

Dear all,

Thank you for reading this piece. This is a first attempt at a draft of the last chapter of my dissertation, on Georgia and the Caucasus (below is a chapter outline). It remains at a very early stage. It is based on research I have been doing for the last three months in Tbilisi and Batumi, as well as other material I gathered earlier in Moscow and in London this June. Some of this material is very recent and could be integrated more effectively into the chapter. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on the chapter and to seeing everyone soon! Thank you again and all the best,

Sam

Dissertation outline:

Introduction

Chapter 1: Warsaw, 1911

Chapter 2: Petrograd, 1917-1918

Chapter 3: Novorossiisk, 1918-1920

Chapter 4: Riga, 1919-1920

**Chapter 5: Tiflis, 1918-1922**

Epilogue: Warsaw, 1933

## Chapter 5: Tiflis, 1918-1922

*Notre petit État est prêt à suivre votre appel sous les glorieux drapeaux de l'Entente.*<sup>1</sup>

*Another Soviet Republic, Another Slap in the Face of the Entente!*<sup>2</sup>

War organized nations into opposing ranks. The statements above were made in December 1918 and April 1921 by the representatives of two independent national governments in the North and South Caucasus, the Georgian Democratic Republic and the Dagestan Soviet Socialist Republic. This chapter explores the common ground on which these statements were based. The British Empire and the Soviet state conducted a struggle over the nations emerging within the territory of the former Russian Empire. Unlike in other areas where new national states were formed after the First World War, in the former Russian Empire war continued. These states developed in a military context. Outwardly, they were shaped by the need to fight in an international military effort alongside either the Soviets or the Entente; internally, they were shaped by an ongoing civil war.

This chapter covers the development of national states in the Caucasus after 1918, in interaction with British military and political officials, and their subsequent incorporation into the Soviet state between 1920 and 1922. The incorporation of these national territories into the Soviet state confirmed, rather than denied, their national character. Though these republics, unlike the Baltic states, were reconquered by Soviet power and transformed into Soviet republics, their creation was a part of the same process as the creation of the independent national states covered in previous chapters.

Centering on Tiflis,<sup>3</sup> where the British High Commission for Transcaucasia was headquartered from 1918-1920, and which would become the capital of Soviet Georgia in 1921, this chapter shows how the tension between military subordination and sovereignty solidified the existence of new states. After

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<sup>1</sup> Delegation du Gouvernement de la Republique Georgienne, to Representative of the Powers of the Entente, Batoum, 18 December 1918, Georgian National Archives, Central Historical Archive [SEA STsA], f1864, op1, d6, L79.

<sup>2</sup> «Еще одна Советская республика, еще одна пощечина Антанте!», *Sovetskii Dagestan* No. 43, 4 April 1921, 1.

<sup>3</sup> I use “Tiflis” here because it was used by all participants in this story, whereas present day “Tbilisi” came into use in the 1930s.

some larger context, I begin the chapter in the Black Sea port of Batumi, where British troops landed in December, 1918. I look first at the way the British were welcomed to Georgia and then at the way the city and the surrounding region were actually governed by British occupying forces. As British forces were invited to Tiflis later in December, I follow the establishment of military power there and at garrisons in other places in Georgia. I then provide an account of the sovietization of Georgia that reveals the international concerns that motivated Soviet leaders' local policies. After the British departure, the fear of the return of the Entente was an ever-present threat that preoccupied the Soviet leadership and the Georgian Communist Party (KPG). In each of these moments, I focus on debates over the movement and stationing of troops in national territories.

In Batumi and Tiflis, British authorities took on the functions of local government as occupying forces. At a higher level, British officials sought to dictate the use of Georgian territory for the movement and organization of troops and military material. When the Soviet advance defeated Denikin in South Russia and brought the frontier to the North Caucasus in early 1920, establishing new Soviet national republics as it went, the Soviet government tried to ensure that independent Georgia would not be used for the further organization of anti-Soviet forces from the British-led Entente or the White governments. At the same time, the Georgian state attempted to keep Soviet influence outside of its borders and maintain the support of the Allies. A bilateral treaty between Georgia and the Soviet state and the year-long struggle over its enforcement cemented this situation of national recognition through the possibility of foreign occupation. After the Soviet conquest of Georgia in February 1921, the organization of local Soviet power in this new national republic aimed at erasing the damage perceived to have been done by the Entente and eliminating vulnerable openings through which they might return. The question of the movement and harboring of troops dominated discussion at each of these moments.

The physical movement of troops and military material across national territory both tested and underlined its national character. It raised material questions about lodging, food, the management of

roads and railroads, and the coordination of forces. Solving these issues delegated some state capacities to national governments and challenged other attributes of their sovereignty. The question of the movement of troops was inherently international, as it entailed coordination between states and was oriented toward an external enemy. At the same time, provisioning and transporting foreign troops produced internal issues which had to be addressed by local authorities.

There were limits to the organization of this military effort. The above statements of welcome, and others like them, turned to protests over the use of sovereign territory. Soldiers overstayed their welcome. National leaders demanded that foreign military forces be withdrawn. At the same time, British and Soviet forces claimed they were necessary to protect independent nations from invasion. In the north and south Caucasus, the tension between the Soviet guarantee of national self-determination and the need to protect new nations from other imperial powers emerged even more strongly than elsewhere.

This is where the international and the local dimensions of the creation of new national states came together most clearly. Because of the importance of winning the local population over to Soviet power—crucial in view of the international stakes of the revolution and the international threats it faced—the Soviet state sought to gain familiarity with the territory it governed, needed local representatives who knew the territory and its conditions well, and produced knowledge about these territories. A feedback loop was created between the perceived need to defend Georgian territory from an external threat, the KPG's awareness of its lack of knowledge of local conditions, directives for knowledge production about local areas to address this deficiency, and the consolidation of territories and populations defined through this new knowledge as objects threatened by the imperialism of the Entente. The more locally Soviet and Party officials looked, the more international the stakes became.

This chapter uses diplomatic communications over the movement of troops as well as administrative records from British and Soviet occupying forces and political missions. These negotiations, petitions, proclamations, and orders differ from diplomatic cables and from debates over national

aspirations at the Paris Peace Conference. They provide a material counterpart to narratives of the postwar order based on popular discourses.<sup>4</sup> These materials show diplomatic activity happening on the ground, among autonomous local officials without official diplomatic authority, and highlight the close entanglement of diplomatic and military recognition.

In the Georgian Democratic Republic, the British found an independent national state that was more resistant than any other they had dealt with. Unlike in Latvia and Estonia and unlike General Denikin's government in South Russia, where British High Commissioners and Generals were present at the founding of the new states, the Georgian government had already maintained itself as an independent national state without British and Allied aid. The leaders of the government and their representatives in Europe—Prime Minister Noe Zhordania, Minister of Foreign Affairs Evgeni Gegechkori, President of the Georgian delegation in Paris Nikoloz Chkheidze—had a strong sense of their independence and their unique mission both as defenders of their nation and, as Social Democrats, as preservers of the true revolution of February 1917. As Zhordania put it to the Commander of British Forces in Transcaucasia, the Georgian government had to maintain a “double cautiousness” (*dvoynuiu ostorozhnost'* [sic]) against both the Bolsheviks and Russian reactionaries, “so as not to allow an action that might undermine the heavy responsibility of the government before the people [*pered narodom*].”<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, the British military administration in Georgia required some of the most materially significant, immediately necessary, and strategically vital concessions of any site of British intervention in the former Russian Empire. Because British objectives required the movement and billeting of large numbers of troops and direct coordination with other military forces on Georgian territory, they impinged on fundamental aspects of Georgian sovereignty. Georgia came closest to direct British occupation of any site in the former Russian Empire apart from Archangel. British Missions in the

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<sup>4</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Zhordania to Commander of the British Forces in Transcaucasia, 12 June 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L21-21ob.

Caucasus not only helped mediate between emerging governments and imagine new spaces as national states, they required the direct use of national territory and resources. Paradoxically, the difficulty of working with the Georgian state and the severity of British demands relative to the British intervention in the Baltic extended the logic of national recognition and territorial delimitation that had developed there. The state and state territory became more real to the extent that the British needed to use this territory and suspend Georgian sovereignty.

### **The British Mission in Batumi**

The British arrived in Batumi in December 1918, in the immediate aftermath of the Armistice. The British commander for the Caucasus, General Thomson, had already sent some officers to Batumi from Baku by December 4.<sup>6</sup> More officers arrived December 12.<sup>7</sup> Several British ships arrived on December 15 carrying members of the Mission, with the head of the Mission and the remaining staff arriving the next day.<sup>8</sup> The arrival of more squadrons and forces was awaited daily.<sup>9</sup> Ottoman troops continued to occupy large parts of the city. Fourteen thousand Ottoman troops had already left the city and twelve thousand more were still housed there, set to depart.<sup>10</sup> As understood by the Georgian government, the British forces were taking steps to “take Batumi from the Turks.”<sup>11</sup> In November, General Thomson had ordered the Georgian government to take all measures to facilitate the movement of Turkish troops across Georgia to the ports of Batumi and Poti.<sup>12</sup> Upon arrival, British forces seized all Ottoman military property.

The representatives of the Georgian government who met the British in Batumi professed their readiness to join the ranks of the Entente. They employed a language of civilizational struggle similar to

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<sup>6</sup> Delo No. 150 Obshchago Otdela Voennago Ministerstva s doneseniiami diplomaticheskago predstavitel'ia v Batume, Topuridze to War Minister, Notanebi, Secret, [4] December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L24.

<sup>7</sup> Topuridze to War Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, 12 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L24ob.

<sup>8</sup> Topuridze to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 16 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d30, L55; Topuridze to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and War Minister, 16 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L25-28.

<sup>9</sup> Topuridze to War Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, 12 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L24ob.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Topuridze to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and War Minister, 16 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L25-28.

<sup>12</sup> Gegechkori to Mdivani, 18 November 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d31, L15.

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that used by other states who had welcomed the British as protectors and supporters against Bolshevism. Member of Parliament Diomid Topuridze and General Alexander Gedevanov, the Georgian representatives who met the British, gave an account of Georgian history from ancient times through the Georgian kingdom's incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1801, down to the First World War and the Russian Revolution.<sup>13</sup> Georgia had always stood at the eastern edge of the civilized world. Though "The waves of savage and nomadic peoples which swept successively over the following centuries out of the depths of Asia against the west...devastated Georgia many times," Georgia had maintained its independence and remained in cultural and economic contact with "the centers of world civilization," surviving this "incessant and unequal battle with the eastern conquerors which...would not admit the existence of a small Christian state in their path."<sup>14</sup> This historical role was implicitly reflected in Georgia's present-day government. The Republic had saved "the Georgian people from the horrors of Turkish invasion and civil war...[and] established at the same time in Georgia complete order."<sup>15</sup> The Georgian state could now continue fighting in the British-led struggle against the Bolsheviks, as a bulwark against a new threat from the east.

The Georgian government promised the British that they would maintain order within the country and contribute their troops and resources to fighting alongside them against the Soviets. These twin objectives were repeated again and again. In another memorandum to the British representatives in Batumi, the representatives of the Georgian government declared that, animated by the same idea of the liberation of peoples, "the Georgian Republic desires to continue the same task in the ranks of the Powers of the Entente and to fight in the name of triumph in the general goal: the crushing of anarchy and the

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<sup>13</sup> Thopouridze and Guedeveanoff, To the Representatives of the Entente Powers, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d6, L73-78 (handwritten Russian draft version, f1864, op1, d6, L3-8). Similar memoranda were later sent to the Paris Peace Conference and to the British Delegation there; see "Memoire de la Delegation de la Republique Georgienne Presente a la Conference de la Paix," President of the Georgian Delegation N. Chkheidze, 14 March 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/5-19A. See also the appendix on Georgia's borders presented to the Peace Conference, "Annexe I. Frontieres de la Georgie," Tchheidze [Chkheidze], President of the Georgian Delegation, 22 March 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/23-38.

<sup>14</sup> Thopouridze and Guedeveanoff, To the Representatives of the Entente Powers, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d6, L73-78. Georgia in the past had been cut off from Europe, just as it had been cut off from the Entente during the present war.

<sup>15</sup> Thopouridze and Guedeveanoff, To the Representatives of the Entente Powers, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d6, L73-78.

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reestablishment of order.”<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously underlining Georgian independence and submission, they wrote, “Our small state is ready to serve your name under the glorious banners of the Entente.” The “nation will be happy,” they wrote, “if its cooperation in any form can facilitate the task of the Powers of the Entente to reestablish order in the spaces and states bordering the Republic and to create the conditions necessary for economic development and of the civilization of nations.”<sup>17</sup> Georgian leaders expected to continue fighting in a war and wanted to fight on the right side, in the name of the Allies. They expressed a desire to join a British led war effort subject to its aims and objectives. With this in view they also stressed the state’s viability, asserting that “Georgia is a country bringing together all the qualities of a state: an independent sovereign authority, an uncontested territory, with the exception of some border districts, and a population of around 3 million recognizing the established authority.”<sup>18</sup>

Some representatives of the American Mission who had an interview with Topuridze in Batumi were preoccupied with similar concerns. Among many questions about Georgia’s political system and political orientation, they asked Topuridze how many forces the Georgian state could marshal to maintain internal order and whether it could withstand a Bolshevik attack from the north. Topuridze replied that the Georgian government had already successfully dealt with internal disorder and external Bolshevik attack.<sup>19</sup> They pressed Topuridze on the socialist sympathies of the Georgian government, the ubiquitous presence of red flags, and whether the government desired to continue the social revolution.<sup>20</sup> Strikingly, noting that “You know that Britain and America appear as friends in the matter of the pursuit of famous principles and the plan of the establishment of order in the whole world,” the American representatives told Topuridze, “we would like to know if you could BE USEFUL TO BRITAIN and could become [a partner]

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<sup>16</sup> Delegation du Gouvernement de la Republique Georgienne, to Representative of the Powers of the Entente, Batoum, 18 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d6, L79.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Topuridze and Guedevanoff, To the Representatives of the Entente Powers, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d6, L73-78.

