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**Publications in the Armenian Press about the Turkish-Armenian Border Clashes
(May-September 1920)¹**

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Preparing for a campaign against Armenia, M. Kemal and K. Karabekir, in May-September 1920, organized riots and clashes in the border regions of Armenia: Kars, Sarighamish, Zangibasar, Vedibasars, Olti, Surmalu. They were also largely using the human resources of Azerbaijan. The Turkish-Tatars (Caucasian Tatars), receiving funds from the Turkish central authorities, invaded Armenian settlements, destroyed, looted and killed the local Armenian residents. In order to put an end to this situation, in the summer of 1920, the Armenian military command set out to clear a number of territories from the Turks.

These events were widely covered in a number of organs of the Armenian press, among which were “Mshak”, “Yaraj”, “Zhoghovrdi Dzayn”, “Zhoghovurd” and others. Other organs mainly published the publications of these periodicals. The material presented in them shows the motives and course of the border clashes, and also provides some statistical information about the victims, wounded, as well as the ratio of forces. These publications of the Armenian press became the basis of our research. In the article, we also referred to the foreign political realities of those months, which in many cases caused border movements and clashes, as a result of which a war against RA was unleashed in 1920, which was devastating for the Armenian people, because the Armenians were deprived of a huge part of their historical motherland.

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հայկական մամուլի էջերում (1920թ. մայիս-սեպտեմբեր)

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Էդիկ Մինասյան

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Հիմնաբառեր՝ թուրք-հայկական պատերազմ,
սահմանային բախումներ, հայկական
պարբերականներ, Զանգիբասար, Վեդիբասար,
Օլթի, Մուստաֆա Քեմալ, Ռուբեն Տեր-Մինասյան,
Քյազըմ Կարաբեքիր:

Նախապատրաստվելով Հայաստանի դեմ ռազմարշավի՝ Մ. Քեմալը, Ք. Կարաբեքիրի հետ միասին 1920 մայիս-սեպտեմբեր ամիսներին ՀՀ սահմանային շրջաններում՝ Կարսում, Սարիղամիշում, Զանգիբասարում, Վեդիբասարում, Օլթիում, Սուրմալուում կազմակերպում էին խռովություններ, բախումներ, իհարկե, մեծապես օգտագործելով նաև Ադրբեջանի մարդկային ռեսուրսները: Թուրք-թաթարները ստանալով ֆինանսներ թուրքական կենտրոնական իշխանություններից ներխուժում էին հայկական բնակավայրեր՝ ավերում, թալանում, սպանում տեղի հայ բնակիչներին: Այս իրավիճակին վերջ տալու համար էր, որ 1920 թ. ամռանը հայկական զինվորական հրամանատարությունը ձեռնամուխ եղավ մի շարք տարածքներ թուրքերից մաքրելուն: Այս իրադարձությունները լայնորեն լուսաբանվեցին հայկական մամուլի մի շարք օրգաններում, որոնցից էին «Մշակը», «Յառաջը», «Ժողովուրդի ձայնը», «Ժողովուրդը» և այլն: Մյուս օրգանները հիմնականում արտատպում էին այս պարբերականների հրապարակումները: Դրանցում ներկայացված նյութը ցույց է տալիս սահմանային բախումների շարժառիթները, ընթացքը, տալիս է նաև որոշ վիճակագրական տեղեկություններ զոհերի, վիրավորների, ուժերի հարաբերակցության մասին: Հայկական մամուլի հենց այս հրապարակումներն են դարձել մեր հետազոտության հիմքը: Հոդվածում անդրադարձել ենք նաև այդ ամիսների արտաքին քաղաքական իրողություններին, որոնցով էր շատ դեպքերում պայմանավորված սահմանային տեղաշարժերը, բախումները, ինչի արդյունքում, ի վերջո, 1920 թ. սանձազերծվեց պատերազմ ՀՀ-ի դեմ, ինչը իր հերթին կործանարար էր հայ ժողովրդի համար, քանզի հայությունը զրկվեց իր պատմական հայրենիքի մի հսկայական հատվածից:

Публикации в армянской прессе о турецко-армянских пограничных столкновениях (май-сентябрь 1920 г.)

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Ключевые слова: турецко-армянская война, пограничные столкновения, армянская периодика, Зангибасар, Ведибасар, Олти, Мустафа Кемаль, Рубен Тер-Минасян, Казим Карабекир.

