

Turkish National Movement and Soviet Russia in Caucasus (1919-1922)*

Tsvetelina Tsvetkova**

Abstract:

The article presents the role of Caucasus in the establishment of new political relations between Soviet Russia and the Turkish National Movement during the eventful period between 1919 and 1922. It examines the politics used by two different regimes, whose common enemy made them realize collaborative actions while finding an approach to achieve their own interests. In the framework of this complicated process, the region of an age-old confrontation between Russian and Ottoman empires - Caucasus, had again crucial importance in the post-war period to facilitate the overall connection between Soviet Russia and Ankara Government.

Keywords: Turkish National Movement, Soviet Russia, Caucasus, collaboration, border question

Introduction

The end of the First World War brought a serious reshaping of the European map and of the international relations. Being in confrontation for many years in the Caucasian region, now the successors of the Ottoman and Russian empires - Ankara government of Mustafa Kemal and Soviet government of Vladimir Ulyanov - Lenin, had to solve the "Caucasian question", which included not only the determination of the

*This article is based on a research, implemented with the support of TÜBİTAK.

**PhD., Visiting Scholar, Center for Balkan and Black Sea Studies of Yıldız Technical University, email: tsvetie_harlin@yahoo.com

borderline and territorial pretensions, but the role of the region that it would play in the mutual relation in the hostile international environment. The solution was complicated given the fact that after the October Revolution the Caucasian nations started their fight for independence and establishment of their own countries. The instability of the new states and their dependency on the "big players", made them part of a game for distribution of political impact and reaffirming of the control over key territories. At the same time, the exposure of Soviet Russia and Turkey*** to international intervention, the source of which was the same enemy in the face of the Entente, raised the natural necessity for cooperation. Thus, the common interests made the Caucasus figuratively and directly bridging Soviet-Turkish strategies whereas the new Caucasian states turned out to be just a tool of implementation, doomed to fail in their struggle for independence.

The October Revolution and the following withdrawal of Russia from the First World War drastically changed the political and international situation in the Black Sea-Caspian region. A total transformation of the socio-political system and relations within the society of the former Russian empire were followed by the total change in the foreign policy of the new Soviet government. Three important decrees¹ issued by the new Soviet government of Vladimir Lenin, spread the influence of the revolutionary movement for freedom of the oppressed by the capitalist nations, peace, equality and self-determination. At the same time, a Civil war marked the beginning of the Soviet rule as the fight had to bring the final solution for the future of the state political system.

The new political situation opened a vacuum of power of the non-Russian populated periphery territories. Especially the in Caucasus, with the abdication of the Tsar, the Caucasian nations started to struggle first for broader autonomy status, and after the October Revolution, for establishing independent countries. This process went along with a search of powerful assistance in the process of self-determination and sovereignty formation among the Entente allies,

***In the present article the term "Turkey" has a particular role as a synonym of the new formation, established with the beginning of the Turkish National Movement in Ankara and represented by the Grand National Assembly and the government there.

¹ "Dekret o Mire", *Izvestiya*, No. 208 (27 October 1917): 1; "Deklaratsiya Pravnaródoov Rossii", *Dekrety Sovetskoy Vlasti* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi literatury, 1957), Eds. N. Lebedev, Vol. 1, 39-41; "Obrashchenie Kovsemtrudiyashchimsya Musul'manam Rossii i Vostoka", *Ibid.*, 113-115.

while the latter put their efforts to destroy the Bolshevik thread, at the same time where purposefully striving to fill out the power vacuum the on Caucasus, of special importance to Great Britain in geostrategic and economical aspect. The situation in Northern Caucasus was more complicated due to the social realities and cultural specifics, but both societies - in Northern Caucasus and in Transcaucasia, were extremely divided on political base, which at the end was in favour of the Soviet regime.

Russian withdrawal from the war, gave strong reason to the Ottoman Empire to regain the lost Caucasian territories and to establish its own rule there. These plans were realised only for a couple of months in 1918 as in November the Ottoman Empire left the war as a defeated side and on its turn in 1919 its territories were occupied by the Allied powers. This led to the natural zeal among the nascent Turkish nation to protect its territories and sovereignty. Being in isolation the newly established government of Mustafa Kemal was ready to cooperate with the Soviet regime, as both were more or less exposed to similar threads. Having been once the most serious enemy, now the Russians in the face of the Soviet regime were seen as the most natural ally. Still, the historical collisions left many problems to be solved between the two governments which made them use complicated political game and diplomacy, especially concerning Caucasian issues.

Establishment of Turkish-Soviet relations and the significance of the Caucasus

In the first period of the Turkish National Movement (June 1919–March 1920)², when there was a hope among its leaders to achieve their aims peacefully and in collaboration with the Ottoman government, Mustafa Kemal initiated an investigation for possible relations with the Soviet government and unofficial contacts were established. It was also a period when still the only internationally recognized authority was that of the Sultan and the Entente showed total neglect of the National Movement, accepting it as a threat to their interests, which they should deal quickly with. In the second period (March 1920–October 1922), when the military confrontation was seen as inevitable, vigorous and decisive steps were undertaken to establish official relations with Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), connected with the strong reliance on their material and financial support. At the same time the fear of the Entente powers for the eventual formation of Soviet-

² William Hal, *Turkish foreign policy, 1744-2000* (London: Routledge, 2002), 46.

Nationalistic bloc was well exploited by Mustafa Kemal.

The Soviets accepted the revolution in Turkey as close to theirs or same as it was directed against the imperialists. In his article the editor of *Izvestiya* newspaper, Yuri Steklov, characterized the Turkish revolution as a counterpart and an elongation of the October Revolution³. They relied that Turkey would also convert to communism and through it Bolsheviks would spread their political influence to the Near and Middle East. Thus, the Bolshevik regime would receive official recognition and come out of the isolation. Of great importance was the fact that "Revolutionary Turkey was expected to protect the exposed Russian flank in the Caucasus and to serve as bulwark likewise for revolutionary Hungary."⁴ Additionally, the Greek expansion in Asia Minor, considered to be controlled by Russia's enemy Great Britain, "could have in the long term blocked the Soviet access to the Mediterranean"⁵. Thus, it was in Moscow's interest to establish contacts with the National Movement, which opposed to the plans of the Entente.

For the Turkish Nationalists establishing relations with the Bolsheviks had several advantages: all claims to Constantinople and the Straits were renounced; both were not in favour of strong and independent Armenia; Soviet Russia wanted the withdrawal of the Western Powers from Caucasus and Turkey as much as the Turks⁶. In addition, through this cooperation they received support, an exit of the international isolation, and a "trump card" in their negotiation with the Entente - they could blackmail the latter for strengthening their connections with the Soviets, but also they could offer their help against them. "Whenever Turks were hard-pressed by the Entente and threatened with the dismemberment of their country, they turned inevitably, even though reluctantly, to the Soviet Union for support. On the other hand, in proportion as the Entente powers eased their pressure and displayed a willingness to compromise, the Soviet - Turkish rapprochement cooled off appreciably"⁷. And not last of importance, the Nationalists secured their northern border during the

³ Yuri Steklov, "Turetskaya Revolyutsiya", *Izvestiya*, No. 85 (637) (23 April 1919): 1.

⁴ Ivar Spector, *The Soviet Union and the Muslim World, 1917-1958* (Washington: Univ. of Washington Press, 1959), 64.

⁵ Bülent Gökay, "Turkish Settlement and the Caucasus, 1918-20", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1996): 59.

⁶ Harish Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia, 1917-1927: A Study of Soviet Policy towards Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan* (Geneva: V. Chevalier, 1966), 90-91.

⁷ Spector, *The Soviet Union*, 68.

war with Greece.

The first unofficial contact between the Nationalists and Bolsheviks according to some authors⁸ was on 25 May, 1919 in Havza, where Mustafa Kemal met personally with Bolshevik delegation led the Colonel (later marshal – a.n.) Semyon Budyonny. As this information is based on one historical source – the memories of Hüsametdin Ertürk, a former colonel of the Ottoman intelligence⁹, one can speculate whether there was such meeting or not, who were the exact participants and what was discussed on it. According to Ertürk, financial and military help was promised to Mustafa Kemal if he provided support against the Entente. Later, during Erzurum Congress, according to the memories of Gen. Kazım Karabekir, Dr. Ömer Lütfi and Dr. Fuat Sabit were sent to establish relations with the Bolsheviks and to familiarize with the situation in Baku, after that the latter went to Moscow¹⁰. In Baku, they accomplished the task to contact with the Bolsheviks and to investigate the possibilities for support. It is of peculiar interest that during the Sivas Congress the Bolsheviks sent as an observer their representative – Mahmudov¹¹, whose visit most probably was connected not only with the initial investigation the of situation and future opportunities for cooperation, but with the organization of revolt against the Entente by the Turkish workers and peasants¹². On September 1919, Nuri Pasha and later Halil Pasha were sent again to Baku for receiving material and financial support for the Turkish National Movement. The Azerbaijani government, by contrast with Azerbaijani communists, were not willing to cooperate with the Turkish Nationalists for fear not to estrange the British support¹³. The development of connections also continued through the secret society "Karakol", which representing a Temporary Revolutionary Government signed an agreement¹⁴ with the Soviet government on 11

⁸ Vasif Gafarov, "Russko-Turetskoe Sblizheniei Nezavisimost Azerbaydzhana (1919-1921 gg.)", *Kavkaz i Globalizatsiya*, Vol. 4, Issue 1-2 (2010): 241; Hal, *Turkish foreign policy*, 49-50; Gökay, "Turkish Settlement", 59; Stefanos Yerasimos, *Türk Sovyet İlişkileri: Ekim Devriminden Milli Mücadele'ye* (İstanbul: Gözlem, 1979), 108.

