

EDITORIAL.

Tartars Versus Bolsheviks.

The Armistice on the Azerbaïdjan front has been prolonged to June 7. Officially, no reason for this is given, but we understand that the Azerbaïdjan delegates failed to turn up to meet the Georgian representatives, the illness of one of the chief members being given as an excuse. But from the reports that have reached Tiflis from Gandja we gather that things are not altogether running smoothly in the new "Soviet Republic" and probably the recent Tartar-Bolshevik collision in Gandja has played a greater part in the non-arrival of the Azerbaïdjan envoys than did the alleged illness. It would appear—if reports be true—that the Bolsheviks will find their hands fairly full in Azerbaïdjan and that the growing discontent in Musulman circles will prove a serious source of trouble to the Soviet authorities.

The Soviet Troops.

Meanwhile we continue to receive reports from Baku as to the new conditions in the town and as to the quality of the Soviet troops. These latter are said to be ill-shod and badly clothed: ill-equipped, too, with faulty weapons—for the greater part of old design. The majority of the soldiers are said to be mere recruits, not experienced in war, and even boys of fifteen and sixteen. Their horses, says a Georgian officer who escaped from Baku, are thin and ill-kept: many of them are diseased. Indeed, the general impression is that the Reds in Baku are far from being a capable fighting force.

The Bolshevik Task.

The Bolsheviks have occupied Baku and they have occupied Enzeli, but even these temporary successes do not diminish their future difficulties. There is the Musulman discontent which we have mentioned. And above all there is the danger of the long communication lines. The Reds may easily find that they have carried their operations too far from their centre. This is a common Russian fault. The great Russian offensive against the Austrians in 1914—15 turned to a great Russian defeat when the Russians found that they had gone too far beyond their base and that they were stranded without food and ammunition—their line of communication being too

long and too badly organised. Similarly, Denikin's march to Kharkov last year took him too far from the Volunteer base and it inevitably led him to ultimate defeat. Russian organisation and Russian transport—be they those of Volunteers or Bolsheviks—are notoriously bad, and it will be a matter of surprise to us if the Bolshevik adventure towards the South turns out the success the Reds anticipate.

In Georgia.

The Armistice and the Bolshevik-Tartar clashes in Azerbaïdjan have combined to ease the situation in Georgia. The menace of trouble on the Eastern frontiers is by no means past, but we are optimistic enough to think that each day is bringing Georgia a little nearer to the end of her troubles. In the interview with Ouratadze, the Georgian representative from Moscow, which we publish this week, he states that the Soviet authorities were quite sincere in the agreement they arrived at with Georgia. It now remains for these same authorities to be sincere in their orders to their Commissars in Baku—sincere and severe...

Russian Officers.

There is something very naive in the latest Soviet "appeal" to Russian officers of the former Russian army. They are asked to "forget" the past and to join the Red Army in a united struggle for the native-land. There is a further "official declaration" that the Bolshevik government will "forgive" all those who served in the armies of Koltchak, Denikin, Wrangel and Semenov if they will assist in the liquidation of the "White Guard detachments that still remain in the Crimea, the Caucasus and Siberia". This appeal—or rather these appeals—do not quite harmonise with the Bolshevik boasts of their capability of warring against the world. And they do not quite harmonise with the reported negotiations between Wrangel and the Reds regarding the cessation of hostilities.

Dunsterforce.

The "Times" review of General Dunsterforce's own account of the operations against Baku in 1918, which we publish in this number of the "Georgian Mail" without comment, is of particular interest. The original plan, it will be seen,

was to occupy Baku and march on Tiflis. The expedition failed—through no fault of the small body of British troops, who behaved throughout with the utmost gallantry. It is interesting to recall that on the arrival of General Thomson in Baku, following the signing of the Armistice, Nouri Pasha, who was at that time at Balajary, himself told a British staff officer that one small company of British soldiers—the Staffords—fought bravely until their ammunition was entirely spent and then with the greatest courage cast their rifles aside and died fighting with their bare fists. The Turks, said Nouri, buried these men with full military honours...