Готовясь к военному походу на Армению, М. Кемаль и К. Карабекир в мае-сентябре 1920 г. организовали беспорядки и столкновения в приграничных районах Армении: Карсе, Сарыгамыше, Зангибасаре, Ведибасаре, Олти, Сурмалу. Они также в значительной степени использовали человеческие ресурсы Азербайджана. Турко-татары (кавказские татары), получая средства от турецких центральных властей, вторгались в армянские поселения, разрушали, грабили и убивали местных жителей-армян. Чтобы положить конец этой ситуации, летом 1920 года армянское военное командование приступило к очистке от турок ряда территорий.

Эти события широко освещались в ряде органов армянской печати, среди которых были «Мшак», «Арадж», «Жоховрди Дзайн», «Жоховурд» и другие. Другие органы в основном печатали публикации этих периодических изданий. Представленный в них материал показывает мотивы и ход пограничных столкновений, дает некоторые статистические сведения о жертвах, раненых, а также соотношении сил. Эти публикации армянской прессы и стали основой нашего исследования. В статье мы также сослались на внешнеполитические реалии тех месяцев, которые во многих случаях вызывали пограничные передвижения и столкновения, в результате чего в 1920 году была развязана война против РА, которая была разрушительной для армянского народа, поскольку Армяне были лишены огромной части своей исторической родины.

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Intro. The defeat of Turkey and its allies in World War I led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. After the war, most of its territories were divided between the victorious countries, Great Britain and France. It seemed that no power could save the empire, which was in agony. However, that happened. In 1919 General Mustafa Kemal led the nationalist movement in Turkey, which according to Aram Antonyan was not an insurrectionary movement, but an “Armenia-killing movement” (Antonyan, 1990, 259-261).

The program objectives of the Kemal genocide received an official formulation in the conferences held in Erzurum in July-August 1919 and in Swaz in September of the same year. Inciting the fanatical Muslim masses against the Christians, the participants demanded “to take all measures to prevent the attempts that the Armenians and Greeks may undertake to harm our motherland” (Sahakyan, 1970, 44). The decisions of the above-mentioned conferences became the basis of the “Turkish National Covenant”

adopted by the Mejlis (Parliament) in Constantinople on January 28, 1920, where the destruction of Armenia was considered a priority issue.

The peak of the crimes of the Kemalites against Armenians was their campaign against the Republic of Armenia in September 1920. In the Turkish-Armenian war M. Kemal's goal was to “destroy the Armenian army and the Armenian state”, to force Armenians to abandon the Treaty of Sevres (Kjemal', 1934, 102).

Starting from the end of April 1920, Soviet Russia, under the leadership of V. Lenin, was the first to recognize the government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey headed by M. Kemal («Dokumjenty vnjeshnej politiki SSS», 1958, 554-555, 725-726). Thus, by 1920, Armenia became a “wedge” between Turkey and Soviet Russia. When Armenia did not have any external defense, and the allies mostly voiced false promises, Kemal received an opportunity to put Armenia under pressure. In this regard, it was noteworthy that already in the spring of 1920 Turkey started provoking clashes along the Armenian-Turkish border.

A de facto state of war existed between Armenia and Turkey since June 1920, when serious border conflicts began in the Olti region. The point is that according to the Armistice of Mudros, the Turks were supposed to withdraw troops beyond the Russian-Turkish 1914 border, but they refused to leave Olti, making focus on the treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Batumi. The border clashes here did not stop until the general Turkish invasions. The problem of subjugating the Turkish-inhabited settlements along the Armenian-Turkish border and taking control over them was also important for the Republic of Armenia, which the Armenian army also decided to solve in June-July 1920. The article will study exactly these border clashes, which were widely covered by Armenian periodicals and provide valuable details about the events of those months.

The preparation of the attack on Armenia. The commander of the Turkish troops, Kazim Karabekir, was trying to clarify the time of the attack on the Republic of Armenia still on March 16, 1920. He offered M. Kemal to wait for a more favorable time for the attack, because the preparatory works were not finished and it was also necessary to take into consideration the cold winter climate typical to the Armenian highlands.

