

VI

**Provisions for Demilitarization of Adjacent
Turkish Territory.**

General J. G. Harbord, Major C. H. Mason and Major Lawrence Martin, having been requested to express their opinions regarding the advisability and means for demilitarization of the Turkish-Armenian border, presented in substance the following views:

GENERAL HARBORD:

The primary purpose of such demilitarized zone is the protection of citizens of the Republic of Armenia from the Moslem population living adjacent to its boundaries. For centuries the Armenians living in that region have been considered to be more or less legitimate prey for the Moslem population. With the Turkish government practically powerless beyond the limits of Constantinople; with the Nationalists in the field in active operations to preserve the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, it is not probable that there is any Moslem subject of Turkey, official or non-official, in the whole region touching the contemplated boundaries, who is not hostile to the creation of the Armenia Republic and burning with resentment and wounded pride at the dismemberment of his country.

After the Armistice the demobilization of the Turkish Army was accomplished by discharging the soldiers and allow-

ing them to take their individual arms to their homes with them. The Armenian throughout Turkey has never been allowed to own or carry arms. Practically every non-Christian subject in the region under consideration has arms in his possession. Banditry prevails against Moslems as well as Christians. To arm the Armenian population, leaving weapons in the possession of the Moslems, means individual warfare every day, perhaps every hour, in some portion of the territory. To take up the arms, leaving aside the practical difficulties of such disarmament, means that neither Moslem nor Christian will be able to protect himself against roving bandits until the region can be so thoroughly policed that security of life and property will be established. The rough mountainous character of the country renders doubly difficult the suppression of outlawry.

Under the Treaty of Sèvres, the military forces of Turkey are limited to an Imperial Bodyguard of seven hundred men and a gendarmerie of fifty thousand. Provision is made for a number of officers to be named for duty with the gendarmerie by the several Allied Powers, a further proviso being that the Allied officers in any one region are to be from the same Allied Power. There is no municipal police in Turkey worthy of the name and upon the gendarmerie will involve the entire task of maintaining order.

The situation seems to be:

- A Central Government powerless within the region;
- An armed Moslem population hostile to Christians as individuals and to the idea of a separate Armenia;
- A Christian population in the minority and all unarmed;
- A region where banditry reaches the dignity of a profession and is almost hereditary among certain classes;
- A Christian population which, unless prevented by force, will, as soon as it is able, seek reprisals against Moslems on the Turkish side of the line in revenge for centuries of oppression.

There seem to be two ways in which Allied supervision could be applied:

First, the actual occupation of such demilitarized zone by troops of an Allied power. It is doubtful if any one of the Allied Powers to the Treaty would be willing to undertake such occupation. The reputation of every one of the Allied Powers for seeking territorial aggrandizement, and for the exploitation of occupied regions, is such that the occupation would be the signal for turmoil only to be quieted by bayonets and bullets.

Second, the use of Turkish Gendarmerie, if provided with a liberal number of Allied officers conscious of the importance of their duty and committed by sympathy and on principle to the protection of the population on both sides of the boundary.

Were it not for the wide-spread distrust of Great Britain, and her intriguing in this region, the best

material for this duty with the gendarmerie, conceding that America is out of the question, would be British officers.

The senior officer of gendarmerie should be independent of any control by local Turkish provincial authorities, responsible perhaps to some inter-allied commission, such as the Government of the Straits, and the control of his actions and of his prisoners before trial should not be subject to the jurisdiction of local Turkish courts. In other words, to be effective, he would have to be practically a benevolent despot in his zone. The success of the whole plan would come down to the choice of the right officer and his subordinates for this duty.

A demilitarized zone, if less in width than a day's march of horsemen or footmen, would permit raids across it, eluding the gendarmerie. Such raiding parties in any numbers could not raid and return beyond twenty-five miles in a day and it is believed the minimum width of such neutral zone, if established, should be about fifty miles. Instead of a zone of fixed width parallel to the boundary, it would be practicable and save dispute over the limits of the zone if the adjoining vilayets, Diarbekir, Mamuret-ul-Aziz, etc., were declared the zone to be neutral under allied officers controlling their gendarmerie.