<sup>19</sup> Topuridze to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and War Minister, 16 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L25-28.

<sup>20</sup> The American representatives seemed unable to distinguish between different types of socialists. Many of their questions amounted to asking Topuridze if he was sure the Georgians weren’t Bolsheviks.



IN OUR STRUGGLE AGAINST THE BOLSHEVIKS and for the establishment of order.”<sup>21</sup> Topuridze replied that although he did not have direct orders from the government on this question, “I dare say that from our side that WITH ALL OUR ABILITIES AND ALL OUR STRENGTH our Republic will assist the Powers of the Entente in the struggle against the Bolsheviks and in the establishment of order.” At least in Topuridze’s account, the American representatives did not ask about Georgian national history or the country’s ethnic composition. They asked about political questions. They wanted to know about immediate political trends and Georgia’s political reliability in the present and the near future. On behalf of the British, they asked the Georgian representative about Georgia’s readiness and capacity to contribute to a British-led war effort against the Soviet state and to maintain order within its territory.<sup>22</sup> The self-determination of Georgia was subject to its suitability for this larger British struggle.<sup>23</sup> American support for Georgian nationhood in Europe was secondary to British military and political aims.<sup>24</sup>

At lunches, meetings, and concerts, representatives of the Georgian government assured the British representatives of their nation’s ability to contribute and its future political viability.<sup>25</sup> Topuridze played down the social radicalism of the government, acknowledging that while wages were high, most Georgian workers understood that this made conditions difficult for capital and had to be adjusted. Looking to the longer term, Topuridze “said that Anglo-American capital, in my opinion, should find in Georgia profitable application for itself...without breaking the interests of the Georgian republic.”<sup>26</sup> Working for the British in exchange for British support meant making changes to ensure internal order.

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<sup>21</sup> Topuridze to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and War Minister, 16 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L25-28. Topuridze’s capitalization.

<sup>22</sup> The American commission also asked about Georgian sentiment toward Britain and the state’s feelings toward having Britain as a neighbor; Topuridze to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and War Minister, 16 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L25-28.

<sup>23</sup> Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*; Arno Mayer, *Wilson Versus Lenin*; Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.

<sup>24</sup> Of course, American representatives did not always cooperate with the British. Colonel William Haskell, the main US representative in the Caucasus, Allied Commissioner in Armenia, and an official for the American Relief Administration, later attempted to interfere in the relations between Georgian and Armenia and between Georgia and Denikin, against the wishes of the British missions and the FO; TNA FO 608/273/172-179. For more on Haskell and relief programs within Russia in 1921, see Bertrand Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand*.

<sup>25</sup> Delo No. 150 Obshchago Otdela Voennago Ministerstva s doneseniami diplomaticheskago predstavitel’ia v Batume, Topuridze to War Minister, Notanebi, Secret, [4] December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L24.

<sup>26</sup> Topuridze to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and War Minister, 16 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L25-28.

Topuridze told the War and Foreign Ministers what Georgia could gain from cooperating with the Entente, suggesting that they might be able to ask for a “guarantee of our borders by the powers of the Entente from attempts from any side” and, second, “financial support to us in the sense of opening credit.”<sup>27</sup> Batumi’s Mayor also welcomed the British representatives, lamenting the decline of the city under Ottoman occupation but noting hopefully that “Your arrival, your flowing banners, will be symbols of liberty, symbols of the deliverance of peoples from servility, symbols of how this civilization temporarily defeated will be reborn in the present.”<sup>28</sup>

These professions of faith and service of the Georgian representatives, organized around British prestige, required the organization of basic government services. The highflown rhetoric of self-determination meant nothing without a working sewage system. Georgian independence had to be backed by British forces housed in physical quarters taken from a limited supply of housing, fed by requisitioned food, and governing living communities. British authorities in Transcaucasia took over many of the functions of government, making material decisions about living conditions. In the port of Batumi, they would eventually take on all responsibilities of municipal government.

As they soon would in Riga, the British mission set up a national council in Batumi composed of representatives of different national groups under Military Governor James Cooke-Collis, establishing the Council for the Administration of Batoum and its Region (*Sovet po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblastiu*) by the last week of December.<sup>29</sup> The Council initially included two Russians, two Georgians, and one Greek.<sup>30</sup> The British installed Prilidian Maslov, a Russian Constitutional Democrat, as the head of the Council. Georgian representatives protested strongly against the appointment of a Russian official to the administration of the town, an action they saw as a betrayal of the revolution and a return to tsarism.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Topuridze to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and War Minister, 16 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L25-28.

<sup>28</sup> Message from the Mayor of Batumi to the Representatives of the Powers of the Entente, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d6, L87-88.

<sup>29</sup> Gedevanov to Minister of Foreign Affairs and Topuridze, 25 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d30, L87-87ob.

<sup>30</sup> Gedevanov to Minister of Foreign Affairs and Topuridze, 25 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d30, L87-87ob.

<sup>31</sup> Ob okkupatsii anglichanami Batuma I ego oblasti (K. Gogoladze), SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d6, L23-27; To the British Governor of Batumi and Batumi Oblast, 30 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d9, L3 (N66). Topuridze had already expressed his

The Council received formal power from the Ottoman occupying administration on 30 December, as Cooke-Collis and Maslov went personally to the official in charge to tell him the conditions agreed by the Council and receive his word on the transfer of power.<sup>32</sup> The British Consul, Stevens, provided detailed reports on the desires of different groups in Batumi for the disposition and representation of the region.<sup>33</sup> For this reason the British requested Gedevanov provide them with “2-3 examples of an ethnographic map of the Caucasus.”<sup>34</sup> The British authorities also received many petitions from Georgian Muslims and representatives of the Muslim community in Ajara asking for representation.<sup>35</sup> At the Foreign Office, some expressed satisfaction at the divided arrangement reached for control over Batumi: “we have deliberately set up a British military governor advised by a mixed local council, as the population is heterogeneous and mostly Moslem, and is strongly averse from being placed under the Georgian Govt at Tiflis.”<sup>36</sup>

As in the Baltic Provinces, members of the British missions got in trouble with local authorities and found themselves caught up in the pressures and temptations of local life in Batumi. Newspapers

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dissatisfaction with this possibility to Webster earlier in December 1918—this “worried the local population, who could not believe that the liberal Englishmen could impose on them once again bureaucrats from the epoch of Rasputin and Nicholas.” Topuridze to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and War Minister, 16 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L25-28. David Ghambashidze, the Georgian representative in London, also complained of the British reliance on “reactionary” Russian officers in Georgia several months later. See J. A. C. Tilley for FO and Curzon to Balfour, 13 May 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/96-101. See also Ghambashidze, Delegate of the Georgian Government in London, to Curzon, 3 April 1919, TNA FO 608/88/5/236-240. Throughout 1919, Batumi was seen as a nest of White Russians and their intrigues. See, e.g., Prince Cherkezov to Wardrop, extract from private letter, 19 July 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/160. Protests were made against the appointment of other former Russian officials, such as the later appointment of General Romanovskii-Romanko as governor of Batumi and Batumi Oblast. To his Excellency the Head Commander of British Forces in Transcaucasia, 1 June 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L20.

<sup>32</sup> Protokol zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblastiu, 30 Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L9-13ob.

<sup>33</sup> Naval Commander-in-Chief (Constantinople), transmits telegram from Stevens, copy to High Commissioner, Constantinople, Britforce Tiflis and Batoum, 24 February 1919, FO 608/88/1/3-4; Stevens (Batoum), 20 March 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/76-78.

<sup>34</sup> Gedevanov to Tiflis Head of General Staff, Highly Urgent, 3 January 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d9, L18; Head of the Topographical Otdel of the General Staff to Military Attaché Gedevanov, 9 January 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d9, L19.

<sup>35</sup> Les Représentants des musulmans géorgiens de la province de Batoum, To his Excellence the Military Governor of the City and Province of Batoum, 3 January 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d6, L86; Protokol zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblastiu, 30 Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L9-13ob; Topuridze to Minister of Foreign Affairs and War Minister, 12 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L28-28ob. Representatives of the Georgian government tried to discredit these petitions for self-government from Muslim groups. Observations sur le memoire d’Akhaltzikh, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d6, L82-83ob; Gedevanov to Topuridze, 6 January 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d9, L27. A full account of the ethnic and religious politics of postwar Batumi is outside the scope of this chapter. For context, see Mathijs Pelkmans, *Defending the Border: Identity, Religion, and Modernity in the Republic of Georgia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), and forthcoming work by Harrison King on Ajara. See also Timothy Blauvelt, “The Muslim Uprising in Ajara and the Stalinist Revolution in the Periphery,” *Nationalities Papers* 44:3 (2016), 359-379. For a related case in another ethnically, linguistically, and religiously distinct region of Georgia, see Timothy Blauvelt, “The Establishment of Soviet Power in Abkhazia: Ethnicity, Contestation and Clientelism in the Revolutionary Periphery,” *Revolutionary Russia* 27:1 (2014), 22-46.

<sup>36</sup> Minute, “A. G. T.”, 16 April 1919, on Ghambashidze to Curzon, 3 April 1919, TNA FO 608/88/5/233.

reported on British officers' requests to the city administration to open brothels in Tiflis, and noted the increased beer production of local breweries required to supply British military forces stationed across the country (additional malt and other brewing supplies had to be imported from abroad).<sup>37</sup> Occasionally British soldiers were killed out of the line of duty.<sup>38</sup> Some British officers settled down into life in Georgia and became members of families and participants in local society—they married, they became godfathers to Georgian children in Georgian and Russian families, and they lived and died.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, the staff of the British Mission, consisting of British soldiers, Georgians, Russians, and other nationalities, kept growing. By December of 1919, the British Mission in Batumi employed more than 60 interpreters.<sup>40</sup> The Billeting Office Department alone possessed a staff of ten, including a manager, bookkeeper, assistant bookkeeper, Clerk, Doctor, Doctor's assistant, storekeeper, interpreter, caretaker, and cook.<sup>41</sup> The city administration under the Council continued to grow its own staff as well.

In order to house these men and officials, the British requisitioned buildings and apartments across the city. In response to a request of the British Military Authority, the Council ordered the City Administration to create a dedicated commission for the purpose of requisitioning apartments for British officers.<sup>42</sup> The City Duma resolved to establish such a Requisition Commission, as "From the arrival in the city of Batumi of the British forces, the City Administration [received] requests of the British forces about the provision of properties for both soldiers and officers."<sup>43</sup> The Requisition Commission was organized

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<sup>37</sup> *Gruziia*, 24 May 1919; "Pivo dlia anglichan'," *Gruziia*, 17 June 1919. I would like to thank Beka Kobakhidze for these references.

<sup>38</sup> Lance Corporal E. M. Martin was killed in Tiflis on the night of 6 August, 1919, by a Georgian soldier. War Office to Ministry of Pensions, 26 April 1920, TNA PIN 15/154. Correspondence over this case referred to at least one other occurrence.

<sup>39</sup> AARMSDSS, f80, op1, d123, L25, L27.

<sup>40</sup> Donne to Harris, 5 December 1919, Archives Administration of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, Batumi (AARMSDSS), f67, op1, d9, L12.

<sup>41</sup> Major Harris (Officer in Charge of Civil Administration) to Captain Grurgeon (Billeting Officer for Military Governor), 23 October 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d4, L41.

<sup>42</sup> Protokol zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblastiu, 30 Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L9-13ob.

<sup>43</sup> Doklad Gorodskogo Golovy po povodu organizatsii Rekvizitsionnoi Komissii po otvodu zdani i kvartir dlia Angliiskikh voisk i ofitserov, 31 December 1918, AARMSDSS, f7, op1, d/arkhiv720, L13.

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and established on January 2.<sup>44</sup> The British also requisitioned houses by their own direct orders.<sup>45</sup> As time went on, British authorities delegated requisition orders to the Batumi City Police.<sup>46</sup> The city was divided into five zones for requisition, sanitation, police, and administrative purposes. Among other buildings, the British occupied the Hotel “France,” part of the State Bank, house number four on Mikhailovskii street (Zone 1); the Armenian School (Zone 2); the Mens Gymnasium, the House of the former Artillery Administration, the House of the Commandant, the Mariinskoe High School, the Governor’s House, the Lazaretto, the Georgian High School, the Commercial Club, the Womens Gymnasium, Chernov House on the corner of Vosnesenskii and Asatianovskii streets, and the Animal Hospital (Zone 3); 53 Lermontov street (Zone 4); and the House of the Lieutenant Governor, part of the Customs House, and the automobile factory (Zone 5).<sup>47</sup> By the middle of January, altogether 27 large buildings were directly occupied by British forces in Batumi.<sup>48</sup> Ottoman forces continued to occupy buildings in the city as well.<sup>49</sup> The British requisitions—of buildings, hotels, shops, and individual apartments—continued through the end of 1919 and into 1920. British authorities requisitioned buildings not only for their own use but also for the use of the Council and the organs and offices of the Batumi city administration.<sup>50</sup>

Individuals and groups sometimes petitioned the Council and the British Mission to protest these requisitions. One prominent tobacco merchant and manufacturer, M. L. Biniatoghlu, petitioned the British about the requisitioning of his shop.<sup>51</sup> He had been renting the space for seven years, he explained, and

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<sup>44</sup> Protokol zasedaniia Batumskoi Gorodskoi Dumy 2 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f7, op1, d/arkhiv720, L6-12.

