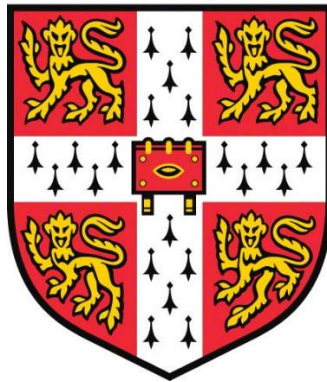


**A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS
IN THE CAUCASUS, 1917-1921**

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of

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To Deni and Janetta Rose

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any work that has been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the Faculty of History Degree Committee.

Sarah Slye

11 June 2022

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a regional framework for the political and military history of the Caucasus during the period of the Russian Revolution and Civil War. Based on journalistic materials, archival documents and contemporary publications in Russian, Georgian, French and English, this chronological study demonstrates that political, military and ideological leaders in the Caucasus 1917-1921 were operating in conscious awareness of their regional context and took it into consideration as they maneuvered through the challenges they faced in the international, all-Russian, national and local spheres. It does so mainly by proving that, despite their preoccupations with national or class concerns, these leaders repeatedly promoted or visited the idea of creating a shared political, administrative or security space for all the Caucasian nations, whether as a regional autonomy, a federation or a confederation.

In 1917, the Caucasian leaders' attention to the regional dimension is evidenced through an analysis of their debates, reflected in the press, about what sort of legal-political relationship the nations of the Caucasus ought to have with each other, a potential regional center and the all-Russian center, and about whether Russia should be reconstituted as a unitary or federal republic. The parameters of these debates had already been mapped in previous decades of discussion about whether the Caucasus ought to form a regional autonomy within a reformed Russian Empire or the Caucasian nations should create a regional federation, and whether this federation would be independent or part of a new Russian federation. As this thesis shows, in 1918 the "national-regional" question in the Caucasus was resolved through a spontaneous decentralization process when circumstances forced the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic, and, subsequently, the four national republics of the Caucasus, to proclaim independence. Then, between 1918 and 1921 the four Caucasian republics struggled, albeit rather feebly, to reconcile their conflicting interests and territorial claims with their need to cooperate to remain viable and survive as they each tried to obtain international recognition while under the threat of reabsorption into Russia, which was seen as a recentralizing force, whether White or Red.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION, DATES AND PLACE NAMES

For both Georgian and Russian, I transliterate with the corresponding Latin (English) letters or digraphs wherever possible (e.g., n for ნ or н, sh for შ and ш). For Russian, I use diacritics for the hard and soft signs as in the following examples: ḷ for -ль, oḥ for обь. I use j for й, whether standing alone or as part of a vowel (e.g., ja = я and aj = ай). Finally, I use ɛ for э, y for ы, x for х and sḥ for щ. For Georgian, I use ts for წ, c for ც, f for ფ, q for ქ, q̣ for ყ, cḥ for ჩ, zh for ჯ, j for ჯ, t for თ, and ṭ for ტ. This system is designed for people accustomed to reading in English and ensures each letter or intuitively recognizable digraph represents one sound while minimizing diacritics to ease typing. For some examples: день = deṇ and ტყე = ṭde but თქეშო = tqeshi.

In this thesis, personal names are transliterated directly from the Russian or Georgian. Terms with an English equivalent are normally translated (e.g., Казачье Войско – *Kazacḥe Vojsko* – Cossack Host), whereas those without precise equivalents are transliterated (e.g., земство – *zemstvo*). I prefer to avoid the term горцы (*gortsy*, mountaineers) in transliteration because it is now associated with the condescending attitude of Russian imperialists towards the original inhabitants of the North Caucasus. However, its use is unavoidable in certain cases since North Caucasian politicians and publicists of the period themselves frequently used the term, for instance in the names of their political organizations (e.g., The Union of Allied Mountaineers) and journals (e.g., *Free mountaineer*). Thus, I do use the transliterated term in quotes. I also regularly use the term “Mountaineers” to refer to the North Caucasians as a collective because when *gortsy* is translated into English and capitalized it becomes a national designation like “Georgians” or “Circassians” and can be used (as it was at the time) to refer to the North Caucasians as a collective in association with their common state-building project.

I transliterate place names and administrative units (e.g., ოლქი – *olqi*). I choose Tiflis over Tbilisi because that is how the city was referred to in English at that time.

As for dating systems, the Julian Calendar (Old Style) was used in the Caucasus through late spring 1918, after which the Gregorian Calendar (New Style) was used. So I follow this pattern.

*By such a Search and Travel to be gone
Up to the mighty mountain Kaf, whereon
Hinges the World, and round about whose Knees
Into one Ocean mingle the Sev'n Seas;
In whose impenetrable Forest-folds
Of Light and Dark "Symurgh" his Presence holds;
Not to be reach'd, if to be reach'd at all
But by a Road the stoutest might apal.*

— Farid ud-Din Attar¹

¹ Farid ud-Din Attar, *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. Edward FitzGerald, (1889), 80.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Caucasus mountains and surrounding lands have long been a mysterious place to outsiders. In Islamic culture, the term Mount *Qāf* came to mean both the actual Greater Caucasus range and the mythical mountain surrounding the world's edge to mark the boundary of the natural and supernatural.² In Attar's *Conference of the Birds*, for instance, Mount *Qāf* is the far-off home of the fantastic Simurgh, a metaphor for God, and the place where you lose and discover yourself.³ For the ancient Greeks, the Caucasus (Καύκασος) was an enigmatic land populated with wild tribes speaking a plethora of languages and a difficult place to reach.⁴ Today, the Caucasus is easy to access by land, sea or air, yet defining it remains a tricky task.

² Iago Gocheleishvili, "Caucasus, pre-1500," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three*, accessed 2 January 2022, http://dx.doi.org.ezp.lib.cam.ac.uk/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25472; Daniel G. Prior, "Travels of Mount Qāf: From legend to 42° 0' N 79° 51' E," *Oriente Moderno* 89, no. 2 (2009): 425.

³ Hanns-Peter Schmidt, "Simorg," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, accessed 13 May 2022, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/simorg>; Prior, "Travels of Mount Qāf," 433.

⁴ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, trans. James Scully and C. John Herington (USA: Oxford University Press, 1990), 21, 48-49, 64, 89, 93, 103-105, 107, 111, 115-117; *The Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus*, trans. Edwyn Robert Bevan (London: David Nutt at the Sign of the Phoenix Long Acre, 1902), 88; *The Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus*, ed. H. Rackham, M.A. (Cambridge at the University Press, 1957), 60. William Edward David Allen, "The Caucasian Borderland," *The Geographical Journal* 99, no. 5/6 (May-June 1942): 228; Apollonius Rhodius, *The Tale of the Argonauts*, ed. Israel Gollanez, trans. Arthur S. Way (London: J.M. Dent and Co., 1901); J.C. Catford, "Mountain of Tongues: The Languages of the Caucasus," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977): 283; C. John Herington, "Aeschylus, Prometheus Unbound, Fr. 193 (Titanum suboles...)," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 92 (1961): 239-250; Ketevan Sikharulidze, "Myth Symbols of Caucasian Mountains," *Journal in Humanities* 2, no. 12 (2012): 35; Strabo, *Geography*, 11.2.16.

Aeschylus' statement that the Amazons were to be found south of the Caucasus does not negate the proposition that the actual Caucasus range was considered the site of Prometheus' castigation since he looks to have meant by Amazons the women of Colchis. This does not explain how the Caucasus and the Amazons are both placed north of the Crimea though. Scully and Herington assert that for Aeschylus the Caucasus meant the mountains between the Black Sea and Caspian as well as the mountain marking the boundary at the edge of the world because he was not aware, like others in his time, that the Caspian was an enclosed sea and thought it was part of the world ocean. Aeschylus' placing of Arabians ("the flower of Arabia") next to the Caucasus could be interpreted as there having been some Arabs nearby the area (Scully and Herington), him including Armenia within the Caucasus (Bevan) or a garbled, inventive geography (Rackham, Scully and Herington). Among the fragments which remain of *Prometheus Unbound*, mention is also made of the Caucasus. Aeschylus puts the Caucasus in Europe and makes the Phasis River the boundary between Europe and Asia.

For reference, Scully and Herington's translation of the parts in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* referring to the Caucasus are provided here:

A. Ambiguities of definition

An evaluation of the readily available sources indicates that ancient and medieval authors looked at the Caucasus with an ambiguity familiar to observers today. Pre-modern sources reveal a strong tendency to list the peoples and kingdoms separately (e.g., Ptolemy, *Geography*, 5; Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.5-19; the Ka‘ba of Zoroaster, inscriptions of Šāpur I and Kartīr; Hamdallah Mustawfī al-Qazwini, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*; and Muhammad al-Idrisi, *Kitāb nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq* [Jaubert translation]). And the distinction between the northern and southern Caucasus is frequently made in the texts which have come down to us (e.g., Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.203.1, 2.104-105, 4.37, 7.79; Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī; *Kitāb Futūḥ al-buldān*; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik* [Ouseley translation]; Yaqut al-Hawami, *Mod’jem El-Bouldan* [Meynard translation], “Qabq,” “Bab al-Abwab” “Errân” “Allân” “Irân-Schehr et Irân,” “Mer de Khazar” “Berda’h”; and al-Istakhri, *Kitab al-masalik wa-al-mamalik* [N.A. Karaulov translation]). However, it is telling that some important authors listed the nations of the whole isthmus separately while still binding them together in a coherent region (e.g., Strabo, *Geography* and Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma‘ādin al-jawāhir*).⁵

“The whole earth now howls with grief: everything mourns the bold, emblazoned glowing ancient glory that used to be and be yours and your family’s before this grief. And those peoples who have set their roots in the plains near Asia’s holy ground, they feel your howling pain as do the girls of Colchis who never tremble in battle; and, too, the Scythian horde camped by Lake Maiotis (Azov Sea) where earth comes to an end and, too, the flower of Arabia: the wild warriors who guard the steep acropolis by Kaukasos, a thunderhead bristling with spears.” (Lines 586-604)

“Don’t cross though. It won’t be crossed till you come to Kaukasos itself the highest of mountains: from whose very brow the river in all its fury gushes out. Those peaks stand off among the stars, and those you must cross. Head south then till you find the man-hating army of Amazons.” (Lines 1054-1064)

⁵ Even though he is famous for first recording the Prometheus story, Hesiod does not specifically mention the Caucasus. Pseudo-Apollodorus (*Library and Epitome* 1.71) and Gaius Julius Hyginus or Pseudo-Hyginus (*Astronomica* 2.6.7, 2.15.3, 2.15.5) put Mount Caucasus in Scythia, and Hyginus specifically states this is according to Aeschylus.

Regarding the “Saspires” in Herodotus being identified with the Iberians, see *The History of Herodotus: A New English Version*, ed. George Rawlinson, vol. 4 (London: John Murray, Albemarle St., 1862), 187-188. In Rawlinson’s view these were the Iberians.

Another view is given by James Rennell in *The Geography System of Herodotus Examined and Explained by a Comparison with Those of Other Ancient Authors and with Modern Geography*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (London, 1830), 367. He writes, “The Saspires then, should have occupied in modern geography, the eastern part of Armenia. The Alarodians, or third division of this Satrapy, we cannot find any

Regarding the division between the northern and southern Caucasus, it should be noted that the Islamicate authors who separated them still tended to treat the districts of the southern Caucasus as bound within a single region. Among these, the unidentified author of the Persian *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam* places Armenia, which to his knowledge included parts of Georgia, Arran (Albania) and Azerbaijan (now in Iran) together in a single region.⁶ Perhaps afflicted by premonitions of 1917-1921, he writes, “These three provinces are adjacent to each other. Their country sides enter into each other...”⁷ He also seems to place Georgia in Byzantium (Rum) and mistakenly puts the Circassians (Kasak) in Alania and the Daghestanis on a border with Rum.⁸ In the opinion of Vladimir Minorsky, the author got his information about the Circassians from a misinterpretation of al-Mas‘ūdī.⁹

The descriptions of Al-Mas‘ūdī (10th century A.D.) and Strabo (turn of the first millennium) stand out for their regional perspective. Al-Mas‘ūdī acknowledges the socio-political diversity of the isthmus while treating it as a region, writing that “The mountain of el-Kaïkh (Caucasus) is a large mountain, and is of such extent that it comprises a number of kingdoms and nations. In this mountain live seventy-two nations, and every nation has its own king and language which differs from the others.”¹⁰ Although he specifically lists the Laks, Alans, Khazar, Abkhaz, Serir (Avars or Daghestanis) and Circassians (Kashak) as inhabiting this mountain, he also says they

authority for placing; but may suppose their country to be parts of Iberia and Albania, bordering on the Colchians and Saspies: for the Alarodes and Saspies were joined in one command, and Tenne both were dressed like the Colchians; implying neighbourhood and connection.” Rennell considers the Mares to be another Caucasian tribe.

⁶ *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam*, ‘*The Regions of the World*’ *A Persian Geography 372 A.H.—982 A.D.*, trans. V. Minorsky, ed. C. E. Bosworth, 2nd ed. (London: Messrs. Luzac and Company, 1970), 142 (in section 35), 141-145 (sections 35-36), 396.

⁷ *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam*, 142 (in section 35). The word “region” is used here in Minorsky’s translation.

⁸ *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam*, 156-158 (section 42), 160-161 (section 48), 161 (in section 49), 422, 446-447.

⁹ *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam*, 446.

¹⁰ *El-Mas‘ūdī’s Historical Encyclopaedia entitled “Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems”*, trans. Aloys Sprenger, vol. 1 (London: Harrison and Co. Printers, 1841), 399-400; John A. Haywood, “al-Mas‘ūdī, Arab historian,” *Britannica*, accessed 3 January 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/al-Masudi>.

live in the lands along the Black Sea coast as far south as Trabzon as well as along the coast of the Caspian Sea, and he places locations like Tbilisi and the kingdom of Sharwan (Shirvan) in his section on the Caucasus.¹¹ An incidental point related to this dissertation's theme is his claim that the Circassians could not resist the Alans because of their lack of a centralized political structure. He explains,

“The Alans are much stronger than this nation, and they cannot maintain their independency... The reason why they are too weak to oppose the Alans is, that their power is not concentrated under one king. If they were united, neither the Alans nor any other nation would have power over them.”¹²

Strabo too recognizes at once the coherence and diversity of the region. Himself hailing from the Black Sea coastal town of Trabzon, the geographer thought the inhabitants of the Greater Caucasus range and its surrounding lands should be considered “Caucasians”. He writes,

“This mountain lies above both seas, both the Pontic and the Caspian, and forms a wall across the isthmus that separates the two seas. It marks the boundary, on the south, of Albania and Iberia, and on the north, of the plains of the Sarmatae... Now in general the tribes in the neighborhood of the Caucasus occupy barren and cramped territories, but the tribes of the Albanians and the Iberians, which occupy nearly all the isthmus above-mentioned, might also be called Caucasian tribes...”¹³

While it would require a different research project to analyze the ancient and medieval sources comprehensively, the above selections suffice to show that the ambiguity surrounding the definition of the Caucasus as a region or not and the classification of its nations in relation to each other is nothing new.

At present, despite the term “the Caucasus” being easily understood in common usage, not only in English but also in the local languages, as encompassing the territories of the northern and southern Caucasus, the ambiguity surrounding whether or not to define it as a distinct region persists in academic and policy discussions.¹⁴

¹¹ *El-Mas'udi's Historical Encyclopaedia*, 310, 390-464.

¹² *El-Mas'udi's Historical Encyclopaedia*, 437-438.

¹³ Strabo, *Geography*, 11.2.15-19.

¹⁴ Andrew Foxall, “Defining regions: introducing the Caucasus,” *Central Asian Survey* 30, no. 2 (24 May 2011); Mike Klein, “The Caucasus: Cartographic Resources in the Library of Congress,” Library of Congress, updated 17 February 2021, accessed 4 January 2022, <https://guides.loc.gov/caucasus-maps>.

Some analysts see the Caucasus as an artificial construct, a geographical space where random historical variables have pushed unrelated ethno-linguistic groups into close quarters.¹⁵ Others view it more as a frontier zone or borderland defined by its existence on the periphery of surrounding powers.¹⁶ A different group emphasizes the cultural interconnections between both sides of the range and treat it as a region proper, distinguished by its own locus of being and unique characteristics.¹⁷ The debate over whether the Caucasus should be considered a region is further complicated by the fact that a subset of analysts separates the southern half from the northern and proceeds to argue over whether the South Caucasus is even a region.¹⁸

In an effort to escape the prevailing contradictory paradigms, the suggestion has recently been made to approach the region through a more dynamic and interactive lens

¹⁵ “On the Origins of the ‘Caucasus Region,’” USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies, published 24 November 2017, accessed 3 January 2022, <https://armenian.usc.edu/on-origins-of-the-caucasus-region/>; Alexey Malashenko, “The Caucasus: There will be no drastic changes,” DOC Research Institute, posted 13 September 2019, accessed 7 January 2022, <https://doc-research.org/2019/09/caucasus-there-will-be-no-dramatic-changes/>.

¹⁶ W.E.D. Allen, “The Caucasian Borderland,” *The Geographical Journal* 99, no. 5/6 (May-June 1942); A. Romanova, S. Yakushenkov and V. Dryagalov, “Traditions and Novations on Caucasus Frontier, abstract,” SGEM Online Scientific Library, accessed 3 January 2022, <https://www.sgemsocial.org/index.php/elibrary-research-reas?view=publication&task=show&id=1424>.

¹⁷ Jeffrey Mankoff, “The Big Caucasus Between Fragmentation and Integration, A Report of the CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, 20 March 2012; Sergey Markedonov, “The Big Caucasus, Consequences of the ‘Five Day War’, Threats and Political Prospects,” ICBSS, May 2009; Jean Radvanyi and Shakhmardan S. Muduyev, “Challenges Facing the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus,” *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 48, no. 2 (2007); Thomas de Waal, “The Caucasus: a region in pieces,” openDemocracy, published 8 January 2009, accessed 4 January 2022, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/the-caucasus-a-region-in-pieces/>.

¹⁸ Salome Asatiani, “CIS: Is South Caucasus ‘Region’ An Artificial Construct?” RadioFreeEurope, RadioLiberty, published 30 May 2007, accessed 4 January 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1076814.html>; Laurence Broers, “The South Caucasus: Fracture without end?” in Anna Ohanyan, ed. *Russia Abroad. Driving Regional Fracture in Post-Communist Eurasia and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 81-102; Thomas de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2010), 5; Thomas de Waal, “A Broken Region: The Persistent Failure of Integration Projects in the South Caucasus,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 9 (November 2012); Tracey German, “‘Good neighbours or distant relatives?’ Regional identity and cooperation in the South Caucasus,” *Central Asian Survey* 31, no. 2 (June 2012); Temuri Yakobashvili, “Is the South Caucasus a Region?” *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, no. 51-52 (17 June 2013).

and define it as a border, contact and common cultural area.¹⁹ There is merit to this proposal since there does appear to be something intrinsic, however faint and intangible, stitching the “Caucasian” peoples together in a kind of bizarre entanglement of shared regional sentiment that goes beyond mere geographical proximity and transcends the both petty and wholly tragic divisions afflicting them. At the same time, it must be recognized that there is not currently any political unity whatsoever to be found between (nor often within for that matter) the nations inhabiting the isthmus, as the remnants of the North Caucasian national groups inhabit separate republics within the Russian Federation and the three states of the South Caucasus are distinct and sovereign.²⁰ Adding to this cracked political picture, since the end of the Soviet Union, conflicts have been simmering over a number of disputed territories (e.g., Abkhazia, what has become called South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabagh and the Prigorodnyj *rajon* [district] near Vladikavkaz). Thus, it is hand in hand with the abovementioned fragmentation that, in the decades since the Soviet Union’s 1991 break-up, Caucasus analysts’ main conceptual lens has been the nation-state or ethnolinguistic group and its rights and claims, and their major focus has been the area’s seemingly intractable conflicts over the legal status of contested territories—despite the general acceptance by outside and inside observers alike of some kind of “Caucasian” regional context (which we see reflected in the names of research centers, the titles of books, journals, articles, etc.), if only geographically.

In the transitional period between the fall of the Russian Empire and rise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), intellectuals and politicians from the Caucasus were likewise exceedingly concerned with national identity and the problem and threat of ethnic violence in the region. However, they devoted substantial thought

¹⁹ Florian Mühlfried, “Caucasus Paradigms Revisited” in *Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus*, ed. Galina M. Yemelianova and Laurence Broers (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2020), 24-25.

²⁰ Vicken Cheterian also notes that conflicts are found within individual Caucasian national societies. See Vicken Cheterian, “The Origins and Trajectory of the Caucasian Conflicts,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 9 (November 2012): 1627.

to the question of regional belonging and intradependence too.²¹ During the revolutionary year of 1917 in particular, the question of what the ideal relationship of the nations of the Caucasus should be to each other and to the imagined future free and democratic Russian republic, both individually and collectively, was an important theme in local political and social-economic debates, much of which we find reflected on the pages of the Tiflis (now Tbilisi) press.

Reminding us of today's scholarly and political stances, some leading thinkers during the time of the Russian Revolution and Civil War held the view that the Caucasus "region" was an artificial construct born of the Russian imperialist imagination, whereas others were convinced that despite its tremendous geographical, climatic and human variety, it was an organic community built over centuries of interaction and its societies were so interconnected that nothing could happen in one without affecting all the others. At that time, there was also a marked conceptual and practical divide between the North Caucasus and South Caucasus, then called Transcaucasia (*Zakavkaze*), which, administratively, included Daghestan. Despite such similarities in these debates about how to define the Caucasus, a significant contrast between a century ago and today is that the regional idea—despite not prevailing over or becoming reconciled with the national idea—then had significantly more influence over the imagination of Caucasian leaders.

Intriguingly, and perhaps counterintuitively, some of the strongest voices emphasizing the interdependence of the Caucasian nations, especially across the range are found among Georgian, Azerbaijani and, especially, North Caucasian nationalists.²²

²¹ See Paul Theobald, *Teaching The Commons: Place, Pride, And the Renewal of Community* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

²² An organic community as opposed to a constructed, invented or externally imposed community à la Benedict Anderson. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2006). "Otdel'nyja strany Zakavkazja. I." (The separate countries of Transcaucasia. 1.), *Molot* 21 (27 October 1917); "amier-kavkasiis mmartvelobis proeqti" (The project for the administration of Transcaucasia), *saqartvelo* 91 (28 April 1917). "Zajavlenie G. Bammata ot imeni gorskoj delegatsii na Trapezundskoj mirnoj konferentsii otnositel'no neobxodimosti vossoedinenija Zakavkazja s Sojuzom o'bedinennyx gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza i Dagestana" (The declaration of G. Bammata in the name of the gortsy delegation to the Trabzon Peace Conference regarding the necessity of the unification of Transcaucasia with the Union of Allied Mountaineers of the North Caucasus and Daghestan) in Georgij Mamulia et al., *Gajdar Bammata—izvestnyj i neizvestnyj. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Gajdar

However, evidence of the existence of a specifically “Caucasian” layer of communal identity, or at least some sort of sentiment of shared belonging in 1917-1921 can also be found in the statements of various socialists such as the Georgian Menshevik Akaki Chxenkeli, who argued in spring 1918 that the Caucasus could only answer for itself, and the famous Ossetian Muslim socialist Axmet Tsalikov, who claimed in spring 1920 that “The unity of the democratic front has never been so necessary for the Caucasus as it is now so that it would be possible to speak and act in the name of the whole Caucasus.”²³ Later, as the Red Army loomed over Georgia in the winter of 1920, Tsalikov warned that an attack on Georgia would trigger a pan-Caucasian uprising.²⁴

Bammat—Known and not-known: A collection of documents and materials) (Baku: Azerbajdzhanskoe istoricheskoe obščestvo, 2015), 208-209; “Russie, Les montagnards caucasiens et leurs voisins” (The Caucasian mountaineers and their neighbors), *Le Temps* 21367 (29 January 1920); “Zajavlenie predstavitelja Gorskoj Respubliki v Parizhe” (The announcement of the representative of the Mountain Republic in Paris), *Voľnyj gorets* 35 (22 March 1920); *La République de l’Azerbaïdjan du Causase* (The Republic of Azerbaijan of the Caucasus) (1919), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k34140588/f1.item>, 42-43; *Mémoire de la Délégation Circassienne, Troisième Conférence des Nationalités, Lausanne, Juin 1916* (Memorandum of the Circassian Delegation, Third Conference of Nationalities, Lausanne, June 1916) (Lausanne: Lith.-Imph. Marsents & Boivin, 1916).

The quote from the memorandum of the Circassian (North Caucasian) delegation to the Third Conference of Nationalities in Lausanne in 1916 is striking:

« Nous, les Caucasiens, nous vivions ainsi tranquillement à l'ombre de nos libertés depuis les temps les plus reculés, pendant que le reste de l'humanité était déchiré par les guerres de toutes sortes. ... Les Moscovites pouvaient-ils prétendre qu'ils entraient au Caucase parce que ce pays était inhabité ? Non, car ce pays a, de tout temps, été occupé par les peuples de race caucasienne : tous les historiens sont d'accord à ce sujet. Pouvaient-ils dire qu'ils allaient au Caucase au nom de la Civilisation occidentale, de cette civilisation sous le couvert de laquelle bien des crimes de lèse-nation ont été commis ? Non ! l'état social moscovite, en comparaison de l'état social des peuples caucasiens, n'était guère plus avancé alors, et il ne l'est pas encore aujourd'hui, malgré l'effort que les Moscovites font tous les jours pour se rapprocher des peuples occidentaux, et malgré les obstacles innombrables qu'ils opposent au progrès des peuples caucasiens. Toutes les auteurs sincères qui ont étudié le monde moscovite et le monde caucasien – et même les simples voyageurs qui ont parcouru ces contrées – sont unanimes à dire que les Russes moscovites ne sont pas en état de s'arroger le titre de civilisateurs. ... Vu que les peuples caucasiens occupent cette contrée depuis les temps les plus reculés, ce qui constitue par conséquent leur patrimoine national ; Vu l'unité morale de tous les peuples caucasiens, unité qui a existé de tous temps et qui existe encore de nos jours ; Vu l'unité ethnographique de la plupart des peuples caucasiens : Georgiens, Circassiens, Lesghis ; Vu l'unité religieuse de la plupart d'entre eux, Circassiens, Lesghis, Turko-Tartares... »

²³ Ax., “Otvetsvennyj moment priblizhaetsja” (The responsible moment draws near), *Voľnyj gorets* 34 (15 March 1920); *Dokumenty i materjaly po vneshnej politike Zakavkazja i Gruzii* (Documents and materials on the foreign policy of Transcaucasia and Georgia) (Tiflis: Tipografija Praviteľstva Gruzinskoj Respubliki, 1919), 34.

²⁴ Ars. “Musul'manskij mir i bolsheviki” (The Muslim world and the Bolsheviks), *Voľnyj gorets* 66 (13 December 1920); Tembotov, “Sovetskaja vlast' na Tereke, Revoljutsija i angushi III.” (Soviet power on

“We have always tied and we still tie the fate of democratic Georgia with the business of the democracy of all the peoples of the Caucasus into one indivisible whole,” he wrote. Finally, similar sentiments are to be found in the Georgian ruling party’s mouthpiece *ertoba* (Unity). For example, in this paper was published the statement that “The solidarity of the Caucasian republics’ interests is a truth which the Georgian government has made its own... everything that happens in the mountains directly impacts Georgia since the Mountain Republic is tightly bound to the Georgian Republic.”²⁵

There are several immediately obvious reasons why a concept of region would have been found in the minds of “Caucasians” at this historical juncture, which saw the Russian Revolution of February 1917, the Bolshevik coup of October 1917 and the ensuing Russian Civil War. First, as various episodes brought forward in this dissertation will illustrate, there is sufficient evidence to posit that, thanks to many centuries of mutual interaction in a shared space and possible genetic-cultural ties, the sense of being a part of some kind of regional collective may have been felt intuitively by the native inhabitants.²⁶ Second, they along with many newcomers to the region,

the Terek, Revolution and the Ingush III.), *Volnyj gorets* 66 (13 December 1920); Ax. “Ne strashno” (It’s not scary), *Volnyj gorets* 67 (20 December 1920); Ax., “Boľshevizm, menšhevizm i narody Vostoka” (Bolshevism, Menshevism and the peoples of the East), *Volnyj gorets* 68 (31 December 1920); Georgi Mamulia, “Zabytyj Gazavat. Gortsy Severnogo Kavkaza v borbe za svobodu i nezavisimost’ (1919-1921). Chast’ II. V borbe s boľshevizmom” (Forgotten Ghazavat. The Mountaineers of the North Caucasus in the struggle for freedom and independence [1919-1921]. Part 2. In the fight with Bolshevism), *Nowy Prometeusz*, no. 8 (2015): 84; 116.

²⁵ “Obzor pečati” (Press review), *Volnyj gorets* 5 (14 October 1919).

²⁶ Incidents to illustrate this assertion will be provided in the body of the dissertation. An example of this kind of thinking is when the diplomatic representatives of the four lost republics claimed that their republics had been trying to establish a united state before the Bolsheviks interfered and creating a political union was only natural for reasons of geography and the commonality of their economic and other interests as well as in light of the age-old ties between their peoples. See “Deklaratsija diplomaticheskix predstavitelej respublik Kavkaza vo Frantsii o sozdanii Sojuza kavkazskix gosudarstv” (Declaration of the diplomatic republics of the Caucasus in France on the creation of a Union of Caucasian states) of 10 June 1921 and “Deklaratsija diplomaticheskix predstavitelej respublik Kavkaza vo Frantsii o sozdanii oĉedinennogo kavkazskogo gosudarstva” (Declaration of the diplomatic representatives of republics of the Caucasus on the creation of a united Caucasian state) of 27 September 1921, both in G. G. Mamulia, *Kavkazskaja Konfederatsija v ofitsial’nyx deklaratsijax, tajnoj perepiske i sekretnyx dokumentax dvizhenija “Prometej”* (The Caucasian Confederation in the official declarations, secret correspondence and secret documents of the “Prometheus” movement) (M: Izdatel’stvo “Sotsial’no-politicheskaja MYSL’, 2012), 41-46.

including Russian colonists, had lived together for successive generations in a common imperial administrative unit with its own regional center (Tiflis).²⁷ Third, the inclusion of the regional dimension into the national question in debates about the optimal political and administrative reconfiguration of Russia was a major feature of the pre-revolutionary tradition of revolutionary and political thought in the Caucasus.

Continuing in the vein of these pre-revolutionary currents, when the tsarist regime evaporated in February 1917, the Tiflis newspapers, generally the mouthpieces of various political parties or administrative bodies, were filled with discussions about whether the Caucasus should enter the constitutional structure of the new, free and democratic Russia as a regional unit or separate national-territorial units. Further indication that regional thinking held sway among the politically active elements at the time is the fact that during this year various governmental and revolutionary structures were also set up on a regional scale (e.g., the Special Transcaucasian Commissariat and Regional Soviet). Later, after the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government in October 1917 and forcibly dispersed the Constituent Assembly in January 1918, squelching hopes of a timely democratic solution to the question of Russia's reconstitution, the nations of Transcaucasia separated from Russia as a regional union, the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR), with North Caucasian leaders declaring the independence of the Mountain Republic in hopes of joining it.

Even after late-May 1918 when Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan declared independence from the TDFR, that is to say, from each other, the regional idea persisted, however feebly, in various quarters of political society in the Caucasus. Calls for regional solidarity were heard repeatedly all the way through 1921, especially from the North Caucasian political and military circles, and several regional conferences

It is difficult to take this statement seriously light of the way things played out in 1917 to 1921, but this dissertation will show that, despite the territorial conflicts and opposing interests of the nations, which was the strongest impulse of the period, there was a concurrent series of attempts, however ineffective, to overcome such divisions and move towards solidarity, integration, a joint defence framework and possibly even political union. So, this statement was not entirely disingenuous.

²⁷ Jeremy Smith touches on this very lightly. See Jeremy Smith, "A Region of Regions: The Historical Failure of Integration in the South Caucasus" in *The South Caucasus beyond Borders, Boundaries and Division Lines: Conflicts, Cooperation and Development*, ed. Mikko Palonkorpi (Turku, Finland: Juvenes Print – Suomen yliopistopaino Oy, 2015).

were held to discuss coordination on the international stage, mutual agreements in financial and other practical matters, including even the proposal of creating a Caucasian defensive or political and economic union. Finally, after the entire Caucasus was lost to the Communists over 1920 and 1921, the idea of creating a common liberation front that could develop into a united Caucasian state became a major theme in the émigré press during the interwar period.

B. The political debates and an analogy

When the Romanov regime ended in March 1917, the peoples of the former Russian Empire faced the task of reorganizing their shared country. The national and agrarian questions were two of the most pressing issues of the moment. The national question asked what state structure was appropriate for multinational Russia, and the social-economic question addressed how assets should be redistributed fairly.²⁸ This was generally referred to as the agrarian question since land was the main asset. Throughout the former empire, the national question was debated along a continuum spanning between the extremes of highly centralized to fully decentralized, with most political positions arguing for a constitutional structure somewhere between these two extremes. Many parties and organizations wanted the devolution of power from the central government to the local, including possibly regional, level and thus took a “decentralist” stance with regard to Russia’s administrative restructuring, just not necessarily along national-territorial lines. In this dissertation, unless otherwise indicated, I am referring to centralism versus decentralism primarily with regard to the national question specifically, not administrative decentralization. I use the terms centralism and decentralism instead of unitarism and federalism because they were commonly employed in this sense in the debates of 1917-1921. However, it must be noted that political, administrative and fiscal decentralization can occur in a unitary

²⁸ See Vasily Alekseyevich Maklakov “The Agrarian Problem in Russia Before the Revolution,” *The Russian Review* 9, no. 1 (January 1950): 3-15.

state.²⁹ In the Caucasus, the national question included a regional dimension since the debates surrounded not only what the Caucasian nationalities' individual relationships should be to the Russian center but also what their relationships should be towards each other or a potential regional center and how such a potential regional unit should be structured or connected to the Russian center. Thus, the national question in the Caucasus was actually the “national-regional” question.

If opinions on the national, or national-regional, question produced answers that ranged from more centralized (unitary, administrative self-government) to more decentralized (federal, national-territorial autonomy), the agrarian question was debated along an axis spanning right to left. The more conservative elements towards the right sought to retain their property and privileges whilst the furthest left radicals demanded the immediate, uncompensated seizure and redistribution of land and other assets. Most politicians in the Caucasus advocated for a just redistribution of land and assets according to a legal process which provided some compensation to landowners, but extremists made use of social-economic disparity and ethnic feuds over land rights to push their agenda through increased destabilization. Over 1917-1921 in the Caucasus, there was also the additional dynamic of the different nations pulling together when their interests coincided and pulling apart when they were opposed, often simultaneously, because of complex sets of interests (often revolving around territorial and legal status disputes) and internal societal contradictions such as conflicting class or religious identifications.

As a visualization aid for these dynamics of the revolutionary and civil war Caucasus, imagine an aircraft in flight. To stay in flight, an aircraft must keep a balance along three axes. It tilts up and down around a lateral axis, pivots left to right around a vertical axis and rolls left to right around a longitudinal axis. In Russia and the Caucasus specifically, the lateral axis corresponds to the centralism (up) vs. decentralism (down) debate; the vertical axis corresponds to the debate regarding land and other asset

²⁹ See *Decentralization in Unitary States: Constitutional Frameworks for the Middle East and North Africa*, Center for Constitutional Transitions, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and the United Nations Development Project, 2014, 24, 25-26.

redistribution (right to left); and the longitudinal axis corresponds to the strange tension caused by the Caucasian nations' tendency to pull together or apart depending on the prevailing conditions. A hauntingly similar visual was provided by a contributor to the Tiflis paper *Kavkazskoe slovo* (Caucasian word) in 1917. He wrote, "The purely class struggle is complicated by the national element, and at times the religious, political and even estate and caste [elements]... And all Russia with its many millions has been dissected not only in the horizontal and vertical directions but also diagonally across sharp and dull angles."³⁰ In the Caucasus, the opposing tensions along all three axes were not reconciled before the entire region fell under the boots of the Russian Red Army and the Communists could impose their preference for a highly centralized state, draped in the veil of a federation; implement their radical vision of total asset seizure and state control of resources and put an end to local conflicts as it suited them.

C. Argument and structure

In this dissertation I argue that the reconstruction of a regional narrative for historical developments in the Caucasus 1917-1921 is both useful and sensible because a) events unfolded on a regional scale, that is, they were closely and distinctly intertwined in the Caucasus and took on a particularly regional dimension, and b) the most visible participants in this drama were conscious of this regional dimension, often factoring it into their considerations, calculations, actions and reactions. The sense of regional context or belonging that the driving actors shared, however weak it was in comparison to other self-identifications (e.g., political party, religion or nation), layers of entanglement (i.e., local, national, all-Russian, international) or scales of vision, had

³⁰ "Tiflis, 19 avgusta" (Tiflis, 19 August), *Kavkazskoe Slovo* 85 (19 August 1917).

«Чисто классовая борьба осложняется национальным элементом, а временами – религиозным, политическим и даже сословным и кастовым... И вся многомиллионная Россия оказалась разсеченной не только в горизонтальном и вертикальном направлениях, но и крест на крест, под острыми и тупыми углами.»

strong roots in the preceding period of tsarist administration and the Caucasian intellectual, resistance and revolutionary traditions.³¹

I demonstrate the existence of the abovementioned leaders' consciousness of their regional context, or layer of belonging and interaction, through an analysis of the debates surrounding the national-regional question in the Caucasus from the 1860s through 1917. At the same time, I provide an overview of how events unfolded, inextricably, on a regional scale and how, and to what extent, the regional factor influenced leaders' political decision-making by reconstructing a synthesized regional narrative for the period of the Russian Revolution (1917) and Civil War (1918-1921) in the Caucasus.³² As part of this reconstruction, I contrast the nationalities' simultaneous conflicting tendencies both to a) try to pull together in common defense before a shared threat and to b) stress national (or other more particular) identities and clash over opposing interests, often manifested in conflicting territorial claims.

Since the purpose of this exercise includes providing a bird's eye view and overarching, regional framework for events in the Caucasus during the revolutionary and civil war period, of which a portion can also be called the period of the independent republics, I organize the information in this dissertation chronologically, as far as possible, providing aerial snapshots, as it were, of the developments in the region as they happened year by year. Since the political debates and historical developments of 1917 to 1921 had their roots in the revolutionary tradition and were also influenced to some extent by pre-modern notions regarding political relationships between the nations of the region, chapter two ("Was the Caucasus Always Confederative?") reviews the history of regionalist and confederal or federalist thinking in the Caucasian intellectual, resistance and revolutionary traditions.

Chapter three ("1917: Revolutionary Russia and Regional Arrangements") analyses the political debates and historical developments of this turbulent year when

³¹ There are also moments to indicate that there was a spontaneous aspect to this regional sentiment, as it was generated in part from the Caucasian societies' collective memories of living, cooperating and quarrelling together in the shared space of the isthmus for many centuries.

³² The degree and scope of synthesis could be augmented in a book, but there are time and space limits to this thesis project.

the politically active elements of the evaporated empire were buoyed by faith in the convening of the Constituent Assembly, whereat they expected a solution to the pressing structural and ethical questions of the day would be achieved through a democratic process. Concerns for their common security also motivated Russia's nations to cling together throughout the spring and summer, but centrifugal tendencies gathered steam on the periphery after the Bolsheviks' October coup and their forcible dispersal of the Constituent Assembly in early January 1918.

Chapter four ("1918: Betwixt the Central Powers and Soviets)" covers 1918, when these centrifugal tendencies culminated in the formation of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR) in April and the proclamation of the four independent republics in May. These were the Mountain Republic and the Democratic Republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. This radical decentralization was triggered by factors related to the rise of Soviet power in central Russia and pressure from the Central Powers and was in fact resisted at first by the leading forces in Transcaucasian politics. Through the summer and early fall, the entire region was caught between the Soviets, who prevailed in the North Caucasus and Baku while attempting to foment peasant rebellions in Abkhazia and parts of Transcaucasia, and the Ottoman and German Empires, which encouraged the state-building efforts of the anti-Soviet North Caucasian Mountaineers, Azerbaijanis and Georgians. When in late fall 1918 the Allies effectively won the First World War with the signing of the Armistice of Mudros (30 October 1918) and the Armistice of 11 November 1918, British forces intent on supporting Russia's nascent White movement replaced Turkish and German troops in the region.³³ The new republics' first attempt to hold a regional conference took place in November in Tiflis.

Chapter five ("1919: Resisting the Whites and Wanting Recognition") treats a year marked by fears that Russian reactionaries in the White movement would forcibly recover the Caucasus in their quest to restore a Russia united and indivisible. In January,

³³ Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Armistices of 1918* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), 85-86, 93-100. The Armistice of Mudros was signed between the Allies and Ottomans on 30 October 1918. The Allies and Germans signed the Armistice in Compiègne, France.

General Anton Denikin's Volunteer Army began its campaign to take control of the North Caucasus, and the rest of the year was characterized by a struggle between the Volunteer Command and its conservative local supporters, on one hand, and a relatively radical, left-leaning popular resistance, on the other. Although there was a strong ethnic and religious component to this conflict, which can be painted with a broad brush as Cossacks and Russians facing a native resistance, there was also a class component which generated some ethnic mixing with regard to who fought whom. In Transcaucasia, the Georgians, Azerbaijanis and Armenians were mostly spared the Volunteers' direct aggression, in part since the latter were mired in fighting in the North Caucasus, and so had the chance to work on building up their republics. On the world scene, all four Caucasian republics sought international recognition at the Paris Peace Conference. A second regional conference was also held in the spring with the goal of forming a regional military alliance, and its main result was the Georgian-Azerbaijani defense pact of 16 June 1919.

Chapter six ("1920-1921: The Reds Return Triumphant") treats 1920 and the start of 1921, when the chessboard was rearranged once again. In early 1920, the Volunteer Army withdrew from southern Russia and the North Caucasus to be replaced with Communists backed by the Red Army. During this process, calls were sounded yet again for building a common defense front against the Bolsheviks, and a third regional conference was held in April. However, by now the Red Army used the North Caucasus as a base for attacking Transcaucasia, taking Azerbaijan in April 1920; Armenia's capture followed in December 1920 and Georgia's in February 1921.³⁴ The Red Army also used spots in Azerbaijan and Georgia as bases from which to crush a renewed North Caucasian resistance that exploded elementally under the leadership of conservatives in the autumn.

³⁴ Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 4, *Between Crescent and Sickle: Partition and Sovietization* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), 376-377.

D. Literature review

Over the past fifteen years, several efforts have been made to apply an integrated regional framework to historical developments in the northern and southern Caucasus. These are the following: *History of the Caucasus: At the Crossroads of Empires* by Christoph Baumer (2021), *The Caucasus: A History* by James Forsyth (2013), *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* by Charles King (2008); and *The Caucasus: An Introduction* by Frederik Coene (2010).³⁵ The first volume of Baumer's book covers the Paleolithic to the Seljuk invasions, and the second volume, which should cover from that time through the present will be out soon. Forsyth also covers prehistory through the present, whereas King deals with the Caucasus under Russian influence and rule. Coene's book is focused on the present and gives regional snapshots through different lenses, such as geography, economy and history.³⁶ These books are useful for what they offer, which is a variety of details and perspectival angles set within a regional container that helps the general reader begin to see the Caucasus as a conceptual whole, a place across which broke and flowed successive waves of migration, invasion, invention and novelty and whose diverse population would often go through these moments together even if they were affected in very different ways. These books strike a path for the production of more comprehensive studies of specific periods, and perhaps someday a sweeping multivolume regional history from prehistory to the present that will contain the nuance and integration demanded by an academic audience.

As far as scholarly works in English written from a regional perspective, there are only a few. Antonio Sagona's *The Archeology of the Caucasus: From Earliest Settlements to the Iron Age* is an excellent conspectus of the prehistoric Caucasus, north and south. In it he attempts to "transcend modern borders and regional academic

³⁵ Christoph Baumer, *History of the Caucasus*, vol. 1, *At the Crossroads of Empires* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021); Frederik Coene, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2010); James Forsyth, *The Caucasus: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³⁶ His section on the history of the region is a good read.

traditions” in the belief that “only then, will a coherent and holistic picture of the ancient Caucasus emerge.” I expect an integrated history of the pre-national Caucasus is also forthcoming within several years or so. The *Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus*, published in 2020, serves as an umbrella for a selection of articles from respected scholars working on different aspects of research in the Caucasus, and some of the articles apply a regional framework to specific topics.³⁷

Regarding the period covered in this dissertation specifically, Firuz Kazemzadeh’s classic *The Struggle for Transcaucasia* gives a semi-regional framework for 1917-1921 but it does not include the North Caucasus and makes for a disjointed read. The most important recent contribution to the historiography on this period is *The Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic of 1918: Federal Aspirations, Geopolitics and National Projects* edited by Adrian Brisku and Timothy Blauvelt. This volume contains a number of articles, each of which treats the TDFR from a different perspective in order to promote a better understanding of the significance of this ephemeral project as set within its historical, political and intellectual context.³⁸ In particular, Adrian Brisku’s contribution on the Transcaucasian federation as a “Georgian” responsibility, Beka Kobakhidze’s article on the British foreign policy perspective, Lasha Bakradze’s article on Georgian nationalists in Germany and my contribution on the North Caucasian political project highlight the significance of the federal or confederal idea among the Caucasian intelligentsia at this time (1917-1921) or give an indication of how fixedly this idea was set within the context of decades of serious consideration.³⁹ Chapter seven of Michael Reynolds’s

³⁷ For instance, Timothy Blauvelt includes the northern and southern parts of the region in his summary overview of the history of the Caucasus under Russian rule. See Timothy K. Blauvelt, “The Caucasus in the Russian Empire” in *Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus*, ed. Galina M. Yemelianova and Laurence Broers (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2020), 107-120.

³⁸ Adrian Brisku, “Afterword,” *Caucasus Survey* 8, no. 1 (2020): 124-125; Adrian Brisku and Timothy K. Blauvelt, “Who wanted the TDFR? The making and the breaking of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic,” *Caucasus Survey* 8, no. 1 (2020): 1-8.

³⁹ Lasha Bakradze, “The German perspective on the Transcaucasian Federation and the influence of the Committee for Georgia’s Independence,” *Caucasus Survey* 8, no. 1 (25 February 2020): 59-68; Adrian Brisku, “The Transcaucasian democratic federative Republic (TDFR) as a “Georgian” responsibility,” *Caucasus Survey* 8, no. 1 (2020): 31-44; Beka Kobakhidze, “Feeble projects and aspirations: the

book *Shattering Empires*, “Forced to be free: the geopolitics of independence in the Transcaucasus” is also indispensable. Particularly valuable for its study of the Caucasian delegations’ negotiations with the Ottomans and Germans, it gives a clear picture of the consternation which beset the Transcaucasian political elites as their confidence in the project of a new, revolutionary Russia was wrecked by the reality of the Bolshevik power grab and pressure from the Central Powers. As Reynolds shows, it was only with great reluctance that they pursued a policy of radical decentralization.⁴⁰

Overall, the English-language historiography on the Caucasus 1860-1921 has been dominated by angles which reinforce the nation-state or national perspective—even when this was not the authors’ intent. It goes without saying that there is value to national narratives, and I regularly refer to the major works built around the concept of the ethno-national state in my reconstruction of a regional narrative.⁴¹ I also refer to

Caucasian and Transcaucasian federation/confederation in the geopolitics of 1918-1920,” *Caucasus Survey* 8, no. 1 (2020): 69-80; Sarah Slye, “Turning towards unity: a North Caucasian perspective on the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic,” *Caucasus Survey* 8, no. 1 (2020): 106-123.

⁴⁰ Michael Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Reynolds brings forward information from Turkish sources often unavailable to researchers due to the language barrier.

⁴¹ These are the following: Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1992); Houri Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019); Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967); Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 1, *The First Year, 1918-1919* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1971); Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 2, *From Versailles to London, 1919-1920* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1982); Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 3, *From London to Sèvres, February-August 1920* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996); Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 4, *Between Crescent and Sickle: Partition and Sovietization* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996); Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy 1883-1917* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2005); Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010); Jeronim Perović, *From Conquest to Deportation: The North Caucasus under Russian Rule* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018); Michael Reynolds, “Native Sons: Post-Imperial Politics, Islam, and Identity in the North Caucasus, 1917-1918,” *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 56, no. 2 (2008): 221-247; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994); Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Alex Marshall’s book is titled *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, but he makes it clear in the first sentence of the introduction that it concentrates mainly on the North Caucasus. At times, however, it does touch on aspects of Transcaucasian history.

such Soviet-era sources as I have been able to find. Despite these works' obvious interpretive deficiencies, certain facts and useful quotes can also be found in them.⁴² This dissertation uses some supplemental material from archival sources, notably the British archival materials housed at the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia, but since it is largely about political ideas and the debates surrounding them, it is mainly based on information taken from Georgian and Russian-language newspapers published between 1917 and 1921.

For quite logical reasons, analyses in the historiography have thus far been focused mostly on the leading political parties or forces in Transcaucasia. Although there remains plenty more depth to be plumbed, the motivations and actions of the Georgian Mensheviks, Azerbaijani Musavatists and Armenian Dashnaksutun have been decently evaluated in the nation-centered works. Thus, along with providing a broader framework that can help us begin to conceptualize a distinct regional paradigm that transcends national paradigms without negating them, the main contribution of this dissertation to the historiography on the Caucasus 1917-1921 is that it brings forward the hitherto neglected points-of-view of the independentist Mountaineers and the Georgian National Democrats, largely presented in the journal *Volnyj gorets* (Free mountaineer) and *saqartvelo* (Georgia), respectively. I also take information from collections of republished documents, contemporary publications and the memoirs or reflective analyses of participants in the political and military events of the time.

⁴² For instance, I. Borisenko's two volumes on the Soviet republics in the North Caucasus in 1918 (*Sovetskie respubliki na Severnom Kavkaze v 1918*).

II. WAS THE CAUCASUS ALWAYS CONFEDERATIVE?

One of the defining characteristics of the political developments in the Caucasus between 1917 and 1921 was how the Caucasian nations attempted, but failed, to pull together in the face of danger due to the instinct of self-preservation manifesting through the “ethno-tribal” (rather than regional) nexus, conflicting interests and the impulse to retain as much freedom of action as possible vis-à-vis other nations in the region. Considering activists in the revolutionary period would sometimes refer to their historical memory when discussing visions for the region’s optimal political reorganization, this chapter briefly reviews the thinking of medieval Georgians on the theme of the fundamental essence of relationships between the Caucasian nations before touching on early nineteenth-century unification attempts made in response to tsarist Russia’s encroachment. It then explores the debates surrounding the national-regional question in the pre-1917 tradition of revolutionary and political thought in the Caucasus.

A. Pre-modern notions of region and nation

“The Lives of the Georgian Kings” is the first book in *The Georgian Chronicles* (*Qartlis cxovreba*, “Life of Kartli”).⁴³ A window into the thinking of medieval Kartvelians, the book situates Kartli’s history within the prevailing Bible-based notions about the genetic origins and geographical placement of the world’s nations while emphasizing the close blood ties and tight security relationship of the Caucasian

⁴³ Nino Doborjginidze, “Medieval Georgian Projection of Religious Historiography of Late Antiquity, Mapping of Biblical peoples (Tabula linguarum et populorum),” *Scrinium, Journal of Patrology and Critical Hagiography* 15 (2019), 245-246; Stephen Francis Jones and Roin Metreveli, eds., *Kartlis Tskhovreba: A History of Georgia* (Tbilisi: Artanuji, 2014), 9, 13-44; Giorgi Leon Kavtaradze, “Caucasica II. Georgian Chronicles and the raison d’être of the Iberian Kingdom,” *Orbis Terrarum* 6 (2000): 181; Manana Sanadze, “The Issue of Geneology of Armenians, Georgians and Other Caucasian Nations in the Historiography of the Middle Ages,” *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 7, no. 2 (February 2017): 207-208.

peoples.⁴⁴ In the view of Manana Sanadze, the geneology in the book should not be taken as proof of a medieval belief in the Caucasian nations' shared ancestry but rather as a reflection of the way the book's author looked at the territorial and political relationships between the Caucasian polities at that particular moment, and it was invented by merging existing Georgian and Armenian genealogies to justify Kartvelian claims to recently incorporated Armenian territories.⁴⁵ Sanadze sees the text as presenting a worldview wherein Kartli is the first among equals, a regional leader among "brotherly" states rather than as a sovereign lording it over subordinated vassals.⁴⁶ This line of thinking thus suggests, in the very least, that in the medieval period, Georgian, perhaps by extension Caucasian, political society could have been thinking more in terms of horizontal, accord-based power relations between the peoples of the region than a vertical, coercive power structure.

At any rate, "The Lives of the Georgian Kings" clearly depicts the Caucasian peoples repeatedly forming defensive alignments or confederal alliances, perhaps even a federation of sorts. According to the book, Targamos was the patriarch of all the native peoples of the Caucasians (Targamosids). They originated in a land further to the south but expanded through the southern Caucasus over the Great Caucasus range into the northern Caucasus as their population grew.⁴⁷ Targamos had eight sons, giants, each

⁴⁴ Doborjginidze, "Medieval Georgian," 245-250; Manana Sanadze, "The Achaemenids in Georgia According to the Georgian Chronicle," *Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 1 (2012), 28; Kartvelians are Georgians from Kartli.

⁴⁵ Sanadze, "The Issue of Geneology," 207, 209, 214-217, 222-224. The author is traditionally considered to be Leonti Mroveli and the book is traditionally dated to the 11th century. Compare with Kavtaradze, 181.

⁴⁶ Sanadze, "The Issue of Geneology," 216-217, 222-224.

Geneticists have recently shown the close genetic bond between the Caucasian peoples, so I think the genetic relationship described in "The Lives of the Georgian Kings" should not be dismissed so lightly even though we can look also at it as a political metaphor at the same time. Recent studies in genetics have demonstrated the close genetic relation of the Caucasian peoples, so it is not unreasonable to imagine that the medieval Georgian chroniclers may have had an actual belief in the real kinship of the Caucasian peoples beyond political metaphors.

See Antonio Sagona, *The Archaeology of the Caucasus: From Earliest Settlements to the Iron Age* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 32-33.

⁴⁷ Jones and Metreveli, eds., 13-14.

one the progenitor of a different Caucasian nation. These were Haosi (Hayk, the Armenian patriarch), Qartlosi, Bardosi, Movakani, Lekosi/Leki (Lezghians), Herosi (Hereti), Kavkasi (the North Caucasians) and Egrosi (Egrisi).⁴⁸ In their first military episode, all the Targamosids backed Haosi in a victorious defensive war against Nimrod and his descendants, the oppressive “king over the whole world”.⁴⁹ Properly contextualized, this story seems to not only depict a federal-type union formed in resistance against a southern oppressor but also the fight of a “godly”, relatively decentralized power structure against an “ungodly”, global and tyrannical (centralized) power structure.⁵⁰ This is apparently why Haosi said “God granted our tribe the power and greatness of numbers. Now with the help of our Creator we will not remain any

⁴⁸ George Anchabadze, “Principal Stages of Ethnical Development of the Georgian Nation from Ancient Times to the Phase of Nation Formation,” accessed 15 January 2022, <http://abkhazworld.com/aw/Pdf/Anchabadze-d.u.pdf>; Doborjginidze, 249, 251; Konstantine Pitskhelauri, “Is Ethnicization of the Archeological Cultures of the 1st and 2nd Millenia B.C. Possible in the South-Central Region of the Caucasus?” *Bulletin of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2010): 153-158.

⁴⁹ Jones and Metreveli, 14.

“The ruler and master over all these seven heroes was Haos. All the seven were obedient to him and all the eight of them were subject to Nebroth, who was the king over the whole world.”

⁵⁰ Doborjginidze, 240-240.

Doborjginidze mentions the date of the translation of Josephus into Georgian.

According to the first-century historian Flavius Josephus (*The Antiquities of the Jews*, book one, chapter 4. [<https://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-1.html>]), after the flood, Noah’s three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their descendents came down gingerly from the mountains onto the plains of Shinar (Mesopotamia). God then instructed them to send out different colonies to populate the Earth. But they had grown prosperous and strong and feared that if they were divided up into different groups, then they would be rendered weaker (“might the more easily be oppressed”). So, they did not want to split up into different groups (become decentralized).

This is suggestive of the idea that centralized power is stronger and decentralized power is weaker. Ham’s grandson Nimrod then stirred them against God’s will and “gradually changed the government into tyranny”, bringing them into a “constant dependence on his own power.” Thus, the multitude gladly supported him in his grand tower-building effort, which I imagine could be imagined both as a reference to the ziggurats of the ancient Mesopotamian civilization and as a symbol for a centralized power structure. Perhaps, this story is a conscious illustration of how people look to centralized power structures for strength and security, but it leads to tyranny. At any rate, as punishment, God then forced humankind into a decentralization of political power by introducing many different, unintelligible languages among them. It would not be surprising if the author of the “Lives of the Georgian Kings” was trying to present the Caucasian peoples as acting in the pro-God tradition, fighting centralized, tyrannical power while organized in a more decentralized power structure, “obeying no one but God”. Although Josephus’ work was not translated into Georgian until the twelfth century, I do not see why he would not have been accessible to Kartvelians in the Greek.

more in submission to anybody and will serve nobody but God—the Creator.”⁵¹ Extrapolating from Sanadze’s thinking, this union might be considered a federal-type union more than a confederal alliance since Haosi was king over the “brothers” (increased verticalization, even vassalage) but each “brother” retained his own domain and gave his consent to fight with Haosi against Nimrod (still horizontal). Moreover, after defeating the tyrant, the Targamosids lived in “mutual love”, together building fortifications to defend themselves against potential reprisals by Nimrod’s descendents (sustained close ties and a shared defense program).⁵²

Around the time the Kartlosids (Caucasians), “forgot God” and suffered from internal feuding, the Khazars (usually interpreted to mean the Cimmerians and/or the Scythians) began attacking the North Caucasians. One of the sons of Kavkasi (the progenitor of the North Caucasian nations) obtained through a negotiation process the support of the other Targamosids for banding together against the Khazars.⁵³ This now looks to indicate a plain defensive alliance but it could be closer to a confederation since all the Caucasians (Targamosids) were “still living in peace and love with each other”. Reminding us of Al-Mas’ūdī’s Alanians and Circassians, the “Khazars” strengthened

⁵¹ Jones and Metreveli, 14.

⁵² Jones and Metreveli, 14-16; Simon Qauxchishvili, ed., *qartlis cxovreba (ana dedofliseuli nusxa) (The life of Kartli [The Royal Annals])* (Tbilisi: saqartvelos ssr mecnierbata akademiis gamomcemloba (Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the Georgian SSR), 1942), 6.

According to Jones’s version, it says, “Until the death of Mtskhetos all these tribes of Targamos lived in mutual love; they lived in fear of Nebrotids, believing that the Nebrotids were looking for a chance to avenge Nebroth’s blood. Due to this fear the tribes of Targamos tried to reinforce their city-fortresses.”

⁵³ Doborjginidze, 251-252; Pitskhelauri, 155; Jones and Metreveli, 15-17; Manana Sanadze, “The Achaemenids in Georgia,” 26-27.

The text in Jones and Metreveli mentions Durdzuk as master of the descendents of Kavkasi (the ancestor of the North Caucasians) and he entered in the negotiations with the other six Targamosid groups, which means one brother is missing. The text specifically states that the Targamosids lived in unity until the time the Khazars gathered strength, which was at the same time that the Kartlosids had already been vying with each other.

Doborjginidze interprets the passage to mean that Mroveli was not yet separating the Targamosids and Kartlosids at that point in his chronology. She writes, “Yet, at that stage, the descendants of Kartlos, the Georgians’ eponym, were not our kin in the sense of Leonti Mroveli. Kartlos continues a sacral ethnogenetic line of Targamos through his children and later his grandchildren dividing their patrimony according to Targamos’ ‘principle of heredity,’ yet his offspring from Kartlos represents not yet the land of Kartli, but the land of Targamosians, to whom the common ancestor of the Caucasians allotted a domain within distinct historical boundaries.”

their politico-military organization through the centralization of their power structure, i.e., selected a king, and returned to numerically overwhelm the more decentralized Targamosids, flooding into the southern Caucasus and seizing control of two passes: the Derbent (on the Caspian littoral) and the Daryal (between Russian Ossetia and Georgia).⁵⁴ All of the Targamosids later united against forces sent by the Persian king “Kekapos” (the legendary Kai Kawus).⁵⁵

The Pontic Wars provide another historical episode wherein Caucasian groups formed defensive alliances against outside invaders. According to Appian, the Choteneans (in Armenia) and Iberians attacked the last Pontic king Mithridates as he tried to make his way towards Colchis. The Iberians and Albanians (ancient inhabitants of the southern Caucasus) then fought together, interspersed with “Amazons”, against the Roman general Pompey as the wily Mithridates fled from Colchis to the Bosporan Kingdom (Kerch Strait), possibly by way of the Mamisson and Roki Passes and then through the Darial Pass (the Scythian Gates).⁵⁶

Yet this tendency to pull together was accompanied by a penchant for internal feuding. The Caucasian nations’ divisive tendencies are also presented in “The Lives of the Georgian Kings”. Although northern Caucasians had proven instrumental in the establishment of the kingdom of Kartli during the time of its first two kings, some began raiding it during the reign of the third king, who responded by crushing them.⁵⁷ Kartvelian kings subsequently brought several North Caucasian tribes to fight with them against the Armenian kings, though after some bloodshed and strife, the

⁵⁴ Jones and Metreveli, 17; Manana Sanadze, “The Achaemenids in Georgia,” 26.

⁵⁵ Jost Gippert, “The ‘Bun-Turks’ in Ancient Georgia,” in *Studies on Iran and the Caucasus* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 38-39; Jones and Metreveli, 18-19.

⁵⁶ Appian, *The Mithridatic Wars*, 21.101-103. Here I agree with the controversial proposal for Mithridates’ route made by Adrienne Mayor in *The Poison King: The Life and Legend of Mithradates, Rome’s Deadliest Enemy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020), 331-338.

⁵⁷ Jones and Metreveli, 22-26.

Georgians, Ossetians and Armenians are said to have returned to living “in mutual love” and joining forces against their common enemies.⁵⁸

Although it does not appear that the stories in the Georgian Chronicles were instrumentalized for any major, concerted propaganda campaign in 1917-1921, they may have been promoted by some in a limited way for the purpose of encouraging mutual cooperation. For instance, North Caucasian political activists who wanted a Caucasian confederation published an article in 1920 that highlights the participation of the Mountaineers in various episodes of the ancient military history of the Caucasus, with a particular focus on the role of Ossetian-Georgian cooperation.⁵⁹

B. Early attempts to unite in resistance against Russia

The modern period also witnessed various attempts by Caucasians to unite across the range in defensive alliances. In 1813, Alexander Batonishvili, a Georgian prince, tried to unite the North Caucasian and Georgian mountaineers against the newcomer Russian imperialists. Having lost to the tsar’s superior forces in the 1812 rebellion in Kakheta, Batonishvili then went to Shatili in Khevsureti where he began organizing a regional rebellion. According to intercepted communications, the mountain Georgians, Daghestanis, Circassians and Vainakh (Chechens and Ingush) were all eager to support him. One of Batonishvili’s men wrote, “The Chechens were very glad at our arrival; all of them great and small came to us and swore that they would come to you.” Moreover, the “Nazranites” told a Russian general that “when all Daghestan, Chechnya, the Circassians, *Tagaurtsy*, *Kurtanintsy*, Kists, *Gligvintsy*, *Chantintsy*, *Terelintsy*, the Khevsurs, Pshav and Tush have conspired together” for Batonishvili, then they would

⁵⁸ Jones and Metreveli, 27-34.

It reads (32), “Then the kings of Kartli...called on the Ovses and Lek’is and brought over the kings of the Ovses... with the Ossetian army. They brought with them the Pechenegs and Jiks, and the King of the Lek’is brought with him the Durdzuk’s and Didoians....Then all the troops of the Ovses, Lek’is, Georgians and the northern tribes uttered a united cry... Several years passed and again the revived Kartli was ravaged by the Armenians.... The Georgians and Ovses united... From that time on the Armenians, Georgians and Ovses lived in mutual love, and all of them fought together against their enemies.”

⁵⁹ Keshish Taras Fałdar Zakatałskij, “Osetiny v drevnejshix vojnax Kavkaza” (The Ossetians in the most ancient wars of the Caucasus), *Volnyj gorets* 28 (2 February 1920).

do the same.⁶⁰ Finally, a Kabardian prince wrote that he was more than willing to back his “kinsman” as long as the Persians and Ottomans followed through on their promised aid.⁶¹

Once Batonishvili had secured the verbal support he needed from the Mountaineers he informed his Persian backers that all the mountain peoples were ready to fight and they were simply waiting for the financing to be guaranteed.⁶² However, the moment their spies learned that the money was indeed forthcoming from Persia, the Russian forces made a daring rush to Shatili to crush the rebellion before it could proceed.⁶³ According to Oliver Wardrop, the Kakhétians and Lezghians subsequently rose together in an attempt to help Persia wage war against the Russians in 1826.⁶⁴ The 1820s and early 1830s indeed saw considerable unrest throughout the region, which helps explain why the Georgian conspiracy of 1832 was originally conceived of as a pan-Caucasian uprising.⁶⁵ As one of the main conspirators, Aleqsandre Orbeliani,

⁶⁰ Ad. Berzhe, ed., *Akty sobrannye Kavkazskoj arxeologicheskoi kommissii* (Acts collected by the Caucasus archeological commission) (Tiflis: Tipografiia glavnogo upravleniia namestnika Kavkazskogo, 1873), 5:373-374 (No. 451).

The exact quote is as follows: «Чеченцы были весьма рады нашему призыву; все они великие и малые пришли к нам и заклились в том, что все они явятся к вам... Состоящий во Владикавказе генерал, будучи весьма запуган, собрал Назрановцев и говорил им, что может быть вы пойдете на них, чтобы они перевели семейства свои в Моздок, а сами помогли-бы ему; но Назрановцы отвечали, что когда весь Дагестан, Чечня, Черкесы, Тагурцы, Куртатинцы, Кистинцы, Глигвинцы, Чантинцы, Терелинцы, Хевсурцы, Тушинцы и Пшавцы, сговорившись вместе, находятся у вас, то не-зачем им перевести семейства свои, и что толикие народы сделают и они тоже учинят, за что генерал весьма сердился и беспокоился,—следовательно и Назрановцы к вам явятся.»

⁶¹ Berzhe, *Akty*, 5: 372 (No. 449).

⁶² Berzhe, *Akty*, 5: 369-371 (Nos. 445 and 446).

It is not unreasonable to insist upon payment for military services considering resistance requires a treasury.

⁶³ Aleksandr A. Cherkasov et al., “Expedition in Khevsureti in 1813. The ‘Assault’ of Shatili,” *Bylye gody* 51, no.1 (2019): 168.

⁶⁴ Oliver Wardrop, *The Kingdom of Georgia: Notes of Travel in a Land of Women, Wine, and Song to Which Are Appended Historical, Literary, and Political Sketches, Specimens of the National Music, and a Compendious Bibliography* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1888), 132-133.”

⁶⁵ Wardrop, 132-133.

The 1826 uprising was set in the context of a general unrest throughout the region. This is how Wardrop summarizes it: “Yermolov became governor-general in 1816, and soon afterwards the Chechens and Daghestanians began to give the Russians serious trouble. Then the clergy raised a national

wrote, “The plot was supposed to unfold in such a way that the entire Caucasus from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea, all the mountain and lowland people, all of us were to unite and create a unified upheaval.”⁶⁶

After subduing the Georgian kingdoms and the khanates of the southeastern Caucasus (present-day Azerbaijan), the Russian generals were then able to use the southern part of the Caucasus as a base from which to apply pressure on the comparatively more defiant North Caucasian peoples. Effectively left by their “brethren” to fend for themselves, the Mountaineers made repeated attempts to unite among themselves, starting (even before the acquisition of Transcaucasia) with Sheikh Mansur in the late-eighteenth century. As Vasilij Potto writes, “One of Sheikh Mansur’s passionate and enduring goals was to unite all the mountain peoples into one. And all the strength of Russian weaponry was directed towards preventing this.”⁶⁷ Another less well-advertised episode was the resistance shown in the 1820s to General Ermolov’s subjugation campaign. Primarily associated with the secular Chechen leader Bej-Bulat Tajmiev, this resistance was of an at least partially pan-Mountaineer character.⁶⁸ Later,

movement in Imereti, in which Guri and Abkhazi joined, and in Mingreli, hitherto faithful, the Dadian’s brother revolted. All these efforts to shake off the Russian yoke were, of course, fruitless, and they ended in 1822 with the capture of Zakatali from the Lesghians. Then the Cherkesses (Circassians) broke into rebellion, and in 1826 Persia again declared war against Russia and marched 60,000 men into Georgia. Aided by the Lesghians and the Kakhetians, under Alexander, son of Irakli, they were at first successful, but the tide turned, and Erivan, Tavriz, and other places saw Russia victorious.”

⁶⁶ G. Goziashvili, *1832 ts’lis shetqmuleba* (The conspiracy of 1832) (Tiflis: saxelmtsifo universitetis gamomcemloba, 1935), 86.

⁶⁷ V. Potto, *Kavkazskaja Vojna v otde’l’nyx ocherkax, epizodax, legendax i biografijax* (The Caucasian War in different essays, episodes, legends and biographies), vol. 1. *Ot drevnejshix vremen do Ermolova* (From ancient times to Ermolov) (St. Petersburg: Izdanie knizhnago sklada V.A. Berezovskago, 1887), 142.

⁶⁸ George Anchabadze, *The Vainakhs (The Chechen and Ingush)* (Tbilisi: Caucasian House, 2009), 35-36; John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), 94, 99, 107, 112-113, 123-124, 148-149; Dalxan Xozhaev, *Chechentsy v Russko-Kavkazskoj vojne* (Chechens in the Russo-Caucasian war), ed. Tamara Mazaeva (1998), section “Tajmi Bibolt,” Avidreaders.ru, accessed 16 January 2022, <https://avidreaders.ru/read-book/chechency-v-russko-kavkazskoy-voyn.html?p=31>; R.A. Tovsultanov and L.N. Galimova, “Bej-Bulat Tajmiev-vydajushij’sja voennoe-politicheskij dejatel’ chechni Pervoj tre’i XIX veka (Bey-Bulat Taymiev as an outstanding military and political figure of Chechnya in the first quarter of the XIX century),” *Samarskij nauchnij vestnik*, no. 4 (17) (2016), 109-110; V. A. Fedorov, comp., *Zapiski A. P. Ermolova 1798-1826* (A.P. Ermolov’s notes) (Moskva: Vysshaja skola, 1991), 410-411.

although Imam Shamil and the Circassians of the northwestern Caucasus did not effectively coordinate, the latter still worked on their own consolidation towards the end of the Russo-Caucasian Wars.⁶⁹

C. Federalism in the Caucasian revolutionary tradition, 1860-1903

The armed resistance in the North Caucasus lasted through the mid-1860s. In the northeast, Shamil surrendered in 1859, and in the northwest the genocidal war against the Circassians culminated in 1864. By this time, however, the scions of some of the more cooperative Caucasian elites were already receiving educations in Russian cities and, through this route, absorbing the liberal and revolutionary ideas that were coming from Europe and mutating in Russia.⁷⁰ In the early 1860s, the Georgians Ilia Chavchavadze, Niko Nikoladze and other *tergdaleulni*, young Georgians studying in the heart of Russia, familiarized themselves with the thinking of J.S. Mill, Alexander Herzen, Vissarion Belinsky, Johann Gottfried Herder and other European luminaries. In St. Petersburg, some also frequented the home of the Russian “revolutionary novelist” Nikolaj Chernyshevskij, whose influences included the Utopianists Henri de St. Simon, Charles Fourier and August Comte.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest*, 412-414, 420-423; Haïdar Bammate, *The Caucasus Problem: Questions Concerning Circassia and Daghestan* (Berne: 1919), 5-9.

⁷⁰ Stephen F. Jones, “Russian Imperial Administration and the Georgian Nobility: The Georgian Conspiracy of 1832,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 65, no. 1 (Jan. 1987): 58-60; Wardrop, *The Kingdom of Georgia*, 164-165.

Wardrop makes the following interesting comment in 1888: “It is interesting to notice that the political ideals of the country [SS: Georgia] are borrowed from Western Europe. Excepting in Japan, perhaps, there is no such instance of a people passing directly from feudalism to liberalism. The grandsons of absolute monarchs, the men who little more than a quarter of a century ago were large slaveholders, are now ardent champions of the democratic idea, and loudly proclaim the freedom, the equality, the brotherhood, of prince and peasant, master and man.” At that time, Wardrop (p. 166) also noted that Georgians preferred European investors to Russian capitalists.

⁷¹ Mike Gane, “Journey to Isidore: Auguste Comte’s utopian method,” *Revue européenne des sciences sociales* 54, no. 2 (2016): 1; Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy 1883-1917* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2015), 34-35; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 129-130; Adam Weiner, “The Most Politically Dangerous Book You’ve Never Heard Of,” *Politico Magazine*, 11 December 2016, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/12/russian-novel-chernyshevsky-financial-crisis-revolution-214516/>.

The Caucasian students in St. Petersburg were quick to participate in the general trends among students in Russia's major cities, and the national-regional question appeared immediately. When the students started forming mutual aid societies based on place of origin (*zemljachestva*), the Georgian students debated on whether there should be a united Caucasian group or separate ones for the different national groups. A few, including Niko Nikoladze, argued for a single regional group whereas the majority argued for different, inter-connected groups. As Nikoladze recalled, "Other Georgians, led by Ilia Chavchavadze and gathering a decent collection of ancient Georgian books and manuscripts... proved that it was necessary to found several Caucasian groups: Georgian, Armenian, Lezghian and so on, establishing close ties between them."⁷² This anecdote is relevant for several reasons. First, it indicates that, along with Armenians, some North Caucasian students were also involved in the proto-revolutionary currents of the 1860s. Second, the Georgian students' debate reflected what would become the recurring question of whether Caucasians required a common political unit or should set up various separate political units tied closely together. Third, the intellectuals' referring to ancient tomes shows how the Georgians consulted their historical memory when deciding what kind of political relationships were, in their view, natural and appropriate not only for their own country of Georgia but also for the Caucasus region as a whole—decentralized but interconnected.

According to Dimitri Shvelidze, the *tergdaleulni* were also quite interested in Russia's transformation into a federation.⁷³ In 1863-1864, Ilia Chavchavadze, the chief

The *tergdaleulni* were the first generation of Georgian students to receive educations "beyond the Terek River". The Terek's source is in mountainous Georgia, and it flows into the North Caucasus. Jones mentions in the footnote that they did not actually see Chernyshevskij much at all since he mostly stayed in his study.

⁷² N. Nikoladze, *Vospominaniia o shestidesjatykh godax. Ocherk pervyj* (Recollections on the sixties. First essay) *Katorga i ssylka*, no. 4 (33) (1927): 34.

«Прочие грузины, руководимые Ильей Чавчавадзе и собравшие недурную коллекцию древних грузинских книг и рукописей, дорожа ею, доказывали, что надо основать несколько кавказских землячеств: грузинское, армянское, русское, лезгинское и т. п., с установлением между ними прочной связи.»

⁷³ Dimitri Shvelidze, *politikuri partiebis tsarmoshoba saqartveloshi, nakveti 1, federalistebi* (The origin of the political parties in Georgia, vol. 1, the federalists) (Tbilisi: "Arsi, 1993), 108.

representative of the *tergdaleulni*'s *pirveli dasi* (first troupe), published his first paper *saqartvelos moambe* (Georgia's herald), which presented the ideas of liberals Victor Hugo and Claude-Frédéric Bastiat alongside those of the anarcho-federalist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and Johann Gottfried Herder, who helped inspire Romantic nationalism.⁷⁴ Chavchavadze was also connected to the journal *droeba* (the times, 1866-1885) although the journal was primarily associated with the *tergdaleulni*'s *meore dasi* (second troupe), whose important representatives included Niko Nikoladze and Giorgi Tsereteli. In *droeba*, articles were published about Utopian socialists and anarchists (Robert Owen, Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Pierre Proudhon and Louis Blanc) as well as liberals like John Stuart Mill.⁷⁵

Whilst Chavchavadze remained in Georgia, Nikoladze went to study in Europe, where at some point he rejected Karl Marx's invitation to represent the Georgians in the International Workingmen's Association (IWA).⁷⁶ This suggests that despite their familiarity with socialism, the *tergdaleulni* were not especially interested in Marxism. A new generation was soon to develop an interest, however. In 1871-1872, while Marx and Bakunin were facing off in the IWA over the structure of the organization and a future revolutionary society or state, a new group, a circle of populists, started meeting back in Georgia. These included Ivane Jabadari and Varlam Cherqezishvili. Like the *tergdaleulni*, these populists were reading and discussing a mix of liberal and Utopian socialist thinking (e.g., Louis Blanc, J.S. Mill, Victor Hugo, Aleksandr Herzen), but now they added the works of Russian populists and Marxists/social democrats (e.g., Karl Marx, Ferdinand Lasalle, Johann Baptist von Schweitzer) into the mix.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, back in Europe, tensions between the Marxists-centralists and Bakunist-decentralists (anarcho-federalists) reached a boiling point when Marx had the

⁷⁴ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 36.

⁷⁵ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 37-39; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 131.

⁷⁶ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 38; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 131. It is not clear from the available sources what the date of Nikoladze's rejection of Marx's proposal was.

⁷⁷ David Marshall Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia* (NY: Grove Press, 1962), 120; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 136.

latter “excommunicated” from the IWA in 1872.⁷⁸ This split would be reflected among the Caucasians too. In 1873, Nikoladze and some associates published *drosha* (flag) in Paris. In this journal, they proclaimed that their social ideal was “a free federation of all the Caucasian peoples and of arrangements reflecting the ‘economic equality’ of every citizen”.⁷⁹ This phrasing suggests a closer affinity to Bakunist than Marxist thinking, but the extent to which Nikoladze and other Caucasians in Europe were, at this point, engaged with trends in the European socialist movement is not clear. On the one hand, according to the Georgian populist I. Jabadari, the sizeable Georgian colony in Zurich was quite unaware of “what happened before their very eyes” in 1872-1874 and was barely acquainted with the programs of Pjotr Lavrov and Bakunin. Instead, earning Jabadari’s censure, they allegedly focused excessively on enjoying national wine and cheese as well as founded a Caucasian society for the comprehensive study of the region with the ultimate goal of creating a Caucasian federal republic based on the Swiss model—which may suggest a closer affinity to patriotic and republican thinking. On the other hand, when Niko Nikoladze, one of the founders of this Caucasian society, organized a congress in Geneva in 1874, the congress had a very socialist flavor.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Wolfgang Eckhardt, *The First Socialist Schism: Bakunin vs. Marx in the International Working Men's Association*, trans. Robert M. Homs, Jesse Cohn, Cian Lawless, Nestor McNab and Bas Moreel (Oakland: PM Press, 2016), 347-352.

⁷⁹ “erobis tvit martveloba rogor gamogvadeba” (How will zemstvo self-government serve us), *drosha: qartuli socialuri gazeti* 2 (2 April 1873).

„აი ჩვენი საზოგადოებრივი იდეალი : თავისუფალი ფედერაცია ყველა კავკასიელი ხალხებისა, გაწყობილთა ყველა მოქალაქეების ეკონომიურ თანასწორებისამებრ.“

⁸⁰ I. S. Dzhabadari, “Protsess 50-ti (Vserossijskaja Sotsialno-Revoljutsionnaja Organizatsija 1874-77 g.g.) (Process of the 50s [The All-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organization 1874-77]), *Byloe, Zhurnal posvjashennyj istorii osvoboditel'nago dvizhenija* 2, no. 8/20 (August 1907): 23-24; I. S. Dzhabadari, “Protsess 50-ti (Vserossijskaja Sotsialno-Revoljutsionnaja Organizatsija 1874-77 g.g. Prodolzhenie) (Process of the 50s [The All-Russian Social-Revolutionary Organization 1874-77. Continuation]), *Byloe, Zhurnal posvjashennyj istorii osvoboditel'nago dvizhenija* 2, no. 9/21 (September 1907): 176; P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (Boston and New York; Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), 281-282.

According to the following passage in Kropotkin’s memoirs, the trend among workers in Switzerland in the early 1870s was anti-centralism and federalism. He writes, “In 1872 the Jura Federation was becoming a rebel against the authority of the general council of the International Workingmen’s Association. The association was essentially a workingmen’s movement, the workers understanding it as such and not as a political party. ... The workers were, moreover, federalist in principle. Each nation,

At the Geneva congress of 1874 the delegates consisted of nearly all of the Georgians in Europe and a few other Caucasians, namely the Daghestani Magomed Dalgat (Magomet Domgat), an Armenian and a woman from the Caucasus of German-Polish origin.⁸¹ Giorgi Tsereteli, the editor of *droeba*, presided. Indicating sympathy for the Bakunists, at the opening of the congress, the attendees paid honor to an Ossetian with the surname Dzigaev, who had worked closely with Bakunin. They also recognized the fallen Communards, and some survivors of the Commune attended as guests. The main question set for the congress to decide was whether the Caucasians should work towards establishing a Caucasian federative republic or align with the all-Russian revolutionary movement. Tellingly, the majority of the Georgians and the Armenian voted in favor of creating a regional federation, whereas a tiny minority, including Dalgat, opposed this, thinking a Caucasian federalist-republican movement would divert the social revolution into narrow nationalist aims, antagonize Russians and cause conflict among the various Caucasian nationalities. This minority failed to see how the Caucasus's diverse peoples could form a functional, geopolitically secure

each separate region, and even each local section had to be left free to develop on its own lines. But the middle-class revolutionists of the old school who had entered the International, imbued as they were with the notions of the centralized, pyramidal secret organizations of earlier times, had introduced the same notions into the Workingmen's Association. Besides the federal and national councils, a general council was nominated at London, to act as a sort of intermediary between the councils of the different nations. Marx and Engels were its leading spirits. It soon appeared, however, that the mere fact of having such a central body became a source of substantial inconvenience. The general council was not satisfied with playing the part of a correspondence bureau; it strove to govern the movement, to approve or to censure the action of the local federations and sections, and even of individual members. It required daily reports about the events, gave orders, favored this and hampered that, and thus put in evidence the disadvantage of having a governing body, even within the association. The disadvantage became still more evident when, at a secret conference held in 1871, the general council, supported by a few delegates, decided to direct the forces of the association towards electoral agitation. It set people thinking about the evils of any government, however democratic. This was the first spark of anarchism. The Jura Federation became the centre of opposition to the general council."

⁸¹ I. S. Dzhabadari, "Protseš 50-ti," *Byloe* 2, no. 8/20 (August 1907): 23; I. S. Dzhabadari, "Protseš 50-ti, cont." *Byloe* 2, no. 9/21 (September 1907): 177; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 43; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 137. The congress was also visited by some Russian radicals (Pjetr Tkachjev, Mixail Konstantinovich Elpidin, Nikolaj Zhukovskij and Lazar Goldenberg) and French Communards. On Magomed Dalgat/Magomet Domgat, see Boris Sapir, ed., *Vpered! 1873-1877: From the Archives of Valerian Nikolaevich Smirnov*, vol. 1, *On the History of "Vpered,"* trans. Brian Pearce (Dordrecht-Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1970), 162.

federation and so entered the nascent all-Russian socialist revolutionary movement.⁸² The split between those prioritizing an all-Russian, class-based unity over the impulse towards a national, or national-regional, self-determination would henceforth characterize the fundamental division in Caucasian revolutionary orientations. As Ronald Suny points out, “This congress marked another decisive bifurcation in the Georgian liberation movement. The more moderate men of the 1860s—Nikoladze, Giorgi Tsereteli, Sergei Meskhi, and others—were dedicated to a Caucasian solution to Georgia’s future... The populists on the other hand... were determined to link the various national liberation movements into one common social revolutionary struggle against tsarism and capitalism.”⁸³

In 1875, Nikoladze returned to Georgia where he contributed to *droeba* and other papers associated with the *meore dasi*.⁸⁴ As for Chavchavadze, he soon left *droeba* and started the paper *iveria* (Iberia, 1877-1906).⁸⁵ According to Ronald Suny, three major currents emerged in Georgian society in the 1870s: 1) the nostalgic nationalism of the gentry with Chavchavadze at their head; 2) the reformist liberalism of the *meore dasi*; and 3) the first generation of populists.⁸⁶ A second generation of populists emerged in the 1880s; this was a group of Georgian and Armenian students centered around the Tiflis Seminary and it soon split up. Discussions about Marxist ideas also started appearing more assertively around this time among intellectuals and in the press.⁸⁷ Still, there must have also been talk of a Caucasian confederation even within Georgia in the

⁸² Dzhabadari, “Protsess 50-ti,” *Byloe* 2, no. 8/20 (August 1907): 24; Dzhabadari, “Protsess 50-ti, cont.,” *Byloe* 2, no. 9/21 (September 1907): 177-178; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 137; Shvelidze, *The origin*, 108.

⁸³ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 137.

⁸⁴ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 132.

⁸⁵ Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 109; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 132.

⁸⁶ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 132.

⁸⁷ Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 121, 124; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 45-46; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 138-139.

Papers associated with the populists in the early 1880s were *imedi* (Hope) and *shroma* (Labor).

1880s because after Oliver Wardrop visited the Caucasus in 1887, he complained about the British statesmen's either lacking or ridiculous understanding of how the nations in the Russian Empire might react if a war broke out between the British and Russian Empires.⁸⁸ He then posited, undoubtedly informed by local interlocutors familiar with the ancient legends, that in such a case the Caucasians would likely rebel and maybe form a defensive alliance. In his words,

“Should Russia ever become involved in a great war, Georgia would undoubtedly declare her independence, and endeavour to seize the Dariel Road; the Armenians and Lesghians would also revolt, each in their own way... The possibility of Armenians, Georgians and Lesghians consenting to combine into one homogenous state is not to be thought of; but there is no reason why the descendants of the three sons of Targamos, great-great-grandson of Noah, should not, if they were free, form a defensive alliance for the protection of common interests; the Lesghians have, in past times, done good service against both Persians and Turks. In any case, Georgia has a frontier which she is quite able to defend, and she could always count upon the assistance of the mountaineers on the northern side of the Caucasus. The Cherkesses (Circassians), whose hatred of Russia is well known, have almost all migrated to Asia Minor.”⁸⁹

Wardrop likewise noted at the time that the Georgian youth were inspired by ideals of Western liberalism and democracy. And it seems indicative of a persistent ideological nebulousness that the members of the student movement of the early 1890s who formed the short-lived Georgian Liberty League (in western Georgia), appear to be a mix of Utopian socialists, future social democrats and proto-national democrats (patriots with liberal, capitalist inclinations).⁹⁰ Notable members of the league included

⁸⁸ Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 112; Wardrop, *The Kingdom of Georgia*, 155-156.

⁸⁹ Wardrop, *The Kingdom of Georgia*, 166-168.

I should thank Beka Kobakhidze for bringing attention to Wardrop's work in his article “Feeble projects and aspirations”. Otherwise, I would not have learned of it.

⁹⁰ A. Bendianishvili, *erovnuli sakitxi saqartveloshi 1801-1921 tsis*. (The national question in Georgia 1801-1921) (Tbilisi: “Mecniereba” Publishers, 1980), 154-155, 163; Grigol Giorgadze, *tvitmpqrobeloba da revoliucia: sabutebi revoliucionur modzraobis istoriisatvis saqartveloshi 1870-1902* (The autocracy and the revolution: Documents for the history of the revolutionary movement in Georgia 1870-1902). Book 1. (Tbilisi: Saxelgami, 1929), 99-103; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 56; Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 125; Shvelidze, *The origin*, 101; “mixeil xeltuflishvili,” National Parliamentary Library of Georgia (NPLG), accessed 17 January 2022, <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/bios/ka/00017176/>; “anton gelazarishvili,” NPLG, accessed 17 January 2022, <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/bios/ka/00015034/>; “iakob fancxava,” NPLG, accessed 17 January 2022, <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/bios/ka/00001687/>.

Giorgi Gvazava (a future National Democrat) and Giorgi Dekanozishvili (who would play a major role in the 1905-1907 revolution).⁹¹ Alongside their commitment to the goal of national liberation, the members of the league also expected to join forces with the other Caucasian nations against the Russian autocracy to create a regional federation.⁹² Perhaps it was in association with this league that in 1894 a certain Simon Salaridze unsuccessfully appealed to the Ottoman Government in Istanbul for permission to publish a journal promoting a Caucasian liberation movement.⁹³ At any rate, the tsarist authorities rapidly surveilled and suppressed the Georgian Liberty League.⁹⁴

After the league's suppression, the distance between the left and right "wings" of the revolutionary movement in Georgia increased. The *mesame dasi* (third troupe), which coalesced around 1892-1893, embraced social democratic views and heavily criticized the conservatives associated with the *pirveli dasi* (Chavchavadze and his journal *iveria*).⁹⁵ Thus, it was with a view to bringing these diverging currents in Georgia's revolutionary movement back together for the nation's common interest that in 1901-1902 the Georgian Archil Jorjadze, who had an affinity for Leo Tolstoy's (essentially Christian anarchist) ideas, developed the "basis for common action" theory, which presented five points around which compromise could be found on the national and social questions.⁹⁶ But he was not successful; while the proto-national democrats criticized aspects of his proposal, the increasingly intransigent Marxists completely rejected it.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Giorgadze, *The autocracy*, 103.

⁹² Bendianishvili, *The national question*, 157, 163; Shvelidze, *The origin*, 108.

⁹³ Bendianishvili, *The national question*, 162; Giorgadze, *The autocracy*, 99-100.

⁹⁴ Bendianishvili, *The national question*, 162.

⁹⁵ Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 109-111, 125-129, 133; Shvelidze, *The origin*, 15-18, 28-31, 37-41, 47-49; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 158-161.

The main journal associated with the *mesame dasi* was *kvali* (Furrow).

⁹⁶ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 66-71; Shvelidze, *The origin*, 54-59.

⁹⁷ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 17; Shvelidze, *The origin*, 75-76.

Undaunted, Jorjadze involved himself in the founding of the journal *saqartvelo* (Georgia) in 1903. This journal was housed in a corner of the French anarcho-syndicalist press in Paris, and it enjoyed the full, open support of the famous anarchist and geographer Élisée Reclus, a long-time friend of Varlam Cherkezishvili, one of the participants in the populist reading circle of the early 1870s. By now, the prince Cherkezishvili had become a leading anarchist in Europe much like Kropotkin, with whom he worked closely.⁹⁸ According to Dmitri Shvelidze, *saqartvelo* called for national autonomy and a Caucasian regional federation within a larger Russian confederation. However, its unstated goal was an independent Caucasian federation.⁹⁹

It was in the same year that *saqartvelo* was founded (1903) that the Georgian Marxists formalized their membership in the All-Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) at the second party congress (July-August).¹⁰⁰ However, the Georgian Marxists did not enter the RSDLP as a national section but as part of the Caucasian Union—a regional organization for Caucasian Marxists.¹⁰¹ According to Stephen Jones, the Caucasians had come to the congress with expectations of federalism but then had to submit to the party's strong centralist preference and tendencies. Even despite this pressure, they still managed to persuade the congress to accept self-government for the Caucasus as a region and allow language rights.¹⁰² Although Jones's analysis shows that the Caucasian and Georgian Marxists had been interested in federalism, Georgian

Jones calls Jorjadze the “nemesi” of Zhordania.

⁹⁸ Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 119-120, 143; Shvelidze, *The origin*, 103, 116,

⁹⁹ Shvelidze, *The origin*, 105-109, “kavkasiis momavali konstitucia” (The future constitution of the Caucasus), *qartuli gazeti* 15 (1 November 1916).

According to *qartuli gazeti*, the Socialist-Federalists only claimed to want a Russian federation in order to mask their true secessionist intentions and their true goal was a federation of the Caucasian nations.

¹⁰⁰ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 104.

¹⁰¹ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 106-116; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 163-164; Ter Minassian, “Nationalisme et socialisme dans le mouvement révolutionnaire Arménien: 1887-1912,” (paper presented at the conference on “Nationalism and Social Change in Transcaucasia” on 24-25 April 1980), 23-24.

¹⁰² Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 109-117.

nationalist authors at *qartuli gazeti* Georgian gazette) make it sound as if the Georgian Social Democrats had always been interested in a unitary Russian republic and only gradually accepted the possibility of regional autonomy for the Caucasus.¹⁰³

The Armenian revolutionary intellectuals were affected by similar dynamics as the Georgians. They too were interested in federalism and read the works of both liberals and socialists, including Utopian socialist, anarchist and social democratic authors.¹⁰⁴ The differentiation between centralists and decentralists was also discernable in the Armenians' political debates and in the structure of their main political parties.¹⁰⁵ The social democratic Hunchak Revolutionary Party (est. 1887) insisted on a centralized hierarchy.¹⁰⁶ But the more nationalist (yet still socialist) Hay Hegapokhakan Dashnaktsutun (The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, ARF or Dashnaktsutun, est. 1890) reflected its founders' interest in federalism through both name and structure.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ "kavkasiis momavali konstitucia" (The future constitution of the Caucasus), *qartuli gazeti* 15 (1 November 1916).

¹⁰⁴ Hourì Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 124-127, 134, 136, 139.

¹⁰⁵ Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 140-141.

¹⁰⁶ Libaridian, "Revolution and Liberation," 190.

¹⁰⁷ Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 125-127, 134, 136, 142; Gerard J. Libaridian, "Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaktsutun" in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 187; Ter Minassian, "Nationalisme et socialisme," 9-10.

According to Berberian, the Armenian intelligentsia drew upon a mix of anarchist, liberal and Marxist writers to make their case that a solution to the national question in the Russian Empire and Caucasus would be found in decentralization, federalism, autonomy and a constitution. Alongside many public discussions and debates, two major books and a booklet on federalism were published by ARF leaders in 1907-1908. The authors referred to Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois*, James Bryce (liberal), Albert Dicey (constitutionalist), Pyotr Kropotkin (e.g. *Du principe fédératif*), Mikhail Bakunin (e.g. *Federation, Socialism, Antitheologism*), Élisée Reclus (anarchist geographer), Zurab Avalishvili (Georgian nationalist, author of *Decentralization and Self-Government in France*), Alexander Herzen (Russian populist), Pjotr Lavrov (Russian populist), Vladimir Gessen, Nikolaj Lazarevskij and Georg Jellinek as well as Social Democrat authors such as Karl Kautsky (e.g. *The Nationalities Question in Russia*) and Karl Renner.

D. The national-regional question from 1904 to 1916

The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War (February 1904-September 1905) presented an opportunity for opponents of the Russian autocracy.¹⁰⁸ In April 1904, *saqartvelo*'s editors, hoping to unite the different currents in Georgian political society around the cause of national unity and autonomy, organized a congress in Geneva for Georgian revolutionaries.¹⁰⁹ The most important result of this congress was the foundation of the Georgian Socialist-Federalist Revolutionary Party, which brought together those who favored territorial autonomy for Georgia within an all-Russian federal republic, though its left wing and right wing (proto-National Democrats) differed principally on the social question.¹¹⁰ However, the congress was not concerned solely with Georgia. One of its stated goals was to unite the Caucasian nationalities into a federation to fight the autocracy. The party members also intended to fight the possibility that the revolution could bring about the unwanted formation of a centralist republic in Russia.¹¹¹ Concerned about the Social Democrats' centralism, they passed a resolution addressing the split between the Marxist-centralists and Bakunist-decentralists and declared that they sided with the decentralists.¹¹²

Invited to the Geneva congress of 1904, the Georgian Social Democrats came only to complain and leave, with the exception of one individual. Since the participants were recorded under pseudonyms, the identity of this individual is not certain, but Dmitri Shvelidze thinks it was probably Vladimir Darchiashvili, the founder of the

¹⁰⁸ A. Tyrkova-Williams, "The Cadet Party," *The Russian Review* 12, no. 3 (July 1953), 174; "The Treaty of Portsmouth and the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905," Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/portsmouth-treaty>, last accessed 8 March 2022; "Treaty of Portsmouth," Brigham Young University Archive, World War I Document Archive, https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Portsmouth, last accessed 8 March 2022.

¹⁰⁹ Shvelidze, *The origin*, 124-128, 131, 141, 143.

¹¹⁰ Shvelidze, *The origin*, 132-133.

¹¹¹ "Congrès des révolutionnaires géorgiens," *La Géorgie Politique & Sociale* 8 (15 August 1904). Shvelidze, *The origin*, 135, 139-143.

¹¹² Shvelidze, *The origin*, 139, 141.

national-autonomist current within Georgian Social Democracy.¹¹³ The Social Democrats refused to go to another significant congress held in Europe that year. In September, the Japanese backed a conference for the national and socialist parties of the Russian periphery. Attended by the Georgian Socialist-Federalists and Armenian Dashnaks, this congress resolved that it was necessary to topple the autocratic regime and create a new order respecting the right of small nations for self-determination.¹¹⁴ In a curious coincidence, Chechen and Kabardian troops in the Far East showed their attitude towards the tsarist regime as early as October 1904 when they refused to fight anymore, a move which then inspired other North Caucasians back home to refuse to enter service.¹¹⁵ Georgians were also resisting conscription as of December.¹¹⁶

The North Caucasians had a much smaller representation in terms of a national intelligentsia compared to the Georgians and Armenians, but their “native sons” were also invested in promoting their cultures and protecting their peoples’ rights in the imperial context.¹¹⁷ Considering they were heavily repressed, the North Caucasians who were in the imperial capital had to cover their political work under the guise of cultural activities. According to the Ingush politician Vassan-Girej Dzhabagiev, “Even before the revolution, we, the *gortsy* living in Petrograd, formed a committee of Caucasian Mountaineers. The autocratic regime, naturally, did not allow us to express our political ideas, and we were forced to start our work under the banner of ‘Questions of culture and civilization!’”¹¹⁸ Circassian leaders made a similar statement in their

¹¹³ Shvelidze, *The origin*, 127, 144, 146.

