

The
JOURNEYS
of HEROES

General Antranig

Vagharshag Shahinian

Yerevan

ANI Foundation for Armenian Studies

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INTRODUCTION

As three of Yeghishe Catchouny's grandchildren our memories of him are as varied as his life was. As in most families, the memories center around family gatherings at his



Yeghishe and Satenig Catchouny with their grandchildren, Richard, Carol and Kenneth Sarajian

home or that of other family members. Often these events would include grandpa's extended family (his nieces) or their friends from Van and other parts of their homeland.

But we knew there was something special about our grandparents. As we grew and learned about the Armenian Genocide and World War I, we understood that our grandparents were an important part of that history. From our great-grandfather Der Hoosig Avak Kahana Catchouny, who was among the first taken on April 24, 1915, to the stories of our grandparents as they met in

Van and what the ensuing years brought them...times of war, survival as they were separated and then traveled together to survive.

Throughout those stories was one almost mythic figure: General Antranig. A hero to the Armenian people, we understood that our grandfather was a key member of his military staff, fought courageously with Antranig and then worked tirelessly with Antranig providing relief to the Armenian people after the war. We learned of our grandfather's service to Armenia and its people and his strong relationship with Antranig. And ultimately how Yeghishe and Satenig Catchouny journeyed to America with General Antranig.

Our grandfather was a meticulous man in the records he kept. His diary of Antranig's strike force provides a detailed record and insight into that army and that time. Antranig lives in the minds and hearts of the Armenian people today. As we talk of him with friends and look at pictures of Antranig with his strike force, we find others whose ancestors fought with Antranig and find them in the photos we have. As we remember the 102nd Anniversary of the founding of the first Independent Republic of Armenia, we also know that 2021 will mark the 30th Anniversary of the new Republic of Armenia which has survived its own challenges and continues to grow. We are proud of our children who have visited the homeland that Antranig, our grandfather, and their comrades fought for and held in their hearts, and is today a reality.

We would like to thank the ANI Armenian Research Center for initially editing and re-issuing Yeghishe Catchouny's book and now publishing an English translation. This was a dream of our parents that has come true.

We are honored that our grandfather's journal will be available to those who wish to study the story of General Antranig, whose stature defined the fight for independence, the brave men who fought with him, and their service to their people.

Richard Sarajian

Ken Sarajian

Carol Sarajian Kennelly

April, 2020



FOREWORD

Growing up, my father would tell our family stories about how his father, Vagharshag Shahinian, as a volunteer in the First Republic of Armenia, fought to protect his homeland. Being an Armenian American in New Jersey, it was a story of another time and place, very far from the comfort and safety of our home.

My paternal grandparents were from a different world and spoke a different language, that unfortunately, we didn't understand or speak. We knew that a terrible black cloud surrounded their earlier lives and they had to struggle to survive; but they had both survived and flourished here in the United States, having four children and fifteen grandchildren.

The story of this book begins with a group email from my cousin Shamira Shahinian, while cleaning out her mom's garage, she came across a cassette tape, asking if any of us were interested in it. Having learned Armenian as an adult, I felt best placed to listen and hear what was on the tape.

The tape begins with my grandfather's voice saying, "We left Yerevan with a group of Vanetsi men, sent to protect the borders of the new republic..." and this story of struggle

and survival came alive for me. It was a recording of my father, Antranig Shahinian, interviewing his father Vagharshag about his experiences in Armenia during the birth of the new Armenian nation.

The tape was marked “1953,” which would make it recorded thirty-five years after the events being described, one year before my birth. The narrative is told by Vagharshag with a clarity of events and places that belied the man that I remembered, someone tired and elderly.

It is a roughly forty-five-minute description of events that took place between May 1918 and October 1918, beginning at the end of the Battle of Sardarapat¹, where my grandfather returned from the decisive Battle of Sardarapat to a wife who was nine months pregnant with my father and who was deathly ill with what I believe to have been typhoid. On that day of his first son’s birth, Vagharshag told his wife, “I must leave today, and I may not return, but when you baptize him, name him Antranig,” which in Armenian indicates the first-born son, and for my grandfather General Antranig was a beloved national hero.

This is a book about the Armenian struggle to survive as a Christian minority towards the end of World War I, when a key part of the Turkish national agenda included elimination

¹ Battle of Sardarapat: A decisive battle between Armenian forces and the Ottoman Army that invaded Eastern Armenia in the days between May 21 and May 29, 1918. The Armenian forces halted the Ottoman advances and thus saved the Armenian nation from destruction. In *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, in reference to the Battle of Sardarapat, Christopher Walker writes, “Had [the Armenians] failed, it is perfectly possible that the word Armenia would have henceforth been denoted as only an antique geographical term (like Cappadocia). But despite being outnumbered two to one...they defeated the Turks in all three encounters.” (pg. 254).

of the Armenians and other Christian minorities from their ancestral homes in eastern Anatolia. This began in April 1915 with the systematic destruction and mass murder of a million and a half Armenians killed and ethnically cleansed from the historic Armenian highlands in eastern Anatolia². While the world was busy fighting a world war, and the Russians had withdrawn from the Caucasus, the Turks found the perfect opportunity to continue to solve their Armenian “problem,” by ethnically cleansing all eastern Anatolia of its native Armenians. At the point in history of this story, they continued the deadly cleansing process across their eastern border into eastern Armenia in the areas of Gyumri and Nakhijevan. These areas had been under Russian influence until the Russian Revolution precipitated the departure of Tsarist troops back to Russia, thus leaving the Armenians unprotected from Turkish aggression.

This story is in two parts, one told through the eyes of Yeghishe Catchouny, General Antranig’s personal secretary, in the form of a day to day, contemporaneous diary of events, and the other through the oral history of my grandfather as interviewed by his son Antranig Shahinian, well after the fact. They are parallel stories, relating parallel events in a similar time and place in Syunik, also known as Zangezur, which is in the south of present-day Armenia.

This is a very strategic area in that, although it is historically majority Armenian, it acts as a wedge between

² Armenian Genocide: The systematic destruction of the Armenian people and their identity by the Ottoman government during WWI. It was the state sponsored mass murder of 1.5 million Armenians cleansed from their ancestral homes in Anatolia by mass murder and death marches through the Syrian desert and the forced islamization of Armenian women and children from 1915-1917.

Turkey and their fellow Turkic peoples in the East. It geographically blocks the Turks from having a potential pan-Turkic republic, from the Mediterranean Sea to the steppes of Asia and to this day remains of strategic importance.

The story begins with General Antranig and his Special Striking Division being charged by the fledgling Armenian government to protect the borders of the new Armenian Republic (the First Republic) at a time when the government had been forced to sign a very unfavorable treaty with the Turks (Treaty of Batum), which stipulated that the Turkish army would be allowed safe passage from Turkey to Baku, through Armenian lands, marginalization of the army and free use of the railroads.

My grandfather, Vagharshag Shahinian, was one of the displaced Western Armenians who volunteered to serve in the army of the new republic. General Antranig could not countenance the decision to allow the Turks to cross Armenian lands, knowing that the Turks had a goal of conquering the prize of Baku with its oil riches and knowing that the genocide of the Armenians living there was sure to follow. The massacre of roughly 9000 Armenians of Baku is exactly what happened³, and the fear was that once they were done in Baku they would surely return and continue their bloody work on the Armenians in the new republic.

3 The Ottoman units were kept outside of Baku so that the age-old custom of looting and pillaging defiant cities was observed. The Muslim masses of Baku, thousands of irregular troops, and even several regular Ottoman regiments swarmed throughout the city plundering and killing. Conservative estimates of Armenian dead are close to ten thousand, while many sources claim that from twenty to thirty thousand Christians were slaughtered. See Richard G. Hovannisian (1967). *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918*. (pg. 227).

General Antranig abandoned the empty mission of guarding the northern border and headed south into Nakhijevan to protect Armenian villages there, and while there defend the thousands of displaced Western Armenian refugees, the protection of whom the Special Striking Division had adopted as their mission. Ultimately his goal was to join the British Army as a striking force in their war against the Turkish Army in Mesopotamia, a goal that he was ultimately unable to achieve.

My grandfather and many others also agreed about this problematic decision to accept the draconian terms of the new treaty and, likely inspired by Antranig, they too went to where they could best help the homeland. That is where my grandfather's story begins.

General Antranig travelled to northern Iran and lacking intelligence regarding the size and location of the adversary, engaged with the regular Turkish army, a much greater and better equipped force. After his defeat there he retreated with his force to Zangezur and with his strength of character and the presence of his armed group, inspired the locals to protect and preserve what would become a key part of today's Armenia.

After having read the Catchouny portion of the book several times, I was struck by a few things. The total isolation of this area prevented Antranig from knowing what was happening in the outside world. There were no telephones, telegraph or newspapers arriving in Syunik. Any news that arrived was hearsay and not reliable. By December 1, 1918 the Striking Division was able to break through Turko-Tatar

forces and finally open the road from Goris to Shushi. The Turks had closed these main roads and any Christian trying to pass this area was either robbed or killed, so this effectively isolated the Armenians of the Syunik region from the outside world. On December 1, 1918, word was sent to Antranig that the Turks had capitulated and were laying down arms, this was a full month after the Turkish capitulation at Mudros⁴ on October 30, 1918, officially ending the Ottoman involvement in World War 1. It is clear that the Turko-Tatars of this region didn't respect this accord and continued their hostilities against the Armenians. Once the British with the Allied Powers had secured victory against Turkey and the Central Powers, they were not respectful of Antranig's wish to allow the Armenian majority in Karabagh self-rule. After Antranig received word that the Turks had capitulated, he decided to wait for word from his British allies rather than move his forces on Shushi. The enormity of this decision to hold his forces back from liberating Shushi in December 1918 cannot be overstated. The December 2, 1918, entry in Catchouny's diary states "Encouraged by the presence of Turkish forces, Azerbaijan—along with the Turks—has seized Shushi, imprisoned intellectuals, suppressed the people, killed travelers, seized weapons, and so on, and in doing so threatened the entire existence of Karabagh". Antranig was told by General William M Thomson⁵ that by advancing against Shushi it would be considered an act against the British. The respect that Antranig had for the word of a British officer potentially changed the course of the history of that area, the

4 The Armistice of Mudros (October 30, 1918) marked the end of hostilities between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire.

5 William M Thomson was a British General that commanded the North Persia Force between September 1918 and May 1919 and went on to command all the British forces in the South Caucasus.

repercussions of which are felt until today. Had he entered and controlled that strategic town, the fate of that area today might well have been different. The British protected the Azeris from Antranig but did nothing to protect the Armenians in Shushi and Nakhijevan, who continued to suffer massacres and ethnic cleansing in the period that followed.

At once a story of struggle, privation and heroism, these two stories intertwine, but never intersect. They are parallel stories of heroic self-defense and ultimately of survival.

For me, it was painstaking yet exciting work to translate, and I would like to thank my father-in-law Berc Araz, who sat for hours with me playing the scratchy recording repeatedly, trying to distinguish what was being said one night in 1953 at the Shahinian dinner table, in Cresskill, New Jersey, with plates being clattered and my older brothers making noise in the background, as this story unfolded.

I credit Tatul Hakobyan for his idea of combining these two stories and for his intellectual honesty.

I would also like to thank the various Shahinian/Melkonian/Haviland/Leitner cousins for the group financing of this project and cousin Michael Manoogian for his creative cover art and book design.

I would like to thank Alan Gilbertson for his professional editing and computerized typesetting skills.

I would like to thank Vartan Matiossian for his help with keeping the Preface historically accurate and from avoiding the land mines of political controversy.

I would like to thank Taline Najarian for her skills at the computer creating a contemporaneous map of 1918.

I would also like to thank the Catchouny/Sarajian family for having had a predecessor that took such great notes that bring the story of General Antranig and his Special Striking Division to life.

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PREFACE

In the early 20th century, while the world was embroiled in World War I, the Young Turk leadership of the Ottoman Empire embarked upon a campaign to eradicate the presence of Armenians from the Western Armenian highlands, their ancestral home of three millennia. The Entente nations of England, Russia and France were engaged on other fronts and did not intercede.

The story of General Antranig as chronicled by Yeghishe Catchouny and the oral history of Vagharshag Shahinian that follow in these pages—their defense of Armenian ancestral homeland and people is set against that backdrop.

The Tsarist government in Russia collapsed in March 1917. The ensuing Provisional Government, unable to feed the people and institute land reforms, ultimately lost power to the then rising force of the Soviets, led by Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. After consolidating control of the government in October 1917, the emerging Soviet leadership attempted to withdraw from the Entente efforts against the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey). Desperate to consolidate power and extricate Russia from the World War, in March 1918 the

Soviets signed the Treaty of Brest Litovsk¹, under the terms of which Russia lost one third of their population, half of their industrial lands, and most of its coal fields, and was forced to pay three hundred million German Marks to Germany.

By January 1918, the entire Caucasian Front had been vacated by Russian forces, leaving Armenian and Georgian forces to protect the front that stretched from the southern end of Lake Van to Trebizond. This line was far too long and the forces too thin to provide an effective defense, especially with their supply lines preyed upon by Kurdish raids and attacks from the rear by pro-Turkish forces.

What followed was a dark page in the history of Western Armenia that spelled the end of Armenian presence in the bulk of their ancestral lands. The fall of the ancient fortress city of Erzurum was a particularly painful tragedy.

The Armenian National Council in Tiflis sent General Antranig Ozanian to defend Erzurum and the Armenian populace still living in that area. Antranig found the city in disarray with rival armed groups each acting in its own self-interest. The Russians had vacated Erzurum leaving great stores of weapons, ammunition, clothing and food. According to Antranig's biographers the city of Erzurum was run by Tigran Aghamalian, the chairman of the Armenian Military Union. Aghamalian had been using his position to profit from the Russian stores and showed little interest in cooperating with Antranig in the defense of the city. He was said to have

¹ Treaty of Brest Litovsk: A treaty signed by the Bolshevik government of Russia and the Central Powers that included Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire on March 3, 1918. The treaty marked the end of the Russian involvement in WWI, and it formalized the default of Imperial Russia's commitments to the Allies.

sold Russian weapons to the Turks, who later used those same weapons to attack the city. He was rumored to have promised the delivery of Erzurum to the Turks for the price of twenty thousand Turkish gold pounds.²

Hampered by disorganized, incompetent, and even treacherous Armenian leadership in Erzurum, compounded by a lack of commitment on the part of Eastern Armenian soldiers sent to defend this Western Armenian city, Antranig lacked the resources to defend the city and was ultimately unable to hold this strategic city.

Additionally, the Soviets, in their own effort to consolidate power, had declared the conflict between the Central Powers and the Entente as a "class war" characterized by the exploitation of the proletariat. This undermined control by the military officers over rank-and-file soldiers. That characterization also helped weaken the fighting will and incentive of the Eastern Armenians to join in self-defense. This resulted in both Russian and Eastern Armenian soldiers abandoning the front.

According to Antranig Chalabian, a biographer of General Antranig, at a critical moment when the Turkish forces were attacking Erzurum, a group of Karabaghtsi

² See Aram Amir Khanian: *Rus ev Turk Zinadadare: Patmakan Ansker, 1917-1918, Fresno, Ca, 1921*. Aghamalian sold 75 boxes of Moss rifles with 60,000 bullets to the Turks and went on to dissuade the soldiers of Erzurum from following General Antranig to fight for the city by deprecating his military experience. As the local chairman of the Armenian National Council, he proceeded to inculcate the idea that "It will serve no purpose trying to resist in Erzurum. The National Council has decided to withdraw to the 1914 borders and to fortify the city of Kars, where it's possible to resist if the enemy breaks off the Treaty and the Armistice." See Antranig Chalabian. *General Antranik and the Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, USA, 1988. pg 325.

Armenians led by a Colonel Bejanbekov abandoned their place and retreated in the heat of battle. This enabled what was in fact a relatively weak force of Turks to attack and force the Armenians from Erzurum, causing a general panicked flight of its Armenian inhabitants.

The cruel irony of this treachery was that this same force of Karabaghtsis, on their return to Karabagh, were attacked and killed by the Turko-Tatars of the Zapugh-Hakaru Pass. This is the same area, as documented in the following diary of Yeghishe Catchouny, that was later cleared of its Tatar outlaws in November of 1918 by Antranig and his Special Striking Division, finally making it safe for Armenians to travel between Zangezur and Karabagh. Catchouny documents seeing the bones of those same 217 deserters by the side of the road along with others who had attempted travel between Zangezur and Shushi through the Zapugh-Hakaru Pass.

The signing of the March 1918 Treaty of Brest Litovsk marked the end of the Russian participation in World War I. In addition to great Russian concessions to Germany and the Central Powers, Talaat Pasha and the Young Turkish government demanded the return of Kars, Ardahan and Batum, areas that had not been under Turkish dominance since the 1870s.

The withdrawal of Russian troops triggered the birth of the short-lived and ill-fated Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic, unifying Georgians, Armenians and Tatars (Azerbaijanis) in a coalition government lasting from

April 22 to May 26, 1918.³ The Transcaucasian Republic was left to negotiate terms with the Turks, without Russian suzerainty. This coalition government, whose priorities were by the nature of each people's needs not aligned, was being pushed by the Turkish negotiators to declare independence from Russia, thus formalizing any agreements that would be forged. Without Russian presence in the region, both Georgians and Armenians were vulnerable, and they continued clinging to the myth that the Transcaucasian Republic would fall under Russian protection. This wishful and unrealistic thinking impeded their ability to act independently and in their own best interests.

The Georgians and the Armenians in particular, were already unhappy with the terms of Brest-Litovsk; the Armenians thought that it unfairly ceded too much of historic Western Armenia to the Turks, and their interests turned towards defending and protecting what territories were left to them from Turkish aggression. The Azerbaijanis, being ethnically similar to the Turks, were happy to align themselves with Turkish interests, and in fact secretly wished to see the Turks wrest control of Baku and its oil riches. Seeing the military weakness in Armenian and Georgian defenses, the Turkish Third Army began marching into Eastern Armenia, without waiting for any agreement to be finalized. Alarmed by the Turkish aggression, Germany quietly informed Turkey that invading Georgia would be a red line and thus protected

³ The Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic was a short-lived union of the three newly independent states of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan as well as parts of Russia and Turkey. It lasted between April 22, 1918, and May 26, 1918, and ended when Georgia declared independence followed shortly by Azerbaijan and finally Armenia.

Georgian sovereignty and their strategic interests there. The Turks provided their Tatar kin with protection, but the Armenians had no one but themselves upon whom to rely.

On April 25, 1918, the Transcaucasian Republic's premiere designate, Georgian Akaki Chkhenkeli ordered his Transcaucasian commander, General Nazarbekov to withdraw from the well defended city of Kars. This was done without the knowledge or agreement of the ARF (the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, aka Dashnagtsutiu, was the dominant Armenian political party) representatives, leaving them angered and feeling betrayed. The Turkish Third Army, led by Vehib Pasha, entered the fortress city of Kars without a shot being fired. With the Armenians retreating in a panic, the Turks marched well beyond the borders agreed upon in Brest-Litovsk, conquering Batumi and Alexandropol (Gyumri) with little resistance.

The Turks pushed past the borders agreed upon in the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, ethnically cleansing Armenians from their ancestral homelands, pushing them eastward and massacring them as they went, repeating the horrific 1915 Turkish genocide of the native Western Armenian population. This created a horrendous humanitarian crisis as refugees and ragtag armed irregulars spilled into the region of Yerevan, where Western Armenian refugees were dying in the streets from disease and starvation.

While the Transcaucasian Republic was negotiating with the Turks, on May 15, 1918, the city of Alexandropol fell to the Turks, and its inhabitants were massacred. The Armenian leadership that found the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk intolerable was now ready to accept its terms. The Turks,

sensing weakness, forced the draconian Treaty of Batum on the Armenians, which demanded even more territory including Alexandropol, Echmiadzin, Javakhk and a railroad that would allow free passage of Turkish troops across Armenian territory to oil rich Baku. Control of the railroad would potentially ensure the success of the Young Turk military commander Enver Pasha's Pan-Turkic scheme of uniting the Turkic peoples of Russian Central Asia with Ottoman Turks.

On June 4, 1918, the Armenians were forced to sign the Treaty of Batum, which ceded even more land than Brest-Litovsk, cementing the loss of Western Armenia and additionally ceding parts of Eastern Armenia. This loss of land and the fact that the Armenians were being forced to allow free passage of Turkish troops were completely antithetical to General Antranig's mission.

By April 1918, General Antranig formed a fighting force of 1400 Western Armenian partisans, and as the Turks pushed eastwards into Russian Armenia, Antranig and his Special Striking Division resisted, with a goal of protecting fleeing Armenian refugees from massacre. He retreated fighting and protecting the 25,000 to 30,000 fleeing refugees, moving further east into the Lori region over difficult mountain terrain. He informed the Armenian leadership that he would make a last stand in Dilijan.

When Antranig heard the terms of Brest-Litovsk and then the Treaty of Batum, he understood that this would cement the loss of Western Armenia. He therefore renounced any cooperation with the Transcaucasian Republic and the First Armenian Republic that shortly followed and vowed to continue to fight. It is the same sentiment heard in Vagharshag

Shahinian's story when, in disagreement with the terms of the Treaty of Batum, he resigned the meaningless border guarding mission to join the fight alongside Antranig. He stated clearly that allowing the passage of Turkish troops across Armenia would enable Turkish forces to capture Baku, and their fear was that the same force would return and completely surround and wipe out what little remained of Armenia. His story that follows begins with this crucial disagreement over the Treaty of Batum.

Yeghishe Catchouny's story begins at a similar time and chronicles General Antranig's heroic efforts to save tens of thousands of refugees being threatened by the advancing Turkish army. Without his timely intervention, the retreating Armenian refugees of Nakhijevan and the Armenian inhabitants of Zangezur surely would have been massacred. Yeghishe Catchouny chronicles that Antranig's presence in Zangezur is what saved that area from being overrun by Turks and protected Armenians from local Turko-Tatar aggression. Antranig's message to the Zangezur Armenians was clear; if they supported him and were willing to fight, he would help them. But if they did not participate in armed resistance, they would be overrun and killed. This was a scenario Antranig had witnessed countless times before. The Armenians of Zangezur agreed to defend themselves.

In the Spring of 1918, the Armenian National Council sent Aram Manukyan, hero of the defense of Van and a Dashnag activist, to lead the Yerevan province. He was given absolute authority and he skillfully organized and directed the country's resources, exhorting his people to defend the homeland. With the help of his generals and a famous inspirational speech by

Gevorg Sureniants, the Catholicos of All Armenians, they made a last stand. The approaching Turkish Third Army threatened to totally annihilate the Armenian nation. This inspired call to arms to defend the fatherland led to Armenian victories at Sardarapat and Bash Aparan, and the Armenian forces pushed the invading Turkish army back to Alexandropol.

Vagharshag Shahinian participated in the Battle of Sardarapat and his story begins when he returns from that battle to his very sick, pregnant wife Shooshanig in Yerevan. On May 28, 1918, after the decisive victory at Sardarapat, the First Republic of Armenia was born. Five days later, on June 2, 1918, Vagharshag Shahinian's first child was born, and that same day as he was leaving to join the fight to save the Republic, he requested that his son be baptized Antranig after the great Armenian hero. The narrative that follows is Vagharshag Shahinian's story. It was tape recorded in 1953 in Cresskill, New Jersey, and is a translation from Armenian of Vagharshag's interview by his then thirty-five-year-old son, Antranig.

General Antranig was a veteran soldier, championing the struggle of his downtrodden people. Beginning in the 1880s and by the time of the Yeghishe Catchouny narrative that follows, he had been fighting for his people for over thirty-five years. In the period of 1918-1919, Yeghishe Catchouny was acting as Antranig's aide-de-camp and kept meticulous notes regarding the day-to-day activities of the General and his Special Striking Division. Those notes are a precious window into that period and an important and conscientious chronicle of those events.

Vagharshag Shahinian was a twenty-nine-year-old refugee from Van, who had spent time in the United States and returned to Van when war broke out in order to save his family. Both men shared the leadership qualities it took to lead and care for non-professional volunteers, leading them to protect their people, mete out frontier justice and save that strategically vital part of today's Armenia, Zangezur, in 1918. It was a fight that Garegin Njdeh continued in 1921 after the Bolsheviks toppled the Dashnag government. Their struggles eventually led to Zangezur remaining a part of Armenia rather than being annexed by Azerbaijan. Geographically Zangezur acts as a land bridge between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Their actions helped preserve that essential part of the Armenian Republic, maintaining the strategic corridor of its own to Iran.

Both Antranig and Vagharshag fought the heroic fight, and both are today interred in their beloved Ararat valley. General Antranig's grave can be found in the military cemetery in Yerablur. Vagharshag's final resting place is on the site of the pivotal Battle of Sardarapat. He is enshrined by a marker behind the first eagle on the promenade to the museum.

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YEGHISHE CATCHOUNY BIOGRAPHY

Yeghishe Catchouny was born November 27, 1889, the youngest child of Der Hoosig Kahana Hazarian and Yeretzgin Nartouhi in Arabkir, where Der Hoosig was the Der Hayr of St. Illuminator's Church. During the Hamidian massacres of the 1890's Der Hoosig served as Locum Tenens. As the Turkish officials tried to get Der Hoosig to sign affidavits that the local Armenians in Arabkir were treasonous Der Hoosig refused and was found guilty of treason. Sentenced to prison in Kharpert, it is believed that Der Hoosig was saved by the intervention of the Armenian Patriarchate and moved to Constantinople with his 4 sons while his daughter stayed in Arabkir. At that time the family name was changed to Catchouny in recognition of Der Hoosig's bravery. Der Hoosig Avak Kahana Catchouny was one of the leaders of the Armenian people arrested on April 24, 1915 at the beginning of the Genocide and died during a death march in Syria.

Yeghishe graduated from Getronagan in 1908 and attended the University of Istanbul Law School with his brother Yeznik. During these years he was one of the founders of the Armenian Football Club of Constantinople and many other athletic groups, which eventually led to the formation

of Homenetmen. Upon graduation in 1914, he traveled to Van with his classmate, Philip Gorgodian, and began the practice of law. In 1915, he became a judge.

During the defense of Van, he served as a member of the press bureau. Upon the retreat from Van, he went to Echmiadzin where worked as a teacher at the Kaianian Institute for Refugees. He returned to Van in 1916 (then under Russian control), where he resumed his position as a member of the court. Yeghishe later traveled to Yerevan, where he was appointed a member of the Refugee Commission by Archbishop Khoren.

In 1917, he headed to Tiflis where he met Antranig. Yeghishe and Yeznik served on the editorial board of Antranig's publication, "Hayastan." By 1918 Yeghishe returned to Yerevan, serving on the staff of the Commissioner of Nationalities of the Caucasus.

In June 1918 Yeghishe joined Antranig's strike force serving as an officer, treasurer and secretary to Antranig. The relationship with Antranig extended past the war as after Antranig disbanded the strike force in Echmiadzin, they traveled to Tiflis, Batum, Marseilles, London and Manchester, where Yeghishe assisted Antranig as he founded the Manchester Armenian Refugees Clothing Fund. From 1919 through 1921, Yeghishe travels took him through Armenia & Persia distributing clothing and funds and collaborating with Near East Relief.

In September 1921 he returned to Armenia where he reunited with Satenig Gorgodian (the sister of his law school classmate) and they joined Antranig as they journey to Manchester (where they are married by Very Reverend

Grigoris Balakian with General Antranig as best man) and arrived with Antranig in NY in June 1922.

After arriving in NY, Yeghishe and Satenig ultimately settled in Orange, NJ where he owned and operated Embassy Cleaners. Yeghishe and Satenig had three children, Alice, Arax and Armen. In the US, Yeghishe remained active in Armenian affairs through the founding of Armenian athletic organizations, including the Homenetmen (and served as US chair) and the Arapkirtsee Compatriotic organization. He maintained correspondence with many of his comrades including Aram Haigaz.

Yeghishe Catchouny passed away February 1, 1976.

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON FIRST EDITION
Yeghishe Catchouny 1921

The present volume contains the military operations of the Armenian Special Striking Division on the Caucasus Front under the command of Zoravar Antranig. It is a day to day, genuine account of events from the fall of Garin to military disbandment (March 12, 1918–April 27, 1919) which Zoravar Antranig instructed his scribe Mr. Yeghishe Catchouny to write, under his direct supervision.

These memoirs of the Commander, apart from their high historical value, unveil the epic episodes that the Armenian Special Striking Unit has forged with courage, which (the courage) is the unfading glory of the Armenian soldier, imbued with the notion of motherland.

A member of the Armenian National Ramgavar Party's Chicago chapter, Mr. Samvel Donecian—who, thanks to the innate ability needed of a man in his field of work has become a fortune builder, bringing credit to his People—once again, as on other occasions, comes to express his deep admiration for the great national hero Zoravar Antranig, by donating approximately \$1000 for the publication of this volume.

We considered it fitting to attach photocopies of a number of historical documents to the end of this book, as well as the “Antranig Speaks” series of articles, which was published in “Abaka” and is in a way an additional part of this historical piece of work.

AZG Editorial
September 1, 1921, Boston, Massachusetts

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON SECOND EDITION

Yeghishe Catchouny 1975

Antranig was not only the most conspicuous, heroic and legendary face of Shabin Karahisar, but also that of the entire Armenian nation. In a way he was our modern day Sasoontsi Davit, whose name terrified the enemy for more than half a century.

The Armenian people, with its unmistakable instinct, gave him the highest honor by recognizing his indisputable greatness, and praised him in poems and song more than once, as in, "As an Eagle," "A Hero Roared," "Dashnagsakan Group," and so on, even during his life.

Due to circumstances, he was both the most castigated, accused, and also beloved, respected, glorified and blessed individual, and remained, in spite of all this, firm and unshaken on his pedestal.

He had two powerful and fundamental passions: unconditional hatred towards the enemies of our nation, and a deep love towards our people, particularly the underprivileged. He was always fair and daring, reaching mythical proportions. His ability to wage battles and choose battle positions came close to prophecy. He always spared his soldiers and carried out great deeds, with few losses.

As a person he was selfless, honest, and just. He had a wonderful memory and the gift of storytelling.

The author of this book, who for a period was his comrade and secretary, has been fortunate enough to keep a diary. Using pages of this very diary we outline the Zoravar's

activities during those fateful days, as genuinely and accurately as possible.

The Zoravar had great passions and great abilities. He also had comrades-in-arms, more like followers, who remained under his strict control—disciplined and obedient to him. Moreover, they remained connected to him. Everyone felt safe under his leadership, especially during times of battle. His mercy and fair-mindedness inspired respect towards him, even in our enemies.

In other words, he was the best of the best in a self-sacrificing and dedicated generation of the best; the bravest in a generation of brave men.

The Armenian people, with its unmistakable instinct, assigned the title BRAVE (Kach) to the name of its brave son: "KACH Antranig."

We dedicate this volume to his everlasting memory.

This publication is, insofar as is possible, the completion of the book "Diary of the Armenian Special Striking Division," published in the "AZG" print house in 1921 in Boston. Given that the national and international situation at the time was extremely fragile, sensitive and uncertain it was neither possible nor convenient to present all the events, especially individuals, as they actually were.

That part of the book covers only the unwavering faith and unshakable will of the Division and especially of Zoravar Antranig during the darkest period in our national history, which was ignited by the idea of national freedom, and the unquestionable support of the people in reaching that goal.

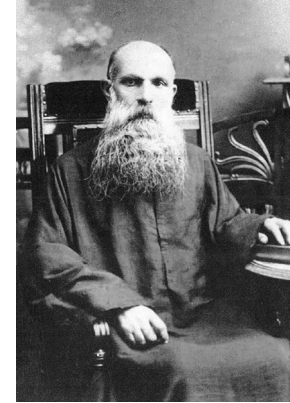
The second part of the book shows the vigor and national dedication of the hero who lived far from his homeland, the efforts he made for the welfare of the Armenian people and the restoration of the Homeland, and his voluntary recruitment, this time to the cause of helping orphans, the helpless and the needy.

On the joyous occasion of the publication of this book, I would like to express our deep gratitude to the PICTORIAL POWERS CONWAY photo engraving company who willingly prepared all the photos and maps included in the book—conscientiously and free of charge.

Thank you also to the well-known and respected writer, Mr. Aram Haigaz, who patiently and painstakingly carried out the copying and editing work of the handwritten manuscript, as well as to Iris Papazian for the arduous task of printing it.

Special thanks to Dikran Sarajian, whose material and moral support made the publication of this book possible; and to all those who in any way contributed to the success of this endeavor.

Yeghishe Catchouny
1975, New Jersey



This work is dedicated to my father,
Der Husig Kahana Catchouny, who suffered and
died in the death march in the deserts of Der Zor
without a tomb to mark his grave.

Yeghishe Catchouny

THE ARMENIAN SPECIAL STRIKING DIVISION

The Diary of Yeghishe Catchouny

Throughout the entire duration of the World War there has never been an Armenian division in more unique circumstances; no other division has had a more significant function than the Armenian Special Striking Division. All military forces have been linked, more or less, to a larger mass, a State, and therefore have not had the “purely national-political nature and significance” that the “Special Striking Division” has had. Others have been a part of, or backed by, a larger Front, a State.

Unfortunately, present conditions, both internal and external, do not allow for the whole truth to be told. Much caution and discretion are still needed. There are still many possibilities; therefore, for the time being we must be content with presenting the events that happened to the Division in a general manner.

Following the fateful fall of Garin/Erzurum on March 12, 1918 (Gregorian calendar) when the whole of Turkish-Armenia was occupied by Turkish troops, the issue of defending Turkish-Armenian lands ceased to exist for a brief period of time. Consequently, the Armenian

Yergrabah¹ Division, which was created for that very purpose and whose commander was Zoravar Antranig, was disbanded.

These were difficult times for the Armenians. Encouraged by their effortless success in Garin, the Turks were exhibiting insatiable appetites. On the other hand, local Caucasian Tatars² were trying both to facilitate the entry of Turks into the Caucasus by all means, and to impede the organization of Armenian resistances.

The prospect of a Caucasus invasion by barbaric Turkish hordes terrified all those who had witnessed the latter's savage instincts unleashed. The atmosphere in the Caucasus was becoming increasingly hostile particularly for Turkish-Armenians.

The Turks had already invaded the whole of Turkish-Armenia and Sarighamish, where refugees and the Armenian population of those areas alike were scattered all about—defenseless and neglected. The shortage of provisions had become unbearable in the Caucasus for well over a year. People waited in the streets for hours, over many nights to be able to obtain half a pound of bread, sugar, fuel, etc. Thus, in these circumstances, even in the absence of a new Turkish advance, hunger, exposure and disease would have inevitably killed the refugees.

On the other hand, there was exciting news regarding the English advance in the direction of Revanduz³ and the state of refugees in that region. Van had not yet

1 Yergrabah: Defender, keeper of the homeland.

2 Present-day Azeris.

3 Revanduz: a city in Iraq.

been captured by the Turks, and therefore encounters with English forces at Yerevan–Nakhijevan–Khoy–Urmia–Revanduz–Musul–Baghdad would have been the only, and likely, salvation for both the Turkish-Armenian military forces and the refugees.

The initial reason for forming the Armenian Special Striking Division was to be just that; making contact with the English forces in the south. However, later on, concern for the self-defense of the Caucasus became critical and it was decided that the Striking Division would remain within the borders of the Caucasus.

At the same time, there was a conviction within Armenian leadership circles that following the capture of Kars, Batum and Ardahan, the Turks, in accordance with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, would remain near Arpa-Chay⁴ and make no further advances.

It was under these circumstances that on April 10, 1918, in Alexandropol, 1400 Turkish-Armenian volunteers were selected to form the Armenian Special Striking Division, under the command of Zoravar-Major Antranig.

From a military viewpoint, the Division was to be under the orders of the commander of the Armenian Corps, General Nazarbekov⁵.

According to the Corps Command, the Division was to control Alexandropol-Ardahan-Lori stretch, as border guards.

4 Arpa-Chay: Turkish name for the Akhuryan River.

5 Tovmas Nazarbekov was an Armenian General in the Russian Caucasus Army, later promoted to Commander-in-Chief of the First Republic of Armenia. He was the top general in the Armenian Corps Command.

However, as expected by many, the Turks, not honoring any agreement, started to bomb Alexandropol and simultaneously cross the Arpa-Chay.

Following the ill-fated fall of Gharakilise⁶ the Armenian National Council was obliged to sign a peace treaty with the Turks, at all costs.

From that day on, the Armenian Special Striking Division ceased to associate with the Armenian Republic and acted completely independently, beyond its borders, based only on their commander's unshakable faith in the ultimate Victory, his will, the selflessness and bravery of the soldiers, and the Armenian people's spirit of sacrifice and freedom.

And, following the fall of Baku, that Division, perched on the Zangezur Mountains, formed the only and ultimate enduring Front of the many Fronts that the Armenian people built in the Caucasus through their faith and blood, and remained invincible, victorious.

⁶ Gharakilise: Subsequently Kirovakan, present-day city of Vanadzor.



WITH THE ARMENIAN SPECIAL STRIKING DIVISION

A daily record of General Antranig and the Special Striking Division, recorded in the diary of Yeghisbe Catchbouny April 10, 1918-April 27, 1919.

April 10: The Armenian Special Striking Division has already been formed. Antranig himself has selected the volunteers of that division, consisting of Turkish-Armenians. They are from all over. There are those who have been in Yerznnga with Murad¹; there are those who have been in the retreat from Erzurum; there are those who are newly recruited, and those who have just arrived from the Northern Caucasus or the Russian coast of the Black Sea.

The Division has camped in one of the barracks of Alexandropol, has two cannons and quite a large quantity of machine guns and bullets brought from Erzurum, all from the warehouses of the Armenian Yergrabah Division.