<sup>45</sup> AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L1, 20 January 1919; AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L10, 3 February 1919; AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L13, 21 February 1919; Harris, Udostoverenie, 15 September 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L42.

<sup>46</sup> Orders, To the Head of the First Section of the Batumi City Police, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L46, L47; To the Head of the Batumi City Militia, 8 October 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L62; To the Head of the 3rd Part of the Batumi City Police, 29 November 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L72; To the Head of the 3rd Police Division, 2 December 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L75; Proshenie, Gospodinu Predsedatel’iu Batumskago Birzhevogo Komiteta Batumskago Tabachnago Fabrikanta M. L. Biniat-Ogly, 2 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L34.

<sup>47</sup> Doklad to the Chairman of the Council, 15 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L48-51.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. The report indicated that Turkish troops were occupying 17 buildings across the city.

<sup>50</sup> Order, 29 September 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L58; AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L46, L47; To the Head of the 3rd Part of the Batumi City Police, 29 November 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L72.

<sup>51</sup> Petition, from Batoum Tobacco manufacturer M. L. Biniatoghlu to Major Harris, Signed F. Liehderman, Director, Batoum, 3 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L32.

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his factory had been in business for 35 years. His business had “brought to the country remarkable improval [sic] in the tobacco plantations” and was “providing work to hundreds of workmen.”<sup>52</sup> Expulsion from his premises would leave him with no opportunities, as “Under the present circumstances obligatory requisition is equal to throw one to the street, since it is impossible to search for a new shop” because the city was so overfilled. The closure of the shop would disrupt the operation of his factory and plantations.<sup>53</sup> Biniatoghlu appealed to the commercial, fiscal, and security interests of the British mission: “Besides knowing the British authorities’ interest in the prosperity of the town commercial life, I take the liberty to ask you, Mr. Major, after you take to consideration that I am paying to the treasure [sic] for the tax of the tobacco and cigarettes prepared in my factory millions of roubles in the year, to settle the matter with Captain Grudjon [Grugeon] showing him the necessity of releasing my shop from requisition.”<sup>54</sup> The tobacco merchant sent a similar petition to the Batumi Bourse Committee, which subsequently petitioned the British authorities on his behalf.<sup>55</sup> He also petitioned the Batumi city administration, which again forwarded his petition to the British military governor and asked for redress regarding the requisitioning.<sup>56</sup> Harris denied all of these petitions.<sup>57</sup> The requisitioning of the shop went ahead. Another shop owner complained that the carpenter sent to partition his shop, part of which was being requisitioned, wanted to build the partition too close to the door, so that the door could no longer

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Tobacco was an important part of the economy in Batumi and Ajara, in other parts of Georgia, in South Russia along the Black Sea, and in neighboring parts of the Ottoman Empire. For more on tobacco production in the Russian Empire and the early Soviet period, see Iu. P. Bokarev, “Tobacco Production in Russia: The Transition to Communism,” edited and translated by Tricia Starks, in Matthew Romaniello and Tricia Starks, eds., *Tobacco in Russian History and Culture: The Seventeenth Century to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 148-157. See also Tricia Starks, *Smoking Under the Tsars: A History of Tobacco in Imperial Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), especially for tobacco’s association with Russian imperial expansion in the Black Sea and Caucasus. On the Ottoman tobacco industry, which extended all over the empire, and the potential of Ottoman tobacco workers for labor struggles, see Can Nacar, *Labor and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire: Tobacco Workers, Managers, and the State, 1872-1912* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

<sup>53</sup> Petition, from Batoum Tobacco manufacturer M. L. Biniatoghlu to Major Harris, Signed F. Liehderman, Director, Batoum, 3 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L32.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Proshenie, Gospodinu Predsedatel’iu Batumskago Birzhevogo Komiteta Batumskago Tabachnago Fabrikanta M. L. Biniat-Ogly, 2 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L34.

<sup>56</sup> Proshenie, Gospodinu Gorodskoiu Golove, Batumskago Tabachnago Fabrikanta M. L. Biniat-Ogli, 2 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L37; Gorodskoi Golova to Major Harris, 3 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L36.

<sup>57</sup> Major Harris for the Military Governor to the Batumi Bourse Committee, 5 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L35; Major Harris to the Batumi City Golove, 5 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L38.

fully open. With this half-open door, the petitioner complained, “a fat man could not pass through,” and if two people approached the door at the same time, neither could get in.<sup>58</sup> In this case, Harris ordered the carpenter to move the wall partitioning the requisitioned part of the shop.

The Council and the British authorities also received petitions asking for the use of requisitioned spaces. An employee of the export office, for example, asked to be granted a lodging in the town after their house in a suburban area of Batumi was destroyed by rain.<sup>59</sup> In a longer petition, another employee of the Chancery of the Civil Administration also asked to be granted a requisitioned lodging in the town because, as she claimed, all available lodgings were already occupied and being rented at a very high cost, she was unable to find lodgings she could afford, and her existing lodgings in the suburbs had been inundated with rain. A lodging in town would cost “my whole salary,” the petitioner argued, and without an apartment granted to her she would be unable to work at the Civil Administration. She would then have no other means of life, would keep walking up to her knees in water, and would catch a serious illness, leaving her unable to continue working for the government.<sup>60</sup>

At the end of December 1918, soon after the beginning of the occupation, the Council was advised by Doctor Henderson, a member of the British mission, that under the Turkish occupation the city had “clearly fallen into a horribly unsanitary condition.”<sup>61</sup> In connection with the sanitary situation, the Council resolved to ask the British authorities to free up the building of the Batumi City Hospital and give it to the City.<sup>62</sup> They divided the city into five sanitary districts, transferred the administration of hospitals and lazarettos, and took steps to crack down on prostitution.<sup>63</sup> The Council also asked the British authorities

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<sup>58</sup> Proshenie, Berukha Gershteina G. Upravliaiushchemu Delami Soveta po upravleniiu Batumskoi oblasti, 21 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L39.

<sup>59</sup> Proshenie, to Harris, 22 November 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L70; for another petition for the use of a requisitioned apartment see AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L69.

<sup>60</sup> Proshenie, Natalia Efimovno Voronina, to Harris, 28 November 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d6, L71-71ob.

<sup>61</sup> Protokol zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblasti, 30 Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L9-13ob.

<sup>62</sup> Zhurnal zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblasti, 31 Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L14-16.

<sup>63</sup> Zhurnal zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblasti, 31 Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L14-16; on the division of the city see also Doklad to the Chairman of the Council, 15 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L48-

to give the city material aid in the matter of organizing sewage disposal (*v dele organizatsii assenizatsionnago oboza*). In order to clean the streets and clean up after horses, the Council asked the British to give two heavy lorries to the city administration. They also asked for the British administration to give them the use of carts formerly owned by the Russian military administration for taking away trash and household garbage.<sup>64</sup> Finally, the Council asked the British power to requisition all medicines and give them to the city administration to help remedy the urgent shortage of medicines in the city.<sup>65</sup> As typhus began to ravage the city in late January, the Council asked the British to give the city authorities the use of hospitals formerly occupied by Ottoman forces for quarantine and to provide medicines, bedclothes, and fresh linens for the use of the hospitals. In all of these requests, as in other areas of the city administration, the Council could only make decisions to request buildings, materials, and supplies from the British authorities, not to requisition or allocate them on their own authority.

On April 15-16, officials of the British Military Mission formally took over the affairs of the city government from the Council they had themselves created to run it three months earlier.<sup>66</sup> Cooke-Collis telegraphed Maslov to arrange for the personal transfer of responsibilities at a meeting of the Council held at the Chancelleries. British officials would take over all essential functions: Major Harris would take on the Treasury, food, oil, permit for export of foods, taxes; Major Benbow-Rowe the departments of roads, engineers, transport, schools, wood and lands; Major Copley the Customs, Excise, and Port administrations. Col. Ievers received responsibility for the Medical department and for the department of Sanitary Measures, Captain Cummins was put in charge of Police and Prisons, and Col. Prickett took over the Posts and Telegraphs administration. Captain Matthews received control over the rest of Batumi

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51; on prostitution, see Zhurnal zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblastiu, 2 January 1919g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L19-21.

<sup>64</sup> Zhurnal postanovlenii soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblastiu, 4 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L24-26ob.

<sup>65</sup> Zhurnal zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblastiu, 31 Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L14-16.

<sup>66</sup> Cooke-Collis to Masloff, 15 April 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L43 (Russian translation, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L52.)



Province, the Provincial Police, the Frontier Police, and the provisioning of food for the Province. Finally, Captain Grugeon was put in charge of Town Accommodation and Refugees. As this list of responsibilities and departments shows, the British administration was responsible for nearly all aspects of life and government in the city. All cheques on the city Treasury would be signed by Maslov up to and including 21 April, after which all cheques would be signed by Major Harris directly.<sup>67</sup>

The British issued orders and proclamations regulating many aspects of life in Batumi. Proclamations were issued in the name of the Council as well as in the name of the British military authorities or the British Military Governor, even before the transfer of power from the Council. These proclamations were concentrated in January, as the British sought to establish control and order in the city, but continued to be issued steadily throughout 1919.<sup>68</sup> The proclamations were printed in English and Russian, as well as in Georgian, Ottoman Turkish, and Armenian. Proclamations were issued regulating or banning the sale of alcohol, the export of certain articles from Batumi, and the use or possession of government property.<sup>69</sup> All guns in the city had to be registered and all those who needed firearms had to receive a British pass.<sup>70</sup> After an automobile was used in an armed robbery in July, all motor cars had to be registered and receive registration numbers.<sup>71</sup> The British administration even standardized the time used in the city: on January 21, the Military Governor ordered that everyone set their watches forward by 50 minutes and “use henceforth the time used by the British Military Authorities;” a cannon fired at noon every day would ensure that this standard time was known to all.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Cooke-Collis to Masloff, 15 April 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L43 (Russian translation, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L52.)

<sup>68</sup> These proclamations are held in the regional archives of Ajara in Batumi, in AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5. To my knowledge there is not an equivalent collection of these proclamations in the British archives.

<sup>69</sup> Order of the Batoum Administrative Council 18 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L6; Obiavlenie, 30 May 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L80; Proclamation, Brigadier General, Military Governor, Cooke-Collis, 25 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L16.

<sup>70</sup> Prikaz Komanduiushchago Britanskimi Voennymi Silami v Batume, 13 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L1.

<sup>71</sup> Capt DAPM Base to Major Harris, 18 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L121.

<sup>72</sup> Proclamation of the Military Governor of the Province and Town of Batoum, Military Governor of Batoum Province Cooke-Collis, 21 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L22.

The British also sought more generally to impose their own order upon the life of the town. A proclamation of January 21, 1919, laid out a set of basic regulations.<sup>73</sup> “In order to maintain cleanness, decency, and order in the streets of the town,” the proclamation stated in the name of the British Military Governor, “I have in addition to the previous proclamations and decisions of the administrative Council considered it necessary to publish this proclamation, which is to be strictly obeyed by all inhabitants.” By the proclamation it was forbidden:

“To dirty the streets with nutshells peels packing paper etc. This is often done by the retail trade in little shops or on fruit stands  
 To appear in public places intoxicated  
 To make a noise, behave violently, to quarrel or to menace especially when armed  
 To fire a gun, revolver, etc even without having an evil design, but for amusement  
 To drive in carriages, carts, and motor cars to the public danger  
 To gamble in public places [...]  
 To barricade the pavements with furniture, fruit stands, etc to walk along the boulevard or pavement with bulky cargo or to cycle”<sup>74</sup>

The punishment for violating any of these rules was, again, a fine of 3,000 roubles or imprisonment for three months, but if disobedience of one of the elements of the order resulted in injury or death, the violator would be tried by court-martial according to military law.

Some of the ordinances of the British occupying forces in the Caucasus were draconian and would not have been out of place in areas considered to have had more brutal postwar occupation regimes.<sup>75</sup> Punishments for violating British regulations in Batumi were usually fixed at a fine of 3,000 roubles or three months’ imprisonment, but could extend in some cases to exile or death. Commander of British Forces in Transcaucasia General G. F. Milne’s proclamation of 20 March 1919, which covered the whole of the Caucasus, proclaimed that British Troops were in occupation of Transcaucasia in order “To enforce the terms of the Armistice between the Allies and Turkey” and “To maintain Law and order pending the

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<sup>73</sup> Proclamation of the Military Governor of the Province and Town of Batoum, Cooke-Collis, 21 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L8.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Vejas Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

final decision of the Peace Conference...upon the question of Territorial boundaries.”<sup>76</sup> In order to fulfill this mission, the proclamation stated it was therefore “the duty of the inhabitants to behave in an absolutely peaceful manner and to carry on their normal civilian occupations so far as possible.” As long as they did so, and “refrain[ed] from all acts in any way inimicable to the British and Allied Forces,” they would “not be interfered with by the British Military Authorities, their lives are in no danger and their personal liberties and property will be respected.” “But should they fail in their duty in this respect,” the proclamation continued, “the necessities of war demand exemplary punishment.” The proclamation threatened that “any person who commits or attempts to commit any act which is hostile or injurious to the British or Allied Forces or any member of such Forces,” or which might aid the Allies’ enemies, “including damage of any kind to any railways, roads, bridges, telegraph or telephone wires, water supplies, military stores,” or who simply failed “to comply with any provision of this Proclamation will be tried by a Military Court and punished with death or...punishment as will meet the necessity of the case.”<sup>77</sup>

In the remainder of this section, I examine four interrelated policies of the British administration of Batumi in order to show how the British governance of the town intersected with larger imperatives of the British administration and affected the lives of the inhabitants. These policies were discussed by the Council and the British authorities as problems presented by the occupation on which the British would need to decide; though these issues had multiple solutions, the British had final say.

