IMPERIAL FORMATIONS IN OCCUPIED LANDS: THE RUSSIAN OCCUPATION OF OTTOMAN TERRITORIES DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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ABSTRACT

During the First World War, the Russian Caucasian Army had occupied a territory comprising the Ottoman provinces of Trabzon, Erzurum, Van, and, for a shorter period, Bitlis. The region that the Russian forces occupied was depopulated to a great extent due to the deportation and the massacres of the Armenian population and the flight of the Muslims. In the course of the occupation, however, mainly Armenian but also a significant number of Muslim refugees returned to the region. The relative absence of resistance and inter-communal violence during the occupation is striking, given the violent periods immediately before and after the occupation. Concentrating on the Russian practice of power during the occupation period, I will try to provide one plausible reason from among many: namely, that the Russian state and society succeeded in projecting a functioning vision of empire for the occupied regions.

The Ottoman state and the Russian state were empires in modern times. Both employed methods to enhance the status of their state in the international arena. The Ottoman state was not on a track to establish a nation-state. Its rulers’ attempts to institutionalize an “Ottomanist” nationalism failed, paving the way for modern methods of increasing the homogeneity of the empire, including population deportation or ethnic cleansing. Had the Ottoman state successfully ended the war, it would exist as an empire. In reality, however, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated into nation-states which all condemned their imperial past and which were all ruled by the late Ottoman elites who had embraced nationalist ideas and identities. The Russian imperial territories and structure, on the other hand, remained almost intact with most of the imperial bureaucracy merely serving under a new banner. The analysis of the Russian rule in the occupied Ottoman territories provides new insights for the viability of imperial political entities.
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Introduction: The Russian Occupation of the Ottoman Territories during the First World War

After the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918, the Ottoman state regained the province of Kars and recovered the territories that the Russian Caucasian army had occupied since 1915. As an attempt to register the sufferings of Muslim population and to counter the charges regarding its responsibility for the Armenian massacres, the Ottoman government dispatched a commission to investigate the Armenian and Russian atrocities against Muslims. Ahmet Refik [Altunay] (1881-1937), a professor of history, headed the commission, in which German and Austrian journalists also participated.\(^1\) The occupied territory that the commission visited between April 17 and May 20, 1918, was in the most desolate condition. People living in this region experienced all the “seven levels of civilian suffering” that Hugo Slim lists.\(^2\) The members of the commission recorded the devastation that they have witnessed; however, they could not help but realize that the misery of the people did not end with the reestablishment of the Ottoman rule. In fact, as Ahmet Refik later recalled, while the Muslims were cursing the Armenian irregulars, they remembered the Russian authorities of the occupation with a certain kind of gratitude. When Ahmet Refik asked a person how they felt under the Russian administration, the person replied: “Sir, we were in fear when the Russians were here but they took good care of us. Now we don’t fear but hunger is terrible.”\(^3\) According to Ahmet Refik:

> Between Trabzon and Erzurum nothing but ruins can be seen. One could not come across any living creature in any village. Hunger followed the Armenian tyranny. Even the [Ottoman] army is hostile to its citizens. The military command confiscated food provisions of Erzurum. The

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people of Erzurum, who were saved from the life-threatening Armenian administration, were now
tired of the hunger and despotism caused by the Turkish administration. …This tyranny caused
agony among the people. It seemed that no one was happy with the return of the Ottoman
administration. The Russian administration—even though it was a foreign and abusive
administration—was [still] the most just administration for the people, had it not been followed
by the Armenians. The people who a few months ago were trembling under the threat of death
and whose hearts were pounding under Armenian tyranny were now subject to the risk of
hunger.⁴

The observation of Ahmet Refik about the absence of hunger during the Russian
occupation was repeated in military reports. Right before Ahmet Refik and the investigation
committee arrived, the commander of the Ottoman Third Army wrote to the central authorities
asking for immediate delivery of provisions and noted: “even under the Russian occupation
people were not famished. After the liberation of the region deaths due to hunger are increasing
every day. Aid should be delivered urgently.”⁵

While these first-hand records draw a more or less benevolent picture of the Russian
administration of the occupied territories, the later historiography on this time period gives us a
radically different impression. The Ottoman and Turkish historiography depicts Tsarist Russia
pursuing its ages-long desires about the annexation of Eastern Anatolia as well as the Straits and
Constantinople. The Soviet description is similar, emphasizing the violence of the Russian
Empire’s participation in an imperialist war. The pro-Armenian historiography emphasized the
deception of the Armenian people in the realization of these imperialist aims. The common

⁵ Report from the Ottoman Third Army, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Dh. I. UM, Folder no: 20/18, File no: 12/29,
15 April 1918.
aspect of all these analyses was the emphasis on the vicious imperialism of the Russian state. I will argue, however, what was really going on in the occupied territories was not the implementation of imperialist policies but the struggle for the realization of competing imperial approaches. As my study will argue, empire was still a viable polity for the military, government, nationalist organizations and scholars from St. Petersburg and from the Caucasus. The Russian state and society were involved in the extension of an imperial polity within the occupied regions. This was a process of learning, which benefited from the experiences at other fronts (Galicia) and historical practices (the administration of the Caucasus); this process also featured several dimensions (military, administrative, social, and scientific).

**Historiography on Military Occupations during the First World War**

So far the literature on the First World War has mainly dealt with the front experiences of the Western armies. The absence of studies on the military occupations of the First World War, however, began to be challenged in the last decade. Annette Becker⁷, Helen McPhail⁸, Larry Zuckerman⁹, Sophie de Schaepdrijver¹⁰ and Tammy M. Proctor¹¹ are addressing the “forgotten,

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silenced and untold” occupation experiences of the Western Front, which had otherwise been studied thoroughly. These researchers apply a cultural- and social-historical approach in their analyses of the occupations in Northern France and Belgium. Becker and McPhail study the Northern France under German occupation, both questioning the reasons for the amnesia concerning this occupation in the historiography of the Great War. They try to portray the “terror” to which the French population was subjected, whose “home” turned out to be the front, and who became “military necessities” (Hull’s description of the status of civilians under the German military order). Zuckermann describes the crimes committed by the Germans during the occupation of Belgium. He claims that the Allies overlooked those crimes during the Great War and during the peace negotiations, and did not use them to justify the severity of the German punishment. Eventually, according to Zuckermann, this led to the appeasement of Germany and to the Second World War. In these studies, violence is at the center of analysis, whether forgotten or ignored. This resulted in efforts to find an explanation for this violence of the occupier.

A very profound explanation for the violence that the German occupying forces perpetrated can be found in Hull’s work. She focuses on the army, which is the institution that largely monopolizes the use of violence in all states, and proposes that in the case of imperial Germany, “the military practices, and the basic assumptions behind them” created a “military culture” which produced “dysfunctional extremes of violence.” In her analysis, the military in general, and the German army in particular, was best at reproducing and honing practices of repression in various contexts and, due to its nature, resistant to criticism and change. Whenever an army is not checked by governmental institutions or by the public opinion during the

implementation of a task, it may be lost in the details of the task and “the means overwhelms the end”. Comparison of different occupation zones, which were administered by uncoordinated bodies and which had presided over “races” that were perceived equal and lower than the Germans, shows us similar policies that went to extreme because “the three main parameters determining occupation policy were the same everywhere: the military definition of the task (establishing its understanding of order and authority, and the “military necessity” involved in serving the goal of military victory); the instruments at its disposal (bureaucratic administration and force); and the problem of overcoming Germany’s inferiority in materials, food and manpower. When the military set about solving these problems, it came up with broadly the same techniques wherever it was.” Hull claimed that the German military establishment shared the military culture that was pervasive among all the great powers, and thus the other armies were also capable to create the absolute destruction. However, only the German army managed to prevail over all forces in the German state and thus had unquestioned authority to take its powers to the extreme. In addition to that, the personalities did not matter in the implementation of violence because it was an institutional reflection.

Alan Kramer questioned this analysis and contended that the German army introduced a dynamic of destruction in the course of the First World War that was eventually shared by all other states involved. Kramer also argued that the process of violence “did not operate in a mechanical sense, or in the sense of a law of nature. At the center of the analysis are the human beings, whether as ordinary soldiers who suffered violence and were agents of violence, as civilians, or as commanders and politicians, who were the decision-makers with the power to modify the process.” According to Kramer, the European leaders, and especially the military

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14 Ibid., p. 228.
authorities, shared an understanding of total war, which also involved an attack on the cultural properties of the enemy. Although potentially all the belligerents had the capacity to deploy the dynamic of destruction to the level of genocide, it was bound to the decisions of political and military leaders. In his words: “The dynamic of destruction was not a law of nature; rather, despite the tremendous pressure of nature, technology, and mentalities, it was man-made, capable of infinite variation, and as we saw with the German decision to end the war, capable of being stopped before ultimate self-destruction. The era of the First World War nevertheless witnessed a decisive step towards total war, as the tendency towards the erosion of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants became more and more visible.”15 Following this analysis, we can make sense of the contrasting policies of a state in different territories during the war. As I will discuss later, the Russian army waged a violent occupation policy in Galicia, where the Russian army and state aimed at immediate annexation after the conclusion of the war. Although the same higher officials, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich and his assistant General Ianushkevich, were in charge of the occupied Ottoman territories, the Russian policies were more lenient and followed the well-tried imperial policies that had been applied in the Caucasus for decades.

Schaepdrijver’s study provides a very different angle on the occupation. First, it sheds light on the policies of the occupiers who were not ready to rule an occupied country and who had to invent means of rule and ways of exploitation for their own country’s war aims. Second, she presents the story of a population that did not flee and had to survive throughout four years of occupation. The duration of the occupation, the necessity of establishing order and providing a relatively secure rear to the most vital front, and the lack of ideological prerogatives that would

occur during the subsequent occupation of the same region all led the German occupation authorities to search for a *modus vivendi*. That process is well documented in the periodical reports of Baron Oscar von der Lancken-Wakenitz prepared by Michaël Amara and Hubert Roland. Moreover, these reports reveal how the German sense of superiority exacerbated the already tense relations between the occupied and the occupier during the requisition and labor deportations and how *Flamenpolitik* aimed to exploit the ethnic diversity in the population and to Germanize the Flemish population.

While the occupations of the German army on the Western Front were thus brought under academic scrutiny, Vejas Liulevicius analyzed the occupations of the German army on the Eastern Front. His book seeks to present a revealing case study of the German wartime imperialism and the response of the local population to it, by focusing on the German Military Administration of the *Ober Ost*, a territory, which encompasses Latvia, Lithuania, and northeastern Poland. Liulevicius masterfully examines the occupation experience of the occupiers.

As was the case during the Belgian occupation, German military authorities were not prepared to administer the occupied region for a long period of time. Therefore, they had to improvise an administration, which was influenced by the previous perceptions about the East, the current necessities of conducting war, and the transformation of war aims due to the unexpected duration and cost of the war. Thus, assuming themselves as representatives of a superior civilization, German authorities both exploited the sources of the occupied territories and enthusiastically undertook an effort to reshape the hostile and unfamiliar land and diverse

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peoples according to a program of German *Kultur* and *Verkehrspolitik*. Similar to the later Soviet nationality policies of the following decades, the German authorities standardized languages, categorized ethnicities and “processed” locals administratively, divided up the territory and restricted movement, and indulged in an ambitious cultural program. These policies were aimed at enabling the Germans to transmit to the occupied population both the orders of the German authorities and German values while inculcating in them respect for German law and authority and raising them into a more developed stage of civilization. The utopian program however, turned out to be transformative for both the occupied and the occupier, but not in the way that the rulers of the *Ober Ost* had imagined. The locals resented the new German administration more than the Russian one, since they were subject to a harsh military colonial rule. As a result, they started to form nationalistic resistance groups. Although the German military set up a large bureaucracy as compared to the previous Russian one, this did not end up in an organized administration, but in a mess in which every responsible officer enjoyed a high degree of autonomy; this led to arbitrariness, isolation, and alienation of the soldiers. Ultimately, when the vast ambitions of *Ober Ost* failed in practice and were overthrown by Germany’s military defeat, the German officers and soldiers blamed “the East.” According to Liulevicius, this contempt, which had grown out of the Eastern front experience, was of decisive importance in shaping German views of the East in the aftermath of the First World War and shaped later Nazi policies implemented in the Eastern Europe.

Jovana Knezević used the *modus vivendi* approach of Schaepdrijver to analyze the conduct and experience of the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Serbia during the First World War by focusing on the “war community” of the capital, Belgrade.18 She analyzed how the

Military General Government of Serbia tried to administer a hostile population and to keep peace and order in the occupied territory and to exploit economic resources of the region to support the Home Front. Knezević brought in the occupied population, and explained how the occupied population manipulated Austrian rule in order to survive. Thus, she reached the conclusion that the regime and the occupied people were not in a constant conflict and enmity. She further maintained that both sides reached a *modus vivendi*, which provided relatively peaceful period of occupation.

Jonathan Gumz analyzes the policies of the Austro-Hungarian army in occupied Serbia and locates the events in the larger international context. According to Gumz, the occupation of Serbia clearly shows the anational, traditional mentality of the Habsburg Army. Gumz claims that in an era of nationalism the Austro-Hungarian army tried to preserve the traditional legitimacy of the empire within the empire as well as in the occupied territories. Because of this concern, the Austro-Hungarian army did not conduct “modern” policies in Serbia and it did not unleash a war of annihilation. There was violence but it was restrained both by the traditional mentality of the officers and by the international law, which was a basis for the legitimacy of the Habsburg polity. Unlike the German occupations of the First and Second World Wars, the Austrian occupation of Serbia was not a prolongation of colonial warfare implemented by a higher race against a lower one. The Habsburg Army aimed at transforming Serbia into a realm of the empire, which was meant to be anational, apolitical. Gumz also argues that “more than other states, Austria-Hungary was highly invested in the post-Napoleonic international system and partially relied its status as a great power for its legitimacy. Austria-Hungary’s own

confidence in the rescuing power of international norms extended both to occupation and to its own survival in 1917.”

Studies on the occupations of the Russian army are also increasing in number. A. Iu. Bakhturina provides an extensive account of the Russian occupation regime in the Eastern Galicia. Mark von Hagen, in a succinct monograph, analyzes the occupations of Russian, German and Austrian armies in Galicia and Ukraine during the First World War. Von Hagen also shows how the realities in the occupied regions, the changing international conditions, and domestic developments affecting the occupying powers forced them to reconfigure the prewar aims and initial plans for the occupations. Liulevicius has explained how the German administration of the Ober Ost had to reconcile with the nationalist demands of the Lithuanians and the Latvians by the end of the occupation. Likewise, the Russian administrators of Galicia had to change their annexationist and Russification policies of the first occupation during 1914-1915 after the active resistance of locals as well as the February Revolution in Russia forced the empire to acknowledge the principle of national self-determination by the end of the second occupation in 1916-1917. Von Hagen’s insight on how the bureaucracies of the occupying powers pursued their own agendas in the occupied regions is a crucial contribution. As von Hagen points out, between and even within the ministries there were severe differences about the policies to be implemented in and future aims projected for the occupied areas. One has to add, as was the case in all occupation administrations be it in Belgium or Serbia, the orders emanating from the capitals were being interpreted and implemented according to the realities on the ground by the officers.

administrators and soldiers whose ideological, national and institutional prerogatives might be categorically different from the others’.

Alexander Prusin discusses the role of the Russian army in creating and intensifying ethnic disputes in Galicia. Prusin claims that “military regimes exacerbated the pre-existing ethnic tensions by targeting allegedly ‘hostile’ and privileging ‘friendly’ ethnic communities in regard to religion, language, education, and property ownership. Such ‘mobilization of ethnicity’ became a rudiment of the total war, expanding it far beyond the areas of combat. At the same time, these policies boosted the pre-war national movements and ultimately precipitated the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires.”23 The Russian army deliberately mobilized ethnicities because the Russian state and army had decided to fully integrate Galicia at the end of the war. To prepare the region for the future annexation, the Russian authorities undertook a Russification campaign and tried to wipe the Austrian character of the occupied territories. Thus, according to Prusin, the Jewish population was targeted not only because of espionage suspicion, but also because more than any other ethnic group the Jewish population represented the Austrian Empire.24

Prusin’s approach on the mobilization of ethnicities in the occupied territories at the Eastern Front resembles the analysis of Michael Reynolds about the Ottoman and Russian borderlands between 1908 and 1918. In their attempts to secure their borderlands and prepare for future expansion, both the Ottoman and Russian states shaped the formation of national movements in Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus.25 However, unlike in Galicia, the Russian army did not intensify the mobilization of ethnicities during the occupation of Ottoman

24 Prusin, The Lands Between, p. 52.
territories in the First World War. This was, as I will explain, mostly due to the indecision of the Russian state about the future of the territory. Therefore the imperial benevolence towards all ethnicities became the preferred and mostly applied policy.

Peter Gatrell’s studies dealing with the “refugedom” in the Russian Empire within the context of the First World War provide valuable tools to analyze the ordeal of the occupied populations, for the reason that most of the peoples in occupied areas would end up being refugees. Gatrell deals with the refugees, the natural victims of the war and military occupations, which constitute a special social group that had decisive impact on the transformation of the Russian government and civil society during and after the War.

More than any other studies, the recent works of Peter Holquist have provided a very useful framework for my analysis of the Russian occupation of Ottoman territories. Holquist skillfully portrays how Russia pursued a policy that was “complicated and riddled with contradiction” and “internally fractious and uncoordinated” in the occupied regions, as well as how the Russian state and the military authorities developed particular and general policies regarding occupation over the course of the First World War. As Holquist uncovers, international norms and negotiations represented an important factor affecting Russian policies of occupation and decisions regarding the future of the occupation. I also concur with this assessment and help expand on it with this dissertation. Another important issue that Holquist tackles is the violence that the Russian forces perpetrated in the occupied Ottoman and Persian territories. In that regard, he builds on his previous studies on the functioning of the Russian army in the course of the war as well as during the Civil War in Russia. In his analysis of the dynamics of violence,

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27 Peter Hoquist, “To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia,” in Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (eds.) *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-
however, most of the cases he chooses to prove his point were actually from the period after the
revolutions had started in Russia and the formal imperial authority was shaken and about to be
replaced.28 This, actually, is a crucial aspect that convinced me to set February 1917 as the end
date for my analysis, because the main framework of imperial occupation started to change
radically after that time, as Holquist’s analysis shows. It was a fact that violence was an
important aspect of the Russian occupation. However, if we take into consideration the violence
in the periods right before and after the occupation, the time during which the region was under
Russian rule was relatively the most peaceful during the First World War.

Chronologically, my analysis thus sits between two extremely violent periods. At the one
end stand the Armenian massacres. The Ottoman government undertook the tragic and violent
Armenian deportations in the very early stages of the First World War. The deportation of the
Armenian population from all over the Ottoman Empire, and not only from the regions bordering
the Russian Empire, started in May 1915, just before the Russian Caucasian Army entered the
city of Van. Officially, this policy was justified as a punishment for those Armenians who had
collaborated with the Russian forces and who might endanger the situation of the already
decimated Ottoman armies on that front. However, this population relocation policy, which had

Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek and Norman M. Naimark (eds.), A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at
the End of the Ottoman Empire (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 151-174; ibidem, “Forms of
violence during the Russian occupation of Ottoman territory and in northern Persia (Urmia and Astrabad), October
1914-December 1917,” in Eric Weitz and Omer Bartov (eds.) Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in
the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013).
been applied by many other governments in the course of the war, escalated to a policy of ethnic cleansing, if not genocide.²⁹

The atrocities that occurred during and after the Russian withdrawal from the region following the Russian Revolution of 1917 stand at the other chronological end of the analysis. After the rapid dissolution of hierarchical authority on the front, the abusive violence of the Russian army members as well as inter-communal violence intensified. This time the victims were mostly the Muslim populations, who were subjected to the arbitrary policies of the dissolving Russian army and to the atrocities of the Armenian formations trying to conjure up an Armenian national state since the February revolution. The Ottoman armies were quick to join in and expand the scope and reach of violence as they reoccupied the region and beyond, even entering Baku in September 15, 1918.

Within the confines of this time period, the Russian Caucasian Army had occupied a territory comprising the Ottoman vilayets of Trabzon, Erzurum, Van, and, for a shorter period, Bitlis. The deportation of the Armenians and the flight of Muslim populations left the region severely depopulated. In the course of the occupation, however, mainly Armenian but also a significant number of Muslim refugees returned to the region. The relative absence of resistance and inter-communal violence during the occupation is striking, given the violent periods immediately before and after the occupation. Concentrating on the Russian practice of power during the occupation period, I will try to provide one plausible reason from among many: namely, that the Russian state and society succeeded in projecting a functioning vision of empire for the occupied regions.

²⁹ There are many valuable studies on the Armenian genocide. For a well-balanced study of the issue within the international context see: Donald Bloxham, The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
The Ottoman and the Russian states were empires in modern times. Both employed methods to enhance the status of their state in the international arena. The Ottoman state was not on a track to establish a nation-state. Rulers had already tried to apply an “Ottomanist” nationalism, but it failed, leading to efforts to increase the homogeneity of the Empire. Population deportation and ethnic cleansing were some of the modern methods that the Ottoman government employed. Had the Ottoman state successfully ended the war, the imperial nature of the state would probably have been enhanced rather than replaced. This would explain, for example, the policies of Cemal Pasha in Syria, whose aim was not to punish the irredentist Arabs but to enhance the strength of the Ottoman state in its periphery. As Ahmed Emin Yalman stated, “Without this World War, Turkey would have lost Syria and — as a natural consequence — the areas south of it. French propaganda has been very effective and would gradually have torn away the country if the agitation had continued with the same speed. But thanks to its cautious work undertaken during the last years of the War, Turkey has conquered Syria anew, making a strong effort to achieve cultural domination too.”

The policies of the Ottoman state in Eastern Anatolia were also aimed at reconquering the region for a more homogenous empire. However, the efforts of the Ottoman government to convince all the ethnicities in the viability of their vision for the empire were not successful. This failure may be one of the reasons for the radical measures that the Ottoman government undertook against several ethnicities right before and during the First World War. The Armenians, the Greeks, the Kurds and the Arabs were the victims of these policies to varying degrees. Maurus Reinkowski provides a good analysis of the ideological radicalization that

engrossed the Ottoman ruling elite, who undertook Westernization reforms but were appalled by the ingratitude of the ethnic components of the empire. “When the empire’s population turned down the ‘generous’ offer, the state elite felt betrayed. Thus was set on its course the process of radicalization that would discharge so violently in the first two decades of the twentieth century.”

The Russian state, on the other hand, did not have such a problem—yet. To the extent that the occupied populations would not consider the occupation as a “nationalist threat,” resistance would be limited, and a *modus vivendi* would be reached between the occupier and the occupied. Studies of the German occupation of Belgium and Northern France, the Austrian occupation of Serbia, the German occupation of western territories of the Russian Empire, and the Russian occupation of Galicia provide us with valuable cases to compare. Moreover, Russian authority was not totally alien to eastern Anatolia. Although the Ottoman state regarded the region as a core territory, Russian armies had already been in the region twice in the last forty years. The adjacent territories in the Caucasus, which had a similar ethnic and religious composition, had been under Russian rule for a century, and the populations on each side of the border had very close relations.

Therefore, I argue that the presence of a legitimate supranational authority allowed for functioning relations between Muslims and Christians under the Russian occupation, despite the presence of tensions and violence. Notwithstanding the arguments to the contrary, the Russian authorities did not prefer one ethnic group to another during the occupation and did not pursue a policy of Russification, as they did in Galicia.

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There were two important differences between the occupation zones in Anatolia and Galicia. One was the decision about the future of the region. Russian military and governmental authorities perceived Galicia as an integral part of the Russian Empire in a vital region. There were Slavic populations among whom the Russophile movement was effective, and the region was crucial to content the western-Slavic populations of the Russian empire. In the case of Anatolia, the state authorities did not take a decision about its future at the beginning of the war. There were no ethnic groups that could be easily assimilated into the Russian nation and the most pro-Russian population, the Armenians, were regarded as troublemakers by the imperial authorities. The second important difference related to the enemies that the Russian armies confronted on these two fronts. In Galicia the Russian army’s position was not very secure. The German and Austrian armies were formidable enemies, and the situation was critical. Therefore, the army was more apprehensive, and this feeling of insecurity led to suspicion about the population in the occupied region. The search for possible threats in the rear of the army intensified as the army’s position became less secure. In Anatolia, at the very beginning of the campaign, the main Ottoman army, the Third Army, lost its combat capacity as the result of the Sarıkamış battle, and the Russian position was not threatened until the end of the war.

Because of these conditions, the Russian army did not implement exclusionary policies in the occupied Ottoman territories and all the ethnicities could interact with the Russian military, governmental, and social institutions. The Muslim people indeed enjoyed a certain degree of self-government according to the regulations of the temporary administration. There were Muslim representatives in the local municipal administrations; in locations with Muslim majority, the mayor would be a Muslim; villages with Muslim populations had Muslim heads; and there were Muslim members at the local courts. Muslim officials in charge of villages or
towns and imams kept registries of the refugees who were receiving governmental aid. The Muslim mayors of Erzurum, Rize and Erzincan were not accomplices of Russian or Armenian schemes. They were appointed by Russian imperial authorities and attempted to protect the life and rights of Muslim population in their localities within the Russian imperial structure. Christian mayors of some towns would request aid from Russian authorities on behalf of Muslim refugees.

In light of these arguments, in the first chapter of this dissertation, I examine the military invasion of Ottoman territories. Looking at the main operations at the front, I analyze the pre-war plans of the Russian governmental and military authorities, the launch of the invasion, and the ways in which the actual battles on the front continuously reshaped Russian plans.

In the second chapter, I focus on different agencies that claimed authority in the planning of the administration for the occupied regions during and after the war. The Russian state was reluctant to incorporate the occupied Ottoman territories and did not devise a vigorous plan for its administration. Still, the Russian military had to administer a large region under its occupation and had to establish order. This process involved the rival imperial visions of different governmental departments, and despite the conflicts between the Russian authorities and the ambiguity about the future of the occupied territories, the region was on track to become a part of the Russian Empire, as I analyze in the case of the city of Trabzon.

The third chapter is about the organization of refugee relief. All the military occupations during the First World War created enormous amount of refugees and the organization of refugee relief became a major concern. There were hundreds of thousands of Christian and Muslim refugees in the occupied territories and providing food, shelter and other basic needs for these people was an important issue for the Russian administration. The Russian governmental and
military authorities cooperated with Russian and Caucasian civilian organizations to handle this issue. This inclusive, imperial approach to the refugee problem was an important reason for the relatively peaceful nature of the Russian occupation and the lack of resistance to it. All the national groups could interact with Russian authorities and got support at varying levels. This organization of refugee relief was a perfect example of the new imperial mindset in the occupied territories. The Russian state interacted not with the nobility or elites of the peoples in the conquered territories but rather lent legitimacy to the nationalist organizations and intellectuals. The nationalist organizations functioned within the imperial structure and did not try to undermine it.

The last chapter is about how the imperial vision of Russian scholars was projected onto the occupied territories. While the imperial government itself was not ready to annex the occupied territories, the Russian academic community had already been involved in the conquest of Ottoman territories before the war and intensified their efforts to that effect in the course of the war. This chapter analyzes the Russian archaeological expeditions, the logic behind them, and the rivalry between imperial and nationalist scholars in the occupation of Ottoman territories at the academic level.

**Methodology**

The main sources for this research are the documents from Russian state archives: the Russian State Military Historical Archive and the Russian State Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire in Moscow; the Russian State Historical Archive and the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg.
The most important documents turned out to be those in the Russian State Military Historical Archive (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv). This archive holds all correspondence of the Tsarist army up to the revolutionary period. There are special collections on the administration of the occupied Ottoman territories alongside documents relating to the general war objectives and projects concerning the future of the region.

The Russian State Historical Archive (Rossiiskii gosudarstvenno-istoricheskii arkhiv) in St. Petersburg contains most of the documents produced by the Tsarist governmental institutions. The projects prepared by the Land and Settlement Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, the discussions at the Council of Ministers on the occupied regions and the concerns of the ministries of Finance, and Industry and Trade are all preserved at these archives.

Since the war aims of the Russian government regarding the occupied territories would change in accordance with the nature of the international developments during the War, the stance of the Foreign Ministry is also crucial. Thus, the Russian State Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii) was quite important for my study. The Russian Foreign Ministry had many consulates on the territory of the Ottoman Empire and Persia before the war. Although the consulates in the Ottoman Empire were closed following the Ottoman entry in the war, those in Persia remained active and their communications with the Russian Foreign Ministry provide crucial insight to the occupation policies of the Russian Army in Persia as well as in the Ottoman territories.

I have traced the correspondence of governmental authorities and the nationalist refugee relief societies in the Georgian State Historical Archive. The collections of the Caucasian Viceroyalty and the office of the refugee affairs provided valuable documentation on the cooperation and conflicts between the governmental and social institutions.
The Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk), the Archive of Russian Imperial Geographical Society and the Russian Oriental Institute at St. Petersburg have valuable collections of the Russian scholars who conducted intensive studies in the occupied regions. The documents from these archives, alongside the publications of the corresponding institutes and the visual documents preserved at the Photo Archive of the Institute of the History for Material Culture, constitute the data providing the views of Russian academic institutions vis-à-vis the occupied regions.

Besides the Russian archival sources, contemporary national and local Russian newspapers provide valuable insights, although what was written in them should not be accepted at face value. Similarly, the memoirs of the participants of the occupation were certainly indispensable as well.

In order to bring in the Ottoman side of the occupation experience, I have consulted the Prime Ministerial Archives (Başbakanlık Osmani Arşivleri) in Istanbul and the Military History and Strategic Studies Institute, a subdivision of the Turkish General Staff (Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etütler Başkanlığı), in Ankara. While the latter holds vast collections of documents relating to the organization and conduct of the Turkish armies since the Crimean War, the former preserves the documents produced by all governmental bodies of the Ottoman Empire since the sixteenth century. Documents related to refugees are generally found in the Prime Ministerial Archives. Besides the archival material, newspapers, memoirs of the officers confronting the occupying army and of the representatives of Muslim relief organizations, contemporary testimonials of the refugees and oral history studies of local historians enriched my data and analysis.
Chapter I: Absent-minded occupiers: The progress of military occupation

Neither the Ottoman nor the Russian Caucasian army was in a position to wage an offensive war on the Russo-Ottoman front. Nevertheless, the historians of the campaigns on the Russo-Ottoman front who mention this pre-war situation draw a different picture. The major events in the histories of the Russo-Ottoman front start with an adventurous Ottoman offensive, the Sarıkamış operation at the turn of 1914-1915; this was followed by Russian attacks that resulted in the occupation of a large territory from 1915 to 1917. The development of the Russian Caucasian army’s activities on the Russo-Ottoman front gives us an important idea about the nature of the Russian occupation and the way that the Russian authorities administered the occupied regions. The occupation was a work in progress and there was no pre-war plan to be implemented in regard to the occupied Ottoman territories. This, however, does not mean that Russia ended up being in the region coincidentally. It was not like the Italian occupation of southeastern Mediterranean shores of Anatolia while expecting to take the region around the Aegean Sea after the end of First World War. Russian foreign ministry and army had plans of occupation and operation concerning the Eastern Anatolian region. The actual occupation of the region in the course of the First World War, however, was not an implementation of these plans. It evolved under the influence of local and international conditions, as was the case in all of the military occupations during the Great War.

During the years before the Great War the Russian civilian and military authorities in the Caucasus and the Russian diplomats in the Ottoman Empire had been conducting policies that would help a prospective Russian occupation and eventual annexation of this region. The picture right before the war was that the Russian government has prepared for the annexation of the
Ottoman territories as it has been doing in Northern Persia. Armenian, Assyrian and Kurdish people were organized, encouraged, protected against the Ottoman state and were ready to support the invading Russian armies.

For this aim in Northern Persia and Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire the Russian state established consulates, agencies, opened schools for the tribal elites at the consulates, employed Orthodox missionaries, set up typographies, opened offices of Russian banks and trade firms. At all these establishments secret agents were employed who were officers of the General staff and fulfilled the following tasks: some prepared the Armenian minds for a rebellion, some tried to allure the Assyrians to the unity of Orthodox, some others set up connections with the Kurdish tribal leaders by intervening in their conflicts about land distribution and benefitting their allies, another group of agents studied the roads and topography of the region and some others supplied weapons and ammunition to the Kurds and the Armenians for the organization of revolts against the Ottoman and Persian states. In short, all the tools of the imperialist arsenal were used for the preparation of future acquisition of new colonies.33

However these plans were for a war in which the Russian state would face the Ottoman state alone. In a general European war, the Russian state could not concentrate on an offensive policy against the Ottoman state due to the pressing danger on its Western front. Likewise, it could not unilaterally decide on the fate of any territory. The claims that the Russian Empire had had a well-designed policy of annexation during the war built on connections with the Armenian, Kurdish and other minority populations in the Ottoman empire had been refuted by the Russian statesmen who actively took part in the cultivation of these ties before the war, such as the consul

33 L. Gotfrid, “Kurdy i imperializm,” Biulleten’ pressy srednego vostoka, nos. 13/14, p. 105. For an excellent analysis of the Russian and Ottoman policies regarding minority populations see: Michael A. Reynolds, Shattering Empires: The clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian empires, 1908-1918. M. S. Lazarev’s seminal book had been the main source to understand the Russian policies regarding the Kurds in the Ottoman and Persian territories before and during the First World War. See: M. S. Lazarev, Kurdistan i kurdskaia problema v 90-e gody XIX veka - 1917 g. (Moscow: NAUKA, 1964).
in Urmia, Persia, Basil Nikitin and the consul at Damascus, Kniaz’ Shakovskoi. Armenian nationalists in the Ottoman Empire and Russia had also complained about the neglect, if not the betrayal, of Russian authorities toward the Armenian people during and after the war.

Moreover, the conduct of the campaign, which is analyzed in this chapter, also shows that the forward movement on the Russo-Ottoman front, the subsequent occupation of the region, and the establishment of an administration for the occupied areas all developed without well-designed prewar plan. Since there was no pre-war preparation for the occupation and administration of the region, the Russian state seemed to implement conflicting policies in the occupied regions. These could be interpreted as anti-Armenian, anti-Muslim, or as a reflection of conflicting interests.

35 Basil Nikitin, “Russia and the Kurds,” Manchester Guardian, 21 September 1950, p. 6. This was a response to M. Philips Price’s article which had appeared in Manchester Guardian on September 7, 1950. Price was a war correspondent on the Russo-Ottoman front during the World War I. Writing about the aggressive Russian policy in the Middle East in the aftermath of the World War II, Price claimed that the Soviet Russia might try to use the “independent Kurdistan card” against Turkey and Persia as the Tsarist Russia once did. See, M. Philips Price, “Russia and the Kurds: Seeking for a Weak Spot,” Manchester Guardian, 7 September 1950, p. 4. According to Nikitin, who was the Russian consul in Urmia during World War I, and a Kurdologist, Tsarist armies did not have a proper map of Kurdistan, did not have personnel conversant in any of the Kurdish languages and did not have a consistent policy regarding the Kurds in the Ottoman empire or in Persia.
36 Gotfrid, “Kurdy i imperializm,” p. 108-110. Kniaz’ Shakhovskoi was the Russian consul at Damascus before the war. Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich appointed him to revive the Russian relations with the Kurdish population, after the serious blow that these relations had taken during the first year of campaign at the Russo-Ottoman front during which the military authorities cruelly dealt with the Kurds in the occupied Ottoman territories. The article of Gotfrid includes excerpts from Shakhovskoi’s memoirs.
37 Garegin Pasdermadjian, Why Armenia Should be Free (Boston: Hairenik Publications company, 1918), pp. 20, 30-31; For a heated debate about the Russian promises and plans for the future of the Armenian territories of the Ottoman Empire in the media see: Kavkazskoe slovo nos. 182, 184, 186, 193, 195, 198, 204, and 209, 18/8, 20/8, 22/8, 3/9, 7/9, 16/9, and 22/9 1916. Armenian nationalist writers responded to an anonymous writer who argued that granting autonomy to the Ottoman Armenians was neither viable, due to the diminished Armenian population, nor in the interests of the Russian state. The responses focused on the sacrifices of the Armenians for this cause and also the Russian commitment to the Armenian autonomy during the negotiations for reforms in the Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire during 1913-1914.
within the Russian governmental institutions at the same time.\textsuperscript{40} Yet these conflicting policies were actually the result of the unexpected progression of the war. It took some time and discussions at various levels for the Russian military and governmental authorities to devise a policy for the occupied regions. Even when there was a plan, it was modified according to the actual necessities on the theater of war. In Galicia, for example, the Russian authorities tried to implement a plan of annexation, and the result was a disaster for the occupied region, the inhabitants of that region and for the occupiers.\textsuperscript{41} This devastating experience forced the Russian authorities to pursue a more tolerant policy in the later occupation of Galicia and also affected the administration of the occupied Ottoman territories.

In this chapter I will try to demonstrate how the region was occupied and how, even until the last major operation of the Caucasian army, Russian authorities were hesitant to give the orders for forward movement. All operations of the Caucasian army on the Russo-Ottoman front were active defensive operations initiated in order to occupy commanding heights, shorten communication and supply routes for the army or to deny the similar aims for the Ottoman army. Rather than describing the operations, which have been given in the official histories,\textsuperscript{42} the works of the participants of those operations\textsuperscript{43} and the studies of several other historians,\textsuperscript{44} I will

\textsuperscript{44} William Edward David Allen, Paul Muratoff, Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Edward J. Erickson, Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War (Greenwood Press, Westport, 2001); Nikolai Georgievich Korsun, Pervaia mirovaia voina na Kavkazkom fronte (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1946); A. O. Arutunian, Kavkazskii front,
underline some important aspects that demonstrate the defensive nature of these forward movements, the hesitance of the central authorities for the further incursion of the Caucasian army and the lack of political aims. We will see that the Russian high command was planning the evacuation of Tiflis during the Sarıkamış operation, that the first aim of the Russian commanders was not the liberation of Armenian resistance fighters in Van (but rather that the Russian central government was furious about the Van operation), that the Viceroy at the Caucasus was adamantly opposed to the Erzurum operation, and finally that the Trabzon operation was almost hampered by the Russian navy in the Black Sea as the admirals of the navy did not give priority to this undertaking.

**Sarıkamış operation**

Like the Russian Caucasian Army, the main task of the Ottoman Third Army was also to defend an extensive borderline of 700 km and to tie down as many Russian units as possible in order to prevent their transfer to the Western front.\(^45\) The promising results of initial military operations against the Russian armies in November 1914 encouraged the Ottoman high command, and it decided to launch an offensive despite the opposition of the commander of the Third Army.\(^46\) The acting commander-in-chief of the Ottoman army, the Minister of War, Enver Pasha, had been urging the commander of the Third Army to Enver Pasha was so hopeful about the results of this encirclement operation that he went to the front to assume the command on December 12, 1914.

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\(^{45}\) Edward Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, pp. 37-41.