¹¹⁴ Hiroaki Kuromiya and Georges Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle: Russia, The Caucasus and Japan, 1904-1945*, (Warsaw/Berlin: De Gruyter Open, 2016), 23-24.

¹¹⁵ Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 41.

¹¹⁶ “Résistance des Géorgiens contre le recrutement,” *Information Spéciale de La Géorgie* 1 (27 December 1904).

¹¹⁷ See Michael Reynolds, “Native Sons: Post-Imperial Politics, Islam, and Identity in the North Caucasus, 1917-1918,” *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 56, no. 2 (2008): 221-247.

¹¹⁸ A. X. Karmov, comp., *Materialy șezdov gorskix narodov Severnogo Kavkaza i Dagestana 1917 goda* (Materials of the congresses of the mountain peoples of the North Caucasus and Daghestan 1917) (Nalchik: Izdateľskij otdel KBIGI, 2014), 72.

memorandum to the Congress of Nationalities held in Lausanne in 1916, writing, “A Circassian intellectual acquainted with the Western world is a pest for the Russians. He can no longer dispose freely of his time, to advocate for his compatriots, or to try to elevate their moral and intellectual level. He will immediately be exiled or committed under some pretext.”¹¹⁹

At least some of the North Caucasian activists who left the empire became involved in the revolutionary currents in Europe—which, to be fair, were themselves heavily influenced by anarcho-federalists hailing from the Russian Empire such as Bakunin, Kropotkin and Cherkesskii. There they apparently met with other Caucasians and worked for the goal of a Caucasian confederation. As Mountaineer independentists later wrote in their memorandum to the Paris Peace Conference,

“The general condition of political life in the Czar’s government were such that political parties and individuals who would not be the instruments of governmental orders and a bureaucratic mind led a miserable obscure life in Russia if they did not resign themselves to emigrating in order to defend their cause abroad. All the Caucasians who met abroad united on the ground of community of aspirations aiming at an independent Caucasus, politically united, based on the principles of a confederation of all the nations which compose it, without any distinction of origin and creed. All steps of an international nature were directed that way.”¹²⁰

The claim of the Georgian nationalists at *qartuli gazeti* that ideas about federation came to the North Caucasus by way of the Georgian intelligentsia thus

«Я впервые на съезде, явившемся счастливой возможностью объединить горские народы. Я представитель горцев, волею судьбы оторванных от Кавказа. Но мы всегда чувствуем себя частью своих предков в этом крае. Еще до революции мы, горцы, жившие в Петрограде, образовали комитет горцев Кавказа. Режим самодержавия, естественно, не позволял нам выражать свои политические идеи, и мы вынуждены были начать нашу работу под знаменем: «Вопросы культуры и цивилизации!» После революции мы самораспустились, а теперь наша цель полностью определена.»

¹¹⁹ *Mémoire de la Délégation Circassienne, Troisième Conférence des Nationalités, Lausanne, Juin 1916* (Memorandum of the Circassian Delegation, Third Conference of Nationalities, Lausanne, June 1916) (Lausanne: Lith.-Imph. Marsents & Boivin, 1916), 13.

« Un intellectuel circassien connaissant le monde occidental est la peste même pour les Russes ; il ne pourra jamais disposer librement de son temps, se mettre en relation avec ses compatriotes, essayer d’élever leur niveau moral et intellectuel. Il sera immédiatement éloigné ou interné sous un prétexte quelconque. »

¹²⁰ Haïdar Bammate, *The Caucasus Problem: Questions Concerning Circassia and Daghestan* (Berne: 1919), 13.

appears well-founded.¹²¹ However, ideas of federation could also have arisen within Russia's internal revolutionary milieu. For instance, the Socialist-Revolutionary leader Viktor Chernov recalled a spontaneous federalism among Georgians, Armenians, Tatars and Chechens which appeared alongside that of other nationalities in the early 1890s. He claimed that this federalist tendency was elemental and uninspired by Bakunin or the other anarchists. He writes,

“Some of the inter-*zemljachestvo* assemblies were a resounding success. One of these in particular was the assembly on the national question, which jokers called the ‘ethnographic exhibition’. At it were Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, Chechens,—I even remember a Buryat student. Each nationality itself spoke about and for itself. And the natural result of the friendly discussions was the federative idea. At that time, we had at best only barely heard about the federalism of Proudhon and Bakunin or about the federalism of Dragomanov, and these names would have been a bad recommendation of the federalist idea for us. Our federalism was not inspired by some social school but born of life itself.”¹²²

Naturally, there were also North Caucasian activists aligned closer with the social democratic movement such as the Sorbonne-educated Daghestani radical Dzhahalutdin

¹²¹ Lasha Bakradze, “The German perspective on the Transcaucasian Federation and the influence of the Committee for Georgia's Independence,” *Caucasus Survey* 8, no. 1 (25 February 2020): 62; Baqradze, Lasha, *germanul-qartuli urtiertobebi pirveli msolfio omis dros (qartuli erovnuli komitetis saqmianoba 1914-1918 tsts.)* (German-Georgian relations during the time of the First World War [The Georgian National Committee's activities 1914-1918]) (Tbilisi: Pegasus Publishing, 2010), 44-47; “kavkasiis momavali konstitucia” (The future constitution of the Caucasus), *qartuli gazeti* 15 (1 November 1916).

¹²² Viktor Chernov, *Zapiski sotsialista-revoljutsionera* (Memoirs of a Socialist-Revolutionary), Berlin: Izdatel'stvo Z. I. Grzhebina, 1922, 116, https://archive.org/details/zapiski_sotsialista_revoljutsionera/mode/2up.

«Некоторые из межземляческих собраний имели шумный долгий успех. Таково было в особенности собрание по национальному вопросу, которое шутники прозвали «этнографической выставкой.» На нем были поляки, украинцы, белорусы, литовцы, грузины, армяне, татары, чеченцы, — помню даже студента-бурята... Каждая национальность сама говорила о себе и за себя. И естественным результатом товарищеских бесед явилась федеративная идея. О федерализме Прудона и Бакунина или о федерализме Драгоманова мы тогда в лучшем случае слышали лишь краем уха, и эти имена в наших глазах были бы плохой рекомендацией федералистической идеи. Наш федерализм явился не веянием какой-либо социальной школы, а порождением самой жизни.»

According to Chernov's memoirs, these were the students that were attracted to the Union Council and organization that Chernov was involved with at the time. This does not necessarily mean that this was the opinion of all the Caucasian students. He wrote that they brought those who were interested to the Union Council assemblies. It also does not mean that all the *zemljachestva* were necessarily officially joining the Union Council and taking on its ideology. However, it does indicate that the different national groups, including Caucasian groups, were naturally inclined towards federalism.

Korkmasov and the Muslim Ossetian socialist Axmet Tsalikov.¹²³ Nonetheless, as the above quotes indicate, the main tendency of the politically active Caucasian Mountaineers seems to have been to advocate for Caucasian federation and they were also consciously preparing for political developments while operating under the guise of cultural enlightenment. This will be confirmed in the developments of spring 1917.

1. *The 1905 Revolution*

Bloody Sunday, the massacre of peaceful protesters which took place in front of the tsar's palace on 9 January 1905, kicked off a year of intensified revolutionary activity in Russia.¹²⁴ In the Caucasus, the primary demand was for regional autonomy, or at least some form of increased self-rule. As Vassan-Girej Dzhabagiev saw it, "the demand for regional autonomy was on every lip" and the uprisings in every corner of the Caucasus had been provoked by Russian administrators, alienating even the most conservative elements.¹²⁵ Unfortunately for the Caucasus, after the tsar promulgated the so-called October Manifesto (on 17 October), which allowed hitherto disenfranchised elements to vote in Duma elections, the Caucasians were still left without this right. In response, the viceroy Count Illarion Vorontsov-Dashkov sent Ilia Chavchavadze and Niko Nikoladze at the head of a Caucasian delegation to the imperial capital to convince the tsar to allow their participation. Electoral rules were then worked out to give landowners a decided advantage over the peasants and urbanites.¹²⁶ Notwithstanding this reinforcement of class inequality, the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) in the Caucasus were in favor of regional autonomy, running in the election campaign for the First Duma on the slogan of regional autonomy and advertising their intention to work

¹²³ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 61-62.

¹²⁴ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 167.

¹²⁵ Vassan-Girej Dzhabagiev, "Chto Nuzhno Kavkazu?" (What does the Caucasus need?) Originally published in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* 235 (1 October 1905), accessed 19 January 2022, <http://gazavat.ru/history3.php?rub=34&art=892>.

¹²⁶ E. A. Goldenweiser, "The Russian Duma," *Political Science Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (September 1914), 408-409; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 200; "The October Manifesto (1905)," Alpha History, <https://alphahistory.com/russianrevolution/october-manifesto-1905/>, last accessed 8 March 2022.

with the autonomists' faction in the Duma—although they were no competition to the radical RSDLP.¹²⁷

As for the Muslim liberals in Baku, they were cautious, petitioning only for the reforms like *zemstvo* (local self-government) to be introduced into the Caucasus and better career and educational opportunities for Muslims.¹²⁸ In summer 1905, Muslim liberals from eastern Transcaucasia and North Caucasian Muslims attended the First All-Russian Muslim Congress, which made a weak attempt to create a political party to promote Russia's transformation into a constitutional monarchy that gave fair representation to the minority nationalities.¹²⁹ But by late 1905, it was clear that the Muslim liberals in Baku were more interested in a local solution as they founded their own constitutionalist party connected to the local Kadets.¹³⁰ According to Tadeusz Swietochowski, this party also supported Transcaucasia's reorganization into an autonomous region with its own legislature (*sejm*) and subdivisions based on ethnically homogenous administrative units."¹³¹

At this point, national autonomy was demanded only by some Georgians. However, Vassan-Girej Dzhabagiev presciently anticipated the thorny national tensions that would arise if the national question was glossed over in the fight for regional autonomy. In 1906 he wrote,

“Like the forest is missed for the trees, the national question, very bitter in the Caucasus, was similarly obscured by autonomy. It was forgotten that the solutions must be found at once to two questions: the question of decentralization and the national question. Moreover, solving the first does not solve the second. The broad masses have even less understanding of these issues than the Kadets. For now, it is only clear to every Caucasian that there is a need for decentralization and liberation from the harsh

¹²⁷ V. Dzhabagiev, “Kavkaz, Avtonomija i natsionalnyj vopros” (The Caucasus, autonomy and the national question) Originally published in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* 120 (2 June 1906), accessed 19 January 2022, <https://ghalghay.com/2010/03/26/кавказ-автономия-и-национальный-вопрос/>. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 201-202.

¹²⁸ Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 46-47.

¹²⁹ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 48.

¹³⁰ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 50.

¹³¹ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 50.

government tutelage—and only [this]... Whatever means or ways, and any kind of autonomy, are good, so long as they let the Caucasus breathe freely, sooner. [But] there are few in the Caucasus who have addressed what will happen next, after autonomy is granted, and how it will be realized, with the exception of the Georgian program for a special national autonomy for the Georgians.”¹³²

In Dzhabagiev’s view, the Kadets were taking an important step forward but had not thoroughly considered the implications of granting autonomy to a region with a politically unprepared population consisting of many different ethno-national groups. He continues, “However, I do not mean to say with this that the autonomists should sit idle. On the contrary, they have a lot, a whole lot of work to do. They can and must prepare the answer to the question by a thousand means and ways: by way of the press, special publications and through the practice of congresses, district and regional, private and public.”¹³³

Meanwhile, the revolutionary parties in the Caucasus—who also thought in regional terms—were competing for the support of the non-privileged population. For example, the Georgian Socialist-Federalists and Social Democrats vied for the support of the peasants in Guria during their rebellion of 1902-1906, the latter with greater success.¹³⁴ Thanks to Japanese support and ties to anarchist networks in Europe, the Socialist-Federalists managed to bring modest amounts of propaganda literature and weapons into western Georgia via Batumi. A driving figure in this effort was Giorgi

¹³² V. Dzhabagiev, “The Caucasus, autonomy and the national question.”

«Как за деревьями не видно леса, так и за автономией не видели национального вопроса, очень остро на Кавказе, забывая, что она должна решить сразу два вопроса: вопрос децентрализации и вопрос национальный, причем решение первого еще не решает второго. Еще менее, чем кадеты, разбирались в этих вопросах широкие слои населения. Для каждого кавказца пока ясно одно, что Кавказу необходимы децентрализация, освобождение от суровой правительственной опеки – и только... Все средства и все пути, и всякая автономия хороши, лишь бы они дали возможность Кавказу скорее вздохнуть свободно грудью. Что случится потом, после дарования автономии, как она будет осуществлена – об этом, признаться, мало кто думал на Кавказе, если исключить грузинскую программу особой национальной грузинской автономии.»

¹³³ V. Dzhabagiev, “The Caucasus, autonomy and the national question.”

¹³⁴ S. F. Jones, “Marxism and Peasant Revolt in the Russian Empire: The Case of the Gurian Republic,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 67, no. 3 (July 1989): 403-434; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 129-158; Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 29-39; Eric Lee, *The Experiment: Georgia’s Forgotten Revolution 1918-1921* (London: Zed, 2017), 7-31; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 165-171.

Dekanozishvili, who, according to a contemporary, was devoted to the vision of “Georgia free and triumphant leading all the Caucasus states” in a great campaign to drive Russia out forever.¹³⁵ Another key personality involved in this effort was Leo Kereselidze, who would later fight with the North Caucasian Mountaineers against the Volunteer Army in Chechnya.¹³⁶

Like the Socialist-Federalists, Dashnak revolutionaries also made use of developments in transport infrastructure to smuggle revolutionary materials and weapons into Batumi and thought in regional terms.¹³⁷ Starting in 1903, after the tsar resolved to confiscate the Armenian Church’s properties and take over its network of schools, the Dashnaktsutun had begun to focus increasingly on the situation of Armenians in the Russian Empire.¹³⁸ This change in direction found crystallization at party congresses in 1904 and in the “Caucasian Project” of June 1905.¹³⁹ The Dashnaks’ “Caucasian Project” called for a pan-Russian struggle against the autocracy, Transcaucasia’s transformation into a democratic federative republic and extensive local autonomy.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the “Turkic Socialist-Federalist Revolutionary Committee” appeared in the Elizavetpoľskaja gubernija (Elizabetpol governorate, Ganja province) in February 1905. In two declarations, the first entitled “Caucasian Tribes, Unite!”, the

¹³⁵ Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 35-36.

¹³⁶ Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 35-36.

¹³⁷ Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 50-55; Varak Ketsemanian, “Straddling Two Empires: Cross-Revolutionary Fertilization and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation’s Military Academy in 1906-07,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 4, no. 2 (November 2017): 348. See also Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, vol. 1, *Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 186-187.

According to Ascher, Russian revolutionaries (SDs, anarchists, etc.) were using considerable creativity to obtain weapons in Western and Central Europe and the primary method of bringing them into the empire was by way of sea.

¹³⁸ Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 17-18; Ter Minassian, “Nationalisme et socialisme,” 15.

¹³⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 18; Ketsemanian, “Straddling Two Empires,” 349; Ter Minassian, “Nationalisme et socialisme,” 32-34

¹⁴⁰ Ter Minassian, “Nationalisme et socialisme,” 34-35.

committee called for the “tribes” of the Caucasus to unite against their common oppressor—the Russian government—so that each could establish its own laws of “autonomy”. The committee called for cooperation with the Georgian Socialist-Federalists, the Armenian Dashnaks and Russian Socialists-Revolutionaries (SRs) who had the same aims. This committee was likely the predecessor of the Gejrat Party.¹⁴¹ The Gejrat Party was established in the summer of 1905 by, among others, Shafi-bek Rustambekov (Şəfi bəy Mustafa bəy oğlu Rüstəmbəyli)—who also co-founded the similarly minded Difai Party—in the fall of 1905. The Gejrat and Difai Parties both promoted the idea of unity for the three major Transcaucasian nations.¹⁴² The Difai party, active in 1906-1908, had the support of about one thousand men throughout eastern Transcaucasia and in the Terek and Daghestan oblasts of the North Caucasus.¹⁴³

As for the Russian parties, the Russian Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries favored administrative decentralization (broad autonomy for the regions) and a federal solution to the national question.¹⁴⁴ The RSDLP, by contrast, produced the most

¹⁴¹ I. C. Bagirova, *Politicheskie partii i organizatsii Azerbajdzhana v nachale XX veka, 1900-1917* (The political parties and organizations of Azerbaijan in the early 20th century) (Baku: Elm, 1997), chapter 3, “Natsionalnye partii Azerbajdzhana” (National Parties of Azerbaijan), section 1, “Vozniknovenie i dejatel’nost’ Azerbajdzhanskix natsionalnyx partij (The origin and activity of the Azerbaijani national parties),” subsection “Gejrat (Chest’)” (Gejrat [Honor]), accessed 5 June 2022, https://www.ebooks.az/book_yJbvXi8c.html; Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 45-46. See also, Edith Ybert, “Islam, nationalism and socialism in the parties and political organizations of Azerbaijani Muslims in the early twentieth century,” *Caucasus Survey* 1, no. 1 (October 2013), 43-58.

¹⁴² Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 43-45.

Swietochowski presents the Turkic Socialist-Federalist Revolutionary Committee and Gejrat as separate organizations. Bagirova presents the former as the basis for the latter. Ybert presents them as the same.

¹⁴³ Ybert, “Islam, nationalism and socialism,” 3.

An *oblast’* is a large administrative unit. It is often translated as “region” but in the Caucasus it cannot be a region in the sense that the North Caucasus, Transcaucasia or the Caucasus is a region.

¹⁴⁴ Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 138; Maureen Perrie, “The Social Composition and Structure of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party before 1917,” *Soviet Studies* 24, no. 2 (October 1972), 225, 238; “Programma partii sotsialistov-revoljutsionerov” (Program of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party) in *Programy glavnejshix russkix partij*, Biblioteka Svobodnago Naroda, 16-17, accessed 9 March 2022, <https://dlib.rsl.ru/viewer/01004097304#?page=1>.

Berberian phrases it as follows: “In particular, they [SS: Khazhak and likeminded individuals] pointed to Russian Socialist Revolutionaries and also the Jewish Bund, which called for national cultural self-determination (and extraterritorial national federation).”

vehement opponents of federalism. Caucasian Social Democrats, Bolshevik and Menshevik, raved against a federal solution to the national problem.¹⁴⁵ These socialists regarded nationalism and associated ideas like national autonomy and federalism as bourgeois devices used to keep the workers of the world divided and fighting each other instead of the exploiter class. They also sincerely feared that the redrawing of territorial-administrative boundary lines that would come with granting autonomy to the national groups would lead to an unavoidable inter-ethnic conflict in the Caucasus.¹⁴⁶ Even so, they too argued for a regional solution, in the form of regional self-government and a Caucasian Sejm along with local competencies, in the election campaign for the First Duma. Armenian socialists in the Hunchak Party allied with the Social Democrats in the campaign and ran on the same platform.¹⁴⁷

Although there could have been other potential outcomes, in retrospect, these concerns of the Social Democrats were not without warrant. Instead of a successful regional rebellion uniting all the Caucasian nationalities against the common oppressor, the 1905 Revolution witnessed inter-ethnic clashes that would make cooperation between them more difficult in the future. Most famously, this is remembered as the brutal and scarring conflict which erupted between the Armenians and Muslim Tatars of eastern Transcaucasia (Azerbaijanis), but there were also outbreaks of violence between the Cossacks and Ingush, Russians and Chechens, Ossetians and Ingush, etc.¹⁴⁸

Despite these tragedies and the paucity of evidence demonstrating any productive coordinated efforts against the tsarist regime between the North Caucasian and Transcaucasian nationalities in 1905-1907, the Russian authorities were alarmed at the possibility of the Caucasians uniting in a common struggle to put an end to the

¹⁴⁵ Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 136-142; Ronald Suny, "The revenge of the past: Socialism and ethnic conflict in Transcaucasia," *New Left Review*, November/December 1990, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i184/articles/ronald-suny-the-revenge-of-the-past-socialism-and-ethnic-conflict-in-transcaucasia.pdf>; Ter Minassian, "Nationalisme et socialisme," 30.

¹⁴⁶ Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 138; Ronald Grigor Suny, *Stalin: Passage to Revolution* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020), 196.

¹⁴⁷ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 200.

¹⁴⁸ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 42-43.

autocracy's control over the region. This is apparent from two quotes. On 26 February 1905, the governor of Elizavetpol wrote the following to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Russia:

“Although we do not yet have the official facts to prove that the Caucasian nationalities are trying to form a criminal union between themselves for a common fight against the Russian government, which is what their proclamations are calling for, the realization of such a unification would have such a threatening character for our own dominion in the region that I considered it my duty to bring it to your attention now.”¹⁴⁹

Later, in December 1905, the governor general of the Terek oblast, expressed concern about the possibility of the combined out-of-towner and native rebel forces seizing the Giorgievsk arsenal; the largest arsenal in the North Caucasus, writing, “The revolutionaries would get the chance to mobilize an entire army out of the peoples of the Caucasus, and it would be difficult to imagine the whole dimension of the terrible consequences for the entire state.”¹⁵⁰

Thus triggered, the imperial forces took harsh measures to suppress the various disturbances arising throughout the region. Georgia was placed under martial law as early as February (1905) and considerable effort was put into pacifying Guria.¹⁵¹ In August 1905, Cossacks shot up a Tbilisi City Duma meeting because too many people had gathered and were behaving in an unruly fashion.¹⁵² That same month, the inflamed Armenians were soothed to an extent with the return of their church property.¹⁵³ Then,

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Bagirova, *The political parties and organizations of Azerbaijan*, section “Gejrat.”

«Хотя стремление Кавказских народностей, - говорить в письме, - к преступному объединению между собой для борьбы общими силами с русским правительством - к чему призывают означенные прокламации - пока официальными данными не установлено, однако осуществление подобного объединения имело бы столь угрожающий характер для самого господства нашего в крае, что я счел своим долгом ныне же обратить на это Ваше внимание.»

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Lothar Maier, “Distant Allies: The Revolutionary Movement and Native Resistance in the North Caucasus 1905-1913,” in *The Russian Revolution of 1905 in Transcultural Perspective: Identities, Peripheries, and the Flow of Ideas*, eds. Felicitas Fischer von Weikersthal et al. (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2013), 148.

¹⁵¹ Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, 154; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 167.

The North Caucasians played a role in this. General A. M. Alixanov-Avanskij (of Daghestani background) was assigned to quell the rebellion in Guria (though the liberal official N.A. Sultan-Krym-Girej was then sent to try to find a peaceable solution instead).

¹⁵² Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 187; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 168.

after months of tensions, martial law was declared in mid-December for all of Tiflisskaja gubernija (Tiflis governorate, province) and the railways.¹⁵⁴ Meetings were banned, and Cossacks and soldiers, encouraged to shoot freely, were stationed all over the region's administrative capital. After some fighting in the city's Nadzaladevi district—dubbed “Switzerland” because of the sense of freedom people enjoyed there—the regime regained control of Tiflis in late-December and early January 1906.¹⁵⁵ Guria was also subdued in January 1906.¹⁵⁶ As for the North Caucasus, in December 1905 the Terek oblast was placed under a state of seige. Severe restrictions of movement were imposed on the natives and the Cossacks were mobilized to secure important points. Reinforcements of troops were brought from surrounding areas.¹⁵⁷ In addition, harsh punitive measures were unleashed against Ossetians in order to prevent the Ingush or Chechens from joining up with them.¹⁵⁸

In order to keep the Caucasian population calm, the tsarist administrators attempted to implement reforms too. In line with the wish of local liberals, the viceroy Vorontsov-Dashkov prioritized the introduction of zemstvo and hosted a conference for discussing the matter soon after his arrival in May 1905.¹⁵⁹ Although Vorontsov-Dashkov claimed the greatest barrier to his reforms had been the imperial bureaucracy, the bitterness expressed at the meetings organized for discussion on how zemstvo might

¹⁵³ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 20; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 171.

¹⁵⁴ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 191, 193; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 166, 169.

¹⁵⁵ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 194; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 170.

¹⁵⁶ Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, 155-156.

¹⁵⁷ Maier, “Distant Allies,” 150-151.

¹⁵⁸ Maier, “Distant Allies,” 151.

¹⁵⁹ GARF f. 601, op. 1, d. 995. l. 1-11. I would like to thank Paul Robinson for sending me his handwritten notes and translation of this document; Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence 1918*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 15; Richard G. Hovannisian, “Russian Armenia. A Century of Tsarist Rule,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte* 19, no. 1 (March 1971), 38; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 172, 175-178; A. Shaxatunjan, *Administrativnyj peredel Zakavkazskago kraja* (Administrative remaking of the Caucasus region) (Tiflis: Tipografija “Ashxatavor,” 1918), 101; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 172. Vorontsov-Dashkov's second attempt to initiate zemstvo implementation in 1909 was also without result.

be introduced in the Caucasus did not bode well for the region.¹⁶⁰ As the Ossetian colonel Nikolaj Aleksandrovich Bigaev lamented, "...the debates took such a turn, even between the Armenians and Georgians, that to me it seemed we Caucasians should never dream of zemstvo self-government, not even for the distant future. The national issue came triumphantly to the fore, irreconcilable, severe and adequately logical."¹⁶¹ The zemstvo debates foreshadowed a time when national identities would prevail over any co-existing sense of regional solidarity.

The last viceroy, Grand Duke Nikolaj Nikolaevich Romanov (1915-1917) too tried to introduce zemstvo to the Caucasus, and in April 1916 he organized for this purpose a conference of representatives from the various Caucasian nationalities in late April 1916.¹⁶² At the conference, the delegates voted by a large majority to follow the zemstvo provisions according to the 1890 act and, in order to speed up the process, keep the current boundaries. But most Armenian representatives were not happy with the outcome because it did not seem fair to them in light of the situation of the Armenian population, of whatever class.¹⁶³ When a Transcaucasian zemstvo project was then

¹⁶⁰ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 339.

¹⁶¹ N.A. Bigaev, "Poslednie namestniki Kavkaza (v svete lichnyx vospominanij) (1902-1917)" [The last viceroys of the Caucasus (in light of personal recollections)(1902-1917)] in *Rossiiskij Arxiv: Istorija Otechestva v svidetelstvax i dokumentax XVIII-XX vv.: Almanax*. (The Russian Archive: The history of the fatherland in evidence and documents of the 18th-20th centuries: Almanac), vol 7, (Moscow: Studija TRITE: Ros. Arxiv, 2003), vol. 7, 419, https://runivers.ru/doc/d2.php?CENTER_ELEMENT_ID=148705.

«Причем споры принимали такой оборот и при этом между армянами и грузинами, что мне казалось, что о земском самоуправлении мечтать нам, кавказцам, не приходится вовсе, даже в отдаленном будущем. На первый план победоносно выступал всегда национальный момент, непримиримый, жестокий и достаточно логический.»

¹⁶² Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 185; Paul Robinson, *Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich: Supreme Commander of the Russian Army* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016), 279. The conference opened on 26 April 1916 and lasted several days.

¹⁶³ Kamala Imranli-Lowe, "The Provisional Government and the Armenian Homeland Project," *Revolutionary Russia* 27, no. 2 (2014), 134; Shaxatunjan, *The Administrative remaking of the Caucasus region*, 104; Irakli Xvadagiani, *eroba: tvitmmartvelobis reforma saqartvelos respublikashi 1918, tomi I* (Zemstvo: self-government reform in the Georgian republic 1918, vol. 1) (Tbilisi: Sovlab 2018), 88-89; GARF f. 601, op. 1, d. 995. l. 1-11. According to the handwritten notes supplied by Paul Robinson; G. Tumanov, "Zadachi zemskago soveshhanija v Tiflise" (The tasks of the zemstvo meeting in Tiflis), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 95 (28 April 1916); "Tiflis, 28-go aprelja" (Tiflis, 28 April), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 95 (28 April 1916); "V Tiflise. Kraevoe Soveshhanie. Pervoe obshee sobranie soveshhanija. 26-go aprelja" (In Tiflis. Regional Meeting. The first general meeting of discussion. 26 April) 95 (28 April 1916); Elte, "O

submitted by the Viceroyalty to the Council of Ministers in Petrograd in late 1916, this version of the project kept the current boundaries, which placed the Armenian population as a minority in most every province (*gubernija*) and district (*uezd*). This outcome and the zemstvo arguments preceding it inspired Armenian leaders to work out a proposal for reorganizing Transcaucasia according to the “ethnographic principle”, that is, according to the settlement patterns of the ethnic groups because they thought such an arrangement would be more favorable to Armenians.¹⁶⁴ Regardless, the zemstvo reform could not be implemented in the Caucasus before the empire ceased to exist.

2. *After 1907*

After the 1905-1907 Revolution, the national-regional question remained an important topic in revolutionary political debates, and the split between centralists and decentralists on the national-regional question continued unabated. In Georgian society, two journals were published that are associated with Vladimir Darchiashvili and the national-autonomist current within the Social Democratic movement.¹⁶⁵ These are *alioni* (Dawn, 1908) and *chveni kvali* (Our furrow, 1908). A quote from an article published in *chveni kvali* helps to clarify the fine distinction that Georgian intellectuals made between “centralists” and “decentralists”. It reads,

zemskom soveshhanii” (On the zemstvo meeting), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 96 (29 April 1916); “saerobo tatbiri” (zemstvo meeting), *saqartvelo* 94 (28 April 1916); “Kraevoe soveshhanije o zemstve” (The regional meeting on the zemstvo) *Kavkazskoe slovo* 97 (30 April 1916); G. M-zov, “Musulmane v zemskom soveshhanii” (Muslims in the zemstvo meeting) *Kavkazskoe slovo* 97 (30 April 1916); Zhil Blaz, “K zemskomu soveshhaniju” (To the zemstvo meeting), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 98 (1 May 1916); “Obzor pechati” (Press review), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 98 (1 May 1916); “Zadachi zemskago soveshhanija v Tiflis, II” (The tasks of the zemstvo meeting in Tiflis, 2), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 99 (3 May 1916); P. T., “Kraevoe soveshhanije o zemstve” (The regional meeting on the zemstvo), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 99 (3 May 1916); “saerobo tatbiri” (zemstvo meeting), *saqartvelo* 98 (3 May 1916). Representatives from the Daghestan oblast were also present.

¹⁶⁴ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 14-15; Imranli-Lowe, “The Provisional Government and the Armenian Homeland Project,” 134-135; Shaxatunjan, *The administrative remaking of the Caucasus region*, 117-119.

¹⁶⁵ Vladimir Darchiashvili is mentioned above as the probable attendee of the 1904 Geneva conference of Georgian revolutionaries (and decentralists) and a founder of the territorial-autonomist wing in Georgian social democracy.

“We place fault on our ‘centralist’ comrades precisely because they reject autonomy in a very specific case; they reject autonomy for our country today and replace it with “regional self-government for the Caucasus”. This here is the subject of our dispute and debate... Instead of “regional self-government”, which means only broad administrative self-government, we demand autonomy which means a defined political self-government.... The second main point of our dispute and disagreement is the question of what kind of relationship should be established between the nations living in the Caucasus. Our “centralist” comrades reject national-cultural autonomy for them and are satisfied with these nations’ common self-government.”¹⁶⁶

At this time, Armenian intellectuals and revolutionaries were also engaged in similar debates about whether centralism or decentralism would be appropriate for “our country”.¹⁶⁷ On the one hand, Armenian social democrats and likeminded socialists were vehemently opposed to federalism.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, the Dashnaks and their allies were in favor. For example, in the view of the Dashnak leader and theorist Garegin Khazhak, arguing in 1907-1908, a Caucasian federation should be created within a Russian federation. The Caucasian federation should be divided into three sections: 1) Transcaucasia; 2) Mountainous and 3) Northern. In his opinion, this federation should enter into a future “Russian United States”, phrasing which hearkens to a broader world view that imagined the solution to national and social issues would be found in an upward cascade of federations from the local to the universal.¹⁶⁹ This decentralist conception was mirrored in the Dashnaktsutjun party program adopted in 1907, which called for a Transcaucasian democratic federative republic with its own parliament.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ “ra aris chven shoris sadavo? (nacionalur programis shesaxebe)” (What is disputed between us? [about the national program), *chveni kvali* 10 (27 July 1908). The term “nacia” (nation) is used.

¹⁶⁷ For tidbits about the ambiguous use of the phrase “our country”, including to mean all-Russia or the Caucasus, among Armenian intellectuals in this period, see Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 136-137, 141, 151, 231, 246.

¹⁶⁸ Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 123, 136-139.

¹⁶⁹ Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries*, 121-143.

¹⁷⁰ “Programma Armjanskoj revoljucionnoj partii ‘Dashnaktsutjun’ 1907 g.” (The program of the Armenian revolutionary party “Dashnaktsutjun” of 1907), accessed 22 January 2022, <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/74933-programma-armyanskoy-revoljutsionnoy-partii-dashnaktsutyun-1907-g>; Ter Minassian, “Nationalisme et socialisme,” 36-37.

Even though Caucasian members of the RSDLP were committed centralists (anti-federalists), they too thought in regional terms. This is evident from Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question*, published in 1913. In this book, the Georgian Bolshevik argued in favor of supporting the nations' right to self-determination (with certain qualifications) and even political autonomy. Since, however, autonomy would imply a federation of national autonomies, which the party firmly opposed, Stalin proposed forming regional autonomies for "such crystallized units as Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, etc." Stalin highlighted the Caucasian case, saying that regional autonomy was essential for the Caucasus because of the "peculiarities of its composition and its conditions of life". In his discussion on the Caucasus specifically, he provides a quote from a Menshevik leader "N" which confirms the Mensheviks were thinking in regional terms as well. According to this "N", "The jurisdiction of the central organ of Caucasian self-government should extend to legislation on local questions." This quote shows that the Caucasian Mensheviks were thinking of an autonomous Caucasian administrative unit that would be internally centralized. The difference here between the thinking of Stalin and that of "N" appears to be that Stalin rejected such Mensheviks' call for internal national-cultural autonomy within this centralized regional autonomy. In his view, the nationalities in the Caucasus were too intermixed to be "organized separately whether territorially or national-culturally. Moreover, he thought some of them were too undeveloped for such cultural-autonomy."¹⁷¹

Caucasian revolutionaries did not limit themselves to verbal sparring. Petre Surguladze and other Georgian nationalists went so far as to organize the Action Committee of the Party of Georgian Separatists Abroad in Geneva in 1911. Leo Kereselidze, who had been active in the 1905 Revolution and later would help the North

Ter Minassian interprets the document to say the party called for a Transcaucasian democratic republic, with broad autonomy, inside a Russian federated republic. The text says, "a Transcaucasian democratic federated republic with its own parliament."

¹⁷¹ Stalin, J.V. *Marxism and the National Question*, accessed 23 January 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03a.htm#n33>.

Caucasians fight against Denikin in 1919, was one of the members.¹⁷² According to Leo's brother Giorgi, as soon as the First World War broke out, the Georgian separatists initiated talks with German representatives and an agreement was quickly reached with Germany whereby the latter recognized Georgian sovereignty on its own territory "in advance" and promised to help the nation establish and defend its statehood.¹⁷³ In order to coordinate better with other parties, they abolished the old committee and established a new one, the Georgian Independence Committee. This committee included Petre Surguladze, Mixeil Tsereteli (the former anarchist), Nestor Maghalashvili and the Kereselidze brothers.¹⁷⁴

Although it is not exactly clear how the Georgian Independence Committee and the Georgian National League are related, in September 1914 Mixeil Tsereteli and Giorgi Machabeli appealed to the German Foreign Ministry in the name of the "Georgian National League" for assistance to the Georgian and Caucasian peoples in their liberation struggle. They envisioned the creation of a regional federation with an independent state comprised of a Georgian constitutional monarchy, a North Caucasian federation and cantons for the highly mixed Armenian and Azerbaijani populations.¹⁷⁵ They then went to Trabzon to catch up with Giorgi Kereselidze and other members of

¹⁷² Giorgi Kereselidze, "saqartvelos damoukideblobis komiteti (1914-1918 tsts.) axladaghmochenili mogonebebi saqartvelos damoukideblobis komitetis shesaxeb" (Georgia's Independence Committee (1914-1918), newly discovered memories about Georgia's Independence Committee), *qartuli emigracia* 1 (4) (2013): 151; Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 69-70. In the original Georgian, Kereselidze calls this committee the qartvel separatistta partiis ucxoetshi momqmedi komiteti (ქართველ სეპარატისტთა პარტიის უცხოეთში მომქმედი კომიტეტი).

¹⁷³ Kereselidze, "Georgia's Independence Committee," 155.
With Germany's help they concluded a similar agreement with Austro-Hungary.

¹⁷⁴ Kereselidze, "Georgia's Independence Committee," 155.

¹⁷⁵ Bakradze, Lasha, "The German perspective on the Transcaucasian Federation and the influence of the Committee for Georgia's Independence," *Caucasus Survey* 8, no. 1 (25 February 2020): 61-62; Baqradze, Lasha, *germanul-qartuli urtiertobebi pirveli msofliu omis dros (qartuli erovnuli komitetis saqmianoba 1914-1918 tsts.)* (German-Georgian relations during the time of the First World War [The Georgian National Committee's activities 1914-1918]) (Tbilisi: Pegasus Publishing, 2010), 44-47; Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 76.

Bakradze claims in his article that this was in September 1915, but in his book it was September 1914. According to a photograph provided in the book, the letter was signed in Berlin in September 1914.

the Georgian Independence Committee who had secured Ottoman support for military operations with German help. In Trabzon, the committee was expanded and a legion was formed which included Georgian Muslims, North Caucasians and Laz.¹⁷⁶

Although it is not clear how this event is related to the activities of the Georgian Independence Committee, in late-August 1914 a Turkish mission including Persian, Kurdish, Georgian, Azerbaijani (Caucasian Tatar), Lezghian, Chechen and Circassian representatives also left Constantinople to meet with Dashnak leaders in Erzerum. The mission leaders' aim was to bring the Armenians into a grand alliance against Russia (and by extension the Allies), and their claim was that the Turks had already secured the cooperation of the Georgians, Azerbaijanis, and North Caucasian Mountaineers. Not trusting in the promises of the Turks for autonomy in exchange for cooperation, the Dashnaks rejected their proposal.¹⁷⁷ Perhaps this delegation was connected to the Caucasian Committee formed under Ottoman auspices earlier that month. This committee united Circassians, Daghestanis, Georgians and Azerbaijanis.¹⁷⁸ This committee also appealed to the Germans for help in forming a Caucasian confederation in 1915.¹⁷⁹

According to Lasha Bakradze, the Georgians played the leading role in coordinating activities between the Germans and North Caucasians from both the

¹⁷⁶ Baqradze, *German-Georgian relations*, 45; Kereselidze, "Georgia's Independence Committee," 156-159; Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 76.

Kereselidze indicates there were more North Caucasians than Georgian Muslims or Laz. Kereselidze makes it seem as if the legion was formed before Tsereteli and Machabeli arrived, but it is not explicitly clear. Bakradze writes that Giorgi Tsereteli and Giorgi Machabeli rushed to Constantinople. Kereselidze says they came to Trabzon. Perhaps they came to Trabzon by way of Constantinople.

¹⁷⁷ Dr. G. Pasdermajian (Armen Garo), *Why Armenia should be Free, Armenia's Role in the Present War* (Boston: Hairenik Publishing Company, 1918), 15-18.

The Turks promised the Armenians autonomy (Russian Armenia, Erzerum, Van and Bitlis) in exchange for their cooperation in defeating Russia and the Allies. Despite their distrust of the Russian government, the Dashnak leaders had less confidence in the Ottomans and placed their hopes in England and France. Armen Garo claimed it was in retribution for their refusal that the Ottoman government murdered the Dashnaks Mr. Aknoui and Mr. Vramian and started the genocide.

¹⁷⁸ Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 76.

¹⁷⁹ Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 75.

Ottoman and Russian Empires.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, a Chechen called Uzden Arzamakov (nom de guerre “Murad Gazavat” was connected to the Georgian nationalists. His North Caucasian resistance group, “Sun, Star and Crescent Moon”, had the aim of “a free Caucasus for the Caucasians, an ‘unshakably solid Caliphate’ and an ‘eternal alliance’ with Turkey against Russia”.¹⁸¹ And in 1916 this Arzamakov and an Azerbaijani were involved in secret operations in the Caucasus with Machabeli and other Georgians.¹⁸² The memorandum of the Circassians to the Lausanne conference of 1916 also shows plainly that the North Caucasian independentists were thinking in regionally inclusive terms at this time. In this document, the authors insist that 1) all the Caucasian peoples were bound by a moral unity which had existed since time immemorial down into the present, 2) the Georgians and North Caucasians (“Circassians and Lezghians”) shared an ethnographic unity and 3) that the greater part of the Caucasian population also shared a religious unity (Circassians, Lezghians and Turco-Tatars).¹⁸³

Unfortunately for the aims of the joint Georgian-Muslim attempt to coordinate their opposition to the Russian regime with the help of the Central Powers, by 1916, the North Caucasians left the Caucasian Committee in Constantinople and formed a separate organization called “The North Caucasian Refugees Committee in Turkey”.¹⁸⁴ Perhaps this split influenced the content in a series of articles entitled “The future

¹⁸⁰ Bakradze, “The German perspective,” 62; Baqradze, *German-Georgian relations*, 47.

¹⁸¹ Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 77; Werner Zürer, “Deutschland und die Entwicklung Nordkaukasiens im Jahre 1918,” (Germany and the North Caucasian Development in 1918), *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 26, no. 1 (1978), 31-33. „Sonne, Stern und Halbmond“; „Gazavat nannte als Ziel der Tätigkeit seiner Gruppe einen freien Kaukasus für die Kaukasier, ein „unerschütterlich festes Chalifat“ und ein „ewiges Kreigsbündnis“ mit der Türkei gegen Rußland.“

¹⁸² Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 77.

¹⁸³ *Mémoire de la Délégation Circassienne* [Memorandum of the Circassian Delegation], Lausanne, Lith.-Imph. Marsents & Boivin, 1916, 13

« Un intellectuel circassien connaissant le monde occidental est la peste même pour les Russes ; il ne pourra jamais disposer librement de son temps, se mettre en relation avec ses compatriotes, essayer d’élever leur niveau moral et intellectuel. Il sera immédiatement éloigné ou interné sous un prétexte quelconque. »

¹⁸⁴ Bakradze, “The German perspective,” 65; Kuromiya and Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle*, 75.

constitution of the Caucasus”, published in the mouthpiece of the Georgian Independence Committee, *qartuli gazeti* (Georgian gazette), in November-December 1916. Here, the Georgian nationalists shared their view on the political shape they now thought appropriate for the region. They said that the differences between the North Caucasians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians were too great for a common, regional constituent assembly but if each group were to hold individual national constituent assemblies and then hold repeated common congresses at which they would find compromise solutions to contentious issues, then through this process they might be able to gradually form a real unity.¹⁸⁵

The authors also summarized the history of the revolutionary movement in the Caucasus. As they perceived it,

“Through the second half of the nineteenth century and turn of the twentieth, especially during the time of the 1905 Revolution and after, the Georgian writers and Georgian party leaders were of one great political idea, which concerned the future independence of the Caucasus and its political organization. The Georgian Social Democratic Party, which at first was infatuated with the idea of one great centralist republic which had to be established in Russia after the victory of the revolution and crushing of the autocracy, gradually got past the primitive centralist program and accepted Caucasian autonomy to a degree although it firmly rejected the severance of ties with Russia. Those peoples who do not want Russian dominion in the Caucasus imitated the current of these ideas, this political direction that Georgia led, and today we can say without reservation that all of the peoples of the Caucasus, except the Armenians, who want Russian dominion in the Caucasus, are fighting in solidarity for the realization of the ideal of the independence of the Caucasus and are in agreement with one main point: that the future Caucasian state should be established as a free federation of the Caucasian nations.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ “kavkasiis momavali konstitucia” (The future constitution of the Caucasus), *qartuli gazeti* 17 (1 December 1916).

¹⁸⁶ “kavkasiis momavali konstitucia” (The future constitution of the Caucasus), *qartuli gazeti* 15 (1 Nov. 1916).

„მეცხრამეტე საუკუნის მეორე ნახევრის განმავლობაში, მეორე საუკუნის დასაწყისში, განსაკუთრებით კი 1905 წლის რევოლუციის დროსა და მას შემდეგ ქართველი მწერლები და ქართული პარტიანი მატარებელნი იყვნენ ერთის დიდის პოლიტიკურის იდეისა, რომელიც ეხებოდა კავკასიის მომავალ დამოუკიდებლობასა და მის პოლიტიკურ ორგანიზაციას. ქართული სოციალდემოკრატიული პარტია, რომელიც დასაწყისში გატაცებული იყო იდეით ერთის დიდის ცენტრალისტურის რესპობლიკისა, რომელიც უნდა დამყარებულიყო რუსეთში რევოლუციის გამარჯვებისა და თვითმპყრობელობის დათრგუნვის შემდეგ, თანდათან გასცილდა პირველყოფილს ცენტრალისტურ პროგრამასა და რამოდენიმედ აღიარა კავკასიის ავტონომია, თუმცა რუსეთთან კავშირის გაწყვეტაზე მან გადაჭრილი უარი სთქვა. ამ აზრთა მიმდინარეობას, ამ პოლიტიკურ მიმართულებას,

Thus, as this chapter shows, and the above cited passage confirms, the overarching tendency among the participants of the main “oppositional” or “progressive” political currents in the Caucasus from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth century was to conceptualize the Caucasus as a distinct region. The points of disagreement were on how they conceived the Caucasus should be connected to Russia, whether as part of a grand centralized Russian republic, most likely with regional autonomy; as part of a grand Russian federation, perhaps as a regional federation wherein each nation had internal national-territorial autonomy; or as an independent federation like Switzerland. Little did these hopeful theorists and revolutionaries know that their chance to experiment in real time was just around the corner, and the major division between centralists and decentralists that was sparked as early as the *zemljachestvo* debates of the 1860s would persist in clear form throughout the revolutionary year of 1917.

რომელსაც საქართველო უდგა თავში, სხვეებმაც მიჰბადეს—იმ ხალხებმა, რომელთაც არა ჰსურსთ რუსების ბატონობა კავკასიაში, და დღეს შეგვიძლია თამამად ვსთქვათ, რომ კავკასიის ყველას ხალხები გარდა სომხებისა, რომელთაც რუსის ბატონობა სურსთ კავკასიაში, სოლიდარულად იბრძვიან კავკასიის დამოუკიდებლობის იდეალის განხორციელებისათვის და თანახმანი არიან ერთს უმთავრეს მუხლში: რომ მომავალი კავკასიის სახელმწიფო უნდა წარმოადგენდეს კავკასიის ერთა თავისუფალ ფედერაციას.“

III. 1917: REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA AND REGIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

A. In the wake of the February Revolution

The pilot of a zeppelin flying over the Caucasus in early March would hear the notes of *La Marseillaise* floating up from every major city and gaze down upon a sea of red banners held aloft by happy crowds. People from all class, ethnic and religious backgrounds were united in celebrating the fall of the hated old tsarist regime—oft blamed as the real source of ethnic strife between them.¹⁸⁷ The Russian autocrat was gone. And now the Caucasian population was suddenly presented with the opportunity to recreate the political order of their region and participate in the formation of a democratic society in Russia as a whole. In this exciting moment, the politically active

¹⁸⁷ “dghevandeli mdgomareoba, 1, miṭiṅi” (The current situation, 1, meeting), *saxalxo furceli* 812 (7 March 1917) [Tiflis]; Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 69-70 [the Dashnaksutium in Tiflis]; Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy 1883-1917* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 246 [Tiflis]; Al. Mxoidze, “revoliuciis sxivebi guriashi” (The rays of the revolution in Guria), *saxalxo furceli* 820 (16 March 1917) [Guria]; M. Philips Price, *War & Revolution in Asiatic Russia* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1918), 280-287 [Tiflis]; Jan Nikolaevich Raenko, *Xronika istoricheskix sobytij na Donu, Kubani i v Chernomorie, vypusk I, Mart 1917 g. – Mart 1918 g.*, (Chronicle of the historic events on the Don, Kuban and Chernomorie) (Rostov na Donu: Rostovskoe oblastnoe knigoizdatel'stvo, 1939), 13 [Sochi], 15 [Ekaterinodar], <https://www.prlib.ru/item/686389>; “saxalxo miṭiṅi tbilisshi” (Popular meeting in Tbilisi), *saqartvelo* 53 (8 March 1917) [Tiflis]; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 70 [Baku]; V. A. Vasilenko and O. P. Panchenko, “Kuban v gody fevral'skoj revoliutsii 1917 goda” (Kuban in the year of the February Revolution, the year 1917), *Nauchnye Trudy KubGTU*, no. 10 (2017): 401 [Ekaterinodar].

The fact that the picture in the Caucasus is similar to that of St. Petersburg and central Russian cities highlights the commonality of the post-imperial space in this moment. Compare Rex A. Wade's passage on page 86 of *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

“Initially the mood was extremely optimistic that all problems could be solved and all aspirations met. After the overthrow of Nicholas, everything seemed possible... During the first few weeks a festive atmosphere swept Petrograd and other cities, with huge rallies, constant parades, singing of revolutionary songs, bands playing (the *Marseillaise*, the song of the French Revolution, was especially popular), all amidst a sea of red flags, red banners, and red ribbons.”

See for example, “qartvelta da mahmadiana urtiertoba” (The relationship between the Georgians and the Muslims), *saqartvelo* 223 (11 [24] October 1917).

“This is exactly what the Roman proverb *divide et impera* has to be about. Is this not what the already overthrown government was practicing among the various nations inhabiting the Caucasus, and the bitter fruit of which is just a sad story for us to remember?”

„სწორედ ამაზე უნდა იყოს ნათქვამი რომაული ანდაზა: „გასთიშე და იბატონე“-ო. და განა ამას არ ჩადიოდა აწ უკვე დამზობილი მთავრობა კავკასიის მოსახლე სხვადასხვა ეროვნებათა შორის, რომლის მწარე ნაყოფიც სამწუხარო მოსაგონებლად და გვრჩება?!“

elements drew upon the intellectual and revolutionary tradition of the previous decades to promote their preferred visions for a bright future.

All the main parties and organizations in the Caucasus initially advertised their intentions to remain within a reconstituted Russian state, though the division between centralists (unitarists) and decentralists (federalists) clearly persisted in their programs. In fact, the collapse of the tsar's bureaucratic regime resulted in an automatic administrative decentralization when provisional executive committees (*vremennye ispolnitelnye komitety*, *ispolkomy*, *ispolkoms*) appeared throughout the Caucasus. These bodies, which recognized the Provisional Government in Petrograd as the country's central authority, tended to be dominated by society's leading elements although they also included representatives from the non-Russian national groups, economic organizations, leftist soviets (councils) and so on.¹⁸⁸ These were intended only as temporary bodies to manage local affairs until elections could be organized for democratically legitimized representative bodies to replace them. Meanwhile, the workers', peasants' and soldiers' soviets (councils) which also formed throughout the region served as a parallel network of authoritative bodies for the "revolutionary" or "democratic" lower classes.

In the Caucasus, both the official and popular systems of authority included a regional element. When Russia's Provisional Government appointed commissioners to the region, these included the body of commissioners in the Special Transcaucasian Committee (*Osobyj Zakavkazskij Komitet*, *Ozakom*), which was created to manage Transcaucasia and Daghestan as a replacement for the Caucasian Viceroyalty. The region's socialist elements likewise formed a Regional Soviet in the summer. Foreshadowing Caucasia's ultimate lurch into total ethno-national decentralization, however, the national and religious groups also formed national councils and held congresses like the Baku Congress of Caucasian Muslims. These bodies were intended

¹⁸⁸ Pipes, *A Concise History*, 93; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 72-73; Raenko, *Chronicle*, 5.

I translate the term "soviet" as "soviet" to refer to the socialist bodies and "council" to refer to the non-socialist bodies, such as the national councils.

to serve the immediate need for peace and order until “four-tail” (universal, direct, equal and secret vote) democratic elections could be held for choosing legitimate representatives to both the local administrative bodies and the greatly anticipated All-Russian Constituent Assembly, that universal body expected to make the supreme final decision on how the Russian state would be restructured and the assets of the old regime and its greatest beneficiaries would be redistributed.

Throughout the year, Russian and Caucasian leaders of all stripes and colors tried to hold the former empire’s peoples and lands together, but Russia’s central Provisional Government repeatedly delayed the opening of the Constituent Assembly and failed to effectively manage the country during the chaos of revolution and a world war.¹⁸⁹ In so doing, this governmental body contributed to an historical outcome where the “maximalist” Bolsheviks and their comrades on the far left were able to seize the reins of power in central Russia without encountering too much opposition there in late October.¹⁹⁰

Once this happened, the leading political forces in the Caucasus, who refused to recognize the new, radical Soviet government as legitimate, deemed it necessary to abandon the system of de facto local administrations (Ozakom, ispolkoms, etc.) and establish autonomous governments to manage regional and local affairs until the Constituent Assembly could yet finally convene to create the longed-for legitimate state order and new government. Although Caucasian leaders continued trying to keep the whole region connected to Russia (imagined during the revolutionary period not as the old imperial juggernaut but rather as an embryotic democratic state with freedom for all) and the Caucasus’s diverse peoples together in a regional unit, the pull towards ethno-national consolidation spontaneously intensified in concert with the late-fall and

¹⁸⁹ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 80-81; Pipes, *A Concise History*, 92, 95.

¹⁹⁰ Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921, The fate of a Soviet democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 42-44.

They were called maximalists because they wanted the “maximum” program of reform to be realized even while the Russian state was at war, as opposed to the “minimum” program called for by more moderate socialists and liberals who wanted to prevent additional chaos.

early-winter's rapidly deteriorating security situation, which was greatly exacerbated by the intensification of Bolshevik agitation and the crumbling of the Caucasus Front.

1. *Learning the news*

News about the bread riots and revolution which had started in late February in Petrograd reached the Caucasus quickly by telegraph, newspaper and rumor. Tsarist officials and informed politicians in Tiflis, the regional center, received telegrams within a day or so.¹⁹¹ As early as 2 March, the Tiflis mayor, Armenian Dashnak Aleksandr Xatisov (Xatisjan), informed an excited crowd about the developments in the capital and that he had telegraphed the news to twenty-eight cities in the region.¹⁹² Telegrams, alongside announcements and running analyses, were generally republished in the local papers after two or more days.¹⁹³ But the general population got the news at a faster rate through the traditional *xabary* system of political gossip.¹⁹⁴ The people

¹⁹¹ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 245-246; M. Philips Price, *War & Revolution in Asiatic Russia* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1918), 279; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 70.

¹⁹² Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 247; “saxelmtsifo saqmeebi da qalaqis sabçho” (State affairs and the city council), *saqartvelo* 50 (4 March 1917).

¹⁹³ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 246. See for example, “Telegrammy” (Telegrams), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 53 (7 March 1917); “satatbiroshi, depeshebi mtavarsardlebs” (In the Duma, telegrams to the chief commanders), *saqartvelo* 50 (4 March 1917); “droebiti komitetis brdzaneba” (The temporary committee's decree), *saqartvelo* 51 (5 March 1917); “defeshebi” (Telegrams), *saqartvelo* 53 (8 March 1917); “Velikija sobytija” (Great events), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 52 (4 March 1917).

¹⁹⁴ B. M. Kuznetsov, *1918 god v Dagestane* (1918 in Daghestan); Aslanbek Sheripov, *Staŭi i rechi: Sbornik, izdanie 3-e ispravlennoe i dopolnennoe* (Articles and Speeches: Collection, 3rd edition corrections and additions) (Groznyj: Checheno-Ingushskoe izdatel'sko-poligraficheskoe oĭedinenie “Kniga”: 1990), 134; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 70; Arnold L. Zisserman, *Twenty-Five Years in the Caucasus, 1842-1867*, trans. Inna Kizirija with introduction and notes by Peter F. Skinner, vol. 1, *The Early Years (1842-1851)* (New York: Narikala Publications., 2017), 14.

Boris Kuznetsov describes how *xabary* worked in Daghestan. I do not have the page numbers for his book since I only have a Word document file. He wrote: “All day the crowd roamed around the square, learning the news (*xabary*) and sometimes even settling their scores (blood revenge).” «Весь день шаталась толпа по площади, узнавая новости (хабары) и сводя иногда даже свои счета (кровавая месть).»

“During the time of this crossing we became convinced that the people of Daghestan were always living only on rumors and hopes for the return of the old regime. The points for receiving and exchanging news were all the mountain springs crossing the way.”

«Во время этого перехода мы убедились, что народ Дагестана все время жил только слухами и надеждой на возвращение старого времени. Пунктом для получения и обмена сведений был каждый горный ключ, пересекавший путь.»

simply had to wait for confirmation in print before publicly celebrating.¹⁹⁵ This is why the British journalist M. Philips Price described Tiflis on 1 March as a city filled with “the most intense suppressed excitement”.¹⁹⁶ An excerpt from the 3 March issue of *Kavkazskoe slovo* (Caucasian word) confirms Price’s impression and the power of *xabary*. It reads,

“The news of the events in Petrograd about which we now have information by telegraph was already received in Tiflis on 1 March. The telegram about the formation of the executive committee with the famous State Duma members and M.V. Rodzianko heading it was already being passed around on the streets, in the banks, in offices, in the establishments and in private homes in the morning. The news, it can be said without exaggeration, flew around the entire city at lightning speed and everyone positively knew about the unfolding events by evening.”¹⁹⁷

It was the same story in Baku, where thousands gathered outside the newspaper office to wait for telegrams to be released. According to reporters, the entire city already knew their contents before they were officially released because every piece of news was spread by word of mouth. The people were so excited that they were tearing the newspapers out of each other’s hands.¹⁹⁸ The situation in the major cities was reflected in the provinces.¹⁹⁹ In Guria, for instance, a local reported the following about how the

Aslanbek Sheripov also refers to *xabary* when he complains that he had already written three times, receiving no letter or *xabar* in response.

¹⁹⁵ “istoriuli dghe batomshi” (An historic day in Batumi), *saxalxo furceli* 817 (12 March 1917).

¹⁹⁶ Price, *War & Revolution*, 279; Ap. Tsuladze, “didi revoliuciis pirveli dgheebi guriashi” (The first days of the great revolution in Guria), *saqartvelo* 60 (16 March 1917).

Tsuladze reports that people were wondering if it were a dream or a provocation even after the news was published in the newspapers.

¹⁹⁷ “V gorode” (In the city), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 50 (3 March 1917).

«Сведения о событиях в Петрограде, о которых мы имеем теперь сообщение по телеграфу, получены были в Тифлисе еще 1 марта. Уже с утра на улицах, в банках, в конторах, по учреждениям и в частных домах передавалась телеграмма об образовании в столице исполнительного комитета из видных членов Государственной Думы, во главе с М. В. Родзянко. Новость, без преувеличения можно сказать, с быстротой молния облетела весь город, и к вечеру о развертывающихся событиях знали положительно все.»

¹⁹⁸ “Po Kavkazu. Ot nashix korrespondentov, Baku, Nastroenie v gorode.” (In the Caucasus. From our correspondents. The mood in the city.), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 56 (10 March 1917).

¹⁹⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 70; S. E. Sef, *Revoljutsija 1917 goda v Zakavkazi (dokumenty, materialy)* (The 1917 revolution in Transcaucasia [Documents and materials]) (Tiflis: Aktsionernoe

news spread: “The rumor that something unusual was happening in the capital city arrived in Guria (the city of Ozurgeti) on 2 March. The sensational rumors were spreading one after the other. And, on Friday 3 March, the newspapers gave us the good news of freedom.”²⁰⁰ Another commentator wrote, “The official news about the overthrow of the old regime had not yet arrived when here and there they were calling out in stealthy whispers, ‘the revolution has begun in Russia!’”²⁰¹

In the North Caucasus, government officials and officers briefly tried to keep the news from the public, but the latter found out anyway through the disobedience of telegraph workers who leaked information, and through *xabary*.²⁰² In the Terek oblast, the official announcement of the fallen tsar’s 2 March manifesto of abdication was posted on the walls and bulletin boards of the main cities only on the fourth.²⁰³ But, even so, as early as the fifth, North Caucasian Mountaineers were standing with their

obshestvo “Zakkniga,” 1927), 57-63; Mamija Oraxelashvili, *Zakavkazskie bolshevistskie organizatsii v 1917 g.* (Transcaucasian Bolshevik organizations in 1917) (Tiflis: 1927), 34.

²⁰⁰ Ap. Tsuladze, “didi revoliuciis pirveli dgheebi guriashi” (The first days of the great revolution in Guria), *saqartvelo* 60 (16 March 1917).

„სატახტო ქალაქში, რომ რაღაც უჩვეულო ხდებოდა, ამისი ხმა გურიაში (ქ. ოზურგეთში) 2 მარტს მოვიდა, სასენსაციო ხმები ზედიზედ ვრცელდებოდა. 3 მარტს პარასკევს კი გაზეთებმა გვახარა თავისუფლება.“

²⁰¹ Al. Mxeidze, “revoliuciis sxivebi guriashi” (The rays of the revolution in Guria), *saxalxo furceli* 820 (16 March 1917).

„ჯერ კიდევ ოფიციალური ცნობები, ძველი რეჟიმის დამხობისა მოსული არ იყო, რომ აქა-იქ ჩუმად, მონურად გაიძახოდნენ: “რუსეთში რევოლუცია დაიწყო.“

²⁰² I. Borisenko, *Sovetskie respubliki na Severnom Kavkaze v 1918 godu, Kratkaja istorija respublik* (The Soviet Caucasus in 1918, a short history of the republics) (Rostov-on-don: Knigoizdatelstvo “Severnij Kavkaz,” 1930), vol. 2, 31; Timur Muzaev, *Sojuz gortsev: Russkaja revoljutsija i narody Severnogo Kavkaza, 1917 – mart 1918 goda* (The Union of Mountaineers: The Russian Revolution and the peoples of the North Caucasus, 1917 – March 1918) (Nalchik: Pechatnij dvor, 2012), 8-9; Raenko, *Chronicle*, 5, 11; Vasilenko and Panchenko, “Kuban,” 41.

Raenko claims that in the Don, Kuban and Black Sea Province, when the officials tried to hide the news, the regular people found out thanks to the efforts of the Bolsheviks. For instance, on 1 March a Bolshevik organized a history lecture but when the people came he actually talked about the developments in Petrograd.

²⁰³ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 10-11.

shaggy caps on Nadzaladevi Square in Tiflis to celebrate with everyone else.²⁰⁴ The news had reached the Caucasus much faster than many places in rural central Russia.²⁰⁵

2. *Organizing temporary administrations*

Considering Russia was at war and the population of Transcaucasia was at high risk with the Caucasus Front and hostile Ottoman Turks so near, it was of extreme importance to ensure steady food supplies to the army and population and to maintain civil order despite the fervent celebrations which erupted upon hearing the news of the fall of the tsar.²⁰⁶ For practical reasons and with the encouragement of the Russian Provisional Government, the leading forces in Caucasian society thus came together to form stopgap administrative-governmental bodies for managing local affairs until the anticipated democratic elections could be held. Provisional executive committees (ispolkoms) or analogous bodies (e.g., public safety committees) were formed in the cities and towns throughout the region.²⁰⁷

In Transcaucasia, the Tiflis Ispolkom was formed within several days of the tsar's fall. Its composition reflected the local political landscape, including representatives drawn from city government, revolutionary organizations, political parties, the cooperatives' union and professional and business councils.²⁰⁸ In Baku, the city дума set up the Executive Committee of Baku's Civil Organizations (IKOO) on

²⁰⁴ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 70.

²⁰⁵ Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 95.

²⁰⁶ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 70; Oraxelashvili, *Transcaucasian Bolshevik organizations*, 34; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 69-70; Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 62-63; "Ot tflissk-gorodskogo golovy r naseleniju gor. Tiflisa" (From the Tiflis-city head to the population of the cit. of Tiflis), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 52 (4 March 1917).

²⁰⁷ Raenko, *Chronicle*, 5; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 71.

Suny writes, "Orders from the Provisional Government in Petrograd had gone out to provincial cities to form executive committees which would act as local organs of the new central government." Some names of these organizations in the Cossack areas are, in the Don (oblast committee), in Chernomorie (public-safety committee), and in the Kuban (safety committee, civil committee and provisional executive committee).

²⁰⁸ "qalaq aghmasrulebeli komiteti" (Cit. executive committee), *saqartvelo* 53 (8 March 1917); Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 186; Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 67.

the fourth. The IKOO was originally dominated by liberals from the professional class, but, as deputies from the local soviet were continually added, it would eventually become an extension of the workers' organizations.²⁰⁹ Reflecting the more conservative and nationalist mood in Ganja, when the mayor Xəlil-bek Xasmamedov (Xəlil bəy Xasməmmədli) organized the Executive Committee of Social Organizations, it included equal members of Turkish and Armenian representatives while excluding socialists, Russians and soldiers' deputies.²¹⁰

In the North Caucasus, the ispolkoms likewise took on the character of the local ethnic and social dynamics. In the Chernomorskaja gubernija (the Black Sea governorate or province of the northwestern Caucasus) a civic safety committee was formed in Novorossijsk on 4 March.²¹¹ The Kuban Oblast Provisional Executive Committee that was formed on 11 March was initially dominated by Cossacks and Kadets although it also included *inogorodnie* (out-of-towners).²¹² In Daghestan, the Provisional Daghestan Oblast Civil Executive Committee was formed on 9 March at a popular meeting held on market day in the oblast capital Temir-Xan-Shura (Bujnaxsk).²¹³ In the Terek oblast, the Vladikavkaz Civil Executive Committee was formed on 5 March and took on the responsibility of the provisional oblast ispolkom

²⁰⁹ Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 69; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 70-74.

²¹⁰ Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 80.

²¹¹ I. Borisenko, *Sovetskie respubliki na Severnom Kavkaze v 1918 godu, kratkaja istorija respublik* (The Soviet Caucasus in 1918, a short history of the republics) (Rostov-on-don: Knigoizdatel'stvo "Severnij Kavkaz," 1930), vol. 1, 155; Raenko, *Chronicle*, 12.

²¹² Gromov, V.P., "Kubanskoe kazachestvo v Velikoj russkoj revoljutsii 1917-1920 gg." (The Kuban Cossacks in the Great Russian revolution 1917-1920), website of the Svjato-Georgievskij xram, accessed 8 March 2022, http://www.georghram.ru/statyi/aktualnye_temy/vpgromov_vystuplenie_na_rozhdestvenskih chteniyah_2017/; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 37; Raenko, *Chronicle*, 5, 16.

Raenko says the public safety committees and ispolkoms in the Don and Kuban were dominated by Kadets but that the SRs and Mensheviks were included in them.

The term *inogorodnie*, "people from other towns", refers to that part of the settler population that had arrived relatively recently. There were some Russian settlers who had arrived earlier who were not included in this category. The *inogorodnie* were usually less affluent and socialism appealed to them more than to the Cossacks or wealthier Russians.

²¹³ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 29.

on 6 March. During this process, when the city's new authorities proved hesitant to allow North Caucasian representatives sufficient places in the ispolkom despite the natives comprising the majority of the population, the Mountaineer intelligentsia successfully demanded additional representation. At the same time, over 5-6 March, the native intelligentsia took the initiative in the collective organization of their peoples when they gathered in the apartment of the Balkarian lawyer Basijat Shaxanov and established the Provisional Central Committee of the United Mountaineers.²¹⁴

The pattern of setting up provisional executive bodies in the major cities and district centers was repeated in smaller cities throughout the Caucasus (e.g. Majkop, Groznyj, Kizljär, Kutaisi, Gori, Signaghi, Lagodexi).²¹⁵ And these ispolkoms were also willingly subordinated to the Provisional Government in Petrograd.²¹⁶ At the regional level, the Caucasian viceroy had initially expected all the city dumas and ispolkoms to follow the lead of the Tiflis Duma.²¹⁷ Indeed, once the Tiflis Ispolkom

²¹⁴ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 12-16.

²¹⁵ "aghmasrulebeli komiteti qutaisshi" (The executive committee in Kutaisi), *saqartvelo* 55 (10 March 1917); "Organizatsija novoj vlasti na mestax" (The organization of the new power in the localities), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 60 (14 March 1917); Raenko, *Chronicle*, 5, 16, 20; "Tserkovnoe torzhestvo v Mtsxete" (Church ceremony in Mtskheta), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 60 (14 March 1917); "Voskresnaja manifestatsija" (Sunday manifestation), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 60 (14 March 1917).

²¹⁶ Raenko, 5, 16; Cory Welt, "A Fateful Moment: Ethnic Autonomy and Revolutionary Violence in the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-21)" in Stephen F. Jones, ed., *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors* (London: Routledge, 2014).

Raenko says that the committees in the Don and Kuban were working under the leadership of the Provisional Government commissioners. In April 1917 the congress of people's representatives from the different settlements in the Kuban passed a vote of confidence in the Provisional Government's commissioner Kondrat Bardizh (Kadet).

²¹⁷ Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 57-59

«В Тифлисской городской думе произойдет экстренное заседание, на котором голова доложит личные слова Августейшего Наместника и Его просьбу использовать влияние думы для содействия власти к охранению порядка в городе точка Решение Тифлисской думы будет сообщено всем городам края для согласования их общих действий точка... Проведение в жизнь всех директив имеющих исходить из Тифлиса Вам надлежит приложить все личные старания точка.»

"An urgent meeting is being held in the Tiflis City Duma at which the head will report the personal words of the August Viceroy and His request to use the influence of the дума for the coordination of the authorities to preserve order in the city period The decision of the Tiflis Duma will be communicated to all the cities of the region for the coordination of their common actions period... You are required to make all personal efforts to implement all directives coming from Tiflis."

This is an excerpt from the letter of Prince Orlov to authorities throughout the region.

was formed, it appeared to have had aspirations of exerting control in the very least over the entire Tiflisskaja gubernija—a situation which provoked the indignation of Georgian nationalists and federalists who wanted more administrative decentralization.²¹⁸ Of course, the Caucasus Viceroyalty was now defunct, and on 6 March the viceroy was escorted out of Tiflis by Cossacks “waving red flags and singing the Marseillaise”.²¹⁹

The Provisional Government in Petrograd now acted quickly to preserve the continuity of governance and order in the region and created the Special Transcaucasian Commissariat (Ozakom) in early March.²²⁰ Most of the commissioners sent to the Caucasus were Kadets or shared their outlook.²²¹ The exception was Kita Abashidze, a Georgian Socialist-Federalist quickly replaced by Akaki Chxenkeli, a Georgian Social Democrat.²²² Despite this new arrangement, however, disagreements over regional and local jurisdictions between the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia could not be avoided. In one major episode, when the Ozakom appointed the Daghestani Ibragim Gajdarov as its commissioner to the Daghestan oblast, as that was administratively part of Transcaucasia, this led to a power struggle since the Provisional Government had also appointed Magomet Dalgat as its direct commissioner and the locals preferred direct

²¹⁸ Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 64-65; “qal. tflisis aghmasr. komiteti da tflisis gubernia” (Cit. Tbilisi’s exec. committee and Tiflis gubernija), *saxalxo furceli* 815 (10 March 1917); “aghmasrulebeli komitetis diqtatoruli mistrafebani” (The executive committee’s dictatorial aspirations), *saxalxo furceli* 818 (14 March 1917); “a.i. xatisovi” (A. I. Khatsov), *saqartvelo* 60 (16 March 1917).

²¹⁹ Price, *War and Revolution*, 286-287.

²²⁰ “depeshebi, delegacia kavkasiashi” (Telegrams, the delegation to the Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 56 (11 March 1917); “revoliuciis depeshebi, kavkasiis komisarebad” (The revolution’s telegrams, as the commissioners for the Caucasus), *saxalxo furceli* 815 (10 March 1917); Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 64-65.

V. Kharlamov, M. Papadzhanyan, M. Dzhabarov, K. Abashidze and the Russian attorney Pereverzov were initially appointed as its commissars. They were sent from Petrograd on 8 March.

²²¹ “Komitet Vremennago Pravitelstva dlja ustroeniia Zakavkazja” (The Provisional Government’s Committee for the ordering of Transcaucasia), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 58 (12 March 1917); Jamil Hasanli, *Foreign Policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan: The Difficult Road to Western Integration, 1918-1920* (London: Routledge, 2016), 195.

²²² “axali ambebi, kavkasiis komisarebi” (News, the Caucasus’s commissioners), *saxalxo furceli* 818 (14 March 1917); “b-n kiṭa abashidzis komisarebis gamo” (Because of Mr. Kita Abashidze’s commissionership), *saqartvelo* 60 (6 March 1917).

representation in Petrograd, according to the principle of decentralization, over subordination to a regional-level intermediary.²²³ In the North Caucasus, the Provisional Government also sent commissioners to the Chernomorskaja gubernija and the Kuban and Terek oblasts to replace the old governors.²²⁴ In the Terek, Mixail Karaulov, a Cossack deputy to the State Duma (and historian), was initially appointed as commissioner for the oblast, but because he was elected ataman of the Terek Cossack Host upon his arrival home, this created an apparent conflict of interests in the multiethnic oblast and so Colonel Ivan Mixajlov replaced him.²²⁵

The Ozakom's commissioners arrived, by way of Baku, in Tiflis on 18 March. In the regional capital, they announced to the population that their purpose was to help the Provisional Government with establishing Russia's new state order and providing democratized administrative governance to the people through duly elected executive committees, the reorganization of city government and the implementation, at long last, of the zemstvo system of local self-government in the Caucasus. In their role as the official representatives of the Provisional Government, the commissioners announced that the most vital questions—national, agrarian, church and labor—would be left to the decision of the upcoming Constituent Assembly.²²⁶ Thus, when national, socialist

²²³ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 32-34, 45-46.

It is the preliminary opinion of the author of this thesis that the reason the Terek oblast and Kuban oblast were not included in the regional commissariat was that the central authorities expected the Cossacks, with their predominance, to govern these oblasts. Lacking a strong Cossack element, Daghestan was included into the Transcaucasian Commissariat. The Cossacks would not have wanted to be subordinated to Tiflis and the native gortsy of the Terek and Kuban were expected to submit to the Cossack government. However, this is simply a suspicion that would have to be confirmed or refuted through the acquisition and evaluation of relevant sources. It is known that the Mountaineer leaders in the Terek asked for a native co-commissioner to be appointed, to the oblast but the Provisional Government refused to do so.

²²⁴ "Naznachenie komissarov" (The appointment of commissars), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 58 (11 March 1917); Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 36; Raenko, *Chronicle*, 17.

Nikolaj Nikolaev to the Black Sea Governorate, Kondrat Bardizh to the Kuban, and Mixail Karaulov to the Terek.

²²⁵ Borisenko: 2, 33-34; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 45-46, 568.

Borisenko says that the Bolsheviks petitioned he be replaced by Mixailov. Muzaev says that Karaulov resigned of his own free will in May because of his sensitivity to the natives' position.

²²⁶ "komisarebis chamosvla" (The arrival of the commissioners), *saxalxo furceli* 823 (19 March 1917); Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 47;

or other organizations later passed resolutions of similar content, this should be seen as an effort to conform to the general principle outlined by the accepted authorities rather than as proof of their unwillingness to take into consideration the concerns of the workers or land-hungry peasants. It was an attempt to keep the peace.

3. *Introducing the soviets*

The pattern of dual power (*dvoevlastie*) which emerged in Petrograd as a reflection of the class tensions in the capital and Russia as a whole was also seen in the Caucasus.²²⁷ But here the ethno-national and religious complexity added an extra dimension which manifested in various places as something more like *troe-* or *chetyrevlastie*.²²⁸ This situation supports Orlando Figes's point that, "The politics of 1917 should thus be understood not so much as a conflict of 'dual power' (*dvoevlastie*)... but as a deeper problem of the proliferation of a 'multitude of local powers' (*mnogavlastie*)."²²⁹ In Transcaucasia, the balance of power was reflected in the occupancy of the viceroy's old palace: 1) the Ozakom and the Tiflis Ispolkom as Provisional Government organs; and 2) the Tiflis Soviet (of Workers' Deputies) as the representative body for "the

"Vozzvanie Osobogo Zakavkazskogo Komiteta k naseleniju Zakavkazja" (The appeal of the Special Transcaucasian Committee to the population of Transcaucasia) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 80-83; "Osobyj Zakavkazskij komitet" (The Special Transcaucasian committee), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 60 (14 March 1917).

Maklakov was a Kadet and the Provisional Government's ambassador to Paris. He defines zemstvo as "local self-government".

²²⁷ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 70-71.

²²⁸ Raenko, *Chronicle*, 5; Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, 83.

²²⁹ Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution* (USA: Viking Penguin, 1997), 359.

democracy”, i.e., the regular people.²³⁰ While the Ozakom was officially in charge, the Tiflis and Regional Soviets quickly became the real power in Transcaucasia.²³¹

The Tiflis Soviet of Workers’ Deputies formed on 4 March and the Tiflis Soviet of Soldier’s Deputies formed on 6 March.²³² On 6 March the Baku Soviet of Workers’ Deputies also held the meeting where it chose its leadership and its representatives for the IKOO.²³³ However, Muslims were poorly represented in the IKOO and the Baku Soviet, so they formed their own organizations under the leadership of the Council of Muslim Public Organizations, led by Alimardan-bek Topchibashev (Əlimərdan bəy Ələkbər oğlu Topçubaşov) and Mamed G. Gadzhinskij (Məmməd Həsən Cəfərqulu oğlu Hacinski). Also influential was the nationalistic Independent Democratic Group led by Topchibashev and Fatali Xan Xojskij (Fətəli xan İsgəndər oğlu Xoyski).²³⁴ Meanwhile, workers’ soviets were forming in other urban centers throughout Transcaucasia, and on 18-22 March the [Regional] Congress of Workers’ Deputies convened with delegates arriving from 17 different districts of Transcaucasia.²³⁵ After a number of congresses, the Caucasian Regional Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies was finally set up in July.²³⁶

²³⁰ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 246; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 186; “V tifl. gor. dume (zasedanie 13-go marta” (In the Tif. Cit. duma (session of 13 March), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 61 (15 March 1917).

Suny makes a point here which underscores my impression that when the Georgian Mensheviks spoke of “the democracy”, they were meaning their constituencies (and perhaps their “progressive-bourgeois” allies), not all people. He writes, “The Ozakom, as Zhordania pointed out to the soviet leadership, was made up of nationalists who did not have the confidence of ‘the democracy’”.

²³¹ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)* (London: Anglo Caspian Press Ltd., 2008), 35; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 256; Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 56.

²³² Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 246-247; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 35-36.

²³³ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 72-75.

²³⁴ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 79; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 77-78; Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 85-86.

²³⁵ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 249; Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 132.

I do not see it mentioned in the sources where they met, but it was likely Tiflis.

²³⁶ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 253-254; Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 132.

In the North Caucasus, the soviets were strongest in the Kuban oblast and Chernomorskaja gubernija, where there was a large out-of-towner population.²³⁷ In the Kuban oblast, workers' deputies elected a soviet ispolkom in Ekaterinodar on 2 March.²³⁸ In the Chernomorskaja gubernija, the Novorossijsk city sovdep (clarify acronym) was elected on 7 March.²³⁹ In Abkhazia, the Bolsheviks dominated the soviets in the districts of Gudauta, which had an Abkhaz majority, and Samurzakano, with a Megrelian (Georgian) majority, because there were many landless peasants in these areas, whereas the Mensheviks dominated in the areas around Sukhumi and in the Kodori district, where they had the support of the nobility and prosperous peasantry.²⁴⁰

The influence of the soviets was weakest in the Terek and Daghestan oblasts, where it was practically non-existent among the Cossacks and native Mountaineers. In the Terek, Groznyj's soviet was strong because the city had a significant out-of-towner industrial workforce and large garrison.²⁴¹ Despite, the Vladikavkaz Soviet's relative weakness, it remained significant for its location in the Terek oblast capital.²⁴² In Daghestan, the "Socialist Group" of native radical leftists like D. Korkmasov (anarchist) and A. Taxo-Gody (independent), congealed in late May. This group was on good terms with the Muslim religious leader Ali-xan Akushinskij, who would come to lead the popular resistance against the Russian General Anton Denikin and his Volunteer Army in 1919. Another group, even closer to the Bolsheviks in orientation, was the *Prosvetitel'noe-agitatsionoe bjuro* (Education and Agitation Bureau) associated

²³⁷ Borisenko 1: 108; Vasilenko and Panchenko, "Kuban," 44-45.

²³⁸ Raenko, *Chronicle*, 11.

²³⁹ Raenko, *Chronicle*, 13.

²⁴⁰ Arsène Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh* (London: Routledge, 2015), 43, 48.

²⁴¹ I. Borisenko, *Sovetskie respubliki na Severnom Kavkaze v 1918 godu, Kratkaja istorija respublik* (The Soviet Caucasus in 1918, a short history of the republics) (Rostov-on-don: Knigoizdatel'stvo "Severnij Kavkaz," 1930), vol. 2, 31-32, 35; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 62-63.

²⁴² Borisenko 2: 31; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 62-63.

Borisenko says the real power was with the Terek Cossack ataman and the soviet, civil committee and city дума were just decorative bodies.

with Ullubij Bujnaskij. The bureau existed through August 1917, when its leaders went to Port Petrovsk to ultimately form the core of the Bolshevik movement in Daghestan.²⁴³

4. *Pinning hopes on the Constitutional Assembly*

Once the whirlwind of the first days and weeks of the revolution had subsided and the stopgap administrative bodies had been formed after the pattern of the Provisional Government alongside the network of soviets for the popular classes, the political forces in the Caucasus turned their attention towards preparing for elections to the local governmental-administrative bodies and the Constituent Assembly. As the legitimate voice of the people, the Constituent Assembly would be vested with the authority to decide on the fundamental questions of the time, the two most important being the national question and the agrarian question—how to solve the question of the redistribution of land and other valuable assets. Since everything would depend on the decisions made at the Constituent Assembly, the political parties and organizations started prepping the population for elections, elaborating their programs and advertising them to the populace.²⁴⁴

All the major parties wanted a democratic republic.²⁴⁵ Alongside questions about how the new state and its government should be structured, a main issue of contention was how centralized or decentralized the new Russian state should be, considering it was populated with numerous nationalities, many among them nursing bad memories of conquest, exploitation, suppression and inequality under the old regime. The main stances held by the political parties before the revolution remained essentially the same, but the parties made some adaptations to the changing situation and took into consideration the results of deliberations and voting procedures at various

²⁴³ Jusup Magomedovich Idrisov, “Dagestanskaja intelligentsija v trjex Rossijskix revoljutsijax nachala XX v.” (The Daghestani intelligentsia in the three Russian revolutions of the early 20th century) (Maxachkala: 2007), dissertation abstract, 19-20; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 63-64.

²⁴⁴ “mitsis mushebs, glexebs!” (To the land workers and peasants!), *saqartvelo* 251 (12 [25] November 1917).

²⁴⁵ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 78; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 88-89.

meetings and congresses. In the camp of the centralists, we find the Russian liberals, Social Democrats and Islamists. Close to them were the Dashnaks and Socialists-Revolutionaries who remained federalists but pushed for relatively more centralist solutions than did the purely decentralist Georgian and Muslim national-territorial autonomists.

With regard to the question of social-economic equalization and asset redistribution, the national and liberal political parties and organizations tended to be the domain of individuals from a higher economic and educational standing, including, such as in the case of the North Caucasus, wealthy religious leaders.²⁴⁶ These parties were not so much opposed to asset redistribution as its extralegal and uncompensated implementation.²⁴⁷ Without an official policy approved by the Constituent Assembly and the coercive power to back it up, they expected any attempts at land redistribution to unavoidably turn into chaotic bloody clashes between the social classes and ethnicities, especially considering certain ethnicities, like the Cossacks in the North Caucasus, tended to monopolize land or other assets in the Caucasus. The social-economic aspirations of the moderate socialists were comparatively more radical, but they were, like Viktor Chernov himself, concerned about the destabilizing effect that immediate, maximalist reforms could have on the nearby front and local society and wanted to stick to their minimal program until the Constituent Assembly could give the final, authoritative answer.²⁴⁸ The most radical socialists on the far-left, however, did not want to wait for the war to end for land seizure and redistribution.²⁴⁹ In Transcaucasia, these extremist leftists were kept under control for most of 1917, but their clamoring crescendoed towards the end of the year and, joined by a mighty choir of radicalized soldiers and deserters, they turned into a major source of destabilization, particularly in the North Caucasus.

²⁴⁶ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 78-80; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 86.

²⁴⁷ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 78-80.

²⁴⁸ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 80-85.

²⁴⁹ Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, 73-74.

5. *Preparing party programs*

In preparation for the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the various political parties and religious and national organizations held congresses to discuss and finalize their programs. The congresses were attended by elected delegates, when possible, or by salient politicians, relevant cultural figures and organizational representatives. The parties and national organizations were also engaged in activities directed at educating and motivating the local populations for voting.²⁵⁰

a. *The Georgian parties*

In Transcaucasia, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party was dominated by ethnic Georgian Mensheviks. Thanks to their practice in the 1905 revolution and the opportunities they had had during the imperial period to build up a strong organizational structure and disseminate their propaganda, in March the Georgian Mensheviks found themselves in a better position than their Georgian federalist and nationalist rivals to rapidly organize and take practical matters and power into their own hands.²⁵¹ Although the Georgian Mensheviks resembled a national party in that they became a vehicle for the protection and realization of a broad swath of the Georgian people's national impulses, they prioritized class interests and the preservation of unity with revolutionary Russia. This is why in the first months of the revolution the Georgian Social Democrats were accused by their compatriots of giving insufficient attention to the national question.²⁵²

Indeed, the Georgian Menshevik leadership invested considerable energy into trying to suppress their "bourgeois federalist" rivals.²⁵³ But, as in many parties, there was a diversity of opinion internally. To direct more attention within the party onto the national question, a subgroup of Georgian Mensheviks led by Petre Saq̄varelidze

²⁵⁰ For example, see "motsodeba" (Announcement), *saqartvelo* 54 (9 March 1917).

²⁵¹ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 37.

²⁵² P. Saq̄varelidze, "revolucia da erovnuli sakitxi chvenshi* shesavali" (The revolution and the national question among us* introduction) *alioni* 1(1 May 1917).

²⁵³ "aseti 'ertoba'?" (Such "unity"?), *saqartvelo* 63 (19 March 1917).

founded the newspaper *alioni* in May.²⁵⁴ Continuing the work of Vladimir Darchiashvili, the *alioni* group argued in favor of national-territorial autonomy, claiming it was a necessary condition for the successful implementation of socialism. Although they kept the rest of the RSDLP platform, on this issue the *alioni* group was aligned with the Georgian federalists and nationalists. Ultimately, at the RSDLP's Sixth Transcaucasian Regional Congress in June 1917, the delegates of mixed ethnicity voted overwhelmingly to support a regional union for the Caucasus subdivided into a mix of territorial units and national-cultural autonomies.²⁵⁵ This was a unitarist solution because it removed the possibility of the self-governing units to enjoy rights like a state would enjoy, which national-territorial autonomies would enjoy, but it was a considerable compromise in that it permitted these units to be set up based on national settlement patterns.²⁵⁶ On the agrarian question, the congress favored the nationalization of important lands and the municipalization of other lands and for there to be no compensation, but it also thought that no steps should be taken until after the Constituent Assembly.²⁵⁷

As for the decentralist parties, at the outset of the February Revolution, Georgian federalists and nationalists were thrilled about the possibility of restoring Georgia's national rights, which they interpreted through the lens of the Treaty of Georgievsk (1783). According to the treaty, Russia was obligated to protect the eastern Georgian kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti while respecting its internal sovereignty. For the Georgian patriots, the tsarist regime had violated that treaty and the new, democratic Russia now had a chance to right this wrong by restoring autonomy to the nation on its

²⁵⁴ P. Saq'varelidze, "revolucia da erovnuli sakitxi chvenshi*) shesavali" (The revolution and the national question among us*) introduction) *alioni* 1 (1 May 1917).

²⁵⁵ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 263-266.

According to Jones, the congress could still be called multinational but it was dominated by Georgians.

²⁵⁶ This point will be covered in more detail below.

²⁵⁷ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 263.

own territory, albeit at this point in line with the modern era's spirit of *Demos*.²⁵⁸ Although in March the Socialist-Federalists' Revolutionary Party of Georgia occupied second place in Georgian political society, it would soon be outpaced in terms of influence by the Georgian National Democratic Party, formally established only in June 1917, after years of an informal proto-existence.²⁵⁹ Although the Socialist-Federalists and National Democrats both accepted that their nation would remain within the new, free Russia, agreed on the need for national unity and national-territorial autonomy, and called for the creation of a national assembly and constitution, they differed on the regional question.²⁶⁰

On one hand, the Socialist-Federalists favored remaining in a federal Russia with a Caucasian regional autonomy including internal national-territorial

²⁵⁸ a. asatiani, "qartveli eris suverenuli uflebebi, tu 1783 tslis traqtaṭi? 2." (The Georgian nation's sovereign rights or the 1783 treaty), *saqartvelo* 59 (15 March 1917); "qartveli eris suverenuli uflebebi, tu 1783 tslis traqtaṭi?" (The Georgian nation's sovereign rights, or the 1784 treaty?), *saqartvelo* 58 (14 March 1917).

See also, "kiṭa abashidzem shemdegi depesha gaugzavna aghmasrulebel komiṭetis tsevr deputat kerenskis" (Kita Abashidze sent the following telegram to executive committee member deputy Kerenskij), *saxalxo furceli* 813 (8 March 1917). Here is the text of the telegram:

"ქართველი ერის წარმომადგენელი ელიან, რომ განახლებული რუსეთი გაასწორებს საუკუნის ცოდვას, რომელიც გამოიხატა იმაში, რომ საერთაშორისო ხასიათის ქართველ ერის ტრაქტატი „ნახევ ქაღალდად“ აქცია ძველმა რეჟიმმა და იმედი აქვსთ, რომ ეხლა მაინც განხორციელდება მათი სამარადისო ლტოლვილება ავტონომიურ თვითმართველობისა დემოკრატიულ საფუძველზედ."

²⁵⁹ Bammate, Haidar, "The Caucasus and the Russian Revolution (from a Political Viewpoint)," *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 4 (1991), 12.

Bammatov says the party was established shortly before WWI started.

²⁶⁰ "gaertianebisaken" (Towards unification), *saqartvelo* 54 (9 March 1917); "aghordzineba" (Revival), *saqartvelo* 56 (11 March 1917); juansher, "saqartvelos erovnul demokratiul partiis kreba" (The congress of the Georgian National Democratic Party), *saqartvelo* 57 (12 March 1917); "qartveli eris suverenuli uflebebi, tu 1783 tslis traqtaṭi?" (The Georgian nation's sovereign rights, or the 1784 treaty?), *saqartvelo* 58 (14 March 1917); "saqartvelos soc.-fed. sarevolucio partiā" (Georgia's Soc.-Fed Party), *saxalxo furceli* 812 (7 March 1917); "saqartvelos soc.-fed. sarevolucio partiā" (Georgia's Soc.-Fed Party), *saxalxo furceli* 814 (9 March 1917); "gansatavisuflebuli ruseti, avṭonomiuri saqartvvelo" (Liberated Russia, autonomous Georgia), *saxalxo furceli* 814 (9 March 1917); "dghevandeli mdgomareoba, 2. Erovnuli lozungi daselebis proklamaciashi" (Today's situation, 2. The national slogan in the proclamation of the daselebis), *saxalxo furceli* 814 (9 March 1917); "gantavisuflebuli ruseti, ṭfilisi, 10 marti, 1917 ts., saqartvelos parlamenti" (Liberated Russia, Tbilisi, 10 March, 1917, Georgia's parliament), *saxalxo furceli* 815 (19 March 1917); "saqartvelos sakitxi" (The Georgian question), *saxalxo furceli* 817 (12 March 1917).

autonomies.²⁶¹ The editorial “Georgia and the Caucasus”, published in the party’s paper *saxalxo furceli* (the people’s broadsheet), highlights this party’s integrated regional and national outlook. It reads,

“If Georgia is a unique and separate unit, and if Georgians are one whole nation by virtue of their history, culture, language and traditions, it also cannot be denied that the Caucasus exists with its own common interests, for the arrangement of which the Caucasian nations’ concordant and unified work is necessary. We have always defended the unification of the Caucasian nations and struggled especially against one or another nation’s domination and hegemony. Unity and agreement are especially needed today when our political-national life must be transformed at the very root and when our relationships with each other must be built anew. At the time of the resolving of the issue of Georgia’s autonomy, we Georgians will have to keep in mind the interests and way of life of the other Caucasian nations and must take care that along with the implementation of Georgia’s autonomy that the circumstances of our neighbors should also be arranged and all the Caucasian nations should form a single political union.”²⁶²

On the other hand, the National Democrats preferred national-territorial autonomy with a direct tie to the all-Russian center and no intermediary regional autonomy. They argued that if indeed in this perilous moment of war and revolution the only option available was remaining within a Russian state, then national-territorial autonomy for each nation would be more desirable than a regional autonomy.

²⁶¹ “tfilisi, 19 marti, 1917 ts., revolucia da kavkasiis erebi” (Tbilisi, 19 March 1917, the revolution and the Caucasian nations), *saxalxo furceli* 823 (19 March 1917); socialist-federalist kreba” (the Socialist-Federalists’ congress), *saxalxo furceli* 823 (19 March 1917); “saqartvelo da kavkasia” (Georgia and the Caucasus), *saxalxo furceli* 827 (24 March 1917).

²⁶² “saqartvelo da kavkasia” (Georgia and the Caucasus), *saxalxo furceli* 827 (24 March 1917).

„თუ საქართველო წარმოადგენს თავისებურს განცალკევებულს ერთეულს, თუ ქართველობა ერთი მთლიანი ერია თავის ისტორიით, კულტურით, ენითა ზნეჩვეულებით, იმის უარყოფაც არ შეიძლება, რომ არსებობს კავკასია თავის საერთო ინტერესებით, რომელთა მოსაწესრიგებლად საჭიროა კავკასიელ ერების შეთანხმებული და შეერთებული მუშაობა.

ჩვენ ყოველთვის კავკასიის ერთა შეკავშირებას ვიცავდით და ვებრძოდით კერძოდ რომელისავე ერთის ერის გაბატონებას და ჰეგემონია. განსაკუთრებით ერთობა და თანხმობა საჭიროა დღეს, როდესაც ძირიან-ფესვიანად უნდა შეიცვალოს ჩვენი პოლიტიკურ-ეროვნული ცხოვრება, უნდა ახლად აშენდეს ერთმანეთთან დამოკიდებულება. ქართველებს არ შეგვიძლია საქართველოს ავტონომიის საკითხის გადაწყვეტის დროს ანგარიში არ გავუწიოთ სხვა კავკასიელ ერთა ცხოვრების მოწყობას და ინტერესებს და არ ვიზრუნოთ იმისთვის, რომ საქართველოს ავტონომიის განხორციელებასთან ერთად ასევე ავტონომიურად მოწყვეს ჩვენი მეზობლების მდგომარეობაც და ყველა კავკასელმა ერმა შეადგინონ ერთი პოლიტიკურ კავშირი.“

Individual national-territorial units directly connected to the Russian federal center would permit each nation to retain the maximum possible autonomy, whereas an intermediary regional autonomy would take over many of the competencies that otherwise would go to the nation. According to Giorgi Gvazava, in his capacity as the national democratic spokesman to the Ozakom Nationalities Commission, the only way a regional autonomy could work within the Russian state was if the center-periphery ties were purely symbolic, like Britain's relationship with Australia or Canada.²⁶³ Apparently, the Georgian nationalists were not opposed to a Caucasian state in principle, however. As Gvazava explains,

“If the Caucasus were an independent state, there would be nothing contentious or unclear. The Caucasus would be a federal state and the legal content of the federal government would be a matter of course... The legal strengthening of Georgia's borders is the only way for peace and cultural progress, and this legal strengthening would be a Caucasian federation.”²⁶⁴

Although the Georgian federalists and nationalists prioritized the upholding of national sovereignty through promoting national-territorial autonomy, their programs also indicate a real concern for social and economic justice.²⁶⁵ In fact, according to the national democrats' late-March program, they called for significant government intervention in the national economy and infrastructural development as well as strong worker and peasant protections. They believed that the main basis of a nation's material prosperity and spiritual expression was national freedom, civil liberties and free labor

²⁶³ “saqartvelos avtonomia (gagrdzeleba), III. kavkasiis avtonomiis sakitxi” (Georgia's autonomy [continued], 3. The question of Caucasian autonomy), *saqartvelo* 84 (20 April 1917).

²⁶⁴ “saqartvelos avtonomia (gagrdzeleba), III. kavkasiis avtonomiis sakitxi” (Georgia's autonomy [continued], 3. The question of Caucasian autonomy), *saqartvelo* 84 (20 April 1917).

“კავკასია რომ თავისუფალი სახელმწიფო იყოს, მაშინ სადავო და გაუგებარი არა იქნებოდა-რა. მაშინ კავკასია წარმოადგენდა ფედერატიულ სახელმწიფოს და უფლებრივი შინაარსი ფედერატიულ მთავრობისა თავისთავად ცხადი იქნებოდა... უფლებრივი გამაგრება საქართველოს საზღვრებისა ერთად-ერთი ღონეა მშვიდობიანობის და კულტურული წინმსვლელობისა, ეს უფლებრივი გამაგრება იქნებოდა კავკასიის ფედერაცია.”

²⁶⁵ “chveni agraruli programa” (Our agrarian program), *saxalxo furceli* 872 (26 May 1917); “saqartvelos erovnul-demokratiuli partiis programa” (Georgia's national democratic party's program), *saqartvelo* 69 (28 March 1917).

