

SEARCH FOR A COMMON NORTH CAUCASIAN IDENTITY: THE
MOUNTAINEERS' ATTEMPTS FOR SURVIVAL AND UNITY IN RESPONSE
TO THE RUSSIAN RULE

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of
Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

February 2002

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ABSTRACT

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February 2002

Throughout the history, the North Caucasian region has hosted a number of peoples, whose numbers are occasionally limited to some hundreds, and whose mother tongues are quite different from each other. Beyond this ethnic and linguistic complexity, the religious pattern has been an additional factor to complicate the matters. Nevertheless, despite the existence of this great diversity, all the inhabitants of the North Caucasus have come to share the same way of life, traditions, customs, and even the costume dictated by harsh mountain conditions and thus they are unified by broad cultural similarities. It is believed that all these commonalities have created a mode of life, or a common identity encompassing the peoples of the North Caucasus called *Gortsy* or the Mountaineer identity. As a consequence, the Russians define all these peoples of the North Caucasus with the general name of Mountaineer and then it was accepted even by themselves.

These peoples, until the arrival of the Russians to the region, had continued a life in an atomized state and never felt it necessary to form a common, comprehensive organization or state. The feeling of freedom, culture and the

common way of life were transformed to a conscious bond by the emergence of an alien power –the Russians. By the late 16th century, the long-lasting struggle of the Mountaineers with the Russians had begun.

The main concern of this study is, thus, to scrutinize the North Caucasian Mountaineers' long-lasting struggle of establishing North Caucasian identity and independence, inside and outside their homelands. This thesis, which aimed to analyze the stages of this struggle, intends to be the first comprehensive study on the North Caucasian struggle of independence in this length.

Keywords: North Caucasus, Mountaineers, Mountain Republic, Union.

ÖZET

MÜŞTEREK BİR KUZEY KAFKASYALI KİMLİĞİ ARAYIŞI: DAĞLILARIN RUS HAKİMİYETİ KARŞISINDA VAROLUŞ VE BİRLİK MÜCADELESİ

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Şubat 2002

Kuzey Kafkasya, tarih boyunca, dilleri ve etnik yapıları birbirinden farklı çok sayıda halka ev sahipliği yapmıştır. Bölgenin dini yapısı da bu farklılığa değişik bir boyut kazandırmış ve karmaşık bir toplumsal yapının oluşmasına katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu karmaşık durum ve birbirinden farklı etnik grupların varlığına rağmen Kuzey Kafkasya halkları, zorlu coğrafi koşullar tarafından şekillendirilen benzer yaşam tarzları, gelenek, örf ve adetleriyle ve hatta benzer giyim biçimleriyle ortak bir kültür çerçevesinde benzeşmektedirler. Bu benzerliklerin, *Gortsy* ya da Dağlı olarak nitelendirilebilecek olan ve Kuzey Kafkasya'nın tüm halklarını kapsayan bir ortak kimlik yarattığına inanılmaktadır. Bu çerçevede Kuzey Kafkasya halkları Ruslar tarafından Dağlı Halklar olarak adlandırılmış ve bu, Kuzey Kafkasyalılar'ın kendileri tarafından da benimsenmiştir.

Bu halklar, Ruslar'ın bölgeye gelişlerine kadar, herhangi bir bütüncül yapıya da devlete ihtiyaç duymadan dağınık bir biçimde varlıklarını sürdürmüşlerdir. Yabancı bir güç olarak Ruslar'ın Kuzey Kafkasya'ya sızmalarıyla birlikte

özgürlük, ortak kültür ve yaşam tarzı gibi kavramlar ortak bir kimliğin ve bilincin yaratılmasının unsurları olarak önem kazanmışlardır. Böylece 16. Yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren Dağlıların uzun soluklu özgürlük ve kimlik mücadelesi başlar.

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı da Kuzey Kafkasya halklarının, ister vatan topraklarında olsun ister sürgünde, bu uzun soluklu kimlik ve dolayısıyla özgürlük mücadelelerini incelemek ve devamlılıkları ortaya koymaktır. Bu çerçevede bu çalışma, mücadelelerin tüm safhalarını kapsayan ilk kapsamlı çalışma olmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kuzey Kafkasya, Dağlılar, Dağlı Cumhuriyeti, Birlik.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the preparation of this thesis I have been fortunate to have the assistance of a number of people and institutions, and now is the time to convey my appreciation. They all deserve my special gratitude.

First of all, I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to Professor Ali İhsan BAĞIŞ who helped me patiently in developing my academic mind and supported me virtually at all my difficult times. I also owe a lot to my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Hakan Kırımlı. His firm support and guidance made the conclusion of this thesis possible. My heartfelt thanks for their passionate encouragement and support in my research pursuit. I also thank to Professor Norman STONE, Professor Dr. Erol TAYMAZ, and Assistant Professor Dr. Hasan ÜNAL for their kind and expert critiques on my thesis.

Thanks are also due to Sefer BERZEG for his support. I have benefited greatly from conversations with him. I also owe similar debts to Muhittin ÜNAL and KAFDER, KAFKAS VAKFI and ŞAMİL VAKFI and their staff.

I am grateful to American Research Institute in Turkey contributed to the realization of this thesis with the scholarship that they provided.

Lastly, a thankful hug to my wife, Özlem, for her kind and enduring attitude and support to my research. She deserves more than usual thanks. It goes without saying that the responsibility for the completed work is entirely my own.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I: THE NORTH CAUCASUS, THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE AND THE NEED FOR UNIFICATION.....	6
1-THE NORTH CAUCASIAN GEOGRAPHY	7
2-ETHNIC AND LINGUISTIC FORMATION	11
3-THE RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE	15
4-THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE	21
5-THE POLITICAL MAKE UP	26
6-THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE.....	29
7-THE NATIVE REACTION: EMERGENCE OF THE ‘MURIDIZM’	33
8-RE-EMERGENCE OF THE MURIDIZM	38
9-TOWARDS THE SOVEREIGN STATE: THE NORTH CAUCASIAN IMAMATE.....	41
CHAPTER II: RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NORTH CAUCASIAN MOUNTAIN REPUBLIC.....	59
1-FROM REVOLUTION TO REVOLUTION: FEBRUARY-DECEMBER 1917	59
<i>A-The First Congress of the Peoples of the North Caucasus.....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>B-The Second Congress.....</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>C-Cossacks and the Mountaineers</i>	<i>72</i>
2-FROM CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT: NOVEMBER 1917-MARCH 1918	74
<i>A- The Bolsheviks</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>B-Volunteer Army (Dobrovol’cheskaia Armiia).....</i>	<i>81</i>
<i>C-Turkish Policy towards the Caucasus.....</i>	<i>83</i>
3- INDEPENDENCE: APRIL 1918- NOVEMBER 1918.....	87
<i>A-The Conference of Trabzon.....</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>B-Bicherakhov and the British Forces.....</i>	<i>95</i>
4- THE END OF THE NORTH CAUCASIAN REPUBLIC: DECEMBER 1918- MAY 1919.....	104
CHAPTER III: THE FOUNDATION OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE ACTIVITIES IN EXILE	114
1- THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVIET POWER.....	114
2- POLITICS IN EXILE	120
<i>A- The Union of Caucasian Mountaineers</i>	<i>125</i>
<i>B- The Caucasian Independence Committee in Turkey.....</i>	<i>128</i>
<i>C- Prométhée and the Amalgamation of Exiles.....</i>	<i>131</i>
<i>D- The Free Caucasian Mountaineers People Party.....</i>	<i>133</i>
3- CREATING A NATION?.....	136
4- COMMON LANGUAGE	141
5- CAUCASIANS IN GENERAL: CAUCASIAN INDEPENDENCE COMMITTEE.....	151
6- CAUCASIAN CONFEDERATION PACT AND THE OPPOSITION.....	156

7- THE TURN OF EVENTS.....	160
8- THE WORLD WAR II AND THE NORTH CAUCASIAN EMIGRES	166
CHAPTER IV: THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND REEMERGENCE OF UNITY.....	175
1- PERESTROIKA AND GLASNOST’	178
2- THE RISING GEORGIAN NATIONALISM, ABKHAZIA AND THE FORMATION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLES OF THE CAUCASUS	182
3- THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSEMBLY	187
4- FROM ASSEMBLY TO THE CONFEDERATION.....	191
5- ACTIVITIES OF THE CONFEDERATION.....	197
6- THE SPLIT: FROM CONFEDERATION OF THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLES OF THE CAUCASUS TO THE CONFEDERATION OF CAUCASIAN PEOPLES	200
7- THE COSSACK FACTOR AND THE CPC	211
8- INCREASING RUSSIAN ACTIVITY	216
CHAPTER V: REGIONAL DISPUTES AND THE CONFEDERATION.....	221
1- THE GEORGIAN-SOUTH OSETIAN CONFLICT	224
2- THE INGUSH-OSETIAN PROBLEM	233
3- THE CONFLICT AND THE CONFEDERATION	237
4- THE ABKHAZ-GEORGIAN CONFLICT	250
5- CONFEDERATION AND THE ABKHAZ CONFLICT	254
6- THE CHECHEN STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND SEEKING FOR A UNITED FRONT.....	268
CONCLUSION.....	280
BIBLIOGRAPHY	301
APPENDICES	322
LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE	323
POPULATION OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS (1897 RUSSIAN CENSUS)	325
POPULATION OF NORTH CAUCASIAN PEOPLES (1926, 1959, 1970, 1989).....	326
SLAVIC POPULATION IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS.....	327

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, an attempt has been made to look into the common identity building process of the native peoples of the North Caucasus. The identity building process normally requires various factors, such as common religion, language, geography, common history and sometimes a working economic network. In the case of the North Caucasus, however, these factors sometimes play a role, while some other times they do not.

The point here to be borne in mind is that the history of the region, as well as the social structure, is quite *sui generis*. Throughout history, the region has hosted a number of peoples, whose numbers are occasionally limited to some hundreds, and whose mother tongues are quite different from each other. The example of Dagestan, the eastern part of the North Caucasus, with more than 30 ethno-linguistic groups can give a clue to a reader on the structure of the region.

It is interesting to note that although the region changed hands several times, the outsiders (such as Sassanian, Golden Horde, Crimean and etc.) hardly interfered with the traditional law and order. And the Ottoman rule over the region was no exception: it scarcely made any attempt to alter the traditional rule.

Despite the existence of great ethno-linguistic diversity, all the inhabitants of the North Caucasus shared the same way of life, traditions, customs and even the costume determined by harsh mountain conditions and thus they unified by broad cultural similarities.

It is also believed that all these commonalities created a mode of life, or a common identity encompassing the peoples of the North Caucasus called *Gortsy* or

the Mountaineer identity. In line with that all these peoples of the North Caucasus defined with the general name of Mountaineer by the Russians and then it was accepted even by themselves.

The peoples of the North Caucasus, however, had continued a life in an atomized state. This atomized peoples and structures never felt it necessary to form a common, comprehensive organization or the State. Until the 16th century tribe was the main source of identification among the peoples of the North Caucasus and in this period the most widespread form of settlement was a village that comprised mainly of one tribe. This diffused structure was only strengthened the particularistic nature of the North Caucasus.

Beyond the establishment of some loose alliances, there was no comprehensive body or the state in the North Caucasus. Peoples continued their lives within their own domains, mainly the small villages, without a need of establishing a common organization, state, or like. Later, in time, because of the economic and legal relationships, and of security concerns, more comprehensive settlements, or rural communes comprised of several tribes began to form. These bodies, however, not permanent political formations and thus did not caused the emergence of the feeling of belonging to the same organization or the body.

The feeling of freedom, culture and the common way of life were turned into a conscious bond by the emergence of an alien power: the Russians. By the late 16th century, the North Caucasus emerged as the main target for the Russian expansion. The Russians endeavoured to establish firm and centralised administration, which soon caused havoc in terms of the survival of the traditional system.

The natives were quick to put up strong resistance. The Russians, on the other hand, who were basically at the head of a centralised state of their own, did their best to shake and destroy the existing system, which they considered a potential threat to the maintenance of their rule. With the outbreak of the struggle of the natives to push the Russians out, the Pandora's box had been opened. Indeed, hardly any outsider would have predicted that from the 19th century onwards, the region would become plagued with waves of struggles, mostly fought in the name of independence by the natives, and violence committed by the Russians.

This process of Russian expansion and consolidation took more than two centuries and created a more conscious motive and strengthened the feelings of solidarity among Mountaineers. Thus the history of common struggle against the Russian forces took its shape in this period.

The initial power or the driving force, which took the above-mentioned commonalities and turned them to the more-conscious and indispensable components of North Caucasian struggle and identity was the Islam. Islam, through the guidance of *Naqshbandi tariqat* took the lead and organized the peoples of the North Caucasus in one and consolidated idea of common front. By this time, Islam against a common enemy, i.e. Russians became one of the most important components of the North Caucasian identity.

Being aware of the differences between the North Caucasian peoples, *tariqats* and its leaders were aimed at the creation of a common ground that defined and determined by Islam. This common ground strengthened by the idea of *ghazavat* and turned into a all-comprehensive idea of struggle. In this struggle, the *Imams*,

under the name of *Muridism* bridged the gap between the ‘political’ and ‘spiritual’ *Naqshbandiya* and merged the two into a united movement.

From this ground, the North Caucasian peoples, for the first time in their history established a unified North Caucasian State encompassing mainly Dagestan and Chechnya and nominally the Circassian lands. Despite the following exiles, deportations and mass killings in their history, in pursuit of their independence, the Mountaineers created a common history of struggle and in line with it shaped distinct North Caucasian tradition of life and identity. Thus it is the aim of this work to trace the emergence and consolidation of this ‘common identity’ among the peoples of the North Caucaus by following the course of these struggles. To achieve this end, the detailed study of late 19th centruy became necessary but not sufficient.

The main concern of this study is, thus, to scrutinize the North Caucasian Mountaineers’s long-lasting struggle of independence, inside or outside their homelands. This thesis, which aimed to analyze all those episodes of the struggle, intends to be the first comprehensive study on the North Caucasian struggle of independence in this length. From the methodological point of view, this case study is designed as a historical-comperative research using qualitative data from primary and secondary sources. During the evaluation process of the data, maps, charts, and tables will be used as an additional evience to increase reliablity and validity. In order to show whether the continuity does exist or not, the utilization of a huge amount of material was required. Thus the major impediment in making

comprehensive and detailed study in this field is emerged at that point: the discouragingly scattered nature of the relevant source material.

To accomplish the primary aim, the study is divided into two six chapters. As an introductory part, the first chapter discusses the scope and primary objective of the study. The second chapter, beyond the geographical, religious and ethnolinguistic characteristics of the region, underlines the emergence and the consolidation of above mentioned common Mountaineer identity. In relation with that, the process of Russian expansion and the politization of Islam will also be analyzed. The second chapter, in continuation of the initial period, discusses the re-emergence of the independence movement following the February and October 1917 Russian Revolutions. In this period, comparing with the earlier period, the external powers mainly the Ottomans, Germans and then the British participated in the course of events and affected the Mountaineers' and their Independent States' destiny. In the fourth chapter consolidation of Soviet power and the emergence of the emigrants and their movements in Europe is discussed. Far from their homeland, these groups tried to shape a North Caucasian identity in exile. They published a bulk of literature and established close contacts with the foreign powers. The fifth and sixth chapters explain Phoenix-like revival of a distinct North Caucasian identity and unity, after the collapse of 70 years long Soviet rule. In 1989, the North Caucasians put their classic demand once more but this time under different circumstances and world. Finally, the conclusion chapter is devoted to the overall analysis of the conflict.

CHAPTER I

THE NORTH CAUCASUS, THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE AND THE NEED FOR UNIFICATION

The Caucasus, the name used from the earliest times, for the chain of the mountains, has at all times been a point where the civilizations of Christianity and Islam or East and West met and mingled. This exceptional geographical situation has always given the Caucasus a role, which has transcended its borders. The region is situated between the two seas and two continents, at the junction of historical trade routes. Thus in each and every period of history, the Caucasus witnessed the passing of peoples and civilizations.

The main chain of the Caucasian mountains, which stretches for approximately 1,100km from the Taman Peninsula in the Black Sea in the north-west to the Apsheron Peninsula in the Caspian Sea in the south-east, divides the area into two: the South (or the Transcaucasus) and the North Caucasus. Currently, the South Caucasus is divided between the three sovereign states of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, while the North Caucasus, populated by numerous ethnic and linguistic groups, is divided into several distinct administrative units within the Russian Federation.

This present work deals primarily with the North Caucasus. For the purpose of this study, the North Caucasus is defined, geographically, as the area included within the present borders of the North Caucasian autonomous republics¹ and

¹ From the west towards the east Adygea, Karachay-Cherkessiya, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Osetia or Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya or Ichkeriya, and Dagestan.

Krasnodar and Stavropol *Krais*, where the mainland Russia can be said to begin in the north. For the southern borders of the North Caucasus, it is very difficult to determine the exact demarcation line. While, the Transcaucasian Republics constituted an administrative border, historically and ethnically, the areas along the southern slopes of the Great Caucasus mountain chain inhabited by the Abkhaz, South Osetians (currently in Georgia), Tats and Lezgins (currently in Azerbaijan) are also included.

1-The North Caucasian Geography:²

The Caucasus is essentially a mountain region and the meaning of the term itself reflects this. According to the Encyclopedia of Islam the word Caucasus or ‘*kabk*’ may be derived from the Middle Persian word ‘*kāfkāh*’ which means ‘the mountain of ‘*Kāf*’ (or *Qaf*). In Firdawsi we find the Caucasus called ‘*kūh-i kāf*’. The Turks, of the same origin, called the region the ‘*Kavkaz*’ or ‘*Kafkas*’.³ Similarly, according to Karl Menges, this name is not of Caucasian origin. The region, which was known to the ancient Greeks and thus to the entire West by the name ‘*Kaukasos*’, from which comes the Latin Caucasus, adopted by all other

² For a detailed description of the geography of the Caucasus in general, and the North Caucasus in specific see Karl H. Meyers, “Geographical Setting” in Tibor Halasi-Kun and et al., 1956. *The Caucasus*, New Haven: Columbia University Language and Research Center, 17-263. T. Halasi-Kun, “The Caucasus: An Ethno-Historical Survey,” 1963. *Studia Caucasica*, 1, The Hague: Mouton & Co. Ronald Wixman, 1980. *Language Aspects of Ethnic Patterns and Processes in the North Caucasus*, Chichago: The University of Chichago, Department of Geography, 45-56. W.E.D. Allen and Paul Muratoff, 1953. *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on The Turco-Caucasian Border, 1828-1921*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3-21; John F. Baddeley, 1999. *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, Surrey: Curzon Press, xxi-xxxviii.

³ See E. van Donzel and et al., 1978 *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. IV, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 341-352. Also see Meyers, 20.

European languages. This word, he pointed out, may well be derived from the ancient Persian '*Krau-kasis*' which means 'ice-covered' or 'ice-resplendent'.

“The seafaring traveller from the West sees these mountains slowly emerging from the sea, their white peaks rising the skies, as the ship advances to the East until it drops anchor in one of the ports of Colchis.”⁴

The topographic, climatic and soil characteristics have all been influential in the establishment of the present complex ethnographic and demographic structure of the North Caucasus. The inhabitants of the region, without any hesitation, voluntarily acquired the name of the Mountaineers to refer to themselves.⁵ As Baddeley put it, “it may be said without exaggeration that the mountains made the men; and the men in return fought with passionate courage and energy in defence of their beloved mountains, in whose fastness, indeed, they were wellnigh unconquerable.”⁶

In geographical terms within the North Caucasus three types of landscape can be distinguished:

- 1) The low coastlines along the Black and the Caspian seas.
- 2) The fertile plains and the low hills.
- 3) High Mountains.

In the north, the slopes of the main chain of the Caucasian Mountains descend to the North Caucasian steppe. The Stavropol plateau divides this fertile plain and the low hills into two somewhat vaguely definable sectors: the western

⁴ Meyers, 19.

⁵ The natives of the North Caucasus called as Mountaineers. This was derived from their living area, that is Dagestan and the mountainous parts of the North Caucasus. *Dag* means mountain in Turkish, moreover some other ethno-linguistic groups also called themselves *Daglı* or *Tavlı*, the Mountaineers, as such Avars called themselves as *Maarulal*, literally means mountain dwellers. Then the Russians inspired from it named those peoples as *Gortsy*, Mountaineers.

⁶ Baddeley, xxi-xxii.

and eastern sectors. The western sector has been called as the Kuban, traditionally, after the Kuban River. The eastern sector is called as the Nogay steppe, after the Nogay nomads who inhabited the region.⁷

The Kuban region, because of its geographic situation, is influenced by the moist climate of the Black Sea basin. It experiences heavy rain and snowfall, and therefore has subhumid to humid climatic conditions. In contrast, the eastern sector is drier and climatically more continental. Because of this agriculture is not possible in much of the Nogay steppes without irrigation, although the western sector has rich grasslands and rich and fertile agricultural potential. In general, there is extensive agricultural activity in the North Caucasian coastlines, plains and low hills. Wheat, corn, sunflowers, sugar beet, tobacco, rice, fruit and vegetables flourish and, even some sub-tropical plants, such as cotton, can be grown. Vineyards and orchards abound in the foothills, while animal husbandry, raising cattle and fine horses, is another important activity in the region.

A high wall-like barrier, the Caucasian Mountain chain stretches from the Black Sea to the Caspian varying from 32 to 180 kilometres in width.⁸

The Caucasus is the highest mountain range in the European continent, and the highest peaks in Europe are to be found there: Elbrus (5633 meters), Diktav (5203 meters), Koştan Tav (5150 meters), and Kazbek (5047 meters) are all higher

⁷ Wixman, 46.

⁸ Related with the width of the Caucasian Mountain chain there were diversified figures. This above-mentioned figures are quoted from Moshe Gammer, 1994. *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan*, London: Frank Cass, 11. Hereafter, *Muslim Resistance*.

than Mount Blanc, the highest peak in the Alps.⁹ Moreover, the entire length of the mountains there are only 4 mountain passes: Daryal, Krestovoy, Klukhor and Mamison. These are found in close proximity to each other.

The Caucasus mountain range can be divided into three distinct sections: the western, central and eastern sections.¹⁰ The western section stretches from the Black Sea to the Elbrus and is densely covered in forest. With approximately 40 peaks over 4,000 meters the central section is the highest part of the Caucasus. The eastern Caucasus, in contrast to the other sections, but in parallel with the plains and foothills, is much drier and more arid than the Caspian side. There are lots of isolated valleys and gorges. All these three sections are above the permanent snow line and hence their nickname is ‘snow’ or ‘ice’ mountains in Russian sources.¹¹

Because of these geographic and climatic conditions, the plains, and the foothills of the North Caucasus, especially the western section was the area where the native or indigenous peoples primarily settled. Thus, while densely populated large number of towns and urban settlements were emerging in the west, there is a relatively low rural density and sparsity of towns mainly in the east and the central parts. In Dagestan, in contrast to the western part of the North Caucasus, only the isolated valleys were populated, and thus compared to the plains and foothills, the mountain region supported a larger population. As a result, the eastern parts of this region remained predominantly a pastoral zone of extensive grazing, with only a small part of the land in cultivation.¹²

⁹ Wixman, 52.

¹⁰ Baddeley, xxii.

¹¹ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 338.

¹² Wixman, 55-56.

All these features caused isolation and great ethnic heterogeneity in the North Caucasus region, specifically in Dagestan.

2-Ethnic and Linguistic Formation:¹³

Ethnically and linguistically the North Caucasian region is one of the most perplexing regions of the world. In the early Greek sources, such as Strabo, stated that the town of Dioskurias, (present day Sukhum) was frequented by people speaking no less than 70 different languages.¹⁴ Timosthanes put the number at 300 and said, “afterwards we Romans conducted our affairs there with the aid of 130 interpreters”.¹⁵ Even in the early Arabic sources, such as in Abu’l Feda Dagestan is named as *Jabal-al-alsun* (the Mountain of the Languages).¹⁶

Modern sources still give varying figures on the number of languages spoken in the region. In Dagestan alone, no fewer than 30 ethno-linguistic groups inhabited the area. Currently, people from the three main different linguistic families are living in the region (see Appendix 1). The people who belong to the Ibero-Caucasian language group, which were named as *Kas* or *Kirkas* (Circas) have inhabited the lowlands and the mountainous parts of the Caucasus since as early as the Palaeolithic period and thus they are considered to be *the* indigenous people in

¹³ Alexandre Bennigsen and Enders Wimbush, 1985. *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide*, London: C. Hurst. Shirin Akiner, 1986. *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, London: Keagan Paul. Amiram Gonen et al. (eds.), 1993. *The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World*, New York: Henry Holt.

¹⁴ Aert H. Kuipers, “Ethnic Groups,” in Tibor Halasi-Kun and et al., *The Caucasus*, 377-8.

¹⁵ Baddeley, xxiv-xxv.

¹⁶ Karl H. Menges, “Human Geography: Distribution of Settlements,” Tibor Halasi-Kun and et al., 211.

the region.¹⁷ Berkok lists the tribes of the ancestors of today's Mountaineers as: Meots, Kerkets, Akhei, Zikhs or Dzikhs, Hanokhs, Basks or Abasks and Sanokhs (western Caucasian or Kirkassian groups); Nakhs, Andellals, Laks, Lezgin, and Kas-Akha (Kas or central and eastern Caucasian groups).¹⁸

The other groups had come to the region later. Long before the Christian era, Indo-European groups, notably the Armenians and some Iranian-speaking groups, began to settle in the southern parts of the Caucasus first. Then up until the 4th and 5th centuries the Animist and Zoroastrianist Persians settled in the territory of the present day Azerbaijan. During the 5th and 6th centuries the Iranian speaking Alans, the ancestors of the Osetians moved into the central North Caucasus and remained in the area until the arrival of the Kipchak Turks in the 11-13th centuries, when they were forced to move into the mountains.

During the 5th and 6th centuries, the Hunnic tribes which admittedly included several Turkic speaking groups began to settle in the region, especially Kuban area and founded the Kingdom of the Greater Bulghar there. At roughly the same time, another group of Turkish speaking Jews, the Khazars moved into the North Caucasian territory and conquered and controlled the northern plain area of Dagestan as far north as the Volga River. These groups mixed with the indigenous

¹⁷ For the early inhabitants of the region see M. O. Kosven, 1961. *Etnografiia i Istoriia Kavkaza: Issledovaniia i Materialy*, Mosow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, Hereafter *Etnografiia*. İsmail Berkok, 1958. *Tarihte Kafkasya*, İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası. Şora B. Noghumuka, 1974. *Adighe-Hâtikhe Çerkes Tarihi*, Dr. Vasfî Gûsar (trns.), İstanbul: Baha Matbaası. Ramazan Traho, 1991. "Circassians," *Central Asian Survey*, 10(1/2), 1-63 and Ronald Wixman, 64-81.

¹⁸ Berkok, 132-146. Also see R. Traho, 1955. "Literature on Circassia and the Circassians," *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 1: 145.

peoples that inhabited the area and it accepted that they formed the present day Balkars and Kumuks respectively.¹⁹

In the 9-10th centuries, with the arrival of another Turkic group, the Pechenegs, the ethnic structure of the North Caucasus became more complex. Although their exact impact on the formation of the ethnic pattern of the North Caucasus is not so clear, together with the large number of newly arrived Kipchak-Turkic dialects speaking nomads, they mixed with the indigenous Caucasian tribes and formed the Karachays.²⁰

As a result, most of the indigenous North Caucasian peoples were being forced to retreat into the mountains. Moreover, with the invasion by the Oghuz speaking Turkics of the southern parts of the Caucasus and Dagestan, and their amalgamation with the native population of the region, the Azeri speaking population of the current time emerged. This endorsed the dominant position of the Turkic speaking populations in the region.²¹

The late comers of the region were the Slavs. The Slavic speaking population of the North Caucasus began to come to the region as late as the 16th century, during which Muscovite Russia began to show some interest in the region. The first Slavs or the chief instruments of Muscovite Russia were the runaway serfs looking for freedom and land of their own. They were called as Cossacks (originally 'Kazak' meaning 'free man' or 'unruly' in Turkic). They established military orders to protect themselves against the Russian State, the nomads and the mountaineers. These earlier Cossacks who settled in the eastern plains area

¹⁹ Wixman, 69-70.

²⁰ Wixman, 71.

²¹ Wixman, 71.

(Grebenskiy, Stavropol and Terek) were Russians, while those who later settled in Kuban in the 18th century were Zaporozhian, i. e. Ukrainian Cossacks.²²

Thus by the 18th century the current ethnic and linguistic make up of the North Caucasian region has more or less been shaped. However, the Russian invasion of the region and the Caucasian Wars, which took place during the mid-19th century, altered the ethnic and demographic position of the native populations of the North Caucasus. Besides the loss in lives due to the war itself, and famine and diseases resulting from it, there was mass emigration especially from the western part of the North Caucasus, to the Ottoman Empire.²³ As the most tragic one, the entire surviving population of Ubykhs, around 30,000, who inhabited the Black Sea coast emigrated to Ottoman lands.²⁴ As a result, the Russian Empire settled large numbers of Slavs in the North Caucasus. After the abolishment of the serfdom in 1861, the *inogorodnye*²⁵ and the landless poor peasants rushed to the region. With the influx of merchants, traders, clerks and immigrant workers

²² For the emergence and the settlement of the Cossacks see Philip Longworth, 1969. *The Cossacks*, New York: Halt, Rinehart and Winston, and Maurice Gerschon Hindus, 1946. *The Cossacks*, London: Collins.

²³ For the numbers of the North Caucasian immigrants, several numbers of sources are given varying figures changing between one and two million. Among these groups, Ubykhs and Shapsugs with the almost entire of their population came first. In addition, a striking numbers of Kabardians, Karachays, and other Circassian people also forced to immigrate. For the settlements of the Circassians on the Ottoman lands see Justin McCarthy, 1995. "Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus," *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims*, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 23-58. Kemal H. Karpat, 1985. "Population Movements in the Ottoman State in the Nineteenth Century," in *Ottoman Populations 1830-1914*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 55-77 and 1980. "The Status of Muslims under European Rule: The Eviction and the Settlement of the Çerkes," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 1: 7-27. Dr. Hayati Bice, 1991. *Kafkasya'dan Anadolu'ya Göçler*, Ankara: Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları. Abdullah Saydam, 1997. *Kırım ve Kafkas Göçleri (1856-1876)*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu. Süleyman Erkan, 1996. *Kırım ve Kafkas Göçleri (1878-1908)*, Trabzon: Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi. N. Berzeg, 1996. *Çerkes Sürgünü: Gerçek, Tarihi ve Politik Nedenleriyle*, Ankara: n.p., and İ. Aydemir, 1988. *Kuzey Kafkasyalıların Göç Tarihi: Muhaceretin 125. Yılı Anısına*, Ankara: n.p.

²⁴ For a comprehensive work related with the Ubykhs Sefer E. Berzeg, 1998. *Soçi'nin Sürgündeki Sahipleri Çerkes-Vubıhlar*, Ankara: Kafkasya Gerçeği.

seeking employment in the oil fields and in the growing towns in the area in the late 19th century, the region demographically became more complicated.

The first census, thus the first data on the populations of the North Caucasus was dated 1897. In this census, the peoples of the Russian Empire were asked to declare their native language and religion to the census takers. Therefore, these first concrete numbers were the numbers of native speakers of the given languages and not necessarily the population of the ethnic group. The peoples of the North Caucasus were asked to declare both their ethnic identity and mother tongue in the Soviet censuses of 1926, 1959, 1970, and 1989, it goes without saying that these censuses reflected the results of the Soviet nationality policy (see Appendix 2).

3-The Religious Structure:²⁶

The overwhelming majority of the Mountaineers are Muslims, but the majority of the Osetians, and 30-50 per cent of the Abkhaz are Orthodox Christians. The great majority of the Muslim population belong to the *Sunni* Islam but, there is a small number of *Shi'is*²⁷ living especially in the southern parts of

²⁵ *Inogorodnye* literally means 'those of other cities', and was used not only as a designation of those Slavs coming in the 19th century, but also of Armenians and Jews who came in to the area as traders and merchants.

²⁶ Alexander Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, 1985. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, London: C. Hurst, hereafter *Mystics and Commissars*. A. Bennigsen and Chantal Quelquejay, 1967. *Islam in the Soviet Union*, London: Pall Mall Press. Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, 1985. *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide*, London: C. Hurst, and also Shirin Akiner, 1986.

²⁷ Small number of Lezgin and Dargin population that are living at the border of Dagestan-Azerbaijan. There is also some small number of Muslim Tats which belongs to the *Twelves Shi'i*.

Dagestan. Two different *madhabs*, or schools of *Sunni* Islam; *Shafi'i*²⁸ and *Hanafi*²⁹ are predominant among these peoples. Despite the repression and persecutions of the Soviet period, a great majority of the North Caucasian peoples preserved the observance of the precepts of their religion, a fact which was significantly helped by the existence of a extensive Sufi network.³⁰

Islam was first introduced to the Caucasus by the Arab invaders in the 8th century. They first conquered the territory present day Azerbaijan and then spread northward into Dagestan. Thus Derbent became a stronghold of the Arab-Muslim caliphate in the Caucasus. Those Arabic invaders, together with the converted Turkic groups, especially the Seljuqs, spread Islam, mainly the *Shafi'i madhab*, among the ancestors of the Lezgins, Laks, Dargins, and Avars. The conversion of the Golden Horde, which was controlling the region at that time, to *Sunni* Islam by Berke Khan strengthened the position of the Islam in the North Caucasus. With the victory of Timur over Toktamış in 1385, the Islamization of the area became inevitable.

Nevertheless, the real turning point in the process of Islamization of the North Caucasus was the 15th century. From this time onwards mostly local agents, especially the Laks (who were converted by the Kumuks) became the most ardent

²⁸ The Avars, Dargins, Kumuks, Laks, Tabasarans, Rutuls, Tsakhurs, Aguls, Kaytaks, Kubachis and some other small peoples of Dagestan

²⁹ Nogays, Kabardians, Chechens, Ingush, Karachays, Abazins, Muslim Abkhaz, Adyges, Balkars and Cherkess.

³⁰ For the preservation and the role of Islam among the peoples of the region during the Soviet period see, Michael Rywkin, 1991. "The Communist Party and the Sufi *Tariqat* in the Checheno-Ingush Republic," *Central Asian Survey*, 10 (1/2): 133-145. Fanny E. B. Bryan, 1992. "Internationalism, Nationalism and Islam," in Marie Bennigsen Broxup and et al. (eds.), *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, London: Hurst & Company, 195-218.

converting forces of Islam through their active participation in Timur's military campaigns. This was recognised in their newly acquired name: *Ghazi-Kumuks*, warriors for Islam. In the late 15th century, the Laks Islamised the peoples of Gidatl, Qarah, Tzunti, Archi and some Avar groups. The process of the Islamisation of Dagestan was at least nominally completed by the late 16th century when the last Dagestani people, the Dido, were converted to Islam by the missionary efforts of the Avar Muslims.³¹

Moreover, by the spread of power of Islamic-Turkic Nogay Hordes to the steppes in the Kuban region and the North Caucasus, the upper classes of the Circassian tribes converted to Islam as early as the 16th century. As a result of these tribes increasing influence the Digors, or the western Osetians, also converted to Islam. Those who accepted Islam were given better land and allowed to resettle onto the plains and thus integrated into Circassian society. The Abaza groups fell under a similar influence and Karachays were forced to move up into the mountains by the Circassians.

Shi'a Islam introduced into the region during the 15th century, initially spread among the Azerbaijanis and then among the other Iranian speaking groups the Tats and Talysh. The increase in Ottoman influence and the power of Crimean Tatars' in the western North Caucasus, in the 16th century was decisive in the systematic spread of the *Sunni* Islam among the Karachays, Balkars, Abkhaz and the other Circassian tribes.

³¹ Wixman, 72-73.

The Islamization process of the North Caucasus was in general concluded with the spread of Islam among the Vaynakh tribes, which began in the 17th century. First of all the Chechen tribes (or *tuqums*) of the Sunja, Aktash, Aksaq and Sulak valleys adopted Islam as their official religion. Then the spread of Islam to the mountain tribes of the Chechens took a century and a half. Only by the second half of the 18th century had Islam become the official religion in virtually all the Chechen tribes. Concurrently, the Islamization of the Ingush started in the second half of the 18th century. Due to their geographical position on the main route between Georgia and southern Russia along the Daryal gorge, the Ingush tribes were, in particular, drawn into the sphere of influence of Christianity. Therefore, the decisive phase of the Ingush conversion to Islam started as late as the early 19th century and was not completed until the second half of the century.

The real power, which concluded the spread of Islam among the entire population of the Caucasus, was the Sufi *tariqats*, the *Naqshbandi* and *Qadiri*, which were introduced to the North Caucasus in the 19th century. Through these movements Islam took the shape of a political movement and began to control the region.

The second most important religion in the North Caucasus is Christianity. In addition to the Russians, among the Mountaineers the Osetians constitute the bulk of the Christian population. In addition, among the Abkhazians, the peoples who belong to Samurzakan tribe are Orthodox Christians.

In the Caucasus, the Armenians were the first nation to embrace Christianity officially in the 4th century.³² Then the Byzantines spread it among the Georgians in the 5th century. From Georgia, Christianity extended into the North Caucasus, to Abkhazia, and the Adyge territories in the 6th and 7th centuries.³³ While the Georgians began to spread Christianity throughout the area of current day Georgia and into the central Caucasus, (roughly contemporary Osetia) the Armenians introduced it into the southeastern Dagestan and among the Udi and Tats of Azerbaijan.

Nevertheless, the Christological controversy divided the Christians in the 5th century. Those who were under strong Byzantine influence followed Byzantium and became Chalcedonic Eastern Orthodox Christians³⁴, whereas the Armenians and the peoples converted by them became Monophysite (Armeno-Gregorian) Christians.³⁵ Thus, in Dagestan, the autocephalous Albanian Monophysite church was established, to which the southeastern Dagestanis, the Udi, and the Christian Tats were attached. However, partly, because of the geographical conditions, which isolated communities and prevented the infiltration of external elements, and partly

³² For the history of Christianity in Armenia see “Armenia, Christianity in,” in F. L. Cross (ed.), 1974. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford Un. Press: New York: 106.

³³ Michel Tarran, 1991. “The Orthodox Mission in the North Caucasus –End of the 18th – Beginning of the 19th Century,” *Central Asian Survey*, 10(1/2): 103.

³⁴ The Fourth Oecumenical Council held in the city of Chalcedon in Asia Minor, nearly opposite Byzantium. At the first meeting, held on 8 Oct. 451, some 500-600 bishops were present, all of them Easterns except two bishops. The Council then drew up a statement of faith, the so-called Chalcedonian Definition, which was accepted by the Oriental Orthodox Churches. According to the Definition the Incarnate Christ is one Person in two Natures and caused the emergence of split within the Christian world. For a detailed information see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*: 315.

³⁵ Monophysitism, in contrast to the Definition of Chalcedon, is a doctrine that in the Incarnate Christ there is only one nature, not two. See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*: 1104-1105.

because of the power of Islam, Christianity could not be effective and spread among the peoples of the North Caucasus.³⁶

The Russians initiated the last attempt, which aimed at the Christianisation of the Mountaineers in the second half of the 18th century. In this activity, the Russian's main agents were the Osetians. Through the 'Osetian Commission', which was established in Mozdok in 1745, Russians achieved limited success. Following it, during the second half of the 19th century, these activities were assumed by 'the Society for the Restoration of Orthodox Christianity' in the Caucasus, but the Russian administration did not succeed in converting a large number of Mountaineers to Christianity.³⁷

The other religion that attracted attention in the region is Judaism. Interestingly, there is a small number of Jews, called Tats or Mountain Jews.³⁸ These people who were escaping from the assaults of the Sassanian kings of Persia, quite probably established a Jewish military colony just south of the present day city of Derbent. They spoke a southwest Iranian language, Tat, as did the Zoroastrian and Armeno-Gregorian Tats. In addition to these groups, the upper classes of the Khazars, who had arrived in Dagestan in 6-7th centuries also adopted Judaism.

³⁶ Wixman, 67-69.

³⁷ In addition to Michel Tarran, see Austin Jersild, October 2000. "Faith, Custom, and Ritual in the Borderlands: Orthodoxy, Islam, and the 'Small Peoples' of the Middle Volga and the North Caucasus," *The Russian Review*, 59: 512-529.

³⁸ For a detailed study on Mountain Jews see Laurent Mallet, 1996. "Bir Kafkas "Tuhaflığı": Dağ Yahudileri ve Tatlar,' *Toplumsal Tarih* 6(36): 21-27.

In brief, despite the existence of several religions from animism to Judaism, Islam is the most comprehensive and deep-rooted religion in the region. It preserved its dynamic position, as the main feature of the North Caucasian identity among the autochthonous peoples of the North Caucasus and strengthened the notion of unity with the help of the *tariqats*.

4-The Social Structure:³⁹

The social structure of the North Caucasian society was based on the clan or tribal system. Although most of the peoples of the North Caucasus have already passed the early stages of the social development, the tribal bonds were influential in the daily life of some peoples of the North Caucasus, at least until the mid-20th century. It was particularly strong among the Vaynakhs, whose the tribal bonds still have a role in determining the social and political relations.⁴⁰

The first concrete information related to the social structure of the North Caucasus went back to the early 15th and 16th centuries which based on Russian and Ottoman documents, and the travellers' books.⁴¹ In that period, the North

³⁹ M. O. Kosven, *Etnografiia*. I. Kh. Kalmykov, 1974. *Cherkesy: Istoriko-etnograficheskii Ocherk*, Cherkessk: n.p. Mekulov, D. H. (eds.), 1991. *Cherkesiia v XIX Veke: Materialy I Kashekhabl'skogo Foruma «Istoriya-Dostoianie Naroda»* Maikop: Adygeisski Ordena Znak Pocheta, hereafter *Cherkesiia*. Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda and Daghestan in the sixteenth century," in Marie Bennigsen Broxup and et al. (eds.), 18-44. Hereafter "Cooptation of the Elites,"

⁴⁰ Jane Ormrod, 1997. "The North Caucasus: Confederation in Conflict," in Ian Bremmer and Roy Taras (eds.), *New States New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 96.

⁴¹ Julius von Klaproth, 1814. *Travels in The Caucasus and Georgia Performed in The Years 1807 and 1808*, London: Henry Colburn. George Leighton Ditson, 1850. *Circassia or A Tour the Caucasus*, London: T. C. Newby. Xavier Hommaire De Hell, 1847. *Travels in The Steppes of The Caucasus*, London: Chapman and Hall. Taitbout De Marigny, 1837. *Three Voyages in The Black Sea to The Coast of Circassia*, London: John Murray. John Longworth, 1996. *A Year Among Circassians (1837-1838)*, for its Turkish translation *Kafkas Halklarının Özgürlük Savaşı (1837-1838)*, trans. by Sedat Özden, Kayseri: rey Yayıncılık.

Caucasian peoples had levels of social development from clanic or tribal to the 'feudal' in which the division of the population was along the patrilineal lines. These patrilineal divisions lie at the basis of the region's political, social, and economic structure.⁴²

At the lowest level of the social fabric, in the North Caucasus, there was an extended family whose members shared common property and joint responsibilities. Closely related extended families formed a clan, and then, as a result of the unification of the clans, the tribes were formed. In general, the North Caucasian tribes were named after a real or putative ancestor, or could bear the name of the most famous man in a tribe or the toponym of its origin.⁴³

During the late 16th and early 17th centuries, only the Kabardians and some of the Circassian groups in the western part of the North Caucasus and the Kumuks in Dagestan developed stratified social structure in parallel with a developed feudal system.

The Kabardians had the most sophisticated social structure. At the top of the pyramid or the social hierarchy, there was a class of prince or *pshi*. The *pshis* and their families have the highest ranking in the society, which was compared to the western barons of the high Middle Ages by Lemerrier-Quellejay.⁴⁴ The children of the *pshi* had the honorific title of *mirza* or *tuma*. The clan of *pshi* did not divide into nuclear families and all the members obeyed the eldest member of the clan. They had lands and serfs collectively. Moreover, inheritance was

⁴² Moshe Gammer, 1995. "Unity, Diversity and Conflict in the Northern Caucasus," in Yaacov Ro'i (ed.), *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, London: Frank Cass, 164. Hereafter Unity.

⁴³ In addition to Gammer, Unity, see Ufuk Tavkul, 1993. *Kafkasya Dağlılarında Hayat ve Kültür*, İstanbul: Ötüken.

⁴⁴ Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejay, 'Cooptation of the Elites,' 25.

devolved from brother to brother not from father to son. These *pshis* had their own clans' fortresses and, therefore, had a comparative amount of power.

Next to the princely family came the *uork* (*verk*) or the gentry. These were the vassals of the princes. This class of gentry can be subdivided into two ranks: the most noble (*tlakotle*) and the less noble (*dezhenugo*). These nobles, most of the time, had a social privilege of establishing ties with a princely family. This social cohesion was secured by a custom of *atalik*, whereby children of princes were given to these nobles to be instructed by them in the military art. In this way, children of the vassals became foster brothers of *pshis*' sons and later, when adults, their brothers in arms.

In the middle of the pyramid there was the most populous class of free peasants or *tlofoqotle* (*Ifekotl*) grouped in *jama'ats*. Next came to the peasants, called *og* and *loganapit*, obliged to perform various chores, and then the slaves, *Pshitli*.⁴⁵

The other Circassian tribes were more primitive and divided compared to the Kabardians. These included the tribes of plains, Bzhedug, Janey, Kemirgoy, Abaza, and Besleney, which had a closer, but less rigid social structure to the Kabardians.⁴⁶ At the top of the social pyramid there was a prince (*pshi*). Then nobles, free peasants, serfs and slaves were placed in the social fabric. In contrast, the Circassian groups that were living in the mountain regions, the Abadzekhs and

⁴⁵ For the social structure and 'classes' in the Circassian tribes see Jabağhi Baj, 1999. *Çerkezler: Kökleri, Sosyal Yaşamları, Gelenekleri*, Ankara: İtalik, 96-113. Leonti Lyulye, 1998. *Çerkesya, Tarihi-Etnografik Makaleler 1857-1862-1866*, transl. by. Murat Papsu, İstanbul: Çiviyazıları.

⁴⁶ See *Uchenye Zapiski: Istoriia i etnografiia*, (vol. IV), 1965. Krasnodar: Krasnodarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo.

Hatukays, had no feudal hierarchy and no gentry but consisted of free peasants, equal in rights, grouped in *jama'ats*.

On the other hand, the other kin of the Circassian groups, the Abazas, had reached a fairly advanced stage of feudal development comparable to the Kabardians.⁴⁷ At the top the social pyramid, there was the prince or rather the clan's chief called *apsha* or *akha*. Next to him, there was the class of the great nobles (*amistadi* or *tawad*) and then the small nobles, vassals of the former *aamista*. Then the free peasants called *ankhayua*, *akavi* or *tefakashau* came. Lower down the social ladder were the freed serfs forced to perform certain chores called *azat-lig* and the serfs (*lig*), and finally comes the slaves (*unavi*).⁴⁸

In the central parts of the North Caucasus, there were the Vaynakh tribes, Chechens and the Ingush. The name Chechen is derived from village Chechen on the Argun River, and those people call themselves *Nokhche* or *Vaynakh*, the Chechen word for people or person. The Ingush received their name from the village of Angushta or Ingusht in the Terek valley, and they call themselves as *Galgay* or *Lamur*.⁴⁹ Within these communities there were no aristocracy. Instead, they were made up of large undivided families and clans whose members considered themselves free, noble, and equal to each other.⁵⁰

The other people of the central North Caucasus, the Osetians compared to the Kabardians had an established stratified social structure although less rigid. At

⁴⁷ Sh. D. Inal-Ipa, "Ob Abkhazo-Adygskikh Etnograficheskikh Paralleliakh," in *Uchenye Zapiski: Istorii i etnografiia*, (vol. IV), 1965. Krasnodar: Krasnodarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 222-246.

⁴⁸ Valeri Beygua, 1990. *Abhazya Tarihi*, transl. Papapha Mahinur Tuna, İstanbul: Asyayın, 49-54.

⁴⁹ R. Traho, 1957 "Literature on Checheno-Ingushes and Karachay-Balkars," *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 5: 76.

the top of the stratification there were the nobles called *aldar* and *badilat*, and then free peasants, (*farsalag*), serfs (*kavsadar*), and slaves.

In the eastern part of the North Caucasus, or the Dagestan, the social structure was widely diversified. Among the peoples of Dagestan only the Kumuks had achieved a very complex society, almost as complicated as that of the Kabardians, represented by a rigid pyramid of social classes upheld by *adat*, the customary law. At the top of the pyramid there was the princely clan; the princes, the khans and their relatives who were called *mirza*, *beg* or *bey* and all those comprised the *Shamkhal*. Then came the middle class, the *chanka*, which comprised the children of members of the princely clan and women, who belonged to the nobility of inferior rank (*chanka* or *uzden*). The third rank called *uzden*, consisted of free noble agricultural workers, vassals of the *Shamkhal*. Below the *uzden* there was a large group of subordinates who were subdivided into several groups. Free, but not noble agricultural workers who made up the mass of the population assembled into the *jama'ats* or communities. The group of serfs, called *cagar* or *rayat*, whose duty to perform certain chores; and finally, at the bottom of the social ladder slaves called *yasir* or *qul*, in most cases Russian and Georgian former prisoners of war, or else purchased in the slave markets.

The other peoples of Dagestan, especially the tribes of the high mountains, had not yet reached the level of development of the peoples of the plains, (mainly the Kumuks in the 17th century). In almost all of these tribes, members of the community were considered as free and equal members in principle. Generally,

⁵⁰ Şamil Mansur, 1995. *Çeçenler*, Ankara: Sam Yayınları, 33-36.

they were grouped into the communities or *jama'ats* ruled by the elders of the community.

5-The Political Make up:

As pointed out above, the tribe was the main source of identification, and the settled agricultural and pastoral North Caucasian tribes were still living mainly in villages, called *aul* in mountainous regions and *yurt* in the lowlands. In 15th and 16th centuries, the most widespread form of settlement was a village that comprised mainly of one tribe. Later, in time, because of the economic and legal relationships, and of security concerns, settlements or rural communes comprised of several tribes named *jama'at* in Dagestan and *tuqum* among the Vaynaxhs, began to form. These rural communes, in late 18th and early 19th centuries became socio-political and territorial entities united by common economic and defence aims, rather than a purely tribal one. In the late 18th century, (especially in Dagestan) there were about 60 communities or principalities with a constantly changing social structure. Moreover, within the same period, from these *jama'ats* began to form loose confederations in case of external threat, mainly from Russian.

By the beginning of the 19th century these *jama'ats* began to develop permanent central political formations. The most powerful among them included the Shamkhalat, the Avar Khanate, the Khanate of Ghazi-Kumuk and the principalities of Kaytak and Tabasaran.⁵¹

⁵¹ For these principalities see Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites," 31-7 and Anna Zelkina, 2000. *In Quest for God and Freedom: A Sufi Response to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus*, New York: New York University Press, 16-20. Hereafter *God and Freedom*.

In almost all *jama'ats* the ultimate authority was vested in the council of elders, which was made up of representatives of each clan and tribe in the commune. Over time, with the expansion of these associations, ruling dynasties came into being. The way in which these dynasties came into being and the titles they used varied from one *jama'at* to another. While in some parts they took the name Khan or Sultan, in others they used the titles of *Maysum*, *Ustmi*, *Shamkhal* or *Qadi*. These central rulers, in parallel with the establishment of their authority, began to remove local rulers by appointing their own agents as governors, mostly named *naib* or *bek*, to the *jama'ats* under their authority, and in turn they formed the local gentry.

The most powerful of these confederation-like structures was the *Shamkhalat* that controlled the northern and northeastern parts of Dagestan including the capital of the *aul* of Ghazi-Kumuk initially, and then Tarku. The *Shamkhalat* population consisted mainly of Kumuks, with a minority of Laks in the mountainous regions, and some Chechen, Avar and Nogay free *jama'ats*, and clans. Nevertheless, as in the case of most North Caucasian confederations, the *Shamkhalat* was divided into smaller parts in the 17th century ruled by *sultans*.

The Avar Khanate, which was made up of the Avars and small Andi and Dido tribes, placed in the high valleys of the Dagestan with its capital in the *aul* of Khunzakh. The rulers of the Khanate had the title of *nutsal* and were chosen from the members of the princely clan and elected by an assembly of elders and gentry. At the end of the 17th century the dignity of *nutsal* became hereditary and with the

decline of the *Shamkhalat*, the Khanate became the most powerful principality of Dagestan.

The other important ruling structure, the Principality of Kaytak, to the south of the Avar Khanate contained a heterogenous population made up of Dargin, Lak, Kaytak, Lezgin and Mountain Jews. The ruler of the Principality had the title of *utsmi* and was the most powerful and respected sovereign of the mountain range.

In the extreme south of the Dagestan, in the high and mid-level valley of the Samur, there was another principality. Two different sovereigns called *masum* and *qadi* governed the principality of Tabasaran. The population of the principality comprised of Lezgin, Tabasaran, and the small tribes of the high mountains, Tsakhur, Rutul, and Aguls.

Nevertheless, all these political structures were transitory bodies with enduring struggles within themselves and with the outside rival powers. Therefore, it is not possible to speak about the existence and even the establishment, of a coherent social or political governing body within the territory of the North Caucasus. However, as it was pointed out by Lemerrier-Quellejey, although its strategic position on the crossroads of vital trade and military routes, the North Caucasus was surprisingly a “happy territory” ignored and by-passed by the great powers of the time, by the Ottoman empire, the Safavi empire, the Crimean Khanate, the Muscovite tsardom and the Shaybani empire in Turkestan.⁵²

⁵² Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejey, “Cooptation of the Elites,” 21.

6-The Russian Advance:

“Moscow appeared on the scene, beginning its southward drive, and the North Caucasus, from the Taman peninsula to the Caspian Sea, became the focus of world politics and fierce rivalry. Two hostile blocks were formed, each endeavouring to set up its authority over this territory of vital strategic importance: on the one hand, the Ottoman Porte and the Crimean Khanate, supported by the Shaybanis of Turkestan, and on the other Muscovy with its natural allies Transcaucasia, Christian Georgia and, further south, the Safavi Shia empire.”⁵³

The Russian interest in the Caucasus, in fact, was a result of the policy of establishing a route to warm seas and Middle Eastern markets. This was shaped after the notable journey of a Russian merchant, Afanasiy Nikitin, who travelled to India and Persia through the Caucasus in the late fifteenth century and wrote a classic of old Russian literature, ‘Travels Beyond Three Seas’ (*Khozheniy za Tri Morya*).⁵⁴

In compliance with this policy, thus Russian forces appeared in the Caucasus for the first time when Ivan the Terrible conquered the Hacıtarhan (Astrakhan) in 1556. From then, until the 20th century, the Russians, Ottomans, and Persians became the main rivals in the region. Initially, the Ottomans, assisted by the Crimean Khans, won the first round gaining control of the region for over a century. The region thus disappeared from the arena of world politics.⁵⁵ Nevertheless the Russians were not indifferent to the fate of the region; they tried to expand their influence by co-opting the ruling groups and making allies of

⁵³ Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, “Cooptation of the Elites,” 21.

⁵⁴ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 52 and Marie Bennigsen Broxup, “Introduction: Russia and the North Caucasus,” in Marie Bennigsen Broxup and et al., 16.

⁵⁵ For the Ottoman accession to the region see Stefanos Yerasimos, 1996 and 1997. “Türklerin Kafkasları: Egzotizmle Jeopolitik Arasında I and II,” in *Toplumsal Tarih*, 6(36): 14-20 and 17(37): 7-13. Dr. Cemal Gökçe, 1979. *Kafkasya ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Kafkasya Siyaseti*, İstanbul: Şamil Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı Yayınları. M. Fahrettin Kirzioğlu, 1993. *Osmanlıları'ın Kafkas Ellerini Fethi (1451-1590)*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu.

them.⁵⁶ Throughout this process their task was significantly facilitated by the contribution of large numbers of Cossacks planted in the region specifically for this purpose.

Within this period of time, the North Caucasian peoples continued to survive under the authority of the state-like organizations and communities. These bodies secured their existence by establishing alliances between each other as well as with external powers, i.e., Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, in the region, a dispersed and unbalanced state of affairs was prevailed.

The second stage of the Russian advance to the Caucasus began in the early 18th century. Peter the Great (r. 1684-1725), having modernised the Russian army and secured Russia's possessions in Europe, organised a Persian Campaign in 1722. As a result of this campaign Russia gained the control of the Caspian coastal lands and neighbouring provinces.⁵⁷

In that period, the Russians were establishing their enduring presence by means of the Cossack armies in the region. Simultaneously, they sought to establish or ensure alliances with local peoples and some of the *jama'ats*. As a result, most of those *jama'ats* accepted the Russian Protectorate. Moreover, to further their success, Russians began to establish fortified settlements in the region. The first of the Russian fortress, *Svyatoi Krest* (Holy Cross), was established in the Kumuk lowland in 1722 and the establishment of Kızlar, “which up till 1763, was,

⁵⁶ The main Russian concern in that period was the Kabardian lands. The Kabardians, against the Crimeans had relied on Astrakhan and when the Russia conquered it Kabardians almost immediately formed a sort of alliance with the Tsar. The first embassies between the parties were exchanged in 1552 and in 1557 the Kabardian princes Temruk and Siboq, heads of two most important clans offered their submission and asked Moscow to protect them against the Crimea and Dagestan. And, in 1561, the Tsar Ivan married the daughter of Prince Temruk and gave Temruk the title of ‘Great Prince of Kabarda’.

so to speak, the Russian capital of the Caucasus” in 1735, followed it.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, this second Russian attempt to advance was halted by the Persian forces and the Russians had to withdraw all their forces beyond the Terek River.

The successes of Peter the Great, however, later gave the Russians a chance to claim legitimacy for attempting to gain control of the region. In this period, Russians mainly used Cossack military settlements, to organize offensives in the North Caucasian territories.

During this period of time, because of the Ottoman dominance over the North Caucasus, especially the western part of it, Islam penetrated almost entire region and became the major religion. On the other hand, as a result of the steady growth of the Russian controlled Cossack and peasant settlements in the north, the Russian interest and influence in the region began to increase. Moreover, Russian successes in establishing alliances with the ruling classes prepared the grounds for Russian expansion in the region. During the reign of Catherine the Great (r. 1762-1796), the Russians resumed their systematic military activities in the region. The Empress renewed Russian expansion by establishing a new fortress of Mozdok in 1763. This action started a long-lasting struggle between the Kabardians and the Russians.

The defeat of the Ottomans in the Russian-Turkish war of 1768-74 gave the Russians free access from the Sea of Azov into the Black Sea and a free hand into the western Caucasus. Moreover, the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774 forced the Ottomans to accept the Kuban River as the boundary between the Russian and

⁵⁷ See M. S. Anderson, 1978. *Peter The Great*, London Thomas and Hudson and Vasili Klyuchevsky, 1965. *Peter The Great*, transl. by Liliana Archibald, New York: Macmillan.

⁵⁸ Baddeley, 10.

Ottoman empires, and to surrender all their claims of sovereignty over both Crimea and the western parts of the North Caucasus. By the annexation of Crimea in 1783, the Russians began to claim sovereignty, albeit indirect over all the tribes and associations of the North Caucasus and established its power in the entire Kuban area.⁵⁹ This caused the emergence of renewed rivalries between the Ottomans and Russians, over the territories of the North Caucasus.⁶⁰

After the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, in order to secure the Ottoman existence in the Caucasus Ferah Ali Pasha was appointed governor of Soğucak in 1780.⁶¹ From then on, the primary Ottoman policy was, through their religious connections, establishing close links with the regional authorities, ensuring order and promoting trade⁶². In response, the Russians aimed to establish strong military positions on the coast, linking them overland to the territory under their control. To this end “the Russians established the Lines along the Kuban and the Laba and erected the fortresses of Ekaterinograd, Georgievsk and Stavropol’ which would later become the Headquarters of the entire Line.”⁶³

Compared to the northwestern Caucasus, although it was less advanced, Russians made a few advances in the northeastern Caucasus and Georgia as well. Responding to the Georgian king’s appeal for help against the Persian threat,

⁵⁹ For a detailed work on the annexation of Crimea see Alan W. Fisher, 1970. *The Russian Annexation of the Crimea 1771-1783*, Cambridge.

⁶⁰ For the Ottoman policy after the Treaty of Kaynarca see Ali İhsan Bağış, 1984. *Britain and The Struggle for The Integrity of the Ottoman Empire*, İstanbul: ISIS Yayıncılık, 9-18 and 1980. “Rusların Karadeniz’de Yayılması Karşısında İngiltere’nin Ticari Endişeleri,” in *Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071-1920)*, O. Okyar and H. İnalçık, eds., Ankara, 211-14.

⁶¹ Jean-Louis Mattei, 1994. “Kırım ve Kafkasya’da Osmanlı Nüfuzunun Gerilemesi ve Ruslara Karşı Kafkas Kabilelerinin Direniş Girişimleri,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, 1(6): 40-47.

⁶² Paul Henze, 1992. “Circassian Resistance to Russia,” in M. Bennigsen Broxup (eds.), *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance Towards the Muslim World*, 76-7. Also see from the same author: July 1983. “Fire and Sword in the Caucasus: The 19th century resistance of the North Caucasian Mountaineers,” *Central Asian Survey*, 2(1): 5-44.

Russia and Georgia signed a treaty at Georgievsk in 1783 which established a Russian protectorate over Georgia. On the way to Tiflis, Russians built the fortress of Vladikavkaz (the Ruler of the Caucasus) “where the Terek issues from the mountains, and connect it by fortified posts with Mozdok. His [Potemkin] was to convert the bridle-path into something in the nature of a road; ...that in October 1783 he was able to drive to Tiflis.”⁶⁴ This would later be expanded and improved into what would become known as the Georgian-Military-Highway –Russia’s lifeline to its possessions in Transcaucasus.⁶⁵ Then the Russians established the first Russian province or *guberniya*, with its centre in Yekaterinodar in May 1785. From then on, under the heading of Prince G. A. Potemkin, the *namestnik* (viceroy), the Russian civil and military officials who were granted the rights of local civil administration, started to interfere directly in the internal affairs of the North Caucasian peoples.

7-The Native Reaction: Emergence of the ‘Muridizm’⁶⁶:

In this atmosphere, under the auspices of *Naqshbandi*⁶⁷ *tariqat*⁶⁸, the first local movement, for the liberation of the entire North Caucasus from the Russian colonization was emerged. The traditional local authorities cooperative attitudes

⁶³ Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 3.

⁶⁴ Baddeley, 20.

⁶⁵ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 4.

⁶⁶ The Sufi disciple is known as the *murid*, and in relation with that the Russians referred to the North Caucasian Sufism and the struggle as *Muridizm*. For a detailed study on *Muridizm* see Aytel Kundukh, 1987. *Kafkasya Müridizmi (Gazavat Tarihi)*, İstanbul: Gözde Kitaplar Yayınevi.

⁶⁷ A *Sunni* Islamic *tariqat*, which was founded by Abu Ya’qub al-Hamadani (d. 1140), but it was named after the Sheikh Muhammad Baha’ al-Din Naqshbandi (1318-1389), in Bukhara. It spread into the North Caucasus late in the 18th century and surfaced in Dagestan via Shirvan, and from there in the middle of the 19th century penetrated the Chechnya and the western North Caucasus. For

towards the Russians resulted in the emergence of the *Naqshbandiya* as the sole force, which could reach beyond petty tribal loyalties and offered an ideology capable of uniting these various peoples into a broader independent political movement.

As pointed out by Gammer, according to the local traditions, the first *Naqshbandi* leader,⁶⁹ who combined the national struggle with the religious one and as such can be seen as the first in the line of North Caucasian *Imams* was a Chechen from the village of Aldy (Aldi), Ushurma, generally known as Sheikh or *Imam Mansur*.⁷⁰

Although Mansur himself never mentioned the name of the brotherhood, nor did he try to establish a Sufi network, he left a long-lasting legacy in the North Caucasus. Moreover, he laid the foundations of a unified body of resistance transcended, which crossed the tribal and ethnic confines and united the Mountaineers under the auspices of a broader politico-religious movement and became a 'national' symbol of a unity.⁷¹

the spread of *Naqshbandiya* into the North Caucasus see Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 39-46; and A. Bennigsen and S. E. Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissar*, 14-24.

⁶⁸ *Tariqat*, literally way or path, is a mystical method, system or school.

⁶⁹ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 39-40.