While hopes were high on the Ottoman side, at least for the Minister of War, the Russian side was evaluating the faltering results of the military operations in November. An inspection committee composed of General Iudenich, Colonel Maslovskii and Lieutenant-colonel Dratsenko, was sent to the front upon the orders of the viceroy after the alarming reports from the Sarıkamış group on November 20-21, and decided that the hesitation of General Berkhman was the main reason for the unsatisfactory development of events. The commander of the Sarıkamış group General Berkhman, who was accused of giving in to the pessimism as a result of unfounded information about retreating forces, tried to correct the situation by asking for permission for an offensive operation. Nevertheless, Viceroy Count Vorontsov-Dashkov made it clear to him that until a decisive victory on the Western front; the aim of the Caucasian army was to prevent successful Ottoman military operations.47

The Sarıkamış offensive was an aberration from the original preparation of the Ottoman armies. The astounding German victories at Tanenberg and Mausiran lakes encouraged Enver Pasha to risk the encircling the Russian forces and trying to protrude into the Caucasus. With three army corps, the Ottoman high command decided to annihilate the Russian forces in an encirclement operation, which started on December 22. Despite the harsh winter conditions, the lack of communication between the army groups, and desertion, the Ottoman forces achieved the major tactical aims of the operation by December 25. Three divisions of the Ninth Army Corps reached Sarıkamış, the railway connecting the town with Kars was cut and the left flank of the army moved into the Russian side of the border and occupied Ardahan. Russian authorities perceived the magnitude of the threat and hastily sent General Myshlaevskii to undertake the general command of the army along with General Bolkhovitinov and General Iudenich. The assessment of General Myshlaevskii about the situation of the army was so bleak that he ordered

47 Maslovskii, Mirovaia voina na kavkazkom fronte, pp. 70-72.
the retreat of the army on December 25, 1914 to Kars (the order was reissued on December 27 and 29) and hastily left the front for Tiflis. His pessimism affected the authorities and the local inhabitants very badly. It was decided to evacuate the families of the Russian officers to Russia proper and take measures for the defense of Tiflis.\textsuperscript{48} The order for retreat demanded that General Berkhman would organize the movement of the main forces to Kars, for which the Ottoman forces around Sarıkamış had to be repulsed, and General Iudenich would command the troops at the front and rear.\textsuperscript{49} It was at that time that the Ottoman offense lost its steam and the Russian commanders at Sarıkamış managed to strengthen the defense of the town by January 1. Moreover, the Russian efforts to occupy the stronghold of Barduz in order to secure the withdrawal of the Russian army towards Kars resulted in the encirclement of the Ottoman Ninth Corps, and General Berkhman realized that his army could not only repulse the Ottoman forces, but also completely destroy them. Thus started the general counter-attack of the Russian forces under the command of generals Baratov, Voronov, and Przhevalskii. The Ottoman Ninth Corps was annihilated, and it surrendered with its staff and commander. General Berkhman was the Russian commander who informed the viceroy about the crushing victory of the Russian Army on January 4 and 5.\textsuperscript{50}

Despite the fact that General Berkhman was the victorious commander at the head of this army, on January 5 Lieutenant General Iudenich replaced him.\textsuperscript{51} It was General Iudenich who organized the pursuit of the remnants of the Ottoman forces and put a decisive end to the Ottoman offensive, received the fourth-degree Order of Saint George decoration, and went down

\textsuperscript{48} Nikolai Georgievich Korsun, \textit{Sarykamyshkaia operatsiia} (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1937), p. 9; Maslovskii, pp. 132-134.
\textsuperscript{50} RGVIA, Fond 2003, op. 2, delo 1039, l. 68; RGVIA, Fond 2000, opis’ 1, delo 3862, l. 142.
in history as the victor of the Sarıkamış battle. The contribution of General Berkhman would be recognized later, and he was rewarded with the same order as General Iudenich by the Chief of General Staff General Alekseev as the result of an inspection only on August 3, 1916.\textsuperscript{52}

The reorganization of the Caucasian army following the victory at Sarıkamış made important impact on the progress of war at the Russo-Ottoman front. General Iudenich would decide on the policy that would be pursued in the regions occupied by the Russian army during 1915 and early months of 1916, until Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, the commander-in-chief of all Russian armies, replaced Count Vorontsov-Dashkov as the new viceroy and the commander of the Caucasian Army. But despite the ignominious defeat of the Ottoman army and the clear predominance of the Russian forces, the defensive strategy of the Russian army did not change. In his report to the Viceroy after the battle on January 5 (January 18), 1915, General Iudenich stated that the Ottoman forces were decisively defeated and they could not undertake any serious military operation. According to the general, Russian forces did not require any significant reinforcements unless the political and strategic situation changed.\textsuperscript{53}

On January 30 (February 13), 1915 Viceroy Vorontsov-Dashkov restated the defensive task of the Russian Army at the Russo-Ottoman front to the new commander, General Iudenich, and gave him complete independence in military operations. “In these hard times when the fate of the empire will be decided on the Western front, the remaining forces at the Caucasus should steadfastly defend the most important locations of the region and the routes leading to those locations. The ultimate goal of all armed forces that remained within the borders of the Caucasian military region should therefore be the defense of Baku and the two lines of communications connecting Transcaucasia with the European Russia, namely, the railroad of

\textsuperscript{52} RGVIA, Fond 2003, opis’ 2, delo 1039, l. 69.
\textsuperscript{53} RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 83, l. 1.
Baku-Derbent-Petrovsk-Vladikavkaz, and the Georgian military road…. In order to fulfill this task the Caucasian Army will be under your command. You will undertake all military operations independently." Such an independent decision taken by the new commander of the Russian army at the Russo-Ottoman front in the wake of the Sarıkamış operation became one of the most-debated episodes of the war on this front. The decisions taken by the new commander, including the operation in Van in 1915, also lay at the heart of the debate on the history of the extermination of the Ottoman Armenians.

**The Occupation of Van**

The occupation of the city of Van in April 1915 has been the focus of many historical analyses, since the event is either seen to be a clear example of the collaboration of the Ottoman Armenians with the Russian forces of occupation and thus a solid reason for the deportation of the Ottoman Armenians, or to the contrary as the best proof of the Ottoman intentions to exterminate the Armenians, as the governor of the city had laid siege to city under his rule and attacked the Armenian inhabitants cruelly with regular and irregular forces until they were rescued by the valiant Russians. Although the nature of the events in Van in May 1915 is debated among the historians, the description of the role of the Russian government is almost always the same. It is claimed that the sinister Russian government, which had long cultivated Armenian nationalist movement against the Ottoman administration, found an opportunity to realize their real intentions for the annexation of Anatolia and betrayed the Armenians after attaining its goal. On the one hand, historians who deny the existence of Armenian genocide

54 RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 830, l. 1.
accuse the Armenians of being traitors who collaborated with the Russian army and try to justify the Ottoman state’s decision to deport the Armenian population by presenting this episode as a clear sign of the threat that the Armenians posed to the Ottoman state. On the other hand, historians who explain the genocide by pointing to the intentions of Ottoman politicians since time immemorial to exterminate the Armenian population, agree with the previous historians on the nature of the Russian intentions and accuse the Russians of betraying the Armenians who had successfully resisted the Ottoman plans of extermination in the city of Van and who laid their hope in the prowess of the Russian Army for the liberation of the long-oppressed Armenian people.

A close analysis of the military operations of the Russian army, however, provides a different picture. The events in Van were a lucky coincidence for the Russian army, which had been trying to strengthen its strategic situation on the Northern Persian theater, and the Russian high command could not miss the military and political opportunities that the “liberation of co-religious brethren” offered. While this was the view of the Russian high command on the Russo-Ottoman front, it is apparent that the Russian government, for its part, did not approve this military operation and was even adamantly against it. Meanwhile, the commitment of the Russian army and the government to the “liberation of co-religious brethren” was so weak that the city and its inhabitants would be left to its fate on the first signs of a possible Ottoman reoccupation as a result of the Ottoman counter-attack in July 1915.

As noted above, General Myshlaevskii ordered the Russian forces to retreat on December 24. Though the Russian commanders on the Anatolian side of the front did not have to fulfill the order of retreat to the letter, on the Persian side, Russian forces under the command of General Chernozubov withdrew from their positions despite the lack of pressure from the Ottoman side.
In fact, Enver Pasha had ordered the formation of two special expeditionary forces under the command of Halil and Kâzım beys (First and Fifth expeditionary forces) for the invasion of Northern Persia before the Sarıkamış operation. When the Sarıkamış operation failed, however, the orders for the invasion of Persia were revoked and the expeditionary forces joined the Ottoman Third Army. Still, however, small Ottoman detachments, aided by irregular Kurdish and Persian forces, could occupy locations abandoned by the retreating Russian army. The fact that important towns and cities in Northern Persia were occupied by small Ottoman detachments aided by irregular volunteer forces could not redound to the glory of the Russian might in the eyes of the local population, who were swayed by the propaganda efforts of the Ottomans and fighting against the Russians alongside the former. The situation had to be remedied for the security of future military operations in the region. After the annihilation of the Ottoman threat at the main theater of the front, the Russian forces initiated an attack against the Ottoman forces in Persia and also organized punitive expeditions against the Kurds.\[57\\]

Although the Ottoman forces at the Russo-Ottoman front were desperately in need of reorganization and reinforcement, the Ottoman high command deployed the First expeditionary force again to its original destination under the command of Halil Bey in April 1915. Obviously the Ottoman army still had limited military capacity to undertake an offensive operation. This time, the Ottoman high command decided to attack on the left flank of the Russian army through Persian Azerbaijan. Halil Bey undertook a successful offensive at this part of the front and occupied a considerably large territory.\[58\\] This second offensive of the Ottoman armies, the attack of the First Expeditionary Force of Halil Bey, was soon repulsed and the Ottoman troops had to

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57 Maslovskii, Mirovaia voina na kavkazskom fronte, pp. 157-158.
retreat. General Iudenich ordered the annihilation of this Ottoman force by blocking its retreat routes. The city of Van thus gained strategic importance for the Russian army as it was supposed to be on the main retreat route of the forces of Halil Bey. In order to secure the left flank of the army from further flanking operations of the Ottoman forces, General Iudenich ordered the Azerbaijan group and the Fourth Caucasian army corps to move to the Lake of Van, which would be strategically easier to defend.

The Russian army attacked in the direction of the Lake of Van with three columns. The Bayazid division which included Cossack regiments and three Armenian volunteer units drove towards Van reached Begri (Muradiye) on 30 April (13 May) 1915 and were ordered to move on the city of Van only after receiving the information that the forces of Halil Bey had managed to escape encirclement and moved towards Mosul. It was at that point that the Armenian rebellion in Van erupted and the Commander-in-chief ordered that the army should use this situation to its benefit. The voluntary Armenian units at the Persian front were employed for the “emancipation” of Van, which was actually a strategic maneuver for the Russian army. The pragmatic approach of the Russian army and lack of its commitment to the Armenian liberation would be tragically apparent for the Armenian population when the Russian forces were ordered to retreat from the city in July due to military considerations. ⁵⁹ Actually, the city would be evacuated four times by the Russian forces along with Armenian refugees in the course of the Russian occupation. After each evacuation, the Armenian refugees who had managed to return to their homelands would suffer terribly. ⁶⁰

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⁵⁹ This first retreat of the Russian army from Van brought catastrophic consequences for the Armenian population of the city, and was named as “the Great Retreat.” Ter Minassian, “Van 1915,” p. 242.
⁶⁰ News about refugees from Armenian newspapers, Georgian State Historical Archive, (SSSA), Fond 520 (Ispolnitel’nyi komitet po ustroistvu bezhentsev), opis’ 1, delo 208, l. 205.
The aim stated in the order given on 1(14) May 1915 was not the liberation of the Armenians, but assisting the other Russian forces which had moved far too west and occupied Malazgirt.\textsuperscript{61} Even the last order to enter the city was given in hesitation as the division commander was ordered to bivouac at Begri and not to enter the city until communications were established with the Russian forces to the north. The Russian advance was very successful and the governor of Van had to evacuate the city as there were no forces to withstand the Russian forces. On May 4 (17) General Nikolaev ordered the Armenian volunteer units but not the Russian Cossack troops\textsuperscript{62} to enter Van and it was then they received a delegation from the city informing about the evacuation of the Ottoman forces. Upon that information, the Russian forces followed the Armenian volunteer units and entered the city on May 5 (18) 1915 victoriously and with much fanfare.\textsuperscript{63}

The Ottoman government was rightly suspicious of the Russian support for the Armenian rebels, which had been the case in the decades before the war. However, as it has been argued, the Russian authorities could not exploit the pre-war ties with the Armenian and Kurdish groups and could not support the rebel groups against the Ottoman state. The head of the intelligence department of the headquarters of the Caucasian army, Danil Pavlovich Dratsenko, who was trying to reinstitute the Armenian spy-network in Eastern Anatolia right before the war started,\textsuperscript{64} was enthusiastically suggesting the armament of the Armenian and Assyrian populations in the Ottoman Empire and prepare them for a rebellion in the rear of the Ottoman army. The Viceroy

\textsuperscript{61} RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 670, l. 45; RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 702, ll. 342-342 reverse. (Cited also in: David Martirosian, “Vanskaia operatsiiia: mif ili real’nost’?” Rodina, no. 5 (2009).\textsuperscript{62} Eliseev, Kazaki na Kavkazskom fronte, p. 140.\textsuperscript{63} RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 745, l. 2.\textsuperscript{64} General Shatilov and Maslovskii, depending on Shatilov’s memoirs, claim that the Armenian intelligence network that had been cultivated long before the war especially by the military attaché at the Erzurum consulate, Vyshinskii, was abolished by the new military attaché Georgii Iosipovich Klerze a few months before the war started. Pavel Shatilov, “Voennaia razvedka na Kavkazskom fronte,” Voenno-istoricheskii vestnik, no. 16, November 1960, pp. 3-7; Maslovskii, Mirovaia voina na kavkazskom fronte, p. 47.
at the Caucasus, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, backed his ideas and methods with the same enthusiasm but diplomatic prudence and lack of the required weaponry prevented the supply of weapons to the Armenian armed groups at least at the amount that was necessary to incite a significant rebellion. According to the reports of the vice-consul in Urmia several groups claiming the representation of Assyrian, Armenian and Kurdish peoples approached him and asked for armament for a prospective revolt against the Ottoman state. The representatives of the Zeitun Armenians delivered a similar request. The responses were always sympathetic but rarely realized or could only be met at an unsatisfactory level. The Zeitun Armenians were directed to the French and British authorities, which in turn also declined to fulfill the armament request because of technical incapacity. The words of General Iudenich, then the chief of staff of the Caucasian Army, from a telegram dated August 22 (September 4) 1914, summarize the situation very well: “We don’t have weapons. General impression is that, we should give [weapons to the Armenians], but what can be given is unknown.”

When the Armenian rebellion in Van was unfolding, the deputy minister of Internal Affairs, Vladimir Fedorovich Dzhunkovskii, who was in charge of the gendarmerie and intelligence services warned the General headquarters of the Russian army with a telegram to the chief of operations General Ianushkevich that the Armenian committees in Turkey decided to act in such a way that would force the Russian army to intervene and liberate key Armenian

65 Genis, Vitse-konsul Vvedenskii, pp. 24-25.
66 “Correspondence of the Caucasian military district with the Russian diplomatic representatives in Turkey and Persia about the preparation of Turkish Armenians, Assyrian and Kurds for armed rebellion against the Turks,” RGVIA, Fond 2000, opis’ 1, delo 3851, ll. 10-84.
67 Telegram from the chief of staff of the Caucasian Army, 22 August (4 September) 1914, RGVIA, Fond 2000, opis’ 1, delo 3851, l. 9.
cities, Van and Erzurum. Dzhunkovskii found this decision particularly dangerous, as it was
generally accepted by the ruling elite that the highest authority at the Caucasus, Count
Vorontsov-Dashkov, was approaching to all Armenian schemes with extreme sympathy.69

Dzhunkovskii’s remarks reflected a widely shared perception among the Russian ruling
elite about Count Vorontsov-Dashkov. Many Russian statesmen and the Russian press criticized
him for being an Armenophile and sacrificing Russian interests for the Armenian national
aspirations. In a report submitted to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a major-general claimed that
the decision for the evacuation of the families of Russian officers from Tiflis, which was
ostensibly taken as a precautionary measure, might be a part of a sinister Armenian scheme to
cleanse the Caucasus of the Russian element. Even the incursion of Armenian refugees was
perceived to be a part of this scheme. Moreover, he was accusing the Viceroy and particularly his
wife of providing preferential treatment to the Armenian refugees, and ignoring the needs of the
refugees of other nationalities. The major-general further reported that there was a common
perception among some military and civilian authorities that the Armenian voluntary divisions,
which were formed by the permission of the commander of Caucasian army, General
Myshlaevskii and by the Armenian nationalist organizations, would form the prospective
military forces for an autonomous or independent Armenia and would be used against Russia if
the aspirations about autonomy for Armenia would not be fulfilled. He argued that the
preferential treatment of the Armenians was disturbing other nationalities especially the Muslims
ethnic groups in the region who were suffering from the assaults of the uncontrolled Armenian
divisions. He urges the replacement of Count Vorontsov-Dashkov claiming that due to his senile
age and precarious health conditions he was not able to effectively fulfill his responsibilities and

69 Telegram to General Ianushkevich from the assistant of Minister of Internal Affairs, 28 April 1915, RGVIA, Fond
2003, opis’ 1, delo 540, l. 219.
unwanted elements, like Countess Vorontsova-Dashkova, might take over. In fact Count Vorontsov-Dashkov’s policies had always prioritized the Russian interest in the Caucasus and in the Ottoman and Persian territories. He tried to secure the allegiance of the Kurdish tribes as much as he courted the Armenian organizations within the Ottoman Empire. Notwithstanding their validity, the accusations reflect the apprehension of the Russian ruling elite about the Armenian nationalist organization in the Caucasus as well as in the Ottoman Empire.

The Russian authorities had always been suspicious about the cooperation of Armenian leftist nationalist organizations, the largest of which was the Dashnaksutiun. According to another report sent from the Minister of Internal Affairs to the chief of operations at the headquarters of the all-Russian armies (Stavka), General Ianushkevich, the Dashnakists were in cooperation with the Russian state only for the purpose of realizing the Armenian autonomy and secretly ordering Armenian people to hold on the officially distributed weapons which may be used against the Russian state if the latter would not allow an autonomous Armenia. The Minister of Interior Affairs was sure about the inimical stance of the Armenian leftist organizations depending on the intelligence reports about the secret and public meetings of the Dashnaksutiun party in Tiflis and Ekaterinodar in February and March.

Several ministers of the government, the main concern of whom was the disastrous turn out of the military operations at the German front, shared these ideas. Contrary to the expectations, the news that the Russian army at the Caucasus was advancing victoriously into the Ottoman territory was not received with enthusiasm at the Council of Ministers. At the July 30, 1915 meeting all the attendants of the council agreed with the state comptroller Kharitonov, who said:

71 Report to General Ianushkevich from Minister of Internal Affairs, 29 April (12 May) 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2003, opis’ 1, delo 540, ll. 228-231.
Where are we going in the Caucasus? I hope it won't all end in catastrophe. I am not a judge of strategic and tactical nuances; nevertheless I cannot help seeing that naked political considerations are triumphing over purely military ones. Everyone knows that the extraordinary sympathy of the Viceroy for the Armenians. Isn't he being carried away by these sympathies? Even a superficial look at the map shows that the army is being directed mainly toward Armenian territories. As it is the situation is difficult enough everywhere and here we are about to take risks for the sake of restoring Armenia. By the way, the Caucasian deputies are very much upset by the course of events in the Caucasus. Chkheidze screams unceasingly about the danger, and accuses the local authorities of an exaggerated partiality for Armenian demands, which are so influential in the vice-regal palace. All this should be brought to the attention of the Emperor.  

All the members of the Council shared these anxieties about the perceived commitment of the Russian empire to the Armenian question. The chair of the council of ministers, Goremykin saw the aim of these military operations as the creation of an Armenia, and maintained the idea that it would lead to serious complications in the future. Foreign Minister Sazanov also agreed that it would be early to deal with the Armenian question but warned the other members of the council that Russia could not disavow the Armenian question as it would be “impolitic” and as “among our allies, particularly in England, there is an old tradition of great sympathy for the Armenians.” The comment of the Minister of Agriculture Krivoshein, a prominent and influential member of the Council of Ministers, agreed with the Foreign Minister Sergei Dimitrievich Sazonov that Russia could and should not forsake the Armenian question. However, he added “we cannot remain silent when we see that the authorities in the Caucasus are prepared to sacrifice Russian interests for the sake of Armenian ones. In our opinion a crime

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72 Arkadii Nikolaevich Iakhontov, *Tiazhelye dni (Sekretnye zasedania Soveta Ministrov 16 Iul'ia – 2 Sentabr'ia 1915g.)* (Berlin, 1926), p. 38.
is taking place in the Caucasus, and it is our duty to turn our attention to this and to point out the approaching danger in time.”

The opposition of the government to the advance of the Russian army continued at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers on August 4, 1915. The news of new victories on the Russo-Ottoman front was received when the minister of war, Alexei Andreyevich Polivanov, was describing the situation at the German front as: “I rely on impassable spaces, on impenetrable mud, and on the mercy of St. Nicholas, the patron of Holy Russia.”

Beyond providing a relief for the ministers who were inundated by the terrible news from the western front, the news of new victories infuriated all the ministers, as they were not happy about the creation of an Armenian polity, which was proved by the increased involvement of Armenian nationalists in the administration of the occupied territories and by their declarations. The commander of the Russian forces that occupied Van, appointed the leader of Armenian resistance forces in Van, Aram Manukian as the interim governor of Van, on May 7, 1915, one day after the occupation of the city. The Russian military authorities also allowed for the employment of Armenian officials and policemen for the city administration, as they needed personnel who were acquainted with the region. Armenian nationalist leaders perceived this appointment as the fulfillment of Russian pre-war promises and they tried to seize the moment. In his proclamation to Armenian population of Van, Aram Manukian expressed his gratitude to the Russian army, which had liberated the Armenian people from centuries of slavery and called

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73 Tiazhelye dni, p. 39.
74 Iakhontov, Tiazhelye dni, p. 45.
75 Many influential Armenian political figures were employed in the administration of the occupied regions in the initial stage of the occupation. This was not the natural result of the Russian support and promises to the Armenians but yet another example of Russian unpreparedness for the occupation and administration of the Ottoman territories. This issue will be examined in the following chapter.
the Armenian people for revitalizing the long-suffered Armenian national life. According to the decisions of the council of ministers, the Minister of War, Polivanov presented the reservations of the ministers about the progression of war at the Caucasian front the consideration of the Tsar. Polivanov later informed the ministers that the Tsar was also not content and shared the idea that the Armenian nationalists were influencing the decisions of the Viceroy, Count Vorontsov Dashkov through his wife.

Notwithstanding the furious remarks of the ministers, the activities of the army at the front were not devised for the establishment of an Armenia. General Iudenich was trying to fulfill the only task of the army – securing the Caucasian territory. The borders that the Caucasian army had to defend expanded extensively by the Ottoman incursion into Northern Persia; and the Caucasian army had to defend such a long border with limited forces and armament. The commander of the army wanted to shorten the border, occupy strategically advantageous positions for defense and decrease the threat of the Ottoman forces. Another aim of the Van operation was repelling an Ottoman offensive into Northern Persia. The appointment of Armenian politicians to administrative posts in the occupied region was just another reflection of the inexistence of a project for the Russian control of the occupied regions. When the Russian authorities finally decided on the future of the region, they replaced most of the Armenian officials and Russian law enforcement personnel were transferred from cities in Russia.

Even though the Russian forces moved successfully into the Ottoman territories, they could not yet hold the area securely as the Ottoman army still had the capacity to undertake a flanking operation and threaten the rear of the Russian Caucasian army. When the Right Wing

77 Iakhontov, Tiazhelye dni, p. 45.
78 See the next chapter of this study on the formation of the administration of occupied territories.
Group commanded by Abdülkerim Pasha organized a counter attack in July 1915\textsuperscript{79} up to the valley of the Eastern Euphrates the Russian forces had to retreat and abandon Van on short notice. This would bring an end to the first “Armenian government” in Ottoman Armenia and deeply affected thousands of Armenians living in the region. Tens of thousands of Armenians fled with the withdrawing Russian army. Before long, the Russian forces halted the Ottoman offense and reoccupied the Van region and stabilized Northern Persia by the autumn of 1915,\textsuperscript{80} and the Ottoman military authorities had to relinquish any further offensive plans due to the lack of sufficient man power and armament which had to be spared for the main front at Gallipoli.\textsuperscript{81}

As these further Ottoman offenses (under the command of Halil Bey and Abdülkerim Pasha) prove, the situation in the Caucasus for the Russian army was still not secure. Since the main concern of the Russian state was the defense of the Western front against Germany, the Stavka could not transfer new army units to the Caucasian army. Notwithstanding the fact that the Caucasian army was waging a successful campaign in the winter of 1914-1915 the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich applied to the British Admiralty with a request to undertake a divertive operation against the Ottomans, lest the latter would transfer more troops to the Russo-Ottoman front.\textsuperscript{82} Already allured by the opportunities of knocking out an ally of Germany, and providing a stable route of supply for their Russian ally, the combined French and British fleets commenced an attack on the Dardanelles in February 1915. The naval attack and the subsequent land offensives throughout 1915 all failed, and the allied troops evacuated the peninsula of Gallipoli between December

\textsuperscript{80} N. G. Korsun, Alashkertskai a i Khamadanskai a operatsii (Moscow, 1940).
1915 and January 1916. However, the expectations of the Russian military authorities for the Russo-Ottoman front were fulfilled. The depleted Ottoman forces facing the Russian Caucasian army could not be replenished. In addition, the Ottoman high command had to spare artillery units and army formations from the Third Army for the Mesopotamian front against the British forces. In the meantime, the Stavka could deploy Caucasian troops to halt the grand German and Austro-Hungarian offensive on the Western front.

After stabilization of the front at a strategically better situation for the Russian army around the lake of Van and in Azerbaijan, both sides had to spend the rest of the year 1915 with reorganizing their forces. During late summer there were important changes in the command structure of all Russian armies. On August 23, the Tsar assumed the general command of Russian armies and the former commander-in-chief, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich was appointed as the Viceroy and the commander-in-chief of the Caucasian army. With the arrival of the new Viceroy on September 11, the position of the acting commander of the Caucasian army became redundant as it was created by the decision of the former Viceroy due to his health problems. However Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich asked General Iudenich to occupy that position as before and gave him absolute authority about military decisions and told that he would mainly concentrate on the civilian administration of the Caucasus. However, General Iudenich could not behave as independently as before and he had to fulfill the orders of the Viceroy; these were not always in accordance with his own preferences for the military activities on the Russo-Ottoman front.

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The Persian expedition

The activities of the Ottoman and German secret services in Persia seemed to be more disturbing to the governments rather than the military authorities who were there. Until the autumn of 1915 the Ottoman forces had twice attempted to invade Northern Persia but were defeated by the Russian forces in the region. The Ottoman and German secret services were not always working in cooperation and occasionally were at odds, and their efforts in organizing tribal forces against the Russian and British armies could not yield the desired results for these governments.  

Still, however, the Russian Foreign Ministry was pressurizing for the dispatch of a strong division to Persia in order to prevent further expansion of the influence of Central Powers in Persia, which was not seen as a necessary measure by the high command of the Caucasian army. Moreover, the Ottoman forces in Iraq managed to halt the British advance and launched a strong counterattack, which would put the British forces to retreat. In this situation, the British military authorities asked for the aid of Russian Caucasian army to distract the Ottoman forces in Iraq. Until the arrival of the Grand Duke, the Caucasian army command avoided the formation of a special force for an offensive operation in Persia, in addition to the already existing Russian forces in the field, but Grand Duke was more open to the British and Russian governmental pressure and decided to form an expeditionary corps in November 1915. 

The Russian forces easily quelled the German and Ottoman supported tribal formations and reinstated the politicians supporting the Entente powers by the end of 1915. The next aim was aiding the British forces in Iraq, and the Russian advance on Baghdad started in April 1916.

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87 Pavel Nikolaevich Strelianov, Kazaki v Persii 1909-1918 (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2007), pp. 107-211.
However, in the meantime the British forces under the command of General Townshend had surrendered on April 29, 1916 in Kut al-Amara, giving the Ottoman army a great morale boost and depriving the Russian expeditionary forces of a clear aim. Maslovskii reflects the reaction of the Caucasian staff by saying that: “Townshend had surrendered; therefore, there is no need for further offensive operations, as the only purpose of this extremely disadvantageous offensive had been the relief of the British forces.” Regular Ottoman forces reversed the advance of the Russian forces when the Ottoman army deployed the XIII Corps commanded by Colonel Ali İhsan Bey, in May 1916. It was the turn of Ottoman forces to occupy some important towns by August 1916, causing losses for the both sides without any significant strategic results. Both the Ottoman and the Russian armies had weak communication and supply lines so until the end of 1916 serious military operations did not take place. The Ottoman XIII Corps was hastily withdrawn at the beginning of 1917 when the British forces in Iraq initiated an offensive operation against which the Ottoman armies could not hold the front.

The Erzurum operation

The Russian military authorities at the Caucasian front were cautiously following the progress of the Gallipoli campaign. As the Allies decided to evacuate the Gallipoli peninsula upon the unsuccessful turn of the campaign for the Allies, the Russian high command was receiving intelligence reports both from its own spy network and from the British intelligence service that the Ottoman army would reinforce the Caucasian and the Mesopotamian fronts as soon as possible. Thus the general staff of the Caucasian army decided in November 1915 to undertake a general offensive against the Third Ottoman army before it received the expected reinforcements.

88 Maslovskii, Mirovaia voina na kavkazskom fronte, p. 225.
89 Korsun, Pervaia mirovaia voina na Kavkazkom fronte, pp. 80-81.
(which had been the elite forces of the Ottoman Empire and proved their value against the allied forces, so they might have increased the morale of the Ottoman forces at the Russo-Ottoman front). Since the reinforcements were expected around March 1916, the operation was to be started before their arrival. To make it a surprise attack for the Ottomans, the Russian commanders decided to start it during the days of Christmas (rozhdestvo) assuming that the Ottomans would not expect an attack on the Christian holidays.90

Even the Viceroy was informed about the preparations as late as December 23. Iudenich and his chief of operations Maslovskii arrived at Tiflis and briefed the Viceroy about the preparations and asked his permission and order for the operations. The latter gave his consent after some hesitation. According to Maslovskii, who was present at the briefing, the Grand Duke mentioned his hesitations about the viability of a general offensive movement in the winter conditions but was convinced by General Ianushkevich who was backing the plan of General Iudenich.91 While the commanders of the Caucasian army were discussing the viability of an offensive against the Ottoman forces, the chief-of-staff at Stavka General Alexeev was asking for the strengthening of the expeditionary forces of General Baratov against the Ottoman forces in Iraq in order to relieve the British armies in Mesopotamia. This time, however, Grand Duke did not accept that request and gave permission for an offensive operation to annihilate the Ottoman Third Army.92

After serious battles the Russian Caucasian army succeeded to break the Ottoman defenses in January 1916 and the road to Erzurum was now wide open. However, the main aim of the offensive, which was the total destruction of the Ottoman Third army, was not attained. Despite suffering great losses the Ottoman forces avoided a rout, retreated. This situation was a

90 Maslovskii, Mirovaia voina na kavkazkom fronte, pp. 232-233.
91 Ibid., pp. 243-244.
concern for the high command of the Caucasian army. General Iudenich, thought that it would be better to continue the offensive and rout the Ottoman forces, which had retreated towards Erzurum. However, Iudenich had to take the consent of the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich for the alteration of the aims of the operation, which now required the assault of a fortified position. According to Maslovskii Grand Duke, who had hesitantly given consent to the offensive operation, was categorically against the assault of Erzurum. For the Grand Duke such an operation was not needed and the conditions of the country and the harsh weather, which had been as important adversaries as the Ottoman forces would make the operation unreasonably dangerous. Therefore he declined the requests of General Iudenich for additional supplies for this operation. Instead, he ordered General Iudenich to organize a new defense line and spend the winter there. Despite the insistence of Iudenich about the opportunity of improving the success of the army as he witnessed the moral superiority of his troops over the Ottoman forces after the battles, Grand Duke did not alter his position and repeated the order about the organization of a new defense line. It was only after receiving supporting information about the disordered retreat of the Ottoman army from Maslovskii (chief of operations who was sent to the front to study the region for the organization of defensive line) that General Iudenich talked with the Grand Duke once again and persuaded him and told him that he would accept all the responsibility for the results of this operation.\textsuperscript{93} Even when the preparations for the operation were well advanced, General Palitsyn from the staff of Grand Duke came to the headquarters of General Iudenich and tried to talk him and his subordinates out of the operation.\textsuperscript{94}

Eventually, after fierce fighting around the forts defending Erzurum, the Ottoman forces had to retreat further to the west and the Russian forces entered the city on February 16, 1916.

\textsuperscript{93} Maslovskii, \textit{Mirovaia voina na kavkazskom fronte}, pp. 258-260.
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 270.
The capture of Erzurum, the economic, political and military center of the region, was a game changer. From this point on, the Stavka would agree to strengthen the Caucasian army in order to facilitate the defense of the occupied regions. Internationally, the Russian dominance in the area would be recognized. In order to secure the Russian consent to the Sykes-Picot agreement on the future territorial gains of France and Britain in the Ottoman territories, the occupied territories at the Russo-Ottoman front, in addition to the previous promises regarding the Straits, were recognized as the Russian zone. According to the following negotiations Russia was to obtain “the regions of Erzurum, Trabzon, Van and Bitlis up to a definite point on the coast of the Black Sea to the west of Trabzon.”95 The inhabitants of the area would also start to accept that the Ottoman forces were not able to defeat the Russian armies and that the area would stay under the Russian rule for a foreseeable future.96

The occupation of Trabzon

While the main forces of the Caucasian army were attacking on the Ottoman Third Army, the forces on its flanks were also ordered to move forward. This resulted in the occupations of Bitlis and Muş, by March 1916, on the left flank of the army. The right flank, supported by the Batum flotilla, was pressuring the Ottoman forces on the Black Sea shores.97 Like the other operations, these ones were not undertaken upon the orders of the tsar, government or the Viceroy in Tiflis, but according to the strategic and tactical assessments of the headquarters of the Caucasian army. The task was to prevent the Ottoman army from threatening the Russian position in the Caucasus.

96 M. Philips Price, War and Revolution in Asiatic Russia (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1917), pp. 84-86.
97 Nikolai Novikov, Operatsii flota protiv berega na Chernom more v 1914 -1917 (Moscow: 1937), pp. 127-128.
with the new forces that were sent from Istanbul. The Second Army was ordered to move to
Diyar-ı Bekir from Thrace and attack the left flank of the Russian army, and to reverse the
Russian advance, and recapture Erzurum. However, the deployment of this army would be
delayed until the summer of 1916 due to the terrible conditions of the communication lines of the
Ottoman Army. The Third Army in the meantime was receiving supplies and reinforcement
through the Trabzon port despite the blockade of Russian Black Sea Navy. Trabzon was
regarded as the most important supply route of the Ottoman army and the paved-roads from
Erzincan to Trabzon and Erzurum were still under the Ottoman control. Therefore, the next step
after the Erzurum operation was to deprive the Ottoman army from its supply routes. This would
be the next decision of the high command of the Russian army at the Caucasian front.

For a successful attack on Trabzon the Russian army needed more troops, and General
Iudenich had been constantly asking for reinforcements from the Stavka. These requests were
approved at last by mid-March and the Stavka decided to transfer some Caucasian army
formations back from the Western front. These troops had to be transported by sea and would
immediately be deployed on the front for the Trabzon operation. General Iudenich had to try
hard to persuade the admiral of the Black Sea navy as the latter was arguing that the navy vessels
were needed for other operations such as the elusive Straits operation. After long negotiations the
navy agreed to transfer the troops and guard them until they were disembarked on the shore.
This disembarkation would be another point of conflict, as the navy did not comply with the
demands of Iudenich for the disembarkation point. The forces under the command of Liakhov
was in immediate need of reinforcements but the admiral of the Black Sea navy did not agree to

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99 Evgenii Maslovskii Papers, Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University.
100 Martirosian, “Rossiisko-turetskii front pervoi mirovoi voiny,” p. 147.
101 Novikov, *Operatsii flota protiv berega na Chernom more*, p. 127.
transport the troops at a closer location to the front, for he was wary of the German submarines in the region. The troops were disembarked at a distance and the admiral disregarded the repeated requests of General Iudenich to take the troops on board again and transport them to a location that the latter found more appropriate by claiming that the Black Sea Navy vessels should renew the blockade of coast to prevent the delivery of coal to Istanbul and aid the Brusilov offensive on the south-western front. At the end of the day, the majority of the troops had to be marched while one regiment was transported by the Batum flotilla. The Ottoman army could not resist the reinforced Russian forces, which also had the artillery support of the flotilla. The Ottoman forces evacuated the city of Trabzon on April 16, 1916. The governor authorized the formation of police force composed of local Greeks under the supervision of the Greek archbishop. A delegation from the city informed General Liakhov, the commander of the Russian forces, about the evacuation of the Ottoman forces, and the Russian forces entered Trabzon on April 18, 1916. The new commander of the Ottoman Third Army, Vehib Pasha, tried to reverse the situation in the summer of 1916, with a coordinated attack along with Ahmet İzzet Pasha’s Second Army. However, the attack resulted in further retreat of Ottoman forces and the Third Army had to evacuate Erzincan, its headquarters. In the words of the chief of operations and the historian of the Caucasian Army, general Maslovskii, “with the occupation of the fortresses (sic) of Erzurum and Trabzon, lake of Van and the Muş valley and with the complete defeat of the Third Ottoman army, which could not regain its combat capacity, the campaign on the Caucasian front was completed. All the major aims, which could have been

given to the Caucasian army, were attained. The main task of the Caucasian army, which was to defend the Caucasus from the incursion of the enemy, was fulfilled.”

**Conclusion**

The forward movement of the army on the Russo-Ottoman front was not a general Russian state policy. It was not realized at the behest of the tsar or the Stavka. General Iudenich was pursuing a military strategic plan to better secure the Russo-Ottoman border and annihilate the Ottoman threat for the Caucasian territories of the Russian empire. The result of this strategic plan was the occupation of a large territory. However, neither the military nor the government had plans for the future of this territory. The pre-war preparations of the diplomats to cultivate ties with the Armenian and Kurdish populations could not be implemented since the war plan was not designed for an occupation and the annexation of the territory. The initial interactions of the Russian military authorities especially with the Kurdish population were strained as General Iudenich ordered the deportation of all Kurds from the occupied areas and the Armenian volunteers and the Cossack troops were behaving ruthlessly. Moreover, the international law about belligerence, which came to fruition by the efforts of Russia, forbids the unilateral annexation of an occupied territory, and the Russian Foreign Ministry was concerned about not irritating its allies by a unilateral decision. It was only after the successful Erzurum operation that the military authorities and the government decided to support the forward movement of the army at the Russo-Ottoman front. In the meanwhile, France and Britain agreed to the annexation

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107 The memorandum of General Iudenchik to the Viceroy Count Vorontso-Dashkov about the Kurdish tribes, 1(14) February 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 830, pp. 2-3. The territory was huge and there were not enough troops to fulfill the deportation orders. Moreover, some Russian military units had negotiated peaceful submission of the Kurdish tribes in their regions. Therefore, the Russian army could only partially carry out this proposal of deportation, after the Viceroy approved it.
of the Ottoman territories occupied by the Russian Caucasian army. After that point the
government started to clarify its position about the occupied areas. The Tsar approved the
provisional regulation about the administration of the region, and several governmental and
military agencies started to discuss several projects concerning the future of the region. This was
not a conflict of ideas and interests but only a reflection of the unpreparedness of the
governmental and military authorities. The following chapter discusses these different projects as
well as the establishment of this administration.
Chapter II: Imperial formation: How to administer the occupied territories

“Should I annex Armenia?”