(by which they meant the right to work for a living wage without coercion or discrimination) and that the nation needed its own state organization in order to ensure the provision of these rights and liberties.²⁶⁶ Like many of the socialists, the nationalists also thought that land from estates over a certain size should be redistributed to the peasants; they simply did not believe the solution lie in nationalization or socialization but rather through the redistribution of land to the peasants in the form of private property with the provision of compensation to the landowners, especially considering there were foreign investors involved.²⁶⁷

b. *The Armenian parties*

The Dashnaktsutun had the strongest influence over Armenian public opinion and national level decision-making. Socialist in form but nationalist in content, after 1917 the party remained federalist in form but drifted towards increased centralism in practice.²⁶⁸ According to the Dashnaktsutun's 1907 political program, still in effect in early 1917, the party called for a Transcaucasian democratic federal republic within a Russian federation wherein defense, foreign policy, customs and money would belong to the all-Russian federal center's sphere of competencies and the Transcaucasian republic would have its own central assembly and be independent in all internal affairs. Internally, they wanted Transcaucasia divided according to the ethnographic principle

²⁶⁶ "saqartvelos erovnul-demokratiuli partiis programa"(Georgia's National Democratic Party's program), *saqartvelo* 69 (28 March 1917). The program includes the following points: 1. private property is essential; 2. the government must help workers with little or no land to acquire it; 3. the government must develop agricultural infrastructure and provide low interest loans as well as create various industries in rural areas; 4. the government must nurture local industry and ensure local sourcing for necessary goods; 5. the government is responsible for making travel cheap through building railroads, river cleaning, navigation and oilfield development; and 6. legislation must guarantee workers' rights, including the right to unite and strike, compulsory workmen's compensation, an 8-hour workday, prohibition of child labor, labor inspections and guaranteed employment.

²⁶⁷ "mitsis mushebs, glexebs!" (To the land workers and peasants!), *saqartvelo* 251 (12 [25] November 1917).

²⁶⁸ See Ronald Grigor Suny, "Nationalism and Social Class in the Russian Revolution: The Cases of Baku and Tiflis," paper presented at the conference on "Nationalism and Social Change in Transcaucasia" co-sponsored by the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies and the Wilson Center and American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies on 24-25 April 1980.

Here Suny emphasizes their nationalism and calls them "vaguely socialist".

into cantons with broad local self-government and communities enjoying self-government in social issues.²⁶⁹

However, the Dashnaks' views changed somewhat over the summer, and by October they were explaining in their Tiflis paper *Molot* (Hammer) that even though they were opposed to the principle of centralization of power and still wanted a Russian federation with Transcaucasia in it as an autonomous union made up of three national cantons, they now thought it was preferable to expand the all-Russian federal center's sphere of competences to enforce a uniform agrarian reform law throughout Russia and to include the right to legislate and monitor minority rights and civil liberties.²⁷⁰ Thus, the Dashnaktsutiun still wanted a Russian federation and an autonomous Transcaucasian union but now they preferred a comparatively stronger federal center. As *Molot*'s editors explained in September, "In general the state and social creation of revolutionary democracy's provincial forces must be under the strong influence of its central body. It is the same with regard to the positions, competencies and even just the attitude of the government's local representatives."²⁷¹

The Dashnaktsutiun and Armenian political currents in general also showed a strong inclination towards supporting Russian political cohesion. This was connected to the belief held by many Armenians that their physical survival depended on the success of the Allied war effort against the Central Powers. It is possible that they also expected certain advantages in supporting the preservation of the state and its residual structural patterns.²⁷² For instance, the Tiflis city mayor and Dashnak Aleksandr Xatisov (Khatsov, Xatisjan, Khatisian) was accused of trying to behave as a regional

²⁶⁹ "dashnakcutunis' politikuri programa" (The Dashnaktsutiun's political program), *saqartvelo* 92 (29 April 1917).

²⁷⁰ "Tiflis 27-go oktjabrja" (Tiflis 27 October), *Molot* 21 (27 October 1917).

²⁷¹ "Tiflis 30-go sentjabrja," (Tiflis 30 September), *Molot* 3 (30 September 1917).

²⁷² Compare with "rusuli presa, somxebi da zavi" (The Russian press, the Armenians and the truce), *saqartvelo* 265 (1 [14] December 1917). According to this article, "I. Semenevi" writes in "Narodnaia svoboda" that "The Dashnaks' Party was always a revolutionary party, but now it has turned into a government party."

„დაშნაკელების პარტია მუდამ რევოლუციური პარტია იყო, ახლა კი იგი სამთავრობო პარტიად გადაიქცა.“

governor.²⁷³ The Dashnaktsutiun activists also boldly managed to influence the Russian central government's decision-makers in Petrograd to give the Armenians autonomy in territories taken from the Ottoman Empire and accept their version of the zemstvo project for Transcaucasia.²⁷⁴

The Dashnaks' perspective on applying the ethnographic principle to the administrative boundary reconfiguration associated with the implementation of zemstvo reforms looks to have been shared by much of the Armenian voting population. In the months after the February Revolution, various district and *uezd* (county) congresses were organized to debate the future of the Russian state and Transcaucasian Armenia.²⁷⁵ In April, at the Villagers' Congress of the Erevanskaja gubernija (Erevan governorate, province), the Armenian peasantry supported the view of the Dashnaktsutiun when they called for the introduction of the zemstvo system as soon as the administrative boundaries in Transcaucasia were redrawn along ethnic lines. In the same month, the liberals in the Armenian Populist Party also called for redrawing the boundaries according to the ethnic principle.²⁷⁶

However, the Dashnaktsutiun did not have a total monopoly on political opinion among Armenians in Russia and the Caucasus. Although the Armenian Populist Party, formed in March 1917, may have supported the ethnographic principle for redrawing of boundaries, it still preferred the outcome of national-territorial autonomy for the Armenians in the Caucasus.²⁷⁷ In May the populists criticized the Dashnaks' provocative actions in their mouthpiece *Mshak* (Toiler) and insisted that any

²⁷³ "xatışovi da nafici veqili çhiabrishvili" (Khatisov and sworn barrister Chiabrishvili), *saqartvelo* 69 (28 March 1917).

²⁷⁴ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 79-80; Imranli-Lowe, "The Provisional Government and the Armenian Homeland Project," 4-5.

²⁷⁵ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 73.

²⁷⁶ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 73-74.

²⁷⁷ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 73-74.

According to the Armenian Populist Party's April program, they supported territorial political autonomy for Armenia and for the boundaries of autonomous areas in Transcaucasia to be drawn along ethnic lines.

arrangement regarding Transcaucasian Armenia would have to be worked out in agreement with their neighbors prior to taking it to the Constituent Assembly. This stance seems more conciliatory than some of the steps taken by the Dashnaksutiun. At this time, the populists were already calling for a congress of Russian Armenians to be held in Yerevan to discuss this question and others as well as to elect a central council to lead the affairs of the nation as a whole.²⁷⁸ As for the non-Dashnak Armenian socialists, Armenian “Specifist” Social Democrats and Socialists-Revolutionaries were ideologically committed to the idea of a unitary Russian state notwithstanding the attraction of national-cultural self-determination and local self-governance.²⁷⁹

c. The Russian parties

In Transcaucasia, Russians tended to join the Constitutional Democratic Party (Party of Popular Freedom, Kadets) or Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries. The Kadets had held their founding congress in October 1905, on the eve of the all-Russian general strike, and adopted their political platform at their second congress in January 1906.²⁸⁰ The versions of the party program from 1906 and 1917 are nearly identical.²⁸¹ Both versions

²⁷⁸ “erovnuli sakitxi, gazetebidan, somexta qriloba” (The national question, from the gazettes, the Armenians’ congress), *saqartvelo* 96 (5 May 1917).

²⁷⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 74; “glexta delegatēbis qriloba” (The peasants’ delegates’ assembly) and “rezolucia, social-demokratiul partiis saolqo qrilobis dadgenileba erovnul sakitxzed” (Resolution, the Social Democratic Party’s district assembly’s decree on the national question), *saqartvelo* 135 (23 June 1917).

²⁸⁰ William Chamberlin, “The Short Life of Russian Liberalism,” *The Russian Review* 26, no. 2 (April 1967): 144-145; A. Tyrkova-Williams, “The Cadet Party,” *The Russian Review* 12, no. 3 (July 1953): 173-174; Ingeborg Fleischhauer, “The Agrarian Program of the Russian Constitutional Democrats,” *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 20, no. 2 (Apr.-Jun. 1979): 175.

²⁸¹ “Programma konstitutsionno-demokraticeskoy partii (partii narodnoj svobody)” (The program of the Constitutional-Democratic Party [The Party of Popular Freedom]), Elektronnaia Biblioteka istoricheskij dokumentov (Electronic Library of Historical Documents), accessed 8 March 2022, <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/33342-programma-konstitutsionno-demokraticeskoy-partii-partii-narodnoy-svobody#mode/inspect/page/8/zoom/4>; “Programma partii Narodnoj Svobody ili konstitutsionno-demokraticeskoy partii. (vyrabot. šezdom partii 12-18 oktjabrja 1905 g. i dopolnennoj i izmenennoj v marte 1917 goda) (The program of the Party of Popular Freedom or the Constitutional Democratic Party. [elaborated by the party congress of 12-18 October 1905. and added to and amended in March 1917]) in Programy glavnejshix russkix partij (Programs of the major Russian parties), Biblioteka Svobodnago Naroda pod redaktsiej A. Stebleva i Iv. Saxarova, accessed 8 March 2022, 41, <https://dlib.rsl.ru/viewer/01004097304#?page=41>.

called for the decentralization of power through the institutions of local self-government, local autonomy and oblast representative assemblies on a democratic basis throughout all Russia.²⁸² Although both versions call for autonomy for Poland and the restoration of the Finnish constitution, they still emphasize the need for preserving Russia's unity and that it is the prerogative of the state to ensure that the rights of civilians and minorities are upheld.²⁸³ Notwithstanding a diversity of opinions within the party, the Kadets generally wanted administrative-territorial decentralization not national-territorial autonomies. They equated the latter with separatism and saw the implementation of zemstvo reforms as an obvious way to devolve a certain degree of state authority to provincial and local administrative units while still preserving Russia's integrity during a time of instability.²⁸⁴ Since the Caucasus did not yet have the zemstvo system, it makes sense why the Provisional Government and Ozakom felt that introducing it as a solution to the issue of the defunct viceroyalty was one of the first things it should do.²⁸⁵

Although the Kadets had liberal ideals and philosophy, with a focus on a constitutional order for the state and rights for the individual, their agrarian policy was

Article 13 was changed from calling for a constitutional and parliamentary monarchy to calling for a constitutional basis for the structure of the Russian state. And Article 14 transitioned from an undecidedness about whether there should be a unicameral or bicameral popular representative body to expressing a clear goal of a presidential republic with a single-chamber representative body.

²⁸² Kadet party program. See Articles 20-24. The central authorities would have a monitoring function.

²⁸³ Kadet party program. See Articles 20-26.

²⁸⁴ Kokoshkin, F. F. *Avtonomija i federatsija* (Autonomy and federation), 1917, dugward.ru library, accessed 8 March 2022, http://dugward.ru/library/kokoshkin/kokoshkin_avtonomia_i_federacia.html, accessed 8 March 2022; "Tiflis, 10 marta" (Tiflis, 10 March) *Kavkazskoe slovo* 56 (10 March 1917); Tatjana Xripachenko "Ponjatija federatsija, detsentralizatsija, avtonomija v sotsialisticheskom i liberalnom diskursax Rossijskoj imperii (konets XIX – nachalo XX vv.) (Concepts of federation, decentralization and autonomy in the socialist and liberal discourses of the Russian Empire [late 19th to early 20th]) in *Ponjatie o Rossii: K istoricheskoj semantike imperskogo perioda* (Understanding about Russia: Towards an historical semantics of the imperial period), vol. 2 (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012), 100-141.

²⁸⁵ "Komitet Vremennago Pravitel'stva dlja ustroenija Zakavkazja" (The Provisional Government's Committee for the ordering of Transcaucasia), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 58 (12 March 1917); "Tiflis, 10 marta" (Tiflis, 10 March) and "Xronika. Upolnomochennye Vremennago Pravitel'stva (Those authorized of the Provisional Government), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 56 (10 March 1917).

radical.²⁸⁶ They wanted to confiscate all state, princely, cabinet, monastery and large private estates and keep them in a land bank managed by the (democratic) state, which would lease out parcels of land to needy peasants.²⁸⁷ The Kadets did not exactly repudiate private property, but the idea was to move towards state management of the national patrimony.²⁸⁸ At the same time, the Kadets intended for the socialization of the national patrimony to be a progressive process, and their minimum program demanded only the confiscation and redistribution of vitally important lands.²⁸⁹ After the February Revolution, the Kadets showed consistency in their agrarian policy and like other moderate parties insisted the final solution be left to the Constituent Assembly.²⁹⁰

In the Caucasus specifically, the Kadets in Tiflis held their first post-revolution meeting on 8 March at a social club and elected their officers on 11 March. Judging from the attendance list, these were mainly Russians and Armenians.²⁹¹ They continued meeting regularly.²⁹² Based on the materials in their paper *Kavkazskoe slovo*, the Kadets in the Caucasus saw the introduction of “democratic zemstvo”, meaning specifically the Armenian proposal emphasizing the ethnographic principle, as the best way to heal

²⁸⁶ V. Maklakov, “The Agrarian Problem in Russia Before the Revolution,” *The Russian Review* 9, no. 1 (Jan. 1950): 12; Fleischhauer, “The Agrarian Program,” 193-194; Donald W. Treadgold, “The Constitutional Democrats and the Russian Liberal Tradition,” *The American Slavic and East European Review* 10, no. 2 (Apr. 1951), 85-94.

²⁸⁷ Fleischhauer, “The Agrarian Program,” 185-186, 191; Maklakov, “The Agrarian Problem,” 13-14; Tyrkova-Williams, 30; Treadgold, 91; “Program of the Popular Party,” Articles 36 and 37.

²⁸⁸ Fleischhauer, “The Agrarian Program,” 185-186, 194-195; Maklakov, “The Agrarian Problem,” 13.

²⁸⁹ Fleischhauer, “The Agrarian Program,” 184.

²⁹⁰ Fleischhauer, “The Agrarian Program,” 191.

Being initially dominant in the Provisional Government, their philosophy can be seen in their action. The government set up a Main Land Committee with subordinate local land committees, which were to, if approved by the Constituent Assembly, manage at the local level the land taken from landholding institutions or individuals.

²⁹¹ “Xronika, Partija narodnoj svobody” (Chronicle, Party of Popular Freedom), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 56 (10 March 1917); “V partijax” (In the parties), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 60 (15 March 1917).

²⁹² There are several mentions of meetings or gatherings in *Kavkazskoe slovo*.

national antagonisms and set up local self-government in Transcaucasia.²⁹³ In other words, the Kadets in the Caucasus were amenable to the idea of administrative boundary redrawing according to national settlement patterns but they seem to have given more weight to the Armenians' stance anchored in the ethnographic principle than to historical or economic factors.²⁹⁴

As for the Socialists-Revolutionaries' Party, their program called for Russia's federal restructuring along federal lines where each nation would have the right to choose to join the state and manage its internal affairs independently.²⁹⁵ However, after the February Revolution, the party began to waver on the national question in its desire to save the Russian state from disintegration.²⁹⁶ This trend and variety of ideas was also reflected in the debates of the Socialists-Revolutionaries (SRs) in the Caucasus. In early April, the local party paper *Znamja truda* (Banner of labor) published articles explaining the need to respect national-cultural self-determination and to form a federal state.²⁹⁷ Then, at the Conference of Tiflis SR Party Workers on 4-5 April, orators expressed their concerns about how to avoid "bourgeois-nationalism" and national antagonisms in the Caucasus.²⁹⁸ When one speaker presented a report arguing for a federal structure based on states and cantons corresponding to the ethnographic

²⁹³ M.A., "Po zhurnalam, Natsionalnyj vopros na Kavkaze" (In the journals, The national question in the Caucasus), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 48 (1 March 1917).

The author is referring to an article by Zhordania published in a Moscow paper.

²⁹⁴ See for example, "somxeti da saqartvelo (administratuli gadimizhvnis gamo). I." (Armenia and Georgia (because of the administrative boundary redrawing). I) *saqartvelo* 192 (1 [14] September 1917).

²⁹⁵ "Programma partii sotsialistov-revoljutsionerov" (Program of the Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries) in *Programy glavnejshix russkix partij*, Biblioteka Svobodnago Naroda, 16-17, accessed 9 March 2022, <https://dlib.rsl.ru/viewer/01004097304#?page=1>.

²⁹⁶ Elizabeth White, "The Socialist Revolutionary Party, Ukraine, and Russian National Identity in the 1920s," *The Russian Review* 66, no. 4 (Oct. 2007): 550-551.

²⁹⁷ F. Sibirskij, "Federativnaja respublika" (A federal republic), *Znamja truda* 3 (7 April 1917); N. Berezov, "K postanovke natsionalnago voprosa" (Towards the organization of the national question), *Znamja truda* 4 (8 April 1917); N. Berezov, "K postanovke natsionalnago voprosa" (Towards the organization of the national question) (cont.), *Znamja truda* 5 (9 April 1917).

²⁹⁸ K. Narodin, "Dve rezoljutsii" (Two resolutions), *Znamja truda* 3 (7 April 1917); "Tiflisskaja organizatsija sotsial.-revoljutsionerov" (The Tiflis organization of Social.-Revolutionaries), *Znamja truda* 3 (7 April 1917).

boundaries in order to “bring to life the principle of territorial autonomy within the actually populated areas of peoples”, he was opposed by those who argued the interests of socialism do not always correspond to the categorical demands of the ethnographic borders. Failing to reach an agreement, the assembly decided to continue discussion at future sessions.²⁹⁹ A few days later, on 7 April, the Congress of Transcaucasian SR Party Organizations opened. At this event the initiative was started to create a common Transcaucasian organization to set up a commission to work out its stance on the nationalities question.³⁰⁰

Overall, it seems the SRs in the Caucasus had a negative attitude towards the national aspirations of many locals. At both conferences, the opinion was expressed that the Georgian Socialist-Federalists and Dashnaktsutiun were not real socialist parties, and at the regional conference a resolution was passed that the SRs could not form a tactical alliance with the Socialist-Federalists unless they gave up their national ideals. Despite their misgivings about the Dashnaktsutiun though, they passed a resolution approving a tactical alliance with this party, and they had no problem forming a tactical alliance with the centralist Social Democrats.³⁰¹ According to Suny, in Baku specifically, the SRs stood between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks while remaining wary of the Dashnaktsutiun.³⁰² As far as the agrarian question, the Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries called for the socialization (*socielizatsia*) of the land, by

²⁹⁹ “Iz zhizni partii s.-r.” (From the S.R. Party’s life), *Znamja truda* 4 (8 April 1917); “Tiflisskaja organizatsija sotsial.-revoljutsionerov” (The Tiflis organization of Social.-Revolutionaries), *Znamja truda* 3 (7 April 1917).

«...привести в жизнь принцип территориальной автономии, в пределах реального расселения народов.»

³⁰⁰ “Şezd” (Congress), *Znamja truda* 4 (8 April 1917); “Zakavkazskaja oblastnaja Konferentsija partii Sotsialistov-revoljutsionerov v g. Tiflise” (The Transcaucasian oblast Conference of the Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries in Tiflis), *Znamja truda* 5 (9 April 1917); “Zakavkazskaja oblastnaja Konferentsija partii Sotsialistov-revoljutsionerov v g. Tiflise” (The Transcaucasian oblast Conference of the Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries Party in Tiflis) (cont.), *Znamja truda* 6 (11 April 1917); “Rezoljutsii konferentsii” (The conference’s resolutions), *Znamja truda* 6 (11 April 1917).

³⁰¹ K. Narodin, “Dve rezoljutsii” (Two resolutions), *Znamja truda* 3 (7 April 1917); “Iz zhizni partii s.-r.” (From the S.R. Party’s life), *Znamja truda* 4 (7 April 1917); “Rezoljutsii konferentsii” (The conference’s resolutions), *Znamja truda* 6 (11 April 1917).

³⁰² Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 82-83.

which they meant that private property should be abolished and transferred to ownership of society, i.e., the management of democratically organized communities, or communes, rather than the state.³⁰³

Thus, with regard to the national questions, the Kadets, moderate SRs and Mensheviks held similar views, and the SRs felt they could cooperate with the Dashnaktsutun.³⁰⁴ All wanted to set aside, or rather suppress, the national (or national-regional) question until it could be decided by the Constituent Assembly, which was repeatedly postponed because of the war effort, in order to preserve as much stability as possible until the end of the war. These parties also thought it wise to postpone their maximal programmatic demands for social and economic reform and focus on their minimal demands until the end of the war and the Constituent Assembly could make its authoritative pronouncement on this matter.³⁰⁵ This shared position enabled them to come together in support of the Provisional Government and form a loose alliance on the political scene in the Caucasus. While this constellation indeed contributed to a relative stability in the Caucasus over the year, it failed to take into account the strivings towards self-determination of many among the national minorities or the urgent yearning of masses of weary soldiers and hungry peasants for peace and land.³⁰⁶

d. *The Bolsheviks*

Unlike the Mensheviks, Kadets and SRs, the Bolsheviks were quick to realize the motivational force of the desire for ethno-national self-determination and the coercive potential of the land-hungry soldiers and peasants. Thus, they outwardly championed the peoples' rights of self-determination even as far as separation from Russia while demanding an immediate end to the war and the confiscation of lands without delay or

³⁰³ "Zemel'nyj vopros i Uchrezhdeniye sobranie" (The land question and the Constituent assembly), *Znamja truda* 4 (8 April 1917); Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 28; Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, 9.

³⁰⁴ "White, "The Socialist Revolutionary Party," 550-551.

³⁰⁵ Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, 57-59, 69-71; White, "The Socialist Revolutionary Party," 551.

³⁰⁶ "Tiflis, 17 March" (Tiflis, 17 March), *Kavkazskoe slovo* 62 (17 March 1917).

compensation.³⁰⁷ In Lenin's opinion, if a Russian socialist opposed the right of other nations to secede from Russia, then he or she was obstructing the success of the world revolution because the Soviet state would then resemble an imperialist state and so repulse the nationalities. But this did not make Lenin a decentralist. He remained a Marxist centralist.³⁰⁸ His idea regarding the national question was that if the Soviet state emphasized the oppressed nations' right to secede, then they would see how different it was from its competitors and strive to join it. "We Russians must emphasize freedom to secede, while the Poles [for example] must emphasize freedom to unite," he said.³⁰⁹ This is why it was no contradiction for some Bolsheviks on the periphery to display a vehement internationalism "in defiance of central party policy."³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution*, 107-108; Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, 73.

³⁰⁸ V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, trans. Robert Service (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 48.

Lenin writes, "Marx disagrees with Proudhon and with Bakunin precisely on the question of federalism (not to mention the dictatorship of the proletariat). Federalism derives as a tenet of principle from the petty bourgeois views of anarchism. Marx is a centralist. There is no retreat whatever from centralism in his quoted observations. Only people suffused with the philistine 'superstitious belief' in the state can mistake the destruction of the bourgeois state machine for the elimination of centralism! Well, what if the proletariat and the poorest peasantry take state power into their hands, organize themselves quite freely in communes and *unite* the actions of all the communes in striking at capital, in crushing the resistance of the capitalists and in transferring the privately owned railways, factories, land and so forth to the entire nation, to society as a whole? Will that not be centralism? Will that not be the most consistent democratic centralism? And proletarian centralism at that? Bernstein simply cannot conceive of the possibility of voluntary centralism, of the voluntary unification of the communes into a nation, of the voluntary fusion of the proletarian communes in the cause of destroying bourgeois rule and the bourgeois state machine. Like every philistine, Bernstein conceives of centralism only as something coming from on high, capable of being imposed and maintained solely by bureaucratic and militaristic power."

³⁰⁹ V. I. Lenin, "The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P (B.), 18, Speech on the National Question April 29 (May 12)," accessed 6 February 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/7thconf/29d.htm#v24zz99h-297-GUESS>.

"But people don't want to understand that to strengthen internationalism you do not have to repeat the same words. What you have to do is to stress, in Russia, the freedom of secession for oppressed nations and, in Poland, their freedom to unite. Freedom to unite implies freedom to secede. We Russians must emphasise freedom to secede, while the Poles must emphasise freedom to unite."

³¹⁰ Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, 149.

Adding fuel to the fire, Lenin argued that “the bourgeoisie” used nationalism as a weapon to keep the working people divided and exploited.³¹¹ Thus, recognition of the right to secede did not prohibit “propaganda and agitation *against* separation or “exposing” bourgeois nationalism.”³¹² By advocating the right to separatism in principle while simultaneously propagandizing against separatism in practice, calling it a bourgeois goal running counter to the interests of the working people and encouraging the national minorities to reject separatism, Lenin expected to gain mass support from among the lower classes of the oppressed nations of the former Russian Empire. Moreover, in his view the question of secession could not rightly be decided by the exploitive classes with their imperialistic and chauvinistic ideologies or even a popular referendum but only by the vanguard proletarian party—which should decide on a case-by-case basis whether or not declaring independence “would be in the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat for socialism”.³¹³ Stalin echoed this principle when he asserted in January 1918 that “It is necessary to limit the principle of free self-

³¹¹ V. I. Lenin, “The Working Class and the National Question,” published in *Pravda* 106 on 10 May 1913, accessed 6 February 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/may/10.htm>.

³¹² Lenin, V.I., “The National Program of the RSDLP,” published in *Sotsial-Demokrat* 32 on 15 (28) December 1918, accessed 6 February 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/dec/15.htm>.

“It would seem that even with Mr. Semkovsky’s mental abilities it is not difficult to deduce that “the right to divorce” does not require that one should vote for divorce! But such is the fate of those who criticise § 9—they forget the ABC of logic... This is childish nonsense since the recognition of the right does not exclude either propaganda and agitation against separation or the exposure of bourgeois nationalism. But it is absolutely indisputable that the denial of the right to secede is “playing into the hands” of the most thorough-paced reactionary Great-Russian nationalism!” Clearly no one believes in promoting the right to divorce even if one recognizes its validity *in theory!* no matter how abusive the situation. Some things never change.

³¹³ V. I. Lenin, “The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P (B.), April 24-29, 1917, Resolution on the National Question,” accessed 6 February 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/7thconf/29e.htm>.

“The right of nations freely to secede must not be confused with the advisability of secession by a given nation at a given moment. The party of the proletariat must decide the latter question quite independently in each particular case, having regard to the interests of social development as a whole and the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat for socialism.”

determination of nations, by granting it to the toilers and refusing it to the bourgeoisie. The principle of self-determination should be a means of fighting for socialism.”³¹⁴

Although Lenin’s Bolshevik party, renamed the Russian Communist Party in early 1918, later allowed for the formally decentralized state structures of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Communist Party apparatus, which controlled the state, was itself centralized. Moreover, the Soviet state formations deployed the principle of federalism as a centripetal rather than centrifugal force.³¹⁵ This created the illusion of the nascent Soviet power as decentralist and supportive of national self-determination—a potent lure for many in the periphery—while building the reality of dictatorial centralism. And this is precisely why the Ossetian Muslim and anti-Bolshevik socialist Axmet Tsalikov wrote the following in January 1920: “Is the right to national self-determination even so far as separation perhaps now understood in the real sense and not merely as a screen for the secret wishes of all-Russian centralization to hide behind?! ... The Mountain peoples are now placed in a tragic situation. ... They will now have to “self-determine”

³¹⁴ Iosef Stalin, “Speech to the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets. January 28, 1918,” *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History*, accessed 6 February 2022, <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1917-2/the-empire-falls/the-empire-falls-texts/speech-to-the-third-all-russian-congress-of-soviets>.

“We are being reproached with the fact that by forcing the Soviet form of government on the territorially organized nationalities... we are contradicting our own principles. Comrade Martov wonders why we demand a referendum in Poland, Courland, and Lithuania, et cetera... and at the same time insist that at home (that is to say, in the Ukraine, the Caucasus, Finland, et cetera)... the right to vote should be given to the toilers only ... The facts are as stated. But those who see in them duplicity and contradictions... do not take into consideration... other factors. The Ukraine, the Caucasus, et cetera, have passed the political stage of bourgeois parliamentarism; but Poland, Courland, and Lithuania have not yet shaken off the autocratic yoke, have not yet reached the democratic stage.”

Compare with Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 109.

³¹⁵ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 110-113, 242-247.

as dictated by the hand wielding the victorious sword.”³¹⁶ This is also the reason the Georgian writer Giorgi Robaqidze called the Bolsheviks “socialist imperialists”.³¹⁷

6. *Organizing by nationality, creed and class*

The aftermath of the February Revolution was characterized by a kind of spontaneous inter-ethnic, inter-class and inter-faith solidarity buoyed by elation at the fall of the tsar. In this elevated mood, the representatives of the various nationalities of the Caucasus pulled together to both celebrate and organize. In the Terek oblast, old feuds were briefly forgotten, and it felt as if “the entire Russian reality basked in the light of newly won freedoms” and nothing could go wrong.³¹⁸ In Tiflis, the Dashnaktsutiun headquarters was the site of festive celebrations and the air was filled with appeals for regional solidarity and brotherhood.³¹⁹ On Sunday 5 March, meetings were held on nearly every square of the regional capital while joyful soldiers marched through the streets raising the red flag of the new government and playing freedom songs.³²⁰

The largest and most important meeting, organized by the Bureau of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies, was held on 5 March on Nadzaladevi Square. By ten in the morning, an excited crowd of many thousands of citizens and soldiers, a microcosm of the region’s demographic diversity, had come to hear the day’s speeches and

³¹⁶ Ах., “Tragicheskij čas” (Tragic hour), *Volnyj goretš* 25 (15 January 1920).

«Может быть право на национальное самоопределение вплоть до отделения поднимается теперь в действительном смысле, а не является только ширмой за которой прячутся затаенные желания всероссийской централизации?!... И горские народы поставлены сейчас в трагическое положение.... Им придется теперь „самоопределяться“ так, как продиктует та рука, которая будет вооружена победоносным мечом.»

³¹⁷ Givi Gollend, “socialisturi imperialistebi” (Socialist imperialists), *saqartvelo* 273 (15 [28] December 1917).

On the Georgian National Parliamentary Library website, it identifies Givi Gollend as Giorgi Robaqidze. See <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gwdict/index.php?a=list&d=2&p=2&w1=%E1%83%92&w2=%E1%83%98>.

³¹⁸ “Itogi i vyvody, Soedinennoe bjuro i Izpolniteľnyj Komitet” (Results and conclusions, the Unified bureau and the Executive Committee), *Terskij kraj* 1 (11 June 1917).

³¹⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 70; Hovannisian 1: 15.

³²⁰ “dghevandeli mdgomareoba, 1, miťingi” (The current situation, 1, meeting), *saxalxo furceli* 812 (7 March 1917).

resolutions.³²¹ The British correspondent Price's observations well convey the all-Caucasian ethno-national harmony of the scene and he has been cited by other authors. Thus, here I will draw attention to the words which refer specifically to the North Caucasians' participation in this momentous event. Price writes,

“In a large open space six raised platforms had been built, and round them was assembled a vast multitude composed of almost every element in the multiracial population of the Caucasus. There were wild mountain tribesman, Lesghians, Avars, Chechens and Svanetians in their long black cloaks and sheepskin caps. The eddies of the wave of revolution had swept up into the recesses of the Caucasus... they had come across miles of mountain tracks out of curiosity to confirm the rumours they had heard... The massed bands then struck up the Marseillaise. Every head was bared. The mountain tribesman took off his shaggy fur cap, the long hair of the Russian student fluttered in the breeze, and the troops, who a few days before had sung ‘God save the Tsar’, now presented arms to the great revolutionary hymn. Three times it was played amid frantic cheering.”³²²

It is intriguing that Price believed the Mountaineers had come to Tiflis from as far as Daghestan and Chechnya to confirm the rumors they had heard about the

³²¹ “dghevandeli mdgomareoba, 1, miṭingi” (The current situation, 1, meeting), *saxalxo furceli* 812 (7 March 1917); Price, *War & Revolution*, 280-284; “saxalxo miṭingi tbilisshi” (People's meeting in Tbilisi), *saqartvelo* 53 (8 March 1917); “Narodnyj miting” (Popular meetings), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 54 (7 March 1917).

The Georgian sources call it Nadzaladevi Moedani (Square). The Russian and English sources say the meeting was held on *Teatral'naja Ploščad* (Theatre Square) at Nakhalovka or on Nahalovsky square. It appears the same place was referred to differently between the two languages. Nadzaladevi even today retains the second name of Nakhalovka.

³²² Price, *War & Revolution*, 280-284.

Here is a fuller version of the quote:

“In a large open space six raised platforms had been built, and round them was assembled a vast multitude composed of almost every element in the multiracial population of the Caucasus. There were wild mountain tribesman, Lesghians, Avars, Chechens and Svanetians in their long black cloaks and sheepskin caps. The eddies of the wave of revolution had swept up into the recesses of the Caucasus... they had come across miles of mountain tracks out of curiosity to confirm the rumours they had heard... There were the picturesque peasants of the fair provinces of Georgia... Then there were Armenian merchants from Tiflis... There were educated Tartars of the East Caucasus... There were the representatives of the urban proletariat of Tiflis and some from the Baku oil-fields... Among them was the intellectual Russian student, the Georgian poet and the Armenian doctor... In this great concourse of Caucasian peoples were standing side by side the most primitive and the most progressive types of the human race... The spirit Demos had suddenly risen out of a multitude of suppressed individualities, and had manifested itself in the form of that great gathering of mediaeval mountaineers and twentieth-century working-men, all inspired by the same idea of brotherhood and freedom... The political prisoners... were carried on the shoulders of comrades to the platforms... The massed bands then struck up the Marseillaise. Every head was bared. The mountain tribesman took off his shaggy fur cap, the long hair of the Russian student fluttered in the breeze, and the troops, who a few days before had sung ‘God save the Tsar’, now presented arms to the great revolutionary hymn. Three times it was played amid frantic cheering.”

revolution. If he is correct, this suggests that North Caucasian mountain villages may have heard the news through *xabary* before it was officially announced in the Terek oblast on the fourth.³²³ Also notable is the fact that they came from the North Caucasus to Tiflis instead of going to some other city like Stavropol or Astrakhan, as this implies they saw Tiflis as their regional center. In fact, there is another text which confirms this impression. In a little “feuilleton”, the Georgian nationalist David Vachnadze recounts the words of the Union of Allied Mountaineers (UAM) delegation members, led by the Chechen millionaire Tapa Chermoev, upon their visit to the national democrats’ office in April 1917. He writes,

Five elegant men entered the hall. “Please allow us to introduce ourselves,” said one of them. “We are the representatives of your northern neighbors: the Chechens, Ingush, Lezghians and Kumyks. Because of today’s tumultuous times, we have rushed to Georgia to seek its opinion and advice, like we used to do in the old days over an old mountain path.”³²⁴

If the Georgian author is faithful in his artistic retelling of the Chechen’s words, this means not only that the Mountaineers saw Tiflis as a regional center and place to obtain information and perhaps discuss coordination in the present but that they also believed this was the practice of their ancestors. Another Georgian nationalist, Shalva Amirejibi, later recorded a similar impression of the Mountaineers’ attitude towards Georgia when

³²³ Of course, it is possible that the Mountaineers on the square had already been in Tiflis, but that is not what Price explicitly states. He says they had come out of the mountain recesses over the mountain paths down to Tiflis.

³²⁴ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 48; “paṭara feleṭoni” (Little feuilleton), *saqartvelo* 83 (18 April 1917).

„დარბაზში შემოვიდა ხუთი მოხდენილი ვაჟკაცი. --ნება გვიბოძეთ გაგეცნოთ, --სთქვა ერთმა მათგანმა. --ჩვენ გახლავართ თქვენი ჩრდილო-მეზობლების წარმომადგენლები: ჩეჩნები, ინგუშები, ლეკები, ყუმბიხები. დღევანდელ აფორიაქებულ დროისა გამო ძველად ძველ მთის ბილიკით მოვეშურებოდით საქართველოში მისი აზრის გასაგებად, და რჩევა დარიგებისათვის.“

Although this is a feuilleton, the UAM representatives did visit the Georgian national democrats in Tiflis on their way to Baku in April (and on the way back). According to Muzaev, Chermoev later recalled the visit warmly, saying, “I was in Georgia, and in thinking of the Georgians as brothers I was not mistaken. I received the most fraternal welcome.”

he described the young Chechen Inzaur Arsanukov as one “on whose lips the name Georgia danced as the best hope for his country’s future”.³²⁵

Like the Georgian national democrats, at the start of the revolution, the North Caucasians and Caucasian Muslims shared in the general hopes placed by society at large on the Constituent Assembly and were in alignment with the general will to preserve Russia’s unity, even considering the possibility of an Ottoman occupation. Thus, they resolutely demonstrated their will to cooperate in the common temporary administrative structures of the region and started preparing their constituencies for participation in the creation of Russia’s new order. At the same time, however (and without any contradiction to the principles of the revolution), the Terek Cossacks, Caucasian Muslims and North Caucasian Mountaineers were the first to hold congresses along the lines of nation or creed, followed only much later by the Armenians and Georgians.

a. *The Cossacks*

In one of the apparent paradoxes of the Russian Revolution, it was not the Armenians or Georgians who were the first to call national congresses but the Cossacks, Caucasian Muslims and North Caucasian Mountaineers.³²⁶ The Don, Kuban and Terek Cossack Hosts reacted to the revolution by resurrecting the institution of the *vojskovoï krug*, the army (“host”) circle or the Cossack assembly, an assembly of the heads of each *stanitsa* (a large Cossack village). These “parliaments” each elected their respective ataman and a government.³²⁷ In the Terek, the Cossacks elected the recently returned Mixail Karaulov as *ataman* at their first assembly, which opened in Vladikavkaz as early as 14

³²⁵ Sh. Amirejibi, “daghestan-chechneti” (Daghestan-Chechnya), *saqartvelo* 270 (12 [25] December 1917).

³²⁶ The Baku Congress of Caucasian Muslims was formally a congress for all the region’s Muslims but in essence it was a congress for the East Transcaucasian Muslims (Azerbaijanis) and was of a more secular nature. According to Suny, in *The Baku Commune* (page 86, footnote 42), the word “Azerbaijan” was not used due to concerns about frightening the Provisional Government.

³²⁷ Peter Kenez, *Red Attack White Resistance: Civil War in South Russia 1918* (Washington, DC: New Academic Publishing, 2004), 40-41.

March.³²⁸ In the Don, Aleksej Maksimovich Kaledin was chosen ataman at the Don Cossack assembly in June.³²⁹

In the Kuban oblast, the original provisional oblast ispolkom included some representatives for the out-of-towners and socialists but it was dominated initially by Cossacks and Kadets. The inogorodnie and socialists then, despite having their own soviets, began pressuring the ispolkom to increase their own number of representatives in it.³³⁰ The ispolkom complied, sending one Cossack and one inogorodnij commissioner to each *okrug* (county). A congress of representatives sent from the different settlements of the oblast was then convened in mid-April. Although the Kuban oblast executive council and its executive committee elected by the congress was dominated by Cossacks, inogorodnie and gortsy members, the Cossack delegates felt like they were losing power and walked out of the congress, declaring themselves the Kuban Host Rada (*Kubanskaja Vojskovaja Rada*) and elected a government headed by Ataman A. Filimonov. On 21 April, the *Vojskovaja Rada* was recognized as the supreme authority for the Cossacks, and it elected its own government on the following day.³³¹ And in the Kuban, the *lineets* (“line-man”) A.P. Filimonov was elected ataman in October.³³²

b. *The East Transcaucasian Muslims*

The political scene among the eastern Transcaucasian Muslims was split between Baku and Ganja (the capital of the Elizavetpol gubernija), centralists and federalists, socialists and nationalists, secularists and Islamists. In Baku, the Council of Muslim Public

³²⁸ Borisenko 2: 32.

³²⁹ Borisenko 1: 43; Kenez, *Red Attack White Resistance*, 41.

³³⁰ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 37.

³³¹ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 37; Raenko, *Chronicle*, 23-25. Raenko gives the date of 16 April 1917.

³³² Kenez, *Red Attack White Resistance*, 43-44; Peter Kenez, *Red Advance White Defeat: Civil War in South Russia 1919-1920* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2004), 113-114.

There were two types of Cossacks in the Kuban, the Black Sea Cossacks (of Ukrainian origin) towards the coast and the Linemen (of Russian origin) before the mountains.

Associations, which was formed in parallel with the IKOO and Baku Soviet, reflected the Muslim's ideological spectrum in its composition. As mentioned above, it was led by the liberal political activist Topchibashev and the Musavatist Gadzhinskij (former Himmatist). In the council on the left were Left-SRs and Himmatists. The Himmat Party had been founded in 1905 and resumed its activities with the February Revolution.³³³ Further to the center was the Musavat, which had its roots in the socialist movement and the largest following among the Muslims. To the right of the Musavat was the Independent Democratic Group led by Topchibashev and Xan Xojskij.³³⁴

The most influential party among the Muslims in Baku was the Musavat. Even though in the early days of the revolution it struggled to come up with a platform, it appears to have leaned towards populism and federalism despite its socialist and pan-Islamic roots.³³⁵ In Ganja the most influential party among the Muslims was the Turkic Party of Decentralization (Swietochowski: Türk Adäm-i Märkaziyyät Firqäsi, Altstadt: Türk Ademi-merkezıyet Halk Firkasi), some of whose members were associated with the repressed Difai.³³⁶ The “decentralists” were federalists with a strong regional

³³³ Hasanov, *On the road to the First Republic*, 38-39; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 77, 86-87; Nigar Afandiyeva Maxwell, “Last Parliament Session Before the Bolsheviks Came-1920,” *Azerbaijan International* 7.3 (Autumn 1999), accessed 2 April 2022, https://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/73_folder/73_articles/73_parliament.html; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 584-585; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 85-87; Tadeusz Swietochowski, “The Himmät Party. Socialism and the National Question in Russian Azerbaijan 1904-1920,” *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 19, no. 1/2 (Jan.-Jun. 1978), 133.

According to Hasanov, the IKOO had the Muslim representatives M.G. Gadzhinskij and I. Gejdarov but as of 4-5 March no representatives from the Muslim (or Armenian) national-cultural organizations). Towards the end of month, F. Xojskij was sent, among others, by the IKOO to the Regional congress of executive committees.

Swietochowski calls it the Council of Muslim Public Associations. Suny calls it the Muslim National Council. They seem to be referring to the same body. Muzaev calls Topchibashev the chairman of the Muslim National Council.

³³⁴ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 86-87; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 86.

³³⁵ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan* 86; Swietochowski, “The Himmät Party,” 123-124.

³³⁶ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 80; Ajdyn Balaev, *Azerbajdzhanskoe natsionalnoe dvizhenie v 1917-1918 gg.* (Azerbaijani national movement in 1917-1918) (Baku: ELM, 1998), 33; Hasan Aziz oglu Hasanov, *Na puti k Pervoj Respublike: Ocherki istorii Azerbajdzhana s fevralja 1917 goda do maja 1918 goda* (On the road to the First Republic: Sketches of the history of Azerbaijan from February 1917 to May 1918) (Baku: Çaşıoğlu, 2016), 35; Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 86.

outlook.³³⁷ Their party program called for Russia's reconstitution as a democratic, federative republic on the basis of national-territorial autonomy, including for Azerbaijan, where they wanted to retain complete independence in everything but common defense, foreign policy, taxes and customs. The federalists' program also highlighted the importance of safeguarding the rights of the peasantry and working class according to national-democratic ideals.³³⁸ Over March and April, the Baku and Ganja parties would move closer together on the national question, merging in the Turkic Party of Decentralism-Musavat ("Musavat") by June.³³⁹ The Turkic Party of Decentralism-Musavat was in favor of land redistribution but called for the compensation of landowners during the anticipated agrarian reforms.³⁴⁰ In opposition to the Decentralists-Musavatists on the national question, the socialists in the Himmat (led by Nariman Narimanov) were aligned with the RSDLP and shared their centralist platform. They were also internally divided between those who favored Menshevism (mainly in Baku) and those who favored Bolshevism (mainly in the provinces). The Islamic parties were the "Muslims in Russia" party in Baku and "Union of Islam" in Ganja, which merged into the Ittihad in September 1917. The Ittihadists were in favor of decentralization but opposed separation from Russia, hoping that a democratic Russian republic would not only keep Russia's Muslims united but also protect them from the predations of Western imperialists.³⁴¹

As shown in the previous chapter, the Difai party emerged against the backdrop of the 1905 Revolution.

³³⁷ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 80-81; Balaev, *Azerbaijani national movement*, 33; Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 86.

Important figures included the founder and chief ideologue Nasib-bek Usubbekov (Nəşib bəy Yusifbəyli) and Rustambekov.

³³⁸ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 81; Balaev, *Azerbaijani national movement*, 33.

³³⁹ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 81; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 85-86, 90, 93.

³⁴⁰ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 81.

³⁴¹ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 82; Swietochowski, "The Himmät Party," 125; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 87-89.

c. The Baku Congress of Caucasian Muslims (April 1917)

The Baku Congress of Caucasian Muslims, held 15-20 April, was organized mainly by and for the so-called East Transcaucasian Tatars to work out their stance on the main questions of the day, but it was also a multinational event which included guests from other religious communities. The Georgian national democrats' correspondent at the congress reported that the Georgian Socialist-Federalists had sent a representative to propose the creation of a Muslim-Georgian federation. On the cultural front, representatives from the Georgian literacy and women's societies spoke, encouraging Muslim participation in Georgian cultural institutions. Representatives from Baku's Russian, Armenian, Jewish and Polish populations also weighed in, expressing their good will towards Muslims and desire for harmony.³⁴²

The four main questions addressed at the Baku Congress were 1) the restructuring of the Russian state, 2) agrarian reform, 3) education and 4) women's rights. With regard to the first question, Gadzhinskij and leftists argued that Russia's Muslims should work out a common policy while Alimardan-bek Topchibashev thought the Caucasian nations should present a united front at the Constituent Assembly. Ultimately, the congress accepted Mamed Emin Rasulzade's (Məhəmməd Əmin Rəsulzadə) argument that the "most acceptable form of state system for Russia" would be on the basis of affirming national-territorial autonomy for each distinct ethnographic group. As for the nations of the Caucasus region specifically, it was agreed there must be established tight ties and agreement for the implementation of their common democratic ambitions.³⁴³ Thus, it appears that the Muslims at the Baku congress did not explicitly accept the Georgian Socialist-Federalists' proposal of creating a Georgian-Muslim federal union but rather adopted a view which looks closer to that of the Georgian national democrats, who, under the circumstances, wanted national-territorial autonomy for each individual nation. The Georgian national

³⁴² "sruliad kavkasiis mahmadiana qriloba" (All-Caucasian Muslims' congress), *saqartvelo* 84 (21 April 1917); "kavkasiis mahmadiana qriloba" (The Caucasian Muslims' congress), *saqartvelo* 89 (26 April 1917).

³⁴³ "kavkasiis mahmadiana qriloba" (The Caucasian Muslims' congress), *saqartvelo* 89 (26 April 1917).

democrats expressed satisfaction with this outcome, anticipating correctly that the Transcaucasian Muslims would play a key role in forming the attitudes of the Russian Muslims towards the national question. This was important since they expected the Muslims to collectively play a major role in the outcome at the Constituent Assembly.³⁴⁴

At the congress in Baku there were tensions regarding the agrarian question and, at the demand of the workers' and peasants' representatives, special committees were set up to look into this matter.³⁴⁵ It was also decided to set up two temporary bureaus, one in Vladikavkaz and one in Baku, for the purpose of gathering statistical information and setting up Muslims' districts and committees, and a bureau in Tiflis for overseeing all common affairs. A fund was set up with a board in Baku and its main representative was to be in Tiflis.³⁴⁶ This shows that even though the congress convened mainly to represent East Transcaucasian Muslims, it was also planning to bring all of the Muslims of the north and south Caucasus together under one organizational umbrella.

d. The Union of Allied Mountaineers (UAM) Provisional Executive Committee

While the Cossacks were reinventing the krug system of governance, and the Russians and other out-of-towners set up workers', peasants' and soldiers' soviets, the North Caucasians fell back on their traditional social structures while simultaneously creating something new and modern. Even though each individual linguistic group, village and extended family had its unique internal life, all the Mountaineers held something common between them: customs and attitudes, a shared experience under tsarist rule,

³⁴⁴ "kavkasiis mahmadiana qriloba" (The congress of Caucasian Muslima), *saqartvelo* 85 (21 April 1917).

³⁴⁵ "kavkasiis mahmadiana qriloba" (The congress of Caucasian Muslima), *saqartvelo* 88 (25 April 1917).

The education question was resolved much more easily with everyone agreeing that schools and universities should be nationalized and brought under Muslim control. They also unanimously agreed on a united administration for Shiites and Sunnis and the eradication of any sectarian differences between them. Concerning their relationship to the other Muslims of Russia, it was decided that there should be an overarching coordinating body with legislative functions. In the end, the congress resolved that the Muslims must support all the nations in realizing their national political ambitions.

³⁴⁶ "mahmadiana qriloba baqoshi" (The Muslims' congress in Baku), *saqartvelo* 91 (28 April 1917).

and the collective memory of folk heroes like Sheikh Mansur and Imam Shamil, who had ever so ephemerally brought them together in resistance to Russian expansion in the past, often under the banner of their shared religion. Drawing on these commonalities, and aware of their weakness as individual groups, after March the North Caucasians quickly pulled together.

As the native communities were small and isolated through the end of the empire, they had a tiny collective intelligentsia, consisting of the sons of elites who had benefitted in some way from old regime. These “privileged sons” were socialized to a degree alongside the scions of other well-to-do imperial subjects, whether in military or secular schools; and some received excellent educations in Europe.³⁴⁷ After graduating, these young men could be found in the military and bureaucracy or working as engineers, doctors, lawyers and teachers. In their free time, they might have collected ethnographic data or engaged in charitable activities.³⁴⁸

Petrograd and Vladikavkaz were two cities with significant concentrations of these men with secular educations. After the February Revolution, the Petrograd and Vladikavkaz circles worked in tandem, the first seeing it as its duty to promote native

³⁴⁷ “chrdilo da amier kavkasia” (North and Trans Caucasia),” *saqartvelo* 215 (1 [14] October 1917).

The article is talking more specifically about Cossacks than Mountaineers, but it was written around the time the Mountaineers were entering into an alliance with the Cossacks. The article talks about the North Caucasus pulling towards the north more than towards Transcaucasia because of various economic ties and also resisting submission to Tbilisi. It mentions how the youth of the Terek and Kuban are educated in Rostov. On a related note, when I looked at a representative sample of the figures in Timur Muzaev’s biographical dictionary of notable figures, the following pattern emerges among the native intelligentsia. Education was divided between religious (quite a few), military (a few) and secular (quite a few). Some received education at “real schools” in Vladikavkaz or Temur-khan-shura and stopped there or went on to get a military education, usually in Elizavetgrad (the Ukrainian city of Kropyvnytskyi). A number of Ossetians went to the Ardon seminary and became Bolsheviks. One Ingush studied in Novocherkessk and then Moscow, and he also became a Bolshevik. A few received basic educations in Tiflis gubernija. For the most part, however, the only gymnasium mentioned is Stavropol Gymnasium. From there young men went to Saint-Petersburg, Moscow, Tartu, Riga, Odessa, Jena and Paris (in order of frequency). Thus, the education seems to have been local schools initially, gymnasium in Stavropol, higher education in the St. Petersburg or Moscow. The most salient leaders in 1917-1921 also tended to be the ones with European educations.

³⁴⁸ See the biographical dictionary in Muzaev’s *The Union of Mountaineers*.

interests in the capital and the second to defend them at home.³⁴⁹ In Petrograd, the North Caucasian intelligentsia quickly formed a committee headed by Magomet Dalgat. “Organize and Unite!” became the call of the moment for the Mountaineers, and the Petrograd Committee explained in an appeal to the Mountaineers that without unification they would be left weak and incapable of guarding their national wealth. The Petrograd committee urged the people to “get started quickly on creating permanent bodies of local self-government” on the basis of the four-tail franchise so that they would fully prepared when it was time to elect representatives for the Constituent Assembly.³⁵⁰ As mentioned above, the native intelligentsia in Vladikavkaz formed the Provisional Central Committee of United Mountaineers on 5-6 March and successfully demanded representation in the Terek’s new oblast ispolkom. In the view of *saqartvelo*’s writers, the Vladikavkaz committee was an effective organization and the united Mountaineers were an “imitable example” for other nations (including Georgia) in implementing freedom and establishing orderly public life.³⁵¹

Meanwhile, the Vladikavkaz committee immediately set about helping the North Caucasians organize themselves through setting up local ispolkoms, which in the North Caucasus generally took on the nature of national congresses because of the way native populations were settled in specific areas.³⁵² In the Terek oblast, the Ingush met as early as 6 March in Vladikavkaz to elect a Provisional Ingush Ispolkom.³⁵³ According to the Chechen historian Timur Muzaev, “By mid-March 1917 the system of national self-government in Ingushetia had taken its final form. The Provisional

³⁴⁹ A. X. Karmov, comp., *Materialy ŧezdov gorskix narodov Severnogo Kavkaza i Dagestana 1917 goda* (Materials of the congresses of the mountain peoples of the North Caucasus and Daghestan 1917) (Nalchik: Izdateľskij otdel KBIGI, 2014), 48, 72.

³⁵⁰ Karmov, *Materials*, 72-73; “Vozzvanie Komiteta gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza k narodam Kavkaza, mart 1917 g.” (The appeal of the Committee of the gortsy of the North Caucasus to the peoples of the Caucasus, March 1917) in Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 405-406.

³⁵¹ “bundovani momavali” (Hazy future), *saqartvelo* 77 (9 April 1917); “kavkasiis mtielta qřiloba” (The Caucasian Mountaineers’ Congress), *saqartvelo* 96 (5 May 1917).

³⁵² D. Z. Korenev, *Revoljutsija na Tereke 1917-1918 gody* (The revolution on the Terek 1917-1918) (Ordzhonikidze: Severo-Osetinskoe knizhnoe izdateľstvo, 1967), 32.

³⁵³ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 19.

Ingush Ispolkom... became the official representative organ of the Ingush people... Real executive authority was in the hands of Nazran okrug Commissioner Magomed Dzhabagiev, whose influence rapidly grew in Ingushetia.”³⁵⁴

The First Chechen Congress convened in Groznyj on 14 March. About ten thousand people attended, and Russian representatives from the Groznyj Civil Committee and Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Cossack Deputies were warmly received. Elected at the congress was the Chechen National Executive Committee of the Groznyj and Vedenno okrugs which served at once as a body of self-government for the Chechens and an administrative organ for these okrugs (which also had non-Chechen residents). The Social Democrat Axmetxan Mutushev was elected head of the national committee, T. Ə. Əldarxanov (the former Duma deputy) as the Groznyj okrug commissioner and Colonel Abdulla Aduiev as the Vedenno okrug commissioner.³⁵⁵ The Nalchik Okrug Civil Executive Committee was formed in the second part of March. It included important members of the native intelligentsia, most notably the Balkarian Basijat Shaxanov and the Kabardian Pshemako Kotsev (Kosok). The First Ossetian National Congress was held 6-8 April in Vladikavkaz. It elected the Vladikavkaz (Ossetian) Okrug Civil Committee as the body of self-government for the Ossetians and the Menshevik Simon Takoev as commissioner. However, this okrug ispolkom immediately split into two factions, supporters of the UAM versus socialists who prioritized class struggle over the national question.³⁵⁶

Judging from the speed and efficiency with which the North Caucasians got organized, they scarcely needed urging from the intelligentsia to bask in their newfound

³⁵⁴ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 20.

«К середине марта 1917 года система национального самоуправления в Ингушетии окончательно сформировалась. Временный Ингушский исполком... стал официальным представительным органом ингушского народа... Реальная исполнительная власть находилась в руках комиссара Назрановского округа Магомеда Джабагиева, влияние которого в Ингушетии быстро выросло.»

³⁵⁵ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 21-23. According to Muzaev, the congress elected the “Chechen National Executive Committee of the Groznyj and Vedenno okruga” and it became the highest civil authority in these okruga and the body of national self-governance.

³⁵⁶ Korenev, *The revolution on the Terek*; 33-34; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 24-27.

freedom and trust in their customary way of doing things. The young professionals however, played an important role in channeling this drive into forms fitting to the current conditions in the oblast and region and getting their fellow citizens ready for full participation in the new all-Russian democracy they imagined before them.³⁵⁷ The UAM together with the okrug ispolkoms/national councils then organized democratic elections to the First Mountain Congress in May.³⁵⁸ It was expected that they would work out a common platform for the Constituent Assembly and formalize an organizational structure that could coordinate both internally between the national groups and to defend their collective and individual interests in the new external conditions.

Among the educated North Caucasians, there was a significant contingent with religious educations, and the religious leaders had a great deal of influence among the populace. This did not impede the UAM Provisional Executive Committee though, since it enjoyed the support of the religious leaders. In the first months of the revolution, native military, secular and religious leaders worked together to get their communities organized in the wake of the sudden collapse of the empire. While they may have had different priorities or ideas about what self-determination ultimately meant for the Mountaineers, they were all interested in helping their peoples bring the right of self-determination into realization.

The UAM also had the full support of the population at the beginning of the revolution. As one of the UAM's harshest critics, the young Chechen firebrand Aslanbek Sheripov still admitted that in the first months of the revolution Chermoev (the UAM president elected in May) enjoyed the greatest authority among the popular masses, landowners and sheikhs and mullahs.³⁵⁹ As a radicalized youth and Bolshevik sympathizer, however, Sheripov disapproved of this situation. He considered the UAM

³⁵⁷ Compare "kavkasiis mtielta qriloba" (The Caucasian Mountaineers' Congress), *saqartvelo* 96 (5 May 1917) and T. Tabidze, "mtielta avtonomia" (The Mountaineers' autonomy), *saqartvelo* 270 (12 [25] December 1917).

³⁵⁸ Karmov, *Materials*, 72. 7-9, 54; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 18, 35, 40-42, 49, 408.

³⁵⁹ Sheripov, *Articles and speeches*, 125-126.

to be a tool for the “upper classes”, which for him included the religious elite. In his own words, at the beginning of the revolution,

“This group had the unconditional trust of all the Caucasian *gortsy*, maybe a simple trust as to *gortsy* who could speak and write Russian ... In Daghestan, this government was based on beks, khans, mullahs, sheiks and in general the propertied classes. In Chechnya, it was based on the artificial landowners, who had got land by betraying the mountain people’s affair, and based on the sheikhs and rich mullahs, who are in our lives the same feudal lords as there were in Europe.”³⁶⁰

The Bolshevik Korenev also likened the native religious leaders to “feudal lords” and agreed with Sheripov that the religious and secular leaders, as representatives of the affluent and intellectual classes, were working together and had broad popular support. He wrote, “And with the sheikhs and in complete agreement with them the landowners, oil industrialists, generals and bourgeois-national intelligentsia immediately stepped forward in the role of ‘guardians’ of the national freedom of the *gortsy*. The new bodies of authority in the Terek were in their hands.”³⁶¹

It is significant, however, that a reason Korenev gave for the sheikhs’ popularity was that they had been seen as leaders and martyrs in the pre-revolutionary anti-tsarist movement.³⁶² Although Sheripov and Korenev sneered at the UAM and their allies among the religious leaders, their words yet underscore that in the beginning of the revolution on the Terek there was indeed a strong sense among the Mountaineers of a native society united in its relief at the collapse of tsardom and ready to work together

³⁶⁰ Sheripov, *Articles and speeches*, 125-126.

«Эта группа имела безусловное доверие всех горцев Кавказа, быть может, доверие просто как к горцам, знающим русский язык и русскую письменность... В Дагестане это правительство опиралось на беков, ханов, мулл, шейхов и вообще на имущие классы. В Чечне оно опиралось на искусственных помещиков, получивших земли за измену горских народов, опиралось на шейхов, богатых мулл, которые являются в нашей жизни теми же феодалами, какими были и европейские феодалы.»

³⁶¹ Korenev, *The revolution on the Terek*, 32.

«А вместе с шейхами и в полном согласии с ними в роли «блюстителей» национальной свободы горских народов сразу же выступали помещики, нефтепромышленники, генералы, буржуазно-националистическая интеллигенция. В их руках и оказались новые органы власти на Тереке.»

³⁶² Korenev, *The revolution on the Terek*, 32.

This is an excellent indication that the native as a majority had never been reconciled to tsarist rule.

towards a democratic future led by the native intelligentsia in tandem with their traditional religious authorities.

Mountain society clearly came together in the spring of 1917 despite internal differences in ethno-linguistic background, political orientation, social-economic situation or religious conviction because they shared a common sense of belonging and historical experience as well as believed that the only practical way of making their voice heard and defend their collective and individual interests on the regional and all-Russian levels was to stand together. In the euphoria of the moment, they also strove to create good relations with the out-of-towner population and, at least among the educated and affluent, with the Cossacks.³⁶³ However, the population which so trustingly followed its native leaders of national democratic leaning in the early months of the revolution would eventually fracture over the year, with some rebelling against the UAM's authority to feud with the Cossacks or each other over land claims and with others breaking away to side with the Bolsheviks and other far left socialists who called for class struggle. Bolsheviks like Korenev then hewed at these dissensions in hopes of dividing North Caucasian society along social-economic fault lines. These fault lines naturally ran strongest between the natives and Cossacks but, with aggravation, serious friction could also be found between different mountain national groups over land rights or economic disparity, e.g., the Ingush and Ossetians or Kabardians and Balkarians, as well as within a nationality between those with relatively greater wealth and privilege and those with less—despite the fact that Mountain societies were far less stratified than those of Russia or Europe.

e. The UAM founding congress (May 1917)

Pleased as they were with the outcome of the Caucasian Muslims' Congress, the Georgian national democrats were also enthusiastic about the First Mountain Congress, at which the Union of Allied Mountaineers was formally established through a democratic election process. On their way back from the April congress in Baku,

³⁶³ Evgenij Zharkovskij, "Rabochee dvizhenie na Tereke" (Workers' movement on the Terek, I.), *Volnyj gorets* 1 (8 September 1919).

Chermoev and his companions invited some of the Georgian national democrats to join them in Vladikavkaz for the gortsy congress, held 1-7 May. Like the Muslim congress in Baku, the Mountaineer congress was an international event with honored guests from a variety of national and party organizations, including Aleksandr Shervashidze Chachba), who attended this congress as a representative of ethnic Abkhazians.³⁶⁴ The Georgians received an especially warm welcome.³⁶⁵

It should be noted that a major theme of the speeches was inter-ethnic solidarity and brotherhood. On the first day of the congress, the Georgian national democrats' representative Shalva Karumidze admitted hatred for the old Russia but, pledging support to the new peoples' Russia, he made a brilliant appeal to the idea of a Caucasian fraternity formed through mutual bloodshed—a concept Benedict Andersen later referred to as “reassuring fratricide”—mixed with the Caucasian idea of the noble opponent. Karumidze said:

“We, Georgians are your brothers, and if in the past we were enemies and our swords crossed more than once, these were knightly jousts, exchanging the dead. The common graves and blood spilled on the battlefield unite us. In the past enemies, we have become brothers since we have been able to value each other.”

The audience rewarded his closing words—“We shall go down the same road of freedom. May your victory be our victory, and let our common victory be the triumph of truth!”—with a round of deafening applause.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 48, 54-61, 529-530; Cory Welt, “A Fateful Moment: Ethnic Autonomy and Revolutionary Violence in the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-21)” in *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, ed. Stephen F. Jones (London: Routledge, 2014), 454.

³⁶⁵ “kavkasiis mtielta qriloba” (The Caucasian Mountaineers’ Congress), *saqartvelo* 96 (5 May 1917); “daghestan-chechneti” (Daghestan-Chechnya), *saqartvelo* 270 (12 [25] December 1917), Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 56.

³⁶⁶ “daghestan-chechneti” (Daghestan-Chechnya), *saqartvelo* 270 (12 [25] December 1917); A. X. Karmov, *Materials*, 59-60; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 56-57. Compare with the concept of “reassuring fratricide” as explained in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (Version: London, 2006), 199-203.

«Мы, грузины, ваши братья, а если в прошлом мы были врагами и наши мечи неоднократно скрещивались, то это были рыцарские поединки, обменивавшиеся погибшими. Нас объединяют общие могилы и кровь, пролитая на поле брани. В прошлом враги, мы стали братьями, так как мы смогли друг друга оценить. Мы пойдем по тому же освободительному пути. Пусть ваша победа будет нашей, а наша общая победа – торжеством справедливости.»

The Georgian Dmitri Chiabrishvili, in his speech, declared that if misery had once united the Mountaineers and Georgians, henceforth “Our mountains and valleys will be shining with creativity, culture, civilization and progress.” Perhaps he was alluding to the famous claim of Ernest Renan that a nation is a “great solidarity” united especially by shared suffering in the past and, in part, by the will to perform great deeds in the future.³⁶⁷ The exiled Georgian revolutionary Beniamen Chxikvishvili, passing through on his way back home from Siberian exile, appealed to the audience to support the Provisional Government and soviets and was greeted with tumultuous applause.³⁶⁸

Russian officials also came to wish the Mountaineers success. N. N. Nikolaev, the Duma representative for the North Caucasus (Terek and Kuban oblasts and Chernomorskaja gubernija) apologized to the natives for his failure in supporting them adequately in the capital, claiming he had tried to introduce legislation increasing the number of deputies from the region. He also said he had dropped everything to rush to the congress and expressed his great faith in the Mountaineers’ abilities. Nikolaev and the Terek Cossack Ataman Mixeil Karaulov regaled the audience with the story of how the Wild Division, including Chermoev, had supported the people during the events in

³⁶⁷ Karmov, *Materials*, 61-62.

«Если до сих пор нас объединяло несчастье, то теперь, я надеюсь, мы будем братьями, идущими вместе по пути свободы. «Я думаю – говорит Чиабров, завершая приветственную речь – что наши горы и долины засияют созиданием, культурой, цивилизацией и прогрессом. Еще раз всем братский привет!»

See also Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” (speech, Sorbonne University, 11 March 1882), trans. Ethan Rundell. Renan says, “A heroic past with great men and glory (I mean true glory) is the social capital upon which the national idea rests. These are the essential conditions of being a people: having common glories in the past and a will to continue them in the present; having made great things together and wishing to make them again... A people shares a glorious heritage as well, regrets, and a common program to realize. Having suffered, rejoiced, and hoped together is worth more than common taxes or frontiers that conform to strategic ideas and is independent of racial or linguistic considerations. “Suffered together”, I said, for shared suffering unites more than does joy. In fact, periods of mourning are worth more to national memory than triumphs because they impose duties and require a common effort. A nation is therefore a great solidarity constituted by the feeling of sacrifices made and those that one is still disposed to make. It presupposes a past but is reiterated in the present by a tangible fact: consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life. A nation’s existence is (please excuse the metaphor) a daily plebiscite, just as an individual’s existence is a perpetual affirmation of life.”

³⁶⁸ Karmov, *Materials*, 62; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 58.

Karmov presents a “Chxikvishvili” who urged the Mountaineers to consider the Socialists-Revolutionaries’ program. Muzaev describes him as one of the Caucasus’s oldest Social-Democrats.

Petrograd. And finally, Colonel Mixajlov (the Provisional Government's commissioner for the Terek oblast) greeted the congress and expressed his wish to see the unification of the Mountaineers. When Chermoev informed the audience that Colonel Mixajlov had been fully receptive and responsive to the UAM over the past two months, the audience gave him a standing ovation.³⁶⁹

Russian socialists also came to flatter the Mountaineers. Two Socialists-Revolutionaries declared that the North Caucasians had already illustrated the principle of "Freedom comes only through struggle" during Shamil's time and asserted the SR slogan of "Land and Freedom" came closest to the heart of the native demands. The post and telegraph workers arranged a theatrical display of solidarity, walking towards the stage while unfurling red banners reading, "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" "Rights gained only through struggle!" and "Peace and brotherhood of all peoples!" One of the participants praised the Mountaineers for being "free eagles when no one even dreamed of freedom" and said that they would be following them on the path of freedom, equality and brotherhood.³⁷⁰

Indeed, the Russians and Mountaineers enjoyed quite good relations in the first few months after the revolution, at least in part because the Mountaineers saw the Russian people—the proletariat, revolutionary army and intelligentsia—as the prime reason for the fall of their real enemy, the autocratic old regime, and hoped to live with them in harmony.³⁷¹ For a moment they felt like they could work in concert with the revolutionary Russian people for the new, just order.³⁷² Foreshadowing the dismal

³⁶⁹ Karmov, *Materials*, 55-58, 60-61, 70-71, 78-79.

³⁷⁰ Karmov, *Materials*, 56-57.

³⁷¹ P. Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization in the North Caucasus," *Caucasian Review* 1 & 3 (1955); Evgenij Zharkovskij, "Rabochee dvizhenie na Tereke" (Workers' movement on the Terek, I.), *Volnyj gorets* 1 (8 September 1919).

³⁷² "Novaja Rossija. Tiflis, 14 ogo marta" (Tiflis, 14th of March), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 60 (14 March 1917).

future though, the soldiers' soviet immediately started complaining about native banditry at the congress.³⁷³

Although the Chechen millionaire Tapa Chermoev was the main financial backer for the UAM and First Mountain Congress, the congress also received the support of other individuals in the region, including from Baku and Tiflis.³⁷⁴ The Azerbaijani guests let it be known that they hoped the Mountaineers would support the push for Russia's restructuring as a federation. The representative from the "Provisional Committee of Muslims" informed the assembly that the Baku Congress had resolved to support a federal republic.³⁷⁵ A representative of the "Baku Intellectual Muslim Society," expressed his wish that the Mountaineer Muslims would also support the idea of a confederative political formation in the Caucasus. Another Muslim representative from Transcaucasia then urged the delegates to vote, claiming Jesus Christ died for freedom and the Prophet Muhammad was a democrat.³⁷⁶

In fact, it was a foregone conclusion that the congress would vote to support Russia's reconstitution as a federative republic.³⁷⁷ The idea was proposed in Shaxanov's opening speech, and the UAM's chief legal theorist, Bashir Dalgat, presented a report from the political section which argued that decentralization would prevent any return to autocratic absolutism and guarantee complete autonomy for each individual nation or people. At the same time, the native intelligentsia knew the Mountaineers could not attain Russia's transformation into a federal republic by working alone. Vassan-Girey Dzhabagiev, who had come from Petrograd, told the delegates about the federal bureau there and reported that in the early days of the revolution (Nikolaj [Karlo]) Chxeidze had come to a big meeting the Muslims held in a mosque and told them Russia must become a democratic federative republic.

³⁷³ Karmov, *Materials*, 60.

³⁷⁴ Karmov, *Materials*, 69, 112-113, 170; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 525-526, 583.

³⁷⁵ Karmov, *Materials*, 65-66; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 54. 536.

³⁷⁶ Karmov, *Materials*, 66-68; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 582-583.

³⁷⁷ Karmov, *Materials*, 68-69.

According to Dzhabagiev, Chxeidze also told them about a federative bureau involving Muslims, Lithuanians, Ukrainians and others and its plans for a congress of Russia's autonomies where they would discuss the extent of the autonomy desired. Dzhabagiev then encouraged the North Caucasians to take part in this congress so that they would not be isolated at the Constituent Assembly.³⁷⁸ Although it seems strange that the Social Democrat Chxeidze was advocating a federative republic, P.P. Skrynnikov, the Social-Democratic Labor Party's representative at the Mountain Congress, was also telling the assembled delegates that his party and the working class were demanding autonomy for all the nations.³⁷⁹

The Union of Allied Mountaineers was formally established upon the congress delegates' unanimous adoption of the constitution, which provided for the organization being internally structured according to the principle of extreme decentralism. This document was designed to guarantee each member full internal autonomy and provided for the establishment of a central committee, which was to have a representative from each ethnic group and bear the responsibility of coordinating between them. At the same time, the central committee had only the power of "decree" with no enforcement mechanism other than the expulsion of a member. Thus, the UAM was neither a political party nor a governmental-administrative organization by design. Nor did it assign to itself the job of running the country. Its explicit purpose was to represent and coordinate between the union's members, each of which had their own bodies of authority based on whatever traditional structures they had and the *okrug ispolkoms*, and to represent the Mountain nations individually and collectively in the Caucasus and Russia. Furthermore, lacking coercive power, the UAM was entirely dependent on the success of the Provisional Government and the good will of the different communities making up its "constituency". Thus, it was not the Union of Allied Mountaineers that can be said to have failed in preserving stability in the North Caucasus over 1917 but the Provisional Government and its ad hoc administrative system in which everyone

³⁷⁸ Karmov, *Materials*, 72-73.

³⁷⁹ Karmov, *Materials*, 63, 128.

had placed their faith. The UAM leaders simply took on the responsibility of trying to help their people adapt as best as possible to the chaotic conditions of the year while staying true to their ideals about maximum democratization, decentralization and internal freedom for each individual people. When, due to the Russian central government's own failures, the security deteriorated over the year, the UAM found itself lacking the organizational mandate or requisite coercive powers for managing the situation.

Along with accusations of leadership failures, the UAM's leadership was also criticized for allegedly ignoring the land question to protect their own class interests. While the union's educated secular and religious leaders did tend to hail from more prosperous families, their rejection of the maximalist demand of immediate, uncompensated land and asset redistribution was in keeping with the policy of the Provisional Government, Ozakom and even soviet resolutions passed in Transcaucasia. No sensible leaders wanted to destabilize the situation by starting a class confrontation before a democratically legitimate decision could be reached and the legitimate governmental authority and corresponding coercive power apparatus could be set up or employed to enforce this decision. To make the decision independently on the local level, would have been, through much of 1917, usurping the power of the Provisional Government tasked with keeping the country together. Moreover, demanding land back from the Cossack population without any sanction or backup from the central government threatened to provoke a horrific bloodbath. Any responsible leader would have wanted to prevent this.

As for the regional question, the Mountaineer congress was aware of the need for cooperation with the other Caucasian nations. At the congress, it was "recognized as necessary that they [the Caucasian nations] should draw together closely for the realization of democratic ideas on the principles of mutual respect."³⁸⁰ In line with this, the Mountaineers put effort into connecting with their southern neighbors. In the first

³⁸⁰ Karmov, *Materials*, 99.

«В частности, о народах Кавказа съезд признал необходимым их тесное сближение в реализации демократических идей на принципах взаимоуважения.»

months of the revolution, they demonstrated a logic in line with that of the Georgian national democrats, hoping to maximize their rights in the new political order, which they saw as governed by the principle of decentralization, and by pushing for national-territorial autonomy over a regional variant—although internally there was considerable discussion and flexibility floating in the air with regard to the regional question, especially as views shifted towards summer.³⁸¹ For example, while the dominant right-leaning wing in the gortsy leadership was eager to cooperate with the Cossacks (it would seem in part since the Terek Cossack Ataman, Mixeil Karaulov, was sympathetic and shared their views on federalism), some were considering unification around a Georgian autonomy.³⁸² Others, like Gajdar Bammatov, favored a Caucasian regional autonomy. This is evident from Bammatov's speech to the Congress of Russian Muslims in May 1917.

f. The Congress of Russian Muslims (May 1917)

Muslims from the Caucasus played an important role at the Congress of Russian Muslims (1-10 May), organized by the Petrograd Muslims' Committee and headed by the Ossetian Muslim socialist Axmet Tsalikov. The congress was intended as a forum for representatives from the many different peoples and parties to work out a common platform on the state structure of Russia, agrarian reform and other issues. At the congress, Tsalikov presented a socialist-internationalist view, arguing that Muslims as a collective should vote for national cultural autonomy within a centralized democratic state. He opposed national-territorial decentralization, believing that local national elites would block important reforms promised by revolutionary democracy.³⁸³

Gajdar Bammatov, the representative for the Muslims of Daghestan and Tiflis, and an independent socialist, recounted the theories of the Austrian Marxists and also

³⁸¹ A. Toradze, "avtonomia da federalizmi (dasasruli)" (Autonomy and federalism, cont.), *saqartvelo* 125 (11 June 1917).

³⁸² A. Toradze, "Autonomy and federalism, cont."

³⁸³ Shafiga Daulet, "The first all Muslim congress of Russia Moscow, 1-11 May 1917," *Central Asian Survey* 8, no. 1 (September 2007): 27, 29-33.

argued for national-cultural over territorial autonomy as well as for a regional autonomy. He thought a future Caucasian autonomy should be administratively divided between north and south. In his own words,

“...we are by no means supporters of centralization in the question of administrative governance of the periphery. Loyal to democratic principles, we recognize perfectly that such an immense state as Russia cannot be governed from a single center. Therefore, we are supporters of the broadest regional (oblast) self-government, and, in view of the principle we have adopted of ex-territorial national protection, we propose that the self-governing units must be defined according to geographical, financial-economic and cultural commonality. Thus, we demand autonomy for Turkestan, Siberia and the Caucasus, and for the above given reasons, the Caucasus can be divided into the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia so that each district (*okraina*) is completely free from the guardianship of the center in its personal questions and will also have the right of local legislation. In such a system, the administrative decentralization of the unitary democratic republic with national-personal autonomy seems to me as the most desirable form of state structure that we should aim for.”³⁸⁴

Although the congress committee which was initially formed to discuss the national question received 150 proposals for national-cultural autonomy plus sixteen for a unitary republic and only thirty-four for a federation, the Musavat Party leader Mehmed Emin Resulzade, Fatih Karimov (the founder of the Kazan National Council) and Zeki Validi Togan (a Bashkir activist) succeeded in convincing a majority of the

³⁸⁴ “Rech, skazannaja na seksii i plenarnom zasedanii Vserossijskogo musulmanskogo šezda v Moskve 6 Maja 1917 g. Gajdarom Bammatomym (delegate Dagestana i g. Tiflisa) (Speech given in the section and at the plenary session of the All-Russian Muslim Congress in Moscow 6 May 1917 by Gajdar Bammatom [delegate from Daghestan and the city Tiflis] in Georgij Mamulia et al., *Gajdar Bammatom—izvestnyj i neizvestnyj. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Gajdar Bammatom—Known and not-known: A collection of documents and materials) (Baku: Azerbajdzhanskoe istoricheskoe obščestvo, 2015), 186-198.

«...мы отнюдь не являемся сторонниками централизации в вопросе административного правления окраинами. Верные демократическим принципам мы отлично сознаем, что такое громадное государство как Россия никоим образом не может управляться из одного центра, поэтому мы являемся сторонниками самого широкого областного самоуправления, в виду принимаемого нами принципа экстерриториальной национальной защиты, мы полагаем, что самоуправляющиеся единицы должны быть выделены по признакам географической хозяйственно-экономической и бытовой общности. Исходя из этого, мы требуем автономии Туркестана, Сибири, Кавказа, при чем по вышеуказанным признакам Кавказ может быть разделен на Северный Кавказ и Закавказье таким образом каждая окраина в личных вопросах будет совершенно свободна от опеки центра ей будут предоставлены и права местного законодательства. При такой системе административной децентрализации унитарно-демократическая республика с национально-персональной автономией мне кажется, есть наиболее желанная форма государственного устройства, к которой мы должны стремиться.»

800 delegates to vote for national-territorial autonomy in a federative state.³⁸⁵ Generally, those arguing for a centralized state were either religious, fearing ethno-nationalism would divide the ummah, or leftist, thinking the liberation of the oppressed Muslims of the world was dependent on Russia's revolutionary democracy, which alone could stand up to the European capitalists' exploitation and imperialism. Other groups, like the Tatar nationalists, were interested in national-cultural autonomy since they could benefit from the economic relationship with Russia, since they were already relatively integrated into that system and their populations were settled in patterns not easily conducive to a compact territorial unit.

As the territorial-autonomists won only by a small margin, this could have been the motivation for the congress to ultimately produce a compromise solution, declaring they would push for Russia's reconstruction as a national-territorial federation with national cultural autonomy for those nations lacking a clear territorial base. A Muslim "national council" (Milli Shura) was then elected as a kind of coordinating body with legislative power but with the major questions to be voted on at a future "congress of provinces." According to Shafiga Daulet, this implies that the participants saw the Muslim National Council as a kind of political party or national block for the future Russian parliament.³⁸⁶ The Ossetian Tsalikov was elected chairman of the Executive Committee of the All-Russian Muslim Council and in this way became the spokesman for all-Russia's Muslim population.

The Georgian national democrats were enthusiastic about the political outcome of the Muslim Congress, considering the congress to be of great significance to the Georgians because if the Muslims would support national-territorial autonomy then the supporters of this position were growing sufficiently to affect the decision-making process at the future Russian Constituent Assembly. They also believed Russia's liberal press was hushing up the results of the congress for "obvious reasons".³⁸⁷ The Muslims

³⁸⁵ Daulet, "The first all Muslim congress of Russia," 28-29, 34-39.

³⁸⁶ Daulet, "The first all Muslim congress of Russia," 41-44.

³⁸⁷ T. T̄abidze, "sruliad rusetis mahmadiana q̄riloba" (All-Russia Muslims' Congress), *saqartvelo* 121 (7 [19] June 1917).

too felt like the liberals at the helm of Russia's central government were deaf to their real national and economic concerns, as demonstrated by the delegates' reactions to the speech of an anti-federalist Russian professor sent from the Provisional Government to address them at the congress.³⁸⁸

g. The Armenians

Because of their historical struggles and tradition of educational activities among the masses, the Armenians had a strong national consciousness.³⁸⁹ Even so, the Armenian newspapers initially urged the unity of all Russia's citizens without distinction by nation or class until the issue of national political and cultural self-determination could be legally decided at the Constituent Assembly.³⁹⁰ A telegram sent from Tiflis to the Moscow Armenian Committee on 21 March shows that many Armenians in Transcaucasia considered it prudent to set aside the national issue to preserve peace, ensure the success of the revolution and avoid military defeat. It reads,

“A private meeting of the representatives of all the Armenian organizations, parties and intelligentsia came to the unanimous decision that no political or national questions whatsoever must be promoted at this time, all measures being taken to advance the revolution and fortify the basis of the new order... The most important thing is victory over the enemy, as defeat would mean a return to the shameful old regime.”³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Daulet, “The first all Muslim congress of Russia,” 23-24.

³⁸⁹ “Oчерки iz istorii armjanskago voprosa v Turtsii (K sorokaletiju rusko-turetskoj vojny 1877-1878 g.).” (Sketches from the history of the Armenian question in Turkey [To the fortieth anniversary of the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878]), *Armjanskij vestnik* 13 (26 March 1917).

³⁹⁰ “Armjanskaja pečat' o perezhivaemyx sobytijax” (The Armenian press about the events we are living through) *Kavkazskoe slovo* 58 (12 March 1917).

³⁹¹ “Xronika. Moskovskij Armjanskij komitet” (Chronicle. Moscow Armenian committee.), *Armjanskij vestnik* 13 (26 March 1917).

«Московским армянским комитетом получена 21-го марта из Тифлиса от г. Чалхушьяна телеграмма следующего содержания: «Частное совещание представителей всех армянских организаций, партий, интеллигенции пришло к единогласному решению: никаких в данное время политических и национальных вопросов не возбуждать, всемерно способствуя делу революции и укрепления основ нового строя. На первом месте победа над врагом, ибо поражение значило бы возврат к постылому старому режиму. Эриванский беженский съезд явочным порядком петроградского армянского съезда.»

At the same time, however, Armenian publicists (especially at *Mshak*) could hardly restrain themselves from lecturing the Georgian “nobility” on respecting the new democratic order.³⁹² Nor could Armenians be fairly expected to forget their national concerns.

On 19 March the Moscow Armenian Committee had already sent a petition to Prime Minister Prince Lvov, requesting “full state autonomy for Armenia” in its historical lands.³⁹³ And Xatisov was invited to Petrograd to discuss the possibility of autonomy with the Russian Foreign Minister.³⁹⁴ They presumably had only Turkish Armenia in mind because, according to the Dashnak programs of 1907 and April 1917, the Russian Armenian areas were to remain part of a Transcaucasian autonomy.³⁹⁵ Subsequently, on 26 April the Provisional Government published a decree placing Turkish Armenia under its direct jurisdiction. This gave the Armenians in this area practical political autonomy since despite being directly administered by the central government, most official positions, especially locally, were held by Armenians.³⁹⁶

This assertive promotion of Armenian national concerns evoked consternation in certain quarters of Georgian society already ill-disposed towards the Dashnaktsutiun as a party and Xatisov personally, and *saqartvelo*’s contributors directly accused both of sowing strife in the region.³⁹⁷ The Georgian national democrats acknowledged the Armenian people’s suffering and wished them success but were angered at what they

³⁹² “Armjanskaja pečat’ o perezhivaemyx sobytijax” (The Armenian press about the events we are living through) *Kavkazskoe slovo* 58 (12 March 1917).

³⁹³ “Moskva. Rezoljutsija moskovskix armjan” (Moscow. Resolution of the Moscow Armenians), *Armjanskij vestnik* 13 (26 May 1917); M. Javaxishvili, “shenic me da chemic meo, saxalxo andaza” (Yours is mine and mine is mine too, popular proverb), *saqartvelo* 68 (25 March 1917).

³⁹⁴ “gasaocari dadgenileba” (An amazing decree), *saqartvelo* 66 (23 March 1917).

³⁹⁵ Imranli-Lowe “The Provisional Government and the Armenian Homeland Project,” 2; “amier-kavkasiis mmartvelobis proeqti” (Project for Transcaucasia’s administration), *saqartvelo* 92 (29 April 1917).

³⁹⁶ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 79-81.

³⁹⁷ “a. i. xatısovi” (A. I. Khatısov), *saqartvelo* 60 (16 March 1917); “saxifato nabijebi” (perilous steps), *saqartvelo* 61 (17 March 1917); “xatısovi da nafici veqili chiabrishvili” (Khatısov and sworn barrister Chiabrishvili), *saqartvelo* 69 (28 March 1917).

perceived to be a Dashnak attempt to promote Armenian national goals while simultaneously obstructing Georgian aspirations for territorial autonomy in their own historical lands.³⁹⁸ They were willing to make compromises about administrative boundary demarcation but feared the Armenian politicians were attempting to obtain a preferential arrangement for self-government directly from the Russian center instead of working out an agreement through negotiation with their neighbors so that in this way they could deprive Georgians of parts of their historical territory, including the city of Tiflis. The Georgian nationalists' frustration stemmed from the recent experience of the pre-revolution zemstvo debates and their concern, as they saw it, that as a result of the tsarist resettlement policies in the past, many Armenians had come to settle what were traditionally Georgian lands and despite their having been welcomed there, the Dashnaks were now demanding control of these lands based on the ethnographic principle and attempting to leverage the Russian government against Georgian interests in this matter.³⁹⁹ The Russian Armenian National Congress would not convene until late September in Tiflis.⁴⁰⁰

h. *The Georgians*

If the Dashnaktsutun had a near monopoly over Armenian politics, Georgian political society was dominated by the Georgian Mensheviks. They were the strongest and best organized political group with the greatest influence over the masses in Georgia—as well as the most influential party in Transcaucasia—during the revolutionary period. They also became the ruling party of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918–1921. But they did not have a total grip on Georgian political consciousness between 1917 and 1921. In the opinion of Bammatov, writing in emigration, the Georgian Social Democratic Party used the powerful position it held at the beginning of the revolution

³⁹⁸ M. Javaxishvili, “shenic me da chemic meo, saxalxo andaza” (Yours is mine and mine is mine too, popular proverb) *saqartvelo* 68 (25 March 1917).

³⁹⁹ “saqartvelos teritoriuli avtonomia” (Georgia’s territorial autonomy), *saqartvelo* 74 (2 April 1917); “tbilisi da somxebi” (Tbilisi and the Armenians), *saqartvelo* 204 (17 [30] September 1917).

⁴⁰⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 86–90; “somexta erovnuli sabcho” (The Armenians’ National Council), *saqartvelo* 232 (21 October [8 November] 1917).

to place its members throughout the new Transcaucasian administration, ensuring it enjoyed a privileged position, which, in his words, “certainly did not correspond either to the number of its members or to its real influence in the country”.⁴⁰¹

The Mensheviks may have had to absorb and adapt to the people’s natural patriotism as part of their maneuverings to remain in power, but in 1917 they were still part of the RSDLP. The *Georgian Social Democratic Party* was formalized only in 1918. And thus in 1917 the Georgian Mensheviks still belonged to this centralist Russian party and demonstrated loyalty to its all-Russian program.⁴⁰² They were committed to the idea of a unitary democratic republic in Russia and rejected the idea of territorial autonomy for the nationalities, particularly in the Caucasus, since they believed pursuing this “bourgeois” wish would lead to interethnic conflict.⁴⁰³ Drawing on their “democratic” convictions, the Georgian Menshevik mainstream also supported the Armenians’ demands to use the ethnographic (majority) principle as the basis for redrawing the zemstvo boundaries.⁴⁰⁴

Consequently, in line with this perspective, the Georgian Mensheviks spent much of 1917 trying to stifle the Georgian nationalists and federalists and ignoring or excluding the North Caucasian and Azerbaijani “bourgeois” parties (also federalists) from regional governance while conveniently managing to find a common language with the relatively more centralist Russian and Armenian parties—whom they labelled as the “progressive bourgeoisie”. Thus, while there is no doubt the party was very influential and popular among regular Georgians, a case might be made that the party was eventually forced further in the direction of national leadership not only by the usual explanation of external geopolitical circumstances but also because they had to take into account the patriotic sentiments of the party rank-and-file and the general

⁴⁰¹ Haidar Bammate, “The Caucasus and the Russian Revolution (from a Political Viewpoint),” *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 4 (1991), 11.

⁴⁰² Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 286.

⁴⁰³ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 229-230, 233-234, 265.

⁴⁰⁴ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 92.

population that were unleashed in 1917.⁴⁰⁵ Perhaps it may also be argued that it was the Socialist-Federalists and national democrats who more directly represented the patriotic sentiment of the Georgian people at the outset of the revolution.⁴⁰⁶ At this time the nationalists and federalists were willing to accept autonomy within a democratized Russia based on principles of national sovereignty and internal autonomy. For example, at a Socialist-Federalist rally in late March people unfurled red flags on which were written “Long Live Autonomous Georgia” and “To Free Georgia in Free Russia.”⁴⁰⁷ And the banner on the National Democratic Party newspaper *saqartvelo* from 24 March to 9 April read “Hail Free Georgia in Free Russia”. Nonetheless, both decentralist parties were aligned in their focus on the need for national organization. Within days of the revolution, they were already, along with calling for national unity, urging the

⁴⁰⁵ A couple incidents hint that further research in this direction may reveal a stronger case for this claim. First, at the end of March, RSDLP party member Pavel Saqvelidze, who later in May founded the *alioni* (dawn) journal, which was the expression of the territorial-autonomist current among Georgian Social Democrats, gave a speech promoting the idea of national-territorial autonomy at a closed party meeting. The majority of the crowd received his proposition enthusiastically, with only a few Bolsheviks expressing opposition. A young poet then declared that it was his dream to see Georgia free. Second, when Akaki Chxenkeli was touring provincial cities, he had to reassure audiences in Kutaisi and Telavi that his party had no intention of forgetting Georgian national interests.

“chxenkeli azri erovnul sakitxe. chxenkeli telavshi” (Chxenkeli’s thinking on the national question. Chxenkeli in Telavi), *saqartvelo* 101 (13 [26] May 1917); “akaki chxenkeli kutaisshi” (Akaki Chxenkeli in Kutaisi), *saqartvelo* 76 (8 April 1917).

“qartuli soc.-demokrati da avtonomia” (Georgia Soc.-Democrats and autonomy), *saqartvelo* 70 (29 March 1917).

„მაგრამ კრების დიდი უმრავლესობა საყვარელიძის აზრს აშკარად მიემხრო და მრავალჯერ ხანგრძლივის ტაშის ცემით დააჯილდოვა იგი. სხვათა შორის, ერთმა ახალგაზდა პოეტმა განაცხადა, რომ ჩემი სამშობლო ქვეყანა ძალიან მიყვარს, მისი თავისუფლება მუდამ ჩემს ოცნებას შეადგენდა, რასაც დღეს, საყვარელიძე ამტკიცებს, ეს დიდი ხანია ჩემს გულის ნადებს შეადგენდა, მაგრამ ქმას ვერ ვხედავდიო.“

“But the assembly’s large majority clearly supported Saqvelidze’s idea and rewarded him with many long applause. Moreover, a young poet announced, “I love my native country very much and its freedom has always been my dream; that which Saqvelidze argues today is what I have held deep in my heart for a long time but which I dared not say.”

⁴⁰⁶ See Haidar Bammate, “The Caucasus and the Russian Revolution (from a Political Viewpoint,” *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 4 (1991), 9-12.

⁴⁰⁷ “amier kavkasiis droebiti mtavroba, komisarebis mimartva qartvel erisadmi” (Transcaucasia’s provisional government, the commissioners address to the Georgian nation), *saqartvelo* 64 (21 March 1917).

„გაუმარჯოს ავტონომიურ საქართველოს“, „თავისუფალ საქართველოს, თავისუფალ რუსეთში.“

nation to organize itself politically. They wanted the Georgian political parties to form a national committee and to elect a Georgian parliament. The Georgian nationalist Grigol Veshapeli also called for a Georgian parliament to work out a Georgian constitution (a national constituent assembly).⁴⁰⁸ But, instead of the cooperation they had hoped for from the Social Democrats, they got what they interpreted as anti-revolutionary and anti-national dictatorism in the face of the Tiflis Ispolkom and Tiflis Soviet, both run by the “triumvirate” Zhordania (SD), Xatisov (Dashnak) and Popov (SR); a smear campaign trying to paint them as counter-revolutionaries and attempts to keep them quiet.⁴⁰⁹

Through the spring and summer of 1917, the decentralists fought back in the press, criticizing the Social Democrats and calling on them to perform their duty to the nation. They compared the situation in Georgia unfavorably with other places such as Ukraine, Poland, Finland, Siberia and even the North Caucasus. They wanted a national political culture, and in response to a speech in which Noe Zhordania demanded they relegate discussion of the national question to academic debates and keep it out of the streets, the nationalists began to demand there should at least be an inter-party meeting then where they could discuss the matter. As a result, April saw two inter-party meetings and the creation of an inter-party information bureau.⁴¹⁰ Although the Georgian Mensheviks agreed to attend, they still refused to form an actual national council with the other parties, fearing this would antagonize their allies in the Social

⁴⁰⁸ “depesha (sakutar korespondentisagan)” (A telegram [from our own correspondent]), *saqartvelo* 56 (11 March 1917); “gantavisuflebuli ruseti, tfilisi, 10 marti, 1917 ts., saqartvelos parlamenti” (Liberated Russia, Tiflis, 10 March, 1917, Georgia’s parliament), *saxalxo furceli* 815 (19 March 1917); “saqartvelos sakitxi” (The Georgian question), *saxalxo furceli* 817 (12 March 1917); “tanamedrove mdgomareoba, 4. erovnuli komiteti” (Current events, 4. national committee), *saxalxo furceli* 820 (16 March 1917); socialist-federalist kreba” (The Socialist-Federalists’ congress), *saxalxo furceli* 823 (19 March 1917).

⁴⁰⁹ “ertobis nacvlad” (Instead of unity) *saqartvelo* 61 (5 Mar 1917); “aseti ‘ertoba’?” (Such “unity”), *saqartvelo* 63 (19 March 1917); “gasaocari dadgenileba” (An amazing decree), *saqartvelo* 66 (23 March 1917).

⁴¹⁰ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 260; “gasaocari dadgenileba” (An amazing decree), *saqartvelo* 66 (23 March 1917); E. Melia, “bundovani momavali” (a vague future), *saqartvelo* 77 (9 April 1917); “partiatia mimart epistole, III.” (an epistle to the parties, 3), *saqartvelo* 77 (9 April 1917).

Revolutionary Party.⁴¹¹ The Georgian National Council would not be formed until late November 1917.⁴¹²

As the historical process shows, despite their numerical weakness, the decentralists were able to push back against the Georgian Mensheviks with relative effectiveness insofar as they managed to hold their ground in the early months of the revolution and the National Democrats in particular increased their influence over the summer and fall. By December the nationalist Geronti Qiqodze could describe the process as follows,

“The world war and Russian Revolution were a good school for these people [SS: the Georgian Mensheviks], who gradually learned to look with their own eyes and walk with their own feet. Though down to the last moment they have been calling themselves Mensheviks, essentially, they are no longer pursuing Menshevik politics. Our homeland’s reality has slowly unraveled their frozen dogmas, their southern temperament in turn breaking free from the constraining framework of Russian socialist opportunism.”⁴¹³

By May 1918, this process of “nationalizing the revolution” would culminate in the proclamation of the independent Georgian republic. As Richard Hovannisian put it, “Fascinating for the student of the Georgian Mensheviks is the process that gradually transformed these international socialists into champions of the policies outlined by their National Democrat rivals. That metamorphosis was completed in May 1918, when the Mensheviks declared the independence of the Republic of Georgia.” Despite this shift, the Mensheviks’ socialist and internationalist (and even pro-Russian) orientation never fully subsided and would color their decision-making during the period of the

⁴¹¹ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 260.

⁴¹² Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 261.

⁴¹³ Geronti Qiqodze, “noe zhordania da socializmis nacionalizacia” (Noe Zhordania and the nationalization of socialism), *saqartvelo* 268 (9 December 1917).