As at other sites of postwar Allied occupation, British authorities and the local administration had to make decisions about what forms of currency would be accepted in Batumi.<sup>78</sup> There were “Nikolaevan” roubles issued by the Russian Imperial government before the February Revolution, “Kerenskian” roubles issued by the Provisional Government, and bills of the government of the Transcaucasia Federation issued

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<sup>76</sup> Proclamation to the Inhabitants of Transcaucasia, 20 March 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L57; for a Russian version of the proclamation, see Obiavlenie k Zhiteliam Zakavkazia, 7/20 March 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d77, L3.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Dominique Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020), 73-107.

before the Ottoman occupation of Batumi. Ottoman bills remained in wide use, and Soviet roubles also appeared. The question of currency was also a question of state legitimacy: the currencies issued by defunct or vulnerable states were unlikely to hold their value. Those currencies backed by the British administration were those of states the British thought would survive or were likely to be restored.

The question of currencies was first discussed at a meeting of the Council on 29 December.<sup>79</sup> A longer discussion the next day examined the issues at stake. Most of the Council argued that in the interests of reviving the commercial-industrial life of the city and its surrounding region, equal acceptance should be given to “Nikolaevan” bills as to “Kerenskys” of all denominations and to bonds (*bonov*) of the Transcaucasian Government. Because of the location of Batumi and its connections with the rest of the Caucasus, the Council reasoned, without the acceptance of Transcaucasian Government bills it would be hard to count on the revival of economic life in the city. The currencies also needed to be guaranteed the right of exchange within the city.<sup>80</sup> Other members of the Council thought it was necessary to accept Nikolaevan and Kerenskian bills on an equal basis but did not think that bills of the Transcaucasian Government could be accepted on this basis, even though they were printed in rouble values. Things had changed since the Transcaucasian Government bills were issued: it was impossible to consider the Transcaucasian bonds equal to the all-Russian money, because “Transcaucasia is cut off from Russia, [and] is broken into three separate states.”<sup>81</sup> This opinion divided the council. Some also thought that Romanov roubles would decline in value because local markets would prefer to use Transcaucasian money, but feared this would then make it difficult to trade with Russia. Still others thought that Nikolaevan and Kerenskian money should be accepted equally and that the decision about Transcaucasian money should be postponed until the view of the British authorities on this question was clarified. After a vote, the

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<sup>79</sup> Protokol zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblasti 29go Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L4-8.

<sup>80</sup> Protokol zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblasti, 30 Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L9-13ob.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

council decided to allow for the acceptance of all three currencies. Non-acceptance of any one of them would be punished by law.<sup>82</sup>

At a later meeting in March 1919, the Council voted that Transcaucasian notes should be accepted at equal value to the two types of Russian notes.<sup>83</sup> A proclamation informed the population of the decision. Nicolas, Kerensky, and Transcaucasian roubles all became legal tender of the same value and were to be accepted on an equal basis, “rouble for rouble,” while Turkish money was to be accepted at the same value as before until further notice.<sup>84</sup> Non-compliance with these exchange rates was punished by the usual fine of 3000 roubles or three months’ imprisonment.<sup>85</sup>

The same proclamation also prohibited speculation and any increases in the price of foodstuffs and commodities.<sup>86</sup> With the supply situation in the city worsening, the British set fixed prices for certain commodities to prevent speculation. A proclamation fixed prices for essential products: beef, lamb, buffalo, milk, potted butter, salted butter, fresh butter, eggs, sunflower oil, local fresh cabbage, beets, onions, green beans, fresh cucumbers, tomatoes, salt, vegetables in packages (sorrel, beetroot, spinach, green onion, fennel, parsley, tsitsmadi, etc.), lump sugar, raw sugar, matches, and ice.<sup>87</sup> Merchants had no right to raise the prices of these products in selling them to the population of the city. All premises selling these products had to affix labels to them showing the set prices. Merchants breaking the fixed prices set out in the proclamation or tampering with these products could be reported to the police, and could be fined up to 3000 roubles or imprisoned up to 3 months, or face the closure of their businesses and be deprived of the right to open another shop by the administrative authorities. The fixed prices were

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<sup>82</sup> Protokol zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblastiu, 30 Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L9-13ob.

<sup>83</sup> Zhurnal postanovlenii soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblastiu, 5 March 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L146-147ob.

<sup>84</sup> Proclamation to the Inhabitants of the Town and Province of Batoum, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L7. Another proclamation in Russian, Georgian, Armenian, and Ottoman Turkish also set the exchange rate. AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L19.

<sup>85</sup> Proclamation to the Inhabitants of the Town and Province of Batoum, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L7. Another order from later in the year enforced the acceptance of all of the currencies, with those found guilty of not accepting any of them subject to the same punishment. Obiavlenie, 5 July 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L110.

<sup>86</sup> Proclamation to the Inhabitants of the Town and Province of Batoum, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L7.

<sup>87</sup> Obiavlenie, signed Military Governor Cooke-Collis, 24 August 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d7, L30.

set by a Special Municipal Taxation Commission. They could be periodically changed in accordance with market conditions, and the new prices would be published by the Military Governor.<sup>88</sup> This followed an inquiry by the British authorities, the city administration, and the taxation commission into which products were of primary importance to the local population, and a series of meetings debating the results of this survey.<sup>89</sup> The British administration also attempted to set prices for tobacco and cigarettes.<sup>90</sup>

Because they set prices for fixed quantities of these essential commodities, the British governors had to standardize the weights and measures used in the city. Merchants and owners of firms in the city had to present their weights and measures to be verified in connection with the set prices.<sup>91</sup> Those who did not do so or were found to be in violation of the order would be punished by the usual fine.

The British administration also managed and reengineered state borders, frontiers, and front lines. In Batumi, the British military authorities oversaw a border with the defeated Ottoman Empire as well as with the Georgian state. Georgian citizens required a passport to enter Batumi region.<sup>92</sup> The Georgian authorities, on the other hand, refused to allow other nationalities to enter Georgia from occupied Batumi.<sup>93</sup> This worsened the food crisis in the city, as more and more refugees arrived without a subsequent outlet. Cooke-Collis wrote to the Council complaining that as “the Georgian Consul in Batoum is refusing to allow Armenians to proceed to Georgia...this will entail my being forced to close the port against Armenians as this town cannot possibly feed the numbers of both Georgians and Armenians who are daily arriving.”<sup>94</sup> These difficulties of enforcing new borders and monitoring the flow of people across them led to strict regulations on the registration of all new inhabitants and food rationing.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Obiavlénie, signed Military Governor Cooke-Collis, 24 August 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d7, L30.

<sup>89</sup> See To the Batumi City Administration, February 1919; Zhurnal I-go Zasedaniia Taksirovochnoi Komiteta na predmety 1-oi neobkhodimosti, 18 August 1919; Zhurnal 2-go Zasedaniia Taksirovochnoi Komiteta na predmety 1-oi neobkhodimosti, 21 August 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d7, L21, L31, L32-32ob.

<sup>90</sup> Tabachnym fabrikantam gor. Batuma, Harris, 11 November 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d7, L41.

<sup>91</sup> “Advertisement,” [March 1919,] AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L47.

<sup>92</sup> Georgian Consulate in Batumi to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 October 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d15, L10-10ob.

<sup>93</sup> Cooke-Collis to the Administrative Council, Batoum 22 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L15.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Cooke-Collis to the Administrative Council, Batoum 22 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5, L15; Proclamation of the Military Governor of Batoum Province, Brigadier General Military Governor Cooke-Collis, 23 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67,

Finally, the British were tasked with ensuring order in the city and its environs. This extended from control over defeated Ottoman troops to control over the local population. In order to prevent “excesses” by Ottoman forces as they withdrew from Artvin, the Council empowered Maslov to ask the British authorities for a detachment for the city of Artvin and to accompany their withdrawal.<sup>96</sup> The next day the Council instructed Maslov to ask the British for 50 soldiers to send to Artvin to ensure order.<sup>97</sup> In Kobuleti, just up the coast from Batumi, where the local Muslim population was agitating for the right to elect its own officials and representatives instead of those appointed by the Council, the Council asked the Military Governor for 60 British soldiers to keep order and to accompany the Council’s chosen administrator.<sup>98</sup> Though the police had first been placed under the control of the Council, by the end of January they had been placed under direct British control.<sup>99</sup> After bandits robbed a train 20 miles from Batumi, stealing a total of 800,000 roubles from the passengers, trains were escorted under British guard with Lewis guns.<sup>100</sup>

A petition to Harris from a group of owners of butcher shops in Batumi shows the intersection of all four of these policies and problems.<sup>101</sup> The butchers complained that they could no longer make a profit from selling mutton and beef at the prices currently fixed by the British administration. The prices did not cover the merchants’ expenses because of the high cost of procuring cattle under present conditions. The butchers had been accustomed to buying cattle in Kars Province, formerly a part of the Russian Empire but now on the other side of the Turkish border in Anatolia. In addition to having to cross the border, the area between Batumi and Kars was dangerous and the merchants had to pay armed guards for security

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op1, d5, L10; Obligatory Decision of the Military Governor of Batoum and Batoum Province, 4 May 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d5 L45.

<sup>96</sup> Protokol zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblasti 29go Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L4-8.

<sup>97</sup> Protokol zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblasti, 30 Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L9-13ob.

<sup>98</sup> Zhurnal postanovlenii soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom I ego oblasti, 9 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L34-35ob.

<sup>99</sup> Protokol zasedaniia soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom i ego oblasti 29go Dekabria 1918g, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1, L4-8; Zhurnal postanovlenii soveta po upravleniiu gorodom Batumom I ego oblasti, 8 January 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d1 L30-31ob.

<sup>100</sup> Mr. Stevens (Batoum), 14 March 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/39-42, 42.

<sup>101</sup> Petition, To His High Nobility Lieutenant Colonel Harris Military Governor of Civil Administration of Batoum, from the owners of butcher shops in Batoum, [29] October 1919, AARMSDSS, f67, op1, d7, L36-37ob.

as they traveled with large sums of money to purchase the cattle. Because the exchange rates were different in Kars Province than in Batumi, the butchers suffered from high rates of inflation in Nikolaevan roubles. The butchers asked the British to raise the prices for beef and mutton and to do so before the winter. If this were not done, they would not be able to procure and purchase cattle for the rest of the winter and would have to completely abandon their trade, leaving Batumi with a shortage of meat.<sup>102</sup> The artificial support for currencies in Batumi, combined with the imposition of the new postwar border, raised costs for butchers already spending more to secure themselves amid a breakdown of state order, threatening both their previous way of life and the precarious food security of the town.

Examining these local policies and the way they were lived by Batumi's population underscores Thomas Barrett's observation about the earlier Russian imperial annexation of the Caucasus, that "we must look behind the military lines to the movements of peoples, the settlements and communities, the transformation of the landscape and the interactions of neighbors, not just in war but in everyday life" in order to understand the workings of military occupation.<sup>103</sup>

### **From Batumi to Tiflis**

Soon after their arrival in Batumi, the Georgian government invited British forces to Tiflis. The Georgian government was careful to indicate that this British force was not needed to uphold order and calm in the country, as the government claimed it could do this on its own.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, the government agreed that the entry of a British force into Tiflis in the numbers that Major Jordan, the leader of the British Mission, had suggested—a brigade of infantry, a brigade of artillery, and 1800 cavalry—would be necessary. On December 24, 1918, "The Georgian Government, sincerely hoping to work in agreement with the Allies and with the goal of realizing the principles of right and justice, proclaimed by

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Barrett, "Lines of Uncertainty: The Frontiers of the North Caucasus," *Slavic Review* 54:3 (Autumn 1995), 578-601, 579.

<sup>104</sup> Gegechkori and Lordkipanidze to the Head [nachalniku] of the British Mission, Jordan, 24 December 1918, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d1, L5.



the Allies,” gave its agreement to the entry of British forces into Tiflis and promised to give all possible effort to their accommodation.<sup>105</sup> As in South Russia at Novorossiisk, and in Latvia and Estonia at Riga and Reval, the British had established a naval presence at the most significant port in the Caucasus on the eastern Black Sea coast, set up a civil administration based on existing consular infrastructure and information, and turned the port into a disembarkation point for troops and aid, a supply depot, and a transfer point. From there they had advanced to the capital of the state and installed missions coordinating control over several national states within a region. This was not a planned progression, but rather a result of a process of British representatives working on the ground with emerging national governments to provide military aid and secure political control over state territory.

The British military presence spread out across Georgia to strategic points. From Tiflis, Forestier-Walker sent a force of 400 British troops to Kazbek in early February to defend the Darial Gorge against the Bolsheviks.<sup>106</sup> This detachment was supported by additional garrisons of British troops in Mtskheta and Dusheti, along the Georgian Military Highway, for food provision and supply.<sup>107</sup> These forces would provision and back up the garrison in Kazbek. The British troops would “work in contact with officers commanding Georgian forces...as far as will be possible.”<sup>108</sup> To house the British garrison, Forestier-Walker asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs “to quickly find quarters in Kazbek for 200 men” and to transfer all Georgian forces, with the exclusion of 100 men, from Kazbek to Dusheti in order to provide quarters for the rest of the detachment.<sup>109</sup> Thus a British force supplanted a Georgian one at an important frontier post, moving Georgian forces out in order to house British troops. The needs of supply and the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Forestier-Walker to Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Georgian Republic, 2 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L9.

<sup>107</sup> Forestier-Walker to Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Georgian Republic, 2 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L9; Forestier-Walker to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 2 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d34, L19-19ob.