¹ Murad (Khrimian, 1874-1918): Armenian freedom fighter, known as Sepastatsi Murad. He participated actively in the second uprising of Sasoon (1904) and the Armeno-Tatar conflict (1905-1907). During the Armenian Genocide he was instrumental in the rescue of hundreds of Armenian orphans imprisoned by the Turks. He fought in the defense of the Armenian population of Baku (1918) where he was killed.

The situation is uncertain. It is true that in accordance with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty the Turks already have Batum, Ardahan and Kars, and therefore many optimists hope that respecting that Treaty, the Turks would not try to cross Arpa-Chay. But the instinct of the Armenian people and the majority of the leaders were skeptical of the Turks' promise. Vehib Pasha² had announced that the Turks will halt their advance only when they encounter the Russian Army.

From the beginning of the struggle, Georgia had shown a two-faced, even pro-Turkish attitude. There was absolutely no doubt about the Caucasian Tatars; they had already joined the Turks and would actively continue assisting them to occupy the Caucasus.

Nobody believed in the stabilization of the situation. The high road from Alexandropol to Gharakilise was full of refugees from the regions of Erzurum, Bassen, Sarighamish and Kars with carts, animals and children, and in the train stations there was congestion, disorder and abandonment.

It was decided that the Striking Division would maintain the expansive Alexandropol-Akhalkalak high road, the protection of which however required more than tenfold the number of soldiers Zoravar Antranig had. In such a volatile region it was difficult to determine the role of the Division—border guard or fighter—since fighting was possible at any moment. In that case, it would have been very unwise to disperse soldiers along that vast expanse.

² Mehmed Vehib Pasha (Paşa) 1877–1940, General in the Ottoman Army, Commander of the Caucasus front.

Almost half of the Division were horsemen, and the other half, foot soldiers. There were also the artillery, machine-gun and transportation divisions, as separate units.

April 11: The Division must move. Before midday, an organized, ceremonial military parade of all the units took place in Alexandropol. Under the leadership of Zoravar Antranig, the entire Division encircled the Square and streets of Alexandropol in orderly rows, with flags and music. There the Commander of the Armenian Corps, General (Tovmas) Nazarbekov gave a speech. The Division reached the fortress and, after each unit had received its separate orders, moved forward to hold its position on the banks of the Arpa-Chay, on the new border.

Only a black line of horsemen and infantry is visible along the length of the high road. The villages in the region are not very large; therefore, different divisions will stay overnight in different villages or in the fields. The cannons are still in Alexandropol.

The Zoravar will spend the night in the Armenian village of Boz³.

April 12: The Division began to move forward in the morning to further spread its flanks. The bank of Arpa-Chay is a normal high road for the horseman, infantryman and cart. Further to the left are the heights. In a while we will pass by the half ruined Armenian village of Toros, by the side of the mountain. Some of the villagers have left the village, fearing the proximity to the Turks.

³ Present-day village of Musayelian.

April 13: The middle of the Division reaches the ruined Armenian village of Dyuz Kharaba⁴, built at the foot of a large rock face.

April 14: The Division is formed hastily. Many commanders are still unfamiliar with the abilities and skills of their units. Next to an experienced soldier is a new conscript; therefore, the need for training is obvious. With its open fields, Dyuz Kharaba's position is convenient for all the units of the Division to undergo training. The probability of a battle is more than likely; so, every opportunity must be utilized. Consequently, the Zoravar made the cavalry, infantry and machine-gun units train today.

The cannons that were left in Alexandropol under the leadership of Commander of the Artillery, Colonel Jaque Jamgochov, arrived today.

The training was barely over when news arrived that the Turks have attacked a caravan of Armenian refugees and are robbing and killing them, this side of the border, near Ghazanchi.

Immediately two hundred horsemen, an infantry company and a machine-gun regiment were sent. After resisting a little, the Turks fled, pursued by the horsemen.

The perpetrators of the incident were Turkish officers and soldiers who, organizing Aghbaba's Turkish mob, crossed the determined border and attacked the Armenian refugee caravan, robbing and killing the better part of them.

The pursuit of the looting, butchering Turks by the Armenian horsemen had given the Turkish commander an

4 Present-day village of Hartashen.

opportunity to complain to Zoravar Nazarbekov, alleging that the Armenians had crossed the demarcation line. This reprimand was factually answered by asserting that the Turks were the first to cross that line.

Following this incident, it was ordered that Battalion A hold the Shishtepe⁵-Ghazanchi-Ghzhkilise⁶ stretch, under the command of Captain Pantukhd⁷, while Battalion B under the leadership of Smbat, hold the Front in the direction of Dyuz Kharaba, Toros and Boz villages. The Division's center moved to the Armenian village of Chiftelu⁸.

April 15: On the Front, the Division communicates by telephone with Alexandropol where the commander of the Corps is located. In the morning, the order came from the Corps Command, "The Turks have attacked Alexandropol. Strike from the side." At the same time the sound of cannons could be heard in the direction of Alexandropol.

So it was clear. The Turkish insidious politics were repeating its principle of deceit at Alexandropol, as it had at Sarighamish and Kars.

Three hours later the sounds of cannons coming from the direction of Alexandropol went silent. There were no further telephone communications. We were deprived of communicating with Alexandropol; Alexandropol had fallen.

5 Present-day village of Sebasar.

6 Present-day villages of Gharipchanian and Azadan.

7 Michael Seryan was a Hnchakyan figure. Commander of the Mush detachment, in the battle of Sardarapat. Died of poisoning in Sarighamish, 1920.

8 Present-day village of Zuykaghpyur.

However, no one has reliable information, therefore all positions were ordered to be at the ready.

In the morning, clashes began on the left flank, with Battalion B, in the direction of Chzkhlar⁹ heights. It was the Turkish regular army with cannons and machine guns. Fighting was fierce and yet the Armenian side was not using cannons. Cannonballs were scarce and there was no hope of obtaining new ones.

Resistance lasted until evening. The absence of information from Alexandropol, the attack of the Turkish regular army, and the silence of cannons in the direction of Alexandropol, were proof that Alexandropol was lost.

In that case, what was the Division to do? To the right was the Turkish, Akhalkalak region of the Aghbaba¹⁰ Turks; to the rear, the savage Borchalu¹¹ Turks; to the left, the railway line which, following the fall of Alexandropol will soon be under Turkish control. So it was necessary to approach the line to get in touch with the Corps Command.

As a result of the Turkish advance, the Armenian population of that region would also migrate, so the Division had to strive to secure its exodus.

For these reasons, in order to narrow the front of the division, Antranig decided to pull Battalion A back from Ghazanji-Shishtepe, concentrate on the suitable heights of Gyulyu Bulagh¹², and resist until the migrants depart, and news comes about the situation.

⁹ Present-day village of Tsoghamark.

¹⁰ Present-day region of Amasia and Ashotsk.

¹¹ Present-day Marneuli, Georgia.

¹² Present-day village of Vartaghbyur.

April 16: Fighting is fierce today on Gyulyu Bulagh. The enemy scales the mountains in regular rows and advances through canyons. It is overwhelmingly dominant in numbers and taking advantage of this fact, attempts to surround Armenian fighters from the left side. Nevertheless, fighting lasts until nighttime.

April 17: The majority of the Division is concentrated in Boz Yeokush, where the resistance is to continue. The Zoravar himself went to the positions. The enemy infantrymen could be seen clearly moving up from the canyon in regular, multiple rows attempting to lay siege from afar, while other forces in the front-line awaited orders to attack.

Today's fight is the most ferocious. On the other side, refugees have taken up the entire high road and are moving towards Lori, Jalal Oghlu¹³, not knowing where their last stop will be.

To go to Jalal Oghlu it is necessary to climb to the *yayla*,¹⁴ the Lori Mountains which are still covered in snow. Before reaching the snow, the path is unbearably muddy and upon reaching the snow, there is no path. These are the conditions in which both refugees and the Division must climb the trail, while on the other side, the Division's large forces continue showing resistance on Boz Yeokush, until the refugees depart, until nighttime.

Part of the population of this region, hoping to stay by winning over the hearts of the Turks, did not migrate,

¹³ Present-day Stepanavan.

¹⁴ High mountain pasture for summer grazing

paid large sums to them and surrendered. However later, survivors recounted that the Turks had not spared anyone.

Hereafter the journey continued towards the *yaylas*, towards Lori, one of the most beautiful regions of Armenia with wonderful valleys, trails, forests, waters.

May 3: The refugee convoy has moved far ahead towards Jalal Oghlu. Suddenly news came that the Turkish village of Karahisar, located on the road, has attacked the refugees—looting and killing them. Hastily we descend to the field and soon reach Karahisar. Although the villagers resist, in barely two hours the village is occupied, and the chain of refugees once again begins to move.

News was sent to Battalion B: withdraw to the *yayla*.

In this manner, refugees and the Division alike fell back following three days of unequal fighting (April 15, 16, 17) and cut off from the outside world.

May 4: Today the local Turks attempted to attack. They were pushed back in an easy battle.

Descending from the *yayla* toward the field, the road to Jalal Oghlu is by way of the field, through the Molokan¹⁵ village of Vorontsovka¹⁶. This road, however, is very long and not exempt from sudden dangers. Therefore, to save time, the Molokans showed us a shorter way to get to Jalal

15 Molokans: Russian religious sect founded in the eighteenth century. The name is related to the "spiritual milk" (Russian slovesnoye moloko) of the bible, since they believe that the only true source of Christian teaching are the Old and New Testament, rejecting the presence of priests and churches. As religious dissenters from the Russian Orthodox Church they were persecuted and sent into the Transcaucasia region in 1820, where many ended up in Armenia and live there to this day.

16 Later Kalinino, present-day city of Tashir.

Oghlu, the way by the *zavods*¹⁷. So, the Division once again started to ascend towards the *yayla*, to the *zavods*. The mud is terrible, especially for the pack animals.

That *yayla*, the *zavods* have a unique beauty: completely green, beautiful mountains on all four sides, as if the whole prosperity and beauty of the Lori region is concentrated there.

The Division remained there. Commander Antranig went ahead to Jalal Oghlu to make necessary arrangements.

Jalal Oghlu is the most beautiful, rich and developed capital city of Lori. Almost half the population, are Russians, Russian colonizers, who came here by the agency of the former Russian government. The other half are Armenians. The village is situated in a beautiful valley, close to a canyon, with an abundance of water.

Arriving there Zoravar Antranig received a heartfelt welcome from the Armenian and Russian people. With a deeply sincere appreciation for one another, these two elements, had united and strived to organize and defend their existence against the destructive Turkish forces, both local and foreign.

Antranig spoke, encouraging and giving hope to the armed forces organized by the people.

Upon reaching Jalal Oghlu, Zoravar Antranig held a consultation with the local armed forces. Representatives of the Molokans of Vorontsovka village were also present at the meeting. Surprisingly, there were different attitudes

17 Russian: Factory.

amongst the Molokans regarding the stance to take towards the Turks. Some wanted their arrival, almost to the degree of being pro-Turkish, while others, on the contrary, were vehemently opposed to their coming.

At the meeting the villagers decided to resist by all means. There were cannons from the Russian period at Vorontsovka village that would be useful in the self-defense efforts. Therefore, the meeting decided to demand that the representatives of Vorontsovka hand over the cannons to the military, and since there were many instances when Molokans had sold cannons to the Turks, the village representatives were kept as hostages in anticipation of the cannons.

Indeed, before the cannons were delivered, as mentioned, the Turks had taken possession of Vorontsovka and seized the cannons, perhaps even bought them.

The Division concentrated in Jalal Oghlu and started setting up positions.

From Jalal Oghlu it had been possible to re-establish telephone communications with the Corps leadership, which is currently located in Medz Gharakilise. The general commissar of the Front, Manas Manasian is also there.

The Front commissar announces that Alexandropol is already handed over.

For the last time the Corps leadership announces that large numbers of enemy forces are advancing on the right flank towards Gharakilise, and that they are forced to leave Gharakilise, that this is their last message, hence they

are also leaving Gharakilise and are going to Dilijan without a fight.

At the same time news arrives that Turkish intelligence groups are visible and have drawn near to Jalal Oghlu.

The Zoravar himself immediately rushes to meet them with the headquarters' cavalry company, ordering both the Division and the local forces to hold their positions. Battalions A and B of the Division hold a big front to the right of the canyon while local forces hold the left. The cannons are located in the city.

The enemy is numerous. All the mountains are covered. They can already be seen. They make expansive moves. When the Armenian horsemen appear, they pull back, while their hidden forces suddenly open fire on the Armenian horsemen, who fortunately retreat without losses.

Fighting on that Front lasts two full days. There is no news from the Corps headquarters. One of the region's Molokan villages protests against the Armenian army going through their village to strike the Turks. On the other side, there is no news about the Corps leadership. A taut situation will be created if the railroad passes into the hands of the Turks, a circumstance that is inevitable with the fall of Gharakilise.

And really, if the Gharakilise-Tiflis stretch ever passes into the hands of the Turks, in that case the Division, the local population and the refugees will be completely surrounded, because Turks are in all directions: a Turkish circle.

Therefore, the danger of being cut off and separated forces the Division and the people to leave Jalal Oghlu and get on to the railroad.

Following two days of persistent fighting Jalal Oghlu too was vacated. The population migrated southward, towards Dsegh, Dilijan, right up to Yerevan.

The Division left Jalal Oghlu and retreated to the railroad. That year seemed to be exceptionally rainy. There is constant rain and mud everywhere, especially in the mountains of Lori, causing difficulties for the army and the people.

Beyond Jalal Oghlu, a Molokan village¹⁸ appears, a clean and hospitable village. Even before reaching the village the public commissar and the people welcome the Zoravar with bread and salt. It is a pretty village, on the riverbank near a honey-abundant mountain.

Then comes the Armenian village of Vartablur (May 17-18). In this area there are stores of ammunition and clothing existing from older times that might soon fall into the hands of the Turks. Therefore, by opening those stores the army acquired clothing, ammunition and food.

May 18: The Division leaves from Vartablur to go to Dsegh, another beautiful village in Lori, where the region's folk writer Hovhannes Tumanian was born. Tremendous heights must be traversed and negotiated; all are muddy, steep and never-ending. So much difficulty for the horses and especially for the cannons. The rain is always unending.

18 The villages of Russian-Molokans in the area of Tashir and Stepanavan and Amrakits (Kirovo, Nikolayevka, Novo-Nikolayevka), Blagodarnoye (Kirilovka), Medovka, Kruglaya Shishka

We reach Dsegh. Mr. H. Tumanian is there. The people are in a good disposition and have decided to fight. But there are those who want to surrender. There are even villages in the region that are willing to take on everything, just so there is no fighting.

The railroad is not yet in the hands of the Turks, but it is expected that they will come at any time, seize the railroad and move on to Tiflis.

In order to hinder this progress by the Turks, Antranig attempts to blast the big bridge of Kolagiran¹⁹. The attempt fails due to a shortage of technical powers.

From Dsegh it is possible to get into contact with the Corps leadership by a messenger. The Zoravar is informed that "although they abandoned Gharakilise mistakenly, five days later upon returning to Gharakilise from Dilijan, they saw that the Turks have not captured the city and consequently it is now in Armenian hands."

But those days, May 18 to 22, were fateful black days for Armenians. Incomparably new and numerous Turkish forces were concentrated against the yet unorganized Armenian forces. The battle was fought fiercely and frantically on the two Fronts of Sardarapat and Gharakilise. It was one of the most critical moments for the Armenians, from all perspectives. And there was no scarcity of people who wanted to traverse to Tiflis, to go far away, and be free of the fire that was threatening to burn all Armenians.

The 22nd was the mournful day of the fall of Gharakilise. On that day many soldiers, defeated, leaving

19 Present-day Antaramut, a village in the Vanadzor region.

the Corps, which was headed for Dilijan, hastened to Tiflis in hopes of salvation. However, in between Gharakilise—to be more precise Sanahin—and Tiflis, is the Turkish region of Borchalu, a region of brigands, who had repeatedly cut off the railroad to prevent the delivery of military forces to the Front and had massacred and looted numerous convoys.²⁰

That day Zoravar Antranig's guards captured numerous Armenian soldiers who were attempting to desert and cross over to Tiflis instead of remaining in their post under the Corps' military commander. Antranig's words persuading them not to go to Tiflis were in vain. The promise that they gave, not to go to Tiflis, but to stay with Antranig and the Corps, was not reliable either. Next morning, they were already headed for Tiflis.

Perhaps very few of those groups would have survived. It is certain that almost all have fallen into the hands of the barbaric Turks of Borchalu, and been ruthlessly slaughtered.

Those deserters described that Gharakilise has fallen, that the commander of the Corps Nazarbekov and consequently, the Corps, had retreated in the direction of Dilijan. So, the Turks would follow him towards Dilijan, at the same time capturing the railroad to Tiflis. The stance of the villagers was also gradually becoming unstable; they wanted to surrender to the Germans whose representatives, they had heard, were nearby.

20 There were 4 Russian officers, 35 Armenian Officers and 500–600 soldiers that were slaughtered by the hands of the Tatars of Borchalu. It was heard that General Korganoff had been there but had not been killed.

The Division left Dsegh, and in that uneven, muddy terrain started in the direction of Dilijan with a bitter heart, under the rain and hail. Once again having communications with the Corps was the most important motive in moving towards Dilijan because, if the Division did not move towards Dilijan, should the Turks seize the Gharakilise-Dilijan-Elenovka²¹ high road, the Division would be surrounded.

The inconveniences of the road, the terrain slowed down the movements of the Division extremely. It was necessary to pass the night of May 25 in the mountains, under the rain and cold wind, in the vast crowds of refugees.

May 26: We descend the mountains of Lori, head towards Dilijan. We come upon Boghos Kilise²².

The fall of Gharakilise has had a decisive influence on the stance of the people. Many villages had received Turkish armies with a white flag. Some villages on this side had also had such a stance.

It is clear that those who are not familiar with the Turks have this kind of conduct. Neither their voluntary surrender, nor the money and various gifts they gave helped survive the unrestrained Turkish army and mob. For Antranig and all those who knew the psychology of the Turks well, such conduct was beyond treason.

Mythical stories could be heard about Gharakilise and the course of the fighting. In Boghos Kilise news came

21 Present-day city of Sevan.

22 Turkish: kilise, church.

that the Turks had already captured Dilijan. This news was cause to make haste, to reach Dilijan as soon as possible, to get acquainted with the situation and do whatever was possible.

Shortly thereafter the road coming from Boghos Kilise unites with the Gharakilise-Dilijan high road. Upon reaching the high road, Antranig immediately headed for Gharakilise.

It was confirmed that the Turks were not yet advanced in that direction, so the horsemen set off and seized (May 28) the final point that had not yet passed into the hands of the Turks, that is, the village of Nikitin²³, from which the Turks were only four miles away.

Immediately positions were held and defensive measures taken.

A great number of guns were left in individual houses. It had been impossible to get many cannons to Dilijan due to the mud and the absence of pack animals. Many cannons, many machine guns were left in the mud. Even in Dilijan, many storehouses, even those of the orphanages, were looted; there was no functioning government. Zoravar Nazarbekov had gone to Yerevan to meet with the National Council there, to decide what to do. Refugees were spread out on the Dilijan-Elenovka-Yerevan high road, presenting a pitiful situation.

Zoravar Antranig immediately reported by telegraph his Division's arrival in Dilijan and his arrangements for defending it. The Commander of the Corps, General

²³ A Molokan village, later Fioletovo.

Nazarbekov expressed his delight and gratitude to this message, and instructed Antranig to hold Dilijan by all means, to which Antranig's response was that he intended to defend Dilijan until the last man standing and the last bullet.

Such was the situation, when on the 28th a white flag bearing representatives from the Turkish line approached the Armenian lines in an automobile. The delegates had brought a letter from the leadership of the Turkish Division, Vehib Pasha, addressed to the Commander of the Armenian Corps.

By way of this letter the Turks were negotiating with the leadership of the Armenian Division about the demarcation line, until peace negotiations ended.

Two days later, on May 30, once again the Turkish negotiators appeared, bringing with them a letter addressed to the Corps' Command of the Armenian Division holding Dilijan (without knowing that it was Antranig who was there) with which they declared that a peace treaty has been signed between the Armenian and Turkish governments, therefore military operations have stopped on both side.

Attached to the letter was a copy of the terms of peace treaty in Turkish and Russian languages.

The key points of those conditions were:

1: The borders of Armenia. A very small Armenia (Gharakilise, Aragats, Daralakyaz²⁴, Lake Sevan).

²⁴ Present-day Vayots Dzor.



2: Turks control the right to use all the railroads, high roads and public roads of Armenia.

3: Armenia must have an army of only 12-16,000 with limited ammunition and must be stationed in places pinpointed by the Turkish government.

Upon learning of these terms, Zoravar Antranig found them irreconcilable with his character, his convictions, and adverse to the Nation and the Allies. How, when he was armed standing, was he to allow the enemy to pass right by him and go to Baku or Persia, to attack an Armenian force or that of an ally? How to trust the word of the Turks, to surrender and give up all roads, when the traitorous tactics of Sarighamish, Kars and Alexandropol are familiar? How to agree when it is clear as day that the real goal of the Turk is to annihilate the Armenian people?

Considering all this, outraged because of his high, pure patriotic sentiments, Zoravar Antranig sent a telegraph to the leadership of the Corps saying. "WITH THESE PEACE CONDITIONS, YOU YOURSELVES HAVE CHAINED YOUR HANDS AND FEET WITH THE CENTURIES-OLD SHACKLES OF SLAVERY. SEND FORCES IN THREE DAYS TO HOLD THE POSITIONS."

Those three days were days of explanatory telegrams and new rifts between the Division and the Corps' Command.

By the third day, the soldiers of *Vanski Bolk*²⁵ and other military units gradually replaced the positions held by the Armenian Special Striking Division.

25 Russian Ванский полк, Van regiment.

Before making his final decision, Zoravar Antranig wanted to take the Division inside the country to Elenovka, on the shores of Lake Sevan.

June 1-2: The entire Division is concentrated in Dilijan. For the last time the soldiers bid their farewells to ravishing Lori, to the beautiful forests of Dilijan and moved towards Chibukhlu²⁶ on the shore of Lake Sevan.

The road is potholed, the mud abundant. However, the view of the lake is enchanting, especially for those who have read “Ancient Gods”²⁷ (Hin Asdvadzner). Lake Sevan, the island, the monastery, the monk and his thoughts, all these come to dominate the human spiritual world, by making him forget all the hardships of life, even in such critical moments.

June 3: The road runs by the lake shore. On the right side the undulating peaks of the mountains of Dilijan and Hamamlu²⁸ can still be seen. On the left side are the lake and its island, with its picturesque monastery, at the back the mountains of Basar Kecher²⁹ and Sh., and up ahead, Elenovka.

June 4–5–6: The rain-drenched, muddy soldiers finally reach Elenovka.

Elenovka is a Molokan Russian village on the Dilijan-Yerevan high road. It is built in the Russian style and has white, low buildings and wide roads. The village, in the

²⁶ Present-day Tsovaguygh.

²⁷ The title of a work by Levon Shant, the events of which take place around Lake Sevan and its island

²⁸ Present-day city of Spitak.

²⁹ Present-day city of Vardenis.

northwest corner of Lake Sevan, is beautiful and the richest in the region. The residents have already left—in part to Russia, in part to other places. There was a time when there were many refugees in the village, but with the advance of the Turks to Dilijan the flow of refugees moved towards Akhta³⁰-Yerevan. Consequently, the village is now almost empty. The Division will wait here until it recuperates a little, and it is decided what should be done. What can be done?

June 6: The air is gloomy and rainy, humidity is unfailing, because we are on the lakeshore. There is hard, sticky mud on the ground. Nevertheless, there is excitement amongst the soldiers. The plan to cross from Persia to Baghdad to reach the English is gradually being confirmed amongst the soldiers and commanders.

Midday, Zoravar Antranig gathered all the horsemen and foot soldiers, spoke about the situation of the day, the state of affairs, the terms of the peace treaty and finally his plan.

He declared that from the onset of the war, Armenia had unconditionally expressed its sympathy for the Allies’ cause—financially, morally and physically. The Allies will eventually win the cause. He revealed the unsatisfactory circumstances of the peace treaty’s conditions and their adverse, dangerous consequences. He presented his plan to cross through Persia to Mesopotamia—to join the English forces and continue the fight there.

Then he announced that whoever wishes can follow him or leave the Division.

³⁰ Present-day city of Hrazdan.

Although there was sure to be adventure and danger, the disposition of the soldiers was no longer dictated by anything other than what was required of the calling and concept of the Armenian volunteer fighter.

June 7: Today two representatives of Zoravar Antranig—Ardash Khan Shahriartsian and Yeghishe Catchouny—leave for Yerevan, to inform the Catholicos and the Yerevan body of the Security Council of the Division's decision to remain firm in defending the national cause, to invite Turkish-Armenian military forces to join the Division and to receive financial assistance.

In addition, the representatives were to explain the reciprocal attitude and attempt to reconcile misunderstandings between the Corps and the Division.

Shortly thereafter, the Division moved forward. The road is next to the seashore and runs in a zigzag fashion. On the left-hand side is the clear Lake Sevan with its delicious Ishkhan fish and historical island, while on the right side, rocky hills. Further on, the mountains of Aghircha and Armaghan are still covered in snow.

On the way we come across ruined Turkish villages, partially sheltering refugees.

In the evening we reach Aghchipir where we will spend the night.

Here, Bishop Mesrob³¹ and Karekin Yenkibarian visited the Zoravar, on behalf of the Armenian National

31 Bishop Mesrob (Der Movsian, 1865-1939): Ecclesiastic and Armenian Studies scholar. Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Georgia (1913-1916), where he participated in the formation of the Armenian volunteer battalions.

Council, with new propositions; that is, to ask Georgia for a new passage for Antranig and the Division, so that the Turkish-Armenian refugees relocate to the Northern Caucasus. This was an impractical suggestion, because getting Georgia to agree was problematic and secondly, before getting to Georgia it was necessary to go through the savage Turkish region of Borchalu.

June 8: The Division, moving from Aghchibir comes to Nor Bayazid,³² to the center of the province, a little inland from the lake. In order to avoid crowding the Division spreads out to the nearby villages, where they are greeted with Armenian hospitality. Here, in agreement with the Yerevan Government, Zoravar Antranig obtains one mountain cannon, making the total number of cannons in the Division just three.

June 9, Sunday: The representatives, Ardash Khan and Yeghishe Catchouny, who had gone to Yerevan and Echmiadzin, return.

In the afternoon a dinner was laid on by the city, in honor of the National Hero.

June 10: The Division leaves Nor Bayazid with the heartfelt farewell of the people. We advance towards Nerkin Gharanlugh³³ always on the road along the lakeshore. Being that it's late a part of the Division reaches Nerkin Gharanlugh, while the other part remains near Adiaman³⁴ on the lakeshore.

32 Later Kamo, Present-day city of Kavar.

33 Present-day town of Martuni near Lake Sevan.

34 Present-day village of Verin Getashen.

June 11: The entire Division is concentrated in Nerkin Gharanlugh a little way away from the lake. At the same time as resting, instructions are given for the transportation of supplies and ammunition for the Division.

June 12: We leave early. We have quite a long way to go today. We must reach an Armenian village by the evening.

The Division's plan of going towards Persia and then to Mesopotamia has already spread among the people. Everybody wants to come. The difficulty is for those who have families. The presence of new soldiers, mostly unarmed, is noticeable. The numbers in the Division grow gradually, and a huge number of refugees and families follow the army.

The road gradually ascends. In order to get to Daralakyaz we must scale the heights. We come upon a small Armenian village—Verin Gharanlugh³⁵. The road once again ascends from Verin Gharanlugh. Here and there on the mountain plain, the Turkish villages of Medz Medineh³⁶, Pokr Medineh, the village of Ahmed Agha, Karvansara, etc., can be seen, endowed with the most beautiful position and nature; all of them empty. The Shushenski³⁷ and Gantsagski³⁸ regiments have passed along that road before us, towards Daralakyaz. Thereafter, the Turks have left their villages in that area.

³⁵ Present-day village of Geghahovit.

³⁶ Present day village of Madina.

³⁷ Russian Шушинский, of Shushi.

³⁸ Russian Гандзакский, of Gantsag

The road zigzags upwards by the side of a green hill. Clear waters flow into the mountain plain, and from the highest mountain plain to the southwest above the dry, high peaks of Daralakyaz, the white summit of Big Masis is visible. Towards the southeast the black mountains of Daralakyaz are visible, further away the still-white summits of the mountain range marking the borders of the provinces of Daralakayz and Jivanshir.

From here on the road takes a sharp descent. There is the zigzag high road, but as it is shorter, we go down in a straight line. On the left-hand side is a deep canyon, on the right a mountain, and straight ahead the canyon of Karaglukh and Taratumb. A torrential stream flows noisily down the canyon. This is the Selim Gedig³⁹, dangerous both for its nature, as well as for being a haven for robbery.

After descending the slope, the road continues through the canyon. Sandy mountains are on both sides, sometimes also calcific, lacking vegetation. In the canyon we pass an empty Turkish village—Horus. A little later, on the right side of the canyon the Armenian village of Taratumb appears, lost in green streams and trees, and opposite it, a bit further on, the Armenian village of Karaglukh. Immediately the soldiers get billeted into the two villages to spend the night. We have already traveled a long distance and most of the infantry has not yet arrived.

It is interesting that the mountain on the right side of the canyon (Selim Gedig) is green, while the one on the left is dry and sandy. Taratumb and Karaglukh are small Armenian villages having 100-120 houses. During the

³⁹ Mountain pass of Selim, Present-day Mountain pass of Vartenyats.

Daralakyaz clashes, Karaglukh, being on the edge of the canyon and having a dominating position, has had vital significance and power.

The American missionary McDowell⁴⁰ also came and caught up with us here. He must go from Baghdad to America, because there is no other way. The roads of Baku and the Northern Caucasus are closed.

June 13: We leave the villages of Taratumb and Karaglukh. It has been decided to stay the night in Daralakyaz's Armenian village of Ghotur. The road continues through the canyon. On both sides of the canyon there are mountains with beautiful views, and in the middle the clear stream flows forcefully because the gradient is steep. Close to the end of the canyon, on both sides, there are huge and almost inaccessible cliffs that are natural fortifications.

We come across the Turkish village of Salli, which continues with its peaceful life and agriculture, because the Turks in this village showed no hostility toward the Armenians from the beginning to the end of the Daralakyaz clashes.

The Armenian village of Ghotur [present day Getap] lies at the end of the canyon, on the right-hand side of the water. It is already evening when the cavalry arrived at the village, while the majority of the infantry reached it at night.

A section of the soldiers went to the nearby village of Keshishkent [present day Eghegnadzor] and the remainder

40 American missionary Reverend Edmund Wilson McDowell, native of Altoona, PA, spent 43 years in Persia and was active in establishing village schools and churches.

stayed in Ghotur. Despite the copious rain and deep mud, the entire Division spent the night in the open air.

June 14: Today the Division must rest. The infantrymen and the horses are exhausted. Also, supplies for the journey and especially pack animals need to be brought from the villages in the area, all of which demands that we wait.

June 15: The number of refugees following the Division gradually grows, as well as those of armed and unarmed soldiers. Many refugees had brought their carts and carriages with them up to Ghotur, often hindering the orderly course of the Division.

It is not possible to go any further because it is impossible to haul those carriages uphill from Ghotur to Keshishkent. Therefore, early in the morning a huge number of carts belonging to the refugees were already abandoned on the edge of the road.

It was also impossible to take the Division's mobile kitchens, so they were left behind too.

The Division left Ghotur and Keshishkent, while Zoravar and the Commissar of the Daralakyaz region, Yapon⁴¹ looked on. From there the road turns towards the southeast and goes against the flow of the water. The elevation of Daralakyaz is quite high and the rose that flowered in Yerevan or Tiflis in May is flowering now here.

Passing the Armenian village of Ayar [present day Agarakadzor], we climb against the current of the water. In

41 Hovhannes Baronyan, an ARF representative.

the afternoon we are at the foot of the Armenian village of Malishka, which is famous for its vineyards and wine.

The population of the village greet us with a priest and a cross.

After Malishka, the road becomes bad. It is a rocky road, full of volcanic rocks and dangerous for horses. The intolerable road continues for hours until we reach the so-called Devil's Bridge that crosses to the southern part of the canyon.

The bridge has a colossal structure and appearance. The river is much lower than ground level, its course tortuous. Up to its upper part, the bridge is two solid stone walls in the water, so when anyone crossing it looks down to the water, they are terrified.

Immediately on the opposite side of the bridge, is the Turkish village of Hakhlu, with a beautiful location, in the canyon with numerous gardens. The residents had temporarily left the village upon the approach of the Division.

We stayed that night in Hakhlu under the open sky and clean air.

June 16: Early morning we leave. It is necessary to go some distance before the heat of the day kicks in, especially since there are a lot of slopes to climb. The ascent starts immediately beside the village. The incline is steep and the road narrow. The pack animals are exhausted, because their loads are heavy, and they have not had any barley. At

times it is necessary for the whole caravan to wait due to a tired or fallen animal in the front.

However, the sight is beautiful; it is a regular and proportionate line of humans and pack animals that is outlined in a zigzag manner by the newly illuminating sunrise.

A little later the road goes through country fields. In the distance, straight ahead, in high positions, the widespread and tree-clad villages of Azatek appear and on the left side, in the dry mountains of Daralakyaz, the villages of Martiros and others and the proud mountain range marking the borders of the province.

Without a long break we pass through the Armenian village of Azatek. After long and bare fields, uphill and downhill slopes, we also pass the Armenian village of Sers.

The uphill slope is seemingly unending. We have to pass probably the highest in order to reach the Armenian village of Sultanbek [present-day Bardzruni], where we will stay the night.

It is almost evening when coming down the last descent we suddenly see houses and the village. The village is built on both sides of a steep canyon. The soil is clay, and the torrential rain has made the slope extremely dangerous for both horses and men. Making matters worse—the leadership of the Division has descended on one side of the canyon, while the soldiers on the other side.

June 17: Very early in the morning the sound of the whistle of the battalion commanders and cavalry

commanders wakes everybody. All the soldiers are still sleeping; many barely arrived close to midnight; others are still wearing clothes damp from the night's rain.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to get going. Soon all the units and cavalry companies take their places on the road and the Division departs from Sultanbek.

The road is uphill. The evening rain has made the path muddier and slippery. But it is the last uphill slope. After that we will always go downwards, towards the plain. Today the elevated province of Daralakyaz (Vayots Dzor) should end and we will enter the Nakhijevan plain—more fertile and warmer. The final summits however do not open broad horizons before us yet, because there are small heights ahead. We descend and come upon the Turkish village of Shada, the residents of which have left a long time ago.

Endless canyons within which Armenian and Turkish villages are scattered. The road passes close by the Armenian village of Badamlu.

None of us is familiar with those places. They are dangerous places for small mountain forces; therefore, we have a guide with us.

We know that up ahead there is a large Turkish village—Salasuz, the position of which dominates both over the canyon and the Nakhijevan plain.

In order to avoid any clashes, news was sent to the village not to show any hostility as the Division would be moving on.

Wisely, the Turks received us, and the Division passed, with the noise of “hoorahs,” through the village, which had raised a white flag. To avoid unpleasant incidents with the soldiers and refugees in the rear, it was announced to everyone not to stop in the village and not to associate with the locals.

However, the embraces between Armenian villagers that were coming with us and the Turks neighbors of the same villages, were heart-breaking. Following their embrace, they would thank God for seeing one another again, and would condemn the conflict, noting that there was really no reason to fight on both sides.

After resting a little at the end of the village, the Division moved on and taking a bend, entered the broad, fertile plain of Nakhijevan. On the right are the mountains of the Turkish village of Jehri, on the left, the mountains of Keolani, straight ahead in the distance, the mountains of Persia, and in the center, numerous Armenian and Turkish villages with plush vegetation. But because of the heat, there is less grass in this region and we will have trouble feeding the horses.

We have already passed the only Turkish stretch—Jehri-Salasuz—in our direction. From here on up to the Persian border, is an Armenian region. This spring, in April, with a small, organized force, the brave Nakhijevan population had managed not only to defend themselves, but forced the Turks to ask for a peace treaty—even delivering the keys of their 12 cannons to the Armenians, a suggestion that the wise Armenian leaders had magnanimously rejected. Then the Armenians had fought with one cannon against the Turkish 12.

A little further on, we come across the first Armenian village, Khalkhal. After resting a while, we move further on to the Armenian villages of Khalilu, Shkh-Mahmud. In all the villages, peasants greet us with great excitement and enthusiasm, throwing flowers on the commander and the soldiers, and giving thanks for finally having seen the Armenian army.

Receptions and speeches already began from the village of Khalalu; the plenipotentiary of the National Council Ashod Melik-Moosian, military commander Yero Kharazian, and so on, and so on... the group of horsemen started to advance swiftly towards Nakhijevan together with all these travel-companions—raising a huge amount of dust in its wake.

That region of Aylabad has great amenities as a campsite, with its huge Russian barracks and horse stables. Therefore, we will not go to Nakhijevan (city) for the night but stay in Aylabad. Anyway, it is barely three versts⁴² (2 miles) from that village to the city. And the infantry and cavalry who are far behind will spend the night in the villages nearby.

There was a splendid reception in Aylabad, with a military band and all.

From Nor Bayazid on, until Nakhijevan, we have had no communication with the outside world. We know nothing of what is going on.

Upon reaching Aylabad, the first necessity is to know what is going on in the outside world. Fortunately, the

42 Верста: a Russian measure of length, about 0.66 mile.

region of Nakhijevan has a wireless telegraph station in the village of Kznud, with which it is possible to contact Yerevan and receive information from there.

