

BAKU EXPEDITION OF 1917–1918: A STUDY OF THE OTTOMAN POLICY
TOWARDS THE CAUCASUS

A Master's Thesis

by

YALÇIN MURGUL

THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
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To My Grandfathers

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The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of
Bilkent University

by

YALÇIN MURGUL

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

Asst. Prof. Oktay Özel
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

Asst. Prof. Nur Bilge Criss
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

Asst. Prof. Evgeni Radushev
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Erdal Erel
Director

ABSTRACT

BAKU EXPEDITION OF 1917-1918: A STUDY OF THE OTTOMAN POLICY TOWARDS THE CAUCASUS

Murgul, Yalçın

M. A., Department of History

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Oktay Özel

September 2007

The Ottoman expedition to Baku has central importance in Caucasus between the Bolshevik Revolution and end of the WWI. Since the Ottoman expedition to Baku was the most concrete action towards domination of the area, it served as the main determinant in the formation of relations between the Great Powers and the Caucasian people fighting for their sovereignty in the period until October 1918. This thesis based on a multi-sided bibliography, attempts to study the Baku Operation of the Caucasus-Islam Army commanded by Nuri Pasha in the course of the First World War in detail by analyzing both political and military processes and international dimensions, with a detailed picture of the whole process. By placing the Ottoman Operation at the centre, it aims to analyze the perception of both sides of the international struggle over Baku.

Since the studies on the Committee of Union and Progress and Enver Pasha give special place to the issue of Pan-Turkism, this study argues that Ottoman Army's Baku operation has a special place in Ottoman history as one of practical implementations of Pan-Turkist policies and it has an important role in the shaping of Azerbaijani National Movement in Transcaucasia. The thesis is divided into three parts. These are "The Ottoman State's Caucasus Policy from the February Revolution to Batum Treaties", "The General Situation in Transcaucasia before Baku Operation", and "The Caucasus-Islam Army's Baku Operation". In this context Germany, Soviet Russia and Britain's strategies in the region will also be considered.

Key Words: Enver Pasha, Caucasus-Islam Army, Ottoman Army, Transcaucasia, WWI, Pan-Turkism, Nuri Pasha, Azerbaijani National Movement, Baku

ÖZET

1917-1918 Baku Seferi: Osmanlılar'ın Kafkasya Politikası Üzerine Bir Çalışma

Yüksek Lisans, Tarih Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Oktay Özel

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Bolşevik Devrimi ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın sona ermesi arasında geçen dönemde Kafkasya'nın durumu söz konusu olduğunda Osmanlı Ordusu'nun Bakü seferi merkezi öneme sahip olan konudur. Kafkasya üzerine planları olan büyük devletlerin ve Kafkasya'da bağımsızlık mücadelesi veren halkların 1918 Ekim'ine kadar olan ilişkilerinin şekillenmesinde Osmanlı Devleti'nin Bakü'ye ilerleyişi bölgedeki hakimiyet mücadelesindeki en somut hamle olduğu için temel belirleyici olmuştur. Çok yönlü bir kaynakçaya dayanılarak yazılan bu tezin amacı Nuri Paşa'nın idaresindeki İslam Ordusu'nun Birinci Dünya Savaşı esnasındaki Bakü Harekatı'nı tüm siyasi ve askeri süreci ve uluslararası boyutu analiz ederek açıklamaya çalışmaktır. Tez Osmanlı hareketini merkeze alarak Baku üzerindeki uluslararası mücadeleye katılan tüm tarafların bakış açısını çözümlenmeyi hedeflemektedir. Enver Paşa ve İttihad ve Terakki üzerine çalışmalar söz konusu olduğunda Pan-Türkizm'e her zaman özel bir önem atfedilmiştir; bu bağlamda Osmanlı Ordusu'nun Baku harekatı'nın Pan-Türkist politikaların uygulanması meselesi ele alındığında Osmanlı Tarihi'nde özel bir yeri,

Azerbaycan Milli Hareketi'nin şekillenmesinde ise özel bir rolü vardır. Tez üç bölümden oluşmaktadır. Bu bölümler “Şubat Devrimi'nden Batum Antlaşmaları'na Kadar Olan Dönemde Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kafkasya Siyaseti”, “Bakü Harekatı Öncesinde Transkafkasya'da Genel Durum” ve “ İslam Ordusu'nun Bakü Harekatı” başlıklarını taşımaktadır. Tezde işlenen genel durum içinde Almanya, Sovyet Rusya ve Britanya'nın bölge stratejileri de ayrıca ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Enver Paşa, Kafkas-İslam Ordusu, Osmanlı Ordusu, Transkafkasya, Birinci Dünya Savaşı, Pan-Türkizm, Nuri Paşa, Azerbaycan Milli Hareketi, Bakü.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

World War I is the major event that triggered all the nationalistic and independence wars in Asia which still has significant influence on international relations. During and after World War I the multinational empires of the era started to dissolve and as a result, peoples under the rule of these empires were faced with the problem of surviving as sovereign nations. Following the fall of Romanov dynasty, the lack of authority enabled the Great Powers to intervene, and peoples of Caucasia faced a bloody process during which they understood the merciless reality of the struggle for survival.

In the beginning, the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917 caused enthusiasm for independence especially amongst the Azerbaijani Turks, Armenians and Georgians. The end of Russian despotism was deeply awaited by the revolutionary and nationalist groups in the Caucasus. However, the failure of Russia amid the tumultuous WWI was identical with the continuation of war in a more notorious way for the peoples of Transcaucasia. During WWI, Transcaucasia under Russian rule was not a place of great battles. For that reason, the fall of the Russian Empire meant that the battlefield would now be transferred to Caucasia.

Especially following the October Revolution the opposing sides of the war intervened in the Caucasus through diplomatic, military and economic means. Germans were hoping to gain access to the oil reserves of Baku; Great Britain was trying to keep Germany and the Ottoman Empire away from the Baku oil reserves and Central Asia, while the Bolsheviks sought to prevent all powers of WWI from capturing Baku. However, since the Ottoman expedition to Baku was considered to be the most concrete step towards the control of Caucasia, it was the centre of attention.

The Ottoman expedition to Baku is of central importance during the period between the Bolshevik Revolution and the end of the WWI. Since Ottoman expedition to Baku was the most concrete action towards domination of the area, this event served as the main determinant in the formation of relations between the Great Powers and Caucasian people fighting for their sovereignty in the period until October 1918. Since many different forces intervened in this matter, the subject is too wide to be discussed from a single perspective.

One of the most important issues related with Ottoman State's military actions towards the Caucasus was Pan-Turkism. Pan Turkism was a crisis ideology. Istanbul, political center of this ideology, was facing constant threats from the West. The Young Turks were aware that the Ottoman Empire, a traditional multi-cultural society, could not survive in the age of nation-states. The well-known cause, as explained in Andre Malraux's "The Walnut Trees of Altenburg"'s section on Enver Pasha, was to transfer the power of the empire to the lands occupied by the Turkic populations.

Especially following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, Pan-Turkism became an ideology widely expressed amongst Turkish intellectuals. Turkish ideologists as Tekin

Alp¹, Ziya Gökalp and journal “Turk Yurdu”, *Tanin* newspaper assisted the spread of Pan-Turkist ideology. As a general idea in their agitative writings, Russia, where a large number of Turkic-speaking populations were living as “captive”, was considered to be the main rival. The sole way of freedom for the Turks of Russia was symbolized with the “Kızıl Elma”(Red Apple) Legend. Many Turkish intellectuals of the era supported this aim and favored the strategy of assertive nationalism. In regard to this aim, members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) participated in various activities in Russia following the 1905 Revolution. Appropriate to the war conditions, the Ottoman Empire under the CUP rule was hoping to use the Pan-Turkism card against its most traditional enemy, the Russian Empire. Pan-Turkism has an important place especially in Enver Pasha’s military and political strategies. By using Pan-Turkism, Enver Pasha wanted to transform the geopolitical dynamics of the Ottoman Empire and Asia. Additionally, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* (Ottoman Secret Service), that was under the command of Enver Pasha, spread Pan-Turkist propaganda during WWI amongst the Turkic peoples living outside the Ottoman borders. The Caucasus was one of those central regions for the inoculation of Pan-Turkist propaganda².

Undoubtedly Ziya Gökalp was the most influential intellectual who provided the necessary cultural foundations of Young Turks’ expansionist strategies in Russia. According to Ziya Gökalp, all Turks, Ottomans, Azerbaijanis, Crimean Tatars, Kyrgyz’s, Uzbeks and others were potentially one single nation. Accordingly, racial differences were not determining factors. It was rather the cultural similarities of these communities that united them. Most Turks were Muslims, they shared common

¹ In fact Tekin Alp was an Ottoman Jew called Moiz Cohen.

² Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*. (Bloomington, 1995), “In the Ottoman Empire:Genesis and Flowering” section, pp. 29-56.

traditions and their language was very similar³. What needed to be done was to liberate and to awaken the “captive” Turkic peoples under Russian rule by military means. The below mentioned couplet of Ziya Gokalp’s “Kızıl Destan” (Red Epic) clearly indicates the true aspirations of Enver Pasha and the Ottoman state in the beginning of the WWI:

“The land of the enemy shall be devastated,

Turkey shall be enlarged and become Turan.”⁴

Ottoman aspirations on the Caucasus were composed of a three-fold plan since the beginning of the war. First, Kars-Ardahan and Batum provinces that were lost to Russians during the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War had to be recaptured. Afterwards, Caucasian Muslims had to be liberated from Russian rule. After reaching the Caspian Sea, a bond would be established between Ottomans and Central Asian Turks and the “Turan” ideal would be materialised⁵.