An Incident.

This is an incident—and a warning to the charitable. A few days ago we were talking to a Georgian officer in the Rustaveli Prospect when an old Russian woman came whining out for alms. The officer immediately gave her ten roubles, whereupon the old beggar bowed low before him in gratitude, blessed him fervently and called on God and all His saints to grant him health and success. On the Rule of Three principle, we were a little afraid that the result of the fifty-rouble note we produced for the woman (it being our smallest note, to be candid) would be embarrassing... But not a bit of it! The old woman seized the note—looked at it—and fled without a single word of thanks!... And now we have the uncomfortable thought that somewhere in Tiflis today there is an old Russian woman gloating over our stupidity and rejoicing in the fact that she was able to get away with our fifty roubles before we discovered the error we had made...

S. L.

Communists on Trial in U. S.

Twenty-six members of the Communist party are on trial in Chicago charged with trying to bring about the overthrow of the Government by force. Thirty-nine were indicted but the leaders are reported to have fled to Mexico and Europe.

Buffer State in Siberia.

Japanese despatches report that negotiations with the Soviet Government are proceeding at Vladivostok for the establishment of a buffer State prior to the evacuation of that city by the Japanese troops.

MOSCOW IMPRESSIONS.

(Continued from page 1)

that the Bolsheviks were able to establish a certain order. In the towns steady order is established. Steady power and inner discipline are felt.

"Referring to victuals the following may be observed in Russia: In one place, as, for instance, in Saratov or in the Kuban, there is sufficient bread; in other places bread is very scarce. This may be explained chiefly by the disorganisation of transport.

"Moscow is really undergoing a very sharp supply crisis. The total of the inhabitants of Moscow decreased from two and a half millions to 700,000 inhabitants. Nearly the whole of the *bourgeoisie* went away. Within the limits of Russia special passes are needed in order to enter or to leave a town. Because of this the entry or the leaving, for instance, of Moscow, is rather difficult. Journeys are allowed only when on duty".

"It means that practically the whole of the country is under martial law?"

"It is so practically. In spite of this, one must estimate the state of affairs in Russia with great cautiousness, taking into consideration the whole complicated complement of the present Russian life".

Four-Power Loans to China.

The U. S. State Department announces the organization of an international loan to China. It states that after nearly two years of negotiations, Britain, France and Japan have agreed with the United States Government and accepted the U. S. plan for the formation of four-Power banking groups for loans to the government of China. Each Government has authorized its citizens to form banking groups to co-operate with similarly organized groups of citizens of the other three Powers. The groups are to receive the diplomatic support of their Governments.

It is expected that the arrangements will provide for China a fund of credit adequate to permit her to proceed with her economic and industrial development, much of which was suspended by the war, and will enable her to adopt a constructive programme which will result in the pacification and rehabilitation of China.

Germans Try to Scuttle a Cruiser.

A serious leak in the cruiser *Thuringen*, which has been handed over to the French fleet, caused by the German crew which brought the vessel, was found on her arrival at Cherbourg.

SOVIET RULE IN BAKU.

GROWING MUSSULMAN DISCONTENT.

(From "Groussia").

A person who remained in Baku during the whole period of the reinforcement of Bolshevism and who has only lately returned to Georgia has communicated interesting details giving a clear picture of all that took place, is taking place and may take place in future.

He affirms categorically that the former Azerbaijan government desired nothing of that which occurred. In view, on the one hand, of a movement in Baku connected with Bolshevism started among some Mussulman circles of the left as well as of the extreme right (party 'Itikhad'), and on the other hand in view of the menacing approach of Russian troops, with which the greater part of the Baku proletariat sympathised and for whom they awaited, the government intended to transfer its residence to Gandja and started to prepare for this. But the events occurred too speedily. The party Mussavat lost its ground, pressed from its political position by new claims, moods and hopes. Struggle proved to be impossible—other politicians, sympathising with Bolshevism, seized the leading role.