„მსოფლიო ომი და რუსეთის რევოლუცია კარგი სკოლა იყო ამ ხალხისათვის, მით თანდათან ისწავლეს საკუთარი თვალებით ცქერა და საკუთარი ფეხებით საირული. თუმცა ბოლო დრომდე თავიანთ თავს მენშევიკებს უწოდებდნენ, მაგრამ არსებითად აღარ აწარმოებდნენ ნამდვილ მენშევიკურ პოლიტიკას. ჩვენი სამშობლოს სინამდვილემ წელწელა გააღბო მათი ჰაყინული დოგმები, მათმა სამხრეთულმა ტემპერამენტმა თავის მხრით გაარღვია რუსული სოციალისტური პორტუნის ვიწრო ჩარჩოები.”

independent republics 1918-1921, for example during the negotiations at the peace conference in Paris, as well as their attitudes during the émigré period.⁴¹⁴

i. *The Soviet congresses*

Like the national parties and organizations, the socialists in the Caucasus organized congresses where elected workers', soldiers' or peasants' deputies could vote on resolutions that would reflect the voice of the laboring people. The Congress of Representatives of the Caucasus Army opened on 23 April continuing through May.⁴¹⁵ This congress decided to leave the solution to the national question up to the Constituent Assembly.⁴¹⁶ It also expressed the view that land and air should not be under private control but rather managed by bodies of local self-government. The congress also called for the immediate confiscation of imperial, cabinet, church and monastery properties whereby local land committees would be set up to manage the process until the Constituent Assembly could make the final decision.⁴¹⁷ The socialist leaders worked to convince the soldiery that it was necessary to unite with the workers and peasants in order to ensure the success of the revolution and bring about a democratic republic.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁴ Zourab Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia in International Politics, 1918-1921* (London: Headley Brothers, 1940), 169-170.

⁴¹⁵ "Iz protokola zasedanija Tiflisskogo Soveta Rabochix Deputatov ot 15 aprelja 1917 g." (From the protocol of the session of the Tiflis Soviet of Workers' Deputies of 15 April 1917) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 89-90; "Iz protokola zasedanija Kraevogo šezda Kavkazskoj Armii 23-ogo aprelja 1917 goda" (From the protocol of the session of the Regional congress of the Caucasian Army of 23 April) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 94-97; "Protokol zasedanija kraevogo šezda Kavkazskoj Armii ot 1 maja 1917 goda. Sedmoj den'" (Protocol of the session of the regional congress of the Caucasian Army of 1 May 1917) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 112-115.

⁴¹⁶ "Rezoljutsija po natsionalnomu voprosu" (Resolution on the national question) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 124.

⁴¹⁷ "Rezoljutsija po zemeľnomu voprosu" (Resolution on the land question) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 123-124.

⁴¹⁸ Popov's speech in "Protokol zasedanija Kraevogo Šezda Kavkazskoj Armii 25-go Aprelja 1917 g. Tretij den'" (Protocol of the meeting of the Regional Congress of the Caucasian Army of 25 April 1917. Third day.) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 100-105,

So by the end of their congress in late May, the soldiers' congress agreed to merge with the workers' soviet and the peasants' soviet once the latter was prepared.⁴¹⁹

The weakness of soviet organization outside of Georgian areas and Baku city, especially in the North Caucasus and among the Eastern Transcaucasian Muslims, was reflected in the counts of workers' deputies that attended the Caucasian Regional Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies which opened on 21 May (although the peasants' deputies were not fully represented due to organizational setbacks). From Transcaucasia, workers' deputies arrived mainly from the Tiflis, Kutaisi and Baku provinces (*gubernija*, nom. pl. *gubernii*) with only a few coming from cities in the North Caucasus.⁴²⁰ This is why Zhordania stated in his opening speech for this congress that it was time to create a Caucasian regional center to coordinate revolutionary forces in the entire region and specifically mentioned extension into the eastern and northern Caucasus. Their plan was to prevail in local elections then being organized. The fact that politics were dominated in these areas of the Caucasus (at least outside the major industrial cities) by the national parties and organizations that the Georgian socialists deemed "bourgeois" seems to have influenced their drive to "democratize" these areas. Chxenkeli's opening speech emphasized their view that "national-chauvinists" were the main threat to Caucasian democracy, which in his estimate was the only route by which the oppressed nations could find their liberation.⁴²¹ It is clear that these socialists meant the will of the *laboring* masses, at

⁴¹⁹ "Rezoljutsii Kraevogo Šezda Kavkazskoj armii. Rezoljutsija o tekušem momente" (The resolution of the Regional Congress of the Caucasian army. Resolution on the current moment) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 115, 120-121.

⁴²⁰ "Iz protokola zasedanija Kavkazskogo Oblastnogo Šezda Sovetov Rabochix i Krestjanskix Deputatov of 24-ogo maja 1917 g." (From the protocol of the meeting of the Caucasian Oblast Congress of the Soviets of the Deputies of the Workers and Peasants) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 132, 140. From the Tiflis province (45), Baku (36), Kutaisi province (15) Batumi okrug and city (3), Dzansul (1), Erevan province and Aleksandropol (Gjumri) (6), Nakhichevan (1). In the North Caucasus, they hailed from Port Petrovsk in Daghestan (1); Armavir (1) and Ekaterinodar (3) in the Kuban oblast; Vladikavkaz (4) and Groznyj (2) in the Terek oblast; Novorossijsk (1); and Stavropol (2). As for the peasants' deputies, they hailed mainly from Tiflis (55) and Kutaisi (28) provinces with a few from Kars (3), Elisavetpol (1) and Sukhumi (1).

⁴²¹ "O zadachax Kraevogo Šezda Sov. Raboch. i Krest. Deputatov vsego Kavkaza" (On the tasks of the Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies of the whole Caucasus) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 135-136; Protokol No. 1, Zasedanija Kavkazskogo Oblastnogo Šezda Sovetov Rabochix i

least rhetorically, when they spoke of “democracy” even if they upheld free and fair elections in practice.

Obviously thinking in regional terms, the congress resolved to establish a regional soviet and adopted a resolution on the national question in which it called for the implementation of local self-government through a combination of cultural and territorial principles. In areas with compact ethnic compositions, an administrative unit would correspond with an ethnicity, and in mixed areas there would be a territorial self-government for common affairs and separate national self-governments to manage national-cultural issues. Self-government meant implementing the laws enacted by the central government while enjoying full independence in local matters. They hoped this arrangement would keep conflict to a minimum. However, it was not intended for the proposed self-governing units to have the right to self-legislate as in a state.⁴²²

The congress’s resolution on the agrarian question recognized that the Constituent Assembly would have to resolve the fundamental questions but it was necessary to implement some practical measures locally. It expected the Constituent Assembly to confiscate and redistribute all treasury, monastery, church, cabinet and imperial lands and larger estates to the management of local bodies of self-government as well to as nationalize all lands of state significance.⁴²³ The Regional Center (Soviet)

Krestjanskix Deputatov. 1-oe zasedanie—21-go maja 1917 g.” (Protocol No. 1, The session of the Caucasian Oblast Congress of Soviets of Workers’ and Peasants’ Deputies) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 137-139.

⁴²² “Rezoljutsija po natsionalnomu voprosu” (Resolution on the national question) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 167-168.

“But not according to the independent right of rule as in a state but by the order of the state; the state has only the right to oversee that they are not breaking the bounds given them by the competencies of self-government.”

«... но не по собственному самостоятельному праву властвования, как это бывает в государстве, а по поручению государства; государству принадлежит только право надзора за ненарушением пределов предоставленной им самоуправлению компетенции.»

⁴²³ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 253-254; “Rezoljutsija po agrarnomu voprosu” (Resolution on the agrarian question) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 123-124, 161-163.

The Workers’ and Peasants’ Deputies Soviets’ Congress resolution said that the Constituent Assembly would have to handle certain tasks: confiscating certain lands and transferring them to the management of large bodies of local self-government, nationalizing lands of state significance, confiscating the lands of private owners over a certain limit and handing them to the management of large bodies of local self-government, giving certain lands to the peasants, transferring Caucasian forests

of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies was elected at this congress. It was dominated by Mensheviks and SRs and included some of the same figures as the Tiflis Soviet (Zhordania, Ramishvili, Dzhugeli, etc.) and a preponderance of Georgians.⁴²⁴

The same ideas on the national and agrarian questions were echoed at the peasants' soviets' deputies' regional congress in June.⁴²⁵ Here, Noe Zhordania elaborated his proposal for state organization, arguing that there should be established in Transcaucasia three main national-territorial self-governmental units, one for each of the dominant nationalities. In administrative units (*olqebi*, counties) of mixed populations, he continued, a joint self-government would be formed out of representatives from the different national groups, an arrangement he thought would enable minorities to promote their cultural autonomy. In his view, cultural autonomy would be sufficient since "the proletariat" were not interested in political autonomy but still needed access to administrative systems in their own language.⁴²⁶

Perhaps to justify his proposal for ethno-territorially based administrative units, which looked a lot like federalism, Zhordania directly criticized federalism as a political form striving towards centralism (where independent states decide to unite into a centripetal federation) and argued that the most decentralized solution would be administrative decentralization whereby self-governing units (*olqebi*) would be tied directly to the center and concern themselves only with implementing laws issuing from the center, promulgating laws of a local character, attending to various administrative

to the management of local bodies of self-government and the regional center. The Regional Caucasian Army Congress said he believed the land should belong to all the people with private property should be abolished forever. An assembly of people's representatives would manage the land at the all-Russian level and local self-governing bodies would manage it at the local level. Stephen Jones distinguishes between these two plans as socialization and municipalization, respectively.

⁴²⁴ Armen Galoian, "Dvoevlastie v Zakavkaze: Sovety i Ozakom (mart-ijuľ 1917 g.)" (Dual power in Transcaucasia: the Soviets and the Ozakom), 19; "Spisok izbrannyx v Kraevoj tsentr" (List of those voted to the Regional center) in Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 168.

⁴²⁵ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian colors*, 254.

⁴²⁶ Iv. Gomarteli, "erovnuli sakitxi" (The national question), *saqartvelo* 126 (13 [25] June 1917).

and judicial affairs, and promoting cultural and economic development.⁴²⁷ Although there may not seem to be much of a difference between national-territorial autonomies and self-governing units arranged on the basis of national distinction on a bounded territory, the former would have been based on the sovereignty of the nation while the latter would not.”⁴²⁸ Zhordania made this distinction clear when he explained that a federal arrangement would entail setting up an arrangement between preexisting states but that the conditions for this did not exist in Russia.⁴²⁹ Thus, the formulation adopted by the congress was a clear attempt to solve the national-regional question in the Caucasus by taking into consideration national and territorial factors, but it still denied the sovereign right of a nation to enter by its own free will into a relationship with a federal center, treating self-government as something granted from above.

The soldiers’, workers’ and peasants’ soviets attained organizational unity in early July in the Caucasian Regional Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies (Regional Soviet).⁴³⁰ However, despite the prestige that the Regional Soviet and other soviet bodies had in 1917, as the security situation destabilized over the course of the summer and fall, the socialists’ leaders efforts to unify the Caucasian working class could not withstand the pressure coming from the combined strains of a world war at their doorstep, the former Russian Empire’s structural disintegration, repeated shocks emanating from the Russian center and the growing pull people appear to have been feeling towards the perceived safety of their national identifications.

⁴²⁷ “N. Zhordaniას მოხსენება ეროვნულ საკითხზე” (N. Zhordania’s speech on the national issue), *saqartvelo* 126 (13 [25] June 1917).

⁴²⁸ Iv. Gomarteli, “ეროვნული საკითხი” (The national question), *saqartvelo* 126 (13 [25] June 1917); Sef, *The 1917 revolution*, 167-168.

⁴²⁹ “N. Zhordaniას მოხსენება ეროვნულ საკითხზე” (N. Zhordania’s speech on the national issue), *saqartvelo* 126 (13 [25] June 1917).

⁴³⁰ Galojan, “Dual power in the Caucasus, 18; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 254.

According to Galojan, the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies of the city of Tbilisi merged organizationally in late May. Jones writes that on the 26th the Army Regional Soviet and the Caucasian Regional Center of Workers’ and Peasants’ Deputies merged, electing a presidium, and that by early July the Caucasian Regional Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies was functioning.

B. The winds of disintegration

Although hopes were expressed that the “celebration of universal brotherhood” found in the Caucasus in the first days of the revolution would continue until the Constituent Assembly could convene, this initial harmony underwent considerable stress over the summer as it became increasingly clear the nationalities and classes had conflicting interests that would be hard to overcome.⁴³¹ As the Provisional Government lost its footing as an effective central government for Russia, its commissioners in the Caucasus also demonstrated their inefficacy. The Ozakom was seen as weakly performing its function as a regional governing body, and the disputes over administrative boundary demarcation for the implementation of zemstvo (particularly in Transcaucasia) and land rights (especially in the North Caucasus) were bitter. Ethnicity and class were often intertwined as well; for example, with one national group dominating in a social-economic space, so these administrative boundary disputes tended to take on a national or national/class character. At the same time, a process is observable whereby the initial solidarity between socialist parties also gradually diminished over the summer and fall of 1917.

1. *Administrative breakdown*

At the regional level, the Georgian Mensheviks, Russian SRs, Armenian Dashnaks and Russian and Armenian liberals initially dominated in the Tiflis Ispolkom and Tiflis Soviet.⁴³² Although the “liberal” Ozakom was officially the higher authority, the soviets and the Regional Soviet wielded the real power.⁴³³ Being the leading force in Transcaucasian politics, the Georgian Mensheviks naturally tried to impose their views on decision-making in all three bodies, at times aggravating Armenians and East Transcaucasian Muslims by doing so.

⁴³¹ “Tiflis, 15 ogo marta” (Tiflis, 15 March), *Zakavkazskaja rech* 61 (15 March 1917).

⁴³² “saxifato nabijebi” (perilous steps), *saqartvelo* 61 (17 March 1917); “gasaoari dadgenileba” (An amazing decree), *saqartvelo* 66 (23 March 1917).

⁴³³ Gevork Melik-Karagjozjan, *Vospominanija: politicheskaja situatsija v Zavkavkaze v 1917-1918 gg.* (Memoirs: The political situation in Transcaucasia in 1917-1918) (Moscow: Tsentrizdat, 2015), 45-47.

Attempts by the Georgian Mensheviks to extend their authority over the North Caucasus also irritated the Mountaineers and Cossacks. One of the first tensions to arise was between the Ozakom commissioner to the Daghestan oblast and the Provisional Government's appointed commissioner. The locals perceived the former as an arrogant outsider and the latter as their own, and a scandal erupted when he issued a decree for the disarmament of the Mountaineer population. The UAM complained that this looked like an attempt by the regional center (Tiflis) to continue the prejudicial tsarist policy and it would have to appeal to the Russian center for protection.⁴³⁴

The dynamic of North Caucasians resisting attempts by authorities in Tiflis to extend their authority into the North Caucasus would continue throughout the year. In another incident, as a result of the blood shed in Vladikavkaz in early July, the Caucasian Regional Committee of the Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies' Soviet felt like it should take charge of the city. The Committee of the Regional Soviet proposed to the Ozakom that it send a special investigative commission and give the UAM recommendations. It also resolved to send its own commission for "the organization of a united organization of the Cossacks and Mountaineers, the organization of military committees and the organization of united worker and peasant organizations".⁴³⁵ This was inappropriate considering the North Caucasian and Cossack authorities had brought the situation under control, the local socialists were the ones obstructing the authorities' efforts to investigate the recent crimes and the general consensus was that drunken soldiers were to blame.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ "chrdilo kavkasiisa da daghestnis mtielta kavshiris deklaracia iaraghis tarebis shesaxeb" (Declaration of the Union of the Mountaineers of the North Caucasus and Daghestan about bearing arms), *saqartvelo* 169 (3 [16] August 1917); "daghestanshi iaraghis aqris brdzanebis gamo" (In Daghestan because of the order for disarmament), *saqartvelo* 159 (22 July [4 August] 1917); Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 32-33, 107-109, 428-430.

⁴³⁵ "qronika, kavkasia, ghonisdziebani chrdilo kavkasiashi momxdar ambebis gamo" (Chronicle, Caucasus, Arrangements because of what happened in the North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 160 (23 July 1917).

Compare also the following article, which is very hard to read because of faded print: "ra xdeba kavkasiis mtebshi" (What is happening in the Caucasus mountains), *saqartvelo* 151 (13 [26] July 1917).

⁴³⁶ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 125-126.

Later, after the August Kornilov Affair, when the Provisional Caucasian Revolutionary Committee (Regional Revcom) was created in Tiflis upon the initiative of Georgian Mensheviks, and this Regional Revcom declared itself the supreme authority throughout the entire region, the UAM Central Committee responded with a public criticism of the Georgian Mensheviks behind the initiative, claiming they were exaggerating their own significance outside of the Georgian population and ignoring the democratic foundations and broad popular influence of the UAM among the Mountaineers.⁴³⁷ The Cossacks too expressed their contempt for the Regional Revcom's attempts to extend its authority across the range.⁴³⁸ Finally, after the Terek-Daghestan Provisional Government (TerDag) was formed in early December, its foreign minister Rashid-xan Kaplanov, warned the Transcaucasian Commissariat not to intervene in its internal affairs or try to subjugate it or else there would be problems with the bread supply and a delay in mobilization.⁴³⁹

2. *Zemstvo debates and land disputes*

Initially, the Georgian Mensheviks were happy to apply the ethnographic principle for the redrawing of administrative boundaries for zemstvo units and allow Armenian jurisdiction in areas where an Armenian population had come to form the majority thanks to tsarist resettlement policies and refugee inflows. This prospect upset the Georgian nationalists, however, and they fought hard against it in the press and zemstvo debates which kicked off in summer. In the North Caucasus, the summer saw the eruption of feuds between Cossacks and land-deprived Mountaineers, which led to clashes over summer and fall and the threat of a "war" by winter. Though this conflict was largely of an ethnic character, its roots also lie in historical injustice and social-economic disparity. There was also a strong antipathy between the Cossacks and the

⁴³⁷ Sarah Slye, "Turning towards unity: a North Caucasian perspective on the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic," *Caucasus Survey* 8, no. 1 (2020): 5.

⁴³⁸ "chrdilo da amier kavkasia" (The North and Trans Caucasia), *saqartvelo* 215 (1 [14] October 1917) (says file no. 235).

⁴³⁹ "amier kavkasiis axali mtavroba (komisariat'i)" (Transcaucasia's new government [commissariat]), *saqartvelo* 254 (16 [29] November 1917).

out-of-towners because the latter resented the Cossacks' privileges and coveted their lands.

In March, the Provisional Government decided that the zemstvo reform must be implemented in those areas where it did not yet exist, including the Caucasus, and the Ozakom was tasked from the beginning with bringing the reforms to Transcaucasia.⁴⁴⁰ In late March, the Russian Interior Ministry held a general conference in Petrograd on the zemstvo system and formed a special commission to investigate how to expand it. Discussions in the commission about the Caucasus revolved around whether administrative boundaries required redrawing, and if so by what principle.⁴⁴¹ On 25 July this project was sent to the Ozakom for discussion.⁴⁴²

Most Armenian political forces wanted the boundaries redrawn according to the ethnographic principle, even though some Armenian socialists were an exception to this approach because they hoped to avoid aggravating their neighbors. The Provisional Government also appears to have supported the "Armenian" project despite its being designed in a way that disregarded the Muslims' security concerns.⁴⁴³ Meanwhile, in summer the Georgian Mensheviks were supporting the Armenian claims to Lori and Axalqalaqi based on the ethnographic principle over the historical arguments put forward by the Georgian nationalists.⁴⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the relationship between the Georgian Mensheviks and the Armenian Dashnaks soured over the summer in part due to the zemstvo debates. These tensions were exacerbated by a Dashnak loss to the

⁴⁴⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 77.

⁴⁴¹ Imranli-Lowe, "The Provisional Government and the Armenian Homeland Project," 35-36; "adgilobrivi reforma kavkasiashi (Local reform in the Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 150 (12 [24] July 1917); "tvitmmarteloba kavkasiashi" (Self-government in the Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 150 (12 [24] July 1917); "kavkasiis gadamijvna da eroba" (Redrawing boundaries and zemstvo of the Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 205 (19 September [2 October] 1917).

⁴⁴² Imranli-Lowe, "The Provisional Government and the Armenian Homeland Project," 5.

⁴⁴³ Imranli-Lowe, "The Provisional Government and the Armenian Homeland Project"; 5-7; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 92.

⁴⁴⁴ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 92; "rezolucia, social-demokratiul partiis saolqo qrilobis dadgenileba erovnul sakitzzed" (Resolution, the Social Democratic Party's district assembly's decree on the national question), *saqartvelo* 135 (23 June [5 July] 1917).

Mensheviks at the Congress of Peasant Deputies in June and Xatisov's loss to a Georgian in the Tiflis City Duma elections in late July.⁴⁴⁵ And by October, we see the Dashnak press accusing the Mensheviks of enlisting the nationalists to do their dirty work of keeping Lori and Axalqalaqi in "Georgia" and, allegedly, ostracizing Armenians from Transcaucasia's political life.⁴⁴⁶

In the Terek oblast, conflict arose over possession of the land. The Terek Cossack Ataman Karaulov and the UAM leadership tried to keep the peace between the settler and native populations. But the UAM could not prevent some gortsy from engaging in robbery and brigandage. Moreover, the Cossack authorities could not stop their own men from attacking Ingush and Chechen villages. The Cossacks also appear to have been motivated by the fear of losing their lands—which they claimed to own fair and square through the right of military conquest.⁴⁴⁷ Aggravating what must have been some repressed sense of guilt or at least impending repercussions among the Cossacks were the many circulating rumors of dubious origin that promoted the idea the natives were on the attack.⁴⁴⁸

According to the Georgian National Democrats reporting on the situation, the major clashes which occurred between Cossacks and Mountaineers on 1 June and in Vladikavkaz on 6 July were entirely the fault of the Cossacks and had been spurred on by rumors meant to provoke the settler population against the hapless natives.⁴⁴⁹ A state of emergency was introduced on 7 July by the hastily formed Provisional Military Committee, which took power in Vladikavkaz. The members of the committee included the Terek Cossack Ataman, the oblast commissioner Colonel Ivan Mixajlov, the

⁴⁴⁵ "social-demokrātia da dashnakcakanebi" (Social-democracy and the Dashnaks), *saqartvelo* 151 (13 [26] July 1917).

⁴⁴⁶ "somxuri presa, somxebi da qartveli socialdemokrātia" (The Armenian press, Armenians and Georgian Social Democrats), *saqartvelo* 235 (25 October [7 November] 1917).

⁴⁴⁷ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 110-111, 114-116, 119-127.

⁴⁴⁸ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 124-125.

⁴⁴⁹ "qronika, kavkasia, mtietta da qazaxta shetakeba" (Chronicle, Caucasus, the clash of the Mountaineers and Cossacks), *saqartvelo* 133 (3 [26] June 1917); "provokacia kavkavshi" (Provocation in Vladikavkaz), *saqartvelo* 159 (22 July [4 August] 1917); Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 123-124.

chairman of the UAM Central Committee Tapa Chermoev and the head of the city *sovdep* (deputies' soviet) Nikolaj Skrynnikov.⁴⁵⁰

At the same time, banditry was also a real problem that exacerbated relations not only with the Cossack and Russian settler populations but also with the neighboring Georgians. And the Mountaineer leaders, secular and religious, undertook various measures to curb this criminal behavior. For example, on 12 July the Chechens held a large assembly in New Aldi near Groznyj. Seven thousand men attended, including Cossack, military and soviet representatives. The Chechens adopted the “harshest measures” against banditry and formed a militia with seven hundred men.⁴⁵¹ As willing as the native leaders were to stop local native brigandage, they demanded similar accountability from the army. For example, at a meeting in Andi (Daghestan), Mountaineer representatives addressed a Russian colonel as follows,

“You should behave in such a way that our persons remain inviolable. You should ensure that we can go in the streets without being insulted by drunken soldiers. We do not place blame on every soldier, but among them are hooligans who insult even our women. Allow us the individual freedom lost with Shamil’s defeat and you will see that we too are citizens just like you. We will come to an agreement with the Cossacks because every Cossack knows the difference between his friendly guest and his enemy. We do not want soldiers; they do not know us and therefore insult us... We wish no less than you to be liberated from thievery and brigandage... We often bring thieves bound to your towns... but your officials accept the lack of verifiable documents as a reason [for releasing them] and, returning, they harass us all the more. We know that worse things are happening in Russia than in the Ingush or Chechen areas, but you cannot see the beam in your own eye and want to punish us for events arranged by our common enemy.”⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 125, 568, 579-580; “qronika, kavkasia, saalqo tšesebi kavkavshi” (State of emergency in Vladikavkaz), *saqartvelo* 153 (15 [28] July 1917).

⁴⁵¹ “chachnebis qriloba: (Chechens’ assembly), *saqartvelo* 159 (22 July [4 August] 1917); “chachnebis milicia” (Chechens’ militia), *saqartvelo* 163 (27 July [9 August] 1917).

⁴⁵² “ingushebi da rusebi” (Ingush and Russians), *saqartvelo* 170 (4 [17] August 1917).

„ისე მოიქცეით რომ ჩვენი პიროვნება მართლა ხელშეუხლებელი რჩებოდეს. უზრუნველგვყავით—ქუჩებში ისე გავიაროთ, რომ მოვრალ ჯარისკაცთაგან შეურაცხყოფა არ მოგვეყენოს, ჩვენ ყველა ჯარისკაცს არა ვდებთ ბრალს, მაგრამ მათ შორის არიან ისეთი ხულიგნები, რომელნიც ჩვენს დედაკაცებსა კი შეურაცხყოფის აყენებენ. მოგვანიჭეთ ჩვენ შამილის ძლევის დროს დაკარგული პიროვნების თავისუფლება და ნახავთ, რომ ჩვენც ისეთივე მოქალაქენი ვართ როგორნიც თქვენ. ყაზახებთან ჩვენ მოვრიგდებით, რადგან ყველა ყაზახმა იცის, თუ ვინაა მისი ყონალი და ვინ—მტერი. ჯარისკაცები ჩვენ არ გვინდა; ისინი ჩვენ არ გვიცნობენ და ამიტომ შეურაცხვოვას გვაყენებენ... ჩვენ თქვენზე ნაკლებად არა გვსურს, რომ ქურდობისა და ყაჩაღებისაგან განვთავისუფლდეთ... ჩვენ ქურდები

Clearly it was not only the rebellious rank-and-file Cossacks who were aggravating ethnic tensions but also the increasingly unruly and radicalized Russian soldiers.

3. *Suppressing the Bolsheviks*

On the one hand, the Bolsheviks had a rather weak influence among the local population in the Caucasus region. On the other hand, in early summer, many soldiers hailing from other parts of Russia were already starting to desert as they lost their patience with the chaotic and unsanitary conditions on the Caucasus Front.⁴⁵³ This gave the Bolsheviks an opportunity to capitalize on soldiers' discontent to win their votes and make use of their arms. And as of mid-summer, it was clear the Bolsheviks were growing stronger in the Tiflis Soviet. In late June the soldiers demonstrated their hostility to the Soviet for supporting, however half-heartedly, the ill-fated Kerensky offensive of mid-June. In response, the Soviet labeled these mutinous soldiers as counter-revolutionaries and took steps to neutralize them, succeeding mainly due to the Bolsheviks' own confusion and weakness.⁴⁵⁴

Meanwhile, in July in the Terek oblast, the Cossack leadership and conservative elements were also working to suppress the radical left in the towns and garrisons. At this point, Bolshevism was still so unfamiliar to the native population that one revolutionary from Vladikavkaz later wrote that in order to combat rumors that they were “devils”, they had to “calm the dark gortsy masses down” by showing them “a real live’ Bolshevik”.⁴⁵⁵ As part of its efforts to suppress the growing radicalism among the settler population, on 5 August the Terek Cossack Krug introduced military-revolutionary courts, confirmed the death penalty and increased the powers and rights

ხშირად რამდენიმე... მოგვყავს თქვენს ქალაქებში... თქვენი მოხელენი კი დასამტკიცებელ საბუთების უქონლობას იღებენ მიზეზად და უკან დაბრუნებული ქურდები უარეს დღეს გვაყენებენ... ჩვენ ვიცით, რომ რუსეთში უარესი ამბები ხდება, ვიდრე ინგუშებისა თუ ჩეჩნების მხარეში, მაგრამ თქვენ თვალში დვირეს ვერ ხედავთ და ჩვენი დასჯა კი გსურთ ამბების გამო, რომელთაც საერთო მტერი აწყობს.“

⁴⁵³ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 254-255.

⁴⁵⁴ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 254-256.

⁴⁵⁵ Borisenko 2: 34.

of the ataman.⁴⁵⁶ According to Borisenko, “the counter-revolution” was especially repressive in Groznyj after the July Days.⁴⁵⁷ On 17 August, Cossacks dispersed the Executive Committee of the soviet’s ispolkom and started to persecute the Bolsheviks and their organizations. When Bolshevikized soldiers ordered to the front refused to go, they were then surrounded by Cossacks and disarmed.⁴⁵⁸

A similar picture is seen in the Kuban oblast. May and June were colored with increased agitation, strikes and demonstrations but the Mensheviks and SRs backed the authorities when they shut down the Bolshevik’s main propaganda organ, *Prikubanskaja pravda* (Kuban truth).⁴⁵⁹ The effects of the failed Kerensky offensive were also felt in the Kuban. In early July, the Cossacks withdrew from the oblast’s soviet and the Kuban Oblast Ispolkom, whereupon Commissioner Bardizh abolished the Kuban Oblast Soviet and Ispolkom and announced the transfer of all authority to the Kuban Host’s government. Although the conservative and moderate socialists retained the high ground, the cycle of growing Bolshevik destabilization efforts meeting increased repression attempts only intensified.⁴⁶⁰

4. *Opposing ethnic tensions (drawing together while falling apart)*

As the euphoria of spring faded into the destabilizing tensions of summer and early fall, the national groups pulled inward and focused on self-preservation while casting about for potential allies around them. This pattern is shown in the fact that the national groups held congresses in the late summer and fall where they elected national councils to serve leadership functions at the same time as they moved towards nationalizing defense and made some feeble attempts to create security alliances.

⁴⁵⁶ Borisenko 2: 34.

⁴⁵⁷ Borisenko 2: 35.

⁴⁵⁸ Borisenko 2: 35.

⁴⁵⁹ Raenko, *Chronicle*, 28-50.

⁴⁶⁰ Borisenko 1: 115-118; Raenko, *Chronicle*, 52-81.

a. *Nationalizing defense and attempts at forming a common front*

Alarmed by the growing disorders in the North Caucasus, in late-June the UAM Central Committee sent its deputy chairman, Pshemakho Kotsev, to Petrograd to ask the Provisional Government's war minister, Aleksandr Kerenskij, to give the Wild Division orders to return so that the native cavalymen could serve as a badly needed security force at home. Kerenskij and his aide, however, feigned confusion and complained about the incomprehensible behavior of the periphery nations. Their concern was clearly keeping the troops on the frontlines where "Russia" needed them moreso than providing the nationalities with the tools needed for ensuring local security. At the very moment Kotsev was trying to get through to Kerenskij, the July Days (3-7) took place, which resulted in the reorganization of the Provisional Government cabinet. It now took on a nature that was less liberal and more moderate socialist. However, after becoming prime minister in the shuffle, Kerenskij continued to prevent the Caucasian cavalymen from returning home to serve as a national security force.⁴⁶¹ Armenian committees in Petrograd were also pressing upon Kerenskij to transfer Armenian soldiers from Europe to the Caucasus. But by the time Kerenskij signed the order for troop transfer and the first few thousand Armenian soldiers were on the way back to the Caucasus, his government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks.⁴⁶²

The deteriorating situation around the Caucasus Front also inspired some hopes for a Georgian-Armenian military alliance. Around August, the famous Armenian military leader Andranik was seeking funds from the British and Americans for the creation of a "Christian" army to fight the Ottomans.⁴⁶³ Later, as Zurab Avalishvili recalls, the Armenian General L.F. Tigranov was lobbying in the capital for the return of the Georgian and Armenian troops, thinking that "If Georgia and Armenia could

⁴⁶¹ P. Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization."

⁴⁶² Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 81-83.

⁴⁶³ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 81-83.

According to Hovannisian, the US consul in Tiflis insisted that setting up national units and creating a united Transcaucasian Caucasian front was the only way to resist the Ottomans. The US Ambassador to Russia, however, was only annoyed with his proposals. In August, Smith, two British figures and Andranik discussed creating an Armenian national force and forming a joint defence front with the Georgians. But they never got the funding.

unite properly, they would be able to get rid of the Turks and erect an inaccessible bastion, a bulwark of their independence.” At some point, the Georgian committees were also lobbying for their troops’ return.⁴⁶⁴

b. *The Andi Gathering of Mountaineers (August 1917)*

In light of the deteriorating security situation and the fact that the decentralized organizational structure of the UAM left it ill-equipped to serve as a strong cohesive authority for the different Mountain nations, the UAM Central Committee decided to convene a second congress to obtain the democratic mandate necessary to form a stronger power structure and create a policing force. They planned to hold the congress in late August in Andi, Daghestan, a location which bore a symbolic association with Shamil’s state.⁴⁶⁵ The issues on the agenda were the Muslims’ religious affairs, organizing a militia, suppressing banditry, ensuring a stable food supply, setting up peasants’ councils and land committees, preparing the population for elections to the Constituent Assembly, and “eternal union with the Georgian people”.⁴⁶⁶ Accordingly, they invited all the Georgian parties to send representatives to discuss territorial concerns.⁴⁶⁷

Although thousands of people gathered for this historic congress, travel conditions prevented some of the delegates from reaching their destination. Adding to the difficulties, the Daghestani religious leaders Nazhmutdin Gotsinskij and Uzun Xadzhi disrupted the agenda when they attempted the founding of a theocratic state. On 20 August, the day the congress was scheduled to open, a religious ceremony was held

⁴⁶⁴ Zourab Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia in International Politics, 1918-1921* (London: Headley Brothers, 1940), 8-9.

It seems Avalishvili is referring to a moment after the October Revolution but his time references are muddled.

⁴⁶⁵ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 174.

⁴⁶⁶ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 174-178; “mtielta qriloba” (The Mountaineers’ assembly), *saqartvelo* 169 (3 [16] August 1917).

⁴⁶⁷ “mtielta qriloba” (The Mountaineers’ assembly), *saqartvelo* 169 (3 [16] August 1917).

at which Gotsinskij was proclaimed the imam of a new theocratic state (an imamate).⁴⁶⁸ According to the eyewitness account of a Daghestani artist, swarms of regular folk had streamed to Andi to see this restoration of the imamate. He writes,

“Gathered there was a vast number of men on horses. People of the most diverse appearance, representatives of all the peoples of the Caucasus, who, being separated by nearly impassable mountain ranges, had never seen each other before, were waiting here on the shores of the mountain lake for the appearance of the imam. All of them, whom the coming chaos of the time would come to dispel in all directions and even destroy, were yet still full of life and hope. Honorable Chechen and Ingush sheikhs started to vie for primacy but very quickly found agreement with the Christian princes of Georgia and Abkhazia since the idea of the motherland was stronger than anything else. This is how the sons of the mountain awaited their loftiest dream. Early in the morning of the next day the rumbling of drums and the piercing sound of zurnas heralded the appearance of the imam from Gotso and his collaborator Uzun Xadzhi. Surrounded by his murids, who were singing religious songs, and accompanied by hundreds of riders he created a strong impression, instilling respect for his person. He was declared imam of Daghestan and the North Caucasus. The bright, impressive days spent on the shores of the sparkling green Andi lake...are the most unforgettable pictures of [SS: my] life, imprinted in my heart. This country of many mountains and valleys was a united country. This people of many tribes was a united people. And one fate bound them all together.”⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 178-181.

⁴⁶⁹ Xalil-bek Musajasul, *Strana poslednix rytsarej* (The country of the last knights), accessed 5 June 2022, https://royallib.com/book/musayasul_halilbek/strana_poslednih_ritsarey.html.

«Туда же съехалось огромное количество мужчин на лошадях. Люди самой разной внешности, представители всех народов Кавказа, которые, будучи разделенными почти непреодолимыми горными хребтами, раньше не видели друг друга, ждали здесь вместе, у берегов горного озера, появления имама. Все они, кого позднее хаос времени развеял на все четыре стороны или даже уничтожил, были еще полны жизни и надежд. Почтенные чеченские и ингушские шейхи начали было оспаривать первенство, но вскоре все же договорились с христианскими князьями Грузии и Абхазии, так как понятие Родины было сильнее всего остального. Так смотрели сыны гор навстречу самой высокой своей мечте. Ранним утром следующего дня гул барабанов и пронзительные звуки зурны {70} возвестили о появлении имама из Гоцо и его соратника Узун-Хаджи. В окружении своих мюридов, певших священные песни, и в сопровождении сотен всадников он производил впечатление сильной, внушающей уважение личности. Он был провозглашен имамом Дагестана и Северного Кавказа. Яркие, впечатляющие дни, проведенные у берегов сияющего зеленого Андийского озера {71} — сверкание оружия, полыхание знамен, топот коней, яркие одежды, высокие тюрбаны знати и темные мрачные фигуры горцев в огромных папахах и величавых бурках, с резкими, обветренными лицами, казавшимися такими же древними, как и их скалистые горы,— являются самыми незабываемыми картинами жизни, запечатленными в моем сердце. Страна эта, из многих гор и долин, была единой страной. Народ этот, из многих племен, был единым народом. И одна судьба связала их всех вместе воедино.»

But this was not just the rosy-eyed interpretation of a wishful Daghestani. A Georgian guest confirms that the gortsy shared a sense of North Caucasian and all-Caucasian identity, writing as follows:

“On 20 August in the village of Andi opened the general assembly of the Caucasian Mountaineers, to which the representatives of the Georgian nation were specially invited. The main objective of the gathering was the tight unification of all the inhabitants of Daghestan and the mountains, and to find a common platform. No one would have thought that the national self-consciousness would be brought back to life among the racially diverse mountaineers hidden in the Caucasus range. It was hard to imagine that the small mountain nations would set forth a common objective, that a tight union would be created and unified, and that, consequently, would come out as a mighty unit in the struggle for the improvement of the national life.”⁴⁷⁰

In fact, despite the clear religious nature of the event, the rupturing division at this particular gathering appears to have been less about secularists versus Islamists and more about the religious leaders' own rivalries or disagreements. The act of proclaiming Gotsinskij the head of a theocratic state, real or perceived, evoked a protest from other important sheikhs like Deni Arsanov from Chechnya and Ali-xan Akushinskij from Daghestan. This group of sheikhs denied that Gotsinskij was qualified to be imam, and so the atmosphere between the opposing camps of religious leaders grew very tense.⁴⁷¹ It was then that the UAM leaders diffused the tension by stepping in to play the role of mediator. As the Georgian Shalva Amirejibi later wrote:

Never since Shamil had so many sheikhs, hajjis and mullahs gathered themselves together; they were coming with their murids, sectarians and flags. The most famous sheikh of Daghestan, Nazhmuddin, was leading them all. At two o'clock we were informed that Nazhmuddin had declared himself imam and *ghazavat* was now underway. These rumors were coming from Andi... where at this time Chermoev and Kotsev were taking action against the clerics and Nazhmuddin. And the Mountain has only Chermoev and Kotsev to thank that on that day it took no disastrous step. These

⁴⁷⁰ “mtielta kreba” (The mountaineers' congress), *saqartvelo* 185 (23 August [5 September] 1917).

„20 მარტობისთვის სოფელ ანდისში გაიხსნა კავკასიის მთიულთა საერთო ყრილობა, რომელზედაც საგანგებოთ არიან მოწვეულნი ქართველი ერის წარმომადგენლებიც. ყრილობის უმთავრესი მიზანია, ყველა მთიულთა და დაღესტნის მცხოვრებთა მჭიდროთ შეკავშირება და გამონახვა საერთო პლატფორმისა. არავინ იფიქრებდა, თუ კავკასიონის ქედში შემალულ მრავალ-ჯურის მთიულებში განცხოველებული ყოფილიყოს ეროვნული თვითშეგნება; ძნელი წარმოსადგენი იყო მცირე რიცხოვან მთიულ ერთათვის საერთო მიზნების დასახვა, მტკიცე კავშირის შეკვრა, გაერთიანება და, მამასადმე, მძლავრ ერთეულად გამოსვლა ეროვნულ ცხოვრების გაუმჯობესებისათვის ბრძოლაში.“

⁴⁷¹ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 179-181.

figures compelled Nazhmuddin to publicly declare his being made imam was just rumor thought up by his enemies.⁴⁷²

It is conceivable that many North Caucasians had placed some hope in their religious leaders to protect them against the increasingly hostile Cossack settlers and aggressive Russian soldiers, but in Gotsinskij's statement at Andi, he announced that the majority of the people gathered there had agreed that it was best for him to be made *sheikh al-Islam* or *mufti* rather than imam because proclaiming the formation of a theocratic state would exacerbate tensions between the native and settler populations, something the Mountaineer leadership wished to avoid.⁴⁷³ Given the logistical difficulties encountered (the official reason) and the confusion surrounding the religious question (which was likely the main reason), it was decided to relocate the congress to Vladikavkaz although an interim meeting was held in Vedenov with Georgian, Abkhaz, Cossack and other guests.⁴⁷⁴

c. The Kornilov Affair (August 1917)

It was right after the Mountaineer gathering in Andi that the Kornilov affair unfolded in Petrograd (27-30 August 1917). At the start of the conflict, the Caucasian Native

⁴⁷² Sh. Amirejibi, "daghestan-chechneti" (Daghestan-Chechnya), *saqartvelo* 270 (12 [25] December 1917).

„არასოდეს შამილის შემდეგ ამდენ შეიხს, ჰაჯებს და მოლებს თავი ერთად არ მოეყარათ ისინი მოვიდნენ თავის მიუზღებოთ, სექტებით და ბაირალებით. მათ მეთაურობდა ნაჟმუდინი ყველაზედ სახელგანთქმული შეიხი დაღესტნისა. დღის ორ საათზე შეგვატყობინეს, რომ ნაჟმუდინმა თავი იმამად გამოაცხადა და რომ დღეიდან ჰაზავატი სწარმოებს. ეს ხმები მოდიოდა ანდიდან, რომელიც ჩვენზე რვა ვერსით იყო დაშორებული და სადაც ამ დროს ჩერმოევი და კოცევი სამღვდელოების და ნაჟმუდინის წინააღმდეგ მოქმედობდნენ. და მხოლოდ კოცევს და ჩერმოევს უნდა უმადლოდეს მთა, რომ იმ დღეს მთამ საბედიწერო ნაბიჯი არ გადადგამ პირებმა აიძულეს ნაჟმუდინი საჯაროთ განეცხადებინა, რომ მისი იმამობა მის მტრების მოგონილი ჭორია.“

⁴⁷³ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 182; Michael Reynolds, "Native Sons: Post-Imperial Politics, Islam, and Identity in the North Caucasus, 1917-1918," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 56, no. 2 (2008): 234.

⁴⁷⁴ Compare Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 184-185.

In Muzaev's view, the Andi congress marked the time when the intelligentsia had lost its tenuous authority over the gortsy masses and the religious leaders showed that they were the true authorities since it was only the conflict between the religious leaders that prevented the formation of an imamate.

Cavalry Division (*Kavkazskaja tuzemnaja konnaja divizija*, also referred to as the *Dikaja divizija*, translated as the Wild or Savage Division), located near the capital, was ordered to go in to help preserve order for the Bolsheviks were conducting an uprising.⁴⁷⁵ After some weak shootouts, the city began to panic about the approach of “the Circassians”.⁴⁷⁶ Opposing this development, the UAM Central Committee instructed their representative in the Russian capital, the Muslim Ossetian Axmet Tsalikov, to convince the native cavalymen not to participate.⁴⁷⁷ Tsalikov and others in the Muslim delegation informed the Wild Division that there was no Bolshevik uprising and successfully urged them to remain loyal to the government.⁴⁷⁸ Shortly thereafter, the Wild Division was reformed into a corps under the command of General Petr Polovtsov and sent back home.⁴⁷⁹

In the Caucasus, as touched upon in the earlier section on administrative breakdown, the Georgian Mensheviks were inspired by the Kornilov affair to try and “save the revolution” by purging the Ozakom of “bourgeois” elements. In the wake of the affair, they tried to create a regional revolutionary government in the form of the Provisional Caucasian Revolutionary Committee (“Regional Revcom”) and declared it the supreme authority of the region, a move that proved thoroughly irritating to the Azerbaijanis, Armenians and Georgian nationalists.⁴⁸⁰ Moreover, they tried to extend their power into Vladikavkaz, which provoked a stern reaction from the Terek Cossack

⁴⁷⁵ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 192-193.

⁴⁷⁶ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 193-194.

⁴⁷⁷ P. Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization.”

⁴⁷⁸ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 194-199.

⁴⁷⁹ P. Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization.”

⁴⁸⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 83-85; Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 273-275; “kontr-revolucia da axali mtavroba” (The counter-revolution and the new government), *saqartvelo* 194 (3 [16] September 1917); “amier-kavkasiis komitetis gadadgoma” (Transcaucasian committee’s resignation), *saqartvelo* 195 (5 [18] September 1917; Mamulia et al., *Gaijdar Bammat*, 202-205; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 207-210.

Ataman Karaulov and the UAM.⁴⁸¹ The situation got so bad that the Georgian National Democrats started warning the Mensheviks to be careful not to provoke the North Caucasians into sending the wheat so desperately needed in Transcaucasia to the north instead.⁴⁸²

The UAM leadership saw the Regional Revkom as a Georgian Menshevik project which failed to reflect the real balance of power in Caucasus and considered this attempt to extend their jurisdiction (albeit via a regional “revolutionary” authority) into the North Caucasus as insulting to the UAM’s own democratic basis and intentions. Gajdar Bammatov, the official UAM representative in Tiflis and chairman of the Tiflis Muslim Committee, a body uniting the representatives of Muslims from all over the Caucasus, made this explicitly clear in a letter. He explains,

The Social Democratic Labor Party, the strongest and best organized party in the Caucasus, can claim political leadership only within Georgia. It does not exercise influence over the Muslim or Armenian party masses. Social Democrats are only starting their work among Muslims in particular. Thus, the Muslim part of Western Transcaucasia, all of Eastern Transcaucasia and the whole of the North Caucasus are outside of the sphere of influence of socialist parties... Political life in the North Caucasus and Daghestan is wholly governed by the Union of Allied Mountaineers, which accepts the socialist parties’ minimum program in all the fundamental questions... The Central Committee [SS: of the UAM] considers this attempt to unite the North Caucasus with Transcaucasia as a contradiction of the democratic principle of administrative decentralization. The committee cannot but see in such a step a certain element of distrust for the democratic organizations of the North Caucasus. On these grounds... I consider it my duty to express a categorical protest against the projected rearrangement of regional governmental authority planned by the Provisional Caucasian Revolutionary Committee.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ “kavkasiis sarevolucio centrali komiteti” (The Caucasian revolutionary central committee), *saqartvelo* 193 (2 [15] September 1917); kontr-revolucionuri modzraoba kavkavshi” (The counter-revolutionary movement in Vladikavkaz), *saqartvelo* 195 (2 [5] September 1917); “kavkasiis droebiti central sarevolucio komitetis biuleteni” (The Caucasus provisional central revolutionary committee’s bulletin), *saqartvelo* 194 (3 [15] September 1917); “chrdilo da amier kavkasia” (The north and south Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 214 (1 [14] October 1917) (says no. 235).

⁴⁸² simshilis safitxe saqartveloshi” (Danger of famine in Georgia), *saqartvelo* 193 (2 [15] September 1917); “puris krizisi” (bread crisis), *saqartvelo* 195 (5 [18] September 1917); “chrdilo da amier kavkasia” (The north and south Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 214 (1 [14] October 1917) (says file no. 235).

⁴⁸³ Mamulia et al, *Gajdar Bammat*, 202-206.

«Социал-демократическая рабочая партия, наиболее сильная и организованная партия на Кавказе, может претендовать на политическое руководство только в пределах одной Грузии; ни в мусульманской, ни в армянских партийных массах партия влиянием не пользуется. В частности в мусульманской среде с[оциал]-д[емократы] только начинают свою работу. Таким

The Mensheviks' behavior likewise irritated the Musavatists, Dashnaks and Georgian nationalists. So, they were eventually compelled to replace the Revkom with a new, more inclusive Ozakom and the far less radical sounding Public Safety Committee on 22 October.⁴⁸⁴

d. *The Second Mountain Congress (September 1917)*

The Second Mountain Congress was held on 21-28 September in Vladikavkaz.⁴⁸⁵ The congress adopted a new organizational constitution for the UAM, which gave its central committee broader authority to act and actually enforce orders. It also initiated the process of preparing a constitution for the Mountain autonomy with the expectation of presenting a finished project to the Constituent Assembly after its planned adoption at a third Mountaineer congress to be convened. The delegates took this decision believing that the Provisional Government would not object to their strivings towards autonomy because its representative to the recent federalists' conference in Kyiv, Mixail Slavinskij, had given his assurances that Russia's central government recognized the peoples' rights to broad autonomy and the choice of a federal system. Although the final version of the constitution was not elaborated, after the second congress the UAM essentially took upon itself the functions of an autonomous government.⁴⁸⁶ Since even

образом, мусульманская часть Западного Закавказья, все Восточное Закавказье и весь Северный Кавказ находятся вне сферы влияния социалистических партий... Политической жизнью Северного Кавказа и Дагестана всецело руководит Союз объединенных горцев, принявший по всем основным вопросам программу минимум социалистических партий... Стремление вновь воссоединить Северный Кавказ с Закавказьем Центральный Комитет считает противоречащим демократическому принципу административной децентрализации. Комитет не может не усмотреть в этом шаге также и элемент некоторого недоверия к демократическим организациям на Северном Кавказе. На основании приведенных мотивов... я считаю долгом выразить категорический протест против проектированного Временным Кавказским революционным комитетом порядка реорганизации краевой правительственной власти.»

⁴⁸⁴ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 274.

⁴⁸⁵ “mtielta qriloba” (The Mountaineers' congress), *saqartvelo* 221 (8 [21] October 1917); Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 229-234.

⁴⁸⁶ “erovnehta qriloba kievshi” (The nationalities' assembly in Kiev), *saqartvelo* 203 (16 [29] 1917; “erovnuli sakitxi, erovnehta qrilobis dadgenileba” (The national question, the nationalities' assembly's decrees), *saqartvelo* 208 (22 September [5 October] 1917); “kievis qrilobis dadgenileba, samshvidobo

legitimate authority needs coercive power, the congress also adopted measures to create a national militia including Wild Division regiments finally returned home after the Kornilov Affair.⁴⁸⁷ One of the militia's main tasks would be to control the growing *abrechestvo* (political or honorable brigandage) and raiding, but even though this phenomenon had some roots in the extreme land shortages among the regular people, the congress did little more than resolve to add an agrarian sector to the central committee.⁴⁸⁸ The committee's relatively conservative leadership also persuaded the congress to approve moving towards a union with the Cossacks. Although left-leaning delegates were displeased with this idea, they went along with it to preserve internal harmony.⁴⁸⁹ The congress was unanimous, however, about accepting the Abkhaz National Council's representatives' request to join the UAM.⁴⁹⁰

konferenciis shesaxeб” (The Kiev assembly's resolution about the peace conference), *saqartvelo* 232 (28 September [11 October] 1917); Karmov, *Materials*, 79-81 (first constitution), 143-145 (second constitution), 149 (decision on federation); Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 231-232; “Deklaratsija tsentralnago komiteta Sojuza oĭedinennyx gortsev” (Declaration of the Central Committee of the Union of Allies Mountaineers), *Kavkaz* 31 (274) (9 December 1917).

“The September congress of all the Mountaineers of the Caucasus, in full unity will all the truly revolutionary parties and peoples of Russia, who have declared at the Kyiv Congress of Peoples and in their declarations the principles of creating a federal democratic republic in Russia, has decreed that the Mountaineers of the Caucasus henceforth embark on the path of realizing autonomy on a federal basis and with the constitution of the Mountaineer's Union has created the union's bodies of authority: 1) the administrative organ—the congress of delegates of the Union of Allied Mountaineers and 2) the executive organ—the central committee, which has been entrusted with full power on the territory of the union.”

«Сентябрьский съезд всех горцев Кавказа, в полном единении со всеми истинно-революционными партиями и народами России, провозгласившими на съезде народов в Киеве и в своих декларациях принципы создания в России федеративной демократической республики, постановил, что горцы Кавказа отныне вступают на пут осуществления автономии на федеративных началах, и конституцией союза горцев создал органы союзной власти: 1) распорядительный орган—съезд делегатов союза горцев Кавказа и 2) исполнительный орган—центральный комитет, коим вверена вся полнота власти на территории союза.»

A comparison of the May and September versions of the UAM constitution reveals the augmented centralization of the organization's structure.

⁴⁸⁷ Karmov, *Materials*, 147; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 230-231.

⁴⁸⁸ Karmov, *Materials*, 148; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 231, 236.

⁴⁸⁹ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 232, 235-236.

⁴⁹⁰ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 233.

e. *The National Congress of Russian Armenians (September 1917)*

The Russian Armenian National Congress opened in Tiflis on 18 September 1917. At this congress, the delegates elected a council to act as an executive body for the Armenians as a collective, and the Armenian National Council immediately started taking on a kind of governmental role. Over half of the two hundred delegates in attendance were Dashnaks, forty-three were populists, twenty-three SRs and nine Social Democrats. The Bolsheviks refused participation, claiming the congress was just a bourgeois-clerical assembly working to trick the proletariat into national antagonisms and that the people's only salvation lie in the joint effort of the Russian and Caucasian proletariats. The congress expressed dissatisfaction in the performance of the Ozakom, and the Dashnaks accused the Georgian Mensheviks of being nationalists just pretending to be socialists. Unsurprisingly, the majority at the congress voted for the Dashnak program, which called for organizing the democratic elements in Armenian society, improving relations with the Georgian and Muslim workers to promote regional progress and harmonious relations, and adopting the zemstvo based on revising administrative boundaries according to ethnic, geographical and economic factors.⁴⁹¹

f. *Russia's October coup and practical decentralization*

By mid-October it was already clear there would be "disturbances" in Petrograd. In what looks like a move made in anticipation of the immanent Bolshevik coup, on 20-21 October, Cossack and UAM leaders signed union agreement for the Southeastern Union of Cossack Hosts, Caucasian Mountaineers and Free Peoples of the Steppes.⁴⁹² As one Terek Cossack publicist later wrote, "The goal of this union was exclusively the

⁴⁹¹ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 86-90; "somexta erovnuli sabçho" (The Armenians' National Council), *saqartvelo* 232 (21 October [8 November] 1917).

⁴⁹² "bolshevikbis ajanqebis molodinshi" (In anticipating of a Bolshevik uprising), *saqartvelo* 232 (21 October [3 November] 1917); "deklaratsija oþedinennago pravitel'stva jugo-vostochnago Sojuza kazachix vojsk, gortsev Kavkaza i volnyx narodov stepej" (Declaration of the united government of the Southeastern Union of the Cossack troops, Caucasian mountaineers and free peoples of the steppes), *Kavkaz* 31 (274) (9 December 1917); Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 257-258, 269; Raenko, *Chronicle*, 74.

creation of a united military front in the fight against Bolshevism.”⁴⁹³ According to the text of the agreement, the union’s aims included helping the central government in its fight to suppress external enemies, anarchy and the counter-revolution. A significant point in the union treaty is that each member of the union retained the right to complete independence in internal affairs.⁴⁹⁴

As mentioned above, however, certain leftist politicians among the Mountaineers opposed union with the Cossacks. One salient example is Axmet Tsalikov. While recognizing the UAM as the legitimate representative of the Mountaineers, he saw this union with the Cossacks as a departure from the goals of revolutionary democracy, arguing,

“The mountain people’s representatives have submitted the fate of the Mountaineers to a union with the Cossacks. The result of this will be unfortunate for the Mountaineers, who are subsumed into the political orientation of the Cossacks. This policy, however, is opposed to revolutionary democracy. Union with the Cossacks means separation from revolutionary democracy, the only friend of the eastern peoples, and the Mountaineers’ separation from all Islam, which sees the liberation of the peoples of the East from imperialism only in the victory of labor democracy.”⁴⁹⁵

Tsalikov could only have been pleased when the Southeastern Union proved stillborn, and the Georgian National Democrats did not hide their satisfaction, writing in *saqartvelo* that such a marriage between the Cossacks, who were centralists by nature,

⁴⁹³ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 261.

«Цель этого союза была исключительно в создании единой армии фронта в борьбе с большевизмом...»

⁴⁹⁴ “qazaxta da mtielta kavshiri” (The union of the Cossacks and Mountaineers), *saqartvelo* 235 (October 25 [7 November] 1917); “mtielta da qazaxta samxret aghmosavletis kavshiris debulebani” (The statutes of the Mountaineers and Cossacks South-Eastern Union), *saqartvelo* 242 (2 [15] November 1917).

⁴⁹⁵ “qazaxebi da mtielebi” (The Cossacks and Mountaineers), *saqartvelo* 229 (18 [31] October 1917).

„მთიელთა ხალხთა წარმომადგენლებმა მთიელთა ბედი ყაზახებთან კავშირს ჩააბარეს. ამის შედეგები სამწუხარო იქნება მთიელთათვის, რომელნიც ამით ქაზახთა პოლიტიკულის არიენტაციაში არიან ჩართულნი; ეს პოლიტიკა კი ეწინააღმდეგება რევოლუციონურ დემოკრატიას; ყაზახებთან შეკავშირება ჰნიშნავს დაშორებას რევოლუციონურ დემოკრატიისაგან, რომელიც ერთად ერთი მეგობარია აღმოსავლეთის ხალხებისა, და მთიელთა გაშორების მთელი ისლამისაგან, რომელიც მხოლოდ მშრომელ დემოკრატიის გამარჯვებაში ჰხედავს აღმოსავლეთის ხალხთა იმპერიალიზმისაგან განთავისუფლებას.“

and the North Caucasians, who they thought should be decentralists both intentionally and “instinctively”, since their survival was at stake, could never have worked out.⁴⁹⁶

On 25-26 October, the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd. The Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom) was established on 26 October, and, in one of its first moves, on 2 November, Russia’s new, revolutionary government published the “Declaration of the Rights of the People of Russia”, in which it confirmed the Soviet recognition of the right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination even as far as declaring independence.⁴⁹⁷ Although the main political forces in the Caucasus had not yet been considering making declarations of independence, the evaporation of the legitimate central authority in Russia made it practically necessary to set up autonomous government in order to manage the situation on the ground. Apparently, after the Bolshevik seizure of power, the remains of the Provisional Government’s leadership, especially in the person of the Georgian Menshevik Irakli Tsereteli, were also encouraging the local authorities to take on state functions.⁴⁹⁸

In the Terek oblast, the Cossack, UAM, military and civil authorities met in Vladikavkaz as soon as 26-27 October and decided to transfer all power to the Terek Oblast Committee for the Fight Against Anarchy and Robbery. A few days later the Committee was renamed the Terek Oblast Military Convention (Konvent). This body was comprised of Cossack, UAM, Russian military, ispolkom and soviet representatives. Although martial law was introduced to the oblast, it was directed only

⁴⁹⁶ “chrdilo kavkasiis amgebis gamo” (Because of the events in the North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 266 (2 [15] December 1917).

⁴⁹⁷ “Declaration of the Rights of the People of Russia,” published on 2 (15) November 1917, accessed 7 February 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/1917/11/02.htm>; Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, 235-244.

⁴⁹⁸ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 269. See also “xmebi kavkasiis shesaxeb” (Rumors about the Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 254 (16 [29] November 1917).

This reminds one of the later power struggle between Mixail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin when both encouraged the regions to take on the functions of autonomy in order to win their support.

at the far-left extremists.⁴⁹⁹ Then on 31 October, the UAM Central Committee decided to take over command of all the native military units.⁵⁰⁰

Soon thereafter, on 6 November, the Cossack leaders and UAM met to discuss establishing a local government. Two days later, at a meeting including military, ispolkom and soviet representatives, the head of the Konvent, the Russian General Petr Polovtsev, stated that the Konvent would not be able to govern the oblast. Ataman Karaulov then responded by announcing a Cossack-Mountaineer joint plan to transform the Terek and Dagestan oblasts into an autonomous federal republic (within Russia).⁵⁰¹ The oblasts would be reorganized into the Terskij kraj (region) for the settler population and a separate autonomy for the natives.⁵⁰²

This joint Cossack-Mountaineer decision upset the out-of-towner socialists, but the UAM representatives resisted the outsiders' attempt to dictate their will over the natives.⁵⁰³ The words of Dzhabagiev in response to this situation reflect this position. He said, "The gortsy do not want to be commanded by the parties or the professional organizations, and they will never allow this."⁵⁰⁴ Some opponents even tried to call into question the UAM's authority over the different Mountain national groups, but the UAM Central Committee Deputy Chair Rashid-xan Kaplanov defused the argument against them by making the following statement about the nature of the Mountaineer union. He said,

"Are the gortsy a people? The commonality of [SS: our] historical fates will answer that question. We gortsy have many bases on which to consider ourselves as a united complex of nationalities. From the very outset we have said that the gortsy want

⁴⁹⁹ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 269-70.

⁵⁰⁰ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 271.

⁵⁰¹ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 271-272, 574.

⁵⁰² Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 272-274.

⁵⁰³ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 274-275.

⁵⁰⁴ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 275.

«Горцы не хотят команды над ними ни от партий, не от профессиональных организаций, и этого никогда не допустят.»

to enter, as an independent union, into a future federative republic—two Mountain congresses have made it sufficiently clear that this is their will.”⁵⁰⁵

While the above proceedings were underway in Vladikavkaz, a peasants’ congress was being held in Sukhumi, and it adopted a constitution for the Abkhaz people and elected an Abkhaz People’s Council (APC) for their temporary government.⁵⁰⁶ Based on the results of a referendum held in early November in the Samurzakano area, aimed at obtaining a popular mandate taking into account the sentiments of local Mingrelians, the Abkhaz representatives were now able to finalize their wish to unite with the UAM.⁵⁰⁷ According to some Abkhaz representatives, this unification was intended to be a temporary political alliance since the Mountaineers were then in a position of strength but that culturally and nationally they would remain with Georgia.⁵⁰⁸

Finally, on 10 November, as a result of the meeting in Vladikavkaz, a joint government between the UAM, Cossacks and socialists was announced.⁵⁰⁹ This seems to have been at least a factor encouraging the meeting of the Transcaucasian representatives on the following day (11 November). At this meeting, these representatives discussed the establishment of a temporary Transcaucasian government. One of the main reasons (alongside the obvious problem of Russia lacking a legitimately recognized government) given for the need to form a temporary

⁵⁰⁵ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 276-277.

«Являются ли горцы народом? На этот вопрос ответит общность исторических судеб. У нас, горцев, есть масса оснований считать себя единой совокупностью национальностей. Мы с самого начала говорили, что горцы желают войти самостоятельной единицей в будущую федеративную республику—два горских съезда достаточно понято выявили эту свою волю.»

⁵⁰⁶ “afxazetis saxalxo sabcho” (Abkhazia’s people’s council), *saqartvelo* 278 (21 December 1917 [3 January 1918]); Arsène Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh* (London: Routledge, 2015), 43.

⁵⁰⁷ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 237-241.

⁵⁰⁸ Z. Edeli, “mtielta kavshiri da afxazeti” (The Union of Mountaineers and Abkhazia), *saqartvelo* 251 (12 [25] November 1917); Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 240.

⁵⁰⁹ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 276-277; “tergis olqis mtavroba” (The government of the Terek olqi), *saqartvelo* 259 (24 November [7 December] 1917).

government in Transcaucasia was that since the North Caucasians were already setting up an authoritative government and the Transcaucasians were dependent on the North Caucasians for food, then they too should set up such a government for the practical reason of being able to enter into communications with them. Thus, after discussion, Transcaucasia's leaders decided to set up a provisional government until elections to the Constituent Assembly could be completed and a new government formed out of the persons remaining after the delegates to this all-Russian body were chosen.⁵¹⁰ This process was completed within several days. On 14 November, the membership of the temporary self-governmental body, the Transcaucasian Commissariat (Zavkom), was finalized, and, on the fifteenth, it formally replaced the recently reorganized Ozakom (as well as the Public Safety Committee which had been set up on 22 October to replace the odious Regional Revkom) to serve as the highest governmental-administrative body of authority in Transcaucasia.⁵¹¹

Back in the Terek, however, the results of the Vladikavkaz meeting quickly evaporated. The socialist members of the new government almost immediately withdrew from the oblast's joint government, pretending it was impossible to work with

⁵¹⁰ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 103; "amier kavkasiis droebiti mtavroba" (Transcaucasia's provisional government), *saqartvelo* 252 (14 [27] November 1917).

"ამირ კავკასია მოწყვეტილია. შველას არც პეტროგრადიდან და არც მოსკოვიდან არ უნა მოველოდეთ. ამიტომ უნა ვიზრუნოთ საკუთარ მთავრობის მოწყობაზე. ჩრდილოეთ კავკასიაში უკვე შეეცადნენ ავტორიტეტულ მთავრობის შექმნას. ამიერ კავკასია სურსათის მხრივ დამოკიდებულია ჩრდილოეთ კავკასიაზე და ამ უკანასკნელს ამიერ კავკასიასთან უკონტაქტო მუშაობა არ შეუძლიან. დროებით მთავრობის მოწყობას თვით მდგომარეობა გვიკარნახებს და მისი აუსრულებდობა არ შეიძლება."

"Present were representatives of the *olqi* centers, workers' and peasants' deputies, the Caucasus Army's deputies, the Executive Committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies' Soviet, Ozakom, the city council, the Transcaucasian Public Safety Committee, Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, SRs, Dashnaks, Socialist-Federalists, "the Bund", the Muslim democratic organizations, and the representatives of the all-Russian railroads, the post-telegraph, the cooperatives and the professional unions."

⁵¹¹ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 274, 279; David Marshall Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia* (NY: Grove Press, Inc., 1962), 120; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 191; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 191; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 173-174; "amier kavkasiis axali mtavroba (komisariati) (Transcaucasia's new government [commissariat), *saqartvelo* 254, (16 [29] November 1917); "kavkasiis komisariatის brdzaneba" (The decree of the Caucasian commissariat), *saqartvelo* 255 (18 November (1 December) 1917). See also G. Veshapeli, "amier-kavkasiis respublika" (The republic of Transcaucasia), *saqartvelo* 254, (16 [29] November 1917).

the “counter-revolutionary” Cossack and Mountaineer leaders.⁵¹² This pushed the Terek Cossack Krug to formalize the creation of the Terek Cossack Kraj the next day (12 November) and institute martial law within its borders.⁵¹³ The Mountaineers also declared autonomy in the form of the Provisional Mountain Government over 1-2 December 1917, and on 1 December the Provisional Mountain Government entered into a federal relationship with the Terek Cossack Krug in the Provisional Terek-Dagestani Government (TerDag).⁵¹⁴ The TerDag was envisaged as an interim government and promised to organize an oblast constituent assembly that would serve as the basis for a legitimate democratic order of governance.⁵¹⁵ In Daghestan, which remained part of the UAM, robberies and disorder waxed so bad that representatives from across the political spectrum (socialists, military, UAM, milli-komitet, oblast commissar) felt compelled to join forces to combat it.⁵¹⁶

In the Kuban oblast, the authorities reacted to the Bolshevik coup by instituting martial law and arresting Bolshevik leaders. Then, the Cossacks and out-of-towners held separate meetings on 1 November: the first session of the Kuban Kraj Legislative Rada and the Kuban Oblast’s First Inogorodnie Congress. The rada announced its rejection of Soviet power and the formation of a local government. Dominated by moderate socialists, the out-of-towner congress also refused to recognize the new Bolshevik government.⁵¹⁷ Then, on 12 November, the Cossacks and out-of-towners

⁵¹² Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 278.

⁵¹³ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 278-279; “tergis mxris konstitutsia” (The Terek region’s constitution), *saqartvelo* 262 (28 November [11 December] 1917).

⁵¹⁴ Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization”; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 306-308; T. Tabidze, “mtielta avtonomia” (The Mountaineers’ autonomy) and “daghestan-chechneti” (Daghestan-Chechnya), *saqartvelo* 270 (12 [25] December 1917).

For information about the territorial claims of the autonomous mountain government, see “mtielta avtonomiis teritoria” (The Mountaineers’ autonomy’s territory), *saqartvelo* 278 (21 December 1917 [3 January 1918]).

⁵¹⁵ “terg-daghestnis droebit mtavrobis deklaracia” (“Declaration of the Terek-Daghestan provisional government), *saqartvelo* 273 (15 [28] December 1917).

⁵¹⁶ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 252-254.

⁵¹⁷ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 287.

held a joint congress, forming the United Legislative Rada and choosing a mixed government, including one Circassian minister. The former mayor of Baku, Luka Bych, was made chairman.⁵¹⁸

Although Chairman Bych reported around this time that the Kuban oblast was relatively calm with only some agrarian disorders and individuals operating out of the law, by the end of the year and into early 1918, the Bolsheviks were propagandizing effectively in the rural areas and some of the out-of-towner settlements recognized the Sovnarkom and began demanding implementation of the Soviet “Decree on Land” of 26 October, which promised immediate gratification of “the people’s” demand for land.⁵¹⁹ In the Chernomorskaja gubernija, where the socialists were relatively stronger, the local population was even more radicalized. Even so, despite the Congress of Soviets of Chernomore (opened 6 December) recognizing Soviet power, Mensheviks, Right SRs and anarchists collectively outnumbered the Bolsheviks in this body.⁵²⁰ Meanwhile, as the culmination of the more conservative elements’ attempts to stabilize the situation in the North Caucasus, on 16 November the united government of the Southeastern Union was formally created in Ekaterinodar. Pshemakho Kotsev represented the Mountaineers in this government.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁸ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 287-288.

⁵¹⁹ Borisenko 1: 116, 118-119, 122-134; V.I. Lenin, “Report on Land” and the “Decree on Land” adopted by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies on 26 October [8 November] 1917, accessed 20 March 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/25-26/26d.htm>; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 288; “qubanis olqi” (Kuban olqi), *saqartvelo* 251 (12 [25] November 1917); Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, 242.

The “Decree on Land” abolished landed proprietorship and called for the seizure of all properties until the Constituent Assembly could make the final decision regarding their disposal.

Borisenko mentions that the older Cossacks wanted to stick with the ataman’s authority.

⁵²⁰ A. S. Puchentkov, “Antibolshevistskoe dvizhenie na Kubani v nachale grazhdanskoj vojny (nojabr 1917 g. – mart 1918 g.): k istorii otrjada generala V. L. Pokrovskogo” (The anti-Bolshevik movement on the Kuban at the start of the civil war [November 1917 – March 1918], *Novejšhaja istorija Rossii / Modern history of Russia*, no. 3 (2013): 101.

⁵²¹ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 289.

g. The Constituent Assembly elections

Despite the growing chaos, the main political forces in the Caucasus persisted in their hope that order could be restored in Russia through the Constituent Assembly, which the ascendant Bolsheviks and their allies promised to support. Elections were held in November, and the soldiers serving in the region were allowed to participate. In Transcaucasia, the vote count shows the balance of popular forces, with the Muslims, Georgians and Armenians roughly equal in strength but the first outnumbering each of the next. The RSDLP's socialist platform seems to have appealed broadly to Georgians although the party, dominated as it was by Georgian Mensheviks, may also have been seen as a kind of vehicle for Georgian national concerns. The Armenians stood mainly behind the Dashnaktsutun. Most of the east Transcaucasian Muslims backed the progressive liberal platform of the Turkic Party of Decentralization-Musavat party although there was a significant percentage of voters favoring socialist candidates. In general, although the SRs outnumbered the Bolsheviks, the combined force of the Bolsheviks and their allies among the Himmat, Ittihad, Muslim Socialist Bloc and Left-SRs still could not be ignored, especially considering the far-leftists' extremist tendency to reject the legitimacy of elections or consensus governance.⁵²²

The soldiers stationed in the Caucasus had a significant impact on the outcome of the elections in key areas. The data places the difference between Baku and its surrounding districts, full of workers and soldiers, and the rest of Transcaucasia in sharp relief. Taking the city of Baku and its surrounding districts together, the Bolsheviks won a majority, followed close behind by the Musavat-Federalists, Dashnaks and Socialists-Revolutionaries; whereas, in the city itself, the Dashnaks led (followed by the Musavat and Bolsheviks). The Bolsheviks' strong showing around the city was

⁵²² Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 108; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 178; "damfudznebel krebis archevnebi" (The Constituent Assembly elections), *saqartvelo* 261 (26 November [9 December] 1917); "damfudznebel krebis archevnebi" (The Constituent Assembly elections), *saqartvelo* 262 (28 November [11 December] 1917; "demfudzn. krebis archevnebis shedegi tbilisshi" (The result of the Contst. Assembly's elections in Tbilisi) and "damfudznebel krebis archevnebi" (Constituent Assembly elections), *saqartvelo* 264 (30 November [13 December] 1917); "damfudznebel krebis archevnebi" (The Constituent Assembly elections) and "damfudznebel krebis garshemo" (Around the Constituent Assembly), *saqartvelo* 268 (9 [22] December 1917).

thanks to the soldiers' (and criminals') vote.⁵²³ These Russian soldiers must be seen as strangers to the Caucasus who upset the local balance of interests, however much local politicians may have wanted to count their votes as fellow citizens of the future Russian republic.⁵²⁴ In the Terek oblast, the radicalized soldiers certainly influenced the outcome of the elections to local soviet bodies, e.g., the Groznyj Rajon Central Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which shifted abruptly to the far left. Bolshevik influence was also starting to gain inroads among the Ossetians around this time thanks to the work of the pro-Bolshevik radical socialist Kermen Party, formed in mid-October.⁵²⁵

h. Ethnic feuds in the Terek oblast

After the October coup, the land conflict between the Cossacks of the Sunzha Line and Ingush worsened in the Terek oblast. The Ingush wanted land back from the "conquering" Cossacks, while the Cossacks were angered by the raids of uncontrollable elements, like robbers and bandits, and took out their aggravation and fears of losing their land on innocent villagers.⁵²⁶ Attacks and counterattacks continued through mid-November when Kuban Cossacks offered their service of mediation. However, the main national leaders continued to show their intention to assuage ethnic tensions. At a meeting on 20 November, the Terek Cossack Ataman Karaulov and the Ingush politician Vassan-Girej Dzhabagiev were involved in working out a peace agreement, signed between the two sides on 22 November. This act is a clear demonstration of the Cossack and native leaders' strong wish to keep the peace between their

⁵²³ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 176-177.

According to Suny, "The Bolsheviks, it is interesting to note, did very well in the "prisoners'" vote, winning 186 votes out of 198 cast."

⁵²⁴ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 111.

Hovannisian comes to a similar conclusion, writing, "Even the most ardent devotees of Lenin were forced to admit that, outside the ranks of the Russian Army and part of the Baku proletariat, Transcaucasia was decidedly anti-Bolshevik."

⁵²⁵ Borisenko 2: 48-50; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 299-300.

⁵²⁶ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 291-292.

constituencies.⁵²⁷ Unfortunately, a contingent of Cossacks became upset with the ataman for trying to find a peaceful solution to the conflict with the North Caucasians and condemned the formation of the Southeastern Union since the Mountaineers had been included in it. This group of rebellious Cossacks now turned to the Bolsheviks in search of allies with whom to prosecute a war of aggression against the natives.⁵²⁸

i. *Bolsheviks rising and radicalized soldiers*

The Bolsheviks had long abandoned any pretense of bringing about the revolution through peaceful means. According to Stalin's speech at the Sixth Congress of the RSDLP Bolsheviks (26 July-3 August 1917), the time had come for the Bolsheviks to switch tactics from calling for the "peaceful transfer of power to the Soviets" to forcibly overthrowing "the existing dictatorship...of the imperialist bourgeoisie"—among whom they included the "collaborationist" Mensheviks and Right SRs—through the mobilization of the proletariat and poorest peasants.⁵²⁹ In the Caucasus, the Bolsheviks took Stalin's urging as their cue to start organizing a fight for power.⁵³⁰ As evidence of their consistent regional outlook, the Bolsheviks in Transcaucasia considered it a first order of business to bring all the disconnected party organizations in the southern and northern Caucasus under the control of a common regional organization, and they announced the scheduled congress in their paper *Kavkazskij rabochij* (Caucasian worker).⁵³¹

⁵²⁷ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 293-296.

⁵²⁸ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 313-314.

⁵²⁹ Ivanidze, K. *Pervyj kraevoj ŝezd Bol'shevistskix organizatsij Kavkaza* (The Caucasian Bolshevik organizations' first regional congress) (Izdatel'stvo Sabçhota Sakartvelo, Tbilisi: 1969, 42-43, 73; J. V. Stalin, "Speech Delivered at the Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P (Bolsheviks)" on 26 July – 3 August 1917, accessed 20 March 2022, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1917/07/26_2.htm).

⁵³⁰ Ivanidze, *The Caucasian Bolshevik organizations' first regional congress*, 10-11.

⁵³¹ Ivanidze, *The Caucasian Bolshevik organizations' first regional congress*, 12-16.

The First Regional Congress of Bolshevik Organizations in the Caucasus opened on 2 October in Tiflis.⁵³² From the North Caucasus, however, only Ekaterinodar was represented. Representatives of Vladikavkaz and Groznyj could not come, likely due to a shortage of funds.⁵³³ Ultimately, the congress passed a resolution to participate in the elections to the Constituent Assembly.⁵³⁴ It also passed a resolution on the national question which demanded the formation of a regional autonomy for the Caucasus, with its own *sejm* (i.e., a legislative body) and broad local self-government on the basis of new administrative-economic districts, wording which rejected the possibility of districts based on the ethno-national principle. While recognizing in words the right of the nations to separation from Russia in principle, it yet warned the Caucasian nations not to take this step in practice.⁵³⁵ Finally, in its resolution on the agrarian question, the congress argued that this issue could not be solved without the Soviets taking power and it demanded the nationalization of all land, to be turned over to the people.⁵³⁶ S. G. Shaumjan and ten others were elected to the RSDLP (B) Regional Committee.⁵³⁷ At the end of the congress, which lasted five days, S. G. Shaumjan rushed off to agitate among the soldiers.⁵³⁸

After their comrades' seizure of power in Petrograd on 25-26 October, the Bolsheviks in the Caucasus grew even bolder. Along with the declaration on the rights of Russia's peoples (2 November 1917) and the decree on land (26 October 1917), another of the new Soviet power's first decrees was the "Decree on Peace" of 26

⁵³² Ivanidze, *The Caucasian Bolshevik organizations' first regional congress*, 20.

⁵³³ Ivanidze, *The Caucasian Bolshevik organizations' first regional congress*, 22-23.

⁵³⁴ Ivanidze, *The Caucasian Bolshevik organizations' first regional congress*, 49.

⁵³⁵ Ivanidze, *The Caucasian Bolshevik organizations' first regional congress*, 67.

⁵³⁶ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 85-86; Ivanidze, *The Caucasian Bolshevik organizations' first regional congress*, 70.

⁵³⁷ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 86; Ivanidze, *The Caucasian Bolshevik organizations' first regional congress*, 77.

⁵³⁸ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 86.

October, which proposed to all belligerent parties stopping military operations at least long enough to negotiate a peace.⁵³⁹ The Bolsheviks' promises of land and peace reached poor and weary soldiers thanks to the Bolsheviks' aggressive agitation and encouraged further desertion and rebellion against the authorities.⁵⁴⁰ In Transcaucasia, as shown in the summer in the affair surrounding the Kerensky offensive and Tiflis Soviet, the Bolsheviks' small numbers did not stop them from having a sway over significant numbers of armed soldiers. It is thus because the increasingly defiant soldiers were controlling the Tiflis Arsenal with its large stock of military supplies that in late November the Georgian Mensheviks executed a plan to capture this arsenal, dealing a decisive blow to the Bolsheviks in Tiflis.⁵⁴¹

As mentioned above, the Bolsheviks were particularly influential in Baku, where by October they had emerged as a numerically small but politically potent force.⁵⁴² After the October coup they continued to lead the local soviet and get their way with the дума though they still lacked the strength or position to take over fully.⁵⁴³ Furthermore, despite their strong showing in the elections to the Constituent Assembly,

⁵³⁹ V.I. Lenin, "Report on Peace," Adopted by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, 26 October 1917, accessed 20 March 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/25-26/26b.htm>; Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, 242-242.

⁵⁴⁰ Raenko, *Chronicle*, 6-9; "tbilisel bolshevikების აჯანყების ამბები" (The news of the Tbilisi Bolsheviks' uprising), *saqartvelo* 268 (9 [22] December 1917).

⁵⁴¹ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 254-256, 279-280; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 188-190; "tbilisel bolshevikების აჯანყების ამბები" (The news about the Tbilisi Bolsheviks' uprising), *saqartvelo* 268 (9 [22] December 1917); "bolshevikების ბნელი საკმანობა" (The Bolsheviks' shady business), *ertoba* 209 (30 November 1917); "tflisis m. da j.-k. sabch'os aghm. komitetisagan biuleteni" (The bulletin from the Tiflis's w. and soldiers' soviet's exec. committee), *ertoba* 210 (1 December 1917).

Compare with Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 179. Suny says that in the elections to the Constituent Assembly in November the SRs actually had a greater influence over the soldiers on the Caucasus Front than the Bolsheviks. However, he continues, "The vote on the Caucasian Front had no effect on the soldiers' 'voting with their feet' in November and December by demobilizing and drifting northward."

⁵⁴² Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 152-163, 166-170.

Led by Shaumjan, not only did they sway soviet and city politics but also enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of the soldiers in the city garrison. Furthermore, after the moderate socialists walked out of the soviet, the Bolsheviks formed a new one comprised of supportive left radicals. At this time the Bolsheviks also enjoyed the sympathy of the Musavat party, sailors and others in Baku.

⁵⁴³ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 180-182.

the Baku Bolsheviks were surrounded by unsympathetic neighbors. As early as 21 November, it was reported in the Georgian paper *chveni qveqana* (Our country) that the Cossacks in the North Caucasus were threatening to cut off bread shipments to Transcaucasia if the Zavkom dared to help the Bolsheviks, and the paper claimed that this had caused the Bolsheviks in Baku to abort an uprising they were allegedly planning, fearing too greatly now to seize power.⁵⁴⁴ As Tiflis proved hesitant to challenge the Cossacks by helping supply the rapidly Bolshevikizing city of Baku with bread, on 24 November the Baku Soviet decided to send its own delegation to Groznyj, allegedly to mediate between the native population in Chechnya and the urban workers and soldiers in Groznyj but clearly with the aim of securing access to grain shipments.⁵⁴⁵

This decision coincided with the outbreak of violence perpetuated by out-of-towners in Groznyj. On 24 November a crowd emboldened by armed soldiers attacked a train sent to aid the Mountaineers' efforts to stop brigandage. This developed into clashes between soldiers and Chechens on the following night, the disarming of the Russian regiment on the 28th and the evacuation of the city by many out-of-towners on the 28th and 29th.⁵⁴⁶ Soon, the Baku Soviet was also sending aid and a military force.⁵⁴⁷ On 29 November *ertoba* reported that Baku had sent five hundred soldiers to help defend the station Gudermes (against the natives) and that only half of them had made it to their destination.⁵⁴⁸ This move looks like an obvious attempt to link up with the pro-Soviet forces in the industrialized cities of the North Caucasus as a counterbalance

⁵⁴⁴ Vasil masxulia, "chrdiloet kavkasiis qazaxebi" (The Cossacks of the North Caucasus), *chveni qveqana* 181 (21 November [3 December] 1917).

⁵⁴⁵ "ra xdeba chrdilo kavkasiashi" (What's happening in the North Caucasus), *ertoba* 208 (29 November 1917); "chrdilo kavkasiis amgebis gamo" (Because of the events in the North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 266 (2 [15] December 1917); Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 183-184.

⁵⁴⁶ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 302-304.
These were reserve units.

⁵⁴⁷ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 183-185.

⁵⁴⁸ "ra xdeba chrdilo kavkasiashi" (What's happening in the North Caucasus), *ertoba* 208 (29 November 1917).

to the anti-Soviet mood of most of the rest of the region: the Zavkom cooperating with the native gortsy and Cossack leadership.⁵⁴⁹

Indicative of the growing split between the region's conservatives and moderates hoping to preserve order and the radicalized elements seeking to challenge them, the Terek Cossack and Mountaineer leaders continued working together against the "anarchic" elements (for example, the Chechens demanded the out-of-towners surrender all weapons to the Cossacks) while the rebellious Cossack group called the "War Party" (which had already shown its head in the conflict with the Ingush) started recruiting Bolsheviks and radicalized soldiers and deserters to help them in their anticipated fight against the natives.⁵⁵⁰ The split between the conservative and moderate elements and the radical leftists had taken on a clear regional dimension.

j. *Calling again for a common front*

In late November, the Georgian political leaders finally convened a Georgian National Congress. In his speech on the first day of the congress, 19 November, Noe Zhordania emphasized the mortal danger little Georgia found itself in living along the Caucasus Front.⁵⁵¹ Nevertheless, the centralist Zhordania insisted in his speech on the second day that even though Russia had insulted Georgia repeatedly since annexing it and implied that the condition of internal self-government had been violated, he still considered the annexation to have been an historically necessary step and expressed the view that Russia's central power had to be restored. Meanwhile, he said, a legitimate Transcaucasian government should be created. The Transcaucasian Sejm should have national sections and the Georgian nation could have internal self-government, its own administration, court system and army, as well as a temporary national council. His

⁵⁴⁹ Compare with Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 183-187.

⁵⁵⁰ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 314-416.

⁵⁵¹ "saqartvelos erovnuli qriloba" (Georgia's national congress), *saqartvelo* 257 (21 November [4 December] 1917).

demand for a national army was met with fervent applause.⁵⁵² On the congress's fourth day, the membership of the national council was decided and a resolution passed calling for the placement of the Georgian national units under the control of the Georgian National Council.⁵⁵³ The Georgian National Council met for the first time on 26 November and elected a fifteen-member executive committee.⁵⁵⁴

Reported on at the same time as the proceedings of the Georgian National Congress were the results of the Conference of the Muslims National Committees held in Baku. The Muslim representatives made it clear that they were waiting for the agreement of their neighbor nations to realize the federalist principle in Transcaucasia and that they hoped this would be a step towards creating a regional unification which would ultimately include the North Caucasian Mountaineers. In light of the deteriorating security situation and advertised right for the nationalities to self-government, the congress also called for immediate preparations for the convening of a sovereign Muslim National Council, which should include representatives from the "Transcaucasian Tatars" and "Transcaucasia's united Mountaineers", and entrusted this task to the Transcaucasian Muslims Central Committee.⁵⁵⁵ In what was soon to become

⁵⁵² Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 260-261; "saqartvelos erovnuli qriloba" (Georgia's national congress), *saqartvelo* 258 (23 November [6 December] 1917).

⁵⁵³ "reszoliuciebi, mighebuli qartuli erovnul qrilobaze" (Resolutions, adopted at Georgia's national congress) and "qartuli erovnuli qriloba" (The Georgian national assembly), *ertoba* 205 (25 November 1917); "saqartvelos erovnul sabch'os shemadgenloba" (The composition of the Georgian national council), *ertoba* 206 (26 November 1917); "V Tiflise, Natsionalnyj sovet Gruzii" (In Tiflis, Georgia's National council), *Kavkaz* 20 (263) (25 November 1917; "saqartvelos erovnuli qriloba" (Georgia's national congress), *saqartvelo* 260 (25 November [8 December] 1917).

⁵⁵⁴ "saqartvelos erovnul sabch'oshi" (In Georgia's national council), *ertoba* 207 (28 November 1917).

⁵⁵⁵ "mahmadiana erovnul komitetebis konferencia baqoshi" (The Muslims' national committees' conference in Baku), *saqartvelo* 260 (25 November [8 October] 1917).

The text says, "მაჰმადიანთა დამფუძნებელ ყრილობა დასწრებიან ამიერ კავკასიის ტატრები და ამიერ კავკასიის გაერთიანებული მთიელთა წარმომადგენლები." "The Muslims Constituent Assembly will be comprised of Transcaucasia's Tatars and Transcaucasia's United Mountaineers' representatives."

If "amier" is a typographical error, it could have meant representatives from the North Caucasus United Mountaineers, but since Daghestan was technically considered part of Transcaucasia, it could have meant those delegates.

See also, Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 103. According to Swietochowski, "The situation [SS: in Baku] deteriorated further with the outbreak of an anti-Bolshevik rebellion in Daghestan, an even that cut off Baku from its regular supplier or grain, the northern Caucasus. While the Baku Soviet was

Azerbaijan, the leadership started with some delay to build a national corps based on a returned Native Cavalry regiment, the recruitment of Russian Army officers and the training of native officers. Denied the needed weapons by Army and Soviet authorities, Azerbaijani soldiers eventually seized a great many at the Shamkor railway station in January 1918.⁵⁵⁶

Not long before, in late October, the Dashnaktsutun had also issued statements stressing the existential peril facing Armenia and the whole Caucasus and the need for a national armed force.⁵⁵⁷ And on 30 November, right after the Georgian Mensheviks seized the Tiflis Arsenal, the Russian Commander in Chief of the Caucasus Front, General Mixail A. Przhevalskij, finally authorized the formation of an Armenian national corps. As the popular forces were being mobilized, the Armenian general Andranik appealed to the Georgians and Muslims to join the Armenians in the struggle against the Ottoman Turks.⁵⁵⁸ After the Georgians were likewise authorized to form a

dispatching a military expedition against the Ter-Daghestani regime in Vladikavkaz, the Musavat was hailing the Daghestani Mountaineers as allies in the struggle for autonomy. The regional conference of Muslim organizations that met in Baku on December 9-12 expressed its solidarity with the Daghestanis by calling for a joint national assembly of Transcaucasian Turks and Caucasian Mountaineers.”

⁵⁵⁶ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 115; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 112-113; “mahmadiana samxedro qriloba” (The Muslims’ military assembly), *saqartvelo* 282 (29 December 1917 [11 January 1918]); “mahmadiana lashqari” (The Muslim’s army), *saqartvelo* 281 (24 December 1917 [6 January 1918]).

“The Transcaucasian Commissariat approved the draft project for the founding of the Muslims’ corps.”

„ამიერ-კავკასიის კომისარიატმა დაამტკიცა პროექტი დებულებისა მუსულმანთა კორპუსის მოწყობის შესახებ.“

⁵⁵⁷ “somxebis tavadcva” (The Armenians’ self-defense), *saqartvelo* 235 (25 October [7 November] 1917).

⁵⁵⁸ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 113-116; G. Korganoff, *La participation des Arméniens à la Première Guerre mondiale sur le front du Caucase* (1914-1918) (Massis: Paris, 1927), 78; “qronika, somxebis erovnuli jari, somex mastsavlebelta dadgenileba” (Chronicle, the Armenians’ national army, the decree of the Armenian teachers), *saqartvelo* 278 (21 December 1917 [3 January 1918]); “somexta erovnuli sabchosh motsodeba” (The appeal of the Armenian National Council), *saqartvelo* 278 (21 December 1917 [3 January 1918]); “somexta erovnuli mobilizacia” (The Armenians’ national mobilization), *saqartvelo* 281 (24 December 1917 [6 January 1918]); “somexta erovnuli mobilizacia, andranikas motsodeba” (The Armenians’ national mobilization, Andranik’s appeal), *saqartvelo* 282 (29 December 1917 [11 January 1918]); “mahmadiana samxedro qriloba” (The Muslims’ military assembly), *saqartvelo* 282 (29 December 1917 [11 January 1918]). The Armenian representative to the Muslims’ military assembly reminded the audience that the Muslims and Armenians were accustomed to respecting each other.

national force, the Georgian poet Tician Tabidze was found urging in *saqartvelo* that all the Caucasian nations form a united defense front.⁵⁵⁹ Meanwhile, as of 10 December the North Caucasian Mountaineers were reported as busy organizing their militia.⁵⁶⁰

According to Firuz Kazemzadeh, after the Bolshevik coup, the Transcaucasian leaders set up a Military Council of Nationalities to coordinate the Georgian, Armenian and Muslim (Azerbaijani) forces. Meanwhile, although a Russian general remained formally in charge of the front, the Zavkom placed its confidence in the Georgian General Odishelidze, the Commander of the Caucasus Army.⁵⁶¹ Throughout this process of forming national military forces, the Zavkom was also prudently directing its energy towards making a peace with the Ottomans on the Caucasus Front.⁵⁶² These efforts were crystallized in the Armistice of Erzincan which was concluded between the Zavkom and the Ottomans on 5 (18) December 1917.⁵⁶³ Although the Brest-Litovsk

⁵⁵⁹ William Edward David Allen and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 193), 462; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 115; T. Tabidze, “mtielta avtonomia” (The Mountaineers’ autonomy), *saqartvelo* 270 (12 [25] December 1917).

⁵⁶⁰ “mtielta milicia” (The Mountaineers’ militia), *saqartvelo* 269 (10 [23] December 1917); Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 113.

⁵⁶¹ Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, 462; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 82-83; Korganoff, *La participation des Arméniens*, 90; Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 202; “samxedro dekreti, kavkasiis frontze samxedro samsaxuris axal pirobebis shesaxeb (mighebulia amier-kavkasiis komisariatis mier qristeshobistvis 18-s” (Military decree about the new conditions for military service on the front [adopted by the Transcaucasian Commissariat on the 18th), *saqartvelo* 279 (22 December 1917 [4 January 1918]).

This decree mentions that it was still unclear how the peace would work out and indicates that the Zavkom had some loose control over the coordination of the national units now taking over the defense of the frontier.

⁵⁶² “Pervaja deklaratsija Zakavkazskago Kommisariata k narodam Zakavkazja, 18 Nojabrja 1917” (The first declaration of the Transcaucasian Commissariat to the peoples of Transcaucasia” of 18 November 1917) and “Vypiska iz zhurnala zasedanija Zakavkazskago Komissariata 21 nojabrja (4 dekabrja) 1917 goda” (Report from the journal of the session of the Transcaucasian Commissariat of 21 November [4 December] 1917) in *Dokumenty i materjaly po vneshnej politike Zakavkazja i Gruzii* (Documents and materials on the foreign policy of Transcaucasia and Georgia) (Tiflis: Tipografija Praviteľstva Gruzinskoy Respubliki, 1919), 8-12.

⁵⁶³ Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, 458; “Armistice, Concluded at Brest-Litovsk, 15 December 1917” in *Texts of the Russian Peace* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918); Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 109-110; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 82; Korganoff, *La participation des Arméniens*, 79; Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 101; “Text

Armistice (2 December) between the Soviets and the Central Powers, the Erzincan Armistice and, soon, the Soviet Decree “On Turkish Armenia” meant a formal cessation of hostilities, the situation on the frontier would remain tense into 1918.⁵⁶⁴

k. *The Bolsheviks’ regional operations*

According to the Armenian Colonel Gabriel Korganoff, the signing of the Erzincan Armistice (5 December) gave even more Russian soldiers an excuse to abandon the front.⁵⁶⁵ As the front evaporated and the Caucasian Bolsheviks now sought to capitalize on the situation by capturing the army’s radicalized forces.⁵⁶⁶ This was rapidly done.⁵⁶⁷ Not long after the Baku Soviet’s failed attempt to help the Groznyj Soviet against native North Caucasians, a Bolshevik majority among the soldiers, verbally attacking the Zavkom, won control of the Second Regional Congress of the Caucasus Army held in Tiflis in mid-December (10-23 December) and its regional soviet.⁵⁶⁸ One of the

peremirija (Telegramma po korpusam Kavkazskoj armii)” (Text of the armistice [Telegram to the corps of the Caucasus Army] in *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 18-21; Wade, *The Russian Revolution*, 255.

The Erzincan Armistice was signed right after the Brest-Litovsk Armistice was signed (2 December 1917) between Russia’s Soviet government and the Central Powers. Hovannisian says that the Zavkom sent General Vyshinkij to talk to the Ottomans. Kazemzadeh says a small Transcaucasian delegation went to Erzincan to discuss the armistice. Korganoff says the armistice was concluded between the Turks and the Transcaucasian Commissariat with General Przhevalskij’s complete accord. Lang says it was signed by the Turkish Commander Vehib Pasha and General Przhevalskij. Allen and Muratoff write that the Brest-Litovsk Armistice between the Soviets and the Central Powers was concluded on 28 December 1917 and then the Transcaucasian Commissariat had no choice but to follow suit with the Erzincan Armistice. They have mixed up the date.

⁵⁶⁴ Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, 459-462; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 121-122; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 85-86; Korganoff, *La participation des Arméniens*, 91-92; Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 201-202; Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 106.

⁵⁶⁵ Korganoff, *La participation des Arméniens*, 80.

⁵⁶⁶ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 60-61.

⁵⁶⁷ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 110. Hovannisian writes that there were about half a million Russian soldiers in the Caucasus as of late October 1917 and only a few thousand were left by early spring 1918.

⁵⁶⁸ “kavkasiis lashqris me-2 qriloba” (The Second Congress of the Caucasus Army), *saqartvelo* 278 (21 December 1917 [3 January 1918]); “Vozzvanie k soldatam Kraevogo Soveta Kavkazskoj armii, izbrannogo na II-m šezde” (Appeal of the Regional Soviet of the Caucasian Army elected at the second congress, to the soldiers) in Sef, *The 1917 Revolution*, 353-354; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 61-62; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 185.

congress's main initiatives was to blame the growing disorder in the North Caucasus on the "counter-revolutionary" activities of the Cossack leaders and UAM (allegedly exchanging bread for weapons with the Zavkom) and resolve to send their forces into the region to pacify it (since the "nationalist" Zhordania allegedly refused to do so).⁵⁶⁹ However, the moderate socialist leaders managed to create their own regional soviet for the army and drive their far-left rivals out of Tiflis to Baku.⁵⁷⁰

In the last months of 1917, the masses of Russian soldiers abandoning the front passed through Transcaucasia, sometimes urged on by the local authorities, and poured into the North Caucasus. They came mainly by way of sea to the Chernomorskaja gubernija or by way of train via Baku and Daghestan to the Terek, Kuban and Stavropol districts. As a result, the Cossacks and Mountaineers were forced to deal with shell-shocked, land-hungry soldiers pouring into their lands, treating natives like the enemy and upsetting the traditional generational order among the Cossacks.⁵⁷¹ In the Terek oblast, when the Cossack "War Party" began recruiting the soldiers for their anticipated assault upon the natives, this disrupted the delicate balance of forces that Ataman Karaulov and Mountaineer leaders had been trying so hard to maintain. A most tragic incident occurred on 13 December when a group of soldiers attacked the train on which the ataman was travelling and murdered him, depriving the oblast of one of its most

According to the "Appeal" reprinted in Sef, the congress closed on 23 December; according to the article in *saqartvelo*, there was a session held on 13 December.