The Caucasus was also an economically attractive region due to its vast resources. It had a wide range of resources such as oil, manganese, copper reserves, tobacco, cotton and wheat⁶. Additionally, at that time Baku held the most valuable oil reserves in the world. Rule over the strategic lands of Caucasus would grant passage to the Caspian Sea, Central Asia, Black Sea and Near East. According to Ottoman archival material Baku region had 1,500,000 million Muslim residents in 1914⁷. It was a fact that Baku was very important for the Turan ideal due to its geopolitical and economical

³ Charles Warren Hostler, *Turkism and The Soviets: The Turks of The World and Their Political Objectives* (London,1957), p. 143.

⁴ Hostler, *Turkism and The Soviets*, p. 143. The couplet in Turkish below is the original one:

“Düşmanın ülkesi viran olacak
Türkiye büyüüp Turan olacak”

⁵ Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi, IX.* (Ankara 1996), p. 414.

⁶ Victor Serge, *Year One of The Russian Revolution.* (Chicago, 1972), p. 191.

⁷ Ahmet Özgiray, “XIX.-XX. Yüzyılda Stratejik ve Sosyokültürel Açıdan Türkiye-Kafkasya İlişkileri” in *Sekizinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri I-XIX. ve XX. Yüzyıllarda Türkiye ve Kafkaslar.*(Ankara, 2003),p.163.

significance, as well as the high number of Turks in the area. Capturing this city was one of Ottomans' goals.

During 1914-1915 *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* agents increased their activities in Transcaucasia. Thus, bilateral political opportunities between the Ottomans and Azerbaijani Turks emerged. One of the former *Difai*⁸ members, Fethali Han Hoyski's nephew Aslan Han Hoyski met with Enver Pasha during February 1915 at the Erzurum headquarters. During this meeting, he asked for approval for a republic to be formed in areas consisting of Baku, Elisavetpol, Erivan governments along with Terekh and Daghestan. Aslan Han Hoyski also promised that if the Ottomans could secure Iranian Azerbaijani support, hundreds of thousands of Muslims would revolt⁹. However, neither the developments in the Ottoman side, nor the realities of Caucasus supported Aslan Han Hoyski's considerations and suggestions; there were limits to Ottoman love affair in Caucasia. Although Muslims in the Caucasus were higher in population, they were extremely weak in regard to military means. A population exempt from military service and suffering from the lack of national consciousness could not have the military impact mentioned by Aslan Han Hoyski. Parallel to this, following the Bolshevik Revolution Caucasian Muslims and especially Azerbaijani Turks were frequently going to perceive their weakness in military terms. Considering Ottomans' disastrous defeat at the Battle of Sarıkamış in 1915, Azerbaijani Turks would not take the risk to revolt. As a matter of fact, following the Battle of Sarıkamış, Mehmet Emin Resulzade, the director of *Açıksöz* newspaper and the leader of the secret association "Musavat", supported Russia; while Fethali Han Hoyski felt indifferent both to the Ottoman and the Romanov Dynasties. At

⁸ *Difai* is the military resistance organization of Azerbaijani Turks founded by Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey after the start of Tatar-Armenian War in 1905.

⁹ Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Müslüman Cemaatten Ulusal Kimliğe Rus Azerbaycanı 1905-1920* (İstanbul, 1988), p. 115.

the same time “Kaspii”¹⁰ newspaper accused the Central Asian Muslims who revolted in 1916 of treason. Moreover, when Russians captured Erzurum on 16 February 1916, Azerbaijani clergymen organized a thanksgiving ceremony. Because of these facts, the Azerbaijan national movement was only going to be supported by political refugees living under Ottoman rule¹¹.

As indicated above, Ottoman defeats in WWI diminished the faith on “Turan” ideal. As a matter of fact, in 1916 during the Turkic Peoples Conference in Berlin, Yusuf Akçura said that the Turan ideal meant Ottoman Imperialism¹². An important part of Muslim-Turk intelligentsia in the Caucasus shared the same feelings with Yusuf Akçura about Turan, and thus were very cautious in their relations with the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless Russia’s withdrawal from the war as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 altered the whole situation. The miraculous collapse of the Russian Empire created a perfect opportunity for the Ottomans that was rarely found throughout Ottoman history. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Enver Pasha would once more take the chance of applying his geopolitical strategies based on the Turan dream, which had previously ended with the Sarıkamış disaster, and he would choose Baku as the new target.

Although Enver enthusiastically attempted to activate Ottoman military forces for an operation towards Caucasus, he would see how Germans disappointed the Ottomans on this issue. Before the Bolshevik Revolution, Germans viewed Pan-Turkism as a major weapon that could be used against their rival, namely Russia. For that reason, Germany was fully supporting Enver Pasha’s liberation projects on Caucasus and Turkistan. Even Germany was training secret service agents such as the

¹⁰ Kaspii is the first Muslim newspaper published in Russia in 1881. It was published in Baku and its sponsor was Azerbaijani businessman Hacı Zeynel Abidin Tagiyev.

¹¹ Swietochowski, pp. 116-118.

¹² İbrahim Bahadır, *Ümmetten Millete Türk Ulusu'nun İnşası* (Ankara, 2001), p. 70.

Azerbaijani Turks to promote Pan-Turkism amongst the Muslims of Russia¹³. Nevertheless, this stance was changed after the Bolshevik Revolution, because the Russian Empire was now dissolved and the main objective for the Germans was achieved. Since Germany's plan was to control the lands that were also aimed by the Turan ideal, he did not want to leave this chaotic territory to the Ottoman Empire. Both Ottomans and Germans wanted to control Baku; although they were allies, they did not want to share control over the region. Since Ottoman Army's Baku operation formed the most problematic point in German-Ottoman relations during WWI, it deserves special attention.

The 1828 Turkmenchai Treaty divided Azerbaijan between Iran and Russia and thus, the Azerbaijani Turks were separated. However, the Russian Revolution changed this situation and Britain faced the problem of the new Azerbaijan State in the north that would affect Iranian Azerbaijan in the east controlled by British forces¹⁴. Britain's main objective in the Caucasus during the first period of 1917 was to sustain the status quo. Even The February Revolution did not change Britain's stance on this issue. Yet, the rise of nationalist- revolutionary movement as a result of the Russian Revolution soon spread to Iran and threatened Britain's authority in that area. Furthermore by 1917 Britain lost Russia's support in that region¹⁵. The Russian Imperial Army disintegrated after the Bolshevik Revolution and this created a serious weakness in the eastern defenses of the Allied Powers, especially for Britain. The collapse of Russian Empire meant destruction of the main defensive wall behind India. In that desperate position, Britain had to take initiative to secure control of the Caspian Sea, Central Asia and most notably Indian Route. For that reason, in the period that the Ottoman army carried out

¹³ Landau, pp. 52-54.

¹⁴ Frederick Stanwood, *War, Revolution & British Imperialism in Central Asia* (London, 1983), p. 6.

¹⁵ Stanwood, pp. 12-13.

the Baku operation, Britain used Dunsterforce, which was under the command of Lionel Dunsterville, to display influence on the Baku question.

Russia's main goal under the Bolsheviks was to establish a new state, while the Ottomans' goal was to protect their state from collapse. For that reason, the Caucasus was equally important to both countries. In this respect, Richard Pipes states that Bolshevik Russia's relations with the Central Powers that lasted one year following the October Revolution is very essential. To him, the communists for the first time had the chance to formulate and apply their foreign policy strategies and tactics¹⁶. Soviet Russia, which was one of the superpowers of the twentieth century, accumulated a vast amount of foreign policy experience during this period by improving relations with Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman operation to the Caucasus also serves as the initial step of Turkish-Soviet relations.

Seizure of Baku by the Ottomans will be examined in the present study in terms of military, political and diplomatic course of actions. The main objective is to explain the political and military attitudes of all sides on the Ottoman operation in respect to their order of importance. In doing this the Ottoman military operation will remain central to the issue. In regard to the sources used, the main difference from previous studies will be that this study will consider the various perspectives of all the powers related to the Ottoman Baku expedition, therefore will use a variety of sources.

“Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı” based on the Turkish General Staff's ATASE Archives, Rüştü's “Büyük Harpte Baku Yollarında” and Süleyman İzzet's “Büyük Harpte 15. Piyade Tümeninin Azerbaycan ve Şimali Kafkasya'daki Harekat ve Muharebeleri” were thoroughly used in this study while examining the Ottoman military expedition. These sources mostly refer to

¹⁶ Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York, 1990), p. 568.

military information. On the other hand, Akdes Nimet Kurat's "Türkiye ve Rusya" and Yusuf Hikmet Bayur's "Türk İnkılabı Tarihi" have also proved to be highly valuable works explaining the political course of action.

There are vast amounts of publications on Britain's intervention in the Caucasus. The most prominent of them is British army commander Lionel Dunsterville's memoirs. Additionally, researchers such as Stanwood, Mitrokhin, Sareen, Ellis, Kaya Tuncer Çağlayan and Bülent Gökay are worth mentioning.

Researchers Fischer, Trumpener, Pomiankowski, Mustafa Çolak and Mühlmann provide valuable information on German-Ottoman relations. However, as mentioned by Erich Jan Zürcher, 98 percent of the reports filed by the Prussian military officers on the Ottoman Empire's performance of the WWI were destroyed during the WWII bombings of Potsdam¹⁷ and this constitutes a vital handicap in the examination of Ottoman-German relations related with the issue of Transcaucasia.