During the preparation for the campaign, K. Karabekir enjoyed his first diplomatic success on April 15, 1920, signing a treaty of mutual aid in Erzurum with the Assistant to the Military Minister of Azerbaijan, General Agha Oglu Shikhlinski. Article 7 of the treaty stated that in case of Armenia's attack on Azerbaijan or the surrender of the eastern regions of Turkey (Western Armenia, E. Minasyan) to Armenia, “both parties who have reached an agreement will protect each other's interests and act as a united army” (Vratsyan, 1993, 474). Probably, it was this alliance that inspired K. Karabekir, who in those same days, telegraphed to Ankara that “the other day I will announce that Armenia will be erased from the world map” (Sargsyan, Sahakyan, 1963, 43). The Sovietization of Azerbaijan forced the government of Kemal to speed up the preparations for an attack on Armenia, because the Sovietization of Armenia without their participation was clearly not in their favor.

Already in May, they had concentrated a 22,000 army with 69 cannons and 200 machine guns on the eastern front (Zohrabyan, 1997, 28). The following data provided by M. Kemal also testify to the preparation of the Turkish attack, because the Armenian troops will try to occupy Erzurum at the right

moment, so the Turkish military units should occupy Sarighamish and the Soganlugh mountain range in the territory of the three sanjaks (villages) that were transferred to Turkey under the Brest-Litovsk and Batumi treaties, to have strategically advantageous positions towards the Armenian army” (Kjemał', 1966, 99). The Turkish government, discussing the issue, orders the command of the eastern army on June 6 to prepare for an attack. In order to attack Armenia, military mobilization was announced on June 9 and K. Karabekir was appointed commander of the Eastern Front (Kjemał', 1934, 117).

However, already on June 20, M. Kemal, after the mediation of the Foreign Minister of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic G. Chicherin, was forced to order K. Karabekir to stop military operations. At the end of May, Chicherin started negotiations with the delegation of L. Shant, who had arrived in Moscow, hoping to resolve the Armenian-Turkish relations by assuming the role of a mediator ((Gjenocid apmjan: Otvjetstvjennost' Tupcii i ob'jazatjel'stva mipovogo soobsh'jestva. Dokumjenty i kommjentapij. 2003, 69).

At the session of the Grand National Assembly on August 14, referring to G. Chicherin's letter, which reached Ankara in mid-June, M. Kemal said that they are of the opinion that the military operations in the borders of the three sanjaks - Kars, Ardahan and Batum - do not mean an attack on Armenia. On June 20, the latter ordered the cessation of hostilities, but at the same time urged to speed up preparations for a general attack. Although the danger of the attack of the Turkish army was prevented in June by the mediation of Russia, it did not disappear completely, because the government of Kemal did not give up attacking the Republic of Armenia, but temporarily stopped it in order to resume it later. They coordinated that attack with Soviet Russia on August 24, 1920, through a secret rapprochement agreement signed between the two countries, by which the Turkey received the necessary material and military resources from Russia. The situation on the Armenian-Turkish border was not stable during the whole period of preparations for the war by the Turks. Clashes took place regularly, which gradually involved wider scales.

The echoes of the Armenian press to the border clashes of the summer months of 1920. The Armenian press made extensive references to the border clashes that started in the mid-1920s with its various, large and small publications.

About 15 Turkish-inhabited villages of Zangibasar (currently Masis district), located only a few kilometers from Yerevan, and not recognizing the Armenian government, had become a meeting place for Turkish and Azerbaijani emissaries for about two years, were openly arming themselves, forming fighting groups, damaging the railway, blocking roads. Starting the final capture of Karabakh, Azerbaijan at the same time sought to create espionage in the Turkish-populated regions of Armenia in order to divert Armenia's attention from Karabakh. “Mshak” (The Toiler), “Yaraj” (Forward), “Voice of the People”, “Zhoghovurd” (People) and other Armenian press organs largely cover the border clashes by Turkish-Tatar (Caucasian Tatars) raiders.

