KAYA TUNCER ÇAĞLAYAN

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS TRANSCAUCASIA 1917-1921

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAB:	Cabinet
CIGS:	Chief of Imperial General Staff
CO-in-C:	Commanding Officer-in-Chief
DIIB:	Department of Intelligence and Information Bureau of the Foreign Office
DMI:	Director of Military Intelligence
DMO:	Director of Military Operations
EC:	Eastern Committee
FO:	Foreign Office
IDCE:	Inter-Departmental Conference on the Middle East
IO:	India Office
IOR:	India Office Records
PID:	Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office
PRO:	Public Record Office
WC:	War Cabinet
WO:	War Office

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1

INTRODUCTION

Britain and Transcaucasia 1917-1921

With its unique geo-strategic position from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea, Transcaucasia, which gets its name from the Caucasus mountain range, has always proved to be a significant part of the world for the empires around it. The Persians, the Turks and the Russians, for instance, had struggled for centuries with each other to establish their authority in the region. This struggle was inevitable since control of the region had brought a strong prospect of greater advance. If it was Turkish control, it opened the way for Turkish penetration into North Caucasia, Transcaspia and Central Asia; if it was Russian, then it opened the route into Iran and Turkey through which the Gulf and the Mediterranean came into Russian sight; and if it was Persian it gave an opportunity to Iran to advance into Turkey and North Caucasia.

Given this state of affairs, the nationalities of the Caucasus, i.e., the Georgians, the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis, had not obtained the right set of circumstances to establish long term independent states. In the period 1917-1921, however, dramatic and significant events took place. The two Russian Revolutions of February and October during World War I in 1917 had profound effects on the international situation. The aftermath of the Revolutions and the consequent political and military developments, as in other parts of the Russian Empire, were quite significant in Transcaucasia, which saw first the military occupation by the Ottomans and the Germans, then the chance of establishing independent states with the involvement of Britain and her Allies, and finally the invasion of their countries by the Bolshevik Russians.

In all these developments, Britain had vital interests to protect. It is these interests and the policies developed to protect them which are the subject of this study. What were those interests which Great Britain was compelled to take action to safeguard? Which kind of policies were developed? Which factors determined those policies? Was there a consistency in her policies or was the policy determined by the exigencies of the moment? What were the

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effects of British policies on the nationalities in the region? What were the results of British policies? Was it a success or a failure for Britain? These are the kind of questions to which this study looks for answers.

Although British involvement in Transcaucasia was a very important phenomenon in the period covered in this thesis the more substantial events of the world such as the peace settlement with Germany, the Russian question and the partition of the Ottoman lands in the Middle East and Anatolia seem to have hindered researchers from giving enough attention to this aspect of British history. The settlement of Transcaucasia and the role taken in it by Great Britain appear to have remained on the sidelines of Anglo-Soviet Relations, the Russian Revolution and the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Armenian question, or the settlement of the Turkish question and the Middle East. Despite a number of studies which have touched on this subject, it seems that there has been a degree of neglect on the part of scholars. F. Kazemzadeh's *The Struggle for Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1950, is one of the works that contains important information. In his book, Mr. Kazemzadeh gives an account of general events, rather than focusing on British policy. Furthermore, since the relevant documents in the British archives were not accessible when the book was written, the information given is largely based on secondary sources. Therefore, he could not fully assess the British position. Another good secondary source is D. M. Lang's *A Modern History of Georgia*, London, 1962. But as can be understood from its title it largely deals with Georgia.

A. Nassibian whose Ph. D. thesis *Britain and the Armenian Question, 1915-1923*, was presented at Oxford University in 1981, also provides useful information. Nevertheless his attention is largely focused on the Armenians and the Armenian question in Eastern Anatolia rather than Transcaucasia. Another scholar is R. G. Hovannisian whose books *Armenia on the road to Independence, 1918*, Los Angeles, 1963, and *the Republic of Armenia*, four vols., California, 1971, 1986 and 1996 are notable. But Hovannisian, like Nassibian, is largely interested in Armenia than the whole of Transcaucasia.

R. Ullman's *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921*, three vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, 1968, and 1972, contains a limited but significant record of British policy in the Caucasus. It is A. H. Arslanian who, in his Ph.D. thesis *The British Military involvement in Transcaucasia 1917-1919*, (University of California, 1974), studied the subject more closely. In his study Arslanian largely gives a description of the military involvement of Britain in Transcaucasia.

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The writer of this thesis, however, hopes to analyze the effect of the Russian revolution in Transcaucasia and the value of the region to the Central Powers, militarily and economically, in detail. The thesis also hopes that a more comprehensive analysis has been made as regards the military involvement of Britain in the sense that not only what had taken place but also various proposals and considerations of alternative policies which played an important part in helping develop the policies applied on the ground are studied. Moreover, Arslanian's study covers until September 1919 when the withdrawal of British forces was completed. The writer of this thesis, however, has endeavoured to study the considerations and policies of the British administration in 1920 and 1921 as regards Transcaucasian Republics. Finally, the descriptive nature of Arslanian's thesis fails to reach a clear conclusion. The writer of this work, nevertheless, thinks that the fear of future conflict with a re-emerging powerful Russia carried the most significant impact on British hesitation to take strong action to support the Transcaucasian Republics.

This study finds it necessary to divide British policy in the Caucasus mainly into two periods: the war period that was largely dominated by military considerations to prevent an advance by the Central Powers, and the postwar period which was largely affected by political considerations concerning the future fate of the Transcaucasian Republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The first part makes it essential to examine the effects of the Russian Revolution upon the two camps in the war as well as the Caucasus. Furthermore, to investigate the importance of the Caucasus from the Turkish and German points of view is imperative in order to understand fully the nature of British intervention in the region. Lastly it is necessary to research and systematize the counter measures taken by Britain to hinder the realisation of the Central Powers' projects in and beyond the region.

The second part of British policy, that is to say the postwar period, may be subdivided into three sections: firstly, immediate considerations and policies by Britain for the future disposal of the region now under British occupation; secondly, her efforts to find ways to diminish the negative effects of her withdrawal from Caucasia; and finally, the recognition of the Republics by Britain at the last moment as a result of the Bolshevik menace and her failure to support the recognition of the Republics with military assistance, thus ending her policy there.

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In this thesis, the Caucasus, Caucasia and Transcaucasia are used interchangeably meaning the Republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The question of Armenia in Turkey is not a matter for consideration by the writer. However, it receives attention when it is considered to be connected with Transcaucasia in general. Similarly, the National Independence Movement of Turkey led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is not an object of this thesis. It is taken into account, however, in so far as it was related to British policy in the Caucasus. Moreover, the internal politics of the region is not given substantial examination. Although the Russian Revolution is not a concern of this study, it is taken into consideration to some extent since it was the Russian Revolution, first of all, which had caused British involvement in the Caucasus. Nevertheless, the aspect of its repercussions upon Britain with respect to Caucasia is to be the centre of this analysis.

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2

THE GREAT WAR, AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE CAUCASUS

In the early months of 1917, Britain's World War I plans in the Middle East were smoothly realised.[1] Not only had Egypt been defended but also a successful counter-offensive towards Palestine had been mounted. After a series of abortive attempts and the embarrassing surrender of Gen. Townshend with over 12,000 British soldiers to the Turks at Kut, Baghdad had been captured in March 1917. In the mean time, the Arab rebellion inspired and encouraged by Britain had rapidly gained strength. The Arab rebellion was used against the Ottomans militarily as well as politically by means of which it was hoped that the legitimate superiority and influence of the Khalifa would weaken if not disappear, with Sheriff Husein of Mecca proclaimed as representing the true interests of Muslims all over the World. India, the most valuable asset of the empire, was safe from any threat by the Central Powers. Persia was largely controlled by the British in the South and by the Russians in the North. Though public opinion was largely inclined to the Turco-German alliance, Afghanistan was secure from the British point of view since the Amir of Afghanistan was strictly neutral. Yet these successes could be overshadowed by political developments in Russia. In this chapter an attempt will be made to analyze the effects of the Russian Revolution upon the plans and policies of Britain and her Allies, and to see how Britain tried to encounter it.

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[1]Before the war Britain had always supported the integrity of the Ottoman Empire since 1830's because of Russian menace to her colonial interests. Russia had always been the greatest rival of Britain in the east concerning especially India which was the Britain's most precious possession. The fear was that if Russia succeeded to acquire the Straits or a port city on the Mediterranean cost of Anatolia, it would have been deadly for British trade and her colonial links with India. Russia, with an outlet on the Mediterranean could easily upset and even exterminate the existence of Britain on the Mediterranean. The Ottoman Empire which was lying from the Balkans to the Persia in the south-west of Russia had significant role in the British policy. It was an important block to prevent the Russian penetration of the near east. Therefore, the unique geographical position of the Ottoman Empire with regard to the Russian Empire and India had to be supported by Britain by at all costs. Another virtue of this policy was that it removed easily and conveniently one great cause of contention between the European powers — namely the inheritance of the Ottoman domains and the possession of Istanbul. Furthermore, since Britain was the biggest colonial or imperial power over the Muslim lands, in India and Egypt for instance, it was considered to be against the interests of the British Empire to take hostile action against the Khalifa in Istanbul, by which Muslims of British subjects could raise against Britain. Yet this policy had to come an end when the influence of Britain in Istanbul almost disappeared and Germany substituted her just before the World War I. See Kedourie, Elie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921*, Bowes and Bowes, London, 1956, p. 10 and Medlicott, W. N., *British Foreign Policy Since Versailles*, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1940, p. 46.

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The Russian Revolution and the Allies

Political events in Russia in early 1917 brought about threatening effects on the British plans. The long period of war and military defeat on the western front had inevitably caused hardship in every quarter of Russian society. In addition to military shortages there were significant shortages of food, cloth and other basic necessities. Therefore the grievances of the Russians had rapidly increased and this political environment helped the anti-autocratic revolution to succeed in bringing down the Tsar Nicholas II and establishing a new democratic regime on 2 March 1917. The Tsar abdicated and a new government under Prince Lvov and Kerensky was founded by the Duma in which the principal parties were at first the Cadets or liberals, later the Mensheviks or Social democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries. The Government was called provisional because it was to exercise power only until a Constituent Assembly could be convened, elected by all the people.

At the same time, however, the workers and soldiers of St. Petersburg came together and established the Soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies, which managed to gain the loyalty of most citizens in the capital. This dualism in power combined with revolutionary fervour in the middle of the war, had significant internal and international repercussions.

Internationally, the attitude of the new government towards the war was the most important issue. The Russian Empire with her large army and territories had been a good contributor to the Allies' war effort. Therefore, Britain and France were deeply anxious about the new regime's attitude. But they were comforted when the Provisional Government announced its firm intention of fighting until victory was achieved, and of upholding the arrangements and treaties concluded between the Allies and the old regime. As a result of this declaration it was obvious, according to Lindley of the British Embassy in St. Petersburg, that no government that could replace it could had been more satisfactory from the point of view of the Allies.[1] Therefore, this new Government and the new regime have to be given support to strengthen its hand, and to bring influence to bear on the pacifist international wing and to improve army discipline.

[1]FO 371/2996/80675/W/38, Sir G. Buchanan, British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, to FO, April 1, 1917, transmits a report by Lindley, British Consul at Moscow.

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The Government's firm intention to continue the War until victory was achieved, however, was not enough. The attitude of the Soviet of Labours' and Soldiers' Deputies in Petrograd was more significant than that of the Provisional Government since in practice most functions of government were in their hands. Soviet influence on army discipline was highly damaging when they ordered soldiers not to obey their superiors in a respectable manner. At first they were openly against the continuance of the war, and called on the working classes of all countries to put an end to it. However it was soon realised that their appeal would not have any effect in Germany. Consequently their decision was also to continue the war as long as Germany threatened Russia.[1]

It can be seen that Britain could feel satisfied by these developments. Russia would still be a partner against Germany. Yet the revolution caused many deadly internal problems in Russia. The Provisional Government, for instance, though nominally acknowledged throughout Russia, had to rely on the Duma and on the personal prestige of its members, to make its authority felt. There was no certainty of its orders being obeyed by the army. Discipline in the army and navy broke down; ammunition and armament factories were empty since workers refused to work until their social and economical demands were met.

All provincial governors and vice governors were removed, and though the new regime was quietly accepted by the provinces, its authority was only nominal. Furthermore, a free extension of semi-independence to all the provinces presented the serious threat of total disruption. Promises of autonomy to Finland and Poland established precedents for other nationalities in the Empire to turn to the road of separation. Therefore, in his report, Mr.Lindley warns of the danger of Russia becoming a republic, the results of which were unpredictable.[2]

Overall, however, Russia's new foreign policy did not change radically. The Russians still wanted the Straits as well as northern Persia, but they lowered their sights in Asia Minor itself.

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.*

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The Revolution and the Caucasus

Caucasia with its geo-strategic position between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and between Russia, Turkey and Persia, was an ordinary front in the Great War until early 1917. It was even a secondary front for Russia itself. In the early years of the War, the Russians had not only managed to stop the Turkish offensive but had also by a counter-offensive successfully occupied Van, Trabzon, Erzurum and Erzincan. As a result of the occupation of these large territories, they were hoping to meet and co-operate with the British forces in Mesopotamia.[1]

The February Revolution had, as in other parts of the Russian Empire, significant effects in Transcaucasia. The most important institution to be influenced was the Russian Army, which was Britain's major concern. After the revolution the command structure of the Caucasus Army was changed, and a number of corps commanders were removed from their appointments for their incompetence and their loyalty to the old regime. Since the soldiers were encouraged by the Soviet of Labour and Soldier Deputies not to salute their superiors in a respectful manner, many officers were maltreated and lost their fighting spirit.

The result of these developments was inevitably a loss of discipline and consequently a lack of will to continue the war. There was no easy answer to these problems. The only solution, according to a secret intelligence report, was to approach and influence the local executive of the Soviet of Labour and Soldiers' Deputies which largely held control of the Army.[2]

In addition to the lack of discipline and commitment the dual leadership in Petrograd had certain repercussions in Caucasia. There was the Commissioners Board of Transcaucasia which was a political body comprising the major nationalities' representatives dispatched from Petrograd to replace the viceroy of the old regime and to push for administrative reform in Transcaucasia. The executive of the local Soviet, however, had the real functions of a government. This dualism, not surprisingly, increased the confusion of the Caucasian Army since the military authorities had to serve two masters.[3]

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[1]W. E. D. Allen and P. Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953, pp. 385-6,442-4.
[2]CAB 24/14/G.T.874, Report from Col. F. G. Marsh, Caucasus military agent, dated April 27, 1917, Tiflis.
[3]*Ibid.*

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Moreover, there was a lack of decisiveness in the Provisional Government in Petrograd about whether to continue fighting on the Caucasus and Persian fronts.[1] Consequently, the already weakened will of the soldiers to fight was further eroded. Hence, the process of disintegration of the Caucasian front slowly started. This was the most worrying local effect of the February Revolution for the British administration.

The impact of the Revolution in Transcaucasia led to significant political developments. First of all, as mentioned earlier, a Transcaucasia Commission representing the democratic Provincial Government of Russia replaced the viceroy. With this important change, the repressive and autocratic Tsarist rule had been superseded by a rather ambiguous democratic regime. Political prisoners were released except those accused of treachery; full liberty of speech was granted to the population with the right to hold meetings; the press was free, except for matters which related to military operations. The police force was also broken.[2] Consequently, numerous meetings took place with people and the troops freely discussing events and electing their delegates and representatives to executive committees. The majority of people declared their adherence to the Provisional Government.[3]

In general, the revolution seemingly brought a kind of satisfaction and happiness to the vast majority of the people. But revolutionary changes in society and the state under war conditions had long-term deep and damaging effects. Firstly, the army almost ceased to be a fighting force because of a breakdown in discipline and lack of commitment to carry on the war. The Russian Army practically stopped participating in the war. This meant a huge loss for Britain and her Allies while giving great advantage to Germany and her Allies, especially to the Ottomans in Caucasia. Secondly, in fact reinforcing the first, there was the lack of authority as a consequence of two institutions presuming to represent the revolutionary authority, namely, the Provisional Government and the Soviet. In Transcaucasia, the Commissioners appointed by the Provisional Government failed to assume real authority, despite their best efforts.[4] When they were initially appointed there was great confidence in them. They worked in co-operation with representatives of provisional and town governments boards and, according to Mr. Stevens,

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] FO 371/2996/74225/W/38, Consul P. Stevens (Batum) to FO, March 19, 1917.

[3] FO 371/2996/82362/W/38, Stevens to FO, Batum, March 23, 1917.

[4] CAB 24/32/G.T.2674, Memorandum by Department of Intelligence Information Bureau (DIIB) of FO on Caucasus to the War Cabinet, November 19, 1917.

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obviously endeavoured to do justice for all.[1] The Commission introduced a new legislation geared to political, social and commercial progress, and the removal of the many difficulties under which the community laboured so long under the old regime.[2] These efforts to introduce proper government for the various nationalities in the country were, however, opposed by the Social Democratic and Social Revolutionary parties as well as the Councils of workmen's and soldiers' delegates, the Soldiers Committees, and the Revolutionary Committee formed after General Korniloff's attempt to re-establish the old regime in July, 1917. All these strong forces rendered the work of the Commission ineffectual. Therefore, the Commission failed to establish the authority necessary for satisfactorily governing the Caucasus.[3]

Freedom of speech and the freedom of every nationality to rearrange its cultural and economic life on a national basis granted by the Provisional Government, naturally led to increasing national demands. The Georgians took the lead, developing their nationalist demands within the first weeks of the Revolution. One of their major claims was for the Georgian Church to be separated from the Orthodox Russian Church. Meanwhile, a conference of the Social Democratic Party which was apparently strongest adopted a resolution calling on Georgians to demand political-territorial autonomy for themselves at the Constituent Assembly. The Georgians also made attempts to reorganise their educational and other systems in order to develop their national life. Similar tendencies and activities were seen among the Armenians and Azerbaijanis.[4]

This increasing nationalism resulted in the animosities among the Caucasian nationalities becoming political.[5] In the Caucasus there had been dislike of Armenians by the Georgians and the Azeris. Largely centred in Tiflis, the Armenians were prosperous compared with the Georgians. They dealt with trade and commerce and were better educated, and they were given administrative posts by the Russians. The Georgians on the other hand were

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[1] FO 371/2996/97376/W/38, Stevens to Balfour, April 7, 1917.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] FO 371/2997/210733/W/38, Stevens to Balfour, October 16, 1917.

[4] CAB 24/32/G.T.2674, Memorandum by DIIB of FO to the War Cabinet, November 19, 1917. See also FO 371/3008/221189/W/38, Memorandum by DIIB to FO, November 20, 1917.

[5] The ethnic frontiers dividing the three main national groups were in many places ill-defined. There were more Armenians in Georgia and Azerbaijan than in the Armenian Republic as ultimately constituted. Tiflis (Tbilisi), the Georgian capital, for instance, had a larger Armenian population than any other city, and contained more Armenians than Georgians. In these circumstances national animosities were as often directed against rival national groups as against the comparatively inconspicuous Russian power. See Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, London: Macmillan, 1960, vol.I, p. 340.

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largely agrarian people living in villages and were not in a position to dominate the Armenians. The result of this was Georgian hatred of Armenians. At the Conference of Transcaucasian peasants held at Tiflis in July, for instance, the Georgians declined to act together with their fellow political associates and voted on purely national grounds with the Tartars against the Armenians.[1]

The economical impact of the March Revolution was also detrimental. Shortages of food and fuel which had been a consequence of the war, went from bad to worse. Basic necessities of life became more expensive than ever causing a steep rise in the cost of living. Inevitably discontent became widespread with an increasing possibility of reprisals against the administration.[2]

Under these circumstances, lawlessness and anarchy became a part of life in the Caucasus as elsewhere.[3] In his telegram, Stevens reported that excesses of every description in the cities, towns, villages and on the highways of the Caucasus were already of hourly occurrence. Daily reports of murders, robberies, burglaries arrived from many localities.[4]

It can be seen from the above facts that the Caucasian front was on the verge of collapse with no prospect of improvement and, therefore, carrying unforeseeable and potentially extreme dangers for Britain. In one of his telegrams, Consul Stevens assessed the situation, depicting Russia as being on the verge of ruin, and events in the Caucasus taking so critical and calamitous a turn as to compel her shortly either to conclude a separate peace, or to surrender all territory acquired in Asia Minor.[5]

The Bolshevik Revolution and the Allies

The Bolshevik Revolution which took place in late October, in St. Petersburg, made the situation worse from the British point of view. The Red Guards of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Bolshevik Party seized the main streets and public and government buildings, the Kerensky Government fell and its members were arrested on 26th October 1917. This

[1]CAB 24/32/G.T.2674, Memorandum by DIIB of FO to the War Cabinet, November 19, 1917.
[2]FO 371/2997/210733/W/38, Stevens to Balfour, Batum, October 16, 1917.
[3]CAB 24/32/G.T. 2674, Memorandum by DIIB of FO to the War Cabinet, November 19,1917.
[4]FO 371/2997/210733/W/38, Stevens (Batum) to Balfour, October 16,1917.
[5]FO 371/2996/97376/W/38, Stevens (Batum) to Balfour, April 17, 1917.

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development ran counter to the interests of the Allies. Despite being less eager to fight than the imperial government the Provisional Government was keeping Russia in the war for defensive purposes. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, immediately declared their readiness to sign a separate peace and end the war at the expense of the Allies. This declaration had serious negative effects upon Britain and her Allies' military campaigns in the West as well as the Middle East. Germany could now get access to the material resources of Russia and employ her soldiers imprisoned there. Germany could also transfer from the Russian front large numbers of troops to the Western theatre of war. The Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, could strike a blow to British gains in Mesopotamia and Palestine with German help. Not only could she recover territories lost to the Russians in Asia Minor but also easily conquer Transcaucasia with the prospect of moving beyond the Caspian Sea.

The British administration now faced a serious problem in how to deal with the Russian question. It was definitely determined not to officially recognise the new regime.[1] Yet it was deemed necessary to keep unofficial links with the Bolsheviks through an unofficial agent to influence them in a sense that Britain and her Allies did not have any desire to interfere in the internal politics of Russia; they were, therefore, ready to recognize the Bolsheviks as long as they stayed loyal to their engagements with the Allies. Britain and her Allies were ready to accept the principle of self-determination of nations as well as of no annexation or indemnity proposed by the Bolsheviks. In the final analysis, they wanted to persuade them not to transfer artillery material to the enemy and to prevent wheat districts from falling into enemy hands. Furthermore, they might be motivated by reminding of them their sacred obligation to save Serbia as well as the Armenians from extinction.[2]

In the meantime, however, British secret agents were in close touch with the various non-Bolshevik elements in Russia proper itself, or in the provinces. Since the main concern of this study is the Caucasus, the other provinces will not be examined in detail.

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[1] FO 371/2999/225633/W/38, Sir G. Buchanan (Petrograd) to FO, November 25, 1917, see L. Oliphant's minute.
[2] *Ibid.*

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The Bolshevik Revolution and Caucasia

When the Bolsheviks seized power in St. Petersburg, Transcaucasia was, like many other provinces, largely controlled by non-Bolshevik elements. The Tiflis Revolutionary Executive Committee of the Soviets did not indicate any enthusiasm for the Bolshevik triumph in Petrograd and Moscow. On the contrary, the resolution of their meeting on November 8, was hostile in tone stating that the Bolsheviks' seizure of power by force was fundamentally wrong since it would lead to counter-revolution and consequently, the loss of freedoms already acquired.[1]

The Bolsheviks only managed to seize power by force in Novorossiisk and Baku, though they faced serious opposition from the Mensheviks (Social Revolutionaries), and Armenian Dashnaksutiun.[2] On the 11 November 1917, at a meeting of the Representatives of all revolutionary organizations of the entire region in Tiflis, the proposal of Noi Jordania, the leader of the Social Democrats (Mensheviks) to create an autonomous government to prevent the region from falling into total anarchy was received with sympathy. At the next meeting of all executive committees on 24 November it was decided to establish a provisional government comprising three Georgians, three Azeris, three Armenians and two Russians. It was called provisional since it was their belief that the Bolsheviks' rule would finish and a truly democratic government would emerge out of the All-Russian Constitutional Assembly.[3] Four days later on 28 November 1917 the provisional government of Caucasia was established. One can see here that although they could immediately have founded independent states by using the right of the self-determination of the nationalities in Russia declared by the Bolsheviks, they had a genuine wish to become a definite autonomous Caucasian unit in the federated Russian Republic.[4]

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[1]CAB 24/38/G.T. 3257, Memorandum by DIIB to War Cabinet, December 18, 1917. D. M. Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, New York: Grove Press, 1962, pp. 199-200, E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, vol.I, London, 1950, p. 340, J. Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918: Documents and Materials*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1934, pp. 451-2.

[2]CAB 24/38/G.T. 3257, Memorandum by DIIB to War Cabinet, December 18, 1917. R. G. Suny, *Nationalism and Social Class in the Russian Revolution: The Cases of Baku and Tiflis*, in R. G. Suny, (ed.), *Transcaucasia*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1983, pp. 246-7.

[3]FO 371/3008/229180/W/38, Sir G. Buchanan (Petrograd) to FO, November 30th, 1917, transmits a telegram from Consul Stevens, Batum. Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 342, F. Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia, 1917-21*, New York/Oxford, 1951, pp. 55-7.

[4]CAB 24/38/G.T. 3257, Memorandum by DIIB to War Cabinet, December 18, 1917. See also G. Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran, 1918-48*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1949, p. 12.

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At the same time, the Caucasians were aware that the Caucasian front represented a great threat to their existence. About 200,000 Russian soldiers were either pacified by the activities of the Bolsheviks or had deserted the front. Even before the revolution, it was reported that military operations on the front had practically ceased; even under the most favourable circumstances, the possibility of their resumption was remote so long as the army remained under the influence of the Soldiers' and Workers' Delegates and Bolshevik propaganda. The Provisional Government made several attempts to clear the army of these committees but failed. On the contrary, their influence increased; the inefficiency and insubordination of the army reached such an extent that it constituted a grave menace to Russia and the Caucasus in particular.[1] As a result of Bolshevik propaganda, the decay of the Army became permanent. The Russians, in the British view, ought to be forced to remedy the situation but it looked hopeless. Unless troops at the front received adequate supplies of clothing and foodstuffs, and without prompt action, the calamitous consequences of a spontaneous withdrawal of Russian troops from the Caucasus front could not be averted.[2]

British Policies for the Caucasus

When the revival of Russian military efficiency was no longer a possibility, steps had to be taken to avoid calamity on the Caucasus front. Captain Gracey who was associated with the Russian Army of the Caucasus as one of the members of the British Mission, proposed one solution. This was to forge an alliance between the Kurds and the Armenians, and make them stand together against the Turks under British officers.[3] This scheme did not find any favour with Foreign Office officials, since it was the Kurds who had always massacred the Armenians, though, according to Lord R. Cecil, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister of Blockade, they could easily fight side by side against the Turks with the prospect of fighting one another later![4] Another solution was needed.

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[1]FO 371/3012/226679/W/38, Buchanan (Petrograd) to FO, November 6, 1917, transmits a telegram from Consul Stevens, Batum, October 22, 1917. Allen and Muratoff, *op. cit.*, p. 449-450, G. Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran, 1918-48*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1949, pp. 15-16.

[2]FO 371/3012/225901/W/38, Buchanan (Petrograd) to Balfour, November 17, 1917, transmits a telegram from Consul Stevens, Batum, October 31, 1917. Allen and Muratoff, *op. cit.*, p. 457.

[3]FO 371/3012/226679/W/38, Buchanan (Petrograd) to FO, November 6, 1917.

[4]*Ibid.*, see minutes of Lord R. Cecil, Lord Hardinge, under secretary of state and Sir R. Graham, assistant under secretary.

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In the meantime it was reported in a secret intelligence report that the Georgians and Armenians had taken a decision to resist the Turkish Army; Armenian and Georgian selected regiments had to defend the country and military assistance had to be given to each other.[1] This point surely did not escape the notice of the British Foreign Office experts. Eventually it appeared to the British Administration as a quick and easy solution to the problem of finding substitutes for Russian Soldiers at the Caucasian front.

In a telegram to the Foreign Office Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador to Russia, also advocated the employment of the non-Russian nationalities surrounding Russia. In his opinion it was difficult to persuade the uneducated Russian soldiers to continue fighting. The Russian Provisional Government, in its last days, had a duty to its Allies to foster the fighting spirit of those people who through being in direct contact with the Central Powers understood the necessity of continuing the struggle for a real peace. The Russian Government had, therefore, to protect these nationalities' troops from open attempts at demoralisation by the pacifists of Moscow and Petrograd. According to Buchanan there could be no doubt that the Armenians would fight to the last to defend their homes.[2] This scheme was also to serve the aim of safeguarding the flank of the British Mesopotamian forces; more importantly a possible union between Armenians and Georgians would form a barrier against the dangerous Turanian movement, which will be dealt with later, from the Balkans to China.[3] The more important role would be given to the Armenians rather than the Georgians whose interests were not so vital as those of the Armenians. The Armenian forces were reported to be the most loyal and reliable troops and would have reached the numbers needed to offer effective resistance to an advance of the Turks, and, if necessary, to take the offensive against them. The Georgians, however, were to be used to some extent on the Trebizond front and to a larger extent on the lines of communication and in suppressing acts of anarchy in the Caucasus.[4]

Although regrouping of the military forces in the Caucasus on the basis of nationality was agreed in principle by the Russian Government Headquarters, the number of Armenian and Georgian soldiers was quite insignificant. Out of total of 150,000 Armenians in the Russian Armies,

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[1]FO 371/3008/221189/W/38, Memorandum by DIIB to FO, November 19, 1917.
[2]FO 371/3012/218506/W/38, Sir G. Buchanan (Petrograd) to FO, November 15, 1917.
[3]FO 371/3018/245628/W/38, FO to Buchanan, Petrograd, December 3, 1917.
[4]FO 371/3012/225901/W/38, Sir G. Buchanan to Balfour, November 17, 1917, transmits a telegram from Stevens, Batum, October 31,1917. See also FO 371/3016/209437/W/38, Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) to FO, November 2, 1917.

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according to General Barter, head of the British Mission at Russian General Headquarters, only about 35,000 were on the Caucasus front. Consequently, General Barter was instructed by the British General Staff to press Russian General Headquarters to transfer these Armenians to the Caucasian front as substitutes for Russians; and thus, gradually to make the majority of Russian units take on the Armenian character and consequently become reliable. It was, moreover, considered a possibility that local Armenians be recruited and trained by the Russians. But the chance of it was slim as a result of Russian disorganisation and inertia.[1]

The British Foreign Office and the War Office considered the use of Armenian national forces not only in the Caucasus but in Persia as well as Mesopotamia. Yet an unexpected refusal of the six Armenian battalions recently formed to fight in Mesopotamia and Persia; and also the decision of the Armenian Committee in Petrograd not to carry on for formation of Armenian units until their future political status was decided by the Russian Constitutional Assembly almost caused the death of this scheme. However the suggestion of Maj. Gen. Sir G. Macdonough, the Director of Military Intelligence, to bring influence to bear on the Armenians proved fruitful.[2] The Foreign Office approached James Malcom who was representing the Armenian case in Britain and later became a member of the Armenian National Council. Malcom suggested that the Foreign Office get in touch with Boghos Nubar Pasha who was the head of the Armenian National Delegation in Europe with significant influence. Boghos Pasha was then asked to write to the Armenian Committee in Petrograd as well as the Catholicos, the religious head of the Armenian Church, through the American Consul at Tiflis.[3]

In reply to the Foreign Office's inquiry, Boghos Pasha emphasised that the Armenians had only to fight on the Armenian front, though he accepted in principle the fact that the Caucasus, Persian and Mesopotamian fronts were all parts of one campaign on which the future of Armenia depended.[4] In fact Boghos Pasha was aware that the military situation on the Caucasian front was full of immediate danger. The remnants of the Russian and Turkish soldiers had fraternised and the land under Russian occupation might go back

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[1]FO 371/3016/204952/W/38, FO to Sir C. Spring Rice, Washington, October 25, 1917. In this telegram British Government sought to receive the United States' financial and military assistance in the reorganisation of Armenian forces. See also FO 371/3016/219307/W/38, Gen. Shore of the Transcaucasia British Mission to DMI, November 14, 1917.

[2]FO 371/3016/208687/W/38, DMI to Secretary of State, October 31, 1917.

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]FO 371/3016/218746/W/38, Lord Bertie, Paris, to FO, November 15, 1917.

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to the Turks if the Bolsheviks applied the principle of no annexations. For this reason, each Armenian armed man had to be kept in Armenia itself. His point was accepted by the desperate Foreign Office. The instructions were sent to Sir G. Marling, British Minister in Teheran, and Consul P. Stevens in Batum, to authorize Armenian and Georgian chief authorities to buy arms, equipment and transport from Russians for their forces, and to inform them that British officers would be sent to help in the organisation of Armenian and Georgian forces.[1] This policy also received the support of the French Government who in return undertook to organise and support the Ukraine against the Bolsheviks.[2]

In addition to the policy of recruiting Armenians in substitution for the Russians, the British Government did not withdraw its support from the remaining Russian troops. In fact, Britain would certainly prefer to bear all financial responsibility for the Russian troops were they committed to carrying on fighting and therefore, making it unnecessary for the British Government to employ the Armenians and Georgians.[3] In a telegram from FO, Sir C. Marling was instructed to continue the monthly issue of fifteen million krans to the Russians so long as they remained effective on the Persian front.[4] Yet, as has been seen, the chance of revitalising the fighting spirit of the Russians almost disappeared.

In the meantime, the appeal of the British Government to the United States for financial and military assistance was turned down. Thus, Britain was left alone on the Caucasus front to save the cause of the Allies in general, and the interests of the British Empire in particular.[5]

One other scheme developed and given support by the British Administration was to establish a southern block around the Bolsheviks. Following the Bolshevik coup in Petrograd and Moscow numerous provisional governments were formed within territories whose populations

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[1]FO 371/3016/230983/W/38, Secretary of State (Paris) to FO, December 5, 1917. Balfour was in Paris for negotiations with the Allies when conversations were held with Boghos Pasha who also emphasised immediate financial help to buy the arms and equipment from Russian soldiers who were selling them. If they did not buy them, those arms and equipment would go to the Tartars and Kurds. See also FO 371/3018/236459/W/38, FO to Sir C. Marling, Teheran, December 16,1917. FO 371/3018/237859/W/38, FO to Mr. Stevens, Batum, December 13, 1917. FO 371/3016/235937/ W/38, DMI to FO, December 13,1917. FO 371/3016/234179/W/38,DMI to Gen. Offley-Shore, Tiflis, December 8, 1917.

[2]FO 371/3019/241388/W/38 Note by Lieut. Col. Spiers of the British military mission in Paris, December 18, 1917.

[3]FO 371/3019/233670/W/38, Treasury to FO, December 8,1917, see G. R. Clerk's minute.

[4]Fo 371/3018/236459/W/38, FO to Sir C. Marling, December 16,1917.

[5]FO 371/3016/215402/W/38, Sir C. Spring Rice, Washington, to FO, November 10, 1917.

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refused to recognize the Bolshevik rule. They assumed everywhere full power pending the establishment of a central government universally recognised. These territories were Transcaucasia, the regions of Don, Terek and Kuban, the Ukrainian Rada and possibly the Black Sea littoral.[1] On the face of this opportunity, it seemed that Britain and her Allies could not only save the Caucasian front but also put the Bolsheviks under severe encirclement and thus restrict their lifeline or at least force them not to sign a separate peace with Germany. [2] In a most secret telegram to Sir G. Buchanan dated 3 December 1917, the Foreign Office outlined the new policy regarding Russia:

> The War Cabinet considered the Russian situation this morning and they are of opinion that all our efforts should be concentrated on trying to prevent Russia from making a separate peace with Germany. They believe that the hope of doing this is to strengthen by every means in our power these elements who are genuinely friendly to the Entente of whom the chiefs are (General) Kaledin, (General) Alexenioff and their group. They do not believe that the constitution of coalition between Bolsheviks, Social Revolutionaries and even Mensheviks would be any real improvement. Such a constitution would be under Bolshevik influence and would besides consist of talkers and theorists. If on the other hand a *Southern Block* could be formed consisting of the Caucasus, the Cossacks, the Ukraine and the Roumanians, it would probably be able to set up reasonably stable government and would in any case through its command of oil, coal and corn control the whole of Russia. You are, therefore, authorized to take whatever steps you regard as possible with a view to carrying out this policy...[3]

One can see from these documents that besides the effort of enabling the Caucasians to defend themselves, the Caucasus was to be put into a larger and collective organisation for combating the external enemy, the Central Powers, as well as the Bolshevik agitation internally. Again it can be noticed that the Caucasians with other non-Bolsheviks were granted within reason unlimited money as well as military support. Yet despite these generous supplies, Britain failed to recognize the so-called South East Union as an

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[1] FO 371/3018/233460/W/38, C. Nabokoff, Russian Charge d'Affairs in London, to FO, December 9,1917. Nabokoff who was representing the constitutional regime, was suggesting that the British Government inform all those regional governments that Britain would not recognize the Petrograd Bolsheviks. The consideration was, however, quite contrary to this view. See minutes of Lord Hardinge and Lord R. Cecil.

[2] FO 371/3018/238609/W/38, Confidential Memorandum, G.T. 2937, for War Cabinet, December 17, 1917. As can be seen from the memorandum, Northern Russia controlled largely by the Bolsheviks was largely dependent on Southern Russia to survive. From food to various raw materials such as oil, coal, iron, and cotton. Southern Russia was a store of supplies for the North. The stoppage of the supplies would have meant hunger and unemployment which would have led to uprisings among the population and the eventual collapse of the Bolsheviks.

[3] FO 371/3018/229192/W/38, FO to Sir G. Buchanan, Petrograd, December 3, 1917. See also FO 371/3018/242595/W/38, Secret memorandum, G.T. 3068, by DMI for War Cabinet, December 24, 1917.

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independent state.[1] The main reason for this was its provocative nature. The British Officials feared that if their financial and military support had been discovered, the Bolsheviks could have made an immediate peace with Germany with the result of Germany securing quite precious advantages. Moreover the safety of the British Embassy and British nationals would be in jeopardy. The British Embassy was still at work and Britain was still more or less hoping to influence political developments, or at least to gather information through her embassy.[2] In fact, it seems obvious that the formation of the South Eastern Union was regarded as temporary and a military necessity rather than a serious political entity. Therefore, one can say that Britain never seriously thought of recognising the proposed Union.

Meanwhile the Transcaucasian Government agreed to enter into the South Eastern Union although it was subject to ratification by Soldiers' and Workmen's Committees.[3]

To sum up, one could see that in 1917 Britain's successful military occupations of Palestine, Baghdad and also the reducing of Turkish influence throughout the Muslim world through the Arab rebellion were overshadowed and endangered by political developments in Russia. The result of the February-March and October Revolutions was the demoralisation and eventual disappearance of the Russian army, with unfortunate consequences for the Allies. Transcaucasia was inevitably influenced by these developments and represented unforeseeable perilous threats especially for Britain, which developed three main policies to overcome the situation: first, to support the Russians at the front; second, to encourage and sustain the Georgians and Armenians to replace the Russians and lastly, to attempt to create a southern block against the Bolsheviks and to incorporate the Caucasus into this collective resistance organisation. As will be assessed later, the degree of success of Britain's policies would be far from satisfactory.

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[1] *Ibid.* See also FO 371/3018/228822/W/38, Buchanan (Petrograd) to FO, November 29, 1917.
[2] FO 371/3018/233460/W/38, C. Nabokoff (London) to FO, December 9, 1917, see Lord Hardinge's minute.
[3] FO 371/3018/237859/W/38, Stevens (Batum) to FO, December 17, 1917.

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3

BRITISH FEAR OF THE TURKISH AND GERMAN MENACE

As has been seen in the previous chapter, the Transcaucasian front collapsed as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution which had seriously damaged and demoralised the Russian army. This perilous development led the Entente Powers to search for solutions to prevent the possible dangers from taking place. This search, as explained previously, mainly resulted in the three policies which were not successful in bringing about the desired results. Before examining the reasons for their failure, however, it seems necessary to assess the value of the Caucasus for the Central Powers as well as the Allies. Since the aim of this study is to analyse British policy in the region, the importance of and the threat of the Ottomans and the Germans in the Caucasus will be studied largely through the British sources. This would hopefully help us to see how this menace was perceived by the ruling circles of Britain.

The Economic Significance of the Caucasus for Germany

The significance of the Caucasus for Germany in late 1917 were considered mainly two fold: economical and strategic. The region was reported to be full of minerals and agricultural commodities most needed in Germany. The major minerals and commodities that were extremely valuable to Germany were oil, manganese, copper, coal, cotton, cereals, wool, tobacco and tea. It was thought that the oilfields gave the greatest economic importance to the region. The annual production in four districts in 1915, for instance, was as follows:

Baku	7,136,000	tons
Grozny	1,408,000	tons
Cheleken Island	176,000	tons
Maikop	128,000	tons.[1]

[1] FO 371/3301/107255/W/38, Note by the General Staff on the Caucasus and its Value to Germany, June 6, 1918.

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It was reported that there were two ways to distribute oil: firstly and mainly the Volga river which however was ice-bound between November and April. 75% of the production was stored until the opening of the navigation. The remaining 25% was distributed through rail and pipe lines which constituted the second channel. The 8-inch pipe lines running from Baku to Batum, and from Grozny to Petrovsk (Makhachkala) were stated to be capable of conveying 1,500,000 and 500,000 tons of oil a year respectively.[1]

Manganese was considered to be the second most important mineral deposit in the Caucasus. According to the General Staff report, some of the richest deposits of manganese ore in the world were to be found in the province of Kutais in Georgia. The quantity annually exported from Batum and Poti in normal times was one million tons though because of the war it came to a standstill.[2]

Copper production was also significant. In 1913 for instance, 10,003 tons of copper was exploited. The cereal production of the Caucasus for the year 1915 including wheat, maize, rye, barley, beans and peas, amounted to the approximately 7,25 million tons. Though the effect of the war had been devastating for agriculture, it was feared by the General Staff that in 1917 there was a 300,000 tons surplus which would be available for the enemy.[3]

In addition to the richness of its raw materials and agricultural products, the communication system of the region was stated to be well established. The railways, in particular, connected almost all major cities to each other. The railway connection from Baku through Tiflis, to Batum and Poti, and through Petrovsk, Grozny and Vladikavkaz to Rostov was available. There was also a line from Kars in eastern Anatolia to Erivan and Tiflis. With an efficient administration and maintenance, these communication lines could sufficiently serve for many years. Furthermore there were good harbours to serve merchant navigation, such as Baku and Petrovsk on the Caspian, and Batum, Novorossiisk and Tuapse on the Black Sea.[4]

As indicated, the economic value of Transcaucasia for Germany was percived to be enormous. Especially the oil resources were vital since the only sources of oil for the Central Powers were the Romanian and Galician oil

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[1] WO 329/2506/M.I.2.b. 2794, Memorandum on oil, January 24, 1918.
[2] FO 371/3301/107255/W/38, Note by the General Staff on the Caucasus and its Value to Germany, June 6, 1918.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

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fields. According to a report, the production of the Baku and Grozny oil fields connected with the Black Sea ports was approximately four times as large as Rumania and Galicia combined. Thus, if Germany only secured half of the production of these oilfields, allowing the remaining half to be retained for Russian internal needs, it was thought that she would treble her present oil resources.[1]

The production of oil and manganese was already developed so far that large supplies were available for export. There was also a considerable quantity of wool, besides certain quantities of cotton, two commodities of immense value to Germany. There were, moreover, ample resources of valuable timber and important deposits of copper. Cotton at that time was reported not to be found anywhere within the German Empire, a fact which emphasises the value of this territory. Furthermore, the Germans would be able to obtain supplies of the rarer minerals from the hitherto unexploited resources of the country.[2]

It seems that the Caucasus could be the main supplier of raw materials as well as food stuff to Germany. It was stated that the possession of such a country, moreover, might to a large extent compensate Germany for the loss of her colonies, or for any economic restrictions that could hamper her trade after the war.[3]

The Strategic and Political Value of the Caucasus

The strategic and political significance of the Caucasus was considered to be as enormous as its economic importance. Before the Bolshevik Revolution Britain had considered relying on the Russian army in the Caucasus and in Persia together with the British forces in Mesopotamia to conquer the outlying territories of the Ottoman Empire and to force her to surrender.[4] A military plan, for instance, had been developed to occupy Mesopotamia together. According to this plan, Baghdad was to be captured by the British forces and the Russians were supposed to occupy Mosul from north. Yet this long-planned co-operation with the Russians had proved

[1]FO 371/3334/114499/W/38, June 23, 1918, Memorandum on Supply of Petroleum Products to the enemy from Russia, by R. R. Tweed, Managing Director, Baku Russian Petroleum Company Ltd.
[2]FO 371/3301/107255/W/38, Note by the General Staff on the Caucasus and its Value to Germany, June 6, 1918.
[3]*Ibid.*
[4]Allen, W.E.D., and Muratoff, P; *Caucasian Battlefields*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953, p. 385.

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abortive in the circumstances created by the revolution in Russia.[1] Consequently, the disintegration of the Caucasian front threatened to remove one of "the principal strategic bases" for the general offensive against the Ottoman Empire.

The collapse of the Caucasian front also meant for Britain that the Turks could concentrate on the Tigris River as many as two hundred thousand men and try to recover Baghdad from the British who had recently captured the city.[2] Because of the Russian front in Caucasia, the Ottoman Government kept there a strong army which could be put into service at another front. Nevertheless after the disintegration of this front the Ottoman Government continued to maintain it in eastern Anatolia. Enver Pasha, leader of the Committee of Union and Progress in power, had plans to operate in Caucasia rather than to operate in Iraq. As a result, his decision was a great favour for Britain in that no major Turkish military operation took place towards Baghdad.

The principal importance of Transcaucasia for Britain was its geo-political location. The region was neighbouring through the Caspian Sea to Central Asia and Persia, important routes leading to India. If it fell, the Indian road would be open to the enemy. An intelligence memorandum reports that much greater importance should have been attached to this Transcaucasian field rather than to the Mesopotamian field of action, for were the Transcaucasian railway to be captured in its entirety, a direct route through Baku and Transcaspia towards the borders of Afghanistan would be open to the Germans.[3] After the conquest of Ukraine and Crimea the Black Sea was under German control. German influence now penetrated most effectively into Transcaucasia, especially into Georgia.[4] It was feared that having secured Odessa and Batum, the Germans would then be in a position to make use of the Caspian Sea and to penetrate, via Tiflis, to Tabriz, and as the eastern part of Asia Minor did not as yet possess railways and would not have them for a considerable time, it was considered that the Caucasus would become the main

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 444-449.

[2] Nassibian, A; *Britain and the Armenian Question 1915-23*, London: Croom Helm, 1984, p. 94, Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia, 1918-1919*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967, pp. 42-3.

[3] Cab 24/52/G.T. 4509, May 18, 1918, Memorandum on the Caucasus by the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office. See also C. H. Ellis, *The Transcaspian Episode, 1918-1919*, London: Hutchinson, 1963, p. 17.

[4] Brinkley, G.A., *The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia*, Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1966, p. 38.

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route to Western Asia, so that the centre of gravity would shift from Mesopotamia up to the Caucasus.[1]

In a memorandum it was stated that Germany had long-planned designs for India which was the most precious asset of the British Empire. She employed, for instance, well-known Indian seditionists for propaganda purposes to stir up rebellion in India against British rule. In addition, she tried to persuade, without success, the Amir of Afghanistan to break his neutrality and join the Central Powers against Britain.[2] Eventually the British occupation of Baghdad in March 1917 appeared to have finally redressed the balance in the East in British favour.

The Russian Revolution, nevertheless, upset all calculations. Russia, on whom Britain relied to control the situation in north and north west Persia in their joint interests, not only ceased to be an effective ally, but became a potential enemy of a particularly dangerous kind. Not only did her troops melt away, leaving north Persia open to the enemy, but she herself developed internal disorders that might well prove more dangerous to British interests than the most active propaganda of the Germans and Turks.[3]

The anxiety of Britain was that this development gave a real chance to Germany and her ally Turkey to penetrate into Caucasia, north Persia and Central Asia, and thus to threaten India. The confusion raging in the adjoining Russian districts could aid Germany to realize her plans. It was already known that German agents were at work in the Caucasus while Turkish officers had been sent to Resht to co-operate with the rebel Jangali movement in the Persian province of Gilan.[4]

In a telegram to Lord Reading, British Ambassador to the United States of America, Foreign Secretary Balfour explained the gravity of the situation:

> ... There is no doubt that Germany is trying to weaken us by reducing the Middle East and through it India to the same condition of disorder as she has reduced Russia. She hopes to do this by Pan-Slavonic or Pan-Turanian propaganda, backed by Turco-German military force. Their agents are already endeavouring to stir up Persia, Turkestan and Afghanistan. The Turks have now captured Batum and if they take Kars, as seems probable,

[1] FO 371/3300/49453/W/38, March 18, 1918, Memorandum on the Caucasus by the Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information of the Foreign Office, (DIIB).
[2] IOR: L/P&S/18/C 173, May 18, 1918, Memorandum on the Persian Situation by the Political Department of India Office.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

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> they will be masters of the Caucasus and their road towards Central Asia and India will be open. Unless this movement is checked it is bound to have far-reaching effects...[1]

According to a note of the General Staff, the possession of the Caucasus would be yet another step forward in the realisation of Germany's Eastern ambitions. A check had been put on their Baghdad schemes. In the Caucasus they would find an alternative. They already secured themselves the control of the Danube, which gave them access to the Black Sea. The acquisition of the Caucasus would take them a stage further to the shores of the Caspian which was on the high road to Turkestan where the Germans were said to be endeavouring to find compensation for the failure of their Mesopotamian dreams. The possible friction in their relations with their ally, Turkey, could probably be smoothed away with German gold.[2]

Germany, according to the Viceroy of India, fully realised the immense embarrassment which she would cause to Britain, not only in India, but in regard to Mesopotamia and Palestine by even a small demonstration of German force on the Afghan border. Control of the Caspian would follow upon possession of Baku with its oil and supplies without any elements likely to offer any serious resistance to the Turco-German advance.[3]

Pan-Turanism and the Turkish Threat

The disintegration and the collapse of the Russian Caucasian front in late 1917 as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution brought about a threat to British military campaigns and interests in the East through Caucasia not only from Germany but also from the Ottoman Empire. The extent of the danger was considered far greater from the Ottomans than from Germany. Until the fraternization of the Turkish and Russian soldiers, the Russians had given a more successful response to an early successful Turkish offensive in 1915 and captured almost all Eastern Anatolia including Trebizond on the Black Sea and Erzurum in inner Anatolia. These losses of the Turks, however, were regained

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[1]FO 371/3327/69398/W/38, April 20, 1918, From Foreign Secretary Balfour to Lord Reading, Washington.

[2]CAB 24/54/G.T. 4883. 8.6.1918, A Note by General Staff of the War Office on the Caucasus.

[3]FO 371/3329/74918, April 28, 1918. From Viceroy to India Office, forwarded to Foreign Office. In the face of these warnings A. J. Toynbee of the Political Information Department of the Foreign Office minuted that it was doubtful yet whether the enemy intended to advance militarily beyond the frontiers laid down in the treaty of Brest-Litovsk — that was, beyond the Batum-Kars-Ardahan districts in Transcaucasia and the provinces assigned to the Ukraine in European Russia.

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by the Ottomans at the Brest-Litovsk treaty which had been signed between the Bolshevik Russians and the Central Powers on March 3, 1918.[1]

Pan-Turanism which had been considered a dangerous movement working in German interests received close study from British Foreign Office experts. According to Toynbee, nineteenth-century philologists in Europe employed the name Turanian for the languages of north east Europe and Asia. The Magyars were the first nation to take up the Turanian search seriously, since they were one of the nations who spoke a language of the "Turanian" family. Since they were isolated among the Latin, Slavonic and Teutonic speaking peoples of Europe, influenced by Russian Pan-Slavism they searched for their kinsfolk and found the Turks nearest to them.[2] This movement therefore took a political nature because of the fact that the Turks were considered natural allies of the Magyars in the Balkans against the Pan-slavist block. The Bulgars followed the Magyars in this sense during the Great War.

The significance and effect of the Turanian movement gained strength in the Ottoman Empire after the 1912-3 Balkan Wars disasters by which the Ottomans lost almost all their European territory. The force of nationalism began to penetrate wide circles and kindle a genuine desire for national regeneration among all educated Turks. From 1908 the Committee of Union and Progress, in power in Istanbul, experienced how the non-Turkish elements of the Empire devoted most of their energies to taking advantage of the new regime to promote their national interests. Not only the Christian Greeks and Armenians but also the Muslim Arabs and Albanians took a similar line to further their national aims. These events eventually led the rulers of the Government to come to the conclusion that only the Turkish element was supportive of the unity of the Empire.[3] Linking up the Ottoman Turks with the other Turks in the World, which had been incorporated in the programme of the Committee of Progress and Union following the Balkan Wars, was declared one of the Turkish aims in the War.[4] This aim was the one which would have determined the policy of the Ottoman Government with regard to Transcaucasia.

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[1]David Marshall Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962, pp. 184-6.

[2]FO 371/3060/226241/W/44, November 28, 1917, Report on the Pan-Turanian Movement by A.J. Toynbee.

[3]FO 371/3060/220908/W/44, November 19, 1917, From Sir H. Rumbold, Berne, transmitting a copy of memorandum concerning the Turanian Movement.

[4]FO 371/3060/226241/W/44, November 28, 1917, Report on the Pan-Turanian Movement by A.J. Toynbee who was in the employment of Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office.

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Thus one can see that the Pan-Turanism of the Ottoman Empire was largely a Turkish nationalist policy rather than a Turanist policy to contain all the Turanian peoples in it. Therefore, though the non-Turkish speaking Magyars and Bulgars also saw themselves as Turanian nations, the attention of the Turanian movement in the Ottoman Empire was directed towards the Turkish-speaking peoples of Caucasia, North Iran, Central Asia and Chinese Turkestan. To realise the union of all peoples of Turkish stock under a single ruler implied moving first into Transcaucasia since most Turkish speaking people out of Turkey were situated in Caucasia and Central Asia.[1] It was in this context that Pan-Turanism became an important factor having an impact on Caucasian affairs in the period covered in this study.

The Bolshevik Revolution was the essential inducement that increased the possibility of realising the Pan-Turanian movement. The movement in fact, had been an idea which had not had until now any serious prospect of success. Russia would have stopped the movement on the borders of Persia as indeed she did stop it in Eastern Anatolia and pushed it back. Yet the Russian Revolution had entirely changed the character of the movement.[2] At the same time, given the losses of Arab lands and the Arab rebellion the idea of founding another great Turkish empire on the lands of Turan in compensation for the Arab lands gained momentum.

Germany was reported to have given her support to the movement. Many social clubs advocating the movement flourished with the financial support of Germany.[3] In the light of the fact that the British successes in Mesopotamia and Palestine were almost irreversible, Germany was thought to have come to the conclusion that the Berlin-Baghdad railway scheme was dead, and she was in need of finding another outlet in the East. Secondly, the anxieties of the Turks to recover their losses in Mesopotamia and Palestine required the Germans to smooth them over. Though promises of bold action to reconquer the lost lands were given by Germany to the Ottomans, because of their precarious situation at the Western front, it was reported that the Germans were in reality unable to realise any operation in those lands.[4] The prospect of acquiring Central Asia, however, as a consequence of the

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[1]IOR:L/P&S/18/C.181, May 1918, A note by Major P. T. Etherton, Kashgar, on the Pan-Turanian Movement.

[2]FO 371/3060/226241/W/44, November 28, 1917, Report on the Pan-Turanian Movement by A.J. Toynbee. See also Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, *op. cit.*, p. 468.

[3]FO 371/3060/220908/W/44, November 19, 1917, From Sir H. Rumbold, Berne, transmitting a copy of memorandum concerning the Turanian Movement.

[4]FO 371/3393/148661/W/44, August 29, 1918, From Sir H. Rumbold, Berne, Transmitting weekly memorandum concerning conditions in Turkey.

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Bolshevik Revolution which had caused the fall of the Russian Empire seemed a great relief to the Germans. Central Asia was regarded as looking more remunerative and richer than Mesopotamia.[1] It was estimated in one report that the resources of the region were as great, and fully as varied, as the United States and Canada combined.[2] It was, therefore, feared that Germany could reshape her Middle Eastern policy and, having already posed as the friend of Islam, declare herself in full sympathy with Pan-Turanian ideals. A greater Turkish empire consisting of only the races and tribes in close affinity to the Turks, was reckoned to be suited to German economic and political aims.[3] It was reported that Germany not only supported the efforts of the C.U.P. to foster this movement financially and morally but herself sent influential missions to Turkestan and Afghanistan.[4] Thus it was feared that Germany would develop the idea of a Berlin-Bukhara railway scheme which was to run through Asia Minor and Caucasia or Northern Persia in substitution for the Berlin-Baghdad railway.[5] In order to activate this new strategic railway a comparatively small construction was necessary from Ankara to Sarikamish in Anatolia since the Transcaucasian and Transcaspian Railways had already been constructed by the Russians.[6] Therefore, this new line could bring Istanbul into contact with Tabriz, Baku and eventually Bukhara with a small degree of effort.

The Political Situation in the Caucasus Before the Central Powers' Involvement.

As explained previously, the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution in Transcaucasia, as in other parts of Russia, had been ruinous. The Caucasians had found themselves faced by an enemy on their borders without having an organized and effective army to defend themselves as about 200,000 Russian soldiers had left the front. Lawlessness had become a part of daily life in the

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[1]FO 371/3060/220908/W/44, November 19, 1917, From Sir H. Rumbold, Berne, transmitting a copy of memorandum concerning the Turanian Movement. G. A. Brinkley, *Op. Cit*, 1966, p. 40.

[2]IOR: L/P&S/18/C.181, May 1918, A note by Major P. T. Etherton, Kashgar, on the Pan-Turanian Movement.

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]FO 371/3296/1919/W/44, January 1, 1918, From Sir H. Rumbold, Berne, to Foreign Office, FO 371/3296/8818/W/44, January 15, 1918, from Rumbold, Berne. See also FO 371/3003/13425/W/38, May 25, 1917, in this telegram from an agent to the Government of India a mission of 70 German agents in Afghanistan was reported.

[5]FO 371/3063/220908/W/44, November 19, 1917, From Sir H. Rumbold, Berne, transmitting a copy of memorandum concerning the Turanian Movement.

[6]FO 371/3060/226241/W/44, November 28, 1917, Report on the Pan-Turanian Movement by A.J. Toynbee.

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society. Consequently they recognised the need to establish a local authority and took the decision to found a provisional Transcaucasian Government on 24 November 1917.[1] This Government had been established only until the expected overthrow of the Bolsheviks and the convening of a Constitutional Assembly of All-Russia. It would have had to deal with the major questions of defending the region against the Central Powers and maintaining internal order by preventing anarchy.

The political environment of each nationality, that is the Georgians, the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis who largely comprised the Government, had inevitable repercussions on the federal government. Except for Baku where the Bolsheviks gained the upper hand, all the region was largely under the control of the non-Bolsheviks. In Armenia, the Dashnaktsutiun Party was powerful and had almost dictatorial powers. Its programme was a mixture of nationalism, populism, liberalism and Marxist socialism. Their first and most important aim was to secure territory from the Turkish administration. The Himmat and the Musavat were two parties that were dominant in Azerbaijan. The former was close to the Marxist line and connected with the Russian Social Democratic Party. Its preponderance over the Muslim population was smaller in comparison with the Musavat that, though previously closely associated with the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, had later taken the nationalist line. In Georgia, there was an almost exclusive control by Mensheviks, i.e. the Social Democrats.[2]

The Government under E. Gegechkori's presidency comprised three Georgians, three Azerbaijanis, three Armenians, and two Russians. It was an anti-Bolshevik and a provisional Government which believed that the future of Transcaucasia would be in a federated and democratised Russia.[3] This belief resulted in a hostile reaction in Transcaucasia against the Bolsheviks in Russia and strong protests from the local Bolsheviks to the Provisional Government. In the meantime elections for the All-Russian Assembly were carried out and the elected representatives started to work at the local Transcaucasian Parliament until the General Assembly's meeting in St. Petersburg.

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[1]FO 371/3008/229180/W/38, Sir G. Buchanan, Petrograd, to Foreign Office, November 30, 1917, transmits a telegram from Consul Stevens, Tiflis.

[2]Kazemzadeh, F., *op. cit.*, pp. 34-37. See also FO 371/ 3300/10284/W/38, January 16, 1918. A Memorandum by the DIIB on the Caucasus.

[3]CAB 24/38/G.T. 3257, A Memorandum by DIIB of Foreign Office to the War Cabinet, December 18, 1917.

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Thus it is safe to say that Transcaucasia *de facto* separated itself from the Russian administration. This reality gained more validation when the Bolsheviks forcibly dispersed the All-Russian Constituent Assembly after one sitting in January 1918 marking the death of Russian Parliamentary democracy.[1]

The Transcaucasian Government and Assembly, however, were reported to be an artificial entity since their members had their own specific objects rather than having a genuine wish to found a federation when they came together. Most of the Caucasians were well aware of this fact. Consequently there was a strong lack of will to foster a real united federal government. In other words each nation was ready to split when the moment arrived. Indeed each nationality's primary object was to safeguard their own national interests rather than to protect and maintain regional ones.[2] They all believed that the Bolsheviks in Russia would be toppled in a short time and a kind of Russian Constitutional Federation would be created. In other words, the idea of separating themselves from Russia and establishing an independent entity was not strong enough. The reasons for establishing the federal government were stated to be provisional too. The need to stand together against the external threat, namely the Ottomans, and the need to maintain internal order had a substantial effect in compelling them to act together. It was indeed their common concern to prevent the anarchy, which had increased as a result of plunder and widespread destruction by the Russian soldiers returning home, from penetrating throughout Transcaucasia. In addition, the prospect of Ottoman occupation was almost certain to be realised if the vacuum of authority was not immediately filled. Perhaps this was the most influential reason that made it likely that three nationalities who had been hostile to each other would come together. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the nationalities tried to be prepared for the possible outcome of the uncertainty by influencing the political process. It seems that they recognised that the provisional Transcaucasian Federation might be a transitional period for them to get ready to form national states. While participating in the elections and taking their places on the government, for instance, they also constituted their own national assemblies.[3] It was reported that although the federal government in Tiflis deserved credit for its regional structure it was inevitable that the federation would fall apart when serious local trouble arose such as

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[1]Lang, D., *Op. cit.*, p. 200; FO 371/3300/12134/W/38, From Consul Stevens transmitting the declaration of the new government in Tiflis, January 19, 1918.
[2]CAB 24/45/G.T. 3957, A Memorandum by the DIIB on the Caucasus, March 16, 1918.
[3]*Ibid.*

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territorial issues or food supplies. The report claimed that this unavoidable result would lead to the establishment of national entities which in practice had already been founded when the National Councils had assembled. It was argued by the same report that the general tendency in Transcaucasia since the revolution had been the increase of strength and improvement of the national organisations. Meanwhile the non-national, All-Russian and Bolshevik organisations had not made a corresponding progress. Therefore, as a result of *realpolitik* the National Assemblies represented a more permanent element than the provisional Transcaucasian Government.[1]

Indeed each nationality had conflicting interests, especially the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis. While pro-entente sympathies were stated to be dominant in the former, the effect of the Central Powers was more powerful in the latter.[2] It is true that the Azeris shared the same culture with the Ottoman Turks.[3] Yet the reason for them to be pro-Turk mainly came from the Armenian claim that they were under British protection and enjoyed British support to create an independent and greater Armenia at the expense of the others.[4] This attitude had to a certain extent a damaging effect on British policy in Transcaucasia. The British administration did not think that it was in their interest to make anyone resentful towards them in the region. Yet they faced a dilemma in which it was impossible for them to back one nation without hurting the other.[5] Since the Armenians had been thought useful by the British administration, they received financial and military support. The result of this was a bitter resentment shared by the Azeris as well as the

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[1] FO 371/3300/10284/W/38, A Memorandum on the Political Situation in the Caucasus by the DIIB, January 16, 1918.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revoultion 1917-1923*, vol.I, London, 1950, p. 342.

[4] FO 371/3301/131359/W/38, A Telegram from Commander-in-Chief, India, to War Office transmitting a report from General Malleson, July 29, 1918. Major-General Sir Wilfrid Malleson had been sent to Meshed to reach, if possible, Ashkabad as one of the missions to do whatever possible to interfere with an expected German-Turkish move across the Caspian and through Transcaspia. The other two missions were Major-Gen. L. C. Dunsterville's mission to north western Persia, Caspia and if possible Baku, and Colonel P. T. Etherton and Lieutenant Colonel F. M. Bailey's mission via Chinese Turkestan to Tashkent.

[5] FO 371/3301/121685/W/38, A Telegram from Lindley, Archangel,to FO, July 11, 1918, transmitting a telegram from Urquhart to War Office. In his telegram Urquhart reports the "March Events" in Baku where the Armenians provided military support for the Bolsheviks to fight the Azerbaijanis who had earlier received a promise from the Armenians to stay neutral. It is reported that over 8,000 Tatars were killed in Baku and over 18,000 unarmed Tatars were murdered in Elizavetpol (Ganja) by the Armenian rebels in cooperation with the Bolsheviks. See also FO 371/3301/122337/ W/38, July 11, 1918, in which it was reported that the Tatars had suffered substantial losses in March and been almost driven out of Baku by the Bolshevik-Armenian forces who took over the control of Baku. See also T. Swietochowski, *The Himmat Party: Socialism and the Nationality Question in Russian Azerbaijan, 1904-1920*, *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Sovietique*, 19(1978), p. 125.

