

**THE SUPPRESSION OF THE 1919 ANTI-ARMENIAN UNREST OF THE
MUSLIM POPULATION IN THE ZOD-BASARGECHAR REGION AND THE
RESTORATION OF THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA IN
THE CONTEXT OF THE ACTIVITY OF COLONEL CLIVE TEMPERLEY, THE
MILITARY AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVE OF GREAT BRITAIN**

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Abstract

In 1918-1920s, the Republic of Armenia made huge efforts to prevent hostile forces and conspiracies, especially in Surmalu, Kars, Aralitch, Zangibasar, Vedibasar, Böyük-Vedi, Nakhijevan, Zangezur, Zod, Basargechar and other regions. Available archives and other documents show the difficulties the Armenian government faces in preventing the special operations of Azerbaijani-Turkish activities.

During the days of the First Republic of Armenia, the successful activity of the Armenian government had significant results in revealing the apparent anti-Armenian intrigues and espionage activities of Azerbaijan in Yerevan aimed at undermining the foundations of Armenian statehood. The anti-Armenian uprisings in Zangibasar, Böyük-Vedi, as well as in Zod and other Armenian territories, directly sought to separate these territories from Armenia, and this took place in the immediate presence of the British military representative, Colonel C. Temperley.

Keywords: Zod, Basargechar-Vardenis, Armenian troops, Tatar-Azerbaijani, C. Temperley, Muslim, Republic of Armenia

One of the most important manifestations of the state and political life of the Republic of Armenia in 1918-1920 was the constant struggle against the forces tearing down the Armenian statehood from within. The boundary and territorial disputes with the immediate neighbors - Azerbaijan and Georgia - had old roots and were always at the basis of the foreign policy choices and orientations that arose with the emergence of the three Transcaucasian republics, when each of them embarked on the establishment of their own armed forces.

In 1918-1920, from the point of view of ensuring the territorial integrity and security of the Republic of Armenia, more importance was attached to the issue of those regions where, from the government's point of view, the chances of violating the rights of the Armenian population were greater, because a great number of Muslim population lived there and they often did not have a law-abiding attitude towards the legal authorities.

During the Armenian-Tatar (Azerbaijani) conflicts, thanks to the joint measures taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the military units of the regular army, a significant number of the Muslim population was deported from Armenia. They mainly concentrated in the border zones, thus becoming carriers of a unique explosive charge, creating hotbeds of unrest.

It should be noted that back in 2003, 2009, 2011, 2015 we addressed the issue from a military and political point of view for the first time, highlighting the efforts of the RA government to ensure the security interests and territorial integrity of RA in the Zod-Basargechar region, and in 2008 the issue was very briefly discussed by Orientalist Davit Knyazyan, and in 2012 - by historian Hamlet Harutyunyan.¹ In 2018, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the First Republic, based on the facts presented by us, A. Asatryan also briefly, in a few lines assessed the Sotk-Zod events and the role of the heroes of the Battle of Sardarapat, General Daniel Bek-Pirumyan and Chief of Staff Al. Chneour in them, noting that in early 1919 Major General Daniel Bek-Pirumyan brilliantly carried out the operations of the village of Zod with the squad he led, and Chief of Staff of the squad Al. Chneour took part in them as well. The operations of Zod were one of the instructive examples of mutual cooperation between the Armenian army and intelligence.² This was briefly noted by Artsvi Bakhchinyan from Armenia and V. Mateosian from the USA who highly appreciated Sardarapat hero Al. Chneour's "Zod" operation aimed at suppressing the Muslim riot in the Nor Bayazet region.³

As for H. Harutyunyan's work⁴ published in 2012, it almost copies our study mentioned above, with minor reservations, and it is clearly seen from the references given in the author's footnote and from the content section in general. In terms of modern interpretation, notable is the work by A. Grigoryan and A. Bobokhyan⁵ who highly evaluate our study in terms of covering the blank pages of the Zod military operation and they emphasize that this work was written from a different starting point, namely from the point of view of revealing the activities of the RA power structures, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the army in Zod-Basargechar in 1919, closely linking it to C. Temperley's (Temperley Clive Errington, the representative of the British military and political mission in Armenia) activity in Zod-Basargechar. And this determines the

● ¹The study is published within the scope of the Contractual (Thematic) Application of the State Committee of Science (21T-6A102: "Armenia in the context of relations with the military and political representations of European countries in Transcaucasia (1917-1920)") approved by Order N1693-A/2 of October 11, 2021 of the RA Minister of ESCS.

Virabyan 2003a: 51; Virabyan 2003b: 98-141; Virabyan 2009: 222-253; Virabyan 2011:128-139; Virabyan 2015: 423-445; Knyazyan 2008: 91-93; Harutyunyan 2012: 283-286, 295-310.

² Virabyan 2003a: 51; Asatryan 2018: 334.

³ Baxchinean A., Mateosean 2018: 100.

⁴ Harutyunyan 2012: 285, 295-310.

⁵ Grigoryan, Bobokhyan 2022.

scientific novelty, modern resonance and Armenological value of the presented problem.

Muslim uprisings against the Republic of Armenia followed one another, covering almost the entire territory of the republic, aimed at undermining and destroying the Armenian statehood. The frequent attacks of bandit Selim and other gangs on Armenian military units and militias in Aghbaba, Zod, Zarushat and elsewhere created hotbeds of great tension. Azerbaijani agents and officers sent and guided by Turkey were constantly calling secret meetings, arming the local Muslim population, training them to use firearms, making provocative calls to overthrow the RA government.⁶ Back in July 1918, Azerbaijan began sending appeals to the Armenian government, demanding an end to violence against Muslims in the Nor Bayazet⁷ region. In response, the Armenian government informed the Azerbaijani government that the Muslim residents who were subjected to violence should turn to the RA government, not to Azerbaijan, considering it unacceptable that the Armenians of Azerbaijan turn to them, and the Muslims of Armenia turn to Baku, viewing it as an interference in each other's internal affairs.

Azerbaijani historian I. Niftaliyev notes that under the name of the Gyokcha (Sevan-V.V.) region the eastern parts of the Nor Bayazet region of the Yerevan Governorate (according to him not Yerevan, but Ierevan-V.V.) were outlined, which lay between Lake Gyokcha and the Lesser Caucasus mountain peak and which administratively belonged to the Dovalinsk, Mazarinsky and Gazaldara police stations, including Zod, Basar-Gechar, Bashkend and other settlements. Referring to the report of A. Shchepoteyev (employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic) on "the disputed territories of the Caucasus" to which the self-determined Azerbaijani Turks allegedly had "legal" rights, Niftaliyev notes that the entire area east of the above-mentioned border had been inhabited by a large Muslim population (100%) without including any ethnic Armenians, stating that since the very beginning of the declaration of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic this population had been striving for the latter and for these natural aspirations they had been repeatedly subjected to bloody persecution by Armenians. As an example he cites the 1919 events in Zod, Bashkend, Basar-Gechar and other villages, claiming that the entire Muslim population along the eastern and southeastern shores of Lake Gyokcha was in ethnic, religious and domestic ties with the Muslim population of Gazakh, Karabakh and Nakhijevan regions⁸.

And Nazim Mustafa, famous Azerbaijani researcher, Doctor of Philosophy, I. Aliyev's aide, writes that in order to stop the Armenian armed forces, self-defense groups were organized by the Muslim population in the Zod-Basargechar region of

⁶ Haraj, May 7, 1920, № 49.

⁷ The Nor Bayazet region included the rural communities of Hajimukhan, Ghshlagh, Pashakend, Dalighardash, Yeranos, Gjol, Gharanlugh, Zolakhach, Gholankirlan, Alichalu, Basargechar, Sariyagub, Mazra, Zod and Nadezhdino (present Jil) - Harutyunyan 2008: 122-124; Harutyunyan 2012: 11, 31.

⁸ Niftaliyev 2010: 22-23.

Gyokcha, and on March 2, 1919, the representatives of 26 villages of the Gyokcha region organized signature gatherings in the villages, allegedly on behalf of 60,000 people. Ogrucha resident Mashadi Isa Kerbalay Musa Oghli was elected the military minister of the region, and Zod village resident Agalar Bey Kasamansky was elected Commander-in-Chief, being entrusted with the mobilization of Muslim detachments in the entrusted territory, adding that the population considered him a citizen of Azerbaijan.⁹ And Armenophobe Bakhtiyar Najafov emphasizes the allegedly endless attacks by Armenians, which were accompanied by atrocities and violence against the population, thereby explaining the Muslim anti-Armenian outbreak in the Zod region. Najafov considered it violence by the Dashnaks against the civilian population, who explained it by the problems caused by the establishment of Armenian statehood, which the Azerbaijani author by no means wants to accept as a normal reality.¹⁰

This explains the activation of Muslim movements throughout 1919. In the second half of 1918 - the beginning of 1919, all the more or less significant cases of deportation of the Muslim population from the territory of RA, and vice versa, from the Armenian regions of Azerbaijan to Armenia, took place. In his report addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs on March 11, 1919, the Commissar of the Territorial Administration and Militia of Armenia emphasized that during the entire period of the Armenian-Turkish clashes 111.560 Tatars were deported outside the borders of Armenia, of which 15.000 were Kurds and 29.000 Tatars returned, but the deported Kurds did not return, emphasizing that in the territory of Armenia the number of villages free from Muslims reached 248, 50 of which were destroyed, and 56 completely free villages were occupied mainly by refugees from Turkish Armenia and 142 villages – by refugees from the Kars province.¹¹ The RA government sought to create a homogeneous population in the border zone, insuring against the dangers that came from Azerbaijan and Turkey. In this regard, H. Harutyunyan expressed disagreement with the above-mentioned point of view, finding that it did not correspond to reality, that such things did not happen.¹² However, in this regard we would like to emphasize that it is one thing for any decent state to strive for the indigenous population to prevail in its territory and the management of ethnic minorities remains the only problem, which we can encounter today in many European countries, but it is another thing to be a minority in the territory of one's own homeland and to be constantly afraid and threatened. At the present stage, any more or less organized country, e.g. the USA, the Russian Federation and other countries, cannot at all feel threatened by, say, a few million non-ethnic Russians living in their territories, for example, Armenians. Only states that are weak and disorganized in terms of security are afraid of such phenomena and realities.

⁹ Mustafa Nazim 2018: 17, 198.

¹⁰ Nadjafov 1994: 59.

¹¹ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 44, p. 16.

¹² Harutyunyan 2012: 307.