Tsar Nicholas II, November 21, 1914

“This is one of the most complicated issues and I have not discussed it with my ministers yet.”

Tsar Nicholas II, March 13, 1916, on the prospective Russian zone of annexation in Armenia

In quite a short time, Russian life was fully apparent from Sarıkamış to Trabzon. The markets and the shops were stocked with Russian goods. The newspapers controlled by the CUP government were writing about starvation in Russia, while the people of Istanbul were themselves dying of starvation. Yet the workers occupied with building roads in Erzurum’s snowy mountains or in Zigana’s valleys would eat fresh bread, drink tea with plenty of sugar and receive a daily wage of four to five manats (rubles). The Turkish workers, the cart drivers, and artisans were all happy with this situation. In the past, Turkish officials slapped them rather than giving bahşısi; now, they were receiving plenty of money from the Russian officers and Russian ladies. After the tyrannical government of the CUP, even the administration of the Russians, that dreaded enemy, was almost a period of bliss for the people who had not seen prosperity, security or justice for centuries. Even their ignorant minds could appreciate the Russian order. Now elegant ladies and Russian officers in shiny uniforms pass through the roads where convoys of miserable and wounded soldiers starved to death a few months ago. Theaters, cinemas, merriment, everything was available in the cities.

The Russian military occupation of the Ottoman territories proceeded more successfully than the Russian military and civilian authorities had expected. However, this would not mean that Russia would pass on the opportunity to have a profitable share at the end of a victorious war. Moreover, the area under occupation had been the center of Russian machinations toward securing the region as an exclusionary zone of influence since the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877-1878. The victorious end of the war seemed not to be far away when the Entente powers launched the Dardanelles campaign in 1915. While the Russian state had obtained assurances from its allies for future Russian control over the Straits, the prospective Russian acquisitions

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111 Ahmet Refik, *İki Komite,İki Ku’al*, pp. 48-49.
in Anatolia were neither formulated nor agreed on among the Entente powers. As the area under Russian occupation was expanding, Russian authorities tried to come up with a strategically, politically and economically sound template for war gains at the Caucasian front and were dealing with the imminent requirements of administration. At the same time, the administrative system for the occupied territories was shaped by the military occupation, and thus conflicting policies had to be implemented regarding the population and land management in the region. The new formulation for the administration would especially disappoint the Armenian nationalists, who were hoping and struggling for an autonomous Armenia, something that had almost been established right before the war under the aegis of the Russian Empire.

**Brainstorming about the Russian share of Ottoman booty**

Discussions about possible annexations on the Russo-Ottoman front emerged during the Dardanelles campaign. Russian military and state authorities were discussing the possible share of the Russian Empire when and if the Ottoman state surrendered. In early 1915, General Aleksei Nikolayevich Kuropatkin from the Russian General Staff and the State Council prepared a project for the annexation and administration of the occupied territories. Kuropatkin envisaged two governor-generalships, namely those of Erzurum and Sivas, in the occupied regions of the Ottoman Empire. According to Kuropatkin, the administration of the occupied regions would be based on the Russian project of the Armenian reforms of 1914, which had envisaged the formation of an inspector-generalship in the six vilâyets of eastern Anatolia. 113 Although Kuropatkin’s memorandum was presented as “the Russian plan” for the annexation of the Ottoman territories, the issue was in fact open for discussion and nothing was set in stone yet.

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Colonel Vyshinskii, the secretary (staff officer for record keeping) to the general quartermaster, General Yuri Danilov, at the General Staff from August 1914 to April 1915, prepared a different report about the prospective acquisitions at the Caucasian front. Colonel Vyshinskii had been the military attaché at the Russian consulate in Erzurum from 1908 to 1914, where he was responsible for the organization of an espionage network among the Armenian population of Eastern Anatolia.\(^{114}\) His good relations with the Armenian nationalists continued later and he became the chief of staff of the Volunteer Armenian corps, which was established at the Caucasian front on December 13, 1917.

According to Vyshinskii’s report from February 25, 1915, the obvious consequences of the Entente victory would be the collapse of the Ottoman government and the end of German influence together with the economic privileges the latter enjoyed on Ottoman territory. Therefore, the victorious powers would sit for the scramble of Ottoman territories. The total eradication of Ottoman statehood was not seen probable or desirable, but the provinces, which had been sources of unrest, those inhabited by the Christian, Arab and Kurdish subjects of the empire, would preferably be separated from the Ottoman state. The report then starts to stipulate the possible outcomes. The British and French had for a long period cast their eyes on the Syrian, Mesopotamian, and Arabian provinces of the Ottoman Empire and were pressing to annex or firmly tie the fate of these territories to their states by the end of the war. As an example of the ambivalence of the Russian authorities, the report actually brainstorms the possible gains for Russia even as the gains of the allies were presented as a *fait accompli*. The importance of the Straits for Russia required no further justification, so the report focused on the territories adjacent to the Caucasian front of the Russian Empire.

Vyshinskii noted that the region included two-thirds of the Ottoman Armenian population, who had always seen Russia as the defender of their rights. The existence of a Christian population between the Muslim populations of Russia and the Ottoman empires was obviously to the benefit of the former. The end of the war presented three possible ways to resolve the Armenian and Kurdish problems. The easiest would be the annexation of the whole region, the second would be the establishment of autonomous regions under Russian protection and the last one would be to leave the region nominally under the sovereignty of the sultan after implementing necessary reforms and setting an autonomous administration. However, the latter would almost be the continuation of the status quo and represented the least desirable solution. Vyshinskii claimed that annexation of a region, which was desolate and inhabited by ethnic groups who were always at each other’s throats would not be in the best interest of the Russian state. Therefore, according to the report, the second option, establishing protectorates, was the way to go. Without taking political responsibility of administering the region, Russia might invest and reap the benefits of its protector status. Vyshinskii seemed to understand the colonial paradox well: Whenever colonial powers leave their colonies, their economic benefits actually increase, as the political and economic culture defined by the metropolis remained while administrative costs disappeared.

According to Vyshinskii, the status of the northeastern parts of Anatolia was different than that of the region closest to the Caucasian front. The region was more developed and inhabited by Greeks, Turks and Lazes, who were ethnically closer to Georgian races. With its favorable location, climate and rich natural resources, the region had the potential to be a “Caucasian Riviera.” Extending the Russian borders up to Giresun would also increase the economic dependence of the Armenian and Kurdish regions on Russia, as their outlet to the sea
would pass through Russian territory. Another territorial acquisition proposed by Vyshinskii was the city and port of Alexendretta, which would solve the problem of Russian access to open seas and even diminish the importance of the Straits. He proposed the construction of a railway passing through the Russian protectorates in Armenia and Kurdistan.115

After Vyshinskii’s report about the beneficial acquisitions in Eastern Anatolia, the General Staff received the opinions of the two most authoritative figures in the Caucasus, the Viceroy Vorontsov-Dashkov,116 and the acting commander of the Caucasian Army, General Iudenich. Both of them underlined that their opinions were only about the best strategic frontier between the Ottoman and Russian states, and for the moment they were not figuring in the political significance of the border. However, when the borderline proposed by both men is considered it becomes apparent that their motivations were as political as they were strategic.

One alternative for the new border was to move it up to the northern shore of Lake Van in the southwest, and include the forts around Erzurum, but not the Erzurum fortress in the west. The strategic benefits of such a border were listed as a) ease of maneuvering a large army, b) closing the wedge between the two flanks of the army, c) solving the communication problems between separate forces and d) controlling important transportation routes from the Black Sea as well as to and from Erzurum. The second alternative was a mere adjustment of the existing border and an occupation of only the valleys of Eleşkirt and Bayazid up to Aladağ, moving the borderline on the Black Sea shores accordingly.117

116 Telegram from Vorontsov-Dashkov to the Chief of the Staff at General Staff, 6 March 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2003, opis’ 1, delo 540, ll. 101-102.
117 Telegram from General Iudenich to the General Quartermaster of the General Staff, 6 March 1915, Fond 2003, opis’ 1, delo 540, l. 104 reverse.
In both cases the acquired territories would not include any significant town. Erzurum and Van, the two cities that the proposed border was ostentatiously leaving on the Ottoman side, were the political centers of the Eastern Anatolian provinces, and the Caucasian military and state authorities were deliberately trying to avoid any further entanglement with the ethnic and political problems that would be left to them should the two cities were annexed to the Russian Empire. It was one thing to be the protectors of the Christian population in the Ottoman Empire while all the European powers were involved in a game of influence management, and a totally different thing to be ruling over antagonistic and increasingly nationalistic ethnic groups. The Caucasian authorities were fully aware of the danger that the increase of Armenian and Muslim populations posed to stability in the Caucasus, as the 1905 and 1914 inter-ethnic conflicts had shown them.

The General Quartermaster, General Yuri Danilov, compiled a memorandum based on these two different approaches. According to Danilov, the priority of the Caucasian authorities was the reduction of Erzurum, the main stronghold of the Ottoman state in Eastern Anatolia, to a defenseless city by controlling all the forts around Erzurum and the roads leading to the city. Although both Vorontsov-Dashkov and General Iudenich emphasized that they were only expressing their strategic considerations about a new Russo-Ottoman border without any political implications, Danilov thought otherwise. He noted that the Caucasian authorities were not oblivious to the political implications of such a plan. Erzurum was the political center of Eastern Anatolia, or Armenia and Kurdistan, so the acquisition of this city would mean, in effect, the annexation of Armenia and Kurdistan to Russia. Therefore, according to Danilov, “most probably the desire and consideration of the Caucasian authorities to avoid having to settle the convoluted Armenian problem made them leave Erzurum but take all the forts around the
Setting this as the new borderline would thus be a palliative measure both from the political and strategic perspectives. From the political perspective, Russia should either decline the acquisition of any Armenian territory in the Ottoman Empire or occupy all, or at least the large part of it, and in any case its center, Erzurum. Strategically, it was unacceptable to decline control of the juncture of all major communication lines in the region, and also to decline the rich Van and Muş provinces after moving the border up to the shores of the lake Van.

Between the two alternatives Danilov found the second one, which foresaw adjustment of the border, more preferable, because it would still provide strategic advantages without the burden of ruling over inimical Muslim masses or the Armenians, whose loyalty to Russia was dubious. If such mere adjustments would not justify the military sacrifices, than the Black Sea coastal area should be occupied, which would bring strategic and logistical benefits to the army and the navy, as well as economic and political advantages to the state.\(^\text{119}\)

After new territory was to be hypothetically served on a golden plate at the end of an early allied victory, one of the first political figures interested in them would be the minister of agriculture, Krivoshein. In March 1915 he wrote to the foreign minister about the plans of the ministry of Agriculture on how to exploit the probable annexations from the Ottoman Empire. According to Krivoshein, the Black Sea coast from Batum to Trabzon would be geographical continuation of the Batum area with an even milder climate and would offer fertile ground for a variety of agricultural products as well as be suitable for summer resorts. In addition to the Black Sea coast, Krivoshein cast his eyes on the headwaters of Euphrates and Aras. This mountainous region was rich in mineral resources and appropriate for the settlement of Russian colonizers.

\(^{118}\) The memorandum of the General Quartermaster, General Yuri Danilov about the new Russo-Ottoman border, RGVIA, Fond 2003, opis’ 1, delo 540, l. 146 reverse.
\(^{119}\) RGVIA, Fond 2003, opis’ 1, delo 540, l. 149 reverse.
The important part of the region seemed to be the headwaters of Aras, which was the main water source for the eastern Caucasus.\textsuperscript{120}

**Foreign Minister Sazonov and the future of the occupied territories**

While discussing the brainstorming about the prospective Russian acquisitions in Ottoman territory, we cannot ignore the Russian foreign ministry. Just like the other governmental agencies, the activities of the foreign ministry did not constitute official “Russian policy” regarding the Ottoman territories either, and until March 1916, its policy would not even be fully formulated. Sazonov was pursuing his own policy and machinations in the international realm. Under the leadership of Sazonov, the Russian diplomatic representatives had championed the Armenian reform projects, culminating in the Armenian reforms of 1914. The Russian consuls and military attaches had been in close contact with the Armenian nationalist groups. The reform project had consolidated the Russian status as the protector of the Armenian people in the Ottoman Empire and interpreted as the best proof for the future Russian acquisition if the territories. Therefore, when the war started, the Armenian nationalist groups in the Ottoman Empire as well as those in the Caucasus were sure that the time that they were looking forward to had arrived. Ottoman statesmen were certainly aware of the connections between the Russian authorities and the Armenian groups, something that simply added to their fears and exacerbated the strained relations between the Armenian nationalists and the Ottoman state. Although the Russian authorities in the Caucasus and Petrograd could not fulfill their promises for support, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the events that led to the tragic end of the Armenian

\textsuperscript{120} E. A. Adamov, *Razdel Aziatkoi Turtsii po sekretnym dokumentam byyshevo Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del* (Moscow, 1924), p. 360.
presence in Anatolia erupted just as the Allies were at the gates of the Straits and the Russian armies were making inroads to Ottoman territory in the east.

The Russian foreign ministry also led a campaign to condemn the Ottoman state for the atrocities committed against its Armenian subjects. Armenian political and religious representatives demanded a Russian protectorate in their efforts to publicize the tragic events in Europe and in the U.S., and the Russian foreign ministry was trying to benefit from it. In response to V. V. Myshlaevskii, the assistant of the Viceroy in the Caucasus, Sazonov wrote: “I suggested to our representatives in Washington and in Rome to defend the appeal of the Catholicos before the governments of the United States and Italy. The Ministry has yet to reach a final decision on the matter of the future management of Western Armenia. I will immediately inform the Viceroy as soon as such a decision is taken.”\(^{121}\)

It was apparent that Russia would lead the discussions about the future of Ottoman territories in Eastern Anatolia. However, Sazonov preferred to pursue a cautious policy and wanted to learn the opinions of its Allies as well as waiting for the outcome of the military operations at the Russo-Ottoman front. Recent history had bitterly taught the Russian statesmen that even undisputable military victories could be annulled when the Great Powers did not approve the acquisitions of one another.

The foreign ministry was receiving information about the events in Van during April 1915, and explaining in the international arena that the Armenians did not rebel and did not have a reason to revolt since the Russian armies could not come to their aid.\(^{122}\) The foreign ministry was building the case of victimized Armenians and trying to preserve the Russian image as the protector of the Armenian cause but at the same time not trying to rescue them in Anatolia. The

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\(^{122}\) Ibid., pp. 460-461.
main effort of the Russian diplomats in London and France was on the formulation of the
declaration condemning the Ottoman government about the massacres against the Armenians,
not about a joint reaction and intervention to stop the Ottomans from massacring the Armenians.

The Armenian delegation headed by Pogos Nubar Pasha and Zavriev were in close
contact with the Russian Foreign Ministry as well as the Russian diplomats in Europe. Zavriev’s
letter to Russian ambassadors in London and Paris well reveals the position adopted by the
Foreign Ministry in regard to the Armenian territories of the Ottoman empire as well as its policy
in collaborating with the Armenian activists. The Russian foreign ministry, as well as other
Russian governmental and military agencies, did not come up with a concrete policy regarding
the future of these territories. Therefore, they were trying to figure out the best outcome for the
Russian state interests. The Armenian activists were mere tools in the formulation of this policy,
which was based on the ever-changing geopolitical and military conditions. According to
Zavriev, the Armenian politicians and the Foreign Ministry formulated a new template for an
autonomous Armenia under Ottoman suzerainty and the united protectorate of three entente
powers. This Armenia should include not only the six eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire
included in the Armenian reform project of 1914, but also the Cilicia region with its
Mediterranean port, Mersin, but excluding Alexendretta.\textsuperscript{123} The Russian foreign ministry
demanded that this project would be presented as an Armenian project, apparently because it was
including Cilicia, which was accepted as a French zone among the Allies. This would not
endanger the relations among the Entente powers and the Russian Foreign Ministry would obtain
information about its options in Ottoman territories. Although the ambassadors had already
received a note from the deputy of the foreign minister A. A. Neratov that the Zavriev mission
should be supported by Russian diplomats, the Russian ambassador to Paris, Izvol’skii, could not

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 455-456.
help but inquire about the ingenuity of Zavriev’s claims regarding the Russo-Armenian project of Armenian autonomy. Responding to that telegram immediately the next day on May 18, 1915, Sazonov again reveals the real nature of the ministry’s policy: “The meeting with the Armenians was purely academic. We did not define a specific program to Zavriev. When he requested that the aspirations of Armenians to see Cilicia within the borders of a future Armenian region should be taken into consideration, we told him that we cannot support such a wish, because of the French interests in Cilicia.” Sazonov would repeat the same expression that “all the conversations with the Armenian representatives have been purely academic in nature” in another letter to the ambassador in London. It was apparent that the Russian government did not come up with a formulation for the Ottoman territories considered to be the “Western Armenia” and Sazonov was just adding his two cents to the brainstorming going on at the time.

Nevertheless, the allies would agree on the scramble of the Ottoman Empire soon and this would initiate the formulation of a unified Russian policy regarding the occupied Ottoman territories. All attempts up to that point were “purely academic” as Sazonov stated several times in his dispatches to Russian diplomats in Europe. However, these academic attempts might have easily become Russian policy had the allies supported Sazonov plans, and had the Russian statesmen backed their foreign minister in these attempts.

These plans were all depended on the condition that the Ottoman Empire would be forced to surrender and sign a separate peace agreement. Therefore, they did not represent the official Russian policy up until the realization of an actual peace treaty and settlement among the allies on their respective shares of the Ottoman Empire. In the meanwhile, the Russian Caucasian army had already occupied a large territory with a desperate population, and there were immediate

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125 *Razdel aziatskoi turtsii*, p. 139.
needs about the civilian administration of the region. The war-torn region had to be reorganized, refugees had to be registered, settled, fed and taken care of, the agricultural production and the rest of the economy had to be revitalized in order to ease the provisioning of the army. The Russian state, however, was not ready to undertake the civilian administration of the occupied region. Civilian officials were not allocated for this purpose and the law enforcement forces of the Russian cities were already undermanned and could not be transferred to the regions under occupation. While the Russian civilian and military authorities were pondering about how to regulate the civilian life in the occupied territories, there were people who were more than ready to offer their services for the civilian administration of the region, which was usually referred to as the “Turkish Armenia”. The appearance of the Armenian nationalist activists in the region following the Armenian volunteer regiments aiding the Russian Caucasian army might invoke the idea that the Russian state was facilitating the establishment of an Armenian political entity in the region, but the reality could not be further than that. The Russian authorities were just not ready to undertake the daunting task of civilian administration and the Armenian nationalists had found a window of opportunity, which could not be missed, and they gave a shot to this chance. However, the window closed earlier and tighter than they might have guessed.

The Tigranian affair

A curious episode that clearly shows the initial unpreparedness of the Russian authorities for the administration of occupied areas was related with a prominent Armenian nationalist, Sirakan Faddeevich Tigranian. As soon as the Russian IV Caucasian corps occupied the region of

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126 Sirakan Faddeevich Tigranian (1875-1935) was a former member of the Second Duma and a prominent member of the Dashnaktsutun Party. He held several important posts in the post-war Armenian political entities and also served as Foreign Minister for a few months in 1918-1919. See, Richard Hovanissian, *The Republic of Armenia: First Year, 1918-1919* (California: University of California Press, 1971).
Bayazid, Eleşkirt, and Diyadin, Tigranian appeared at the front with an appointment from the Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasian Army to undertake the civilian administration of the area. In a telegram dated from December 5, 1914 the commanders of the advancing Caucasian army were advised to support Tigranian in his task which included the organization of civilian administration in the occupied region, establishing and maintaining public order, disarming the Kurdish tribes, setting up a militia from among the local population to provide the security of the administration, building up the loyalty of the population in the occupied territories, revitalizing agricultural production, and “organizing the most dedicated fight against pan-Islamism and propaganda for the favor of the Ottoman empire.” As the head of this civilian administration Tigranian would appoint his own subordinates. The memorandum sent by the commander of the IV Caucasian corps to the commander of the Makinskii division made it clear that Tigranian was his subordinate and did not represent any national organization.

In the following months Tigranian acted as the civilian administrator of the region appointed by the highest authority in the Caucasus and reporting his activities to the commander of the IV Corps. In his report to General Oganovskii, Tigranian informed the general about the already undergoing preparations for a civilian administration headed and manned by Armenian nationalists, and made some further requests in order to limit the military, meaning Russian, intervention in the civilian (i.e. Armenian) administration that he was trying to establish. He requested form General Oganovskii to prevent the visits of any military rank to the local villages and if it would be necessary the responsible army unit should inform the civilian administration which village and who would be visited and for what purpose and a representative from the

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127 Telegram to Generals Abatsiev, General Nikolaev, and Driagin, 5 December 1914, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 521, ll. 8-10.
128 Telegram to Generals Abatsiev, General Nikolaev, and Driagin, 5 December 1914, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 525, l. 8.
129 RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 523, l. 288.
civilian administration should accompany the soldiers or officers. Tigranian reported that all kinds of trade and traders should be under the supervision of the civilian administration and all animals, vehicles, agricultural tools, and seeds should be excluded from confiscation for the army. General Oganovskii accepted and approved all his suggestions and requests except the one to expand the responsibilities of the Armenian militia established for the protection of the civilian administration to the whole occupied regions, and put them in force by an order dated from April 5, 1915. General Oganovskii informed the local commanders about their tasks in cooperation with Tigranian. It was apparent to the Russian general that an Armenian civilian administrator and his subordinates would look intimidating to the Kurdish population, so whenever the former would visit the Kurdish villages they had to be accompanied by a Kurdish colonel, Mamed bek Mirzajanskii or they should get a letter of recommendation from him.

The general was more than happy to see that a willing and able politician and his like-minded and enthusiastic companions relieved him of the task of civilian administration. However, it was no later than mid-April that the Russian high command in the Caucasus reacted to the events. Actually neither the viceroy, nor the commander of the Caucasian Army General Iudenich appointed Tigranian to this post. General Iudenich informed the commander of the IV corps about this fact and ordered the expulsion of Tigranian and his associates from the occupied regions. The Chief of the staff of the Caucasian Army General Leonid Mitrofanovich Bolkhovitinov seconded this order and General Oganovskii was reminded that, according to the latest orders of the Commander in Chief, only the military personnel would control the

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130 Report from Tigranian to General Oganovskii, 17 March 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 531, ll. 7-8 reverse.
131 Circular order from the commander of the IV Caucasian Corps to the commanders of the regiments, 5 April 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 531, l. 2.
132 From General Bolkhovitinov to General Iudenich, April 17, 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo, 566, l. 18.
133 Telegram to General Oganovskii from General Iudenich, April 17, 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 521, ll. 184-186.
administration of the occupied regions and the assistance of civilians of any nationalities would not be required.\footnote{RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 521, l. 188.} According to Bolkhovitinov, the presence of the Armenian intellectuals would hinder the realization of the Cossack settlement project proposed by General Iudenich.\footnote{From General Bolkhovitinov to General Iudenich, 17 April 1917, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 566, l. 18.}

By June 1915, most of the administrative tasks that had been left to Tigranian and his associates were transferred to the Russian military commanders on the field.\footnote{The principles of the administration of the occupied territories and the responsibilities of the chiefs of the districts, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 534, ll. 193-194. See the part on “Early regulations” in this chapter.} However, still the Armenian refugee relief committees had extensive responsibilities and power in the occupied regions. Since the inception of the occupation the Russian authorities were insisting on proof of previous residence from the refugees who wanted to settle in the occupied regions. The Armenian refugee relief committees would provide this documentation. The representatives of the relief committees would regulate the daily lives of the refugees and act as an intermediary between the local population and the military authorities. A crucial permission was given to all Armenians to possess all kinds of weapons except the standard rifle of the Russian army, the Mosin rifles.\footnote{Telegram from General Oganovskii to Baron von Khoven, 24 September 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 531, l. 19 reverse.} Since there were not enough Russian personnel to employ in the police forces, this task was left to the selected men from among the local population. The local population would also form a committee to take care of communal or municipal tasks.\footnote{The principles of the administration of the occupied territories and the responsibilities of the chiefs of the districts, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 534, l. 193 reverse.}

As well as the self-appointed (samozvanets) Tigranian, the representatives of other Armenian national organizations such as the agricultural society of Knastamatunts were also required to leave the region and the agricultural machinery they brought would be left to the control of the local military authorities.\footnote{Telegram to the Armenian Episcop Misrop, April 25, 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 521, l. 202.} Subsequent requests of the Armenian Episcop for
permission to send clerical representatives and social administrators to aid the refugee relief were all denied by the Commander-in-chief.\textsuperscript{140} Later in the year General Oganovskii, who was grateful to the Armenian activists for their organizational assistance, had to restrict the activities of the Armenian refugee relief organizations only to specific relief oriented tasks such as setting up canteens and providing medical assistance and deny them any responsibility in the settlement of the Armenian refugees and other administrative tasks that they had been performing in the region.\textsuperscript{141} Even for the charitable acts each and every personnel of the relief organizations should obtain permission and identity check clearance by the headquarters of the IV corps.\textsuperscript{142}

The Armenian government of Van

Tigranian was removed from the civilian administration of the regions, which were occupied during the first stages of the campaign on the Ottoman-Russian front; however, he soon reappeared as the vice-governor in Van. The appointment of an interim Armenian government in Van was another reflection of the initial unpreparedness of the Russian state to administer the occupied Ottoman territories. During the uprising of Van in April 1915 the organizers of the Armenian resistance had established a well working system of self-governance in the section of the city under their control and the Russian commander at the head of the Russian forces found it practical to appoint the leader of the Armenian resistance, Aram Manukian, as the interim governor of Van, on May 7, 1915, one day after the Russian armies entered the city. Aram Manukian and his associates rapidly organized the structure of their local government with its

\textsuperscript{140} Telegram from the office of the Viceroy to the Chief of Staff at the Headquarters of the Caucasian Army, June 20, 1915, RGIVA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 566, ll. 64-65.
\textsuperscript{141} Telegram to the chiefs of Diadin and Bayazid districts from General Oganovskii, 10 October 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 647, ll. 11-12.
\textsuperscript{142} Telegram from General Oganvoskii to the chief of Diadin okrug, 7 November 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 531, ll. 21-21 reverse.
departments of police, judiciary, agriculture, and refugee relief as well as the regional administrations of 14 districts in the province of Van. Dashnakists headed ten of these districts and “all this has allowed the people to call the new administration of Van as the Armenian government.”

The commander-in-chief of the Caucasian Army General Iudenich had a different idea about the administration of Van, however. He suggested to the Viceroy that the Russian civilian officials should control the civilian administration; however, his suggestion could not be fulfilled at that time due to the lack of such officials and policemen. The correspondence among General Iudenich, the chief of the General staff of the Caucasian Army General Leonid Mitrofanovich Bolkhovitinov, and the assistant of the Viceroy in civilian affairs Paterson at the end of May 1915 reveals that the Russian authorities were not at ease to delegate the administration of a large area to Armenian politicians and militia, however, they did not have the adequate preparation to replace them immediately with Russian personnel.

The Armenian administration of the city of Van lasted less than 100 days. When the city was again under the Russian occupation, the Armenian nationalists had to be satisfied with administering the local committee of providing aid to the population of the Van region. The new Russian governor of the Van region initiated the establishment of this committee and the volunteer militia. The Russians were careful to emphasize that this armed-militia was not a part of the army like the Armenian volunteer divisions, but would solely function as a police force in the Van region. Although the Russian governor of Van kept asking for support the Russian

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144 RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 566.
145 Report from the representative of the Committee of providing aid to the population of the Van okrug, Navasarian Arakelian, to the general-quartermaster of Caucasian Army, 8 January 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 605, l. 27.
authorities refused to support the militia and the committee as well.\textsuperscript{146} According to the governor of the Van region, Lieutenant-colonel Termen, the Russian prestige in Van was under threat and the Armenian population was utterly disappointed by the policies of the Russian authorities. In his telegram to the chief of the General Staff of the Caucasian Army, General Bolkhovitinov, he was asking the permission of the latter to come to Tiflis to personally report on the severity of the problem of conflicting interests of the Russian government and the Armenian nationalists.\textsuperscript{147}

Termen had experience in ruling over non-Russian populations and he could perceive the danger of ignoring the interests of the native population for the Russian administration. He seems to be following his formula of a better administration over non-Russians by being the best one among them, not a ruler over them. Thus, he tried to protect the interests of the Armenians in Van for a smoother transition to Russian rule.\textsuperscript{148} Famous Russian poet Sergei Gorodetskii, who worked as a representative and investigator of Soiuz gorodov in Van, also hailed his empathy with the local population and his humanitarian approach in an obituary he wrote after Termen’s death.\textsuperscript{149} While the support of Armenian volunteer militia was one of the problems, the major issue for the Armenian nationalists was the Russian intransigence about land ownership. Russian authorities announced several times that the returning refugees should prove their ownership of a land or they could only rent it temporarily. The petitions of local governors and the representatives of Armenian refugee relief organizations claimed that it was almost impossible for the refugees to provide any proof of ownership due to either the lack of documentation during the Ottoman times or the fact that the refugees might have lost these documents while they fled.

\textsuperscript{146} Telegram from the representative of the Armenian volunteer squad of Van to the general-qartermaster of the Caucasian Army, 9 January 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 605, l. 28.
\textsuperscript{147} Telegram from Lieutenant Colonel Termen to the Chief of the General Staff of the Caucasian Army, General Bolkhovitinov, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 605, 1 March 1916, l. 69.
The intelligence department of the general staff of the Caucasian army informed the governor of Van region on 11 March 1916 that the position of the Commander of the Caucasian Army, General Iudenich, did not change and without proof of ownership the refugees could only rent land for a limited period.\textsuperscript{150}

**The deportation of the Kurds**

While there were Russian officers as well as Caucasian Muslims or Kurds in the service of the Russian army trying to make a deal with Kurdish tribal leaders, other Russian officers were convinced that the Kurds only understood the language of power and in the final analysis were inimical to the Russian army. The Stavka was expecting that the Kurdish tribes might be easily won over as like all other nomadic groups they respect the higher power, which was apparently the Russian side. The general quartermaster of the general staff General Danilov reminded the Caucasian command that the forward movement of the army would be easier had the Kurds assisted the Russian army and wanted to learn what precautions were taken to provide this situation.\textsuperscript{151} However, this did not culminate into the adoption of a policy of toleration and incorporation towards the Kurds and the individual attempts of negotiation yielded no results.

One example of the extent of Russian indecisive proclivity towards the Kurds was the case of Bagyr Khan. According to the report of V. Shcherbina, Bagyr Khan had been in contact with the Russian authorities for a while. He had been propagating for the Russian side among the Kurds and had the arrest of two Kurdish tribal leaders not happened, his efforts would have been beneficial for the Russians. Nevertheless, he restarted to root for the Russians after the release of these two leaders. Shcherbina reiterated the assertions of Bagyr Khan about his capabilities to

\textsuperscript{150} Telegram from the Department of Intelligence to the Chief of the Van region, lieutenant-colonel Termen, 11 March 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo. 605, l. 101.

\textsuperscript{151} From Danilov to Bolkhovitinov, 16 May 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 837, l. 6.
attract several Hamidiye regiment leaders as well as occupying Malazgirt for the Russians with
his own forces with a certain degree of suspicion and at the end of his report he disclaims that he
believes in the sincerity of Bagyr Khan about his intentions to collaborate with the Russians.
However, he was deeply suspicious about his capacity to undertake all he was promising.\footnote{152}

Another such figure was major-general Shamshadinov. He was charged to initiate talks
with the Kurdish tribal leaders in the region under the occupation of IV corps. He should have
invited the Kurdish leaders to submit to the Russian empire, and warn them if they would not,
they would be severely punished and all their belongings would be confiscated. The conditions
that the Russian authorities were asking for was the submission of all kinds of weapons and to
take an oath of allegiance according to shari‘a and adat to the Russian emperor.\footnote{153} According to
Shamshadinov the Kurdish tribal leaders welcomed him well and there were large fetes of
allegiance ceremonies to which Kurds attended in masses. However, Shamshadinov noted that
these should be taken with a grain of salt. Even though they took oath of allegiance, they handed
over only nineteen old model guns. General Oganovskii did not approve his appointment as the
vice-governor of the Bayazid region suggested a temporary appointment under the commander
of the region.\footnote{154} Six months later Shamshadinov was still in the region but he was not given any
tasks. He complained about the situation and reminded General Oganovskii that his January
mission had been a good start but his first attempts were not followed up and still he thought that
only he could be influential on the Kurds\footnote{155}, but still could not get employed.\footnote{156}

\footnote{152} Special agent of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Shcherbina to General Oganovskii, 16 December 1914, RGVIA,
Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 525, l. 16.
\footnote{153} Oganovskii to Shamshadinov 8 January 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 525, l. 42.
\footnote{154} RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 525, l. 65.
\footnote{155} Shamshadinov to Oganovskii, 6 June 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 525, l. 138.
\footnote{156} RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 525, l. 141, 11 June 1915.
The majority of the Russian commanders on the Caucasian front, led by the commander-in-chief General Iudenich, were convinced that Kurdish forces were not reliable in combat and it was sufficient to keep them under control or if this would not be possible to deport them. General Iudenich ordered the deportation of Kurdish people several times in 1915 and early 1916, however, due to the lack of personnel these orders could not be implemented to the letter but definitely infringed a major tragedy on the Kurdish population.

The report of the commander of the IV Caucasian corps, Vladimir Vladimirovich De-Vitt summarizes the relations between the Kurdish population and the Russian army throughout 1915 and 1916.\footnote{The report of the commander of IV Caucasian corps, General Lieutenant De-Vitt to the commander in chief of the Caucasian Army, 6 March 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 525, ll. 33-36.} De-Vitt replaced General Oganovskii at the end of 1915. In his report dated March 6, 1916 he started with emphasizing that the Kurdish problem was the main political problem that should be resolved if the Russian troops would move forward. The timing is important here. The successful Erzurum operation had just ended and the prospects of the war had radically and favorably changed for the Russian side. However, the forward movement, occupation of further territories, and eventual annexation of these lands were still open questions. The report of Lieutenant-general De-Vitt once again reminds us that the Russian authorities were dealing with these problems with ad hoc and usually conflicting measures.

On February 5, 1915 the former commander of the IV corps, General Oganovskii received an order commanding to deport all the Kurds who had assisted the Ottoman army even only at the very beginning of the campaign. The Kurds who had sworn an oath of allegiance to Russia would not be excluded and all the villages that were not necessary for the use of Russian troops would be destroyed. Another telegram from the commander-in-chief on May 18 restated the deportation order and prohibited the return of the Kurdish refugees.
Despite these orders, due to technical difficulties, not all the Kurds were deported and local commanders as well as their superiors allowed some Kurdish groups to stay when the latter declared their loyalty. However, according to lieutenant-general De-Vitt, these “loyal” Kurds did not hesitate to open fire on the withdrawing Russian army during the July campaign of 1915. When the Russian army regrouped and retook the abandoned territories, the IV corps conducted punitive expeditions against local Kurdish tribes. On September 24, 1915 General Oganovskii ordered that the Kurds who had been inimical to the Russian army would certainly be deported and their properties be confiscated.

Experiencing the difficulty of deporting all the Kurdish population, Oganovskii submitted a report in which he offered to categorize the Kurds into two groups: The Kurdish peasants who dealt with agriculture and husbandry would constitute the first group and the warrior Kurdish beks and their tribes which were not productive but disruptive would be the second group. The Ottoman state had given various privileges to the latter group and they were still prone to support the Ottoman side. However, the Kurdish peasants, who had suffered at the hands of the Kurdish beks, alongside with other ethnic groups, could be easily won over to Russia. His approach was embraced for the moment, and the orders given in September 1915 instructed the deportation of the “non-producing” Kurdish groups.

Things mainly changed after the appointment of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich as the new Viceroy. On October 29 Grand Duke rescinded the orders of deportation of the Muslims. Furthermore, he stated that the Russian authorities should provide Muslims material support when needed, but should also be vigilant against any kind of disorder that the Muslims might cause. However, this order was late for the Muslims in the region of the IV corps, as the deportation orders had already been fulfilled. Moreover, during the winter campaign of 1916 the

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158 Oganovskii to Iudenich, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 531, ll. 14-18.
IV corps had to fight against the Kurdish tribes as well as the Ottoman army and all Kurdish villages gave a fight albeit with negligible harm. Upon that, the Russian army promulgated a declaration about the deportation to all Kurdish people in February 1916. The declaration was written in Turkish and Russian. According to the declaration the Russian authorities were obliged to regard the Kurds as enemy combatants because Kurdish groups did not stop assaulting weak Russian detachments and supply caravans despite all efforts of the Russian authorities. The Kurdish people, including women and children, were ordered to leave the occupied areas until March 15, otherwise they would be forcefully deported and all their belongings would be confiscated.\textsuperscript{159}

\textbf{Cossack settlement project}

The next major plan for the occupied regions was creating a buffer zone by transferring Cossack settlers to the region that was cleansed from the “unreliable Kurdish elements.”\textsuperscript{160} General Iudenich considered that the provisioning of the army could be alleviated better by productive and dependable Cossacks rather than by the returning refugees who were themselves in need of all kinds of aid. Moreover, the Cossack settlements might also provide a buffer zone between the Muslim and Armenian peoples on the both sides of the border. Iudenich had informed Viceroy Vorontsov-Dashkov about his project, and upon his approval sent copies of his report on the Cossack settlement project to the Cossack Atamans in the Caucasus at the end of April 1915. The Atamans were to inform the Russian population about the conditions of settlement opportunities in the occupied Ottoman territories and enlisting volunteer settlers as well as temporary agricultural workers. For this purpose a list of possible numbers of settlers and

\textsuperscript{159} Declaration to the Kurdish population, February 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 525, l. 26.
\textsuperscript{160} Report of General Iudenich to the Viceroy Nikolai Nikolaevich, April 4, 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 605, l. 129.
laborers were sent to the chief of the general staff of the Caucasian Army, General Bolkhovitinov. Upon the approval of Vorontsov-Dashkov special labor brigades were sent to the region to undertake cultivating tasks for the provisioning of the army. However, a general settlement operation did not start, and Armenian and “unwanted” Kurdish refugees occupied the area designated for the Cossack settlement.

A year later, on April 4, 1916, General Iudenich submitted another report to the new Viceroy, Nikolai Nikolaevich. The project envisioned the establishment of a new Cossack settlement along the new border with the Ottoman Empire from among the Don, Kuban and Terek Cossacks. If Cossack settlers would not be recruited, the Russian forces could not prevent the former to occupy the lands. General Iudenich proposed the following measures to be taken:

- In principle, all unoccupied lands in the given region should be given to Cossack settlers or to pure-Russian elements and decisive measures should be taken to fulfill this principle.
- The Kurdish population that had fled from the region or had been deported because of their inimical attitude towards the Russian army under no condition be allowed to return to their lands (vovse ne vypuskat’ obratno na svoi zemli).
- From the Armenian population only the people who can prove that they had lived and owned land in this region before the war should be given permission to come back.
- Other Armenian refugees who desire to return to the occupied regions should be directed to the Van province.