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Georgians against Britain.[1] The British officials gave "every assurance" to the Tartars, i.e. the Azerbaijanis, that the British did not favour one nationality more than another, and their only desire was to see and support a united Caucasus block. The Foreign Office even considered informing the Azerbaijanis that Britain was prepared to provide military equipment and personnel to help organize their national army.[2] Yet the facts on the ground did not help these efforts to succeed in winning over the trust of the Azeris.

The Georgians were also deeply influenced by the attitude of the Armenians, though to a lesser extent than the Azerbaijanis. As reported in a memorandum, the Armenians had come into more direct contact with the Europeans who had always tried to exploit the Armenian question for their aims. Therefore, the Georgians felt that they had been neglected by the European Powers, especially Britain, which supported a group of adventurous and dangerous Armenians at the expense of others in the Caucasus.[3] Hence they had serious doubts about the intentions of the Entente.[4] Indeed as Major McDonell reports, as the Armenian units kept their position in Eastern

[1] As explained earlier, the use of Armenian forces and to some extent Georgian units on the Caucasian front against Turkey in substitution for withdrawing Russians was one of the solutions to stop the enemy advance towards the East. Indeed, the Armenian forces and the Armenian question in general were seen a solution by the Foreign Office. Sir Mark Sykes who was an expert on Middle Eastern Affairs and well-known as the British architect of the Sykes-Picot agreement to partition the region between France and Britain in 1916 minuted that "the Armenian question is the real answer to Pan-Turanism just as free Arabia is the answer to Turkish Pan-Islamism". See FO 371/3063/220908/W/44, from Sir H. Rumbold, Berne, to FO, November 19, 1917. Thus it is not surprising to see that the massacres committed by the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia before the Turkish advance and in the Baku region against the Muslim population were not made public. On the contrary they were denied in public as enemy propaganda though in private Boghos Nubar Pasha representing the Armenians in Europe, in Paris, was urged to restrain his compatriots in the region. See FO 371/3301/131359/ W/38, a telegram from Commander-in-Chief, India, to WO transmitting a report from General Malleson, July 29, 1918, and FO 371/ 3400/36460/W/44, A Memorandum by the DIIB, February 19, 1918, prepared by A. J. Toynbee who urged the British administration to take steps to stop the Armenians and in the meantime to launch a counter-propaganda. Lord Hardinge and R. Cecil agreed with Sykes that even the United States should not receive any information regarding the Armenians committing massacres. See FO 371/3400/37581 -18/W/44, March 14, 1918. Hence a letter, dated April 2, 1918 and signed by A. J. Balfour, was sent to the United States Embassy in London explaining that "the whole story of Armenian atrocities against the Muslims was based on hearsay". Amazingly, the Foreign Office denied the information given by its DIIB and earlier sent to the United States Embassy. See FO 371/3400/37581/W/44, A Weekly Report on Turkey and other Muslim Countries, March 21, 1918, FO 371/3657/37175/W/58, from the Director of Military Intelligence to FO, March 7, 1919, transmitting a Memorandum in which Major A. R. McDonell reports on his activities between September 1917-October 1918. Major McDonell was Vice-Consul at Baku in peace time though he was later attached to the Tiflis Consulate as Political Officer. See also FO 371/3300/18464/W/38, from India Office to FO, transmitting a telegram from Sir P. Cox, January 25, respecting the attitude of the Tatars, FO 371/3300/19679/W/38, from Sir C. Marling, Teheran, to FO, January 30, 1918.

[2] FO 371/3300/19679/W/38, from FO to Sir C. Marling, Teheran, February 2, 1918.

[3] FO 371/3300/10284/W/38, January 17, 1918. A memorandum by the DIIB regarding to the political situation in the Caucasus.

[4] *Ibid.* See also FO 371/3300/10284/W/38, January 16, 1918. A memorandum by the DIIB on the political situation in the Caucasus.

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Anatolia after the Russians left, they received, on instructions from the Foreign Office, one million roubles from the British Military Mission. Meanwhile the Provisional Transcaucasian Government was handed four million roubles and the Russian Volunteers 200,000 roubles. When they had obtained the money the first thing the Armenians did was to commit massacres on the Muslim population of the Russian-conquered Ottoman territory. These facts, McDonell says, with the help of enemy propaganda lent Britain the reputation of exclusively supporting the Armenians.[1] On the other hand, the propaganda of the Central Powers had doubtlessly to a substantial extent had an effect upon the Caucasians. The central points of their propaganda were that the Entente aimed only to stand behind the Armenians who were apparently ready to serve their interests and they would leave the region to the reactionary Russians. This inevitably added fuel to the differences among the Caucasians. Yet in a secret report it was asserted that the Georgians were ready to fight for the existence of an autonomous Armenia, including Turkish Vilayets, in order to prevent any further Armenian pressure on their own territory.[2] This report, nevertheless, seems to have failed to take into account the fact that the pressure from the Turks would have been far higher than from the Armenians considering that the Turkish Army would easily override the Georgian and Armenian military units. Given this, it was a quite logical necessity for the Georgians to seek a compromise with the Turks rather than to defend the Armenians in Turkey. Secondly, the significant number of Muslims in Georgia had a certain impact on the Georgian leaders in discouraging any dealings with the Armenians against Turkey and Azerbaijan.

The existence of a large number of Armenians in Georgia, especially in Tiflis and southern parts of the Country, caused the resentment against the Armenians to increase. These Armenians, a significant number of whom were refugees from Turkey, were reported to give rise to food shortages which reached a crisis point.[3] In addition, because of the fact that there were more Armenians in Tiflis than in Erivan, the effort of the Armenian socialist politicians was to strengthen the socialist elements in Georgia with a view to weakening the national feeling amongst the Georgians and thus strengthening internationalism.[4] Furthermore, the territorial demands of the Armenians not

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[1] FO 371/3657/37175/W/38, from the Director of Military Intelligence to FO, March 7, 1919, transmitting a Memorandum in which Major A. R. McDonell reports on his activities between September 1917-October 1918.

[2] FO 371/3300/10284/W/38, 17 January 1918. A Memorandum by the DIIB regarding to the political situation in the Caucasus.

[3] FO 371/3321/124834/W/38, A Memorandum by Prof. J. Y. Simpson of DIIB, July 17, 1918.

[4] *Ibid.* See also FO 371/3300/5197/W/38, a memorandum by the DIIB on the political and economical situation in the Caucasus, January 9, 1918.

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only conflicted with the Tartars in Karabagh, Ganja, Nakhichevan and Zangezur but also with the Georgians in Akhalkhalaki and Borchalo.[1]

The Georgians and the Azeris were on rather good terms with each other. Their common dislike of the Armenians and the threat of a greater Armenia at their expense with European support eased the understanding between them. Moreover, a possible reactionary Russian threat from the north was another factor for them to be understanding of each other.

In short, one can say that the existence of serious differences and conflicting interests had an apparently destructive impact upon the federal government's survival. Because of the circumstances in which there was no hope of establishing a really united Caucasus bloc, it was considered desirable and inevitable that the national states were to substitute for the federal government.[2] The attitudes of these nations regarding whether to continue the war, for instance, were quite different from each other. Though in its first declaration to the people of the region the government had pledged itself "to take most energetic steps towards the immediate conclusion of peace", the Armenians were reported not to be supportive of this decision in their hearts. The Tatars were inclined to support the Ottomans because of their kinship and common interests. The Georgians, on the other hand, felt that they had no choice but to come to a compromise with the Central Powers.[3] The fact that the Entente Powers were not in a position to give them substantial military and financial support to enable them to stand against the approaching enemy reinforced the Georgians' tendency to make a peace with the Central Powers. Thus, before the Central Powers were to become involved in the affairs of the Caucasus the ground was very convenient from their point of view.

The effect of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia was undoubtedly favourable to Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Germany benefitted substantially from the attitude of the Bolsheviks who had sought a peace at any price. The peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk where a separate ceasefire had been signed between the Bolsheviks and the Central Powers resulted in a

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[1]FO 371/3300/26755/W/38, A memorandum by DIIB of FO on the political situation in the Caucasus, February 12, 1918. The Georgians, it is reported, had pledged themselves to defend those districts against the Armenians.

[2]CAB 24/45/G.T. 3957, March 16, 1918. A memorandum by the DIIB on the Caucasus, FO 371/3300/10284/W/38, January 16, 1918. A memorandum by the DIIB on the Caucasus.

[3]FO 371/3300/12134/W/38, January 19, 1918. A Telegram from Consul Stevens regarding the declaration of the Provisional Transcaucasian Government.

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peace treaty on 3 March 1918.[1] Among other losses such as the territory west of a line from the Gulf of Riga to Brest-Litovsk, the Bolsheviks accepted to evacuate the districts of Kars, Ardahan and Batum in Caucasia, and to allow the inhabitants to decide their future in agreement with Turkey. In other words, Turkey would certainly regain the frontier it had held before the War of 1877-8 with Russia.[2]

Thus the political balance in the Caucasus would substantially change in favour of the Ottoman Empire. The Transcaucasian Government who had signed an armistice with the Turks on 18 December 1917 in Erzincan which had received strong protests from the representatives of the Entente Powers, declared the Brest-Litovsk Treaty invalid since they were not a party to it.[3] They maintained that since they never recognised the Bolshevik regime, the Bolshevik delegation had no legal right to represent them. Therefore, the Ottoman Government had to come to an arrangement with them.

Meanwhile, in parallel with the German advance into the Ukraine and the Baltic provinces in February 1918 to force the Bolsheviks to accept the peace terms at the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, the Ottoman Army started its advance into Eastern Anatolia on 13 February. They regained Trabzon on 24 February and Erzurum on 12 March without any serious resistance.[4] The Caucasians who had hoped to keep not only Batum, Ardahan, and Kars but also Trabzon, Erzurum and Erzincan, which had been occupied by the Russian forces earlier in the War, accepted the Ottoman invitation for peace negotiations in Trabzon in March.[5]

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[1]For more details on the Brest-Litovsk Peace see J.W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace, March 1918*, (London, 1938), Swettenham, *op. cit.*, p. 35-6.

[2]IOR: L/P&S/18/C.191, A Memorandum on Turco-German Relations over the Caucasus by Political Intelligence Departmnet of FO, (PID), October 4 1918.

[3]With the Erzincan Armistice, the Turks had a real chance of moving their Eastern Army of about 200,000 men into Iraq to recover the Baghdad and Basra vilayats that were under British occupation. Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

[4]FO 371/3335/130177/38/W, July 26, 1918. A Secret Report on the Turco-German Advance into the Caucasus, by Director of Military Intelligence to FO. See also IOR: L/P&S/18/C.191, A Memorandum on Turco-German Relations over the Caucasus by PID of FO, October 4, 1918.

[5]FO 371/3301/203251/38/W, December 10, 1918. A Memorandum by PID of FO on the Political situation in Trancaucasia.

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The door for the Turkish and German schemes in Caucasia and beyond was now open.[1] To prevent these schemes, which were detrimental in the main to British interests, Britain initiated various counter-measures. These measures and their results, however, will be studied in the following chapter.

[1]The peace negotiations in Trabzon ended in failure as a result of the disagreement on territorial exchange. While the Transcaucasian delegation demanded to maintain the pre-war frontier between Turkey and Russia, Ottoman Delegation insisted on Batum Kars and Ardahan that had been returned to Turkey by the Brest-Litovsk Agreement. See IOR: L/P&S/18/C.191, A Memorandum on Turco-German Relations over the Caucasus by PID of FO, October 4, 1918. When the Turkish advanced, however, the Caucasians accepted the conditions put forward by the Turkish side. At the Batum peace conference in May, however, the Ottoman delegation introduced new territorial demands. Finding these demands unacceptable the Caucasians discovered a powerful shelter against the Turks, that is to say Germany which was uncomfortable with the actions of her ally in the Caucasus. German protection over Georgia led to termination of the federation and each republic declared their independence at the end May 1918. See Brinkley, *op. cit.*, p. 39, Carr, *op. cit.*, pp. 342-343, Lang, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-208.

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4

BRITISH COUNTER-MEASURES IN TRANSCAUCASIA

As explained earlier, in the last quarter of 1917 the British Government developed three main policies to encounter the danger, which was a direct result of circumstances created by the Bolshevik Revolution, posed by the Central Powers in the region. These policies were a) to encourage and support financially the retiring Russian troops, b) to encourage the nationalities of the Caucasus to form military units and stand against the enemy in cooperation, and c) to create a "Southern Block" consisting of Roumania, the Ukraine, the Cossack territories of Don, Kuban and Terek, and the Transcaucasian Federation, which would be powerful enough to face the Germans and the Bolsheviks in the north and the Turks in the south.

Of these policies the first one was doomed to failure from the onset. As noted earlier, the strong Russian army which had served in the Entente cause in the war had lost almost every feature of an army. As a result of Bolshevik propaganda the lack of discipline, insubordination, inefficiency and, most importantly, unwillingness to fight dominated the minds of the Russian soldiers. About 200,000 Russian soldiers, for instance, left the Caucasus front even before the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty between the Bolshevik Russians and the Central Powers on 3 March 1918. Only a handful of them remained in north Persia, and these were also eager to leave as soon as possible.[1] Faced with these facts, the British Government had to find other ways of stopping the coming threat.

The Southern Block Policy

When the Russian option proved clearly incapable of achieving any desirable objective, the policy of creating and supporting a southern block

[1]FO 371/3012/226679/W/38, 6 November 1917, From Sir G. Buchanan, Petrograd, to FO, transmitting a telegram, dated October 22, 1917, from Consul Stevens in Batum.

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gained strength in policy-making circles at the beginning of 1918.[1] It was thought that if the British Government, in cooperation with its Allies, established its position in South East Russia it would give Roumania, whose army was about to collapse before the German-Austrian forces, essential support due to her and deny the wealth of the Ukraine, the Don, the Caucasus and eventually Siberia to Germany. If successful, this line of action would not only deny the benefits to the enemy but also would play a decisive role in revitalising the Eastern front. Therefore this scheme was given substantial importance. To realise this scheme, Britain and her Allies took four main lines:

1. By financial support to induce the Rada, i.e., the Ukrainian Parliment, to make of the Ukraine at the least a friendly base on which the Roumanian Army could rest, and to deny the Ukraine frontier to Bolshevik and German alike. This task was assigned to the French.
2. More or less in concert with the French Britain was to give financial assistance to the Cossacks whose main centre was at Novocherkassk but who were also calling for organisation at Ekaterinodar. This if successful would extend the barrier from the Ukraine to the Caucasus.
3. To establish at Tiflis the head of a British mission for securing the support or at least the benevolent neutrality of the South Eastern Union that would also include the Daghestanis, the Georgians and the Armenians.[2]
4. To save the vast accumulation of military stores at Vladivostok from falling into the hands of the Bolsheviks and to keep Vladivostok and Harbin open, and, if possible, to extend the Allies' influence along the Siberian Railway and thereby eventually establish an Allied line of communication to link up with the South Eastern Union in the Ukraine.[3]

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[1] See chapter 2 section *2.5. British Policies for the Caucasus* in which more information can be found regarding the policies of Britain considered in the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution.

[2] This line was accorded substantial attention. G. R. Clerk of Foreign Office reported that the success of this undertaking is our most immediate and vital concern because it is only by establishing an Armenian cordon strong enough to hold back the Turks and Kurds that we can protect the flank of our Mesopotamian force, hope to keep Persia clear from hostile penetration and prevent the spread of anti-British Turanian-Muslim Movement working in German interests from Turkey into the heart of Central Asia." See FO 371/3283/4022/W/38, January 7, 1918, FO Minutes regarding South East Russia.

[3] *Ibid.* See also A. Arslanian, *The British Military Involvement in Transcaucasia, 1917-1919*, Ph.d thesis, University of California, 1974, p. 17, and Brinkley, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-4.

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As one can see, this was an ambitious policy requiring much money and effort to be realised. The realities on the ground were not necessarily convenient. First of all the peace negotiations at Brest were in progress, the result of which was crucial. The Germans were in a position to advance easily if they wanted to, thus forcing Roumania and the Ukraine to come to their terms. Secondly, the powerful Black Sea Fleet was an important factor for the stability of the proposed Union. The Fleet's attitude was unknown. It was clear, however, that the Fleet was under strong pressure from the mighty German navy ships on the Black Sea. Thirdly, though Generals Kaledine and Alexieff were apparently masters of the Cossacks country, the Bolsheviks had access to the Cossacks a significant number of whom were under their influence. In other words the reliability and effectiveness of the Cossacks was in question. Furthermore, the situation in the Caucasus was not promising either. Although it seemed that the Georgians and Armenians were ready to take the Russians' place at the front their racial antagonism and the existence of a large proportion of a pro-Turk Muslim population were not certainly signs of a healthy situation from the British point of view. Lastly, the scheme of establishing an Allied line of communication from Vladivostok to the South Eastern Union through the trans-Siberian railway did not look very highly practicable. There was strong objection from the United States which had recently entered the war to the project proposed by Britain since it required the employment of a substantial number of Japanese forces thus making it in practise a Japanese intervention in Siberia. Although France readily concurred to give the Japanese a mandate to take possession of the Siberian Railway, the Italian Government proved another obstacle by remaining sceptical. As a result of these prolonged diplomatic negotiations the operation of establishing a line of communication failed to start on time.[1]

Under these conditions the South Eastern Union had a weak chance of surviving. In addition, the Bolsheviks had a negative effect on the Union. The British Government did not want to appear to be engaging to support anti-Bolshevik forces, so that the Bolsheviks would not be provoked into signing a peace with Germany. Nevertheless, the Bolshevik leaders were aware of the British actions in that regard, so that they warned the Entente to decide which side they were on and to accept the consequences accordingly.[2]

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[1]FO 371/3283/4022/W/38, January 7, 1918, FO Minutes regarding South East Russia.

[2]FO 371/3299/32250/W/38, February 17, 1918, From Lindley, Petrograd, to FO. One senior clerk, J. H. Selby, accepted the indictment of the Bolsheviks by writing that 'we have backed every anti-Bolshevik movement and everyone has collapsed.'

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In the mean time, when negotiations between the Bolsheviks and the Central Powers were broken off in February, Germany rapidly advanced to the East and made a peace with the Ukraine. The Roumanians did not have any line of action but to make peace. Moreover, the Cossacks retreated before the Bolshevik forces. As a result, according to Lord Hardinge, Permanent Under Secretary of State, 'three out of the four elements upon whom the Allies counted to create a solid bloc in South East Russia gradually faded away as factors of any useful importance.'[1] J. H. Selby submitted that the British Government had backed the "wrong horses" and thought that 'we have much to gain and nothing to lose by frankly acknowledging the fact.' R. Graham and Lord Hardinge agreed with him in saying that the Don Movement and the Ukraine Rada were certainly bad horses to back and the Cossacks were almost equal to them. R. Graham, however, disagreed with Selby that the Bolsheviks would be the worst horse to back.[2]

As seen the only option for the British Government now left was the Caucasus whose Armenian and Georgian nationalities had apparently committed themselves to fight against the Turks. Thus, the Caucasus which was a part of a bigger scheme for revitalising the Eastern Front became the centrepiece of a plan which could possibly have an effect on the recreation of the Eastern Front. It has already been seen that the Caucasus would also fall in the end to the enemy. Here, however, an attempt will be made to study the efforts of the British Government to implement some projects to employ Caucasia for its cause.

The Employment of Nationalities Policy

As noted, the British Government recognised the fact that the Armenians and to a lesser extent the Georgians had potential and, apparently, readiness to fight the Ottomans.[3] In his minute Clerk stated that the only forces that they could use to meet the situation in Russia were

1. money,
2. Armenians, and if they could get hold of them, Poles, for these were the only peoples in Russia who had something definite to fight for and were prepared to fight,

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[1]FO 371/ 3289/32543/W/38, February 20, 1918, Lord Hardinge's minute with respect to policy in Russia and Siberia.

[2]FO 371/3299/32250/W/38, February 17, 1918, From Lindley, Petrograd, to FO. See the minutes.

[3]Arslanian, *British Wartime Pledges*, *op. cit.*, p. 520. See also chapter 2 section *British Policies for the Caucasus*.

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3. an Allied occupation, by Japanese, American and British troops, of Vladivostok and possibly of the Siberian Railway.[1]

An effort was commenced to put into practice the last hope of the British Administration. The Armenians and Georgians were encouraged to buy arms, equipment and transport from Russians for their forces, and informed that a number of British officers would be sent to help in the organisation of their forces.[2]

The financial support, however, was not easy to give, not because the British Government was unable to afford it but because the means to transport the money were restricted. In addition to assisting the French financially in the Ukraine and providing funds for the Cossacks, it was reported that to create a new army and to liquidate the old one in Caucasia the amount of five hundred million roubles (roughly ten million sterling) was needed. There were two ways that the money could be raised: First, local agents could draw Bills upon the Chief Clerk of FO or on the Treasury. Yet there was the problem of finding someone locally to buy those bills. Secondly, roubles could be purchased abroad and taken to Transcaucasia by courier. In this case the difficulty was the safety of the courier's journey. In addition, this approach required considerable time for the delivery to reach its destination. Nevertheless, both these ways had to be used. In fact, there was one other method to finance the nationalities in question. That was to put the various local governments into a position which would enable them to raise money among their own people. In order to do so, the British Government would have to give them its formal financial guarantee for a loan. Yet this action implied definite, and for all practical purposes official recognition. This would have the risk of a definite rupture with the Bolshevik government who might totally fall into the Central Powers' arms. Secondly, there was no guarantee that the local governments would last and not be replaced by Bolshevik Commissaries. G. R. Clerk of the Foreign Office maintained that if there was a certainty regarding the second question that Bolsheviks would not take over the nationalities' administrations, they might be prepared to risk the first, basing his point on the fact that the Bolsheviks recognised the right of self-determination of the various units claiming autonomy. Graham, however,

[1]FO 371/3283/4022/W/38, January 7, 1918, Foreign Office minutes with regard to South East Russia.

[2]FO 371/3016/230983/W/38, December 5, 1917, Balfour to FO; FO 371/3018/236459/W/38, December 13,1917, FO to Sir C. Marling, Teheran; FO 371/3018/237859/W/38, December 23, 1917, FO to Mr. Stevens, Tiflis; FO 371/3016/234179/ W/38, December 8, 1917, DMI to General Offley-Shore, Tiflis.

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objected to the idea of loan by saying that the positions, power and general sympathies of the local governments were by no means clear. He opted for the first two methods to be employed. Lord Hardinge and R. Cecil agreed with him.[1]

From late December 1917 to the middle of April 1918 when the British Military Mission had to leave in the face of the approaching enemy the British Government supplied a considerable amount of money to the Armenians and Georgians through the two methods mentioned above. The British Consul at Tiflis was authorised to draw on Baring Bros. up to £ 100,000 later extended to £ 250,000, selling telegraphic transfer or sight bills at his discretion. In addition, the Imperial Bank in Persia was instructed to buy up all available rouble notes which amounted 6,808,000 roubles (roughly £ 144,000), which were disposed as follows: 1 million roubles paid to the Turkish-Armenian Committee at the end of December 1917. 3 millions roubles expended on the purchase of arms, etc., for Armenian and Georgian troops. 2,808,000 roubles sent from Teheran to Tiflis about the middle of January 1918 (final disposal unknown). Finally rouble notes were purchased abroad resulting in the despatch of 2,558,376 roubles to the Caucasus in two consignments which left England on the 15 and 29 January. These, however, did not reach Baghdad in time for transmission to Tiflis before communication was finally interrupted.[2] It does not seem not very clear how much of the £ 250,000 was paid out. But from McDonell's report it appears that the Transcaucasian Commissariat received 4,000,000 roubles and the Russian volunteers 200,000 from the British Financial Board.[3]

In addition to military schemes, the Foreign Office considered the employment of the rebellion of Sharif Hussein as a part of a propaganda effort to win over the Muslims of Caucasia. The proposal was put forward by

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[1]FO 371/3283/4022/W/38, January 7, 1918, Foreign Office minutes with regard to South East Russia.

[2]FO 371/3284/75611/W/38, April 30, 1918, A Memorandum by War Office to the Foreign Office regarding the support afforded to the Armenians. It was reported that from 25 February 1918 to 6 April 1918 all telegraphic communication with Tiflis was severed; since the latter date it had only been possible to transmit a small number of messages by wireless from Tabriz. See also Arslanian, *The British Military Involvement*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[3]FO 371/3657/37175/W/58, March 8, 1919, Major A.R. McDonell's report on his activities in Caucasia. In his account McDonell reported that General Lebidinsky was still the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army on the Caucasian front in October 1917, although there was not such an army. The actual figures suggested that there were two Armenian Divisions, one Assyrian Division, one Division of Russian Volunteers and perhaps a mixed division of Greeks and other nationalities. He maintained that nothing could be hoped from the Georgian army whose infantry were mostly Bolshevik while the cavalry had declared its intention of only guarding its own territory. He and his colleagues hoped that it was possible to form a volunteer army of sufficient strength to hold the frontier and keep the conquered territory.

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Captain Noel, a member of the British military mission in Caucasia, and supported by Sir P. Cox, civil commissioner in Mesopotamia. In his proposal Capt. Noel suggested that

> We should move King of Arabia to send influential deputation to Caucasus to invoke assistance of all Muhammedans there and in Crimea in struggle of Arabs to liberate holy places from Turkish yoke, and urging them therefore to continue war and retain maximum number of Turks on Caucasian front.[1]

A second stage in the propaganda programme would be to make a statement to the press of a project for a great pilgrim railway connecting the Caucasus and Mecca, to be built with Muhammedan capital from all over the World. The commercial evolution of the Tartar community had reached such a stage as to give great importance to the question of future foreign commercial relations, and from the propaganda point of view it would seem necessary to show that 'we are interested in this question, and are ready to open up communications capable of supplying materials required for the development of trade and natural resources of the country.'[2]

The proposal received support from Sir P. Cox who argued that the Arab movement could be used in order to win Russian Muslims to their side. A. Toynbee, however, expressed an opposite view in that the movement was regarded as reactionary and encouraged by Britain in order to make schisms in Islam, and therefore, it would backfire. Gasel minuted that if the proposal was adopted, their task would be easier in a sense that "we are prepared to work the Arab movement to any extent, and to attempt to flood the Russian Muslims with literature and pictures extolling the King of the Hejaz as the saviour of Islam." M. Skyes also gave his support to the proposal by agreeing the view of the Arab officers in London that the pro-Arab propaganda would be worth pushing through Arab-officer agents in the Caucasus.[3] Sir R. Wingate, Cairo, voiced his opposition by saying that Hussein was little more than a name for the Muslims of Caucasia whose languages were not Arabic and who had doubtless heard of the Arab revolt as a diabolical attempt to destroy Islamic unity. The success of the mission was, therefore, minimised and its failure would react very unfavourably on Entente propaganda.[4] His doubt was joined by R. Graham who emphasised the need to find suitable

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[1] FO 371/3300/3644/W/38, January 7, 1918, From Sir P. Cox, Baghdad to FO.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] FO 371/3300/3651/W/38, January 7, 1918, From India Office to FO enquiring the view of FO on the employment of Arab movement in Caucasia.
[4] FO 371/3400/41977/W/44, March 7, 1918, From Sir R. Wingate, Cairo, to FO.

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men. He minuted that "I fear that the typical long-bearded sheiks with patriarchal ideas and an intimate knowledge of the Quran, who will probably be selected, withstand little chance as propagandists among the Tartars, with their Bolshevik ideas or compound with Turkish propagandists." However, Lord Hardinge, while accepting this doubt, noted that they might be better than nothing.[1]

Though the proposal received the sanction of the Foreign Office and the Cabinet the delegation to the Caucasus could not proceed as a result of the successful operations of the Turkish army in the early part of 1918. Thus the reason for a delegation to go ahead was terminated since almost all Muslims had come under Turkish influence already. As a consequence, the proposal ended in failure even before any attempt was made to realise it.

The First Mission of Dunsterforce

The second aspect of the policy of supporting the Armenians and Georgians was related to the organisation and training of local forces. To realise this, it was considered that a number of British officers with the necessary equipment would be enough. Thus arrangements were made on January 14, 1918 to send Major- General L. Dunsterville with 150 officers and 300 non-commissioned — officers to help in the organisation of the local forces.[2] In addition to this, the mission had to carry out the task of co-ordinating the various local governments of the proposed South Eastern Union of the Ukrainians, the Cossacks and the Caucasians. According to Sir G. Buchanan, this task was a complicated one requiring political skills rather than those of a military character.[3] He also brought to the notice of the Foreign Office officials the political difference between the Transcaucasians and the Cossacks. The former were predominantly socialist and anti-militarist while the latter were constitutional with a tendency towards monarchism with a strong military element. Therefore, it was imperative that they were dealt with on different lines.

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] FO 371/3284/75611/W/38, April 30, 1918, A Memorandum by War Office to the Foreign Office regarding the support afforded to the Armenians. See also Ellis, *The Transcaspian Episode, op. cit.*, pp. 20-21, Allen-Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields, op. cit.*, p. 483.

[3] FO 371/3283/2428/W/38, January 4, 1918, From Buchanan, Petrograd, to FO.

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In addition to the complicated nature of the task, the situation in Transcaucasia was not satisfactory. As noted earlier, the Bolshevik Revolution had had destructive effects in the region where a federal government had been established in November by the Georgians, Armenians and Azeris whose political outlooks and interests were quite divergent and conflicting.[1] It was reported that Colonel Pike, who had succeeded General Offley Shore as chief of the British Mission in Tiflis, was largely incapacitated by the ceaseless intrigues between the several nationalities concerned. The War Office memorandum reported that

> ... the only hope of success lay in uniting the various elements — Armenians, Georgians, Azeris — in common opposition to the Turks. Every effort was made to effect this purpose through the National Councils and the National leaders, both in Transcaucasia and abroad, but to no avail. The Baku Tartars, [i.e. Azeris] were openly pro-Turk while many of the Georgians shared the same sympathies. The Armenians alone were on the whole sincere, but even Adronik himself eventually declared that he was surrounded by traitors and betrayers.[2]

A bitterness against the British, moreover, commenced as a result of the Armenians' attitude. The other nationalities, namely the Georgians and the Azerbaijanis, were unhappy with the fact that most British support was lent to the Armenians. Consequently, the Muslim population especially acquired a hostile attitude towards the British personnel and in the early part of 1918 orders were issued by the Muslim Committee of Azerbaijan to arrest all British people travelling on the railways.[3] Furthermore, the Georgians who had been in favour of the idea of receiving British assistance to defend themselves, had not made up their mind yet. General Offley-Shore who met General Dunsterville in Hamadan after he had left Tiflis, reported to him that the Tiflis politicians were hesitant and rather pro-German. He informed him that 'they considered a deal with the Germans as possibly a better safeguard against the Turks than reliance on British assistance'.[4]

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[1] For more information with regard to the effects of the Bolshevik Revolution see chapter 1 section 4, *The Bolshevik Revolution and Caucasia.*

[2] FO 371/3284/75611/W/38, April 30, 1918, A Memorandum by War Office to the Foreign Office regarding the support afforded to the Armenians. General Adronik was a national hero of the Armenians, who commanded the Turkish Armenian forces in Eastern Anatolia.

[3] FO 371/3657/37175/W/58, March 8, 1919, Major A. R. MacDonell's report on his activities in Caucasia.

[4] Lenczowski, *Russia and West in Iran*, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18. See also Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia, op. cit.*, p. 4; Arslanian, *Dunsterville's Adventures*, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

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It was in these circumstances that General Dunsterville was ordered with his small but effective force to proceed to Tiflis. Since all routes to Tiflis from west, east and north were closed the only route he could take was, as Lord Hardinge minuted, from the south through Baghdad, Hamadan and Tabriz.[1]

Apart from the undesirable conditions in Tiflis, General Dunsterville had more immediate problems before reaching his mission's destination. His mission's force was not complete yet when he left Baghdad on 27 January 1918 with 12 officers, 41 men and 41 Fords motor cars.[2] His mission had originally been decided to be 150 officers and 300 non-commissioned-officers.[3] Another 70 officers and 140 men, picked from the South African, Australian and Canadian units in France, with a special party of Russian officers to act as liaison men, had also set out from Italy in February by ship to join his mission which would be known as "Dunsterforce".[4] Dunsterforce would have to proceed through Khanaqin, Kermanshah, Hamadan, Kazvin and the province of Gilan to the Iranian port of Enzeli on the Caspian, and from Enzeli to Baku by sea and from Baku to Tiflis by rail. The total route was as follows:

a) Baghdad to Enzeli ---by road--- 600 miles.
b) Enzeli to Baku ------by sea---- 227 miles.
c) Baku to Tiflis ------by rail--- 344 miles.

The land route was liable to serious interruptions by snow in winter while in addition conditions on the road in normal times were not satisfactory. The rail route from Baku to Tiflis was frequently severed by armed Muslims. Moreover, to find ships from Enzeli to Baku was not easy since these cities were controlled by the Bolsheviks whose attitude towards the British was not clear at that time.[5] In addition to these, the tribes of North-West Iran, such as the Shahsavans, were incited by Turkish and German-Austrian agents who, besides, influenced and even directed the Jangali movement in the Gilan

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[1]FO 371/3289/32543/W/38, February 20, 1918, Lord Hardinge's minute with respect to policy in Russia and Siberia.
[2]Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
[3]FO 371/3283/4022/W/38, January 7, 1918, Foreign Office minutes with regard to South East Russia. See R. Graham's minute.
[4]Brinkley, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
[5]FO 371/3284/75611/W/38, April 30, 1918, A Memorandum by War Office to the Foreign Office regarding the support afforded to the Armenians.

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province to rebel against the Teheran Government.[1]

With all these obstacles in front of him, Dunsterville embarked on his adventure with his mission on January 27, 1918. He reached Enzeli on 17 February 1918.[2] Before reaching Enzeli his mission had to pass through Khanaqin, Kermanshah, Hamadan and Kazvin with an unfriendly population under pan-Islamist influence. His more serious problem, however, came when he approached the Gilan territory where the Jangali movement had been in action with a strong anti-British tendency. Kuchik Khan's around 3,000 forces had closed the road to Enzeli. Moreover, Captain Noel had been taken captive by him. Therefore, General Dunsterville tried to make a deal with him but failed. Eventually he forced his way to Enzeli.[3]

In the meantime the Foreign Office in London was informed that the Foreign Commissar of Soviet Russia, Trotsky, concurred with the idea of organising, training and supporting the Armenians in the Caucasus against the Turks. He doubted, however, if the Armenians really meant to fight.[4] Upon receiving Trotsky's approval of the scheme the Foreign Office thought it appropriate to ask him to facilitate General Dunsterville's journey. However, having faced the facts on the ground, L. Oliphant thought that it was rather up to the Jangalis and their German masters who had the upper hand regarding the safe journey of General Dunsterville.[5]

In Enzeli, Dunsterville found that the circumstances were not convenient. The Bolsheviks with a hostile attitude completely controlled the city. Comrade Cheliapan, the chief executive of the Bolshevik Committee, did not welcome him and his mission. To the surprise of General Dunsterville, the Committee informed him that it knew his mission's objectives, and that in view of the fact that the Central Powers were no longer their enemies, his presence was no longer required. For Russia the war was over, and, therefore,

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[1] IOR:L/P&S/18/C.173, 24 February 1918, A Memorandum by the Political Department of the India Office regarding the Persian situation. According to Dunsterville the Jangali movement was commenced by a well-known revolutionary Mirza Kuchik Khan, a honest, well-meaning idealist. Liberty, equality and fraternity were his principal program. "Persia for the Persians" and "Away with the foreigners" were other items which displayed his Persian nationalist character. Yet he was controlled by a German officer, Von Passchen with the help of Austrian instructors. Turkish machine guns and ammunition formed a large part of material of his army. He had forcibly taken over the administration of the whole of the Gilan country and was in conjunction with the Bolsheviks in Enzeli. See L.C. Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*, London: Edward Arnold, 1920, pp. 14, 29.

[2] Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[4] FO 371/3404/67063/W/38, March 30, 1918. From Lockhart, Moscow, to FO.

[5] *Ibid.*, See Mr. Oliphant's minute dated 30.3.1918

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they objected to a mission whose avowed intention was to prolong the war. The Committee further explained that Great Britain, as a symbol of imperialism, was deeply mistrusted and the Tiflis people whom his mission aimed to help were anti-Bolshevists. As a result, the Bolshevik government of Baku asked Enzeli to stop the British mission at all costs.[1] As a consequence of this attitude General Dunsterville's efforts to persuade the Committee to let them go did not reach any result. After his last effort, the Committee accepted to let his mission proceed to Baku provided that his mission recognised the Bolshevik government in writing and moved to Baku under Bolshevik auspices. Dunsterville regarded it unacceptable. He states that 'with the Jangalis and Bolsheviks around us, Bolsheviks ahead of us and Kuchik Khan waiting for us on the road behind the longer we delayed the smaller would be our chances to escape.' Therefore, after securing enough oil from the Committee in return for a number of vans, he ordered his men to move back to Hamadan on 20 February 1918.[2]

General Dunsterville points out that his real hope lay with the Armenians, who were in control of Baku together with the Bolsheviks, to arrange a safe passage for his mission. Yet he failed to see his expectation coming through.[3]

Dunsterforce thus failed to fulfil its first mission. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that a genuine attempt had been made, but because of circumstances deriving from other sources than the mission itself, it was forced to retire. With this result, the policy of organising and employing the local elements against the Turks in Caucasia came to an end. It was thought possible, however, that the circumstances in Enzeli or in Baku might change, and the mission again might try to reach its destination.

Yet it seems that even if the mission at its first attempt had been successful it would have been too late to get any successful result since the Turkish army had started its operations to advance on 13 February, capturing Trabzon on 24 February and Erzurum on 12 March without being faced by any serious resistance from the Armenian and Georgian forces and contunied to

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[1] Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 47. See also Arslanian, A. H., *Dunsterville's Adventure's: A Reappraisal*, *Int. J. of Midddle Eastern Studies*, 12(1980), p. 203.

[3] FO 371/3284/75611/W/38, April 30, 1918, A Memorandum by War Office to the Foreign Office regarding the support afforded to the Armenians.

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move ahead rapidly.[1] In the meantime, the Transcaucasian Assembly meeting on 23 February took a decision to make a peace with the Ottoman Government on March 1.

These realities on the ground indicated that unless a large number of troops were deployed the efforts of a number of officers to train and command the Armenians, who constituted the bulk of the forces available, Georgians, Russian Volunteers, Assyrians and others would have proved fruitless. As explained earlier, the rivalry between Germany and Turkey helped the Georgians to avoid to a great extent any Turkish occupation, although German invasion in practice replaced it. The Azeris largely benefitted from this situation since the Turkish presence in Caucasia coincided with their interests. The only losers were the Armenians. However, they themselves sought a German refuge in which they did not secure a great deal of success.

The British administration at the end failed to provide the shelter the Armenians had looked for. The War Office, however, argued that anything possible to support them was not spared as indicated in a memorandum. It points out that

> ... although the occupation of Armenia by the Turks can only be regarded as one of the tragedies of the war, it should be recognised that all possible efforts were made to save the Armenians from the consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution and the disappearance of the Russian army which was protecting them...[2]

It can be seen from this account that the War Office had put its finger on the fact that it was not the British Government in the first place which had caused the misery of the Armenians who had found themselves in that situation as a result of Russian withdrawal from the war. Secondly, though they had had a chance to make an early and possibly favourable peace with Turkey, the Armenians appserently hoped that they might be able to keep large Russian occupied areas of Turkey for themselves with British assistance.

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[1] In his minute on a report regarding the situation in South East Russia, R. Graham states that 'it looks as if General Dunsterville will arrive too late to do anything even if he ever gets there.' J. H. Selby points out in the same report that 'lack of financial support is less responsible for it than are the disinclination of the Cossacks to fight and racial antagonism in the Caucasus which prevents any effective cooperation between Azeris, Armenians, Georgians etc...' See FO 371/3283/34110/W/38, February 23, 1918, from Lord Reading, Washington, to FO, transmitting a paraphrase of telegram from US consul at Tiflis dated February 12.
In this telegram it was reported that the Armenians while trying to get British aid as well as German, were of the inclination to come to an understanding with the Bolsheviks with a view to safeguarding themselves against Muhammedans.

[2] FO 371/3284/75611/W/38, April 30, 1918, A Memorandum by War Office to the Foreign Office regarding the support afforded to the Armenians.

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It was the Armenians who, as a matter of fact, encouraged the British Government to make an attempt to employ them by suggesting their readiness to fight the Turks if Britain could give them a helping hand.[1]

The only way to stop the Turkish advance was to transfer a large number of troops into Caucasia. That was not a possibility. Firstly, there was no adequate number of troops to deploy. The nearest British army was the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force under the command of General W. Marshall in Baghdad. The forces available to him needed to be deployed in Mesopotamia itself since the Turks might launch active operations to regain Baghdad. Secondly, even if there were enough troops the question of transferring them into Caucasia was difficult to find an answer. As seen, not only the bad conditions of the long route but a hostile population were two eminent problems regarding this issue.[2] Consequently, the idea of sending a large number of forces was out of consideration.

The Change of Policy

While General Dunsterville expected to see a new opportunity, the Turkish campaign resulted in regaining Russian occupied lands as well as Kars, Ardahan and Batum, the provinces that had been ceded to Russia by the Ottomans in 1878, around the middle of April. The peace conference in Batum in April left large areas to Turkey including some territory not assigned to her at the Brest Treaty. As noted earlier, the Georgians who went over to the Germans for protection against the Turks were controlled by their protectors; the Azeris were engaged in preparing themselves under Turkish officers' instructions for operations in Azerbaijan.[3]

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[1]In his report, MacDonell indicated that about October 1917 a deputation, consisting mainly of wealthy and influential Armenians from Tiflis, visited Sir C. Marling, British Minister at Teheran. The object of the deputation was to get into touch with the British Foreign Office and find out what were the aims of the British Government in the Caucasus, and whether the Armenian people could 'rely on British support and if so to what extent...' The Armenians maintained that their own people would remain at their posts and, with the new forces that they hoped to form would be able to guard the frontier and avoid a Turkish invasion. See FO 371/3657/37175/W/58 March 8, 1919, Major A. R. MacDonell's report on his activities between September 1917 to August 1918 in Caucasia.

[2]Arslanian, A. H., *Dunsterville's Adventure's: A Reappraisal, Int. J. of Midddle Eastern Studies*, 12(1980), p. 203.

[3]For more information regarding the situation in Transcaucasia during the Central Powers' involvement see chapter three.

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Under these circumstances, the British authorities in London found themselves in a desperate position. In April, Colonel Pike and the British mission at Tiflis with other Entente missions had to leave town before the German troops were deployed. It was reported that there was nothing to be hoped for from the national military formations.[1] In this report it was pointed out that the Georgian members of the Transcaucasian government were pro-German supported by a large pro-Turk Muslim clique. In addition, the leaders of Azerbaijan were in negotiations with the Persian Democratic Committee at Tabriz to secure the whole of Azerbaijan and a part of northern Gilan to join them under a Turkish protectorate, though the Committee dissented and sent a delegation to Tiflis to protest against the inclusion of any Persian territory.[2] Upon receiving this information, R. Graham pointed out that 'in such circumstances it will be useless to try and to get Dunsterville through.' Lord Hardinge and the Secretary of State Balfour concurred.

A sudden development in Baku in March 1918, however, gave the British policy makers some hope. As seen earlier, Baku, which was the only centre to have recognised the Bolshevik authorities in central Russia, witnessed a tragic event in which the Muslims were severely suppressed by the coalition of Bolsheviks and Armenians who killed several thousand Azeris including women and children. The effect of this development was significant. Although signing a peace treaty on 3 March 1918 with Germany and Turkey the Bolsheviks in Moscow declared that they would defend Transcaucasia against Germans and Turks, and, therefore, would assist all nationalities with the same objective.[3] In his telegram Colonel Pike suggested that 'our best course seems now to negotiate with Bolsheviks and Armenians in Baku and hold the line Tabriz to Enzeli.' On this information and the submission of Pike, R. Graham minuted that 'if the Armenians get the upper hand it may be possible for General Dunsterville to effect something.' Lord Hardinge added that 'Baku is occupied by the Armenians and Bolsheviks, it looks as though

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[1] FO 371/3300/64404/W/38, April 11, 1918, from Marling, Teheran, to FO, transmitting a memorandum of information from an intelligence officer named Stchiken, regarding Transcaucasia.

[2] *Ibid.* See also FO 371/3300/49280/W/38, March 18,1918, from Marling (Tehran) to FO, transmitting information received from M. Hildenbrandt, late Russian Consul at Kazvin; and FO 371/3300/61812/W/38, April 8, 1918, form Marling to FO, transmitting further information. In this telegram it was reported that most British personnel in the region were in difficult conditions, facing possible arrests. J. H. Selby's minute expressed the hopelessness by saying that 'this does not look very promising for General Dunsterville's journey' while Graham commented that 'this is worse than we feared.'

[3] FO 371/3284/66538/W/38, April 15, 1918, from Colonial Pike, Tiflis, to DMI.

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this might be a case where we could cooperate with Bolsheviks and Armenians to fight the Germans and Turks.'[1]

As a result of these developments, a new policy was in progress in London. When it was obvious that nothing could be done in Transcaucasia it was considered to be essential to prevent the enemy's further eastward advance into Persia and Transcaspia. In May, the Turks were already in occupation of Alexandropol in Armenia and Sharaf Khaneh, the port at the northern end of Lake Urumiye, and on their way to Tabriz and Baku. The Germans after taking full control of the Black Sea were at Tiflis.[2] The attainability of the Turco-German scheme of penetrating Central Asia was almost certain. Consequently, there was an urgent need to close the door in the North-West of Iran. In a memorandum the India Office pointed out that even if this door were closed, the enemy still could have access to Central Asia and India through the Caspian. Yet to block the North-West of Iran would certainly make it difficult for the enemy to move forward. Thus the memorandum highlighted the need to act as quickly as possible. It maintained that any action which might be taken would have to be in conjunction with the Persian Government's consent in order to avoid an accusation of invading Persia.[3]

The India Office accepted the fact that there were no available troops to launch a massive operation. Yet it proposed that

> a fleet of armoured motor-cars, under the charge of British officers and non-commissioned officers of General Dunsterville's party, should be established at the southern end of the Kasr-i Shirin-Kermanshah-Hamadan road, and should gradually extend its operations northwards in the direction of the Caspian as circumstances permit. The British officers in charge would have authority to organise local levies etc as opportunity offered, or take over existing organisations (e.g., the Cossack Brigade) to assist them in their work. It is believed that, given the right quality of officer and the necessary financial support, the objects in view could be achieved without further assistance from regular troops.[4]

It appears that the proposal of the India Office was accepted by the War Cabinet and in addition to Dunsterforce's mission two more missions were arranged to meet the requirements of the situation. The second mission to be sent to Persia was under the command of Major-General W. Malleson, and left

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] Swettenham, *op. cit.*, p. 46, Arslanian, *Dunsteville's Adventures, op. cit.*, pp. 203-4.
[3] IOR:L/P&S/18/C.173, 24 February 1918, A Memorandum by Political Department of the India Office regarding the Persian situation.
[4] *Ibid.*

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Quetta for Meshed in the Persian province of Khorasan in June 1918, arriving at its destination about the middle of July.[1] The mission's task was to fill the gap left there by the withdrawal of Russian troops earlier by taking over what was known as the "East Persian Cordon"; to keep a close watch on the situation in Transcaspia; to take counter-action against enemy agents endeavouring to penetrate Afghanistan and Baluchistan from the West; and to take advantage of any possibilities of denying the use of Central Asian railways to the enemy in the event of Baku being occupied by the enemy.[2] To the East of the Caspian, there was an anti-Bolshevik government led by a socialist revolutionary F. Funtikov who welcomed the Malleson Mission, called Malmis. General Malleson was to sign an agreement with this government on August 19, 1918. This agreement, among other things, provided all facilities for the British mission in return for which the British Government would defend Baku which was the door to Russian Central Asia and on the safety of which the economic life and military power of Transcaspia and Turkestan largely depend; and would garrison the part of Krasnovodsk with a view to defending it with infantry and guns against any attacks either by Turco-German or Bolshevik forces. Lastly the Transcaspian government would receive financial and military supplies from the British Government.[3]

The third mission, under the command of Colonel P.T. Etherton and Lieutenant-Colonel F.M. Bailey, was organised to proceed to Tashkent via Kashgar to establish contact with the local soviet and ascertain what steps, if any, might be taken to deny the use of the Central Asian railways and cotton stocks to the enemy.[4]

Thus, the Dunsterforce which had originally been organised for the purpose of stopping the enemy before the Caucasus became a part of a new scheme to hinder the enemy before Persia and Transcaspia. The task of the mission was transformed into securing a road from Baghdad to Enzeli and reporting on Turkish moves in the direction of Tabriz and developments in Baku while at the same time establishing contact with friendly elements in Transcaucasia who might be willing and able to resist the Turkish advance

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[1] Ellis, *The Transcaspian Episode, op. cit.,* pp. 20-22.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 23, Brinkley, *op. cit.,* p. 64. By mid-summer Malleson had two squadrons of the 28th Indian Cavalry Regiment and two companies of the 19th Punjabi Infantry Battalion in position some 160 miles from Ashkabad across the Russian border.

[3] IOR:L/P&S/18/C.187, 22 August 1918, From Major-General Malleson, British Military Mission, Meshed, to the Chief of the General Staff, Simla. See the full text of the Agreement.

[4] Ellis, *op. cit.,* p. 20.

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towards the Caspian Sea.[1] His patrol trucks checking the Turkish movements achieved a great success in containing a possible Turkish breakthrough into Iran and beyond by giving the feeling that there was a large British army in the region.[2] It seems that Dunsterforce attained a rate of success in its task. The mission took control of Khanaqin, Kermanshah, Hamadan, Qazvin, Bijan and Zinjan. Dunsterville reports that if these towns had not been effectively controlled and their leaders who were members of the Democratic Movement in Persia with anti-British leanings had not been pacified the Jangali Movement would have spread under German-Turco instruction, thus giving the enemy easy access to Persia and beyond.[3]

In his efforts to pacify the Jangalis of Gilan Dunsterville was greatly helped by a detachment of remnant Russian forces, around 12,000, commanded by Colonel (later General) Bicherakov. Dunsterville arranged an agreement with Bicherakov in April. This agreement provided that Bicherakov would not withdraw his troops from Persia till Dunsterville could replace them with British troops, and the first operation to be undertaken would be an attack on Kuchik Khan's army and the clearing of the road from Kazvin to the Caspian. In return, Dunsterville undertook to provide financial assistance from the British Government.[4]

This agreement brought fruits for General Dunsterville. Kuchik Khan's forces were dispersed by the Russians in cooperation with Dunsterforce. Dunsterville maintained that if there had been no cooperation with the Russians the Jangalis would happily have let them pass through their territories back to Russia, and Bicherakov would not have resorted to the use of force to make his way through.[5] Consequently, Dunsterville managed to take control of the rest of the road from Kazvin to Enzeli, which they reached on June 27.

Nevertheless, Dunsterforce failed to prevent the advance of the Turkish forces towards Tabriz, which was taken by them on 14 June. The Turks moved even further south-east, occupying the Shabli Pass on the road to Mianeh.[6] If they had wanted they could have easily acquired the north corner of

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
[2] Lenczowski, *Russia and West in Iran*, *op. cit.*, p. 18. See also Swettenham, *op. cit.*, p. 42-43.
[3] Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-4.
[4] *Ibid*, pp. 77-78.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 174.
[6] FO 371/3335/130177/W/38, July 26, 1918, Secret War Office Memorandum on the Turco-German advance into the Caucasus.

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Persian Azerbaijan including Ardabil and the port of Astara on the Caspian, thus enabling themselves to join hands with the Jangalis, gaining supplies and cutting off to south Caspian area to British movements. However, the Turks did not make an attempt in that direction, a possible result of British activities in pretending that they had a substantial number of troops on the ground.[1]

The Involvement of Dunsterforce in the Defence of Baku

While patrolling the north-west corridor of Iran, at the same time General Dunsterville's mind was occupied with the possibility and necessity of securing Baku without which the control of the Caspian was impossible. Moreover, large stocks of oil would have been denied to the enemy. Otherwise it would enable the enemy to get access to a vital lifeline to prolong the war. Therefore, Baku's importance was enormous and any risk was justified in an endeavour to secure it[2]

Nevertheless, the British policy-makers in London had given up the idea of defending Caucasia. Their attention was focused on obstructing the Turks and Germans to move further from the Caucasus. For that reason their attention was placed on controlling the fleet of the Caspian as well as blocking the north-west corridor of Persia. For this purpose General Marshall in Baghdad was ordered to allocate all available assistance to Dunsterville. General Marshall, however, was in disagreement with this policy. He first delayed the release of troops and the equipment to Dunsterforce on the grounds of his belief that the best course to take to knock out the Turks was to launch a bold offensive against Mosul. The troops, he thought, were needed in that direction. He also did not share the view that the enemy was seriously in any position to contemplate a military offensive into Transcaspia or Persia.[3] It seems, however, that his proposal ended in failure since no such operation was put on the ground till the end of the war.

In the meantime the situation in Caucasia worsened since the Turks acquired the districts of Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikh to the east of Batum, some villages near Ozurgeti to the north of Batum and a considerable portion of Borchalo where they had pushed up the Alexandropol-Tiflis railway, until

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[1]Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-8.
[2]*Ibid.*, p. 141.
[3]Sir William Marshall, *Memories of Four Fronts*, London, 1929, pp. 282-283.

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stopped by the Germans from Tiflis. The disagreement on the question of Georgian territories gained by the Turks who had also occupied Abastuman and Atskhur, two Georgian towns between Batum and Tiflis, upon which the negotiations had concentrated, as well as the utilisation of the Georgian railways for Turkish troop movements, proved to be a substantial deadlock for the Turks and Germans to overcome. As noted earlier, the rival aims of two Allies played a significant role here. The Germans, supposedly working in the Georgian interest, held up Turkish trains towards Baku until Enver Pasha ordered the evacuation of the two towns mentioned above in late August.[1] In other words, in the face of obstruction from Germany the Turkish campaign against Baku was delayed for about two months. Yet the Turks did not give in their campaign. They pushed across by road transport to the Tiflis-Baku railway line outside Georgian territory, and as early as June 7 they had established outposts within 85 miles of Baku and despite German opposition continued to concentrate troops in Azerbaijan.[2] They did not, however, have sufficient forces to push on till July 9 when the Baku Soviet troops, mainly Armenians numbering 7,500, began to retire; in spite of the efforts of the Russian General Bicherakov they continued to put up little real resistance and by July 30, the Turks had occupied Khurdalan, 9 miles north-west of Baku, Bicherakov retiring northwards.[3]

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[1]FO 371/3411/158228/W/44, September 17, 1918, A memorandum by DMI to FO regarding military situation in Armenia and Caucasus. In this memorandum it was reported that during the period of hostilities the Georgians showed little military ability or bravery. For instance, Batum, a place of great strength, was captured by only 400 Turkish soldiers; Chkenkeli, the Georgian Prime Minister of the federation, was reported to have agreed to the evacuation of Kars without any reference to the Armenians. The memorandum accepts the fact that the Georgians were undoubtedly in a desperate position but their general conduct had not been at all in consonance with the martial ardour and military traditions so repeatedly emphasised by their apologists. There is also a similar reference in the memorandum regarding the Armenians. The claim by the President of the Baku Armenian Council that Armenians in Erivan where there was a force of 25,000 Armenians commanded by Nazarbegian and in Nakhichevan where there was a substantial number of Armenian forces commanded by Andranik supported the Baku Armenians, therefore, deserved to receive assistance from the British was put into question. The Memorandum claimed that there was no reliable evidence as to how far the settled population of Armenia could be relied on to assist actively in an organised offensive against the Turks since the opposition to the Turks in Armenia did not constitute a menace to the enemy who was in action towards Baku.

[2]FO 371/3335/130177/W/38, July 26, 1918, Secret War Office Memorandum on the Turco-German advance into the Caucasus.

[3]FO 371/3411/158228/W/44, September 17, 1918, A memorandum by DMI to FO regarding military situation in Armenia and Caucasus. When he was in Enzeli with General Dunsterville Bicherakov accepted the invitation from the Bolsheviks to convert to Bolshevism as the only way of getting a footing in the Caucasus. He sailed for Alyat, south of Baku, on July 6 taking with him five of Dunsterville's officers and four armoured cars. See Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

From the beginning of June the Turks started to invent an *Army of Islam* from the manpower of Azerbaijan together with regular Ottoman Turkish forces. This task was assigned to Nuri Pasha who was the half-brother of Enver and came from Tripoli in May for this assignment. Nuri paid special attention to the recruitment of the Azeris who had already got a good deal of arms in their possession. FO 371/3335/130177/W/38, July 26, 1918, Secret War Office Memorandum on the Turco-German advance into the Caucasus.. See also Allen and Muratoff, *op. cit.*, p. 479.

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It seems that from May to July the British authorities in London considered the idea of sending British troops into Baku negatively. The scheme which was proposed by General Dunsterville at first by requesting permission on 24 May 1918 to go to Baku with Bicherakov and which also received support from Sir C. Marling in Teheran and Major MacDonell in Baku, was similar to one that had been the original reason for establishing Dunsterforce. In Baku there were around 10,000 Armenians and several thousand Russian forces and quite enough equipment and ammunition. What was needed was a unity of command providing leadership and thus raising the morale of the troops with training.[1] It appeared to Dunsterville and others who supported the idea, that by furnishing these requirements, namely a united command and basic training, it would not be impossible to defend the city against the Turks. In his telegram from Baku, Major Macdonell urged the authorities to arrange at least one British officer who would be easily able to consolidate those elements which were friendly to Britain.[2]

The Foreign Office seems to have considered the scheme favourably. Nevertheless, it was recognised that two factors might obstruct any move in implementing the scheme. First, it was not certain that the British troops could land in Baku since the Turks posed a menace to any attempt by the British forces to land in Baku by attacking and disrupting the communication lines. Second, it was deemed not preferable to have any dealings with the Bolsheviks whose position in Baku as well as in Central Asia where their power was based on oppression was precarious. They were hated in those Muslim lands. Accordingly, it was considered in London that it would be a risky operation in the sense that they could lose power to the native people and would make the anti-British feeling among the Muslims still stronger than it was already in this part of the world.[3] In his minute Toynbee concludes that

> ... in answering appeals for military assistance in the Caucasus it is therefore probably best to emphasise the geographical difficulties, while leaving no doubt of our sympathy and community of interest with them, and holding out vague hopes of cooperation at Baku.[4]

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[1] Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[2] CAB 27/24, Minutes, Eastern Committee 11th meeting, 31 May 1918.

[3] FO 371/3408/88525/W/44, May 18, 1918, From J. Malcolm to Sir R. Graham of Foreign Office requesting facilities for an Armenian Socialist to proceed to Scandinavia to counteract Turkish propaganda. See Toynbee's minute, dated 22.6.1918.

[4] *Ibid.* When A. Toynbee wrote his minute, the Jangalis were not yet cleared by Bicherakov and the Turks had recently captured Tabriz and were moving further south.

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In the meantime Dunsterville proposed several times to the War Office for permission to be given to him to proceed to Baku. He first requested to go to Baku with Bicherakov on 24 May but received a negative response. On 27 May he then proposed to accompany Bicherakov with two squadrons and a company but was turned down by General Marshall in Baghdad. His similar proposal on 4 June received support from Baghdad that asked for the approval of the War Office. In reply the War Office sanctioned the preparations being made, yet fell short of permission to go to Baku.[1]

The situation in Baku meanwhile was complicated by the fact that it was ruled by a coalition of Armenians and Bolsheviks. The Armenians whose support clearly enabled Shaumanian and his Bolshevik friends to establish an administration, had hoped that the Bolsheviks in Central Russia could afford to send substantial forces to rescue them from the forces of the Army of Islam.[2] Yet the expectations of the Armenian community were not realised since the Bolshevik regime in Moscow was unable to provide necessary support. Only a cavalry force of about 170 men from Astrakhan and a detachment of 780 infantry along with some artillery from Central Russia under the command of Georgii K. Petrov had arrived in Baku at the end of July.[3] Consequently, the Armenians turned their attention to General Dunsterville and Bicherakov who in late June had reached Enzeli. They strongly tried to persuade Shaumanian to ask the help of Dunsterforce and Bicherakov. Meanwhile they established private contacts through secret representatives with Dunsterville in Enzeli to inform him their desire to receive British aid. Dunsterville, thus, received almost daily messengers from the Armenians and Social Revolutionaries who were also in favour of British assistance.[4]

General Dunsterville was encouraged very much especially by the Armenians that with a number of British officers and soldiers the city would easily stand against the enemy.[5] It was reported on July 3 that all classes in Baku were determined to resist the Turks, and that British aid was desired but the Bolsheviks were suspicious and jealous of British intentions and objected to the British uniforms. They were ready, however, to barter oil and petrol in

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[1]FO 371/3411/154943/W/44, September 11, 1918, From WO to G.O.C. Mesopotamia.

[2]Arslanian, *Dunsterville's Adventures*, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 206.

[4]FO 371/3301/88031/W/38, May 15, 1918, from Sir C. Marling, Teheran, to FO. In his telegram Sir C. Marling indicated that Social Revolutionaries were conducting propaganda including through their newspaper *Zarya Turana* (?) in favour of and would welcome British assistance. See also Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

[5]Lenczowski, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

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exchange for rifles and money. Although there were 10,000 Armenian forces out of an 80,000 Armenian population in Baku and several thousand Russians their value was reported to be little and with ill-organised structure.[1]

All the efforts of the Armenians and Social Revolutionary Russians to induce the Bolsheviks to call on British assistance came to no avail. Since the Bolsheviks in Central Russia had made a peace with Germany and her allies, Shaumanian was not in a position to enter into a co-operation with the British. It seems that even if he might see it as useful, his masters in Moscow would surely be under pressure from Germany who would not like to see Britain controlling the oil deposits of the city. Nevertheless, after some hesitation, Shaumanian invited Bicherakov to Baku to join in the defence of the city as commander-in-chief provided that he embraced Bolshevism. Bicherakov, thus, as seen earlier, landed at Alyat on 3 July.

This attitude of the Bolsheviks left the Armenians no option but to seek to overthrow the Bolsheviks together with the Socialist Revolutionaries who were in control of the Caspian fleet. Encouraged and helped by Dunsterville in Enzeli and MacDonell in Baku in a meeting of all parties except the Muslim Council which had lost any degree of influence over the affairs of the city after the March events, the Armenians proposed to ask British assistance in defence of the city. The meeting which took place on 16 July witnessed a dramatic event. The proposal for British assistance was accepted by a majority consisting of the Armenians and Socialist Revolutionary members. The Bolsheviks who voted against it were overthrown on the night of 25 July and a new government calling itself "Centro-Caspian Dictatorship" was established ending the Armenian-Bolshevik coalition.[2] The first act of the new government was to ask for

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[1]FO 371/3335/130177/W/38, July 26, 1918, Secret War Office Memorandum on the Turco-German advance into the Caucasus. See also Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 167. Dunsterville described the value of the Baku defenders as 'troops on paper', since the revolutionary soldiers on the ground were out only to avoid being killed they counted for nothing.

[2]FO 371/3335/130177/W/38, July 26, 1918, Secret War Office Memorandum on the Turco-German advance into the Caucasus. See also FO 371/3657/37175/W/58, 8 March 1919, Major A.R. MacDonell's report on his activities between September 1917 to August 1918 in Caucasia. From his report MacDonell seems to have played a substantial role in preparing the ground for a possible British intervention in Baku. His sole aim in Baku, according to instructions from Colonel Pike at Tiflis, was to keep well in with the Bolsheviks and Armenians and do his utmost to get matters arranged so that General Dunsterville and his force could come through to Baku. In the report he points out that he had tried to gain the personal confidence of the Bolsheviks; to use the Armenian National Council's influence in the Bolshevik Committee and Red Army; to establish communications by courier with Dunsterville in Enzeli and Colonel Pike in Tiflis; and to prepare the fleet so that at a given moment, when required it would obey the instructions of General Bicherakov or General Dunsterville. From his account, he seems to have been successful in accomplishing his tasks.

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British assistance, requesting the despatch of staff officers, instructors and troops immediately. By the 26 July transports were already sent to Enzeli.[1]

These developments had an impact on inducing the policy-makers in London to reconsider their policy. Dunsterville to whom the long-awaited supplies of about 1,000 rifles, 8 armoured cars, two mountain guns and 500 Ford motor-vans were dispatched at the beginning of June, transmitted the appeal of the new government of Baku to Baghdad and London with a request for permission to proceed.[2] On July 20, the War Office eventually gave its consent.[3]

Dunsterforce in Baku

The permission for Dunsterforce to proceed to Baku signalled a change of policy in London. The policy had been converted from maintaining the north-west corridor of Persia to an active involvement in the defence of Baku. The new policy was developed by the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet. The new policy had three objectives and directions of activity in Transcaspia and on the Caspian. The three objectives were a) to control Caspian shipping b) to occupy Baku, for as long as there was any hope of holding it and c) to occupy Krasnovodosk permanently.