The news received, however, is not favorable. According to the terms of the peace treaty, the Armenians have already handed over the railroad to the Turks. The latter are in a hurry to send troops to Persia as soon as possible, to strike the British army advancing to Baku from Mesopotamia or through Enzeli from the rear. There is already information that they have reached Shakhtakht. In fact, the Turks have sent out a call to the local Turks of Nakhijevan, encouraging and informing them that they will be in Nakhijevan in three days.

At the same time news has been received that a delegation, made up of two Turkish and one Armenian officer, has come to Nakhijevan to hand over the railroad to the Turks but that the Turks, hearing that Antranig and his Division have arrived in the area, had fled.

So the danger of the Turkish forces pursuing the Division via the railroad could become a reality. Hence Antranig arranged for the railway bridge and tunnels between Shakhtakht and Nakhijevan, as well as the tracks for a few miles, to be destroyed. To this end, a group of horsemen went into the night to carry out the operation.

At midnight 3-4 explosions were heard. The order had been carried out. The Division and the situation of the British army in Persia are temporarily secure. Although it must be said that we knew nothing certain about the British forces and positions. No one knew.

June 18-19: In Russian times, the region of Nakhijevan had military depots, both for ammunition and clothes. Following the departure of the Russians, on account of the ability of the Turks to make friends swiftly, the majority of those depots passed to the Turks and only a quarter to the Armenians. Nevertheless, ammunition and other military supplies are still abundant. The Division was in dire need of all military supplies. The majority of the soldiers did not have clothes, shoes, weapons, a water bottle, a hat, or a tent. Therefore, it was necessary to use the last remnants of the Russian depots, although one must admit that the usable things were secondary items—water bottles, leg bandages, bags and these types of unimportant items.

The Division also acquired a field cannon and ammunition here.

The issue of transporting ammunition, supplies, etc. was vital for the Division. We had very little. Up until here, we had transported things with the help of the locals with the use of their pack animals.

Thus, Zoravar Antranig decided to purchase the more than forty mules that had come from the region of Daralak yaz—paying their owners.

Close to midday, the entire Division moved forward. Soon we reached the city of Nakhijevan. Although the surroundings are beautiful orchards, the main market and the districts are eastern-style buildings—dense houses, old and dusty. From time to time, we come across buildings bombarded during the clashes, and burnt-down districts.

The Armenians, although happy to see Antranig, are at the same time sad that he is leaving. The Turks are quiet and crestfallen. It is clear they are progressively encouraged by the proximity of the Turks. The heat is suffocating, and the hospitable Nakhijevan residents feel immensely satisfied giving water to the dusty and parched Armenian soldier.

Exiting the Turkish neighborhood, we move towards the Armenian village of Yarmja. From there we continue along the road towards the Armenian village of Kznut. The weather is horrifyingly hot, there is no water, and the hot breeze dries out the body like a simoom (dust storm). There is no food for the horses.

Ahead in the distance, on one side of the plain we see Ararat on the horizon, with its majestic body, white peak, and the mountains of Maku. And on the left-hand side, in that desert of fire, rises Yelan Dagh (Mountain of Serpents), a steep, rocky mountain, like a Cyclopean monument.

In the evening we reach the village of Kznut and spend the night in the open fields.

June 20: We set out early. All the way up to Julfa, there is no grass, no greenery, so each horseman is instructed to take food for his horse.

The Division moves in the heat and dust, without water. Barely once every 3 or 4 hours do we come across a little bit of water, which is turbid. The road near Julfa begins to slope upwards. It is a rocky, unattractive road. On the right side, there are only the distant, mysterious heights of the banks of the Araz.

Suddenly however, a large—though dry—valley appears up ahead. In the middle is the river with its arched, historical bridge, and on the other side, the Persian mountain range, and the hill next to Julfa. Finally—the city, the station, the depots. Seeing the station and the depots, once so full of life under the Russian influence, and the vacant, abandoned state of them today, one reluctantly wonders about the power, the spirit that filled those deserted, unattractive territories, and feels nostalgic towards those fortunate times. Oh, what days Julfa and the Bridge of Araz have seen!

The city is in the hands of the Armenians who have a small division. There are also a few Russian officials and railroad workers who have stayed due to the roads being closed since the start of the clashes.

The military depots have been looted a number of times, therefore nothing useful can be found. There is only ammunition and a little bit of food that the Division used.

The Araz bridge is a border; it separates the Caucasus from Persia. On the two sides of the bridge there are two Julfas—the Russian and the Persian. The Russian is under the control of Armenians, and the Persian, the Turks, who have sent a group of guards there to hold the bridge. So on one side of the Julfa bridge the Armenians have guards, and on the other, the Turks have regular troops.

Crossing the Julfa bridge had become the biggest concern for Antranig. Is it protected? How many troops do the Turks have in Persian Julfa? Is it not possible to cross by some means, without a fight?

Nobody has precise information about the Turkish troops. According to the information given by the Persians, there are about one thousand of them. The Armenians do not know.

But haste must be made to seize the bridge while the enemy has not noticed the arrival of the Armenian forces and has not strengthened the defense of the bridge. On the other hand, however, only one part of the Division's cavalry—one or two companies, have reached Julfa. Taking the bridge in a fight with this force is a risk.

In this situation, Antranig's inventive and decisive mind finds the way.

Leading the mounted company himself, he advances towards the bridge, towards the Turkish positions. A violin and a flute, playing Turkish melodies, accompany the horsemen. Without hesitation Zoravar Antranig crosses the bridge. The Turk commander of the guards asks who they are and says that they cannot pass. Antranig replies that he is Armenian soldier X, that the peace agreement has already been signed between the Turks and the Armenians, that he has a function on behalf of the Commander of the Turkish Front, Vehib Pasha and the Armenian Government, to take the refugees through this stretch to their country Turkey, and that he is surprised that Vehib Pasha has not sent a telegram to the Commander of Julfa regarding such an important matter.

The Commander of the Guards asks for time to make an inquiry by telephone. However, in the meantime, the horsemen have already crossed the bridge and surrounded

the guards. Immediately disarming all the guards (almost 20), they send them to Russian Julfa. Only later was it known that the number of soldiers the Turks had in Julfa did not surpass 80.

Another matter for concern is the Division's provisions. There is absolutely no bread, and the Division cannot be fed with only a few tins of canned food. There is no way to find bread in Julfa either. Instead, there are large amounts of almonds and raisins in the railway stores.

Immediately opening up the stores, Zoravar Antranig took part of the raisins and almonds and divided them among the Division.

The 20,000 refugees following the Division, naturally, benefited from these stores of food.

The night was beautiful, the moon was full, the air warm. And the Division was resting, contemplating tomorrow's successes and the best outlook for the future, receiving its nourishment on both banks of the Araz, glistening under the moon.

June 21: It is a beautiful morning. From early morning, the remainder of the Division gather on the Persian side. The refugees are prohibited to cross the bridge before the Division moves. A detained Turk captive reports that there is a 12,000 strong Turkish force in that region, one thousand of which are in positions very close by.

Midday, in the suffocating heat, the Division starts advancing in a regular line—the cavalry, infantry,

machine-guns, cannon, infantry and again the cavalry. The high road is in order and there are not many uphill gradients, but the heat significantly slows the Division's speedy progress down, especially since there is a large number of those in the infantry whose feet hurt, who cannot walk, and are tired. There is no water, and what exists are dry waters which make one thirstier, instead of quenching the thirst. Gradually the road ascends. Battalion A goes in front. We had barely found a place with water to pause for a moment, when news came that the enemy's vanguards have appeared, so we must be ready. But today there was no encounter with the enemy. The Division continued on its way.

The coolness of the night and the moon gave new spirit to the infantry, who finally managed to reach the midday rest place—some place on the road, in the fields, where they rested.

Tonight, however, Antranig, the Division and the Armenian people lost a loyal, daring and brave soldier.—Aslan from the province of Van died of cholera.

June 22: The road today is downhill right from the start. It is the newly constructed high road. There are bare mountains on the right-hand side, from the foot of which the water flows out. The existence of trees in Persia is a sign that there is running water there. But the water is far, the thirst awful. Finally, we come across red-colored water in one of the arms of the Dghmud. The thirst is so strong that everybody drinks from that water, without paying attention to its color and taste. A little later we reach inns,

deserted gardens and sometimes even streams, which are turbid.

For midday dinner and rest, the slow-moving part of the Division would rest on the edge of barely found water, under the trees. The heat and thirst had affected them very much, meanwhile the horsemen, way ahead, were advancing with great speed.

The enemy's scouting party appears 25-30 versts [16.5-19.8 miles] from Khoy, in an open plain. Upon seeing our horsemen they start to retreat. Upon seeing this, Antranig immediately begins pursuing the enemy, with about 400 horsemen. Pulling away from the field, the Turks ascend the dominating height near the village of Ev Oghlu on the road to Khoy.

The Turks are holding a position on that height, and contact takes place immediately. Leaving the first line of defense the Turks ascend to the second, then third position, where they have 3 machine guns and 2 mountain cannons. An entire Battalion, with its cannons and machine guns, is battling a mere 400 to 500 horsemen.

Right from the start of the clash, Antranig sends orders to the infantry, machine guns and artillery to catch up with the cavalry and come to the battlefield. But the distance between the two forces is too much and the infantry commanders find it extremely difficult to move immediately, without resting. So, when those forces reached the battlefield, the fight was already long over.

Seeing that the infantry and the machine guns are late, Antranig places a company of horsemen in the center and makes a pincer move on both of the enemy's flanks

with the rest of the horsemen. This move has its decisive result. The enemy begins to yield and flee, leaving two cannons, many casualties, military items and papers in the hands of the Armenians. Relatively few escaped the pursuit of the horsemen, and certainly no one would have survived if the infantry had ever reached the battlefield and freed the horseman from fighting as a foot soldier.

Ev Oghlu and the adjacent Persian villages did not show any resistance and were not subjected to any harm.

Immediately following the victory, Antranig continued the triumphant advance and entered the Armenian village of Seyidavar—12-15 versts [7.92—9.9 miles] away from Khoy and investigated further ahead up to the surrounding areas of Khoy.

Whoever has been to Persia, knows the kind of Armenian village Seyidavar was—rich, traditional, hospitable, brave. Unfortunately, the Turks and Smgo⁴³ have massacred this village by deception. Only 12 surviving Armenians were discovered in the fields, who described the massacre of Seyidavar, and stated that the Armenians who were in clashes with the Turks in the region of Salmast, together with the Armenian refugees from Van and the Assyrian fighters, retreated towards Urmia four days ago, unable to resist the greater Turkish forces.

This information was crucial for the Division, because Antranig had chosen the Khoy-Salmast road taking into account that in Salmast he would meet 7 to 8,000 armed Assyrians and 2,000 Armenian fighters from Van; adding these to the Division, a significant force would

43 One of the captains of the brigands in Persian Kurdistan.

emerge and could advance up to Baghdad. Now, with the fall of Salmast, that road was decisively closed before us. And taking the Tabris road, going through the deserts and semi-wild tribes of Gharadagh was a significant risk. In addition, there was no precise news on the whereabouts of the British.

From the papers seized from the Turks' campsite, it became evident that the 36th Division of the Turkish Fourth Army is opposing us; their headquarters are in Sheytan-Ava.

That night was a wonderful night. Following the heat, thirst, fatigue and victory of the day, it was time for rest and satiation. The full moon illuminated everything, like daylight. Instead of the day's excessive thirst, because of which the soldiers were forced to drink even the stagnant waters gathered in the footprints of animals on the ground, they were now to be found at the edge of cool, clear water.

The enemy's losses were great. We had one dead and three injured.

June 23, Sunday: Today will be a decisive day. Early on, the entire Division is concentrated in Seyidavar. The positions are determined: Battalion A, together with three regiments and 400 horsemen, will hold the left wing—the west of Khoy and the road leading towards Tizadiz and Salmast. Battalion B will hold the right wing—the height of Khoy, while Battalion C will hold the left wing—the western part and height of Khoy. Battalion D will remain as a reserve.

By early morning, the city is already surrounded like this. Gradually making an opening through the walls

of the orchards surrounding the city, Antranig himself approaches the city and even succeeds in entering the city with his followers, under a torrent of bullets. The Persians receive them, declaring their surrender and reveal the positions of the Turkish troops fighting within the city.

The resistance of the Turks in the city is weak and there is little artillery. It is already evident that this force has just arrived. The fighting continued in our favor until midday.

But a little after midday, the enemy got huge reinforcements—infantry, cavalry as well as artillery from Sheytan-Ava and Tizadiz. The important combat zone was on our left side, where Battalion A was located, under the command of Smbat. The horsemen of Pilos and Shavarsh were to hold the bridge next to the Vartanants hill, which overlooks the Salmast road, from where the enemy's reinforcements were to come. Instead of holding the position on the bridge, the horsemen ascend the Vartanants hill, so that the enemy approaches those positions unhindered.

Suddenly, dust began to rise on the road to Tizadiz, and the enemy's artillery began to grow stronger. It became apparent that the enemy wants to go to the rear of the Division from the left side with horsemen.

Immediately infantry and cavalry forces were sent against them. And a surprising thing happened; the horsemen merged together. The Turkish horsemen were Arab lancers with whom local Turks had united.

Behind the Division, outside the battle line, close to 20,000 refugees were anxiously waiting for the outcome of the fight. There were all kinds amongst them—people with animals, with chattels, on foot, horsemen. When the refugees saw the Turks' attempt to surround us, they panicked; each one began to leave their belongings and flee in a disorderly manner, in panic. The refugees' actions also reflected on the soldier, and suddenly some of the horsemen began to retreat in disarray. Encouraged, the enemy began firing more forcefully with cannons, machine guns and rifles. The panic gradually increased and all the troops began to retreat. Although the Turks tried to occupy the dominant positions over the high road they failed, and with the darkness of the evening, the remnants of the Division pulled back tired and defeated.

That day the enemy had significant losses, but the Armenians also lost about 60-70 good fighters, among them the Commander of the Cavalry Company, an exemplary military man, Yaro.

The tired, exhausted soldier once again took the road to Julfa, and walking all night, hungry and tired, once again reached Julfa.

Fortunately, Antranig had taken immediate measures to secure the Julfa bridge and keep hold of the area, before any movement was made by the enemies towards our rear from the direction of Tabris or Nakhijevan.

June 24: The Division rests on both sides of the Araz Bridge; the soldiers still on the roads gradually arrive, lean, dusty, with legs swollen and blackened. It is terribly hot and

this overcrowded state of the refugees and soldiers, and hunger can certainly cause infectious diseases. Therefore Antranig ordered the refugees to move towards Nakhijevan and settle in the villages of the region to live.

Towards evening there was a sudden commotion. It was reported that Turkish horsemen were advancing on the Nakhijevan high road and that they were near. Immediately all the horsemen crossed from the Persian to the Russian side and moved ahead to encounter the enemy. There was a great commotion. Fortunately it was short-lived because it became clear that those arriving were horsemen from the Vanski regiment, led by Commander Haroutiun Bedrossian who, hearing of Antranig's advance towards Khoy, had come to join him.

We had already returned from Khoy. These horsemen, however, joined the Division and remained there until the end.

June 25: Relieved of the burden of the refugees, the Division will move to the mountainous parts of Goghtan, because the heat is already intolerable and cholera may soon occur.

The road to Goghtan is mountainous. Firstly, we will go to the villages of Verin Aza and Der, which are adjacent. Taking the cannons and transport by way of the riverbank is difficult, so they will come by way of the high road, but the horsemen and infantry head to the village of Verin Aza by way of the riverbank—a much closer route.

No one knows the way, therefore soldiers of Julfa's Armenian troops, who are from that region, and Karabagh

soldiers will lead the Division. After advancing a little, we come across the Turkish village of Yeayji, the strongest village in the region. There are about 40 Turkish soldiers who govern the village and organize it. The village also has two mountain cannons.

When the Division headed by Antranig continues on its way, suddenly they see that the Turks have already taken their positions. Zoravar Antranig suggests they give him passage, as he is passing through peacefully. The Turks, however, demand 10,000 roubles to allow passage, and simultaneously begin firing salvos.

Immediately, the soldiers take positions and start advancing in the direction of the hill held by the Turks. The horsemen are given orders to surround the village from the left side.

Barely an hour had gone by when the entire village, along with two cannons and 200 cannon shells, was seized by us.

A huge ammunition depot in the village was blown up by our artillery fire. The population had fled; some of the armed men tried to cross to the Persian side by going into the Araz River. Some succeeded, and many were swept away by the water.

It was too late to continue the journey, so the Division spent the night in the village of Yeayji, in the open fields.

When leaving Julfa for Aza, Antranig had left a sufficient number of soldiers there and ordered that the Araz Bridge be demolished by all means. Unable to blow it

up in any way, the soldiers had burned the bridge, using petrol. As a result, no wooden parts were left; only the iron remained.

June 26: Bad signs have already begun: cholera, or more accurately, *Kholerina*⁴⁴ wreaks havoc. Two or three soldiers suddenly fell to the ground. It is a direct result of hunger, heat, fatigue, and unclean waters, especially since the soldier has so far eaten raisins and almonds and drunk only tainted water.

The Division moves on. After going uphill a bit we reach the Armenian villages of Verin Aza and then Der, which together constitute one village.

During the spring clashes, the village of Aza, which was generally considered the weakest village in the region of Nakhijevan, has demonstrated unexpected bravery and resistance by fending off numerous Turkish attacks and had won the honorary title *Verteon*. This village was considered the key to the passage from the Turkish region of Ordubad and Zangelan to the Armenian region of Nakhijevan.

It is a stone-built village, surrounded with good heights that although not high, are very advantageous. The two villages are only separated from one another by water and a bridge.

The village is terribly hot, contrary to its surrounding orchards. The fruit has barely started to ripen. The tired, exhausted, shattered soldier began to eat the unripe fruit. There is no bread. And so cholera began to gain momentum.

⁴⁴ Russian *Холерина*: Diarrhea that happens during outbreaks of cholera.



Medical resources are insufficient and powerless; there is only one physician and 2 or 3 Physician Assistants—without medicine.

It was heart-breaking and discouraging to see dozens of young people, left helpless in the streets, in the water, groaning, begging for help. Many—completely naked, half their body blue, slumped on the water's edge—insatiably drank the running water in which, perhaps a little higher upstream, another lay lifeless.

Desolation, despair; no one could think of anything else. The lack of bread was having a terrible effect. The villagers argued that they did not have any, that the new crop was not yet harvested.

And many dozens died like this.

To counteract this, Antranig himself worked and by his example encouraged the soldier to harvest wheat, to thresh and provide bread, but eventually he also was affected and became dangerously ill. Some abandoned the army and went to Karabagh.

Fortunately, Zoravar Antranig recovered quickly and the Division began to regain life. It was encouraging to see all the soldiers doing communal work; some harvest the wheat by hand, with knives, some thresh the wheat with rocks, with their palms, or by putting it in the mill, while others try to turn the wheat into flour by means of rocks or the mill.

Once, summoning all the commanders to a meeting, the Zoravar criticized the actions of those commanders who caused the unnecessary panic that occurred at the

battle of Khoy because they had not fulfilled his orders correctly, and demonstrated the necessity to execute his every single order precisely.

The Division is gradually ascending the heights of Goghtan. Battalion A has already left for the Armenian village of Tsgghna; Battalions B and C will soon go there too. The highlands are relatively cool and there is food for the horses.

July 3: The Division gradually moves forward. Battalion A is already in Tsgghna, B and C are in-between Aza and Tsgghna in the Turkish village of Dyuglyu, more accurately in its orchards.

After Verin Agulis, Tsgghna is the richest and most developed village in Goghtan and is at the same time a summer residence for Goghtantsis outside of the region. The province is mountainous and composed of parallel valleys. The villages are established in these valleys and have vegetation. Fruit is extremely abundant. There are also Turkish villages in the district, of which Dastan has cut the road from Agulis to Julfa, and Vanand, which used to be an Armenian village. There are also mixed villages.

In this region, the diseases in the army gradually diminished, although a considerable number died.

Since Tsgghna is mountainous, as is the Goghtan region, communication with Nakhijevan, the center of the region is difficult. A good horseman can barely get to Nakhijevan in 3 or 4 days.

July 7: Ashod Melik-Moosian, the National Council plenipotentiary from Nakhijevan, arrived today in Tsgghna, bringing with him a telegram from Yerevan, from Zoravar Smbat⁴⁵, asking about the whereabouts of Antranig; reporting that the Bolsheviks are advancing by way of Baku and have reached the Myusyulyu station; that the British are advancing through Shamakhi, and that the Allies have won a great victory on the European Front.

These reports encourage the soldiers, who already detect the end of their suffering and the realization of their goals.

Every day fresh news has arrived, and a new detail was added to the old ones; One day... that there was a revolution in Turkey, and that the front-line soldiers no longer want to fight, or there was a telegram to clear the Nakhijevan barracks for the arrival of 6,000 Cossacks.

All of these were becoming linked to each other. It was evident that some things were happening in the outside world. It was clear that the Turks were relocating their forces to Persia to strike the British from the rear.

On the other hand, the Division's activities in any location would immediately have its effect. In addition, the arrival of Turkish forces in the region of Nakhijevan was of the greatest danger for the Armenian population

45 Smbat Boroyan (Makhluto): Western Armenian freedom fighter who participated in defending Western Armenian villages with General Antranig and participated in the Battle of Sardarapat, eventually becoming a general in the First Armenian Republic. He was like minded with Antranig in opposing the signing of the Treaty of Batum, knowing that it would nullify Armenian claims to Western Armenia.

of the region. As soon as these forces arrived, the local Tatars would consider the moment a convenient time to seek revenge against the Armenians for the clashes of the previous Spring, even if the Turks did not do so. The plenipotentiaries of the Nakhijevan National Council were of this opinion too, begging that the Division head for the region of Nakhijevan, where there were facilities for encampment, promising to also organize the local forces and obtain provisions for the Division.

The Armenian village of Abrugunis with its 700 houses was convenient for camping; it was thought that it would be possible to find a number of military items, shoes, equestrian equipment, and so on there.

July 9: Most of the horsemen and infantry will go to Abrugunis via the mountainous part, the upper road, and some will go there by way of the Verin Aza-Julfa stretch—the high road, because the cannons can only travel on the high road.

So Battalion C, with the cannons, will take the Verin Aza and Julfa high road to Abrugunis, which we hope to reach in 3-4 days. Departure to Nakhijevan must be sped up because as a result of military and administrative disagreement amongst the leaders there, the Armenian Battalion, which had done wonders during last Spring's self-defense battles, is disbanded. At a time when the Turkish threat was imminent and the Armenians of Nakhijevan were determined to resist, such a move by the leaders was extremely short-sighted. On one hand they disbanded their force and on the other they were inviting

Antranig to take on the self-defense efforts of the region of Nakhijevan.

July 10: The Division moved on towards Abrugunis through the mountainous road. The road begins in the valley, then starting from the left side of the canyon ascends in zigzags. After reaching the summit it continues a little, and then it reaches the mouth of the next canyon. They are sharp, rocky, inaccessible canyons. The Armenian village of Paraga is in the canyon. From there we must climb yet another mountain to cross to the next canyon, where the Turkish village of Devin, which is now deserted, is located. Traveling with horses through mountainous roads is very difficult, but the infantrymen experience even more difficulties ascending the mountains in the July heat. In addition, the villages on the road are too small to accommodate all the Division's troops. Thus, the beginning of the Division is in a village, and the rear is very far, 30-40 verst (20-26 miles), behind.

Passing the Devin canyon, we enter another canyon where the Armenian village of Bist, consisting of 70-100 houses, is located. The Division stays there.

July 11: Arshag Shirinian, the delegate of Karabagh's National Council, has arrived in Bist. He has come specially to invite Antranig and his Division to move to Karabagh and stay there, promising to care for all the Division's needs.

At that time, the Armenian regions in Karabagh were in an exceptional situation. On the one hand the Bolshevik Army was advancing in the direction of Baku, towards

Yevlakh, while on the other hand, the Turks, following their capture of Gantsag, were striving to invade Baku. The majority of the Armenian fighters in Baku were Karabaghtsi Armenians and communicating with them was of great significance for the Karabaghtsis. In particular, from a military point of view, if Baku connected to Karabagh it would be a major stab in the back for the Turks and a support for the Armenians.

But Nakhijevan's situation is graver. The Turks are more threatening in that direction. Therefore, Antranig finds it more necessary to go in that direction. So Arshag Shirinian returns to Karabagh.

The road from Bist to Abragunis once again rises and falls impossibly. The slope down to the Bist canyon is terrifying, a sharp and narrow road which is dangerous to travel in groups, especially for loaded pack animals.

After dozens of ups and downs, we reach the Armenian village of Shurut and from there to Paradashd.

July 12: We leave Paradashd. A short part of the road is mountainous, but shortly thereafter it gradually becomes open country. Four verst [2.60 miles] from the village, on the right hand side is Smbataperd—an erect fort with a Turkish village at its feet. On the right-hand side, Yelan-Dagh rises as a huge monument.

Further ahead is the mixed Armenian and Turkish village named Norashen, the Turkish residents of which have left; currently Armenian refugees reside there.

In half an hour we are already in Abragunis—an Eastern village surrounded with extensive orchards and fruit trees. The Division will be concentrated here.

The leadership of the Division is billeted in the monastery of Abragunis and the soldiers in the orchards nearby. Battalion C and the cannons have also arrived, by way of the high road.

July 13: A meeting takes place in the monastery. Plenipotentiaries of the National Council and Military Body: Ashod Melik-Moosian, Lieutenant Yero Kharazian, Lieutenant Parunag Baghcheian and others have arrived from Nakhijevan.

A telegram has been received from Yerevan which warns that two Turkish regiments are advancing to Persia via Shakhtakht with their artillery, while others arrive and relate that there has been a three-day standoff between Turks and Germans in Tiflis and that the Turks have finally been driven away.

The meeting takes quite a long time. Several important decisions are made, as a result of which, on July 14, announcements signed by Antranig are issued in both Armenian and Russian, with the following content:

1. From this date on, Antranig and his Division are part of the Russian Central (at the time Soviets) Government⁴⁶ and will be subject to it.

2. In accordance with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, the region of Nakhijevan is declared an inseparable part of Russia.

⁴⁶ He means the soviet authorities.

3. Disarmament of the region's population will take place without ethnic discrimination.

4. Martial law is declared in the region and all power belongs to Zoravar Antranig until contact is made with the Russian Central Government.

Outside this statement, measures are taken to create a local administration, a court, a migration body, and transportation. A law on military discipline is also created and a field court established.

The youth of the region will be subject to mobilization and have at least 4,000 armed troops, which the Division will work with under the general command of Antranig.

After these decisions were made, Doctor Kh. Bonapartian was sent to the village of Kznut to communicate these decisions by telegram to the Soviet government's Commissar Extraordinary for the Caucasus, Stepan Shahumian, who was in Baku.

However, there was no time for organization. The Turks were already in Shakhtakht, and their attack was anticipated by the day. It was necessary to first carry out the disarmament of the population, in order to neutralize the danger from the rear. The order for disarmament was sent to the Turk khans⁴⁷ of Nakhijevan, who procrastinated and responded that the people would not listen to them so it would be necessary to disarm them by force.

⁴⁷ Turkish for lord, prince.

Under the command of Smbat, Battalion A left in the direction of Ghazanchi to go to Nakhijevan, disarming the villages of that mountainous region en route, with the support of local forces. There the Battalion would join the Division that would come to Nakhijevan, disarming the villages in the plain.

July 15: News comes that the Turks have concentrated forces in Persian Julfa. We had a field cannon and ammunition there, so the order was given to respond, and defend Julfa and the bridge to the very end.

July 16: The task of disarmament should begin fast. The Turks already boldly refuse to disarm. It is decided to start today or tomorrow. Major centers of Turkish forces in the region have been the villages of Yayji, Nehram and Jehri, which have Turkish instructors and cannons. Yayji has already fallen. The closest is Nehram, so the Division will first disarm Nehram, after which only Jehri will remain. Thereafter there will no longer be a large military force left in the hands of the people.

The Division left for the Armenian village of Kznut, which is only 5 verst [3.3 miles] away from Nehram.

Due to shortage of time and insufficient forces, local mobilization cannot be realized. Instead of the promised 4000 skilled soldiers there are only 100 to 200. No one is making sacrifices in aid of the Division's soldiers who, poorly clothed and hungry, have come to defend their country, their home and honor.

July 17: Early in the morning, the Division moves in the direction of the Turkish village. The Turks reply to the proposal that they disarm with gunfire from trenches. Shortly thereafter the enemy's two cannons start firing towards the soldiers.

The village is besieged, and the real fighting begins. The Turks have good positions, but the Armenians already seize half of the village. In despair, the Turks try to retreat and blow up the ammunition depot. But seeing that they are under siege, the enemy shows desperate resistance.

It is terribly hot and the soldiers in the positions are extremely thirsty. Women from Kznut start transferring water to the positions. The soldiers are tired and hungry.

In the evening, the Division returned to Kznut, leaving only a small force around the village.

News arrives from Nakhijevan that the Turks have opened fire there on the Armenians, that fighting has begun in the city, and that Battalion A is already approaching the city.

July 18: Fighting continues intensely in the direction of Julfa. Horsemen—Shmavon's Company, depart for Julfa. The local infantry of Abragunis will also leave.

Fighting continues in Nakhijevan. The Turks are close to seizing the barracks. Help is requested urgently.

July 19: Antranig has decided to continue the resistance in the direction of Julfa, bombard Nehram with field cannons and go to Nakhijevan to help.

The siege of the village had already begun in the morning, when news came from Nakhijevan to "Come immediately, if not we are doomed." The Turks are bombarding the Armenian positions with cannons and are about to enter the city. Hence, leaving only a few local forces at Nehram, the Division and the Artillery moved towards Nakhijevan. Passing Yarmja, the Division set up position in the hollow of the stream and gardens located between the town and the village.

The enemy was using twelve cannons and numerous machine guns. From the right, Battalion A had arrived opposite the town but, not being able to withstand enemy fire, had retreated. Two companies of horsemen with the main Division had also followed it. An unwise move by Battalion C led to the enemy being encouraged and further emboldened. The Division stayed until 10 o'clock at night—bombarding the Turkish artillery and Turkish district. The Turks were mistakenly bombarding the Turkish districts instead of the Armenian. We had three mountain cannons and one field cannon here. The city had already been occupied by the enemy before the Division could enter the city, and behold, the tip of the refugee convoy started to break away towards Kznut and Abragunis.

The Division began to draw back, and it was midnight when it reached Kznut. The enemy was gradually intensifying its pursuit.

The city had shown heroic resistance, but the enemy was superior in numbers and equipment.

In this manner, because of the carelessness and indifference of the leadership past and present, and the people of Nakhijevan not delivering a local fighting force, this prosperous, wonderful region passed into Turkish hands, causing immense damage to the Armenian people.

That same day towards evening the Turks also captured Julfa. The refugees of New Jugha⁴⁸, Armenians with an ancient patriarchal heritage, came, also as refugees, to mix with Nakhijevan and Turkish-Armenian refugees.

The Division waits in Kznut, the population of which is also pulling out. There is no news from Battalion A, no communication.

July 20: The division withdraws to Abragunis. A meeting takes place. Ashod Melik-Moosian thinks that the Turks are conducting an encircling move, in the direction of Ghazanchi. Battalion A has reached Ghazanchi. That village is also migrating. The region must be vacated. Abragunis is also emigrating. And along with the migration, ugly images of Armenian selfishness become apparent.

The Division's soldiers' need for clothing, shoes, undergarments, provisions, socks, tents, and so on had been repeatedly declared since the Division entered that region, and it was palpable. No one—no authority, commissar, or individual—willingly or forcibly handed over any item that could be useful to the soldier; but on the day of the emigration, huge quantities of clothing, tents

48 In referring to refugees from New Jugha he is referring to today's Jolfa, the sister city to Julfa on the Persian side of the Arax River that is immediately across the Araz bridge and contiguous with Julfa. This is not confused with New Jugha in Isfahan, Persia.

and food were removed from the homes and storerooms of individuals. The soldier cannot use many of these items because he is already retreating and cannot carry much with him. The time to use those items has already passed.

The heavily loaded carts of the refugees line the entire length of the road. Soldiers pass by on foot or horseback, raising dust. The animals, unaccustomed, cannot pull the carts because they are too heavy. Young girls and ladies used to a comfortable life, and small children, unaware of the coming rigors, still walk lightly. No one can account for what happened or will happen tomorrow. No one can describe what emotions, what feelings, what end each of these refugees had. No one can say how many of Nakhijevan's lavish, rich and populous Armenians were lost, how many are left and how much wealth was lost and how many lives destroyed.

At night, the villages of Paradashd and Shurut, as well as the entire road are resting stops. The refugees and army, scattered, fallen, are resting. Tomorrow they will continue on the road again, towards the unknown.

July 21: Up until Shurut the road is convenient for carts, but it is impossible from Shurut to Bist. Therefore, all the carts are left on the road. All along the length of the road you will see families busy separating the important from the unimportant on the carts.

The refugees and soldiers reach Bist with great difficulty. The downhill slope slows everybody down. One must descend carefully, otherwise there is the danger of tumbling.

July 22: News comes that Yero Kharazian has already reached Paratashd with the Nakhijevan refugees; Ashod Melik-Moosian is also with us. The refugees arrive and gather there. Bist is much more suitable for resistance; thus the local forces remain there. They do not feel the need for the Division to stay in those parts because there is no food.

July 23: It is decided to make for Karabagh, because this area is mountainous and has no wheat. Antranig announces that the soldiers are set free, in order to simultaneously free the soldiers and put an end to migrant-soldiers (as a result of which, 100 soldiers would show up to receive bread, but only ten for battle; in addition the migrant-soldiers would behave in an unruly manner when passing through villages, which was damaging to the reputation of the Division).

There are a few roads to Karabagh. One, through the village of Alahi goes by the Geghi canyon and descends to Ghapan (Karabagh). The other one goes through the Armenian village of Nazrvan by way of the Okhchi canyon to Ghapan. There is a third road that goes above Tsghna, through the Armenian village of Ramis, once again to Ghapan. The first is the easiest of them all, the second is difficult but safer than the first, and the third is far from Bist. Some of the refugees and soldiers chose the easy way but, coming under fire from the Turk shepherds while ascending the summit of the mountain, after significant losses, they return and continue towards Karabagh on the second road. One section of the people stayed in Bist, Paraga, Ramis, Tsghna, in the region of Ghoghtan.

Antranig, the Division, and the Turkish-Armenian and Nakhijevan refugees opted for the second road.

Departing from Bist, we ascend upwards through beautiful orchards. Clear water flows and in one or two hours we reach the water-abundant Armenian village of Nazrvan, the last and highest village in the region of Nakhijevan. Thereafter we climb Gabu Tagh (Mount Kaputjugh), the mountain dividing the region of Nakhijevan from Karabagh. It is already night-time when we reach a suitable place to camp. It is July, but the waters are cold as ice and are frozen in many places. We spend the night there in the open countryside.

July 25: We awaken to beautiful weather. We still have quite a climb. From the top of the mountain, an unparalleled panorama opens before us. On the right, the entire Nakhijevan plain, the city and the villages. Ahead, Araz and the mountains of Persian Gharadagh. On the left, the mountains of Goghtan, among which beautiful villages were scattered, like those of Tsghna, Agulis, Tanakert, and others. Nothing is visible towards Karabagh because there is a taller mountain at the back.

From that summit we move sinuously to the slope of another mountain. The path here is very narrow so we must walk in single file. We come across cold streams, but what use is that? Our stomachs are empty, and we have no bread.

From there we will climb to the summit of the actual mountain that is the border between the two provinces.

The ascent is terrifying, a true Golgotha⁴⁹. It is a steep and rocky mountain. The road, almost horizontal right to the end, ascends in crooked zigzags and no more than one man or horse can pass at a time. It is especially difficult for laden horses. It is necessary to stop every 10 to 15 steps to rest. We only just manage to climb the summit in an hour.

And behold an enchanting view; the high peak of the mountain is covered in snow. A beautiful, water-abundant valley becomes visible in the direction of Karabagh. The streams glisten in the sunlight. Before us is a section of the Karabagh Mountains and black forests.

Karabagh.... How many times had the soldiers of the Division longed to be there, in invincible positions, with the fighting people?

The descent from the mountain is no less difficult than the ascent, but we descend. It is a wonderful, green, water-abundant and flowery valley. It is July, but the field is full of St. John's Wort, Primrose, Hemlock, and many other flowers. We continue the road through the valley and via rocky, naturally solid positions we enter the area of Verin Ghapan's villages. The first Turkish village is Shabadin, which is populated. Through the canyon we move to the Armenian village of Kacharan. Only 4 of the 40 or so villages of Verin Ghapan are Armenian; the rest are Turkish. Representatives of the Turkish villages come to Kacharan, present themselves to the Zoravar and express their sincere friendship to the Armenians. Those representatives traveled with the Zoravar to the Armenian village of Hand,

49 Also known as Calvary, the site of Christ's crucifixion.

where we stayed the night. All the Turkish villages of the surrounding region displayed a friendly attitude to both the Division and the arriving refugees.

July 26: We depart from the village of Hand early. The road is wonderful. The Ghapan canyon is gigantic; high, inaccessible mountains rise on both sides. The summit is a summer spot, with a separate path to reach it. The vertical mountains are more dreadful, with their huge rocks that seem as if they will fall at any minute. On a bend, the narrowest part of the canyon, we see the remnants of David Bek's fort. The entire gorge is a fort in itself. At the same time, the plentiful water floods down the canyon with a thundering sound. Somewhere, the Turkish villagers wanted to slaughter an ox before the Zoravar and served it up with butter and honey.