Suny's, Swietochowski, Kazemzadeh and Hovanissian's works are also highly valuable sources that focus on the 1917-1918 period in Transcaucasia. Mehman Süleymanov, who is also known for studies on post-Soviet era Azerbaijan national history, Naki Keykurun, and Mirza Bala Mehmetzade have both published important information for researchers regarding the Azerbaijan National Movement and history.

The demonization of the Ottoman Empire and the National Movement of Azerbaijan is obvious in Soviet Historiography. Soviet historians condemn the Azerbaijani National Movement in various ways, especially in the case of Musavat Party. The Soviet regime required historical propaganda. Soviet historians were obliged to inscribe historical events from a propagandist perspective. Even so, Azerbaijani and

¹⁷ Erik Jan Zürcher, 'Between Death and Desertion. The Experience of Ottoman Soldier in World War I', *Turcica* 28 (1996), p. 238.

Armenian Soviet archives and the newspapers of that era used in the works of Russian historians clearly demonstrate the views of Baku defenders' supporters and the Bolsheviks. Among these historians Tokarzhevskii, Sarkisyan and Kadishev are of high importance.

As far the archival material used for this study, I should mention two particular archives. National Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic (ARDA) and Archives of Political Parties (ARSPIHDA) contain essential documents with reference to the political conjuncture of the Caucasus during the period 1917-1918. However, due to the lack of catalogues, researchers are faced with difficulties in locating the documents. For that reason, the information obtained from the archives was mostly categorized in specific folders on a presumption basis. Finally ATASE archives(Turkish General Staff's archives) provides useful information for researchers. However, strict regulations make studying difficult for researchers. Despite such difficulties, I have tried to make most of the material these three archives house.

CHAPTER II:

OTTOMAN POLICY TOWARDS CAUCASIA FROM THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION TO BATUM TREATIES

II.1. Collapse of Tsarist Russia and Towards the Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference

Until February 1917, no one could speak anything about the Ottoman Empire's possible operation in Caucasia. After the defeat of the Ottoman forces in Sarıkamış, the Ottoman military was almost in a disastrous situation in the Eastern Anatolian Region and the Russian Army was holding its forces in the occupied Ottoman lands. The event that could immediately reverse the situation could only be an outstanding event that had never been experienced; it was what exactly happened in February 1917.

Disorder in the economic life brought the end of the Tsarist Russia. The total power of the state was within a disintegration process, and in this situation, the army and public were far from satisfying their needs. The industries were not able to provide food; therefore, by the end of February, it would be impossible for Russia to continue fighting in terms of both economic and morale related considerations¹⁸.

In February 1917 in Petrograd, demonstration marches took place with the aim to protest poor living conditions and poverty and those continued to take place in an

¹⁸ Voline, pp. 128-130.

increasing manner. As a result of those demonstration marches, protests that the police forces were trying to keep under control could not be stopped and instead increased dramatically even resulting in a break over in the government forces. It was the end of the Romanov Dynasty¹⁹.

During this chaos, in February 27, two political centers were established. These were the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Provisional Committee of the State Duma those of which were established under the leadership of N. S. Chkeidze by labour's and army's representatives of the time. In March 15, within all this chaos, Czar Nicholas II announced his resignation²⁰.

Soldiers in the borders understood this certain resignation of the Czar on March as a sign of the upcoming peace. Order Number – 1 dated March 1, published by Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, included paragraphs envisioning democratisation of the army. This written command enabled military units to elect their representatives and from time to time, with the help of this decree, the newly chosen parties selected by the soldiers could take old commanders' positions in the hierarchy. Again the approval of the Declaration of Soldiers' Rights in March 11 by Kerensky and in May 14 the right given to independent soldiers of political conduct, the democratisation process of the army was completed²¹. However, this kind of democratisation, especially when World War I is the case, was no different from disintegration of the Imperial Army of Russia. End of Tsarist Russia was a shock upon the command-control chain in the military of Tsarist Russia that weakened this chain and the overall control of the military forces. The soldiers started disobeying their

¹⁹ Voline, *The Unknown Revolution 1917-1921* (New York, 1974), pp. 131-133.

²⁰ Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, "February Revolution" in *Critical companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, edited by Edward Acton, Vladimir Iu. Cherniaev, William G. Rosenberg (Bloomington, 1997), p.57; Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918* (Berkeley, University of California, 1967), p. 69.

²¹ Ronald I. Kowalski, *The Russian Revolution: 1917-1921* (London; New York, 1997), pp. 176-178.

commanders' orders and present their candidates as commanders revealing the fact that the Imperial Russian Army's disintegration was accelerated steadily. Military committees were built up due to administrative and chaos related problems²².

Bolshevik protests between February to October aiming to demonstrate counter ideology against the war in a pacifist way would be highly effective in soldiers' fleeing from the fronts and indirectly in disintegration of the Imperial Army of Russia. The peace propaganda against WWI of Bolshevism spread quickly like a virus among the soldiers desiring peace²³.

According to Fevzi Çakmak, in the winter of 1917 alone, Russia had lost 100.000 soldiers in the Eastern Anatolian Region and Caucasian fronts. Despite this loss, with the reinforcements, the total Russian soldiers numbered 250.000 at that time. However, Russia did not have power to afford that crowded force and therefore, it was nearly impossible to even make any attacks²⁴. If Russia could attack the Ottoman forces with that crowded army in Anatolia, the distance between the army and the backside communication link center would increase and would result in a non-restorable provision problem. Similarly, attacking the Ottoman front with a weak force would not result in any success²⁵. Starting from the spring of 1917, the situation was completely disadvantageous to Russia in Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus²⁶. Typhus, scurvy and similar problems resulting from hygiene and food, became very common in the Caucasian army²⁷.

²² Allan K. Wildman, "The Breakdown of The Imperial Army in 1917" in *Critical companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, edited by Edward Acton, Vladimir Iu. Cherniaev, William G. Rosenberg (Bloomington, 1997), pp.69-70.

²³ Wildman, pp. 72-73.

²⁴ Fevzi Çakmak, *Büyük Harpte Şark Cephesi Hareketleri: Şark Vilayetlerimizde, Kafkasya'da ve İran'da 1935 de Akademide Verilen Konferanslar*. (Ankara, 1936), p. 260.

²⁵ Felix Guze, *Büyük Harpte Kafkas Cephesindeki Muharebeler*. (İstanbul, 1932), p. 97.

²⁶ Çakmak, p. 260.

²⁷ Serge, p. 193.

The Ottoman public opinion became aware of these developments within a very short time. In the Istanbul press, since March 20, the first news about the Russian Revolution started to appear²⁸. For the Ottoman side, these events were signs of a peace agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. Additionally, the Ottomans realized the disintegration of the Russian army in Anatolia as well.

By summer 1917, Russian soldiers originating from farmers had started to leave the front and return to their homes. Despite Kerensky's proclaiming of democracy on September 14, 1917, the army was about to completely disintegrate, lost commanding authority, and the tendency of the villagers for plundering had increased²⁹. At that moment, Kerensky preferred continuing to fight to call the Russian army rather than accelerate the demobilization of the army. However, the problem of demobilization would in a way bring the end of the Kerensky government and help the Bolsheviks to come into power easily.

By the withdrawal of Russia from the war, Enver Pasha had declared that this was a sign of an improvement in favour of the Central Powers of which the Ottomans was also a member at that moment, and that it would be possible to defeat other Entente powers as well in the near future³⁰.

Enver Pasha was aiming to attack the British army forces in Baghdad to gain a victory in the Near East, instead of pursuing an offensive strategy in Eastern Anatolia. However, Enver Pasha immediately changed his plan and sent the Seventh Army to Palestine³¹. Therefore, the Ottoman Army forces remained passive in Eastern Anatolia till October 1917. In this period additionally, the Ottoman army faced the problem of

²⁸ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya* (Ankara, 1970), p. 317.

²⁹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı* (Ankara, 1993), p. 423.

³⁰ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 424.

³¹ Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of The Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport, 2001), p. 171.

hunger; the lands in Eastern Anatolia were under occupation, and the Ottoman economy was in a big crisis.

By the time the effects of the February Revolution began to dominate Russia, the Ottoman Third Army was protecting the 190 km. area from Munzur Mountains to the Black Sea with a total of 30.000 combatants and 125 cannons. On this line, the Russian army against the Third Army had 86.000 combatants and 146 cannons. In May, on the other hand, the Third Army had this time 66 battalions consisting of 30.000 combatants each, 177 machine guns, and 157 cannons. The number of machine guns, of animals, supply, transportation and clothing were all problematic. Moreover, at this period Russia had successfully strengthened Erzurum and Trabzon. Russia had 9; the Ottomans had 3 planes at this front³². In May 1917, Ahmed İzzet Pasha and Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) were, to make a front operation, proposing that necessary preparations and solutions for the problems of provisioning should be handled³³. As a result, it would be impossible to expect a serious Ottoman attack in the Caucasian front until the Bolshevik Revolution that had accelerated the disintegration of Russian Imperial Army. In October 1917, the Russian Army was “protecting a line from the west of Trabzon, along the Erzincan-Kemah passage, passing through south of Dersim and Murat waters to Lake Van and to Başkale”. Despite the February 1917 Revolution, this line could succeed to keep its existence until the October Revolution in 1917³⁴.

After the Bolsheviks overthrew the provisional Kerensky government, with the decision of the Petrograd Workers and Soldiers Russian Government, on November 8, 1917, a Peace Decree was published. With this Decree, Soviet Russia advised the immediate start of meetings and discussions with all the fighting governments for a just

³² *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, pp. 415-416.

