

bravo, which at times were quite deafening, although the poor men ought to have been tired after being here four hours. It was dark and stuffy in the warehouse, the floor of which was strewn with straw; only the listeners who stood nearest to the two entrances were in the light, while the rest were hidden in almost subterranean darkness. The audience was mixed—wild Caucasian types, hot-headed Russians, Armenians, and Tatars. The discussion was, to say the least, still lively when we left the meeting, and no resolution could be agreed upon except that no work was to be done.

Lopatin had little comforting information to give us that day. The revolutionary disturbances seemed to be developing into a civil war. A detachment of 150 Cossacks had been surrounded by 2000 well-armed Georgians at Osurgeti. The commander of the small troop tried to send off a messenger to Batum with a request for assistance. The horseman did not get through. Another was sent off and was caught; a third and fourth disappeared. The fifth messenger, a Musulman, creeping through the twilight, succeeded in breaking through the blockade and escaped safely to Batum. Two hundred men with four machine guns had just been sent off from Poti to reinforce the Cossacks. My friend the Colonel considered their undertaking desperate, as they would have to force their way through narrow passes and defiles, where they could be shot at from above by marksmen scattered and hidden in the woods, and where they would be picked off, one after another, without being able to defend themselves. From time to time small parties of navvies were constantly attacked as they were repairing various sections of the line, and every attack cost the lives of some soldiers—a real guerilla war!

Meanwhile we took counsel about the roads which were open to us—or more correctly closed—to Teheran. To wait till traffic was restored on the Poti-Tiflis-Erivan line seemed hopeless, especially after the railway on this side of Samtredi was again torn up. How would it be to travel through Novorossisk, Vladikavkaz, and the Georgian military road, or to Petrovsk and Baku? No; probably a