom of RCP(B)* that replaced the *Kavbureau RCP(B)* in February, 1922, the representatives of the three Soviet republics of the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) signed on March 12, 1922, in Tbilisi the federal treaty establishing the *Transcaucasian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic*, also known as ZSFSR (dissolved on December 5, 1936). Less than a year later, on December 30, 1922, ZSFSR got completely absorbed by the Bolshevik-recreated empire, through signing the Union Treaty that signalled the establishment of the USSR and formally subordinated the three Soviet republics (Belarus, Ukraine and the Transcaucasian Federation/ZSFSR) to the Kremlin. The instruction that came from the Kremlin regarding the creation of the Transcaucasian Federation also prescribed that the leaders of the South Caucasian soviet republics

¹⁴⁵ Tsutsiev, p.60.

¹⁴⁶ All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) – the old name of the CPSU (auth.).

¹⁴⁷ M. Volodarsky, *The Soviet Union and its Southern Neighbours* (Ilford, 1994), p.ix..

¹⁴⁸ R.G. Suny, “Soviet Armenia” in R.G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times* (New York, 2004), Vol. II, p. 354.

should have resolved all the outstanding territorial disputes between them prior to the formation of the ZSFSR. In fulfillment of that directive, an agreement was concluded on the 6th of November 1921 between the Soviet Republics of Armenia and Georgia regarding border delimitation between them. The above agreement awarded to Armenia the sector of Lori of the county of Borchalo that had been disputed between the two nations since 1918 and finally incorporated into Georgia during Turkish-Armenian war of 1920 (see above) together with the southern part of Borchalo sector of the county bearing the same name that had been acquired by Armenia by the Treaty of January 17 1919 and lost to Georgia in the course of the Turkish-Armenian war of 1920 (see [Map 8](#)). The above adjustment of Georgian-Armenian border was formally made in accordance with the declared “ethnic principle” keeping in mind that the above territory had mixed Armenian, Russian and Greek population with Armenian majority.

Soon after the beginning of Russian Campaign (1941-46), following the Axis plans for the dismemberment of the USSR and creation of new satellite-states on its territory, the “Liberation Committees” of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were formed in Berlin. Those Committees regarded by the Nazi leadership as embryonic governments of the future satellite-states of Germany, since April 15, 1942, were granted the status of “full-right allies” of the Third Reich¹⁴⁹. During the “Battle for the Caucasus” also known as the “Operation Edelweiss”(1942-43) when the Axis occupation of the South Caucasus became a real possibility, the “Liberation Committees” of the three nations of the South Caucasus and the North Caucasia received a directive from Adolf Hitler to resolve their territorial disputes. As a result of quite heated talks, the leaders of the Caucasus collaborators agreed on the following terms:

- Armenia was supposed to gain Nakhichevan and all of the Mountainous Karabakh (including North Artsakh) and a small part of Javakh (Akhalkalaki district of Georgia)
- Georgia was to receive the former Sochi county and Zakatala district, lost in 1919-1921 to Russia and Azerbaijan
- For all territorial concessions to Armenia and Georgia, Azerbaijan was to be compensated by the most of Daghestan where Azeri-Turkish language was *lingua franca* (later it was replaced in that capacity by Russian)¹⁵⁰

Armenian and Georgian “Liberation Committees” (AONK and GNK) were also given promises by Alfred Rosenberg that in case of Axis invasion of Turkey, Armenia would be granted Western Armenia and Cilicia while Georgia was supposed to receive parts of the historical Paryadria (The Empire of Trebizond)¹⁵¹.

The defeat of the Axis powers in 1945 put an end to the above virtual projects and left them almost completely forgotten even by the historians.

¹⁴⁹ J. Hoffmann, *Kaukasien 1942/43: Das deutsche Heer und die Orientvoelker der Sowietunion* (Freiburg, 1991), p. 356.