³³ Metin Ayışığı, *Mareşal Ahmet İzzet Paşa: Askeri ve Siyasi Hayatı* (Ankara, 1997), p. 139.

³⁴ Stefanos Yerasimos, *Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Türk-Sovyet ilişkileri 1917-1923* (İstanbul, 2000), p. 11.

peace agreement. Offering of peace and open diplomacy without any annexation and indemnity were building up the essence of these peace discussions³⁵. In his speech on November 8, 1917, Lenin declared that they did not accept any of the previous international agreements and contracts before coming to power, that they would make public all the secret agreements of Russia and that they were offering a three-month cease-fire³⁶.

The offer of a peace without any annexation and indemnity had created a big enthusiasm in the Ottoman State that was suffering from economic and military weakness. The withdrawal of the force that used to fight against the Ottoman Empire with one of the highest successes and performances during the war³⁷ without any annexation and indemnity and the return of the Russian soldiers in the Caucasian front to their homes with the effect of counter propaganda against the war both meant delaying collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

In these international, political and military circumstances, news about the overthrow of the Provisional Government in Petrograd on November 7, 1917 by the Bolsheviks arriving to Istanbul revived the hopes for success of the Ottoman Empire with great enthusiasm. Yunus Nadi's articles appearing in the newspaper "Tasvir-i Efkar", dated November 10, 1917, entitled "the Bolshevik Revolution" and dated November 12, 1917, entitled "Evolution of the Russian Revolution" reveal the appetite

³⁵ Selami Kılıç, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerinin Doğuşu: Brest-Litovsk Barış ve Müzakereleri*, (22 Aralık 1917-3 Mart 1918), (Istanbul, 1998), p. 32.

³⁶ *Milestones of Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1967 (Translation of Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR 1917-1967)*, (Moscow, 1967), pp. 30-32.

³⁷ Dominic Lieven, "Russia, Europe and World War I" in *Critical companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, edited by Edward Acton, Vladimir Iu. Cherniaev, William G. Rosenberg (Bloomington, 1997), p.44.

towards Lenin's offer for peace publicly. Yunus Nadi describes the peace efforts of the Bolsheviks and Lenin with praises.³⁸

Ahmet Nesimi explained the peace offer of the Russian government to the Parliament of the Deputies on December 3, 1917 with great enthusiasm and he was received with great applause. However, many deputies were supporting the idea of a peace in accordance with the objectives of war. Among these, the deputy of Sinop, Hasan Fehmi was claiming that although Tsarist Russia had disintegrated and a new Bolshevik power had come into force, the program of the new rule included an attraction in terms of its deeds and therefore it was still the most powerful government of the world. According to his view, after the four-year-long war, the new program of the Bolsheviks would not let any other force to stand in front of them³⁹. By mid-1918, in their pieces of writings published on *Yeni Mecmua* magazine, Ziya Gökalp and Necmettin Sadak were pointing to the threat of the rising Bolshevik power⁴⁰.

With a legal communiqué dated November 30, Vehib Pasha, Ottoman Third Army's Commander, offered a cease-fire to the commander of the Caucasian front, General Prizhevskii. On December 7, 1917 a reply arrived from Russia's Caucasian front and it was declared by Russia that until the peace agreement is signed, military operations in the Caucasian fronts were stopped⁴¹. On December 18, 1917, Erzincan Cease-Fire Agreement was signed⁴². After this agreement, the disintegration of the Russian Caucasian Army accelerated and Russian soldiers started to leave their locations to Armenians in these fronts⁴³. However, while the Russian soldiers were

³⁸ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 328; Kılıç, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerinin Doğuşu: Brest-Litovsk Barışı ve Müzakereleri*, p. 36.

³⁹ Tefik Çavdar, Talat Paşa: *Bir Örgüt Ustasının Yaşam Öyküsü* (Ankara, 1984), pp.392-394.

⁴⁰ Çavdar, p. 394; Uygur Kocabaşoğlu – Metin Berge, *Bolşevik İhtilali ve Osmanlılar* (Ankara, 1994), pp. 166-170.

⁴¹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 425.

⁴² *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 426.

⁴³ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p.428.

withdrawing, they were left food, equipments and guns to the newly constructed Armenian national army soldiers⁴⁴.

In the meantime, activities and efforts to make a peace agreement between the Central Powers and Russia had increased and accelerated in the diplomatic arena. In accordance with the peace offer of Russia dated November 8, 1917, starting from the end of December, a peace conference would be organized in Brest-Litovsk and the Ottomans would put their effort in the best way with a concentration to position themselves in the most advantageous way within this process.

Realizing that Germans were putting an effort to make a peace agreement with the Russians, the Ottoman Ambassador to Berlin, Hakkı Pasha offered to the government a set of demands for peace negotiations. Among these offers, there was no extra land and/or war indemnity request. The only offer of the Ambassador regarding land was the withdrawal of the Russians from the Ottoman lands and the acceptance of the independence of Iran⁴⁵; however, it did not include any request for acquiring land from the Caucasian region. A similar peaceful atmosphere prevailed within the Ottoman Parliament as well. Commonly, the idea of demanding land was far behind the desire for peace at that moment.

In the telegraph of German Ambassador to Istanbul, Count von Bernstorff defining the land objectives of the Ottomans after the Bolshevik Revolution, which was sent to the German General Staff, dated November 26, 1917, it was announced that Enver Pasha requested from German military attaché in Istanbul, General von Lossow, the restoration of 1877-1878 borders of the Ottoman State in Caucasia. On December 25, 1917, a telegraph sent by the Foreign Minister of Germany, von Kühlmann, to Graf

⁴⁴ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p.438.

⁴⁵ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 357.

von Bernstorff to be sent to Enver Pasha, it was written that Germany did not make any promises to the Ottoman state to enlarge its borders in the Caucasian region, which openly revealed that months before the Caucasian operation started, the German Foreign Ministry had a negative attitude towards the Ottomans' Caucasia Plans⁴⁶.

Together with all these, the Ottomans were in need of German support. In another telegraph dated December 12, 1917 by the Ottoman Foreign Minister Ahmed Nesimi Bey, it was explained to Hakkı Pasha that the Ottomans had lost significant territory; the issue of the Straits and the capitulations still remained as important problems; therefore, a bilateral peace was unfortunately not desirable in that situation. On the other hand, Kühlmann refrained about the return of the lands called *Elviye-i Selase* (including Kars, Ardahan and Batum) and he was stressing the difficulty of taking these lands back from Russia⁴⁷. Germany did not have a positive attitude before Brest-Litovsk for the withdrawal of the Russian soldiers from Eastern Anatolia. Instead, Germany was focusing on withdrawal of Russian and Turkish soldiers from Iran. The main reason of the early offer of the German Supreme Military Commander about the evacuation of Eastern Anatolia was in fact the possibility that Russians could have similar requests from Germans regarding the occupied lands and that therefore cease-fire could be difficult to achieve⁴⁸. Before the Armistice of Brest-Litovsk, the Ottomans gave priority to ending Armenian cruelties against Muslims in the occupied provinces. According to Zeki Pasha, military attaché of Ottoman Empire in Berlin, Russians should

⁴⁶ Kılıç, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerinin Doğuşu: Brest-Litovsk Barışı ve Müzakereleri*, p. 120.

⁴⁷ Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi cilt:3, Kısım:4* (Ankara, 1983), pp. 109-111.

⁴⁸ Ulrich Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918* (Delmar, New York, 1968), p. 168; Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 358; Kılıç, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerinin Doğuşu: Brest-Litovsk Barışı ve Müzakereleri*, pp. 63-64.

secure law and order during the process of evacuation and should not harm the Muslim population⁴⁹.

On December 15, 1917, Enver Pasha sent a personal letter to Kaiser Wilhelm and requested support from Germany to help Ottomans in restoring their borders of 1877. Bernstorff sent his offer to Talat Pasha on December 20, 1917, about Berlin's support to the Ottomans in case of a demand from Transcaucasia region to enter into the Ottoman Administration. However, Talat Pasha did not show a positive attitude towards this offer⁵⁰.

The Ottoman State was the only one among the Central Powers to have lost lands and therefore, a common peace strategy was highly critical for the Ottomans. Ahmed Nesimi sent a telegraph on December 22, 1917 to the Minister of Justice Halil Bey (Menteşe) describing the main peace strategy of the Ottomans. According to this, peace negotiations should be held together, not between individual parties; in case of Germany and/or Austria's gain of lands, the Ottomans should gain land as well; Russia should also pay an indemnity⁵¹.

In December 25, Kühlmann sent a letter to Enver Pasha saying that Germany had a positive attitude and sympathy towards the Ottoman demands on Transcaucasia; however, it was also important for them that the people living on the lands that are to be given back to the Ottomans should demonstrate that they were willing to live under Ottoman rule as well⁵². In this way, the right of self-determination was turning into an excuse to limit the Ottomans in the Caucasus issue. This attitude of the Germans could

⁴⁹ ATASE (Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüd Başkanlığı) Arşivi, (15.12.1917), K. 530. D. 928 F.1-36.

⁵⁰ Trumpener, pp. 168-169.

⁵¹ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p.112.

⁵² Trumpener, p. 170.

also be explained by their belief to success in their offensive operation towards the West in the upcoming spring⁵³.

Nevertheless, Enver Pasha and Talat Pasha were claiming that the Ottomans could cooperate with the Germans to carry out economic activities in Iran and Turkistan along the Batum-Baku railway⁵⁴. In fact, before the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk Peace, Enver and Talat Pashas were planning an Ottoman front operation towards Baku.

