

ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

HISTORY

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ACTIVITIES OF ALEXANDRAPOL MUNICIPAL AUTONOMY BODIES IN 1918–1920

Key words: autonomy, occupation, municipal council, municipal administration, P. Levonyan, RA Government, Revolutionary Committee.

Introduction

The restoration of an independent Armenian state in 1918 was significant for the Armenian people. Despite the difficult and unstable political and socio-economic situation of the First Republic of Armenia, in 1918–1920 large-scale processes took place in the field of state formation in newly independent Armenia, one of which was the formation of local self-governing bodies. They were some of the most important means of exercising the system of public administration and public power of the newly independent republic.

The study of local self-governing bodies is important for making the history of the state system of the First Republic of Armenia more complete. The gained experience can be useful from the point of view of developing the current system of territorial administration and local self-governing bodies of the Republic of Armenia.

* Հոդվածը ներկայացվել է 17.05.21, գրախոսվել է 21.05.21, ընդունվել է տպագրության 02.08.21:

Alexandrapol Municipal Autonomy Bodies during the First Turkish Occupation

The first bodies of municipal autonomy were formed in Alexandrapol in 1896 under the leadership of G. Ter-Petrosyan¹. They remained operational with minor changes until the beginning of 1917. After the February Revolution, the Provisional Government established a democratic electoral system for the formation of urban autonomies, enabling cities to establish municipal councils and administrations. Unfortunately, the municipal autonomy of Alexandrapol, formed on democratic principles in 1917, did not last long. In the morning of May 15, Turkish troops occupied the city and most of the Alexandrapol uyezd². At that crucial moment for Alexandrapol, the members of the municipal council and administration, the heads of public and state organizations, as well as the municipal police in their entirety, fled the collapsing city, so that the municipal autonomy ceased to exist³.

Following the seizure of Alexandrapol, the Turks reestablished the municipal autonomy. On May 17, the General Assembly of Citizens, chaired by the director of the Commercial Gymnasium L. Sargsyan, formed a 29-member municipal council (16 Armenians, 3 Greeks, 3 Muslims, 3 Russians, 2 Georgians, 2 Jews)⁴. The next day, the council elected a 15-member municipal board with 16 committees (sanitation, food, auditing, finance, inventory, etc.)⁵. The mayor of Alexandrapol, L. Sargsyan, was elected chairman of the municipal council, his assistants were P. Merkurov, Haji Yusuf-Oghli-Yusufov, the secretary was Tsikhistov, and the translator was Mubayajyan⁶.

On May 19, the Turkish command recognized the legitimacy of the municipal authorities, and on May 22, Vehib Pasha, who arrived in Alexandrapol, met with the members of the newly elected council at the Trade Gymnasium. The Council presented a petition consisting of 9 articles, demanding to respect the personal

¹ Հայրապետյան 2006, 42–50:

² Խատիսեան 1968, 73:

³ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2711, թ. 3, Ատրպետ 1918, N 262, 2:

⁴ Ալեքսանյան 2011, N 1, 28:

⁵ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 200, ց. 1, գ. 125, թ. 8, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2713, թ. 30:

⁶ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2711, թ. 5:

inviolability of property and honor, to stop looting, arbitrary rule and violence, to allow the Armenians migrated from Kars region to return their homes⁷.

On June 26, the municipal administration was reorganized, and all affairs were concentrated under five general sections: financial-economic (Ter-Martirosov), administrative (S. Ghazaryan), sanitary-medical (Tsikhistov), technical (Chakhmasazov) and food (Yusufov)⁸.

The justice system in the war-torn uyezd was not launched. Turks simply allowed the Commission for the Investigation of Legal Disputes between citizens under the Municipal Autonomy to investigate light offences⁹. Instead, they created a new police system. According to contemporaries, patrols appeared in the streets of the city in the morning of May 16¹⁰, and four days later a 50-member Turkish-Armenian mixed police force was formed¹¹.

The solution to the food issue became the priority task of the municipal authorities. On July 26, 1918, the Municipal council set up a committee to organize the bread trade, which in its turn set about returning 1,200,052 rubles to the Alexandropol Bank, which had been taken to Tbilisi (Georgia) by members of the former administration. The financial dispute between the old and new municipal authorities was settled only in September 1918, after A. Jamalyan, the diplomatic representative of the Republic of Armenia in Georgia, at the request of L. Sargsyan, who arrived in Tbilisi (Georgia), intervened in the case¹².