⁷⁰ There is no exact information in respect to the birth date of Mansur. Even, one of his great-grandsons, Nart gave contradictory dates in different sources. While in his booklet, *Zhizn Mansura* which was published in Istanbul in 1924, he was giving the date of 1732, in another article which was published in the second issue (published in 1925) of *Kavkazskiy Gorets* in Prague, 1748. Zelkina was also refrained to give the exact date, and therefore, she preferred to say "born in the 1760s." *God and Freedom*, p. 59. Nart's booklet later translated into English and published in *Central Asian Survey* "The Life of Mansur: Great Independence Fighter of the Caucasian Mountain People," 10(1/2), 81-92. In addition to these sources see Tarık Cemal Kutlu, 1987. *İmam Mansur*, İstanbul: Bayrak Yayıncılık; Franco Venturi, 1991. "The Legend of Boetti Sheikh Mansur," *Central Asian Survey*, 10(1/2): 93-101; E. Kaval, 1953. "Şeyh Mansur," *Birleşik Kafkasya (Vereinigtes Kaukasien)*, (Munich), 9 (26): 17-24 and 1953. "Kafkas Mücahidi Şeyh Mansur," *Kafkas Dergisi*, (İstanbul), 1(9): 23-24. Dr. Vasfi Güsar, 1953. "Uşurma – Şeyh Mansur," *Kafkas Dergisi*, (İstanbul), 1(11/2): 4-6.

⁷¹ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 67.

He was proclaimed a Sheikh and *Imam* and adopted the name Mansur, which means ‘victorious’ in Arabic, in 1783 but the first Russian reports related to him date back only to 1785.⁷² In his early years of power, Mansur tried to establish the dominance of Islam in the North Caucasus. He declared a *ghazavat*⁷³ against the pagan and semi-pagan Ingush and Christian Osetians, first by sending his emissaries and, later in June 1785, by organizing two military campaigns against them. The Russian authorities saw this as a challenge to their power and they staged a military campaign against Mansur’s base, the village of Aldy, to capture him. However, Mansur’s surprising victory over the Russian forces earned him his place among the North Caucasian peoples. As a result, by sending letters to all *jama’ats*, he propagated Islam and made several attempts to organize the life of Mountain peoples. He established the first native army of 12,000 amassed from among the Chechens, Kabardians, Kumuk, Avar, Nogay, and Circassians, to combat the Russians.⁷⁴

Nevertheless his offensive against the most important military centre of the region, Kizlar, halted his short-lived successes. Against the overwhelming Russian military might, he had to escape into the western North Caucasus in 1787, and led

⁷² For the first Russian report, from Major General P. S. Potemkin to the viceroy of the Caucasus Prince G. A. Potemkin, on Mansur see A. Bennigsen, 1964. “Un Movement Populaire au Caucase XVIII Siecle,” *Chaiers du Monde Russe et Sovietique II*, 5: 159-204. Zelkina (59-60) quoted it. “On the opposite bank of the river Sunja in the village of Aldy a prophet has appeared and started to preach. He has submitted superstitious and ignorant people to his will by claiming to have had a revelation.”

⁷³ Literary means conquest. In the Caucasus it took the meaning of a holy war for the sake of Islam, identical to Islam.

⁷⁴ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 64.

the Circassians in anti-Russian resistance for three years, until the Russians captured him in Anapa in 1791.⁷⁵

Although it took not so long period, in the history of the North Caucasus Mansur was the first leader who initiated the struggle of independence within a unified structure under the banner of Islam. He managed to motivate the Mountaineers to join the struggle against the Russians in a consolidated body. Thus the Mountaineers' vivid memories of Mansur and his achievements against Russia prepared the ground for the later *Naqshbandi Imams* who saw themselves as his disciples.

“He failed it is true, in his endeavour to unite them [the mountain peoples] against a common enemy, but he it was who first taught that in religious reform lay one chance of preserving their cherished liberty and independence and therefore laid foundation for future union and for the great movement which under the name of *Muridism* was, in the common century to set at naught year after year, decade after decade the whole might of Russia.”⁷⁶

By the 19th century, the Russians started to re-implement the dream of Peter the Great, traditional policy of expansion towards the Black Sea and began to colonise the North Caucasus systematically by constructing a fortified Caucasian line and hastened the resettlement of the Cossacks. At the turn of the century, in 1801, through the manifesto of Tsar Aleksandr I, Russians began to re-implement the traditional policy of, above-mentioned, co-optating the local elite once again.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ The Russians brought him to St. Petersburg and imprisoned in Schlüsselburg castle where he died on 13 April 1794. Three days later, on 16 April he was buried on the Preobrazhenskaya hill.

⁷⁶ Baddeley, 47-8.

⁷⁷ This classic policy which was modelled partly on the Byzantine and partly on the Mongol traditions, involved granting economic and political advantages to individuals, social groups and/or entire tribes as well as the delegation of power to the local ruler who became the representative of

After securing its dominance in the southern parts of the Caucasus with signing the Treaty of Gülistan with Persia in 1813, Russian claims over the North Caucasus were officially recognised, and the “Russians turned towards the mountains to secure their rear and communications.”⁷⁸ The duty was given to General Aleksey Petrovich Yermolov who was appointed the Governor and Chief Administrator of Georgia and the Caucasus, commander-in-chief of the separate Georgian Army Corps and Ambassador Extraordinaire to the court of Fath Ali Shah of Persia. This appointment earned him the nickname of Proconsul of the Caucasus.⁷⁹ Thereafter, with his chief of staff General Veliaminov, he began to implement a new policy of his own, the ‘siege policy’. He aimed to drive the Mountaineers away from the plain area and restrict them to the mountains by establishing lines of fortresses using the Caucasian line as the first parallel. In compliance with this policy, he built the fortresses of the Sunja and Sulaq lines, Groznaya (‘Menacing’) in 1818, Vnezapnaya (‘Sudden’) near Enderi in 1819 and Burnaya (‘Stormy’) near Tarku in 1821. Through ruthless actions and genocidal tactics directed from these new centres, Russians managed to subjugate larger parts of Dagestan.

In this short period of time, although the rulers of Dagestan tried to form an alliance against the Russian forces, they failed and were beaten. Then, the pro-

the Russian sovereign, and sought cultural and linguistic assimilation. See Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejey, ‘Cooptation of the Elites’. Also see A. V. Fadeev, 1960. *Rossii i Kavkaz: Pervoi Treti XIX v.*, Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR.

⁷⁸ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 7.

⁷⁹ For Yermolov see Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 29-38.

Russian ones replaced the rulers of the Avar Khanate and Ghazi-Kumuk and those of Mekhtuli, Kaytak, and Tabasaran were deposed and their lands were annexed.⁸⁰

During the 1828-29 Russian-Turkish war, the Russian forces captured Anapa and in the Treaty of Edirne (Adrianople), the Turks agreed to give up all positions and claims on the northwestern Caucasus or the Circassian lands in return for the restoration of Kars and Batum.

8-Re-emergence of the Muridizm:

In this milieu, in the footsteps of Mansur, Islam once again emerged as the major political force capable of crossing tribal and ethnic divides, and uniting various peoples in a broad anti-colonial struggle. This new movement, which was shaped by *Naqshbandi* orders, first emerged in the central areas of the North Caucasus, in which there was no ruling elites and princely dynasties, and thus no co-optation by the Russians. Then, it gradually spread into the eastern and western areas. The first Mountaineers' revolt, under the banner of Islam took place in 1825-26, under the leadership of Beybulat Taymi⁸¹, in Chechnya, and supported by the *Naqshbandiya* heartily. In spite of its importance as a reflection of a centralising tendency that began to emerge in the North Caucasus, this revolt had limited success.⁸²

⁸⁰ Rasul Magomedov, 1939. *Bor'ba Gortsev za nezavisimost' pod rukovodstvom Shamilia*, Makhach-Kala: Daggiz, 21-33.

⁸¹ He was born in 1779 to the family of a Chechen craftsman in the village of Bilty. His courage and the other qualities as a statesman rose him to a prominent position of an elder. But the *Naqshbandiya*, especially the most important sheikh, Muhammad al-Yaraghi, supported the revolt that he led. Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 126-7.

⁸² For a detailed account of this revolt see Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 121-134.

The leader, who bridged the gap between the ‘political’ and ‘spiritual’ *Naqshbandiya* and merged the two into a united movement, was Ghazi Muhammed.⁸³ As a *Naqshbandi* sheikh, he saw the *sharia* as the only guarantee against the corruption of the North Caucasian society by Russian colonial rule. He called on Muslims to replace the traditional ‘*adat*’ system with a *sharia*-based legislation.

This kind of development in the North Caucasus caused the beginning of the Mountaineer-Russian struggle in the entire region and strengthened the vitality of the establishment of unified body for a successful resistance. The Russians began to implement a policy based on the premises that “fear and greed are the two mainsprings of everything that takes place here” and that “those people’s only policy is force.”⁸⁴ Under the command of Yermolov and his successors, Paskevich and Rosen, Russian forces stormed entire Chechnya and Dagestan.

In response, the influence of the *tariqats* and consequently Ghazi Muhammed grew steadily. The local authorities and the people in general inclined to *Imam* and ready to struggle with ‘infidels’, i.e. Russians. At the end of 1829, he summoned the *Naqshbandi* sheikhs and mullahs to a gathering at Gimrah (Gimri) and declared a holy war, *ghazavat*, in early 1830. Until his death in October 1832, he managed to establish his authority over the territory of central and eastern North

⁸³ Ghazi Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Gimrawi was born some time in the early 1790s in the village of Gimrah. Although nothing is known about his family, it is supposed that it was a common family of the Avar *uzden*. At the age of ten he was sent to Karanay village to study Arabic and the Qur’an, and then he visited the other Dagestani centres of learning. In 1825, he went to Ghazi-Kumuk, to see the famous *Naqshbandi* sheikhs, and became one of the ardent *murids* of Jamal al-Din al-Ghazi Kumuyki and Muhammad al-Yaraghi. In early 1827, following his meeting with al-Yaraghi, he returned to his native Gimrah, where he established himself as a sheikh in his own right and started to take up *murids*. See Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 49-59, Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 135-159, and Magomedov, 43-44.

⁸⁴ Baddeley, 65.

Caucasus, invaded the Kumuk plain, looted the Russian fortress of Kizlyar, besieged Burnaya, Vnezapnaya and Derbend, and threatened Groznaya and Vladikavkaz.⁸⁵

Ghazi Muhammed managed to establish a central authority with the help of the *Naqshbandi* order and thus the Mountaineers understood importance of a unified body in the struggle with a powerful external force. Moreover, for the first time, he challenged the traditional institutions of power and the entire set of laws and customs that governed North Caucasian society, and introduced an alternative system of values, which asserted the supremacy of God and His Prophet in all matters of law and government.⁸⁶

After the death of Ghazi Muhammed⁸⁷, another Avar, Hamza Bek became the new *Imam* in 1833.⁸⁸ As Zelkina pointed it out, he was not so much interested in the spiritual-mystical dimension of the *tariqat* as its political teaching and particularly in its call for *ghazavat*.⁸⁹ His most important contribution to the establishment of the subsequent ‘unified state’ of Shamil was the extermination of one of the most powerful local ruling families, the Avar ruling house. By doing so, he changed the traditional balance of power in the North Caucasus. He removed the

⁸⁵ Magomedov, 47-52.

⁸⁶ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 159.

⁸⁷ As the last episode of Paskevich’s, the new chief commander of Caucasus, campaign Ghazi Muhammad died in the village of Gimrah in October 1832.

⁸⁸ Hamza ibn Ali al-Iskander Bek was born in 1789 in Hutsal (new Gotsatl), one of the largest villages of the Avar khanate. His father belonged to a side branch of the family of the Avar khans and enjoyed the respect of the people in Hutsal and has close relations with the Avar khans. He studied Qur’an and Arabic, but he didn’t further his religious education. Unlike both the first and third North Caucasian imams, he did not achieve the rank of a Sufi sheikh and had no Sufi *murids* of his own. Nevertheless, his military and political talents and courage brought him a prominent position on the eyes of Ghazi Muhammed and his *murids*. See Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 60-65 and Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 160-168, Magomedov, 52-59.

most powerful local force capable of resisting the spread of the *Imam*'s authority and deprived the Russians of their most important allies. After the removal of the Avar khans, although not claiming the title of khan, he took Khunzakh, the Avar capital as his main residence. Nevertheless, this action caused a bloody feud, which resulted in his death.⁹⁰ Despite the very short term of his service as an Imam, Hamza Bek made the rise of the third *Imam*, Shamil, and the establishment of the North Caucasian Imamate possible.

9-Towards the Sovereign State: The North Caucasian Imamate:

Following the assassination of Hamza Bek, one of the most prominent *Naqshbandi* sheikhs, Shamil⁹¹ became the third *Imam* in late September 1834. Nevertheless, during the period between his becoming Imam and 1837, he had to overcome the internal strife within the *Naqshbandi* order first⁹² and then regain the respect and trust of the North Caucasian peoples, outside the *tariqat*. Thus, in this

⁸⁹ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 161.

⁹⁰ One of the guards of the dead khans, Itim Muhammad urged his sons Osman and Haji Murad to avenge the killing of the khans. Although Hamza Bek was urged by one of his loyal *murids* he did not take it seriously. On 19 September 1834 those two organized the assassination and killed imam in the mosque. Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 167.

⁹¹ He was born in 1797 in Gimrah, to the family of Dengaw Muhammad, an ordinary *uzden* and Pahu Mecedu –the daughter of a branch of the ruling Ghazi-Kumuk family. He received solid religious education of the Arabic grammar and the Qur'an, logic philosophy and law. He entered the *tariqat* and spent a number of years with the greatest *Naqshbandi* Sheikh in the region, Jamal al-Din al-Ghazi Kumuyki. At his house Shamil studied Sufi practices and other 'ulum and after finishing his spiritual education, along with Ghazi Muhammad, he went to Muhammad al-Yaraghi who put the final touches on his spiritual training. Then Yaraghi nominated Shamil as sheikh in his own right. Shamil accompanied Ghazi Muhammad in all his military campaigns and was with the Imam during his last battle at Gimrah in 1832. He was appointed by the Imam as his deputy in the Koysubu *jama'ats*. He served the second Imam within the same region. See Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 170-171, Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 69-80, Magomedov, 59-60. Moreover these novels on Shamil by Lesley Blanch, 1960. *The Sabres of Paradise*, London: John Murray (in English) and Tarik Mümtaz Göztepe, 1961. *İmam Şamil: Kafkasya'nın Büyük Harp ve İhtilal Kahramanı*, İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi, and Murat Yeşil, 2000. *Kafkas Kartalı İmam Şamil Destanı*, İstanbul: Babıalı Kültür Yayıncılığı (in Turkish) could be seen. For a comprehensive bibliography on Shamil see Moshe Gammer, 1991. "Shamil and the Murid Movement, 1830-1859: An Attempt at a Comprehensive Bibliography," *Central Asian Survey*, 10(1/2): 189-247.

period, he refrained from direct clashes with the Russian forces and instead he made a truce with them. On “several occasions he assured the Russian command of his loyalty, formally, accepted Russian citizenship, took an oath not to undertake any raids in the lowlands and to restrain people in his domain from doing so.”⁹³

During the early period of Shamil’s Imamate, in fact, in dealing with the peoples of the North Caucasus, the main policy of the Russians was to use comparatively peaceful means. As a result of Shamil’s growing power, by the late 1836, Baron Rosen changed the Russian policy to achieve the unconditional surrender of the *Imam* and stop the spread of *muridizm* in the North Caucasus organised a military campaign to the Avar land in April 1837. This campaign, however, only served to increase the popularity of the *Imam*. Russian troops captured Shamil’s base, Khunzakh and Ashilta, stormed Akhulgo, and sieged him with his supporters in Tiliq. But, while the Russians besieged him in the village, his supporters surprisingly imposed their own blockade on the Russian forces and deprived them of any possible reinforcements. At the end of 40 days of double blockade the Russians had to conclude peace on the terms offered by Shamil. The ‘victory’ or the peace of Tiliq was the real turning point for the Shamil’s authority. All his rivals accepted his command and he consolidated his power over almost all of Dagestan and mountainous Chechnya. Moreover, Tiliq boosted his prestige in other parts of the North Caucasus.⁹⁴

This was a real danger for the Russian expansion in the region. In order to prevent the increase of Shamil’s power Russians had to deal with him. Thus, in

⁹² His other main rival *Naqshbandi* sheikhs were Tashou Haji al-Enderi, Qibid Muhammed al-Tilitli, Akhberdy Muhammed, and Sayyid al-Ihali.

⁹³ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 179.

order to understand the situation in the region, Tsar Nicholas I visited in October 1837. Despite the Russian authorities' efforts to bring Shamil to Tiflis to see the emperor, Shamil, he refused to go. During his tour, the emperor realised that in spite of the enormous amount of material and human resources and military efforts that had been committed to the subjugation of the region, it still defied Russian control. Disappointed and angered at what he had seen in the Caucasus, the emperor made subjugation of the northeastern Caucasus the immediate priority for 1838-39.⁹⁵

In compliance with this new priority, Russians started a new campaign against Shamil in June 1839 and besieged his base, Akhulgo and trapped him in the fortress. Shamil manage to escape luckily but the Russian victory affected his position and authority adversely. Thus he was forced to move to Chechnya for a while in 1839. With the help of Chechen mullahs and sheikhs, he managed to organize his movement and increased his power in Chechnya. By 1840 he had won over the majority of Chechens and began his struggle. First of all, he concentrated his efforts in Dagestan and achieved great success over the territories of Salatav, Andi, and Gumbet. Through these regions he organised assaults against the Avar land. Haji Murad's acceptance of his authority reinforced his position in Dagestan and with his support, Shamil spread his authority to the whole of Avar territories and Ghazi-Kumuk Khanate.⁹⁶

In this period, the Russian policy in the region was to use political means rather than force. In order to implement this policy the Tsar appointed Aleksandr

⁹⁴ For the Tiliq campaign see Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 81-95, Magomedov, 66-7.

⁹⁵ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 184-185.

Ivanovich Neidhart, commander-in-chief of Russian armies, and to prevent any further disasters, he imposed a 2 year long ban on raids and expeditions. This policy allowed and helped Shamil to consolidate his power and spread his authority over the entire North Caucasus. Thus, from the early 1840s, the struggle of North Caucasian peoples began to take the shape of a unified and consolidated movement under the control of *Imam* Shamil.

The North Caucasian Imamate was brought about by a gradual and continuous process, which was initiated by the Russians, i.e. infidels, and its foundations were laid by the first two *Imams* on the basis of *Shari'a*. These *Imams*, in compliance with the *Naqshbandi* traditions, assumed the role of spiritual guides and supervisors of the local rulers and claimed a higher religious authority over them. The first *Imam*, Ghazi Muhammed in particular, did not envisage himself as a ruler. He rather regarded himself a guide to the various rulers and communities.⁹⁶ Although the second *Imam* attempted to modify the existing social and political order of the North Caucasus, his very short term in the Imamate did not allow him to make necessary regulations. It was *Imam* Shamil who finally set his authority, formalised its administrative system, codified the laws and defined the authority of each official in this new unified North Caucasian State that mainly extended over the territories of Chechnya and Dagestan. Moreover through his deputies he nominally set his authority over the Circassian lands. In contrast to the *ad hoc* deputies or the messengers of the first *Imam*, Hamza Bek and Shamil, through

⁹⁶ For the struggle of Shamil see Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 189-202; Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*; and Magomedov, 71-89.

⁹⁷ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 225.

sending regular deputies and missionaries, called *naibs*, for the first time in the North Caucasus, brought the isolated tribes and *jama'ats* under a unified *Shari'a* based legal system to ensure a coordinated resistance against the Russians. By the mid-1850s, the *Imam* has already established a sovereign state and ruling with complex machinery.

Through comprehensive administrative, fiscal, and military measures based on the *Shari'a*, Shamil eliminated the power base of the traditional rulers and created a new central state, which became known as the Imamate of Shamil. In order to achieve unification, he combined both the religious and military authority in the personality of the *Imam*, and, as Zelkina stressed, he established a kind of 'constitutional monarchy'.⁹⁸

First of all, Shamil's state, without any controversy, was a religious one. The *Shari'a* was its constitution and thus the *Imam's* authority was bound by this constitution. At the top of the pyramid was the imam. In the early years of his rule, he used the title of *al-Imam al-a'zam*, which meant Great Imam, but in time, in line the consolidation of his power, he replaced it with *Amir al-mu'minin*, the Commander of the Believers, which highlighted his claims to have full authority as the sovereign ruler of the Imamate.⁹⁹

In his Imamate, Shamil established, more or less, a system of balance of power. Beyond the all-powerful *Imam*, there was a legislative assembly called the *shura al-ulama* (the council of scholars). This legislative assembly was comprised of religious leaders and had the power to elect the *Imam*. In the early 1840s, again

⁹⁸ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 217.

⁹⁹ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 214-5 and Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 225-7.

in line with the enhancement of Shamil's authority, it was replaced by the congress of *naibs*, known as the *Majlis al-nuwwab*, and it took the consultative rather than legislative character and dealt exclusively with military issues.¹⁰⁰

Then, Shamil began to fulfil the legislative duties by himself, but under the control of a privy council, the *Shura al-imam* or *Divanhane*, which was comprised of the closest confidant *Naqshbandi* leaders, trustworthy *naibs*, and respected elders. In addition to its consultative and high-level decision-making functions, *Divanhane* served as a body relieving the imam of the burden of daily routine decisions. In order to gain legitimacy and achieve compliance with the *Shari'a*, all the laws and initiatives of the imam had to be approved by the Council. All the members of the Council had equal vote but as the real authority, the Imam had the power of veto over decisions. However, the religious traditions of the *tariqat*, or the Sufi *murshid-murid* bond, in fact prevented any kind of direct clash between the Imam and the Council members.¹⁰¹

Beyond that, as stressed above the *Shari'a* was the ultimate legislation in the Imamate. Shamil's interpretation of the *Shari'a* was of the orthodox in nature adopted by the *Naqshbandiya*.¹⁰² Basically it was strictly against, and even hostile, to the local *adat* and some innovations or *bid'as* resulting from contact with the Russians. Thus, Shamil's main duty, as the *Imam* and the chief competent interpreter, was the removal of the entire habits or daily practices of the Mountaineers, which contradicted with the *Shari'a*. To ensure the Muslim way of life should prevail over the entire North Caucasus, Shamil prohibited all kinds of

¹⁰⁰ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 215-6 and Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 226-7.

¹⁰¹ Magomedov, pp. 90-92, Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, and Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 215-6.

customs and habits. Smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages were forbidden. Women were obliged to dress modestly. Dances and music were limited to weddings and circumcisions. Feuds were not allowed between the peoples.

“In general, religious and administrative functionaries were instructed repeatedly to enforce the observance of the *Shari'a*.”¹⁰³ Where the *Shari'a* could not provide an answer in the narrowly legalistic term, as a supreme ruler, learned Muslim scholar and Sufi sheikh, the *Imam* had the faculty to pass his own judgements or qualified opinions. He never refrained from taking such decisions and these decisions constituted a separate set of laws known as Shamil's *Nizams*.¹⁰⁴

Shamil's *nizams* were the first written sets of regulations that, embracing the entire population of the North Caucasus, and challenged and changed the existing rules and practices. These *nizams* included a vast range of domestic, religious, political, and military matters and can be compared to the Ottoman *kânun*.¹⁰⁵ Through these *nizams* Shamil irreversibly changed the life of the North Caucasian peoples and succeeded in greatly improving the adherence of the Mountaineers to the Islamic codes. Moreover, he introduced the concepts of union and state by instituting the notion of a crime against state and religion, which had never existed before.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Gammer put it as “one of the fundamentalist one”, but in fact it is better to put it as an ‘orthodox’ one rather than the fundamentalist. See Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 232.

¹⁰³ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 232.

¹⁰⁴ “Until the late 1940s only one copy of such regulations was known, which led Russian and Soviet historians to lay special importance on 1847 in the development of *nizam*. The publication, since then, of the new documents –among them other copies of the *nizam*- have clearly proved the existence of the *nizam* as early as 1842.” Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 233.

¹⁰⁵ In order to compare and contrast it with the Ottoman sytem, cf. Enver Ziya Karal, 1946. *Selim II'ün Hat-tı Hümayunları –Nizam-ı Cedit, 1789-1807*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, and 1961. *Osmanlı Tarihi: Nizam-ı Cedit ve Tanzimat Devirleri, 1789-1856*, Vol. V, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu.

¹⁰⁶ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 218.

These *nizams* of Shamil can be examined into two broad categories. Within the first category there were the *nizams* of prohibitive character. Those groups of *nizams* were regulated for promoting and reinforcing the *shari'a* laws in opposition to the local *adat* and laws induced by the Russian administration. Most of the time, these *nizams* repeated the stipulation of *shari'a* or gave force to a certain interpretation of it.

The other category of *nizams* were supplementary in character. These *nizams*, had little to do with religious law, involved mainly non-religious administrative and military issues.

One of the most important legal codes of Shamil defined the administrative structure, which was inspired from the three main sources: “firstly the Sufi framework which he adapted into a lay form of social organisation; secondly the structure of the Ottoman empire,...; and thirdly what he had seen of a centralised Russian autocracy.”¹⁰⁷

Administratively, again for the first time, he had divided the country into smaller structures.¹⁰⁸ At the top of the structure there were large military administrative districts, *vilayats*. Initially in 1840 there were only 4 *vilayats*, but in 1856 it reached 33.¹⁰⁹ All these *vilayats*, were then divided into smaller districts, and than as the smallest unit villages came.

In order to administer and control these units, Shamil appointed his deputies, *naibs*.¹¹⁰ These *naibs* were the backbone of the administrative-military machinery. They had full authority over all military, administrative and judicial

¹⁰⁷ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 204.

¹⁰⁸ Magomedov, 93-95.

¹⁰⁹ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 226.

matters in their *vilayats*. He was responsible for law and order. He had to collect taxes, to execute the sentences and to judge his subordinates according to the Shamil's regulations. Most important he was the military commander of his area, led its people on to the battlefield and was, therefore, responsible for their preparedness for war.¹¹¹

“Although many of Shamil's *naibs* belonged to the traditional ruling houses they reached their posts through their service to the imam and their personal merits rather than their noble origin. Furthermore, their power was now interpreted not in traditional but religious terms, but rather derived from their association with the imam.”¹¹²

However, at a later stage, because of increasing abuses of power and to prevent the increasing powers of the *naibs*, Shamil confined their powers to military issues and transferred all judicial and religious matters to the jurisdiction of specially appointed *muftis* and *qadis* who were accountable directly to the *Imam* by a decree in 1847.¹¹³

The smaller units, districts, were headed by a *ma'zun* or *dibir* in Dagestan and *turqkh* in Chechnya. These heads of administration performed similar tasks to the *naibs* in *vilayats*. Again similarly, the judicial authority was vested in the local *qadis*, who were responsible to the *muftis*. Moreover at village level, authority was vested in the hands of elders who were elected by the village settlers.

As the administration became more complex and difficult to control, Shamil instituted the rank of superintendent, *mudir*. As a watchful eye on the *naibs*, the *mudir* supervised the different activities of several *naibs*, and *muftis* and acted as a

¹¹⁰ For the names of some of his *naibs* see Magomedov, *ibid.*, p. 94.

¹¹¹ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, p.226.

¹¹² Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, p.207.

¹¹³ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, p. 205.

naib in his own right in the area of his residence. Moreover he led his inferiors and their men in battle. Shamil also appointed inspectors, called *muhtasib* to exercise control over the *naibs* and *mudirs* and collect information independent from their reports. These *muhtasibs*, who were recruited from the most loyal and knowledgeable Naqsbandi sheikhs of the imamate, travelled around and reported to Shamil on the activities of his officers.¹¹⁴

Shamil managed to establish a well functioning and well-defined administrative system which was accountable to the *Imam* and thus to the people and God, throughout the country.

In order to make the system's work possible and maintain the centralised system of government, Shamil put the financial affairs in order by making fiscal reforms. He systematised the sources of revenue and of expenditure in his state and thus the Treasury.¹¹⁵ Ghazi Muhammed, the first Imam, had in fact set up the treasury, bayt al-mal. The main source of funding of this treasury was initially military revenues, but in time, as a result of the growing state this became insufficient.¹¹⁶ Therefore Shamil, in order to maintain the centralised state apparatus, introduced a system of regular revenues in the early 1840s. The income was driven from several sources.

The first and the most important one was the taxation. His taxation system, naturally, was based on the traditional Muslim system of taxation. The two main

¹¹⁴ See Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 203-7 and Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 226-7.

¹¹⁵ Magomedov, 102-103.

¹¹⁶ According to the *Shari'a* one fifth of the captured amount, that is *khums*, is belonging to the treasury and four-fifths were divided among the participants of a raid. At the outset this was the major source of income.

taxes were, the land tax, *Shar'i kharaj*, and income tax, *zakat*. Second, he set up a system of fines for various offences. All the fines paid by the people went to the treasury. Through these fines he both attained revenues and established a system of control in the society. In addition, the property of people who died without heirs also went to the treasury. Third, in his system, all the income of land belonging to mosques (*awqaf*), which had been used for the upkeep of the mosques and their clergy now went to the treasury. His last and a special source of income was the payment of three silver rubles per household per annum to avoid raids by the mountaineers.¹¹⁷

“In his expenses the *imam* tried to follow the *shari'a*. Although deviations were unavoidable, as Shamil himself admitted, an attempt was made to keep the expenditure from each source of income generally within the area destined for it by the *shari'a*. For this purpose it seems that each source of income was handled as a separate account.”¹¹⁸

The other important area in which he made important reforms was the military.¹¹⁹ The Imamate's army, in essence was a volunteer one. In fact, with the exception of a few categories of people, who had crucial economic duties, almost all male population was considered as trained warriors ready to fight. This pool of warriors constituted the bulk of Shamil's forces. Nevertheless within the time period, because of the state's growing size, Shamil felt the importance of establishing a standing army and therefore he established an army of *naibi murids*.

¹¹⁷ For the military reforms of Imam Shamil see Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 230-232; and Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 207-209.

¹¹⁸ Gammer, 231.

¹¹⁹ Magomedov, 95-99.

Its nucleus consisted of armed horsemen called *murtaziqa* who were set up and run along the Sufi lines.¹²⁰

“In the early 1840s every ten houses were obliged to contribute one armed horseman. These horsemen ... were freed from any other work –their own and their families’ upkeep, their fields, herds, etc. were the responsibility of the other nine families- and had to dedicate themselves to military service.”¹²¹

In addition to this cavalry Shamil established a regular infantry unit, inspired by the *nizam-ı cedid* of Ottoman Empire duly named as *nizam*.¹²² Using the Russian captives, he also established artillery units. At last, in order to win people’s trust and respect, and to enlarge his domain among the Mountaineers, he also carried out an ideological or spiritual warfare. In this area of contention he utilised his *murids* who called *tariqa murids*.

Then, in order to sustain large-scale campaigns and extend his sovereignty he introduced a corresponding system of command structure and military ranks. He correlated the administrative structures with military terms.

“In military terms the *vilayat* corresponded to the largest military unit –the regiment or 1,000 (*alf*), divided into two battalions or 500 (*khamsa mi’a*), companies of 100 (*mi’a*) platoons of fifty (*khamsin*), and squads of ten (*‘ashara*). The corps were divided into cavalry (*fawaris*) and infantry (*mushat*). Russian deserters who found refuge in the imamate and accepted Islam formed the imam’s artillery brigades.”¹²³

Moreover, for the sake of uniformity and discipline, he introduced a semblance of a uniform with distinct colours corresponding to each of the services in his armed forces and gave the shape of a modern army. Thus, for the first time in

¹²⁰ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 211-212.

¹²¹ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 228-9.

¹²² See footnote no. 98.

¹²³ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 210.

the North Caucasus, to carry out the struggle of independence, he established a modern standing army:

“By establishing this strictly defined system of government in the imamate, Shamil profoundly changed the existing order under which the North Caucasus had lived for centuries. He not only dismantled the traditional power structure and deprived the old elite of their power base, but, far more importantly, he introduced what amounted to a concept of citizenship, whereby for the first time the ruler and the ruled were accountable to one system of law and in theory were at least equal in their obligations and rights as far as the system of law was concerned.”¹²⁴

By 1845 Shamil's domain was at its largest and his power at its peak. Then, in compliance with his policy of establishing broader unified state and expelling the Russians outside the North Caucasian territory, Shamil decided to extend his authority over the lands of Kabardians and the northwestern parts of the Caucasus. This was the first concrete initiative to following the footsteps of Mansur, to unify the resistance movements of the all North Caucasus.

Shamil's main agents in the central and western parts of the North Caucasus were the Kabardians. In fact due to their central location, the Kabardians had always maintained close links with both their western and eastern neighbours. Although, compared to Dagestan and Chechnya the *tariqats*' were in a weak position in the western parts of the region. Through the Kabardians the ideas of *Naqshbandi* brotherhood started to penetrate into the areas to the west of Chechnya. The *Imam* had established his first contacts with the Circassian tribes already in early 1840s and had suggested to the Ubykhs and Shapsugs a plan to unify forces against the Russians in 1842. His first *naib*, Haji Muhammed was sent to the region in 1843. After his death a member of the Dagestani *ulema*, Suleyman

Efendi was appointed the *naib*. Nevertheless both *naibs*, failed to inspire enthusiasm or lead the resistance. The most important and effective name, which spread the Shamil's authority to the region, was Muhammed Emin¹²⁵, who was appointed *naib* in 1848. Through him the authority of Shamil spread among the Circassian tribes, primarily the Abadzekhs and Temirgoys. Within a short period of time, Muhammed Emin proved to be a competent leader. He learned the local language and integrated himself to the peoples by making a marriage with a daughter of princely family. "Several times before and during the Crimean War the *imam* and his *naib* intended to join their forces in a concerted attack, but none of these plans were carried out."¹²⁶ Nevertheless, due to the lack of communication and coordination between Shamil and Muhammed Emin, as well as the absence of a deep-rooted *Naqshbandi* brotherhood in the Circassian lands hampered the establishment of the stable authority of Shamil in this region. The nominal authority of Shamil over his *naib* continued, but never turned into a unified front against the Russian forces. Instead, Muhammed Emin had taken the region under his control in 1851 and established his domain similar to that of Shamil. Despite the existence of local noble opposition, he ruled over the Circassian lands until Shamil was surrender.

By the early 1850s Shamil's power in the North Caucasus began to decline. Behind this decline were two main reasons. First, the Russians, in order to combat

¹²⁴ Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 207.

¹²⁵ Muhammed Emin was born in the Koysubu *jama'at* and had accepted the *Naqshbandi tariqat* directly from Shamil. See, A. Canbek Havjoko, 1965. "İmam Şamil'in Sadık Naibi, Şimali Kafkasyalı Büyük Devlet Adamı: Muhammed Emin," *Birleşik Kafkasya*, (İstanbul), 4: 19-25.

¹²⁶ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 249.

the threat of the enduring and unified North Caucasian State, decided to make more persistent and permanent advances in the region. To achieve this end the Tsar appointed Prince Mikhail Vorontsov¹²⁷ the viceroy of the Caucasus with unlimited plenary powers in 1845.

With the appointment of Vorontsov as viceroy, the status of the Caucasus was dramatically changed. Until that time, the North Caucasian territory had been ruled by a high commissarioer or literally an ‘administrator in chief’ (*glavnoupravlia iuschchii*), who had usually also been the Territory’s commander in chief (*glavnokomand uischchii*). But with the appointment of Vorontsov the region gained higher status with a ruler who directly responsible to the Tsar and would take the place of the Emperor himself.¹²⁸

Vorontsov’s suggestion was the ‘siege policy’ which reminded the policy of Yermolov, with some modifications.¹²⁹ In 1846, in compliance with this policy, Russians transferred a considerable amount of military force to stop all gaps in the Russian defence line. They started to reinforce the existing fortresses and to construct new ones. They build military roads and repaired older ones. They also established communication lines. All these were accompanied by a campaign of cutting down the Chechen forests to stop the ‘guerilla warfare’ tactics of the Mountaineers and clean the lowland areas of all the Chechen population.¹³⁰

Second, Shamil faced some serious internal problems. The lack of new military achievements, and thus the revenues, caused some disturbances among the

¹²⁷ For a deatiled accounts on Vorontsov see Anthony L. H. Rhineland, 1990. *Prince Michael Vorontsov: Viceroy to the Tsar*, McGill-Queen’s Un. Press.

¹²⁸ Rhineland, 123-184.

¹²⁹ See Baddeley, 446 and Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 175.

population. Moreover, Shamil's new policies, especially his fiscal reforms caused the emergence of estrangement among the peoples. The population that still had a 'tribal mentality' and did not readily accept the taxation system. Moreover, because of war-weariness and deprivations, Shamil started to lose the support of the ordinary people in the Imamate. Thus, his base and authority began to deteriorate.

The other important point that caused the Shamil's failure was the emergence of 'power struggle' between the *Imam* and his *naibs*. By the early 1850s, the first defections among his *naibs* began. The first in the line of defections was Haji Murad. After a number of conflicts between him and Shamil, Haji Murad defected to the Russians in 1851. The basic reason behind his defection was the proclamation of Ghazi Muhammed, Shamil's son, as the successor of his father in March 1848. Haji Murad refused to accept this proclamation and publicly announced that he might claim the title of *Imam* for himself after Shamil's death. Later in 1851, because of raising charges against him, Shamil tried to depose Haji Murad from his office and ordered the confiscation of his property. Defended by his *murids*, he resisted.¹³¹ Later on he defected to Russians. Following him, Bata and the some other *naibs* also defected.

Nevertheless, the Crimean War and his strong will and military genius helped him to survive for a time. Shamil greeted the War as the last and the biggest

¹³⁰ Suzanne Goldenberg, 1994. *Pride of Small Nations: The Caucasus and Post-Soviet Disorder*, New Jersey: Zed Books, 21. Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 226.

¹³¹ Not being able to face life in the Russian camp and Shamil's refusal to allow his family to join him, he once again tried to escape into the mountains but was killed by Russian soldiers. Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 228. For the literary account of Haji Murad's life and adventures see Leo Tolstoy, 1977 '*Hadji Murad*' in *Master and Man and Other Stories*, trans. Paul Foote, London: Penguin Books.

chance. He wrote a letter to the Ottoman sultan and asked for help.¹³² Moreover during the war he tried to establish contacts with the Ottomans, British and French, but he failed to acquire what he hoped.¹³³ Although the British, particularly, Palmerston, interested in “the romantic Chief of the Circassians” and “for his cooperation ... were even ready to establish an independent Circassian state after the war, to be headed by the imam”¹³⁴, Shamil did not find any help or material support from the British.

The period between 1854 and 1855 testified the last but the most meagre struggles of Shamil and June 1856 was a turning point for his Imamate. Prince Alexandr Ivanovich Bariatinskiy, in order to conclude the conquest of the region, was appointed as the Commander in Chief of the Caucasian Army. Bariatinskiy, together with his chief of staff, Dimitry Alekseevich Miliutin organized a three-year campaign, which was concluded with the capture of Shamil.¹³⁵ During the spring of 1859, the Russians launched a general offensive, which was completed with the seizure and destruction of Shamil’s capital Vedeno on 13 April 1859. At the end of September, at last, the Russians captured him in Gunib.¹³⁶

¹³² For the correspondence between the Ottomans and Shamil in that period see Mustafa Budak, 1988. “1853-56 Kırım Harbi Başlarında Doğu-Anadolu-Kafkasya Cephesi ve Şeyh Şamil,” *Kafkasya Araştırmaları I*, İstanbul, 52-8.

¹³³ For some of the letters of Shamil see Perteve Boratav, July-December 1969. “La Russie dans les Archives Ottomanes in Dossier Ottoman sur L’Imam Chamil,” *Chairs du monde Russe et Sovietique*, 10(3/4): 524-535. Moshe Gammer, 1991. “Imam Shamil and Shah Mohammed: Two Unpublished Letters,” *Central Asian Survey*, 10(1/2): 171-79. Masayuki Yama’uchi, 1985. ‘I. From Ottoman Archives,’ *Central Asian Survey*, 4(4): 7-12. And also see 1985. “Shamil: New Documents and Correspondence,” *Central Asian Survey*, 4 (4): 1-5.

¹³⁴ Gammer, *Muslim Resistance*, 272.

¹³⁵ Moshe Gammer, 1994. “Prince Bariatinskii –Conqueror of the Eastern Caucasus,” *Central Asian Survey*, 13(2): 237-247.

¹³⁶ For the life of Shamil after his capture see Austin Lee Jersild, 1995. “Who was Shamil?: Russian Colonial Rule and Sufi Islam in the North Caucasus, 1859-1917,” *Central Asian Survey*, 14(2): 205-

In conclusion, the *Imams*, Sheikh Shamil, in particular, within a period less than fifty years, through a well-defined set of rules of conduct changed the values and existing social and political structure of the North Caucasus. At the root of these changes there was one main motive: Islam. The Islamic identity that was shaped by the orthodox version of *Naqshbandiya*, mainly as a result of Russian assaults which aimed to colonize the region, transformed and politicised itself and took the shape of struggle of independence. Nevertheless, in addition to the Russians, Shamil had to struggle with the local powers and some of his rival groups. Thus, in order to remove those groups Shamil initiated a series of reforms and replaced the existing political and social order with a new one. In this process the *Shari'a* was the main guide. Through the basic principles of *Shari'a* and his *nizams*, Shamil, for the first time in the North Caucasus established a comprehensive and well functioning state structure and spread his authority almost all over the North Caucasus.

223; Mucahit, August 1953. "İmam Şamil Mekke ve Medinede," *Birleşik Kafkasya (Vereinigtes Kaukasien)*, (Munich), 8 (25): 9-11; Zelkina, *God and Freedom*, 233-4.

CHAPTER II

RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NORTH CAUCASIAN MOUNTAIN REPUBLIC

1-From Revolution to Revolution: February-December 1917:

After the defeat of Shamil, Russian operations and the Mountaineers' struggle continued in the western parts of the North Caucasus until 1864.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the overwhelming dominance of the Russians, with a half-million strong army, made the struggle a futile effort. Most of the Circassian population, because of the ruthless Russian repression, was forced to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire and dispersed throughout the territories from the Balkans to the Middle East.¹³⁸

“...[S]ome Circassian leaders advocated departure to Turkey and obtained the agreement of the Ottoman government for an orderly settlement in Anatolia. It was not only bayonets that urged on this wave of migration but also religious provocation, deliberately supported by the Russian government, which finally caused mass psychosis which gripped not only the Circassians but also the other North Caucasians.”¹³⁹

Therefore, by the last quarter of the 19th century, the Russians managed to suppress and subjugate the region. They settled the Cossacks and other Russian populations in the North Caucasus, and severely changed the balance of population and power in favour of the Russian Empire. As a consequence, disturbances broke

¹³⁷ A. Namitok, 1956. “The “Voluntary” Adherence of Kabarda (Eastern Circassia) to Russia,” *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 2: 17-33. Ramazan Traho, 1991. ‘Circassians,’ *Central Asian Survey*, 10(1/2): 40-49.

¹³⁸ See Chapter I, footnote 23.

out in entire North Caucasus in 1865, 1877, 1898 and 1906 that resulted in the arrival of new refugees from the North Caucasus to the Ottoman lands.

In the central parts and in Dagestan, the *Naqshbandiya*, the ideological driving force lost its leadership cadre, which weakened its struggle of independence. Despite the appearance of a new religious order *Qadiriya*¹⁴⁰, intended to revive the struggle, the Russians easily defeated it and encouraged the massive emigration of the Chechens and Ingush to the Ottoman Empire. From then until 1917, the Sufi brotherhood discarded the idea of *ghazavat* and open resistance, and developed an underground, semi-clandestine character. However, when the opportunity to rebel against the Russians presented itself, they took the lead to organize the masses.¹⁴¹

The leaders of the Mountaineers in exile and the North Caucasians took part in every kind of anti-Russian movements and wars, led primarily by the Ottomans. In 1877-78 the Mountaineers, headed by Ghazi Muhammed Shamil, Sheikh Shamil's son and Musa Kundukhov Paşa¹⁴², engaged in the most determined

¹³⁹ Ramazan Traho, "Circassians," 46. For an interesting account of voluntary emigration see Musa Kundukov, 1978. *General Musa Kundukov'un Anıları*, trnsl. Murat Yağan, İstanbul: Kafkas Kültür Derneği.

¹⁴⁰ The *Qadiriya* was founded in Bagdad by Abd al-Qadir al-Ghilani in the second half of 12th century and brought to the North Caucasus by a Kumuk, Kunta Haji Kishiev in early 1850s. But, he was obliged to leave the region because of the hostility of Naqshbandiya towards his pacifist sermons. He returned in 1861, after the surrender of Shamil and enjoyed immediate success in Chechnya, Avar lands and the northern Dagestan. Then because of the unrest in Chechnya in 1863-64, the Russian administration arrested him. He was not tried but simply declared insane and banished to a prison hospital, where he died in 1867. See, Alexander Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, 1985. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, London: C. Hurst, 9-11.

¹⁴¹ Marie Bennigsen Broxup, 1992. "The Last *Ghazawat*: The 1920-1921 Uprising," in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance Towards the Muslim World*, ed. by. M. B. Broxup, London: C. Hurst, 112-145.

¹⁴² Musa Kundukhov, (1818-?), an Osetian. He was born in the *aul* of Sanib in the North Caucasus. In 1830 he was sent to the Petersburg Pavlovsky Corps to receive a military education. After 6 years, he graduated as an officer of the cavalry. In 1837 he was the interpreter of Emperor Nicholas I during his visit to the Caucasus. After his participation in several wars he became a general in the Russian Army. And he was appointed head of the Osetian, and later Chechen military regions and

battles on the Caucasian front, but the Ottomans eventually lost the war and the Mountaineers' dream of establishing their own state was left unfulfilled.¹⁴³ Moreover with the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty, the Ottomans gave up Kars, Ardahan and Batum, and the remaining Mountaineers lost their contact with the Ottoman lands and the North Caucasian emigrants.

During this period of time the Russians ruled the region with a military governor and considered the Mountaineers to be savages or primitive peoples, who could not be educated. They generally left the Mountaineers alone and were cautious about interfering with the local traditions and customary law. As a result, Dagestan remained a religious centre and within the religious schools Arabic was taught.

By the beginning of the 20th century, initially, the Russians tried to establish local schools that used native languages transliterated into Cyrillic script. Nevertheless, in order to create a pro-Russian population, the Russian authorities discarded this idea and Russian language schools replaced these native language schools. As Broxup put it, on the eve of the Revolution, there were only 93 government schools which has thought in Russian and “these schools were able to barely educate small number of natives as the clerks and minor officials.”¹⁴⁴ Beyond this, unlike the case among most of the other Muslim peoples of the

worked with all the Russian commanders-in-chief in Caucasus in time. But, becoming disenchanted with the Russian rule in the region, he immigrated to Ottoman lands with his people. He was also promoted to the rank of Paşa in the Ottoman Army. See *General Musa Kundukov'un Anıları*, and Ramazan Traho, “Circassians”.

¹⁴³ For the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 see W.E.D. Allen and Paul Muratoff, 1953. *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border, 1828-1921*, Cambridge:

Russian Empire, it is difficult to talk about the existence, or the effects, of any kind of reformist movement in the region. Moreover, we have no concrete information related to the effects of the main reformist movement of Russian Muslims ‘*Cedidizm*’ on the peoples of the North Caucasus.¹⁴⁵ Thus, beyond the small groups of elites who belonged to privileged and wealthier families educated in Russian schools, the Mountaineers did not create a class of intelligentsia who could lead the society.

When the February Revolution broke out, there was a handful of people who had a modern European education, most of them whom studied in Russian schools. This so-called ‘intelligentsia’ or ‘elite’ tended to have close relations with Russian circles and, can be classed into two distinct groupings, each having almost diametrically opposed world outlooks. The first group was aligned with the leftist Russian political parties, especially the Socialist Revolutionary party, and the other consisted mostly of middle-ranking officials belonging to the influential nobility who were faithful to the Tsar and the Russian Empire. Beyond their reputation, which is carried almost exclusively by their family name, these people had almost no contacts with the masses.¹⁴⁶ In addition to these groups, there was a group of wealthier landowners and merchants who had a basis among the peoples of the North Caucasus. These groups carried out their political works within the Russian

Cambridge University Press, 105-201 and for the Mountaineers’ part in this war see Musa Kundukov.

¹⁴⁴ Broxup, 120-121.

¹⁴⁵ For *Cedidizm* and its effects, primarily on Crimean Tatars see Hakan Kırmılı, 1996. *National Movements and National Identity among the Crimean Tatars, 1905-1916*, Leiden: E.J. Brill.

political parties and local non-political charity organizations, like Dagestan Islamic Charity Organization¹⁴⁷. Beyond these groups, as was the case in the other parts and among the other peoples of the Caucasus, there were no Bolsheviks and thus Bolshevik organization among the North Caucasian Mountaineers.¹⁴⁸

Because of this diversity it seemed difficult to establish an earnest and unified nationalist organization in the North Caucasus during that period. The political milieu in the empire, however, forced at least some of the intellectuals to think about the situation in Russia and its effects in the North Caucasus. Thus on 19 March 1917¹⁴⁹, several respected North Caucasian intellectuals, most of whom were lawyers educated in St. Petersburg, created a 'Provisional Central Committee of the Mountaineers of the Caucasus' in Vladikavkaz.¹⁵⁰ It was presided over by a Socialist Revolutionary Bassiat Abayevich Chakhanov, a Balkar. This Committee, which aimed to organise a general congress of Mountaineers and establish an

¹⁴⁶ İ. Berkuk (Berkok), September 1934. "Büyük Harpte [334] Şimalî Kafkasyadaki Faaliyetlerimiz ve 15. Fırkanın Harekâtı ve Muharebeleri," *94 Sayılı Askerî Mecmua'nın Tarih Kısmı*, (İstanbul), 35: 15. Hereafter "15. Fırkanın Harekâtı".

¹⁴⁷ Mustafa Beştoy, May/July 1965. "Ahmet Avar'la Bir Mülakat," *Birleşik Kafkasya*, (İstanbul), 4: 49-51. For the emergence and the course of political organizations and activities in early 20th century see *Severnyi Kavkaz v Period Revoliutsii 1905-1907gg: Mezhevuzovskii sbornik statei*, 1981. Krasnodar: Kubanskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet.

¹⁴⁸ A. Magoma, January/March 1954. "Kafkas Katliamının X. Yıldönümü," *Birleşik Kafkasya (Vereinigtes Kaukasien)*, (Munich), 1/3 (30/32): 6. Balo Bilatti, February/March 1966. "Şimali Kafkasya ve 11 Mayıs 1918," *Birleşik Kafkasya*, (İstanbul), 7: 6-11.

¹⁴⁹ See *Compte-Rendu des Assemblées des Peuples de la Ciscaucasie et de leurs Travaux Legislatifs*, 1918. Constantinople: Publié par le Comité des Emigrés Politiques de la Ciscaucasie en Turquie, p V. Hereafter, *Compte-Rendu*. D. Halidov, "Istoricheskaia Spravka o Gorskoy Respublike 11 Maia 1918 goda i Politiko-pravovye Aspekti Anneksii Gorskoy Respubliki" in *Sbornik Materialov 1-i Nauchno-prakticheskoi Konferentsii na Temu: «Istoriia Gorskikh Narodov Kavkaza (1917-1920 gg) i Nezavisimaia Gorskaia Respublika 11 Maia 1918 goda»* (Makhackala, 1992), p 55. Hereafter, *Sbornik*.

¹⁵⁰ *Compte-Rendu*, V and Kurtatag, 26 March 1927. "Istoricheskie Zadachi Gortsev Kavkaza," *Vol'nye Gortsy*, (Prague), 1: 5. Hereafter "Zadachi".

umbrella organization, consisted of 16 members, most of whom were liberal and wealthier landowners and socialists.¹⁵¹

A-The First Congress of the Peoples of the North Caucasus:

The Provisional Committee managed to convene the First Congress of the Peoples of the North Caucasus in d'Olynski gymnasium in Vladikavkaz between 1-7 May 1917.¹⁵² This Congress, with the participation of more than 300 delegates, was the first overall meeting of Mountaineers from the shores of the Black Sea, to the Caspian. Representatives of the Circassians, Dagestanis, the Abkhaz, and even the Turkmens and Nogays took part. Moreover, on behalf of the State Duma, M. A. Karaulov, a Cossack, and N. N. Nicolayev; representatives of the Armenians, Azerbaijanis; representatives of the Soldiers and the Social Democrats joined the Congress and made speeches.

The delegates to the Congress, after questioning the Tsarist administration and oppression, defined the Revolution as a 'miracle' and utilized the *mottos* of the French Revolution, 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' in each and every occasion. In line with that, the basic aim of the Congress emerged as the establishment of a union of all the peoples of the North Caucasus, including Nogays and Turkmens.

¹⁵¹ The members were Abdulmejid Tapa Chermoev [Çermoy], Prince Reshid Khan Kaplanov, Beshir Dalgat, General T. Ukurov, S. Kochenov, Tavsultan Chakmanov [Şakman], Tajeddin Pensulayev, M. Chermoev, S. Thostov, G. Ahriev, Ch. Arsamakov, Prince T. Alhazov, B. Lianov, A. Khanukov and I. Abayev. *Compte-Rendu*, V-VI and 136-7. G. K. I. Kakagasanov also given these names, except M. Chermoev, S. Thostov, G. Ahriev and Ch. Arsamakov in "Pervye O'ezdy Gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza i Dagestana/Politicheskaiia Platforma, Programma i Konstitutsiia Gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza i Dagestana," in *Sbornik*, 11-23.

¹⁵² *Compte-Rendu*, and Kurtatag, p. 5. Also see, Dr. Edige Kırımal, May 1953. "Şimali Kafkasya'nın İstiklalinin 1918 Yılında Türk ve Alman Matbuatındaki Akisleri," *Birleşik Kafkasya (Vereinigtes Kaukasien)*, (Munich), 5 (22): 7-12. A. Magoma, January-March 1954. "Kafkas Katliamının X. Yıldönümü," *Birleşik Kafkasya (Vereinigtes Kaukasien)*, (Munich), 1/3 (30/32): 4-8 Hereafter "Katliam".

They believed that all the rights and freedoms that were attained as a result of the February Revolution could become absolute. In this Congress, through different commissions¹⁵³, Mountaineers tried to analyze each and every aspect of the possible state structure and daily life of the Mountaineers. Moreover, as it was stressed by one of the delegates, through the Congress “the peoples of the North Caucasus that are differentiated from the perspective of language, are, now getting together and uniting on the basis of philosophy of life, traditions and customs and common interests.”¹⁵⁴

At the end of the Congress, Mountaineers proclaimed the establishment of the Alliance of the Unified Mountaineers of the North Caucasus and Dagestan (*Soyuza Ob’edinennikh Gortsev Severnogo Kavkaza i Dagestana*).¹⁵⁵ In this framework, the Congress prepared a political program and a draft Constitution¹⁵⁶, in which the Alliance accepted itself as a constituent part of Russia, and undoubtedly agreed with the ideals of the Revolution. In addition, until the convocation of the new Russian Constituent Assembly, it recognized the Provisional Government in St. Petersburg as the sole legitimate authority and declared their commitment to continuing war, and opposition to any kind of counter-revolutionary activity.¹⁵⁷

The first and the foremost priority of the Congress was the establishment of a Federal-Democratic state structure in Russia. Within the program, Mountaineers

¹⁵³ Political and social, agricultural, judicial, religious or spiritual, educational and financial commissions. *Compte-Rendu*, 48.

¹⁵⁴ Barasbi Baytugan, 1970. “Kuzey Kafkasya,” *Dergi*, (Munich), 16(61): 8.

¹⁵⁵ B. O. Kashkaev, 1963. *Bor’ba za Sovety v Dagestane (1917-1920 gody)*, Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoy Literatury, 39. Hereafter *Bor’ba*.

defined Russia as a ‘big mosaic’ and demanded autonomy and self-governance for their own territories. Therefore, the Congress was asking for the North Caucasus, to be accepted as a separate member of the new federal-republican Russian government, and for the restoration of the territories of the peoples of the North Caucasus which were confiscated by the Russian Treasury.¹⁵⁸

In order to administer the affairs of the newly established Alliance constitutionally, the Congress proposed the formation of a ‘Representative Committee’ and of a ‘Central Committee’ (*Tsentral’nyi Komitet*) as the Alliance’s legislative and executive bodies respectively.

In compliance with the principle of one delegate for every 15,000¹⁵⁹ people, 17 names, representing different constituent parts of the Alliance, were chosen as the members of the Central Committee.¹⁶⁰ It is interesting to note that this committee is a reflection of the strong will of all the different peoples to form a comprehensive union, the representatives of the different peoples of the North Caucasus, who had different ideological and political stances were elected to the Central Committee. Some pro-socialist names like B. A. Chakhanov and Makhach

¹⁵⁶ For the full text of political platform and program see *Sbornik*, appendix no. 2: 71-74. For the analysis of the Congress see Ali Sultan, May 1934. “11 Mayis 1918,” *Şimali Kafkasya/Severnyy Kavkaz*, (Warsaw), 1: 3. For the text of the Constitution see *Compte-Rendu*, 139-144.

¹⁵⁷ *Compte-Rendu*, 139.

¹⁵⁸ *Compte-Rendu*, 16-18.

¹⁵⁹ See *Compte-Rendu*, 54 and B. O. Kashkaev, 1972. *Ot Fevralya k Oktyabriu (Natsional’no-Osvoboditel’noe Dvizhenie v Dagestane)*, Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 35. Hereafter *Ot Fevralya*.

¹⁶⁰ As the representatives of the province of Dagestan; B. Dalgat, Makhach Dakhadayev, Nuh Bey Tarkovskiy, Haydar Bammatov, Zubeyr Temirhanov, and Efendiyev. From the province of Terek; Pshemaho Kotsev (as the representative of the Kabardinians), M. Mollayev (Balkars), R. H. Kaplanov (Kumuks), A. T. Chermoev (Chechens), Vassan Girey Jabagiev (the Ingush), El. Britayev (Osetians). As a representative of the Karachays, Halid-Haji Erkenov; for Nogays M. Muhsinov and for the Abkhaz S. Bassaria. The names that would have represent Circassians, Abazins and the peoples of the Zakatala region would have been nominated later on by the peoples of the each region. *Compte-Rendu*, 153-154.

Dakhadayev¹⁶¹; nationalists Haydar Bammat¹⁶², Abdulmejid Chermoev¹⁶³ and Vassan-Girey Jabagiev¹⁶⁴; and some former pro-Tsarist military names like Reshid Khan Kaplanov and Nuh Bek Tarkovskiy¹⁶⁵ could easily find a place in this Central Committee.

The basic task of the Committee was the creation of a consciousness, among the Mountaineers of the North Caucasus, about the basic principles of the Revolution, and in this context, to prepare the population for elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly. This meant securing the election of the ‘genuine’ representatives of the Mountaineers to the Constituent Assembly. More than that the committee was responsible “to ensure order within the Union and maintain good relations with the surrounding Caucasian nations.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Makhach (Magomed Ali) Dakhadayev, (1882-1918), Avar. He was born in the village of Untsukul. He married with sheikh Shamil’s grand-daughter Nefiset. After 1905 Revolution, because of his socialist ideas, exiled outside of the North Caucasian territory. After the February Revolution he became one of the most ardent Bolsheviks and the first president of the Communist organization in Dagestan. After his death, the city of Port Petrovsk was renamed as Makhachkale in his memoriam in 1921.

¹⁶² Haydar Bammat (1890-1965), Kumuk. He was born in Temir Khan Shura. After his basic education in Stavropol he studied law in St. Petersburg. Before the Revolution he had been working as a civil officer at the office Caucasian Viceroy.

¹⁶³ Abdulmejid (Tapa) Chermoev [Çermoy] (1882-1937), Chechen. He was born in Grozny as a son of Tsarist Army General. After his basic education in Vladikavkaz he graduated from the Russian Military School and he served in the Tsar’s Special Guard Regiment as a military officer in Petersburg between 1901 and 1908. Then he returned the North Caucasus and struggled for the right of Mountaineers to hold land in oil rich parts of the North Caucasus prior to 1917. And he became one of the most prominent Muslim oil tycoons.

¹⁶⁴ Vassan-Girey Jabagiev [Jabagi or Cabaği] (1882-1961), Ingush. He was born in the village of Nasır-yurt. He studied at the Russian Lyceum of Vladikavkaz, at the Polytechnic Institute of Riga and at the University of Jena in Germany where he received a Ph.D. in Agronomy in 1908. This earned him a position as an agricultural economist for the Ministry of Agriculture in St Petersburg, from 1908 to 1917. There he struggled for the right of Mountaineers and together with the Muslim deputies of the Duma achieved some success in forcing changes in local administrative practices.

¹⁶⁵ He was the representative of the ancient house of the Shamkal of Tarku who, for some centuries until the Russian conquest, had ruled the maritime Dagestan from the mouth of the Sulak as far south as the district of Kayakent.

¹⁶⁶ Haidar Bammate, 1929. *Le Caucase et la Revolution Russe (Aspect Politique)*, Paris: l’Union Nationale des émigrés de la Republique du Caucase du Nord, 38. For this text’s English translation, 1991. “The Caucasus and the Russian Revolution (from a Political Viewpoint),” *Central Asian Survey*, 10(4): 14.

The other important reference point for participants of the Congress was Islam. Islam, as was the case in Shamil's period, was still one of the most important determinants of the Mountaineer identity. During the Congress, on every occasion, each speaker made reference to Islam and the Islamic brotherhood. Moreover, the prominent religious leaders, i. e., sheikhs and mullahs from different sections of the region took an active part in the Congress and, through the Religious (or Spiritual) Commission, analyzed the religious issues and *Shari'a* thoroughly, and submitted a report to the Congress.¹⁶⁷

In addition to the colourful Central Committee, a 'Clerical Council' under the leadership of Najmuddin Gotsinskiy¹⁶⁸ was established and given the power to tackle spiritual issues.¹⁶⁹

The Congress, in general, served as a discussion platform for the different groups, from socialists to *tariqats*, and played a role, at least for a time, to coalesce these groups on the main ideology of North Caucasians: unification. The North Caucasus defined the rights and interests of all North Caucasian peoples, regardless of ethnic differences, as one and the same. From this perspective, the Congress could have been accepted as successful, and by the end of the congress, at least the participants thought they were showing to the entire world that the North Caucasus

¹⁶⁷ For the report of the Spiritual Commission see *Compte-Rendu*, 80-91.

¹⁶⁸ He also called as Sheikh Najmuddin of Hotso. He was born in 1860 as the son of a *naib* of Shamil, Dano Magoma, who surrendered to the Russians and later, sided with them during the 1877 uprising. Gotsinskiy was a distinguished Arabist and a talented poet. Having finished his education he joined the horse guards of the tsarist governor, was nominated a judge of the Dagestani National tribunal, and later became the 'chief *naib*' of the Koysubul region. In 1903, he spent three months in İstanbul, after which he was regarded by the Russian administration as an emissary of the Ottomans and was suspected because of several uprisings in 1905 and 1913 by the Russians.

¹⁶⁹ The names of other members of the Council were as follows: *Kadı* Abdulbeshir Dadayev Kazanichskiy and *Kadı* Jemaleddin Karabudakhtinskiy from the province of Dagestan; Abubakir Tsalikov (Osetian), Ilyas Akgaliev (Ingush), Hasan Haji and Abdulkadir Haji (Chechens), Alikhan

was “one and vigorous nation”,¹⁷⁰ which did not discriminate on ground of race and religion.

After the formation of the Alliance, the Central Committee faced two immediate problems: land and the army. A solution to the former problem, according to Pshemaho Kotsev¹⁷¹, would only be possible with the solution of the latter.¹⁷² By May 1917, the Central Committee still had almost no military power of its own and apparently the existence of deserting Russian soldiers from the Caucasian front was threatening the North Caucasus.¹⁷³

As an immediate and basic solution, the Central Committee decided to ask the new Russian administration for the return of the Caucasian Cavalry Division, which consisted of 6 regiments¹⁷⁴, to the homelands. To this end, the Central Committee issued a declaration and authorized Kotsev to carry out negotiations with the Russian Provisional Government on 30 June 1917.¹⁷⁵ He talked with Kerensky but failed to ensure the return of the Division. Kornilov’s unexpected coup attempt made the return of the Division possible only in October 1917.

Chaganov (Kabardian) from the province of Terek; Abdulsalih Tangatarov from the province of Stavropol.

¹⁷⁰ Aziz Meker, August 1953. “Kafkas,” *Kafkas Dergisi*, (İstanbul), 1(8): 9. Hereafter “Kafkas.”

¹⁷¹ Pshemaho Kotsev [Kosok], (1887-1962), Kabardian. He was born in Nalchik. He studied law in St Petersburg. Before the revolution he had been working as a lawyer in Yekaterinodar and after the February Revolution, in order to join the Congress, he came to Vladikavkaz.

¹⁷² P. Kosok [Kotsev], 1955. “Revolution and Sovietization in the North Caucasus,” *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 1: 47-54 and 1956, 3: 45-53. Hereafter Revolution and Sovietization I and II respectively.