<sup>108</sup> Forestier-Walker to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 2 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d34, L19-19ob.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. Forestier Walker also told Gegechkori that “the War Minister promised my representative that swift measures will be taken for a modest refitting [*nebol'shogo remonta*] which will necessary to carry out for those accommodations [*pomeshcheniakh*] which will be occupied by my forces in Kazbek.” Forestier-Walker to Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Georgian Republic, 2 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L9.

maintenance of an occupation multiplied the military presence, expanding British authority to different sites and across larger zones of territory, movement, and communication, like the Military Highway.

Though Forestier-Walker insisted that “My detachment in Kazbek will be responsible only for guarding the Darial Gorge,” and promised not to “interfere either with the affairs of Georgian customs in Kazbek or with the administration of Georgian controls on passports,” he “at the same time reserve[d] the right for myself to establish a British Control on the Georgian Military Highway.”<sup>110</sup> British control was to be instituted “if at any point there should be reason to think that people are abusing passes issued by the Georgian Government or have connections with the Bolsheviks.”<sup>111</sup>

By the end of February, this had already come to pass. Forestier-Walker “came to the conclusion that it is necessary to hinder the entry of the Bolsheviks into Georgia by Georgian roads.”<sup>112</sup> In order to facilitate this control of the border and the Military Highway, Forestier-Walker invited a representative of the Volunteer Army to man the pass: “to ease the identification of Bolsheviks I have asked the Volunteer Army to designate an officer to help the British commandant and I suggest that the Georgian government does the same.”<sup>113</sup> Under this new joint regime, “The British Commandant will refuse passage through Kazbek to anyone against whom the British, Georgian or Volunteer representatives shall speak out.”<sup>114</sup> British troops now controlled movement through a large zone of Georgian territory. Their control of the Georgian border regime also involved the representative of another power often hostile to Georgia.

In addition to the military presence in Tiflis and on the border in Kazbek, and in Dusheti and Mtskheta, British troops and missions were present in Akhalkalaki in the south,<sup>115</sup> the port of Poti, and as already mentioned in Batumi, Kobuleti, and Artvin. In addition to these sites of direct British occupation,

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<sup>110</sup> Forestier-Walker to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 2 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d34, L19-19ob; Forestier-Walker to Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Georgian Republic, 2 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L9.

<sup>111</sup> Forestier-Walker to Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Georgian Republic, 2 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L9.

<sup>112</sup> General Walker, 24 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L2; General Walker, 24 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d101, L10; General Walker, 18 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L15.

<sup>113</sup> General Walker, 24 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L2.

<sup>114</sup> General Walker, 24 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d101, L10.

<sup>115</sup> See the petitions to the British Mission in Akhalkalaki in SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d92.

the British High Commission and Military Mission used Georgian territory and infrastructure to move their own troops and those of their allies in the international struggle against the Soviet state. On 27 January 1919, for example, Forestier-Walker telegraphed Gegechkori to inform him of the movement of a large group of White Russian forces across Georgia. The force would leave Baku in three trains on 28 January and travel to Batumi en route to Novorossiisk. The trains would carry 36 Russian officers traveling to join up with Denikin and a large group of demobilized Kuban Cossacks from Bicherakov's command consisting of 22 officers, 608 Cossacks, 353 horses, 22 wagons, and four mountain guns. On the trains would also be a party of five British officers and 93 British soldiers of other ranks on leave to England.<sup>116</sup> Forestier-Walker told Gegechkori that he "would be very glad if your excellency would arrange for the easy crossing of this force across Georgian territory."<sup>117</sup>

The Minister of Foreign Affairs relayed this information to the War Minister.<sup>118</sup> Gegechkori told the War Minister what would be required of the transport in order to make its passage across Georgian territory acceptable: "Those having guns should go in a special carriage, the train should not make any stops along its way and the travelers should not exit from the wagons within the borders of our territory, they will be supervised and accompanied by British officers, [and] in the borders of [our] territory the train will be accompanied on our side by two officers named by the War Minister."<sup>119</sup> Gegechkori informed the British of further conditions in another note. First, the Georgian government demanded that the Cossacks should "be held in Batumi until the final liquidation of the Sochi conflict between the Georgian Government and the Armies of Denikin;" second, they stipulated that "The British command will guarantee that no kind of military action will be undertaken by these Cossacks from Batumi against Georgia;" third, if there were to be renewed conflict with Denikin in Sochi, then military equipment should

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<sup>116</sup> Forestier-Walker to Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Georgian Government, 27 January 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L8.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Telefonogram from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the War Minister, 3 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L10.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

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be taken from the detachment.<sup>120</sup> In other words, if the Cossacks were to be moved through Georgian territory, the Georgian government was anxious that they should not be used in operations against them, and claimed a right to guard them and a right to their military equipment. Eventually, the government stipulated that though it had no objections to the return of the Cossacks to South Russia, their guns and equipment should be left in Batumi.<sup>121</sup>

In another case, Zhordania protested to the Commander of the British Forces in Transcaucasia about the proposed transfer of artillery from Kars to Novorossiisk via Batumi.<sup>122</sup> Though the Georgian government “would be fully prepared to participate in the plan drafted by the British High Command in Constantinople and laid out in your note,” Zhordania drew attention to the fact that “relations with the Volunteer Army are very tense [*ochen’ natianuty*],” and that Georgia could “expect every day an armed attack from their side.”<sup>123</sup> The Georgian government therefore asked for a guarantee that the guns to be transferred through Georgian territory would not be used by the Volunteer Army against them but rather against the common Soviet foe.<sup>124</sup>

The movement of British troops not only involved Georgian sovereignty and the disposition of territory, it also created interpersonal and social tensions. As noted above, British soldiers and officials in Georgia did not always behave well. The movement of British troops across Georgian territory, along railroads, and in railway stations, created more problems of behavior and social friction. At a train station in the south of Tiflis, drunken British soldiers from the British troop transports attacked a policemen on duty who wanted to disarm them; an official tried to intervene and calm the situation but the drunk soldiers grabbed him by the arm.<sup>125</sup> In Tiflis, an Indian officer threatened railroad staff with a revolver.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Gegechkori to Head of the British Mission, 7 February 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L12.

<sup>121</sup> Gegechkori to the Head of the British Mission, 17 March 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L7.

<sup>122</sup> Zhordania to Commander of the British Forces in Transcaucasia, 12 June 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d33, L21-21ob.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Epatashvili from Navtlugi to Tiflis Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of Roads, copy to the British Railroad Mission, 30 April 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d69, L26.

<sup>126</sup> Administration of the Georgian Railroads to British Railroad Mission, May 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d69, L37.

The Georgian railroad administration complained to the British Railroad Mission that “These continuing excesses, of which this was not the first case, made [their] work impossible” and requested that steps be taken to stop this type of activity.<sup>127</sup> The Director of the Department of Roads asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs to ask the British Mission to “take all possible measures to put an end to the constant bullying [*postoiannym izdevatel'stvam*] of British soldiers of the staff of the railroads” and to “outrages” (*bezchinstvakh*) of British soldiers.<sup>128</sup> Trade unions of the railroad workers also lodged protests against the abuses of British soldiers and the abuse of the railroad system by the British administration in general.<sup>129</sup>

It was the ongoing dispute between the Georgian state and the Volunteer Army over Sochi okrug and other territories in the north Caucasus that led to the appointment of a British political representative in Tiflis. In June 1919, Oliver Wardrop was appointed British Chief Commissioner of Transcaucasia.<sup>130</sup> Wardrop was sent on a political mission under the FO “in view of the very great importance of preventing any open conflict between the Georgian Republic and General Denikin’s Volunteer Army.”<sup>131</sup> Wardrop’s Mission was sent to mediate between the two states, both British clients but at each other’s throats. Wardrop would provide a British political authority to connect the two governments as the military decided how to deploy them; he clearly remained subordinate to the British military leadership.

In addition to providing British political representation, Wardrop’s mission had four objectives, according to Curzon: to report on the political situation in Transcaucasia, “to do your utmost to prevent friction between the Volunteer Army and the Trans-Caucasian Republics and to ensure respect for the line to be drawn between their respective spheres,” to advance the interests of British trade in the region as far as was possible, and to give advice in political matters to the three Transcaucasian governments in

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Director of Department of Roads, Head of Roads to Minister of Foreign Affairs, May 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d69, L36.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Foreign Office to Secretary to the Army Council (WO), 20 June 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/127-132.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 129. This was a strange phrasing, as the two states had been at war on and off in the area around Sochi and Gagra since January of the same year. See Clippings, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d11, L1-2ob.

consultation with the British military leadership.<sup>132</sup> If the line was ever modified to leave the territory of Dagestan to the south of Denikin's zone of influence, Wardrop would be expected to maintain relations with the North Caucasus Republic established there on the same basis as with the other three republics.<sup>133</sup> Wardrop's mission, in other words, was to make the border drawn by the British between the Georgian and South Russian states palatable to both governments and to ensure its acceptance, as "an amicable arrangement on these lines between the Volunteer Army and Georgian Government would be very desirable."<sup>134</sup> The political mission was produced by the military necessity of avoiding conflict between two allies. Wardrop had to save the situation and keep political channels open while the line was enforced.

Georgian leaders had in fact requested a British political representative earlier in 1919.<sup>135</sup> The Georgian government's representative in London, David Ghambashidze, had advised Curzon in April that the British "should appoint a political representative or send a political mission composed of learned men who would look upon Georgia and its people as worthy of individual political existence and not only as a mere tract of territory of transit importance on the Transcaucasian Railway."<sup>136</sup> At the same time, significantly, Ghambashidze hoped that this group of political advisors would also be men "who will not be prejudiced by the far-reaching social reforms which have been introduced by our Government."<sup>137</sup> Here was Zhordania's "double cautiousness" in action, in the otherwise subordinating gesture of requesting a political mission. Prince Varlam Cherkezov—anarchist Georgian aristocrat, longtime resident of London, and friend of Wardrop's—had suggested him personally in May, writing to him that "if England will send a man like yourself, who knows G[eorgia] and its good and bad characteristics, as a representative, all misunderstanding will disappear."<sup>138</sup> Cherkezov invoked a tradition of regional autonomy from the 19th

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<sup>132</sup> Curzon to Wardrop, 22 July 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/153-155.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> War Office to G.O.C. Constantinople, 19 July 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/142.

<sup>135</sup> Ghambashidze, Delegate of the Georgian Government in London, to Curzon, 3 April 1919, TNA FO 608/88/5/233-240.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 239.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 239.

<sup>138</sup> Private letter, Prince V. E. Tcherkezoff to O. Wardrop, 26 May 1919, TNA FO 608/88/5/248-249, 248.

century and 1905 to contend that Georgia would not be fit back into Russia, reminiscing to Wardrop about conversations with Kropotkin on Russia's federal diversity.<sup>139</sup> Those who now attempted to reconstitute Russia did not understand this diversity and disregarded its inevitable popularity.<sup>140</sup>

Wardrop's appointment, like those of other British High Commissioners, preceded British recognition of the three Transcaucasian states. The states were informed that Wardrop's appointment should not be regarded as any form of recognition.<sup>141</sup> In the letter informing him of his appointment, Wardrop was told that "although the de facto authority of the Governments...has not yet been formally recognized...you will be required to keep in close touch with these governments."<sup>142</sup> This was a form of authority tailored to states in formation, allowing control of external and internal policy without the full acknowledgment of a deferred, promised independence.

Wardrop acted as a kind of clearinghouse for disputes between the three Transcaucasian republics and for protests from their representatives.<sup>143</sup> With the help of British consular officials, he regulated transport, hygiene, and refugee policies across borders.<sup>144</sup> Wardrop's appointment was justified by his consular career and local knowledge—as the FO wrote to the War Office, his "extensive personal experience of Georgia and the Georgians [and] his long Consular service in Russia makes him peculiarly fitted to carry out such a Mission."<sup>145</sup> The communication that informed the Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijan delegations of Wardrop's Mission also mentioned this consular experience, stating that he had been "specially chosen for this mission on account of his extensive personal experience of Trans-Caucasia and his long service in Russia as a member of His Majesty's Consular Service."<sup>146</sup> As High Commissioner,

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 249.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 249.

<sup>141</sup> British Delegation to Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijan Delegations, 25 July 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/150.

<sup>142</sup> Curzon to Wardrop, 22 July 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/153-155, 153.

<sup>143</sup> See, e.g., Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Republic to Wardrop, 2 April 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d67, L23.

<sup>144</sup> Memorandum of the High Commissioner on Passage for Refugees into Turkey, 4 December 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d67, L28.

<sup>145</sup> Foreign Office to Secretary to the Army Council (WO), 20 June 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/127-132, 129.

<sup>146</sup> British Delegation to Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijan Delegations, 25 July 1919, TNA FO 608/88/1/150. The information about Wardrop's background was added at the behest of Eyre Crowe by E G F Adam. Minute, TNA FO 608/88/1/149.