In a letter which was advised and authorised by the Eastern Committee from the War Office to the Commander-in-Chief in India it was stressed that

> the object of occupying Baku is, in the first place, to accomplish the control of Caspian shipping, and secondly, if it is impossible to effect a continued occupation, to render the oil-fields and port useless for many months to the enemy. So soon as this is complete, and unless the situation at Astrakhan develops so much in our favour as to justify hopes of early co-operation we should no longer attempt to defend Baku against superior forces, but should transfer to Krasnovodsk our detachment there, together

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[1]FO 371/3411/158228/W/44, September 17, 1918, A memorandum by DMI to FO regarding military situation in Armenia and Caucasus. See also Lenczowski, *op. cit.*, p. 20., FO 371/3335130177/W/38, July 26, 1918, Secret War Office Memorandum on the Turco-German advance into the Caucasus, Arslanian, *Dunsterville's Adventures, op. cit.*, pp. 206-207.

[2]Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

[3]FO 371/3411/158228/W/44, September 17, 1918, A memorandum by DMI to FO regarding the military situation in Armenia and Caucasus. See also F. I. Moberley, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918*, London, 1927, Vol.IV, pp. 198-199.

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with any local forces, including possibly Bicharakoff, which will hereafter be useful to us.[1]

It is very clear from the information above that the real aim of landing Dunsterforce at Baku was to maintain control of the Caspian in order to close the door to an enemy to advance into Central Asia where there was no one organised and strong enough to stop him. It seems very obvious that the British Government was quite prepared to withdraw from the city if the likelihood of holding it began to disappear. Krasnovodosk, however, was to be maintained and every effort should be made by Marshall and Malleson to build a force there and arrange a satisfactory seaward defence.[2] Thus, Baku and Krasnovodsk became two keys of British policy in controlling the Caspian.

Even before General Dunsterville landed at Baku withdrawal and its possible effects were discussed in the Eastern Committee.[3] At the meeting General Wilson, Chief of Imperial General Staff, said that General Marshall in Baghdad, took upon himself a great responsibility in sending troops to Baku when he was in doubt as to the possibility of withdrawing them. He maintained that the troops should have been transferred to Krasnovodsk if they were in danger. But for that a sufficent number of ships should have been secured. If Baku fell with our troops to the enemy, he warned that the other shore of the Caspian should have almost certainly been lost. Lord Robert Cecil, Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said that the object of sending troops to Baku was to secure the shipping and to deny the oil to the enemy. He added that apart from the question of oil, there was no purpose in our holding Baku. On the other hand, if we destroyed the oil, the fleet would become immobile, and we should estrange the Central Caspian Government which was in control of the fleet. Lieut.-Colonel W. H. Gribbon, representing the Director of Military Intelligence, General Macdonogh, said that, in addition to the reasons advanced by Lord R. Cecil for our despatching troops to Baku, there was the intention that they should have been used to stiffen local resistance to the enemy. He argued that "if we found it necessary to withdraw them the onus for this would rest with the inhabitants for not supporting our troops." He further stated that it was certain that the Germans did not want the Turks to take Baku, and from our point of view it was better that port should fall into Turkish rather than German hands. E. S. Montagu,

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[1] CAB 27/24/E.C. 25th Meeting, August 14, 1918. See Appendix I, E.C. 1166, WO to C-in-C India, Repeated to G.O.C., Mesopotamia, 14 August 1918.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] CAB 27/24/E.C. 24th Meeting, August 13, 1918. The meetings of the Eastern Committee took place in Lord Curzon's room and were attended by the representatives of the Foreign Office, War Office, India Office and the Treasury.

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Secretary of State for India, expressed the view that General Dunsterville had apparently already secured a certain amount of shipping for the transport of our troops up to Baku, and if necessary, to Krasnovodsk. Therefore, even if Baku fell, British troops would have a reasonable chance of getting away. The Chairman, Lord Curzon, Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, agreed with Mr. Montagu, citing a telegram from General Marshall, dated 12 August, who assessed the withdrawal practicable. Although it was advisable to hold Baku as long as possible General Smuts of the War Office thought that it would be impossible for Britain with the small number of forces of which we could dispose, to hope to hold Baku indefinitely.[1]

The Committee thought that "since the aim of British activities in the region is to deny the use of Caspian to the enemy, the oil reservoirs and pipelines should be destroyed." This would disable the enemy's advance for a considerable time because the fleet, even if it fell to enemy control, would become immobile for lack of oil. Therefore, the Committee decided that "the War Office should again telegraph the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Mesopotamia, urging the supreme importance of destroying the pipeline and reservoirs, if by any means possible."[2]

The British forces available to be employed in Baku were insignificant. The force of about 1,000 men of General Dunsterville was certainly not sufficient to cover all the necessities of the defence of the city. Dunsterforce's aim in Baku, however, was not intended to bear the whole burden of defence. Dunsterville was aware of the fact that he would not have more troops.[3] What he could do was to organise the city's troops through providing an effective unity of command and to strengthen those troops with his small but highly efficient soldiers and officers with their effective instructions.[4]

It seems that there was thought to be a strong possibility of the scheme being successful. General Macdonogh, the DMI, reported that the Turks had at present only 10 guns and some 7,000 Turks and Azeris. These forces were the 5th Caucasian corps which were not of high fighting value. He

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] CAB 27/24/E.C. 23rd Meeting, August 8, 1918. A report from Colonel Stokes who landed at Baku on 4 August, stated that it was impossible to arrange for the destruction of the oil-fields as the latter were full of Tatars, i.e. Azeris, workmen who were pro-Turk and unwilling to destroy the means of their own livelihood, while a number of Russian troops were interested. It seems that the Committee took it into account and advised only the pipelines and reservoirs to be terminated.

[3] Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

[4] Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

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said that, against the existing enemy "we had a chance of being able to hold Baku, where our garrison would not be in danger so long as they had shipping to get them away."[1] In Baku, there were reportedly 7,500 to 10,000 Armenian and 2,500 to 3,500 Soviet Russian troops.[2] With the addition of General Bicharakov's forces of 1,000 men, the number of troops reached almost 15,000 men who could effectively defend the city if they were given proper command and instructions. Moreover, the city possessed considerable supplies of arms and ammunition. Because of political and racial jealousy and fears, and, as a consequence, the absence of a central military command, equipment and military stores had been placed at the disposal of rival forces.[3] It was hoped that Dunsterforce could also solve this issue easily through unified command.

Meanwhile, Commodore Norris managed to secure the co-operation of the Russian Caspian fleet. Although his instructions were to take control of the fleet he reported to his superiors that

> hasty action in seizing ships would certainly result in the removal of all trooping facilities which he could not replace at present, and that ships would be taken over when his men and guns were up and the situation was favourable.[4]

Commodore Norris further reported that seaplanes capable of raiding Baku from Enzeli, also for coast flights, would be most valuable and were preferable to aeroplanes. While taking his suggestion under consideration Mr. Montagu stated that in a possibility of the fleet falling into the hands of the enemy, "they ought to have in the Caspian Sea submarine chasers or some special vessels which could operate in shallow waters." He suggested that naval designers should have been set to work at once to invent some special craft to meet the particular conditions of the Caspian. The Committee requested Admiral G. Hope to investigate and report the possibilities of constructing special vessels suitable for naval operations in the Caspian Sea.[5]

With positive aspects in his mind, General Dunsterville was hopeful. Nevertheless, even before he embarked for Baku, his hopes began to wane for various reasons. First, he still had not received most of the forces sent to

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[1]CAB 27/24/E.C. 23rd Meeting, August 8, 1918.
[2]FO 371/3335/130177/38/W, July 26, 1918. A Secret Report on the Turco-German Advance into the Caucasus, by Director of Military Intelligence to FO.
[3]Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
[4]CAB 27/24/E.C. 27th Meeting, August 20, 1918.
[5]*Ibid.*

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him.[1] Nevertheless since the situation was very critical, General Dunsterville sent a small detachment of 40 men under the command of Colonel Stokes who arrived in Baku on 4 August 1918.[2] Their arrival enhanced the morale of the local forces whose defence was near to collapse in the face of a determined Turkish attack.[3] As a result of McDonell's news the local defenders of the city made no reply to favourable terms of peace offered by the Turks on 3 August.[4] Another small detachment under Colonel Keyworth with two armed cars sailed to Baku on 4 August.[5]

The second problem with which General Dunsterville had been confronted was the departure of Bicharakov with his troops to the north on 4 August. General Dunsterville explains himself the effect of this in his book as follows:

> We had come to Baku under very different conditions from those originally contemplated, the chief difference being the absence of Bicharakov's troops, on which we had relied as a nucleus of disciplined troops to set an example to the others. Without Bicharakov we could still carry on, but it meant a greater consumption of time and this was altogether a time problem...[6]

The next question for Dunsterville was the attitude of the Soviet Russians. After losing his grip on power Shamunian and his friends were in a dilemma. Around 3,000 Soviet Russian troops were effective in the defence. Before Dunsterforce came in they still kept their place in the defence line

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[1]Major McDonell, who had been approached by the Caspian fleet on 20 July to inform him that the fleet would sail to Enzeli to bring over Dunsterforce without Bolshevik consent, went to Enzeli before the fleet to see if the Dunsterforce was ready to come to Baku. But to his intense disappointment General Dunsterville was at Qazvin and there was no force available to send over immediately. He, therefore, sent a messenger back to the fleet telling them to hold off as owing to the activity of Kuchik Khan and lack of petrol, transport was not available. He then went to Qazvin to see Dunsterville. See FO 371/3657/37175/W/58, 8 March 1919, Major A.R. McDonell's report.

[2]FO 371/3335/130177/38/W, July 26, 1918. A Secret Report on the Turco-German Advance into the Caucasus, by Director of Military Intelligence to FO.

[3]Major McDonell had been at the front since he had returned from Qazvin and engaged to spread the news that a large British force was on its way to Baku, thus preventing the total collapse of the defence.

[4]FO 371/3411/158228/W/44, September 17, 1918, A Memorandum by the DMI to FO regarding the military situation in Caucasia.

[5]FO 371/3335/130177/38/W, July 26, 1918. A Secret Report on the Turco-German Advance into the Caucasus, by Director of Military Intelligence to FO. 4 August 1918 was an exciting day for Baku. After Colonel Stokes' landing a German mission arrived in Baku through Astrakhan possibly to work with Shamunian, or if the city fell, with the Turks to secure much needed oil for Germany. Yet to their surprise neither the Bolsheviks nor the Turks were in control of the city. They were taken to prison by the orders of Baku's new rulers. See Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 239, Lenczowski, *op. cit.*, p. 21, Brinkley, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

[6]Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

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although maintaining their independence of command.[1] In the meantime, the German Government was disappointed with the Turkish policy in the Caucasus. As noted earlier, the two allies were in strong disagreement in the region and especially about Baku. When her diplomatic efforts failed to divert the Turkish operations towards Baku, the German Government decided that her interests would have been served better if the Bolsheviks took control of Baku. Accordingly Germany and Bolshevik Russia signed a supplementary treaty to the Brest Treaty on 27 August 1918, by which the Germans left Baku to the Russians in return for a certain amount of oil from Russia.[2]

In early August, since Moscow was unclear about Baku's position, the attitude of the Bolsheviks in Baku was also unresolved. Yet the arrival of the first British detachments and the coming of General Dunsterville to Baku apparently helped them to come to a decision: they left Baku on August 12 on board 12 Caspian fleet ships for Astrakhan. However, when it was discovered that they had taken away a large part of the arms and ammunition belonging to the city's arsenal, the ships were forced to return to Baku. The Bolshevik commissars of the former government were put under arrest and the rest of the party, consisting of Bolshevik troops was permitted to leave.[3] Thus Dunsterforce lost another important part of Baku's defence force, and Dunsterville was left with a large number of Armenians and an insignificant number of Russians.

The racial animosity between the Russians and the Armenians was another difficulty waiting for him. Because of Russian dislike and mistrust of Armenians, Colonel Keyworth, in his letter to Dunsterville dated 15 August, stated that "Russians will not work with Armenians. Russian officers are said to be with the Turkish troops fighting against us, and therefore, Russian officers here decline to go to the front..."[4]

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[1]Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[2]For more detail see Chapter 3. On 2 August it was reported that von Kress, German representative in Tiflis, had urged the German Government to arrive at a diplomatic understanding with the Bolsheviks at Moscow over the question of Baku as quickly as possible in order definitely to end Russian nervousness and Turkish aspirations, and to avert a fuel crisis throughout the Caucasus. See also FO 371/3335/130177/ 38/W, July 26, 1918. A Secret Report on the Turco-German Advance into the Caucasus, by Director of Military Intelligence to FO. It seems that the advice of von Kress to solve the Baku issue to end Turkish aspirations backfired since the Turks hastened to gain Baku following the supplementary treaty.

[3]Brinkley, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

[4]Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

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As one can see, the circumstances were largely changed from those prevailing when Dunsterville had been in favour of intervening in Baku. He had already sent some of his forces to Baku and therefore, it was impossible to turn back at that stage. He himself set sail on 16 August from Enzeli landing at Baku on 17 August 1918. Even before sailing for Baku he reported to his superiors that the success of the expedition was doubtful.[1] Upon his report of the possibility of failure the War Office thought it necessary to tell General Marshall to remove Dunsterville if he lacked the necessary determination though, at the same time, pointing out that what he needed might be some encouragement. However, Marshall was given latitude to take action regarding Dunsterville.[2] General Marshall's answer was in the negative that he wished to keep him for diplomatic purposes, but should events have taken a serious military turn he proposed to appoint another military commander.[3]

When he landed at Baku Dunsterville found the situation "evidently as bad as could be" and it seemed certain to him that

> the most we could hope for would be a passive defence, which obviously entails defeat in the end.. The only real plan for defending Baku was to secure and hold the heights due west of our lines now occupied by the Turks. If no forward movement on the part of the local troops were possible the fall of Baku would become only a matter of time.[4]

A defensive line was held just in front of Baku and only minor operations took place until the 26 August from which date onwards the Turks resumed their attacks.[5] Dunsterville in the meantime, made serious attempts to improve the military situation. He first tried to establish a single command structure by replacing the existing division of military command. Nevertheless, his efforts with the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship, a coalition of Armenian nationalists, Russian Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks,

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[1]FO 371/3411/154943/W/44, September 11, 1918, From WO to General Officer in Command, Mesopotamia.

[2]CAB 27/24/E.C. 25th Meeting, August 14, 1918. WO to GOC, Mesopotamia, (repeated C.in C., India), August 14, 1918.

[3]CAB 27/24/E.C. 27th Meeting, August 20, 1918. The War Office had already been dissatisfied with General Dunsterville's failure to seize Enzeli in a short time in spite of the large staff and adequate forces at his disposal, and to send any useful information. Therefore, War Office had advocated his recall. The Commander in Chief in India had telegraphed that he was disposed to think that, in view of Dunsterville's want of success, a change would be advisable. To this first request, Marshall had to reply in the negative expressing his opinion that "Dunsterville is only just now in a position to act on his instructions. He is a man of character, and it would be difficult to replace him." His view was then accepted by the Eastern Committee that it was not necessary to replace Dunsterville. See CAB 27/24/E.C. 22nd Meeting, July 29, 1918.

[4]Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

[5]FO 371/3411/154943/W/44, September 11, 1918, From WO to General Officer in Command, Mesopotamia.

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proved fruitless. Instead of cooperation Dunsterville found apathy, suspicion or outright hostility on the part of the Baku Dictatorship. He made an attempt to receive further troops from Baghdad. However, his efforts brought no results since General Marshall in Baghdad and the War Office in London were dissatisfied with the situation. General Marshall thought that "though Allies may have temporary success there (Baku) they will not be able to compete with the eventual arrival of superior hostile forces.. and the situation in north west Persia was threatening.."[1] Thus General Marshall quite openly expressed his disagreement over British involvement in Baku. Instead of sending reinforcements he sent instructions, with the approval of the War Office, to Dunsterville to obtain possession of sufficient shipping to control the Caspian and to prepare for the withdrawal of his troops.[2] In the meantime the British Government had under its consideration a proposal submitted by the Commander-in-Chief in India. The proposal suggested putting the British forces around the Caspian under one command which could increase the efficiency of the forces. The proposal gained the support of the War Office but the India Office and Foreign Office agreed on the view that General Marshall, to whom the task would almost certainly be assigned, would be in great difficulty in determining the situation in Transcaspia from Baghdad.[3] The Committee, therefore, failed to reach any decision on the subject. However, it was agreed that the views of the Government of India would be asked on the subject to see if any useful action could be taken.[4]

In addition to problems with the rulers of Baku and his superiors, the biggest hinderance for the success of Dunsterville was the disorganisation, the lack of discipline and spirit to fight and, therefore, the unreliability of the local, largely Armenian, troops.[5] These forces declined to obey orders and under fire they tended to leave the front. Their presence was more dangerous to the British forces than to the enemy since the duties assigned to them were not carried out. Though there were supposedly 9,000 troops, the actual fighting strength was never more than 3,000. The Russian troops, around 1,000, who were better qualified as soldiers, regarded the Armenians as worthless cowards. During the fighting Russians frequently fired on retreating Armenians rather than on the enemy.[6]

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] CAB 27/24/E.C. 27th Meeting, August 20, 1918.
[4] CAB 27/24/E.C. 28th Meeting, August 22, 1918.
[5] Swettenham, *op. cit.*, p. 49, Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields, op. cit.*, p. 493.
[6] FO 371/3404/172728/W/44, October 16, 1918, From the DMI to FO transmitting a telegram from G.O.C. Mesopotamia, giving summary of General Dunsterville's full report on the evacuation of Baku.

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Although General Dunsterville was extremely disappointed with the fact that cowardice and disobedience to orders were rampant, he sympathized with the Armenians' situation. He stated that

> I am far from wishing to brand Armenians as a whole as being cowardly, my remarks refer only to the Baku Armenians, who are very different from the Armenians of Erivan.. I do not blame the Armenian soldier of Baku for his cowardice which is at best merely a comparative term. He was not a soldier by instinct or training, but just an ill-fed, undersized factory hand. He had no equipment, no proper instructions, no decent officers and no regular arrangements for food supply.. under such circumstances no troops could be expected to display a high standard of valour. And finally I would add that there were many cases of individual bravery among them.[1]

General Dunsterville maintained that among other difficulties the most dangerous problem was the tendency among local people to believe that the arrival of the British had saved Baku and that no further effort was required of the inhabitants or local troops.[2] In his telegram on August 23, he summed up the situation as being one in which

> there was general suspicion and lack of cohesion, e.g. the defence troops were apparently at this date still under five different political organisations. Matters were improving and would improve but the *real danger* lay in the feeling of security induced by the arrival of British forces.[3]

It appears that as argued by Arslanian, the Armenians expected a large force consisting of about 5,000 men to come to Baku.[4] Even before Dunsterville himself went to Baku he received some visitors from Baku, one of whom was Dr. Araratiantz, a representative of the National Council of Baku Armenians. He expressed the disappointment of Baku people at the small number of British troops arriving in the town in response to their appeal for help and tried to force Dunsterville to give a definite number, which Dunsterville refused. To make his mind quite clear on this important subject and "also in order to prevent him from saying later that British had not acted up to their obligations," he put the gist of their conversation into a letter, dated August 7, 1918, to be communicated to the Baku people. In the letter he clearly emphasised the fact that the British could not take the whole responsibility for the defence of the city and that it was the inhabitants

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[1]Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-7.
[2]FO 371/3404/172728/W/44, October 16, 1918,
[3]FO 371/3411/158228/W/44, September 17, 1918, A Memorandum by the DMI to FO regarding the military situation in Caucasia.
[4]Arslanian, *The Adventures of Dunsterville, op. cit.*, p. 209.

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themselves with British instructions and reinforcement who would have to deny the city to the enemy.[1]

Meanwhile the circumstances in Baku did not progress. The Turks further encircled the city and they made two successful attacks on 20 and 31 August since the Armenians returned to their homes instead of fighting.[2] Dunsterville warned the rulers of Baku that unless they fought with determination the further defence of Baku was a waste of time and life, and he advised them to surrender the city in return for favourable terms.[3] In a letter to the Dictators he denied that any large number of troops, such as 16,000, was promised. In his letter of 5 September he argued that contrary to promising a large force he had been led to believe that Baku already possessed a sufficent fighting force to render them capable of defeating the enemy. Therefore he had regarded the proposition as quite favourable in hoping that with a nucleus of some 2,000 to 3,000 regular troops and some artillery, the soldiers of Baku would have been able to defend the city.[4]

In an another letter dated 4 September, he condemned the sentiment in the town that the British had betrayed the town by failing to send a larger detachment since there was no such promise. He explained that

> Britain responded to your appeal for help and sent to you every man they could spare. For three weeks the British troops have borne the brunt of attacks by overwhelming numbers, they have fought with courage and freely given their lives for you. Their presence here has at least postponed

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[1]Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, P. 214. Part of his letter is as follows:
Dear Araratiantz,
.. The defence of Baku appears to me to be quite feasible and its capture by the enemy forces extremely unlikely "provided that the inhabitants of Baku are heart and soul with us in our determination to defeat the enemy." It is not sufficient that the town should merely be held, but the defence can only be successful when the Baku troops can issue from the town and defeat the enemy on the field of battle. This particularly affects the Armenians, who form a great proportion of the fighting strength... The entire defence of the town cannot be undertaken solely by the British who, as you know, have to maintain large armies on several different fronts, and distance from Baghdad to Baku, with no railways, makes the maintenance of our troops a matter of some difficulty. I can assure you, however, that every available man will be sent to Baku as soon as possible. If with the help of some British troops your comrades are ready to undertake the defence of the town, victory is assured. But on the other hand, if your men are undecided and half-hearted, it would be better for you to say at once that you do not intend to fight to the end, and you would be well-advised to make what terms you can with the enemy, after first giving me time to withdraw my men...
Dunsterville states that he wrote thus clearly in order that he might not later be accused of holding out false hopes which in the end he failed to fulfil. However, his fear was realised and he was accused of promising more and bringing less to Baku.

[2]FO 371/3404/172728/W/44, October 16, 1918, From the DMI to FO transmitting a telegram from G.O.C. Mesopotamia, giving summary of General Dunsterville's full report on the evacuation of Baku.

[3]Dunsterville, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

[4]*Ibid.*, pp. 272-5, 289.

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> the evil day of the fall of Baku and in the last event I am confident that it will enable you to make better terms with the enemy than you could otherwise have done...[1]

Indeed before the fall of the city 180 men out of 900 members of Dunsterforce were killed, wounded or left behind with 30 Fords and 8 armoured cars.[2]

In these circumstances Dunsterville decided that nothing could be done to save Baku and gave orders to make arrangements to withdraw from the city. He was, in fact, ordered to withdraw from the city on 31 August by General Marshall, his immediate superior in Baghdad. Marshall was annoyed with Dunsterville who had not obeyed his order. Marshall then repeated his order in three successive telegrams dated 2, 6 and 9 September. The Eastern Committee discussed the situation in Baku and considered the nature of correspondence between Dunsterville and Marshall. The War Office had

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 288. The accusations by the Armenian scholars against Dunsterville that he betrayed the townspeople seem to be unfair. He consumed significant energy to persuade his superiors to send reinforcements to Baku. He even put his career at risk by a series of arguments with his superiors. Arslanian himself describes Dunsterville's arguments with Marshall in Baghdad. See Arslanian, *The Adventures of Dunsterville, op. cit.*, pp. 210-1. At the same time it appears that the British Government sought to give financial assistance and provisions which had been asked for the Armenians in Armenia itself by Boghos Nubar Pasha in Paris who had been appointed by the Armenian Catholicos in Etchmiadzin in 1913 for the purpose of securing European support for the Armenian cause. Yet the fact that all possible communications were under enemy control made it impossible for the British Government to take any action. Lord Robert Cecil then asked if there were any objections to sending some funds through the private channels of Nubar Pasha if, of course, he had any. His submission was considered positively and Nubar Pasha was informed accordingly. See FO 371/3404/143120/W/44, August 19, 1918, from Boghos Nubar Pasha, Paris, to FO, dated 15 August, pointing out the desperate conditions of the Armenians in the Caucasus and requesting financial aid and military supplies.
A telegram from Dr. Araratian, President of the Armenian National Council of Baku, to Nubar Pasha received strong criticism from the DMI, Major-General George Macdonogh. His comments are useful in order to see the failures of the Armenians' commitment to the British Government. Dr. Araratian stated in the telegram that the only real support of the Allies in the region was the Armenian people, and that the Armenian forces at Erivan and Nakhichevan were ready for action against the Turks but because of lack of ammunition and supplies they could not operate. The DMI pointed out that the President's message neither represented the full facts regarding the Armenian situation nor was it strictly accurate. He argued that
the President omits to mention the treaty signed by the Armenian National Council with the Turks on 4 June 1918, the arrival of the Armenian delegates Chandjanian and Zaurabi in Berlin by the 3rd June and the subsequent Armenian acceptance of Kuhlmann's guarantee of security against the Turks. Nor does he mention that on 11 June an Armenian Bishop travelled from Erivan to Tiflis to beg Schulenberg for German assistance. The delegation to Constantinople mentioned by the President was headed by Aharonian and arrived at Constantinople by 24 June, when according to Turkish press, it declared that its intention was to establish good relations with the Porte, which it was convinced had no objection to an independent Armenia.. The Parliament of the Armenian Republic opened at Erivan on 1 August in the presence of representatives of Germany, Turkey, Persia, Austria and the Ukraine.. Generally speaking the Baku Armenians have not so far committed themselves to the Turks and Germans to the same extent as have, perhaps naturally, the Armenians further to the West, but it would be a mistake to place too great a reliance upon their assurances...
See FO 371/3404/145722/W/44, August 23, 1918, from the DMI to FO transmitting a telegram from Dr. Araratian, dated 14 August, to be transmitted to Boghos Nubar Pasha.

[2] Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army, op. cit.*, p. 68.

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hitherto supported Marshall. They naturally felt annoyed at the recriminations in which Dunsterville had indulged when it was mainly owing to his own representation that the expedition to Baku had been undertaken. Yet, Lord Curzon, the Chairman of the Committee, said that the Commander in Chief in India, on the other hand, seemed to side with Dunsterville and evidently took the view that the venture was still worthy of being pursued and that the general situation in north west Persia was not affected by Dunsterville's reluctance to withdraw from Baku. It was reported that the situation had improved at Baku and Dunsterville was of opinion that if Baku could hold out for a few days more, the situation might still be saved, as he hoped with the ships at his disposal to get reinforcements from General Bicharakov. The Central Caspian Government was also unwilling to permit the evacuation of Baku by Dunsterville because the possible next target for the enemy would be Krasnovodsk. Furthermore, a telegram was received on 10 September from Commodore Norris stating that ten ships were now at British disposal and being armed.[1]

General Macdonogh, the DMI, noted that the view taken by Lord Milner, Secretary of State for War, was to agree with the line taken by the C. in C. in India. He pointed out that "if there was any chance of Bicharakoff reinforcing Baku or of co-operation by the Terek Cossaks who were under anti-Bolshevik General Alexieff's instructions and in view of our recent successes on the Western front, it would be a great mistake to evacuate Baku unless actually compelled to do so by force." However, Lord Curzon pointed out that the Germans and Turks had recently overcome their differences in Caucasia, and Germany had consented to the Turks' capturing Baku in return for oil. Thus the Turks would be shortly in a much stronger position. The question for Dunsterville, he argued, was whether it would be possible for him to hold out in the long run even if he were reinforced by Bicharakoff. General Macdonogh stated that if Alexieff could make progress with his 25,000 men in Cis-Caucasia, i.e. North Caucasus, Baku could still be held by Dunsterville.[2]

The Committee was informed that Turkish forces before Baku amounted to 1,000 sabres, 6,000 rifles, 100 machine guns, and 26 guns. The Turks also had the assistance of about 8,000 Azeris. The Committee then decided that

> the War office should send instructions to General Marshall telling him to maintain Dunsterville at Baku, if possible, and requesting him to reinforce

[1] CAB 27/24/E.C. 30th Meeting, September 11, 1918.
[2] *Ibid.*

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the forces on the Hamadan-Enzeli road, and to stop at all costs, the evacuation of the 10,000 Armenian women and children.[1]

Meanwhile Dunsterville informed the Baku government of his intention of withdrawal. His intention was met with hostility. Yet Dunsterville went ahead with his preparations. It was reported that since the situation did not progress and the city's fall was imminent the fleet and town became more impatient at the ineffectiveness of the Dictators and a strong tendency was developing to remove the government which largely consisted of Armenians and to hand over the entire control, civil and military to the British. A meeting of soldiers and workmen on September 10, passed a resolution that "as Armenian administration and troops had proved worthless and cowardly they should be removed and their places taken by British or Russians." Although he was very tempted Dunsterville declined to take such a course of action.[2]

The Fall of Baku and its Effects

In the night of September 15, 1918, Dunsterforce left the city under fire from the fleet to Enzeli.[3] The Turks captured the city on 16 September and a massacre of the Armenians took place at the hands of the Azeri irregular troops to revenge the massacres of Azerbaijanis during the March Events, leaving at least 3,000 dead.[4]

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[1] *Ibid.* A telegram from Baku suggesting that 10,000 women and children should be evacuated to Enzeli was brought to attention of the Committee by General Macdonogh who argued that such an evacuation which might have serious consequences upon the food situation in north-west Persia, would constitute a serious strain on General Marshall's transport, and might prejudice the possibility of sending up reinforcements to Enzeli.

[2] FO 371/3411/158228/W/44, September 17, 1918, A Memorandum by the DMI to FO regarding the military situation in Caucasia. FO 371/3404/172728/W/44, October 16, 1918, From the DMI to FO transmitting a telegram from G.O.C. Mesopotamia, giving a summary of General Dunsterville's full report on the evacuation of Baku. Dunsterville, *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

[3] Dunsterville states that if the Baku troops would only hold firm, all would be well. Their training and morale had latterly much improved, the position had great natural strength, and if the Turks gained a footing on the heights above the town they could only do so after suffering heavy loss. Should this happen a counter-attack would give us the victory, and before another attack on a large scale could be brought off reinforcements from Bicharakov in the north and from our own people in the south would render the town practically impregnable... When the Turkish attack started the despairing message was to the effect that the battle was over and the victorious Turks were advancing at a run, without opposition, on the town.. It was incredible that this strongest portion of the whole line should so easily have fallen to the enemy. Dunsterville, *Op. Cit* ., pp. 297-8.

[4] For more information regarding the *March Events* footnote 51 in chapter 3.

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Thus the involvement of British forces in the defence of Baku ended in failure. The city was lost, and oil deposits and industry were left undamaged. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that Dunsterforce with its limited resources had achieved some degree of success from the British point of view. First of all, it certainly delayed the fall of the city to the Turks for at least a month. This period of time may seem very short within four long years of war but it was a crucial delay since the city was an energy centre. This delay would most probably have not changed the result of the war. However, it would almost certainly have prolonged the war. Besides, if General Dunsterville came into possession of circumstances he had earlier thought likely i.e., Bicherakhov's forces, Soviet Russian forces and determined Armenian forces, he might have succeeded in saving the city and even launched attacks for forward operations against the enemy. Nevertheless, the facts on the ground were contrary to his expectations.

In the meantime, the Eastern Committee of the British Government discussed the developments in Baku. A telegram from Commodore Norris, dated 17 September, received the attention of the Committee. The telegram said that

> I expect representatives of the fleet here today or tomorrow. Dunsterville leaves tomorrow and evacuation of Enzeli is ordered. Thus, just as there is a chance of coming to terms, the fleet will see British troops being weakened. This may result in hostile action. It will stop efforts to continue arming ships... Naval control is only effective if backed by military forces.[1]

To continue to control the Caspian which had now at least five armed Bolshevik ships at Astrakhan, the Committee agreed that

> the evacuation of Enzeli, following closely upon that of Baku, would be highly prejudicial to our prestige, and that it was desirable to hold on to Enzeli at all costs if it were not too late. The Committee accordingly directed the War Office to telegraph urgently to General Marshall stating that great importance H.M.G. attached to the retention of Enzeli, and instructing him that the port should only be evacuated as a last resort and on account of urgent military necessity.[2]

The withdrawal of British forces and the fall of the city had a disastrous impact on the Armenian cause in Britain in particular and in the Allied camp in general. The War Office made a statement in the name of the War Cabinet

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[1] CAB 27/24/E.C. 32nd Meeting, September 18, 1918.
[2] *Ibid.*

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to the press explaining the withdrawal of the British expeditionary force to Baku and put much responsibility on the Armenians who had been accused of failing to endeavour to fight wholeheartedly. This statement was printed in the press with devastating headlines from the Armenians' point of view such as "British Leave Baku: Defection of the Armenians" in **The Times**, "Armenian Treachery to British" in the **Daily Mail**, and "British Betrayed at Baku: Armenian Treachery with the Turks" in the **Daily Express**.[1]

The Foreign Office found the publication of such news in that manner very irritating. Sir Mark Sykes argued, for instance, that

> the facts in the communiques are correct but they are displayed in a manner calculated to do greatest damage to the Armenians as a whole... It must be pointed out that a local event such as has taken place at Baku, should not under any circumstances have been used in a way to give a bad impression of the Armenian race as whole.. The effect of the communiques and the headings will be to promote dissensions, doubt, and recrimination among all Armenians throughout the World, to stultify our Armenian policy and to give the public a totally wrong impression of the situation, and to suggest that after all the massacres and outrages against the Armenians in Turkey were perhaps not without some justification ... I submit that early action should be taken to undo the damage which has been done by issuing to the press a communique or hint of some kind showing that the British Government's attitude is unchanged, and that neither the action of a few intriguers nor a gesture of despair on the part of a few disorganised bands can affect the situation.[2]

Arnold Toynbee also wrote a long minute regarding the effect of the communique on the Armenian and British cause. His remarks were similar in general to those of Sykes. He claimed that the communique was a grave damage to British interests since it might have a profound influence on the Armenians to change sides. He explained that

> since June 1918 the Turks and Germans have been making a serious — though hitherto unsuccessful — effort to conciliate the public opinion of the Armenian colonies throughout the World -particularly in neutral countries. In wealth and intelligence these colonies represent an important international force, which hitherto had been heart and soul with the Allies, and has paid a heavier price for this loyalty than any other small nationality. The occupation of the Caucasus by the enemy, and their policy in allowing a small autonomous Armenian Republic to exist there, might incline the Armenians in general to accept the fact that their fate is now entirely in the enemy's hands, and to make terms with him on the basis of the concession he has offered of an autonomous Armenian state under his control. The Baku communique will certainly assist the efforts of the enemy propaganda in suggesting this re-orientation of Armenian policy.

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[1] *The Times, The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Express*, all printed on 20 September 1918.
[2] FO 371/3404/160092/W/44, September 21, 1918. See Sir M. Sykes' minute.

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He then pointed out that the Turks could also get a wrong impression from the communique. He argued that

> The Turks will certainly take it as an invitation to them by HMG to make a separate peace at the Armenians' expense. They will never believe that such a grave political step... was not inspired directly from "the highest quarters"... Since the German reverse in the West the Turks have been intending to secure the Caucasus and Azerbaijan as compensation for the provinces occupied by us... They will represent the Baku communique as an offer on our part to do a deal of this kind...[1]

Thirdly he drew the attention to the possibility of the revival of Turkish influence in the Middle East. He argued that

> discredit cast on the Armenians is a direct weakening of the anti-Turkish cause. It has been hard to kill the superstition that the Turk is a gentleman and his subject races curs. This will revive it, and will react on the prestige of the Zionists and Arabs, as well as the Armenians themselves. The treatment of the Armenians by the Turks is HMG's greatest asset in commending the policy of a radical solution of the Turkish problem to public opinion at home and abroad... If Armenia was to be liberated the liberation of Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine follows geographically. If Armenia's solutions are weakened, the claims of the other provinces will be exposed to a critical examination on their own merits.[2]

He suggested that the Foreign Office arrange an interview with the Press on the relations of the Armenians to the Allies to rescue the situation.[3] The Foreign Office accepted the necessity to undo the damage done. In a letter to Lord Bryce who had earlier inquired from the Foreign Office about the communique an explanation was given to indicate that the policy of the Government to the Armenians did not alter, and this letter was made known to the Press.[4]

In the meantime steps were taken to ask the War Office not to make important statements before they were seen and approved by the Foreign Office.[5] However, the Foreign Office was notified that the verbal approval of

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[1] FO 371/3404/62647/W/44, September 26, 1918. See A. Toynbee's minute.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] FO 371/3404/164439/W/44, September 30, 1918. The letter was prepared by A. Toynbee on behalf of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Balfour. Toynbee, after praising the sacrifices the Armenians endured during the war for the sake of the Allies strongly emphasised that there was no change in the policy of the British Government. He wrote that "I am quite ready to reaffirm our determination that wrongs such as Armenia has suffered shall be brought to an end and their recurrence made impossible".
[5] FO 371/3404/160092/W/44, September 21, 1918. See the minute of Sir Eyre Crowe, Assistant under Secretary of State.

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Mr. Balfour had been received at an Eastern Committee meeting. Then Sir E. Crowe submitted that "when important aspects of foreign policy are involved as in this case, it is desirable to consult the Foreign Office formally so as to allow of more careful examination of papers..."[1] Action was taken accordingly.

In conclusion, one can say that the British Government frequently found it necessary to develop and adopt new policies with respect to Caucasia from early 1918 to late 1918. As seen, the policies of the employment of nationalities and the southern block were bankrupted largely as a result of speedy Turkish occupation. Having acknowledged the fact that the region was lost, attention was given to protecting the territories further east and south-east. For this, a small number of forces was stationed in north west Persia and another one on the eastern shores of the Caspian. Although these forces were effective in their missions the situation in Baku encouraged the British Government to take part in the defence of the city thereby developing a new policy which placed the control of the Caspian at its centre. In the end it was inevitable for the British force to withdraw from the city, thus ending its involvement there in failure. Yet it did not necessarily mean the bankruptcy of the general policy, that is to say controlling the Caspian. It will remain for the next chapter, however, to study the result of this policy.

[1] FO 371/3404/162647/W/44, September 26, 1918.

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5

THE END OF THE WAR AND BRITISH POLICY IN TRANSCAUCASIA

The policy of Britain regarding Caucasia would be reshaped and acquire a different character as a result of the war coming to end. But before attempting to analyze the new features of British policy it is necessary to see the effect of the retreat of Dunsterforce from Baku and actions taken until the end of the war in late October 1918.

Control of the Caspian Sea

When Baku fell on 16 September to the Turks, the British policy of controlling the Caspian inevitably suffered a setback. Baku was probably strategically the most important port on the Caspian because of its suitability as a naval base. It lay on the central part of the Caspian and could enable any navy to control the sea, south and north, more easily. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the oil resources of Baku were certainly an advantage for naval ships. The loss of it, however, was not the end of British control over the Caspian.

The extent to which the Central Powers could advance India through the Transcaspian railway now reached its highest degree. One of the first things the Turks did in Baku was to take control of any ship available at the port. This indicates their readiness and will to move ahead towards Transcaspia. Yet they did not make any attempt in that direction. It is presumably right to say that since Krasnovodsk was across the Caspian, the highway to Central Asia from the Caucasus, it was strongly guarded by British forces, and secondly, the number of armed ships in the hands of British forces at Enzeli were quite enough to deter any Turkish move on the sea, Turkish forces were not likely to make any immediate move.

As seen in the previous chapter, the British Government had ordered the local British Commander to keep Enzeli at any rate and to strengthen Krasnovodsk against a possible move from the Turks. In a memorandum,

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Lieutenant-General Smuts, a member of the powerful Eastern Committee, regarded the military situation in the Middle East as very unsatisfactory. He pointed out that

> While on all other fronts we are holding or driving back the enemy, his advance in the Caucasus, Trans-Caspian and North West Persia continues. And this is a matter which in a very special degree concerns the British Empire and its future in Asia. If the enemy reaches Central Persia and Afghanistan next summer, a situation might arise on the Indian frontier which would cripple our military effort from Palestine and Salonica to Central Asia.[1]

In addition to military aspects, the fall of Baku had an important impact upon Persia. In a long telegram to Mr. Balfour, Sir P. Cox explained that

> ... fall of Baku and retirement of our force from there and Zinjan line, respectively, has had very deleterious effect on public opinion at Teheran and elsewhere. It has, moreover, given hostile element an opportunity of revival of violent anti-British propaganda, which brought about considerable run on the Imperial Bank of Persia, and has greatly shaken position of the Cabinet... I am instructed by reliable elements here that, were we to suffer any further setbacks in North West Persia, the pro-Turk and pro-German factions, stimulated by enemy's propaganda, would undoubtedly turn out present Cabinet and replace it with an extremist one, which would certainly drag the country into the war on the side of the enemy. It is especially considered that if the Turks succeeded in ejecting us from Qazvin and occupying Teheran they would have no difficulty in forcing Persia to come in on their side.[2]

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[1]CAB 27/24/E.C. 32nd Meeting, 18 September 1918. A memorandum by Lieut.-Gen. J. C. Smuts regarding the Military Command in the Middle East.

[2]CAB 27/24/E.C. 33rd Meeting, September 26, 1918, Appendix III, (E.C.-1658); A telegram from Sir Percy Cox, Teheran , to the FO, dated September 23, 1918. Sir P. Cox reports on his discussions with the Persian Government and suggests the view taken by the Persian Government to pose itself as popular government by taking democratic elements to its side. Persian Government proposed that British Government, if agreed, should declare

1. That Great Britain has categorically reiterated its determination to respect independence of Persia,
2. That she has undertaken as soon as Russian government emerges, which she can recognise, to press for abrogation of Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 that had divided country into two zones between Russia taking the north including Teheran and Great Britain receiving the south,
3. That she has consented, firstly, to transfer direct control to Persian Government of South Persia Rifles; although the real control would be retained by junior ranks of British officers (in accordance with a private understanding between two governments).

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The Turkish army had also forces in Persian Azerbaijan.[1] The leaders of the Ottoman Government had aspirations to establish an Azerbaijan Republic including Persian Azerbaijan as well as Daghestan. It was reported that the Turkish army had stopped its advance towards Qazvin and was consolidating itself in Persian Azerbaijan. Furthermore, the Porte issued an ultimatum to Teheran asking the Government to take sides in the war since neutrality would no longer be recognised. Besides, a statement of the Ottoman Government in the press that "the seat of the government of the Persian province of Azerbaijan has been transferred to Baku" indicated the line of action taken by the Ottomans.[2] The orders of Enver to the Turkish forces in Baku on September 20 to clear up the situation on the south west coast of the Caspian and to occupy Enzeli as well as to clear Derbend and Petrovsk and occupy the North Caucasus as far as the Terek River were another sign demonstrating the direction of the C.U.P. in Turkey.[3]

The display of strength by the Turks and Germans in the Caucasus and North West Persia apparently frustrated the British administration. The fall of Baku with its threatening effects caused the responsible authorities to find someone to blame for it. The War Office and General Marshall thought it was General Dunsterville who, in the first place, had urged this expedition to Baku. In a telegram to General Marshall, General Officer in Command in Mesopotamia, the War Office made quite clear its indignation with Dunsterville and authorised Marshall to relieve Dunsterville from his command as soon as possible.[4] When he landed at Enzeli with his force on three ships Dunsterville discovered next day, September 17, that he had been removed from his command by General Marshall.[5] Dunsterville had himself put most of the blame, as has been seen, on the Armenians who had blamed

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[1]The following table summarizes the Turkish and German forces in the Caucasus and North West Persia.

On Front
Turks:-
A. Baku front, 6,000 rifles, with proportion of artillery and other arms and services,
B. Tabriz-Kuflan Kuh front, 4,000 ditto,
C. Sakiz-Sain Kale front, 2,000 ditto,
Batum area, 1,000 rifles reserve for A, B, or C,
Alexandropol area 2,000 rifles, reserve for A, B, or C.
En route for Tabriz area, 3,000 rifles, reserve for B.
West of Lake Urumia area, 6,500 rifles, reserve for C or B.
Erivan area, 4,000 rifles, reserve for B or C.

Germans:-
In Georgia 7,000 rifles. See CAB 27/24/E.C. 33rd Meeting, September 26, 1918, Appendix V, A memorandum by General Staff, WO, for the Eastern Committee on the situation in the Caucasus and North West Persia since the fall of Baku, in relation to General Bicharakoff's request for financial assistance, September 26, 1918.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]FO 371/3411/154943/W/38, September 11, 1918, From WO to GOC, Mesopotamia.

[5]CAB 27/24/ E.C. 33rd Meeting, September 26, 1918. See Appendix IV, E.C.-1675, Memorandum entitled "Original Object of Dunsterville's Mission", by E.S. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, dated September 25, 1918.

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the British Government. General Smuts, emphasising the necessity of holding the Caspian, placed most responsibility for failing at Baku upon General Marshall for his dilatory inclination towards military operations to the direction of north west Persia and Baku. He regretted that "Marshall's eyes were kept unmovably fixed on the Tigris front, which had for that moment lost all importance".[1] To this criticism Montagu joined. The Secretary of State for India argued that General Marshall had not made as great an effort as was possible towards the Caspian. Montagu, moreover, approved the actions of Dunsterville who, he argued, had saved the British prestige in that part of the world by bringing the enemy to a standstill in front of the town.[2] Lord Robert Cecil also expressed his frustration in a letter to Balfour with regard to British military operations around the Caspian and North West Persia.[3] As a result of these developments the Eastern Committee discussed the situation with a view to re-shaping the military and political structure in the Middle East.[4]

The position of Britain in the Caucasus, Transcaspia and Persia thus became very precarious. Yet the lack of resources at the disposal of the Turks and the developments in Palestine and Syria where General Allenby had managed to crush the Turkish defence in late September 1918, had great influence upon the Turkish military operations in Transcaucasia. The 10th Ottoman Caucasus Division, for instance, which was under orders to move to Tabriz, received orders to counter-march to Istanbul easing the situation in North West Persia for the British forces situated there.[5] It looked very clear to the Turks that Germany could not recover from her defeats. Moreover, Bulgaria's capitulation to the Allies on 29 September made the position of the Ottoman Government in the war untenable, and, consequently, the C.U.P.-dominated Government asked for an armistice from the Allies. The armistice was signed on 30 October 1918 in Mudros on Midilli island in the Aegean Sea. Thus the danger for British imperial interests in the East for that moment came to end.

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[1]CAB 27/24/E.C. 32nd Meeting, September 18, 1918. See Appendix C.

[2]CAB 27/24/E.C. 33rd Meeting, September 26, 1918. See Montagu's paper on Dunsterville in Appendix IV. To Dunsterville's credit, Montagu maintained that

...in the middle of the very difficult and intricate problem of the defence of Baku, Dunsterville was ordered to withdraw. It would be hard to realise anything more discouraging to a commander with strong hostile forces in front of him and treacheries within the town itself, than the above... He is relived of his command 48 hours after his withdrawal from the town he has defended to the last... It appears to me to be evident that General Marshall was not in favour of a great diversion of his strength towards the Caspian, and that both he and the War Office looked upon the defence of Baku as a doubtful adventure.

[3]CAB 27/24/E.C. 32nd Meeting, September 18, 1918. See appendix D, A letter from Lord Cecil to Balfour, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, dated 15 September 1918.

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]CAB 27/24/E.C. 33rd Meeting, September 26, 1918. See Appendix , General Staff's Memorandum.

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The Mudros Armistice and Transcaucasia

Before the Ottoman Government asked for peace, the British Government had already put under consideration necessary conditions to impose upon the Turks. Although the political aspects of a peace with Turkey had also received consideration, the military side of an agreement took priority. It seems now appropriate to examine the proposed armistice and the reasons behind it. It was, firstly, stressed that 'if a peace was asked for, the answer should be that there could be no peace until the general peace, but that there could only be a military armistice.' It was also agreed that 'the terms of the armistice in no way prejudice the ultimate terms of peace.'[1] In other words, the armistice would have only military considerations rather than political aspects. Then it was strongly advocated that an armistice reserving all political questions for the expected Peace Conference seemed the better course.[2]

The first thing considered with regard to the Caucasus was the withdrawal of all Turkish forces from Transcaucasia and North West Persia. Next it was proposed to have a complete and unconditional surrender, including a large demobilisation of the Turkish army and the occupation by the Allied troops of such portions of Turkish territory as they might wish to occupy.[3] This condition was in preparation of the ground for the partition of the rest of the non-occupied Ottoman lands. It was, moreover, a pretext for the creation of Armenia in Eastern Turkey that was supposed to come under occupation by the mandatory power of Armenia. Another important clause was related to the Straits and the Black Sea which would be asked to be opened immediately to the Allies.

In his long memorandum to Sir E. Crowe Sir Mark Sykes proposed three points of vital importance. He submitted that

1. Britain must be permitted to occupy the Cilician Gates and the Amanus Pass, and to establish detachments at Zeitun and Hajin,
2. Britain must be permitted to occupy Mosul and such passes on the Turco-Persian frontier in the Mosul province as the military desire, and

[1] FO 371/3411/167860/W/44, October 7, 1918. See J.I. Headlen's minute.
[2] FO 371/3413/170855/W/44, October 11, 1918. See Toynbee's minute.
[3] FO 371/3411/167860/W/44, October 7, 1918. See J.I. Headlen's minute.

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3. Britain must insist on the evacuation by the Turks of all Russian territory.[1]

For his reasons as regards the occupation of Mosul and the evacuation of Russian territory by the Turks he submitted that 'if Mosul is occupied and Turco-Persian passes dependent on Mosul are held and the Turks begin to retire from the Caucasus, the Persian situation in Azerbaijan will speedily clear up, Nestorian massacres will end, and Turkish prestige will be gone.'[2]

On subsequent consideration he made the following points in regard to Armenia:

1. That the Allies should be accorded full power to repatriate any persons of Ottoman birth who either prior to or during the war have left the six Armenian Vilayets and desire to return, and that the Allies should have the power to afford such persons such military protection as they may stand in need of, and shall have power to establish and administer such organisation as may appear to them necessary for providing these persons or their dependants with means of subsistence;
2. That the Ottoman Government shall undertake to release all persons.., imprisoned for political reasons during the present war, (and) the Allies to be given the power to afford such protection to such persons as may appear to them necessary.[3]

It is quite clear from these considerations that the Foreign Office in particular, and the British Government in general were strongly keen to see an Armenian State in Eastern parts of Turkey as these conditions were the primary conditions necessary for the establishment of Armenia. Almost all

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[1] FO 371/3411/167860/W/44, October 7, 1918. See Sir M. Sykes memorandum, dated September 30, 1918. Sykes gave his four reasons for points carrying military and political aspects:

a. It is a matter of common knowledge to all Syrians, whether urban, rural or nomadic, that all effective Turkish control must come through these two passes. If they are known to be held by us, Syria will feel secure and will dare to express itself against the Turks.
b. The doubtful elements of the Kurds and Turco-Kurds of Diyarbakir and Urfa will make common cause with the Arab movement if once they realise that the Turks have lost the game. There will be a rush not only to turn against the Turks but equally a rush to help Armenians in hopes of avoiding penalties and punishment.
c. The occupation of Hajin and Zeitun will be absolute proofs of our intention to stand by Armenia and the Armenian cause, will facilitate negotiations, and will prevent any danger of last moment massacres.
d. The occupation of the Taurus Pass will have a profound affect on Anatolia.. The Anatolian feels that Constantinople may be lost any day, but that Konia will always remain as a safe retreat. If he knows that the Cilician Gates, the key of Anatolia, are held, he will undoubtedly bring pressure to bear on Constantinople to hurry up negotiations and to recall all Caucasian expeditionary troops.

[2] *Ibid.*, He further expressed the view that "Turkish movements against Persia have generally centred from Mosul; when it is occupied Baghdad will believe that the Turk has really gone for good and all; and unless Mosul is held, the northern Kurds will remain doubtful".

[3] *Ibid.*

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considerations put forward by Sir M. Sykes were placed among the clauses of the Armistice with the Ottoman Government.[1]

A complementary comment came from Mr. Toynbee who pointed out that he had agreed entirely with suggestions of Sir M. Sykes except for one thing regarding Armenia. He minuted that

> the greater part of the country inhabited by Armenians in Turkey lies between the Hajin-Zeitun district and the Russo-Turkish frontier, and Sir M. Sykes' proposal, though it would clear the Turks out of Cilicia and Russian Armenia, would still leave in their power such important centres of Armenian population as Erzurum, Mush, and Van. Thus the objects of preventing fresh massacres and showing our intention of standing by the Armenians might not be secured definitely under this proposal.[2]

Nevertheless, Toynbee accepted the need to force the Turks to evacuate the six Vilayets, and recognised the fact that that part of Turkey might lie outside the range of effective British military action — though the case might be altered if the Black Sea Straits and the Transcaucasian railways were at the disposal of Britain.[3] He even considered the ideal course to be to insert in the armistice agreement a clause defining the eastern frontier of Turkey. But he emphasised the objection to this course as that 'any purely political stipulation in the armistice would at once raise the question of the agreements (signed among the Allies), and so bring up prematurely political questions

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[1]The fourth clause, for instance demanded from Turkey that 'all Allied prisoners of war and Armenian interned persons and prisoners be collected in Constantinople and handed over unconditionally to the Allies.'
Clause 7 was that 'the Allies to have the right to occupy any strategic points in the event of any situation arising which threatens the security of the Allies.'
Clause 10 specified 'allied occupation of the Taurus tunnel system.'
Clause 11 was that 'immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops from North West Persia to behind the pre-war frontier has already been ordered and will be carried out. Part of Transcaucasia has already been ordered to be evacuated by Turkish troops, the remainder to be evacuated if required by the Allies after they have studied the situation there.'
Clause 15 required ' ...Allied control officers to be placed on all railways, including portions of Transcaucasian railways.. This clause to include Allied occupation of Batum. Turkey will raise no objection to the occupation of Baku by the Allies.'
Clause 16 required 'surrender of all garrisons in Hedjaz, Assir, Yemen, Syria and Mesopotamia (Mosul) to the nearest Allied Commander, and the withdrawal of troops from Cilicia, except those necessary to maintain order.'
Clause 24 stated that 'in case of disorder in the six Armenian Vilayets the Allies reserve to themselves the right to occupy any part of them. See FO 371/3393/180964/W/44, October 31, 1918. Armistice signed with Turkey. For the full document see also J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record 1914-1956*, J. Van Nostrand Company, 1956, pp. 34-35. Hovannisian argues that Britain and Allies made concessions in Mudros to the Ottomans in Eastern Turkey by not securing its occupation by the Allied forces. See Hovannisian, *Caucasian Armenia between Imperial and Soviet Rule: The Interlude of National Independence*, in Sunny, R G, (ed); *Transcaucasia*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1983, p. 264.

[2]FO 371/3411/167860/W/44, October 7, 1918. See Toynbee's minute.

[3]*Ibid.*

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affecting the whole of Turkey and Arabia.[1] In another minute he reiterated his concern over the control of Transcaucasus railways and the Black Sea which were the main communication lines to Transcaucasia from Constantinople. For an effective authority in the six Armenian vilayets these were vital for the Allies. Eventually the control of these lines took its place in the Armistice.

The military campaign thus came to an end in the Caucasus as in most parts of the world. With the Armistice, the Turks now would be eliminated from the Middle East and Caucasia. However, the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress though accepting defeat and the loss of Arab provinces, were not finished yet. It was a well known aspiration which the CUP had long upheld that an enlarged Muslim Azerbaijan State in Transcaucasia might still provide enough ground to instigate and operate Pan-Islamic or Pan-Turanist policies which were at work against British interests.

Enver Pasha's Designs in Transcaucasia

When the war ended most of Azerbaijan, both Russian and Persian, was occupied by the Turkish army which was still moving towards Derbent and Petrovsk from where General Bicharakoff was forced to retreat. Consequently a large territory to the west of the Caspian was in the control of the Turks. As seen, under the armistice's clause 11, these territories were supposed to be evacuated. However, instead of ordering the Ottoman forces to withdraw Enver Pasha, the leader of the CUP, on 12 October ordered Nuri Pasha, commander of the Turkish forces in Azerbaijan, that while the Turks were in a strong position in Azerbaijan they were to take steps to leave no Armenians or Russians within the boundaries of Azerbaijan. He further ordered that the districts of Lenkoran and Astara were at once to be cleared in order that no obstruction would remain which might prevent the Azerbaijani frontier marching with that of Persian Azerbaijan.[2] Meanwhile a special train was arranged to convey Ahmed Pasha, Enver's father, from Batum to Elisavetpol (Ganja).[3] Furthermore, it was reported that the 5th Caucasian Division which had been ordered to Constantinople, had received counter-orders on 17 October to remain in Azerbaijan and, if necessary, to become subject to the Azerbaijan Government, whose national forces of about 9,000 men were reported to be

[1] FO 371/3413/170855/W/44, October 11, 1918. See Toynbee's minute.
[2] FO 371/3388/173495/W/44, October 17, 1918. From the DMI to the FO.
[3] *Ibid.*

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incompletely organised at the end of September.[1] It was argued in the same note that though most of the Turkish forces had been ordered to withdraw from the Caucasus and North West Persia, the order given to the 5th Division indicated that Enver's followers aimed at securing the British evacuation of Persia on the ground of Persian neutrality while themselves maintaining an unostentatious "Enverian" nucleus to secure control of a "self-determined Azerbaijan", thus providing for the future a strong and well-placed centre for Pan-Turanian or Pan-Islamic activity. The note ends with a warning that 'the Turks and Germans aspire to retain a foothold in Azerbaijan and Georgia respectively, on the plea of self-determination and unless this design is carefully watched at the Peace Conference, we may incur serious future military liabilities in the Caspian region.'[2]

In a memorandum, A. Toynbee drew attention to the same threat coming from Enver Pasha and his followers. He claimed that Enver's new direction would probably be to retreat to the Eastern Caucasus and wage a guerilla warfare there, in repetition of his exploits in the interior of Tripoli after the Treaty of Lausanne in 1912 between Italy and the Ottoman Empire. He reported that various means to realise this were employed by Enver. Firstly, to get recognition of Azerbaijan from the British Government. Then, the Turks promised to make the Crown Prince of Persia who had been ex-officio governor-general of Persian Azerbaijan, ruler of a united Azerbaijan — doubtless to be independent under Turkish protection. The Turks also spread rumours in Teheran that His Majesty's Government had offered Persian Azerbaijan to Turkey. Lastly, their efforts to unite Azerbaijan and Daghestan into a single state were known. Toynbee summarized the situation as that 'thus the first aim of the Turks seems to be to bluff HMG into recognising

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[1] IOR:L/P&S/C.190, A secret note on Azerbaijan by General Staff of the WO, dated 31 October 1918.

[2] *Ibid.*, As regards the Germans, the note remarks that their principle objective appeared to be the establishment of a controlling interest in Georgia, where they had issued a loan and had secured considerable political success by the activity of Von Kress, German representative in Tiflis, working through the agency of Chkhenkeli, the Georgian Minister for Foreign Affairs. The policy entailed control of Baku, and the Germans had sent a party of experts as well as a consul.

An interesting piece of information regarding a change of attitude towards the Armenians by the Turks was included. It says that the Turks by the 18th October 1918, when they were contemplating an armistice, appeared to have changed their attitude somewhat towards the Armenians, since on that date Enver issued orders that no Turkish forces were to enter Armenian territory, especially Karabagh, and that Turkish commanders were not to take any part in disputes between the Armenians and the Azeris. The note interprets this as meaning that the Turks intended to play off the Armenians against the Georgians, the proteges of Germany, by giving the former a disputed district, which might serve as compensation for further Tatar gains. See also FO 371/3413/177237/W/44, October 24, 1918. A letter dated 22 October 1918 from Colonel G. Gribbon, of the WO, to Sir R. Graham of the FO. In his letter Colonel Gribbon also warns the FO of the danger of an incomplete peace if "we do not keep our eyes open".

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the independence of Russian Azerbaijan, then to strengthen this state by adding Daghestan and Persian Azerbaijan to it, presumably through faked plebiscites, and to keep the whole area under Turkish control.[1] Therefore, Toynbee thought that

> it may be the policy of the CUP (or at any rate of Enver) to hold on at Constantinople up to the last possible moment, pulling the wires of a puppet "Ententephil" government, and then take ship to Batum when the game is up and the Straits are on the point of falling. There may still be room in this World for Enver.[2]

In another paper he discussed measures which might be taken up to prevent new Enverian threats in Transcaucasia. He suggested that a Turkish Government in Istanbul should have been forced to agree to the evacuation of Russian and Persian territory, and to forbid Turkish soldiers to naturalise themselves as Azerbaijanis; and to open the Straits and thereby give Britain command of the communications between Turkey and the Caucasus. But he enquired whether the Turkish Government would be in a position to give orders to the Turkish forces in Azerbaijan as Enver would most probably repudiate the authority of Constantinople and carry on the war on his own account. In that case, he argued, even if Britain controlled the Black Sea and could occupy Trebizond and Batum, 'it might still be a formidable task to force our way into the interior against an organised Turkish force.'[3]

As one can see, given the possibility of Enver Pasha's establishing himself in Caucasia, Toynbee and other experts could not find a firm solution. One solution, again proposed by Toynbee, was the employment of the Armenian forces. Assessing a telegram from Boghos Nubar Pasha, dated September 27, Paris, in which the Armenian General Bagratomi (sic) had proposed to organise a disciplined Armenian force to be amalgamated with Andranik's volunteers, he thought that this might solve the problems of keeping order in the Armenian districts of the Caucasus and even of supplying an interim regime in the six Vilayets. He added that the Armenian regular troops with British control would keep order there just as well as Turkish and

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[1] FO 371/3388/174496/W/44, October 19, 1918. A memorandum by A. Toynbee on "the Republics of North Caucasus and Azerbaijan, and Enver Pasha's Policy There". Mr. Toynbee maintains that it was obvious that the British Government would not fall into the trap of the Turks, but then the Turks would be able to keep the country by force, because of the self-sufficiency of the region, and its inaccessibility to British forces since already communication lines of railways were in Turco-German control, and the natural defences were extraordinarily strong. Above all, the Turkish designs in this area were favoured by the anarchy which the Russian breakdown had caused.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] FO 371/3413/177237/W/44, October 24, 1918. See Toynbee's minute.

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would be infinitely preferable from the political view.[1] Furthermore, by command of the Caspian Sea and cooperation with a non-Bolshevik government in Transcaspia it was possible to prevent the mischief from spreading east.[2]

The British fear of a new Turanian threat in Azerbaijan, however, was not realised since Enver Pasha and his friends preferred to proceed to Germany and the Azerbaijan Republic proved to be keen to work with the British military authorities whose efforts to remove the Turkish military and civil officials from her administration, nevertheless, were deliberately kept at a low key.

The British Occupation of Transcaucasia

Following the Mudros Armistice with the Turks a military occupation of Transcaucasia looked necessary from the British point of view to force the Turks to withdraw as well as to prevent the leading figures of the CUP from attempting anything in the region deleterious for British interests. Moreover, the war was still in course and Germany, who had about 7,000 soldiers in Georgia, might pose threats. In addition, since the Russian civil war was continuing it was desired to establish liaison with Bicharakoff and Denikin who had remained loyal to Britain and her Allies by keeping up the fight with the Central Powers. In other words the justification for the occupation largely stemmed from military considerations. To proceed with the occupation the War Office on 31 October 1918 ordered General Marshall in Baghdad to arrange the occupation.[3] General Marshall then ordered Major-General W.M. Thomson to occupy Baku and the rest of the Caucasus.[4] Accordingly

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[1]FO 371/3404/167834/W/44, October 7, 1918. See Toynbee's minute, dated 9.10.1918. Although he finds this solution preferable, he warns against some dangers to be avoided such as the employment of the Armenian troops for policing Georgia and predominantly Azeri and Daghestani districts of the Caucasus, and lastly Baku.

[2]FO 371/3388/173495/W/44, October 17, 1918. See Toynbee's minute, dated 20.10.1918. Amazingly Toynbee finds some advantage if Enver Pasha was able to create a mini Turanian state in the Caucasus. He argues that

(1) the creation of a militant "Turanian State" in this region would reconcile to us not only the Persian Government but the Persian nation, which would be in danger of the loss of Azerbaijan and of a Turkish ascendency over the "Iranians",

(2) if the Turks intend to unite Daghestan and Azerbaijan into a single state, this is likely to lead to trouble, since earlier in the Russian Revolution the Daghestanis were extremely jealous of the Azerbaijani Tatars, and considered them overbearing. Propaganda among the Daghestanis might have some chance of success, and if they could be detached, the problem of restoring order in Azerbaijan would be greatly simplified from the military point of view.

[3]Arslanian, *The British Military Involvement in Transcaucasia 1917-1919, op. cit.*, p. 109.

[4]Thomson was in command of Dunsterforce, now renamed the North Persian Force.

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Thomson informed the Azeri Government's delegation which had come to ask for delaying the occupation for a few days that

1. Baku would have to be entirely cleared of all troops, Turkish as well as Azeri, by the morning of November 17 when his troops would occupy the city.

2. Baku with its oilfields would be occupied, while the rest of the country would remain under the control of the Azerbaijan Government and its troops.

3. Azerbaijan was not officially recognized, but the representatives of England, France and the United States would establish relations with its *de facto* Government.

4. All organisations and institutions would continue to function as usual with only the following changes:
   a) General Thomson would be governor-general of Baku.b) An Englishman would lead the city police.
   c) The city Duma would be free to function once more.
   d) Azerbaijan would not be excluded from the discussion of the principle of national self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference.
   e) Lazar Bicharakoff and his troops would come to Baku together with the British forces.
   f) Armed Armenians would not be admitted to Baku.[1]

Since the Turks had signed an armistice and indicated their intention to withdraw, the Azeri Government of Fath Ali Khan had had no choice but to accept the demands of General Thomson. On 16 November 1918 General Thomson set sail from Enzeli with 20 ships. He was joined en route to Baku by Bicharakoff and his forces who had been forced to retire from Petrovsk by Nuri Pasha in early November despite the fact that the Ottoman Government had ceased fighting on 30 October. Thomson's mission included a small number of staff from France and the United States, and carried four flags of the Allies, i.e., Britain, France, the United States and Russia to reinforce the appearance that it was an international force.[2] Baku was occupied by British

[1] Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, *op. cit.*, p. 164. See also FO 371/3416/190205/W/44, November 18, 1918. Nuri Pasha, the commanding officer of the Turkish forces in the Caucasus, replied to General Thomson's request to withdraw from Azerbaijan that he had accepted service in the Azerbaijan Republic's army and had forwarded his resignation to Constantinople and that he did this to prevent anarchy and assure peace in Azerbaijan. He hoped this would not be taken as an act of hostility and asked that the arrival of British troops be postponed to November 26. His reason for delay was the problems which had occurred along the communication lines between Tiflis and Batum. Thus Nuri apparently tried to evade withdrawal. Yet he failed to persuade the British General and he was ordered to leave the city on 17 November.