On the outskirts of Yerevan, starting from Charbakh, traveling by train had become quite dangerous. No official figure dared to enter that region, and the Armenian government tolerated it for a long time. Finally, in June 1920, it was decided to put an end to this situation and restore law. The government initially tried to resolve the issue peacefully and offered to end hostilities, recognize the authority of Armenia, pay state taxes, but was unsuccessful and had to undertake more decisive measures. An ultimatum was given on June 18, giving 6 hours for a response. We read about this in “Yaraj” daily. “... yesterday, an ultimatum was given to Zangibasar residents to lay down arms and

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recognize the authority of the Republic of Armenia” (Yaraj, 19.6.1920, 2). But apart from Ulankhanlu (now Masis), there was again no response from the others, and on June 19 the government sent troops. Taking into consideration the ultimatum, Zangibasars residents “decided not to make concessions to the legitimate authority of the country at any point and taking advantage of the darkness, they opened heavy fire on the republican troops from trenches on all lines” (Yaraj, 20.6.1920, 3). The facts published in the issues of “Yaraj” on June 24 and July 4 and newspaper “Mshak” show the level of preparedness of the residents of Zangibasars in terms of ammunition. The commanders were Turkish officers. According to these articles, the fighting lasted for about ten hours and 2 cannons, 3 machine guns, 40,000 bullets and other military equipment were taken as war trophies (Yaraj, 24.6.1920, 1; Mshak, 4.7.1920, 2). Colonel Arsen Shahmazyan, the head of the operation, reported another information about the enemy’s forces, according to which the Turkish commanders had trained the enemy, as a result of which they were able to train “at least 4000 local fighters and 600-800 soldiers” (Yaraj, 27.6. 1920, 3-4). According to Yaraj’s information, “our troops managed to take control of all the Turkish villages almost up to the bank of Araks” (Yaraj, 22.6.1920, 2). The military columns of Noragavit, Parakar, Gharkhun managed to capture Haji-Eylaz, Goyquyumbet, Kelali, Arbat, Taza Gharkhun, Chobankeara, Makhmandar and other villages (Yaraj, 27.6.1920, 3-4). Of course, there were some difficulties in the case of some settlements. The Armenian armed forces managed to subdue the villages of Chobankeara and Sharlu-Mekhmandar only in the early morning of June 20 (Yaraj, 22.6.1920, 2). The military operation of Zangibasars filled the government with faith in its own power. Our government was deeply sure that “all those who threaten the freedom of Armenia will have the same fate” (Yaraj, 24.6.1920, 1). The official newspaper of the Armenian People’s Party “Zhoghovurd”, also presenting the details of the Zangibasars events, believed that it was necessary to restore the power of Armenia in all rebellious places (Zh’oghovurd, 23.6.1920, 1).

Parallel to the events in Zangibasars, military operations were also active in the Olti region in those days. The reason for this was the appearance of Turkish-Kurdish terrorist groups in Panjuret area on June 18. Before that, the government had already decided to attack the Olti coal mines, and this incident was simply used to carry out the already planned attack. The Armenian government assumed that the Olti region of the Kars Province was part of Russia’s 1914 borders, and the Mudros Armistice provided for the withdrawal of Turkish troops from those borders and its accession to Armenia. In addition, Armenia was in great need of oil and black oil (mazut). As a result of the bans and regular blockades by Azerbaijan, the transport means of the republic and, especially the railway, did not work regularly. In order to fill that big shortage to some extent, it was necessary to replace it with coal, and there was such a mine in Olti district (Hakobyan, 2022, 143). That is why, starting an attack, the command of the Armenian troops of Kars, as if trying to avoid further complications, found it convenient to inform Karabekir Pasha that the Armenian troops would not cross the 1914 border. However, already on June 21 Karabekir Pasha, with a telegram addressed to our command, and on June 24, with a note sent to Bekir Sam - to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, demanded the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied regions (NAA, fund 200, inv. 1, file 602, sheet 1). Notes (Note verbale) were exchanged between the parties in July as well. Accordingly, if the Armenian side cited the 1914 borders and the Mudros armistice to justify its actions, the Turkish side cited the treaties of Brest Litovsk and Batumi.

That is the reason why the conflict not only did not settle down, but deepened, and the clashes continued until the general attack of the Turkish troops in September. As in the case of Zangibasar, the Armenian press was enthusiastically covering the events taking place in the Olti region. “The glorious victory of the military units of the Kars Province in the direction of Olti was a new proof of the determination of our courageous army and its commanders to become the master of the native land” (Yaraj, 25.6.1920, 2). “Yaraj” also attached great political importance to the victory in the Olti region, noting that “the victory of Olti opens a new and bright page in the history of United Armenia. We have no doubts at all that this mission will be completed successfully” (Yaraj, 25.6.1920, 2).