II.2. The Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference And Ottomans' Caucasia Policy

The initial meeting at Brest-Litovsk started on December 22, 1917. At the opening negotiations, Ahmed Nesimi requested Russian soldiers to withdraw from all the occupied lands in Anatolia and *Elviye-i Selase* (Kars-Ardahan-Batum). Germans refused this request since it would logically give the right and allow Russia to request from Germany withdrawal from Courland, Lithuania and Poland⁵⁵. However, this was at the same time being interestingly an improbable project according to General von Lossow, who still recommended Enver Pasha to make propaganda among the Muslims of Russia and persuade them to secede from Russia and to proclaim their independence⁵⁶.

The Ottoman state and Enver Pasha had already started to attain a special interest towards Caucasia since the Erzincan Cease-Fire Agreement. The Ottoman state, through the contact of Ottoman delegates located at Brest-Litovsk, desired to obtain information about Caucasia from the Ukrainian delegates at Brest-Litovsk. Again Enver Pasha had sent a letter to the Ottoman delegates at Brest-Litovsk, requesting for

⁵³ Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 579.

⁵⁴ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 382.

⁵⁵ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace March 1918* (New York, 1971), pp. 119-120.

⁵⁶ Kılıç, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerinin Doğuşu: Brest-Litovsk Barışı ve Müzakereleri*, p.119.

information about Muslims, Georgians, and Armenians at the Transcaucasian Commissariat and about their roles within this formation. Additionally, Enver Pasha attempted to gather information about the Transcaucasian Commissariat via the help of Third Army Commandership⁵⁷.

At the first phase of Brest-Litovsk Conference, Halil Bey proposed that the main goal of Russia was not to make a peace agreement and withdraw, but instead, impose its new regime and practice an imperialist policy across the globe⁵⁸. As a matter of fact, at the December 29 negotiations, the Russian Government requested a referendum in Eastern Anatolia and Caucasian Armenia. The Ottoman state refused this request⁵⁹.

The return of the occupied lands and *Elviye-i Selase* back to the Ottomans was quite important; therefore, the Ottomans called Ahmed Nesimi and Hakkı Pasha back and decided to send Talat Pasha to the second phase of the peace negotiations starting January 1, 1918, in Berlin, who was more assertive and aggressive⁶⁰. At the second phase of Brest-Litovsk negotiations Soviet Government put the Turkish-Armenian issue forward. In accordance with this issue, Lenin and Stalin published the Decree number 13 on Armenia on January 11, 1918. According to this decree, the Bolsheviks were defending the right of Armenian people's self-determination and the establishment of Armenian militia forces. All the Armenian refugees should have the right to return to their homelands within the Ottoman lands. Bolshevik commissar Stephan Shaumian would be the head of the organization of Armenia in Anatolia⁶¹. Bolsheviks were willing to implement their projects in the Near East region through publishing the Turkish Armenia Decree by using the Armenians. On January 14, 1918, during the

⁵⁷ Enis Şahin, *Diplomasi ve Sınır: Aleksandropol Görüşmeleri ve Protokolleri-1918* (Istanbul, 2005), p. 59.

⁵⁸ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 118.

⁵⁹ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 117.

⁶⁰ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 367.

⁶¹ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 100.

meeting with Trotsky, Ahmed Nesimi protested the Decree on Armenia. In return to the warning of Ahmed Nesimi, Trotsky claimed that they had already armed Armenians to protect themselves against armed Kurdish forces and that the Caucasian Army was under their rule. From this meeting, Talat Pasha believed that the Bolsheviks would withdraw from Eastern Anatolia after arming Armenians and that the Ottoman State should prepare in response to this result⁶². In fact, the Bolsheviks were continuously arming the Armenians outside the Caucasia region; even the political prisoners were being freed with the help of the Decree on Armenia to establish an Armenian militia army and many prisoners were moving from Siberia to Caucasia to join the Armenian army⁶³. According to Talat Pasha, the only way to end the massacre of the Muslims in the East was the return of Eastern Anatolia to the Ottomans by an action of the Ottoman army; therefore, this should be among the main topics for the Ottomans at Brest-Litovsk negotiations that would restart on January 30, 1918⁶⁴. During the February 3-9 negotiations between the Ottomans and the Russian delegates, concentration was on the outrages of armed Armenians against the Muslims in Eastern Anatolia⁶⁵. In this way, the security issue of the Muslims was being revealed at the Brest-Litovsk negotiations as part of Ottoman policy based on heading towards the East. In reality too, at the negotiations with the Russian delegates, the Ottomans had stressed the violence against the Muslims. Soviet delegation, on the other hand, was escaping from its responsibility through putting self-determination rhetoric in front of the developments in Eastern Anatolia⁶⁶.

⁶² Çavdar, pp. 403-404.

⁶³ Jacques Kayaloff, *The Battle of Sardarabad* (Paris, 1973), pp. 73-74.

⁶⁴ Çavdar, pp. 405-406.

⁶⁵ Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, "Birinci Genel Savaş'tan Sonra Yapılan Barış ve Antlaşmalarımız I, Brest-Litovsk Antlaşması (3 Mart 1918), in *Bellekten* XXIX/115, 1965, pp. 511-513.

⁶⁶ Çavdar, pp. 407-408.

Enver Pasha sent a telegraph to Vehib Pasha in January 12 explaining that they would support the protection of the Transcaucasian Republic⁶⁷. Vehib Pasha, on the other hand, in the letter he sent to Odishelidze in January 16, would invite Transcaucasian Commissariat to Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference. Here, the goal was to declare Transcaucasia, which still insisted on being dependent on Russia, as an independent state within the international arena and to help its secession from Russia⁶⁸. Generally, the Caucasians believed that Bolshevik rule at Petrograd would be overthrown after a while and the Constitutional Russian Federation would be established. Therefore, breaking off ties with Russia and establishing an independent state was not a strong belief among the Caucasians⁶⁹. The block composed of Georgian and Armenian socialists who were strongly against the idea of participating the Brest-Litovsk negotiations⁷⁰. However, through the process, The Transcaucasian Commissariat would realize that it had in reality lost an important opportunity by refusing to participate negotiations, especially during the Ottoman operation and due to the difficult position it would be left in.

Establishing a buffer state was among the most important goals of Ottoman state within the process of Brest-Litovsk. While the Brest-Litovsk Conference was continuing, the Grand Vizier Talat Pasha sent a telegraph to Enver Pasha dated February 1, 1918, proposing that in case of the establishment and proclamation of an independent Ukrainian Government, a Muslim Government could be established in Caucasia as well⁷¹.

⁶⁷ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 170.

⁶⁸ Yerasimos, p. 17.

⁶⁹ Kaya Tuncer Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921* (İstanbul, 2004), p. 39.

⁷⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 120-121.

⁷¹ Emin Ali Türkogeldi, "Brest-Litovsk Konferansı Hatıraları", *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi*, no. 13, March 1986, p. 50.

As the Brest-Litovsk negotiations were prolonged, the attitude of the Bolsheviks became more aggressive. On February 10, 1918, by using the rhetoric “no peace no war”, Trotsky had refused to sign a peace agreement and this led Germany to plan a new attack towards the heartlands of Russia. After the re-breaking of the negotiations, Germany accepted Ukrainian support request as an excuse to regard the cease-fire agreement as invalid and decided to start his operations. With this aim, Germany sent an ultimatum to the Soviet Government on February 17. In this ultimatum there was also the request on the issue of returning Eastern Anatolian provinces to the Ottoman State. However, the Ottoman State additionally demanded the provinces – Kars, Ardahan and Batum - lost during the 1877-1878 Russian-Ottoman War as well⁷². Starting from February 18, German, Austrian, and Ottoman forces attacked Russian lands and in the end achieved significant successes. The German army occupied Reval, Rezhitsa, Dvinsk, Minsk and Ukrainian lands between February 18 and 24⁷³. On March 2, the German forces were bombing Petrograd⁷⁴. In the end, Bolsheviks accepted the proposed peace conditions offered by Germany and they restarted the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations. However, in the new negotiations Germany additionally requested the evacuation of the Eastern Anatolian provinces and *Elviye-i Selase* from Russia. Together with this, the Foreign Minister of Germany, Kühlmann, again had a negative attitude towards territorial demands of the Ottomans especially regarding Batum. For him, Batum would possibly be a cause for dispute between Russia and the Ottoman Empire⁷⁵. According to a report of General von Seeckt, the Chief of the General Staff in the Ottoman Empire, dated March 1, the Ottoman Empire would additionally demand the return of the three provinces, the establishment of a completely independent state in

⁷² Çavdar, p. 411.

⁷³ Serge, p. 163.

⁷⁴ Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 594.

⁷⁵ Kılıç, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerinin Doğuşu: Brest-Litovsk Barışı ve Müzakereleri*, p. 344

Caucasia and of self-determination right by all the Muslims living in Russia including places like Orenburg, Kazan, Turkistan, and Bukhara⁷⁶. At the final phase of Brest-Litovsk, Enver Pasha also requested realization of the independence of Caucasia; however, Hakkı Pasha believed that Germans would not support such a request and he persuaded Enver Pasha to give up this request in the end⁷⁷.