The significant mass of Muslims living in the territory of Armenia was enough (according to the memorandum of the RA government presented by Hovh. Qajaznuni to the US Senate on November 10, 1919, the number of Muslims [Tatar, Turk, Turkmen, Karapapakh] was 588.000 or 27% of the population)¹³ to make RA always be in a state of alarm, especially since spies from Azerbaijan and Turkey, various emissaries armed with a huge amount of fake money, were trying to organize this mass and incite a rebellion against the legitimate authorities, supporting separatist sentiments. And in this matter, the RA government had a lot to do, trying to eradicate it almost everywhere - in Basargechar,¹⁴ Zangezur, Kars etc.

The Muslim uprisings were felt wherever there was a more or less large Muslim population, and it was difficult to fight against them, therefore, to solve the issue, the military was involved, which was not strengthened, but weakened by participating in internal fights, “pacifying” the Muslim population in the territory of Armenia and reasserting the power of the legitimate authorities. It was clearly demonstrated in the suppression of the Zod-Basargechar (Vardenis) riot, when the Republic of Azerbaijan, relying on the Muslim population in the Lake Sevan basin, tried to make claims to a part of the legal territory of the Republic of Armenia. R. Ter-Minasyan writes the following: “With Zod¹⁵ as their center, the Tatars had established the power of Azerbaijan there and firmly closed the roads of Jivanshir. The Tatar villages about 2000 square verst north of Lake Sevan in the Basargechar district of the region of Bayazet, which were directly connected with Jivanshir and bordered Azerbaijan, declared that they were not independent, but a part of Azerbaijan: agents and officials of Azerbaijan ruled there, and our officials did not have access to that country. The loss of that region was very harmful for Armenia not from the economic, but from the military point of view. Azerbaijan could enter the basin of Lake Sevan through it, it could keep in touch with Vedibasar and Sadarak over Jghin, and therefore with Turkey. All the roads of Armenia were open to it and it would be able to cut to the Daralagyaz and Zangezur regions, as well as the Dilijan and Yerevan regions. It was a hammer raised over the heads of the Armenian provinces”.¹⁶ It is difficult to unequivocally agree that our officials had no access to those regions, that “the importance of this danger was not felt by the

¹³ Qajaznuni 1993: 11.

¹⁴ Basargechar - a region and a village of the same name in Nor Bayazet region of Yerevan province, in the south-eastern part of the Gegharkunik province of the present-day RA. By order of June 2, 1969 of the Supreme Council of the ASSR it was renamed **Vardenis**. The place name is derived from the Turkish words “**basar**” (to attack, trample) and “**gechar**” (to pass). See Hakobyan *et al.* 1986: 609; Hakobyan *et al.* 1986: 782-783.

¹⁵ Zod – a village in the Sotk region of the Syunik province of Greater Armenia. Zod, Agheghush, Zot, Tsavdenk, Tsot, Hog, Sod, Sodk, Sot, Sotits avan, Sotk – a village in the Vardenis region of the ASSR, on the banks of the Sot-Zod river, near the Zod mountain pass, surrounded by mountains on three sides. To the east of the village there are the gold mines of Zod, which were developed several centuries Before the Common Era. In medieval Armenian sources it is known as Vasakashen village of the Sotk region of the Syunik province. In 1991 it was renamed Sotk. Hakobyan *et al.* 1988: 312; Hakobyan *et al.* 1998: 651.

¹⁶ Ruben 1982: 210, 326-327.

government to the extent necessary” and resorted to negotiations to improve the situation, which Ruben considered inexpedient. However, it should be noted that considering the available military and political resources and opportunities, perhaps the RA government was more right to go for that option and try to resolve the conflict.

Information about these Azerbaijani-Turkish ambitions was obtained by intelligence agencies. The situation around the Sevan basin and RA is well represented by T. Devoyants: “Subsequent events are a consequence of the implementation of the Muslims’ plan by which Azerbaijan would join Turkey and Armenia would be neutralized, limiting itself to Lake Sevan, Yerevan and Alexandropol. At the same time, the full connection between the actions of Azerbaijan and Turkey and the role of the leader of Azerbaijan in all the hostile actions that are aimed directly against Armenia is absolutely revealed while Turkey is temporarily busier with its domestic affairs and the organization of resistance to the decisions of the Paris conference”.¹⁷ The so-called Basargechar events made a lot of noise, where the Turks, ignoring the calls and warnings of the Armenian authorities, with the direct encouragement of their secular and spiritual leaders and the Azerbaijani authorities, continued to cherish the hope of joining Azerbaijan and carried out anti-Armenian and anti-government aggressive actions in the Basargechar region.

Judging by the correspondence between militia chiefs, governors and military bodies, alarming signs were discerned as early as in December 1918 and January 1919, until the well-known Zod-Basargechar Muslim uprisings, when the population, instigated by the Tatar beys, announced that they were joining Azerbaijan. The Muslim elements did not demonstrate loyalty towards the legitimate authorities in other parts of RA either, they often revolted and created a tense situation with their riotous mood. In this situation, the special services were forced to expose the enemy’s covert agents and spies in different places: Zangibasar, Kars, Basargechar and elsewhere, preventing their anti-Armenian actions.

Sometimes the RA authorities were faced with problems of “local” nature, preventing the transgressions of the provincial Armenian authorities. In 1919, in a note addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs, a colonel of the General Staff wrote that according to the information of the head of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, the Commissar of Qaravansara allowed armed men to move from Azerbaijan to Armenia for a bribe. He demanded that immediate measures be taken to stop the illegal crossing of armed men across the border.¹⁸ In a letter addressed to the counter-intelligence department, assistant to the head of the intelligence department of the General Staff, Ensign Hovsepyan reported about the Azerbaijani-Turkish ambitions in the Kars province,

¹⁷ Devoyeanc 1945: 96.

¹⁸ NAA, f. 201, l. 1, f. 168, p. 32.

which was also confirmed by A. Poidebard,¹⁹ officer of the French military representation in Armenia, according to whose data at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919, Turkish agents were engaged in active propaganda in the mentioned area²⁰.

The summary of the intelligence reported that Ali Riza, the former “Vice President” of “Shura” (the so-called “Milli Shura”, the Muslim “autonomy” in the Kars province) escaped from the Batumi prison, passed through Tiflis to Gharachakh, and from there to the Aghbaba region, and then to the Olti region through Zarushat (July 1919). It added that beyond doubt Azerbaijan sought to create a “second Karabakh” in the region of Aghbaba, Zarushat, Ardahan and Olti, that “there was also a Georgian-Azerbaijani confederation, that more than 300 Georgian soldiers had arrived in the border villages of Gorlovka and Troitsk of the Akhalkalaki province”. Ensign Hovsepyan referred to the data on the cooperation of the Tatars with the Kurds, stating that he had had a conversation with A. Rawlinson, Colonel of the British headquarters in Erzurum regarding this.²¹ In the operational intelligence summary of May 24, 1919 Lieutenant Colonel A. K. Chneour²² reported on Kurdish-Tatar and Turkish-Georgian encroachments in Kaghzvan, Merdenek and Ardahan regions, adding that an Armenian military unit was sent in the direction of Ardahan.²³ In the report of August 22, 1919, addressed to the RA Minister of Internal Affairs, governor of Kars St. Ghorghanyan reported on the espionage-provocative activities of the Georgian military units in the Ardahan region.²⁴

According to the report of Staff-Rotmister Martirosov, the operational intelligence summary of the headquarters of the Yerevan Group of the Armenian Army, which refers to the events from August 20 to September 20, 1919, states that the Tatars from Kalvijar were preparing to attack Basargechar, gathering a detachment of about 2000 people under the leadership of Asker Bey.²⁵ On September 7, 1919 Captain Shumov telegraphed to Tiflis, to the military attaché General H. Kishmishyan, giving information about the preparations and movements of the Muslim population in the period from August 26 to September 4 on the Basargechar-Tazakend-Daralagyaz-Nor Bayazet-Ghamarlu line, where clashes with small Kurdish groups took place.²⁶

¹⁹ Antoine Poidebard (1878 -1955) – archaeologist, historian, pilot, cartographer and missionary who knew Armenian well.

²⁰ Ter-Minasyan 2004: 97.

²¹ NAA, f. 201, l. 1, f. 168, p. 38.

²² Chneour Alexander Constantine (20.08.1884 - 16.09.1977) – officer of the Russian army, Colonel, hero of Sardarapat (Heroic battle of Sardarapat 1967; Virabyan 2021).

²³ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 73 (71), p. 21.

²⁴ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 73 (71), p. 126.

²⁵ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 155, p. 126.

²⁶ NAA, f. 275, l. 5, f. 177, p. 119.

Regarding the Zangezur realities, relying on the information received from intelligence, Major-General Hakhverdyan brought facts about the special measures taken by Azerbaijan in the border zone with Armenia, about the militia battalion of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan in Okuzli and Getabek, in Gazakh, consisting of 112 people, 3 machine guns and a frontier detachment with 80 cavalrymen and 50 infantrymen. It was then stated that the commander of the troops had ordered the commanders of the Dilijan and Nor Bayazet detachments to check the situation in the territories of the regions of Gazakh and Ganja (Gandzak) with constant intelligence by agents, noting that there was no doubt that in the event of the official start of military operations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, regular troops would be concentrated in the regions of Gazakh and Getabek to attack Dilijan or Karakilisa and Basargechar.²⁷

In the telegram of July 26, 1919, addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs, to Dro and to Colonel Chneour, Khosroyev, the commissar of the Nor Bayazet region, reported that the spy "Kurd" (Ali Alahverdi) had learned from 2 Tatars in the village of Shishkaya that the Tatars were going to take Basargechar, driving away the Armenians, expecting to expel the Armenians from Karabakh and Elizavetpol in case of success and settle the Tatars there.²⁸

On August 3, 1919, the "diplomatic representative-spy" Khan Tekinsky reported to the Azerbaijani government about sending artillery and shells in 8 trucks to Dilijan, Nor Bayazet and Basargechar and about the presence of the 4th regiment in those regions, concluding that "the Armenians were preparing it against Muslims" and demanding that the government "take the necessary measures"²⁹.

The anti-Armenian provocative and destructive activities of the Azerbaijani diplomatic representative, the establishment of an espionage and intelligence network and groups of agents throughout the Republic of Armenia encouraged the Muslim masses, whose leaders provoked them to run various machinations, and pushed them to insurgent actions against the legitimate Armenian authorities and the Armenian people. And encouraged by this Muslim gangs that had started anti-government riots in Zangibasar, Zod-Basargechar, the Kars province and elsewhere, showed strong resistance to the Armenian troops and local authorities under the leadership of Turkish officers and special service agents and with the participation of military men and askyars.