⁹ Samih Nafiz Tansu, *İki Devrin Perde Arkası: Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Başkanı Hüsametdin Ertürk* (İstanbul: Parola Yayınları, 2016), 336-339.

¹⁰ Kazım Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz*, Vol. 1, (İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 2005), 406-407.

¹¹ Çağatay Benhür, "1920'li Yıllarda Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri: Kronolojik Bir Çalışma", *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, No: 24 (2008): 279.

¹² İsmet Konak, *Rus Devrimi ve Mustafa Kemal. Rus İç Savaşı (1918-1922) Döneminde Türk-Bolşevik İlişkileri* (İstanbul: Libra Kitap, 2017), 287.

¹³ Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of a National Identity in a Muslim Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 161.

¹⁴ Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz*, Vol. 3, 1093-1095.

January, 1920, having the main aim the "liberation of all Muslim people from the imperialist slavery of Western Europe". Soviet Russia took responsibility to provide aid for the Turkish Revolution such as money, military and other material support, while the Turkish side – to support the Soviets against Gen. Anton Denikin, Admiral Alexander Kolchak and other enemies, and backing anti-British revolts in Batumi, Iran, Afghanistan and India. Both representative bodies would cooperate in the Caucasus to initiate movement against English and Russian imperialists and the obstructive governments of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, acting under the dictate of the imperialists. Other groups in Azerbaijan, led by Halil Pasha and Fuat Sabit, united in a "Turkish Communist Party", worked in close connection with the local Bolsheviks and Mustafa Kemal. The aim – receiving Soviet help in return for achieving sovietisation of Azerbaijan¹⁵ as it lied on the road to Anatolia, where military aid from RSFSR was expected.

The geostrategic position of Caucasus turned it into a bridge, across which Bolsheviks and Turkish Nationalists could join forces. It could provide a vital connection for the struggle against the British – the common enemy, and the events, taking place there, influenced both Bolshevik Russia and the Turkish National Movement. "Therefore, it was not a coincidence that the rapprochement of the Turkish National Movement with the Russian Bolsheviks was first materialized in this region in the form of Turco-Bolshevik cooperation for the Soviet-controlled Caucasus."¹⁶ Otherwise, the bridge could turn into a barrier or a springboard for aggression, realized by the British and the Caucasian governments that supported them. It was also the White Movement that with the financial and military support of the British continued the fight with the Bolsheviks. At the same time, the newly-born Turkish National Movement could be put under fire from two sides – one, already implemented with the occupation by the Entente of the territories of the Ottoman Empire, the other – could come from the North, from the British controlled Caucasus. As Mustafa Kemal wrote to Gen. Kazim Karabekir on 6 February, 1920, the creation of a "Caucasian rampart" by the Entente countries as a part of a plan for the elimination of Turkey, would compel the leaders of the National Movement to undertake most extreme measures to prevent it. Also, if the Caucasian nations decided to be a barrier, then an agreement with the Bolsheviks for a joint offensive against them had to be made¹⁷.

¹⁵ Karabekir, *Istiklal Harbimiz*, Vol. 3, 1302-1308.

¹⁶ Gökay, "Turkish Settlement", 61.

¹⁷ Karabekir, *Istiklal Harbimiz*, Vol. 2, 997-999.

Special attention was to be paid not only to Azerbaijan but to Dagestan, too.

Northern Caucasus was also important part of the Caucasian "domino". After the establishment of the Mountain Republic¹⁸, it was often its representatives to discuss their unification with Azerbaijan with the support of the Ottomans and later, with that of the British. Announcing its sovereignty, the Mountain Republic searched for help from Georgia and Azerbaijan for its international recognition and for its struggle against the "Whites" and "Reds". There was even idea they to unite with the Transcaucasian Federative Republic¹⁹. The interest was mutual as Georgia and Azerbaijan supported the mountaineers in order to use them in the struggle against Gen. A. Denikin. At his strong offensive in beginning of 1919 in Northern Caucasus, Azerbaijan already as a separate country, turned again to the idea for unification and continued to support the mountaineers with materials and financially. On 6 April, 1919 the Azerbaijani government issued a decision to provide military support for the mountaineers but as it could not be regular force a volunteer regiments were to be sent²⁰. When the territories of the Mountain Republic were occupied by the Russian White forces, the government continue to act from Tbilisi, searching for help against the occupier. As a step in this direction, most of the mountaineers were ready to unify with Azerbaijan. And yet, to accept the Mountain Republic as part of its country, meant for Baku government to open another front, as already there was one with the Armenians, and to worsen the relations with the Armed Forces of South Russia (AFSR)²¹, which was accepted as a serious threat is already at the border of Azerbaijan. In fact, due to the many revolts that arouse against Gen. A. Denikin and the fight with the Bolsheviks, he could hardly continue his way to occupy Georgia and Azerbaijan, even having the wish to do so.

¹⁸ V. Dzidzoev, "Osnovnyy etap Mezhnatsional'nykh Otnosheniy i Natsional'no-Gosudarstvennogo Stroitel'stva Severnom Kavkaze (1917-1925 gg.)", *Vestnik Vladikavkazskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2008): 2.

¹⁹ Sevindzh Alieva, "Azerbaydzhanskaya Demokraticeskaya Respublika i Gorskaya respublika: Sotrudnichestvo, proekty obedineniya i Vzaimodeystviya s Osmanskoy imperii (Podokumentam, Dogovoram i Notam 1918-1920 Godov)", *Severo-Kavkazskiy Yuridicheskiy Vestnik*, No. 4 (2015): 120.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

²¹ Sevindzh Alieva, "Azerbaydzhanskaya Demokraticeskaya Respublika i Gorskaya respublika": Sotrudnichestvo, Proekty Obedineniya i Vzaimodeystviya s Osmanskoy Imperii (Podokumentam, Dogovoram i Notam 1918-1920 Godov)", *Severo-Kavkazskiy Yuridicheskiy Vestnik*, No. 1 (2016): 91.

When the Bolsheviks got the upper hand over the AFSR at the end of 1919, the Georgian government started to warn Azerbaijan that the Turkish military officers, who at that time were in Northern Caucasus, namely Nuri Pasha, established connections with the Bolsheviks and it was very possible a Soviet Mountain Republic to be created²². This was not so far from the reality, as at that time already to the Turkish Nationalists became more and more clear that they would use the cooperation with Soviet Russia against the common enemy. On 17 March, 1920, Kazim Karabekir wrote to Nuri Pasha, who at that time was in Azerbaijan, that "For coming of Bolshevism, to our country which is already ready and to our borders, an immediate invasion of Caucasus and moreover Bolsheviks with a small force arriving in Azerbaijan, with Azerbaijanis together to move to our border will be quite enough for ensuring our aim.... It would be very proper the Bolshevik idea to be predominate in Azerbaijan and Dagestan and if necessary to support Batum Bolsheviks and also providing Georgia's participation to Bolshevism."²³

The Turkish national cadres had an important role in sovietisation of the mentioned territories in order to turn the Caucasus from a hostile barrier into a bridge for mutual cooperation. The process was facilitated by the decision of the British government in March, 1919 to retreat from the region until the end of the year, leaving only one regiment in Batumi, as Britain could not bear any more the financial burden of sustaining an army on two fronts, especially when it was obvious the Bolsheviks were winning against the ASFR. Then, the only obstacles for receiving the crucial Soviet military help were the independent republics at the Caucasus, which were cooperating with Bolsheviks and Nationalists' common enemy – the Entente.

Three days after the opening of the Grand National Assembly (GNA), on 26 April, 1920, Mustafa Kemal sent his first foreign document (a note) to V. I. Lenin offering the latter to establish diplomatic relations and to fight together against the imperialism. In order to strengthen their power for the struggle with the enemy, a financial support was requested from the Soviets - five million Turkish liras in gold, arms, and military supplies, military-technical means and medical materials, as well as food for the Turkish forces. One part of the document, concerning directly the Caucasus, reveal very well the attitude toward the republics there: "...if Soviet forces propose opening

²² *Ibid.*, 100.

²³ Karabekir, *Istiklal Harbimiz*, Vol. 3, 1155-1156.

military operations against Georgia or by a diplomatic path seek to use their influence to force Georgia to enter into a union and undertake the expulsion of the English from the territory of the Caucasus, the Turkish Government will commit itself to military operations against imperialist Armenia and to force the Azerbaijani Republic to enter the range of Soviet states."²⁴ Even though a question about the authenticity of the note was raised²⁵, the fact is that it very clearly depicted proven facts, namely – the request for the material and financial support, which was received by the Turks from the Bolsheviks; the later taken actions against Armenia and Georgia; the sovietisation of Azerbaijan against which GNA didn't oppose, on the contrary – as written above Turkish cadres facilitated the process on spot. In addition, the transfer of the Soviet support could not be carried out through hostile territories – there was a strong need of free passage for crucial interstate connection between Bolsheviks` and Nationalists` governments.