[2] Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army*, *op. cit.*, p. 91. The Russian flag was flown later as a result of Bicharakoff's pressure. He argued that owing to the general cessation of hostilities, to fly the British flag while ignoring the Russian was directed against the Russians. See FO 371/3416/190205/W/44, November 18, 1918.

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forces on November 17, 1918, with a force of 1,200 British and 800 Indian troops.[1] The occupation placed Baku under a firm British military rule involving maintaining law and order, rebuilding public administration and enforcing the departure of the Turks who had encamped outside Baku and along the railway to Elisavetpol (Ganja), while encouraging the creation of as representative a form of government as was possible in the circumstances.[2] A new government was soon established by Azeris and other nationalities including the Armenians, under the premiership of Khan-Khoiski. With British approval the new government was convoked on December 7, 1918. Although it was largely dominated by the Muslims a significant number of Armenian, Jewish and Russian members were represented in the Cabinet. Thomson accepted it as the legitimate government of Azerbaijan by issuing a statement on 29 December 1918 that "this coalition government would receive the full support of the Allied command as the only legal authority in the borders of Azerbaijan". General Milne, the commander of the Black Sea Army, came from Constantinople in January and affirmed that the new government would be dealt with *de facto* as the only legal authority.[3]

Thus within six weeks of Dunsterforce's withdrawal British soldiers reentered Baku. Yet the rest of Azerbaijan territory was left to the Azerbaijan Government. The occupation of Baku not only helped to force the Turks to withdraw but also provided a very useful naval base as well as source of oil for British armed ships on the Caspian.

The occupation of Baku, however, necessitated the occupation of Tiflis as well as Batum for the complete control of Transcaucasia. But before studying British military action as regards Georgia it seems necessary to analyze briefly British policy with respect to Russia as the Caucasus was thought a part of Russia, and political and military actions were at first taken in accordance with the general lines of British policy towards Russia.

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[1] Moberly, F.J., (Compiler), *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918*, Vol. IV, London, 1927, pp. 329-330.

[2] Ellis, *Transcaspian Episode, op. cit.*, p. 121; Arslanian, *British War Time Pledges, 1917-1918: The Armenian Case*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, pp. 524-5. When General Thomson landed at Baku on 17 November he made a proclamation disregarding the independence of the Caucasus and implied that he had come to one part of Russia proper. See Kazemzadeh, *op. cit.*, p. 165, and Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question, op. cit.*, p. 153. Yet he and his forces received a warm welcome from the Azeri Government who urged that Azerbaijan be admitted into the family of European States. Thomson then indicated that the Allies' purpose was merely to enforce the armistice and assured the government that the British command had no intention of intervening in the internal affairs of Azerbaijan, either at present or in the future. See Brinkley, *op. cit.*, p. 93. His reply caused resentment from the Russian National Council (RNC)in Baku who argued that since Baku was a part of Russia Baku and rest of the country should be ruled through the RNC. When his efforts bore no fruit with the RNC, Thomson declared he recognized that no Russian Government existed which could rule over Baku and asked the Azeri Government to establish a coalition government representing everyone's interests.

[3] FO 371/3416/193007/W/44, November 22, 1918, Admiral Calthorpe (Constantinople) to FO.

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The Effect of the Russian Question on British Policy in Transcaucasia

An interdepartmental conference on 13 November paid attention to a memorandum by General Henry Wilson, the Chief of Imperial General Staff, (CIGS), as regards British military policy on Russia.[1] In his memorandum General Wilson explained very clearly British policy on Russia since the revolution. He maintained that the military intervention in Russia during the war by the Allies had three main objectives: 1. To prevent Germany from drawing assistance from Russia and Siberia in man-power and supplies; 2. To retain on the Russian front enemy resources in men and material, which would otherwise have been available for use on other fronts; 3. To prevent the acquisition by Germany of a preponderating influence in Russian affairs after the war.

The first two objects, he stated, disappeared with the signing of the armistice with the enemy (Austria-Hungary on 3 November and Germany on 11 November). But the British Government was left in a dilemma as to what to do with the Russian Question, namely whether to continue her military intervention against the Bolsheviks, and thus throw them out and establish a non-Bolshevik government or leave Russia to her destiny in which case apparently the Bolsheviks would gain the supremacy. General Wilson summarised the views of those who favoured continuation of the intervention. The reasons for continued intervention in Russia were as follows: a) That Bolshevism is a danger to the world (including, of course, the Central Powers) and must be crushed; b) That if we do not do so the time will come when the Germans will, and in the process of so doing obtain a preponderating influence in Russia; c) That we cannot leave those who have helped us to the tender mercies of the Bolsheviks, and that without further intervention we may not be able to extricate certain of our troops.

General Wilson explained further that if continued intervention was necessary three alternatives were open to Britain: the first was to withdraw all forces and to create a ring of states all around Bolshevik Russia, thus depriving her of supplies and power of expansion, and so reducing it to absolute exhaustion. However, he disfavoured it since it required an indefinite period of occupation by the Allied troops of the Border States and would cause starvation of a large number of people. A second course would be to launch a

[1]CAB 24/70/G.T.-6311, 13 November 1918. A memorandum by General H. Wilson on "Our Present and Future Military Policy in Russia". See also FO 371/3344/188552/W/38, in which same memorandum is available.

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firm military operation to crush Bolshevism definitely at the earliest possible date. Thus German penetration of Russia would be met by making Russia liberated and powerful enough to re-establish control over the border nationalities as an effective barriers against Germany. Yet this action would require a substantial amount of manpower which the Allies lacked as a consequence of the exhausting war. Therefore, though desirable he could not recommend it.

The last alternative which he also favoured was to compel the Germans to hand over arms and equipment to the states from which they were in the process of withdrawing; to repatriate troops which Britain's friends might possess; and generally to give them any assistance possible except troops to let them do the best they could against the Bolsheviks.[1] Poland, the Ukraine, Rumania, the Baltic States, Finns and friendly Russians in and around Archangel, all friendly Russians gathered around the Omsk Government, and General Denikin's anti-Bolshevik volunteer forces in the north Caucasus should be considered to receive assistance from the Allies. He emphasised the necessity of occupying important ports, such as Batum, on the Eastern shores of the Black Sea.

He concluded that 'we should liquidate our commitments in troops at the earliest possible moment, aiming at their complete withdrawal from European Russia by the time Peace has been signed, and establishment of a firm Russian Government in Siberia at the earliest possible moment.'

This memorandum had a significant importance as it was the major paper which largely shaped the British post-war policy towards Russia. The Interdepartmental Conference on the same day when the memorandum had been submitted discussed the CIGS's views.[2] Although the date for the

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[1]CAB 24/70/G.T.-6311, 13 November 1918. A memorandum by General H. Wilson on "Our Present and Future Military Policy in Russia". Wilson argued that
Bolshevism is a cult if not a religion... Like all cults, if radically unsound, as we think it is, it cannot long survive the re-establishment of normal conditions in the rest of the world. If, however, it is better than we are prepared to admit, it will gradually develop into a higher organism and we cannot permanently stifle it by military action... To abandon our friends is contrary to British principle; but provided that we place them in an initial position to defend themselves, we shall have given them a fair chance. If the Bolsheviks are the better men, we cannot indefinitely continue to protect the others...

[2]CAB 23/8/W.C. 502, November 14, 1918. See Appendix. Minutes of proceedings of the conference held at the FO on 13 November 1918 were appended to those of the following day's of the War Cabinet meeting. The conference was attended by the following: A. J. Balfour, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Chairman, Lord Milner, Secretary of State for War, Lord Robert Cecil, Assistant Under Secretary of State, Lord Hardinge, Permanent Under Secretary of State, Sir George Clerk, Foreign Office, Admiral Sir W. Reginald Hall, Director of Naval Intelligence, Major-General W. Thwaites, Director of Military Intelligence, Major-General P. Radcliffe, Director of Military Operations, Lieutenant-Colonel F.H. Kisch Major Farmer.

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withdrawal of British forces from Russia was considered difficult as suggested by General Wilson, his main considerations were accepted. Balfour proposed the following for discussion: 1. The British Government cannot embark upon an anti-Bolshevik crusade in Russia. 2. It is necessary that support should be afforded to the Border States of Western Russia from the Baltic to the Black Sea. These States should be recognised and support should follow on recognition. 3. To support the Omsk Government. 4. To ensure the Czech troops in Siberia should be extricated. 5. To help Denikin in South East Russia. 6. To help the small nationalities of the Caucasus.

These proposals were approved with an important difference of understanding between Lord Milner and Lord Cecil. Milner argued that it was impossible to crusade against the Bolsheviks in countries where Bolsheviks already prevailed, but he thought that everything should be done to protect other countries from Bolshevik attack, particularly when invited to do so. He further argued that

> anything which could be done to protect the Baltic States should be done, but British troops could not be despatched to these regions. On the other hand, considerations of both of *honour and interest* demanded that we should keep Bolshevism from the regions East of the Black Sea, i.e., the Caucasus, the Don Country and Turkestan...

Lord Robert Cecil, while sharing in general with Balfour and Milner, disagreed with Lord Milner that Britain should protect Border States against Bolshevik attack. His argument was to help the Russians to stand by themselves, and therefore, do everything possible to support and strengthen existing (anti-Bolshevik) organisations.[1] Eventually the conference took decisions on the lines of Balfour's proposals largely inspired from General Wilson's memorandum. Among other decisions the 6th was 'to proceed with

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[1] In a memorandum to the Cabinet Mr. Balfour asserted that "it is for the Russians to choose their own form of government; that we have no desire to intervene in their domestic affairs; and that if, in the course of operations essentially directed against the Central Powers, we have to act with such Russian political and miliary organisations as are favourable to the Entente, this does not imply that we deem ourselves to have any mission to establish, or disestablish, any particular political system among the Russian people... Recent events have created obligations which last beyond the occasions which gave them birth... in the south east corner of Russia, in Europe, in Siberia, in Transcaucasia and Transcaspia, in the territories adjacent to the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean, new anti-Bolshevik administrations have grown up under the shelter of Allied force. We are responsible for their existence and we must endeavour to support them. How far we can do this, and how such a policy will ultimately develop, we cannot say. It must largely depend on the course taken by the Associated Powers who have far larger resources at their disposal than ourselves..." See CAB 23/8/W.C.-511, December 10, 1918, Appendix. Memorandum was dated as 29 November 1918.

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the occupation of the Baku-Batum railway.'[1] These decisions put forward next day at the War Cabinet meeting were entirely approved except 9 which was left for discussion by the Secretary of State for War, in consultation with the Secretary of State for India.[2]

One of the decisions taken by the War Cabinet meeting of 14 November was the occupation of Batum and Tiflis as well as the railway communication between Batum and Baku that had already come under British military rule. For the occupation of the railway, Batum and Tiflis, the War Office designated an entire British division from Salonica. The Eastern Committee meeting on 21 November took it into consideration.[3] Lord Cecil expressed some doubt whether the occupation might involve Britain in further extensive operations. The Director of Military Intelligence, General Thwaites, stated that the reason why it was desirable to send a division up to the railway was to open up a much better line of communication than the Hamadan-Enzeli line, and to have a better control of the Caspian. He explained that the divisional commander would be instructed merely to hold the line and not to embark on extensive operations in that area. He further indicated that, in reply to Mr Montagu's enquiry, it was an alternative line since the Hamadan line in winter was practically impassable. It was not, however, proposed to evacuate Enzeli, and the construction of the Khanikin-Hamadan railway would not be abandoned.[4]

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[1]The other decisions were as follows: 1. To remain in occupation of Murmansk and Archangel. 2. To recognize the Omsk Directorate as a *de facto* government. 3. To maintain present British Siberian expedition and to encourage the Canadians to adhere to the arrangements contemplated prior to the armistice. 4. To endeavour to induce the Czechs to remain in Western Siberia. 5. To approve the proposal outlined by the DMO for a *modus vivendi* with the French authorities on the subject of the relations between general Jarin and General Knox. 7. To establish touch with Denikin at Novorossisk, and afford him all possible assistance in military material. 8. To supply the Baltic States with military material, if, and when, they have governments ready to receive and utilise such material. 9. To authorise General Marshall to take over Krasnovodsk, subject to the concurrence of the India Office. 10. To adhere to the Convention of December 1917, if possible, extending the British sphere so as to include the country between the Don and Volga.

[2]CAB 23/8/W.C. 502, November 14, 1918. During the discussion Lord Milner stated that "it so happened the countries where there were already in existence governments opposed to the Bolsheviks — that is to say, east of the Don and the Volga — were those which most closely affected the interests of the British Empire and were most easily got at. These countries were threatened by a Bolshevik invasion from the West. We should help the existing governments to resist such an invasion..."
Then Mr. Montagu asked whether the cabinet had accepted a principle, stated by Lord Milner, that 'where there was in existence a friendly anti-Bolshevik government which was to our advantage to support, we should support it, and we ought to support it, even though it entailed anti-Bolshevik action... If this principle were accepted, it would apply to Transcaspia where there was such a government and he would then give the Government of India instructions.' In reply the Cabinet acknowledged the principle. See also Brinkley, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

[3]CAB 27/24/E.C. 38th Meeting, November 21, 1918. The Committee meetings always took place in Lord Curzon's room at the Privy Council Office.

[4]*Ibid.*

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Meanwhile, before the arrival of the division from Salonica, the Georgians entered into communications with General Thomson in Baku. As the first aim of the occupation was to clear the Germans and the Turks from the region, Thomson informed the Georgian Government of his decision to send a force into Tiflis, which had been the headquarters of the German military and political establishment in the Caucasus. The Georgian Government tried to persuade Thomson not to send any force via his envoy, Kartsevadze, by explaining the reasons on the part of Georgia by inviting Germany in; and that now since the Germans left there was no German influence in the country; and Georgia was able to maintain law and order. Yet General Thomson's views remained unaltered.[1] He in return took an uncompromising attitude and informed N. Jordania, the Georgian Prime Minister, that the British objectives included the restoration of the Caucasian viceroyalty in the name of Russian authority and the liberation of the Caucasus from the Germans and the Bolsheviks [2] In fact, he did not have any such instructions from his superiors in London. All he had to do was to announce that the British Government's policy was to police the area between the Caspian and the Black Sea, as may be required to maintain order and enforce the terms of the armistice, pending final settlement at the Peace Conference of various territorial questions involved.[3] Therefore, it seems that he might have been influenced by General Bicharakoff whose forces along with the British had been placed in the occupation of Baku. However, he also informed the Georgian Government that in re-establishing order, British forces would not interfere with the internal affairs of Georgia. Yet the Georgians did not consent at first. But there was nothing, as a matter of fact, they could do to prevent the entry of British troops into their country which the British forces entered on 23 December 1918. A British division sent from Salonica landed at Batum and had its headquarters at Tiflis under the command of Major-General G.T. Forester-Walker.[4] A military-governorship, similar to the one in Baku, was established in Batum, which had been occupied by the Turks. Batum had a mixed population, with a Muslim majority and a minority of Georgians, Russians and Armenians.[5]

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[1]The Georgians' argument for their plea to Germany was desperation, since they had been threatened by the Turks from the south and by the Bolsheviks from the north, and the Allies, though Georgia had long wished to enter into close relations, had been unable to give any significant help. See Brinkley, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

[2]Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia, op. cit.*, p. 216, see also Kazemzadeh, *Struggle for Transcaucasia, op. cit.*, pp. 169-170.

[3]CAB 27/24/E.C. 38th Meeting, November 21, 1918. See Lord Curzon's minute in Minute 1.

[4]Nassibian, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

[5]General Forester-Walker assigned Lieut.-Gen. W. J. N. Cooke-Collis as military governor-general to bring about a council representing all elements in the population as an advisory body. General Cooke-Collis induced a council to assemble with two Russians, two Georgians, one Greek, one Muslim, one Jew, one Pole and one Armenian under Russian Moslov's chairmanship. However, the Council failed to function because of intrigues on the parts of Russian and Georgian members who claimed that the city was a part of Russia and Georgia respectively. See Brinkley, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-103.

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The responsibility in the region was thus divided. While Georgia and to some extent Armenia were placed under Forester-Walker's responsibility, General Thomson was held responsible for Azerbaijan and Daghestan. Thomson sent a small detachment to station in Petrovsk, on the Caspian, in Daghestan that was otherwise left to itself.[1]

One problem left over from the war was the activities of the Turkish military agents who carried on Pan-Turkish propaganda in Transcaucasia even after the armistice. Their activities inevitably caused some anxiety in London and in India. G. Kidston minuted for instance that

> everything points to unpleasant developments in the Caucasus and Transcaspia, but I very much doubt whether the present Turkish Government at Constantinople would have the slightest control of Turkish agents in these countries. The agents were sent there by the CUP which is apparently shifting its activities eastward under the guise of an Islamic and Pan-Turanian movement, with the probable intention of cooperating with Bolshevism.[2]

As seen earlier, a substantial number of Ottoman Turkish soldiers and officers stayed in Azerbaijan and Daghestan claiming that they were now subjects of the Azerbaijani and Daghestani Governments.[3] Furthermore, the Ottoman Government of Izzet Pasha, recently appointed by the new Sultan Vahid-ed-Din Mehmed V, apparently wishing to delay the withdrawal, informed the British Government that owing to the difficulties experienced on the communication lines it was ready to place the troops at the disposal of the British Government.[4] In order to prevent Turkish activities some solutions

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[1]Daghestan was inhabited by numerous Muslim tribes who had come under Russian rule after Russia had made great efforts and sacrifices, military and economic, and it took Russia about a century to take full control over them. Since the Russian Revolution they had become independent and their delegation had been received by the Sultan in Istanbul during the Constantinople Conference which took place in late June and in early July. However, their government, according to Toynbee, had only a delegation and nothing else. This delegation visited Thomson in Baku for recognition. In reply Thomson repeated the same principle he had done to others, that their case would be considered by the peace Conference. Daghestan meanwhile was under threat from two sources: the Bolsheviks and the Volunteers of General Denikin. The delegation, headed by Haidar Bammate, wished to visit London to present their case. The Foreign Office was not prepared to receive them since it was thought that Daghestan would be in the Russian zone. George Kidston, the head of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, minuted that "we should hold ourselves severely aloof form any interference in affairs north of the Caucasus, which forms part of the general Russian problem". See FO 371/3379/198020/W/38, December 2, 1918. See also Toynbee's minute mentioned above.

[2]See his minute in FO 371/3417/191386/W/44, November 20, 1918.

[3]FO 371/3301/193356/W/44, December 2, 1918. A telegram from General Marshall in Baghdad transmitting a telegram, dated 23 November, from Thomson reporting that he had ordered all Turkish officers and soldiers to be removed from the Azerbaijani Army of 20,000 placed at British disposal. It was, however, not an easy task.

[4]FO 371/3416/193007/W/44, November 22, 1918, A telegram from Admiral Calthrope, Constantinople, to Admiralty. See section V for the FO.

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were submitted. Sir Eyre Crowe suggested that 'the remedy lies in our strengthening our hold (militarily and naval) over the Caucasus region and Transcaspia.'[1] A. Toynbee supported the idea of using Omar Adil Effendi Daghestani, who was in the Ottoman Capital, as suggested by the High Commissioner, Admiral S. Gough-Calthrope. Toynbee maintained that

> we ought to use Daghestani to foster Lesgian and Azeri nationalism in the Caucasus as opposed to Pan-Islamism or Pan-Turanism, and we should then encourage an understanding between these nationalities and the Georgians and Armenians on the lines of the entente between the Arabs and the Zionists.[2]

The Foreign Office, in addition, informed the India Office of the possible danger and asked further measures to be taken in and around Transcaspia.[3]

Political Considerations of Britain Regarding Caucasia

While the region was in the process of coming under British military occupation, it was inevitable for the policy-makers in London to search for policies for the future settlement of Transcaucasia. As noted earlier, it had been a prime concern for British officials to prepare an armistice with Turkey without prejudicing the peace agreement. Therefore, almost all political considerations were kept aside. Nevertheless, there was a strong need now to develop certain policies regarding the Republics since the Peace Conference at Paris would have convened in January 1919.

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[1]FO 371/3417/191386/W/44, November 20, 1918, a copy of telegram from the CO-in-C, India, communicated by the DMI to the FO.

[2]FO 371/3421/210025/W/44, December 21, 1918, From Calthrope, Constantinople, to the FO, dated November 19, 1918. See Toynbee's minute dated 28/12/1918.
Admiral Calthrope reported that Daghestani wished to place his influence in the Caucasus at the disposal of HMG provided that he received instructions from King Hussein of Hejaz. Calthrope suggested to communicate with Feisal, well-known son of Hussein. Feisal advised British Government that though Daghestani did have some influence in the Caucasus Kamil Pasha, residing in Damascus, son of Shaykh Shamil who had led three decades of successful resistance against the Russian aggression in north Caucasus, might be more useful.

[3]FO 406/40/188753, November 23, 1918, from the FO to the IO. Some part of the communication was as follows: "... In view of recent events in the Caucasus, the establishment of the Azerbaijan Republic and the apparent enlistment of large numbers of Turkish Officers and men in the army and under the flag of that Republic, in evasion of the terms of the armistice with Turkey, the alleged flight in the direction of the Caucasus of the leading members of the CUP,and the well-known connection of the Committee with the Russian Bolsheviks, Mr. Balfour considers it desirable that all possible measures should be taken to maintain the Caspian under the British, to continue the British occupation of Krasnovodsk, and to sever as far as possible all connection between the Bolshevik forces in Transcaspia and the friends of the Committee in the Caucasus... (Signed by L. Mallet).

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Views of the Foreign Office Experts

Even before the armistice was signed there had been some attempts to work on the political nature of the region. A. Toynbee, for instance, developed some arguments in that direction early in October. He argued that the soundest course diplomatically would be simply to refuse to recognize the arrangements made by Turkey and Germany in Russian and Persian territory.[1] Yet this policy had drawbacks since Britain might face a. an independent Azerbaijan under the effective military control of Enver and his kinsmen — Persian as well as Russian Azerbaijan being in their hands and the Daghestani mountaineers cooperating with them; b. an independent Russian Armenia — a small Armenian force under Andranik holding out in the Karabagh hills harassing Enver's forces, and calling on the British for help; c. an independent Georgia hastening to the assistance of the 'victors.'

He further pointed out that all these *de facto* independent states would nominally be in Persian and Russian territory, but there would be no Persian and Russian Governments in a position to bring them to order. Even if it was possible for Britain to restore order, he warned that the responsibility for preserving it till Russia and Persia were in a position to take control lay with the British Government which would be required to occupy Daghestan and Azerbaijan for an indefinite period. In the meantime the Georgians and Armenians would ask for their recognition in return for their military assistance and the use of communication lines, namely the ports and the railways. He concludes his note by expressing the view that

> ... thus we might in all good faith start at the peace settlement from the position that the Persian and Russian status quo must be maintained, and find ourselves driven by circumstances to bring about, or at any rate assent to, an entirely different arrangement, by which Russia and Persia would lose large territories of the nominal possession of which they had previously been assured by us.[2]

In another paper Toynbee maintains that when the evacuation of Turkish armies was completed there would be no government left except the new-born, or still-born, Republics set up by the enemy's permission or instigation, with boundaries drawn so far as to favour his future hegemony. He suggests, therefore, that a provisional military administration was

[1] FO 371/3413/177237/W/44, October 24, 1918, from Colonel Gribbon of the WO to Sir R. Graham, dated 22 October, 1918.
[2] *Ibid.*

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desirable. In this memorandum he suggests respecting the wishes of the Georgians, assisting Armenia in her effort to establish herself as an independent state while giving the most precious part of Azerbaijan, Baku, to the Russians, and discouraging an Azerbaijani State. He further submits that 'for the sake of future relations with Russia, it was desirable that the United States should be asked to undertake the task of assisting in the administration of these Republics.'[1] Although he finds Russian Armenia dispensable to Russia, he suggests leaving Baku with as large a district as possible to the Russians on the grounds that Germany had guaranteed Baku to Russia and, consequently, Britain could not fail to be less generous than Germany for the sake of British interests regarding future relations with Russia. For this reason Baku should be occupied by British forces in cooperation with the Russians.

With respect to Daghestan Toynbee advocates that the British aims in that country should be to encourage them to break their relations with the Turks and to secure their good-will for the re-opening of the railway from Baku to Rostov. Regarding Azerbaijan he recognizes a need for some provisional administration to maintain law and order, without prejudicing its ultimate disposal. He claims that 'of course the Azerbaijani Republic was expected to be as small as possible after giving Baku to the Russians, leaving it only with one province, Ganja, i.e., Elisavetpol.' Since Georgia was perhaps relatively the best organised of the newly established States in Transcaucasia her autonomy should be respected, and her ultimate decision whether to be independent or re-enter into a Russian Confederation should not be prejudiced. In the case of Armenia, it was necessary not to postpone the settlement. Otherwise, it would be unfair to wait until the general settlement of Russia. This small territory was the nucleus for a future larger Armenia. With extended interests in the Arab region and Persia, Britain could not be disinterested in the condition of the Caucasus. Nor could she afford the dispersal of strength and danger of future complications with Russia which British intervention there would involve. Therefore, a zone of independent national states developing under American tutelage from the Cilician coast of the Mediterranean practically to the Caspian Sea, would accord admirably with the interests of the British Empire in the Middle East. (See map 1 on p. ?).

In a different memorandum prepared by the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office the future settlement of Transcaucasia was viewed as part of the general problem of the future of the Russian Border

[1] FO 371/3411/166030/W/44, October 2, 1918. A memorandum by A. Toynbee to the FO entitled "Desiderate for a possible Armistice with Turkey: The position in the Caucasus".

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States, though it had special features. It advocated that the wisest plan would be that any settlement ought to start from the principle of self-determination; this would imply the recognition of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia as free independent states, which it was hoped would ultimately come into a federal union with one another. This would also imply that they should be free, at any rate in the meantime, from Russian dominion, and that the Caucasus should become the frontier of a restored Russia.

The possibility of their voluntary return into a stable and liberalised Federation of Russian States should not, however, be absolutely foreclosed. Furthermore, it suggested, a Western Power might be appointed to watch over, assist and control these nationalities in their efforts to self-government. The Peace Conference should delegate them either to Great Britain — as an extension of a Mesopotamian Protectorate — or to the United States because of her Anatolian and Armenian interests.[1] The memorandum draws attention to the fact that Germany was out for a considerable time in World politics and submits the question of whether would it not be desirable to discourage any Russian advance beyond Cis-Caucasia, to confine her to the northern side of the Caucasus, thus making Transcaucasia a barrier to any future aspiration towards the South-East. To endorse the argument, the memorandum claims that if the Azeris proved their ability to govern themselves it would not be a difficult task to federate them with assistance from Great Britain. For this reason the memorandum argues against the idea of giving Baku back to Russia

[1]CAB 29/69/G.T.-6216, November 1, 1918. Also in IOR:L/P&S/18/C.189. A memorandum by the PID of the FO entitled "the future settlement of Transcaucasia with special regard to British interests". The memorandum states that Georgia, as the most advanced politically and economically, with the most compact and homogeneous population, deserved to be independent. There were historical grounds supporting the Georgian claim to be independent. Georgian history reached back to the third century B.C. and they had maintained their political independence until 1801 when Russia, despite having made a treaty with Georgia in 1783 recognising her sovereignty, established her rule by invasion. Moreover, the principle of self-determination introduced by the Bolsheviks to international politics and adopted by the Allies was strongly on their side.
As regards Armenian claims to independence, the memorandum reckons that a territory consisting of Russian Armenia, six Vilayets plus Trebizond as an outlet on the Black Sea, and Cilicia would be greatly disproportionate to the present Armenian population and, therefore, it would be an Armenian protectorate rather than an independent state under the Mandate of a Great Power. This Armenian State would face long-term, profound difficulties, one of which was the existence of large numbers of Kurds whose rights would require to be safeguarded. Moreover, there were doubts whether the Russian Armenians would want to unite with Turkish Armenians.
Regarding Azerbaijan it questions whether the Azeris would be able to form a self-governing element alongside Georgia and Armenia. If the negative proved to be case then it would be difficult not to hand it back to Russia.

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since if she had a footing she would inevitably attempt to recover all her former possessions.[1]

In his memorandum circulated to the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet, Sir Eyre Crowe of the Foreign Office maintains that it would appear safe to begin by recognising effective national governments in any areas in Transcaucasia in which they had been established, in such a form as not to prejudge the question of their permanent independence or reintegration with Russia.[2] However, it would be necessary to reconsider any arrangements to be made with the Republics after the lapse of some fixed period. He argues that

> the League of the Nations, if established, might offer the necessary machinery for this purpose. The duration of the provisional settlement should be long enough to allow, on the one hand, of the possibility of a return of Russia to a state of stable political equilibrium, and to permit, on the other hand, of the three South Caucasian States having a fair chance of finding their own feet under the conditions of complete political autonomy guaranteed to them in the interval by the Allies. If Russia recovers rapidly, they might conceivably rejoin her in some federal relation; if the anarchy in Russia lasts many years their present separation from her will probably be permanent. Our policy towards the Caucasus should be framed to meet either eventuality.[3]

From the remarks above it seems clear that the Foreign Office did not have a settled policy with regard to Caucasia. In other words, the Foreign Office was prepared to accept to see a recovered Russia reestablishing herself in the region, and if not to accept *de facto* governments as permanent entities and to recognise them.

Sir E. Crowe discussed the possibility of federation between Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Daghestan, but since the differences were immense this option was out of consideration for that time at least. Independent sovereignty of each republic, however, implied that a Great Power friendly to Great Britain should take care of these republics supplying a unifying element

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[1] *Ibid.* The memorandum maintains that with the oil fields of Grozny and Maikop and the ports of Derbent and Petrovsk on the Caspian Russia would not suffer essential loss or means of direct communication with her Transcaspian possessions.

[2] FO 371/3301/186203/W/38, November 9, 1918. A memorandum entitled as "A possible territorial policy in the Caucasus regions" by Sir Eyre Crowe, dated November 7, 1918. Crowe cautions that though the principle of self-determination claimed by the Republics needs to be recognised, "it will, however, be prudent to follow a course which may be calculated to cause the minimum of resentment and bitterness to a reconstituted Russia, and leave her no ground for complaining that the Allies had taken advantage of her temporary weakness".

[3] *Ibid.*

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sufficiently strong to take the place of the federal option.[1] As regards Georgia, he comments that 'if the Georgian Government breaks off her special relations with Germany it would be easy to recognise her provided that Georgia accepts Batum and Poti as free ports and freedom of transit along the railway for trade with the countries around her.' The natural line of policy with respect to Russian Armenians would be to recognise the present independent Government and not to oppose its union with Turkish Armenia, if desired. His remarks on Azerbaijan, however, were not very favourable from the Azeri point of view. He claimed that

> the Azerbaijanis are a comparatively backward Muslim Turkish-speaking race, who are probably incapable in their present stage of establishing an orderly, civilised government, and certainly could not cope, by themselves, with the administration of Baku where their recent entry has been marked by pillage and the massacring of the non-Azeri elements. It would hardly be advisable for us to recognise the present government, which has been set up under the aegis of the Turks by the Azerbaijani land-owning class and the handful of Azeri industrialists at Baku.[2]

It seems to be clear from these remarks that the Azeris did not deserve to be independent as they were firstly backward Muslims and secondly they shared the same nationality with the Turks of Anatolia who had been an enemy of Britain during the war. Any Azeri State established would almost certainly cooperate with Turkey which would re-establish its influence in the region. In addition, an enlarged Armenia from the Caucasus to the

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[1] *Ibid.* The memorandum says that 'it is undoubtedly a British interest that regions so near to those countries in the Middle East in which we have a direct stake should not allowed to lapse into anarchy.' But it adds to this argument that it would be undesirable, from the point of view of Britain's future relations with Russia, that England should be the mandatory power. As the mandatory power needed to have capability of military force or prestige, to exercise authority, only France and the United States would be able to take this task. He favours France for two reasons: Firstly, France would be most probably be accepted by the populations concerned especially by the Armenians; secondly, with the inclusion of these territories into French mandate it might be possible to induce France to make concessions as regards French claims in Syria (where the Arabs were not in a mood to welcome it) and Mesopotamia (where Mosul was considered very essential for British Imperial interests to be in the British zone, and Palestine). Although France might pose a new danger on the northern frontier of Persia, this might, however, be regarded as a minor evil. It might well be accepted by Britain as on the whole satisfactory, since Great Britain would have to some extent control through the League of Nations if the French mandate derived its authority from the League of Nations and remained subject to some, however indefinite, control of that nebulous body. He proposes as the ideal solution to leave Georgia, Azerbaijan and Daghestan to the United States and Armenia to France but this scheme was not possible to be realised in view of the United States administration's unwillingness to take responsibility as a mandatory power.

[2] *Ibid.* He also points out that the connection of Azerbaijan with Turkey, which rests on community of nationality and religion, and a common hostility to the Armenians will be much harder to break than that of Georgia with Germany. A strong foreign protectorate would be, therefore, desirable. He, furthermore, touches upon the Baku oilfields, the produce of which was vital to the industry and transport of European Russia, as well as to the rest of the world. Therefore, he proposes to place the oilfields under some kind of direct international control whatever political regime would be set up in Azerbaijan.

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Mediterranean which it was hoped would curb the influence of the Turks over the Arabs and the Turkish tribes of Persia, Caucasus and Central Asia, would be surrounded by the Turks of Anatolia from the West and the Turks of Azerbaijan form the East. Besides the attitudes of the large number of Kurds in Armenia were doubtful. A show of strength by the Turks would certainly affect their attitude towards Turkey. Thus one can perhaps say that within these circumstances it was inevitable for Britain to discourage the idea of an Azerbaijani State.[1]

Discussions at the Eastern Committee

The schemes, proposals and considerations put forward by various experts were considered by the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet which played the key role in framing the major policies of Great Britain towards the Middle East. The settlement of Transcaucasia was discussed at length by the Eastern Committee on December 2.[2] The discussion was largely focused on the mandatory power for the region and the Armenian issue with regard to its boundaries. As regards the mandatory power mainly three views were proposed: The first scheme developed by Lord Curzon, Lord Privy Seal, who argued that it might be possible to create some form of temporary international control in this region, pending the assumption by France of this larger responsibility although he doubted very much France would take it. He suggested to the Committee that

> we should contemplate for the time being an Allied occupation of this country, an allied occupation which might be undertaken by ourselves, the

[1]There was a debate among the Foreign Office experts how to bring about a solution to the Armenians and Kurds in Turkey. One proposal put forward by Sir M. Sykes was interesting. He proposed to establish (a) an Armenian area in Cilicia and (b) a Kurdo-Armenian area further north-east, and (c) Russian Armenia.There would be an Armenian national state in area (a) with the minimum of foreign assistance and in (b) a state with equal status for all nationalities, and with foreign administration {by the same power as assists (a)} while leaving Russian Armenia out of consideration at that time. Toynbee found this scheme unworkable since it would encounter strong opposition from the Armenians who would believe themselves in danger of being partitioned between three different administrations. Instead he suggested to amalgamate the three regions into a single unit under the regime Sir M. Sykes proposed for area (b). Since Cilicia and Russian Armenia had a mixture of population he thought it would meet the needs of the situation. He further observed that the Armenians believed that 'given an effective and impartial outside administration for a term of years, their own greater energy and ability would give them ascendancy over the other elements in the population; and that the present smallness of their numbers could be made up by the return of those dispersed abroad.' Sykes pointed out that 'many of these Kurds are Kizilbash (Alevites) and are likely to turn Christian and become assimilated to the Armenians.' But, he noted, this process which implied time and absence of political pressure, would be much more likely to take place under the impartial administration of an outside power. See FO 371/3407/174037/W/44, October 18, 1918. A communication from the IO reporting position of affairs in Kurdistan.

[2]CAB 27/24/E.C. 40th Meeting, December 2, 1918.

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> French, and the Americans, or in the last resort by ourselves alone, which would involve the holding of Batum, Tiflis, and Baku, with a temporary government set up at Tiflis, the policing of the line, the control of railways, telegraphs, and so on, and, in fact, the giving of some kind of backbone and stability which will enable these rather rudimentary states, on either side of the line, to make their way into existence.

He put forward mainly four reasons to have British control in the country. The first reason, he thought, was the strategic importance of the region regarding India's security. He argued that the Turkish and German operations taught that 'we should exercise some measure of political control there.' The second argument was based on the threat of chronic disorder in the region. He pointed out that 'any sort of anarchy, disorder or Bolshevism there must inevitably react upon our whole position in Persia and the countries lying to the east of Persia.' Thirdly, great commercial and material interests in the Caucasus were too significant to ignore. He asserted that

> once you have the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus, and the Black Sea open, with the main line of railway across the Caucasus (from Batum to Baku), the commercial importance of Batum, which has been the port of export for oil, will be enormously increased, and it will become the emporium for the central parts of Asia, therefore, we are vitally interested in Batum.

Lastly he rested his case on Baku as a great international interest. He said that 'it is impossible to allow the great oil resources of Baku to fall into the hands of a tiny little mountainous republic like Daghestan, or into the hands of a very doubtful element like Turkish Azeris.' He added that 'it is essential to us, from our point of view, that some form of order and government should ultimately emerge in the Caucasus regions.'

His policy, however, was disfavoured by Lord Robert Cecil, Assistant Secretary of State fo Foreign Affairs, and Montagu, Secretary of State for India. Lord Cecil put forward two reasons against it. First, the French would not send any troops unless the region was to be handed over to them. Second, it would not be in British interest to become entangled in any considerable military commitments in the Caucasus. He referred to a paper written by Stevens, long-serving British Consul at Batum, who indicated that the minimum number of troops necessary to control the Caucasus was 60,000, 20,000 to be provided by each of three Powers, namely Britain, France and the U.S.A.

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Mr. Montagu on the other hand refused to take any responsibility over the Caucasus, questioning whether it was necessary for Britain to do so. He agreed that temporarily they were in the possession of the Batum-Baku Railway, but 'they should remain there until the (arrival of) French or whoever is to take possession of the country.'

Meanwhile a second scheme was suggested by General Smuts. His scheme was to get the United States into this region through the League of Nations. He argued that the Caucasian States, as other newly-born states of the Turkish and Russian Empires, would become autonomous states and nominally at the disposal of the League of Nations for the larger purpose. International control, referring to Curzon's proposal, was impossible. He argued that

> the international control has never worked and never will. It simply leads to the greatest confusion and friction, and it becomes a source of danger, because it sets the great nations quarrelling with each other. Therefore, some particular power belonging to the League of Nations should be indicated as the tutelary power, the guardian power, under the supervision of the League of Nations in respect of one or other of these states.

He agreed with Lord Curzon that to put France into this position was dangerous. He claimed that

> our line of policy should be, if possible, to work with America. The Sykes-Picot Agreement[1] is unfortunately a millstone round our necks, and we must

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[1] British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey on 21 October 1915 apprized the French Ambassador in London, Paul Cambon, to indicate that the two governments might discuss their respective interests in Ottoman Asia. The details of the Anglo-French negotiations were entrusted to Sir Mark Sykes and Charles Francois Georges Picot, who contrived by February 1916 a provisional formula for the division of the Arab provinces. Sykes and Georges-Picot in March proceeded to Russia to confer with Sazonov, the Foreign Minister of Russia. Sazonov declared his government's willingness to endorse the Anglo-French suggestions in return for Anglo-French approval of Russian territorial claims in northeastern Anatolia. In 1916, they arrived at an agreement for the partition of the Ottoman Empire. The agreement known as Sykes-Picot was signed by France and Russia on 26 April and by Britain and France on 16 May, and lastly between Britain and Russia on 23 May 1916. These promised Russia the Straits and Constantinople, and the vilayets of Van, Bitlis, Trebizond and Erzurum. France was to acquire Syria and Cilicia, Britain was to acquire Mesopotamia and Palestine. The Arabs lands in the Arabian Peninsula would acquire independence in order to satisfy the Muslims in general and the Arabs in particular. The Russian Government at first objected to the inclusion of Cilicia in the French sphere of influence since the idea of an independent Armenia under Russian tutelage was still very much alive in Petrograd, and still more to the extension of that sphere to the Persian frontier. This was seen as a barrier to Russian expansion southwards from the Caucasus. See Hurewitz, J. C., *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1914-1956*, D. Van Nostrond Comp. , Princeton, 1956, p. 21, and Anderson, M.S., *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, Macmillan Press, London, 1966, pp. 340-1. Kedourie argues that the Sykes-Picot Agreement was an attempt to try to settle amicably the Ottoman destruction and succession by the hands of Britain, France and Russia. This agreement proceeded on the assumption that the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, while satisfying the ambitions of the certain great powers, would create a problem of government in these areas which had been for so long under the Ottoman administration. In order to prevent possible chaos, while destroying it, the Sykes-Picot Agreement provided for an authority — that of France and Britain — to replace the Ottoman administration. See Kedourie, Elie; *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921*, Bowes and Bowes, London, 1956, p. 65.

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> try and get out of it. In the second place, with Germany practically wiped off for a generation, we must deal with France. France is a great military Power... France may be a great problem, and therefore we must try and make friends with America, America has no selfish objects at this juncture and is out for the larger issue of world settlement, depending upon the League of Nations. If we meet the United States at that point, upon the League of Nations, we should probably carry America with us in arguments that we could not possibly use with the French.

Lord R. Cecil remarked that although his choice would also be the United States, he did not believe the United States would show any interest at least in the longterm. He put forward, as a third alternative to the general question, his argument that the solution was to give the mandate to France. He maintained that

> this region is part of the route to India, and a great Asiatic thoroughfare, and for some things it would be better to have the Americans there than the French. If the Americans are there, they are not there permanently. They will never hold it permanently, and whenever the Russians may recover, they may come down there. The Russians are much more formidable to us than the French. The French can not get at these place at all except by sea. As far as we can see, they will never be able to do anything in the military sense in these places, miles away from their base, but if the Russians come, they could and would be a very formidable power there.

Although Mr. Montagu found himself in agreement with Cecil's proposed solution, the thesis, nevertheless, was encountered with immediate criticism from Lord Curzon who indicated his strong disagreement to having the French in the Caucasus. He argued that

> if you have France there, with a control which will extend from the eastern corner of the Mediterranean right across to the Caspian, our position will be very assailable in the East; trouble in Persia means trouble in Afghanistan and then you are brought right up to the borders of India... We have been brought for reasons of national safety, into an Alliance with the French, which I hope will last, but their national character is different from ours, and their political interests collide with our own in many cases. I am seriously afraid that the great power from whom we may have most to fear in the future is France and I almost shudder at the possibility of putting of France in such a position.[1]

[1] CAB 27/24/E.C. 40th Meeting, December 2, 1918. He continued that "she is powerful in almost all parts of the World, even around India. Are we to place her in a position to control this railway from Batum to Baku? Batum is one of the main approaches to India. France is a highly organised state, has boundless intrepidity, imagination, and a certain power of dealing with Eastern peoples; and the idea that she would sit quietly there simply for the purpose of allowing Azerbaijan and the other states to constitute themselves a strong people is out of the question, for the French are born intriguers, as we have seen in the Lebanon and elsewhere, and I can only say that I should be most reluctant to lend a hand to a scheme which would place France in a position of political authority in this region, and that I would sooner the states fought it out among themselves, and that Russia ultimately come back."

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General Thwaites, the Director of Military Intelligence, agreed with Lord Cecil that the Americans would not send any soldiers into the Caucasus which was far away from their country and already the United States was on the move to go back to home. He, however, proposed, in general lines with Lord Curzon's scheme, that the power in this vital part of the World should be Britain. He explained that

> ... with regard to the position in Transcaspia it is difficult to separate Transcaspia from this question, because we have a line of communications which is helping us to back up General Malleson, helping us to enforce the terms of the Armistice, for which the Turks are showing every disrespect. Once having settled ourselves on this line of communications, it could be difficult to say how soon it should be taken away or how soon it would be desirable to have it taken away.

Lord Curzon agreed with the DMI and stated that 'there will have to be some sort of military control, perhaps embracing some form of civil administration, for a time to come.' He also added that 'we are going to get under some disguise or other, the whole of Mesopotamia, that seems absolutely certain. If anybody looks after Persia it must be ourselves; and (we) really (have) to go into the Caucasus.'

The Committee also consumed significant time and energy on the question of the future of Armenia. Lord Curzon stated the reasons why an Armenian State was needed in the Eastern part of Turkey. He emphasised three points: Firstly, to provide a national home for the scattered peoples of the Armenian race; secondly to set up an Armenian State as a "palisade" against the Pan-Turanian ambitions of the Turk which might overflow the Caucasian regimes and carry great peril to the countries of the Middle East and East. Lastly, to constitute something like an effective barrier against the aggression, if not now at any rate in the future, of any foreign power, impelled by ambition or by other motives to press forward in that direction.

He then opened the debate on the size of Armenia. He drew the attention of members to the fact that

> under the unfortunate partition of spheres that had been contemplated by the Sykes-Picot Agreement concluded in May 1916, the whole of Cilicia and the greater part of the three Armenian Vilayets of Sivas, Kharput (Elazigh) and Diyarbakir were included in the blue zone assigned to the French, who had the right to establish such direct or indirect intervention as she may require. The remaining Armenian Vilayets of Erzurum, Van, and Bitlis as well as the Vilayet of Trebizond, were included in the Russian sphere. That part of the Agreement has lapsed, whatever may be said of the remainder, and in regard to those parts of Armenia or of Turkey in Asia partly inhabited by the Armenians, we have an absolutely free hand.

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He pointed out that the Foreign Office experts strongly favoured a "larger" Armenia.[1] However, he challenged the view that these territories were largely inhabited by the Armenians. He pointed out that

> it would be the greatest mistake to suppose that this is an area mainly inhabited by the Armenians. I do not suppose any of us has any exact figures as to the proportions of the populations there, but my own opinion is that, particularly in view of the devastation wrought by these massacres and by the incidents of war, the Armenians would be in a decided minority in that area, and you would find that Turks, Kurds, Afghans and all sorts of people of other Asiatic races, constitute the majority of the population, I merely point that out because this large area is one which seems to me to be greatly in excess of anything that could possibly be demanded by the numerical strength of the Armenians.

Thus Lord Curzon expressed his disagreement with the idea of a large Armenia. Instead, he submitted a proposal put forward by Commander Hogarth of a smaller Armenia in and around Cilicia, moving the Armenians from the northern areas down to the south. He thought that even this small state would include many non-Armenian elements but 'their number in relation to the Armenians will be nothing like so great and the proportion will not be anything like so large as if we contemplated a larger Armenia on the lines of the Foreign Office memorandum.'[2]

Lord Robert Cecil, nevertheless, did not share the views of Lord Curzon. He gave some population figures although he himself doubted their correctness, showing that the Armenians were in the majority in general.[3] He

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[1] As earlier seen, the future Armenian State in the FO experts' mind was a large one. The frontiers of such an Armenia, as described by Lord Curzon, are as follows.
'Armenia starts in the eastern corner of the Levant, from Mersina. it then runs along the Taurus range and the western side of the Anti-Taurus, past Sivas, included, and reaches the Black Sea at a point marked as Cape Yasun. This area includes two ports, one of them inconsiderable, the other of great importance, Kerasund and Trebizond. To the further east and south east it includes the very important centres of Erzurum, Bayazid, Mush, Bitlis and Van. Its southern limits are a line that runs from south of the Gulf of Alexandretta to the north of Antioch (Antakya), through Aintap, Diarbakir, and Siirt, to the northern boundaries of Jezireh and Kurdistan.' As one can see, from Mediterranean to the Black Sea the whole of eastern Turkey was proposed to be in an Armenian State. Although no reference was made to the Russian Armenians it was expected that they would to join the great Armenian State.

[2] CAB 27/24/E.C. 40th Meeting, December 2, 1918.

[3] He said to the Committee that 'the figures given to me — I do not know that they are trustworthy — state that in the Six Vilayets of Armenia before the war the population was 35 per cent Armenian, 25 per cent Turks, and 20 per cent Kurd, and some extra minor populations, Christian and Pagan, of about 20 per cent. That shows, what I suppose is true, that before the war, throughout six Vilayets the Armenians were the most numerous body, although probably not in the majority in any district , or, at any rate, in very few districts. That is the generally accepted view. It is probably true, I should think, that by now they are not even the most numerous body in that district."

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maintained that a large Armenia was a necessity and obligation to Britain. He argued;

> Are you going to give back a portion of Armenia to the Turks? That would be a most objectionable thing to do, surely, as a result their massacres... You would have to remove the Armenians from the north to the south which is Commanders's Hogarth's plan, and then give the north part back to the Turks. That is objectionable from every point of view if it can be avoided, partly on the grounds which I have given, and partly also that you would enable the Turks to have a direct connection between Anatolia and the Turkish population in the Caucasus, which is exactly what we wish to avoid so far as Pan-Turanism is concerned. We want to get a barrier across from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean if it can be done reasonably. Therefore, I myself am in favour of a large Armenia.

It seems that Lord Cecil was not concerned very much with the facts on the ground as long as a great Armenia served the British interests. Lord Curzon in replying to Cecil enquired whether Trebizond, an important port on the Black Sea, had any significant Armenian population. He said that

> you have been talking about a large Armenia as if it were identical with the six Vilayets. Of course it is not. The large Armenia is much bigger than the six Vilayets, and Trebizond was never one of the vilayets, it is a Turkish port and part of Turkish territory ... The large Armenia involves giving to Armenia a district in which Armenians are in a great minority.

Lord R. Cecil conceded that it would be an impossible task if a European Country would not look after it. In other words the mandatory power should be making sure that Trebizond would be Armenised. He stated that 'on the whole I do not see anything much better than making a large Armenia.'

The mandatory power for Armenia came up for discussion too. The smaller European powers were ruled out because of their lack of resources, forces, and political prestige necessary to undertake this task. Consequently, only France and the United States were options open to discussion. Britain was also ruled out since she had already taken too much responsibility in her hands.[1] Curzon remarked that a mandatory power who would take the responsibility for Armenia should also receive the responsibility for the Caucasus. He objected to the mandate being given to France for reasons mentioned above. He thought that this would put France into an enormously

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[1]Lord Curzon commented that 'we have already far too much upon our own hands in those parts of the world to be able to undertake any responsibility so colossal as that of being responsible for the future of the Armenian State."

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strong position in the Middle East. France, as stated, had a direct political interest in the Cilician districts of the proposed Armenian State as a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. It looked natural that she would be given the mandate to take responsibility if a large Armenia were established. The Foreign Office experts, on the other hand, also had a strong argument that it would be in the British interest to divert France's ambitions from Syria and Mesopotamia towards the Caucasus. Lord Cecil agreed with Lord Curzon that it would be very difficult to have a different mandatory state dealing with Armenia and the new Caucasian Republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Daghestan. Yet he did not see any reason why France should not be given the mandate for the whole of that district.

It seems that Lord Curzon and Lord Cecil represented two quite different judgements on the issue. It looks certain that Curzon was in favour of a small Armenia in Cilicia and leaving 'central Armenia' to the Turks. On the other hand, Cecil was vehemently in favour of large Armenia, wishing to see any Turkish influence gone from the region. This grand divergence of opinions apparently brought about a different approach to the mandatory issue. Although Lord Curzon proposed an international control, probably British, over the Caucasus Republics, Cecil again wanted to see British involvement there to come to end as soon as possible and leave the future mandatory to deal with it.

The Eastern Committee lastly studied the claims of the Republics for independence. From the discussion it emerged that Georgia deserved to be independent for its western-most character, and relatively long historical background provided that Georgia consented to Batum being a free port. Azerbaijan represented a problem since her government was violently pro-Turk, and anti-Armenian and Persian. Secondly, the aspirations of Azerbaijan were detrimental to Britain. Lord Curzon explained that

> they, the Azeris, want to join themselves with their brethren across the border in Persia, and to make a Turkish State in that part of the world. Now what are our desires with regard to Azerbaijan, both north and south of the Persian frontier? That problem is one of the most acute that we have to deal with, because, which I imagine on general grounds, we should welcome the constitution of some sort of state there, provided it were not a menace to ourselves. The only form that state seems likely to assume in the near future is one which we could not look upon with any satisfaction... Under the circumstances it is most difficult to say yes to Azerbaijan independence. On the other hand it is not easy to say no.

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With regard to Daghestan, it was thought that it had fallen into the Russian orbit rather than that of the Caucasus. However, until Russia recovered, if ever, Daghestan might probably be independent.[1]

Nothing could be said regarding Russian Armenia's independence since it was a part of a larger problem. It was thought that its future would be decided in accordance with the future of an Armenian State in Anatolia.

Thus the Eastern Committee ended without agreement on major issues such as the mandatory power for the Caucasus and the size of Armenia in Turkey. A great deal of considerations, however, were discussed and the ground for further discussions was prepared.

In the next meeting which took place on 5 December it seems that Lord Curzon's view, to have a temporary military occupation in the Caucasus and keep the French out, was shared by the War Office.[2] General Wilson, the CIGS, replied that 'we should plead strongly against the French coming in' when he was asked by Lord Curzon for his view as to the prospect of the French acquiring control over the Caucasus in the future. General MacDonogh, Adjutant-General to the Forces, also shared Wilson's view. He pointed out the importance of Transcaucasia to Britain and drew attention to the agreement he had made with the French General Foch on 23 December 1917, which had put the whole of the Caucasus within the British zone against the French, the French being confined to the Ukraine and the Crimea. Yet to reach an agreement was left to the next meeting again.

The 42nd meeting witnessed dramatic discussions regarding the future settlement of the Caucasian Republics. As has been seen, views were mainly divided into two groups: On the one hand Lord Curzon with the support of the War Office had suggested the possibility of British control in the region while having a small Armenia in Cilicia. On the other, Lord R. Cecil advocated a large Armenia under the tutelage of France, and leaving the rest of the Caucasus to the French mandate thus preferring to have nothing for Britain. He was supported by the India Office. This meeting was also attended by A. Balfour, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and appointed head of British representation at the coming Peace Conference in Paris.

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[1] Daghestan's importance consisted in the fact that their territory gave them control of Petrovsk, whence the railway line ran to the oil wells of Grozny; Derbent which was one of the few ports on the west coast of the Caspian Sea and the coast running down to the immediate proximity of Baku.

[2] CAB 27/24/E.C. 41st Meeting, December 5, 1918.

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Montagu started the discussion with a warning that since France and the United States were for some reasons not acceptable the responsibilities of Britain would be enormous to cope with. He, therefore, enquired

> whether we shall not find ourselves in a position in which we have firmly convinced ourselves that all alternatives are objectionable, and that unfortunately, against our will, British responsibilities, with their concomitant military responsibilities, have increased to embrace the whole areas discussed by this Committee?[1]

Lord Curzon found his view a little exaggerated. He thought that Britain would never be out there, in Paris, demanding some countries, though some of them certainly would be in the British mandatory. He added that the League of Nations would ask Britain to act as the mandatory and in the last resort Britain would be bound to assume certain responsibilities. Lord Cecil joined the discussion by saying that

> the League of Nations will not only be the dominant factor in all these situations, but it will probably lay down as a principle that no occupation of any of these countries must be of advantage to the occupying country... The 'open door' will have to be an essential principle of all countries under the control of the League of Nations. If that is established, I doubt if France will be so keen as she was.[2]

To strengthen his view, Lord Curzon put forward a paper written by General Wilson in which it was claimed that the military and, ultimately, the political danger to the British position in the East of setting up France as a great power occupying a large block of territory and exercising political influence from the eastern corner of the Levant right up to the Caucasus might be very considerable and one which Britain should be slow to encourage and accept. Secondly, he argued that a separation of Russian Armenia from Turkish Armenia should be provided both because of the difference between the aims and aspirations of the two sets of people and also because, 'if Turkish Armenia be given to the French, the addition of Russian Armenia to that block would add considerably to the strategic danger pointed out.' It seems that his second reason was in fact related to the first reason, namely to keep the French out of Caucasia even if she got the mandate for Armenia in Turkey. Cecil, not unexpectedly, objected to the idea of separating Russian Armenia and Armenia in Turkey by asking if there had been a distinction between them. A discussion followed between him and Curzon who argued that there

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[1] CAB 27/24/E.C. 42nd Meeting, 9 December 1918.
[2] *Ibid.*

had already been an Armenian State in the Caucasus with strong interests in Baku and Tiflis. In return Cecil argued that the Armenian State around Erivan was created by the enemy and there had been no Armenian political entity under the Russians, and the Armenians of the Caucasus wished to join the Armenians of Turkey.

Lord Curzon, then, presented his 14 propositions as regards the Transcaucasian States to try to reach an agreement at the Committee which was to submit general lines of policy to the British Delegation to Paris. His propositions were as follows:

1. That it is desirable to encourage and foster the political independence of the Transcaucasian States, namely Georgia, Russian Armenia (subject to further considerations), Daghestan, and Azerbaijan.
2. That of these States Georgia is the most advanced, and may be entitled to the earliest recognition, but that the recognition of the remaining States would be premature at the present stage.
3. That in the settlement to be arrived at in the Peace Conference, it is probable that one of the Great Powers may be appointed the provisional tutelar Power of this region.
4. That it is undesirable on broad grounds of policy and strategy that that Power should be France.
5. That the United States may be invited, but appears unlikely to undertake, and should not be encouraged to undertake, responsibilities for the Caucasus.
6. That if there be a mandatory Power, subject to the invitation of States concerned, or of the League of Nations, it should preferably be Great Britain.
7. That pending the creation of a stable government or governments in these regions a "temporary military occupation" may be found necessary.
8. That in as much as this force is already provided by the British, and as the Caucasus falls in the scheme of partition laid down in the Anglo-French Agreement of December 1917 into the British sphere, it should continue to be provided by them.
9. That the British Government should also retain for the present the naval control of the Caspian.
10. That the ultimate settlement should provide for the declaration as free ports of Batum, Poti, Trebizond and Baku, and free transit on the railway from Batum to Baku.
11. That if a Azeri Republic can be recognised in the Eastern Caucasus, special steps may require to be taken for the administration of Baku.
12. That it is desirable — and here is the disputable proposition — to retain the separate political existence of Russian, as distinguished from Turkish Armenia.
13. That in the reconstruction of Georgia it is desirable to include within its borders the Muslim Georgians of Batum and Lazistan.

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14. That it is desirable that the mandatory Power for Armenia should be either France or the United States and that Great Britain should put forward no claims for this position.[1]

His propositions, not surprisingly, were strongly criticised by Lord R. Cecil. He objected against any British military commitment in the Caucasus, British mandate over the region and British military occupation.[2] He argued that if Britain kept its supremacy on the Black Sea and the Caspian, anyone who took control of Caucasia could not be in a position to threaten Britain. General Wilson, on the other hand, stated that without ports on the Caspian, no control was possible. In other words, if Caucasian ports were controlled by a hostile France the control of the Caspian would become almost impossible. To this view Admiral Hope, representing the Admiralty, agreed. General MacDonogh also agreed with the view that since Caucasia was an important communication line with India the mandatory Power should be Great Britain.

Yet Lord Cecil, already supported by Montagu, received backing from Balfour who indicated that he was against a mandatory Power and also against Britain taking it, although accepting the possibility of being driven to it. He said;

> I am much alarmed at our having sent a division there... I think you are going to find it a great military burden. I cannot get a platoon for places much nearer home because there are no troops to give and then I find that troops are being sent to the furthest parts of the world... I would not give it to the French either.. I would not allow these people to be attacked from the outside by any big Powers, and I would exercise through the League of Nations a controlling influence which would prevent them carrying their squabbles and their frontier fights beyond a certain point.

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] He said that "the General staff says, as far as I understand, that the French with their military talents, will be able to raise, if they like, a very important force from Anatolia and Armenia itself and may become quite a formidable military force there. Then it is suggested that Georgia and Daghestan should be independent under our control and protection; that is to say we shall be chargeable with the defence of Georgia and Daghestan if there is any attack made upon them... We have to keep a very considerable force ready to protect Georgia and Daghestan... I do not myself quite see our being made responsible for their defence, because that is the whole basis of the General Staff paper, a regenerated Russia on the north and a militarised Armenia on the south... I can not conceive what the real reason for it is. We say this is a part of the route to India. So it is. The railway from Batum to Baku is a very important link in that particular route to India. If we have the Black Sea that is all right, and nobody can go to Batum without our leave. If we have not, then we evidently cannot defend Georgia at all. If we have got the control of the Caspian, which I think we ought to retain, and also cut off that route a little further on, it seems to me our proper course is to abide by our traditional policy, to go in for supremacy on the sea in the Black Sea and the Caspian, and let anybody who likes to have the intervening bit of land, which does not matter to us at all."

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He contradicted himself, however, when Lord Curzon asked how he would prevent them from being crushed by Russia unless he had a military force. Balfour replied, 'if Russia is in a position to crush them, why not?' He regarded having a military force there to protect them as foolishness. He furthermore added some criticisms of the idea of protecting India's gates. He complained that 'those gateways are getting further and further from India, and I do not know how far west they are going to be brought by the General Staff.'[1]

Yet Lord Curzon was not satisfied. He maintained that the impact of the Caucasus upon India was significant as it had been clearly shown during the war. Secondly, the military occupation by Britain, because the British forces were already there, which he emphasised to be temporary, would be extremely essential for these small Republics to develop their stability. Otherwise the alternative would be to 'let them cut each other's throats.' Balfour replied that 'I am in favour of that.'

As one can see, it seems that Balfour with Lord Cecil and Montagu shared the view in common that the utmost priority should be given to reducing the military commitments of Great Britain in places where, they thought, there was no vital interest, while leaving behind the local people whose lives would almost certainly be in danger following the British withdrawal.

General Wilson, in replying to a question put forward by Montagu, drew attention to a new aspect of France controlling the area from Mediterranean to the Black Sea and the Caspian. He pointed out that France would be in a position to ruin Mesopotamia to a great extent. He thought that since Mesopotamian oil would be as important as the Welsh coalfields had been in the past, it ought to be necessary to go into the Caucasus, to keep the Republics friendly and then withdraw as the perfect thing to work for. Lord Curzon added that in addition to India's security, the oilfields of Baku and the Batum-Baku pipeline were elements of international concern. Therefore, he said, someone would be needed to assist these small Republics. In that case

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[1] He further argued that "what was our anxiety about India ten years ago? It was the Mesopotamian line, the Baghdad line and the Persian Gulf... We have stopped that, and the terrors excited by Mesopotamia are now excited by Transcaucasia, which is far safer now, from the Indian point of view, that it ever was, because it is either going to be occupied by French, whom I think we can manage, or by these little nations themselves. It is not going to be occupied by Russia, which was the military Power you had to fear. I would not commit this country to military action under necessities which have not yet arisen, and which I most earnestly trust never will arise."

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France should not be there. 'If you have a friendly France, he added, there is no danger, but if you have, as one day you may, a hostile France, why add to her power of offence?'

Cecil replied that it was impossible for France to cause Britain considerable military difficulties there unless she and Russia acted together; in that case, with a small force Britain could not make any difference. In the meantime Balfour suggested to postponing the settlement of Transcaucasia to the Peace Conference. Lord Curzon returned an angry reply. He said that 'I thought we were preparing the case for the Conference. That is the object of these meetings.' He added that 'Britain must have an idea of what we are working for.' Balfour replied, 'I do not think it is our business to have a policy with regard to these places.' He and Cecil agreed that if Britain was pressed forcefully by the Conference to take responsibility for the Caucasus, then Britain might give it consideration if that would be within her powers. Curzon expressed his strong disagreement with Balfour and Cecil.

Lord Cecil also tried to persuade Generals attending the 42nd meeting of the Eastern Committee, by explaining that it would be in Britain's interests if the French were forced into concessions in Syria and Mesopotamia by giving her the whole of Armenia and the Caucasian Republics. He thought that would be a good deal, referring to a possible change in the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

Meanwhile Italy was brought into the discussion by Balfour who reminded the Committee that under the Treaty of London by which Italy had joined the war on the side of the Entente, it was stipulated that Italy was to have certain advantages if Britain and France got any. In other words, Italy was to get something if any changes were made. General Smuts then suggested putting Italy in the Caucasus. He explained that this would help Britain in four ways: First, France would be out of controlling a strategic area and, second, Italy would be supported by Britain against France, the main rival of Britain. Then, Italy might feel satisfied with respect to gains at the end of the war. Lastly, Britain would discharge her obligations there. This suggestion found a cautious positive attitude but the Committee again ended without reaching a certain agreement upon what to do with the Caucasian Republics and the future State of Armenia.[1] The only decision taken was to deal with the subject at the next meeting.

[1] Lord Curzon expressed his dissatisfaction by saying that 'I really do not know what is the position, and if I were asked what the Committee wanted to do I should not know what to say. There is a body of opinion, but the difficulty is the way to put it as regards the Caucasus and Armenia.'

