

THE GEOPOLITICAL CONDITIONS OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN (1918): A BRIEF OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Two Russian revolutions of 1917 were the turning points that shaped the development of Transcaucasia leading first to the separation of the region from Russia and then to the emergence of three independent states: Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. However, it was not only revolutionary processes within Russia and the ensuing civil war that determined the independence of the Transcaucasia, but also the clash and combination of interests of a number of regional and extra-regional states: Ottoman Empire, German Empire, Great Britain, Soviet power, and White army in Southern Russia. The main goal of this research is to reveal the combination of those geopolitical conditions, which led to the creation of a new state called “Azerbaijan” in the Eastern Transcaucasia. In the article are examined the following issues: the political approaches of Muslims, the Caucasian invasion of Turkish army and the declaration of Azerbaijan’s independence, Baku as a key to real independence or destruction. Overall, it is important to discuss the purpose and legality of naming the newly formed state after the historical name of the territory that is a constituent part of another state.

Keywords: *Transcaucasian Muslims, Turkish army, Germany, Baku, Azerbaijan*

Political sentiments of Transcaucasian Muslims from February 1917 to February 1918. The February revolution in Russia revitalized national movements. The Muslim political elite enthusiastically accepted the fall of the monarchy, particularly the Provisional Government's promises to grant freedom of speech and assembly, and to remove class and religious restrictions, opened up a wide field of activity for the latter. On April 9, as a result of the consultation led by F. Khan Khoisky, the National Bureau of the Provisional Committee of Baku Muslim Public Organization was formed. A. Topchibashev, F. Khan Khoisky, N. Narimanov and Amirjanov became its members, and the leadership of the committee was taken over by M. Hajinski and M. E. Rasulzadeh.¹

In the first months after the revolution, the Muslims of the former empire were aware of their unity as a religious community, which suffered the same difficulties under the imperial administration, but after a short time, the differences in culture, socio-economic development, and political organization made themselves felt, and caused

¹ Kaspiy, № 75, 06. 04.1917: 1.

disagreements between the representatives of different regions of the Muslims. And these disagreements were particularly reflected in the discussions on the form of organization of the state at the first All-Russian Congress of Muslims in May 1917.² The following questions were included in the discussion of the Congress: the structure of the state, agrarian, women's and labor questions, cultural-enlightenment, religious issues, organization of military forces, etc.³ The main disagreements among the participants concerned the future structure of the state. There were two main approaches: a federal one, according to which the state should be formed on a federal basis, with national-territorial autonomies within it, and a unitary one, which envisaged the creation of a unified state, not with territorial autonomies but with cultural-religious ones. To resolve the issue, a vote was held on 7 May, with the federalists winning by 446 votes over supporters of cultural-religious autonomy (271 votes). Thus, "the form of the state structure of Russia, which will mostly ensure the interests of the Muslim peoples, is a democratic republic organized on the national-territorial-federal principle. Moreover, those nations whose borders of residence were not clear should benefit from cultural autonomy."⁴ As a result of discussions, the All-Russian Muslim Council (Milli shura, 30 members) and Executive Committee (12 members) was formed. From Transcaucasian Muslims F. Khan Khoyski was elected a member of Muslim Council, and A. Sheykhulislamov and M. Vekilov as members of the Committee.

Thus, the Russian Muslims, especially Transcaucasian Tatars, were full of hope of obtaining equal rights with other citizens of the future democratic state, and there were no aspirations of separatism or independence. The same is obvious in the programs of Muslim political parties. In spring of 1917, a new political party was formed in Yelizavetpol - the Türkic party of Federalists. The party's program was published in the newspaper "Kaspiy" on May 19, 1917. The program envisaged the granting of territorial autonomies to certain provinces, with the fourth point declaring that "each autonomous unit is an inseparable federal part of Russia and is linked to it in matters of defense, foreign policy, monetary and customs systems".⁵ Soon afterwards the Turkish federalist party merged with the Musavat party.⁶ The joint Central Committee was formed with four representatives from each party: M. E. Rasulzadeh, M. H. Hajinsky, M. Rafiev, M. Vekilov from the former Musavat party and N. bey Usubbekov, H. bey Aghaev, Sh. bey Rusatambek and Mirza-Mehmed Akhundov from the party of Federalists. The united

² Volhonski and Mukhanov 2007: 27-28.

³ Iskhakov 2001: 169.

