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Introduction

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Goals, Scope, Thesis

Brief assessment of literature on Canada in the Russian Civil War.

Brief assessment of literature on Canadians in Dunsterforce.

Stopgap: British Imperial Intentions and Policy in the Caucasus & Persia

Before 1917, the Eastern Front was held almost entirely by the Russian Imperial Army. From the Baltic to the Black Sea, through the western Caucasus and south to the Persian Gulf, the Russians bolstered themselves against the Central Empires. The Russians and Turks traded Kurdistan, Assyria, and western Persia back and forth until the spring of 1917, when the British captured Baghdad, buttressing the south-eastern front. Meanwhile, the Russian army withered in unrest and desertion. Russian troops migrated north through Tabriz, Batum, Tiflis, and Baku, leaving dwindling numbers to defend an increasingly tenable front, and as the year wore on the fighting spirit of the Russian army evaporated.

In the autumn of 1917, the three primary nationalities of the Caucasus – Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis – called an emergency meeting in Tiflis in reaction to the Bolshevik coup d'etat in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In attendance were representatives from trade unions, civil employees, regional soviets, political parties, the army, and lastly Entente military agents. Most opposed the Bolshevik
stranglehold on the Russian heartland. The polyglot committee attempted to coordinate a government to rule the Caucasus until a Russia-wide Assembly could be restored. In the middle of the meeting, Bolshevik delegates rose and denounced the gathering as counter-revolutionary, then left the room with gritted teeth.¹ The other representatives went on with planning the maintenance of law and order, and trying to secure themselves against an imminent Turkish invasion. The new government proclaimed that they would wait until reunion with greater Russia was possible. The radicals at the meeting were not taken seriously; the Bolshevik hegemony was not expected to last.

The war with Turkey still loomed. The makeshift federation had little money or guns and was divided by the representation of its three national councils. Armenians slowly refilled the gaps in the line left by retreating Russians but their front was the longest and their troops, the most exhausted. The Georgians, similarly terrified, acted more unilaterally. On November 29th, Georgian Social-Democrats seized the army arsenal at Tiflis from Russian troops in the name of the new government. The Russian Commander of the Caucasus Army was sympathetic to the Georgians and wanted to quell the unrest caused by deserting Russian troops. He allowed the arsenal to pass into Georgian hands. Meanwhile, rumors abounded that the Azerbaijanis sympathized with the Turks, and were waiting to take up arms with their co-religionists. The representative councils of Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijani politicians recognized the potential for complete social collapse in Transcaucasia and acted fast against it. Almost immediately, they sued for peace with Turkey and signed a temporary armistice on December 18th.² It was imperative that the nascent state ensure its survival until it

¹ Hovannisian, Armenia on the Road to Independence, p107.
² Ullman, Intervention and the War, p51.
could reunite with a Russia cured from its Bolshevik illness.

The only locus of Boshevik control in the region was the oil city of Baku, on the shores of the Caspian Sea, which housed an equally combustible situation. The primary factions in the town – the Russian Red Guards, the Armenians, and the Azerbaijanis, were represented in a soviet where the Bolshevik party held the balance of power. Stepan Shaumain, its chairman and the defacto ruler of the city, was charged with the task of making sure this perilous balance was kept. If two parties allied against the third, the broken stalemate would plunge the city into chaos and bloodshed.

General Shore, the chief British agent in Tiflis, reported the volatile situation back to the War Cabinet in Whitehall, who scrambled to form some sort of cogent policy about what to do in Russia. Agents on the spot recommended immediate intervention, stating that the impact of British boots on the ground would shock the country out of Bolshevism. In an endless stream of meetings and memos the War Cabinet debated on the best course of action. General William Robertson, Chief of Imperial General Staff, opted to back the new Tiflis government with military support. Meanwhile, General MacDonough, the Director of Military Intelligence, wanted to address calls for a force to help quiet a disruptive and potentially explosive political situation in Persia. The decisions which eventually culminated in the dispatch of Dunsterforce targeted problems of military policy and diplomacy in both Transcaucasia and Persia.

Before the Bolshevik uprising, Robertson looked to the Armenian nation as a strategic ally and solution to the deteriorating Russian army. Using native Armenians to

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3 BNA, CAB/24/34/GT 2817, General Barter to C.I.G.S., 27 Nov 1917.
hold the Turks at bay in the Caucasus seemed a reasonable objective in scope and principle. “The Armenians,” Robertson wrote in a memo of October 20th 1917, “are the only large body on the Russian Asiatic front whose interests are vitally bound up with the success of the Allied cause.” A large portion of their ethnic population lived under Turkish rule and their territorial homeland lay in the path of the advancing Turkish army. Robertson thought the national consciousness of the Armenians would easily compel the bulk of their fighting men to the Allied cause. It was no trifle of a force: 150,000 Armenians were in the Russian army, but only 35,000 of them served in the Caucasus at that time. Armenians could be regrouped to replace the more than 200,000 Russians of the Imperial Army retreating from the Turkish front. The French already furnished the Armenian military committee with 40 training officers for 2 Armenian divisions towards this end. General Shore in Tiflis liaised with the councils and wondered if the British might send something similar.

On November 30th, a deputation arrived in Tehran representing the new Transcaucasian state. They needed money. The British Minister, Sir Charles Marling, personally received them and listened to their proposals. The Transcaucasian delegates asked the British for cash so they could continue to pay its troops to fight the Turks. Marling sent a message to London stating their case:

...That country could be secured as a stronghold against Maximalist influences if money were forthcoming, but if it were not, then Caucasian troops (which members of the

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4 BNA, CAB/24/29/GT 2347, Robertson to War Cabinet, 20 Oct 1917.
5 BNA, CAB/24/29/GT 2347, Robertson to War Cabinet, 20 Oct 1917.
6 BNA/CAB/24/32/GT 2682, C.M.A. To D.M.I., 17 Nov 1917.
7 BNA, CAB/24/34/GT 2852, Shore to D.M.I., 2 Dec 1917. The leader of the Caucasus Army, General Prjevalsky, had informed Brig-Gen. Shore, Caucasus Military Agent, of the dispatch.
8 BNA, CAB/24/144, Eastern Report No. 45, 6 Dec 1917, p.4.
General Shore confirmed that if Britain wanted to do something immediate to secure the Caucasus against anarchy, they needed to send money to alleviate the “financial famine”.¹⁰ Tiflis called upon Britain for help.

By the end of November, communications from Petrograd, Tiflis, and Jassy led the War Cabinet to believe European Russia would split into a Civil War between south and north.¹¹ Even though northern European Russia was under Bolshevik control and suing for peace with Germany, Whitehall saw potential in keeping southern Russia in the war and on the Allied side. Allowing the Eastern Front to collapse meant German troops would be free to shift to the west. Because several members of the War Cabinet thought the new regime was in league with Berlin, and suspected the Germans of orchestrating the recent coup d’etat,¹² they thought Germany and Turkey would be free to exploit the industrial resources of Russia with Bolshevik support. Grain from the Ukraine and coal from the Volga basin were noted, but of special concern was oil from the Caucasus. Some Allied control over South Russia would ensure the Central Empires did not have a free hand towards the revitalization of their war machines.

The War Cabinet decided that, in light of recent events, the best way to handle a Russia fractured by loyalties was to “support any responsible body in Russia that would actively oppose the Maximalist movement, and give money freely to such bodies as were

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¹⁰ BNA, CAB/24/34/GT 2852, Shore to D.M.I., 2 Dec 1917.
¹² CITATION NEEDED. Ullman, Kennan, Brinkley.
prepared to help the Allied cause.” On December 3rd, when the Prime Minister heard from a Russian liaison that the Caucasus escaped the coup mostly unscathed, he brought the matter of supporting the young nation to the attention of the War Cabinet. Marling’s earlier suggestion to give the Transcaucasi ans money resonated. The War Cabinet decided that any reasonable amount of funds would be made available to support and stabilize the Caucasus.

Sympathetic reasons may have also played a role in guiding the British policy towards the Caucasus, and Armenia in particular. What Robertson saw as the reason for the Armenian “vital interest” in the Allied was linked to events that threatened, in the minds of some of the War Cabinet, the destruction of the entire race. For example, Curzon stated in one cabinet memo of 5 December 1918,

> It must be borne in mind that the Allies are pledged in the most categorical manner to secure the liberation of Armenians from the Turkish yoke, and should that pledge be broken, not only shall we be dishonored before the world, but the Armenians, handed back to their oppressors, will, in so far as they have not already been destroyed, disappear from the list of peoples.

Curzon’s fears were not unique. Men on the spot were terrified of the wholesale slaughter of an entire nation if they could not act in time to help secure the self-sufficiency of the Armenians. To show their support, the foreign office instructed General Shore in Tiflis to “assure the Armenian military defense committee that, to the best of our ability, we were prepared to assist the Armenians in their efforts to remain

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13 BNA, CAB/23/4, War Cabinet No. 289, 3 Dec 1917, p3.
14 BNA, CAB/23/4, War Cabinet No. 289, 3 Dec 1917, p3.
15 BNA, CAB/24/4, German and Turkish Territories Captured in the War: Their Future, 5 Dec 1917, p2.
16 BNA, CAB/24/29/GT 2347, Barter to Robertson, 15 Oct 1917.
At this time, British interests in the Caucasus were also vitally linked to those in North Persia, an area which begged the question of local intervention. Chaos seemed to rule Persian politics and the War Office did not trust the revolving cabinets to either guard the frontier to India or keep the nation as “neutral” as the British desired. A need for men on the ground to keep roads open and guard the line to the Caspian became apparent, especially when revolutionaries seized important cities. In Kermanshah, rebels overthrew the local government. In Resht, a Persian nationalist movement seized the city under the authority of the Jangalis and their leader Kuchik Khan, effectively cutting off the western road to the Caspian. There seemed to be no way of securing the roads or stopping German and Turkish agents from inciting local khans in North-West Persia, Turkestan, or Afghanistan to revolt. On December 3rd, the same day that the Cabinet agreed to financially support the Transcaucasians, the Viceroy in India sent a cable to London reporting the unstable situation in Persia.

From Tehran, Marling confirmed the need to establish a presence in northwestern

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18 Detailed and reliable reports of the pogroms and death marches would not reach the War Office until later that year. (CITATION NEEDED)  
20 Moberly, Operations in Persia, p259.  
21 BNA, CAB/24/33/GT 2737, Cox to DMI, 21 Nov 1917. BNA, CAB/24/33/ GT 2738, Cox to DMI.  
22 BNA, CAB/23/34/GT 2855, Viceroy to India Office, 3 December 1917.
The only allied force which could assert some authority in the region was a cavalry brigade under Russian General Baratov, which had been cooperating in operations with General Marshall out of Baghdad. Since the Bolsheviks took power they were cut off from funds and needed money to combat desertion. To make matters worse, a severe famine gripped the country. Marling told the War Office about the skyrocketing prices of corn and bread for more than a month. Something needed to be done in Persia to ensure an order more preferable to British interests.

With these factors in mind, on December 7th Robertson addressed the War Cabinet to lay out his plan for Russia. While man-power was a desperate and critical issue, he discussed with the other Allied powers the need for intervention and reviewed plans submitted by his advisors. He decided then that “definite encouragement should be given to the Government of Tiflis, and an endeavor should be made to constitute an Armenian Army, which should be given financial support.” The foreign office would try to get financial help to the Armenians, and the Locker-Lamson Armoured Car Brigade, which already saw action on the Eastern Front, would be sent to Tiflis with whatever officers and men already existed in South Russia.

As the plans were laid, General Robertson and General Macdonogh decided to adapt the force to meet the needs of the growing problems in Persia. On December 14th, the cabinet realized that cash advances for their friends in South Russia and the Caucasus had not arrived. Marling in Teheran seemed unable to find and release the

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23 Moberly, Operations in Persia, p259.
necessary funds from anywhere in Persia. The country was a mess and a lack of order meant a lack of economic circulation, which meant there were no roubles or pounds to buy. To make matters worse, General Shore in Tiflis defied Marling’s request to release funds for the Georgian and Armenian armies. Shore only wanted to take orders directly from the War Office. This delay wasted precious time, and before long Persia and South Russia became the same problem. Marling hoped the War Office could send a force, Russian or otherwise, to secure the Kermanshah-Hamadan road in order to stabilize the country. If they were going to take action in Russia, they would first have to take action in Persia to free up the cash.

A special committee of the War Cabinet met on December 19\(^\text{th}\) to discuss the best course of action towards funding and supporting armies in North Persia and South Russia. General Macdonogho considered the demands from Persia as taking precedence. After some brainstorming, Macdonogho decided the need for support in both the Caucasus and Persia would be handled by one mission with officers attached for the training of Armenian and Georgian troops. They would also guard a precious cargo. Because roubles could not be had by Marling in Tehran for any of the forces the British hoped to bolster in South Russia, the British would send up 300,000 pound sterling in cash (equal to about 12 million roubles) with the mission. This seemed the

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28 Arslanian, British Military Involvement in Transcaucasia, p33.
29 Moberly, Operations in Persia, p270. See also BNA, CAB 24/144, Eastern Report No. 64, 20 Dec 1917, p3.
32 Ibid.
33 BNA, CAB/24/38/GT 3243, Foreign Office Minutes on S.E. Russia, 2 Jan 1918, p5. Dunsterville himself speaks of a ‘considerable weight of money in Persian silver and English gold’ which required several cars for transportation. Dunsterville, Adventures of Dunsterforce, p12.
only way to bring to the Transcaucasians their promised support.

General Marshall in Baghdad resisted extending the Mesopotamian force into Persia. Operations in Persia were outside the scope of his mission, and he could not spare the men or handle the supply difficulties along the difficult path of the Caspian Road. At the time, the British presence in Mesopotamia was shrinking to accommodate an aggressive advance in Palestine. Without available support north of the Persian Gulf, the British needed to bring in men from elsewhere.

To avoid leaking resources away from Marshall in Baghdad, half of this new force would be culled from the ranks of the Western Front to try and pick out idle, underemployed officers of the right personality. Once this was decided, Marling got a wire on December 20th saying a detachment of armored cars was on the way. For his lack of cooperation, General Shore was withdrawn from Tiflis. The India Office found Brig-General Lionel Dunsterville to take his place as the head of the Caucasus Military Mission, and lead the new expedition into North-West Persia.

**MORE CONTEXT ON DUNSTERVILLE.**

One armored car brigade and 450 imperial officers and NCOs was sufficient in establishing a presence from Baghdad to the Caspian, with detachments for Tiflis in order to help train what was hoped to be the new Caucasus Army. It was not a force large enough to undertake either offensive or defensive operations against an organized regional Turksish army, which numbered 8-10,000 regulars. By the time the force was being assembled, the mandate of the new expedition was fairly clear to the War Office,

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35 Plotke, *Imperial Spies Invade Russia*, p43.
36 Arslanian, PhD Thesis,
and the design of the force reflected that intent: secure the road, stabilize the region, deliver the cash. On Christmas Eve, Brigadier-General Lionel Dunsterville received his orders in Delhi to proceed to Baghdad, soon to be followed by a force of 450 British Imperial troops.

Volunteers: Constructing the Dunsterforce

Rapid progress dictated that the force would fill its quota with whatever capable soldiers volunteered, or were volunteered by their superiors.\(^\text{37}\) From the dispatch of Dunsterville on Christmas Eve to the embarkation of the nucleus of the force from London month later, Colonel Byron and Colonel Steel of the Directorate of Military Intelligence took whatever decent “volunteers” they could muster. The whole while, General Robertson and the D.M.I. keep an active interest in the new mission to the Caucasus. That the word 'sacrifice' and sentiments thereof were whispered in the Tower of London spoke to an understanding of the scope of the mission at the time: that it was not to receive much, if any, assistance or reinforcements. However grim this seemed, it was a policy in line with Robertson's intentions.

Colonel John Wightman Warden was C.O. of the 102\(^\text{nd}\) Canadian Infantry Battalion, a hardened group of British Columbians, nicknamed “Warden's Warriors”. He was sometimes stopped on the street for “commanding the finest battalion on the Allied front.”\(^\text{38}\) Under the command of Brigadier-General Victor Odlum, he saw his men

\(^{37}\) It has been suggested in some accounts that the entire body of soldiers was 'hand picked', and regarded as “the flower of the British army.” See Murray (???)

\(^{38}\) History of the 102\(^\text{nd}\) Battalion, Chapter 7. URL: http://www.102ndbattalioncaf.ca/warpages/102chap7.htm
through the battle for Hill 145, a battle where aggressive general orders had Canadian “corpses accumulate and form small hills of khaki.”39 After the maelstrom of Passchendaele, where he watched his men spend the better part of the battle doing nothing but freezing in the autumn cold and digging in the mud, he decided he had enough of the Western Front. Thoroughly soured, he put in his application for transfer on January 1st.40 Warden admitted in his personal diary:

I should never have left the Canadians I could not stand my Brigadier General Odlum any longer, nor Major General David Watson, Division Commander. Both very mercenary men and political [...] Odlum was the most clever schemer of the two. He was working for Watson's job & was making balls for Watson to fix in order to make him unpopular & Watson was not smart enough to know it [...] Odlum is a most avaricious decoration hunter, as are most of the staff.41

Warden did not want to be involved in personal army politics. He seemed to have no patience for officers with agendas which served their own egos. Over the next few days he argued with General Watson while trying to arrange for a transfer.

Meanwhile, the D.M.I. sent Colonel Byron down to France to recruit for the mission. A general call went out to the Canadian Corps for volunteers. Byron requested, “a number of officers [...] for a hazardous enterprise in a foreign theater of war. These officers must have the following qualifications: the spirit of adventure, undoubted courage, and ability to quickly estimate difficult situations.”42 Specifically, he looked for officers with at least a year's front line experience, men of “strong character, adventurous spirit, especially good stamina, capable of organizing, training, and

39 Wood, Vimy!, p140-1.
40 Warden, “Notes on the Persian and Baku Operations, 1918” 1 Jan 1918, p1.
41 LAC, Warden, Personal Diary, 8 January 1917.
42 Murray, Canadians in Dunsterforce I, p211.
eventually leading irregular troops.”

When Warden heard of the mission he saw it as his chance to get away from the vexes of his superiors, as it would get him out of France sooner rather than later. He wrote,

*Received information volunteers were being called for from France from among experienced man who had seen at least a year's front line experience for service in a foreign secret mission, which was mysteriously whispered was a very dangerous one. I immediately seized upon this to get away, and requested the G.O.C. to recommend me for it.*

General Watson did not want to let Warden go and argued with the colonel for days, hoping to meet some sort of arrangement regarding his transfer. Watson knew he and Odlum had put Warden out of sorts and perhaps did not want to be implicated to Major-General Currie. When they met on January 8th, another argument ensued, but Warden was adamant to be transferred.

Watson eventually caved and Warden immediately sought out Colonel Byron, who was interviewing volunteers. Warden wrote that Byron “was to proceed to the different divisions and select these selected men and take them to England. He was very efficient and of charming personality.” After a brief interview Byron approved Warden for the mission. Warden then met with Major-General Arthur Currie to approve the transfer, but Currie refused accept it. Unwilling to lose a senior colonel, he
Warden to stay. Warden later recalled in his diary how he refused to be honest about what drove him to give up his command.