Despite the harsh protest of Sokolnikov⁷⁸, the head of Soviet Delegation, on the issue of *Elviye-i Selase*, the Bolsheviks signed the agreement on March 3, 1918. According to the agreement, Russia would first withdraw from Eastern Anatolia within 6 to 8 weeks, and then it would also withdraw from Ardahan, Kars and Batum; the Russian army would provide the Muslims security within this period; Armenian forces located in Eastern Anatolia would be disarmed by Russia; Soviet Russia would not be allowed to have more than a single military division in Caucasia until signing of the general peace agreement; and Russian soldiers would also withdraw from Iran⁷⁹. As the stipulations of the agreement openly declared, the gate to Caucasia was opened to the Ottoman army. On the war indemnity issue, Germany's idea was commonly accepted at Brest-Litovsk Peace Agreement and Russia did not pay any indemnity⁸⁰.

Brest-Litovsk was the first real diplomatic victory of the Ottoman Empire against Russia after Pruth Agreement signed in 1711⁸¹. Despite this success, there were also parties supporting aggressive strategy as well. The article published in *Tanin* "Muslims of Russia" dated February 27, 1918, explained that this was a historically significant opportunity for the Ottomans against Russia for the Turks living in Russia

⁷⁶ Carl Mühlman, *Das Deutsch-Türkische Waffenbündnis Im Veltkriege*(Leipzig,1940), pp. 190-191.

⁷⁷ Türkgeldi, p. 52.

⁷⁸ Türkgeldi, p. 51.

⁷⁹ Çavdar, 412.

⁸⁰ Bayur, "Birinci Genel Savaş'tan Sonra Yapılan Barış ve Antlaşmalarımız I, Brest-Litovsk Antlaşması (3 Mart 1918), p. 516.

⁸¹ Ahmet Ender Gökdemir, *Cenub-i Garbî Kafkas Hükümeti* (Ankara, 1989), p. 15.

and a similar opportunity could not be re-gained easily⁸². On March 17, 1918, German Minister Busche announced, “all the Turkish parties were at that moment under the influence of the enthusiasm came with the ultra-nationalist and Pan-Islamist victory”⁸³.

At the Ottoman Parliament, the only person who expressed dissatisfaction about the Brest-Litovsk was Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey. To him, the Ottoman state did not put enough effort for the acceptance of Russian Muslims’ right to self-determination. However, in response to this claim, Enver Pasha made a speech saying that based on the self-determination right given by Soviet Russia to Muslims of Russia including those living in Caucasia, Muslims of Russia would be able to apply to the Ottoman state for acceptance of their independence and in this case, the Ottoman state would accept it⁸⁴.

Brest-Litovsk Treaty was signed in the way the Ottomans desired; however, the real fight was still ongoing in the fronts. The Ottoman state would only be able to retrieve the lands it had gained via Brest-Litovsk Treaty in the Caucasian front in price of the blood of its soldiers. Thus, rather than the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, the offensive operations of the Ottomans in the Eastern front would dominate the Caucasia Policy.

II.3. Ottoman Offensive on the Caucasus Front(Until May 1918)

After the Bolshevik Revolution of November 28, 1917, the Transcaucasian Commissariat had declared its independence. Menshevik Gegechkori became the head of this establishment. Together with this, Transcaucasians aimed to remain as part of Russia until April 1918.

⁸² Kocabaşoğlu-Berge, p. 153.

⁸³ C. S. Kirakosyan, *Mladoturki Pered Sudom İstorii*. (Erivan, 1986), p. 229.

⁸⁴ Çavdar, p. 413.

The disintegration of the Russian army in 1917 autumn had caused anxiety in Tiflis, since the Ottomans had gained an advantageous position to attack Caucasia. In fact, the Ottoman General Staff was aiming to restore its 1877-1878 borders⁸⁵.

On February 23, 1918, Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey at the Parliament proposed that a Transcaucasian state centered at Tiflis would not be accepted and if a center would be the issue, this would be either Baku or Gence received enthusiastic applause and this revealed that the Ottomans did not have a positive attitude in favour of a Transcaucasian state in the region⁸⁶.

Towards the end of autumn, the Russian army had totally disintegrated and the Chief General of the Caucasus Front Przhevalskii ordered the establishment of national Armenian and Georgian forces. Armenians had started their efforts to establish a national army in December 1917. Armenians had planned to keep their existence based on a political strategy in the way of being supporting the Allies and Russia and to establish their national army with Russian support⁸⁷. When Russia withdrew from the Caucasian front, they left behind 3.000 cannons, 3.000 machine guns, 1 billion cartridges, 100.000 military clothing, and food enough for 100.000 soldiers, 15.000-17.000 horses, 1 million bombshells, 100.000 rifles and many types of equipment. In Baku alone, Russian army left 160 cannons, 180 machine guns, and 160 million cartridges⁸⁸. In 1918, the Russian army was planning to defeat the Ottoman army by a concluding stroke and to occupy Anatolia and so Russia “filled up their stocks to the fullest”⁸⁹. The Russian army had stocks of gun, ammunition, equipment, and food and

⁸⁵ Erickson, p. 183.

⁸⁶ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, pp. 172-173.

⁸⁷ W. E. D. Allen- P. Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of The Wars on The Turco-Caucasian Border 1828-1921* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 458.

⁸⁸ Antranig Chalabian, *General Andranik and the Armenian Revolutionary Movement* (Melrose, 1988), p. 318.

⁸⁹ Hüsamettin Tuğaç, *Bir Neslin Dramı: Kafkas Cephesinden, Çarlık Rusyasında Tutsaklıktan Anılar* (İstanbul, 1975), p. 208.

the Caucasian Christians had taken these stocks over. However, the Armenians could not turn those materials and equipment into their advantage.

Armenian generals Nazarbekov, Silikian, Korganov, and Pirumov had preferred to stay in Caucasia because of revolutionary acts⁹⁰. By 1917, there were 110-120 thousands of Armenian originated soldiers within the Russian army⁹¹. The Commandership of Russian Caucasus Army only believed in the possible resistance of highly motivated national forces against the Turkish threat. General Tovmas Nazarbekov was positioned as the head of the new Armenian national army⁹². The organization of the Armenian army was as follows⁹³:

First Division-General Areshian

1st Regiment Erzurum-Erzincan

2nd Regiment Hınıs

3rd Regiment Erevan

4th Regiment Erzincan-Erivan

Second Division-Colonel Silikian

5th Regiment Van

6th Regiment Erevan

7th Regiment Aleksandropol

8th Regiment Aleksandropol

⁹⁰ Chalabian, p. 319.

⁹¹ Kayaloff, p.73. According to Chalabian 200.000 Armenians were in the service of Russian Army in the German Front between 1915-1917(Chalabian, p.319). For Nansen this number was 150.000. See Fridtjof Nansen, *Armenia and the Near East* (New York, 1976), p. 310.

⁹² Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 113-114.

⁹³ Hovannisian, p. 114.

Third Division-General Andranik

1st Brigade Erzincan-Erzurum

2nd Brigade Khnus

3rd Brigade Van

Despite this organization, Armenians were not strong enough to protect many locations and the food stocks, ammunition, transportation and communication equipments, and medicine that had been left by the Russian army⁹⁴. By January 1, 1918, Armenians had two divisions, three voluntary brigades and militia battalions. Artillery units had also been placed on the lines. However, the Armenian army did not have qualified personnel able to use the cannons effectively. The population of the Armenian National Army was no more than 16.000 infantry, 1000 cavalry, and 4000 militia⁹⁵. Moreover, communication lines located on the lands under Armenian rule which covered a wide area under the threat of Muslim⁹⁶.

At the same time Allied Powers, Cossacks in the south, Georgians and Armenians were willing to build a resistance line against the Ottomans through gathering in the region. In case of an agreement between Russia and Central Powers, this was the only strategy to continue fighting against the Ottomans⁹⁷. According to the report of Major A. R. MacDonell, the Armenians keeping their position in the region after the withdrawal of the Russian soldiers from the Caucasian front had taken support of 1 million rubles from Britain⁹⁸. As soon as taking this money, the first thing the

⁹⁴ Hovannisian, p. 114.

⁹⁵ Allen-Muratoff, pp. 458-459.

⁹⁶ Allen-Muratoff, p. 459.

⁹⁷ Bülent Gökay, *A Clash of Empires: Turkey between Russian Bolshevism and British Imperialism, 1918-1923*(London, 1997), p. 12.

⁹⁸ Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, p. 52.

Armenians did was to slaughter Muslims in the regions occupied by Russia and this was an event strengthening propaganda against Britain in Caucasia⁹⁹.

Vehib Pasha, The Ottoman Commander of the Caucasus Front, sent a diplomatic note on January 14, 1918 declaring that the Ottoman state was willing to initiate peace negotiations with the Transcaucasian Commissariat as an independent state and was also willing to send delegates to the capital of this independent state in Caucasia. However, in the response sent by the Transcaucasian Commissariat dated January 17 it was declared that Transcaucasia was part of Russia and the peace negotiations could only be initiated following the acceptance of Russian Constituent Assembly¹⁰⁰.

In this period, communication had taken place between the Minister of War, Enver Pasha and the Third Army Commander Vehib Pasha to protect Muslims against Armenian cruelties. However, through these writings until February 1918, no result could be achieved because General Przhevalskii and General Odishelidze were both disinterested towards the violence committed by the Armenians and were not responding to warnings¹⁰¹. In the telegraph dated February 21, 1918, sent from Odishelidze to Vehib Pasha, Odishelidze expressed his sadness due to the murder of Muslims¹⁰².