⁴ Volhonski and Mukhanov 2007: 28.

⁵ Kaspiy, № 109, 19.05.1917: 4.

⁶ The Musavat Party was founded in 1911. The party was formerly known as the Musavat Muslim Democratic Party. The official name implies the principles that formed the basis of the party's first program. It consisted of eight clauses with pan-Islamic content.

party was called the Turkish Federalist Party "Musavat".⁷ This organization was destined to play an important role in the further development of the region.

In April, another party "Ittihat-i Islam" ("Union of Islam") was formed in Yelizavetpol, whose main slogan was the dissemination of "pure" Islamic ideas. This party also envisioned the future of the region as an autonomous unit within democratic Russia. But very soon the situation changed. The Bolsheviks carried out an armed coup d'état in Petrograd, overthrowing the Provisional Government and established the Council of People's Commissars. The entire Transcaucasia, with the exception of Baku, did not recognize the change of the central government and "instead waited for the Bolshevik 'adventure' to be overturned."⁸ On November 11, a new local governmental body was established in Tiflis: Transcaucasian Commissariat.⁹ This was a temporary governing body, which was to deal with industrial, agrarian, financial and other issues. It was necessary to negotiate a truce with Ottoman Empire and to pacify the internal conflict.¹⁰ Turkish propagandists were actively operating among the Muslims and incited them against Christians, thus destabilizing the situation. The Soviet power adopted a Peace Decree on October 26, 1917, by the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets. It called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, a cease-fire, and preparations for peace negotiations with a view to conclude a final treaty.¹¹ It also meant the disintegration of the Caucasian front line.

The political life of the Caucasus was characterized not only by grouping by parties, but by nationalities too. This was reflected in the issue of the "division" of the Caucasian army,¹² when the political leaders of the three main nations in

⁷ Huseynov 1927: 26.

⁸ Hovhannisyan 2005: 20.

⁹ Documents and materials on Transcaucasian and Georgian foreign policy 1919: 3.

¹⁰ Volhonski and Mukhanov 2007: 58.

¹¹ Wheeler-Bennett 2009: 340-342.

¹² As the Peace Decree led to the collapse of the entire front line, new units had to be created to replace the returning Russian troops back home. In early December of 1917, a proposal was received from the headquarters of the Caucasian Front to create separate Muslim military units. The Transcaucasian Commissariat and the Provincial Council of the Caucasian Army approved this proposal. Some researchers explain the fact of arming Muslims by an unofficial Georgian-Muslim agreement. Bolshevik ideas were spreading among the soldiers of the Caucasian Army returning from the front and the road from the front led to Baku, from where it was possible to move north along the Baku-Tiflis railway. The appearance in Baku of soldiers obsessed with Bolshevik ideas could have posed a real threat to the establishment of Soviet order in the region; instead it was possible to disarm returning trains through Muslims (Sef 1932: 71). On December 18 the Commissariat declared the creation of a new army to be created by disarming the 219th Regiment. It also included a Muslim or Tatar corps. The armed Tatars had absolutely no intention of acting in concert with the rest of the army and engaging in the defense of the territory. Some researchers argue that the corps actually existed only on paper. It was originally supposed to be established on a voluntary basis. Volunteers who were included in the corps deserted after receiving clothes and weapons (Steklov 1928: 4-5).

Transcaucasus sought to nationalize as many troops as possible, realizing that their future existence depended on it. The Musavats were also involved in this process and sought to create Muslim units similar to the Armenian and Georgian units that already existed.¹³

By the beginning of 1918, the situation in the Transcaucasus was as follows. The Bolsheviks, led by Stepan Shahumyan, had established de facto power in Baku and turned Baku into a stronghold for the further expansion of Soviet power, on the other hand, the Transcaucasian Commissariat, the successor of the Transcaucasian Special Committee, was operating in Tiflis with the participation of the main political forces in the region and was carrying out its own activities, in this case towards the formation of national armed forces. In February 1918, the deputies of the dissolved Constituent Assembly, elected from Transcaucasus, created the Seym, which, as a legislative body, took over the administration of the territory. The creation of the Seym was the first practical serious step in the separation of Transcaucasus from Russia, although in theory both the Commissariat and the Seym regarded the region "an integral part of Russian democracy".¹⁴