...The Corps Commander insisted on knowing why I was leaving my battalion. I gave as my reasons my wish to see the Orient, he did not believe me and again insisted that there must be some reason why I was leaving, stating that I was one of the most popular battalion commanders in the Corps with my men. I still adhered to my original statement that I wished to see the Orient. He told me what I was going into, as he was cognizant of the whole thing, and I said, “Right 'O. I am willing to take a chance.” He looked at me for about a minute, and then he said “John, you are the biggest God damned ass I ever met, you are throwing away your military career, as you are now one of the senior colonels of my line battalions.” I still requested to go, and he consented, and issued orders for me to be seconded to the Imperial Army for special duty abroad.48

Warden packed up his kit, tied up loose ends in his battalion, and left Vimy. Glad to leave Corps politics behind, it was still a heartbreaking moment when he left his men. As he drove away from camp, he passed his troops who were lined up at the field kitchens drawing rations. “This is the hardest thing I ever had to do in my life,” he wrote.

*I have the best battalion in France. There never were men truer, braver, more gallant or loyal or capable, or more loved by their senior commanding officer in the British Army [...] This is just breaking my heart. I could not say “goodbye” to a single soul.*49

Although sad to part from the battalion he led for more than two years, Warden was relieved to be free of the “back-biting, hot air and petty jealousies” but knew that giving up his command and taking a spot on the expedition was a huge gamble because he practically gave up his authority in the Canadian Corps. He expressed his anxiety as

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48 Warden, “Notes on the Persian and Baku Operations, 1918” 8 Jan 1918, p5.
such: “When one becomes 'seconded' one never gets anywhere, he is just simply an
orphan, nobody's child, disowned by everybody.”

In addition to Colonel Warden, fourteen other Canadian officers applied. In the
late afternoon on January 10th, at headquarters at Camblain l'Abbe near Arras, Currie
met the applicants in person. Although Currie thought the mission was a crapshoot in
private, he said nothing of its circumstance to the officers he met that day. Each of the
officers was then interviewed by Brig-General Byron. Every man had his own private
reasons for applying. For ambitious men, a change of scenery and the promise of
adventure might have sufficed. Still, the particulars of the mission were kept secret
when the officers were told to report to the Tower of London.

Twenty-nine Canadian NCOs also arrived into London between January 11th and
15th. There was at least one man from each province in the dominion. They joined a
collection of soldiers from across the Western front. Alfred P. Gattey, a rancher from
Consort, Alberta served in the 107th Pioneers before he was forwarded for special duty.
He later wrote that the Tower contained, “Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans,
Canadians and British Imperials – one officer and one man from almost every battalion
on every front.” Twelve Imperial Russian officers were also present. Ali Ackbar, a
Persian, was attached to the force as interpreter and language teacher. The hodge-
podge army, called the “Hush-Hush Brigade” due to its secrecy, was fully assembled as

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51 LAC, SEE DUNSTERFORCE NOMINAL ROLL, WHERE ONE WAS TURNED AWAY.
52 How can you prove Currie thought this was a crapshoot?
54 LAC, RG 24, Vol. 1741, DHS 4-19, Canadians Serving in the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force,
55 Gattey, as quoted in Plotke, Imperial Spies Invade Russia, p148.
56 Maclaren, p11.
of January 13th. More than 200 British and colonial men, many of whom had no promotions, became acting sergeants for the expedition, and the junior officers became acting captains. None of the NCOs were allowed to leave the tower, to guard against the leakage of information.57

When he arrived at the Tower of London Warden’s first impressions of his fellow Canadians was lackluster. He wrote in his private diary:

*I am perfectly convinced that our Canadians were selected in order to get rid of them, and not for their efficiency in their units. I think it is most disgraceful. If I had the selecting, not one of the Canadian officers or men would have been sent. 58*

To Warden, the Canadians seemed to have been “picked on account of their individualistic character, which peculiarly fitted them for roving commissions. Men of the do-or-die type who in many cases were unhappy with the routine work of trench warfare.”59 Indeed, the request that all the men volunteer for the mission proved inviable, at least in the case of the Canadians. For example, Alfred Gattey was called to his colonel’s office out of the blue. He later wrote, “[The colonel] informed me that I was to report back to headquarters in London on a secret mission. He also asked me ‘if I could handle a bunch of cut-throats.’ On the way back to London I met two other Canadians with the same orders I had.”60 All the volunteers may not have been completely willing. Roy Casey, of the 29th Battalion, was in the custody of the military police until seconded to the War Office. Arrested for insubordinately disobeying an

60 Gattey, as quoted in Plotke, *Imperial Spies Invade Russia*, p148.
order and then resisting arrest, he chose adventure over incarceration. Still, despite the Canadians' hard-boiled flavor, Warden ranked them above the Australians for overall military smartness.

When Colonel Byron arrived, Warden impressed on him the need to know more about the expedition. Byron replied that “it was not advisable to state where it was going or what it was for.”

It was sufficient enough to inform us that we were embarking on one of the most dangerous missions that British troops had ever been asked to attempt. That was the reason why they had been picked from volunteers, as they would have been called upon to endure great hardships and dangers.

Still in the dark, the soldiers met a rigorous medical inspection. The medical officer seemed to be particularly interested in reactions to high altitudes. An officer and five other Canadian ranks were found unfit for duty after the inspection, due to the toll trench life had taken on their bodies. They were replaced by an artillery training officer from Seaford, Major Harold Kenzie Newcombe of the Manitoba Regiment, and two NCOs from other Canadian depots in England.

At the tower, Warden met with Colonel Donnan, who was in charge of organizing the force. Barrel-chested with a hard Aryan face, Donnan spent his military career up until then in office duties. This was the first time he had actually commanded men in the field. Perhaps uncomfortable with the responsibility, he was posturing at being a martial man by wearing a big revolver around his belt. He quickly acquired the nickname “Pistol

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64 Maclaren, *Canadians in Russia*, p10
65 Maclaren, *Canadians in Russia*, p10.
Pete” amongst the men. Warden wrote of their meeting, “[...] he eyed me critically, owing to the fact that he heard that a wild Canadian colonel was coming on the job, and he was not exactly at his ease.”66

Everyone felt out of the loop and speculation about the party’s destination was rife among the officers and the men. Some men guessed Quebec, thinking the French Canadians revolted and needed to be suppressed.67 Warden thought perhaps Egypt or East Africa, both being “storm centers”.68 Ireland, Norway, Italy and China were also suggested destinations, with China as a favorite of the NCOs. Sgt. David McWhirter of Manitoba once recalled how “Jimmy Murray began teaching us the Chink lingo that he’d picked up in a chop suey joint in Calgary.”69

The direct involvement of the Imperial General Staff speaks to the intentions behind of the mission. On the afternoon of January 22nd, Warden was surprised to see General Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, present himself at the Tower to inspect the men.70 He spoke before them of the importance of their mission.

*General Robertson gave a short address wherein he told us that we were selected by the Empire to carry out one of the most arduous tasks and most dangerous undertakings that any subject had been called upon to perform. That we were really a sacrificial party being sent out to endeavor to save the Empire and our Allies. We would be surrounded by greater dangers, if that were possible, than in France, but dangers of a different nature. There would be many, no doubt, who would not return. Those who returned would be very fortunate.*71

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67 Warden, “Notes on the Persian and Baku Operations 1918”, 11-13 Jan 1918, p11
69 Murray, “Canadians in Dunterforce I” p213.
Robertson’s harrowing address made sense in the light of the objectives the War Cabinet had established for the force. The expansion of the Central Powers’ resource base into Central Asia was threatening, but Robertson maintained that strength in manpower on the Western Front was a more urgent priority than checking the Germans at every turn.\textsuperscript{72} For the Entente to outlast Germany, Britain needed to provide enough manpower to weather the storm Germany was expected to rain down on Western Front in the spring. A few days prior to his appearance at the Tower, Robertson sent a memo articulating his views on the war to come. He wrote, “...that we must have the largest possible number of reserves ready to move at the shortest notice in any required direction; and that until we can define the enemy’s intentions we must resist urgent appeals for help which are certain to be made and avoid frittering away our reserves to meet what may prove to be subsidiary attacks.”\textsuperscript{73} The expectation was that a couple hundred officers and NCOs would man the thousand-kilometer Baghdad-Baku cordon and provide leadership to the new Caucasus army. The commanders of this mission simply had to deal with this difficult reality. The mission was intended as stated: sacrificial. In Robertson’s view, the Empire could spare no more.\textsuperscript{74}

After Robertson’s visit, the force was designated as the “Baghdad Party”, giving the NCOs some idea of where they were going. On January 28\textsuperscript{th}, Deputy D.M.I. Colonel Steel corralled the officers and addressed them, emphasizing the utmost secrecy. “You have been specially selected for this adventurous expedition, and it is quite possible that

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\textsuperscript{72} Robertson, “The Present Military Situation with Reference to the Peace Proposals,” CAB/27/34, 29 December, 1917.
\textsuperscript{73} Robertson, “The Present Military Situation with Reference to the Peace Proposals,” CAB/27/34, 29 December, 1917.
\textsuperscript{74} Robertson’s restraint and urge to prevent diversions is well described in Millman, “The Problem with Generals,” p295-296. Robertson had no desire to see resources or manpower used in peripheral theaters, and practiced a stern restriction of force in what he perceived as ancillary territories.
\end{footnotesize}
you might be sacrificed on the altar of British prestige in the Caucasus Mountains.” At last he revealed to them the particulars of the mission. The only thing further said to the NCOs was that Baghdad was the first destination. More orders would then be issued upon arrival.  

3

The Mad Dash: Dunsterville Fails to Reach Tiflis

The day before the Canadians left London, Dunsterville collected a dozen officers, five cars, thirty-six vans, the £300,000 for the Caucasian armies, and sped out of Baghdad for the Caspian, hoping to make the 600 mile trip in ten days. “Hurrah for the great adventure!” he wrote in his private papers. However, the quick jump he was hoping for did not materialize. Shifts in regional power closed roads which seemed open, both literally and politically speaking. Within eight weeks of its launch, the Dunsterville mission to Tiflis needed to be entirely reassessed.

After a day of clear driving the cars hit heavy show on the edge of the Persian plateau. It took a week of digging and pushing to get to Kermanshah, which was not even half way up the line. Dunsterville, stuck for the moment, gathered information about the situation in Persia. Baratov's Russian force had whittled itself out of usefulness but one of his subcommanders, Colonel Bicherakov, still led a small force of about 300 loyal, functional cavalry. Bicherakov was a figure of some romance amongst the Britishers who met him; they found something magnetic and commanding in his

75 Murray, “Canadians in Dunsterforce I”, p212.
77 Dunsterville Diary.
bearing and battle scars.\textsuperscript{78} “Bicharakov, the number of whose wounds was said to already be in double figures, seemed to be young for his rank and was evidently a man of vigorous personality,” wrote one British officer.\textsuperscript{79} Another remembered him similarly:

\begin{quote}
He is the only man I know who after three and a half years' war still loves fighting. He comes of an old [Ossetian] stock, wears no decorations, and has the face of an iron dreamer. He was on the Western Front early in the war, and has been wounded six times in six different actions. He lost the use of his right hand, retains only partial use of his left, carries a bullet near his spine, and limps. All the same he is a hard rider, and when mounted you could not tell he was not sound.\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

The old soldier had been cooperating with General Marshall in the autumn, trying to keep stability along the Caspian Road while the Persian Cossacks dissolved.\textsuperscript{81} The rump force called themselves Partizans, indicating their defiance to Bolshevik sympathizers. Their determination to continue fighting and a stern loyalty to Bicherakov himself united them under a skull and crossbones banner. The colonel's charisma gave his force a great advantage of reputation, which he used to negotiate their path through the crumbling edges of the Russian Empire. For an inflated price, Dunsterville made an arrangement to keep Bicherakov's men and material at his disposal.\textsuperscript{82}

The column moved up the road to Hamadan as fast as possible in nearly constant snowfall. When the cars stalled in a blizzard, Dunsterville rode ahead to Hamadan where he met a handful of intelligence officers from Tiflis, Tabriz, Baku, and other places now within the theater of his command. Most of them were har\textsuperscript{\scriptsize{1}}ed by sheer

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{78} French, p97-98.  \\
\textsuperscript{79} Edmonds, \textit{East and West of Zagros}, p220.  \\
\textsuperscript{80} Candler, \textit{On the Edge of the World}, p221.  \\
\textsuperscript{81} Barker, \textit{The Neglected War}, p449.  \\
\textsuperscript{82} Donohoe, p70. See also how much money the WO planned to use to fund the Persian Cossacks.
\end{footnotesize}
stress and nervousness. Dunsterville sent one, Captain Goldsmith, ahead to Enzeli to secure some petrol for when they arrived. General Baratov spoke longwindedly to the British general about the situation. Most of the hostiles in the area were deserters of his former army. After a couple days rest in Hamadan the column continued up to Kasvin, where Dunsterville encountered more of the same: stress-eaten officers and disgruntled Russian soldiers. “There was never such a terrifying situation,” he wrote privately, “but one is not paid to be terrified.”

Leaving Kasvin, knowing the road to the Caspian was held by Jangalis nationalist rebels, the column resolved to move as quickly as possible, stopping at the city of Resht for half an hour to talk to the local British consul. The rebels made declarations that they would hinder the British in any way possible. Their force of approximately 5000 was purportedly led by German Colonel von Passchen and his Austrian instructors. “Kuchik Khan is only too glad to see the Russians leaving,” recorded Dunsterville in his memoir, “This enables him to buy huge stocks of rifles and ammunition at very low prices.” Nervous about driving into hostile territory, the 70-mile trip through Gilan province to the sea shore was swiftly done in a tight convoy with the armored machine-gun lorry at the front.

Dunsterville arrived in Enzeli on February 17th, the whole trip to the Caspian taking twice as long as he had hoped. The harbour town had been taken over by Bolshevik Russian soldiers who, by holding the city, effectively controlled all shipping.

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83 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 7 Feb 1918.  
84 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 15 Feb 1918.  
85 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 16 Feb 1918.  
86 Dunsterville, Adventures of Dunsterforce, p29.  
87 Dunsterville, Adventures of Dunsterforce, p29.
on the South Caspian. A committee of Russians and a committee of Persians administered the port, the Russians taking their orders from the Bolsheviks Baku and the Persians, from Kuchik Khan. It was up to them if Dunsterville could proceed to Baku and thence to Tiflis to take up the object of his mission.

The British column received an icy welcome. “We were prisoners from the moment of our arrival,” wrote Dunsterville. First, the general stopped at the Customs House where a throng of curious Russian soldiers immediately surrounded the British. A messenger from the Russian committee approached the general and said they demanded to see him at their meeting at eight o’clock that night. Dunsterville, to his error, got caught up in dinner with the Belgian customs officer and his wife and lost track of time. His mistake was revealed to him when the president of this committee and a Russian sailor in uniform arrived and demanded to speak to him. In the sitting room of the house of the customs officer they questioned Dunsterville who answered tactfully and agreed to meet the committee the next morning.

Overnight, Dunsterville learned that the committee locked down transportation in the town. “They put sentries on all the ships to prevent my leaving and they have a gun-boat ready to sink us if we try – our house is guarded night and day and the situation is absurd.” The party seemed barred from going forward or backwards, seeing as how the stretch back to Kasvin was hostile territory and the column was in desperate need of petrol. When he met the Russians in the morning, he greeted a group of a dozen young revolutionary officers sitting around a table with their collars

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88 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 17 Feb 1918.
89 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 17 Feb 1918.
90 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 18 Feb 1918.
unbuttoned. The general did his best to be amicable but made no headway. Before the Bolsheviks could make a unanimous decision on what to do with the British officer who dropped into their midst, Dunsterville excused himself and immediately set about leaving. The council commanded him to report back to them again the next day.

Without passage to Baku the party could not reach Tiflis to support the Transcaucasian Republic. As far as Dunsterville considered it, the road to the Caucasus seemed closed. That night, he wrote “The mission has ended and there is nothing left to do but get out of it with all speed.”

At the next meeting on the morning of February 19th, Dunsterville informed the committee he intended to leave and made an excuse for his haste. For the most part, they seemed not to wish him harm but could not assist him on principle. Dunsterville managed to speak to the president of the committee privately, and took the opportunity to beg for petrol. To his astonishment, the president signed it over.

I thought they might try to take us prisoners, but they did not. [...] I have an army of 40 Chauffeurs and 1 armoured car, and am not prepared to take on 4000 Russians, so there’s nothing to argue about [...] I foresaw all this from the very start - the mission was two months too late and could only end in failure.

Thinking the mission had failed and ready to abandon its objectives, the only thing to do now was to make a clean getaway. That night, Dunsterville feared for the £300,000 in gold and silver he had sitting in the backs of his cars. The party left extremely early the next morning and drove back to Kasvin on a road littered with Russian deserters on the one side and Persian nationalists on the other. “I am frightfully disappointed at having

91 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 18 Feb 1918.
92 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 18 Feb 1918.
93 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 18 Feb 1918.
to go back like this, but I am convinced that very few men could have extricated the party from the ridiculous position they were in and I am glad to be here without losing a car or a man.”

Goldsmith preceded Dunsterville to Baku and telegraphed Stepan Shaumian, asking for permission for the force to proceed to Tiflis. Goldsmith later reported that Shaumian acquiesced, but Dunsterville never received this news. On the contrary, Dunsterville wondered if taking a steamer and heading for Baku would simply lead his men into capture. To cement the notion that he was unwelcome, Dunsterville later heard that a cadre of Red Guards arrived in a steamer from Baku moments after his party drove out of the city. The event convinced him that the road through Baku was not a viable option. “I shall never cease to marvel at our escape from Enzeli,” he wrote. I expect they are now cursing their foolishness in letting us go. Each was trying to get the other to fire the first shot and neither dared, but the Red Guards who arrived from Baku just as I left, would doubtless have done it, and they had us cold. If I had stayed another 24 hours it would have been all up. Thanks be to God!