In another telegram dated July 30, 1919 addressed to Colonel Chneour, provincial commissar of Nor Bayazet Khosroyev informed that a spy named "Kurd" reported that the Tatars had sent a letter of demand to Elizavetpol, asking to send troops, otherwise they threatened to submit to the RA government.³⁰ In the telegram of August 7, 1919, sent to Dro and the RA Minister of Internal Affairs, Hamazasp emphasized the threat

²⁷ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 73 (71), p. 190.

²⁸ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 73 (71), p. 75.

²⁹ Secret documents 1920, N 1, 15, 616.

³⁰ NAA, f. 201, l. 1, f. 168, p. 12.

posed by the Azerbaijani troops stationed on the Dallar-Chardakhlu-Getabek-Ghalakend line to the Zod-Shishkaya region, asking to urgently strengthen the area with militiamen and other forces.³¹

It is noteworthy that, as A. Grigoryan and A. Bobokhyan aptly point out, before the resolution of the Zod operation, the RA armed forces first tried to find a peaceful solution and approached the Tatar settlements with the accompaniment of *zurna* and *dhol*, offering peace as a way to resolve the conflict, and only after being shot at responded with fire.³²

In this situation, the Armenian authorities tried to suppress possible anti-Armenian Muslim uprisings, but the sending of punitive military units to the region became inevitable. In the autumn of 1918, the punitive military unit from Yerevan entered the Basargechar region after solving the problem of tax collection in Armenian villages. After the establishment of the Transcaucasian republics, Abbas Ali Bey, a resident of the village of Zod, the former provincial commissar of the region, tried to join the Basargechar region to the Republic of Azerbaijan. For the purpose of joining the Basargechar region to Azerbaijan, he sent some influential Turks to Gandzak to submit to the Azerbaijani authorities, expecting their direct military support. Having collected 60 000 roubles from ordinary people for the realization of the purpose, Azerbaijan also sent several influential Turks. In order to resolve the possible confrontation in a peaceful way, the provincial commissar of Nor Bayazet called Abbas Ali Bey to Nor Bayazet, but the latter refused, openly declaring that he did not recognize the authority of the provincial commissar. Ensign Tigran Baghdasaryan's punitive military unit arrived in Basargechar, because back on September 18, 1918 Aram Manukyan instructed the provincial commissar of Nor Bayazet to prevent the encroachments of the Tatars seeking to establish Azerbaijan's authority over the Basargechar region and to declare that they were obliged to fulfill the legal requirements of the RA government.³³ The latter called the representatives of the Turkish villages and informed them of the Armenian government's decision to disarm the people living in the territory of the Republic of Armenia, demanding that they hand over their weapons and pay taxes within three days, otherwise threatening to bombard the villages.³⁴ However, 3 days went by but the Turks expressed no willingness to submit to the Armenian authorities, which prompted the punitive military unit to act and bombard the village of Mets Mazra, after which the Muslim population, terrified by the sound of the cannon, came to T. Baghdasaryan with a white flag, handing over weapons and taxes, including 20,000 roubles and 450 rifles, promising to give the state grain as well, after which, on November 12, 1918, the punitive military unit left for Yerevan.³⁵ Thus, the region of Basargechar gradually turned

³¹ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 1, p. 311.

³² Grigoryan, Bobokhyan 2022: 15.

³³ Grigoryan, Bobokhyan 2022: 108.

³⁴ Zang, 1918, December 11, N 78.

³⁵ Zang, 1918, December 11, N 78.

into the center of the anti-state movement and separatist sentiments of the Muslim population of RA.

The uprising of Basargechar encouraged the population of other regions of Armenia, and they began to openly interfere in domestic affairs, send appeals to the Azerbaijani government, asking to free them from the grave situation and from the Armenian authorities that were oppressing Islam, to occupy Armenia and to join the region to the Republic of Azerbaijan. For this purpose, on January 2, 1919, a meeting of Muslim public figures living in Armenia was held in Yerevan, in which dissatisfaction with the attitude of the Armenian government towards the Muslim population was expressed. Beg Bayrambegov, who made a speech during the meeting, presented information about the tragic situation of the Muslims of Yerevan province. In the resolution adopted at the meeting, it was decided to appeal to the commander of the Allied forces in Baku, General W. Thomson to occupy the province of Yerevan, and if for some reason it was not possible, to force the government of the Ararat (Armenia) republic to take real measures against the atrocities of the Armenian gangs. As a result of the meeting T. Bey Makinsky, Palabeg Bayrambegov, Rashid Bey Ismailov and Aziz Bey Sultanov were assigned to go to Baku and meet with General Thomson,³⁶ who became known for his Armenophobia and anti-Karabakh position.

Thus, under the threat of the appearance of Armenian troops, the local Tatars agreed to submit to the authorities, which was followed by an increase in taxes, and Tigran Baghdasaryan's punitive detachment returned to Yerevan on November 12, 1918. In addition to that, there were starving and furious migrants near the Tatar settlements.³⁷ So, on January 31, 1919, in a telegram addressed to the Commissar of Territorial Administration and Militia of Armenia, Shahinyan, the provincial Commissar of Nor Bayazet reported that about 1000 armed refugee Armenians were attacking the Muslim villages of Verin Zaghalu, Ghezel-Vank and Subbutan in the Basargechar region, which is why the head of the militia had been sent there.³⁸ From the official letter sent by Shahinyan to the head of the territorial administration on February 2, we learn that the refugees, led by Mushegh, Vahan, Ishkhan and Nikol, supported the local Armenians, drove the Muslims out of these villages and the frightened Turks fled to the neighboring villages.³⁹ On February 6, Shahinyan got a telegram from the commissar of the Territorial Administration and Militia of Armenia, in which it was requested to immediately take decisive measures to prevent the riots and bring the perpetrators to strict judicial responsibility.⁴⁰ However, judging by the documents, the events got out of control and began to develop in a different scenario. Becoming uncontrollable, they

³⁶ Mshak, 1919, January 16, N. 12.

³⁷ Kavkazskoe slovo, 1918, December 7.

³⁸ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 4.

³⁹ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 4-8.

⁴⁰ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 8, 115.

created new problems, during which, as it was emphasized in the telegram of the RA Foreign Minister addressed to the Prime Minister on February 18, 1919, "...the local administration has shown criminal negligence and incompetence".⁴¹

However, it would be one-sided to explain all that only by the administration's incompetence, because those events also had socio-economic motives, which became an additional impetus for the undesirable course of events, and the ambitious Muslim leaders of Azerbaijan took advantage of it. This was stimulated by the desperate steps of the refugee and starving Armenians of the Basargechar region in late January, 1919. Due to the steps taken by the administration and the division of Rotmister Silikyan, the refugees calmed down and were partially disarmed, the Tatar villages were freed from the refugees who occupied them, the administration began to return the looted property to the Tatars and started prosecuting the perpetrators. Rotmister Silikyan and cornet Khachaturov went to the Tatar to calm down the population,⁴² which proves the non-discriminatory approach of the RA authorities to the problem. With the help of the military units, they were able to disarm the refugees and resettle the Tatars in their villages and return the looted property.⁴³ However, the events were already spreading beyond the village of Basargechar, becoming a cause of tension in inter-ethnic relations, which was complicated by the proximity of the border of Azerbaijan, about which Rotmister Silikyan telegraphed to Generals M. Silikyan⁴⁴ and Sardarapat hero D. Bek-Pirumyan.⁴⁵

On February 12, 1919, the Council of Ministers heard the report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs about the telegram of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, in which the latter complained about the actions of Armenian military units near Lake Sevan, which, crossing the border of Azerbaijan, had allegedly attacked several Turkish villages, carried out oppression and looting. He demanded to prevent such phenomena and to bring the perpetrators to justice, asking not to consider them responsible for the potential future actions by the Turkish population on behalf of the Azerbaijani government. In the decision adopted in this regard the RA Council of Ministers emphasized: "In view of the Military Minister's report that there could be an attack by "groups", the Minister of Internal Affairs is instructed to immediately appoint a strict investigation in order to find out the authenticity of the attacks and pressures mentioned

⁴¹ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 110.

⁴² NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 115.

⁴³ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 115.

⁴⁴ Silikyan Movses Baba (Mikhail) (14.09.1862-10.12.1937) – major general, member of the RA Military Council, hero of Sardarapat.

⁴⁵ Daniel Bek-Pirumyan Abisoghom (22.11.1861-1922) – lieutenant-general, Chief commander of the Sardarapat battle, hero of the Zod-Sotk operation, Hayastani Hanrapetutian Karavarutean nisteri arcanagrutyunner: 2014, 132, 136, 146, 156, 162, 169: NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 22.

in the telegram and to bring the perpetrators to justice.⁴⁶ In the response of the Armenian side it was mentioned that the regular RA troops had not participated in the Basargechar region riots, but about 10 000 Armenian migrants had attacked Muslim villages, and the RA authorities had returned the Muslims to their villages, given them back the looted property, and those responsible were called to account.⁴⁷

However, it should be mentioned that in this regard D. Knyazyan supports the opposite point of view, noting that the Western Armenian migrants, who were left homeless and without food, were responsible for the aggravation of the situation in the Basargechar region. D. Knyazyan believes that the military unit from Yerevan drove out the migrants from the Muslim villages, and the irresponsible behavior of Rotmister Silikyan, the commander of the military unit, became an excuse for the Muslim uprising and the massacre of the troops.⁴⁸

All these led to tension and the infiltration of armed groups from the territory of Azerbaijan into the territory of Armenia and the delivery of weapons to the rebels. Preparations to capture Chambarak and Bashkend began, at the same time, military mobilization was announced, and around 1000 Georgian officers came to the aid of Azerbaijan.⁴⁹ It should be said that it was positive for Armenia that the British command and its military and political representative actually supported Armenia in the settlement of the problem, contrary to their openly pro-Azerbaijani position in Nagorno-Karabakh, Zangezur and elsewhere, and thus, they contributed to the preservation of the territorial integrity of RA in the Zod-Basargechar region. The incident also clearly demonstrated that Azerbaijan, in one way or another, laid claim to all those Armenian regions where there was a concentrated Muslim population.⁵⁰

On February 18, 1919, in its regular session the Council of Ministers was introduced to the problem in connection with the activation of the Muslim movement in the Basargechar region and instructed the Minister of Internal Affairs to investigate the activities of the local administration.⁵¹ Soon new facts emerged, allowing the government to achieve a more realistic and complete understanding of the problem that had arisen in the Zod region. It is clearly seen from the official letter of the Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Tigranyan addressed to the Prime Minister on February 18, 1919: "The developments in the Basargechar region, which became the reason for the intervention of the Azerbaijani government, have already been clarified to some extent. In addition to the private individuals who committed the crime and will suffer the legal punishment, I consider it necessary to draw the special attention of the government to

⁴⁶ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 96, p. 25; f. 100 (43), p. 26; f. 201, l. 1, f. 486, part I, p. 37. Arev, 1919, February 13; Haraj, 1919, February 16.