MAJOR MASON:

To demilitarize the Turkish-Armenian frontier it is necessary that there be no establishments of military colonies, points d'appui, strategic transportation systems or excessive garrisons within the areas under consideration.

Under the present situation a prescription for the disarmament of these border peoples would be both ineffective and ill-advised - ineffective because impracticable of accomplishment, ill-advised as it would tend to lessen the present scanty means of individual self-defense, which in this region of long maladministration is a fundamental necessity.

Armenia is of military importance to the world through its location at the point of frictional contact of several great national interests, all of which Armenia flanks or lies athwart of in such manner as to make of her an object of jealousy and grave temptation to aggression- aggression that may be either direct, through the construction of strategic railways and highways and points d'appui for use in sudden conquest, as exemplified by the German procedure against Belgium, or indirect through the encouragement of border lawlessness. In the region under consideration the primitive character and present disorganization of the border peoples, their divergent religions and culture, their traditional antagonisms and in some cases

nomadic life, their present isolation from modern conditions and the topography of their countryside, separately and together make for lawlessness and present a tempting opportunity for the play of those sinister influences whose aims are turbulence and military aggression.

The devastated regions offer special opportunities for establishing an army in residence along the frontier through the well-known method of military colonies (Cossacks, as they are called in Russian territory). Such aggregations are peculiarly inimical to contiguous territories, due to their independence of railway and supply systems, which are usually prerequisites of frontier mobilization. To eliminate this phase of militarization, it is essential that military colonies along the frontier be prohibited. Such a prohibition to be effective must apply to a zone at least a day's march on each side of the frontier and must be subject to the constant supervision of a disinterested power. Without such supervision, the inherent characteristics of frontier life make it easy to covertly militarize the resident population.

As regards the depopulated regions, it is, of course, most desirable that they be repopulated as quickly as may be and it is peculiarly desirable that no prohibition should be permitted to operate to prevent the accomplishment of this. However, unless local disinterested observation is keen and continuous in permitting legitimate settlement

and yet preventing military colonies the pressure of frontier conditions, in conjunction with sinister propaganda and intrigues, will very quickly produce militarization and subsequent turbulence and aggression. But this is not the only method of frontier militarization - there is that produced by railway and highway systems, which in conjunction with supply depots provide the essential bases for large modern offensive operations. Such depots of supply are not needed for defensive purposes nor for the normal garrisons and therefore they have no legitimate reason for existing in this region. Since, however, these depots are essential to large formal offensive operations, such operations can be prevented by prohibiting the establishment of these depots of supply and by making the transportation systems conform strictly to the needs of the economic situation, solely. By limiting the amount of supplies kept within a frontier area the number of troops that can be maintained in that area or concentrated therein is limited. This provides one of the best means of insuring that garrisons are restricted to their authorized strength. An unreasonable application of such a prohibition, on the other hand, will tend to defeat the object sought, by hampering the development of communications, when roads and railroads are among the most important elements for dissipating the medievalism of this region and opening it to the civilizing influences of world intercourse.

Thus the objectives of demilitarization of the Turkish-Armenian boundary are as follows:

(1) The prevention of strategic railway and highway construction and the non-establishment of points d'appui and military colonies within striking distance of the international boundary.

(2) The prevention of inimical propaganda and the activities of provocateurs in the border regions.

(3) The quashing of quasi-military turbulence by the establishment of civil law and order.

The first objective involves the acquiescence of the Armenian and Turkish Governments and the obligation of decision and enforcement by the League of Nations.

The second objective is one of peculiar importance at the present time when the methods of the propagandists and the provocateurs are so generally effectively in use. General colonial experience indicates that the most effective means of dealing with these methods is through the personal contacts of the local occidental governor, commissioner, or whatever the colonial official's title may be - provided he is a man fitted for the work - a man who having the necessary qualities of character to establish himself as the revered counselor and friend of the natives can, through their chiefs, allay unrest and eliminate hostile influences. The type of man, his methods and achievements are so well known in colonial work as to obviate the necessity of

analyzing the rather intangible methods by which his very tangible results are accomplished. Such a man commissioned by the League of Nations as Commissioner or Warden of the Turkish-Armenian frontier and operating under large discretionary powers for the peace of the border country, offers about the only means available under present conditions for accomplishing the second objective and also for providing that close and continuous disinterested observation requisite to the various phases of successful demilitarization.