¹⁵⁰ E. Abramian, *Zabytyj Legion* (Erevan, 2005), p. 37.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Conclusion

The current situation at Georgian-Armenian border is relatively calm and free of hostilities. The border line itself remained unchanged in principle since the agreement signed on November 6, 1921. As for the territory of the former two disputed counties, it can be roughly divided into the following three zones:

A) Zone "A" - the former Lori sector of the county of Borchalo with small increments of territory as described above, which is now a part of Armenia (as of today, it lies within three Armenian provinces: most of it – within the province of Lori, and two smaller parts – within Shirak and Tavush). This territory is not claimed by Georgia, as modern Georgia has no territorial claims to neighbouring countries, including Armenia, either at the official level, or at the level of mass consciousness. The ethnic composition of the zone "A" has changed since the war of December 1918. Due to various circumstances beyond the scope of this study, this territory became practically mono-ethnic: almost one hundred percent of its population are Armenians. There are also small Greek and Russian residual communities there.

(B) Zone "B" - the former northern sectors of the county of Borchalo (Borchalo, Ekaterinenfeld and Trialeti), located within Georgia where they are now organized into four out of seven districts of the land Kvemo-Kartli: Tsalka, Dmanisi, Bolnisi and Marneuli. The district of Tsalka, is inhabited predominantly by ethnic Greeks (61%) and Armenians (28.5%), in 1918-1920 was the only part of the county of Borchalo, on which Armenia laid no official claim. As for the other three modern districts that belong to Zone "B" and in 1918 were claimed by Armenia, but remained Georgian, as per the Agreement of January 17, 1919, their ethnic composition also changed significantly over the past 90 years, and as of today, the dominant ethnic group there is the Azeris (see Table 3). That fact possibly explains why there are no claims on this territory coming from the contemporary leadership of Armenia.

FORMER NORTHERN SECTORS OF THE FORMER BORCHALO COUNTY, AS OF 1989		
Contemporary district	Dominant ethnic group	% to the total population of the district
Tsalka	Greeks	61
Dmanisi	Azeris	63.9
Bolnisi	Azeris	66
Marneuli	Azeris	76.3

Table 3: Dominant ethnic groups of the former northern sectors of the former Borchalo county, as of the end of the 20th century. Source: General Census of the USSR for the year 1989

(C) Area "C" – the former county of Akhalkalaki district (two of the six districts of the land Javakheti (Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda). As can be seen from Table 4, no significant changes occurred in its ethnic composition since the beginning of the twentieth century.

FORMER AKHALKALAKI COUNTY, AS OF 1989		
Contemporary district	Dominant ethnic group	% to the total population of the district
Akhalkalaki	Armenians	91.3
Ninotsminda	Armenians	89.6

Table 4: Dominant ethnic groups of the former Akhalkalaki county, as of the end of the 20th century. Source: General Census of the USSR for the year 1989¹⁵²

¹⁵² Stephen F. Jones, "Georgia: the trauma of statehood" in Jan Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds.), *New States New politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 506.

At the official level, there are no Armenian claims on this territory at the moment, but at the level of mass consciousness it has been Zone "C" that during to decades since the restoration of Armenian and Georgian independence became the subject of active propaganda in Russian and partially, Armenian media aimed at destabilization of bilateral relations between the two nations, revival of an old border strife going back to 1918 and, finally, creation of "the second Karabakh" in the Armenian-populated Georgian land of Javakheti. the Armeno-Georgian border area. As of today the propaganda campaign aimed at the creation of a new conflict in the South Caucasus has been supported not only by the media and some "analysts" but also by numerous online resources, claiming to represent the interests of the Armenian people. We do not possess detailed information regarding the degree of success in manipulating the public opinion both in Armenia and in Armenian diasporas worldwide, but the ideologeme of "the Armenian Javakh illegally annexed by Georgia" has been successfully planted in mass consciousness since the late 80's, and it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that it is largely due to the balanced and restrained position on both the Armenian and Georgian leadership that the issue of Javakheti so far has not degraded into inter-ethnic violence and hatred as well as into the military involvement of Russian Federation in this part of Georgia that could be similar to the operations in already destabilized Abkhazia and Tskhinvali-"South Ossetia". Some positive momentum for the improvement of political situation in Javakheti was the evacuation of the Russian military base that occurred in 2006, as well as a number of economic and infrastructure programs of the central Georgian government.