The newspaper also expresses hope that “by seizing the Olti region, the roads of Western Armenia will be opened to our troops” (Yaraj, 25.6.1920, 2). The Armenian press also emphasizes the importance of the Olti mines and mentions what environmental problems the transfer of those territories to Armenia solves. In particular, the fact that they will no longer have to use excessive amounts of wood for energy is particularly important, especially when the country has a severe shortage of forest areas (Yaraj, 29.6.1920, 2). Later, the Armenian press also published articles about the successful operations in the direction of Olti. In particular, in the issue of “Yaraj” on July 3 we read that “our military units having noticed the enemy’s positions in the direction of Olti, moved forward and captured the villages of Merjinis, Kotik and Vaskut” (Yaraj, 3.7.1920, 4). Keeping the events taking place in this period under constant attention, the Armenian press also informed about the movements of Turkish troops towards Olti. In particular, it was mentioned about the military movement from Erzurum (Yaraj, 7.7.1920, 4). In another publication, we find that a regular Turkish military unit, which consisted of 200 soldiers and three machine guns, organized two night attacks on the Olti-Penal highway positions on July 18, but had no success (Yaraj, 21.7.1920, 4).

The situation was much more serious in Vedibasar. The local Turks, relying on the help of their compatriots of Sharur-Nakhijevan on the one hand and on the other hand the existing natural fortifications for defense, did not recognize the Armenian government from the beginning. After the departure of the Turkish army, with the help of the officers and soldiers who remained here, the local Turkish residents armed themselves, organized and started constant battles against Armenia, becoming a continuous threat. Both Zangibasar and Vedibasar Turks were greatly encouraged and provided financial and military assistance by Turkey and Azerbaijan. And when the Armenian government tried to suppress those riots, the Muslim government immediately made a noise with the news about the massacre of Muslims by the Armenians, asked the British side to intervene and prevent it. At the same time, in June-July 1920, Turkey launched attacks in the direction of Merdenek, Sarighamish, Kaghzvan, Igdir, Khor-Virap. Only thanks to the great efforts, Armenia managed to repulse the hostile attacks.

As for Vedibasar, it remained one of the strong bases of Turks in their struggle against Armenia. That is why, after subjugating Zangibasar in June 1920, the government of Armenia offered Vedibasar to accept the authority, too. But, as expected, there was no response. On July 10, Armenian troops from both sides - Ghamarlu (Artashat) and Nor-Bayazet (province) - launched an attack on Vedibasar. The fighting lasted for 2 days. On July 11, our troops captured a number of villages, and on July 12, they entered Vedi. Here, too, the enemy had left not only bodies of those killed, but also large quantities of weapons and ammunition on the battlefield. Pursuing the retreating enemy, the Armenian troops crossed the Gayli Drunk (Gates of Wolf) on July 14 and captured Bash-Norashen, Yengija, Tazakend and a number of other villages of Sharur in the following days (Vratsyan, 1993, 324-326). We also read about

the liberation of these territories in the "Zhoghovurd" daily newspaper. Here we read that according to their authoritative sources, "the troops captured the villages of Yeaji, Bashnorashen and Ulyanorashen" (Zh'oghovurd, 17.7.1920, 2). Although small in volume, other organs of the Armenian press regularly published articles about the liberation of these territories. This is how "Yaraj" writes: "At 11:40 on July 14, in the direction of Ghamarlu, our infantry troops captured the Gayli Drunk after a strong fight". The newspapers also informs about the capture of 4 wounded soldiers and the villages of Armik and Arkhis (Yaraj, 16.7.1920, 4; Zh'oghovurd, 16.7.1920, 3).

The newspaper "Zhoghordi Dzayn" (Voice of People) published in Constantinople also reported on the events of those days, stating: "... Armenians have caused huge losses to Turks and Tatars (Caucasian Tatars) in Eastern Armenia. These last ones are forced to retreat completely, after losing the important position of Peoyuk Vet'i" (Voice of the People, 21.7.1920, 3).

It is interesting that in the mid-summer of 1920, the Armenian press began to write in separate sections about border incidents and present the situation in each direction as of different days. This was due to the growing tension at the borders and the focus of public attention on these issues. Those sections were mainly titled "last hour", "military message", "our front". There was no analytical work; the articles were composed on just a few lines.