⁵⁶⁹ G. Alikberov, *Revoljutsija i grazhdanskaja vojna v Dagestane, xronika vazhnejshix sobytij (1917-1921 gg.)* (The revolution and civil war in Daghestan, chronicle of the most important events [1917-1921]) (Makhachkala: Dagestanskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1962), 46; "Resoljutsija 2-go Kraevogo šezda Kavkazskoj armii o položenii del na Severnom Kavkaze" (Resolution of the 2nd Regional congress of the Caucasian Army about the state of affairs in the North Caucasus) in Sef, *The 1917 Revolution*, 1917, 351-352; "kavkasiis lashqris me-2 qriloba" (The Second Congress of the Caucasus Army), *saqartvelo* 278 (21 December 1917 [3 January 1918]); "mdgomareoba chrdilokavkasiashi" (The situation in the North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 279 (22 December 1917 [4 January 1918]).

⁵⁷⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 111.

⁵⁷¹ Borisenko 1: 133; "demobilizacia kavkasiashi" (Demobilization in the Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 279 (22 December 1917 [4 January 1918]); Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 60-61, 82-83; Korganoff, *La participation des Arméniens*, 86; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 56-57; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 296-299; Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 102.

dedicated peacemakers.⁵⁷² Then, on 27 December, Cossacks in Groznyj, backed by Bolsheviks, shot the important Chechen shaikh Deni Arsanov in the back as he was leaving the town after coming in hopes of negotiating a peace.⁵⁷³ These disruptive acts paved the way for ethnic conflict “in defense of the revolution”, that is to say, over land claims, in the Terek.

Meanwhile, on the Kuban, the United Congress of Cossacks and Inogorodnie convened on 14 December. However, as soon as it was announced that the Ataman Karaulov had been murdered the day before, the left-wing members of the congress, which included Bolsheviks, Left-SRs and anarchists from among the out-of-towners and poor Cossacks, walked out, with some of them boldly declaring that they welcomed his death. Meeting separately, the far-leftist assembly voted (406 to 180) in favor of the Bolshevik resolution to support the Russian Sovnarkom and fight the “counter-revolution,” including the Kuban oblast government. The radical congress also elected its own sovnrakom and initiated plans to convene a congress (based on universal, equal and secret elections) in early 1918.⁵⁷⁴ By contrast, the moderate socialists (Mensheviks and Right-SRs) among the out-of-towners remained in the congress and formed with the Cossacks a joint commission, passing the decision to let the Constituent Assembly give the final answers on the governance of the kraj and whether or not it should have a federative relationship to the Russian center.⁵⁷⁵

If the conservatives and moderates were hanging on by a thread in the Kuban, the arrival of the radicalized soldiers placed further strain on the balance of power. In mid-November an entire division left the Caucasus Front and, after terrorizing Muslims in eastern Transcaucasia, forced railway workers to haul them into Daghestan and the North Caucasus. The Terek Cossack leadership was occupied on the Sunzha Line and

⁵⁷² Haïdar Bammate, *The Caucasus Problem: Questions Concerning Circassia and Daghestan* (Berne: 1919), 23-24; P. Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization”; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 316-317; Reynolds, “Native Sons,” 227.

⁵⁷³ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 320.

⁵⁷⁴ Borisenko 1: 120-123; Raenko, *Chronicle*, 109.

⁵⁷⁵ Borisenko 1: 123.

could not do anything to stop the train, and the UAM was reluctant to take on the division alone without Cossack backing, fearing it would fan the flame of interethnic tension. Unable to rely on anyone further east for help, the Kuban Cossack leadership then tried hard to organize forces to stop the division, which consisted of many out-of-towners from the Kuban and Stavropol, before it could reach its final destinations in these districts. However, the Cossack leaders could not convince enough rank-and-file Cossacks to support them, and once the division reached the Kuban, it would come to play a key role in the rise of Bolshevism in the oblast.⁵⁷⁶

It should be noted that the Bolsheviks' regional strategy and organizational vision is once again evident in their organizational patterns and decrees from this moment. First, on 16 December, the RSFSR Sovnarkom under Lenin's chairmanship put the Armenian Bolshevik Stepan Shaumjan in charge of "regional operations" in the Caucasus.⁵⁷⁷ Second, after the Bolsheviks walked out of the Second Caucasian Regional Congress of Workers' Deputies convened on 19 December, denouncing the Zavkom, they immediately set up their replacement body—the Congress of Eastern Transcaucasian and North Caucasian Soviets.⁵⁷⁸ Third, the Russian Sovnarkom decree "On Turkish Armenia" of 29 December 1917 describes Shaumjan as the Soviets' "Extraordinary Commissar" for the "whole Caucasus" when charging him with organizing the withdrawal of Russian troops from Turkish Armenia and managing refugee flows.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁶ Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 297-298, 348.

⁵⁷⁷ Alikberov, *The Revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 46-47.

⁵⁷⁸ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 62; "mushata deputatebis kreba" (The Workers' Deputies Congress), *saqartvelo* 279 (22 December 1917 [4 January 1918]). According to the article in *saqartvelo*, the congress opened on 19 December.

⁵⁷⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 98-101; "Sovnarkom Decree on Turkish Armenia" of 29 December 1917, accessed 7 February 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/events/revolution/documents/1917/12/29b.htm>. This decree also allowed for the formation of an Armenia national militia.

1. *Zemstvo tensions in Transcaucasia*

In Transcaucasia, the repeated calls for unity in defending the Caucasus Front had been sounded against a backdrop of bitter disagreements over how to redraw the borders for the proposed self-governing administrative units. In mid-October, the Russian Interior Ministry had instructed the Ozakom to move forward with the introduction of zemstvo in non-contested areas.⁵⁸⁰ Then, on 15 October Chxenkeli chaired an Ozakom session where the majority of the representatives voted to comply with this instruction. The Dashnak representatives, however, were disappointed in this result and announced their refusal to participate in any further discussions on the matter.⁵⁸¹ At this time, the Dashnaksutun also accused the Georgian Mensheviks of covert nationalism and of sending the National Democrats like Giorgi Gvazava to fill in for them at the zemstvo meetings in Petrograd and Tbilisi in order to do their dirty work, so to speak, of keeping Lori and Axalqalaqi in Georgia and of ostracizing the Armenians from political life in Transcaucasia.⁵⁸² In any case, the resolution could not be carried out since the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd on 25-26 October and the Ozakom was replaced by the Zavkom on 9 November. On 1 December, however, the Zavkom took its turn at trying to push through with the reform, issuing an analogous decree for the introduction of the zemstvo system in non-disputed areas. But the Dashnaks protested this decree too, calling it an insult to Armenian democracy since all the contested areas involved Armenians.⁵⁸³ The territorial disputes over administrative boundaries left unresolved in

⁵⁸⁰ “tbilisi da somxebi” (Tbilisi and the Armenians), *saqartvelo* 204 (17 [30] September 1917); “kavkasiis gadamijvna da eroba” (Redrawing boundaries and zemstvo of the Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 205 (19 September [2 October] 1917).

⁵⁸¹ Imranli-Lowe, “The Provisional Government and the Armenian Homeland Project,” 145-146; “saerobo tatbiri” (Zemstvo meeting), *saqartvelo* 228 (17 [30] October 1917); “eroba da somxebi” (Zemstvo and the Armenians), *saqartvelo* 229 (18 [31] October 1917).

⁵⁸² “somxuri presa, somxebi da qartveli social-demokratia (The Armenian press, Armenians and the Georgian Social Democrats), *saqartvelo* 231 (20 October 1917); “somxuri presa, somxebi da qartveli socialdemokratia” (The Armenian press, Armenians and Georgian Social Democrats), *saqartvelo* 235 (25 October [7 November] 1917).

⁵⁸³ Imranli-Lowe, “The Provisional Government and the Armenian Homeland Project,” 146; “somxuri presa, somxebi da komisariat’s dekreti erobis shesaxeb” (The Armenian press, Armenians and the commissariat’s decree about zemstvo), *saqartvelo* 267 (3 December 1917).

1917 would lead to ethnic conflict between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis and a war over contested zones between the Armenian and Georgian republics, after they were established in 1918.⁵⁸⁴

The exuberant hopes entertained by many Caucasians in spring 1917 that the demise of the Russian autocracy would allow them to finally live with each other and Russia's other nationalities, including the Russians, in peace, together enjoying the fruits of democracy and a fresh prosperity brought about through the equalization of the economic disparity created by the old regime, had come crashing down by winter. Throughout the year, the Caucasian political leaders repeatedly demonstrated their intention to remain a part of the new Russia they envisaged as a republic that would serve as the guarantee of their common security in a world wracked by war and the framework within which they could realize their long-held dream for a free society (one some believed would even serve as a model for the rest of the world). As highlighted in this chapter, the main political and intellectual leaders in the Caucasus also displayed a persistent recognition of their regional context, a fact reflected in the governmental-administrative and organizational structures they created and in the contours of their political debates.

As the Russian Revolution failed to live up to its promises, however, with the Provisional Government proving weak and political society in Russia itself fracturing over the course of the year, the Caucasian leaders found it increasingly difficult to stay connected to the center while holding their own regional and respective national societies together. Like in Russia as a whole, Caucasian political society was divided across several axes: up-down on the issue of centralism-decentralism with regard to the national question, right-left on the agrarian (social-economic) question and to-and-fro, pulling together or apart depending on historical factors or whether their concrete interests like territorial claims or security concerns coincided or clashed. While most Caucasian leaders tried to keep their multi-layered regional society united with Russia and internally cohesive until all the contentious issues of the day could be resolved through a democratic process, the apex of which was expected to be the All-Russian

⁵⁸⁴ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 155-156, 174-180.

Constituent Assembly, by the end of 1917 the combined pressures of the opposing forces on each ideological axis, the lack of a legitimate central authority in Russia and the deteriorating local security environment threatened to send the region spiraling out of control

IV. 1918: BETWIXT THE CENTRAL POWERS AND SOVIETS

In 1918 the national-regional question was decided for the Caucasus at the all-Russian level when force of circumstance brought about the extreme decentralist solution of the separation from Russia of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR) in April and the North Caucasian Mountain Republic in early May. Although the Mountain Republic planned to join the TDFR in an enlarged regional confederation, Ottoman aggression facilitated the TDFR's further decentralization by pushing Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to create independent national republics in late May. Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks and the soviets they dominated opposed these "separatist" developments and directed their efforts towards bringing the whole Caucasus back into Soviet Russia. As the Bolsheviks tightened their grip over much of the North Caucasus and Baku, they used these places as bases wherefrom to attempt expansion through the rest of the region, mainly by attempting to promote peasant rebellions in Abkhazia and parts of Transcaucasia.

Opposing the Soviets were the representatives of the emergent Mountaineer, Azerbaijani and Georgian republics, who fought hard to keep and push them out, and there was no significant Bolshevik presence in Armenia.⁵⁸⁵ Although the Muslims and Georgians could rely on the Central Powers' support over the year, the Armenians were stuck dealing with the belligerent Ottomans and struggling to set up their state in desperate conditions. Then, in the late fall of 1918, the Central Powers lost the First World War to the Allies, who now came to establish their authoritative presence, mainly in the face of the British, in the Caucasus region. The Allies' arrival coincided with the entrance of Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak onto the political scene in Siberia and the rise of General Anton Denikin's Volunteer Army in southern Russia; and overall the Western powers supported these "White" forces against the Soviet "Reds".⁵⁸⁶ In late

⁵⁸⁵ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 217.

⁵⁸⁶ Peter Kenez, *Red Attack White Resistance: Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, (USA: New Academia Publishing, 2004), 194-195, 255-266.

The Caucasian press would sometimes refer to the "Whites" as "Black forces."

1918, however, as Denikin's Volunteer Army gained strength in southern Russia and the northwest Caucasus, setting its sights on restoring the whole region to an indivisible Russia, the British Command in Baku was urging support for the creation an independent Caucasian buffer state including Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus, asserting that the creation of such a regional state would both please the locals and serve British interests.

A. Constituent Assembly lost

In 1917 the residents of the Caucasus had been buoyed up by the idea of together finding a democratic solution to the national-regional and social-economic questions at the All-Russian Constituent Assembly. After the Bolsheviks forcibly dispersed the assembly on 6 January 1918, however, the Caucasian leaderships were forced to deal with the foreign policy issues normally decided in Petrograd and to set up independent republics in order to maneuver and survive in the rapidly changing international environment. On the first of the year, the Commander of the Turkish Armies on the Caucasian Front had sent a letter to the Commander of the Caucasian Army to ask how to establish a peace with the "independent Caucasian government", and on the third he invited the Transcaucasian government to the talks between the Soviets and Central Powers in Brest-Litovsk.⁵⁸⁷ Upon the Zavkom's request, the Regional Center of the Soviets of

Admiral Aleksandr Vasiļevich Kolchak was named the "Supreme Leader" after a military coup in Siberia on 18 November 1918. Kolchak's group replaced a government of mixed character called the Directorate. This marked a transition from a more leftist government to a more conservative, rightist one. General Anton Ivanovich Denikin assumed command of the Volunteer Army after General Kornilov's death in the siege of Ekaterinodar in April 1918. In October 1918 Denikin became the supreme commander of the Volunteer Army. On 8 January 1919 the Volunteer Army and Don Army were united in the Armed Forces of Southern Russia, of which Denikin became the supreme commander. The Volunteer Army was renamed the Caucasian Volunteer Army and General Baron Pyotr Vrangel' was made its commander. See Anton Ivanovich Denikin, *Ocherki Russkoj smuty, Vooruzhennye sily Juga Rossii* (Sketches of the Russian turmoil, The Armed Forces of Southern Russia), vol. 4 (Slovo, Berlin, 1925), chapter 10, http://militera.lib.ru/memo/russian/denikin_ai2/index.html.

⁵⁸⁷ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 84-85; "Pişmo Komandyjushago Turetskimi armijami na Kavkazskom fronte Vexiba-pashi" (Letter of the Commander of the Turkish armies on the Caucasian Front Vehib Pasha), *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 24-25, 52; Michael Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 195-196.

Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies discussed the Ottomans' request for negotiations on 4 January and suggested the Ottomans be informed that the decision would be left to the Constituent Assembly. The Transcaucasian leadership yet believed in a future with the all-Russian "democracy" and hoped the Constituent Assembly would restore order across the former empire. Indicating its commitment to the all-Russian paradigm and naivety regarding the Bolsheviks, the Regional Soviet even proposed discussing the matter with the Sovnarkom.⁵⁸⁸

The All-Russian Constituent Assembly finally opened in Petrograd on 5 January. But the Bolsheviks' armed dispersal of the assembly the next day meant the Transcaucasians could no longer rely on the hope of a central Russian authority to deal with the Ottomans. It also marked the end of the anticipated new Russian order and the start of a miserable civil war fought on jagged interlocking fronts between right and left, centralists and decentralists, and various national groups.⁵⁸⁹ Yet Transcaucasia's political leadership continued to cling to the illusion of restoring "democratic Russia".⁵⁹⁰ On 14-15 January, the Zavkom met again to discuss the Ottoman issue under the changed conditions. A lone voice of reason, the Georgian Menshevik Akaki Chxenkeli argued here that, based on the actual situation on the ground, it would be

In the collection in *Dokumenty i materjaly*, this letter is dated 1 (14) January 1918, but at the bottom of the letter it is dated 9 January 1334, which is 9 January 1918 according to the Ottoman Rumi calendar. See "Rumi takvim" at <http://www.i-takvim.com/takvimler/rumi.php>, accessed 27 July 2021.

⁵⁸⁸ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 25-27; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 120.

⁵⁸⁹ Jonathan D. Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars 1916-1926: Ten Years That Shook the World* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), 30-35; Rex A. Wade, "The October Revolution, the Constituent Assembly, and the End of the Russian Revolution," in *Reinterpreting Revolutionary Russia: Essays in Honour of James D. White*, ed. Ian Thatcher (Basingstroke: Palgrave, 2006), 72-85.

Smele mentions that Rex Wade argues in his essay "The October Revolution, the Constituent Assembly, and the End of the Russian Revolution" that the Russian Civil War began with the Bolsheviks' forced dispersal of the Constituent Assembly. Although Smele does not agree with him, through my research process I came to a similar conclusion as Wade that it was this act of dispersing the assembly which marked the end of the "revolutionary" period, when the majority of relevant political actors thought they could decide their fate through a voluntary democratic process, and the start of the "civil war" period, when this hope evaporated and the armed struggle became the primary instrument through which it was determined whose vision for the future should prevail.

⁵⁹⁰ Gevork Melik-Karagjozjan, *Vospominaniya: politicheskaja situatsija v Zavkavkaze v 1917-1918 gg.* (Memoirs: The political situation in Transcaucasia in 1917-1918) (Moscow: Tsentrizdat, 2015), 45-47.

most logical to invite the Kuban and Terek-Daghestani governments to the upcoming negotiations. He called for regional unity, saying, “The Caucasus can answer only for itself... On the Caucasian Front our own Caucasian nationalities are responsible. And if all of the nationalities here united, things would already not be so bad. The misfortune is that we are not unified.” The other Zavkom members rejected Chxenkeli’s advice, insisting on inviting Ukraine and the Southeastern Union instead. This strategy failed since Ukraine did not respond and the Southeastern Union passed its invitation along to the Kuban and Terek-Daghestani governments.⁵⁹¹

After the Constituent Assembly’s dispersal, it was decided to replace the Zavkom, an unelected temporary administrative body, with an elected body having legislative force—the Transcaucasian Sejm.⁵⁹² The Sejm was comprised of the delegates elected to the Constituent Assembly and the vote threshold was lowered to include smaller parties although the vast majority of seats were still divided nearly equally between the Mensheviks, Musavat and Dashnaktsutiun.⁵⁹³ In early February, the Zavkom decided that the responsibility for making peace with Turkey should lie with the Transcaucasian Sejm, which first convened in early February.⁵⁹⁴ With regard to Abkhazia, on 9 February representatives from the Abkhaz National Council signed an agreement with the Georgian National Council that provided for the final decision on Abkhazia’s organization and relationship with Georgia to be left to the Abkhaz Constituent Assembly.⁵⁹⁵ At this point, Georgia had not yet been declared a republic.

⁵⁹¹ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 29-35, 40, 52-53.

«Кавказ может отвечать только за себя... На Кавказском фронте ответственными являются наши Кавказские народности. И если бы все здешние национальности объединились, дел не обстояло бы так уже плохо. Беда в том, что мы не объединены.»

⁵⁹² *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 27-28; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 85-87.

⁵⁹³ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 87.

⁵⁹⁴ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 52-57; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 87.

The Zavkom also set up a commission to prepare its own answer and enter into preliminary talks with Turkey.

⁵⁹⁵ Dzhemal Gamaxarija and Badri Gogia, *Abxazija – istoričeskaja oblast’ Gruzii* (Abkhazia – an historical region of Georgia) (Tbilisi: Agdgoma, 1997), 402; Arsène Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 43.

B. The Soviets gain strength in the North Caucasus

As the Transcaucasians organized their regional government, the far-left gathered steam in the North Caucasus. The year 1917 had ended with chaos in Vladikavkaz.⁵⁹⁶ And on 15 January 1918, some of the few socialists remaining in the city met to unite in the so-called Socialist Bloc. The bloc was a tactical unification of the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Georgian federalists and SRs. Opposing this move were other Bolsheviks aligned with the belligerent group of Terek Cossacks mobilizing against the native population. But key Bolshevik leaders, like Sergej Kirov, supported the bloc.⁵⁹⁷ Kirov played a special role in attracting some Mountaineers to the Bolshevik cause. This is thanks to his pre-revolutionary cultivation of contacts with specific figures like the Kabardian shepherd Betal Kalmykov and the Chechen youth Aslanbek Sheripov, who during the revolution would show their loyalty to the Communists.⁵⁹⁸

As the Socialist Bloc began its work, the belligerent Terek Cossacks and Bolsheviks of the Mozdok Military Revolutionary Committee (milrevkom) called for the convening of the First Terek People's Congress at Mozdok (Mozdok Congress, 25-31 January).⁵⁹⁹ The organizers' goal was to obtain a popular mandate for launching a major offensive against the Ingush and Chechens, and they may well have succeeded were it not for the efforts of the Socialist Bloc. Kirov, in particular, pushed very hard to persuade the congress delegates to redirect their aggressions away from "toilers" of whatever ethnicity and towards the "oppressors" of the upper stratum and governmental

⁵⁹⁶ Richard Douglas King, *Sergei Kirov and the Struggle for Soviet Power in the Terek Region, 1917-1918* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1987), 223-224; Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 70-71.

In the Terek oblast, the Vladikavkaz Soviet was liquidated on 30 December and Ingush fighters assaulted the city on the 31st. Moreover, many refugees and radicals were now streaming out of the city (to Pjatigorsk and Georgia) in fear of reprisals under the "reactionary" Colonel Belikov, the former commander of the local garrison and TerDag supporter, who helped the joint Cossack-Mountain government keep a modicum of control in the city through March, when the Soviets took over.

⁵⁹⁷ Richard Douglas King, *Sergei Kirov and the Struggle for Soviet Power in the Terek Region, 1917-1918* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1987), 225-227.

⁵⁹⁸ Derluguian, Georgi and Sufian Zhemukhov, "Making and breaking the political machine in Kabardino-Balkaria," *Demokratizatsiya* 21, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 539; King, *Sergei Kirov*, 34-41.

Kirov's wife was a Daghestani Mountain Jew.

⁵⁹⁹ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 72, 207.

bodies (Terek Cossack Krug, TerDag, UAM). Thanks to Kirov's passionate oratory, the Socialist Bloc won the vote by a small majority, passing their proposal to send delegations to the Ingush and Chechens and invite them to a second congress in Pjatigorsk for talks on land redistribution.⁶⁰⁰

The TerDag responded to the Mozdok Congress by pronouncing it illegitimate and scheduling a concrete date for the opening of the previously promised constituent assembly.⁶⁰¹ With this choice before them, the oblast's different national groups now held national assemblies to decide which side to support. The Terek Cossack Krug backed the TerDag but a contingent of disgruntled Cossacks resolved to go to Pjatigorsk. The Chechen National Council refused to send a delegation for several reasons: mistrust of the soviets, the aggressive behavior of some Cossacks and Sheikh Uzun Xaji's opposition. But a group of left-leaning dissenters, the so-called "Party of Peace", sent the young Aslanbek Sheripov as their representative to Pjatigorsk. Considering the Ingush received the invitation to the congress at a moment when they were besieged by hostile Cossacks and Ossetians and cut off from desperately needed food supplies, the Ingush National Council made the prudent decision to send a delegation. Importantly, a large group of radicalized Kabardians and Balkars attended the congress. These were not authorized by the Nalchik Ispolkom or any national assembly but were rather a self-selected group of disaffected elements hoping to seize lands with Soviet help.⁶⁰²

⁶⁰⁰ King, *Sergei Kirov*, 240-263; Evgenij Zharkovskij, "Rabochee dvizhenie na Tereke IV" (The workers' movement on the Terek IV), *Volnyj gorets* 4 (6 October 1919); Evgenij Zharkovskij, "Rabochee dvizhenie na Tereke V" (The workers' movement on the Terek V), *Volnyj gorets* 5 (13 October 1919); Evgenij Zharkovskij, "Rabochee dvizhenie na Tereke VI" (The workers' movement on the Terek VI), *Volnyj gorets* 6 (20 October 1919).

⁶⁰¹ Timur Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 397.

⁶⁰² "kavkasiis sarevolucio centrali komiteti" (The Central Revolutionary Committee of the Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 193 (2 [15] November 1917); King, *Sergei Kirov*, 277-301; D. Z. Korenev, *Revoljutsija na Tereke 1917-1918 gody* (The revolution on the Terek 1917-1918) (Ordzhonikidze: Severo-Osetinskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1967), 117-134; Muzaev, *The Union of Mountaineers*, 384-394; "Sovetskaja vlast' na Tereke, Revoljutsija i ingushi II" (Soviet power on the Terek, the revolution and the Ingush II), *Volnyj gorets* 65 (6 December 1920).

Uzun Xaji and his followers were counting on help from the Ottomans.

The Pjatigorsk Congress ran from 16 February through 15 March, opening on the same day that the Transcaucasian Sejm voted in favor of entering into negotiations with the Ottomans. The Sejm made this decision expecting to demand the Ottomans restore the Russia-Turkey frontier to its pre-war status and give autonomy to the Armenians in Turkey. The more realistic Chxenkeli was appointed to lead the delegation to meet Ottomans in Trabzon on 17 February, the same day the Sejm learned the Soviets had already ceded to the Ottomans the Transcaucasian territories of Ardahan, Kars and Batumi.⁶⁰³

While the Transcaucasians prepared for the planned peace conference in Trabzon, the Pjatigorsk Congress was turning into a triumph for the far left in the Terek. At the congress, the far-left socialists (Bolsheviks, left-SRs and Menshevik-Internationalists) eventually prevailed over the moderate socialists and convinced the majority of the delegates to recognize the Russian Sovnarkom and declare the Terek oblast an inseparable part of Soviet Russia. The radicalized Mountaineers and out-of-towner representatives also teamed up against the smaller Cossack faction in favor of land socialization at the Cossacks' expense.⁶⁰⁴

As the Soviets steadily gained power in the North Caucasus, the Autonomous Mountain Government looked for support from Transcaucasia and the Ottomans.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰³ Zourab Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia in International Politics, 1918-1921* (London: Headley Brothers, 1940), 26-27; *Dokumenty i materialy*, 83-84; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 89-90.

⁶⁰⁴ King, *Sergei Kirov*, 310-372, 386; Korenev, *The Revolution on the Terek*, 135-168; Evgenij Zharkovskij, "Rabochee dvizhenie na Tereke" (The workers' movement on the Terek), *Volnyj goret* 9 (10 November 1919).

Zharkovskij writes, "The Bolsheviks at the Pjatigorsk Congress mobilized all their forces, hostile to the Socialist Bloc, to secure the recognition of the power of the Soviet of People's Commissars and the proclamation of such in the Terek oblast, and many of the delegates from the Cossacks at the congress appeared with the same mandatory instructions with which they had come to the Mozdok Congress."

«Большевики на Пятигорский съезде мобилизовали все свои силы, враждебные социалистическому блоку, чтобы добиться признания власти Совета Народных Комиссаров и провозглашения таковой в Терской области, а многие из делегатов от казаков на съезде явились с теми же императивными мандатами, с которыми они приезжали и на Моздокский съезд.»

⁶⁰⁵ Georges Mamulia, Mairbek Vachagaev, Khadzhi Murat Donogo and Irada Mamedova, eds., *Gajdar Bammat – izvestnyj i neizvestnyj: sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Gaidar Bammat – Known and unknown: A collection of documents and materials), (Baku: Azerbaijan Historical Society, 2015), 206-

Whereas in 1917 there were few socialists among the small native intelligentsia, by 1918 Mountain society was starting to split between a growing force of leftists who supported the Soviets, whether for ideological reasons or hope of land, and those in the center and right, including moderate socialists like Gajdar Bammatorov, who continued to back the Mountain Government. This tension within Mountain society would play out over the year in the rival claims to popular legitimacy of the Terek People's Soviet and the Mountain Republic. It was also seen in the political spectrums of the individual national groups.

On 7 March, the entire delegation of the Pjatigorsk Congress took a train to Vladikavkaz, proclaiming the Terek People's Republic on 9 March.⁶⁰⁶ After the proclamation of the Soviet republic, radicalized native delegates headed home to promote Soviet power among their communities. The Kabardian and Balkar delegates organized a "people's congress" that elected a soviet with a Russian chairman, sparking a conflict with the conservative Nalchik Ispolkom and provoking renewed interethnic disturbances related to land claims.⁶⁰⁷ The Sixth Ossetian Congress, which included the Christian and Muslim Ossetians, formally recognized the new Soviet power, but internal division would soon lead to violent conflict between the far-left (Simon Takoev and others) and the center-right (Colonel Belikov and others).⁶⁰⁸ Although the Chechen National Council briefly accepted the new Soviet power for tactical purposes, as soon as the Soviets decided to convene the third Terek People's Congress in Groznyj, the council split over the question of whether to participate: the majority, centered in Starye Atagi, wanted to cooperate with the Terek Cossack Krug and hoped for Turkish help;

207; Michael Reynolds, "Native Sons: Post-Imperial Politics, Islam, and Identity in the North Caucasus, 1917-1918," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 56, no. 2 (2008): 237.

⁶⁰⁶ King, *Sergei Kirov*, 371.

⁶⁰⁷ King, *Sergei Kirov*, 386; Korenev, *The Revolution on the Terek*, 169-170; Nabljudatel' (Observer), "Sovetskaja vlast' na Tereke, IV, Bojba obščestvennyx sil v Kabarde" (Soviet power on the Terek, IV, The struggle of social forces in Kabarda), *Volnyj gorets* 42 (28 June 1920).

⁶⁰⁸ King, *Sergei Kirov*, 386-387; Korenev, *The Revolution on the Terek*, 176-179.

and the radical minority left to form a separate soviet in Gojty.⁶⁰⁹ The Ingush National Council also outwardly accepted Soviet power while its head, Vassan-Girej Dzhabagiev, continued doing everything possible to facilitate its overthrow.⁶¹⁰

C. The Mountain Government seeks union with Transcaucasia

On 28 February 1918, the Provisional Mountain Government passed a resolution to take measures to unite with Transcaucasia and enter into communications with the Ottomans and their allies to see if they would back an independent Caucasian state.⁶¹¹ The Ottomans thought a Caucasian buffer state could serve their own interests, and the Caucasian Muslims present at the peace talks in Trabzon urged them to leave Batumi to Georgia.⁶¹² Yet the Transcaucasian leadership was averse to declaring independence—even when threatened by a Turkish invasion—because they felt like this would be a “betrayal of the revolution”.⁶¹³ The pragmatic Chxenkeli strove to circumvent the problem that Soviet Russia’s leadership had created by signing the Brest-Litovsk treaty, but under Ottoman pressure he realized that Transcaucasia was too weak to withstand the impending Turkish onslaught and should accept the loss of the ceded territories in exchange for Ottoman support for a new, independent state. Thus, on 28 March, Chxenkeli declared Transcaucasia’s acceptance of the terms of the treaty.⁶¹⁴

Meanwhile, as the Transcaucasian delegation in Trabzon tried to hold a common front before the Ottomans, ethnic feuds were tearing the mixed Azerbaijani

⁶⁰⁹ King, *Sergei Kirov*, 387; Korenev, *The Revolution on the Terek*, 173-175.

⁶¹⁰ Korenev, *The Revolution on the Terek*, 170-172.

⁶¹¹ Mamulia et al, *Gajdar Bammat*, 206-207.

⁶¹² Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 201-203.

⁶¹³ Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence 1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 143; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 99-101.

⁶¹⁴ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 151, 159-160; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 103; Reynolds, “Native Sons,” 237-238; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 201-203.

and Armenian populations apart in various areas of Transcaucasia.⁶¹⁵ The most striking burst of ethnically based slaughter was the Baku “March Days”. In late March, hostilities broke out between Muslim units and Soviet soldiers joined by Armenian fighters. This struggle turned into a citywide massacre of Muslims and resulted in a political victory for the Bolsheviks, who could now assert considerable control in the oil city through the Baku Sovnarkom.⁶¹⁶ As Ronald Suny writes, “This short-lived experiment in maximalist socialist administration has been called the ‘Baku Commune’.”⁶¹⁷

It was during the March Days, which extended into April, that the separation-averse Transcaucasian Sejm reversed Chxenkeli’s decision and recalled its delegation (31 March), quixotically declaring war on the Ottomans while swearing to defend “the revolution” and every fistful of earth.⁶¹⁸ The Ottoman forces then waltzed right into Batumi.⁶¹⁹ But the separatists—the Caucasian Muslims and Georgian nationalists and federalists—had opposed such an antagonistic move.⁶²⁰ And thus, proven right in their

⁶¹⁵ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 140-146.

⁶¹⁶ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 147-149.

⁶¹⁷ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 234.

⁶¹⁸ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 28; Haïdar Bammate, *The Caucasus Problem: Questions Concerning Circassia and Daghestan* (Berne: 1919), 28; Haidar Bammate, “The Caucasus and the Russian Revolution (from a Political Viewpoint,” *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 4 (1991): 10-13; *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 163-166, 184; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 101-103; Reynolds, “Native Sons,” 238; Michael Reynolds, “Buffers Not Brethren: Young Turk Military Policy in the First World War and the Myth of Panturanism,” *Past & Present* 203, no. 1 (May 2009): 159.

⁶¹⁹ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 24, 28-29; *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 195; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 102, 107; Reynolds, “Native Sons,” 238; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 204.

It appears the Ottoman forces took Batumi on 1 April and the information was reported on 2 April 1918. The Ottomans occupied the fortress of Kars on 12 April.

⁶²⁰ A. Asatiani, “erovnuli tavdacva” (National self-defense), *saqartvelo* 72 (4 April 1918); Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 133-134; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 103; “mtielta delegaciis gancxadeba” (The Mountaineer delegation’s statement) and “saxifato nishnebi” (Perilous signs), *saxalxo saqme* 213 (5 April 1918); “tfilisi, 6 aprili 1918 ts. amierkavkasiis damoukidebloba” (Tiflis, 6 April 1918, Transcaucasia’s independence), *saxalxo saqme* 214 (6 [19] April 1918).

The National Democrat Giorgi Gvazava and the Socialist-Federalist Giorgi Laskhishvili were among the eleven members of the delegation with voting privileges.

argument that Transcaucasia could not withstand the Turks, some of the Caucasian Muslim representatives and one of the Georgian nationalists sailed to Constantinople to meet with the Sultan.⁶²¹ After its short, embarrassing “war” with the Ottomans, the Transcaucasian Sejm was left with no choice but to concede to the Turkish demands and create an independent Caucasian buffer state. On 9 April 1918, the Sejm solemnly declared independence from Russia in the form of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR), and the vindicated Chxenkeli was appointed head of government.⁶²² Although the Transcaucasian Regional Soviet approved this move, Stalin roundly condemned it as anti-revolutionary, claiming separation from Russia was against the wishes of the population—ignoring apparently the Bolsheviks’ lack of any popular mandate in Transcaucasia and their key role in forcing the Sejm into this move.⁶²³

Since a new peace now had to be settled, fresh talks were scheduled in Batumi. The Mountaineer delegation was eager to participate in the negotiations, but the Transcaucasian delegation had some reservations. In the end it was decided that for the North Caucasians to be included, they would have to first declare independence from Russia. The Mountaineer politicians, for their part, feared taking this provocative step

⁶²¹ GE_CHA_1864_2_117, Délégation Géorgienne à la Conférence de la Paix, *Mémoire présenté à la Conférence de la Paix* (Paris, July 1919), 9; Jabagi (Cabagi), Vassan-Giray, “Revolution and civil war in the North Caucasus – end of the 19th-beginning of the 20th century,” *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 1-2 (1991): 125; P. G. La Chesnais, *Les peuples de la Transcaucasie pendant la guerre et devant la paix* (Paris: Éditions Bossard, 1921), 50-51; Reynolds, “Native Sons,” 238; “sazavo delegaciis dabruneba” (The return of the peace delegation), *saqartvelo* 73 (5 April 1918); M. M. Vachagaev, *Sojuz gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza i Gorskaja respublika. Istoriya nesostojavshegosja gosudarstva. 1917-1920* (The Union of Mountaineers of the North Caucasus and the Mountain Republic. The history of a failed state. 1917-1920) (Tsentrpoligraf, 2018), 64-65.

La Chesnais says that the representative of the Georgian nationalists went to Constantinople. If he means the nationalist party representative that was on the Transcaucasian Sejm’s delegation to the Trabzon negotiations, then this would have been Giorgi Gvazava.

⁶²² Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 28; *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 199-222, 253; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 102-108; Reynolds, “Native Sons,” 238; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 204-205.

The Ottoman Empire gave recognition to the TDFR on 15 April 1918.

⁶²³ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 172; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 105; I. V. Stalin, *Sochinenija* (Works) (Moscow: OGIZ, 1947), 4: 95-100, https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/stalin/t4/t4_23.htm.

without a solid guarantee they could subsequently unite with Transcaucasia, but when pushed by the Ottomans, Germans and Transcaucasians, they proclaimed the independence of the Republic of the Union of Mountaineers of the North Caucasus and Daghestan (Mountain Republic) on 11 May so they could participate in the peace conference opening the same day.⁶²⁴ As of 20 May, it looked like the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia were on the way to creating a regional confederation. This is evident in a note sent by Chxenkeli to Bammatov, which reads as follows:

“In response to your telegram of 13 May of this year, I have the honor of informing you that the government of the Transcaucasian Republic fully shares in principle the opinion of Your government regarding the necessity, in view of the common political and economic interests of Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus, of establishing between the Transcaucasian Republic and the Union of the Peoples of the North Caucasus the necessary alliances through the creation of a single and confederated whole.”⁶²⁵

However, the Ottomans disrupted the Caucasians’ attempts to form a united front and state just as they were starting peace talks with them; the Ottoman forces were pushing deeper into Transcaucasia and even setting their sights on Tiflis.⁶²⁶ Observing this development, the Germans offered the Georgians a way out, protection from the Ottomans in exchange for special economic and strategic favors once they declared

⁶²⁴ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 312-316; Mamulia et al, *Gajdar Bammat*, 225-231.

⁶²⁵ Archival Administration of the Government of the Chechen Republic, f. 243, op. 1, el. ed. uch. 131, ed. xr. 270 (from TsGARD, f. P-8, op. 3, d. 234, scan 266); Mamulia et al, *Gajdar Bammat*, 235.

«В ответ на Вашу телеграмму от 13-го мая сего года, имею честь сообщить, что правительство Закавказской Республики в принципе вполне разделяет взгляд Вашего правительства на необходимость, в виду общности политических и экономических интересов Закавказья и Северного Кавказа, установления между Закавказской Республикой и Союзом народов Северного Кавказа, необходимых союзнических связей на основе создания единого конфедеративного целого.»

⁶²⁶ William Edward David Allen and Paul Muratoff. *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 470-471. NAG CHA, fond 1864, list 2, file 117, « Mémoire présenté à la Conférence de la paix. Revendications politiques. Frontières. Suivi de l'acte de l'indépendance de la Géorgie et d'une carte (1919) » (Memorandum presented to the Peace Conference. Political claims. Frontiers. Followed by the act of independence of Georgia and a map), 9; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 110-117; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 207-208.

national independence.⁶²⁷ After the Ottomans issued an ultimatum demanding additional territory in Transcaucasia, the Georgians accepted the German offer, declaring independence on the same day—26 May 1918.⁶²⁸ At this juncture, the Azerbaijanis proclaimed independence (28 May), the Armenians issued a statement that was effectively a reluctant proclamation of independence (30 May), and the Mountaineers' hopes for a regional confederation were temporarily dashed.⁶²⁹

The fate of the TDFR is a good example of the principle of pulling together while falling apart. The nations had tried to come together for common security, and Armenia was especially anxious to remain united with its Transcaucasian neighbors, but outside forces, opposing interests and territorial disagreements proved too much to overcome. Interestingly, the Georgian Mensheviks—who bear much of the responsibility for making the final decision to abandon the regional project—insisted they had been most active proponents of unity in Transcaucasia all along and that it was only the outside pressures of the war which proved too powerful for a joint government to manage, the situation itself forcing the creation of separate national republics better poised to navigate the complex environment emerging with the disintegration of the Russian Empire and Caucasus Front.⁶³⁰ These new circumstances were comparatively favorable for the Georgians, who had German backing, and manageable for the Azerbaijanis and Mountaineers, who enjoyed some Ottoman support, but the

⁶²⁷ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 46-60; NAG CHA, fond 1864, list 2, file 117, "Memorandum," 9; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 115, 119; La Chesnais, 59-60; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 209-210, 215-216.

⁶²⁸ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 175-176, 179-185; NAG CHA, fond 1864, list 2, file 117, "Memorandum," 9; *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 317-338; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 120.

⁶²⁹ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 189-191; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 119-120; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 212-213.

The date given for the "proclamation of independence" of the Republic of Armenia is usually 28 May because on that day the Armenian National Council gave three persons the right to negotiate with the Ottomans in Batumi in the name of the Republic of Armenia. The official statement about the Armenian National Council assuming supreme authority in the Armenian provinces was made on 20 May.

⁶³⁰ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 317-323.

Armenians—having sided with the Allies—found themselves in an unenviable predicament.⁶³¹

D. Bolshevik power bases in the North Caucasus and Baku

As the Caucasus broke off from Russia and then the Transcaucasian nations from each other, the Bolsheviks kept their eye on the region as a whole. The fact they thought of the Caucasus in terms of region is reflected in their organizational patterns and various appeals. Considering they had a weak presence in Transcaucasia, the Bolsheviks used the North Caucasus and Baku, which had greater numbers of out-of-towners and radicalized industrial populations, as bases from which to push into Transcaucasia. After the Constituent Assembly's dispersal, the Bolsheviks and their far-left allies held the Emergency Congress of Soviets of Workers' Deputies of the North Caucasus and Eastern Transcaucasia, which declared that it was the authority for all the Soviets in the North Caucasus (Novorossiisk, Ekaterinodar, Groznyj) and Transcaucasia except those under the influence of the "Menshevik-nationalists".⁶³² In February and March 1918, the RSDLP (b) Regional Committee (Krajkom) also made several appeals to the toiling masses, in which they claimed that the Sejm was the tool of the Germano-Turkish imperialists and their nationalist collaborators: the Muslim beks; Georgian princes and Armenian bourgeoisie, urging the workers, peasants and soldiers to join the Red Army to fight the enemy without and within.⁶³³

The Soviets started out strongest in the Chernomorskaja gubernija and Kuban oblast, where there was a majority out-of-towner population, and came to dominate in the Terek oblast and Baku by the spring of 1918, making substantial progress in

⁶³¹ Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 1, *The First Year, 1918-1919* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1971), 39; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 211.

⁶³² G. Alikberov, *Revoljutsija i grazhdanskaja vojna v Dagestane, xronika vazhnejshix sobytij (1917-1921 gg.)* (The Revolution and Civil War in Daghestan, chronicle of the most important events [1917-1921]) (Makhachkala: Dagestanskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1962), 50-51.

⁶³³ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 54-56, 58.

Daghestan towards autumn.⁶³⁴ In late February and early March the Soviets took control of Ekaterinodar in the Kuban, and by mid-April they would beat the combined forces of the Kuban Cossack Ataman A. P. Filimonov and General V. L. Pokrovskij and the White General L. G. Kornilov, who had just brought the newly formed Volunteer Army on the famous and deadly Ice March from the Don to the Kuban.⁶³⁵ When General Kornilov was killed during the siege of Ekaterinodar, his replacement was General Anton Denikin, who marched the Volunteer Army back to the Don to recover.⁶³⁶

The Bolsheviks' centralizing tendencies are highlighted in the organizational steps they took in the North Caucasus at this time. The Kuban Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed during the battle for Ekaterinodar.⁶³⁷ Then, the Kuban Central Ispolkom destroyed the anarchist-run Black Sea Milrevkom over the following month, and the Kuban-Black Sea Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed on 30 May with the goal of joining a South Russian republic as part of Soviet Russia.⁶³⁸ The First

⁶³⁴ I. Borisenko, *Sovetskie respubliki na Severnom Kavkaze v 1918 godu, Kratkaja istorija respublik* (The Soviet Caucasus in 1918, a short history of the republics) (Rostov-on-don: Knigoizdatel'stvo "Severnij Kavkaz," 1930), vol. 1, 108.

⁶³⁵ Borisenko 1: 137-142; Jan Nikolaevich Raenko, *Xronika istoricheskix sobytij na Donu, Kubani i v Chernomore, vypusk I, Mart 1917 g. – Mart 1918 g.*, (Chronicle of the historic events on the Don, Kuban and Chernomorie) (Rostov na Donu: Rostovskoe oblastnoe knigoizdatel'stvo, 1939), 153-155, <https://www.prilib.ru/item/686389>; Peter Kenez, *Red Attack White Resistance, Civil War in South Russia 1918* (Washington, DC: New Academic Publishing, 2004), 96-104, 107, 109-114; N. Ľdinskij, *Pervye boi na Kubani*, (Ekaterinodar, 1918), 14, 21; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 57; Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars*, 56-57.

Kenez dates Kornilov's death on 13 April. Borisenko seems to place the Whites' defeat a bit earlier in the month. Pokrovskij was promoted from the rank of colonel to major general during the course of these events.

⁶³⁶ Borisenko 1: 140-141; Kenez, *Red Attack, White Resistance*, 115-116; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 57; Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars*, 65.

⁶³⁷ Borisenko 1: 141.

⁶³⁸ Borisenko 1: 148-150; G.T. Chuchmaj et al., *Borba za Sovetskiju vlast na Kubani v 1917-1920 gg., Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (The struggle for Soviet power in the Kuban in 1917-1920: A collection of documents and materials) (Krasnodarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1957), 262. The reprinted document is titled "Resolution of the Third Extraordinary Congress of Soviets of People's Deputies on the Unification of the Kuban and Black Sea Soviet Republics into a United Kuban-Black Sea Soviet Republic"; O.V. Matveev, "Kubano-Chernomorskaja Sovetskaja Respublika" (The Kuban-Chernomorskaja Soviet Republic)," *Boľshaja rossijskaja entsiklopedija* (Great Russian Encyclopedia), accessed 13 May 2022, https://bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/2118081; Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars*, 57.

Congress of the Soviets of the North Caucasus met on 7 July in Ekaterinodar and declared the unification of the Kuban-Black Sea Soviet Socialist Republic, Stavropol Soviet Republic and Terek Soviet Republic into the unified North Caucasus Soviet Republic. According to the unification resolution, this centralizing move was made for the purpose of presenting a stronger front against the Volunteer Army, then gathering strength around the Don, as well as against the native Caucasians backed by the Central Powers. It reads:

“To achieve a definitive victory over the bourgeoisie and the final strengthening of the gains of the socialist revolution and Soviet power and in order to organize a successful joint struggle against the bands of German, Turkish, Georgians and Don counter-revolutionaries approaching the North Caucasus, what is necessary is the tightest unification of all Soviet republics with each other and their tightest tie to the center.”⁶³⁹

In comparison with the leaders of the national republics in the Caucasus, the Communists not only gave lip service to the idea that unity was needed for a successful common defense but succeeded in organizing it. This was facilitated by a unified ideology that could transcend national particularities and a preference for centralized organization, whereas the ideology of regional unity for common self-defense was weaker than the national ideologies in the Caucasus, a place where a persistent resistance towards a centralized regional political organization can be observed. Although centralized and highly verticalized organizational and political structures may arguably prove more brittle in the long run, it seems in this case that it was a more effective short-term strategy. By the time the Caucasian republics could have worked out a *modus operandi* for mutual relations and common defense, the Soviets simply crushed them—even if only to fail and disappear a lifetime later leaving the national republics to rise again.

⁶³⁹ Chuchmaj et al., *The struggle for Soviet power*, 278-279.

«Для достижения окончательной победы над буржуазией и окончательного укрепления завоеваний социалистической революции и Советской власти, для организации успешной совместной борьбы с надвигающимися на Северный Кавказ бандами германских, турецких, грузинских и донских контрреволюционеров — необходимо самое тесное объединение всех советских республик между собой и самая тесная связь их центром.»

The capital for all three of the abovementioned Soviet republics was Ekaterinodar, and—being a major center of Soviet power in the North Caucasus—the city was an early target of the Volunteer Army after it regained its strength in the Don. When Ekaterinodar was lost to the Whites on 16 August, the Soviet government relocated to Pjatigorsk in the Terek oblast, where the Bolsheviks were fighting the forces of the Cossack-Ossetian resistance, commonly called the “Bicherakhov Rebellion”.⁶⁴⁰ Over the course of the year in the Terek, the Soviets held three congresses after Mozdok and Pjatigorsk, each of which marked a turning point in local developments. The Third Terek People’s Congress, held in Groznyj on 22-29 May, served as a showcase for contentious land claims, and the proposed resolution on agrarian reform included a point on resettling the Cossacks of the Sunzha Line. At the same time, the congress served as a flash point for the formation of the Cossack-peasant faction that would soon join the Cossack Andrej Shkuro, General Eĭmurza Aslambekovich Mistulov, the Muslim Ossetian Commander of the Terek Host, and the Ossetian socialist Giorgi Bicheraxov, the head of the movement, in their Mozdok-based uprising against the Soviets.⁶⁴¹ The Fourth Terek People’s Congress, held in

⁶⁴⁰ Chuchmaj et al., *The struggle for Soviet power*, 287-288; Kenez, *Red Attack*, 177; *Boľshaja rossijskaja entsiklopedija* (Great Russian Encyclopedia), s.v. “Severo-Kavkazskaja Sovetskaja Respublika” (North Caucasian Soviet Republic), accessed 13 May 2022, https://bigenc.ru/domestic_history/text/3544393; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 74-77; Smele, *The “Russian” Civil Wars*, 65-66.

The Volunteer Army took Novorossijsk on 26 August and Stavropol’ on 15 November 1918. Smele says the Volunteers took Ekaterinodar on 15 August. Kenez says the army entered the city on 16 August. There were appeals published by the city’s Bolshevik leaders urging the population to defend the besieged city on 16 August, which indicates Kenez’s date is more accurate.

⁶⁴¹ I. Borisenko, *Sovetskie respubliki na Severnom Kavkaze v 1918 godu, kratkaja Istorija respublik* (The Soviet Caucasus in 1918, a short history of the republics) (Rostov-on-don: Knigoizdatel’stvo “Severnij Kavkaz,” 1930), 2: 66-67; A. K. Dzhanayev, X. X. Bekuzarov, D. Z. Korenev and V. D. Kuchiev, *Šezdy narodov Tereka 1918 g., Sbornik dokumentov i materialov v 2-x tomach* (The Congresses of the Peoples of the Terek, Collection of documents and materials in 2 volumes) (Ordzhonikidze: Izdatel’stvo “IR,” 1977), vol. 1, 257; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 75; Alex Marshall, “The Terek People’s Republic, 1918: Coalition Government in the Russian Revolution,” *Revolutionary Russia* 22, no. 2 (November 2009): 209-21; Polkovnik Eliseev, *General Eĭmurza Aslambekovich Mistulov, Komandujushij vojskami Terskago Vojska v 1918 godu (Ko dnju 35-ti letija ego tragicheskoi smerti, 1918-1953 g.g.)* [General Elmurza Aslambekovich Mistulov, Commander of the Terek Host troops in 1918 (For the 35-th anniversary of his tragic death, 1918-1953)] (New York: Mr. F. I. Elyseev, 1953), 11, 13, accessed 10 August 2021, <https://archive.org/details/generalelmurzaas008800/mode/1up>. The author would be the Kuban Cossack Colonel Fyodor Ivanovich Eliseev.

Relying on two secondary works unavailable to the author of this dissertation and *The Congresses of the Peoples of the Terek*, (Dzhanayev et al.), Marshall writes that the agrarian reform resolution was passed

Vladikavkaz from 23 July to 21 August 1918, while the Cossack-Ossetian forces were assaulting the city, was characterized by arguments about who was to blame for the violence which revolved around a mix of contested class and ethnic demands for land.⁶⁴² The fifth congress, held in Vladikavkaz from 28 November to 9 December after the Cossack-Ossetian resistance had failed, was marked by a division between the Communists and other socialists like Axmet Tsalikov.⁶⁴³

In Daghestan, the oblast ispolkom and Daghestan National Committee managed to keep the upper hand in the political scene through the fall although the Bolsheviks were able to make some inroads, mainly in the port cities. During the March Days in Baku the Daghestani Colonel Magomed Dzhafarov and would-be imam Nazhmutdin Gotsinskij sent forces to Baku in an attempt to defend the Muslims there against the Soviets, but this adventure failed and Daghestan's own ports of Derbent and Petrovsk were in Soviet hands by late April.⁶⁴⁴ In late May though, the Bolsheviks' grip on the Daghestan and Terek oblasts was still tenuous, and troops were sent from Astrakhan to Daghestan in June.⁶⁴⁵ As possible, the Soviets took over agricultural production and seized assets in Daghestan.⁶⁴⁶ And the Soviets appear to have been in control of the oblast capital Temir-Khan-Shura by late-May.⁶⁴⁷ Despite these gains, however their

at the Groznyj congress, which decision provoked the Cossack-Ossetian rebellion. Looking at the reports on the Groznyj congress in Dzhanayev, however, the information that the resolution was passed does not appear to be included, and in Borisenko's work it says that the agrarian issue was not resolved at the congress but that the dissension there helped to form the Cossack-peasant faction.

⁶⁴² A. K. Dzhanayev, X. X. Bekuzarov, D. Z. Korenev and V. D. Kuchiev, *Şezdy narodov Tereka 1918 g., Sbornik dokumentov i materialov v 2-x tomax* (The Congresses of the Peoples of the Terek, Collection of documents and materials in 2 volumes) (Ordzhonikidze: Izdatel'stvo "IR," 1978), vol. 2, 5; Marshall, "The Terek People's Republic," 213-214.

⁶⁴³ Marshall, "The Terek People's Republic," 214-216.

⁶⁴⁴ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 62-68.

⁶⁴⁵ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 79, 84.

⁶⁴⁶ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 83, 87-88.

Alikberov's chronicle of events indicates the nationalization of vineyards and mills, prohibition of private sales of grain and confiscation of horses and the lands of the wealthy.

⁶⁴⁷ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 76, 84-87.

ability to keep the oblast within their control was not guaranteed through the summer and fall, as they had to deal with continual resistance from native national elements as well as from Giorgi Bicheraxov's brother Lazar.⁶⁴⁸

Soviet influence in Azerbaijan did not extend beyond Baku and its surrounding areas. After the March Days, on 25 April 1918, the Baku Sovnarkom—comprised of Bolsheviks and Left-SRs—declared its loyalty to the Russian Sovnarkom.⁶⁴⁹ The Baku Soviet to which it answered had a Bolshevik minority backed by Left-SRs and with whom the Right-SRs, Mensheviks and Dashnaks cooperated.⁶⁵⁰ As in the North Caucasus, the Baku Bolsheviks worked to set the classes against each other within Baku's local society.⁶⁵¹ They also embarked on a land and asset nationalization campaign.⁶⁵² Along with Baku, the main springboards for Soviet expansion in the Caucasus were Ekaterinodar, Vladikavkaz and Astrakhan; and the Bolsheviks from these places collaborated closely with each other.⁶⁵³ For example, in June the Baku Bolsheviks participated in a party meeting in Ekaterinodar.⁶⁵⁴ The ties between Baku

⁶⁴⁸ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 93-105.

Lazar Bicheraxov and Prince Nuxbek Tarkovskij, Commander of the Daghestani troops and member of the Mountain Government, agreed to work together against the Soviets in September. Alikberov's chronicle of events shows repeated calls for backup from Soviet leaders in Daghestan in the summer and fall.

⁶⁴⁹ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 234-235, 251.

The Baku Sovnarkom was subordinated to the Baku Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' Deputies and its executive committee; the sovnarkom considered its job to be serving as the link between the Russian Sovnarkom (the Soviets' central government), and the Baku Soviet.

⁶⁵⁰ Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 135.

⁶⁵¹ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 295; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 136.

They appointed Himmatists as commissars in Baku and installed soviets in outlying villages.

⁶⁵² Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 245-246, 250.

All natural resources were nationalized on 22 May, the oil industry on 1 June and the fleet on 5 June.

⁶⁵³ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 79.

⁶⁵⁴ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 63, 81-82, 88.

Bolsheviks from Daghestan would also send aid (including 1,500 soldiers) to Astrakhan. On 7 April the Astrakhan Kraevoj Military Council authorized the Daghestani Bolshevik Ullubij Danijalovich Bujnaskij to mobilize local Muslim agitation against the nationalists "in the Caucasus".

and Daghestan were particularly close, with the former treating the latter as its jurisdiction.⁶⁵⁵

Another order from this time gives a good characterization both of the interplay between Bolsheviks in Daghestan and Baku and of their regional outlook. On 6 June the people's commissar for military-naval affairs of the Baku Sovnarkom, G. N. Korganov, called upon the Caucasus Red Army to fight against the counter-revolution and for the victory of Soviet power in the entire Caucasus."⁶⁵⁶ Then on 18 June, in an act illustrative of the grandiose ambitions of the Bolsheviks to extend their power throughout the region despite widespread unpopularity, the Baku Sovnarkom issued a decree ordering the socialization of all land in Daghestan and Transcaucasia.⁶⁵⁷

With the goal in mind of regional capture, the Bolsheviks also sought to extend their influence from the Black Sea and Kuban area into Abkhazia, from the Terek into the northern areas of Georgia inhabited by many Ossetians (in the area now called South Ossetia) and from Baku into Daghestan and eastern Transcaucasia. The Bolsheviks attempted to incite or encourage a number of peasant rebellions in Transcaucasia over the year, although some were spontaneous. In Abkhazia, the Bolsheviks drew their main base of support from among the peasantry in the Gudauta area though in early 1918 they were still too weak to challenge the Abkhaz National Council alone. Coming from Gudauta, the Bolsheviks' overthrow of the ANC in Sukhumi on 16 February was only possible thanks to the backing of a crew of Russian deserters, and when the ship left five days later (21 February) the Bolsheviks were easily repulsed.⁶⁵⁸ Abkhazia's Second Peasant Congress (4-9 March) condemned the Bolsheviks, confirmed the ANC's

⁶⁵⁵ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 81, 83.

⁶⁵⁶ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 83.

⁶⁵⁷ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 85; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 295-296; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 136.

⁶⁵⁸ Saparov, "From Conflict to Autonomy," 43; Cory Welt, "A Fateful Moment: Ethnic Autonomy and Revolutionary Violence in the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-21)" in *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, ed. Stephen F. Jones (London: Routledge, 2014).

I do not have access to the original text for Welt and so cannot provide the accurate page numbers.

authority and recognized the Transcaucasian Sejm, which suggests the peasants' support for the Bolsheviks was not universal.⁶⁵⁹ However, Bolsheviks from the Chernomorskaja gubernija were pushing not only eastward against Ekaterinodar around this time but also southward, and, in early March, Red forces from Tuapse and Sochi moved towards Gagra, joining with the Gudauta forces, to retake Sukhumi on 8 April and occupy all the other districts (including Samurzakano) excepting Kodori.⁶⁶⁰

Anti-Bolshevik leaders holding out in Kodori responded by asking assistance from the authorities in Transcaucasia, who sent the Georgian National Guard on a successful operation against the Bolsheviks, who were driven as far north as Gagra by mid-May.⁶⁶¹ Although the situation was shaky over the summer, which saw renewed attempts to assert Soviet power based in Gagra, Gudauta and Samurzakano, the ANC was restored and on 11 June it signed an agreement with the Georgian government that allowed for the Abkhaz National Assembly to make the final decision regarding the political relationship between Abkhazia and Georgia.⁶⁶² It was largely thanks to the operation of the Georgian General Mazniashvili that the Bolsheviks were ultimately put down and driven back into the Chernomorskaja, where the Georgians, following them,

⁶⁵⁹ *Abxazija – Dokumenty i materialy (1917 – 1921 g.g.)* (Abkhazia – Documents and materials [1917 – 1921]) (Sukhumi: Publication financed by the Fund of the First President of the Republic of Abkhazia, the academician V. G. Ardzinba, 2009), 20-22; Saparov, "From Conflict to Autonomy," 44; Welt, "A Fateful Moment."

⁶⁶⁰ Peter Kenez, "The Relations between the Volunteer Army and Georgia, 1918-1920: A Case Study in Disunity," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 48, no. 112 (July 1970): 407; Saparov, "From Conflict to Autonomy," 44; Welt, "A Fateful Moment."

⁶⁶¹ Saparov, "From Conflict to Autonomy," 43-44; Welt, "A Fateful Moment."

Saparov says Bolshevik forces came from the Black Sea Province. Kenez writes that the Red Army came down after taking the Kuban.

⁶⁶² Tamaz Diasamidze, ed. *Status of Autonomous Regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia within Georgia (1917-1988): Collection of Political-Legal Acts*. Tbilisi: Regionalism Research Center, 2005; Saparov, "From Conflict to Autonomy," 44; Welt, "A Fateful Moment"; N. Vorobev, *O Neosnovate[nosti pritjazanij gruzin na Suxumskij okrug (Abxaziju)]* [On the baselessness of the Georgians' claims to the Sukhumi okrug (Abkhazia)] (Rostov on Don: 1919), 10.

captured Tuapse in July.⁶⁶³ In early fall, however, the Georgians retreated to Sochi and the Whites took over Tuapse.⁶⁶⁴

Unfortunately, while Georgian forces were in Abkhazia fighting the Bolsheviks, some of their representatives acted in ways that disregarded the authority of the ANC, even disbanding it in the fall, and disrespected the local population. Abkhaz political society became divided between groups supporting the Georgians, siding with the Volunteers, turning towards the Turks, sympathizing with the Bolsheviks, and so on.⁶⁶⁵ Meanwhile, over the course of the year, there were a number of uprisings and disturbances among the restless peasantry in various areas of Georgia, including among the Ossetian population. These were generally associated with discontent or confusion surrounding the implementation of land reform, and in some cases the Bolsheviks played an instigating or aggravating role. From Baku, the Soviets also tried to incite an uprising of Muslim peasants against their landlords in Azerbaijan, where there were also agrarian disturbances.⁶⁶⁶

Throughout 1918, the Bolsheviks kept a close eye on developments in Transcaucasia, hoping to capitalize on the peasant unrest. In light of the Soviets' early spring gains in the North Caucasus, on 9 April Lenin signed a decree for the creation

⁶⁶³ Saparov, "From Conflict to Autonomy," 44-45; Welt, "A Fateful Moment."

⁶⁶⁴ Kenez, "The Relations between the Volunteer Army and Georgia," 408-409.

⁶⁶⁵ Saparov, "From Conflict to Autonomy," 46-47; Vorobev, *On the baselessness*, 10-11; Madina Ivanovna Zukhba, "K probleme politicheskogo statusa Abkhazii v 1917-1921 gg." (Towards the problem of political status of Abkhazia in 1917-1921), *Teorija i praktika obshchestvennogo razvitiia* 6 (2011), 241-242; Welt, "A Fateful Moment."

⁶⁶⁶ Stephen Jones, "Between ideology and pragmatism: social democracy and the economic transition in Georgia 1918-1921, *Caucasus Survey* 1, no. 2 (April 2015): 63-81. See the section "Economic Challenges: The Peasantry"; Karl Kautsky, *Georgia: A Social-Democratic Peasant Republic: Impressions and Observations* (2018), 285-287. The original edition is from 1921. This is the edition with a Georgian and English translation as well as commentary by Irakli Iremadze. It appears to have been published in Tbilisi under the auspices of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Georgia foundation and Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 130-131, 187-192, 224; David Marshall Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1962), 212-213; Eric Lee, *The Experiment: Georgia's Forgotten Revolution 1918-1921* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2017), 101-103; Saparov, "From Conflict to Autonomy," 47; Valery Silogava and Kakha Shengelia, *History of Georgia* (Tbilisi: Caucasus University Publishing House, 2007), 205; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 197-198; Welt, "A Fateful Moment."

of the Extraordinary Commissariat for the Southern Region (covering the whole of the North Caucasus all the way to Baku) to be headed by G. K. (Sergo) Ordzhonikidze. Ordzhonikidze played a major role in the Bolsheviks' Caucasus operations in 1918, running operations north of the range while keeping a close watch over Transcaucasia.⁶⁶⁷ As the Soviet historian I. Razgon put it,

“All threads of events in Transcaucasia converged in Ordzhonikidze. He followed closely the struggle that a small group of Transcaucasian Bolsheviks in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan waged against the German and Turkish interventionists and against the “traitors”—the Mensheviks and other counter-revolutionaries. On 13 October Ordzhonikidze informed Lenin in Moscow and Stalin in Tsaritsyn about the situation in Baku on the eve of its capture by the Turks, the uprisings of the Georgian peasants, the suppression by German troops of the Russian and Armenian peasants' demonstration in Belyj Ključ and about the slaughter of the Armenian population organized by the Turkish-Tatar bands in Azerbaijan.”⁶⁶⁸

Ordzhonikidze and the Bolsheviks clearly had a regional strategic perspective and perceived events north and south of the range as interconnected and inseparable. However, their plans in the region were thwarted in 1918 by the pushback from the cooperative efforts of the Germans and Ottomans with the Georgians, Azerbaijanis and Mountaineers, the “Bicheraxov Rebellion” and the rise of Denikin's Volunteer Army in southern Russia and the Kuban.

E. Pushing back against the Soviets

On 4 June, the Ottomans signed tough peace and friendship treaties with the new Transcaucasian republics in Batumi. They also concluded a treaty with the Mountain Republic on 8 June 1918. According to Dzhabagiev, the North Caucasian government

⁶⁶⁷ I. Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze i Kirov i borba za vlast' sovetov na Severnom Kavkaze, 1917-1920 g.g.* (Ordzhonikidze and Kirov and the struggle for power of the soviets in the North Caucasus, 1917-1920) (Gospolitizdat, 1941), 227.

⁶⁶⁸ Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 22.

«К Орджоникидзе сходились все нити событий в Закавказье. Он внимательно следил за борьбой, которую вела небольшая группа закавказских большевиков в Грузии, Армении, Азербайджане против германских и турецких интервентов, против предателей – меньшевиков и других контрреволюционеров. Тринадцатого октября Серго сообщил Ленину в Москву и Сталину в Царицын о положении в Баку накануне взятия его турками, о восстаниях грузинских крестьян, о подавлении немцами выступления русских и армянских крестьян в Белом Ключе, о резне армянского населения, организованной турецко-татарскими бандами в Азербайджане.»

here again proposed creating a Caucasian confederation.⁶⁶⁹ These treaties defined the Ottomans' relationship with the new republics and secured for them advantages such as access to the railways. Overall, these agreements were comparatively disadvantageous for the Caucasian republics, and did not amount to official recognition, but Azerbaijan and the Mountain Republic were promised military support.⁶⁷⁰ Some of the Batumi agreements involved more than two states. These were related to the maintenance of the kerosine pipeline between Georgia, Azerbaijan and the Ottomans and an agreement dividing the railroad between the three Transcaucasian republics and the Ottomans.⁶⁷¹ The Georgians also signed an agreement with Germany (The Treaty of Poti, 28 May 1918) which gave the latter use of the railways (with rights to station soldiers along them) and special mining privileges in exchange for defense and financial support.⁶⁷² In return, the Germans worked to convince the Russian Sovnarkom to recognize Georgia, and as a result an article in the Russo-German Treaty of 27 August 1918 included the statement Russia would not object to Germany's recognition of Georgia.⁶⁷³ After this a political treaty between imperial Germany and the GDR was

⁶⁶⁹ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 343; Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 124.

⁶⁷⁰ Audrey Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), chapter 6; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 196-197; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 125-126; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 288; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 130.

⁶⁷¹ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 364-365; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*, 198.

⁶⁷² P. Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization in the North Caucasus," *Caucasian Review* 1955. No. 1: 47-54, no 3. 45-53, 13-14. This article does not have page numbers indicated; Giorgi Revishvili, "Falsifying History: Georgia Lost Historical Lands because of Germany," MythDetector, 28 July 2017 [Last accessed 11 August 2021: <https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/falsifying-history-georgia-lost-historical-lands-because-germany>]; A. I. Osmanov, G. I. Kakagasanov and L. G. Kajmarazova, eds. *Sojuz oĭedinennyx gortsev Severnogo Kavakaza I Dagestana (1917 – 1918 gg.) i Gorskaja Respublika (1918 – 1920 gg.)*. *Dokumenty i materialy*, 2nd ed. (The Union of Allied Mountaineers of the North Caucasus and Daghestan ([1917-1918] and the Mountain Republic [1918-1920] Documents and Materials) (Makhachkala: IIAE DNTs RAN, ALEF, 2013), 122-123. A treaty was also supposedly drawn up between the Germans and Mountaineers. Makhachkala 1994, 122-123. Pshemaxo Kosok mentions only an exchange of notes between the Mountaineer representatives and the Germans, Austro-Hungarians and Bulgarians.

⁶⁷³ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 149-150, 161.

prepared, but German fortunes in the war reversed before the treaty could be signed as planned.⁶⁷⁴

It was thanks to the German support that the Georgians could reestablish the security they needed to start building their new republic, including putting down the various peasant rebellions. And it was with Ottoman backing that the Azerbaijani government, temporarily located in Ganja, could prepare for the recapture of Baku and the Mountaineers could eventually recover their capital in Temir-Khan-Shura. Around the same time, the Volunteer Army was pushing against the Soviets in the Kuban. They took Ekaterinodar on 16 August, which forced the Soviet government to relocate to Pjatigorsk. They also took Stavropol on 15 November.⁶⁷⁵

In the Terek, the Cossack-Peasant Congress in Mozdok, with the Terek Cossack Host behind it, declared war against the Soviets on 23 June.⁶⁷⁶ In the first half of July, the Soviets sent their forces towards Mozdok but got stuck around the strategic point of Proxladnaja stanitsa, which the anti-Soviet resistance took the same time as Ordzhonikidze made it to Vladikavkaz.⁶⁷⁷ Once in the city, Ordzhonikidze helped organize the Fourth Terek People's Congress (23 July – 21 August 1918).⁶⁷⁸ As the congress was underway, the resistance besieged Vladikavkaz, Groznyj and Kizljar (in Daghestan), and the Georgian government (24 July) sent an ultimatum demanding the release of prisoners and resumption of trade. The ultimatum was backed by the Cossack faction of the congress, and anti-Soviet North Caucasian leaders, but the Soviets refused to comply.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁴ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 150-151.

⁶⁷⁵ Chuchmaj et al., *The struggle for Soviet power*, 288; Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 182; Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars*, 65-66.

⁶⁷⁶ Borisenko 2: 67-68; Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 125; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 75; Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 188-189, 193-194.

Different sources say the nominal leader of the rebellion, Giorgi Bicheraxov, was a Menshevik or an SR. At any rate, he was an Ossetian Cossack.

⁶⁷⁷ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 77; Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 195-198.

⁶⁷⁸ Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 198.

⁶⁷⁹ Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 199.

The battle for Vladikavkaz lasted from 6 to 18 August and is referred to as the August Days.⁶⁸⁰ The Soviets prevailed thanks in large part to Ingush detachments who came to their aid. According to Razgon, when Ordzhonikidze went to the Ingush to ask for their help, Dzhabagiev and his supporters, including officers, small property owners and mullahs tried to prevent the crowds from even listening to the Georgian Bolshevik, but the crowds rushed eagerly to Ordzhonikidze and enthusiastically agreed to help the Soviets take the city in exchange for Cossack stanitsas. He also claims that Dzhabagiev was dedicated to the dream of a Mountain republic “stretching from sea to sea” but opposed the Ingush helping the Soviets in Vladikavkaz out of fears the nationalists would lose their prestige among the masses.⁶⁸¹ It is more likely Dzhabagiev was concerned with preventing Ordzhonikidze and the Bolsheviks from fanning the flames of interethnic conflict.⁶⁸²

The Cossack-Ossetian siege of Groznyj lasted from 11 August to 12 November, about 100 days.⁶⁸³ The main leaders of the defense were N. F. Gikalo, a Georgian Bolshevik from Odessa, and Aslanbek Sheripov, now devoted to the Bolshevik cause. The defenders received their support from the pro-Bolshevik Chechen national council in Gojty.⁶⁸⁴ Kizljär remained in Soviet hands through the end of the confrontation.⁶⁸⁵ On 23 November the Red Army captured Mozdok, and the Cossack-Ossetian rebellion came to an end in that month.⁶⁸⁶ However, the Soviets would still have to contend with the Mountain Republic.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁰ Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 200-203.

⁶⁸¹ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 76-79. Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 200- 205.

⁶⁸² Compare with Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 78.

⁶⁸³ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 79. Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 211.

⁶⁸⁴ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 79. Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 214-215.

⁶⁸⁵ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 76. Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 225, 230.

⁶⁸⁶ Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 233.

⁶⁸⁷ P. Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization in the North Caucasus”; Vladimir Borisovich Lobanov, “Terskoe antibolshevistskoe vosstanie (ijuñ-nojabr 1918 goda): sovremennij vzgljad” (The Terek anti-

Thus, by early fall 1918, the Soviets had been pushed out of the Kuban by the Volunteer Army and Abkhazia with the help of Georgian forces. The Terek oblast remained under the control of the Soviets through the end of the year although they were still dealing with the Cossack-Ossetian resistance until late November, and the Ottoman-backed Mountaineers had reasserted their presence in Daghestan by October.⁶⁸⁸ In eastern Transcaucasia, meanwhile, on 10 June the Baku Sovnarkom sent the Red Army's First Caucasian Corps against the Army of Islam. The Sovnarkom expected its forces to be buoyed up by the "oppressed" Muslim peasantry at a moment when peasant uprisings were occurring in Abkhazia, Georgia and Armenia too. But their behavior alienated the peasantry, if it had ever been inclined to help.⁶⁸⁹ As the Army of Islam gradually advanced, the hungry population of Baku disagreed on where to turn for support; Armenians and non-Bolshevik Russians wanted to ask the British for help but the Bolsheviks rejected this option.⁶⁹⁰ On 27 June-1 July the Army of Islam started a month-long push towards Baku from near the border of the Ganja and Baku provinces.⁶⁹¹ In early July, Giorgi Bicheraxov's brother Lazar, a Right-SR, arrived to Baku from Persia and joined the Baku Commune's forces in their losing battle at Kurdamir (8-10 July).⁶⁹² Then, on 30 July Bicheraxov abandoned the city's flagging defenses just as the Army of Islam drew near.⁶⁹³

Bolshevik rebellion [June-November 1918]: a contemporary view), *Vestnik KGU im. N.A. Nekrasova* no. 4 (2012): 50. Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 234.

⁶⁸⁸ Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 124-126.

⁶⁸⁹ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 90; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 222-228; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 130-131, 134; Suny, *The Baku Commune* 269-270; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 133.

⁶⁹⁰ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 131-133; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 297, 301, 304, 323-324.

⁶⁹¹ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijani*, 132-133. Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 272.

⁶⁹² Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 226; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 291; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 137. Suny says 6 July.

⁶⁹³ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 317-318; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 137.

Finally, on 31 July the Baku Sovnarkom resigned in a refusal to concede to the growing demand to ask the British for backing, and on 1 August a new government was formed to replace the Sovnarkom called the Central-Caspian Dictatorship, an alliance of Right-SRs, Dashnaks and the Sailors' Union. With the Bolsheviks' departure, some food was found, defense improved a little and the British were invited.⁶⁹⁴ In mid-August, the British General Dunsterville brought a very small force in from Persia, but he found the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship quarrelsome and the local defense forces too apathetic. Forced by the temporary dictatorship to remain against his will, Dunsterville escaped the city with his men under cover of darkness just as the Army of Islam approached the city on 14 September.⁶⁹⁵ In the midst of the ensuing panic and chaos, many Armenians fled the city while the Baku Sovnarkom made its third and final attempt to escape from imprisonment, stealing a ship and sailing to the SR-dominated city of Krasnovodsk in Turkestan, where the commissars were taken into the desert and shot.⁶⁹⁶ On 15 (or 16) September irregular forces described by historian Tadeusz Swietochowski as "local Muslims, Azerbaijani irregulars, and Ottoman marauders" massacred thousands of Armenians in what is referred to as the September Days. Then, on 16 (or 17) September the Ottoman and Azerbaijani forces entered the city along with the representatives of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, who set about establishing the new regime in the country's oil city.⁶⁹⁷

Meanwhile, Lazar Bicheraxov had gone to Daghestan, taking Derbent on 12 August and stationing his forces in Port Petrovsk in early September.⁶⁹⁸ After this he is

⁶⁹⁴ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 91; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 136-139, 144; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 318, 320-321, 324-326; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 133, 137-138.

⁶⁹⁵ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 92; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 139-142; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 335; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 138-139.

⁶⁹⁶ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 144-146; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 336-338.

⁶⁹⁷ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 91-92; Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 1: 31-32; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 130-131, 143; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 336-337; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 139.

⁶⁹⁸ Mitat Çelikpala, "Search for a common North Caucasian identity: the Mountaineers' attempts for survival and unity in response to the Russian rule," Dissertation for Bilkent University, accessed 16 August 2021, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/52925868.pdf>, 96.

said to have captured Khasavjurt on 8 September, where he was just a ruined bridge away from linking up with his brother Giorgi.⁶⁹⁹ However, the local Chechens prevented the brothers from uniting.⁷⁰⁰ It is not clear where their sympathies lie, with the Soviets or the Mountain Republic as both sides seem to claim them.⁷⁰¹ At first Lazar Bicheraxov was able to find a *modus operandi* with Prince Nuxbek Tarkovskij, who was associated with the Mountain Republic and considered by the British to be the temporary dictator in Daghestan, but after the Ottomans took Baku, it appears they were able to focus more on helping the Mountaineers retake their territory.⁷⁰² With the help of the Turks, the Mountaineers then took Derbent on 6 October and Temir-Khan-Shah in late October.⁷⁰³ When they asked Bicheraxov to leave Petrovsk and he refused, even

⁶⁹⁹ Zh. Gakaev, *On dostoin pamjati narodnoj (kratkij istoricheskij ocherk o Tashtemire E]derxanove)* [He is worthy of the people's remembrance (A short historical sketch about Tashtemir Elderxanov)] (Groznyj: Kniga, 1991), 28; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 135; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 75-76; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 229.

⁷⁰⁰ Gakaev, *He is worthy*, 28; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 76.

⁷⁰¹ Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 125; Gakaev, *He is worthy*, 28; Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization."

Kosok writes, "These formations had not yet been perfected when the units of General Bicheraxov's army came from Baku, retreating under the onslaught of the Turkish divisions that had captured Baku. General Bicheraxov's troops were the remnants of Russian army units from Persia and numbered more than 10,000 men. This force was supported by ships of the Russian Caspian fleet. The superior forces of General Bicheraxov captured Petrovsk, declaring that they were under the authority of the government of the Constituent Assembly which had been formed beyond the Volga; Bicheraxov himself was the commander of the so-called Caspian government, subordinate to the above-mentioned government. Fifteen Turkish divisions, commanded by Yusuf-Izzet Pasha (a Circassian) came to the assistance of the Northern Caucasians. After 17 days of fighting, Petrovsk was recaptured. General Bicheraxov suffered heavy losses and the remainder of his forces embarked on ships and headed southward. This unexpected clash with the forces of the 'Commander-in-chief of the Caspian regime' inflicted irreparable harm on the Northern Caucasus. Instead of properly organizing its armed forces to drive the Bolsheviks completely out of its territory, the Northern Caucasus had to exert all its forces to liquidate Bicheraxov and his group."

⁷⁰² Çelikpala, "Search for a common North Caucasian identity," 96-98; Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization"; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 58, 71, 98; Jeronim Perović, *From Conquest to Deportation: The North Caucasus under Russian Rule* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018), 127; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 219-220.

These "Turkish" forces were comprised mainly or entirely of officers and soldiers of North Caucasian descent. It is not exactly clear from the available sources if the Turkish forces went before, during or after the capture of Baku.

⁷⁰³ Çelikpala, "Search for a common North Caucasian identity," 100; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 102, 337; "Zajavlenie gorskago pravite]stva" (The Mountain Government's statement) *Gruzija* 64 (19 November 1918).

threatening to attack Derbent, they surrounded the port city and forced him to evacuate on 6 November.⁷⁰⁴ On 7 November, the Mountain Government announced it had captured Petrovsk and thereafter regained control of all Daghestan and Chechnya, declaring its friendly intentions towards all neighboring peoples.⁷⁰⁵ A National Assembly of representatives from Daghestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia was immediately called, and the assembly confirmed its readiness to defend the country's independence as proclaimed in May.⁷⁰⁶ Meanwhile, however, in what was a happy day for world peace but did not bode well for the North Caucasus, Ottoman and British representatives had been meeting in Port Mudros on the Greek island of Lemnos to discuss Turkey's withdrawal from the war.⁷⁰⁷

Back in the Terek, the confrontation between the Cossack-Ossetian forces and the Soviets ended when the Soviets took Mozdok on 23 November.⁷⁰⁸ Then, in December 1918, Kirov declared Soviet power supreme on the Terek, even though the reality on the ground belied this assertion since the Soviets' administration was hollowed out and weak whilst their military capabilities were disorganized and they lacked sufficient weapons.⁷⁰⁹ Meanwhile, Terek Cossack society had split between Bicheraxov's group and those backing the Soviets, and like the pro-Soviet Cossack

⁷⁰⁴ Çelikpala, "Search for a common North Caucasian identity," 100; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 102, 337. FO 371/3667, "Notes on the Situation in Azerbaijan," (Signed) R.I.G. Gorton, 8 Dec. 1918.

Izzet Pasha said that he did not use Prince Nukh-Bek Tarkovsky's cavalry units here, but Kotsev and Dzhabagiev claimed in emigration that Mountain forces did help take the town. A report by British Brigadier General R.I.G. Gorton gives support to the claim of the Mountaineers. He wrote, "After the news of the Armistice had been communicated to Izzet Pasha and Chermoiev, the two combined together and attacked and drove Bicherakov out of Petrovsk."

⁷⁰⁵ "Zajavlenie gorskago praviteľstva" (The Mountain Government's statement), *Gruzija* 64 (19 November 1918).

⁷⁰⁶ Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 125.

⁷⁰⁷ Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 1: 56.

⁷⁰⁸ Kosok; "Revolution and Sovietization"; Lobanov, "The Terek anti-Bolshevik rebellion," 50; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 79. Marshall says this was in December. Kosok says this was in November.

⁷⁰⁹ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 80, 115.

contingent had switched over to the side of the resistance in June, now a group of Cossacks defected to the Soviets towards the end of the Bicheraxov-Soviet conflict.⁷¹⁰ Ossetian society was also internally divided with some supporting Bicheraxov and others, like the Kermanists and the Muslim Menshevik-Internationalists, supporting the Soviets. It was further divided between Christians and Muslims, the latter leaning towards the Ingush and Mountain Republic.⁷¹¹ The Mountaineers' political leadership was itself spread across the left-right ideological spectrum, and in May 1919 the republic would fall when the right wing defected to the side of the Volunteer Army.

F. Forming free republics in Caucasia

As the Azerbaijanis and Mountaineers worked with the Ottomans to regain their territories, thanks to the German presence the Georgians had a chance to focus on building their new state.⁷¹² Contributing to the relative stability of the country, the problem of *dvoevlastie* was resolved when in June the soviet bodies (Regional Soviet, Tiflis Soviet, Red Guard) foreswore any pretenses to governmental power.⁷¹³ Preparations were started for elections to a national Constituent Assembly, and in October the unelected National Council was expanded into an unelected parliament to serve temporarily as the legislative organ.⁷¹⁴ Moreover, the new republic's government continued the zemstvo reform initiated under the Ozakom and Zavkom.⁷¹⁵ On 28 June,

⁷¹⁰ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 75, 79.

In Marshall's assessment, the entire Cossack-Ossetian resistance saw itself as a revolutionary force and the main leader Bicheraxov was a Menshevik—not a counter-revolutionary.

⁷¹¹ Os., "Tragedija Severnyx Osetin" (The tragedy of the northern Ossetians), *Volnyj gorets* 33 (8 March 1920).

⁷¹² Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 147, 160.

⁷¹³ Noda Asatiani and Otar Janelidze, *History of Georgia: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (Tbilisi: Publishing House Petite, 2009), 300-301; Irakli Khvadagiani, *eroba: tvitmmartvelobis reforma saqartvelos respublikashi 1918* (Eroba: self-government reform in the Republic of Georgia 1918) (Tbilisi: Sovlab, 2018), 1: 139; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 195.

The state's new flag, seal and anthem were unveiled in September.

⁷¹⁴ Asatiani and Janelidze, *History of Georgia*, 301; David Marshall Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia* (NY: Grove Press, Inc., 1962), 209.

⁷¹⁵ Asatiani and Janelidze, *History of Georgia*, 300-301.

the Interior Ministry was tasked with implementing zemstvo (*eroba* in Georgian) as fast as possible.⁷¹⁶

The Armenians inherited a much less stable situation. Even as the Armenian delegation was working out a peace treaty with the Ottomans in Batumi, the people were still fighting Turks in the Erevan province. And after the treaty with the Ottoman Empire was signed, Armenia was left with a tiny landlocked territory that could barely support a state. At the same time huge swaths of the population, including great masses of refugees, lacked basic necessities like food, medical supplies or shelter while roaming bandits terrorized the countryside.⁷¹⁷ Thus, the Dashnak-dominated political leadership spent much of the summer trying to manage this chaos while setting up a functioning state apparatus. In late May, the Armenian National Council had declared itself the supreme governmental and administrative authority until a national government could be elected. Reflecting the political spectrum in the country, the Dashnaks dominated the first cabinet formed in late June. On 1 August the National Council was expanded into an unelected temporary legislative body called the Khorhurd, which had representatives from the four major political parties and minority groups.⁷¹⁸

In external affairs, the Armenians spent much of the summer in a futile effort to convince Germany and Soviet Russia to pressure the Ottomans into returning lands to them so they would have enough territory for a viable state.⁷¹⁹ They also fell into

⁷¹⁶ Khvadagiani, *eroba* 1: 140.

⁷¹⁷ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 211-213; Richard G. Hovannisian, "The Allies and Armenia, 1915-28," *Journal of Contemporary History* 2, no. 1 (January 1969): 146; Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia* 1: 33-37, 42.

Hovannisian describes the city of Erevan as follows: "The scene that unfolded before the newly arrived leaders defied description. The mid-summer air was heavy with the umbra of death. The diseased and starving people were cast like shadows upon a backdrop of mud hovels and mire. It was said that the Turks had begrudged the Armenians enough land for a mass cemetery, and this appraisal seemed scarcely exaggerated during the first tortuous months of the Republic. The native inhabitants and refugees subsisted on a few grains of wheat and a broth of grasses and herbs; but by the onset of winter even these were gone."

⁷¹⁸ Hovannisian 1: 33, 40-44 Along with four Dashnaks, there was only one populist minister, while the leftists, SDs and SRs, refused to join.

⁷¹⁹ Hovannisian 1: 49-53, 71-72.

disputes and conflicts with their Georgian and Azerbaijani neighbors. The main dispute with Georgia was over the Lori district, part of which the Georgians seized with German help in June 1918.⁷²⁰ The territories contested between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis were the highland area of the Ganja province called Nagorno-Karabagh, divided into three sections, Dilijan, Nagorno-Karabagh [Shusha] and Zanzegur, and parts of the Nakhichevan, Sharur-Daralagiaz and Novo-Bayazit districts of the Erevan province. Dilijan was incorporated immediately into Azerbaijan. The Ottomans present in Ganja tried to force the local population in Nagorno-Karabagh [Shusha] to admit Turkish troops and recognize the Azerbaijani republic, but the locals refused. When interethnic strife broke out in Zanzegur, the Armenian government could do nothing, but the willful General Andranik entered the district with about 30,000 refugees in July. The Azerbaijanis also laid claim to parts of the Nakhichevan, Sharur-Daralagiaz and Novo-Bayazit districts (*uezdy*) of the Erevan province.⁷²¹

Azerbaijan's leaders also made their national council serve as the supreme governmental authority until elections could be held. The first prime minister, Fatali Xan Xojskij, formed a cabinet as fast as 28 May, but Ottoman meddling forced him to prune it of leftists and form a new one on 17 June. The Ottomans also forced the national council, which the leftists had already exited, to hand over its authority to this new cabinet, effectively a government with temporary legislative powers.⁷²² The Ottomans' activities contributed to the strengthening of rightist and moderate over socialist or nationalist tendencies in the Azerbaijani leadership.⁷²³ Only entering its capital Baku in September, the Azerbaijani government had little possibility for implementing state-building or reforms in 1918.⁷²⁴

⁷²⁰ Hovannisian 1: 71-72.

⁷²¹ Hovannisian 1: 79-83, 86-87, 90.

⁷²² Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 90; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 129-132, 266-270.

⁷²³ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 132.

⁷²⁴ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 90. Altstadt mentions that Nuri Pasha opposed reforms the Ganja and Baku branches of the Musavat had painstakingly worked out between themselves, but she does not provide a source.

G. Out with the Central Powers, in with the Allies

The Mudros Agreement, which ended hostilities between the Allies and the Ottomans, was finalized on 30 October—just a week after the Mountain Republic’s flag was raised again in Temir-Khan-Shura. According to the agreement’s terms, Turkish troops were allowed to remain in certain parts of the region, mainly Azerbaijan and Daghestan, until the Allies could enter and assess the situation on the ground.⁷²⁵ The agreement also allowed the Allies to take control of the Transcaucasian Railways and occupy Baku and Batumi.⁷²⁶

1. *The first attempt at a regional conference*

On 26 October, the day the Mudros talks started, the Georgian government had invited the Armenian, Azerbaijani and Mountaineer representatives to a regional conference to discuss a common strategy for the world peace conference to be held in Paris. In the invitation, the Georgians put forward their view that “the peoples of Transcaucasia and the Caucasus must be ready to step forward in friendship and solidarity because this is the only way their voices, as small nations and new state formations, would have any weight, and they proposed the following topics for discussion: 1) mutual recognition; 2) the resolution of all contentious issues, including territorial boundaries, or an agreement on choosing arbitrage; 3) a commitment not to enter into agreements harmful to any other Caucasian republics; and 4) solidarity and mutual support at Paris for the purpose of obtaining international recognition for their individual states.⁷²⁷ It was at this time that the Mountaineer leaders again proposed creating a Caucasian confederacy.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁵ Hovannisian 1: 57-58.

⁷²⁶ Sir Frederick Maurice, “The Armistice Convention with Turkey” in *The Armistices of 1918* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), 85-87.

⁷²⁷ “amier-kavkasiis konferencia” (Transcaucasia’s conference), *saqartvelo* 206 (30 October 1918); *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 428-429; “Kavkazskaja konferentsija” (The Caucasian conference), *Gruzija* 47 (30 October 1918).

⁷²⁸ Jabagi, “Revolution and civil war,” 124.

On 31 October, the day after the Mudros agreement was signed, the Armenian plenipotentiary in Georgia responded to the conference invitation by suggesting starting with preliminary negotiations about the agenda, place and time.⁷²⁹ The Georgian foreign minister insisted the conference was envisaged as a forum for preliminary discussions, but the Armenian politicians continued to fixate on this point—to all appearances a stalling tactic.⁷³⁰ It was only in early November that the Armenian parliament met to discuss its own position, and it appears that the date for the conference was then rescheduled for 10 November. The adopted Dashnak proposal insisted that while in principle the Armenian parliament welcomed the idea of a *Transcaucasian* conference, it could not agree to the date of 10 November because the Georgian government had not carried out preliminary preparations in the appropriate manner and the Armenians had not received the invitation in a timely fashion. It also insisted that the time, place, participants and agenda be agreed upon and the territorial question between the Georgian and Armenian republics be resolved first between the two republics themselves before any such conference could be called.⁷³¹

The contents of the Armenian parties' proposals for the parliamentary meeting indicate the Armenian political leadership wanted more control over the organizational process for any kind of regional conference so that they could marginalize the Azerbaijanis from the process and exclude the Mountaineers altogether. Armenia's demand for bilateral resolution of the territorial spat with Georgia also suggests they were categorically opposed to any sort of compromise or outside interference, fearing

⁷²⁹ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 429.

⁷³⁰ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 436.

⁷³¹ "Arm. parlament o zakavkazskoj konferentsii" (The Armenian parliament on the Transcaucasian conference) *Gruzija* 66 (21 November 1918); *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 431-432; R. Ingilo, "konferencia da somxebi" (The conference and the Armenians), *saqartvelo* 225 (22 November 1918).

The Armenian Social Democrats thought that it was important for the Caucasian peoples to show solidarity at the upcoming peace conference and so there would have to be a congress, but they wanted the time, place and participants of the conference to be decided between the Georgian and Armenian governments alone. The Socialists-Revolutionaries and the nonpartisan deputy S. Mamikonjan opposed the conference in general, while the Armenian Popular Party considered the proposals of both the SRs and Dashnaks acceptable to state interests. The note sent by the Armenian Foreign Minister Tigranjan matches the Dashnak proposal. It is reprinted in *Dokumenty i materjaly*. According to R. Ingilo's article, the Armenian parliament held a session on 6 November.

that they would lose territory thereby. Firuz Kazemzadeh interprets their behavior as showing that Armenia was reluctant to submit the resolution of the territorial conflict with Georgia to a court of arbitration dominated by Muslims, especially when the Allies, sympathetic to the Armenians, had defeated the Central Powers.⁷³² Based on information in *saqartvelo*, the Armenian newspapers associated with Dashnaktsutiun (*Horizon* and *Ashkatavor* [Worker]) show the party was also strongly opposed to including the Mountaineers.⁷³³

On 10 November, the representatives of the Georgian, Azerbaijani and Mountain governments met at noon still hopeful the Armenians might show up. However, since the Armenian representative to Georgia claimed he had not yet received instructions about who the Armenian delegates should be, they had to reschedule the conference for 14 November.⁷³⁴ At this time the Armenians insisted again they were not ready and needed at least ten more days. Furthermore, they demanded “information about the composition and authorities of the Mountain Union and the attitude of the Azerbaijanis towards the conference.”⁷³⁵ The conference was rescheduled for 20 November, but the Armenians once more failed to appear.⁷³⁶ Meanwhile, the Armenians continued with their insistence that border issues be decided bilaterally between the concerned states.⁷³⁷ The Georgians finally rescheduled the conference for

⁷³² Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 176.

⁷³³ “kavkasiis saertashoriso konferenciistvis” (For the international conference of the Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 210 (6 November 1918).

⁷³⁴ k. s—dze, “kavkasiis konferenciisatvis” (For the Caucasus’s conference), *saqartvelo* 212 (8 November 1918);

“Kavkazskaja konferentsija” (Caucasian conference), *Gruzija* 58 (12 November 1918).

These were for Georgia the Minister of Foreign Affairs Gegechkori, Minister of Internal Affairs Ramishvili, for Azerbaijan the diplomatic representative in Georgia Dzhafarov and Doctor Vekilov, and for the North Caucasus the Vice-Chairman of the Government Pshemaxo Kotsev and Finance Minister Dzhabagiev.

⁷³⁵ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 131.

⁷³⁶ “amier-kavkasiis erta konferencia” (The conference of Transcaucasia’s nations), *saqartvelo* 223 (20 November 1918); *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 432-434.

⁷³⁷ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 435.

30 November.⁷³⁸ As the North Caucasian, Azerbaijani and Georgian representatives waited in vain for the Armenian leadership to enter into serious talks with them, the situation on the ground was rapidly changing.⁷³⁹

2. *The British arrive in Baku*

On 11 November the Germans and Allies signed the armistice ending the First World War. The Germans were required to withdraw their troops from Russia's territories and evacuate all Black Sea ports.⁷⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the Ottomans were engaged in a gradual withdrawal from the territories of Erevan province.⁷⁴¹ On 17 November, the commander of the North Persia Force, under the India Office, Major General William Montgomerie Thomson, led several companies and Allied representatives into Baku. He was accompanied by General Bicheraxov's Socialist-Revolutionary forces (which had been evacuated from Port Petrovsk). To paraphrase historian Alex Marshall, when Thomson entered Baku, he did so singing praises to Russia and demanding the Azerbaijani national flag be taken down.⁷⁴² One wonders if the fact that relations between Bicheraxov and the Baku Command quickly soured contributed to Thomson's rapid about face whereupon he expressed distrust of Russian "imperialism" and demonstrated particular sympathy to the Muslims.⁷⁴³

On 24 November the newspaper *Azerbajdzhan* published Thomson's proclamation to the Azerbaijani people that the Allied troops had come "to establish order on the Russian territory lying between the Black and Caspian Seas until the Peace Conference could decide any issues related to this territory". This wording shows the

⁷³⁸ *Dokumenty i materjaly*, 435.

⁷³⁹ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 176-181.

⁷⁴⁰ Sir Frederick Maurice, "Conditions of an Armistice with Germany" in *The Armistices of 1918* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), 93-100.

⁷⁴¹ Hovannisian 1: 57-58.

⁷⁴² Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 104.

⁷⁴³ Hovannisian 1: 61. FO 371/6269, "Outline of Events in Transcaucasia from the beginning of the Russian Revolution in the Summer of 1917 to April 1921" by W. J. Childs and A. E. R. McDonell.

commander viewed the Caucasus as Russian territory despite all four Caucasian republics declaring independence and the lack of a legitimate central Russian authority. However, in the declaration, Thomson promised to support Azerbaijani's bid for recognition in Paris if they fulfilled certain conditions.⁷⁴⁴

The Mountain Government also sent a delegation to General Thomson, and its members left their meeting with him under the impression that the British viewed their government as the authorized local body of government and administration for the North Caucasus. On 27 November Thomson informed the Mountain Government in a letter that he would take the same attitude towards them as the Azerbaijanis and support them in Paris, *if* they managed to form a coalition government, set aside all internal divisions, unite against the Bolsheviks, govern their territory impartially and fairly, restore the transportation networks, expel the Turks, convince the Ingush to liberate the British mission held captive at that moment by Bolsheviks in Vladikavkaz, and help the Allies maintain communications with Denikin's Army.⁷⁴⁵

Although the British officials later questioned the authenticity of this letter when the Mountain delegation to Paris tried using it to support their claims at the peace conference, a British summary of the occupation states clearly that, "the Mahommedan Province of Daghestan, which had formed the "North Caucasian Republic"—or the "Mountain Republic"—since May 1917 had been more or less unofficially recognised by the British military authorities at Baku after the armistice".⁷⁴⁶ Thus, the impression the Mountaineer delegation received in their meeting with Thomson matches the Baku Command's real attitude and so it is reasonable to accept they indeed received such a letter.