Northern Caucasus on the Road to Sovietisation

The internal situation in Northern Caucasus was complicated regarding several aspects of political, social and religious life such as land shortage, imperial migration policy, issues connected with educational and health problems and so on. The national movements gave another due to that problem and to the interethnic relations of the North-Caucasian people. After the October Revolution a more outlined political division put an obstacle in front of the state-building process in Northern Caucasus. The main reason was the growing separation between supporters of the "Whites" and the "Reds", which escalated the interethnic collision and put different social groups in conditions they were forced to cooperate according to common political aims. Thus, several formations appeared from time to time in order to find an exit from the political chaos in the former empire. One of them, already mentioned, the Alliance of the United Caucasian mountaineers and Dagestan - transforming to the Mountain Republic in May 1918, with the deepening of the Civil war, was trying to maneuver according to

²⁴ Letter of Mustafa Kemal-Pasha to the Soviet Government, 26 April 1920, RSASPH, f. 5, op. 2, d. 315, l. 38, quoted in Jamil Hasanly, "Russian-Turkish Relations between the Sovietization of Azerbaijan and the Sovietization of Armenia", *ADA Biweekly*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2012), http://biweekly.ada.edu.az/vol_5_no_2/Russian_Turkish_relations_between_the_Sovietization_of_Azerbaijan_and_the_Sovietization_of_Armenia_PART1A.htm (accessed on April 23, 2018).

²⁵ Hasan Bulent Paksoy, "U.S. and Bolshevik Relations with the TBMM Government: the First Contacts, 1919-1921", *The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* No. 12 (1994): 211-251.

the different political perspectives, relying on the support first of the Germans and Ottomans, later on the Allied powers, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Another important moment connected with these processes was the role of the religion in the North-Caucasian societies. The Muslim leaders were also influenced by the political situation and some of them tried to get an advantage of it to realise their plans for the future social and political development of the mountaineers. This made some of them vulnerable to the Soviet propaganda and they openly supported the establishment of the Soviet regime among the mountaineers. On its turn, the Soviet Government was also ready to cooperate with the Muslim leaders and to pretend not being against the religious rights of the mountaineers. Generally, the Bolsheviks, by attracting the Muslims at their side, aimed at spreading the Bolshevik and socialist ideas not only among the Muslim population of Russia, but also among Near East peoples. This was one of the important objectives when Soviet Russia established official relations with Turkish GNA. Muslims could be used as well as a means in the struggle with other confessions and social classes of the non-Muslim societies²⁶.

The famous slogan “Long live the Soviet power and *sharia!*”²⁷, propagated by Nazir Kathanov and his comrades, was a reflection of the belief that cooperation with Bolsheviks would bring equality, freedom of religion and fair division of land as well as would save mountaineers from the “Whites”, who wanted to turn back the old despotic regime. The hopes of the “red shariatists” from Kabarda and Balkaria regions, as they became popular among the society, were also based on “The Decree on the Freedom of Conscience, and of Church and Religious Societies”²⁸, proclaimed by the Council of the People’s Commissars. Additionally, in order to fight with the anti-Bolshevik powers in Terek Oblast, the extraordinary commissar of South Russia S. Ordzhonikidze established within the Eleventh Red Army a

²⁶ Nadezhda Emel'yanova, “Esliumyt'sya Krov'yu...” Islam i Revolyutsiya na Severnom Kavkaze”, *Rodina*, No. 9 (2008): 52.

²⁷ Fatima Shahaliev, “Islamskiy Faktor v Kabarde i Balkarii v kontekste Grazhdanskoj Voyny (1918– Nachalo 1920 g.)”, *Rossiyskiy Gumanitarnyy Zhurnal*, Vol. 5, Issue 5 (2016): 509.

²⁸ “Dekret o Svobode Sovesti, Tserkovnykh i Religioznykh Obshtestvah”, *Dekrety Sovetskoy Vlasti* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo Politicheskoy literatury, 1957), Vol. I, 373-374, http://istmat.info/files/uploads/53273/dekrety_sovetskoy_vlasti_t.1.pdf (accessed May 5, 2018).

regiment called "Shariatskaya column", consisting of local mountaineer's soldiers. The general enemy there was Z. Dautokov-Serebriakov and his military political formation "Svobodnaya Kabarda"²⁹.

Other Islamic leaders such as Uzun-Hadzhi and Nazhmudin Gotsinskiy from Dagestan announced the October Revolution being creature of the Devil and the Bolsheviks main enemies of Islam and Sharia³⁰. They wanted to establish Islamic state following the example of Imam Shamil, with the support of the Ottoman empire, as the steps in this direction were undertaken in promulgating N. Gotsinskiy for Imam of Chechnya and Dagestan in 19 August (1 September) 1917 on the Second Congress of the Mountaineer Peoples, which was left by the socialist group after rejecting to accept the Bolshevik rule³¹. Later, N. Gotsinskiy, became part of the Mountain Republic government, participated in delegation for negotiations with Gen. Denikin and was not so much against his control over Chechnya and Dagestan. He also took active part in the struggle with the Bolsheviks³².

The position of Gotsinskiy toward the "Whites" led to separation with Uzun-Hadzhi, who established in September 1919 North-Caucasian Emirate in Chechnya and Dagestan as a response to the occupation of the AFSR and announced his monarchy being under the protection of the Ottoman Sultan³³. The emir announced "holy war" against Denikin, relying on the military and financial support of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Ottoman Empire. Weapons and ammunition were received from Georgia, while in Azerbaijan a voluntary corps was ready to be sent to help the Emirate, and Ottoman advisors appeared as military advisors of Uzun-Hadzhi³⁴.

As already hinted, the external factors had serious influence on political and social life in Northern Caucasus, which included not only the Soviet government, but the "Whites" - the Armed Forces of South Russia (AFSR), established in early 1919, and the British occupational

²⁹ Shahaliev, "Islamskiy Faktor", 508-510.

³⁰ Emelyanova, "Esli umyt'sya Krov'yu...", 53.

³¹ YusupIdrisov, "Dagestanskaya Sotsialisticheskaya Gruppy v Usloviyah Revolyutsionnogo Krizisa 1917 Nachala 1918 Goda", *Izvestiya Rossiyskogo Gosudarstvennogo Pedagogicheskogo Universiteta im. A.I. Gertsena*, Vol. 19, No. 45 (2007): 104.

³² Murad Donogo, "N. Gotsinskiy i povstancheskayabor'ba v Dagestane i Chechne (1922–1925 rr.)", *Novyy istoricheskiy vestnik*, № 18 (2008): 136.

³³ Vladimir Lobanov, *Istoriya anti bol'shevistskogo dvizheniya na Severnom Kavkaze, 1917-1920 gg. na materialah Terekai Dagestana* (Sankt-Peterburg : Poltorak, 2013), 306.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 308.

forces. The “Whites” were struggling for preservation not only of the territories of the Russian empire, but also for the old political and social order. Russia united and undivided was the official political “creed” of Gen. A. Denikin. In early 1919 Gen. Denikin invaded the Northern Caucasus and managed to put an end to the Mountain Republic. He was supported in his actions by the British occupational forces, commanded by Gen. Thompson, aiming to secure for the “Whites” strong support among the mountaineers in the struggle with the Bolsheviks. Because of this the British were keeping for some period the hope of the Mountain government for independence and made it fulfill given instructions such as keeping the order, recovery of railway and steamship transport connections, cancellation of any Ottoman or German propaganda etc., which were more or less possible for implementation³⁵ However, the request for governmental changes to have highly representation of all ethnical groups, which meant to include Cossacks and the close cooperation with A. Denikin, was sign of total neglect of the inter-ethnic and inter-social relations. The conquered with their conquerors in common government supporting the tsarist White Movement – it would be ironic if not real suggestion. The British by all means followed their most important aim, namely to defeat the Bolsheviks and to broaden their influence. In addition, due to the fast development of natural sources exploitation of the region in the end of XIX century, the control over it had one more important aspect for the Entente.

The British managed to discredit themselves when they allowed Gen. Denikin to establish control over Northern Caucasus and restore the tsarist style military-administrative rule over the mountaineers. The mistake to press mountaineers to cooperate with the Voluntary Army leaders neither of whom want to recognise any separatist movement on the territory of former Russia, contributed additionally for broadening the support for the Soviet power. The discontent of the mountaineers came to its most when it became clear that the general would not only purge the region from the Bolsheviks but started to exercise his power over the North-Caucasian people without regard to their wish for non-interference in their internal matters and right of self-governing within the independent Mountain Republic. Not only Gen. Denikin started to appoint the governors of the different Caucasian peoples returning old police servants, but introduced forcible mobilisation in the White

³⁵ V. Dzidzoev, “Severnnyy Kavkaz kak Mikrosub’ekt Geopoliticheskogo Protsessa (1917-1921 gg.)”, *Vestnik Vladikavkazskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra* Vol. 4, No. 4 (2004): 3.

Army³⁶. The revolts against A. Denikin in Ingushetia and Dagestan, which were suppressed with cruelty, the ultimatums toward mountaineers; protection of interests of Cossack at expense of the mountaineers; the abrogation of the Soviet decrees and restoration of the private property – all these brought mountaineers to the point of great disconnect and readiness to collaborate with the Bolsheviks.

The escalation of the conflict with Gen. Denikin made Uzun-Hadzhi more inclined to search for support from Bolsheviks in order to oppose the "Whites". If in 1917-1918 the cooperation between the Islamic leader and Bolsheviks was inconceivable, changing the situation led to this "queer union"³⁷. Several representatives of the "Reds" entered the emir's government, such as Nikolay Gikalo, who was commander of Red Army in Northern Caucasus, became commander of the 5th regiment of the Emirate's Army, and N. Kathanov was a commander of the 1st regiment of the Emirate, including Kabardians and Balkars. Representatives of the Bolsheviks were also Gen. Habala Beslaneev as Minister of internal affairs, and Magomet Haniev – chief of Staff of the Emirate Army³⁸. In March 1920, having achieved the expulsion of the "Whites", Bolsheviks put an ultimatum to Uzun-Hadzhi to accept the Soviet authority, to resign and to disband his military formations. He died at the end of the month and with him the Emirate ceased to exist giving way to the full establishment of the Soviet regime in Chechnya³⁹. In the beginning of 1920 Kathanov managed to gather many volunteers from Ossetia, Kabarda and Balkaria, who united under the "Green flag" against Denikin. On 10 March 1920 he captured Nalchik and on 20 March issued a "Proclamation" announcing the establishment of the Soviet power in Kabardino-Balkaria region and urged people to build a new fair society⁴⁰.