Dunsterville’s precarious trip to Enzeli and back convinced him that “until the situation improves this road must be regarded as entirely closed.” When Dunsterville got back to Hamadan, he wired Whitehall, probably not knowing that Roberston had

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94 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 24Feb 1918.
95 Dunsterville, Private Diary, __________? It is possible that Colonel Pike, temporarily in charge in Tiflis, did not think it was necessary to send the message on to Hamadan and that he could hold the fort and support the Caucasian army without the assistance of Dunsterville’s officers. See Arslanian, British Military Involvement in Transcaucasia, p51-52.
96 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 26 Feb 1918. Arslanian maintains that while Dunsterville was still in Enzeli Captain Goldsmith, who was sent ahead and had since arrived in Baku, sent a telegram to Stepan Shaumain, leader of the Baku Soviet asking for safe passage for the British, and that Shaumain acquiesced to let them through to Tiflis but Dunsterville left Enzeli before he got the message. See Arslanian, p48.
97 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 26 Feb 1918.
98 BNA, CAB 24/43/GT 3712, Dunsterville to CIGS, 22 Feb 1918.
been pressured out of office by the Prime Minister and General Wilson had taken his place as Chief of the Imperial General Staff.\footnote{BNA, CAB/24/43, GT3779, Dunsterville to CIGS, 26 Feb 1918. A Norperforce officer revealed in his diary that in 1920, the road from Zanjian (180km west of Kasvin) to Tabriz, although unmetalled, was in fact fit for motorcar. See Edmonds, \textit{East and West of Zagros}, p257.} A few days later, the War Office cabled back, asking if the party could not proceed by road to Tiflis through Tabriz. Dunsterville replied that the road to Tabriz out from Kasvin was not suitable for motor, and he needed more men and animals to make it happen.\footnote{Dunsterville, Private Diary, 26 Feb 1918.} “They want me to go by the Tabriz road - how little they understand the situation. I should have to be taken prisoner or shot the first day, or take a force big enough to fight.”\footnote{Dunsterville, Private Diary, 3 March 1918.} If this was going to be the case, he requested a regiment of cavalry, an infantry brigade, a battery of mountain artillery, a battery of armored cars, and three airplanes. He had Bicherakov's Partizans, but it was doubtful as to whether or not Bicherakov could be trusted. “Bicherakov offers to escort my party through,” wrote Dunsterville, “but he is an Ossetian and out simply to fight for the Ossetians against the Bolsheviks which has nothing whatsoever to do with my aims.”\footnote{Dunsterville, \textit{Adventures of Dunterforce}, p75.} Relying on the Russians was too big a gamble.

\begin{quote}
\textit{As long as the Russians were near us, it was possible they might help in case of difficulty, but it was equally possible that the revolutionary soldiers might be tempted to join in with the other programme, that included, like all good programs, a looting of the bank.}\footnote{Sareen, \textit{British Intervention in Central Asia and Transcaucasia}, p51.}
\end{quote}

Marling also did not trust the Cossacks, writing “I cannot help suspecting that Bicherakov is just trying to make money out of us.”\footnote{Dunsterville, Private Diart, 17 March 1918.} Either way, Bicherakov told Dunsterville that his force would not attack Jangalis.\footnote{Dunsterville, Private Diary, 26 Feb 1918.} By the end of February, after
what was considered an extremely narrow escape, Dunsterville’s considered his original orders impossible with the resources available, and the mission finished.

With the mission all but abandoned, agents wired the War Office stating that the encroaching Turkish army on the Persian border stirred up massacres between the Armenians and Kurds. While the Mission in Tiflis was successful in getting some money out to the troops, the divides between the three national councils of the Transcaucasian Commissariat deepened. The Armenians held the largest portion of the battle-line against the Turks and were the first to receive funds from the British. Accusations of favoritism pushed the other two nations away from cooperation with both the British and the Armenians. Local intelligence officers expected the frontier from Kermanshah to territorial Armenia could be greatly calmed when the rest of the Dunsterville party arrived. One agent judged that the stability they would bring to North-West Persia would be more useful than the attempt to move to Tiflis and organize a non-existent force.\(^\text{106}\) Opinions were that operations in Persia need to take precedence over getting to Tiflis, where trying to help seemed useless.\(^\text{107}\)

Despite the advice, the War Office had no idea what to do about the rapidly deteriorating situation. Some thought it best to tread softly, and that an all-out military occupation of the Caspian Road would be “tantamount to declaring war on Persia.”\(^\text{108}\) General Wilson, the new Chief of General Staff, favored expanding British engagements in theaters other than the Western Front. He advocated to increase the size of Dunsterville’s force to hold the line, but not an entire cavalry brigade.\(^\text{109}\) Completely

\(^{106}\)BNA, CAB 24/43/GT 3760, CMA to DMI, 21 Feb 1918.

\(^{107}\)Arslanian, *British Military Involvement in Transcaucasia*, p56.

\(^{108}\)BNA, CAB/23/5, WC 354, 26 Feb 1918, p2-3.

replacing the Russians in North-West Persia required a great deal of transport from Baghdad, almost all that the MEF had to offer. To consider the risks, the question was deferred to Lord Curzon's Persian Committee.

The matter got tied up in committees for two weeks. The General Staff was reassessing its strategy in the east, trying to decide upon where to press the Turks and what to do about Germany's newly found access to Odessa, the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and Southern Russia. It was not until March 11th that a definitive statement of strategy was made by the War Office. In response to German occupation of Odessa, Wilson determined that it was essential to inflate the situation in Persia.110 Getting to Tiflis and supporting the army there was no longer the objective. Instead, a force would be sent further into North West Persia to pacify the nationalists, raise levies, and support the flank of the remnants of the Armenian forces holding the line against the Turks. He wrote in a memo to his colleagues,

[...] We are to stretch out from Baghdad into North-West Persia and on a foundation of organized military strength between Baghdad and the Caspian build up local organizations and work our way into the Caucasus with the firm intention of winning over Armenia, and making our influence predominate on the eastern ports of the Black Sea.111

The new orders were finally cabled to Dunsterville. He was to pacify Persia, raise what forces he could, and secure the country North-West towards Tabriz. In these efforts, he could no longer operate independently if his force was going to be supported from Baghdad. He recorded in his diary,

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110 Wilson was backed in sentiment by analysts in the Foreign Office who saw controlling North-West Persia as the only way to keep communication and support open to south Russia. See Arslanian, *British Military Intervention in Transcaucasia*, p56.
At last an important cable from Home facing facts and altering everything. I am now no longer on a Mission to the Caucasus. They recognize, as I suggested, that Persia must be held first. So I am no longer independent. I am under Baghdad, and they are told to shove troops up here as soon as they can, and as far as I am concerned, the sooner the better. But Baghdad are very sticky and take a long time to get a move on - I asked for armored cars a month ago, and now they "contemplate" sending them.112

Dunsterville welcomed the reinforcements, but saw that being placed under Baghdad brought its own set of challenges. He had to work against General Marshall to get men and material up the line if he was going to have any chance of pushing back towards the Caspian and eventually following through with Wilson's new intentions of securing North-West Persia.

4

Orphans: Mission Mismanagement and Marshall's Mesopotamian Malign

The rest of the “Hush Hush Army” spent February and March in transit to Mesopotamia. They experienced a marked lack of organizational support at various points throughout the trip. In fact, General Marshall frustrated the mobility of the party and hindered their timely arrival in Persia.

Managing a hodgepodge of individualistic men proved difficult, and Warden was frequently disappointed with the caliber and behavior of the NCOs under his command. When the party arrived at Cherbourg on the 30th, the men had until two o'clock the next afternoon to be ready to entrain for a ten day trip by rail to Italy. Stragglers held up the whole party and were eventually located by the French adjutants at the British camp.

112Dunsterville, Personal Diary, 13 Mar 1918.
Many of the sergeants, especially the Canadians, seemed an irresponsible rabble to their colonel.

_The trouble with these men was they were really officers' servants made sergeants so that they could be brought and these were most unsatisfactory. The colonial NCOs were not much good [...] the colonials were very drunken and were really hard tickets. I am perfectly convinced that our Canadians were selected in order to get rid of them and not for their efficiency in their units. I think it is most disgraceful. If I had the selecting not one of the Canadian officers or men would have been sent._

The disgust Warden had felt for his fellow Canadians echoed his attitude towards his former commanders. While Warden's attachment to his own battalion was souring his opinions, many of the Canadian sergeants, and probably some of the officers, were 'hard tickets' themselves, who had been shelved for refusal to follow protocol. Still, he tolerated some of the officers. He let Captain Murray share his cabin on the train, but may have taken exception to the fact that Captain Petrie invited himself to sleep on the floor between them.

The men disembarked at meal hours, taking a careful watch of their kits lest they be pilfered by Italian railroad attendants. Captain Adam Harrison Gilmore, a Winnipeg grain broker before the war, was in France since 1915. His fiancée Josephine had volunteered as a nursing sister and was taking her leave on the French Riviera. She showed up at the station in Cannes and rode with her husband-to-be and the 209 other “Hush-Hush” soldiers. Warden recalled the breach of regulation, “Though no woman is supposed to ride on a troop train we took her from Cannes to Monaco. While the

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114EXAMPLES FROM RG9 FILES AT L.A.C.? NEED ANOTHER LAC TRIP MAYBE?
115Warden, LAC Diary, 1 Feb 1918.
engineer was taking on water, we had the train slow down and she jumped off. [...] Ye
gods how the train does smell of garlic.”116

An electric engine carried the men through depots where the rambunctious
reputation of Canadian soldiers proceeded them. The tourists enjoyed the small Italian
towns by night. Warden kept the company of Lieut-Commander Smiles, CO of the
armored car brigade promised to the Armenians. At Taranto, Warden's patience reached
its limit while trying to load all of the force's kit and gear onto the boat for Alexandria.
Staff officers and labor units sat idly by while he and his officers attempted to load their
own stores. Finally, he snapped into action and took command of the dock and the 600
African laborers working there. “I don't know how we manage to win wars,” he wrote in
a furor. “For incompetence and lack of knowledge of his duties in war the average
English staff officer is easily the winner of first place.”117

Aboard the S.S. Malwa, the men were lectured in Persian and Russian and vied
over the attentions of 50 nurses bound for South Africa. Games on deck made quick
work of three days at sea. After a submarine scare in Alexandria Harbor, the men
disembarked and took in the sights of the ancient Egyptian city and the young dancing
Egyptian girls. Warden's opinion of his men fell further still when trying to get things
underway at Suez. When Captain Gilmour was left behind in Alexandria, Warden
fumed.

These men could not form fours or perform ordinary
parade ground evolutions let alone instruct. A
heterogeneous, conglomerate mob of irregulars would not
understand the language of the instructors. Many of the

officers are still more hopeless.\textsuperscript{118}

Warden’s also bore the brunt of the criticism for the command structure of the mission from the men. Due to a lack of foresight at the War Office, there had been some confusion over rank between the officers. Warden explained,

\textit{The Australians are particularly aggrieved due to the fact that many were junior to Canadian officers who had a shorter length of commissioned service than they had. [...] These officers figured that as they had been lieutenants longer than the Canadians they should be senior to them when all were promoted Captains.}\textsuperscript{119}

A cockroach-infested ship coached the men from Egypt to Mesopotamia. The food was indigestible. The NCOs listened to briefs on regional affairs and started lessons in Russian. Many of them were fascinated at the schools of flying fish and porpoises splashing in otherwise calm waters.\textsuperscript{120} Occasional sports filled the afternoons on deck. A cleaner hospital ship picked up the men in Kuwait and carried them over sunken steamboats in the river mouth to Basra, where then men disembarked on March 2\textsuperscript{nd}. Soon thereafter, Warden received an invitation to bring his officers to dine with the Sheik of Mohammerah. There, they were privy to live music, dancing girls, a fifteen course meal, and a cinema show. The NCOs sat in their billets and listened to the music drift up the Tigris.

\textbf{VISITING TOWNSEND MONUMENT AT KUT-EL-AMARA BECAUSE IT FORSHADOWS A POSSIBLE DUNSTERVILLE 'SUICIDE STAND' AT BAKU.}

It took the party an entire month to arrive in Baghdad from Basra. Circumstances

\textsuperscript{118}Warden also noted that there was a distinct lack of specialists on the mission, including clerks and horseshoers. Seeing as how the mission was to be attached to, supporting and supported by, an Allied Caucasus Army, the lack of specialists is understandable. Warden, “Notes”, p23. Plotke, p??.

\textsuperscript{119}Warden, “Notes”, p23.

\textsuperscript{120}Campbell Diary, 23 Feb 1918.
point to a marked lack of logistical support from the MEF. “During this period we merely killed time,” wrote Warden. “Not a word during this period of our nominal chief General Dunsterville.”121 Instead of taking the rail line up from Basra, they were forced to wait, and the idleness created discontent. On March 17th the force finally packed itself “like sardines” onto a barge and headed up the river. “The delay was inexplicable, there seemed to be every possible means adopted to waste time.”122 Meanwhile, Dunsterville waited in Hamadan for Baghdad to move his men up the line. He half expected Kurdish tribes or Janglais rebels to swoop down on his force, and started getting frustrated with General Marshall.123

The G.O.C. Mesopotamia, for the two weeks the Dunsterforce was waiting in Basra, told the War Office that the weather was holding up the men more than anything else, leaving Whitehall to think that the troops they promised Dunsterville were stuck in the mud and snow, rather than waiting for a ride on the riverbank.124 When asked to move troops to Kermanshah to support Dunsterville, Marshall only sent one platoon.125 The general promised the War Office he would send the needed troops within six weeks when the weather cleared up.

Men in the ranks took the lack of support as a sign of jealousy against the independent command Dunsterville was given. One officer described the situation as follows:

*Our welcome in official quarters was distinctly chilly. The difficulty chiefly arose, it appears, because General*

121Warden, “Notes”, 7 Mar 1918.
122Warden, “Notes”, p44.
123Dunsterville, Private Diary, 29 Mar 1918.
124Moberly, IV, p118-119.
125Moberly, IV, p118-119.
Dunsterville, the leader of our expedition, had been given a separate command, and was independent of the General commanding-in-chief in Mesopotamia. Jealousy was created in high quarters.126

A colonel who arrived on the scene in July reported a similar situation, but tried to defend the attitude in Baghdad in his memoir, as the MEF received what seemed like unorthodox requests for a mission without clear, stated objectives.127 On one occasion, Dunsterville cabled asking for a butcher and baker to put to work to help alleviate the famine conditions in Hamadan. After a week of waiting on a cable back, the reply read, “It is not understood for what purpose the services of a butcher and baker are required.”128 Though frustrated, Dunsterville continued to cajole Baghdad for support.

Marshall intentionally frustrated Dunsterville’s free hand to conduct operations, but not out of spite.129 The man in Baghdad hated the whole thought of intervention in Persia.130 “Had the Eastern Committee done me the honor of asking for my opinion, I should certainly have advised against it,” he wrote in his memoir. “Persia was a neutral country which did not want us there at all.”131 Knowing that the mission had essentially failed by the end of February when Dunsterville fell back, General Marshall saw no further reason to support it. “From a purely military point of view the creation of another 700 miles of communications, and most of that distance though a mountainous country with a mere track as a road, seemed to me to be madness.”132 Marshall instead wanted to keep what forces he had for the open plains of Mesopotamia, a battlefield

126Donohoe, p62.
127Rawlinson, p57.
128 Rawlinson, p57. Dunsterville, Private Diary, 10 Apr 1918.
129Discuss historiography.
130Arslanian, British Military Involvement in Transcaucasia, p67-68.
131Marshall, p282-83
132Marshall, p286.
which allowed brisk movement but required a large number of animal and mechanical transport. However, Dunsterville’s urgency impressed upon the War Cabinet a need for full intervention. Eventually they gave Marhsall a direct order to support Dunsterville. He was so incensed at the matter he almost resigned his post. Though he disagreed with the entire policy and the lines of communication sapped his transport strength, Marshall bowed and resolved to follow orders. “Though for some time the bad weather enabled me to postpone the evil day, I eventually received orders to carry out this, in my opinion, mad enterprise.”

Although set to cooperate, Marshall had to take it upon himself to keep Persia from inflating into a cancerous sap of MEF resources.

On April 1st, Col. Warden and Col. “Pistol Pet” Donnan reported to Marshall soon after arriving in Hinaidi. “On entering we beheld a small, spare man,” wrote Warden. He said ‘Well, what do you want?’ I told him we were reporting the arrival of the Dunsterforce at Hinaidi camp. I reported our condition there and asked if there were any instructions, as we were informed before leaving London that we would get our instructions at Baghdad. Strange to say he seemed to be very much annoyed at our presence and remarked that he did not know who the Dunsterforce was, and not knowing what we were there for, he did not know what to do with us. After tapping his pencil on the table he finally inquired ’Who are you and what are you here for anyway? I have no instructions for you.’ The disagreeable meeting put Warden off. “If that is the sort of treatment that is to be accorded to us by our senior officers,” Warden told Donnan, “I do not think our expedition will be much of a success. In fact, I am afraid it will be a dead fizzle.”

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133Marshall, p287.
134Warden, “Notes”, p57. Marshall was lying. Dunsterville had stayed with him in Baghdad before departing into Persia with his small column at the end of January. See L.C. Dunsterville, Personal Diary, 18 Jan 1918.
135Warden, “Notes”, p57.
the men were forwarded up the railhead to head into Persia, a full month had passed since Dunsterville received his new orders from General Wilson. A trying trip brought out the shortcomings of the War Office’s plan before it was even underway.

5

Releif: Managing Persia

Half of the Dunsterforce was not present in the theater of operations until April 1918. Faced with new objectives, the original force of about 70 officers and 150 NCOs was no longer expected to land in Tiflis and assemble a new Caucasus army around themselves. Instead, Canadian officers received duties relevant to assuring peace and military order along the Caspian Road. Most of these took the form of administrative duties, famine relief, or advance positions on the Bijar-Tabriz road. Especially concerning famine and refugee relief, the Canadians and other British Imperial soldiers found themselves woefully frustrated.

Colonel Donnan and General Byron left for Hamadan with the Armoured Car Brigade, leaving Warden in charge of moving about 150 men into Persia. Now with a lone command, Warden knew he had to crack down on discipline if the march was going to go smoothly. On May 21st, when officers failed to show up for parade, he lined them up and threatened to send them back to Baghdad. “There is to be no second chance. I’m going to be obeyed or someone will suffer,” he jotted down in his dairy.\(^{136}\) He dismissed his English adjutant and instead made Captain Cecil Lewis, a British Columbian, his new second-in-command. On May 23rd they proceeded up the line by rail to Ruz and then left with horses, mules, donkeys and camels -- 700 pack animals in all -- towards

\(^{136}\text{Warden, LAC Diary, 21 May 1918.}\)
the Persian frontier. Still, before the party made out for Kermanshah, discipline was foremost on Warden’s mind when Captain Petrie and the Australians caroused late into the night. “They are not even fit for NCOs,” he wrote. “The Australians are absolutely an undisciplined mob.”

Logistical problems plagued the force. When Captain Harrison rode ahead of the party to find camping sites, he discovered his maps inaccurately showed distances to rest stops and drinking water. Under the unbearable heat of the day, marching uphill into Persia along the sandy road, the horses foamed and panted, occasionally having their bit whetted for their comfort. After enduring the desert, Warden opted to march the men by night despite an increased risk of attack by Kurdish raiders. When they made camp on June 4th, these tribal guerrillas dammed the local stream and cut the force’s telephone wire back to Baghdad. Warden posted a double guard to keep watch. The next day, while riding alongside the column, a bullet whizzed by his head.

No matter where the party stopped, Warden took exception over logistics. Accommodations and campsites were poor, and he made requests for more pack animals, seeing as how the ones he had been given were weak, tired, overloaded, and sometimes died on the road. It became difficult to supply the men with food, and soon the NCOs prodded the officers over the paltry meat ration. The Dunsterforce was meant to pay its own way: each man’s allowance should have paid the inflated prices which made food inaccessible to the average Persian. Still, food was scarce. Warden

137 Warden, LAC Diary, 24 May 1918.
138 Harrison, LAC files. 0-11-36. p1
139 Harrison, LAC files. 0-11-36. p1
140 Warden, LAC Diary, 6 June 1918.
141 Warden, LAC DIARY, May 28th.
complained, “We were supposed to be able to purchase plenty of food but absolutely nothing but goats can be had & the native people are dying of starvation by the roadside.”¹⁴² Decrepit souls who crawled out to beg received a good percentage of the Britishers’ rations, and the men marched on with a little less in their stomachs.