⁷⁴⁴ "Proklamatsija gen. Tomsona" (General Thomson's proclamation) *Gruzija* 72 (28 November 1918).

⁷⁴⁵ FO 371/3662, « La lettre du Général Thomson au Gouvernement Nord-Caucasien le 27 November 1918 » copy dated 1 July 1919; Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 125; P. Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization in the North Caucasus"; "ucxoetis ambavi, zhurnal-gazetebidan, mtielta respublika da gen. tomsoni" (News from abroad, from the journals and newspapers, the Mountain Republic and Gen. Thomson), *saqartvelo* 236 (10 December 1918); Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 107.

⁷⁴⁶ FO 371/6269, "Outline of Events in Transcaucasia from the beginning of the Russian Revolution in the Summer of 1917 to April 1921" by W. J. Childs and A. E. R. McDonell.

Evidently influenced by his discussions with the Azerbaijani and Mountaineer representatives, on 6 December Thomson penned a report explaining that the locals “hated” Russia and wanted independence. He then argued that the provinces could not be dealt with “piecemeal” and a comprehensive regional policy was needed. Drawing upon this, he proposed an administrative and infrastructural unification as well as the military occupation of Tiflis, Erevan, Petrovsk, Kars, Julfa and Vladikavkaz (and possibly Tabriz) along with the expulsion of all troops other than those actively fighting the Bolsheviks and British or Allied forces. Thomson thought the situation required a prolonged occupation, something desired by the natives but which, he insisted, would require few British troops. Thomson also made it clear he considered the Caucasus a distinct country that encompassed the native lands north and south of the range. He wrote, “The Caucasus, as a country with separate problems, appears to have a Northern limit roughly along the Vladikavkaz-Petrovsk railway line,” to the north of which lived Cossacks who had taken lands from the Caucasian tribes and would prefer to “remain under a regime which gives [them] preferential treatment”.⁷⁴⁷

Thomson has all the markings of a reasonable man eager to let the locals show their capacity for self-government. A supplementary report by the British General R.I.G. Horton from December 1919 confirms that Thomson considered the safest course of action in the Caucasus to be supporting “the formation of coalition governments constituted of moderate men from all parties” and giving the Caucasians a chance to “impress the Allied Powers with their ability for self-Government” by demonstrating their ability to “sink their national animosities and work together in restoring order and property to the country”. This report indicates that the Baku Command saw the Caucasus as a single country and felt it urgent to rid the North Caucasus of the Bolsheviks and take control over the railroad from Petrovsk to Vladikavkaz and possibly all the way to Ekaterinodar.⁷⁴⁸ The motivation for the Baku

⁷⁴⁷ FO 371/3667, “General situation in the Caucasus,” “Notes on General Situation in Caucasus – 6.12.19 [sic]. by Major-General Thomson, Commanding at Baku, 11 January 1919.

⁷⁴⁸ FO 371/3667, “Notes on the Situation in Azerbaijan,” (Signed) R.I.G. Gorton, 8 Dec. 1918.

Command's support of the Mountaineers and Azerbaijan may also have had a basis in the India Office's apparent longstanding distrust of traditional Russian imperialism.⁷⁴⁹

The initial policy goal of the British was to ensure the Ottomans complied with the terms of the Mudros Agreement and to occupy Baku, Batumi and possibly Tiflis in order to reopen the railway and pipeline between the Black Sea and the Caspian. According to a War Office memo from 11 December 1918, the British also desired to support strong independent states in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Daghestan.⁷⁵⁰ Still, they expected everything to be resolved at the Paris Peace Conference and had "no intention of converting these territories into a British Protectorate or annexing them or entangling [themselves] in any commitments which [would] involve the permanent maintenance of large forces in the district."⁷⁵¹

Meanwhile, the Mountaineers endeavored to fulfill Thomson's demands. For one thing, they secured the release of the British mission in Vladikavkaz thanks to Ingush help.⁷⁵² Then on 10 December certain Terek Cossack representatives reached an agreement with the Mountaineers to join their union as equal members enjoying proportional representation and administrative authority. Both sides hoped this move would make it possible to finally resolve fairly the land problem between their

⁷⁴⁹ FO 371/6269, "Outline of Events in Transcaucasia from the beginning of the Russian Revolution in the Summer of 1917 to April 1921" by W. J. Childs and A. E. R. McDonell; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 167-169.

According to the Childs and McDonell report, "The Mesopotamian division [under the India Office, Baku Command] were said to have the traditional Anglo-Indian suspicion of everything pertaining to Russian imperialism."

⁷⁵⁰ FO 371/3661, War Office to G.O.C. in C., G.H.C. Salonika, 72436 cipher, 11 December 1918. See also A.B. Murphy, "Black Sea, Civil War 1919-1920," *Revolutionary Russia* 14, no. 2 (June 2008): 33.

⁷⁵¹ FO 371/3661, War Office to G.O.C. in C., G.H.C. Salonika, 72436 cipher, 11 December 1918.

⁷⁵² Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization in the Caucasus."; "Protest sojuznago Medzhnisa gortsev Kavkaza po povodu vozzvanija polkovnika Rolandsona. Sojuznym Medzhnislom gortsev Kavkaza podan Verhovnomu Komissaru Velikobritanii na Kavkaze Oliveru Uodropu sledujushii protest" (The protest of the Medzhnisl of the Mountaineers of the Caucasus because of the announcement of Colonel Rawlinson. The following protest was submitted by the Allied Medzhnisl of the Mountaineers of the Caucasus to the High Commissioner of Great Britain in the Caucasus Oliver Wardrop.), *Volnyj gorets* 7 (27 October 1919).

populations “on the basis of social justice”.⁷⁵³ Thus, in mid-December, Chermoev’s government was replaced by a new coalition government which included the Terek Cossacks. Pshemakho Kotsev headed the new government, which was heavily reliant on the British.⁷⁵⁴ The British representative to the Mountaineer government was Colonel Rawlinson.⁷⁵⁵ According to Kotsev, Rawlinson made the following statement to the Mountain Parliament on 19 December: “Despite the fact that your government is waging a two-front war, complete order prevails among you. You are concerned about the freedom and independence of your country. The solution to this problem does not depend on me. It depends on the Peace Conference. I regard it as my duty to report to my government everything that I myself have seen and have discussed with your government, and I will speak in your favor.”⁷⁵⁶

The British soon extended their presence beyond Baku and Daghestan. On 27 November, the British consul in Baku arrived in Tiflis accompanied by two English and four Russian officers.⁷⁵⁷ Three days later, the first English ships anchored at Poti, sailing for Batumi on 31 November.⁷⁵⁸ The British occupation of Batumi began on 27 December with the arrival of a force under General Forestier-Walker sent from the Salonika army. This force was subordinate to the War Office and had many officers formerly attached to General Denikin’s staff. It was this force that would set up headquarters in Tiflis and oversee the occupation of Georgia. Although sympathetic enough to the Georgians, it showed its primary preference to the Russians. The

⁷⁵³ Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization in the Caucasus.”

⁷⁵⁴ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 107.

⁷⁵⁵ Jabagi, “Revolution and civil war,” 126; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 107.

⁷⁵⁶ Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization in the Caucasus,” no page numbers indicated.

⁷⁵⁷ “inglisis elchis chamosvla,” *saqartvelo* 231, 30 November 1918.

There are inconsistencies on the dates in the literature and primary sources.

⁷⁵⁸ “ingliselebi soxumshi,” *saqartvelo* 232 (4 December 1918).

A different article in the same issue says that on 20 December the English arrived in Sokhumi and on the 30th they sailed south. This doesn’t make sense because the article was published on 30 November, so they probably meant that on 29 November they arrived in Sokhumi. On the 30th they sailed to Poti. And on 1 December they left Poti for Batumi. This is “ingliselebi sokhumshi” (The English in Sokhumi), *saqartvelo* 231 (30 November 1918).

opposing views towards Russia and the “native peoples” between the War Office and the Baku Command under the India Office contributed to an unstable British policy that would frustrate the locals, especially the Mountaineers who would soon lose their republic thanks in part to British incoherence. As for the Armenians, they expected, in vain, preferential treatment based on the fact that the British had shown them considerable support theretofore. Adding to the “confusion”, a French Military Mission headed by Colonel Chardigny also came to Transcaucasia where it showed itself to be in strong support of reincorporating Transcaucasia into Russia and worked to convince the Armenians to support the Russian Volunteer Army.⁷⁵⁹

When the tsarist regime collapsed in the February Revolution, the process of the old empire’s disintegration immediately started. Almost no one wanted Russia to break into pieces, but people had different ideas about how centralized or decentralized it should be structurally with regard to the national question. Over the course of 1917, however, the country cracked apart spontaneously, and by spring 1918 it can be said the decentralization processes was complete in the Caucasus, as four republics had declared their independence. Meanwhile, the Soviets were asserting their dominance in much of the North Caucasus and Baku. The Bolsheviks wanted to keep the entire region within Russia under the dictatorship of the proletariat even if they were willing to apply the form of a “centralizing federation” and pay lip-service to the concept of self-determination to do so. As the Bolsheviks attempted to expand over the summer and fall though, the Georgians, Azerbaijanis and North Caucasian Republic managed to push back against the Soviets rather successfully thanks to the support they received from the Central Powers, and the Bolsheviks were also challenged by other groups like the Volunteer Army in the Kuban (failing to stop them in the spring but returning to push them out in the fall) and the Cossack-Ossetian rebellion in the Terek.

By the time the Soviets had been pushed back out of Daghestan, however, the Central Powers lost the First World War, and the Turks and Germans were replaced by the British and their allies in the Caucasus. In general, the Allies were keen to support

⁷⁵⁹ FO 371/6269, “Outline of Events in Transcaucasia from the beginning of the Russian Revolution in the Summer of 1917 to April 1921” by W. J. Childs and A. E. R. McDonell.

General Denikin's anti-Bolshevik Volunteer Army that was already moving into the North Caucasus by late 1918—although the British Command in Baku argued for supporting the Caucasian republics and even a regional project. At this time these policies were not entirely contradictory, as the Mountaineers were planning to cooperate with the Volunteers in their push to drive the Soviets out of Vladikavkaz and the Terek. But by early 1919, the Volunteer generals imbued with the dream of restoring a unitary Russia “one and indivisible” would show their intolerance to the Caucasians' wish for self-determination or cooperation as equals.

In the former empire, the left-right divide was manifest broadly in the struggle between the Soviets and the Volunteers, and in the Caucasus this divide was also found within each unique national or religious society, a fact reflected, for example, in the way ideological affiliations cut across the region's many ethnic and religious lines and inside national parliamentary or press debates. Although the national-regional question of 1917 had been “answered” in 1918 with total decentralization from the all-Russian and regional levels upon the formation of four independent national republics in the Caucasus, the idea of creating a regional confederation was put forward repeatedly throughout 1918 by the North Caucasians, and the hope of at least presenting a united front to the international community was expressed in the Georgian call for a Caucasian conference.

V. 1919: RESISTING THE WHITES AND WANTING RECOGNITION

In early 1919 the Volunteer Army pushed the Soviets out of the North Caucasus, but the Russian generals refused to recognize the Mountaineers' contribution to the expulsion of the Reds or cooperate with the Mountain Republic's leadership despite the latter's wish for this. The Whites' pressure against the North Caucasian leaders and people exacerbated the tensions within local societies along all three axes. The Mountain Republic deteriorated as its right wing sided with the incoming Russian centralist forces, causing the republic to lose what remained of its interethnic and interclass cohesion and collapse by summer.

Watching the Volunteer Army approach, many Caucasian political leaders feared it as a threat to their national aspirations or the "gains of the revolution", or both, depending on their ideological position. Thus, in the face of a shared danger, they revisited the regional question at a conference in Tiflis and at the international peace conference in Paris. At the spring conference in Tiflis, Georgian, Azerbaijani and North Caucasian representatives pushed for the creation of a common defense front that could serve as a step towards a stronger political and economic union. In Paris, the Azerbaijani and Mountaineer delegations in particular promoted the idea of a Caucasian union, arguing that it would augment all of the new republics' chances of getting international recognition and support. However, thanks to Armenian hesitation and the fall of the Mountain Republic, the Tiflis regional conference produced only the June 1919 mutual defense treaty between Georgia and Azerbaijan; and the Muslims' efforts in Paris resulted in little more than a few statements of solidarity.

Although in the Mountain societies certain elements among the officers, well-to-do elements and religious conservatives supported Denikin, the Volunteer Command's total disregard for the principle of self-determination coupled with forced requisitions and levies provoked a resistance of a spontaneous, popular character with strong leftist and religious overtones. The resistance was strongest in the northeast Caucasus under the leadership of the Daghestani mullahs Ali-Xadzhi Akushinskij and Uzun Xadzhi. Although these mullahs cooperated with Red partisans in the area, this

was a tactical move proving no real support for the Soviet project.⁷⁶⁰ Akushinskij and Uzun Xadzhi also cooperated with each other and the patriotic Mountaineer intelligentsia operating in Transcaucasia; together they formed new political structures such as the Defense Council of the Republic of the North Caucasus based in Levashi, Daghestan and the Allied Mejlis in Tiflis, which must be considered as the coordinated grassroots replacements of the fallen Mountain Republic. While many North Caucasians fought the Volunteers over the summer and autumn in what they saw as a struggle for self-determination and physical survival (not just “for Sharia”), the Transcaucasian republics enjoyed some breathing space for setting up their new states.

The Mountain resistance leaders repeatedly urged the Georgians and Azerbaijanis to help them, arguing that if they failed, the Transcaucasian republics would be Denikin’s next target. Although Noe Zhordania claimed in his memoirs that the Georgian government did everything to help, and the Georgian Leo Kereselidze led a group of officers to fight alongside Uzun Xadzhi’s emirate in Chechnya, the North Caucasians continually insisted they were getting insufficient support. In fact, the Mountaineer leaders were mostly welcome in Tiflis and received some charity, and there was sympathy for them in Azerbaijan, but evidence is still required to show that they received substantial backing from the Georgian or Azerbaijani governments against the Whites, and the question remains as to whether this would have been due to a lack of will or a lack of resources coupled with the fear of losing their own chances of international support should they do anything to oppose Denikin’s “anti-Bolshevik” efforts.⁷⁶¹ Despite the paucity of support from their neighbors and hostility from the world powers patronizing Denikin, the Mountaineers put up a serious resistance to the

⁷⁶⁰ See, for instance, A. N. Popov, *Revoljutsionnaja Chechnja v ogne srazhenij* (Revolutionary Chechnya in the flame of battle) (Groznyj: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1973), 66.

⁷⁶¹ NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Russia, Political, Decypher, from Mr. Wardrop, 26 September 1919; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Russia, Political, from Wardrop, 7 October 1919; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Russia, Decypher, from Wardrop, 8 October 1919; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Russia, Political, Decypher, from Wardrop, 8 October 1919; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Russia, Political, Decypher, from Wardrop, 12 October 1919; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3664, Russia, Military, Decypher, from Wardrop, 19 October 1919; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Decypher, from Wardrop, 20 October 1919; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3664, Military, Decypher, from Wardrop, 28 October 1919, NPLG, BA, FO 371/3673, Russia, Political, from Mr. Grundy (Tiflis), 28 January 1920.

Volunteer Army over 1919, contributing to the Volunteers' weakened ability to fight the Red forces further north in Russia.

The Russian generals' arrogance and inhumanity towards the native North Caucasians, which provoked the crippling Mountain resistance, combined with their insensitivity towards Cossack wishes for a separate military command and political autonomy contributed in a major way to the Whites' failure to beat the Bolsheviks.⁷⁶² Considering the Mountain Government had expected to cooperate with the Volunteer Command, Denikin could have efficiently secured his rear through reaching an agreement with the Mountaineers, who would have worked with him to eliminate the Red elements in the mountains. Instead, his command took a domineering, heavy-handed approach, denying the North Caucasian nations their basic right to self-determination, robbing them of their men and resources, killing women and children, and then punishing the natives severely for "insubordination". This strict centralist vision and naked arrogance provoked a sustained popular resistance among the Mountaineers that drained the Volunteers of forces desperately needed in the north. Furthermore, it alienated many "federalist" Cossacks otherwise ready to join the fight against the Communists. By the end of 1919 it was evident the Whites would soon be

⁷⁶² Anton Ivanovich Denikin, *Ocherki Russkoj smuty, Vooruzhennye sily Juga Rossii* (Sketches of the Russian turmoil, The Armed Forces of Southern Russia), vol. 4 (Slovo, Berlin, 1925), chapter 14, 114, <https://www.prlib.ru/item/436174>; Peter Kenez, "The Relations between the Volunteer Army and Georgia, 1918-1920: A Case Study in Disunity," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 48, no. 112 (July 1970): 418; Peter Kenez, *Red Attack White Resistance: Civil War in South Russia, 1918*, (USA: New Academia Publishing, 2004), 219-230; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3673, Letter from Wardrop to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 6 January 1920; NPLG, British Archives, FO 371/6269, "Outline of Events in Transcaucasia from the beginning of the Russian Revolution in the Summer of 1917 to April 1921" by W. J. Childs and A. E. R. McDonell. See subheading "General Denikin assumes Supreme Command of Anti-Bolshevik Forces in South-East Russia"; Jonathan D. Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars 1916-1926: Ten Years That Shook the World*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), 108-109.

Peter Kenez and Jonathan Smele note the detrimental effect that the Volunteers' attitude towards the nationalities' wish for self-determination had on the success of their struggle against the Bolsheviks. Wardrop himself wrote, "On the above I would observe that I still adhere to my opinion that the inclusion of Daghestan in Denikin's line was a serious mistake and against the real interests of the Volunteer Army. If we adopted a sympathetic attitude towards the Mountaineers I believe we could count on their assistance."

replaced by the Reds in the North Caucasus—and the Mountaineers were warning their neighbors the Caucasus would be lost without a confederation.⁷⁶³

A. Denikin's Volunteer Army enters the North Caucasus

In early January, White forces took territory around Mineralnye Vody.⁷⁶⁴ At this time the Georgians also feared that Denikin was concentrating troops around Tuapse in preparation for an attack on Georgia.⁷⁶⁵ However, even as the Volunteer Army expanded into the North Caucasus, the British GHQ Constantinople and Batumi (Batumi) assured the Georgians that Denikin had no plans to attack them, and General Thomson in Baku told the same to the Mountaineers, going so far as to warn Denikin's local theater commander, General Erdeli, that any changes to the status of Daghestan, whose government he had unofficially recognized, would have to be discussed first with General Milne in Constantinople.⁷⁶⁶ In fact, Denikin's army occupied the Sochi district straightaway in February and refused to withdraw his troops despite being told to do so by the British.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶³ NPLG, British Archives, FO 371/6269, "Outline of Events in Transcaucasia from the beginning of the Russian Revolution in the Summer of 1917 to April 1921" by W. J. Childs and A. E. R. McDonell; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3661, A report on the Georgian Government, 31.

⁷⁶⁴ Jabagi (Cabagi), Vassan-Giray, "Revolution and civil war in the North Caucasus – end of the 19th-beginning of the 20th century," *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 1-2 (1991): 127; Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 6; Andrej Grigorevich Shkuro, *Zapiski belogo partizana* (Notes of a White partisan), chap. 19, 70, https://www.academia.edu/33661427/A_Shkuro_-_Zapiski_belogo_partizana.

⁷⁶⁵ Zourab Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia in International Politics, 1918-1921* (London: Headley Brothers, 1940), 177-187; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3661, A report on the Georgian Government from Major McDonnell, 5 March 1919, Appendix IV, 27.

⁷⁶⁶ Bülent Gökay, "Turkish Settlement and the Caucasus, 1918-20" in *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics*, ed. Sylvia Kedourie (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 1996), 47; Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 127; Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 106, 116; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3661, A report on the Georgian Government, Appendix IV, 27.

General George Francis Milne was commander of the British Army of the Black Sea, headquartered in Constantinople.

⁷⁶⁷ Kenez, "The Relations between the Volunteer Army and Georgia," 415-416; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3661, A report on the Georgian Government from Major McDonnell, 5 March 1919, Appendix IV, 28.

Both fearing the danger which could come from the north, the Georgian and Mountain governments assured each other of their peoples' "close, fraternal union" and "friendly-neighborly mood". Illustrating the Mountaineers' general perception of Georgia as a potential source of support against a Russian invasion and the Menshevik government's hesitancy towards committing to a defensive alliance with the North Caucasians, the Mountain government expressed its hope that "if someday danger should ever await either of the two republics' independence" then "they should defend it hand-in-hand clasped across their own breast", but Noe Zhordania's "friendly" response made no reference to mutual self-defense.⁷⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the Mountain Republic continued to function, and on 20 January 1919, the Mountain Republic Union Council opened its first session. Representatives came from every national group except the Kabardians, Balkars and Karanogai, who could not make it on time. The chairman, Zubair Temirxanov, stated in his opening speech that the North Caucasians did not yet know what form their relationship with Russia would take or what the powers at the Paris Peace Conference would dictate but that their fate was in their own hands and they would be successful if they could be organized and strong politically, as well as solve the difficult social issues.⁷⁶⁹ The arrival of the Volunteers, however, left them with little opportunity to organize their free political life.

At this juncture, the Mountain Republic's right wing dominated in political circles, but there was also a weaker "patriotic" faction, "the independentists", who placed national independence or self-determination first whilst tending to lean more towards the left on social and economic issues. Both of these groups were willing to cooperate with Denikin's Volunteer Army because they saw the Volunteers as a potential ally against the Bolsheviks and British support for their independence project

⁷⁶⁸ "mtielta mtavrobas salami saqartvelos mtavrobas (The Mountain government's greeting to the Georgian government) and "saqartvelos mtavrobisagan, mtielta mtavrobas (From the Georgian government to the Mountain government), *saqartvelo* 9 (14 January 1919); Osmanov, *The union*, 120.

⁷⁶⁹ Osmanov, *The union*, 119-120.

bid depended on such cooperation.⁷⁷⁰ The Ingush, who held the key to the central Caucasus and blocked the way to Georgia, were the first to put up a serious resistance to Denikin—but not because they were defending the Soviets. Despite Denikin’s self-contradictory assessment that they were at once the “Landsknechts” (mercenaries) of Soviet power and the ones preventing the Soviets from taking over their territory, a British report from January 1919 characterized the Ingush as staunchly anti-Bolshevik and suggested they would appreciate military support against the Soviets until the Volunteer Army could arrive.⁷⁷¹ This indicates the Ingush national leadership was also in agreement with the policy of the Mountain Republic. In fact, the Ingush were surprised when the Volunteer Army attacked them, and they resisted in self-defense.⁷⁷²

Commencing their operation against the remains of the Red Army in the North Caucasus and the native inhabitants, on 27 January (14 January OS), the Caucasian Volunteer Command sent two forces towards the Terek oblast. Anticipating the Volunteers’ assault, the radicalized populations of Groznyj and Vladikavkaz prepared to defend themselves or evacuate. Since Vladikavkaz was the first target, Red forces from Groznyj headed there, and the oblast capital was already full of wounded Red soldiers who had fled before the incoming Whites, causing a great strain on the local population.⁷⁷³ General Liachov, infamous for his brutal actions in the 1905 Revolution in the North Caucasus, led the 3rd Army Corps south and southeast towards Vladikavkaz and Groznyj whilst General Pokrovskij led the 1st Cavalry Corps in the direction of the Caspian Sea.⁷⁷⁴ As Pokrovskij pushed eastward he defeated a large

⁷⁷⁰ “Gorskaja respublika i dobrovolčeskaja armija” (The Mountain Republic and the Volunteer Army), *Gruzija* 46 (28 February 1919); National Archives of Georgia (NAG) Central Historical Archives (CHA), fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “Protokol chasnago soveshhanija Kavkazskoj Konferentsii 29 Maja 1919” (Protocol of the private meeting of the Caucasian Conference 29 May 1919); Jabagi, “Revolution and civil war,” 127.

⁷⁷¹ Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 97-98; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3661, A report on the Georgian Government, 20; Jabagi, “Revolution and civil war,” 127-128.

⁷⁷² Jabagi, “Revolution and civil war,” 128.

⁷⁷³ “tšerili kavkavidan” (Letter from Kavkaz [Vladikavkaz]), *saqartvelo* 9 (14 January 1919).

⁷⁷⁴ Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 111; Jabagi, “Revolution and civil war,” 129.

force of Bolsheviks and then occupied Mozdok on the 28th—apparently receiving British air support.⁷⁷⁵

Meanwhile, it seems as if the British and Mountaineers were trying to push forward together against the Bolsheviks to meet the Whites coming towards them. According to Tsalikov, on 2 February, Red Army units abandoned the emptying city of Vladikavkaz for the village of Bazorkino, and the city fell into the hands of two Ingush squadrons.⁷⁷⁶ In Transcaucasia, the local press reported that Kotsev's government had received word that the Ingush had taken the city.⁷⁷⁷ Soon thereafter, Kotsev himself claimed Ingush partisans loyal to the Mountain Republic had taken the city from the Reds on 31 January. Within a few days, however, it appears the Bolsheviks returned to the city and tried to reassert authority, which could explain why Denikin claimed his army took the city from Bolsheviks and pro-Bolshevik Ingush.⁷⁷⁸ Further east, by the second, British forces had occupied Port Petrovsk and were attempting to hold the railway from the coast to Vladikavkaz, perhaps in cooperation with the Mountain

⁷⁷⁵ “brdzola chrdilo-kavkasiashi” (The fight in the North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 33 (12 February 1919); “V Terskoj oblasti, Anglichane na Sev. Kavkaze” (In the Terek oblast, English in the North Caucasus), *Azerbajdzhan* 34 (14 February 1919); NPLG, BA, FO 371/3667, C. “The Caucasus,” 2 February 1919; Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 111.

⁷⁷⁶ A. Tsalikov, “Grazhdanskaja vojna v Terskom krae” (The civil war in the Terek kraj), from the 4 February 1919 issue of the Tiflis paper *Borba*, reprinted in S. M. Isxakov, *Grazhdanskaja vojna v Rossii i musulmane: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (The civil war in Russia and the Muslims: A collection of documents and materials) (Moscow: Tsentr strategicheskoy konjunktury, 2014).

⁷⁷⁷ “Poslednija izvestija: Razgrom Bol'shevikov v Terskoj oblasti” (Latest news: Defeat of the Bolsheviks in the Terek oblast), *Azerbajdzhan* 8 February (29 January) 1919. Based on a telegram from Kotsev from 7 February.

⁷⁷⁸ “Beseda s predsedatelem gorskago pravitel'stva (A conversation with the chairman of the Mountain government), *Azerbajdzhan* 36 and (18 [5] February 1919); “Beseda s predsedatelem gorskago pravitel'stva” (Conversation with the chairman of the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 42 (23 February 1919); NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “Protokol chastnago sovesh'anija Kavkazskoj Konferentsii 29 Maja 1919” (Protocol of the private meeting of the Caucasian Conference of 29 May 1919); Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 118; Tsalikov, “Grazhdanskaja vojna v Terskom krae.”

Alixan Kantemir, representing the Mountain Republic at the Caucasian Conference in spring 1919 told the Transcaucasian republics' representatives that Vladikavkaz was taken first by forces loyal to the Mountain Republic and then occupied by Bolsheviks.

forces.⁷⁷⁹ Denikin claimed in his memoirs that at this juncture the Volunteer Command feared the British may have been commanding local forces aiming for Groznyj and its valuable oil, which apparently inspired them to hasten there.⁷⁸⁰ On 3 February the British bombed Shēdrinskaja stanitsa as well as Bolsheviks in Groznyj, following up with an air attack on Naurskaja stanitsa near Mozdok.⁷⁸¹

Although the British Baku Command had been anxious to keep the Volunteers from advancing into the Mountain Republic's territory, the British War Office backed Denikin's designs on the North Caucasus. In January, Thomson made an agreement with Denikin that the Volunteer Army would not operate south of the Caucasus main range or northern border of the Mountain Republic. However, on 1 February the War Office sent Constantinople a telegram stating that Denikin's forces must be allowed to enter the North Caucasus at will as far south as the line from Tuapse to Zakataly (Zaqatala), that is to say, the Volunteers were to be allowed to occupy the Daghestan and the Terek oblasts.⁷⁸² Moreover, the telegram gave instructions to hand over control to Denikin as soon as he "cleared" the area.⁷⁸³

Thus, considering the timing of this telegram, it does not seem to be a coincidence that the Volunteers pushed hard against the Ingush and by extension the Mountain Republic in the first days of February.⁷⁸⁴ Leaving some forces at Proxladnenskyj uzel, Liaxov sent the Cossack Generals Shkuro and Gejman down the banks of the Terek towards Vladikavkaz and the Circassian General Kelech-Girej's

⁷⁷⁹ "brdzola chrdilo-kavkasiashi" (The fight in the North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 33 (12 February 1919); GNPL, BA, FO 371/3667, C. "The Caucasus," 2 February 1919; "V Terskoj oblasti, Anglichane na Sev. Kavkaze" (In the Terek oblast, English in the North Caucasus), *Azerbajdzhan* 34 (14 February 1919).

⁷⁸⁰ Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 112.

⁷⁸¹ "V Terskoj oblasti, Anglichane na Sev. Kavkaze" (In the Terek oblast, the English in the North Caucasus), *Azerbajdzhan* 34 (14 [1] February 1919).

⁷⁸² NPLG, BA, FO 371/3661, A report on the Georgian Government from Major McDonnell, 5 March 1919, Appendix IV, 28; NPLG, British Archives, FO 371/6269, "Outline of Events in Transcaucasia from the beginning of the Russian Revolution in the Summer of 1917 to April 1921" by W. J. Childs and A. E. R. McDonnell. See the section "General Denikin and Baku."

⁷⁸³ A.B. Murphy, "Black Sea, Civil War 1919-1920," *Revolutionary Russia* 14, no. 2 (June 2008): 34.

⁷⁸⁴ Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 112.

Circassian division through the Sunzha River valley towards Groznyj. Around two thousand Ingush cavalymen then blocked Kelech-Girej's Circassian forces near the village of Axlovo, refusing them passage until receiving approval from the Ingush National Council, which appealed to the Mountain Government for instructions.

After Kelech-Girej's unsuccessful attack against the well-armed Ingush around Axlovo, Liaxov sent in the reserves from Proxladnenskyj uzel to "liquidate" their resistance, giving the Ingush an ultimatum near Dolakovo on 9 February. Denikin claims the Ingush National Council declared unconditional submission on the same day, which freed up the Volunteers to finish taking Vladikavkaz on the tenth. Kotsev and Dzhabagiev, however, claim that the Ingush National Council refused to submit, and the Azerbaijani press was reporting continuing fighting as late as the fourteenth. It seems from the available sources that perhaps the Ingush blocked the way in the first days of the month, appealing to the Mountain Government for instructions since they had been previously assured the Volunteers would not attack them, but were overwhelmed by the ninth, after which there may have been some continued fighting. At any rate, the ultimatum demanding "submission" disregarded the Mountain government's and Ingush leadership's original inclination to cooperate with the Volunteers.⁷⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the Volunteer Command pushed further into the North

⁷⁸⁵ "Beseda s predsedelem gorskago pravitel'stva (A conversation with the chairman of the Mountain government) and "V gorskoj respublike (Ot nashego temir-xan-shurinskago korrespondenta)" (In the Mountain Republic [From our Temir-Khan-Shura correspondent]), *Azerbajdzhan* 36 (18 [5 OS] February 1919); "Beseda s predsedelem gorskago pravitel'stva" (Conversation with the chairman of the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 42 (23 February 1919); Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 112; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3661, A report on the Georgian Government, 20; Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 128; "V Terskoj oblast, Divizija kubanskix cherkesov" (In the Terek oblast, The Kuban Circassian division) and "V Terskoj oblast, U\ltimatum dobrovo\cheskoj armii ingusham (In the Terek oblast, The Volunteer Army's ultimatum to the Ingush), *Azerbajdzhan* 34 (14 [1 OS] February 1919); Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 11.

Axlovo is now called Nizhnij Kurp. It is located between Proxladnij and Mozdok, north of Dolakovo. Dolakovo is located near Nazran, where the Ingush National Council was, and north of Vladikavkaz. According to Dzhabagiev, after receiving the ultimatum, the Ingush National Council asked the Mountain government for an explanation and fighting lasted seven days. His dates do not correspond exactly with those given by Denikin, however. Denikin says the Ingush immediately complied on the ninth, after six days of battle, thus freeing up the Volunteers to take Vladikavkaz on the tenth. Perhaps, the Volunteers first demanded passage to Vladikavkaz and Groznyj, to which the Ingush refused, appealing to the Mountain Government for instructions, and then Kotsev learned of the situation on the sixth. Then, after about a week of fighting, the Volunteers finally obtained the tactical "submission" of the Ingush on the ninth. This is what Popov's account seems to suggest. Kotsev himself said at the time that on the sixth he received word that the Volunteers were attacking the Ingush and that he appealed to

Caucasus, taking Vladikavkaz on the tenth and declaring a great victory on the eleventh.⁷⁸⁶

Indicative of the chaotic situation, there were reports at the time that Vladikavkaz was being held by the “Ingush and Bolsheviks” and that Kabardian and Balkarian Bolshevik forces were heading to aid the Ingush against the Volunteer Army.⁷⁸⁷ Considering a Circassian division was fighting against the Ingush while radicalized Kabardians and Balkars were attempting to help them, this is a clear example of how Mountain society was divided within itself along the right-left axis. Though the Bolsheviks were involved at this time in the fighting for Vladikavkaz and Groznyj, it seems more likely they were helping the locals than the other way around. For example, although Ordzhonikidze informed Lenin that the Chechens and Reds defended Groznyj together and that “the Ingush Spirit has reached a spectacular high”, insinuating the Chechens and Ingush had rallied for the Red cause, the accounts of North Caucasian leaders claim the local population was loyal to the Mountain Government and had to mobilize for self-defense after the Volunteers refused to negotiate.⁷⁸⁸ In another instance, the Bolshevik A. Popov writes that Red students, as well as forces from Groznyj and Bolshevized Kabardians and Balkarians, went “to help” the Ingush defend the approach to Vladikavkaz.⁷⁸⁹ Although in both Red and

the British and Volunteer Command on the seventh. An Azerbaijani correspondent in Temir-Xan-Shura also confirmed Kotsev’s words and that the republic’s chairman had received word that the city was being held by Ingush partisans loyal to the Mountain Republic.

⁷⁸⁶ Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 112.

⁷⁸⁷ Anton Ivanovich Denikin, *Očerki Russkoj smuty, Vooruzhennye sily Juga Rossii, Raspad Rossijskoj imperii, Oktjabr 1918 – janvar 1919, Vospominanija, Memuary* (Sketches of the Russian turmoil, The armed forces of the South of Russia, The collapse of the Russian empire, Recollections, Memoirs, October 1918 – January 1919) (Minsk: Xarvest, 2002), 223; Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 11; “V Terskoj oblasti, v rajone Vladikavkaza” (In the Terek oblast, in Vladikavkaz rajon) and “V Terskoj oblast, Divizija kubanskix cherkesov” (In the Terek oblast, The Kuban Circassian division), *Azerbajdzhan* 34 (14 [1] February 1919).

Popov also reports Kabardian and Balkarian Bolsheviks fighting with the Ingush against the Volunteers around Vladikavkaz.

⁷⁸⁸ A. D. Avdeev, *Stodnevnye boi v Groznom: Sbornik istoricheskix ocherkov i vspominanij* (Groznyj: Checheno-Ingushskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1959), 33; Jabagi, “Revolution and civil war,” 127.

⁷⁸⁹ Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 11.

White versions of the story, the Ingush were defending the Bolsheviks, Dzhabagiev, Kotsev and an Azerbaijani correspondent in Temir-Xan-Shura insist they were fighting for the Mountain Republic.⁷⁹⁰ Interestingly, it appears that on 10 February General Thomson personally thanked the Mountain Republic and the Ingush for clearing Vladikavkaz of the Bolsheviks.⁷⁹¹

The conflicting claims over rightful control of Vladikavkaz were repeated with regard to Groznyj. On 3 February, pro-Soviet forces abandoned Groznyj in the face of the Volunteer Army's "advance units". These may actually have been native forces, since Kotsev and papers in Transcaucasia claimed at the time that Chechen partisans took Groznyj on the third and were soon joined by troops loyal to the republic.⁷⁹² Volunteer forces under General Shatilov's command then took over the city on the fifth as British airplanes set Bolshevik barracks in Groznyj ablaze.⁷⁹³ A power struggle subsequently ensued between the Volunteer Command and Mountain Government, each claiming jurisdiction in the city and surrounding area.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁹⁰ "Beseda s predsdatelem gorskago praviteľstva (A conversation with the chairman of the Mountain government) and "V gorskoj respublike (Ot nashego temir-xan-shurinskago korrespondenta)" (In the Mountain Republic [From our Temir-Khan-Shura correspondent]), *Azerbajdzhan* 36 and (18 [5] February 1919); "Beseda s predsdatelem gorskago praviteľstva" (Conversation with the chairman of the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 42 (23 February 1919); Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 112; Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 127.

⁷⁹¹ Denikin, *Ocherki Russkoj smuty ... Ocjabr 1918 – janvar 1919*, 222-223; "Pišmo gener. Tomsona" (Gener. Thomson's letter), *Volnyj gorets* 11, 20 November 1919.

According to a reprint of the same letter Denikin is referring to from the paper *Iskra*, Thomson wrote from Baku and praised the Ingush for clearing their "homeland" (not Vladikavkaz, as Denikin wrote) of the Bolsheviks.

⁷⁹² Avdeev, *Hundred Days Battle*, 33; "Beseda s predsdatelem gorskago praviteľstva (A conversation with the chairman of the Mountain government), *Azerbajdzhan* 36 (18 [5] February 1919); "Beseda s predsdatelem gorskago praviteľstva" (Conversation with the representative of the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 42 (23 February 1919); "Nastuplenie na Grozniĭ" (Advance on Groznyj), *Azerbajdzhan* 29 (8 February [26 January] 1919); Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 10-11.

⁷⁹³ "brdzola chrdilo-kavkasiashi" (The fight in the North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 33 (12 February 1919); Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 112; Denikin, *Ocherki Russkoj smuty ... Ocjabr 1918 – janvar 1919*, 223; "V Terskoj oblasti, Anglichane na Sev. Kavkaze" (In the Terek oblast, English in the North Caucasus), *Azerbajdzhan* 34 (14 February 1919).

⁷⁹⁴ NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, "Protokol chastnago soveshānija Kavkazskoj Konferentsii" (Protocol of the private meeting of the Caucasian Conference), 29 May 1919; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 116-117; Shatilov, P. "V Dobrovol'cheskoj armii (iz vspominanij)" (In the Volunteer

At this point, the North Caucasian leaders appealed to the British in Baku and set off to reason with the Volunteer Command in Ekaterinodar.⁷⁹⁵ Once Kotsev's delegation reached Ekaterinodar, however, Denikin refused to see the Mountaineer representatives and, in a deeply insulting gesture, pawned them off on the offensive General Liachov. According to the historian Alex Marshall, Liachov savored watching Kotsev's face collapse into total despondency when, on 25 February, he showed him the text of the British telegram stating that Daghestan "was to enter entirely into the sphere of influence of the Volunteer Army".⁷⁹⁶ Up until this point, the Mountain leadership had believed there must be some sort of misunderstanding since the Baku Command had seemed so sincere in its support. After this, they felt betrayed by the British.

On 6 February, Volunteer Army forces also landed south of Sochi and gave the Georgians an ultimatum demanding they evacuate the Sochi district by midnight. Although the Georgians received some limited political support from the British, protests to the British had no effect for the North Caucasus.⁷⁹⁷ In early March, Liachov was demanding the Mountain government resign and disband its army, and he was planning to divide the union into national okrugs, placing his loyal men in charge of each one.⁷⁹⁸ Then, even though the Volunteers had yet to subdue the Chechen areas or mountainous Daghestan, Liachov began demanding troops and attempting repressions in Daghestan. At first the Mountaineer leadership attempted to hold the population

Army [from memoirs]) in *Rossija zabytaja i neizvestnaja: Beloe Dvizhenie* (Russia forgotten and unknown: The White Movement), vol. 6, *Vtoroj Kubanskij poход i osvobozhdenie Severnogo Kavkaza* (The second Kuban campaign and liberation of the North Caucasus) (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2002), 320.

⁷⁹⁵ P. Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization in the North Caucasus," *Caucasian Review* 1955. No. 1: 47-54, no 3. 45-53, 13-14. This article does not have page numbers indicated; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 117.

⁷⁹⁶ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 117.

⁷⁹⁷ NPLG, BA, 371/3661, A report on the Georgian Government, Appendix IV, 27-28.

⁷⁹⁸ "Dobrovol'cheskaja armija i Gorskaja respublika" (The Volunteer Army and the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 49 (4 March 1919).

back, but as soon as it was obvious that the Volunteers were not really hunting Bolsheviks but rather blatantly attacking the native population, they were forced to mobilize for self-defense.⁷⁹⁹ The Mountain Republic's parliament now rejected the Volunteer Army's demands for submission and ordered its government to undertake all possible measures to resist the Whites.⁸⁰⁰

As the Volunteers and Mountaineers clashed over the new power arrangement in the North Caucasus and the British washed their hands of the situation, the Red soldiers who had been concentrated around Vladikavkaz tried to enter Georgia for safety or went into the rural areas and mountains of Chechnya and Ingushetia. In Chechnya, Gikalo managed to obtain the support of some Chechens by appealing to their tradition of hospitality and, with the help of Sheripov, secured some food and shelter for his men, whom he organized over the summer into a small army of partisans numbering between 1,000 to 1,500.⁸⁰¹ Another small group of Bolsheviks led by Sergo Ordzhonikidze left Vladikavkaz for Muzhichi in Ingushetia and moved up the Assa River gorge into the mountains.⁸⁰² Meeting with initial resistance from the Ingush, this band continued pushing south until they realized the Georgian Khevsurs, who had recently killed a small band of Bolsheviks, would never let them pass. Ordzhonikidze subsequently led his group, which included women, back into Ingushetia.⁸⁰³

From the point of view of Caucasian solidarity, it is noteworthy that in mid-February 1918 the editors of *Azerbajdzhan* stated that the Bolsheviks were the main

⁷⁹⁹ NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, "Protokol chastnago soveshĭaniia Kavkazskoj Konferentsii 29 Maja 1919" (Protocol of the private meeting of the Caucasian Conference of 29 May 1919).

⁸⁰⁰ "Dobrovoľcheskaja armija i Gorskaja respublika" (The Volunteer Army and the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 49 (4 March 1919).

⁸⁰¹ "brdzola bolsheviketan" (The fight with the Bolsheviks), *saqartvelo* 38 (19 February 1919); R. Brodskij, "Politicheskoe obespechenie boevyx dejstvij v gorax," (Political support for military actions in the mountains), *Voennyj vestnik, Voennopoliticheskij zhurnal* 7-8 (10 March 1931), 59; Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 15, 28-29.

⁸⁰² G. K. Martirosian, *Istorija Ingushii. Materialy* (The history of the Ingush. Materials) (Ordzhonikidze: Ingushskij nauch.-issled. In-t, 1933), 273.

⁸⁰³ Martirosian, *The history of the Ingush*, 274-275.

danger to Russia and that even though there were few to be found in the Caucasus, all the Caucasians were intent on defending themselves against them. The editors also considered the Volunteer Army a monarchist, reactionary force that rejected the Caucasian nations' right to separation and independent existence whilst lacking any vision for Russia's reorganization as a multi-national state.⁸⁰⁴ Furthermore, *Azerbajdzhan's* editor also challenged the Volunteer Army propaganda against the Mountain Government, defending the idea that the Mountaineers were a collective. He wrote:

“If the author could have risen to an unbiased and impartial evaluation of the question he raised, he could not but have established that the Mountaineers have historically been a united body. They are bound into a single whole by their historical past and their historical fates. The commonality of their economic interests and the blood they have spilled together on the battlefields for the freedom of their homeland has brought the mountain peoples closer together—they are soldered into one.”⁸⁰⁵

The author goes on to describe the multiethnic nature of the Mountain government and assert that the Ingush fighting around Vladikavkaz and Dolakovo were spilling their blood not only for the Mountain Union and their own physical existence but also for the lives of all the North Caucasian peoples.⁸⁰⁶ Although his claim about the government's popularity looks exaggerated, the general idea holds that the Mountain Republic can be considered an indigenous creation and yet another form of expression of the sentiment regarding a preexisting common North Caucasian bond.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰⁴ “Na Tereke, Vladikavkaz” (On the Terek, Vladikavkaz), *Azerbajdzhan* 40 (22 [9 OS] February 1919).

⁸⁰⁵ I.R., “Pravda o Gorskom pravite[stve]” (The truth about the Mountain government), *Azerbajdzhan* 44 (27 [14 OS] February 1919).

«Если бы автор возвысился до безпристрастного и нелицеприятного рассмотрения поднятого им вопроса, он не смог бы не установить, что горцы исторически представляют собою одно целое. В единое целое они связаны и историческим прошлым и своими историческими судьбами. Общностью экономических интересов сближены горские народы между собой и кровью пролитой вместе на полях битв за свободу родины—они спаяны во-едино.»

⁸⁰⁶ I.R., “Pravda o Gorskom pravite[stve],” (The truth about the Mountain government), *Azerbajdzhan* 44 (27 [14 OS] February 1919).

⁸⁰⁷ NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “Protokol chastnago sovesh[an]ija Kavkazskoj Konferentsii 29 Maja 1919” (Protocol of the private meeting of the Caucasian Conference of 29 May 1919).

For example, Kantemir admitted at the Caucasian regional conference in spring 1919 that the mountain government had never been so popular.

At this juncture, after the insulting treatment they received from the Volunteer Command and their perceived betrayal by the British, the Mountain Government gave up hope of finding peace through negotiation. In a report published in *Gruzija* on 28 February, the government's representative, Alixan Kantemir, shared the North Caucasians' assessment, matching that of the *Azerbajdzhan* editors, that the Russian generals were interested in nothing but the restoration of a "single, indivisible Russia" (Russian centralism) through force of arms and without regard for the fate of the Caucasian nations or Russian society itself. They warned, correctly, that with this aggressive policy the Volunteer Command was undermining its own aim of securing its army's rear, as the generals' condescending attitude was driving the local inhabitants into supporting the Bolsheviks, who had recently been promising "full independence" to the Mountain Republic. Unwilling to submit to either the Volunteer Army or the Soviets, the North Caucasian leaders asked Azerbaijan and Georgia for support against the "immediate existential danger", arguing that the only thing that could protect their common political and economic interests would be the creation of a Caucasian confederation. In this vein, they also announced their support of the idea of a second conference of Caucasian republics, which Georgia was already planning.⁸⁰⁸

The Georgian nationalists at *Gruzija* also considered Denikin's actions against the North Caucasian Mountaineers to be a clear indication of the Whites' true nature, which no "honest champion of the Caucasian peoples' national freedom" could doubt. "Under the false slogan of a federative, new or some other kind of Russia, the Volunteer Army brings death to the self-determined nationalities of the Caucasus and tries to place the former imperialist yoke of slavery and oppression back upon them," they wrote.⁸⁰⁹ According to the frequent contributor K. P. Tumanov, most of Russia's politicians,

⁸⁰⁸ "Gorskaja respublika i dobrovol'cheskaja armija" (The Mountain Republic and the Volunteer Army), *Gruzija* 46 (28 February 1919); "The coming conference of the Caucasian Republics," *The Georgian Messenger* 7 (6 April 1919).

⁸⁰⁹ "Tiflis, 5 marta" (Tiflis, 5 March 1919), *Gruzija* 50 (5 March 1919).

«Под лживым лозунгом федеративной, новой или какой-нибудь еще России добровольческая армия несет смерть самоопределившимся национальностям Кавказа, стремится вновь надеть на них прежнее великодержавное ярмо рабства и угнетения.»

regardless of their ideological orientation were fundamentally opposed to the loss of the Caucasus, some hiding their chauvinism under the rhetoric of leaving the final decision up to the Constituent Assembly. He thought the Volunteer Army, ostensibly created to fight the Bolsheviks, was in fact fighting the Reds only to secure the northern rear against their real target—the independent states in the Caucasus—and thereby preserve Russia’s indivisibility. He thus urged the Caucasians to comprehend the gravity of the situation and prepare themselves to repel the danger coming from the north, warning them that the interests of the Georgians, Azerbaijanis and Mountaineers were the same and that the three would have to fight together in solidarity against the Whites because if the liberty of the Mountain Republic was being threatened today, it would be the liberty of Georgia and Azerbaijan tomorrow. “Only the united work in solidarity of the above newly formed states can save the Caucasus,” he wrote in March, arguing for the urgent creation of a defensive union.⁸¹⁰ On 18 April, the day after Georgian forces took Gagra and a sliver of the Sochi district back from the Volunteers, the National Democrats also expressed their wish to see close cooperation between the Georgians and Mountaineers in the sphere of defense.⁸¹¹ “Tormented by the enemy, the Mountain government is expecting help from Georgia, and its hope must be completely fulfilled through an attack by the Georgian army and guard in Sochi,” they wrote. In their view, the fate of all the Caucasian nations depended on the successful coordinated defense of the northwestern corner of the Caucasus by the Georgians and the Mountaineers further east along the ridge.⁸¹²

⁸¹⁰ K. P. Tumanov, “Budushġee Kavkaza” (The future of the Caucasus), *Gruzija* 51 (6 March 1919).

«Только объединенная, солидарная работа указанных выше государственных новообразований может спасти Кавказ...»

Tumanov reasoned that it would be wiser to leave the Armenians out of such a union since they were more concerned about creating a unified Armenia. As for the form of the Caucasian union, he thought it would be best to first work in solidarity for the preservation of each individual state’s independence and later worry about what state structure and system of interrelations would be best for the Caucasian nations.

⁸¹¹ Kenez, “The Relations between the Volunteer Army and Georgia,” 415-416.

⁸¹² “saerto mtris tşinaghmdog” (Against the common enemy) *saqartvelo* 86 (18 April 1919).

Tsalikov, now in Tiflis, made an analogous argument in the Georgian Menshevik paper *Bor̂a*. He said that if the North Caucasus fell to those attempting to restore Russian “statehood”, Transcaucasia itself would be threatened. He also asserted that the Whites and Reds had the same aim of keeping Russia together, using as evidence Lenin’s quip that the creation of a single, indivisible Russia was acceptable to him as long as the word “Soviet” was added. He thought that the only way to save the Caucasus and its peoples from the “struggle of the three forces: the right counter-revolution, the left anarchy and the democracy’s attempts to suppress” both of the others would be to forge a common regional front and expel Denikin before the Bolsheviks could arrive. “Forward to the North Caucasus, to help the mountain peoples fighting for the common freedom of the Caucasus!” he urged.⁸¹³ He clearly saw Caucasian society as stretched along the right-left spectrum with the democracy in the center and was calling on the Caucasian nations to pull together at the regional level to defend themselves from Russian centralist-imperialists White and Red.

In response to appeals and to reports of spontaneous popular resistance, the Georgian government sent a note of protest to the great powers’ representatives in Tiflis.⁸¹⁴ The note emphasizes the Georgian government’s recognition of the Mountain Government as the legitimate representative of the Mountaineers’ wish for self-determination and the fact that Transcaucasia’s security depended on the successful defense of the North Caucasus. It also refers specifically to the economic and historical ties between the Caucasian nations.⁸¹⁵ In response to this protest, the Mountain

⁸¹³ S. M. Isxakov, *Grazhdanskaja vojna v Rossii i musulmane: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (The civil war in Russia and the Muslims: A collection of documents and materials) (Moscow: Tsentr strategicheskoi konjunktury, 2014), 445.

«Вперед на Северный Кавказ, на помощь горским народам, сражающимся за общую свободу Кавказа!»

⁸¹⁴ “Nota praviteľstva Gruzii” (The Georgian government’s note), *Gruzija* 50 (5 March 1919).

⁸¹⁵ “Note of the Georgian Government,” *The Georgian Messenger* 3 (9 March 1919).

The note reads in part, “The Government of the Georgian republic considers that, in accordance with the declarations of the Volunteer Army the main object which it has in view and it [sic] the Northern Caucasus in particular is to combat bolshevism, and that the demand made by it to the Mountaineer Government is an infringement of the principle of the self-definition of peoples and an attack on the independence of the Mountaineer Government, whereas the recognition or non-recognition of the latter depends wholly upon the decision of the Peace Conference. The solidarity of the peoples of the

Government's diplomatic representative thereupon sent a note of "deepest appreciation" to the Georgian government and asked Georgia to be sure that it always finds a sincere defender of the idea of an independent and free Caucasus among the mountain peoples.⁸¹⁶

Although the Georgian government's assessment of the Mountain government was correct, North Caucasian society was internally divided to an extent along social-economic lines. The divisions were not nearly as deep as the class divisions in central Russia, but some of the officers and more prosperous elements did go over to the Volunteer Army once it appeared on the scene whereas many among the regular population rushed to self-defence.⁸¹⁷ *Gruzija* informed its readers that the Mountaineers' uprising against the Whites covered nearly the whole North Caucasus and that Kabardians, Ingush and Ossetians were fighting together in solidarity.⁸¹⁸ And *saqartvelo* reported the Volunteers' advance was so unpopular among the locals that even the women were entering battle and engaging in hand-to-hand combat against Denikin's Cossacks and soldiers.⁸¹⁹ A Bolshevik participant observed women fighting too.⁸²⁰ But since the political elite in the Mountain government and parliament were

Transcaucasus is based upon the mutual recognition and trust in one another of the Caucasian Republics, which are closely united amongst themselves by economic and historical ties, and this solidarity lays an obligation upon the Government of the Georgian Republic to make a categorical protest against such enforced demands on the part of the commanding officers of the Volunteer Army, which, inasmuch as they are directed against the best interests of the population of the Mountaineer Republic, force the mountain peoples into the path of bolshevist actions, and thereby become a source of danger to the peace of the various peoples of the whole Caucasus."

⁸¹⁶ "mtielta mtavrobis noṭa saqartvelos mtavrobisadmi" (The Mountaineers' note to the Georgian government), *saqartvelo* 56 (12 March 1919).

⁸¹⁷ R. Brodskij, "Politicheskoe obespechenie boevyx dejstvij v gorax," (Political support for military actions in the mountains), *Voennyj vestnik, Voенно-politicheskij zhurnal* 7-8 (10 March 1931) 58-59; "Dobrovoľcheskaja armija i Gorskaja respublika" (The Volunteer Army and the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 49 (4 March 1919).

⁸¹⁸ "Dobrovoľcheskaja armija i Gorskaja respublika" (The Volunteer Army and the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 49 (4 March 1919). This was reprinted information originally published in *Azerbajdzhan*.

⁸¹⁹ "chrdilo kavkasiashi" (In the North Caucasus) *saqartvelo* 53 (8 March 1919).

⁸²⁰ Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 32, 34.

internally divided with the “moderate patriotic” faction in the center, and the far right and far left on the extreme ends of the spectrum, this division along the left-right axis would influence the way events unfolded over the coming months.

As the Volunteer forces pushed against the North Caucasian population, who put up a spontaneous resistance, the generals started recruiting sympathetic elements while punishing the regular people who opposed requisitions or levies or anyone who preferred determining their own political destiny, which pressure then exacerbated the fracturing of local societies—Cossack and native. In the Kuban, the Kuban Cossack Host was composed of Black Sea Cossacks, who pulled towards Ukraine, and the wealthier but less numerous Russian-speaking *linejtsy* (frontier linesmen) who were settled around the upper Ku ban. The *linejtsy* generally supported the Volunteers, acquiescing to Denikin’s demand for political and military submission in terms of accepting a centralized government granting autonomy, and a single military staff. The Black Sea Cossacks, however, wanted a separate, independent military command for the Cossacks and a federal political structure for Russia. Thus, there was a running tension between the Volunteer Army headquarters (*stavka*) and the *linejtsy*, on one side, and Black Sea Cossack federalists, on the other.⁸²¹ Along with the division between centralists and federalists, the oblast also had ethnic and class divisions, which were reflected, in the election and land laws passed by the Rada in late summer 1919. The election law practically disenfranchised all but the most affluent out-of-towners, despite out-of-towners making up over half the population. The land law touted the socialist principle that land should belong to the people but then divided the people into two groups; those in the first group—Cossacks, Mountaineers and early settlers—were to receive their share of the land first, and only after that should the leftover land be apportioned out among the out-of-towners.⁸²²

In late-March or April, the Kuban Rada proposed defeating Bolshevism and anarchy through the creation of a federation of Caucasian states (the Don, Kuban,

⁸²¹ Kenez, *Red Attack, White Resistance*, 223, 226-227.

⁸²² Kenez, *Red Attack, White Resistance*, 220-221.

Terek, Daghestan, Crimea, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) and proposed holding a conference in Ekaterinodar to work out a constitution. The Russian generals strongly opposed the project, rejecting federalism in general and the participation of the Mountaineers and Georgians in particular. In Georgia, the Menshevik paper *ertoba* supported the idea of a Cossack-Caucasian federation, but the nationalists at *saqartvelo* opposed it, thinking it was a hidden attempt to restore great Russia. Nevertheless, the nationalists were in complete favor of the Georgian government's proposal for a Caucasian conference (without the Cossacks). As for the Mountain Government, it announced it would not respond to the Rada's proposal until it heard from the Transcaucasian states. In the end, nothing came of the Kuban Rada's proposal.⁸²³

Despite their domineering approach, the Whites had problems setting up their control over the population centers in the North Caucasus, which were full of deserters.⁸²⁴ In the Terek oblast, in Kabarda and Ossetia, the elites quickly went over to the Russian generals, but the Whites still had a fairly difficult time establishing internal order, and over the spring and summer they would have to forcibly, even "cruelly", suppress resistant elements among the population.⁸²⁵ The split in Chechen society was exacerbated with the approach of the Volunteer Army. The Volunteer forces' first assault against them in early March resulted in General Shatilov's forces being "cut to pieces".⁸²⁶ The Volunteers now had to organize larger battalions to try again.⁸²⁷ Liaxov met twice with the Chechens to try to convince them to recognize his authority, but as

⁸²³ "qubanis radis tsinadadeba" (The Kuban Rada's proposal), *saqartvelo* 76 (5 April 1919); Peter Kenez, *Red Advance White Defeat: Civil War in South Russia 1919-1920* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2004), 114-120, 128-132; "chrdilo kavkasia, qubanis rada da mtielebi" (The North Caucasus, the Kuban Rada and the Mountaineers), *saqartvelo* 91 (27 April 1919); "qubani, denikinis brdzaneba" (The Kuban and Denikin's order), *saqartvelo* 81 (12 April 1919).

⁸²⁴ "qubani, denikinis brdzaneba" (The Kuban and Denikin's order), *saqartvelo* 81 (12 April 1919).

⁸²⁵ Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 121-122; I. Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze i Kirov i borba za vlast' sovetov na Severnom Kavkaze, 1917-1920 g.g.* (Ordzhonikidze and Kirov and the struggle for power of the soviets in the North Caucasus, 1917-1920) (Gospolitizdat, 1941), 279-280; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 127-128.

⁸²⁶ Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 129-130.

⁸²⁷ Jabagi, "Revolution and civil war," 130.

of early March the Chechens were refusing to comply without first asking for the approval of the Mountain Government and instructing Kotsev to inform the Allied Command that they did not accept the bosses appointed over them by the Volunteer Command.⁸²⁸ Around this time, on 12 March, the Mountain Union Council took steps to ready the republic for self-defense.⁸²⁹

Watching from Transcaucasia, the Mountain Government representative in Baku, Alixan Kantemir, received the information that attempted negotiations had failed, and he gave a speech to North Caucasians in the Baku *rajon* gathered at the Taza Pir Mosque. Encouraged by this socialist leader, they demanded the Mountain government fight hard against the Volunteers, whom they saw as acting against the interests of the workers and peasants, and resolved to appeal to the workers of Transcaucasia for help in “strengthening the freedom of the mountain people.”⁸³⁰ This implies that many North Caucasian workers in Baku were both nationalist and socialist in orientation, and supported the Mountain Republic at least insofar as it looked out for their interests.⁸³¹

With their demands for subordination having been rejected, the Volunteer Army launched a major offensive against the Chechen population in mid-March.⁸³² As of 2

⁸²⁸ “chrdiloet kavkasiashi, general liakhovi” (In the North Caucasus, General Liakhov), *saqartvelo* 53 (8 March 1919); “chrdilo kavkasiashi” (In the North Caucasus) *saqartvelo* 59, 16 March 1919.

⁸²⁹ “chrdilo-kavkasia” (“North Caucasus”), *saqartvelo* 81 (12 April 1919).

⁸³⁰ “azerbajjani, mtielni moxaliseta tsinaglmdeg” (The Azerbaijanis and Mountaineers against the Volunteers), *saqartvelo* 60 (18 March 1919).

⁸³¹ It also suggests a patriotic type of socialism among Mountain workers in Baku similar to that found among Georgians who supported the Mensheviks or Azerbaijani Turks supporting the dominant Musavat Party—which had a strong leftist wing and moderately socialist platform.

⁸³² “chrdilo-kavkasia” (The North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 83 (15 April 1919); Denikin, *Ocherki Russkoj smuty ... Otkrytyj 1918 – janvar 1919*, 227; Jabagi, “Revolution and civil war,” 130; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 119; “mtielta brdzola moxaliseta lashqartan” (The Mountaineers’ fight with the Volunteer forces), *saqartvelo* 75 (4 April 1919); “mtielta respublika” (The Mountain Republic), *saqartvelo* 80 (11 April 1919); Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 31-32.

Marshall dates the attack on Alxan-yurt to 16-17 March. Popov dates it to 26-28 March.

According to the information in *saqartvelo*, the Volunteer Army was fighting heavily with the gortsy in certain areas of Chechnya starting from 20 March but within a week the gortsy were pushing back hard on the Volunteers along the entire front and the Volunteers suffered great losses around Alxan-jurt

April the local press reported that General Liaxov had “again crossed the border into the Mountain Republic” and was fighting the Chechens around Alxan-jurt.⁸³³ The Volunteers besieged several settlements, including Alxan-jurt, where they slaughtered even women and children.⁸³⁴ General Liaxov then called for a third meeting, scheduled for 10 April, with the Chechens. Denikin and the British General Briggs were also present at this meeting. Although Denikin claims the Mountain Government delegation never made it, Kantemir described the meeting as if he was personally there, saying, “Denikin changed nothing in his demands; he said that we will have broad autonomy, oblast self-government and so on. Briggs made an astonished face and asked us what else we could want. We did not accept these offers.” At this meeting, the Chechen General Eris Xan Aliev convinced the assembly to acquiesce to Volunteer rule and accept an appointed Chechen ruler (*upraviteľ*).⁸³⁵

This was not the end of the struggle, however. It appears that as the talks concluded in Groznyj, other Chechens and Ingush held rallies to discuss general

on 26-27 March, but Alxan-jurt was later besieged and many locals were killed in the first days of April. Denikin writes that the battle for Alxan-jurt lasted from 16 to 23 March OS (29 March – 5 April NS).

⁸³³ “chrdilo-kavkasia” (The North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 83 (15 April 1919); “mtielta respublika, moxaliseta armiis tsinsvla” (The Mountain Republic, the Volunteer Army’s advance) *saqartvelo* 73 (2 April 1919).

⁸³⁴ “chrdilo-kavkasia” (The North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 83 (15 April 1919); “mtielta respublika, moxaliseta armiis tsinsvla” (The Mountain Republic and the Volunteer Army’s advance), *saqartvelo* 73 (2 April 1919).

⁸³⁵ “chrdilo kavkasia, denikini da mtielebi” (The North Caucasus, Denikin and the Mountaineers), *saqartvelo* 91 (27 April 1919); “chrdilo-kavkasia, sazavo molaparakeba” (The North Caucasus, peace talks), *saqartvelo* 83 (15 April 1919); Denikin, *Očerki Russkoj smuty ... Očtjabr 1918 – janvar 1919*, 227.; NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “Protokol chastnago soveshānija Kavkazskoj Konferentsii 29 Maja 1919” (Protocol of the private meeting of the Caucasian Conference of 29 May 1919); Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 119; “mtielta brdzola moxaliseta lashqartan” (The Mountaineers’ fight with the Volunteer forces), *saqartvelo* 75 (4 April 1919); A. Taxo-Godi, *Revoljutsija i kontr-revoljutsija v Dagestane* (Revolution and Counter-revolution in Daghestan) (Makhachkala: Dagestanskoe Gos Izdatelstvo, 1927), 97-98.

Taxo-Godi says that Kaplanov and Gotsinskij went from the Mountain Government.

According to the protocol, it says: «Деникин нечего не изменил в своих требованиях, он сказал, что будет у нас широкая автономия, областное самоуправление и т. д. Бриггс сделал нас удивленное лицо и спрашивал, что же еще нам надо. Мы не приняли этих предложений.»

mobilization.⁸³⁶ As of 11 April, it was reported in Transcaucasia that the men in Daghestan and Chechnya were signing up for the army in great excitement and rushing to the battlefield in the spirit of self-sacrifice.⁸³⁷ As of 17 April Axmet Tsalikov and E. S. Bogdanov in Tbilisi were claiming the Mountaineers and Russian workers and peasants were “shedding their blood” in the fight against Denikin and asked the Georgian government to form expeditionary units to help them as well as to allow the North Caucasians to form partisan units on Georgian territory and collect money for this purpose.⁸³⁸ Denikin himself wrote that “peace was not established for a long time yet”.⁸³⁹ Although the Chechens on the plains were forced by the Volunteers’ excesses into a period of “submission”, it was clear that the Mountaineers had not lost their will to resist.⁸⁴⁰ It was reported in *saqartvelo* in late-April that the Kabardians and Ossetians Denikin had gathered were running home.⁸⁴¹ This is corroborated by the claim of the Bolshevik Popov, who writes, “The overwhelming majority of the *gortsy* continued refusing to recognize Denikin’s authority; they did not stop that armed struggle against the Whites that was sometimes quiet and sometimes exploding with new force.”⁸⁴²

Nevertheless, as the Volunteer Army pressed on the local societies in the Terek over March and April, it split them between collaborators (right-leaning) and resisters (left-leaning and independentists) and the Mountain Government lost what remained of

⁸³⁶ “chrdilo kavkasia, chachnebis da ingushebis proṭeṣṭi” (The North Caucasus, protest of the Chechen and Ingush), *saqartvelo* 91 (27 April 1919).

⁸³⁷ “mtielta respublika” (The Mountain Republic), *saqartvelo* 80 (11 April 1919).

⁸³⁸ “mtielta gancxadeba” (The Mountaineers’ statement), *saqartvelo* 85 (17 April 1919).

⁸³⁹ Denikin, *Ocherki Russkoj smuty ... Oetjabr 1918 – janvar 1919*; 229.

⁸⁴⁰ Denikin, *Ocherki Russkoj smuty ... Oetjabr 1918 – janvar 1919*; 229; “Pravda o sobytijax v Gorskoi respublike” (The truth about the events in the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 118 (7 June 1919).

⁸⁴¹ “chrdilo kavkasia” (North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 91, 27 April 1919.

⁸⁴² Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 33-34.

«Горцы в подавляющей массе продолжали не признавать власти Деникина, не прекращали то затихавшую, то вспыхивавшую с новой силой вооруженную борьбу против белых.»

Popov adds that they were also waiting impatiently for the return of Soviet power.

its authority.⁸⁴³ Meanwhile, Bolsheviks tried to woo the population over to their side. For example, Ordzhonikidze addressed a letter to the Ingush telling them to forget the Bolsheviks' brief departure and expect their triumphant return, exhorting them to resist Denikin to the end and accept Soviet power. According to the Soviet historian Georgij Martirosian, a meeting was held in Xamxi where over 800 Ingush met and agreed to the terms of the letter.⁸⁴⁴ No indication is given as to how representative this group was of the general opinion of Ingush society though; it could have been simply a group of Bolshevik sympathizers. In early May another meeting of "Ingush village heads" was held in Ekazhevo where they agreed to organize an armed resistance against the Cossacks. Ordzhonikidze was present at this meeting, and it was resolved to send the Ingush Xizir Ortsxanov to Tbilisi for weapons.⁸⁴⁵

Although information in the local press suggests that there was a popular demand for the Mountain Government to defend the population against the Volunteers and there was a spontaneous popular resistance, the government failed to lead the resistance successfully. This may be explained by a lack of resources or a lack of the political will to do so, or some combination of both. For example, Nazhmutdin Gotsinskij spoke against helping the Chechens fight the Volunteers while Ali Xadzhi Akushinskij and Uzun Xadzhi argued for it.⁸⁴⁶ Furthermore, according to a contemporary observer's allegations, although the government's formal stance was pro-independence, its leadership was divided, with the rightist majority pushing the cause of political independence as a ruse to distract the people from the social and economic struggle and the "independendists" genuinely dedicated to the cause of independent statehood comprising a weaker minority. He believed that the declarations and calls for

⁸⁴³ Denikin, *Očerki Russkoj smuty ... Očtjabr 1918 – janvar 1919*; 229; "Pravda o sobytijax v Gorskoj respublike" (The truth about the events in the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 118 (7 June 1919).

⁸⁴⁴ Martirosian, *The history of the Ingush*, 274-275.

⁸⁴⁵ Martirosian, *The history of the Ingush*, 276.

⁸⁴⁶ M. K. Dibirov, *Istorija Dagestana v gody revoljutsii i grazhdanskoj vojny* (The history of Daghestan in the years of the revolution and civil war) (Makhachkala: 1997), 90.

Gotsinskij may have been opposed to helping the Chechens specifically since some of them were cooperating with the Bolsheviks.

mobilization against the Volunteers were empty words since no real measures were taken, for example, to organize a national militia or to help the Chechens in their fight, which led to the lowland Chechens surrendering and Daghestanis losing their faith in the government.⁸⁴⁷ Even so, the republic continued to exist, now confined mainly to Daghestan, through the rest of April and May.

On 11 May, a celebration of the anniversary of the Mountain Republic's independence day was held in Temir-Xan-Shura. The city was decorated with flowers. There was a parade of troops and Uzun Xadzhi gave a prayer. Parliament held a special session at which there were representatives of the Jewish and Polish communities, and an Azerbaijani guest appealed to the memory of Shamil. Underscoring the fact that the Mountaineers were motivated by the desire for self-determination and political freedom, the speaker of parliament concluded his speech with the following statement: "Long live Russian democracy, which brought us the possibility of implementing the principle of the small nations' right of self-determination!"⁸⁴⁸

This celebratory moment would soon fade. The conflict between the far right and far left in the Mountain Republic was about to render the "independentists" powerless and tear apart what was left of the young republic. In Daghestan, left extremists were plotting to overthrow the Mountain Government and were organizing a Soviet congress for 20 May. Some of them were already in Temir-Xan-Shura on 13 May, when the government forces arrested them. On 16 May these prisoners were sent to Petrovsk on a special train, but it was attacked on the way by "the people" attempting to free them, and two days later some Mountaineers came to the capital and fighting broke out outside the city. Although the Mountain Government retained control, a crisis ensued, which ended with the formation of a new cabinet headed by the Daghestani rightist General Minkail Xalilov.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁷ "Pravda o sobytijax v Gorskoj respublike" (The truth about the events in the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 118 (7 June 1919).

⁸⁴⁸ "mtielta respublikashi" (In the Mountaineers' republic), *saqartvelos respublika* 115 (28 May 1919).

⁸⁴⁹ "mtielta respublikashi" (In the Mountaineers' republic), *saqartvelos respublika* 115 (28 May 1919).

After the Volunteer Army took Derbent and Petrovsk on 22 and 23 May, the Mountain Government went through yet another crisis, ending with the decision to dissolve parliament and abolish the government. The right-wing politicians are said to have convinced the officers, who had considerable real power, that the independentists were becoming Bolshevized and would execute them if they came to govern. Moreover, it is alleged that Xalilov was spreading rumors to make it sound like the force under General D. P. Dratsenko which had arrived in Petrovsk was too large to resist. After learning that the Volunteer Command was willing to allow the formation of an autonomous Daghestani government separate from the Mountain Republic and cooperative with the Whites, Xalilov called for a meeting of Daghestani parliamentary delegates, who agreed to the Volunteers' terms and called for the formation of a Daghestani national council and government headed by Xalilov. The current *sheikh al-Islam*, Akushinskij's (former) deputy Abdul Basyr Adzhi, then claimed that the Sharia forbade resisting overwhelming force, in this case, the Volunteers. The Mountain parliament was then informed of the Daghestani faction's decision and thus cheerlessly dissolved as Ali Akushinskij prepared to resist this development and Uzun Xadzhi went to Chechnya to continue fighting.⁸⁵⁰

B. The four republics' regional conference

As the Volunteer Army bulldozed the North Caucasus, it was also clashing with Georgia in the Sochi district.⁸⁵¹ The Georgian government proposed a second regional conference; all four governments agreed, and it was scheduled for 25 April in Tiflis.⁸⁵² Georgia's nationalists approved of the conference idea although they entertained doubts about how effective it could be or how well the ruling party would defend Georgia's

⁸⁵⁰ Dibirow, M. K., *Istorija Dagestana v gody revoljutsii i grazhdanskoj vojny* (The history of Daghestan in the years of the revolution and civil war) (Makhachkala: 1997), 90-92; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 120; "Pravda o sobytijax v Gorskoj respublike" (The truth about the events in the Mountain Republic), *Gruzija* 118 (7 June 1919).

⁸⁵¹ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 176-179; Peter Kenez, "The Relations between the Volunteer Army and Georgia," 415-417.

⁸⁵² "Georgia, The conference of the Caucasian Republics," *The Georgian Messenger* 7 (6 April 1919); "The coming conference of the Caucasian Republics," *The Georgian Messenger* 7 (6 April 1919).

territorial interests.⁸⁵³ The Georgian Social Democrats were interested in promoting regional solidarity and unity, but their focus was more on forging unity through the solidarity of the popular classes—“the democracy”—and they saw everything through the lens of class struggle. As it was expressed in *ertoba*:

“The interest of Transcaucasia’s democracy, as that of the working people, demands stepping onto a defined path, finding a common path, moving towards unification and laying a firm foundation for the solidarity of nations... because of the particular conditions of Transcaucasia, the class struggle here was wrapped in the local national mantle; it took on the form of a national struggle, and with this the initial, romantic time of unity ended with the loss of unity. Today the unity must be established on a new foundation and the bitter lessons of the alienation must become a testament for accord.”⁸⁵⁴

Although Georgia’s leading party understood the most important issue was that of creating a common front against danger to the north or south and that the territorial question was the source of much enmity, in the run-up to the conference the Mensheviks announced they were meeting to discuss the less controversial economic and financial issues which would pave the way towards subsequent conferences on more difficult topics.⁸⁵⁵

This approach caused the National Democrats disappointment. In their opinion, the Georgian government’s previous attempt at convening a council of the neighboring republics’ representatives had failed because of the Armenian government’s

⁸⁵³ See, for example, R. Ingilo, “ra unda iqos kavkasiis saxelmtsifota konferenciis sagnad?” (What should be the object of the Caucasian states’ conference), *saqartvelo* 79 (10 April 1919) and “konferenciistvis” (For the conference), *saqartvelo* 88 (25 April 1919).

⁸⁵⁴ “kavkasiis respublikebis konferencia” (The Caucasus’s republic’s conference), *ertoba* 89 (25 April 1919).

„ამიერ-კავკასიის დემოკრატიის როგორც მშრომელი ხალხისა, მოითხოვს გარკვეულ გზაზე დადგომას, ერთი გზის გამონახვას, გაერთიანებისაკენ სვლას, ერთა სოლიდარობასთვის მტკიცე საფუძვლის ჩაყრას. ... ამიერ-კავკასიის განსაკუთრებულ პირობების გამო კლასთა ბრძოლამ აქ, ადგილობრივ ეროვნული მანტია მოისხა, ერთა ბრძოლის სახე მიიღო და ამით მთლიანობის პირველი, რომანტიული ხანა დაასრულა მთლიანობას დარღვევას. დღეს უნდა ჩაყაროს ერთობას ახალი საფუძველი, გათიშვის მწარე გაკვეთლები უნდა გახდეს შეთანხმების საბუთათ. და მას უნდა სამარველათ ჩაედგას რეალური ინტერესები დემოკრატიის, მასის, რომელიც არის იმავე დროს გარდაუვალი ინტერესი სამივე რესპუბლიკების, რომელნაც ამიერ-კავკასიის სინამდვილეში არსებობენ.“

⁸⁵⁵ “amier-kavkasiis konferencia” (Transcaucasia’s conference), *ertoba* 78 (6 April 1919).

irreconcilability and aggressive politics.⁸⁵⁶ Thus, they argued that since the territorial-border issue was the main issue of contention between the states, this issue had to be resolved immediately so the states could then be freed up to cooperate over other things. Having initially believed the focus of the conference would be the territorial question, they were unhappy to see it was now being advertised by the Social Democrats as a conference to discuss mainly economic rapprochement, and they argued this approach would cause the conference to fail.

The National Democrats were also concerned that the neighboring republics' press had barely discussed the conference and hoped that at least the national leaders at the conference could do something to promote the solidarity of the Caucasian nations. They wrote,

“In such conditions it is only possible to wage a struggle with hope of victory if a common Caucasian front will be created for self-defense from attack and if the idea of preserving independence brings to life the spirit of unanimity in the nations of the Caucasus and all will stand side-by-side militarily against the common enemy... If... the lessons of the past will have been used effectively and the issue of territory resolved correctly, then the first conference of the Nations of the Caucasus will become a great moral, political, and militaristic force that will deal with the sworn enemies of the Caucasian republics and achieve great international value.”⁸⁵⁷

Clearly, the nationalists hoped that the national representatives would find a common language and platform for interdependence because they believe such unity would serve to strengthen the freedom of the individual republics.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵⁶ R. Ingilo, “ra unda iqos kavkasiis saxelmtsifota konferenciis sagnad?” (What should be the object of the Caucasian states' conference), *saqartvelo* 79 (10 April 1919).

⁸⁵⁷ “konferenciistvis” (For the conference), *saqartvelo* 88 (25 April 1919).

„ასეთ პირობებში გამარჯვების იმედით ბრძოლის წარმოება მხოლოდ მაშინ შეიძლება, თუ რომ შეიქმნება საერთო კავკასიურ ფრონტი თავდაცვა შეტევისა, თუ დამოუკიდებლობის შენარჩუნების იდეა ერთსულოვნობის პათოსს ჩაუდგამს კავკასიის ერებს და ყველას გვერდ-გვერდითი საომრად შეჭრის საერთო მტრის წინააღმდეგ... თუ... წარსულის გაკვეთილები ნაყოფიერად გამოიყენეს და ტერიტორიის საკითხი მართებულად მოგვარდა, მაშინ კავკასიის ერთა პირველი კონფერენცია გადაიქცევა დიდ მორალურ, პოლიტიკურ და მილიტარულ ძალად, რომელიც კავკასიის რესპუბლიკათა დაფიცულ მტრებსაც გაუმკლავდება და დიდ საერთაშორისო ღირებულებასაც მოიხვეჭს.“

⁸⁵⁸ “sxvadasxa sakitxistvis” (On various issues), *saqartvelo* 90 (27 April 1919).

Despite the nationalists' unfavorable assessment of reported public interest, the idea of increased infrastructural and political unity for the Caucasian peoples seems to have had some popularity in Georgian political society. For example, the editor at *The Georgian Messenger*, Elizabeth Orbeliani, argued that a unified financial policy was necessary for the Caucasus and a free customs zone should be established at the conference. She also noted that other issues of political and economic importance would be decided.⁸⁵⁹ At least one Georgian society, the Union of Communities, which included 21 provincial officials, praised the congress's effort, emphasizing the urgent need for the culture and solidarity of the peoples of Transcaucasia and expressing its hope and belief that the foundations for the idea of this solidarity and fraternity would be established at the conference.⁸⁶⁰

The first meeting of the conference took place on 25 April, but the main opening session was held on Sunday the twenty-seventh.⁸⁶¹ At first the only delegates in attendance were from Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia because the Mountaineer representatives' arrival was delayed thanks to the war with "the legacy of tsarism" (the Volunteers).⁸⁶² The Georgian Foreign Minister Evgeni Gegechkori opened the conference with a speech indicating his government's goal for the event. The Georgians hoped it would mark the start of a productive rapprochement between the Caucasian nations and lay the groundwork for a more unified future. In his own words,

"...despite the differences in our particular interests... we are united by a whole series of the most vital interests, which must serve as the foundation for the tight rapprochement of the democracy of the peoples of Transcaucasia... We all feel the real threat looming over us, and this common threat must make us form tight ranks in order

⁸⁵⁹ "The coming conference of the Caucasian Republics," *The Georgian Messenger* 7 (6 April 1919).

⁸⁶⁰ "konferenciis gaxsnis gamo" (Because of the opening of the conference), *saqartvelos respublika* 94 (1 May 1919).

⁸⁶¹ "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia" (Conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelo* 89 (26 April 1919); "amier kavkasiis respublikis konferencia" (The Transcaucasian republics' conference), *saqartvelos respublika* 92 (29 April 1919).

⁸⁶² "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia" (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelo* 89 (26 April 1919); "amier kavkasiis respublikis konferencia" (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelos respublika* 92 (29 April 1919); NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, "Stenograficheskiy otchet 3ji zasedaniy Kavkazskoj Konferentsij 3 maja" (Stenographic report of the 3rd session of the Caucasian Conference of 3 May).

to push back against all those violators of our freedom, from wherever they should come... We hope that as a result of our first meeting... we will succeed in creating a political and economic union of all the nations represented here and, in this way, restore that united front, which alone can save our peoples from all the suffering before us.”⁸⁶³

The other national representatives’ attitudes towards the idea of Caucasian unity are also shown in their opening speeches, and the proceedings show where each government stood on which issues should be resolved first: contentious ones like the territorial question or less controversial, pragmatic ones. The Azerbaijanis held the same view as the Georgian nationalists, arguing that the territorial disagreements should be resolved right away. They thought any other agreements worked out first could be unraveled if territorial negotiations subsequently failed. The Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Fatali Xan Xojskij strongly favored the idea of regional unification. In his opening remarks, he said his government had always been in favor of the Transcaucasian nations’ unification and that the Azerbaijanis believed the only way for life to proceed normally for the peoples of the Caucasus would be to resolve the contested issues.⁸⁶⁴ Xojskij reiterated this point at the session on 3 May when greeting the recently arrived Mountaineers’ delegation. He said,

“There is no doubt that economic and political interests and even the way of daily life is so closely interwoven between our peoples that these peoples have always considered themselves as members of one and the same family and that everything occurring in the life of one people cannot help but be reflected in the life of the other... We have all come here for the establishment of the unity and solidarity between the

⁸⁶³ NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “I-e zasedanie Kavkazskoj Konferentsii 27 aprelja” (The first session of the Caucasian Conference); “amier kavkasiis respublikis konferencia, b. ev. p. gegechkoris sityva” (The conference of Transcaucasia’s republic, Mr. E. P. Gegechkori’s speech), *saqartvelos respublika* 92 (29 April 1919).

«...несмотря на противоречия наших интересов по частным...нас объединяет целый ряд наиболее жизненных интересов, которые должны послужить основой для тесного сближения демократии народов Закавказья... Мы все чувствуем реальную угрозу? которая нависает над нами, и эта общая угроза должна заставить нас сплотиться в тесные ряды, чтобы дать отпор всем посягательствам на нашу свободу, откуда бы они не исходили... Мы надеемся, что в результате нашей первой встречи... нам удастся создать политической и экономической союз представленных здесь народов и этим самым возсоздать тот единый фронт, который одни только может спасти наши народы от всех предстоящих еще нам испытаний.»

⁸⁶⁴ NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “I-e zasedanie Kavkazskoj Konferentsii 27 aprelja” (The first session of the Caucasian Conference); “amier-kavkasiis respublikis konferencia” (The conference of the republic of Transcaucasia), *saqartvelo* 91 (27 April 1919).

peoples of the Caucasus. The gortsy representatives will find in this unity the strength for resisting and defending their sacred rights for the free declaration of their fates.”⁸⁶⁵

The Mountain Government’s representative, Alixan Kantemir, responded that the Caucasian Mountaineers had always stood for the idea of an independent Caucasus and considered themselves an inextricable part of the family of the peoples of the Caucasus. He then gave the conciliatory opinion that the territorial question was very important but the main thing at the moment was to find a common language and *modus operandi* to present a common front in the international arena.⁸⁶⁶ The Armenian representative Armen Tigranjan, struck a slightly different tone. He claimed that, historically, there had never been any unity between the Caucasian peoples, brought together only under Russian rule, but once Russia left the region, he thought, the Transcaucasian people themselves realized that they had to safeguard the independence of their national republics and were thus now exhibiting a tendency towards unification since they recognized the need to pool their forces for the common good. “Freedom and independence,” he said, “hardly means mutual estrangement and isolation.” However, the Armenian government still wanted to skirt the territorial question and focus on solving less controversial questions in line with the Georgian government’s initial proposal.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶⁵ NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “Stenograficheskij otchet 3ji zasedanij Kavkazskoj Konferentsij 3 maja” (Stenographic report of the 3rd session of the Caucasian Conference of 3 May).

«Нет сомнения, что интересы экономические, политические и даже уклад бытовой жизни настолько тесно сплетены между нашими народами, что всегда народы эти считали себя членами одной и той же семьи и все явления в жизни одного народа невольно отражались в жизни другого... Мы все съезжались [*sic*] сюда для установления единения и солидарности народов Кавказа. В этом единении представители горцев найдут силы для отстаивания и защиты своих священных прав на свободное объявление своих судеб.»

⁸⁶⁶ NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “Stenograficheskij otchet 3ji zasedanij Kavkazskoj Konferentsij 3 maja” (Stenographic report of the 3rd session of the Caucasian Conference of 3 May).

⁸⁶⁷ “amier-kavkasiis konferencia” (Transcaucasia’s conference), *ertoba* 78 (6 April 1919); “amier-kavkasiata respublikelis konferencia, 27 aprilis sxdoma, b. tigranianis sityva” (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics, 27 April session, Mr. Tigranian’s speech). *saqartvelos respublika* 96 (4 May 1919); NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “I-e zasedanie Kavkazskoj Konferentsii 27 aprelja” (The first session of the Caucasian Conference; Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 1, *The First Year, 1918-1919* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1971), 355.

«Независимость и самостоятельность вовсе не означают взаимной отчужденности и изолированности.»

Although the presidium met several times to prepare a draft agenda for the conference members' general approval, they failed at this very task due to disagreements over whether or not to even put the issue of territorial boundaries on the agenda. The Azerbaijani side argued that since the territorial question was at the root of the discord, then it must be at the top of the agenda while the Armenian side insisted on solving all the non-contentious issues, leaving the territorial question off the agenda. A private meeting was thus held on 30 April in order to come to a consensus regarding the agenda. After a tedious discussion, it was decided to set up a common commission to establish the general methods and principles by which the territorial disputes ought to be resolved. Meanwhile, the delegates agreed to work out solutions to other issues within the framework of six other commissions: transport, infrastructure and communications; financial and economic; political (mutual recognition, solidarity with regard to their republic's independence and taking measures to prevent attempts against their independence); legal and justice; and refugees and nomads.⁸⁶⁸

The committees met repeatedly to discuss their respective issues between the second and third sessions.⁸⁶⁹ For instance, the Territorial Commission met three times by 29 May.⁸⁷⁰ On 19 May a commission produced a resolution that stated the territorial

⁸⁶⁸ "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia" (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelos respublika* 113 (24 May 1919); "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia" (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelos respublika* 97 (6 May 1919); "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia" (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelo* 97 (7 May 1919); "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia, 2" (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics, 2), *saqartvelo* 106 (17 May 1919) "kavkas. respubli. warmomadgenelta konferencia" (The conference of the representatives of the Caucasian republics), *ertoba* 97 (6 May 1919); Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 1: 356-358; NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, "Stenograficheskij otchet 3ji zasedanij Kavkazskoj Konferentsij 3 maja" (Stenographic report of the 3rd session of the Caucasian Conference of 3 May).

⁸⁶⁹ "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia" (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelos respublika* 110 (21 May 1919); "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia" (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelos respublika* 113 (24 May 1919); "kavkasiis respublikata konferencia" (The conference of the Caucasian republics), *ertoba* 114 (25 May 1919).

For example, the Financial Commission met multiple times between 9 and 21 May and the railroad commission met six times.

⁸⁷⁰ "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia, 29 maisis sxdoma" (The Transcaucasian republics' conference, 29 May session), *saqartvelos respublika* 118, 1 June 1919.

questions must be resolved through common agreement between the concerned republics but if negotiations failed, the republics should submit to arbitration.⁸⁷¹ On 22 May, the third working meeting was held to listen to the report prepared by the financial-economic and railway commissions.⁸⁷² The fourth main working session was held on 29 May and it appears the final session was held on 9 June.⁸⁷³ A main goal of the Georgian, Azerbaijani and Mountaineer representatives at the conference was to form a regional defensive union, but since by the end of the conference the Mountain Republic had fallen, with Xalilov going over to the side of the Volunteers, and the Armenian government had taken a “neutral” stance regarding Denikin, only the Georgian and Azerbaijani governments were left to sign a mutual defense pact on 16 June.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷¹ “amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia” (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelos respublika* 112 (23 May 1919); amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia, 29 maisis sxdoma” (The Transcaucasian republics’ conference, 29 May session), *saqartvelos respublika* 118, 1 June 1919; Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 1: 358 “Na Kavkazskoj Konferentsii, Zasedanie 19 maja” (At the Caucasian Conference), *Gruzija* 114 (3 June 1919).

⁸⁷² “amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia, amier kavk. konferenciis komisiebsi. Safinanso-ekonomiur komisiashi” *saqartvelos respublika* 126 (12 June 1919); “kavkasiis respublikata konferencia” (The conference of the Caucasian republics), *ertoba* 114 (25 May 1919).

⁸⁷³ “amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia, 29 maisis sxdoma” (The Transcaucasian republics’ conference, 29 May session), *saqartvelos respublika* 118 (1 June 1919): “amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia” (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelos respublika* 128 (14 June 1919); “amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia (dasasruli)” (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics, continued), *saqartvelos respublika* 129 (15 June 1919); NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “Stenograficheskiy otchet 5go zasedanii, Kavkazskoj Konferentsii, 30 maja, 5-e zasedanie Kavkazskoj Konferentsii - 29 maja” and “Protokoly chastnyx soveshanii (sp.?) Kavkazsk. Konfer. 29 i 30 maja” (Stenographic report of the 5th session of the Caucasian Conference, 30 May, 5th session of the Caucasian Conference – of 29 May & Protocols of the private discussions of the Caucasian Conference, 29 and 30 May).

⁸⁷⁴ “aderbeijanshi” (In Azerbaijan), *saqartvelos respublika* 134 (21 June 1919); “amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia” (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics), *saqartvelos respublika* 128 (14 June 1919); “amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia (dasasruli)” (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics, continued), *saqartvelos respublika* 129 (15 June 1919); M.K. Dibirov, *The history of Daghestan*, 90-92, 95-96; Hovannisian 1: 358-360; Kazemzadeh, 246; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 120; NAG CHA, fond 1861, list 2, file 58, “Protokoly chastnyx soveshanii (sp.?) Kavkazsk. Konfer. 29 i 30 maja” (Protocols of the private discussions of the Caucasian Conference, 29 and 30 May); Taxo-Godi, *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, 105-106.

C. The Caucasian delegations in Paris

In late 1918-early 1919, the four Caucasian republics had sufficient hope of at least being heard in Paris to spare no effort to send their delegations. Considering their sacrifices in WWI and the widespread international sympathy for their recent suffering, the Armenians had the best chance of receiving Allied support for recognition of some configuration of an Armenian state. The U.S. delegation led by President Wilson—famous for trumpeting the principle of self-determination for the small nations—intended to encourage all the border regions to reunite with Russia in a democratic federation—except Finland, Poland, possibly Lithuania, and Russian Armenia—which should be reunited with Turkish Armenia in an independent state under the tutelage of a mandatory power answerable to the League of Nations; Georgia and Azerbaijan might be assisted in getting a “provisional” independence but only once the Russian question was solved and their relationships with Russia and Armenia finalized.⁸⁷⁵ The British favored a mandatory power for an independent, united Armenia but were divided as to what fate they should promote for the other republics.⁸⁷⁶ According to the Eastern Committee’s 16 December 1918 resolution, the British wanted to see Georgia, Azerbaijan and Daghestan as strong, independent states in the Caucasus, possibly in the form of a regional federation, depending on the course of events and if they could prove themselves.⁸⁷⁷ The French were internally divided on the Armenian question and practically hostile to the idea of the other Caucasian republics leaving Russia.⁸⁷⁸

It was thus only with great trouble that the Caucasian delegations could even receive the permission from the British authorities in Tiflis to go to Paris. And by the time the delegations were on their way, the Volunteer forces were rapidly fanning deeper into the North Caucasus. After arriving in Constantinople, the Armenian delegation sailed quickly on for Marseilles, arriving to Paris on 4 February, missing the

⁸⁷⁵ Hovannisian 1: 261-265.

⁸⁷⁶ Hovannisian 1: 265-269.

⁸⁷⁷ Hovannisian 1: 271-272.

⁸⁷⁸ Hovannisian 1: 273-276, 282-286.

18 January conference opening. But a delegation of Western Armenians was also already in Paris at the start of the conference. The other three delegations were forced, thanks in part to French hostility, to wait longer in the Turkish city.⁸⁷⁹ In the view of *saqartvelo*'s editors, the Allies were reluctant to allow the Georgian delegation to come to France at all because they were suspicious of the prominent socialists in it.⁸⁸⁰ But a few Georgian figures were already in Europe and paved the way for the eventual arrival of some of their colleagues.⁸⁸¹ The members of the Azerbaijani delegation made use of their delay by heading via Marseille to Rome, where they held business negotiations.⁸⁸² Though all of the delegations were allowed to participate, none of them enjoyed an actual seat at the conference.⁸⁸³

The Russian White movement's disparaging attitude towards the newly independent nations seeking statehood fed the great powers' dismissive attitude towards the Caucasian delegations, but they were ultimately forced to deal with the reality of Russia's minorities' national aspirations and the eventual fact of the Russian generals' failure to defeat the Communists or restore Russia "united and indivisible".⁸⁸⁴

⁸⁷⁹ Ismail Agakishiev, ed. and G. Mamulia and R. Abutalybov, compilers, *A. M. Topchibashi, Parizhskij arxiv 1919-1940. V chetyrex knigax. – Kniga pervaja 1919-1921* (A. M. Topchibashi, Paris archive 1919-1940. In four books. – First book 1919-1921) (Moscow: Xudozhestvennaja literature, 2016), 14, 18 19, 51; Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 157-158; Hovannisian 1: 253, 257-261, 276, 285-286; "Na Versalskoj konferentsii" (At the Versailles Conference), *Volnyj gorets* 4 (6 October 1919); "Otezhd gruzinskoj delegatsii v Parizh" (Departure of the Georgian delegation to Paris), *Gruzija* 7, 11 January 1919; "saqartvelos delegacia" (Georgia's delegation), *saqartvelo* 15 (21 January 1919).

According to the material in *A. M. Topchibashi*, The Caucasians frequently met with conceit. For example, when Professor Simpson asked Topchibashev if the Mountaineers were capable of forming a state and Topchibashev replied that they would like to form a confederation on the Swiss model, the professor replied, "There is culture there, which the Mountaineers lack."

⁸⁸⁰ "brdzola chrdilo-kavkasiashi" (The fight in the North Caucasus), *saqartvelo* 33, 12 February 1919.

⁸⁸¹ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 161.

⁸⁸² "aderbeijanshi, aderbeijanis delegati otxta tsinashe" (In Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan's delegate before the four), *saqartvelos respublika* 139 (27 June 1919); Agakishiev, 26-27.

⁸⁸³ Hovannisian 1, 255-257.

⁸⁸⁴ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 174-175; Agakishiev, *A. M. Topchibashi*, 29; "Beseda s predstavitelem Soveta Oborony Gorskoy Respubliki V. Dzhabagi" (A conversation with the representative of the Defense Council of the Mountain Republic V. Dzhabagi), *Volnyj gorets* 11 (20 November 1919).

The initial indication of the Whites' attitude towards the border republics was given in the declaration made by the Russian Political Conference in Paris on 30 January 1919. In what was essentially a "left-Kadet" proposal, the Russian leaders announced the new Russian state would be based on popular sovereignty and guarantee religious, social and class equality as well as provide support for the private initiative of capital while protecting working class interests. They announced their intention to carry out agrarian reform through a legal process and decentralize the state's administration. They also promised to work towards the conciliation of the interests of the state and the nationalities "within the framework of the state" perhaps even in the form of a federation or some arrangement of autonomies for those nationalities the Russian leaders deemed "advanced enough".⁸⁸⁵ The phrase regarding those nations the Russian leaders deemed advanced enough gives an obvious indication of their attitude towards national groups—the Russian leaders placed it upon themselves to determine who was sufficiently "evolved" for self-rule (the Finns and Poles), somersaulting over the essence of the principle of self-determination.⁸⁸⁶

Nonetheless, the Caucasian delegations had their own ideas about the future of their republics, which they outlined in their claims presented to the conference. The memorandums they presented to the conference shared common elements like descriptions of historical backgrounds and territorial claims. According to the Azerbaijanis, the south-eastern part of the Caucasus had been "since immemorial times" populated by a mixture of Turkic, Tatar and Iranian elements. Over the centuries they had seen conquerors come and go but in the 18th century there were independent khanates that variously cooperated with and fought against the Persian attempts to rule them. In the early 19th century, they were forcibly annexed by the tsarist forces, who hacked up their territorial boundaries and persecuted the population. Influenced by the ideas emanating from Western Europe, they had then spent the previous decades

⁸⁸⁵ "La déclaration de la conférence politique russe" (The declaration of the Russian political conference), *Le Temps* No. 21026 (30 January 1919); Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 171.