Several big operations of the Eleventh Army together with local

³⁶ V. Dzidzoev, "SevernyyKavkaz kak Mikrosub`ekt", 7.

³⁷ Vladimir Lobanov, "Dobrovol'cheskaya Armiyana Severnom Kavkaze, Noyabr' 1917 – May 1919 gg.: Periodizatsiya", *Vestnik SPbGUKI* No. 3 (2014): 186.

³⁸ M. Tekueva, "Islamskoe Dvizhenie v Kabardei Balkarii vo Vremya Grazhdanskoy Voyny na Tereke", in *Islam i Politika na Severnom Kavkaze. Sbornik Nauchnykh Statey* Vol. 1. Ed. Viktor Chernous (Rostov-na-Donu: "Izdatel'stvo SKNTS VSH", 2001), <http://regiment.ru/Lib/D/93.htm> (accessed on September 30, 2018)

³⁹ Abdula Bugaev and Zarina Alhastova, "Stanovlenie Sovetskoy Politicheskoy Sistemy i v Chechne: Nachal'nyi Etap", *Istoricheskie Nauki: Teoriya i Praktika Obshtestvennogo Razvitiya*, No. 20 (2014): 125-128.

⁴⁰ M. Tekueva, "Islamskoe Dvizhenie".

guerilla managed to “purge” the “Whites” in Dagestan and to capture Derbent and almost all Hasavyurt region in the beginning of 1920 and later in March Temir-Han-Shura, Hasav-Yurt, and Port-Petrovsk. With the advent of the Red Army in Dagestan, the restoration of the Soviet authority began through formation of revolutionary committees, which implemented first socio-economic activities. On 8 April, 1920 Kavkazskoe byuro (Kavbyuro) to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party was established, which had to monitor the subordination of Caucasus to the Soviet government. Same year the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic were proclaimed⁴¹.

One of the last outbreaks of resistance was that of N. Gotsinskiy, who continued to fight against the Bolsheviks for independence of Dagestan, as his efforts were supported by the representatives of the former Mountain government in Tiflis, the Georgian Mensheviks, the Entente, as well as some Caucasian migrant circles in Turkey by establishing conspiratorial political organization, hidden under the coverage of a trade company⁴². The strong resistance and activities of N. Gotsinskiy continued until September 1925, when big operation of Soviet detachments, he and his supporters were arrested and later sentenced to death.

Transcaucasia and the process of sovietisation

Azerbaijan and the first Turkish-Soviet negotiations

In the spring of 1920 Azerbaijan was in a complicated external and internal situation – engaged in a military conflict with Armenia for Nakhchivan and Nagorno-Karabakh; Red Army approaching its borders after the defeat of the Denikin’s ASFR in Northern Caucasus and occupying Dagestan; strong activation of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan and their preparation for the “proletarian revolution”; governmental crisis, which led to the lack of government in the most crucial moment for the republic⁴³. The last attempt of the Entente to

⁴¹ Anatoliy Tetuev, “Natsional’no-Gosudarstvennoe Stroitel’stvo na Severnom Kavkaze (1917-1941)”, *Vestnik RUDN. Seriya “Isotriya Rossii”*, No. 4 (2005): 138; B. Kashkaev, *Bor’ba za Vlast’ Sovetov v Dagestane (Mart 1917 - Mart 1920 g.)*, *Voprosy istorii* No. 1 (1960): 3-24, <http://libmonster.ru/m/articles/view/БОРЬБА-ЗА-ВЛАСТЬ-СОБЕТОВ-В-ДАГЕСТАНЕ-МАРТ-1917-МАРТ-1920-Г> (accessed on September 30, 2018).

⁴² Murad Donogo, “N. Gotsinskiy”, 137.

⁴³ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 277-278, 281-282.

strengthen the Caucasian barrier against the Soviet advance was the de facto recognition of the South Caucasian Republics in January 1920 by the Allied Supreme Council and "behind this sudden recognition there was a weighty reason: the failure of Denikin"⁴⁴. This belated step had no effect. The insistence of Azerbaijan to be officially recognized by Moscow was also in vain as no response was received, concerning this proposal.

On 27 April 1920, one day after Mustafa Kemal sent his first note to Lenin, the Eleventh Army of the Red Army crossed the border of Azerbaijan after an ultimatum was handed to Azerbaijani government by the communists to surrender within 12 hours. The established earlier Turkish communist party in Baku by the Turkish cadres was at Bolsheviks' disposal as well as other Turkish officers, making pro-Bolshevik propaganda and assuring the population the Red Army would stay a couple of days as it had to continue on its way to Anatolia. After the Temporary Revolutionary Military Committee of Azerbaijan invited the Red Army for a fraternal struggle with the imperialism, the destiny of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan was predetermined. The Turkish Communist Party even issued a proclamation to the Azerbaijanis in which they called them to support the new Bolshevik government⁴⁵. A lot of Turkish officers, who served in the Azerbaijani army in Baku, helped many important buildings and railways to be occupied by the Bolsheviks⁴⁶. Taking Baku meant not only to put a hand on the petroleum and transport connections, but posing a control over both Northern and Southern Caucasus, over the Caspian Sea, and paving a road toward Central Asia⁴⁷. Due to this it opened the way for the sovietisation of the rest of the Southern Caucasus.

After the establishment of the Bolshevik power in Azerbaijan, Halil Pasha and Fuat Sabit received an order from Gen. Karabekir to leave for Moscow to negotiate the Soviet support for the Turkish National Movement. The official delegation sent by Ankara was led by Bekir Sami Bey – Turkish minister of foreign affairs, including Yusuf Kemal Bey – minister of economy, and Dr. Miralay Ibrahim Tali, Mebusu Osman from Lazistan, Lieutenant Colonel Shevket Seyfi, who

⁴⁴ Ibid., 268.

⁴⁵ Vasif Gafarov, "Russko-Turetskoe Sblizhenie", 246; Musa Gasymlı, "Azerbaydzhan mezhdu Rossiei i Turtsiei v 1920-1922 gg.", *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 11 (2010): 28-29.

⁴⁶ Vasif Gafarov, "Russko-Turetskoe Sblizhenie", 247.

⁴⁷ Musa Gasymlı, "Azerbaydzhan", 27.

left for Moscow on 11 May 1920⁴⁸. On behalf of the Soviet government Iosif V. Stalin, Grigory Chicherin and vice-deputy Lev Karahan took part in the negotiations for the future treaty, as additionally the Turkish delegation had a meeting with V.I. Lenin, too. During the meetings it became clear that both governments had some serious debatable grounds, concerning Armenian and Georgian territories – those of Kars, Ardahan and Batumi, as well as opening the road between Soviet Russia and Turkish Nationalists through Armenia (of great importance was the line Baku-Erzurum, which greater part was controlled by Armenian government⁴⁹). Soon, these would turn into serious collision points, which would try the stability of the relations and cooperation.

Turkish Nationalists continued to insist that the mentioned territories remain part of new Turkey, based on the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The last was denounced by RSFSR after the capitulation of Germany and the Ottoman Empire and the Soviets did not accept it anymore as a starting point for negotiations⁵⁰. The Soviets did not respond to some other expectations during the negotiations in Moscow, too. A joint operation against Armenia was not possible as at that time Moscow was in a war with Poland and with Gen. Pyotr Wrangel, who took control of the AFSR after A. Denikin was defeated⁵¹. Another one, the wish of Nationalists to conclude a treaty of mutual assistance could not be achieved, regarding the fact that same time Bolsheviks were in negotiations with the Great Britain for trade agreement and the only they could offer was a Treaty of friendship⁵². But still, it should be not regarded as underestimating the importance of the treaty with GNA or the relations with it, because even before signing the Treaty of friendship the Nationalists started to receive the promised material and financial support in 1920 and it continued until 1922, when both treaties were already signed – with Great Britain and with GNA. So, the negotiations with the British didn't change the plans of the Bolsheviks for the Caucasus and Turkey and their commitment to the Turkish National Movement.

⁴⁸ Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Moskova Hatıraları. Milli Mücadele ve Bolşevik Rusya* (Istanbul: Temel Yayınları., 2017), 106-107.

⁴⁹ Gökay, "Turkish Settlement", 67.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵¹ Cebesoy, *Moskova Hatıraları*, 108, 118-119.

⁵² Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia*, 95.