Soon, the Turkish army reached the pre-war border. The commissariat had to go to negotiations. Such developments on the military front could not but affect the political attitudes and practices of the region's Muslim leaders. The idea of remaining part of Russia on a federal basis was gradually replaced first by latent and then by open separatism and attraction towards the Ottoman Empire. The absence of separatism in the initial period cannot be explained by the sincere devotion of the Muslim leaders to Russia. Simply, the balance of power in the region, on the one hand, was not favorable to such practices and, on the other hand, there were no resources to fight. The Russian army controlled vast areas in the Ottoman Empire and Persia before the collapse of the war front, turning the Caucasus into a regional hinterland, cut off from outside forces.¹⁵ The collapse of the front lines, however, transformed the region into a theater of war where Turkish, German, British, and Soviet interests clashed. Turkey was betting on the aspirations of the Muslims. Even on the first day of the opening of Seym the Musavat faction was not present. A witness to the events, S. Heifetz writes about this situation: "The reason for the absence of representatives of this party is more than clear. This party desires to use the situation to join Yelizavetpol Province to Turkey. The current situation seemed more than suitable. During the opening of the Seym, the Musavat deputies were busy with preparing to join Azerbaijan with Turkey and could not come to Tiflis".¹⁶

¹³ Mukhanov 2019: 33.

¹⁴ Hovhannisyan 2005: 23.

¹⁵ Davidov 2020: 295.

¹⁶ Heifetz 1923: 301.

Turkey's political aspirations

Turkey's policy towards the Transcaucasus led to its separation from Russia, which would open Turkey's hands in both military and diplomatic operations. Turkey's aim was to capture Baku. This plan, formulated by the Ottoman Defense Minister Enver Pasha, was part of Pan-Turkism, which aimed at the political unification of all Turkic-speaking peoples of the Ottoman Empire, Russia, China, Iran, and Afghanistan. Baku played a key role due to its location on the route to Central Asia, the North Caucasus and other regions. The details of his plan were communicated by Enver only to the chairman of the state council, Khalil Pasha, and Grand Vizier Tala'at Pasha, and the implementation of the plan was entrusted to Enver's brother Nuri Pasha and his uncle Khalil Pasha. Thus, the Baku operation was to become a kind of "family operation" for Enver Pasha and his relatives.¹⁷

According to the plan, Nuri Pasha's army was to enter the Eastern Transcaucasia from the Northern Iran and form military regiments from the Musavat units and former Turkish army captives there, which were to be called "Caucasian Army of Islam". The choice of this name was not accidental but aimed at exploiting the religious feelings of the local Muslim population. On the other hand, the regular Turkish army was to enter the territory of Azerbaijan from Georgia and establish contact with the counter-revolutionary forces of the North Caucasus. This would have captured not only the Eastern but also the Northern Caucasus, after which the Turkish army would have moved on to the Caspian regions, the Volga and Central Asia.

An attempt to inflame separatism was noticed in a letter written by Vehib Pasha dated with January 1, in which he states that it seemed to them that the Caucasian Army had gone to armistice negotiations and sign on behalf of the "Caucasian Independent Government"¹⁸ and asked to be informed, how relations can be established with the Caucasian government with a view to establishing peace between the two countries". After some delay, the Transcaucasian Commissariat clearly stated in its reply that the Transcaucasus is an integral part of the Russian Republic and could not enter into separate negotiations. In January disturbing information was received regarding the situation in the front and near-front rear. The Muslim population, agitated by a possible invasion of the Turkish army, became a threat to the Christian population.

The negotiations between the Transcaucasian Seym and Turkey took place in two stages: in Trabzon and Batum. At the beginning of negotiations in Trabzon the Brest-Litovsk treaty was signed, which not only ceded to Turkey the pre-war territories, but also Kars, Ardahan, and Batum. The Turkish delegation demanded the recognition of the Brest Treaty. The Turkish approach was clear: if Transcaucasus considered itself part of Russia, then it should recognize the Brest Treaty, and if it does not recognize it, then it should declare its independence. In front of the Transcaucasian delegation Turkey saw great military preparations. At the same time, there was no unity not only

¹⁷ Ludshuveyt 1966: 175.

¹⁸ Documents and materials on Transcaucasian and Georgian foreign policy 1919: 24.

within the Sejm, but also in the Transcaucasian delegation, whose Muslim representatives were in favor of meeting Turkish demands. Parallel to its demands, the Turkish army crossed the pre-war border and captured Sarikamish, Ardahan, Kars, and Batum one by one.