161 From the Nachal’nik of the Kuban oblast’ and the Ataman of the Kuban Cossack troops to General Bolkhovitinov, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 566, ll. 48-48 reverse.
162 Report of The Chief of the Diadin okrug Lieutenant Colonel Baron von Khoven, 1 March 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 605, l. 132.
163 Report of General Iudenich to the Viceroy Nikolai Nikolaevich, April 4, 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 605, l. 129.
The Viceroy approved the project and the local authorities were ordered to fulfill the decree about the settlement of Cossack pioneers.164

As the project was actually put in force during the tenure of Vorontsov-Dashkov, there were already Cossack settlers as well as the temporary labor regiments, which were contemplating to settle and many Cossacks in the army were eager to stay in the occupied areas. For instance, Eliseev, a Cossack officer, wrote that during the long nights at the officers-quarters they were talking about the prospective voluntary settlement of Cossacks in the large plains in the occupied territories. Moreover, these Cossacks regarded the Kurds as their Muslim counterparts, who could soon be ‘cossakified’ and turn into *Alashkertske kazach’e voisko*.165

The Chief of Diyadin okrug lieutenant-colonel Baron von Khoven and the commander of the IV corps wanted to conduct statistical surveys and distribute free land to the Cossacks under their command. The chief of Diyadin *okrug* was also receiving petitions from the Cossacks who were ready to move in his region with their own farming equipment and asking for his help to secure transportation.166 General Iudenich was sending orders to military chiefs to prevent the settlement of refugees and of the returning Muslim or Armenian inhabitants of the Pasin valley as this area would be the settlement area for “Cossack and other Russian peoples.”167

However, the project could not be fulfilled. The new governor-general of the occupied regions of the Ottoman Empire, General Peshkov was not on the same page with the commander of the Caucasian army, General Iudenich, and since the settlement was more of an administrative

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164 Correspondence between Colonel Shatilov and Major-General Savel’ev, 23 April 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 605, ll. 107-108.
166 Kazak 3 sotni Ladinskogo Polka David Luk’ianchenko to Baron von Khoven, 29 July 1916, RGVIA, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 131, ll. 41-42.
167 General Iudenich to the commander of the First Caucasian Corps, 16 April 1916, RGVIA, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 41, l. 126.
task within the responsibilities of the former, the creation of a new Cossack settlement failed.\footnote{168 The resignation letter of Baron Khoven to Lieutenant Colonel Shatilov, 18 August 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 605, l. 217.} General Iudenich fought hard to restrict and control the influx of refugees as a necessary precaution for the Cossack settlement project. He wrote in a telegram to the Armenian bishop Mesrop on March 3, 1916 stating that the Armenian refugees were allowed to return only to the area to the east and south of Lake Van, (that is Saray, Başkale, Hoşab and Vostan). He also made it explicit that all the responsibility to provide the security and the provisioning of these refugees belonged to the Armenians, and he could not guarantee that there would not be a strategic withdrawal of the army.\footnote{169 Telegram from General Iudenich to Armenian bishop Mesrop, March 3, 1916, Sakartvelos Sakhelmtsipo Saistorio Arkivi [Georgian National Archive, hereafter SSSA] SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 197, l. 37.}

Armenian and Greek refugees sent series of petitions to the general refugee administration asking for permission to return to their homelands before the end of the sowing season during January, February March and April months.\footnote{170 Petitions from the representatives of refugee groups, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 33, ll. 1, 3, 92-93.} Until May the answer of the major-general Tamamshev, the director of the refugee resettlement administration, was the same: The commander of the Caucasus Army General Iudenich does not allow the return of refugees except to the region of Van.\footnote{171 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 33, l. 5.} In early May the permission was expanded to include the return of previous residents of Diyadin, Bayazid, and Erçiş regions.\footnote{172 Report of the chief of Caucasian military district, 6 May 1916, SSSA, Fond 520 opis’ 1, delo 33, l. 7.} Refugees other than the former residents of these regions were only allowed to go to the Van province.\footnote{173 Telegram from the chief of Caucasian military district to General Tamamshev, 6 May 1916, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 33, l. 101.} Only after mid-May all refugees were allowed to return to their homelands except to a few locations.\footnote{174 Tamamshev to all governors, consuls and gorodo-nachal’niki, 12 May 1916, SSSA Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 33, l. 108.}
Early regulations

The chief of the staff of the Caucasian army General Bolkhovitionov had informed the commander of the IV Caucasian corps on April 17, 1915 that the new regulations for the civil administration of the occupied region were prepared and the assistance of Tigranov and similar people was not necessary anymore. Already, there was a vague rule about the administration of the occupied regions in the 11th article of “ Regulations about the field management of the army during war time”, which stated that the occupied region of the enemy would either be incorporated to the closest military district or a separate military governor-generalship would be formed of these regions. In line with the military law, special institutions were to be founded for the civilian administration of the occupied regions. However, as it was seen in the Tigranian and Van examples, the rule could not be followed, and the Russian military and civilian authorities were not clear about the establishment of an administration.

Soon, however, the Russian authorities would implement the methods of imperial formation in an occupied region, as it was familiar to them. The new administration would be similar to the military-civilian administration [voenno-narodnoe upravlenie] formulated first for the Northern-Caucasus and then applied in the occupied regions such as Dagestan, Transcaspian, Turkestan, Kars, Artvin, etc. The temporary stage of annexation was named as the military-civilian administration, which essentially gave the rights and responsibilities of civilian administration to the military personnel. The first step of this imperial formation was the establishment of a temporary administrative system for the preparation of the occupied region to the ultimate incorporation to the Russian state.

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175 Telegram from General Bolkhovitnov to General Oganovskii, April 17, 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 566, l. 19.
177 B. I. Borubashov, “Kyrgyzstan v sisteme gosudarstvennogo ustroistva I upravleniia rossiskogo gosudarstva,”
Vorontsov-Dashkov described the regime as such: “The system of military-civilian administration, which was formed during the war against the mountaineers, concentrated administrative power in the hands of officers under the supervision of the commander-in-chief of the Caucasian army and envisioned the autonomy of the local population in handling their internal affairs according to the *adat.*” This “autonomy” meant the employment of locals at the lower levels of administration and in the courts, all of which would be done by elections or nominations by the local population. The officer in charge of the administration had extensive rights and employ Russian military power whenever needed.\(^{178}\)

Bolkhovitinov added the 1860 project of administration for Dagestan to his letter to General Oganovskii and later the actual regulations of administration of the occupied Ottoman territories were formulated similarly to that project.\(^{179}\) The order from June 29, 1915 gave the details of this administrative system:

The region would be organized as a military general-governorship, and the senior commander in the region would assume the responsibilities of governor-general (like the chief of the Transcaspian region.) The region would be divided into *okrugs,* which would be under the administration of officers, who would be particularly charged with this task while maintaining their military posts. The borders of the *okrugs* should correspond to the former administrative delimitations under the Ottoman rule. The *okrugs* would be divided into rural communities according to the local conditions, like it was done in the Caucasus. The chief of the *okrug* would be responsible for the maintenance of order in the region under his administration. He would protect the interests of the population while providing for the needs of the army units passing through the region. The chief would appoint the administrative personnel elected from among the

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\(^{179}\) Bolkhovitinov to Oganovskii, 17 April 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 566, ll. 1-19.
local population. If the elected local administration would not be able to maintain order, the chief had the authority to impose order by use of force. The chief of the okrug should take every measure not to allow non-residents of the area to seize the abandoned lands and he should closely observe the collection and delivery of any kind of fees and taxes by the tax collectors elected by the population and approved by him.\footnote{Osnovnyia nachala voennogo upravleniia zemliami, zavoevannymi u Turtsii i funktsii nachal’nikov okrugov, 29 June 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 534, l. 193-193 reverse.} This first step aimed at maintaining order in the rear and at the front by using as few personnel as possible, without trying to impose Russian laws. At the same time, however, the administration would make it clear to the local population that the Russian authority would be firmly and if necessary severely established in the region.

From September to November 1915 the first chiefs of okrugs were appointed to Diyadin, Van, Bayazid, Eleşkirt and Karakilise\footnote{RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 566, l. 92, 103, 106, 113.} and the description of their functions and responsibilities got more detailed and conforming the conditions in the occupied regions. New instructions sent to the chiefs of okrugs on September 19 listed the geographical subdivisions of okrugs with their Ottoman nahiye and karye names, the chiefs would be assigned assistants and translators. The chiefs of okrugs would resolve all complaints of the local population about forced confiscations, assaults of the Cossacks and Armenian volunteers, and other problems caused by the army. Finding appropriate accommodation for their administration and troops would be the responsibility of the chiefs.\footnote{Instruktsiia nachal’nikam okrugov v oblastiakh Turtsii zaniatykh po pravu voiny, 19 September 1915, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 566, l. 98.} The registration of refugees, accommodating Russian and Cossacks settlers, forcing Kurdish population to the Ottoman controlled lands were all on the shoulders of the newly assigned chiefs and obviously these were daunting and impossible tasks to undertake.
Russian share of the Ottoman Empire and the decision about the occupied territories

After the occupation of Erzurum almost all “Ottoman Armenia” was under the control of Russia. It was the Russian victories on the Caucasian front that had accelerated the process of negotiations on the partition of the Ottoman Empire. Britain and France had already agreed upon their prospective share in the Ottoman Empire and in March 1916 the details of the Anglo-French agreement were presented to the Russian government. The Russian government discussed the Allied offer at a meeting convened by the Foreign minister Sazonov at the end of March. The chairman of the Council of Ministers, the naval minister, generals from the Stavka and representatives of the Caucasian viceroyalty attended this meeting. It was at this meeting that the new policy of the Russian state regarding the occupied regions of the Ottoman Empire was decided on and later related to the Tsar, who until then had not made up his mind about annexing “Armenia.” In that meeting the naval minister insisted on including Sinop, and the representatives of the Caucasian viceroyalty pointed to the dangers of leaving Armenian territories divided between Russia and France. After discussing all the options of territorial acquisitions, the ultimate Russian response to the Allied offer was presented on April 26, 1916. The Russian territorial demands on the Ottoman Empire followed the memorandum of Sazanov to the Tsar from March 14, 1916 in which the minister proposed that “the entire territory between the Black Sea and a line beginning at Urmia province, through Van, Bitlis, Muş, and Harput, up to the mountain range of Tavra and Antitavra (near Sivas) – must be placed at Russia’s disposal.” The final Sykes-Picot Agreement than ratified in Paris and London on 15-16 May 1916.

183 Kirakosian, Zapadnaia Armeniia, p. 392.
During the days when the Russian state was formulating its decision about the occupied territories, Ministry of Agriculture once again addressed to the Foreign Minister with the request to urgently commence the studies on the questions connected to the exploitation of the occupied areas. According to the Minister of Agriculture, it became urgent to discuss “the actual agricultural problems in the occupied regions of Turkish Armenia”, after the occupation of Erzurum and Bitlis vilayets by the Caucasian Army. In order to facilitate the solution of the problem, the minister offered the help of his ministerial staff about the necessary acts for the exploitation of the acquired fields in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry.  

In his telegram sent on March 19, 1916, the Minister of Agriculture addressed the Viceroy of the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, and proposed the appointment of an experienced officer from the Colonization Department to work on the ultimate incorporation of conquered territories. His nominee for the investigation of colonization in the region was the deputy for the Chief of the Central Administration of Colonization, Kamer-junker A. A. Tatishchev, who “had successfully organized the colonization programs in the Far East and Turkestan”.  

In the same telegraph, the Minister of Agriculture warned the Viceroy of the immediate danger of speculative acquisitions of land and pointed that after a fair distribution of land to the local population, there would still be a significant amount of territory available for the settlement of the Russian colonizers, especially of the participants of the current war. On March 23, 1916, the Viceroy replied to the Minister of Agriculture stating that he had banned all illegal acquisitions of land in the occupied regions and had no objections to the suggested person for the research aimed at colonization programs, which he found suitable in a time when he had already

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185 Arutiunian, ibid., p. 341.
186 RGIA, Fond 391, opis’ 6, delo 305, ll. 3 reverse - 4.
planned the prospective regulations for the civil administration of occupied regions. The Chief of the Colonization Department, Gennadii Feodorovich Chirkin also gave his consent for the nomination of A. A. Tatishchev with a minor reservation. He advised that Tatishchev should be sent as a representative of the Russian Red Cross instead the Colonization Department in order not to invoke any disturbance among the local population.

Thus, A. A. Tatishchev was appointed with the task of investigating the conditions of colonization in the conquered regions of the Ottoman Empire. Tatishchev had been enthusiastically involved in the implementation of the Stolypin’s agricultural reforms. His work with the head of the Resettlement Administration in Siberia and his statistical survey about the Amur region in 1908-1911 had facilitated his appointment as the head of the resettlement administration in the Primorskii region and in 1912 he became the head of the administration of land use and agriculture in Turkestan where he also had to deal with the settlement of the refugees coming from the Western front and with the increasing demand of the army for cotton and food. In 1915 he was promoted to the position of the deputy of the head of the Resettlement administration and represented the ministry of land use at the State Duma. Thus his appointment for a survey of the land use in the occupied regions of the Ottoman Empire attests to the seriousness of the Ministry of Agriculture about the prospective use of these lands. According to the program he prepared, professor Vasilii Vasil’evich Sapozhnikov (1861-1924) from the University of Tomsk would organize a three-month survey. The Ministry of Agriculture would support the survey which would encompass the region of “Sarikamış, Köprüköy, Erzurum, Hınıs, Malazgirt, Muş, Eleşkirt, Bayazid, Van, and if possible, the coastal region of the

187 RGIA, Fond 391, opis’ 6, delo 305, l. 9 reverse.
188 RGIA, Fond 391, opis’ 6, delo 305, l. 11.
189 V. V. Berseneva, Rossiiskii Arkhiv: Istoriia otechestva v svidetel’stvakh i dokumentakh XVIII-XX vv.: Almanakh (Moscow: Studia TRITE: Rossiiskii Arkhiv, 1999), p. 416.
Black Sea.” It was aimed with this expedition to prepare minor scale military-topographic maps of the region instead of the major scale Ottoman maps, to indicate the arable and pasture lands and meadows on these maps, to clarify the names and ethnic structure of the villages, number of houses and land per house in those villages depending on the researches and on the testimony of the native population, to investigate the system of land tenure, conditions of the irrigation and productivity of the soil through interviews with the local population.\textsuperscript{190}

Tatishchev’s proposals were discussed at a special conference in Tiflis attended by the Grand Duke and the military officials in charge of the occupation attended in May 1916. His report is an excellent example of the distinctive views of different state departments in regard to the occupied lands. In the eyes of the Ministry of Agriculture the occupied areas were recently-conquered-Russian-lands waiting to be open to Russian colonization. Therefore, Tatishchev proposed to conduct a more detailed survey of the region by experts on land use and agriculture in the next summer. In his report he suggested the establishment of a land fund in the occupied areas, from which the state would distribute lands to the incoming Russian settlers.\textsuperscript{191} He assumed that most probably the lands of the Kurdish population in the areas he traveled thorough would be left to the government control. According to Tatishchev the land needs of the refugees should also be strictly controlled and supervised by the government. The government should register all the agricultural population before the war. This information should later be utilized for the distribution of land to the refugees. “The place of origin of each refugee should be clarified by all means, and based on this information each refugee should get a form of identification from the police which would ease the control of the refugee movement by the government. Otherwise it would be really difficult to handle the return of refugees in an ordered

\textsuperscript{190} RGIA, Fond 391, opis’ 6, delo 305, ll.38-39.
\textsuperscript{191} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 33, l. 109.
manner [and we] could not establish a rational system of land settlement and could not prevent the possible attempts of unwanted elements (*postoronnye elementy*) to settle in the occupied regions.\(^{192}\)

Tatishchev also proposed some changes in the current organization of the return of refugees. He mentioned that the refugees could only return to the areas which were designated by the commander of the army, General Iudenich, who, in a recent order, gave permission for the rent of lands which were not currently occupied by their owners and reiterated that self-possession of someone else’s land would not be allowed. However, there were two problems related to the implementation of this order. The chief of the okrugs did not have enough officials to implement the order and the refugees did not possess any kind of identification document, let alone title for land. Therefore it was almost impossible to verify whether the current occupier of the land was the original owner or not. Moreover, it would not be in the benefit of the army to prevent the use of land until the verification of ownership. In that case, Tatishchev proposed that the order which allows the temporary use of land in designated territories should be valid for the whole occupied territories but the surplus production in these rented lands should be obligatorily given to the army.\(^{193}\) That way the refugees would have land to cultivate but there would not be an incentive to grab the lands, as they could not sell the surplus production. The army would have a better supply of food and fodder and the issue of rent collection would have been resolved. He also proposed that refugees should be settled in close proximity and the Kurdish villages should be exempt from the resettlement, as these lands would be left to governmental state fund for future Russian colonization according to Tatishchev’s plan.

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\(^{192}\) SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 33, l. 110.

\(^{193}\) SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 33, l. 112.
Peter Holquist interpreted the report as reflecting the eagerness of the Ministry of Agriculture for the colonization of the occupied territories. According to him, the military and civilian authorities at the Caucasus rejected this report, stating that the proposals in it were either impossible to implement or outright premature. I suggest that this report was another step in the policy development of the Russian authorities in regard to the occupied territories. One of the most capable and experienced officials of the Resettlement Administration was brought to the region on the request of the Viceroy at the Caucasus, he spent several months in the occupied regions, and “[r]ealizing that the proposed measures possess serious significance for the organization of land use in the occupied territories at the current moment as well as in the future, the Viceroy deem[ed] it necessary to discuss the mentioned report at the Special Convention.”

Moreover, the convention did not reject the suggestions in the report; on the contrary, it found them valuable but not timely. Almost all of them were considered to be important for the future of the occupied regions. Besides, the other crucial part of the report, which was about the organization of refugee resettlement, was embraced as it was proposed in the report. The first proposal was about an extensive survey of the region for the designation of available lands. The Special Convention concluded that such an extensive survey could not be performed in the current war conditions, “however, admitting that the understanding of the available categories of land in the occupied regions is very crucial for the interests of the state and also for the army, the Convention arrived to the decision that, the Ministry of Agriculture should send several experts for a preliminary survey of the region for the estimation of available arable lands and pastures. Such a preliminary survey would suffice for the moment, and will serve as a basis for the detailed and precise future work.”

194 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 37, ll. 99-99 reverse.
195 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 37, ll. 100-100 reverse.
regarded as untimely and decided to be undertaken after the ultimate organization of the administration. The third proposal of Tatishchev, the issuance of registration cards for the refugees, was decided to be rational and necessary for various purposes. The proposal about the obligatory delivery of surplus production to the government by the refugees who were cultivating the lands that did not belong to them was regarded unnecessary as the current requisition procedures could attain the same result.

The 18 June 1916 Imperial Decree on the Administration of the Occupied Regions

In the wake of the international approval of Russian acquisitions of the Ottoman lands and after the serious discussions in Petrograd and in Tiflis, an Imperial decree concerning “The Rules for the Temporary Administration of Areas of Turkey Occupied in Accordance with the Law of War” was issued on 18 June 1916. This decree established the military Governor-Generalship of the occupied territories of Turkey, for the purpose of the unification, surveillance and guidance of the military institutions in the region, and the establishment of the Russian administration.

The Military Governor-Generalship consisted of the General Staff, Chancellery, military-sanitary administration, technical department, and the department of taxation, with its headquarters in Tiflis. Eventually the Military Governor-Generalship was to be transferred to the occupied regions. Erzurum and Trabzon were offered to host the residence of the Military Governor-Generalship. However, difficulties of communication and transportation and the special legal status of Trabzon as a fortified region headed by a major-general, prevented the

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196 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 37, l. 101.
197 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 37, l. 101 ob.
198 “Priказ Начальника Стабла Верховного Главнокомандующего, 5 июня 1916, No: 739: При сем обиавлаєтія врєменнее полощенє об упраєвлєній областіями Турецкій, занятыми по праву войны”, RGIA, Fond 1284, opis’ 47, delo 165, ll. 3-21 reverse.
199 Trabzon region was the westernmost position on the Russian-Turkish frontline, so it was designed as a fortified region separate from the Military Governor-Generalship of the occupied regions of Turkey and its administration.
realization of these proposals, and the Military Governor-generalship stayed in Tiflis throughout the occupation period. The territory of the Military Governor-Generalship would be divided into regions (oblast) and districts (okrugs). The administration of these units was entrusted to the military governors of the oblasts and to the chiefs (nachalnik) of the okrugs.

It was stated in “The Rules for the Temporary Administration” that, the borders and the number of the oblasts and the okrugs, would be determined in correspondence to the previous administrative delimitation of the region, as far as possible. Depending on the progress of the military operations and on the consideration of administrative convenience, the Military Governor-General had the right to alter the borders of the oblasts and the okrugs, and to establish new ones. Initially, there were 8 okrugs in the occupied region. By 1917 the number reached to 29: Rize, Atina, Humurgan, Melo, Karakilise, Bayazid, Van, Tortum, Diyadin, Eleşkirt, Erzurum, Hasankale, Horasan, İd, Bergri, Aşkale, Mamahatun, Bayburt, Massad, Saray, İspir, Tercan, Verhnearaks (Upperaras), Himis, Dutah, Malazgirt, Erciş, Başkale, and Hoşab. In the cities, depending on the decision of the Military Governor-General, municipal police administration might be established.

The posts of the Military Governor-General, his assistants, governors of the oblasts, their assistants, and the nachalniks of the okrugs would be entrusted exclusively to military officials, military and civilian officials might get lower positions. The responsibilities of the appointed officials were described briefly in the article 8 of “The Rules for the Temporary Administration”. The main tasks would be “to reestablish and uphold law and order, to protect life, honor, property, religious-civil liberties of the inhabitants, to consider all nationalities equal before the was bestowed on a major-general. However, the Military Governor-General of the occupied regions of Turkey appointed the chied of the fortified region.

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200 RGIA, Fond 560, opis’ 28, delo 518, ll. 20-20 reverse.
201 Kavkazskoe Slovo, 17 November 1917, p. 4.
202 RGIA, Fond 1284, opis’ 47, delo 165, ll. 4.
Russian government, and to guarantee these inhabitants the possibility of free and tranquil labor, on the condition that they submit *in toto* to the suzerainty of Russia,203 and fulfill the obligations demanded by the Russian military and administrative authorities.204 At the same time, the officials should observe the proper evolution of civil and administrative life in the region, with the concern for the utilization of the facilities in the region in the interest of the army. In order to establish an effective administration in the region, and to sustain the development of the prosperity of the native population, the Russian authorities were ordered to study the national, economic and social peculiarities comprehensively, and formulate all measures necessary to reach the stipulated aims.

**Imperial transformation in Trabzon**

So far I have discussed the hesitant measures that the Russian authorities undertook for the occupation and administration of the Ottoman regions under their control. However, there was a conspicuous transformation that was going on. The occupation period was short, there was neither a well-designed prewar plan for the administration nor a concluded peace for annexation, but the region under Russian occupation was slowly becoming a part of the Russian empire, and undergoing a process of imperial formation. In this section I will describe this transformation in the case of Trabzon, and analyze how it became Trapezund, a Russian city, by the effect of the practical dynamics of occupation. Demographic changes, construction projects, military ceremonies, parades and the celebrations of Russian-orthodox holidays, reclamation of the Orthodox-Greek heritage of the city by the Russians, and the negotiated incorporation of the

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204 RGIA, Fond 1284, opis’ 47, delo 165, l. 5.
inhabitants into the Russian administration of the city were the steps of this conversion that I would like to pay attention to.

Before the war, the city center of Trabzon had a total population of 51,016, (29,168 Turks, 13,190 Orthodox Greeks, 7,121 Armenians, 1,453 Catholics (including Catholic Armenians and other nationalities)). After fierce fighting near Of, the Ottoman Army and the majority of the Muslim population had evacuated Trabzon on 16 April 1916. “The Russian General [Liakhov] was received at the outskirts of the city by a deputation of citizens [exclusively of Christian citizens] headed by the American consul,” and the Russian forces occupied the city on 18 April 1916. In the meantime, the city was left to the control of Greek gendarmes, since the new population of the city, which was approximately 15,000, consisted mainly of Greeks. The city was half-depopulated because of the mass flight of the Muslim population along with the Ottoman Army and the deportation of the Armenian population from the city in the previous year. The last Ottoman governor of the city entrusted the Greek bishop, Chrysantos, with the temporary administration of the city and with the security of the remaining Muslim population. Since the city had surrendered without fighting, it spared destruction. Most of the Muslims had evacuated the city leaving everything intact; even the closed stores were full of commodities, the military and civilian administrative buildings, bridges, barracks,


206 Hasan Umur, Of ve Of müharebeleri, (İstanbul: Güven Basımevi, 1949), pp. 41-65.


210 The Ottoman governor announced the establishment of a temporary administration headed by the Greek Bishop right before the evacuation of Ottoman forces from Trabzon and announced the responsibilities and rights of this temporary administration. For the original announcement see: Metropolitou Trapezountos Chrysanthou, Ekklesia Trapezountos (Athens: Hestia, 1933), p. 760.
and houses were all in good condition, but plundered by the Greeks.\textsuperscript{211} The All-Russian Union of
Towns (\textit{Sogor}) inspectors, Kniaz Argutinskii-Dolgorukii and A. I. Mitkevich arrived at the city
after the occupation, and found the city “almost at European standards, with clean streets, well-
built houses, pavements, street illuminations, sewer system, and water supplies, though in
oriental style.”\textsuperscript{212} The buildings were decorated with the flags of the United States of America,
demonstrating that they were under the protection of the United States.\textsuperscript{213}

\textbf{The establishment of the Russian administration of the city}

In the absence of land routes connecting the front with the rear, the location of Trabzon on the
eastern Black shore was seen as a quick remedy for the supply problem of the front. Hence the
significance that the Russian military authorities ascribed to the city and the region was much
higher as compared to the other places in occupied territories. A temporary military
administration was founded, headed by General Iablochkin who enjoyed the privileges of a
governor-general. Initially the Russians did not interfere with the local administrative institution
that they found. There was a city administration (\textit{gorodskai\u00a0a uprava}) composed of the Greek
notables of the city; however, it lacked funds and authority to undertake any municipal tasks.\textsuperscript{214}

The first months of occupation were rather chaotic and detrimental for the city. The
presence of several Russian military authorities with conflicting responsibilities besides the
existence of a civilian Greek city administration exacerbated the chaos. Although General
Liakhov ordered the troops camp outside the city, during the transfer of the troops there were

\textsuperscript{211} “The Consul at Trebizond (Oscar Heizer) to the Secretary of State”, 29 April 1916, Trebizond, \textit{Papers Relating
to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916 Supplement The World War} (Washington: United States
\textsuperscript{212} A. M. Argutinskii-Dolgorukii, \textit{Doklad knyaz\u00a0a Argutinskogo-Dolgorukogo o komandirovke v Trapezund} (Tiflis:
\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Bakhmeteff Archive of Russian and East European Culture} [hereafter BAR] Kefeli Papers, Box 1, File “V
Trapezunde s Generalom Schvartsom” l. 51.
unavoidable looting and destruction of the districts that were abandoned by the Muslims.\textsuperscript{215} Besides the looting of household items, evacuated buildings were destroyed in search of firewood. Since the soldiers were taking the wooden frames of the buildings, the buildings were collapsing afterwards and creating danger for the people and adding more rubble to the streets. There were thousands of such buildings in and around Trebizond by the winter of 1916, according to the memoirs of Dr. Kefeli.\textsuperscript{216} The water systems, which had been intact at the time of occupation, were totally damaged by the Russian troops, especially by the Cossacks for watering their horses. The sanitary conditions worsened to such an extent that epidemics started to threaten the city. The returning Muslim people who did not know Russian language or any other European languages could not protect their rights and properties from the Russian soldiers. The Greeks represented by the Greek Bishop Philippides Chrysanthos had some access to military authorities and thus managed to defend themselves to a certain degree against the arbitrary acts of the troops. The introduction of Russian rule had nothing to do with the civilizing mission.

The Russian general Aleksei Vladimirovich von Schvarts, who was in charge of the constructions of the fortifications in the city sent a report to the viceroy at the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich describing the dire consequences of the multi-headed nature of the Russian rule in Trabzon for the city and for the fortification project. He demanded the concentration of authority in his hands.\textsuperscript{217} Upon his report and for the sake of centralization after the proclamation of “The Rules for the Temporary Administration”, General Schvarts was

\textsuperscript{215} Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [State Archive of the Russian Federation, hereafter GARF], Fond P-10027, delo 8, l. 213.
\textsuperscript{216} BAR, Kefeli Papers, File “V Trapezunde,” ll. 49-50.
\textsuperscript{217} BAR, Schvarts Papers, File “Dnevnik Antoniny Vasil’evnoi Schvarts,” ll. 30-36. Schvarts dictated the report to his wife the night before he sent it to the Grand Duke and his assistant for civilian matters General Leonid Mitrofanovich Bolkhovitinov.
appointed as the commander of the fortified region on June 20, 1916.²¹⁸ As the Russian authority found a representative in his person, the transformation of the city speeded up. General Schvarts, who had been a successful commander of Ivangorod until its evacuation and then of the Kars fortresses, started energetically to fulfill the tasks he marshaled in his report to the Grand Duke which were the construction of the fortifications, reconstructing the destroyed infrastructure of the city, the improvement of sanitary conditions to prevent the epidemics and securing the provisioning of the inhabitants of the city which were increasing by day. While the fortification project was already going on, he initiated the possession process of the region by assigning Sergei Rudolfovich Mintslov to conduct a statistical and ethnographical survey of the region under his jurisdiction²¹⁹ and also appointed Mintslov as the acting director (nachal’nik) of the city to supervise the municipal tasks which were to be undertaken by the Greek city administration.

Since the city was still very close to the front and clashes were continuing, the locals did not regard the Russian rule to be firmly established in the summer months of 1916.²²⁰ Schvarts felt compelled to issue a decree describing the nature of the Russian rule as a permanent annexation rather than a temporary occupation.²²¹ In the decree all inhabitants of the region were declared to be Russian subjects submitted to and being equal before the Russian laws the violation of which would be severely punished. Although the decree had a certain effect, the further penetration of the Russian armies into Anatolia proved to be more persuasive for the inhabitants of the city.

²²⁰ BAR, Schvarts papers, File “Dnevnik Antoninoi Schvartsoi,” l. 42.
²²¹ GARF Fond P-10027, opis 1 delo 8. l. [The decree alarmed the Russian Foreign Ministry for which the annexations could only be decided by the end of the war.]
Negotiated incorporation of the inhabitants into the Russian administration of Trapezund

Although the Russian population was growing, the incorporation of the local inhabitants was more than a necessity for a stable administration of the city. The Greeks, who composed the majority at the time of occupation, thanks to the flight of Muslims en masse, were mainly merchants whose cooperation was crucial for the provisioning of the city. The Muslim population was also increasing everyday as the Russian rule became settled and their submission was necessary for the maintenance of order, the provisioning of the city and also for the realization of the construction projects. The Russians could not induce the Greeks to work in the construction projects and had to turn to the Muslims. The Russians managed to secure the participation of the local population by employing an inclusive imperial policy and by negotiating with the representatives of these populations.

As mentioned above, the Bishop Chrysanthos, who was a young and well-educated cleric, headed the Greek population. Even during the Ottoman rule, he proved to be a skillful diplomat in regulating relations between his congregation and the authorities. When the Ottoman forces and administration evacuated the city, the Ottoman governor Cemal Azmi Bey proclaimed that he was granting the control of the city to a provisionary administration headed by the Bishop and entrusted him with the protection of the well-being and possessions of the Muslims remaining in the city.  

He continued this role under the Russians. During the Russian naval bombardment Chrysanthos assured the Ottomans of his and his people’s loyalty to the Sublime Porte and received a decoration for his loyalty. However, he would be more than welcoming the Russian authorities when the Russian occupation started. He immediately started learning Russian and would add Russian expressions to his sermons. However, his position was not a

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223 BOA, DH.EUM. 3.Şb. File no. 4, folder no. 17, 15/R /1333 [03/02/1915].
total submission. He would continue defending the rights of Greeks and would lead protests when he could not persuade the authorities. While this policy of negotiation was understood and appreciated by the local Russian authorities headed by General Schvarts, it would cause suspicion at the headquarters of the Russian Caucasian Army. The commander-in-chief General Iudenich would accuse the Bishop of being a German or Ottoman spy and demand investigations.224

One such instance was the unanimous resignation of the Greek administration when Schvarts appointed a Russian subject as the head of the administration instead of as a supervisor, and also wanted to add two Muslim members. The city administration was not able to perform the municipal tasks it was assigned, and General Schvarts wanted to empower it by appointing Dr. Ia. I. Kefeli, who was in charge of sanitary operations in Kars. Moreover, since the Muslim population of the city was increasing he decided to add two Muslim members, who would facilitate the incorporation of Muslims and also act as a check over the city administration, which was controlling the rents derived from the abandoned Muslim properties. Although the Bishop was in cordial relations with General Schvarts he arranged the resignation of the members of the city administration and asked Schvarts to countermand his decision. Schvarts initially hesitated about his decision especially when the Bishop sought the support of the Grand Duke. The Grand Duke rejected the bishop’s request; however, still the Russian authorities had to come to agreement with the Greeks. According to the new arrangement, another Greek member would be added to the city administration besides the two Muslim members, the administrative power of Greek members in financial matters would be enhanced, and the Dr. Kefeli would pay a visit to the Bishop at his office and kiss his hand as a show of respect.225 In the meanwhile Chrysanthos

224 RGVIA. Fond 2168, opis’ 1, delo 553, l. 343.
225 BAR, Kefeli Papers, File “V Trapezunde S Generalom Schvartsom,” ll. 119-121, 130.
was awarded with the white headgear of Russian bishops, another act that was both flattering and setting one more connection of the Greek community to the Russian empire. As a Russian became the head of the administration and two Muslim and two Russian members were also added, the city administration was transformed to a Russian imperial municipal body from a local Greek one. Its authority, material capabilities, and funds were duly increased.226

The integration of the Muslim population also enjoyed a high priority on the task list of General Schvarts. The main obstacle for this task, however, was the inexistence of “intellectual” representatives of the increasing Muslim population. The Muslim civilian officials, notables, and religious leaders had fled with the Ottoman army. The Russian authorities could not find a representative of this population, and had to create one. A former-Russian subject from the Caucasus was appointed as the mufti (the highest religious authority in a province) through whom the Russian authorities could convey their demands to the Muslim population.227 As mentioned above, two Muslim members were added to the city administration and were assigned the role of controller over the financial issues regarding Muslim properties and construction projects. The rent of the abandoned Muslim properties was collected by the city administration and half of the revenue was used to finance the municipal projects. The rest was deposited in the Russo-Persian bank in the name of the owners of the properties. Since the Greek members of the administration oversaw these procedures it caused resentment among the Muslims. (General Schvarts decided to subject the procedure to the control of Muslim members of the administration without discharging the Greeks who were performing it.)

The appointment of Dr. Kefeli as the head of the administration also made a favorable effect for the Muslim population. Being a Karaim (a Turkic group professing non-Rabbinical

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Judaism), Kefeli could communicate with the Muslim population and he soon became an intermediary between the Turkish speaking peoples and the Russian authorities.\textsuperscript{228}

Turkish members of the city administration, a Turkic-speaking mayor and the mufti who was appointed by the Russians would form the crucial connection of the Muslim population to the Russian administration. This connection proved beneficial for both sides of the equation. The Muslims started to receive aid from the Russian authorities and the civilian institutions. The decree of July 30 mentioned above, guaranteed their legal rights and permitted the performance of religious rituals. Soon after General Schvarts initiated the opening of a school for Muslim boys since there were no functioning schools for the Muslims, whereas the Greek educational institutions were open. As a token of gratitude, the Turkish members of the city administration and the schoolmaster organized a parade of pupils in front of the building of the governor, and General Schvarts gave gifts to the children.\textsuperscript{229}

In turn, the Russian authorities found the much-needed workforce for the construction projects. The memoirs of many Muslims that lived under Russian rule indicate the willingness of the Muslim population to work for Russians and to deal with the administration because of the simple fact that this would guarantee their survival under the conditions of occupation. Witnesses from the city and its environs almost unanimously tell how well and on time they were paid for their labor in the construction of roads and railways.\textsuperscript{230}

\textsuperscript{228} BAR, Kefeli Papers, File “V Trapezunde”, ll. 109-110.
\textsuperscript{229} BAR, Kefeli Papers, File “V Trapezunde”, ll. 187-188.
\textsuperscript{230} Brent Brendemoen, \textit{Turkish Dialects of Trabzon: Their Phonology and Historical Development}, v. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), pp. 65, 82, 103.
Construction and reconstruction projects

By setting up an inclusive and functioning city administration Russians could start the infrastructural transformation that they needed to administer the city. According to the Russian administrators of the city, the oriental infrastructural disorder was the main cause for the sanitary problems. They needed to set up a plan first, and then build straight and wide streets instead of the winding, narrow Ottoman streets. Professional city-planners were called from Petrograd and a master plan for the future transformation of the city was prepared. Although this plan could not be totally implemented due to the abrupt end of the Russian rule, important developments were made. Had the city was remained under the Russian rule, argues Kefeli, it would have looked like a town in southern Crimea.\(^{231}\) The major accomplishment was the opening of a wide straight main street, which was named the Russian street (*Russkii prospect*), and it would remain as the main street of Trabzon for many years to come, as was the case in many towns that fell under the Russian occupation. Many other smaller streets were straightened and several of them were renamed in Russian, like the *Liakhov, Velikokniazheskaia*, and *Pochtovaia* streets.