Armenia and escalation of Turkish-Soviet collision

The Democratic Republic of Armenia was in catastrophic economic⁵³ and political conditions, which, having in mind the future developments, just deepened and more or less predicted the consequences from the short-sighted policy of Dashnak government. It exercised full power over the administrative and legislative institutions, and over the population, half of whom were displaced persons⁵⁴. Still, the territorial claims of Armenia surpassed their ability to defend even those six *vilayets* which composed the so-called "Turkish Armenia" and the occupation of which the Democratic Republic announced on 28 May, 1919, renouncing the Treaty of Batumi⁵⁵ after the capitulation of the Ottoman Empire. Under the Treaty of Sevres⁵⁶ the Ottoman government recognized Armenia as independent state and agreed "to submit to the arbitration of the President of the United States of America the question of the frontier to be fixed between Turkey and Armenia in the *vilayets* of Erzurum, Trabzon, Van and Bitlis, and to accept his decision thereupon, as well as any stipulations he may prescribe as to access for Armenia to the sea, and as to the demilitarisation of any portion of Turkish territory adjacent to the said frontier."⁵⁷ And additionally, after the decision for the border came into power, Ottomans renounced all their rights over the transferred territory. The clauses were never to be accepted by Mustafa Kemal and his adherents, and this entire situation just escalated the hostility between the two nations. The spark was the occupation of Olti in June 1920 by the Armenian troops and as the first prime minister of Armenia wrote: "...the hasty occupation of Olti was the gauntlet which we threw down, as if intentionally, to the Turks; as though we ourselves were desirous of war and sought it"⁵⁸.

On 3 June, concerned by the eventual serious conflict between

⁵³ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 212.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁵⁵ Charlotte Mathilde Louise Hille, *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus* (Leiden [the Netherlands]; Boston: Brill, 2010), 7

⁵⁶ "The Treaty of Sevres, 1920",

https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Section_I_Articles_1_-_260 (accessed on July 2, 2018)

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Hovhannes Katchaznoui, *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnagtzoutiun) has Nothing to Do anymore. The Manifesto of First Prime Minister of the Independent Armenian Republic* (New York: Armenian Information Service: 1955), quoted in Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 287.

Armenia and GNA⁵⁹, Soviet Russia offered its mediation, which was accepted by Mustafa Kemal for solving the conflict through diplomatic means. He didn't want this to intervene the understanding with Russians, whose support still was to be negotiated. While on the road, Bekir Sami also sent two notes to the Armenian government for protesting against the attack on Olti and demanding the establishment of normal relationship based on Brest-Litovsk and Batumi treaties⁶⁰, which was totally unacceptable for the Armenians.

The Armenian side also accepted Moscow's mediation and received some assurances from G. Chicherin, that Soviets would secure some territories for Armenia, referring to the disputable with Azerbaijan Zangezur and Nakhchivan, while Nagorno-Karabakh's fate to be solved via referendum, and outlet to the Black Sea to be provided⁶¹. At that time, a delegation of the Republic of Armenia was in Moscow for negotiations in the quest of security guarantees for its independence and official recognition. After being left without military assistance from the West and the League of Nations, as well as the mandatory responsibilities of USA were rejected by the Congress, Armenia had no chance but to try to establish at least non-threatening relations with the Soviets, while still keeping its pro-Western orientation.

While negotiations between Turkish and Soviet delegations in Moscow were entering a deadlock, the Soviets signed a temporary treaty with Armenia on 10 August, 1920, according to which, based on the premise the territories of Nakhchivan, Zangezur and Karabakh would be occupied by the troops of RSFSR, which in fact just confirmed the current situation, and gave the administrative operation of the railway in the Shahtaght-Julfa district to Armenia "with the proviso that it will not be used for military purposes"⁶². Cease of fire and stop of military operations with the free passage of Armenian troops on their way to Armenia through the territories to be occupied by RSFSR were among the other important clauses. In fact, the treaty never entered in complete implementation, as there continued to be some clashes in the disputed regions and Armenia could not exercise the administrative control on the railway due to its conflict with Azerbaijan. This treaty

⁵⁹ Richard Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia, Vol. 4: Between Crescent and Sickle - Partition and Sovietization* (California: University of California Press, 1996), 146.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁶¹ Charlotte Mathilde Louise Hille, *State Building*, 149.

⁶² Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 95.

was expected to give some security to Armenia for its independence and for giving it possibility to concentrate forces to defend its territorial pretention in Turkish Armenia. Regarding RSFSR, they gained time during very important period of the war with Poland – the battle for Warsaw, where they concentrated strong military efforts. In addition, revolts on Kuban and battle with P. Wrangel, made Soviets follow the Treaty at least while they deal with the conflicts that were priority.

Nevertheless, the Turkish delegation protested against the temporary treaty between RSFSR and Armenia, mainly because it blocked the connection between Soviets and Anatolia. The negotiations continued finalizing a draft agreement at 24 August. But again the "Armenian question" became an obstacle to conclude the undertaking, especially when Chicherin tried to put the delivery of material support in dependence on cession of territories to Armenia. Still, information was coming to Ankara from several channels that Moscow would not help Armenia in case Turkish army attacked⁶³ because the RSFSR recognized Armenia only temporarily until solving the conflicts on the other fronts and waiting for the right time for sovietisation of the Armenian Republic.

The information proved its authenticity when at the end of September, a full-scale war started between Turkish Nationalists and Dashnak Armenia. It was reposted in *Pravda* that "The responsibility for the blood spilled falls exceptionally on the Armenians and their patrons the imperialists"⁶⁴, which clearly showed the lack of support by the Soviets. Turkish Army's fast advance was the "awakening blow" to the Armenian government, which underestimated the enemy's military power. Sarikamish, Kars, Alexandropol fell under Turkish control, while Armenia totally exhausted her sources, and support from Entente countries, which except expressing sympathy, did not provide the expected protection⁶⁵. The Red Army was at the borders and the Soviets pressing diplomatically the Armenian government. The last was forced to conclude a truce on 18 November under terms of Turks keeping Alexandropol and their control over Armenian railways⁶⁶. On 26 November, 1920 negotiations between the hostile powers started in the above-mentioned city.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁶⁴ "V Armeniya. K Turetsko-armyanskoy voyne", *Pravda* № 265 (25 November 1920): 2.

⁶⁵ E. Sarkisyan, "Sovetsko-Turetskie Otnosheniya i Zakavkaz'e v 1920-1921 Godakh", *Literaturnaya Armeniya* No. 6 (1967): 86.

⁶⁶ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 288; Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia*, 97.

The Red Army was ready to intervene. After the truce with Poland and the defeat of gen. Wrangel's army in Crimea, Soviet Russia was ready to start the sovietisation of Armenia especially after it was weakened enough by the Turkish offensive. The new situation interfered in the interests of Moscow on Caucasus "for it could not possibly allow the Turks to increase their influence in Armenia"⁶⁷. RSFSR offered again mediation to Armenia, which was accepted by Dashnaks but rejected by the Turks, the latter being in a better position now. Then, the Soviets decided to act, sending a note that Armenian government had to reject Turkish demands and let the Red Army to enter Armenia. While hesitation stopped the official reaction of Dashnaks, another note by Boris Legran – Soviet plenipotentiary in Erevan, posed an ultimatum of surrendering the power to the Revolutionary Committee of Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia, situated at the Azerbaijani region of Kazakh on 29 November. This was followed by the advance of the Eleventh Army, which crossed Armenian border⁶⁸. On 2 December Boris Legran concluded an agreement with the Armenian government and the independent Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia was proclaimed. The news reached Baku, provoked a special session of the Baku Soviet on which Neriman Nerimanov, Chairman of the Council of People`s Commissars of Azerbaijan, read a declaration that Azerbaijan gave up in favour of Soviet Armenia the districts of Zangezour, Nakhchivan and Nagorno-Karabakh⁶⁹ (in order to return them to Azerbaijan few months later – a.n.).

While these processes were taking place and the Soviet government requested the withdrawal of the Turkish Army from Armenia, the representatives of Dashnak government continued negotiations with the Turkish GNA in Alexandropol, which resulted in a treaty on the very same 2 December, and then resigned. According to the treaty Armenia renounced all its claims on the disputed territories in Anatolia, Armenian Army was to be limited to 1500 men, Armenian railways to be under Turkish control "in order to prevent treacherous acts against its integrity and totality by imperialists until complete peace is established" and also Turks obtained the right to "take temporary military preventive measures in Armenia against attacks that may threaten its territorial integrity on condition that such

⁶⁷ Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia*, 97.

⁶⁸ Gökay, "Turkish Settlement", 68; Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia*, 99.

⁶⁹ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 291-292; *Pravda o Nagornom-Karabakhe: (Materialy i Dokumenty)* (Erevan: Yerevanskiy Gosudarstvennyy Universitet, 1989), 101.

measures do not disturb the rights of the Republic of Erevan conceded in this territory"⁷⁰. As it is obvious the issue with the Republic of Armenia had not to be considered only through the prism of opening the "bridge" among the Bolsheviks and Turkish Nationalists or only as territorial pretensions, referring the "National Pact" or Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Security from North and the very existence of Turkish National Movement was concerned the by need of prevention of any hostile attacks by the Entente, using the territory of the countries on Caucasus, which supported the Allied powers, while Turks were fighting with the Greeks.

The new socialist government in Armenia rejected to recognize the Treaty of Alexandropol and proposed a conference to negotiate a new treaty. The Soviet government, as mentioned earlier, insisted on Turkish troops withdrawal from Alexandropol, also gave instructions to its representative in Armenia in this direction and even warned Mustafa Kemal that if he decided to risk a military adventure against Soviet troops "it will be sufficient to deal him one or two blows and his army will fall to pieces like a house of cards."⁷¹ Still, both Moscow and Ankara could not sacrifice their relations and cooperation due to the Armenian conflict. As B. Gökay stated: "It was more than ever before that the cooperation was like a business partnership then a unity of principles. The Turks did not attempt to go further towards historically Russian-held parts of Armenia and the Russian did not move further down into Turkish Armenia"⁷². The final decision about Armenia was to be taken by RSFSR and GNA.