Wardrop used these consular skills. Like many other consular officials, political experts, and Commissioners in the British postwar world, Wardrop was also a paternalistic partisan of the nation he served; when they were together in Novorossiisk on New Year's Day, 1920, Halford Mackinder, High Commissioner in South Russia, noted how Wardrop "described to me with pride his Georgians."<sup>147</sup>

In drawing the border—really a frontline—between Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the Armed Forces of South Russia, the British followed a combination of the distribution of military forces, natural features, imperial provincial boundaries, and important infrastructure. Ethnic considerations were not involved as they had been in the Baltic. Beginning at the mouth of the river Bzyb' on the Black Sea, the boundary followed the river north to the border of Sukhumi oblast, along the northern borders of Sukhumi, Kutais, Tiflis, and Dagestan oblasts, to a point five miles south of the Petrovsk-Dagestan railroad, and from there parallel to the railroad five miles south of it to a point on the Caspian Sea five miles south of Petrovsk. Gegechkori cabled Lloyd George about the demarcation line, notifying him that the Georgian government had told the British command of its willingness to withdraw its forces behind the line.<sup>148</sup> Gegechkori claimed that this did not resolve the issue, and wanted a guarantee from the British government of the line's inviolability. Previous assurances from the British commander had not been honored by Denikin's troops. In August, the British changed the demarcation line to include all of Dagestan within the Volunteer Army's territory, replacing the railway line with the former southern boundary of Dagestan oblast.<sup>149</sup>

The demarcation line was used to separate restive members of the British military effort against the Soviet state. The border provided a form of recognition to Denikin's government and to Georgia and mediated the conflict between them. It made clear which government had a right to control what

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<sup>147</sup> Report by Sir H. Mackinder on the Situation in South Russia, 21 January 1920, *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, ser. 1 vol. 3, Document 656, 768-798, 783. Of course, the Wardrop Collection of Oriental Manuscripts at the Bodleian Library testifies to his gifts as a Kartvelianist and as a collector of Georgian art and manuscripts. His wife Marjory translated the 12th century Georgian national epic, Shota Rustaveli's *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, into English.

<sup>148</sup> 29 July: Telegram from E P Gegechkori to the British Government, London, To His Excellency Prime Minister Sir Lloyd George, Clippings, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d11, L3-5ob.

<sup>149</sup> Cory, Major General Commanding British Forces in Transcaucasia to President of the Government of the Azerbaijan Republic, 4 August 1919, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d83, L13.



territory, with British enforcement and imprimatur, and precipitated political recognition. It kept troops meant for use against the Soviets from coming into contact with each other and defined the territories in which these troops belonged as opposed to those through which they had to be transported.

### **Soviet Advance and British Departure—The Treaty of Moscow of May 7, 1920**

The Georgian government struggled to obtain recognition from the Western powers in Paris.<sup>150</sup> Though the details of these attempts fall outside the scope of this chapter, and the shifting status of Batumi produced a multitude of proposed solutions, the Foreign Office had resisted commitments and looked for an exit for much of 1919. In November, Curzon had concluded at a meeting of the Eastern Committee that “General Milne’s demands for an increased staff for Batoum should be rigidly curtailed,” and indicated to Milne that “it was undesirable to set up an elaborate administration at Batoum.” In January 1920, a request to attach a civilian financial advisor to the mission was denied. The British occupation of Batumi was only “provisional” and the question of the city would soon be taken up by the Peace Conference.<sup>151</sup>

Colonel Stokes traveled to Batumi from Baku in June 1920 to transfer the city and province to the Georgian government.<sup>152</sup> The Georgian government was not to be informed of Stokes’s mission or the imminent transfer of Batumi before his arrival.<sup>153</sup> The agreement handing over the province, port, and town of Batoum from the British government to the Georgian government was signed on June 28, 1920.<sup>154</sup> The transfer of Batumi from Allied control to Georgia was accompanied by steps to send a new supply of arms “to Georgians and Armenians to assist them in maintenance of their independence.”<sup>155</sup> Still, Stokes wrote, “They deplore our evacuation and express greatest anxiety for closer relations and moral and political support of His Majesty’s Government.” Stokes claimed to be “satisfied that Georgian Government

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<sup>150</sup> Beka Kobakhidze; Suny; Jones; Charlotte Alston, “The Suggested Basis for a Russian Federal Republic”; Anatol Shmelev

<sup>151</sup> Foreign Office to R. S. Meiklejohn, Secretary to the Treasury, 13 January 1920, TNA FO 608/273/66/309.

<sup>152</sup> Curzon to Peace Delegation, 12 June 1920, TNA FO 608/278/146; Curzon to Derby, 13 June 1920, TNA FO 608/278/150.

<sup>153</sup> Curzon to Derby, Enclosure of Telegram 537 to Constantinople, 12 June 1920, TNA FO 608/278/152.

<sup>154</sup> Commander Luke (Tiflis), transmits telegram of Colonel Stokes, 28 June 1920, TNA FO 608/278/181-183, 181.

<sup>155</sup> Curzon to Derby, 13 June 1920, TNA FO 608/278/150.

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has internal situation well in hand and that Government and people are anti-Bolshevik and determined to fight for their independence.”<sup>156</sup> They could therefore be left on their own. So as to avoid the interpretation that the British withdrawal from Batumi represented the “abandonment” of Georgia and Armenia, Stokes and the Chief British Commissioner recommended that the British government make statements of moral and political support, continue to supply arms to the Georgian Government “to enable it to defend its independence,” and grant the two states de jure recognition.<sup>157</sup> These gestures would help to stabilize the situation and “encourage [the] two states to hold out...against Bolshevism,” which would “undoubtedly be [the] lot of these States if they are left unsupported.”<sup>158</sup>

But as the Soviet state advanced against Denikin it sought a new ally in the Georgian state. Chicherin asked for aid against Denikin in a public telegram addressed to the people of Georgia and Azerbaijan at the beginning of 1920.<sup>159</sup> The Georgian Foreign Minister, however, insisted that Georgia would remain neutral.<sup>160</sup> In a telegram filled with rhetorical vitriol, Chicherin denounced the Georgian government’s claimed neutrality.<sup>161</sup> At the “moment when the regime of Gegechkori...adopts the attitude of an indifferent spectator toward the present struggle against the last remaining defenders of the idea of the restoration of the despotic old Russia,” Chicherin wrote, “the same government opens negotiations with Churchill and Foch with the intent to use Georgia as a new base to prepare an attack against worker-peasant Russia.”<sup>162</sup> The Soviet government, Chicherin said, desired peace with its neighbors and had “not once abandoned its readiness to support the principles of the rights of the working masses and the right of peoples to self-determination.” But Georgia could only prove it shared these aspirations by “refusing

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<sup>156</sup> Commander Luke (Tiflis), transmits telegram of Colonel Stokes, 28 June 1920, TNA FO 608/278/181-183, 182.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 183.

<sup>159</sup> Chicherin, Radiogram, “To the Georgian People,” 2 January 1920, SEA STsA, op1, d100, L12.

<sup>160</sup> Gegechkori to Chicherin, 12 January 1920, SEA STsA, op1, d100, L19.

<sup>161</sup> Chicherin to Gegechkori, 31 January 1920, SEA STsA, op1, d100, L15-15ob (Russian version, SEA STsA, op1, d100, L17-17ob).

<sup>162</sup> Chicherin to Gegechkori, 31 January 1920, SEA STsA, op1, d100, L15-15ob.

the propositions made by the Entente on the subject of military forces for the battle against the Soviet republic, not permitting the British army to occupy Georgian territory.”<sup>163</sup>

As the Soviet state defeated Denikin, and established national Soviet republics in the North Caucasus and Azerbaijan, it began to threaten the invasion of Georgia. With Azerbaijan under Soviet control and uprisings across Georgia, many within the leadership of the Kavbiuro wanted to pursue the revolution and takeover of the republic. Instead, the Soviet government negotiated a treaty with Georgia in Moscow on May 7 1920.<sup>164</sup> The Soviet state also negotiated bilateral treaties with other states along its borders in the spring of 1920. These treaties defined the borders where these new national states met the RSFSR, resolved disputes over contested territory, exchanged populations, and negotiated future relations. When viewed within this context, the Moscow Treaty becomes a part of a pattern. The Moscow Treaty is not always taken seriously and is sometimes viewed as a Soviet ruse. As I show below, however, both the Georgian and Soviet sides expected the treaty to be upheld, both attempted to fulfill it (and tried to circumvent it when they could), and both used it as a negotiating tool to demand other concessions.

In late April, as the Red Army took up Denikin’s former positions in Sochi, Chicherin demanded a guarantee that any remaining units of Denikin’s army would not be allowed into Georgia or sheltered on its territory, and in the case that such units did appear on Georgian territory that they should be disarmed and interned.<sup>165</sup> Chicherin claimed knowledge that “Georgian territory is being used by units of the volunteer army to save themselves from Soviet forces and for...their transit to the Crimean peninsula.”<sup>166</sup>

The Moscow Treaty aimed to prohibit this type of action of other powers on Georgian territory. After articles defining a provisional border between Georgia and the RSFSR and neutralizing important border positions, Article 5—by far the longest and most detailed part of the treaty—directed the Georgian

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Peace Treaty, concluded in Moscow on 7 May 1920, between the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR) and the Democratic Republic of Georgia. The 7 Treaty also appears in the archives of the Georgian Foreign Ministry. Copy of sections of Treaty with RSFSR, 7 May 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d73, L3.

<sup>165</sup> Chicherin to Gegechkori, 24 April 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d73, L12 (Russian version, SEA STsA, op1, d100, L27-27ob).

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

state to prohibit within its territory any “military operations, the presence of military forces, or, generally, activities which may create within the territory of Georgia conditions likely to endanger Russia’s independence or to establish in Georgia a base of military operations directed against the RSFSR.”<sup>167</sup> Georgia pledged to “disarm immediately or to intern in concentration camps all military and naval units which, at the time of signing this agreement, shall find themselves on the territory of Georgia;” to deliver to the RSFSR all foreign military equipment, vessels, and their crews; and to prohibit any such forces or their representatives from entering Georgia in the future.<sup>168</sup> Once this treaty was in place, Georgian and Soviet representatives began complaining of violations by their counterparts and exchanging cables denying the accusations of the other side.

The Georgian government complained about frequent violations of the treaty by the RSFSR and Soviet Azerbaijan. The week after the conclusion of the May 7 agreement, Gegechkori complained to Chicherin that Soviet troops were still participating in battles between the Georgian Republic and Soviet Azerbaijan (which had not yet concluded a peace treaty with Georgia).<sup>169</sup> Gegechkori hoped Chicherin would “take urgent measures for the withdrawal...of the Soviet units located in Azerbaijan” because the “participation of Soviet forces on the side of Azerbaijan against Georgia undermines [*koleblet*] the authority of the peace agreement concluded between Russia and Georgia.”<sup>170</sup> The following week, however, Gegechkori informed Chicherin that, after armistice negotiations with Soviet Azerbaijan, Georgia considered it possible to withdraw its forces to its borders.<sup>171</sup> A delimitation (*razgranichitel’naia*) commission would be chosen by both sides to establish a line beyond which Azerbaijani and Georgian forces would not advance.<sup>172</sup> Gegechkori argued that this proposal could only be rejected on the basis of

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<sup>167</sup> Peace Treaty, concluded in Moscow on 7 May 1920, between the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR) and the Democratic Republic of Georgia, Article V.

<sup>168</sup> Peace Treaty, concluded in Moscow on 7 May 1920, between the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR) and the Democratic Republic of Georgia, Article V, Points 1-4, 6-10.

<sup>169</sup> Gegechkori to Chicherin, 15 May 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d73, L6.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Gegechkori to Chicherin, 23 May 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d73, L7.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

a lack of desire for peace from the Azerbaijani authorities, and asked Chicherin to “take urgent measures to get the Azerbaijani Soviet authorities to honor the agreement of 7 May.”<sup>173</sup> Chicherin and the international Soviet state had now become intermediaries between independent republics.

Meanwhile, Gegechkori protested against Soviet incursions onto Georgian territory from the north. On 20 May, he had complained of a division of Soviet troops with two guns crossing into Georgia from Terek Oblast across the Roki Pass, and had been informed that in Vladikavkaz “nearly one thousand Ossetians were organized in a fighting unit for transfer into Georgia.”<sup>174</sup> Gegechkori had already protested “the unacceptability in accordance with the sixth article of the agreement of 7 May of the organization within the borders of Russia of military forces [*boevoi sily*] setting for themselves the goal of the overthrow of the state order [*gosudarstvennago pravoporiadka*] existing in Georgia” but had not received any response.<sup>175</sup> He asked for the Soviet central authorities, who had concluded the agreement with Georgia, to enforce it against local officials pursuing contradictory policies.<sup>176</sup> Gegechkori’s complaint over this violation of the May 7 treaty once again shows a fear of the organization of forces across borders and the use of adjacent territory as a launchpad for military attacks.

Gegechkori appealed to Uratadze to protest to Chicherin about these incursions into Ossetia.<sup>177</sup> “All the efforts of local communists are directed toward the irruption [*ottorzheniui*] of the borders [*okrain*] of Georgia and the creation of anarchy inside it,” Gegechkori wrote with evident frustration.<sup>178</sup> These were precisely the attributes—territorial integrity and internal order—that Georgian statesmen had promised the British they would maintain and that they in turn had hoped to gain from cooperation with the British.

On the Soviet side, Guseinov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Soviet Azerbaijan, protested to Gegechkori about Georgian support for the actions of bands in Soviet Azerbaijan and organizing uprisings

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Gegechkori to Chicherin and Kavtaradze, 8 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d73, L11.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Gegechkori to Uratadze, 17 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L106-106ob.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

in Zakatali okrug along the Georgian border.<sup>179</sup> Guseinov alleged that Georgian-supported forces crossed the border during the uprisings and joined up with bands under the leadership of Georgian officers, violating the Akstafa agreement between the two states. Another communication complained that though the “Soviet government had taken all steps to honor the agreement” Georgian forces were still occupying positions in the neutral zone named in the treaty and should be withdrawn. “In Mamisoni gorge and along the Georgian Military Highway,” Kirov wrote, the same units were still occupying positions; these forces had even been strengthened, especially in the Mamisoni gorge, which was also in violation of the point of the agreement that stipulated that the neutral zone would not be fortified. Georgian units from the Darial bridge to Kazbek were also still occupying positions and still being fortified.<sup>180</sup> The Georgian government cleverly turned this protest around on the Soviet representative, explaining that it could not withdraw its forces or neutralize the passes because of “constant harassment” from the north.<sup>181</sup>

Soviet officials also asked the Georgian government to use its power under the agreement to disband groups inimical to the Soviet state. Soviet Plenipotentiary Leonid Stark listed organizations in Tiflis and Batumi that should be shut down in accordance with 7 May treaty, including both Russian organizations and “national” organizations and the representatives of erstwhile national governments, and registered a protest against the continued existence of these groups and representatives in Georgia.<sup>182</sup> Another note protested the gathering on Georgian territory, especially in northwestern Georgia, of groups and organizations claiming to represent the government of Russia and intending to overthrow the Soviet government.<sup>183</sup> Former Denikinist officers, as well as oil supplies, were allowed to

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<sup>179</sup> Guseinov to Gegechkori, copy to Chicherin, 15 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d67, L34.