In the evening we reached Ghapan's *Ghatarski Zavods*, that is—the copper mines of Ghapan. We had not seen a normal house, a clean, well-dressed man, or electricity for a long time now. All three existed here.

The Division camped in a vast orchard near the buildings.

Gatarski Zavod is a small place with barely 40 or 50 houses, although they are proper and clean houses. It is located in the canyon and is the market for villages of the region. The water from the Ghapan gorge flows in front of the village and provides electricity. It is surprising—in such remote parts of Asia, you suddenly see the tall chimneys of European factories which belong to the copper mines. Currently, however, the roads are closed. Consequently,

export has become impossible so labor has stopped. The air of the village is unhealthy. There will be malaria. But the villages of the region have lovely air and, particularly, beautiful mountainous views. There are many gardens; fruit is abundant, and water close by. The local National Council tries helping the supply of provisions for the Division with its own resources.

The village and the market are the same; the Turks bring lots of provisions to sell, while the Armenians—textiles and so on. There are also Turk craftsmen. There is a great demand for bread and provisions. The Armenians no longer sell, only the Turks bring and sell. From this point of view, the Turks in the region were very advantageous to both the soldiers and the refugees, although they also benefited financially.

July 27: The last part of the Army at the back and the refugees gradually arrive. All are tired, dusty, hungry, drained and blackened. Most of the recent refugees from Nakhijevan have become unrecognizable; the poor things have been affected so much. Their shoes are torn, their hair unkempt, their clothes dusty and tattered. Most cannot walk anymore; their feet are swollen, and they are forced to either lean on a cane or a relative. Many sick and fatigued, in an unconscious state, are coming loaded on horses, donkeys or oxen.

The first concern of absolutely everybody reaching the market is to get hold of some food, no matter what the cost. How many necessary items, clothing, furniture, pack animals, livestock, beloved pieces of jewelry and weapons

were sold for a piece of bread or a bowl of yogurt? Ghapan's market had come to life; everything was bought and sold. It was exactly like the Bit Bazaar⁵⁰ in Constantinople or the Saldatski Bazaar in Tiflis, and even more.

And that caravan, that flow, was not for one hour or two hours, 100 or 200 people; entire days and nights, tens of thousands of these exhausted and drained creatures came and went.

Life goes on in this manner. The refugees and soldiers gradually leave, going on to Goris.

On behalf of the Goris and Zangezur Central National Council, Arshag Shirinian has come once again to invite the Zoravar there, promising to assist the Division with everything.

July 31: As a result of an abundance of weapons and a shortage of food, new difficulties emerge. After selling everything, the hungry soldier or refugee also starts selling his weapon, and since it is his last resource, he sells it to whoever pays more—Armenian or Turk; and since usually the Turks pay more, even unimaginable sums, consequently they also sell it to the Turks. In addition, a number of base, selfish Armenians, buying from the refugee or soldier sell to the Turks, solely for profit.

Such an incident was caught today. It is a frustrating case, and if there had been a permanent and firm authority, there should have been an execution of both parties, but the tentative authority of the local national government were obstacles to taking decisive measures.

⁵⁰ Turkish Bit Bazaar: Literally, flea market.

August 2: Antranig and the Division leave Ghapan for Goris by way of the Tatev Monastery. The road is very bad. First it zigzags up to the summit of the mountain, then it descends into another gorge, then once more it ascends, always in a zigzag manner. The road is extremely difficult; many horses stay behind, goods fall. Many are forced to stay in the villages on the way, while others—on the open road. Lots of villages, both Armenian and Turkish, are scattered along the road: Gatar, Geavard, Achachur, Akhdakhana, Chobanlu, Okhdar, Dorhni, etc. In all these villages and on the road, many Turks had hurried to bring provisions to the soldiers and refugees in exchange for money, weapons, or any textiles.

At the summit of the hill is a beautiful plateau, Inje Bel, which is an area where the Turks go in summer. The road continues through the plateau. After passing through a gorge yet again, abysses, the village of Tatev and the Tatev Monastery appear in the distance. The road goes through a forest before reaching the village.

We reach the Monastery of Tatev. It is a solid monastery built on a precipice, with the village of Tatev close by. Tatev is a wonderful fort built on the summit of a triangle, the two sides of which are rocky gorges, and tremendous mountains at the back. The first gorge is the Vorodan water (Vorodan River), which grumbles and flows into the Hakaru and Araz Rivers.

The Pendulous Column⁵¹ that, although it moves and swings, does not fall, is here. The Monastery is dirty and unsightly. We spend the night at the monastery. That night is reminiscent of the pilgrimage of blissful olden days, but alas, this is not a pilgrimage. Everyone is gloomy, the refugees hopeless.

August 3: We are on the road before midday. We start descending the canyon immediately close by the Monastery. It is difficult to go down. We descend one by one. At the foot of the canyon is the *Satanayi kamurj*⁵²—a tremendous rock stretching naturally from one side of the canyon to the other. Looking at the water from that bridge is terrifying; one's head spins. There are mineral waters on the bridge, which according to locals have healing properties. The *Satanayi kamurj* has a magnificent view.

From the bridge we climb up another slope. Afterwards, we advance along a field road and crossing a tree-filled gorge, get closer to Goris which is still not visible.

Refugees are piled up on the water's edge along the entire length of the road, trying to rest, quench their thirst and feed the animals.

Suddenly Goris, the central city of Zangezur, is visible from the peak of a canyon. The valley is divided in two by a rivulet running down the middle. One side is an

51 The Pendulous Column (Gazavan Siun) is a 26-foot stone column on the Tatev Monastery grounds that acts as early warning for imminent earthquakes and alerts the monastery of approaching enemies giving them time to prepare for defense. The stones rotate during times of danger but return to their original form when danger passes.

52 Armenian for Devil's Bridge.

irregular, old village, while the other is the new city with well-ordered, wide streets and gardens and with orchards and vegetation along the entire length of the canyon.

We go down the valley. The people and the National Council greet the Zoravar ceremoniously. The Army settles into the gardens and buildings.

August 4 to 13: Life in Goris is diverse; however, every day has the same structure and content. The National Council takes care of the soldiers' food, although in insufficient quantities. Consequently, the soldiers sell whatever they have; some have even started to turn trade into a craft, for profit. And so, the Bazaar of Goris has come to life, as it did at the Ghapan Mines, and prices rise fantastically.

Soldiers are scattered everywhere. In addition, the refugees arrive. Some had already come earlier. All the waters' edges, squares, fields, even gardens are occupied by them. The air has started to deteriorate because of the foulness of such a crowd.

The refugees also take part in the liveliness of the market, selling their final remnants. The harvesting of fruit from the orchards gives way to considerable unpleasantness and incidents. The hungry and penniless refugees and soldiers snatch the fruit off the trees, ripe or unripe; they grab potatoes from the gardens and the crops from the fields.

This phenomenon is vexing for an unaccustomed and proud Karabaghtsi who, due to the lack of leadership, recklessly turns to weapons. There was endless gunfire

on this issue, and by the time they grew accustomed to it, a lot of people were killed. It was not rare for the noise of endless gunfire to awaken the entire population at midnight. The reason for this was that the refugees have gone by night to somebody's field to gather a little of the crop or dig out potatoes. There was no one to make these people understand all the ugliness and wrong doing there was in killing that poor refugee, that Armenian who is trying to survive and wants to live.

August 13: The situation is uncertain. Both the military and refugees are unorganized. Everyone only thinks of themselves. Some have already moved on towards Shushi, along secret paths. Others have gone over mountainous paths to Sisian and much further to Yerevan. Many have relatives there; they want to go. Others want to stay.

For this reason, Antranig published a leaflet today informing the Division that, given the adverse conditions created regarding the Division, the Turkish-Armenian refugees and the Turkish-Armenian Cause, as well as some people's predisposition to go to Yerevan, he urges them not to go to Yerevan, never to disarm, to continue the struggle until the end—in defense of the physical existence and political cause of the Turkish-Armenian people. With this leaflet he stated that he will agree to leave the Caucasus regions, along with the Turkish-Armenian refugees, only when a firm guarantee is given by the Allied States.

In the morning, the Division's soldiers stood to attention, as Antranig was to address them. Whoever wanted to go to Yerevan could go, but whoever stayed in

the Division had to promise to submit to military discipline. He stated that although it is true that for discipline the soldier should receive all kinds of compensation, isn't it also true that he did not spare bread, clothes, or ammunition when there was any? On the other hand, he tallied how the soldier has severely misused that condition, that there must be cohesion and kinship. Whoever remains must submit to strict discipline.

It was left for each to decide what to do. Is he a refugee or a soldier? —And if he is a soldier, to carry out his responsibilities. After deciding to be a soldier, it was left to think about the course of action. Some were thinking of going to Shushi, and from there to Yevlakh, where they hoped to join the forces of Baku—Bolshevik or British. Some wanted to go to Yerevan. Some were thinking about going to Meghri, crossing the Araz and, via the village of Muzhambar (Persia-Gharadagh), go to Tabris and join the British, who were rumored to have arrived there.

But before any decisive decision was made and steps taken, everyone was waiting for some real news from this or that side; and news, real or fictitious, is swarming around the square. There is no way to check it.

August 15: The news comes more from the direction of Shushi because the leaders of the Shushi and Gantsag Regiments are in Goris. The road from Goris to Shushi is closed; the Turks have taken it. Communication is only maintained through messengers. A messenger came from Shushi today. The news is positive; 5,000 British troops have come to Baku with 400 cannons; 25,000 more are yet to come; General Alexeyev is advancing towards Tiflis

with 30,000 Cossacks; and the British are advancing to Julfa via Tabris. On the other hand, the Turks have massacred the Armenians in the regions of Nukhi and Aresh and have surrounded those refugees who wanted to go to Shushi in the canyon between Goris and Shushi. Therefore, horsemen hasten to their aid.

The news, as can be seen, is diverse. One day there is news that the British have reached such and such a location; another day that the Turks have seized Baku; another day, that there is fighting in Yerevan, and that the Yezidis have captured four cannons from the Turks, and so on. According to the published news, depending on which army was rumored to have made gains, the mood of the refugees and locals would go up or down.

The piece of news that Antranig never believed, always insisting on the opposite, was the seizure of Baku by the Turks. Every time that news came up, he always insisted that it was impossible, since he had seen with his own eyes the ammunition, cannons and armored vehicles that were transported there for the city's defense. In the end, because there is no tangible evidence and news does not come from very reliable sources, he will not believe it. On the 21st of this month, news came that the Turks have taken Baku, and that one Division of the Turkish Army is coming to Karabagh. But on the 26th information comes from Yerevan that the British have had a great victory in Baku and have taken 8000 prisoners, and that the British have seized Tabris, etc.

The region of Zangezur and especially Goris is poor in wheat. Even before the war, a large amount of flour

was imported every year from Russia. This year, although the harvest is plentiful, a good part of it has been ruined by animals and men. Therefore, the National Council is finding it increasingly difficult to give even a modicum of support to the soldier. It can only provide for one thousand persons.

For a long time now, the army could not find anything else to eat except potatoes, which had given rise to a witty soldier explaining the situation thusly: “The menu is: in the morning, *patates*⁵³; at noon, *kednakbnt-sor*⁵⁴; in the evening, *gardofil*.⁵⁵”

So we must leave Goris and go someplace with more wheat. Sisian is just such a place, where wheat is plentiful. The refugees have not gone there and, it being close to Yerevan in the Armenian Republic, those wishing to go could do so safely.

Thus, the Division must move towards Sisian.

August 27: After midday everything is ready for departure. There is hope that by evening, before dark, we will reach one of the Armenian villages of Sisian. The refugees in the Goris region who are settled in the mountain pastures and gorges, travel together with the Division.

The majority of the horsemen were already in the mountain pastures. The people of Goris are gathered and wish Antranig and the Division adieu. The road that goes to Sisian ascends the canyon that forms the Goris canyon. Up

53 The word “potato” in Turkish.

54 The word “potato” in Western-Armenian.

55 The word “potato” in Russian.

above is an open field, more precisely a plateau—the Goris mountain pasture. Despite it being summer, there is plenty of grass, so the horses eat their fill.

There is no village on the high road from Goris to Sisian, but not far from the high road, on the banks of the Vorodan River, in hollow positions, there are the Turkish villages of Aghudi, Vaghudi and Urud. The Turks in these villages are bandits and notorious for the marauding they have done in their region. They have become more audacious following the Russian revolution and have closed the high road between Sisian and Goris. They robbed dozens of Armenian travelers and killed and stole the weapons of soldiers returning home so that no Armenian, not even any armed group, dared to go from Sisian to Goris, or Goris to Sisian by way of the high road. Under very pressing circumstances, people were forced to travel along the dangerous mountainous Tarbas road to Tatev-Shnher⁵⁶ and on to Goris; that is, along the other bank of the Vorodan River. The Division of course, could not go by that refugee road, because it is impossible to travel with an army on that road.

The Division had just entered the area of the Turkish villages from the mountain pasture when Turks started to open fire on the soldiers. They had already taken the best positions. Fighting had begun. We were forced to spend the night in the mountain pasture, in the cold open air.

Fighting gradually intensified. In the end, the Turks yielded and first took refuge in their villages, then in the

56 Present-day Shinuhayr.

mountains. But the Division stayed in the open field and did not enter the villages.

The fighting at Aghudi-Vaghudi had prevented the two field cannons belonging to the Shushi and Gantsag Regiments from being transported from Sisian to Goris. Wanting to take advantage of the Division's move towards Sisian and hoping that the road would be temporarily opened, these cannons, along with the soldiers of the Sasoon Regiment, come towards Goris. But since the Turkish villages of Shaki and Ghalajukh show resistance, they are forced to bombard those villages, forcing the inhabitants to withdraw to their mountain pastures. Thus temporarily, after the removal of obstacles on the Sisian and Goris roads, the refugees that were in the Zangezur region moved to the region of Sisian. At the same time, naturally, the refugees benefited from the provisions left in the villages by the Turks.

In the evening we heard that instead of coming to Sisian, the Commander of Battalion C, Doctor Kh. Bonapartian and Commander of the Cavalry Company, Sarkis Jebeji⁵⁷ have departed by way of Ghapan to Meghri, in order to execute the plan of going to Tabris through Muzhambar.

August 29: The soldiers and horses are tired; they need to recover. Therefore, we stay and spend the night in Turkish villages.

August 30: We advance towards the Armenian region of Sisian. And behold, a beautiful view opens before us. It is a beautiful valley, with the Vorodan River flowing

through the middle. There are lovely villages on the banks and beautiful heights surrounding the valley. On the right side are the mountain pastures; on the left, the heights leading to the Nakhijevan plain, and ahead the heights of Arabsa.

A little further on, we reach the Armenian village of Angeghakot, in the center of Sisian. Angeghakot is a very unremarkable village, the inhabitants of which have at one point migrated from Persia. They are newcomers, as are the residents of the villages of Uyts and Mazra. The village has no trees, but towards the Vorodan River, which is called the Bazarchay River here, there are beautiful copses. It has a healthy climate and cool, clean water.

Opposite Angeghakot, in the canyon on the other bank of the river, are the Armenian villages of Belek and Shaghat.

August 31: Angeghakot is full. Part of the Division wants to leave Sisian and go to Yerevan. Some have family issues. Besides soldiers, there are commanders who also want, and have decided, to depart for Daralakyaz and the borders of the Yerevan Republic. They justify their decisions with the following points of view:

1. Without state support, without any sources for provisions, money, or ammunition, it is impossible to maintain the Division. The Division cannot be maintained by local means.

2. According to the Armenian-Turkish treaty, this region remains within the borders of Azerbaijan. Therefore, the Turks will not tolerate the Division staying there.

⁵⁷ In 1920, the Commander died during the self-defense of Hadjin, on the day the city fell.

Already rumors are circulating that a Turkish and Armenian commission will shortly arrive in these parts to determine the final boundaries, and if the Division is in those regions, there will definitely be clashes. But our soldiers are not able to fight a big, extended battle, because they are hungry and poorly clothed.

3. Politically, the independent activities of the Division negatively impact Armenian and Turkish relations, especially at a time when the existence of the Yerevan government is hanging by a thread. With regards to that, the leaders of the Division cannot escape responsibility. To these objections Antranig would respond that they do not have to worry about the Division's provision and maintenance. He himself provides for these things in every way possible; the local people are disposed to making every sacrifice, if only the Division would stay. In addition, there is never a shortage of local means for the survival of the Division, they can be found.

4. If and when the Turks determined that it was in their interest and the timing right, the existence or absence of the Division would never be an obstacle for declaring war against Yerevan and annihilating it. On the contrary, the activities of the Division probably keep the Turks cautious in taking such action. It is clear that the Turks see the government of Yerevan as a temporary phase in their scheme. When the time comes, when Baku is captured, the Turks will not delay in ripping it up like a handful of grass.

On the other hand, the country is very suitable for self-defense. The people are disposed to not be subjected to Turkish rule and are willing to fight. The difficulty is for up

to a month or a month and a half, after which the roads will become closed due to snow and any military action will become impossible until spring.

Until then, he is convinced that change will definitely happen in our favor, because he believes deeply, in his mind, body and soul that the Allies will prevail and turn Germany into a corpse.

All of this, however, cannot persuade the majority of the commanders of the Division, who have decided to depart.

News comes that the Armenians of Gyumri have killed Corporal Trchnak of the Sasoon Regiment.

September 1: Today the former commander of Battalion A, Smbat and Ardash Khan, and commanders Shmavon, Pilos, Hasrat and many others leave for Daralakyaz and from then on to Nor Bayazid and Yerevan. The entire structure of the Division up until now is destroyed, because not a single company or battalion has the necessary number of men.

One section of the soldiers had already set out earlier, another will leave today. All of them will gather together in the Russian Molokan village of Bazarchay⁵⁸ and move to Daralakyaz together, since the road near the Turkish village of Chul is dangerous.

So, from that populous Division of about 4000 men that was the Armenian Special Striking Division, only the Commander Zoravar Antranig and some 1,300 soldiers

⁵⁸ Present-day village of Gorhayk.

were left standing firm. Furthermore, the experienced commanders had also left.

September 2: Antranig must therefore carry the entire burden of the Division; it is necessary to reorganize, reconstitute the Division's command system, the logistics, the quartermaster corps, the military divisions, battalions and companies.

If only that was the sole issue to deal with. Between Sisian and Nakhijevan is the region of Gyumri-Gjhadzor, with Armenian and Turkish villages. That region is the key to Sisian, because if the forces from Nakhijevan capture Gyumri-Gjhadzor, the defense of Sisian becomes questionable. The Turks have already seized the Armenian villages of that region up to Badamli; only Gyumri, Gjhadzor, Nors and Nors-Mezre are left. These villages have also been pressed to disarm and submit to Turkish rule. Although the Armenians have not responded decisively to this proposal, and although the majority of the people, led by Shavarsh, have decided not to obey, there is an influential circle that is in favor of accepting the proposal. Gyumri-Gjhadzor is very far from Sisian, about 30 versts (20 miles), and it is difficult to have influence without having actual power there. However, ignoring this very important region is very dangerous. Only Antranig's decisive order and appeal could have an impact. So whether written, orally, or by deed, Antranig would have to do everything he could, so that the Gyumri-Gjhadzor population did not unwisely betray the Armenians of Karabagh.

To the honor of the intelligent and patriotic youth of Gyumri-Gjhadzor, the Armenians never surrendered to the Turks, and the Turks never dared to seize the area by force and advance.

Another issue for concern was whether or not the Division was to stay in Sisian or not and, if it did, the issue of supplying it with provisions.

In addition, owing to the disorganized condition of the local authority, it was necessary to resolve disputes between the refugees and the local population, as well as internal disputes both amongst refugees and locals themselves, as well as take on the burden of organizing the local military force.

September 4: Members of the Zangezur Central National Council, Arshag Shirinian, Keteon Der Minasian, and Plenipotentiary Lieutenant of the Karabagh National Council, Hovag Stepanian, come from Goris to Sisian. The cavalries of the Sasoon Regiment leave Sisian for Daralakyaz.

September 5: Today the commissars of all the Armenian villages of Sisian have been invited to Angeghakot for a meeting.

Antranig expresses his desire to know the will of the people; whether or not the people desire that Antranig stays in Sisian. Are the people disposed to fighting against the Turks and not surrendering to them? And if the people respond positively to these two questions, will they make economic sacrifices and how?

The commissars are elected by popular choice and express the will of the people, but since the matter was serious, after expressing their opinions they decided to invite a larger representative assembly of the Armenian and Russian-Molokan villages of Sisian and thus make their decisive verdict.

September 11: Today after a military trial, by decision of the Military Council and the confirmation by Antranig, soldiers Sahag Holigian from Gurun and Parunag Baghcheian from Shabin-Karahisar are executed by gunfire. They had strangled and killed Mgrdich Bashbeoyukian from Shabin-Karahisar in the village of Mukhaturian to take possession of his belongings.

VERDICT

Sometime between July 15 to 28, 1918, four soldiers of the Sasoon regiment, Sahag Holigian from Gurun; Parunag Mesrob Baghcheian from the village of Verin Adzbdar, Shabin-Karahisar; Kevork Tumanian of Brussa; and Krikor Der Simonian of Kharbert, stood accused of killing a soldier from the same regiment—Mgrdich Bashbeoyukian (Emi) from the village of Endires, Shabin-Karahisar—by suffocation on Vartavar Sunday (water festival) in the village of Mukhaturian in Sisian. The trial took place on August 29th, 1918 in Angeghakot by order of General Major Antranig, by means of an officers' meeting, with the participation of the commanders of the Armenian Special Striking Division, company commanders, platoon commanders, and representatives of squads, doctors and the Sasoon regiment.

Initially the accused denied their actions; however, a search revealed material belonging to the murdered Emi—wallet, medal, St. George Cross and money—the majority of which, according to the testimony of witnesses belonged to Mgrdich Bashbeoyukian's nephew, Azarig Bashbeoyukian, who had been wounded and killed during the fighting at Bash Abaran.

On this evidence, the accused were forced to confess to their deed and each admitted his share of complicity.

According to the confessions, the crime was committed by Sahag Holigian and Parunag Baghcheian who, on Vardavar Sunday night, together suffocated Mgrdich Bashbeoyukian in his sleep in order to steal his money, horse and other items. The next day, having hidden the body under piles of grass, they buried the deceased in the garden, under the cow pats. The detachment doctor performed a special exhumation of the body, which was in the designated place. After identification of the body, (since the right hand was missing, the glove rested on the corpse) it was buried in the Mukhaturian cemetery.

The other accused, Kevork Tumanian, despite having witnessed the crime, was threatened into silence and the next day, again under threat, had participated in burying the corpse. In this manner, the criminals had not confessed even during interrogation, despite knowing the truth.

And Krikor Der Simonian of Kharbert, despite not having participated in the crime or having any knowledge about it, had kept the bundle of items given to him by the murderer, Sahag, during interrogation.

Based on the above-mentioned information, the officers' meeting ruled:

1. To sentence Sahag Holigian and Parunag Baghcheian to death for the premeditated murder by asphyxiation of Mgrdich Bashbeolyukian in order to steal property and money.

2. To sentence Kevork Tumanian to imprisonment until the end of the war.

3. To sentence Krikor Der Simonian to three months' imprisonment.

After General Major Antranig, commander of the Armenian Special Striking Division, approved the above-mentioned verdict, it was implemented on August 29th, 1918 when Sahag Holigian from Gurun and Parunag Baghcheian from the village of Verin Adzbder, Shabin-Karahisar faced the firing squad in Angeghakot.

And the other two convicted, Kevork Tumanian and Krikor Der Simonian were sent to the Goris prison to serve their prescribed punishments.

I approve the above-mentioned ruling.

— General Major Antranig

News comes that the Turks have again proposed that the Armenians of Gyumri-Gjhadzor should submit to Turkish rule and disarm.

September 12: This is an historic day. The Commissars and people's representatives of the Armenian and Russian villages of Sisian are invited to a meeting in

Angeghakot. The decisions taken at that meeting have a decisive significance and consequence.

The agenda of the meeting is:

1. The issue of whether Antranig and his Division should remain in Sisian.

2. If the decision is positive, the issue of how to meet its requirements.

3. The issue of local self-defense.

4. The question of transportation of cannons and ammunition.

As a democratic person, Antranig had not wanted to do anything without the people's opinion; to stay in Sisian or not?

Almost all the representatives of the villages—except Gyumri-Gjhadzor (whose delegates arrived late)—have come. The meeting takes place in the church in Angeghakot.

At the meeting, Antranig clarified the essence of the issues on the agenda and the importance of the decisions to be taken. He said that he does not want to go against the people's will and so he is asking the people of Sisian if they want him and his division to stay. He says that the Turks are trying to repress and subjugate the Armenians by all means possible in order to finally eliminate them, and that they must fight against that. He also added that the meeting should deliberate thoroughly, as his presence in Sisian will undoubtedly be a reason for there to be clashes with the Turks and tragedies to occur. And if the people do

not desire his presence, let them not worry about where Antranig will go, or what he will do. He knows where he will go and what he will do.

The disposition of the people and the meeting was obvious. They had all decided to fight and never accept Turkish rule because they knew very well how the Turks would act, specifically towards the Armenians of Sisian, and they considered Antranig's presence in Sisian to be fortunate. Therefore, the meeting unanimously decided to ask Antranig to stay in Sisian with his Division.

After this decision the meeting decided, in order to meet the needs of the Division according to a proposal, to gather by apportionment 4000 pood of wheat and 2000 pood of barley from the 22 villages in Sisian. It was also decided to mobilize 20-25 year-olds for self-defense; and to provide the necessary number of horses for the transportation of ammunition.

September 14: The news around this time is surprisingly contradictory, from the most favorable to the most unfavorable, circulating with equal abundance and equal certainty. According to the favorable news, the Baku forces are victorious and the fight is in the vicinity of Gantsag at present. On the other side, the Russians have reached Dushet (near Tiflis).

September 15: The Sasoontsi⁵⁹ regiment, the infantry of which has already set off towards Daralakyaz, has decided to set off from Sisian for Daralakyaz. In fairness, the horsemen are moving towards Bazarchay and from

there to Daralakyaz, where they hope to find better means of making a living.

September 16: Today a letter has arrived from Goris, according to which, the Baku forces are bombarding Yevlakh (Yevlakh is a town near Gantsag, on the Baku-Gantsag rail-line, where there is a large railway bridge), and the sounds of the cannons are audible from Asgeran. At the same time, it adds, there is a battle for Zapugh (a gorge on the way from Goris to Shushi).

September 17: It has been decided that the Division should stay in either Sisian or Zangezur; but of course the Division needs clothes, munitions, etc. Fortunately, the Shushi and Gantsag Regiments, which carried with them a considerable quantity of ammunition and military equipment, had set off from Tiflis and Medz Gharakilise, towards Karabagh and Gantsag, at the start of spring. The number of soldiers in these Regiments was very small. After delivering the equipment, they were to form larger companies, amongst whom the items would be distributed.

But after great difficulties, barely a portion of that ammunition and clothing reached Sisian and Goris after which it became impossible to proceed to Shushi and Gantsag, as the Turks had closed the Zapugh gorge on the road from Goris to Shushi. And so it was possible to use those goods—clothes, shoes, and munitions, and so on—economically of course, keeping a portion for the self-defense fighters of each locale in the region.

For that reason, today the Division's infantry, who are dressed in tatters and without uniforms, many even

⁵⁹ The Sasoon regiment.

wearing civilian clothes, will be going to the village of Brnakot to receive whatever they can.

The road between Angeghakot and Brnakot is not that pleasant. There are heights you have to climb. Suddenly in a valley you will see Brnakot, a quite large mud-built village with trees. It is the largest, richest and most developed village in the region.

The job of distributing the clothing and equipment begins immediately. The soldiers stand in line. One gets bewildered as to who not to give anything to; they are all in rags and tatters. It is difficult in all conscience to say this one is not needy as, truly, they all have no clothes. They have absolutely no shoes, many are in sandals with holes in them and torn shoes. Many have just one layer of clothing on them, with no undergarments. The soldiers each have different forms of headgear—not one matches the other. None of them have socks. However, despite that being the situation, a choice must be made, because there is a limited quantity of items.

For better or worse, the soldiers began to fall into shape. Each one received something.

In the evening, once again, unfavorable news arrives. There is a serious battle near Zapugh; Gharaghshlagh, the large Armenian village on the other side of the gorge is burning. From Goris, Colonel Melik-Shahnazarian⁶⁰, the commander of the Shushi and Gantsag Regiment will go to their aid. The news from the other side of Sisian, in other words from the Gyumri-Gjhadzor side, is also bad. Once again, the Turks have proposed that the Armenians lay

⁶⁰ Colonel Sograd Peg Melik-Shahnazarian.

down their arms and they have given them a deadline. The Turks are gradually moving forward towards Daralakyaz and some Armenian villages in that area have already obeyed, while the Armenians in Gyumri are not that resolutely disposed. Besides, several times Turkish officials and the people have declared to the Armenians that 20,000 Turkish forces are already surrounding Sisian and the advance will be in three directions: Aravus (Sisian), and the villages of Gyumri and Chul-Mardiros. We are informed from Angeghakot that they can hear cannon fire in the direction of Chul.

September 18: We leave Brnakot. We are going to the Armenian villages of Uyts, and Gharakilisa⁶¹. The journey is across fields. We arrive in Uyts shortly thereafter. It is a small village and not very rich, but the people are hospitable. Then we depart towards Gharakilisa which is located at the center of Sisian. This is where the local companies are organized.

Bazarchay's (Vorodan River) must be crossed in order to go from Uyts or Brnakot to Gharakilisa. The village is stone-built and located at the water's edge. The inhabitants had been a mix of Armenians and Turks but with the Turks having fled at the break-out of clashes in spring, they are all Armenians now. It has an historic church. Here, the local companies comprised of new conscripts welcome the Commander. The village is bustling; the soldiers come and go and train. We leave for Angeghakot in the evening.

September 19: The Gyumri-Gjhadzor situation is not secure, not from the point of view of forces but from

⁶¹ Gharakilisa is a small village in the Sisian region, not to be confused with Medz Gharakilse, today's Vanadzor, which is in northern Armenia.

that of morale and resoluteness. There are individuals—and they are persons of position and influence—who are disposed to submit to the Turks. Their leader is the village Commissar, Nigolai Asdvadzadurov, a former chinovnik⁶². Today he came to Angeghakot, laid down his arms, and was imprisoned.

September 22: We are again in Brnakot, busy organizing military stores. The news of the Turkish movements towards Sisian are becoming more and more persistent. The most dangerous spot will be the incursion in the Aravus-Shkhlar direction because if the Turks ever advance on the Aravus-Shkhlar front they will go to the Aghudi-Vaghudi Turkish villages via the gorge and with that, the villages of Sisian will be divided into two parts, where not only will the Armenians be divided, but communications with Goris will also be cut off. In order to realize this plan, the Turkish villages of Ortakyugh, Jomardlu and Aravus on the edge of Sisian would have been used as an anchor for the enemy forces. A Turkish force coming from Nakhijevan, resting and consolidating in those villages, could quickly and easily realize this plan. Consequently, it was vital to remove the residents from their villages.

Towards this end, a meeting of all the national representatives of the region took place in Brnakot, in which it was decided to remove all Turks from those above-mentioned villages. The inhabitants of those villages had become a real threat to their neighboring Armenian

villages, by obstructing their threshing activities with awful fusillades of shots, day and night.

We reach the Armenian village of Tazakyugh by night.

September 23: Movement against the Turkish villages of Ortakyugh and Jomardlu begins all at once, early in the morning. The Turks resist quite a lot but fall back to the mountains. The same occurs in Aravus. The number of victims is not high because the aim of the battle is to expel the Turks from the villages, not to kill them. In this way, the villages in this region of Sisian can no longer serve as anchors for the advance of the enemy in this direction, because the next Turkish village from Aravus is at least one day away which, in those mountains, presents great difficulties for a regular army.

September 25: We leave Uyts and then, Gharakilisa. The situation is not very good but at least now there is no danger from the Sisian side.

There is no news from Nakhijevan. Since the occupation of that area by the Turks, it is impossible to communicate with that region. No one has any information as to what is happening there and what has happened to the Armenians who, willingly or unwillingly, stayed. Y. M. succeeded in reaching his native village of Asdabad in Nakhijevan by night and returned today. According to what he describes, they have left no Armenians in the entire region of Nakhijevan. They have killed the majority of women, men, and children, and taken away the pretty

62 An officeholder or bureaucrat serving in the Tsarist Russian government.

young girls. Many houses in the village are still full of Armenian corpses and the harems are full of Armenian girls.

September 26-27: The situation in Goris is becoming increasingly threatening. After burning Gharaghshlagh, the Turks are becoming bolder and more dangerous. The mission to go to the aid of that brave village is unsuccessful.

The Turks have now started to attack the region of Zangezur from three directions—Gornidzor, Khoznavar, and Khnatsakh.

The deputies of the Zangezur National Council have come yet again appealing for immediate help.

The situation is complex. Firstly, the villages of Aghudi-Vaghudi, located between the villages of Goris and Sisian, have once again blocked the Sisian-Goris road; the only open route is once again the mountainous Tarbas trail. If the people of Zangezur should have the misfortune of being forced to retreat, then using the mountain trail will become exceedingly difficult and almost impossible because only one person at a time can pass along that trail. The slightest carelessness will be fatal.

There is no doubt that all this is taking place with the help and participation of the Turkish forces. An Arab prisoner-of-war is caught, who relates that they have come from Ibrail (Romania) to Batum; after traveling for three days by train, their battalion walked for 5 days along the high road; their center is Kareagin; they have with them eight machine guns, and so on, and so on.

This all goes to show that Goris is in danger. It is necessary to help and it becomes vital to neutralize Aghudi-Vaghudi, secure the high road, and travel to Sisian will perhaps become easier. Consequently, Antranig wrote a letter to the Sasoon regiment in Daralakyaz and to Yapon, telling them to come to Sisian and remain there, and ordered that 100 soldiers from Sisian go the aid of Gyumri-Gjhadzor.

At the same time, 25-31 year-olds were called to arms for the self-defense of Sisian and to hold the important locations throughout Sisian: Bazarchay-Gyumri-Gjhadzor, Bnunis, Tazakyugh, Akhlatian, and Alelu. Local companies were to remain in these villages and the reserve company was to remain in Gharakilisa. Haig Krikorian, the head-quarters captain, would be the commander of the Sisian battalion.

From time to time, refugees come from Yerevan through the snow and cold and bring eye-witness information; and sometimes the visitor does not appear but the news he brings circulates, picking up various nuances along the way. In this way, news comes that someone has come to Sisian from Tiflis who relates that there are only Germans and Austrians in Tiflis; Khalil Bey⁶³ has come to Yerevan on behalf of the Turks; that he has been welcomed with roses; Nazarbekov and Dro⁶⁴ have left for Dilijan with

⁶³ Commander of the Ottoman Third Army; One of the slaughterers of Armenians, particularly in the provinces of Van and Paghesh; Bore the title of Pasha and later received the surname Kut (1881-1957).

⁶⁴ Dro, Drastamat Kanayan (1883-1956): Armenian freedom fighter, leader of the Battle of Bash Aparan (1918), general in the Armenian Army, Minister of War of the first Republic of Armenia (1920).

two regiments; Shahkhatuni⁶⁵ wants to leave, etc. However, this all seems unimportant to us. We have actual work before us and are occupied with that. For a long time now we have become skeptical about things we have not seen or heard for ourselves.

Prior to departing towards Goris, General Antranig calls upon the people of Sisian, announcing that he is going to the aid of Goris, that his departure is temporary, and he calls upon them to obey all orders and defend Sisian at all cost.

September 28: The bustle of military movement begins in the morning. The army begins to move. Gharakilisa is in the gorge and the high road and field are high above. The horsemen and the infantry climb and reach the high road. The Turks of Aghudi-Vaghudi are resisting again. And so the battle concentrates on those two villages. Up until then it had been impossible to transport the two field cannons belonging to the Shushi regiment to Goris because after the first clash the Turks had once again blocked the high road before the cannons were transported to Goris.

It is extremely hard work getting those heavy cannons up steep elevations. The horses brought from neighboring villages to be hitched to the cannons, are too weak to move them. Yokes are brought to yoke oxen and water buffalo to pull the cannons. The cannons can only be raised up to the high road by the oxen after a lot of noise, shouting and yelling.

⁶⁵ Arshavir (Asho) Shahkhatuni (1885, Alexandropol—1957, Paris), military superintendent of Yerevan, celebrated actor.

After a few rounds of cannon fire, the Turks left their villages and retreated down the valley to the Urut monastery (formerly known as the Vorodan Vank), to the village of Urut.

But it is already evening. The fighting has stopped. It is not possible to advance further, so the Division must spend the night outdoors, in an open field.

At night, two new representatives come from Goris with a letter from the colonel in which he says that the Turks have taken the Armenian village of Khoznavar and asks for immediate aid.

September 29: It is Sunday and Surb Khach⁶⁶ but no one here knows what to do on days such as this. What difference does it make? For a long time now the days are all the same for us. Anyway, we leave early.

The *yayla* around Goris is wonderful: on the left, tall mountains; on the right, firstly the rumble of the Vorodan River and further away the Tatev mountains and the heights of Ghapan; in front of you the Karabagh mountain chain, and below the Zangelan plains along the Hakaru River.

The weather is very hot, despite the fact that the elevation of this location is quite high. There is no water until we get close to Goris, where there is a spring called Shakar Chur⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Khachveradz, the Feast of the Transfiguration

⁶⁷ Sweet Water

We haven't yet arrived when a messenger comes from Goris, saying that the Turks have retreated 15 versts. The excitement is extraordinary and the horsemen ride nonstop.