The Administration for the Construction of Military Railways of the Trabzon Region\(^{232}\) completed the construction of the Trabzon-Gümüşhane line of 150 km, which was planned to pass through Erzincan and to connect with the Erzurum narrow gauge in the Mamahatun region.\(^{233}\) The main line of Batum-Trabzon would connect the occupied Black Sea region with the Russian Empire, and a separate administration for the construction works was established. Other than the railways, the Russian administration improved the water route facilities. Since the Black Sea coast was not connected by land route to the empire, starting from the very first day of

\(^{231}\) BAR, Kefeli Papers, “V Trapezunde”, l. 179.
the occupation, the construction of ports along the Black Sea coast had commenced. Initially simple docks were built in Trabzon, Rize, and Polathane (Akçaabat) in 1916, and were improved throughout the occupation.\textsuperscript{234}

The construction works had a psychological effect on the Russians and the local inhabitants. Being detached from the mainland was a constant resentment for the Russian civilian and military staff in the city.\textsuperscript{235} The sea route was not safe and reliable, the post and the newspapers were coming belatedly. All was reminding the temporary stationing of them in this remote and boring town on the rear front. The ongoing construction projects of main highways and railroads to connect Batum to Trapezund convinced the Russians that soon they would be connected to the motherland.\textsuperscript{236} The effect on the locals was no less. The region had not seen construction project at that scale. The Batum-Trapezund highway and railroad impressed the locals as all other large Russian construction efforts. These were demonstrating the will of the Russians to stay in the occupied areas. Moreover, as some of the Muslim witnesses of occupation confessed, they even came to resent the end of the Russian rule.\textsuperscript{237}

**Military ceremonies and the visits of high Russian officials**

While the construction projects were evolving, the front was stabilized further west from Trapezund and the Turkish armies confronting the Russians were so weakened that they were unable to resist any further attack, as the military representative of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Turkey, Lieutenant Field-Marshal Joseph Pomiankowski stated.\textsuperscript{238} It was time for the viceroy

\textsuperscript{234} RGIA, Fond 95, opis’ 1, delo 2027-2030.
\textsuperscript{235} GARF, Fond P-10027, opis’ 1, delo 72, l. 18.
\textsuperscript{236} BAR, Kefeli Papers, “V Trapezunde”, l. 12.
\textsuperscript{237} Brendemoen, *Turkish Dialects of Trabzon*, p. 79.
at the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, the commander-in-chief General Iudenich, the conqueror of Trapezund General Liakhov and other high military and civilian officials from Petrograd to visit the city and observe the progress of the transformation. Military ceremonies organized to welcome these important visitors of the city were symbolizing the power and persistence of the Russians in Trapezund as these were demonstrating the Russian might to the locals as well as to the Russians. The ceremonial submission of the welcoming delegates of the locals was assuring the belonging of the city to the Russian Empire. Schvarts and Kefeli noted their astonishments about the voluntary attendance of the Muslim delegates in these parades and welcoming delegations. However, from the point of view of the Muslim inhabitants these were acts showing their will to participate in the future political, social, and economic life of the city, in case it would stay under Russian rule.

**Reclaiming the Greek-Orthodox heritage of the city**

Religion played an important role in these ceremonies. All the ceremonies started with religious services. All military and civilian officials as well as many locals attended these events.

Orthodoxy was one of the few universal characteristics, if not the only one, associated with a Russian nationality and, as Theodore Weeks has showed, its assertion was particularly important in mixed borderlands.\(^{239}\) By the occupation, Orthodoxy became the predominant religion professed in the city replacing Islam. The public celebration of main holy days besides other ceremonies starting with religious rituals became the main entertainments in the city. For the first time after five centuries, the Greek population had a chance to celebrate Theophany, the

ceremony of the consecration of waters on January 6, 1917. The diary notes of Antonina Vasilievna, wife of General Schvarts, show us the symbolic importance of the ceremony:

The Greek cathedral was full. There were two elevated places one for the Bishop and the other for my husband. My husband entered with great pomp and he was led to the special place prepared for him, which was earlier occupied by the emperors of Trebizond. After a while our priests from the church at the garrison arrived with the crucession. The church was so crowded that it was hard to breathe. …After the blessing of the water, people moved towards the Jordan [River], i.e., to the shore of the sea. Even only that day would be sufficient to see how densely populated was Trapezund. People were all over streets, lurking behind the windows and doors. The hymns and the music played by the orchestra seemed to bring down the angels to witness this ceremony which had not been held for five centuries. Sun was sparkling and was blessing the city with its sunbeams. When the procession reached the sea passing through the decorated streets, it arrived at the square on the seashore, which was embellished with Russian national colors in the background of the wonderful sea. On that day when this important ceremony of Orthodoxy was celebrated with such joy, everyone thought that it would be repeated every year.

While the public demonstration of Orthodoxy was shared by the Greek population, the Russians would be interested in reclaiming the Greek-Orthodox heritage of the region sometimes despite or against the Greek population of the city. In this endeavor, the major assistance would come from the Russian archeologists and Byzantinologists, which will be the focus of the fourth chapter of this study.

240 GARF, Fond P-10027, opis’ 1, delo 72, l. These remarks seem to be objectively reflecting the enthusiasm and joy of the participating population as the celebrating crowd was captured in a photo which is now located in the collection of Russian Archive of Photography and Film.
Concluding Remarks

Following the first news of victory at the Caucasian Front against the Turkish armies, the Russian Government and the Russian High Command projected a series of measures for the organization of the administrative and economic life in the conquered areas. The rules for the temporary Russian administration entailed the preservation of the previous territorial delimitations while appointing Russian military officials as the highest authorities. Yet municipal and rural administrations remained local. There were hardly any attempts at cultural assimilation, the Russian administration did not ban local languages, and the shari’a courts continued to exist. Nevertheless, projects for the settlement of the Russian population as the mainstay of Russian domination were contemplated. This semi-autonomous form of control, respecting the geographic, ethnic, and cultural peculiarities, was the dominant pattern of the Russian colonial rule.

The first measures were taken in order to reestablish order and security of the population, to guarantee the security of the rear of the army, to mobilize the economic resources of the region in line with the interests of the military. Since all the political, economic and administrative regulations in the occupied regions were first of all implemented in the interests of the war conduct, the conflicts between the civilian and military authorities were settled to the benefit of the military authorities.

According to the Hague conventions, the occupied areas were not conquered regions until the signing of peace treaties to that effect and the occupying powers had to keep the laws and structure of the previous governments in effect. However, this rule was not applied in the occupied regions during World War I. The occupied regions of the Ottoman Empire were not an exemption. Still, however, the Russian authorities referred to the region as “the occupied
territories by law of war” and the ambitious projects of immediate annexation were not implemented. Even, a declaration by the Military Commander of the Fortified Region of Trabzon, Major General Schvarts, about the equality of the people before Russian law in a Russian territory referring to the occupied regions invoked a diplomatic conflict between the Foreign Ministry and the military administration of Trabzon.\footnote{Mintslov, Trapezundskaya epopeia, p. 89.} Whatever the legal status of the occupied regions was, the presence of a large Russian army, the establishment of a Russian administration, the implementation of many construction projects, the formation of connections with the local populations according to the Russian imperial practices gradually transformed the region into a part of the Russian empire.
Chapter III: Refugees and Empire: The organization of refugee relief

It is just one month ago to-day that the Russian army marched into, and with no sign of opposition, took possession of our city and established a reign of peace in our midst. Imagine the relief of those poor Turkish refugees at the time, at the kind treatment they received. The Russian officials, as they overtook them, bade them return in peace, without fear, to reoccupy their homes and their fields and their hazelnut groves. Then there was another company, who scattered flowers under the feet of the incoming conquerors. They were Armenian boys and girls who had been hidden all those months by kind-hearted Greeks and other friends, who at great danger to themselves had risked the wrath of the former rulers and saved these innocent children alive. 242

Between Trabzon and Erzurum nothing but ruins can be seen. One could not come across any living creature in any village. Hunger followed the Armenian tyranny. Even the army is hostile to its citizens. The military command confiscated food provisions of Erzurum. The people of Erzurum, who were saved from the life-threatening Armenian administration, now had enough of the hunger and despotism of the Turkish administration. …This tyranny caused agony among the people. It seemed that no one was happy with the return of the Ottoman administration. If the Armenians had not followed, the Russian administration, — although it was a foreign and abusive administration — was [still] the most just administration for the people. The people who a few months ago were trembling under the threat of death and whose hearts were pounding under Armenian tyranny were now subject to the risk of hunger. 243

Even under the Russian occupation people did not die of hunger. After the liberation of the region the deaths due to hunger are increasing every day. Aid should be delivered urgently. 244

In the course of the war, the occupied regions of the Ottoman Empire became a large internment camp for all ethnic groups living in the region, as each and every one of them was subject to persecution, labor draft, deportation and resettlement as a result of military operations or governmental policies. However, in this chapter I will add another layer of the “Russian occupation of Ottoman territories” beyond the evolving military and administrative aspects of the occupation discussed in the previous chapters. As in the cases of military and administrative aspects, the “humanitarian” occupation of the region also evolved and changed in time, and

242 Reverend Lyndon S. Crawford’s letter from Trabzon published in Life and Light for Women (Woman’s board of missions), vol. 46, no. 9 (1916), p. 401.
244 Report from the Ottoman Third Army, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Dh. I. UM, Folder no: 20/18, File no: 12/29, 15 April 1918.
several agents with conflicting agendas took part in this occupation process. The term “humanitarian” must first be qualified: The agents I deal with in this chapter were mostly driven by strategic and political motivations, yet the task they undertook was humanitarian inasmuch as many human lives were saved as a result of their efforts. During the war Russian imperial governance was shifting from traditional imperial politics to a more modern style of categorical exclusion, as Eric Lohr argued. However, the Russian state also employed modern policies of inclusion, as we will see in the organization of refugee relief. The Russian state supervised a refugee relief, which was basically run by the nationalist elites of the Armenian and Muslim populations in the Caucasus and which enabled the delivery of international aid.

For Russian government and military authorities the occupied territory was just that: a territory occupied on rights of war, as formulated at the conference of 1907 in The Hague agreed among the European states, most of which were empires. The territory in question was occupied by an empire, from an empire and would constitute a part of the empire. Unlike, for example, the occupations that the German army undertook on its western and eastern fronts, the Russian occupation was mostly compliant with the rules of belligerence that the Russian state ratified in 1909. The Russian state would try to meet the needs of various ethnic groups in its efforts to rule over the multinational population in the occupied regions as an empire. Despite various attempts of deportation, confinement or exclusion from governmental aid of certain ethnic groups, the imperial mentality of governing differences prevailed and the Russian state implemented a relatively inclusionary ethnic policy regarding the refugees and inhabitants of the occupied

territories. This picture contrasts with the practices of occupying powers at other fronts, including the Russian empire itself.\textsuperscript{247}

The political issues revolving around “refugeedom” had significant social and political impacts during and in the aftermath of World War I.\textsuperscript{248} Refugedom was an opportunity especially for the national organizations of the Russian Empire. The mobilized status of the refugees and their desperation gave an opportunity to multi-national as well as national states to categorize and move them in accordance with the political and ideological framework politicians were formulating at the time. This was not a possibility before the war, but during and after the war, widespread refugee conditions enabled the states to reshape their populations. Especially in the case of nationalist relief organizations, refugees were cited as a reason for their existence, “[which] acted on behalf of refugees in ways that defined and reinforced their own legitimacy, reducing refugees to passive, infantilized subjects seemingly incapable of developing the kinds of self-help initiatives that non-displaced groups had done.”\textsuperscript{249}

The refugee relief organizations would function with clear nationalist agendas further deepening the mistrust among different national groups and increasing the national consciousness within different ethnic populations. Just like the Austro-Hungarian authorities as Julie Thorpe describes, the Russian state officials “…lent legitimacy to these nationalist projects, first by creating national categories for the displaced and, second, by incorporating the various national committees for refugees within the larger state welfare programs.”\textsuperscript{250} Among the “specialists” that were involved in the refugee relief organizations we see those Armenian

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{248}] See Peter Gatrell, Whole Empire Walking Refugees in Russia During World War I, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
  \item[\textsuperscript{250}] Thorpe, “Displacing Empire,” p. 114.
\end{itemize}
nationalists who took administrative positions in the early period of the Russian occupation. These “specialists” would demand for the centralization of the refugee relief and the creation of favorable conditions for the Armenian refugees in a region where the Armenian nationalist elite contemplated a future Armenian autonomous rule. The rivalry between the Armenian, Georgian and Muslim nationalists in the Caucasus was reflected in the relief organization and this led to struggles over government funding or entitlement to come to the aid of a certain group. Muslim benevolent societies gradually became more representative of the Muslim people in the Caucasus and in the occupied territories. Georgian benevolent societies defined the Lazes as Islamicized Georgians and try to overtake the relief efforts for these people from the Muslim benevolent organizations. Thus, the analysis of the “humanitarian occupation of the Ottoman territories” provides clues about the future developments in the region and the thinning of the consensus on the multinationality as well as on the governance structures of the empire.

Therefore this chapter looks for answers to the following questions: How the Russian state and civilian organizations governed the refugee problem and how has the nature of this governance changed? What practices and policies were used by governmental and civilian relief agencies to manage, control, or protect refugees and to what effect? How have conceptualizations of who was worthy of protection and assistance developed in the course of the occupation period? What motivated the responses of governmental, civilian and international organizations to the refugee problem?
The office of the special plenipotentiary for the organization of refugee affairs at the Caucasian Front

As happened on the other fronts, the war at the Russo-Ottoman front created a substantial amount of refugees on both sides of the front. As soon as the Great War started Armenian refugees started to appear in the Caucasus in October 1914. While the amount of these initial groups was not high, large groups of Armenian refugees fleeing from deportation and massacres after the Sarıkamış battle and later after the withdrawal of Russian armies in July 1915 overwhelmed the capacities of benevolent societies, such as the Central Armenian Committee and the Armenian Benevolent Society and the intervention of the government became a necessity. The measures taken were similar to the ones developed for the Northwestern (against Germany) and South-western (against Austria-Hungary) fronts where the Russian government had two chief plenipotentiaries to supervise, organize, and direct the funds for refugee relief efforts.

The Tsar approved the law defining the refugees, their rights and obligations, as well as regulating the operations of the benevolent societies on August 30, 1915 and this law continued to control the relief efforts with some modifications until after the February Revolution of 1917. With this law a special council for the organization of the relief efforts for the refugees at the northwestern and southwestern fronts (Osoboe soveshchanie po ustroistvu bezhentsev severo-zapadnogo i iugo-zapadnogo frontov, hereafter Special council for refugees) was established. Representatives from the Duma and from the public organizations attended the meetings of this council. As Peter Gatrell argues, the Special council for refugees was organized in a manner to put the relief efforts under governmental supervision, to attenuate the prominence of the public

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251 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 204, l. 5.
organizations in the relief organization and to prove that the government was paying attention to the public opinion.

The governmental plenipotentiaries who were appointed at the end of July 1915 to organize refugee relief on the southwest and northwest fronts, Prince N. P. Urusov and Sergei Ivanovich Zubchaninov, would submit to the Minister of Interior and would operate according to the regulations stipulated in law of August 30. Their task was to coordinate the distribution of governmental funds in their regions, to supervise the registration and resettlement of the refugees, to arrange loans for agricultural needs, and to provide compensation for the losses that the refugees incurred during requisitioning and relocation.252

The Minister of the Interior appointed a plenipotentiary for the organization of relief efforts for the refugees at the Caucasian front. The plenipotentiary would receive funds and orders from the Special Council for Refugees and the viceroy at the Caucasus would supervise his activities.253 The plenipotentiary, Major-general Tamamshev, was responsible for the relief efforts in all the provinces and districts of the Caucasian viceroyalty, in the Stavropolk province, and in all occupied territories of Persia and Anatolia.254 General Tamamshev served as the head of the office for the refugee affairs on the Caucasian Front until May 1, 1917 when the Special Transcaucasian committee (Ozakom) appointed Khosrov Pasha Bek Sultanov and Sirakan Faadeevich Tigranian as the commissars for the refugee affairs.255

At the local level committees to supervise the organization of refugee relief were set up. Russian diplomatic representatives, consuls, and vice-consuls headed these committees in the occupied territories of Persia. In the occupied territories of Anatolia the military commanders,

252 Peter Gatrell, Whole Empire Walking, pp. 43-44.
253 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 193, ll. 16-18; delo 201.
254 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 201, l. 20.
255 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 197, l. 87.
representatives of all public, national, and in some places international relief agencies, local clergies of all religious groups and representatives of central ecclesiastical organizations and Russian and native local administrators attended these committees.256

**Who was entitled to governmental aid?**

Defining which groups were to be regarded as refugees was an important issue. Soon the definition was expanded to include Christian and non-Muslim groups fleeing from the Ottoman armies and Kurdish irregulars in the Ottoman and Persian territories.257 A leading Armenian Kadet deputy, Mikhail Papadzhanov worked hard for the inclusion of Armenian refugees on the Caucasian Front to the list of refugee groups who were entitled to governmental aid. Thus, the government agreed that the council would also look after the needs of people who fled from the persecutions of foreign states to the Russian Empire. Another Duma deputy, G. Adzhemov represented the Armenian central committee at the Special Committee for refugees.258 The Council of Ministers regarded the Armenians in the occupied territories who had escaped the deportation and massacres as well as the Armenians returning from the Russian and Persian territory as people deserving governmental aid. Initially, the Council of Ministers decided that the Armenians in the occupied territories who were Ottoman citizens could not be regarded as refugees, but their allegiance to and collaboration with the Russian state should entitle them for special governmental aid, which Armenian benevolent societies would distribute under the supervision of the Viceroy at the Caucasus.259 On several occasions the government issued funds

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256 RGVIA, Fond 1300, opis’ 4, delo 583, l. 97 reverse; SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 7, l. 1; delo 11, l. 1; delo 233 ll. 4, 12, 17, 27-29.
257 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 13, l. 4, 7, 23.
258 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 204, l. 6.
259 RGIA, Fond 565, opis’ 12, delo 888, ll. 2-3 reverse.
to be distributed to the Armenian benevolent societies.\textsuperscript{260} However, the plenipotentiary of the Ministry of Interior, General Tamamshev, several times refused to give governmental aid to the Armenians living in their home villages and towns in the occupied territories. He maintained that they did not fit in the definition of refugees according to the law of August 30, 1915.\textsuperscript{261}

Compared to the Armenian inhabitants, the Muslims, especially the Kurds, were not very lucky. The Russian military authorities did not regard the Muslim population as a friendly element, so denied aid proposals for the Muslims for a long time. Therefore, the status of the local Armenians and the Muslims would become a major issue of conflict among relief agencies, local commanders and the governmental plenipotentiaries at the Caucasian Viceroyalty.

**Imperial mind at work: The inclusion of Muslims to the governmental aid program**

The war against the Ottoman state adversely affected the Russian governmental and public perception of the Muslim population of the Russian Empire, let alone the Ottoman subjects. There were serious projects to deport the whole Muslim inhabitants living close to the Ottoman border. Although the projects were not fully implemented and eventually rejected, thousands of Muslims were still deported and many more had been subject of abuse. This led to the first surge of Muslim refugees into the internal parts of the Caucasian region. The dire situation of the Muslim population at the Russian side of the border, found reflection in the pages of the Muslim press and soon the refugees themselves appeared in Gence, Baku, and Tiflis.\textsuperscript{262} Region-wide fund-raising activities were organized, and the responsive public donated food, clothing, and every kind of valuable items including the family heirlooms, and wedding presents. The public

\textsuperscript{260} AVPRI, Fond 151 “Politarkhiv”, opis’ 482, delo 3492-3493; SSSA, Fond 13, opis’ 1, delo 855, 1. 2 reverse.
\textsuperscript{261} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 110, l. 26.
sensitivity, outpouring of the newspaper and journal articles, speeches and sermons, attempts of
the prominent figures of Caucasian Muslim elite, and especially of the Duma member Jafarov,
who was as a member of the ad hoc committee of the Duma for field hospitals. urges the State
Duma to grant governmental protection and a special credit for the Muslim refugees.

The majority of the Muslims of the occupied regions had fled following the withdrawal
of the Ottoman Army. The Ottoman officials tried to prevent the mass exodus of people, as this
would destabilize the regions under Ottoman rule. The Russian occupation forces also tried to
keep Muslim people, especially villagers, in their places because due to the lack of reliable
communication and transportation lines the forces at the front were increasingly dependent on
the local population for food and shelter. Although the Ottoman government tried to control and
care for the Muslim refugees entering the regions under Ottoman control, many refugees ended
up trying to survive on their own means and share the suffering of the local populations. In many
places the host communities shared their limited sources with the refugees, however, in some
instances the refugees were not welcome and they had to move on to find food and shelter in
other places. Because of the desperate situation on the Ottoman side and also upon hearing the
rumors that the Russian authorities were not prosecuting Muslims and even were providing food
and offering paid jobs in the occupied regions, many Muslims opted to go back to their homes.

In fact, aid for Muslim refugees in the occupied territories was a sensitive issue for the
military commanders in the region, for the refugee relief administration and for Russian state
agencies. In several cases the commanders in the field extended aid to the Muslim inhabitants of

263 Fuat Akhundov, “Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan Leaders (1918-1920) Mammad-Yusif Jafarov - Head of
Tahsin Uzer, Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi ve Son Osmanlı Yönetimi (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1979),
pp. 336–337.
the regions under their control as the population was in desperate need regardless of their ethnicity. However, the government maintained that only the Armenian population was eligible for governmental aid. Moreover, the field commander of the Caucasian army, General Iudenich, designated the Kurdish population as an unwanted element, so the military authorities were insistent on keeping them excluded from any kind of aid program in order to accelerate their departure from the occupied regions. However, eventually the imperial mindset prevailed, but this took some time.

As mentioned before, the Special council for refugees granted refugee status to the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire in the occupied areas on October 5, 1915. When the commander of the Diyadin okrug asked in January 1916 whether the Ezidi population could be included, the response of General Ianushkevich was positive. At the April 7, 1916 convention of the Special committee for refugee relief, Jafarov raised the issue about the desperate situation of the Muslim population in the occupied regions, mentioning that they were in worse condition than all other refugees who were eligible for governmental and private aid and asked for their inclusion in the refugee relief program. Upon this appeal, the Ministry of Interior Affairs contacted the Viceroyalty and on April 13, 1916 Kniaz Orlov, the assistant to the Viceroy in civilian matters, asked the opinion of the field commander of the Caucasian Army, General Iudenich about the “necessity and political appropriateness of governmental aid for the Muslim population in the occupied regions of Turkey.” In the meanwhile, Kniaz Orlov noted that the Viceroy assigned a one-time monetary aid for thirty-three Muslim villages on the border of the Kars province.

General Iudenich responded to this inquiry on April 21, 1916. He was reluctant to provide aid for the Muslims and claimed that they did not fit the official definition of refugees,

266 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 5.
which concerns people fleeing from enemy forces. Since the Muslims were not fleeing from the Ottoman armies, therefore, they could not be regarded as refugees. In the case of the Muslim, as well as the Armenian inhabitants of the occupied regions, they were free to cultivate their lands as before the war and moreover, many military construction jobs with high payments were available for them. Thus a relief organization could not be regarded as a necessity. Moreover, while the Turkish Muslims were “extremely loyal, the Kurds around Eleşkirt, Diyadin, Bayazid, Van and Bitlis were involved in all types of inimical acts against [Russian] forces.” Upon this response, Kniaz Orlov informed the Ministry of the Interior on May 16, 1916 that there were no Muslim refugees in the occupied areas and that people were free to work in their lands as well as at well-paid construction jobs.

While it was true that people could toil the land and work at construction jobs, these reports were not reflecting the entire picture, which was rather bleak. Many commanders of small units were sending reports regarding the desperate conditions of the people in the occupied regions and most of these people were Muslims. General Tamamshev wrote to General Bolkhovitinov about this problem on June 17, 1916. The area under Russian control was expanding and the number of Muslim people in this area was increasing. Famine and epidemic diseases threatened the majority of this population and they were in need of urgent relief. In order to attract Bolkhovitionov’s attention, Tamamshev emphasized that this situation threatens the well-being of the Russian soldiers and implied that the governmental aid for the Christian subjects of the Ottoman and Iranian states should be extended to the Muslims. However, the current regulations for aid distribution did not allow Tamamshev to do that. Even the aforementioned monetary aid, which was assigned directly by the Viceroy for thirty-three

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267 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 9.
268 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 10.
villages along the borders of Kars region, could not be distributed due to the lack of regulations.\textsuperscript{269}

In the meanwhile the Muslim politicians were pressuring the government, and contacting the administration of refugee relief in the Caucasus. The Duma member Jafarov’s question about the fate of the Muslim refugees at the Special Commission could not be satisfactorily answered and neither the central nor the local military and civilian authorities could conjure up a working plan for the Muslim refugees.\textsuperscript{270} The representatives of the Muslim society in the Caucasus claimed that this approach would inevitably lead to the resentment of Muslims.

The plenipotentiary of the Baku Muslim charitable society for aid to the Muslim refugees and victims of war at the Caucasian Front Sultanov appealed to Tamamshev on June 10, 1916, before directly contacting the Viceroy about the issue. For Sultanov, while Tamamshiev was an imperial bureaucrat, the Viceroy was the personification of the empire. He was sure that he could appeal to the imperial generosity but wanted to preserve it as a last resort. His appeal to Tamamshiev reflected his understanding of the empire. Sultanov inquired about the situation of tens of thousands of Muslim refugees on the Caucasian front who were in terrible conditions, suffering from hunger and diseases due to the rejection of aid to Muslims by the government. His main concern was the inconsistency in the approach of the state towards the Muslim refugees. Muslim refugees were receiving governmental aid in some regions; however, in neighboring territories Muslims were dying of hunger because the government refused the aid requests of the Russian administrative staff in these areas. For example in the Lazistan region, from Hopa to Trabzon, refugees were receiving abundant aid while in Melos requests of the Batum governor for aid organization were declined. The same contradictory policy was the case in the

\textsuperscript{269}SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 1.
\textsuperscript{270}SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 13, 14, 15, 16.
Surmalinskii district of Erivan province and in Diyadin. Muslim refugees in Surmalinskii received daily provisions while the authorities in Tiflis declined the petitions of the commander of Diyadin okrug Baron von Khoven for the organization of relief for ten thousand Karapapak Muslim refugees.

Sultanov urged to extend relief to those Muslim refugees who could not receive aid, and on behalf of the Muslim Charitable Society of Baku asked for funds to acquire food and other relief substances. In case that his appeal for aid would be rejected, Sultanov warned Tamamshev that he might directly contact the Viceroy “whose sympathetic approach towards the Muslim population gives him hope about the favorable solution for the lives of tens of thousands of Muslims.” Sultanov was correct about his assessment about the concerns of the Viceroy for the Muslim refugees. Kniaz Orlov contacted the central government as well as General Tamamshev and reported the request of the Viceroy to include the Muslim refugees, except the Kurds, to the aid-recipient refugees with an official decree of the Special Commission for refugee relief.

Sultanov kept pressurizing Tamamshev to obtain a favorable decision about the Muslim refugees. His letter from June 18, 1916 clearly shows that the negative attitude of General Iudenich towards the Muslim, especially the Kurdish population, was common knowledge. Sultanov suggested that General Tamamshev listened to the commanders of Russian army units such as General Liakhov, General Miller or Baron von Khoven besides the field commander of the Caucasian Army, General Iudenich. In the meanwhile Jafarov was contacting the Ministry of the Interior and questioning the reason for the delay of aid for the Muslim refugees. He claims that there was no exclusionary clause in the law on aid for refugees, which was promulgated on

271 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, 1. 17.
272 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 19-20.
273 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 21-21 reverse.
August 30. He also mentioned that the attitude of the government caused “suspicions among the locals in the Caucasus.”

Tamamshev still did not want to take the responsibility for ordering the inclusion of the Muslim refugees in the aid roster. He was waiting for the decision of the Special council for refugees and he was not alone. None of the high officials in Tiflis were ready to take that responsibility. Kniaz Orlov once again asked General Ianushkevich about his opinion on the extension of aid to the Muslims on June 23, 1916. To this letter Ianushkevich curtly responded that he had already expressed his opinion on this subject. In fact, this was an aversion, as Orlov noted in his minutia, because “he had not talked about the Muslims in that response.” He reminded General Ianushkevich in a consequent letter that his previous response had said nothing about the Muslims but gave permission for the extension of aid only to the Ezidis. Orlov was in need of an authorization at the time when the “Muslim charity organizations were increasing their pressure to get permission for the organization of aid.” Ianushkevich would positively respond only after the field commander of the Caucasian army, General Iudenich had approved the aid program for the Muslims. His letter dated from July 11, 1916 noted that such an aid would be “totally desirable for the interests of the occupied regions and of the Viceroyalty.”

General Iudenich approved the organization of aid for Muslim people, excluding the “elements of the population displaying inimical acts against the Russian army” on June 28, 1916. Upon that permission, the central government sent five hundred thousand rubles to the

\[274\] SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 23.
\[275\] SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 25-26.
\[276\] SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 94.
\[277\] SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 36.
Viceroy in the Caucasus for the organization of aid at the beginning of July 1916.\textsuperscript{278} The money would not be distributed in cash or as provisions, but it would be used to set up food stores, which generate a capital for further aid funding.\textsuperscript{279} This decision to open stores instead of distributing money to the refugees was suggested by the General-governor of the occupied territories, General Peshkov. As mentioned above, the Viceroy had already assigned seventy five thousand rubles to be distributed to some Muslim villages. This fund was to be given as a one-time-only credit. However, the general-governor mentioned that the aid should be distributed according to the local conditions, which differ from one region to another. In the case of the villages along the border of the Kars province, which would receive the seventy-five-thousand-rubles credit, the villagers did not need monetary aid as there were no food stocks or they could not bring in food to their region. Therefore, he proposed the opening of food stores and storages.\textsuperscript{280}

Although the aid was approved for the Muslim refugees, and the Muslim charity organizations were allowed to work in the territories within the jurisdiction of the General-governorship of the occupied territories,\textsuperscript{281} Tamamshev was still hesitant about involving these organizations in the aid distribution. He shared his second thoughts about relief for the Muslim people in the occupied regions with general Peshkov who responded that he had no reservations for allowing Muslim charitable organizations to provide aid to Muslims as long as the relief operation would be within the territory of his governor-generalship and under his constant supervision.\textsuperscript{282} When Sultanov, the representative of the Muslim Charitable Society of Baku asked Tamamshev on 17 July 1916 whether the Muslims and the society could get a part of the

\textsuperscript{278} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 41.
\textsuperscript{279} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 39, 41–42.
\textsuperscript{280} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 43.
\textsuperscript{281} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 58.
\textsuperscript{282} RGVIA, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 131, l. 3.
funds which the special interdepartmental committee assigned for the cultivation of lands in the occupied territories, Tamamshev ordered to provide funds to the Muslim organization but not to correspond with the representatives of the Baku society in writing. On August 22, 1916 Tamamshev reported to the Viceroy that upon his orders the money assigned by the interdepartmental committee for the relief of the Ottoman subject Muslims would be used to set up food stores in several locations in the occupied territories. The Viceroy approved that this task to be assigned to the Governor-general of the occupied territories and local commanders, not to the Muslim charity organizations.

Muslim refugees were also aware of the hesitance of the authorities to provide aid for the Muslims and therefore sought the intermediation of Christians to receive aid. Thus, for example, in Gümüşhane, the Muslims sought the help of the Greek head of municipality, Stastolidi, who wrote to General Schwartz, the commander of the fortified region of Trabzon about the situation of the Muslim population in and around the city on July 17, 1916. According to the report, there were twenty-five to thirty thousand Muslims who were in need of everything starting with bread, so he was not asking for monetary aid, but for flour. The Muslims wanted to ask for the help of Baku Muslim Charity Society, however, they were hesitant to call the Baku society before getting the permission of the Russian military authorities. This letter was copied to the general administration of refugee affairs in Tiflis and along with other reports on the desperate condition of Muslim refugees helped the acceleration of the organization of aid for this region. On September 20, Tamamshev appointed Agamalian, the Sogor representative in the region, to open canteens for the refugees in Gümüşhane and sent him the required amount of funding.

283 SSSA, Fond 520, opis; 1, delo 32, l. 61.
284 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 73-73 reverse.
285 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 37, l. 197.
Although the permission was granted, there was an exclusionary clause about the Kurdish people. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, the military authorities designated the Kurdish people as an antagonistic group, an unwanted element, and tried to forcefully deport them en masse from the occupied regions. Therefore, it was logical for the same authorities not to include them as the eligible recipients of governmental aid for the refugees and local peoples. The military authorities tried to use this exclusion as another leverage to quicken the deportation of Kurdish people from the occupied region. This policy was more or less consequential. The Kurds seem to get the shorter end of the stick and those Kurds who had not fled or survived the massacres were in desperate situation.\textsuperscript{286} Despite the fact that refusing aid to the Kurdish people was the predominant idea, it was not a verdict written on stone. There were Russian officers who were negotiating with different Kurdish groups to gain their loyalty for the empire, and these were supplying the Kurds with money and goods. Kniaz Shakhovskii was probably the most prominent of such officers, and he was the chief of Bashkalinskii okrug. He repeatedly contacted the administration of refugee relief for the inclusion of peaceful Kurds in the aid program claiming that refusing aid to these people would not be fair.\textsuperscript{287} Shakhovskii and other Russian officials started distributing aid to the Kurdish population in the Van region,\textsuperscript{288} and when they asked for additional funds, this had infuriated the refugee administration because the latter did not give permission and was waiting for the response of General Iudenich on the inclusion of Kurds in the aid program.\textsuperscript{289}

Moreover, in many villages, the Muslim population was mixed, and the ethnic differentiation was not an easy task. The necessity for aid was impending and the local

\textsuperscript{287} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 64, 65, 69, 74.
\textsuperscript{288} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 104, 107.
\textsuperscript{289} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 105, 116.
commanders were sending numerous petitions to the office of the Governor-general about the
dire conditions in their regions, and the governor-general was delivering these calls to the
administration of refugee aid. General Tamamshev was insistent on the exclusion of unwanted
elements from the aid program, and he always inquired about the nationalities of the refugees. In
this effort, he sent several inquiries to the General-governor on 19th, 21st, 25th and 29th of August.
He was repeating that the five hundred thousand rubles for temporary aid to the Muslim Ottoman
subjects were only available for the Turks, and not for the Kurds.  

General-governor Peshkov was utterly dissatisfied with the bureaucratic delays of the
relief administration in realizing the funds for the aid that the commanders from the occupied
regions requested. He wrote to Tamamshev that when he had received urgent calls for aid he
could not and would not search for the nationalities of the suffering population or whether they
were locals or refugees. He reported that in the occupied areas the population was predominantly
Muslim but was mixed due to the war conditions. If the refugee administration wanted to learn
about the ethnicities of the aid recipients it had to send its representatives to supervise the aid
distribution. Vasilii Mikhailovich Tamamshev noted on this letter that he would release the fund
but needed further information on the recipients of money.  

Adding to all, there were also Kurds that were perceived as being friendly to the Russian
state, as the Kurds in the Dersim region. Following the petitions of the local commanders, the
General Staff of the Caucasian Army urged the refugee administration for their inclusion in the
aid program, and by the end of October 1916 funds became available to be distributed to the

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290 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 80, 81, 82.
291 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 86-86 reverse.
292 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 130.
293 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 131, 136.
Finally, General Iudenich changed his adamant opposition to provide aid for the Kurdish people by November 1916. Russian commanders in the occupied territories of the Ottoman Empire and the Russian consuls in Iran, in the regions close to the Ottoman border, were submitting series of petitions to General Tamamshev for funds to be distributed to the Kurds. General Tamamshev kept forwarding them to the General Staff of the Caucasian army. The issue was settled when General Iudenich informed General Tamamshev that he was not interested in the situation of refugees anymore. Tamamshev once again reminded that the refugees in hand were the Kurdish refugees, not the ordinary Muslim or Christian refugees, but to no avail. Still in need of an authorization from a higher authority to distribute aid to the Kurds, Tamamshev wrote to Kniaz Orlov, who decided that the Kurds of Persia could not receive aid for the moment, and the consuls in Persia were duly informed.

General Ianushkevich, the assistant of the viceroy in military affairs and the chief of the provisioning of the Caucasian army resided a meeting on the relief for the inhabitants of the occupied territories on September 16, 1916. The Governor-general of the occupied territories general Peshkov, the head-representative of the Red Cross, the military-sanitary inspector, the head of the refugee relief administration general-major Tamamshev, representatives of the Soiuz gorodov and zemstvos were all present. The reports presented to the meeting detailed the terrible conditions of the people living in the occupied territories and made emphasis on the threat that this situation poses for the army at the front. Ianushkevich noted that the Russian authorities should provide relief for the population not only as a benevolent act, but also taking into

294 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 140.
295 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 149, 150, 151.
296 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 155.
297 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 156.
298 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 166.
299 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, ll. 169, 170.
consideration that the population was an important source of labor. As the recently established general-governorship of the occupied territories did not have the capacity to provide necessary sanitary and food relief for the people in need, it was decided that the *Soiuz gorodov* and *zemstv* should expand their services in the occupied regions.\(^{300}\)

Despite the tendencies of separating and labeling the population as reliable and unreliable elements, the imperial mind – necessitated by the imminent practical needs of the army and the administration of the occupied regions – won the day and by the end of 1916 and the entire Muslim population in the occupied regions of the Ottoman Empire was included in the relief program of the government. However, this did not mean that the suffering of all these people was alleviated. The situation in the occupied region was going from bad to worse as the winter of 1916-1917 was approaching. Since the communication and transportation networks were terribly primitive, the armies had to depend on local food supplies. The inhabitants of the region had to provide the armies with or without charge and were more often than not forced to do so. The only option for the people in the region was to ask for the mercy of the new rulers of the region. It was not a matter of religion or ethnicity but of mere survival. Therefore individually or in groups the residents of the region sent petitions to the Russian authorities via local commanders in the region. Usually several heads of villages signed these petitions as they were all suffering from the same conditions. The local commanders were willing to help the inhabitants. Many of them distributed aid sometimes without an official permission but usually they asked for permission from higher authorities. However, usually they did not have the necessary supplies, or even if they had they did not have the means to distribute these provisions. A letter from the Russian commander stationed in Ispir, a landlocked and hard to reach town in Northeastern Anatolia, explained that the people were ready to take or buy even the spoiled foodstuff from

\(^{300}\) RGVIA, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 79, ll. 12-14.
army depots. In some regions people had money but nothing to buy. The foodstuff could not be transported but again the people were ready to carry it on their backs.\textsuperscript{301}

The funds and the provisions could not be delivered to the region immediately. The methods of aid that the relief administration preferred were not applicable in every region. On December 18, 1916, the office of the general-governor responded to a local commander who was begging for help for the people in his region – “Hear the wails of these suffering people and give a morsel of bread”\textsuperscript{302} – by stating that the aid material was coming to Sarıkamış but further could not be delivered.\textsuperscript{303}

Moreover, the relief administration was still not willing to cooperate with the Muslim charity organizations. Duma deputy Jafarov sent a telegram to Tamamshev about the fate of the promised provisional aid to the Muslims in the occupied regions on December 3, 1916. He reminded that the credit was released on that day for this purpose and he repeated his request that the Muslim charitable society should be employed in the distribution of this aid.\textsuperscript{304} In response to the proposal of Jafarov, Tamamshev said that the Viceroy had agreed to the employment of the Muslim Charitable Society for the distribution of aid independently only when the Russian administration of the occupied territories was established firmly.\textsuperscript{305} Another letter from Dr. Sultanov to Tamamshev revealed that even the Muslim refugees close to the Russian border could not receive aid designated for their use. In Oltu region, the Muslim refugees didn’t receive provisions since July [for 6 months] and in other regions such as Kağızman, İd, and Ardahan since October [for two months]. The hesitant approach of Tamamshev also led to conflicts between the Armenian and Muslim relief organizations. From the report of the commander of

\textsuperscript{301} RG Via, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 79, ll. 41-43.
\textsuperscript{302} RG Via, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 79, l. 49.
\textsuperscript{303} RG Via, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 79, l. 64.
\textsuperscript{304} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 177.
\textsuperscript{305} SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 178.
Diyadin okrug dated February 22, 1917, we see that the Muslims could not get provisions from the storages controlled by the Armenian organizations since Tamamshev did not unequivocally ordered the latter to cooperate with the Muslim relief agency. The representative of the Muslim relief agency, Pepenov covertly threatened the commander that if the issue would not be resolved the resentment would turn on the Armenian organization.306

Adding to all problems, however, the most important factor that endangered the refugees was the revolution of 1917. The administrative structure of the Caucasus as well as the empire was being redesigned, and during the turmoil even the representatives of relief agencies could not find food,307 or the funds designated for the refugees, including the Muslims, were stolen for the sake of revolution.308 Notwithstanding all the obstacles the national relief agencies were trying to protect and provide for the refugees until the turmoil turned into a civil war.