At the same time, the Armenian press also reported on the bad condition of the enemy's troops, desertions, and widespread discontent in the army (Yaraj, 22:07:1920, 4). Parallel articles praise the brave deeds of the Armenian army. From this point of view, military minister Ruben Ter-Minasyan's decree addressed to the "army of the Republic of Armenia" is worth mentioning, where the brave deeds of the Armenian regular troops and volunteer regiments in June-July 1920 are glorified (Ruben Ter-Minasyan, Yaraj, 22.07.1920, 1).

Border clashes on the eve of the war. Preparing for war, Kemalist Turkey had prepared an army of several thousand soldiers. According to the data of "Mshak" newspaper, on September 7, at the council of high-ranking military officers convened in Ankara, where the issue of a large-scale attack on Armenia was decided, the commander of the eastern front K. Karabekir said that "he has 4 divisions, each of which will consist of 8-9 thousand soldiers and will receive support from Turkish and Kurdish forces. Artillery is also in the right amount" (Mshak, 11.11.1920, 2).

According to Military Minister R. Ter-Minasyan's bulletin, there were about 40,000 people in the Armenian army, of which only 25,000 were regular forces, and the rest belonged to intendant, sanitary and other auxiliary services (30 percent of the total number) and volunteer groups (NAA, fund 200 , inv. 1, file 602, sheet 280).

The border conflicts, although they were sometimes severely aggravated, then abated to some extent, in general did not stop and continued until the general Turkish invasion. Starting with September 10, the Armenian positions of the right wing of the Sarighamish detachment on Mount Vaskut and Mount Keroghl were subjected to artillery bombardment every day (Hovhannisyan, 2016, 218). In order for the reader to get an idea of the seriousness and scale of these clashes, let us quote some reports of the Armenian Telegraphic Agency about the clashes that took place in September, which were published in the issue of "Mshak" newspaper on September 15, 1920. Message from military headquarters at 10 a.m. on September 11. "In the direction of Olti, on September 9, at 14:00, the Turks opened cannon fire on

Vaskut Mountain and our artillery responded to it. On the night of September 10, a large group of the enemy approached our guard, which was located at the height of 5095, two versts (km) north of the village of Gharadagh, but was repulsed by artillery and machine gun fire. At 8 o'clock in the morning on September 10, 2 helicopters of the enemy made a sortie along the Sarighamish front, and at the same time, the Turks opened artillery fire on our positions at Bardus. Our artillery was responding. On the same day at 15:00, 2 enemy helicopters appeared again, the Turks were shooting at our trenches on the Keroghlibash mountain. On September 9 at 18:45, after two days of fighting, we captured the village of Koghb and the salt mines. A mountain cannon, two telephone sets, and other trophies of war were taken. Our losses are insignificant. Manuk, the head of Sassoon's cavalry group, was killed near the village of Pirlu while repelling the enemy's counterattack" (Mshak, 15.9.1920, 2).

The newspaper writes that "on September 13, large Turkish forces unexpectedly attacked the left flank of the Armenian military unit of Sarighamish, broke through the front and captured two mountain cannons of the 4th battery. A fierce battle took place between the 4th Armenian regiment and the Turks, where Gantarjian's battalion showed particular perseverance and courage. Our military units retreated and in the morning of September 14 they strengthened themselves in Begli-Ahmed positions. The Kaghzvan military unit (5th regiment, Colonel Shaghubadyan) was forced to retreat and occupy the positions of Berna. The population of Kaghzvan also left." About the attack of Turkish troops on September 13, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia immediately telegraphed Tiflis, Authorized Representative T. Bekzadyan: "Early in the morning of September 13, the Turks launched an attack in the direction of Olti, as well as on the right wing of the detachment of Sarighamish, and captured Vaskut mountain and the village of Berdikh," said the telegram. Armenian newspapers testify that already on September 14, martial law was declared in Vanand province (Yaraj, 15.9.1920, 1; Hovhannisyan, 2016, 220).