We reach Goris in the evening. Before entering the valley, an exhilarated crowd came to welcome him with pomp. Though the joyous bursts of gunfire confuse the people of Goris at first because they did not expect it so soon, they quickly realize that it was Antranig who was coming.

The Division was billeted in the town. The change in Goris was noticeable. In summer, it was indifferent, unsympathetic. But now it conveyed another mood, and all of them were trying to ensure satisfaction, not to give any reason to offend, not be found inadequate. But whatever they did in Goris for our soldiers, we had felt more sincerity and heartfelt hospitality from the villagers in Sisian, from which we had just come, than here.

At every opportunity, each person that comes starts to tell a story about the fighting. It was some time now that the Armenian National Council of Shushi had transformed itself into a government and declared itself independent. Turkish Azerbaijan considered that region as its own.

However, munitions were needed in order to defend that independence. The National Council of Shushi knew that considerable ammunition was on the way for the Sush and Gantsag region; therefore, it wanted the munitions to arrive in Shushi as soon as possible, but it had been impossible to do so as the Turks had closed the Zapugh gorge. The

ammunition was steadily becoming even more vital. From Shushi to Goris, or more accurately, the village of Togh, is 70 versts (46 miles). There is only the one large Armenian village of Gharaghshlagh to act as a safe haven in between. The villagers of Gharaghshlagh are famous for their bravery.

Thus, the inhabitants of Shushi take horses and carts belonging to villagers of Gharaghshlagh towards the Zapugh gorge, in order to transport the munitions. The Turks however, taking advantage of the presence of Terekemen,⁶⁸ attack Gharaghshlagh and the transport traveling into the gorge, and set fire to Gharaghshlagh, the residents of which retreat to Shushi.

On the other side of the gorge, the attempt to go to the aid of Gharaghshlagh from the direction of Zangezur also fails because of bad organization.

Encouraged by this attempt, the Turks attack the region of Goris (Zangezur) from several directions—Gornidzor, Khoznavar and Khanatsakh. But when the Armenian self-defense and Antranig's Division move towards Zangezur, they leave.

With the destruction of Gharaghshlagh the Armenian base between Shushi and Goris is also eliminated.

September 30, October 1–10: The situation is uncertain. It is true that the Turks have stopped their aggressive course but there is no guarantee that they will not restart tomorrow. We must organize self-defense.

⁶⁸ Sheep-herding Turks.

For that, we must know the quantities of weapons and ammunition the region has. It is necessary to unite all the arsenals under the jurisdiction of one authority; to enlist all the youth and create regular companies; and to decide upon and prepare positions. Aside from that there is the issue of food for the armed forces and their horses. These are all issues in need of resolution and organization, and a great deal of time, energy and resolve is needed to organize them.

However, it seems that the Goris National Council and the people of Goris do not understand the moment, are indifferent and motionless. Delay and avoidance have replaced sacrifice in the list of virtues.

Winter is close. Soon the roads from Yerevan to Daralakyaz and Karabagh will be closed by snow. Many soldiers have been at the front for four years and want to go home. Now and then such soldiers and refugees come from Yerevan. They bring the strangest stories and legends with them—few bring newspapers. Three soldiers and two other familiar figures come—Stepan Sarkisian and Kostia, who have also brought papers with them. We read from the papers that the Turks have already captured Baku on September 15. And so, the unbelievable has been realized. Our greatest hope was pinned on Baku. So that too has fallen. Apart from that, Mianeh and Tabris are also in Turkish hands. Of course, this news greatly affected the people and the soldiers.

But our optimism would not allow us to be discouraged and we always believed that no matter how accurate

that all was, nevertheless, much must have happened since those days and the situation must have changed in our favor.

It has been a long time now that our belief in the accuracy of what was written in those papers has changed. Was it not those papers that had written that the famous Armenian platoon leader Antranig had been killed in Karabagh by an Armenian, while in fact Antranig, alive and well, was operating in Karabagh and had never noticed any such attempt against him?

Despite hearing all that bad news, an inner voice said that the great moment was close when we would see the situation change and even if a little late, we needed to get to work.

Letters received from various Commissars of the Sisian region appeared to be extremely reassuring and precise. The Darbas regional Commissar, Davit Mgrdichian writes that the Turks of the neighboring region of Shkhlar are leaving the region and request that the Armenians use their lands and houses but do not burn them. Others attest that the sound of cannon fire can be heard from the Nors Mountains. Others verify that the Turks are drawing back from the Nakhijevan region and burning the Armenian villages. So we assume that the English are advancing through Tabris towards Julfa-Nakhijevan. On the other hand, we receive news from Ghapan and Meghri that the sound of cannon fire can be heard in the direction of Persia.

So it was vital for the Division to be near to Nakhijevan, in Sisian, and to follow the comings and goings in that region.

Apart from that, there had recently been a series of disturbances in the Sisian local divisions, making the return of the Division to Sisian necessary.

Antranig decided to move to Sisian on the evening of October 10, and orders were given.

October 11: Preparations have already been made to leave for Sisian. Suddenly at midday a telephone call from the village of Togh announces that a delegation has arrived there from Shushi. Eager to receive information about Shushi and the outside world, the information communicated by the call appears to be optimistic. The allies have captured the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia; the Bulgarians sign a separate peace treaty; the Greeks join the war on the side of the Allies and the Allies have besieged Metz. But apart from these news items, we sensed that important events were about to occur. The very fact that they have come from Shushi through the Turks, in a phaeton⁶⁹ with a white flag showed that there was something perplexing in their coming. There was a premonition that they had an important, worrying piece of news.

The visitors from Shushi arrive in Goris toward evening. There are three of them, Mushegh Zakarian, Arsen Bakunts and Sergei Baghirov, from three political parties Dashnagsutian, Social Democrat and Joghovrtagan.

At night, in a tight circle in the presence of Zoravar Antranig and members of the National Council, they announce that in the previous month on September 25

the Turks had occupied Shushi. They had no precise information on the Turkish force but the Turks, after bombarding several villages in the region of Asgeran, had quickly been able to reach Shushi. The Turks occupied it without any resistance, and they said that the Armenians, particularly one section, had laid out a glorious reception for the Turks; further, that the armed youth had left the city and they themselves, being from the region of Zangezur, had been sent to Goris by the commission—comprised of Armenian and Turks—set up in Shushi, to “announce that which they had seen.” Shushi is occupied by the Turks.

October 12: Today, those who have come from Shushi are formally reporting the events to the National Council, regional commissars and a slightly wider circle of participants. It is clear that they have been sent to influence the mood in Zangezur, to submit to the Azerbaijan government and lay down their arms. “They have come to announce what they have seen.” That’s their mission. What is interesting is that three official documents in Turkish emerge. In the first, at the recommendation of the commission formed in Shushi, Dr. Misha Baronian, who is President of the National Council, is appointed the governor of the province of Zangezur by Azerbaijan; and Nikolai Hovsepov and Mikayel Safrasbegian, governors of B and A province, respectively. At the same time, the declarations of Turk Nuri Pasha of Gantsag became known, printed in Shushi and addressed to the Armenian people, demanding that they submit to the Azerbaijan authorities and to stay calm, threatening that they will be held severely culpable if they do not comply. There is also another declaration which

69 A light, open, four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage.

communicates that he is sending the army to the Jivanshir mountain regions because of the aggressive course of the Armenians and that the people should not follow the course and provocation of someone like Antranig, who is bribed by English gold.

After the report, considering the seriousness of the situation, it was decided to call representatives of all the villages of the province to a larger meeting to decide what direction should be taken next.

Despite all this taking place, simultaneously, necessary military action was initiated in the direction of Urut.

The news of the surrender of Shushi to the Turks badly affected the mood of the people because if it had been good news it would have come from the Baku-Shushi direction. From every point of view Shushi was the center of all Karabagh's power and intelligentsia. As a result of this information, 70 individuals from local company A alone, fled by night and returned to their homes.

October 13: The A and C mounted companies and platoons move towards Sisian before midday.

The village representatives of the region are gathered by midday. It is the regional meeting. Sixty-one representatives, National Council, and Commissars are present. Their inclination in general—especially amongst the village representatives—is in favor of resisting, not surrendering.

Halfway through the meeting, they are suddenly informed from Gornidzor that 1100 Turkish soldiers with cannons have reached Gharaghshlagh. This news created

a commotion amongst the participants of the meeting. Zoravar Antranig spoke and declared that the only way was to fight and die with honor and especially—to speak less and act now. He wanted to know what the meeting would decide to do, fight or surrender, according to which he would organize the actions of the Division.

The meeting gave way to a polarization. Some of the city representatives and intelligentsia suggested resisting if those who were coming were irregular troops and Turks, and surrendering if it was the regular force, while the villagers proposed resisting under any circumstance.

Outside, the people did not want to submit and categorically announced they would fight, although at the same time, the local companies were gradually diminishing.

The result of the consultation was announced in the evening. The meeting has decided 21 votes against to 27 in favor of resisting at all costs and obeying all Zoravar Antranig's requirements.

However, in such a critical issue as this, 27 votes for, from 61 representatives was not a very encouraging sign. In particular, the mentality of the masses was clear. Fighting without the assistance of the locals would be disadvantageous, particularly since the valley of Goris did not have a favorable position.

For that reason the military council, convened with the commanders of the Shushi and Gantsag regiments, decided not to place its hope on local promises, but to transport the military ammunition to Sisian or, if that was

not possible, to detonate it and to call upon the local armed youth to follow the Division and leave Zangezur.

That night many could not get any sleep before dawn. There was a lot of work. They only dozed off towards morning. And here it was!

October 14: The whole Division is ready early in the morning. One part had already left for Sisian the day before and those remaining are assembled in the square in Goris.

The residents have withdrawn to their houses and are subject to hopeless nightmares. What will happen when the Division leaves? Disheartened, the people sincerely want Antranig and the Division to stay, but it is clear that some of the town's intellectuals are disposed to showing a passive, even sympathetic attitude to the Turkish incursion. The region is not disposed towards accepting Turkish domination at all and is decisively in favor of fighting, but the course taken by the town's intelligentsia makes them circumspect. Besides, the villages in the region have not yet contacted each other to determine their stance.

The 80 year-old white-bearded priest of Daralakyaz, who has participated as a brave fighter in the volunteer regiments from the very start of the 1914 volunteer movement, is also here.

We are waiting for the armed troops from the regions who are late. But it is not expedient to wait too long as the valley of Goris is a dangerous position. Consequently, Antranig decided to take the Division up to a higher position, towards Sisian.

Before leaving, the priest of Daralakyaz spoke, explaining what damage the indecisiveness and unwillingness to fight of the people of the Zangezur region will bring to the Armenians of both this and other regions.

Then Antranig spoke, declaring his belief that, as a result of that indecisiveness he also will be very careful towards future responsibility; that as a result of that indecisiveness he also is forced to avoid fighting in that region; that there is only one path for the Armenian nation and that neither migration, nor the open-hearted reception of Turkish domination can save the people. It is necessary to fight, and if we are to die, at least we should die with honor. We are invaluable. Finally, he swore in the name of the most sacred memories, saying that although it was true that he was coming out of Goris, he was not leaving. He would keep part of the force in constant touch with the town and if ever the region decisively, sincerely decides to fight, he would be ready, obligated to come and help at the first rifle shot.

And the Division moved out towards the heights of Goris, towards the *ayala* and Sisian.

It was an inspiring scene; the sections of the Division were encamped in an orderly fashion all along the trail from the top of Goris to the village of Gharakilisa. Mounted company A was encamped at the very top of Goris. Next to that, towards Sisian, was company C. Then came the infantry, horsemen, machine guns and so on. The entire Division is ready and prepared. Even he, Antranig, with his sciatica, sleeps outdoors under a tent. The soldiers and

commanders of the Shushi and Gantsag regiments are also with the Division. The refugees have already completely passed from the Zangezur region to the Sisian region.

Tonight was an historic night. The Zoravar is in a tent outdoors. At 11 o'clock at night the massive, resolute young man Zakar D. Ghazarian, the attorney to the Sisian region, comes to visit the tent. He brings with him letters just arrived from Yerevan. It is winter and communications with Yerevan are broken. Barely once every 15 days or month does a traveler risk coming with letters and bringing news. There is plenty of word-of-mouth news. The important news is also confirmed by letter. "Bulgaria has made peace and disarmed. Chatalja⁷⁰ is being bombarded. The Turkish forces are retreating from the Caucasus in order to defend Constantinople. The allies have entered German soil." All these reports were inspiring. Antranig is deeply convinced that it is all true, all true because he believed from the start of the war that it would be like that eventually.

And immediately that night he communicates this information to the National Council in Goris stating that they should not abandon or submit to the Turks and that he would quickly return to Goris. And indeed, as a result of the news the Goris-Shushi-Yevlakh stretch becomes more attractive—forbid the Turks from invading Zangezur, remove the Turks from the Shushi region and advance to Yevlakh... Gantsag... Baku, who knows?

⁷⁰ Ottoman Army Headquarters, close to Istanbul.

October 15: Going to Goris is good but we also have things to do in Sisian. The danger in that region has not yet been eliminated. Despite the encouraging news, the Turks still propose that the Armenians of the Nors-Mazra-Gyumri-Gjhadzor region submit to them. Therefore it is also necessary to deal with affairs in Sisian. After all, if ever Zangezur submits to Turkish authority, by force or voluntarily, it will then be the turn of the population of Sisian. So, prior to crossing to Goris it is vital that Sisian decides on its stance.

To that end, this evening a meeting of the commissars and people's representatives of the Sisian region will take place in Gharakilisa.

The meeting will hear the report on the situation and the questions asked. Will Sisian fight or not? And if it decides to fight, will it take upon itself all forms of physical, material and moral sacrifices?

To the honor of the *Sisiantsi*⁷¹, once again the meeting decides never to submit, to fight to the end and liberate or die. And what could a *Sisiantsi* do? Migrate? Where to? There was already death, hunger and disease everywhere. Moving from place to place in wintertime is not a joke. Submit? But who does not know how the Turks would treat the proud *Sisiantsi*?

The meeting decided:

1. to fight,

⁷¹ *Sisiantsi*: A native of Sisian.

2. to mobilize 20 to 40 year-olds, and
3. to satisfy Zoravar Antranig's demands by all possible means.

Arshag Shirinian, a member of the Zangezur Central National Council, who had gone to Yerevan as a Zangezur delegate to learn about the political situation of Zangezur and to request assistance from the Armenian government, arrived before the end of the meeting.

The viewpoint of the Yerevan government however, is not the same as that of the people of Zangezur, and Arshag Shirinian, as a true revolutionary and interpreter of the people's opinion, declares his conviction: Resist! Fight!

The Shushi regiment and its corporal will remain in Sisian to deal with self-defense activities there.

October 16: Early in the morning, the Division is already set. It will go once again to Goris. At the same time, a letter has been received from Goris saying that a conference convened by the representatives of the entire region has decided to fight, consequently to invite Antranig and the Division to go to Goris-Zangezur. Barely had the Division moved when the authorized representatives of the region of Goris came, asking on behalf of the people that Antranig once again go to Goris.

The entire high road was full of soldiers and their "Hurrah"s resounded from one end to the other like endlessly stretching, continuous waves of thunder.

Despite their critical situation, the Turks were showing their excessive proclivity to dominate and conquer. News reached us that the Turks have set the Armenian villages of Khndzoresk and Gornidzor a deadline of 12 o'clock today, and that Izzet Beg, the Turk appointed regional governor, has invited the village elders to a meeting.

In the evening we are in Goris. The public joyously welcome Antranig and the Division. They all settle into their previous billets.

The representatives of Ghapan region also arrive. Hearing that Antranig had left Goris, they have come to beg him not to leave, because Ghapan has also decided to fight.

That night, poring over the map of Zangezur, the issues of the region's self-defense and the necessary soldiers, their arming and supply of provisions, kept the minds of those responsible for the region's self-defense occupied into the late hours.

October 17: The distribution of the soldiers takes place according to the plan.

Together with self-defense, there is also the issue of eliminating local anarchy. As long as Antranig was in the region, order was maintained due to his popularity, discipline and especially, justice. But once he had left, anarchy had swept the region, and restless elements had found a suitable time to settle new and old scores. Baseless or justified accusations, and familiar tribal ties did not make the resolution of those challenges easy.

In order to put an end to all that, it would be necessary for Antranig to make his presence felt once again.

The flow of news has stopped once again. There are no new arrivals. The old information circulates around the population, with various embellishments.

If what they say is true, then we should wait for communications with the English to be established along the Meghri or Gyumri stretch any day now. All communication points are in the hands of the Turks.

In particular, we do not know much about the Meghri region. Only the Ghapan representatives relate that Doctor Kh. Bonapartian, the former commander of battalion C and Sarkis Jebeji, commander of the cavalry company is there and that the region of Meghri, despite numerous demands by the Turks, has also not surrendered. They described what effective defense positions that region has, how the Turks had tried to trick the Armenians by offering to open the road between Ordubad and Zangelan and how the Armenians had replied to that offer—by just sending a bullet.

October 18: Conflict between the villager and the town dweller in the region has existed from the beginning. Villagers have regarded town dwellers as exploiters of the region, and its intellectuals as parasitic and feeble. That mentality was further reinforced during the recent events when a portion of the town's intellectuals leaned towards welcoming the Turks' entry into Zangezur in a more peaceful manner than with guns. In general, the people of the villages and towns have an unfriendly attitude towards

urban intellectuals. Paghshi Hovsepov of Khanadzakh is a typical, vehement representative of that mentality—a true man of the people—who, even when the people of Goris were at their weakest, was the only one who had resolutely decided to fight with his village and never submit to the Turks.

Today, Paghshi Hovsepov and his horsemen conducted a well-armed march through Goris and made a speech in which he presented the intelligentsia as useless. He ended his speech exclaiming, “Long live the illiterate people, down with the intelligentsia.”

October 19: The region's self-defense is pressing forward quite well now. All positions are prepared, the necessary number of soldiers are provided for each position, and their provisions are fairly organized. There are even more reserve troops than was thought. Now that the work is more or less in order, it is essential to amend and see the positions personally and give instructions and advice to the commanders of the position guards. For that reason, Antranig is going to the village of Karashen where the reserve force is.

We leave Goris in bad weather. It is raining, but who cares? We climb the slope and after traversing switchback valleys, we once again come to a steep height. Everything all around is covered in mist; nothing can be seen. No one can imagine that the village is that close. Suddenly, from the sounds of hurrahs, you understand that you have already entered the village. Karashen is a village built in the valley, a little distance from the Goris-Tegh high road. Some

of the houses are stone while the majority are without walls, more like holes burrowed into caves in the foot hill, which have been transformed into homes by being given regular shapes, real caverns.

The situation has compelled the region to have speedy communication lines; therefore, all the villages situated on the front have telephone links with Goris.

In order to rest from the humidity and fatigue of the day, we have already gone to bed when the telephone broadcasts new information, new successes. The caller is Arshag Shirinian. He announces that the Allies have captured Chatalja, Captain Pantukhd is coming to Goris from Yerevan, and many Turks are leaving Sisian.

October 20: Early in the morning, Antranig is busy organizing the reserve forces. A, B, and C companies are formed.

Then we leave for the Armenian village of Togh, which is the largest and richest village in Zangezour. The road soon turns into a path through fields. The deep Zapugh valley appears in the distance, beyond which is Mount Markiz (which dominates its surroundings). By the side of Markiz village appears the serpentine road, the high road, and then the Hakaru gorge and on the other side Mount Markiz. Further on from there, we see the high road once again, which climbs up to Gharaghshlagh, that proud but unfortunate Armenian village; the monastery near it; and then mountains upon mountains. To the south, the plain of Zangelan and the mountains of Persia stretch into the distance.

After going for about eight versts, we reach Togh, the first Armenian village in Zangezour when coming from Shushi to Goris and consequently the most important point of our self-defense. Togh village is also built in a valley and if there are some more or less normal houses, there are also houses from the prehistoric period carved into the rocks. The streets are narrow, undulating, irregular and muddy. There's little water.

Captain Pantukhd comes to announce that he confirms what we have previously heard and read about the success of the Allies.

But quite some time has passed since his departure from Yerevan. In those days the Allies had new surprises, new conquests, and new successes every day. Consequently, we can deduce the situation that the Allies may be in today.

But there is also sad news. They call from Goris, informing us that news has arrived from Agulis that, apart from the villages of Bist, Nazrvan, Paraga and Ramis, the other villages in the region have accepted Turkish domination, laid down their arms and are now in a hellish situation. Turks surround the villages and demand money, provisions, girls, and so on. Khalil Bey, residing in Ordubad, has placed a levy of 87,000 roubles on the village of Tsghna alone, of which he has already received 65,000 in jewels and valuables. Agulis has surrendered their rifles, bullets and ten-round guns. The regional commissar A. M. plays a wretched role in all of this.

Of course this news upset us all. However, we cannot help as the region of Agulis is very far away.

October 21: Today we receive news from Shushi. Three persons have come from the Armenian village of Khdzapert and brought a letter with them. The writer of the letter is the military commander of the region (Ardem Lalaian). According to the letter, it is true that Shushi has been handed over to the Turks. Local and Turkish soldiers have moved in—overall, 1500 soldiers, 4 cannons and 12 machine-guns. No guns have been handed over to the Turks from the town or from the villages, which have also not submitted to the Turks. There is a battle for the villages of the Chartar region. Movement by the Turks is expected from that side. Finally, a new messenger will come in two days.

So, the situation was clear. Apart from the town of Shushi, the regions of Dizak, Khachen, Varanta, and Jivanshir have not submitted to the Turks. We must wait for the messenger for a more definitive opinion, particularly since the signature on this first letter was not very legible.

On leaving the village of Tegh, once again we advance to the south over open country, fields. We are going to the positions of the Armenian village of Gornidzor. Gornidzor, together with the Armenian villages of Tegh and Khndzoresk, are the Front of that region and together form a triangle, of which it is the protruding corner. Consequently, both in the past and in the future, Gornidzor has been and will be the first striking point for attacks on that region by the Turks. For this reason, messengers from the Dizak region come through Khdzapert via Gornidzor.

It is a small village of 120 houses, located in a valley, with a small number of gardens.

After a short rest, the group moves towards the large Armenian village of Khndzoresk.

The road is through an open plain. The Turkish positions can be seen on the other side of the valley separating the Armenian region from the Turkish one.

After going through a forested valley, we start to climb. A short while later, we are at the highest position of that region, an Armenian position. Trenches have been dug and guards are ready and prepared.

A little further on, the Armenian village of Khndzoresk—the largest in the region with over 1000 houses, spreads out in the valley. Some of the houses are regular houses, but the majority are caverns.

We return to Goris the next day. Impatience eats away at everyone's nerves and minds. We want to hear about and operate in the direction of Shushi.

October 26: They finally informed us from Tegh that the messenger from Shushi has arrived. Impatient to get the news, they communicate by telephone the information that the messenger has communicated to them orally.

Two hours later, the messenger presents himself to the Zoravar. He is a simple, naïve, mild-mannered old man—wiry, with a full head of unruly hair. When he removes his cap respectfully, he becomes a devoted, marvelous old man. Who... which youth would dare to travel all alone from Khdzapert, in the region of Dizak, cross mountains,

valleys, go through Turkish regions by night and reach the Armenian region of Gornidzor? What this old man, Alexan Arakelian of Harar related was thrilling—how he had passed through Turkish villages by night; how the people, following their leaders, have not disarmed, have not submitted to the “Osmanlu” (Ottoman Turks); and how they all long for Antranig to go there. His simple, peasant’s language is even more striking. He calls notable figures on both sides ‘Agha’⁷² He does not rush. You would think he is relating very ordinary things. He relates all he has seen in a phlegmatic manner and only adds that “all are ready and awaiting the arrival of the ‘Agha’ (Antranig).” When he is asked what payment he wants for his services, he answers, “If the Agha pleases, a three-rounder.” In other words, a Mosin⁷³ rifle.

He has not taken the letters out yet; you must ask him. Even after asking he does not hurry, he doesn’t look for them. He presents his walking stick, indifferent and composed.

It is understandable. They immediately undo one end of the walking stick and the letters appear. There are several of them. The most important is the one written by the commander of Varanta, Sograd Beg, addressed to Zoravar Antranig. In it he describes how the Turks entered Shushi with 1500 soldiers and 4 cannons; how a group of Armenians cordially agreed and welcomed them; that the region, however, never disarmed or submitted; how the

⁷² Turkish: An honorific title.

⁷³ The 3-line rifle M1891 used by the armed forces of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and various other nations.

Turks gave an ultimatum to the regions to disarm and hand over one tenth of their income; how the villages of the Chartar region refused, after which about 400 troops with 4 cannons and 6 machine guns go from Shushi to those villages, but they all fall into the trap and are taken prisoner, together with the cannons and machine guns. It also reveals how some Armenians in Shushi had approached the mayor, Kerasim Melik-Shahnazarov and appealed to him by letter, asking that he obey the Turks and disarm to save the children (the letter sent to him by those individuals was enclosed).

Finally, he revealed that the region is ready, has resolved to fight to the end and to that end, regional Commands have been organized and that 15,000 armed men can be counted on, if only Antranig moves towards Shushi. At the same time, there was a letter to Antranig from the commander of the Hadrut region, Aghachan, inviting the Zoravar to his region, promising him everything.

So the implementation of the Shushi-Baku plan was becoming feasible.

The message to come to Goris was immediately sent to Sisian, to Colonel Melik-Shahnazarian, the Commander of the Shushi Company and Shushi Regiment. The army was to be centralized.

October 30: Moving towards Shushi had been seriously considered, but there were two important points there:

1. To be certain that it was the desire of all the Armenian population of Karabagh that Antranig and the Division go to the aid of the people of Karabagh, and

2. Do the people of Zangezur want to go to the aid of Karabagh, with all resources necessary; personnel, munitions, and means of transport?

On the first point, a letter was written and sent to Karabagh so that the people express their opinion on such an important and responsible step and an invitation be sent by the peoples' representatives and not by individuals. On the second point, the specially convened Zangezur Conference decided to go to the aid of Karabagh, by all means.

October 31: Today the messenger will leave for Shushi. The decisions of the Zangezur Conference and other important information will be communicated written on cloth and sewn into garments, as it was in the Middle Ages; although, even today, this was the best method in Karabagh.

The numbers of those coming from Shushi are increasing. From Togh, we have been told that 13 people from Zangezur have arrived in Togh and will come to Goris.

November 1: The *Zangezurtsis*⁷⁴ come and announce that Bolis (Constantinople) is already occupied; Germany disarmed; the Turkish losses in Chartar are real; 150 prominent Armenians have been arrested and imprisoned in Shushi; Turkish morale is low, and the post

service from Tiflis to Shushi is operating but the Turks have not handed the newspapers from the last post over to the Armenians.

At the same time, a letter comes from Yerevan, which reveals that Khalil pasha has recalled Nuri pasha from Gantsag. The newspapers tell us that Georgia has given the Armenians an ultimatum that all the territory up to Shahali should be handed over.

All of this is fine. But a lot of things on which we have no information whatsoever must have changed since the dates printed on all the letters and newspapers and today.

November 8: Someone has come from Yerevan: Yesayi Melik-Yeolchian of Sisian, who has brought letters and oral information according to which, the Turkish cabinet has fallen, and the conditions of the ceasefire signed with Turkey are as follows:

1. Open the Dardanelles;
2. Pull the Turkish troops back to Yertznga and disarm.
3. Recognize the independence of Armenia, Assyria, and Mesopotamia. We also know that the Missions of the Allies are in Vladikavkaz and are coming to Tiflis; the German troops are leaving Georgia; and Russia does not recognize the Brest-Litovsk treaty and has given the Turks seven days to retreat to the 1914 borders.

⁷⁴ Inhabitants of Zangezur.

Everyone is enthusiastic and wants to leave this inactive region as soon as possible, to go towards the region of activity.

November 9: It is a day of mourning today, both for the Division and for the people. It is the funeral of the one of the commanders of the machine-gun unit, Vosgean Stepanian of the village of Pakarj in the region of Kemakh.

Vosgean was an energetic, pleasant, friendly youth who had come from Romania voluntarily, liked by all his comrades-in-arms. He was in Sisian when the hopeful news started to come and the young dreamer, encouraged by the realization of his cherished ideal, had started to preach the Independence of Armenia (Lloyd George's speech), and encourage the people of Sisian to organize, sacrifice, and help Karabagh.

He returned from Sisian with a chill and unwell. Two days later, the medical diagnosis confirmed that Vosgean had [contracted] smallpox. Today we buried that young, joyful, promising dreamer in one corner of the Goris cemetery. The ground is covered by two feet of snow but that is not an obstacle to the people and particularly his comrades-in-arms conducting their sacred duty. Speeches were made both in the church and at the cemetery.

November 11: The news from Shushi is overdue. Patience is stretched to its limit. The old messenger has not yet left. Dense fog in the Hakaru canyon is an obstacle to the journey.

But the delay can be fateful for the people of Shushi and Karabagh. The most impatient are the *Shushetsi*

soldiers who, because of circumstances, have been left in the Zangezur region. Among them are Aghajan, a restless and brave young man and Lieutenant Arshag Balasarian, a serious and measured military man.

Both, with certain instructions, depart towards Tegh-Gornidzor to go on to Karabagh.

November 15: Life while waiting brings monotony. Sometimes variety should be introduced into it.

Antranig thinks about creating a false alarm.

In the evening, ostensibly on the arrival of a piece of news, he orders all the Division to immediately move towards Tegh. A real commotion and clamor began. All the soldiers hurriedly go to their units, while the confused civilians wait to hear what unexpected event has happened. The infantrymen are given just five minutes and the cavalry, ten. In ten minutes, the Division and the entire force are out of the town and moving towards Tegh.

A little later, all the soldiers return to town in the same formation, to the delight of the people.

November 16: This evening however, the alarm is genuine. The brigade leader of the third cavalry company—which is camped in the village of Khndzoresk—goes out towards the Turkish positions with his group of ten on reconnaissance. The Turks attack the horsemen. A fight starts, at which point B cavalry company and part of B company camped at Gornidzor go to the battleground.

At first this news, which was announced in a very uncertain and contradictory way, was the reason the

Zoravar sent the cavalry and infantry, to preclude any surprises.

A little later the issue was clarified and the fighting stopped.

November 21: Finally the news came that the messengers to Shushi, A. and A. of Hadrut, had returned while Lieutenant A. had remained there. Everyone was impatient to hear news about Shushi.

This time the invitation to go to Shushi is by popular demand and signed by numerous regional and military leaders. So there is no doubt that the population in that region want the Zoravar and the Division to go there and help.

However, there is a contradiction in the two letters received. While in one the immediate departure for Karabagh is sought, the second one requests a delay of ten days to avoid bloodshed.

Considering the proposal of the largest regions to reschedule for 10 days and in particular, to avoid the responsibility for bloodshed, it was considered suitable to postpone for 10 days and to use that time to prepare.

November 27: Nine of the ten days have already passed. We still have no news about a peaceful, negotiated ending to the issue. Therefore we must consolidate our forces at Tegh village, which is the last station in Zangezur on the road to Shushi, from where we will move forward at the end of the predetermined period.

The majority of the Division and local forces have almost consolidated in that region. Today Zoravar Antranig will depart with his horsemen. Who knows what the outcome of the undertaking will be? Perhaps the Division will get to Shushi without any clashes and stay there. In any case, there is no doubt that in the case of success there is no return to Goris. And there is no doubt about success. Consequently this departure is also a farewell.

As a souvenir of their sincere thanks and best wishes, the “Armenian Womens’ Association of Goris” have made a flag using a dark red silk material with the inscription “Armenian Special Striking Division” embroidered on it in gold thread.

The blessing and presentation of the flag ceremony will take place prior to the Zoravar’s departure.

It was an emotional sight. The entire cavalry, the newest and most precious part of the Division, stand in a circle in Goris Square with curious and grateful people gathered on all four sides. A table is placed in one corner.

A little later the Zoravar, clergy, Zangezur National Council and all the dignitaries come. They bring the flag, red with gold-threaded tassels and inscription. The clergy bless it and the Womens’ Association representative presents it to the Zoravar with a few words, expressing their gratitude to the Zoravar and Division and wishing their devoted, patriotic efforts be crowned with success.

The Zoravar begins to speak. With strong yet emotional emphasis he declares that “Many flags have been

presented to date, which have all been signs of blood, ruin, massacre and tragedy. He wishes that this flag will be the last and will bring success and peace. Then he calls for each Armenian individual, particularly the *Zangezurtsi*, to be brave, defend his right and fight for his nation's freedom and his life, honor and the defense of his property. "This is the only way for every dutiful Armenian. Long live those dutiful fighters."

Accompanied by the sound of "hurrahs" and clapping, Zoravar and the Division swiftly marched on out of town towards the high road, waving the new red flag of the Division at the front.

It is already dark when we reach the village of Tegah. The village is full. But what can we do? We must find accommodation somehow for a day or two. Therefore, we cannot be finicky in any way, saying that there is no bed or bedcover, or that you have slept on the floor or had to share a cover, or sleep in the same bed with someone else in a fraternal manner and so on.

November 28: Today is a day for preparation, organization, instructions, and therefore, anger and beatings.

Oh, whoever is familiar with the sluggishness, indifference and desire to avoid responsibility of some of the people of this region and has seen Zoravar Antranig's tense, nervous work, obeyed and accepted his indisputable commands, and been subjected to his fiery temper and in particular his disciplinary beating—only he can imagine what a day this has been.

It is an historic scene. To free the suffering people of Karabagh from the Turkish yoke. It is every Armenian's solemn duty—especially that of the *Zangezurtsis*—to make every sacrifice to reach that goal. Previously the Zangezur conference had expressed and decided to make every sacrifice to save Shushi and Karabagh.

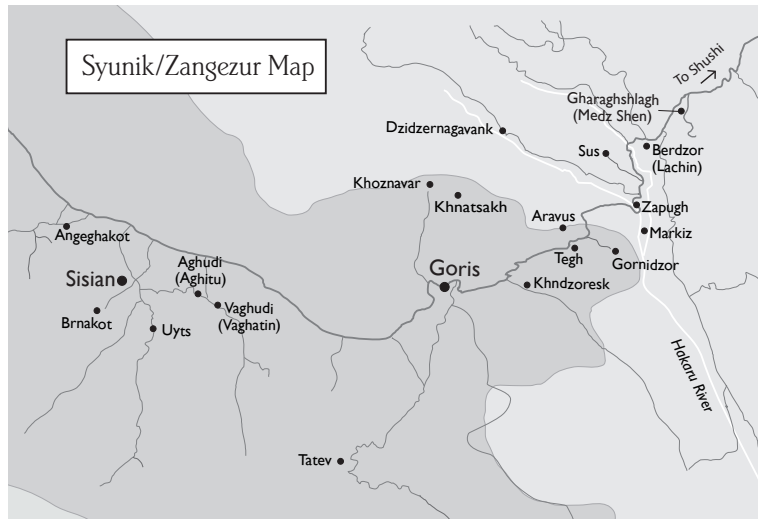
The Division's resources are insufficient for this lofty undertaking. The *Zangezurtsi* must help with men, transport, provisions and food for the horses.

Unfortunately, nothing had been done. Horses are necessary to hitch to the cannons. So they must be found and tried. Horses are necessary to transport munitions and food for the soldiers, the food and hay for the horses, and to transport the sick and wounded.

It has been decided that each of the villages must obtain a certain number of horses and pack animals, and bring bread, barley and hay.

Apart from that, it is necessary to organize military arrangements, give the necessary instructions to each unit of the Division, the local troops, transportation units, provision units, and take precautionary measures.

With all there is to do, it is truly difficult and irritating to see that nothing has been done and that many try to avoid performing their duty. Particularly frustrating is the fact that only one person is occupied doing all this. Where possible it was the duty of many to conduct their part in this task.



And thus the anger, even beatings, become completely understandable, even just.

Today many were subjected to that rebuke and subsequent beating. But in the future all those who bore that painful feeling remembered those moments—when crystallized patriotism and energy had no other way of expressing themselves but in that outburst—with a certain amount of respect and dedication.

Before getting into bed, everything was organized and ready.

The moment dictated it, and Zoravar was ready to only allocate a few hours for his physical rest.

November 29: Everyone was already set and ready at 3:30 in the morning. In order to arrive at another

settlement by evening, it is necessary to depart at night. Moreover, it is necessary to avoid clashes as far as possible. Consequently, if ever the division could approach and neutralize the Markiz heights dominating the Zapugh and Hakaru gorges by night, clashes would be avoided; otherwise the Turks, trusting the Markiz, would be able to easily obstruct the Division's progress.

The instructions from the day before were repeated for everyone and the Division moved towards Zapugh gorge before first light.

The way to Zapugh is through open fields. After going for 14 to 17 versts we reach the Zapugh gorge—a steep, rocky precipitous abyss. The journey descends winding into the gorge where the abundant waters of the Zapugh River flow.

Then the high road, curling around a sharp corner of a delta, enters the second gorge, the Hakaru gorge, through which the Hakaru River flows. The path on the other side of the Hakaru gorge rises once again and passes through the ruined Armenian village of Gharaghshlagh then, passing the peak of Ttu Chur⁷⁵ (Lisakor), enters the province of Shushi and the town of Shushi.

Mount Markiz, the largest and dominant height in the region, rises in the center of the delta formed by the confluence of the Zapugh and Hakaru Rivers. That position dominates both the high road of the Zapugh gorge and that of Hakaru. The Zapugh gorge extends north up to the Turkish mountainous region of Minkend and the Hakaru

⁷⁵ Armenian for Sour Water.

gorge extends upwards to the snow-clad mountains of Turkish-Kurdish Haji-Samlu.