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The next meeting which took place on 16 December 1918 in Lord Curzon's room at the Privy Council Office was presented with a draft resolution on the Caucasus and Armenia drawn up by the Chairman, Lord Curzon, in accordance with the discussions of the last meeting.[1] The resolutions finally adopted by the Committee were as follows:

1. We desire to see strong independent States — offshoots of the former Russian Empire — in the Caucasus.
2. Of these States Georgia is the most advanced and has the strongest claims to early recognition.
3. Recognition of the remaining States, viz., Daghestan, Azerbaijan, and Russian Armenia, must depend on the march of events and their successful assertion of an autonomous existence.
4. Whether Russian Armenia shall have a separate existence (as distinct from Turkish Armenia) will be determined in the main by the attitude of the people themselves.
5. Whether the independent States of the Caucasus combine hereafter in a Federation, or prefer to remain separate is a matter for their own determination.
6. Similarly their relations to the present or future Government or Governments of Russia is a matter that in the main concerns themselves.
7. If it be decided at the Peace Conference, either as the result of a request from the States, or at the instance of the League of Nations (should such be set up), that the services of a Great Power are required for a period to protect international interests in the areas concerned, the selection of America would be preferable to that of France, but is not in itself desirable. The selection of France would on broad grounds of policy and strategy be undesirable. Only in the last resort, and reluctantly if pressed to do so, might Great Britain provisionally accept the task.
8. In any case we have no intention of annexing any of these territories, or converting them into a British Protectorate, or of accepting any commitments which will involve the permanent maintenance of large British forces in the Caucasus.
9. It is important for the time being to maintain British naval control of the Caspian.

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[1] CAB 27/24/E.C. 43rd Meeting , December 16, 1918. The meeting was attended by the following: The Earl Curzon of Keddleston, in the Chair, Lieut.-Gen. J. C. Smuts, A. J. Balfour, Secretary of State for Foreign Office, E. S. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, Lord R. Cecil, Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Sir L. Mallet, Foreign Office, L. Oliphant, Foreign Office, Sir A. H. Grant, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, Lieut.-Gen. Sir H. V. Cox, Military Secretary, India Office, J. E. Shuckburgh, India Office, Rear-Admiral G. P. W. Hope, Deputy First Sea Lord. Lieut.-Gen. Sir G.M.W. MacDonogh, Adjutant-General to the Forces, Major-Gen. W. Thwaites, Director of Military Intelligence, Lieut.-Col. W. H. Gribbon, War Office, Sir H. E. Richards, R. Movat, Lieut.-Col. L. Storr, Secretary.

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10. The ultimate settlement should provide if possible for the declaration as free ports of Batum, Poti, Trebizond, and Baku, and for free transit on the railway from Batum to Baku.
11. Special steps may require to be taken for due safeguarding of international interests in the city and oilfields of Baku.
12. In the reconstruction of Georgia, it will be desirable to include within its boundaries the Moslem Georgians of Batum and Lazistan.
13. If an independent Armenian State be constituted out of either the six Armenian vilayets or a smaller area, and if a Great Power be called upon either by the League of Nations, or by the people themselves, to act as protector to the new State, Great Britain should refrain from advancing any claims, and should support the case either of America or France, preferably, in the interests of a revision of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, of France.[1]

Almost all the propositions received the approval of Committee except numbers 6 and 7, and to some extent 9. Number 6 read that 'similarly their (Republics') relations to the present or future government or governments of Russia is a matter that concerns themselves.' Lord R. Cecil raised a question whether it mainly concerned the republics to decide to go back to Russia. He argued that it would be most dangerous to see the Caucasus falling back to a powerful Russia rather than to see France there. Curzon's reply was that he had not meant a powerful Russia but rather a Don Cossacks Republic. General MacDonogh, meanwhile, remarked that the danger would come if the region was controlled by a Western Power since it was an avenue to India. For Russia, however, that was not the case. He added that 'it is not the Caucasus that is a danger to India from the Russian side but the Orenburg line.' Lord Cecil was not satisfied and preferred to leave this proposition out altogether. Lord Curzon and Balfour agreed in maintaining the view that if the Caucasians wanted to join Russia, there was nothing to prevent them. If they did not want go back and Russia pressured them, then through the League of Nations something could be done. Nevertheless, to meet Cecil's objection to some extent, Curzon, with the approval of the Committee, amended the "a matter that concerns themselves" substituting "a matter that in the main concerns themselves".

Curzon's 7th resolution proved to be the most difficult to agree upon. The resolution read that

> if it be decided at the Peace Conference, either as the result of a request from the States, or at the instance of the League of Nations (should such be set

[1] *Ibid.* See also Arslanian, *The British Military Involvement in Transcaucasia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-7 and Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, *op. cit.*, vol.II, pp. 86-98.

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> up), that the services of a Great Power are required for a period to maintain order and to offer protection to the States concerned, the selection of America would be preferable to that of France, but is not in itself desirable. The selection of France would on broad grounds of policy and strategy be undesirable. Only in the last resort, and reluctantly if pressed to do so, would Great Britain provisionally accept the task.

The strongest criticism came from Cecil and Montagu. Their main argument, as it had been at previous meetings, was that it would be a grand mistake for Britain to take any sort of responsibility in the region, and France ought to be left in those territories together with Armenia in Turkey.[1] Lord Curzon defended his view with the same arguments that he had used earlier. He argued that

> we are there entirely against our will and because we have been forced to go. Much against our will we have a force at Batum and at Tiflis, and we are already in occupation of Baku. Whatever we may say, there is absolutely no alternative to the troops remaining there, at any rate for a time. You ask me to fix a period, and I reply that I cannot undertake to do so... I hope the occupation will be provisional; but it is in existence, and for the moment we cannot withdraw... You cannot take them away and have everybody cutting everybody else's throat.

Montagu's response was "why not". He said that "in Transcaucasia the sooner our troops are away the better". Lord Cecil suggested to strike out the sentence "the selection of France would on broad grounds of policy and strategy be undesirable". Furthermore, he wished to alter "would" in the last line into "might". Although happily accepting his second point, Curzon did not retreat from his position as regards France. Then Balfour intervened by confessing his fear of the responsibilities Britain would be taking at the coming Peace Conference.[2] Yet he agreed with Lord Curzon if his argument was only to keep the railway line, to prevent Baku falling into the hands of the Daghestani people, to prevent Batum being useless as a port and to protect the pipeline and railway between two places which would not need a large number of troops. Otherwise, a policy of civilising a few people 'who do not

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[1] Montagu commented that "I agree it is most unfortunate for the Caucasians if there is disorder there, but why should we be there at all?.. Lord Curzon says he does not want to be there permanently but how long does he want to be there? Presumably until the these States are ready to stand upon their own feet. How long is that going to be? How many years will that military and financial expenditure continue?.. It does not seem to me that we have the slightest concern in this country, and why should we go there even reluctantly?

[2] Balfour enquired who had to bear those responsibilities? He himself answered it. He argued that "two offices in the main — the Treasury and the WO. The Admiralty can manage quite well, but the WO and the Treasury are mainly concerned. Where are they going to find the men or the money for those things? I do not know. Those matters are never considered. We consider the advantage to the nation, the advantage to our prestige; we consider certain things connected with trade and commerce, and all the rest of it; but money and men I have never seen referred to, and they seem to me to be the governing considerations".

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want to be civilised' would require large amounts of money and men which he strongly disagreed with.[1] Lord Curzon expressed his agreement with him in that 'he never thought to make efforts to civilise those people.' The Daghestanis, he argued, were a set of turbulent mountaineers. It did not matter for Britain what they would do. The Georgians and the Azeris had significance from the British point of view.[2]

Lord R. Cecil raised a new debate, suggesting that if it was only a question of maintaining the railway and the pipelines and not a question of administering the country, that might be done by an international force. He further argued that to maintain order or to offer protection to the States concerned in the proposition meant more than guarding the communication lines. The Committee then agreed to amend the proposition further as regards the words "to maintain order or to offer protection to the States concerned" substituting "to protect international interests in the areas concerned." Montagu, however, did not consent to even this modified form and desired that his objection to British remaining in the Caucasus in any capacity should be recorded in the minutes.

Some disagreement upon resolution number 9 also occurred. The proposition read that 'it is important for the time being to maintain British naval control of the Caspian in the interests of order in Persia and (Trans)caspian.' Mr. Montagu here again raised his objection and stated that he did not see the necessity for the British keeping order in the Caspian. He stated that the Indian Government wished to withdraw all British forces in Transcaspia. Nevertheless, his argument did not find any support from any quarter. On the contrary, Curzon, Cecil, Balfour, Admiral Hope and General MacDonogh were united on the necessity of keeping control of the Caspian mainly for two reasons: fist, to protect the Baku oilfields, which was an international interest and largely needed by the anti-Bolshevik Russians, and second, to protect Persia from Bolshevik influences and thus ensure the stability of the Country, and Turkestan where a number of British soldiers had

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[1]Balfour agreed with Montagu that if the people want to cut their own throats 'why do we not let them do it.' He added further that "I speak in presence of the India Office here, but as I understand we do let the tribes on the North West frontier, outside our own frontier, cut each other's throats in moderation. We make expeditions, as I understand, of a punitive character when they attack us, but when they merely attack each other we leave them alone. We do not try to introduce good order there... That is the way I should be inclined to treat those nations (in the Caucasus).

[2]Curzon stated that "the important communities here are two: first, the Georgians, who are an advanced, intelligent and cultured community, with whom we shall never attempt to interfere except by way of giving support and encouragement; secondly, a much more difficult element at the eastern end, on the Caspian, namely, the Tartars (Azeris). That is really the crux of the whole thing..."

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been stationed. Yet they found it necessary to strike out the last part of the resolution's "in the interests of order in Persia and (Trans)caspian".

After consecutive meetings the Eastern Committee thus eventually reached a general agreement with regard to Transcaucasia. It seems that from the two views which had largely dominated the discussions Lord Curzon's view gained slight supremacy over the rival view taken by Lord Cecil and Montagu. Although he failed to secure a British mandate over Transcaucasia he managed to assure in resolution 7 that France would be an undesirable choice, and kept the door still open for Britain, however little.

As regards a future Armenian State, the Eastern Committee failed to define what kind of Armenia they would be supporting at the Conference, whether it would be a larger or a small state. Yet it was strongly indicated that Great Britain would take no responsibility in any circumstances regarding Armenia.

Discussions at the Cabinet

With these resolutions at hand the War Cabinet put under consideration the Caucasian Republics on December 23.[1] The discussion was focused on the same subject, that was the question of keeping British troops in the Caucasus. Lord Curzon, Lord Milner, Secretary of State for War, and Churchill, Minister for munitions, took the view that British troops were needed in Transcaucasia to maintain order and to give protection to those States until the Peace Conference and the League of Nations appointed a mandatory power to take charge of the area. On the other hand, however, Lloyd George, Prime Minister, and Montagu took the view that the British troops should have been withdrawn when the Turks and the Germans evacuated the area.

Lloyd George enquired who threatened the peace in the Caucasus. The reply from Curzon indicated that Bicharakoff might attack on the orders of the Omsk Government[2] and pointed out that as a result of British withdrawal the Persian frontier would be re-opened: the Azeri Turks would invade Persian Azerbaijan and Persia would appeal to Britain for protection. The Caspian

[1]FO 371/3346/213100/W/38, December 23, 1918, Imperial War Cabinet 45: Minutes.
[2]Lloyd George said that 'we appeared committed not only to fight the Bolsheviks but also anti-Bolsheviks.'

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would also be lost. Lastly, he stated that the Caucasians themselves could destabilise the region by killing each other. Lord Milner suggested that

> it was unnecessary to come to a decision there and then. There was no real difference of opinion. One division at Batum was not a big force to control eight million people under four different Governments. There was no intention of remaining permanently in the country. We should at least stay until all the Turks and Germans had cleared out, and even after that we should maintain some force there in order that the Country should not be in chaos, before the Peace Conference had settled its future status.

Lloyd George pointed out two things: first, the temporary occupation might become a 'protracted occupation'; and second, since the Canadian and Australian Governments wished to withdraw their forces, all the burden would be on British forces with a prospect of declining conscription. Churchill argued that 'it was a question of keeping 10,000 men for a few weeks pending a decision of the League of Nations or the Peace Conference to secure order in a valuable country.' Lloyd George replied that this estimate of the time required for the formation of the League of Nations and for its decisions on this subject was 'optimistic'. He further argued that

> People, however, could not appreciate the necessity of keeping troops in the Caucasus in order to prevent Georgians, Armenians, and Azeris from attacking one another; the British people knew exactly what they had gone to war for and the continuance of expeditions of this kind could effect recruiting disastrously.

He later concluded that they should drop the despatch of the second division requested by the War Office to the Caucasus.[1] The Cabinet then decided that

> although no definite conclusions were agreed to the general trend of the above discussion was that the British forces should not be withdrawn from the Caucasus until after the Turkish and German forces had been withdrawn; that a second British division should not be sent to the Caucasus without Cabinet authority; and that British forces should not be maintained there longer than could be avoided.[2]

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[1]Lloyd George stated that 'we might agree to say that if the United States, France and Italy did not wish to keep troops in Russia we were also anxious to withdraw.' Thus he indicated that if other European powers were not willing to share the responsibility as regards to Russian settlement, Britain should not be taking the whole burden by herself alone. His view was largely accepted by the Cabinet members except by Churchill who was an eager crusader against the Bolsheviks in Russia. For more information regarding British policy towards Russia during this period see R. Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War 1917-1921*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3 Volumes, 1968, 1972, and S. White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution*, 1920-1924, London: Macmillan, 1979.

[2]FO 371/3346/213100/W/38, December 23, 1918, Imperial War Cabinet 45: Minutes.

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The British Government thus made it clear that it did not have any intention to stay in the Caucasus longer than it would certainly be required. It indicated that it would largely be indifferent about the future fate of the new Republics who hoped to receive recognition and support, political and if need be military. The Armenians, especially, had taken the impression that they were to benefit from the fact that the Allies had won the war and they had suffered at the hands of the Turks for their loyalty to the Allies during the war. Yet it is clear that although in principle supporting a larger Armenia than Russian Armenia itself Britain was careful to refrain from taking any responsibility in the foundation of a proposed Great Armenia. Since indifference was dominant, the Cabinet did not give any consideration to meeting the demands of the Republics for recognition and independence. However, it was left to the Peace Conference in Paris.

Georgia, for instance, asked for recognition of the *de facto* independence of Georgia. In a communication, Z. Avaloff, as the emissary of the Georgian Government to Britain, requested five points: the recognition *de facto* of the Georgian Republic; application of the principle of the right of peoples freely to decide their own destiny; for the support of their just demands before the future international Tribunal and for the admission of a representative to the Peace Conference; for eventual recognition of their full sovereignty within their ancient territorial limits; and finally, for the prohibition of any foreign power entering their territory which could destroy the results of their work of organisation. Georgian demands received support from the Foreign Office senior officials. Sir L. Mallet, for instance, gave his approval with the following considerations: Georgia should be able to govern itself; but she might ask for foreign advisors from European Powers among whom Great Britain came first. Secondly, if a market for European goods was offered at Batum, it would be to the interests of Azeris and anyone concerned to keep the railway line open. Then, if the Georgians were capable of great military efficiency as reported, and fully equal to the task of protecting the line themselves, British occupation could in all likelihood be dispensed with within a comparatively short time or reduced to a minimum. Lastly, it was in the British interest to promote Georgian independence and to encourage Georgian aspirations towards the ultimate federalisation of the Transcaucasian Republics.[1] Lord Hardinge agreed with Mallet that if the Georgians could protect the railway from Batum to Baku they would certainly be worth making Britain's friends. It would also relieve Britain of the burden of occupation and

[1]See FO 371/3321/201883/W/38, December 7, 1918. See Sir L. Mallet's minute, dated 13 December.

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give an opportunity of withdrawing British troops when Georgia was recognised. Professor J. Y. Simpson strongly favoured an independent Georgia. He even suggested that if France undertook the protectorate of United Armenia, while Georgia and the Tatar State came under the provisional protection of Britain, this would at any rate, in the case of the Georgians, be a solution most in harmony with the desires of the people.[1] Yet the Georgians' request, though receiving strong support from senior clerks of the Foreign Office, was not approved. That was left to the Peace Conference.

The military authorities of British forces occupying Transcaucasia were also left in dark with regard to the political aspects of the situation in which they had found themselves. In a communication to the Foreign Office the DMI, General Thwaites, enquired what information he could give to General Milne as regards political matters. The reply of the Foreign Office was an indicator of the British Government's failure on this specific issue. The Foreign Office wrote to the DMI that

> ... so far as the political aspects of the question are concerned, Lord Hardinge of Penhurst finds it impossible to say more than that the British forces should enter into relations with and provisionally support any effectively established local authority able and willing to keep peace and order.
>
> It is at the same time of importance that nothing should be done to commit HMG to any particular line of policy pending the constitutional settlement of the future status of these regions by the Peace Conference, and that meanwhile the resumption of trade, and especially of British trade should be encouraged in every possible way.[2]

Since recognition was not accorded, the news that the Turks had arranged to send a representative to the Caucasian Republics caused anxiety in the Foreign Office. G. Kidston, for example, pointed out that it was most undesirable that 'the Turks should be the first to send diplomatic representatives to the three Caucasian Republics even though we have not yet recognised them.' He further minuted that since there was nothing in the

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] FO 371/3301/203626/W/38, December 17, 1918. In another communication it was stated that an early recognition of the Georgian Republic was favoured. However, in the case of Russian Armenia it was pointed out that premature recognition of the Armenian Republic in the Caucasus might wreck the project for a single independent Armenia for which the Armenian leaders in Europe were engaged. With regard to Caucasian Azerbaijan two problems prevented Balfour from offering any useful opinion regarding its recognition: first, the extent of the territory claimed by the this Republic was still too vague, and second, the possibility of the Azeri Government coming under the influence of the CUP from Constantinople or Bolsheviks from Moscow, or perhaps both. See FO 371/3301/198356/W/44, December 30, 1918. From the Foreign Office to the DMI, WO.

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armistice to prevent them from doing so he suggested warning the representatives of the Republics that 'their chance of recognition will not be improved by the reception of Turkish diplomatic representatives.[1]

In conclusion, it has been seen in this chapter that British policy in Transcaucasia was firmly shifted as a result of the war coming to end. During the war, the British policy had been largely, and inevitably, dominated by the military necessities the result of which had been to pay almost all attention to the strategic rather than political aspects of the region.[2] In other words, all the policies adopted by the British Government since early 1917 had always been developed to meet the military demands of the war in the east. However, the end of the war meant the end of British policies shaped in the main by war conditions. Consequently, political considerations gained priority. The region, meanwhile, was brought under British military occupation. British military governorships were established in Baku and Batum, and the republics of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Daghestan, though granted a large extent of autonomy, became subject to British military authority.

Politically, two main viewpoints clashed with each other as regards the political settlement of Caucasia at the meetings of the Eastern Committee and the War Cabinet. In the first place, it was advocated by Lord Robert Cecil and supported by the India Office, and later by Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, that "the region should come under French protectorate including a larger Armenia from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, and Britain should not have

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[1]FO 371/3301/208037/W/38, December 18, 1918. See G. Kidston's minute, dated December 20, 1918. See also FO 371/3321/210990/W/38, December 24, 1918. Notes of conversation of Prof. J. Y. Simpson with Zourab Avaloff (Avalishvili), accredited member of the Georgian Delegation in connection with the Peace Conference; and FO 371/3321/205126/W/38, December 13, 1918, from the French Ambassador to the FO who reported that France would not currently recognise Georgia.
The Foreign Office, meanwhile, received an appeal from C. G. Constantinides as President of Congress des Originires du Pont-Euxin asking the Allies for support for the rights of the Greek population inhabiting Pont-Euxin, i.e., North East Black Sea region. Their claim that pont-Euxin extends from Batum to a point west of Sinop with 2,000,000 Greeks out of total population of 3,500,000 did not persuade anyone to pay any serious attention. On the contrary it was agreed that the figure was very exaggerated. A.Toynbee, for instance, found the statistics and frontier 'fantastic' pointing out that the official figures of the Greek Government indicated only a total of 450,000 Greeks for the Vilayets of Trebizond and Sivas, even though this was exaggerated. He therefore, thought that no state territory with a Greek majority could be carved out in this region. He proposed that 'most of the Pontic Greeks will fall within the proposed frontiers of the new independent Armenian State, which will be frankly a state of mixed population, with a mandatory power to keep peace and preserve equality between the different elements.' He added that 'this should give the Pontic Greeks a satisfactory national home with Greek recognised as an official language on an equality with Armenians and Turkish... See FO 371/3419/198471/W/44, December 2, 1918.

[2]As a matter of fact, it may be remembered, there had been no British policy designed for the Caucasus until the Bolsheviks, supported largely by the Germans for strategic reasons rather than political ones, had taken power into their hands with the prospect of disengagement from the war. For more information see chapter 3.

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any commitment in the region." Second, it was submitted by Lord Curzon and backed by the War Office that "Britain ought to have direct or indirect, through an international force, control over these territories because of their strategic and commercial importance." This argument was strengthened by the sub-argument that "if this region was left to France, it meant giving France extra power to threaten British interests in the Middle East and India in a possible future collision with France. Yet a compromise eventually was reached. The supporters of the first argument admitted the slightest possibility of Britain taking over, and the second view's supporters consented that France, though undesirable, might receive the enlarged Armenia and Caucasia under her control provided that she was prepared to make concessions in Syria and Mesopotamia.

Thus British policy makers in London managed to prepare an outline of their policy concerning the political settlement of Transcaucasia just before the opening of the Peace Conference in Paris. Whether and to what extent they would have realised their policy will be the subject of the next chapter.

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6

THE POSTWAR PERIOD AND BRITISH POLICY IN TRANSCAUCASIA

As seen in the previous chapter the British administration framed a policy as regards a future settlement of the Caucasian Republics. In this chapter it is intended to analyze whether the British Government was able to realise its plans and, if not, the reasons for it.

The future settlement of the region, as noted, had been left to the Paris Peace Conference which formally opened on 16 January 1919. It was not, however, possible for the delegations of the Republics of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Daghestan to be given a chance to present their case to the Conference at an early date. The fact that the Conference was engaged in laying down positions and trying to reach decisions as regards peace with Germany and Austria, and the settlement of Central Europe such as recognition of Finland and Poland, prevented the Allied delegations from sparing time and giving consideration to less important issues. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the lack of decision on the part of the Allies with respect to the Russian situation carried important effect upon the Allies failing to consider the Transcaucasian States.

Although it is not the concern of this work to study the Allies' attitude towards Russia in the postwar period it seems, however, necessary to look into it to some extent since the settlement of Transcaucasia, and hence British thinking on the subject, was largely connected with the settlement of the Russian question in general. Furthermore, it might prove to be helpful to understand the mentality behind the approach taken by the Great Powers' statesmen as regards solving international issues.

The Allies and the Russian Question.

The Bolshevik Revolution had been, as seen, a major concern for the military authorities during the war. The collapse of the Eastern Front which had been a result of the Revolution had given major headaches to them. The postwar period transferred much responsibility from the military authorities to

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the political authorities to bring forward solutions to deal with the Russian question which had caused unexpected and complicated problems such as the Transcaucasian settlement. The Armenian issue, for instance, had already been dealt with in 1916. According to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the six Vilayets of Eastern Turkey would have gone to Russia and Cilicia to France. Therefore, the negative effects of the Revolution continued to weigh upon the Allies during the postwar period.

The immediate problem that the Allies faced was to decide whether Russia should be given a seat at the Peace Conference. This problem had two aspects: first, who would represent the Russians, i.e., the anti-Bolsheviks whose representatives had already been in Paris or the Bolsheviks, or both. Second, if it were decided that the Bolsheviks had a right to represent, would it be possible to give them a seat at the Conference?

Since the matter was complicated enough the prime ministers and foreign secretaries of France and Italy had come to London in December 1918 to co-ordinate Allied planing for the approaching Peace Conference. They had consumed a whole day in discussing the question of Russian representation at the Peace Conference.[1]

At the meeting two main views were expressed: the first argument discounted the granting of any representation whatsoever to the Bolsheviks for two reasons: the betrayal of the Allies by the Bolsheviks by signing a separate peace treaty with Germany and the fact that the Allies were at war with the Bolshevik Russians. This view was stated by G. Clemenceau, the French Premier, and shared by Balfour and Lord Curzon.[2] On the other hand, Lloyd George argued that there was a need to come to an understanding with {Bolshevik} Russia as it was she who had suffered the most in the war. Furthermore, it appeared to him that the Bolsheviks had a considerable amount of support. Lastly, Russia represented two-thirds of Europe and a large part of Asia with a population of nearly two hundred million people. For that reason it seemed to him impossible to give representations to small nations such as

[1] CAB 28/5/I.C.-100, 3 December 1918. Notes of an Allied conversation held in the Cabinet Room, 10 Downing Street. The Allies had been meeting since December 1 but the Russian question came up on 3 December.

[2] Clemenceau expressed his feeling that he would resist with the greatest energy any representation of Bolshevik Russia.

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the Letts and not to the Bolsheviks. He, therefore, strongly deprecated the adoption of any fixed attitude towards Central Russia.[1]

The case of small nations and border states of the former Russian Empire was also brought forward. Balfour and Curzon each argued in favour of the representation of the various border states. Balfour stated that though there should be a coherent and stable Russia, some border states such as the Baltic States, Finland and the Transcaucasian States whose population were not Russian could not be included in the new Russia. This argument, however, was opposed by Baron Sonnino, Foreign Minister of Italy, who argued that it was in the common interest that Russia should exist possibly as a federation of autonomous states since a collection of very small and mutually hostile states would give Germany a chance of creating the same kind of trouble that had disturbed Europe in the Balkans. To this Clemenceau added that 'we were not bound to recognise the small nations at once, to use the colloquial phrase: "let them cook" and when they appeared ready we should recognise them.'[2]

This mini conference thus failed to reach any decision as regards Russian representation as a result of the fact that first, the United States was not present, and second, there was no agreement on the subject. However, the discussion was quite useful as the views of various delegations were put forward and the ground for further discussions in Paris was prepared.

The matter was also discussed by the British Imperial War Cabinet on 23 December.[3] The Cabinet discussion was again dominated by two arguments; one side was in favour of coming to terms with the Bolsheviks and the other of crushing it by a powerful intervention. The first argument was put forward by Lloyd George. Against the counter-argument advocated strongly by Churchill, Minister of Munitions, he emphasised the military and financial burden which would make it impossible to carry on a large-scale intervention.[4] He was supported by Bonar Law, chancellor of the Exchequer,

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[1] In reply to the British Prime Minister, Balfour pointed out that the Prime Minister had good reasons for their inclusion but the inclusion of the Bolsheviks represented difficulties, such as that the allies were at war with them, which was not an inconsiderable obstacle.

[2] CAB 28/5/I.C.-100, 3 December 1918. Notes of an Allied conversation held in the Cabinet Room, 10 Downing Street.

[3] Cab 23/42, Imperial War Cabinet, 45th Meeting, 23 December 1918.

[4] The Bolshevik regime in Moscow had recently indicated its readiness, with the prospect of various concessions, to come to terms with the Allies. The British Government received the first Soviet offer through the Swedish Embassy in Petrograd on 3 November 1918. The Bolsheviks proposed a general armistice between Russian and British forces and the beginning of peace discussions. See J. Degras, ed., *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, Vol. I, 1917-24, London: Oxford University Press for Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1951, p. 123.

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Balfour, and Milner, Secretary of State for War, on condition that the contact with the Bolsheviks for a possible peace should be conducted informally and the Bolsheviks would not make any advances against their neighbours. The importance of this decision was that the British Government accepted the possibility of direct negotiation with the Bolsheviks.

Lloyd George's argument for coming to terms with the Bolsheviks and, therefore, giving them a seat at the Peace Conference was enhanced by a submission from Sir Robert Borden, Prime Minister of Canada, in a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet on December 30.[1] He stated that the only alternative to continued intervention was 'to induce the warring parties in Russia and also governments of the border states, to send representatives to Paris for a conference with the Allies who could then apply pressure to restrain and control aggression, and bring about conditions of stable government under the power and influence of the League of Nations.' To this Lord Robert Cecil added that as a condition of their coming to Paris, all the participants in the Russian civil war should cease firing and hold their present territorial positions until a settlement was achieved. A further addition came from Lloyd George that measures would have to be devised to prevent the Bolsheviks form using the Peace Conference as a propaganda forum. Thus Lloyd George was now in possession of a possible solution for the Russian question.

His argument, nevertheless, was not easy for France and Italy to accept. Before the first meeting of Allied powers in Paris took place the British Government had informed the Allies of her intention to invite all the Russian factions to Paris to find out an acceptable solution to end the fighting in Russia. When the Allies gathered in Paris to meet on 12 January Stephan Pichon, Foreign Minister of France, indicated France's view that the Bolsheviks would not be welcome in Paris.[2] The discussion was left over to the next meeting at which Lloyd George continued to argue for a need, at least informally, to summon all Russian groupings to Paris.[3] To support his argument he enquired what was the alternative. In his opinion three options were open to the Allies: first, to crush the Bolsheviks militarily for which at

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[1]CAB 23/42/47th Meeting, Minutes of Imperial War Cabinet, 30 December 1918.

[2]CAB 28/6/I.C.104, Minutes of Council of Ten, held in Pichon's room at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris on January 12, 1919. This Council also known as the Supreme War Council, was attended by the heads of governments and the foreign ministers of the United Kingdom, France, Italy, the United States and the Ambassador of Japan, usually accompanied by expert advisers. Though the formal opening of the Conference was on 16 January the delegations met on 12 January to formulate the procedures of the Conference.

[3]CAB 28/6/I.C.109, The Minutes of Council of Ten, January 16, 1919.

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least one million men were needed and he doubted any Ally was prepared for this. Second, the policy of *cordon sanitare* which would lead to the starvation of hundreds of thousands of innocent Russians and would, therefore, strengthen the Bolshevik regime. After all he doubted the ability of General Kolchak in Siberia and General Denikin in north Caucasia to overthrow the Bolsheviks. Lastly, his proposal of asking representatives of the various Russian governments to meet in Paris after a truce among themselves. He strongly deprecated the idea that to summon the Bolsheviks to Paris would be tantamount to recognising them. While the French and Italian delegates kept their silence, President Wilson expressed his agreement with Lloyd George by saying that 'there was certainly a latent force behind Bolshevism which attracted as much sympathy as its more brutal aspects caused general disgust.' He concluded his long statement by saying that

> if the Bolsheviks refrained from invading Lithuania, Poland, Finland, etc., we should be well advised to allow as many groups as desired to do so to send representatives to Paris. We should then try to reconcile them both mutually and with the rest of the world.

Since the French had not consented to inviting the Bolsheviks to Paris the first subject of the next meeting was again Russia.[1] President Wilson proposed to modify Lloyd George's proposal by inviting them somewhere else such as Salonica. Before considering this modification, however, Baron Sidney Sonnino, Foreign Minister of Italy, strongly criticised the idea of meeting with the Bolsheviks.[2] Sonnino suggested bringing together the anti-Bolshevik parties and give them support to overcome the Bolsheviks. Lloyd George then enquired what contributions America, Italy and France would make in terms of soldiers, 150,000 of whom were needed only to keep the anti-Bolshevik organisations from dissolution. The reply from Wilson, Clemenceau and Sonnino was the same: none. Furthermore, he remarked that to feed, equip and pay the anti-Bolshevik forces thought to be around 400,000 would cost an immense amount, and questioned whether the Allies were prepared to take their share. Eventually, the Council of Ten agreed upon Lloyd George's proposal, modified by Wilson, of inviting Russian parties and border states, including the Transcaucasian Republics, to a discussion with a view to restoring peace and order in Russia. Participation was made conditional on a cessation of hostilities.

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[1] CAB 28/6/I.C.114, The Minutes of Council of Ten, January 21, 1919.

[2] Clemenceau also expressed his unhappiness at having a conversation with the Bolsheviks. Yet he said that 'for the sake of unity among the Allies he was prepared to consent to Wilson's modified resolution.'

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The meeting place was decided to be the Princes (Prinkipo) Islands in the Sea of Marmara. The invitation was broadcast to Russia by radio on 23 January 1919 asking all organised groups to be on the Islands to assemble on 15 February 1919. However, all anti-Bolshevik parties, with a programme of restoring a unified Great Russia, with informal French encouragement, as well as border states including the Transcaucasian Republics except the Baltic States and the newly Sovietized Ukraine, refused to attend. The Bolsheviks, accepted the invitation. Therefore, it became evident that the Prinkipo meeting would never take place, thus declaring the failure of the so-called Prinkipo policy.[1]

The Council was presented with another proposal from the British Delegation. But this time it was from W. Churchill, Secretary of State for War, who had been sent over to Paris by Lloyd George who had earlier been forced to return to London to deal with the industrial unrest and trouble in Ireland.[2] Churchill simply repeated the argument he had made at the British Cabinet Meetings that the anti-Bolshevik forces should be sustained with military equipment and technical experts. However, President Wilson who was about to leave Paris expressed his hesitation whether this policy could reach anything. Furthermore, he indicated that the Allied Powers ought to withdraw their troops from all parts of Russian territory as there was no possibility of reaching any result.

In the absence of Lloyd George and Wilson, Churchill found a receptive audience at the next meeting that took place on the same afternoon.[3] He further advanced his argument to advocate the immediate appointment of an Allied Council for Russian Affairs with political, economic and military sections as well as executive powers. This was agreed to by Clemenceau and Baron Sonnino. The United States representatives, R. Lansing and Colonel E. House, asked time for consultation with the President. Balfour, the head of the British Delegation, urged caution and more consideration. At a meeting of the British Empire Delegation in Paris Churchill restated his assertion for a need to actively support the anti-Bolsheviks and a special Inter-Allied Council for Russian Affairs.[4] The members of the delegation, however, took an attitude

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[1]For more information on the Prinkipo policy see Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, *op. cit.*, Vol.II, pp. 99-117.

[2]CAB 28/6/I.C.142, The Minutes of Council of Ten, February 14, 1919; Lloyd George, *Truth About the Peace Treaties*, London: Gollancz, 1938, vol. I, p. 368.

[3]CAB 28/6/I.C. 143, The Minutes of Council of Ten, February 15, 1919. See also W. Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath*, London: Thornton Butterworth, 1929, pp. 171-177.

[4]CAB 29/28/B.E.D. 8th Minutes, February 17, 1919.

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similar to Lloyd George's view by opposing any large-scale Allied intervention in Russia. They reluctantly consented to establish a military commission only to investigate as to how the limited resources of the Allies could most efficiently be distributed to the anti-Bolsheviks. Churchill's argument eventually lost at the meeting of the Council of Ten on the same day when Colonel House and Balfour opposed it.[1]

When the Prinkipo policy and Churchill's idea of giving effective Allied support were dead, the new line of British policy with regard to Russia, particularly in Lloyd George's mind, became that "Russia must save herself." Yet he was prepared to defend Poland and Finland, and possibly the Baltic States.[2] There was no mention of any Transcaucasian Republics. General H. Wilson, Chief of Imperial General Staff, also failed to mention any Republic in the Caucasus in his paper circulated to the Cabinet in which he claimed that the primary responsibility of the Allies was to ensure the protection of the following states whose integrity had been guaranteed: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Roumania.[3]

The British Cabinet thus returned to its early position as regards Russia. The Cabinet decided under Lloyd George's strong influence, to withdraw all its troops from Russia as early as possible; to supply the "friendly" Russian Commanders with everything they might need "except troops and money", and to press the Allies to agree to the early evacuation of British forces from North Russia.[4] The decision to withdraw all British troops from Russia had an important effect on British forces in Transcaucasia.

British Considerations for Evacuation

While the future of the Transcaucasian states was waiting to be decided by the Conference, the events on the ground moved quickly. As seen, the Eastern Committee had considered it essential to police the Batum-Baku railway and pipeline to maintain the communication between the Black Sea and the Caspian's eastern shores on which a small British force under General

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[1] J. M. Thomson, *Russia, Bolshevism, and the Versailles Peace*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 143.
[2] A letter from Lloyd George to P. Kerr, Paris, 19 February 1919, in Lloyd George's *Truth About the Peace Treaties*, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 375-377.
[3] CAB 24/75/G.T. 6885, 24 February 1919. A Note for the Cabinet on "Future Military Operations in Russia," by Sir H. Wilson, the CIGS.
[4] CAB 23/15/W.C. 541 A, 4 March 1919, War Cabinet Minutes.

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Malleson was situated; and to make sure that the Turks and Germans complied with the armistice that had required their withdrawal. Accordingly, around 2,000 British soldiers under the commands of Generals W. M. Thomson and G. T. Forester-Walker moved into Baku on 17 November and Batum on 22 December 1918 respectively.

These forces ensured that the Turks completed their withdrawal albeit with uneasiness. Thus the prime object of the British military mission was executed. However, the second aspect of the British occupation, namely restoring order and keeping peace in the region pending the Peace Conference's settlement proved to be complicated. The military authorities on the ground who had been informed that the British Government desired to see strong independent states in Georgia, Daghestan and Russian Azerbaijan[1] found it necessary to despatch British forces and missions to many places in Transcaucasia with a view to maintaining order and bolstering up the new Republics.[2] In addition to Baku and Batum military governorships, Kars and Nakhichevan districts came under British military governorships.[3]

Therefore, not only in Batum, Baku and Tiflis but also in almost all major towns in Transcaucasia, British detachments were situated.[4] Yet General Milne asked for two more divisions to deploy in the region.[5] Thus the situation in Transcaucasia became what Lord R. Cecil and Lloyd George had been afraid of. In fact General Thomson in Baku had urged on the War Office not only occupation of all the important towns and communication centres of Transcaucasia, including Daghestan, but also assumption of all administrative responsibility for such services as finances, postal and transport facilities, police forces etc. In other words, he advocated a complete protectorate over the whole of Transcaucasia south of the Vladikavkaz-Petrovsk railways. Yet the

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[1]WO telegram to General Milne, C-in-C of the Army of Black Sea, Constantinople, 16 December 1918, in FO 371/3661/41025, March 14, 1919, Appendix IV.

[2]FO 371/3667/24819/ME/58, 12 February 1919. A Memorandum by the DMO, P. de B. Radcliffe, to the FO on the situation in Transcaucasia.

[3]FO 608/84/347/1/2/2870, February 25, 1919. A Memorandum by General G. F. Milne, Constantinople, on the situation in Transcaucasia, dated February 6, 1919.

[4]The actual disposition of the British troops in February 1919 was as follows: Batum: 2 Brigade HQs and 2 Battalions. Tiflis: 1 Division HQ, 1 Brigade HQ, 5 Battalions and 2 half Battalions. Kars: Half Battalion. Nakhichevan: Half Battalion. Akhalkalaki: Half Battalion. Balakhani: 1 Battalion. Tiflis-Baku Railway: 1 Battalion. Baku: 1 Brigade HQ and 3 Battalions. Petrovsk: 1 Battalion (at the request of the Navy for action against the Bolsheviks). See FO 371/3667/24819/ ME/58, 12 February 1919. A Memorandum by the DMO to the FO on the situation in Transcaucasia.

[5]Milne's report in FO 608/84/347/1/2/2870, February 25, 1919.

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War Office had depreciated his proposal and had not taken any steps to carry out this policy.[1]

A proposal of this kind and the fact that British forces were despatched to almost every town gave anxiety to Lord Curzon who wrote a short paper to indicate his dissatisfaction as regards military actions taken in the Caucasus. He stated that 'so far it has never been explained to or authorised by HMG and when the country realises that this is in train and that we are irremediably involved the Foreign Office will be asked if they knew all about it and approved.' He, therefore, proposed to call a meeting of the Eastern Committee to find out exactly where Britain stood.[2]

The Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, (IDCE), the Eastern Committee's renamed structure, met on 13 February to discuss the situation.[3] Curzon opened the meeting by expressing his dissatisfaction with General Forester-Walker and General Thompson's operations which had been out of Government's lines. He said, for instance, that

> they were interfering in the territorial disputes of the local republics, operating north of the Caucasus mountain range, and dispatching troops to regions like Kars which had no relevance to the security of the Batum-Baku line.'

Nobody, however, asked Lord Curzon how it would have been possible to keep the peace between the rival republics, one of the objects of the British military expedition as stated by Curzon himself in his paper,[4] without intervention on the part of the British military authorities to stop fighting.

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[1]FO 371/3667/24819/ME/58, 12 February 1919, The DMO's Memorandum, *Op. Cit.*

[2]FO 371/3667/19030/W/58, 4 February 1919. A paper entitled *The Caucasus* and dated 2 February 1919, by Lord Curzon. Since General Milne asked two more divisions and Gen. Thompson occupied Petrovsk where a British aeroplane base sixty miles north of Petrovsk was proposed by the Admiralty. Lord Curzon, finding these actions very excessive, stated that 'our policy so far as it has been formulated and announced were a) to hold the three principal cities on the railway, Batum, Tiflis and Baku. I believe we are in all three; b) to keep the peace between the rival Republics; c) without actually recognising any one of them to assist them in maintaining some form of government; d) to protect them if actually menaced by a Bolshevik invasion across the Caucasus {which is the highest degree unlikely}; e) to hold the Caspian but f) not to extend our military operations far afield or get deeply involved either in administrative or military responsibilities; and g) to contemplate withdrawal as soon as local stability and decent government is assured.

[3]IOR: L/P&S/10/807, IDCE, 6th Meeting Minutes.

[4]FO 371/3667/19030/W/58, 4 February 1919. A paper entitled *The Caucasus*, dated 2 February 1919, by Lord Curzon.

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The conference then discussed a memorandum written by the General Staff.[1] In this memorandum the dispersal of British forces is justified on the grounds of preventing internecine trouble among the Transcaucasian Republics. However, the memorandum states that the military objects for which the expedition to the Caucasus had been despatched were to all intents and purposes attained, that is to say the evacuation of the Turkish-German troops was nearly complete; the Batum-Baku railway was firmly held, the line of communication to the Caspian and the maintenance of naval supremacy on the Caspian was assured; and finally, hostilities among the Republics were repressed, thus making it possible for peace and order to prevail. Yet the accomplishment of these objects, the memorandum argues, necessitated a considerable dispersion of the British forces leading to a request for further troops from General Milne.

The memorandum then states alternative courses of action which might be taken by HMG. There were two main courses: first, confining Britain purely to military action and disclaiming all attempts to regulate the internal administration of the country. This course would also require concentration of British forces for the immediate protection of the Batum-Baku railway, withdrawing all detachments that were not essential for that purpose, except from Petrovsk which the Navy required the War Office to occupy. However, there would be considerable risk of internal disorder and even open hostilities breaking out among the Caucasian States.

Second, Britain should definitely assume control of the administration of the various embryo states; thus establishing a protectorate of Transcaucasia as General Thompson had earlier proposed. If this course were adopted then General Milne would certainly need reinforcements. The view of General Staff, the memorandum remarks, was in favour of reducing commitments to the minimum on the grounds of the urgent necessity of "economising troops" to meet the demands of demobilisation. It was added that an early and definite decision should be taken on the question to obviate the danger of Britain's being involved in matters of internal policy and administration from which it would be difficult ultimately to dissociate Britain unless a clear cut decision be taken forthwith.

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[1] FO 371/3667/24819/W/58, 12 February 1919, the DMO's memorandum on the situation in Transcaucasia.

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The memorandum submitted a possible third course: an immediate withdrawal. Yet General Staff itself objected to this for three reasons: firstly, it would entail the abandonment of British naval control of the Caspian, and of communications with Krasnovodsk. Secondly, it would prevent the supply of General Marshal's troops in North-West Persia fed from Enzeli. Lastly, it would cause reaction on the part of General Denikin's forces and encourage the growth of Bolshevism in Georgia and other districts in Caucasia.

In the light of this memorandum, the Committee decided to opt for the first course favoured by the War Office. It was decided to inform General Milne whose command included the Transcaucasus and Transcaspia of the results of the discussion which were as follows:

1. His {Milne's} report awaited.
2. Meantime, military and political commitments must be limited to a minimum.
3. Outlying detachments not essential for protecting Batum-Baku line to be withdrawn (except Petrovsk).
4. No commitments of military or financial nature with the local states.
5. To send home an officer with local knowledge to advise on the Caucasus.[1]

With regard to the decision to concentrate troops only around the Batum-Baku railway, the Eastern Committee took a significant step towards disengagement from the Caucasus. As reported in the same memorandum, this course of action had a considerable amount of risk with the prospect of regional disorder. Thus, the policy of keeping peace in Caucasia and, more importantly, the desire for the creation of "strong and independent states in Georgia, Daghestan and Azerbaijan", the first of 13 resolutions adopted by the Committee at its meeting on 16 December 1918, were almost extinguished. Without troops it was a difficult task to reinforce and maintain peace and order in the region. The Armenian Republic, for instance, did not experience any British occupation as Georgia and Azerbaijan did. Nevertheless, the British presence in the region which provided stability gave protection to Armenia against her more powerful neighbours.[2] Another example is that when the Georgians and Armenians fought each other over Borchalu the intervention of the British Command brought about an end to fighting and two sides retired to their previous positions.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] Ullman, *op. cit.*, vol.II, p. 85.
[3] Kazemzadeh, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-2.

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To curtail the British involvement further, the IDCE meeting on 17 February which dealt with the financial situation in Transcaucasia which had arisen as a result of military efforts to stabilize the region, decided to stop issuing rouble notes, General Thompson's practice in Baku, and to state that British policy should be to avoid all interference with local currency arrangements.[1]

The situation in Caucasia was considered by the War Cabinet on 4 March.[2] Churchill, now Secretary of State for War, enquired as to how long were the British troops to remain in the Caucasus; the future of the British fleet on the Caspian Sea; and the way in which "General Denikin should be made up." Without giving an answer to these questions, the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, stated that the total cost for various operations in Russia including Transcaucasia would be 150 million sterling per annum. Then the Chancellor of the Exchequer, A. Chamberlain, entered the discussion by saying that

> we ought to withdraw from North Russia, subject to our Allies' consent. So far as the Caucasus and Caspian were concerned, we had no obligation to our Allies, and he (Chamberlain) could not see that any British interests were being served by our presence there.

W. Churchill disclaimed any responsibility for the situation and asked the Cabinet to lay down certain policy for his department. Meanwhile, he put forward his own wishes for consideration. These were 1. to evacuate North Russia in such a way that a catastrophe would be avoided, 2. to evacuate the Caucasus, subject to a date agreed upon in Paris, 3. to make it up to General Denikin, and for this purpose he proposed to send a Military Mission for the General's assistance, 4. to send a similar mission to Admiral Kolchak and to recall the battalions now in Siberia under Colonel John Ward.[3]

Lord Curzon, the acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said that they were all agreed so far as North Russia was concerned. As regards the Caucasus, he suggested that the Eastern Committee should be instructed to submit to the War Cabinet a series of proposals as regards a possible evacuation, indicating its political and other consequences. He made an attempt, however, to justify the presence of the British forces in Transcaucasia. He reminded the Cabinet that Armenia had been in an effort to establish a republic whose precarious existence was only being sustained by

[1] IOR: L/P&S/10/807, Minutes, IDCE, 7th Meeting, 17 February 1919.
[2] CAB 23/15/W.C. 541 A, 4 March 1919
[3] *Ibid.*

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the presence of British troops. Lloyd George welcomed Curzon's suggestion that the Caucasus should be discussed, and proposals be put forward by the Eastern Committee. However, he emphasised his trust that these proposals would be put forward in such a way that "the hands of the British Delegation in Paris would be in no way tied."[1]

It seems from these proceedings that Transcaucasia had lost its significance in the minds of most Cabinet members. Only Lord Curzon appeared to be giving some consideration for its future. But his voice at the Cabinet was weakened in the absence of Lord Milner, Churchill's predecessor at the War Office, who had been supportive of British involvement in the Caucasus. It also appears that the General Staff had been influenced by their new head whose primary interest was focused on bolstering up anti-Bolshevik Generals whose political programme was dominated by the idea of indivisible Great Russia. Sir H. Wilson, CIGS, for instance, seemed to have forgotten his unhesitating support at the meetings of the Eastern Committee in December 1918 for Lord Curzon's view in favour of taking control of the region by Britain.

The Interdepartmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs met on 6 March to examine the situation in the Caucasus.[2] The Conference had before them an extensive and long-awaited report from General G. F. Milne, Constantinople. In his assessment of the situation General Milne considered the conditions in Georgia worse than had been thought. He reckoned the Georgian regime as Bolshevik by calling it ultra-Socialistic of the most advanced type. The nationalisation of most of the land and property was given as example. In contrast, he reported the Armenian Government as democratic and honest but with a pro-Russian tendency. His view with regard to the Azerbaijan Government was also positive. He found the government democratic and anti-socialist, and cooperative with the British administration in Baku. He also reported the division of Azerbaijanis into two main groups: the Pan-Islamists led by the Musavat Party and pro-Russians led by the Ittihad that maintained that no individual state in the Caucasus can stand alone without a great protecting power with a view to the re-establishment of Russia as their natural protector.

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] FO 371/3661/41025/ME/58, March 14, 1919. A copy of Minutes of IDCE of 6 March 1919.

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The Russians, especially in Baku, were reported to be very hostile to Britain. He stated that politically the Russians had actively supported the Armenians and on the arrival of British forces expected a free hand to deal with the Tartars. The British attitude of working through the existing government had puzzled them and they were firmly convinced that the British intended to annex Azerbaijan and steal the Baku oil.

He concluded his memorandum with a gloomy picture. He claimed that while Georgia and Azerbaijan were endeavouring to maintain their independence, the Russians in Transcaucasia were strong upholders of some form of Russian Government there... The memorandum continued that

> whatever is decided, it is very doubtful whether those small States can ever be wholly independent. Free trade between the States, with one railway, postal, and telegram system appears absolutely essential owing to the interdependence of one port of the country on the other, and the governing factor that the Baku oilfield supplies not only the motive power, but the money for fuller development.[1]

Toynbee made some comments upon Milne's report. Firstly he found the hostility of the non-Georgians and Muslim Georgians to the Christian Georgians, particularly in the Batum province very disquieting. As for the Kars district, and information reported by Milne that the armed Muslim population was against the return of the Armenians, he argued that 'the Muslims will have to be compelled by force, if necessary, to allow the Christians to return and restore their property. Future peace in the Caucasus and Armenia will be impossible unless an example is made of people who adopt this sort of attitude.' With regard to Azerbaijan he thought it satisfactory to note that the Baku Muslims, and not the land owning Beys (who were pro-Turk and far more reactionary) were in power. He further commented that 'in view of the reported attitude of the local Russian and Armenian elements, and the division of the Azeris into a Pan-Islamic and a pro-Russian party, it would seem more than ever advisable to leave the future of Azerbaijan an open question.'[2]

At the IDCE meeting, the Chairman, Lord Curzon, opened the debate by expressing the anxiety felt by the Government and the Prime Minister to reduce military commitments in the Caucasus and to release the troops there at

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.* See Toynbee's minute dated 26 February 1919.

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the earliest possible moment.[1] He explained three reasons for this need: first, it was a secondary theatre of operations, second, the cost was already enormous, and finally, fresh sums would have to be asked for and a case made out in the House of Commons. He said that 'the explanation required was not an easy one to convey to the public, and it might be difficult to convince the House of Commons of the necessity for this expenditure.' He complained that British commitments in the Caucasus had grown insensibly and without the knowledge of the Eastern Committee. British policy, he argued, itself had been consistent throughout, repeating the objects of the military expedition into the Transcaucasia approved by the Committee. He maintained that

> our operations had, however, attained a magnitude far greater than had ever been contemplated or authorised... though broadly speaking, our policy had been to prevent these states from flying at one another's throats and encourage them in establishing their independence, in practice, we had set up governments, or at any rate military governorships, in all these states, and instead of being looked upon as benefactors and friends, we appeared to be generally unpopular and to be regarded with grave suspicion throughout the Caucasus.

After giving a long summary of what had happened in Transcaucasia, he brought forward the question of evacuation. He reminded the Conference that when he had expressed his own view that they should be lucky if they got out by early autumn 1919, the Prime Minister had been dismayed at the prospect of so late a retirement. It seemed to him fairly certain that if Britain left the Caucasus without restricting Denikin, all these small states which had relied on the promises of Britain and the guarantees of President Wilson would be overwhelmed. He thought that the only place where a renascent Russia had any real chance of early success was the Caucasus. Denikin was an old Russian, an imperialist, and a monarchist. If Britain left the Caucasus, Curzon thought that there seemed to be only two alternatives for the future of the new states: either Denikin would recover them for Russia, or they would turn Bolshevist. He did not conceive any possibility for the Republics to stand by themselves without external military backing. He depreciated the idea that Italians who had indicated an interest to take over the responsibility from Britain could have the resources to go to Caucasia.[2] Since the fact was that

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[1] FO 371/3661/41025/ME/58, March 14, 1919. A copy of Minutes of IDCE of 6 March 1919. The meeting was attended by the following: Earl Curzon of Kedleston in the Chair, Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for War, Admiral Sir S. R. Fremantle, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff,
Capt. C. P. R. Coode, Director, Operations Divisions (Foreign), Admiralty, Major General P. P. de B. Radcliffe, DMO, WO J. E. Shuckburgh, IO, J. Y. Simpson, FO, G. J. Kidston, FO, S. D. Waley, Treasury, E. H. Jones, Secretary.

[2] The Italian interest in the region will be studied in the later part of this chapter.

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nobody was likely to take British's place he put forward two questions to be considered by the Conference: "first, if we were going to evacuate the Caucasus, when we should we do so? Second, if we did so, what consequences would be produced?"

Churchill replied that his office had not been responsible for the policy and put the blame on the Eastern Committee which had approved the telegrams which had resulted in the dispersal of British forces. When Lord Curzon stated that none of the Committee members knew what had taken place until the papers reached them now Churchill retorted that he had taken no part in framing the telegrams and it was for the Government to say what the War Office was to do. He diverted attention to Denikin by saying that he himself was interested in fighting the Bolsheviks, and if the evacuation was going to result in bringing about Denikin's downfall, he would regret it; but he did not think evacuation would have this result. Curzon did not believe that Denikin would fall if British forces pulled out. On the contrary, he drew attention to a prospect that the withdrawal might divert Denikin's attention from the north to these newly formed states in the Caucasus.

The solution that Churchill proposed to prevent Denikin turning his attention to the south was to employ the support of a military mission with substantial munitions and arms provided Denikin did not pass a certain line which could be fixed. He thought that Denikin would be likely to accept the deal because without British help he would be bound to fall. As he had said earlier, he made it clear that the Caucasus had a value for him as long as it had a role to play to back up the White General Denikin. He apparently did not have any concern for the new republics. His following words are indicative of his thinking:

> As to Georgia, Azerbaijan, Daghestan, and the other small states, I really did not see what British interests were involved. There seemed to be no doubt that as soon as Russia revived they would be reconquered, and once more form a part of the Russian Empire; what happened in the interval did not effect us, for we had no interests there.

General Radcliffe, the DMO, expressed the full accord of the General Staff with the Secretary of State for War. Mr. Shuckburgh, representing the India Office, supported Churchill in the sense that India's political interest in the Caucasus was rather remote, and if Russia came back, India would be no worse off than before the war. Kidston of the Foreign Office, however, stated that British withdrawal would likely compel Denikin to invade Caucasia.

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Curzon added that the policy of the Secretary of State for War was clear and intelligible but it appeared that he was really only interested in Denikin and was indifferent to the new Republics of the Caucasus. Churchill was inclined, in Curzon's opinion, to over-estimate Britain's hold over Denikin: with Batum and Baku within his grasp it seemed unlikely that he would march north when he might stay at home and take the prize at his feet.

Prof. Simpson of the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, expressed his dismay over the lack of united policy. He said that

> the discussion seemed to be avoiding the main issue. The question to be answered, in my opinion, was "are we preserving order in the Caucasus in the ultimate interest of a united, undivided Russia, or of these new self-created States"?... A clear statement of our policy on this particular point was called for. At present Georgians and Russians alike were frankly puzzled by our attitude, and regarded us with complete distrust, believing that we had at the back of our minds some far-reaching scheme for our own advancement; whereas the truth was that, up to date, we had not made up our minds at all upon this issue. If we imagined that Denikin did not intend to reconquer these States for Russia... we were merely burying our heads in the sand... In supporting him we were without doubt backing Russian imperialism...

To support his argument against the withdrawal Simpson emphasised the strategic and economic importance of the region. Furthermore, he maintained that following the withdrawal the Germans and Turks would come in as civilians before the Russians. It would also give another impetus to the Bolsheviks. Then Germany would again take control in the Caucasus. Therefore, he suggested a counter-policy to Denikin's aims which should be to remain in the Caucasus and keep Denikin out till the Peace Conference had settled the question.

In reply to a question by the Chairman who asked was it not inevitable that Britain should withdraw if the Peace Conference recognised these States but nobody was willing to accept the mandate, Simpson said that it would be more honourable to withdraw if it was done so in accordance with the decision of the Peace Conference.

Churchill intervened by asking him whether he was in favour of a re-united Russia or the small States. Simpson replied that he was not for anything and drew attention to a great danger that a defeated and embittered Germany and Russia would act together. He thought it wise for the present to support the independence of all these small non-slav Border States where a

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will to resist the Bolsheviks had been manifested stronger than in Russia proper. Furthermore, he argued that some of these republics might have to return to Russia on economic grounds but the only way of getting them to return was to let them learn by experience that they were not yet sufficiently advanced to get on by themselves. Then they might return of their own motion, as federal units, into a decentralised liberalised Russia.

Churchill responded that 'we were in the Caucasus to help the small states, not against Russia, but against anarchy.' He argued that if there was any prospect of keeping the Caucasus permanently he would personally like very much to annex the Caspian. Yet even if it was possible it would bring Britain into collision with a revived Russia. Therefore, it was not worth paying the price for a short stay, and it would be much better to devote Britain's energies to some place where it intended to remain. Curzon added that if Russia were revived the Republics were doomed. However, he wished their re-absorption to be a peaceful rather than a bloody one. Thus, Curzon indicated that he was prepared to see British involvement in the Caucasus terminated. Faced with the opposition of the Prime Minister, the India Office, the Treasury and now the War Office as well as within his department Curzon's earlier view that Britain should have some kind of control in Caucasia; and that the Republics should be given a chance to establish themselves appears to have lost its case even in his mind. If not he would most probably have shared Simpson's argument to remain in the Caucasus.

Curzon assumed that the result of the Conference ought to have three conclusions: first, to sanction the destruction of the Bolshevik fleet at Astrakhan; second, to draw up a programme of evacuation; and third, to send our programme to Paris, with the report of this Conference, for it was for Paris not the Committee, to come to ultimate decision on these matters.

Churchill added another conclusion: to advise HMG to enter into a convention with Denikin to supply arms and munitions, a military mission, and naval support, on condition he did not invade Georgia, and that he respected a particular line of frontier in regard to the Caucasian States. He also thought that it would be advisable to make it known beforehand that British forces were going to evacuate.

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Although agreeing with this view Curzon underlined his understanding that Denikin must not be permitted to invade Transcaucasia or to absorb the small States "for the present" and a new line of frontier should be demarcated for Denikin to respect.[1]

The Conference also considered the situation on the Caspian Sea. As seen, the original object in placing a fleet on the Caspian had been to maintain the line of communications to Krasnovodsk before the war ended. Therefore, the first intentions of the operations were passive or defensive.[2] After the war, the navy's duties were to be maintaining the line of communications between Baku and Krasnovodsk, and Enzeli. In addition, it would prevent enemy (Bolshevik) raids on the Caspian shipping and coast towns. It was reported that the navy was essential to the safety of the army of the Caucasus as protecting its right flank.[3] The position of the British fleet, however, became precarious as a result of the Russian flotilla's tendency to turn toward the Bolshevists, and to the increasingly powerful Bolshevik fleet at Astrakhan. The first question, however, was dealt with successfully from their point of view. The flotilla crews were deposed and the ships manned by British crews. Yet the second question was not easy to handle since the establishment of an aeroplane base north of Petrovsk was found necessary for the purpose of bombing the fleet before the ice broke. Moreover, the air attack was in need of army backing to be successful. As Lord Curzon put it, thus at the very moment of restricting any advance or fresh commitments by the British troops and endeavouring to concentrate the scattered detachments on the Batum-Baku railway line the circumstances demanded the carrying out of an

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[1]General Denikin and his attitude towards Transcaucasian Republics will be studied in the next section.

[2]In February 1919 Britain had 8 ships armed with guns, the Russian flotilla that had been cooperative with the British forces but recently turned Bolshevik had 3 gunboats, 5 armed merchant ships and 1 dispatch vessel. The Bolsheviks at Astrakhan had a stronger fleet with 12-13 armed merchant ships, 4 torpedo boats, 4 submarines and 4 destroyers. This fleet, however, was disabled to set sail upon the Caspian by ice around mouth of Volga. See A Memorandum by the Admiralty, undated, appended, (App. III), IDCE, 11th Meeting, see in FO 371/3661/41025/ME/58, March 14, 1919. A copy of Minutes of IDCE of 6 March 1919.

[3]WO 106/1206/BI/2845, March 28, 1919. A Memorandum by the Navy entitled "Naval Events in the Caspian Sea: With an Appreciation of the Naval Situation. The memorandum reports that the army holding the valley south of the Caucasus range could only come into conflict with the Bolshevist army to the north of that range by a) the pass of Dariel on the Caucasus, b) through Petrovsk and along the sea coast, c) by a Bolshevist landing to the south of Baku. Of these (b) and potentially (c) were covered by the navy. Therefore, the memorandum maintains, so long as it was necessary to maintain a British army in the Caucasus it was necessary to maintain a British fleet on the Caspian. See also Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army, op. cit.*, pp. 168-9.

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aggressive policy in the region. As a result, the naval necessities on the Caspian came into conflict with Britain's Caucasus policy as a whole.[1]

Winston Churchill proposed that before the evacuation, the situation at Astrakhan and in the Caspian must be cleared up, and measures must be taken to prevent the cutting of British troops at Krasnovodsk. Once rid of the Astrakhan fleet the British fleet could be handed over to Denikin as part of the British Military Mission. Admiral Fremantle responded that from the Admiralty point of view Britain had no purely naval interests in the Caspian. The naval operations there were subsidiary to the military. So long as British land forces, or Denikin, remained in the Caucasus, it would be essential for their safety that the command of the Caspian should remain under British control. Captain Coode explained the reason for a need for an advanced aeroplane base as the machines on the Caspian were not capable of flying long-distance.

The Conference then was terminated with the decisions that were as follows:

1. The creation of an advanced air base for the purpose of carrying out bombing operations against the Bolshevist fleet at Astrakhan.
2. To advise HMG to enter into a convention with General Denikin, promising him the support of (a) arms and ammunition, (b) a strong military mission, and (c) the co-operation of the Navy in the Caspian till he has taken Astrakhan (for which operation a time limit should be set); such support conditional on his giving an undertaking to respect a stated frontier line with regard to the Caucasian States.
3. That this frontier line should be defined by the War Office in consultation with the Foreign Office.
4. That the War Office, in consultation with the Admiralty and India Office, should prepare a plan for the evacuation of the Caucasus and the Caspian to begin at once, the evacuation to be from east to west (starting with General Malleson's force in Trans-Caspian), on the lines indicated by the Chairman.
5. To consult the military authorities as to the announcement to the Governments of the various States in the Caucasus of the intended withdrawal.
6. To submit the above programme, together with a report of the meeting, to the British Peace Delegation in Paris for their approval.

[1] See a memorandum by the Foreign Office, entitled "Policy in the Caucasus," dated March 5, 1919, Appended (IV) to IDCE, 11th Minutes, see in FO 371/3661/41025/ ME/58, March 14, 1919. A copy of Minutes of IDCE of 6 March 1919.

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The Cabinet meeting took place on the same day following the Committee meeting.[1] At the meeting Churchill repeated his argument for a conditional support for Denikin. Curzon, again, emphasized the importance of retaining control over General Denikin through the supply of material which should be used to carry out his real object of attacking in the north, but not in the south.

As seen, the War Office and the India Office took the line of disengagement and leaving the region to itself, most possibly to be incorporated into a revived anti-Bolshevik, even a Tsarist Russia. The Foreign Office, on the other hand was of the view that the republics should be protected against Denikin and, therefore, the effect of the withdrawal in this sense should be taken into consideration. However, since the Foreign Office and Lord Curzon were left alone in arguing against the withdrawal, the decision to evacuate the Caucasus was accepted, reversing the decisions of the Eastern Committee meeting on 16 December the first of which had desired to see strong and independent states in the region. One reason that might have helped a change of attitude towards British disengagement appears to be the fact that France which it had been taken for granted would take a mandate over Transcaucasia declined to have any interest. Therefore, a possible danger from France in future through Caucasia was not now in sight. At that time the Russians' comeback to the Caucasus was not conceived as a threat to India from the British point of view.

The question of the independence of the Caucasian Republics thus disappeared from the minds of British Cabinet members. An alternative possibility that the Republics could maintain their independence by themselves and get along with each other was apparently never considered as a possibility. As Montagu, Chamberlain and Churchill indicated, the region was not worth the expenditure of British resources since Britain could not stay or annex it as a result of possible complications and conflict with a future revived Russia. Yet the Caucasus acquired a new aspect, helping its importance to be maintained at the British Cabinet level: it became a very strategic base to back up General Denikin from his rear.

[1] CAB 23 /9/W.C./542, Minute 2, March 6, 1919.

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The Volunteer Army of General Denikin and the Transcaucasian Republics.

Although it is not an object of this study to look into the Russian Civil War, it appears to be essential to analyze the activities of the Volunteer Army under General Anton I. Denikin from the point of view of its relations with the Republics as well as the policy of Britain in that regard.