⁸⁸⁶ Compare with the interpretation of Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 171.

focused on their national-cultural revival, a process which culminated in the declaration of independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan.⁸⁸⁷

The North Caucasian memorandum began with a dramatic reference to reports of the historians of antiquity, which proved the “Circassian peoples of the Caucasus” have lived “ever since the remotest times, in the country situated from the mouths of the Volga and Don as far south as the Caucasus range and down to the Absheron peninsula (where Baku is located). Having withstood repeated invasions, they were unable to resist the Russian conquest despite their valiant efforts to defend their freedom through arms, political reorganization and appeals to “civilised Europe” for support. The Russian conquerors then deported huge numbers of people, ruined the economic basis of their society and repressed them politically. Under these conditions, the Caucasian political activists, usually working abroad, had to conceal their hope for freedom in the form of a future Caucasian confederation. After the fall of the tsar, they proposed to the Transcaucasians that they form a regional union, but this did not work out as they had wished. In the Mountaineers’ view, the peoples of the North Caucasus had already rendered humanity a great service by “preserving Europe and the peoples of the Mediterranean basin from the horrors of Asiatic and Russian invasions during the middle-ages and modern times” and if their independence would be recognized by the great powers, they could render such service again “by placing themselves as an intercontinental Switzerland between Eastern Europe and Central Asia”.⁸⁸⁸

The Armenians too referred to their great historical past but focused on more recent times. As they saw it, the old European policy of upholding Ottoman Turkish territorial integrity and, as a compromise, pushing for reforms to serve as the basis of the resolution of the problem of minorities in the declining empire was a clear failure, serving only to place the Christian subjects in greater peril. And when the Armenians helped the Young Turks to overthrow “the Hamidian tyranny” (Sultan Abdul Hamid II)

⁸⁸⁷ *La République de l'Azerbaïdjan du Caucase* (The Republic of Azerbaijan of the Caucasus) (1919), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k34140588/f1.item>.

⁸⁸⁸ Haïdar Bammate, *The Caucasus Problem, Questions concerning Circassia and Daghestan* (Bern: 1919).

they were thanked with a butchering. Thus, at the outbreak of the First World War, when the Young Turks asked the Armenians to rise up against Russia, they refused and in response were subjected to massive reprisals directed towards their extermination. Not only had they fought bravely for their national survival and statehood, they argued, but they had also contributed to the Allies' victory in the war. Paying dearly for their loyalty and service, they now expected the Allies to live up to their promises to uphold the Armenians' right to self-determination and statehood.⁸⁸⁹

The Georgian memorandum emphasized the deep historical roots for Georgia's statehood, gave a brief account of the recent political developments leading to the proclamation of the republic's independence and set forth the fledgling republic's territorial claims. It is interesting to note, however, that the Georgians' request for state recognition was accompanied with a vague acknowledgement that somehow such recognition would be related to support for the neighboring republics and the significance of Transcaucasia as a barrier and a conduit between Europe and the East. It reads,

The independence of Georgia in connection with the political constitution of its neighboring countries, protected by that incomparable natural frontier which is the main range of the Caucasus and upheld by international arrangements, will not only be the endorsement of the natural rights of Georgia and an act of justice but will also serve effectively to create a solid barrier between the different political spheres ever ready to collide in the Orient. This will facilitate the grand mission assigned to Transcaucasia by its geographical situation, that of being a open road for economic and intellectual relations between Europe and the countries of Central Asia and the Middle East.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁹ "The Armenian Question Before the Peace Conference. A Memorandum Presented Officially by the Representatives of Armenia to the Peace Conference at Versailles, on February 26th, 1919," Paris, 12 February 1919.

⁸⁹⁰ NAG CHA, fond 1864, list 2, file 117, « Mémoire présenté à la Conférence de la paix. Revendications politiques. Frontières. Suivi de l'acte de l'indépendance de la Géorgie et d'une carte (1919) » (Memorandum presented to the Peace Conference. Political claims. Frontiers. Followed by the act of independence of Georgia and a map).

« L'indépendance de la Géorgie en connexion avec la constitution politique des pays voisins, protégée par cette frontière naturelle incomparable qu'est la chaîne principale du Caucase et confirmée par des arrangements internationaux sera non seulement la sanction des droits naturels de la Géorgie et un acte de justice mais encore servira efficacement à la création d'une barrière solide entre les différentes sphères politiques toujours prêtes à entrer en collision en Orient. La grande mission qui est dévolue à la Transcaucasie par sa situation géographique, celle d'être une voie ouverte aux relations économiques et intellectuelles entre l'Europe et les pays de l'Asie centrale et antérieure, en sera facilitée. »

With regard to the territorial question, Azerbaijan claimed as its territory the Baku governorate, much of Elizavetpol (Ganja) governorate, parts of the Erevan governorate, small pieces of the Tiflis governorate and Daghestan oblast, and the Zakatal'skij okrug. At the same time, the Azerbaijanis recognized that its neighbors were also claiming some of these areas, so they expressed their intention to settle the matter of territorial disputes with the Mountain Republic through common agreement and their hope of solving the problem of Muslim Georgia through organizing a referendum or supporting an independent republic for the Georgian Muslims. The Mountaineers claimed the territories between the mouth of the Enguri River and the mouth of the Kuban in the Kerch Strait in the west and between the mouth of the Kuma River and the town of Kiljazi (Gilazi, Giləzi) in the east, with the northern border running along the Kuban and Kuma Rivers and the southern border along the Great Caucasus range. This included Abkhazia. They also wanted the Zakatal'skij okrug.⁸⁹¹ The Armenians claimed territories spanning from the Mediterranean Sea to the mountains of Karabagh as well as various districts lost to Ottoman administrative reforms and the Black Sea coastal areas around Trabzon and Giresun.⁸⁹²

The Azerbaijani memorandum was distinguished by its assertion that a Caucasian union was indispensable. It stated,

“The community of interests [between the native Caucasian peoples] is so great that, notwithstanding the difference of races, religions and languages, it would be difficult to imagine a normal existence and development of the vital forces of any of these nations taken singly; it is why it is evident that the Caucasus, geographically one, limited by the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and by the Caucasus mountains, must be united under some economic and political form. What sort of union will it be? The Areopagus of the representatives of the Caucasian nations, under the guidance of the Peace Conference and League of Nations will have to settle that question. The Peace Delegation of Azerbaijan thinks that the best form would be a confederacy of Caucasian Republics: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and the Mountaineers. Being partisans of that confederative union of the Caucasian Republics, the Azerbaijanis, like the Mountaineers of the north of the Caucasus, consider that form of union to be the best means to put an end to national and territorial contests.”⁸⁹³

⁸⁹¹ Bammate, *The Caucasus Problem*, 32-39.

⁸⁹² “The Armenian Question Before the Peace Conference.”

⁸⁹³ *La République de l'Azerbaïdjan du Caucase*, 43-44.

In Paris, the Allied Supreme Council was willing to listen to the Caucasian and Armenian delegations, but the governments represented in the council were generally fixated on the idea of preserving Russia whole and strong. Thus, the council viewed an all-Russian federation as a workable compromise for the need to preserve a strong, united Russia while also acknowledging, or paying lip service to, the demands of the new state formations.⁸⁹⁴ With regard to the Caucasus specifically, the great powers were opposed to allowing the emergence of numerous little state formations, fearing “Balkanization”, and the Muslim delegates learned in a private conversation with the US President Wilson that it would be easier for a united Caucasian state—whatever its form—to obtain international recognition than several squabbling republics. This information inspired the Azerbaijani and Mountain delegations in particular to try harder at building solidarity and creating “as much unity as possible” between themselves. This resulted in a series of meetings between the four delegations aimed at harmonizing their views on various questions. The Armenian delegation was least interested in this effort, stating that its main concern was unification with Turkish Armenia and not the issue of “Denikin or Lenin”.⁸⁹⁵ The Mountain delegation also refused to sign a joint petition asking the Allies to maintain troops in Transcaucasia—

« Cette communauté d'intérêts est si grande que, malgré la différence des races, des religions et des langues, il serait difficile de se représenter une existence et un développement normaux des forces vitales de chacun de ces peuples pris à part ; s'est pourquoi il est évident que le Caucase, géographiquement un, renfermé entre la mer Noire et la mer Caspienne et cerné par les monts de Caucase, doit être unifié sous telle ou telle forme économique et politique. Quelle sera cette forme d'union ? L'aréopage, composé des représentants des nations du Caucase, sous l'égide de la Conférence de la Paix et la Ligue des Nations devra résoudre cette question. La Délégation de Paix de l'Azerbaïdjan considère que la meilleure forme serait celle de la confédération des Républiques caucasiennes : l'Azerbaïdjan, l'Arménie, la Géorgie et les Montagnards. Étant partisans de cette Union confédérative des Républiques caucasiennes, les Azerbaïdjanais, de même que les montagnards du nord du Caucase, voient dans cette forme d'union, le meilleur moyen de mettre fin aux discussions nationales et territoriales. Ces discussions perdront leur âpreté, et, dans la vie commune des voisins séculaires, grâce aux concessions mutuelles au nom des intérêts communs auront, nous en sommes certains, un dénouement favorable au bonheur de tous les Caucasiens. »

⁸⁹⁴ Agakishiev, A. M. *Topchibashi*, 40; Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 171-173.

⁸⁹⁵ Agakishiev, A. M. *Topchibashi*, 32-36; Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 151-152; “Na Versalskoj konferentsii.”

because Allied troops meant British troops and they were still upset with the British for “letting” Denikin overrun their country.⁸⁹⁶

In late May 1919 the Allied Supreme Council stated it may recognize Admiral Kolchak’s government if it fulfilled certain conditions and expressed its support for the reestablishment of Russia while informally stating its intention to advocate for the autonomy of the border states and provide for international control of their relations with Russia.⁸⁹⁷ Kolchak responded by stating that besides Finland and Poland the border formations would have to accept autonomy at a level to be decided on a case-by-case basis, and on 12 June the Supreme Council expressed its satisfaction with his answer.⁸⁹⁸ Disturbed by this development, the Georgian, Azerbaijani and Mountain delegations signed a protest with other newly formed republics on Russia’s periphery on 17 June.⁸⁹⁹ The Georgian, Azerbaijani and Mountaineer delegations then signed a joint declaration affirming their commitment to national sovereignty.⁹⁰⁰ And a note was signed by a number of the border republics protesting the occupation of the Mountaineers’ territory.⁹⁰¹ The North Caucasian delegation also signed a treaty of friendship with the Kuban Cossacks’ federalist representation at the Paris Peace

⁸⁹⁶ “Na Versalskoj konferentsii” (At the Versailles Conference), *Volnyj gorets* 4 (6 October 1919).

⁸⁹⁷ Agakishiev, A. M. *Topchibashi*, 40-43; Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 172-174; “Appendix I to C. F. 37—Despatch to Admiral Kolchak,” Paris, 26 May 1919. Office of the Historian, Department of State of the U.S.A., accessed 29 May 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Russia/d390>.

⁸⁹⁸ Agakishiev, A. M. *Topchibashi*, 42-43.

⁸⁹⁹ Ramiz Abutalebov, ed. and Vilijat Kuliev, compiler and author of the foreword, *Ali Mardanbek Topchibashev: Pişma iz Parizha, Donisenija predsedatelja delegatsii Azerbajdzhanskoj Respubliki na Parizhskoj mirnoj konferentsii (mart-dekabr 1919 g.)* (Ali Mardanbek Topchibashev: Letters from Paris, Dispatches of the chairman of the delegation of the Azerbaijani Republic at the Paris Peace Conference [March-December 1919]) (Baku: Azerbajdzhanskoe Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1998). See the document “Gospodinu Predsedatelja Soveta Ministrov Azerbajdzhanskoj Respubliki” (To Mr. Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan); Agakishiev, A. M. *Topchibashi*, 43-44; Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 174-175; “Na Versalskoj konferentsii.”

⁹⁰⁰ Abutalebov, “Gospodinu Predsedatelja Soveta Ministrov Azerbajdzhanskoj Respubliki” (To Mr. Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan); Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 174-175, 179.

⁹⁰¹ Abutalebov, “Gospodinu Predsedatelja Soveta Ministrov Azerbajdzhanskoj Respubliki” (To Mr. Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan); “Na Versalskoj konferentsii.”

Conference. This act enraged Denikin so much that he ordered the execution of the Cossack and Mountaineer signatories to this document, including Chermoev and Bammatov; and one Cossack politician indeed met his death for this act.⁹⁰²

Nevertheless, beyond demonstrating some solidarity, the four Caucasian delegations did not forge a strong common front in Paris. Providing a snapshot of the internal political landscapes in each distinct Caucasian political society, the national delegations themselves were hardly monolithic in their composition. The Armenian representation in Paris was a merger of the Ottoman and Russian Armenian delegations, each of which had different political temperaments and goals regarding territorial claims. The Russian Armenian delegation came with instructions to make more modest demands (the six eastern vilayets and a corridor to the Black Sea) but, in order to prevent internal friction, agreed to push with their westerly cousins for a maximal territorial claim (including Cilicia and Mediterranean seaports).⁹⁰³ To complicate matters further, the Russian Armenian delegation included a mix of Dashnaks and Populists.⁹⁰⁴

In the Georgian delegation, the enduring division between left and right was evident at the conference. Avalishvili, taking the position of the more practical nationalists on the right, suggested talking to Denikin's delegation to see if some "friendly" agreement could be found. But the Georgian Mensheviks, trapped by their leftist dogma and need to impress their friends at the Second International, refused to consider negotiations with "the reaction".⁹⁰⁵ In principle, the Mensheviks were not

⁹⁰² "Dogovor družby mezhdu Praviteľstvami Kubani i Respubliki Sojuza Gortsev Kavkaza" (The treaty of friendship between the Governments of the Kuban and the Republic of the Union of Mountaineers of the Caucasus), *Voľnyj goret* 6 (20 October 1919); Kenez, *Red Attack, White Resistance*, 230; Peter Kenez, *Red Advance White Defeat: Civil War in South Russia 1919-1920* (Washington DC: New Academia Publishing, 2004), 135-137; Kurtatinskij, "Jarost Denikina" (Denikin's wrath), *Voľnyj goret* 11 (20 November 1919); "Razgrom Kubanskoj rady. Prikaz gen. Vrangel'ja. Sud nad Kalabuxovym. Kazn Kalabuxova" (The defeat of the Kuban rada. General Vrangel's order. Kalabuxov's trial. Kalabuxov's execution) *Voľnyj goret* 14 (1 December 1919).

⁹⁰³ Hovannisian 1: 259-260.

⁹⁰⁴ Hovannisian 1: 251-252.

⁹⁰⁵ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 181-183.

opposed to unity with Russia, just reabsorption into *reactionary* Russia. In Avalishvili's view, the Georgian government's official representatives' Marxist convictions caused them to mistakenly put their faith in the weight of the International instead of more savvily cultivating the goodwill of "the imperialists" on the Supreme Council—who held the real decision-making power.⁹⁰⁶ He also thought that the delegation leaders, Nikoloz Chxeidze and Irakli Tsereteli, in particular, and the Georgian Mensheviks in government, in general, were unqualified for and indisposed to dealing with defending Georgia's independence and Caucasian unity, which were the main issues and what the situation required, in the unfolding international context.⁹⁰⁷

The Azerbaijani delegation also had a strong socialist component, and like their Georgian counterparts some were active in the socialist circles in Paris.⁹⁰⁸ Internally, there were tensions between the moderate Topchibashev and the more radical Gadzhinskij. According to Vilijat Kuliev,

“...M.G. Gadzhinskij came to Baku in August 1919 for a two-month break and did not return to Paris again... In the letter addressed to the chairman of the Azerbaijani Council of Ministers, A. M. Topchibashev insisted that M. Gadzhinskij not be entrusted with any functions or posts and that after two months he must be sent back. A.M. Topchibashev knew M. Gadzhinskij well enough and was undoubtedly motivated by compelling reasons. You see, shortly thereafter Gadzhinskij played an unseemly role in our country's loss of independence. In fact, he attracted the aggression of Bolshevik Russia with his duplicitous politics.”⁹⁰⁹

⁹⁰⁶ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 186-189, 196-197.

⁹⁰⁷ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 155, 163-167, 170; “saqartvelos delegacia” (Georgia's delegation), *saqartvelo* 15 (21 January 1919).

⁹⁰⁸ Abutalebov, *Pişma iz Parizha*, sections “Sostav” (Composition) and “Gospodinu Predsedatelja Soveta Ministrov Azerbajdzhanskoj Respubliki” (To Mr. Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan).

⁹⁰⁹ Abutalebov, *Pişma iz Parizha*, “Suđba delegatsii” (The fate of the delegation).

«М. Г. Гаджинский в августе 1919 года приехал в Баку в двухмесячный отпуск и больше в Париж не вернулся... В письме на имя председателя Совета министров А. М. Топчибашев настаивал, чтобы на М. Гаджинского в Баку не возлагалось каких-либо функций и должностей и чтобы через два месяца он был отправлен обратно. А. М. Топчибашев достаточно хорошо знал М. Гаджинского и, несомненно, исходил из веских соображений. Дело в том, что Гаджинский сыграл неприглядную роль в последовавшей вскоре утрате нашей страной независимости.»

It appears Topchibashev suspected Gadzhinskij of disloyalty to the cause of Azerbaijani national independence and felt he ought to be kept under a watchful eye. Gadzhinskij would indeed play a fateful role in the Bolshevik takeover of Azerbaijan in April 1920.

The members of the Mountain delegation were Tapa Chermoev, Gajdar Bammatov, Ibragim Gajdarov and Doctor Xossan Xodzatagev.⁹¹⁰ It is probable they maintained a united front despite any ideological differences. For one thing, it appears Bammatov the socialist had a friendly working relationship with Chermoev the tycoon since he eventually married his niece in emigration.⁹¹¹ Several members of the Mountain delegation also participated in the socialist meetings chaired by Albert Thomas.⁹¹² As the Caucasian delegations sat in Paris through the summer and the great powers stalled on solving the Russia question, Denikin's forces continued their assault on the population of the North Caucasus, unchecked by their Western allies.

D. The popular nature of the Mountain resistance

After the Bolshevik coup in October 1917, the formation of the Terek People's Republic in early 1918 marked the departure of the far left from the common North Caucasian political front embodied in the UAM and Autonomous Mountain Government. Then, with the arrival of the Volunteer Army, the far right sloughed off from what remained of the common cause to back the "White" Russian centralists, whom they presumably imagined had come to restore law and order. As a result, some of the political leaders in the patriotic center (including moderate socialists) were forced to flee to Azerbaijan and Georgia to escape persecution. In Transcaucasia, however, they remained active, supporting the popular resistance which soon sprung up in the

⁹¹⁰ "Gorskaja delegatsija na vsemirnoj konferentsii" (The Mountain delegation at the world conference), *Gruzija* 18 (24 January 1919).

⁹¹¹ I. L. Babych, T. L. Gladkova and L. A. Mnuxin, *Severokavkaztsy v emigratsii v XX veke: Materialy k biograficheskomu slovarju* (The North Caucasians in emigration in the 20th century: Materials for a biographical dictionary) (Moscow and Berlin: DirectMEDIA, 2020), 50.

⁹¹² "Na Versaľskoj konferentsii (Beseda s chlenom gorskoj delegatsii na konferentsiji)" (At the Versailles Conference [A conversation with a member of the Mountain delegation to the conference]), *Voľnyj gorets* 4 (6 October 1919).

mountains under the leadership of religious figures like Ali Akushinskij and Uzun Xadzhi.⁹¹³

1. *In the mountains*

Xalilov's cooperation with "the Cossacks" inspired Akushinskij to initiate an exchange of letters with the conservative general which ultimately led to armed clashes and open rebellion.⁹¹⁴ As relations deteriorated between Xalilov and Akushinskij, Xalilov dismissed him from his official post as *sheikh al-Islam* on 15 July 1919.⁹¹⁵ Around this time, Akushinskij took the initiative to organize a committee for the defense of the Mountain peoples in Levashi, and in mid-July hostilities broke out between the Volunteer Army and its conservative supporters, on the one hand, and the left-leaning popular resistance led by Akushinskij on the other.⁹¹⁶

According to the Daghestani memoirists Dibirov and Taxo-Gody, Akushinskij was spurred on by Bolshevik leaders and received financial support from the government of Azerbaijan.⁹¹⁷ However, Akushinskij himself directly refuted any accusations of Bolshevism—insisting he had no party affiliation and was motivated entirely by the idea of freedom for the mountain peoples. The contents of Akushinskij's various announcements and letters show that while he and the people held Sharia sacred, they were thinking strongly in terms of the defense of the mountain peoples' political right to self-determination as well as in terms of social-economic justice, basically "class". In a July announcement to the Volunteer Army's chief representative in Daghestan he wrote the following:

⁹¹³ Dibirov, *The history of Daghestan*, 92.

⁹¹⁴ Dibirov, *The history of Daghestan*, 97-101; A. Taxo-Gody, *Revoljutsija i kontr-revoljutsija v Dagestane* (Revolution and counter-revolution in Daghestan) (Makhachkala: Dagestanskoe Gos Izdateľstvo, 1927), 111-112; "V Dagestane" (In Daghestan), *Gruzija* 130 (22 June 1919).

⁹¹⁵ Dibirov, *The history of Daghestan*, 95, 107.

⁹¹⁶ "Vozstanie v Dagestane" (Uprising in Daghestan), *Gruzija* 156, 23 July 1919. In the newspaper "vozstanie" is misspelled as "vozstakie."

⁹¹⁷ Dibirov, *The history of Daghestan*, 97; Taxo-Godi, *Revolution and counter-revolution*, 109-110.

“...the invasion of Volunteer Army units into the territory of Daghestan and their occupation of the cities of T-X.-Shura and Derbent, located behind the demarcation line of the Caucasian states... all the facts listed and a great many others, being open violence against the will of the Daghestani people and an open overthrow of the democratic freedoms and blatant violation of the Sharia sacred to them, are appalling to all. Such actions cannot be tolerated... Daghestan recognizes the full right to govern itself by custom and the sacred Sharia until the establishment of an all-state form of government in Russia. The Daghestani people does not consider itself obligated to respond to the accusations of Menshevism, Bolshevism, etc. thrown at them by persons who are irresponsible and hostile to them... I, Ali Gadzhi Akushinskij, *Sheikh al-Islam* of Daghestan, in complete agreement with the sheikh Uzun Xadzhi and other esteemed *ulema*, and in complete unity with the entire Daghestani people and in their name, have the honor of insisting before the representative of the Volunteer Army [that the Volunteers]: 1) Clear Temir-Xan-Shura and Derbent of Volunteer Army units and remove these units behind the demarcation line of Daghestan, according to the communication of the British government. 2) Refrain from any interference in the internal affairs of Daghestan, recognizing by a public act that the full right to self-determination belongs to the Daghestani people and only to them, just as the Daghestani people recognizes the rights to self-determination of the Cossacks and Russia's other peoples. 3) Repeal the order on the appointment of a ruler over Daghestan and refrain from giving any support to the officer-bek estate dictatorship over Daghestan.”⁹¹⁸

In July, Akushinskij's son also produced a statement emphasizing his father's loyalty to the cause of Mountaineer self-determination and refuting rumors that the sheikh was partial to any political party and. He wrote:

“I declare most categorically that the standard raised by my father, together with Uzum Xadzhi Saltinskij, who is just as popular a sheikh in Daghestan, is the

⁹¹⁸ “V Dagestane” (In Daghestan), *Gruzija* 152 (18 July 1919).

«...вторжение отрядов добровольческой армии на территорию Дагестана и занятие ими городов Т-Х. Шуры и Дербент, находящихся за демаркационной линией кавказских штатов... все перечисленные факты и многое множество других, являясь открытым насилием над волей дагестанского народа, очевидным опровержением демократических свобод и вопиющим нарушением священного для него шариата, единодушно возмущают его. Подобия действия не могут быть терпимы... Дагестан признает полное право управлять собой быту и священному шариату впредь до установления общегосударственной формы управления в России. Дагестанский народ не считает себя обязанным отвечать за бросаемые по его адресу безответственными и враждебными для него лицами обвинения в меньшевизме, большевизме и т. д. ...я, Али Гаджи Акушинский, шейх-уль-ислам Дагестана, в полном согласия с шейхом Узун Хаджи и другими высокочтимыми алимами, в полном единении со всем дагестанским народом и от его имени имею честь настаивать перед представителем добровольческой армии: 1) очистить от частей добровольческой армии города Темир-Хан-Шуру и Дербент и вывести эти части за демаркационную линию Дагестана, согласно сообщения великобританского правительства. 2) Отказаться от всякого вмешательства во внутренние дела Дагестана, признав публичным актом за дагестанским народом и только за ним полное право на самоуправление, точно так же, как дагестанский народ признает за казаками и остальными народами России их права на самоопределение. 3) Отменить приказ о назначении правителя Дагестана, а также отказаться от всякой поддержки офицерско-бекской сословной диктатуры над Дагестаном.»

standard of Imam Shamil, who proved by way of his continuous thirty-five-year uninterrupted struggle with the Russian imperialists that the gortsy do not part with their freedom so easily. My father, as head of a well-known religious current in Daghestan and fully inspired by the ideas of the independence of the mountain peoples, cannot be considered in any case whatsoever as a party worker in the sense normally given to this expression. Therefore, every assertion that my father belongs to one or another of the political parties now fighting each other must be categorically rejected as a perversion of truth and accuracy.”⁹¹⁹

A religious leader and freedom fighter, Akushinskij was also highly concerned with social and economic justice like other left-leaning North Caucasian patriots such as Alixan Kantemir, Gajdar Bammatorov and Axmet Tsalikov. Although the mid-summer revolt was not initially successful, by fall it would transform into an entrenched resistance that spread to contiguous areas of the North Caucasus. The popular resistance percolating over the summer was a mix of partisans increasingly aggrieved at the heavy-handed nature of Denikin’s regime and Bolshevik sympathizers.

Even though the Mountaineer patriots at the time described the motivations of the native population as related more to concepts like liberty, self-determination, religious freedom and self-defense, the North Caucasian resistance also demonstrated a commitment to “leftist” principles like social and economic justice while still rejecting Bolshevism. Considering the main anti-White leaders were Akushinskij and Uzun Xadzhi, and they were cooperating with the non-Bolshevik intelligentsia intensively whilst with the Bolsheviks only tactically, it seems the Soviet historians place undue emphasis on the “class” nature of this conflict and the “leadership role” of Bolsheviks like Ordzhonikidze, Kirov and Gikalo and their local comrades-in-arms like

⁹¹⁹ “Pišmo Magometa Akushinskago, syna shejx-uł-islama Dagestana” (The letter of Magomet Akushinskij, son of the *sheikh al-Islam* of Daghestan), *Gruzija* 156 (23 July 1919).

«Я заявляю в самой категорической форме, что зная поднятое моим отцом совместно с таким же популярным шейхом в Дагестане Узум Гаджи Салтинским, есть зная имама Шамиля, который 35-летний непрерывный борьбой с русским империализмом доказал, сто горцы не так легко расстаются со своей свободой. Отца моего, как главу известного духовного течения в Дагестана и проникнутаго идеалами независимости горских народов, ни в коем случае нельзя считать партийным работником в том значении, какое привыкли придавать этому выражению. Поэтому всякое утверждение, что отец мой принадлежит к той или другой из борющихся сейчас политических партии, должно быть безусловно отвергнуто, как вращение истины и достоверности.»

Aslanbek Sheripov.⁹²⁰ In fact, there was a collection of different groups hostile to Denikin's Volunteer Army, each with differing shades of priorities, who warily entered into varying degrees of cooperation with each other.

In Chechnya, over the summer Gikalo organized and trained around 1,000 to 1,500 of the Red soldiers who had sought refuge in the mountains into a detachment and acquired some arms and sustenance with Sheripov's help. Sheripov also formed a detachment of Chechen fighters sympathetic to the Bolsheviks. Meanwhile, Uzun Xadzhi was headquartered in Vedenov with a personal guard of Daghestanis, and people were coming from Chechnya, Ingushetia and Kabarda to join him. After 29 September, Uzun Xadzhi's emirate, organized that month, was run by its vizier—Inaluk Arsanukaev Dyshninskij—and its army had six divisions (detachments). The forces of Gikalo and Sheripov entered into Uzun-Xadzhi's Emirate's army as the "Fifth Free Army" (600-1500 men). But there was no love lost between the Bolsheviks and the Emirate's main forces. Both groups worked to undermine each other even as they were forced into a degree of temporary cooperation against their common foe.⁹²¹ On the one hand, the emirate leadership never trusted the Bolsheviks, and Dyshninskij actively looked for ways to eliminate them. On the other, as Gikalo's secretary Popov admitted, the Bolsheviks intended to discard the religious leaders as soon as possible. He quotes Gikalo's words as follows: "As long as he is fighting the Whites and distracting their forces, it is possible to justify alliance with him... We will try not to antagonize our relationship with Uzun-Xadzhi. At the same time carry out a tireless war against the Emirate's most reactionary figures."⁹²²

⁹²⁰ Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 280-281.

⁹²¹ Z. A.-G. Gojgova, *Narody Checheno-Ingushetii v borbe protiv Denikina* (The people of Checheno-Ingushetia in the struggle against Denikin) (Groznyj: Checheno-Ingushskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1963), 137-139; Nosov, *The October Revolution*, 96; Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 62-63; Kılseev, E. I., "V gorax chechni (otrjad N.F. Gikalo 1919-1920 gg.)" (In the mountains of Chechnya [N.F. Gikalo's squad in 1919-1920]), *Kavkazologija* 2 (2018): 139.

⁹²² Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 64-67; Kılseev, "In the mountains," 141.

«В пределах того, как он ведет борьбу против белых и отвлекает их силы, в такой же мере возможно и оправданно наше сотрудничество с ним... Мы будем стараться не обострять отношений с Узун-Хаджи. В то же время неустанно вести борьбу с наиболее реакционными деятелями эмирства.»

If the Bolsheviks used Uzun Xadzhi and the emirate to distract the Volunteers, Uzun Xadzhi's emirate worked with the Bolsheviks because they had promised to help the Mountaineers obtain an independent republic if they won. Uzun Xadzhi's son Magomad Xadzhi stated this explicitly at a meeting in Daghestan. He said,

“When Denikin ruled in the North Caucasus, the gortsy rose up to rid themselves of this yoke. They did not want to tolerate another nation ruling over them. And the Bolsheviks in the face of Gikalo promised Uzum-xadzhi that if Denikin is defeated and the Bolsheviks take control, the mountaineers will receive the right to an independent republic. Now when the victory has been gained, the promise is forgotten. But we cannot be calm until we get the independence we demand. The people demand independence and there is no need to discuss any of these issues until the issue of the independence of the mountain peoples is solved.⁹²³

When the Dagestani Communist Dzhelal-ʿd-Din Korkmasov answered that the Mountaineers had no factories or trade ties to survive independently, Magomad Xadzhi retorted, “Give us our independence and we'll find our manufacture!” For this he was forcibly removed from the meeting.⁹²⁴

According to the Soviet historian I. Razgon, Bolshevik influence was strong in upper Chechnya. Shali was the epicenter of the partisan resistance and Aslanbek Sheripov's stronghold was higher up the Argun River valley around Shatoj.⁹²⁵ Although the Chechen lowlands stayed relatively quiet over the summer, the highlanders remained defiant and stirring though not openly aggressive. The Chechen collaborator General E. Aliev repeatedly threatened to send punitive cavalry raids but did not do so over the summer, likely afraid of provoking a violent resistance. Meanwhile, the

⁹²³ К. “Chto delaetsja v Dagestane” (What is being done in Daghestan), *Volnyj gorets* 48 (9 August 1920).

«В то время, как Деникин царствовал на Северном Кавказе, горские народы поднялись, чтобы свергнуть его иго. Горцы не хотели терпеть владычества другой нации над собой, и большевики в лице Гикало обещали Узуму-хаджи, что в случае, если Деникин будет разбит, и большевики возьмут верх, горцы получат право на независимую республику. Теперь, когда победа одержана, обещание забыто, но мы не можем успокоиться до тех пор, пока требуемая нами независимость не будет нам предоставлена. Народ требует независимости, и никаких вопросов обсуждать не нужно, пока не будет решен вопрос о независимости горских народов.»

⁹²⁴ К. “Chto delaetsja v Dagestane” (What is being done in Daghestan), *Volnyj gorets* 48 (9 August 1920).

«Дайте нам, моль, независимость, а мануфактуру мы найдем.»

⁹²⁵ Ki|seev, “In the mountains,” 140.

Volunteers' propaganda efforts were in full swing.⁹²⁶ However, despite the Chechens' promise to supply the Volunteers fighting men, the latter had a tough time actually getting and keeping them.⁹²⁷ As Perovic points out, "Like other Russian generals before him, Denikin misjudged the meaning of 'submission'. Thus, the apparent compliance of the Chechens in no way indicated feelings of partnership with the White forces."⁹²⁸ At *Volnyj gorets*, it was thought that the average Chechen did not expect the Cossacks and Volunteers to solve the land issue and warned that by fall the Chechen highlanders would go on the offensive to solve the agrarian question themselves.⁹²⁹

Submission in Ingushetia was likewise nominal. According to reports from Volunteer headquarters, on 5 July "rebellious" Ingush attacked an Ingush military echelon at Nazran Station in an attempt to prevent it from going to the front. Then, on 9 July, "strong " resistance was crushed in Surxoxi (Surxaxi), after which all of the plains villages "submitted" to their demands and agreed to supply the Whites with horsemen.⁹³⁰ In the Transcaucasian press, it was asserted that the Ingush were attempting to save the echelon from being forced to the front and were holding out well but it would be impossible for them to hold out against superior forces unless the other mountain peoples sent backup. Once again the Mountaineers hoped the Transcaucasian governments and British Command could intervene, this time since the Ingush feared total extermination.⁹³¹ Although the lowland Ingush were quickly forced into compliance and the Ingush resistance was paralyzed, the bulk of the active Ingush

⁹²⁶ V. Lavrovich, "Dobrovolija i Chechnja (Ot nashego korrespondenta)" (The Volunteers and Chechnya [From our correspondent], *Volnyj gorets* 1 (8 September 1919).

⁹²⁷ Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 33; See also A. V. Posadskij, "Chechentsy v vooruzhennyx silax juga Rossii: K istorii Chechenskoj Konnoj Divizii" (Chechens in the armed forces of the south of Russia: Towards a history of the Chechen Cavalry Division. Saratov State University, 95-99.

⁹²⁸ Jeronim Perović, *From Conquest to Deportation: The North Caucasus under Russian Rule* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018), 133.

⁹²⁹ V. Lavrovich, "Dobrovolija i Chechnja (Ot nashego korrespondenta)" (The Volunteers and Chechnya [From our correspondent], *Volnyj gorets* 1 (8 September 1919).

⁹³⁰ "V Ingushetii" (In Ingushetia) *Gruzija* 150 (16 July 1919); Nosov, *The October Revolution*, 93-94; Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 33.

⁹³¹ "Boi v Ingushetii" (Fighting in Ingushetia), *Gruzija* 149 (15 July 1919).

fighters regrouped in the mountains, where they had a large cache of weapons.⁹³² It was only with difficulty and bloodshed—namely the attacks on and subsequent looting of the villages of Surxoxi, Ėkazhevo and Nacyr-kort—that the Whites were able to extract contributions and men at great cost to the people, who were soon stricken with an epidemic of cholera.⁹³³

The situation was little better elsewhere. In Ossetia, the pro-Bolshevik Kermenists were persecuted and the village of Xristanovskoe (Digora) endured a major assault.⁹³⁴ In Balkaria, many homes were burnt down in punitive expeditions, and the people also had about half their cattle taken. So not only did they lose their main source of wealth but also the source of the milk products they used to trade with the Kabardians for bread. Having ruined the Balkars, the Volunteers then they set up their garrisons in whatever villages were left standing, depriving the locals of the few homes they had left, and continued to requisition cattle.⁹³⁵ In Karachai, many people fled into remote areas with their livestock to avoid the contributions and levies.⁹³⁶

Meanwhile, the members of the North Caucasian intelligentsia who had gone to Transcaucasia started organizing in Tiflis and Baku. Two committees formed over the summer, competing with each other, unsuccessfully, for potential funds from the Azerbaijani government. The first, the Conference for Mountain Affairs was headed by Axmet-Xan Mutushev and Said Kazbekov, who had Bolshevik orientations. Failing to receive funds, the organization disappeared by early August. The second, the Committee of Mountaineers of the North Caucasus, included such familiar names as Dzhabagiev, Kantemir, Temirxanov and Rashid-Xan Kaplanov. This organization held

⁹³² “V Ingushetii” (In Ingushetia), *Gruzija* 157(24 July 1919).

⁹³³ M. “V Ingushetii” (In Ingushetia), *Volnyj gorets* 1 (8 September 1919); “V Ingushetii” (In Ingushetia), *Gruzija* 157(24 July 1919).

⁹³⁴ Denikin, *Sketches* 4: 121-122; I. Razgon, *Borba partisan protiv Belogvardejtsev na Severnom Kavkaze v 1919-1920 gg.* (The fight of the partisans against the White guards in the North Caucasus in 1919-1920) (OGIZ, Gospolitizdat, 1942), 8; Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 279-280; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 127.

⁹³⁵ T. Azau, “V gorax Bolkarii” (In Balkaria’s mountains), *Volnyj gorets* 7 (27 October 1919).

⁹³⁶ “V Karachae” (In Karachai), *Volnyj gorets* 1 (8 September 1919).

a conference in Tiflis on 27 August to 3 September, inviting representatives from the Georgian and Azerbaijani political parties and out-of-towner politicians from the Terek and Daghestan. As the committee's goal was to create a united front, it also extended invitations to some Bolsheviks, who declined to participate. The representatives of Uzun-Xadzhi and Akushinskij came to the conference as well. At the end of the conference, on 4 September, the Allied Medzhlis was formally established. Its founding aim was to serve as the political center for the Mountaineers until a genuine constituent assembly could convene. The Medzhlis was recognized by Georgia as the legitimate representative of the North Caucasians, and it entered into official communications with the American Colonel Haskell, the Allied High Commissioner in Armenia for the Paris Peace Conference.⁹³⁷

Although the Mountain Republic had formally ceased to exist in May, by autumn the resistance had set up new authoritative structures to replace the fallen—or, as many saw it, *betrayed*—republic. The Defense Council of the North Caucasus was organized in Levashi under Akushinskij's leadership on 19 October 1919.⁹³⁸ The Allied Mejlis and the Defense Council were of a mixed ideological character but leaned left and brought the religious leaders in the mountains and the intelligentsia politicians together. These two organizations were coordinated with the peace delegation in Paris. All three bodies were united in their opposition to both the Russian generals and the Bolsheviks and held the common goal of defending the right to self-determination and preserving the physical existence of the mountain peoples.⁹³⁹ Since the Volunteers were

⁹³⁷ “Konferentsija političeskix dejatelej Sev. Kavkaza” (Conference of political activists of the North Caucasus), *Voľnyj goret* 2 (22 September 1919); “Materials of Axm. Tsalikov,” document digital files in possession of the author; M. Danilbekov, “Pišmo gortsa” (Letter of a Mountaineer), *Gruzija* 161 (29 July 1919); “Ot komiteta gortsev Sev. Kavkaza (Pišmo v redaktsiju)” (From the Committee of the Mountaineers of the North Caucasus [Letter to the editor]), *Gruzija* 163 (31 July 1919); “Vozvanie Medzhlisa gorskix narodov” (Appeal of the Medzhlis of the Mountain Peoples), *Voľnyj goret* 2 (22 September 1919).

⁹³⁸ This appears to be an expanded version of the defense council he formed earlier in the summer. Sometimes the first one is referred to as the Defense Council of Daghestan.

⁹³⁹ “Nota Soveta Oborony, predstavlenaja g. Ministru Inostrannyx del Gruzii i Predstaviteljam Sojuznyx Derzhav na Kavkaze” (Note of the Defense Council presented to Mr. Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Representatives of the Allied Powers in the Caucasus), *Voľnyj goret* 14 (1 December 1919).

the immediate and overwhelming threat, these patriots were sometimes compelled to try to cooperate with Bolsheviks or pro-Bolshevik natives for tactical reasons, but they were not sympathetic towards them.⁹⁴⁰

A serious resistance started gathering steam in late summer, and by late September even Denikin was admitting he had lost control of most of Daghestan and Chechnya.⁹⁴¹ In Chechnya, Volunteers occupied Vozdvizhenskaja sloboda on 11 August. On 15 August a special detachment of Red soldiers was formed around Vozhdvizhenskoe (near Shali) at the mouth of the Argun.⁹⁴² Then a second wave of resistance in the North Caucasus kicked off in late August in Daghestan. Though there was a sizeable concentration of Volunteer forces in Chechnya and Daghestan, they could only manage to protect points of strategic or economic importance like major cities and railroad lines. Meanwhile, despite the lack of any uprisings in Ingushetia, Ossetia or Kabarda, *Volnyj gorets* reported that the locals there had accumulated plenty of light explosive material and were just waiting for the second phase which they expected to be a pan-Mountaineer uprising.⁹⁴³

In mid-September, Uzun Xadzi's forces, including Gikalo's and Sheripov's men, attacked Vozhdvizhenskaya sloboda and succeeded in pushing out the Whites. Attacks were also made on Shali and near Starye Atagi.⁹⁴⁴ It was in the battle for Vozhdvizhenskaja that Sheripov was mortally wounded when, hiding in some corn to harass fleeing enemy soldiers, he fell off his horse and landed on his own grenade.⁹⁴⁵

⁹⁴⁰ NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Russia, Decypher, from Wardrop, 8 October 1919.

⁹⁴¹ NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Secret document from Denmiss, Taganrog to Proomial, 29 September 1919.

⁹⁴² Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze*, 281.

A sloboda is a kind of settlement. This may be where the Vozdvizhenskaja krepost' (fort) was, near the present-day village of Starye Atagi. Razgon mentions Vozdvizhenskaja sloboda (settlement) and Vozdvizhenskoe selo (village).

⁹⁴³ Al. Tarkoev, "Pervyj fazis" (First Phase), *Volnyj gorets* 5 (13 October 1919).

⁹⁴⁴ Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 53; "Vozstanie v Dagestane i Chechne" (Uprising in Daghestan and Chechnya), *Volnyj gorets* 5 (13 October 1919).

⁹⁴⁵ "Vozstanie v Dagestane i Chechne" (Uprising in Daghestan and Chechnya), *Volnyj gorets* 5 (13 October 1919).

According to Popov, Vozdvizhenskaja then became the start of an “organized partisan struggle” against the Volunteers. As the Reds gained strength, the Bolsheviks started work on party organizing, building connections with sympathizers in Groznyj, Vladikavkaz and radically inclined stanitsas and auls in the Terek oblast.⁹⁴⁶ However, the Red partisans’ connections to the Caucasus Regional Committee and Eleventh Red Army Headquarters (in Astrakhan) remained irregular and difficult.⁹⁴⁷ As mentioned above, Uzun-Xadzhi also formalized the establishment of an emirate in September. It was also around this time that a group of Georgian officers led by Leo Kereselidze went to help Uzun Xadzhi—although the Georgian government denied any association with this adventure.⁹⁴⁸

Back in Transcaucasia, in mid-September, the Allied Medzhlis reached out for international and regional help. It sent a telegram to Oliver Wardrop, who was now the British Commissioner in Transcaucasia, Colonel Haskell and the Georgian government, claiming that native settlements were being burnt, cattle stolen, and homes looted, and that the forced contributions and mobilization were driving people into the mountains along with the fact that they were also suffering from food and medicine shortages during an epidemic.⁹⁴⁹ The British War Office responded by saying it could not believe the North Caucasians were telling the truth and wanted the first-hand opinion of a British officer on the ground.⁹⁵⁰ Obliging, Colonel Rawlinson, who had just returned to Taganrog from Daghestan, gave a report falsely claiming that Denikin’s

Popov makes him sound like a hero but in *Volnyj gorets* it says he was mortally wounded by his own grenade.

⁹⁴⁶ Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 55, 61.

⁹⁴⁷ Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 56-57.

⁹⁴⁸ Kiļseev, “In the mountains,” 142; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3666, Paraphrase of a report from G.H.Q. Constantinople to War Office, 5 September 1919; Paraphrase of report from British Liaison Officer Tiflis sent from GHQ Constantinople to War Office, 5 October 1919; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Deciphered telegram from Wardrop, 23 October 1919; NPLG, BA, FO 371/6269 NPLG, “Outline of Events in Transcaucasia.”

⁹⁴⁹ NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, War Office to Denmiss, Taganrog, 81215 cipher, 16 September 1919.

⁹⁵⁰ NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, War Office to Denmiss, Taganrog, 81215 cipher, 16 September 1919.

troops were very welcome among the locals, the levies were going smoothly and no one was fleeing into the mountains. Rawlinson denied the resistance was “nationalist” in essence, dismissing it as the work of Bolsheviks aided by the Transcaucasians, Turks and Germans. He also lied about the Russian Bolsheviks providing generous financial support and the leadership to the resistance movement of which the “fanatical mullahs” were, he said, just figureheads.⁹⁵¹

Not long afterward, when Rawlinson came to the North Caucasus again as the British mission’s representative attached to Denikin’s Command, he caused a great scandal when he addressed the representatives of the Ingush, Chechens and Daghestanis, telling them that Denikin’s goals were destroying the Bolsheviks, restoring Russia “Great and Indivisible” and giving the Mountain nations broad self-government. Rawlinson proceeded to threaten the North Caucasians that if they did not submit, the Volunteers would “be forced” to use English weapons to destroy them and their auls. In response, the Allied Medzhlis sent a note of protest to Oliver Wardrop pointing out that Rawlinson had no right to speak in the name of England, the Allies and all Russia when threatening the Mountaineers with English tanks, bombs, aeroplanes, etc. and reminded the English that Rawlinson, best of all people, ought to know that the North Caucasian resistance was not a Bolshevik effort since it was the Ingush who rescued him from the Bolsheviks.⁹⁵² Wardrop reacted by publishing a note stating Rawlinson lacked any authorization for such a statement.⁹⁵³

Although the tactical cooperation between Uzun Xadzhi and the Reds continued through the fall, their real relations frayed quickly. In late September the Volunteer and

⁹⁵¹ NPLG, BA, F0 371/3663, Denmiss, Taganrog to War Office, secret communication, 29 September 1919.

⁹⁵² “Protest sojuznago Medzhalisa gortsev Kavkaza po povodu vozzvanija polkovnika Rolandsona. Sojuznym Medzhlisom gortsev Kavkaza podan Verxovnomu Komissaru Velikobritanii na Kavkaze Oliveru Uodropu sledujushii protest” (The protest of the Medzhlis of the Mountaineers of the Caucasus because of the announcement of Colonel Rawlinson. The following protest was submitted by the Allied Medzhlis of the Mountaineers of the Caucasus to the High Commissioner of Great Britain in the Caucasus Oliver Wardrop.), *Volnyj gorets* 7 (27 October 1919).

⁹⁵³ “Verxovnyj Komissan [sic] Britanii O Uodrop o zajavlenii polkovnika Rolandsona” (The British High Commissioner O Wardrop about Colonel Rawlinson’s announcement,” *Volnyj gorets* 11 (20 November 1919).

insurgent forces clashed around Berdykel (Berdakel) and fought for hours without result until the second regiment of Sharia forces was able to break through the enemy front, causing them to panic and flee to the Sunzha Line.⁹⁵⁴ Meanwhile, even as they fought together, the Reds started a smear campaign against Dyshninskij (calling him an “anti-people” “reactionary” traitor). In Popov’s view, the people’s main motivation was to fight against the Cossacks so they would back whoever was successful in this and that is why, in his version of the story, the Red soldiers, with their dedicated and successful fighting abilities, earned their respect while the native forces under Dyshninskij steadily lost it.⁹⁵⁵ Popov also claimed that Kereselidze’s group was initially hostile to Gikalo’s army, but their own lack of familiarity with the local conditions hampered their success and they eventually came to respect the Reds and prefer them over working with Dyshinsky. There were also allegedly Chechen commanders in the emirate with Red sympathies working to undermine the authority of “Prince” Inaluk and the Georgians.⁹⁵⁶

However, Uzun Xadzhi was still too popular for the Reds to challenge directly.⁹⁵⁷ As of late September, the Azerbaijani war minister believed the Chechens were impossible to control and Denikin’s forces in the North Caucasus were weak.⁹⁵⁸ At the same time, Wardrop reported that all of Daghestan was in the hands of the natives led by Akushinskij and Uzun-Xadzhi, and that Petrovsk, Groznyj and Vladikavkaz were in danger of being lost by the Volunteers. In Denikin’s own assessment, the insurrection covered nearly all of Daghestan (7,000 insurgents) and Chechnya (6,000

⁹⁵⁴ “Vozstanie v Dagestane i Chechne” (Uprising in Daghestan and Chechnya), *Volnyj gorets* 5 (13 October 1919).

⁹⁵⁵ Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 66-68, Kiļseev, “In the mountains,” 141-142.

⁹⁵⁶ Kiļseev, “In the mountains,” 142; Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 67-68.

⁹⁵⁷ Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 66-67.

⁹⁵⁸ NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Russia, Political, Decypher, from Mr. Wardrop, 26 September 1919.

insurgents) and was expected to spread to Ingushetia.⁹⁵⁹ This insurgency was of a popular and self-defensive nature and could not have been led by the Bolsheviks, considering Gikalo had only 1-1,500 men in Chechnya who were subordinated to Uzun Xaji and dependent upon a population that was opposed to atheism.

The autumn insurgency was concentrated mainly in the northeast Caucasus, but the situation was also tense in other mountain districts, where rumors and press reports were giving the population some hope of resistance. Perhaps anticipating an uprising, Ossetians even started making peace overtures to the Ingush.⁹⁶⁰ In Kabarda, rebels began coming down from the hills, threatening Nalchik itself in late September. Although the officials were referring to these forces as “bands of Bolsheviks and deserters”, a local press report presented them as organized groups of young men who had fled conscription.⁹⁶¹ In early November, Nalchik was tense because of the rumors of the uprising in Dagestan and fights in Chechnya. The Whites tried to counteract the rumors, but at *Volnyj gorets* they believed the masses were eagerly consuming the gossip just waiting for the moment they could cast off the White generals’ yoke with the help of Dagestan.⁹⁶²

A note of protest sent by Akushinskij in the name of the Defense Council of the North Caucasus to the Georgian Foreign Minister and Allied Powers’ representatives confirms the popular nature of the resistance and its participants as well as the close ties between the Allied Medzhlis in Tiflis and the resistance fighters in Dagestan and Chechnya. It reads, in part,

“On 19 October of this year [1919], in the village of Levashi, was organized the Defense Council of the North Caucasus, which heads the popular defense against the assault of the Volunteer Army and enjoys the fullness of state power. The Defense Council of the North Caucasus, evaluating the current situation, considers it its duty to

⁹⁵⁹ NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Handwritten note from of telephone call from Wardrop, 28 September 1919; NPLG, BA, FO 371/3663, Secret document from Denmiss, Taganrog to Proomial, 29 September 1919.

⁹⁶⁰ Mussaev, “V Ingushetii. (Ot sobstvennago korrespondenta) (In Ingushetia [From our own correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 8 (3 November 1919).

⁹⁶¹ Kabardinets, “Vesti iz Kabardy” (News from Kabarda), *Volnyj gorets* 5 (13 October 1919).

⁹⁶² Kabardinets, “Vesti iz Kabardy” (News from Kabarda), *Volnyj gorets* 8, (3 November 1919).

point out before the representatives of the Allied Powers that the war between the Volunteer Army and the peoples of the North Caucasus started through the fault of the Volunteer Command and cannot be stopped except by the interference of influence of the Allies on Mr. Denikin, who is using the weapons and means of the Entente to carry out his program. In the process of the Russian Revolution, the Mountain Peoples declared their independence and created a parliament and a government; but thanks to the cowardly interference of Mr. Denikin, it did not fulfill its duty before the people and shamefully left the country defenseless. Taking advantage of the fall of the Mountain Government, Mr. Denikin brought troops into our mountains, offended our honor, robbed the peaceful working people and tried to restore the forms of power of Russian despotism in the mountains, which naturally provoked a popular war. Mr. Denikin explains his assault on our life and right as a fight against Bolshevism, against whom the Allies have permitted war, but the Spiritual Father of the People, Ali-Xadzi, openly declares to all that we accept no other teacher besides *Islam*, in which the principles of equality and justice also have their place. ... The Defense Council declares that the Caucasus is not Russia and the armed assault of Denikin and the Cossacks into our mountains cannot be tolerated by a single Mountaineer, just as the violence from Soviet Russia was not tolerated. The idea of the independence of the Mountaineers of the Caucasus, sanctified by the blood of a series of generations, however impossible it might seem to our enemies, is for the Mountain peoples a matter of life or death. The centuries-long struggle of the Mountaineers for independence must be realized in the interests of tranquility and peace in the mountains of the Caucasus. If the truth about the right of peoples for self-determination declared by Mr. President Wilson in the name of the Allies, is not annulled by some kind of mercenary considerations then the gortsy can count on the defense of their rights on the part of the Allies and I, in the name of the people, spilling their blood in the unequal war, ask about just intercession.⁹⁶³

⁹⁶³ “Nota Soveta Oborony, predstavlenaja g. Ministru Inostrannyx del Gruzii i Predstaviteljam Sojuznyx Derzhav na Kavkaze” (Note of the Defense Council presented to Mr. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and the representatives of the Allied Powers in the Caucasus), *Volnyj gorets* 14 (1 December 1919).

«19-го октября с. г. В сел. Леваши организовался Совет Оборон Северного Кавказа, который возглавляет народную оборону против нашествия Добровольческой Армии и пользуется полнотой государственной власти. Совет Оборон Северного Кавказа, обсудив создавшееся положение, считает долгом отметить пред Представителями Союзных Держав, что война между Добровольческой армией и Народами Северного Кавказа возникла по вине Добровольческого Командования и может быть ликвидирована лишь при вмешательстве или воздействии Союзников на г. Деникина, пользующагося оружием и средствами Антанты для осуществления своей программы. В процессе русской революции Горские Народы объявили свою независимость, создали Парламент и Правительство; но благодаря коварному вмешательству г. Деникина, оно не выполнило своих обязанностей пред народом и позорно оставило страну без защиты. Пользуясь падением Горского Правительства, г. Деникин ввел войска в наши горы, оскорбил нашу честь, разграбил нашу честь, разграбил мирный трудовой народ и пытался возстановить в горах формы власти русского деспотизма, что естественно вызвало народную войну. Свое посягательство на нашу жизнь и право г. Деникин объясняет как борьбу с большевизмом, против которого война разрешена Союзниками, но Духовный Отец Народа, Али-Хаджи открыто заявляет всем, что мы не примем другого учения кроме Ислама, в котором имеют свое место также принципы равенства и справедливости. ... Совет Оборон заявляет, что Кавказ не Россия и насильственное вторжение Деникина с казаками в наши горы не может быть терпимо ни одним горцем, как не было терпимо и насиле со стороны Советской России. Идея независимости Горцев Кавказа, освященная

Although Akushinskij emphasized the importance of Sharia, he still insisted the resistance was of a popular nature and was aimed at self-preservation and the defense of the right to liberty. The socialist Axmet Tsalikov also described the nature of the resistance to be as spontaneous and defensive. Although the religious leaders and people were fighting for Sharia, this was an indigenized concept unlike Bolshevism or Denikinism, and as such the struggle “for Sharia” should be understood as a fight to do things their own way, the way they thought and felt was right and, as he put it, “the first stage in the *gortsy* national-democratic movement”. According to Tsalikov, the Sharia principles would have to be modernized and democratized but he felt they were a necessary element in the foundation of a Mountaineer state since this would be the only way to get “sanctioned by the national conscience”.⁹⁶⁴

As shown above, the political divisions among the Mountaineers of the North Caucasus ran along the same spectrums as in the rest of the former empire. The religious fabric of the Mountain societies was divided between conservative, moderate and radicalized sheikhs. For example, as a different *Volnyj gorets* contributor put it, Akushinskij was a revolutionary sheikh but Nazhmutdin and Uzun Xadzhi were reactionaries. But since the Russian reaction embodied by the Volunteers was both overtly hostile to revolutionary *shejxizm* (sheikh-ism) and rejected conservative *shejxizm* as a form of popular self-assertion, Akushinskij and Uzun Xadzhi had joined forces at the center of the Mountaineers’ struggle for national liberation.⁹⁶⁵

кровью ряда поколений, как бы она не казалась несбыточной нашим врагам, для Горских Народов является вопросом жизни или смерти. Вековое стремление Горцев к независимости должно быть осуществлено в интересах спокойствия и мира в горах Кавказа. Если истина о праве народов на самоопределение, провозглашенная г. Президентом Вильсоном от имени союзников, не аннулирована какими либо корыстолюбивыми соображениями, то горцы могут рассчитывать на защиту своих прав со стороны Союзников и я, от имени народа, истекающего кровью в неравной борьбе, прошу о справедливом заступничестве.»

⁹⁶⁴ Ax., “Shariatizm gorskago dvizhenija” (The Shariatism of the Mountain movement) *Volnyj gorets* 11, 20 November 1919.

⁹⁶⁵ Os., “Shejxizm v borbe gorskix narodov” (Shejxizm in the struggle of the mountain peoples), *Volnyj gorets* 32, 1 March 1920.

2. *The Mountain insurgency and international affairs*

As Akushinskij pointed out in his note to the Allied Powers' representatives in the Caucasus, the conflict in the mountains could only be regulated through international intervention.⁹⁶⁶ The Volunteers were using the Allies' supplies and weapons, and the Allies were insisting that the Mountaineers "submit" to stop the bloodshed instead of pressuring Denikin's command to respect the North Caucasians' rights to life and liberty. Despite their protests and efforts, their logic fell on deaf ears. By late summer or early fall, it had become clear to the Mountaineer delegation in Paris that there was no use staying at the conference any longer since it "stalled in impotence before the Turkish question and, as before, failed to muster the courage to tackle the Russian question... The longer the work of the conference continued, the more it has been found that all those hopes laid on the Versailles Conference are illusory." Since the work of the conference was postponed until fall anyway, the Mountaineer delegation split, with Chermoev remaining to keep a presence in Paris and the others returning to the Caucasus via Constantinople.⁹⁶⁷

⁹⁶⁶ "Nota Soveta Oborony, predstavlenaja g. Ministru Inostrannyx del Gruzii i Predstaviteljam Sojuznyx Derzhav na Kavkaze" (Note of the Defense Council presented to Mr. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and the representatives of the Allied Powers in the Caucasus), *Volnyj gorets* 14 (1 December 1919).

I did not include this paragraph in the above quoted text. He wrote, "The Defense Council of the North Caucasus urgently asks the Representatives of the Allied Powers to take urgent measures for the cleaning out of the Volunteer Army from the Mountain territory and to appoint an international commission for the elucidation of those calamities that have resulted from the aggressive actions of Denikin's army. Only such measures by the Allies can soothe the indignant conscience of the Peoples of the North Caucasus and put an end to the reckless bloodshed."

«Совет Обороны Северного Кавказа убедительно просит Представителей Союзных Держав принять срочные меры к очищению Добровольческой Армией Горской территории и назначению международной комиссии для выяснения тех бедствия, которые явились следствием агрессивных действий армии Деникина. Лишь такие меры Саюзников могут успокоить возмущенную совесть Народов Северного Кавказа и положить конец безразсудному кровопролитию.»

⁹⁶⁷ NPLG, BA, F0 371/3663, Russia, Decypher, from Wardrop, 8 October 1919; "Na Versalskoj konferentsii (Beseda s chlenom gorskoj delegatsii na konferentsiji)" (At the Versailles Conference [A conversation with a member of the Mountain delegation to the conference]), *Volnyj gorets* 4 (6 October 1919).

«В безсилии остановилась конференция пред турецким вопросом, по прежнему конференция не обнаруживала смелости взяться за российский вопрос... Словом, чем дальше шла работа конференции, тем больше обнаруживалось, что все те надежды, которые возлагались на Версальскую конференцию, оказываются иллюзорными.»

In November 1919, Dzhabagiev, representing the Defense Council, shared an analysis of the great powers' attitude towards the North Caucasian situation. In the interpretation of the resistance, the powers were each pursuing their own individual political interests. In the British establishment there were three main currents regarding the fate of Russia's former territories. The "liberal" group (Herbert-Henry Asquith and Winston Churchill) supported Russia's restoration united and indivisible. The Curzon group wanted to isolate and weaken Russia. And the socialists and trade-unionists were pushing for non-intervention. Regarding the Transcaucasian republics, Dzhabagiev denied the Volunteer Command's accusations that Georgia and Azerbaijan were sending support to the Mountaineers, publicly calling on them to actually start supporting them since the Volunteers were getting weaker in the north. He also warned the Transcaucasians that their approach of trying to obtain sovereignty through international recognition was misguided considering throughout history most nations had achieved independent statehood through force of arms alone—forcing international recognition by *fait accompli*. Like Akushinskij and Tsalikov, Dzhabagiev emphasized the popular, spontaneous nature of the resistance, and he credited the North Caucasian resistance as the reason the Volunteers had not yet entered Transcaucasia.⁹⁶⁸

Dzhabagiev then reasserted the conviction of the Defense Council that the northern and southern Caucasus were so inextricably bound together that the only way to ensure their independence would be to form a federation or confederation.⁹⁶⁹ Tsalikov argued in a similar vein that the great powers, whom the Transcaucasians were petitioning for recognition, were overlooking the fact that Transcaucasia's fate was inextricably bound with that of the North Caucasus and so even if they gave them recognition, this would not help the republics withstand a northern invasion. Tsalikov too urged the Caucasians to unite, saying, "The orientation to ourselves is the only orientation appropriate to the interests of the democracy of the Caucasian peoples."

⁹⁶⁸ "Beseda s predstavitelem Soveta Oborony Gorskoy Respubliki V. Dzhabagi" (A conversation with the representative of the Defense Council of the Mountain Republic V. Dzhabagi), *Volnyj gorets* 11 (20 November 1919).

⁹⁶⁹ "A conversation with the representative of the Defense Council of the Mountain Republic V. Dzhabagi)."

Noting a recent shift away from the “fetishism” of independence dependent on an outside power, he admitted that to now, finally, think about the necessity of a Caucasian confederation was already probably too late but there might still be a chance to make it happen. Tsalikov also addressed the concern that there was no “formal government” for the Mountaineers, explaining, “If there currently does not exist a formal sign of the existence of the Mountain Republic, in the form of a parliament and government answerable before the parliament, there still exists the Defense Council with governmental functions and, therefore, we consider it necessary for the representatives of the Mountain peoples to participate in the formation of a confederation of Caucasian states.”⁹⁷⁰

The need for the orientation to the self was a theme echoed by another contributor to the paper *Volnyj gorets*. “Argunskij” wrote, “The only orientation now can be for the Caucasian states to self. The only force capable of defending one’s interests and physical existence is one’s own strength.” Argunskij argued that it was time to abandon the dream and expectation of international recognition and “neutralization” and immediately “get busy working on the realization of the oft put forward, but unfortunately, often forgotten, project of the Caucasian confederation”. Argunskij had in mind the four Caucasian republics with the possible inclusion of the Kuban. He reasoned that the very fact of a union would eliminate the possibility of fratricidal war in the Caucasus due to malicious international forces manipulating the national sentiments. The first step in the creation of the confederation was, he insisted, the restoration of the Mountain Republic because the North Caucasus was the “armor”

⁹⁷⁰ Ах., “Gortsy i konfederatsija Kavkaza” (The Mountaineers and the confederation of the Caucasus), *Volnyj gorets* 21 (25 December 1919).

«...ориентация на самих себя, вот единственная ориентация, соответствует интересам демократии кавказских народов...»

«Если сейчас отсутствует формальный признак существования Горской Республики, в виде парламента и ответственного пред парламентом правительства, все же имеется Совет Обороны с правительственными функциями и потому, мы считаем необходимым, чтобы в процессе образования конфедерации кавказских государств приняли участие и представители горских народов.»

for Transcaucasia, without the north, he said, the south would be too vulnerable. The Mountaineers thus came out in favor of a new four-republic conference.⁹⁷¹

However much the North Caucasian activists sounded the warning about the Volunteer Command's aggressive designs on Transcaucasia and promoted the issue of restoring the Mountain Republic with the help of the Transcaucasians as the first step towards a Caucasian confederation, the Georgian and Azerbaijani governments did little more than voice moral support. The issue was also largely overlooked in the press, with responses south of the range limited to praise for the "bravery of the brother gortsy". Never receiving the support from their neighbors or outside powers needed to push out the Volunteers and restore their republic, by late-1919 and early 1920, the Mountaineer intelligentsia were now warning the Transcaucasians that the Volunteers' immanent evacuation of the North Caucasus would put the entire region in peril. This was because the pro-Soviet currents in Mountain society were on the rise and the pro-Soviet elements would rise up in support of the incoming Red Army, which they expected would soon replace the Volunteers.⁹⁷²

By late 1919, the Bolsheviks were ready for their triumphant return to the region. Working in Astrakhan, Kirov had been in charge of the Eleventh Red Army since late 1918. In early January 1919 the Caucasian Regional Party Congress (Bolshevik) was also meeting in Vladikavkaz. Gikalo came from Groznyj and was elected to the Caucasian Regional Party Committee. After his return to Groznyj, the party organization worked to strengthen its ties to the masses, as well as built up the Groznyj Red Army and sent party workers to Chechen and Cossack settlements to try to strengthen the "proletarian" influence in the countryside.⁹⁷³

⁹⁷¹ Argunskij, "Pred groznoj opasnostju" (Before a terrible danger) *Volnyj gorets* 21 (25 December 1919). The Argun is a river in Chechnya.

«Единственная ориентация теперь может быть для Кавказских государств только на себя, единственной силой, способной охранить интересы и физическое существование,—эта своя сила.»

⁹⁷² Ax., "My preduprezhdali" (We warned), *Volnyj gorets* 24 (7 January 1920); "Beseda s predstavitelem Soveta Oborony Gorskoj Respubliki V. Dzhabagi" (A conversation with the representative of the Defense Council of the Mountain Republic V. Dzhabagi), *Volnyj gorets* 11 (20 November 1919).

⁹⁷³ Avdeev, *Hundred Days Battle*, 32.

In spring 1919 Kirov built new units out of the remains of the Eleventh Red Army recently beaten by the Volunteer Army. According to one Soviet historian, Kirov was also managing all the underground activities of the revolutionaries on both sides of the range, with a direct line to Gikalo in Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Dagestan and Georgia. He is alleged to have sent his contacts in the Caucasus not only orders and plans but also the money needed to fulfill them.⁹⁷⁴ From the testimony of Gikalo's secretary Popov, however, it is clear that by fall the Red partisans in Chechnya were still relying heavily on the charity of locals to survive.⁹⁷⁵ As of late 1919, Denikin's army was losing ground before the Red Army in Russia, which shifted into an offensive mode, and was stuck in a draining contest with insurgents in the North Caucasus and along the Black Sea coast.⁹⁷⁶ It would not be long before the Bolsheviks would come riding in on the back of the Red Army.

The year 1919 had opened in the Caucasus with the hope that the four new republics might be able to obtain international recognition at the Paris Peace Conference and the Mountain Republic could cooperate with the Volunteer Command against the Soviets. However, the White Movement quickly demonstrated its hostility to the idea of allowing the Caucasian republics free choice and attacked the populations of the North Caucasus in the name of fighting Bolsheviks. The Volunteers also got into a conflict with the Georgians over Sochi. However, the Allied Powers showed little inclination to check the Volunteers in the North Caucasus or throw their support behind the Caucasian republics' bids for independence without the Russians' approval. Under the threat of reabsorption into a reactionary and centralist form of Russian rule, the leaders of the different Caucasian nations once again discussed the possibility of a regional union. However, the lack of reliable external support or a true common vision, especially with regard to the Armenians, who were more interested in unification with

⁹⁷⁴ Dzhabajskij, "Manevr po vnutrennim linijam (Po opytu boľby za Astraxan v 1919 g.) (Maneuver on the internal lines [According to the experience of the fight for Astrakhan in 1919]), *Vojna i revoljutsija* 5 (September-October 1935), 54-71. Google Books.

⁹⁷⁵ Popov, *Revolutionary Chechnya*, 41, 56-57.

⁹⁷⁶ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 128.

their Western cousins, and the associated failure to provide sufficient backing to the Mountaineers shedding their blood in defense of their lands and families prevented the realization of this goal. Meanwhile, the failure of the Volunteer Army to either control the North Caucasus or defeat the Bolsheviks in Russia would bring about its demise by the end of the year. These developments led the North Caucasian politicians to warn the Transcaucasians that the Red Army would soon return and the Mountaineers would be powerless to stop it from overrunning the North Caucasus and then conquering Transcaucasia.

VI. 1920-1921: THE RED RETURN

A. The White retreat

In January 1920, the Whites were fighting to hold the Crimea and Odessa. In southern Russia, they were facing off against the Reds, who had a small numerical advantage, along a front extending from the Azov Sea down the Don and Sal Rivers to the Kalmyk steppes. As the Whites struggled to hold the western section of the front, the Reds bore down from the east, taking Taganrog, Tsaritsyn and Novochoerkassk along with Rostov—the key to the Don, Kuban and Terek oblasts—in early January, though local conditions around the Don and its tributaries delayed their final victory. On 26 January the Whites fighting around the Sal steppes were pushed southward past the Manych River by the Ninth and Tenth Red Armies.⁹⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the Whites were beginning to pull out of the North Caucasus, moving men through Novorossiisk to Odessa. The infirmaries of the Don, Kuban and Terek were overflowing with wounded soldiers, and all suitable private homes along the Vladikavkaz railroad and its branches were being used as infirmaries. Medical organizations started preparing for a possible epidemic, anticipating insufficient

⁹⁷⁷ G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istorii Grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR, Sbornik dokumentov I materialov v trex tomakh, 1918-1922* (From the History of the Civil War in the USSR, Collection of documents and materials in three volumes, 1918-1922), vol. 2, *Mart 1919-fevral' 1920* (March 1919-1920) (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Sovetskaja Rossiya," 1961), 578-579; Anton Ivanovich Denikin, *Ocherki Russkoj smuty, Vooruzhennye sily Juga Rossii* (Sketches of the Russian turmoil, The Armed Forces of Southern Russia), vol. 5 (Berlin: Slovo, 1926), 315-328; Peter Kenez, *Red Advance White Defeat: Civil War in South Russia 1919-1920* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2004), 236-238; Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 128.

Relevant documents reprinted in G. A. Belov et al.: "Operativnaja svodka shtaba 1-j konnoj armii ob osvobozhdenii Taganroga" (Operative summary of the command of the First Cavalry Army on the liberation of Taganrog) of 6 January 1920, "Telegramma S.M. Kirova Rossijskomu telegrafnomu agenzstvu ob osvobozhdenii Tsaritsyna" (Telegram of S.M. Kirov to the Russian Telegraph Agency about the liberation of Tsaritsyn) on 7 January 1920, "Soobshhenie revvoensoveta jugo-vostochnogo fronta ob osvobozhdenii novochoerkasska" (Communication of the revmilsoviet of the south-eastern front about the liberation of Novochoerkassk) of 10 January 1920, "Prikaz vojskam 1-j konnoj armii ob osvobozhdenii Rostova i Naxichevana" (Order to the troops of the First Cavalry Army on the liberation of Rostov and Naxichevan) of 10 January 1920, "Operativnaja svodka shtaba Revvoensoveta respubliki ob uspeshnom nastuplenii vojsk jugo-vostochnogo fronta" (Operative summary of the command of the Revvoensoviet of the republic about the successful attack of the troops of the south-eastern front) of 10 January 1920.

medicaments; and refugees from the north were pouring into the Caucasus.⁹⁷⁸ In the Terek, the Volunteer Army and Cossacks were “feverishly” preparing to resist the Red Army, and a last-ditch mobilization effort was launched.⁹⁷⁹

The Volunteer Command still had troops in the North Caucasus but the generals were losing control. In Kabarda, the Volunteers’ presence was apparently strong enough for representatives of the affluent, led by Knjaz Fjedor Nikolaevich Bekovich-Cherkasskij, to try to pressure the White General Ivan Georgievich Erdeli to force the lower classes to compensate them for their losses during the civil war.⁹⁸⁰ In Ossetia, the Volunteers continued harassing the population, bombing villages when residents refused to mobilize and sending punitive divisions against deserters and draft dodgers. As part of the pushback, Ossetian rebels occupied the Alagir Gorge from Alagir to the Mamison Pass, and anti-White local elements were streaming there. In January it was reported in *Volnyj gorets* that a widespread uprising should be expected soon in Kabarda and Ossetia.⁹⁸¹

Meanwhile, economic inequality continued to plague relations between the wealthier Cossacks and poor Ossetians. Attempts by the pro-Cossack Ossetian faction to organize a joint congress to discuss a political union and the possibility of small concessions regarding land redistribution failed due to the Cossacks’ refusal to yield

⁹⁷⁸ “Na Sev. Kavkaze. Volna raneniyx” (In the North Caucasus. Wave of wounded), *Volnyj gorets* 23 (1 January 1920); “Na Sev. Kavkaze” (In the North Caucasus), *Volnyj gorets* 25 (15 January 1920).

⁹⁷⁹ “Razrushenie shesti osetinskix selenij (Ot` nashego korrespondenta)” (The destruction of six Ossetian villages [From our correspondent]) *Volnyj gorets* 24 (7 January 1920); “Na Tereke” (On the Terek), Terets, “Uporstvo kazakov” (Persistence of the Cossacks) and “Na Sev. Kavkaze” (In the North Caucasus) *Volnyj gorets* 25 (15 January 1920).

⁹⁸⁰ *Boľshaja rossijskaja entsiklopedija* (Great Russian Encyclopedia), s.v. “Erdeli” (Erdeli), accessed 13 May 2022, https://bigenc.ru/military_science/text/4937438; “Bekovich Cherkasskij Fedor Nikolaevich” (Bekovich Cherkasskij Fedor Nikolaevich), “Russkaja armija v Pervoj mirovoj vojne (The Russian Army in the First World War), accessed 13 May 2022, <http://www.grwar.ru/persons/person/1912>; “V Kabarde” (In Kabarda), *Volnyj gorets* 25 (15 January 1920).

Erdeli was the chief head and commander of the forces of the Terek-Dagestan district from April 1919 and the commander of the forces in the North Caucasus from July 1919 to March 1920.

⁹⁸¹ “Razrushenie shesti osetinskix selenij” and “Zanjatie alagirskago ushheľja osetinskimi povstantsami. (Ot nashego korrespondenta)” (The occupation of Alagir gorge by the Ossetian rebels [From our correspondent]) *Volnyj gorets* 24 (7 January 1920); “Karateľnyj otrjad v Osetii” (Punitive detachment in Ossetia), *Volnyj gorets* 25 (15 January 1920).

even a bit—despite the specter of a Communist victory. Observing this, the anti-Bolshevik socialists at *Volnyj gorets* asserted that “Only a revolutionary authority, seeking its base among the Mountaineer masses and out-of-towners will have the power to resolve the agrarian question fairly and in an organized manner, despite the Cossacks’ opposition, in the Terek.”⁹⁸² While these intellectuals did not want this authority to be the Communists, it is easy to see how the intransigence of the conservative elements could have helped the Soviets’ message appeal to regular people.

In Ingushetia, the Whites were losing their confidence, having received repeated reports of losses in the north, and the local population, sensing this, became increasingly defiant and provocative. Robbery and banditry allegedly increased, but the Volunteers were unable to arrest or punish native deserters, those spreading anti-White propaganda, or open opponents of the failing regime. Meanwhile, the Cossacks in the Tarskaja, Sunzhenskaja and Aki-jurtovskaja stanitsas started trying to escape, fearing reprisals without the Volunteers’ backing, and some Ossetians began seeking reconciliation with the Ingush.⁹⁸³ In Chechnya, the Whites, despite their growing weakness, attacked Gikalo’s Fifth Army at Vozdvizhensk on 31 January, driving the Red partisans back up the Argun River valley. Gikalo and the Red partisans believed that Uzun Xadzhi’s vizier Dyshninskij had purposely neglected to help them in hopes of seeing them eliminated by the common enemy.⁹⁸⁴ The power struggle percolating between Gikalo and Dyshninskij now rose to the surface, and Gikalo’s men arrested the vizier on 6

⁹⁸² Terets, “Uporstvo kazakov” (Persistence of the Cossacks) *Volnyj gorets* 25 (15 January 1920).

«... только революционная власть, ищущая своей базы в горской массе и группе иногородних, будет иметь силу, несмотря на противодействие казачей группы, решить справедливо и организованно аграрный вопрос на Тереке»; Na Tereke” (On the Terek) *Volnyj gorets* 25 (15 January 1920).

⁹⁸³ M. “V Ingushetii” (In Ingushetia) *Volnyj gorets* 23 (1 January 1920).

⁹⁸⁴ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 129-130. It is not clear whether Marshall means Vozdvizhenskaja stanitsa, Vozdvizhenskaja krepost’ or Vozdvizhenskoe selo. Compare with I. Razgon, *Ordzhonikidze i Kirov i borba za vlast’ sovetov na Severnom Kavkaze, 1917-1920 g.g.* (Ordzhonikidze and Kirov and the struggle for power of the soviets in the North Caucasus, 1917-1920) (Gospolitizdat, 1941), 281.

A sloboda is a kind of settlement. This may be where the fort Vozdvizhenskaja krepost’ was, near the present-day village of Starye Atagi. Razgon mentions Vozdvizhenskaja sloboda and Vozdvizhenskoe selo (village).

February, bringing him to Uzun Xadzhi, which led to the collapse of the so-called Sharia monarchy—the emirate.⁹⁸⁵

In Daghestan, according to his contemporary Magomed-Kadi Dibirov, Akushinskij decided in late November 1919 that it would be preferable to reach an understanding with the Volunteers than fall under the long-term influence of the Turkish officers there, so he offered them an alliance, a move which upset both the Turks and the Bolsheviks.⁹⁸⁶ In *Volnyj gorets*, however, it was reported that the Volunteer Command presented Akushinskij with a peace proposal on 12 December.⁹⁸⁷ At any rate, the Defense Council chairman demanded of the Bolsheviks that they refrain from obstructing his attempts at making peace with the Volunteers, but they ignored him.⁹⁸⁸ In Dibirov's telling, the Bolsheviks, along with the Turkish officer Kazim-bey, then blocked the sheikh's efforts to meet with a Volunteer delegation on 3 February.⁹⁸⁹

As of late-January, the Defense Council in Levashi was still anxiously waiting for military backup from the Georgian Leo Kereselidze, whose two thousand men were

⁹⁸⁵ G. Alikberov, *Revoljutsija i grazhdanskaja vojna v Dagestane, xronika vazhnejshix sobytij (1917-1921 gg.)* (The Revolution and Civil War in Daghestan, chronicle of the most important events [1917-1921]) (Makhachkala: Dagestanskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1962), 147; Kurt—skij, "Kak kommunisty sami sebe vysekli" (How the Communists flogged themselves), *Volnyj gorets* 30 (15 February 1920); Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 129-130; A. N. Popov, *Revoljucionnaja Chechnja v ogne srazhenij* (Revolutionary Chechnya in the flame of battle) (Groznyj: Checheno-Ingushskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1973), 98-105; "Vozzvanie 'velikago vizirja' 'Emirstva,' 'fel'dmarshala' 'knjazja Dyshinskago'" (Appeal "of the grand vizier" "of the Emirate," "Field Marshal Prince Dyshinskij") *Volnyj gorets* 30 (15 February 1920).

⁹⁸⁶ M. K. Dibirov, *Istorija Dagestana v gody revoljutsii i grazhdanskoj vojny* (The history of Daghestan in the years of the revolution and civil war) (Makhachkala: 1997), 121-122.

The text says that in late November 1920, Ali-Gadzhi decided to enter into an alliance with Denikin's Volunteers. But this is not possible, so the date must be either November 1919 or January (or February) 1920.

⁹⁸⁷ "Poslednija vesti. Mirnyja predlozhenija dobrovoľtsev (Ot nashego spetsial'nago korrespondenta)" (Latest news. Peace proposals of the Volunteers (From our special correspondent), *Volnyj gorets* 21 (25 December 1919).

⁹⁸⁸ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 145; Dibirov, *The history of Daghestan*, 122.

⁹⁸⁹ Dibirov, *The history of Daghestan*, 122. Compare with the version in "Mirnyja predlozhenija dobrovoľtsev dagestantsam" (The peace proposals of the Volunteers to the Dagestanis), *Volnyj gorets* 31 (23 February 1920).

delayed in Baku.⁹⁹⁰ Whilst Dibirow claims the Georgians wanted to return home because relations were improving between the Georgian government and Denikin's command and therefore Nuri Pasha, a different Turkish officer sent from Azerbaijan, did Daghestan a great favor by seizing the Georgians' weapons on the Azerbaijani-Daghestani border before allowing them to leave (so the weapons could be used against the Whites). The information in the available sources is conflicting with regards to why Kereselidze's men did not make it into the North Caucasus. In the same passage, Dibirow admits relations were improving between the Whites and Akushinskij.⁹⁹¹ And in early January Wardrop had been under the impression that Nuri Pasha was friendly with the Bolsheviks.⁹⁹² Furthermore, a British report from late-January remarked that the Georgians were returning from Baku due to a lack of funds.⁹⁹³

Overall, the Volunteers' awareness of their own growing weakness likely propelled them to consider peace with the Defense Council while some of the North Caucasian leaders associated with the council may have thought they should cooperate with the conservative Cossacks or Volunteers to defend themselves against the growing Communist threat. They could not have failed to notice that the Red Caucasus Expeditionary Force briefly took (and lost) Kizljar in mid-January.⁹⁹⁴ Although Dibirow's claim that Akushinskij was hoping to circumvent Turkish influence corresponds to contemporary complaints about the Turks' behavior, this does not rule out the possibility that Mountaineer politicians thought finding agreement with the Volunteers might give them leverage against Turkish influence *and* help prevent a

⁹⁹⁰ "Predstavitel S. Oborony S. Kavkaza y gen. Kereselidze" (The representative of the Defense C. of the N. Caucasus to Gen. Kereselidze), *Volnyj gorets* 27 (26 January 1920).

⁹⁹¹ Dibirow, *The history of Daghestan*, 118, 121-122.

⁹⁹² NPLG, BA, FO 371/3673, Letter from Wardrop to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 6 January 1920.

⁹⁹³ NPLG, BA, FO 371/3673, Russia, Political, Decypher, from Mr. Grundy (Tiflis), 28 January 1920.

⁹⁹⁴ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 129.

possible Communist takeover.⁹⁹⁵ In fact, it was in January that the Defense Council, whose goal remained independence and confederation with Transcaucasia, conveyed to the British its readiness to expel both the Bolsheviks and Turks—if only they would send them guns and ammo—along with its hope that officers from the Circassian diaspora would be permitted to come from Turkey. However, the British declined to help the North Caucasians, against the advice of Oliver Wardrop. On 22 January, Wardrop informed Brigadier General Terence Keyes, in what appears to be a response to a previous rebuttal, that he was well aware of the discord between the members of the former Mountain government but if the Mountaineers could be given only a small sum this would serve British interests. In what reads like frustration, he wrote: “If we had carefully spent in the Caucasus one thousandth part of sum spent in South Russia situation here would be even better than it is.”⁹⁹⁶

Meanwhile, events moved swiftly over January as the Soviets prepared in earnest for their takeover of the entire region. On 2 January, the People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Giorgij Chicherin, proposed military alliances against Denikin to the Georgian and Azerbaijani republics.⁹⁹⁷ On 8 January, The Caucasus Regional Committee (Kavkrajkom) of the RCP(b) called to the masses in Transcaucasia to get

⁹⁹⁵ “Turki v Dagestane (Ot nashego korrespondenta)” (The Turks in Daghestan [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 32 (1 March 1920); “Poslednija vesti. Neizbezhnij razryv kommunistov s turkami v Dagestane. (Ot nashego korrespondenta)” (Latest news. The Communists’ break with the Turks in Dagestan is unavoidable. [From our correspondent]). *Volnyj gorets* 30. 16 February 1920. In this article it is reported that in relation to the growing tension between the Communists and Turks as well as friction between Daghestanis of various orientations, the current for democratic independence («самостийническое течение») was growing.

⁹⁹⁶ NPLG, BA, FO 371/3673, Decypher, from Wardrop, 22 January 1920. Richard Whittingham, *Imperial Disguises: The Life of Terence Keyes* (Oxford and Shrewsbury: YouCaxton Publications), Kindle Edition page 259 location 4118.

⁹⁹⁷ Hovannisian 2: 502-503; “Otvét Azerbaidzhana Sovetskoi Rossii” (Azerbaijan’s answer to Soviet Russia), *Volnyj gorets* 26 (19 January 1920); “Sovetskaja Rossija i Gruzija. (Ot informatsionnago otdela m-va inostr. del Gruzii)” (Soviet Russia and Georgia [From the information division of the minister of for. Affairs of Georgia]), *Volnyj gorets* 25 (15 January 1920).

Chicherin’s note was sent or composed on 2 January but received by the Georgian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers on the sixth.

ready to welcome the “mighty waves of the powerful northern sea.”⁹⁹⁸ Reading the tea leaves, the Allies granted de facto recognition to the republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan on the tenth (and to Armenia on the nineteenth).⁹⁹⁹ Then, on 12 January the Georgian Foreign Minister Gegechkori responded to Chicherin with the offer to enter negotiations for establishing good neighborly relations whilst rejecting the possibility of a military alliance.¹⁰⁰⁰ The next day, the thirteenth, a special bureau was set up for the purpose of restoring Soviet power “on both sides of the Caucasus range”, its objectives including undertaking agitation work among the native population and establishing revkoms throughout the North Caucasus.¹⁰⁰¹ On the fourteenth, the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Xojskij, also informed Chicherin, like his Georgian counterpart had done, that his government would only enter into negotiations aimed at

⁹⁹⁸ G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istorii Grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR, Sbornik dokumentov i materialov v trex tomach, 1918-1922* (From the History of the Civil War in the USSR, Collection of documents and materials in three volumes, 1918-1922), vol. 3, *Fevral' 1920-oktjabr' 1922* (February 1920-October 1922) (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Sovetskaja Rossija,” 1961), 447-448. See “Obrashenie Kavkazskogo Kraevogo Komiteta RKP(b) k trudjashimsja massam Azerbajdzhana, Gruzii i Armenii s razoblacheniem kontrrevoljucionnyx zamyslov praviteľstv Zakavkazskix respublik” (Appeal of the Caucasian Kraj Committee RCP(b) to the working masses of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia with a denunciation of the counter-revolutionary governments of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia) of 8 January 1920.

⁹⁹⁹ Hovannisian 2: 501, 511-512, 517, 523-524; David Marshall Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1962), 204.

Denikin announced his recognition of the three Transcaucasian republics on 13 February.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Hovannisian 2: 502-503; Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)* (London: Anglo Caspian Press Ltd., 2008), 278-281; Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 225; “Sovetskaja Rossija i Gruzija. (Ot informacionnago otdela m-va inostr. del Gruzii)” (Soviet Russia and Georgia [From the information division of the minister of for. Affairs of Georgia]), *Volnyj gorets* 25 (15 January 1920).

¹⁰⁰¹ Axed Agaev, *Nazhmudin Samurskij (politicheskij portret)* (Nazhmudin Samurskij [political portrait]) (Makhachkala: Dagestanskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1990, section “Rabota v Kavkazskom Revkome” (Work in the Caucasian Revkom), 23; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 128-129. Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 145.

According to Alikberov, the members of the bureau (formed “prikazom po vojskam Jugo-Vostochnogo fronta”) were G. K. Ordzhonikidze, S. M. Kirov, A. Stopani, B. Mdivani and N. Narimanov.

Marshall mentions Ordzhonikidze, Kirov and Nazhmudin Samurskij (who soon joined). According to Agaev, Ordzhonikidze was sent to Astrakhan in late January, and he was appointed (It is not explicitly clear in the text whether he was appointed before or after he got there.) chairman of the Caucasian Revkom and chairman of the Bureau for restoring Soviet power on both sides of the Caucasus range. So these were two separate bodies.

establishing friendly ties based on the principle of sovereignty for both states.¹⁰⁰² And in just over a week, on 22 January, the Kavkrajkom of the RCP(b) asked the Baku Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) to prepare for an armed uprising against the Musavatist government.¹⁰⁰³

Meanwhile, rumors were circulating in Daghestan that the Communists would recognize the Mountain Republic if it would declare itself Soviet while at the same time the North Caucasians were also hastening to set up their own governmental structures.¹⁰⁰⁴ In a move that once again highlights the links between the secular intelligentsia and the religious leaders, as the Volunteers' grip on the North Caucasus loosened, the sheikhs in Chechnya and Daghestan appealed to the Mountaineer intelligentsia in Transcaucasia to return home and build up the Mountain Republic.¹⁰⁰⁵ On 20 January Akushinskij formally asked them to set aside their "work for the homeland" in Transcaucasia because they were required for restorative works at home.¹⁰⁰⁶ And in early February Uzun Xadzhi sent a delegation to Baku to tell the intelligentsia there he had been wrong about them and that he and the people needed their help, promising to support the idea of the Mountain Republic in every way if they would return home.¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰² Hovannisian 2: 502-503; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 278-281; Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 225; "Otvét Azerbaidzhana Sovetskoi Rossii" (Azerbaijan's answer to Soviet Russia), *Volnyj goret* 26 (19 January 1920).

¹⁰⁰³ G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istории Grazhdanskoi vojny v SSSR*, 3: 450-451. "Iz obrasheniia Kavkazskogo kraevogo komiteta RKP(b) k Bakinskoi komitete KP(b) Azerbaidzhana s prisvyvom gotovitsja k vooruzhennomu vosstaniju protiv Musavat'skogo praviteľstva" (From the appeal of the Caucasus Kraj Committee of the RCP(b) to the workers, peasants and soldiers of Azerbaijan with the call to overthrow the Musavatist government and conclude a union with Soviet Russia) of 22 January 1920.

¹⁰⁰⁴ "Sovetskaja ili demokratičeskaja gorskaja respublika" (Soviet or democratic Mountain republic?) *Volnyj goret* 27 (26 January 1920).

¹⁰⁰⁵ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 149; Hovannisian 2: 523-524.

¹⁰⁰⁶ "Obrashenie shejx-ul-islam Ali-xadzhi k gorskoj intelligentsii" (Appeal of *Sheikh al-Islam* Ali-xadzhi to the gortsy intelligentsia), *Volnyj goret* 32 (1 March 1920).

¹⁰⁰⁷ "Delegatsija Uzun-Xadzhi" (Uzun-Xadzhi's delegation) *Volnyj goret* 29 (9 February 1920).

In light of the looming Communist threat, the idea of holding a conference to discuss creating a Transcaucasian or Caucasian confederation was raised yet again in the region's top political circles.¹⁰⁰⁸ The question was apparently first put forward by the Azerbaijani government, and the Georgian Mensheviks too expressed their interest in finding a common language and organizing for collective defense.¹⁰⁰⁹ For example, Akaki Chxenkeli called for the close union of the Transcaucasian republics, saying that the solidarity of their peoples was required for the salvation of their state existence.¹⁰¹⁰ The Georgian Mensheviks' accent on the term "Transcaucasian" confederation inspired *Volnyj gorets* to remind them not to forget about the North Caucasus if they didn't want to receive some "nice surprises", meaning an invasion from Russia.¹⁰¹¹

For their part, the Georgian nationalists at *saqartvelo* were now in favor of cultivating friendly, neighborly relations and a possible union of free states for defensive purposes, essentially a temporary confederation, but rejected anything that could lead to an infringement on Georgia's full sovereignty or subjection to a central regional government and were therefore wary of setting up a more permanent confederation since, they argued, this kind of political structure could be used as the first step towards federation followed by a centralized state wherein Georgia would lose its freedom. Moreover, they thought that the experience of the TDFR alongside the Armenian Dashnak leadership's clearly divergent interests were sufficient indication of the impracticable nature of a regional confederative project.¹⁰¹² At the Georgian

¹⁰⁰⁸ "Obzor pečati" (Press review), *Volnyj gorets* 23 (1 January 1920); "konfederacia" (Confederation), *saqartvelo* 3 (4 January 1920); "tsiteli armiis kavkasiastan moaxlovebis gamo" (Because of the Red Army's coming closer to the Caucasus) *ertoba* 4 (6 January 1920); "amier-kavkasiis urtiertoba" (Transcaucasian relations), *ertoba* 5 (7 January 1920); "saqartvelo da konfederacia" (Georgia and confederation), *saqartvelo* 11 (16 January 1920); "Zakavkaze, Obshekavkazskaja konferentsija" (Transcaucasia, Caucasian conference), *Volnyj gorets* 26 (19 January 1920).

¹⁰⁰⁹ "Obzor pečati" (Press review), *Volnyj gorets* 23 (1 January 1920); amier-kavkasiis urtiertoba" (Transcaucasian relations), *ertoba* 5 (7 January 1920).

¹⁰¹⁰ "Obzor pečati" (Press review), *Volnyj gorets* 25 (15 January 1920).

¹⁰¹¹ "Obzor pečati" (Press review), *Volnyj gorets* 23 (1 January 1920).

¹⁰¹² "konfederacia" (Confederation). *saqartvelo* 3. 4 January 1920; "saqartvelo da konfederacia" (Georgia and confederation), *saqartvelo* 11 (16 January 1920).

nationalist paper *klde* (cliff), they expressed support specifically for the creation of a military alliance between the Georgians, Azerbaijanis and Mountaineers backed by a European state.¹⁰¹³ As a result of these developments, by the end of the month the Azerbaijani, Armenian and Georgian foreign ministers were meeting in Tiflis to discuss the best way of resolving the contentious issues between their countries. They decided to create a permanent council so at least state representatives could meet on a regular basis, and it was agreed that the three republics should render each other all necessary help, including military support, in the event of any outside enemy's attack; further, it was hoped that the meeting would lead to a regional conference.¹⁰¹⁴

B. Contending loyalties (February-March 1920)

In early February, the Soviets started preparing for operations in the North Caucasus.¹⁰¹⁵ The Bolsheviks also claimed that as a result of new elections the Defense Council of the North Caucasus and Daghestan was Bolshevized around this time. However, the editors at *Volnyj gorets* had only recently denied "the circulating rumors" of re-elections and asserted there was not a single Communist on the Defense Council. They said there was a different, Soviet council bearing the same name.¹⁰¹⁶ A Defense Council consisting of Communists was apparently formed on 7 February, with a diverse membership and Said Kazbekov elected as its chairman.¹⁰¹⁷ Since the youthful Kazbekov was soon killed as a result of the early March clash between the Turks and Bolsheviks in Daghestan but Akushinskij continued to lead the Defense council as of

¹⁰¹³ "Obzor pechati" (Press review), *Volnyj gorets* 25 (15 January 1920).

¹⁰¹⁴ Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 3, *From London to Sèvres, February-August 1920* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), 161-16; "sagareo saqmeta ministrebis tatbiri" (Meeting of the Foreign Affairs Ministries) *ertoba* 17 (24 January 1920).

¹⁰¹⁵ G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istorii Grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR*, 2: 591-592. "Iz direktivy komandovanija Kavkazskogo fronta vojskam fronta o podgotovke nastuplenija na Severnom Kavkaz" (From the directive of the Caucasus Front Command to the troops of the front about the preparation of an attack on the North Caucasus) of 6 February 1920.

¹⁰¹⁶ "Lozhnie sluxi o Sovete Oborone Respubliki Severnago Kavkaza" (False rumors about the Defense Council of the NC Republic), *Volnyj gorets* 28 (2 February 1920).

¹⁰¹⁷ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 147.

mid-March, it appears these were indeed two separate organizations.¹⁰¹⁸ According to Imanutdin Sulaev, Akushinskij remained head of the “anti-Denikin movement” through 30 March 1920.¹⁰¹⁹ It is interesting to note, however, that on 3 April, Akushinskij appealed as the “Chairman of the Defense Council and Sheikh al-Islam of the People’s Republic of the North Caucasus” to the Red Command, asking them to live up to their promises to recognize the independence and sovereignty of the North Caucasus republic and send representatives to discuss conditions for peaceful neighborly relations.¹⁰²⁰

Meanwhile, the process of the Volunteers’ evacuation continued through February even as Denikin recognized the autonomy of the Don, Kuban and Terek Cossack Hosts (*Vojska*) in a desperate last bid to shore up support.¹⁰²¹ On 23 February, Denikin moved his headquarters from Tixoretskaja to Ekaterinodar.¹⁰²² Throughout the North Caucasus the Whites were being challenged by partisans, some of whom were fighting for Soviet power.¹⁰²³ In Daghestan, the Communists were gathering up Red

¹⁰¹⁸ “Poslednija vesti. Atmosfera v Dagestane raschishhaetsja (Ot nashego korrespondenta) (Latest news. The atmosphere in Daghestan is clearing [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 34 (15 March 1920; “Grazhdanskaja vojna v Dagestane (Ot nashego korrespondenta)” (Civil war in Daghestan [From our correspondent]). *Volnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920); “Said Kazbekov i Abbas Efendiev” (Said Kazbekov and Abbas Efendiev), *Volnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920).

Kazbekov was killed on 10 March. Kazbekov and Abas-Aga Efendiev were killed as a result of a violent clash in Levash on 10 March. The reason for the clash was reported in *Volnyj gorets* to be the Communists’ pressuring of the Defense Council to give up independence in factor of the Russian Soviet Federative Republic when the people were committed to the goal of independence.