Given the number of economic and social problems that trouble the present-day Javakheti, as well as the experience of Armeno-Georgian relations since 1918, it seems possible to give the following recommendations aimed at neutralization of a number of conflict-provoking factors in this area:

- Promote more active integration of the population of Zone "C" into economic and social processes of the rest of Georgia
- Encourage the coaching of local administrative staff in training centers of the rest of Georgia
- Promote the study of Georgian language among the local population while preserving their Armenian identity
- Work on the creation of investment-friendly environment in Zone "C" (keeping in mind that such an environment can be productive only subject to the fulfillment of other recommendations above and below, otherwise it may become counterproductive)
- Develop local self-government, at the same time distancing from the creation of quasi-state territorial formations similar to the Soviet-style autonomies in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali-South Ossetia the development of which led to the recent wars and ethnic cleansings
- Pay special attention to the objective teaching of history in the schools of Zone "C" in both Georgian and Armenian languages thus impeding the historical myths, implanted into mass consciousness by various destructive forces
- Conduct outreach to the public of Zone "C", which would promote understanding that national boundaries should not necessarily coincide with ethnic ones, as well as understanding of the fact that the transfer of a territory under the jurisdiction of a neighbouring state may have a negative impact that may significantly outweigh benefits of territorial acquisition. Within such programs the examples could be provided of how such changes turned into big troubles for the local population
- Study and implement constructive experience of other countries and regions that had similar problems

The gradual smoothing of the objective and subjective contradictions existing in the area of the Armeno-Georgian border, could contribute to regional stability and serve as a positive example for the successful resolution of other conflicts in the region, currently in a more dangerous stage.