As already noted, both the Caucasian Republics and the Volunteer Army came under British responsibility at the end of the War. While occupying Transcaucasia for the purpose of helping the new States to establish themselves through peace and order enforced by the British force, the British Cabinet had also decided to give support to General Denikin and his volunteers. A conflict between these two sides, however, was inevitable as a consequence of the fact that on the one hand the Georgians and Azerbaijanis opted for separation and independence, and on the other, the Volunteer Army stood for a united and indivisible Russia. In a report written by General Poole, Head of the British Military Mission at Denikin's headquarters in Ekaterinodar, the objects of the White Army were stated as defeating the Bolsheviks, restoring order, giving the people the chance of choosing a form of government, securing the cancellation of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and finally standing for a united and indivisible Russia while favouring the granting of wide autonomy to the diverse "regions" but opposing a federation of states.[1] General Milne, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Constantinople, who had made a visit to and had a long conversation with General Denikin was given the same account of the aims of the Volunteer Army.[2] The Volunteer Army kept its adherence to its aims until it was forced to retreat.

Having this programme at the centre of his campaign it was quite natural for General Denikin to think of the Caucasian Republics as Russian districts, and wish to bring them back to an indivisible Russia.[3] The relationship of Britain to the Republics as well as to the Volunteer Army caused confusion among the British Commanders on the field. While the British military missions with Denikin acquired a pro-Denikin attitude, the military commanders in the Caucasus took sides with the Republics.[4] General

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[1]WO 106/1204, A report of visit to the Head Quarters of the Volunteer Army in South Russia by Major-General F. C. Poole, December 1918-January 1919. The report is also available in FO 371/3661/27335/W/58, 19 February 1919.

[2]See his report in FO 371/3662/83593/W/58, 4 June 1919.

[3]General A. I. Denikin, *The White Army*, Cambridge: Ian Faulkner Publishing, 1992, p. 262.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 261.

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Pole, for instance, clearly indicated his support for Denikin's political and military aims, and suggested that 'the need for coordination of British political and military representation in our zone, in the Caucasus and Cossack territories is very urgent.' Therefore, he suggested to appoint a British High Commissioner with representatives in the Kuban, on the Don, in the Crimea and in Transcaucasia with strong consular staffs.[1]

Similar differences of opinion also took place between General Briggs, General Poole's successor, and General Milne who supported the Georgian's claim to Sochi which had come under Denikin's occupation, the latter supporting the Volunteer Army.[2] The relations between Denikin's Volunteers and Georgia and Azerbaijan where anti-Russian feeling was quite strong[3], therefore, were hostile to each other. Armenia, however, as reported by Milne, feeling assured of her independence by the Allies, chose to have a cooperation with Denikin for two reasons: first, it was in her interest to see Azerbaijan falling under Russian rule, and second since she had disputes over some territory and transit over the Georgian railway from Batum to Armenia she would be pleased to see her rival neighbour consuming most of her energy towards the north.[4]

In his interview with General Milne, Denikin told him that 'certain Transcaucasian states and districts have unmistakably shown their desire not to be separated from Russia and he wishes to keep in touch with these states, which are Armenia and Batum.'[5] Prof. Simpson urged caution to watch the tendency of the Armenians to go with the Russians because it might be used

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[1]WO 106/1204, A report of visit to the Head Quarters of the Volunteer Army in South Russia by Major-General F. C. Poole, December 1918-January 1919.

[2]See FO 371/3661/50843/W/58, 2 April 1919. From the DMI, transmitting a telegram of 26 March 1919 from General Milne, (Constantinople) to Foreign Office.

[3]See a report by Major R. McDonell (Tiflis) of 27 January 1919, appended to 11th Meeting of IDCE, and General Milne's report, see both in FO 371/3661/41025/ ME/58, March 14, 1919, a copy of Minutes of IDCE of 6 March 1919;

[4]A memorandum by the Foreign Office, appended to the IDCE, 11th Meeting, in FO 371/3661/41025/ME/58, March 14, 1919, Minutes of IDCE of 6 March 1919, see part IV entitled "Our Position and Commitments towards the Transcaucasian Republics"; section 5: Political and Economic Results to be anticipated from withdrawal.

[5]Milne's report in FO 371/3661/41025/ME/58, March 14, 1919, Minutes of IDCE of 6 March 1919. In his report on Georgia, McDonell maintained that most of the Russian officers resident in Tiflis, formerly by no means pro-Armenian, were now openly sympathetic with the Armenians. Furthermore, he stated that the Armenian army was to a great extent officered by regular Russian officers, most of them followers of Denikin, calling the Armenian army the 9th Denikin Army, thus considering themselves in service in the Volunteer Army. A report by Major A. R. McDonell (Tiflis) of 27 January 1919, appended to 11th Meeting of IDCE, in the same document referred above.

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later by the Russians to reassert their claims in Transcaucasia. Lord Hardinge agreed with him in finding this development new and not good.[1]

The large amount of military support given by the British Government to Denikin inevitably caused suspicion and resentment on the part of the Georgians and Azeris towards Britain whose declaration of her desire to see "strong independent states", therefore, had been met with doubt.[2] General Denikin in return displayed his uneasiness, even distrust, towards Britain which, he believed, while supporting the anti-Bolshevik drive against Moscow, was pursuing a policy of dismembering Russia.[3]

January and February 1919 witnessed the successful operations of General Denikin in the North Caucasus enabling him to extend his influence southwards as far as the southern extremity of the Black Sea province neighbouring the Sochi district which was under Georgian administration to the eastern part of the Caspian shore. This development, however, raised acutely the question of the relationship between the Volunteer Army and the republics. Georgia, which was in the certain belief that Denikin was only awaiting a favourable opportunity forcibly to incorporate Georgia in a reconstituted Russia became very antagonistic to the Volunteer Army. Eventually hostilities occurred on 6 February 1919 over the question of the possession of the Sochi district. Yet these were terminated by the prompt intervention of British naval and military forces.[4] Denikin's forces, however, took control of Sochi district up to Sukhum frontier. On 13 February, moved by Georgian representatives, the British Delegation in Paris requested the War Office to convey an intimation to General Denikin that in no circumstances must arms supplied by the Allies be used to force Georgia back into a reconstituted Russian Empire, and that any operations directed by him against the Georgians would lead to the immediate withdrawal of British support. On 14 February 1919 the War Office asked General Headquarters in Constantinople to inform Denikin that hostilities at Sochi must cease, and he must withdraw his troops. Yet Denikin preferred to fail to do so.[5]

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[1] FO 371/3661/20444/W/58, February 6, 1919, from the DMI to the FO, transmitting a copy of telegram sent on 25 January 1919 from GHQ, Constantinople, giving a summary of McDonell's report.

[2] *The Times*, 18 February 1919.

[3] FO 371/3661/23712/W/58, 12 February 1919, from the War Office to Foreign Office transmitting precis of three letters from General Denikin.

[4] See Brinkley, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-8.

[5] A Memorandum by the Foreign Office to the IDCE, 11th Meeting, in FO 371/3661/41025/ME/58, March 14, 1919, Minutes of IDCE of 6 March 1919. See also FO 371/3661/24183/W/58, 12 February 1919, from British Delegation in Paris to the Foreign Office, and FO 371/3661/26086/W/58, 17 February 1919, from the DMI to the FO. Prof. Simpson minuted that 'Denikin will have enough to do facing and advancing north and west without backing south and south east. If we mean to restrict his operations to north of the Caucasus range we ought to be frank and say so...' See his minute dated 18.2.1919.

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Meanwhile the Russian Embassy representing the interests of anti-Bolshevik forces made an enquiry at the Foreign Office as regards policy of HMG in the Caucasus. The Ambassador, Konstantin Nabokoff, informed the Foreign Office of General Denikin's anxiety to understand HMG's policy towards the Volunteer Army.[1] Lord Hardinge, Under Permanent Secretary of State, considered this official request an excellent opportunity for clearing the air. Yet he reckoned that the British Government had not made up its mind as to what its policy in the Caucasus would be. A response, however, was returned to the Russian Embassy prepared by Lord Hardinge and edited by Lord Curzon. The reply which clearly represented the view of British Government stated that

> ... as regards the general attitude of HMG towards General Denikin, their sympathy has been very clearly manifested by their co-operation with him in his recent military movements, to the success of which they have tendered substantial assistance.
>
> The local situation in Cis-Caucasia varies so rapidly from week to week, and information in regard thereto is so incomplete, that it is impossible for the time being to lay down from London the exact limits either of status or operations in that region.[2]
>
> With regard to the Transcaucasian Republics, HMG hold that their ultimate status is a matter for the Peace Conference to decide and that, pending such decision, there should be no interference with them from the Russian side. General Denikin has already been informed that his operations should, in the opinion of HMG be confined to the area to the north of a line which has been expressly indicated to him, and has been told that the support and good will of HMG are dependent on a strict observance of this condition.[3]

General Denikin, however, did not observe this line and as seen, he came down to the Black Sea occupying Sochi and Terek in February, and threatening Daghestan.[4] In May 1919, Denikin moved further and occupied the

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[1] FO 371/3661/28165/W/58, 20 February 1919, from Russian Embassy to the FO.

[2] *Ibid.* Prof. Simpson of the PID of the FO minuted that 'from the administrative point of view, Daghestan was always included in Transcaucasia by the Russian Government and it is necessary strategically for holding Baku (town and government)...' He submitted that 'it would be advisable to suggest that the Russians keep within the Terek District (which gives them control of the Grozny oil fields) that is, confine themselves within Cis-Caucasia proper.'

[3] *Ibid.* The line mentioned here required General Denikin to restrict his operations north of the Caucasus range except on the west excluding Sochi district and on the east Terek and Daghestan. See also Brinkley, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-159.

[4] He was in fact encouraged by the Head of the British Military Mission with him not to recognize the line. This was one of the main causes of disagreement among the British Generals situated on the ground.

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whole of Daghestan. The War Office found this excessive and drew up a new line in June giving him control of only Petrovsk in Daghestan on the Caspian Sea which was vital for operations against Astrakhan and Tsaritsin under Bolshevik rule. Yet General Denikin again took no notice of the new line, and the War Office, without any means to enforce the line accepted Daghestan as within his influence.[1]

His actions were observed with indignation at the Foreign Office.[2] Some experts at the Foreign Office made strong criticism of not only General Denikin but also the British Government's failure to define a definite policy in Transcaucasia. The leading figure was Prof. Simpson who had drawn attention to this circumstance. He argued in one of his minutes that

> the difficulty is that we have apparently not yet decided whether we are going to help to restore a united and indivisible Russia or recognize the independence of the Transcaucasian States. We are apparently in sympathy with the latter project, but we continue to supply arms etc. to Denikin, knowing that he will use them for the subjugation of Transcaucasia when the time comes. Everything that we *say* is in support of self-determination; everything that we *do* is in support of those who are opposed to that principle.[3]

Lord Hardinge agreed with Simpson but noted that he failed to see what else they could do except make British support to Denikin conditional on not interfering with the Republics.[4] Yet as seen, Denikin turned a blind eye to British conditions when he occupied Daghestan. Lord Hardinge, expressing his hopelessness, stated that 'we must, if only for decency's sake, make some show of protecting the republics from Denikin.'[5]

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[1]The fact of the matter is that Denikin was encouraged to ignore the line by Major-General H. C. Holman, the new head of British Military Mission at Denikin's Headquarters. However, he was severely criticised by Generals Thompson in Baku and Forester-Walker in Tiflis as well as Milne in Constantinople. See WO 33/974/4781, 24 June 1919, Milne to the WO. See also Kazemzadeh, *op. cit.*, p. 245 and Ullman, *op. cit.*, Vol.II, p. 225.

[2]It was stated in a memorandum that the consequences of his operations would be that 1) Denikin is within 65 miles of Baku, 2) Daghestan has ceased to exist, 3) Azerbaijan has lost some territory, 4) Denikin has appointed Liankof to be Governor of Terek and Daghestan, 5) It is admitted that it is only our presence that keeps the Russians out of Baku, 6) (The) Caucasus people will interpret this as meaning that the Allies talk of self-determination is insincere, and will lose belief in Britain's good faith. See the Foreign Office memorandum appended IDCE, 11th Meeting in FO 371/3661/41025/ME/58, March 14, 1919, Minutes of IDCE of 6 March 1919.

[3]FO 371/3661/7165/W/58, 14 January 1919, from the DMI to Foreign Office. See Simpson's minute dated 17.1.1919. See also FO 371/3661/5890/W/58, January 14, 1919, the DMI to FO.

[4]*Ibid.*, See his minute dated on 20.1.1919.

[5]FO 371/3662/80442/ME/58, 28 May 1919, the DMI to FO.See Hardinge's minute signed on 31.5.1919.

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The conduct of Denikin and his not secret intentions with regard to Georgia and Azerbaijan inevitably resulted in great enmity on the part of the Georgians and Azerbaijanis against the Volunteer Army. Especially the Georgians whose experience with the Volunteers in February had convinced them of the Volunteer Army's aggressive intentions became very hostile towards Denikin, and revealed strong resentment of the British authorities. For instance Georgia did not permit the use of the land line from her territory to Ekaterinodar, and prosecuted Russians who had links to the Volunteer Army. Azerbaijan declined to supply oil for the Caspian fleet that had been transferred to Denikin by the British Navy.[1]

The relations between the two sides continued in a similar pattern until the fortunes of Denikin in the north were reversed in the later part of 1919, the effect of which will be studied in chapter seven.

The Replacement of Britain by Italy in Caucasia

As noted, the Eastern Committee and the War Cabinet had decided to prepare the ground for the evacuation of the Caucasus. The withdrawal of British troops was considered inevitable on the grounds of lack of sources and troops.

The withdrawal of British troops, however, would create a power vacuum in the Caucasus and the stability restored by British intervention would be in jeopardy. The withdrawal would most possibly result in, as discussed at the IDCE of 6 March, Denikin turning his attention to the south of the Caucasus range and colliding with Georgia and Azerbaijan. The Georgians and Azerbaijanis would almost certainly turn towards the Bolsheviks whose administration would be more acceptable from the Georgian and Azerbaijani point of view.

To prevent these possibilities taking place, the only solution was to hand over the responsibility in Transcaucasia to another power. However, the United States and France declined to take any mandate leaving Britain alone to handle the situation. Faced with this complication, it seems that General J. C. Smuts' early suggestion to put Italy in the Caucasus might have provided an answer. As explained earlier, according to Smuts, the advantages of involving

[1]FO 371/3662/75933/ME/58, 19 May 1919, from the DMI to FO, transmitting a report of General Milne, dated May 9, 1919.

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Italy were threefold: first, it would release Britain from the burden in Caucasia. Second, Italy would be made satisfied in terms of acquisition of new colonial lands. Furthermore, Italy would not pose any danger to British interests there, and thus would provide a solution to a possible French threat if she were to accept. Lastly, Italy would provide a good barrier against French attempts in that direction as well as being a source of problems for France in the context of the Franco-Italian rivalry.

At a meeting of the Supreme War Council Lord Milner, Secretary of State for Colonies, argued against the discussion of a report put forward by the military representatives with respect to an equitable distribution of Allied troops in Transcaucasia and the Ottoman Empire.[1] The report suggested the Italians replacing the British in the Caucasus and Konya, and the French in Syria. Milner stated that the report's suggestions involved political decisions that could only be taken by the political authorities, and although he was reminded that the report had been prepared according to information earlier given by Lloyd George, the report was dropped from consideration. Yet it looks clear from the records of a meeting of the Council of Ten in Paris on February 10 that Lloyd George had sounded to Vittoria E. Orlanda, the Italian Premier, about the possibility of Italy taking over the Caucasus. From the records it appears that Italy agreed in principle to occupy the Caucasus and Konya to replace British forces.[2]

The idea of Italy replacing Britain in the Caucasus was not taken seriously in most quarters of British policy-making, except by the Prime Minister. At the Eastern Committee meeting of 11 March when Lord Curzon enquired who was to take Britain's place when British troops left he stated that

> he had heard with amazement that at Paris recently it had been suggested that the Italians should go into the Caucasus, but nobody really believed that the Italians, without a penny to spare, would be able either to finance that region or to provide the minimum of two divisions necessary to police it...[3]

General Radcliffe, the Director of Military Operations, in answer to a question by the Chairman said that

> the proposal for the Italians to troop the Caucasus appeared to have been a *bona fide* offer made by the Italian representative on the Military Committee at Paris, but so far as he could ascertain, nobody had taken it seriously.

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[1] CAB 25/123, S.W.C. 365, 5 February 1919, Military Representatives, Supreme War Council, "A Report on the Military Occupations of the Turkish Territories and Transcaucasus.

[2] CAB 28/6/I.C. 137, 10 February 1919,, The Minutes of the Third Meeting of 13th Session of the Supreme War Council, Paris.

[3] FO 371/3661/41025/ME/58, March 14, 1919, Minutes of IDCE of 6 March 1919.

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Yet the reasons put forward earlier by General Smuts seems to have persuaded Lloyd George who asked Balfour, the Head of the British Delegation in Paris, to arrange an agreement with the Italians. Balfour and Sonnino, the Italian Foreign Minister, reached an agreement on 21 March in Paris as regards transferring responsibility from Britain to Italy in the Caucasus. General H. Wilson, the CIGS, and his counterpart General Diaz designed preliminary plans for the Italian troops to take over the British positions.[1] The Supreme War Council formally approved the agreement reached by Britain and Italy as regards Caucasia on 9 April 1919.[2]

When he learnt of it Lord Curzon strongly disagreed with this agreement. He wrote privately to Balfour that

> with all respect, this seems to me absolute madness, and the Italians can have very little idea of what they are in for if they lightheartly accept such a burden. They have no knowledge of that part of the World; it has no connections with their national interests or their political ambitions; they will not carry the smallest weight or respect among the Caucasian peoples; they will be confronted there, when we retire, with a situation with which they will wholly unable to cope; and the result, I take leave to warn you, will be disorder, bloodshed, and anarchy of a most shocking description.[3]

The Foreign Office also received from various quarters strong arguments against Italy taking responsibility from Britain.[4] Consul Stevens in Batum reported that the rumours of Italy substituting Britain in the Caucasus had been received with bitter disappointment by the Georgians, creating a situation verging on panic.[5] He put forward four reasons against Italian involvement: first, the Italians would not be able to maintain the peace and order successfully restored by British troops. Second, the Italians, themselves known for their socialistic views, would not be strong enough to prevent the spread of Bolshevism in Transcaucasia. On the contrary, the introduction of Italy in Caucasia would make conditions more favourable for the Bolsheviks. Thirdly, Great Britain would lose her prestige and, therefore,

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[1] MS diary of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, entry for 24 March 1919, in Ullman's *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 228. Wilson considered the agreement as 'a most disgraceful and cynical arrangement.'

[2] Balfour (Paris) to Curzon, June 4, 1919, transmitting a copy of paper from the British Delegation to the Italian Delegation, dated May 26, 1919, in which the Italians formally were asked to replace British crews in the Caspian and the British troops in the Caucasus as early as possible. See *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, edited by E. L. Woodward and R. Butler, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949, Vol. II, no. 229.

[3] *The Curzon Papers*, India Office Library, MS, box 65, Curzon to Balfour (Paris), 25 March 1919.

[4] For Italian involvement see also Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia,* vol II, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 22-39.

[5] FO 371/3662/83024/ME/58, 2 June 1919. Stevens (Batum) to FO, dated 14 May 1919.

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commercial interests. And lastly, to establish her authority Italy would need at least one hundred thousand soldiers, whose coming would worsen the food shortages.[1]

E. G. F. Adam, a member of the British Delegation in Paris, found Stevens' observations doubtless just. However, he failed to see any alternative to the Italian proposal. He thought that 'the decision to replace our troops by Italian troops was primarily due to military considerations and to the fact that we have other military commitments in areas of more vital importance to the British Empire.'[2] In other words, Adam made it clear that whatever harmful effects it might have, the Italian move into the Caucasus was needed for the sake of Britain's imperial interests elsewhere. Indeed, the British Administration was faced with difficult problems in early 1919. A nationalist rebellion in Egypt in March, the separatist movement in Ireland, and the declaration of war by the new Amir of Afghanistan against Britain in May, took priority within War Office circles and the rest of the Imperial administrative offices. In addition, the effects of the War upon economic conditions of Britain were acutely felt within society, causing strong industrial unrest.

Prof. Simpson of the Foreign Office, nevertheless, wrote down his considerations against the British evacuation in a long memorandum. He argued first of all that the strategic importance and the wealth of the natural resources of Transcaucasia were too immense to ignore, whether regarded from a military point of view or as the future great through-way to the East. He maintained that the country that commanded the Caucasus could dominate Central Asia. Its central position made it more vitally important than either Mesopotamia or the entry into Asia through south Russia, north of the Caspian. Moreover, its geo-politic position would likely play the part for the next generation that the Balkans played in the past. Its effect upon the Middle East would also be crucial, and therefore, it should be controlled by Britain or America.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] FO 608/85/347/1/6/11955, June 6, 1919, FO to British Delegation (Paris), transmitting a copy of P. Stevens' report. See Adam's minute of June 9, 1919. Adam was a junior clerk at the Foreign Office.

[3] FO 371/3662/71722/W/58, 10 May 1919, Prof. J. Y. Simpson's memorandum of 9 May 1919 containing suggestions against the evacuation of the Caucasus.

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With regard to Italy he put forward four reasons against her involvement in the Caucasus: firstly, since Italy's surplus population emigration to the United States was great, Italy would wish to keep her population nearer home. Georgia with similar climate conditions would prove to be a new emigration place for the Italians, and this would increase the complication of the already too mixed populations. Next, there was no connection, either historical or commercial, between Georgia and Italy and the Caucasians looked down upon Italy's ability to establish any administration. Third, the main reason for Italy to have an interest in the Caucasus was to acquire coal and oil in order to release her dependency on British coal. Finally, the Italian colonial record was one of persistent failure and most selfish exploitation. Furthermore, there were great possibilities of her associating herself with discontented Turkish elements and even renewing her relations with Germany over commercial interests that she might be willing and able to share with her in Georgia.

He then drew attention to Azerbaijan which, he claimed, was a hotbed of Pan-Turanian propaganda. Its possible effects for future troubles in Persia, Afghanistan and India, he argued, could be easily realised and he warned that

> for the sake of the maintenance of law and order in our own possessions in the East, it is of the utmost importance that this point should be under our control so that this movement should at least not be developed in an anti-British sense — we might be able to meet it and conciliate it — as we have no guarantee that it will not be developed in the hands of any other mandatory.[1]

An interesting comment on a new Pan-Turkish danger had earlier been made by Toynbee who had minuted that 'Azerbaijan presents a political problem of more serious kind. It may become the focus for a new Turkish and Islamic movement, while the mandatory there will incur the hostility of Russia.' Sir L. Mallet added his fear that

> the Italians will not be able to cope with this very menacing situation of which Turcophil agitation is not the least serious feature. Much will depend on a speedy settlement of the Turkish Question in a sense which will not lead to serious resistance on the part of the large Muslim majority.[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] FO 608/88/356/2/2/5474, March 28, 1919, FO to British Delegation, transmits a copy of telegram by Stevens (Batum), dated March 14, 1919, reporting the situation in the Caucasus. See Toynbee's minute signed 29.3.1919 and Mallet's without a date.

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Minuting another document in which Avetis Aharonian, representative of Caucasian Armenia to the Paris Peace Conference, appealed to the British authorities for help against an organisation by Young Turks officers of the Azerbaijani Army, Toynbee pointed out that 'the danger of a "Turanian" reaction will be considerably increased by the withdrawal of the British forces — an apparent sign of weakness which their replacement by Italians will hardly counteract.' He saw no solution except for the United States to undertake, without delay, responsibility — including military responsibility — for Armenia. Colonel Gribbon, however, urged caution towards Armenian appeals, which he stated that he was inclined to rather distrust since they contained no dates.[1]

With respect to the financial burden of British troops situated in the Caucasus, in his memorandum Prof. Simpson stated his belief that the region, which had rich resources, would be able to finance the British expenses within six months. Moreover, local policing forces on Indian Army lines could be easily raised, and the need for the two British divisions would vanish. Another point, he stated, was that the announcement of the British withdrawal would inevitably lead to the renewal of racial antagonisms, as Italy commanded no moral respect whatever. Consequently, Russia would find it easy to overbear the local populations and the Italians alike. He claimed that since the future of Russia was very largely in British hands, it should not be impossible to come to some arrangement with Russia eventually about this part of the world that would be mutually advantageous and also conserve the rights and aspirations of the local peoples. He concluded his long memorandum expressing his belief that 'the surrender of Transcaucasia at this time will be one of the biggest mistakes in British history.'[2]

His memorandum received various observations at the Foreign Office. Maurice D. Peterson, a junior clerk, for instance, referred to a key question which proved to be one of the main dilemmas for Britain at the end of the Great War. This was the lack of direction of Britain's policy in the Caucasus. He commented that

> the expediency of our remaining in the Caucasus — leaving military considerations out of the question — entirely depends on the character of our future policy towards Russia. If we wish, and expect to see, a new

[1] FO 608/78/342/1/6/5936, March 31, 1919, Aharonian to Sir L. Mallet (Paris). See Toynbee's minute without a date and Gribbon's of 31/3/1919. Gribbon noted that 'the story of the Turkish renegades is an old one. We know all about it and steps were taken to count the Turks out. Undoubtedly some of them remain but I respect this appeal is designed to attract our good officers to the Tartar territory round Nakhchevan which the Armenians would like. It is bad policy on Aharonian's part...'

[2] FO 371/3662/71722/W/58, 10 May 1919, Prof. J. Y. Simpson's memorandum of 9 May 1919.

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centralised Russia in the near future, I doubt if we should do much good by remaining in the Caucasus now since the Transcaucasian Republics are bound to be re-united to such a centralised Russia, whatever their political history in the intervening period may be. But if our policy is to encourage local self-determination and the creation of independent States in Russia with a view to an eventual federal solution at what may be a very distant date, it seems certainly regrettable that we should leave the Caucasus now. The Italians are not likely to do much for self-determination there or to show any very disinterested spirit in the evolution of a new federal Russia.[1]

George Kidston pointed out something else:

...unless and until the Italians renounce it (their acceptance of responsibility) I do not well see that we can do anything. Personally, I believe that even if they have the sense not to go there themselves they will cling to whatever rights may be implied in the offer made to them and will use them for purposes of bargaining.[2]

Eric Adam, considering the views of a future Great Russia, commented that

it seems hardly likely that our relations with the Russia of the future would ever admit of our having any permanent connection with the Caucasus. The best safeguard we could have for our Near Eastern interests would be a strong American mandate for a united Armenia, placing a wedge between Azerbaijan and the remains of Turkey. Russia may be willing to abandon Caucasian Armenia but will not likely forego Baku and its oilfields.[3]

Lord Curzon, too, had some observations upon Simpson's memorandum. He expressed his agreement with the arguments in the memorandum. Yet he stated seven reasons for the decision to evacuate Transcaucasia. These were

1. the insistence of the Prime Minister ,
2. the attitude of Mr. Balfour, Lord R. Cecil and Mr. Montagu,
3. the conversion to their view of the CIGS,

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[1] *Ibid.*, See Peterson's minute of May 13, 1919.

[2] *Ibid.* See his minute signed on May 13, 1919. In another minute Kidston expressed his dissatisfaction with the Italian proposal in the Caucasus by questioning whether the British Delegation really imagined that Italy could be regarded as a strong power "capable of controlling the situation" in the Caucasus? See FO 371/3658/52984/ME/58, 1 April 1919, Peace Delegation (Paris) to FO.
Meanwhile the Italian Prime Minister, Signor Orlando, made representations to Lloyd George that the fact of the Italian Government assuming the burden of replacing British troops by their own in the Caucasus, 'will in no way imply the renunciation on their part of a share in the Military occupation of, or a mandate in Asia Minor.' Lloyd George accepted the Italian view. See FO 608/85/347/1/6/7207, April 12, 1919. Italian Delegation (Paris) to British Delegation (Paris). A large part of the South- West of Turkey had been left to Italy and another part of Western Turkey had been designated for Italian zone of influence under St. Jean de Maurianne Agreement of 17 April 1917.

[3] FO 608/85/347/1/6/10611, May 21, 1919. FO to British Delegation (Paris), transmitting a copy of memorandum of May 9 by Prof. Simpson. See Adam's minute signed on May 22, 1919.

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4. the inability of the General Staff to separate the men for 2 divisions in the Caucasus,
5. the refusal of the Treasury to find the money,
6. the view that the Caucasus is neither the corridor to India nor a part of the glacis of the Indian fortress,
7. the undoubted fact that in spite of our virtues everyone there (until we go) wants to get rid of us.[1]

Not only did the members of the Foreign Office argue against the Italian involvement but also the Republics themselves. For instance, the Georgian Delegation indicated their anxiety upon the news that British forces might be evacuated, and reminded the declaration made by Great Britain when she had come to the Caucasus that Britain was to police the region and maintain order pending the final settlement by the Peace Conference of the various territorial questions involved. Sir L. Mallet replied that if the British forces were to leave the Caucasus at some future date, their place would be taken by other Allied troops.[2]

Ghambashidze, the Georgian Representative to Britain and a member of the Georgian Delegation in Paris, expressed his concern to A. Toynbee. He told Toynbee that Britain's withdrawal, in any circumstances, would mean the end of Georgia; that Denikin would at once overrun Transcaucasia. In that case, Ghambashidze stated that no alternative would be left to the Georgians as well as the Azerbaijanis except joining the Bolsheviks and attacking Denikin from the rear before he would overwhelm them.[3]

To prevent any conflict between Denikin and the Republics, Sir L. Mallet and Lord Hardinge hoped that no interregnum would occur between the British withdrawal and the arrival of Italian forces. Mallet confessed that 'to leave the Georgians in the lurch would be contrary to our announcement when we occupied the country, and would probably have the most serious consequences throughout the East.'[4]

Ghambashidze repeated his views to Colonel Gribbon, a member of the military section of the British Delegation in Paris, and Colonel Stokes who had just returned from the Caucasus, in a meeting which took place on the

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[1]FO 371/3662/71722/W/58, 10 May 1919, Prof. J. Y. Simpson's memorandum of 9 May 1919. See Curzon's minute dated 14 May 1919.

[2]FO 608/88/356/2/3/6983, April 11, 1919. An interview of Sir L. Mallet with the Georgian Delegation.

[3]FO 608/85/347/1/6/7995, April 22, 1919. An interview of A. Toynbee with Ghambashidze on 21 April 1919. Toynbee's first assessment was on the Armenians. He reckoned that 'it would certainly be a poor look-out for the Armenians between Georgians, Tartars and Turks all leagued with Bolshevism and Persia would hardly remain unaffected.' See his minute of 22 April 1919.

[4]*Ibid.* See Mallet's minute of 22 April and Lord Hardinge's without a date.

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same day he had seen Toynbee. In his description of his early interview with Baron Sonnino, the Italian Foreign Minister, who had offered an Italian mandate to Georgia, he reported that he had discouraged the Italians.[1] However, his attitude was found not to be an encouraging sign by Mallet who considered that Italy was a ready answer to Britain's complications in the region.[2]

The Azerbaijani Delegation, comprising Topchibashev and Jalinsky, also expressed their anxiety to Mallet as regards British withdrawal.[3] The Armenian Delegation did not fail to voice their apprehension as regards British withdrawal. According to Toynbee who interviewed Boghos Nubar Pasha and Aharonian, the delegation showed great perturbation at the idea of British occupation coming to an end. They said to him that it would be the end of the Armenians, and expressed their conviction that, among other things, if British control of the Railways ceased, the Georgians would intercept all food supplies imported through Batum and prevent any equitable distribution. In reply to their anxiety Toynbee reports that he referred to the general impression that the mandate in Armenia would fall to America, and advised them strongly to appeal to the Americans for the military and economic assistance the Armenians required.[4] Privately, however, Toynbee expressed

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[1]FO 608/85/347/1/6/8366, April 26, 1919. A report on an interview on April 21 with David Ghambashidze. Ghambashidze and the other members of the Caucasian Republics had not been informed yet of the intention of British withdrawal. Ghambashidze reported that he had reminded Sonnino of Italy's colonial failures in Tripoli and Abyssinia, and the financial insufficiency of the Italian economy. He also told Gribbon that the Italians were scarcely fit to govern themselves, and really required a mandate for themselves. Furthermore, he expressed his view that the Georgians would prefer Britain and then the United States. When he returned to London Ghambashidze made a visit to the FO and made his points to Prof. Simpson who had drawn attention to among other things Italy's desire to acquire Poti's coal mines in order to get rid off a British lever upon her. G. Kidston and R. Graham regarded this point as most significant. See FO 371/3662/88936/W/58, 6 May 1919, A memorandum by Prof. Simpson on a conversation with Ghambashidze of 5 May 1919.

[2]FO 608/85/347/1/6/8366, April 26, 1919. See his minute. In a telegram Consul Stevens in Batum reported that the Georgians had annexed the town and district of Sukhum on the Black Sea which was inhabited mainly by the Abkhazians who demanded to return to Russian rule. Toynbee proposed to devise a local autonomy for the Abkhazians who were Muslims and anti-Georgian. The response minute of Mallet was interesting enough to see the easy solution brought forward by Italy for Britain in this region. He stated that 'the Italians are going to the Caucasus, it will be for them to settle such questions.' See FO 608/88/356/2/2/6915, April 11, 1919, FO to British Delegation (Paris). See Toynbee's minute of 11 April 1919 and Sir L. Mallet's minute without a date.

[3]FO 608/84/342/12/1/10979, 26 May 1919. A report of an interview of Sir L. Mallet with Azerbaijan Delegation on 23 May. See also FO 406/42, No.24. Balfour (Paris) to Curzon, May 27, 1919. The Azerbaijanis had demanded independence coupled with federation with the other Transcaucasian Countries. Toynbee submitted that the provisional recognition of an Azerbaijani Republic was the best course to adopt. He considered that Tophcibashev's statement that Azerbaijan would be willing to federate with the other Republics if it represented the real wishes of the people, might simplify the situation. L. Mallet reminded his colleagues of the Eastern Committee's point that the independence of Azerbaijan must depend upon the "march of events." See FO 608/84/342/12/1/643, January 25, 1919, FO to British Delegation (Paris), transmitting a copy of a letter and a memorandum by Topchibashev, Minister for Azerbaijan, giving history and reasons for the establishment of the Republic and appealing for recognition by HMG.

[4]FO 608/79/342/1/9/5883, 31 March 1919, A report of Toynbee's interview of 27 March 1919 with the Armenian Delegation.

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his conviction that Armenia could not any longer be left to itself. The only way, he thought, to prevent practically universal famine in these countries and the revival of interracial conflicts of a catastrophic kind was for the Conference to commission some single power — say the United States — to take over control there *at once*, pending the final decisions regarding their settlement. The reason for this exigency in his opinion was the fact that the political settlement in the Caucasus was likely to be postponed until the more urgent questions centring round Germany were settled, and it was essential that some provision should be made for preventing the Armenians from falling into complete chaos in the meanwhile.[1]

The question of food shortages in Armenia led British statesmen to consider what could be done. R. Vansittard thought that the only solution was to get these people repatriated and it should be done before the British troops left the Caucasus. The alternative, he reckoned, was that there would be no Armenia because there would be no Armenians. His suggestion was questioned by Lord Hardinge, Permanent Under Secretary of State, with the words "Yes, but how is it going to be done and who will undertake it? I should like to see some definite and feasible proposal put forward." [2]

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[1] *Ibid.* See his concluding remarks in his report. At this meeting the real object of the Armenian Delegation was to press upon the British Government the urgency of occupying the Ottoman Armenian provinces preferably either by British forces or if not by the Armenian Army under British officers. However, Toynbee made it clear to them that there was no possibility of the British Government assuming further responsibilities in this region, and reminded them that the British occupation of the Transcaucasus railway system was itself only a temporary arrangement for the enforcement of the Armistice terms.
His answer was a reflection of the British Government's tendency that had decided to reduce British military commitments in Transcaucasia. A previous similar request by the Armenian Delegation, for instance, was received with disfavour by the War Office and the Foreign Office. G. Kidston of the FO considered Boghos Nubar Pasha's proposal to be in conflict with the Prime Minister's policy of evacuating the Caucasus at the earliest possible moment. He minuted that 'if our main force is to withdraw, the loan of British officers to lead forces of one of the Republics may land us in all sort of complications with the others. It is the old story of pocket expeditions.' However, he advised consulting the WO. See FO 371/3657/39367/W/58, March 11, 1919, Balfour (Paris) to Curzon, requesting the WO to be consulted with a view to sending allied troops for protection of Armenians returning to their homes. See Kidston minute of 13 March 1919. See also FO 371/3671/90110/W/58, 17 June 1919, a report of G. Kidston's interview with Mr. Varandian, one of the Delegates of the Armenian Republic who put similar proposals of an immediate military occupation of the Armenian districts of Turkey by British troops. The Director of Military Intelligence, Major-General W. Thwaites, considered that 'the existing Armenian army of the Erivan Republic, reported around 12,500, should be sufficient to police the area, if they really intend doing so.' He maintained that since 'British military authorities were already ordered to minimise British commitments in the region, the request of Boghos Nubar Pasha could not be granted without altering the considered opinion of HMG.' FO 371/3658/44541/ME/58 19 March 1919, DMI to FO. He, furthermore, maintained that 'the rehabilitation and maintenance of the Armenians in a future State of Armenia, is a task of the Power to whom Mandate is given.' FO 608/79/342/1/9/5302, March 26, 1919. FO to British Peace Delegation (Paris), transmitting a copy of dispatch of March 19, 1919, from the DMI regarding this request by Boghos Nubar Pasha of March 11.

[2] FO 608/78/342/1/1/13033, June 19, 1919, delegation minute on Armenia. See Vansittart's minute of July 1 and Hardinge's without date.

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A possible solution was attempted in Kars. Major-General Forester-Walker based in Tiflis signed an agreement with the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs on 8 January 1919 as regards the civil administration of Kars. In other words, Forester-Walker guaranteed to the Armenians that Kars would be included in their jurisdiction. Yet the South-West Caucasian Republic established by the local Turks with Kars as its capital and claiming territories from Batum to Nakhichevan obstructed any attempt on the part of Forester-Walker to carry out his agreement. The South-West Caucasian Council (Shura), furthermore, appealed to Britain's Foreign Office to receive permission to send a delegation to Paris as well as for protection against Armenian atrocities.[1] Yet General Milne discovered that the members of the Shura were in collaboration with the 9th Turkish Army under Shevki Pasha in Erzurum as well as a number of disguised Turkish officers in Kars. In order to prevent famine among the Armenian refugees who should have returned to Kars, he ordered the arrest of the Shura members and anyone suspicious, and demanded from the Turkish Government in Istanbul the immediate replacement of Shevki Pasha by a General who would cease interfering with the Armenians. Following the arrest of the local administration a British military governorship was established and the Armenians began to come to Kars before the end of April.[2]

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[1] FO 608/78/342/1/6/4854, March 21, 1919, FO to British Delegation (Paris). See also FO 608/78/342/1/6/ 5303, March 26, 1919, FO to British Delegation, and FO 608/78/342/1/6/6171, April 3, 1919, FO to British Delegation, Paris.

[2] FO 371/3658/52948/ME/58, 5 April 1919, WO to FO, transmitting a telegram of General Milne, Constantinople, dated 6.4.1919. A note from Balfour to Curzon indicated that since the Armenian inhabitants of Kars had fled or had been expelled, the Muslims were homogenous in Kars. Because of the fact that Kars would be a part of Armenian Republic, the need for a strong power to control the situation was significant. See attached telegram from British Delegation to FO, 2 April 1919. See also Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields, op. cit.*, pp. 497-8, and Öke, *The Armenian Question, op. cit.*, pp. 179-180. Armenia represented herself in Paris by two delegations: namely, the representation of the Erivan Republic (Caucasian Armenia) by Avetis Aharonian and the representation of Armenians in Turkey by Boghos Nubar Pasha and J. Malcolm. Although the two delegations appeared to have a common programme in Paris, as noted by Mallet, it seems that there was a significant degree of disunity between the two delegations. Their differences even led them to complain of each other to the British Delegation in Paris. For instance, J. Malcolm pointed out to E. Adam that Karabagh was chiefly Tartar and that it would be very difficult to attach it to the Armenian territory round Erivan. Secondly, and more importantly, he complained of Aharonian making a great mistake by insisting that the Allies recognise Erivan Republic without formally receiving the consent of Russia. He argued that if and when the Americans accepted a mandate for Turkish Armenia they would be able to obtain Russian agreement for some part of the Caucasian territory, which the Erivan Government claimed, to incorporate itself into new Armenia. Finally, because of a possible Russian disapproval, he pointed out that he and Boghos Nubar Pasha considered it very difficult for the new Turkish Armenian State to aim at including Caucasian Armenia without the prior consent of Russia. FO 608/80/342/13/10358, 19 May 1919. A report of an interview of E. G. F. Adam with J. Malcolm on 15 May 1919. Aharonian, on the other hand, argued that Karabagh was a part of Armenia whose most virile population came from that district. Yet he also admitted that there was an important number of Tartars and Kurds who, however, were fewer and intellectually far inferior to their Armenian neighbours. Moreover, he put forward his demand for recognition of the Erivan Republic rather than arguing a united Armenia. FO 608/80/342/13/10420, 20 May 1919. A report of an interview of Sir L. Mallet on 16 May 1919. See also Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia,* vol.I, (*The First Year 1918-1919*), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, PP. 257-260.

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Colonel Stokes who had just returned from the Caucasus also reported to Prof Simpson that practically the whole of the Caucasus was against the British replacement by the Italians. The Italians, he told Simpson, were believed to be a poor nation and would exploit the Caucasus for their own ends; without any World prestige or authority; and an extremely socialistic people whose soldiers would easily convert to Bolshevism in the region thus making the whole Caucasus Bolshevik.[1] Nevertheless, he moved on to say, the Republics would formally welcome the Italians.[2]

Prof Simpson took Stokes' report as another opportunity to express his opinion that the Government should reconsider its decision to withdraw. He stated that

> a policy with such a decided dash of cynicism in it, for it cannot be honestly pretended that the advent of the Italians there will be either for their own good or for that of the local inhabitants, is sure to recoil upon us sooner or later... The difficulty of maintaining our position in Mesopotamia, Persia and India will only be increased by the unrest certain to develop under the Italians in the Caucasus, and it will probably in the end come out that it would have been the cheaper and less distracting policy to have taken over the whole thing.[3]

General Milne, GOC-in-C, Constantinople, had shared the anxiety felt over the Italian substitution. He warned London of the possible dangers of interracial fighting, the spread of Bolshevism and, most importantly, Denikin's re-direction of his attention towards the South. In addition, he argued, in the view of the Italian disinterest in taking over the Navy on the Caspian Sea, Denikin to whom the fleet would be left would be unable to keep control in the Caspian. The Bolshevik fleet, therefore, would easily capture major towns on the Caspian including Baku which was the key port for anyone wishing to maintain their superiority in and around the Caspian

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[1] FO 608/85/347/1/6/12174, 11 June 1919, Minute of a conversation with Colonel Stokes. See also FO 371/3662/90450/ME/58, 18 June 1919, Balfour (Paris) to Curzon. The decision of the British Government to evacuate the Caucasus was formally conveyed to the Republics on 10 May 1919. See WO 95/4879, G.S.H.Q., 27th Division, War Diary, entry of 10 May 1919 and Zourab Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia in International Politics 1918-1921*, London, no date, p. 201.

[2] He informed Simpson that the Azerbaijani Government, who at first intended to send a note of protest to the Peace Conference but saw that their own position would be prejudiced with the Italians in the event of the note not being accepted, had, therefore, decided to take no action.

[3] FO 608/85/347/1/6/12174, 11 June 1919. Upon receiving a telegram from Stevens in Batum drawing attention to the great commercial potentials of Caucasia for Britain and therefore the necessity for British protection, Prof. Simpson repeated his call for reconsideration. Robert Vansittart, a senior clerk, minuted in reply that 'there is no prospect of reconsideration, I fear.' See his minute in FO 608/85/347/ 1/6/13842, 30 June 1919, FO to British Delegation (Paris), transmitting a copy of Stevens' telegram.

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Sea because of its oil resources and strategic position as a naval base.[1] The Admiralty was of the same opinion.[2]

Lord Curzon, feeling dissatisfied and anxious about the effects of the withdrawal upon the local people, made a last attempt to lay stress on the negative results that the withdrawal would bring about. He wrote a long telegram to Balfour explaining five reasons for a need to delay the evacuation. These were

1. General Denikin's chances of success in the operations on which he is now engaged will be gravely imperilled by the exposure of his flank; his attempt against Tsaritsin will probably be too late; and the entire plan of a combined campaign with Admiral Kolchak may be fatally impaired.
2. The Caucasian Republics, with whose aspirations towards independence we have expressed our sympathy, and whose insecure footsteps our presence has done so much to sustain, will whatever pledges may be given to the contrary fall an ultimate, perhaps an early, prey to Denikin, or will be driven to come to terms with the Bolsheviks, unless indeed they are actually overrun and subjugated by them.
3. Many thousand Christians in the Caucasus will be exposed to the risk of wholesale massacre.
4. With our retirement from the Caspian, Baku, with its rich oil resources must almost inevitably fall into the hands of the Bolsheviks, and the Azerbaijani Republic will disappear. The vast resources of this wealthy region will be at the mercy of a horde of savages who know no restraint and are resolved to destroy all law.

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[1] FO 371/3667/82890/W/58, 2 June 1919, WO to FO, transmitting a copy of Milne's telegram dated 27 May 1919. In his telegram Milne reported that command of the Caspian was the most important question. If this became Bolshevik then Baku would be Bolshevik and the whole of Russia would be supplied through Astrakhan with oil. Milne doubted Denikin's ability to make any headway against the more trained Bolshevik Navy. He, therefore, strongly recommended that 'should Italians not be able to relieve us there our withdrawal is delayed until the result of Denikin's operations against Tsaritsin can be properly gauged, as the command of Caspian becomes of secondary importance once that point is reached.'
The British fleet on the Caspian Sea proved to be a source of complications for the British Government. Although Italy agreed to the transfer of responsibility from Britain in the region she never made it clear whether this transfer would include the Caspian Navy. Therefore, the only alternative left to the British officials was to leave the Navy to Denikin. I. Fuller, a member of the Naval Section of the British Delegation, assessed this prospect as not very healthy for the Republics. He noted that 'it is difficult to imagine that Denikin or the leader of any other Russian party would refrain from using the Caspian fleet to aid him in recovering the rich provinces of the Caucasus, whenever a suitable opportunity arose, and it is considered that to hand over the Caspian fleet to Denikin is to hand over the Caucasus to Russia. FO 608/85/347/1/6/7207, April 14, 1919, Italian Delegation to British Delegation (Paris).

[2] FO 371/3667/75556/W/58, 19 May 1919, Admiralty to FO. The Admiralty's note emphasised their opinion that 'from a naval point of view our withdrawal from the Caspian at this juncture may turn out to be unfortunate.

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5. An immense impetus will be given to all the disaffected elements in Asia, whether Bolsheviks, Pan-Islamists, Pan-Turanists, Kurdish, Egyptian, Indian or other nationalists who are endeavouring to avenge the defeat of the Central Powers in Europe by carefully organised and universal convulsion in Asia.[1]

After referring to Caucasus' strategic value for the future British interests in the Middle East and India, he submitted that

> ... while not questioning the policy of withdrawal, as soon as may be practicable, ... I venture to urge the extreme undesirability of proceeding with these measures until we have some certainty as to the Power by whom we are to be succeeded, and until the occupation or mandate, whichever it be, has begun to effect.[2]

His telegram to Balfour, nonetheless, was suspended as a result of the news of postponement of withdrawal from 15 June to 15 July by the War Office. The reason for this delay appears to have been to prevent any power vacuum between the British withdrawal and Italian arrival, and enable Denikin in his offensive to the North.[3]

Although the Italians accepted to take over the Caucasus, nevertheless, they never made it public and never gave any date on which they would move into the Caucasus. To force the Italians to declare publicly their plan as regards Caucasia the British Delegation resorted to various methods, however in vain. This Italian attitude caused an inevitable dissatisfaction among the members of the British Delegation. R. Vansittard, for instance, assessed the situation as follows: 'the position is really that we have settled the thing in principle here, and then washed our hands of the business. If it is ever to get ahead at all, the sooner the Italians are officially approached the better.'[4]

Despite the fact that Italy showed a great interest and even sent a mission comprising a significant number of experts from military to trade

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[1]FO 371/3667/80816/ME/58, 28 May 1919, Curzon to Balfour (Paris).

[2]*Ibid.* G. Kidston also commented that 'if we are really to evacuate before the Italians come in this will probably be equivalent to handing over the Republics to Denikin. The great betrayal of the intention of which the Georgians have always accused us. The alternative is that the Republics should throw in their lot with the Bolsheviks and fight it out with Denikin. In any case the Armenians to the south of the Caucasus will be betrayed and abandoned to their fate.' See FO 371/3667, 75203/W/58, 17 May 1919, DMO to FO transmitting a copy of telegram from the WO to GHQ, Constantinople, in which the latter was informed that the evacuation of the Caucasus would take place irrespective of the arrival of the Italians.

[3]FO 371/3667/80816/ME/58, 28 May 1919, Curzon to Balfour (Paris).

[4]FO 608/85/347/1/6/13829, 30 June 1919, FO to British Delegation, Paris. See his minute of July 1, 1919.

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departments, she nevertheless failed to implement her agreement with Britain.[1] The main reason for this failure was a change of government in Italy in mid-June 1919. The new government of Italy under Francesco Nitti considered plans to occupy Caucasia as an extensive military adventure and without the consent of the majority of the Italian population. Moreover, he was afraid of getting into conflict with future Russia, Bolshevik or otherwise.[2] Yet it seems that if the former government had stayed in power Italy would have been in Caucasia before the autumn of 1919.[3]

The Italian military representative in Paris transmitted informally the new government's decision to General H. Wilson, the CIGS. Colonel Gribbon then reported to R. Graham in London by telephone on the evening of 2 July that the CIGS was authoritatively informed that the Italians had abandoned all idea of sending a military force to the Caucasus.[4] Lord Curzon's reply was a clear indication of his bewilderment: 'but then what are we to do?'[5]

It appears that the British Delegation in Paris tried to persuade the Transcaucasian Republics, as a solution for their desire of disengagement from Caucasia, to return to Russian rule within a constitutional and federal structure. This can be seen from the efforts of various experts who had interviewed the Delegations of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Prof. Simpson, for instance, reported that he had a conversation of more than two hours with the Georgian Delegation on 4 June 1919 in order to try and get them to give him a scheme under which the Georgians would consent to enter a federation of Russian States. Yet he found the Georgians in a very "chastened mood". They told him that they still stood on their demand for independence mainly because they foresaw a decade of civil war and anarchy in Russia as the result of a white terror, should Kolchak be successful, which

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[1] FO 371/3662/67445/W/58, 2 May 1919, W. Ernkind (Rome) to FO reporting the Italian mission to Caucasia. Kidston, finding this mission negligible minuted that '...I even began to doubt whether, when they accepted the mandate, they ever had any intention of going there themselves. In view of exceedingly dubious policy which they are conducting elsewhere, is it not possible that they regard the Caucasus Mandate as a valuable power of which they can make use with either the Turks or the Bolsheviks, as circumstances may dictate.' In reply to his question, Sir R. W. Graham, Assistant Under Secretary of State, noted that 'but surely the despatch of a mission to Georgia can be only justified if they mean to take over military control and this looks like the first step. ' See their minutes of May 3, 1919. The Italian Commission later reported the conditions favourable from the Italian point of view and reported that an army of 30,000 men would be enough to control the Transcaucasus. FO 608/85/347/1/6/118323, June 6, 1919. Sir R. Rodd,(Rome) to British Delegation (Paris), repeating a telegram to FO. See also FO 371/3662/84863/W/58, June 6, 1919, Sir R. Rodd (Rome), to FO.

[2] Francesco Nitti, *Peaceless Europe*, London, 1922, pp. 147-8.

[3] *Ibid.*, P. 148., Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, op. cit.*, Vol.II, p. 229.

[4] FO 371/3668/97993/ME/58, 4 July 1919, Graham note of 2 July 1919 to Curzon.

[5] *Ibid.*

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would exceed anything known in Tsarist or Bolshevik days. Yet in the end they agreed to draw up for him a "theoretical scheme of re-entry" into the democratic Russia of the future.[1] Mallet considered it "very useful" and expressed his hope that the Georgians would produce "something practical".[2]

When the Azerbaijani Delegation was received by Mallet he asked about their relations with the rest of Russia. Topchibashev stated that they did not expect a stable government to be established in Russia for some time but that they were prepared to await the march of events and in the meanwhile hoped that the four separate governments in the Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Daghestan) might form some kind of confederation on the lines of that formed in 1917 and destroyed by the Turkish invasion of the Caucasus.[3] In other words they did not rule out being a member of future democratic federal Russia. The Azerbaijani Delegation in Paris enquired from Sir L. Mallet whether HMG would support their claim for a recognition of their independence and whether there was any possibility of HMG accepting a mandate for Azerbaijan. However, Mallet made it clear that no hope could be held out in the latter direction and for the first part referred them to the Conference.[4]

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[1]FO 608/88/356/2/2/11390, May 31, 1919. FO to British Delegation (Paris). See Simpson's minute of 5 June, 1919.
A report by General Milne, Istanbul, of the Georgian Government's failures towards British authorities such as the hostile and truculent attitude adopted by the Government and the disobedience of orders of Milne by the Georgians not to take action against Denikin was welcomed by the Foreign Office experts as a pretext to free themselves from their responsibility of sympathy toward Georgia. In the telegram Milne urged authorization to inform the Georgian Government that HMG no longer regarded the Republic with sympathy and would not urge its recognition at the Peace Conference. L. Mallet considered it a good opportunity to absolve themselves from an undertaking to urge the independence of Georgia at the Conference which might become very embarrassing. Hardinge agreed and stated that 'it would be a good thing to be free of any responsibility towards Georgia and the sooner our troops clear out the better. We might inform the Georgian Mission that unless their attitude changes at once we consider ourselves absolved from any engagement towards them.' However, nothing was said to the Georgians in that sense, since Balfour did not approve it. See FO 608/88/356/2/2/9998, May 15, 1919, WO to Military Section of British Delegation, transmitting Milne's telegram of 9 May 1919.

[2]FO 608/88/356/2/2/11390, May 31, 1919. FO to British Delegation (Paris). See his minute without a date. Mallet had already enquired what the attitude of Georgia would be to a future, constitutional federal Russia. In answer, the Georgian Delegation pointed out that their object was an economic and cultural rapprochement with Western Europe, and especially with Great Britain. Yet they admitted that it would be necessary to come to an understanding with Russia, even if they became politically independent of her, upon which, they said, they were determined. See FO 608/88/356/2/3/6983, April 11, 1919. British Delegation minute on an interview of Sir L. Mallet with the Georgian Delegation members of Tcheidze and Tseretelli on April 8, 1919.

[3]FO 608/84/342/12/1/10979, 27 May 1919, Balfour (Paris) to Curzon.

[4]FO 608/84/342/12/1/10979, 27 May 1919, Balfour (Paris) to Curzon. The Azerbaijan Delegation paid special tribute to General Thomson and the British military authorities for advice and assistance to Azerbaijan. G. Kidston in London remarked that 'this is the first time, I think, that we have had any expression of appreciation by a Caucasian of the assistance given by our military authorities. One cannot help wondering how Mr. Topchibashev's attitude would be affected if he were aware of the recommendation recently made by the Admiralty that Denikin's first use of the Caspian fleet, when it is handed over to him, should be to make a demonstration before Baku in order to cover the withdrawal of our troops.' See FO 371/3662/79984/ME/58, 27 May 1919, Balfour (Paris) to Curzon.

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In his meeting with the Armenian Delegation Prof. Simpson put a similar question to A. Aharonian enquiring the Armenians' attitude toward Russia. Aharonian replied they were determined about one thing, namely that they would never again return into direct relationship with Russia except under force. Besides, he argued that a mandate over the Armenians given to Britain or the United States for 25 years would put them in position to be able to resist any future Russian aggression.[1]

With Italy's failure to keep her part of the deal as regards a settlement of Caucasia, and without any prospect of the Republics accepting Russian rule, Britain was left in a hopeless situation as to finding another way to relieve herself from the Caucasian complication. The first thing that the Cabinet did was to re-postpone the beginning of evacuation, urged by the War Office, to 15 August.[2] However, the answer to the question of to whom the responsibility would be relinquished was not clear. The old proposal of American involvement was put forward by Balfour.[3] The result of this attempt and the following developments, however, will be studied in the next chapter.

[1]FO 608/78/342/1/1/13031, June 19, 1919. A report of his interview on 17 June 1919 with Aharonian by Prof. Simpson.
[2]CAB 23/11/W.C. 599(3), War Cabinet Minutes, 25 July 1919.
[3]Balfour (Paris), to Lloyd George, CAB 24/86/G.T. 7949, 9 August 1919.

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7

BRITISH WITHDRAWAL AND BRITISH ATTEMPTS TO ALLEVIATE ITS EFFECTS

The decision of the new Italian government to withdraw from the proposal to send Italian troops to replace British soldiers put the British Government in a very awkward situation in respect to finding someone else to take their place. In the face of British withdrawal, if someone with sufficient resources and prestige could not be found, the British administration expected serious trouble to break out behind them. The administration were afraid that General Denikin would be very much tempted to take possession of Transcaucasia and neglect his primary objective of dealing with the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, it was believed that the position of the Armenians who were surrounded by hostile Azerbaijanis, Turks, Kurds and Georgians would be worsened.

American Mandate

To prevent these almost certain effects of British withdrawal A. J. Balfour, head of the British Delegation in Paris, suggested to London it reconsider United States involvement in the Caucasus. In his letter to Lloyd George he submitted that while British troops were being withdrawn an attempt should be made to get the United States' Government considered as a possible future mandatory for Armenia. On the subject of the Caucasus, he further suggested that Britain might even delay the concluding stages of withdrawal if the United States could be induced to send military forces to take the place of British troops.[1] Lord Curzon who received a copy of the letter

[1]CAB 24/86/G.T. 7949, August 9, 1919, from Balfour (Paris) to Lloyd George. In his letter Balfour voiced his fears of Armenian massacres and Great Britain getting the blame for it. He wrote that 'evidence is reaching us from every quarter that the withdrawal of British troops will be followed by the most appalling massacres of the Armenians and general bloodshed throughout the Caucasus. I am entirely in favour of the policy of withdrawal... But I confess that I do not like to look forward to the day when it will be said that the British precipitated a massacre of the Armenians by deliberately withdrawing their troops in the face of the advice of all local authorities as to the probable consequences...'
Balfour put all the blame upon the Italians. He argued in his letter that 'as usual it is the Italians who have got us into this mess. Ever since April they have said they were going to the Caucasus, and now they say they cannot. But, if as a result, we can secure the Americans' place, we shall have made a good exchange...'

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considered Balfour's submission a possibility. He first got in touch with General H. Wilson, the CIGS, to enquire about the possibility of postponing the withdrawal. General Wilson considered it out of the question. He told Curzon that any delay in the evacuation, which had indeed already begun, would present almost insuperable difficulties, owing in the main to the fact that British troops were overdue for demobilisation and could not be pressed to remain in the Caucasus.[1] The CIGS, moreover, added that in his opinion, the reconsideration of the contemplated evacuation might have been anticipated and it was impossible to take at the last moment precautionary steps which if undertaken at all ought to have been authorised months ago.[2]

In his conversation Curzon explained the situation to the United States Ambassador in London, John W. Davis, on 11 August.[3] He then enquired as to the possibility of the United States Government assuming responsibility for Armenia with a prospect of extending their interest to the whole Caucasus. In reply, while he saw no reason why the request suggested by Balfour should not be made to the American Government, the Ambassador said that he did not anticipate that it would be attended by any practical result for various reasons. First, any despatch of American troops to Caucasia could not be attempted without the knowledge and the consent of the Congress. Second, the twofold traditional basis of the United States' foreign policy, namely, (a) the refusal to be entangled in foreign alliances or commitments; (b) a strict adherence to the Monroe Doctrine, which demanded the United States Government refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Europe, would not allow any possibility of a mandate being taken by the United States. Lord Curzon, therefore, could not find comfort from his interview with the Ambassador. He informed the Cabinet and Balfour of his conversation with Davis.[4] He reported to Balfour that in view of the opinions expressed by the CIGS and the American Ambassador it was deemed impossible by the Cabinet to take any

[1]FO 371/3668/1249989/ME.58, September 11, 1919, Curzon to Balfour (Paris).
[2]Curzon to Balfour (Paris), 12 August 1919, *British Documents*, Vol. III, no. 367.
[3]FO 371/3659/115267/ME.58, August 11, 1919, Curzon to Lindsay (Washington).
[4]CAB 23/11/WC 612, War Cabinet Minutes, August 12, 1919; Curzon to Balfour (Paris), 12 August 1919, *British Documents*, Vol. III, no. 367.

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responsibility such as that involved in a reversal of policy.[1] In other words, the evacuation would go on according to plan starting on August 15, 1919, and would be completed around mid-October 1919, whether the Americans would show an interest or not.

Although J. W. Davis did discourage Lord Curzon over an American mandate over Armenia and Caucasia, and despite the fact that British policy makers were aware of the likely outcome of an appeal to the United States to show an interest, Lord Curzon wrote to the United States Ambassador requesting him officially to communicate with his government in this sense. Curzon indicated to him that no official representation had reached the Foreign Office from the American Government, and to satisfy American opinion and to protect the Armenians it was difficult to modify an announced and already inaugurated policy of evacuation unless it was known for certain for how long a period Britain was requested or expected to remain, and what part the American Government were prepared to play at its close. He reminded Davis of a speech made by Bonar Law, Lord Privy Seal, and Leader of House of Commons, in the House of Commons in the evening of 8 August 1919. In his speech Bonar Law stated that

> I can assure my Noble Friend that, if any sign of help were coming from America, as he suggests, we would only to gladly welcome it. Indeed, I think I might say more with the consent of my right honourable Friend. It is, if I may be permitted to say so, an American problem rather than a British. They are in a better position to deal with it. They have interests as great as ours — I think, greater. I can assure the House that if the President of the United States were officially to say to the British Government 'we

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[1] In his letter to Balfour, Curzon expressed his dismay at the way that British policy had taken shape in the Caucasus. He wrote to Balfour that 'personally I am little surprised that Paris has awakened so late in the day to the seriousness of the impending situation, because on many occasions during the past six months I have taken the liberty (though quite ineffectually) of pointing out to the Cabinet: having even, I believe, on several occasions rendered myself unpopular by the notes which I have written about disorder, anarchy, and bloodshed which were, in my view, certain to result from the Allied policy in Asia Minor.'
On Balfour's putting the blame on the Italians Curzon stated that 'as regards the Italians in particular, I remember pointing out as soon as the plan of sending them to the Caucasus was announced that it was incredible that they should either take it up or be encouraged to take it up; and here, at any rate, we have never proceeded upon the hypothesis that they were in the least likely to go to the Caucasus at all.' Curzon also emphasised his position of despair to Balfour. He stated that 'nothing, indeed, can prevent the anticipated outbreaks now, except the retention in the country of the forces we are about to remove. This policy, I have consistently advocated for the last nine months; and you may perhaps remember my expounding it at length at meetings of the Eastern Committee, which you, among others, attended. At that date I proposed that we should remain in occupation of the Caucasus for a limited time; a year or more, as might be required, until the local Republics were able to stand on their legs. But I obtained no sympathy or support for this idea, which was not shared by my colleagues; and when I made this sort of suggestion in the Cabinet, I was invariably "turned down". I see, therefore, no adequate or satisfactory solutions of the present problem, nor any means of averting the disasters which you anticipate.'

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wish you to hold the front for a little until we can make arrangements' we would certainly do our best to match him.[1]

It seems fair to say that one intention in inviting the United States to undertake the responsibility in Armenia was to satisfy public opinion in Britain as well as in the West, and thus put the United States Government in a difficult position in the eyes of its citizens if it refused the responsibility. If the United States failed to respond positively then Britain would find someone to blame as regards possible Armenian massacres. Aneurin Williams, a Member of Parliament closely associated with the Armenian aspirations, for instance, visited Lloyd George, Churchill and G. Kidston of the Foreign Office. He said to Kidston that there was a very strong feeling amongst his American friends in London that the whole thing was an attempt to force the hand of the United States Government and to impose upon the Americans the poorest parts of the territories eventually to be assigned to Mandatories.[2]

In his letter, Curzon, on behalf of the British Government, added that in the event of the American Government addressing Britain in the sense indicated, the financial burden of retaining British troops in the Caucasus beyond the period already fixed should not be borne by Great Britain but should be assumed by the State which expected to be, or was likely to become, the mandatory for the Armenian people. To justify this request he referred to the overwhelming financial responsibility already assumed by Britain.[3]

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[1]FO 371/3659/119103/ME.58, 21 August 1919, Curzon to the American Ambassador, 19 August 1919.

[2]FO 371/3668/1201000/ME.58, 25 August 1919, A Report on a conversation of A. Williams with G. Kidston taken place on 24 August 1919. There was, indeed, an apparent resentment on the part of the Americans towards Britain on this issue. The Times, for instance, issued an extract of two reports printed in the *New York Sun* and *New York Times* on 27 August 1919. The *New York Sun* registered its surprise that the Allies could not find enough men to police Armenia in the interests of humanity. There might be, it continued, something in the British contention that they simply could not keep men in Armenia any longer; but the United States could not be expected to take up the burden. It, furthermore, said that "we feel that it would be unjust that the nations associated with us in the war should receive all the rewards of victory — new colonies, territorial expansion, huge indemnities — and that we, who asked for nothing, should be saddled with the plague spots of the world."
The *New York Times*, meanwhile, argued that it was Great Britain's duty to continue to look after Armenia until its ultimate fate was settled. It further claimed that "it is ridiculous to suppose that Britain cannot keep troops there for, say, six months, if assumed that then somebody else will look after Armenia. There is no talk of the withdrawal of troops from Egypt. Objectors may reply that in Persia and Egypt England is looking after her own interests. Quite so, but England can afford to spend a little altruism on Armenia... Eventually America ought to take up the mandate, but meanwhile the duty is on Britain's shoulders." See *The Times*, 30 August 1919, "America's part in Europe; Opposition to Mandates; Protest Against troops for Armenia."