¹⁷³ Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization I,” 50-51.

¹⁷⁴ The North Caucasian Cavalry Regiment, which was established during the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 and because of its success it was enlarged to a Division, that was consisted of 6 regiments: the Dagestani, Kabardian, Chechen, Circassian, Ingush and Tatar. Mikhail Aleksandrovich, the Tsar’s brother commanded this Division, until General Bagration replaced him. The last commander of the Division was General Polovtsev. See İ. Natırboff, 1955. “The Circassians’ Part in the Civil War,” *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 1: 138.

¹⁷⁵ Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization I,” 52.

Despite the contradicting attitudes of some officers, the majority of members of the Division constituted the main combating force of the Mountaineers.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, finding a solution to the land problem was more hardened issue and within this early period the Central Committee could, in fact, do nothing.

B-The Second Congress:

The Central Committee, during the First Congress, had planned to convene the Second Congress of the Mountaineers in the village of Andi in September 1917, in remembrance of *Imam* Shamil. It is important to note that, with the aim of electing delegates for the Second Congress, local meetings preceded this Congress during August 1917, and the members of the Central Committee were assigned to these meetings.¹⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the gathering of a mass of 20,000 people that was provoked by “the Muslim clergy, particularly of Nazhmuddin Gotsinskiy and Uzun –khadzhi, in order to demand that the independence of the Northern Caucasus be immediately proclaimed” and the threat of the newly emerging Communist elements headed by Celâl Korkmazov¹⁷⁸ made the convening of Congress in Andi impossible.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ For the role of the Cavalry and the Mountaineers in the Kornilov affair see Aytek Namitok, December 1958. “Ekim Devrimi’nin Çatıştığı Yollarda Kuzey Kafkasya Fırkası,” *Yeni Kafkas*, (İstanbul), 2(12): 82-5. Also see Natırboff, and Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization I”.

¹⁷⁷ Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization II,” 46-7.

¹⁷⁸ Celâl Korkmazov (1879-1938), Kumuk. He was born in the village of Kumtorkala. Because of his revolutionary activities in 1905 he exiled to Olonest but until 1917 lived in Paris and studied in Sorbonne. Following the February Revolution he turned back and participated to the Bolshevik Party.

¹⁷⁹ Related with the convention of the Second Congress there was a contradicting information. Several sources were given the date truly but, varying in the place, that is while some were giving Vladikavkaz, the others put the place as Andi. See Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization II,” 47; Kashkaev, *Ot Fevralya*, 42 and Kakagasanov, 19.

“The members of the Central Committee held a meeting and concluded that with such a crowd it would be impossible for the congress of accredited delegates to meet. ...It was decided that the congress itself would be held in Vedeno and the delegates would return there from Andi.”¹⁸⁰

This Congress was being perceived as the revitalization of the period and of the state of *Imam Shamil*, which was interrupted by the capture of Shamil¹⁸¹, and the Constitution of the Union, which was prepared by the First Congress, was finalized and ratified. The basic provisions and the charter on the basis of civil codes and local traditions were prepared. Najmuddin Gotsinskiy was elected as the *Mufti* of the entire population of the North Caucasus and Dagestan.¹⁸² Following the formation of the new Central Committee, which was consisted of five members, under the leadership of Abdulmejid Chermoev, the works of the Congress was ended.¹⁸³

In this early period the leaders of the movement, despite their varying ideologies had worked towards the ideal of establishing a unified administrative structure that would encompass the entire North Caucasus within a federal-democratic Russia. In order to represent the rights and interest of the North Caucasian peoples in the best manner possible they tried to create a unified body.

¹⁸⁰ Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization II,” 47.

¹⁸¹ Ahmed Magoma, 1957. “Komünistlerin İmam Şamil Hakkında Fikir Değişirmeleri ve Onun Sebepleri,” *Dergi*, (Munich), 3(8): 28, Hereafter ‘Şamil’ and Aziz Meker, “Kafkas,” 10.

¹⁸² The other names which were elected as Najmuddin Gotsinskiy’s religious staff as follows: Ali Haji Akushinskiy, Hasan Efendi Kakhbiskiy, Abusufiyan Kazanishchenskiy, Ulagay *Kadi* Urakhinskiy and Ali *Kadi* Kayaev. Kashkaev, *Ot Fevralya*, 45.

¹⁸³ For the passed resolutions of the Congress see Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization II,” 47-8.

C-Cossacks and the Mountaineers:

By September, nevertheless, the situation in the North Caucasus, in line with Russia in general, became more problematic. It is important to note that the Mountaineers were not alone in their struggle of self-governance within the North Caucasian territory. The forced emigration of the Mountaineers and the forced settlement of the Cossack and Russian populations already changed the demographic balance of the region. The living standards of the Cossacks were much higher than that of the Mountaineers. They were also better educated, had more land and greater privileges, and more importantly retained their military organizations.¹⁸⁴ After the revolution in February, through their own representative assemblies, called *Krug* in the Don and *Rada* in the Kuban, the Cossacks already started their own struggle in the region.¹⁸⁵

The Central Committee of the Union of the Mountaineers had been following the activities of the Cossacks closely and had close contacts with the newly establishing Cossack organizations. On the eve of the Bolshevik coup, the Central Committee officially asked for negotiations with the Cossacks in Vladikavkaz. As a result, in the same month, October 1917, the Alliance of the Mountain Peoples and the Terek Military Government established a new political

¹⁸⁴ In the course of the time, in late eighteenth century the Cossacks lost their autonomy. And more than that, the central government no longer allowed them to choose their *atamans*. Nevertheless, because of their primary role as the main servants of the Russian Tsars during the expansion of the Russian Empire towards southward, they allowed organizing themselves into eleven *voiskas* (an autonomous territory or community in which there were no class distinctions and no private land)—Don, Kuban, Terek, Astrakhan, Ural, Orenburg, Siberia, Transbaikal, Semirechie, Amur and Ussuri. Among them the Don and the Kuban were by far the most important. See James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, 1934. *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918. Documents and Materials*, California: Stanford University Press, 401-402. Peter Kenez, 1971. *Civil War in South Russia, 1918: The First Year of the Volunteer Army*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 37-39.

body, Terek-Dagestan Government (*Tersko-Dagestanskoe Pravitel'stvo*)¹⁸⁶, (which was to join the Southeastern Union (*Yugo-vostochniy soyuz*),¹⁸⁷ to counter the Bolshevik threat. The objectives of this new organ were the same as those of the congresses of Mountaineers and Cossacks previously determined: the establishment of the Russian Federal Democratic Republic, the approval of the autonomous position of the constituent members, and establishing administrative order over the territories of the new organ.¹⁸⁸

However, this new government did not last long. The Bolshevik coup took place, and on 6 November 1917, the Central Committee together with the Military Government of Terek Cossacks issued an extraordinary resolution.¹⁸⁹ They abolished their stillborn government, or union, and shared the responsibilities and sovereignty over their own regions with unclarified borders.¹⁹⁰ Then the majority of the Terek Cossacks, fearing that they would have to cede part of their land to the Mountaineers began to support the Bolsheviks. Thus, in November 1917 the

¹⁸⁵ Olga Andriewsky, spring 1979. "The Triumph of Particularism: The Kuban Cossacks in 1917," *Journal of Ukrainian Graduate Studies*, 6: 29-41. Also see W. G. Glaskow, 1972. *History of the Cossacks*, New York: R. Speller and Sons, 98-132.

¹⁸⁶ In that government, from the side of the Mountaineers, Pshemaho Kotsev, Haydar Bammatorov, Reshid Khan Kaplanov, Vassan Girey Jabagiev, B. Malachkhanov, Ibrahim Haydarov, H. Shakhshvarov and A. Butayev were chosen as the ministers, and Ali Khan Kantemir was nominated as the Speaker of the Parliament. *Sbornik*, 57; and Kashkaev, *Ot Fevralya*, 229-232.

¹⁸⁷ Richard Pipes, 1997. *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge Un. Press, 97 and Kurtatag, "Zadachi," 5-6. Related with the formation of this union also see Sefer E. Berzeg, November/January 1964-1965. "General Sultan Kılıç Girey (1917-1921 Yıllarında Kuzey Kafkasya- Bolşevik Rusya Mücadelelerinden Sahneler)," *Birleşik Kafkasya*, (İstanbul), 2: 50. Mirza Bala, 1958. "Kafkasya İstiklâl İlânının Kırkinci Yıldönümü Münasebetile," *Dergi*, (Munich), 4(12): 9.

¹⁸⁸ *Sbornik*, 56-57.

¹⁸⁹ *Sbornik*, appendix no. 3, 75. This resolution was being signed by M. A. Karaulov, B.I. Abramov, D. I. Elanskiy, S. A. Cherkasov, D. S. Tkachev and M. I. Gujev on behalf of Cossacks, and A. T. Chermoev, P. Kotsev, T. Alhazov, R Kaplanov, V. G. Jabagiev and T. Pensulayev on behalf of the Central Committee.

clashes between the Chechen-Ingush and Cossacks erupted over land dispute and these groups started to distance themselves from each other.¹⁹¹

2-From Central Committee to Provisional Government: November 1917-March 1918:

On 15 November 1917, in response to the above mentioned developments, the Central Committee of the Alliance of the Peoples of the North Caucasus, depending on the provisions of the Second Congress and its Constitution, decided to set up a republican-federal state structure in the territory of the North Caucasus. In compliance with the principles of self-determination and self-government, this new state structure was proclaimed one of the sovereign constituent members of the newly established Russian Federal Republic. The Central Committee renamed itself the ‘Provisional Government’ of this new state and elected Abdulmejid Chermoev as its president. This Provisional Government, according to the declaration, would have absolute executive power in the territory until such time as a new democratic centralized government was set up in Russia and accepted by all its component parts.¹⁹²

Throughout November and December 1917, the Provisional Government of the North Caucasian Mountaineers tried to establish contact with its constituent

¹⁹⁰ By issuing a Declaration on 1 December, the Cossacks of the Kuban *Voiska* were going to be established the Kuban Republic and its government under the leadership of L. L. Bych. See James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, 404

¹⁹¹ Pipes, *Formation*, 97-98 and Stephen Blank, 1994. *The Sorcerer as Apprentice, Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities, 1917-1924*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 37. Hereafter *Sorcerer*.

¹⁹² Vassan-Giray Cabađi [Jabagiev], 1967. *Kafkas-Rus Mücadelesi*, İstanbul: Bahar Matbaası, 84, and Vassan-Giray Jabagi (Cabađi)[Jabagiev], 1991. “Revolution and Civil War in the North Caucasus –End of the 19th- Beginning of the 20th Century,” *Central Asian Survey*, 10(1/2): 121. Also see Meker, “Kafkasya,” 13.

members and with the Cossacks. It defined its borders as those along the territories of Dagestan, six administrative units or the *okrugs* of the Tsarist Russia with a significant Mountaineer population, Karanogay area (*uchastok*) of the Terek district and, Nogay and Turkmen territories of the Stavropol *guberniya*. Zakatala¹⁹³ and Sukhum regions¹⁹⁴ were also defined as the natural parts of this new state but the final decision was temporarily abandoned by the Zakatala and Abkhaz national committees, which were under the control of Transcaucasian Government.¹⁹⁵ But in fact, the newly established Mountaineer government was far from taking necessary security measures and establishing law and order over its territories. The Central Committee still had no insufficient military power and failed to establish its own national army. Thus, in order to stop military clashes, secure its borders and guarantee its citizens' rights, the Mountaineer government tried to negotiate a friendship treaty and alliance with the Cossacks. Nevertheless, both groups had claims of sovereignty over the same territories, and thus, there was no excuse to clash on other grounds.

Following the formation of the Bolshevik government in November, throughout the last months of 1917, the course of events in the North Caucasus changed seriously. In addition to the Mountaineer-Cossacks clashes, and the

¹⁹³ In Zakatala region the overwhelming majority of the population was Avar who were settled in the region by Shamil after his capture of the territory from the Georgians.

¹⁹⁴ As it was pointed out above, Simon Basarya had joined the First Congress and placed in the Central Committee as a representative of the Abkhaz. However, the situation was more complex. The status of the Sukhum region still remained in question. Within the same period, the Abkhaz were struggling for the establishment of politically independent Abkhazia by all means within the Transcaucasian Federation. See Avtandil Menteshavili, 1995. *Trouble in the Caucasus*, New York: Nova Science Publishers.

¹⁹⁵ Kurtatag, "Zadachi," 7, and *Sbornik*, appendix no. 4, 76. Also see Cabaği, *Kafkas-Rus Mücadelesi*, 85.

emerging Bolshevik Caucuses, the reality of the dominance of anti-Bolshevik currents, particularly the Mensheviks and SRs, turned the Caucasus into the centre of the counter-revolutionaries.

The elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly took place on 13 November 1917¹⁹⁶. Nevertheless, because of the Cossack Russian majority, which was enhanced by the participation of deserting soldiers, the North Caucasians failed to win representation in the Assembly.¹⁹⁷ It is important to note that this meant that the Mountaineers' did not have a voice at the Russian Constituent Assembly. This contravened the principles of the congresses, and thus at the end of December, a provisional government of the Mountaineers took a step further and issued a declaration stating, that it had decided not to participate "... in the work of the Russian Constituent Assembly, and refused to surrender the right to determine the affairs of the North Caucasus to the Russian Constituent Assembly."¹⁹⁸ Bolsheviks' dismissal of the Constituent Assembly on 18 January 1918 strengthened this decision and enhanced the estrangement of Mountaineers from the Bolsheviks and their government. From this time on, they took up a position of active resistance and independence.

¹⁹⁶ These elections, because of the time shortage to make new arrangements for the Bolsheviks, were based on arrangements made under the Provisional Government. Therefore, Right SRs, with the peasant vote held the majority. The Constituent Assembly met on 18 January 1918 and refused to support Soviet power or the Bolshevik Government. As a response, Bolsheviks with the support of the Left SRs dispersed the Assembly. Related with the elections and the situation in the Caucasus in general see U.S. Government Intelligence Bureau's memorandums "on the Political situation in the Caucasus," *The National Archives*, (Washington DC), Records of Department of State, Inquiry Documents, "Special Reports and Studies", 1917-1919, MC 1107, Inquiry Documents: 768 and 770.

¹⁹⁷ The North Caucasian Mountaineers joined the elections within the region of Terek-Dagestan *okrug*, or election constituency. There were 11 different lists that were shaped by different political currents. For the analysis of the elections and the candidates in the North Caucasus and Dagestan see Kashkaev, *Ot Fevralya*, 197-199.

In the meantime, after the Bolshevik's declaration of withdrawal from the war and proposal to start peace negotiations caused the self-demobilisation of the Russian Army on the Turkish front. Thousands of deserting soldiers started to return north to their homes in Russia.¹⁹⁹ This made the situation in the Caucasus more complex. On the one hand, this had started to threaten public order in the Caucasus and caused an increase in the power of the Bolsheviks²⁰⁰, and on the other, it opened the way to the Caucasus for the Turkish Army and thus turned the struggle into an international one.

A- The Bolsheviks:

When the February Revolution took place in St. Petersburg, there was no Bolshevik organization of the Mountaineers in the North Caucasus. Moreover, nobody defined or declared himself as a Bolshevik.²⁰¹ Therefore, throughout 1917 it was very hard for the Bolsheviks to revolutionise the area, and the Bolsheviks sought to collaborate with any group that was available to form an alliance.²⁰² Most branches of the Soviets of the Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the region were in fact set up in the cities, heavily populated by Russians and Cossacks, such as Rostov, Yekaterinodar, Grozny, Vladikavkaz and Pyatigorsk most of which were controlled by the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries.

¹⁹⁸ Jabagi, "Revolution", 122.

¹⁹⁹ For the Caucasian front and the detailed course of fighting see W.E.D. Allen and Paul Muratoff, 1953. *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border, 1828-1921*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 447-450.

²⁰⁰ See Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization II,".

²⁰¹ A. Magoma, "Katliam," 6. Balo Bilatti, February/March 1966. "Şimali Kafkasya ve 11 Mayıs 1918," *Birleşik Kafkasya*, (İstanbul), 7: 8.

²⁰² Blank, *Sorcerer*, 36.

The first pro-Bolshevik socialist bloc was established under the leadership of Ulubiy Buynakskiy, with the participation of Makhach Dakhadayev, Celâl Korkmazov, Magomed Mirza Hizroev, Said Gabiev, Alibek Takho-Godi, Sultan Said Kazbekov, and some others in Temir Khan Shura in May 1917.²⁰³ As it was pointed above, this group had initially been working together with the other groups who played active part in the Alliance and, with the exception of Korkmazov they had no contacts with Bolshevik circles.

During the summer of 1917 the Bolsheviks adopted flexible tactics to cooperate with the socialist and non-party Mountaineers through the intensive work of Segei Mironovich Kirov. Kirov laid the basis, primarily among the Ingush, by propagating on their land problem with the Cossacks. In order to attract the masses, in August 1917 under the leadership of Celâl Korkmazov he instigated the establishment of the Dagestan Land Committee (*Zemel'niy Komitet*) to find solutions to the problems of the Mountaineers and so managed to gain some support from the Mountaineers.²⁰⁴ Moreover, Kirov succeeded in organising a 'front' party of Osetians, the *Kermen*, or *Chermen* to facilitate the process within the same period.²⁰⁵ Then he cooperated with the above mentioned bloc of local Muslim socialists, and turned them against Islamic conservatives, nationalists, and Tsarist groups. With the help of these names the Bolsheviks started to gain control

²⁰³ Kashkaev, *Ot Fevralya*, 12 and *Bor'ba*, 35.

²⁰⁴ The other names that had been working in this Committee were M. Dakhadayev, S. Gabiev, and some other well-known pro-Bolshevik names. Kashkaev, *Bor'ba*, 77.

²⁰⁵ *Kermen* was the first revolutionary movement or the party of the Mountaineers. It had established by mainly Osetians. It took its name from the legendary Osetian hero, Kermen, a slave, who had fought for his rights but killed by the opponents. Although this organization had no definite political program, it exercised considerable influence among the Osetian peasants, in favour of the Bolsheviks. In May 1918, most of the members of the organization joined the Bolshevik Party and formed Osetian Bolshevik organization. *The History of the Civil War in the USSR: The Great*

of the Soviets in the region, by the end of September 1917, and by early 1918 they had a considerable amount of support in these organizations and the city centres.²⁰⁶

This was detrimental step for the functioning of the Alliance and the Central Committee. Through the activities and new organizations of the Bolsheviks the leading cadre of the Alliance was scattered and the hostilities began to emerge.

At the end of January 1918, during a power struggle between the pro- and anti-Bolshevik Mountaineers, in order to consolidate their power in the North Caucasus, the Bolsheviks invited Russian political parties and Cossack representatives to a meeting called the First People's Congress of the Terek Region in Mozdok. Kirov and Buachidze organized this Congress, in order to combine forces against non-Bolshevik forces, the so-called 'invaders from the mountains'. At this congress, Pipes pointed out that, all the Russian political parties of the Terek Region; Mensheviks; Socialist Revolutionaries; Bolsheviks, as well as some radical Osetian parties (this would be *Kermen*), took part and formed the Terek People's Soviet (*Terskiy Narodniy Sovet*).²⁰⁷ The main concern in creating regional Soviet organs was to attract minorities and then to mobilize them against the anti-Bolshevik forces. From then on, Kirov and Ordzhonikidze were styled as the new

Proletarian Revolution (October-November 1917), 1946. (vol.2), Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 137. Also see Kashkaev, *Ot Fevralya*, 69.

²⁰⁶ For the emergence of Bolshevik supremacy see B. O. Kashkaev, *Bor'ba* and *Ot Fevralya*. Blank, *Sorcerer*, 36-7, and S. Blank, 1993. "The Formation of the Soviet North Caucasus 1918-24," *Central Asian Survey*, 12(1): 13-32.

²⁰⁷ Pipes, *Formation*, 196 and, Betal Kalmık, 1980. *Adiđe Devrim Hareketi Kabartay Balkar'da Devrim Mücadelesi*, İstanbul: Nibçeğu Yayınları, 19-20.

extraordinary commissars for the entire Caucasus, and enjoyed plenipotentiaries powers in the entire area and direct contact with Moscow.²⁰⁸

Following the conclusion of an agreement, in Brest-Litovsk on 3 March, the Bolshevik forces, under the command of Celâl Korkmazov occupied Vladikavkaz in the middle of March.²⁰⁹ There, they formed the Terek People's Soviet Socialist Republic (*Terskaya Narodnai Sovetskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika*) headed by Noi Buachidze with the aim of joining Soviet Russia.²¹⁰ Then the Bolshevik controlled military revolutionary soviets (*voenrevkoms*) were spread all around the North Caucasus.²¹¹

As a result, the members of the provisional government of the Mountaineers had to move to Nazran first and then to Temir Khan Shura.²¹² At the same time, while some members of the government were forced to turn back on their native regions to organise military formations against the Bolsheviks, others left the North Caucasus to search for economic and military aid.²¹³ Nevertheless during the last month of 1917, apart from the natives, the Cossacks and the Bolsheviks, a new force had taken position in the region. This was the Volunteer Army.

²⁰⁸ Blank, "Soviet North Caucasus," 13.

²⁰⁹ After the signing of Treaty, in compliance with the Bolsheviks' promises the soldiers from entire Caucasian front began to desert to the Russian territories. Most of these deserting soldiers were pro-Bolshevik and stayed in the North Caucasus. Thus, the baseless North Caucasian Bolsheviks of 1917 surprisingly owned an army of their own.

²¹⁰ Pipes, *Formation*, 197 and Kalmık, 21-2, pointed out that in this structure Osetians had 8, Ingush 3, Cossacks 8, Chechens 15, *inogorodnye* 15 and Kabardians 7 representatives respectively.

²¹¹ Kashkaev, *Ot Fevralya*, 105-107.

²¹² "It did this because part of the population in Vladikavkaz, which consisted of Russians, and also the entire garrison which had once belonged to demoralized sections of the old Russian Army, joined the Bolsheviks and seized the control of city." Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization II," 49.

²¹³ Cabađi, *Kafkas-Rus Mücadelesi*, 86-87 and Baytugan, "Kuzey Kafkasya," 9.

B-Volunteer Army (Dobrovol'cheskaia Armia):²¹⁴

The name Volunteer was used throughout the civil war period to refer to the army organized by General Alekseev, and subsequently expanded by the other generals, Kornilov and Anton Ivanovich Denikin. It was mainly an organization of officers. They created the Army, set its tone, determined its ideology, and always retained leadership in it. But the main combat force of this Army composed of neither officers nor Russian soldiers, it was made up rather of Kuban and Don Cossacks, and its official name became the Armed Forces of South Russia.²¹⁵

Following the Bolshevik coup in Petersburg, at the invitation of *Ataman* Kaledin²¹⁶, the Tsar's last Commander in Chief, General Alekseev arrived in Novocherkassk, the capital of the Don, on 15 November 1917. By the end of December, the other prominent names such as Kornilov, Denikin, Markov, Romanovskiy, and Lukomskiy who had been imprisoned at Bykov for their participation in the Kornilov affair²¹⁷ managed to escape from their confinement

²¹⁴ For the Volunteer Army, the first hand information could be reached from General A. I. Denikin, *Ocherki Russkoi Smuty*, Vol. II, pp.156-157. A shortened English version has been published in two volumes, General A. I. Denikin, 1922. *The Russian Turmoil*, London: Hutchinson and co., and, 1930. *The White Army*, London: J. Cape and co.

²¹⁵ Peter Kenez, 37, and George Brinkley, *Allied Intervention in South Russia, 1917-1921*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Un. of Notre Dame Press, 297. Hereafter *Allied Intervention*.

²¹⁶ Following the Bolshevik coup in Petrograd General Kaledin assumes control of the Don region by issuing a declaration on 7 November. And, "taking into consideration the extraordinary conditions of the moment and the lack of contact with the central authorities, [he]... assumes ...full executive power...The assumption of power is temporary and will last only until the Provisional Government and order in Russia are restabilised." For the text of the Declaration see, James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, 404.

²¹⁷ After the February Revolution, uncontrollable strikes and street demonstrations, so-called 'July Days' had created a crisis and the resignation of most of the Kadets caused the collapse of Provisional Government. As a result, Alexander F. Kerensky, the only member of the Petrograd soviet in the government as a war minister replaced Prime Minister G. Lvov. But the position that Kerensky stood related the war isolated him from all the Soviet Parties and the population in general. He insisted on fighting to victory, thus he had to turn to the army. At that point he made his mistake and in order to restore the discipline in the army, he appointed General Kornilov to the post

and arrived at Novocherkassk. These Tsarist generals get together with the intention of using the south eastern region as a base for gathering the remaining loyal elements to organize a coherent military power or an army. As Denikin himself pointed out, the first goal of the Volunteer Army was to stand against an armed invasion of Southern Russia by the Germans or Bolsheviks.²¹⁸ Then the ultimate objective, in compliance with the basic dictum of 'Russia One and Indivisible', was the restoration of a 'Free Great Russia'.

This had caused serious apprehensions among the Bolsheviks, and the *Sovnarkom*²¹⁹ declared war on the Cossack chiefs. Trotsky then ordered an offensive against the Cossacks.²²⁰ Thus, Bolshevik forces attacked in December 1917 and occupied Novocherkassk and the whole Don by February 1918. As a result, the generals and the Volunteer Army started to move southwards, towards the Alliance's territory. Consequently, the two rival groups clashed i. e. Bolsheviks and the Volunteers, in the North Caucasian territory and put the Mountaineers in a disturbing position.

By the early months of 1918, following the December 1917 declaration by the Mountaineers, the power configuration of the region changed severely. The Mountaineers started to loose their possible partners in the region one by one.

of Commander in Chief. This was resulted with a 'Kornilov Affair'. By the support of the Kadets and other royalists Kornilov moved towards Petrograd. Bolsheviks, despite the leadership cadre were being arrested or forced to leave the country, were utilized July Days in a best manner. They opposed Kornilov and took the lead in organizing the struggle against Kornilov. They organised a Red Guard amongst the workers; set up a Military Revolutionary Committee, secured the release of the Bolsheviks imprisoned in July. At the end Kornilov was arrested and the Bolsheviks gained more reputation among the soldiers and workers. See Richard Pipes, 1997. *The Russian Revolution, 1899-1919*, London: Harvill Press, 426-431.

²¹⁸ Denikin, *Ocherki*, 198-199.

²¹⁹ Council of People's Commissariats, which was the highest non-party official body.

Cossacks cooperated with the Volunteer Army and the Volunteer Army was acting together with the allied powers. Thus at the end, they had a last and only chance, to cooperate with the Turks.

C-Turkish Policy towards the Caucasus:

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Ottomans had always close contacts with the North Caucasus. Following the establishment of Russian rule in the region, a large number of Mountaineers were forcibly settled on the Ottoman lands and even participated in the political life of the Ottoman Empire. Initially they actively joined the anti-Russian campaigns, hoping to liberate the North Caucasus. Nevertheless, after the 1877-78 War, in compliance with Ottoman policy, they had to keep silent until 1908. From then on, with the help of a new regime North Caucasian émigré organizations began to emerge in İstanbul.

The Circassian Association of Union and Relief (*‘Çerkes İttihad ve Teavün Cemiyeti’*) was the first North Caucasian émigré organization in İstanbul.²²¹ This Association was established by Gazi Mehmet Paşa, the son of Imam Shamil, as a social organization which aimed to direct the Circassian community in exile, preserve linguistic and cultural peculiarities of the community, teach the national history, and maintain their distinct culture. Moreover, it is important to note that

²²⁰ Bunyan and Fisher, 407-9.

²²¹ For a detailed work on this association see Sefer E. Berzeg, 1985. *Gurbetteki Kafkasya'dan Belgeler* Ankara, 10-23. Vasfi Güsar, 1975. "Çerkes İttihad ve Teavün Cemiyeti," *Kuzey Kafkasya Kültürel Dergi*, 47: 28-37. Among the other Caucasian Associations in İstanbul, *İstanbul'da Kafkasyalılar Arasında Neşr-i Maarif Cemiyeti* and *Kafkas Teali Cemiyeti* could be mentioned. The former appears to have provided material assistance for the study of North Caucasian refugees in İstanbul, while the latter was another political extension of the same group. Sefer E. Berzeg, 6-7.

the organization, naturally, from the outset had a declared aim of seeing the motherland liberated.²²²

In compliance with the social objectives the Association began to publish an eight-page weekly paper *Guaze* (Guide) in April 1911 and more importantly:

“Circassians trained in İstanbul were sent by ÇİTC [i. e. ‘*Çerkes İttihad ve Teavün Cemiyeti*’] to found native language elementary schools in the Kuban for example, in the years 1910-12. The textbooks employed were developed in İstanbul. At this time a lycee and the teachers school was also established in Nalchik. As the Russian authorities moved after 1911 to force the withdrawal of Ottoman subjects who were engaged in such teaching endeavours, 36 local men were gathered and trained over a three month period.”²²³

Nevertheless, the last may be the most important objective of the Association. Liberation of the motherland did not develop as an objective until the beginning of the First World War. The confluence of interests brought the Association and the leaders of the ruling party of the Union and Progress into alliance, and the political activities of the emigres increased dramatically. Most of the members of these organizations, were in fact already party members.²²⁴ When the First World War broke out, these North Caucasian’s in exile had conceived a confederative state, which encompassed Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and the North Caucasus as a ‘buffer state’ between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Enver Pasha vehemently supported this idea and took an active part in the activities to

²²² For the objectives and the programs see above mentioned sources.

²²³ Lowell Bezanis, *Lazare of Levant: A Study of North Caucasian Organizing and Publishing Outside the USSR*, 36.

²²⁴ Among these names Hüseyin Tosun Şaplı, Field-Marshal Fuad Pasha, Rauf Orbay Abuk Ahmet Paşa, Aziz Meker, Bekir Sami Kundukh, Dr. İsa Ruhi Paşa were the most renowned. M. Aydın Turan, April 1998. “Osmanlı Dönemi Kuzey Kafkasya Diasporası Tarihinden: Şimali Kafkas Cemiyeti,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, 29(172): 50-59.

organize an anti-Russian movement in the Caucasus.²²⁵ In line with this the Turkish Army was ordered to be ready for an advance into the Caucasus to destroy Russia's war supply network.²²⁶

Meanwhile, by the beginning of the World War, the North Caucasian emigres, through the initiative of Enver Pasha, organized a 'Caucasus Committee' ('*Kafkas Komitesi*') in September 1915 in İstanbul.²²⁷ This Committee, by establishing special commissions, searched for support and patronage from the Central Powers in Vienna and Berlin in December 1915. In January 1916, it submitted a memorandum on the establishment of the Caucasian Confederation comprising Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the North Caucasus in the 'Captive Nations Congress' in Lausanne.²²⁸

However, in the summer of 1917, because of the Georgian-German rapprochement, this committee was scattered and each group founded their own organizations. The North Caucasians set up a 'Committee of North Caucasian Emigrants in Turkey' ('*Türkiye'de Şimali Kafkasya Muhacirlerinin Komitesi*').

²²⁵ Kurat stressed that, in August 1914 by the initiative of Enver Paşa, Fuad Paşa had organized a mission to the North Caucasus with the aim of carrying out the plan of establishing Islamic State under the authority of Ottoman Prince which encompasses Azerbaijan and the North Caucasus. Akdes Nimet Kurat, 1990. *Türkiye ve Rusya*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 500.

²²⁶ W.E.D. Allen and Paul Muratoff, 459-460.

²²⁷ Under the leadership of Field-Marshal Fuat Paşa, Georgians Prince Machabelli and Kamil Toghiridze; Azerbaijani Selim Bey Behbutov; North Caucasians Dr. İsa Paşa and Aziz Meker took part in this Committee. Dr. G. Jaschke, 1937. "1916 Lozan Kongresinde Rusya Mahkumu Milletler," *Kurtuluş*, (Berlin), 28: 17-21 and 29/30: 24-28 respectively: 17. Among these names Prince Machabelli had already had close contacts with Germans through the Georgian émigré organization that was established in 1905 in Berlin. See Fritz Fischer, 1967. *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, London: Chatto & Windus, 134.

²²⁸ For the congresses of Captive Nations see Jaschke, 20-21. For a detailed work on this issue also see M. Aydın Turan, September 1997. "Gothard Jaschke'nin Bir Makalesi," *Tarih ve Toplum*, 28(165): 13-21. Fritz Fisher asserted that Prince Machabelli drew up this idea or the plan of Confederation in September 1914. "His plan envisaged a neutral Caucasian Federation, with Georgia a kingdom under a west European prince, the Armenia and Tatar districts under a Mohammedan prince, while the so called mountain peoples were to be under a ruler chosen by themselves." 135.

This group was attentively observing the course of events in Russia and in parallel with that they established the ‘North Caucasian Association’ (*‘Şimali Kafkas Cemiyeti’*) in the spring of 1918.²²⁹ The chairman of this Association, Hüseyin Tosun (Şhaplı)²³⁰ Bey, was director of the Ottoman National Agency, the government’s press agency, and one of the prominent names of the political life in İstanbul. In this period, the leaders of the Association and the Ottoman government believed in the same cause of liberating the Caucasus, so there was no inherent conflict between the Turkish aims and the North Caucasians. For this reason, Hüseyin Tosun Bey and the North Caucasian Association played the roles of intermediary and conduit for the Mountaineers in the North Caucasus and the Ottoman government. And the Trabzon Conference, the first meeting place of these three groups became the intersection.²³¹

²²⁹ For the North Caucasian Association see Berat Bir, 1988. “Şimali Kafkas Cemiyeti ve Şubelerine Gönderdiği 1919 Tarihli Bir Talimname,” *Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür Dergisi* (İstanbul), 68/70: 12-14. Sefer E. Berzeg, 1991 “Şimali Kafkas Cemiyeti Nizamnamesi Hakkında Bazı Notlar ve Şimali Kafkas Cemiyeti,” *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, (Samsun), 3: 28-32. Mustafa Butbay, 1990. *Kafkasya Hatıraları*, Ankara: TTK Yayınları.

²³⁰ Hüseyin Tosun Şhaplı, his birth date was unknown. He was an interesting personality. Because of his revolutionary activities, he exiled to Tripoli in 1896. But he escaped to Europe and took part in the First Congress of Ottoman Liberals held in Paris in 1902. He was among the founding members of the *‘Teşebbüs-ü Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti,’* which was headed by Prince Sebahattin. He was involved in publishing the Association’s organ *Terakki*. In 1907 he travelled to Russia but arrested there. Then he returned to İstanbul and in 1908 was elected representative for Erzurum. Died in 1930.

²³¹ Later on after the collapse of the Union and Progress government, this Association changed its name to the Association of Relief for the North Caucasian Emigrants and closed on 21 June 1919 by the British and its leaders were exiled to Malta. The other names were as follows: Dr. Mehmed Reşid Bey, Bekir Sami Kundukh, İsmail Canbulat, Yusuf İzzet Paşa, Aziz Meker, Hüseyin Kadri Şhaplı, and Hayriye Melek Hanım

3- Independence: April 1918- November 1918:

A-The Conference of Trabzon:

It is important to note that the isolation of the Transcaucasian Republics was among the Ottoman war aims. The conference in Trabzon was organized to negotiate a separate treaty between the Turks and the Transcaucasian Commissariat (*Zakavkazskii Komissariat*)²³². During the negotiations in Trabzon, Turkish delegates, in line with this policy and with the help of the Azeris, insisted on the Transcaucasians' declaration of independence and declared that, if the Transcaucasians do not declare independence they would support the Brest-Litovsk Treaty was null and void.²³³

While the negotiations were going on, the North Caucasian delegation consisted of Abdulmejid Chermoev, Muhammed Kadı Dibirov and Haydar Bammat,²³⁴ who were chosen by the Provisional Government in Temir Khan Shura.²³⁵

In Trabzon, the North Caucasian delegation made a statement in which it pointed out that:

²³² The Transcaucasian Commissariat, or the Transcaucasian temporary government was established on 11 November 1917 in order to replace the already defunct *Special Transcaucasian Committee* or *Ozakom (Osobyi Zakavkazskii Komitet)* which had established in March 1917, following the abdication of the Tsar, in order to take all the civil authority in the region. The task of this temporary government was to maintain order until the time when the All-Russian Constituent Assembly had established a new government for the entire Russian State. For a detailed work on Azerbaijan and the Transcaucasian government see Tadeusz Swietochowski, 1985. *Russian Azerbaidzhan 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community*, Cambridge: Cambridge Un. Press, and Pipes, *Formation*, 193-5.

²³³ For the course of Conference and the Turkish side's attitudes see Kurat, 480-484 and W. E. D. Allen and P. Muratoff, 460-466.

²³⁴ Haidar Bammat, *Le Caucase*, 39-40 and "The Caucasus," 15. Şerafettin Erel, (1961), added the names of Ali Khan Kantemir and Zübeyr Temirhanov in *Dağıstan ve Dağıstanlılar*, İstanbul.

²³⁵ According to the statement that was given to the newspaper *Ati* on 27 April 1918, the representatives of the North Caucasus stressed that they left Vladikavkaz on 2 April. The route that they were followed was Temir Khan Shura-Baku-Gence-Tiflis-Batum-Trabzon. See A. Hazer Hızal, 1961. *Kuzey Kafkasya: Hürriyet ve İstiklâl Davası*, Ankara: Orkun Yayınları.

“Transcaucasia cannot exist as an independent state without links with the territory of the peoples of Daghestan and the North Caucasus. The creation of a unified Caucasian state is dictated by geographical, economic, strategic and political considerations. ...[W]e would like to believe that all the peoples of the Caucasus are motivated by the same burning desire to create the conditions favourable to peace, friendship and unity within the Caucasus, and to act as a unit in drawing up our foreign policies.”²³⁶

It is apparent that the mountaineers, on their way to Trabzon, had contact with the Dagestani and Azeri groups of the Transcaucasian Government. Bammat stressed that “in March ...the delegation of the government of the North Caucasus,... stopped in Baku and Tiflis to deliberate with the national councils, the different political parties and the government of the Transcaucasian Diet.”²³⁷ There it is possible that, against Georgian-German relations, the Azeris and the North Caucasians pro-Turkish stance was reiterated.

In Trabzon the parties could not reached any agreement. While the Transcaucasian delegation was turning to Tiflis to clarify their policy against Ottoman demands, the Mountaineers turned their faces decisively towards the Sublime Porte. They had a chance to meet with Enver Pasha in Batum²³⁸ and then, in order to establish some close contacts with the Ottoman government, they moved to İstanbul together with him and stayed in Perapalas.²³⁹

Following the arrival of the delegation, the Turkish media, with the initiative of the North Caucasian Association started to publish several articles and

²³⁶ Bammat, “The Caucasus,” 15 and Jabagi, “Revolution,” 124.

²³⁷ Kurtatag, 3 May 1927. “Istoricheskie Zadachi Gortsev Kavkaza II,” *Vol’nye Gortsy*, (Prague), 2: 3-4. Hereafter “Zadachi II”. Bammat, “The Caucasus,” 15.

²³⁸ At that time Enver Pasha, in order to appease the Ottoman-German dispute, had been making talks with a German General Hans von Seeckt. Kurat, 485.

²³⁹ *Tanin*, 26 April 1918, see Hızal, *Hürriyet ve İstiklâl*.

interviews with the delegates.²⁴⁰ In Istanbul the delegates, A. Chermoev, Muhammed Kadı, and Haydar Bammat met with the Grand Vizier Talat Paşa and Ministers of War, Enver Paşa and Naval Minister, Colonel Hüseyin Rauf Bey. The declared mission of the delegation was to conclude an agreement of cooperation and friendship with the Ottomans. In response, as Bammat stressed, the Sublime Porte gave its assurance that Porte was ready to recognize the independence of the Caucasian peoples and would take the necessary steps to obtain the same recognition from its allies. Then, after all these talks in İstanbul, the Union of the North Caucasian Mountaineers declared its independence by giving a diplomatic note to the world from İstanbul, on 11 May 1918.

“We, the plenipotentiary representatives of the government of the Union of the Native Peoples of the North Caucasus [*Şimalî Kafkasya Ahali-i Asliyyesi İttihadı*]²⁴¹ who have undersigned have the honour to declare these following points to the attention of all governments.

The peoples of the North Caucasus have elected a national assembly in concurrence with the appropriate procedures. This national assembly, which was gathered in May, and September 1917 had proclaimed the foundation of the Union of the Native Peoples of the North Caucasus, and delegated the executive powers to the current government whose members include the signatories below. The government of the Union of the Native Peoples of the North Caucasus, in the presence of prevailing anarchy in Russia, had acknowledged below-mentioned particulars relying on the right of determination of its own political future freely for the nations of Tsarist Empire which was affirmed by the Petrograd government:

1. The Union of the Native Peoples of the North Caucasus determined to separate from Russia and to establish an independent state of its own.

²⁴⁰ For the activities of the North Caucasian delegation and reflections to the Turkish media see A. Hazer Hızal’s serial article “Kuzey Kafkasya İstiklâli ve Türkiye Matbuatı, (1918),” published in a periodical *Birleşik Kafkasya*’s, (İstanbul), nos. 2-12, between 1964-1967 and A. Hazer Hızal, 1961. *Kuzey Kafkasya: Hürriyet ve İstiklâl Davası*, Ankara: Orkun Yayınları. To check the published articles see the newspapers *Tanin*, *Tasvir-i Efkar*, *Vakit*, and *Atı* between 26 April and 30 May 1918.

²⁴¹ In general, this Republic was known as the North Caucasian Mountaineer Republic. Although these representatives, most of the time, used the name North Caucasian Mountaineer Republic [*Şimali Kafkas Cibaliyyun İttihadı Cumhuriyeti*] in their correspondence with the Ottoman government, in this case they preferred this title.

2. The borders of the newly established state, in the north, will be the boundaries of the provinces and districts of Dagestan, Terek, and Stavropol of the former Russian Empire. The western and the eastern borders will be the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea respectively. The southern borders will be determined in compliance with further talks with the Transcaucasian government.

3. The plenipotentiary representatives, who have the signatures below, have been authorised to declare these above mentioned points and the foundation of the Union of the Native Peoples of the North Caucasus to the knowledge of all governments with this notification. In consequence, thereof, the undersigned proclaim that as of this date the Independent State of the North Caucasus has been duly established.”²⁴²

This declaration, in the words of Haydar Bammat, “was the logical consequence of and gave official sanction to the historical process which began with the century long fight for independence” against the Russian Empire, and by this declaration the peoples of the North Caucasus had “at last obtained tangible results” of their struggle.²⁴³ Within a year of this declaration, the Mountaineers, in order to survive as a sovereign entity on the North Caucasian geography, revitalised the idea of unification and the need to establish a single political body.

The Bolshevik government protested about the Ottoman policy in the Caucasus in a note dated 23 May. In this note the main concern was the Turkish Army and its operations. Later, the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs submitted another diplomatic note, on 30 May 1918, concerning the Mountaineers’ declaration of independence. In this note, Chicherin, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, denied the Alliance and the Mountaineer Government and thus the representatives who had signed the declaration. He mentioned the leaders of the

²⁴² This notification was signed by Abdulmejid Chermoyev and Haydar Bammatov and, published in the newspaper *Tasvir-i Efkar* and *Vakit* on 14 May 1918 in Istanbul. For the Russian text see Kurtatag, “Zadachi II”, 4.

Alliance as the ‘adventurous and deceitful gang’ and stressed that they could not have any legal right to represent the Mountaineers population.²⁴⁴

In addition, in order to prevent possible German acceptance of the new Republic, Chicherin sent a telegram, in which he reported the situation, to the ambassador of the RSFSR to Berlin on 31 May.²⁴⁵ The real protesting note however, was passed on almost half a year later, on 15 February 1919, to the last Ottoman ambassador to Moscow, Galip Kemali [Soylemezoglu] Bey.²⁴⁶ In all these documents, the leaders of the Mountaineer Republic were accepted as counter-revolutionaries and the Republic was defined as baseless. According to Moscow, the peoples of the North Caucasus have never accepted this so-called Republic and have even opposed it. It is interesting to note that the Turkish government, however, never replied any of these Bolshevik notes. Instead, Enver Paşa send a directive to Galip Kemali Bey on 19 July 1918 and asked for efforts to obtain Bolshevik acceptance for these new Republics. But this never happened and both of Ottoman and Bolshevik governments began their own operations in the region.

The course of events in the Caucasus, interestingly enough, disturbed first and foremost the Germans, the biggest ally of the Ottomans. The basic reason behind this German upset was closely related to pre-war German plans to exploit the region economically. The region’s ores, oil, cotton, wool, and cereals, and in

²⁴³ Haidar Bammate, “The Caucasus,” 15.

²⁴⁴ Documents No 211 and 213 in *Dokumentiy Vneshniy Politiki SSSR*, 1957. Vol 1, Moscow: Gosudarstvennoy Izdatel’stva, respectively 335-338 and 338-9. Also see Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu, 1953. *30 Senelik Hatıralarımın Üçüncü Cildi 1918-1922*, İstanbul: Ülkü Yayınları, 49-50.

²⁴⁵ Söylemezoğlu, 49-50.

²⁴⁶ Söylemezoğlu, 59-65.

brief all the raw materials needed by German factories. Moreover, the Germans had an important political purpose, i. e. balancing Great Britain in India. In order to achieve this end, the Caucasus was seen as a bridge and main route to Persia and Central Asia. Therefore the Caucasus could not lie exclusively in Turkish hands.²⁴⁷

Thus to balance the Ottoman existence and power in the Caucasus, Georgia and the Georgians emerged as the main allies or the agents of Germans. The increasing Ottoman threat in fact made the Georgian leaders already more receptive to the Germans.

It was in this atmosphere that the interrupted negotiations of Trabzon were being reopened in Batum on 11 May 1918, the exact day of the North Caucasian declaration of independence. For this time, Ottoman and German interests were mutually exclusive and the Germans, through von Lossow,²⁴⁸ intervened in the negotiations. During the negotiations in Batum the main German objective was the internationalization of Batum, but the Turkish side naturally rejected it. Thus, the next best solution for the Germans remained concluding peace and alliance, and then to recognize Georgia. “Germans could then negotiate separately with Georgia and would thus not lose her *point d’appui* in the Caucasus.”²⁴⁹

In compliance with these developments, the Germans pushed the Georgians to declare their separation from the Transcaucasian republic and establish a

²⁴⁷ F. Fischer, *Germany's Aims*, 550-51.

²⁴⁸ He as a representative of German general staff was empowered to conclude the preliminaries of a peace between the German Reich and the Transcaucasian government on 29 April 1918. He was an uncompromising advocate of German supremacy in the Caucasus and was prepared to oppose Ottomans' plans flatly.

²⁴⁹ Fischer, *Germany's Aims*, 556.

sovereign state under the protection of Germany. Even, Chenkheldi proposed Georgian incorporation within Germany or some other form of union.²⁵⁰

Meanwhile the Germans also contacted the representatives of the Mountaineer Republic. Lossow opened separate negotiations with Haydar Bammat and offered him German recognition of North Caucasian independence. Moreover, as a political means of securing this end, Lossow proposed, a ‘politically skilful general’ and ‘if possible, two divisions should be sent to Novorossisk and Tuapse.

“The one way of ensuring the continued existence of the North Caucasian state was, he said, and Bammat expressly agreed with him, to attach it closely to the German state, not by an ordinary alliance, but by a close union, ‘unity of government on the highest level, of foreign policy, of currency, customs area, army and navy.’”²⁵¹

With the declaration, in İstanbul, of the independence of the North Caucasian Republic by the Mountaineers, and bid for help from the Great Powers, the situation in the North Caucasus was dramatic. The Bolsheviks already occupied the territory defined therein. The Bolsheviks, having captured Petrovsk, with the help of fresh troops sent from Astrakhan via Caspian, were moving towards Temir Khan Shura, the capital city of the newly established North Caucasian State. Therefore, most of the members of the Mountaineer government had already left the capital for the mountain regions of the North Caucasus or contingent areas.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ In the last part of May 1918, partly because of the Turkish pressures and partly the German activities the Transcaucasian assembly met to dissolve the republic and first Georgia on 26 May and then Azerbaijan and Armenia on 28 May declared their independence. While the Georgians asked Germany to take the country under its protection and the Armenians asked for help in their desperate situation, Azerbaijanis choose the Ottomans.

²⁵¹ Fischer, *Germany's Aims*, 556.

²⁵² Baytugan, “Kuzey Kafkasya,” 9 and Kurtatag, “Zadachi II,” 5.

Thus, confident of Ottoman support, on 12 May 1918 representatives of the North Caucasian government applied to the Porte and ask for help.²⁵³ In this recourse through its representatives, the North Caucasian Republic, having stressed the situation in the region and inadequate military resources in the Republic, asked for the deployment of troops to the region as quickly as possible. The Turkish government, naturally, replied immediately and, the Ministry of War issued its first order for military aid to North Caucasus.²⁵⁴ With that order, the Ministry proposed to send, one infantry, one cavalry division and one artillery regiment to the North Caucasus, initially. Furthermore, with that order, all the rights and responsibilities of the officers and troops sent to the region were defined.

At the beginning of May 1918, the Turkish Army initiated the second phase of the Transcaucasian offensive. The Ottomans concluded treaties of friendship and cooperation, first with the Azerbaijani and then the North Caucasian governments, on 4 and 8 June 1918 respectively²⁵⁵, in a bid to counter the growing Bolshevik threat and German influence²⁵⁶ in the region. By summer 1918 the situation in the region became more complex. While the Bolsheviks were trying to control the

²⁵³ The text of recourse which was signed by M. Karı (on behalf of Haydar Bammat) and A. Chermoev, the representatives of the government of the North Caucasus, dated 12 May 1334 (1918), to the Porte could be seen from Kurat, appendix no. 24, 671-72 and “Kuzey Kafkasya Cumhuriyeti, Azerbaycan ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Arasında Anlaşmalar,” autumn 1999, *Kafkasya Yazıları*, 7: 78-9.

²⁵⁴ The order no 2456 of the Ministry of War dated 13 May 1918. See M. Erşan, 1995. *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuzey Kafkasya Siyaseti (1914-1918)*, Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, 97-8.

²⁵⁵ For the text of the agreement Kurat, appendix no. 24, 672-674 and “Kuzey Kafkasya Cumhuriyeti, Azerbaycan ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Arasında Anlaşmalar,” autumn 1999. *Kafkasya Yazıları*, 7: 79. This treaty was being signed in Batum on 8 June 1334 (1918) by the Minister of Justice and the President of the Council of State Halil Bey [Menteşe] and Commander in-chief of Ottoman Armies on the Caucasian Front, Vehib Pasha, and H. Bammatov, A. Chermoev, Ali Khan Kantemir, Zubeyr Temirhanov and Mehmed Karı.

²⁵⁶ On 3 June, 2 German battalion sent from the Crimea, landed at Poti. This caused the emergence of something like a real conflict between the Turks and Germans. See Allen and Muratoff, 477 and Fischer, *Germany's Aims*, 560.

region with the military formations organized by Ordzhonikidze²⁵⁷, the Ottomans were organizing a Caucasian Army or the 'Army of Islam'.²⁵⁸ Nuri Paşa, the brother of the Enver Paşa, was appointed commander of this new Army and stationed in Gence. Moreover, a Circassian Ottoman, Yusuf İzzet Paşa who was one of the most prominent members of the North Caucasian Association, was appointed both military and political representative of the Ottoman government to the North Caucasian Republic.²⁵⁹

B-Bicherakhov and the British Forces:

In the meantime, an important new factor, the Allied Powers, especially the British, entered into events. The rapprochement between the Bolsheviks and the Germans, and the advance of Turkish troops towards the Caucasus, forced the allied governments to establish contact with anti-Bolshevik elements in the Caucasus. The British had tried to be influential by using a native actor: an ex-Tsarist officer Colonel Lazar Bicherakhov.

On 14 January 1918, Major-General Dunsterville was appointed Chief of the British Mission to the Caucasus and British representative at Tiflis. His sphere of operation was to extend over all Russian and Turkish territory, south of the main chain of the Caucasus over with the Transcaucasian Commissariat claimed

²⁵⁷ Blank, "Soviet North Caucasus," 13-14.

²⁵⁸ For a detailed information on the composition and the structure of the Army of Islam see İ. Berkuk, "15. Fırkânın Harekâtı", 7 and Allen and Muratoff, p.468.

²⁵⁹ In addition to Yusuf İzzet Paşa, some other Circassian officers of the Ottoman Army, as such İsmail Berkuk (or Berkok), also send to the region with an official duty of establishing North Caucasian Army. In addition to the above-mentioned article of Berkuk see Kaymakam Mehmed Tevfik [Bıyıklıoğlu], 1927. "Şimalî Kafkas Muharebeleri," *Askerî Mecmua*, (İstanbul), 64: 129-157. E. Kur. Yb. Süleyman İzzet, October 1936. "Büyük Harpte (1334-1918) 15. Piyade Tümenin Azerbaycan ve Şimali Kafkasya'daki Hareket ve Muharebeleri," 103 *Sayılı Askerî Mecmua'nın*

control.²⁶⁰ Dunsterville took the command of a spearhead force of some 12 officers, 41 men, and 41 Fords that left Baghdad on 27 January 1918²⁶¹ and arrived in Enzeli, the port city at the south of Caspian Sea, on 17 February 1918. There, he met with Bicherakhov and decided to co-operate with him to ease his introduction to the Caucasus, primarily Baku. As a result, on 5 July, Bicherakhov landed with his Cossacks at Alyat, a point some 40 miles south of Baku.²⁶² Because of the presence of the Turkish Army, he changed his plan and instead heading towards Baku, turned northward towards Derbent, the gate to the North Caucasus. He captured the city on 12 August and was stationed in Petrovsk by the beginning of September. Meanwhile, although Dunsterville, with an incomplete brigade, had arrived in Baku he decided in desperation that further efforts to hold Baku would be a waste of time and of British lives. He left the city before the Turkish forces captured it. Thus, by September 1918, Bicherakhov became the only remaining British foothold in the region.²⁶³

This internationalization of the Caucasus made the North Caucasus uncontrollable. The initiators of the Congresses and the Alliance were diffused and the leading cadre of the newly established Republic was far from controlling the region. Moreover they had to move outside the territory of the Republic and they

Tarih Kısmı, (İstanbul), 44. Halil Bal, 1997. "Kuzey Kafkasya'nın İstiklâli ve Türkiye'nin Askeri Yardımı, 1917-1918," *Kafkas Araştırmaları III*, (İstanbul), 29-91.

²⁶⁰ Richard H. Ullman, 1961. *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921: Intervention and War*, Vol.I, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 305.

²⁶¹ For the mission and the operation of the Dunsterforce see, L.C. Dunsterville, 1920. *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*, London: Edward Arnold.

²⁶² He had an army of 1200 Cossacks and six guns. Allen and Muratoff, 488.

²⁶³ For the telegram on Bicherakhov dated 7 September 1917, from the North Caucasian Command to the Caucasian Islam Army see Erşan, 90-94.

tried to reclaim their state from Tiflis and other cities outside the North Caucasus.²⁶⁴

This openly caused the emergence of local rulers. Some of the names, who had played an active part in the events of 1917, lacked information on the activities of the representatives of the Mountaineer Republic outside. They started to explore the possibilities of establishing their own authority. As such, in Dagestan Nuh Bey Tarkovskiy, with the support of Ali Hasanov and Colonel Resul Kaytbekov declared himself dictator in the city of Temir Khan Shura. His declaration was made in collaboration with the Turks, but with the arrival of the Bicherakhov he changed his stance without any hesitation. After the talks, Tarkovskiy and Bicherakhov agreed to share authority over Dagestan whereby Bicherakhov would control the coast and Tarkovskiy the interior. The British hoped to use Tarkovskiy's bands to put an end to Bolshevism in Dagestan and pronounced Prince Tarkovskiy the provisional military dictator of Dagestan.²⁶⁵ In the beginning Tarkovskiy did not upset his allies and in compliance with this agreement, clashed with the Bolsheviks and killed one of their most prominent members who was a participant in the North Caucasian Conference in May, Dakhadayev.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ “This happened, -wrote Sergei Kirov,- when the so-called Mountaineers’ Government (or the government of the ‘Orient’ hotel) upon selling North Caucasus to Vehid [Vehib] Pasha under a treaty of ‘Peace and Friendship’, was brought in on the bayonets of the Turkish askars aimed against revolutionary Dagestan, and, trampling upon the dead bodies of revolutionary mountaineers headed by comrade Dakhadayev, set itself up in Temir-Khan-Shura.” M. A. Daniyalov, 1982. *Soviet Daghestan in Foreign Historiography*, Moscow: Nauka Publishing House, 27.

²⁶⁵ Brinkley, *Allied Intervention*, 69-70.

²⁶⁶ Daniyalov (33), quoted from the letter to Ordzhonikidze from Lenin dated 12 October 1918. “Bicherakhov on British orders is retaining the coast of the Caspian Sea, including Derbent and Port-Petrovsk. The officer bands of Bicherakhov-Tarkovsky brutally tortured and murdered the most popular Soviet functionary in Dagestan engineer Dakhadayev. Socialist Dagestan has suffered a grave loss.”

During this period, leaders of the North Caucasian Republic were, naturally, collaborating with the Turks. In order to coordinate the activities of Ottoman armies in the region, two representatives of the government, Pshemaho Kotsev and Vassan Girey Jabagiev came to Tiflis. From there, it was planned to organize a military expedition to Dagestan, relying mainly on a battalion mainly of Turkish Circassians, led by Yusuf İzzet Paşa.²⁶⁷ Turkish occupation of Baku on 15 September 1918 gave them a big advantage over other groups. In this period, the president of the North Caucasian Republic, Abdulmejid Chermoev had always travelled with Yusuf İzzet Pasha and on 2 October they moved to Baku from Batum together. As a result, the second phase of the advance of the Turkish troops went northwards, to Derbent and Petrovsk. They captured Derbent on 6 October 1918, and Yusuf İzzet Paşa, together with A. Chermoev arrived in the city on 10 October and Tarkovskiy also joined them. The official independence ceremony of the North Caucasian Mountaineer Republic, with the participation of Nuri Paşa, the Commander of the Army of Islam, was held five months later and the official flag of the Republic was hoisted on 13 October 1918.²⁶⁸

During this ceremony Chermoev appealed to the population of the North Caucasian Republic to support its government's efforts to establish law and order and to lead the country to the Constituent Assembly. In this appeal, a program of

²⁶⁷ The first Turkish military mission that was composed of 3 officers, Muzaffer, Mithat and İ. Berkuk arrived in the North Caucasus region from Azerbaijan and settled in Gunib in early June 1918. See, Berkuk, "15. Fırkanın Harekâti", 25; and Jabagi, "Revolution," 124-5.

²⁶⁸ Berkuk, "15. Fırkanın Harekâti", 73.

the government's policy that was based on strictly democratic principles was also introduced.²⁶⁹

On the same day, in a meeting, which included Chermoev and other Ottoman officers, the situation in the region was evaluated. The existence of Bicherakhov and his troops in Petrovsk was recognised as a big threat to the survival of the North Caucasian Republic. Therefore, as a next step, it was decided to move towards Petrovsk. Accordingly, the 15th infantry division remained under the command of the North Caucasian Army for a time.²⁷⁰ A letter was sent to Bicherakhov asking him to evacuate Petrovsk on 17 October 1918. In his reply, on 16 October, he not only refused to abandon Petrovsk but also threatened to attack Derbent. In response, the Republic and its army sent a final ultimatum and ordered him to evacuate the territory by 20 October 1918.²⁷¹

Unfortunately at that time, the Republic was faced with the difficulty of creating a state with the help of Ottoman military support. Because of failures on other fronts, the Union and Progress Party Government, chaired by Talat Paşa, resigned in the beginning of October and the newly appointed Grand Vizier Ahmet İzzet Paşa ordered the abolishment of the Caucasian armies and the retreat of troops.²⁷² The armistice of Mudros, moreover, signalled the end of the short time success.

²⁶⁹ Jabagi has given the date as 12 October, "Revolution," 125. In Derbent in addition to Chermoev, Yusuf İzzet Pasha and Nuri Pasha made speeches. The President of the North Caucasian Mountaineer Republic Abdülmejid Chermoev issued a call for the help of the peoples for the restoration of order and supporting the national assembly. Cabaği, *Kafkas-Rus Mücadelesi*, 90.

²⁷⁰ Berkuk, "15. Fırkanın Harekâtı", 74-5 and Erşan, 107.

²⁷¹ For these letters see Erşan, 108-112 and the Appendix no.5, 169-171.

²⁷² Berkuk, "15. Fırkanın Harekâtı", 95.

Despite the order of retreat and armistice, the Turkish army, accompanied by the troops of the North Caucasian Republic, carried out the operation and captured Temir Khan Shura on 31 October. Then, in order to secure the previously defined geographical space, the troops, as was planned, turned towards Petrovsk. The last note signed by Yusuf İzzet Paşa, the Commander in Chief of the North Caucasian Army to Bicherakhov was sent via the Commander of 15th Infantry Regiment Süleyman İzzet Bey on 27 October 1918. He again refused to evacuate.²⁷³

The last operation of the Turkish Army in North Caucasus began on 5 November 1918. Bicherakhov's primary support, the British, sent help via the Caspian Sea. When the British reached Petrovsk on 6 November the city was already under heavy artillery fire and Bicherakhov was advised to evacuate. The North Caucasian Army's troops captured Petrovsk on 8 November 1918.²⁷⁴

From then on, the leaders of the Republic attempted to establish authority over the territories of the Republic and a fully functioning state structure. On 12 November 1918, in a meeting of representatives of the North Caucasus and Dagestan, President Chermoev made a speech and submitted a report concerning the activities of his government. This Assembly first changed the name of Petrovsk to Shamilkale (from Sheikh Shamil) and then the representatives, based on this report issued a resolution reiterating the reliance of the peoples of the North

²⁷³ For the text of note see Erşan, 122. For the capture of Petrovsk A.N. Kurat has given the date 6 November, but A.H. Hızal 7 November and, M. Erşan 8 November. For the last days and hours of Bicherakhov in Dagestan have been described in detail in the recollections of the British Lieutenant-Colonel F. French, who was with the British squadron and personally took part in negotiations with Bicherakhov. F. French, 1920. *From Whitehall to the Caspian*, London.

Caucasus on the government. Moreover the government was charged with the duty of defending the country's independence that and ensuring the worldwide acceptance of this independence.²⁷⁵

While the Turkish troops were preparing to evacuate the North Caucasus, the new Allied forces, mainly composed of British forces, set sail from Enzeli to Baku, in 20 ships, with Bicherakhov's troops, under the command of General V. M. Thomson on 16 October 1918. The immediate goal of the expedition was to enforce the Armistice and to expel any remaining Turks or Germans in the area.²⁷⁶

This was still not the end of Turkish action in the area. Before the evacuation of the troops Yusuf İzzet Pasha concluded a treaty with the North Caucasian government.²⁷⁷ Accordingly, the Ottoman and the North Caucasian governments allowed officers and soldiers of the Caucasian Army to stay in the region after agreeing contracts with the North Caucasian government. In compliance with this Yusuf İzzet Pasha and a considerable number of the troops stayed in the North Caucasus.²⁷⁸ Thus, from then on, Yusuf İzzet Pasha signed everything with the title of Republic's Army Commander. But this Turkish military

²⁷⁴ Berkuk, "15. Fırkanın Harekâtı", 95.

²⁷⁵ For this report and the resolution see "Ot Pravitel'stva Respubliki Soyuzu Gortsev Kavkaza. Obrashchenie k naseleniiu Respubliki," Kurtatag, "Zadachi II," 5-6 and Jabagi, "Revolution," 125.

²⁷⁶ Brinkley, *Allied Intervention*, 91.

²⁷⁷ The order of Porte to evacuate the region was dated 24 October and allowed the volunteer officers and soldiers to stay in the region for a fixed period of time. In compliance with this order the treaty was signed by Yusuf İzzet Paşa on behalf of the Ottomans and the President Chermoev and the Minister of War Nuh Tarkovskiy on behalf of the Mountaineer Republic. See Berkuk, "15. Fırkanın Harekâtı", 95 and for the text of treaty see Erşan, 139-141.