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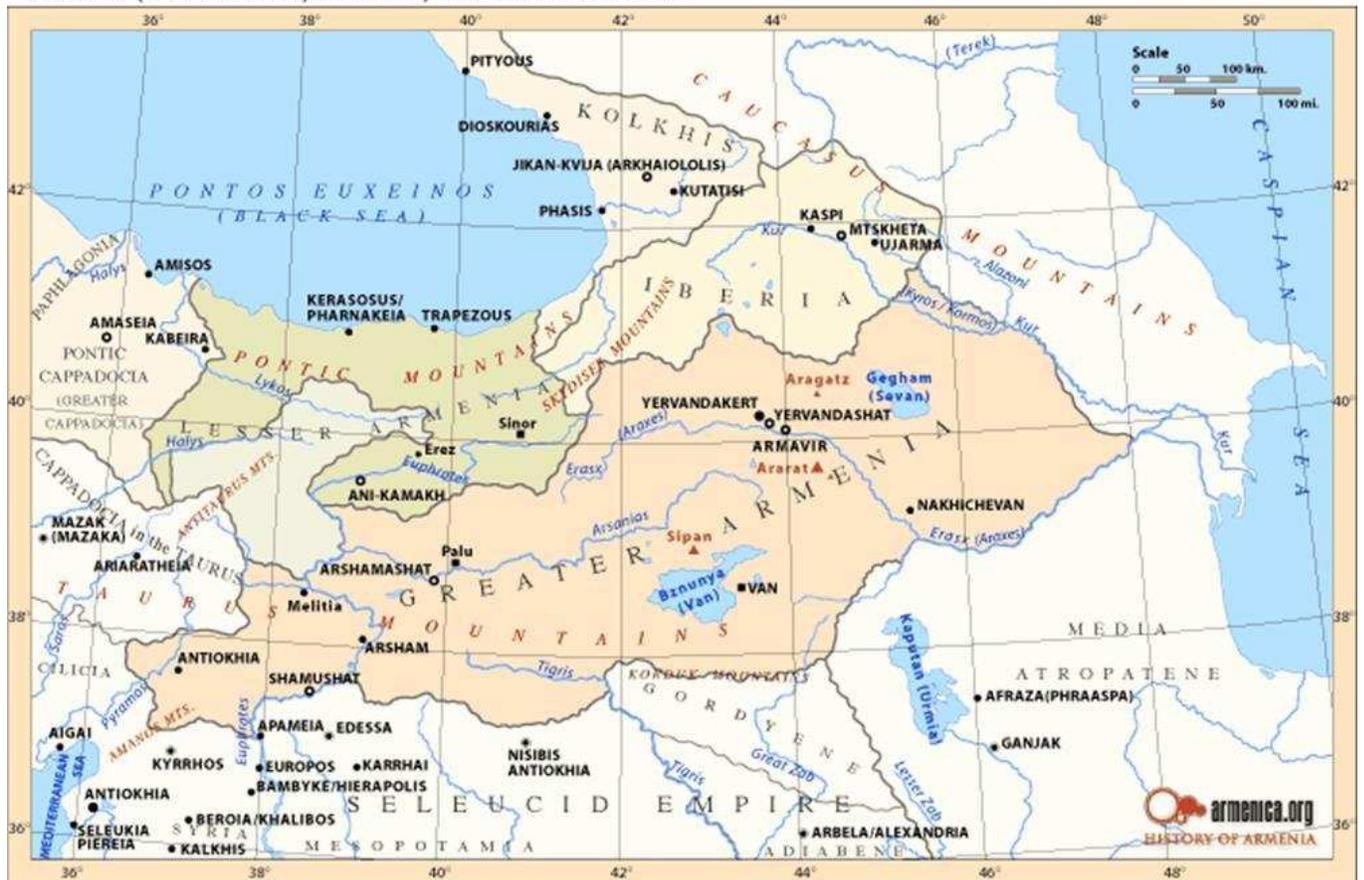
Addendum: Prominent Scholars on Armeno-Georgian conflict:



Robert H. Hewsen

Below are a few fragments from selected maps that have been included in Hewsen's book *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, 2001). The attached fragments depict the history of the disputed area.

Orontid (Yervandouni) Armenia, 4th-2nd Centuries B.C.