The governance of refugee relief

“The story of the [All-Russian] Unions in the Caucasus forms a unique chapter in their history. When war erupted with Turkey in November 1914, the entire region was bereft of any self-governing organization; there were no zemstvos at all and the local town councils – the few that existed – were financially destitute and politically inactive. Yet it was here deep in the mountainous recesses of Georgia and Armenia that the Unions came to play their most important role in assisting the army. In addition to assuming full responsibility for the evacuation and treatment of the sick and the wounded, the Unions – and only the Unions – ministered to the needs of the refugees, who threatened to engulf the Caucasian cities with every imaginable disease and disorder in 1915.”309

The Russian government was funding and supervising the aid organizations, however, national committees and nationalist intellectuals that functioned as the representatives of All-Russian civilian organizations were undertaking the operation in the field. Humanitarian action during the

306 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 223, ll. 7-9.
307 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 100, ll. 9-10.
308 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 110, l. 32.
war legitimized the extension of the remit of the civilian organizations in public sphere. Through the humanitarian action the civilian organizations found ways to intervene into public sphere and the extension of their remit forced these organizations to devise new methods of administration and planning, which in return politicized their actions. The nature of relief organization in the vehement conditions of war created a relation of power between the relief organizations and the refugees. The relief organizations would define who was a refugee during the registration of refugees, they would also decide on where a canteen or store should be constructed, and they would serve as the institutions receiving the funding to be distributed. They had all the means to direct the aid and therefore had a powerful position vis-à-vis the refugees. The government, military, and the refugees were at certain levels of dependence to the relief organizations during the war and this situation empowered the organizations as well as the people in the employment of these organizations. There were around 1200 small and large entities involved in refugee relief in Russia and the Tsarist government had to accept this situation because it did not have the manpower to undertake this task and also the involvement of public and national organizations were relieving the resentment of the public opinion, especially for the refugee situation on the Western front, which was to a large extent a result of the policies of the army.

However, one consequence of the involvement of public and national organizations was clearly disturbing the state: These organizations were active in areas in which the state structure seemed to be failing or incapable. Although Foucault defined “failure” as a perpetuating factor of the existing system of governance, it also opened ways to discuss the possibility of alternatives. In this respect, these issues contributed substantially to the alienation from the

regime of educated public opinion as well as the people suffering from the mismanagement of
war.\textsuperscript{313} Through the unions the society was coming closer to a sense that the society was
overtaking the responsibilities of the state. Prince Georgii Evgenevich L’vov, the chairman of the
All-Russian Union of Zemstvos, would note that the society demonstrated its capability to run
governmental tasks.\textsuperscript{314} So the civil action was no longer supporting but replacing the
governmental action. The involvement of All-Russian civilian organizations in the war effort had
transformative implications in the political atmosphere of the Russian Empire.\textsuperscript{315} Peter Gatrell
claims that in the context of Russia-proper, the national organizations of relief enjoyed state
support because they constituted an alternative to All-Russian Unions, which in turn were
threatening the legitimacy of the state. However, in the context of the Caucasus and especially
the occupied regions it was not easy to draw a line between national organizations and the All-
Russian unions. The Unions had to employ nationalist activists and their work contributed to the
organization of relief along ‘national’ lines.\textsuperscript{316}

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the plenipotentiary of the Ministry of
Interior, General Tamamsev had to leave his position to Khosrov Bek Sultanov and Tigranian
in 1918. This replacement reflects the changes at the capital. The chairman of the All-Russian
Union of Zemstvos Prince L’vov headed the provisional government. As it was the case in
Petrograd, the prominent members of the public organizations were acquiring the administrative

William Gleason, “The all-Russian union of zemstvos and World War I,” in Terence Emmons and Wayne S.
Vucinich.\textit{The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-government} (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1982).
\textsuperscript{314} “Protokoly sobranii upolnomochennykh zemstv 12-13 mars 1915,” \textit{Izvestiiia Glavnogo Komiteta Vserossiiskogo
zemskogo soiuza}, nos. 12-13 (1915).
\textsuperscript{315} See: William Gleason, ibid; V. M. Shevyrin, \textit{Zemskii i gorodskoi soiuzy 1914-1917: Analiticheskii obzor}
(Moscow: Institut nauchnoi informatii po obschestvennym naukam (INION RAN, 2000); Peter Holquist, “La
Mouvement social} (2001); Alassandro Stanziani, “Specialistes, bureaucrates et paysans. Les approvisionnements
\textsuperscript{316} Peter Gatrell, “Refugees and Forced Migrants during the First World War,” \textit{Immigrants and Minorities}, vol. 26,
offices at the Caucasus. Their appointment was not accidental. They were the two most important figures in the administration of refugee relief. It was also a confirmation of the consolidation and empowerment of national identities at the peripheries of the empire, as the representatives of Armenian and Muslim benevolent societies would share the office of refugee affairs.317 Both Sultanov and Tigranian had long experience with the organization of aid, as well as representing the national interests of their respective communities. In the course of the occupation national relief agencies and the nationalists employed by the relief agencies rapidly came to the forth in the political arena. Through the relief agencies the nationalist intellectuals attained official recognition and acquired financial power. The Armenian relief agencies were apparently more active, as the Armenian refugees had been included in the aid program of the government from the very beginning of the war at the Caucasian front. The Armenian nationalists tried to expand their responsibility and to form a centralized relief agency in order to harmonize the relief operations as well as uniting the political power of separate organizations. The inclusion of Muslim refugees in the aid program gave a chance for the Muslim activists in their search for power in the Caucasian political scene. Since the political power and legitimacy of these national organizations depended on their responsibility over refugees, there was a competition to get the supervision over refugees. Georgian charitable societies would compete with the organizations from Baku to provide aid for the Muslim populations of the Black Sea littoral. In the following section I will describe and analyze the activities of these new agents of occupation and their administration of refugee relief.

317 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 217, ll. 190, 232-233; delo 219, ll. 1-2; delo 233, l. 9; d. 264, ll. 293-98; Kavkaz, no. 151, 9 July 1917, p. 1.
The real Armenian administration of Van

“We don’t think about autonomy or self-administration. The only task is to rescue what is left of the nation. The Turks and the Kurds have also suffered. They are dying of hunger. The thing is that while we can organize relief, they cannot. This way the demographic balance will be in our favor.”318

Aram Manukian, 1916.

These were the words of Aram Manukian, who headed the short-lived Armenian government of Van after the Russian armies occupied the city in May 1915. The Armenian nationalists had to accept the establishment of Russian administration, however, found great opportunity to rejuvenate or create an Armenian national enclave in Van, which the field commander of the Caucasian army, General Iudenich, designated as the only territory that the Armenian refugees could return. The first sizable Ottoman territory to fall under the Russian occupation was the Van region and except brief periods of tactical withdrawal in 1915 and in July-August 1916, Van had remained under Russian occupation until April 2, 1918. After the brief Armenian autonomous rule in the city Al’fred Iusupovich Termen was appointed as the head of Van okrug in September 1915.319 Van did not possess much military significance as the Russian forces rapidly moved westward. It was not an Erzurum or a Trabzon for the Russian army, therefore, the Russian presence was much less felt. Even in those locations with more importance, the civilian organizations were more visible than the Russian military institutions as the civilian organizations had to take care of all the immediate necessities of the refugees and inhabitants. During the fierce fighting of 1915 between the Ottoman forces and the Ottoman Armenians, and during the Russian-Turkish military operations, the city and its environs diminished to ruins, almost all of the houses were demolished, and the 1915 harvest was lost.320 The city, with its

318 “Interview with Aram, the ex-governor of Van in Petrograd,” Armiane i voina, no. 6 (August 1916), p. 80.
319 To the nachal’nik of the Van okrug, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 566, ll. 113, 135.
almost exclusively Armenian population during the Russian occupation, became a stronghold of the Caucasian Committee of the All-Russian Union of Towns—Sogor.

Other than the Sogor several Russian, Armenian, and international relief organizations operated in Van. S. I. Tigranian represented the Committee of Her Imperial Highness Tatiana Nikolayevna, (Tatiana Committee) which mainly dealt with medical aid and the revival of the local manufacture. Another Armenian social organization was the United Committee, which consisted of the Armenian Charitable Society of the Caucasus, the Nmastamatuits, the Agricultural Committee and similar charity organizations. The United Committee mainly dealt provided material aid such as seeds, agricultural equipment, and also opened workshops.321 Governor Termen presided over a local committee, which was composed of the representatives of local inhabitants as well as the representatives of the relief agencies. This local committee functioned as the highest judicial organ in the city, as well as the law enforcement force, it handled the municipal tasks such as the maintenance of the irrigation canals and of the drinkable water supplies, the resettlement of newly arriving refugees, and distribution of governmental rations.322

The city was in desperate need of aid from the Russian government and the relief organizations. The Sogor appointed Konstantin Saakovich Ambartsumian as its representative in Van.323 According to Russian poet Sergei Gorodetskii, the Russian governor of the city, A. I. Termen, was a reclusive person interested more in the weird jams he was preparing and preserving in his office, rather than the administration of the city.324 The city then turned into a

322 From the plenipotentiary of the Van voluntary militia to the general-quartermaster of the Caucasian Army, 8 January 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 605, ll. 27-28.
323 Ocherk deiatel'nosti Vserossiiskogo soiuza gorodov v vanskom raione, p. 1.
kingdom of the Sogor, and the Armenians of the city named Ambartsumian as “King Kostia” due to his relentless efforts. The main street of the city was named after the Sogor (the Sogorskii prospekt) on which all the offices of the governmental and social organizations were located.\textsuperscript{325}

The Sogor provided shelter, food and work for the majority of the population. There were 12 public kitchens, and several field canteens on the road to Hoy and Iğdır.\textsuperscript{326} There were several workshops operated by the Sogor as well as temporary shelters. Sogor and the Local Armenian Committee were also organizing the registration and resettlement of returning refugees.

One of the most important Sogor institutions was the orphanage. Sogor used the German orphanage building, which was very well constructed for the needs of the orphans. It became a center for the collection and rescue of the Armenian orphans in the occupied regions before they were transferred to the Caucasus.\textsuperscript{327} There were thousands of Armenian women and children kept in the Muslim households in the region.\textsuperscript{328} The search and rescue of these people became an important national task for the Armenian relief organizations. They symbolized the hope for the revitalization of the Armenian presence in the occupied territories and an important part of the legitimization of the relief organizations.\textsuperscript{329} These organizations sent representatives to all important population centers to organize rescue operations for these people and organized public fund raising campaigns in the Russian Empire for their rescue. The Russian authorities were

\textsuperscript{326} A. A. Atanasian, Deiatel’nost’ Soiuza gorodov i prochikh obschestvennykh organizatsii v raionakh: Vanskom, Mushskom, Hyuysskom, Bitlisskom v sviazi polozheniem bezhentsev (Tiflis, 1916), p. 2.
\textsuperscript{327} Sergei Goredetskii, “Vanskii Gubernator”, Kavkazskoe slovo, 10 August 1917, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{328} The presence of Armenian women and children in Muslim households was not only an outcome of the terrible events of deportations and massacres. The assimilation of Armenian children and women into the Muslim society were an important part of the population policies of the Ottoman government. See: Vahakn N. Dadrian, “Children as Victims of Genocide: The Armenian Case,” Journal of Genocide Research, no. 5, (2003), pp. 421-427.
closely watching these campaigns and providing assistance. At a high level meeting of Russian authorities and Armenian ecclesiastical representatives in July 1916 the issue of the search for orphans was also discussed. The Armenian representatives asked for permission to let the Armenian organizations to investigate and search the homes of the Muslims who kept Armenian children and women. The governor-general categorically refused to give such permission but he told that the local Russian authorities would make announcements to urge people to return those Armenian children and women, and only upon satisfactory evidence the local Russian authorities might search homes for the missing people.

The mentality of imperial governance as well as the bureaucratic limitations of imperial administrative structure let the Armenian national organizations to freely operate and have high hopes of reconstituting Armenian cultural, economical and political life in the occupied regions. However, there were limitations to these aspirations and by the end of 1915 those hopes would wither away starting with the dissolution of the Armenian voluntary units in the Caucasian army. Before that, however, the Russian military authorities were already trying to restrict the autonomous activities of the Armenian national organizations. In November 1915 General Iudenich ordered the commanders in the Bayazid and Diyadin regions that the previous permission for Armenian organizations to organize the settlement of the refugees was abrogated. According to the order, the relief organization should be under the strict control of the military commanders in the region and any settlement should be “temporary and without any claim of ownership.” The remit of the activities of these organizations should only be in the sphere of relief such as the establishment of canteens, feeding stations, providing medical assistance. All the representatives and employees of these organizations should get proof of identity given by

330 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 88.
332 Somakian, Empires in Conflict, p. 78.
the staff of the army corpus in the region. The military authorities in the region should report on all activities of these organizations.333

Around the same time, the director of the chancellery of the Viceroy in the Caucasus, Nikolai Leonidovich Peterson, complained that the relief agencies became powerful and autonomous in the administration of the refugee movements and started to intervene in political matters. It was apparent that the lines between collaboration and intervention were not clear for both the governmental and nongovernmental organizations. From the perspective of the relief agencies the control of the refugee movement was a clear example of how the relief agencies relieved the burden of governmental institutions. According to the letter of the Caucasian committee for aid to the wounded, had the relief agencies not controlled the refugee movements the state authorities would have faced with a bigger problem than they could have handled. Besides, the letter continued, the total detachment of relief organization from administrative authorities would not only cause problems but it was also against the orders of the Tatiana committee, which directed its plenipotentiaries to work in close collaboration with the civilian authorities and also against the will of the Viceroy.334 The letter was a clear example of the tensions between the state authorities and the relief agencies, and this situation would only get worse.

Following on the requirement of identity cards for the workers of relief organizations, in February 1917 General Iudenich ordered that the All-Russian unions should not employ personnel who were not Russian subjects in refugee relief. The head of the All-Russian Union of Cities in the Caucasus, Khatisov, objected to this order through General Tamamshev. For

333 From the General Staff of the Caucasian Army to the military commanders of Baiaizid and Diadin regions, RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 647, l. 11.
334 From the Caucasian committee for aid to the victims of the war to the director of the chancellery of the Viceroy, 13 November 1915, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 204, l. 47.
peculiarities of refugee relief the relief agencies had to employ people who knew local conditions, languages and had relations with the refugees. Moreover, he assured the head of the refugee administration that Sogor was very prudent in choosing its employees, carefully avoided people who were politically unreliable and usually seek recommendation of Russian consuls. Therefore, he asked whether the order of General Iudenich applied to the Sogor organizations that served the military, or it also effects the refugee relief organizations of Sogor.\textsuperscript{335} In his respond to this inquiry General Iudenich told that the order relates to all organizations and non-Russian subjects, except the subjects of allied or neutral countries, should be fired.\textsuperscript{336}

As mentioned, Van was the only area that the Russian authorities allowed Armenian refugees to return from the Caucasus. Apparently the Russian authorities could not control all refugee movements and refugees were returning to their homeland in the wake of Russian victories one way or another. The governor of Van, Termen informed Tamamshev that Armenians were returning to Van with great hopes after the victories of the Russian army. The main issue for the returning inhabitants and the refugees during the approaching spring was the ownership of lands. He was asking the opinion of higher authorities about the use of land.\textsuperscript{337} Tamamshev received answers directly from General Iudenich. The answers were blunt as usual. Iudenich allowed people to rent lands without owners until the owners return and did not allow the sale of any property owners of which were absent.\textsuperscript{338}

Resettlement of the Armenian refugees, rejuvenation of the agriculture and economy in the devastated occupied regions, and thus securing an Armenian future were the aims of the

\textsuperscript{335} From the Khatisov to General Tamamshev, 7 February 1917, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 90, l. 53.
\textsuperscript{336} From General-quartermaster of the Causasian Army to General Tamamshev, 6 March 1917, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 90, l. 60.
\textsuperscript{337} From Termen to Tamamshev, 4 February 1916, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 35, l. 56.
\textsuperscript{338} From the General Staff of the Caucasian Army to Tamamshev, 9 March 1916, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 35, l. 115.
Armenian activists and they wanted to consolidate and coordinate these efforts under a unified body. For this purpose there have been many attempts but the Russian government did not even allow this to be discussed until May 1916. In May 1916, the tsarist government approved the convocation of a special Armenian congress in Petrograd, attended by the representatives of Armenian political and civilian activists including those from abroad.  

The first Armenian congress discussed the proposal about the establishment of a central organization but failed to formulate a workable solution, but the issue did not drop from the agenda of Armenian politicians and activists. Later in the year many articles in Armenian newspapers were reminding the Russian as well as the Armenian public that the need for a central organization of relief efforts was imminent and while other nationalities that had also suffered during the war had national and central organizations; the Armenians could and should also have it. The new venue for a second congress was Echmiadzin, for the fact that the Russian authorities were in better terms with the ecclesiastical leaders of the Armenian population. However, the attitude of the Russian authorities did not change and nothing came out of these calls.

On July 10, 1916 the assistant of Viceroy in civilian matters, General Orlov, convened a meeting upon the inquiries of the Armenian Catholicos on the return of Armenian refugees to their homelands. Highest-level Armenian clerics and the governor-general of the occupied territories of Turkey, the head of the refugee administration, General Tamamshev attended the meeting. In the meeting the Russian authorities reiterated that they could not allow the refugees to return to the occupied regions other than Van until the establishment of the Russian administration. The issue of armed Kurdish bands was also raised. The Armenian representatives demanded the total disarmament of the Kurdish tribes. They claimed that the Russian army

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339 Gatrell, Whole Empire Walking, p. 152.
employed Kurds to provide the security of some roads, and this employment gave the Kurds the opportunity to rob Armenian refugees. The assistant of the viceroy in civilian matters declined to discuss this matter as it was a military issue but told the Armenian representatives that he would submit the matter to the Viceroy.\textsuperscript{342}

The impartial approach of the Russian authorities was not what the Armenian activists expected. Articles criticizing the Russian rule to be lenient against the Kurds and allowing them to rob the Armenians were appearing in the pages of Armenian newspapers. Papadzhanov prepared a speech condemning these policies. Having heard about that, the Russian authorities in the Caucasus decided to defend their policies with the help of prominent members of the parliament. Therefore, in December 1916, the Viceroyalty decided to inform Pavel Nikolaevich Miliukov, the leader of the Kadet party, who was sympathetic to the Armenian political aspirations but who was also a staunch supporter of the Russian war effort, that the Russian authorities were keeping the same distance to all of the national groups in the occupied territories. The relations with the Kurds, the Viceroyalty claimed, were devised according to the necessities of the war conditions, not out of political preference.\textsuperscript{343}

The Armenian organizations could not take the total control of the refugee resettlement, could not persuade the authorities to disarm all the Kurdish population, and could not obtain permission to establish a central organization to oversee the cultural, educational and economic revival of the Armenian life in the occupied territories. Van being the center of the Armenian revival efforts, one of the most devastating blows to the relationship between Armenian activists and the Russian authorities was the tactical withdrawals of Russian forces from the city. The Russian military authorities repeatedly informed the Armenian representatives that the

\textsuperscript{342} About the settlement of Armenian in their homelands, SSSA, Fond 13, opis’ 3, delo 2250, ll. 1-4.
\textsuperscript{343} From the assistant of Viceroy to Pavel Nikolaevich Miliukov, SSSA, Fond 13, opis’ 3, delo 2255, ll. 3-5.
occupation of Ottoman territories was not completed and the army could not guarantee the safety of the returning refugees even in the areas designated to be the resettlement regions because the army might need to maneuver and withdraw from some occupied places.\textsuperscript{344} Despite this warning refugees kept returning, and the Armenian organizations invested all their energy for the normalization of life. It was devastating for the people and the relief organizations to learn that the warnings of the army would come true. The Russian army withdrew from Van several times during the course of the occupation and the results of the evacuations were disastrous for the city. All the relief organizations left, the population fled, the harvests were lost, and looting raged the city. The Armenians started to loose their trust in Russian military and governmental authorities after these “strategic” withdrawals which rendered Armenians as refugees for repeated times and each time worse than the previous one.\textsuperscript{345}

Later, after the regime change in 1917 these evacuations were listed as evidences of the anti-Armenian policies of the tsarist regime along with the dismissal of the Armenian voluntary units, the replacement of Armenian police forces of Van with Russian policemen, the expulsion of Armenian members from local courts, ban of the employment of qualified non-Russian-subject Armenians in the administration, the existence of Kurdish militia under Russian rule, and the land use rules which did not allow people to possess land.\textsuperscript{346} All of these, however, were reflections of the tensions of imperial governance at the brink of global political changes. The Tsarist regime did not deserve to be labeled as anti/pro Armenian or Kurdish in the occupied regions.

\textsuperscript{344} General Iudenich to the Armenian bishop Mesrop, March 3, 1916, SSSA, Fond 520, opi’s 1, delo 197, l. 37.
\textsuperscript{345} Sergei Gorodetskii, “Gorod prizrakov,” Kavkazskoe slovo, no. 166, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{346} “Obzor pechati,” Armianskii vestnik, no. 17, April 1917, p. 3; Garegin Pasdermadjian, Why Should Armenia be Free? (Boston: Hairenik Publication Company, 1918), p. 31-33.
Imperial organization of relief for the Muslims

The inclusion of the Muslim population in the aid governmental aid program was not an easy process but was a necessity and became possible thanks to the imperial nature of the Russian administration. As I tried to explain in the section about the inclusion of Muslims in the governmental aid program, the Russian authorities tried to figure out the most proper policies regarding the Muslim inhabitants of the occupied regions and the Muslim refugees. The Muslim subjects of the Russian Empire, and the Muslim deputies in Duma did not organize clandestine rescue operations but, on the contrary, worked through the imperial structures to alleviate the desperate situations of the Muslims as well as to prevent the atrocities they were subject to.

The main social organization functioning in the occupied regions for the Muslim population was the Bakü Müslüman Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi (The Muslim Charitable Society of Baku [hereafter Baku Society]). The Muslim business elite established the Baku Society during the turbulent times of 1905 in order to alleviate the desperate living conditions of the Muslims in the revolutionary turmoil and interethic violence.347 The first concern for the Baku society was the situation of Muslims in the Kars province since the Russian authorities had designated them as “unreliable elements” and started to deport from their homelands. As a result, Caucasian cities started to receive Muslim refugees and the Baku society and Muslim activists in the Caucasus immediately organized fund raising campaigns for them. As soon as the Russian armies advanced into the Ottoman territories, the Baku society increased its pressure on the Russian authorities to get permission to operate in the occupied lands, and as we know they got permission and governmental funding.

Distributing aid and organizing relief in the occupied territories was another story, which has so far remained neglected except for the studies of Betül Aslan. She has successfully introduced and analyzed the efforts of the Baku Society in her book and several articles.\(^3\) However, she maintained that the Baku Society seems to have been administering the relief organization despite the interventions of the Russian state as well as the Armenian organizations. She preferred to emphasize the role of the Baku Society in the build up of national consciousness among the Muslim population, and anachronistically declared the Muslims of the Caucasus as “Azerbaijani Turks,” who came to the rescue of “Turkey’s Turks,” both of which were not clearly in existence yet. Notwithstanding the validity of her analysis, there was more to this picture. Despite all the impediments and the hesitations of the Russian authorities, the organization of relief for Muslims was an imperial effort, and it was not possible without the collaboration of Russian authorities, All-Russian relief organizations, Armenian national organizations, local Muslim and Christian officials in the Russian administration, local Muslim and Christian clerics and of course without the relentless efforts of the representatives of the Baku society.

Erzurum was the largest city that fell under Russian occupation and even though the majority of the population had fled during and after the withdrawal of the Ottoman Army, the city and its environs had a significant amount of people and almost all of them were Muslims. Besides, following the establishment of Russian rule and after hearing that the new rulers were not massacring the population, many refugees who could not find suitable conditions were

As soon as the basic administrative structure was set, the primary task of the administration of the region was to assess the human and natural resources of the region. Russian authorities held a census and registration of the possessions of the population. The aim was to find out the available labor force and to provide much needed workers for different military and construction units. For this purpose several labor battalions were formed and sent off to work at several tasks. Almost all able-bodied people from 17 to 45 years of age were put into work and all transportation vehicles were confiscated.

The administration had to walk on a tight rope between the population and the military authorities. The administration had to maintain order, normalize living conditions, win over the population’s allegiance for the Russian state, and at the same time had to satisfy the demand for labor and material. Settlement of returning Muslim population was another task for the administration. The administration asked Baku Society, which had already sent a commission to assess the needs of the city and its environs in March 1916, for help but other than providing a meager amount of flour, Baku Society could not assist the administration. Therefore the Russian military authorities had to apply to General Tamamshev and Armenian charitable organizations. Actually, the Baku society was delivering products of urgent necessity for the stores of the committee of provisions of Erzurum up to Sarkamış station whence the foodstuff was carried on to the city on carts. The rising transportation fees, however, made the procurement of products inhibitive for the inhabitants of the city. The local Russian authorities

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had to secure a special permission to carry food products on the narrow-gauge railway, which
was being constructed between Sankamış and Erzurum.\textsuperscript{351}

The situation in the occupied region was going from bad to worse as winter of 1916-1917
was approaching. Since the communication and transportation networks were terribly
underdeveloped, the armies had to depend on local food supplies. The inhabitants of the region
had to provide the armies with or without charge and were more than not forced to do so. The
only option for the people in the region was to ask for the mercy of the new rulers of the region.
It was not a matter of religion or ethnicity but of mere survival. Therefore individually or in
groups the residents of the region sent petitions to the Russian authorities via local commanders
in the region. Usually several heads of villages signed these petitions as they were all suffering
from the same conditions and none would know Russian to address the Russian
administration. The Muslims also knew that Baku Society was supposed to take care of the
Muslims but the need for aid was exceeding the capacity of the Baku society.\textsuperscript{352} Several
representatives of the society visited Erzurum but they could only prepare a list of needs and
register the people that need help. The mayor of Erzurum, Hakkı pasha, reported to the military
chief of the city, Nagaibakov, that the city did not receive any substantial aid from March to
December 1916. There were twelve thousand people in need in the city and the local
administration could not provide for them either.\textsuperscript{353} Collaboration with the All-Russian union of
towns was inevitable and the Sogor tried to meet the needs by opening public kitchens in the
city. In the countryside, in order to guarantee the food supply, the Sogor organized a resettlement
program of the refugees, in coordination with the Chief Administrator of the Refugees, General

\textsuperscript{351} Nagaibakov to the governor general of Turkish territories, 11 November 1916, RGVIA, Fond 13227, opis’ 2,
delo 41, ll. 19-22.
\textsuperscript{352} RGVIA, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 79, l. 46.
\textsuperscript{353} RGVIA, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 79, l. 50.
Tamamshev, and provided agricultural equipment, and credits for the temporarily settled refugees.\footnote{354} The Armenian and Muslim representatives of relief organizations also had to work in cooperation to persuade Christian and Muslim population to work in the construction projects.\footnote{355}

The cooperation between Armenian and Muslim organizations was not always the case. In February 1917, the representative of Baku Society, Ahmed Bey Pepin, contacted the Russian commander in Diyadin and explained the calamities of the Muslim population. In his report he noted that Armenian and Ezidi populations, even able-bodied ones, were receiving governmental aid but the Muslim population in the same region had not received any aid. Moreover, the Armenian committee, which was controlling the regional food storages, was refusing to give any food provisions to the representatives of the Baku society. Pepinov was asking the intervention of the commander lest his complain about the Armenian committee would seem to be nationally driven.\footnote{356} Upon this request, the Russian authorities compelled the local Armenian committee to release provisions for the Muslim population.

Like the provisioning of the refugees and the people in need, the medical assistance for the Muslim people in Erzurum was an imperial undertaking. Adding to food requirements, both the representatives of the Baku Society and officials of the Sogor expressed the pressing need of a hospital for the Muslim population. The chief representative of the Sogor in Erzurum suggested to the representatives of Baku Society to open a hospital for the Muslims,\footnote{357} and Sultanov applied to the Russian Red Cross, in March 1916, in order to take permission for the establishment of a field hospital.\footnote{358} According to Aslan’s study, Baku Society could not succeed

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\item [354] “O polozhenii bezhentsev v Pasinskoi doline i okrestnostiah Erzeruma”, Izvestiia kavkazskogo komiteta vserossiiskogo soiuza gorodov, no.8, (May 1916), p.115-123.
\item [355] Zhurnal Erzerumskogo komiteta po ustranstvu bezhentsev, SSSA, Fond 530, opis’ 1, delo 110, l. 23.
\item [356] Ahmet Bek Pepinov to Polkovnik Lashkarev, 22 February 1917, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 223, ll. 8-9.
\item [357] Otchety o deyatel’nost’ uchrezhdennii Vserossiiskogo Soyuza Gorodov v sarikamishskom raione (Tiflis, 1916), p. 84.
\item [358] B. Aslan, Kardeş Kömeği, p. 271.
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in opening a hospital for the Muslim people of Erzurum. Baku Society provided 11000 rubles for the establishment of a hospital in Erzurum. The plan was to set up the hospital for 5000 rubles but the difficulties to procure necessary materials, and rapidly rising prices of those materials considerably increased the cost. Russian Red Cross provided some material free of charge and the city administration had to spend 5000 rubles more than the funding supplied by the Baku society. The hospital was in operation by May 15, and a representative of the Baku Society run the hospital initially. In November 1916, the hospital was transferred to the management of the medico-sanitary department of the Sogor, and the general-governorship of the occupied regions of Turkey accepted to cover the expenses of from then on.

In Trabzon, the care for Muslim refugees was possible with the interaction of local Russian authorities, Greek clerics, relief administration in Tiflis and the Baku Society. There were almost no Muslims in the city at the time of the Russian occupation, but the Muslim that left and those that were hiding in the mountains around soon came back to constitute a serious refugee problem there. When the military commander in charge of Trabzon okrug wanted to get information on the conditions of the Muslim refugees in the city, he had to turn to the Greek bishop who had the best knowledge about all refugees, including the Muslims, as he was heading the committee for refugees. The local authorities and the Greek clerics were already providing for the needs of the Muslims in the early days of occupation.

359 RGVIA, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 41, l. 66.
361 SSSA, Fond 520, opis 1, delo 207, l. 3 reverse.
362 A letter from the Mayor of Trebizond to the Chief of the Trepezundskii okrug from October 19, 1916, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 46, l. 5.
363 A Muslim from the Trabzon region who fled to the Ottoman controlled territories explained how and where the Muslim population was receiving food supplies from the Russian authorities under the control of Greek clerics to Ottoman military interrogators. Ermeniler Tarafından, pp. 77-78.
The conditions of the villagers and the returning refugees were not better than the Muslim population in the other occupied territories. These conditions were considered to be dangerous for the acting army, and the military authorities got in contact with the Batum branch of the Baku Society in June 1916 and demanded the organization of the relief for the Muslims. Already by July 1916 in the Black sea littoral the situation of the Muslim refugees was relatively better, thanks to the efforts of General Liakhov and the Baku society as well as to the favorable location of the region which was open to sea transport. Almost every able-bodied men, women and children were working in military construction projects and receiving 1 ruble and 3 pounds of bread. The Russian authorities wanted to use the distribution of aid as leverage in order to employ the local population in the ambitious construction works. Batum-Trabzon railway, several ports on the Black Sea and local roads were under rapid construction and without the involvement of local population it was not possible to complete them. In this regard, the Muslim refugees became the favored population for the occupying authorities. The majority of the local Greeks did not leave their villages or towns, and thus did not lose their jobs or lands. Therefore, they did not have motivation to work in the construction sites. Hellenistic committee was taking care of existing Greek refugees and the Greek bishop of Trabzon, Chrysanthos used his cordial relations with the Russian authorities to increase the state support for the Greeks. The Russian authorities in Tiflis were not content with the reluctance of Greeks to work in military construction and informed the Greek bishop and local Russian authorities that governmental aid would not be given to those who refused to work. Moreover, when the government was providing funding to the Hellenistic committee they were requiring the inclusion of Armenians and “Turks” as the recipients of relief program. Since the reports of the representatives of Sogor

364 RGIA, Fond 21, opis’ 1, delo 285, l. 28 reverse.
365 The report of the representative of the Refugee relief administration at the Caucasus Tsulkidze from July 16, 1916, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 45, ll. 128-129.
and the Refugee relief administration at the Caucasus designated Muslims as the main refugee group, by the end of 1916 the Viceroyalty assigned 500 thousand rubles to cover the expenses of the relief operations for the Muslims and the local authorities could not use this funding for the refugees and the people-in-need from other ethnic groups and had to ask for additional funding from Tiflis.  

Russian authorities, Greek clerics and Baku Society were not the only agents involved in the relief organization for the Muslims living in the coastal regions of Black Sea. Since claiming some sort of authority over a group of refugee population seemed to be closely related with increased political power in the war-time imperial scene, the Georgian charitable societies decided to work on the ethnical affinities between the Georgian Muslims and the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire that populate the Black Sea region, whom they collectively called “the Laz”. The Society opened offices in Rize and Trabzon, distributed food in the region, founded an orphanage and a school for the “children of Laz” in Rize. The representatives of the Georgian charitable society who traveled through the Lazistan region and observed the terrible situation of the Laz people, appealed to the Georgian society for material and cultural aid to the desperate Laz in the occupied regions.

In addition to these activities in the occupied regions, A Georgian newspaper, Sakartvelo were calling for a campaign to emancipate the Ottoman “Georgians” and allow them return to their native lands, which were currently under Russian occupation. According to the newspaper, the Ottoman subjects from the northern Black Sea region, mostly the Laz, who had been working in the Russian empire were actually Georgians. These people, who were many thousands, were

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366 Correspondence exchanged between General Schvarts and General Tamashev, 2-3 December 1916, SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 32, l. 175-176.
367 Tiflisskii listok, 20 August 1916, p. 3.
368 Tiflisskii listok, 26 August 1916, p. 3.
369 SSSA, Fond 520, opis’ 1, delo 208, l. 65; Zakavkaszaia rech’, No. 215, 25 September 1916.
arrested and sent to northern provinces as aliens. The newspaper notes that the Ottoman Armenians were allowed to live free in the Russian Empire by a special order and this order should include the Ottoman Georgians. This would also benefit the occupied regions, which are abandoned by its inhabitants and made emphasis on a resolution of the convention at the Hague that obliged the occupying power to strive for the normalization of life in the occupied territories.  

Another Georgian newspaper *Sakhalkho pertseli* wrote about the necessity to train religious leaders for Muslims of Georgia. The article claimed that religious leaders were important especially among undeveloped peoples, to which Muslims in Georgia also belong. The religious leaders among them were educated in Turkey so they did not have anything Georgian in their education. These had to be educated in Georgia within the Georgian culture and language, this way they will serve the nation.  

All these attempts and articles in newspapers were apparently disturbing the Baku society, which claimed sole authority over Muslim refugees in the Caucasus. Sultanov wrote an article in *Açık Söz* where he noted that the Muslims in the Black Sea region were receiving aid through the Baku Society and he that the interest of the Georgian charitable society in the Muslim peoples stemmed from nationalist reasons rather than philanthropist feelings.  

**Conclusion**

Despite the fact that the Armenian relief organizations established a network of relief organizations with the financial support of the Russian imperial government, the Armenian historiography accused the Russians of duping the Armenians by promising them a “bright

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372 “Gruziny i musul’mane v Adzharii,” *Batumskie vesti*, no. 2137, 22.1.1917, p. 3.
future” while striving for an Armenia without the Armenians, and preferring Kurds and Turks to the Armenians in the occupied lands. The Muslim, or after the war the Turkish, interpretation was that Russians and the Armenians collaborated in massacring the Muslim population in the occupied areas.

Depending on the perspective of the analysis, all these allegations might be correct and the period of Russian occupation abounds with evidences to support them. The Russian authorities contemplated to and did utilize the Armenians in the occupation of Ottoman territories; there were Russian military and civilian authorities that would have been happy to see an Armenia without the Armenians and in some instances they had to employ Kurds or other Muslims in the administration of the occupied regions. Terrible massacres and all kinds of atrocities against the Muslim population took place in the course of the Russian occupation. Especially during the forward movement of Russian armies, when the control of the higher authorities was less strict, the Cossack troops and the Armenian voluntary units acted violently against the Muslim population in several occasions. The Ottoman archives have thousands of eyewitness- or victim-reports detailing the rapes, massacres; lootings and abuses that happened as well as the Russian reports reprimanding Cossack, Russian and Armenian soldiers. However, this was not a total repression policy. On the contrary, the Muslim population, especially the “Turks” in comparison to the “Kurds,” as the Russian authorities distinguished between them, enjoyed a relatively peaceful period under the Russian rule. Even the Muslims who suffered from the atrocities of Russian troops noted that the violence they had witnessed during the initial periods of the occupation was an anomaly and an unexpected

374 RGVIA, Fond 13227, opis’ 2, delo 186; RGVIA, Fond 2300, opis’ 1, delo 531 and others.
occurrence. The area had seen several Russian occupations and people were remembering the last occupation in 1877-1878 not with especially horrible memories. The witness reports about the atrocities usually include a note that “these Russians were not the Russians of the previous war”, or that “we didn’t flee because we thought that since the occupying force was one of the Great Powers it would behave accordingly and would guarantee the life and properties of the inhabitants.” The refugees that complain about the Cossacks and Armenians who were committing all kinds of horrible acts also mention that in some cases the Russian or Muslim soldiers and officers in the Russian Army would come to the rescue of the victims.

While massacres were the main aspect of the Muslim memories about the occupation period, another prominent part was the refugeedom, (muhacirlik). Afraid of the rapidly advancing Russian forces, and especially of the Armenian units, the majority of the Muslim population fled to the territories under the control of the Ottoman government. Almost all the narratives of the Muslims about the occupation period refer to sufferings in the course of this flight. People lost their homes, loved ones and had to endure terrible conditions. Despite the fact that there were still hundreds of thousand Muslims in the occupied territories, and many thousands had to return back in the course of Russian occupation, very few Muslim narratives of memories related to the Russian rule exist. After a two-year pause Muslim people only appear when the Armenian atrocities started in the aftermath of the Russian withdrawal at the end of 1917.