²⁷⁸ At the same time Nuri Paşa, the commander of the Army of Islam became the commander of the Army of Azerbaijan. For the account of Turkish volunteers in addition to Berkuk see Kâzım Kap, August 1967-April 1968. "Şimali Kafkasya-Bolşevik Rusya Mücadelelerinden Sahneler," *Birleşik Kafkasya*, (İstanbul), 13-14-15: 36-41. Tarık Cemal Kutlu, autumn 1999. "1918-1921 Yıllarında Kuzey Kafkasya'daki Mücadelelerin Bilinmeyen Komutanı," *Kafkasya Yazıları*, 7: 36-57.

presence was not long lasting. Under pressure from the British, the Ottoman Ministry of War withdrew its order to allow Turkish officers to stay in the North Caucasus and issued a new one, dated 29 October, instructing all troops to leave the region.²⁷⁹

Thus, by the end of 1918, with the exception of a British detachment stationed in Petrovsk, the North Caucasus presented a military and political vacuum. The Bolsheviks used this vacuum first and, intensifying their activities began a propaganda campaign aimed at the Mountaineers. The Bolshevik paper ‘Revolutionary Mountaineer’ written on 17 November 1918 as part of this campaign, stated that:

“Neither the Turks nor the Chermoyevs will save us, but only we ourselves, our united mountaineer democracy with the masses that have reared together, with the rest of Russia, the banner of the Soviets, the banner of the revolution...All mountaineers should equally know that the support which is given to the ‘Mountaineers’ Government’ in Tiflis and Yelisavetpol is a noose that is being tightened on the neck of the mountaineers of North Caucasus and Dagestan by Menshevist Georgia and bourgeois-khan Azerbaijan, who are dreaming of creating a buffer ‘Mountaineers’ Republic’ or ‘Mountaineers’ Alliance’ between the great Soviet Russia and themselves... Cursed be those of us mountaineers, who deliberately or unwittingly lead our small peoples to such peril!”²⁸⁰

The government of the North Caucasian republic, fearing the Bolshevik threat, sent a letter to the Transcaucasian governments reiterating the importance and necessity of establishing a close union of Caucasian republics.²⁸¹ At the same time, in order to retain the gains made, and to guarantee the independence of the

²⁷⁹ Berkuk, “15. Fırkanın Harekâtı”, 95-6. For a detailed analysis of Turkish troops in the Caucasus in addition to Berkuk and Erşan see Nasır Yüceer, 1996. *Birici Dünya Savaşı’nda Osmanlı Ordusu’nun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekâtı: Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan’ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması*, Ankara: Genel Kurmay Yay. Halil Bal, 1997. “Kuzey Kafkasya’nın İstilali ve Türkiye’nin Askeri Yardımı,” *Kafkas Araştırmaları III*, İstanbul, 29-91.

²⁸⁰ Daniyalov, 26.

North Caucasian Republic, as a last attempt, contact was established with the British command in Baku. At the end of November 1918, the Mountaineer government appointed Ali Khan Kantemir²⁸² as the Mountaineer government representative to the British and sent a delegation to Baku presided by the President Chermoev himself. The aim of the delegation was to understand the attitudes and plans of the British government in the region.

On 26 November, the delegation met with General Thomson, the commander of the British forces in Baku and the Allies' representative. During these talks, Chermoev explained their previous reliance on the Turks and the present necessity for British aid to prevent a reconquest of the entire area by the Bolsheviks. In response, General Thomson told the delegation, that the Paris Peace Conference would settle the matter of the North Caucasian Republic's independence. Until that time, he stressed, the government of the North Caucasian Republic would have the opportunity to administer the country according to the same principles, which were applied by the allies to Azerbaijan.²⁸³

Moreover he gave a note in the name of the Allied Powers in which he criticized the political program of the Mountaineer Government and asked for the removal of all the remnants of German and Turkish troops. He stressed, among other things, that "Englishmen and their Allies consider it necessary to help Russia to restore order." "It is our duty" he went on "to defend order in the country and to

²⁸¹ For the text of this letter see Bammat, "The Caucasus," 16 and Kurtatag, 28 July 1927. "Zadachi III," *Vol'nye Gortsy*, (Prague), 3: 3.

²⁸² Ali Khan Kantemir, (1886-1963), Osetian. He was born in Vladikavkaz. He studied in Vladikavkaz and then law in St. Petersburg. Following his graduate settled in Baku and worked as a lawyer with the first premier of Azerbaijani National government Fethali Khan Hoyski. Before the February Revolution he was the governor of Kars but then he removed from office and elected as a

help the local population in their efforts to destroy Bolshevism.” “The Allies are here”, he concluded, “to assure justice and peace for everybody”.²⁸⁴ At last, he asked for help in the establishment of contacts between the Allies and the Denikin.

In addition, in order to control the North Caucasian government and to see that the evacuation of the Turkish troops was carried out, General Thomson appointed Colonel Rawlinson as British representative to the North Caucasian Republic.²⁸⁵

4- The End of the North Caucasian Republic: December 1918- May 1919:

By December the fate of the Mountaineer government was seriously at risk. The situation in the region remained quite fluid, and the authority of the North Caucasian government was already being challenged by two outside powers; the Bolsheviks and the Whites, seeking to establish control over the North Caucasus.

Under these circumstances the Mountaineer government of Abdulmejid Chermoev resigned on 12 December 1918 and the Union Council or the Parliament approved the resignation on 15 December. The setting up of a new government was delegated to Pshemaho Kotsev and in spite of some set backs he presented his cabinet on 19 November. The new cabinet consisted of Pshemaho Kotsev (President), Nuh Bey Tarkovskiy (Minister of National Security), Reshid Khan Kaplanov (Minister of Interior), Haydar Bammat (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Vassan Girey Jabagiev (Minister of Finance), B. Malachkhanov (Industry and

representative of Kars to Sevm. He served as the deputy Foreign Minister of the Transcaucasian Government. At last he was the representative of the North Caucasian government at Baku.

²⁸³ Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization II,” 50.

²⁸⁴ For the text of General Thomson’s telegram to the North Caucasian Republic’s government see Kurtatag, “Zadachi II,” 7. Related with the issue also see Jabagi, “Revolution,” 125-26 and also see Denikin, *Ocherki*, Vol 4, 123-124.

Trade), Ibrahim Haydarov (Transportation), H. Shakhshvarov (Education), A. Butayev (Agriculture and National Estates).²⁸⁶

During the same meeting, Kotsev delivered a speech and commented on the situation in the region. He also emphasised that one of the main tasks of the new government was to strive, together with Azerbaijan and Georgia, for worldwide recognition of the countries independence.²⁸⁷ In order to accomplish this aim, a delegation was sent to the Paris Peace Conference, consisting of A. Chermoyev, Ibrahim Haydarov, Haydar Bammam, and Dr. Hazarakov. Before a decision was taken in Paris, the Whites attacked North Caucasus.

By 1919 the North Caucasus had a new and aggressive enemy: Denikin and his anti-Bolshevik White Army. Before the main blow towards the north started, Denikin wished to secure his position and guarantee the flow of British support from the south. He therefore decided to make his first task the clearing of the mountain region and the coast between the Kuban and the Transcaucasian states. This made the North Caucasian Republic his first target. Early in 1919 his army began its operations towards the North Caucasus and took the territory known for its mineral waters, Kislovodsk, Pyatigorsk, Zheleznovodsk, and Esentük. In early February he advanced to Vladikavkaz, which at that time had been recently

²⁸⁵ Kurtatag, "Zadachi II," 7; Bammam, "The Caucasus," 19; and Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization II," 52.

²⁸⁶ For the ministries of Justice, Labor and, Health and Public Relief and to the National Control nobody was nominated. Cabađı, *Kafkas-Rus Mücadelesi*, 94 and Jabadı, "Revolution," 127. Pşimaho Kotsev, May-June-July 1965. "Yeşil Mayıs," *Birleşik Kafkasya*, (İstanbul), 4: 3-8.

²⁸⁷ For the text of Kotsev's speech see 'Deklaratsiya P. Kotseva,' in Kurtatag, "Zadachi III," 3-4 and also see Jabadı, "Revolution," 127.

captured from the Bolsheviks by the Ingush troops and thus was in the hands of the Mountaineer government.²⁸⁸

This was not to last, but was one of the most important threats to the well being of the North Caucasian government. Despite the talks between the authorities of the Mountaineer Republic and Denikin, the parties could not reach an agreement. Thus Kosok, the President of the North Caucasian Republic personally visited General Thomson in Baku on 9 February 1919 and asked him to intervene to halt the advance of the Whites.²⁸⁹ Despite his promises to control Denikin and to stop the White advance, the British supported Denikin unconditionally and thus all requests and protestations were in vain.²⁹⁰

Denikin rejected reconciliation with the Mountaineers and the North Caucasians. He appointed General Liakhov as the governor general of the mountain region, including Dagestan. The Mountaineer government sent a delegation headed by Zubeyir Temirhanov to Liakhov to Yekatarinodar. This delegation was to inform the Volunteers that the Mountain Republic would join the struggle against the Bolsheviks, but insisted on its independence and the exclusion of Volunteer troops from its territory, until the final conclusions of the world conference in Paris, to which a special delegation has been sent.²⁹¹

The negotiations continued for two weeks.²⁹² General Liakhov explained to the delegation that his authority covered the entire area but indicated that each of

²⁸⁸ Jabagi, "Revolution," 127 and Bammat, "The Caucasus," 18.

²⁸⁹ Kosok, "Revolution and Sovietization II," 53.

²⁹⁰ Bammat, "The Caucasus," 18.

²⁹¹ For a detailed account of events see Brinkley, *Allied Intervention*, 148-151. For the report of delegation to the North Caucasian Parliament see A. Takho-Godi, 1927. *Revoliutsiia i Kontrrevoliutsiia v Dagestane*, Makhachkale: Dagestanskoe Gosizdat, 189-197.

²⁹² Kotsev, "Yeşil Mayıs," 6.

the various Mountain peoples could form autonomous local governments. Under the governor-general a special local governor of native birth would be appointed for each region, and the administrative organs could be developed as each saw fit within this framework. In short, the Mountain Republic, as such, did not exist for the Volunteers, and the compromise offered by Liakhov was the only concession, which would be made.²⁹³

In response, the Mountaineer government issued a statement of protest against the profound coercion by the Volunteer Army and ordered the mobilization of all armed forces to defend the territory against the volunteers. The first group to face the Volunteers was the Chechen-Ingush.²⁹⁴ The Whites' ultimatum to the Ingush caused bewilderment.. They responded to this ultimatum by appealing to the North Caucasian government for an explanation of the situation, as they recognized only this government and acted according to its orders. Nevertheless, the government in Temir Khan Shura had neither the opportunity nor the time to come to the aid of the Ingush. As a result, the Volunteer Army under the command of General Heimann defeated the Ingush after a seven-day fight.

“After this defeat, experienced by the most courageous tribe and the one most devoted to the idea of independence, which, according to General Heimann, constituted an ‘iron gate’ to the North Caucasus, there was nothing to prevent them taking Vladikavkaz and the whole territory between there and Grozny.”²⁹⁵

Kotsev in a last attempt appointed General Khabaev, an Orthodox Osetian, commander in chief of Chechen troops. However, Khabaev compromised with

²⁹³ Brinkley, *Allied Intervention*, 149-150 and see Takho Godi, 196-7.

²⁹⁴ Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization II,” 53.

²⁹⁵ Jabagi, “Revolution,” 128.

Denikin who appointed him governor (*pravitel*) of the Osetian region.²⁹⁶ This situation caused disputes among the members of the North Caucasians government. Kotsev was accused of passivity and failure. He was forced to resign from the government. To ensure his resignation Nuh Bey Tarkovskiy, Reshid Khan Kaplanov and Vassan Girey Jabagiev resigned from their posts in early March. In addition, Kotsev got no support from the British and his government collapsed on 20 March 1919.²⁹⁷ Nevertheless, in spite of strong opposition, Kotsev was once more given the duty of setting up a new government. This new Kotsev government included military names like Butayev and Pensulayev. However this second cabinet of Kotsev resulted in a split between the Mountaineers.

Seeing the split within the members of the Mountaineer government Denikin himself journeyed to Grozny in April to use the situation to his advantage. In early May, because of increasing criticisms the second Kotsev government was resigned and after much discussion, General Mikail Halilov was appointed President of the Republic and given the duty of setting up a new government. Halilov was unable to create a cabinet, however.²⁹⁸ During this general confusion, without encountering any opposition, the Volunteer Army captured first Shamilkale (Petrovsk), and later Derbent. The Dagestani section of the Parliament

²⁹⁶ Baytugan, "Kuzey Kafkasya," 10.

²⁹⁷ Kotsev, "Yeşil Mayıs," 7. Cabağı, *Kafkas-Rus Mücadelesi*, 99-100. Mikhail Halilov or Mikhail Halil Paşa in his reply to Denikin in Gortsy Kavkaza has given this date as 18 May. See Mikhail Halilov, 1934. "Otvét Generalu Denikinu," *Gortsy Kavkaza*, (Warsaw), 50: 16.

²⁹⁸ Jabagi, asserted that the decisive factor in the election of Halilov was the support of the pro-Denikin group headed by Danyal Apashev, a former tsarist police officer and landowner. "Revolution," 131. And Halilov stressed that he did not want to be a President initially. He defined himself as a military man not politician therefore he said that he was not ready or suit to the Presidency but despite this reality the North Caucasian Parliament elected him unanimously to the post of Presidency. See Halilov, "Otvét", 16.

of the Mountain Republic decided to separate from the Mountain Republic ‘for an indefinite time’ to establish a provisional Dagestan Government under General Halilov on 23 May 1919. Moreover it authorized him to enter an agreement with Denikin along the lines suggested by the British. With this decision the peoples of the North Caucasus lost their ephemeral independence. Denikin appointed native names as local governors in compliance with his general policy. The last president of the Republic, Mikail Halilov was appointed as the governor-general of Dagestan. General Aliyev, General Khabaev, and General Bekovich-Cherkaskiy were appointed as the governors of Chechen, Osetian, and Kabardian territories respectively. General Hacı Murat Orozhkhanov was appointed regional commander of Temir Khan Shura. “The latter tried, on the order of the parliamentary opposition after some stormy scenes in Parliament, but twelve of them managed to escape via Baku to Tiflis.” In this way, the independence of the North Caucasus Republic came to an end.²⁹⁹

Following the disintegration of the North Caucasian Mountaineer Republic, the leading political figures of North Caucasians were divided into four distinct groupings: (1) a group of former Tsarist generals who collaborated with Denikin; (2) a group of Mountaineers controlled by the religious leaders or sheikhs; (3) the Bolsheviks and, (4) the group of leading nationalist figures of the Mountaineer Republic which has to move outside of the North Caucasus.

²⁹⁹ Baytugan, “Kuzey Kafkasya,” 10.

In early June, the first group appeared to be in a stronger position than the others. Having secured Transcaucasus, the British established a demarcation line, which left the North Caucasus to Denikin and his collaborators, and issued a statement to the population in which they labelled any kind of anti-Denikin movement as Bolshevik. This step provoked reaction and hostilities against Denikin, and against the British.³⁰⁰ But, because of the military might of Denikin they managed to keep their authority in the region.

The most popular and powerful group of the other three groups was the religious one led by Gotsinskiy and Uzun Haji³⁰¹. Following the arrival of the Denikin and the collapse of the Mountaineer Republic Uzun Haji continued his struggle and declared a theocratic state, the North Caucasian Emirate in Upper Chechnya, modelled on Shamil's state. Although initially he had co-operated with Bolshevik forces against Denikin, he in fact hated all Russians indiscriminately, and treated them all as enemies. Moreover, because of his co-operation with Denikin, he wrote to Mikail Halilov that whoever sympathised with the Cossacks would be eternally damned and would fall under the 'rage of God'.³⁰² Nevertheless, Uzun Haji died in March 1920, and Gotsinskiy took over and developed the military might into the strongest of the four factions.

³⁰⁰ Denikin, *Ocherki*, Vol.IV, 135.

³⁰¹ Uzun Haji, (1848-1920). He was born in the village of Salty in Dagestan. He took a religious education and opened his own religious school in Salty in 1882. Because of his anti-tsarist activities and struggle for liberation exiled to the Siberia, to stay in a labour camp in 1892. Then, by the help of the Muslim merchants of Astrakhan he returned and stayed in Astrakhan until the February Revolution.

³⁰² Takho-Godi, 110-111.

The nationalist groups of the time were forced to leave the North Caucasus. While some of them were trying to establish contacts and find help in European capitals, others stayed in Baku and Tiflis, the nearest place to the North Caucasus, and searched for the ways of establishing contact with the other Caucasian republics in order to survive the struggle of independence. Nevertheless, they lost their ‘authority and power’ over the peoples of the North Caucasus and waiting for the initiative of any kind of a rebellious movement.

Among these four groups, the Bolsheviks used the situation most skilfully and agitated the hostility of religious groups against the Volunteer Army. Meanwhile, because of Denikin’s supremacy, the leadership cadre was forced to leave the region for Baku and organized the North Caucasian ‘socialist group’ there. In autumn, this group attempted to set up a comprehensive anti-Denikin organization and Celâl Korkmazov established contacts with the ‘nationalist’ leaders Haydar Bammam and Ali Khan Kantemir, and managed to conclude an agreement, in which the establishment of a ‘North Caucasian Defense Council’³⁰³ was proposed.

The agreement aimed to embrace all components of the North Caucasus against Denikin. This Council was given the duty of organizing military activity against the occupying forces first and then, after defeating the enemy, would be the core of the possible national government. In order to obtain the participation of religious groups into the Council, Celâl Korkmazov and Ali Khan Kantemir

³⁰³ For the Defense Council see Bammam, “Revolution,” 18-9, Kosok, “Revolution and Sovietization II,” 53. Some other names like Ahmet Tsalikhov and Nuri Pasha were also took active parts in this Council.

travelled to Lavasha, the base of Ali Haji and convinced him to act together with the other groups against Denikin.

Thanks to this umbrella organization, the anti-Denikin front in the region was strengthened. Actually almost from the beginning the Bolsheviks dominated the Council and exploited this situation successfully. Moreover, in order to control the whole region, they established the Bureau for Establishing the Soviet Domination in the North Caucasus. This consisted of Ordzhonikidze, Kirov, Stopani, Mdivani and Nerimanov, and was directed centrally. As a result of the activities of this Council and the increasing Bolshevik military presence, Denikin was forced to leave the region in February 1920 and in March the remainder of the troops under his command were evacuated to the Crimea with extensive allied assistance. The Bolsheviks or the Red Army gained control of the region without any difficulty. Revolutionary committees controlled by the Bolsheviks quickly spread over the territory, even into villages. "Formed rapidly on the ground, they were the initial military, political authorities in the North Caucasus."³⁰⁴

The next step for the Bolsheviks was the liquidation of the Defence Council. At first, Council had moved to Petrovsk and on 11 April 1919, by the vote of Bolshevik members, was dissolved itself and turned into the Revolutionary Committee of the whole Caucasus. The non-Bolshevik members of the Council were dismissed and executed. The troops loyal to the Council were disbanded and the Bolshevik policies of divide-and-rule for controlling the region were initiated.

³⁰⁴ Blank, 15.

In summary, the Russian forces, in this case Bolsheviks, once more ruined the second main attempt of the Mountaineers to establish a unified, sovereign North Caucasian State. In this struggle, Mountaineers did not have the chance to create a long-lasting, effective, and comprehensive state structure and bureaucracy. Moreover, in different parts, as in Shamil's period, the Mountaineers took varying attitudes towards the existing authorities of the various groups, or the peoples who declared their own rules and could easily establish contradicting and ephemeral alliances with one another.

In this period, again in contrast to Shamil's, the foreign powers participated directly. The Turkish advance provided the opportunity to establish a Mountaineer Republic, but the collapse of the Ottoman Empire halted the activities of the Mountaineers for that period. Thus, until then each party, in pursuit of its own interests, usually chose one of the powerful external powers. The religious groups on the other hand, although they had a considerable power base among the native population, didn't establish contacts with foreign powers and because of their discourse, which has constructed solely on the religious motives alienated other initial support groups. Moreover, some other groups that were closely associated with Denikin caused the emergence of Bolshevik dominance and lost their prestige among the Mountaineers.

With the exception of the first Congress of May 1917, the North Caucasian Mountaineers, because of the continuing military clashes, never had a chance to deal with the social dimensions of the North Caucasian unity and found themselves in a scattered position.

CHAPTER III

**THE FOUNDATION OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE
ACTIVITIES IN EXILE**

1- The Establishment of Soviet Power:

By 1920 the Bolshevik forces controlled the entire region. The Mountaineers last resistance movement, led by Said Shamil, (great-grandson of *Imam* Shamil) and the religious leaders, Uzun Haji and Najmuddin Gotsinskiy continued until summer 1921. Some of the former tsarist army officers who fought sided with Denikin now, head by Colonel Kaitmas Alikhanov, an Avar, also joined this last attempt together with them. Although, initially, they achieved some success, with the arrival of the 11th Red Army, the Bolshevik forces suppressed the movement in spring 1921.³⁰⁵ However, “from 1922 to 1943, the history of Chechnia and Daghestan was an almost uninterrupted succession of rebellions, counter-expeditions and ‘political-banditism’ –uprisings took place in 1924, 1928, 1936-...”³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ For a detailed account of uprising see Marie Bennigsen Broxup, 1992. “The Last *Ghazawat*: The 1920-1921 Uprising.” In M. B. Broxup, eds., *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance Towards the Muslim World*, London: C. Hurst, 112-145. Alexandre Bennigsen, July 1983. “Muslim guerilla Warfare in the Caucasus (1918-1928),” *Central Asian Survey*, 2(1): 45-56. Also see N. Samurskii, “Grazhdanskaia Voina v Dagestane,” *Novyi Vostok*, (Moscow): 230-240. Al. Todorskii, 1924. *Krasnaia Armiia v gorakh: Deistviia v Dagestane*, Moscow: Izdatel’stvo ‘Voennyi Vestnik’. Daniyalov, 58-9.

³⁰⁶ Broxup, “The Last *Ghazawat*”, 143. For a detailed account of above-mentioned uprisings see Abdurahman Avtorkhanov, “The Chechens and the Ingush during the Soviet Period and its Antecedents,” in *The North Caucasus Barrier*, 146-194.

In this atmosphere of uprisings and disorder in the North Caucasus, the Bolsheviks initiated the process of establishing Communist rule.³⁰⁷ Stalin and his commissariat of Nationalities, *Narkomnats*³⁰⁸, took the lead by 1920.

Stalin, formulated the nationalities policy of the Bolshevik party as a response to Lenin's request in his article titled 'Marxism and the National and Colonial Questions' against the Austro-Marxist theory of 'extra-territorial cultural autonomy' for national minorities³⁰⁹ and the policy of assimilation. In this article Stalin provided a restrictive conception of nationhood: "A nation is an historically evolved, stable community of people arising on the basis of a community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make up as manifested in a community of culture."³¹⁰

Based on this definition, and directed by Lenin, he developed the Soviet interpretation of self-determination. In resolving the Russia's nationality question, Lenin's main concern was the adoption of a political strategy through which the

³⁰⁷ For the establishment of Soviet rule in the North Caucasus see Stephen Blank, 1993. "The Formation of the Soviet North Caucasus 1918-24," *Central Asian Survey*, 12(1): 13-32. Hereafter "the Soviet North Caucasus". Stephen Blank, 1994. *The Sorcerer As Apprentice: Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities, 1917-1924*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. Hereafter *The Sorcerer*.

³⁰⁸ The *Narkomnats* was established on 25 October 1917 during the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets. On the activities and the history of the Commissariat see Blank's above mentioned book *The Sorcerer* In addition see Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, 1987. *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State, 1917-1930*, transl. by Nancy Festinger, New York: Holmes & Meier, 101-106.

³⁰⁹ For Otto Bauer and Karl Renner, the most prominent Austro-Marxists, the multiethnic character and growing political salience of ethnic divisions made the role of nations in the establishment of socialism and their future position in a socialist society a far more problematic affair than in the established nation-states of Western Europe. There was also the problem of those nationality groups living outside their national territories. For them territory was not to be a prerequisite feature of the nation; rather, the nation was deemed to be a product of a common history. Consequently, nations should be granted cultural autonomy without regard to the compactness of their geographical settlements.

establishment of a unified body of equal citizens based on the principles of Communism is made possible. One of the most important elements of Lenin's policy was the right of nations to self-determination, which he saw as linked exclusively to the right to political secession. He believed that even if small nations did seize the opportunity to declare themselves independent states, they would soon realise the benefits of being part of a larger territorial unit and would opt for reincorporation.³¹¹

“For Lenin the ethnic constitution of such a polity included proposals to divide the country into autonomous and self-governing territorial units according –among other things- to nationality; freedom and equality of languages, and the protection of the cultural and educational rights of minorities. With socialism's establishment, such a programme also envisaged the *sblizhenie* ('coming together') and eventual *sliyanie* ('merger') of the proletariat of different nations.”³¹²

In other words, the Soviet solution to the nationality question was the strategy of ethno-territorial proliferation:

“The Soviet solution was to extend their system of national-territorial units downward into smaller and smaller territories, the smallest being the seize of a single village. ...Territorially dispersed nationalities would no longer be threatened with assimilation, and therefore, according to Soviet theory, the potential for defensive nationalism and the resulting ethnic conflict would be defused.”³¹³

In compliance with this policy, Stalin participated the Congresses held in the North Caucasus in November 1920. In the Congress of the Peoples of Dagestan held in Temir Khan Shura on 13 November and the Congress of Mountaineers of

³¹⁰ See J. V. Stalin, “Marxism and the National Question,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 2, (Moscow, 1952-55), 307 and also see Joseph Stalin, 1942. *Marxism and Nationality Question*, New York: International Publishers. In addition, for a detailed analysis see Wixman, *Language Aspects*, 21-43.

³¹¹ On the Bolshevik and then the Soviet nationality policy and the establishment of the Soviet Union see Terry Martin, 2001. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, New York: Cornell University Press.

Terek held in Vladikavkaz on 17 November, Stalin read out Lenin's decree on Soviet autonomy for Dagestan and the North Caucasus. He said that the new administration would "respect for traditions and the peculiarities of the region's peoples but not their separation from Russia."³¹⁴ In relation with that he declared that Moscow would granted full rights of administration to people on the basis of their indigenous laws and customs.

"If they wanted to be ruled by Shariat the regime would abide by it. This was music to minorities' ears and they proclaimed autonomy on 20 January 1921. At the same time Stalin hedged his promise by noting that all native peoples could live according to their customs but within the framework of the common constitution of Russia."³¹⁵

On 20 January 1920, in compliance with these policy initiatives, the Central Executive Committee created two autonomous republics, Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) and Soviet Mountain Republic (*Gorskaia Sovietskaia Respublika*), which comprised the Chechen, Ingush, Osetian, Kabardian, Balkar and Karachay territories, and incorporated them into RSFSR. The Soviet Mountain Republic however was short lived. Once Soviet power was firmly established, the regime divided the region into smaller ethnic territories in 1921 and created six autonomous units from 1922 to 1924: Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblast (AO) 12 January 1922, Kabardino-Balkar AO 16 January 1922, Adyge AO 27 July 1922, Chechen AO 20 November 1922. With the

³¹² Graham Smith, 1996. "The Soviet State and Nationalities Policy," In Graham Smith eds., *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, London: Longman, 2-22.

³¹³ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 33.

³¹⁴ D'Encasse, *The Great Challenge*, 116-7.

³¹⁵ Blank, "The Soviet North Caucasus," 23-4.

establishment of Ingush AO and North Osetian AO 7 July 1924 which republic ceased to exist.³¹⁶

Among the most interesting examples of the implementation of Soviet policy of fragmentation³¹⁷ were those of the Karachay-Balkars and the Circassian populations. Despite the existence of a logical way of delineating the territories of these two peoples latitudinally, i. e., in the north a Circassian AO, and the south a Karachay-Balkar AO, the Soviets choose to split both peoples longitudinally into a Karachay-Cherkess and a Kabardino-Balkar territory. So from two people four were created.³¹⁸

Then using the language as a basis, the Soviet regime created and provided ethnic homelands to the different peoples, within which they were entitled to use a variety of ethnic institutions. These titular nationalities gained some privileges within their homelands and were permitted to use their own languages in the press, broadcasting and education.

Stalin believed that the native languages would make Soviet power comprehensible. In line, “native cadres, who understood ‘the way of life, customs,

³¹⁶ Later on depending on Moscow’s policies the territorial boundaries and the statutes of those units changed several times. On 26 April 1926 the Karachay-Cherkess AO was further divided into a separate Karachay AO and Cherkess AO, on 5 December 1936 the Kabardino-Balkar AO was elevated to ASSR status, and on 15 January 1934 the Chechen and Ingush territories were united in the one Checheno-Ingush AO and then elevated to ASSR status on 5 December 1936.

³¹⁷ The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was consisted of hierarchical national-territorial units. At the top, there were the Union Republics (SSRs) which were the building blocs of the USSR. Then there were Autonomous Republics (ASSRs). These were sub-divisions of the larger union republics, designated as the territories of national minorities. The Autonomous *Oblasts* or provinces (AOs) were placed at the third level of hierarchy and the designated territory of national minorities living in a coterminous geographic area within a union republic. In addition to these AOs there were other *oblasts*, which were the basic non-national administrative units of the union republics. Beyond that there were the *Krais* or the border regions and Autonomous *Okrugs* or the national provinces. *Krais* were large territories of geographic or military significance, located in strategically important borderlands and *Okrugs* were the smallest of the national-territorial units.

³¹⁸ For a detailed discussion and the examples of Soviet delimitations see Wixman, *Language Aspects*, 137-141.

and habits of the local population' would make Soviet power seem indigenous rather than an external Russian imperial imposition." Thus he defined his system of cultures as "national in form, socialist in content".³¹⁹

Initially, the Russians readily accepted Arabic as the official language of the newly established Soviet Mountain Republic and moreover, the Bolsheviks allowed the functioning of religious schools. However, by 1922 native language schools replaced by these schools.³²⁰ In 1924, with the exception of Dagestan where they remained until 1927, all Arabic or religious schools were closed. As an alternative the Bolsheviks introduced latinized alphabets to create written native languages. In this way, "the right of so called 'independent development' was recognized for each local language and separate dialect to become 'state language' in each autonomous republic or oblast along with Russian."³²¹ Moreover, Russian along with the native languages became the primary educational language throughout the North Caucasus in 1920s.

This latinization process was strongly opposed prompting different reactions from the peoples of the North Caucasus. Even the local Communist leaders opposed it, as they were demanding a unified script. They wanted the languages to be brought closer together, not artificially divided.³²² But, those who openly opposed this process were labelled bourgeois nationalists and most were executed.

³¹⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 13.

³²⁰ R. Adighe, 1956. "Cherkess Cultural Life," *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 2: 85.

³²¹ R. Karcha, 1958. "The Status of Popular Education in the Northern Caucasus," *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 7: 111. Also see Ramazan Karça, 1959. "Kuzey Kafkasyada Halk Tahsilinin Durumu," *Dergi*, (Munich), 5(15): 62-75.

Then Moscow decided to replace this latin script and openly instigated the policy of Cyrilization in 1938-9, which was viewed as forced Russification and met by revolts among the Karachays, Balkars, Ingush and Chechens. This was accompanied with the acceptance of Russian as the obligatory language in education and the assimilation process in the North Caucasus gained momentum.³²³

Moreover, the Soviet government divided its population into two broad categories: eastern and western nationalities.³²⁴ This dictomy was based primarily on the developmental stage. The peoples of the North Caucasus, naturally, belonged to the economically and culturally ‘backward’ eastern nationalities group.

“In the east, major problem was a lack of literate, educated titular nationals, and so the policy emphasis was an affirmative action in education and hiring to create national elites. Only after their creation would lingistic *korenizatsia* be possible.”³²⁵

Then the formation process of native local leaders in the North Caucasus was gained a momentum, but the results were not complied with theory.³²⁶

2- Politics in Exile:

While the Bolsheviks, who were cementing their control over the region were suppressing the uprisings, the nationalist groups of the Mountaineers left the

³²² R. Adighe, 86.

³²³ R. Karcha, 1956. “Genocide in the Northern Caucasus,” *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 2: 77-88 and 1956. “Şimali Kafkasya’da Tehcir ve Katliam,” *Dergi*, (Munich), 2(5): 35-50.

³²⁴ The Soviet regime made and declared the official list of these ‘culturally backward’ nationalities only in 1932, which comprised 97 nationalities. All the peoples of the North Caucasus naturally found a place in this list. For the list see Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 56.

³²⁵ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 24.

North Caucasus. Apart from the leaders who were in İstanbul and Paris, some stayed in Tiflis and as a last attempt, formed the ‘Azerbaijan-North Caucasus Committee,’ (*Azerbaycan-Kuzey Kafkasya Komitesi*). On 22 February 1921, Haydar Bammam informed the European powers of the formation and the composition of the Committee through a radio broadcast.³²⁷ The basic aim of the Committee was, naturally, the liberation of Azerbaijan and the North Caucasus and the creation of a confederative state with Georgia and Armenia. As Bammam states, this Committee was the first real step towards the establishment of a Caucasian Confederation.³²⁸ On the day of its foundation, the Georgian government recognized the Committee as the provisional government of Azerbaijan and the North Caucasus. The advance and success of the Red Army, however, halted the realization of this idea, at least in the territory of the Caucasus.

From then on, representatives of the formerly independent Caucasian Republics have to shift the base of their struggle for independence outside their homelands, especially to Europe. Paris was the first safe heaven. In fact, the Caucasian Republics already had delegations in Paris in charge of defending rights of their peoples at the Versailles Peace Conference. It is interesting to note that, in contrast to the attitude of the period of Civil War, the leaders of the former Caucasian Republics began to act in a spirit of compromise, and their organizations, publications and leadership intermingled and supported each other.

³²⁶ For the activities and the ‘achievements’ of one of these native North Caucasian leaders see Umar Aliev, 1926. *Natsional’nyi Vopros i Natsional’naia Kul’tura v Severo-Kavkazskom Krae: (Itogi i Perspektiy) k Predstoiashchemu S’ezdu Gorskikh Narodov*, Rostov: Sekavkniga.

³²⁷ Haydar Bammam, 1991. “The Caucasus and the Russian Revolution (from a Political Viewpoint),” *Central Asian Survey*, 10(4): 25. The Committee was made up of as follows: Haydar Bammam, chairman; Mustafa Vekilli, vice-chairman; and as the executive members Ahmet Tsalikov, Ali Khan Kantemir, Shafi Bek Rustem Bek, and Bagir Rıza.

Again in contrast to the former period, the idea of establishing a Confederation was accepted as the most viable and realistic solution for the future of the Caucasus. The ideal of the Confederation was now not only a word for coalescing the leaders seeking a return to power, but it was the solution to the intractable internal problems the region faced because of nationalism and religious differences.

In Paris, the representatives of the North Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, in response to Bolshevik occupation, decided to form a kind of a platform or unified body of structure.³²⁹ In order to strengthen their positions in defending their peoples' rights, they drew up basic plans for the future Caucasian Confederation and outlined methods of cooperation. They signed a declaration on 10 June 1921³³⁰ and submitted it to the Secretariat of League of Nations on 6 July via the representative of Georgia in Paris, in his name and the name of the representatives of the three other Caucasian republics. The Secretary-General communicated a copy of the Declaration to the Council and the members of the League of Nations on 19 July 1921.³³¹

³²⁸ Haydar Bammat, 1936. "Türkiye ve Kafkasya," *Kafkas Almanığı*, F. Daryal, eds., 70. Hereafter *Almanak*.

³²⁹ See M. E. Resulzade, June/July 1952. "Kafkasya Meseleleri V: Kafkasya birliđi fikri muhacerette," *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 11/12: 5-9; and D. Vaçnadze, March/April 1953. "Hariçte Kafkasya Birliđi Hareketi Tarihi I," *Birleşik Kafkasya (Vereinigtes Kaukasien)*, (Munich), 3/4 (20/21): 9-11.

³³⁰ 'Declaration des representants des Republiques d'Armenie, d'Azerbaidjan, du Caucase du Nord et de Georgie, Paris 10 Juin 1921' signed by A. Aharonyan, A. M. Topçubaşı, A. Chermoev, A. I. Chkhenkeli, the representatives of the republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, North Caucasus, and Georgia respectively. See D. Vaçnadze, "Hariçte Kafkasya".

³³¹ Note by Secretary-General, League of Nations, 19 July 1921, on the alliance, enclosing translation of declaration [FO 371/6273] in *Caucasian Boundaries: Documents and maps 1802-1946*, 1996. In Anita L.P. Burdett, eds., Archive Editions, London: Oxford, 763-768. Hereafter *Caucasian Boundaries*.

This Declaration could be accepted as the first common manifesto of the Caucasian peoples in which the basics of the state structure and policies were clearly defined.

In this Declaration, the signing parties declared their desire to eliminate all grounds of conflict which caused a discord in the current history of the region and stressed their wish to establish an union to ensure the benefits of independence, democratic government and economic prosperity for the peoples of the Caucasus.

The Declaration accepted that the establishment of a close and brotherly union as absolutely essential for the consolidation of the independence of these republics as well as enabling the Caucasus to act as a connecting link between West and East, and between the Christian and Muslim worlds. Their common fate was the main basis of the Union. In order to promote a degree of confidence among the member nationalities, article IV of the Declaration, stated that the Caucasian Republics would refrain from entering into any agreement, action or understanding of an international character which might be prejudicial to this alliance. To secure independence it proposed the formation of a defensive military alliance among the confederate states against foreign aggression.

While little emphasis was put on common economic interests with a word, significantly enough, the future promises and the relations with the foreign powers, and especially the neighbouring states, Turkey, Russia and Persia (Iran) were analyzed in detail.

In the article VII, the Confederation's possible relations with Russia and Iran were seen in terms of mutual economic and trade relations. In relations with

Turkey, however, the demarcation of borders had precedence. In the article it was stressed that:

“they attach equal importance to the establishment of friendly and neighbourly relations with Turkey, the Caucasian Republics will endeavour, by their joint efforts, to strengthen these relations, subject to Turkey’s observing and respecting the inviolability of Caucasian territory as constituted by the frontiers of 1914.”³³²

The Confederation was thus made reference to the problems between the Armenians and Turks. According to the declaration, this was one of the chief obstacles to establishing a union of Caucasian states. Therefore, the declaration accepted the solution of the problem as a condition for managing the establishment of a true Confederation. The signing parties uttered that:

“[A] prompt and equitable territorial delimitation of Turkey and Armenia in accordance with their mutual interests and within the limits of Turkey will be guarantee for peace and quiet in the Near East, and that the strength and very existence of the Caucasian Republics and of their Union will depend to a large extent on this settlement, to which the Caucasian States will, by the joint efforts, contribute.”³³³

In article IX by contrast, both Russia and Turkey were defined as occupying states and asked for all kinds of diplomatic means to put an end to this occupation. All treaties and agreements on the ceding of territory forced on the Caucasian States by neighbouring powers were regarded as having no legal force, and as being null and void.

Nevertheless the atmosphere and the attitudes of the Great Powers at the Paris Peace Conference did not favor small nationalities. Therefore, these demands

³³² *Caucasian Boundaries*, [FO 371/6273].

were not realized, and the Caucasians were removed from the international stage for a time.

A- The Union of Caucasian Mountaineers:

The first formal organization of the Mountaineers of the Caucasus in exile was set up, quite probably in late 1923 in Prague, Czechoslovakia: The Union of Caucasian Mountaineers (*Soyuz Gortsev Kavkaza*). Czechoslovakia, as a sovereign state that emerged after the First World War under the leadership of Thomas Masaryk served to accommodate former White Russians. Along with this group there was a small but prominent North Caucasian minority. Thus, initially in this Union, some Cossack groups of the North Caucasus participated alongside the natives such as Nikolai Andreyevich Bigaev, was even nominated the chairman of the Union.³³⁴ The most important figure among the Mountaineers was Ahmet Tsalikov (Tsalikkatı).

The first general assembly of the Union was held on 29 April 1924 in Prague. In this meeting Ahmet Tsalikov was elected the President and, Murat Hatağogu (Khatagovko) as his deputy. V. V. Vazov was elected secretary and K. D. Guldiev, the treasurer. The other leading figure was Elmurza Bekovich Cherkaskiy. In addition, the auditing board was composed of N. A. Bigaev, Kırımğirey Kuchmazukin, and Janbolat Jerikov.

³³³ *Caucasian Boundaries*, [FO 371/6273].

³³⁴ We have no concrete information related with the founders, regulations and the date of the foundation. But during the first general assembly, which met in April 1924, it was mentioned that the activities of six months were reviewed. Therefore, apparently the Union had been active from November 1923. See, Aydın Turan, April 1997. "Kuzey Kafkasya Mültecilerinin Çalışmalarından Bir Kesit: Kafkasya Dağlıları Birliği (*Soyuz Gortsev Kavkaza*)," *Toplumsal Tarih*, 7(40): 46. Hereafter "*Soyuz*".

The only source of first hand information on the Union was its periodical *Kavkazskiy Gorets*. This periodical, was the first political publication of the Mountaineers in exile. The first issue of *Kavkazskiy Gorets* was published in the spring of 1924, in line with the decision taken in the general assembly of the Union. Because of limited financial support, however, the Union's administration had to cease the publication of the *Kavkazskiy Gorets* following the unified issue of 2-3 in 1925.

The objectives of the Union were indicated in the first issue of the *Kavkazskiy Gorets*. The first and foremost aim was the rehabilitation of Caucasian republics on the basis of federal principles. Beyond that, creating a political consciousness, uniting all former and fresh emigrants dispersed to the world into one central body, the establishment of contacts with other 'brotherly unions and persons', and with European help the development of programs to achieve these objectives.³³⁵

Nevertheless the Union faced with a discord between the Mountaineers and the Cossacks, from the very outset.³³⁶ Alongside other Cossack members, especially the founding-chairman and the member of the auditing committee Nikolai Andreyevich Bigaev was strongly criticized by the Mountaineers. The main accusations were being ineffective and wasting the Union's funds.³³⁷ As a result, the Union's administration convened an extraordinary congress on 8 August

³³⁵ "Gortsy Kavkaza v Cekhoslavakii," 1924. *Kavkazskiy Gorets*, 1: 70. See Turan, "Soyuz", 46.

³³⁶ Despite the conclusion of a four-point program on the Cossack problem was reached in a meeting that was held on 6 June 1924, both of these groups clashed with each other. A four-point program set out which noted that North Caucasus must be sovereign and independent state, that everyone would be equal in this new state, that the matter of this state's boundaries be settled in the future, and that the Cossacks must live and work within the laws of this state.

1924 and revised the administrative set up. Hatağogu replaced Tsalikhov, with his consent as a chairman and Ahmet Nabi Magoma was named as his deputy. V. Beselov was charged with the duty of secretariat and K. D. Guldiev with the treasury. Only Elmurza Bekovich Cherkaskiy had kept his post as a member.³³⁸

Beyond these disputes among its members, the activities of the Union, in the beginning focused mainly on the construction of communicative channels to establishing permanent contacts between the Caucasian emigrants and supplying them with the necessary resources for their survival in Europe. As a result, the Union managed to find financial support and scholarships from several European states, especially from Czechoslovakia. With these scholarships, fifteen students could study in Prague and Bruno and the Union successfully prepared the intellectual basis of the struggle in exile.³³⁹

In the meantime, while the Mountaineers were endeavouring to establish their own organization, they also had close contacts with other Caucasian *emigres*. On every possible occasion, they issued declarations of solidarity and protested against the Bolshevik government. On 23 September 1924, the representatives of the four Caucasian republics issued a declaration on revolts in Georgia. In this declaration, which was signed by A. M. Topçubaşı (Azerbaijan), A. Hatisyan, V. Papazyan (Armenia), A Chkhenkeli, H. Ramishvili (Georgia), and A. Chermoev, I.

³³⁷ For a further accusations see Aytek Kundukh's reply (26 March 1927) "Otkritoe Pis'mo Predsedatelyu Soyuzu Gortsev Kavkaza v ChSR M. Gatgogu," *Vol'nye Gortsy*, (Prague), 1: 19.

³³⁸ *Kavkazskiy Gorets*, 2/3, 1925.

³³⁹ Among these students, Ahmet Nabi Magoma, Aytek Kundukh, Barasbi Baytugan, Kosta Zangi, M. Abatsiyev, Elmurza Bekovich Cherkasskiy, Cemalettin Kanukati, Nevruz Sunç and Murat Hatağogu could be pointed out. See "Gortsy Kavkaza Studenty Uchashchiesia v Cekhoslovatskiy,"

Haydarov (North Caucasus), the signing parties declared that they believed in the necessity of sincere and brotherly relations between Caucasian nations. The sole guarantee of the cultural and economic welfare of these four Caucasian republics would be the establishment of political and economic unity of those nations.³⁴⁰

B- The Caucasian Independence Committee in Turkey:

During this period the activities of the Caucasians were not confined to Europe. The North Caucasian, Georgian and Azerbaijani leaders who were living in exile in İstanbul, such as Dr. Hüsrev Sultanov, Ali Khan Kantemir and Aleksander Assatiyani, had informed the formation of the Caucasian Independence Committee³⁴¹ issuing a declaration on 1 November 1924.³⁴²

However due to the lack of financial resource the Committee was forced to work only on preparatory activities and until September 1925 could not take them to the implementation stage. It tried to ascertain to what extent the idea of the Confederation had matured and been prepared in the political circles and in the minds of masses. And how large was the circle of the active elements, the Committee could understand the enormous number of activists it draws on it from the very first beginning. As a result of the continued negotiations with the political

1924. *Kavkazskiy Gorets*, (Prague), 1: 71-2 and "Khronika Soyuz," 1925. *Kavkazskiy Gorets*, (Prague), 2/3: 135-6.

³⁴⁰ Declaration des representants des gouvernements Nationaux des republicues du Caucase, Paris, 23 Septembre 1924, see Vaçnadze "Hariçte Kafkasya", 10.

³⁴¹ While Ahmet Hazer Hızal was giving the date of 1 November 1924 and labelling the committee as Caucasian Independence Committee (*Kafkas Kurtuluş Komitesi-C.I.C.*), the British Consulate General, in his report from İstanbul to Foreign Secretary named this committee as the 'Committee of Confederation of Caucasia,' (K.K.K.) and gave the date of formation as 7 October 1924. See 'British Consulate General, Constantinople to Foreign secretary, On Committee of Confederation of Caucasia, formed 7 October 1924' [FO 371/11783] in Burdett, *Caucasian Boundaries*, 834-838.

groups of the peoples of the Caucasus, the Committee came to the conclusion that after bitter experiences and misfortunes the necessity and vitality of uniting the efforts of these activists who fought against the Bolsheviks for freedom and the creation of an All-Caucasian Confederation in future was now understood by all political currents in Caucasus.³⁴³

Thus, in autumn of 1925 the Committee entered into more permanent relations with other groups of the peoples of the Caucasus. They endorsed once more that cooperation between activists from different ethnic groups in the Caucasus could only be possible under the colours of a united Caucasian front and in the future a Caucasian political union, which would be set up on the principles of a Confederation. In September 1925 the Committee having some small means, began a well planned work of organization, and proposed:

“1) To form a system of relations with the Caucasian Republics, 2) There to form groups and agencies for work in the Republics, 3) To organize the more active elements of the Caucasian Emigration, 4) The creation of a party press for Caucasians and for the emigrants.”³⁴⁴

In accordance with these principles, the Committee began to function among the Caucasian *emigres*. In his report, the British Consulate General in İstanbul, stressed that:

“...[T]he military elements in Azerbaijan and in Northern Caucasus, which were in Turkey and in Persia united under the guidance of persons

³⁴² Vassan Girey Jabagiev, Ali Khan Kantemir, Aytek Namitok (Northern Caucasus), M. Tsereteli, A. Assatiyani, D. Vachnadze (Georgia), Hüsrev Sultanov (Sultanzade), Abdülali Emircan and A. Sheikhülislamzade (Azerbaijan) signed this Declaration. See Vaçnadze, “Hariçte Kafkasya”.

³⁴³ *Caucasian Boundaries*, [FO 371/11783].

³⁴⁴ *Caucasian Boundaries*, [FO 371/11783].

appointed by the K.K.K. and Georgian officers all over Europe were brought together into one Union and like in the past in Georgia they are working in full liaison with the national democratic party of Georgia which has its share in the K.K.K.”³⁴⁵

The Committee organized a propaganda campaign and published printed materials. Moreover, it proposed to continue the commenced plan and to extend its framework, and in parallel to engage in forming requisite relations with those foreign states with an interest in weakening the Soviet Union. Establishment of this kind of relationship provided the possibility for receiving external protection and support for the work of the Committee, and in particular to receive sufficient quantity of arms and ammunition. The Committee believed that a rationally prepared action on the part of the entire Caucasus would create serious complications for Soviet Russia at home and abroad, and this justifies the expectation of success.

At this time the British supported the activities of the Committee, and the Consul General in İstanbul recommended to London to support the work of this Committee against Soviet Union.

“The work was commenced by the K.K.K. on a very modest scale but owing to its nature and character it will without fail grow up to that scale which is necessary in such a matter. Keeping that average scale it must be continued in the future and the following must be kept:

- 1.The office of the K.K.K.
- 2.The Persian section of the Committee, its office and means of liaison.
- 3.The technical apparatus of the liaison (Kars, Arghadan –Tripev).
- 4.The organisation of the K.K.K. in the Caucasian republics.
- 5.The section of the K.K.K. in Europe for work amongst the ranks of the Emigration.
- 6.The creation and labour of a Pancaucasian military circle.
- 7.The Committees press conferences.

³⁴⁵ *Caucasian Boundaries*, [FO 371/11783].

For the subject of all those objects the K.K.K. considers that £900 will be required per month.”³⁴⁶

Nevertheless, because of the ‘close’ relations between the newly founded states of Turkish Republic and the Soviet Union, the activities of those anti-Bolshevik or anti-Soviet groups were halted and its leaders were forced to leave Turkey or to keep in silence.

C- Prométhée and the Amalgamation of Exiles:

By the late 1920s, as a result of negative Turkish attitudes towards the Caucasian emigres and the death of Masaryk in Czechoslovakia, the Mountaineers began to search for a new safe heaven for their anti-Soviet independence movement. The atmosphere in Europe was favourable for the establishment of an anti-Bolshevik or Soviet front. Accordingly, the aforementioned Caucasian Independence Committee firstly moved to Paris in 1926. This allowed the establishment of close contacts between the members of the Committee and the Union of the Caucasian Mountaineers in Prague and the bulk of emigration who were living in Paris.

Meanwhile, in May 1926 General Pilsudski came to the power in Poland. As Hostler stressed it, his official program was the political preparation for a possible war with the Soviets.³⁴⁷ He was aware of the importance of the anti-Soviet nationalist movements and accepted them as natural allies. He got a quick response from these groups and Russian *emigres* turned their faces towards Poland.

³⁴⁶ *Caucasian Boundaries*, [FO 371/11783].

³⁴⁷ Charles Warren Hostler, 1993. *The Turks of Central Asia*, London: Preager, 124.

Pilsudski, by allocating a considerable sum of money, strongly supported the activities of the *emigres* against the Bolshevik regime, which attracted émigré groups to Warsaw. And, with Polish financial support, the non-Slavic population of the former Russian Empire, except the Armenians, succeeded in setting up an overarching anti-Bolshevik political organization in 1926: the *Prométhée*.³⁴⁸

The main contenders of all the anti-Bolshevik national parties of the revolutionary period in Russia took part in this newly established umbrella organization: Georgian Mensheviks, Azerbaijani ‘*Musavat*’, Crimean Tatars’ ‘*Milli Furka*’, Turkistani ‘*Milli Türkistan Birliđi*’ and the members of various North Caucasian and other non-Slavic groups.³⁴⁹

The official publication of the *Prométhée* was its periodical *Prométhée*. The first issue of the *Prométhée* was published in November 1926 in Paris. In fact, beyond that the organization supplied the necessary financial means for the publication of several periodicals in different languages aimed at different nationalities. Among these were *Trizub-Le Trident*, *Sakartvelo* (Paris), *İstiklâl* and *Kurtuluş* (Berlin), *Yaña Milli Yul* (Berlin), *Yaş Türkistan* (Berlin-Paris), *Volnoye Kazachestvo* (Prague), *Emel* (Constanza), *Severnyi Kavkaz-Şimali Kafkasya* (Warsaw).³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ For *Prométhée* see Etienne Copeaux 1997. “Prometeci Hareket,” *Unutkan Tarih, Sovyet Sonrası Türkdili Alanı*. In Semih Vaner, ed., İstanbul: Metis Yay., 17-52 and January-February 1993. “Promete Hareketi” *Kırım*, 2: 11-20. According to Muhlen *Prométhée* was set up in 1928 after a Caucasian freemasonry guild has moved from Warsaw to Paris. Patrik von zur Muhlen, 1984. *Gamalıhaç ile Kızılyıldız Arasında: İkinci Dünya Savaşı’nda Sovyet Dođu Halkları’nın Milliyetçiliđi*, trnsl. Eşref Bengi Özbilen, Ankara: Mavi Yayınları, 20-1. Hereafter *Gamalıhaç ile Kızılyıldız Arasında*.

³⁴⁹ Noy Jordaniya, Cafer Seydahmet, Osman Hoca, Mustafa Çokayođlu, Ayaz İshaki, Said Shamil, Mehmed Emin Resulzade and Roman Smal-Stotskiy were the leading members of the *Prométhée*. However, Armenians, possibly because of the Turkish dominance refused to participate and cooperate. Muhlen, *ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁵⁰ Copeaux, ‘Prometeci Hareket’, p. 29 and, Hostler, *ibid.*, pp. 124-5.

The *Prométhée* functioned through the Promethean Club in Warsaw. This club also had branches in Paris, Helsinki, and other European capitals. All national communities and governments in exile were represented in meetings, discussions and the planning of the political and propaganda actions. Beyond all those more or less public work;

“the most serious and important activity was restricted to inner circles of the governments in exile, national communities, and the special desk of the Polish general staff and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who formulated plans for a possible future war and activities in the territory of the Soviet Union.”³⁵¹

D- The Free Caucasian Mountaineers People Party:

In *Prométhée*, each national group functioned through their own national centers. In a way, the North Caucasian peoples set up their own organization or national center on 18 November 1926³⁵²: The Free Caucasian Mountaineers People Party (*Narodnoy Partii Vol'nikh Gortsev Kavkaza*). Later on, this Party renamed itself the Caucasian Mountaineers People Party (*Narodnaya Partiya Gortsev Kavkaza*) in Warsaw.³⁵³

The Party, which defined as a political organization “shinning in exile”, was the first and the sole political party of the North Caucasians in exile.³⁵⁴ The party aimed at strengthening the spirit of the struggle for freedom among the North Caucasian intelligentsia. Therefore, as its main organizer, Said Shamil pointed out,

³⁵¹ Hostler, 125.

³⁵² Barasbi Baytugan, 1931. “Znamenatel'naya data,” *Gortsy Kavkaza*, (Paris), 26: 4. Also see Aydın Turan, May 1997. “Promethe Hareketi'nde Kuzey Kafkasya Mültecileri: Kafkasya Dağlıları Halk Partisi (1926-1940)-I,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, 27(161): 49-57 and “Promethe Hareketi'nde Kuzey Kafkasya Mültecileri: Kafkasya Dağlıları Halk Partisi (1926-1940)-II,” June 1997. 27(162): 39-47. Hereafter KDHP.

³⁵³ Barasbi Baytugan, “Znamenatel'naya data”.

³⁵⁴ Vano Kavtaradze, 1991. “Kafkasya Konfederasyon Yolunda,” trnsl. Musa Ramazan, *Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür Dergisi*, (İstanbul), 83/84: 44. Barasbi Baytugan, “Znamenatel'naya data,” 4.

Warsaw was chosen as the center for the party and its initial activities, and the militant cadres were composed of the ‘the young intellectuals’ in Prague.³⁵⁵ Thus, it is not wrong to say that the Caucasian Mountaineers People Party was a continuation and the amalgamation of the Union of the Caucasian Mountaineers of Prague and Caucasian Independence Committee of İstanbul. Most of the leading figures of both parties like, Ahmet Tsalikhov, Elmurza Bekovich Cherkaskiy, Barasbi Baytugan, Adil Bek Kulatti, Mirza Bek Kulatti, Aytek Kundukh, Ahmet Nabi Magoma, Gazihan Bessolt, Cemalettin Kanukati, Kosta Zangi, Ahmet Canbek, Mehmet Girey Sunch (Sunç), Tavsultan Shakman and Ibrahim Chulik played a role in this new organization.

From the beginning the Party quickly organized itself among the dispersed North Caucasian diasporas and making the Middle East, especially Turkey the first focus of its attention. Because of the policies of existing governments, it was not possible to establish branch organizations of the party. Therefore, in order to reach these groups, the first and most effective step was to be the substantial and enduring publication activities. Thus, the Party initiated its first periodical *Vol'nye Gortsy* in Prague, of which possibly 6 issues were published in 1927 and 1928 in Russian.³⁵⁶ Later on it was given the name of *Gortsy Kavkaza/Kafkasya Dağlıları* and renamed once more in May 1934 as *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Said Şamil, 1995. “Said Şamil’den Muhaceretteki Kuzey Kafkasyalıların esir Vatan’ın Kurtuluşuyla İlgili Mücadelelerine Işık Tutan Tarihi Bir Mektup,” *Birleşik Kafkasya*, (Eskişehir), 3: 49-50.

³⁵⁶ The first issue of the *Vol'nye Gortsy*, which was the namesake of an earlier publication that appeared in Tiflis in 1920, was published on 26 March 1927. Then the second one was published on 3 May 1927, and the third on 28 June 1927. The 4th and 5th issues were not available for me but the 6th and possibly last issue was published on 19 January 1928.

³⁵⁷ *Gortsy Kavkaza* appeared through 1928 as the North Caucasian National Defense Organ. It was continued with a Turkish component *Gortsy Kavkaza/Kafkasya Dağlıları* (1929-1934) and partially concurrent *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya* (1934-1939).

First hand information on the program and party regulation is only possible by the help of a declaration which was issued by the Party on 23 March 1927 and published in *Vol'nye Gortsy*. In this declaration, the party declared that its main aim was to establish a 'national-territorial' state that is a sovereign North Caucasian Federal Republic, in compliance with the basic principles, which had drawn up by the Andi Congress of 1917. In addition, everyone would have the right to vote, without discrimination on grounds of race, sex, and belief. Each and every civil liberty would also be guaranteed. The economic structure would be liberal in content. Commercial and industrial sectors will gain the precedence for future economic development. Therefore, the private sector will be encouraged to make investments especially in commercial and industrial fields of activities.³⁵⁸

Within the pages of the periodical the Mountaineers openly declared that they were against the Russians. Red or white, Russians were not to be trusted and that the Mountaineers could not wait for new and better policies to be implemented by the Russians. Primarily, the Bolsheviks were implementing the policies of Tsarist Russia and thus, within the pages of *Vol'nye Gortsy* the Mountaineers did not hesitate to urge the leaders of the new regime: "Communists, repent before it is too late!"³⁵⁹

The Party also rejected the proposals, put forward by the newly emerging Socialist League of East European Nations, to organize plebiscite in the lands that

³⁵⁸ For the text of the declaration see *Vol'nye Gortsy*, (Prague), 26 March 1927, 1: 1-2.

³⁵⁹ "Otkliki Druzey 'Vol'nikh Gortsev'," *Vol'nye Gortsy*, (Prague), 3 May 1927, 2: 21.

were under Soviet rule after the liberation and expressed a will to be independent.³⁶⁰

Despite its importance as the first official periodical of the Free Caucasian Mountaineers People Party, *Vol'nye Gortsy* never mentioned itself as a Promethean publication. On the other hand, its successors *Gortsy Kavkaza* and *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya* were outwardly Promethean publications and the basis of the Mountaineers' struggle in exile took shape within the pages of these periodicals. Moreover, while they were waiting for the War to re-establish their state, the North Caucasians started to discuss the structure of the state and the basic difficulties posed by unification. From the beginning it became clear that the biggest challenge facing them in unification was the creation of a single nation.

3- Creating a Nation?

The North Caucasian *emigres* took the issue of creating a 'North Caucasian nation' seriously. Almost all the leading figures believed that the basic handicap to establishing a unified structure for the struggle for the North Caucasian territory, was the lack of a single, unique North Caucasian nation. Therefore, as Balo Bilatti emphasized, in sovereign North Caucasus, there would be no Avar, Kabardian, Balkar, Osetian, Chechen or Kumuk, but just a North Caucasian.³⁶¹ Lack of this kind of an understanding was the main reason for the captivity of the North Caucasian peoples.

³⁶⁰ Related with the Socialist League of East European Nations and the position of the Party against it see Batraz, 3 May 1927. "Liga Sotsialistov Vostoka Evropy i Gortsy Kavkaza," *Vol'nye Gortsy*, (Prague), 2: 18-19 and see the leading article of the No. 6, published on 19 January 1928, 1-5.

³⁶¹ Balo Bilatti, 1935. "Millet ve Dil," *Severnyi Kavkaz*, (Warsaw), 15: 4.

Therefore, the North Caucasian intellectuals felt themselves to take this issue particularly and more seriously. For a first time, Barasbi Baytugan analyzed the nationality issue in *Gortsy Kavkaza* in reference to the psychological motives.³⁶² He looked all the relationship between nation and union and emphasized that this kind of an amalgamation already existed in the North Caucasus. He pointed out that the common historical destiny, neighbourhood, and close connections for centuries were the main cements of this union.

The most comprehensive article on the issue was Balo Bilatti's '*Milli Hareketlerin İdeolojik Esasları*' (The Ideological Principles of the National Movements). He wrote it in an academic manner, and discussed whether the North Caucasian nation is existed or not.³⁶³

In this article, Bilatti asserted 'the nations' right to independence' or self-determination as the core of his argumentation. In the first part, he analyzed the development and transformation of this right from 17th century's philosophers, Locke, Voltaire, Diderot, and D'Alemberte to the principles of Wilson. According to him, in the 19th century there were two main currents. The first, was brought into existence by small 'prisoner nationalities', to free themselves from the yoke of big imperial powers, such as the secessionist movements of 19th century in Turkey and Russia. The other was the current of small states aiming to unify to create a single powerful political entity, like the unification of the Germans and the Italians.

³⁶² Barasbi Baytugan, January/February 1933. "Uzun Geçmişimiz Hakkında Birkaç Söz," *Gortsy Kavkaza*, (Warsaw), 35/36: 26-30.

³⁶³ Balo Bilatti, April 1934. "Milli Hareketlerin İdeolojik Esasları," *Gortsy Kavkaza*, (Warsaw), 50: 5-11. It was reprinted in *Birleşik Kafkasya*, (İstanbul), November-December-January 1965-66, 2(6): 1-10. Hereafter "Milli".

From this perspective, Bilatti suggested that the struggle of the North Caucasians against the Russian Empire was an example of the first type. It was based on the principle of the nations' right to self-determination. Additionally, it depended mainly on the understanding of the 'national unification of the mountaineers'. The Russians however, despite their strong support for the struggles of small nationalities in Europe, were inexorably fighting with all the nationalities that were struggling for their independence within the boundaries of Russia and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless Bilatti argues, the notion of the 'sovereignty of nations' reached its peak in the principles of Wilson. He believed that "this right could only be turned into a dynamic power, under the condition that, when a group of people associate themselves with a common interest and they accordingly define themselves as a nation"³⁶⁴

Therefore, the key point was the creation of a nation. For this reason, in order to determine the ideological pillars of the North Caucasian independence movement, the phenomenon of 'national sentiment' and 'nation' have to be defined clearly. In the second part of his article Bilatti focused on the historical evolution of these terms. With the help of the main contenders like Mazzini, and E. Renan he reached his definition of a nation, which was mainly subjective in content. "The nation, first and foremost means a common sentiment and purpose, a spirit which disguised within a common historical past, and a will on the common destiny."³⁶⁵

According to Bilatti, this definition was in full compliance with the realities of the North Caucasus. Despite the existence of 'tribal differences', the North

³⁶⁴ Bilatti, "Milli," 5.

³⁶⁵ Bilatti, "Milli," 9.

Caucasians have common historical background which was accepted as 'consecrated' by each and every Mountaineer.

“Civil and cultural values are the products of the common life continuing for centuries within the identical borders. At last, the ultimate objective of these values is living within the borders of the national boundaries collectively.

The sole inconvenient condition in front of the North Caucasian national unity is the lack of common language. However, ...the common language is not an indispensable instrument and has no important role over the establishment of a national union. Being a multi-lingual nation could not be disturbed anyone so much. Following the removal of the factors that are hampering the development of the North Caucasus, the language problem could be solved easily. The strength of the elements of the 'national unity' would help to solve this problem.”³⁶⁶

Later on, in his article '*Şimali Kafkasyalıların Esareti*,' (The Captivity of the North Caucasians) which was published in *Gortsy Kavkaza*, Abat³⁶⁷ argued the issue from a different perspective and analyzed the reasons for the failure to establish a union or a nation in the North Caucasus.³⁶⁸ He particularly stressed that the indispensable and necessary conditions, which bind members of a nation together, such as religion, customs, language, race, and unified fatherland were, absent in the North Caucasus. Moreover, he pointed out, it was almost impossible to speak about the existence of 'common enlightenment', which was the main reason for the North Caucasians' captivity.