When they reached Kermanshah on June ⁷th, they scoured the town for food. “We could obtain sheep, chuppatees, eggs, almonds, and raisins, and the water supply here was good,” wrote Captain Harrison, while still remembering how the countryside had been ravaged with famine and war:

*Signs of the Turkish and Russian occupation were to be seen all the way. The villages were deserted, the mud houses pulled down for what fuel the few beams afforded, and the land was out of cultivation for want of draught oxen and seed. Except for itinerant shepherds there were few people on the roadside, and those we saw were living skeletons.*¹⁴³

Those who begged for food were now turned away by a party on half rations. Warden barred the NCOs from entering the disease-ridden town.¹⁴⁴ The Canadian officers were invited to visit Mr. Stead, an American missionary stationed in the city, and his Canadian wife. For first time in weeks, the men drank tea. The Steads set the party up with orphan Persian boys as batmen to carry and maintain their gear.

The British invasion of Persia became a fact when Dunsterforce rode out of Kermanshah. The road proved an easier march at the top of the Persian plateau, but the countryside was rife with anxiety. The men passed starving locals laying in ditches and dodged the occasional sniper bullet. The ‘chuppatee’, the black bread picked up in

¹⁴²Warden, LAC DIARY, July 6.
¹⁴³Harrison, LAC files. 0-11-36. p2
¹⁴⁴Campbell Diary, 8 June 1918.
Kermanshah, was packed with bits of moldy chaff and those who ate it got diarrhea.\textsuperscript{145} Two days out of Kermanshah, two of the Shah's battalions came down the road towards the front party. An Australian, S.G. Savige, led the advance party and worried that the Persians were there to arrest them. His Canadian sidekick, a young Sergeant Tom Brophy, assessed the situation, “I guess we'll have about as much chance as a snowflake in hell if these here guys cut up.”\textsuperscript{146} Savige snapped a quick order for his men to form up and salute. The Persian battalions approached and to the relief of the advance guard, their commander leaned into a salute himself. A short column of women and children trailed behind the Shah's army on foot and camel, all deathly thin.

The force finally pulled into Hamadan in mid-June. When the party approached the city Captain Guy Burland Roberts took charge of the supply. One surviving anecdote puts Roberts with a bone to pick with some of his fellow officers. Instead of the NCOs bringing in the pack animals, Roberts decided to leave that job to the officers. A sergeant under his command remembered, “The NCOs and I had a very easy day, but the baggage came in by the penny numbers for hours.”\textsuperscript{147}

The former capital of old Persian empires hoarded unparalleled hardship, probably unlike anything seen before by these Canadian eyes. Starved bodies had piled in the streets and were occasionally gnawed by stray dogs.\textsuperscript{148} Harrison later wrote “The collection of the dead seems to be the only form of local government.”\textsuperscript{149} Outside the city walls, people would graze on dry grass in the patchy fields, pulling it up by hand and

\textsuperscript{145}Warden, LAC Diary, 13 June 1918.
\textsuperscript{146}Brophy, as quoted in Savige, Chapter 10.
\textsuperscript{147}Kesley, p26.
\textsuperscript{149}Harrison, LAC FILE, p2.
chewing on the roots to fill their bellies.\textsuperscript{150} A person could subsist on nothing but grass for about two weeks, until their bodies used up all available stores of energy and they expired beside the highway, begging at wandering Russian soldiers for food.

The men were broken up into units for jobs along the line of communication and at advance positions in the north. Several of the officers, including Capt. Roberts, Capt. Gilmour, Capt. Burbidge, and Capt. Harrison were assigned to clerical and administrative duties in town. Before they could raise levies for any sort of action against the encroaching Turks, the party found that the most rudimentary civil work was needed to save the populace from starvation and anarchy. They tried creating work-releif programs and soup kitchens, making do with the modest manpower they could muster from Persian policemen and Dunsterforce NCOs. One soldier wrote of the sights at the soup kitchen, “But what is this crowd of unfortunate women and children on the side? Oh, they are waiting for the overflow. When the workers have had their share, each of these groups go through the "race" and get just half that issued to the workers until all is finished. Yes, we do save a few.”\textsuperscript{151} The worst tale of famine was of a mother who ate her infant child, and was then stoned to death by her neighbors. Harrison commented, “The attitude of the rich people assumed were were fools to waste our time feeding the people, as they would only die when we had gone.”

Some of the rich had been hoarding grain in order to inflate prices, and soon necessity dictated that the excess be bought and requisitioned by the British in order to feed the starving multitudes. Crowded bread-lines and soup kitchens lines stretched far into the streets of Hamadan. One Canadian observed, “A couple of Armenian girls in the

\textsuperscript{150} Savige, Somewhere.
\textsuperscript{151} Savige, Chapter 20.
breadline told Sammy Hamilton and me they prayed for us every night. Sammy told them to carry on: we needed it.”

Hamadan’s streets were given English signs to accommodate the maintenance of law and order by imperial troops. Local revolutionaries frequently published anti-British propaganda, and occasionally sniped at the captains who rode around town on horseback. Policing the brigands became difficult because the local elite, including the governor of the town, would offer support to the British with one hand and rebels with the other.

At the end of June, it was clear that the British needed to arrest the governor of Hamadan. The magnate harbored anti-British agitators, incited the locals to subvert and attack the Dunsterforce troops. Most importantly, he hoarded a large stockpile of grain to drive up prices. To get the local grain prices down and prevent people from starving, Dunsterville needed to act. On June 27th, Dunsterforce troops stormed the palace. In the early hours of the morning, they climbed over the wall and raided the palace. Captain Hopkins and Sgt. Pegg participated in the raid.

With revolutionary dissent quieted and a plan for famine relief in place, July in Hamadan proved more uneventful. George Burbidge was assigned the post of Administrative Commandant in Hamadan, managing convoys to and from the desert between Tabriz and the Caspian Road. Under him, Sgt. Crofford Campbell was assigned to office duties. “Our expedition is practically at a standstill for the time being,”

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152 Murray, IV, p94.
153 Shepherdson, p170-171.
155 Tom Kesley, “Dunsterforce Sidelights,” Revillie, 1 August 1933.
Campbell wrote. “Reported here that the Germans are entering Baku in force.” In various spots on the Caspian Road, the dangerous stretches were reinforced and repaired by work-for-food parties to make them safer for merchants. Examining posts were established, and the British collected a small duty on imports in order to pay for some of their famine relief work. When commerce eventually increased, prices fell and the poor were once again able to afford food. Sgt Campbell would eventually be assigned to this tariff blockade, and was delighted to spend his days outside in the Persian summer.

Captain Walter Chambers of Pembroke, Ontario, was a made marshal of the Hamadan-Kasvin Road. Russian deserters, loafing in their newfound freedom and flirting with the ideals of Bolshevism, populated nearly all the way houses and rest stops. Meanwhile, starved bodies lay three or four to a mile along the roadside. Persian police enlisted to help these duties were paid for out of the British treasury, but disease was rife and a quarter of the Persian men under Chambers’ command eventually died of cholera.

The presence of the British in Western Persia was largely responsible for enabling the economy in that part of the world to flow once again. Once trade resumed, it was easier to import foodstuffs, and in June and July some of the food crop actually harvested and put on the market in Hamadan, relieving the famine to a modest extent. Eventually, the relief work had a significant impact as well, and the measures taken by Dunsterforce probably saved thousands from starvation through relief and rationing. By

156Campbell Diary, 13 July 1918.
157Savige.
158Murray, IV, p93.
159Note in Donohoe? Savige? Campbell Diary, June-July 1918.
mid-July things were looking up. Crofford Campbell was manning the blockade house and saw more goods and grain come in from Mesopotamia. “Things are much better in Hamadan,” he wrote, “every soup kitchen has been closed and very few cases of actual starvation about. Foodstuffs of every description is plentiful.”

Levies of irregulars were eventually raised, but proved useless for anything but routine patrols to ensure the rudiments of law and order in the towns and villages. Captain Tommy Hodgson was commander of one such Persian levy out of Taisarkan.

Sgt. D.M. McWhirter, with a post of ghurkas, held the blockade at the Assadabad Pass between Hamadan and Kermanshah. A Kurdish sirdar in the nearby highlands was stirring up trouble, and headquarters ordered McWhirter to arrest him. Knowing that the ghurkas and the Kurds would mingle poorly, and the situation had to be handled tactfully, he went alone, despite the great risk in doing so. McWhirter rode into town and tried to get a formal interview with the headman, who refused him. The Canadian decided to try and wear the magnate down, visiting again day after day. To his luck he got an appointment on his fourth day of persistence. After the courtesies of a formal Persian visit, McWhirter told the Kurd the purpose of his visit, and asked if the gentleman would acquiesce to join him. To the Canadian's surprise, the sirdar agreed to come along smoothly, having been properly charmed and politely asked.

Major Van Den Berg, a Dutch-born Canadian, was assigned to a special mission.

160Campbell Diary, 27 July 1918.
161Dunsterville, Adventures of Dunsterforce, p124-125.
162Murray, IV, p93.
163Murray, IV, p95.
into the highlands. The Kurds benefited from the retreating Russians, who sold off their war materiel in their wake, providing rogue tribes with huge stocks of rifles and ammunition. Van Den Berg and British Major H.B. Suttor trekked out with two NCOs and an interpreter into the dusty Zagros mountains. They hoped to parlay with Abdullah Khan, a Kurdish warlord who played the fool to the British presence in the country and continued to raid and pillage Persian towns. The small party was to put an end to the raids and persuade the Kurds to organize themselves into levies to defend their homes against a possible Turkish invasion from the north.

They set out from Hamadan on July 31st, heading northwest towards Sennah. Local magnates met them with courteous Persian hospitality and provided horses for their trip. British soldiers passing through deserted and disheveled villages created a stir in the country side. They were expected at their destination, but it was unsure which sorts of open arms would greet them. After two weeks of edgy travel they arrived in Sennah. The local sirdar demanded to know why the British were poking around in his villages. Once Suttor explained their situation, the sirdar was amicable and agreed that the raiding was a problem, and resolved to assist the British in their efforts. For what they were willing to pay, Suttor and Van Den Berg found an ally. As it happened, the sympathetic magnate had been buying up wheat for some time so that the people in his region could get it at a fair price.164

Almost immediately after they arrived, headquarter in Hamadan called the small party back with no explanation. They slowed their pace when they met a throng of Assyrian refugees shuffling south from Lake Urumiah. The tiny, dilapidated villages the

164Shepherdon, Journeys of a Light Horseman, p172-179.
officers visited on their way up were now in ruins. “Their passage is marked by dead men, women, and children, lying where they fell by the roadside, as well as dead animals and broken carts,” wrote Major Suttor, “stealing all they can get their hands on and all seeking British protection.”

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The Push: Dunsterville for Baku

In April the Turks advanced into Batum and soon thereafter the Transcaucasian Commissariat fell apart. The Georgians, in an attempt to protect their country from being overrun by the Turks, appealed to Germany and before long were marching their troops under German flags to keep the Army of Islam out. The Azeris, who courted the Turks from the start of the Bolshevik revolution, began to take up arms and formed irregular bands to coordinate with their co-religionists. The Armenians found themselves holding the majority of the existing Turkish line with few supplies, poor support, and little in the way of resources or industry as peace concessions. Mostly pro-Russian, but also pro-British, the Armenians attempted to organize themselves under both Bolshevik and nationalist leaders. The British in Enzeli, Bijar, and Kasvin represented their best and closest hope of assistance.

With their ally state dissolved, the British Military Mission withdrew from Tiflis. The original plan of supporting a Caucasus Army now had no chance of success; the cause was all but lost. Whitehall expected that the end of their project in the Caucasus was “near and inevitable.” By mid-May, the Turks pushed onto Tabriz. Increasingly

165Shepherson, 179.
166Arslanian, PhD thesis, p60.
nervous, Dunsterville urged his higher ups to send him support. “The War Office refuse to give me any more troops,” he wrote in his diary. “I asked for a Division, then for a Brigade - and all they give me is 1 Cav. Regiment and 1 Infantry Battalion to run the country against the Germans, Turks, Democrats and Brigands, from Tabriz, Teheran to Kermanshah, an equilateral triangle with the sides of 400 miles, or a bigger area than the British Isles.”  

General Wilson took Dunsterville's pleas in accord with political dispatches from Marling in Tehran, and urged Marshall in Baghdad to give Dunsterville more support. Marshall reluctantly promised to inflate the infantry battalion to a brigade and add three aeroplanes and sixteen armored cars by June. Marshall insisted he did not have the support staff or man power to send more. Still, General Wilson in London insisted it would not be enough to hold the Turks at bay if they were to invade from the north. Wilson also intended for Dunsterville to have enough manpower to brush aside the Janglais in order to get a foothold on the Caspian Sea, an objective vital to preventing German and Turkish penetration eastward. Despite Marshall's willingness to commit to sending troops, London demanded a strong defensive line in North Persia.

Meanwhile, Dunsterville and Bicherakov moved their headquarters up to Kasvin and plotted about what to do to keep Baku from falling into Turkish hands. Even though the War Office had told him to stay in Persia, Dunsterville continued to explore his options for Baku. Now that manpower was finally coming in from Mesopotamia, he proposed to partner with Bicherakov in order to defeat Kuchik Khan, take Enzeli, and

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167 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 2 May 1918.
168 Moberly, Mesopotamian Campaign IV, p169.
169 Moberly, Mesopotamian Campaign IV, p173.
then find a way to take the oil city by sea. He wired Whitehall about his plans. The War Office absolutely forbade him from trying for Baku.\textsuperscript{170} Not wanting to get entangled in a defensive siege in Baku, they maintained that he should only try to get a foothold onto the Caspian and to try and control shipping there.

Dunsterville was frustrated with what seemed like a lack of support for securing important Baku oil from the Germans.\textsuperscript{171} His first plan dead in the water, Stalky proposed an alternative. The Baku Bolsheviks were against British cooperation but perhaps they would accept a defector from the Czar's former army. He would send his armored car column along with Bicherakov to Baku, where a few of his officers could then destroy the oil-producing capacity of the city. The War Office thought this was a more sensible plan, but had no idea how it might be accomplished. They wanted more information about how the oil would be rendered useless, and reminded Dunsterville that he first had to gain control of Persia, which meant defeating the Kuchik Khan and gaining access to the Caspian.\textsuperscript{172}

Earlier attempts to clear out the Jangalis in order to capture a port on the Caspian proved ineffective. In April, Dunsterville asked Bicherakov to move up and take Menjil Bridge, north of Kasvin, from the Kuchik Khan and bring the crisis to a head so that it might eventually come to a resolution. Instead, the Russians resolved to defend one side of the bridge and the Jangalis waited patiently on the other, sitting in a comfortable stalemate. “[It] should have meant awful blood-shed,” wrote Dunsterville, “instead of which I hear the Cossacks and the Jangalis are sitting side by side alongside

of the bridge are quite friendly with each other! One minute I have to implore Bicherakov not to kill too many and the next minute I have to urge him on to kill at least some of them.”

Now, months later, Dunsterville felt more pressure and pushed harder for action. Bicherakov's Cossacks – in cooperation with two British armoured cars, four horse-drawn artillery guns, and a squad of British cavalry – finally moved to attack the bridge. A German officer, Colonel Von Passchen, came out to parley but Bicherakov simply told him to get out of the way. The battle was a quick rout. Most of the 400 Jungalis either scattered into the hills or were taken prisoner. The Russians and British punched a hole through Gilan that got them back to Enzeli a few days later, where Bicherakov's cossacks parleyed with the Bolshevik council that sent Dunsterville packing in February. However, Gilan was far from secure: the Jungalis would strike back against the British when the opportune moment arrived.

Even though he was making good progress in Persia, Dunsterville continued to prod for permission to go to Baku. Marling in Tehran was against it, wanting to keep British manpower concentrated in Persia for the stabilizing effect. If rebels managed to seize control of Tehran, his would be the first foreign throat to be cut. The India Office also advised against the occupation of Baku, especially at the risk of alienating the Bolsheviks, on account that the allies might still strike a reasonable bargain with the Reds. General Macdonogh, Director of Military Intelligence, and General Wilson in Whitehall also spoke against it, arguing that Dunsterville's manpower estimates and

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173 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 17 April 1918.
174 Allen & Muratoff, p485.
175 Sareen, p56, 58.
176 Sareen, p58.
expectations for holding the city were unrealistic.\textsuperscript{177} The best thing Dunsterville could do, in the eyes of the War Office, was hold down the fort in North-West Persia or use a few officers to destroy the oil producing capacity of the city or capture Caspian shipping.\textsuperscript{178} If he took all his manpower to Baku, Dunsterville would expose Persia to a Turkish invasion from the north.

Marshall in Baghdad hated the whole Baku affair. He thought the idea of occupying Baku and destroying the oil wells to be entirely unfeasible:

\begin{quote}
I had never seen Baku, but I did know that it contained some 200 oil wells, each about 500 feet deep and protected by ferro-concrete and asbestos coverings, and how many tons of high explosive would have been required to blow them all up is a question I did not enter into. The inhabitants of Baku may not have had much stomach to fight against the Turks, but one can hardly imagine that they would have looked on, with their hands in their pockets, whilst a few British troops went about blowing their means of livelihood sky-high.\textsuperscript{179}
\end{quote}

Marshall was not alone in his opinions. Other intelligence officers said it would only hinder British operations in the region by setting the local population against them.\textsuperscript{180} With this in mind, he was still keen to try and limit the size of Dunsterville's force.\textsuperscript{181} At the end of June, the War Office made it very clear to Marshall and Dunsterville that Baku was not on option, and that trying to defend the city would be 'inexpedient and dangerous'.\textsuperscript{182} Dunsterville still insisted that he could hold Baku if he got there in time.\textsuperscript{183} In the meantime, Marshall played his bad hand as slowly as he could and required

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{177}Arslanian, PhD Thesis, p70.
\item\textsuperscript{179}Marshall, p311-312.
\item\textsuperscript{180}Sareen, p56.
\item\textsuperscript{181}Moberly, p183.
\item\textsuperscript{182}Moberly, p183.
\item\textsuperscript{183}Moberly, p182.
\end{footnotes}
Dunsterville to justify any manpower claims he made.\textsuperscript{184} An artillery brigade and the
promised infantry brigade were sent up, but these forces were intended for the Bijar-
Tabriz road in anticipation of the Turks.\textsuperscript{185}

Colonel Warden noticed the way that Marshall put the breaks on Dunsterville's
activities and expansionary requests. “Baghdad will not do anything except refuse
everything asked for” wrote Warden.\textsuperscript{186}

\begin{quote}
I think there is no unity or coordination of action between the GOC Dunsterville and C in C in Baghdad. In fact
Baghdad seems to put all possible obstacles in General Dunsterville’s way. Although the general will not admit it, it
is patent to everyone.\textsuperscript{187}
\end{quote}

Marshall acted as a dampener on Dunsterville's ambitions in word and deed and
continually reminded Dunsterville that Baku was not a possibility.