On February 4, 1918, Vehib Pasha sent a letter to General Przhevalskii declaring that the Armenians were committing crime, violence, and abuses towards Turks on the lands that Russian soldiers had already left and were withdrawing and that the Ottoman State would make an operation against these abuses in the region. Immediately after this letter, the Ottoman army started a front operation in Eastern Anatolia on February 5,

⁹⁹ Çağlayan, pp. 41-42.

¹⁰⁰ James Bunyan- H.H Fisher, *The Bolshevik revolution, 1917-1918: documents and materials* (Stanford, California, 1934), p. 454.

¹⁰¹ Enis Şahin, "Türkiye'nin Kafkasya Politikalarında Ermeni Faktörü" in *Sekizinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri I-XIX. ve XX. Yüzyullarda Türkiye ve Kafkaslar* (Ankara, 2003), p. 382.

¹⁰² *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, Aralık 1982, Sayı: 81, Genelkurmay Basımevi, p. 317.

1918¹⁰³. In the letter sent by Enver Pasha to the Third Army Commandership in February 11, continuation of the fighting against the Armenian and Transcaucasian Commissariat's forces till the peace agreement with Russia was necessary for the success of the plans on the Eastern Front¹⁰⁴. The diplomatic note sent by Vehib Pasha to the Supreme Commander of Transcaucasian Commisariat, General Lebedinskii on February 12, 1918, in a way ended the Erzincan Cease-fire Agreement:

“ I warmly and sincerely assure you that the Erzincan temporary truce continues in force except for the paragraph respecting the demarcation lines, which, because of the withdrawal of the Russian troops, automatically loses its significance. This action is resorted to only in the name of humanity and civilization.”¹⁰⁵

On January 23, the Commander of the Third Army had ordered preparation for the front operation. However, since the Armenian forces located in the Eastern front was estimated as 40-50 thousand soldiers, preparations had lasted long and the operation could start on February 12¹⁰⁶. The number of soldiers in the First Caucasian Army Corps commanded by Colonel Kazım (Karabekir) by January was 1178 officers, 25.000 soldiers, 94 machine guns, and 53 cannons¹⁰⁷.

By February 1918 in the 650 km front in the East was held by eight divisions composed of only 30.000 combatants. Armenians, on the other hand, had a total of 36 infantry battalions together with the reserve military units¹⁰⁸. The small Armenian army had been occupying a large area¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰³ Necmi Koral, *Birinci Dünya Harbi İdari Faaliyetler ve Lojistik* (Ankara, 1985), p. 492.

¹⁰⁴ Şahin, *Diplomasi ve Sınır: Aleksandropol Görüşmeleri ve Protokolleri-1918*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁵ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁶ Fahri Belen, *Birinci Cihan Harbinde Türk Harbi: 1918 Yılı Hareketleri* (Ankara, 1967), p. 150.

¹⁰⁷ Belen, p. 151.

¹⁰⁸ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 442.

¹⁰⁹ Allen-Muratoff, p. 462.

In the Ottoman operation, the initial important target was the city of Erzincan. In Erzincan, an infantry division commanded by Colonel Maurelle¹¹⁰, a voluntary cavalry squadron, a field battery and a mountain cannon team were located as the whole military force. The total Armenian forces in Erzincan were summed up to 2000 soldiers and the communication lines were open to be easily broken off by Kurdish tribes¹¹¹. However, due to the quick advance of the Ottoman army to the city, Colonel Maurelle decided to leave Erzincan by February 13. Withdrawing from the city, a total of 6000 soldiers and people commanded by Maurelle moved to Erzurum. During this withdrawal, Armenians had heavy losses¹¹². The Ottoman army captured food, 4016 rifles, 3 cannons, 25 bomb cannons, a machine gun, 321 chests of ammunition and many types of equipment¹¹³.

The Eastern offensive of the Ottoman army was highly important in terms of capturing vital needs such as food and equipments, since the crisis caused by the war economy and the occupation of the Russians in the East had resulted in great difficulty for the Ottoman army. To illustrate, the Commander of the Forth Army Corps, while the forces' operations were continuing in the winter, had declared that the front operation of the army corps could be possible by April due to the insufficiencies and difficulties in supplying and transportation of the food and the equipments and that many individuals and the animals were suffering from hunger during winter¹¹⁴. Therefore, it was among the goals of the Ottoman army to capture the remaining food and guns of the Russian army left in Eastern Anatolia after the withdrawal, within the scope of the operation¹¹⁵. General Odishelidze had made a big mistake by abandoning those food and equipment

¹¹⁰ Colonel Maurelle was Imperial Russia's military attache in Tokyo during WWI.

¹¹¹ Allen-Muratoff, p. 460.

¹¹² Chalabian, pp. 334-335.

¹¹³ Belen, *Birinci Cihan Harbinde Türk Harbi: 1918 Yılı Hareketleri*, p. 152.

¹¹⁴ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 450.

¹¹⁵ For detailed information about supplies and transport vehicles left by Russians see Tuncay Öğün, *Kafkas Cephesinin I.Dünya Savaşındaki Lojistik Desteği* (Ankara, 1999), pp. 266-272.

during their withdrawal with an idea that they all would be given back to the Russian forces as a peace agreement is signed¹¹⁶. In this way, this equipment played an important role in the move of the Ottoman forces ahead in their offensive operation in the region.

The Ottoman army took Bayburt in February 19, Nenehatun in February 22, and had a four-hour long negotiation with the Trabzon Bolshevik Committee in February 23 and finally entered Trabzon without facing any resistance¹¹⁷. Victories the Ottomans achieved revealed that the Ottoman forces were not as weak as Transcaucasia believed and that Armenians did not have enough strength to stop the move of the Ottoman forces and they also realized that despite the difficulty caused by winter conditions, the Ottoman forces had enough power for the victory¹¹⁸.

The head of the Transcaucasian government Gegechkori and the head of the Transcaucasia's Seim (Parliament), Chkeidze, protested the Brest-Litovsk Treaty on March 2, 1918, by a radiogram¹¹⁹. Transcaucasian government had always supported the idea that it was part of Russia and did not accept the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. However, the Transcaucasian Commissariat realized the serious threat caused by the movement of the Ottoman forces and offered peace, addressing Tiflis to be the location for peace negotiations¹²⁰. Due to the request of the Transcaucasian Parliament, *Seim*, Trabzon was decided as the location for peace negotiations¹²¹. Before the negotiations started with the Ottomans, Transcaucasian delegates were still discussing the autonomy of Turkish

¹¹⁶ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 124.

¹¹⁷ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 453.

¹¹⁸ İzzet Öztoprak, "Maverayı Kafkas Hükümeti" in *Sekizinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri I-XIX. ve XX. Yüzyillarda Türkiye ve Kafkaslar* (Ankara, 2003), p. 129.

¹¹⁹ Bunyan-Fisher, p. 455.

¹²⁰ Selami Kılıç, "Brest-Litovsk Barışı Sonrası Kafkasya'daki Bazı Askeri ve Siyasi Gelişmeler" in *Sekizinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri I-XIX. ve XX. Yüzyillarda Türkiye ve Kafkaslar* (Ankara, 2003), p. 330.

¹²¹ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 128-129.

Armenia¹²² and their decision to put this issue forward as one of the negotiation subjects revealed the fact about Transcaucasia's current power balances and the existing situation that they were not in fact in a realistic mood.

The Ottoman side decided to send Colonel Hüseyin Rauf Bey (Orbay) and Minister of Justice Halil Bey to Trabzon the negotiations¹²³. Seim positioned the most ardent supporter of Germany, a Menshevik, Chkenkeli, in Tiflis as the head of the delegation that would be sent to Trabzon¹²⁴. During the negotiations in Trabzon, Muslim delegates publicly declared that they would refuse to fight against the Ottoman State¹²⁵.

After March 3, the Ottoman army continued to command the operation based on the right given by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. While the operation was continuing, Vehib Pasha sent a message in March 10 to General Lebedinskii and in this way indirectly to Transcaucasian Government requesting the evacuation of Batum, Kars and Ardahan¹²⁶. In response, the head of the Seim, Chkeidze, announced that Transcaucasian Government did not accept the existence of the Bolshevik Government and the stipulations of the Brest-Litovsk Agreement¹²⁷.

The Transcaucasian Government was right in its sensitivity on Batum since Batum was the third largest city of Transcaucasia¹²⁸. Moreover, Batum was the gate of Transcaucasia opening to the world. As Noi Zhordania, one of the members of the Presidium of the National Council of Georgia had pointed too, Batum was the same for

¹²² Hovannisian,, pp. 129-130.

¹²³ Mustafa Çolak, *Alman İmparatorluğu'nun Doğu Siyaseti Çerçevesinde Kafkasya Politikası 1914-1918* (Ankara, 2006), p. 227.

¹²⁴ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 130.

¹²⁵ Swietochowski, p. 166.

¹²⁶ Bunyan-Fisher, p. 456.

¹²⁷ Yerasimos, p. 21.

¹²⁸ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism 1917-1923* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), p. 107.

Transcaucasia as Petrograd was for Russia and Izmir for the Ottomans¹²⁹. By the occupation of Trabzon and later Erzurum by the Ottomans, Central Powers had gained power upon Black Sea¹³⁰. Therefore, the importance of Batum for Transcaucasia had increased even more.

During Trabzon negotiations, Transcaucasian delegation refused the stipulations of the Brest-Litovsk Agreement. Within the same period, the Ottoman army headed by Kazım Karabekir was moving ahead destroying the resistance of the Armenian forces.