⁴⁷ Knyazyan 2008: 92-93.

⁴⁸ NAA f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 4, 6, 9-10, 15, 34, 44. Arev, 1919, February 11.

⁴⁹ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 47, 54-55, 60, f. 294, p. 77.

⁵⁰ Kavkazskoe slovo, 1919, 5, April 25; Yedinaya Rossiya, 1919, March 26.

⁵¹ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 100 (43), p. 28; f. 96, p. 27.

the fact that, according to importance, the local administration has shown criminal negligence and incompetence. I find it necessary that those governors be brought to justice, be punished, and perhaps removed from public office, and the commander of the division, Rotmister Silikyan, whose intervention restored order and peace, should be thanked. Please provide me with detailed and accurate information about the motives and nature of the events, so that I can inform both the British High Command and the Government of Azerbaijan".⁵²

And from the February 18 telegram of the RA Minister of Foreign Affairs addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, it becomes clear that as a result of the dynamic actions undertaken by the Armenian armed forces in mid-February, in which the local administration and the bodies of Internal Affairs also participated, the Tatars were pushed back to their settlements, the property stolen by them in the Zod region was returned, and the perpetrators began to be questioned in order to be brought to justice.⁵³ This letter of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the investigation of the events in the Basargechar region was sent to the Minister of Internal Affairs.⁵⁴

During that time Azerbaijan took feverish steps to rearrange the situation in its favor and with that intention, on February 24, 1919, A. Kh. Ziatkhanov, Assistant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, presented an official note to General W. M. Thomson, commander of the allied forces in Baku, about the atrocities of the Armenian military units against the population of Azerbaijan and accused them of occupying a part of the territory of Azerbaijan, at the same time citing RA Foreign Minister S. Tigranyan's urgent telegrams addressed to them: "In response to your note received from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Armenian Republic I assume that the events of late-January are meant: *"1. The Armenian military units and officers are complicit in the crimes committed in the settlements of the Basargechar region, which is included in the territory of Armenia. Measures have been taken by the government to prevent crimes and restore order. An investigation is ongoing. The perpetrators will be severely punished. February 13, No. 27. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Tigranyan". 2. "In addition to my telegram related to the events that took place in the Basargechar region [№ 278, February 13], I report that thanks to the active measures supported by the military units and taken by the regime, the Tatars have been returned to their settlements and what was stolen from them has been returned. The perpetrators have been brought to justice. № 304, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Tigranyan".*

Based on the biased assessment of the above telegrams, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Ziatkhanov, assuming that the facts provided

⁵² NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 100 (43), p. 28, f. 20, p. 31.

⁵³ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 211, part I, p. 27.

⁵⁴ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 20, p. 35.

by the Armenian side were clear evidence of the violence that the Armenian military units were carrying out against the peaceful Muslim population, wanting to forcibly occupy a part of Azerbaijan's territory near Lake Gyokcha (Lake Sevan), in the region of Nor Bayazet, also claiming that despite the assurances, the Armenians continued to inhumanely exterminate and oppress the Muslim population, pointing out to some Sultanov, their confidant in Nor Bayazet, that in the regions of Ganja and Shemakhu the number of Muslims who had escaped from Nor Bayazet reached several thousand, including many women, children, old people almost naked, exhausted, sick and hungry, emphasizing that the picture was terrible. In conclusion, referring to the act of the reconciliation conference of January 24, 1919, warning of the cessation of all kinds of violent occupations, the Armenian republic was humbly requested to categorically offer the liberation of the violently occupied region of Nor Bayazet, the southeastern parts of Lake Gyokcha and a part of the Gazakh region (which allegedly formed an integral part of the Azerbaijani territory) from the rampaging Armenian military units, resettling the worn-out residents in their places".⁵⁵

On February 24, Rotmister Silikyan went with the division to the village of Mazra, where the Tatars met them with salt and bread, assuring them that they had already calmed down. In the evening, Silikyan went to Basargechar, and on the morning of February 25, he returned to the village of Pokr Mazra with the 1st squadron and half of the 2nd squadron. On the same day, on February 25, the 1st squadron returned to the village of Basargechar with Rotmister Silikyan and Cornet Khachaturov. And Silikyan, together with his adjutant Shimkevich and half a squadron left for Zod, where they stayed with a Tatar named Agilyar Samand Agha Kesmansky. Here, Rotmister Silikyan announced to the villagers that the Tatars should prepare hay, wheat and barley for the division at state prices. The Tatars promised to consult and answer in the morning. On the morning of February 27, the dignitaries of the Zod village announced to Rotmister Silikyan that they refused to give the requested forage and bread. Rotmister Silikyan's persistent demands became a signal for the Tatars to initiate an attack, which was also facilitated by the removal of the militia post a few days before those events. In the early morning of February 27, 11 soldiers stationed in the village, in the houses of Tatars, were killed, including 4 division officers who were hosted in the houses of the Turks in Zod: adjutant Cornet Shimkevich, Cornet Khachatryan, Commander Alexander Silikyan and his younger brother Arshak Silikyan (the officers spent the night in the house of Samed Agha Kyasamanski) - they were beheaded and mockingly demonstrated in the neighbouring Muslim villages.⁵⁶

And on February 28, the RA Territorial Administration and Militia Commissar instructed the Nor Bayazet provincial commissar to personally go to the place with the precinct investigator, conduct an investigation, identify the perpetrators and arrest them

⁵⁵ Azerbajdjanskaya Demokraticheskaya Respublika 1998: 132.

⁵⁶ Grigoryan, Bobokhyan 2022: 113, 116-117.

in the presence and participation of the precinct inspector, public village commissars and militiamen, and if necessary, also turn to the army for support, however, not allowing to involve a representative of the Muslim refugees in the case in order to avoid the risk of inciting a new riot and violence. At the same time, on the instructions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, an assistant prosecutor was sent to the scene to lead the investigation and restore order.⁵⁷

These facts in themselves are proof of the fact that the riotous Muslim population of the Basargechar region had set a practically serious goal to help Azerbaijan with armed actions to cut the region from Armenia and annex it to Azerbaijan. The Zod junction became the focal point of the agenda of the Armenian political and military circles, which threatened the country's territorial integrity, encouraged separatist-provocative demonstrations in other parts of the RA territory, which the RA government tried to resolve peacefully. Zod became a reason for the already aggressive government of Azerbaijan to intervene more openly in the domestic affairs of Armenia and to speak openly, considering it predetermined that the Basargechar region would be included as a part of Azerbaijan, which from a strategic point of view also included the entire basin of Lake Sevan, just like today, during the events of 2021-2022, after the Armenian-Azerbaijani capitulation war of the autumn of 2020. The Basargechar tangle escalated, it also touched upon the Armenian Bashkend region and the region of Getabek rich in copper mines, which the RA government supported as much as it could, because in many cases, supporting them with weapons and troops was not always effective.

On March 1, 1919, at the session of the Council of Ministers, the Minister of Internal Affairs presented a report on the events in the village of Zod of the Basargechar region, which concerned the murder of the officers and soldiers of the Karabakh Cavalry Regiment. After thorough discussion of the situation, the Council of Ministers made a decision to create an Extraordinary Investigative Committee chaired by the representatives of the Ministry of Justice, and with the participation of the representatives of the Military Ministry and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, instructing them to immediately investigate the incidents: 1) The Extraordinary Investigative Committee is formed by the assistant prosecutor of RA as a chairman, the investigator of special cases, one representative from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and one from the Military Ministry. 2) The Extraordinary Investigative Committee is sent to investigate the reasons of the events that took place in the village of Zod of the region of Nor Bayazet at the end of February, the result of which was the murder of 4 officers of the cavalry division and about 80 soldiers, to identify the perpetrators and to imprison and send to the Nor Bayazet prison those who had anything to do with that crime. 3) In case of complaints by the Turks about the violence of Armenians, the Extraordinary Investigative Committee undertakes to investigate these complaints and bring those

⁵⁷ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 115.

responsible to justice. 4) To place sufficient militia and military forces at the Committee's disposal in order to create normal conditions for the investigation.⁵⁸

On March 4, for tactical reasons, the commission, not in full force, with only the provincial commissar and investigator, went to the Basargechar region in order to settle the conflict peacefully, but the leaders of the rioters responded with extreme position and declared that the guarantee of peace was possible only after the independence of "their lands" and they would do everything to force the Armenian side to give up the Basargechar region. The Turks greeted the Armenian envoys with gunfire. This convinced the RA authorities that should this continue, they would not succeed and their plans would turn in the opposite direction, since the Muslim population was resolute in its separatist actions.⁵⁹

The Armenian government spared no effort to avoid a military confrontation with the Tatars. This is emphasized by Staff Rotmister Kudryavtsev in his telegram of March 5, 1919, sent from Nor Bayaset to Yerevan to Major Generals M. Silikyan, D. Bek-Pirumyan and the Commissar of the RA Territory, mentioning that on March 4, at 20:00, they went to that Tatar-inhabited region with the provincial commissar and investigator to settle the incident, but they were met with gunfire. Kudryavtsev, in consultation with the Staff Rotmister, asked for reinforcements, stressing that without cannons the problem was unsolvable and would lead to great losses; he also complained about the lack of food.⁶⁰

In his telegram of March 5-6, addressed to General Silikyan, the provincial commissar Shahinyan, referring to the alarming situation, found it necessary to send a punitive detachment with cannons to submit the Muslims to the legal authorities, adding that there were only 200 bayonets in the Karabakh division, and no artillery shells at all.⁶¹ In response, on March 7, 1919, Military Minister Hakhverdyan sent this letter to the RA Prime Minister, and at the same time he found it necessary to send one battalion and two cannons to Nor Bayazet, taking into account the possible resistance of the Tatars. The military minister also informed that in a conversation with him, colonel C. Temperley (Temperley Clive Errington) had agreed to the use of armed force if the Tatars did not allow the investigative committee to go to the scene.

Back on January 7, 1919, Captain C. Temperley, adjutant of the 4th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade of the British troops in Transcaucasia, was appointed British Military Governor of Kars with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel according to the memorandum of General G. Forestier-Walker. In February-March 1919, the Muslim population showed a disrespectful attitude towards him which became intolerable; the Muslims did everything to ignore him. Qajaznuni's government initially called him an "arrogant and brazen

⁵⁸ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 100 (43), p. 34; f. 96, l. 33; f. 201, l. 1, p. 486, part I, p. 58.