The fight against epidemic diseases also became a matter of concern for municipal autonomy. Steps were taken to invite doctors from Yerevan, Tbilisi (Georgia), bury the bodies of cholera victims in special places, and open hospitals for the treatment of venereal diseases¹³. Attempts were also made to revive the school work by bringing back Alexandropol teachers who had fled to Tbilisi (Georgia)¹⁴.

In fact, during the Turkish rule, Alexandropol municipal authority, in the absence of national parties and other state institutions, became the only body that

⁷ Ատրպետ 1918, N 262, 3:

⁸ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2710, թ. 5:

⁹ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 200, ց. 1, գ. 125, թթ. 9–10:

¹⁰ Ալեքսանդրապոլում, 1918, N 116, 2:

¹¹ Յովսէփեան 1918, N 6 (206), 2:

¹² ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2711, թ. 103–114:

¹³ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2710, թ. 62:

¹⁴ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 200, ց. 1, գ. 97, թ. 26:

concentrated all the public and state affairs of the uyezd. At the same time, acting as a mediator between the people of the city and the uyezd and the Turkish command, it **tried to suppress the Turks' violence as much as possible and to ensure the physical existence of the Armenians**¹⁵. In his report sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated to December 4, 1918, the RA diplomatic representative in Alexandrapol G. Khoyetsyan wrote about the activities of the structure headed by L. Sargsyan. "When the former administration left the city, L. Sargsyan and his teammates stayed to help the martyred people. "What they endured during the Turkish rule, their self-renounced support of the people's interests, honesty and courage, awakens a deep sense of respect in me"¹⁶.

Activities of Alexandrapol Municipal Autonomy BODIES in 1919–1920.

In the fall of 1918 the situation changed dramatically. The Ottoman Empire, defeated in World War I, withdrew its troops from the occupied territories. On December 4, 1918, the Armenian troops entered Alexandrapol with great solemnity. On the same day, the uyezd of Alexandrapol was declared part of Armenia¹⁷. However, the new uyezd was significantly different from the previous one in terms of territory. The precinct of Mets (Great) Gharakilisa was removed from the uyezd by October 7 decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Armenia, and merged with the precincts of Dilijan and Karavansara to become part of the newly formed province of Dilijan¹⁸. The new province of Alexandrapol, established in early December, included only the territory of Eastern Shirak, with 4 precincts and 129 villages¹⁹.

In the grip of famine and epidemics, it was necessary to restore the activities of state and public institutions in the province, and the city authorities of Alexandrapol played a major role in this. In order to establish order, on December 14, 1918, the city militia was made up of 350 policemen, and 3 judges (A. Tayants, G. Khoyetsyan, Ter-Hakobyan) were elected to investigate the urgent criminal cases.

¹⁵ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 200, ց. 1, գ. 125, թ. 8:

¹⁶ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 126, թթ. 90–96:

¹⁷ **Հեռագիրներ Ալեքսանդրապոլի գրաման մասին**, 1918, N 78, 4:

¹⁸ **Ղարաքիլիսէի յանձնումը**, 1918, N 20, 4:

¹⁹ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 203, ց. 1, գ. 4, թ. 20:

An emergency commission chaired by the mayor was set up to prevent epidemics. The city was divided into four districts, with regional doctors appointed in each of them, bathhouses and orphanages opened²⁰.

The Migration Commission chaired by M. Ghazaryan played an invaluable role in ensuring the living conditions of the migrants²¹. In just four months, from December 10, 1918, to April 2, 1919 (after April, the American Middle East Relief Committee took over the food supply)²², the commission provided shelter to the migrants in Alexandrapol and opened 9 feeding stations²³.

Unfortunately, the tense relations between the central authorities of the Republic of Armenia and mayor L. Sargsyan did not allow to register serious results in the restoration of the city economy. Those relations became more tense during the Armenian-Georgian war. Hoping to save the population of an economically devastated province from starvation, Alexandrapol municipal authorities asked the Armenian government to stay away from an extremely undesirable war²⁴, but to no avail. When the railway communication between Kars and Jajur was interrupted due to the winter snowstorms, the province found itself in the grip of famine²⁵.

The controversy between the non-Dashnak city authorities of Alexandrapol and the center made up of predominantly ARF members, was in fact politically motivated. The municipal authority was trying to maintain its power, while the ARF, on the contrary, was trying to regain its influence in the city of strategic importance.