Sovietisation of Georgia and Turkish-Soviet rivalry

This collision was not the only which disturbed Soviet-Turkish "cordial" engagement against the imperialists. The last fortress of theirs was Georgia, ruled by the social-democrats, who tried to be flexible in their attempt to evade Red or Turkish Army's proceeding to Georgian territories. From the three Transcaucasian states, Georgian Social-Democratic Workers' Party (Menshevik) government was trying hard to implement social and economic reforms after they won a stable

⁷⁰ "Treaty of Alexandropol", <http://www.deutscharmenischegesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Vertrag-von-Alexandropol-2.-Dezember-1920.pdf> (accessed on July 26, 2018).

⁷¹ Mikhail Pavlovich, "The Turkish Offensive against Armenia", *Soviet Russia*, Vol. V, №7 (1921), quoted in Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia*, 100.

⁷² Gökay, "Turkish Settlement", 68.

majority in the parliament. They introduced several reforms connected with the nationalisation of land, of key industries and railway transportation, of labour work, which brought to several revolts and activation of Bolshevik propaganda⁷³.

Even though the treasury was in a high deficit⁷⁴, Georgia was preoccupied with territorial pretensions toward its neighbours being part from the nationalistic “wave” at that period, concerning mainly Borchalo district, Kazakh and Akhalkalaki, which provoked protest from Azerbaijan and short war with Armenia in December 1918, ceased with the intervention of the Entente.

After the sovietisation of Azerbaijan and Armenia, Georgia was the last part of the Caucasian “puzzle”, that had to provide stable communication and transportation route between Russian Soviets and Turkish Nationalists. Still, the collision for Batumi region between Ankara and Moscow made the “Georgian case” more complicated and put to the test the close cooperation between the two governments.

Soviet-Georgian relations started to deteriorate after the capitulation of Germany and the Ottoman Empire, when all contracted treaties between the lasts and Soviet Russia ceased to be valid. In late 1918 RSFSR not only did not recognise the Georgian Republic but proclaimed that “all persons who consider themselves Georgian citizens are recognised as Russian citizens and as such are subject to all the decrees and the enactments of the Soviet authority of the RSFSR.”⁷⁵ Then, until the beginning of 1920, Soviet Russia did not have any specific relations with Georgia, when it invited the latter to participate in the struggle against Gen. Denikin. Georgian minister of foreign affairs refused to get involved his country into the Civil war, which provoked the hostility of the Soviet government. After the sovietisation of Azerbaijan, Bolsheviks made an attempt for uprising in Tiflis on 2 May, 1920, which had to be accompanied by military intervention, but it failed as Georgian army managed to stop the offensive. Being seriously engaged in the war with Poland and the escalation of a revolt

⁷³ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 192.

⁷⁴ Simon Ter-Petrosyan (Kamo), “V Gruzinskoy Demokratii”, *Izvestiya*, No.177 (729) (19 August 1919): 1.

⁷⁵ “Postanovlenie Narodnogo Komissariata po Inostrannym Delam RSFSR o Nepriznanii Gruzii Samostoyatel’nym Gosudarstvomot 24 Dekabrya 1918 Goda”, *Mezhdunarodnaya Politika Noveyshego Vremeni v Dogovorakh, Notakhi Deklaratsiyakh*. Eds. Yuriy V. Klyuchnikov and Andrey Sabanin (Moskva: Izd. Litizdata N.K.I.D., 1925-1929), Vol. 2 (1926): Ot Imperialisticheskoy Voyny do Snyatiya Blokady s Sovetskoy Rossii, 209-210.

in Azerbaijani rural area, Soviet government decided to postpone the operation against the Georgian Republic. On 7 May, 1920, after secret negotiations, a Georgian-Soviet Moscow Treaty was signed⁷⁶. In general, RSFSR recognised de jure independent Georgia, declared abstaining from interference in internal affairs, demilitarisation of the established border between the two countries, both states having the responsibility to prevent every group trying to organise anti-governmental activities on their territories, and in secret supplement Georgia recognised the right of existence and activity of the Communist party. Unfortunately, this clause could not save Georgians "willing to buy independence from Soviet Russia"⁷⁷.

In interview for *Pravda* newspaper on 30 November, 1920, Stalin underlined the great importance of Caucasus and especially the most important economic and strategic roads between Soviet Russia and Ankara government – Batumi-Baku, Batumi-Tavriz, Batumi-Tavriz-Erzurum⁷⁸. The key word definitely is "Batumi", seen as the main counterpoint on the Black Sea against the Entente, "which, owing now Constantinople, this key to the Black Sea, wants to preserve direct road to the East through the Transcaucasia"⁷⁹. Soviet Russia could not let even a friendly country like Turkey to occupy Batumi and it was a matter of a couple of months the port to come in Soviet hands. Since the signing of the Soviet-Georgian agreement and the arrival of the Soviet ambassador in Tiflis Sergey Kirov, a gradual escalation in the relations could be observed until the end of 1920⁸⁰. Additionally, rumours about the renewal of the British occupation of Batumi⁸¹ aggravated the situation. Meanwhile, the occupation of Batumi by the Georgian army

⁷⁶ "Peace Treaty, Concluded in Moscow on 7 May 1920 between the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR) and the Democratic Republic of Georgia. May 7, 1920", <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1921-2/transcaucasia/transcaucasia-texts/georgian-independence/> (accessed on May 20, 2018)

⁷⁷ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 300.

⁷⁸ Yosif Stalin, *Sochineniya*, Vol. 4 (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1947), 408.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Rejection of Transit of Goods for Armenia; Georgian Occupation of Borchalo; Persecution of Communist Activists; Material Support to Imam Nazhmudin Gotsinskiy in Dagestan, etc. See more at: Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 302-313; "Na Kavkaze. Arestyi Kommunistov", *Pravda*, No.14 (3 July 1920): 2; Vadim Muhanov, "K istorii sovetizatsii Zakavkaz'ya (1920-1921)", *Kavkazskiy Sbornik*, Vol. 8 (40) (2014), 193.

⁸¹ Information about new planned attack the on Caucasus by Great Britain given also in the following articles: "Angliya. Novyi Plan na Padenia na Kavkaz", *Izvestiya*, No. 15 (862) (24 January 1920): 1; "Kak Vedut Voynu posle Zaklyucheniya Mira", *Pravda*, No. 239 (26 October 1920): 1; "U Vorot Baku", *Pravda*, No. 258 (17 November 1920): 1; "K okupatsii Batuma", *Pravda*, № 265 (25 November 1920): 2.

after the British left in July 1920, provoked the protests of Ankara government, which still accepted the region as part of the country⁸². Later, a Turkish representative – Kazim Bey, was sent in Tiflis for solving the matters concerning the establishment of official relations. As further developments showed, the Turks were not ready to give up from the important regions of Batumi, Ardahan and Artvin. Even the official recognition of Georgia by the Allies on 27 January, 1921, could not stop the escalation of its conflict with Soviet Russia and GNA.

After the intensification of the collision with the Menshevik government and a final provocation on the Georgian border with Azerbaijan SSR at the end of January 1921, Soviet Russia was ready to take action and instructions were given to the local communist party to raise a revolt against the Menshevik government. It started on the night of 11 to 12 February, 1921, in Lori neutral zone (occupied by Georgian army during Turkish-Armenian war for three months according to the agreement with Armenia, as on 12 February, 1921 this period expired⁸³). Following the model in Azerbaijan and Armenia, a Revolutionary Committee was established, which proclaimed a Soviet regime and appealed Soviet Russia and the Red Army for help. The Eleventh Army crossed the Georgian border on 16 February and 25 February it entered Tiflis.

The Soviet attack of Georgia, provoked an unexpected rebellion in Armenia, where the economic and social conditions totally deteriorated after the inauguration of the Soviet regime due to the obligatory requisitions and confiscations of food and properties, not enough care for peasants and refugees, and as final blow – the heavy winter conditions, which totally isolated Armenia. The revolt was organised by a group of Dashnaks, who in the beginning cooperated with the Bolsheviks. Their leader Simon Vratzian managed to gather several thousand men and on 18 February entered Yerevan and proclaimed the disposition of the Soviet regime⁸⁴. The new Armenian government searched for European help, which could be foreseen, but more curious

⁸² Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia*, 101.

⁸³ Avtandil Menteshashvili. *Iz Istarii Vzaimootnosheniy Gruzinskoy Demokraticheskoy Respubliki s Sovetskoy Rossiei i Antantoy. 1918-1921 gg.* (Tbilisi: 1990), <http://sisauri.tripod.com/politic/chapter2.html> (accessed on July 18, 2018); Full text of the agreement quoted in: Guram Marhuliya, *Armyano-Gruzinskiye Vzaimootnosheniya v 1918-1920 Godah* (Tbilisi: 2007), <https://iberiana.wordpress.com/armenia-georgia/1918-1920/7-8/#8> (accessed on July 18, 2018).

⁸⁴ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 321; Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 405.

was the fact Vratzian sent an appeal to Turkish GNA on 18 March, 1921. Based "on the friendly relations that have been established with the treaty of Alexandropol", he requested Turkish military support against the Bolsheviks – releasing of Armenian prisoners of war, ammunitions and military aid⁸⁵. At that time, GNA was already a step away from signing the final agreement with Soviet Russia, even though being in a complicated dubious situation after the Turkish army occupied Batumi. Still, there is information that Kazim Karabekir agreed on releasing the Armenian prisoners of war⁸⁶.