"The Turkish attack continues. I ask you to immediately report this to all representatives of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in Tiflis, as well as in Constantinople and Paris, and protest against the actions of the Turks, which violate the very foundations of the peace treaty signed by Turkey" (NAA, fund 200, inv. 1, file 486, sheet 226; Vratsyan, 1993, 418). In another message of the Telegraph Agency of Armenia, which was published in the September 18 issue of "Mshak", it is said that as a result of the battles in the direction of Olti on September 13 and 14, "our military units retreated under the pressure of the enemy forces and took the positions near the villages of Agubdir and Kedir. The situation in Sarighamish direction is unchanged. Intelligence officers in the direction of Koghb have predicted successful operations for us... Martial law has been declared in Kars Province. General Pirumyan has been appointed governor-general" (Mshak, 18.9.1920, 2). According to the publications of "Mshak", it becomes clear that after the events of Olti, they started providing volunteers to the Armenian army in Alexandropol (Mshak, 19.9.1920, 2). In the following days, this periodical also published short messages, which prove that the border incidents continued intermittently and in various directions. The diplomatic representation of Armenia in Tiflis also published an official message about the military operations of those days. It is said that "in the middle of this month, the Turkish troops, having a goal to occupy the coal mines, advanced in the direction of Olti region with forces superior to ours, forcing our military units to retreat. At the same time, a Soviet Russian military unit located in the north-eastern border, in the region of Ghazakh, appeared and pushed back the Armenian military group. Armenian troops, trying to make a comeback, drove the enemy from the positions it had occupied and took back

the Armenian territories that the enemy had seized” (Mshak, 1.10.1920, 2). Vahe Artsruni, one of the major statesmen and politicians of those days, also reported a lot of information about Olti operation and the events that preceded it. According to him on September 15, the line of defensive fortifications of Olti was destroyed, and the most important positions were captured by the enemy (Artsruni, 2002, 82). A general state of desperation had begun in those days and no one on the Olti front wanted to undertake the task of defense. According to Artsruni, Colonel Mazmanyan handed over the command of Merdenek to Officer Anushavan Dilanyan, who considering the desperate situation, did not want to assume the new position, but had no choice (Artsruni, 2002, 82). As we can see, these chronicles are real military summaries and testify to the existence of a state of war between Armenia and Turkey even before the general Turkish invasion. Reports also indicate that border incidents, as well as situation in Muslim-populated areas of Armenia, were incited by the Kemal government in order to keep the situation always tense, to have a pretext for intervention, and to blame Armenians in case of a war. That is exactly what they did later on. It is no coincidence that in the Alexandropol conference and in other official writings sent to Europe and Russia, they put forward the hypothesis that the Kemal army did not attack, but counter-attacked. This wrong point of view also was present in the Soviet historiography.

Turkish historians, although they do not deny the fact that Turkey started a war against Armenia at the end of September, also blame Armenia, which allegedly constantly threatened Turkish nationalists, obstructed the communication between Soviet Russia and Azerbaijan, organized massacres of Muslims and continuous attacks on Turkish on the border, etc. However, as we have seen, the Turks were constantly preparing for military operations and only some geopolitical problems prevented them from starting military operations earlier. This is an understandable behavior typical of conquerors. It is known from history that the winners always blame the losers.

Already on the eve of the war, when it was obvious that the positions of the Armenian army in Olti and other fronts had become unfavorable, the Armenian press began to condemn the lack of development of the successes of the Armenian army in June-July in separate publications. “Tell me, please, what happened, what reason was there to stop the campaigns and start peaceful negotiations with the beaten enemy” (Yaraj, 19.9.1920, 3).

It should be noted that the border conflicts along the perimeter of the Armenian-Turkish border continued until the general Turkish attack on September 28 and the beginning of the undeclared war (Hakobyan, 2022, 149).

Conclusions. The notable successes achieved by the Armenian armed forces along the Armenian-Turkish border in June-July 1920 disappeared already in the autumn of the same year, when the commander of the Turkish army, Kazim Karabekir, was finally allowed to start a war against the Republic of Armenia.

The border skirmishes with the Turkish residents of Zangibasar and Vedibasar were a great inspiration for Armenians, because the latter believed in the possibility to finish the started work with victory. In this regard, the role of the press was especially important, which mostly acted in unison and did not provide highly contradictory information regarding these events. We see that various press organs mainly make same accents and present very balanced and similar information, which we cannot say about the information flows during the large-scale Turkish-Armenian operations.

These press publications have an important value as primary sources, and together with archival materials and memoirs, provide an opportunity to thoroughly restore the actions of those days.

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