On February 25, 1919, the ARF demanded that Alexandrapol municipal administration hold municipal council elections²⁶. Those took place on May 4, 1919 and gave the following results: 38 representatives were elected to Alexandrapol municipal council from the ARF (Dashnaktsutyun), 9 from the People's Party of Armenia (PPA), and 5 from the Socialist Union (an alliance of Independent Socialists led by Menshevik L. Sargsyan and SRs – Socialist Revolutionaries).

²⁰ ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, զ. 2711, թ. 153–154, 166, 172–174, 190:

²¹ ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, զ. 2715, թ. 3:

²² ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, զ. 2715, թ. 50:

²³ ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, զ. 2715, թ. 7–10, 50:

²⁴ ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, զ. 3003, թ. 3:

²⁵ ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 205, ց. 1, զ. 689, թ. 45–49:

²⁶ ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, զ. 2799, թ. 11:

Considering such a ratio of political forces in the newly elected municipal council as a result of electoral fraud and abuse, the Socialist Union and PPA tried to challenge the election results in court (the court hearing ended on December 1, 1919. The administrative department of Yerevan District Court dismissed the election complaint)²⁷. L. Sargsyan also appealed to the RA Prime Minister and the Ministry of Internal Affairs not to convene sessions with the new council before the court decision was announced, but the RA Government decided that the judicial process was not an obstacle for convening a newly formed council²⁸. At the first session convened on June 4, 1919, H. Budaghyan was elected chairman of the newly elected council of Alexandrapol, and M. Simonyan – as the secretary²⁹. The issue of electing a mayor lasted relatively long. H. Melkonyan was elected to the post on September 23, after only six months, and on March 22, 1920, he resigned³⁰.

After H. Melkonyan, the post of the mayor of Alexandrapol remained vacant again, which had a negative impact on the efficiency of the city's autonomy. The issue was resolved only due to the intervention of the central authorities. After the defeat of the May uprising, the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Military, R. Ter-Minasyan simply demanded that the governor of Shirak “restore the activity of municipal autonomy as soon as possible.” On June 16, 1920, the council invited the deputy governor of Yerevan P. Leonyan to the post of mayor of Alexandrapol³¹. The activities of the economic, food, financial-budgetary, police, medical-sanitary, audit and other temporary and permanent commissions were regulated³².

1919–1920 Alexandrapol lived through a difficult and controversial period: chaos in the local self-government bodies, complicated relations with the Center, inter-party struggle, famine, emigration, orphans, the May Uprising. However, due to the steps taken by the local authorities since 1919 from the middle of the XIX century, life in the city started slowly normalizing.

²⁷ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2799, թ. 264:

²⁸ **Նոր կեանք**, 1919, N 60, 4:

²⁹ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2711, թ. 219:

³⁰ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2807, թ. 1–3, 12:

³¹ **Քաղաքային խորհրդի 1920թ. յունիսի 16-ի նիստի որոշումներից**, 1920, N 25, 4:

³² ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2807, թ. 27:

The first positive steps were taken in the field of education. After the establishment of the government of the Republic of Armenia in Alexandrapol, the tuition fees were reduced by 50% in 6 elementary schools under the jurisdiction of the city³³. In the 1920 academic year, the number of elementary schools reached 10. The Armenian government gave 2 million rubles for their renovation³⁴.

Proceeding from the principle of sequence of education and upbringing, the board decided to open mixed gender kindergartens. Despite financial constraints, the first kindergarten opened on February 4, 1920. 122 children from poor families were admitted here³⁵.

Based on the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia of September 22, 1920 to open a music school, the city administration invited the merited composer Romanos Melikyan³⁶ to Alexandrapol for the position of headmaster. The department also expressed readiness to open the university, providing the necessary building facilities. Later, when the government decided to move the university to Yerevan, the municipal autonomy set up a special commission to negotiate with the government to let the university stay in Alexandrapol³⁷.

The city council approved a number of other bills for the renovation of streets, their renaming, the establishment of taxes, duties and tariffs. A toll was imposed on vehicles in favor of the city. Because of the difficult economic situation on June 16, 1920, the land tax was reduced³⁸. A “Council of Elders” was set up under the city administration to prevent unnecessary increases in the prices of food and other basic necessities³⁹.