In the latter days of June, Bicherakov in Enzeli was attempting to convince the
Baku Soviet to give him free naval passage to Azerbaijan. His force was considerable,
some 1200 armed men and horses, and the Soviet considered that the man power was
needed against the Turks. Bicherakov tried to allay fears that he was plotting to
surrender the town to the British. He wrote a personal telegram to the Soviet confirming
his loyalty.

\begin{quote}
I do consider the sabotage of Soviet power to be a crime. I
do not aspire to power or to a position of responsibility. I
don’t understand anything about politics or socialism, I’m
not prepared for the building of a new life, I’m a Cossack, I
know a little something about combat and military matters,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{184}Moberly, p183.
\textsuperscript{185}Arslanian, PhD Thesis, p71. At this point, Dunsterville sent up an advance guard to the north to block
any Turkish descent into Persia, but knew that the situation would soon need reinforcements.
\textsuperscript{186}Warden, Diary, 15-20 July 1918.
\textsuperscript{187}Warden, Diary, 30 June 1918.
Chairman Stepan Shaumain was reluctant to trust the cossack, but the pressure mounted as the Turks crept closer to the city, and the council chambers echoed with cries of inaction from the other political parties. Between defeat at the hands of the Turks, gambling on Bicherakov, or betraying Lenin's wishes from St. Petersburg and allowing the British to come to his aid, Shaumian chose what he considered the lesser evil. The soviet's trust in Bicherakov, like Dunsterville's would have to be tested to be ratified.

General Dunsterville also trusted Bicherakov to the tune of at least hundreds of thousands of roubles, which he paid out in bullion for the Partizans' help at Menjil Bridge. It was a hefty enough sum to require some supervision. A young Canadian major had impressed General Byron and General Dunsterville with his intellect and his knowledge of finance. To keep the Russians from squandering the loot, and perhaps to keep Bicherakov from embezzling the small fortune, Stalky sent Major Harold Kenzie Newcombe along with the Cossacks and the armoured cars. Dunsterville took a chance on Bicherakov; the cossack could easily pocket the cash and leave the British in the lurch.

Having convinced the Baku Soviet of their loyalty, the Partizans left Enzeli on July 4th. They landed at Alyat, thirty-five miles southwest of Baku, along with No. 2 Battery 'A' Squadron “Duncars”, Major Newcombe, and three other Dunsterforce officers, dressed in Russian uniforms in order to avoid ruffling Bolshevok feathers. 

188Bicherakov, as quoted in Mikoyan, p120.  
189Suny, p291. Shaumian knew that Bicherakov's brother was currently fighting the Bolsheviks to the north.  
190Donohoe, p206.
Shaumain was there to greet them. The two leaders spoke and Bicherakov managed to allay Suny's suspicions, and afterwards the chairman trusted that Bicherakov was genuinely willing to serve the soviet. Bicherakov took up the rank of Major-General in the Red Army and the command of about 3000 Russian and Armenian troops. Newcombe and the other British armored car officers suddenly found themselves surrounded by Bolsheviks and practically embedded in their ranks.

NEED MORE ON NEWCOMBE. SEE PERRET & LORD, LOOK FOR MORE BOOKS ON THE RUSSIAN WAR V THE TURKS. SEE MIKOYAN FOR A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THE ATMOSPHERE OF THIS ARMY WAS LIKE.

The Armenians on this defensive line took up the positions of the withdrawing Russian army. Many of them held aspirations of socialism but more practically had been pushed out of their homes. Socialist leadership seemed their best chance of saving their lands and families in the face of the Turkish advance.

Bicherakov plotted a flanking maneuver on the advancing Turks, but before the polyglot army could act, the Turks attacked and the Russians and Armenians were forced to retreat through the swampy plain of Kuirdamir. Meanwhile, Armenian refugees clogged the roads heading east. According to one British armored car officer, the Bolshevik infantry which Bicharakov commanded were a 'rough lot' who fought poorly.

Rearguard action was fought against the Turks from the 9th to th 19th. A desperate moment occurred when one of the British armored cars was lodged in the mud in the heat of battle. Under the threat of being overrun, it took considerable manpower to...

191 Suny, p290-291.
192 Perrett & Lord, p168.
heave it free.\textsuperscript{193} Another week of fighting found the British officers, Cossacks, and Red Army with their backs to the sea against the coast. When the Bicherakov realized he was being outflanked, he promptly had his entire force, including the British armoured cars, rail-lifted to Baku where they could organize a more active line of defense around the prize.

Stalky waited on pins for news from Bicherakov while he was preparing to move in strength towards Tabriz to check the reported advance of two Turkish divisions. However, on July 8\textsuperscript{th}, Dunsterville abandoned his plans for the relief of the Bijar-Tabriz Road, and sped down to Baghdad.\textsuperscript{194} Plans for a move on Bijar to assist the refugee column were put on the back burner.

When Dunsterville arrived in Baghdad, he went to general headquarters expecting another argument with General Marshall. In a stroke of good luck for Stalky, at that time, General Marshall was on leave in India. His second, Major-General Fanshawe, was now in charge but knew little about the Persian situation. Wireless transmissions out of Kasvin had been dead for some time, due to technical difficulties on the one hand and an attempt at secrecy on the other. Dunsterville intended to take and defend Baku.\textsuperscript{195} In mid-July Dunsterville had roughly five battalions worth of infantry, four artillery batteries, a score of armoured cars and a cavalry regiment ready for battle.\textsuperscript{196} Bicherakov's Partizans were in the area and Dunsterville counted on his cooperation. Fanshawe also received cables from an intelligence officer in Baku stating that sizable elements within the city would welcome the British.

\textsuperscript{193}Perrett & Lord, p168.  
\textsuperscript{194}Rawlinson, p60.  
\textsuperscript{195}Dunsterville, Private Diary, 1 July 1918-4 July 1918.  
\textsuperscript{196}Allen & Muratoff, p485.
The case for Baku won over Fanshawe. The War Office, despite earlier objections and a lack of information about the situation in general, deferred to Fanshawe and Dunsterville on the matter. After much agitation and negotiation, an opportune moment free of Marshall's leash presented itself, and Dunsterville finally had permission to move on Baku.

While Dunsterville was in Baghdad, the Jangalis launched their counter attack. Coming out of the mountains and jungles of Gilan province, the rebels attacked and captured Resht on July 23rd, killing 50 Dunsterforce soldiers. The few airplanes sent up from Mesopotamia were now put to work bombing Jangalis positions on the outskirts of town, and eventually armored cars were brought up to storm the streets and purge the city of Jangalis. **A LITTLE ON THE PEACE TREATY?**

At Baku, the Army of Islam approached the cliffs on the outskirts of the city and there was widespread panic. The Red Army failure at Kuirdamir helped break the public confidence in the Bolshevik's ability to rescue the city. Populist elements in Baku clamored for the government to call the British to their aid, but Shaumian refused. Outvoted and now against the majority, Shaumian disbanded the Baku Soviet rather than risk his ideology and cooperate with the British against Lenin's wishes. A dictatorship of five nationalist leaders took power, and the new Centro-Caspian Dictatorship immediately set about inviting the British to their aid.

When the Partizans arrived on the Baku line a couple days later, their appearance on the Turkish flank caused the Turks sieging the town to momentarily retreat. It was hailed as a victory, but none of the Baku defenders had the wherewithal or energy to

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occupy the now vacant Turkish positions. The dictators, in an attempt to consolidate power, ordered Red Army units to stop fighting and give up their arms, removing Baku of 3000 potential defenders.  

Bicherakov took the lull in the action as an opportunity to plan his escape the peninsula and head north to Derbent with 1000 Russians from Baku, who preferred Bicherakov's leadership to the chaos and precariousness of the city. He informed Dunsterville that when the British arrived, he would have to retreat. The cossack general had no confidence in the Armenian and Russian troops, nor in their leadership. He anticipated the city would soon be in Turkish hands. When he left Bicherakov took with him the fighting strength of 3000 men, as well as the British officers and armoured cars still attached to his force.  

At Derbent, Bicherakov showed the Bolsheviks his true colors and attacked the local Red Army forces. Although he was told by Dunsterville not to employ the armoured cars in action against Red Russian troops, their machine guns proved useful in taking the town and storming positions of enemy artillery. It might have been the cossack general's plan all along to simply find his way back to Russia. Dunsterville was furious. Both the British and the Bakuvians wondered if Bicherakov had reneged on his promises, or if he might still return to defend the town against an inevitable Turkish assault.  

198Allen & Muratoff, p489.  
199Allen & Muratoff, p490.  
200Donohoe, p207.  
201YOU SHOULD TALK ABOUT HOW STALKY LATER BLAMED THE FAILURE OF THE MISSION ON BICHERAKOV.
Dunsterville had issued orders for a few cars and cavalry to head into the Persian highlands. The notion was to block the three south-going roads into Persia from Turkey and the Caucasus, so that a Turkish invasion might be met with an adequate response, even though the number of men employed along all three roads did not exceed 120 until September. It was a colossal bluff against two divisions of Turkish infantry, but Dunsterville felt starved for manpower.

On June 6th, a party headed for Bijar by way of Zenjian under the command of Australians Major Starnes and Captain Major S.G. Savige. Canadians Captain J.H. “Mack” MacLean and Captain J.M. “Buck” Fisher, and Sergeants Brophy, Casey, Clark, Gattey & McWhirter were similarly attached to this excursion.

Along the sandy roads to their first stop, Zenjian, north of Kasvin, the imperial men passed a long column of Russian officers, Persian troops, and pack animals. Each of the mules was loaded with ammunition purchased by the Shah from the Imperial Russian stores at Tabriz. The stores were being liquidated in anticipation for a Turkish invasion. The Dunsterforce officers halted briefly at Zenjian to buy provisions for the 120-mile trek to Bijar and unexpectedly discovered a group of Turks hiding in the village. Fortunately, they were deserters who wanted to surrender and get into a British work camp so they could avoid starving to death. When the locals heard the Turks were getting good treatment, the more emaciated ones attempted to surrender as well.

By the middle of June the force was on its way to Bijar. Captain Savige took

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202Savige, Chapter 18.
command of the moving column as Major Starnes attempted to draw out a map of the region, a time consuming task. The row of mules, camels, and Britishers zig-zagged through the rusty mountain passes. Here and there a local would beg for food but the men themselves were on quarter rations. “We had at least a fair supply of rice, flour, dried fruits, tea and sugar,” wrote Captain Savige. “We would generally boil a little rice for breakfast, another lot for supper, and would consider ourselves very lucky if we were able to have meat for the evening meal. For lunch, we generally had a big drink of water and would then tighten the belt and consider that we had a fair meal.”

After four straight days of marching, they arrived at Bijar where a dumbfounded governor presented himself to Major Starnes. The crew set up a little wireless station with equipment from Kasvin and Zinjian to get in contact with Hamadan. Russians, Turks, and Kurdish raiders looted the town consistently since the beginning of the war and the locals were not predisposed to welcoming another army. Discerning enemies from friends in unknown territory was no easy task, so reconnaissance was a first priority. Captain “Buck” Fisher went on a perilous mission to find a road to the south which was rumored to lead to Hamadan, a hundred miles away. The possibility of being attacked by tribesmen was high, so Buck and two NCOs rode their camels hard and, stopping only once, arrived safely in Hamadan. Captain Fisher would take command of the Bijar-Hamadan road from then on.

The soldiers set up a famine-relief station much like the ones in Hamadan where a starving family who had been billeted by the local chief of police could get a meal, or in exchange for a day’s labour a starving Persian could receive a bowl of stew. They raised a

203 Savige, Chapter 19.
204 Savige, Chapter 20.
small levy of able Persian men for a police force to keep order in the town and keep
raiders out. With most of the population starved useless, Starnd purchased the loyalty
of a Kurdish warlord who offered his mercenary services.

After about three weeks, the platoon of Dunsterforce officers was fully established
in Bijar and decided to ingratiate themselves to the local nobility by holding a feast.
Because of the famine they could only muster enough food for a couple of courses.
Before long the table was beginning to go bare in front of the police chief, the governor,
and the warlord. Captain John “Mac” McLean offered some of his precious stock of
Virginian cigarettes in order to keep the night going. Captain Savige recalled that
“[McLean] bitterly regretted the move next morning, for our worthy visitors appeared to
relish the cigarettes beyond anything else that could be offered, and smoked one after
the other at such a furious rate that before long his priceless stock had gone up in
smoke.”

Dunsterville sent a plane north to Urumia. He bring back word of the
exodus of refugees. A call to action. A party was designated to move north to
meet Aga Petros and join up with their troops, and support them in their
defensive withdrawal.

On July 19th, the party headed up the road to Urumia, having heard news of the
Assyrians who fought a few successful battles against the Turks, but now seemed in dire
straits. There was word that a massive column of refugees was heading south from
Urumiah. The objective was to link up and provide them with enough ammunition and
money to keep them going a little longer, and to coordinate a strategy between them.

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205Savige, Chapter 21.
Carrying twelve machine guns and 100,000 rounds of ammunition, the Dunsterforce officers hoped that their presence alone would be enough to bolster and organize the rearguard of the mass of displaced people.

Persian Kurdistan undulated north through dusty river valleys and scrub-lined camel roads were the only lines on a map dotted with a little villages, each a day's ride apart. Stopping in at the hamlets, the British attempted to raise more manpower by calling upon any able bodied men and offering them pay enough to help get their families through the famine. Major Savige recalled an anecdote about one Canadian's effect on a local boy,

On passing another village a young Persian, the son of the priest with whom we were negotiating for troops, joined the column and informed us that his greatest friend was Capt. McLean. [...] Mac was a typical Canadian, and besides teaching this young hopeful a few words such as roads, creek, house, horse, etc., had added to his vocabulary some choice Canadian swear words. The youth, being quite proud of the fact that he understood English, would rattle off a string of words, both fair and foul, much to our amusement.

When the party reached the meeting point, there was no sign of the Assyrians and instead of waiting they turned back to the nearest village to hold the fort and wait. Defensive positions were marked out, maps were made, diplomatic inroads were established with the local elite, and levies were attempted with minimal success. On August 1st, a rumor hit the town that a battle was taking place some distance north between the Assyrians and the Turks. The Dunsterforce officers dismantled camp the next day and rode up to meet them.

206Savige, Chapter 29.
The Turks had attacked Urumia and driven the 80,000 inhabitants of the city down the Bijar Road. Thousands of starving and disheveled refugees packed the narrow valleys with Turkish cavalry pushing them further south with intermittent raids to carry off food, livestock, and young women. Once the British arrived, most of the Assyrian and Armenian troops at the column’s defense fled to try and secure their own families. The remaining rearguard consisted of an American missionary doctor and a handful of Russian cavalrymen. On August 5th, a dozen Dunsterforce officers arrived to relieve them. Along the way they attempted to enlist men from the column for help in the rearguard, but many rode by with their rifles slung over their shoulders and saddlebags full of ammunition as women and children trudged beside them.207

When they reached the end of the column, Capt. Savige and his men rode on to meet the enemy and ascertain what they were up against. The nearest village was in ruins, entirely looted and stripped clean by the refugees. They hit another village a few miles up the road and were surveying the area when machine gun fire punctuated the evening. They had first sight of the enemy, but before long the group needed to regroup at the village to avoid being caught in an exposed position in the dark. At first there was no sign of supplies or food coming up the rear, but around 2 AM the pack animals came in and the men ate their first meal since breakfast the day before. Dawn broke and in the middle of a quiet breakfast after a short and ugly sleep, a sentry opened fire.

The Dunsterforce officers cleared out of the village in a stir. Capt. Savige and Sgt. William Brophy made for a poplar grove on the right flank of the village, hoping to catch some of the raiders off guard with machine gun fire. It was a welcome surprise when

207 Savige, Chapter 36. Murray, II, p382.
several riders, thinking they had won the day and took the village uncontested, 
dismounted on the other end of the grove for a cigarette.

Young Brophy said, "I guess sir, it's about time to give them a little bit of hurry up," and he stood by with another loaded magazine, ready to slip on the gun immediately the one in position had run out. Laying the sights on to the thickest group in the center of the crowd, I pressed the trigger until the whole magazine had been expended. In a twinkling young Brophy replaced the empty one with another fully loaded drum, which burst into the now panic-stricken enemy. Men and horses were rolling and kicking on the ground amongst the others, and those of the enemy who were fortunate enough to be holding their horses, quickly mounted and galloped back to the protection of the hills.²⁰⁸

The British attempted to evacuate their supply from the village, but the 200-some Turks returned and shot up their transport mules. Several were killed in the effort to save supplies. Driven out of the village, the men pulled back along the valley road. Every mile or so, they would try to hold their position until the Turks pressed too close, and the Britishers would again fall back another mile. This continued until they had reached the tail end of the refugee column once again. At this point, the British were getting as run down and starving as the Assyrians.

At noon, a squad of English cavalry officers finally relieved Capt. Savige and his men, and shortly thereafter the entire rearguard lacked machine gun ammunition. After a full day of fighting with nothing to eat, the men were exhausted and the refugees were panic-stricken. “I still had with me young Brophy,” wrote Savige, “who, throughout the day, was always nipping up when danger seemed to be most prevalent and he, on more than one occasion, saved my life.”²⁰⁹ That evening the situation calmed and it appeared

²⁰⁸Savige, Chapter 37.  
²⁰⁹Savige, Chapter 38.
as though they shook off the Turks, but the struggle was not over. Another sixty-some miles lay between the Savige & Brophy and Bijar. There was a significant lack of water and food and disease was beginning to spread amongst the refugees. Trying to ease the plight of the less fortunate, the Dunsterforce officers did what they could to help the refugees along. Savige wrote:

> We dismounted, and placed two or three women or children upon our horses, abandoning hundreds to their fate. Cruel as this was it was absolutely essential, as our idea was to save the greatest number of lives possible. Knowing that the first help was at Bijar, six marches off, it would have been absolute folly for a mere handful of us to remain behind in the attempt to save a few.\(^{210}\)

Sgt. D.M. McWhirter rode up from Hamadan as part of a relief force to help the column along and keep them from looting Persian homes. He later recalled one deadly part of the road.

> At one stage there was about 18 miles in which there was no water. We warned them of this; but that 18 miles claimed hundreds of lives. Old men and women would throw their arms around our legs and pray for food and water, we could do nothing – only keep them moving. The road was strewn with corpses in that awful march.\(^{211}\)

Even at Bijar, the refugees had to be moved along as quickly as possible to prevent them from pillaging and murdering the townsfolk. There were not enough resources in Persia to support an entire displaced nation. Once the required transport could be gathered from Mesopotamia, the British brought up grain to Bijar. One convoy of over 500 pack animals was entirely loaded with bags of corn to feed the starving Assyrians. Captain Fisher still took charge of the Bijar-Hamadan Road, and when relief

\(^{210}\)Savige, Chapter 38.

\(^{211}\)McWhirter, as quoted in Murray, II, p382.
supplies came up, Major Starnes ordered the officers in charge to take back as many women and children as possible. The convoy officer said they already picked up 250 people but would try and take more. “Go to Buck Fisher,” said Major Starnes, “He is running that part of the show.”

“We raked ‘Buck’ Fisher from the midst of a howling mob of hungry Armenians and explained that we were to take 500 of them to Hamadan,” wrote the convoy officer.

‘When are you coming for them?’ asked ‘Buck’.

‘Well’, I said, ‘We have to deliver a certain amount of forage and stores to a squadron of 14th Hussars. We ought to get clear of that and reach here by midnight.’