Jewish Commissar.

On April 28 Russian troops entered Baku. This was the 11th Army headed by General Levandovsky, which had evidently a great military task to perform. The total of its troops amounted at one time to over 100,000 soldiers. An interesting detail: the Commissar of the army is a Jewish girl, very young and popular among the soldiers. At present in connection with the retreat on the Polish front the total of the troops decreased at least by half. In spite of this further operations in Persia and Asia Minor and perhaps even more grandiose ones are undoubtedly included in the projected military programme. This is no secret and the 32nd division is already directed to the South. The troops fail to make a favourable impression: tired, numbly, unconscious of the task that stands before them, they are in their majority young recruits having a very slight idea of military order and discipline.

At first the Mussulman politicians, parents of the revolution, believed their rôle to be a very important one in everything which took place beneath not only for Azerbaijan but in general for the Mussulman cause. But their disenchantment increased—we may say daily. "The Russian Bolshevik has deceived us",—this is the phrase that is called the motto of Azerbaijan at present. All understand this clearly.

Tartar Discontent.

Mussulman Commissars have very soon lost all authority. At present the Russians manage everything, relying on their military force. It becomes gradually clear to everybody that the revolution which has taken place has simply abolished the independent Azerbaijan, having handed it over to Russia again. Bolshevism is only a new form of former domination. The askers are being abolished as independent troops and are being included in the 11th Army.

Such a situation, of course, cannot be tolerated for long. In spite of the traditional abasement of the Tartar masses a grumble of discontent resounds louder and louder and our interlocutor expressed full confidence that complications will inevitable follow.

Azerbaijan cannot be reconciled to its present situation and the party "Mussavat" which has in due time given to the people a national power and its own stamenship in again becoming extremely popular. A movement of revolt will certainly arise and Russian Bolshevism if it has really some further problems to solve in Mussulman countries will have to alter decisively its policy in Azerbaijan. Evidently between the instructions given from Moscow and all that practically occurs, exists a considerable difference. The Moscow government is very concerned because of the mood which is being created—concerned because of the decisive discontent of the Nationalists—pro-Turks—on which it relied up to now and whose sympathies are necessary in future. About ten days ago the chief commissar, Narimanov, arrived from Moscow. He was already expected and as he has all necessary instructions certain hopes of improvement of relations and of a more correct policy from the point of view of common Russian-Mussulman problems are connected with his arrival. All Russian officials who were so numerous in all Baku ministries have remained on their posts. But the former ministers—Mussulmans—concealed themselves. Kaplanov alone remained; he is the former Minister of Finance and previously a Mountaineer politician and has been arrested in consequence of his former dealings with the Bolsheviks in the North Caucasus.

Volunteer Generals Shot.

Our interlocutor is well aware of the shooting of 21 men only—all the rest is only rumour. Four Generals of the Volunteer Army (Roudnev, Razdorsky, and two others) were shot as well as a few officers and "bourgeois-speculators". He does not confirm that

Tlekhas and Goudiev have been shot. He says that they have been arrested only. The fact of the suicide of Mourtouza Moukhtarov is not to be doubted. It occurred as follows: Reds came to Moukhtarov in order to requisition his house. Moukhtarov refused to obey and after some arguing fired his revolver twice and killed two on the spot. The others took flight, but the house of Moukhtarov was surrounded by a whole detachment. Not wishing to surrender alive, Moukhtarov shot himself.

The "Tchrezvitchaika", at first very moderate and cautious, started further to act energetically, performing all sort of arrests. It worked particularly successfully for some time when managed by the sailor, Pankratov, but as soon as Narimanov arrived—Pankratov was removed.

The Armenians.

Pending the increase of discontent among the Mussulmans, the Armenians are raising their heads. They are beginning to penetrate into the institutions, seeking in every way the good graces of Russians and express openly their satisfaction: independent Azerbaijan is finished, power is in the hands of Russia, the ministries are entirely full of former officials.