On the initiative of the Muslim faction and the Georgian National-Democratic Party in the Sejm, a question arose about the complete independence of Transcaucasus. On April 22, the leadership of the Sejm declared the independence of Transcaucasus. "There is no doubt that the raising of this question already reflected a strong Turkish-German influence, which was based on the Pan-Islamist tendencies of some Transcaucasian intelligentsia and, finally, on the longstanding links of the Turkish and German governments with the "Committee for the Liberation of Georgia".¹⁹

New negotiations with Turkey were to begin in Batum. Turkey's recognition of the independence of Transcaucasus at the start of the Batum negotiations freed it from the obligation to accept the provisions of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, but it gave Turkey the opportunity to put forward new territorial protectorates. The Turkish military command, as a justification for its invasion, puts forward the protection of the Muslims of Transcaucasus. This is evidenced by the note of the head of the Ottoman delegation to the head of the Transcaucasian delegation on May 26, 1918: "Hundreds of thousands of Turks and Muslims in and around Baku are under the bloody yoke of thugs, the so-called revolutionaries, and the irreversible disaster threatening these unfortunates is getting more and more inevitable. The fate of Turkish and Muslim populations in other parts of the Caucasus ... deserves the most serious attention".²⁰

The political aspirations of Germany

Germany had no less serious interests in Transcaucasian events. The Turkish activity in the Caucasus worried Germany. After invading Armenia, part of the Turkish army moved to Georgia. Soon the Turkish army appeared at a distance of about 25 km from Tiflis. The advance of Turkish troops in Georgia could be prevented by the entry of German troops and the establishment of a German protectorate.²¹ By taking over the defense of Georgia, Germany would not allow the military occupation of the entire Transcaucasus by Turkey. Anticipating Turkey's imminent aggressiveness towards Transcaucasus, Germany forced Turkey to sign a secret agreement on the division of spheres of influence in the Transcaucasus on April 27,²² which gave Turkey the

¹⁹ Denikin 2017: 603.

²⁰ NAA, fund. 200, reg. 1, file 27, f. 32 (following: NAA).

²¹ On May 28, 1918, a total of 6 contracts were signed on the merchant ship "Minna Horn" in Poti, of which 2 were additional. According to the agreements, Germany could use the railways of Georgia, all the ships belonging to Georgia were at the disposal of the Germans, the captains were considered to be in service in Germany, the German currency was allowed to be used in the territory of Georgia (Pipiya 1978: 103-105).

²² Chichkin 2013: 131.

territories already occupied in the Transcaucasus, as well as a part of Armenia along the Kars-Alexandropol-Gharakilisa railway, were transferred to Turkey. The rest of Transcaucasus, including the territory of the future Azerbaijan, was to be regarded as a sphere of German interests. But even after such an agreement, the Turkish side managed to obtain the right to transport its troops by railway, ostensibly to fight against the British in Northern Persia.²³

General E. Ludendorff writes of the Turkish conquests: "I approved of Turkey's actions as long as they were not detrimental to the general interests of the development of the war. But they should not distract Turkey from its main war problems or make it difficult for us to get raw materials from the Caucasus. Enver's task was to fight England primarily on the Palestinian front. But Enver and the Turkish government were more concerned with their pan-Islamic goals in the Caucasus".²⁴ Germany clearly stated that if "Turkey does not respect the boundaries defined by the Treaty of Brest, Germany will reserve the right to make further decisions. The treaties signed between Turkey and the Transcaucasian states bypassing Germany will not be recognized by Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria".²⁵ Ludendorff mentions in his memoirs that Germany's occupation of Georgia opened up the prospect of attacking Baku. The occupation of Georgia by Germany caused anxiety in Turkey, since the capture of Baku became a key for Germany as well, thanks to which it could take advantage of the resources of the East, as all other routes were already closed. According to K. Helferich, "Germany was very interested in the oil fields of Baku, which are connected by an oil pipeline to Batum, and the rich manganese mines of the Caucasus, which are of great importance to us both in this war and after it".²⁶ E. Ludendorff repeatedly referred to the importance of Baku. "For us (the protectorate over Georgia) was a way of using the Caucasian raw materials independently from Turkey and using the railways passing through Tiflis. In this sense, we could not trust Turkey. We couldn't count on Baku oil if we didn't get it ourselves".²⁷

Baku as a key

At the end of May, under Turkish pressure, the Transcaucasian Seym was dissolved, and Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia declared their independence.²⁸ The

²³ Pipiya 1978: 101.