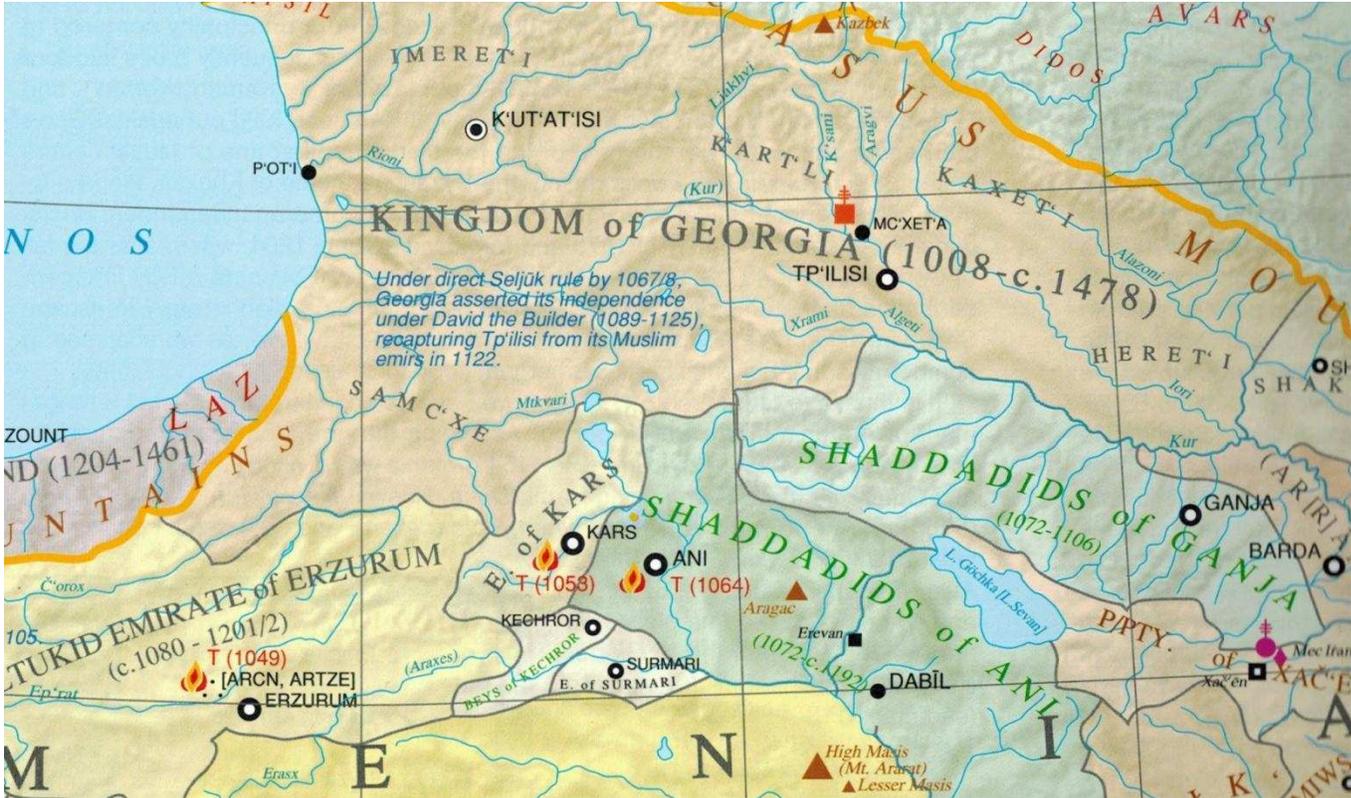


GEORGIA AND ARMENIA, 966-1000¹⁵³



¹⁵³ R. H. Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, 2001), p. 125.

GEORGIA AND ARMENIA IN 1008-1478¹⁵⁴



¹⁵⁴ R. H. Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, 2001), p. 128.

THE CAUCASUS IN THE PERIOD OF GEORGIAN DOMINATION, 1199-1236¹⁵⁵



¹⁵⁵ R. H. Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, 2001), p. 143.



Richard Hovannisian

Below is an excerpt from Hovannisian's book *The Republic of Armenia*, Vol. I (Los Angeles / 1982).

Thereafter, on behalf of the Armenian National Council, Khachatur Karjikian, Gevorg Khatisian, and General Gabriel Korganian met with a special Georgian committee charged with defining the exact boundaries of the Republic of Georgia. During that conference the international Menshevik leader, Iraklii Tsereteli, stunned the Armenians by outlining the Georgian case for sovereignty over every uezd of the Tiflis guberniia, together with the Pambak uchastok of the Erevan guberniia. The more Armenian-populated territory included within Georgia, he argued, the safer the inhabitants would be. The Armenians would at least be spared the viciousness of the Turk, and they would reinforce the Christian element in Georgia as a bulwark against the Muslims. Vehemently protesting the new Menshevik tactic the Armenian representatives persuaded the Georgian committee to reconsider the issue and to resume the discussions in a few days. But before the two sides met again, Georgian newspapers carried the official announcement that the Tiflis guberniia was in its entirety an integral unit of the Republic of Georgia.