⁵⁹ Harutyunyan 2012: 301.

⁶⁰ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 64, p. 3.

⁶¹ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 27, p. 85.

Englishman", who, in agreement with the Kars Shura (officially the Provisional Government of the South-West Caucasus) opposed every attempt to give a position to the employees of the Armenian administration and even made strict demands to the Armenian officials of the main railway junction of Alexandrapol, connecting Kars and Tiflis.⁶² As of January 26, 1919 C. E. Temperley was the British Military governor of Kars, and to support him, the main body of the battalion that had reunited with the guards under Colonel Frederick Lattin of the 4th Rifle Brigade, was in Kars. After that, on March 2, 1919, Temperley moved to Yerevan as a military representative.

It was during his service in Yerevan that Temperley's attitude towards Armenians underwent a certain change, which is expressed in the reports he sent to the officers of the 27th military unit. In them, Temperley expressed concern about the difficulties the Armenian government faced. He had often tried to pacify the population of Muslim settlements that rejected Yerevan's jurisdiction. During that period, Temperley made considerable efforts to pacify the Muslims of Vedichai-Sadarak, who turned to riotous steps around March 10. He tried to prevent the frequent killings of Armenians and looting. Temperley tried to restrain the chieftains and khans, but to no avail. Temperley came to the conclusion that the riot was not just a separate incident, as the conscription in the Sadarak region was linked to similar incidents in Aralikh, Kaghzvan and Kars, and Colonel Lattin characterized the region as having an intransigent position, forming a common anti-Armenian chain with the Shura. Temperley's and Lattin's moderate efforts and attempts to prevent the criminal activities of the Muslim villages failed as the villagers responded by openly resorting to arms. This was already an ominous sign of rebellion that the Turkish propaganda contributed to. It spread from Maku and Aralikh to the Sadarak region through Araks, agitating the Muslim population from Böyük-Vedi to Nakhijevan. On April 28, 1919, Temperley, accompanied by General Andranik and Major William Gibbon, left for Tiflis, and on May 1, he received the temporary command of the 4th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade,⁶³ which was followed by his activities in the Zod-Basargechar region.

The course adopted by the government and military authorities is clearly demonstrated by another document, the author of which is Major General Silikyan. Thus, on March 7, 1919, Silikyan, the head of the Armenian Division, addressed the RA Military Minister with an urgent secret report, in which he also touched upon the Zod issue, mentioning the information reported by Colonel A. Chneour that the Semyonovsky mountain pass was covered with snow, and General D. Bek-Pirumyan was still in Nor Bayazet, waiting for the arrival of the new troops in order to speak decisively, otherwise the impression would be weak, since the local Muslims were

⁶² Great October Revolution 1957: 256-258; Denikin 1925: 147; Hovhannisyan 2005: 220-223.

⁶³ Hovhannisyan 2005: 252, 257.

organizing themselves. Silikyan emphasized that according to Major General Daniel Bek-Pirumyan, a clash with the Tatars was inevitable⁶⁴.

In the instruction issued to the Extraordinary Investigative Committee sent to Zod, signed by Minister of Justice Harutyunov, acting Minister of Internal Affairs Manasyan and Military Minister Hakhverdyan, it was stated that the Committee was sent to the village of Zod in the Nor Bayazet region to investigate the circumstances of the events that took place at the end of February (as a result of which 4 officers and 30 soldiers of the Karabakh cavalry division were killed), to find out the names of the perpetrators and uncover all the circumstances related to that crime. The instruction also stated that if there were declarations about violence committed by Armenians towards Tatars, the Investigative Committee had to investigate those complaints and bring those responsible to justice.⁶⁵ On March 8, the Extraordinary Investigative Committee arrived in Basargechar. The Extraordinary Investigative Committee sent two Muslims to Zod, offering to come to Basargechar on March 10 to find out the circumstances of the incident, to carry out the procedure and function of the investigation. Negotiations were held on March 11 in the village of Mazra. The Committee offered to hand over the bodies of the officers and soldiers killed, their belongings, weapons, horses, documents, division flag, setting the condition that only then the Investigative Committee would agree to enter the village of Zod to conduct an impartial and objective investigation of the causes, motives and consequences of the case. The Committee considered it its moral duty to also emphasize that all this was necessary in order to avoid the use of military force. According to the information obtained by the preliminary investigation, the criminal actions of the Turks had been prepared in advance by the local separatist forces and had been directed from Baku, which encouraged the local Muslims to continue the struggle, avoiding the peaceful settlement of the problem in every possible way and seeking to solve the Basargechar issue in favor of Azerbaijan through machinations, as well as influencing the pro-Turkish British generals, and in particular Thomson. Thus, the negotiations reached a deadlock; the enemy, both today and in those days, concentrated significant military forces, weapons and artillery around Zod and other settlements, which was a challenge to the RA authorities.

The RA Government wrote an official letter to the British Military Representation in Yerevan, which sent its officer to Basargechar on March 12 in order to personally make sure how legitimate the Armenian authorities were for the Muslim community, and how justified the actions taken by the Armenian authorities were.⁶⁶ We learn about this from the letter of March 10 sent from RA Justice Minister Harutyunov to Chairman of the Investigative Committee Parsadanov: "Tomorrow, on the instructions of General Thomson, English Colonel Temperley is leaving for Nor Bayazet to settle the Zod

⁶⁴ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 64 (48), p. 2.

⁶⁵ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 64 (48), p. 4.

⁶⁶ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 115.

events”.⁶⁷ On March 12, Temperley visited Basargechar. On March 17, 1919, the Council of Ministers addressed the issue of Basargechar-Zod, hearing the Prime Minister’s report on sending a punitive military unit to the village of Zod. At the session it was decided: 1) to leave the Investigative Committee in place, so that it could immediately start working as soon as the opportunity arose, 2) to instruct the Military Minister to issue an order to General D. Bek-Pirumyan, that he, if necessary, move the military force to the location of the riot immediately at his discretion, after seeing certain preparations.⁶⁸

On March 17, the British military representative C. Temperley arrived at the scene and hearing the report of the Extraordinary Investigative Committee, he sent a letter through Tatars demanding that Tatar representatives immediately come to Basargechar for negotiations, but the envoys did not return and the British officer had to go back.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the Tatars were concentrating considerable forces in the Zod region, armed with rifles and machine guns, preparing for military operations, evacuating their families, property, children, and concentrating rioters from the surrounding villages in the Zod region.⁷⁰

On March 20, 1919, the minister-president’s report on the Zod events was discussed. In the adopted decision, the Council of Ministers instructed: a) to dispatch a statement regarding the sending of armed groups by Azerbaijan to the Armenian border and crossing it, b) to instruct the Military Minister to order General D. Bek-Pirumyan to contact Yerevan by direct cable before leaving Nor Bayazet, c) to instruct the Minister of Foreign Affairs to get press coverage of the Zod events.⁷¹

Some important details of the issue related to the activation of the Muslim movement in the Zod region also become evident from a telegram of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of RA of March 22, 1919 addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan (with a copy to the RA diplomatic representative in Baku). In it, the RA Foreign Minister emphasized that 4 Armenian officers and more than 10 soldiers of the second Karabakh Cavalry Division had been killed near the village of Zod, stressing that the Investigative Committee sent by the government was met with volley fire and the opposition to the authorities was supported by armed groups from Azerbaijan. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of RA found the passage of armed persons from Azerbaijan to the territory of RA completely unacceptable, emphasizing that, on the instructions of the government, he strongly protested against such actions and asked for urgent orders

⁶⁷ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 76.

⁶⁸ NAA, f. 201, l. 1, f. 486, part I, p. 69; f. 1 99, l. 1, f. 96, p. 45.

⁶⁹ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 115.

⁷⁰ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 115.

⁷¹ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 100 (43), p. 48.

to be made to prevent the citizens of Azerbaijan from staging armed demonstrations and from violating the order in the territory of Armenia.⁷²

The Zod junction created problems along the entire Armenian-Azerbaijani border, becoming an explosive for diplomatic relations, intensifying tension in the work of the Internal Affairs bodies and militia of the border regions. As it turns out from the telegram of General Baghdasarov sent from Gharakilisa to Yerevan, to the commander-in-chief on March 21, 1919, which was based on espionage and intelligence data, the situation had also worsened in the Bashkend region in connection with the murders in Zod. The telegram reported that the Tatars were preparing, and gatherings were taking place in the villages to help their compatriots in Zod. It said that 200 people had been sent from the Gedabek region of Azerbaijan; and two cannons and two machine guns had been brought through the Zegam Gorge. They were not able to move one mountain cannon which they left in the village of Shakhtala. An interesting detail was emphasized: the gunners were Russians and Georgians.⁷³ Other facts of those days become known from another telegram, the author of which is Staff Captain Mkrtichyan, the commander of the militia regiment. Thus, on March 24, 1919, in a telegram addressed to the division commander (with a copy to General Baghdasarov who was in Karvansara) Staff Captain Mkrtichyan reported that according to verified data, the Tatars had brought a field cannon to Shakhtala village, and the mountain cannon was taken to Zod through the village of Jil. At the end of the telegram, Mkrtichyan also added that the local forces would not be able to resist without cannons and asked for immediate orders on how to act.⁷⁴

However, the RA government had instructed General D. Bek-Pirumyan to ensure the peaceful entry into the village of the Committee established in connection with the Zod events, and armed force could be used only with the special permission of the government. In the situation of inevitability of conflict, on March 24, 1919, the National Council of Muslims of Yerevan issued an unexpected call for sobriety: "The National Council of Muslims of Erivan urges the residents of the Zod village of Nor Bayazet region not to obstruct the investigation of the Government's investigative committee regarding the murder of officers, soldiers and several Muslims. The RA government guarantees the inviolability of life and property of the population. We consider it our moral duty to inform you that if you obstruct, the Government will be forced to send military force against you, as a result of which completely innocent people may suffer. Taking all this into account, the National Council urges again to prevent bloodshed, to provide full support to the Government's investigative committee. President: Asad bey

⁷² NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 211, part I, p. 62, f. 199, l. 1, f. 73, p. 45.

⁷³ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 48.

⁷⁴ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 55.