²⁴ Ludendorff 1924: 187.

²⁵ Mukhanov 2019: 112.

²⁶ Denikin 2017: 68.

²⁷ Ludshuveyt 1966: 213.

²⁸ On May 28, the first meeting of the National Council adopted a six-point declaration of independence for Azerbaijan: 1. The peoples of Azerbaijan are henceforth the bearers of sovereign rights and Azerbaijan, encompassing Eastern and Southern Transcaucasia is now a fully-fledged independent state, 2. The form of political structure of independent Azerbaijan is established as a Democratic Republic, 3. The Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan seeks to establish good-neighborly relations with all members of the international

emergence of three newly independent states in the Transcaucasus radically changed both the internal and external situation of the region, opening the door for the clash of interests between different states. Therefore, the emergence of a state named "Azerbaijan" in the Eastern Caucasus, in the territory of Baku and Yelizavetpol provinces, gained great geopolitical significance. The name of the state reveals the purpose of the fathers of this organization - the Turkish military-political command. Although the extension of the name of Iranian northern historical province Azerbaijan to the territory of Baku and Yelizavetpol provinces lacked "historical" legitimacy, it allowed the Ottoman Empire to carry out a large-scale geopolitical maneuver. The aim was to capture the north of Persia under the slogan of the unification of the "two Azerbaijan", therefore establish control over the whole of Persia, enter the North Caucasus, then Povolzhiye, Near-Caspian regions, Central Asia, thereby implementing the ideology of Pan-Turkism. Thus, great importance was attached to Baku oil and the support of the local population.

After the declaration of independence of the three Transcaucasian republics (Georgia on May 26, Azerbaijan on May 27, and Armenia on May 28), negotiations in Batum continued with each of them separately. This further intensified the struggle between Turkey, Germany, Great Britain, and Bolshevik Russia for control of Baku. In this regard, A. Denikin writes: "Baku oil especially dominated the thoughts and feelings of European and Asian politicians. In the spring, a sharp competition and a "race" in the field of war and politics began, towards the final goal - Baku. the British from Enzeli, Nuri Pasha from Azerbaijan and the Germans from Georgia. For the same purpose, Ludendorff withdrew one cavalry brigade and several battalions from the Balkan front and hurriedly moved them to Batum and Poti, a port that the Germans had leased from Georgia for 60 years".²⁹

On June 4 in Batum the Ottoman Empire signed a "Peace and Friendship Treaty" with the Republic of Armenia and the Democratic Republic of Georgia, and a "Friendship Treaty" with the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan. Although Turkey did not present territorial claims to Azerbaijan, like Armenia and Georgia, the signed agreement created a basis for the advance of the Turkish army. The fourth article of the treaty was of great military and political importance: "The Ottoman Imperial Government undertakes to provide military assistance to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan within the borders of its territory, if it is necessary to establish order and

community, and in particular with neighboring nations and states, 4. The Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees civil and political rights within its borders to all citizens without distinction of nationality, religion, social status and sex, 5. The Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan will provide all nationalities living on its territory with wide space for free development, 6. Until the Constituent Assembly is convened, the National Council, elected by popular vote, and the Provisional Government are in charge of governing all of Azerbaijan, responsible to the National Assembly (Nesibzadeh 1996: 37).

²⁹ Denikin 2017: 69.

security in the country".³⁰ The treaty was supposed to be ratified within a month and exchanged with them in Constantinople, after which the treaty would enter into force.³¹ This clause was to provide a legal basis for the invasion of the Turkish army to the territory of Yelizavetpol and Baku provinces. The treaty, however, did not ratify and did not recognize Azerbaijan as an independent state.³² Moreover, Nuri Pasha was already in Yelizavetpol on May 25 before the declaration of Azerbaijan's independence and the signing of the Batum Treaty.

The former interests of Turkey and Germany ceased to coincide with the continuation of the invasion by the Turkish army. But according to E. Ludshuveit: "The Turkish government could immediately include Musavat Azerbaijan, but due to diplomatic reasons, it did not take that step, not wanting to further exacerbate relations with Germany on the Caucasian issue".³³ In addition, Germany sought to adhere to the Treaty of Brest. The Soviet government also tried to rely on the agreement reached with Germany under the Treaty of Brest, so that Germany would not allow Baku to be captured by the Turkish army. As a result, the Treaty of Berlin was signed on August 27, 1918, which was supplementary to the Treaty of Brest Litovsk. "Part IV of the agreement contained the following provisions for Azerbaijan: 1. Germany will take measures to prevent any third power from crossing the boundary line of the *uezds* (sub-provinces) of Shemakha and Baku. 2. Russia would deliver to Germany one quarter of the oil extracted at Baku or a specified monthly quota".³⁴ In this way Germany could ensure a partial supply of oil.