All goods in Baku are registered and there is no free trade in the town. Goods are sent to Russia; consequently it is impossible to find anything apart from the most necessary victuals—fish, meat and bread. Bread is now rather cheap; it is being requisitioned on the Kuban. The banks are closed and only the newly-opened "People's Bank" carries on operations. The naphtha fields are counted as nationalised.

A reward for former owners is spoken of but nobody has received money yet. There are no revolutionary excesses in the town; the Reds do not behave insolently. The traffic in the streets is as usual. People walk on the boulevard along the shore and dress jauntily as before. The prices increase owing to the further drawing near to Russia (in Astrakhan, for instance, a box of matches costs 150 roubles, one pood of flour 16,000, a pair of boots—35,000, most old trousers—25,000. There are no such prices in Baku at present but one believes that there will be).

Goming Opposition.

The rate of exchange of Azerbaijan money, of Kerensky and Soviet is the same. Don money is not acknowledged. About 7,000,000 poods of naphtha have been sent to Russia. The mood in general is very depressed, spirits very low; and the further—the worse, in consequence of mutual exasperation.

Our interlocutor goes not doubt that "Soviet" order in Azerbaijan is impossible and that the Mussulmans will oppose it shortly with a decisive resistance, and will steadily unite because of this.

IN SOVIET AZERBAIDJAN.

(According to the Mussulman Soviet Press).

We have received "Communist" No. 5 of May 7 which is being published in Baku in Tartar. "The organ of Independent Soviet Azerbaijan" is the sub-title of this news-paper.

We quote some news from it:

Decree Regarding the Land.

A decree regarding the land is published in the "Communist".

1) Private ownership of the land is abolished once and for ever.

2) The defining of free districts and the distribution of land among the working people are imposed on the district commissions, and

3) The opposers to the decree are advised that they will be considered as the enemies of the proletariat and proclaimed outside the law.

The decree is signed by the President of the Revolutionary Committee, Gusseinov, the members—Mussabekov, Karaev, Buniatze, Aliev and is countersigned by the Commissar of Agriculture, Agamalov.

Instruction.

As to the sphere of the people's instruction we find the following statements in the newspaper: The Baku University will be named the People's University. The examinations in all the educational institutions are being abolished. The order of the exercises in the schools has been published and everywhere evening classes have been introduced. All the bookshops are proclaimed nationalised. The orders have been given in the name of the Commissar of People's Instruction.

Struggle Against Speculation.

At the head of the newspaper an address is published to the workmen and peasants calling on them to declare war against the speculators "because the speculators", as is said in the newspaper, "having concealed the goods, strive to produce famine in order to break down easier the revolution and to ruin the proletariat of the East".

In another article headed "The speculators must understand", it is said that the speculators must forget their methods of work appropriated by them under the old government and must reject them as one will no more stand upon any ceremony and the struggle against speculation will be merciless.

Supply.

A series of notes is published in the same section regarding the supply of Azerbaijan. There is a communication referring to the import of bread and wheat from Soviet Russia to Baku. Low prices for bread have been

established: for workmen 2 roubles a pound, and for all others 7 roubles.

The Diplomats' Visit.

According to the communication of the same "Communist", the representatives of foreign Powers—Sweden, Holland, Persia, Denmark, and Latvia—have visited the Commissar for Foreign Affairs and declared that they had informed their governments of the new situation that has been created in Azerbaïdjan.

Information.

Among the telegrams and news from Russia and Europe there is one telegram stating that the strike-movement is again growing in England.

It is communicated from Rostov that a labour week has been organised on the Don.

It is communicated further that some victuals have risen 30 times in price and statistics are being quoted.

It is curious that there is not in the newspaper any news concerning the Azerbaïdjan-Georgian front and Georgia and Armenia generally. There is no article touching on the relations of Azerbaïdjan to her neighbours.