Aghabekov, Council members: Mirza Husein Vaiz and Zilfigar bey Makinsky, Secretary: A. Naziyev".⁷⁵

In the telegram of March 27, 1919 addressed to the commander of the Armenian division, Staff Captain Mkrtichyan reported from Karvansara that according to the information received, the Tatars of the Tarsacha (Getik⁷⁶) gorge of the right tributary of Aghstev, were transporting wheat and barley to Zod, adding that on March 25, 300 poods were brought via Dilijan to Chibukhlu.⁷⁷ During this period, the Armenian civil, military and internal affairs bodies were making preparations, were organizing new military forces, replenishing the lack of weapons and ammunition, and solving conscription problems. In the telegram of March 18, 1919, sent by D. Bek-Pirumyan from Nor Bayazet to the Military Minister, it was reported that the concentration of the military squad was about to end, and the replenishment would be completed on March 28. Then it added that military intelligence had confirmed that up to 6000 Tatars armed with machine guns and cavalymen had gathered in the Zod region, and that information was still being verified.⁷⁸ In the session of the Council of Ministers of March 22, 1919, the Military Minister presented a report on establishing a military field court in the Nor Bayazet region. It was decided to approve and implement the bill, excluding the death penalty.⁷⁹ On April 2, 1919, the Council of Ministers heard the Military Minister's report on the problems of the village of Zod. They decided to instruct the Military Minister to order General Pirumyan to act in cooperation with Colonel C. Temperley and use all possible means to settle the incident peacefully and avoid military conflict. At the same time, the false claim of the Azerbaijani government that the village of Zod belonged to Azerbaijan, was denied, specifically emphasizing that it was part of the Republic of Armenia.⁸⁰ Certainly, during this time the Armenian government sought to use all the possible diplomatic means to end the incident peacefully. Simultaneously, certain military and political and police measures were being taken to strengthen the basin of Lake Sevan (having great strategic importance for Armenia) and the region of Nor Bayazet, where the ill-fated Zod junction was located. The command of the special Karabakh battalion, which had earned the honor of acting in that region, was entrusted to Major General Pirumyan; and Lieutenant Colonel A. Chneour was appointed chief of staff. The latter also led the intelligence service throughout the Zod operation. From December 31, 1918 A. Chneour was already the head of the Separate Karabakh Brigade.⁸¹ In K. Araratyan's request letter addressed to M. Silikyan it was said that according to Captain Medvedev and Lieutenant Colonel Chneour, the Prime Minister

⁷⁵ NAA, f. 206, l. 1, f. 85, p. 12.

⁷⁶ Hakobyan *et al.* 1998: 422.

⁷⁷ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 66.

⁷⁸ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 64 (48), p. 5.

⁷⁹ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 100 (43), p. 51.

⁸⁰ NAA, f. 201, l. 1, f. 486, part I, p. 81; f. 199, l. 1, f. 100 (43), p. 54; f. 96, p. 58; f. 200, l. 1, f. 26, p. 58.

⁸¹ NAA, f. 204, l. 1, f. 104, p. 53; f. 204, l. 1, f. 129, p. 6 -7; Avetisyan 1997: 223.

had ordered General Pirumyan to ensure the entry of the Investigative Committee to Zod. It was asked in the telegram to double-check everything and instruct what to do if the Investigative Committee's entry to Zod did not lead to positive results in a peaceful way. In that case, General Pirumyan was instructed to contact the government directly through the command and not to use armed force until he received such permission from the RA government.⁸² Further, the RA government introduced new adjustments in its steps, trying to get out of the critical situation. On April 8, 1919, the Foreign Minister of RA received a telegram from the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, in which the representative of Azerbaijan regarded the Zod region as the territory of Azerbaijan, considering the presence of Armenian armed forces in the territory of Azerbaijan unacceptable, and placing the responsibility of avoiding misunderstanding on the RA government.⁸³

In the telegram of April 3 addressed to the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan (with a copy to Bekzadyan, the diplomatic representative of RA in Azerbaijan), the Foreign Minister of RA emphasized that the Government of the Republic of Armenia had sent the Extraordinary Investigative Committee to investigate the events that had taken place in the village of Zod, to find the perpetrators and to bring them to legal responsibility. However, the Committee could not get to the scene of the incident because of the resistance of armed Tatars. He added that the government had instructed the military squad to ensure that the Extraordinary Committee had access for investigation, informing that on General W. Thomson's instructions the British colonel C. Temperley had left for Zod to facilitate the arrival of the Extraordinary Investigative Committee in Zod and the conduct of the investigation, noting also that the Armenian government had instructed to resolve the conflict peacefully, and if that failed, not to resort to armed force without the government's permission.⁸⁴

Involuntarily, Colonel Temperley went to Zod. This was reported in the telegram sent by Colonel Shakhanov to Major General Bek-Pirumyan on April 9. The British officer met with the population there. He was of the opinion that the maximum concession that the local Turkish population could agree to in that situation was that from April 11 Armenian troops should occupy the Tatar villages, which was the only condition under which he would agree to continue the conversation on controversial issues. The Turks agreed with Temperley on the condition that the English representative also participated in the deployment of troops, otherwise they threatened not to retreat.⁸⁵ It becomes clear from Major General Bek-Pirumyan's telegrams to the division commander that returning from Zod to Basargechar, Colonel C. Temperley announced to the Tatars that on April 11 the Armenian troops would occupy the

⁸² NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 59.

⁸³ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 64.

⁸⁴ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 62, 64.

⁸⁵ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 76.

villages, the only peaceful solution to the problem. To this the Tatars replied that the occupation of the villages by the Armenian troops and their deployment in those villages was possible only with the participation of the British representative. Bek-Pirumyan asked for additional troops, adding that the Tatars continued to arm themselves, that according to the agreement with Colonel C. Temperley, on April 13 their troops could begin the occupation of the Tatar villages of Tashkend, Zod, Mets Mazra and Pokr Mazra, carrying out the disarmament of the Tatars in a peaceful way, and in case of resistance – by force.⁸⁶

Colonel C. Temperley, an active participant of the Muslim movement, stayed in Zod for a few days, after which he returned to Basargechar, and a few days later, on April 14, a new wave of anti-state demonstrations began in Zod.

The Council of Ministers once again addressed the deepening of tension in the Basargechar-Zod region on April 14, 1919. At the session, the Military Minister reported that he had given instructions to General Pirumyan regarding the Zod developments. It was decided to instruct the Military Minister to telegraph Pirumyan so that: 1) he acted according to C. Temperley's instructions, 2) if it was necessary to resort to armed force, appeal to C. Temperley asking to submit a written proposal, and 3) try not to resort to confiscations, and take the most drastic measures to prevent violence against the population, announcing this to the people.⁸⁷ On the same day, in a special letter the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of RA informed the diplomatic representative of RA in Azerbaijan that in connection with the protest of the Government of Azerbaijan and the presence of Armenian troops in the Basargechar region, they believed that the area could not be considered the territory of Azerbaijan, that the Basargechar region was an inseparable part of the territory of the Republic of Armenia. He reiterated that the RA government protested against the passage of armed Tatar groups sent from the territory of Azerbaijan to the borders of the Republic of Armenia by the Azerbaijani authorities, who were spreading riots there and inciting the population to an armed conflict against the Armenian authorities.⁸⁸

As it turns out from Major General Pirumyan's April 14 telegram to General Silikyan, according to Colonel C. Temperley's proposal, on April 14, at 7 A.M. the Nor Bayazet detachment of the Armenian troops started an attack in two formations to occupy the Tatar villages. However, the Tatars of Mets Mazra suddenly opened an intense rifle fire, to which the Armenian infantry did not respond, continuing their advance towards the village. Instead several artillery shells were fired at the village, which forced the Tatars to retreat. After that it turned out that the population had abandoned the village beforehand, taking with them all the property that could be moved; and the shooters were Tatar groups remaining in the village. The same thing

⁸⁶ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 76.

⁸⁷ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 96, p. 65; f. 201, l. 1, f. 486, part I, p. 96.

⁸⁸ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 79, 82.

happened during the occupation of the villages of Husein Gharali, Aghalu, Kosha Balagh, Galbash and Siri Aghuni, and near the village of Tashkend battles took place, after which the Armenian military unit captured the village and the enemy fled to the mountains. In the battles of April 14 Armenians lost 3 people, Lieutenant Colonel Ishkhanov was wounded, and even after that he returned to the battlefield. But then 15 Armenians were killed and 8 horses. It is noteworthy that all the orders were given in the presence and knowledge of Colonel C. Temperley, who saw no violence or plunder by the troops during the fighting. The vanguard military units of the Armenian army occupied Mets Mazra, Husein Ghum, Aghalu, Galbash and Tashkend.⁸⁹ On April 15, at 7 o'clock, the Armenian side sent envoys with white flags to the village of Zod, but the Tatars fired at them, after which the Armenian side sent envoys for the second time, but they also failed to enter the village. Only after that the Karabakh battalion launched an attack and captured Zod without firing a shot - the Tatars had fled from there. The same thing happened during the occupation of the villages of Sar Yaghub, Ghara Gopli, Aghkilisa, Zarzibil, whose inhabitants had left beforehand, taking out all their property. During those battles 1 officer, 18 soldiers and 2 horses were wounded, 3 soldiers and 3 horses were killed.⁹⁰ As it becomes obvious from Major General Pirumyan's telegram sent from Basargechar to Major General Silikyan on April 16, 1919, scouts were sent to the village of Shorzhalu on April 15, but it turned out that there was no peaceful mood in the village, and shells were fired at them. On April 16, the military squads at the outskirts of the village of Taghi-Kend moved to Shorzhalu, and again shells were fired at them by the Tatars ambushed there. After shelling the village, the Armenian military unit was able to enter the village and capture it, and the Tatars who fled, took refuge in the nearby mountains. On April 17, the Armenian military units besieged Zod, the den of riots, from where the Muslim population had fled.⁹¹ From Major General Pirumyan's telegram of April 23 addressed to Major General Silikyan we learn about the timeline and details of the military operations of the days that followed. On April 18, at 4 P.M., a company of the Karabakh battalion was sent to the village of Shishkaya and was met with fire by the Tatars. Despite the stubborn resistance of the Tatars, the village was captured, after which it turned out that there had been concentrated considerable forces - about 1000 infantrymen and cavalrymen. The Tatars had taken their property and families out of the village beforehand. As a result of these battles, the Armenian side had 8 wounded soldiers and 2 horses, 1 soldier was killed, Ensign Mkhitaryants was also wounded.⁹²

⁸⁹ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 86, 86_a; f.199, l. 1, f. 64 (48), p. 9.

⁹⁰ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 89; f. 199, l. 1, f. 64 (48), p. 10.

⁹¹ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 64 (48), p. 8.

⁹² NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 97.