According to Abat, religion, language, blood and race, compatriotism and common customs are the complementary elements of a nation. For the North

³⁶⁶ Bilatti, "Milli," 10.

³⁶⁷ Abat was one of the pennames of Tevfik Çiper (1901-72), an Abkhaz. He was born in the village of Akpınar, Adana. Following his graduation from the İstanbul University Law Faculty, he has been worked for Turkish Ministry of Justice.

³⁶⁸ Abat, September-October 1933. "Şimali Kafkasyalıların Esareti," *Gortsy Kavkaza*, (Warsaw), 43: 5-18 and 44: 2-6. It was reprinted in *Kuzey Kafkasya Kültür Dergisi*, (İstanbul), 14: 76/78, January-July 1990, 20-27. Hereafter "Esaret".

Caucasus however, he emphasized, none of these elements were sufficient to establish a social and unified identity. Then, in order to verify his argumentation he scrutinized all these components one by one.

First of all, he stated that religious bonds and faith were not sufficient components to coalesce the members of a nation. Moreover, he believed that religion had never managed to form a social bond in the North Caucasus, or at least in certain parts. Osetia, Abkhazia and Georgia were inhabited mainly the Christian populations and beyond that Islam, because of the Arab influence was not concordant to the native customs and daily life in the other parts of the region.

The customs that implicitly have nationalistic contents, he believed, left a mark among the North Caucasians. Except some primitive ones like tribalism, these customs concluded the stages of evolution for stating a nation in the North Caucasus. Therefore, the author emphasized that, from the perspective of customs and civilization, if the life of the North Caucasians had progressed naturally they would have reached a level, beyond that which British had achieved.³⁶⁹

From the point of a race, the author stated that the North Caucasians had the ‘superiority of race and blood’, but they were rather unconscious in their patriotic feelings. The lack of common enlightenment unfortunately disabled the North Caucasians to convert this love of country or patriotism to a conscious and organized struggle.

Thus, at last, he was concerned with the reasons for the absence of a common enlightenment among the North Caucasians. The primary reason, which impeded the creation of a common enlightenment, was the lack of a common

written language. From this point of view, he shifted the focus of argument to the language issue and from then on the Mountaineers in exile, in order to solve the problem of creating a nation focused on the common language problem.

4- Common Language:

The lack of a *lingua franca* among the North Caucasian peoples has always been perceived as the root cause of almost all the problems of the region, mainly the inability to sustain a union. Arslan published the first analysis, ‘*Kafkasya Dilleri*’ (Caucasian Languages) on this language issue in *Gortsy Kavkaza*.³⁷⁰ It was the first detailed article that was written beyond the usual polemical intentions. In this article, Arslan tried to expose several possibilities related to the language problem for removing the obstacles, facing the North Caucasian union. He emphasized that, according to linguistic studies of that time having different languages was not an impediment to the North Caucasians’ becoming a united nation. Like common historical destiny and common political and economic situation, linguistic relations could allow the achievement of a union. The only requirement for to support this case to carry out this way was detailed studies of the linguistic pattern of the North Caucasus and to compare with the studies of linguists, such as Guldenstent, Pallas, F. Erkert, F. Müller, Dirr and Marr. To accomplish this aim, Arslan analyzed and discussed the arguments of linguists of his time and classified their works and at end he reached the conclusion that:

³⁶⁹ Abat, “Esaret,” 21-2.

³⁷⁰ Arslan, January-February 1933. “Kafkasya Dilleri,” *Gortsy Kavkaza*, (Warsaw), 35/36: 30-32. Hereafter “Dil”.

“People who are not benevolent to the Caucasus, were always passionately interested in asserting the multi-national and multi-lingual structure of the Caucasus. Even Russian researchers and writers, forgetting Russia’s multi-national and multi-lingual structure, do not hesitate to defend this interpretation devotedly. If methods of superficial research, demagogy and the distortion of the facts would be given up and only the scientific and objective research methods applied, it would be clear that linguistic relations, like the historical destiny would enable the unification of the Caucasian nations.”³⁷¹

Abat’s article triggered long lasting and more polemic discussions among the North Caucasians on the language issue. From the aspect of speaking languages, Abat appraised the North Caucasus, as one of the most eccentric regions of the world. The number of languages that were spoken in the North Caucasus was more than usual, but significance of this, he said should not be exaggerated. With the help of other commonalties peoples of the North Caucasus can easily compensate every kind of shortcomings.

“Among the North Caucasians, despite the existence of different languages, from the perspective of common features like race, patriotism, customs and traditions, style of life and clothing, religious beliefs and etc, there is tremendous and strong harmony.”³⁷²

Therefore, the first and the most important, but not most painful point for which the North Caucasian intellectuals had to work, should be the language issue. They have to find ways to arrange a common North Caucasian language, *a lingua franca*. This was a must for improving mutual cultural understanding and creating a unified, one and single nation.

³⁷¹ Arslan, “Dil,” 31.

³⁷² Abat, “Esaret,” 23.

Until this time, he pointed out, there was no any exertion to arrange and assemble languages. They remained as they were. There was no alphabet and intellectuals never endeavoured to make any arrangements to tackle this issue. Religious intellectuals preferred to communicate through Arabic. This lack of a means of communication resulted in the Russian invasion, and the North Caucasians never established a unified structure. Therefore, according to Abat, the first and foremost duty of the North Caucasian intellectual emigrants, was to work for the necessary language arrangements and achieve a unity of language before North Caucasian independence.

For unity of language in the North Caucasus he proposed a two-staged project. Initially, he emphasized, the languages that were spoken in the region has to be specified. Their origins, vocal structures, transliterations, letters were to be defined and arranged in a unified manner. In making these arrangements, he suggested that the Latin script be used. Obstacles related to sounds which could not be found in other languages using the Latin script, could easily overcome by inventing special letters for the North Caucasian languages.

The next step following the determination of the written languages would be the unification of some several languages. This arrangement, he believed would cause the establishment of a strong bond between the peoples of the North Caucasus. Then, he progressed the second stage of his project: to decide the official common language, which would be the means of communication among these peoples.

Abat was well aware that this was his most controversial point. Nevertheless, he stated in his article that the reason necessitates that the peoples of the North Caucasus has to make a choice between three different alternatives:

- “ 1- To adopt one of the main languages, in use in the region, that is Russian or Turkish, as an official language,.
- 2- To assent one of the languages of the North Caucasus as an official language.
- 3- To create a new language inspired by *Esperanto* and to adapt it as an official language.”³⁷³

Abat believed and suggested that the first alternative should not be considered. For the second, because of the primitive structure and insufficiencies of those languages to embrace the whole population of the region, he pointed out, it is impossible to select one of them as an official language. For the third alternative, although it is very hard to realize, he argued that, it was not impossible to create such a language and moreover, it has an attractive side. If the North Caucasians could manage to create a simple language that composed of small numbers of words which has an optimum meaning, the peoples of the region would prefer this language and automatically began to use it. Then within a time a common language would emerged within the North Caucasian territory and the language problem would be solved.³⁷⁴

With this article, Abat initiated a serious discussion among the North Caucasian emigres. Several intellectuals, published critiques, answers, and analysis in reply. The prominent Caucasian leader, Ahmet Tsalikhov using the penname A.

³⁷³ Abat, “Esaret,” 26.

³⁷⁴ Abat, “Esaret,” 26.

T., criticized Abat in his article '*Kafkasya Dağlılarının Resmi Lisanları*' (The Official Languages of the Caucasian Mountaineers) and made his own analysis.

“Today, we too, desire and demand the solution of the language problem firstly and urgently, because our movements are excessively intellectual not operational. As an instrument of the manifestation through which the flow of idea towards the each and every segments is ensured there is a need for a common language.”³⁷⁵

According to the Tsalikhov, the North Caucasians, under these circumstances they have no option but to use Russian or Turkish as an official language at that time, because in general, Mountaineer Intellectuals can only speak Russian or Turkish. Therefore in all publications, at least for the time being, each and every Mountaineer has to accept both of these languages together.

“Consequently, for the time being, in principle, we have to understand and accept the employment of both languages together in all the publications. Moreover, each Mountaineer, under the conditions in which his own personal language is not sufficient, has to know that the language that would be utilised in the fields of national idea and science are Russian and Turkish.”³⁷⁶

At the end of his article, Tsalikhov, having suggested using of Latin script because of convenience and its international character, emphasized that the issues of language and script should be scrutinized broadly, and this kind of a discussion would be open to every North Caucasians. Tsalikhov asked the North Caucasians to scrutinize Abat's alternatives in detail. By doing so, they can make the true choice. However, he suggested that the discussion should not be open ended. All

³⁷⁵ A. T., March 1934. “Kafkasya Dağlılarının Resmi Lisanları,” *Gortsy Kavkaza* ≅ *Kafkasya Dağlıları*, (Paris), 49: 2-4. Hereafter “Lisan”.

³⁷⁶ A. T., “Lisan,” 2.

the young should defend their arguments but a decision should be taken as quickly as possible and then the work has to be started.

Ahmet Tsalikhov's proposal was not left unanswered. *Severnyi Kavkaz*, the successor publication of the North Caucasian emigration opened a discussion platform in its first issue published in May 1934. B.H. joined this discussion with an article titled '*Şimali Kafkasya'nın Resmi Lisani Ecnebi Bir Lisan Olmamalıdır*' (The Official Language of the North Caucasus should not be a Foreign One).³⁷⁷

In the beginning, he agreed with the other authors that the lack of a unified official North Caucasian language was the main reason for the North Caucasians' captivity and so long as an official language is not defined this captivity would last. However further, he claimed, it is impossible to agree an official language for a nonexistent state. Most North Caucasians are now living in exile and thus have no sovereignty. Moreover it is impossible to estimate when this sovereignty would be realized. On the other hand the process in the North Caucasus was on going and currently, he said, there were autonomies not only for each language but even for the all dialects in which these languages and dialects are written and read. Therefore the exiles, he stressed, could not decide themselves the official language of the possible sovereign state.³⁷⁸ He was well aware of the dominance of the Russian language in the region. Therefore, to speak of making a choice between Arabic, Turkish, or Esperanto, he claims to be nonsense.

He believed that when the North Caucasian gained their freedom, they would prefer the most developed and comprehensive regional language as their

³⁷⁷ B. H., May 1934. "Şimali Kafkasya'nın Resmi Lisani Ecnebi Bir Lisan Olmamalıdır," *Şimali Kafkasya- Severnyi Kavkaz*, (Warsaw), 1: 5-7. Hereafter "Resmi Lisan".

³⁷⁸ B. H., "Resmi Lisan", 6.

official language. Then, in contrast to his earlier analysis, he asserted that although there was no single language extending over the entire North Caucasus, a somewhat widespread language was already in existence: the Adyge language. Before the 19th century's struggles and emigration, he points out, more than three million out of five million individuals living in the North Caucasus were Adyges. Their language, unfortunately, as the other regional languages had no script and thus they could not create any kind of science and knowledge. However, if the North Caucasians could defeat the Russians and establish their own state, the Adyges with their overwhelming majority would declare their language as the official language.³⁷⁹

As it is understood from the *Severnyi Kavkaz*, the North Caucasian emigrants interested in the language issue. Therefore, the periodical made an announcement in its second issue in Russian and in its fourth in Turkish.

“Naturally, we do not believe that finding a solution to the most complicated problem of language, through discussions in the pages of a periodical which published in exile would be possible. On the other hand we have no any doubt about the usefulness of this kind of a discussion. In our opinion, our dispersed structure to the varied numbers of countries do not allow us to utilize any other way to exchange our ideas in an extensive way. Without doubt, the exchange of ideas in a comprehensive way among the representatives of old and new emigrants, would bring us together and increase uniformity and capability. Moreover, we better understand our ideas reciprocally and most importantly, -if it exists- we assist each other by pointing our erroneous opinions. Through this way, for the future, we willmake the solution of the complicated language problem easier to a certain degree.”³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ B. H., “Resmi Lisan”, 5-6.

³⁸⁰ Editorial Board, August 1934. “Şimali Kafkasya'da Dil Mes'elesi, (*Problema Yazıka na Severnom Kavkaze*),” *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*, (Warsaw), 4: 11-12.

In this framework, the periodical's Editorial Board declared that they would publish all articles on the language issue, even articles in which the authors which contradicted the line of the periodical. Nevertheless, they felt it necessary to point out that this doesn't mean that the level of argumentation and objectivity will not be taken into consideration. Therefore, the participants of the discussion should be careful on writing on the language issue.

The editorial board of the periodical concluded this announcement by underlining that the stance of the periodical would be clarified at the end of the discussion.

Another very important article on the language issue was Arslan's article '*Dil Mes'alesi Hakkında 1928'de Dağıstan'da Neler Söylenmişti*' (What was said regarding the language problem in Dagestan in 1928)³⁸¹. In this article, the author showed the North Caucasian peoples' interest towards their motherland and their concern for the events, which had taken place. The article also gives a historical perspective on the development of the discussions on the language issue.

Arslan asserted that the language issue was not a newborn topic for the North Caucasians. Even in 1905, the North Caucasian intellectuals studied this issue. The political atmosphere and the Tsar's regional administration however, he said, didn't allow detailed discussion or the taking of the necessary steps to solve the problem.

³⁸¹ Arslan, August 1934. "Dil Mes'alesi Hakkında 1928'de Dağıstan'da Neler Söylenmişti," *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*, (Warsaw), 4: 12-19 and September-October 1934, 5-6: 24-29.

Later on, it was taken into consideration in the Congress of Mountaineers in May 1917 and the special commission on cultural issues and education set up. This commission studied the issue in detail (See Chapter II). But the failure of 1918 did not allow the North Caucasian State to implement these decisions in the North Caucasus.

In the following sections of the article, the author clarified the similarities between the approaches of the North Caucasians who were living in the North Caucasus and those in exile by comparing discussions which took place during a congress in Dagestan in 1928, and existing discussions from *Severnyi Kavkaz*.

Another author Kosta (Kosta Zangi) joined the discussion by asserting a different argument. He pointed out that having a common official language was of course a big advantage, but for the North Caucasus in particular, the discussion of this issue would have no benefit, because of the existing situation. Therefore, “for the time being there was no need to dwell on this issue and assume a position.”³⁸²

The participation of General Mikail Halil to the discussion brought about some serious reactions. As for the alphabet, Mikail Halil was in favor of the Latin script and, in order to overcome some obstacles related to particular sounds, he proposed some modifications. His analysis on the common official language provoked some reactions.

“I have never been inclined to my fellow citizens who, by the help of the tombs and archaeological excavations, were trying to prove that the North Caucasian peoples had the same origin with the European nations like Kelt, Frank, Roman, Greek, German or etc. In my opinion, the native populations

³⁸² Kosta, November 1934. “Müşterek Devlet Dili Mes’eleşi Münasebetile,” *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*, (Warsaw), 7: 17.

of the North Caucasus are originally Turks or Tatars. Some tribes like the Kumuk, Balkar and Karachay could preserve their languages, but the other majority, like Avar, Lak, Chechen, Osetian, Abkhaz and Adige had forgotten their original languages and instead took their current languages.”³⁸³

From that perspective, he defended the position choice had to be made, it could never be Turkey’s Turkish or Russian. The most suitable choice, in spite of its inadequate literary quality, would be the Kumuk language.

The response, in a violent manner appeared suddenly. A Kabardian, Shurdumyiko Ali (Ahmet Ali Şurdum) replied to him in the next issues:

“Not so Mr. Mikail, on the contrary, the Kumuks, Karachays and Balkars distorted their own languages as a result of social intercourse. ...in designing the race connections I am not passionately inclined to the Europeans. ...Today, while there are several excellent languages existing among our tribes and particularly the Adyge language is still more copious than most of the independent states’ languages, is it convenient that trying to dictate a Turkic language and dealing with the reorganization of the Kumuk language on behalf of the common language?”³⁸⁴

“It could be asserted that the Adyge language, although it was deprived of the enlightenment, is copious than most of the nations’ languages”³⁸⁵

This language and alphabet discussion continued until 1938 on the pages of the periodicals enthusiastically. Moreover through ‘the Commission for the Languages of the North Caucasus’, founded in 1933, the Kumuk language was chosen as the *lingua franca* for the North Caucasus. For the future they planned to

³⁸³ Mikail Halil, December 1934. “A.T. Beyin Makalesine Cevap,” *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*, 8: 8-9.

³⁸⁴ Şurdumyiko Ali, February 1935. “Şimali Kafkasyanın müşterek resmi dili mes’elesinde Mikail Halil Paşa Hazretlerine cevap,” *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*, 10: 16-17.

³⁸⁵ Şurdumyiko Ali, March/April 1935 “Şimali Kafkasyanın müşterek lisanı mes’elesine dair,” *Şimali Kafkasya*, 11/12: 26-27

“unify the North Caucasian alphabets using the Latin alphabet” having used Latin with diacretics and diphthongs to create a 47-letter alphabet. They had undertaken a Polish-North Caucasian dictionary with 2,000 basic words in each language written in the new alphabet.³⁸⁶

5- Caucasians in General: Caucasian Independence Committee:

While the peoples of the Caucasus were continuing their activities within their own national centers in the framework of *Prométhée*, the setting up of an overarching organization encompassing all the peoples of the Caucasus still had some adherents. The leaders of the national centers of the North Caucasus, Azerbaijan and Georgia were also in favor of it and they actively took part in activities to set up such an organization. The activities of these groups were expressed firstly in *Vol'nye Gortsy*'s No. 3 published in July 1927.³⁸⁷ Later on, the establishment of the Caucasian Independence Committee-CIC (*Komitet Nezavisimosti Kavkaza*) was declared ostentatiously during celebrations for the 10th anniversary of the declaration of independence of the Caucasian states in Paris in 1928.³⁸⁸

The Committee's basic aim was to bring all Caucasian nations, that is the North Caucasians, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, and Armenians, together and to unite their efforts in the common struggle against the Bolsheviks or the Soviet Union to restore independence. The basic project of this Committee was the establishment of

³⁸⁶ See, “The Commission for the Languages of North Caucasia,” 1938. *Wschod-Orient*, 2: 26-29.

³⁸⁷ “Chas Priblizhaetsya,” 28 July 1927. *Vol'nye Gortsy*, (Prague), 3: 1-2 and Batraz, “Chto Delat?” 8-10.

a common state structure, which encompassed the Caucasus as a whole, in the form of a Caucasian Confederation.

Members of the Independence Committee thought that they were on the brink of great events or decisive days that was a general war. It was stressed in the declaration that this will bring a solution “of the political drama of the old Tsarist Empire and, with it, the definite settling of the fate of” the peoples of the Caucasus. Those days were not so far away and this would be a last chance for the Caucasians to restart their war of independence. In such critical moments, however, “only the closest union of the whole Caucasus, the most whole learned collaboration of its leaders, resolved to carry on the struggle for the common ideal, can give the much desired victory.”³⁸⁹

Nevertheless, disputes among the different nationalities, especially between the Armenians and Muslim groups caused the Committee’s failure to declare its main program until 1934.³⁹⁰

In June 1934, in No. 2 of *Şimali Kafkasya* Emir Hasan heralded reconciliation among the Caucasians and on 14 July 1934, the Caucasian Independence Committee concluded and signed the Pact of the Caucasian Confederation in Brussels³⁹¹. The representatives of the National Centres of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the North Caucasus signed this Pact.³⁹²

³⁸⁸ M. E. Resulzade, June/July 1952 “Kafkasya Meseleleri V: Kafkasya birliđi fikri muhacerette,” *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 11/12: 6.

³⁸⁹ “Appeal of the Caucasian Independence Committee to All Caucasian Patriots,” 1934. *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*, (Warsaw), 3: 5.

³⁹⁰ Vaçnadze, “Hariçte Kafkasya”, 11.

³⁹¹ For the full text of the Pact “Kafkasya Konfederasyonu Misakı,” 1934. *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*, (Warsaw), 3; and *Kafkasya Konfederasyonu Vesikalar ve Materyallar*, 1937. *Kafkasya*

With that Pact, the parties declared that the complete sovereignty of the nations of the Caucasus was the main concern. The only possibility to attain this aim was the establishment of a union, geographically and economically. Therefore, as its political form, the Pact was proposing the establishment of a ‘Caucasian Confederation,’ in which, the participating nationalities could preserve their national characters and territorial integrity in the best manner possible.

According to the Pact, the Confederation would represent all the nationalities of Caucasus as a whole in the international arena and preserve the integrity of the Confederation with the help of Confederation army, which would be made up of the armies of the confederated republics. For the resolution of the internal debates, Pact proposed the establishment of arbitration court, that is Supreme Court of the Confederation.

Thus in order to make the Confederation work within these formulated principles, article 5 of the Pact revealed that, “as soon as possible a commission of experts will draw up a project or a draft constitution for the Constitution for the Caucasian Confederation.” This would serve as a basis for the work of the first Constituent Assembly of each republic. At the end, in article 6 of the Pact, it was stressed that there was a place for the Armenian Republic in the Confederation.

At the same time by issuing ‘an Appeal to all Caucasian Patriots’, the Caucasian Independence Committee declared that it assumed the first period of its activity closed by the declaration of the Pact. “From today the Pact must serve as

Konfederasyon Şurası Neşriyatından, 2: 5-7. Hereafter *Vesikalar*. But between these texts there were small differences. In addition, an extra information could be obtained from the periodical of Azerbaijanis *Kurtuluş*.

the essential basis for all activity of the National Centers; henceforth they are united in the struggle for the conquest of the unalienable rights of the Caucasian peoples.”³⁹³

Thus, the Caucasian Independence Committee, for the new phase of the Caucasian independence movement, revealed its intention to convene a conference to discuss its past activities and proposed to create a new organ to carry out the fundamental principles of the Pact.³⁹⁴

The reactions of the Caucasian emigration to the signing of the Pact were generally positive. Criticisms had been made *pro forma* on two different points. One was related those who signed the pact on behalf of the North Caucasian emigration. Some Caucasians believe that the signatures were not the notable names of the North Caucasian emigration. The other point was related to the Armenian question. According to these criticisms, there was no need to declare the Pact without ensuring the participation of Armenians.³⁹⁵

The proposed conference of the Caucasian Independence Committee held from 14-23 February 1935.³⁹⁶ After the election of the presidential board and determination of the agenda, the Secretary General of the Caucasian Independence Committee summarised the activities over the eight years of activities of the

³⁹² This pact was signed by M.E. Resulzade and A. M. Topcubasi (Azerbaijan National Center), M.G. Sunç, İbrahim Çulik and Tavsultan Şakman (North Caucasian National Center), and Noy Jordaniya and A. Chkhenkeli (Georgian National Center).

³⁹³ “Appeal of the Caucasian Independence Committee to All Caucasian Patriots,” 1934. *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*, (Warsaw), 3: 4-5.

³⁹⁴ “Appeal.”

Committee in light of the existing situation. Then, in order to revitalize the independent Caucasian Confederation, he asked the Conference, to set up a new and more influential Caucasian organization in compliance with the spirit of the 14 July Pact.³⁹⁷

The representatives of the three nations participating in Conference decided to form the Caucasian Confederation Council (*Kafkasya Konfederasyon Şurası*). This Council was set up on the basis of equal representation of the national centers of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the North Caucasus.³⁹⁸ The duties of the new body were also determined during this Conference.

- “ 1) To overthrow the Russian invasion government in the Caucasus, to make the Caucasian nations ready for the revival of the Caucasian republics and organize the unification of these republics in the form of Confederation.
- 2) To establish political and organizational connections with the organizations of the other captive nations of the Soviet Union.
- 3) The Caucasian Confederation Council is ready to establish contacts with revolutionary forces of the Russian nation who are unconditionally accepted the right to independence of Russian captive nations, and in favour of solving all kinds of international problems through peaceful means and arbitration.
- 4) The Caucasian Confederation Council, during it’s struggle to accomplish its objectives, depends only on its own power, which comes from discontented nations, relies on the benevolence and the support of the Caucasian friends and refrains from taking any kind of steps that would be put them in threat. The Council, taking its member nationalities’ interests into account would stay, only, as the builder and the owner of the Caucasian politics.”³⁹⁹

³⁹⁵ D. Vaçnadze, ‘Hariçte Kafkasya birliğı hareketi tarihi II,’ *Birleşik Kafkasya (Vereinigtetes Kaukasien)*, (Munich), 6(23): 8. Hereafter “Birlik Tarihi II.”

³⁹⁶ *Vesikalar*, 21.

³⁹⁷ *Vesikalar*, 22.

³⁹⁸ M. Resulzade, “Kafkasya Meseleleri V,” 7.

³⁹⁹ *Vesikalar*, 25-26.

Following the elections of the members of the Council and talks, the Conference issued a declaration and began to function.⁴⁰⁰

6- Caucasian Confederation Pact and the Opposition:

The first, if negligible, opposition to the Caucasian Mountaineers People Party came from its predecessor, the Union of Caucasian Mountaineers. Despite the fact that new Party was established by most of its members, the Union did not cease exists. Presided over by Murat Hatağogu who was not allowed to participate to the new party, some opponent continued to work.⁴⁰¹ Moreover, another opposition organization, the Union of Caucasian Nations (*Kafkasya Milletler Birliđi* or *Soyuz Naroda Kavkaza*) was established by some North Caucasian emigres led by M. Abatsiyev and H. Hatayev. The Caucasian Mountaineers People Party refused these organisations vehemently. Of the opposition movements, ‘*Kavkaz*’ set up by Haydar Bammat, the former Foreign Minister of the North Caucasian Republic of 1918 was the most organized and long-lasting one.⁴⁰²

The basic social and political policies of the Kavkaz group⁴⁰³ could easily be followed from its periodical *Kavkaz*. The first issue of the *Kavkaz* was published in October 1934 in Paris. The members of the group were very knowledgeable

⁴⁰⁰ For the text of Declaration see *Vesikalar*, 57-60. And for the reactions of several numbers of media see *Vesikalar*, 29-44.

⁴⁰¹ Aydın Turan, April 1997. “Kafkasya Dađlıları Birliđi (*Soyuz Gortsev Kavkaza*),” *Toplumsal Tarih*, 7(40): 49.

⁴⁰² For the analysis of a split among the North Caucasians see F. Daryal (Fuat Emircan), “Ön Söz,” and “Kafkas İşleri,” 1938. *Kafkasya: Kafkasya Hakında Yazılar Dergisi II*, F. Daryal, eds., İstanbul: Matbaai Ebuzziya, 3-4 and 65-68. Hereafter *Yazılar Dergisi II*.

⁴⁰³ Attributed to the periodical *Kavkaz* that had been started to publish in October 1934 by Bammat in Paris, this group was labelled as ‘Kavkaz group’.

native Caucasians who had often participated in the work of their respective national movements and short-lived governments. While the Azeri and Georgians of greatest international prominence were connected to the Promethean front, this was not the case with the North Caucasians, who were instead bound up with *Kavkaz*. As a reflection of the ideology of the group the periodical had been publishing with the help of Japanese embassy in Paris and was partly printed in Berlin, Charlottenburg.⁴⁰⁴

In fact, the ultimate goal of the group was not so different to the other group the realization of “the independence of the harmed fatherland”⁴⁰⁵ Their strategy, tactics, and world outlook nevertheless differentiated sharply.

The Kavkaz group sought to establish the Caucasus as a ‘Switzerland of the East’ by adopting a decentralized canton system used in that country. It worked to stimulate Armenian interest, to promote a careful and tolerant religious policy, which would help in building up a genuine Caucasian nationality that would occupy a buffer state, a Caucasian Confederation, between Russia and the Middle East along borders already, established with Turkey and Iran.

According to Bammat, distress and the economic crises after the Great World War caused the emergence of three different ideologies totally opposed to the basic principles of the pro-war period’s mentality. Among them, Marxism transformed into an ‘oligarchy of party bosses’ in the hands of the Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union. Contrary to that, fascism and national socialism, in Italy and

⁴⁰⁴ Patrik von zur Muhlen, *Gamalihaç ile Kızılyıldız Arasında*, 34-35.

⁴⁰⁵ “We learned at the expense of blood and the lost independence that we have no alternative of improvement but only the establishment of a Caucasian state that made up of all the nations of the Caucasus.” Haydar Bammat, “Hedefimiz,” 1936. *Kafkas Almanağı*, F. Daryal, eds., İstanbul, 6. Hereafter *Almanak*.

Germany, and *Kemalizm* in Turkey is still functioning with great support in all fields of social and political life. The achievements they realized forced other world governments to revise and modify their own policies. Thus, in the light of these developments, the peoples of the Caucasus were also to revise their own situation and arrange themselves.⁴⁰⁶

In this framework, Haydar Bammam and his Kavkaz group openly repudiated the essential principles of international democracy and sympathized with national socialism and fascism. They defined themselves as nationalist and anti-Marxist and, openly preferred to act in line with Germany, Italy, and, Japan.

Therefore, from the beginning, Bammam started to criticise the ‘Brussels Pact’ in the pages of *Kavkaz*. According to Bammam, the Brussels Pact was an arrangement of Georgian Mensheviks who controlled the *Prométhée* and it was just a Marxist set up⁴⁰⁷. Therefore, the Kavkaz group targeted Georgian socialists at first. Then, because of their close connections, they opposed Resulzade and his ‘*Musavat Party*’ and, Said Shamil and his North Caucasian group. At last, although they were not active in *Prométhée*, their ideological proximity made the Armenian *Dashnaks* their rivals.⁴⁰⁸

With the help of these groups or so-called parties, which were converted into a kind of ‘benefit fund’ and willing to make every kind of compromise for its survival, the peoples of the Caucasus could not achieve anything. They could not vote for the feelings of the younger generations, and their opportunity had passed

⁴⁰⁶ “Yeni Yollar,” *Almanak*, 8-10.

⁴⁰⁷ Haydar Bammam, “Lehistan ve Kafkasya II,” (translated from the Kavkaz, No.8), *Almanak*, 26-32.

them by. The Caucasians were in need of new direction.⁴⁰⁹ “The overwhelming majority of our emigres who were doomed to survive under extremely severe conditions, lost their confidence and faith.” These emigres, because of a lack of genuine leadership and ideal, began to refuse to join any kind of political activity. They are aware that the existing so-called leaders were in pursuit of their ‘comfort’ and ‘unimportant party works’.⁴¹⁰

But on the other hand those ‘loyal and idealist’ Caucasian emigres vehemently requesting the establishment of a new organisation. Accordingly, the aim of the *Kavkaz*, was to assist Caucasian emigres to set up a genuine united political organisation. This organisation, he pointed out, had to have a program based on the historical realities of the Caucasus and which avoided imitating implicitly alien examples. He admitted that the only way to accomplish this aim was to establish a comprehensive union or confederation of the Caucasus. Logic, he pointed out, necessitates that. On each and every occasion from 1917, he stressed that sincere nationalist leaders of the North Caucasian Republic proposed it to the leaders of the Transcaucasian republics, but they never took these proposals seriously. Therefore, the idea of Confederation that was proposed by the Pact signed in Brussels was not a new phenomenon, but just a product of opportunist minds.⁴¹¹

According to Bammat these groups were not trustworthy. They were mainly directed by the internationalist minds of the 1917 revolution and had no patriotic

⁴⁰⁸ Muhlen, *Gamalhaç ile Kızılyıldız Arasında*, 23. Muhlen quoting from Kantemir’s hand-written note titled “Caucasian Problem” in Federal Archive in Koblenz. (Die Kaukasische Frage, (BA), R. 6/65).

⁴⁰⁹ “Yeni Yollar,” *Almanak*, 10.

⁴¹⁰ Haydar Bammat, ‘Lehistan ve Kafkasya II,’ *Almanak*, p 31.

feelings at all. However, the basic needs of the Caucasians were nationalism and patriotism. Thus the Kavkaz group did not respect the proposals of Brussels Pact.⁴¹²

7- The Turn of Events:

1934 was in fact a turning point for the Caucasians. For the last time they tried to establish a Confederation, at least on a paper. The contracting committee, however, was dissolved in 1935 and a Caucasian Confederation Council replaced it with no concrete contribution. Beyond that, the Armenians and Georgians separated themselves and began to work together, excluding the North Caucasians and Azerbaijanis.

The first substantial initiative was the Armenian-Georgian League of 24 May 1936. The foundation of the League was announced following the religious ceremony to sanctify the souls of the martyrs of the independence war in Armenian Church at Paris. The leading names who prepared the document were Arshak Jamalyan, the ex-foreign minister of Armenian Republic and Georgian Prince Vachnadze. The Declaration was signed by the representatives of Armenian Dashnaks and Georgian Mensheviks and published in the Armenian periodical *Usaber*.⁴¹³

The League was religious in content and aimed to establish a union on the basis of religion, excluding Muslims of the region. Nevertheless, it only served to

⁴¹¹ Haydar Bammat, 'Lehistan ve Kafkasya II,' *Almanak*, p 31.

⁴¹² It is clear from the position taken by Bammat's group that they were very anti-socialist, seeing the Second International in the work of the Ukrainian and Georgian socialists in the Promethean front. That they were inclined towards the fascist powers of the day as an antidote to communism.

alienate Caucasian peoples, and was utilized by the Kavkaz group to criticise *Prométhée*.

This declaration of the League caused a significant discord between the Caucasians centred on territorial problems. First of all, this group initiated a debate on the delimitation of the borders of the Armenian and Georgian republics with Turkey. In response, the Caucasian Confederation Council issued a decree after its meeting on 16 June and made this explanation.

“1-Neither the Caucasian Confederation Council nor the national centers included in it, was previously informed of this declaration. The composition of the organisation propagating this declaration is still unknown to us.

2-The Caucasian Confederation Council, in principle, is in favour of friendship and rapprochement between the Caucasian nations, but politically the existence of one single political organisation is a must. The Caucasian Confederation Council is already functioning, and of course the Armenians have a place in it.

3-Forming political alliances between some of the nations of the Caucasus was a detrimental enterprise and could not be permitted by the Caucasian Confederation Council. It is evident that this kind of an enterprise will cause the collapse of the Caucasian union and create enmity between the nations.

4-Moreover, the Caucasian Confederation Council reminds all the Caucasian nations that border problems and other conflicting issues will be solved by reciprocal agreements or forced arbitration following the salvation of the Caucasus.”⁴¹⁴

Moreover, in an article published in *Severnyi Kavkaz*, the North Caucasian emigres lobbied the Armenians and Georgians. They made a correlation between the policies of the Bolsheviks and the League, and described the declaration as the fabrication of the Bolsheviks.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹³ For the text of the Declaration see *Almanak*, 55-58.

⁴¹⁴ This text was published in *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*, 26, June 1936 and, *Kurtuluş* 20 in June 1936. It was reprinted in *Vesikalar*, 45-46, and *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 14, September 1952.

⁴¹⁵ “Ermeni-Gürcü Birliđi,” May 1936. *Severnyi Kavkaz/Şimali Kafkasya*, 25.

Haydar Bammat and *Kavkaz* also took this issue seriously and examined its connections with the 'Brussels Pact'. With this declaration of the League, Bammat asserted that the arguments of the Kavkaz group were being verified. The Georgian Mensheviks, by taking sides with the Armenians made the validity of the Pact ambiguous. The Pact became null and void. As a result, the Kavkaz group advanced as a real organ representing the Caucasian confederation.⁴¹⁶

From the 1937 and 1938, war was in sight and the Caucasians, having no doubt on the collapse of the Soviet Union, started to deal with the issue of the border delimitation. While the Armenians and Georgians were dealing with their republics' borders with Turkey, the fantasy of Greater Azerbaijan encompassing Iran Azerbaijan found adherents among the Azeri groups. Haydar Bammat started to criticise these ideas severely. He pointed out that, the situation and balance of power was changing throughout world. European states were separating into blocs and tremendous events were taking place in the Far East. All these events have to be analysed reasonably. The second chance for the Caucasians after 1918 was knocking on the door. Therefore, in order not to loose this chance, once again the Caucasian intellectuals had to be awake and organised.⁴¹⁷ The mistakes of the past would not be repeated. From these mistakes new and reasonable path to independence has to be constructed. The key point in this way was the necessity to act in a unified structure.

⁴¹⁶ Haydar Bammat, "Ermeni-Gürcü İttihadı," *Almanak*, 58-60 and F. Daryal, "Yanlış Yol," *Almanak*, 63-67.

⁴¹⁷ Haydar Bammat, "Yine Kafkas Hududları Meselesi," *Yazılar Dergisi II*, 3-8.

Because of its geography, history, economics and ethnography, the only chance for Caucasian independence was Turkey and Iran's exigency to see the Caucasus as a buffer between Russia and themselves. In order to utilise this exigency and to obtain the support, the Caucasians had to remove all obstacles between these countries and establish close neighbourly relations. Therefore, the most critical issue was the delimitation of borders. According to Bammam, the activities of some Georgian, Armenian, and even Azeri emigres from this issue were a big mistake. This just caused the interference by the Russians. More than that, solving the issue, essentially in line with the Caucasians' demands became impossible.

Bammam in his articles, in fact, indicated indirectly that some of the Caucasian territories were in the hands of Turkey. However, he said that the only possibility for agreement entailed the renunciation of these territories by Turkey. This could be painful but was necessary to attain sovereignty.

In response to these arguments of Bammam and *Kavkaz*, the other group blamed them for giving Kars, Ardahan and Batum to Turkey and being pro-Turkish. Bammam and the *Kavkaz* group in response defined Turkey and Iran as the partners that have common interests with the Caucasians.⁴¹⁸ The existing cultural bonds and race connections attach these two nations to the Caucasians. Therefore, Bammam asserted relations with Turkey and Iran could only be friendly and cordial. Then he frankly stated that, he had never felt it necessary to conceal his Turkophilism. He pointed that, for the all-Caucasian patriots who had a desire to

⁴¹⁸ Haydar Bammam, "Türkiye ve Kafkasya," *Almanak*, 67-70. Azerbaycanlı Mehmed Zade, "Kafkasyayı, Türkiye ve İrana Bağlayan Tarihi, Etnik ve Kültürel Rabitalar," *Almanak*, 76-80.

free the Caucasus, being pro-Turkish was a must in the service of their country. Caucasian emigres who opposed the Turks or Turkey, he argues, were overtly or covertly pro-Russian groups.⁴¹⁹

Then he explained his ‘Turkophilizm’ by correlating moral and cultural values of the Caucasus to Turkey. This was a psychological bond. In addition some objective criterion such as geographical position also forced them to be pro-Turkish. Therefore Bammat’s aim, as some groups asserted, was not to remain under Turkish control.⁴²⁰

While the Caucasian emigres were discussing not so relevant issues such as the borders, the German troops annexed Austria. This annexation or ‘*Anschluss*’ was gratified by the Kavkaz group and, received as the removal of one of the unjust consequences of the 1st world War. In Kantemir’s words, among the unfair treatments, the worst two were done to the ‘German and Turan’ worlds, therefore this was merely the overturning these injustices. What Hitler did for the Germans was akin to Atatürk’s achievements for Turks. By with the spread of national socialist ideology one of the anomalies of the post-world war period was recovered at the end. One nation in two states unified into one entity. Henceforth, there was one big Germany stretching along from the North Sea to the Mediterranean.

The next step was not so far, the bells of a clash between the ideologies of Communism and national socialism were ringing. The war was closer than ever before. Therefore, the Caucasians would have to be prepared for their own terms.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ Bammat, “Türkiye ve Kafkasya,” 69.

⁴²⁰ Bammat, “Türkiye ve Kafkasya,” 69.

⁴²¹ A. Kantemir, “Anşlus Münasebetile,” *Yazılar Dergisi II*, 62-64.

However, the Nazi-German Pact in August 1939 put a dramatic end to the expectations of Haydar Bammatt and caused the dissolution of the Kavkaz group.⁴²² Bammatt, because of the shift in Nazi policy, disgruntled and disengaged from the Germans. He ceased to play an active role in politics, settled down Switzerland and increasingly devoted himself to religious subjects.

For the *Prométhée* events could not be perceived within the same psychology. In 1938 the name of the periodical was changed to *La Revue de Prométhée*, and an Ukrainian Aleksandr Shulgin, replaced Georges Gvazava as the editorial director. With the German occupation of Poland, they lost their most important financial support and with the German invasion of Paris in 1940 the publication of the periodical ceased.⁴²³

From the side of the Caucasians in general and the North Caucasians in specific, The German occupation of Poland in September 1939 was the death of the idea of independence. Members of the Caucasian Mountaineers People Party fought against the German troops together with the Polish Army, but they had to abandon Warsaw after fall on 27 September.⁴²⁴

⁴²² After the first German language edition of *Kavkaz* was appeared in 1937 the French authorities took steps against the émigré organization on its soil. In that year Bammatt moved to Berlin and according to Muhlen, the next year he associated with German counter-intelligence. After the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, however the publication of the *Kavkaz* probably banned by the Germans. Muhlen, *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴²³ Muhlen, *Gamalihaç ile Kızılyıldız Arasında*, 36-45.

⁴²⁴ Muhammed Ayaz İshaki, March-December 1984. "Lehistan'dan gidiş," *Emel*, 141/145, 120.

8- The World War II and the North Caucasian Emigres:

World War II, initially, caused retrogression in the activities of the North Caucasian emigres. First of all, German policy, in contrast to the expectations of the North Caucasians, was arrogant and cynical, geared to the exploitation of non-Russian nationalist sentiments within very tight parameters, for propaganda purposes only. The Germans never had an intention of giving the desired independence to the eastern peoples of the Soviet Union. Instead they planned to occupy and colonize all these regions.

The first German initiatives were in the military area. By late 1941 and early 1942, in order to fight against the Soviets, along with the German troops, the Germans organized legions which consisted mainly of prisoners of war. For this they established Turkistani, Armenian, Georgian and Muslim legions. The latter later divided into two, the Azeri and North Caucasian and sent to the region together with the German troops.⁴²⁵

The political dimension of German interest emerged relatively late. The German Foreign Ministry organized the first German initiative, to use the 'Eastern Peoples' of the Soviet Union in the spring of 1942. On the recommendations of Franz von Papen, the German ambassador to Turkey, the Foreign Ministry organized a meeting in Berlin called *Adloniade*.⁴²⁶ The names from the different and even rival camps were invited to Berlin, such as Said Shamil, Haydar Bammat, Ali Khan Kantemir and Ahmet Nabi Magoma. Interestingly enough, the first to

⁴²⁵ For the structure and the establishment of the legions see the detailed study of Muhlen, *Gamalıhaç ile Kızılyıldız Arasında*, 39-53. Also see, Tahir Çağatay, "Türkistan Kurtuluş Hareketine İlgili Olaylardan Sahneler," 11; İskenderoğlu, August 1952. "İkinci Dünya Savaşında Kafkasya Gönüllüleri," *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 13: 25-26.

understand the German plans and distance himself was Haydar Bammat. Nevertheless, others with the intention of advancing the North Caucasian cause continued their activities. Said Shamil, who came to Berlin on 10 May 1942, strived to be seen as the chief representative of the emigrants in lobbying the Germans for support for an independent North Caucasus. Encouraged by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem el Huseyni and the former president of Iraq, he sought a six month period to win over the support of the German government for North Caucasian independence which could be won under the flag of his grandfather, Imam Shamil.⁴²⁷

Within that period, he instigated the establishment of the North Caucasian National Commission in the summer of 1942, which aimed to defend the rights and ideals of the North Caucasians on behalf of the German government. Nevertheless, with a feeling of disillusionment, he left Germany in late 1942. From then Ahmet Nabi Magoma and Ali Khan Kantemir tried to represent the North Caucasian emigration and the activities of the Commission. Moreover, new names, prisoners of war joined their struggle for independence; among them Abdurrahman Avtorkhanov⁴²⁸, Ramazan Traho⁴²⁹, and Ramazan Karcha⁴³⁰.

⁴²⁶ All the guests were stayed in Adlon Hotel, Berlin and the meetings held in the same place, therefore Muhlen gave this name to this initiative.

⁴²⁷ Related with the activities of the Shamil and other groups in Berlin in order to Muhlen, also see, Müstecib Ülküsal, 1976. *İkinci Dünya Savaşında 1941-1942 Berlin Hatıraları ve Kırımın Kurtuluşu Davası*, İstanbul:n.p.; M. Resulzade, June-July 1952. "Kafkasya Meselesi V: Kafkasya Birliği Fikri Muhacerette," *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 11/12: 5-9; Ahmet Temir, 1998. *60 Yıl Almanya, (1936-1996) Bir Yabancı'nın Gözü İle Geziler-Araştırmalar-Hatıralar*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 217-269.

⁴²⁸ Abdurrahman Avtorkhanov, a Chechen, (1908-). [aka Yuri Orlov, Abdurrahman Kunta] He was born in Grozny. A former communist who studied at the Red Professor's College and a student of Bukharin, he was imprisoned for several years before making his way to the Germany in the course of the war. As a staunch anti-communist, scholar, educator and publicist he has numerous numbers of nationalist works.

⁴²⁹ Ramazan Traho, after finishing 4 semesters in the faculty of Medicine at Moscow University, he continued his studies in the Faculty of Language and Literature, which he completed in 1934. Until

The North Caucasians, together with the other émigré groups submitted several notes and memorandums to the German government in which they asked for the establishment of independent republics of the revolutionary period but they gained almost nothing.⁴³¹ In contrast, the Germans, in order to establish an umbrella organization allowed a Soviet prisoner of war, General Andrey A. Vlasov to organize a committee in the summer of 1944, called the Vlasov Committee. Under his leadership, this Committee almost at the end of the War, managed to establish an organization in Prague which would represent all the non-Slav populations of Russia, the Committee for the Salvation of the Peoples of Russia (*Komitet Osvobozhdeniia Narodov Rossii* or KONR) and in relation with it he founded the Russian Salvation Army (*Russkaia Osvoboditel'naia Armiia* or ROA) composed primarily of the prisoners of war.⁴³²

The North Caucasian National Commission and the other émigré groups had never took part in these organizations.⁴³³ They just rather carried out some propaganda, issued pamphlets, brochures and periodicals targeting the North Caucasian region⁴³⁴ and in October 1944 they established the Caucasian Council

the World War II he worked in various academic and educational institutions, both in Moscow and the Caucasus. For his arrival in Germany see R. Traho, September-October 1951. "Stalingrad'dan Berlin'e," *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 2-3: 31-34.

⁴³⁰ Ramazan Karcha, a Karachay, (-). He studied in the Philological Faculty of Rostov University. Worked in various institutions and learned organizations in the Caucasus.

⁴³¹ F. Daryal, March 1952. "Mecburi Bir İzah ... Daha," *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 8: 29.

⁴³² Muhlen, *Gamalihaç ile Kızılyıldız Arasında*, 160.

⁴³³ See May 1952. "Kafkasya Cumhuriyetlerinin İstiklali," *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 10: 1-3 and "Yalan ve İftira," September-December 1951. *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 4/5: 37-38.

⁴³⁴ The North Caucasian emigres published two different periodicals. *Severnyi Kavkaz*, in Russian was published by Ali Khan Kantemir and the other one, *Gazavat*, in Turkish, was published by A. Avtorkhanov with the pseudonym of Manius Mansur and targetting the legion. As Bezanis pointed it out, the *Gazavat*'s masthead apparently proclaimed that 'God is above us and Hitler is with us' a typical formulation in such publications, though it caused consternation in some quarters after the war.

which consisted of four Caucasian Committees.⁴³⁵ Nevertheless, the Germans surrendered and one of the episodes of the North Caucasians' struggle concluded with a tragedy.⁴³⁶

The North Caucasians' collaboration with the Germans was not a function of their adherence to the Nazi ideology. It was just an example of their willingness to work with any and all to advance the North Caucasian cause and to intervene with German officialdom to win better conditions for their prisoners of war compatriots. They essentially, did their best to look after these young and often uneducated men.

After the War, until the late 1940s, the North Caucasian emigres, like their Russian/Soviet counterparts remained aloof from every kind of political establishment. The main reason for this reluctance was, naturally, the post-War agreements between the allies, according to which all Soviet citizens who took part in the legions and the political organizations against Soviet Russia would be forcibly repatriated to Soviet Russia. Because of this, during the early post-War period the North Caucasians were restlessly trying to find secure places for their survival. The greatest numbers of the emigres therefore emigrated again primarily to America and Turkey. Some, who had a chance to escape from the repatriation, settled in camps like Limburg and Mittenwald in Germany. This made Munich, the

⁴³⁵ Related with this issue see Muhlen, *Gamalıhaç ile Kızılyıldız Arasında*, 162-165 and for the text of Caucasian Council's declaration see Kırimal, "Matbuat," 198.

⁴³⁶ The tragedy on the Drau River is the most famous incident. Approximately 7,000 North Caucasians were forcibly repatriated from Austria to the Soviets, untold numbers killing themselves en route by leaping from train wagons. Their commander General Kılıç Girey accepted the same fate as his men, and was hung in Moscow on 6 February 1946. See, Asuman Ceyisikar, August-

closest urban center to these camps as the main center of the émigré activities in late 1940s and early 1950s. During this early period, these emigres modestly initiated their political works within some religious organizations, like Islamic Society of Germany (*Islamische Rat für Deutschland*).⁴³⁷

The emergence of American-Soviet rivalry in early 1950s provided the impetus to the re-emergence of the genuinely political organizations and increased the activities of emigres. American political and financial support was well received. Firstly, the Americans, as part of their campaign against communist Russia formed the Council for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia.⁴³⁸

The first activity of the Council was the establishment of the Institute for the Study of the History and Culture of the USSR (*Institut zur Erforschung der Geschichte und Kultur der UdSSR*) on 8 July 1950 in Munich.⁴³⁹ The primary defined objective of the Institute was, through the “scientists and men and women of letters who have left the Soviet Union”, presenting “to the free world scholarly analyses of life in the Soviet Union.” The sole condition to become a member of the Institute was not being “a Communist Party member or symphatizer.” Beyond that “all members of the Soviet emigration who have scholarly qualifications are,

October 1965. “Kuzey Kafkasyalı Mültecilerin 20. Teslim Ediliş Yıldönümlerinde,” *Birleşik Kafkasya*, (İstanbul), 5: 43-45.

⁴³⁷ Muhlen, *Gamalihaç ile Kızılyıldız Arasında*, 232.

⁴³⁸ This Council in relation with the situation and the American policy renamed several times up until 1953. The American Committee for the Liberation of Russian Peoples, the American Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of the Soviet Union, American Committee for the Liberation of Bolshevizm and at last it took the name of the Council for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia. J. Layons founded this Council or the Committee. Then some other names that were representing the anti-Russian or anti-Communist faction like Admiral Kerk and Vice-Admiral Stevens also leaded it. The Committee’s representative in Europe was Don Levin.

⁴³⁹ This Institute was, later, renamed as the Institute for the Study of the USSR (*Institut zur Erforschung der UdSSR*). For the analysis on the activities and the history of the Institute see “Sovyetler Birliğini Öğrenme Enstitüsünün 10 Yıllığı,” 1960. *Dergi*, 6(21): 86-7.

therefore, eligible to participate in the work of the Institute irrespective of their place of residence.”⁴⁴⁰

In this framework, the Institute sponsored conferences on the Soviet Union and gave modest grants for research by émigré scholars and published several numbers of books, brochures, pamphlets and periodicals.⁴⁴¹

As it is easily understood from these publications, the Americans’ and thus the Council’s main concern, like the Germans, was the establishment of a comprehensive oppositional organization, which encompassed all anti-Soviet or anti-Communist groups. In order to accomplish this aim, they established ties with the Russian political organizations. The most prominent Russian name for the Americans during this period was Aleksandr Kerensky, Following several meetings the Americans managed to establish an umbrella organization in October 1952; the Coordination Center for the anti-Bolshevik Struggle (*Koordinationszentrum des antibolschewistischen Kampfes*) in Munich.⁴⁴² This Conference, in principle, accepted the February 1917 Russian Revolution as the point of departure and thus denied all the republics established after the Bolshevik Revolution.⁴⁴³ According to the Center’s regulation, the main executive body of the Center would be the Central

⁴⁴⁰ See the ‘foreword’ that placed in the first pages of all the publications of the Institute.

⁴⁴¹ Some of the Institute’s periodicals were as follows: *The Caucasian Review*, *Vestnik* (in Russian), *Bulletin* (in English), *Byulleten* (in Russian), *Dergi* (in Turkish), *Ukrainsky Zbirnyk* (in Ukrainian), *Ukrainian Review* (in English), *Belaruskiy Zbornik* (in Belarussian), *Belorussian Review* (in English). For the detailed list of the Institute’s publications see “Institute Publications,” 1956. *The Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 2: 153-156.

⁴⁴² For a detailed course of events in that period the issues of the *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)* are the most valuable source. The Russian organizations led by Kerensky, under the control of Americans organized meetings on 28 August 1951 in Stuttgart, on 3-7 November 1951 in Weisbaden and 19-21 June 1952 in Starnberg.

⁴⁴³ A. Magoma, November 1952. “Muvaffakiyetsiz Bir Deneme Daha,” *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 16: 7-10; and, “Weisbadencilerin Münih Konferansı,” October 1952. *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)* 15: 31; “Weisbaden Toplantısı Münasebetile,” November-December 1951. *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, 4/5: 40-46.

Council, which would consist of 20 Russian, 20 non-Russian and 20 personally invited delegates. Related with non-Russian populations, the Center proposed plebiscite on independence following the liberation of Russia from the Bolshevik control.⁴⁴⁴

This kind of a formation naturally disturbed and provoked each and every non-Russian emigres of the Russia. Therefore, the Center suffered from the outset due to the unwillingness of Caucasian and other non-Russian groups to cooperate with it.

In this period the North Caucasians had, unfortunately, no consolidated political structure. The group consisting mainly of ‘new emigres’, under the leadership of Abdurrahman Avtorkhanov, established the Caucasian National-Democratic Party and began to function in cooperation with the Russian groups and took part in the Center. Avtorkhanov, through his periodical *Svobodny Kavkaz*, was propagating the policies of the Center.⁴⁴⁵

The ‘old or earlier emigres’, on the other hand strongly refused to work together with the Russian groups. This group, despite their close connections to the Americans evaluated the Center and the Russians as the enemy. These Russian organizations, according to this group, were unsuitable allies, because they were struggling for an indivisible Russia. Moreover, ‘newcomers’ who were working together with these groups, according to the ‘olds’, were the ‘usurpers’, former communists and ‘Nazi Collaborators. The old emigrants were functioning within the North Caucasian National Committee that was founded by Ahmet Nabi

⁴⁴⁴ A. Magoma, “Muvaffakiyetsiz Bir Deneme Daha,” 9.

⁴⁴⁵ This periodical was published in the years 1951-53. From the old emigres only Vassan Girey Jabagi contributed regularly. All the other leading names were ‘the newcomers’.

Magoma and Ali Khan Kantemir. This group produced the periodicals of *United Caucasus*⁴⁴⁶ and *Kafkasya*⁴⁴⁷. On the initiative of Kantemir and Magoma, the North Caucasians, with the aim of analyzing the events and developments of the period, organized a Congress in Munich in September 1951 and expelled Avtorkhanov from the Committee. This was the real breaking point for the North Caucasian emigres. From then on they continued their struggle, ‘the North Caucasian struggle for the unification and independence’ separately. While the old group, together with other Caucasian groups working within the Caucasian Independence Committee that was established in December 1952, the youngsters organized their own structure together with the Russian groups.

By the late 1950s, in correlation with the American-Soviet relations the activities of émigré North Caucasians in search of a unity and the independence diminished day by day. Moreover the natural removal of the prominent leaders of the struggle forced the remnants to change their policies and the style of the struggle. Nevertheless, these devoted fighters left behind them a tradition of struggle for the North Caucasians. In the volumes of printed material, they scrutinized each and every aspects of North Caucasian society and life and they constituted extensive blueprint for the Unified North Caucasian State.

⁴⁴⁶ Kantemir and Magoma published this periodical in Munich in Russian, Turkish, and English.

⁴⁴⁷ Kantemir, Barasbi Baytugan and Balo Bilatti published *Kafkasya (Kaukasus)* again in Munich. The first issue was published in August 1951. Later by the No. 18-19 published in January-February 1953, as an official organ of the Caucasian Independence Committee, it took the name *Birleşik Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)* or *The United Caucasus*

CHAPTER IV

THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND REEMERGENCE OF UNITY

After the Second World War, the Mountaineers' activities in Europe became negligible. The activities of the North Caucasians, primarily the Circassians in Turkey, with the participation of some exiles from Europe revitalised slowly.

During the early years of the new Turkish Republic, for domestic⁴⁴⁸ and international⁴⁴⁹ reasons, the North Caucasians could not lead an independence struggle in Turkey.⁴⁵⁰ By the beginning of multi-party democracy and after the establishment of Democratic Party rule, the activities of the North Caucasians were enhanced in the form of organizations established, and in periodicals and books published.⁴⁵¹ Nevertheless the ideology and purpose of these new North Caucasian

⁴⁴⁸ Atatürk's and İnönü's state building policies under the one party system did not allow any of the other nationalism or nationalist activity. Thus a kind of an assimilation policy was carried out. Any talk of cultural peculiarity was barred, as separatism that ran counter to the whole thrust of Turkish policy which was to build a unified nation. Moreover, the policy of secularization of new Turkish society undercut the very reason North Caucasians had originally taken refuge in the Ottoman Empire. At last close relations between the leaders of the North Caucasians and the *Ittihad* Party of Ottoman period made the leaders of new State more hesitant with the activities of the North Caucasians.

⁴⁴⁹ In that period Bolshevik or Soviet Russia was emerged as the sole friendly partner for Turkey. Because of the existence of serious problems with the other bordering neighbours, Turkey did not want to have a problem with Soviet Union and thus did not allow the irredentist activities of the North Caucasians in Turkey.

⁴⁵⁰ Before the 2nd World War the North Caucasian publications in exile were forbidden to enter Turkey by governmental decrees. Without making any difference, the Promethean *Gortsy Kavkaza* and *Severnyi Kavkaz* and Bammat's *Kavkaz*, didn't allow spreading in Turkey. For the decrees see *Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi*, (BCA), 030.18.01. Later, even Ali Kahn Kantemir expelled and lost his Turkish citizenship in 1938. See *BCA*, 030.18.01

⁴⁵¹ For the emergence and the history of the North Caucasian organizations and the activity in Turkey see Erol Taymaz, "Kuzey Kafkas Dernekleri," and Alexandre Toumarkine, "Kafkas ve

organizations in Turkey were very different to earlier European ones. “In Europe, an overt and covert political struggle was waged while in Turkey the keynote of the effort was preservation of an endangered community.”⁴⁵²

These groups and their activities, in contrast to earlier European groups, interestingly enough, were not well informed on events in the Soviet Union and the North Caucasus region itself, nor were they particularly concerned with the situation there.

During this period, the situation in the North Caucasus was much more dramatic than during the pre-War period. In late 1943 and early 1944 Stalin deported seven nationalities completely from their native countries to the Central Asia and Siberia, officially, for collaboration with the German armies. Among these nations were four North Caucasian nationalities: the Chechens, the Ingush, the Karachays and the Balkars.⁴⁵³

Despite the Soviet claims of collaboration, the Germans in fact only reached to the Russian-inhabited Malgobek district in what is today northwestern Ingushetia and thus occupied only some parts of the Karachay and Balkar

Balkan Göçmen Dernekleri: Sivil Toplum ve Milliyetçilik,” in Stefanos Yerasimos, ed. *Türkiye’de Sivil Toplum ve Milliyetçilik*. 2001. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 451-460 and 425-449. For a detailed study on the North Caucasians publications see Lowell Bezanis, 1994. “Soviet Muslim emigrés in the Republic of Turkey,” *Central Asian Survey*, 13(1): 59-180.

⁴⁵² Bezanis, “Soviet Muslim emigrés”, 92. He also stressed that the “North Caucasian activism after 1950 served several purposes: to connect, inform and help preserve the North Caucasian community in Turkey, to counter assimilation, to fight communism in and out of Turkey, and to accomplish this within the parameters of acceptable political behavior in Turkey.”

⁴⁵³ The other three were the Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, and the Volga Germans. For a detailed account of the deportations see R. Conquest, 1960. *The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities*, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd. Alexandr Nekrich, 1978. *The Punished Peoples: the Deportation and fate of Soviet minorities at the end of the Second World War*, (trns.) George Saunders. New York: Norton. Abdurahman Avtorkhanov, “The Chechens and the Ingush during the Soviet Period and its Antecedents,” in *The North Caucasus Barrier*, 184-192.

territories in autumn 1942. They stayed until March 1943 and never reached the lands inhabited by the Chechens and Ingush. Thus Stalin's accusations were unfounded. The selection of the peoples to deport, as Cornell put it, was the indication of the purpose of act: "the Chechens were traditionally the leaders of Caucasian rebellions, the Karachais and Balkars were both of Turkic origin, and were thus a potential pro-Turkish fifth column. These were the peoples seen as most dangerous to Soviet rule."⁴⁵⁴

In November and December 1943 all the Karachays were loaded on cattle wagons and transported to the Central Asia and Siberia. In February 1944 the Chechens and the Ingush, and in, March the Balkars followed them. In numbers, these deported North Caucasians comprised nearly half of the total deportees. The Chechens and Ingush alone totalled half a million. The former republics of these deported groups were, naturally dissolved and their territories were redistributed among the other neighbouring peoples. The peoples who used to live in the mountainous areas were forcibly resettled in the rural lowlands, while the Russians were drawn into the towns and cities. Not until the late 1950s were the deportees allowed return. Nevertheless, they lost more than a half of their populations over the course of deportation.

In January 1957 the Chechen-Ingush ASSR and the autonomy of the Balkars, Karachays and Kalmyks was re-established. But the Soviet regime created a new discord among the Mountaineers. Clashes began to take place between the returnees and those who had been forcibly resettled in their former lands, with each

⁴⁵⁴ Svante E. Cornell, 2001. *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, Surrey: Curzon, 31.

side claiming the right to the territory. The iron fist of the Soviet regime, however, suppressed these discords and clashes in a ruthless manner.⁴⁵⁵

1- Perestroika and Glasnost':

Following the election of Mikhail Gorbachev as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in March 1985. The Soviet Union experienced major social, political and economic upheavals. This was activated by the efforts of the reform-minded leadership to carry out a so-called well-planned comprehensive reorganisation of the country. This 'revolution from above' inadvertently fuelled a scale of ethnic unrest unparalleled in Soviet history, as the various nationalities of the world's largest multi ethnic society seized the opportunities opened by *glasnost'* (openness) and democratization to put forward demands for greater national self-determination.⁴⁵⁶ Moreover, the complex and three-tiered hierarchy of ethnically defined, administrative units, of the Soviet Union did not affect the situation positively.⁴⁵⁷ When the Union Republics demanded sovereignty in the late 1980s, autonomous republics and *oblasts* began to demand a higher status and greater rights.

⁴⁵⁵ The North Caucasian emigres were closely interested with the deportations and several numbers of articles were written on the issue. See, A. Bahadur, August 1951. "Kuzey Kafkasyada Halkın Toptan İmhası," *Kafkasya (Der Kaukasus)*, (Munich), 1: 10-12. Vassan-Ghiray Djabagui, 1955. "Soviet Nationality Policy and Genocide," *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 1: 71-80. R. Karcha, 1956. "Genocide in the Northern Caucasus," *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 2: 74-84. R. Traho, 1957. "The Restoration of National Autonomy in the Northern Caucasus," *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 4: 7-8. R. Karcha, 1957. "The Restoration of the Liquidated Republics and the Rehabilitation of the Deported Peoples," *Caucasian Review*, (Munich), 5: 41-46.

⁴⁵⁶ Graham Smith, 1996. "The Soviet State and Nationalities Policy," in Graham Smith, eds., *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*. London: Longman, 2-22.

⁴⁵⁷ In late 1980s, the Soviet Union was consisted of 15 Union Republics (RSFSR and 14 SSRs) and administratively divided among 20 Autonomous Republics, 8 Autonomous *Oblasts* (AO). In addition to that, there were 6 *Krais* and several numbers of *Okrugs*.

The major disturbances started first in Union Republics, especially in Baltic Republics and Ukraine in 1987 and spread to the Transcaucasus in February 1988. Rather than formulating a coherent policy, Gorbachev's approach to the nationalities question was to respond to each new ethnic crisis as it arose. This resulted in a tendency to treat each as a distraction from the central tasks of economic restructuring, *glasnost*' and democratization, through which ethnic unrest could be largely resolved.

The Caucasus was not an exception and, the catastrophic results of the aforementioned administrative set up could be seen explicitly. During the last days of the Soviet Union, the region was divided into four Union Republics: the Armenian SSR, the Georgian SSR, the Azerbaijani SSR, and the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR). In the last three, there were seven Autonomous Republics (ASSRs)⁴⁵⁸ and four Autonomous *Oblasts* (AOs)⁴⁵⁹. In addition to this, parts of the region belonged to the two big *Krais* within the RSFSR: Stavropol and Krasnodar. The peoples of the North Caucasus were living within the borders of these entities, except Armenia. The nominal nationalities of eight of which (5 ASSRs and 3 AOs) were ethnic groups of the North Caucasus.⁴⁶⁰

This complex structure and the policies of *perestroika* and democratization made the Caucasus in general, and more specifically the North Caucasus more prone to ethnically based conflicts. The re-emergence of nationalist movements within the union republics, their feigned blindness towards the existence of other

⁴⁵⁸ Abkhaz, Kabardino-Balkar, North Osetian, Chechen-Ingush, Dagestan, Adzhar, and Nakhchivan ASSRs.