The Musavat government in Yelizavetpol also longed for the capture of Baku by the Turkish army for the simple reason that the existence of that government depended only on the Turkish capture of Baku.³⁵ Otherwise, it could absorb the Baku Soviet, which did not hide the intention of attacking Yelizavetpol and was preparing to do so.

Active hostilities began on June 10, 1918. During the first period of military operations, Soviet forces in Baku managed to achieve success, using almost all military potential. However, the Turkish-Azerbaijani army was reinforced and went on a counter-attack, gradually approaching Baku. The failures at the front and the lack of the support from the Soviet center led to disagreements within the Baku authorities, the result of

³⁰ Archive documents on the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Azerbaijani Turkic Khanates 1993: 216-217.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Hille 2010: 179.

³³ Ludshuveyt 1966: 213.

³⁴ Hille 2010: 179.

³⁵ On June 14, an agreement was reached between the Musavat government and the Turkish authorities, according to which the railways of Azerbaijan were put under Turkish control for 5 years. In addition, with the consent of the Musavat government, the latter took over the oil industry, ships of the Caspian Sea fleet, the Baku-Batum oil pipeline, etc. (Pipiya 1978: 123), In addition, the small military force of Azerbaijan was placed at the disposal of the Turkish military command.

which was the calling of an emergency session by the non-Soviet forces (Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, Dashnaks) on July 25, which decided to call in British troops to defend the city. A new government was formed - The Dictatorship of Centro-Caspiy.

Baku oil was also of great importance to Great Britain. In addition, Britain feared that a Turkish-German advance to the Caspian Sea and Turkestan might threaten the English colonies. The situation and the attendant risks that were facing L. Dunsterville, the Commander of the British Expeditionary Corps in Northern Persia, would be grave indeed. The total number of the Turkish army was 30. 000 to 40. 000 troops and the Germans had two divisions in Georgia. Dunsterville only had roughly 1.200 of his own British troops to defend the city. He himself even questioned the enterprise.

However, at the same time, in early August, both the Turkish-Azerbaijani army appeared at the gates of Baku, and the leading detachment of the British army, led by Colonel Stokes, entered Baku. L. Dunsterville made the following statement in the Moscow "Mir" newspaper: "With the consent of its allies, the British government, at the request of the people of besieged Baku, sent ammunition and troops. Dunsterville reports that for the information of all: 1. The British Government does not pursue any personal goals in Baku other than the common interests of the Allies in the common struggle, 2. British troops do not participate in Russia's internal politics, all political parties and peoples are equal in the eyes of the British government".³⁶

On August 17, L. Dunsterville arrived in Baku with other units. "Another important political factor in Transcaucasia that the British had to take into account was the large Muslim population, which the British would not want to antagonize. General Dunsterville appealed to the Muslims, in which he pointed to England's historical patronage of the Muslim population and their devotion to Britain, inviting them to join the ranks of the Baku army to fight against the Turks, who were allegedly led astray by German influence."³⁷

The appearance of British troops in Baku seems to have changed the position of the Germans as well. Professor Zugmeier reported that Baku could now be treated as an English fortress, although there are no large English forces there.³⁸ In addition, Germany feared that by occupying Baku, the Turks might negotiate with England.

On August 26, a new attack of the Turkish army led by Khalil Pasha began. Under intense pressure the British were slowly retreating to the residential areas. On 1 September, L. Dunsterville informed the Baku government that a continuation of the defense was out of the question, saying "no power on earth could save Baku from the Turks" and that negotiations and an armistice should be started immediately. On the last day of the attack on the city, in September 14, the British did not take part in the defense and left Enzeli in the evening, along with the government of Cento-Caspiy and

³⁶ Mshak № 180, 08.09.1918: 3.

³⁷ NAA, fund 200, reg. 1, file 158, f. 8.