The leading article deals with the sense of Bolshevism in the world's history and with those sales which are ascribed to Bolshevists and in a special poem devoted to the propagation of the ideas of Bolshevism among the Mussulmans it is said that "Bolshevism delivers the Mussulman East from Europe's enslavement".

The "Lusitania".

Paris, Friday.—A London telegram says that an attempt is to be made to refloat the *Lusitania*, torpedoed by a German submarine on May 7, 1915, off the south east coast of Ireland. The vessel lies over 70 metres deep and the refloating will be very difficult. Some months will elapse before it is known whether it is even possible to proceed to it.

League of Nations Journal.

The Associated Press reports that the *League of Nations Journal* intends to publish all acts entered into by members of the League after the coming into effect of the Covenant and that the first meeting of the League of Nations Assembly probably will be next autumn.

German-Bolshevik Agreement.

The negotiations at Reval and Helmsingfors between the German delegates and those of the Soviet Government have led to the conclusion of an accord for the exchange of prisoners of war.

"DUNSTERFORCE".

The Adventures of Dunsterforce. By Major-General L. G. Dunsterville.

The following review of General Dunsterville's book is taken from the "Times Literary Supplement".

Long before the war broke out Germany had laid her plans for the absorption of the Near East into her scheme of world dominion, and the tentacle of the Baghdad Railway was to be one of the great factors in bringing this result about. But Baghdad fell to the British, not to the Germans; and therefore after March, 1917, the line of German penetration was shifted farther north, taking the route Berlin—Baku—Bokhara. It was to cut this line that General Dunsterville was sent with a "mission" to the Southern Caucasus and Baku. As it was impossible to send enough troops to meet the situation suddenly caused by the defection of the Russian armies, the mission was ordered to Tiflis to reorganize the broken remnants of the local troops to stem the tide of Turkish invasion. Although it never attained its original purpose, nor did it reach Tiflis, it reached the Caspian Sea eventually, defended Baku with a handful of Englishmen successfully in spite of the Armenian "friendly", and only by its successful evacuation by sea avoided capture or destruction by the Turks.

On January 27, 1918, the "mission", which amounted to forty-one cars, with a fighting total of forty-one rifles and one Lewis gun, started on its 800-mile journey across Western Persia to Baku. Apart from the winter road difficulties and the lack of supplies of food and petrol, there were the questions of hostilities by the way, the very doubtful neutrality of the Persians, the hostility of the Kurds, the Bolshevists, and particularly the declared enmity of the Jangalis of Gilan under the idealist Kuchik Khan on the South Caspian shore. To consider the plan of attempting to reach Tiflis in the face of these difficulties as "a very sound one", "attractive and practical", as General Dunsterville does, is British optimism at its worst, although doubtless gratifying to those who evolved such a scheme. The last British post on the Persian side was the $\frac{1}{4}$ Hampshires, near Surkhadisa, just over the Persian border; thenceforward the expedition was "in the air". Within sight of the Caspian at Enzeli the little force was to meet the influences of both Bolshevists and Kuchik Khan. Kuchik Khan's Persian Committee urged the Russian Bolshevists to arrest them, while the latter were equally anxious that the Persians should take the responsibility. Increasing hostility made it evident that further progress was impossible; and the only course open was to try to extricate the cars and men as secretly as possible while the committees were wrangling, and to steal silently

away before dawn, retiring on Hamadan. Why this was ever allowed is a mystery; but the General succeeded in his vigorous manner which stood him in good stead throughout the expedition.

Now comes the second phase of the foray. Further "parties" were assembling in Baghdad to reinforce General Dunsterville, and the mission was now officially designated "Dunsterforce". The General at this time was certainly not optimistic in his report on the situation; the Pan-Islamists, with the Tartars of Baku and the Jangalis, backed by Germany, were a very strong anti-British combination, and troops would be required. A base was formed at Hamadan; and a phantom army of twelve officers, two clerks and forty-one chauffeurs, with one armoured car, one aeroplane, and a handful of soldiers, was formed, to be joined in April by a squadron of Hussars. Early in May a detachment was sent to Kasvin (nearly 150 miles N.E. of Hamadan), which was made into Headquarters, and the force was increased by two new parties amounting to more than two hundred officers and N.C.O.s. A start was made in raising Persian irregulars with varying success; also at Kasvin were Bicherakov's Russian troops, but a very doubtful factor.