⁴⁵⁹ Adyge, Karachay-Cherkess, South Osetian, and Mountain-Karabagh AOs.

⁴⁶⁰ Abkhaz, Kabardino-Balkar, North Osetian, Chechen-Ingush and Dagestan ASSRs and Adyge, Karachay-Cherkess, South Osetian AOs.

small nationalities, and moreover, the possibility of breaking inaccessibly away from each other within the separate sovereign entities forced the peoples of the North Caucasus to become more reactionary.

By 1988, peoples of the North Caucasus started to see their demands for national sovereignty and enhanced republican status as an expression of cultural anxiety and cultural sovereignty.⁴⁶¹ As a result, the opportunity to form regional and national organizations was used to embark on a revival of the national cultures, languages, and national identities by the peoples of the North Caucasus. Ethnically based, homogenized socio-political organizations sprang up in the whole territory of the North Caucasus.⁴⁶² These organizations, in those days, fulfilled a dual function: to put ethnic groups' demands on the government agenda, and to serve as a platform for emerging leaders.⁴⁶³ In the last years of Soviet power, North Caucasus elites developed and presented images of nationhood within the spheres of these organizations. In the beginning, in almost all these organizations, the main concern was national-cultural development and basic rights for their peoples within the Soviet Union, in compliance with the basic tenets of *perestroika* and democratization.

⁴⁶¹ Jane Ormrod, 1998. "The North Caucasus: confederation in conflict," in Ian Bremmer and Roy Taras, eds., *New States New Politics: Building the Post Soviet Nations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 99-100.

⁴⁶² Most of these front movements or organizations were established in 1988 and 1989: Chechen's *Bart* (Unification) in July 1989, South Osetian Popular Front, *Ademon Nykhas* (Popular Shrine) in spring 1989, Ingush *Niiskho* (Justice) in 1988, the Karachay national movement *Jamagat* in 1988, Abkhazian *Aydyglara*, Cherkess *Adygey-Khase*, the Kumyk People's movement *Tenglik* (Justice) in 1989. The others were founded in 1990; Avar People's National Movement Imam Shamil Front and Avar People's movement, Lezgin National Movement *Sadval* (Unity), Nogay National Movement *Birlik* (Unification), the Lak People's Movement *Tsubarz*, and Dargin's *Tsadesh* (Unity).

⁴⁶³ Anna Matveeva, 1999. *The North Caucasus: Russia's fragile borderland*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs: 11.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the discourse of national and ethnic identity among the peoples of the Caucasus diverted its path. The North Caucasian peoples' demands of the post-Soviet period broadened to include demands for increased economic and legislative autonomy and even the concepts of the nation state, whether fully sovereign or, as part of a republican structure.

Consequently, in the early 1990s, the peoples of the North Caucasus issued declarations, one after another, upgrading the administrative status of their territories. This general tendency to establish sovereign entities caused the emergence of discord among the peoples in question. The already existing 'land question' arose as a basic reason for possible armed clashes among the peoples who had to live together as result of Soviet policies over the past century.

In this context, the peoples of the North Caucasus had to face the legacy of the Soviet divide-and-rule policy and of deportations. While the discontented peoples were looking for the restitution of their ancestral lands, the forcibly settled peoples in turn were seeking to retain their existing status. At the same time, Turkic groups (Karachays and Balkars) were demanding their own sovereign union republics, while smaller entities like Shapsugs and the nationalities of Dagestan were in pursuit of reconstituting their autonomous administrative structures.

Likewise, while Russian nationalism had not yet gained momentum in the region, Georgian nationalism, choosing the Osetians and Abkhaz as its target, already started to demonstrate its strength. The existence of this kind of nationalist threat gave rise to solidarity between the peoples of the North Caucasus. While each group has been establishing their own national organizations, the necessity for

an over-arching organization encompassing all the peoples of the North Caucasus started to sound overtly and loudly.

Within this context, some leading figures of the national movements, in order to defend the rights and interests of the peoples of the North Caucasus in a more efficient way, started to discuss the viability of forming an umbrella organization, to be called the 'pan-Caucasian movement,' 'Caucasian Home,' 'union' or 'confederation'. As a stimulus behind this idea there was a belief that, despite the existence of religious and linguistic divergence, the peoples of the North Caucasus were one and the same, with shared customs, a way of life and common interests. Therefore, this movement to establish a comprehensive organization for the peoples of the Caucasus developed hand in hand with the spread of ethnically based homogenous organizations in the region.

2- The Rising Georgian Nationalism, Abkhazia and the Formation of the Assembly of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus:

The first concrete step in establishing a unified organization of the peoples of the North Caucasus was taken by the Abkhaz. The events of 9 April 1989 created a negative atmosphere all around Georgia and Georgian nationalism paved way.⁴⁶⁴ Following the founding of the Congress of the Popular Front of Georgia in

⁴⁶⁴ On 18 March 1989, the People's Forum of Abkhazia (PFA)- *Aydgylara* called a general assembly of the Abkhaz peoples in the historical village of Lykhny, in Gudauta district. This assembly with the participation of 30-thousand people, and also the local party and soviet authorities signed an appeal which proposed that Abkhazia should secede from Georgia and requesting the restoration of the status of Abkhazian ASSR of 1921-31. These demands were addressed to the Moscow and asked for the introduction of a temporary regime of 'special rule' from the center, that is direct subordination to the Moscow. As a response, mass rallies of protest against the Abkhazian demands from the villages of Abkhazia spread to the all other regions of Georgia. These demonstrations which were started out under anti-Abkhazian slogans quickly acquired a broader, pro-independence character, and the masses with the anti-Communist and anti-

Tiflis (Tbilisi), on 25 June 1989, violence erupted in Sukhum over the establishment of a department of Tiflis State University in the city.⁴⁶⁵ The Georgian lecturers of Sukhum University refused to stay, as long as Abkhaz and Russian lecturers remained there. The Abkhaz then attacked a school, which was intended to house the Georgian University. At this time, neither side was strong enough to force the issue militarily. The battles between the Georgians and the Abkhaz over the Abkhazian question were relegated to the legislatures of the two republics.⁴⁶⁶

This ‘power show-down’, incidentally, forced each side to revise its position vis-a-vis the other. The Abkhazians, with the proposal of the People’s Forum of Abkhazia (PFA)-(*Aydgylara*) took the initiative of uniting the peoples of the North Caucasus.⁴⁶⁷ As a result, in order to defend the rights and interests of the peoples of the North Caucasus, in late July they proposed the setting up an overarching socio-political organization to the representatives of the Chechen and the

Soviet statements demanded the secession of Georgia from the USSR. But on 9 April, they were brutally dispersed by Soviet (Russian) troops under the command of General Rodionov, the Commander-in-chief of the Transcaucasian military district. A curfew was introduced in Tiflis and the former first-secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, J. I. Patiashvili, resigned. See Alexei Zverev, 1996. “Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus 1988-1994,” in Bruno Coppieters, ed., *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, Brussels: Vubpress, 40-41 and Svetlana Chervonnaya, 1994. *Conflict in the Caucasus: Georgia, Abkhazia and the Russian Shadow*, London, 60. Hereafter *The Russian Shadow*. Then the leaders of the *Aydgylara* made public its appeal on 8 July. In addition, see “Abkhazia –Problems and the Paths to their Resolution,” by Konstantin Ozgan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia, 1998, www.abkhazia-georgia.parliament.ge/Publications/Abkhaz/Ozgan.htm.

⁴⁶⁵ In fact, the Georgian SSR’s Council of Ministers issued an order for the establishment of this department already in May.

⁴⁶⁶ Zverev, “Ethnic Conflicts,” 42. During this three-day clashes 17 persons died (11 Georgians, 3 Abkhazians and 1 Greek) and 448 were wounded. On 18 July a special regime of the conduct of citizens was introduced in Sukhum. See Chervonnaya, *The Russian Shadow*, 151.

⁴⁶⁷ *Aydgylara* means unity in Abkhaz and it was established in 1988. An Abkhaz doctor of law, Taras Mironovich Shamba drew up the program of the *Aydgylara*, and his brother Sergei Mironovich Shamba, a historian, was elected as the chairman at the founding congress in Sukhum. Chervonnaya defined the *Aydgylara* as an *interfront* (*internationalny front* or fifth column) organization, which was set up by the initiative of Moscow. She claimed that the first draft of its program drawn up in Moscow and replated with arguments in favor of a socialist order and the indivisible and unbreakable Soviet union, stated that socialist Abkhazia must be a constituent part of

Kabardian national movements. In this context, an ‘initiative group’ consisting of Abkhaz Gennadi Alamiya, Oleg Domeniya, the rector of the Abkhaz State University, and Chechen Muhradzin Kottayev, a lawyer, managed to make contact with the representatives of the national front movements of Abkhaz, Chechen, Kabardian, Abaza, Ingush, Circassian and Adyge peoples. As a result, a Coordination Committee chaired by a Kabardian lawyer, Yuri Musa Shanibov, and a Consultative Committee, headed by Muhradzin Kottayev, were formed and they were given the task of organizing a Congress for all Mountaineers of the North Caucasus.⁴⁶⁸

It is important to note that, despite the differences in motivation and the milieu, from the outset there was a striking similarity between the courses of events in 1917 and 1989. In both cases, the leaders of the movements were aware that in order to solve the problems and to defend the rights of the Mountaineers a unified front was essential.

These committees managed to organize the First Congress of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, which met in Sukhum, the capital of Abkhazia, on 25-26 August 1989. Representatives of the Abkhaz, Abaza, Adyge, Ingush, Kabardian, Cherkess and Chechens took part.

The improvement of the cultural rights of the Caucasian Mountaineers; the establishment of a political platform of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU); determining how the organization could best function, in compliance with

the SU on the basis of Lenin’s principle of the right of nations to self-determination. *The Russian Shadow*. 57.

⁴⁶⁸ Musa Y. Şemibe (Shanibov), 1997. *Kafkasya’da Birliğin Zaferi*, İstanbul: Nart, 33-4.

the basic policies of *perestroika* and democratization; and shaping regulations to govern this new organization, were the main topics on the agenda.⁴⁶⁹

Aleksy Gogua, the Chairman of the Association of Abkhaz Writers and Soviet Union parliamentary deputy, made the opening speech of the Congress: ‘A study on the situation of Abkhaz society’.⁴⁷⁰ The Congress, after bitter discussions especially between the Ingush and the Chechens took these decisions:

“ 1-The prestige and all legal rights of the punished peoples of the North Caucasus have to be restored.

2-Opponents of *Perestroika* have kept the Stalinist policies alive. The nationality policy of the CPSU does not serve the interests and legal rights of small nationalities, which were living in the autonomous *oblasts* and *okrugs*.

3-In order to defend the rights and interests of the scarcely populated ‘small’ peoples of the North Caucasus, political institutions will be founded.

4-In order to obtain the return of the kinsmen who left the North Caucasus as a result of the Tsarist policy petitions will be submitted to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.”⁴⁷¹

Beyond that, the Congress adopted an important decision on the establishment of the Assembly of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus (AMPC) (*Assembly Gorskikh Narodov Kavkaza*). This new Assembly was defined as a socio-political organization of all the Mountaineers of the Caucasus and its proclaimed aim was the regeneration of the community of the Mountain peoples of the Caucasus, which Shanibov called ‘the Caucasian ethnos’. Moreover, the Assembly ultimately aimed to create a separate Caucasian Federal Republic with Sukhum as its capital.

⁴⁶⁹ For the Agenda of the Congress: “Kafkas Dađlı Halkları Kongresi (25-26 Ağustos 1989) ve Kafkas Dađlı Halkları Birliđi,” January-June 1990. *Kuzey Kafkasya*, (İstanbul), 76/78: 10-14.

⁴⁷⁰ In addition several number of intellectuals, mainly from Abkhazia made speeches during the Congress.

⁴⁷¹ “Kafkas Dađlı Halkları Kongresi,” 10 and also see www.kafkas.org.tr/TARİH/daglhalklarkonkar.html.

As its first elected chairman, Yuri ('Musa') Mukhammedovich Shanibov⁴⁷², pointed out the Assembly was born from the idea of the need for an independent national-democratic organization for the Mountaineers of the North Caucasus. Participants of the Congress, who were also the leading figures of the front movements of the North Caucasus, perceived the policy of *glasnost*' as a chance to establish a more organized structure outside the existing administrative set up in the region. According to Shanibov, the future of the Mountaineers depended on the unification of powers against the forces that have been pursuing policies of invasion and destruction for centuries. Only the unification of these smaller peoples of the North Caucasus could serve to protect the interests of the Mountaineers.⁴⁷³

The Assembly, or the union, defined itself a socialist, anti-nationalist and anti-racist organization and, according to the decisions and the regulations of the Congress, it would function in compliance with the basic policies of the CPSU.

Nevertheless, despite its assertion to unite all the peoples of the North Caucasus, there was no place for the Russians and Cossacks and most of the other peoples of the North Caucasus did not take part in the Congress and the Assembly. Moreover, neither the representatives of the Turkic groups or the Osetians, nor most of the Dagestani groups took part. Even the Ingush had to be convinced by

⁴⁷² He was born in the village of Staraya Krepest in Kabardino-Balkaria on 29 December 1936. He studied law at Rostov University. He worked for the Ministry of Justice and served as a regional prosecutor of the Terek Region and currently, is a senior lecturer at Kabardino-Balkar State University.

⁴⁷³ From the personal interview with Shanibov that took place in Ankara in June 2001 and also see Musa Şanıbe (Shanibov), January 1991. "Yeniden Doğuşa Hizmet Etmek," *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, (Samsun), 3: 14.

the Chechens to participate.⁴⁷⁴ This made the Assembly primarily an organization of the Circassians, i.e. Adyge and Abkhaz peoples with the participation of the Chechens.

The Assembly, in its initial phase emerged as an anti-Georgian organization, but the tone of the first documents adopted was rather restrained. Thus, at the end of the Congress, while the Assembly was calling on the Abkhaz and the Georgians to shake hands, it submitted a petition to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR complaining about the attitudes of the Georgians to the Abkhaz and appealed to Moscow to intervene.⁴⁷⁵

In short, the new initiative of the Mountaineers to establish a unified structure was, from the outset, free from the idea of establishing a unified independent North Caucasian State. They objected to the creation of a unified body solely to defend the Abkhaz people and to secure their existence, within the sovereignty of Russian Federation.

3- The Activities of the Assembly:

During its first year, from its foundation Congress to the declaration of Russian sovereignty in June 1990, the Assembly focused its activities mainly on the Abkhazian problem. This was seen as a means of winning support from the neighbouring republics of the North Caucasus and Georgia, who were defined as

⁴⁷⁴ Related with this limited membership, Yandarbiyev asserted that, the Chechens, especially the *Bartists* opposed the idea of restraining the membership only with the Mountaineers of the Caucasus. Nevertheless, because of the clashes between the Abkhaz and Georgians, the other groups took the decision to name the Assembly as the Mountaineers. Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, 1996. *Bağımsızlığın Eşiğinde*, (trns.) Prof. Dr. Ö. Aydın Süer, Ankara: 19.

⁴⁷⁵ “Kafkas Dağlı Halkları Kongresi”, 13-14 and; www.kafkas.org.tr/TARIH/daglihalklarkonkar.html.

the sole ‘ugly force’ against the Assembly and the peoples of the North Caucasus, in that period.

On 31 May 1990, the Assembly, in cooperation with the *Aydgylara*, organized its first meeting to protest to the Georgian government. It was attended by over 30-thousand people. At the end of the meeting, the Coordination Committee issued a declaration, signed by Y. M. Shanibov and the president of the *Aydgylara*, S. M. Shamba, to the UN General Secretary, Peres de Cuellar, Mikhail Gorbachev and Turgut Özal, the presidents of the USSR and Turkish Republic respectively.⁴⁷⁶

In this declaration, the leaders of the AMPC and the *Aydgylara*, outlined the policies of the Russian Empire on the Mountaineers and their anti-Colonial struggle. They made the following demands:

“1-21 May 1864, the date of the end of the Caucasian War, should be proclaimed as the day of ‘Caucasian War and remembrance of the victims of the exile’.

2-The international program allowing the Mountaineers to set up cultural and scientific relations with the kinsmen living the outside the North Caucasian territory should be prepared.

3-The suitable conditions for the return and the integration of the mountaineers in exile into their homeland must be arranged.”⁴⁷⁷

This declaration was the first document of the Assembly establishing contacts with the international environment.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Soviet’s adoption of a decree ‘on the recognition as illegal and criminal all acts against those who have been forcibly resettled, and on safeguarding their rights’, in November 1989, caused the intensification of

⁴⁷⁶ For the Russian and Turkish texts of the declaration see, *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, January 1991, 3: 4-5.

⁴⁷⁷ “Kafkas Dağlı Halkları Kongresi,” 10.

ethnic disturbances in early 1990 regarding the land problems. Then, despite the fact that the Abkhazian question had priority in its October and November 1989 sessions, the Assembly's Coordination Committee at last turned its attention to the problems in the region. In order to strengthen and enlarge its area of influence, the Assembly had to deal with these land problems thoroughly. The claims of Shapsugs, the clashes between the Chechen-Auxhovs (Akkintsy) and Laks in Dagestan, and the problems and demands of the Ingush were all taken into account. These activities increased support for the Assembly among the other peoples of the region and enhanced its reputation among the masses.

The Russian declaration of independence in June 1990 and President Yeltsin's invitation 'to take as much sovereignty as you can swallow' changed the course of events for the leaders of the Assembly. For the first time, since the establishment of the Soviet Union they had a chance to establish a unified structure, which was to encompass the entire North Caucasus. Thus the leaders of the Assembly decided to revise the Assembly's policies.

On 22 September 1990, the First Congress of 'the Representatives of All-Former Autonomous Regions and Areas' was convoked in Moscow. The AMPC took an active role in this Congress and Musa Shanibov was elected chairman. "The main objective of the Congress was to work out how to deal with the autonomies and 'peoples having no statehood of their own' in case the new democratic authorities were unwilling to sign the Union Treaty and attempted to

secede from the Soviet Union.”⁴⁷⁸ This was the Assemblies main concern and was the basis of its Second Congress held in Nalchik on 13-14 October 1990. In this Second Congress, events taking place in the entire Soviet Union, and possible repercussions for the North Caucasus, and specifically for the Assembly, in the near future, were taken into account. At the end of the Congress it was announced that a period of practical work to implement a program for a new state structure for the North Caucasus and Abkhazia was under way. Moreover, for the first time, special attention was to be given to the unity of the North Caucasian Mountaineers, put into effect on 11 May 1918 by the proclamation of the North Caucasian Republic. After almost seventy years, the North Caucasians remembered their ideal of a unified North Caucasian State and decided to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors.

Nevertheless, in contrast to the lack of national consciousness encountered during the early period, the Soviet regime deliberately created new nationalities with their own agendas. Therefore, in order to free itself from these particular national movements’ effects, the Assembly decided to strengthen its hand by establishing its own permanent organizational structure, free from national front movements and parties. To accomplish this, the member peoples were asked to organize regional conferences and elect their plenipotentiary representatives to the next congress. By so doing, the Assembly probably aimed for a legal basis and effectiveness for the decisions, which would be adopted in the next congress.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁸ Chervonnaya *The Russian Shadow* 87-8 and for the Declaration issued at the end of the Congress see *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, January 1991, 3: 6-7.

4- From Assembly to the Confederation:

With the participation of the representatives of the 13 peoples of the North Caucasus,⁴⁸⁰ the Assembly organized the Third Congress of the National Democratic Movements and the Parties of the North Caucasus on 1-2 November 1991, in Sukhum Drama theatre.⁴⁸¹

In this Congress, the Assembly evolved into the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus (CMPC) declaring itself to be the legitimate heir of the North Caucasian (Mountain) Republic that was established on 11 May 1918, with Sukhum as its capital. This was, according to the Treaty, the start of the process of restoring the sovereign statehood of the Mountain peoples of the Caucasus.⁴⁸²

According to Shanibov, realization of the idea of the Confederation was the result of the long and detailed work of special committees of the Assembly on integration.⁴⁸³ This newly established Confederation consisted of the peoples of the member nationalities, not their existing official state structures. The delegates, as

⁴⁷⁹ In fact there is no concrete information concerning the election processes, electorates and the candidates. In a personal contact with Shanibov I could not get any information on this issue.

⁴⁸⁰ Abazin, Abkhaz, Avar, Adyge, Auxov-Chechen, Dargwa, Kabardian, Lak, North, and South Osetian, Cherkess, Chechen, and Shapsug delegates attended the congress.

⁴⁸¹ In an interview with Zarema Khadartseva published in *Severnyi Kavkaz*, No.41 (44), November 1991, Shanibov pointed out that this Congress was regarded as the continuation of the first of 1917 and the second of 1918. The 3rd, 4th and 5th congresses were not taken into account because the Bolsheviks convened them. But as it was discussed in Chapter II, the Second Congress was also held in September 1917 and there was no connection between the Bolshevik Congresses and the 1917 congresses of Mountaineers. For this interview's translation to Turkish see, "Kafkasya Dağlı Halkları Konfederasyonu Başkanı Şanibe Açıkladı: 'Dağlıların Yüzyıllar Boyu Arzu Ettikleri Birliğı Gerçekleştiriyoruz'," *Kafkasya Gerçeğı*, (Samsun), January 1992, 7: 2-4.

⁴⁸² Article 1 of "the Treaty on the Confederative Union of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus", dated 2 November 1991. In order to see the English text of this Treaty, B. G. Hewitt, 1993. "Abkhazia: A Problem of Identity and Ownership" *Central Asian Survey*, 12(3): 267-323: Appendix 4: 304-309. Article No.19 stressed that "the parties to the Treaty have chosen as place of residence for the leading organs (headquarters) of the CMPC the city of Sukhum, capital of the Abkhaz Republic." With that, Shanibov stressed, the participating parties were intended to show Georgia that the Abkhaz were the inseparable part of the North Caucasian unity.

⁴⁸³ Şenibe, *Birliğın Zaferi*, 40 and "Kafkasya Dağlı Halkları" January 1992. *Kafkasya Gerçeğı*, 7: 3.

proposed in the Second Congress in October 1990, were chosen by the national conferences of each member peoples. In the framework of the process of overarching integration, the Assembly aimed at evolution from separate national-democratic front movements to the union of the Mountaineers that had for centuries been the dream of the peoples of the Caucasus.⁴⁸⁴

During the Congress, the basic documents –the Declaration on the Alliance of the Caucasian Mountaineer Peoples, the Agreement on the Confederative Union of the Caucasian Peoples and the Treaty on the Confederative Union of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus- were prepared and ratified.

In the Treaty, on the Confederative Union of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus:

“the participating peoples declared that they would act in the spirit of fraternity, friendship and cooperation, with the aims of further developing and strengthening political, socio-economic and cultural ties between the Mountaineers of the Caucasus, following the principles of respect for state-sovereignty, cooperation, mutual help and non-interference in the internal affairs of the republics which they represent.”⁴⁸⁵

The Treaty built the organs of the Confederation in compliance with the principle of the division of powers between the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary. Each was to function in accordance with the “Statute concerning the leading organs of the CMPC”, ratified during the Congress and with regard to the laws of the republics of the region.⁴⁸⁶

Article 7 envisaged the President, Presidential Council, and Chairman of the Court of Arbitration, the Caucasian Parliament or the Caucasian Assembly, the

⁴⁸⁴ Article No.2.

⁴⁸⁵ Article No.3.

⁴⁸⁶ Article No.8.

Chairman of the Committee of Caucasian Associations and the Coordinator for the Business of the CMPC as the supreme organs of the CMPC.

As a legislative organ, the Caucasian Parliament or Assembly was proposed. This Parliament would consist of three plenipotentiary representatives from each member people who would be elected directly by the congresses of the participating peoples of the CMPC. The Parliament was not dependent on national parliamentary institutions, but was to have a direct link with them through people who were deputies simultaneously of the Caucasian and national parliaments.

As an executive organ, the Treaty envisaged the Committee of Caucasian Associations, consisting of leading employees of the ministries, departments and public organizations of the republics, who would lead the various specialist associations.

The President and the Presidential Council, which comprised of one representative of each nation, were to represent the Confederation.

Article 12 of the Treaty conceived the establishment of the Confederation's Court of Arbitration as its judicial organ. This court was given the duty of examining acute and complex problems between citizens of the Confederation, and also between citizens and the Confederation. Decisions of the Court would only be recommendatory in character.

Preventing ethnic conflicts and guaranteeing stability in the region were among the most important aims of the Confederation. To accomplish these aims, the Congress charged the Caucasian Parliament with drawing up a special statute on the status and functions of established forces for stability. This meant that the agenda of the Confederation would include the improvement of socio-cultural and

political co-operation between the peoples of the North Caucasus, and the creation of a united defence system against foreign aggression.⁴⁸⁷

Beyond that, The Confederation set up 9 special commissions: National Consent or Reconciliation; Economic Integration; State and Law; Culture; Environment; Foreign Affairs; Religious Affairs; Defence, and Relations with the Diasporas.⁴⁸⁸

During the Congress, Musa Shanibov, a Kabardin delegate, and Yusup Soslambekov⁴⁸⁹, a Chechen delegate, were chosen as President of the Confederation and Speaker of the Parliament respectively. In addition, 13 deputy-presidents, one from each participating peoples were named.⁴⁹⁰

On 3 November 1993, the deputy-presidents signed the Confederation Treaty, in the name of their own respective peoples, in an Abkhazian village Likhny that was the historical center of the Abkhazian State and culture.⁴⁹¹ At that time, the Confederation, as Fiona Hill states, “because of the lack of a regional native leadership and in the absence of a powerful political party with a regional manifesto had the only vision that had been offered to the peoples of the region.”⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁷ “Kuzey Kafkasya Halkları Konfederasyonu,” January 1994. *Yedi Yıldız*, 1: 20.

⁴⁸⁸ Şenibe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 3-4.

⁴⁸⁹ At the same time he was the head of the Committee on International Relations of the Chechen Parliament.

⁴⁹⁰ The other leading names were as follows: Den’ga Khalidov (Abkhaz), Deputy Speaker of the Caucasian Parliament; Konstantin Ozgan (Abkhaz), the Chairman of the Committee of the Caucasian Associations; Zurab Achba (Abkhaz) Chairman of the Confederation’s Court of Arbitration; Gennadi Alamiya (Abkhaz), deputy-president and the Coordinator for the Business of the Confederation. Among the other deputy-presidents there were Kargiyev (North Osetia) and Torez Kulumbekov (South Osetian).

⁴⁹¹ Şenibe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 41.

⁴⁹² Fiona Hill, 1995. *Russia’s Tinderbox: Conflict in the North Caucasus and its Implications for the Future of the Russian Federation*, Cambridge: J. F. Kennedy School of Government, 25.

Nevertheless, the Confederation had some critical problems even from this initial phase.⁴⁹³ First of all not all the Mountain peoples of the North Caucasus joined it. Turkic groups: the Balkars; Karachays; Nogays, and Kumuks did not respond to the invitation of the AMPC. Moreover, Nogays and Kumuks were withdrawn from the membership of the Assembly as well. Dargin and Lezgin also did not take part. The Ingush, even though they had named delegates, did not participate.⁴⁹⁴

Secondly, its members, as Shanibov stressed it, were peoples, or rather their ‘representatives’, not republics. This gave the Confederation and its members the image of an opposition, which was confronting the existing native governments in the region, except Chechens and Abkhaz. Propaganda by an old political elite who knew how to strengthen their own positions by playing on the national aspirations of the North Caucasian peoples, criticised the Confederation and its leaders.

Related to that, thirdly, the Chechen republic was the only member of the Confederation from the Russian part of the North Caucasus. This was essential to Confederation, but at the same time created a danger of Chechen supremacy in the Confederation, and consequently a danger of the Confederation becoming a tool of the Chechen regime. The higher number of Abkhaz officials active in the Confederation, compared to Chechens had no negative consequences for Moscow, at least for the time being. This Abkhaz supremacy meant, at least for the Russians, leverage against Georgia. But Chechen supremacy caused serious problems and created opposition.

⁴⁹³ Moshe Gammer, 1995. “Unity, Diversity and Conflict in the Northern Caucasus,” in Yaacov Ro’I, eds., *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*. London: Frank Cass, 173-174.

⁴⁹⁴ Şenbe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 3.

At last, internal, national and personal quarrels made the Confederation a more complex body. Due to different policy preferences of the Confederation's members, the purpose of the Confederation's existence was never clarified properly. This alone was the most critical handicap for its future.⁴⁹⁵ While the Chechens were in pursuit of total independence, all the other peoples, especially the Abkhaz were in favour of a kind of autonomy within the Russian Federation. Moreover, mutual territorial claims of the member peoples of the Confederation against each other and neighbouring peoples were clear.

The leaders of the movement were well aware of all these troubles and of the possible reactions of the existing power centres in the region, from regional governments to Moscow. As Gennadi Alamiya, one of the deputy-Presidents of the CMPC, put it, the objective of collecting different nationalities under the umbrella of unified single state was so far from the reality. Instead, the Confederation aimed at the establishment of a loose body of democratic organisations, taking the example of the European Union, to consolidate economic, political social and cultural solidarity among the peoples of the Caucasus.⁴⁹⁶ Shanibov also perceived the establishment of the Confederation as the initial phase of the realization of a powerful North Caucasian State.⁴⁹⁷ He tried to assure possible opponents by saying

⁴⁹⁵ Cem Oğuz, June-August 1999. "The Unity of the North Caucasian People: The case of the Confederation of the Peoples of the Caucasus," *Perceptions*, (Ankara), IV(2): 128.

⁴⁹⁶ "Kafkasya Halkları Konfederasyonu. Hedef Avrupa Modeli Birlik," July 1992. *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, (Samsun), 9: 11-2.

⁴⁹⁷ "Kafkasya Dağlı Halkları Konfederasyonu Başkanı Şanibe Açıkladı:..." January 1992. *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, (Samsun), 7: 4.

that "...the parliament was not an alternative to existing governments, ...its mission was rather to solve regional conflicts by peaceful means."⁴⁹⁸

5- Activities of the Confederation:

With the establishment of the Confederation, the new executive bodies, in contrast to the Assembly, started to function regularly. The Confederation's Parliament and the Presidential Council met almost every month in one of the cities of the member peoples. And, in those meetings, these bodies discussed the developments and disputes affecting the region directly or indirectly.

During the first period, the most critical point was the new Russian Federation Treaty and draft constitution. Following the formation of the CIS, in order to prevent the disintegration of the Russian Federation, as was the case in the Soviet Union, the authorities in Moscow prepared a Federation Treaty in which a comprehensive reform of the Russian Federation's administrative structure was taken into account.⁴⁹⁹ This Treaty was intended to be the fundamental document delimiting powers between the federal government and the constituent parts. Its finalisation was the main issue on the agenda of the leaders of the Russian Federation.

⁴⁹⁸ *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol.1, January 1992. 5(31): 69.

⁴⁹⁹ With that Treaty Moscow was intent to sign three documents with 89 subjects of the Russian Federation in 1992. The 89 subjects of the Russian Federation consisted of 21 republics, 1 autonomous *oblast*, 10 *okrugs*, 6 *krais*, 49 *oblasts* and 2 cities with special status, Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The CMPC strongly opposed this treaty from the beginning because of its ‘undemocratic character’. And, in compliance with the decision taken during the 3rd Congress, the Confederation protested to the Yeltsin administration for proposing and supporting this kind of an undemocratic Treaty to the peoples of the Federation. Thus the dispute between Moscow and the Confederation was already fuelled in the beginning of 1992.

The Confederation put the issue on its agenda at the 5th session of the Parliament and Presidential Council in Grozny on 27 February 1992. According to the Confederation, although most clauses in the draft constitution tabled at the last Congress of the Peoples’ Deputies meet contemporary needs, the section on the structure of the state of the future Russian Federation was absolutely unacceptable. Its denial of the right to self-determination and demolition of the principle of national states, meant it would be a political disaster and would result in the revival of the Russian Empire, a return to the pre-Soviet period. Since it was undemocratic and placed the peoples of the North Caucasus in a dependent and unequal position with regard to Russia, the acting administrative bodies of the North Caucasus could only reject it.⁵⁰⁰

The Confederation, as a best solution, requested a moratorium for the ending of disputes and clashes between the peoples of the North Caucasus. The leaders believed that this was the only way to establish a comprehensive and unified state of the peoples of the North Caucasus, without Russian intervention.⁵⁰¹ Yusup Soslambekov pointed out that if the current draft Russian constitution were

⁵⁰⁰ “Caucasus Parliament threaten military intervention in Abkhazia,” *SWB SU/1319, B/5-6*, 3 March 1992.

adopted, the peoples belonging to the Confederation would declare general elections and create an independent confederative state from the Caspian to the Black Sea.⁵⁰²

In its meeting on 22 March 1992 in Vladikavkaz, the Confederation Parliament issued a declaration⁵⁰³ stating that the Confederation was established to defend the political rights and freedoms of the North Caucasian peoples. In addition, it aimed to end imperial captivity and to secure the establishment of an independent state, therefore it was impossible, at that time, for the Confederation to accept this new Federal Treaty.

Likewise, the Confederation tried to constrain the official and competent authorities of the existing republics of the North Caucasus by saying that the approval of this Treaty would contradict the freedom and the basic rights guaranteed to the peoples of the North Caucasus. Thus it would have no legal validity.

Then the Confederation proposed its own solution and called for the legal disintegration of the existing Russian Federation. This disintegration would give equal status to all the republics which compromised the Russian Federation. Then, these equal republics would establish an independent Russian Federal Republic.

⁵⁰¹ For the text of CMPC's Parliament's resolution after the meeting on 28 February 1992 see: "A call to the peoples of the North Caucasus," April 1992. *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, (Samsun), 8: 1.

⁵⁰² *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1(11), 13 March 1992.

⁵⁰³ The text of the declaration was published in the newspaper *Kavkazskiy Dom* and for the Turkish text see *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, (Samsun), April 1992, 8: 2; and *Marje*, (Ankara) June 1992, 1: 28-29.

Despite the Confederation's strong opposition and the propaganda work against the Federation Treaty, all the republics of the North Caucasus signed the Treaty, with the exception of Chechnya on 31 March 1992.

6- The Split: From Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus to the Confederation of Caucasian Peoples:

By 1992, increasing demands for territorial change and structural reform in the North Caucasus; the growing influence of the Confederation as an independent and 'anti-Russian' organization, and the fear of the so-called 'domino-effect' caused by the Chechen declaration of independence, forced the authorities in Moscow to deal with the region in a more concrete and responsible manner.

Through the newly established Ministry of Nationalities and Regional Policy⁵⁰⁴, Russian authorities tried to manage the conflicts and disagreements in the North Caucasus. However as Hill stressed, because of the lack of a blueprint for the future of the Russian Federation Moscow has to improvise and adopt *ad hoc* measures to address the issue of conflict in the North Caucasus.⁵⁰⁵

In addition, the emergence of different trends in Russian politics, which was roughly, defined by Hill as 'statism' and 'federalism' made the situation in the North Caucasus more fragile.

The second half of 1992 was a year of transformation for the Confederation. Existing disagreements in the North Caucasian territory began to escalate and turn

⁵⁰⁴ A ministry which was created in 1992 on the basis of a pre-existing State Committee for Nationality Affairs (*Goskonnats*).

into the military clashes. Thus, in addition to its socio-political character, the Confederation quickly gained the status of a military power.

In the sixth session of the Confederation's parliament on 21-22 March 1992 in Vladikavkaz, the Confederation's authorities decided to form a Defence Committee and an army. According to the provision approved by the parliament, the Confederation's armed forces would be equipped with motorised rifles, armoured and artillery sub-units. In addition, air force and air defence sub-units would be formed. These armed forces were created, according to the leaders of the Confederation, for the safeguarding of the Confederation's state sovereignty, resolution of inter-ethnic problems peacefully, and protection of citizens' rights and freedoms.⁵⁰⁶

Nevertheless, at least in the beginning, the leaders of the Confederation did not intend to establish a permanent military structure. They were establishing a volunteer army, to be activated on the existence of a clash affecting the region and the Confederation directly. During the South Osetian-Georgian conflict the Confederation sent 3 battalions, organized totally on voluntary basis, to intervene in the conflict.

The Confederation established a command structure of its own in February 1993, during the Abkhazian war. While Shamil Basayev, the commander of the Chechen volunteers, was appointed commander of troops, a deputy of the Adyge Supreme Soviet, Amin Zekhov was appointed chief of staff.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Hill, *Russia's Tinderbox*, 30.

⁵⁰⁶ "Confederation of Mountain Peoples' Parliament Meets in Vladikavkaz," *SWB SU/1338, B/6*, 25 March 1992.

⁵⁰⁷ "Confederation of Peoples of Caucasus forms command of its army," *SWB SU/1611, B/7*, 12 February 1993.

In the beginning, it was used by the Russian authorities, especially the military circles, against Georgia. But in time, because of the Confederation's increasing anti-Russian and anti-federal discourse and attitude, the authorities in Moscow started to oppose the idea of any kind of an organisation outside Russian control.

Moreover, the Georgian assaults on Abkhazia and the Confederation's quick reaction to it, resulted in a rapprochement between Georgia and Russia. After talks between Yeltsin and Shevardnadze in late August⁵⁰⁸, the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation issued a statement in which the actions of the Confederation was defined as a gross violation of the Constitution.⁵⁰⁹ Accordingly, Valentin Stepankov, Procurator General of the Russian Federation instigated criminal proceedings against the Confederation for stirring up inter-ethnic strife, committing terrorist acts, and diversions, and taking hostages. In his accusation, the procurator stressed that despite the fact the Confederation has proclaimed itself a socio-political institution, it was clearly claiming the role of substitute for the legal bodies of a state power. The anti-constitutional thrust of this organization was displayed perfectly by the attempts to create a parliament, defence council and armed forces, the establishment of the post of commander-in-chief, the adoption of

⁵⁰⁸ In a telephone conversation on 24 August these two leaders condemned the activities of the Confederation and Yeltsin in a session of Russian Security Council stated that he would personally take the necessary steps to stop the conflict and to start peace talks. "Yeltsin and Shevardnadze discuss situation in Abkhazia," *SWB SU/1469, C3/3*, 26 August 1992.

⁵⁰⁹ "Mountain Peoples acting outside the law according to Russian Justice Ministry," *SWB SU/1470, CI/2*, 27 August 1992.

documents calling for the continuity of terrorist acts.⁵¹⁰ The Procurator entrusted the investigation of the case to its investigation department in which representatives from the ministries of security and internal affairs took part.

The leaders of the Confederation quickly reacted and rejected the accusations and activities of Yeltsin and the Justice Ministry. Shanibov and Soslambekov stated that the Confederation did not recognize the jurisdiction, which intended to prosecute the organization for unconstitutional activities with regard to Georgia.⁵¹¹

While the Russians were continuing peace negotiations between the Abkhaz and Georgians, they detained Shanibov as part of their policy of repressing the Confederation. He was accused of encouraging ‘internal disharmony’ and of signing a document on forming armed detachments to send to Abkhazia. Demonstrations, demanding his release began over the entire North Caucasus, especially Kabardino-Balkaria⁵¹² in response. The demonstrators blockaded Nalchik airport and a state of emergency was declared.⁵¹³

On 27 September 1992, after the meeting of its parliament, the Confederation issued an appeal to the Russian Procurator General requesting him not to view the Confederation’s actions as unconstitutional. The appeal explained

⁵¹⁰ “Proceedings against Confederation of Mountain People instituted,” *SWB SU/1471, B/2*, 28 August 1992.

⁵¹¹ “Mountain Peoples do not recognize jurisdiction of Russian procurator,” *SWB SU/1476, C1/5*, 3 September 1992.

⁵¹² “Demands for release of CMP’s leader,” *SWB SU/1496, ii*; 26 September; “Demonstrations in Kabardino-Balkaria support mountainmen’s leader,” *SWB SU/1497, C2/*, 28 September 1992.

⁵¹³ “State of emergency declared in Kabarda-Balkaria; Fighting continues,” *SWB SU/1498, B/4*; 29 September 1992. “State of emergency suspended in Kabardin-Balkaria,” *SWB SU/1498, i*; 29 September 1992.

why the Confederation's president signed his decree on forming armed units to fight in Abkhazia.⁵¹⁴

While these demonstrations were continuing, Shanibov managed to escape from custody in Rostov and addressed a meeting in Nalchik on 28 September. In a television interview, Shanibov said: "We want peace, we want to preserve Russia as a commonwealth of peoples – of free peoples. We have not forgotten history, and we still feel for the Russian State. We do care about where it is heading."⁵¹⁵

How he escaped is still unknown and is viewed suspiciously. While some claim he was released due to rising pressures from the Kabardian Peoples' Congress and *Adygey-Khase*, and their fear of a possible opposition coup, there were also rumours that the Russian let him out to prevent unrest from spreading into other areas of the Caucasus. In addition, in an article published in *Segodnya*,⁵¹⁶ it was implied that he has close contacts with Russian military officials in the region. These close contacts made his 'escape' possible.

In order to analyse the complex situation and position of the Confederation in the region and to decide on what policy to adopt towards Russia, the Fourth Extraordinary Congress of the Peoples of the Caucasus was organized in Grozny on 3-4 October 1992.

In this Congress the first and most serious split in the Confederation emerged. Representatives adopted two different approaches on relations with

⁵¹⁴ "Confederation of Caucasian Mountain Peoples appeals for leader's release," *SWB SU/1498*, B/5, 29 September.

⁵¹⁵ "Nalchik Demonstrations Continues; Situation Relatively Calm," *SWB SU/1500*, B/2-3, 1 October.

Russia. According to the first group, which consisted mainly of Chechens, the attitude towards Russia should be hardened, even secession should be considered. Dudayev, representing the first group suggested that the Confederation should set up a committee to investigate and judge the leaders of the North Caucasian republics where Russia had been allowed to send troops. This committee should even have the right to pass death sentences on them. The other group, including Shanibov and most of the Abkhaz were defended more moderate policies.⁵¹⁷ In contrast to Dudayev, Denga Khalidov, the first deputy chairman of the Confederation, told the congress that they would need at least 10 years to form a true Caucasian confederation. During that period, a federal treaty should be signed with Russia and all North Caucasian republics. Dagestan and Abkhazia should also sign a similar treaty. During that period, the Confederation would form its own political system and begin to play a role in international politics. Khalidov, in addition, stated that the political structure of the Confederation would be “identical to that of the common European home”. Due account would be taken of the different character of the regions, and in international politics it would act as the legal successor to the Mountain Republic which existed in the Caucasus in 1918. In case official state structures in Caucasian republics pursued policies contradicting the republics’ ‘common interests’; the Confederation might organize acts of civil disobedience, and “use other means of political struggle”.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁶ “North Caucasus Regional Movements’ Leaders in Conflict,” *FBIS-USR-93-114*, 22-23, 1 September 1993.

⁵¹⁷ Şanibe, “Yeniden doğuş,” 44.

⁵¹⁸ “Congress of Confederation of Mountain Peoples in Groznyy,” *SWB SU/1504, C1/1*, 6 October 1992.

Although the majority of participants defended the first approach, most of the leading cadre supported the second, and managed to maintain a moderate line. In the final declaration, the Confederation advised all socio-political organizations and movements to demand that the leaders of their republics seek real independence and, conclude treaties on political, economic and cultural cooperation between one another. Moreover, the formation of a joint regional security forces run along the lines of the national guard. In the event that the leaders of the republics rejected these measures, the Confederation threatened to organise peaceful actions of mass protest and civil disobedience to demand that the unpopular leadership resign and that elections to republican parliaments be organized ahead of schedule.

After the Congress, Shanibov blamed ‘the third force’ without naming it. He went on to say that he appreciated Dudayev’s achievements in reviving national consciousness throughout the Caucasus, nevertheless he also stressed, “we are unanimous on global issues but somewhat differ on tactics, which manifest itself, *inter alia*, in the approach to the Russian-Caucasian mutual relations.”⁵¹⁹ “Chechnia has today become the flagship of freedom in the region”, he said, but, the other 15 peoples within the Confederation should for the time being link their future with Russia.

Within the same days, especially after the outbreak of armed conflicts in the region Moscow was faced with the question of how to address regional disputes.

⁵¹⁹ “Shanibov calls for Unification of the Caucasus within Russian Federation,” *SWB SU/1504*, CI/2, 6 October.

The Russian Federation Security Council set up a special Inter-regional Commission on the North Caucasus which was given the task of looking for ethnic, psychological and legal solutions to conflicts arising in the region that threaten Russia's security of state and society.⁵²⁰ In addition to representatives from the Russian ministries of security, defence, finance, and economy, the then Russian Minister of Justice, Nikolay Fyodorov also took part in the commission as a deputy chairman. By this commission Yeltsin wanted a way of dealing with the region directly.

The Security Council's Committee produced two reports entitled 'The Current Ethno-political Situation in the North Caucasus and the Path Toward its Stabilization,' and 'The Conception of Russian Nationalities Policy in the North Caucasus'. Both of reports singled out 'national separatism' on the part of the Confederation and the national movements in the republics as the root of all problems in the North Caucasus.

The first report recommended that, instead of working with the new political forces such as the Confederation and other national movements, Moscow establish alternative organizations in the North Caucasus. The separatist urges of the nationalist movements could only be overcome if Moscow concentrated its efforts on increasing the popularity of as many pro-Russian socio-political groups in the region as possible.

The second report, which outlined the tenets of Russia's policy toward the region, affirmed that assisting the creation and growth in popularity of pro-Russian

⁵²⁰ Vladimir Lysenko, then Deputy Head of the Ministry for Nationalities and Regional Policy, and later the Chairman of the Russian Duma Subcommittee on Federal Relations was heading this

oriented social movements was the primary method of tackling national separatism in the North Caucasus.⁵²¹

These reports and the Confederation's increasingly anti-Russian stance were the turning points for the creation of a succession of regional organizations which would be favourably disposed towards Moscow and would provide a counter-weight to the Confederation and other national front movements. In this Moscow began to use mainly high ranking politicians and bureaucrats from the region, like Sergey Shakhray⁵²² and Ramazan Abdulatipov.⁵²³ Regional official leaders were motivated to establish alternative regional pro-Russian organizations aimed primarily at weakening the Confederation

Abdulatipov set up the first of these pro-Russian organizations, even before the publication of these reports. In autumn 1991, he convened a congress of the Assembly of Peoples of the Caucasus, which was intended to be a direct challenge to the Confederation. This Association was based in Moscow with a heavy representation of Moscow scholars and peoples from Dagestan. In 1992, this Assembly began to publish a magazine in Russian in Moscow, *Ekho Kavkaza* (Echo of the Caucasus) which gave concrete form to the idea of regional integration. Nevertheless, the Association failed to become a credible counterweight to the Confederation and, instead of drawing support away from the

commission. "Russia sets up commission to seek solutions to North Caucasian conflicts," *SWB SU/1471, CI/2*, 28 August 1992.

⁵²¹ Fiona Hill quoted these reports, *Russia's Tinderbox*, 37-38.

⁵²² He, a Terek Cossack, was the Chairman of the Russian State Committee for Nationalities Policy of the Russia and the Russian deputy premier with responsibility for ethnic affairs.

⁵²³ He, an Avar, was from Dagestan and the Chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation.

Confederation it was one of the factors that galvanised it into action in 1991 and 1992.⁵²⁴

The second major organization was established in January 1993 during a regional round table meeting, organised by the Ministry for Nationalities and Regional Policy, and the State Committee of the Russian Federation for Nationality Policy, in Pyatigorsk and Kislovodsk, with the participation of the republics, of various national or ethnic movements and groups in the region. Shakhray and Abdullatipov took the lead during these meetings.

The meeting was the first initiative in the North Caucasus that attempted to establish mechanisms for cooperation with the 93 representatives from 37 North Caucasian parties, movements and even the regional branches of the Russian political parties. This meeting ended with the adoption of a ‘Declaration on the Principles of Inter-ethnic Relations in the North Caucasus’. The declaration stressed that relations between the ethnic groups and nationalities in the region were based on equal rights for all peoples and on respect for the territorial integrity of the North Caucasian republics, *krais* and *oblasts* within the Russian Federation.

On the second day of the meeting in Kislovodsk, the leaders of legislative and executive power in the region decided to create a North Caucasus Coordinating Council made up of representatives of the executive and legislative power. This body was to help unite the efforts of the republics and *krais* to maintain ethnic accord in the region, prevent and settle inter-ethnic conflicts and other crisis

⁵²⁴ Fiona Hill, *Russia's Tinderbox*, 39.

situations in the North Caucasus and also to strengthen the integrity of the Russian Federation.⁵²⁵

In line with Security Council's Committee reports, the second major organisation focused on the region. The North Caucasian Democratic Congress, was established in Stavropol *Krai* with the participation of several anti-Dudayev groups from Chechnya. This organization was heavily controlled by Sergey Shakhray⁵²⁶ and marking a break with the radicalism of Chechnya, a leader of the Chechen opposition and former minister of the Soviet Union's oil industry, Salambek Khadzhev was elected head of the Political Council of the Congress.

This Congress, as stated by Shakhray, was established to the preserve a unified Russian state, Russia's chief priority in the Caucasus, that was. Thus it was intended to replace the Confederation and presented itself as the Confederation's democratic alternative. Therefore, in contrast to the Confederation, the Congress professed common democratic priorities and registered with the Russian Federation Ministry of Justice.⁵²⁷

Another North Caucasian organisation, the Association of Democratic Forces of the North Caucasus, was established in the beginning of April under the auspices of Abdullatipov, and registered by the Russian Ministry of Justice.

⁵²⁵ "Meeting in Kislovodsk decides to set up North Caucasus Coordinating Council," *SWB SU/1589, B/4*, 18 January 1993. "North Caucasus Coordination Council set up," *SWB SU/1592, B/8*, 21 January 1993.

⁵²⁶ "North Caucasus Democratic Congress to attempt to solve regional problems," *SWB SU/1608, B/2*, 9 February 1993.

⁵²⁷ "North Caucasus Democratic Congress on Program, Referendum," *FBIS-USR-93-025*, 46, 5 March 1993.

According to the Ministry, the organisation encompassed as collective members, eight associations and political parties in the North Caucasus, and had set itself the task of bringing together various public and political forces to achieve peace and reconciliation in the region and to develop friendship and cooperation there.⁵²⁸ The Association's general-secretary was Schimidt Dzoblayev, and its executive committee was located in Moscow.

In addition, Moscow began to be closely interested in the economic problems of the North Caucasus republics. Through the Council of Associations of Socio-economic Cooperation of the Republics, Territories and Regions in the North Caucasus, Moscow implemented a socio-economic development program, which, in fact, aimed to control the region and establish a foothold to prevent any kind of a separatist activity.

7- The Cossack Factor and the CPC:

During the October 1992 Congress, the Confederation renamed itself the Confederation of the Caucasian Peoples (CCP) (*Konfederatsiia Narodov Kavkaza*), representing a comprehensive and powerful consolidated body of organization, comprising mainly Cossacks and other peoples. In Shanibov's words, this decision made this congress a turning point in the history of the entire Caucasus. At this very moment, he said, "the Caucasus was facing the acute question: to be or not to be".

⁵²⁸ "New organization set up to promote peace in Northern Caucasus," *SWB SU/1661, B/11*, 13 April 1993.

Initially, membership of the Assembly was restricted to mountaineers and native non-Slavic population of the North Caucasus. However, the reputation had been growing Confederation in parallel with the size of its member peoples. At last, the Confederation opened itself to the Cossacks of the region. By so doing, the Confederation's leadership aimed to change the extremely negative view the Russian population of the North Caucasus had of it, and to neutralise Russian reservations about its activities. In fact, the Cossacks and other Slavic populations, during that period, were among the component parts of the North Caucasus and had a lot of power in the region, causing some territorial disputes with other North Caucasian groups.

The Cossack revival went back to the period of 1989 and 1990. As Hill pointed out, Cossack clubs first began to spring up in the North Caucasus in 1989 with Kuban Cossack clubs formed in Krasnodar and Don Cossack clubs in Stavropol. The first Congress of the Cossacks of the North Caucasus took place in December 1991. These clubs focused on ethno-cultural revival, encouraging a dual Russian-Cossack identity among the region's Slavic inhabitants, and promoting Cossacks as indigenous inhabitants of the North Caucasus on a par with the non-Russian "titular nationalities".⁵²⁹

Thus, the interests of these Cossack groups' coincided with those of the peoples of the North Caucasus and their clubs inevitably clashed with nationalist organisations of the peoples of the North Caucasus. Summer 1992 to winter 1993 saw the peak of confrontation between the Cossacks and the governments and

peoples of the North Caucasian republics. Following the meeting of the Union of Cossack Armies of Russia in Moscow in January 1992, at which Sergey Shakhray participated a loose coalition of the Cossacks of Terek, Kuban, Don and Stavropol was established.

In its early period, the Union of Cossacks of South Russia presented itself as a direct competitor to the Confederation. It issued demands on the recognition of the Cossacks as a repressed people, to the creation of national-territorial formations headed by an elected *ataman* with representation in organs of local governments at all levels. In addition, the Union offered to form a Cossack military force to guard Russia's international borders in the region.

To prevent this revival causing armed clashes with the North Caucasian peoples, the Confederation tried to accommodate the Cossacks as an "indigenous people" of the region. Then, in early 1993, the renamed Confederation met with Cossacks' representatives to negotiate a cooperation agreement. The first official meeting of these groups was held in Pitsunda, Abkhazia on 4-5 April 1993. In this conference, the representatives from the Confederation and the Cossacks' Union of the South Russia, decided there was to be roundtables of the Confederation and the Cossacks' Union, with an agreement on different issues ensuing.⁵³⁰

On 28 April 1993, in Stavropol, the representatives of the Confederation and the Cossacks' Union signed an agreement on the principles of cooperation and

⁵²⁹ Fiona Hill, *Russia's Tinderbox*, 67-73.

⁵³⁰ See Stanislav Lakoba, 1995. "Abkhazia is Abkhazia," *Central Asian Survey*, 14(1): 103 and Gueorgui Otyrba, 1994. "War in Abkhazia: The Regional Significance of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict." In Roman Szporluk, ed., *National Identity*, 301.

mutual assistance.⁵³¹ This document guarantees collective security in case of the danger of the use of force against the Confederation and the Cossacks.

The agreement proposed cooperation in defending rights and freedoms in the region, eliminating the use of force in solving territorial problems, and respecting the right of peoples to self-determination, without raising any territorial claims on each other. It stressed in particular that neither the roundtables, nor the agreement contradict the Russian Federation Treaty or the new principles.⁵³²

The conclusion of this agreement was disturbed mainly to the authorities in Moscow. While Yeltsin and his cadre were seeking to co-opt the Cossacks against the secessionist movements and organizations in the North Caucasus, this initiative of reconciliation with the well-defined enemy of Moscow's interests in the region provoked Russian interference. In June 1992 Yeltsin issued a decree supporting the Cossacks revival movement and the restoration of Cossack economic, cultural and patriotic forms of self-governance in the Russian Federation. The decree recognized the rights of Cossacks to practice traditional forms of local administration and land ownership in areas that would be defined by plebiscite. Under the provisions of the decree, Cossacks were to be given grants of land and Cossack regiments were to be created by the Ministry of Defence to defend international borders and maintain law and order. In March 1993, while the Confederation's leaders were continuing their efforts to establish an alliance with

⁵³¹ While Yusup Soslambekov and Musa Shanibov were signing the document on behalf of the Confederation, Vladimir Gromov, ataman of the all-Kuban *host*, Petr Fedesov, ataman of the Stavropol *Krai* Union of Cossacks, Pavel Shirminzhinov, ataman of the Union of Cossacks of Kalmykia, and Vasiliy Kaledin, ataman of the Don signed the document in the name of the Cossacks. However, ataman of the Tersk Starodubtsev refused to sign the agreement.

the Union of Cossacks of the Southern Russia, President Yeltsin signed an additional decree, 'on the Reforming of Military Structures, Frontiers and Interior Forces on the Territory of the North Caucasian Region and State Support for the Cossacks' that created Cossack units as part of the Russia Federation's armed forces in the North Caucasus.

This decree was specifically intended to address personnel shortages in the Russian forces of the North Caucasus Military District by taking advantage of Cossack desires to perform military service.

Then, following the conclusion of the Confederation-Cossack treaty, the Cossack *atamans* of the region were invited, and travelled to Moscow, when the first Congress of the CCP with the participation of the Cossacks, was supposed to be convened. Later, the Cossack groups complained about the lack of coordination with the Confederation's leaders on pre-congress materials. In addition, the Cossacks began to recall the problems with the Russian speaking population in the North Caucasus.

Thus the agreement signed by the parties had almost no serious positive political consequences for either party or for the region. This brought the Cossacks and the Russians closer together and resulted in a split within the Confederation. The promising relations between the Cossacks and the Confederation during the conflict in Abkhazia began to deteriorate.

⁵³² "Agreement signed between Cossacks and CPC," *SWB SU/1676, B/3*, 30 April 1993.

8- Increasing Russian Activity:

By May 1993, high-ranking Russian officials started to visit the region and Moscow introduced new administrative structure. The North Caucasian Military District was transformed into a border-adjacent military district.⁵³³ By so doing Moscow aimed to significantly increasing their military potential in the Region, settling troops withdrawn from Germany, the Baltic countries and the Transcaucasus there.⁵³⁴ Then, in mid May, Russian Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin and Russian Procurator General Valentin Stepankov, in order to attend the meeting of the North Caucasian Coordination Council in Nalchik, came to the region. In this meeting, Moscow's anti-Confederation attitude became clearer. Abdulatipov said that he was afraid of the Confederation's "possible plot against Russian interests". In addition, Stepankov noted that his Office had prevented "confederation attempts to become a parallel state power" and expressed concern over confederation armed units participating in combat operations in Abkhazia.⁵³⁵

Meanwhile, in June and July, the clashes in Abkhazia re-intensified and the rapprochement between Moscow and Tiflis gained momentum. The Confederation became one of the most important common subjects of this new system of relations.

⁵³³ The North Caucasian Military District, the first one on the territory of the Russian Federation was set up on 9 January 1993 by Yeltsin's decree. And then, four days later on 13 January, the Russian Security Council discussed the socio-political situation of the region and defined it within the sphere of Russia's vital interests.

⁵³⁴ "New status for North Caucasus Military District," *SWB SU/1687, C3/4*, 13 May 1993.

⁵³⁵ "Stepankov and Abdulatipov on government delegation trip to North Caucasus," *SWB SU/1691, B/11*, 18 May 1993.

In this period, especially during the second half of 1992 and the early months of 1993, Georgians intended to control the ethnic groups within Georgia and Shevardnadze was trying to strengthen his post.

Throughout late 1992, Shevardnadze tried to get the Russian authorities to act against the Confederation. Georgian authorities accused Russia of failing to stop the activities of the Confederation. In his critiques, Shevardnadze always stated that if resolute measures were not taken, the anti-Georgian decisions and activities of the Confederation may involve other countries, especially Russia, and the events in Abkhazia may grow from local conflicts into a global confrontation.⁵³⁶

He analysed the Confederation and described the its actions as “international terrorism reeking of fascism.” In addition, the Georgian authorities had always described Confederation volunteers from the North Caucasus as ‘mercenaries’.

In a Conference of the leaders of the administrative bodies and heads of the executive powers of the North Caucasus and southern Russia in Sochi on 13 July 1993, regional security and conflicts were discussed. The most important names related with the Caucasus also took part: Andrey Kozyrev, the Russian Foreign Minister; Sergey Shakhrai, Deputy Premier; Ramazan Abdulatipov, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Soviet; Viktor Barannikov, the Security Minister; and Boris Pastukhov, the Russian President’s special representative for the settlement of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict.

At the end of the congress, the participants for the first time declared that they almost unanimously agreed that cooperation between Russian Federal bodies and the Confederation was impossible.⁵³⁷

Under these circumstances, the Georgian authorities ‘earnestly requested’ that the Procurator General of the Russian Federation should consider the issue of the lawfulness of the activities of the Confederation with reference to its interference in the internal affairs of Georgia. The increasing role of the Chechens in the Confederation during this period did not benefit the Confederation. As a result of Georgian pressure the Russian authorities restarted discussions on the status of the Confederation.

The most striking accusation of the Russian authorities was that the Confederation was not registered with the Russian Federation’s Ministry of Justice. In fact, the leaders of the Confederation had already put this issue on its agenda during the its parliamentary sitting on 26 November 1993 in Grozny. After bitter discussions they concluded that it was impossible, either for political or psychological reasons. This would result in, according to the leaders of the Confederation, the isolation of the Abkhazian from all the other peoples of the North Caucasus.⁵³⁸ Soslambekov said;

“I personally am against it. Russia in my opinion should recognize the KNK [Confederation] a union of peoples of North Caucasus. After this, like Palestine for example, we could have our representative at the United Nations. ...Russia must determine what is more important to it –the

⁵³⁶ “Sate Council Announces Local Mobilization,” *SWB SU/1468, CI/1*, 25 August 1992.

⁵³⁷ “Conference discusses problems in Southern Russia and Northern Caucasus,” *SWB SU/1741, B/1*, 15 July 1993.

⁵³⁸ “Situation in Chechnya updated,” *FBIS-USR-93-151*, p.46, 1 December 1993.

personal ambitions of the politicians or stability in the south of the country.”⁵³⁹

Because of the complete disarray of the federal policy owing to the deepening conflict between Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet in Moscow, the situation in the North Caucasus remained relatively quiet and a decision on the Confederation was postponed. After the October crisis in Moscow, Yeltsin pushed forward his own version of the constitution and organized a referendum on 12 December. Aware of the initial disturbances after the Federal Treaty of 1992, the chapters dealing with the delimitation of powers in the Russian constitution were rewritten and resubmitted to the republics and regions for approval prior to the referendum. The Confederation, as in earlier referenda, opposed the new draft constitution. In November, it appealed to the peoples of the North Caucasus to vote against the Constitution as it alleged that the article on the private ownership of land contained prerequisites for eliminating the traditional lifestyle of Russia’s people.⁵⁴⁰

Before the referendum, Yeltsin with his team or the heads of the top Russian federal ministries and governmental departments visited the North Caucasus on 6-7 December, campaigning for the new constitution. During his visit, he attended a conference of all North Caucasian republican leaders in Nalchik and promised them more attention to their problems, which in essence meant more donations from the state budget. And, announced that on the day after the

⁵³⁹ “Caucasus Confederation Chief on Dudayev, Chechnya,” *FBIS-USR-93-161*, p.46, 18 December 1993.

referendum, and elections to the Federal assembly, a decree of the Russian President on the settlement of the long, protracted and tragic conflicts would be published.⁵⁴¹

Despite the words of support from the official leaders of the region, a number of republics that had initially signed the Federal Treaty, including Adygea, Dagestan and Karachay-Cherkess now rejected the constitution on the grounds that it violated the original provisions of the Treaty. Moreover, elections that were held at the same time as the referendum resulted in significant success for the Russian radical nationalists and communists. From then on, a new phase for the Russian Federation and of course for the Confederation began.

⁵⁴⁰ “Confederation of Peoples of Caucasus opposes draft of new constitution,” *SWB SU/1850, B/14*, 19 November 1993.

⁵⁴¹ “Statement on stabilization of North Caucasus signed in Nalchik,” *SWB SU/1866 B/5-6*, 8 December 1993.

CHAPTER V

REGIONAL DISPUTES AND THE CONFEDERATION

In order to understand the Confederation's growing influence among the peoples of the North Caucasus, the conversion of the regional problems from discord to military clash and the response of the Confederation to these clashes should be analyzed in detail. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the North Caucasus faced with several ethnically based clashes primarily in 1992 and 1993. These clashes determined the Confederation's rise and fall.

In this context, while the organization was functioning under the title of Assembly, the dispute between the Chechens of Dagestan, named as Chechen-Akkinty (or Auxhovs) and Laks emerged as the first test to understand its power over the peoples of the North Caucasus.

When the Chechens were deported from their lands in what was taken Eastern Chechnya, the territory forming the *Aukhovsky* district was given to Dagestan. The Laks were forcibly settled with the loss of 2,500 lives to the lands left by the Chechens and this region renamed as *Novolaksky*. After the return of these Chechens from deportation, they claimed the rehabilitation and asked for the resettlement to their lands of pre-deportation period. As early as 1989, the clashes erupted and the Chechens attacked to the tent-city of Laks settled near the village of Leninaul and Laks reacted quickly together with Avars.