Serious steps were also taken to renovate the streets. The meeting of engineers convened at the suggestion of the city council decided to pave the central streets with cobblestones⁴⁰ and announced a tender for contractors to

³³ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 172, թ. 5–8:

³⁴ Նույն տեղում, թ. 121:

³⁵ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2891, թ. 6, 15–16:

³⁶ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2779, թ. 91:

³⁷ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2889, թ. 69:

³⁸ Քաղաքային խորհրդի 1920 թ. յունիսի 16-ի նիստի որոշումներից, 1920, N 25, 4:

³⁹ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2889, թ. 63:

⁴⁰ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2813, թ. 90–91:

carry out the work⁴¹. With the funds provided by the government, the city's water supply network was restored⁴².

Practical steps were also taken to electrify the city. In February 1920, the city council municipalized the power plant on a private basis, and when the lighting problem was not resolved, it decided to build one, that should belong to the town hall⁴³.

An integral part of the social policy of the municipal authority was the management of public catering establishments. From the end of 1919, one of the main tasks of the authority became the distribution of bread to the poor immigrants. Grain purchases were made in Sharur region⁴⁴, and the distribution was entrusted to cooperatives⁴⁵.

Unfortunately, the Turkish-Armenian war, which began in late September 1920, disrupted the normal functioning of the city authorities. At dawn on November 5, Mayor P. Lyonyan, members of the board and heads of almost all state structures, contrary to the decision of the Armenian authorities not to leave Alexandrapol in case of invasion, left the city, abandoning it to anarchy⁴⁶: At that crucial moment, L. Sargsyan again took the initiative to prevent the physical extermination of the defenseless Armenian population of the province. Forming a **coalition body of 15 people from the Peoples' and Social-Democratic Party** (with E. Mirakyan and P. Shermazanyan as advisors)⁴⁷, L. Sargsyan, allegedly, at the instructions of General Silikyan the representative of the Armenian government in Alexandrapol, started negotiations with the Turks, with the hope to prevent the Turkish-Bolshevik reapproachment, but in vain. The Turks who entered Alexandrapol preferred to negotiate with the Bolsheviks, thus discrediting the coalition authority led by L. Sargsyan, thus reaching the establishment of the Soviet order in the city⁴⁸. On November 17, a body of the Soviet government, the Revolutionary Committee (RevCom), was established⁴⁹. The Turkish command re-

⁴¹ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2897, թ. 12:

⁴² ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2866, թ. 93:

⁴³ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2866, թ. 220:

⁴⁴ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 199, ց. 1, գ. 147, թ. 81:

⁴⁵ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2779, թ. 111:

⁴⁶ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2863, թ. 226:

⁴⁷ Ալեքսանդրապոլի դէպքերը, 1920, N 182, 1:

⁴⁸ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 114, ց. 2, գ. 10, թթ. 1–3:

⁴⁹ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 114, ց. 2, գ. 10, թ. 5:

cognized the Soviet power in Alexandrapol as much as required to complete the last act of the annihilation of the Eastern Armenians⁵⁰. The Section of Internal Affairs and the Emergency Commission, in particular, became a real scourge on the population of the uyezd of Alexandrapol, where the Turkish horrors had been taking place. Only on January 25, 1921, the Revolutionary Committee, realizing its mistake, laid down its authority⁵¹.

The Turkish command immediately set about forming new local government bodies. With their support, the city police chief S. Matinyan declared himself mayor⁵². The city council and the department started their work on March 18. The situation remained unchanged until the end of April 1921, when Turks left the uyezd of Alexandrapol.

Conclusion

The local self-government bodies of Alexandrapol experienced a rather difficult and controversial period in 1918–1920. The Turkish double invasion in 1918 and 1920 dealt an irreversible blow to both the socio-economic situation of the city and the demographic picture. In addition, the inter-party struggle, hunger and thousands of migrants left their mark on the work of autonomy. But still, the city authorities did an invaluable job in bringing life back to normal in this difficult situation.

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Ալեքսանդրապոլի դէպքերը, «Ժողովուրդ», Երեւան, 1920, N 182, 9 նոյեմբերի:

Ալեքսանդրապոլում, «Մշակ» օրաթերթ, Թիֆլիս, 1918, N 116, 20 յունիսի:

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ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 126:

ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 172:

⁵⁰ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 4033, ց. 4, գ. 127, թ. 29:

⁵¹ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 114, ց. 2, գ. 33, թթ. 54–57:

⁵² ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 114, ց. 3^ա, գ. 70, թ. 4:

ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2710:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2711:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2713:
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ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2799:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2807:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2813:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2863:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2866:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2889:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2891:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 2897:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 105, ց. 1, գ. 3003:
ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 114, ց. 2, գ. 10:
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ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 200, ց. 1, գ. 97:
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ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 203, ց. 1, գ. 4:
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ԱԼԵՔՍԱՆԴՐԱՊՈԼԻ ՔԱՂԱՔԱՅԻՆ ԻՆՔՆԱՎԱՐՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԱՐՄԻՆՆԵՐԻ ԳՈՐԾՈՒՆԵՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ 1918–1920 ԹԹ.