[3]FO 371/3659/119103/ME.58, 21 August 1919, Curzon to the American Ambassador (London).

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J. W. Davis replied on 29 August that for various technical reasons concerned with the sanction of the Congress the American Government could neither send troops nor bear the financial burden of the continued retention of British troops. On the contrary, he expressed the view that his Government had made an official appeal to HMG not to withdraw British forces in the Caucasus on the ground that massacres would inevitably result, and that the United States Government, while realising Britain's difficulties in the matter, considered that Britain should be held responsible in the eyes of the civilised world.[1]

The Wardrop Mission

The disinclination of the United States to replace Great Britain in the Caucasus left no alternative option for the British administration to substitute British troops. This situation led them to search for other possible solutions to prevent the expected chaos in Transcaucasia. One of these was the appointment of a political mission to Tiflis, headed by Oliver Wardrop, an official well acquainted with the country and the people, with the title of *Chief British Commissioner in Transcaucasia*.[2] His main objects were to use his influence to prevent friction between General Denikin and the Georgian and Azerbaijani Governments; to appoint subordinate officers as his representatives in important towns; and to endeavour by every means at his disposal to avert the anticipated massacre of the Armenians.[3] Although the *de facto* authority of the Republics had not as yet been formally recognised by HMG, he would be required to keep in close touch with these Governments. He would be independent of the British military command in political matters.[4]

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[1]FO 371/3668/124999/ME.58, September 11, 1919, Curzon to Balfour (Paris).

[2]FO 371/3662/102622/ME.58, July 22, 1919. Curzon to Wardrop.

[3]FO 371/3668/124999/ME.58, September 11, 1919, Curzon to Balfour (Paris). The idea that a strong political mission to Transcaucasia might be sent to overcome the expected anarchy after British withdrawal had also been suggested by General Milne in Constantinople. He argued that this mission with representatives at Baku and Erivan could act as arbitrator and persuade the republics that the Allies were not deserting the country. He further suggested that the commissioner at Tiflis should be representative of the Allies, and all missions in the Caucasus should be under his orders. Lastly, he proposed Batum town and province remaining under a British Governor with a small escort. He pointed out that the mission at Tiflis and the continuance of British Governorship in Batum was recommended because of the fact that no other means seemed available for keeping the country in some form of order until the final decision was taken. See a paraphrase of his despatch to the CIGS in FO 371/3662/112726/ME.58, 6 August 1919, WO to FO, transmitting Milne's telegram of 27 July 1919. While leaving the question of whether Wardrop's mission might represent the Allies in general to Paris, the Foreign Office thought that this mission would meet Milne's suggestion. See A. C. Kerr's minute of August 8, 1919. See also Brinkley, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

[4]FO 371/3662/102622/ME.58, July 22, 1919. Curzon to Wardrop.

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O. Wardrop arrived in Tiflis on 30 August 1919 and deputed representatives to Erivan and Baku.[1] The Wardrop mission proved quite helpful for Britain. As indicated by General Milne, the mission filled the vacuum of prestige after the decision to withdraw to a great extent. Furthermore, the Foreign Office now was able to receive information and assessment of the political situation in the region directly from its representative rather than military authorities whose reports had not always been channelled by the War Office to the Foreign Office.

The Maintenance of the Batum Governorship

In addition to appointing a political mission to Transcaucasia, Lord Curzon, through the medium of the War Office, consulted General Milne, G.O.C.-in-C., Constantinople, as to the possibility of mitigating the consequences of evacuation by all or any of he following steps: 1. Postponement of the withdrawal of the Indian native troops. 2. The supply of fresh British troops, if these were imperatively required, from British forces at Constantinople. 3. The supply of military escorts to the political officers appointed to the principal towns in the Caucasus. 4. The leaving behind of tanks, armoured cars and aeroplanes.[2]

In his reply, General Milne stated that a force of one Indian brigade, one British battalion, and an Indian machine-gun company might be earmarked to provide guards for British Commissioners. Although he found employing white troops difficult because of their overdue leave to Britain, he considered it possible to arrange that armoured cars and aeroplanes could be left.[3]

In order to mitigate the effects of British withdrawal, General Milne repeated his suggestion of maintaining the governorship of the Batum province and so preventing a scramble by the Georgians, the Russians and the Turks for it. Batum had originally been a separate province of the Russian Empire. During the war the Turks had occupied Batum but left it to British forces at the end of 1918. As seen earlier, a British military governorship, acting through an administrative council representing the largely Muslim population, had been established. The province was certain to be a centre of

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[1]FO 371/3662/125051-1015/ME.58, August 30, 1919, Wardrop (Tiflis) to Curzon. See also *British Documents*, Vol.III, No.402, p. 535.
[2]FO 371/3668/124999/ME.58, September 11, 1919, Curzon to Balfour (Paris).
[3]FO 71/3668/121299/ME.58, August 21, 1919. WO to FO, transmitting a copy of telegram from Milne (Constantinople).

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contention when British forces left. General Denikin had always kept an eye on it from the Russian standpoint and maintained a military mission in the town for recruiting purposes. While strongly protesting against any Georgian involvement in or occupation of the province when Britain left, he claimed that the interests of Russia and the Russian inhabitants demanded that the province be handed over to Russia, that is to the Volunteer Army.[1]

The Georgians, on the other hand, claimed Batum because of the Christian Georgian element in its population and because they regarded it as naturally falling within their territory. In order to get Batum town and province under Georgian jurisdiction after British withdrawal, the Georgian Government offered the port to Britain as a coaling station, provided it was recognised to form part of Georgia, and asked to be allowed immediate occupation pending the final decision of the Peace Conference.[2]

Meanwhile the National Defence Movement in Eastern Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Pasha with a total of 23,500 regular troops and an estimated 100,000 irregular but armed and trained men had established itself as a considerable force whose prime object was to prevent any encroachment into Turkish territory by either the Greeks or the Armenians.[3] Unless the Allies were prepared to suppress the movement militarily it was almost certain that the Turks would again dominate Eastern Turkey and possibly Caucasia. Surely Batum with a Muslim population who had lived under Ottoman rule for centuries till 1878 would become one of the first aims of the movement in the Caucasus.

The situation in Batum thus required a solution that would maintain order. Otherwise, it would be inevitable that Transcaucasia would fall into immediate anarchy. Three main solutions were put forward to answer this complication:

1. That Batum should be taken over by Denikin. This view was supported by the military officers associated with General Denikin's programme for Russia such as General Briggs, then head of the British Military Mission to the Volunteer Army.

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[1]FO 371/3663/126879/ME.58, 10 September 1919, Wardrop (Tiflis) to FO, September 4, 1919, reporting situation in Georgia.
[2]FO 371/3662/114781/ME.58, 11 August, 1919. DMI to FO transmitting an extract from General Milne's despatch as regards Batum province.
[3]FO 371/3668/133008/ME.58, 24 September 1919, DMO to FO, transmitting a Memorandum by the CIGS on proposed British Detachments in the Caucasus, 17 September 1919.

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2. That the Georgians should have it. This proposal was supported by Wardrop who also advocated the retention of some British troops there, till its future was determined.
3. That Batum should be retained in British military occupation with a governor and escort. This was backed by General Milne.[1]

The last proposal was also considered favourably by the Foreign Office for the following reasons:

a) If Britain evacuated Batum entirely its possession would certainly become an object of strife between Denikin and the Georgian Government at Tiflis, upsetting the equilibrium of all Transcaucasia. A conflict with the Volunteer Army was thought likely to drive the Georgians into the arms of the Bolsheviks.
b) Retaining Batum under British control could be important in a sense that the port afforded the most convenient access to the Armenian Republic, in the event of intervention by Britain or other Allied forces being determined upon.
c) The British Mission at Tiflis would be left in an exposed and isolated position, and its influence would be correspondingly weakened if Britain lost control of this port.[2]

Thus when the military withdrawal which had started on 15 August 1919 and was completed, except in Batum, on 16 September, it was decided in London that the town and province of Batum should be held under British governorship until the Peace Conference decided its future fate.[3]

Arming and Repatriation of the Armenians

In addition to sending a political mission and retaining the occupation of Batum, another possible action to maintain general order in the region to be taken by the British Government was to furnish the Armenians with arms and equipment to help them defend themselves.

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[1]FO 371/3663/126879/ME.58, 10 September 1919. A Memorandum on Batum by the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office without a date. There were some other proposals with regard to Batum question such as holding it in the name of the Allies; making it another republic; and being administrated by Colonel Haskell, the Allied High Commissioner to Armenia. Yet these proposals were not deemed plausible by the Foreign Office. See also a minute of G. Kidston in FO 371/3662/110591/ME.58, 1 August 1919, WO to FO.

[2]FO 371/3663/126879/ME.58, 10 September 1919. A Memorandum on Batum by the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office.

[3]Lord Curzon himself stated that 'I am on the whole in favour of a continued but temporary occupation of Batum by the British since it seems to me the only way to avert disaster.'

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The first suggestion of arming the Armenians came from R. Vansittart, a senior clerk of the Foreign Office and a member of the British Delegation in Paris. When the Italians made known to the British Delegation their failure to go to the Caucasus Vansittart stated to Sir E. Crowe, Assistant Under Secretary of State, that after British withdrawal the Georgians, Armenians and Azeris would all be at each others' throats, and the remnant of the Armenians would get the worst of it as they were too physically debilitated by suffering and starvation to be a match for the others. He continued that

> unless our whole Armenian policy is to be a frost, the Armenians should get the bulk of whatever stores and military equipment is available when we quit, especially if — as is likely — we quit before America accepts a mandate and comes in effectively.[1]

In addition to arming the Armenians, Vansittart proposed to repatriate the Armenians into Turkish Armenia under British officers and if possible accompanied by British troops. He argued that for the survival of the Armenians it was essential for them to be repatriated in time for the autumn sowing.[2] He, nevertheless, accepted risks and objections on the ground that it was a gamble on British officers being able to carry on till the Americans came. If they declined to come then the officers and troops would have to be withdrawn and the Armenians would be left defenceless in a hostile country so that their last state would be worse than the first. Yet he thought that the consequences of inaction would be frightful, and they would die anyhow if there was no immediate move.[3]

The repatriation proposal, nevertheless, failed to reach any success in persuading other members of the Delegation in Paris. The Director of Military Intelligence, General W. Thwaites, expressed his opinion that the troops in the Caucasus under General Milne's command were only just sufficient for the task they had been sent to perform and he doubted whether any could be spared for this business. The nearest, he said, were at Tiflis, about 140 miles away.[4] Another member of the British Delegation representing the General Staff, Captain Macindoe, stated the views of the General Staff on this issue. He pointed out that the autumn sowing for which urgent return of the Armenians to Turkish Armenia was proposed would not alleviate the food situation this winter. Furthermore, the repatriation of small bodies at this juncture would

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[1] FO 608/85/347/1/6/13829, 30 June 1919.
[2] FO 608/79/342/1/9/14100, 1 July 1919. Admiral Calthorpe (Constantinople) to Peace Delegation (Paris).
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.* See also Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia,* vol.II, *op. cit.,* pp. 40-61.

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lead to a general movement of the Armenians away from communications by means of which relief organisations could supply food and distribution, already difficult, would become impossible. Therefore, the General Staff urged postponement of the present scheme and concentration on a well organised scheme of repatriation to definite approved centres in Spring 1920.[1] General Thwaites regarded this view as a reasonable assessment of the situation and reported his conversation to the CIGS who had told him that no officers and troops were available to assist in repatriation.[2]

R. Vansittart himself had enquired from Boghos Nubar Pasha, the leading Armenian delegate representing primarily the Anatolian Armenians. Boghos Nubar informed him that repatriation could not be safely undertaken without the provision of covering troops of about 30,000. Vansittart considered this request impossible since Britain did not have anything like that number in the Caucasus even if she could keep her troops already there. Therefore, he himself concluded that the repatriation scheme looked hopeless.[3]

The proposal of arming the Armenians, however, received the support of the Delegation and was forwarded to the Foreign Office in London for consideration. The officials in London agreed with the idea and Lord Curzon recommended to the War Office that they should favour the scheme. Yet the War Office rejected the proposal on the ground that such action would aggravate an already dangerous situation.[4] The refusal of the War Office caused resentment in Foreign Office circles both in London and Paris. Vansittart, for instance, retorted that

> it is all very well for the War Office's officials not favour the idea. They are not going to get their throats cut. The War Office have material "to burn". If not on the spot, they could easily send it out there.'[5]

Officials in London considered the refusal of the War Office regrettable. M. D. Peterson, for instance, found the situation certainly alarming because the Azerbaijanis and Turks were now threatening the capital and the heart of

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[1]FO 608/79/342/1/9/14768, July 9, 1919. See Capt. Macindoe's minute of 8 July 1919, presenting the comments of General Staff.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]*Ibid.* See his minute of July 19, 1919. See also various minutes of the British Delegation in FO 608/79/342/1/9/15078, July 12, 1919.

[4]FO 371/3659/121298/ME.58, 27 August 1919, WO to FO, reporting the view of the Army Council on arm supplies to Armenia. See also Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, Vol II, *op. cit.*, 95-102, and Vol III, (*From London to Sevres: February-August 1920*), Berkeley and Los Angelas: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 337-341, 347-352.

[5]FO 608/78/342/1/6/18333, August 26, 1919. See Vansittart's minute of August 27, 1919.

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the Armenian Republic itself. He considered the view of the War Office that giving arms to the Armenians would be to encourage disturbances as absurd. He feared that the nascent Armenian State would disappear, perhaps permanently. A. C. Kerr agreed with him. He blamed, however, the United States for not helping and laying the responsibility on Britain. He further expressed his anxiety from the British point of view that 'we shall wake up one day soon to hear that massacres have taken place and that the Armenian question has been solved by the sword, and that we shall have to face the combined attack of the press of the whole world.'[1]

Following a number of appeals from various Armenian quarters the Foreign Office decided to ask the War Office to reconsider its early refusal of arms supplies to Armenia.[2] Meanwhile Wardrop who had been asked about the wisdom of arming the Armenians suggested that a sympathetic reply might be given to Armenia's appeal and that so far as equipment (boots and clothing etc.) was concerned arrangements might be made to supply demand. Yet he preferred to leave the supply of arms and ammunition to the Americans. As to the loan of British officers he favoured the idea provided that these officials should be acting in the capacity of advisers and administrators rather than fighting on the ground. Finally he stated that 'the Georgian Government would probably not view unfavourably British aid to Armenia even in form of an army of occupation, but the Azerbaijani Government could hardly be expected to see with complaisance any considerable increase of Armenia's military power on their border and we ought to do our best to keep them in a good humour.'[3]

When Wardrop saw no objection to British aid to Armenia the Foreign Office made its second enquiry about assisting Armenia with arms and equipment on 30 september 1919. Nevertheless, the Army Council again turned it down on the same basis that 'the provision of arms for the Armenians would lead to provocative action on their part and further complicate the difficult situation. The despatch of the War Office put forward two more reasons for this refusal: the jealousy which will be created in the

[1]FO 371/3659/121849/ME.58, MOX of WO to FO, a copy of a telegram from Constantinople concerning the situation at Erivan. Sir E. Crowe in Paris also blamed the US Government for failing to take their share, which was largely if not entirely responsible for the gradual extinction of the Armenians. He thought that the United States was pro-Turkish and, therefore, the Turks were encouraged in their belief that they had the diplomatic support of the US and at the same time needed to have no apprehension as for active American intervention to put down outrages. See his minute of August 2, 1919, in FO 608/78/342/1/6/ 16807, August 1, 1919, American mission (Tiflis) to British Delegation (Paris) reporting grave danger to Armenia from Turkish forces and asking intervention on the part of British forces in the Caucasus.

[2]One of the quarters that had been persistently asking for arms and equipment was General Korganoff, military advisor to the Delegation of the Armenian Republic at the Peace Conference. See his appeal and conversation minutes in FO 371/3659/126946/ME.58, 10 September 1919.

[3]FO 371/3659/134168/ME.58, 26 September 1919, Wardrop (Tiflis) to FO, September 23 1919.

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neighbouring states, and the danger of increasing the hostility of Muslims in Turkey both to the Armenians and towards the Entente Powers.[1]

There were reports, however, that the Armenians played a significant role in provoking the Muslim population of Turks, Tartars and Kurds around the Erivan Republic. In a telegram to the War Office General Milne reported from Constantinople that the aggressive attitude of the Armenians towards Kurds on the frontier near Olti had sparked the sudden encirclement of Armenia from all sides. R. Vansittart who apparently was one of the strong supporters of Armenian aspirations observed that the Armenians were themselves partly responsible for the trouble. He minuted that 'this is madness on their part and it will be a good thing to speak to Boghos Nubar.'[2]

In his memorandum, G. Kidston of the Foreign Office argued that the news of British evacuation had soon got about and had served to encourage the Tartar-Turkish coalition which now threatened Erivan. An additional incentive to the enemies of Armenia was provided by the conduct of the Armenians themselves, who had been established by British Military Authorities in the administration of Nakhichevan and part of the province of Karabakh disputed between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He pointed out that 'the massacres of Muslims and other outrages perpetrated by the Armenians in this area disgusted our military Authorities and are responsible for the present attitude of the War Office.'[3]

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[1]FO 371/3660/145108/ME.58, 24 October 1919, WO to FO, informing the refusal of the Army Council to grant the request to assist Armenians. The Council also took the occasion to say that no prospect of the creation of a Greater Armenia stretching from Cilicia to the Caucasus was possible and argued that two small Armenian States one in Cilicia under French mandate and one in the Caucasus, were the only solution.

[2]FO 608/78/42/1/6/16808, August 1, 1919, War Office to the Military Section of the British Delegation (Paris), transmitting a copy of Milne's telegram of July 28, 1919.
Although finding the Armenians' excesses provocative Sir E. Crowe regarded the sad fate of the Armenians as largely due to the failure of the Allies to adopt in time the *only measure* which would have averted it; that was the military occupation of Asiatic Turkey by the Allies themselves. He noted that 'whatever might be said for and against such a policy, the Allies have quite clearly decided not to adopt it. Other factors have contributed to aggravate the danger of the local situation, and our definite withdrawal from the Caucasus leaves us impotent to take any other effective action.'

[3]FO 371/3668/124570/ME.58, 3 September 1919, A Memorandum on the Armenian Question by G. Kidston. It was also reported that publication of proposed peace terms to the Ottoman Delegation in late June favourable to Christians and talk of greater Armenia had strengthened the forces of Pan-Islamism which Georgia might inclined to join. See FO 608/78/3442/1/6/16951, August 2, 1919. Vansittart minuted that 'as things are going now I do not think that a greater Armenia will be possible.' He pointed out that the premature step in Smyrna (Greek occupation) had turned the whole interior in two months into a furnace, and 'no one has any real hold on it (except the Committee of Union and Progress).' See his minute of August 2, 1919.

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Another element that might have persuaded the War Office to refuse the request was a report that the Armenians had received a supply of one million cartridges from the Americans.[1] Wardrop reported in his telegram that this would carry them over a couple of months or so. Kidston considered, therefore, that the Armenians were not in absolute straits in that sense.[2]

The second refusal of the War Office caused bitter disappointment at the British Delegation in Paris. To protest their indignation the Delegation wrote a long letter to Kidston in London. The letter signed by Sir E. Crowe and despatched on 17 November emphasised the need to arm the Armenians while making sure that they did not abuse their increased strength. The letter and the further correspondence contain interesting and important views which are useful for us to discover the bases of judgement in the minds of the officials for British policy towards Caucasia. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to quote here the major points of the long letter and the response of London. In his first letter to London, Sir E. Crowe argued that

> 4. I do not think that much attention need be paid to the possibility of either the Georgians or the Azerbaijanis becoming jealous of Armenia, if moderately equipped by us. Georgia is much better able to look after herself than Armenia and does not fear attacks from the latter. We are already giving her moral support in her relations with Denikin. Azerbaijan seems equally well able to look after herself and in view of recent history and her sympathies (perhaps for the moment latent) with our enemies, the Turks, it seems quixotic to have so much regard for her susceptibilities.
>
> 5. It must also be remembered that the future of Georgia and Azerbaijan is linked up with the fortunes of Denikin and the future Russia to a much greater degree than Armenia's and it does not seem likely that Russia will object to an independent Armenia. From this point of view, also, we are justified in treating Armenia differently from Georgia and Azerbaijan.
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> 6. It is difficult to take seriously the second War Office argument as to increasing the hostility of Muhammedans in Turkey. If it were a question of arming Armenians in the Caucasus and sending them into Turkey (which

[1] FO 371/3659/134894/ME.58, 29 September 1919, Wardrop (Tiflis) to FO, informing the source of cartridges to the Armenians, 23 September 1919.

[2] FO 371/3659/131467/ME.58, 20 September 1919. See his minute of September 22, 1919. The Prime Minister, Lloyd George, asked the Foreign Office what answer he should give to a letter from the Red Cross and Refuge Fund for Armenia requesting HMG to protect Armenia from the Turkish violence on withdrawal of British troops. G. Kidston's minute was quite angry. He pointed out that
'I bitterly resent this attempt of Downing Street to make us responsible for explaining to the public the result of a policy which we have all along opposed. The evacuation of the Caucasus was decided without consulting us and in spite of our repeated warnings. We are now asked to suggest a reply as to what HMG and the Peace Conference intend to do to rectify the blunder.' See his minute of October 4, 1919 in FO 371/3659/ 135824/ME.58, October 1, 1919.

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it is not) there might be something in it, because Mustafa might then be able to rouse the Kurds in the usual C.U.P. way... Nothing to my mind is likely to 'increase' his hostility to the Entente, until the Turkish terms of peace are announced...

8. The War Office in the last paragraph of their letter make no attempt to conceal part of that policy, which, we know, they would like the Turkish peace terms to reflect i.e. an independent Turkey as large as possible and continuing its rule over subject races whether they be Greeks, Kurds or Armenians. I trust that neither HMG nor the Peace Conference will be influenced in so large a question of policy by what the War Office thinks...[1]

In reply, G. Kidston explained his views in a long letter. He indicated, to the surprise of the officials in Paris, his agreement with the War Office. After stating that they would not drop the matter with War Office he noted that

I sympathise with the War Office view to the extent of believing that it would be imprudent, to say the least of it, to supply the Armenians with arms and ammunition in any quantity unless we can at the same time supply allied officers to control their use, and I hope it may still be possible to do this; I fear that there is not the slightest doubt that the Armenian is at least as good a hand at massacring as his Muslim neighbour and the Dashnak gang who are at present in control at Erivan inspire no confidence...[2]

Your second thesis of the future of Armenia raises the whole of the question of the Turkish settlement and I only wish I could share a tithe of the optimism with which you appear to regard it. The idea, for instance, that it will ever be possible now, whatever it might have been a year ago, to join up Cilicia with Erivan in a single Armenian State is to me almost

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[1] FO 608/78/342/1/6/20367, November 13, 1919. The rest of the letter contained interesting views. Some of those were as follows:
7. As regards to first part for the War Office letter I still, therefore, hope that you may be able to get them to reconsider their decision to some extent. The Armenian delegations here are much disappointed with their attitude.
9. After all, Mustafa or no Mustafa and whatever form of international supervision may be devised for an independent Turkey in Anatolia, we are in possession of Constantinople and could tomorrow, if we like, cut it off from Anatolia and occupy the rest of a Straits zone; the Greeks are in possession of Smyrna and the zone around it... Cilicia and the Arab countries are already virtually in the occupation of ourselves and the French: the difficulty remains as regards the Eastern vilayets -Kurdish and Armenian... It should be possible to devise some method of placing the whole of this area under the League of Nations and some form of international control and dividing it into Armenian and Kurdish zones (it seems both possible and desirable to have a Kurdish and an Armenian policy at the same time).

[2] Kidston continued that 'I hear today, by the bye, that our friend Aharonian, Head of Armenian Republic's Delegation to Paris, is a leading light of the Dashnak brotherhood and has fallen foul of Papanjanian who is resigning. These everlasting feuds between Dashnaks and Hintchaks poison the whole Armenian atmosphere and make one despair of ever being able to do anything effective for these unfortunate people...'

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inconceivable, What proportion would the Armenian population of such state bear to the whole?..[1]

... It would be folly to antagonise all Muslim opinion and so substantiate the wicked C.U.P. cum Bolshevik lie that the British Empire is out to destroy Islam... Surely our aim ought to be to keep the national aspect of the question in the limelight as much as possible and seek about for some Muslim elements to encourage in contrast to the Turk. The Arabs of course were indicated, but the French have well-nigh destroyed us there and seem set upon doing so impairable before long. Then there are the Kurds and the Azerbaijanis. In spite of your apparent enmity and mistrust of the latter I believe it would be to our advantage to make friends of them; they aspire above everything else to a recognition of their independence and I believe it would pay us to give it to them...

With regard to the Eastern Vilayets; I do not believe there is any possibility of any sort of mandate, international or otherwise, or of dividing the country up into Kurdish or Armenian zones without a military force sufficiently strong to keep the Turk and CUP influence out and to impose respect on the divergent internal elements. And this, I venture to suggest, is the crux of the difficulty, not only here but everywhere else. We have not a man to spare anywhere, and the CUP know it... Nor is there money to pay for more.[2]

Sir E. Crowe and the officials of the Delegation thought it necessary to reply and wrote another long letter explaining their reasons for their approach requesting assistance to the Armenians. The letter pointed out that

1. ... We must remember, however, that the misfortunes of their past history, for which Europe is in some measure to blame, have led them in self-defiance to adopt subterranean methods and to become too prone to massacring their opponents. The Armenian character is now not a more pleasing one than that of any other nationality which has for centuries had to submit to Turkish domination, but it is to be hoped that some measure of freedom to develop on national lines may change this, although a long time and much patience on the side of Armenia's future rulers or helpers will certainly be required...

5. I want to see the question settled on the basis and merits of nationality, — Kurd, Arab, Armenian, Greek and Turk. I am sorry that you think my letter showed 'hostility and enmity' towards the Azerbaijanis. All that I intended to advise was that recent history gave us no reason to pay particular attention to Tartar susceptibilities when considering the question of helping the Armenians... I think that from a local point of view the independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan might be quite good policy for us: only unfortunately our policy in the matter of the future of these countries seems inevitably bound up with our future policy towards Russia.

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[1] Kidston agreed with Crowe that Mustafa Kemal would only show his hand when the peace terms were declared and that his trump card then would be his power to massacre every Christian in Asia Minor unless the terms were to his liking...

[2] FO 608/78/342/1/6/20832, November 29, 1919. See Kidston letter of 28 November 1919.

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6. If, as I think, the best solution for us of the Russian problem will be a federal Russian State (more or less in its present boundaries minus Finland and Poland) with a good deal of local autonomy for the border states, we can hardly prejudice such a solution by any hasty recognition of the absolute independence of the latter.

7 ... I do not think that whatever the extent of the Armenian zone may be, it will be fair to take too much into account the proportion of the present Armenian population to the rest. The zone or the state can only be at first Armenian in name: it will require strong rule by the officials of the mandatory or the international commission: time alone will show whether enough immigration by Armenians from the rest of Turkey and from abroad will take place to give the government a definitely Armenian complexion...[1]

These letters, however, did not have much impact in reversing the decision of the War Office. At the end, this scheme, like the repatriation proposal, failed to receive the approval of the War Office and, consequently, was not put into practice.

French Troops to Armenia

The scheme of supplying arms and equipment to the Armenians, thus, came to nothing. Although the Armenians were reported to posses enough armaments and ammunition, public opinion in Europe was shaped that they had been abandoned by the West. Nevertheless, Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France, made an unexpected announcement that the French Government was prepared to send 12,000 troops to help the Armenians. Yet the French troops deliberately failed to reach their publicly declared destination of Eastern Turkey.[2] From the beginning it was doubted by the British officials that the real intention of France was to help the Armenians. They were almost certain that the French move was to subjugate Amir Feisal, son of the Sheriff Hussein of Mecca who had led the Arab Rebellion, who was in Syria and resisting the French demands for occupation of the country allocated to France by the Sykes-Picot agreement. M. D. Peterson at the Foreign Office minuted, for instance, that 'the French are sending their troops to overcome Feisal and not to rescue the Armenians of Erivan.'[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*, See the full text of the letter of December 1, 1919.

[2] FO 371/3659/123063/ME.58, 1 September 1919, WO to General Sackville West of British Delegation Military Section, Paris. The telegram sent by the CIGS, General H. Wilson, indicated that the French aimed to land at Mersina and Alexandretta on the Mediterranean to proceed to Erzurum. Gen. Wilson pointed out that Samsun and Trabzon or Batum on the Black Sea were most suitable landing ports if the French meant to go Erzurum.

[3] *Ibid.*

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A special meeting of the Cabinet on September 2 decided to support the French proposal provided that the French troops would be sent by the only practicable route, namely the Black Sea, to the only possible destination, namely regions where 300,000 Armenian refugees had been collected and were in danger of massacres. The British Government was prepared to hand over to them all military stores and supplies, and even to delay the evacuation until their troops arrived and assumed control. The Cabinet considered that 'if the object is to rescue the Armenians this appears to be the only way in which it can be done, while the French plan seems not only certain to fail but likely to produce political consequences of a very serious nature.'[1] The Cabinet, in fact, thought that this proposal was a mask to conceal a purely political design either to occupy Cilicia or even to secure the line of the Sykes-Picot agreement in the direction of Nissibin and Mosul.[2]

Although agreeing with the opinion of London the British Delegation in Paris considered the matter from a different angle. Vansittart observed 'but of course the French offer is a political manoeuvre. I suppose we shall have to try this on them, but I shall be rather surprised if they do not then wriggle out...' C. Fuller agreed with him and added that 'everybody here agrees that such a small force cannot possibly do anything but fail in achieving the ostensible object of the expedition. Let their failure , however, be ascribed to France and not to HMG.'[3]

In his letter, Balfour asked London to consent to the French proposal. After expressing his agreement with the opinion held by the Cabinet, he, nevertheless, argued that 'it would be the worst possible policy to hamper the French plan by raising small difficulties, and formal objections. I doubt their scheme succeeding, but do not let it be said that we have made it fail.'[4] The British Cabinet then changed its mind and France initiated her expedition. Lord Curzon considered the French move in his minute as that ' I have always understood that the French intended to persist in their plan, but that 12,000 would upon arrival at Mersina or Alexandretta forget all about the Armenians who could not indeed be easily visible from either of those spots.'[5] His view was right in that the French stuck to Cilicia after they had landed at Alexandretta.

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[1] FO 371/3668/123979/ME.58, September 2, 1919, FO to Balfour (Paris), transmitting views of the Cabinet on the French proposal.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] FO 608/78/342/1/6/18579, September 3, 1919. FO to British Delegation, (Paris) transmitting opinion of the Cabinet on the matter. See their minutes of September 3, 1919.
[4] FO 317/3668/123464/ME.58, September 2, 1919. Balfour to FO by bag for WO, dated 31 August 1919.
[5] FO 371/3659/131467/ME.58, 20 September 1919. See his minute without a date.

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The White Army and the Republics

As noted in the previous chapter, relations between General Denikin and Georgia and Azerbaijan had always been unfriendly if not entirely hostile. The political aims of two sides were in complete contradiction. While the republics were hoping to live independently, General Denikin thought them a part of indivisible Russia. In the meantime, however, he had to deal with the Bolsheviks controlling the central part of Russia.

The quarrels between the two sides in the latter part of 1919 centred around Denikin's naval blockade of Georgia and Azerbaijan and the rebellion in Daghestan, which had been left to Denikin's authority by Britain, against the Volunteer Army and in August Denikin's accusation of the Georgian and Azerbaijani Governments of helping the rebel forces.

The constant pressure from the Volunteer Army resulted in a military alliance between Georgia and Azerbaijan. The Georgian-Azerbaijan Treaty which had been signed on 11 July 1919 and was of a defensive character bound the two states to act conjointly, using all their military forces and means, against any attack threatening their independence. The treaty was to last for three years. Armenia was given a fortnight to join.[1] Armenia, nevertheless, chose to stand out of the agreement. It was reported that the main reason for Armenia's standing out was the fact that this alliance was directed against the Volunteer Army.[2] The Armenians were apparently convinced that the

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[1]For full text of the treaty see FO 371/3664/145862/ME.58, October 30, 1919. Peterson observed that it was a defensive treaty against Denikin. Kidston regarded it as containing nothing that Denikin could object to. See also Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army, op. cit.*, p. 164.
It was reported by a member of the U.S. Embassy in London, B. Wright, that the treaty contained secret clauses. These were a) both parties agree to keep the Russians out of Transcaucasia, b) both parties will join hands with the Bolsheviks and the Young Turks against the Entente for the purpose of excluding the Entente from Transcaucasia, c) Armenia is the common enemy of both parties, d) in case of war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Georgia will block all communication with Armenia.
Yet since the source of information was Russian and it was most probably issued for political purposes, the Foreign Office did not attach it much importance. See FO 371/3671/148704/ME.58, 16 September 1919. See Kidston's report on his conversation with B. Wright.
Lieutenant-General T. Bridges regarded this alliance as ineffectual to resist Russian aggression. In his report upon the conditions in the Caucasus he claimed that 'this is a rather as a case of the sheep combined to resist the wolves. It would seem that nothing but foreign occupation can prevent them becoming Russian provinces.' See FO 406/42, No.41, DMI to FO, August 12, 1919, transmitting Gen. Bridge's report of July 26, 1919.

[2]G. Kidston thought that the Armenians were making a mistake in standing out. If Denikin kept to the line which had been laid down for him Kidston did not think there was the slightest prospect of the Republics attacking him in the same way. He maintained that 'if the Republics come to some defensive agreement between themselves, there is less chance of Denikin attacking them. The danger is that Armenia may again come to loggerheads with either Azerbaijan or Georgia or both and in that case especially in the event of leaving the Caucasus, the temptation to Denikin to fall upon the lot will probably be too much for him.' See his note of 27 June 1919 in FO 371/3662/94192/ W.58, 26 June 1919, DMO to FO transmitting a telegram from Constantinople containing terms of the treaty of June 22, 1919. See also Hovannisian, *Caucasian Armenia between Imperial and Soviet Rule: The Interlude of National Independence*, in Sunny, (ed), *Transcaucasia, op. cit.*, p. 269.

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Volunteer Army would reach Moscow and a new Great Russia would be established by General Denikin and his administration. They seemed to believe that the Russians would agree to the independence of the Armenian Republic whose territory would not be significant economically or strategically to Russia.[1] Furthermore, it was already known that the Armenian Government in Erivan had an undeclared alliance with General Denikin for security purposes against Georgia and Azerbaijan with whom she was in dispute over border provinces.[2]

It is not clear to what extent this alliance had an impact on Denikin. Yet until his defeat at the end of 1919, General Denikin did not attempt to invade south of the Caucasus. Nevertheless, he never failed to complain of the hostile attitude of the Republics and to give the impression that he would not hesitate to step into the region.[3] This policy on his part always received strong criticism at the Foreign Office. Kidston, for example, argued that an aggressive policy by Denikin would be a very short-sighted one from every point of view, but more especially perhaps from that of Denikin himself. The main points, he thought, were

a) The only chance for Denikin is to have a quiet and contented Caucasus on his flank. If he invades it I do not believe there is the slightest chance of his coming to any arrangement with the republics on amicable terms and if he attempts to subdue it will take him years and

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[1]M. Papadjanian, an ex-member of the Russian Duma and a member of the Delegation of the Armenian Republic to the Peace Conference, stated in his conversation with F. Adams of the British Delegation on 6 October 1919 in Paris that
'the Armenian Government are convinced that Denikin and any future Russian Government formed under his auspices would agree to the independence of the Armenian Republic if such independence were supported by the Conference or the League, whether or not a portion of Turkish Armenia were added. At the same time they would gladly see Azerbaijan and Georgia independent, or, at the worst, given a large measure of autonomy within a Russian federation. But until this question was settled as between the future Central Russian Government, Georgia, Azerbaijan and the Conference or the League, they would not well join Georgia and Azerbaijan in any close relationship. ' See FO 371/3663/142427/ ME.58, 17 October 1919. Papadjanian was considered to be one of the most broad minded Armenians and his views as very moderate and fair by the Foreign Office officials. See also A. H. Arslanian and R. L. Nichols, *Nationalism and the Russian Civil War: The Case of Volunteer Army-Armenian Relations, 1918-1920*, *Soviet Studies*, vol.31, no.4, October 1979, pp. 567-9.

[2]Major R. McDonell who had served in the Caucasus during and after the war and was employed by the FO as a temporary clerk stated in his minute that "from the beginning it has been evident that the Armenians had come to some arrangement with Denikin, who called the Armenian Army his 9th army and drafted his officers to it. The Armenians, therefore, have little to fear from a new Russian Empire under Denikin which would doubtless grant them the measure of independence which would satisfy them." See his note in FO 371/3663/142427/ ME.58, 17 October 1919, British Delegation (Paris) to FO.

[3]FO 406/42 No.73, Memorandum by R. McDonell of the Foreign Office respecting the evacuation of Batum and Bolshevism in the Middle East, 15 November 1919. The Memorandum is also available in FO 371/3664/152848/ME.58, 18 November 1919. Although the title appears to be related to the Bolshevik threat it largely deals with the relations between Denikin and the Republics.

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he will have to withdraw a large proportion of his force from the Bolshevik front.

b) We are pledged in honour to leave the decision of the future states of the Republics to the Peace Conference and in the case of Georgia at any rate, we have expressed sympathy with their aspiration for independence.

c) All the Republics are represented at Paris.

d) Admiral Calthrope has expressed a fear that the Georgians may even join the Turks in the movement which is now boiling up in Eastern Asia Minor.

e) If we betray the Republics to Denikin we shall create lasting hostility with one of the richest districts in the world.

f) The betrayal of the Republics will instantly be taken up by the Labour party all over the world and the accusation of reaction labelled against Denikin will be confirmed.[1]

In another file in which the War Office complained about Wardrop's failure to understand Denikin's situation Kidston argued that the fundamental lines of Wardrop's policy were essentially right. He indicated those lines as follows:

1. That Denikin has no cause to fear aggression from the Republics, but that the republics have everything to fear from him.
2. That in Denikin's own interest the best, and indeed the only sensible thing for him to do is to make his peace with the Republics and to recognize their *de facto* independence pending the decision, not of the All-Russian Congress, but of the Peace Conference or the League of Nations.
3. That the best safeguard against the spread of Bolshevism, not only in the Caucasus itself but in Trans-Caspia, is to induce Denikin to take this line and give a similar assurance to the Republics ourselves.
4. That the Republics cannot stand alone but will inevitably come into some form of federation with the greater Russia, when and if it is established; but that they must do this voluntarily and on their own conditions.
5. That the Republics are honestly and to the best of their ability struggling against internal tendencies to Bolshevism, but that if they are driven to choosing between Bolshevism and Denikin they will certainly choose Bolshevism, — and in the case of Azerbaijan, the CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) form of Bolshevism based on Pan-Islamism and the fight of Islam against the British Empire.

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[1] FO 371/3662/110080/ME.58, 31 July 1919, WO to FO, requesting a meeting of IDCE. See Kidston's minute of July 31, 1919.
Kidston further pointed out that the War office represented that Wardrop could not have the necessary military knowledge but had never stated what military problems were to be solved. He continued that 'all they have said is that Denikin must not be threatened in his rear and they have never answered Mr. Wardrop's contention that it is Denikin who is making trouble for himself in his rear. On the other hand, they ignore completely the political considerations enumerated above, which seem to me to dominate entirely any military problem which may exits. See his minute of October 25 1919 in FO 371/3664/144710/ME.58, 23 October 1919, DMI to FO, October 22, 1919, drawing attention to Wardrop's lack of military knowledge.

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6. That to allow Denikin to destroy the Republics would antagonise democratic opinion in this country and throughout Europe and forfeit any sympathy which may exist for Denikin in America.
7. That to establish Russia once more in complete domination in the Caucasus is contrary to our own interests in Persia and the East generally.
8. That a friendly and orderly Caucasus is of immense importance to our trade and that if we are instrumental in obtaining the recognition of the Republics we may expect substantial advantages from their gratitude and a more open door than we would ever hope to obtain from Russia.
9. That if we do not seize the opportunity offered to us now, the Italians and the Germans will cut us out on the commercial side and the Turks and CUP Bolsheviks will destroy us politically.[1]

When an Admiralty note asking an observation about handing over of the Caspian Squadron to Denikin was received by the Foreign Office Kidston agreed with the view of the British Rear Admiral of the Black Sea Navy that British evacuation of the Caucasus constituted a betrayal of Denikin. Yet he added that it constituted an even greater betrayal of the Caucasian Republics. He pointed out that it was vital to both sides that Britain should have remained.[2] Lord Curzon expressed his frustration with the situation and stated that 'I disapprove the entire Caucasian policy of HMG. The decision to evacuate is a military decision and was concurred in by Mr. Balfour. Similarly I had no responsibility for the Italian suggestion and I cannot find a policy now to extricate mixture(?) from the situation...'[3]

Denikin increasingly became hostile to the Republics towards the end of 1919. Two interesting reasons for this were reported: there was a strong party with Denikin which favoured the abandonment of the northern campaign on understanding or, at any rate, a truce with the Soviet Government and the establishment by Denikin of an independent Southern Russia, with its capital probably at Rostov and to include the whole of Transcaucasia.[4] It was reported that the new policy of the British Government towards Denikin, that is to say that when he received the last package he could expect no more support from the British Government unless he was prepared to pay, influenced Denikin to act independent of British advisers.[5] Secondly, it was argued that in winter,

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[1] See his minute of October 25 1919 in FO 371/3664/144710/ME.58, 23 October 1919, DMI to FO, October 22, 1919.

[2] FO 371/3668/106304/ME.58, July 23, 1919, Admiralty to FO.

[3] *Ibid.* See his minute of 27 July 1919.

[4] FO 371/3665/157697/ME.58, December 2, 1919.

[5] *Ibid.* See telegram no. 171, November 30, 1919 from Wardrop to Foreign Office. Denikin requested Azerbaijan on 17 October that in accordance with Act 8 of the Treaty of Turkmenchai, signed in 1828 between Russia and Persia, no ship could fly any flag but Russian. Kidston regarded Denikin's demand as ominous, crossing British interests not only in the Caucasus but far more importantly in Persia. He believed that if Denikin were to turn his attention seriously to the south it was quite possible that he would be in Teheran before the end of the winter, referring to the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 as regards spheres of influence in Iran. He proposed to put pressure by warning him that the British blockade of Bolshevik Russia might be abolished. J.A.C. Tilley, an assistant secretary, observed that Denikin was gradually to receive 15 million sterling of stores which could be cut.

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owing to climatic conditions, any further advance to the north would become impossible. He would have a great army on his hands with nothing to do and little to eat, and from his point of view, a winter campaign in the less rigorous climates of the Black Sea and the Caspian afforded an overpowering temptation.[1]

The situation of constant quarrels between the two sides inevitably made an impact upon British officials to develop their own approach to each side. One finds the majority of the Foreign Office members taking the view of the Republics and the majority of the War Office putting their support behind Denikin. The primary supporter of the Volunteer Army in the British Government, the War Office, was inclined to overlook the complaints of the Republics as well as those of the Foreign Office. Their attitude may be summarised in the words of G. Kidston who stated that 'the only people who appear to be in a position to bring any pressure to bear upon Denikin are the War Office and they, for alleged military reasons, back him up in everything he does quite regardless of the political consequences.'[2]

The contradictory views of the two departments were even discussed at Cabinet level. At a meeting of 12 August the Secretary of State for War, Churchill, expressed his satisfaction with the progress of Denikin towards Moscow and added that he was welcomed everywhere with many new volunteers. Lord Curzon, as acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said that he did not quite share his view about General Denikin. If it was really thought that Denikin could reach Moscow, Britain might entertain hopes of his crushing Bolshevism. In his view, however, the most serious difficulty was that Denikin's ambitions, as he understood it, lay not in the direction of Moscow, but towards the Caucasus. If Great Britain withdrew, it was certain that Denikin would move against Baku to get oil for the Caspian fleet thus

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[1] FO 371/3664/147980/ME.58, November 3, 1919. See Kidston's minute of November 3, 1919.

[2] *Ibid.* The general impression was that Denikin, in alliance or in concert with the Armenians, was preparing to crush Daghestan and Azerbaijan. Denikin was thought to be encouraged in this object by a proclamation issued on 1 November 1919, by Colonel Rowlandson the British officer who had been sent to make an arrangement between him and Azerbaijan. The proclamation stated that Britain supported Denikin whose object was to reconstitute a reunified Russia at the cost of the liberties of the Caucasian peoples. See Tilley's minute of 3 November 1919. Lord Hardinge, Permanent Under Secretary of State, thought it intolerable that the military officers should dictate their own policy in opposition to that of HMG and submitted that the Foreign Office should take strong action with the War Office about Colonel Rowlandson's proclamation to repudiate it. See his minute of 3 November. For full text of the proclamation see FO 371/3664/1511018/ME.58, 12 November 1919.

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entering a war with Azerbaijan and most possibly with Georgia. He added a word of warning: he doubted whether Denikin would achieve any great success, and it was possible that he might fail like Kolchak in Siberia. Moreover, Curzon did not suspect Denikin of ambitions in the Caucasus direction.[1]

In reply, Churchill said that he did not agree with Curzon that Denikin would abandon his idea of getting to Moscow and turn towards the Caucasus. When Britain left the Caucasus, there would be a general convulsion, anarchy, massacres, and so on, and it was not possible for Britain to arrest or avert this. Instead of invading the Caucasus, he thought Denikin might have to detach certain troops to guard his rear, and he would certainly have to secure his supply of oil from Baku. He had been told that Denikin himself was afraid that when Britain left the Caucasus, the Republics would attack him. These nations, when Britain first went there, gave her anything but a welcome; now, however, they were imploring Britain to stay.[2] Churchill believed that this would be dangerous unless it was decided to maintain a considerable force there; there was no middle course between clearing out and an effective occupation. Lord Curzon then pointed out that Denikin had already put in a claim for Batum, where he had no conceivable business. If, as had been suggested by Churchill, Denikin was too weak to invade the Caucasus, he must surely be too weak to attempt to reach Moscow.[3]

The divergence of opinion taken by the two departments continued till Denikin lost any chance of progress. In a letter of 27 September, Churchill reported his view to Curzon that Denikin's rear was in danger from the Caucasian Republics and urged him to instruct Wardrop in Tiflis to use his influence to prevent the Georgians from attacking him.[4] Curzon replied to him on 2 October in the following words:

> the situation in the Caucasus is, as you say, complex, contradictory but not altogether surprising. The Caucasian States who are struggling to preserve

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[1] CAB 23/11/WC 612, Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held on 12 August 1919. Although the Cabinet was reluctant to carry on supporting Denikin, and even Lloyd George expressed his strong doubt that Denikin would reach Moscow, it was decided to grant one last package to him. As regards the small nations of the former Russian Empire the general mood in the Cabinet was to advise them to open up negotiations with the Bolsheviks who were believed to be the real governing force in Russia.

[2] The Georgian Government, for instance, asked for a British mandate. If this was found unacceptable then they requested British military forces to stay in Georgia which would be ready to pay the expenses caused by those troops to HMG. See FO 371/3662/114781/ME.58, 11 August 1919, DMI to FO, transmitting information from General Milne about the Georgian offer.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] FO 371/3663/136702/ME.58, 3 October 1919, a copy of Churchill's letter of 27 September 1919 to Curzon.

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> their independence know that they have no worse or more formidable foe than Denikin and that the moment he is free he will smash them... If Denikin and his myrmidons would leave the Caucasus alone all would be well. But if he persists in trying for Batum, Baku, etc., he inevitably comes up against people whom it is our policy to support.
>
> A renewed Russia spreading over the entire Caucasus into North Persia is not a patent that I should welcome. The best I can do is to urge Wardrop to stop the Georgians from making trouble for Denikin. This I will do.[1]

It seems that there was one thing on which the two departments were in agreement: neither of them openly encouraged either Denikin nor the Republics to attack the other side.

The Question of Recognition of the Republics

The officials of the Foreign Office considered another solution plausible to prevent a war in the Caucasus. That was to recognise the independence of the Republics.

The question of recognition was put forward in early August 1919 by Wardrop before he left for Tiflis. In his long memorandum regarding the course of action which would, in his opinion, tend to facilitate his mission to Caucasia he submitted that

> HMG would either recognise the Republics, as they have already been recognised by Germany and Turkey, and are, I understand, on the point of being recognised by Italy; or that I be authorised to inform the three Republics that HMG is ready to recognise them so soon as they have given undoubted proof of their intention to live in peace and amity together, and maintain a benevolent attitude towards General Denikin so far as his policy is directed to the support of a free, democratic government truly representative of a regenerated Russia.[2]

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[1] *Ibid.* Apart from Wardrop's effective actions to maintain order between Denikin and the Republics as well as between the Republics themselves the British Government appointed H. J. Mackinder, a member of Parliament as High Commissioner with General Denikin to use his best endeavour to restrain Denikin from any action against the Republics. See Cabinet decision in CAB 23/18/Cab 1(19), 4 November 1919.
Wardrop, meanwhile, in coordination with Colonel Haskell, the Allied High Commissioner in Armenia, arranged an agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia to terminate collisions and to settle all questions by peaceful agreements or failing that by arbitration. The full text of the agreement of 23 November 1919 signed in Tiflis is available in FO 371/3665/162833/ME.58 as well as in FO 406/42/ No.74. Wardrop led another two agreements between Georgia and Armenia with respect to the freeing from all customs duties of the transit trade and settling their disputes by means of agreement. The texts of the agreements of November 3, 1919, signed in Tiflis, are available in FO 406/42 No.69. Wardrop to Curzon, November 4, 1919.

[2] FO 371/3662/114276/ME.58, 9 August 1919, See O. Wardrop's Memorandum of 5 August 1919.

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Yet most high ranking officials were not willing to agree with Wardrop. A. C. Kerr, for instance, thought that this was a question of policy which would have to be referred to Paris since it would raise the whole question of the Russian border states. W. Selby, head of the Russian Department within the Foreign Office, agreed with him and reminded the department that Britain had suggested to her Allies that the situation of the border provinces of the late Russian Empire should be regularised, pending the establishment of a Russian central Government, by the recognition of their provisional independence. He argued, therefore, that Britain should only move in the matter with her Allies if this could be arranged. Nevertheless, he did not see any objection to an immediate announcement to the Caucasian Republics of the course Britain was urging her Allies to take.[1] J. D. Gregory did not even see any good in informing the Republics of the British course of action with her Allies as regards the status of ex-Russian States until the Allies came into line. He thought it might do more harm than good to raise hopes which might conceivably be disappointed. His opinion was shared by G. E. Hubbard, R. Graham and Lord Curzon.[2]

The discussion of the question of recognition appears to have taken up significant time and energy of the Foreign Office. There seem to have been various views on the issue. G. Kidston led the view that championing the cause of the Republics would be in the interests of Britain. He argued

1. that we should openly champion the cause of the Republics at the Peace Conference and press for the immediate recognition of their independence.
2. that we should make any further support to Denikin conditional on his recognising of their independence... If he invades the Republics I do not believe that this or any other country in Europe, and certainly not the USA, will be able to continue to give him support.
3. If once the Republics were recognised I do not believe that there would be the slightest chance of their attacking Denikin.
4. If we were recognised as the champions of the Republics who had secured for them their recognition I believe the future benefits to ourselves might be immense.
5. The withdrawal of the great bulk of our troops could probably then be carried out without much difficulty.

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[1] *Ibid.* See Kerr's minute of August 6, and Selby's August 7, 1919.

[2] *Ibid.* See their minutes of 7 August 1919. See also FO 371/ 3663/144528/ME.58, 23 October 1919, Wardrop to FO urging the recognition of the Republics including Daghestan as a barrier against Russia which would be an absolute essential for the safety of Britain's position in Persia and India. Wardrop expressed his doubt that a victorious Volunteer Army would be less pro-German than the Bolsheviks. He considered that fear of Denikin was well-founded and even qualified recognition would greatly diminish it.

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Kidston stated also that he made these suggestions with great diffidence, but at least they were suggestions and something had to be done.[1] R. Graham thought that it would be technically impossible for Denikin to recognise the Republics since he had placed himself under the Omsk Government which would certainly repudiate Denikin's recognition, if he would recognise them at all. 'What is wanted, he argued, is a promise from Denikin to leave the Republics alone and not to interfere with or encroach upon them.'[2] Kidston, however, pointed out that one of the reasons for recognition of the Republics was that British interests in terms of trade would be seriously damaged by Germany and Italy. Although Italy had turned down the mandate over the Caucasus, she had left a mission there to develop and increase Italian trade interests. Kidston assessed this attitude in the following words:

> The Italian scheme is evidently to let us bear all the worry and expense while they reap all the benefits. It should be noticed that Italian policy is to accord at least quasi recognition to the Republics... I venture to submit our assuming the role of champion of the Republics without delay.[3]

Lord Curzon then enquired what would be done to increase the British stake in Transcaucasian trade and instructed Wardrop to report on the subject.[4] Wardrop considered that the enhancement of British trade interests in Transcaucasia was dependent on the question of recognition. He, therefore, advised the British Government to recognise these states, which would bring many advantages to Britain.[5] Kidston observed that

> the situation is entirely unsatisfactory from every point of view. Not only can we do nothing to encourage traders to embark on trade with Transcaucasia until we know what the fate of the Republics is going to be and whether there will be any security for their ever getting paid, but the Republics themselves have not been slow to realise that their control of trade is a powerful lever with which to work for the recognition of their independence. Their line is to prove to British commercial firms that their interests are bound up with the recognition of the Republics and they are able to do this by erecting monopoly controls of concessions dating from the old regime and national control of the mining and other resources of the country.[6]

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[1] FO 371/3662/110080/ME.58, 31 July 1919, WO to FO requesting a meeting of Eastern Committee. See Kidston's minute of July 31, 1919.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] FO 371/3662/116968/ME.58, 16 August 1919.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] FO 371/3663/39967/ME.58, 11 October 1919, Wardrop (Tiflis) to FO, September 15, 1919, reporting on British trade relations with the Republics. R. McDonell drew attention to the complication of the currency situation. Without a solution to it he doubted that British firms would be even keen to trade with Transcaucasia.

[6] *Ibid.*

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Yet J. A. C. Tilley thought that Wardrop gave excessive importance to trade with Georgia and Azerbaijan — apart from Baku. He, furthermore, expressed his agreement with the opinion that these Republics would come under Russian rule again. Lord Hardinge believed the same thing.[1]

The most serious discussion of the recognition to be accorded to the Republics took place when Wardrop telegraphed from Tiflis informing the Office that Germany proposed to send a diplomatic representative with consuls and had increased her activities in the region. To prevent German supremacy he submitted an urgent statement regarding the political future of Transcaucasia implying their recognition by Britain and her Allies.[2] Wardrop, moreover, argued that even a merely provisional recognition of *de facto* Governments, subject to final decision by Peace Conference, would be sufficient. This would result in to an inflow of British capital, which was only waiting for some guarantee of reasonable safety to take on great industrial and commercial schemes announced, which would immediately steady the exchange rate. Secondly, he thought, it would complete establishment of public order and security for life and property. He concluded his despatch with these words:

> recognition of Republics seems to me a matter of urgency. Whatever may happen to Russia I venture to take view that independence of Transcaucasia (which Germany and Turkey have already recognised as far as Georgia is concerned) is a British interest of prime importance for the sake of India and Persia where Russia in future, whether she be under German influence or Bolshevik, or Denikinist will inevitably give us continual trouble.

P. V. E. Evans of the Russian Department of the Foreign Office agreed with Wardrop. He pointed out that inevitably Germany would gain a certain amount of ground in Russia for two reasons. First, she was very near to Russia and, secondly, a large number of Russian reactionaries would encourage German penetration. On the other hand, he observed, Denikin was pro-ally and although his party would militarily tend towards the German side Britain had an advantage at that moment. He concluded in his minute that 'I do not think we will lose our advantages at present as the result of the *de facto* recognition of Georgia, and we will apparently do much to counteract German influence there.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] FO 406/42 No.53, September 19, 1919, Wardrop (Tiflis) to Curzon. This despatch can also be seen in FO 371/3663/131980/ ME.58, 22 September 1919.

[3] FO 371/3663/131980/ME.58, 22 September 1919, Wardrop (Tiflis) to FO. See Evans' minute of 23 September 1919.

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J. D. Gregory shared Evans' opinion. He maintained that

> there is no sort of doubt that German danger is the greatest as far as Russia is concerned; and personally I believe — though this is a minority belief — that the best way to counter it is to make friends of the ex-Russian States by recognising their independence, which will be the security for British industrial enterprise, and thus establishing them as outposts of British influence North West, West and South of the future Russia.

G. Kidston, too, expressed his agreement with the policy advocated by Wardrop.[1] Yet he drew attention to the point that its adoption depended on a settlement of the whole question of Russian policy. Tilley pointed out that until Russian policy was settled there was nothing to be done on this matter.[2] Lord Hardinge thought that British policy in Russia had been settled as far as the Baltic States (which were accorded *de facto* recognition) were concerned, and the support that Britain was to give Denikin which was limited. He imagined that 'our attitude towards Georgia will be governed by the same considerations as decided our policy elsewhere.'

Kidston reckoned that a merely provisional recognition of the *de facto* Governments subject to final decision by the Peace Conference would involve very little for Britain but would mean a good deal to the Republics. He argued that

> it would mean to them an open disavowal of the intention which has been consistently imputed to us by our enemies that our military occupation had no other object than to keep the place warm for Denikin and to hand the Republics over to him when the moment arrived and when he had disposed of the Bolshevik danger to the north. I cannot see that we could recognise Georgia without also recognising Azerbaijan and Armenia. Not to do so might precipitate an explosion in the Caucasus and would probably be taken as a studied insult to Islam by the Muslim State of Azerbaijan. We might make the recognition of all three dependent upon the maintenance of peace between them.

In the concluding part of his long minute Kidston proposed to ask Wardrop's views as whether a similar recognition, given to the Baltic States on 25 September 1919, of autonomous existence addressed to the Caucasian Republics, coupled, mutatis mutandis, with similar reservations would do anything to clear the situation. He personally believed that it would.

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[1] He wrote down that "this (is) of course the view (recognition of the Republics) which he (Wardrop) has taken all along and which I have also consistently upheld."

[2] Tilley had in general taken a negative attitude on the recognition of these Republics hoping that a new Great Russia would be established soon at the hands of the Volunteer Army.

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Tilley pointed out that the German rivalry was exaggerated. He argued that Britain need not fear permanent German rivalry of a kind to exclude British trade.[1] He was convinced that Germany would effect the commercial reconquest of the Baltic States and North West Russia but, he argued, the Black Sea shores were a neutral area of commercial influence for Britain. Odessa, being the main avenue for trade with Russia, was a bigger thing than trade with Georgia. He continued his argument that 'this consideration makes one hope that we are not going to antagonize the Russia of the future for the sake of propping up the frail barriers which may at first surround it.' He also disagreed with Wardrop's view that Russia would pose a threat to India through Georgia. Yet he conceived that 'still there may be no harm in giving Georgia *de facto* recognition, and Azerbaijan too.[2]

Major R. McDonell who had recently returned home from Caucasia, asserted that the recognition of the Georgian Republic would lay the British Government open to the often repeated accusation that Britain was secretly working for the eventual dismemberment of the former Russian Empire.[3] However, he claimed that 'undoubtedly our recognition of the Georgian Republic would enormously increase our prestige in Georgia, open up great commercial advantages for British enterprises, stabilise the currency and, in a great measure, immediately counteract German influence.' In his long memorandum he challenged the view that recognition of these republics either as a federation or separately meant a definite split with Denikin and Kolchak, and would antagonise the Russia of the future. He thought that it might be made a matter of arrangement between the Republics and the Russians with Great Britain as intermediator. He, therefore, believed that some form of recognition could be accepted by the Allies with a mandate held by Britain for the League of Nations. German and Turkish influence would be thus most effectively counteracted and Bolshevik intrigues in Central Asia and North Persia guarded against.[4] He concluded his memorandum that

> only those who believe in and rely on the quick re-establishment of a powerful Russia can advocate the non-recognition and consequent

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[1] At a Cabinet meeting in August, Prime Minister Lloyd George had made a similar statement. He thought that nothing could prevent the German penetration of Russia. He pointed out that 'Germany must pay her indemnity somehow and Russia was the only possible big market open to her, and it was at her door. That market, in any case, would demand more goods than we could supply...' See CAB 23/11/WC 612, Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting held on 12 August 1919.

[2] In his argument, however, Wardrop mentioned not only India but also Persia. See his concluding remarks.

[3] McDonell joined Kidston in arguing that Azerbaijan should also be recognised if Georgia was accorded recognition. Otherwise, Britain's interests in North Persia and Russian Central Asia would be endangered as it would alienate the Muslim population which was in a majority in both these regions, and throw it into the arms of Turco-German intrigue in the Caucasus and the Trans-Caspian, and the anti-British elements in North Persia.

[4] He expressed his opinion that it was absolutely essential for Britain's prestige and general British prosperity in the East that Britain should at once gain the confidence and friendship of the Caucasus and Central Asia. It seemed to him that unless Britain supported the claims of these people she would create great ill feeling and force them to find friends elsewhere.

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> impossibility of the closest friendship with all the Republics demanding recognition on the basis of self-determination.[1]

Lord Curzon then stated his difficulty in making a clear judgement upon this issue. He remarked that

> 'not only do our own advisers not agree but a) the other departments of Government disagree also, and b) I doubt if there is any measure of agreement among the Allied powers without whom we can hardly take any definite action. It seems of no use to address Paris on these points. We have already done so in the case of Russia without the smallest result... Paris does not want to be bothered by the Caucasus and (I) suppose if we act at all we must act by ourselves.

Lord Curzon considered that to act alone was easy. Nevertheless, he pointed out that Britain's difficulties were enhanced by the local conditions. These difficulties, in his opinion, were as follows:

a) We are pro-Denikin North of the Caucasus
b) We are anti-Denikin South of the Caucasus
c) We are pro-Georgian in so far as she is respectable and orderly
d) We are anti-Georgian in so far as she is Bolshevik and violent
e) We are pro-Armenian in so far as we do not want to see them exterminated
f) We are anti-Armenian in so far as we do not mean to assume the responsibility either of supplying them with arms or of guaranteeing an Armenian State or of repatriating them to a larger Armenia.
g) Whether we are pro-Azerbaijan or anti-Azerbaijan I have not the least idea.
h) As to the Hill State (Daghestan) I suppose it is little more than various groups of bandits who are smashed by Denikin...[2]

Curzon stated that if the Caucasian States would form a federation or act together or conjointly appeal to Britain or to the Allied Powers to act, it might be easier to deal with these calls.[3]

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[1] FO 371/3663/131980/ME.58, 22 September 1919, Wardrop (Tiflis) to FO.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.* In expressing his bewilderment he said that 'I had no idea what this department would want me to do and I suspect that they have not made up their minds also.' He suggested to send a telegram to Wardrop pointing out the difficulties of the case and asking his opinion for each state.
The telegram that was sent on October 4, 1919, reported to Wardrop the difficulty of determining the exact measure of recognition; the uncertainty of recognition accorded alone, the possibility of increase of the internecine struggles of the Republics as a result of such recognition; and the problem of their hostility to Denikin. The telegram pointed out that "we cannot afford to have Denikin's whole plan of campaign upset by intrigues in his rear nor can we, in order to defeat German schemes in the Caucasus, risk a wholesale defection to Germany of the greater anti-Bolshevik Russia which Denikin represents.' A copy of the telegram can be seen in FO 406/42 No.58.

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The issue of recognition thus was postponed though most members of the Foreign Office officials agreed on according recognition to the Republics. As Curzon himself indicated very clearly the policy of Great Britain in the Caucasus was in a muddle as a result of contradictory and complex policies taken with each element in Caucasus.[1] Nevertheless, a new development in the region would help them to decide which way to go. That development was the crushing of the Volunteer Army by the Bolsheviks who, consequently, increased their influence in the region at the end of 1919.

[1] In a similar long discussion of Caucasia a month later, Kidston pointed out that it would be wrong for the British interests to let Russia to establish herself in the Caucasus. But Tilley raised his doubts about not doing so and observed that 'while it may be to contrary to our Asiatic interests to re-establish Russian domination in the Caucasus I feel only a pious hope that the Caucasus will prove a real barrier between Russia and the East... And I feel certain that we shall have to reckon with a big new Russia and that it would be well (though it may still be immoral) to start on friendly terms with her. I fear that the reaction of a ring of small states round Russia may not prove a very lasting affair...' See 371/3664/144710/ME.58, 23 October 1919, Kidston's minute of 25 October and Tilley's of 26 October 1919.