After converging, the Zapugh and Hakaru are called Hakaru and descending south, spill into the Araz in the region of Kareagin.

Over 20 Turkish villages such as Vari Avdallar, Markiz, Ghzljgh, Sultankend, Malipeglu, Sus, Zeyva, Syumyuklyu, Navruzlu, Chaykend, Tatdarasi and others are established in various inlets on the Delta. The Turk people in those villages, and of the region, are well-known as marauders. Even during the period of Russian domination, there were no fewer incidents of marauding and robbery, and even the presence of Russian Kazaks has not been enough to restrain these thieves and bring them into line.

After the Russian revolution the Turks in the region became more audacious. Apart from numerous discrete killings and crimes, they had closed the Goris-Shushi road to passers-by and soldiers returning home, robbed them, killed them and stolen their arms. This is where the 217 deserters from Karabagh were killed.

And in summer, when a section of the refugees, trusting the permission given by the Turks, try to go to Shushi, after crossing the Zapugh bridge they find the Hakaru bridge closed before them. Being stuck between gunfire from both sides—because shooting also begins from the Zapugh side—they suffer considerable losses and barely manage to get to Togh village.

The bones of those soldiers and migrants are still visible a short distance from the road. In the same way, it

was the villages of this region which, two months ago, with the help of the Terekemen, attacked Gharaghshlagh, the Armenian village in this region. They burned and destroyed it and then tried to raid Zangezur from the direction of Gornidzor and Khnatsakh.

After those successes and experience, and in particular the occupation of Shushi, the Turks of the region had become more audacious. It was clear from far away that they always protect Markiz and there is no shortage of guards there.

But it is difficult to think that the region's Turks would want to resist the advance of Zoravar and the Division without outside help.

Approaching Zapugh gorge, the Division and Antranig saw that the Turks already hold Markiz and immediately started firing on the Division, both from the village and the mountain. So it was obvious that the Turks of the region wanted to be an obstacle to the Division's advance.

Fighting started. The Division descended into the Zapugh gorge and occupied the already deserted village of Zapugh. Then the Division started to advance on the high road to the other gorge, the Hakaru, simultaneously making an encircling movement on Mount Markiz and the similarly named Turkish village by its side.

Advancing towards Markiz is tiring. That rocky region is unfamiliar and always uphill. Advancing on the high road on the other side toward Hakaru and Avdallar would require many losses because the other bank of the Hakaru presents rocky, natural strongholds and hiding

places, particularly in the area of the Turkish village of Kearavuz, the population of which are notorious as marauders. Besides, those positions dominate the high road, so it was not difficult for sharpshooters to hit every passing foot soldier or horseman traveling on the high road.

Unfortunately, the sharp side of that delta, with its various zigzags and endless high road, is prone to gunfire—the Turkish positions of the Markiz region being on one side and the Kearavuz positions on the other.

The fighting continued in two directions—Markiz and Hakaru—until late into the night. The enemy fired abundantly, and it became apparent right from the start that it had prepared for resistance beforehand because they had orderly trenches, in the Turkish manner, and there were also a considerable number of askers⁷⁶ there, a fact that was also later confirmed.

Despite natural difficulties, by night fall the Division occupied positions, but prominent soldiers were wounded and died: Corps. Captain Stepan Sarkisian (Stesar), the young revolutionary from Karabagh, died of wounds to his abdomen; Hovhannes Aghajanian, assistant to the battalion commander, and others were killed.

The darkness of late night covered everything and the sky above Zapugh gorge was red from the Division's bonfires. Luckily, the weather was warm and the soldiers were well-disposed to spending the night outdoors.

November 30: The battle resumed early morning. The importance of Markiz became apparent during the

previous day's fighting. For that reason the occupation of that position was initiated.

Simultaneously, Aghajan, the leader of the local horsemen, would try to cross to the other side of the gorge and strike at the rear of the Kearavuz Turkish positions.

The cannons started bombarding the Turkish positions in the direction of Kearavuz from morning while Aghajan descended the gorge to attempt the plan. But an encircling move in such close proximity came across many difficulties. Barely had we descended the gorge when Aghajan tries to pass in front of the enemy positions with his detachment. They are subjected to a horrific shower of cannonballs as a result of which his horse is killed and he is slightly injured, as is one of his friends. It was now clear that an enveloping move in that stretch would have no chance at success, while an enveloping movement from Gornidzor would sorely need many more available troops and time.

The operation in the direction of Markiz developed successfully, however, thanks to the fact that it was possible to distribute both foot soldiers and horsemen widely in that direction, something that was not possible in the movement towards Kearavuz. On the Kearavuz side our soldiers were forced to pass very close to the enemy positions. Even after passing those positions the steep rocky gradient of the gorge made a quick ascent impossible.

The important thing therefore was the occupation of Markiz. Here the difficulty was that the enemy was

⁷⁶ Turkish: Soldier.

established in very strong trenches built with the latest scientific systems, located in dominating positions.

Nevertheless brave, relentless attacks by the Division and forces of the local infantry and horsemen, gradually squeezed the Turkish lines. In the afternoon they occupied the village of Markiz, the region's bloodthirsty den. It only remained to occupy the heights. But due to the injury sustained by Armenag Mikayelian, the commander of C Cavalry Company during the occupation of the village, we could not implement that task today.

December 1: The fighting began in the morning. The cannons intermittently bombard the Kearavuz positions. The attack on Markiz began, and that position fell into the hands of the Armenians before noon. By advancing further, the forces in that direction also seized Sus and Zeyva, while Cavalry Company B crossed the Hakaru Bridge and entered the Turkish village of Avdallar without resistance. So there was no obstacle to the advance towards Shushi, in the direction of Avdallar-Gharaghshlagh-Ttu Jur (Lisakor). After Avdallar, the Turks could not create an opportunity for resistance anywhere. With the seizure of Avdallar, the Turkish positions of Kearavuz were also neutralized. Turk nomads started to appear from that side. Having loaded their belongings on their horses, donkeys and oxen, they were leaving.

The plan had become clear and easier. Obstacles towards Shushi were eliminated. It was only necessary to give the order ... Onward!

But news came that a messenger had arrived in Gornidzor via Harar, who had brought a telegram for Zoravar Antranig from the British commander in Baku and another telegram from Azerbaijan's Premier Khan-Khoyski.

Indeed, shortly thereafter, the telegrams arrived. The villager who brought it is an old man and has only brought the telegram; he has no other information. That is why he has stayed in Gornidzor.

There are two telegrams; one is signed by the «English General of Baku» and the other by Khan-Khoyski. In the first, the English General writes to Antranig and the commander of the Armenian forces in Shushi to stop the advance, saying that he will be sending two officers to approach Antranig tomorrow.

The second telegram is from Khan-Khoyski who is notifying the Governor General of Shushi province, the Mayor, the National Council and the Armenian military commander to immediately deliver the English General's telegram to Antranig.

These telegrams could not be considered sufficiently authentic. Firstly, the name or signature of the English General was absent. Secondly, if any English General ever wanted to convey anything to Antranig, he could and should have conveyed that message to Antranig in the direct way (via the highroad) and through an official representative and not by means of an old Harar villager.

All of this, very rightfully so, were grounds to be skeptical about the telegrams, especially since Antranig was very familiar with the Turks' mastery in such games.

Therefore, Antranig decided to only respond to the English General, to express his doubts about the authenticity of the telegram and the reasons based on which he is going to Shushi. Encouraged by the presence of Turkish forces, Azerbaijan—along with the Turks—has seized Shushi, imprisoned intellectuals, suppressed the people, killed travelers, seized weapons, and so on, and in doing so threatened the entire existence of Karabagh.

The reply was sent in the same way as the telegrams had come.

At the same time preparations for the advance were completed.

December 2: In the morning the weather is beautiful again. Fortune is smiling on us. All the soldiers have heard about the telegrams. Everyone is in the same frame of mind, to hasten and reach Shushi.

The representatives sent by the English General are expected at any minute. The eyes of the soldiers are on the highroad coming from Shushi.

The desired news came. On the highroad, an automobile flying a white flag is coming towards Avdallar. Doubts are cleared up. So the telegrams were genuine. Soldiers on the bridge were informed to allow the automobile to pass and to accompany it.

The automobile is gradually approaching; it has already entered the Armenian region, crossed the bridge and reached the point on the highroad that is closest to Zoravar Antranig's tent.

One or two companies of soldiers, infantry and horsemen, are standing to attention.

Two military men get out of the automobile and are led to Zoravar Antranig's tent.

This tent has an unforgettable position and history. It has been located on the first line of fighting since the beginning of the battle, in a valley, the sides and close vicinity of which are hit by enemy bullets coming from the Kearavuz positions. If it has been spared from a bullet so far, it is because it has an enormous rock by its side.

The newcomers present themselves to the Zoravar. The first is English Captain Y.F. Square of the Gloucester Regiment and his companion is French Capitaine Gasfield of the 6-eme Regiment de Hussards, both in good shape and clean. They have brought a letter with them, albeit undated, addressed to Antranig and signed by the General Commander of the Allies in Baku, General Thomson.

Initially when they start talking, they announce that they are happy to report to Antranig that the Allies are victorious, that the ceasefire is signed. They then present General Thomson's letter telling Antranig to suspend the advance, threatening that such a move would undermine the favorable resolution of the Armenian National Cause, that such a violation of the ceasefire would be considered a hostile act against the Allies, and therefore he will find the Allies' resistance against him.

The conditions of the ceasefire were understandable and pleasing. However, the threatening tone made by an allied commander and directed at Antranig, who was firmly

invested in the belief of the Allies' success, was an insult and an affront.

The issue of Baku's fall, which could have created a bad disposition among some officials, was familiar. The deceptive and especially fascinating character of Tatar-Turkish diplomacy was familiar to Antranig, but one could not expect such an attitude from an English General Commander to begin a relationship.

Conversations and negotiations, mutual inquiries were long but eventually became cordial.

Last summer, when Antranig was traveling to Khoy, the French Captain was in the Urmia region, with the Assyrians. He has seen the refugees from Van, their migration with the Assyrians to Baghdad; they have heard of Antranig's advance. He stated that the 25,000 refugees of Van and the Assyrians were liberated because, due to Antranig's advance in Khoy, the Turks pulled their forces from Salmast towards Khoy thereby weakening the pursuit. He also reported on the unfortunate death of Kostia Hambarzoumian⁷⁷ that took place in Persia during his counter offensive aimed at pushing back the Kurdish attacks on the refugees.

It was very late at night when everyone returned to their places to rest for all to dream of a new life.

December 3: The letters and reports are ready. General Thomson's representatives must depart. Fighting has already ceased and only now and then sounds of

gunfire still ring between positions, unaware of the recent events.

In honor of the guests, the majority of the troops are standing to attention for a military salute. Only a small number of soldiers are at the positions.

Before entering the automobile and departing, the guests inspected the proud soldiers of the victorious Division. Speaking to the soldiers, the Zoravar conveyed his appreciation for the soldier who had gone through all the hardships and deprivations to expedite the day that had arrived at last—the Victory of the Allies, of Rights and Freedom. Then he thanked the Allies, who had come from distant places to find their small but sincere fellow soldier, Antranig and his Division.

The guests departed amidst hurrahs. Excitement was great, the dreamt-of day had arrived. The Allies have won, so everyone will receive their share of freedom and peace. So as an ally to the Great Allies, all our desires were to be realized without bloodshed.

Antranig did not forget to also send a telegram addressed to the head of the National Delegation, Boghos Nubar Pasha⁷⁸, with the English and French representatives going to Baku. In the letter he stated the severe level of misery of the refugees and pleaded for help to be sent as soon as possible.

And under the bright sky, surrounded by beautiful nature, each one was weaving his enchanting dream. From

⁷⁷ See Malkhas, *Memories*, Volume A, Edition B, pages 216-217, 245.

⁷⁸ Boghos Nubar (1851-1930): Founding president of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (1906-1928) and president of the Armenian National Delegation (19-12-1922).

now on we were connected to the Allies; all difficulties had ended.

Two representatives of the Zangezur National Council also departed for Shushi and then on to Baku with the foreign guests, to have a meeting and shed light on a number of issues.

An agreement was made that this side of Hakaru towards Zangezur will remain an Armenian region.

The delegates, who had gone to sort out issues on the spot, had met with the Turkish leader of the region, Sultan Bek⁷⁹ from Hajisamlu. He had agreed to every condition. Those who had gone had found the Turks extremely dejected and had witnessed Turkish soldiers fighting in their positions.

So the cruel conditions of the ceasefire came to be imposed in that region as well.

Fighting has already ended. Only a small number of soldiers have been left in the positions. Staying in that region in the open air and without provisions any further is pointless. We must therefore return to Zangezur, to Goris, until new instructions arrive from General Thomson regarding Antranig and the Division's activity. We are anticipating getting them within 10 days.

December 4: We must return. While going to the village of Togh through the gorge of Zapugh, a beautiful panorama opens up again from the summit of the uphill

⁷⁹ Of Kurdish nationality, brother of the appointed Governor General of Karabagh Province, Khosrov Bek Sultanov.

incline—historical places, Markiz, Gharaghshlagh, the mountains of Ttu Jur, Kearavuz; down below—the region of Zangelan, the mountains of Persia, the mountains of Tatev and Ghapan and the heights leading towards Khoznavar.

That same day we stay in the village of Togh, and the next day in Goris, where a triumphant reception takes place.

So it is necessary to wait in this region for 10 days, until instructions come from General Thomson on what to do. There are amenities for the Division to winter in Shushi and Nakhijevan. We expect instruction to come in directing us to one of these two locations.

However the order is overdue. There is also no news from Arshag Shirinian and Nigolay Hovsepov, the two members of the Zangezur Central National Council who had gone to Shushi. The Goris-Shushi road is closed and we have no information as to whether they even reached Shushi or not, nor what they did when they got there.

The appointed ten days have passed. It is difficult to keep soldiers in villages for a long time. Antranig therefore began to gradually send troops to Sisian and from there in any direction, to advance further. There is not much snow yet so there are routes in many directions, but too much waiting means being condemned to staying.

December 20: Finally, news came that the members of the Zangezur Central National Council, together with the English representatives and others, have reached the

village of Togh. National Council member Arshag Shirinian, not waiting, has arrived in Goris during the night. He reveals General Thomson's instructions in general terms. The Division and Antranig must stay in Zangezur.

December 21: The whole of Goris is celebrating and preparing. An English representative of the Allies will be coming. Every house and shop have hoisted the Russian flags used during celebrations in past Russian times, decking houses and streets with them. However, there are no English flags as there is no fabric to make them. Even so, with great difficulty, it was possible to sew only one new English flag, let alone those of the other Allies, the Italian, American and French flags.

After midday, the public, led by the mayor, is gathered in a separate place to present salt and bread on behalf of the city, while the army is lined up in the town square in military formation. Three large flags fly at the entrance to the square—those of the Division, the English and Russian.

Shortly thereafter the carriages appeared and the representatives arrived in the city. The reception was impressive. There was a breath of freedom in the atmosphere.

Those arriving are: Major Gibbon, an English military man, medium height, with a pensive and serious appearance; Captain Seawright, English; Abdulfattah Bek Hasanbekov, a Turk representative on behalf of Baku; and Gurken Chilingarian, on behalf of the Armenian National Council of Baku.

December 22: In the evening the English guests, as well as other guests and dignitaries of the region, are invited to dine with the Zoravar.

In the Caucasus generally, and at dinner parties especially, speeches and toasts are plentiful. It is a rule that a toast will be offered to each of those sitting around the table. And behold, time for toasting begins. They drink a toast to the health of the Allied soldiers and to the dignitaries present, praising their virtues.

Particularly noteworthy is the speech of Nigolay Hovsepov, a member of the National Council, in which he presents Zoravar Antranig's endeavors as a manifestation of popular will and not as an adventurous, arbitrary act, as the Turks were trying to convince others, because he has always received popular consent for all his actions.

An official meeting takes place, following the dinner.

Major Gibbon states the main purpose of his mission. But seeing that prior to developing these topics there is a need for provisions for both the Division and the region's population and refugees, he decides to send Captain Seawright to Shushi and Baku the very next morning, to bring vital provisions to Zangezur.

Then Major Gibbon announces that the goal of this mission is not political. The main focuses of his tasks are the following:

1. Open the Shushi-Goris-Ghapan stretch, and roads in general, and secure freedom of travel and transportation.

2. Find and draw circles of jurisdiction between Antranig and Azerbaijan so that the respective ruler is responsible for disturbances taking place within their region. As a practical conclusion to this point, it was agreed that for the other side of the Hakaru-Zapugh line, the authority there would be considered responsible, and Antranig would be considered responsible for this side of Zapugh—the region of Zangezur, Ghapan and Sisian. Thus, Antranig’s responsibility in that region will be to a) keep the rule of law b) ensure the safety of transportation of provisions for refugees in his region.

The main difficulty lay in the responsibility for the incidents that would occur beyond Hakaru, as the Armenians were opposed to that region being subject to Azerbaijan’s authority. Despite the 300,000 Armenians in the region, just 15,000 Turks in the city of Shushi would become the dominating element of the region. Considering that the vast majority of the population of the region is Armenian, the authority of the country should have been in the hands of Armenians.

Both Zoravar Antranig and the Turk representative agreed to all the points. Only the issue of Shushi remained pending. Antranig would not acquiesce to the people of that region submitting to the rule of Azerbaijan against their will.

Consequently, to resolve this issue, Major Gibbon promised to present all objections and difficulties to the proper authority. At the same time, he stated that the Division would remain in the region of Zangezur until May 1919, during which time the Allied authorities would

take care of the Division’s needs. Therefore, a six-month estimate was compiled of the Division’s needs, as well as the quantity of those provisions that the population of the region were also in dire need of.

December 23: It was necessary to also have the opinion of the Commanders and the army before deciding on the issues raised yesterday, especially the point about staying in the Zangezur region until May.

Consequently, the Zoravar has invited the Commanders of the Division to a meeting today. The assembly concluded that it was impossible to keep the Division in the region of Zangezur until May for the following reasons:

1. The region is unable to provide the Division’s soldiers and horses with the necessary provisions.

2. The area is devoid of buildings and other conveniences for the soldiers to spend the winter.

3. Many soldiers want to go and look for their relatives.

4. In this way, the role of the soldiers of the Division will just be policing, something which the fighting soldier is not that adept at. On the contrary, the assembly found that the Division must go to another area—the region of Yerevan, and for this the Nakhijevan road must be opened, from where the Division will descend towards the plain; and the 17,000 Nakhijevan refugees in Sisian should relocate to Nakhijevan before winter comes, otherwise they will perish from starvation and hunger.

The decision of the Division's assembly regarding the proposal to stay in Zangezur was clear: to relocate the refugees to the relatively tolerable region of Nakhijevan and move towards the region of Yerevan. Otherwise they should spend the winter in Nakhijevan or Khankend⁸⁰ (a village near Shushi, where there are Russian barracks) where there was every amenity for the Division.

December 24: Today Major Gibbon is departing for Shushi, from where he will send a telegraph conveying the counterproposals of Antranig and the Division. The Division's doctor, Rupen Der Stepanian, is leaving with him, as well as those former soldiers from Shushi and Gantsag who had remained in the region of Zangezur due to the roads being closed.

Prior to leaving, Major Gibbon left a written declaration in the name of General Thomson, by which the Shushi-Goris and Goris-Ghapan, and all roads in general, were declared open, threatening to consider those who impeded them as enemies.

Major Gibbon has promised to return soon and bring the final arrangement with him. Major Gibbon is someone true to his word, a genuine Englishman. So we have to wait until his return.

Until his arrival, we can deal with the relief efforts of the Sisian, Zangezur and Ghapan refugees by distributing the 600,000 roubles from General Bicherakhov⁸¹ brought

80 Later the city of Stepanakert.

81 General of the Tsarist Russian Army, Lazar Fedorovich Bicherakhov (1882-1952), General Commander of the Russian Armies on the Caucasus military front.

from Baku by Zangezur National Council members Arshag Shirinian and Nikolay Hovsepov, with the mediation of General Bagratuni.⁸² This sum was 1,000,000 roubles, which General Bicherakhov had given to General Bagratuni to deliver to Zoravar Antranig, of which 600,000 was allocated to the refugees and 400,000 to the army.

Therefore, certain people were sent to the regions to do the distribution work. Each refugee will receive just 29 roubles.

1919 January 6: Days pass and there is no news from the Major and the Doctor. It is obvious that they have gone to Baku, but there is no information on the purpose of their going or the result.

Major Gibbon, however, is not one to be late, and on the 6th he arrives in Goris. He has brought some favorable news. General Thomson has agreed that the Nakhijevan refugees sheltering in Sisian return to Nakhijevan; consequently, it should be announced that they get ready. On the other hand however, the English headquarters in Baku has no information on, or communication with Nakhijevan; maybe the Turks will not agree to the return of the Armenian refugees to their homes. Therefore Major Gibbon will personally go there, before the refugees move, to meet with the Turkish authorities and decide on the details.

82 General Hakob Bagratuni (1879-1943), General of the Tsarist and RoA Armies, biography: «Պատմաբանասիրական հանդես», 1997, N 1, pp 41-56.

Before departing for Sisian and Nakhijevan, Major Gibbon travels to meet the Turkish head of the Ghapan-Shurnukh region to request him not to impede free passage on the road.

The next day Major Gibbon, accompanied by Doctor Rupen Der Stepanian, departs for Sisian. From Sisian he will travel to Nakhijevan through Gyumri to carry out his mission.

January 10: Today Captain Bouchier—an agreeable and honest young English military man—comes to stay with Zoravar Antranig in Goris in place of Major Gibbon.

The days pass by. No news from Major Gibbon. The only thing heard is that the Turks have opened fire on them in the Turkish region of Keolan, but there is hope that he is unharmed in Nakhijevan.

Along with this anticipation begins the improvement of the Division's internal organization. In a relatively peaceful period, organizational ability is also revealed.

Although impatient about the uncertainty of the situation regarding the refugees and the undecided state of the Division, nonetheless during free time the personality of Antranig is revealed to be a social person. The human—friendly, happy, joyful, and democratic—side of the battle-hardened soldier is revealed. Every single day an episode is presented, showing that the battle-hardened, strict man also has a soft heart, a pleasant sociability, humor and grace.

Very late in the evening, at the end of the day's diverse and exhausting work, those of his commanders who are in Goris gather in his residence, in the hall adjacent to his bedroom. There is no formality anymore, though respect never diminishes. A warm, close and intimate circle is created, the conversation is about a variety of issues and questions and there are stories and frequent humor. But the story of the heroic exploits of Revolutionary Antranig is the focus of these peaceful evenings. He is a unique visionary and an extraordinary storyteller.

Rejuvenated by the vivid dreams of his youth, Antranig recounts recollections of his childhood, his homeland in Shabin Karahisar, his relatives, the description of each one of them, and their impact on him. He tells about the adventures of his youth, the expressions of his rebellious spirit, the struggles, and then the start of his being a revolutionary, his first friends, and his wanderings.

It is the turn of the self-defense battle organized in the Sasoon region; moving from the Caucasus via Kars; the incident in the Basen plain; Sasoon; the position; the people; examples of Kurdish chivalry; the mentality of the people; the assassination of Khalil Bek; the rebellion of Sasoon; the siege of Arakelots Monastery; the loss of Hrayr and Vahan; then the incidents while going to Van, and traveling through Persia to Baku. All these stories are spiced up with personal memories, small, joyful anecdotes.

Other stories to recount include his time overseas; his sciatica; in particular, the Balkan War, during which memorable work was done by his volunteer group; the

Pan-European War⁸³; the volunteer movement; the Battle of Dilman; the pursuit of Khalil Beg's army; clashes in the plains of Sorp and Mush; the retreat; the clashes with the Russian commanders; and then episodes from the capture of Bitlis. Each story is listened to with particular attention and intense interest.

Moving to more recent times, Antranig relates organizing the self-defense of the subjugated territories of Armenia; his superhuman efforts to retain Garin⁸⁴; the prevailing destruction and recalcitrance; the fateful fall of Garin; and finally, the formation of the Armenian Special Striking Division on April 10, 1918 in Alexandropol. Then followed the task given to the Division there; the course of action; the departure from Alexandropol to the north to secure the border; the battle of Ghazanchi on the 15th of the same month when the Turks, ignoring the conditions of the ceasefire, had entered the Armenian region and were pursuing the Armenian refugees; the battle of Shishtepe; the battles of Kyulybulakh-Bozeokhoosh and Chzkhlar on the 15th, 16th and 17th.

Antranig recounts the battles in the Gharakilise region; the fighting in the village of Karahisar; the loss of the soldiers running to Tiflis, with particular liveliness and bitterness and especially, the plains of Lori; the mountains; the mud, going to Jalal Oghlu; the battles there; the conduct of the Molokan village of Vorontsovka—how they were selling cannons to the Turks; the attempt to demolish the

83 He means World War I.

84 Garin is the Armenian name of city of Erzerum.

bridge of Kolakiran; their retreat to the village of Dsegh; the mentality of the people there; his dear friend, the poet Hovhannes Tumanian; the mud in Dsegh; and then their arrival in Dilijan where they had found desolation.

Many have already witnessed and lived through all of this; however, his storytelling gives new life and spirit to those memories.

Those cruel, dark days have safely gone now, but recollecting them will be an opportunity to better appreciate the sacrifices made and abstinences practiced, in order to reach this fortunate day.

Antranig also relates how the Turks, without knowing that Antranig is the one securing the Dilijan front, would inform the Commander of the Corps, General Nazarbekov, about the outcome of the Armenian and Turkish negotiations in Batum and the conditions of the Armenian-Turkish ceasefire via him, and how he, being informed of those conditions and finding them irreconcilable with his views and spirit, telegraphed General Nazarbekov to send a force to Dilijan in the course of three days to secure the border, for he does not wish to disturb the ceasefire—which would surely have happened if he had stayed there. Nevertheless, considering that this ceasefire once again wraps the centuries-old chain of slavery around the Armenian peoples' necks, he does not acknowledge this agreement, does not abide by it and he himself decides what he will do or where he will go.

Crossing the Julfa bridge; the battles of Ev-Oghlu, Khoy, Yayji, and Nakhijevan; the mistake made by some of the commanders; the difficulties endured by the Division;

and finally, the attitude of foreign governments towards the Armenian people, etc., are more recent topics.

And all this related in an intimate, friendly manner, and sometimes, carried away by the intensity of his emotions, with indignation and anger he describes all the mistakes which, on various occasions, have had fatal consequences for the Armenian people.

Next, the Division's secretary and treasurer Yeghishe Catchouny, his bodyguard Alexander Topuzian, and right next to the Zoravar's bedroom is a simple table. On top of it—sometimes messy, sometimes orderly—are papers, orders, requests, accounts, refugee files. There is no set time for work; night or day, one must work when necessary. However, there is never any formality.

There are large quantities of wheat, barley, grass and hay for the Division and the refugees. There are also the departments controlling meat, cracked wheat, sock-sandals, transport and medical supplies. All run by a variety of interesting men.

Head of Provisions is Vartan Shahbaz—a respectable old man, his hair already white, an old revolutionary who has been in Sasoon, Van, etc. All this, however, is not an obstacle for Vartan Shahbaz to modestly assume a prominent role in the Provisions department, and deal with locals and refugees like a father, tirelessly performing all their requests—receiving cargo, delivering cargo, assisting the refugees. And beyond all this, Vartan Shahbaz is extremely honest, gentle, and friendly, pleasant and respectful in every respect.

Krikor Tsaghigian, often the manager of the region's Supply department—a young, handsome and equally brave fighter, modest and friendly, is also there.

Artashes Keorkian is the secretary—accountant of supplies—happy, hardworking and friendly. His brother, Torkom Keorkian, is a young man with as-yet adolescent thoughts, Bolshevik convictions, spirited, compassionate and, simultaneously, a courageous fighter. The two Karapets are the cornerstones of the Supply department, one is the Assistant to the General Supplier, and the other is the grass and hay overseer.

Harutyun Tutian is another character; the complete opposite of his brother, Aram Tutian, who is the commander of Cavalry Company A.

Extremely distinctive is the commander of Transportation, Haji Kevork Muradyan of Mush, an old revolutionary, already old in age, but very young in his nature and spirit. Unfortunately, the injuries sustained during the volunteering period do not allow Haji Kevork Mouradyan to behave as young as he would like. Haji Kevork Muradyan is by conviction and nature a revolutionary, and with his *cherkesska*⁸⁵, saber and pipe, equally beloved by both locals and soldiers. He is a hostage to responsibility, therefore strict with himself and his subordinates. He is also an accomplished orator, especially when he has drunk a little too much.

85 The traditional male costume of Circassian tribes.

One of the interesting characters in the Transportation department is the camel keeper Taghi—the true guardian and care giver of the camels. Taghi, a Persian, does not make a trivial or personal request or demand. All his requests are in favor of the camels and the Division, and he knows that he will not be rejected. He has a naive optimism and is convinced that when the Division disbands, the camels are his share (four camels were gifted to him when the Division demobilized). You will often see him in his Persian costume, sitting on the lead camel, guiding the caravan, the crucifix sewn on to his tall Caucasian hat, shimmering in the sun.

In the Medical branch, Doctor Rupen Der Stepanian is an honest, hardworking young doctor, often busy with surgeries, visiting patients and recently, negotiations and translations with foreign representatives.

Minas Cheraz's nephew (his brother's son) Vahan Cheraz is a magnificent character; a tireless, idealist volunteer with conviction. At the start of the war, he came to the Caucasus from Paris as a volunteer and remained a volunteer until the end. Vahan Cheraz does not like having a position, a status. He has always liked being a common soldier, fulfilling all his duties, battling and enduring difficulties. But it no longer makes sense to be a common soldier at this time. With his knowledge of English and French languages, he is one of the Division's rare intermediaries between Zoravar Antranig and foreign (English) military men, and more often, the one accompanying them as their interpreter, familiar with local languages and customs.

Commanders of the machine gunners, Kevork Gyuzelian and Dadur Malakian, from Constantinople and Rodosto respectively, are a young, friendly and wonderful pair, as are the other military commanders, company commanders, and commanders of cavalry companies—of course with differences, to a greater or lesser degree.

Karekin Sahagian, Senior Physician Assistant, has a special aptitude for hospital and orphanage affairs. He is the one who steered the entire Sisian Hospital and cared for some 120 orphans. Similarly, Kevork Hovagimian is a Physician Assistant.

All of these young men, under one man's hand and one roof, each of them a fine gemstone led by Zoravar Antranig, develop a sincere, pleasant and intimate circle, bonded by a mortar of blood in an environment of the leadership circle of the Armenian Special Striking Division.

The soldiers, aware of their role and position, strive to maintain their prestige, as well as that of their commanders and the Division before the Armenian people and foreigners.

And armed with this moral force, the Armenian Special Striking Division, despite being few in numbers (about 1,500), represented a respectable military force that local restless elements, regional and neighboring Turks, Azerbaijan and the Allies were forced to take into account.

Armenian and foreign travelers are arriving gradually from Shushi, several times a week, always with English mission papers. They go from Goris to Shushi the same

way. The restoration of this communication, however, led to the following phenomenon: in Baku, Shushi and elsewhere there was a terrible price increase for meat, potatoes, cheese and food in general or in other words, an abundance of money. When the *Zangezurtsi* heard this, he was in a hurry to send his horse, cow, cattle and other food to Shushi to sell at a high price. But more often they would come from Shushi to buy everything cheap from Zangezur and take it to Shushi or Baku to sell for higher, outrageous prices. As a result, prices began to rise in the Zangezur region as well. If a horse was worth 3-400 roubles before, now it is worth 2-3000 roubles. The price of other commodities rose proportionately.

This phenomenon spread to the trade of weapons as well. Many started to buy weapons and sell them to the Turks at high prices. It was necessary to fight against these ugly phenomena with very decisive and radical methods. Consequently, the export of provisions and livestock to Shushi was prohibited, while the death sentence was decided for the trade of weapons.

January 25: Today, Mr. B. Roben, the director of the Ghapan Copper Mines French Company, arrived in Goris via the Tiflis-Shushi line. He is a gregarious Frenchman who has come on business. He has brought letters for the Zoravar from Tiflis. From these letters we regretfully hear that Rostom,⁸⁶ a veteran of the Armenian Revolution, has died of typhoid in Tiflis on the 22nd of this month.

Since B. Roben was planning to go to Paris upon his return to Tiflis, the Zoravar sent an extensive report with

⁸⁶ Rostom: Stepan Zorian (1867-1919), one of the founders of ARF, Dashnagtsutiun political party. He died not on the 22nd but 19th of January 1919. He was a leader of the Armenian National Liberation movement.

him to the National Delegation in Paris, presenting the Division's recent history the situation of the refugees, and requesting arrangements for the Division and the refugees.

January 31: Frenchman B. Roben had announced that an English military journalist has come with him to tour this region. Roben had come from Shushi to Goris directly, while the journalist will go through Hakaru to Ghapan and then on to Goris. Today, the journalist has reached Goris at a late hour.

February 1: The war journalist introduces himself to the Zoravar. Mr. Scotland Lidell is a tall, smiley faced youth, with a bony English physique. He speaks French and Russian. He informs us that his visit is commissioned by Major Gibbon and General Thomson, who is currently in Tiflis. The questions are about the future of Shushi, the state of Karabagh, the affairs of the Zoravar. He very cautiously suggests reflecting on the issue of the return of Turkish refugees to their villages in Sisian. He lets it be known that they had reported to him that Antranig has demonstrated a harsh attitude towards those refugees, which is untrue. He has been to the Turkish villages. As regards these refugees, it was stated that their villages are inhabited by Armenian refugees at the moment, and not until the Armenian refugees move back to their homes will Turkish refugees find a place if they go to Sisian.

Mr. S. Lidell departed from Goris with completely different opinions and beliefs than the ones he came with.

February 14: Finally, today, Dr. R. came to Goris. He has had a lengthy journey with Major Gibbon. The Turks

had indeed opened fire on them. With great difficulties, they only just managed to reach Nakhijevan. The negotiations have not reached a positive outcome, as the Turks have announced to Major Gibbon that they will never allow armed Armenian refugees to enter the region. In that event, clashes would be inevitable. The only success that the Major had was managing to purchase 10,000 poods of wheat for 50 roubles per pood, on behalf of the Armenian Government of Yerevan. From there, the Major traveled to Yerevan, met with the Armenian government, moved on to Tiflis, where he reported on the situation in Nakhijevan and Yerevan, and then went to Baku.

Major Gibbon has stayed in Baku, and Captain Townsend has come to Goris to replace Captain Bouchier. From Baku, General Bagratuni has sent one hundred Russian St. George Crosses with Doctor R. for Antranig to distribute to the Division's soldiers.

February 20: Vahan Cheraz returns from Shushi today bringing with him the January 15 issue of "Arev," in which it is written that, with the consent of the Allies, the independence of Armenia was declared on December 17th. This news makes everyone rejoice, and eager to see the results of that Independence without delay.

February 24: Today is Vartanants Day. It is the most appropriate day to distribute the crosses sent by General Bagratuni.

Preparations have already been made to carry out the ceremony of distributing the crosses in the Square of Goris city after church. The table is decorated with flags and foliage.

The military chain is already standing around the Square. According to the list, the names of the recipients of the crosses are called out. They come forward to the center.

The Zoravar speaks and acknowledges the Division's soldier's determination and dedication with which he relentlessly endured all deprivation until he arrived at this fortunate day. Indeed, everyone is both deserving of a cross, and the worthy successor of the hero of the day, Vartan.

Member of the National Assembly, Smbat Beg Melik Stepanian, and Captain Bouchier also spoke.

February 25: Captain Bouchier, that very pleasant young military man, leaves Goris. Captain Townsend will take his place. Those who are leaving meet the latter, who is coming to Goris, in the village of Tegh.

In the evening, the new Captain is with the Zoravar. He has brought with him 500,000 roubles for the region's refugees with 150,000 more to come. He inquires about the Division's departure by way of the Yevlakh line. He then states that they recognize the existing Caucasian republics as they are, and therefore, if Azerbaijan chooses an official anywhere, they are obligated to accept and support him.

It was obvious what the captain was trying to convey. At the end of the meeting he was answered by both the Zoravar and the National Council saying that the Turks of that region had never ruled the area. On the contrary, the Armenians have kept it with so many sacrifices, and that if there is any attempt to take it from them, they will never agree and will oppose it by all means necessary. Seeing the

determination of the Armenian side, the captain closed the issue.

February 28: The departure of the Division is certain. It is impossible to stay in the region any longer; there are not sufficient provisions or aid coming from outside. Much as the local people have good intentions, they are exhausted and at the same time unable to maintain themselves, the soldiers and the refugees. Even without that, in normal times, Karabagh has always had the need for a large percentage of its flour to come from outside.

But it is snowing terribly, making it impossible to set out on the road. Nature has frequently influenced people's decisions, especially in such territories as this.

However, there is no shortage of work to do. The refugees are hungry, they must be helped. The Zoravar even provides wheat and flour from the Division's stores to give to orphanages and refugees. The distribution work has to be done.

March 2: It is *Poon Paregentan*⁸⁷, but nevertheless we are sad. The Division's police officer, Penyamin, a lively, friendly and humble soldier from the region of Izmit, has died from an illness.

And once again, the escorting soldiers and people go to the Goris cemetery, walking on a thick blanket of snow, to deliver police officer Penyamin to the cold earth—far away from his relatives.

87 The first Sunday of Lent: Good living, or convivium. A day of enjoyment, before the following great abstinence.

March 3: The friendly atmosphere, youthful enthusiasm and limited activities in particular, are often occasions to enjoy innocent jokes and entertainment.