ՀԱՅՐԱՊԵՏՅԱՆ Ա.

Ամփոփում

Քանայի բառեր¹ ինքնավարություն, քաղաքային խորհուրդ, քաղաքային վարչություն, Հ. Մելքոնյան, Պ. Լևոնյան, ՀՀ կառավարություն, հեղափոխական կոմիտե:

1918 թ. մայիսի 15-ին գրավելով Ալեքսանդրապոլը, թուրքերը վերականգնեցին քաղաքային ինքնավարության գործունեությունը: Հաջորդ վեց ամիսներին Ալեքսանդրապոլի քաղաքային ինքնավարությունը դարձավ միակ մարմինը, որը ստանձնեց քաղաքի և գավառի հասարակական-պետական գործառույթների ղեկավարումը՝ միաժամանակ հանդիսանալով միջնորդ՝ քաղաքի ու գավառի ազգաբնակչության և թուրքական հրամանատարության միջև:

Առաջին համաշխարհային պատերազմում պարտված Թուրքիան 1918 թ. աշնանը դուրս բերեց իր զորքերը ռազմակալված տարածքներից և դեկտեմբերի 4-ից Ալեքսանդրապոլի գավառը հայտարարվեց ՀՀ մաս: Հաջորդ երկու տարիների ընթացքում Ալեքսանդրապոլն ապրեց բարդ ու հակասական ժամանակահատված՝ խառնաշփոթ տեղական ինքնակառավարման մարմիններում, Կենտրոնի հետ բարդ հարաբերություններ, միջկուսակցական պայքար, սով, գաղթականություն, որբեր, Մայիսյան ապստամբություն: Այդուհանդերձ տեղական իշխանությունների հետևողական քայլերի շնորհիվ՝ սկսած 1919 թ. կեսերից, կյանքը քաղաքում մտավ բնականոն հունի մեջ:

1920 թ. աշնանն իրավիճակը կրկին փոխվեց: Թուրք-հայկական պատերազմի արդյունքում քաղաքն ու գավառը երկրորդ անգամ ռազմակալվեցին թուրքերի կողմից: Ալեքսանդրապոլ մտած թուրքերը գավառում խորհրդային կարգեր հաստատեցին և համագործակցելով բոլշևիկների հետ, փորձեցին ավարտին հասցնել արևելահայության բնաջնջման վերջին գործողությունը: Այդ իրավիճակը տևեց մինչև 1921 թ. ապրիլի վերջերը:

ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ ОРГАНОВ ГОРОДСКОГО САМОУПРАВЛЕНИЯ АЛЕКСАНДРОПОЛЯ В 1918–1920 гг.

АЙРАПЕТЯН А.

Резюме

Ключевые слова: самоуправление, городской совет, городская дума, П. Левонян, правительство РА, революционный комитет.

Оккупировав Александрополь 15 мая 1918 г., турки восстановили деятельность городского самоуправления. В течение следующих шести месяцев Александропольское городское самоуправление являлось единственным органом, который взял на себя функцию управления общественно – государственными делами города и уезда, одновременно выступая в качестве посредника между населением и турецким командованием.

Осенью 1918 года проигравшая в войне Турция вывела свои войска из оккупированных территорий, и с 4-ого декабря Александропольский уезд был объявлен частью Армении. На протяжении последовавших вслед за этим двух лет Александрополь пережил сложный и неоднозначный период: беспорядки в местном самоуправлении, сложные отношения с Центром, межпартийная борьба, голод, эмиграция, вопрос сирот, Майское восстание. Однако благодаря последовательным действиям местных властей с середины 1919 г. жизнь в городе нормализовалась.

Осенью 1920 г. ситуация вновь изменилась. В результате турецко-армянской войны город и уезд во второй раз были оккупированы турками, установившими в уезде советскую власть и в сотрудничестве с большевиками попытавшимися довести до конца истребление восточных армян. Такова была ситуация в Александрополе до конца апреля 1921 года.