On April 18, Khan Tekinsky informed his government about the resistance shown by Muslims in the Zod-Basargechar region and the battles with Armenian military units.⁹³

During all these operations, tension reigned along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, the Azerbaijanis resorted to various intrigues, to significant movements of troops, all of which were clearly anti-Armenian. On April 29, 1919, in a telegram addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Chief of the General Staff Colonel M. Zinkevich reported that according to the information received from the commander of the militia regiment, on April 23 groups of Azerbaijani troops went to Jil through Yaghubli, and on April 25 the arrival of Azerbaijani troops was expected in Novosaratovka and Novoivanovka. Zinkevich stated that the commander of the militia regiment was ordered to check this information and report back to him.⁹⁴ However, all this could not prevent the Armenian army from completing the Zod operation, teaching a lesson to the aggressive Muslim forces, which sought to cut off the Basargechar region from Armenia and annex it to Azerbaijan. The Armenian military units won an impressive victory, liberating an important part of the territory of the homeland, and at the same time, they demonstrated the order and discipline of a good and capable army, refraining from robbery and plunder. Thus, having the Armenian-populated Basargechar regional center of the Zod-Sotk plateau as their center, the regular military units of the Armenian army carried out offensive attacks for 5 days with the active support of the militia and the police squads of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 4 main directions: Shorzha, Ghshlagh, Zod and Tashkend. They were able to force the Turkish-Tatar fanatic mass to retreat through the mountain passes to Azerbaijan, as a result of which the Armenian authorities managed to take more than two dozen settlements under their full control, not allowing the disruption of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia.

And yet, the Extraordinary Investigative Committee sent to the Zod region by the RA government tried to reveal the motives behind the insurrectionary and seditious actions of the Muslims of Zod-Basargechar. Those conclusions were made as of April 27, 1919 and came to the following: 1) As a result of the impossibility of conducting an investigation among Muslims, it was not possible to find out the exact motives of the Muslim uprising against the Armenian authorities. It is presumed that Rotmister Silikyan's excessive demands to provide them with wheat and barley were just an excuse for the tragic denouement; and the dissatisfaction of the Muslims with the authorities grew day by day and turned into a conflict. A number of circumstances became the reason for that. 2) In August, 1918, the entire Zod region was recognized (or accepted) by the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a territory within the borders of Azerbaijan and was declared as the 9th police department of the Elizavetpol

⁹³ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 4, n. 60.

⁹⁴ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 100.

province, and their commissars and militia were appointed. And in October, 1919 that region surrendered to Armenia, and the Muslim residents, albeit unwillingly, expressed their willingness to submit to the authorities, without severing their ties with Azerbaijan.

3) In late 1918, Rotmister Silikyan was sent to the region of Nor Bayazet to form the Karabakh Cavalry Division, but no money from the state treasury was allocated for this. Silikyan was given the opportunity and the right to confiscate horses, equipment, weapons and everything necessary for the maintenance of the division. Confiscations were carried out, but besides the commissions provided for that purpose, they were carried out by anyone - any officer, commissar, constable, militiaman, etc. For the most part, only receipts were given for the confiscated property. During that process, there were cases of abuse, mainly during the confiscations of horses in the Muslim villages, because not all confiscated horses went to serve the needs of the division. The horses were sold at state prices to outsiders, to persons who had nothing to do with the division, or they were simply sold to their former owners, of course at higher prices, and confiscated fodder was sold. All these developments provoked the discontent of the Muslim population, which, of course, needed a pretext to rebel against the legitimate authorities of Armenia. And finally: 4) in late January, 1919, migrant Armenians led by some Nikolay Avetisov attacked and looted the Muslim villages of Zagalu, Ghezel-Vank and Subbutan, and the villagers fled to other villages of the Zod region. The Muslim District Commissar was warned in time about the planned attack, but no action was taken by him. True, an investigation was conducted regarding the case and a part of the looted property was returned to the Muslims, and generally to all those from whom the property was taken, but the perpetrators were not identified. According to the conclusion of the Chairman of the Extraordinary Investigative Committee Parsadanov, these important reasons, in fact, caused strong dissatisfaction among Muslims, who even had openly declared that there was no government in Armenia and they did not want to obey anyone. For the same reasons the militia post had been removed from the Zod village a few days before the murder of the Silikyan and others. The Extraordinary Investigative Committee sent to Zod by the RA Government came to this conclusion as of April 27, 1919, and on May 2 it was confirmed by the director of the office of the Ministry of Justice.⁹⁵ On May 5, 1919, after hearing the report of the Acting Minister of Justice on the activities of the Extraordinary Investigative Committee (rep. 951, May 2), the Council of Ministers instructed the Ministers of Justice and Internal Affairs to bring the perpetrators to justice.⁹⁶

The issue brought diplomatic and political complications. On April 10, 1919, the Council of Ministers attached the Prime Minister's report on the motion initiated by Tekinsky regarding the withdrawal of the troops from the Zod region and the participation of a Turkish representative in the Investigative Committee. The Foreign

⁹⁵ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 68-72; f. 199, l. 1, f. 64 (48), p. 11-15.

⁹⁶ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 96, p. 83; f. 100 (43), p. 84.

Minister was instructed to announce to Tekinsky that under the existing conditions the withdrawal of the troops was impossible due to military reasons, and as to the participation of a Turkish representative in the Extraordinary Investigative Committee, there was no objection to that.⁹⁷

As we can see, in the Zod-Basargechar region, the Armenian authorities tried to proceed from certain principles of legality, avoiding excessive and unnecessary complications and escalations. On April 6, 1920, after hearing the report of the Minister of Internal Affairs on the "illegal actions" of the Basargechar committee, in the adopted decision the Council of Ministers considered the order of the Investigative Committee illegal and highly harmful from the point of view of state interests and instructed the Ministry of Internal Affairs to hand over all documents and materials to the Military Court.⁹⁸

In this complicated situation, the Armenian authorities, not giving way to Muslim pressure, ensured the security interests of RA in the Sevan basin by legal means, preventing the dangerous territorial and political ambitions of Azerbaijan, which was not an easy task.

The operations of the Armenian army in the area of the Zod village were highly assessed even by the colonel C. Temperley. The actions of the military squad during the capture of the Tatar villages were so excellent in terms of discipline and the bravery of the officers and soldiers that after arriving in Yerevan Colonel Temperley felt obliged to praise the steadfast and disciplined actions of the squad before the Armenian government. After hearing the opinion of Colonel Temperley on April 24, the Council of Ministers thanked Major General Pirumyan and all the officers and soldiers for the brilliant combat operations in the Zod region. Military Minister Major General Araratyan was happy to thank the young Armenian Army represented by Major General Daniel Bek-Pirumyan (who was replaced in July 1919 by famous warrior Hamazasp Srvandztyants, the commander of the military unit stationed in Nor Bayazet), and his chief of staff Chneour as officers with glorious combat experience, who created and commemorated Zod's squad and the flawless military operation it carried out, which for the first time even received a favorable assessment by the representative of the British Army. The military minister ordered to present especially outstanding officers to be promoted to the next military rank. And to reward the soldiers, Chief of Staff Alexander Konstantin Chneour was ordered to take 4 crosses of St. George for each company, battery and cavalry division.⁹⁹ After this operation, according to the order of the military department of April 28, 1919, the head of the Separate Karabakh Brigade, Al. Chneour, was appointed department head of the General Staff.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 96, p. 63.

⁹⁸ NAA, f. 199, l. 1, f. 146, p. 56.

⁹⁹ NAA, f. 204, l. 1, f. 132, p. 68.

¹⁰⁰ NAA, f. 204, l. 1, f. 131, p. 24.

Establishing order and rule in the Zod-Basargechar region, the RA government was guided in its steps by the principles of legality, trying to avoid unnecessary complications, creating foundations of sustainability for the future. For that purpose, according to the conclusion of the Extraordinary Investigative Committee of June 2, 1919, a number of officials and 8 police officers were fired and faced trial.¹⁰¹

After the confrontational military and political events that unfolded around the village of Zod in the Basargechar region, which was one of the most brilliant actions of the Armenian armed forces, in 1919, most of the Muslim population of that region moved to the territory of Azerbaijan. They returned from there only with the establishment of Soviet rule and it was imposed on the Soviet Republic of Armenia.

A. Grigoryan and A. Bobokyan's factful and spectacular work also highlights the discovery and assessment of a number of important circumstances related to the organizers of the murders of Zod and the participants in general. According to the important conclusion of the authors, **"Nemesis of Zod"** was carried out against the organizers of the murders of the Silikyan brothers in Zod. And so, the authors have found out that the main organizer of the conspiracy of Zod, Samand Agha Kyasamansky, was killed on May 2, 1919. According to Azerbaijani sources, this was carried out by General Silikyan, and according to Armenian sources - by Colonel Halabov, uncle of the Silikyan brothers, by the order and knowledge of Major General M. Silikyan, who was the cousin of the brothers. According to this version, Halabov tied Kyasamansky's body to a cart and passed through the streets of Basargechar in response to the demonstration of the heads of the Silikyan brothers in the Tatar villages.¹⁰² According to the data given in the same work by A. Grigoryan and A. Bobokyan, Haji Rahim, who had beheaded Rotmister Silikyan, and Ashugh Najaf, the organizer of the Zod conspiracy, were also eliminated during the riot of the Zod Muslims in April, 1919. And another conspirator, Meshadi Isa, was eliminated on September 27, 1924. According to Azerbaijani sources, he was killed by two Dashnaks. And finally, Abbaskyul bey Shadlinsky (the son of Samand Agha Kyasamansky's sister) who is known for carrying out the massacres of Armenians in Nakhijevan and other places, and for his active participation in the suppression of the hotbeds of rebellion in Nor Bayazet during the February uprising of 1921, was eliminated in Davalu - present-day Ararat, in 1930.¹⁰³ And so, we can conclude that the operations of the **"Nemesis of Zod"**, born spontaneously, were not coordinated, and the actions of the Armenian avengers stemmed from the self-defense instinct of the Armenian population and were fully justified.

According to A. Grigoryan and A. Bobokhyan, the Azerbaijani sources came to a distorted conclusion regarding the events of Zod-Basargechar, placing all the blame on

¹⁰¹ NAA, f. 200, l. 1, f. 263, p. 106.

¹⁰² Grigoryan, Bobokhyan 2022: 156.

¹⁰³ Grigoryan, Bobokhyan 2022: 156-157.