<sup>180</sup> Kirov to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 24 July 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L240.

<sup>181</sup> Sabakhtarishvili to Kirov, 27 August 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L229.

<sup>182</sup> Stark to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 20 September 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L56. The Georgian government attempted to offer a justification for the continued existence of these groups. Sabakhtarishvili to Plenipotentiary Representative of the RSFSR in Georgia, 1 October 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L57-57ob.

<sup>183</sup> Kirov to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 25 July 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L47-47ob. Gegechkori denied these allegations. Gegechkori to Kirov, 30 July 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L257-258ob; Gegechkori to Plenipotentiary Representative of

depart from Batumi for Crimea to join Wrangel. Kirov wanted a guarantee that the 7 May agreement would be honored, and asked to see decisive action taken by the Georgian government.<sup>184</sup>

Most of all, the Soviet government feared the continuing British presence or a renewed British occupation of Georgia. Soviet representatives sought to use the May 7 Treaty to remove British forces from the country and keep them from returning. Claiming to have information that “England is landing forces in the territory of Georgia in Batumi oblast,” Chicherin reminded Gegechkori that “By the [May 7] agreement Georgia pledges to take measures for the removal from its territory of all foreign forces all the more should Georgia take measures not to accept the appearance of new British units.” Chicherin argued new British landings intended “not only the further fortification of Batumi, but also the movement of its forces into the territory of Georgia and to Artvin, Ardahan, and farther.” He asked the Georgian government “to take swift measures against the increase of British military strength in Georgia.”<sup>185</sup> The Georgian government explained that Batumi had first to be incorporated into the Georgian state before international forces could be removed, but that the matter could be considered finished as regards the evacuation of the occupying forces, which would proceed in the days after the British departure.<sup>186</sup> After the British evacuation, the Georgian government responded to another alleged violation of the treaty by explaining that since “coming into possession of Batumi Georgian government has been taking most energetic measures to fulfill the obligations of Article 5 of the May 7 treaty.”<sup>187</sup> Still, Kirov continued to protest against all of these actions as the “systematic violation of the agreement between Russia and Georgia of the 7 May.”<sup>188</sup>

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the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic to the Government of Georgia (Makharadze), 30 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d25, L87-91.

<sup>184</sup> Kirov to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 25 July 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L47-47ob.

<sup>185</sup> Chicherin to Gegechkori, 17 May 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L41. In November Makharadze expressed Soviet concern over news that Batumi might be reoccupied by British forces, protesting against the violation of the conditions of the treaty. Makharadze to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 17 November 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L58-59

<sup>186</sup> Gegechkori to Kirov, 30 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L115.

<sup>187</sup> [Sabakhtarishvili] to Kirov, 24 July 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L238.

<sup>188</sup> Note of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the RSFSR in Georgia Kirov to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Georgian Democratic Republic, 21 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d101, L8-9.

## The International Context of the Sovietization of Georgia

On Thursday, September 30, 1920, at 7:00 in the evening, Filip Makharadze gave a speech to a meeting of Georgian communists held in Baku at the Central Workers' Club.<sup>189</sup> The middle son of a Gurian village priest, Makharadze had attended the Tiflis Theological Seminary with Zhordania in his teens.<sup>190</sup> When their revolutionary activities got them in trouble with the school, all the universities in the Russian Empire were closed to them except, by chance, the Warsaw Veterinary Institute, where he and Zhordania proceeded together in 1891.<sup>191</sup> In Warsaw, Makharadze came into contact with the Polish workers' movement in both its national and international forms, spent time in prison, and helped to inaugurate a transnational and imperial circuit through which many Georgian revolutionaries passed.<sup>192</sup>

The meeting in Baku was attended by 80-85 communists. Makharadze gave a presentation titled "The Upcoming Work of the Communist Party of Georgia" (*"Ocheredniia rabochi kompartii Gruzii"*). In the speech, Makharadze identified the situation facing the Communist Party in Georgia at this "sharp, critical moment." The Party had lived through heroic times. "On one hand the occupation of the country by the imperialists, on the other the vassalage of the Mensheviks," had led to bloody events for the Georgian worker and peasant masses.<sup>193</sup> Makharadze argued that the legalization of the KPG under the Moscow Treaty had actually weakened the party. Legalization was a ruse for repression. It was time to return instead to underground, illegal, revolutionary work.<sup>194</sup> Makharadze argued that a new Central Committee of more "battle-seasoned" comrades should lead the Party to closer contact with the masses and restore

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<sup>189</sup> Protokol sobraniia kommunistov iz Gruzii, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d1, L1-3.

<sup>190</sup> Filip Makharadze, "Moia kratkaia avtobiografiia," [1933], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f93, op1, d182, L5-17. Makharadze's autobiography conforms to many of the genre standards of Party autobiographies, but retains a refreshing spontaneity and self-deprecating quality.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, L5ob-6.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, L6. Alfred Rieber, *Stalin and the Struggle for Supremacy in Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 18, 25.

<sup>193</sup> Protokol sobraniia kommunistov iz Gruzii, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d1, L1-3. In 1929, on the eve of a new phase of socialist construction frequently imagined as an extension of the Civil War, Makharadze still insistently figured the struggle for the establishment of Soviet power in the Caucasus in international terms. Filip Makharadze, "12 Let," Manuscript, October 1929, MIA PA, f2914, op2, d29, L6-11 (Georgian version L1-5).

<sup>194</sup> Protokol sobraniia kommunistov iz Gruzii, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d1, L1-3; Resolution approved at the common meeting of Communists of Georgia in Baku, 30 September 1920, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d1, L4-4ob.



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the authority through Party cells working in “every village, every rural community, just as in every industrial plant, every factory, in every party-less organization.”<sup>195</sup>

In the Caucasus, the Bolsheviks faced the most successful iteration of parliamentary Social Democracy they were to encounter anywhere.<sup>196</sup> Georgian Mensheviks, along with the Armenian Dashaktsutiun and the Azerbaijani Musavat parties, had managed to hold power in Russian Transcaucasia throughout 1917, after gaining preeminence in the Tiflis Soviet shortly after the February Revolution. They established a short-lived federal Transcaucasian Republic for just over one month in 1918. After that state split under military, ethnic, and religious pressures, Georgian Mensheviks again governed an independent Georgian state.

The Georgian Social Democrats drew on a strong tradition of revolutionary social democracy that went back to the 19th century and was active among both workers and peasants. During the Revolution of 1905, the Gurian Republic created an example of regional revolutionary self-government.<sup>197</sup> As a later report of the Accounting and Distribution Division of the Central Committee of the KPG noted, “As everyone knows, Georgia is an extraordinary country where the peasantry possesses its own 25-year revolutionary history.” This history expressed itself in places like Guria, “where there are no non-Party workers, where ten-year-old children talk about Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, where the peasant from his plow-handle debates armed with citations from Marx [*razsuzhdaet vooruzhennii tsitatami Marksa*].”<sup>198</sup>

At the same time, the Georgian Mensheviks had collaborated with *both* the German and British empires. In exchange for the recognition of Georgian independence and preservation of Georgia’s territorial integrity they had given the German Empire control over independent Georgia’s currency,

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Resolution approved at the common meeting of Communists of Georgia in Baku, 30 September 1920, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d1, L4-4ob.

<sup>196</sup> Suny ; Jones ; Lee

<sup>197</sup> See Stephen F. Jones, “Marxism and Peasant Revolt in the Russian Empire: The Case of the Gurian Republic,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 67:3 (July 1989), 403-434.

<sup>198</sup> Otchet Uchetno-Raspredelitel’nogo otdela TsK KP Gruzii za Mai-Oktiabr 1924 goda, MIA PA f14, op1, d67, L163-175, L164. Ironically (or not), this report covered the period of the most serious uprising against Soviet power in Georgia, of August 1924.

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railroads, ports, ships, mines, raw materials, and exports.<sup>199</sup> The garrisoning of German troops on independent Georgian soil began two weeks later.<sup>200</sup> These Social Democrats had closed other socialist newspapers, like the SR newspaper *Znamia truda* and Communist Party organs, and attempted to disempower the workers' soviets and the Red Guards. Under Menshevik leadership and pressure, the soviets voted to renounce all claims to political power. Only a democratic parliamentary government could hold legitimate political power in the new Georgian state.<sup>201</sup>

The May 7 Treaty had also legalized the Georgian Communist Party within the Democratic Republic of Georgia. By Article 10, Georgia agreed to exempt from punishment or prosecution anyone who had been subject to such prosecution in Georgia for offenses committed in behalf of the RSFSR or of the Communist Party, and to free all such prisoners immediately.<sup>202</sup> Despite this, the Georgian government denounced the agitation of "local communists, who, not finding within the country a basis for their destructive plans, place all their hope in external forces."<sup>203</sup> Georgia, guided by the exact letter [*tochnym smyslom*] of the peace agreement," had "legalized the Communist Party and freed from arrest 900 communists, and then granted the members of the party the right of printing public lectures, presentations and the publication of party newspapers;" as long as communists recognized the "independence of the Republic of Georgia and the existence in it of state order [*pravoporiadka*]," it would not interfere with their activities. But if "members of local communist organizations or individuals calling themselves communists continue to take actions [to undermine] state order," Gegechkori wrote, "then my government cannot avoid taking...all measures dictated by the interests of state security."<sup>204</sup> The

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<sup>199</sup> Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 193. In a separate agreement, the Ottoman Empire also received use of Georgian railroads and two disputed fortress towns near the former border.

<sup>200</sup> For details on these capitulations, see SEA STsA f1864, op1,

<sup>201</sup> Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 194-195.

<sup>202</sup> Peace Treaty, concluded in Moscow on 7 May 1920, between the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR) and the Democratic Republic of Georgia, Article X. See also Uratadze to Gegechkori, 8 May 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L82.

<sup>203</sup> Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs to Chicherin, Kavtaradze, and Kirov, June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d73, L14-15.

<sup>204</sup> Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs to Chicherin, Kavtaradze, and Kirov, June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d73, L14-15; see also Gegechkori to Kirov, 30 July 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L257-258ob.

Georgian government invoked the right of self-preservation in repressing members of the KPG.<sup>205</sup> The agreement's legalization of the KPG did not mean that the Georgian government would "give carte blanche to activity [aiming at] the death of the republic."<sup>206</sup> For this reason, Gegechkori argued the arrest of communists did not violate the conditions of the Moscow Treaty.<sup>207</sup>

Members of the KPG in Georgia repeatedly found it necessary to inform the government of violations of the agreement on the transition of the Party to a legal status.<sup>208</sup> They complained that the provincial administration harassed Party members working legally and tried to break Party cells; arrested Party organizers along with groups of peasants attempting to join the Party; banished Party leaders from certain regions; and continued to hold previously arrested communists in prison in violation of the agreement.<sup>209</sup> The Temporary Central Committee of the KPG threatened that "the further continuation of this administrative bacchanal could complicate the political situation of Georgia."<sup>210</sup> Kirov complained that "every day I receive yet another...report about the arrests of members of the Communist Party, both in Tiflis and in the provinces."<sup>211</sup> Kirov provided a list of members of the Communist Party held in prison before the peace agreement between Russia and Georgia who had not yet been released, in violation of Article 10.<sup>212</sup> Kirov protested the Georgian government's closure of the newspapers *Kommunist* (Russian) and *Georgian Communist* (Georgian), accusing the Georgian government "of attempting to bring about the full liquidation of the press organs of the communists in order to render them effectively powerless."<sup>213</sup> As "the Georgian Republic throws into prison if not hundreds then many tens of

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<sup>205</sup> Gegechkori to Plenipotentiary Representative of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic to the Government of Georgia (Makharadze), 30 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d25, L87-91.

<sup>206</sup> Sabakhtarishvili to Kavtaradze, 28 August 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L231

<sup>207</sup> Gegechkori to Plenipotentiary Representative of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic to the Government of Georgia (Makharadze), 30 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d25, L87-91.

<sup>208</sup> Head of the Temporary Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia to the Head of the Government of Georgia, 16 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d99, L23.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Kirov to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 28 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L110-110ob.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Kirov to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 19 June 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L124-124ob.

communists,” this repression amounted to “a planned system for the total liquidation of the communist party of Georgia,” in violation of the May 7 agreement.<sup>214</sup>

This section explores the process of sovietization of Georgia as it was planned at higher levels of the Party and as it proceeded on the ground. In the aftermath of the above repressions, efforts at sovietization were unfailingly placed within an international context and justified by references to international events. Local Soviet and Party power was constantly threatened by, and mobilized within, an international struggle. Anti-Soviet sentiment was blamed on external Menshevik agitators and perceived as a tactic of the Entente’s larger struggle with Soviet power.