Even these scarce reminiscences of the occupation period are also convenient for the nationalist paradigm. In these memoirs Russian attitude towards Muslims is presented as a policy of hypnotization (uyuşturucu siyaseti) as the Russian rulers did not demand much from the

375 Ermeniler Tarafından, vol. 1, pp. 69, 73-74.
376 Ibid., pp. 21, 35, 52.
377 Ibid., p. 73, 76, 77, 103, 140.
Muslim society, allowed Muslim participation in the low levels of administrative structures and let the Muslims to open traditional schools and perform their religious duties – even forced them to do so.\(^{378}\) When the authors of these memoirs remembered about the refugee relief, it either became a tool of Russian hypnotization policy in order to prevent “Turkish” national awakening or became possible only because of the Muslim or “Turkish” officers and definitely thanks to the efforts of the nationalist representatives of the Baku Society. The emphasis was usually on the contribution of the Baku society to the upkeep of national awareness rather than the eradication of diseases or supply of provisions.\(^{379}\)

The Muslim people indeed enjoyed a certain degree of self-government according to the regulations of the temporary administration. There were Muslim representatives in the local municipal administrations, in locations with Muslim majority the mayor would be a Muslim, villages with Muslim population had Muslim heads, and there were Muslim members of the local courts. The Muslim officials in charge of villages or towns and imams kept the registries of the refugees who were receiving governmental aid.\(^{380}\) In all refugee commissions that the Russians set up in the occupied territories there was a Muslim representative.\(^{381}\) The Muslim mayors of Erzurum, Rize, and Erzincan were not accomplices of the Russian or Armenian schemes, but were trying to protect the life and rights of Muslim population in their localities within the Russian imperial structure and were appointed by the Russian imperial authorities. Christian mayors of some towns would request aid from Russian authorities on behalf of Muslim refugees. Apparently the situation of the Muslim refugees had nothing to envy. The material and


\(^{380}\) RGVIA, Fond 13239, opis’ 1, delo 57, ll. 1-39.

\(^{381}\) Proceedings of the Refugee Committee of Trabzon from 29 December 1916, RGVIA, Fond 1300, opis’ 4, delo 583, l. 97 reverse.
organizational power of Baku Society could not be compared with the Armenian organizations, which had been organizing relief efforts from the very beginning of the war, were having fund raising campaigns all over Russia, and getting international public support. Still however, this imperial organization was possible as long as the imperial governance of the Russian empire existed and this was clear to the organizers of the relief effort. Therefore, the Muslim relief organizers were also trying to solidify their authority over the Muslim refugees and construct, and protect the Muslim identity.
Chapter IV: Scholars and Empire: Archaeological studies in the occupied lands

Thus far, I have described the military, administrative and humanitarian components of occupation of the Ottoman territories by the Russian army, state and society. In this last chapter I will introduce another component of the Russian occupation — the scientific occupation of the Ottoman territories. Several Russian scientific institutions and scholars were involved in archeological, ethnographical, biological and geological expeditions in the occupied regions. Since there is more information about the archaeological expeditions, I will concentrate on the archaeological studies of Russian scholars in the occupied Ottoman territories. The government funded these expeditions, and the central and local military authorities gave permission to the scholars to work in the war zone, also supporting them materially. In almost all cases, however, the scientific institutions or scholars pressured the governmental and military authorities in order to realize these expeditions and the latter, believing in the benefits of these expeditions, supported and permitted them.

Since the archaeological expeditions cannot simply be regarded as an extension of military or administrative occupation of Ottoman lands, I have decided to use the term “scientific occupation”. The term that I chose to describe this last component of occupation was actually implied by the scholars involved in these expeditions themselves. Russian scholars referred to the works of German scholars in the Eastern Anatolia as a scientific invasion of territories that ought to be under the control of Russian scholars. Nevertheless, these academicians conducted their research without always considering the benefit of their studies for state policies. Even though they always praised the might of the Russian army and emphasized their service to it in their application letters for permission and support, they actually wanted to consolidate the
scientific possession of the occupied lands. Their occupation was definitely a scientific occupation, and in this respect the territory was not actually occupied from the Ottoman Empire but from the Western scientific communities, particularly the Germans.

The Russian intellectuals were more determined than the state about what should be done in the occupied territories. They were the representatives of a universal, Western or Russian civilization, and in the name of this higher civilization they had the right to conquer the occupied territories of the Ottoman Empire. While the state apparatus was still hesitant about the future of these regions, intellectuals were getting restless about this indeterminacy. The war gave scholars an opportunity to forestall the European powers in a region where Russian military power entered before that of the Western powers. Therefore the “scientific conquest,” they argued, ought to be launched without loosing any time. In this haste the scientific societies of Russian Empire organized, funded and dispatched several teams of scholars to the occupied regions. For the scholars in the region the annexation of these territories was not the ultimate aim. Of course, annexation would have been better for the sake of continuous research, but once the archaeological monuments were studied, registered, documented from all aspects, once the most important artifacts and manuscripts were transported to the Russian centers, once the scholars conducted ethnographic survey of all the different populations inhabiting the region was completed, and once the researchers described the resources of the region, the scientific conquest would be accomplished and the flag of Russian science would fly high in this region forever.

These approaches were the reflection of the educated society in the Russian Empire. According to the mindset of educated society, conducting research in the Orient was an inherent right of the Russian scholars as they were representing the higher European civilization. In this regard, there was not much difference between the Western European and Russian scholars in
justifying their inalienable rights to conduct studies in the East. Claiming status as a great power was very closely related with claiming rights over the remnants of ancient, classical or any past civilization. The knowledge as well as material possession of artifacts was part and parcel of European imperialism. Russian intellectuals regarded their state and society as more civilized and European than the Ottoman Empire and had accused the latter of destroying the social and physical composition of the territories that had to be studied for the sake of civilization.

In the course of the war the representation of civilization gained more importance. Russian scholars started to blame not only the Ottoman state but also Germany, which had been the model for intellectual development before the war for the Russian educated society. In line with British and French propaganda, the Russian elite joined in the accusation of Germans as a threat to European civilization and condemned them for their disregard of European civilization’s cultural artifacts. In that regard, Russian state and society was to set a better example as the representative of the real European civilization. Secondly, Russian intellectuals correctly interpreted that the German alliance with the Ottoman Empire would lead to the total German domination of Ottoman state and territory, eliminating all opportunities for the

382 In the words of the German ambassador to Ottoman Empire the scholar penetration into the Ottoman lands was just the beginning of the economic and political control over the Ottoman Empire. "The idea of Germany's gradual spiritual conquest [geistige Eroberung] of Asia Minor is thoroughly sound and capable of development. The interim intellectual goals already pursued, or to be pursued, by our schools, our doctors, and our archeologists could very well become, in the course of time the crystallization point onto which German economic and colonizing undertakings are grafted. The economic will follow the intellectual conquest as a natural result, and then these two diffused phases will naturally be followed by the third stage, that of political exploitation [Verwhertung] and consolidation of the cultural values we have created. But for the execution of such a farsighted policy, it is above all necessary that we know when to hold our tongues, that neither at home not anywhere abroad, to say nothing of among the Turks, do we allow it to be thought that our cultural efforts aim at anything else than the satisfaction of GErman scholarly ambitions and the friendly intention to bring new vitality to the penniless Turkish state coffers… Nothing is more disruptive to the careful and continuing envelopment of our operation that the deportment of German agitators who urge the cultural conquest of the Orient, and who are perpetually discussing the subject of Germany's putative future plans in Turkey in public meetings and in the press, and have recently manifested a tendency to come together in associations [like Anatolian Society] … If our Altertumsforschung has been increasingly successful, this is above all to be credited to the tactful and modest behavior of the scholars sent here who have extracted the most precious treasures from the Turkish soil for us, and also who know how to gradually put to rest the Turks' initial mistrust of their activity.” Cited in: Suzanne Marchand, in George W.
Russian scholars to conduct research in Ottoman territory. The scientific occupation of the Ottoman territories had already started in the second half of the nineteenth century and, like in the Scramble for Africa, all the European powers were active in this occupation. By the end of the century, however, Germany began to surpass its rivals. The German scientific studies in the late 1890s and the presence of German archaeologists in the Ottoman territories during the war were perceived as dire threats to Russian science. Therefore, if the Russian scholars did not act promptly they feared that they would lose the war against the German scholars at the Ottoman front. In the course of the occupation, however, Russian scholars had other rivals, and these rivals were the representatives of the nationalist intelligentsia of the Caucasus region.

**Scientific war at the Archaeological front that started before the Great War**

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the unprecedented expansion of imperial powers in the World. The role of scientific developments in that expansion was clear. The scientific revolution not only facilitated the political conquest of the world by European powers, but also created and fortified the belief in the superiority of European peoples over other nations. This sense of “European” or “Western Christian” superiority did not preclude the struggle for predominance among the European powers, and science and scientific institutions played important role in this nationalist competition among the European powers when they were sharing the planet.

Increasingly in the nineteenth century scientific and technological achievements, suitably certified by international acceptance or economic success, were regarded as cultural resources in a competition for prestige, respect and cultural power. In this regard, Gellner underlines the

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importance of science and scientific institutions in the development of nationalism and nation-state.\textsuperscript{383} Especially in Germany, the status of German science became a matter of national honor and the scholars were well aware and ready to promote this notion. According to German physiologist and physicist Hermann Helmholtz the promotion of science was crucial for the self-preservation of all states and “no nation which would be independent and influential can afford to be left behind in the race”.\textsuperscript{384} He described the scholars as “a sort of organized army” and any state that wanted to prosper should support not only the natural sciences and technology but also the social sciences and humanities”.\textsuperscript{385}

One of the founders of modern archaeology, Adolf Michaelis had categorized archaeology as one of the conquering sciences of his century. Archaeology served the European Great Powers’ ambitions for cultural importance (or even dominance) along the lines of cultural imperialism. Archaeology had been in the forefront of this imperialist and nationalist competition as the European powers were literally waging a war of acquisition of antiquities all over the world. Archaeologists were supposed to help museums in their country’s capital obtain the most significant antiquities in order to impress the worldwide public as well as to prove the cultural and/or scientific superiority of their own country; thus contributing to its honor and glory. Following the well-known colonialist “scramble for Africa”, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed a “scramble for antiquities.”\textsuperscript{386}

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The biblical heritage and the antiquities of the classical world were the main targets for all European powers. As the representatives of the most developed civilization, it was easy to claim that the European states were the actual heirs to the high civilizations of the past rather than the primitive, ignorant, underdeveloped inhabitants of the regions that hold the treasures of antiquities. As Trigger points out, “a view of prehistory which saw the Western European nations rather than the Arab peoples as the true heirs of the ancient civilizations of the Near East helped to justify Europe's colonial interventions in that region.”

The fact that so much of the archaeological heritage of the classical world was in Turkish and Muslim hands inevitably appeared deeply anomalous to the European mind. Noel Buxton, the liberal author and politician, and a member of the pro-Bulgarian Balkan committee, writing in 1906, avowed what many others probably continued to think for many decades afterwards:

What waste of wealth and loss of historic treasure remains in Turkey to redeem... Again, what the archeologists may gain when order arrives in Turkey Dr. Evans has shown by the wealth of his discoveries in Crete. Turkey is filled with neglected stores of similar riches, and history must remain in needless darkness while the gloom of the Sultan's palace is allowed to conceal the famous library of the Byzantine Emperors.

Therefore the lands of the Ottoman Empire hosting the many treasures of biblical history, classical civilizations as well as the ancient civilizations of the Near East became a war ground for all European states. During the initial stages of this war, France and Britain were the leading forces, but all other Western countries joined the war as their capacities allowed. Archaeologists, employed as colonial officers in imperialist settings, engaged in a form of nationalist

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archaeology. Consuls in the remote parts of the Ottoman Empire wrote reports on the archaeological treasures in their region, adventurists tried to allure state support for their excavations, museums in the capital cities pressured the ministries of foreign affairs to convince the Ottoman Sultan for more favorable conditions to transfer antiquities.  

The German entrance into this scramble of antiquities after the unification of Germany was forceful. The Istituto di Corrispondenza Archaeologica in Italy was transformed into a state institution, upon the suggestions of the German scientific community, and soon turned into German Archaeological Institute, and became an important tool of German influence abroad. The institute also opened a branch in Athens. As Suzan Marchand described, the German scientific community “had studiously cultivated a disinterested, anti-utilitarian reputation, and this aura of apolitical neutrality ideally suited for launching the practice that was later termed Kulturpolitik.” This policy was especially fruitful in the Ottoman Empire. The Sublime Porte was eager to find a Great Power which would not be directly interested in the dismemberment of its territories, and thus an “exclusively scientific Kulturpolitik complemented the diplomatic strategy of preserving the outward sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Ottoman regime, offering irreproachable evidence that Germany wished only to assist in Turkish modernization and international scientific progress.” The aims of the German scholars to promote the prestige of German science and the diplomatic interests of the German state converged on the advancement of German archaeology and acquisition of archaeological artifacts from the Ottoman Empire.

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While the European archaeologists and diplomats were sharing the antiquities on the Ottoman soil, the Ottoman state and the elite were contemplating appropriate responses to these activities. Being the pragmatic diplomat, Sultan Abdülhamid II, perceived the value of antiquities for the European powers and added them to his arsenal of useful leverages in his politics of balances. The Ottoman elite gradually incorporated artifacts of antiquities and sites of archaeological importance into the developing state ideology in the nineteenth and twentieth century, as Wendy Shaw argues. The possession of artifacts of classical civilizations and the awareness of their importance was increasing the legitimacy of the Ottoman state as a modern European state.\(^{392}\) This awareness, however, did not change the feeble position of the Ottoman state against the advances of European archaeologists. They found a way to circumvent new Ottoman regulations for excavations and for the transfer of antiquities either through diplomatic negotiations or through bribery.

**Russian state and scholars joins the scientific war: Russian Archaeological Society in Constantinople**

As an aspirant to be a participant of the European civilization it did not take long Russia to seek its place in this race. One step was claiming affinity with the classical civilization on Russian soil that had its roots in the Greek project of Catherine II. For a long time, at least until the early twentieth century, Russian archaeologists concentrated considerable effort on the study of ancient cites in the Black Sea area. These were the sites of Greek colonies along the coast. Implicitly, official support for classical archaeology in Old Russia stemmed from the ‘Third Rome’ ideology, according to which Muscovy regarded herself as the heir to a classical, largely

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Byzantine legacy and thus as the spiritual leader of the Orthodox world. Then came the efforts to compete with the European powers on the global scale when the antiquities war was concentrated on the Ottoman territories. Constantinople should be the privilege of Russian science as well as the past of Slavic and other Eastern Christian peoples that were living under the Ottoman rule, or recently established their independent status. The result was the opening of Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople. While declaring interest in and following a connection with the classical antiquities was an important attempt at claiming membership to the modern European civilization, the next natural step would be to open an archaeological institute abroad, which was an established practice of main European powers.

At the Eight Archaeological Congress at Moscow in 1890 several proposals about the location of Russian scientific institute were considered. The classicists favored Athens or Rome, as expected. The Russian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, N. I. Nelidov and Byzantinologist Fedor Ivanovich Uspenskii (1845-1928) proposed Constantinople as the most appropriate location. While the Russian Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IPPO), which was established in 1882 in Jerusalem, had involved in limited scientific studies in Palestine, the proposed institution would be the first scientific Russian establishment abroad. The activities of IPPO in Palestine were very limited compared to the European archaeologists. The realm of classical archaeological studies in Greece and Italy had been well occupied by the European states. Moreover, the German state and archaeologists were increasing their presence in the Ottoman territories, which was a grave concern for the Russian state. Therefore the location of first Russian scientific institution abroad would be decided according to the scientific and

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national interests of Russia. The minister of foreign Affairs Nikolai Karlovich Girs, and the president of the Moscow Archaeological society Graf P. S. Uvarov also supported the establishment of institute in Constantinople. It took four more years to convince the state and society about the appropriateness of Constantinople, despite the suspicions that it would be perceived as a tool of propaganda instead of a scientific institute.\footnote{Asen Kirin “Eastern European Nations, Western Culture and the Classical Tradition,” in Susan A. Stephens and Phiroze Vasunia (eds.), \textit{Classics and National Cultures} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 141-162, here at p. 151.} Tsar Alexander III (1881-1894) approved the statute of the institution in May 1894 and the institute was inaugurated on March 10, 1895 with a ceremony that was supposed to coincide with the fiftieth birthday of the tsar, Alexander III, who had passed away a few months ago.

As expected, the Ottoman government was not very much enthusiastic about having a Russian archaeological institute in its capital, considering the political implications of this institute. However, it did not have much say on the issue as the subsequent developments showed. The Ottoman government advised the Russian embassy to refrain from (\textit{sarf-i nazaretmek}) the establishment of a special institute for the study of antiquities in the Ottoman realm (\textit{Memalik-i Şahane}), which would be a branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and attached to the Russian embassy. However, to the dismay of the Sublime Porte, the Russian ambassador was not much interested in the opinion of the Ottoman government.\footnote{BOA, Sadaret Hususi Maruzat Evraki (Y.A.HUS), 307/84, 27 Safer 1312 [30 August 1894].}

As Nelidov stated during the opening ceremony of the institute, however, the issue was not between the Russian and Ottoman governments. It was about the competition of influence among the European powers. Explaining the reason that an ambassador led the campaign to open a scientific institution Nelidov said “it [was] important for [Russia] to be at a leading position in the field of Byzantinology. Any conquest that a nation accomplishes in the sphere of global
knowledge increases the weight and importance of a state. As the representatives of state abroad we have to expand opportunities for the material and spiritual might of the country in the international arena.”

Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople (RAIK) productively functioned from 1895 until it had to be closed with the start of the First World War. It became an important educational institute for Russian Byzantinologists, and contributed a lot to elevate the status of Russian scholars in the field of Byzntinology. In its efforts to conquer the former territories of the Byzantine Empire in the name of Russian science RAIK asked for and received cooperation of Russian diplomatic representatives, and Orthodox clergy in the Ottoman Empire. Right after its establishment the institute sent letters to all Russian consuls in the Ottoman territory asking for information about important monuments in the regions under their responsibility, especially about those monuments, which had not been studied by foreign scholars. The institute sent similar requests to the Orthodox clerics within the Ottoman Empire through the patriarchate at Constantinople. Processing the gathered information, the institute started to organize scientific expeditions within the Ottoman Empire a year after its establishment.

As the Ottoman state realized that it was beyond its power to stop the establishment of this institute, it did not create a diplomatic crisis out of this issue. The next best thing it could do was to supervise the travels and surveys of the members of the institute and to pretend to have control through the issuance of permissions for travel, study and excavation, through the imposition of antiquities law, and through special exclusions in the implementation of this law as

397 Izvestiia russkogo arkheologicheskogo instituta v Konstantinopole (IRAIK), vol. I (Odessa: 1896), pp. 6-8.
a special gesture of the Sultan. An Ottoman official always supervised the excavations of the RAIK and the Ottoman central government warned the local authorities to be especially alert to any suspicious acts that the archaeologists, Russian consuls and other assisting staff might engage in. Beyond giving permissions, supervising the conformity of excavations to the antiquity law and spying about the suspicious acts of the members of the study teams, the Ottoman government also rewarded the head of the RAIK for his service to the Ottoman state. This was another way of displaying authority, which was usual at the times of Sultan Abdülhamid II.

Other than the monuments of Byzantine history, the RAIK was interested in the Slavic culture and history and undertook scientific studies and expeditions in the Slavic countries as well as at the sites of Slavic history and culture within the Ottoman Empire. RAIK initiated many excavations in the Balkans and mostly interested in the pre-classical cultures as well as the Byzantine history. This was not only a scientific but also a political choice. The director of RAIK wanted to have an impact on the cultural formation of the new Slavic states. This preference increased the suspicions of the Ottoman state, however, all the Sublime Porte could do was supervise the activities of the archaeologists and make sure that they did not foment any political disturbances in the Balkans.

RAIK also sent a delegation of scholars to Palestine, as it was also a contested territory among the European scientific communities. Even though IPPO had handled Palestine studies and publicized archaeological undertakings in its publications, RAIK could not remain

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400 BOA, Irade Hususi (I.Hus), 57/1315/Ca004, 01/Ca/1315 [28 September 1897].
401 BOA, Dahiliye Mektubi Kalem (DH. MKT), 2128/80, 20/C /1316 [5 November 1898].
402 BOA, Dahiliye Mektubi Kalem (DH. MKT), 2563/22, 19/Ş /1319 [1 December 1901].
403 BOA, Irade Taltifat (I..Tal), 121/1315/Ca-066, 19/Ca/1315 [16 October 1897].
indifferent to Palestine. In November 1896 RAIK organized a preliminary visit to Palestine. The report in the official publication of RAIK described Palestine as “a battle scene (boevoi punkt) on which French, English, American and Greeks [were] all fervently occupied with archaeological research.” According to that report “archaeology became a means to justify political and religious preferences in Palestine”. The report reminded the Russian state and scientific community that all these European nations were undertaking vigorous archaeological excavations and acquiring land for archaeological purposes. Russian scientific community should not lag behind.\textsuperscript{405} Moreover, having a strong presence in Palestine would mean to have an access to the archaeologically significant locations in wider Syria, where Russian scholars also involved in the scramble of antiquities. One such instance was about the Palmyra inscriptions. Famous Russian scholar Semen Semenovich Abamelek-Lazarev (1857-1916) found an inscription in Aramaic and Ancient Greek in the Palmyra ruins in 1882. The Russian scientific community regarded this as “Russian” possession and thus it had to be added to the Russian Museum.\textsuperscript{406} The Russian scholars discussed the issue in 1899 and the head of the Russian Archeological Institute, Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich asked the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, Zinoviev to ask the Sultan to grant this artifact to the Russian museum.\textsuperscript{407} The Sultan accepted this request and bestowed the coveted item as well as several other artifacts from Palmyra ruins to the Russians.\textsuperscript{408}

RAIK continued its activities until the abruption of relations between the Ottoman and Russian states in 1914. As its director Uspenskii claimed in a memorandum to the Soviet government in October 1921:

\textsuperscript{405} \textit{IRAIK}, vol. II, pp. 32-34.
\textsuperscript{407} \textit{IRAIK}, vol. 13, p. 363.
\textsuperscript{408} BOA, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası (BEO), 1731/129825, 27 Cemaziyelahır 1319 (Hicrî) [10 October 1901].
The two establishments [the Palestinian Society and the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople] have one thing in common, something very few people realize here: both the Palestinian Society and the institute in Constantinople had made it possible for us to compete with Western powers in such strategic places like Jerusalem and Constantinople. This competition had been going on for more than 25 years and it was—one could safely say—to Russia's benefit.\footnote{Igor P. Medvedev, “The Saint-Petersburg-based Project,” p. 98.}

Despite the institute had to leave its headquarters in Istanbul, it continued to function and stayed ready to be deployed back to Constantinople if the Russian military forces would occupy the city. Eventually the course of the war provided the institute with new opportunities and RAIK acted immediately to seize the moment, as I will describe later in this chapter.

**Nikolai Marr and the Russian science in Eastern Anatolia**

Another area that the Russian scientific community designated as the area of Russian influence was Eastern Anatolia. If RAIK and its director Uspenskii carried the Russian scientific flag in the former Byzantium territory, Nikolai Marr led the Russian scientific forces in the Eastern Anatolia both before and during the war.

Nikolai Marr (1864-1934) was one of the most prominent members of the Russian Orientologist tradition, which Vera Tolz describes as the Rozen School. Tolz argues that the Rozen School developed a peculiar Orientalist tradition in Russia. She claims that the “members of the Rozen School, above all, insisted that the knowledge that academics like themselves produced was superior to other types of knowledge about the ‘Orient’: more able to transcend stereotypes and prejudices based on beliefs in profound differences between East and West, which permeated the works of anti-Islamic missionaries, imperial administrators, or travelers in
the 'East’.” Since Russia was never regarded as a part of the Western European civilization, being territorially and culturally between the East and the West justified a special role for the Russian Orientologists. These orientologists believed that the Russian culture was an outcome of the interaction between Slav and non-slav national cultures. Thus, the Russian imperial orientologists deemed it possible to propagate imperial Russian hegemony, promote the development of Oriental cultures and nations and criticize the European imperialism all at the same time.

In this regard, Nikolai Marr’s studies on the literary and archaeological monuments of ancient Georgia and Armenia, which gave birth to his Japhetic theory, was an outcome of this peculiar approach of Russian orientalism. Marr first concentrated on the affinities of Georgian and Armenian languages than take this further to relate Caucasian languages with Semitic and indigenous European languages. While elevating the status of Caucasian languages, he never became a proponent of particular national movements and in fact regarded them as impediments for the development of national cultures. Because he believed that the roots of all Caucasian cultures were same and the political unity provided by the Russian empire gave them the opportunity to develop together. Although he criticized the Russian imperial policies in the Caucasus he deemed the presence of Russian rule a necessity for the development of Japhetic unity he was seeking for.

For the proof of his theories, Marr was interested in not only the unwritten tongues of the Caucasus, but also in the languages of ancient civilizations that affected the Caucasus and

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410 Vera Tolz, “Imperial Scholars and Minority Nationalisms in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Spring 2009), pp. 261–290.
411 Vera Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), the quotation is from p. 84.
provided the links with the other ancient civilizations of the world. Although he was not an archaeologist by training, he was involved in expansive archaeological studies in the Caucasus as well as in the Ottoman territories. Marr regarded this region crucial for his theory. From 1891 until the beginning of World War I and then during the war he headed the excavations at Ani and his student and assistant at Ani excavations, Iosif Orbeli, started to work at Van in 1911.\footnote{K. N. Iuzbashian, \textit{Akademik I. A. Orbeli} (Moscow, 1964).} I. A. Orbeli (1887-1961) conducted research at the fortress of Van and Toprakkale. This preliminary survey of Orbeli and Boris Vladimirovich Farmakovskii’s (1870-1928) report on “Stone friezes with carved figures from Van” in 1914, motivated Marr to propose the establishment of a special commission for research and excavations at Toprakkale and Van under the supervision of the Oriental Department of the Russian Academy of Sciences.\footnote{N. Ia. Marr, I. Orbeli, \textit{Arkheologicheskaia ekspeditsiia 1916 goda v Van: Raskopki dvukh nish na Vanskoii skale i nadpisi Sardura vtorogo iz raskopok zapadnoi nishi}, (Peterburg: Akademicheskaia tipographiia, 1922), p. 1.}

However, Marr was not satisfied with the extent of Russian scientific presence in the region. In a speech he gave in 1917 at the opening ceremony of the Caucasian Historical Institute, He accused the former tsarist regime of not providing necessary support for scientific studies in the Caucasus and in its environs whereas the European scholars received popular and governmental support for their works in this region. He was especially incensed about the German scientific expeditions, which he would refer as “scientific offensive” on a region that he regarded as a part of the Russian scientific turf.\footnote{N. Ia. Marr, “Zapiska akademika N. Ia. Marra o Kavkazkom Istoriko-Arkheologicheskom Institute,” \textit{Izvestiia Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk}, serial 6, vol. XI, no. 13, pp. 962-995, here at p. 972.} He claimed:

\ldots in the course of the nineteenth century Western Europeans, first the English and French, and then the Germans tried to pull away (otorvat’) the regions of ancient oriental cultures, such as Van, from Russian scientific dominion. These regions are in many respects close to us and the Russian scholars are theoretically better equipped to conduct research there. However, while the
German scholars are encroaching on to the Caucasus and incorporating it into the scope of their expeditions we [Russians] are carelessly sleeping.\textsuperscript{416}

The war opened up new opportunities for the Russian scholars to complete the scientific conquest they have been seeking to materialize. In this effort they easily persuaded the Russian state and military authorities in the necessity of archaeological expeditions. One more concern of the Russian military and governmental authorities proved to be useful for the Russian scholars, and this was about the protection of historical and cultural monuments. The protection of historical and cultural monuments was something that the authorities cared about at least on paper, and this concern eased the scientific conquest plans of the scholars.

**Protection of historical monuments**

The Russian government had a stake in the conduct of archaeological expeditions, and this was related with the protection of cultural monuments, which had become a part of the international law as a result of the Hague conferences. The Tsar, personally, and the Russian state as an institution had initiated and championed the disarmament negotiations at the Hague in the decades right before the war. Although the sincerity of the Russian state was much disputed\textsuperscript{417} then and after, it was still the call of the Russian tsar that made the Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907 possible.\textsuperscript{418} The conferences did not stop the armament race among the Great Powers nor it prevented WWI and its horrible civilian and military casualties. Still however, the signatories had agreed on many important regulations for the conduct of war including the ones

\textsuperscript{417} The Russian plenipotentiary at the Second Hague Conference, Charykov wrote in his memoirs that the Tsar told him directly that his only concern for the conference was limiting the armament of Austria-Hungary. See N. V. Tcharykow, \textit{Glimpses of High Politics} (London, 1931), p. 257.
about the protection of private property and monuments of historical and religious importance. Apparently these regulations could not protect many monuments in the course of the war, but they provided a strong argument for the claims and accusations in the name of civilization. It was logical that the Russian state would at least keep its appearance as the bearer of the banner of civilization. Protection of historical monuments became a part of the Russian imperial ideology as it was practiced at the Caucasian and to certain extent at the German and Austrian fronts. Providing protection for religious, historical and cultural monuments empowered and legitimated the war effort of the Russian empire for the Russian intellectuals and for the Russian military and civilian officials.

In the course of war the historical and cultural monuments in occupied regions were always among the main targets for the occupying forces. The victorious side might destroy buildings of political or religious importance as a sign of its victory and conquest, or perform a conversion of these buildings to serve the new political and religious power. Movable and immovable possessions were regarded as the rightly acquired spoils of the war. In Europe awareness of the destructive impact of war on cultural heritage gradually grow during the wars of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and treaties that ended the devastating wars such as the Thirty Years War included some clauses concerning the “restitution of looted cultural and other private property”. Rapaciousness of various armies during Napoleonic campaigns increased this consciousness but the first written codification of cultural protection came from the United States in the “1863 Instruction for the Government of Armies of US in the Field, during the

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American Civil War,” and it was known as the Lieber Code as Francis Lieber drafted it. The first international codifications of wartime protection for cultural property were included in the Declaration of Brussels in 1874 and later in the Oxford Code of 1880 and urged the belligerents to deliberately spare the historical, cultural, buildings and hospitals during the war. However, these regulations did not become part of international treaties. The Hague conferences of 1899 and 1907 were the culminations of the consciousness to protect cultural heritage. The Laws and Customs of War formulated and agreed on during these two conventions considered to be Customary International Law, “binding on all states and persons, whether or not they are formal signatories of these conventions.”

In retrospect we know that many historical, religious and cultural monuments suffered in the course of WWI. According to Alan Kramer this destruction was not a random impact of the war, but in fact served a purpose in the age of total war. Building on Isabel Hull’s analysis of the military culture of Germany that sought the absolute destruction of the enemy, he compared the acts of other belligerents and pointed out that the destruction of cultural monuments was a deliberate war policy for Austro-Hungarian, Italian, Russian, and Ottoman armies. This understanding was not lost to the parties involved in the conflict and the Allied countries accused German armies of deliberately targeting cultural properties, the most famous of which was the Library of Louvain. This accusation can also be interpreted as a reflection of the awareness of the value of historical and cultural monuments that should be under the protection of the international law, and the German state felt the urge to respond to these accusations by establishing a special unit to provide protection for these monuments in the occupied territories.

For the specialized knowledge concerning cultural heritage objects, the German military authorities turned to the academic institutions, which were already willing to provide assistance. This would be a precedent and in the following the war the Nazis and later the Soviets and the US employed scholars and art professionals in their organizations to protect or to acquire cultural property.423

The name of this organization was *Kunstschutz* — art protection. It was composed of art historians, scholars, and museum professionals who were determined to preserve the art treasures of Europe. Paul Clemen, an important art historian and archeologist, led the organization. *Kunstschutz* worked along with the German army in the Western as well as in the Eastern and Ottoman fronts. The organization cataloged and registered art monuments and provided directions for the army to prevent unnecessary damage to monuments in the zone of battles. As a result Clemen edited *Kunstschutz in Kriege* and, four years later, the two richly illustrated volumes of *Belgische Kunstdenkmal.*424 Clemen presented the activities of the organization as a response to charges that the Germans had destroyed Reims and Louvain. “This disinterested gesture”, Clemen told the Civil Cabinet, “would show the rest of the world how German scholarship, free from all chauvinism, does its all to defend art monuments in enemy territory.”425 The work of the organization at the Ottoman front went beyond the aims of protection and was close to the efforts of Russian scholars, which was to conquer in the name of

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German science. The Ottoman authorities became wary of these efforts and tried to control and supervise their works.

Another belligerent that was concerned about the protection of monuments was Russia. On the one hand, the Russian government had the responsibility to uphold the ideals that it had represented during the organization of the Hague conventions that set the laws for the conduct of war. On the other hand, being in war with Germany which was accused of being the destructor of civilization was also ideologically beneficial for the war propaganda, and organizing the protection of cultural monuments against these barbaric enemies was logical. The educated society was more than ready to aid the government and the army in this effort. TA. A.

Shakhmatov wrote to the president of the Imperial Academy of Sciences on July 21, 1914, upon the German proclamation of war, and requested the transfer of archives, libraries, and museums, which would soon be in the battle zone to safer places. The president of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Konstantin Konstantinovich, asked his cousin, Nikolai Nikolaevich, the commander in chief of the Russian armies, to take all the measures to protect educational institutions and all historical monuments in the occupied Galicia at the beginning of November 1914. The Commander-in-chief responded positively to this request and accepted the assistance of the Academy in this effort.

Shakhmatov delivered his report on the protection of monuments in the war zone at a special convention at the Academy of Sciences on November 29, 1914. The academy established a special commission for the further development of this task and nine members of the academy

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428 RGVIA, Fond 2005, opis’ 1, delo 71, l. 4.
joined the commission: A. A. Shakhmatov, A. S. Latso-Danilevskii, N. P. Kondakov, F. I. Uspenskii, V. M. Istrin and others. Also the academy decided to send two plenipotentiaries to two fronts to organize the protection of monuments at the front. E. F. Shmurlo was the representative at the Western front, who, with the permission and cooperation of the commanders at the front evacuated monuments from Lvov in 1915. The Academy was also planning to undertake the evacuation of monuments from the Caucasus as the initial tide was against the Russian army at the Caucasian front. The authorities at the Caucasus were ready to order the evacuation of Tiflis in the case of an Ottoman breakthrough at front and the Academy was concerned about the cultural treasures of the Caucasus. The president of the academy contacted the commander-in-chief Nikolai Nikolaevich to get permission to send F. I. Uspenskii for the organization of this transfer and soon the permission for transfer of cultural properties was granted.

However, the tide of the war at the Caucasian front rapidly changed in the favor of the Russian army. As I described in the first chapter contrary to the expectations in the early months of the war, the Russian Army did not need to organize a well-ordered retreat until a more favorable time to recover the lost territories, and it penetrated into the Ottoman territory. Moreover, the allied forces were forcing the Straits and the fall of Constantinople seemed inevitable by the spring of 1915. Therefore, the Academy had to change its plans of evacuation, and get ready for the conquest.

In March 1915, the president of the Academy wrote to the Commander-in-Chief again. First he expressed his gratitude for the cooperation of military authorities in the protection of historical monuments, in the activities of the delegate of the Academy of Sciences, Shmurlo.

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Then he asked for the expansion of the territory under Shmurlo’s responsibility in the occupied regions. His second request was about the pending occupation of Constantinople, Tsargrad. The Academy of Sciences regarded Tsargrad as its own turf because of the Russian Archaeological Institute, and was concerned about the fate of the historical monuments that the Russian scholars should take care of. In that case, the president of the Academy asked for the expedited dispatch of the director of the Russian Archaeological Institute, F. I. Uspenskii to the Russian Army, which would enter Constantinople and supervise the protection of historical monuments.\textsuperscript{430}

The conquest of Constantinople had been a romantic ideal of Russian statesmen and a sweet topic for public discussion as well as discussions at the Duma. However, when the issue was seriously discussed, the statesmen balked from the idea taking into account both physical difficulties of the task as well as the international reaction. However, the WWI seemed to deliver the grand pris on a golden plate to the Russian Empire. As I discussed in Chapter II, Russian diplomats tried to secure the Russian rule over Constantinople. Utopian projects about the Russian transformation of the city were hot topics in the Russian society in the spring of 1915. F. I. Uspenskii, the director of the then defunct Russian Archaeological Institute also joined the discussion about the future of the city, but his project was not about radical transformation of Constantinople into a Russian city. His understanding of the city and its Christian population was apparently more grounded than that of the utopian thinkers, as he had spent a good part of his life in Constantinople. According to Uspenskii, the Russian Church should not try to incorporate the Greek Church and should not try to assert ascendancy over the authority of the Greek patriarchate. The Greek Church and the Greek people developed a distinct religious, social and political culture since the conquest of the city in 1453; therefore, it would not be possible to assure their allegiance to Russian state and church in a short period of time. He was more

\textsuperscript{430} RGVIA, Fond 2005, opis’ 1, delo 71, l. 26.
interested in the remains of the Byzantium in the city and thought that the Russian state should control these monuments, starting with the most important one of them, Hagia Sophia.\textsuperscript{431}

The Commander-in-chief’s response did not share the conqueror’s appetite manifested in the letter of the president of the Academy of Sciences. He informed his cousin that the Russian Army did not yet occupy a large territory at the Caucasian Front and there was not much material of scientific interest in these regions. The occupation of Constantinople was not on the horizon; therefore the appointment of Uspenskii would be unnecessary and premature.\textsuperscript{432} Even this letter did not abate the enthusiasm of the Academy. Konstantin agreed to hold up the appointment of Uspenskii until the time when the commander in chief would regard appropriate. He wrote “When your highness deem it appropriate you can order the appointment of Uspenskii to Tsarigrad. In case of your consent F I. Uspenskii would always be ready to go to Tsarigrad upon your orders.”\textsuperscript{433}

While lofty plans of reconquering Constantinople in the name of Russian science in order to protect its historical monuments had to wait, the territories under the occupation of the Russian forces were expanding and the Russian scientific community was ready to step in. The Russian Academy already established a commission for the preservation of antiquities and not unexpectedly N. Ia. Marr headed the section of this commission regarding the Caucasian Front. Marr described the detrimental conditions of the region for archaeological artifacts and stressed the necessity of the conservation of cultural monuments at a conference of the Oriental Department of the Russian Academy of Sciences, in the summer of 1915. Upon the resolutions of this conference S. V. Ter-Avetisyan, a professor from the Department of Archaeology of the

\textsuperscript{432} RGVIA, Fond 2005, opis’ 1, delo 71, l. 27-28.
\textsuperscript{433} RGVIA, Fond 2005, opis’ 1, delo 71, l. 34.
Caucasian Museum in Tiflis, asked for the permission of the Viceroy at the Caucasus for a preliminary survey at the behest of the Russian Academy of Sciences.434

Archaeological and Ethnographical Expeditions to the region of Van

The results of the Ter-Avetisian expedition were alarming beyond the worries of the concerned parties. He described the extent of the damage that the historical monuments suffered due to all the plunders, looting, destruction, and desecration that civilian population and the military personnel had committed435. Therefore, after Ter-Avetisian published and presented the results of his preliminary survey the Russian scientific community decided to increase its efforts to protect the cultural and historical monuments in the occupied regions of the Ottoman Empire and to register and “conquer” them in the name of Russian culture. Several scientific societies mobilized in the spring of 1916 to take part in this scientific conquest. Russian Academy of Sciences, Archaeological Society of Moscow, Imperial Archaeological Society, The Russian Imperial Museum, Caucasian Museum, and The Society for the Protection of Historical Monuments organized several expeditions in the occupied regions.