Armenians and the Armenian authorities, trying to advance the anti-historical and anti-scientific view on false grounds, as if the Sevan basin and Zod-Sotk in particular were historically Azerbaijani territories where Azerbaijanis lived until 1988.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, as the above-mentioned authors assure, during the days of the “rebellion” of the Azerbaijanis, Samand Agha Vali Ahga Oghli Nasibbekov Kyasamansky was the one that negotiated with the Armenian clergy and government representatives in the regional center (Zod - V.V.) and reportedly Rotmister Silikov-Silikyan insulted him and Samand Agha, not forgiving the insult, organized the murder of Silikyan,¹⁰⁵ which is a baseless claim, as well as the false Azerbaijani news, according to which Silikyan organized murders of Azerbaijanis, set fire to houses, which is denied by archival documents. Instead of presenting the truth, Azerbaijani authors similarly distort the fact that more than 800 armed cavalymen were transferred from Azerbaijan to Zod in order to support the rioters in Zod and incite them to act against the central Armenian authorities. They participated in the looting of more than two dozen villages and brutally executed civilians, characterizing it as ethnic cleansing,¹⁰⁶ as it happened in the 1980s and 1990s, when the policy aimed at ethnic cleansing of Gandzak, Khanlar, Dashkesan and other regions was implemented. Also important is the fact that the distorted views of Azerbaijan are not based on real archival evidence, but on claims based on the falsified memories of contemporaries of the events.

It should be added as a postscriptum that even after all this, Azerbaijan did not give up its aggressive ambitions in the Zod-Basargechar region. This is proved by the note (N 3253) of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan M. Y. Jafarov addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of RA on September 22, 1919, in which the real facts were distorted and aimed at justifying Azerbaijan's aggressive goals: “Before the Turks came to the province of Yerevan in January 1918, the Armenians of the mentioned province had destroyed more than 300 settlements, killing the majority of Muslims in those settlements. When the Turks left and the allied powers came to the Caucasus, the Azerbaijani people hoped that the Armenian government would no longer allow the extermination of Muslims in order to establish peace and tranquility. However, in December 1918, after they left Yerevan province, the regiment of Sasun disarmed the Muslims of the rural communities of Karakhach and Vedichai provinces and destroyed the villages of Kadilu, Dokhpaz, Karabeklyar, Aghasi Bekli and others, exterminating almost all the Muslims of the mentioned communities. Muslims from a number of villages in the Milli Darasi region also suffered such a fate. Almost simultaneously, the Armenian troops surrounded the villages of the Basargechar district of the Nor Bayazet region and exterminated the Muslims of Kizil-Bank, Subatan, Zagali, Shahab and other villages, raped women and burnt many children of Shahab village in tandoors. The

¹⁰⁴ Grigoryan, Bobokhyan 2022: 165-166.

¹⁰⁵ Grigoryan, Bobokhyan 2022: 167.

¹⁰⁶ Grigoryan, Bobokhyan 2022: 167-168.

Azerbaijani government, deeply outraged by these atrocities, expresses a decisive protest to the Armenian government responsible for the possible consequences, and is convinced that the violence against the Muslims of Yerevan province will be stopped by the most decisive means".¹⁰⁷

Some more incidents took place later, proving that Azerbaijan could not put up with such a conclusion of the Zod riot, as evidenced by the telegram of October 27, 1919 sent by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, F. Khan-Khoisky to the diplomatic representative of Azerbaijan in Georgia, M. Y. Jafarov, asking him to inform the RA representative in Georgia that the 9th department of the Ganja region was an inseparable, indivisible part of the Republic of Azerbaijan: "I have received the following telegram from the governor of Ganja: "The bailiff of the 9th department of the Ganja region, composed of rural communities that passed to the Nor Bayazet region, upon arriving in Ganja, informed that on October 12, the provincial commissar of Nor Bayazet came to the village of Basargechar, gathered the elders, dignitaries and clergy, and announced that the territory of the current 9th department belonged to the Republic of Armenia, not to Azerbaijan. No bailiff has been appointed, and the one who has declared himself the bailiff of Chaikhor is an impostor. The following demands have been made: first, to pay last year's taxes within one week, second, to hand over the entire wheat reserve, leaving 10 poods for each person, third, to hand over the weapons, fourth, to hand over Chaikhor's bailiff to the authorities, and fifth, to deport those who disobey from the RA borders without the right to bring out the wheat and cattle". Having reported this, I ask you to immediately contact the representative of the Armenian government regarding this matter, pointing out that the 9th department is a constituent part of the Republic of Azerbaijan, that is why our government is protesting and insisting that the Government of the Republic of Armenia cancel the above decision by a special order, because it is an intervention in the internal affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan".¹⁰⁸

As a result, just like in the modern phase, in 1918-1920 as well the Republic of Armenia faced a complex choice of foreign political priorities and particularly, serious threats to the preservation of its territorial integrity. However, at that historical stage the Zod-Basargechar issue was successfully resolved by the RA government and the emerging Armenian statehood, which at that time received high British support, which was unprecedented unlike the Artsakh-Karabakh problem, in which Great Britain and other alleged allies of RA, for the sake of their oil and colonial-imperialist interests, openly sponsored and supported Azerbaijan, which acted as a barrier against Bolshevism and Russia and which annexed Armenian Karabakh. And yet, during the tumultuous events of Zod-Basargechar, Azerbaijan failed to disrupt the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia in the Sevan Lake basin and adjacent regions,

¹⁰⁷ Azerbaijan, 1919, September 25, № 205. Azerbajdjanskaya Demokraticeskaya Respublika 1998: 296-297.

¹⁰⁸ Azerbajdjanskaya Demokraticeskaya Respublika 1998: 347.

which was rather important in view of the challenges that the newly proclaimed Armenian statehood faced. The “Zod” operation is one of the most successful and flawless operations of the Armenian armed forces. It solved an issue of great strategic importance, which resolved an important communication problem, because the Zod-Basargechar region closed the rear of Karabakh-Artsakh and the only safe road leading to Syunik-Zangezur, which could essentially endanger the road passing through the Ararat valley. The Armenian side’s peaceful approach to solving the Zod issue was not successful; the only way out was to solve the problem with force, which became an instructive example from a military-scientific point of view. C. Temperley, the military and political representative of Great Britain in Armenia, who was to establish peace between the Transcaucasian republics with a mediating mission and contribute to the delimitation and establishment of stability, was involved in the process.

The forgotten pages of Zod-Sotk of 1919 are undoubtedly one of the brightest episodes in the annals of the First Republic, which reveal Azerbaijan’s territorial claims towards Basargechar, a significant part of the current Gegharkunik region of the Republic of Armenia, aimed at cutting off that vital for Armenia region from the motherland, which repeated 100 years later, once again proving Azerbaijan’s aggressive and illegal claims towards the Sotk region.

The facts clearly show Azerbaijan’s provocative and conspiratorial actions against RA. During 1918-1919 the Azerbaijani authorities incited the Muslim population living in different parts of Armenia to seditious, anti-government and anti-Armenian steps in the Sotk region, trying to cut it off from Armenia and annex it to Azerbaijan.

The archival facts demonstrate a significant circumstance as well: the peaceful approach of the Armenian side to the resolution of the Zod conflict, to which the Azerbaijani side responded with a provocative anti-Armenian move, killing the Silikyan brothers and their two companions, moreover, displaying their beheaded heads in Muslim villages, which was followed by the “Nemesis of Zod” carried out by brave Armenian warriors against the organizers of the murders of the Silikyan brothers.

It is also noteworthy that before the resolution of the **“Zod” operation**, the RA armed forces initially tried to find a peaceful solution and approached the Tatar settlements with the accompaniment of *zurna* and *dhol*, offering peace as a form of conflict resolution, and only after being fired upon they responded with appropriate fire. This important circumstance that has great resonance today is one of the significant merits of the Armenian armed forces. It was demonstrated in 1919, at the time of the suppression of the Tatar riot, characterized by a pronounced anti-Armenian orientation unfolding in the basin of Lake Sevan. This made it possible to ensure the vital interests of the Armenian people and the Armenian statehood, as well as the solution to security problems.

The Zod epopee of the Armenian armed forces is one of the most impressive pages of the last hundred years, one of the essential manifestations of the Armenian armed forces and Armenian military glory.

It is noteworthy that in the events of the Zod-Sotk region, the Armenian population resorted to self-defense, acting from a peaceful position and conciliatory approaches, striving to protect its interests, which has also been demonstrated since ancient times. Therefore, the military-and-political and historical-and-cultural significance of the **“Zod Operation”** is emphasized, which has essential meaning from the point of view of the future of Armenia.

It is evident that, just like today, in 1918-1919, in the grave economic and political situation of the First Republic, by sowing chaos in the Zod-Sotk region and elsewhere, Azerbaijan and Turkey, parallel to the open military and political aggression, used the anti-Armenian attitude of the large masses of the Muslim population guided by the dark instincts, implemented a clear strategy to destroy Armenia from the inside, to dismember it territorially, due to which the border zones of Armenia have become explosive, and in that sense, the Basargechar-Gegharkunik region was of key importance in terms of vital interests and security. The main supporter of the Muslim riotous sentiments was Azerbaijan, which laid claim to Armenian territories that over the centuries had been depleted of the Armenian element as a result of the Turkish-Persian war and other wars and disasters. Besides, the Armenian state born in May 1918 was from the start surrounded by a large Muslim population, and had no real friends in Transcaucasia and no common interests with any newly-born state. This demanded great efforts for overcoming the manifestations of anarchy in Zod-Sotk, Kars, Zangibasar-Vedibasar, and other regions, re-establishing the control of the Armenian state over the Armenian regions that had ended up in the range of seditious and anti-state actions provoked by Azerbaijan and Turkey, and stopping the Azeri-Turkish plan of the territorial dismemberment of Armenia. During the events of Zod, the Armenian army carried out an exceptionally successful military operation. Thanks to its implementation and the brilliant and competent actions of the national armed forces, Armenia was able to nullify Azerbaijan's devilish plan to make the Sotk-Gegharkunik region an integral part of Azerbaijan. And the military commanders leading the operation were the heroes of Sardarapat - Colonel Alexander K. Chneour and General Daniel Bek-Pirumyan.

The existing facts about the events of Zod testify to the insufficient reliability, falsifications and inaccuracy of facts in the works of Azerbaijani historians. The archival documents allow a deep understanding of the vitally important problem that the heroes of the *glorious “Zod” operation* solved, saving the ancient region of Sotk-Gegharkunik, and preserving it for Armenia without which it would also be deprived of vital resources that are very necessary for its survival, which again became endangered after 100 years, in 2020, during the war that ended in capitulation for the Republic of Armenia and in the course of history that followed it.

The events of Zod-Sotk of 1919 are also a unique message to the Armenian people and generations about what the Armenian armed forces can be and what they should do when they are standing in the positions of defending their own borders. It

contains an Armenian meaning and message about how the strategic borders and vital military and political interests of the native country can and should be preserved.

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