This evening, a circle of friendly youths wear disguises. The characters are marvelously felicitous. What is more appropriate for a foreigner coming to Karabagh to present than the striking characters of the local people? Commander of the Machine gun unit, D. has become a true Karabagh *bidza* (old man) with his woolly, conical hat, old man's glasses and jubba (long coat); physician assistant Kevork Hovakimian has become a stout *Karabaghtsi*, with a masculine temperament and behavior; Ardashes Kevorkian has become an old-fashioned musician, with his frock and beard; and all of the others were similarly decked out.

This group has visited very close circles, it has even been to the Zoravar's house and presented itself—causing joy everywhere it has been.

March 4: News arrives that Major Gibbon and Vahan Cheraz have returned. It was previously announced that Major Gibbon would not come again. So his arrival had a particular significance, and everybody was interested in learning the purpose for his coming to Goris.

March 5: Major Gibbon presents himself to the Zoravar. He states that in accordance with the previously stated wishes of the Zoravar, the Division will depart from Goris to Tiflis and Yerevan by way of Yevlakh. He has succeeded in getting that permission. Preparations for the Division's journey have been made in Shushi, Aghdam and

Yevlakh—vital provisions, tea, wood, and everything. The railroad is in the hands of the English. 250 English soldiers will join the Division.

This suggestion, and especially action taken in that direction, was a surprise. True, there had been questions about the Division going to Yevlakh or Nakhijevan and being demobilized, but a final decision had not been made; only the predisposition of the English command had been of interest.

Major Gibbon has succeeded in arranging this, going by way of Yevlakh, because it is impossible to travel through the Nakhijevan region, as the region has not yet fallen under English rule and was not under the jurisdiction of General Thomson.

In the opinion of the Major, it is not suitable for the Division to go to the region of Yerevan because it is not easy to live there. There is already a difficult situation there concerning the issue of feeding the refugees.

Then the Major also announces an important decision of the Peace Conference on disputed territories, according to which “the seizure of disputed territories severely harms the rights of the attacker.”

The Major has brought 200,000 roubles for the region’s refugees, and new funds will arrive soon.

Antranig was objecting to the suggestion of going via Aghdam-Yevlakh, stating that it was impossible and undesirable for the Division to travel via Aghdam-Yevlakh for the following reasons:

1. The Division will be carrying large quantities of flour and barley to feed the army and the horses until the execution of the demobilization. There is no way to transport these provisions while traveling via Yevlakh.

2. The majority of the Division’s horses belong to the soldiers, most of whom would not want to be deprived of their horses. In addition, these horses can be of great benefit to Armenia and its people; but in the event of traveling by Yevlakh, it will not be possible to transport them and they will therefore have to be sold to the Turks.

3. We would have to be disarmed while going through Yevlakh, but if we went to Yerevan, the weapons would be left to the Armenians.

4. In the event of going by way of Yevlakh, the Division’s soldier will have to travel a long way to go to Yerevan or another part of Armenia, because he would want to travel to Yerevan or its surroundings to find his relatives—if any are left.

On this basis, it was announced to the Major that the Division cannot travel by way of Yevlakh. Rather, to also avoid possible clashes in the event of moving in the direction of Yevlakh or Nakhijevan, it will go through Daralakyaz.

March 6: The Major has received the Zoravar’s final answer. He will travel to Shushi to convey the Zoravar’s response to the English command and receive new orders.

Before departing, a new command from General Thomson arrives, stating that Antranig cannot go to

Yerevan because there is famine there, but will go to Batumi with his Division, where he will remain until there is a possibility for the soldiers to return to their homeland.

Before making a decisive assertion, the Zoravar found it necessary to get the opinion of the Division's commanders and troops.

Based on the aforementioned considerations, the meeting convened for this matter refused to go by way of Aghdam-Yevlakh.

Having the final decision of the Division, Major Gibbon departed for Shushi to suspend the assistance work that was to be shown during the journey and to report to Command, and at the same time to announce Zoravar Antranig's desire for Major Gibbon to accompany the Division on the voyage from Goris to Yerevan.

Meanwhile, until the Major returns, Zoravar Antranig will distribute the funds brought for the refugees.

In addition, the snow and cold were still severe and it was impossible to travel, especially on the border of Sisian-Daralakyaz. For a long time now, nobody has been able to come from Yerevan (the snow has closed the roads)—even Arshag Shirinian, member of the National Council of Goris, who has gone to Yerevan again and, from what we hear, is coming to Zangezur with Mr. Arsen Shahmazian, the governor of Zangezur for the Armenian Government of Yerevan. They are waiting in Daralakyaz for the roads to open.

After many difficulties, sinking in snow and traveling for miles on foot, Arshag Shirinian and Governor Arsen Shahmazian reached Goris.

As a result of the Division's departure, the local militia and self-defense must be organized, because the period of surprises and unpleasantness is not yet over for that region.

First, there are the Azerbaijan's ambitions which, not yet having secured Shushi, has an eye on controlling Zangezur. Then there is the issue of the Terekemen. After the snow melts, shepherding, nomadic Turks—the Terekemen—who had not been able to ascend the mountains last year and are now in the fields of Mughan and Kareakin on the banks of the Araz, will want to climb the mountain and cross the Zangezur border. The entry of these armed highlanders into the boundaries of Zangezur is worrisome for the tranquility of the Armenians. Consequently, it is clear that the Armenians will not want the Terekemen to ascend the mountain. The burning of Gharaghshlagh is proof of the Terekemen's presence.

March 16: The issue of the Division's departure has been decided. But the situation of the refugees presented a big problem, because they would not want to stay in that region following the departure of Antranig. They feared starvation and the hostile attitude of the locals in general. It was only the fear of Antranig that made life more or less tolerable for the refugees in that region. The cost of food was gradually rising to extraordinary prices. Only Antranig's authority could curb the abuse and impose a

tax. After his departure, it was unlikely that the refugee would be able to find food with his modest allowance. Moreover, not only would food be difficult to obtain but he would encounter hostility. This matter was very familiar to Antranig, the representatives of the refugees, and the local leaders.

Thus, it was obvious that the refugees, Russian-Armenian or Turkish-Armenian, would never stay and would follow their only hope: Antranig.

However, this move on the part of the refugees would be disastrous because most would be left on the road, starving and cold, and would surely die. Arriving in Yerevan, the refugees would again get nothing because the local refugees are poorly clothed and hungry. The Americans have just begun to support them, and their provisions, in particular their means of transportation, are limited. Under these conditions, moving the refugees from their location would mean certain losses.

Therefore, Antranig decided to clarify the situation with the refugees, and before the Division leaves, to persuade the refugees to stay there until the roads opened and provisions arrived, especially since the English were promising to help the refugees of this region with funds and provisions, as they had done in Shushi. In order to end disputes between the locals and the refugees peacefully, they had decided to keep Lieutenant Howells in the Sisian region to defend the rights of the refugees, and to direct the relief work until the American missionaries came and took upon themselves the relief efforts of the refugees.

March 18: Major Gibbon arrives in Goris. He will accompany the Division, while Lieutenant Howells will stay in Sisian for the refugees.

March 20: It is a meeting of representatives of the refugees. Representatives of almost all the villages of the region of Sisian have come: *Nakhjevantsi*, *Basentsi*, *Sasoontsi*, and *Vanetsi*.

The Zoravar clarifies the situation, the departure of the Division, the situation in Yerevan, the promise of assisting the refugees of the Zangezur region and Lieutenant Howells' stay in Sisian for that purpose.

All the representatives agree with difficulty to give in to the Zoravar's order to stay in Sisian. They promise to do what they can to restrain the people, though at the same time they believe that many will follow.

Antranig also announces his final decision—to collect 4,000 pood wheat from wealthy locals, to set the price for that wheat and pay for it from the benefit monies, and distribute it to refugees who are orphaned, widowed and incapable of working.

The Representatives had no other option than to comply.

March 22: Today a farewell dinner is organized on behalf of the city of Goris, in the mayor's house. The Zoravar, the National Council, representatives of the city, Major Gibbon, the Governor of Zangezur, Mr. Arsen Shahmazian, sent by the Armenian Government of Yerevan, and others are present.

Toasts are endless and become annoying. Oh those toasts! The city officially wishes Antranig a good journey and success, and is grateful to Antranig who, by his presence, liberated the region and the city from Turkish rule.

Antranig gives his farewell speech—bitter and yet full of reasonable observations. He believes that after his departure the Allies, who are now in command of the situation, will never agree to subject Goris and the region to Turkish rule.

Major Gibbon reveals to the representatives of Zangezour that if ever the English have come to Goris and helped or if they have pacified the region, they owe it to Antranig. Without Antranig's presence in the area, the English would not have had any information about the region.

March 25: All the soldiers, provisions and most of the horsemen have already departed for Sisian on previous days. They are currently all concentrated in a few villages of Sisian that have amenities: particularly Angeghakot.

Many difficulties are foreseen in transporting the Division's provisions. There is the issue of the wheat to be bought from the villages of the Sisian region that is to be distributed to the refugees. There is also the issue of provisions and funds for the orphanages and, from an administrative point of view, security issues that are weighing on Antranig's shoulders.

At the same time it is necessary to distribute the newly arrived assistance funds.

Thus, we must depart and make haste. Each day of delay means consuming a large part of the Division's supplies, the vital foodstuffs that will be transported to Echmiadzin and will feed the Division until demobilization.

Sisian will provide 260 horses and mules for transportation.

At 9 o'clock in the morning, the last companies of horsemen are waiting in Goris square, ready to depart.

The people, gloomy and perplexed, have come to bid their last farewell to the People's Hero and their liberator, Antranig.

At 10 o'clock the line of horsemen led by Antranig ascends the zigzag incline from Goris to Sisian. The thunder of gunfire for the last time was the most fervent expression of farewell, compared to which any other form of farewell would have been feeble.

The group advanced by way of the mountain pasture, but near Uch Tepeler diverted towards the left. It is impossible to go by the highroad; the snow has left no trace of the road. The way is through the valley of the Vorodan or Bazarchay River.

Gradually we descend the gorge. There is a tepid spring sun. Shortly thereafter, a pleasant gorge, warm and newly green.

Appearing first is the village of Vorodn—formerly Turkish, now inhabited by Turkish-Armenian refugees.

The refugees wait on the road to bid farewell to their protector. The gorge in this region is wonderful; the clear and cool spring water flows; there are sandy mountains on both sides and occasional greenery. Just a few miles from the village, on a beautifully positioned hill, is the Vorodan Monastery, currently in ruins. Since the Armenian-Turkish clashes of 1905, the monastery had not seen an Armenian.

To the right of the gorge in another gorge that opens sideways is Vaghudi, another Turkish village also currently inhabited by refugees. The canyon continues, revealing many beautiful views and inaccessible positions. After ascending a height, the descent begins. Shortly afterwards, at the foot of the cliffs, spreading out into the canyon is Aghudi, the largest and most dangerous Turkish village in the region. Today, however, smoke in the village rises from the hearths of Turkish-Armenian refugees. In the canyon, in places where greenery can be found, you will see refugee teenagers grazing a few oxen or cows—lean and weak, the last remnants of who knows how luxurious and rich a past.

You will also often find numerous groups of women and children, who with their backs bent, holding a small stick in their hands, wander from dawn to dusk in the fields next to the mountains, to find a green weed, a root or greens to eat or take home. There is no shortage of cases of people being poisoned by these herbs. The wretched die or suffer from various other illnesses from eating only grass without bread.

April 1: Arrangements for transporting the Division's effects, provisions and ammunition have been completed.

The calculation of the funds distributed to the refugees has also finished. The issue of distributing wheat to the orphanages and refugees must also be addressed prior to departure.

The Zoravar decided on the manner of administration and the officials of the orphanage at Gharakilisa and provided the orphans with 2 to 3 months' worth of both provisions and funds. He similarly decided the distribution method for the wheat and flour purchased from the villages of Sisian, for distribution among the refugees of the region who were orphaned, widowed and unable to work, and informed the English Lieutenant Howells, who was to stay in Sisian, of the matter.

April 2: The majority of the Division has advanced up to Ghalachukh, Mukhuturian, Borisovka and Bazarchay—the last village in Sisian. It has been ordered to clean the road until Bazarchay. That road is clean and there are only a few places that need care.

But the important and difficult part is the Daralakyaz section of the Bazarchay to Ghushji Belek stretch. The snow in that region is taller than a man's height. It will take months to wait for the snow to melt. Therefore, the Zoravar has ordered the Bazarchay residents to open and clean the road towards Ghushji Belek and has sent orders to Ghushji Belek for them to clean the road from Ghushji Belek to Bazarchay, until both sides meet up.

News has come that these efforts are progressing successfully and that in one or two days, the laborers will meet.

The Zoravar departs for Bazarchay. The horsemen and local transport, which will set out the following day and bring the Division's provisions and reserve ammunition to Bazarchay, stay in Angeghakot.

It is with an unparalleled feeling that one leaves Angeghakot, the village of the historic assembly in September. You must remember those days and be aware of the situation today to be able to appreciate what a big difference, what a change has been accomplished. It is not easy to cold-heartedly leave Angeghakot, those brave, hospitable villagers.

From Angeghakot the road bends again. The highroad goes through the plain, but in this season it is covered with snow. There is a road by way of the canyon which we will take. From the field, we go down a very narrow and steep slope. It seemed to be a stairway, an irregular road with rough stones everywhere. One has to imagine the difficulties the transport will encounter when descending this part. The water of Bazarchay is in the canyon. This time it has become murky due to the rain of the previous day. We reach the Armenian village of Ghalajugh. Then we leave the canyon and must climb up. Barely out of the canyon, you see only one thing, snow. It is an infinite mountain pasture covered with a thick blanket of snow from one end to the other.

For better or worse, however, the road is still tolerable. The snow has not melted completely. Shortly thereafter, in the middle of the mountain pasture, alongside a hill, we encounter the Armenian village of Mukhaturian.

Beyond Mukhaturian it's snow again. After midday the sun is stronger and the snow has softened. The trampled snow is still hard enough to take the weight of people, so the infantry can walk. But it is difficult for horses. The road is very narrow. It is dangerous outside the narrow track of hardened snow; getting stuck is inevitable. But being on the road is also not safe. In many places the snow has softened from the heat; the horses are sinking into the snow. There are places where horses have previously become stuck and deep potholes have developed. Great care must be taken to move, slowly; if not, the horse will fall in, and to considerable depths at that. After being buried in the snow up to his belly, every attempt he makes to get out drives him further down in the snow and this obstructs the whole road.

Past Mukhaturian, a beautiful white mountain stands erect before us; it is Mount Bazarchay. From that side, the view is stunning. Gradually we descend further down to the valley of Bazarchay, the air gets milder. We are already in Borisovka. The shape of the houses and the regular lines of the streets indicate that it is a Molokan village. We move forward close by the water. In every direction streams flow peacefully on their way to join the Bazarchay River. Shortly thereafter, the village of Bazarchay is visible next to the picturesque white mountain. Bazarchay is a village situated at the water's edge, next to the mountain. The inhabitants are all Molokans and it is the richest village in the region. The Russian leadership has greatly favored those Russian colonies, giving them the largest and most fertile plots. Bazarchay is a beautiful village, with regular streets.

Communal organization in the Molokan villages is remarkable. It is based on broad democratic foundations. They have a commissar, but he cannot do anything, even on the most trivial issue, without consulting the people. Also, there is no two-tiered consultation system; all the village elders must be present, not just an elected few.

The entire army is billeted in houses. It should be added that the Molokans are very hospitable and disciplined.

People have gone to Ghushji Belek to clear the road. In the evening, news came that the road is cleared on both sides and the laborers have met each other. It was necessary to wait one more day in Bazarchay for assembly, organization, and for the transport to arrive.

April 4: We must leave early, before the days become hot. In addition, it rained heavily at night and the road may be damaged.

From Bazarchay to Ghushji Belek is the most difficult, deserted road. One must rise to the elevation that separates Sisian from Daralakyaz and then descend to Ghushji Belek.

The Division moved. About 50 local horsemen went first to examine the road, while the village's foot soldier is standing at attention for a military farewell.

It was a terrible day for the horsemen and especially for the transport.

There is snow everywhere. The path is made by trampling and hardening the snow because reaching the

ground underneath is impossible. The snow is very deep. In places the hardened snow has softened because of the night-time rain or because there is a water gutter underneath or a brook, and behold, the horse's leg sinks into the snow; we must dig with spades to correct the path, fill the hole, or change the course of the path. For a single horse, the entire caravan that comes after him, be it infantry, horseman or transport, has to stop and wait. There is no other way, because the snow right next to the road is soft and undoubtedly men will get stuck. This waiting is twice as tiring, especially for transport horses, some of which are already tired, hungry, and weak. Often it is necessary to take the load off the horse's back to relieve it, and often it will be necessary for people to carry the load on their backs for some distance. Because of the narrowness of the path, you can neither go backward nor forward to get to and use the reserve cargo horses.

All the Division's horsemen and the transport people of Sisian have struggled one whole day to be able to get that cargo to Ghushji Belek. Only a long black line is visible on the plain—low in some places and completely invisible in others. The low part is the infantry, the high section, the horsemen. The path on the snow is sometimes so deep that nothing can be seen. And that black line climbs the height forming the borderline of Sisian and Daralakyaz with winding snakelike undulations, at a snail's pace, in fits and starts.

By midday, we are still on our way up; we still must ascend. We only just managed to pass the heights in the afternoon, late in the day.

But apparently that was the easy side. Until then the horses and men were fresh, the weather beautiful, and the road uphill, which is easier on the horses.

The situation was more arduous during the descent. We must get down. Even without snow, Daralakyaz is a rocky, uneven region. One must descend with leaps, and when the place you land on is a pond of snow, water and mud, it is understandable what a man encounters. Even worse is the situation of the pack animals. Under heavy loads and tired, the poor creatures fall into the mud up to their bellies. Many get stuck in the potholes, obstructing those who come behind them. It is necessary to drag them to one side and discard the cargo—if only to clear the road.

The Zoravar has already reached Ghushji Belek and has sent pack animals to help. But the road is narrow and two pack animals cannot pass one another. It is necessary to drag one of them to the side of the road. There is still so much cargo left behind in the distance.

With superhuman effort, under the rain, in the dark, completely muddy and wet, soldiers and the majority of the cargo arrived in Ghushji Belek. For better or worse, they were accommodated in that small village. That night, in that cold, some of the soldiers stayed in the mountains alongside some of the *Sisiantsis*, to guard the goods and horses. Many horse owners, giving up on their horses, came without them.

Ghushji Belek is a small Armenian village in a gorge, in a rocky place.

We somehow pass the night.

In the morning, fresh horses were sent to bring the cargo left yesterday. The previous day 14 horses and two camels were left on the road, and two of the many refugees ill-advisedly following the Division had frozen to death.

April 5: The road from Ghushji Belek to Malishka, where we intend to arrive at night, is not difficult. We hear that we must pass through the snow for only a few miles.

In fact, the snow is light. We must go through a gorge with abundant water and soft earth. The horses are already tired, they always get stuck. But the ascent is good. And after we reach the top, the climate changes completely: there is little or no snow.

The gorge of Daralakyaz is beautiful, bold and wild. On the side of a gorge with abysses, cliffs and rapid water, are small, parallel valleys. We have to cross the hillside of the big gorge. The other side of the gorge is a field of rocky, inaccessible cliffs, with no vegetation. On our side are sparse, evergreen trees, red, sandy soil that is occasionally rocky.

We go along the switchbacks of the side gorges. Sometimes we ascend and sometimes we descend.

On the way, we encounter people with mismatched pieces of clothing: the hat, Austrian; the pants, military; the jacket, civilian; and vice versa. It is obvious that they are prisoners of war returning to their homeland. We ask them. They are from Goris, perhaps relatives of people with

whom we have made friendships or are acquainted. One of them draws our attention. It is true that all of them are tired, exhausted, it feels like their steps are not their own, and they sway, but that one makes extraordinary gestures. The poor soul has become mentally unbalanced.

Moving on, we enter a valley replete with water, and prosperous. At the end of the valley we come across the semi-ruined village of Herher. The village is Armenian. The villagers had left for some time. The Turks had come and destroyed it. There is not one house intact. The villagers have now returned, but they have nothing. A village where there is no one, no grass, no hay.

From Herher we climb the mountain, and then we start to descend. A bit further on, a small village appears. The noise of sheep and lambs can be heard from afar. It is unquestionably a sheepfold, a place of sacrifice. They are refugees from Nakhijevan. The Turks of the village have left and currently the refugees reside there with their sheep.

In the evening we arrive at Malishka, one of the central villages of Daralakyaz.

The *krebdars*⁸⁸ from Sisian will carry their cargo to Malishka and return. Therefore, it is necessary to first check the existing cargo, the dead horses and make corresponding arrangements. Daralakyaz should provide means of transport for those cargoes to Davalu railway station, from which point we are sure that we will have wagons at our disposal.

88 Armenian, քրեհուսը: a person who has a horse and cart and rents it out.

The Zoravar arranges for the villages of Daralakyaz to bring horses and mules. The *Sisiantsis* are to return home and the owners of the dead horses to be paid. After making these arrangements he departs for Keshishkent.

The tired and exhausted transport gradually arrives. Only one load of flour and one and a half loads of barley are missing. We have to be content that is all that is missing. The *Sisiantsis* go back.

Gradually the pack animals arrive from the Daralakyaz region—although insufficient in quantity and quality. It is necessary to divide some of the cargo among the horsemen.

On April 8, the entire group converges on the village of Ghotur.

Keshishkent and Ghotur are familiar villages from bygone days. On the road, the metal frame of the Division's mobile kitchen—left there the previous June—can still be seen.

April 8: Since entering Daralakyaz, new worries and new emotions have been unceasing. In Malishka, representatives of the refugees that had presented themselves to the Zoravar, sorrowfully described the situation of the 17,000 refugees from Sharur and Nakhijevan who were sheltered in Daralakyaz. The picture was the same as in Sisian, even worse. This was the situation in Keshishkent and Ghotur also, which was having a very bad effect on the Zoravar. Major Gibbon, who was with him, could also see the situation.

The Major will be heading to Davalu before us to arrange for the transport of the Divisions provisions and supplies and to tend to other matters. He was to have already parted ways at Ghotur, but the scale of the desperate state of the refugees forced the Zoravar to express himself in a more sincere, frank manner and to declare that with their course of actions the Allies are peacefully sentencing to death that section of the Armenians that has escaped the sword and fire of the Turks. Despite the fact that they are victorious and as such should have been commanding decisively, they have taken the path of nonintervention. It is necessary for the remnants of the Armenian people to return to their homes as soon as possible to cultivate, to sow. This demand is palpable everywhere, in Nakhijevan, the region of Kars, Alashkert and Van. The Allies are wary of restraining the Turks of Kars and subjugating the Khans of Nakhijevan and, under the pretext of possible Turkish uprisings, forbid the Armenians to return to their homeland, forcing them to stay in a small territory where they are condemned to death because of the cold, hunger and sickness.

Since this is the attitude of the Allies, which includes the English leadership, Antranig declares, “Go tell General Thomson that I no longer need his assistance, and that if I had the means, I would repay the small monetary aid of 250,000 roubles that was made to the Division.”

The noble Major, feeling the bitter reality of these words and his powerlessness as a soldier, departs for Yerevan, taking with him his soldier Cohen, a sympathetic young man, and Vahan Cheraz.

The Division left Ghotur. The black line of horsemen, infantry, the Division’s and local transport, moves in file on the potholed roads of Daralakyaz. This region is new. There are beautiful valleys and fields; it is a pity that all the people are hungry. The population of this region had also fled during the time of the Turks and are newly returning to their homes. You see many houses are newly roofed; — many are still in ruins.

The returning people have nothing to eat. Until now only the Americans have helped a little. There is no work, no food in the region. Many of those returning are disposed to leave for somewhere else where they may be able to secure some aid. To wait for aid to reach Daralakyaz is to await certain death.

Aynazur is a village in a beautiful location, and the last village not to have migrated. Beyond that are—Rind, Yelpin, Chanakhchi, Keshish Veran, Pirelu. They are all villages that have migrated.

We must wait in Pirelu, firstly for the entire Division and transport to assemble and secondly to rest. The uphill and downhill gradients of Daralakyaz, and especially the mud, have greatly tired the already exhausted horses.

Upon receiving news of the Zoravar’s arrival, leaders of the Sasoon Regiment—Sasoontsi Manuk, Mushegh and Karapet—approach him. After going from Sisian to Daralakyaz, that military force, being unable to stay there, has come to this region and they are currently staying in the village of Karakhaz as refugees.

The village of Pirelu has no horizon. There are small heights on all four sides. But one needs to advance only a little further to see a splendid panorama that we will enjoy the next day.

April 11: We depart from Pirelu early. We will climb a little and then gradually descend to the Ararat plain, towards Davalu—the station of hope. We ascend the first incline of Pirelu from the width overlooking the Yerevan plain.

A wonderful panorama is revealed. In the distance, Greater Ararat and Lesser Ararat appear, clear and majestic, the plain of Yerevan, the height of Gherkh Bulagh and the height of Kanaker surround us. In the field very close to us, the Araz River winds and gleams. To the left Shakhtakht, even the bridge is visible. The mountains of Maku; and right under our noses, small hills in the direction of Beoyuk Vedi and the Ararat Station, which now form the last stretch of the Republic of Ararat in the direction of Nakhijevan lay out before us.

For the first time following a long time of deprivation, we see the railroad there, the locomotive that emits smoke, the white stations on the open plain, those characteristic remnants of Russian times. Six months ago the railway would have been considered a dream.

The road is not far from Beoyuk Vedi—that nest of bandits. Therefore, every precaution is taken. We descend into the valley, then gradually into the plain. The horsemen have already reached the Ararat station, which is under English control and is the neutral zone between the Turkish Sadarak and Armenian Davalu stations.

Dust is rising from the road in the plain; the infantry and transport are arriving.

Inside the Ararat Station, the Zoravar is hosted by the English military. Vahan Cheraz is also here, waiting for the Division. We had heard of Indian soldiers but had not yet seen them. Here, for the first time, we see Indian soldiers who, having carried out their responsibilities, are busy resting under the sun or eating. They have thin, long, black, stick-like legs and arms with nimble movements, a flexible groin and their heads are wrapped. They are almost completely naked, with only a white apron tied at their waists. Perhaps they too are surprised at us—dusty, with different costumes. Their relationship with the Armenian soldiers is strong.

The weather is suffocatingly hot, the mosquitoes intolerable. From the very first moment, the region's unhealthy climate is noticeable, especially for the soldier accustomed to the severe, cold, healthy climate of Sisian. There is no water and what can be found is bitter. Oh, where are the clean, cool waters of Sisian and the other mountainous regions!

What was to be delivered to the train was placed in the wagons. The transport horses and mules acquired from Daralakyaz returned and the Division went to Davalu to spend the night.

Davalu is the biggest Armenian village in the region and presently the last station of the Armenian Republic. The Turks have just left and the villagers have just returned. Many have not yet returned and many, many more will not

be returning. You will not find any wooden part of a house, neither a door, nor a window, in the entire village. The savages have destroyed them all. The local forces greet the Zoravar.

April 12: We have no news from Major Gibbon. The infantry will no longer walk. A carriage was to come and transport them; bread had been promised. Everyone is impatient about that.

There is no station. The Turks have burnt and destroyed it. Taking its place is a wagon on the railway tracks.

Finally, the train appears. Dro, the assistant to the Republic's Minister of War, and other soldiers arrive to welcome them. There are also other acquaintances from Karabagh and Goris who are returning to Goris, such as Kostia.

After embracing, the infantrymen board the carriages, while the horsemen, led by the Zoravar, swiftly gallop through the Yerevan plain on the highroad.

This plain is beautiful, flat, with closely spaced, green villages here and there.

We pass one or two Turkish villages that have remained unscathed. Indian soldiers are on guard in these villages to maintain safety on the roads.

We gradually speed up our pace. We pass by the Armenian villages on the highroad, Yuva, Ghamarlu, and Chikdamlu. All these villages were once inhabited, joyful,

prosperous villages, but today they represent only misery, desolation and ruin. Who does not know of the historic wine of Ghamarlu—its abundant, fruit-bearing orchards? But today more than half of the village is burned. The population who had fled during Turkish domination have begun to return. But what population? All of them—women, children, the elderly—everybody is emaciated, starving. Returning to their homes, many of them have nothing else to do but await death. Such is the situation in this region.

We also pass the villages of Hamzalu, Tazakyugh and Norakavit. This last village has been exempted from Turkish domination and has been the farthest point of the Republic in that region. The village is not damaged but has been under constant threat.

The rain has started to drizzle. The Zoravar is making haste to reach Echmiadzin as soon as possible, as he had promised to be there by April 12 or 13. He hastens and rejects the offer to go through Yerevan.

In the evening we will spend the night in Parakar, a village very close to Echmiadzin.

April 13: It is a wonderful spring. It is Sunday, Palm Sunday at that. We have a short distance left to get to Echmiadzin. There is no need to rush. At 10 o'clock all the horsemen, led by the Zoravar—ahead of whom the flags of the Division, Russia and Britain, are carried—advance towards Echmiadzin.

The infantrymen have just arrived by train at Echmiadzin Station.

The public and representatives of ARF Dashnagtsutiu led by the local regional commissar—a pleasant, active young man—have come to greet us joyfully, waving flags.

We have passed the Zvartnots Monastery. The rhythm and harmonious strides of the horses gradually encourages them. Their speed gradually increases and eventually turns into a rhythmic, victorious crusade.

Aslan, the Zoravar's beloved and inveterate horse, gradually begins to foam. The group is lead at this pace to the monastery of Echmiadzin and is settled in the *tavla*⁸⁹ of the monastery and the Zoravar, in the Monastery's guesthouse.

Immediately the Zoravar informs Tiflis, represented by Major Gibbon—who has already risen to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel—of his arrival in Echmiadzin, and then presents himself to His Holiness [Gevorg Surenyants, Catholicos of All Armenians 1911-1930].

April 14: From arriving in Echmiadzin up to the day of departure was a period of receptions, interviews and, at the same time, strenuous work.

The existing resources of the Division would not be enough for very long, barely 10-15 days, and even then not for all the soldiers. Therefore, from the first day it was decided to allow all those who wanted to leave the Division to do so.

⁸⁹ Turkish: stable.

Anticipating everything, the Zoravar had prepared in advance the Discharge Paper that was to be given to each soldier.

It was necessary to first discharge all those who were sick and weak. Handing out the discharge papers began after the internal issues and administrative work were organized.

At the same time, however, it was expected and hoped that Major Gibbon would bring news that the English command has decided to keep the Division and authorize it to cross into Turkish-Armenia and to settle refugees into their native country. In addition, there was very little money at the disposal of the Division, barely 200 to 250,000 roubles, which the Zoravar had saved when in Goris, from the monies given by General Bicherakhov and the English. That amount was woefully insufficient. It was therefore necessary to give each soldier only 200 roubles (one English Pound), which meant, for a country where the price for a pound of bread had become 7 to 8 roubles, money sufficient for only 10 days' worth of dry bread. Many people's clothes were tattered, their shoes and sandals had holes. But there was no solution. Absolutely no solution.

Witnessing this situation, one could only feel compunction that, after such deprivation, that self-sacrificing, courageous soldier would be rewarded in such a manner.

However, conditions are cruel. You cannot keep a soldier without food.

Once again and for the last time, those patriotic, lively, hero-soldiers of the Armenian Special Striking Division, all together and orderly in military file, came to the open square near the Echmiadzin Forest to hear the bitter verdict, the imperative of the situation; demobilization.

And after hearing the only possible—yet cruel—verdict; when those soldiers, silent, disciplined and noble, returned to their places in military file; one felt sincere regret that such an organized, solid and victorious army has to be dispersed.

April 15: Discharges are handed out in order, but while it is being given to the sickly and weak, there is hope that somehow an arrangement will be made to keep them.

At midnight Major Gibbon arrives. He has not brought funds or any actual assistance. The English Command agrees to keep the Division and proposes it go and stay in Surmalu. However, staying in Surmalu is not a job for the Division; it makes no sense. Permission must be given to go to new territories—Kars, Nakhijevan or Turkish Armenia. And Antranig presents his plan to the Major; the Division works independently and obeys the English Command; it moves, and advances into the country in accordance with orders from the English Command and will always have English instructors and inspectors.

With this counterproposal, Major Gibbon leaves for Tiflis.

April 17-23: Endless visits and all of them important. Dr. Ussher⁹⁰ from the American Mission; Head of the French Military Mission, Captain Poidebard⁹¹, an Armenian-speaking and Armenophile Frenchman; Captain B. B. Moore, and Lieutenant Emery, visit. Antranig meets with His Holiness; English General, K.M. Davie and Colonel C.E. Temberely. He is also visited by A. Khatisian, on behalf of the Armenian Republic, the Executive Body of Western Armenians, and public figures.

Meanwhile, the demobilization continues. It is the turn of the cavalry.

How difficult it is for a horseman to separate from his companion, his horse, which has shared his fate, has saved his life, with whom he has been friends in battle lines and under fire, and upon which he has doted. More loyal than a human, the horse has been a dear friend to the horseman.

And to imagine that he must separate from that beloved companion, his horse and also his weapon, by virtue of which these robust soldiers have retained their manhood and soldier's pride.

However, we must reconcile ourselves to it. It is impossible to personally keep a horse in that region. There is no grass, no hay, and whatever exists is sold at astronomical prices. There can be no talk of barley in a land where people consider themselves fortunate if they find anything at all other than rocks to eat.

⁹⁰ Clarence Douglas Ussher (1870-1955): American physician and missionary, eyewitness to the Defense of Van and the Armenian Genocide.

⁹¹ Antoine Marie Joseph Poidebard (1878, Lyon-1955, Beirut), Archaeologist, French military attaché in Armenia. In the 1920s he was greatly beneficial to the Armenian refugees in Lebanon.

April 23: Major Gibbon arrives. There is no news from the national delegation of Paris. To Zoravar's question, "I arrived in Echmiadzin together with the Division. Shall I keep or disband it?" the English command cannot accept Antranig's proposal of keeping the Division and the way in which it will function.

So, everything is decided. The Division must finally be disbanded. The Major announces that there will be a train in three days on which it will be possible to go to Tiflis-Batum.

In accordance with the Zoravar's request, the English have agreed to transport to Batum those soldiers from Armenia who want to go to the shores of the Black Sea or Constantinople.

The final gathering of the Division's Commanders' Assembly decides to:

1. Leave all the Division's weapons at the disposal of His Holiness the Catholicos.
2. Donate 15,000 roubles (Nikolayevsky money) from the Division's Treasury for the erection of a statue in one of the squares of Armenia's future capital, in memory of all those who gave their life for Armenia's independence.
3. Provide 5000 roubles to the Security Fund of Rostom's grieving family.
4. Distribute another 40,000 roubles to the infantry soldiers remaining in Echmiadzin.

April 26: The horses, means of transport and other items belonging to the Division have already been sold to

the Armenian Government, and the money distributed amongst the soldiers. Horses that are private property remain. The Yerevan Republic is going to purchase these. Appraisers have come from the government; prices are determined, and the horses are handed over.

Major Gibbon's role is over, so for the last time he says goodbye to the Division's remaining troops. He declares that he has seen first-hand the hardships these soldiers have endured and that he values them highly. He states that he hopes their sacrifices will bear fruit and that he will strive by all means to help achieve those goals.

Hurrahs went up, and the Major left for Tiflis.

April 27: Today the Tiflis-Batum train will come to transport the Zoravar and the soldiers who are leaving.

All weapons are handed over to His Holiness the Catholicos and in the evening everybody leaves for the station together.

Everyone, however, is heartbroken. Many are leaving their friends, many have been separated from their beloved animals, and many are pensive, thinking of the uncertainty of the future. Everyone was weighed down with a thought, and the Armenian's conscience was what spoke the loudest in all of them—that such a historic, strong and courageous, chivalrous Division was being dispersed; Armenia was being deprived of its strong support...

These diaries do not contain the records and correspondences of those historical meetings that, not being in my possession, will no doubt be available in the future to the writer of the 30-year history of Zoravar Antranig.

The wedding of Antranig to Nevarte Kurkjian, May 1922, Paris. Boghos Nubar was the best man.



General Antranig Ozanian



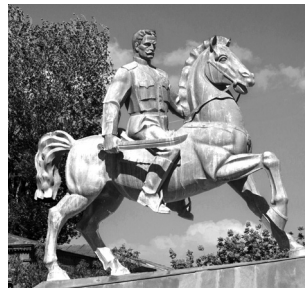
General Antranig statue in cemetery of Pere-Lachaise, Paris.
Photo: Carlos Delgado; CC-BY-SA



General Antranig and his commanders in Syunik, 1919

General Antranig statue in Gyumri, Armenia

Photo Marcin Konsek
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General Antranig and the Striking Division, Echmiadzin, April 1919. (Antranig seated, center, with Yeghishe Catchouny seated at his feet.)



VAGHARSHAG SHAHINIAN

*Vagharshag Shabinian, as interviewed by his son
Antranig Shabinian in Cresskill, NJ, 1953*

Vagharshag: We left Yerevan, our group of Vanetsi men were led by Baghdasarian¹, who was my teacher back in Van. He was our Kntabed (battalion commander), I was the Vashdabed (company commander), I had 200 hundred soldiers under my command. We arrived at Ordaklu [today's Lchashen] village near Lake Sevan to act as border guards for the new Republic of Armenia.

When we got there our Vanetsi battalion split up into three groups, we were sent to the Dilijan area, near Gharakilise [today's Vanadzor], to protect the border. At that point, the Turkish army had been given permission by the newly independent Armenian Republic to cross Armenian soil to capture Baku². And like jackasses we were expected to watch as the Turks cross our territory, capture Baku, then most likely return to attack Armenia, break our backs and completely wipe us out.