In the first weeks after the conquest of Georgia, the KPG leadership set about expanding the local Party organizations and making contact with the Georgian population. They sought to strengthen local Party organizations and fill the ranks of the local Party apparatus. Local Party organizations had to be reorganized and strengthened because of the damage done by the “chauvinist, petty-bourgeois Menshevik government,” which had disorganized the Party and “taken every opportunity to cut off the great tasks of the Party at the roots.”<sup>215</sup> Only after Soviet power was strongly established could the Party finish its organizational work. Both processes had to begin at the local level.<sup>216</sup>

The Agitation and Propaganda Division of the KPG Central Committee (Agitpropotdel) therefore called for agitational work in the countryside and among the peasants. “Reading izbas” and libraries should be organized in the villages. “Peasants’ houses,” *dom khrestianina*, should be set up in towns and administrative centers. There, the Georgian Agitpropotdel enthused, when coming into the town on business the peasant could find a stable and food for his horses, a place to stay for the night, a telephone, an organizational scheme of all Party administrations and organizations, the names of the heads of otdels and sub-otdels, and workers’ cooperative establishments for trade between town and country. Peasants

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<sup>214</sup> Kirov to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 9 July 1920, SEA STsA, f1864, op1, d100, L126-127.

<sup>215</sup> Circular, To all Uezd Committees of the Party, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L58.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

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could meet with government and Party representatives. The Peasant Houses should also include gramophones with records playing the speeches of Soviet leaders and revolutionary and popular songs, reading libraries, Party literature and newspapers. They would put on plays and show lectures, films, and magic lantern shows.<sup>217</sup> Meanwhile, the Political Otdel of the XI Army organized agit-points at the main railway stations.<sup>218</sup> Roving companies agitated among the peasants, initiatives to provide direct aid in peasant villages, and campaigns for periods of agitational work.<sup>219</sup> These agitational points and local Party branches organized week and month long campaigns on elections, the 10th anniversary of the Lena goldfields massacre, for work among women and the organization of childcare, and international issues.<sup>220</sup>

All of this was necessary because of the low level of “culture of the majority of the working population” in Georgia.<sup>221</sup> This was caused both by the dire economic situation and “conditions under which the working peasantry does not perceive the good results of the existence of soviet-power.” “This situation in Georgia had been worsened by the three-year work of the Mensheviks,” who had carried out “both the destruction of our young apparatus and the infiltration of it with Menshevik-saboteur elements.”<sup>222</sup> The infiltration and disruption of the Party at the hands of the Mensheviks had led to a lack of capable Party workers and had broken the connections between the KPG central leadership and its local organizations, as well as between the Party and the country and population it sought to mobilize.

At an early plenum of the KPG Central Committee, Makharadze discussed this insufficiency in the numbers of party workers.<sup>223</sup> Two months after the legal existence of the party the information received

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<sup>217</sup> Circulars, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L1, L1-5, L18.

<sup>218</sup> Circular, To all Partkoms, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L23, 35, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 49, 52; Protocol of the plenum of the Central Committee, 21 April 1921, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d5, L15 (Item 6: On Agit-Points in Railway Stations).

<sup>219</sup> Circulars, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L1, L1-5, L18.

<sup>220</sup> Telegram, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L6; Circular Letter, To all Uezd committees and otdels for work among women, from Orekhelashvili, Donenko, Dal’niaia, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L75. For Northrop, *Veiled Empire*

<sup>221</sup> Circulars, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L1, L18.

<sup>222</sup> Circulars, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L1, L18.

<sup>223</sup> Protocol, 29 March 1921, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d5, L5-6.

from local party organizations still was not sufficient.<sup>224</sup> In order to correct the deficiency in Party workers, the leadership asked for accurate statistics from Party organizations down to the most local level.<sup>225</sup>

To produce more information about the local Party organizations and the progress of their work, circulars and questionnaires were frequently sent out. Questionnaires asked about the status of Party and propaganda work at the local level.<sup>226</sup> Questions covered the progress of agitprop work, the organization of local agitprop ottdels at the guberniia, uезд, oblast', and raion levels, the number of local workers, the organization of party schools, the presence and availability of Party literature, and the presence of local presses for newspapers and brochures. Questionnaires asked local Party leaders whether or not there existed a "living connection with the population," whether there were enough propagandists, whether agit-points had been organized, what language the agitational and propaganda work was being conducted in, and in what languages Party literature was available. They asked for details on the role of the communist party in the locality, the local tasks of the party, plans for upcoming propaganda work, information on the work of the local raion and Party cell committees, work among members of the Party cells, and information on the progress of soviet construction. How many meetings were organized and how were they attended by peasants, workers, and artisans? What topics were discussed, what presentations were given, and which subjects were translated into local life? Answers to questionnaires about agitprop work in uyezds and in the army were to be given every two weeks.

The bi-weekly circulars became more detailed over the spring and fall of 1921, incorporating larger numbers of more complex questions.<sup>227</sup> But there was a limit to how far this organization should penetrate. The same Party circulars dictated that local organizations should not have printing presses at

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<sup>224</sup> Circular, [15 April 1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L60.

<sup>225</sup> Plan raboty Uchstaty p/otd. Obkomov i Ukomov KPG na blizhaishie 4 Mesiatsa s 1go Maia – 23g. po 1e Sentiabria, MIA PA f14, op1, d67, L108. If possible, these statistics should indicate the nationalities of Party members and candidate members. MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L15.

<sup>226</sup> Circulars, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 20, 21, 22, 32, 60; Circular letter, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L77; Circular, To the Uezd Committees of the Party, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L90

<sup>227</sup> Circulars, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L3, L15.

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lower than the uezd and raion levels, and should not organize presses or publications on their own initiative below that level.<sup>228</sup> Party cells (the most local level of organization) should use the presses only in cases of a special need for printed material. Local Party and Soviet government organizations should not hold or organize evenings, concerts, or amusements of a charitable aim (*blogotvoritel'noi tsel'iu*) on their own initiative or without higher approval.<sup>229</sup> Party authorities tried to limit independent agitation among the peasants or incorporate it into existing Party initiatives.<sup>230</sup> Again, these limits on the local penetration and spontaneity of Party activity were motivated by fears of external influence. There was a risk of SR and Menshevik agitation in conferences designed to promote the work of the Party among the non-Party workers and peasants if such meetings were left too open or were organized without sufficient oversight.<sup>231</sup>

The Soviet project in Georgia ran up against even more fundamental limits. Famine began to affect the country in the fall of 1921. KPG leaders and organizers argued that the Party's work was not effective because of the economic situation.<sup>232</sup> Uprisings broke out in several regions in late 1921 and 1922. Monitoring the situation in the regions of the Georgian SSR and at the local level, the Cheka collected and forwarded petitions, anti-Soviet leaflets, and evidence of anti-Soviet demonstrations to the KPG leadership, the Zakkraikom, and Moscow. Meanwhile, the Cheka warned that the international counterrevolution was using the poor economic situation for its own ends in Georgia and the Mountain Republic. The difficult economic conditions were creating a poor political outlook, and

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<sup>228</sup> Circular, To Uezd Committees, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L51; Circular, To all Raions, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L10-10ob; Circular, To Uezd Committees of the Party, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L81. These circulars also dictated a standard form that Party newspapers should take. Circular, To Uezd Committees, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d108, L51.

<sup>229</sup> Circular, To all Raikoms, from Orekhelashvili and Donenko, 9 August 1921, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L22; see also Circular, to Uezd Committees of the Party, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L88.

<sup>230</sup> Circulars, [1921], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f 14, op 1, d 108, L 1, 1-5, 18.

<sup>231</sup> MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L73. One Cheka report, for example, stated that in Borjomi the local party committee was planning a conference of non-Party workers without the agreement of the uezd communist party. The report warned that "Mensheviks have organized for the conference. There will be unpleasantness." Mchedlidze, 14 July 1921, From Gori, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d36, L37.

<sup>232</sup> Circular, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L168. On speaking about famine see Robert Kindler, "Famines and Political Communication in Stalinism. Possibilities and Limits of the Sayable," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 62:2 (2014), 255-272, 258-259.

counterrevolutionaries were taking advantage of this.<sup>233</sup> The famine was used by the enemies of Soviet power as fuel for agitation against it.<sup>234</sup> The Cheka alleged groups of Mensheviks were supporting uprisings in the provinces from organizations in Tiflis.<sup>235</sup> Menshevik agitators moved among the rural population. They organized meetings and infiltrated non-Party conferences. One circular advised that “The enemies of the worker-peasant dictatorship are preparing new strikes against Soviet power.” With this new attack, the “world counter-revolution...plans to prepare Soviet territory for invasion first by the army of the ex-Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich Romanov, and subsequently the armies of the Entente.” But if the danger was clear, the solution was as well: it was “necessary to pursue a broad political campaign, starting in the highest reaches of the party leadership, continuing in the party masses and finishing with the very broadest masses of workers and peasants and all toilers.”<sup>236</sup> A Russian-British invasion could be avoided by agitation among the masses, who were otherwise vulnerable to the agitation of the imperialists.

These organizational and agitational efforts show the KPG and its local officials in the process of building up Party and state power. They attempted to pull the country together, even as it was falling apart. The aim of these organizational campaigns was “soviet construction” and “the creation of new norms of socialist life.”<sup>237</sup> Such was the project pursued across the whole of the Soviet state. What distinguished the struggle for Party and Soviet power in the Georgian countryside was the specter of renewed imperial intervention.

### **Conclusion: The “Georgian Affair”**

The so-called “Georgian Affair” is one of the most written about events in Soviet history, as well as one of the most speculated about.<sup>238</sup> It is a dramatic story. A slap, an angry phone call, a dying man dictating his

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<sup>233</sup> MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d36, L12.

<sup>234</sup> Circular, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f 14, op 1, d 14, L 91.

<sup>235</sup> Tolordava to Gruzcheka from Kutaisi, 9 April [1922], MIA Archive, Party Archive, f 14, op 1, d36, L197.

<sup>236</sup> To all Oblast and Uezd Committees of the Communist Party of Georgia, MIA PA, f14, op1, d14, L5.

<sup>237</sup> Circular Letter, To all Uezd committees and otdels for work among women, MIA Archive, Party Archive, f14, op1, d14, L75.

<sup>238</sup> Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* ; Richard Pipes



last thoughts to doctors and secretaries as he loses the use of his leg, his hand, and eventually his speech. The desperate drive to release a “testament,” or all at once to go back and revise everything. Hobbled figures confined to their rooms in the Kremlin—Lenin with paralysis, Trotsky with back pain, others with sickness—rooms the action never leaves, as in a stage play. The principals send telegrams and letters across corridors from one apartment to another. But the emerging Soviet Union was a very large country, and the sovietization of Georgia involved tens of thousands of Party workers.<sup>239</sup>

The Georgian Affair has not been examined within the international context attributed to it by those involved: as a moment within a specific phase of an international struggle. Both sides of the debate over the status of Georgia and the form of the Soviet state framed their positions in reference to imperialism and the threat posed to the Soviet international project by a mishandling of the nationalities question. If the sovietization of Georgia was carried out incorrectly, it would leave the Caucasian nationalities vulnerable to imperialist suggestion and exploitation. Moreover, the example set by the Bolsheviks in the Caucasus could affect the broader anti-imperial struggle of peoples around the world. Deviating from the principles of anti-imperialism in constructing and saving the nation might impede or discourage those nations “awakening” in other areas of colonial rule. This potential threat of imperialism was, once again, both internal and external: both Russian and British.

Creating a Transcaucasian federation had been discussed in the Kavbiuro since the summer of 1921. The resolution on the creation of a federation passed in November 1921 argued that “the independent state existence of the Transcaucasian Republics weaken[ed] them in the face of the capitalist and bourgeois countries.”<sup>240</sup> A federation would give a durable guarantee against the renewed

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<sup>239</sup> Some accounts of the “Georgian Affair” have in fact emphasized the role of individual local officials. Sergo Ordzhonikidze, the Chairman of the Kavbiuro, behaved abusively toward the members of the KPG who resisted the rapid sovietization of Georgia and its integration into the ZSFSR. Sergo’s difficult personality and his management style on the ground shaped the course of events in the Kavbiuro’s relationship with the KPG as events spiraled out of control. Jeremy Smith, “The Georgian Affair of 1922. Policy Failure, Personality Clash or Power Struggle?” *Europe-Asia Studies* 50:3 (May 1998), 519-544.

<sup>240</sup> Extract from Protokol No. 23, Evening meeting of the Plenum of the Kavbiuro TsK RKP, 3 November 1921  
Item 2. Resolution about the creation of a Transcaucasian federation, MIA PA, f12, op1, d1, L18-19.

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interference against the republics from the side of counter-revolutionary forces and would strengthen Soviet power on the borders of the Near East.<sup>241</sup>

The sovietization of Georgia was not intended to be the end of the Soviet international project. More nations and republics were supposed to follow. Though they were central to the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Georgian SSR and the ZSFSR were not meant to be the last pieces in the Soviet edifice. The creation of Soviet republics in the Caucasus looked outward from Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to further Soviet national republics to be established elsewhere in “the East,” to become theaters of revolution and staging grounds, eventually to join the “world union of Soviet republics.”<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Extract from the Protocol of the Evening meeting of the Plenum of the Kavbiuro of the TsK RKP, 3 November 1921, MIA PA f14, op1, d5, L69; Extract from Protokol No. 23, Evening meeting of the Plenum of the Kavbiuro TsK RKP, 3 November 1921 Item 2. Resolution about the creation of a Transcaucasian federation, MIA PA, f12, op1, d1, L18-19.

<sup>242</sup> “Eshche odna Sovetskaia respublika, eshche odna poshchechina Antante!” *Sovetskii Dagestan* No. 43, 4 April 1921, 1.