The Assembly took this issue into its agenda and Shanibov issued a call to the parties to prevent the clashes. In this call the Assembly was giving the message

to the parties that “who will open the fire to its brothers first, would be damned eternally by the peoples of the Caucasus”.⁵⁴² The clashing parties took this call seriously and the commission for settling the problem established with the participation of the representatives from the Dagestani government. By the work of this commission and by the help of the April 1991 law on the rehabilitation of repressed peoples, the solution was found to the conflict. The Laks, in a rare concession, agreed to resettle elsewhere in Dagestan, and the funding for their new homes was to come from the central government.⁵⁴³ This was accepted by the Assembly and its leaders as the first real success of the Assembly on solving the problems in the region without participation of outside powers.

In November 1991, when the Assembly converted itself to Confederation, one of its constituent members, the Chechens declared the independence of the Chechen Republic. In response, Yeltsin imposed state of emergency in Chechnya with a decree and decided to send Russian troops to Chechnya on 9 November.

This was the first serious threat to a well being of newly established Confederation. Therefore, in order to discuss the situation, the Confederation’s Parliament, and Presidential Council together with the Chechen Parliament met in Grozny on 9 November. In this meeting, Confederation declared that territories of the North Caucasus and Chechnya the combat area and decided to recruit volunteers on the territory of the North Caucasus to show Confederation’s support

⁵⁴² Şenbe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 35.

⁵⁴³ Svante E. Cornell, 2001. *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, Surrey: 278.

to Chechens. Furthermore, a committee comprised of the representatives of the confederate members was formed and sent to Moscow.⁵⁴⁴

The Russian Parliament, however, annulled the Yeltsin's decree and lifted the state of emergency. This was increased the popularity of Dudayev, and Confederation's leaders accepted it as the first victory of Confederation.

Nevertheless from then on, the Confederation had always been faced with several conflicts, some of which were between the member peoples, namely the Ingush-Osetian conflict. However, from its initial phase, the Assembly's and the Confederation's main rival that defined as 'ugly force' in the region was Georgia. Georgian nationalism and expansionism were the main stimuli behind the establishment of the organization.

The first nationalist movements that aimed at independence in the Caucasus were emerged in Georgia. Giorgi Chanturia's National Democratic Party and Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Irakli Tsereteli's Society of St. Ilia the Righteous were formed as loose alliances as early as in 1988 and targeted the Communist regime. These two movements shared the common feature and rather than advocating a cultural program, they were outright separatists, and rejected other ethnic groups living on the territories of Georgian SSR: the Abkhaz and South Osetians.

The relations between the Confederation and Georgia thus had never been in friendly manner. As Otyrba put it out, with the conflict that broke out in South Osetia in 1990 and the beginning of war in Abkhazia in August 1992, it became clear that ethnic conflicts were indispensable elements of Georgian policy. The

⁵⁴⁴ Şenbe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 42.

conflict in Abkhazia would give Tiflis an opportunity to consolidate the Georgian nation while sparing Shevardnadze the risk of confrontation with the Abkhaz and Osetian armed groups.⁵⁴⁵ Nevertheless this policy brought disastrous results to Georgia and a process of consolidation among the national minorities against this new imperial power in the Caucasus began.

Georgia's problems with the Abkhaz and Osetians started as early as in 1989, following the law strengthening the position of the Georgian language in the entire territory of Georgia was introduced. In this period, the Assembly, as Shanibov pointed out, from its early days faced with the 'multifaceted evil', i.e. Georgia, which was standing on the way of the rapprochement between the peoples of the North Caucasus. This made South Osetia and Abkhazia as the main playgrounds of the Confederation.

1- The Georgian-South Osetian Conflict.⁵⁴⁶

Georgians regarded Osetians as relative newcomers to Georgian land and this made the Osetian claims worthless on the eyes of Georgians. Thus in that period, even the term 'South Osetia' has been wiped out of Georgian publications and replaced with *Samechablo*⁵⁴⁷, *Shida Kartli* (inner *Kartli*) or, later the Tskhinval

⁵⁴⁵ Otyrba, "War in Abkhazia," 291-292.

⁵⁴⁶ The best accounts of the Georgian-South Osetian conflict are Julian Birch's articles: "Osetia: a Caucasian Bosnia in Microcosm," *Central Asian Survey*, 14(1): 43-74; "The Georgian/South Osetian territorial and boundary dispute," in John Wright *et al.* Eds., 1996. *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, London, and "Osetiya –land of uncertain frontiers and manipulative elites," *Central Asian Survey*, 18(4): 501-534. In addition see, B. Çoçiev (Chochiev)-M. Dzojev, eds., 1996. *Güney Osetya 1988-1992: Gürcü Saldırıları-Tutanaklar*, İstanbul. Nart Yayıncılık.

⁵⁴⁷ It means, "land of the Machabelli" from the name of the Georgian feudal family, which allegedly ruled it.

region.⁵⁴⁸ In response, while the clashes between the Abkhaz and Georgians was on going in spring 1989, the nationalist leaders of South Osetia already established their own popular national movement *Ademon Nykhas* (Popular Shrine)⁵⁴⁹ and addressed an open letter to the Abkhaz in which they were supporting the secessionist claims.

Then the Georgian parliament and government went on to take potentially discriminatory measures in September and November 1989 to make Russian and Georgian the official languages in South Osetia and to strengthen the position of the Georgian language within the would-be new republic. South Osetian authorities responded with a proposal giving equal status to Russian, Osetian, and Georgian in their *oblast*. Then, at the end of the month the oblast Soviet instituted Osetian as an official language in the region. This clearly marks the fact that September was the month in which the open clashes escalated.

The real breaking point for the relations was the Georgian Supreme Soviet's adoption of an election law banning the regional parties from running for the elections to the Georgian parliament in August 1990. South Osetian Supreme Soviet countered this move by upgrading its status unilaterally and proclaimed the establishment of independent South Osetian Soviet Democratic Republic on 20

⁵⁴⁸ Zverev, "Ethnic Conflicts," 43.

⁵⁴⁹ This movement was founded in January 1989 under the chairmanship of Alan Chochiev. The leadership cadre, including Zora Abayeva and Kshar Djingkaev, were intent on secession from Georgia, to form a republic within or as a united Osetian republic, together with the North Osetia.

September 1990. The Georgian Supreme Soviet immediately revoked the decision on 21 September.⁵⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the South Osetians continued to reject the policies of the Georgian government and on 16 October 1990, created an executive committee and called for the elections. The upcoming Georgian elections, however, distracted the Georgian leadership from dealing with the South Osetia instantly.

The elections to the newly established South Osetian Republic' Supreme Soviet held on 9 December 1990⁵⁵¹ and as a counter move the Supreme Soviet of Georgia adopted a law abolishing the South Osetian autonomy two days later, on 11 December. This counter-move provoked a justified negative reaction on the part of South Osetians. These Georgian attitudes perceived by South Osetians as a threat. They openly turned their face to Moscow and asked for a help to stop the Georgian aggression. In response, Gorbachev ordered the removal of the Georgian troops from South Osetia on 7 January 1991 and sent tanks to the area. In addition, the participation of the South Osetia to the all-Union referendum in March 1991 and overwhelming vote for it made the relations more tense in the middle of the 1991.

In May 1991, surprisingly, South Osetians took a step back in and vote for abolishing their new Republic, restating it to an autonomous *oblast*, but now under the jurisdiction of Russian Federation. Meanwhile, during the mid-1991, the Georgian forces laid siege to Tskhinval for months and bombarded the city with artillery to force the population to flee.

⁵⁵⁰ Felix Corley, "South Osetia between Gamsakhurdia and Gorbachev: 3 documents," *Central Asian Survey*, 16(2): 271.

On 28 November 1991, the South Osetian Soviet declared the area a republic and part of the Russian Federation. Then, on 22 December to gain recognition from former Union republics in the new circumstances of the collapsing USSR, it declared the independence of the South Osetian Republic. This declaration approved by the population in a referendum on 19 January 1992. An overwhelming 97% voted in favour of an independent South Osetia as a part of Russian Federation.

In response, the new Georgian regime led by Eduard Shevardnadze initially seemed to adopt a more conciliatory stance *vis-a-vis* South Osetia. Nevertheless, the Osetian leadership refused to enter into negotiations until Shevardnadze pulled Georgian troops out of the region and lifted the blockade.

At that stage, two important factors intervened the situation and changed the balance of power to the Osetians. The first factor was the North Osetia. North Osetians, by using the Russian card tried to pressure Georgians to stop the aggression towards the South Osetians. Especially, following the brake of temporary cease-fire on 13 May, all the political contact was broken off and North Osetia cut the pipeline supplying Georgia with Russian gas.⁵⁵² A new cease-fire in early June again broke-down within a few days

The other factor was the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus. When the Georgian aggression was in its height, the representatives of

⁵⁵¹ According to the figures of the elections' organizers, 71% of voters took part and 64 deputies were elected to the planned 75 seats. See Corley, *ibid.* p. 271.

the popular front movements in both North and South Osetia applied to join the Assembly of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus in March 1990 and then became the founding members of the Confederation.

The Confederation officially took the South Osetian issue in its agenda at the 5th session of its Parliament on 27 February 1992 in Grozny. The parliament adopted a document in which it accused Georgia by attempting to play the South Osetian option against the Abkhaz people. In order to protect the honour and virtue of the Caucasian people against this attempt, Confederation's Presidential Council and the Parliament warned Georgia to stop its aggressive actions towards the South Osetians and intimidated to announce general mobilization to send the North Caucasian volunteers to Abkhazia.⁵⁵³

Then the South Osetian issue became one of the most important problems of the Confederation and in each session Presidential Council and the Parliament took the issue in detail. During the sixth session of the Parliament that was held on 21-22 March 1992 in Vladikavkaz, the issue of the situation in South Osetia and the ways of stabilizing the situation in the armed conflict zone have been specially submitted for examination at the session. A parliamentary committee was set up and instructed to hold talks with authorized representatives of the provisional government of the Republic of Georgia and the full representatives of the South Osetia on the settlement of Osetian-Georgian relations.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵² "North Osetia imposes blockade of Georgia. Armenia badly affected," *SWB SU/1392, B/7-9*, 28 May 1992.

⁵⁵³ "Caucasian Parliament threatens Military intervention in Abkhazia," *SWB SU/1319, B/5-6*, 3 March 1992.

Nevertheless, because of the intensification of the clashes, instead of continuing negotiations, the Confederation focused on the military solutions. Shanibov defined the South Osetia as an ‘open wound’ of the Confederation and he stressed that the seventh session of the Confederation in Tskhinval put forward concrete proposals. Among them the most concrete one was the decision to send the troops to the South Osetia.⁵⁵⁵ The Confederation threatened to intervene militarily if there was not an end to the genocide against the peoples of the Confederation by the Georgians. With this threat Confederation’s leaders were intended to sit the Georgians on the negotiation table. In line with that, Shanibov declared his inclination for meeting with Eduard Shevardnadze to stop the fratricidal war immediately. Moreover he pointed that the “confederation’s aim in this area of the Caucasus is to put an end to the carnage and move the conflict onto the level of political decisions. Our military presence there can be justified on condition that the CIS troops are withdrawn from there.”⁵⁵⁶

Shanibov’s suggestion to the South Osetian-Georgian dispute was the military presence of the Confederation troops as the peacekeeping forces. Because “the confederation’s authority among the peoples of the North Caucasus was extremely high.” At the end of the May, Confederation’s Parliament and the Presidential Council held common session in Makhachkale. In that session, in order to prevent the annihilation of the South Osetians, the Confederation decided to take

⁵⁵⁴ See “Confederation of Mountain Peoples’ Parliament meets in Vladikavkaz,” *SWB SU/1338 B/6*, 25 March 1992 and *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol.1, 3 April 1992, 75.

⁵⁵⁵ *SWB SU/1370, B/13*, 3 May 1992.

⁵⁵⁶ “Confederation of Mountain Peoples ready to intervene in South Osetia,” *SWB SU/1371, B/7-8*, 4 May 1992.

more radical measures and Shanibov issued a call to Georgian and Russian leaderships and peoples. In this call Georgian Presidential Council was urged to stop the military aggression against the South Osetian peoples within ten days period. If not, the Confederation with its entire means would help the South Osetia.⁵⁵⁷

Meanwhile the South Osetian Prime Minister, Oleg Teziyev arrested in Vladikavkaz on 12 June 1992 for organizing the attack in which four died, because the guns from the raid being found in his car. South Osetian armed detachment leaders thereupon threatened to divert forces from the defense of Tskhinval to Vladikavkaz to release their leader. In the face of this, the North Osetian Supreme Soviet Chairman Galazov, with the consent of the Russian Prosecutor General had Teziyev released.

As a result of these developments, the Russian Supreme Soviet declared a state of emergency in Vladikavkaz and parts of the North Osetian territory on 12 June, and the following day special troops from Nizhny Novgorod and the interior ministry troops from Moscow airlifted into the area to restore the calm.

Under this atmosphere, at the end of the 10-day period, Musa Shanibov with a platoon of the Confederation's Abkhazian battalion arrived in Vladikavkaz on 13 June 1992⁵⁵⁸ by the intend to help the Tskhinval's defenders. Commenting on the action, Shanibov said "if the presence of the Confederation's soldiers in

⁵⁵⁷ Şenbe, *ibid.*, pp.49-52.

⁵⁵⁸ "Peace-keepers arrive in Vladikavkaz," *SWB SU/1409, B/4*, 17 June 1992.

South Osetia does not stop Georgia and the battalion suffers casualties, Georgia would automatically find itself at war with the entire Caucasus.”⁵⁵⁹

In Vladikavkaz, Shanibov made talks with Akhsarbek Galazov, the chairman of the North Osetian Parliament and General G. Kantemirov, South Osetian Foreign Minister and informed them about the mission of the Confederation and the platoon. Galazov, however refused to allow the Confederation’s troops’ passage to South Osetia by asserting that such a step would be fraught with unforeseeable consequences, including war throughout the Caucasus.⁵⁶⁰ Torez Kulumbekov also rejected the presence of the Confederation’s troops in Tskhinval and then Shanibov took the platoon to Nalchik after two days period of stay in Vladikavkaz on 15 June.

On 22 June 1992, Galazov felt it necessary to call upon Yeltsin to send troops to help South Osetia win its independence from Georgia and unification with North Osetia. The North, it was proclaimed was itself ready to mobilize all adult males to defend those in the South Osetia if required to do so. The gravity of the situation and the possible escalation of this hitherto localized conflict to a Caucasian war positing Georgia against Russia was instrumental in engineering a rapprochement between Shevardnadze and Yeltsin. Thus on 22 June 1992, Yeltsin contacted Shevardnadze and the two “outside powers” agreed to meet to discuss Osetia in Dagomys, Sochi. During the talks the Russian and the Georgian leaders agreed upon a number of general principles as well as some more concrete

⁵⁵⁹ “Mountain Peoples’ troops unwelcome in Vladikavkaz,” *SWB SU/1410 B/3*, 18 June 1992. “Fighting continues between Georgians and South Osetians,” *SWB SU/1408, B/2-3-4*, 16 June 1992.

specifics. Among the decisions was a cease-fire to be effective as of 28 June; withdrawal of Georgian troops from around Tskhinval; the setting up of a special control committee; and the deployment of a peacekeeping force composed of Russian, Georgian and Osetian troops was set up.⁵⁶¹

The agreement that signed in Dagomys in fact did not satisfy both of the conflicting parties. With the words of the Uryzmag Dzhiayev, the South Osetian Foreign Minister, the outside powers were “married us [Georgians and Osetians] in our absence”. The basic reason of the Osetian uneasiness was the deployment of the Georgian troops in South Osetia as a peacekeeping forces. Therefore, Dzhiayev added that, “we are pinning our hopes on Russia, but if no effect is forthcoming on its part, the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus could be such a force”.⁵⁶²

The last meeting of the Confederation related with the Osetian-Georgian conflict was held in Ingushetian town Jeyrakh on 29 June. At the end of the Parliament’s sitting, Shanibov issued a statement on the Dagomys agreement, on an outline peace plan for the Georgian-Osetian conflict, and on the latest events in the region.⁵⁶³ He expressed Confederation’s concern that the armed confrontation could lead to a deterioration of the situation throughout the Caucasus. And the

⁵⁶⁰ “North Osetia Blocks Passage of Caucasus detachments to South Osetia,” *SWB SU/1392, B/11*, 28 May 1992.

⁵⁶¹ The first units of the peacekeeping forces entered the conflict zone on 14 July 1992. Also see Suzanne Crow, 18 September 1992. “The Theory and Practice of Peacekeeping in the former USSR,” *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1(37): 33.

⁵⁶² “South Osetian Foreign Minister Interviewed on results of Dagomys meeting,” *SWB SU/1422, B/9*, 2 July 1992.

⁵⁶³ “Caucasus Parliament Meets to Discuss North and South Osetia,” *SWB SU/1423, B/2*, 3 July 1992.

Confederation's most concrete solution was deploying the Confederation's troops in peacekeeping role in South Osetia.

Despite the Confederation's belief of its success, after the Dagomys agreement, a relatively benign atmosphere facilitated between the Osetians and Georgians and of course Russians. Especially by the beginning of the Abkhaz conflict this process gained momentum and the links between the Osetians and the Confederation gradually weakened. The conflict between the Osetians and the Ingush then strengthened this split and from the end of 1992, "historical strains in the relationship between the Osetians and the peoples of the North Caucasus come to the fore".⁵⁶⁴ In other words, by the Russian intervention to the conflict and the Osetian preference towards Moscow evaporated the mood of cooperation and unity of the period of 1989-1991. Nevertheless, the Georgians attacked to Abkhazia and the relatively calm situation in the South Osetia forced the Confederation to turn its all activities to Abkhazia.

2- The Ingush-Osetian Problem.⁵⁶⁵

The basic reason of the clashes between the Ingush and the Osetians, the only incidence of large-scale inter-communal violence within the Russian Federation, was the dispute over the question of who should control the

⁵⁶⁴ Jonathan Aves, 1996. *Georgia from Chaos to Stability?* London: n.p., 35.

⁵⁶⁵ For the detailed account see, Olga Osipova, 1997. "North Osetia and Ingushetia: The First Clash," in Alexei Arbatov and et al. *Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union: Russian and American Perspectives*, Cambridge: 27-82; Julian Birch, "Osetia: a Caucasian Bosnia in Microcosm," *Central Asian Survey*, 14(1): 52-68; and "Osetiya –land of Uncertain Frontiers and Manipulative Elites," *Central Asian Survey*, 18(4): 512-528; Felix Corley, 1994. "The Ingush-Osetian Conflict," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September, 401-403.

Prigorodnyi *rayon* and the east of the Vladikavkaz in the North Osetian republic – the Ingush or the Osetians.

Of the two peoples, by the Caucasian standards, the ancestors of the Ingush certainly earlier inhabited the North Caucasus, long predating the arrival of the Osetians. The latter arrived in the northern part of Osetia in around the 6th century AD. Both of these peoples also divergent from the religious side; the Ingush were converted to Islam in the course of the 1860s, while the Osetians, to a considerable extent converted to Christianity under the Russian influence, though there have been a significant number of Muslim Osetians. Nevertheless, despite the existence of the tensions, the emergence of clashes between these peoples was relatively new. It basically was a result of the repeated recurving of boundaries in compliance with the Soviet divide-and-rule policy. Beyond that, the absence of clear and effective political structures and the general stability caused the intensification.

After 13 years of exile, the Ingush were rehabilitated in 1957 by the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR after the death of Stalin and the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic was reinstated but the Prigorodnyi was not included in the restored territory. However, some returnees went back to their houses in Prigorodnyi only to find their lands and houses occupied by Osetians and others; the scenario for the future conflicts was thus prepared. A series of protests by the Ingush throughout 1970s and 1980s were met by the Osetians with both officially sponsored and unofficial countermeasures in areas such as housing allocation on jobs, as well as periodic curfews when small scale clashes occurred.

When the Supreme Soviet of the SU adopted the decree “On the Recognition as Illegal and Criminal of All Acts Against the Peoples who have

Suffered Forced Resettlement, and on Safeguarding their Rights” in November 1989, the Ingush had already revealed their demands by several occasions.⁵⁶⁶ Later on, in late March 1990, as a response to those Ingush claims, the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet set up a commission, called Belyakov Commission, in order to investigate the claims of the Ingush for the land. Nine months later, it concluded that the Ingush claim was well founded, and that the Prigorodnyi ought to be restored to the Chechen-Ingush ASSR from the North Osetian ASSR. It also requested the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR to take the matter on its agenda.⁵⁶⁷

During 1990 and 1991, however, the situation became more complex. In the first place a split emerged between the Chechens and the Ingush. While Chechens were moving towards independence, the Ingush were still looking at Moscow for support in the conflict with the Osetians. Nevertheless, the growing weakness of the central government in Moscow and its apparent inability to stop the riot only complicated this dangerous situation.

⁵⁶⁶ In the course of 1988 and 1989, Ingush population via a powerful socio-political movement called *Niiskho* (Justice) that was based on national traditions and supported by the clergy and the Council of Elders –the heads of the clans (*teips*)- activated social mobilization among the Ingush. “...*Niiskho* called the first Congress of the Ingush people and made an appeal to the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Soviet government to partition the Chechen-Ingushetian Republic and restore the Ingushetian Republic to its 1924-34 boundaries, which would include the Malgobek, Nazran, Sunzha, and Prigorodnyi districts. In addition to that, the Ingush collected some 60.000 signatures on petitions in support of Ingush autonomy, and on 29 May 1989 an Ingush deputy to the Congress of People’s Deputies in Moscow similarly declared out essential to their culture and economic development.” In September 1989, a second Ingush congress in Grozny, also took up this appeal once more and reaffirmed that the Prigorodnyi was an unalienable part of Ingushetia, while advocating the re-establishment of a separate Ingush territorial entity, apart from the Chechen-Ingush ASSR.

⁵⁶⁷ See Cornell *Small Nations*, 412 and Zverev, “Ethnic Conflicts,” 63.

Further clashes occurred in March and April 1991, when the armed Ingush tried to take over Osetians' houses in Prigorodnyi. In response, the North Osetian Supreme Soviet declared a state of emergency in the district and instituted a curfew, document checks, confiscation of illegal weapons and the demolition of dwellings built illegally by the Ingush who did not have residence permits (*propiska*) in mid-April.

Nevertheless, the Russian Supreme Soviet's "Law on the Rehabilitation of Peoples Subjected to Repression" dated 26 April 1991 gave a new departure point for the Ingush for insisting their claims on a legal basis. The Ingush deputies to the Supreme Soviet were among those who lobbied heavily for the law, the Osetian deputies seldom attended the sittings and failed to take part in the debate. From then on, the Ingush justified their claims to Prigorodnyi by articles 3 and 6. Article 6 indicated that former territories of the peoples involved would be restored. During a visit to the area in September 1991, Yeltsin also hinted Russian support to the Ingush territorial claims. Moreover, the Ingush in order to secure Russian support, complied with the Russian desire and did not take part in the Chechen-Ingush Republic's elections. In contrast to the Chechen declaration of independence, they held their own referendum in November 1991 and overwhelmingly supported the establishment of a separate Ingush Republic within the Russian Federation including the Prigorodnyi.

While the Ingush received some encouragement from these developments, the North Osetians acted to protect their own interests by imposing state of emergency in December 1991, following an Ingush attack on a special police unit. This situation was to remain unaltered right up to the events of October 1992. In

October, they also took advantage of the Ingush weakness and created a National Guard of around 5,000 men, equipped with 20 armoured vehicles.

3- The Conflict and the Confederation:

The Ingush were among the founding members of the Assembly, but they did not take part in the establishment of the Confederation. In contrast, the Osetians were the founding members of the Confederation. The Confederation's role has been minor in this conflict, however it is important to note that, it could actually have been used as an institutional framework to find a solution to the Prigorodnyi conflict, as Russian mediation was unlikely to be objective and disinterested. As it is pointed out by Cornell, the Confederation set up a committee to find a solution to the conflict and also proposed replacing the Russian peacekeeping forces with a joint North Caucasian force, an idea that has been favourably viewed by most North Caucasians, and indeed by the Ingush. Although the North Osetian side may prefer Russian mediation or rather no mediation at all, given the fact that it was the only Christian member of the organization and the closest to Russia, the Confederation was an option that was understood in the quest for a resolution.⁵⁶⁸

The Assembly and later the Confederation, closely interested in the events in Ingushetia and the clashes between its member peoples. Following the Ingush referendum and the increasing tensions with possibility of armed clashes, the Confederation in its parliamentary meeting called for a moratorium on 15 December 1991. With this moratorium the Confederation proposed a peaceful

solution to the dispute with the support of the Ingush and Osetians. The Confederation, later repeated this call once more on 28 February 1992 in Grozny. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was collapsed, and throughout the early months of 1992, the war of words between the North Osetia and the Ingush escalated without any larger disturbances.

On 4 June 1992 the Ingush Republic was founded by a Russian Supreme Soviet decree which was to consist of three rural districts -Nazran, Malgobek, and Sunzha- with no defined borders, and no state institutions or administrative bodies of any kind. The sole decision-making authority rested with President Yeltsin's representative in the republic, Isa Kostoyev, a former official in the Russian Procurator General's Office. With this decree the transitional phase ranging until March 1994 was proposed to resolve all the questions related to it, including administrative issues but mainly its territorial delimitation. In a meeting in Nazran, the Ingush, including the representatives from Prigorodnyi, welcomed the new law, but declared that any such republic without Prigorodnyi would be unacceptable, and called for a congress of the Ingush people. In that power vacuum, the rural councils and tribal leadership played a symbolic role early on and to some degree filled in the gaps left by the absence of government structures. Nevertheless, the other group with any real authority in Ingush Republic at the time of the republic's creation was religious organizations.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁸ Cornell, *Small Nations.*, 262.

⁵⁶⁹ Osipova, "North Osetia and Ingushetia," 51-52.

In the meantime, the Confederation was still working on the issue and in order to discuss the developments in the North Osetia, the Parliament and the Presidential Council called a meeting in the town of Jeyrakh, in a mountain region of Ingushetia.⁵⁷⁰

In this meeting, the Confederation offered the sides of the conflict taking a decision, which excludes the use of force on the solution of the land dispute. As a result, the solution to the problem of the partition of the disputed lands would be postponed and the eruption of the military confrontation (by the active participation of the Russians) would be obstructed for a time. On this way, the representatives from North Osetia, by the approval of the President of the North Osetian Supreme Soviet, put forward a package of proposals that was met with, after the intensive pressures from the Confederation, understanding by the Ingush side.⁵⁷¹

According to the proposals, the North Osetian Supreme Soviet and the government would prepare for the return of Ingush people who lived on the republic's territory prior to their eviction in 1944 to their homes. The names of the settlements would reinstitute as they were in the pre-deportation period. The homes that were occupied by the Osetians or the representatives of other peoples at that time would be given back to the Ingush people. And, these peoples would pay compensation and give help to built shelters in any other region, at their own discretion, or they will be granted flats. The cemeteries belong to the Ingush that were damaged will be restored. North Osetia was prepared to help with the

⁵⁷⁰ Şenibe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 53 and "Caucasian Parliament Meets to Discuss North and South Osetia," *SWB SU/1423, B/2*, 3 July 1992.

⁵⁷¹ Şenibe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 53.

publication of newspapers in the Ingush language and with the transmission of signals from the television station in Grozny.

The main thing –once the state bodies of Ingush republic would set up, the Osetian side was ready to sit down at the negotiating table with official representatives of the authorities of Ingushetia to resolve territorial disputes. In order not to waste any time, the Confederation Parliament proposed convocation of urgent meeting, with the participation of legal and political experts and representatives of the elders and socio-political movements of the peoples concerned.⁵⁷²

However, the difficulties in resolving the question of territorial rehabilitation for the Ingush soon became clear, and once again, as a result of “the active Russian participation” the Osetian side violated the agreement.⁵⁷³ On 3 July 1992, the Russian Supreme Soviet announced a moratorium on raising the territorial problems until 1995, and criminal penalties were established for any unauthorised changes in territorial borders.⁵⁷⁴

In the case of Ingush, this understood as move to prevent elections within a defined territory for the new autonomous republic’s parliament and thus prevented the setting up of both legislative and administrative structures. Thus, the provisional administration of the Russian parliament, under plenipotentiary representative General Viktor Yermakov was to remain in July 1992 up to the outbreak of the conflict in October.

⁵⁷² “Caucasian Parliament Meets to Discuss North and South Osetia,” *SWB SU/1423, B/2*, 3 July 1992.

⁵⁷³ Şenibe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 53.

By October 1992, the two sides were ready to clash. The Ingush centered their emphasis on two aspects: in the first place that the North Osetia had ignored the law on the rehabilitation of deported peoples by their restrictions on the registration of Ingush as permanent residents; by their bans on the buying and selling of houses; and by their imposition of repressive states of emergency in both Prigorodnyi and Malgobeksky *rayons*. They had also another new grievance: Osetian ignorance of the law on creation of an Ingush republic within the Russian Federation.

The North Osetians had their own emphasis, in direct contrast to Ingush. They claimed that the Ingush had been stockpiling weapons in preparation for an armed confrontations; that their sovereign territory was not merely threatened from within by Ingush resettlers but likely to be attacked from without, i.e. from Ingush. As tensions rose between two communities, Osetians began to flee from Prigorodnyi to Vladikavkaz and Ingush to Ingushetia. The scene was thus set for tragedy.

In October the clashes erupted. On 20 October 1992, a gas pipeline passing through the Prigorodnyi was blown up and an armoured personnel carrier of the Osetian militia crushed 12 year-old Ingush girl. During the same period, several Ingush were killed on the territory of North Osetia. On 23 October, crossfire between the Ingush and Osetian militia in the village of Yuzhnyi was the beginning of the intensive armed clashes. Then, a committee for directing the region, named as the Ingush Coordinating Council, formed in Prigorodnyi and decided to organize

⁵⁷⁴ Osipova, "North Osetia and Ingushetia," 51-52.

self-defense units to patrol Ingush settlements on 24 October. Coordinating Council appealed to the Caucasian peoples and to the Confederation with a request for assistance in attaining the immediate return of Prigorodnyi rayon to Ingushetia.⁵⁷⁵

The North Osetian leadership interpreted the creation of this body as an encroachment on the republic's legitimate authority and the attempts at talks between the two sides quickly broke down and matters went from bad to worse.

On 26 October 1992, the Russian Parliament's leadership recommended a mixed Osetian-Ingush committee to work out a negotiated solution to the crisis, and Russian Supreme Soviet Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov sent a telegram to the North Osetian authorities asking them not to use force. Similar telegrams arrived in Vladikavkaz from all North Caucasian republics and the Confederation.⁵⁷⁶

Talks between the Coordinating Council, representatives of the administration from Nazran and the leadership of North Osetia did not prevent the explosion. It was then that the conflict moved into its acute phase. After a mass meeting was staged in Nazran, which initiated a more or less spontaneous armed march on the Prigorodnyi, the Ingush subsequently took control of most of the Prigorodnyi, and marched on Vladikavkaz.⁵⁷⁷

On 31 October 1992, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Georgi Khizha (at the same time he was the head of the inter-regional commission of the Russian Federation) with around 3,000 Russian special purpose troops went to Vladikavkaz

⁵⁷⁵ "Ingush leader calls for direct presidential rule," *SWB, SU/1525 B/6*, 30 October 1992.

⁵⁷⁶ "North Osetian Parliament Calls on Ingush to Remove Road Blocks," *SWB, SU/1527 B/1*, 2 November 1992.

⁵⁷⁷ Svante E. Cornell, "Conflicts in the North Caucasus," *Central Asian Survey*, 17(3): 414-5.

in order to “restore law and order”.⁵⁷⁸ A state of emergency was introduced on the territories of the North Osetian Republic and Ingushetia and a decree was issued by President Yeltsin to enforce the actions of the troops on 2 November.⁵⁷⁹ More than that, with that decree Russian government set up a special interim administration for those districts and headquartered it in Vladikavkaz. Georgi Khizha was appointed head of this interim administration.⁵⁸⁰ The Russian “peace-forces” did not stop at controlling the Prigorodnyi. Within a few days, they moved into Ingush proper, and by 10 November they had reached the (still undemarcated) border between Chechnya and Ingushetia.⁵⁸¹

While the clashes between the component parts of the Confederation were on going, the Confederation has also been practicing a crucial transformation within itself. The Georgian aggression towards Abkhazia; Moscow’s move to investigate the Confederation; and the arrest of its president caused the major disturbances and demonstrations all around the Caucasus.

Within this atmosphere, the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus renamed itself as the Confederation of the Caucasian Peoples (CCP)

⁵⁷⁸ “Russian Troops Attempt to Separate Warring Sides in North Osetia,” *SWB SU/1527 B/2*, 2 November 1992.

⁵⁷⁹ “Yeltsin Imposes State of Emergency in crisis region,” *SWB SU/1528 B/5*, 3 November 1992.

⁵⁸⁰ The interim administration was created by the edict of the president of the Russian Federation of 2nd November 1992, No.1327. “On introduction of a state of emergency on the territory of the North Osetian SSR and the Ingush republic” on the basis of articles 15, 16, and 17 of the RSFSR law of 17 May 1991, “on a State of Emergency”. For the “Text of Interim Administration Statute on North Osetia and Ingushetia,” see, *SWB SU/1542 B/1-2*, 19 November 1992. Osipova, *ibid.*, p.52. The head of the Interim Administration had been changed several times: Sergei Shakrai (Nov.92), Alexander Kotenkov (end of 92), Yuri Shatalin (March 93), Viktor Polyanichko (1 July), and Vladimir Lozovoi. Then in 1995, this interim administration became the Interim Committee for the Elimination of the Consequences of the Oset-Ingush Conflict and in 1996 it was transformed into the office of the Presidential Representative.

⁵⁸¹ Cornell, “Conflicts in the North Caucasus,” 415.

(*Konfederatsiia Narodov Kavkaza*) in its emergency congress held in Grozny on 4-5 October 1992.

In its first meeting in Grozny on 17-18 October 1992, the renamed Confederation discussed the clashes between the Ingush and Osetians. In that meeting North Osetia was described as the ‘spine’ of Russia in the region. That is to say, it was a republic that could easily change the political balance in the region.⁵⁸² From then on, Osetians diverted their path towards Moscow and the relation between the Confederation and the Osetians started to become tense.

Following the intensification of the strife among the Ingush and Osetians, Chechen Republic’s parliament held an emergency sitting in Grozny on 1 November. “It is supposed to propose to make the peacemaking activity of the CCP in solving the conflict more active.”⁵⁸³ The leading figures of the Confederation also took in part at that sitting of the Chechen parliament, and Musa Shanibov declared that the clashes between the Osetians and Ingush in the Prigorodnyi region of North Osetia were “the greatest misfortune which could happen in the Northern Caucasus.” He underlined that the CCP would insist on urgent stopping of bloodshed and sacking of all disputable issues between the Osetians and Ingush by peaceful political means.⁵⁸⁴ In addition, Yusup Soslambekov, the head of the Confederation Parliament, declared that the Confederation was not going to join

⁵⁸² “Kendimizden Başka Kimse Bize Yardımcı Olmayacaktır,” January 1993. *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, 11: 8-9.

⁵⁸³ “Chechnia rules out involvement in Osetian-Ingush Conflict,” *SWB SU/1528, B/5*, 3 November 1992.

⁵⁸⁴ Chechnia rules out involvement in Osetian-Ingush Conflict,” *SWB SU/1528, B/5*, 3 November 1992.

either North Osetia or Ingushetia in their conflict, but would “play peacemaking role to immediately stop this armed conflict”.

According to the participants of the session, the main burden was on “the empire forces of Russia and Georgia”. Shanibov accused Russia and Georgia for establishing serious contacts with North Osetia and Ingushetia, respectively. The conflict has become a burning point, which distracts the Confederation forces from confrontation in Abkhazia, Shanibov pointed out, “that is why Georgia is interested in this conflict.”⁵⁸⁵

In those days, the main concern of the Chechen and Confederation leaders was preventing the spread of the clashes and advance of the Russian troops to the Chechen proper. Therefore, in order to mollify the Russian military circles, they oftenly denied reports that Chechen regiments were moving towards Vladikavkaz to support the Ingush. Soslambekov said that not a single volunteer of the Confederation would appear in the zone of the Osetian-Ingush conflict and added that “in the whole history of the Chechen and Osetian peoples they had never fought against each other and that this would not happen now, either.”⁵⁸⁶

In fact, an Ingush delegation from the Prigorodnyi arrived to Grozny in the very early days of the conflict, on 31 October 1992 and asked for a support, especially for the arms. In addition, the Ingush expressed their hope that the Confederation and all “sound forces of the region” would be on their side.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁵ Şenibe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 53-4.

⁵⁸⁶ “Chechnia rules out involvement in Osetian-Ingush Conflict,” *SWB SU/1528, B/5*, 3 November 1992.

⁵⁸⁷ “Grozny TV calls on Chechens to share arms with Ingush,” *SWB SU/1527, B/3*, 2 November 1992.

Beyond the rumours that the Chechen and Confederation's armed formations have left Grozny for the Osetian-Ingush conflict area, the attitudes of both sides was much more different.

During the aforementioned emergency session of the Chechen Parliament, the overwhelming majority of deputies spoke out against Chechnya's involvement in armed conflict. Moreover, they insisted that the Chechen mass media would not publish any propaganda on participation of volunteers in the conflict. The parliamentarians spoke out for strengthening of guard of military units to prevent seizure of arms by the Ingush.⁵⁸⁸

On 9 November, when the Russian troops had already reached the still undemarcated border between Chechnya and Ingushetia, Musa Shanibov demanded the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the zone of the Osetian-Ingush conflict. He pointed out that "following the withdrawal, we shall solve the problem within a month through negotiations". He further added that the Russian authorities should stop their interference in the affairs of the Caucasus, particularly in the affairs of the Ingush and Osetians.⁵⁸⁹

On 10 November 1992, Russian troops entered into the territory of Ingushetia and by evening they were in control of the situation. They reached undefined Chechen-Ingush border and occupied some of Chechen territory. Chechen Republic was not late to react and declared a state of emergency in the

⁵⁸⁸ "Chechnia rules out involvement in Osetian-Ingush Conflict," *SWB SU/1528, B/5*, 3 November 1992

⁵⁸⁹ "Shanibov demands withdrawal of Russian troops," *SWB SU/1535, B/3*, 11 November 1992.

republic. In connection with this Dudayev issued an ultimatum demanding that the Russian troops be withdrawn beyond the borders of the Chechen Republic.⁵⁹⁰

The possibility of the diffusion of the armed clashes to the entire North Caucasus made the atmosphere more delicate and the Confederation quickly intervened. Musa Shanibov tried to appease the situation by saying panic caused by the introduction of Russian troops in Ingushetia was needless, and evaluated the situation which has come about “resulted from the fact that Ingush leaders, laying claims to a part of Chechen territory, gave wrong information to Russian military on the border between Chechnya and Ingushetia”.⁵⁹¹ As a result, Russian troops, which were “misled”, occupied some settlements of Chechnya. However, yet, as a security move, the chairman of the Confederation ordered the partial mobilization of the entire territory of the CCP.⁵⁹² Within the same day, on 10 November 1992, the representatives of the Chechen government and the Ingush side signed a protocol in Nazran. According to the protocol, until the formation of power structures in the Ingush Republic, the border between the two republics was recognized as being the line separating them up to their union in one autonomous entity in the year 1934. On the basis of this agreement, the Russian tanks started to leave the disputed regions on 11 November.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹⁰ “Russian troops enter Ingushetia; Dudayev demands they withdraw from Chechnia,” *SWB SU/1536 B/1-2*, 12 November 1992.

⁵⁹¹ In fact there is no clear border between Chechnia and Ingushetia exists. Russian troops were occupied Sunzhenskiy and a part of Malgobekskiy rayons and Chechens stated that those regions have never been a part of Ingushetia, and they have always belonged to Chechnia.

⁵⁹² “Head of Confederation of Mountain Peoples accuses Ingush of misinforming Russia,” *SWB SU/1537, B/4*, 13 November 1992.

⁵⁹³ “Gaydar in Nazran: Russian troops to withdraw from border area,” *SWB SU/1537 B/2-3*, 13 November 1992. On 16 November, Russia and Chechen republic were reached an agreement on troop withdrawals with the participation of Yusup Soslambekov, see “Chechnia and Russia reach agreement on withdrawing troops,” *SWB SU/1540 B/1*, 17 November 1992 and “Agreement reached between Russia and Chechnia on troop withdrawals,” *SWB SU/1541 i*, 18 November 1992.

The agreement and the restraint of Russia and Chechen republic in the Ingush-Osetian conflict took positive reactions from the Confederation's side. Musa Shanibov commented on that and declared that "it may be that this is the first step towards changing Russian policy in the Caucasus".⁵⁹⁴

After failing to stop the Ingush side and to impede the entrance of Russian forces into the region, which were invited by North Osetia, the Confederation's attitude toward the Ingush became of particular importance. Indeed, there already was a deterioration of relations between the two.⁵⁹⁵ Confederation assessed the introduction of the Russian troops in North Caucasus, specifically Ingushetia, as a result of the wrong actions of the Ingush leaders. A member of the parliament of the CCP told that:

"the next session of the parliament would discuss the possibility of expelling Ingushetia because it had concealed its preparations for an armed attack on North Osetia. It's now clear why there is not a single Ingush in the confederation volunteer units in Abkhazia".⁵⁹⁶

In addition to that, Haji Murat Ibrahimbeyli, Chairman of the Committee on Interethnic Accord of the CCP evaluated the Ingush demands for the return of Prigorodnyi *rayon* as the just demands. However, he added that, the Ingush leaders were to be blamed for:

"expressing these demands in a frankly rude manner, whipping up hysteria at mass meetings in the months proceeding the catastrophe, and initiating the formation of forward-based armed detachments in the territory of the Prigorodnyi Raion."⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁴ "Shanibov welcomes restraint of Russia and Chechnia," *SWB SU/1547 B/6*, 25 November 1992

⁵⁹⁵ Oğuz, "the Unity," 136-7.

⁵⁹⁶ "Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus to consider expelling Ingushetia," *SWB SU/1540, B/3* 17 November 1992.

⁵⁹⁷ Zverev, "Ethnic Conflicts," 60.

The North Osetian side has also reacted negatively towards the Confederation, as opposed to the positive attitudes during the South Osetian-Georgian discord. Akhsarbek Galazov turned down the proposal by the leaders of the CCP to replace Russian peacekeeping force by confederation units. He said that North Osetia was a sovereign republic within the framework of Russia (even it was still a member of the confederation) and confederation units' presence on its territory would mean interference in the internal affairs of both Russia and North Osetia, and the consequences of this action may aggravate the situation.⁵⁹⁸

By the Russian intervention, the conflict although the lack of armed clashes, turned into a protracted one rather than abated. Moreover, the impact of this conflict, however, went beyond the two peoples involved. Russians, beyond the permanent military presence, re-established total control over the North Caucasus by controlling this central part of the region. And, in addition to the Confederation's failed attempt to find solutions for the conflict, the newly established Russian organizations began to emerge and assumed the task of facilitating a dialogue between the Ingush and Osetians.

The clash, of course, had also negative consequences for both of the Ingush and the Osetians. For the Ingush, at the end of 1992, they were left in a far worse position than previous one. They lost most of their substantial foothold in Prigorodnyi, as well as many lives and livelihoods. For the Osetians, most of their population that were living in Prigorodnyi became the victims of an uprising and

⁵⁹⁸ "North Osetian speaker dismisses Caucasian Confederation offer to send troops," *SWB SU/1553 B/9* 2 December 1992.

attacked by the Ingush. And, both of the peoples faced with a new phenomenon emerged as a serious problem for the peoples of the North Caucasus: the refugee problem.

Beyond that, as the most destructive consequence, the conflict, to a great extent, ruined the unity of the North Caucasian peoples that was institutionalized in the Confederation. As Shanibov stressed it direct confrontation among the two of its component parts caused a serious damage on the prestige of the Confederation, and resulted with a terrible moral defeat on the Confederation's work. The Confederation's intention to work, as a peacemaking and peacekeeping entity, has been blocked by its own constituent members, and as a result, considerably reduced the power of the Confederation.⁵⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the existence of a new conflict, at that time with an outside power, namely Georgia, did cause a dead blow to the Confederation, and, all the attention was turned toward Abkhazia.

4- The Abkhaz-Georgian conflict:⁶⁰⁰

Abkhazia had always been the Achilles heel of the Caucasian unity in 1990s and as it was stressed several times by the leaders of the Assembly and the

⁵⁹⁹ Şenibe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 54.

⁶⁰⁰ For the Abkhaz-Georgian dispute see B.G. Hewitt, "Abkhazia: a problem of identity and ownership," *Central Asian Survey*, 12(3): 267-323 and in *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, John F.R. and et. al., eds., 1996. London: 190-225. Gueorgui Otyrba, "War in Abkhazia: The Regional Significance of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict," in Roman Szporluk ed., 1994. *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, New York: 281-309; B. Coppieters, *Georgians and Abkhazians: The Search for a Peace Settlement*, available from the Internet: www.vub.ac.be/polit/publi/; Stanislav Lakoba, "Abkhazia is Abkhazia," *Central Asian Survey*, 14(1): 97-106. John Colarusso, "Abkhazia," *Central Asian Survey*, 14(1): 75-96.

Confederation, the peoples of the North Caucasus and even the other small peoples of the former Soviet Union saw their destiny in the fate of Abkhazia. By helping the struggle of Abkhazia, the peoples of the North Caucasus gained a sense of regional identity and the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus acquired an immediate and concrete task true to the meaning of its existence.

As it was in the case of South Osetia, the Abkhaz strongly opposed the emerging nationalist policies and actions of the Georgians, and in return to the election of Zviad Gamsakhurdia as the President of the Republic of Georgia in October 1990, they elected an Abkhaz nationalist, Vladislav Ardzinba to the chairman of the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet.

Again similar to the South Osetian case, a major catalyst of tensions was the March 1991 all-union referendum. The Abkhaz, despite the existence of Georgian threats, took part in all-union referendum and voted in favour of the preservation of the union. Then, while the Georgia had declared its secession from the Soviet Union and independence on 9 April 1991, the Abkhaz, in response, declared their intent to become the part of the Soviet Union.

During the course of the last months of 1991, the parties mainly negotiated on the proposal of the Abkhaz for the two-chamber parliament for Abkhazia. Despite the opposition from the Georgian side, the Abkhaz organized elections in October and December 1991 for this parliament. However, within the months, the parliament was paralyzed owing to the formation of two blocks: that of the Georgian deputies on the one side and the other ethnic groups' deputies on the other. The Georgian deputies repeatedly rejected decisions that were taken by a

majority of votes. These disagreements led to a walkout by Georgian deputies who continued to meet in separate quarters.

During this chaos, inter-Georgian tensions increased and descended into open warfare in Tiflis over the period of the last days of 1991 and the beginning of 1992. An elected president Zviad Gamsakhurdia fled to Chechnya and the Military Council of Sigua-Kitovani-Ioseliani was set up. Then in March 1992, Shevardnadze was brought in Tiflis and quickly made head of State Council, which run Georgia until the elections on 11 October 1992. The arrival of Shevardnadze obtained international recognition of Georgia, which implied the recognition of the borders, claimed by that country's government and therefore the inclusion of Abkhazia in its territory.

Meanwhile following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia proceeded to adopt its constitution of 1921, which made no reference to Abkhazia. The Abkhaz saw the adoption of this constitution together with the earlier nullification of its borders with Georgia, as a further downgrading of its already intolerable status.

In June 1992, president Ardzinba of Abkhazia sent a draft treaty to the Georgian State Council in which a federative or confederative solution to the problem was suggested, which would safeguard Georgia's territorial integrity. The draft contained provisions for the guarantee of the rights of all minorities in the territories under the Abkhazian and Georgian jurisdiction, and for rejection of the use of military force to resolve differences. The Georgian leadership nevertheless did not reply.

The Abkhaz retaliated by reinstating the 1925 constitution of Abkhazia, which defined Abkhazia as independent but “united with the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia on the basis of special union treaty.” Thus in practice Abkhazia declared its independence. But such a decision required a simple majority for the ratification by the Abkhazian Parliament. The Georgian members of the Abkhazian Parliament didn’t take part in this decision and started a campaign of civil disobedience.⁶⁰¹ The State Council of Georgia, at the same time declared this decision null and void, on 25 July.

While, in compliance with the appeal of the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet dated 12 August, the negotiations on the future federative relations between Abkhazia and Georgia went on in Sukhum, the Georgian troops commanded by Tengiz Kitovani crossed into the Abkhazia on 14 August 1992. On that day, the Abkhazian parliament also was scheduled to discuss the draft treaty proposed to the Georgian State Council. The official reason for sending troops was to put an end to ongoing sabotage and looting, particularly on the railway line, and to search for, and free Georgian officials kidnapped by supporters of ousted Georgian president Gamsakhurdia.⁶⁰²

Within four days, Georgian troops commanded by Kitovani, Ioseliani and Karkarashvili entered Sukhum. Because of the surprise attack, Abkhazian National Guard failed to oppose and, as a result, Ardzinba’s government withdrew to

⁶⁰¹ The Abkhazian parliament had been deadlocked by prior efforts to institute a repatriation program of Diaspora Abkhaz, similar to one begun in the Circassian republics in June 1991 for Diaspora Circassians.

⁶⁰² The Georgian excuse to this move was the capture of hostages (11 responsible officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia) in Zugdidi and their transfer to Abkhazia. The Vice-Premier, Alexandr Kavsadze, captured earlier, was also taken there. 13 August was the deadline for the release of hostages.

Gudauta, a city in the northern Abkhazia. Within a week the Georgians were up to the Russian border and had the Abkhaz bottled up in three cities: Sukhum, Ochamchira, and Tkvarchel, with only a region around the Gudauta truly in Abkhaz control.

5- Confederation and the Abkhaz Conflict:

The Georgian assault to Abkhazia created a serious reaction among the peoples of the North Caucasus. First of all, most of the peoples remembered the “ethnic death of the Ubykh which loomed large in the minds of all North Caucasus as a symbol of oblivion” and they determined “not to sit back and watch this fate befall the Abkhaz.”⁶⁰³

The Confederation reacted to the conflict promptly and, the first volunteer troops under the command of the chairman of the Confederation Defence Committee Colonel Sultan Sosnaliev, arrived in Gudauta on 15 August 1992.⁶⁰⁴ All the other national front movements and public organisations around the North Caucasus including the Cossacks, as a response to the calls from the Confederation and the International Cherkess Association, under the slogan “Hands off Abkhazia!” started to organise committees for solidarity with Abkhazia. Meetings were held in Maykop, Cherkessk, Vladikavkaz, Makhachkale, Grozny, and Nalchik

⁶⁰³ Colarusso, 1995. “Abkhazia,” *Central Asian Survey*, 14(1): 83.

⁶⁰⁴ Şenibe, *Birliğin Zaferi*, 64-5.

and these centres were named as the relief centres to Abkhazia and volunteers started to gather.⁶⁰⁵

On 17 August 1992, at a two-day special 10th enlarged session of its parliament in Grozny, the Confederation drew up a platform of solidarity with Abkhazia. At the end of the session, the CMPC parliament adopted a decision that the dispatch of Georgian troops to Abkhazia was accepted as ‘armed aggression’. The Confederation demanded the withdrawal of the Georgian troops and declared that, if the Georgian troops were not withdrawn from Abkhazia within 3 days, that is 21 August and to provide compensation for the damage inflicted during the occupation, the Confederation would declare war on Georgia.⁶⁰⁶

In the beginning, this ultimatum was regarded in Tiflis as a bluff. President Shanibov, after seeing the Georgian refusal, however, signed a decree to all regional centres, on the start of hostilities on the territory of Abkhazia and Tiflis was declared a disaster zone on 21 August. The decree instructed the Confederation’s armed formations “to force their way” on to the territory of Abkhazia “by any means” and to “engage in hostilities if opposed by any forces”.⁶⁰⁷ Moreover, with this decree, the Confederation ordered the Georgians within the territories of the Confederation to be seized as prisoners of war. This

⁶⁰⁵ “Kabardin-Balkaria: Volunteers leave for Abkhazia,” *SWB SU/1463, B/3*, 19 August 1992; “Anti-Georgian meeting in Chechnia,” *SWB SU/1464, C1/2*, 20 August 1992; And, *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, quoted from *Qhuaze*’s issue dated 26 August in October 1992, 10: 15.

⁶⁰⁶ “Caucasian Confederation threatens war on Georgia: Dudayev refuses to arm,” *SWB SU/1465, C2/2*, 21 August 1992; “Anti-Georgian meeting in Chechnia,” *SWB SU/1464, C1/2*, 20 August 1992; and Zverev, “Ethnic Conflicts,” 50.

⁶⁰⁷ For the Russian and Turkish text of order (*ukaz*) dated 21 August see “Kafkas-Abhazya Direnişi (Belgeler)” October 1992. Document No: 20, *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, 10: 15 and for the English text, “Mountain Peoples to take Abkhazia by any Methods,” *SWB SU/1470, C1/1-2*, 27 August 1992. In addition see, “Confederation of Mountain Peoples urges volunteers to fight Georgia,” *SWB SU/1467, C2/3*, 24 August 1992.

decree had profound consequences over the peoples of the North Caucasus and the volunteers began to arrive in Abkhazia via mountain paths.⁶⁰⁸

The local authorities, much as they feared uncontrollable mass movements of North Caucasian peoples, could not stop the volunteers.⁶⁰⁹ However, in order to show their concern the issue and to control the population, the leaders of Adygea, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and North Osetian Republics, Krasnodar and Stavropol *Krais* and Rostov *oblast* held an extraordinary meeting in Armavir, Krasnodar, on 22 August 1992. At that meeting they blamed Georgia with causing the armed clashes and adopted an appeal to the Russian President. To submit this report to Moscow a special delegation was also formed.⁶¹⁰ Moreover it was decided to take urgent measures to provide humanitarian aid to the peoples of Abkhazia. In order to ensure security and cooperation in the North Caucasus, they also decided to form a permanent committee, consisting of the top leaders of the executive and legislative bodies of national-state and territorial formations.⁶¹¹

Such a turn of events was extremely unwelcome to the Georgian and Russian governments. Shevardnadze denied all responsibilities for the military

⁶⁰⁸ “Unarmed and armed volunteers going to Abkhazia,” *SWB SU/1467, C2/3*, 24 August 1992; “Mountain Peoples to take Abkhazia by any Methods,” *SWB SU/1470, C1/1-2*, 27 August 1992. In his press Conference in Moscow on 23 March 1993, Taraz Shamba, a leader of the *Aydgylara*, said, “380 people from the North Caucasian republics were fighting on the Abkhazian side. See “Over 700 Abkhaz had been killed and over 1200 wounded,” *SWB SU/1646, B/4*, 25 March 1993. At the height of the armed struggle the number of the Confederation troops was around 500, but for a “war” at that size it was a serious amount of force to change the course of the war.

⁶⁰⁹ “Adygey deputy leader warns that Moscow could alienate North Caucasian people,” *SWB SU/1469, C3/1-2*, 26 August 1992.

⁶¹⁰ This delegation meets with Russian Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoy in Moscow on 21 August and handed over their appeal to Yeltsin and Khasbulatov. See, “Rutskoy receives delegation from North Caucasus republics,” *SWB SU/1467, C2/2*, 24 August 1992

⁶¹¹ “Leaders of north Caucasian republics hold emergency meeting,” *SWB SU/1466, C2/3*, 22 August 1992.

action in Abkhazia and following the unsuccessful attack staged on Gadauta, the Georgian State Council, after its extraordinary session announced local mobilization of the reservists into the national army on 23 August.⁶¹²

Shevardnadze evaluated the above-mentioned decree of the Confederation as a declaration of war and urged the Russian authorities to take resolute measures. Otherwise, he said, “the events surrounding the situation in Abkhazia may grow a local conflict into a global confrontation.”⁶¹³

Thus, on 24 August, Shevardnadze and Yeltsin sum up the situation on a telephone conversation and decided to meet on 3 September 1992 in Moscow.⁶¹⁴ According to the Georgian State Council’s press service, “the two men condemned the activities of the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus which has announced its intention to defend the Abkhaz people.”⁶¹⁵ Shevardnadze defined the decisions and actions of the Confederation as a gross intervention into Georgia’s internal affairs and asked Yeltsin to take responsibility over the borders and to close them to the ‘armed gangs’ from the North Caucasus sneaking into the Georgian territory.⁶¹⁶

This conversation changed the course of Russian involvement in the war.⁶¹⁷

On 25 August, the Russian Federation Ministry of Justice issued a statement where

⁶¹² ‘State Council announces local mobilization,’ *SWB SU/1468, C1/1*, 25 August 1992.

⁶¹³ “Mountain Peoples advance: report military success,” *SWB SU/1469, C3/1* 26 August 1992..

⁶¹⁴ “Yeltsin and Shevardnadze talks on Abkhazia confirmed,” *SWB SU/1470, i*, 27 August 1992.

⁶¹⁵ “Yeltsin and Shevardnadze discuss situation in Abkhazia,” *SWB SU/1469, C3/3*, 26 August 1992.

⁶¹⁶ “Shevardnadze to meet Yeltsin: State Council considers Abkhazian situation,” *SWB SU/1470, C1/2-3*, 27 August 1992

⁶¹⁷ At the beginning of the crisis Moscow chose to remain passive. The Russian government just released a statement on 18th August calling on the peoples of the northern Caucasus to display patience and good sense and abstain from actions that can further destabilise the situation in the region. See, *SWB SU/1464, C1/2*, 20 August 1992. And then a delegation of Russian deputies, under the leadership of the Sergei Baburin visited region. But the position of the Baburin as an opposition leader had no positive effects on the government’s policies.

it declared that the actions of the Confederation were a gross violation of the constitution of the Russian Federation. The Ministry accused the Confederation of claiming the role of the legal bodies of state power. The Confederation's attempts to create a parliament, defence council and armed forces, the establishment of the post of commander-in-chief, the adoption of documents calling for the commission of terrorist acts were accepted as the proofs.⁶¹⁸ The investigation of the case was entrusted to the prosecutor's office investigation department. Investigation group, made up of officers from the ministries of Security and Internal Affairs, started to investigate the issue.⁶¹⁹ In addition, the acting prosecutor of Kabardino-Balkaria issued a statement addressing to the leadership of the Confederation where he stressed that the decree signed by the Confederation's leaders on 21 August declaring Tiflis a disaster zone is unlawful. He demanded the Confederation to cease its unlawful actions.⁶²⁰ Moreover, Russian internal troops and frontiersmen took the control of the frontier with Georgia and they established checkpoints and frontier posts to control the illegal crosses of borders.⁶²¹

While the judicial bodies of the Russian Federation were working on the legality of the decisions and actions of the Confederation, President Yeltsin convened a summit on Abkhazia on 3 September 1992 in Moscow. As a constructive response, Shanibov declared that from 1 to 4 September, the CMPC has stopped sending volunteers to Abkhazia. And, the result of the talks would be

⁶¹⁸ "Mountain Peoples acting outside the law according to Russian Justice Ministry," *SWB SU/1470, C1/2*, 27 August 1992.

⁶¹⁹ "Proceedings against Confederation of Mountain People instituted," *SWB SU/1471, C1/2*, 28 August 1992.

⁶²⁰ "Kabardin-Balkaria judiciary chief denounces Caucasus confederation," *SWB SU/1474, C1/1*, 1 September 1992.

litmus test for the Confederation's decision to continue sending the volunteers. Shaniboy, however, did not refrain to confess his pessimism over the course of the meeting.⁶²²

During the talks, Shevardnadze mainly criticised the role of 'mercenaries' of the Confederation in Abkhaz issue. In an interview he defined the Confederation as:

"on their merits, the actions of its leadership can only be described as international terrorism reeking of fascism. The Confederation is carrying out aggression and is interfering in our internal affairs from the territory of those republics. Radio transmitters coordinating combat operations in Abkhazia are operating over there. It is from there that gunmen come to murder our citizens and orders are issued to sow terror in our capital. And all Georgians who are citizens of those republics have been declared hostages."⁶²³

The Moscow meeting concluded with a stillborn agreement of 4 September under the signs of Yeltsin, Shevardnadze, Ardzinba, and the leaders of the *krays* and *oblasts* bordering the North Caucasus.⁶²⁴

The principal aspect of the agreement was the reaffirmation of the territorial integrity of Georgia. The implementation of a cease-fire on 5 September, disarming and withdrawal of illegal armed forces active in Abkhazia, and the reduction of the Georgian armed forces to a number sufficient to prevent the sabotage of railways and other important installations were also agreed. The agreement also provided for the resumption in Sukhum of governmental functions by legitimate authorities of

⁶²¹ "Volunteers from North Caucasus returning home from Abkhazia," *SWB SU/1478, C2/3*, 5 September 1992.

⁶²² "Mountain Peoples' Confederation seeks to unite Caucasus," *SWB SU/1477, C2/2*, 4 September 1992.

⁶²³ "Shevardnadze interviewed on unrest in Abkhazia," *SWB SU/1476, C1/3*, 3 September 1992.

⁶²⁴ For the full text of the agreement see, *SWB SU/1478, C2/1*, 5 September 1992.

Abkhazia by 15 September 1992, and called on the UN and CSCE to support the principles of the agreement.

Shevardnadze said, “if we do not manage to implement the accords that have been reached, the Caucasus will turn into a second Lebanon.”⁶²⁵ The cease-fire, however, was never fully implemented. The Georgian side blamed the Abkhaz for the lack of willingness to implement the agreement, and for attacking the positions vacated by the Georgian troops. In addition, Shevardnadze insisted on the attitudes of the volunteers of the Confederation. His main concern was the removal of those volunteers from Abkhazia. Therefore at the third round of negotiations which began, on 15 September in Adler, the Georgian side has set a ten-day grace to the Abkhazian leadership for the withdrawal of the volunteers of the Confederation. They warned the Abkhaz that, when the deadline expired, the military command would retain the right to ensure the withdrawal of the uncontrolled, illegal armed detachments from Abkhazia using all possible means.⁶²⁶

In response, the Abkhaz authorities stressed that the Georgians did not withdraw their troops as agreed and that they consistently violated the cease-fire. Later, Ardzinba clarified the issue of volunteers by saying “the withdrawal of confederation units is possible only after the forces of the State Committee leave Abkhazia.”⁶²⁷

⁶²⁵ “Press conference: Ardzinba expresses doubts about document,” *SWB SU/1478, C2/2*, 5 September 1992.

⁶²⁶ “Cease-fire agreed at meeting of control commission,” *SWB SU/1488, C1/1*, 17 September 1992.

⁶²⁷ “Abkhazian leader on need for cease-fire,” *SWB SU/1505, C1/2*, 7 October 1992.

In those days in order to pressurise the Confederation, the Russian authorities arrested Shanibov on 23 September.⁶²⁸ He had been accused of encouraging ‘international disharmony’ by signing a document on forming armed detachments to be sent to Abkhazia. Nevertheless, the demonstrations with the participation of thousands in late September in Nalchik⁶²⁹ forced Russians to turn a blind eye when Shanibov escaped arrest and appeared in Nalchik before the crowds on 28 September.⁶³⁰

Shanibov’s escape made the internal strife within the Russian Federation on the policies towards the North Caucasus more evident. While Yeltsin and Kozyrev were in favour of the policies for supporting Shevardnadze, the Russian Military and some other groups such as Sergei Baburin’s⁶³¹ were less inclined to pressurise Abkhazia in favor of Shevardnadze. In this context, Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee of Russian Parliament, Sergey Stepashin accused Russia’s

⁶²⁸ “Head of Caucasian Mountain Peoples under investigation,” *SWB SU/1495, i*, 25 September 1992.

⁶²⁹ “Demonstrations in Kabarda-Balkaria support mountainmen’s leader,” *SWB SU/1497, C2/2*, 28 September 1992. Following the deaths, the president of Kabardin-Balkaria, Valeriy Kokov introduced a state of emergency lasting for a period of two months on 27th September. But after the talks between government and the leaders of the Congress of the Kabardin People, this decree was suspended next day. See “State of emergency declared in Kabarda-Balkaria; Fighting continues,” *SWB SU/1498, B/4*, 29 September 1992.

⁶³⁰ Zverev, “Ethnic Conflicts,” 50-1. “Nalchik demonstration continues; situation relatively calm,” *SWB SU/1500, B/2*, 1 October 1992.