At the beginning of March 1916, Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich, the president of the Archaeological Society of Moscow, and Grafina Uvarova, the president of the Imperial Archaeological Society, wrote letters to the Viceroy at the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich requesting the preparations of necessary regulations for the preservation of the archaeological treasures in the occupied regions. In his letter Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich also inquired about the possibility of the attachment of archaeologists to the staffs of the

Caucasian armies.\textsuperscript{436} The response of the Viceroy, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich revealed the fact that, the problem of the preservation of the cultural and historical monuments at the Caucasian Front had also constituted a matter of concern for the military authorities. The Viceroy informed Georgii Mikhailovich that he had already instructed the senior commanders at the front to take necessary measures for the preservation of the historical monuments in their respective territories. Furthermore, the Viceroy stated that, the archaeologists may conduct research in the region with special permission, but they cannot be attached to the staffs of the armies due to the peculiar conditions of war.\textsuperscript{437}

The Russian scientific society was yearning for such an answer. Already at the first news of successful movement of Russian forces at the Caucasian front and at the time of expected fall of Constantinople during the Dardanelles campaign of the Allies, the Russian scientific community pestered the military authorities to get permission for scientific expeditions in the occupied regions. The long-awaited response came in the spring of 1916, and the Russian scientific community set on to prepare their expedition projects. On March 10, 1916 during a conference at the Oriental Department of Russian Academy of Sciences the director of the Commission for the Preservation of the Antiquities at the Caucasian Front, Nikolai Marr, suggested the renewal of a systematic study in the region.\textsuperscript{438} The Russian Archeological Society convened to discuss the preparations for the systematic study. The now defunct RAIK and its director had already been prepared to undertake an expedition in the occupied Ottoman territories and thus the first expedition plan was about the Byzantium heritage in and around the city of Trabzon, which was actually the Russian army had not yet occupied.

\textsuperscript{436} RGIA, F.530, opis’ 1, delo 63, ll. 2-2 reverse.
\textsuperscript{437} Nikolai Nikolaevich to Georgii Mikhailovich, 4 March 1916, RGIA, Fond 530, opis’ 1, delo 63, l. 2.
\textsuperscript{438} Marr, \textit{Arkheologicheskaia ekspeditsia}, p. 2.
At the same meeting the members of the Russian Archeological Society also acknowledged the expediency of organizing an expedition to Van, which Marr had already proposed in 1914\textsuperscript{439}, and conferred the task of organizing an expedition in the Van region to I. A. Orbeli. Marr found Orbeli competent enough to accomplish such an explorative study in a region where he had worked before. Marr, as the director of the protection commission would travel along the northern shores of the Lake Van and visit the locations that Ter-Avetisian could not go. Marr intended to visit Van on his way back to Tiflis, just in order to familiarize with the results of the Orbeli expedition, which would have been ended by then.\textsuperscript{440}

When the Russian Archaeological Society was preparing the Van archaeological expedition other scientific institutions also expressed their desire to be a part of it. The vice president of Imperial Academy of Sciences, P. V. Nikitin, told to the secretary of the Russian Archaeological Society, Farmakovskii that the Academy of Sciences found it expedient to send its own personnel together with the expedition of Russian Archaeological Society.\textsuperscript{441} The Russian Imperial Museum asked to take part in the expedition and expand it with scholars from its Ethnographical Department. As the expedition staff and scope was expanding Nikolai Marr decided to take the lead. Thus, the final proposal included a large team of Russian scholars and aimed to accomplish ambitious goals in the Van province and its environs.

After the Russian scientific institutions joined their “armies” it was time to ask the approval of the commander in chief of all-Russian forces, the Tsar. The president of the Russian Imperial Museum, Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich presented the proposal to the Tsar in person on April 16, 1916:

\textsuperscript{439} RGIA, Fond 530, opis’ 1, delo 63, l. 7 reverse.
\textsuperscript{441} 28 March 1916, RGIA, Fond 530, opis’ 1, delo 63, ll. 3-3 reverse.
The territory of Van Kingdom is adjacent and connected to our Caucasian domains. These territories house countless monuments and the Van kingdom was inseparably connected to Transcaucasia in the past. The war had detrimental effect especially on historical monuments. The Turks had looted many monasteries which had invaluable manuscripts and destroyed many temples. Besides, antiquarians freely roam the region and they are not much less harmful than the Turks for the scientific studies we are planning to conduct.

Moreover, the war adversely affected the peoples in the region. Even though many people who had fled are now coming back, the new political, social and economic conditions will definitely alter the ethnographical composition of the region. These dire conditions urged the Russian scientific community to initiate scientific studies in the occupied regions immediately. This endeavor will be the first step of the penetration of Russian culture in the new regions [of the Russian Empire].

The Russian archaeological society and the Russian Museum of Alexander III can organize the archaeological and ethnographical parts of a combined expedition together. Since the expedition has great significance for Russian cultural work and for the Russian state and since the venue of the expedition is in close proximity to the war zone, I, as the head of the Russian Imperial Museum regard it my obligation to present it to your approval.

The Tsar enthusiastically supported the project. He signed the presented document and jotted “I approve it wholeheartedly. We have to hurry. (Vpolne odobriauiu. Nuzhno toropit’sia.)”

After obtaining the highest approval, Georgii Mikhailovich presented the project to the Viceroy at the Caucasus. In the meanwhile the Viceroy, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, also showed interest in the cultural monuments in the occupied territories of Ottoman and Iranian states. On March 17, 1916 the Viceroy promulgated a special order considering the protection of

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442 RGIA, F.530, opis’ 1, d. 63, ll. 9-9reverse.
historical and cultural monuments and regulating the prospective work of Russian scholars. The order served as the main official document founding the basis of all scientific studies in the region. By the order the churches, mosques, monasteries, cemeteries, archives, libraries, museums with all contents especially historical manuscripts and books, all the inscriptions and decorations on steles, rocks and hills, were all claimed to be state property and declared to be under the protection of the Russian state. According to this order all the explorative studies would be conducted with the special permission of the Commander-in-Chief (the Viceroy) and under the supervision of local commanders.\textsuperscript{443} When in Northern Persia military personnel found a large stele with cuneiform scripts in the ruins from the Urartu period in the Ushnu Valley, the Viceroy immediately ordered its transportation to Tiflis in order to prevent that it ended up in Berlin, as the Germans had already attempted to do that before the war started.\textsuperscript{444}

This rivalry against the German science was the reason for hurry that motivated the Russian scientific community and convinced the Tsar and the Viceroy about the urgency of the matter. The occupied regions were not securely annexed to the Russian Empire yet, however, the Russian scholars could and should secure its scientific conquest when they had the opportunity to do so. Thus, Georgii Mikhailovich requested the unconditional support of the Viceroy:

There is no doubt that only the Russian science is prepared to study such questions the answer to which lay in the newly occupied regions. Meanwhile, all previous attempts to that effect had met the opposition of the Turkish government and the areas — became especially in the late 1890s — a sphere of interest for the German scientific enterprise. Now it is desirable for the Russian cultural forces to penetrate into this new region along with our exalted Caucasian army by well-prepared scientific expeditions.

\textsuperscript{443} Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg (Archiv Akademii Nauk, hereafter cited as AAN), F. 169, opis’ 1, delo 4, l. 1, “Prikaz No.117, Glavnokomanduiushhego Kavkazskoi Armiei” (Tiflis, 17 March 1916).
\textsuperscript{444} RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 648, ll 1-4, 15 April 1916.
On April 16, I had the good fortune to present a report on the joint expedition to the attention of His Imperial Highness and he noted with his own hands that he approved the project wholeheartedly and we had to hurry to realize it. He had ordered his cabinet to provide the necessary funds for the expedition. As I know your interest and support for science I request your assistance for the realization of these expeditions.445

The viceroy ordered his assistant in civilian affairs, General Bolkhovitinov, to provide all necessary assistance for the proposed expeditions on May 23, 1916. After receiving the enthusiastic support of the Tsar and the permission of the Viceroy for archaeological studies in the occupied regions the two scientific teams arrived in Tiflis on 17 June 1916. The first team was the archaeological team of Marr, and consisted of Marr, Orbeli, P. E. Knyagintskii, and the photographer, A. M. Vruir. The second team, which aimed at conducting an ethnographical expedition, consisted of the ethnographer and anthropologist A. A. Miller, A. G. Aleni and I. P. Makinyants.446

The archaeological expedition managed to start early enough to take advantage of the aftermath of the war; that is, to travel with military protection and aid.447 In Van Marr and his staff employed military personnel for the excavations. The main site of his research was Toprakkale, where German, French and English travelers and archaeologists had conducted excavations. Marr claimed that the unprofessional excavations of the Europeans had spoiled these sites, which should be exclusively under the control of Russian scholars. The Marr-Orbeli

445 Letter from Georgii Mikhailovich to Nikolai Nikolaevich, 23 April 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 335, ll. 118-120.
446 “Nauchnye Ekspeditsii”, Kavkazskoe slovo, 4 June 1916, p. 3.
team unearthed significant artifacts among which a large cuneiform stele from the time of King Sardur II was the most important.\textsuperscript{448}

The ethnographical expedition, however, could not be accomplished as it was planned. Members of that expedition were either employed at the military institutions in Tiflis to translate documents from local languages or were charged with works related to the activities of the Caucasian Museum there.\textsuperscript{449} Still, however, the director of the Russian Museum, Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich reported the success of the two expeditions to the Viceroy, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, upon the return of the two expeditionary teams to Petrograd. Georgii Mikhailovich knew that it was only the beginning of future consolidation of the scientific conquest; therefore, it was expedient to keep good relations with the political and military authorities. Georgii Mikhailovich wrote to Nikolai Nikolaevich that the two surveys gave encouraging results for “the eventual penetration of Russian culture to the occupied territories which could only be achieved by your benevolent patronage.”\textsuperscript{450}

Another unaccomplished ethnographical survey was Pavel Aleksandrovich Falev’s (1888-1922) visit to the occupied territories. In coordination with the Marr expedition, Falev, an expert on Turkish language, intended to conduct an ethnographical and linguistic survey among the Muslim population of the occupied territories of Eastern Anatolia. On his way to Bitlis and Muş he met Ter-Avetisian in Tiflis, who had returned from an expedition in the region where Falev was about to go. Ter-Avetisian told the latter that there were almost no Muslims left in the occupied regions and he had collected all the extant Muslim manuscripts and brought them to Tiflis. Thus, Falev gave up his plans for the ethnographical research and went to the Iranian

\textsuperscript{448} N. Marr, I. Orbeli, \textit{Arkheologicheskaia ekspeditsiia 1916 goda v Van}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{449} N. Ia. Marr, “Defektis ispolneniia prepologovsheisia organizatsii,” AAN, Fond 800, opis’ 1, delo 1295, l. 8.
\textsuperscript{450} From Georgii Mikhailovich to Nikolai Nikolaevich, 7 November 1916, SSSA, Fond 13, opis’ 3, delo 1810, l. 23.
Azerbaijan instead.⁴⁵¹ Considering the fact that Muslims were coming back to the occupied regions besides the existent Muslim population, Ter-Avetisian’s reasoning to stop Falev conducting research among the Muslim population is suspicious. While the imperial Russian scholars were vying for their share of the scientific conquest in the occupied territories, Caucasian national elites of Armenian and Georgian populations emerged as their rivals. Georgian and Armenian social organizations as well as the respective churches spearheaded scientific expeditions in the occupied Ottoman territories. Armenian and Georgian nationalist scholars dedicated their efforts to claim historical and contemporary presence of their nations in the occupied regions.

**Nationalist Caucasian Elite and the Russian Scientific Occupation**

Around the time when the Russian imperial scholars were gathering their act to protect and conquer the cultural monuments in the war zone, nationalist elites in the Caucasus were also urging their societies about the urgency of claiming the same cultural monuments for the benefit of their nations. Armenian ethnographer and linguist Khristofor Ivanovich Kuchuk-Ioannesov (Khachatur Ovanesovich Kuchuk-Ovanesian) (1852-1919) gave a lecture on the historical Muslim and Armenian monuments in the Caucasus and in the region of Van in February 1916. Kuchuk-Ioannesov warned the Armenian society about the danger that the Armenian cultural treasures in the occupied Ottoman territories faced. He urged the Armenian patriarchate to take measures to protect Armenian monasteries, churches, libraries, and other cultural treasures in the occupied Ottoman territories. In response to that message, the patriarchate sent a letter to the Mshak newspaper. Echmiadzin already ordered clergics from Akhtamar and Limskii monasteries

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to take care of Armenian cultural objects in the occupied territories and also contacted Ter-Avetisian to that effect.\textsuperscript{452} The Armenian patriarch asked Ter-Avetisian to collect materials related to Armenian culture during the expedition funded and organized by the Russian Academy of Sciences and to send them separately to Echmiadzin.\textsuperscript{453}

While in Tiflis Kuchuk-Ioannesov was prodding the Armenian society and organizations to increase their efforts to protect and claim the cultural property in the occupied territories, he was presenting a different picture to the Russian imperial elite. According to Kuchuk-Ioannesov the Armenian intellectual society was well aware of the threat that the war poses for the cultural wealth of the Armenians in the war zone. The Armenian Ethnographical Society in Tiflis and the Armenian committee of fraternal aid employed ethnographers and teachers to collect ethnographical material from the Armenian refugees at Echmiadzin.\textsuperscript{454}

The Russian imperial scholars confronted with the nationalist efforts of the Armenian and Georgian scholars in the occupied regions. Marr had been condemning the separatist efforts of the nationalist intellectuals in the Caucasus as their work was against his theory of a common culture in the Caucasus, which could only flourish under the Russian imperial system.\textsuperscript{455}

Another witness of the nationalist fervor for cultural protection and conquest was Fedor Mikhailovich Morozov (1883-1962), an archaeologist, curator and historian of art who worked for the Russian Hermitage Museum for years in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Morozov volunteered for service in the Red Cross units during the war and in 1916 worked at the Caucasian Front. While he was at the front he also worked as a self-appointed guardian of cultural monuments. He wrote

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{452} Kh. I. Kuchuk-Ioannesov, “O sokhranenii drevnikh pamiatnikov,” \textit{Armianskii vestnik}, no. 5, 28 February 1916, pp. 3-4.
\textsuperscript{453} Kh. I. Kuchuk-Ioannesov, “Doklad Kh. I. Kuchuk-Ioannesova,” \textit{Armianskii vestnik}, no. 6, 6 March 1916, pp. 20-21, here at p. 21.
\textsuperscript{454} Kh. I. Kuchuk-Ioannesov, “Doklad Kh. I. Kuchuk-Ioannesova,” \textit{Armianskii vestnik}, no. 6, 6 March 1916, pp. 20-21, here at p. 20.
\end{footnotesize}
to Ilia Aleksandro维奇 Shliapkin (1858-1918), a historian of Russian literature, and an archaeographer:

It is totally impossible to get any historical artifacts here. The Turks do not ascribe any significance to the monuments. If an artifact falls into the hands of the Armenians, especially if it is an ancient Georgian item and has some sort of inscription on it, then the Armenians will remove the inscription and replace it with an Armenian one. The Armenians are too eager to claim all ancient artifacts, even without a historical proof. It would have been still alright if they did not destroy it. [Strashnoe zhelanie armian vse pamiatniki stariny prisvaivat' sebe, khotia i ne imeiut na to nikakikh osnovanii. Khorosho by esche tak, no zachem razrushat'.]456

While Ter-Avetisian had diverted Falev from the Ottoman territories claiming that there were not much Muslims and Muslim manuscripts to find there, collecting Muslim manuscripts was one of the main reasons for his second assignment to conduct a second extended survey in the occupied regions between May 13 and September 5, 1916. This time the director of the Caucasian Museum in Tiflis and the Tiflis Library, Aleksandr Nikolaevich Kaznakov (1871-1933) accompanied him.

The expedition covered a large territory including Sarıkamış, Köprüköy, Hasankale, Erzurum, Muş, Hınıs, Bitlis, Mamahatun, Erzincan, and Van. The team collected so many materials that they had to return to Tiflis in the middle of the expedition for a safe transfer of these items. The scholars visited all the important Armenian churches and monasteries, explored underground caves,457 and undertook several excavations. In these efforts, several Armenian clerics, appointed by the Armenian patriarchate, assisted the expeditionary team.458 Ter-

Avetisian delivered most of the artifacts, books and manuscripts related to the Armenian culture and history to the Caucasian museum, the Armenian patriarchate at Echmiadzin, and to the Armenian ethnographical society in Tiflis. He also managed to gather a considerable amount of Muslim manuscripts for the Academy of Sciences.\(^{459}\)

The Armenian patriarchate, Armenian relief organizations, and Armenian scholars employed by Russian imperial scientific organizations worked hard to salvage whatever Armenian archaeological and ethnographical material they could find in the occupied territories. *Kavkazskoe slovo* reported in May 1917 that the Armenian Ethnographical society collected 2000 Armenian manuscripts only from the Van region and that the society was preparing albums of the Armenian monasteries and churches in the occupied regions.\(^{460}\)

Ter-Avetisian was involved in other expeditions sent from the imperial center. Academy of Sciences sent the former scientific secretary of the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople, Nikolai L’vovich Okunev (1885-1949), a specialist on Byzantium and Slavic architecture, to Eastern Anatolia in the summer of 1916. His task was to collect archaeological artifacts of the Christian civilizations in the occupied regions and organization of the protection of the archaeological monuments and sites he visited. Okunev had organized the program and the staff of his expedition in coordination with Ter-Avetisian, and the latter planned to join the expedition later. The expedition staff consisted of Okunev, the head of the expedition, A. Ia. Beloborodov, an archaeologist, and a photographer, Bul’benko, appointed by Ter-Avetisian. The

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team gathered in Tiflis and left for Erzurum on 21 July 1916. Under Ter-Avetisian’s direction the main focus of the Okunev expedition was also to register and protect Armenian monuments.

Okunev expedition also visited the Çoruh valley in Northeastern Anatolia and registered and took measures of protection for several churches. This region had been a focus of interest for the Georgian academic circles, which was referring to the region as Southern Georgia. In 1902 and 1907, Ekvitime Takaishvili (1863-1953), a prominent Georgian historian, archaeologist and philologist461, had organized two expeditions to Ahiska, Ardahan, Kars and Oltu, which were already under Russian rule. As the Russian armies occupied more territories in “southern Georgia” the Georgian elite was also mobilized and decided to organize a “Georgian” archaeological expedition. In early 1917, Georgian archaeologists visited the monasteries in the Çoruh basin462 and the Georgian Society of History and Ethnography, which was founded by Takaishvili, planned a detailed expedition.463 The Georgian aristocracy and Georgian church would sponsor the expenditures of this expedition, whereas transportation for the expedition would be arranged by the Caucasian Department of the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos. Like in the case of the “Armenian” expeditions, the head of the Georgian church appealed to the imperial benevolence of the Russian Tsar through the Viceroy with these words:

The forward movement of the victorious Caucasian Army under your command annexed to Russia the whole Turkish Georgia, which is rich in historical monuments witnessing to the once flourishing Orthodox-Christianity in this region. … These monuments, which were the centers of Georgian cultural enlightenment, were converted to mosques in the sixteenth century but the belief that one day they will again return to Christian Georgia never withered away. Now is the time that we can think that this faith came true. The first task of Russia as a Christian state should

462 N. M. Shugurov, “Kholulskii sobor,” Trapezorskii voennyi listok, 12 February 1917, p. 4.
be the rejuvenation of Christianity in the annexed region, which is rich in Christian culture. The region, for which many Christian religious and political leaders shed their bloods and blessed it with their good deeds should see that it is again under the rule of a Christian tsar. In this respect first a historical-archaeological expedition should be organized in order to register and document these historical monuments. We have almost no information about these monuments, which could easily be adornment for any capital city. Nobody has studied these monuments and our knowledge depends on antiquated Georgian sources and on a very basic study of Sargisian. After such an expedition we should return these monasteries to their previous forms. Since the Turks [Muslims] used them as mosques, the architectural integrity of the monasteries is protected; even the paintings and frescoes are intact. These works can only be realized under your rule.\footnote{From the Archbishop of Georgia to Nikolai Nikolaevich, 17 October 1916, SSSA, Fond 13, opis’ 3, delo 1622, ll. 1-3.}

But the expedition could only be realized after the “imperial benevolence” faded away. The expedition of Georgian scholars left Tiflis on 21 July 1917, visited and studied ruins, fortresses, churches and monasteries they considered to be related to the Georgian culture in Oltu, Tortum, Hahul [Bağbaşı], Akçakale, Erseskaie, İşhan, Oşk, Bayburt, Dört Kilise, and Parhal in Northeastern Anatolia. Due to the upheaval of war and revolution the results of this expedition could be disclosed in 1920 at an exhibition on ancient Georgian architecture. It was part of the Georgian attempts to establish a state in the Caucasus and all the materials gathered and prepared were placed in the Museum of the Georgian Society of Ethnography and History\footnote{E. Takaishvili, \textit{Arkheologicheskaia ekspeditsiya 1917-go goda v iuzhnye provintsii Gruzii} (Tiflis: Izdatel’stvo akademii nauk Gruzinskoj SSR, 1952), pp. 17-22.} as an affirmation of Georgian sovereignty claims.\footnote{Scientifically this expedition still preserves its importance. Many of the churches that were studied and registered during the expedition suffered terrible destruction in the following years and the results of this expedition remain as the main data for references in future studies Mine Kadiroglu \textit{The Architecture of the Georgian Church at Ishan}, European University Studies: Series 28. History of Art, Vol. 121, 1991, p. 5.}
Archaeological Expeditions to the Southern Coasts of the Black Sea

The southern coast of the Black Sea was the last territory that became accessible to the studies of Russian scholars, as Russian troops drove deep into the Ottoman territories. In this region a branch of the Byzantine imperial family, the Komnenos, had founded the empire of Trebizond after the Latin occupation of Constantinople in 1204, and continued to rule the region until the Ottoman conquest in 1461. At the zenith of its wealth and power, the court of the emperors of Trebizond was a great artistic and cultural center, and thus the city had been the last refuge of the Byzantino-Greek civilization. Therefore, the region had attracted the interest of Russian scholars, and the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople had organized one of its first scientific expeditions to the region following its foundation in 1895. As I have mentioned before, RAIK continued to exist on paper after it had to leave Constantinople at the beginning of the war and its director and staff hoped for a quick return its location together with the victorious Russian army. Although the Constantinople dreams had to be delayed, the institute was more than eager to benefit from the conquests of the Russian Army at the Caucasian Front. The director of the institute, F. I. Uspenskii, pioneered the efforts for the establishment of a special commission to organize the protection and research of the archaeological monuments in the newly occupied territories on the Black Sea coast. For him, the work in Trabzon was temporary before the Russian armies occupied Constantinople.

Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich already proposed to send the director of RAIK to the front in 1915, with no avail. When the Viceroy at the Caucasus gave a general permission for such studies, the Russian scientific elite proposed to send a RAIK team to the Black Sea coast in late March 1916, however, Trabzon, the main strategic center on the Black Sea coast was not conquered yet and Georgii Mikhailovich did not want to get another refusal for a hastily

467 See: W. Miller, *Trebizond, the Last Greek Empire* (London: S.P.C.K., 1926).
prepared expedition proposal and advised a well-thought out plan. Soon, however, Feodor Uspenskii achieved his goal. Uspenskii, Feodor Ivanovich Shmidt (1877-1937) and artist Nikolai Karlovich Kluge (1867-1947) arrived in Trabzon on 13 May 1916, with the special permission of the Viceroy Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich. The expedition planned as a joint organization of Russian Archaeological Society and the Russian Academy of Sciences. However, since the Russian scientific elite did not want to forego previously gained positions in the sphere of scientific competition, the expedition was presented as a RAIK expedition and Uspenskii headed the team of scholars. The expenses of the expedition would be financed through the accounts of the RAIK, and the scholars corresponded with military and governmental authorities as members of the institute.

The main task of the expedition was the discovery, registration and conservation of the historical monuments in the city of Trabzon and in its environs. Accept very limited shell damage, the war did not touch the city but first during the Armenian deportations and second after the evacuation of Ottoman forces and the flight of the majority of the Muslim population, the dwellings and temples of the leaving populations were plundered and damaged by the people who remained and by the occupying Russian forces. The first impression after the survey of monuments was depressing. The scholars witnessed the traces of plunder and destruction everywhere. They decided to concentrate on the study of former churches that had been converted to mosques. The Viceroy’s order from March 30, 1916 concerning the cultural monuments laid the legal basis for the scientific studies in Trabzon. According to this order all the mosques, which had been churches centuries ago, were closed for Muslim prayer and were

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468 RGIA, Fond 530, opis’1, delo 63, ll. 7 reverse - 8.  
470 S. R. Mintslov, Trapezundskaiia epopeia, p. 28.  
given to the control of the archaeological commission. The closure of the mosques for Muslim worshipping did not make much sense since the Muslim population in the city was only about twenty people at the moment of the Russian occupation of the city.\textsuperscript{472} The importance of the order was that it did not transfer the former-churches to the Greek authorities of the city and this fact would be a matter of conflict between the Greek population and members of the archaeological expedition. Hence, the Uspenskii team got the keys of the twelve former churches, and the team commenced its work in the mosques of Ayasofya, Orta Hisar and Yeni Cuma, the former churches of St. Sophia, Chrysocephalos and St. Eugene respectively.

From the very beginning of the expedition the scholars had serious divergence about the aims and the organization of the expedition. Shmidt planned to work independently and organize an expanded program for the protection of monuments in the occupied territories. Uspenskii on the other hand, wanted to concentrate in Trabzon and employ Shmidt and Kluge as his assistants in this work. In Trabzon Uspenskii did not share his plans fully with his colleagues and he did not share his colleagues priorities about the protection of historical artifacts. According to Kluge, the plunder and destruction of historical artifacts continued after the scientific expedition arrived in Trabzon and took the control of mosques, because Uspenskii did not consider the items in these former churches as historical artifacts. As Kluge wrote, “not only soldiers but also the officers and the high command are explicitly involved in the plunder. The officers are heaping mountains of furniture, rugs, mirrors etc.”\textsuperscript{473}

Kluge and Shmidt could not cope with the methods and the difficult character of Uspenskii and left the city in July.\textsuperscript{474} Thus, Uspenskii was left alone. However, there were other

\textsuperscript{472} S. R. Mintslov, \textit{Trapezondskai\'a epopeia}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{473} IIMK RAN Fond 3, delo 372, ll. 54-54 reverse.
Russian personnel interested in archaeological treasures in the city and they replaced Kluge and Shmidt. First of all the acting administrator of the fortified region, Sergei Rudolfovich Mintslov\textsuperscript{,} already got permission to study the historical monuments of the city from the commander of the fortified region, General Schvarts. As an amateur archaeologist Mintslov was more than happy to have the company of a renowned professor of Byzantine archaeology and assisted him in his research at the St. Eugene church [the mosque of Yeni Cuma].\textsuperscript{475}

Another person of great help for Uspenskii was Fedor Mikhailovich Morozov. Morozov was on voluntary service at the Serafimowskii mobile hospital and when the hospital was transferred to the Caucasian front, the Society for the Protection of Historical Monuments wanted to appoint Morozov to register ecclesiastical monuments, to take pictures and note their current condition in the occupied regions. However, the military authorities did not allow him to officially undertake such a mission.\textsuperscript{476} Notwithstanding this impediment Morozov used every opportunity to study and register historical monuments and took hundreds of pictures from his first day of duty in the Caucasus.

Morozov arrived at Trabzon in August and immediately took part in Uspenskii’s studies. He helped the latter excavate a tomb in the court of the church of Chrysocephalos, which was used as the graveyard of the emperors of Trebizond. The tomb was dedicated to Hoşoğlan, a legendary Muslim martyr of the siege of Trabzon in 1461. Uspenskii decided that the tomb had originally belonged to an emperor. Uspenskii demanded the commander to raze the shabby dwellings abandoned by the Muslims around the tomb, and the latter fulfilled this request during the construction works for new and broad roads in the city. Uspenskii and Morozov dug out two skeletons, one belonging to a beheaded Muslim and the other to an emperor of Trebizond, buried

\textsuperscript{476} Correspondence between the Society for the Protection of Historical Monuments and the General Staff of Caucasian Army, 14 May - 23 June 1916, RGVIA, Fond 2100, opis’ 1, delo 648, ll. 21-23.
in a sarcophagus. Later on, interpreting the information given in the Greek chronicles, Uspenskii came to the conclusion that the second skeleton belonged to the emperor Alexius IV of Trebizond.\textsuperscript{477} Uspenskii handed the relics of the emperor to the Greek bishop of Trabzon, Phillipides Chrysanthos.\textsuperscript{478} This excavation was symbolic on several levels. The Russian scholars reclaimed a symbol of Muslim conquest of the city in the name of the former Greek rulers, and the excavation was a part of the Russification of the city when the Russian commander opened large, straight Western/Russian roads.

Although the Russian scholars were exposing and studying the Greek past of the city, the Greeks in the city were not content with the process. The Russian authorities did not return churches to the Greek patriarchate and the Russian scholars did not involve the Greeks in their studies. While the Greek elite could not intervene in the works of Uspenskii who had the highest level of patronage, the bishop prevented Morozov to work in some small churches in and around the city.\textsuperscript{479} In order to resolve this tension, Morozov proposed to open a museum in the city and to involve the local elite in the organization and functioning of the museum.\textsuperscript{480} Uspenskii did not support this proposal, as he did not want to share the possession of archaeological treasures even with his Russian colleagues. Apparently the main victims of the tension turned out to be the valuable historical and cultural artifacts in the city. The temporary storage-museum that the Russian scholars organized at Orta Hisar Mosque (the former church of Chrysocephalos) could not be protected and was sacked when the Russian scholars left in September 1916.

\textsuperscript{479} AAN, Fond 169, opis’ 1, delo 6, ll. 18-18 reverse.
\textsuperscript{480} Shcheglov, \textit{Khranitel’}. \textit{Zhiznennyi put’ Fedora Mikhailovicha Morozova}, p. 140.
Dissatisfied with the results of the first expedition Uspenskii wrote to the Viceroy on September 1, 1916, that if he would not get enough material and personnel support it would be better for him to return to Petrograd and join to an expedition for the study of historical monuments in the Balkans rather than returning back to Trabzon. The Viceroy ordered his staff to provide the necessary material and personnel to Uspenskii. He noted that he found the studies of Uspenskii crucial for the Russian state and thought that the studies would give fruit especially after the victorious end of the war for Russia. Uspenskii came back to Trabzon in the summer of 1917, however, the conditions in the city had drastically changed. In 1916, Uspenskii was a respected archaeologist who was working under the aegis of the Viceroy at the Caucasus, and he was an intimate friend of the commander of the fortified region, Major General Schwartz. Even in that position it was difficult to conduct research and protect the historical monuments in the city. Following the February revolution, political and military structures of the occupied regions were all in mess. Since thousands of soldiers were transferred to Russia through Trabzon a dire need for accommodation compelled the authorities to use any available building as temporary barracks. Soldiers used some of the church or mosque buildings as latrines, burned wooden structures and papers to warm up or to cook and damaged the buildings as there was no one to stop them. Mintslov described the eventual chaos with these words: All our municipal activities ended up in the destruction of the three-fourth of the city for firewood. Every niche and creak turned into a toilet.

The political authority of the Russian military administration was rapidly waning. New authorities emerged in the city, the most important of which was the Bishop of Trabzon. The Greek population was busy with attempts to acquire patronage of the city, and reclaiming the

481 Uspenskii to Nikolai Nikolaevich, 1 September 1916, SSSA, Fond 13, opis’ 3, delo 1810, l. 21.
482 Nikolai Nikolaevich to Pavel Nikolaevich, 30 September 1916, SSSA, Fond 13, opis’ 3, delo 1810, l. 22.
483 Mintslov, Trapezondskaia epopeia, p. 196.
historical monuments an important part of this endeavor. In the meantime, Morozov, who was still not endorsed by a scientific institution for his studies, seized the moment and led the organization of a local archaeological society.484

In these turbulent times the second Uspenskii expedition arrived at Trabzon. This time the staff was larger. A. E. Krymskii from the Lazarevskii institute of oriental languages, N. D. Protasov from the theological academy of Moscow, archaeologist N. E. Makarenko, architecture N. B. Baklanov, artist G. K. Meier and artist N. K. Kluge.485 Amidst the revolutionary upheaval and transformations in the city Krymskii started to analyze the manuscripts, books and documents that the expedition could salvage at the temporary storage/museum at the church of Chrysocephalo.486 Professor Protasov would study the architecture and the paintings at the churches, and Makarenko would survey the walls of the town and the acropolis of Trabzon. Architecture Baklanov prepared plans and drawings of the main churches at Trabzon.487

As the Russian authority declined in the city, the local Greek archaeological society started to gain ground. The Greek newspaper, Logos, provided the society with a physical venue and published their works. Besides publishing about the archaeological works the society also organized exhibitions demonstrating the artifacts they had found during excavations in and around the city. It sent letters to Greek teachers and clerics asking for information about archaeological monuments in and around the city as well as for ethnographical materials like Turkish and Greek folk songs. Although Uspenskii declared the society to be “anti-Russian” the Russian Archaeological Society recognized it as a corresponding society. The Russian

486 Krymskii continued his studies after the Russian expedition ended with the cooperation of members of the Ukrainian Community (Ukrainska Gromada). See: Lev Bykovsky, Na Kavkazsko-Turetskomu Fronti: Spomyny z 1916-1918 rr. (Denver: Pratsy Instituut Doslydyv Volyny, 1968), p. 61.
Archaeological Society informed Morozov of their decision to grant him associate-membership and recognize him as the representative of the Russian Archaeological Society in Trabzon. In turn, Morozov sent the organizational statute and the list of the members of the local organization to the Russian Archaeological Society.\(^{488}\)

Uspenskii tried to secure his control over historical monuments by allying with the Muslim population and the Muslim Charitable Society of Baku and tried to get the support of the Special Transcaucasian Committee (OZAKOM), which had replaced the viceroyal authority in March 1917.\(^{489}\) However, neither the Muslims nor the soon to be abolished OZAKOM had any power to support Uspenskii.\(^{490}\) The Russian army was withdrawing and the Russian scholars had to follow its traces.

**Conclusion**

During the first months of 1917, a special department under the governor-generalship of the occupied regions was established to centralize archaeological studies in the region. Ignatii Iakovlevich Stelletskii (1878-1949), an active member of the Russian Military-Historical Society, the Moscow Commission for the Study of Antiquities, the Archaeological Society of Moscow and the Society for the Study of the Historical Monuments, headed the archaeological department under the governor-generalship, in a way uniting the Russian scientific elite in his newly founded office.

Amidst the political turmoil of 1917, he also tried to secure the support of the nationalist elite in the Caucasus through his personal connections and through his articles on the importance

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of archaeological treasures in the occupied regions for both Russia and the Caucasian peoples.491 His proposal for collaborative study of archaeological treasures with the intelligentsia of the Caucasus got official as well as social support,492 but the political situation did not allow the expedition to be realized. His attempt, however, clearly reflected the impact of political transformation on the scientific projects that Russian imperial scholars initiated in the occupied regions. The scholars from Petrograd had planned to hoist the imperial flag of Russian science over the conquered regions, claiming it away from European science. Instead, they had to deal with a rising force in the Caucasus: the nationalist elite.

492 AAN, Fond 169, opis’ 1, delo 1, ll. 4, 9, 20-29.
Conclusion

The situation on the Caucasian Front in 1917 was dire for the Ottoman army and state. The Ottoman army had lost almost all of its important defense positions and communication lines, along with an enormous number of soldiers. The Russian side, on the other hand, was consolidating its rule in the area, improving the supply lines, and planning to initiate a new decisive campaign in cooperation with the British forces in Mesopotamia. This collaborative campaign “over the whole area between the Black Sea and the Persian Gulf”\(^{493}\) could never be realized due to the outbreak of the 1917 Revolution in Petrograd. The impact of the revolution on the Russian Army was disastrous. The Russian Caucasian Army, as well as the Russian army at the German Front, disintegrated throughout 1917\(^{494}\). Furthermore as a result of the November 1917 events in Petrograd, “demobilization became spontaneous even before the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk had begun” between delegates of the Central Powers and the Russians in late December 1917\(^{495}\). At that point, the new commander of the Caucasian Army, Mikhail Alekseevich Przhevalskii could not decline Vehib Pasha’s proposal for a truce. The two parties signed the truce in Erzincan on 18 December 1917, which required the cessation of all military operations, and the preservation of the front line at the positions held by the Russian and Turkish armies as of the winter of 1916-'17.\(^{496}\)


However, “the Erzincan Truce did not stem the tide of desertion”⁴⁹⁷, which by that point had turned into a disorganized withdrawal. The extended frontline was left to the control of the hastily formed Armenian forces with the assistance and participation of a few Russian officers and soldiers. The Ottoman army seized the opportunity to launch a rapid offensive to end the atrocities of Russian soldiers and Armenian formations against the Muslim population. The army entered Erzincan on 13 February 1918, then recovered Bayburt, and Erzurum. On February 24 the Ottoman Army took Trabzon and Mamahatun (Tercan). By spring 1918, the Ottoman forces had reached the 1914 borders, ending the Russian occupation of Eastern Anatolia.

As I have tried to describe, the occupation period up to the revolutions of 1917 had been a relatively peaceful one for the peoples living in the region. Muslim and Christian inhabitants hesitantly but steadily came back to the region and tried to reestablish their lives in their homeland. Russian government authorities and the national refugee relief organizations assisted and utilized (or frequently abused) these peoples for their own ends but also managed to establish a functioning imperial order in the occupied regions. The Russian occupation of Ottoman territories was starkly different from the first Galician occupation of the Russian armies in 1914-15, as it was different from the Ottoman policies in this region right before and after the war. I have argued that both the Russian and Ottoman states were implementing several contradictory policies in their realms. This was because both empires were simultaneously imperial and modernizing states that strived to secure their presence in the volatile international arena. For Russia, Galicia was closer to its national core, so claiming and trying to transform the Ruthenians into Russians was seen as crucial for the survival of the empire on its economically and politically important southern and western borders. The same was true for the Ottomans.

Eastern Anatolia was a vital part of the Ottoman state, so keeping it firmly would mean strengthening the Ottoman—that is, the Muslim/Turkish—presence there. The Ottoman Empire was still an inclusionary empire in its Arab realms, but pursued radically exclusivist policies and engaged in ethnic cleansing in its Anatolian borderlands and in other core areas. The Russian Empire, on the other hand, behaved like an inclusive empire in Anatolia.

From the first day of the occupation until the disintegration of the imperial regime, the Russian occupation of Ottoman territories was a process that involved several “imperial formations.” The analytical tool of “imperial formations” describes how, where and by whom empires were made; and analyses the degradation of sovereignty and differentiation. Using this approach gives empires a dynamic character, replacing the center-periphery model by trying to describe the roles of all the actors, governors, scientists, tribal leaders, bureaucrats, peasants etc. in the process of imperial formation. This approach inherently results in contradictions, as there are several terrains and several actors taking part in the imperial formation. As Ann Stoler argued, “blurred genres of rule are not empires in distress but imperial polities in active realignments and reformation.”

In the case of the occupation of the Ottoman territories, Russian military authorities, the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Agriculture, the national organizations for refugee relief and the scientific societies from Petrograd and the Caucasus contributed, cooperated and clashed on the formation of imperial rule. While in 1918 these imperial formations seemed to be doomed, in the long run, the Russian version of imperial organization proved to be successful. Though elite dissention (and not popular revolts) dissolved the Russian empire three times in its

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history, the empire managed to come back together, and today’s Russia is still a multi-cultural, differentiated and territorially expansive state in the massive core of the former Russian Empire.
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