Following the intervention of the Red Army, the Turkish army started an offensive on 11 March, 1921 ordered by the commander Gen. Kazim Karabekir to occupy Batumi, Ozurgeti and Akhaltsikhe uezd. These territories of Batumi, Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe were surrendered by Georgians themselves⁸⁷, hoping to receive military assistance against the Red Army, but very soon after realising this move would not help them. On the one side the presence of the Turkish army facilitated the Red Army advance through Akhaltsikhe uezd to Batumi. On the other side, the Turkish command on spot didn't want to give up their pretensions of the occupied territories and on 17 March they took under control positions in Batumi and announcing it under Turkish control. This happened one day after the Treaty of Moscow⁸⁸ was signed by Turkish and Soviet delegations in Moscow; according to which GNA officially surrendered the territories of Batumi, Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki in favour of Georgia and Alexandropol in favour of Armenia, receiving Artvin, Ardahan and Kars on its turn. In addition, the Turkish occupation of Batumi provoked the nationalistic feelings of the Georgians, who were ready to fight for the city to stay as part of Georgia aside from political views and no matter of the political power that would control the country. On 18 March, 1921 the Menshevik government signed an agreement with the Revolutionary Committee, which generally established the joint

⁸⁵ Kapriel Papazian, *Patriotism Perverted: a Discussion of the Deeds and the Misdeds of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the so-called Dashnagtzoutune* (Boston: BaikaPress, 1934), 77-78.

⁸⁶ Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi 1838'den 1995'e*, 2. Kitap (Istanbul: 1993), quoted in Natal'ya Ul'chenko, "Izistorii Podpisaniya Karsskogo Dogovora (Mart-Oktyabr' 1921 g.)", *Turcica et Ottomanica: sbornik v Chest' 70-Letiya M. S. Neyera*. Eds. I. Zaytsev and S. Oreshkova (Moscow: 2006), 359.

⁸⁷ Cebesoy, *Moskova Hatıraları*, 197-198; Muhanov, "K Istorii Sovetizatsii", 222.

⁸⁸ "Moskovskiy Dogovor mezhdou Rossiei i Turtsiei 16 Marta 1921 Goda", <http://www.amsi.ge/istoria/sab/moskovi.html> (accessed May 5, 2018)

defense of Batumi⁸⁹. The armies were under the command of Gen. Manziev, who earlier cooperated with the Entente with the support of the Red Army division and of the communists, who were released from jail. As described by V. Muhanov, a quite peculiar conflict situation occurred: "Georgian army under the command of Georgian commander with European weapons and European uniform, appointed by the Entente, united with the Bolsheviks to defense Batumi from Turkish divisions with Russian rifles and bullets, outfitted and provided by Soviet gold"⁹⁰. Until 21 March the Soviet Army took control over Batumi and the whole region⁹¹, the Turkish army retreated to their former positions, and the Georgian Menshevik government left the country earlier on 18 March. Concluding this operation Soviet Russia turned to Armenia again and on 2 April Yerevan was taken again by the Soviet troops. The sovietisation of Transcaucasia was finished and the transportation corridor between Soviet Russia and GNA opened.

The Treaty of Moscow and Soviet material support to Ankara government

Due to the border disputes, the Soviet-Turkish negotiations for a treaty were in a deadlock at the beginning of 1921. When the Georgian sovietisation was on the agenda, the Turkish troops won the first battle at İnönü in January, convincing the Allies that they could not anymore ignore Ankara government and had to try to deal with it, still having the upper hand. Following the unsuccessful attempt to reach a settlement between the Entente, Turkey and Greece in Near East on London Conference (23.02.-12.03.1921)⁹², negotiations with Moscow were resumed as an effort to overcome the border dispute, showing the importance of the Soviet support for the Turkish National Movement and for Mustafa Kemal. On 18 February, 1921 a Turkish delegation, led by Yusuf Kemal Bey arrived in Moscow to reach a final agreement with

⁸⁹ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 326-327.

⁹⁰ Muhanov, "K Istorii Sovetizatsii", 222.

⁹¹ The Comintern greeted specially the proletariat of Tiflis and Batumi in a telegram to the Revkom of Georgia for the liberation from the imperialists and the national-Mensheviks and unification with RSPSR: "Privet Kominterna Sovetskoy Gruzii", *Pravda*, No. 61 (22 March 1921): 1.

⁹² Parvin Darabadi, "Geopoliticheskoe Sopernichestvo na Kavkaze v Nachale XX Veka (Geoistoricheskii Ocherk)", *Kavkaz i Globalizatsiya*, Vol. 1 (1) (2006): 208. Spector, *The Soviet Union*, 74-75.

the Soviet government.

On 16 March, 1921 a final "Treaty of Brotherhood" (or Treaty of Moscow – a.n.) between RSFSR and Ankara government was signed. Several important issues were solved by it. All previous treaties were annulled, capitulatory regime abrogated, financial obligations of the Ottoman Empire to former Russian government cancelled. The "term" of Turkey bore the meaning of all the territories included in the Turkish National Pact of 28 January, 1920, proclaimed by the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies in Constantinople. It was confirmed that "the Turkish territory referred to in this article means the territory under the direct military and civil administration of the Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey"⁹³. These important articles brought the official recognition of GNA and Ankara government, strengthening their position in military aspect concerning the Liberation War, as well as diplomatic aspect regarding the struggle with Great Britain and other Entente powers, giving the possibility for better deal for the Turkish side.

In return, the GNA agreed the future of the Straits and the status of the Black Sea to be decided on a future conference with "delegates from the littoral states" (a condition, which later was changed – a.n.). This was definite success for the Soviet diplomacy because thus they excluded Entente powers from the decision-making process about the strategic region. The RSFSR would have a predominant voice as easy to be guessed due to the fact that all littoral states on the eastern coast of the Black Sea were sovietised and under its control.

The question with the frontier was also solved as Turkey received the territories of Artvin, Ardahan and Kars, surrendering Batumi and its region to Georgia, Alexandropol and its region to Armenian, and obtaining a success concerning Nakhchivan, which was given to Azerbaijan as an autonomous region. The corrections of the so established border would be done by mixed commission and an additional agreement would be signed with the three Transcaucasian Republics.

The RSFSR ratified the agreement on 20 March but GNA did it not until 22 July, 1921, as the planned agreement with the Transcaucasian states could not also be signed in April as planned in advance. The

⁹³ "Moskovskiy Dogovor mezhdru Rossiey i Turtsiey 16 Marta 1921 Goda", <http://www.amsi.ge/istoria/sab/moskovi.html> (accessed on May 5, 2018)

apparent reason was the rejection of Turks to withdraw their troops from Alexandropol, waiting for the final blow of the Soviets over the Dashnaks, while secretly hoping the last to win and the Treaty of Alexandropol to be confirmed as suggested by N. Ul'chenko⁹⁴. And yet under the surface, a mutual mistrust was taking place due to several developments, concerning again the Entente. In March the RSFSR signed a trade agreement with England, while the GNA signed an agreement with France for evacuation of its troops from Cilicia. Rumours on the agenda guessed Turkey would reconcile with the Entente, as Soviet Russia would attack through Transcaucasia⁹⁵. Additionally, tension aggravated due to the activity of Enver Pasha, who arrived in Moscow spring or summer 1920 and who with the unofficial support of the Soviet government tried to organize parallel movement for liberation of Turkey from the imperialist⁹⁶.

The suspicion that Ankara government would not follow the Treaty of Moscow and the non-withdrawing of Turkish troops from Alexandropol led to the suspension of Soviet military support. It was one more "diplomatic" tool to exert pressure on Ankara government. In April the Red Army started its offensive against the last centre of Dashnak power and after regaining Yerevan, Chicherin sent official note to Ali Fuat Cebesoy – Turkish envoy in Moscow, that the Turkish troops had to leave Alexandropol after installation of Soviet government in Armenia and that the wish to implement Alexandropol Treaty would be equal to annulment of the Treaty of Moscow. An ultimatum was sent to Kazim Karabekir by S. Orzhonikidze – commander of Eleventh Army, on 13 April, requiring immediate withdrawal of the Turkish army and rejecting any responsibility for the entrance of the Red Army in the city as a consequence of eventual denial⁹⁷. A war with Soviet Russia was for sure not the result Ankara government was persuading from the arisen situation and on 23 April, 1921, the Turkish troops left Alexandropol. Solving this last issue and the Greek offence to Ankara in the beginning of July intensified the decision process in the Turkish government by ratification of the Treaty

⁹⁴ Natal'ya Ul'chenko, "Iz Istorii Podpisaniya Karsskogo Dogovora (Mart-Oktyabr' 1921 g.)", *Turcica et Ottomanica: Sbornik v Chest' 70-Letiya M. S. Neyera*. Eds. I. Zaytsev and S. Oreshkova (Moscow: 2006): 360.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 361; Rumours for Turkish readiness to attack Soviet Russian in Caucasus were also disturbing the population. See: Mihail Frunze, *Sobranie Sochineniy* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1929), Vol. 1 (1905-1923 Gody), 355-356.

⁹⁶ Salahi Sonyel, "Mustafa Kemal and Enver in Conflict, 1919-1922", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1989): 511.

⁹⁷ Natal'ya Ul'chenko, "Iz Istorii Podpisaniya", 362.

of Moscow and organisation of a conference in Kars for signing the treaty with the Transcaucasian countries. This happened on 13 October, 1921, when, with the mediation of RSFSR, the Treaty of Kars was signed between Turkish GNA, Georgian SSR, Armenian SSR and Azerbaijani SSR⁹⁸, and the borderline, which did not change until nowadays, was defined. Even though, it could be assumed just as formality that reaffirmed the negotiated territorial demarcation under the Treaty of Moscow, the Treaty of Kars came after the "bridging" over difficulties and a consecutive collision. In addition, the predominant Soviet role over the Transcaucasian countries and their becoming part of the Soviet sphere was thus consolidated and affirmed by the Turkish side. Not last, the support for the Turkish government was resumed at the end of 1921.