The third objective would gradually accrue through the work of the Warden or Commissioner of the border upon his being endowed with the necessary diplomatic and superior magisterial powers. To this end he should be given the necessary sanctions by the League and by the Armenian and Turkish Governments, together with such sanctions from local headmen as he can gradually obtain from them.

As demilitarization is the object sought, the Warden must ipso facto work through civil methods, but equally obviously he must have force back of him and subject to his call. The obvious ability to apply force promptly and efficiently is an axiomatic prerequisite to success. The essence of such application is promptness and incisiveness — deficiency in either causing a reaction that but feeds the flame. Promptness of summons can be obtained through the

Warden being provided with an adequate radio telegraph system throughout the border zone. Incisiveness of application can be achieved by providing the Warden with an occidental constabulary, including an aerial unit. If this contingent consists of picked men it need not be large. It should be under the sole jurisdiction and orders of the Warden. Through this means the Warden should be able to produce at need such a prompt show of power as to minimize the necessity for its use.

MAJOR MARTIN:

The frontier provided, and the limitations placed upon the Turkish army by the Treaty of Sèvres, furnish Western Armenia with adequate military security.

The Treaty of Sèvres (Articles 152, 156, 165, 170, and 200 (2) limits the size of the military forces which Turkey may maintain within the territorial areas adjacent to the Armenian frontier to a small proportion of 35,000 men, or at most of 50,000 men - say 5,000 to 10,000 men. These forces may not include either artillery or technical services, except in case of serious trouble. The legions of gendarmerie from one territorial area may not be employed outside this area. The legions are to be made up of local inhabitants, including both Non-Moslem and Moslem soldiers.

The nature of the terrain and of the population within Turkish territory adjacent to the new Armenian frontier

is such that small armed forces are and always will be necessary for the maintenance of order. Within these mountains no strategic highways or railways are likely to be built except those needed for peace-time commerce.

It would be inconsistent to demilitarize the Turkish territory adjacent to the northern portion of the new Armenian frontier without also demilitarizing the southern and eastern portions of the Armenian frontier in the autonomous Kurdish area of eastern Turkey, including the Dersim, Kharput, Sairt, and Hakkiari districts. It would be unsafe to limit permanently the gendarmerie of these Kurdish areas to the small number provided by the Turkish treaty and to forbid the use of artillery and of such technical services as are provided with pontoons, airplanes and dirigibles. The Armenians and many of the Kurds, Turks and other peaceable inhabitants of these Kurdish districts may need more protection than can be provided in a rigidly demilitarized zone.

If a zone in Turkey or in Kurdistan were to be demilitarized the Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian and Greek inhabitants of the demilitarized zone might feel that a corresponding zone in Armenia ought to be also demilitarized. This the President is not authorized to do.

For all these reasons it is thought best, in the interest of good-feeling between the local populations of all races and religions inside and outside the new Armenian

frontier, that no Turkish territory adjacent to the new Armenian frontier be demilitarized.

- - - - -

Having considered the foregoing an unanimity of opinion between these three officers quickly developed, in substance as follows:

That the Treaty of Sèvres in its provisions for demobilizing and demilitarizing the Turkish Empire has provided adequate means for demilitarizing the frontier, provided certain special applications are made of the prescriptions in that Treaty, to wit: that in the vilayets contiguous to Armenia the superior officers of the gendarmerie provided for in the Treaty be without exception officers of the Allied, Associate or neutral Powers to the exclusion of others and that these officers be specifically charged with observing and reporting any tendency within these border vilayets that would make for militarization — such as military colonies, strategic railways and highways, excessive depots of supply, arming fortifications, etc.

That under the limitations of the request under which the President is rendering his decision and prescription, it would not be feasible for him to prescribe like supervision on the Armenian side of the border; therefore, the

supervision here provided for is restricted to the Turkish side, though it is felt that to accomplish a wholly satisfactory result similar measures should be applied to the Armenian side.