Baku was the goal aimed at, as soon as troops enough should arrive; and by the beginning of June a thousand British and Gurkha rifles, with a battery of field guns and two mountain guns, and the remainder of the Hussar regiment were well on their way, with 500 cars. Kuchik Khan, ostensibly with 5,000 men, was hostile and opposing the advance at Menjil, 70 miles from Kasvin, and by June 11 all was ready to attack him. The result was an easy victory for the combined British and Russian force; the Jangalis were driven out of their position, leaving a large number of casualties, and ultimately General Dunsterville reached Enzeli on the Caspian on the 27th, where Bicherakov decided to turn Bolshevist, as he saw no other way of getting a footing in the Caucasus, and was given the command of the "Red Army", 10,000 men, of little more than "paper" value. Twelve thousand Turks were advancing from the Tiflis direction on Baku, and Bicherakov unsuccessfully attempted to bar their passage at Yeldakh, the one bridge over the Kura River which practically covered Baku. He was ultimately driven into Baku towards the end of July; and only an extraordinary panic in the Turkish army, arising from a rumour that a large cavalry force was in their rear, deferred the fall of the town.

Meanwhile our Thirty-ninth Brigade began to arrive in Kasvin. At Resht the Jangalis made a determined attack on our garrison on July 20, but were driven off, and finally thrust out of the town, and the road to the Caspian lay clear. General Dunsterville secured

a small fleet on the sea to effect his retirement from Baku in case of need, and our troops fought manfully the Baku line against the Turks. The local forces, chiefly Armenians, appear to have been of little use; they

dig very little in the way of trenches. . . "Why should we dig ourselves in? We do not want to dig; towards do that we want to fight". They liked to line up in a row just behind the edge of the steep cliff and fire off their rifles at the sky.

Unfortunately it was Bicherakov's fatal move to the north which had rendered the occupation of the town so hazardous. The Turks were now holding the heights west of the British lines, and the fall of Baku could only be a matter of time unless they could be driven out. There were as yet not enough British troops to effect this, and the Armenian was useless; there was a shortage of supplies; and a determined and successful attack by the Turks on August 26 on a position known as the Mud Volcano, about six miles N.W. of Baku, in spite of splendid gallantry of a company of North Staffords, rendered the position increasingly difficult. A few days later, at Binagadi, the Turks again attacked, and, owing to the scuttling of the local Baku troops, were again successful. The position was hopeless. A fresh Turkish attack was made on September 14, with the usual failure of the Armenian troops to support the British; and it remained only for the General to evacuate the British troops, as he had repeatedly warned the local headquarters he must do, if the rabble of Armenian troops could not help to save their own town. So ended the expedition.

If there is one thing more than another which is sharply silhouetted against a drab background of vacillating "committees", Armenian cowardice and Oriental incompetence, it is the heroism of the handful of British troops engaged. The gallantry of the Hampshire and the Staffords has never been surpassed; had there been twice their number the result would probably have been different. As it was, one wonders whether this expedition was justifiable, and what would have been the feeling in the East if any of its components had been wiped out, or Baku had become a minor Kut.

General Dunsterville's stories of Persians and Armenians and the innumerable committee meetings are always amusing, albeit at the back of the reader's mind is the feeling that the lives of many honest Englishmen were at stake. We confess to a certain readiness to criticize the insertion of some of the General's conversations and official letters, which are quoted at some length. In a book of this kind, however, the terseness advocated by professional military handbooks is not always taken to heart by the Regular soldier, alas! as many in the New Armies will doubtless remember is not an essential.