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8

THE BOLSHEVIK THREAT AND THE END OF BRITISH POLICY

Recognition of the Republics

Even before the Bolsheviks overwhelmed the remnant of the Volunteer Army in the north Caucasus, as seen in the previous chapter, there had been arguments from some quarters of the Foreign Office to grant *de facto* recognition to the Republics. One of the bases of these arguments was the prospect of future Russia, whether Bolshevik or not, becoming penetrated, and thus controlled, by Germany which would certainly continue her rivalry against British interests. Secondly, an undivided Great Russia would inevitably make every effort to resume her pre-war activities in Persia in accordance with the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907. Therefore, it would be a wise thing, from the British point of view, to detach Transcaucasia from Russia and German influence, and to establish a buffer between a more or less Germanised Russia, on the one hand, and Persia, Mesopotamia and India on the other.[1]

In a memorandum M. D. Peterson and R. McDonell of the Foreign Office argued that very great danger would be entailed by allowing a decision as to the future of Georgia and Azerbaijan (and more particularly the latter) to stand over until next spring. In support of this contention they adduced two reasons: first, the Governments of both Republics were struggling honestly and with some success against the spread of Bolshevism in their territories. Their difficulties could only be increased by Soviet successes in the north, while their position could only be strengthened by Allied or British recognition. If nothing would be done until Denikin collapsed or became a negligible factor, there would be every prospect that the Governments of the Republics would be left with no alternative but to ally themselves in one way or another with the Soviet Government. Secondly, there were distinct and dangerous Turkish influences in Azerbaijan working against British interests.

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[1] FO 371/3664/152026/ME.58, 14 November 1919, J. M. De Robeck, (Constantinople) to Curzon, transmitting a Report on the situation in Transcaucasia by Lieutenant-Commander H. C. Luke of the staff of the C-in-C, Mediterranean. Commander Luke proposed the United States as a mandatory without which the Republics would not stand up.

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For these reasons they submitted that the future policy of the Allies towards Georgia and Azerbaijan should be immediately taken into consideration, apart from the negotiations for the Turkish settlement, and that as the Power most interested in the matter, the initiative should fittingly come from Great Britain. They urged that this policy should be determined on the lines of an immediate *de facto* recognition of Georgia and Azerbaijan, with reservations entitling the League of Nations or the Allied Governments (1) to determine all territorial questions between the two Republics and between either of them and Armenia by means of a Commission to be appointed after the future of Armenia was determined under the Turkish Peace Treaty; (2) to take into consideration the position of the Republics after a period of five years as to their reincorporation in a reconstituted federal Russia (the clause might be left sufficiently vague to allow of the eventual incorporation of Azerbaijan in Persia, should this become desirable). They thought that while no mandate either would or could be assumed by any of the great Powers, it should be possible to supply expert European or American advisers or administrators without committing the governments concerned in any way.[1]

In an additional memorandum, Peterson and McDonell stated that the immediate effect of *de facto* recognition would be to satisfy the large body of opinion in both countries which suspected the policy of the Allies to be merely one of waiting until the Republics could be handed over to a reconstituted Russia. This feeling prevented the Governments in either State receiving support against the Bolsheviks and in the case of Azerbaijan against pro-Turkish influences. The only responsibility, they argued, which Britain and her Allies would incur by *de facto* recognition apart from the new departure in British policy vis-a-vis Denikin which it would denote, would lie in the moral obligation incumbent on Britain to continue to recognise the existing Governments and to refrain from supporting any rivals as long as they fulfilled the conditions on which *de facto* recognition was granted.[2] The department in general agreed with this proposal.

When the Bolshevik Russians appeared to have the command of the north of the Caucasus range, the idea of the creation of buffer states between Persia and the reconstituted Russia of the future gained a considerable amount of sympathy among the advocates of a federated Russia in London. It was suggested that the independence of the Republics should be immediately

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[1] FO 371/366/168836/ME.58, January 8, 1920. See the Memorandum of January 2, 1920 signed by Peterson and McDonell.

[2] *Ibid.* See their additional memorandum of 6 January 1920.

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recognised by the Allies, and that they should be placed under a British and American mandate pending the formation of the League of Nations that would guarantee their independence and territorial integrity. Yet the recognition should be dependent upon the agreement of the Republics to form a Federal State, and should be followed by a declaration of the mandatory Power's willingness to extend its mandate over any autonomous part of the former Russian Empire, provided its governing body was framed on a democratic basis. It was anticipated that this federation would gradually extend all over the former Russian Empire, forming a democratic federated republic in which there would be no room for Bolshevism.[1]

The mood of the Foreign Office, thus, was prepared to grant *de facto* recognition to the Republics at the beginning of 1920. A telegram of January 3 from Wardrop in Tiflis transmitted an appeal from the Georgian Government to receive advice and help against the Bolsheviks. Wardrop himself submitted that the British Government should take action to prevent the Bolsheviks from absorbing Transcaucasia for the sake of British interests in the East. He suggested that Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia as well as Daghestan should immediately receive *de facto* recognition. In addition, he also proposed to let them have financial and military aid. He emphasised that these states of the Caucasus formed a natural barrier separating the Bolsheviks from the Turks, two forces working in cooperation against British interests.[2] On Wardrop's submission Peterson considered that an early *de facto* recognition of Georgia and Azerbaijan would a) encourage the growth of an anti-Bolshevik party in Daghestan who would look to union with Azerbaijan as their ultimate goal; b) enable Britain to be in a position either to support the Transcaucasian States

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[1]FO 406/42, No.81, A Memorandum respecting the Transcaucasian Republics by the Foreign Office, 24 December 1919.
Among the Republics, Armenia was considered to be in a different position from Georgia and Azerbaijan with respect to recognition since all the Allied Powers during the war had committed themselves more or less directly to the creation of an independent Armenian State under a European or an American mandate. The only question to be decided in the case of Armenia was the extent of Turkish territory which should be added to the Erivan Republic to make up the new state. As regards Georgia, it was also thought that she was entitled to recognition since she had a history as an independent state and her population possessed cohesion and a capacity for self-government. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, lacked in all these features and, therefore, her case for recognition was weaker than Georgia and Armenia. Nevertheless, it was reckoned that the independent existence of Georgia was impossible without an independent Azerbaijan on her east, thus making it necessary for Britain to recognise Azerbaijan as well.

[2]FO 371/3666/167875/1015, Wardrop (Tiflis) to Curzon, 3 January 1920. Wardrop also proposed reoccupation of Caucasia by Great Britain and to taking over the remnants of Denikin's Caspian fleet, thus involving a big military enterprise which was not conceived practicable by the Foreign Office advisers. See FO 371/3666/167947/ME.58, January 6, 1920, Wardrop (Tiflis) to Curzon, January 3, 1920.

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in resisting Bolshevism by force of arms, if that would fall in with Britain's general policy, or (which seemed the more favourable alternative) to encourage them to come to terms with the Bolsheviks which would at least leave them outside the Soviet system.[1]

Lord Hardinge, Permanent Under Secretary of State, thought that the reason for the British Government's hesitation to recognise the *de facto* independence of the Republics so far had been the possibility of Denikin's turning his attention to the south and incorporating these Republics in to Russia under his control. Since Denikin was no longer in that position, he expressed his agreement with their recognition.[2] Then E. Phipps, an assistant secretary, noted that Lord Curzon might desire to raise at Paris the question of whether (a) the *de facto* recognition of Georgia and Azerbaijan should be given at once and (b) arms should be supplied to Georgia to enable her to resist the Bolsheviks.[3]

Lord Curzon indeed raised these questions in Paris at the Supreme Council meeting of 10 January 1920. France and Italy found themselves in agreement with the proposals and, consequently, Azerbaijan and Georgia became *de facto* Republics.[4] Armenia was not given recognition at the same time because her settlement had still to be decided by the Treaty of Peace with Turkey. The objections to recognition of Armenia before the conclusion of the Turkish settlement were two-fold: a) that if an Armenian Republic was recognised within its Caucasian limits, the Turks would jump to the conclusion that no Turkish territory was to be added to the new state, and b) that if on the other hand it was specified at the time of recognition that Turkish territory was to be detached to form the new State, Britain would risk an outbreak of massacres etc., before she was ready to enforce the Turkish settlement as a whole.[5]

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[1] 371/3666/167875/1015, Wardrop (Tiflis) to Curzon, 3 January 1920. See Peterson's minute of 6 January 1920.

[2] *Ibid.* It is interesting to notice that the suspicions of the Republics as regards their future in the event of a Volunteer Army victory in Russia seem correct if one takes Lord Hardinge's opinion as the general view of the British Government.

[3] *Ibid.* See his minute of 6 January 1920.

[4] FO 371/3666/169528/ME.58, January 12, 1920. Derby (Paris) to FO transmitting Curzon's message of 10 January 1920. Brinkley, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

[5] FO 371/3666/168836/ME.58, January 8, 1920, A memorandum by M. D. Peterson and R. McDonell on the question of recognition of the Republics, 6 January 1920.

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The Supreme Council, however, found a solution later, suggested by Lord Curzon, which was to recognise *de facto* the Armenian State. The solution was that "the Government of the Armenian State should be recognised as a *de facto* Government on condition that this recognition in no way prejudges the question of the eventual frontiers of that State."[1] Thus Armenia was also granted *de facto* recognition on 19 January 1920.

Recognition and Military Assistance to the Republics

While recognising Azerbaijan and Georgia, the Supreme Council further decided to reconstitute the Inter-Allied Military Council at Versailles under the presidency of Marshal Ferdinand Foch, French Chief of Staff of the armed forces of France, and to refer to it the anxious situation in the Black Sea, Caucasia and North Persia with a view to seeing whether any Inter-Allied action would be possible for settlement of the situation.[2] At the same time Lord Curzon and E. H. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, agreed in consultation that the military aspect of the situation mainly affecting Britain should be considered in London. Therefore, Curzon asked that a meeting of the Eastern Committee should be held under the chairmanship of Lord Hardinge including responsible representatives of the India Office, the War Office, and the Admiralty, to discuss the retention of British forces at Batum and possibility of aid to Georgian forces; protection of Baku in the event of a Bolshevik menace from Krasnovodsk; recovery from Denikin of the Caspian Fleet and possible reconstitution of British marines, or if this be impossible, destruction of the fleet; diversion to Caucasia of the remaining parts of Denikin's last pocket, i.e. the last delivery of British military arms and equipment; and sending British officers and aeroplanes to the Caucasus.[3] In other words, he asked London to consider the reoccupation of Transcaucasia by Britain to a greater extent than the previous one amounting to an immense military intervention against a Bolshevik expansion towards the south.

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[1]CAB 29/81/I.C.P. 21, January 19, 1920, Notes of a meeting held in Stephan Pichon's room, Quai D'orsay, Paris. See also FO 371/3660/172323/ME.58, January 21, 1920, Derby (Paris) to FO. See also Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. II, *op. cit.*, pp. 482-6, and E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, op. cit.*, vol.I, p. 345.

[2]FO 371/3666/169528/ME.58, January 12, 1920. Derby (Paris) to FO.

[3]*Ibid.*

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According to Lord Curzon's instructions an Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs meeting on January 13 considered his proposals. Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, the CIGS, explained that there were three alternative lines of defence against a possible Bolshevik aggression:

a) Constantinople-Batum-Baku-Krasnovodsk-Merv. This would entail command of the Black Sea and the Caspian, two divisions in the Caucasus and five divisions from Krasnovodsk to Merv.

b) Constantinople-Batum-Baku-Enzeli-Teheran-Meshed. This would entail command of the Black Sea but not necessarily of the whole of the Caspian. Approximately some seven divisions would be required.

c) Northern Palestine-Mosul-Khanaqin-Meshed. The latter was the only alternative considered practicable by the War Office, and even in this case it was not certain that Britain would retain Mosul or Meshed. Figures for alternatives (a) and (b) were for British troops only. The cooperation of the Allies would entail larger forces still, whose support and maintenance would become increasingly difficult as numbers increased. In any case, the War Office, led by Churchill as Secretary of State, were strongly of the opinion that if there was to be any question of employment of considerable forces they would be more effectively employed in some such manner as an advance on Moscow through Poland with consequent heartening effect on anti-Bolshevik elements on all fronts, or in support of Denikin in Southern Russia.[1]

The Admiralty stipulated that retention of Baku was essential to command of the Caspian. They were prepared to control the Caspian if Baku were held. The Air ministry could not contemplate provision of air-craft as they were reluctant to release machines now available in Egypt and India where the British forces were engaged in pacifying a nationalist rebellion in the former and to bring to an end the Afghan war in the latter.

The Committee, therefore, reached the opinion that in view of Britain's inability to find the force entailed in the holding of line (a) or (b), of reinforcing troops in areas south and east of the Caspian, and of the military argument that such a force would be more profitably employed in aggressive action elsewhere, it was inevitable that Britain should fall back on alternative

[1] FO/371/3666/169528/ME.58, 13 January 1920, FO to Derby (Paris) reporting the Eastern Committee meeting of 13 January 1920. Denikin with his followers were in Crimea after their defeat in North Caucasus.

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(c). Consequently, the Committee declined almost all the inquires of Curzon: troops to remain for the time being at Batum but to be evacuated before they are forced into a position; no military, naval or aerial assistance to the Georgian forces could be provided; no supplies could be given from Denikin's pocket since they would be merely a present to the Bolsheviks; protection of Baku could not be contemplated and no marines could be sent to the Caspian; and the despatch of aeroplanes was found impossible.[1]

It seems clear from the considerations of this meeting that not only the Transcaucasian Republics but also north Persia were left to the Bolsheviks if they intended to advance. It was true, however, that Britain and her Allies were in great need of troops for elsewhere. The separatists in Ireland and industrial unrest at home in addition to the war weariness of the population did not help their complications in Caucasia. Nevertheless, if it had been deemed vital for British interests then most possibly the Committee would find the means of intervening in the region.

This historic meeting inevitably affected the course of British policy in Caucasia. The Foreign Office experts adjusted their views accordingly. F. D. G. Osborne, a senior clerk, minuting next day, found it highly undesirable that Britain should incur the responsibility inherent in authorising military support of Daghestan against the Bolsheviks. If the tribes liked to pool their powers of resistance, that was their own affair. He noted that 'as we are not going in militarily we had much better keep out entirely.' R. McDonell thought that Britain should do everything to avoid creating the impression in the Caucasus that Britain desired or in any way supported active aggression against the Bolsheviks on the part of the Caucasian States. The impression that Britain wished to push these people into any military action would certainly entail obligations of material support on the part of the British Government. He thought it imperative to telegraph Wardrop telling him broadly the reasons why he should not give any of these people the impression that Britain would support military action on their part. E. C. E. Phipps, and J. A. C. Tilley, assistant secretaries, agreed. Phipps feared that as a result of recognition the Republics might be inclined to adopt an aggressive attitude towards the Bolsheviks.[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] FO 371/3666/170466/1075/ME.58, 14 January 1920.

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The possibility of intervention was further discussed by the British Cabinet Conference in Paris. The Conference which gathered three times on 16, 18 and 19 January 1920 in Lloyd George's hotel room was dominated by Curzon, Churchill and Lloyd George representing different approaches to the question. Curzon argued in favour of intervention. He explained that Denikin had failed and it was necessary for Britain to move in and organise the excellent defensive line of the Caucasus. The control of the Caspian Sea, as the principal route of access from the north into Persia, was too significant to ignore for the safety of Britain's Eastern Empire. To this Walter Long, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Admiral Earl Beatty, First Sea Lord, agreed. Their consideration was largely, however, the safeguarding of South Persian oil-fields. They drew attention to the oil dependency of the Navy on the United States oil that made up 75% of British Navy's requirement.

Churchill, however, disagreed with this argument and urged the Cabinet to reconsider Denikin's prospect of recovering. Instead of giving small amounts of assistance to various small states, he favoured revitalising the Volunteer Army to push to capture Moscow. If that was not possible then he urged the so-called Foch plan, that is to say, to attack the Bolsheviks from Poland and Finland rather then putting British energies in Transcaucasia where they were certain to be wasted.

Lloyd George then took a view between his two Secretaries. He did not agree with the opinion that the Bolsheviks were a great military power. His concern was the political threat the Bolsheviks posed to Europe through gold and propaganda. Therefore, political measures rather than military expedients were necessary to halt the Bolsheviks. He did not believe that the Bolsheviks intended to invade their neighbours. Except oil, there was nothing for the Bolsheviks in the Caucasus to tempt them to step in. Yet he was prepared to consent to sending arms to the Caucasian Republics as well as British marines to the Caspian to force the Bolsheviks to come to terms with the Republics.[1]

Meanwhile the Minister of Labour, Sir Robert Horne, warned the Cabinet that industrial disturbances as a result of the trade union movement could make it necessary to employ all sorts of special forces to take over the public services to deal with the situation. Sir Henry Wilson did his best, as he had done at the Eastern Committee meeting of 12 January, to persuade the members of the Cabinet of the line of defence accepted by the Committee.

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[1]For the notes of Cabinet meetings see CAB 23/35/S-10, January 16, 1920, CAB 23/35/S-11, January 18, 1920, and CAB 23/35/S-12, January 19, 1920. See also Ullman, *op. cit.*, vol.II, pp. 330-336.

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At the end, the Cabinet failed to reach an agreed policy on the question of intervention in Caucasia. With this disunity the British delegation attended the Allied Conference on 19 January.[1] On the agenda of the Conference, whose members apart from the United Kingdom were the United States, France, Italy and Japan, was a report prepared by the British section of the Allied Military Committee on 12 January 1920 on the situation of the Caucasus caused by the defeat of Denikin's armies and of the measures to be taken to enable the Caucasian Republics to offer a resistance to the cooperation of the Bolsheviks and Muslim Forces (Turkish forces under Mustafa Kemal) across their territories. The Allied Military Committee, after studying the case, was of the opinion that if it was not possible to overcome Bolshevism on its own soil, it should be possible to arrest it on certain dangerous routes such as that of the Caucasus. With this end the organisation of a military barrier on the line of the Caucasus could well be considered. In view of the unstable condition of the local Governments and of the immature condition of their military forces, this barrier should first of all be organised by European troops, whose strength might be fixed at two divisions. The report then stated that eventually these European troops could be relieved by local forces, as soon as the latter should have been reconstituted, organised and provided with the necessary armament.[2]

At the Conference meeting, however, the military experts, Marshal F. Foch of France and Field-Marshal H. Wilson of Britain, expressed discouraging opinions upon the proposals put forward by the Military Committee. Foch, for instance, raised his doubt whether the Caucasian populations were ready to receive military material and to employ it to their advantage against the Bolsheviks or whether all that might be sent would not simply fall into the hands of the Bolsheviks. Wilson also stated that unless the British Navy effectively held the Caspian, the Batum-Baku line could not be effectively defended; and, inversely, that unless there existed the means of defending that line, it was impossible to send Naval forces into the Caspian. For that matter, he warned, unless the Caspian was occupied and held, Baku would certainly fall. He further added that if the Caspian was not effectively held by the British Navy, no war material should be sent to these Republics. Wilson, in other words, appeared to have meant that the Bolsheviks should be allowed to invade Caucasia if they wished. Lloyd George and Churchill agreed with him. Lord Curzon, however, stated his disagreement with this view and said that the Republics were certain to fall to the Bolsheviks unless they were

[1]CAB 29/81/I.C.P. 21, January 19, 1920. Notes of an Allied Conference held in Paris.
[2]*Ibid.* See Appendix "A", 12 January 1920.

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given arms, ammunition and food. Before deciding their fate, he suggested listening to the delegations of Azerbaijan and Georgia waiting in the adjoining room. His suggestion was accepted and the delegations of Azerbaijan and Georgia were invited into the hall.

The delegations headed by Iraklii Tseretelli and Ali Mardan Topchibashi, (Topchibacheff) were questioned by the Council as regards their ability to defend themselves if the Allies sent arms and equipment, whether they needed troops and how many men they had on the ground. They answered that with arms, ammunition and food supplies they would be quite able to defend themselves without any Allied troops. They also indicated their readiness to sign an agreement with the Bolsheviks provided that the Bolsheviks recognised their independence.[1] In order to protect the whole of Transcaucasia and especially Azerbaijan, Topchibashi submitted the recognition of Daghestan as a buffer State against Bolshevik attacks. However, that was not taken into consideration by the Conference.

When the Delegations withdrew, the Council enquired of Marshal Foch if he considered the question of the defence of the Caucasus as a problem standing by itself or as a part of the general defence against the Bolsheviks. The answer was in the latter sense. Foch maintained that it was necessary to confront a vast Bolshevik Russia with strong, united efforts. It was not by Poland alone that it must be resisted, but every state which could collaborate in the effort. The forces that could be opposed to the Bolsheviks were those of scattered Republics organised or unorganised. Passing from Azerbaijan by the Caucasus Georgia, Bessarabia, Poland, Estonia, and Latvia were all new States which might be placed in a very difficult situation if they were abandoned. If, on the contrary, he argued, they were taken in hand, it was possible to succeed in establishing a system of military forces powerful enough to hold Bolshevism in check. Then Lloyd George asked him whether he proposed a military entente between these different States with the object of attacking Soviet Russia, or, on the contrary, with the object of common defence in case the Bolsheviks attacked. He replied that it was a matter of establishing a defensive organisation, a safety belt to protect Central Europe against the advance of the Bolsheviks, and to realise an entente between Poland, Roumania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland. The Transcaucasian Countries could join that league and Bolshevism would thus be contained.

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[1] Lord Curzon enquired of the Azerbaijani Delegation whether the Turkish officers in the Azerbaijani Army would fight the Bolsheviks. The Delegation replied that some 50 officers of the Ottoman Army had stayed behind in Azerbaijan and since they were native Caucasians they would certainly use their whole energy in fighting the Bolsheviks for the defence of Azerbaijan's independence.

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In the proceeding discussions, however, it emerged that neither Great Britain, nor France and Italy would be prepared to send the two-three divisions necessary to be sent to the Caucasus. Even sending arms and ammunition was considered in the negative sense since it was believed that these arms would certainly end up in the hands of the Bolsheviks. Yet Lloyd George reckoned that it would not make too much difference whether the Bolsheviks got a few more arms and ammunition as they were already in possession of excessive arms. He continued that

> these people claim that they can put up a good enough fight to impress upon the Bolsheviks that it is not worth their while to attack. The chances are, too, that the Bolsheviks do not want to wage a big fight in those regions except in order to secure Baku. For all these reasons, I am of the opinion that we should supply the Transcaucasian Republics with all the material aid asked for, on the express condition that the Caucasian States will resist the Bolsheviks and garrison Baku with all their strength.

The Conference then decided that the Allied Governments were not prepared to send to the Transcaucasian States the three divisions contemplated by the Inter-Allied Military Committee but to accept the *principle* of sending to the Republics arms, munitions and, if possible, food.[1]

As one can see, the view put forward by Curzon for military intervention in Caucasia lost its case. Curzon's main consideration in this thinking was the security of the Eastern Empire of Great Britain. On the other hand, Foch and the French Government represented the case in the context of checking the Bolshevik advance for which they allocated a place for the Caucasian Republics. Churchill appeared to consider that there was no chance for the Republics and paid all his attention to Denikin's prospect of success. The Italians followed the wind. Francesco Nitti, Italian Prime Minister, even reluctantly agreed on the policy of sending arms and ammunition to Georgia and Azerbaijan provided that Britain and France would take the responsibility.

Despite the lack of enthusiasm, a door was kept open for the Republics to find a degree of comfort in the fact that the Allies agreed *in principle* to send them arms and ammunition. Nevertheless, the extent to which this principle was turned into practice proved to be very negligible from the point of view of the Republics. The appeals of Georgia and Azerbaijan to receive arms and ammunition were constantly turned down by the War Office which argued that no decision had been taken as to sending military assistance to

[1]CAB 29/81/I.C.P. 21, January 19, 1920. Notes of an Allied Conference held in Paris. See also Brinkley, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-230.

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them. Osborne at the Foreign Office thought that this was the right decision on the grounds that arming the Georgians and Azerbaijanis would invite the Bolsheviks to step in. He did not believe that arming these two Republics would deter the Bolsheviks from invading the Caucasus. Furthermore, there was no reason to think that the Bolsheviks would attack them. The Bolshevik policy of 'non-interference' in the internal affairs of others was an indication of this. The Bolsheviks wanted oil but no quantity of arms could stop them from going to Baku if they decided to do so. Osborne reckoned that if Britain did not send arms, the Republics could make peace with the Bolsheviks with an easy conscience. Moreover, once Britain sent arms she would be more or less tacitly committed to further material support. Besides, these arms would probably either be used against Denikin's remaining small forces or else obtained by the Bolsheviks. Therefore, he proposed to inform the Republics that

> we find that we have not sufficient military supplies available, but that we are trying to facilitate their own purchases here of food etc., and, if desired, will try and facilitate any military orders they may wish to place.[1]

The rest of the Office agreed with him in a general sense. Meanwhile the Governments of Georgia and Azerbaijan searched for ways to arrange a basis of friendly relations with the Soviet Government. They asked the British Foreign Office for advice and approval. Yet this appeal failed to receive any reply from the officials who thought that if the Republics wished to come to terms with the Soviet Government they must do so on their own responsibility.[2]

With respect to military assistance to the Republics Lord Curzon reminded the Department of the efforts of Azerbaijan and Georgia to sign a friendship agreement with Moscow and added that 'if these States mean to make peace with the Soviet Government the *raison d'etre* for giving them arms has gone and the arms had much better go the Armenians to defend themselves against the Turks.'[3]

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[1]FO 371/4932/E 1287/1/58, 10 March 1920. A memorandum by W. G. Osborne on arms for Caucasia, 11 March 1920.

[2]FO 371/4932/E 12271/58, 9 March 1920. A letter from Azerbaijan and Georgian governments to Prime Minister asking the British Government's sanction for an agreement with the Soviet Government to secure *de facto* recognition from Moscow. See Tilley's, J. D. Gregory's and Lord Hardinge's minutes of March 10, 1920.

[3]FO 371/4932/E 1287/1/58, 10 March 1920. A memorandum by W. G. Osborne on arms for Caucasia, 11 March 1920. See Lord Curzon's minute of 12 March 1920.

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Britain's Disinterest in Bolstering the Republics

The result of these views, in fact, amounted to abandoning Azerbaijan and Georgia to their fate. In his interview with McDonell on 29 March, Mechtieff, Representative of Azerbaijan in London, reported that the power of the Musavat Government was not sufficient to cope with the critical situation or maintain their authority unless Great Britain and the Allies were to grant them more tangible support. He reminded McDonell that the Azerbaijani Government had come into being at the instigation of, and with the support of, the British military authorities while in Baku, and the Government's platform was pro-Allied, anti-Bolshevik and anti-Turkish, leading the people to believe that all would be well if they followed the Allies, especially Britain. He pointed out the immediate Bolshevik threat of invasion, violent pro-Turk agitation and famine in Azerbaijan. He then asked for the assistance of the British Government in terms of arms, instructors and credit. Osborne refusing to give any assistance in very strong words expressed his opinion that he did not mind if Azerbaijan went to the Bolsheviks.[1] Tilley agreed with his argument. Yet he thought that with the appearance of British officers and some arms the Azerbaijanis might be able to get more favourable terms from the Soviet Government. He, therefore, proposed to ask the War Office to lend some officers who had been with General Denikin to Azerbaijan. Lord Hardinge and Curzon agreed. Lord Curzon, however, indicated that he doubted whether there would be a result from this appeal to the War Office to which he had previously appealed several times with no success.[2]

Colonel C. B. Stokes, who had served in Baku as the representative of O. Wardrop, the Chief British Commissioner to Transcaucasia, was in London in March and had been considered for relieving Wardrop at Tiflis. Before his appointment was executed, Stokes put his views on British policy in

[1] FO 371/4934/E 2849/1/58, 29 March 1920. A report of conservation with the Representative of Azerbaijan in London by R. McDonell, 29 March 1920. Osborne's minute was in the following words: 'we have had more than enough of this kind of thing — a mixture of petulant complaint and thinly veiled threat. Because we assisted at the birth of the Republic we did not assume all the responsibilities of parenthood. HMG is apparently expected to combine the functions of mid-wife, wet-nurse and fairy godmother. If the present Government is so feeble and unpopular that it can not exist without our "serious moral and material support," it had much better disappear. And if the majority of the population want the Country to join the unholy alliance of Soviet Russia and Turkey, for Heaven's sake let them do it and get it over and be absorbed by one or the other. We shall then know where we stand. We have no grain to send them, we cannot possibly intervene in their negotiations with the Soviets; if the Country is about to turn Bolshevik it is obviously preposterous to expect us to send arms and money; and in this case the less military instruction they have the better.'

[2] *Ibid.*

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Transcaucasia. He found it difficult to give an answer on what British policy was. He thought that the British Government appeared to have followed two mutually antagonistic policies at the same time in the last eighteen months. While supporting the national aspirations of the Republics on the one hand, Britain's unstinted support to the Volunteer Army, on the other, caused chronic unrest in Transcaucasian States. Furthermore, Britain had told the Republics that the Entente had decided to help the three States with arms, ammunition etc., but apparently it did not do so as the British Government did not mind if they made terms with the Bolsheviks. Stokes then drew attention to German, French and Italian activities in the region and the losses Britain would suffer. He submitted that Georgia and Azerbaijan had already been in alliance and that Armenia might be persuaded to join this alliance leading to a confederation under British influence, keeping open for Britain the short route to Persia and serving to some extent as a barrier to the southward expansion of Russia. To achieve this he proposed a) to put an end to the intrigues and hostile activities of Britain's Allies, b) to help these States with civil officials and military instructors, and arms, ammunition and equipment, c) to advise any of these States which wished to make terms with the Bolsheviks what terms Britain considered would be injurious to British interests.

He further pointed out that if we are unable to play an active part and all we want of our representatives in Transcaucasia is that they hold a watching brief and report events, let them be told so.[1]

Minuting on his note Osborne thought that if Britain did send arms, they would probably not be used in self-defence, since in his opinion there was no immediate prospect of danger of attack from Bolshevists, Volunteers and Turks, but in highly undesirable military adventures. Therefore, he proposed to tell Colonel Stokes that

> HMG had no active or military policy in the Caucasus; their policy is based on benevolent and, where physically possible, practical assistance and support in maintaining the neutrality, and establishing the stability of the Caucasian Republics with a view to an ultimate Confederation, to include the North Caucasian Republic. But the future of the Country depends on the Republics themselves and not on a more direct intervention in their affairs by HMG who have already shown their sympathy by *de facto* recognition and are now waiting to be convinced that this sympathy was not misplaced.[2]

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[1] FO 371/4933/E 2310/1/58, 21 March 1920. See his long note of 21 March 1920 on the situation in Transcaucasia.

[2] *Ibid.* See his minute of 23 March 1920.

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Tilley agreed with Osborne and added that there was no need to be alarmed by German activity in Georgia. He did not believe that they could expect the Germans to sit at home forever. Besides, if the Georgians could stand up against the Russian Bolsheviks he did not believe that they would go Bolshevik to please the Germans and join in an Eastward advance at the expense of Britain. Lord Hardinge, however, appeared to agree with Stokes that it was difficult to define British policy in Transcaucasia, beyond saying that Great Britain desired their autonomy, independence and eventual federation with the Republics. Although he did not want Britain to be compromised there, he, nevertheless, did not like the idea of putting an end to the activities of Britain's Allies since it would create much friction with their Allies resulting in a possible breaking down of the Alliance. Lord Curzon joined him in thinking that they could not prevent the intrigues of the French and the Italians. It was their way of doing business. He also agreed with the points put forward by Osborne and Tilley. He pointed out that Colonel Stokes, like other most loyal men working at a great distance, failed to understand the difficult circumstances surrounding the British Government, and accused the Government of making no policy. He expected the Caucasian States to show some capacity to stand upright instead of leaning on others.[1]

When Azerbaijan was seriously threatened by the Bolsheviks in April, the officials of the Foreign Office agreed with General Milne's view that they could not send any military support to the Republics to meet the situation. Osborne considered that the only thing they could do was to concentrate on the defence of Batum with such overwhelming navy support that it would be easy to defend it. He imagined that to abandon Batum port in the face of the Bolsheviks would be the severest possible blow to British prestige, not only in the Caucasus and the East generally but throughout the world.[2] Tilley minuted, however, that Britain was bound by her announcement that if the border States of ex-Russian Empire were attacked Britain would support them. Moreover, he drew attention to Stokes' proposal of confederating the Republics, including Armenia. Then he suggested sending a telegram to Wardrop and Milne that

> our advice to the Republics is to make peace with the Soviet Government; that there is no question of our sending troops to help them; that if they were really attacked we might send them some arms and that we should in any case endeavour to do so as an evidence of goodwill and to enable them

[1] *Ibid.* See Tilley's minute of 26 March, Hardinge's without a date and Curzon's of 28 March.
[2] FO 371/4934/E 2641/1/58, Various telegrams from Wardrop (Tiflis) and Milne (Constantinople) to FO. See Osborne minute of 6 April 1920.

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> to maintain internal order; but that the sending of arms to enable them to defend themselves against the Bolsheviks is conditional upon their refraining from aggression in other directions such as the Batum Province and Armenia.[1]

Tilley further suggested to enquire, if possible, from the Soviet Government of its intentions in the Caucasus. Lord Curzon shared his view. Yet he complained that the Caucasians always appeared to have nothing with which to defend themselves against the Bolsheviks, meanwhile having countless arms to kill each other.

The War Office that had been asked to consider arms to the Caucasians kept its consistency in refusing to provide these requirements to Georgia and Azerbaijan on the grounds of lack of time and a scramble for arms. Furthermore, they proposed to withdraw from Batum altogether. Yet they were prepared to proceed with the consignment of arms for Armenia.[2] This refusal meant a clear abandonment of Georgia and Azerbaijan. R. McDonell, for instance, noted that the effect of refusal would be to throw Azerbaijan in to the arms of the pro-Turk Party (Ittihad) and Georgia to the Bolsheviks. Moreover, this would put an end to any question of federation. He supposed that these new States must have some big Powers on whom they could rely and look to for assistance. He added that 'we can hardly blame them if they now go elsewhere.'[3]

Tilley considered the explanation of the War Office not understandable and said that 'the War Office are determined to follow their own policy in the Caucasus.' He proposed to write to the War Office to point out the danger of leaving Azerbaijan unable to make good terms with the Soviets and the danger of her attacking Armenia in supposed self defence; to remind them that the same policy had been followed in the Baltic of giving small States arms to enable them to adopt a stiffer attitude in negotiations with the Soviet; and that the policy of sending arms to the Caucasus was that of the Supreme Conference; and urging them to send arms that would also help Armenia to receive arms more easily. His suggestion was agreed by the Department.[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] FO 371/4935/E 3294/1/58, April 15, 1920, WO to FO, reporting their regret of impossibility to send arms.
[3] *Ibid.* See his minute of 16 April 1920.
[4] *Ibid.*

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The Disposal of Batum

Batum and its province also proved to be a matter of dispute between the Foreign Office and the War office. In fact, the Cabinet had decided to evacuate Batum in late January 1920 for military reasons claimed by the War Office such as the desirability of strengthening General Sir George Milne's forces at Constantinople and the possibility of becoming involved in an armed conflict with the Red Army.[1] Curzon had strongly protested against this decision in his memorandum circulated to the Cabinet. He argued that the political consequences of this step would be disastrous in the Caucasus where these Republics had just been recognised and were expecting assistance from Britain and her Allies. He pointed out that this decision would be considered as a betrayal by the Republics and ruin their morale and give full sway to Bolshevik, Turkish and Denikin's intrigues as well as to Georgian. He proposed the conversion of Batum into a free port with a zone around it to be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations. This solution was the only guarantee against Batum becoming a cockpit, not only of fratricidal struggles between the Republics, but of revived rivalry between larger and more dangerous powers, Turkey, Germany and Russia. He pointed out that until the League of Nations took responsibility British troops should remain in Batum.[2] At the Cabinet meeting of 18 February, his argument was accepted.[3]

At the London Conference which began on February 12, 1920, to set out the peace terms with Turkey, it was decided at the instigation of Curzon that Britain, France and Italy would send one battalion to Batum to prevent the immediate disorder. It was further agreed that Batum should be a free port in

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[1]FO 371/4932.E 133/1/58, 4 February 1920. A memorandum by R. McDonell on Transcaucasia and the evacuation of Batum.

[2]FO 371/3673/178023/ME.58, February 11, 1920. A memorandum by Curzon on the Evacuation of Batum.

[3]CAB 23/20/Cabinet 11 (20), 18 February 1920, Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet. The Cabinet decided that Curzon should propose to the Supreme Council that a mixed international force under British control should be formed at once at Batum, and should hold the town pending its transference to the League of Nations; and pending a decision on this proposal, the evacuation of Batum should proceed no further.
The Foreign Office considered only two alternatives in regard of the disposal of Batum if the British forces withdrew: either to hand it over to the Georgians or to internationalise the port and surrounding zone under the protection of the League of Nations. Because of Turkish and Russian intrigues and the weakness of the Georgians in match with them, and the stabilising effect of an international control ensuring free and safe communication for all concerned the Foreign Office preferred the second option. Lord Hardinge, however, doubted the capacity of the League. See A memorandum of 16 February 1920 drawn up by the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office in FO 371/4932/E 1239/1/58, February 16, 1920.

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Georgia, with the latter guaranteeing access to Azerbaijan and Armenia under League supervision.[1]

The disposal of Batum was the main issue when Lord Curzon tried to persuade the Armenians, the Azerbaijanis and the Georgians to confederate during the San Remo Conference of the Allies in April 1920. At a meeting of the Supreme Council of April 20, Lord Curzon explained to the Council that the best method to meet the demands of the local populations was to obtain common agreement between Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Georgians claimed Batum as part of their territory; the Armenians needed it as a means of access to the Sea; and Azerbaijan was greatly interested, seeing that Batum was the one port from which the oil of Baku was exported to Europe. R. Vansittart, on behalf of the British Foreign Office, had had several interviews with the representatives of the three States. He had brought great pressure to bear upon them, and was on the verge of obtaining an agreement, according to which Batum should remain a part of Georgia, but that free access to the port should be guaranteed to Armenia and Azerbaijan.[2] Vansittart's great efforts to induce the Caucasian delegations to come to an agreement received strong support from the Azerbaijani and Armenian Delegations. A draft agreement was even drawn up and provisionally signed but was afterwards repudiated by the Georgians.[3] Even Lord Curzon's threat that unless the Georgians came to terms his interest in the fortunes of Georgia would be greatly diminished and he would lose his incentive to bestir himself further for their protection did not persuade the Georgian Delegation to change their mind.[4]

The Caucasian nations, consequently, missed an important opportunity to maintain their independent existence with the help of Britain and her Allies. If they confederated and appealed together to the Allies conjointly there was a strong possibility of receiving full support from the Allies. As noted earlier, the War Office was determined not to provide any military assistance to Georgia and Azerbaijan. Although their reasons were lack of time and a possible scramble on the part of the Republics, it appears that the real reasons were lack of political will and determination on the part of the three States to stand together against the Bolsheviks, and the petty but constant border

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[1]Brinkley, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

[2]CAB 29/85/I.C.P. -98, April 20, 1920. Notes of a meeting of the Supreme Council held at the Villa Devachon, San Remo.

[3]FO 371/4936/E 3963/55/58, April 28, 1920, Lord Curzon to Wardrop (Tiflis).

[4]*Ibid.* See also Z. Avalishvili (Avalov), *The Independence of Georgia in International Politics 1918-21*, London: Headley, 1940. (Originally published in Russian in Paris, 1924), pp. 241-55, and D. M. Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia, op. cit.*, p. 222.

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conflicts between them resulting in perpetual instability, thus inviting bigger powers around them to intervene. Therefore, one might possibly say that if the Republics had signed an agreement and indicated their determination to construct a common front against the Bolshevik and Turkish threat, Lord Curzon who had consistently endorsed their being given a chance to maintain their political independence might have had a stronger lever to press upon the War Office and the Cabinet to back up these little States. Great Britain could also easily have persuaded her Allies to take the same course.

The news of the failure of the negotiations apparently immediately reached the Bolshevik Russians who perceiving that the Allies had abandoned the Republics invaded Azerbaijan on 28 April 1920 with the help of the pro-Turk opposition party Ittihad.[1] Perhaps the Bolsheviks were afraid that the Allies might decide to give substantial assistance to the Republics and thus deprive them of access to Baku oil. Whatever the reason, the attitude of the Allies of not encouraging the Caucasians to be ready to defend themselves by armed force since the fall of Denikin at the end of 1919 appears to have been a good indication to the Bolsheviks that the region had been left to their sphere of influence. [2]

The End of British Policy

Following the failure in San Remo and the Sovietisation of Azerbaijan, British policy in Caucasia came almost to an end. No change of policy took place towards Georgia and Armenia as regards Bolshevik and Turkish threats. An independent Armenia with a considerable extent of territory in Eastern Turkey to be determined by the President of the United States and under the protection of the League of Nations had been decided by the Supreme Council at the San Remo Conference.[3] Nevertheless, the Council of the League made clear to the Supreme Council of the Alliance that

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[1]FO 371/4943/E 8641/1/58, July 21, 1920, Commander Luke to Curzon, June 22, 1920, transmitting a report on Sovietisation of Azerbaijan on 28 April 1920. Arnold J. Toynbee, *Relations Between Soviet Russia, the Transcaucasian Republics, and Turkey from the Armistice of Mudros (30 October 1918) to the Signature of the Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923)*, in A. J. Toynbee *Survey of International Affairs 1920-1923*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1925, p. 366. Arslanian argues that British policy helped demoralize the armed forces of the Republics thereby easing or hastening their fall to the Bolsheviks. See A. H. Arslanian, *Britain and the Transcaucasian Nationalities during the Russian Civil War*, in R. G. Sunny, (ed); *Transcaucasia, op. cit.*, p. 304, Swietochowski, *The Himmat Party, op. cit.*, p. 133, Kazemzadeh, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

[2]Bülent Gökay, *Turkish Settlement and the Caucasus, 1918-20*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.32, number.2, 1996, pp. 65-6.

[3]CAB 29/87/I.C.P. 109, Appendix V, A meeting of the Supreme Council, San Remo, April 26, 1920.

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the League did not possess the financial resources required to set up the proposed Armenian State or the military forces required to defend it, and that it was powerless to find a solution for Armenia's need of an outlet to the sea.[1]

Since the very territories that Armenia was supposed to annex, such as Van, Bitlis, Erzurum and Trabzon, had been under Turkish forces' control, the need for military forces and, therefore, financial requirements were quite substantial and no Power was prepared to provide either the troops nor money. Although Curzon tried to persuade France and Italy to endorse a plan to create a larger Armenia he failed. Francesco Nitti, the Italian Prime Minister, stated that Mustafa Kemal's forces were difficult to suppress requiring big forces. 'The larger Armenia was to be, he commented, the greater would be its difficulties, more especially if Erzurum, which was not Armenian, were included.'[2] Lord Curzon also faced disagreement with his superior, Lloyd George, who said that Great Britain could supply nothing in terms of military and financial assistance. Yet he asked the Council to give help to train and equip the Armenian forces of 40,000. That was agreed by the Council.

Meanwhile, after a series of arguments by the War Office to withdraw from Batum and of counter-arguments from the Foreign Office[3] it was decided eventually by the British Government on 11 June to hand it over to the Georgians.[4] The two imperial battalions of the 9th Punjabi regiment and the 2nd Durham light infantry regiment in Batum left the city before the end of June 1920.[5]

With this decision, as Lord Hardinge predicted, British policy in the region came to end. The settlement of Transcaucasia was left to the Turks and the Bolshevik Russians who solved the Armenian question in practice in December 1920 when the Turkish Army recovered Kars, Ani, Kagizman, Oltu and other places under the Armenian control in Eastern Turkey and the

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[1]Memorandum agreed to by the Council of the League of Nations meeting in Paris on 11 April 1920, in CAB 29/85/I.C.P. 98.

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]See FO 371/4936/E 4120/1/58, 2 May 1920, WO to FO, transmitting a copy of their telegram to General Milne authorising him to evacuate Batum if and when he thought fit to save a disaster, and the minutes of the FO staff. Lord Hardinge, for instance, noting that 'to evacuate Batum will be the end of our policy in the Caucasus and will undoubtedly have regrettable results in the East.' See also a letter of Lord Curzon, June 2, 1920, to the War Office requesting postponing of the withdrawal on political grounds in FO 371/4939/E 5700/1/58, 2 June 1920, FO to WO.

[4]CAB 23/21/Cabinet 35 (2), 11 June 1920.

[5]Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. III, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-105, Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran, op. cit.*, p. 24.

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Russians intervened in Armenia and established a Bolshevik regime at the same time.[1]

A similar fate was shared by Georgia which came under attack by the Soviet Russians in late February, ending in Sovietisation of the Country in March. The appeals of the Georgian Government to whom Great Britain had just granted *de jure* recognition on 18 February 1921 for assistance were refused again by the War Office.[2]

The London Conference in February - March 1921, called to secure an agreement with Turkey, failed to reach its object. Yet a significant official contact with the forces of Mustafa Kemal was established and various issues were negotiated. One of the matters negotiated was related to the Caucasus. At the time of the Conference, in addition to the Georgian delegation, all the members of the delegations of previous non-Bolshevik Governments of Azerbaijan, Armenia and as well as Daghestan had come to London in agreement between themselves that the policy they should follow was to come to an agreement with the Turkish Government in Ankara. A friendly Turkey, allied to and supporting the four Caucasian States, would create the required

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[1]The main reason for the Turkish advance into Armenia appeared to be the signature of the Sevres Treaty of the Allies with the Ottoman Government's Delegation on 10 August 1920 which demanded that Turkey recognise Armenia as a free and independent State with territorial extensions to be arbitrated by President Wilson at the expense of Turkey. As a result of their advance, the Turkish authorities, in addition to territorial recovery, received renunciation of the Treaty of Sevres by the Armenian Government. See Fo 371/4966/E 15522/134/58, 10 December 1920, Colonel; Stokes (Tiflis) to Earl Curzon, November 22, 1920, reporting on the Turkish military activities.
By August 24, 1920, Bekir Sami, first Turkish Foreign Minister, had reached sufficient agreement in Moscow to initial a draft treaty but the formal signing was delayed for seven months by considerable friction over the Transcaucasian region. During the winter of 1920, Moscow and Ankara co-operated to exclude all Western Powers from the settlement of the area; but competed in extending their own control. R. Davison, *Turkish Diplomacy from Mudros to Lausanne* in G. Craig and F. Gilbert, (eds), *The Diplomats 1919-1939*, Princeton University Press, Princeton , New Jersey, 1953, p. 185-6; Hovannisian, *The Allies and Armenia, 1915-1918*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.3, (Jan. 1968), pp. 138, 144; Hovannisian, *Armenia and the Caucasus in the Genesis of the Soviet-Turkish Entente*, *IJMES* , 4(1973), p. 129: Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 229; Toynbee, *Relations between Soviet Russia, the Transcaucasian Republics and Turkey from the Armistice of Mudros (30 October 1918) to the Signature of the Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923)*, in Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1920-1923, op. cit.*, p. 368; Carr, vol.II, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-7, Kazemzadeh, *op. cit.*, pp. 286-290.

[2]FO 371/6271/E 3271/56/58, 25 February 1921, WO to FO, an intelligence report from Constantinople describing the proceedings of an unofficial conference of the Council of People's Commissars, Moscow, 24 February 1921. The immediate reason for the Bolshevik attack was the possibility of the Turks coming to an agreement with the Allies against the Bolsheviks at the London Conference in February-March 1921. Secondly, an independent Georgia was considered to be a source of encouragement for other Sovietised peoples in the Caucasus. Lastly, Georgia was a base from which the Entente could operate its intrigues. The Georgian Government surrendered to the Bolsheviks on 18 March 1921 by making an agreement. See also Carr, vol.II, *Op. Cit*, p. 349, Lang, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-6.

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buffer between Russia and the British East friendly to the Entente and eliminating Bolshevik influence in Persia.[1]

Bekir Sami Bey, head of the Ankara Delegation to the Conference, had shared the views of the Caucasian representatives. Although the Turkish Government in Ankara did not want any Pan-Turanian or Pan-Islamist policy, for practical purposes he considered the Caucasus a neutral barrier against the Russians whether Bolshevik or not. He assured Lloyd George that it was Turkey's desire to see an independent Confederation of the Transcaucasian States, including Armenia and Daghestan. The British Prime Minister expressed his agreement with him that the barrier of Turkey together with a Confederation of Caucasia was in the interests of both Turkey and Great Britain.[2]

The ground in Transcaucasia was considered ready for this possible project. Since Georgia was attacked by the Red Army, Colonel Stokes in Tiflis had reported that if Georgian troops advanced into Azerbaijan and North Caucasus whole populations in Caucasia would turn against the Bolsheviks. He, therefore, urged that the moment was most favourable for securing expulsion of the Bolsheviks from the Caucasus for which, however, the first requisite was the detachment of the Turkish Nationalists from the Bolsheviks by securing agreement with the Allies.[3] Lord Curzon, too, considered this proposal with approval. He thought that if the Caucasian States were in a position to cooperate and if they were to make friends with the Turks, that would be a greatly preferable alternative to their remaining or falling 'under the heels of the Bolsheviks.'[4]

Even at the Cabinet meeting, Lloyd George expressed his opinion that Mustafa Kemal was really looking towards the East rather than to the West. He thought that Mustafa Kemal was basing his strength in Azerbaijan and enquired from the Cabinet if he could be encouraged in that direction. Azerbaijan could not possibly remain independent, and would have to be either

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[1]FO 371/6268/E 2201/55/58, 19 February 1921, See McDonell's Memorandum of his interview with Mechieff, representative of Azerbaijan Government in exile in London, reporting the agreement drawn up by the members of the Caucasian delegations and asking the approval of HMG.

[2]CAB 29/91/J.A.-172.B., March 4, 1921, Notes of Meeting between Lloyd George and Bekir Sami, held at 10 Downing Street.

[3]FO 371/6268/E 2201/55/58, February 19, 1921, Colonel Stokes (Tiflis) to FO, 15 February 1921. Stokes also reported that a meeting of Bolshevik authorities at Baku decided on 15 February to be ready for a conflict with the Turks if the Turks secured agreement with the Entente, and at the same time be ready for crushing of Georgia.

[4]*Ibid.* See his minute of 20 February 1921.

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Turkish or Bolshevik. Lord Curzon supported his view and reminded the Cabinet that a large portion of Azerbaijan was Turkish and Muhammedan, and their presence would create less harm to Britain than that of the Bolsheviks.[1] In other words, they seemed to be ready to compromise with Mustafa Kemal Pasha to let him acquire Azerbaijan in return for which he would side with the Entente against Soviet Russia.

In fact, this was a view apparently taken and strongly endorsed by the War Office and especially by the Chief of General Staff, H. Wilson. When, for instance, the Foreign Office requested from the War Office the supply of military material to Armenia and Georgia on 17 November 1920, the War Office refused to provision Georgia on the grounds that no useful purpose would be served by doing so. The Army Council of the War Office, however, submitted that if HMG reconsidered their policy towards Turkey with a view to the creation of a buffer state against Russia the Council would view military support of Georgia in a totally different light.[2] The Army Council considered that Georgia, with the cooperation of Turkey, which in its turn would require Allied stiffening, might be able to present effective resistance to a Bolshevik advance into Transcaucasia, and might even secure the cooperation of Azerbaijan, then Sovietised. The political adjustments which might be necessary in such case as regards Batum and Armenia were the concern of the Foreign Office. But, without a friendly base in Turkey, such assistance to Georgia would prove fruitless.[3] In the light of this letter, the reason seem very clear behind the War Office's consistent refusal of provisions to the Republics.

The mood during the London Conference of February-March 1921 was, therefore, in favour of making a deal with the Ankara Government. The deal, nevertheless, was not realised because the questions of Smyrna and Thrace, which were under Greek occupation, proved a serious obstacle to bringing the Turkish and Greek sides to a compromise.[4] When it was clear that the London Conference had failed to achieve a settlement, another Turkish delegation of the Ankara Government in Moscow signed a friendship Treaty with Soviet

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[1]CAB 23/24/14-Appendix 1(3), 18 February 1921, Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, held in Bonar Law's room, House of Commons.

[2]FO 371/4964/E 14649/134/58, November 24, 1920, WO to FO.

[3]*Ibid.* Osborne considered the view of the War office as to what should happen in the future. But the latter implied the suppression of Armenia and giving of Batum to Turkey which were, he thought, impossible. He noted that 'it is practically an offer to us to arm Georgia if we will revise the Treaty (of Sevres) in favour of Turkey.' See his minute of 25.11.1920. Tilley also pointed out that 'it is primarily a plea for revision of the Turkish Treaty and the intention of policy founded on friendship with Turkey.' See his minute of 26 November 1920.

[4]R. S. Sonyel, Turkish Diplomacy, 1918-1923, London: Sage Publications, 1975, pp. 105-107.

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Russia on 16 March 1921. Accordingly the Treaty which sealed the fate of the Transcaucasian Republics gave Turkey Kars, Ardahan and small towns that had been under Armenian control until the Turkish advance in December and most of Batum province except the town to Turkey.[1] This treaty was renewed and signed between Turkey and the Soviet Republics of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan as well as Russia in Kars on 13 October 1921.[2] (See map 2 on page 397).

In conclusion, one can say that the mere *de facto* recognition of the Republics did not help them to maintain their independent existence in the face of the Bolshevik threat. Great Britain and the Allies, though agreeing in principle to assist the Republics militarily, failed to endeavour to make a real attempt to rescue them from falling under the Bolsheviks' yoke. This result inevitably brought to an end to the British policy in Transcaucasia.

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[1]For full text of the treaty see FO 371/6272/E 5810/116/58, May 20, 1921, DMI to FO, a copy of official text of Moscow treaty. On the same day Russia signed a trade treaty with Britain. The Turkish Delegation was headed by Foreign Minister of Ankara Government, Yusuf Kemal Bey. See Toynbee, *Relations Between Soviet Russia, the Transcaucasian Republics, and Turkey,* in A. J. Toynbee Survey of International Affairs 1920-1923, *op. cit.,* p. 370; Sonyel, *op. cit.,* pp. 57-8, 63-5.

[2]For full text of Kars Treaty see FO 371/6274/E 13062/116/58, November 28, 1921, Sir H. Rumbold (Constantinople) to FO, November 22, 1921. See also Sonyel, *op. cit.,* pp. 128-130.

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9

CONCLUSION

Transcaucasia had never received the attention of Great Britain to the extent that it did in the period of 1917 to 1921 covered in this study. It had always been a consideration of regional big Powers such as Russia, Turkey and Iran. Even in the greater part of the Great War it had not carried any significance for British civil and military authorities.

The Russian Revolution, however, transformed dramatically the course of the war on the Eastern Front including Caucasia, in late 1917. The Central Powers of Germany and the Ottoman Empire found themselves in a position to move forward to the Caspian Sea, with a strong prospect of advancing as far as India's northern frontiers. This unexpected and, from the British point of view, unfortunate development which was in the main detrimental to British interests in the East led to the involvement of Britain in the defence of the Caucasus, and the shaping of the political fate of the Caucasian Republics of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Daghestan.

British policy in Transcaucasia may be divided into two parts: the first part is the war period and the second part is the postwar period. The war period, that may be subdivided into two sections, was inevitably dominated by military and strategic considerations. The first section was the period from late 1917 to mid-1918 in which Britain had plans to stop the enemy before the Caucasus. In this period the British authorities, desperate to find ways to prevent an advance of the enemy, first hoped to keep the Russians at the front by meeting their financial and military needs. But the Russians, who had lost their discipline and most of all their will to fight, proved to be no answer for the British hope. The Georgians and Armenians, who had indicated their willingness to defend the territories captured by the Russians earlier in the war, were the British authorities' second hope. Yet a British mission comprising officers to train and instruct local forces and supply military equipment failed to reach Tiflis in February 1918. Moreover, a rapid Turkish advance round the same time proved to be decisive, reaching Batum within a very short time and ending any prospect of employment of local forces by Britain. A third hope shared the fate of the first two schemes. A federation of

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Rumania, the Ukraine, the Cossacks of the North Caucasus and the Transcaucasus Republics was to establish a Southern Block against the Bolsheviks from Central and North Russia and against Germany and Turkey from the West. Yet before anything could be realised in practice, the rapid military advance of Germany and Turkey resulted in these countries coming under their control.

When any hope of meeting the enemy before the Caucasus had evaporated, the second division of the war period came into existence: that is to say to stop the enemy before North West Persia and the Caspian Sea. To achieve this object Dunsterforce and the Malleson Mission were stationed in North West Persia and Krasnovodsk respectively. The control of the Caspian Sea was to be in British hands. Yet the Turks who had taken control of Baku from a British-led defence chose to move forward to the North West Caspian coast where Britain had no effective means to hinder the enemy. London became very anxious since the fall of Baku had a substantial impact in Iran and Afghanistan. Although there was a real prospect of an advance beyond the Caspian by the Central Powers, developments on the Western Front helped Britain to relieve her anxiety as the Central Powers surrendered.

With the end of the Great War the British Government found it necessary to occupy the Transcaucasian Republics in order to coerce the Turks who were inclined to resist the demands of the Mudros Armistice to evacuate places beyond the 1914 Turko-Russian frontier in order to comply with the terms of the Armistice. With the occupation of Transcaucasia at the end of the war the first period of British policy ended.

The postwar period of British policy in Transcaucasia was largely dominated by political considerations. First, as seen in chapter five, the future of the region was thought of as separated from Russia, at least for the foreseeable future. That was because of the perception that Russia was in a state of civil war from which it would take years for her to re-emerge as a great Power. The long discussions of the Eastern Committee took place within this perception, leading to the result that the British Government desired to see independent Republics in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Daghestan. Armenia had already been taken for granted as an independent, and most possibly enlarged, Republic. The main consideration of the leading members of the Committee, most of whom were also Cabinet members, was the safety of the British Empire rather than the well-being of these Republics. As seen in chapter 5 section 6.1. and 6.2., Transcaucasia was given a role to help

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maintain the interests of the British Empire by almost every member of the Committee who had expressed a view as regards its future disposal. Lord Robert Cecil, for instance, reckoned that Transcaucasia might provide a good bargaining counter to persuade France to compromise in Syria and Mesopotamia (northern Iraq) which were substantial areas of British interests in the Middle East. French control, moreover, while helping in the establishment of a greater Armenia from Erivan to Cilicia on the Mediterranean, which would also impose an immense financial and military burden, was needed to curb Turkish influence in the immediate Arab provinces as well as Turkish populated parts of Iran and Caucasia where it was essential to safeguard British interests from Turkish intrigues. Lord Curzon, on the other hand, thought that British control was not only preferable but strongly desirable because of his mistrust of France which was Britain's main rival and might pose a great danger to Great Britain in the Middle East if she were allowed to take control of large territories from the Mediterranean to the Caspian Sea. His most important consideration was, in addition, the safety of Britain's Eastern Empire rather than the future well-being of the Caucasian Republics. Nevertheless, they might be justified in thinking in this context if the circumstances of the international environment that existed at the beginning of the last phase of imperial culture are taken into account.

Although a desire for the independence of the Republics had been expressed by the British Government the fact on the ground, however, was that no encouragement to the Republics to secure their independence was given until the Bolshevik menace appeared before the republics whose resistance was thought likely to be stiffened by a *de facto* recognition. Not only did the British Government grant *de facto* recognition to the Republics quite late but also withdrew its military forces from Caucasia quite prematurely. As analyzed in chapter 7, to maintain the political existence of the Transcaucasian Republics it was requisite for British forces to remain in the region in order to allow some other credible country's forces to replace British forces. Yet the withdrawal took place as a result of substantial pressure from the War Office which put forward military reasons for it such as the need for troops at home, in Ireland and in Egypt. Although the military necessities of withdrawal are impossible to ignore, it seems to the writer that the real reason was to do with political considerations that were related to the Russian civil war. When the War Office demanded withdrawal in early spring, the white forces of Admiral Alexander V. Kolchak and General Anton I. Denikin were in a strong position with the prospect of an easy advance on Moscow. In the north Caucasus Denikin had established himself powerfully enough to be

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in a position to seize the Republics of the former Russian provinces of Transcaucasia. In addition to this, the Republics themselves proved to be unable to safeguard their stability as a consequence of the constant border disputes between themselves. Lastly, and most importantly, the conviction strongly held by Winston Churchill, as Secretary of State for War, that the Bolsheviks should be crushed by the only possible means, i.e., military action, and his confidence in Denikin's ability to realise this object had apparently resulted in the abandonment of the Republics to Denikin, whose political programme for the future was dominated by the idea of an undivided and great Russia. Therefore, the impact of Churchill and the War Office's policy of championing Denikin's campaign resulted inevitably in supporting his political programme which would require the Republics to come under Russian domination again. In his arguments at the Eastern Committee as well in the Cabinet Churchill reflected this view in general and considered the reason for British military and political involvement in Transcaucasia as being only to keep Denikin's rear in order rather than to encourage the establishment of independent states. His view, inevitably, affected the senior members of the General Staff, one of whom was Field-Marshal H. Wilson, Chief of General Imperial Staff. If one remembers, Lord Kitchener, predecessor of Churchill at the War Office, had been in agreement with Curzon that the French should be kept out of Transcaucasia and that British control should be maintained there. General Wilson had also voiced his strong agreement with his immediate political superior and Curzon in December 1918.

The view taken by the War Office influenced to some extent the Foreign Office, a majority of whom approached the Republics with sympathy. From the minutes of most officials it seems quite clear that the Foreign Office was in favour of the separation of the Caucasus from future Russia. Yet the effect of the White Army's future prospects as well as its supporters in London hindered an open policy on the part of the Foreign Office to champion the cause of the Caucasian Republics' becoming independent. It has been seen that some senior officials such as Prof. Simpson and G. Kidston, advocated a policy of promoting Caucasian independence which would accord with British interests. Although Lord Curzon himself was in favour of this policy he was left by and large alone in the Cabinet to advocate it.

Most officials who had not been happy with the failure of the British Government to back up these states always complained of the same thing: the indecisiveness of His Majesty's Government as regards the political fate of Transcaucasia. Indeed, from late 1918 to the beginning of 1920 the British

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decision-making authorities found themselves in a complicated situation: while they were supporting the Volunteer Army in the Caucasus, they were also in sympathy with the national aspirations of the Republics. When this indecision came to an end in early 1920 it was not that the British Government itself solved it, but it was a result of an outside development, i.e., the defeat of Denikin and the Bolshevik threat to Transcaucasia and through this to British interests in Persia and Mesopotamia.

This new development, nevertheless, in a short time resulted in the replacement of the previous hesitation of the British Government to endorse Georgia and Azerbaijan with a new unwillingness to bolster these Republics at this time against the Bolshevik Russians. Lord Curzon advocated a powerful intervention by Britain in Caucasia while the War Office and especially the General Staff refused to do so. Instead, the War Office indicated that the ability of the British military establishment was limited to defending only a line north from Palestine through Mosul across southern Persia to Meshed in the East. Lloyd George was not very helpful in clearing the air since he failed to support any side or to frame another clear policy. In the face of this, the *de facto* recognition granted to the three Republics in January 1920 by the Allies at the instigation of Lord Curzon did not bring any comfort to the Republics whose need for military and financial assistance was much more urgent than a mere *de facto* recognition. A late attempt on the part the British Government to arrange an agreement with the Turkey of Mustafa Kemal Pasha to organise an effective defence of the Transcaucasian Republics, supposed to be federated, also proved abortive.

It was true that the British Imperial Administration was overburdened by nationalist rebellions and separatist movements as well as social unrest at home, therefore making it difficult to spare military forces to anywhere deemed not vital to Britain. However, the same administration was able to meet the immense needs of the White Army, militarily and financially, in order to suppress the Bolsheviks. If there was a real political will to bolster up these Republics to stand by themselves, it would not be an impossible task for Britain. The lack of troops and financial resources, two main reasons put forward by the advocators of disengagement from Caucasia, would have been easy to overcome if there had been a real political will to keep these regions under British protection. It was quite possible, as suggested by several military and civil officials, to establish a local force under British officers for the purpose of maintaining law and order as had been the case with some parts of British Empire such as India. As regards the financial costs of remaining in

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Transcaucasia, the resources of the region were quite sufficient to meet the financial expenses. Batum, under a British governor-general, for instance, provided a good example of this in that through taxation of trade at the port, mainly oil, not only was the governor able to obtain enough money for British expenses in the town but also he was able to obtain surplus revenue.

One possible reason for this indecision of the British Government was the fact that Great Britain had largely reached her aims after the war: Germany had now been defeated and reduced to a position in which she would not be able to challenge British supremacy for the foreseeable future. Secondly, in addition to German colonies in Africa and elsewhere, the most precious parts of the Ottoman Empire were now under British control. In other words, Britain was more than satisfied with what she had acquired. Moreover, the fact that Russia had fought on the British side for the greater part of the war carried some degree of influence upon the British administration to respect Russia's territorial integrity. The Russian Revolution, furthermore, had brought unexpected problems for Britain to deal with, one of which was the future of Caucasia. The policy-making circles which were quite busy enough with the settlement of the German question and the partition of the Ottoman Empire which had already been planned earlier were not prepared to handle the complications brought to the fore by the Russian Revolution. Finally and most importantly, it was feared by British Government officials that decisive action on the part of Britain to help the separation of Transcaucasia, whose Baku oil was thought to be indispensable to Russian industry, from Russia would involve future conflict with a renewed Russia, Bolshevik or non-Bolshevik. This attitude inevitably strengthened the lack of political will towards Caucasia.

This unwillingness to take responsibility for the defence of the Republics was sufficient encouragement for the Bolshevik Russians to step in and reestablish Russian authority in the region in 1920 and 1921, hence bringing British policy to an end. Thus Great Britain, which had been in a unique position to frame the future fate of the Transcaucasian Republics as independent political bodies, preferred to act indecisively.

To sum up, it is fair to say that the lack of troops and financial resources were only pretexts to avoid taking responsibility in Transcaucasia. The real reason was the lack of political will, largely affected by a fear of future conflict with Russia.

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