³⁸ NAA, fund 200, reg. 1, file 57, f. 24.

part of the Armenian population.³⁹ On September 15, the Turkish-Azerbaijani army entered the city and engaged for three days in unrestrained looting and massacre of the peaceful non-Muslim (Armenian) population. According to various sources, 30-35 thousand people were massacred after Baku was taken. On September 17, the Azerbaijani government headed by Khan Khoisky arrived in Baku, receiving the half-burnt city as a gift from his ally.

The consequences of the Baku occupation

What were the consequences of the capture of Baku by the Turkish army? The capture of Baku was a serious tactical victory for the young government of Azerbaijan over its main adversary, the Baku Council. It marked the end of dualism in the region. However, the government of Azerbaijan did not get real power over the country, because the Turkish military leadership took over the government. Moreover, not recognizing the Republic of Azerbaijan as a sovereign state, the Turkish government did not even appoint its diplomatic representative here, as it did in Armenia and Georgia.⁴⁰ After the capture of Baku, Ahmed Izzet Pasha was sent there with extraordinary powers in the Caucasus. Turkey was allowed to proceed with its Pan-Turkism plan. However, success on the Baku front came at the expense of the reduction of troops on other fronts, particularly in Syria and Mesopotamia, which ultimately led to the victory of Great Britain on these fronts and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the entire war.

The Soviet side lost its stronghold in the Transcaucasus. Whereas previously it had seemed possible to spread the Soviet power in the Transcaucasus in a short time through the Baku Commune, this process was now delayed.

With the defeat of the Central powers, Germany also had to withdraw its troops from the Caucasus.

With all this, it is impossible to talk about truly independent and independently functioning Azerbaijan during this historical period. First of all, the capture of Baku and the elimination of the de facto dualism in the country was not the result of a Soviet-Azerbaijani struggle, but of a de facto Soviet-Turkish struggle, since the main force fighting against the Soviet government was the Turkish army, to which the small Azerbaijani armed forces were attached or supported. Therefore, the capture of Baku was not an intra-Azerbaijani phenomenon, as in the civil war, but one of the nodes of the logic of the war going on at this point in history on the Caucasian front of the World War I, involving a number of interested parties, one of which was the Khan Khoyski government in Yelizavetpol. In addition, as has been repeatedly stated above, during both the Trabzon and Batum negotiations, the representatives of the Musavat party took active steps to directly annex the territories inhabited by Muslims to the Ottoman

³⁹ Mukhanov 2019: 92.

⁴⁰ Mukhanov 2019: 93.

Empire. However, in the opinion of the Turkish commanders, this was hindered by the logic of general war and the conflict of interests with Germany.

Throughout the investigation of the events, we shall note that the creation of any state in the Eastern Transcaucasus has not been part of Turkey's plans since the winter of 1918. Nor did the Muslim political parties envisage the creation of an independent state in the Eastern Transcaucasus under the name of Azerbaijan in their political programs. However, the creation of an independent state of Azerbaijan would only serve the implementation of Turkey's military and political plans and lacked historical legitimacy. In K. Davydov's view, to give "historical" legitimacy to the new state, it would be more appropriate to call it the "Islamic Republic of Shirvan", "Democratic Republic of Shirvan", "Caspian Republic", "Caspian Muslim Democratic Republic". As convenient as the use of the name Shirvan was for the territory, it did not provide the same opportunity for territorial ambitions as was possible in the case of 'Azerbaijan'. Although the use of the name "Caspian" was more comprehensive than Shirvan, even now the possible claims could be limited to the Near-Caspian regions only.⁴¹

Azerbaijan was not recognized as a truly independent state either by Great Britain, which took control of the Eastern Transcaucasia after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, and by the South Russian Volunteer Army led by A. Denikin. The period of November 1918-August 1919 was to last in this uncertain atmosphere of existence. Hence, although there were nominally three independent Transcaucasian states, the major powers simply did not recognize them as such.⁴² A delegation sent to Paris led by Törcibashev failed to secure recognition of Azerbaijan's independence. He wrote from Paris: "Not only do allies not discuss the question of our independence, they don't seem to want".⁴³ The Allies considered the independence of Azerbaijan and Georgia within the framework of the "Russian question". Until the "Russian question" was resolved, the question of recognizing their independence would remain unresolved. Azerbaijan's de-facto independence was recognized by the Paris Assembly only when the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War became evident.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Davidov 2020: 299-300.

⁴² Hille 2010: 179.

⁴³ Rayevski 1930: 52.

⁴⁴ Documents on British foreign policy 1949: 747-748.

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