¹⁰¹⁹ Imanutdin Sulaev, “Revoljutsija i grazhdanskaja vojna v vosprijatii i dejaniach musulmanskogo duxovenstva Dagestana (1917-1921 gg.) (Revolution and Civil War through the Perceptions and Actions of Muslim Clergy in Dagestan, 1917-1921), *Gosudarstvo, religija, tserkoy v Rossii i za rubezhom* (State, religion and the church in Russia) 37 (1/2) 2019: 480.

¹⁰²⁰ “Obrashenie shejxa Ali-xadzhi k sovetskomu komandovanija” (Appeal of shejx Ali-xadzhi to the Soviet command), *Volnyj gorets* 53 (13 September 1920).

The use of the word “people’s” is significant because the Mountain Republic had not been referred to in this way before, and it is not clear who Akushinskij represents at this point.

¹⁰²¹ “Chto nuzhno predotvratit’ na Tereke” (What must be prevented on the Terek), *Volnyj gorets* 29 (9 February 1920); Hovannisian 2: 524.

¹⁰²² Kenez, *Red Advance, White Defeat*, 238-239.

¹⁰²³ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 146-148; “Poslednija vesti. Vozstanie v severnoj Osetii. (Ot nashego korrespondenta)” (Latest news. Uprising in northern Ossetia. [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 33 (8 March 1920).

soldiers who had earlier sought refuge in Azerbaijan or Georgia and offering money to locals who would join their army.¹⁰²⁴ According to *Voľnyj gorets*, the Daghestani population was refraining from protesting against the Communists and their tendency to put their party interests over all else only to prevent internal dissent from affecting the front.¹⁰²⁵

With regard to regional solidarity, when thanking the Allied Supreme Council for extending recognition to their republics in January 1920, the Georgian and Azerbaijani delegations in Paris had asked that recognition also be extended to the North Caucasian republic—specifically in order to strengthen the Caucasus region as a buffer zone.¹⁰²⁶ Perhaps related to the Caucasian delegations' efforts in Europe, in early February 1920, the Defense Council received word the Entente would soon decide on the question of international recognition for the Mountain Republic. The resistance's guarded hopes were briefly rekindled as they received the impression that the world's decision-makers were finally beginning to realize the North Caucasus was a necessary component in a Caucasian regional federation.¹⁰²⁷ But this led to renewed disappointment. On 25 February 1920, when the Allied representatives were discussing recognition of the republic at a meeting in London, Lord Curzon stated that "Daghestan was a mountainous region whose inhabitants were the most turbulent people in the world... a very martial race, who acknowledged no Government. Whatever Government there was, changed every two months." He then concluded with the "authoritative" opinion that Daghestan had no responsible government to whom recognition could be given.¹⁰²⁸ And so it was not extended.

¹⁰²⁴ "Bolshevistskij kulak v Dagestane" (Bolshevik kulak in Daghestan), *Voľnyj gorets* 29 (9 Feb 1920); "Poslednija vesti. Kommunizm za 3000 rub." (Latest news. Communism for 3000 rubles), *Voľnyj gorets* 30 (16 February 1920).

¹⁰²⁵ "Bolshevistskij kulak v Dagestane" (Bolshevik kulak in Daghestan), *Voľnyj gorets* 29 (9 Feb 1920).

¹⁰²⁶ Hovannisian 2: 507-508.

¹⁰²⁷ "Poslednija vesti O priznani Gorskoj Respubliki" (Latest news: on the recognition of the Mountain Republic) *Voľnyj gorets* 29 (9 February 1920).

¹⁰²⁸ Rohan Butler and J.P.T. Bury, eds., *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, vol. 7, 1920 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1958), 255.

With the Reds planning to move into the Caucasus, and support from the West not forthcoming, the Defense Council of the North Caucasus emphasized the argument that the only way to prevent a Soviet takeover of the north and south Caucasus would be for the Transcaucasian republics to support the restoration of the Mountain Republic, including for Georgia and Azerbaijan to send troops and form a federation or confederation with the North Caucasians.¹⁰²⁹ Perhaps there was indeed a chance of a military alliance at this point. On 1 March, the Georgian government called yet again for a regional conference.¹⁰³⁰ The Azerbaijanis agreed without hesitation and asked that the idea of a regional confederation be placed on the agenda as well as for the Armenian representatives to ask in advance for specific authorization to make decisions on this question. However, the Armenian foreign minister Xatisov declined to do this unless certain territorial demands were first met.¹⁰³¹ In Hovannisian's view, the Dashnak leadership wanted to avoid any discussion of confederation since they hoped Soviet Russia would focus on capturing Azerbaijan for its oil and leave Armenia alone.¹⁰³² It was around this time that Chermoev addressed the Supreme Council in Paris, stating that the Georgian and Azerbaijani representatives were in full agreement with the Mountaineers and were urgently trying to create a tight union of the republics formed on the basis of respect for their individual sovereignty.¹⁰³³ The conference would open in April.

¹⁰²⁹ Georgij Mamulia, "Zabytyj Gazavat. Gortsy Severnogo Kavkaza v boʻrbe za svobodu i nezavisimostʹ (1919-1921). Chastʹ II. V boʻrbe s boʻlshevizmom" (Forgotten Ghazavat. The Mountaineers of the North Caucasus in the struggle for freedom and independence [1919-1921]. Part 2. In the fight with Bolshevism), *Nowy Prometeusz*, no. 8 (2015): 84; Mjurid, "Nereshiteľnostʹ ili blizorukostʹ" (Indecisiveness or shortsightedness) *Volnyj gorets* 23 (1 January 1920); Ax., "Boʻrba na dva fronta" (Fight on two fronts) *Volnyj gorets* 29 (9 February 1920); Ax., "Otvettstvennij moment priblizhaetsja" (The responsible moment draws near), *Volnyj gorets* 34 (15 March 1920); "Chto budet na Terek" (What will be on the Terek), *Volnyj gorets* 35 (22 March 1920).

¹⁰³⁰ Hovannisian 3: 165.

¹⁰³¹ Hovannisian 3: 165-166.

¹⁰³² Hovannisian 3: 173-174.

¹⁰³³ "ucxoeti, chrdilo-kavkasiis mtielta respublikis tsarmomadgenlis gancxadeba parizshi" (Abroad, The announcement of the representative of the North Caucasus Mountain Republic in Paris), *saqartvelo* 50 (6 March 1920).

Meanwhile, in early March the Defense Council of the North Caucasus declared itself the supreme authority in the liberated native territories until a permanent government could be elected by the people. The council set to work reestablishing the Mountain Republic, calling for parliamentary elections; and members of the intelligentsia exiled to Transcaucasia were making their way home to participate in the state-building project.¹⁰³⁴ In this fleeting moment between the White and Red occupations, the press reports indicate that the Defense Council, with the political goal of independence, was the strongest claimant to authority among the North Caucasian population. For example, in mid-March when representatives from the Cossack Supreme Krug offered the Ingush National Council autonomy and weapons in exchange for letting some Volunteer units stay on Ingush territory to fight the Reds, the council demanded they first recognize the independent Mountain Republic.¹⁰³⁵ In another instance, an officers' battalion came to the Ingush and offered to recognize the natives' republic and serve in their military forces.¹⁰³⁶

In Daghestan, as a result of the fight in early March between the Bolsheviks and Turks several important Communists were killed or arrested and the Bolsheviks were supposedly weakened to the point of admitting there was no bourgeoisie among the Mountaineers there to fight. According to one *Volnyj goret*s correspondent, "The people

¹⁰³⁴ "Poslednija vesti, Nota Soveta Oborony respubliki S. Kavkaza" (Latest news, Note of the Defense Council of the Republic of the North Caucasus), *Volnyj goret*s 32 (1 March 1920); "ucxoeti, daghestani. mtielta mtavroba" (Abroad, Daghestan. Mountaineers' government) *ertoba* 60 (15 March 1920); "Nakanune provozglashenija gorskago pravitel'stv (Ot nashego korrespondenta)" (On the verge of declaring the Mountain Government, from our correspondent) and "Otez d gorskoj intelligentsii na S. Kavkaz. (Ot nashego korrespondenta)" (The departure of the gortsy intelligentsia to the N. Caucasus [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj goret*s 34 (15 March 1920); "Poslednija vesti. Obrashenie Soveta Oborony k intelligentsii (Ot nashego korrespondenta)" (Latest news. Appeal of the Defense Council to the intelligentsia), *Volnyj goret*s 35 (22 March 1920); "Poslednija vesti. Deklaratsija Soveta Oborony Respubliki S. Kavkaza k intelligentsii (Ot nashego korrespondenta)" (Latest news. Declaration of the Defense Council of the N. Caucasus to the intelligentsia) and "Otez d br. Dzhabagiev" (Departure of the Dzhabagiev brothers), *Volnyj goret*s 36 (29 March 1920).

¹⁰³⁵ "ucxoeti, umaghles 'krugis' delegacia da ingushebi" (Abroad, the Supreme Krug's delegation and the Ingush), *ertoba* 60 (15 March 1920); "Peregovory delegatsii verkhovnago kruga s predstaviteljami ingushej" (Negotiations of the delegation of the supreme krug with the representatives of the Ingush), *Volnyj goret*s 34 (15 March 1920).

¹⁰³⁶ "Tajnye peregovory denikinskix ofitserov s ingushami" (Secret negotiations of Denikin's officers with the Ingush) *Volnyj goret*s 34 (15 March 1920).

stand resolutely for independence. There is nothing left for them [SS: the Bolsheviks] to do but recognize the independence of the Mountain Republic or call in Trotsky's army and start a war."¹⁰³⁷

Suggesting that some native radicals were either interested in an independent Soviet republic or felt the population would demand one, the local Communists were now divided over the issue of whether the future Soviet Mountain Republic should be a federal unit within Soviet Russia or an independent Soviet republic.¹⁰³⁸ Indicating Akushinskij was loyal to the North Caucasian national project, or at least was attempting to hold some kind of neutral position for the benefit of the people and the goal of preserving self-determination and Sharia, the violent breakdown of relations between the Bolsheviks and Turks in Daghestan caused him to inform both sides they would be expelled if they did not stop since neither had any right to be in Daghestan unless busy with fighting Denikin.¹⁰³⁹ Adding credence to the claim that the Bolsheviks enjoyed only a weak prestige among the Mountaineers, the native Communists started debating the possibility of a coalition with the "separatist" socialists.¹⁰⁴⁰

Meanwhile, in the Terek, Volunteer forces held Vladikavkaz through late March. Upon the Volunteers' evacuation of the city and the entire district, Ossetian and

¹⁰³⁷ "Grazhdanskaja vojna v Dagestane (Ot nashego korrespondenta)" (Civil war in Daghestan [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920) «Народ определенно стоит за независимость. Им остается либо признать независимость горской республики, или же призвать армию Тротского и начать в Дageстане войну»; "chrdilo kavkasiashi" (In the North Caucasus), *ertoba* 72 (30 March 1920). "V Dagestane, Likvidatsija Bol'shevizma" (In Daghestan, Liquidation of Bolshevism), *Volnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920).

¹⁰³⁸ "Trenija sredi kommunistov v Dagestane (Ot nashego korrespondenta)" (Friction among Commies in Daghestan [From our correspondent]) *Volnyj gorets* 34 (15 March 1920); "uchxoeti, daghestani, utanxmoeba komunists shoris" (Abroad, Daghestan, disagreements between the Communists), *ertoba* 60 (15 March 1920).

The debate essentially surrounded whether the Soviet Mountain Republic should become an autonomous republic within the RSFSR formed in 1917 or a union republic in a union of soviet socialist republics. The USSR would not be formed until 1922.

¹⁰³⁹ "uchxoeti, daghestani. turqebi da balshevekebi" (Abroad, Daghestan. Turks and Bolsheviks), *ertoba* 60 (15 March 1920); "Poslednija vesti. Atmosfera v Dagestane raschishchaetsja (Ot nashego korrespondenta) (Latest news. The atmosphere in Daghestan is clearing [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 34 (15 March 1920).

¹⁰⁴⁰ "Dagestanskije kommunisty ishut koalitsii (Daghestani Communists seek coalition), *Volnyj gorets* 35 (22 March 1920).

Ingush forces took over temporarily. Georgian observers on an information gathering mission reported that Ingush National Council forces had encountered terrible artillery fire when they tried to enter Vladikavkaz on the 20th.¹⁰⁴¹ At a joint meeting the Kabardian, Ossetian, Ingush and Chechen National Councils then chose Gajdar Bamatov in absentia as chairman of a provisional government of the North Caucasus Republic. General Erdeli passed his authority onto Axmed Dudarov, Bamatov's deputy.¹⁰⁴² And Bamatov, still in Tiflis, proclaimed the creation of the Mountain government in Vladikavkaz.¹⁰⁴³ Similar to the TerDag before it, this government considered its responsibility to be organizing a constituent assembly, this time for the laboring people. The historian Giorgi Mamulia asserts that this use of socialist rhetoric reflected an attempt to prevent the Bolsheviks from accusing them of being counter-revolutionaries.¹⁰⁴⁴

It is also possible that they were using this language to appeal to the population. According to the socialists at *Volnyj gorets*, the regular people would only support a leadership that would resolve the land issue in their favor.¹⁰⁴⁵ And another contributor to the journal pointed out that the Mountain government set up in Vladikavkaz had no real power behind it since its members were associated with allegedly pro-Cossack orientations and the people would only support a government coming from Daghestan, the only problem being that the Daghestani-Mountaineer government had not been able to do anything in the Terek lately since it was dealing with its own factional struggle.¹⁰⁴⁶

¹⁰⁴¹ "Poslednija vesti, Kongsentratsija dobrovol'tsev vo Vladikavkaze" (Latest news, Concentration of Volunteers in Vladikavkaz) *Volnyj gorets* 34 (15 March 1920); "Chrdilo kavkasiashi" (In the North Caucasus), *ertoba* 67 (24 March 1920). Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 81-82.

¹⁰⁴² Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 81-82.

¹⁰⁴³ "ukanaskneli cnobebi, chrdilo kavkasiashi" ("The latest news, in the North Caucasus"), *ertoba* 67 (24 March 1920); "Provozglashenie Gorskago Praviteľstva" ("Declaration of the Defense Council of the North Caucasus") and Os., "Koshmar anarxii na Tereke" ("The nightmare of anarchy on the Terek"), *Volnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920).

¹⁰⁴⁴ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 82.

¹⁰⁴⁵ "Chto budet na Terek" (What will be on the Terek). *Volnyj gorets* 35. 22 March 1920.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Os., "Koshmar anarxii na Tereke" ("The nightmare of anarchy on the Terek"), *Volnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920).

At any rate, the Vladikavkaz government accomplished nothing in the few days of its existence before the city was taken over by Communists.¹⁰⁴⁷

Judging from the announcements published in *Voľnyj gorets*, it is not perfectly clear whether Bamatov was operating with a directive from the Defense Council in Levashi when he announced from Tiflis that a Mountaineer government had been formed in Vladikavkaz. Over 1919 and into 1920 the various political bodies and figures were interconnected and had the same goal of national self-determination. In the journal, Bamatov is identified as late as 29 March as the diplomatic representative of the “Defense Council of the Republic of the North Caucasus” to the Georgian and Armenian governments.¹⁰⁴⁸ Thus, on one hand, it does appear that Bamatov was still connected to the Defense Council in Levashi, which was simply referred to at the time with some imprecision. In the press, the Defense Council led by Akushinskij in Levashi, Daghestan was called both the “Defense Council of the Republic of the North Caucasus” and the “Defense Council of the North Caucasus”. For example, a February article in *Voľnyj gorets*, the mouthpiece of the council through January 1920, states that the Defense Council of the Republic of the North Caucasus was located in Levashi.¹⁰⁴⁹ And, in Bamat’s March notes to the Georgian and Armenian foreign ministers, the council is referred to both different ways in the very same document.¹⁰⁵⁰

On the other hand, the reporting in *Voľnyj gorets* seems to suggest that the Daghestani leadership, weakened by factional infighting, and the Mountain government

¹⁰⁴⁷ Mamulia, “Forgotten Ghazavat,” 82-83; “Chto proizoshlo vo Vladikavkaze posle uxoda dobrovoľtsev. (Iz pišma)” (What happened in Vladikavkaz after the Volunteers left. (From a letter),” *Voľnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920).

¹⁰⁴⁸ Bamat, Gajdar, “Exo Lzhi” (Echo of the Lie), *Kavkaz (Le Caucase) Organ nezavisimoj natsionalnoj mysli* 12 (December 1934); “Ot diplomatičeskago Predstaviteľstva Respubliki Severnago Kavkaza pri Praviteľstvax Gruzii i Armenii” (From the Diplomatic Representation of the Republic of the North Caucasus at the Georgian and Armenian Governments), *Voľnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920).

¹⁰⁴⁹ “Poslednija vesti, Trenija mezhdru kommunistami i turkami” (Latest news, Friction between Communists and Turks), *Voľnyj gorets* 29 (9 February 1920).

¹⁰⁵⁰ “Poslednija vesti, Nota Soveta Oborony respubliki S. Kavkaza” (Latest news, Note of the Defense Council of the Republic of the North Caucasus), *Voľnyj gorets* 32 (1 March 1920); “Ot diplomatičeskago Predstaviteľstva Respubliki Severnago Kavkaza pri Praviteľstvax Gruzii i Armenii” (From the Diplomatic Representation of the Republic of the North Caucasus at the Georgian and Armenian Governments), *Voľnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920).

declared in Vladikavkaz were unrelated. On 29 March the paper published an announcement from Bammatorov that the North Caucasian Republic had opened a passport bureau in Tiflis and all documents issued by the “Allied Medzhlis and other organs of the republic in Tiflis lose their validity”.¹⁰⁵¹ This wording is ambiguous. Perhaps the confusion can be explained by the abovementioned “factional” in-fighting and some North Caucasian leaders wanting to continue the struggle for independence while others thought it best to cooperate with the rising Soviet power. At any rate, none of the “independendist” structures would endure.

C. The Communists take the North Caucasus

The Communists initiated their takeover of the North Caucasus in February. In the northwest Caucasus, the Committee for Liberation of the Chernomorskaja gubernija first captured Sochi and Tuapse from the Volunteers, but the Red Army representatives rushed in to Tuapse, set up a revolutionary military soviet (*revvoensovet*) and seized jurisdiction over much of the territory along with many weapons to use against the Volunteers in the Kuban.¹⁰⁵² In the native areas, the Reds conducted an agitation campaign and supposedly organized small revkoms with about five members in each in Ingushetia, Ossetia, Kabarda and Balkaria. There were also Red forces under Gikalo’s command, as well as Kermenists and other pro-Bolshevik groups, operating in the native areas.¹⁰⁵³ At this point, the locals were exhausted and depleted from the

¹⁰⁵¹ “Ot diplomatičeskago Predstaviteľstva Respubliki Severnago Kavkaza pri Praviteľstvax Gruzii i Armenii” (From the diplomatic Representative of the Republic of the North Caucasus before the Governments of Georgia and Armenia), *Voľnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920).

¹⁰⁵² “Komitet Osvobozhdenija Chernomorskoj gubernii (The committee for the liberation of the Chernomorsk governorate), accessed 28 May 2002, filial.shpl.ru/asv/komitet-osvobozhdeniya-chernomorskoj-gubernii.

¹⁰⁵³ “Gikalo v Ingushetii” (Gikalo in Ingushetia), *Voľnyj gorets* 38 (12 April 1920); R.X. Gugova, ed., *Revoljucionnye komitety Kabardino-Balkarii i ix dejatel’nost’ po vosstanovleniju i upročheniju Sovetskoj vlasti i organizatsii sotsialističeskogo stroitel’sтва, Dekabr’ 1919 g.—ijul’ 1920 g. (Sbornik dokumentov i materialov)* (Revolutionary committees of Kabardino-Balkaria and their activities for setting up and strengthening Soviet power and the organization of the socialist order, December 1919—July 1920 [Collection of documents and materials]) (Nalchik: Kabardino-Balkarskoe Knizhnoe Izdateľstvo, 1968), 14-19. See “Iz pišma komandujushhego Terskoj oblastnoj gruppoj krasnyx povstancheskich vojsk tov. Xoroshevu o voenno-političeskom položhenii v Terskoj oblasti” (From the letter of the commander of the Terek oblast group of red rebel troops to com. Xoroshev about the military-political situation in the

Volunteer Army occupation, so many were surely hopeful that the Bolsheviks would provide basic services, solve the land disputes and allow them their religious freedom—as well as honor their wish for national independence as promised. This facilitated the Communists' takeover despite their small numbers and lack of general popularity.¹⁰⁵⁴ As shown above, the religious leaders at the head of the popular resistance also tolerated the Bolsheviks, to an extent, specifically because they promised to recognize the Mountain Republic.¹⁰⁵⁵ However, it was already clear to some that the Bolsheviks were lying. And the Defense Council in Levashi was still working to stop the Bolsheviks from pushing their party interests and agitating for a *Soviet* Daghestan as late as mid-

Terek oblast) of 27 February 1920; “Iz protokola zasedanija shtaba Terskoj oblastnoj gruppy krasnyx povstancheskich vojsk o sostave Kabardinskogo revkoma” (From the protocol of the meeting of the headquarters of the Terek oblast group of red rebel troops on the composition of the Kabardian revkom) of 5 March 1920; “Instruktsija Kabardino-Balkarskomu revoljutsionnomu komitetu” (Instructions to the Kabardino-Balkarian revolutionary committee) of 8 March 1920; “Instruktsija po sozdaniju Kabardino-Balkarskoj krasnoj armii” (Instruction for the creation of a Kabardino-Balkarian army) of 8 March 1920; “Prikaz komandujushhego Terskoj oblastnoj gruppy krasnyx povstancheskich vojsk N.F. Gikalo Osetinskomu, Chechenskomu i Ingushskomu revkomam peredať v rasporjazhenie Kabardino-Balkarskogo revkoma vsekh kabardincev i balkartsev, naxodjashhixsja u nix” (Order of the commander of the Terek oblast group of the red rebel troops N.F. Gikalo to the Ossetian, Chechen and Ingush revkoms to transfer all Kabardians and Balkarians located at them to the disposal of the Kabardino-Balkarian revkom) of 14 March 1920; “Iz donesenija komandujushhego Terskoj oblastnoj gruppy krasnyx povstancheskich vojsk N.F. Gikalo nachalniku otdela politicheskoy agentury XI Armii Xadzhi-Muratu Muguevu o voenno-politicheskom položenii v Terskoj oblasti” (From the dispatch of the commander of the Terek oblast group of red rebel troops N.F. Gikalo to the head of the division of the political agency of the 11th Army Xadzhi-Murat Muguev on the military-political situation in the Terek oblast) of 16 March 1920; “Predpisanie revoljutsionnogo komiteta Pjatigorskogo rajona obshemu sobraniju Karmovo ob organizatsii revoljutsionnogo komiteta iz 5 chelovek” (Order of the revolutionary committee of the Pjatigorsk rajon to the general meeting Karmovo on the organization of the revolutionary committee out of 5 persons) of 20 March 1920.

¹⁰⁵⁴ “Poslednija vesti, V Ingushetii. Nastroenie ingushej. (Iz pisma) (Latest news, In Ingushetia, Mood of the Ingush [From a letter]), *Volnyj gorets* 35 (22 March 1920); “Chrdilo kavkasiashi” (In the North Caucasus), *ertoba* 67 (24 March 1920); “V Dagestane, Likvidatsija Bol'shevizma” (In Daghestan, Liquidation of Bolshevism), *Volnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920); “Chechentsy i sovetskaja vlast” (The Chechens and Soviet power), *Volnyj gorets* 50 (23 August 1920); X., “Na kogo oni opirajutsja” (On whom are they based), *Volnyj gorets* 52 (6 September 1920); “Kabarda i sovetskaja vlast (Ot nashego korrespondenta)” (Kabarda and soviet power [From our correspondent]) *Volnyj gorets* 53 (13 September 1920); “Sovetskaja vlast na Tereke (Iz besedy) (Soviet power on the Terek [From a conversation]), *Volnyj gorets* 54 (20 September 1920).

Chxikvishvili reports that neither the Ossetians nor Ingush sympathized with either the Volunteers or the Bolsheviks.

¹⁰⁵⁵ From memoirs of Mustafa Butbay, Interview with Ali-Xadzhi Akushinskij (Ali Xodzha), head of the Defense Council sometime around March 2020; Mamulia, “Forgotten Ghazavat,” 82.

March.¹⁰⁵⁶ At this point, Akushinskij was ordering anyone not working for the independence of the Mountain Republic to leave Daghestan. Moreover, the political circles associated with the council and recently elected parliament continued to discuss forming a responsible government and declaring independence.¹⁰⁵⁷

As soon as the Communists intensified their push into the North Caucasus, they once again advertised their regional strategic perspective. On 15 March the Kavkrajkom appealed to the Russian Red Army and proletariat in the “name of all the Communists and peoples of the Caucasus” to help them in their struggle for the victory of Soviet power in the Caucasus.¹⁰⁵⁸ All of the main cities of the Terek and Daghestan oblasts were taken by the Reds by late-March or early April. According to Soviet sources, the general pattern was for partisans to seize a town and for Red Army detachments to then come and assist them and form a revkom. However, Georgian observers, including Valiko Jugeli and Benia Chxikvishvili, went to Vladikavkaz in mid-March to find out where the front was. What they discovered was that there was no front to speak of and barely any Red soldiers in the Terek oblast. Chxikvishvili wrote, “There has not been any fighting and there is not any going on now. All those reports coming in by telegraph about ‘the fronts’ and the heroic battles are proven to be devoid of truth.”¹⁰⁵⁹ What really happens is that a dozen men gather together and declare themselves a government and the Volunteers then leave the city, he explained.¹⁰⁶⁰ As shown in the cases of Groznyj

¹⁰⁵⁶ “Poslednija vesti. Atmosfera v Dagestane raschishajetsja (Ot nashego korrespondenta) (Latest news. The atmosphere in Daghestan is clearing [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 34 (15 March 1920); M.P., “V Dagestane, Likvidatsija Bolševizma” (In Daghestan, Liquidation of Bolshevism).

¹⁰⁵⁷ “Poslednija vesti. Atmosfera v Dagestane raschishajetsja (Ot nashego korrespondenta), (Latest news. The atmosphere in Daghestan is clearing [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 34 (15 March 1920); “Poslednija vesti. Nakanune provozglasheniya gorskago praviteľstv (Ot nashego korrespondenta)” (Latest news. On the verge of declaring the Mountain Government [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 34 (15 March 1920).

¹⁰⁵⁸ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 150.

¹⁰⁵⁹ “Chrdilo kavkasiashi” (In the North Caucasus) *ertoba* 67 (24 March 1920).

„ბრძოლა არ ყოფილა და არც ამ ჟამად არის და სიმართლეს მოკლებული აღმოჩნდა ყველა ის ცნობები „ფრონტების“ და გმირული ბრძოლის შესახებ, რომელიც მოდიოდა დეპეშებით.“

¹⁰⁶⁰ “Chrdilo kavkasiashi” (In the North Caucasus), *ertoba* 67 (24 March 1920).

and Vladikavkaz, Red forces would then enter the cities. After the Volunteers left Groznyj, Gikalo entered the city with a Red Army detachment and declared Soviet power, and units from Astrakhan were stationed in the city.¹⁰⁶¹ After the Volunteers left Vladikavkaz, Communists from Groznyj came to the city and declared they were forming a revkom based on Gikalo's orders. Red soldiers then entered the city later on 27 March.¹⁰⁶² Bamatov's announcement, published on 29 March about the Republic of the North Caucasus opening a new passport bureau coincided with the Soviet capture of the North Caucasus's major cities.¹⁰⁶³ As noted above, it is unclear from the available sources how Bamatov's "Republic of the North Caucasus" and Akushinskij's "People's Mountain Republic" were related, but the Reds would soon sweep away the natives' attempts to restore self-rule.¹⁰⁶⁴

Consolidating the Red gains, on 31 March Ordzhonikidze ordered the creation of the North Caucasus Revkom, covering all of the North Caucasus from the Stavropolskaja gubernija to the Daghestan oblast.¹⁰⁶⁵ Then on 2 April 1920, Ordzhonikidze informed Lenin that the entire North Caucasus, Kuban, Stravropol, Chernomore, Terek and Daghestan Oblasts had been "liberated" with the Ossetians,

¹⁰⁶¹ "Poslednija vesti, Krovavaja banja v Groznom obrazovanie novej vlasti" (Latest news, Bloodbath in Groznyj formation of the new power), *Volnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920).

¹⁰⁶² "Poslednija vesti, Chto proizoshlo vo Vladikavkaze posle uxoda dobrovol'tsev" (Latest news, What happened in Vladikavkaz after the exit of the Volunteers"), *Volnyj gorets* 38 (12 April 1920); Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 81.

¹⁰⁶³ "Ot diplomatičeskago Predstavitel'stva Respubliki Severnago Kavkaza pri Pravitel'stvax Gruzii i Armenii" (From the diplomatic Representative of the Republic of the North Caucasus before the Governments of Georgia and Armenia), *Volnyj gorets* 36 (29 March 1920).

¹⁰⁶⁴ "Obrashenie shejxa Ali-xadzhi k sovetskomu komandovaniju" (Appeal of shejx Ali-xadzhi to the Soviet command), *Volnyj gorets* 53 (13 September 1920).

Akushinskij refers to himself as *Sheikh al-Islam* of the People's Republic of the North Caucasus in this appeal dated 3 April 1920.

¹⁰⁶⁵ R.X. Gugova, ed., *Revoljucionnye komitety Kabardino-Balkarii*, 20. See "Prikaz Chlena revoljucionnogo voennogo soveta Kavkazskogo fronta G. K. Ordzhonikidze o sozdanii Severo-Kavkazskogo revoljucionnogo komiteta" (Order of the Member of the revolutionary military soviet of the Caucasian front G.K. Ordzhonikidze on the creation of the North-Caucasian revolutionary committee) of 31 March 1920, 20.

The members were Ordzhonikidze, Kirov, Ja Polujan, Mdivani, Stopani, Narimanov and Said Gabiev. See also Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 151, 153.

Ingush, Kabardians, Daghestani and Balkars all filled with awe for and trust in Soviet power. He claimed that the people had been eagerly awaiting the Red Army and electing their own revkoms (at least in Vladikavkaz, Groznyj and Derbent).¹⁰⁶⁶ In reality, however, the Communists' control did not extend beyond the major cities, which had majority out-of-towner populations even if the native populations were not actively resisting them.¹⁰⁶⁷ Moreover, the Red Army entered Daghestan in late-March and early April.¹⁰⁶⁸ This is why it was on 2 April, in response to Ordzhonikidze's above-mentioned letter and on the same day that Red partisans and troops paraded triumphantly through Temir-Xan-Shura, that Lenin instructed Ordzhonikidze to show great sensitivity to the North Caucasians' wish for self-determination as the Red Army made its entry into Daghestan. He wrote, "Once again I ask you to act carefully, and you must be sure to show the maximum good will to the Muslims, especially when entering Daghestan. In all ways demonstrate, and what's more, in the most solemn manner, sympathy to the Muslims, their autonomy, independence and so on."¹⁰⁶⁹ The very next day, Akushinskij appealed to the Red command to respect the Mountaineers' wish for a sovereign, independent republic—the only guarantee for peace in the Caucasus, but the Soviet leadership ignored Akushinskij's appeal.¹⁰⁷⁰ And it also appears that the Red soldiers failed to heed Lenin's caution. Already on the fourth,

¹⁰⁶⁶ G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istorii Grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR*, 2: 632. "Telegramma G. K. Ordzhonikidze V. I. Leninu o povstancheskom dvizhenii trudjashixsja prichernomorja i Severnogo Kavkaza" (Telegram G.K. Ordzhonikidze to V. I. Lenin about the insurgency movement of the workers of the Black Sea and North Caucasus) of 2 April 1920."

¹⁰⁶⁷ Hovannisian 3: 173.

Hovannisian says that the Red Army troops were ranged along the border with Azerbaijan by early April.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Agaev, *Nazhmudin Samurskij*, 25; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Russian Rule*, 131.

Marshall writes, "On 25 March, Dagestani partisans occupied Derbent and then Temir-Khan-Shura, before finally liberating Port Petrovsk on 20 March, meeting up with the advancing 11th Army forces in the process."

¹⁰⁶⁹ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 154.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 83; "Obrashenie shejxa Ali-xadzhi k sovetskomu komandovanija" (Appeal of shejx Ali-xadzhi to the Soviet command), *Volnyj gorets* 53 (13 September 1920).

Akushinskij had to warn the Reds to scale back their violence and requisitions or risk a “rural backlash”.¹⁰⁷¹

On 6 April Bammatorov also made a radio address to Chicherin demanding the Soviets *confirm* their recognition of the independence of the Mountain Republic.¹⁰⁷² The word “confirm” appears to have been chosen specifically because Akushinskij had earlier received an official recognition of the Mountain Republic from the Bolsheviks in verbal and written form. The only problem was that the courier carrying the written document about recognition had been murdered.¹⁰⁷³ Like Akushinskij’s appeal, Bammatorov’s address to Chicherin was also ignored.¹⁰⁷⁴

Over the month of April, the Communists deepened their presence in the North Caucasus.¹⁰⁷⁵ But even without establishing a firm control over the native countryside, they rushed to use the North Caucasus as a base for their invasion of Transcaucasia. On 8 April the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party Politburo organized the Central Committee’s Caucasian Bureau (Kavburo).¹⁰⁷⁶ On 11 April the Daghestan Revkom was formed.¹⁰⁷⁷ Then the Commander of the Caucasus Front along with

¹⁰⁷¹ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 132.

¹⁰⁷² Mamulia, “Forgotten Ghazavat,” 83; “Poslednija vesti. Radio o priznanii Gorskoj Respubliki” (Latest news, Radio about the recognition of the Mountain Republic), *Volnyj gorets* 38 (12 April 1920); “Kommunisty i Gorskaja Respublika” (“Communists and the Mountain Republic”), *Volnyj gorets* 41 (21 June 1920).

¹⁰⁷³ Mustafa Butbaj, *Vospominanija o Kavkaze* (Recollections about the Caucasus). Translation from the Turkish by Z. M. Bunijatov. Maxachkala: Journal *Nash Dagestan* (Our Daghestan), 1993, 19-20. Interview with Ali-Xadzhi Akushinski (Ali Xodzha), head of the Defense Council sometime around March 1920.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Haidar Bammate, “The Caucasus and the Russian Revolution (from a Political Viewpoint,” *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 4 (1991), 22-32; Mamulia, “Forgotten Ghazavat,” 83.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 154-158.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 155; Hovannisian 2: 179; Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 225; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 205; The members were G. K. Ordzhonikidze, S. M. Kirov, M. Oraxeloshvili, A. Nazretjan and others.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Agaev, 26; Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 155; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 131-132.

Ordzhonikidze and Kirov appealed to the Daghestani people as the Red Army entered their territory, congratulating them on their liberation from Denikin and the formation of their revkom.¹⁰⁷⁸ Wasting no time, on 12 April the Kavkraikom of the RCP(b) appealed to the Communist organizations of the North Caucasus and Daghestan, asking for their help in liberating the working people of Transcaucasia.¹⁰⁷⁹

D. The Transcaucasian conference (April 1920)

On 19 March, the Georgian government had invited the Azerbaijani and Armenian representatives to Tiflis for the third regional conference.¹⁰⁸⁰ Originally scheduled for the fifth, the conference was finally opened on 9 April. This was an inauspicious moment as the Red Army was already concentrating on the border between Daghestan and Azerbaijan and Ottoman imperialists were menacing Georgia and Armenia. To make matters worse, hostilities had broken out in Karabagh-Zanzegur between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, serious violence and pogroms were directed against Armenians in Ganja, and there were border clashes around the Kazakh district of Ganja.¹⁰⁸¹

In the view of the Georgian Mensheviks, the republics had three main issues requiring discussion: 1) the territorial issue, 2) coordinating the three republics' foreign

Alikberov says the Defense Council of the North Caucasus and Daghestan was renamed into the Daghestan Revkom. Agaev and Marshall write that the Daghestan Defense Council had been renamed into the Daghestan Revkom.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 155.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Alikberov, *The revolution and civil war in Daghestan*, 156.

¹⁰⁸⁰ "Amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia" (The Transcaucasian republics' conference), *saqartvelo* 73 (4 April 1920).

¹⁰⁸¹ "Amier-kavkasiis konferenciistvis" (On Transcaucasia's conference), *saqartvelo* 75 (9 April 1920); "Amier kavkasiis respublikabis konferencia, oqmi No. 1" (The Transcaucasian republics' conference, minutes No. 1), *ertoba* 83 (15 April 1920); Hovannisian 3: 153-156.

The first session was on 9 April. The second and third sessions were on 10 April. The fourth session was on 11 April. The fifth session was on 12 April.

policy steps, and 3) confederation.¹⁰⁸² At *saqartvelo* they saw the two main issues to be territorial and common defense, and they warned that if the conference could not resolve these two major issues, “a power that denies our right to self-determination” would soon be deciding the new republics’ fate.¹⁰⁸³ However, the territorial issue was not addressed at the conference because it was felt that a regional conference was the wrong forum for bilateral disagreements.¹⁰⁸⁴ Moreover, the blood flowing between the Azerbaijanis and Armenians made it difficult to concentrate on other issues. Thus, the Georgians and Armenian delegates proposed that the conference focus first on stopping this conflict. Reminiscent of the Armenian delegation’s behavior at the previous two regional conferences, the Azerbaijanis now claimed for the first three sessions that they lacked their government’s authorization to discuss ending the violence.¹⁰⁸⁵ Since in the fourth session they finally agreed to discuss this issue, the next three sessions revolved around stopping the violence and setting the final agenda for the conference, which did include the point on confederation. Although the delegates argued over how to determine the status of the contested areas, they still managed to organize three mixed commissions to work towards ending the hostilities. They also agreed on the need to create an oversight and advisory body for the three republics that would help to coordinate between the three republics without infringing on their individual sovereignty. The work of the commission and the conference, along with the possibility

¹⁰⁸² “Amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia” (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics) *ertoba* 88 (21 April 1920).

¹⁰⁸³ “Amier-kavkasiis konferenciistvis” (On the conference of Transcaucasia), *saqartvelo* 75 (9 April 1920).

„თუ ამ უდიდეს საკითხებზე პასუხი ვერ გაცა კონფერენციამ... ახალი სახელმწიფოების ბედის გარდამწყვეტად ჩვენ ვიხილავთ იმ ძალას, რომელიც უარყოფს ჩვენს თვით მყოფობას!“

¹⁰⁸⁴ “Amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia” (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics) *ertoba* 88 (21 April 1920).

¹⁰⁸⁵ “Amier-kavkasiis konferenciistvis” (On Transcaucasia’s conference), *saqartvelo* 75 (9 April 1920); “amier kavkasiis respublikebis konferencia, oqmi No. 1” (The Transcaucasian republics’ conference, minutes No. 1), *ertoba* 83 (15 April 1920); “amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia” (The conference of the Transcaucasian republics) *ertoba* 88 (21 April 1920); Hovannisian 3: 167.

of coming to an agreement over contested issues and forming a united defense front, was interrupted by the Red Army's entry into Azerbaijan.¹⁰⁸⁶

E. The Communists capture Azerbaijan

The Communist Party of Azerbaijan had been formed in February 1920. It absorbed the local far left parties and declared its intentions to overthrow the existing authorities throughout Transcaucasia and to form a Soviet Transcaucasian federation.¹⁰⁸⁷ According to observations made at *ertoba*, in April, when the Red Army was waiting at the border with Daghestan, the majority of Azerbaijan's population, including the proletariat in Baku, and the main political parties were intent on preserving the republic's independence.¹⁰⁸⁸ Thus, in hopes of finding an agreement with the Soviets while yet preserving their independence, the Azerbaijani political elite in parliament instructed the Bolshevik sympathizer Gadzhinskij to form a new cabinet better able to communicate with Russia, a task at which he failed.¹⁰⁸⁹ At four a.m. on 24 April, the "Azerbaijani government" called Tiflis asking for help against the Red Army troops which were crossing the border into Azerbaijan. At ten a.m., Xan Xojskij asked for help again.¹⁰⁹⁰ At noon, however, the Azerbaijani Communist Party gave the national parliament an ultimatum demanding power be handed over to them while promising to

¹⁰⁸⁶ "Amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia, 12 aprilis sxdoma. (oqmi No. 5)" (Transcaucasian republics' conference, 12 April session, minutes No. 5), *ertoba* 90 (23 April 1920); "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia, 12 aprilis sxdoma. (oqmi No. 5) (dasasruli)" (Transcaucasian republics' conference, 12 April session, minutes No. 5, continued), *ertoba* 91 (24 April 1920); "amier-kavkasiis respublikata konferencia, 13 aprilis sxdoma, oqmi No. 6" (Transcaucasian republics' conference, 13 April session, minutes No. 6) *ertoba* 92 (25 April 1920); Hovannisian 3: 167-172.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Hovannisian 3: 176. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 97-98; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 276; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 205; Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 175.

¹⁰⁸⁸ "Aderbeijanıs vitareba" (Developments of Azerbaijan), *ertoba* 91 (24 April 1920).

¹⁰⁸⁹ "Aderbeijanıs vitareba" (Developments of Azerbaijan), *ertoba* 91 (24 April 1920); Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 97-98; Hovannisian 3: 177-178, 181; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 277-278, 281-283; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 176-180.

¹⁰⁹⁰ "Baqo" (Baku), *ertoba* 95 (29 April 1920).

recognize the republic's independence. The parliament named a commission, which included Resulzade and Gadzhinskij, and this commission then accepted the terms of the ultimatum.¹⁰⁹¹ By eleven p.m. Baku was under Communist control and the Azerbaijani Socialist Soviet Republic was proclaimed on 28 April.¹⁰⁹²

The Georgian Mensheviks' reaction to this development was to accuse the Azerbaijanis of sympathizing with the Soviets and leaving the Georgians without an ally against their northern enemy, who was now allied with the Turks, and they argued henceforth they would have to worry about their own defense.¹⁰⁹³ Zhordania and Georgian political society perceived or presented the capitulation of the Musavatists as a betrayal.¹⁰⁹⁴ While there is truth to the Georgian perspective, the Azerbaijani forces were clearly occupied elsewhere (although the Georgian press suspected this was part of the ruse) and the Azerbaijani leaders had little alternative if they wanted to spare their country of bloodshed.¹⁰⁹⁵ A different reason Zhordania may have refused to help was that his government was already holding secret talks with Moscow, hoping to convince Lenin to recognize Georgian independence.¹⁰⁹⁶

Ordzhonikidze and his comrades in the Caucasus were eager to rush from Azerbaijan into Georgia and Armenia, but the authorities in Moscow did not consider

¹⁰⁹¹ "aderbeijanshi" (In Azerbaijan), *ertoba* 96 (30 April 1920); Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 99; "Baço" (Baku), *ertoba* 95 (29 April 1920); Hovannisian 3: 180-182; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 283; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 180.

¹⁰⁹² "Bolshevikuri gadaṭṭrialeba bakoshi" (Bolshevik revolution in Baku), *ertoba* 95 (29 April 1920); "Baço" (Baku), *ertoba* 95 (29 April 1920); G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istorii Grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR*, 3: 463. "Telegramma revvoensoveta 11-j Armii V. I. Leninu ob osvoboždenii Baku" (Telegram of the revmilsoviet of the 11th Army to V. I. Lenin about the liberation of Baku) of 28 April 1920; Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 98-99; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 283-285; Hovannisian 3: 181-182; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 205; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 182; On 28 April, the Azerbaijani Socialist Soviet Republic was proclaimed and Nariman Narimanov was made chairman of the Azerbaijani Sovnarkom and Revkom.

¹⁰⁹³ "Bolshevikuri gadaṭṭrialeba bakoshi" (Bolshevik revolution in Baku), *ertoba* 95 (29 April 1920); Hovannisian 3: 200-201.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Hovannisian 3: 200-201.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 278.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 297-300; Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 225.

this expedient.¹⁰⁹⁷ Thus, after a false start in May, the takeover of the rest of Transcaucasia would be delayed until late 1920 (Armenia) and early 1921 (Georgia). Ordzhonikidze's false start proceeded as follows: Red troops and new revkoms soon covered Azerbaijan, and the Communists laid claim to Zanzegur and Karabagh, which they took over by the end of the month.¹⁰⁹⁸ Meanwhile, the success of the Red Army in Azerbaijan emboldened Bolsheviks in Georgia and Armenia to call for help from the Red Army.¹⁰⁹⁹ In Alexandropol, Armenia, on 1 May, Communist agitators interrupted May Day celebrations in various places and succeeded in provoking crowds and soldiers in several cities into a standoff that turned into an aborted rebellion against the Dashnak government, which prompted a crisis and the formation of a new cabinet.¹¹⁰⁰ On 2-3 May, local Bolsheviks in Georgia went as far as attempting a coup so they could, in line with Ordzhonikidze's plan, ask the Red Army to assist them.¹¹⁰¹ Red troops coming from Azerbaijan then came face to face with Georgian forces at the border on 5 May.¹¹⁰² However, the Georgian forces pushed back, even following the retreating forces into Azerbaijan to help the population and the Azerbaijani soldiers in Ganja who were already resisting.¹¹⁰³ But neither Moscow nor Zhordania wanted a conflict at this moment, and Moscow quickly ordered Ordzhonikidze to recall his forces.¹¹⁰⁴

The treaty signed on 7 May between Moscow and Tiflis contained a special provision to avoid the need for parliamentary ratification since Zhordania did not expect it to pass and provided for Soviet recognition of the Georgian republic in exchange for permission to let the Communist Party operate freely in Georgia. This move was widely

¹⁰⁹⁷ Hovannisian 3: 203-204.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Hovannisian 3: 183, 185-188, 193-200.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Hovannisian 3: 202-203; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 219, 296.

¹¹⁰⁰ Hovannisian 3: 209-253; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 219-220.

¹¹⁰¹ Hovannisian 3: 202-203; Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 225.

¹¹⁰² Hovannisian 3: 183, 202.

¹¹⁰³ Hovannisian 3: 202; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 296-297.

¹¹⁰⁴ Hovannisian 3: 203; Suny, *The Making*, 206.

unpopular and many, including the foreign minister, viewed the treaty as “veiled subjection” to Russia.¹¹⁰⁵ As a result of these efforts, however, hostilities between the Georgian Republic and Red Army had ceased by mid-May, and on 12 June a treaty was signed between the Democratic Republic of Georgia and the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.¹¹⁰⁶

In the wake of the Communist takeover of Azerbaijan, the Armenian government demanded the new Soviet government in Azerbaijan concede to Armenian territorial claims in Karabagh and elsewhere, which it refused to do. Instead, Karabagh was Sovietized by late May with the help of the Red Army.¹¹⁰⁷ Inside the Armenian republic, Armenian Socialist-Revolutionary parliamentarians (a small minority) began suggesting that Armenia also Sovietize right away and local Bolsheviks started agitating more aggressively.¹¹⁰⁸ On 10 May, the standoff which had begun on May Day in Alexandropol turned into a revolt and Soviet power was soon declared.¹¹⁰⁹ But as soon as 13-14 May, the members of the Alexandropol Revkom were already fleeing like cowards before the republic’s advancing forces.¹¹¹⁰ And in Kars they ran away at the threat of hostile locals and defecting soldiers.¹¹¹¹ The Sarykamysh Revkom was suppressed by 18 May, and an attempted revolt in Nor-Bayazit was put down quickly by the nineteenth.¹¹¹² Around this time, radicalized villagers around Armenia’s border with Azerbaijan tried to secure the backing of the Eleventh Red Army for a revolt.¹¹¹³

¹¹⁰⁵ Hovannisian 3: 204; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 297-300; Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*, 226.

¹¹⁰⁶ Hovannisian 3: 206; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 300-301.

¹¹⁰⁷ Hovannisian 3: 184-189, 192-200.

¹¹⁰⁸ Hovannisian 3: 189-192, 195; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 219.

¹¹⁰⁹ Hovannisian 3: 229-231; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 219.

¹¹¹⁰ Hovannisian 3: 232-235.

¹¹¹¹ Hovannisian 3: 235-237; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 220.

¹¹¹² Hovannisian 3: 239-242; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 220.

¹¹¹³ Hovannisian 3: 243-244.

And on 22 May the Red Army helped insurgents capture Dilijan for about a day, but the Red Army was ordered to leave Armenia even though fighting with Soviet backed rebels in the border zone continued through June.¹¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, the Georgian government's 7 May treaty with Moscow gave the Communists time to strengthen their hand against the Caucasian republics, shoring up their power in the North Caucasus and Azerbaijan while preparing for the ultimate takeover of Armenia and Georgia.¹¹¹⁵ Despite Zhordania's apparent intention of saving Georgia from a Soviet Russian invasion through securing Moscow's formal recognition, his naïve agreement with Lenin brought the country only a false and temporary respite while making it easier for the Soviets to undermine Georgia's security. One of the 7 May treaty provisions was for the Georgians to expel all troops hostile to Soviet power, which would require a great deal of trust in the Communists since British forces alone could serve as a foreign deterrent to Communist aggression.¹¹¹⁶ On 17 May Chicherin asked the Georgians to take immediate measures to prevent any increase in British troops in Georgia, any movements of such troops across its territory and eliminate the ones that were there, reminding them that "according to the treaty, Georgia undertook the responsibility to remove all foreign troops and take measures to prevent the appearance of any new English units."¹¹¹⁷ On 20 May, however, the Allies moved a battalion from Constantinople to Batumi.¹¹¹⁸ On

¹¹¹⁴ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 110-111; Hovannisian 3: 245-246; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 220.

¹¹¹⁵ Shalva Karumidze, " 'Sever' i 'Jug' (Prodolzhenie)" ("North" and "South" (Continuation), *Kavkaz (Le Caucase): Organ nezavisimoi natsionalnoi mysli* 10/34 (October 1936), 8.

¹¹¹⁶ Compare with Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 297-301.

¹¹¹⁷ G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istorii Grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR*, 3: 512-513. "Iz noty G. V. Chicherina Menshevistskomu pravitelstvu Gruzii o prinjatii mer dlja vyvoda Anglijskix vojsk s territorii Gruzii" (From the note of G.V. Chicherin to the Menshevik government of Georgia on the adopting of measures for the removal of English troops from the territory of Georgia) of 17 May 1920.

¹¹¹⁸ G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istorii Grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR*, 3: 513. "Pišmo Vejgana predstavitelju Velikobritanii pri Voennom komitete Antanty ob otytii batałona Alzhirskix strelkov iz Konstantinopolja v Batum" (Weygand's letter to the representative of Great Britain at the Military committee about the departure of the battalion of Algerian gunmen from Constantinople to Batum) of 20 May 1920. See also

the same day (20 May) the Kavkrajkom of the RKP(b) was dissolved, and in a centralizing process the recently formed Azerbaijani, Georgian and Armenian Communist parties were subordinated to the Caucasian Bureau of the RCP(b) (Kavburo).¹¹¹⁹

Meanwhile, in Azerbaijan the process of integrating the new country into the Russian Soviet state proceeded in late May with the subordination of all of the republic's military and naval forces to the Eleventh Red Army and Red Caspian Fleet (and in early June with the nationalization of the entire Caspian merchant fleet).¹¹²⁰ At the same time, the Communists had to appeal to workers, peasants and soldiers of the republic to stop a major rebellion in Ganja, which started on 28 May, claiming that the beks and khans, together with the Mensheviks and Dashnaks from Baku, were killing the peasants.¹¹²¹ In their view, they had to defend the new Soviet republic from the mutinous reactionary bands and so set up a soviet for the worker-peasant defense of Azerbaijan.¹¹²² Ganja fell after the Red Army seriously outgunned the national resistance that was holding out there and practically razed the city to the ground. Fighting spread throughout the rest of the country and to every major town. When the towns were beaten, the defenders who could escape went into the mountains to continue

Commercial & Financial Chronicle 2877 (Saturday 14 August 1920) vol. 111 (New York: William B. Dana Company, Publishers), 625, https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/files/docs/publications/cfc/cfc_19200814.pdf.

¹¹¹⁹ Hovannisian 3: 206-210.

¹¹²⁰ G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istorii Grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR*, 3: 468, 472-473. "Postanovlenie Revkoma Azerbajdzhanskoj SSR o peredache vsekh voenno-morskix sil respubliki v razporjazhenie Krasnoj Armii i Krasnogo Flota Sovetsknoj Rossii" (The order of the Revkom of the Azerbaijani SSR on the transfer of all military-navy forces of the republic to the use of the Red Army and the Red Fleet of Soviet Russia) of 7 May 1920, "Dekret Revkoma Azerbajdzhana o natsionalizatsii Kaspijskogo trgovogo flota" (Decree of the Revkom of Azerbaijan on the nationalization of the Caspian merchant fleet).

¹¹²¹ G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istorii Grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR*, 3: 469-470. "Iz obrashhenija Tsk KP(b) Azerbajdzhana k Rabochim, Krestjanam i Krasnoarmejsam respubliki s prizyvom podavljat vse kontrrevoljutsionnye vystuplenija burzhuzii i momeshnikov" not before 26 May 1920; Altstadt, 110-111; Swietochowski, 188.

¹¹²² G. A. Belov et al., *Iz Istorii Grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR*, 3: 472. "Postanovlenie Revkoma i Tsk KP(b) Azerbajdzhana ob organizatsii Soveta Raboche-Krestjanskoj oborony respublika" (Order of the Revkom and Central Committee CP(b) of Azerbaijan on the organization of the Soviet of Worker and Peasant Defense of the republic) of 28 May 1920.

struggling for independence as guerrillas. Armed resistance continued through 1924.¹¹²³

In the North Caucasus as well, even as the Communists were setting up power, the population was already beginning to show its dissatisfaction with Soviet rule. Starting in June, reports from *Volnyj gorets* indicated the sheikhs and regular people were unhappy with the Communists' attempts to use Islam to back their authority alongside their ignorance, strategy of consolidating power through holding one-party elections, betrayal of their promises to allow self-determination, failure to resolve land issues or restore destroyed settlements, attacks on traditions, immoral behavior, repression of speech and free assembly and press, abduction and denigration of women, arresting dissidents, making requisitions and engaging in punitive expeditions and horse and weapons' snatching.¹¹²⁴ The situation was so bad that in response to the Communists' predations, in Ossetia some people allegedly resorted to the ancient

¹¹²³ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 110-111; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 300-301; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 188-190.

¹¹²⁴ Alibek "Dva puti" (Two paths) and "V Kabarde" (In Kabarda), *Volnyj gorets* 39 (7 June 1920); "Shejx Magomet i kommunisty" (Sheikh Magomed and the Communists), "V Kabarde" (In Kabarda) and "Kommunisticheskiy raj v s. Osetii" ("The Communist paradise in n. Ossetia), *Volnyj gorets* 39 (7 June 1920); "Nam prinadlezhit budushee" (To us belongs the future), Abdul-Medzhid (probably Tapa Chermoev) "Nastroenie gornoj Chechni" (The mood in mountainous Chechnya) and "Na Tereke" (On the Terek), *Volnyj gorets* 4 (21 June 1920); Ax., "Kommunisty ishut bazy" (Communists seek bases), Nabljudatel', "Sovetskaja vlast na Tereke IV. Bo'ba obshchestvennyx sil v Kabarde" (Soviet power on the Terek IV: Struggle of social forces in Kabarda) and "Poslednija Vesti. Obyski i rekvizitsii" (Latest News. Searches and requisitions), *Volnyj gorets* 42 (28 June 1920); "Atmosfera sgushaetsja..." (The atmosphere thickens...) and "V gorax Digorii" (In the mountains of Digori) in *Volnyj gorets* 43 (5 July 1920); "Poslednija vesti. Aresty v S. Osetii" (Latest news: Arrests in N. Ossetia), *Volnyj gorets* 44 (12 July 1920); "Chudo 'sv. Elerdova'" ("St. Elerdov's" Miracle) and "V Terskom krae" (In the Terek Kraj), *Volnyj gorets* 45 (19 July 1920); "Komu eto nuzhno?" (Who needs this?), *Volnyj gorets* 46 (26 July 1920); "V 'kommunisticheskom' raju (Pisma s Sev. Kavkaza.) III." (In the Communist paradise (Letter from the Nor. Caucasus) III), *Volnyj gorets* 47 (2 August 1920); "Nastroenie Severnyx Osetin" (The mood of the North Ossetians), "Borba s vrednymi obychajami" (The fight against bad customs) and "Chto delaetsja v Dagestane?" (What is being done in Daghestan?), *Volnyj gorets* 48 (9 August 1920); "Velikosovetskaja svadba vo Vladikavkaze. (Ot nashego korrespondenta)" (Great Soviet wedding in Vladikavkaz. [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 49 (16 August 1920); "Chechentsy i sovetskaja vlast" (Chechens and Soviet power), *Volnyj gorets* 50 (23 August 1920); "Kabarda i sovetskaja vlast" (Ot nashego korrespondenta) (Kabarda and Soviet power [From our correspondent]), *Volnyj gorets* 53 (13 September 1920); Kas., "Sovetskaja vlast na Tereke. (Iz besedy)" (Soviet power on the Terek [From a conversation]), *Volnyj gorets* 54 (20 September 1920); "Obrashenie sotsialistov gorskix narodov Severnago Kavkaza k mezhdunarodnoj sotsialisticheskoi delegatsii v Gruzii" (Appeal of the Socialists of the Mountain Peoples of the North Caucasus to the international socialist delegation to Georgia) and "Poslednija vesti" (Latest news), *Volnyj gorets* 56 (4 October 1920).

custom of bull sacrificing to ward off calamities.¹¹²⁵ In Chechnya, a national assembly was held in July where the elders reportedly castigated Gikalo directly for assaulting their right to independence. Not mincing words, they said,

“You told us from the beginning we were independent. That is why we took you in beaten and hungry and we shared with you our last bread, giving you two-thirds and keeping one-third for ourselves, hoping that you would fight for your independence and we would fight for ours. We fought Denikin and lost many men. Even knowing your strength, we’ll fight you too if you come against our independence. We’ll make a parapet of our wives and children and shoot you from their bodies. We won’t recognize your power, and we want an independent republic of the North Caucasus. You are acting like Denikin, promising us independence and then fighting us. You, Gikalo, broke your word, repaid hospitality with a lie. You will have no more bread from us as long as one Mountaineer remains alive.”¹¹²⁶

This congress ended in gunfire between the Chechens and Gikalo’s detachment and heightened tensions in Chechnya at a time that there were reports that insurgents had appeared in Kabarda, Ossetia, Ingushetia and in the Kuban where the “Greens” (anti-Communist Cossacks and out-of-towners) were resisting requisitions and service obligations.¹¹²⁷ There were also minor disturbances in Daghestan.¹¹²⁸

By August a full-on rebellion had broken out in the Kuban, and it was clear that the North Caucasians were also heading towards an uprising, but the socialists at *Voľnyj gorets* advised the Mountaineers to stay calm because they thought it was suicidal to fight Soviet Russia and it would be wiser to wait for things to fall apart in Russia itself.¹¹²⁹ Gajdar Bammatorov also issued an appeal against siding with General Baron

¹¹²⁵ “Zhertvennyj byk” (Sacrificial bull), *Voľnyj gorets* 42 (28 June 1920); “Zhertvoprinoshenie” (Sacrificial offering), *Voľnyj gorets* 46 (26 July 1920).

¹¹²⁶ Abdul-Medzhid (probably Tapa Chermoev), “Nastroenie gornoj Chechni” (The mood in mountainous Chechnya), *Voľnyj gorets* 41 (21 July 1920).

¹¹²⁷ “Povstantsy v Kabarde (Ot nashevo korrespondenta)” (Rebels in Kabarda [From our correspondent]), *Voľnyj gorets* 43 (5 July 1920); “Boľshevizm v Kabarde” (Bolshevism in Kabarda) and “Poslednija vesti” (Latest news), *Voľnyj gorets* 46 (26 July 1920); “Povstancheskoje dvizhenie na Kubani (Ot nashego korrespondenta)” (Rebel Movement on the Kuban [From our correspondent]), *Voľnyj gorets* 49 (16 August 1920).

¹¹²⁸ “Chto delaetsja v Dagestane (Ot nashego korrespondenta)” (What is being done in Daghestan [From our correspondent]), *Voľnyj gorets* 46 (26 July 1920).

¹¹²⁹ “Nashe otnoshenie k vozstanijam” (Our attitude towards the rebellion), *Voľnyj gorets* 47 (2 August 1920); “Nash put’” (Our path), *Voľnyj gorets* 48 (9 August 1920); “Iz ognja da v polymja” (From the

Pjotr Nikolaevich Vrangeli's growing anti-Soviet movement (pointing out its anti-democratic, monarchic character).¹¹³⁰ When the rebellion began under Nazhmutdin Gotsinskij in Daghestan, Mountaineer socialist intellectuals related to *Volnyj gorets* pointed out the rebel leaders' right-wing nature. These positions suggest that at least some of the moderate socialists among the North Caucasians were hesitant about supporting what they saw as a counter-revolutionary opposition to the Soviets even though they themselves were anti-Soviet. It should be noted that the last issue of *Volnyj gorets* was published on 31 December 1920 because the journal was replaced by *Nezavisimyj gorets* (Independent Mountaineer) for the purpose of bringing together the "democratic" and "socialist" currents within Mountain politics for the restoration of the republic. Then, on 20 February 1921, *Nezavisimyj gorets* was replaced by *Nezavisimyj Kavkaz* (Independent Caucasus) in order to include Azerbaijani democrats. This collective's goal was promoting an independent, democratic and confederated Caucasus.¹¹³¹

F. The rightist resistance in the North Caucasus

On the all-Russian level, General Baron Pjotr Nikolaevich Vrangeli (Vrangeli) was chosen to head the Armed Forces of South Russia (AFSR) on 4 April 1920.¹¹³² Although by now the British were increasingly inclined to seek cooperation with Soviet Moscow and indeed withdrew their last troops from Batumi in July 1920—effectively abandoning Georgia and the Caucasus as prey—the French quickly replaced the British

frying pan into the fire), *Volnyj gorets* 49 (16 August 1920); "Nasha istoricheskaja zadacha" (Our historical task) *Volnyj gorets* 55 (27 September 1920).

¹¹³⁰ "Obrashenie Gajdara Bammata k gorskim narodam" (Gaidar Bammata's appeal to the mountain peoples), *Volnyj gorets* 57 (11 October 1920).

¹¹³¹ Avalishvili, *The Independence of Georgia*, 264; "Nezavisimyj Gorets"—"Nezavisimyj Kavkaz" ("Independent Mountaineer"—"Independent Caucasus"), *Nezavisimyj Kavkaz* (Independent Caucasus) 1 (20 February 1921).

¹¹³² Jonathan D. Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars 1916-1926: Ten Years That Shook the World* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), 166.

as a potential Western backer for an anti-Soviet resistance effort in the region.¹¹³³ In 1920, the French government under Prime Minister Alexandre Millerand was looking favorably upon the ring of anti-Soviet forces which sprung up from Poland to the Caspian, including General Vrangeli's army in Crimea, Nestor Makhno's anarchists in eastern Ukraine, General F. A. Fostikov's guerilla army (The People's Army for the Regeneration of Russia) in the Kuban and insurgents in the northeastern Caucasus and Azerbaijan. And it recognized the potential for containing or defeating Red Russia through the backing of these movements in a coordinated fashion.¹¹³⁴ Despite their intention, however, the French were unable to bring such a project into realization, in part due to a condescending attitude displayed towards the national groups. In the Caucasus, at least, the French made the mistake of demanding the North Caucasians subordinate themselves to Vrangeli even though he was perpetuating Denikin's disregard for their right to self-determination, and thus failed to secure the Mountaineers' cooperation under these terms.¹¹³⁵

It was against this changing international backdrop that at some point, perhaps late spring, the Daghestani officers Kajtmas Alixanov and Nuxbek Tarkovskij met with the cleric Nazhmutdin Gotsinskij and others to discuss their options for resisting the Communists. And it was in June that Alixanov and Gotsinskij agreed to join forces against the Bolsheviks.¹¹³⁶ The French and Georgians had already arranged some support for the resistance in the Kuban and, in June, the head of the French Military

¹¹³³ Michael Jabara Carley, "The Politics of Anti-Bolshevism: The French Government and the Russo-Polish War, December 1919 to May 1920," *The Historical Journal* 19, no. 1 (March 1976): 187-189; Kenez, *Red Advance, White Defeat*, 261; Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 86; John D. Rose, "Batum as Domino, 1919-1902: The Defense of India in Transcaucasia," *The International History Review* 2, no. 2 (April 1980): 286; Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars*, 168.

Some French troops stationed there were also withdrawn along with the British troops.

¹¹³⁴ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 86-87; Mick Armstrong, "Nestor Makhno: the failure of anarchism," *Marxist Left Review*, accessed 13 May 2022, <https://marxistleftreview.org/articles/nestor-makhno-the-failure-of-anarchism/>; Kazimierz Maciej Smogorzewski, "Russo-Polish War 1919-1920," *Britannica*, accessed 13 May 2022, <http://britannica.com/event/Russo-Polish-War-1919-1920>; Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars*, 140, 143.

¹¹³⁵ Carley, "The Politics of Anti-Bolshevism," 187; Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 89, 93-95, 99, 102, 114-115.

¹¹³⁶ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 132.

Mission in the Caucasus, Emile August Corbel, reported that the North Caucasian native resistance was prepared to start operations in Daghestan and Chechnya. Corbel believed that the Mountain insurgency was well-organized and could seriously hinder the Communists' goals in Russia proper as well as hamper their designs on Transcaucasia and Western Asia.¹¹³⁷ Around this time, the North Caucasian leaders placed their hopes in the French, repeatedly asking them for support, though as a June letter by a Circassian from Turkey named Ismail Berkok emphasizes, they maintained the ultimate goal of "full freedom".¹¹³⁸ The leaders of the Azerbaijani resistance centered around Ganja also approached the French in June. Strangely, it was immediately afterwards that one of their main leaders, Xan Xojskij, was murdered in what some contemporaries believed was a political assassination aimed at crippling the Azerbaijani defense effort.¹¹³⁹

Apparently convinced of the North Caucasians' capabilities, and considering Vrangeli was planning a campaign to recover the Kuban with the help of the Cossacks, over the summer the French representatives in the Caucasus repeatedly asked Paris for weapons and support for the Mountaineers to be sent by way of Georgia.¹¹⁴⁰ Although the North Caucasian leaders expressed their willingness to cooperate with the Cossacks and Vrangeli, setting up a special committee headed by Kotsev for this very purpose, they also insisted that Vrangeli officially recognize their independence and inform the Allies directly.¹¹⁴¹ Their "stubbornness" on this matter was surely inspired by worries about a repeat of their experience with Denikin and the British. And when Vrangeli showed his true colors in various statements making it clear that he would compel the Cossacks to submit and expected the native North Caucasians to remain within Russia,

¹¹³⁷ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 88-89.

For a picture of Lieutenant-colonel Corbel, head of the French Military Mission to the Caucasus, see http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ulyse/notice?id=FR_ANOM_31Fi70-605.

¹¹³⁸ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 90-92.

¹¹³⁹ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 92-93.

¹¹⁴⁰ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 93-95; Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars*, 167.

¹¹⁴¹ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 88-89, 93-96.

the Mountaineer representatives refused to consider further the possibility of cooperation with him.¹¹⁴²

The Mountaineer socialists' attitude towards Vrangeli was reflected in *Volnyj gorets*, which on 9 August published an article explaining that even though the general had learned from some of Denikin's mistakes, the essence of the White movement remained the same. It reads,

“We know that Vrangeli's agents are trying to use the oppositional mood of the mountain masses in the interests of the Crimean movement. We think that whatever they are doing, it is bad for the Mountaineers in realizing the idea of the independent Mountain republic... The Mountain democracy does not need the Bolsheviks or the Vrangelites. The Mountain democracy must find the internal strength of its own peoples and in brotherly unity with the Caucasian peoples. However slow and difficult the path, it is the only one that can provide a guarantee against a tough disappointment in the future.”¹¹⁴³

At *Volnyj gorets*, they were also suspicious of Vrangeli's social-economic reforms.¹¹⁴⁴ It bears mentioning that the imperious Russian general likewise managed to aggravate some Cossacks. Despite the Cossack atamans agreeing to subordinate themselves to Vrangeli and accept what was essentially limited autonomy in a future unitary Russian state, not all Cossacks approved of their decision.¹¹⁴⁵ Representatives of the Terek Cossacks' democratic contingent were so upset with this decision that they even went

¹¹⁴² “Obedinenie kazakov” (Unification of the Cossacks), *Volnyj gorets* 50 (23 August 1920); Mamulia, “Forgotten Ghazavat,” 96-98.

¹¹⁴³ “Nash put” (Our path), *Volnyj gorets* 48 (9 August 1920).

«Нам известно, что агенты Врангеля пытаются использовать оппозиционное настроение горских масс в интересах крымского движения. Мы считаем какую-бы то ни было работу агентов Врангеля среди горских народов вредной для борьбы горцев за осуществление идеи независимой горской республики... Горской демократии не нужны ни большевики, ни врангельцы. Горская демократия должна почерпать силу внутри собственных своих народов и братском единении с демократией кавказских народов. Как бы не был медлителен и тернист этот нуть, только он один гарантирует в будущем от тяжелых разочарований.»

¹¹⁴⁴ Dzhambulat, “Uspexi Vrangelja” (Vrangeli's success), *Volnyj gorets* 51 (30 August 1920).

¹¹⁴⁵ Peter Kenez, *Red Advance, White Defeat*, 296-297; “Kozachja demokratija i Vrangeli, Beseda s I. P. Timoshenko” (Cossack democracy and Vrangeli, Conversation with I. P. Timoshenko) and “Poslednija vesti, Soveshanie Terskix kazakov i gortsev” (Latest news, Meeting of the Terek Cossacks and the gortsy), *Volnyj gorets* 52 (6 September 1920).

Timoshenko was chairman of the Supreme Krug of the Don, Kuban and Terek and chairman of the Kuban Kraevaja Rada.

to meet with the North Caucasian leaders and struck a deal whereby they could enter into the Mountain Republic.¹¹⁴⁶

In the end, the French investment in Vrangeli backfired since the general failed to accomplish anything. His famous landing operation on the shores of the Black Sea started with great optimism in mid-August to end disastrously by the first week of September.¹¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Mountain insurgency was just beginning to pick up steam. It was at this time that Imam Shamil's young grandson Said Shamil arrived in Tiflis to help the Mountaineers fight the Reds. He too refused to cooperate with Vrangeli unless the general treated the North Caucasians as equals and formally recognized their independence.¹¹⁴⁸ The Daghestani anti-Communist uprising then began in earnest in September 1920.¹¹⁴⁹ Along with Said bek, who was perhaps more a symbolic figurehead for certain demographics than a serious leader, the insurgency's leadership was a mix of conservative clerics like Nazhmutdin Gotsinskij and conservative officers like Kajtmas Alixanov.¹¹⁵⁰ These were accused by leftist patriots of being motivated by their petty grudges, and they likely did have some motivations related to protecting their private property, but this rightist resistance too advertised their goal as being national liberation, operating under the slogan "National Liberation and *Shariat* State".¹¹⁵¹ This

¹¹⁴⁶ "Poslednija vesti, Soveshanie Terskix kazakov i gortsev" (Latest news, Meeting of the Terek Cossacks and the gortsy), *Volnyj gorets* 52 (6 September 1920).

¹¹⁴⁷ Kenez, *Red Advance, White Defeat*, 298-230; "Poslednija vesti. Desant Vrangelja na Kubani" (Latest news. Vrangeli's landing in the Kuban), *Volnyj gorets* 50 (23 August 1920).

¹¹⁴⁸ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 101-102, 104-105.

¹¹⁴⁹ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 103; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 134; Al. Todorskij, *Krasnaja Armija v gorax: Dejstvija v Dagestane* (The Red Army in the Mountains: Activities in Daghestan) (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Voennyj Vestnik," 1925), 55-57.

¹¹⁵⁰ Ax., "Nashe otnoshenie k dagestanskomu vozstaniju" (Our attitude towards the Daghestani uprising), *Volnyj gorets* 65 (6 December 1920); Marie Bennigsen Broxup, "The Last Ghazawat: The 1920-1921 Uprising," in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, ed. Marie Bennigsen Broxup (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 122-123; Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 103; Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (C. Hurst: London, 1985), 25; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 134; Todorskij, *The Red Army*, 55, 57.

¹¹⁵¹ Bennigsen Broxup, "The Last Ghazawat," 115, 123; Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 109.

goal seems affirmed in a June letter from the Daghestani Alixanov to the Georgian Gegechkori in which the officer shared his evaluation of any form of Russian rule. He wrote,

“The bloody chaos which first the Volunteers and then the Bolsheviks brought into the North Caucasus plunged a people of Daghestan, the Avars, into a vicious circle. The influence of Bolshevism has captured only the lowlands of Daghestan and fortified itself along the coast of the Caspian Sea. Among us, the highlanders of Daghestan, there have also appeared Bolsheviks, but they could not put down deep roots since we, gortsy, especially the Avars, perfectly understood that both under the mask of the “Volunteers” and the mask of Bolshevism lurked the desire to gather back together and unite the old Russia, in other words the Russians came and are coming to us with the open or hidden slogan—“United and indivisible Russia”.¹¹⁵²

Kicking off around the border with Georgia, the struggle between the Reds and the rightist resistance centered around the besieging and liberation of three key forts in Daghestan—Botlix, Gunib and Xunzhax—and the control of surrounding areas.¹¹⁵³ The rebels saw the liberation of Chechnya to be essential too since its lowland areas would supply them with grain, so Said bek was placed directly in charge of military operations there.¹¹⁵⁴ Although Tsalikov claimed the Mountain “democracy” turned neither right nor left but wanted an independent democratic republic, the right-left divide in Mountain society was reflected again in the 1920 rebellion. The more right-wing,

¹¹⁵² S. M. Isxakov, *Grazhdanskaja vojna v Rossii i musulmane: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (The civil war in Russia and the Muslims: A collection of documents and materials) (Moscow: Tsentr strategicheskoi konjunktury, 2014), 537.

«Докладная записка начальника Аварского округа Дагестанской области полковника К. Алиханова Е. П. Гегечкори»

«Кровавый хаос, который внесли на Северный Кавказ сначала добровольцы, а затем большевики, ввергли народ Дагестана, аварцев, в заколдованный круг. Влияние большевизма охватило только плоскостной Дагестан и укрепилось по побережью Каспийского моря. К нам, горцам Дагестана, также явились большевики, но пустить глубоко корни не смогли, так как мы, горцы, и в особенности аварцы отлично учли, что как под маской «доброволии», так и под маской большевизма таилось и таится стремление к собиранию и объединению бывшей России, т. е. к нам приходили и приходят русские с явным и скрытым лозунгом — «Единая и неделимая Россия».

In this letter, Alixanov actually asked in the name of the Avars for Georgia to annex the territories populated by them.

¹¹⁵³ Bennigsen Broxup, “The Last Ghazawat,” 123; Mamulia, “Forgotten Ghazavat,” 109; Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 134; Todorskiĭ, *The Red Army*, 55-60.

¹¹⁵⁴ Todorskiĭ, *The Red Army*, 134. Compare with Mamulia, “Forgotten Ghazavat,” 83, 88, 90-91, 106.

conservative essence of the anti-Communist resistance in Daghestan seems to have had much to do with why the democratic wing of native politicians at *Volnyj gorets* verbally opposed fighting the Communists. As Tsalikov wrote in December,

“Various sheikhs and hajis joined Nazhmutdin Gotsinskij. It is interesting to note that most of them were people who, in the past, held a pro-Denikin orientation despite their commitment to the Sharia... Our attitude towards this kind of fight without a definite political program was always negative. Moreover, we consider such a fight against the Bolsheviks to be senseless and criminal.”¹¹⁵⁵

Tsalikov claimed that the leaders of the Daghestan rebellion had no definite political program and were adventurers leading the people into a suicide mission.¹¹⁵⁶ However, it is interesting that Gotsinskij and company appear to have been operating on the basis of widespread popular support; Gotsinskij himself claimed that he did not want to fight the Reds but the people asked him to do so.¹¹⁵⁷ This suggests that whether the resistance against the “northern invaders” leaned to the left (led by Akushinskij) or right (led by Gotsinskij), there was consistently a significant base of support for leaders appealing to the cause of self-defense and self-determination or national liberation. The common folk’s motivation to resist can surely be explained away as based in frustration with the crude, cruel and insensitive treatment they received from the Volunteers and Communists, but resentment against such mistreatment can just as easily be a reason for elemental explosions of “unconscious” violent resistance as a reason for regular people to want their own country and be willing to fight for it. These motivations are not mutually exclusive.

The fighting in Daghestan started off strong with the besieging of the Gunib and Xunzax fortresses in early September and much of mountainous Daghestan quickly

¹¹⁵⁵ Ax., “Nashe otnoshenie k dagestanskomu vozstaniju” (Our attitude towards the Daghestani uprising), *Volnyj gorets* 65 (6 December 1920).

«За Нажмутдином Гоцинским потянулись разные другие шейхи и хаджи. Интересно __метить то, что это в большинстве были лица, в прошлом, несмотря на свою «приверженность к шариату»,» придерживавшиеся ориентации на Деникина.»

¹¹⁵⁶ Ax., “Nashe otnoshenie k dagestanskomu vozstaniju” (Our attitude towards the Daghestani uprising), *Volnyj gorets* 65 (6 December 1920).

¹¹⁵⁷ Marshall, *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*, 132.

went into the hands of the resistance.¹¹⁵⁸ The insurgents then took Arakan, gaining control of the Andi, Avar and Gunib districts.¹¹⁵⁹ Although the Reds restored communications with the Red defenders of Gunib and Xunzhax, they were defeated at Arakan, and Gunib and Xunzhax were surrounded again by late November.¹¹⁶⁰ By late fall, when Vrangeli's army was isolated in the Crimea and it was clear the resistance in Daghestan was serious, the White Russian military commanders' representatives finally agreed to respect the Mountaineers' wish to organize their political life on the basis of self-determination. However, Vrangeli's army would soon suffer its final defeat and evacuate from the Crimea in November 1920, and the Mountain partisan movement would lose its momentum over the winter of 1920-1921. Meanwhile, the Reds reorganized, brought in troops from Azerbaijan and Chechnya and directed their focus on Daghestan.¹¹⁶¹ The Communist forces employed brutal tactics to dissuade the local population from supporting the insurgents, threatening and destroying villages which did not yield conscripts, occupying them one by one and slaughtering or deporting entire villages wherever there was resistance.¹¹⁶²

The chief reason for the Communists' ultimate victory in the northeast Caucasus was the use of overwhelming force and superior weaponry. The Mountaineers were using daggers while the Reds employed armored cars and the extensive use of artillery barrages.¹¹⁶³ Without the promised supply of weapons from the French, and no other substantial international support, besides the limited backing Georgia could provide, the Mountaineers stood little chance of success. Furthermore, since the North

¹¹⁵⁸ Todorskij, *The Red Army*, 65-66.

¹¹⁵⁹ Todorskij, *The Red Army*, 66.

¹¹⁶⁰ Todorskij, *The Red Army*, 74-95.

¹¹⁶¹ Bennigsen Broxup, "The Last Ghazawat," 126-128; Kenez, *Red Advance, White Defeat*, 306-307; Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 104.

¹¹⁶² Bennigsen Broxup, "The Last Ghazawat," 137; Todorskij, *The Red Army*, 125. I think I saw this in *ertoba* too, but I cannot recall where. Let us hope their claim of harming only a few cows is true. Poor cows.

¹¹⁶³ Bennigsen Broxup, "The Last Ghazawat," 141; Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 110-111; Todorskij, *The Red Army*, 102-104, 159, 172-178.

Caucasians had never received the support necessary for resisting Denikin and building up their defenses before the anticipated Red invasion, the Daghestani insurgency was soon surrounded by hostile forces in lowland Chechnya, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Red counteroffensive snowballed over December 1920 and the first few months of 1921, ending with proclamations of victory in mid-March 1921.¹¹⁶⁴ By the time the new French government under Prime Minister Aristide Briand was eager to back Georgia and send weapons into Daghestan, the tide had already turned, and the earliest the French could get weapons to the Caucasus would have been March.¹¹⁶⁵ It is possible that influential Soviet leaders foresaw this potentiality, which encouraged them to rush into Georgia with the Red Army and overthrow Zhordania's government in late February 1921 as a preventive measure.¹¹⁶⁶ With the fall of Georgia, the Caucasus was lost.

¹¹⁶⁴ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 112; Todorskij, *The Red Army*, 102-156.

¹¹⁶⁵ Mamulia, "Forgotten Ghazavat," 113-117.

¹¹⁶⁶ Armenia had been Sovietized in December 1920.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Communist capture of the Caucasus can be interpreted as the restoration of Russian rule over the region in the sense that it was subordinated to a highly centralized power structure based in Moscow that was imposed by Russian arms. At the same time, some Caucasian Bolsheviks, like Stalin and Lavrenti Beria, played outsized roles in shaping the structure, nature and destiny of the Soviet state. Moreover, some of the key actors involved in the Sovietization of the Caucasus were themselves from the region (e.g., Sergo Ordzhonikidze and Nariman Narimanov), and they could not have succeeded without a degree of local sympathy and support.

Therefore, considering the significance of the centralist-decentralist debates in the pre-revolutionary Russian Caucasus, it should be no surprise that the influence of regionalist and federalistic thinking on early Communist visions for the resolution of the national question in the former Russian Empire as a whole and the national-regional question in the Caucasus was blatantly reflected in the constitutional structures of the state and republics they formed: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, 1922-1991), the Russian Soviet Federalist Socialist Republic (RSFSR, 1918-1991), the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR, 1922-1936), the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Mountain ASSR, 1921-1924), and the Azerbaijani and Georgian Soviet Socialist Republics. What must be emphasized, however, is the Caucasian Bolsheviks' ideas and solutions were inspired not only by the debates about regionalism and federalism that were prevalent in the European and Russian revolutionary traditions but also by the distinct and rich Caucasian tradition of political and revolutionary thought.

In the Russian context, the profound impact of federalist thinking on the Soviet and post-Soviet Russian understanding of how to reconcile the right of nations to self-determination and the state's prerogative of preserving its unity and territorial integrity was showcased when the RSFSR was replaced with the *Russian Federation*.¹¹⁶⁷

¹¹⁶⁷ Although the Russian Federation replaced the RSFSR not the USSR, it still replaced the USSR in certain ways like assuming its seat at the United Nations.

Moreover, the continuing impact of the pre-revolutionary centralism versus decentralism debates on the thinking of influential Russian politicians remains observable today and ought to receive a great deal more consideration in light of current events. Three days before the Russian Federation launched its war of aggression against the sovereign state of Ukraine, in an apparent attempt to bring it back under Moscow's control, the Russian president Vladimir Putin gave an official speech in which he blamed the Bolsheviks for the ultimate break-up of the Soviet Union due to mistakes they made when trying to solve the national question during its creation. He said,

“I would like to focus attention on the initial period of the USSR's formation. I believe this is extremely important for us... after the 1917 October Revolution and the subsequent Civil War, the Bolsheviks set about creating a new statehood... Stalin ... suggested building the country on the principles of autonomisation that is, giving the republics... broad powers upon joining a unified state. Lenin criticised this plan and suggested making concessions to the nationalists... Lenin's ideas of what amounted in essence to a confederative state arrangement and a slogan about the right of nations to self-determination, up to secession, were laid in the foundation of Soviet statehood... Lenin's principles of state development were not just a mistake; they were worse than a mistake... This became patently clear after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991... I would like to repeat that the Soviet Union was established in the place of the former Russian Empire in 1922. But practice showed immediately that it was impossible to preserve or govern such a vast and complex territory on the amorphous principles that amounted to confederation. They were far removed from reality and the historical tradition. It is logical that the Red Terror and a rapid slide into Stalin's dictatorship... transformed the formally declared but ineffective principles of government into a mere declaration. In reality, the union republics did not have any sovereign rights, none at all. The practical result was the creation of a tightly centralised and absolutely unitary state. In fact, what Stalin fully implemented was not Lenin's but his own principles of government. But he did not make the relevant amendments to the cornerstone documents, to the Constitution, and he did not formally revise Lenin's principles underlying the Soviet Union... the mine laid at the initial stage to destroy state immunity to the disease of nationalism was ticking... the mine was the right of secession from the Soviet Union... The disintegration of our united country was brought about by the historic, strategic mistakes on the part of the Bolshevik leaders and the CPSU leadership, mistakes committed at different times in state-building and in economic and ethnic policies. The collapse of the historical Russia known as the USSR is on their conscience.”

In short, what Putin is saying is that when the Bolsheviks tried to solve the national question by creating a factually centralized power structure in the Communist Party (and security state apparatus) alongside the legal fiction of a voluntary union of nations, they laid the foundation for the collapse of the Soviet Union, which itself was the

continuation of the Russian Empire, precisely because they granted nations the formal right to leave Russia. It is clear that the Russian Federation's president, who has focused much of his career on subordinating the regions and autonomous republics to the center, thinks a state centralized in both fact and form would have prevented the event of the USSR's collapse, which he has called the "century's greatest geopolitical catastrophe" and a "genuine tragedy for the Russian people".¹¹⁶⁸

The impact of the regionalist and federalist currents of political thought in the European, Russian and Caucasian intellectual traditions also reverberated in the Caucasus well past 1921. The Communists inaugurated their rule over the region with the creation of the short-lived Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Mountain ASSR) and the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR), which lasted through 1936. This is because the Georgian Sergo Ordzhonikidze and his circle of first-generation Bolsheviks saw the Caucasus as a single region, the heir to the Russian Empire's Caucasian Viceroyalty, and believed a federal structure with national republics having autonomous republics and districts inside them would solve the national-regional question there.

The influence of regionalist and federalist thinking also remained strong among the political émigrés, many of whom had played key roles during the revolutionary year of 1917 and the time of the independent republics, 1918-1921. The overarching theme in émigré politics from 1921 through the Second World War was the hope of obtaining outside support (mainly Western) for the liberation of the Caucasus from Soviet rule and for the creation of a regional state, whether in the form of a confederation or federation. There are many interesting details to the story of the Caucasian émigrés and their movement for a united Caucasus, but most significant to the argument of this thesis is the fact that the fault line between the movement's two main rival camps, each

¹¹⁶⁸ Vladimir Putin, "Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation," 25 April 2005, Kremlin, transcript and video, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931>. For the Russian version, see Vladimir Putin, "Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniju Rossijskoj Federatsii" (Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation), 25 April 2005, Kremlin, transcript and video, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931>.

claiming ownership over it, was not along ethno-national or religious lines but ideological.

The émigrés' two rival camps were crystallized around the two competing journals *Prométhée : organe de Défense Nationale des Peuples du Caucase, de l'Ukraine et du Turkestan* (Prometheus: Organ for the National Defence of the Peoples of the Caucasus, Ukraine and Turkestan) and *Kavkaz (Le Caucase): Organ nezavisimoj natsionalnoj mysli* (Kavkaz [Le Caucase]: Organ of independent national thought). The Prometheus group was a mix of Georgian Mensheviks, Baku-based Musavatists (originally socialists) and North Caucasians, some of whom had supported Denikin, whereas the Kavkaz group was a mix of Georgian nationalists, Ganja-based Musavatists (originally federalists) and UAM/Mountain Republic leaders. This alignment corresponds roughly to a centralist-leftist versus decentralist-rightist grouping and, thus, despite all the nuances left untreated here, indicates that the classic divide between proponents of centralism and decentralism with regard to the national question in Russia, which was observable as far back as the student movements of the early 1860s, continued in some form or another through the subsequent decades of émigré political quarrels.

Even in cases where the centralist-leftist/decentralist-rightist separation becomes rather fuzzy (for example, the Baku Musavatists were federalists after 1917 and the pro-Denikin Mountaineer leaders were conservatives), the split's occurrence between different factions of the Caucasian political spectrum (each having a plot point somewhere along the decentralist-centralist/right-left axes) rather than between different national groups serves as further evidence for the existence of a pan-Caucasian identity at this time in addition to the national ones, which were reflected in the different national centers (Georgian, Azerbaijani, North Caucasian and Armenian). An intriguing twist to the persistent centralist-decentralist debate, however, is that while the Prometheus group now clung to the notion of a confederation, the Kavkaz group began promoting federation as a first step towards building a more centralized regional state.

The Armenians did not participate in the émigré movement for a united Caucasus after 1924.¹¹⁶⁹

Evidence of a more spontaneous expression of regional solidarity may be found in certain episodes of local resistance to the Communist takeover between 1921-1924. Although these rebellions have yet to be comprehensively evaluated in the literature, there are clues enough to indicate that there were at least a few attempts at coordination between them. As this dissertation has demonstrated, the leaders of the four Caucasian republics had declined to organize a coherent regional defense strategy during the brief period of independence. Thus, it stands to reason that over 1920-1921 local resistance efforts, despite receiving support from their compatriots in emigration, could only flare up spontaneously and fail in response to the far more coordinated, progressive steps taken by the Soviets to establish their rule over the region as whole.¹¹⁷⁰

Nevertheless, there may have been ties between the Daghestani insurgency of 1920-1921 and the Azerbaijani resistance of around the same time. According to Tadeusz Swietochowski, in the very least, the Daghestani resistance helped to inspire the wave of Azerbaijani resistance which started in late 1920.¹¹⁷¹ Azerbaijani and North Caucasian patriots also helped with the defense of Tiflis in February 1921. On 17 February they established the Azerbaijan-North Caucasian Committee (ANCC), which was recognized by Georgia. The ANCC representative, Gaijdar Bammatorov declared that the committee would serve as a temporary joint government until the republics

¹¹⁶⁹ For more details about the émigré movement for a united Caucasus, see Sarah Slye, "Kavkaz: True Face of the Twentieth Century Quest for Caucasian Liberation and Unification" (master's thesis, University of Arizona, 2011). This thesis covers the rivalry and debates between the Prometheus and Kavkaz groups. It does not cover in detail the rivalries inside of the different national groups.

¹¹⁷⁰ Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 4, *Between Crescent and Sickle: Partition and Sovietization* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), 373-377; Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)* (London: Anglo Caspian Press Ltd., 2008), 318-31; Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 180-183.

¹¹⁷¹ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, 190.

were liberated and a Caucasian confederation created.¹¹⁷² After the Soviet takeover, Georgian patriots set up the clandestine multi-party Committee for the Independence of Georgia in 1922. This committee, intent on liberating Georgia, made efforts to forge ties with other anti-Communist forces in Armenia, Azerbaijan and the North Caucasus though they were thwarted by Soviet intelligence. Perhaps the most interesting episode in the Georgian resistance effort was the rebellion led by Qaixosro Choloqashvili. The Kakhetian prince, with his band of partisans, spent some time in Chechnya, where he vainly hoped to unite the Georgians and Chechens against the Russians.¹¹⁷³ According to Communist Party documents, the famous Chechen sheikh Ali Mitaev also stated that the North Caucasians' goal was to create a free Mountain republic federated with Azerbaijan and Georgia.¹¹⁷⁴

In conclusion, the period of the Russian Revolution and Civil War was the short but crucial juncture in which the politically active elements of the former Russian Empire were suddenly forced to try to solve Russia's volatile national question very quickly under extreme pressure. Informed by the previous decades of revolutionary practice and political debate, and rapidly gaining practical experience in administrative matters and crisis management, political leaders in the Caucasus initially strove to lead their constituencies in the creation of a new democratic Russian republic, a utopian order where they imagined all the former empire's nations and peoples could live together in political harmony, enjoying the fruits of social-economic equalization. Of

¹¹⁷² Mitat Çelikpala, "Search for a common North Caucasian identity: the Mountaineers' attempts for survival and unity in response to the Russian rule," Dissertation for Bilkent University, accessed 16 August 2021, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/52925868.pdf>, 33; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 320-323; David Marshall Lang, *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia* (NY: Grove Press, Inc., 1962), 235.

¹¹⁷³ Jeronim Perovic, "Uneasy alliances: Bolshevik co-optation policy and the case of Chechen Sheikh Ali Mitaev," *Kritika* 15, no. 4 (Fall 2014), accessed 13 April 2022, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A393657284/AONE?u=cambuni&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=5772641f>; "qaquca choloqashvili" (Kakutsa Cholokashvili), NPLG, accessed 27 May 2022, <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/bios/ka/00013070/>; Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 343.

Perovic says in Chechnya. Rayfield says near Chechnya but does not provide a source.

¹¹⁷⁴ Mix. Kaxiani, *Itogi i uroki vystuplenija v Gruzii* (Results and lessons of the uprising in Georgia) (Tiflis: Izdatel'stvo "Sovetskij Kavkaz," 1925), 21; Jeronim Perović, *From Conquest to Deportation: The North Caucasus under Russian Rule* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018)174.

Mitaev apparently denied any ties to the Georgians.

course, hardly anyone agreed about the best way to do this. But the belief was strong that the answers could be found through a democratic process, so, in the Caucasus, people waited for months and months to finally hold the elections to the Constituent Assembly, which happened only after the Bolsheviks ousted the Provisional Government in October 1917. Once the assembly finally convened in early January 1918, however, the Bolsheviks dispersed it forcibly, paving the way for the ultimate questions of legal-political restructuring and social-economic reformation to be decided through blood and fire.

Since it was the Communists who won the Russian Civil War, they were the ones who ultimately imposed their vision for the future of the nations and classes of the former Russian Empire. But whereas the Russian president today sees a tragedy in the fact that the Bolsheviks' USSR was not centralized enough (since he thinks the actual vertical power structure should have been paired with the formal legal structure of a unitary state), perhaps the real tragedy was that the nations imprisoned by Imperial Russia were denied the chance to freely chart their own futures, individually and collectively, and instead were locked up again by the "Socialist imperialists". The Communists worked hard to keep Russia single and indivisible in content if not in form and, notwithstanding the brief interlude between 1918 and 1921 when the Caucasian nations had a chance to declare independence and to attempt to build viable, internationally recognized states, the decentralization of the Russian Empire did not actually take place until the USSR dissolved nearly seventy years later. In fact, one could argue that this decentralization process has yet to reach its logical end since the Russian Federation still clutches the North Caucasus and parts of Georgia securely within its borders.

The particular hostility and bloodiness which has accompanied the decades following the USSR's dissolution in the Caucasus is explained in part by the way the Soviets tried to resolve the national-regional question here. They created a system which served to reinforce identity divisions both structurally and psychologically and in doing so made the contentious border claims and legal status questions that had originally emerged in the Caucasus after February 1917, and subsequently reemerged

at the end of the Soviet Union, even more difficult to resolve through negotiation and compromise than they might have been had other policies been pursued.¹¹⁷⁵ And these conflicts are still unresolved. The Bolshevik legacy paired with the prevailing world order in which the nation-state is the fundamental unit of political legitimacy has made the contradiction between the right of states to territorial integrity and the right of nations to self-determination hard to reconcile peacefully when approached with the zero-sum thinking patterns prevailing on multiple levels, from international to local, since 1991. Western, Russian and Caucasian actors alike have tended to approach the territorial integrity/national self-determination dichotomy through ossified conceptions of identity difference and territorial division which make it next to impossible for one to win without another losing rather than through the more flexible lenses of regional framing and federal or confederal approaches.

This thesis has opened a door to the incorporation of scholars' and analysts' continually improving understandings of the nature and dynamics of the Caucasian nations' historical and existing relationships into more flexible conceptualizations about how to set up constitutional and other institutional frameworks for the arrangement of state and political power in a way that works for all involved parties' mutual benefit and collective advantage despite a past strewn with bad memories, countervailing narratives and contested legal and territorial claims easy to exploit by malevolent or self-interested actors. It has done so by showing it was this very question, how to best solve the national-regional question in the Caucasus, whether within Russia or without it, that burned in the minds of some of the Caucasus' most brilliant and influential politicians and publicists for many decades before and after 1917 and which shaped how they responded to the challenges initiated by the February Revolution and exacerbated by the Russian Civil War. It has presented the basic contours of the

¹¹⁷⁵ See Robert E. Hamilton, "The Post-Soviet Wars: Part I," Foreign Policy Research Institute, 18 December 2017, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/12/post-soviet-wars-part-i/>. Hamilton observes that the "legacies of Soviet ethno-federal policies led to institutionalized identity divisions within some Soviet republics." He then argues that where this institutionalization of identity divisions had taken place, there was a higher likelihood of mobilization around identity during the rapid collapse of the Soviet Union, and violent separatism was most likely to result where such mobilization and associated conflict had emerged due to this institutionalization of identity *and* the West did not intervene but Russia was left to do so (largely because these were places seen as not European).

enduring and extensive debates on the national-regional question in the Caucasus to encourage more exploration into the depth and various angles of the abovementioned (and other) Caucasian activists' and thinkers' long-forgotten discussions surrounding regionalism, nationalism, centralism, decentralism, unitarism and federalism so that contemporary intellectuals and policymakers can mine for ideas yet to be tried and identify mistakes best left unrepeated.

At its core, this thesis has demonstrated that it is both feasible and useful to reconstruct a regional narrative for the Caucasus during the Russian Revolution and Civil War as a complement to the prevailing national narratives. It synthesized data and information found in periodicals, contemporary publications and archival sources, while pulling together a broad array of scattered facts, to illustrate how the different shards of the complicated prism of conflicting national and ideological narratives fit together during this tumultuous and under-researched period, shedding new light through this process on the views and arguments of two largely misunderstood but highly influential political forces in the region: the Georgian National Democratic Party and the North Caucasian patriotic intelligentsia. Finally, this thesis has not only demonstrated that the application of a regional approach to the study of political and military events in the Caucasus is useful for showing how developments were interconnected at the regional scale and how the regional level was tied in to the international, all-Russian, national and local levels between 1917 and 1921 but also that the most important political figures in the Caucasus during this period were consciously attuned to their regional context and repeatedly visited the idea of creating a regional autonomy, federation or confederation.

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*I would like to thank Paul Robinson for sending me his handwritten notes and translation of this document.

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