⁶³¹ Baburin was elected to the Russian Parliament in 1990 with the support of Democratic Russia movement. However, in the parliament he did not affiliate himself with the democrats and instead organised a fraction of deputies called “Russia”. Then in order to unite the nationalist-minded statist, he formed ROS Movement (*Rossiskaya Obschchenarodnogo Soyuz*) in October 1991. This organization blamed the forces that come to power in August 1991 for leading the country to social, economic, and geopolitical catastrophe. The program of the ROS called for organization of a new social force of civil patriotic unity to prevent this catastrophe and help the rebirth of Russia. In the autumn of 1992, his group joined the National Salvation Front (*Front Natsionalnogo Spaseniya*) which called for revolutionary overthrow of the “provisional occupation regime”.

law-enforcement agencies by acting abominably and, actually made it possible for Shanibov to flee from custody.⁶³²

Following the successful Abkhaz offensive with the support of the Confederation forces to Gagra in October, Kitovani clarified the Georgian State Council's position that Georgia must be a unitary state in which there was no place for any type of autonomous area. In a departure from his earlier position, on 3 December Shevardnadze stated before the Parliament that a peaceful solution to the conflict in Abkhazia was no longer possible, only the military means could solve the issue and that this would have to happen soon.

Most of the 1993 saw a military stand off with the two forces facing each other across the River Gumista, to the north of Sukhum. During which, the Abkhaz continued to consolidate their strength and positions over the early summer as Shevardnadze's troubles continued unabated in *Mingrelia*, and towards the end of July 1993, it looked as if just one more push was needed for them to take Tiflis.

In this period the support and the presence of the Confederation troops or the volunteers, which Georgians named as the 'mercenaries' was apparent. Shevardnadze, most of the time, blamed Russian 'military circles' of supporting the Abkhaz. In his official telegram to Yeltsin in March 1993 he stated that:

“particularly difficult situation had arisen after a number of actions were carried out in Abkhazia by forces known to Yeltsin. As a result thousands of Russian citizens acting as mercenaries and also acting Russian

⁶³² After the mid-1992, a policy shift occurred in Moscow, which has been described by Mohiaddin Mesbahi as a switch from a Euro-Atlanticist to a Euroasianist perspective. Russian policy turned back toward a conservative “Great Russian” approach. See, Mohiaddin Mesbahi (eds.), 1994. *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union: Domestic and International Dynamics*, Gainesville: University Press of California, and “Russian Foreign Policy and Security in Central Asia and the Caucasus,” 1993. *Central Asian Survey*, 12(2): 181-215.

servicemen had been directly involved in military actions against Georgia.”⁶³³

On 17 March 1993, the Georgian parliament adopted a law on mercenaries. According to this law henceforth criminal proceedings would be instituted against mercenaries who participated in the armed conflicts on the territory of Georgia. Terrorists would be deprived of their freedom for from 10 to 15 years or be shot, depending on the degree of their guilt.⁶³⁴

Despite the Georgian accusations, the Confederation, never did hesitate to declare its support to Abkhazia, but in all cases it openly and strongly rejected the Georgian pretensions of the Russian support to the Confederation. Because it seems probable that, with the help of Abkhazia, the Confederation recovered the lost prestige during the Osetian-Ingush conflict. After its success in Abkhazia, the Confederation engaged widespread support among the North Caucasian peoples. In addition to the inclusion of Akki, Dargin, Lezgi, Rutul, Karachays, Nogays, and Kumuks even the Cossacks participated in the work of the Confederation as observers.

This caused the increasing of the Russian interest towards the conflict and the North Caucasus in general. Despite the conclusion of a cease-fire in the Georgian-Russian summit in Moscow on 14 May 1993, the armed clashes intensified once more in July. On 2 July, the Abkhazian parliament asked Yeltsin to force the Georgian authorities to leave their forces from Abkhazia. At the same time it issued a call to Shanibov for help. Shamil Basayev, the Confederation’s

⁶³³ “Shevardnadze protests to Yeltsin on Abkhazia but says he would meet him,” *SWB SU/1641, B/10*, 19 March 1993.

⁶³⁴ “Georgian Parliament passes law on mercenaries,” *SWB SU/1642, B/19*, 20 March 1993.

troops commander in Abkhazia responded this call by ordering combat readiness in response to the escalation of combat operations on 4 July. The next day, at a session of its Presidential Council held in Nalcik, the Confederation announced a total mobilization of volunteers for fighting in Abkhazia against the Georgian troops.⁶³⁵

Thereupon, the press center of the Georgian parliament released a statement by the parliamentary collegium and express the hope that the peoples of the North Caucasus would not be provoked by any appeals and intervene to aggravate the conflict and pose a threat the whole Caucasus region.⁶³⁶

In addition, Shevardnadze described the Confederation's decision as a 'serious trouble'. Moreover with his special envoy Aleksandr Kavsadze (the chairman of the Georgian human rights and inter-ethnic relations committee), he sent a letter to the Russian Deputy Premier Shakhray, Foreign Minister Kozyrev, Security Minister Barannikov, and Procurator General Stepankov on 6 July. In this letter, he condemned the decisions of the Confederation and pointed out that "such actions by the confederation is nothing other than rude interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. Moreover, it is an undisguised aggression against Georgia." He appealed these Russian officials "to take all measures to stop the illegal infiltration of Russian citizens representing this organization as well as transportation of military equipment to the conflict zone, because a general Caucasian war is becoming a reality."⁶³⁷

⁶³⁵ "Caucasian peoples mobilize to fight for Abkhazia," *SWB SU/1734, B/7*, 7 July 1993.

⁶³⁶ "Confederation troops on alert; Georgia asks North Caucasus not to intervene," *SWB SU/1733, B/8*, 6 July 1993.

⁶³⁷ "Georgia appeals to Russia to halt forces from Caucasus Confederation," *SWB SU/1737, B/7*, 10 July 1993.

Interestingly, Shanibov denied the above-mentioned order of Basayev and said that the Confederation, its Parliament or the Presidential Council has never made any decision to create a Confederation force in Abkhazia. The volunteer activity, he said was resumed by the region's national democratic movements without the participation of the Confederation, and all the volunteer detachments were part of the Abkhazian army. The creation of a separate force under the title of the Confederation was, according to Shanibov, something undertaken by the volunteers themselves and was a testimony that the volunteer movement was running out of control.⁶³⁸

In contrast, in Shanibov's words, the Confederation's efforts aimed primarily at mobilizing the public opinion in the Russian Federation, Georgia, and the entire Caucasus to prevent a further deepening of the armed conflict in Abkhazia. Moreover, he stressed once more that "we do not control the volunteers' movement, because this mechanism is acting without us."⁶³⁹ This was the first concrete sign of a discord among the leaders of the Confederation.

On 7-8 July, the Abkhaz forces reinforced with the North Caucasian volunteers attacked from the sea on Sukhum. The Russian authorities protested the Confederation and for the first time they declared that the cooperation between the Russia's federal bodies and the Confederation was impossible. The warring parties, hoping to avoid further casualties and under strong pressures from Moscow agreed

⁶³⁸ "President of Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus on Abkhaz Conflict," *SWB SU/1740, B/12-13*, 14 July 1993

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*

to a new Russian mediated agreement in Sochi, on 27 July. This new agreement, which came into effect on 28 July 1993, like its predecessor proposed a cease-fire that was monitored by UN and the withdrawal of the Georgian troops and weaponry within 15 days and the subsequent restitution of the legitimate governments of Abkhazia.⁶⁴⁰

The Confederation assessed the conclusion of the Agreement ‘positively’ and the armed formations from the North Caucasus started to withdraw from Abkhazia. Amin Zekhov, the chief of staff of the Confederation’s armed forces, said that the troops of the Confederation would leave Abkhazia according to the cease-fire agreement over 10 to 15 days, on condition that the Georgian side also withdrew its troops.⁶⁴¹

The Georgian side, however, did not comply with the agreement and Ardzinba issued a statement to the UN and other powers on 9 and 11 September respectively, in which he warned the dangers of the Georgian non-compliance. The executive committee of the Congress of the Kabardian People, replied at first and issued a statement calling on Georgia to fulfil the conditions of the Sochi Agreement and urged the North Caucasian volunteers to be ready to return to Abkhazia, if Georgia continued to fail to comply with its undertakings.

⁶⁴⁰ This was the third attempt at putting an end to the fratricidal war and Vakhtang Gogvadze, the speaker of the Georgian parliament, Sokrat Dzhindzholia, Deputy Chairman of the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet, and Andrey Kozyrev, Russian minister of Foreign Affairs, signed agreement. For the text of “An agreement on a cease-fire in Abkhazia and a mechanism to monitor its observation,” see *SWB SU/1753, B/4-5*, 29 July 1993. In addition see Pauline Overeem et al., “Report of a UNPO coordinated human rights mission to Abkhazia and Georgia,” *Central Asian Survey*, 14(1): 151-153.

At the end of the September, while the Zviadist forces were entering the town of Gali, the Abkhaz forces organized a new offensive and captured Sukhum on 27 September 1993 and drove the Georgian forces out of the Abkhazian proper. Within two weeks of the fall of Sukhum, Shevardnadze went to Moscow, ostensibly to attend a meeting with Yeltsin and the leadership of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The four leaders agreed on the need for collective action to stabilize the situation in the Caucasus. In his speech at this meeting, Shevardnadze declared his intention to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and argued that Russia and the other CIS states should help the Caucasian countries to maintain their collective security.

The Confederation took the clashes between the Abkhaz and the Georgians as a chance for recovering its previous prestige, which had been wounded during the clashes between the Osetians and the Ingush. This was the reason of Confederations insistence on the Abkhaz cause. To put the importance of Abkhazia Shanibov said that the peoples of the Caucasus and other small peoples of the former Soviet Union saw their destiny in the fate of Abkhaz. According to him, Abkhazia was an important test case for this principle. The fight of Caucasian peoples for the freedom of Abkhazia was actually the struggle for their own freedom. He believed that if the Abkhaz, with the help of volunteers from the North Caucasus region, could show that an attack on such a people couldn't take place

⁶⁴¹ "Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus approves cease-fire," *SWB SU/1755, B/11*, 31 July 1993 and "North Caucasus volunteers reportedly begin to leave Abkhaz conflict zone," *SWB SU/1762, B/11*, 9 August 1993.

without serious resistance, this would discourage future attacks on any of the North Caucasian peoples.

However, despite the success of the Confederation and the Abkhazia, the developments did not result in a consolidation and the emergence of true Confederation. Russia managed to achieve its desire of forcing Georgia to accept the membership of the CIS and to secure military bases to control the region. In addition, the Russian authorities decided to establish their own organizations in the region to neutralize the Confederation. Moreover, the possibility of the Chechen supremacy and the reaction from the other members of the Confederation caused the alienation between the members of it.

6- The Chechen Struggle⁶⁴² for Independence and Seeking for a United Front:

The Chechens and the Abkhaz had always been the cardinal components of the Assembly and later the Confederation. During the struggle between the Confederation and Georgia, the Chechens comprised the main combat force and provided the necessary financial means and ammunitions. Nevertheless, the increasing tensions between the Russians and Chechens, beyond the destruction of the Chechen independence, caused internal strife within the Confederation as well.

⁶⁴² For the Chechens and the Chechen war see Anatol, Lieven, 1998. *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, New Haven: Yale University Press. Sebastian Smith, 1998. *Allah's Mountains: Politics and War in the Russian Caucasus*, London: Tauris. Carlotta Gaal and Thomas De Waal, 1997. *Chechnya: A Small Victorious War*, London: Pan Books. John B. Dunlop, 1998. *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge Un. Press.

The Chechens, as it was in the other peoples of the North Caucasus, has a dual sense of identity: that of Mountaineer and, more narrowly but strongly, the national one as a Chechen or *Nokhchi*. In compliance with this dual identity while they had been living in their independent state from 1992, under the leadership of Djokhar Dudayev on the one hand, they were trying to establish an independent larger North Caucasian State on the other. However, because of the serious economic problems and power struggles between the Chechen *teips*, the fragile political stability in Chechnya disintegrated and the political fragmentation started. In response to the demonstrations that were asking the president's resignation, Dudayev dissolved the parliament and imposed a curfew by issuing a decree in April 1993. Then, in addition to Yaragi Mamodayev, Salambek Hajiev, and Doku Zavgayev, even his former allies of Dudayev, like Omar Avtorkhanov, Bislan Gantemirov and, Ruslan Labazanov had started to oppose him.

Similarly, because of Dudayev's ambitions to control the 'pan-Caucasian' movement, the relations between the Confederation and the Chechen Republic began to deteriorate. The 'Dudayev factor', thus, caused the alienation between Chechens and other peoples of the North Caucasus. Dudayev believed that with its economy, history, geographic location as well as the impact of current developments, the Chechens should play the leading role in the efforts toward independence and unity in the North Caucasus.⁶⁴³ He put the Chechen Republic into the center of the struggle of the North Caucasian peoples but chose Russia as its main rival, while the other peoples of the North Caucasus, especially the

Abkhaz were willing to side with Russia against Georgia. Therefore, this basic difference of an outlook resulted in a split within the Confederation.

In fact, from the outset, Dudayev intended to establish an organization, which encompassed the whole Caucasus, including Azerbaijan, Georgia and even Armenia. To accomplish this aim, together with Zviad Gamsakhurdia he set up a ‘Caucasian Home’ (*Kavkazskiy Dom*) or International Caucasian Home Forum⁶⁴⁴ in September 1992 for the purpose of uniting the local peoples in their struggle for freedom and national independence. This was, like the Confederation, an informal alliance heralding political and economic integration in the form of a Confederation.

Nevertheless, this initiative of Dudayev, especially in cooperation with Zviad Gamsakhurdia created distress in the Confederation. Gamsakhurdia accepted by the Confederation’s leaders as the leader of the Georgian nationalism and blamed in every condition as the instigator of the Georgian assaults on the Abkhaz. Dudayev, however, from the early days of Gamsakhurdia’s escape from Georgian territory supplied him a safe shelter. In several occasions the Confederation expressed its distrust and dissatisfaction at the former president’s presence in

⁶⁴³ *Marje*, June 1992, 20-22.

⁶⁴⁴ For the Caucasian Home and some other similar organizations see Rafiq Aliev, “‘Caucasian Home’: A view from Azerbaijan,” in *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, Bruno Coppieters and et al. eds., 1998. London: 99-110. Also see “Cohar Dudayev’le bir söyleşi,” *Kafkasya Gerçeği*, (Samsun), January 1993, 11: 12-14; and “Chechens try to rally Caucasian peoples: tension with Russia rising,” *SWB SU/1488, B/3*, 17 September 1992 and “Caucasian Home group calls for removal of Russian troops,” *SWB SU/1639, B/3*, 17 March 1992.

Chechnya.⁶⁴⁵ Thus, the Confederation described this new Caucasian Home movement as a rival under the control of Gamsakhurdia.

In March 1993, the consultative council and the highest religious council of the Caucasian Home held a joint session in Grozny and approved the structure of the leading bodies of it, which comprised three councils: the Consultative Council, the Collective Security Council, and the Highest Religious council.⁶⁴⁶ Then later, in a joint session of the bureaus of the Consultative and higher Religious councils participants adopted a decision to create a Caucasian Home Security Council.⁶⁴⁷

In August 1994, the Chechen opposition with the support of Moscow declared Dudayev deposed, claiming to have established control over most of the territory of Chechnya, and clashes between government forces and opposition intensified. In September, after Dudayev had inflicted a harsh defeat on the opposition, did Gantemirov, Avturkhanov, and Khajiev agree to cooperate and in September and October they attacked to capture Grozny by the help of the Russians.

During these clashes between the Chechen groups, the Confederation took the issue into its parliament's agenda. After the joint session of the Chechen Presidential Council and the Confederation's Parliament in Grozny, on 23-24 August 1994, the Confederation "resolutely backs the desire of the Chechen

⁶⁴⁵ "Confederation of Mountain Peoples ready to intervene in South Osetia," *SWB SU/1371, B/7-8, 4 May 1992.*

⁶⁴⁶ "Caucasian Home group calls for removal of Russian troops," *SWB SU/1639, B/3, 17 March 1993.*

⁶⁴⁷ "Caucasus to have its own peace-keeping forces," *SWB SU/1660, C2/8-9, 12 April 1993.*

Republic for freedom and independence”.⁶⁴⁸ In order to achieve this end, the Confederation declared its full support to Dudayev’s policies and condemned the activity of the opposition forces. In addition, it was declared that, in case Russia started armed aggression against Chechnya, the Confederation would come to the defense of Chechen sovereignty.⁶⁴⁹

This declaration, naturally, caused dissatisfaction among the Chechen opposition. The Chechen opposition’s Interim Council issued a statement on 6 September 1994 and accused the Confederation of interference in Chechnya’s internal affairs. In this statement, the Interim Council stated that “a civil war against the people in the Chechen republic has been unleashed with direct participation of the Confederation of Caucasian Peoples in the person of confederation leaders Musa Shanibov and Ibragim Beyli”.⁶⁵⁰

Then the council voiced the inadmissibility of a third party’s interference in Chechen internal affairs and warned the Confederation that any similar action would receive “adequate estimation of the Chechen people and the mercenaries will be destroyed right on the spot under the laws of the wartime”.⁶⁵¹

The following day Ibragim Beyli replied the Interim Council’s statement and stressed that “the Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus has never interfered and will not interfere in the internal affairs of that republic unless Russia sends in its troops.” Moreover, he rejected the Interim Council’s statement alleging

⁶⁴⁸ “Confederation of Caucasian Peoples backs Chechen sovereignty,” *SWB SU/2084, B/1*, 26 August 1994.

⁶⁴⁹ “Caucasus confederation is pro-Dudayev; Grozny appeals to UN,” *SWB SU/2083, B/1*, 25 August 1994.

⁶⁵⁰ “Caucasus Confederation warned not to interfere in Chechnya’s internal affairs,” *SWB SU/2096, B/2-3*, 9 September 1994.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*

that mercenaries under the Confederation flag were operating on Dudayev's side. He noted that after the war in Abkhazia the Confederation disbanded its armed structures, and there was no appeals or orders whatsoever on this score and, consequently, announced no mobilization of volunteers.⁶⁵²

On 29 November 1993, Russian President Yeltsin warned to all those taking part in armed confrontation in the Chechen republic and demanded that, within 48 hours of this appeal to stop the armed clashes and declare the a cease-fire. "If this demand was not met by the set deadline, a state of emergency would be introduced on the territory of the Chechen republic and all the forces and means at the disposal of the State would be used."⁶⁵³

While the opposition complied with Yeltsin's ultimatum, Dudayev and his Chechen government assessed this ultimatum negatively and the address by Yeltsin was described as contradicting international legal norms.⁶⁵⁴

Then the Confederation of the peoples of the Caucasus held an emergency session of its Parliament in Nalchik on 4 December. At the end of the session, Confederation's parliament issued a resolution in which the Confederation declared that it considers Dudayev as the sole legitimate Chechen leader. In addition, the resolution also pointed that if Russian troops invade Chechnya, the republics of the Northern Caucasus would start severing the Federation Treaty and bilateral

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ "Yeltsin ultimatum to Chechnya: peace within 48 hours or Russians will use force," *SWB SU/2166, B/3*, 30 November 1994.

⁶⁵⁴ "Chechen government issues official statement on Yeltsin's address," *SWB SU/2167, B/6*, 1 December 1994.

agreements with Russia. Moreover, in line, the Confederation's Parliament adopted an appeal to the Russian Federal Assembly and to the Russian President and government and stressed that the multi-ethnic population of the Caucasus was against military confrontation between Russia and Chechnya, and against the invasion of Chechnya by Russian troops. Then, the session decided to convene an extraordinary congress of the peoples of the North Caucasus in Nalchik or Maykop on 10 December to discuss ways of rendering assistance to Chechnya.⁶⁵⁵

On 6 December, a meeting was held between Pavel Grachev, Russian Defense minister, and Dudayev in Mozdok, where both parties agreed to seek a peaceful solution to conflict.⁶⁵⁶ However, while Grachev was trying to make peace, after a meeting of the Russian Security Council on 9 December, Yeltsin ordered his government to restore order and disarm all armed factions in Chechnya.⁶⁵⁷

In order to implement Yeltsin's decree, troops of the Russian Federation Defense and Interior ministries, moving in three columns entered the Chechen territory on 11 December.⁶⁵⁸

Meantime, the Confederation convened the extraordinary congress to discuss the situation in the North Caucasus, specifically in Chechnya in Nalchik on 10-11 December 1994. At the end of the Congress, first of all, in order to meet the representatives of the power ministries (defense, counterintelligence, and interior)

⁶⁵⁵ "Confederation of Caucasian Peoples pledges help for Chechnya if Russians invade," *SWB SU/2171, B/6*, 6 December 1994.

⁶⁵⁶ "Grachev meets Dudayev: talks deemed successful," *SWB SU/2173, B/3-4*, 8 December 1994.

⁶⁵⁷ "Yeltsin orders Russian government to disarm Chechen groupings," *SWB SU/2176, B/1*, 12 December 1994.

⁶⁵⁸ "Russian troops enter Chechnya," *SWB SU/2176, B/1-2*, 12 December 1994.

of the Russian Federation in Vladikavkaz, a delegation was formed.⁶⁵⁹ Then, another delegation, which includes around 500 people, has been formed. This delegation was intended to go to Grozny to form a human chain around the town in order to avert a tragic development of events and to defend the city against the Russian invasion.⁶⁶⁰

Moreover, Congress sent telegrams to the President, chairmen of the Federation Council and the State Duma, in which it demanded that the talks processes should continue and that pressure by force should be stopped. In a special statement, it was pointed out that “unless the tragic development of events and the use of force halted, the peoples of the Caucasus would be called upon to leave the Federation Treaty of the Russian Federation.”⁶⁶¹ Likewise, in the appeals to the leaders of the North Osetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia the Confederation demanded to hinder the movement of Russian troops towards Chechnya. Moreover the Congress decided to set up an operational headquarters to coordinate the activities of the Mountaineers in entire North Caucasus.

The Confederation with its all forces prepared itself to a ‘war’ with Russia and Ali Aliyev, head of the Confederation’s parliament declared that in order to coordinate the activities of the Confederation’s troops on the spot, the headquarters

⁶⁵⁹ This delegation arrived in Vladikavkaz on 13 December, before the talks between the Chechens and Russians begin and handed proposals on reaching a settlement to the Russian delegation. See, “Assaults on Grozny threaten Chechen talks; opposition excluded,” *SWB SU/2178, B/7*, 14 December 1994.

⁶⁶⁰ Nevertheless, this project was failed because of the lack of support of the peoples of the North Caucasus. See, “ITAR-TASS reports “human chain” to block NC road a failure,” *SWB SU/2185, B/4*, 22 December 1994.

⁶⁶¹ “Peoples of Caucasus threaten to leave Federation Treaty over Chechnya,” *SWB SU/2177, B/11-12*, 13 December 1994.

of the Confederation would move from Sukhum to Grozny.⁶⁶² Then, on 14 December 1994, the Confederation of the Caucasian Peoples announced the beginning of the mobilization of the volunteers to aid Grozny. Ali Aliyev, signed the instructions to the members of the Confederation where he asked the formation of mobilization centers in Sukhum (Abkhazia), Lazarevo (Krasnodar territory), Maykop (Adygeya), Cherkessk (Karachay-Cherkessia), Vladikavkaz (North Osetia), Nazran (Ingushetia), Makhachkala (Dagestan) and Nalchik (Kabarda-Balkaria). In addition, operational centers were to be set up in Nalchik and Grozny to coordinate the actions of volunteers. Amin Zekhov, the Vice-President of the Confederation from Adygea (a member of the local parliament also), charged with the coordination of these operational centers.⁶⁶³

In response, the Russian government issued a statement and pointed out that these activities of the Confederation were illegal and formation of these ‘mobilization centers’ to recruit volunteers to fight for Chechnya in the Chechen Republic and other areas of the Northern Caucasus should not be not allowed. The statement stressed that the mobilization for active military service comes within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Russian President.⁶⁶⁴

Moreover, beyond the Russian protest, this decree for the mobilization of the volunteers to fight in Chechnya resulted in a split among the Confederation itself. The decision was signed by the head of the Confederation Parliament, Ali

⁶⁶² “Confederation of Caucasian Peoples plans move to Grozny,” *SWB SU/2179, B/16*, 15 December.

⁶⁶³ “Confederation of Caucasian Peoples begins mobilization of volunteers,” *SWB SU/2180, B/9-10*, 16 December 1994.

Aliyev and had the backing of the Confederation's chief of staff, Amin Zekhov. However, the President of the Confederation, Musa Shanibov, objected the formation of volunteer detachments.⁶⁶⁵ Therefore, as a result of the heavy pressures from the Chechen side Shanibov resigned from his post on 18 December 1994, by giving the reason of deteriorating health after an incident in Abkhazia in 1993 in which he was wounded.⁶⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the basic reason behind the resignation was the discord on the issue of mobilization. According to Denga Khalidov, the deputy chairman of the Confederation Parliament, "Shanibov was, evidently, find it hard to take decisions that require resolve, consistency and the like, in connection with the events developing in Chechnya". In addition, he pointed out that, "Shanibov did a lot of good at the time when the CCP was establishing itself, particularly during developments in Abkhazia. He has done enough, considering his age."⁶⁶⁷

Following the removal of the Shanibov, under the leadership of Ali Aliyev, mobilization centers set up in the North Caucasian cities. According to Khalidov, the first centers founded in Makhachkale and Khasavyurt (Dagestan), Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria), Maykop (Adygea), Sukhum (Abkhazia), Nazran (Ingushetia), Vladikavkaz (North Osetia) and Cherkassk (Karachay-Cherkessia).

⁶⁶⁴ "Russian government declares mobilization centres in Caucasus illegal," *SWB SU/2181, B/11*, 17 December 1994.

⁶⁶⁵ "Confederation of Caucasian Peoples divided over volunteers for Chechnya decision," *SWB SU/2181, B/14*, 17 December 1994.

⁶⁶⁶ Shanibov pointed out in special talk in Ankara that, the youngsters of the Confederation who at the same time favoring the war with and independence from Russia asked him to resign. Because of the lack of support from other groups he obliged to resign from the Presidency. Also see "President of Caucasus confederation resigns," *SWB SU/2183, B/12*, 20 December 1994.

⁶⁶⁷ "Senior member of Caucasus confederation confirms establishment of headquarters for volunteers," *SWB SU/2183, B/12*, 20 December 1994.

Khadzhi-Murat Ibragim-Beyli, a member of the Confederation presidium, however, said at a news conference in Moscow on 26 December that Confederation was not recruiting volunteers for the Chechen war. He stressed that “representatives of every republic and every people are already in Chechnya.” He noted that the Confederation had not set up recruiting centers to recruit and train volunteers for Chechnya. However, he added that the Confederation of course naturally coordinated volunteers’ movements in the region. Ibragim-Beyli recalled that representatives of 16 ethnic groups of the Caucasus adopted a resolution at a their congress denouncing the use of force to settle the Chechen crisis and urging “help to the Chechen people at the time of hardships.”⁶⁶⁸

From then on the Russians were emerged as the main rivals of the Confederation and this made the work of Confederation problematic. In addition, of the internal strife within the Confederation resulted in the dismemberment of the Confederation. None of the North Caucasian peoples or the regional administrations, (except some individual initiatives) did not want to fight together with the Chechens against the Russian troops.⁶⁶⁹

Thus, by the Chechen war of 1994, the Confederation faced with the disintegration process. The Russian interference ant the Chechens’ struggle for their own territories, resulted with the dismemberment of the North Caucasian peoples. While the Abkhaz and other Circassian groups began to function within the frame work of International Circassian Association, the Turkic peoples

⁶⁶⁸ “Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus on involvement in recruiting for Chechnya”, *SWB SU/2190, B/12*, 31 December 1994.

⁶⁶⁹ Moreover, the regional authorities, with a Russian backing, obstructed the activities of the Confederation. Such as on 7 January 1995, Confederation Parliament proposed to make its session

preferred to follow their own path and established their own union. Some other groups, such as Osetians at last, choose establishing closer alliance with the Russian. Thus the Confederation took the shape of a ghost organization.

in Makhachkale. The Dagestani authorities however interfered with a reason of possible upheavals among the peoples and the Parliament inevitably postponed its meeting.

CONCLUSION

The North Caucasian peoples or the Mountaineers, who were the genuine settlers of the North Caucasian geography, constituted a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic society. From the earlier periods of history tribe was the main social structure and thus the source of the Mountaineers' identification in the region. These settled agricultural and pastoral North Caucasian tribes lived, separately mainly in villages, called *aul* in mountainous regions and *yurt* in the lowlands that comprised principally of one tribe, even in the 17th century. In time, because of the economic and legal relationships, and of security concerns, settlements or rural communes comprised of several tribes named *jama'at* in Dagestan and *tuqum* among the Vaynakhs, began to form. These rural communes, in late 18th and early 19th centuries became socio-political and territorial entities united by common economic and defence aims, rather than a purely tribal one. In the late 18th century, (especially in Dagestan) there were about 60 communities or principalities with a constantly changing social structure. Nevertheless, in these earlier periods, these Mountaineers, mainly were the believers of Islam, continued their daily lives under the nominal rule of Ottoman Empire. On their daily, however, they ruled themselves through council of elders, which was made up of representatives of each clan and tribe in the commune. Beyond the existence of temporary alliances between several communes, primarily against the another North Caucasian commune and rarely against the 'foreign powers', because of the lack of communication and outrageous geographical conditions, consolidated and

permanent relationships and thus alliances could not be set up in the North Caucasus.

By the beginning of the 19th century these *jama'ats*, however, as a result of the emergence of aggressive enemies, i.e. Russian controlled Cossacks, began to develop permanent central political formations. The most powerful among them included the Shamkhalat, the Avar Khanate, the Khanate of Ghazi-Kumuk and the principalities of Kaytak and Tabasaran. Over time, with the expansion of these associations, ruling dynasties came into being. The way in which these dynasties came into being and the titles they used varied from one *jama'at* to another. While in some parts they took the name Khan or Sultan, in others they used the titles of *Maysum*, *Ustmi*, *Shamkhal* or *Qadi*. These central rulers, in parallel with the establishment of their authority, began to remove local rulers by appointing their own agents as governors, mostly named *naib* or *bek*, to the *jama'ats* under their authority, and in turn they formed the local gentry.

Nevertheless, all these political structures were transitory bodies with enduring struggles within themselves and with the outside rival powers. Therefore, it is not possible to speak about the existence and even the establishment, of a coherent social or political governing body, which encompassed the entire, or at least the great part of the North Caucasus.

Nevertheless, with the coming of alien great aggressive power with the intention of occupying the North Caucasus changed the course of event severely. The Russians appeared on the scene of the Caucasus for the first time in the middle of the 16th century and initiated the great power rivalry, mainly with the Ottomans, that lasted for more than two centuries. This resulted in a striking change within the

attitudes and the political formations of the Mountaineers. They faced with an aggressor and defined a common enemy that forced the Mountaineers to set up a common front to balance it. In the second half of the 18th century, during the reign of Catherine the Great, the Russian Empire at last established its dominion southward to include the northern shores of the Black Sea. The Empress, in order to demonstrate her belief in its future importance to the Empire, labelled these newly conquered territories as 'New Russia' and focused the Empire's attention southward.

The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca signed in 1774, concluded the six year Russo-Turkish war, and following it, the annexation of Crimea in 1783, marked Russian dominance over the Ottomans in the Caucasus. Thus, the Crimean Tatars, the main agents and the vassals of the Ottoman Empire formally became the Russian vassals and their territories transformed from the historic northern bastion of the Ottoman Empire into the southern bastion of the Russian Empire. After that, with the establishment of the first Russian province, or *guberniya*, in May 1785 with its center in Yekaterinodar the North Caucasus underwent drastic changes. From then on the Russian civil and military officials started to interfere directly in the internal affairs and the daily life of the Caucasus and of course the Mountaineers. Thus, for the first time, at least nominally the Mountaineers were subjected to an 'infidel's rule'. The most conspicuous result of this interference and rule was the emergence of reactionary movements among the Mountaineers. Under the auspices of the *Naqshbandiya*, Islam surfaced as the most dynamic and comprehensive political force and by the help of its network among the Chechens and Dagestanis instigated a struggle in entire Chechnya and Dagestan.

The *Naqshbandiya* was in fact introduced into the North Caucasus in early 18th century and established its first roots primarily in Dagestan. Until the arrival of Russian forces prominent sheikhs or *tariqat* leaders always fulfilled the roles of spiritual guides and supervisors of the existing local rulers. Nevertheless, because of the failure of traditional local authorities and their cooperation with the Russians the *Naqshbandiya*, as the sole institution, which could reach beyond petty tribal loyalties and offer an ideology capable of uniting these various peoples into a broader independent political movement, emerged as a reactionary force.

The emergence of this movement called '*muridizm*' was not accidental. It coincided with the establishment of the new Russian province and Mansur's proclamation of *ghazavat*. Moreover, the Ottomans' last defeat, and thus their forced relinquishment of all positions and claims in the Caucasus after the 1828-29 Russo-Turkish war, also coincided with the emergence of the new *Imam*, Ghazi Muhammed. These were the basic results of religious reactions to the alien Christian power, the Russian Empire.

Mansur, the *de facto* religious and national leader, laid the foundation for a future union and prepared the ground for the later *Naqshbandi Imams* who saw themselves as his disciples. Although Mansur himself never mentioned a brotherhood, nor did he try to establish a Sufi network, he left a long-lasting legacy in the North Caucasus. Mansur, had a prominent role in the Islamisation of the central North Caucasus, mainly the Ingush and Osetians. He consolidated *Naqshbandiya* and thus Islam in these territories. He managed to establish contacts with the Chechen, the Ingush, and Dagestani communes and even the Kabardian and Circassian princes and for the first time in the North Caucasus established a

common front in the struggle with Russians. In spite of Mansur's defeat, the new *Imam*, Ghazi Muhammed emerged, almost 50 years later, as new leader who bridged the gap between the 'political' and 'spiritual' *Naqshbandiya* and merged the two into a unified movement. He once again declared a *ghazavat* against the infidel's rule in 1830. His successors, Hamza Bek and Shamil managed to exterminate the existing local rulers and instead of being spiritual guides and supervisors they took the real authority into their hands and became the official leaders in the North Caucasus.

Those new leaders' position was very different to that of the earlier local leaders. These *Imams* accepted the *Sharia* as the only guarantee against the corruption of the North Caucasian peoples by Russian colonial rule, and so they called upon Muslims to replace the traditional *adat* system, which was identified as the main obstacle to unification, with *Sharia*-based legislation. Through comprehensive administrative, fiscal, and military measures based on an orthodox version of *Sharia*, they established a new central state encompassing Chechen, Ingush, Avar, Kumuk, Lezgin and Ghazi Kumuk territories. His authority through the Kabardians penetrated, at least nominally to the Circassian areas.

These *Imams* saw the Mountaineers as a totality and denied the existence of tribal differences, accepting Islam as the primary denominator of the unified North Caucasian identity. Thus, *Imam* Shamil finally established the North Caucasian Imamate as the first unified North Caucasian State in the 1840s. Through his *naibs*, he brought isolated tribes and jama'ats under a unified *Sharia*-based legal system and ensured the coordination of efforts to resist the Russians. In line with this,

again through his *naibs*, at least theoretically, Shamil managed to spread his rule to the Circassian lands and thus the entire North Caucasus.

Nevertheless, increasing Russian military might and emerging native resistance or reluctance to comply with the comprehensive changes in the social structure and daily life triggered Shamil's downfall. Despite his defeat, because of his deep-rooted reforms, Islam substantiated its place among the Mountaineers irreversibly and became one of the principle components of the Mountaineers' self-identification during this period.

The defeat of Shamil however, caused drastic changes in the demographic and political balances in the North Caucasus in favour of the Russian Empire. Between 1864 and 1878 a significant percent of the North Caucasian population, mainly the Circassians, were forcibly expelled to the Ottoman lands and dispersed throughout the territories from Balkans to the Middle East. The remaining religious leaders were either killed or exiled and the Sufi brotherhood discarded the idea of *ghazavat* and open resistance, with remaining groups forced into an underground, semi-clandestine existence. However, when the opportunity to rebel against the Russians presented itself, they took the lead to organize the masses. Meanwhile, the newly settled Cossack and Russian populations, began to dominate the region and thus, during the last quarter of the 19th century Russians managed to suppress and subjugate the North Caucasus.

This inevitably shifted the centre of the struggle of independence outside North Caucasian territory. While Russian's 'divide-and-rule' policy was creating

divisions and frictions among the Mountaineers, the North Caucasians used the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman war to struggle for independence, but the defeat of the Ottomans left the Mountaineers' dream of returning to the Caucasus and establishing their own state was unfulfilled. From then on, in compliance with Ottoman policy and the tradition of loyalty to the host state, North Caucasian emigrants in the Ottoman Empire had to keep silent until 1908. Afterwards, the new regime allowed these emigrants to set up their own organizations in İstanbul. These organizations became the engines of the independence struggle and in correlation with of their increasingly intensified activities the Mountaineers struggle grew in the homeland.

Through the Circassian Association of Union and Relief, which was established by Gazi Mehmet Paşa, the son of *Imam* Shamil, as a social organization, the North Caucasians of the Ottoman Empire revitalized their political activities to liberate the motherland. Nevertheless they did not find the opportunity to realize their objective until the beginning of the First World War. A confluence of interests brought the Association and the leaders of the ruling party of the Union and Progress into alliance and the political activities of the emigrants increased impressively. When the First World War broke out, the North Caucasians took an active part in the formulation of a confederal state, which encompassed Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and the North Caucasus as a 'buffer state' between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Enver Pasha vehemently supported this idea and took an active part in the activities to organize an anti-Russian movement in the Caucasus.

During this period, the Russian viceroys ruled the Mountaineers, who were living in the North Caucasian territory. Despite the fact that the *tariqats* had still survived under-cover and were continuing their spiritual guidance among the Chechen and Dagestani peoples, a class of young North Caucasian elite, who were educated in Russian schools emerged and gained a foothold among the peoples of the North Caucasus. Despite their small number, these young peoples managed to take the destinies of their peoples. This new group, because of their education were familiar to the Russian society and the western thought and way of life. Some had close contacts with the Russian political parties and currents, had a part in the Empire's political life. Nevertheless they failed to establish common political North Caucasian or Islamic political movement. As was the case with North Caucasian emigrants in Ottoman lands, World War I and then the Russian Revolution in February 1917 changed the course of events in the North Caucasus. These North Caucasian elites defined the Revolution as a 'miracle' and used the *mottos* of the French Revolution, 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' on every occasion. In line with this they organized a Congress with the aim of establishing a union or a common political structure encompassing all the peoples of the North Caucasus, from the Black Sea to the Caspian coasts. Thus, the Alliance of the Unified Mountaineers of the North Caucasus and Dagestan, including the Circassian tribes, Chechens, the Ingush and all of the Dagestani peoples, with a political program and a draft Constitution, emerged. Initially, the leaders of the movement undoubtedly agreed with the ideals of the Revolution, and the Alliance accepted itself as a constituent part of Russia. The first and the foremost priority of the Congress was the establishment of Federal-Democratic state structure in

Russia. In their program, Mountaineers defined Russia as a 'big mosaic' and demanded autonomy and self-governance for their own territories. This was the ultimate ideal for these people for that time.

The Bolshevik Revolution and the beginning of the 'Civil War' in Russian territories, however, changed the course of events. As a result of the Turkish advance towards the Caucasus, these two North Caucasian independence movements, in exile and at home met. During the Trabzon Conference, both of these groups for the first time, at least officially, analyzed the issue of North Caucasian independence with the Ottoman government, which resulted in the declaration of North Caucasian independence in İstanbul on 11 May 1918.

The independent North Caucasian Mountaineer Republic, nevertheless, could establish its authority in the North Caucasus only for a limited time with the help of the Ottoman armies, composed primarily of Ottoman Circassians. The discords between the Ottomans and the Germans, and at last their complete defeat in war and the great power rivalry over the Caucasus, unfortunately caused the collapse of the Independent State. In this rivalry although the Ottomans and Germans were apparent allies, the Germans interfered with developments in the region in pursuit of their own interests, at the expense of the Ottomans and thus the Mountaineers.

During this time, in contrast to the Shamil's era, the foreign powers openly participated in and even directed the course of events. The Turkish advance gave the Mountaineers a chance to establish their own Republic, but the collapse of the Ottoman Empire halted the activities of the Mountaineers. Then the British, in an alliance with Denikin, affected the destiny of the Mountaineers negatively.

Moreover, the ideological difference between the Mountaineers personal desires for ruling the region and ever-changing alliances between the groups caused consolidation of the Bolshevik power and their supremacy in the region.

By 1920 Bolshevik forces controlled the region entirely. The last resistance movement of the Mountaineers led by Said Shamil, the great-grandson of *Imam* Shamil and the religious leaders, Uzun Haji and Najmuddin of Hötzo (Gotsinskiy) continued until summer 1921. Although, initially, they had achieved some successes, with the arrival Red Army in spring 1921, the Bolsheviks managed to suppress the movement. In fact the North Caucasian leaders, either Bolshevik, nationalist or religious all the time defended the unity of the North Caucasus. They just differentiated the method through which this unity was being established.

On 20 January 1920, however, in compliance with the premises of Soviet nationality policy, two separate autonomous republics, Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and Soviet Mountain Republic, which comprised of Chechen, Ingush, Osetian, Kabardian, Balkar and Karachay territories were established and incorporated into RSFSR. The latter however was short lived. Once the Soviet power was firmly established, the regime adopted a policy of dividing this region into smaller ethnic territories in 1921 and artificially created six autonomous units from 1922 to 1924. Then by using language as a basis, the Soviet regime created and provided ethnic homelands for the different peoples of the North Caucasus, within which they were entitled to use a variety of ethnic institutions. Thus the process of ‘creating nations’ and ‘national territories’ initiated by the Soviet Russia. This caused the emergence of atomised social and political

structure in the North Caucasus and started the alienation process among the peoples of the North Caucasus. The best example of this alienation process was the separation of Circassian peoples into three distinct titular nations, i.e. Adyge, Cherkess, and Kabardian.

While the Bolsheviks had been suppressing the uprising and taking the whole region under their control, the nationalist groups of the Mountaineers were forced to leave the North Caucasus. From then on, representatives of the formerly independent Caucasian Republics had to shift their struggle for the independence outside their homeland, especially to Europe. Paris was the first new centre for the struggle followed İstanbul, Prague, and Warsaw.

These ‘new emigrants’ were directly affected by the political atmosphere of the post-War period and, until the late 1920s remained scattered and confused. In this early period, the North Caucasians’ first priority was securing their own survival. The emergence of the anti-Bolshevik currents in Europe, primarily within the new states of Czechoslovakia and Poland, had changed the course of events and broken the bewilderment of the exiles. Leaders of these states, such as Pilsudski, were the most ardent anti-Bolsheviks. Their financial support made the establishment of the émigré organizations for all the nationalities of the former Russian Empire possible. Including of course the North Caucasians.

The first formal émigré organization of North Caucasians, the Union of Caucasian Mountaineers, was established in Prague. As it is easily understood from its name, their main aim was ‘unification’. Following the establishment of the

Promethean bloc, their activities became heavily political in content and, in contrast to the on going process in the Caucasus, the idea of establishing comprehensive Caucasian Confederation gained precedence.

In that period, the North Caucasian emigrants, despite internal splits, willingly supported the idea of Confederation. Their main difference was not on the nature of the end, but just on the strategy that would have to be followed. They, with a strong belief in the collapse of Bolshevik, or Soviet Russia, continued their struggle against Bolshevism as the successor to the chauvinism and imperialism of Romanov rule. They hoped that the World War, which was looming, would result in the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the problem was who would lead the War against the Soviet Union or whom the North Caucasians would support?

Accordingly, two main currents emerged. While Haydar Bammatt and his Kavkaz group supported Germany and Italy, i.e. Nationalist Socialism, the Prometheans supported the European democracies, i.e, Britain and the other newly emerged smaller states.

Despite ideological differences, both groups thought it essential to make necessary preparations for establishing their independent state's infrastructure. Because they believed that the primary reasons behind the failure in 1917-20 were the lack of leadership of a cadre and program for a functioning state. Thus, during this period, they dealt with the problems and solutions in detail. The problems of language, nationality, form of state, relations with the neighbouring states, economy, and etc. were all scrutinized in the pages of the North Caucasian émigré publications, such as *Vol'nye Gortsy*, *Severnyi Kavkaz*, and *Kavkaz*.

Aware of the fragility of North Caucasians or the other Caucasians future states, the idea of establishing a Confederation comprised of all the former Republics of the Caucasus (North Caucasian, Azeri, Georgian, and even the Armenian Republics) began to take precedence as the most viable and realistic solution for the future of the Caucasus. The ideal of the Confederation was now not only a word for coalescing the leaders in seeking a return to power, but it was the solution to the intractable internal problems the region faced because of nationalism and religious differences. Stemming from this, the leaders of the Caucasian emigrants signed several agreements and issued declarations in which they accepted that the establishment of a close and brotherly union as absolutely essential for the consolidation of the independence of these republics as well as enabling the Caucasus to act as a link between West and East, and between the Christian and Muslim worlds. Their common fate was the main basis of the Union.

1934 was a turning point for the Caucasians. They made a last try to establish a Confederation, at least on a paper. All the leaders of North Caucasian, Azeri and Georgian emigrants heartily signed the document. Armenians, however, because of mainly the religious concerns and the possible Turkish domination never took part. The contracting committee, however, was dissolved in 1935 and a Caucasian Confederation Council replaced it with no concrete contribution. Beyond that, the Armenians and Georgians separated themselves and began to work together excluding the North Caucasians and Azerbaijanis.

The War anxiously awaited started without delay. Nevertheless the emigres received it with scepticism. The Nazi-German Pact in August 1939 put a dramatic end to the expectations of North Caucasians. This caused retrogression of the

activities of the émigré groups. Apart from some minor efforts, North Caucasian activities for unity and independence diminished. The Germans planned to colonize the North Caucasus and had no intention of giving the Mountaineers their desired independence.

The Second World War resulted in the consolidation of Soviet power. While the 'old' North Caucasian emigrants, Bammat, Chermoev, and others were abandoning the struggle in disillusion a small number of 'new' emigrants who were born and brought up in the Soviet regime, such as A. Avtorkhanov, R. Karça and R. Traho continued their struggle against the Communist regime together with other émigré groups. Their works, however, far from the political and military struggle and only covered some scholarly works on the peoples of the North Caucasus in the Soviet Union.

The most important achievement of this group is probably their success on bringing the Soviet deportation of North Caucasian peoples, namely the Chechens, the Ingush, Karachays, and Balkars to light and informing the world. In late 1943 and early 1944 Stalin deported seven nationalities from their native countries to Central Asia and Siberia, on the face of it, for collaboration with the German armies. Not until the late 1950s were these deported peoples allowed to return. Nevertheless, they lost more than half of their populations over the course of deportation. This caused the re-change in the balance of the North Caucasus and made a profound effect in the minds of deported peoples. Nevertheless, over time the North Caucasian émigré movements, in parallel with American-Soviet rapprochement and the natural removal of the leading figures came to an end.

These devoted fighters left a tradition of struggle behind them. In the volumes of printed material they scrutinized each and every aspects of the North Caucasian society and outlined an extensive blueprint for the unified North Caucasian State.

With the developments in the North Caucasus following the election of Mikhail Gorbachev as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in March 1985, the North Caucasian desire to establish a unified independent state came to the stage again. The complex structure, which was created by Soviet policies of *perestroika* and democratization, faced several ethnically based conflicts. The re-emergence of nationalist movements within the union republics, their feigned blindness towards the existence of other small nationalities, and moreover, the possibility of breaking away forced the peoples of the North Caucasus to become more reactionary.

By 1988, similar to the case after the February Revolution of 1917, peoples of the North Caucasus, at the outset, started to demand national sovereignty and enhanced republican status as an expression of cultural anxiety and demands for cultural sovereignty. The opportunity to form regional and national organizations was being used to embark on a revival of the national cultures, languages, and national identities by the peoples of the North Caucasus. Ethnically based, homogenized socio-political organizations sprang up throughout the whole territory of the North Caucasus.

In the final years of Soviet power, the North Caucasian peoples, from Avars to Shapsugs, developed and presented images of nationhood within the spheres of

these organizations. In the beginning, in almost all these organizations, the main concern was national-cultural development and the rights of their peoples within the Soviet Union, in compliance with the basic tenets of *perestroika* and democratization.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the discourse of national and ethnic identity among the peoples of the Caucasus diverted its path. The North Caucasian peoples' post-Soviet demands have broadened to include demands for heightened economic and legislative autonomy and even the concepts of a state, whether fully sovereign or, as a part of a broader republic.

Consequently, in the early 1990s, the peoples of the North Caucasus issued declaration after declaration upgrading the administrative status of their territories. This general tendency of establishing sovereign entities, however, caused the emergence of discord among the peoples in question. The already existing 'land question' arose as a basic reason for possible armed clashes among the peoples who had to live together as result of the Soviet policies for almost a century.

In this context, the peoples of the North Caucasus had to face the heritage of the Soviet divide-and-rule policy and of deportations once more. While these peoples were asking for the restitution of their ancestral lands, the forcibly settled peoples were in turn seeking for to retain existing status. At the same time, Turkic groups (Karachays and Balkars) were seeking their own sovereign union republics while, smaller entities like Shapsugs and the nationalities of Dagestan were in pursuit of reconstituting their autonomous administrative structures.

Likewise, while Russian nationalism did not yet gain momentum in the region, Georgian nationalism, choosing the Osetians and Abkhaz as its target,

already started to demonstrate its. The existence of this kind of nationalist threat caused solidarity among the peoples of the North Caucasus. While each group has been establishing their own national organizations on one hand, the necessity for an over-arching organization encompassing all the peoples of the North Caucasus started to sound overtly and loudly, on the other.

Within this context, some of the leading figures of the national movements, in order to defend the rights and interests of the peoples of the North Caucasus in a more efficient way, started to discuss the viability of forming an umbrella organization to be called whether 'pan-Caucasian movement,' 'Caucasian Home,' 'union' or 'confederation'. A stimulus to this idea was the belief that, despite the existence of religious and linguistic divergence, the peoples of the North Caucasus were one with the same customs, way of life and common interests. Therefore, this movement of establishing comprehensive organization for the peoples of the Caucasus developed hand in hand with the spread of ethnically based homogenous organizations in the region.

It is important to note that despite differences in motivation and in the milieu, at the outset there was a striking similarity between events of 1917 and 1989. In both cases, the leaders of the movements were aware that in order to solve the problems and to defend the rights of the Mountaineers the only option was the establishment of a unified front. This reality was revealed itself as a logical consequence of the diffused structure of the region and the strength of the rival force, whether Russian, Georgian or another one.

The first concrete step to establish a unified organization of the peoples of the North Caucasus was taken by the Abkhaz. They managed to convene the First Congress of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus on 25-26 August 1989 in Sukhum. In that Congress, after the long period, the first all-embracing organization of the Mountaineers, the Assembly of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus was established. This new Assembly was defined as a socio-political organization of all Mountaineers of the Caucasus and proclaimed aim to be the regeneration of the community of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus. Nevertheless, in spite of its comprehensive title, the Assembly, initially only attracted the Chechens, the Ingush and the Circassian peoples, including the Abkhaz and thus had an image of restricted organization.

The Russian declaration of independence in June 1990 and President Yeltsin's invitation 'to take as much sovereignty as you can swallow', however changed the course of events for the leaders of the Assembly. For the first time, after the establishment of the Soviet Union they had a chance to establish a unified structure encompassing entire North Caucasus. Thus the leaders of the Assembly decided to revise the Assembly's policies. Accordingly, with the participation of the representatives of the 13 peoples of the North Caucasus, the Assembly organized the Third Congress of the National Democratic Movements and the Parties of the North Caucasus on 1-2 November 1991, in Sukhum. In this Congress, the Assembly took a vital step and evolved into the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus declaring itself to be the legitimate heir of the North Caucasian (Mountain) Republic established on 11 May 1918. This was,

according to the Treaty, the start of the process of restoring sovereign statehood to the Mountain peoples of the Caucasus.

Nevertheless, the Confederation had some critical problems even from its initial phase. First of all not all the Mountain peoples of the North Caucasus joined. Turkic groups; the Balkars, Karachays, Nogays, and Kumuks did not respond to the invitation to join the Assembly. Moreover, Nogays and Kumuks withdrew from the Assembly as well. Dargin and Lezgin also did not take part. The Ingush, even though they had named delegates, did not participate. Moreover, its members were peoples or rather their 'representatives' not republics. This gave the Confederation the image of opposition. The existing regional governments and their leaders assumed negative, even hostile attitudes to the Confederation. At last, internal ethnic and personal quarrels made the Confederation a more complex body. Due to different policy preferences of members the Confederation's *raison d'être* was never clarified properly. While Chechens were accepting this body as an initial phase of independent North Caucasian State, the Abkhaz evaluated it as solidarity organization with their struggle with Georgia. Russians intended to use it as a leverage against Georgia and the Circassians accepted it as the means of helping their close kinsmen, the Abkhaz. This was the most critical handicap for its future

The second half of 1992 was also another year of transformation for the Confederation. Existing disagreements in the North Caucasus began to escalate and turn into the military clashes. Thus, in addition to its socio-political character, the Confederation immediately gained the status of a military power. This transformation, however, resulted in open discord and a split within the Confederation. In the 4th Extraordinary Congress of the Peoples of the Caucasus

organized in Grozny on 3-4 October 1992, this split came to light. The representatives took two different approaches on Russia. The first group, which consisted mainly of Chechens, the only policy towards Russia should be a hardening of attitude and possible secession. The other group consisted mainly of Circassian peoples and most of the Abkhaz, defended more compromising and moderate policies. They preferred to stay in the jurisdiction of more powerful state, i.e. Russia.

Meanwhile, increasing compromise between Russia and Georgia (i.e. the main rival of the Confederation at that time), and the intensifying clashes between the peoples of the North Caucasus affected the Confederation adversely. The Confederation failed to help these inter-Mountaineer claims and clashes.

Meanwhile, the Russians, because of the Chechen supremacy in the Confederation, after the submission of Georgian leaders to Russian will and the Georgian participation to Commonwealth of Independence States, decided to establish their own umbrella organizations in the North Caucasus. These organizations, established by existing official administrations of the North Caucasian autonomous regions' leaders under the control of Russia made the Confederation a marginalised body and diminished its authority and power. The reconciliatory attitudes of other members of the Confederation, mainly the Abkhaz and Circassian, resulted in the emergence of rival factions, directed by the Chechens, within the Confederation. This group also established its own organization, the Caucasian Home, ultimately aimed at the formation of a broader Confederation together with Azerbaijan and if possible Georgia.

In this perplexing situation the founding leaders of the Confederation lost their bases in the Confederation and the life of the North Caucasian peoples. Apart from this, the beginning of the Russian-Chechen War, and the apathy of other Mountaineer peoples to the Chechen cause at last brought the collapse of the Confederation. The Confederation, because of the lack of massive support of Chechens, the Abkhaz and in relation with them, the Circassians, turned a marginal ghost organization.

The Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus was just an episode of the North Caucasian struggle for unification and liberation. Although its tragic end, it added one more volume to the Mountaineers' experience of struggle. Today, the establishment of a North Caucasian union would be accepted as a utopian. In the view of political, territorial, and religious differences between the Mountaineers and more important than the existence of Russian and Georgian supremacy would make the regional integration a speculation, but, the process is going on and there is an undeniable fact that among the North Caucasians there was, is and will be a belief that the Mountaineer peoples have the common identity and myth of North Caucasian unity which would be turned into a reality under the suitable conditions.

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APPENDICES

*LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE*⁶⁷⁰

- I) Ibero-Caucasian Language Group
 - A) Southern Caucasian Group;
 - 1- Kartvelian (Georgian),
 - 2- Mingrelian,
 - 3- Svanetian,
 - 4- Laz.
 - B) Northwest Caucasian Group;
 - 1- Abkhaz,
 - a) Abkhaz,
 - b) Abaza,
 - c) Ubykh.
 - 2- Circassian (Adyghabze),
 - a) Eastern (Kabardinian),
 - i- Kabardin (Baksan),
 - ii- Bes(le)ney.
 - b) Western (Adyge),
 - i- Bzhedug,
 - ii- Shapsug,
 - iii- Abadzekh,
 - iv- Temirgoy.
 - C) Northeast Caucasian Group;
 - 1- Vaynakh,
 - a) Ingush,
 - b) Chechen,
 - c) Batsbi.
 - 2- Avaro-Andi-Dido Group,
 - a) Avar,
 - b) Andi,
 - i- Andi,
 - ii- Botlikh,
 - iii- Akhvakh,
 - iv- Godoberi,
 - v- Bagulal,
 - vi- Tindi,
 - vii- Chamalal,
 - viii- Karata.
 - c) Dido,
 - i- Dido,
 - ii- Khvarshi,

⁶⁷⁰ Ronald Wixman, pp. 87-88. Hewitt, CAS, 1999, 18 (4). Bennigsen-Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire*.

- iii- Bezhetta,
- iv- Khunzal,
- v- Ginukh.
- d) Archi.
- 3- Lak-Dargin Group,
Dargin (Kaytak, Kubachi) and Lak.
- 4- Samurian group.
Lezgin, Agul, Rutul, Tsakhur, Tabasaran, Udi,
Shakhdag.
- II) Altaic (Turkic) Language Group;
 - A) Oghuz group,
 - 1- Azeri,
 - 2- Turkmen.
 - B) Western Turkic or Kipchak group,
 - 1- Karachay-Balkar,
 - 2- Nogay,
 - 3- Kumyk.
- III) Indo-European Language Group,
 - A) Iranic group,
 - 1- Eastern Iranian (Osetian),
 - 2- Western Iranian (Tat).
 - B) Slavic Group (Eastern Slav: Russian and Ukrainian),
Armenian.

POPULATION OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS (1897 Russian Census)⁶⁷¹

<u>Language</u> :	<u>Population</u> :
Abkhaz	72,104
Cherkess	46,286
Kabardinian	98,561
Karachay	27,223
Balkar	34,232
Osetian	171,716
Chechen	226,496
Ingush	47,409
Kist	413
Avar	212,692
Dargin	130,209
Lak, Tabasaran, etc.	91,880
Lezgin	159,213
Kumyk	83,408
Nogay	64,080
Udi	7,100
Tat	95,056

⁶⁷¹ Source is Ronald Wixman. In the 1897 census data was not presented by nationality, but rather by declared native language. In this data, the number of Abkhaz population included both Abkhaz and Abaza, both being considered one people with one language at this time. The Balkars were referred to as Mountain Tatars (*Gorskie Tatary*). The Kists were later reclassified as Ingush and the figure representing Tats included both Tats and Mountain Jews.

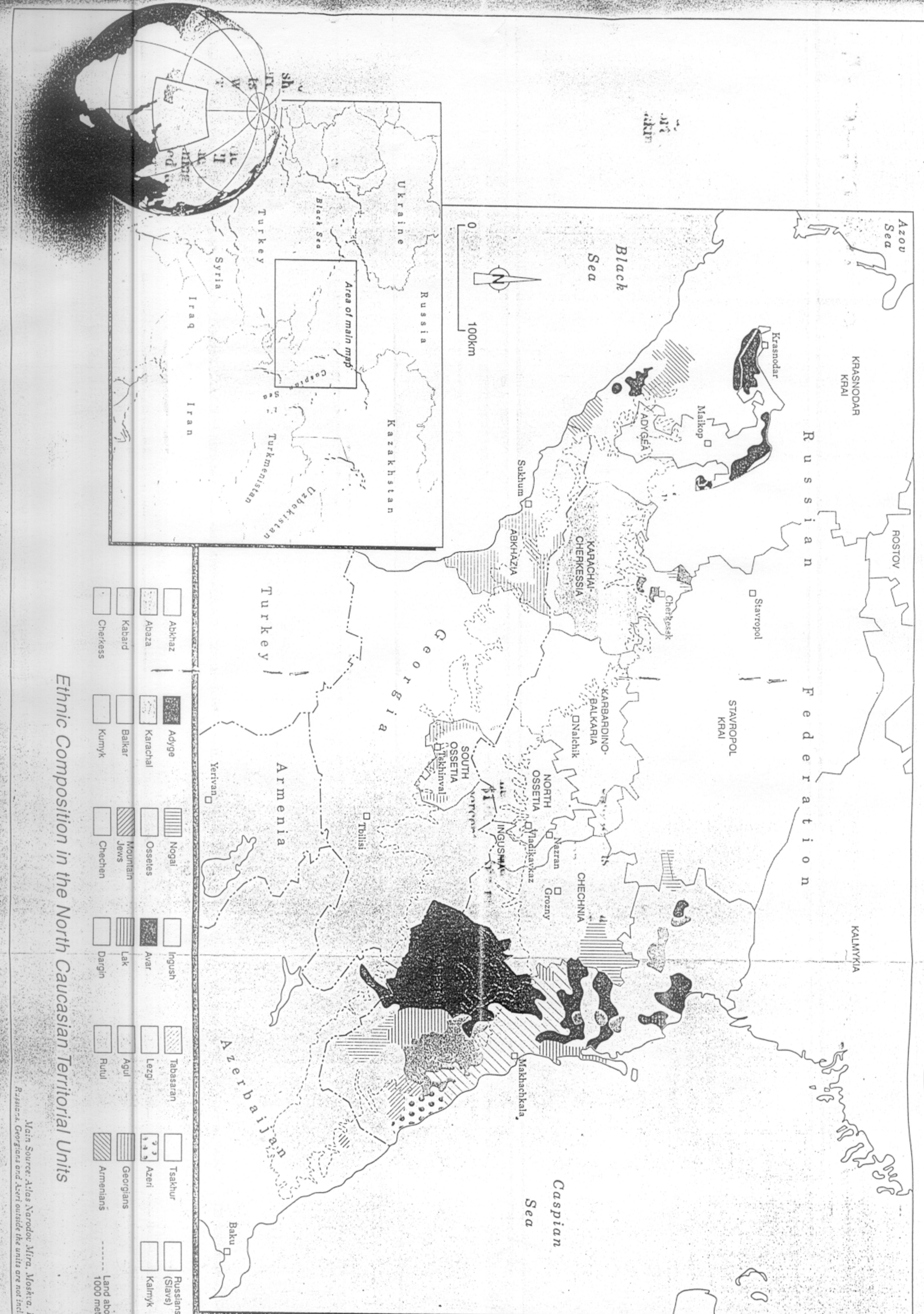
**POPULATION OF NORTH CAUCASIAN PEOPLES (1926, 1959, 1970
AND 1989)⁶⁷²**

Ethnic Group	1926 :	1959 :	1970 :	1989 :
Mingrelians	242,990	--	--	--
Svanetians	13,218	--	--	--
Abkhaz	56,957	65,430	83,097	90,713
Abaza	13,825	19,591	25,448	
Circassians				
Adyge	65,270	79,631	108,711	124,941
Cherkess	--	30,453	46,470	52,356
Kabardinian	139,925	203,620	321,719	394,691
Karachay	55,123	81,403	131,074	156,140
Balkar	33,307	42,408	66,334	88,771
Osetian	272,272	412,592	541,893	597,802
Ingush	74,097	105,980	186,198	237,577
Chechens	318,522	418,756	785,782	958,309
Avaro-Andi-Dido	197,392	270,394	482,844	604,202
Laks	40,380	63,529	188,804	204,370
Dargins	108,963	158,149	202,297	231,805
Lezgins	134,529	233,129	382,611	466,833
Aguls	7,563	6,709	246,854	280,431
Rutuls	10,495	6,732	71,722	78,196
Tsakhurs	19,085	7,321	11,103	
Kumyks	94,549	134,967	188,792	
Nogay	36,274	38,583	51,784	
Tabasaran	31,983	34,700	55,188	
Tats	28,705	11,463	22,441	30,817
Mountain Jews	25,974	25,225	9,389	19,516
Udi	2,455	3,678	5,919	

⁶⁷² The numbers of the 1926 and 1959 censuses were from Wixman, *ibid*, pp.84-85. The numbers from the 1979 and 1989 censuses were from Paul B. Henze, "The Demography of the Caucasus according to 1989 Soviet Census Data," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.10, no.1/2, pp.147-170. The figures related with the Chechens, Ingush, Kabardinians, Balkars, Adyge, Karachay and Cherkess were reflecting populations of the respective nationalities existing within the whole USSR. The number of the Osetians was controversial because of the dispersed status of the Osetians.

SLAVIC POPULATION IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

<u>Ethnic Unit :</u>	<u>1979 :</u>	<u>1989 :</u>	<u>Change:</u>
Chechen-Ingush ASSR	350,346	308,395	-11,8
Dagestan ASSR	197,572	175,424	-11,2
Kabardino-Balkar ASSR	248,492	255,569	2,8
North Ossetian ASSR	213,162	201,026	-5,7
Adyge AO	299,948	310,096	3,4
Karachay-Cherkess AO	171,202	183,550	7,2
TOTALS	1,480,722	1,434,650	-3,2



Ethnic Composition in the North Caucasian Territorial Units

Main Source: Atlas Narodov Mira, Moskva, 196
 Russia's Georgians and Azeri outside the units are not included