As already mentioned, the continuous material support for the Ankara government was also a tool that facilitates the finalisation of the treaties. According to S. Kuznetsova "during 1921 in disposition of the Turkish government there were sent 6,5 mln. golden rubbles, 33275 rifles, 57 986 cartridges, 327 machine guns, 54 artillery guns, 129 479 shells, 1500 swords, 20 thousand gas masks and a huge amount of other military equipment. On 3 October, 1921 to the Turkish military command in Trabzon 2 marine fighters were handled - "Jivoi" and "Jutkyi"⁹⁹. According to an interview with Gen. Ali Fuat Gebesoy in 1958, aid for the Turks was as follows: ten million golden rubles, 30 000 Russian rifles with 1000 rounds of ammunition for each rifle, 30 000 bayonets, from 250 to 300 machine guns with 10 000 cartridges for each gun, some cavalry swords, from 20 to 25 mountain cannon, some cavalry swords, a large number of hand grenades. According to Gen. Cebesoy these were enough to equip three Turkish divisions. The Soviet government deposited in Berlin one million Russian rubles to the credit of the Turks, who were thereby enabled to secure replacements for German weapons obtained before and during the First World War¹⁰⁰. This significant support was considered to have a crucial role for the success in the war against the Greeks, as for Moscow "the Turks were fighting Soviet battles and that the Turkish defeat of

⁹⁸ "Dogovor o Druzhebe mezhdu Armyanskoy SSR, Azerbaydzhanskoj SSR i Gruzinskoy SSR, s Odnostorony, i Turtsiej - s Drugoj, Zaklyuchennyj Priuchastii RSFSR v Karse", <http://www.amsi.ge/istoria/sab/yarsi.html>(accessed on May 6, 2018).

⁹⁹ S. Kuznetsova, *Ustanovlenie Sovetsko-Turetskikh Otnosheniy: k 40-Letiyu Moskovskogo Dogovoramezhdu RSFSR i Turtsiej* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vostochnoy Literatury, 1961), quoted in: Muhanov, "K Istorii Sovetizatsii", 220.

¹⁰⁰ Spector, *The Soviet Union*, 78.

the Greeks spread dissension among the Allies¹⁰¹. In December 1921, the arrival of Gen. Mihail Frunze in Ankara¹⁰², commander-in-chief of the Soviet Forces in Ukraine, not only Turkish-Ukrainian relations were officially established, but his visit had to shatter all doubts and prove the inconsistency of all rumours for the deterioration of Turkish-Soviet relations and an eventual future military conflict on Caucasus between them. In addition, equipment and munitions were provided for the Turks. As a proof of the still existing high-level of mutual trust M. Frunze presented in his report for the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Executive Committee of Ukraine that "An access to the most important military secrets was opened for me, I became acquainted with the battle schedule of the Turkish and Greek Army, I became acquainted with all the necessities of these armies, with the number of soldiers, with quantity and quality of the military equipment, with the condition of the rear etc. I can say that I have almost the same general idea of the Turkish armed forces as for Ukraine army."¹⁰³

After M. Frunze, on 26 January, 1922, the newly appointed Soviet envoy to Turkey Semen Aralov strengthened the trust in Russia's moral and material support in the final period of the Turkish Liberation War. In the Turkish press Mustafa Kemal was criticized for his fiduciary relations with Aralov, but under the cover of drinking tea, evening events etc. they managed to discuss and prepare the offensive against the Greek positions¹⁰⁴. S. Aralov together with his colleagues the military attaché Zvonarev and the Azerbaijani envoy had the opportunity to visit the front line personally invited by Mustafa Kemal in the period of the preparation of the general Turkish offensive against the Greeks – March-April 1922¹⁰⁵. The Entente's proposal for peace was also discussed with Aralov, which was rejected the by Ankara government following the confidence of Mustafa Kemal that Soviet Russia would continue to help Turkey¹⁰⁶. In May 1922 a final balance of the given credit of 10 million rubles was done in a period when the Entente made an attempt to end the war between Greece and Turkey¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.,76.

¹⁰² Mihail Frunze, *Sobranie Sochineniy*, 319-321.

¹⁰³ Ibid.,359.

¹⁰⁴ Rasim Ors, *Russkiy Ataturkurk i Rozhdyeniye Turyetskoy Respubliki: v Zerkale Sovyetskoy Pressy 1920-h godov*, (Moskva: Ves' Mir, 2012), 78.

¹⁰⁵ Semen Aralov, *Vospominaniya Sovetskogo diplomata. 1922-1923* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo IMO, 1960), 76-110.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 83.

¹⁰⁷ Kapur, *Soviet Russia and Asia*, 114; Semen Aralov, *Vospominaniya*, 104.

The material support was a definite "trump card" in the hands of the Moscow government, which used it as a catalyst to achieve its aims, but at the same time, the Turks knew how to play the "Entente card" well enough to receive what they needed in the most important period of the Turkish National Movement in order to finish the war with the Greeks. The availability of counter balance move was always the approach that didn't allow some of the sides to fall into total dependence but helped in establishing mutual beneficial relations.

The relations between the Turkish National Movement and Soviet Russia in Caucasus during the period of 1919-1922 followed the dynamics of the incipient new international order after the First World War. Both governments – that of Russian Bolsheviks and Turkish Nationalists, being in extreme circumstances for preserving their very existence against the common enemy – the Entente, came to the logical decision for cooperation, which could be of a mutual benefit. Situated in the neighbouring Caucasian region they could not be non-dependent on the local situation there and similar developments with the Caucasian nations, which established new state formations and were also seeking for support for official recognition of their independence and sovereignty. Their wrong perception of the local and international situation, the interethnic military conflicts for territories and political power, economic critical condition were among the factors that made those states vulnerable to foreign interests and political strategies, preventing the separate existence of the Caucasian states. Their geostrategic position between Europe and Asia, the proximity with the Anatolian plateau, the key ports Batumi and Baku situated on the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and being a gate respectively toward the Straits and the Far East, the natural resource and the transportation infrastructure, secure strong positions of the power controlling the Caucasus. When this power was the Great Britain, which thus tried to establish strategic positions directed against Southern parts of Russia and Northern parts of Turkey, the existence of the Caucasian independent democratic states for Soviet Russia and the Turkish GNA became not only unacceptable, but also dangerous for their own security. The Caucasian "place d'armes" used by the Ottoman and the Russian Empires for many centuries of conflict, had to be now transformed into a "bridge" to enhance the Soviet-Turkish coordination of actions and provide a transportation route for the material support to the Ankara government.

Nevertheless, the common problems that both governments faced

and that became ground for cooperation could not hide their main expectations for benefits from it. Soviet Russia expected through Turkey to spread communism to the Near and the Middle East as a tool for political influence to strengthen the struggle against imperialism. The fact that Turkey would be ally was of importance for the protection of the Soviet Russia's flank in the Caucasus. Bolsheviks were also against the Greek expansion as it was supported by Great Britain, considering this could block access to the Mediterranean. Not last, establishing close relations with GNA strengthened Soviet Russia positions on the international scene where they tried to return as a key political factor. After renouncing all treaties and claims to Constantinople and the Straits, Russians were not seen any more as an enemy and Turkish National Movement could benefit significantly from close relations. Turkish nationalists would receive the needed material and financial support also securing their northern border during the war with Greece. The cooperation with the Bolsheviks could balance the pressure exercised by the Entente and their unwillingness to recognise the Turkish GNA as a stakeholder in the future peace negotiations. The Soviet - Turkish rapprochement was skillfully used by the Ankara government to achieve better conditions, official recognition and preservation of the territories under the "National Pact".

No matter that the realisation of the mutual support was not a stable process, this did not hinder the Soviet-Turkish main cooperation and the process of sovietisation seemed as very well coordinated operation, including following steps: 1. Establishment of perfunctory diplomatic relations, which had to keep the delusion for normalisation of bilateral relations; 2. Organising/provoking unrests/revolts based on socio-political ethno-religious differences; 3. Military attack from both sides (with exception of Azerbaijan where it was not attacked by the Turkish army, but still Turkish officers support the process of sovietisation). And while in Northern Caucasus the Turkish non-interference and pro-Bolshevik position has a crucial role for providing Bolsheviks advantage in this aspect, in the Southern Caucasus intentionally or unintentionally the presented above scheme was duly followed by the partnering Soviet and Turkish governments.

Last, but not least, the mistrust and suspicions that followed the Soviet-Turkish relations in the period under consideration could be accepted as typical characteristics in the initial period of establishing new type of relations between two sides, whose historical background

was woven by political and military conflicts. More than expected was they to be ready to use a backup plan if mutual cooperation turned out to be not beneficial even dangerous for their security. In addition, the means to provide balance or upper hand in negotiations were always in favour of finding better solutions and strengthening the goodwill for continuing the close relations. In regard to the latter, very important was the fact that the leading Soviet and Turkish policy and decision-makers were all the time in direct contact and communication, which "quenched the tension" when needed and turned back the focus on the main aims of cooperation. Concerning the Caucasus, they were fulfilled at the expense of the independence of the newly-born states, which led to the facilitation of Soviet-Turkish struggle against the Entente for self-preservation and returning on the international stage as a key factor in the new European order.

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