“That suits me down to the ground’, said ‘Buck’. ‘I’ll have the 500 lined up at midnight, every one with three days rations and a chit. And I’ll have half a dozen N.C.O.s to load them. You won’t have any trouble at all!’ 212

Of the 80,000 some who left Urumia, only about 49,000 made it to Hamadan, where most of them were forwarded on to an internment camp being established at Baquebah. 213 As the refugees moved through Hamadan, so did their diseases. Sgt Campbell worked the trade blockade through which thousands of refugees passed, when he caught a harsh fever that put him out of commission for several days. Captain Burbidge set up a small refugee camp outside the city, which processed thousands of people and attempted to ensure proper sanitation, famine relief, and security amongst the starving, violent throng. 214 Soup kitchens, work parties, and levies were brought about once again an attempt to relieve the situation.

212 Kesley, p35.
214 “Part Played by Canadians in Rescuing of Christians is Recalled by Recent Fight” The Evening Telegram, (Toronto, ON) August 26, 1933, p7.
The Assyrian and Armenian men pressed into service from the column were mostly those who were too hungry or lame to continue to the refugee camp in Mesopotamia. Discipline in these ranks was poor and formality was practically nonexistent. The C.O. of these irregulars, a Scottish Major George Henderson, had a violent streak in his nature and used intimidation and flogging to keep these disheveled masses under his control.

At the beginning of September, with Dunsterville making arrangements for the defense of Baku, reports began to come in that the Turks were moving in force on Bijar and Zenjian. Dunsterville’s supply line to Enzeli and thence to Baku was already running precariously thin, and the manpower devoted to relief left his western flank almost completely exposed. Once Marshall in Baghdad realized the urgency of the situation, he issued orders for the Assyrian irregulars to march into the highlands and prevent the Turks from overrunning Persia.

Captain ’Buck’ Fisher was in command of one of the worst companies in the lot. He and the Australian officers who commanded the brigade had to trick the men into marching to Bijar without them all deserting. They told the Assyrians the unit was going on a routine route march, but instead the officers continued until it was too dark to turn back. The force met their supplies later on up the road. That they made the hundred miles march without mutiny was considered amazing due to the the shortage of adequate boots and dysentery scouring the ranks.\textsuperscript{215}

Henderson kept discipline by personally beating any irregulars he thought were shirking their duties, and his violent temper, stoked by the burden of command, became

\textsuperscript{215} Stewart, p148.
hard for his fellow Britishers to tolerate. This strained relationships with his officers to
the point that they soon opted to eat and billet with their Assyrian conscripts instead of
with him.\textsuperscript{216} The number of active troops in the irregulars fell daily. Captain Fisher took
his ragged platoon to the defensive line outside of Bijar, and held them there as best he
could while the motley force awaited a Turkish assault.

Lucky for them, the thrust never came. Instead, a division of Turks was marching
down from Tabriz towards Zinjian. A column of some 2000 Turkish regular troops was
heading directly for Kasvin, Dunsterforce’s general headquarters and the heart of its
supply lines. On September 12\textsuperscript{th}, the Turks approached the outskirts of Zinjian.
Dunsterville had drawn most of his fighting strength up to Baku and the irregulars in
Bijar were withering in tattered boots.

\textbf{8}

\textit{BAKU}

Faced with a lack of information, the War Cabinet permitted Dunsterville to set
upon his own objective: the capture and defense of Baku. When the British arrived by
boat on August 4\textsuperscript{th}, the situation was worse than Stalky anticipated. Almost in sync with
the British arrival, Bicherakov pulled out to Derbent rather than be cornered on the
peninsula, abandoning both his agreement with Dunsterville and the now defunct Baku
Soviet. The British troops coming in would hardly fill the gap the cossacks left in the
line. Bolshevik soldiers were either in prison, had left the town, or refused to fight for

\textsuperscript{216} Stewart, p148-150.
the new regime. Eventually, the battle fared so badly and the trust in their commanding officer was so low, that the Canadians and other officers took it upon themselves to consider going AWOL.

A month after their initial acquiescence to Dunsterville’s case for Baku, the War Office was losing confidence in the general who kept requested additional troops. Once he had his feet on the ground, landing in Baku on August 17th, they granted him an additional battalion. Still, the War Office was unsure of Dunsterville’s exact plan. They telegraphed General Marshall saying “[Dunsterville] should be removed if he lacks the necessary determination to see this difficult situation through.”

Truthfully, Dunsterville met an entirely different situation than he anticipated. The local troops were more disorganized and less willing to fight than he thought possible, and the impossibility of destroying the oil producing capacity became clear the instant the British entered the city. One officer wrote, “The country around Baku is a mass of oil wells – a regular forest of pumping towers and one gets completely lost in them.” The pumping station for the Baku-Batum Pipeline was but one link in an vast chain of oil machinery surrounding Baku. The unrest being caused by racial and political tensions also suggested that throwing a match on the oily fire would only burn the British. Dunsterville opted to keep his headquarters on a large steamship at the docks, out of range of the enemy artillery.

The city was being shelled when Captain Harrison and other Dunsterforce officers stepped off the boat

*Although our headquarters and billets were being shelled*

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217 Sareen, p67.
218 Shepherson, p182.
from the west, life was apparently proceeding as usual, the brightly lit promenade along the sea front was thronged every night by a well dressed crowd of Russian and Armenian pleasure seekers of both sexes.\textsuperscript{219}

While the General kept his command on board the \textit{Kruger}, the officers set up their operations out of the Hotel Europe. When the British Consul from Resht arrived, he brought with him his staff of Russian stenographers, all female, all very attractive, and a very welcome sight at meals to the Dunsterforce officers. A Ukrainian girl with a cascade of long blond hair stood out amongst them.\textsuperscript{220}

Fourteen Dunsterforce officers took command of local Armenian and Russian units, in an attempt to organize an effective defense, eight commanding infantry battalions and brigades and the rest administrating the artillery. Captain Harrison was one of the few Dunsterforce officers to actually get the job for which he was sent; when he arrived he was detailed to an Armenian battalion. Harrison was issued a map, an interpreter, an Australian sergeant, a Ford van, and a letter of introduction to the Russian officers, told to go find his troops and assume control. The Canadian immediately sensed that the situation would be an uphill battle. His command was a two and a half mile stretch outside of Baku which looked north across the peninsula, over four miles of pale, undulating hills to the sea coast. When he introduced himself to the Armenian troops hiding behind the walls of a small Azeri village in the middle of the line, he met nothing but frustration. “No digging had been done,” he wrote.

\begin{quote}
\textit{We had no support or reserves. The Armenian commander could give me little information as to his numbers, organization, or intentions, nor had he ascertained the enemy's position. He was chiefly concerned in carting away}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{219}Harrison, p4-5.
\textsuperscript{220}Rawlinson, p83.
Harrison wrote off the Armenian commander completely when the men told him that he was a coward who ran whenever the Turks attacked. Realizing he had to take full authority, Harrison determined to try and reach the coast so that the enemy troops on the east of the peninsula would be cut off from the Turkish army on the mainland. He tried to persuade the Armenians to patrol but had trouble getting anyone to leave the village, which was looted to a pile of rubble and full of murdered Azeris. At night, he and his Aussie sergeant snuck over the countryside and found the enemy's position a mile and a half away, but when he returned he could not convince his Armenians to attempt a raid. Over the next few days with much cajoling he managed to get some digging and cavalry patrols established. Still, the behavior of the troops sickened the Canadian with disappointment, “Old men, children, and one woman picked up by the patrols and brought in to me for examination I discovered subsequently were not sent back according to my orders but were murdered by my own men.”

Major Van Den Berg supervised the machine gun placements at the battle line. When he arrived, the guns seem to be placed erratically and without much sense. This was apparently because some of the defenders regarded the machine guns as their own property and carried them around with them when off duty. The major had a difficult time putting an end to this behavior. He also set up a machine gun training school, so that when the time came, the gunners would not lose their heads and make off into town with their guns in tow.

221Harrison, p5-6.
222Harrison, p6
223Harrison, p6.
Warden was made Inspector General of the Russian and Armenian armies, but fumed at the behavior of the troops. “[The Armenians] represent they have 45,000 men in the line and draw rations for 70,000 saying the balance are in town reserves when they only have about 3000 all told.”224 However, even on the British end of things, the logistics left something to be desired. “I have no staff, of course,” Warden complained.

_Each other senior officer has a Ford Touring Car & others a Ford van, but I am not to have any at all. Still I have a front line 30 miles long and the nearest part to H.Q. is three miles. It is impossible to walk and get anywhere in a day and yet the staff keep their cars and never go out anywhere. If I were of the Indian Services, I could get anything, but being a Colonial I am of no account in their opinion._225

Major Newcombe arrived from Derbent on August 19th, ending his brief service fighting in, and ironically against, the Red Army.226 Dunsterville brought him an urgent problem: there was almost no money to be had in the city for paying troops or buying food. The Turks cut off the peninsula from the mainland and the Caspian economy had ground to a near-halt. “The banks and larger private businesses had sometime previously been nationalized,” wrote the Manitoban, “and now ignorant and unscrupulous committees were endeavoring to carry on. [...] Confidence on the part of the public had been entirely destroyed.”227 The first thing Newcombe did was ask the Dictators for an advance of five million roubles. They obliged with little choice. Secondly, he had to find a way to liquidate the sterling and krans they brought from Mesopotamia and gathered in Persia into roubles. Thirdly, Newcombe needed to keep the now circulating Bolshevik Baku bond from becoming worthless. Addressing them

224Warden, Private Diary, 1 Sept 1918.
225Warden, Private Diary, 1 Sept 1918.
227Major Harold Kenzie Newcombe, as quoted in Dunsterville, _Adventures of Dunsterforce_, p242.
personally, Newcombe had the Dictators continue to print the Baku bonds and used them to pay the Baku army and buy supplies in the city.\textsuperscript{228} Meanwhile, British officers complained that they almost couldn't afford to buy a meal where they were lodged, and the local residents began to feel the grip of famine.

A battery of field artillery unexpectedly arrived from Derbent, sent by Bicherakov as a sign of goodwill. It looked as though he had not completely forgotten his loyalties and benefactors. However, it was not enough, considering the size force mounting on the outskirts. Insolent as ever, Dunsterville still cajoled Baghdad for more men and guns. “Give me enough troops here and not only will Baku be permanently saved, but a movement will spread over the whole of the Caucasus which will prove inestimable to Great Britain and her allies,” he argued.\textsuperscript{229} Marshall refused to budge.

Eventually Dunsterville's exposure to the critical situation in Baku caused his optimism to wane. With such a small force and a large, agitated population against him, destroying the oil wells was not viable. He reported to the War Office that the only way to control the oil was to continue to hold Baku. The War Office, reluctant to have men at Baku in the first place, now regarded the situation as pointless, and issued an order for Dunsterville to withdraw.\textsuperscript{230}

Captain Gilmour received orders to see Dunsterville who had a special job for him. He reported to the \textit{Kursk} and was admitted to the general's office. “General Dunsterville was playing Patience [cards] when I was admitted to his office, and without looking up, he greeted me.” Stalky wanted Gilmour to link up with Colonel Battine in

\textsuperscript{228}Dunsterville, \textit{Adventures of Dunsterforce}, p243.
\textsuperscript{229}Dunsterville, as quoted in Sareen, p69.
\textsuperscript{230}Sareen, p71.
Krasnovodsk, on the other side of the Caspian Sea. If a complete withdrawal was necessary, Gilmour could provide Battine with enough information to accommodate retreating soldiers and refugees.

Arriving at the Krasnovodsk, Gilmour moved inland to liaise with Battine and the local warlord, who was putting up his own fight against the Bolsheviks. When the counter-revolutionaries intended to shoot a boat-full of refugees from Baku, Gilmour asked Battine if they should intervene. Gilmour later remembered, “Colonel Battine left the matter entirely in their hands: in a civil war of this sort, the affair was quite their own business.”\textsuperscript{231} Gilmour spent the next two months attempting to organize Turkmen irregulars for combat against the Red Army, but was not surprised when they lacked discipline. “Troops of this nature,” wrote the dry Winnipeg native, are not any more aggressive than their jobs require.”\textsuperscript{232}

Hopkins tried his best to bring food into Baku from other Caspian ports. Caviar was the most prolific thing available, and the men quickly grew sick of eating ‘fish paste’. Captain Hopkins would send rations through the town to the troops at the front. Due to the unpredictable reliability of the Armenian supply officers, the food would sometimes never make it to its destination.\textsuperscript{233}

Warden criticized Dunsterville for his lack of initiative and placed the blame for the precarious situation squarely with the general for not taking absolute control of the town:

\textit{Now we are in a beautiful mess. General Dunsterville on coming here should have taken charge and made all parties}

\textsuperscript{231}Murray, IV, p99.  
\textsuperscript{232}Murray, IV, p99.  
\textsuperscript{233}Murray, III, p491.
obey his order and they would have fallen into line without a word, but he has done nothing and is not in charge and we are, of all things, working under the Russian workman's orders.\footnote{Warden, Private Diary, 6-13 Sept 1918.}

Dunsterville felt he needed to act on behalf of and in cooperation with the existing government, no matter how frustrating it turned out to be. The general spent a lot of time arguing with them and attending their council meetings with little result. Although he pressed for changes in the army so that battle efficiency could improve, he agreed to let inexperienced Russian and Armenian officers command the brigades, rather than British troops. This was not optimal, Dunsterville admitted, “I would have eventually agreed to anything to get the movement started, and would have relied on getting things into order later.”\footnote{Dunsterville, \textit{Adventures of Dunsterforce}, p293.} He counted on his own troops to put things through on the right lines when they were in the field. In practice, the orders of the British officers were often met with shrugs and excuses from Armenians and Russians, over whom they had no command.\footnote{Donohoe, p214.}

Even though Dunsterville had been ordered to evacuate, he still pressed on Baghdad and Whitehall to send him more troops. He explained in a telegram of September 1\textsuperscript{st} that Baku could not be held under current circumstances. Reliable Russian, Armenian and British soldiers numbered no more than three thousand against a reported 6000 Turk regulars and 8000 Azeri irregulars. Stalky's last hope in holding Baku was to get more men up the line. Emotional and defiant, he told Marshall: “This expedition should never have been ordered if it was simply to result in placing a handful of British troops in the firing line where they remain without relief and if not supported
faces with prospect of certain annihilation.”

Marshall forwarded Dunsterville's telegram to London and repeated the order to evacuate. Infuriated with General Marshall, Stalky cabled back,

*The responsibility for the present situation therefore rests entirely with you and it is inconceivable that while there remains a good chance of saving it and the town you should propose the abandonment of all work at the outset. The contrast between the loyalty and Chivalry of Bicharakhoff and this attitude will utterly discredit the British Army in the eyes of all Russians.*

Both Baghdad and Whitehall knew that it was only at Dunsterville's insistence that Baku was considered. In this light, his comments seemed insolent and vainglorious, and the brass was ready to take Stalky off the job. Wilson told Marshall directly “The attitude of recrimination which he now adopts adds to our former misgivings and should you deem it advisable you are at full liberty as soon as the situation permits to relieve General Dunsterville from his command.”

They repeated their order for him to evacuate. In defiance, Dunsterville refused to leave. He never told any of his officers at the front that, in spite of his pleas, London had ordered a withdrawal.

On August 31st, the Turks attacked the line to the north of town, to the left of Harrison's position. Luckily, the support of a few Cossacks to helped him rally his forces to meet the offensive.

*I could see their objective and made use of an old Russian soldier to handle a couple of platoons and enfilade them. My two machien guns and the remainder of my force I had to keep in hand as a squadron and a half of Turkish cavalry were waiting opposite my front but out of range. It was a*

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237 Dunsterville, as quoted in Arslanian, PhD Thesis, p78.
238 Dunsterville, as quoted in Arslanian, “Dunsterville's Adventures”, p211.
239 Dunsterville, as quoted in Arslanian, “Dunsterville's Adventures”, p211.
most satisfactory afternoon.\textsuperscript{240}

Harrison managed to hold out the entire day and keep the Armenians in line with the help of the Cossacks. Harrison was ordered to pull back in order to reinforce their position. A field of oil derricks, spires of sticks and steel, stabbed out of the oily ground behind them. It was not a very defensible position, but headquarters insisted was to be held “at all costs”. When the line to the west started to break, Harrison left his unit to find out what happened. “I found the adjutant who had just heard the situation from Brigade, and told him to get the infantry back and use the cavalry to cover them. [The adjutant] put his spurs into his horse and galloped towards Baku.”\textsuperscript{241}

In danger of being flanked if the line to the west failed to hold, Harrison looked around for the machine gun positions. The guns had been taken back to town by deserting Armenian troops. The Canadian managed to find some disassociated cossacks who had been scattered by Turkish artillery fire and directed them into the line to try and shore up the breach. They held and eventually retook the lost position. Sgt. Ambrose Mahar of Prince Edward Island took a bullet in the shoulder during the battle. “The Armenians did a good day’s work,” wrote Harrison, “and as long as I was with them they appeared willing to fight. Towards evening the Turkish attack petered out and we felt rather pleased with our conduct.”\textsuperscript{242}

Night eventually came and Harrison reported his position to headquarters and requested rations. They never arrived. Instead, rumors fluttered through the armored car unit that the British would try and evacuate the next day. These rumors were false,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{240}Harrison, p7.  \\
\textsuperscript{241}Harrison, p7.  \\
\textsuperscript{242}Harrison, as quoted in Murray, III, p493.
\end{flushleft}
but the stress of the situation brought into their minds that perhaps it was the best option. Harrison was finally relieved the next morning. He later learned that three miles to the southwest of his position, the Turks had almost broken the line and forced it home, with half a company of Warwicks slaughtered in the process.

After these bleak events, a group of British officers met in secret, away from the eyes of Dunsterville, Byron and Warden. Perhaps word got out that Dunsterville was holding up in Baku against the orders of his superiors. In the dining room of the Hotel Europe, the pounding of Turkish shells reminded the officers of the seemingly unavoidable fate of the city. Evacuation was on everyone's mind. Captain Hopkins later recalled their conversations:

_We had visions of giving up our arms and having a nice long walk to Constantinople as prisoners under a Turkish escort. This did not appeal to Harrison, Newcombe or myself. The thought struck us that if Dunsterville told us we would have to surrender, we would be in a position to shift for ourselves._

Hopkins, Harrison, Newcombe, Van den Berg and others did not trust Dunsterville to do what he could to save the men from capture. Even less, the men did not expect him to procure evacuation should the situation become desperate. Hopkins put a plan to the other officers: hijack one of the tugboats moored at the wharf and make off to either Derbend, to link up with Bicherakov, or Krasnovodsk, and hook up with the Malleson mission. Hopkins could navigate the boat, having grown up on and worked on the Pacific coast. The officers saw no other way out other than mutiny, and all present quietly agreed.\(^{244}\)

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243 Captain Gordon Scott Hopkins, as quoted in Murray, “Canadians in Dunsterforce” III, p496.  
244 Murray, III, p497.
That night Hopkins kept his eyes open for a suitable boat while he was on patrol. He saw a tugboat that looked the part and snuck aboard. He was quietly poking around on deck when he saw three men in the asleep in the cabin. Careful not to wake them, he stepped lightly and made for the wheelhouse to lift a set of Caspian charts. Hopkins returned to the hotel and met with the others, where it was decided they would rush the three sailors with their revolvers and sail off into the night. They packed food and water, and waited. Townsend’s monument must have stood out in somewhere in their heads. If Stalky was ready to abandon his men in a vain attempt to hold Baku, they were ready to abandon him.