The Menshevik reversal could logically be defended. Georgian acceptance of the ethnic principle in Lori and Akhalkalak had come at a time when all Transcaucasia had been combined into an extensive region (Arai) of the Russian Empire. With the establishment of independent republics, however, circumstances had changed radically. The Republic of Georgia deemed possession of Akhalkalak and Lori essential. Historic, geographic, cultural, and economic considerations now overshadowed the ethnic principle. Georgian kingdoms had encompassed both districts, which together constituted a natural defensive boundary. These highlands also provided lush summer pastures for herdsmen of the plains to the north and, combined with those plains, formed an economic unit bound to Tiflis, not to Erevan. Furthermore, the Mensheviks now flaunted a document long since uncovered by Georgian nationalists, the Russo-Georgian treaty of 1783. This compact not only had placed the realms of King Iraklii II under the protection of Empress Catherine II but also had provided that, should the remaining historic Georgian territories subsequently be liberated from Muslim overlords, they too would be added to the domains of Iraklii or his successors. The Republic of Georgia, as heir to the Georgian kingdoms, thus staked its claim to Akhalkalak and Lori.

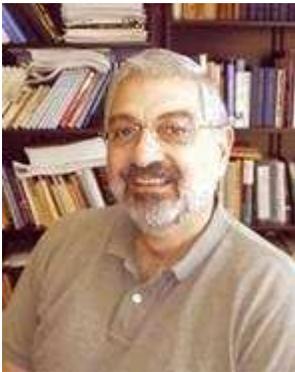
The pretensions of Armenia rested on equally logical foundations. Ethnically, Lori and Akhalkalak were indisputably Armenian. Geographically, they formed an extension of the Erevan guberniia and contrasted with the Georgian lowlands to the north. Strategically, they afforded a natural, easily defended frontier that in the hands of any other power would thrust menacingly toward the heart of Armenia. Economically, these highlands were rich in pastures, forests, and mineral resources, which were vital to Armenia, a land otherwise exceedingly limited in natural wealth.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1918, despite the seriousness of the controversy, neither Armenia nor Georgia could enforce her claims. Southern Lori and all Akhalkalak remained under Turkish domination; the two republics did not even share a common frontier. Moreover, the

Armenians of northern Lori enjoyed greater security under German protection than did their compatriots south of the Kamenka, where Turkish violence and pillage were rampant. The cardinal complaint of the Lori Armenians during this time arose from attempts to induct the village youth into the Georgian army. On three separate occasions Arshak Djamalian, the Armenian charge d'affaires in Tiflis, protested this infringement and reminded Georgian officials of their pledge that the occupation of Lori would not be permanent. He insisted that Georgia had no right to recruit men in "an integral part of the Republic of Armenia."

The Armenian Maneuver in Lori

In October, 1918, Turkish regiments withdrew from Pambak and southern Lori, thus eliminating the corridor between Georgia and Armenia. General Halil Pasha apparently kept Armenian military authorities better informed of the evacuation timetable than he did Georgian officials, and on October 18 Armenian companies attached to Dro's headquarters at Dilijan rapidly occupied southern Lori from Shahali station, on the border of the Erevan guberniia to the Kamenka river.¹⁵⁷



Ronald Grigor Suny

Below is an excerpt from Suny's book *The Republic of Armenia*, Vol. I (Los Angeles / 1982)

Shortly after the republic (of Georgia – Ed.) was founded, conflict with the Armenia broke out over the border regions of Akhalkalaki, Borchalu, and Lori.

The Armeno-Georgian marchlands had been held at various times by the Armenians, and Georgians, but in the nineteenth century (and even more during World War I), the Muslim population had been reduced and refugees from the Turkish massacres swelled the Armenian population. With withdrawal of Turkish armies from Transcaucasia, Georgian forces occupied parts of northern Lori and Akhalkalaki, and Armenians moved into southern Lori and Pambak. Efforts at a peaceful solution to the territorial dispute failed, and in December 1918 fighting commenced.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ R. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*,), Vol. I (Los Angeles, 1982), pp. 72-74.

¹⁵⁸ R. G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Insianopolis, 1994), p. 202.