¹ Colonel Tigran Baghdasarian, participated in the Battle of Sardarapat leading the Van 4th regiment.

² According to the terms of the Treaty of Batum, signed June 4, 1918.

So, our three Armenian companies split up and I decided to separate myself and go to join General Antranig, who had been in that area three days earlier. He had passed through Daralakyaz region³ [today's Vayots Dzor] on his way to Nakhijevan, and from Nakhijevan he went to Persia, in order to join up with the British Army [who had a fighting force in Mesopotamia].



Vagharshag and his son, Antranig

Antranig's mission was to convince the British Army, as quickly as he possibly could, to join him in attacking and taking back the Caucasus and as such save the lives of the Western Armenians that were being slaughtered there by the Turks.

The new Republic of Armenia had sent a delegation to Nor Bayazid [today's Gavar on the shores of Sevan] to convince Antranig to return to Yerevan to participate in running the government. The Dashnagtsutun government was unbearable, and they needed his guidance, but Antranig refused to participate in the government and told them he was going to continue on to Persia. So, our regiment went from Yerevan to Ordaklu village by Lake Sevan; the regiment split into four battalions, three of which left to guard the border.

When the government said that they wanted us to protect the border and they proceeded to allow the Turkish troops to cross Armenian soil, I told the men in

my battalion, "I can't tell you men what to do, but I am not going to the border to watch the Turks cross our country unmolested, I am going to join with General Antranig to make one united front and protect the Armenian people and fight the Turks."

Antranig: *The men in the other groups when you split up, who were they?*

Vagharshag: One group was Baghdasarian's group, they were on horseback. A second group that split had four hundred cavalrymen and four hundred men on foot. My group had two hundred fifty men. That second group left for Nor Bayazid after hearing that General Antranig had been there three days prior in hopes of joining his battalion.

I also wanted to join Antranig, but I was supposed to be a company commander, so I had to wait in a field for two hours to make it clear that I was abdicating my role as commander, breaking away from what our mission was in order to join Antranig.

Many people left my group and joined the other groups as they departed. I told the men I would no longer be their commander. At that point, because I was breaking away from the mission, I only wanted to be responsible for myself, which is why I waited. But after two hours waiting in the field, it became clear that Baghdasarian was incapable of leading his men.

I told the men, "I'm leaving to join Antranig and if you want to join me you can," signaling to my men that they should choose to join Baghdasarian or follow me to join Antranig. I left to catch the other men who already

³ Daralakyaz is the region today known as Vayots Dzor. It is south of Lake Sevan and whose southwestern border is Nakhijevan and whose southeastern border is Syunik/Zangezur. This area was the limit of the new borders as defined by the Treaty of Batum.

departed, and I told my men that I would ride ahead and that they could catch up. Then I left on horseback and after roughly two hours, I caught up to the men that had already left for Nor Bayazid.

It was raining hard, and it was dark. There was a Turkish village, Harabah that was in ruins where I stayed the night in a caravansary. I wanted to be ready in the morning so when the men that decided to join me arrived, they wouldn't lose heart in thinking that I had abandoned them. I was worried that they would become disorganized, undisciplined and break apart without their leadership. First thing in the morning, I set out some sentries to make sure the men in that first group stayed together and organized to avoid them leaving the group. These men were leaderless as all the commanders had stayed in Baghdasarian's group and this group was undisciplined because of lack of strong leadership.

I had the men meet in the town square and I asked if there were any commanders. When they said no, I broke them into four groups and organized leaders for each group. It took me from morning until noon, with me on horseback and the men on foot. The men I was organizing didn't know me, I was waiting for my Vanetsi comrades to arrive that knew me and trusted me to lead them, but by noon they still hadn't arrived. So, I had the men march towards Nor Bayazid. I sent word ahead to Nor Bayazid that our men were coming through so that there would be a cease fire.

Antranig: *Were the men in Nor Bayazid Armenian?*

Vagharshag: No, they were a local militia.

Antranig: *Why did you need to warn them that you were coming?*

Vagharshag: There were armed forces there, both Russian and Armenian. This was still Armenian territory under the control of the Armenian government. It is at the edge of Lake Sevan. So, I organized the men, 200 mounted soldiers in the front with me, 200 hundred mounted soldiers in the rear and the men on foot in between, marching in rows of four abreast, the way an army should be. Thus, we marched into Nor Bayazid with me leading them. I wasn't certain that the word we had sent ahead requesting a ceasefire had been received, so I wasn't sure as we entered the town whether there would be fighting. I wore the uniform of a common soldier, I had no insignia on my shoulder proving rank, but because I was leading this small army, the local army officers and generals came out and showed great respect. I asked for help in having a place outside of town for the men to camp, because I didn't want the men bothering the town.

They sent someone who knew the area to help us settle the men. So we left the town, but I knew the men were hungry. They had been marching and it was afternoon, and no one had eaten anything. The next town we arrived at was Yeranos village and I knew I had to get the men fed.

We arrived at the town square and at this point, I was not sure that the Armenian government was going to sanction me and this army, because I was not being guided by the central government. I was not sure if they were

going to see me as someone who was organizing a coup, and therefore attack us.

We came to the town square and the leaders of the town met us and I arranged that the local villagers, particularly those people of means, should provide shelter and food to the men. They wanted me to come down off my horse and talk to them, but I said that before I do I have to make sure the men are taken care of.

It was a village of two to three hundred homes. We picked one hundred of the most well to do homes and sent our men to each to be taken care of. In each home I sent four horsemen and six foot soldiers, ten soldiers to a home to be fed and given a place to sleep. The men were told to take an evening meal, a breakfast the next day and each was to be given food for the following day. They were told to behave like proper soldiers. You must understand that all the commanders that had been in charge weren't there, I was the only one. And none of these men knew me, none of my men that were my friends and compatriots were in this group.

This was the second day that I was leading, but I was alone. When the men were taken care of, I went to the home of the town leader. They offered to feed me, but I had no appetite. My mind was busy worrying about how I was going to take care of and control this many men, and how I would be able to take care of them going forward.

I forgot to mention that, when I was organizing the men and had asked them where their commanders were, they said that none of the commanders were with them. I

said that they should confer among themselves and from their groups choose a leader that would represent each group. But I received an emphatic reply that I needed to lead them. And so I did.

So after the men were settled at about ten or eleven o'clock at night I went to the home of the *rais* [village leader], and I was hoping that at some point my Vanetsi contingency would show up to this town. These were about fifteen to twenty men, men that I knew from Van that were my compatriots who knew me and trusted me. But now it was late, and I was beginning to believe that they had given up trying to join me, having lost hope and turned around.

As I was sitting in the town leader's home worrying about tomorrow, word came that a group of soldiers had arrived and they were looking for the commander. I told them to bring the soldiers to me, and sure enough it was my men! They were exhausted and hungry, but they made it!

We had slept the night before, but they hadn't, so they were in bad shape. The town leader brought a big tray of pears, and a very large tray of *dzuwadzegh* [bread cooked in eggs] that had been prepared on the tonir [metal rimmed oven]. The men were famished, but I couldn't eat a bite. The men ate and I made sure that they were taken care of for the night.

I told the town leader that tomorrow we were leaving and that my men had eaten that night, but I would need to feed them for days going forward, that I would need *pacha* for the men. So, they took three or four cows

and one sheep, and that night, imagine, on the top of three or four houses they cooked *ghavourma* throughout the night and they also prepared the flour and cooked it on the tonir oven to prepare the *ghavourma* for the men. They cooked all night, and I supervised them all night without sleeping.

We worked until the sun came up. I had told the men that as soon as I had the villagers ring the bell of the church, they had to be ready, and they should assemble in the town square. When the time came, we assembled the men and gave them the food that we had prepared, and we pushed on. We then went to that village that I told you about. I told the men, the *ghavourma* you keep for later and the food that you were going to eat to get from this village.

Antranig: *What was the name of the village?*

Vagharshag: I can't remember, but I know the village that prepared the *ghavourma* was called Yeranos. It was a big village, and they were prosperous. I forgot to mention that in Yeranos, all the villagers were frightened, and they hid their livestock from us, fearing that we would commandeer all of it. That was the impression they had. I was just worried about getting enough for the day. We approached a village and apparently men from this village had heard from the Yeranos villagers that there was a fighting force of Armenians headed that way and then suddenly some men started shooting at us from the rooftops. This was a small village with maybe ten or twenty men, and we could destroy it, but it would also waste precious time.

I was worried about being able to control the men and I had to decide if I should let them destroy this village. So I entered the village to catch these accursed men who had fired on us. Then I saw that it was a waste of time, the men who fired on us just ran away and we needed to get to Antranig. If I wasn't rushing to meet Antranig I would find them and clean them up, of course without hurting the innocents of the village. But I thought better of it and we pushed on. We moved on to the next village, I can't remember the name of this village, but it was similar to Yeranos, and we spent the night there. Similarly, we slaughtered livestock to feed the men. It was the same going from village to village as we made our way south on the road to Nakhijevan, with the eventual goal of meeting Antranig in Persia.

Antranig: *Where was Antranig?*

Vagharshag: We knew he had been on this road because it was the road to Persia. In all of these villages on the road to Nakhijevan we heard that Antranig had just been there three or four days earlier. This was really the only road Antranig could take to get there. You had to go to Daralakyaz, then Nakhijevan then on to Persia.

Antranig: *Why was Antranig going to Persia?*

Vagharshag: He went there to join the British Army. The British Army had come to fight the Turks in the Caucasus, and to help save the Armenians of the Caucasus. We were there to spearhead that fight, battling at the front lines with the British behind us with their canons. They were going to move the Armenians of the Caucasus and

Yerevan to Persia. There were two hundred thousand Vanetsis that had escaped to Eastern Armenia, and the British planned to move them south to Persia. Most of the people in Yerevan were refugees from Western Armenia, there were hardly any native Yerevantsis there at that time, they had all gone north to the Caucasus to get away.

The Turks had destroyed Van so that the Armenians wouldn't have a home to come back to. So we moved from Daralakyaz region south towards Nakhijevan, and before reaching Nakhijevan we arrived at a village called Martiros.

Word reached the village ahead of our arrival that a detachment of Western Armenian soldiers was headed their way, and it caused a terrible panic among the villagers. Just before our arrival one of the villagers had a heart attack and died out of fear of our arrival. They had the expectation that we would ravage the village, take the livestock and leave them with nothing.

I told them, we were there to protect the Armenians not to attack them and that we would need food and lodging for the soldiers, and only for one night. We told them we were there to protect the Armenian people and that they had nothing to fear from us. I assured them the men were under my command and they would not hurt them. After reassuring them, their attitude changed and they accommodated our needs for the night. The next day we headed to Nakhijevan.

When we arrived in Nakhijevan I settled the men outside of the city. If I brought the men into the city they

could get dispersed and I needed them to be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

We were again too late to join with Antranig and his men, and I had a meeting with a group of soldiers from Sasoon. If the men were to go to the city we couldn't keep them from getting separated and lost from our group. The roads were controlled by the Turks and if a group got separated and tried to catch up, as a small group they might get killed trying to find us. Additionally, they couldn't be sure of what road we would be taking, it hadn't been decided yet.

Because we were a large force, we would be able to negotiate the roads and any attacks safely, but any isolated soldier or small group would have a problem, so I told them they had to be ready at a moment's notice. As expected, there were times when that happened, we would meet Turks on the road that would threaten our passage but because we were a large enough force, we were able to fight our way through.

In the end some ten or twenty of the Vanetsi men didn't listen. They found friends that lived in Nakhijevan, they ate and drank and showed up at dawn. I myself got back from my meeting at midnight, took my men and departed. Those men returned at dawn, but we had already left and they didn't know which way we went. When we left, for the safety of my men I didn't want anyone to know which direction we were headed and those that showed up at dawn were left stranded.

When we had arrived at Nakhijevan we had heard that the Turks had forced Antranig and his forces to retreat from Persia to Julfa, which was the next station after Nakhijevan at the border of Persia. When I had arrived at Nakhijevan I tried to telephone Antranig, but the man said Antranig had just departed Julfa for Mountainous Armenia and Pakher Maden, and the route he was taking wasn't clear.⁴

The inhabitants in Mountainous Armenia were mostly Armenian. I wanted to join Antranig, but I heard that the Turkish Army had pushed Antranig back and forced a retreat, so I knew that if Antranig with his larger force of three to four thousand couldn't resist the Turkish forces, that I had better not follow his path where I would be walking into a trap, so I had to find a different route with which to join Antranig rather than to head straight south from Julfa. So that night I conferred with the Sasoontzis, including Armen Sassouni [Garo Sassouni's younger brother. Garo Sassouni was an Armenian revolutionary, intellectual, provincial governor during the First Armenian Republic].

Armen Sassouni was holding three hundred thousand rubles that were raised for the war effort by the Tiflis Azgayin Khorhourt.⁵ This money was meant for Antranig and his soldiers. Armen Sassouni was going to join our group to deliver the 300,000 rubles, but he led us on a circuitous route to slow us down.

4 He uses the word Mountainous Armenia to indicate Syunik/Zangezur region and east to Karabagh.

5 Azgayin Khorhourt was the National Council in Tiflis. The National Council was a non-elected group that was the Armenian government at the time, whose representatives were sent by the various political parties, but excluded the Bolsheviks.

Antranig: *Why?*

Vagharshag: I suspect he had no plans to deliver that money, so he took us on a circuitous route purposely to slow us down so that he wouldn't have to give Antranig that money. We never eventually joined with Antranig, so I suspect that he stole the money that was meant for Antranig.

So that evening we decided to leave Nakhijevan and join Antranig using a different route in order to reach Mountainous Armenia and Karabagh. To reach Karabagh we had to pass through the regional center town of Goris. We had hoped to meet Antranig in Goris, but he wasn't there. We had heard that he was in Pakher Maden. So I sent ten horsemen out to look for him towards the village of Pakher Maden. Six days later they returned with a letter from Antranig. His writing was very poor, I hate to say it, I could barely read it. Antranig wrote that we had taken a very circuitous route and that we must not really want to join him, otherwise we would have been able to already have joined our forces with his.

Wherever we went we heard that Antranig has just been there, but he never let anyone know where he was going. I had no idea that ours wasn't a straight route, and I had no idea that Armen Sassouni had a mission to bring him money. I only learned about that money later. The Sasoontsis that had joined us were the ones guiding us; my only desire was to join Antranig, I had no idea about the money. The Sasoontsis and how they joined us is a different story. I haven't told that story.

Antranig: *Why not, tell the story.*

Vagharshag: It's in the past. It's not an interesting story. When we were on the way to Nor Bayazid, the Sasoons joined us. They were on horseback and as such a group that size would be vulnerable to attack. When you have infantry support, the cavalry is safer and more protected, so they joined us for protection.

Be that as it may, Armen Sassouni and his men joined us without the intention of ever delivering that money to Antranig. I decided that night in Julfa to go and join Antranig. On arriving in Goris, we found the Armenians there were in bad shape at that time.

There was a National Council [Azgayin Khorhourt] in Goris. They said that they were in no shape to keep me and my men there. So they sent us to nearby Tegh village, [which is on the road from Goris to Karabagh].

It was a prosperous village and we were told that they would be able to take care of our men. While there they requested that we should make sure that the villagers of Tegh gave money promised to fund the self-defense forces. They were supposed to provide this money, but they refused to do so.

Tegh was a village of a thousand homes and they were prosperous and they had a responsibility to contribute to the cause of self-defense of that region from the Turks. There was another condition put on us in going there. It so happens that there had been a murder in Tegh village. There was a group of twenty soldiers from Shushi that had been traveling through there on the way back to

their native town of Shushi and one of the soldiers staying in a villager's home had been killed by a villager over a rifle. They needed us to capture that villager and bring him to justice. I told them that would be difficult because the villager would be protected by his friends and its unlikely that they would turn him over to us. That was another mission that the Goris National Council sent us to Tegh village to do.

So we set out for Tegh village which was situated in a mountainous area. It sat in a valley surrounded on the three sides by mountains. On the fourth side there was a river that ran out of the village into a valley to the east in the direction of Shushi. We approached the village from atop one of the mountains, and as we approached, we looked down upon the village. We had men on horseback and infantry all lined up on three sides overlooking the village and as this group of western Armenian soldiers approached, the villagers became terribly frightened.

Antranig: *Did they know you weren't the Turkish Army?*

Vagharshag: They knew we were Armenian. There were no Turkish troops in that area. So they sent the village elders, about seven or eight men to meet us. They asked me to dismount. I said the only way I will dismount is under the following conditions. You are to take ten of my men per household, feed them and give them a place to stay. You need to give us four hundred pood of wheat [one pood is about forty pounds]. I want two thousand rubles, and I want you to begin to collect all of this right now.

Furthermore, I want the person who murdered the Shushi soldier. Right now. They told me to dismount and they would take care of everything. They said that they were weak and couldn't deliver the man themselves, but now that we were there we could do it.

So I dismounted and made sure the foot soldiers and cavalymen were taken care of. I ended up staying in this village for one week. On the road out of Togh going towards Shushi there were gardens and orchards of fruit trees. As a Vanetsi I loved being in those orchards because it reminded me of my home in Van. The orchards were laid out one on top of the next in a terraced way as you descended out of the village towards Shushi. I went there to relax and think about how I was going to take care of my men. Meanwhile I had set up guards in the village with a goal of catching the murderer. I can't remember if it was the second or third day, I was resting in the orchards and up the hill in one of the upper orchards when I saw a man running and jumping down from one orchard terrace to the next in a frenzied way past me.

I didn't understand what was going on, then suddenly I saw two of my men chasing after him yelling that was the murderer! I jumped to my feet and watched to see if they were going to be able to catch the man. Then suddenly a shot rang out from below. Apparently, he lived down below the orchard and he knew the quickest way down. So it looked like my two soldiers weren't going to be able to catch him and so they shot and the man fell. Fortunately, they didn't kill him, but wounded him in the leg. There were mounted soldiers that took him back to the

village and chained him to a tree. Goris was a day's distance away and we took him back to Goris. I brought back the 2000 rubles and the four hundred pood of wheat and I stayed in Goris for a week.

Antranig: *How much is a pood measure?*

Vagharshag: One pood is about forty pounds. It was two hundred pood, not four hundred [total 8,000 lbs of wheat].

Antranig: *Wow, that's four tons of wheat.*

Vagharshag: Arutiun Atanasov. I remember his name. That is a russified version of Harutiun Atanasyan.

Antranig: *So he was Russian Armenian?*

Vagharshag: Yes. He was the guy from Togh Village in Mountainous Armenia.

Antranig: *Was this area under the governance of the Armenian government at that time?*

Vagharshag: No. It was originally under Russian rule and then it was an independent area. The Armenian government controlled Yerevan and the surrounding area but not this territory. There was hardly any government here at all in fact. The Turks had come up and surrounded Armenia.

When you reached the first station leaving Yerevan, the Turks were already there. They had chained Yerevan in, we had nothing. It was later that they declared this area part of independent Armenia. Before we left Togh village

to go back to Goris, we had confrontations with the Tatars⁶. Next to Togh village there were three Turk/Tatar villages.

During the Summer Armenian youth from Togh village took their livestock up to the yayla [mountain pastures] to graze and they would return in the Autumn. While we were there news arrived that some men from the neighboring Turk/Tatar village had gone up to the mountain pastures, killed some Armenians and stole their livestock. Word came that Tatars had attacked and fighting had begun.

Because we were there, the Togh Armenians came to us and asked us to help. I asked them about the situation and they described who had attacked them. I took my men and I went to the first Turk/Tatar village we came to, which was located in the valley, and we cleaned up that village. We went on to the next village and we began a skirmish. At that time other Turkish fighters joined in against us from the surrounding Turkish villages.

My men on horseback went forward with me in the middle of them. It was there that I almost got killed. A Turk was hiding and shooting at me, I could hear the bullets whizzing by me, but I couldn't tell where the fire was coming from. I looked all around to try and figure where he was shooting from, so that I could attack in that direction.

Later the fighters from the three Turkish villages joined each other and attacked us as one force. Our cavalry went forward and surrounded them, allowing us to evade

⁶ In referring to Tatars he means Azerbaijanis.

their attack and send them running at which point we decided not to pursue them. We retreated to Togh village and with us we brought all the livestock from all three villages.

Approximately two thousand sheep, four hundred goats and oxen, and twenty horses. We scattered all the Turk/Tatars and they left. We returned to Togh and then the next day left for Goris. While in Goris the murderer that killed the soldier from Shushi was executed by firing squad. Before his execution he confessed to the priest of having killed the Shushi soldier. As I said, I had sent the ten soldiers to Pakher Maden to get news from General Antranig and they came back with that letter saying that we had taken a circuitous route as if we did not really want to join him. And we had taken an indirect route, that was true.

Armen Sassouni and his Sasoontsi men were the ones guiding us and Armen Sassouni, unbeknownst to me, had no intention of delivering the three hundred thousand rubles to Antranig as was his charge by the National Council. So, when I heard that Antranig was leaving Nakhievjan and headed back to Yerevan, I pulled out my troops and headed to meet him towards Brnakot village.

At the time when Antranig had retreated from Persia, he was up against a Turkish Army of fifteen thousand men to his four thousand. He retreated from there towards Pakher Maden and Goris where we had just been. There he was waiting for an armistice, and if that did not happen, he would move again or lie in wait because Armenia was surrounded. It was not clear what was going to happen,

and we had heard that the Turkish army was going to take Baku and then possibly go to Shushi and attack Mountainous Armenia from Shushi. If true, then we would have had to be ready to defend ourselves from the attacks from the Turks.

Antranig: *How large a force was the Turkish Army?*

Vagharshag: According to what I heard fifteen to twenty thousand men were there to take Baku.⁷

Antranig: *How did you know that figure?*

Vagharshag: We heard it from the locals. And from the Tatars. The Turks then went from Baku to Shushi. We were there to defend, then a general and a soldier came and delivered the news that there was a stop to the fighting and that the Turkish government [The Young Turkish Government] had fallen, and that the Turkish army was to retreat immediately and entirely from the Caucasus. Of course, we were very happy and relieved to hear this news. That also meant that there was no reason for us to be in Mountainous Armenia anymore.

So, we took our men and went back to Yerevan. That is where my family was and so we returned to Yerevan. I had been gone three to four months. Antranig, you were a newborn when I had left Yerevan. It was night when I had

⁷ In the first days of September 1918, approximately 15,000 combined Ottoman and Azeri troops overwhelmed the combined forces of the Bolsheviks, Armenians and a force of 1800 British soldiers. 70,000 Armenians escaped on boats. The rest, roughly 9,000 Armenians, were massacred. Some sources say as many as 30,000 Armenians were killed by Enver Pasha and his Army of Islam. (Hovannisian "Armenia on the Road to Independence," page 227).

returned from the fighting at Ghamarlu [today's Artashat, this where Vagharshag participated in the Sardarapat war prior to this story] I waited until you were born and then I left the next morning. Your mother was very sick, so I waited until after your birth to depart. I was gone for four months and when I returned you had already been baptized with the name Antranig, according to my wishes. I had to go to war, and I knew it was possible that I would be killed, so before I left, I made sure that they would baptize you with the name Antranig.

Antranig: *When you were in Togh Village for that week, is that where you got the artillery pieces?*

Vagharshag: I didn't get that field artillery from Togh; I got them in Daralakyaz [on his way south from Sevan towards Nakhijevan] and I brought them to Mountainous Armenia. It was in Angeghakot village, which was a large village, I heard that the Turks had lost the war and were pulling their troops out of the Caucasus [according to the terms of the Mudros Agreement]. I then brought my men back to Yerevan. It was after that General Antranig took the field artillery pieces from Angeghakot and he attacked Turks in the area of Aghudi -Vaghudi villages [today known as Aghitu and Vaghatin villages]. That was the heart of the Armenians of the area and the Turks were harassing the Armenians there. Antranig used those artillery pieces to attack those villages, the same pieces I had brought from Daralakyaz. There were four field artillery pieces and a large number of shells.

Antranig: *They were Russian weapons?*

Vagharshag: Yes, they were Russian made, and very heavy duty. They were field artillery.

Antranig: *How big were the shells, how thick were they?*

Vagharshag: I think they were five to six inches wide, very big and very heavy, and a large quantity of them. The Russians had a military presence in Daralakyaz. The Russian Fifth Army and most of the soldiers were Armenians from Mountainous Armenia. Because they couldn't bring the cannons from Daralakyaz, the Russian Army had left them there. The twenty soldiers that had been in Togh village were from Shushi and they were a contingent of the Russian Fifth Army that had been left there with the cannons. One of those men was killed for his weapon. Regardless, Shushi was a six or seven hour trip from Togh and the soldiers were on their way there.

Antranig: *And that's where they killed the soldier from Shushi.*

Vagharshag: Yes, they killed the soldier for his weapon and buried the body. The morning after he was killed, the soldiers were going to band together and travel back to Shushi, because to travel alone was dangerous, but it would be safer to pass through the areas where the Turks were as an armed group of twenty rather than alone. So, when the soldiers went to band together to leave and their comrade wasn't there, the Togh villagers said that the missing man went off on his own. The soldiers knew that

this couldn't be true, that he would never travel that road alone, but the villagers insisted that he had left and denied any wrongdoing. The soldiers knew that could not be true, and they confronted the Togh villagers, accusing them of murder, but the Togh villagers insisted that wasn't true and that he had left on his own. There wasn't much the Shushi soldiers could do because they were just twenty men in a large, powerful village with many young men, leaving the soldiers with little recourse.

Antranig: *Once you told me that you took those field cannons, you told me to the village...*

Vagharshag: That was when we took them, there was a battle....

Antranig: *What battle? [Here Vagharshag goes back to an earlier part of his story, when he and his men are leaving Nakhijevan and heading east towards Mountainous Armenia, before he gets to Goris and Togh village.]*

Vagharshag: The battle in Daralakyaz, when they were moving the cannons, crossing the border of Mountainous Armenia, the Turks from the villages all went up to the mountain pastures, to the top of the mountain. We had to cross in front of them. They called the main road the *chaussee* [French for roadway], Turks had closed the main government roads and the Armenians were forced to use mountain pathways to go and come. It was impossible to bring those big cannons over the mountainous roads, we had to use the *chaussee* because each cannon took six to eight horses to pull. So, when we went through the valley

we got caught in a skirmish. In the meantime, the Turkish Army arrived in Nakhijevan. When we got caught up in this skirmish, we understood that we were fighting the Turkish Army. Somebody gave them intelligence that we were there on our way to Mountainous Armenia with those cannons and they attacked us.

Antranig: *You had a thousand men?*

Vagharshag: Yes, we had four hundred cavalry and six hundred foot soldiers.

Antranig: *With the cannons and all...*

Vagharshag: Yes, with the cannons we were on our way to Mountainous Armenia.

Antranig: *And you engaged with the Turks?...*

Vagharshag: Yes. What is a thousand men going to do against the whole Turkish Army?

Antranig: *That was the regular Turkish army?*

Vagharshag: Yes! It was the Turkish Army. So we see that in Nakhijevan...

Third voice: *The Turkish government brought everything, the cannons, the men....*

Vagharshag: At that point we were not in good shape, we didn't even have one day's worth of provisions for the men. Then we saw that from the mountainsides of Nakhijevan, from the enemy's position we could see herds of sheep. It was early morning and we knew that we had to travel out of that valley fast, it was a six hour journey to get over the mountain pass towards Sisian. So, I spread the men

out and created a second defensive front as we worked our way towards Sisian on the road to Mountainous Armenia. After spreading the men out into what would appear to be a large fighting front, I had the men fire on the Turkish positions aggressively and nonstop to make it look like we had a much bigger force than we actually had.

This surprised the Turks and made them disperse in a panic. I supposed that the Turks had sent the local Tatars to their front in the attack, so when they were spread out by our attack, especially the attack of our cavalry, that gave us an opportunity to get the cannons out and allowed us to get away to the road to Mountainous Armenia. It was a dangerous road because we had to pass through three Turk/Tatar villages to get there.⁸

So, this way we avoided the main Turkish force, we made our way with speed and with the cannons on our way to Mountainous Armenia. I thought they were going to come after us, but I learned later that they didn't attempt this. As we were taking the cannons, we had to pass through a Turk/Tatar village. I had sent fifty cavalymen ahead to tell the Turkish villagers that we were just passing through and we would cause them no harm if they allowed us passage unmolested. I have forgotten the name of that village.

The fifty horse mounted soldiers were from Mush and with their company leader, a Mushetsi man named

⁸ Based off maps of the area, these three villages are assumed to be Kolani, Asagi Qislaq and Bichanak because they fit the location and topographical description he provides.

Yevo, we sent them forward and found out that the Tatar forces or possibly the Turkish army had sent a force to help the villagers cut off our escape and not let us pass. The road we had to take passed through a gorge. There was a mountain on one side of the road, and to the other side a river, and a mountain that rose out of the other side of the river. We had no choice but to pass through that gorge. This put us under a real threat of attack from the heights, from the front and behind, but we had no choice. We hurried to pass through this gorge with the infantrymen and the cannons, knowing that if they found us here, we would be at a terrible strategic disadvantage. They could completely wipe us out. I hustled to get the infantrymen and the cannons in and out of this gorge before the Tatars had time to organize and ambush us.

Yevo went ahead and arrived at a moment where the Tatar village leaders were having a meeting out in the open talking about how they were going to deal with us. There was an armed group of Tatar men that were organizing to attack us, but it was already late. The idiots had an armed group of men, but they were not even watching the road to the village. Yevo approached them directly, got off his horse and told them that we had a group of about a thousand men and that we wanted to pass through peacefully. He told them that if they allowed us to pass through, we would not bother them. They agreed to let us pass, but as they were agreeing Yevo could see that the group of armed men had already begun to head off to positions up the mountain. When they reached positions of height where they could fire on Yevo and his cavalrymen, Yevo's men began yelling at Yevo, "Let's get out, they are going to fire on us!"

Yevo told his men, based on his negotiations, that they promised they would not fire on them. Then as one, shots rang out and they cut Yevo to pieces. And they took his revolver,⁹ his sword and stole the 1900 rubles he was carrying.

We were getting close to the village at that point and from our position we could hear gunfire from ahead of us. We made speed to get to the village where we could hear that the fifty cavalrymen were pinned down in a skirmish, being shot at by Tatar fighters hiding behind every rock from positions up the mountain. As we rushed towards the village, we had one of our cannon bombardiers riding on one of the cannons. Originally there were four cannons, but we only had the capability of taking two. There were a few bombardiers that could operate the cannons but there was only one who was forward enough at that moment to operate this cannon.

Third voice: *Was he Armenian?*

Vagharshag: Yes. The bombardier turned one of our cannons towards where the village leaders were still meeting. When the men in the village saw us lining up the canon, they ran for the hills. The bombardier fired three times. He fired the first shell towards where the men were, but it missed its mark high. Once he had his mark, the bombardier said, "now I've got my mark," and the second shell landed perfectly in the midst of the running men. That made us very happy! And the third shell also hits its mark,

⁹ The word Vagharshag uses for revolver is *dasamadyan*, which likely means a ten-shot revolver, possibly a ten round Mauser pistol.

scattering both the villagers and a herd of sheep. We knew that once we got past this village, we would have to cross a mountain pass separating Nakhijevan from Sisian village [indicating that this must be a village called Bichanak]. We still had two hours of travel before we got to that mountain pass. Once we crossed the mountain pass the road would be clear to Sisian and Armenian territory, where we would not be threatened.

Antranig: *Three shells were enough?*

Vagharshag: They had all already scattered. This was the main government road and it passed right through this village. They had closed the road and no Armenians or Christians had passed on that road for the entire prior year, so when we counterattacked with the canons, we caught them by surprise and they scattered, opening our way through their village. The Armenian village was further down this road at the top of the mountain pass that entered Armenian territory.

Antranig: *Did General Antranig pass through that village before you?*

Vagharshag: No, Antranig was in Pakher Maden village at that time. After I went to Mountainous Armenia, I came back to Daralakyaz and took the two canons through that gorge between the two mountains. Antranig was in Khoy in Persia where he had encountered the regular Turkish Army and had to retreat to Nakhijevan. As I told you earlier, we just missed him in Julfa and when I called him in Julfa, he had left just one hour earlier and was said

to have headed east. I learned later that he had gone to Pakher Maden.

Antranig: *Did you see him in Pakher Maden?*

Vagharshag: No. He was in Pakher Maden, which is in the eastern part of Mountainous Armenia. I headed towards Mountainous Armenia. After the Turks had surrounded Armenia, we took those cannons with us going towards Mountainous Armenia, thinking that we could retreat to the mountains and protect ourselves from the Turkish attacks using those cannons.

According to the conditions of the treaty the new Armenian government had signed, the region of Daralakyaz, which included the town of Malishka, were to fall inside of Turkish territory.

We knew the Turks would be there soon, and sure enough, ten days later the Turkish army was there. But we were there first and took two Russian cannons. We took as many shells for the cannons that we could, but there were many that we couldn't take. And there were two cannons that we couldn't take. Before we left, we disabled those two remaining cannons because we knew they would fall into Turkish hands. We took our two cannons and headed towards Mountainous Armenia. There were two villages, Angeghakot and Brnakot in the region of Sisian, each had about a thousand families. We took the two cannons and established them at the top of the village of Angeghakot. After I had gone back to Yerevan at the end of this period, Antranig came and took those two cannons and cleaned up the Tatar villages of Aghudi and Vaghudi that were a threat

to the neighboring Armenian village of Angeghakot. After that Antranig also returned to Yerevan.

Antranig: *Did you join him then?*

Vagharshag: No. There was an armistice at that time and no fighting. He took his army to Echmiadzin and dispersed his men and after that he left for Europe in the company of an English general. He went to France and then to America. He was in America before I was. I came to America in 1920.

Antranig: *[Unintelligible question] ... and wasn't there a delegation?...*

Vagharshag: That was the reason I returned from Mountainous Armenia. I thought I already spoke about this. A delegation approached us there and said that there was a treaty and the fighting had to stop, that is why I returned to Yerevan. They said if you attack the Tatars, we [the British] will hold you responsible and the fighting must stop. The English delegation spoke of an armistice, the Turks had lost the war and were being pulled immediately out of Shushi and Baku. We were told by the British to stop the fighting. The local Tatars approached the British general, who had brought their army from Persia to Baku and complained that the Armenian fedayee were cleansing Tatar villages in the mountains. The British approached us and said that we had no right to continue fighting or harassing the Tatars. We responded that we were only protecting ourselves, we were here based on self-defense. We are happy the war is over and we can now return to our villages.

Antranig: *You went back to Yerevan?*

Vagharshag: Yes, I went back to Yerevan.

Antranig: *unintelligible... Babakhanov.*

Vagharshag: Yes, Babakhanov was my godfather. Vagharshag Babakhanov.

Antranig: *He was also named Vagharshag? What did he do in Yerevan?*

Vagharshag: Yes, he had a big cognac and wine factory.

Antranig: *Is his house the place you stayed in Yerevan?*

Vagharshag: I have not spoken about this yet. When the Turks were on their way towards Armenia, we as Vanetsis were so afraid that we went to my godfather's house and stayed there. We were afraid that before attacking the Persian Armenians, they would attack us, so we went to my godfather's house. He was a rich man, a well-known man in Yerevan.

Antranig: *Is that the place where Pa was in the orchard and the soldiers came?...*

Vagharshag: No that was a different place in Yerevan. We were not with Babakhanov yet. We had rented a vineyard...

Antranig: *You did? Alone?*

Vagharshag: There were ten families, we rented the land together. We made a hundred thousand rubles

working that vineyard. Ten families, I would say a hundred people would get together and we would eat and drink. That work was very big and productive, but on the other hand, soldiers would come and steal our grapes. We gave them what we could, we had a great supply of grapes. They would also come with baskets and take grapes and sell them. They would come in the night to steal grapes, we would tell them not to come in the night and trample our vines, we had to protect the vineyard. They would take ten pounds of grapes and destroy a hundred pounds while they took them, it being nighttime, and they could not see.

Antranig: *Were these regular soldiers in the Armenian army?*

Vagharshag: Of course, they were federal soldiers.

Antranig: *And what did the government do...?*

Vagharshag: It happens that surrounding our vineyards there were two or three government forts with Armenian government soldiers. I could not blame them, they were hungry!

Antranig: *Didn't you have some kind of recourse?*

Vagharshag: We went to the commander, we went to the mayor of the town, we went to Colonel Shahkhatuni [Arshavir Shahkhatuni was the Commandant of Yerevan in 1918], he was the chief of police of that town. We repeatedly complained. They said look, find the people stealing from you, bring them to us and we will punish them. That meant that we had to use weapons to catch the thieves. Bringing a soldier to Shahkhatuni also meant that we had to use a weapon, because they would come armed in the

night. He said if you bring the thief to me, and he is alive, we will punish him. Imagine. And we would catch them. But we would let them eat their fill and then send them on their way, we just did not want them destroying the vineyard. Every time they would eat a couple baskets of grapes. They were enduring difficult conditions. They were hungry. The government did not have the means to provide enough sustenance to keep them alive. They were starving. The whole country was starving. The soldiers did not have enough strength to hold their rifles.

Cresskill, New Jersey, 1953

Vagharshag Shahinian, Syracuse, NY 1913



Vagharshag and Shooshanig Shahinian
circa 1955



Vagharshag, Shooshanig
and baby Antranig,
circa 1920



Three Vanetsis, left to right,
Dajad Terlemezian, Sylva Gaboudigian,
Vagharshag Shahinian,
Oradell, NJ 1974



Vagharshag and Shooshanig Shahinian
with children Antranig, Arpine and George,
circa 1926



Vagharshag with Family, circa 1934



Shrine of General Antranig,
Yerablur, Armenia.



Vagharshag Shahinian shrine
at Sardarapat

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