Dunsterville may have been vain but he was not stupid. He came back from his meeting with the dictators and told his officers to prepare for evacuation. Another attempt was going to be made to try and save the city, but the Dunsterforce was not up for sacrifice. Knowing the general was not going to abandon them to death, capture, or mutiny, the Canadian officers quietly abandoned their plans of a secret escape.

Who was defending the town depended on who one asked. While the British were prepared to assume the role of leaders and technicians, the Armenians and Russians defending Baku assumed the British came to take on the burden of holding the city. The Bakuvians expected the British to bring a much larger force, as many as 5000 men, up from Persia. The dictators were frustrated with the lack of manpower, and Dunsterville wrought his hands trying to cooperate with them. In addition to this, the Armenians and Russians at the front often reverted to the tactics and command schemes

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245 Allen & Muratoff, p493.
246 One of the directors of the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship claimed Dunsterville had personally promised as many in a telegram before his departure from Persia. See Gokay, “The Battle for Baku”, p44-45.
they were using under the Bolsheviks. Sometimes soldiers stopped mid-battle to vote on the efficacy of commands. Coordination faltered.

At this point, Dunsterville’s refusal to withdraw despite London’s insistence had recriminated him to the War Office. He penned,

> London and Baghdad keep on telling me to leave Baku at once and I finally and firmly refuse - so how it will all end I do not know. I have sent the strongest telegrams that have ever been sent, but they contain nothing but what is true and right and what can be substantiated.  

The troops he did have were in the front lines, attempting to shore up gaps left by deserters, train Armenians in the basics of Western military discipline, and keep the supply chain running through the city. Still, the situation looked bleak. Warden’s stress over the immobility of the local troops became plain. “In his own racy speech, redolent of his native prairie,” wrote an officer, “[Warden] summed up his efforts in this direction as being as futile as trying to flog a dead horse back to life.”

High explosive shells hammered the roof of the Hotel Europe and buildings nearby. In middle of an otherwise quiet morning on September 9th, the building suddenly shook with shelling. The section of the hotel where Major Newcombe had set up his office burst into smithereens. “Search was at once made,” wrote a British officer, “but the whole wing being in ruins, no sign could be found of his remains, so that when I arrived for dejuner at midday, I was told the news, and many nice things were said about him, and his loss was sincerely mourned.”

The men sat over a quiet lunch remembering the man from Winnipeg, the pretty Russian stenographers at the next

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247 Dunsterville, Private Diary, 9 Sept 1918.
248 Donohoe, p215.
249 Rawlinson, p84.
table. Colonel Rawlinson, Officer of Supply, noted, “Our friend with the glorious hair was also at dejuner at another table, and as I knew out absent comrade was a great friend of hers, I took a good look at her, and noticed that, apart from trying to catch the conversation at our table, she was otherwise quite unconcerned, and looked, if anything, more attractive than ever.”

At that moment, Newcombe walked in and sat down to lunch as if nothing had happened. Astonished, the men jumped up and congratulated him on his escape. “What escape?” he replied. The officers told him how they had spent the morning searching for his dead body. “My quarters!” he said, falling back in surprise, amazed with his close call. Colonel Rawlinson thought for a moment, too, and looked over once again at the girl with the long blond hair, who quietly blushed like a rose. The Hotel l’Europe in shambles, Newcombe moved his office to the Hotel Metropole down the street, which was also shelled to smithereens later in the day without much injury to the British officers.

Luck swung the way of the British when a Turkish deserter appeared on September 12th. The Turks planned to launch a decisive attack the day after next. Knowing that the final push approached, Dunsterville attempted to organize a defense scheme with the Dictators. Things were certainly looking up when 500 soldiers and ten machine guns arrived from Derbent, local men who had departed with him in August and now returned home. These Armenians were disheveled, but better trained than most of the line. They brought with them a dispatch from Bicherakov, saying would send troops as soon as he could.

250Rawlinson, p84.
251Rawlinson, p84.
STRENGTH BEFORE???

On September 14th, the final push arrived. The British thought it might come at Balajari, where in the early morning, the Turks pressed on the line. Colonel Warden was not aware that the offensive had begun until 6 AM when an orderly told him to report to Colonel Keyworth. “The attack had started at 4AM but he had not received any reports from anyone yet. Two hours after the battle started & I was told afterwards all the staff were still in their beds.” Warden got a move on the organize the Russian defenses. If the British were lucky, this attack would peter like the others before things became serious. He soon realized that the Baku army was a mess.

“I went up to [the Russian Barracks] and found the Russian Brigadier Commander tearing his hair and acting like a man who had lost his mind or sense,” wrote the Canadian colonel. “Two of his battalions ran away, bolted when the first shot was fired by the Turks, who then climbed up on the ridge and occupied our trenches. They had advanced about one mile into our position were only 2000 yards away from the city, and the whole line of ours was falling back, men running away everywhere.”

Warden grabbed a car and driver and made for the front line, trying to rally the men together into a cogent defense. The line formed up, but the car took heavy fire and Warden was forced back. He pointed the driver to head down the ridge, and the car wound along the dust roads through the oil wells to another part of the battle line. “I found a hopeless situation,” he wrote. “Our artillery was doing nothing. No good whatever.”

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252Warden, LAC Diary, 14 Sept 1918.
253Ibid.
254Ibid.
the dilapidated Hotel Metropole and did nothing all morning.

Keyworth, who is an artillery officer and was also in command of all operations did even less. He had four armoured cars at his disposal and never did anything until I phoned in and asked him to send them into action. He did not even know where they all were.  

“The day wore on in this chaotic state,” wrote Warden in his Diary afterwards. Before the morning's end, Warden was sure they were going to lose the city. By morning's end the Turks had overrun the first line of defenses. Bicherakov's force was nowhere in sight. Dunsterville knew that the situation thereon out was hopeless and ordered a full-scale evacuation.

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**EVACUATION**

Clinging onto Baku despite all advice and orders, Dunsterville finally issued the order for the force to pull itself out of the fire. The British pulled back from the firing line, and the wounded were loaded onto the *Kursk*. Gordon Scott Hopkins was commanding the wharf during the evacuation, and needed to set up a guard to keep the local population from swarming the docks and making escape impossible.

**THE DICTATORS INFORM DUNSTERVILLE NOT TO LEAVE.**

Warden, still trying to command the Russians and Armenians to form an effective defensive line, got the order to retreat, as he considered it, almost too late.

The Turks eventually got all high ground and closed in around the city. At 5 PM their rifle bullets were spattering against the sides of the streets all over the city, and they shelled us out of our HQs in the Hotel Europa and the Hotel

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255Ibid.  
256Maclaren, p31. Rawlinson, ???
Metropole, and we began to move towards the boat.\textsuperscript{257}

On the edge of the town, a squad of Warwicks was holding out against the Turks in what used to be a girls' school. Hopkins, ordered to bring them away, went out to get them in the midst of a machine gun barrage. The obstinate Warwicks, to Hopkins' admiration, gave up their defense, formed up, and marched back to the wharf as if they were on parade, bullets landing all around them.\textsuperscript{258}

Harrison noted that on the last day of operations, a greater stand was being made than ever before by the local troops. “During the day the Russians were driving the Armenians back into the firing line, and as we made our final departure, we saw a great many Armenians with fixed bayonets on their own doorstep, and this appeared to us to be the place from which they intended to put up a resistance, if at all.”\textsuperscript{259}

By 10PM that night, all the men were aboard their commandeered steamers and the Kursk and the Abo pulled away, leaving a fortune in kit, guns, and cars behind on the wharf. Colonel Warden was shocked at the ineptitude of leaving the stores behind. “I never witnessed such chaos amongst the military, especially the regulars. They did not appear to have the vaguest idea of what to do or how to do it or when, where, etc. They stood about looking helplessly at one another.”\textsuperscript{260}

Another ship, the Armenian, had been loaded with ammunition and kit enough to fill the hull. The officer had to hold a Bolshevik crew at gunpoint to get it to sail out of the harbor. Everyone held their breath as they attempted to speed by a gunboat guarding the exit. It opened fire on the ship laden with countless rounds of ammunition and

\textsuperscript{257}Warden, LAC Diary, 14 Sept 1918.
\textsuperscript{258}Maclaren, p32.
\textsuperscript{259}Harrison, LAC FILE, p9.
\textsuperscript{260}Warden, LAC Diary, 14 Sept 1918.
explosives. A shot skipped off the deck and another burst through the cabin, before the Armenian hit open water and made off into the night. The Dunsterforce was out of Baku.

71 British Imperial troops had been killed, 85 wounded, 24 were missing, presumed dead.\(^{261}\) What remained of the officers and NCOs made their way back to Enzeli. Warden was holding back a mouthful of scorn for his superiors. In his opinion, they had bungled the whole affair.

\[\text{Baku could have been held by good management and organization but General Dunsterville was not capable of doing either and his staff was far worse. Not the slightest move was made to meet the enemy during the last night and when the attack developed nobody bothered to find out how it was going until I went out. And to keep four new armoured cars and never put them into action when we were being driven in and then leave them on the dock was, in my opinion, criminal, and Keyworth should be cashiered for it.}\(^{262}\]

Dunsterville wrote on the day of the evacuation,

\[\text{Persia has tumbled to pieces - Urmieh has fallen, the Turks are advancing in Hamadan and Kasvin, and goodness knows what lies ahead of us - chased from pillar to post. I sent a very strong wire to Baghdad and the War Office, pointing out that their policy was a bad one, but even then I could have got through if they had not run even their "bad" policy badly. They object to my impertinent criticisms, and state they would remove me from my command if they could do so, but they cannot. My conduct will be gone into later - so I suppose I shall be tried by Court Martial.}\(^{263}\)

A series of quick British victories in Palestine had the Turks suing for peace by

\(^{261}\)Perrett & Lord, p176.
\(^{262}\)Warden, LAC Diary, 14 Sept 1918.
\(^{263}\)Dunsterville, Private Diary, 15 Sept 1918.
October. The division heading for Kasvin stopped at Zinjian.

The remaining Russian and Armenian regiments under the leadership of the Dictators attempted to negotiate the surrender of the city, sending out one of their commissars with a white flag that morning. He attempted to negotiate a peace with the Turks, but by noon the slaughter had begun. That general later wrote, “For several days in succession the lorries were removing the bodies from the town, and streets were cleaned. However, for a while, the smell of the dead still hung over the city.”

Somewhere between 8900 and 10,000 inhabitants, including women and children, were slaughtered.

When they disembarked, Harrison was appointed Deputy Military Governor of Enzeli. He described it as “the disgusting job of helping to teach Armenian refugees the elements of sanitation and honesty, and the first principles of how to help each other.”

He managed to get permission to leave for France at the end of October on ground of ill health, as outbreaks of dysentery, smallpox and cholera plagued the Caspian littoral.

With thousands of refugees coming aground at Enzeli harbor, sanitation conditions were atrocious. Colonel Warden, sick with the display he just witnessed at Baku, also suffered a bout of dysentery. He was ordered to Krasnovodsk, on the east Caspian Shore, and could not return to Enzeli due to inclement weather. Warden was eager to leave this expedition behind him:

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265 Kayaloff, p7. Although the extent of the slaughter is disputed, more conservative accounts (ie Kazemzadeh, p144) place the death toll at at least approximately 9000.
267 Warden, Diary, 19 Sep 1918.
I hope I get back to France at an early date. They will surely release me now that Dunsterforce has been disbanded. I am too senior for their benefit. The old regular soldier gives nothing to the Colonial soldier if it can be avoided, and in this case it can by sending me off to some outlying part and forgetting me. [...] If they were half decent now they could give me my Brigadier’s rank and return me to France and it would not interfere with their establishment whatsoever.  

Warden went up the line to examine the situation in Turkestan, waiting for the chance to hand over his authority in the region to someone else. When the new G.O.C. out of Kasvin finally sent up another Lieutenant-Colonel, Warden was relieved. “Hurrah, now I am off for France I am sure, with my military career badly warped by this confounded Dunsterforce. It was an awful outfit.” Gilmour left Turkestan with him, and they arrived at Kasvin on October 18th to meet the new G.O.C., General Thompson.

Thompson gave the men of Dunsterforce a choice: help train irregular units of Armenians, Persians, and Assyrians; take a job with the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force; return to their original units in France; or volunteer for Norperforce. Colonel Warden wanted to go home, but on his way there he was ordered for Vladivostok, where Canadians were participating in an Allied occupation of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, and trying to organized a coordinated resistance with the White Army against the Bolsheviks. Warden admitted to himself that General Currie may have been right in saying that he was throwing his military career away by leaving France. “I am making a proper mess of my career. I would have been better off in France even Odlum & all I

268 Warden, Diary, 25 Sep 1918.
269 Warden, Diary, 10 Oct 1918.
think, but it's done now. No use crying over spilled milk.”

Captain Lewis, Sgt Ramsay, Sgt Lawrence, and a wounded Sgt Mahar also made for Siberia to link up with the C.S.E.F.

Gilmour spent the rest of his war at the head of an Assyrian Brigade out of Kasvin. Lorne Weidmark and Samuel Hamilton also.

Major Newcombe was promoted to a Lieutenant-Colonel and headed back to Baku with Thompson as a financial advisor. SEE CECIL JUDGE PAPERS

Captain Roberts and Captain Murray, as well as Sgts McWhirter and Gattey joined McCarthy's Irregulars, otherwise known as the Army of the Black Sea, and led Assyrian and Armenian units in police duties through Kurdistan and the Caucasus for a few more months until they were recalled.

Sgt William Edward Trevor had a long detour before making it home. He rushed down to Basrah like many other Dunsterforcers and managed to snag a ship for Suez. He was arrested in Cairo for assaulting a local Arab man, and thrown into an Egyptian prison with a sentence of two years.

All the Canadians were recalled from Mesopotamia and Persia by March 10th,

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271Warden, Diary, 13 Feb 1919.
273Murray, IV, p100.
275 See your dunsterforce file.
THE WAR ENDS? WHAT DOES THE WAR OFFICE HAVE TO SAY ABOUT ALL THIS?

Warden thought Stalky was done for, writing in his diary, “Major General Dunsterville should be made a full general and knighted and kicked out as they do everyone who makes a mess of his job.”

WHAT HAPPENED TO DUNSTERVILLE?

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Those who packed the hall at the Royal Geographic Society on the evening of December 20th, 1920, were eager to hear a tale of gallantry and adventure in the Near East when Major-General Lionel Dunsterville took his place as the center of attention. A haven for the Imperial elite, the R. G. S. often featured eponymous visitors who had been to the furthest reaches of the empire. The President of the Society quieted the crowd and introduced the speaker, a man whose “extraordinary,” “venturous,” and “skillfully conducted” expedition in the Caucasus was the subject of so much interest.

Dunsterville then explained the events that led him from Baghdad to Baku in the waning months of the war inviting the fascination of the crowd with his story. When the address had ended, General Percy Sykes, who had commanded British operations in

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276LAC FILE RG24, Vol 1741, DHS 4-19, “0-226-33”.
277Warden, LAC Diary, 14 Sept 1918.
South Persia, took the floor and told the audience, “I think that when the history of the Great War is finally written and we gain some distance from events, this will be looked upon as the great adventure of the Great War.” He went on to say that Dunsterville understated the difficulties that he faced in Baku. “I do not think there are many Englishmen who could have done what he did.” Elaborating, Sykes went on to say, “I think we cannot make a better comparison of the feat of General Dunsterville than by comparing it with the great adventures of the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth,” equating Dunsterville with the great explorers of England’s past. The President then said, “We in this society are always glad to hear a tale of great adventure, and we have heard this evening a tale of the most romantic kind.” The speakers then praised the laurels of not only the expedition but of Dunsterville himself, citing his great capacity for leadership, worldliness, and his great sense of humor.

Dunsterville was surrounded by friends that night - the London elite and other Imperial officers - but the words spoken on that occasion suggested that there was an implicit connection in the minds of speakers between the man with the mission. The expedition lives on in memory today as “Dunsterforce,” bearing the indelible mark of its leader. This mark was not only one of personality, but existed in a tradition and ideology that shaped its public memory, where Dunsterforce became intertwined with the image of Dunsterville himself. It took decades of historical discourse for new perspectives and new evidence to remove the romance and image that Dunsterville’s name impressed upon the narrative of the Battle of Baku.

278Recorded as spoken by Percy Sykes, December 6 1920, in L. C. Dunsterville, “From Baghdad to the Caspian, 1918” Geographic Journal, Vol 57, No 3 (Mar 1921) p165.
279“From Baghdad to the Caspian”, p165.
280“From Baghdad to the Caspian”, p166.
As a boy, Dunsterville attended military school with Rudyard Kipling in Devonshire. Kipling, a magnanimous author and poet, was one of the most popular writers in the British Empire due to his vivid narrative gifts and his novel tales of imperial adventure. Kipling's own experiences inspired some of the most vibrant details and characters found in his works. A boyhood Lionel Dunsterville was Kipling's inspiration for the character of Stalky, a vivacious and clever leader of a group of schoolboys in Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* (1899). Kipling was at the height of his popularity before the Great War, having won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907. As such, Stalky was a character known by nearly the entire Empire. In comparison, Dunsterville's relatively lackluster career before the war saw him posted in Pakistan, Waziristan, and China. He had led Indian troops and rubbed elbows with the Imperial social elite, earning his way to a general's post by 1917, but he failed to rattle cages and win hearts in the same manner as his fictional alter-ego, and eventually drifted into obscurity.

Dunsterville wore, embellished, and was embellished by the image of Stalky. It was a nickname he wore proudly during his expedition, a term of endearment from other officers. 281 In his later years, he published a series of books, mostly Kipling-esque short stories, under the nickname. His memoirs became *Stalky's Reminiscences* (1928), and in his subsequent books *More Yarns* (1931) and *Stalky Settles Down* (1932) his nickname branded the book. He served as president of the Kipling Society for years, maintaining an active, public link with the man who had immortalized his boyhood persona in prose. Dunsterville, in adopting the name for himself and creating a public link to the author, readily associated himself with the character's image, and used it to

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promote himself.

Dunsterville's account of the expedition, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*\(^{282}\) (1920), was widely publicized. Edward Arnold, the London publisher of the book, advertised it with a direct connection to Stalky and the Kipling canon:

> Who is not familiar with Mr. Rudyard Kipling's figure of Stalky, the schoolboy 'wily Odysseus'? Stalky has now grown up, and is now Major-General Dunsterville, the author of this work. [...] Mr. Kipling's estimate of Stalky, the boy, is amply realized in the story, as told by himself, of Stalky the man.\(^{283}\)

The story about Dunsterforce was presented as a continuation of the adventures of Kipling's Stalky. When Dunsterville passed away on March 18, 1946, his obituary in *The Times* read, “Major-General L. C. Dunserville – Stalky of “Stalky and Co.”\(^{284}\) To Britons, the two figures were remembered as one and the same.

The first wave of British memoirs further enshrined the association of the mission, the man, and the character. A popular work was *The Long Road to Baghdad*\(^{285}\) (1919), by journalist Edmund Candler. Writing as a military correspondent for *The Times* and *the Daily Mail*, he reported to the press back home on British troops and actions in the Middle East. He equated Dunsterforce with the momentous expeditions of “Cyrus and Hystaspes.”\(^{286}\) Candler's Dunsterville was drawn as the fated liberator of the Caucasus, who in typical Stalky fashion was valiantly “leading his band of adventurers into the unknown.” He wrote that it was “generally agreed that if anyone could form

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\(^{283}\) “Mr. Edward Armold's Spring Announcement”, p3. As appended to Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*.

\(^{284}\) *The Times* (London), Wednesday March 20, 1946, p7.


some sort of organism out of [the Caucasus], or call into being a body with related front and flanks, capable of independent action, it was General Dunsterville.\textsuperscript{287} The journalist went on to emphasize the impossible odds and the noble relief work of the expedition, describing how the soldiers rescued Northern Persia from Turkish ravages and natural famine. The unstable political situation in Baku was illustrated as the machinations of traitors upon traitors, and when Dunsterforce took up the noble task of rescuing the city from the Turks, it was in spite of the Baku populace who continually worked against him. Candler squared the loss of the city with the Baku Armenians and Azerbaijani Tatars for their malaise and subterfuge, at no cost to the efforts of Stalky himself.

New Zealander Colonel S. G. Savige's account of the expedition was titled \textit{Stalky's Forlorn Hope}\textsuperscript{288} (1920), a name that suggests an association of Stalky, the general, with the Kipling canon of Stalky, the fictional boy.\textsuperscript{289} Savige went far to praise Dunsterville in his account of the expedition. His Stalky was cool-blooded, gallant, and wry. M. H. Donohoe, who also served in the expedition, painted the same portrait, saying of Dunsterville, “he rode easy and without straining on the anchor of his reputation.”\textsuperscript{290} Donohoe emphasized that the man met every aspect of his projected personality. One of his rumors is telling: “It is related of him that with his fateful interview with the Bolsheviks [at Resht] that he told the 'Red Committee' so many amusing stories in their own mother-tongue that they quite forgot the principle business of the evening, which was to sentence him to death.”\textsuperscript{291}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{287}{Candler, \textit{The Long Road to Baghdad}, Vol 2, p286.}
\footnotetext{288}{S.G. Savige, \textit{Stalky's Forlorn Hope}, Melbourne: McCubbin, 1920}
\footnotetext{289}{Savige informs the reader that Dunsterville is Stalky on the first page of the memoir. See S.G. Savige, \textit{Stalky's Forlorn Hope}.}
\footnotetext{290}{M. H. Donohoe, \textit{With the Persian Expedition}, London: Edward Arnold, 1919, p130.}
\footnotetext{291}{Donohoe, \textit{With the Persian Expedition}, p131.}
\end{footnotes}
charms were just as true in fact as they were in fiction.

As a picture of Kipling-esque wit and gallantry, the criticisms brought against Dunsterville by the first wave of histories of the Caucasian expedition were few. His reputation had the effect of speaking for his actions. With a view that he had adventure and intrepidity in his heart, it seemed as though the man himself could take no fault for tragedy. These accounts, embroiled in the Stalky persona, influenced the historiography for years to come.

When news of the fall of Baku made it back to London, a headline in *The Times* enshrined in the memory the nation the cause for the loss of the city to the Turks. “BRITISH LEAVE BAKU – DEFLECTION OF THE ARMENIANS.”292 The article described how the local Armenians refused to fight and the British soldiers had to rise to the occasion and defend the city. “ARMENIANS SAVED BY BRITISH” reads a sub-heading. The next year, General Marshall published a letter in the Times explaining the end of the Mesopotamian Campaign. On the Battle of Baku he wrote how the Armenians had often retreated and refused to fight.293 The party line from the War Office seemed to affirm that the 'Dunsterforce' failed despite their best efforts. The “treachery” of the Armenians at Baku became widely known as the truth. Meanwhile, magazine articles mentioned the Baku expedition in passing and forebodingly recalled the ethnic tensions that pervaded the region.294 There was a darker side to the story of Dunsterforce that laid beneath a surface of Kipling imperial chivalry. And while General Marshall acquiesced to the War Office in public, in his private memoir he insisted that the Baku

293 *The Times* (London), Friday February 21, 1919, p8.
situation had been rotten from the start. More critical historians took notice, but in their works balanced Marshall's laments with Dunsterville's frustrations.

The operations of Dunsterforce were then published in official histories of the war. The Mesopotamian Campaign, 1914-1918, written by British Brigadier-General F. J. Moberly, was released in 1927. As an official account, it maintains a professional portrait of Dunsterville separate from his public image, but was the most critical history to date. Moberly described Dunsterville in an information conflict with Baghdad and the War Office, unable to reassure them that the situation in Baku warranted action and that the city could be saved from occupation with British support. The War Office advised against any permanent occupation of Baku, but General Marshall deferred to Stalky on the matter of direct action. Dunsterville took the initiative and tried to push ahead. To the War Office, Dunsterville was taking dangerous gambles in thinning out the Persian line through such requests. Only after an invitation was made by the Baku government - and Dunsterville accepted - did the force gain official consent from the War Office to go to Baku, but never for the city's permanent occupation. The conflict illustrated between the War Office and Dunsterville was put in the context of a lack of information - information that the War Office thought Dunsterville had and was not sharing. While Moberly suggested the tension was minimal, his assessments did something to magnify the simplicity of previous accounts and put the lens over the ambition of General Dunsterville.
While critical, this official history was also conciliatory towards Dunsterville. But according to Moberly, the causes for the fall of Baku were out of Dunsterville's control. Local troops were incompetent, Bicherakov was unreliable, and things seemed to be doomed from the start. Dunsterville's best efforts to rouse the War Office to send more troops fell on deaf ears because other reports confirmed the hopelessness of the situation. While Dunsterville may have been responsible for the embarkation of the ill-fated expedition, he was not responsible for an end that could have otherwise been avoided. If anything, the evidence given by Moberly suggests that had Dunsterville been given appropriate support by Baghdad and the War Office he might have saved Baku from the Turks. The 'Secret' War Office document *Operations in Persia* (1927) published a largely reiterated account of Moberly's volume, hiding no scathing critiques of Dunsterville. Most of the publications before the end of the Second World War are either about or by participants, such as Donohoe, Candler, Savige, Sykes, or Commodore Norris, who took charge of the Caspian Fleet. They largely corroborated and participated in Dunsterville's own memory of the expedition.

At the dawn of the Cold War, Feruz Kazemzadeh, a Russo-American historian, published an account of the revolution in Transcaucasia that incorporated Caucasian and Russian sources and other accounts still unseen by Anglophones. *The Struggle for Transcaucasia* (1951) described the Battle of Baku in new ways. Bicherakov, instead

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300 Ibid., p210-11.
of a cautious ally, openly betrays the trust of both the British and the Baku Soviet.\textsuperscript{305} Dunsterville's appraisal of Bicherakov as a 'truly heroic figure' was countermanded by evidence of the Cossack's repeated betrayal of all parties he encountered. The study was not a critique of Western historiography, but it did bring into the English literature important aspects of the narrative.

After Kazemzadeh's book, Western historians began to take an interest in this episode in the context of explaining the origins of the Cold War. Because the expedition had a hand in deposing two Caspian Bolshevik regimes, it became an interesting case study in early Anglo-Soviet relations. Instead of a perception that the Battle of Baku was an extension of the Mesopotamian and Persian campaigns, the focus began to shift with the spirit of the age and Dunsterforce became a part of the intervention in the Russian Civil War. A new wave of historians – armed with skills in Russian – brought into their own studies whatever Russian language sources they could get their hands on.

Kazemzadeh's interpretations of Bolshevik responses to Dunsterville became important for understanding Anglo-Soviet relations in Central Asia. Richard H. Ullman's Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921\textsuperscript{306} (1961) was a mag\textsuperscript{n}imonous three volume work that looked at the interactions of the newly birthed Bolshevik state and the British Empire. The most comprehensive, careful, and fair work on the intervention from the West to date, its opinions on Dunsterforce have remained influential. Examining official histories in addition to Kazemzadeh's new account, Ullman reminds us of Moberly's claim that Dunsterville's first request to proceed to Baku met with sharp opposition in

\textsuperscript{305}Kazemzadeh, The Struggle for Transcaucasia, p133-134.
London, who told him that a permanent occupation of Baku was out of the question.\footnote{Ullman, Anglo-Soviet Relations Vol I, p307-308.} But after the Bolsheviks had been expelled from the government, Dunsterville was encouraged by both Baku's invitation and the conciliation of the War Office to proceed. The successes of the expedition outweigh the failures in Ullman's narrative, Dunsterville having struck a dual blow against the Turks and the Bolsheviks at Baku. Ullman admitted that Dunsterville's own ambitions played a role and that he was eager to accept any invitation to Baku that might have come his way.\footnote{Ibid., p309-310.} In the age of Ullman, it seems as though Stalky became an agent of anti-Bolshevism in the eyes of history.

George A. Brinkley's \textit{The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia, 1917-1921}\footnote{G.A. Brinkley, \textit{The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia, 1917-1921: A Study in the Politics and Diplomacy in the Russian Civil War}, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966.} (1966) is no exception. It places the Dunsterforce in the context of conflicting intentions between the Bolsheviks and the Allies. In Brinkley's study, the Ashkabad Soviet, further north along the Caspian coast, played an important role in the internal politics of Baku. According to Brinkley, Baku was not a part of British strategy against the Turks; instead it was conceptualized as part of the British intervention against the nascent red state in South Russia. \textit{The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia} had Dunsterforce reflect the greater trend of Allied intervention: a shaky start to Western-Soviet relations that was piecemeal, hopeful, and ultimately unsuccessful. The same sentiments are reflected in C. H. Ellis' \textit{The British Intervention in Transcaspia, 1918-1919}\footnote{C.H. Ellis, \textit{The British Intervention in Transcaspia, 1918-1919}, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963.} (1963). A British participant in Dunsterforce, Ellis was looking back through his own memories when he saw the Soviet Union as the
rising antagonist in the story of the intervention. The Battle of Baku became a
foreshadowing to the complex and often conflicting nature of Anglo-Soviet relations.

Through the height of the Cold War, Dunsterforce took a new place in the
historiography of Western-Soviet relations, and drifted further away from the Persian
and Mesopotamian campaigns of the First World War in historical memory. However,
Stalky's actions and reputation remained more or less unexamined. This trend
continued into and through the 1970s, with works like Canadian War Museum historian
John Swettenham's *Allied Intervention in Russia*311 (1968), John Silverlight's *The
Victors Dilemma*312 (1972), and Roy MacLaren's *Canadians in Russia, 1918-1919*313
(1976) echoing the same sentiments.

For scholars focused specifically on Transcaucasia, Dunsterforce formed a part of
the narrative of the region's modern history. Ronald G. Suny's work *The Baku
Commune*314 (1972) had Dunsterville enter the story of a turbulent Baku. This study had
Dunsterville as an accomplice in the failure of the new Right Socialists to hold the city
after replacing the Bolshevik Baku Commune. Suny stated the fall of Baku was delayed
more by Turkish incompetence than British resistance;315 that the British worsened the
situation by getting involved in local politics;316 and that the deposed Baku Commissars
had foretold the whole event. With this deeper incorporation into regional history,
Dunsterforce was no longer just a side-show extension of the Mesopotamian campaign.

311 J. Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia (1918-1919) and the Part Played by Canada*,
312 J, Silverlight, *The Victor's Dilemma: Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War*, New York:
316 Ibid., p335.
It was now associated with the tumultuous history of Caucasian nationalities. At the turn of the 80s, Dunsterforce was moving further away from the romantic adventure suggested by its iteration at the Royal Geographic Society sixty years before.

The first truly revisionist history of the Dunsterforce would completely demystify and condemn the man who made the expedition his namesake. When previously classified documents in the British National Archives were made public, Armenian-American scholar Artin Arslanian revealed a concise reappraisal of the narrative. Having a basis in Armenian political history, he saw the British expedition to Transcaucasia as a manifestation of its attitude towards the native people.\(^{317}\) In his PhD thesis, and later the published article “Dunsterville’s Adventures: A Reappraisal”\(^{318}\) (1980), he used correspondence between Dunsterville, Baghdad, and the War Office to show that the somewhat conciliatory reputation given to general by historians was unwarranted. Instead Arslanian had these correspondences show Dunsterville as a hot headed, devil-may-care loose cannon, who took dangerous actions at the behest of his superiors. Arslanian placed the debacle at Baku as the responsibility of Dunsterville himself. In fact, Arslanian showed that Dunsterville continued to pander for Baku after having been warned not to by the War Office, that he might have made dubious promises to the Baku government, and that he purposely obfuscated in his dispatches and communications to both Baghdad and Baku. Arslanian argued that after the expedition had retreated, the War Office wanted nothing to do with Dunserville, although they supported and relayed

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his version of the story to the press. Despite the fact that he had led his troops on a
dangerous and foresightedly ill-fated mission, the authority of his account had been
used by Western historians for generations.

Arslanian's Dunsterville was a man who, after a lackluster military career, had
failed to live up the the reputation that preceded him, and subsequently lied in his
memoir for his own aggrandizement.\textsuperscript{319} Dunsterville had to go to considerable lengths in
order to get himself to Baku, including disrupting the political events of the Baku
Soviet.\textsuperscript{320} Instead of Dunsterville being a gallant leader of intrepid adventurers against
impossible odds, he became a renegade general whose ambitions for glory caused undue
harm and confusion for all those around him, retiring in disgrace. In explaining the
General's dismissal, he wrote that Dunsterville “was a persona non grata to the War
Office. The reasons for the War Office attitude are not difficult to guess: he was
insubordinate, lacked good judgment, and blamed others for his failures.”\textsuperscript{321} Arslanian
makes a special note to refer to Dunsterville's alter ego, writing that “unfortunately for
the Baku defenders and for Dunsterville himself, the British authorities in London and
Marshall in Baghdad did not prove as gullible as the Indian tribes tricked by Stalky in
Kipling's stories.”\textsuperscript{322} Arslanian was keen on dispelling the persona that Dunsterville had
built up by way of reputation. Arslanian knew that in denouncing Dunsterville, he had to
disprove that he lived up the image of Stalky that people remembered.

Arslanian went on to publish further papers about how British intervention in

\textsuperscript{320} Ibid., p207.
\textsuperscript{321} Ibid., p212.
\textsuperscript{322} Ibid., p210.
Transcaucasia only made things worse for the people who lived there.³²³ British historians reacted to the reinterpretation. Brian Peirce, a British Marxist politician and historian, stressed that the cause of the loss of Baku to the Turks was primarily due to the inability of the Armenian government there to organize and motivate their manpower. In “Dunsterforce and the Defense of Baku” (1997), Pearce wanted to retort Arslanian's presentation of Dunsterville and attempted to demonstrate that Dunsterville had been misled as to the plausibility of the city's successful defense. The major factor in this was the irreconcilable state of the Armenian infantry and their poor discipline, morale, and fighting ability. By citing numerous primary accounts, he left little doubt that the 6000 Armenians who were defending Baku were poorly trained and poorly led.

Pearce took it upon himself to dispel what he saw as the preconceptions of Soviet historiography about the Battle of Baku. In the early eighties, he had multiple publications devoted to dismissing the charge that the British were responsible for the deaths of 26 Baku Bolshevik commissars that had been arrested after Dunsterville had taken the city.³²⁴ The debate between Arslanian and Pearce represents a larger issue implicit in the historiography – revisionists felt that works about the expedition were Anglo-centric and participated in perpetuating Dunsterville's cult of personality. Pearce did not deny any of the claims made by Arslanian, but only brought evidence to bear that the Armenians themselves were responsible for the defeat. Pearce's argument from silence on behalf of Dunsterville showed that enough historical distance had been given

for a reassessment of Dunsterville, and the time had come to judge whether or not he lived up to his reputation.

At this point, Dunsterville takes a back seat in the historical discourse, and an emergent trend would try to place Dunsterforce into patterns of British diplomacy and Transcaucasian history. In 1998, Canadian historian of war and diplomacy Brock Millman published a paper in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, titled “The Problem with Generals”. In it, Millman determined that Dunsterville had gone far beyond the parameters of his mission and had pushed the limits of what the War Office would have allowed. With the expedition originally conceptualized as anything but a field force, Dunsterville managed to grow his party into two small battalions and a large cadre of guns and cars. This was largely because Dunsterville was adamant about taking matters into his own hands, and pressed his superiors to the point that they relegated decision making authority to him. According to Millman, Dunsterville himself was largely responsible for the expedition as it happened, and was more audacious than historians have previously afforded.

Bulent Gokay, a prominent scholar of Transcaucasia, in a move of revisionism against those who place Dunsterville as a part of the intervention, demonstrated that Dunsterville and the Bolsheviks actually had many of the same objectives, and that they were in a good position to work together to expel the Turks from Azerbaijan. In fact, Gokay argued that the only thing stopping Dunsterville from doing so were orders from

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Obversely, Gokay said Moscow felt the same way and would not have allowed the Baku Soviet to cooperate on principle. With this article, Gokay showed that while Dunsterforce may be viewed as a part of the Russian intervention, it must also be said that the situation was never simply binary, and it must be reminded that Dunsterville never brought force against the Bolsheviks.

More recently there was an effort to incorporate Dunsterforce into a growing field of intelligence history. A. J. Plotke's *Imperial Spies Invade Russia* (1993) described the intervention in the Civil War, and thus categorically Dunsterforce, as intelligence missions. Plotke agreed with Millman and Arslanian that Dunsterville forced the expedition well beyond the parameters of its original conception, and reminded his readers of original concerns over the lack of organization and foresight in Dunsterville's plans for Baku. Dunsterville frustrated his superiors and, According to Plotke, had “actually activated another front, alienated a neutral Muslim state, and brought North Persia within a few steps of being taken over by one of three different and entirely hostile powers.”

Dunsterville himself was now the subject of critical appraisal. Time had detached the memory of Dunsterforce from the image of Stalky to the point that the authority of his account became questionable. At the turn of the new millennium, the Dunsterforce expedition faced a moment of critical reappraisal, and scholars had come to the task.

The history and memory of Dunsterforce and the Battle of Baku have been in a discourse that participates in an implicit assessment of General Dunsterville. Wearing

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330 Ibid., p143.
331 Ibid., p156.
and projecting the image of Kipling’s Stalky, Dunsterville and those he served with were largely responsible for creating a romantic image of the man and the expedition that he led. Their accounts were corroborated in the press and the public memory from the outset. Over the years, Dunsterville's image had to be largely forgotten in order to separate it from the history of the expedition. As discussions of the Battle of the Baku continued, new perspectives were brought to light, and the result was a slow process whereby the romanticism and gallantry of the escapade was washed away to reveal a complex and sometimes horrific experience. Critical evaluations showed that perhaps Dunsterville did not always live up to the stalwart and sly image that he had projected in his youth.

**CONCLUSIONS**

“Baku was merely a sideshow,” wrote one soldier, “but even side shows have their rows of wooden crosses.”

For a concise history of the historiography, from a revisionist perspective until 1976, see Jacques Kayaloff *The Fall of Baku*, p2-4.

**END OF FIRST DRAFT (REFERNCE MAP ON NEXT PAGE)**

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