In the Ottoman front operation, the most important obstacle was Erzurum Fortress¹³¹. There were hundreds of cannons in Erzurum; however, there were not enough soldiers to use this military equipment¹³². Moreover, there was a dispute and chill between Armenian and Russian soldiers in Erzurum¹³³. On March 10, 1918, the First Caucasus Army Commander Kazım (Karabekir) decided to attack Erzurum with 5000 soldiers of which 233 were from Dersim tribe, 45 machine guns, 26 mountain cannons on the March 11, 1918¹³⁴.

On March 12, 1918, 36th division entered Erzurum. The Ottoman army suffering from insufficient food and equipment, took advantage of the crowded Armenian army was being spread in a wide area and could enter into the city. 5000 Ottoman soldiers overcame 6000 soldiers and 14 cannons of the Armenian forces. During the battle, 500 Armenians died¹³⁵. The number of Muslims killed by the Armenians alone in the 29

¹²⁹ Cemil Hesenov, *Azerbaycan Beynelhalk Mınasibetler Sisteminde 1918-1920* (Baku, 1993), p. 55; Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 132.

¹³⁰ Judah Leon Magnes, *Russia and Germany at Brest-Litovsk: A Documentary History of The Peace Negotiations* (New York, 1919), p. 181.

¹³¹ Belen, *XX.yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti* (Istanbul, 1973), p. 347.

¹³² Belen, *Birinci Cihan Harbinde Türk Harbi: 1918 Yılı Hareketleri*, p. 153.

¹³³ Talat Paşa, *Talat Paşa'nın Anıları* (Istanbul, 2000), pp. 91-106.

¹³⁴ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 464.

¹³⁵ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 467; According to Allen and Muratoff, the total number of Armenian losses in Erzurum was about 600. See Allen-Muratoff, p.463).

neighbourhoods of the city was 1078¹³⁶. Ottoman forces captured 400 cannons, many military equipments and food¹³⁷. According to Andranik who commanded Armenian defenders in Erzurum, the escape of the Armenian soldiers to their homes and the disordered and undisciplined nature of the Turkish Armenians resulted in easy occupation of Erzurum by the Ottoman forces¹³⁸. Andranik was a legendary guerilla leader; however, he was not a soldier able to command such high level, important military operations¹³⁹.

Nazarbekov had claimed in a meeting with Andranik and Areshov months before the occupation of Erzurum that despite the insufficiency of the Ottomans in terms of soldiers, ammunition, and food, they had the ability and power to defeat the Armenians with the help of their outstanding military discipline¹⁴⁰.

With the Ottoman occupation of Erzurum, the dream of the Armenians to establish a Turkish Armenia had come to an end. Moreover, the time to implement the stipulations of the Brest-Litovsk had finally come.

Upon the occupation of Erzurum, with Hüseyin Rauf Bey's call, Trabzon Conference was held in March 14. The strategic criterion of the Ottomans was mainly based on the stipulations of the Brest-Litovsk Agreement. Delegates of the Transcaucasia party, headed by Chkenkeli, announced that they would not accept Brest-Litovsk since Sovnarkom (The Council of People's Commissars) did not represent Russia¹⁴¹. Due to the fact that the Transcaucasian delegation did not make any

¹³⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 467.

¹³⁷ Belen, *Birinci Cihan Harbinde Türk Harbi: 1918 Yılı Hareketleri*, p. 154.

¹³⁸ *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, p. 389.

¹³⁹ Kayaloff, pp.71-72. Simon Vratzian states that although Erzurum had great supplies and ammunition stock and 8.000 well-armed Armenian soldiers and 100 guns under the command of Andranik defended it, it was captured by Ottomans. See Chalabian, p.346. These numbers also proved the inability of Andranik in commanding considerable battleforces.

¹⁴⁰ Chalabian, pp. 338-339.

¹⁴¹ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 139-140.

concession, Hüseyin Rauf Bey made an aggressive attempt and put the Turkish-Armenian dispute forward in the negotiations to declare that they did not have right to interfere into the internal affairs of the Ottoman State. Additionally, the Ottoman State could only accept the existence of the Transcaucasian Government in case of its abandonment of its claims upon Kars, Ardahan and Batum¹⁴². In the end, there was a tremendous gap between the demands of Transcaucasian and Ottoman parties. Even more, the accusations between Azerbaijani Seim member Mehmed H. Hacinski and Dashnak leader Aleksandr Khatisian were signs of disintegration within the delegation of Transcaucasia¹⁴³.

By March 24, 1918, the Ottoman Army had restored its borders of 1914. Muslim delegates were keen on the acceptance of the stipulations of Brest-Litovsk. On the other hand, Armenians were willing to gain some favour from the Ottomans. Armenian delegate Khatisian sent a message to Hüseyin Rauf Bey requesting the return of the 400.000 Armenians to their homes in the Ottoman lands. According to this, in case of the Ottoman approval of the return of these Armenians, the Armenians would accept the rights of the Ottomans on *Elviye-i Selase*. However, Hüseyin Rauf Bey did not accept a negotiation upon this issue¹⁴⁴.

Upon the right given to the Ottoman state on March 26, 1918, by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, Third Army Commandership ordered the occupation of Kars, Ardahan and Batum. In this way, the new defence line of the Armenians, who were defeated in Erzurum and Eastern Anatolia, would be shaped according to the strategy to hinder this

¹⁴² Hovannisian, p. 140.

¹⁴³ Hovannisian, p. 141.

¹⁴⁴ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, pp. 471-472.

aim. Georgians had started to move to Batum as well. 36 weak battalions composed of 15.000 Armenian soldiers would protect the 250 km front¹⁴⁵.

According to Enver Pasha, Batum was the most important location given to the Ottomans according to the Brest-Litovsk. Batum could possibly become the only port at the Eastern Asia belonging to the Muslims. Georgians would not have enough power in the future to resist Russians without the support of the Ottomans; therefore, they had to give up their insistence on the right upon Batum¹⁴⁶. Vehib Pasha was not in favour of moving ahead of the 1877 Ottoman-Russia borders. Therefore, with his message dated April 3, 1918, he had warned Enver Pasha on this issue. Vehib Pasha claimed that in the end Caucasia would be a Russian land and so Muslims living in Caucasia would not be able to help the Ottoman Army that was already moving ahead with difficulty, and the possible alliance resulting from Georgian-Armenian relations upon proclaiming of a war against the Georgians would harm the Muslims living in the region¹⁴⁷. Apparently, Vehib Pasha was in favour or concession about the issues of Batum and Caucasia. Possibly, the main reason of his removal from the Eastern Armies Group Commander was this attitude. Enver Pasha's response to Vehib Pasha dated April 4, 1918, explained that Kars, Ardahan and Batum were the rewards of the Ottomans' three-year long disastrous experiences¹⁴⁸.

After the regain of Sarıkamış by the Ottoman forces on April 5, 1918, Hüseyin Rauf Bey sent an ultimatum to the Transcaucasian Delegation conditioning the announcement of Transcaucasia's independence from Russia for the continuation of the negotiations between Transcaucasia and the Ottoman State¹⁴⁹. As a solution, Hüseyin

¹⁴⁵ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, pp. 474-475.

¹⁴⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 478.

¹⁴⁷ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, pp. 478-479.

¹⁴⁸ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 479.

¹⁴⁹ Yerasimos, p. 21.

Rauf Bey declared in the Trabzon negotiations that the Ottoman State would own the lands from the Black Sea to Caspian including all of Transcaucasia or a number of governments as the protectorates of the Ottoman state would be established in Transcaucasia¹⁵⁰.

Muslim delegates of the Transcaucasian side mainly composed of Azerbaijanis applied to the Ottomans for Batum to be owned by Georgians. The main reason was fear of the Transcaucasian Muslims of Georgian and Armenian unification against themselves. Interestingly, some members of the Ottoman committee in Trabzon were thinking in the same way as the Caucasian Muslims. Even the head of the Ottoman committee in Trabzon, Hüseyin Rauf Bey, thought that leaving Batum owned by the Georgians would hinder a possible Georgian-Armenian integration and result in the protection of the Muslims in Caucasia. However, Enver Pasha sent a secret coded message to Vehib Pasha dated March 30, 1918, defending the idea of Batum's occupation by Ottomans, and his idea that in this way the Ottomans could attain a position to protect the Georgians from future Russian imperialism. Therefore Enver Pasha was offering a protective formula to persuade both the Georgians and Muslims. Despite this, Muslim members of the Transcaucasian delegation did not change their attitude and demanded a solution that would favor Georgia at a time a military operation was considered. On April 8, 1918, a group of Muslim envoys, among who was Mehmed Emin Resulzade, proposed a diplomatic note to the Ottoman delegation, requesting for a solution to the issue of Batum in favour of Georgia¹⁵¹.

¹⁵⁰ E. K. Sarkisyan, *Ekspansionistkaskaia Politika Osmanskoi İmperii v Zakavkaze* (Erivan 1962), p. 346.

¹⁵¹ Enis Şahin, *Türkiye ve Mavera-yı Kafkasya İlişkileri İçerisinde Trabzon ve Batum Konferansları ve Anlaşmaları 1917-1918* (Ankara, 2002), pp. 412-416.

Despite all these requests of the Muslim delegates, Enver Pasha did not change his idea about Batum¹⁵². Therefore, in the telegraph Enver Pasha sent to Vehib Pasha on April 9, 1918, he proposed that in case of the acceptance of the stipulations of Brest-Litovsk, the Ottoman forces that took part in Batum operation could be sent to Caucasia to support Transcaucasian forces in their decision to fight against the Bolshevik forces¹⁵³.

Upon Transcaucasian delegation's extending of the negotiations and in a way gaining extra time, the Ottomans requested the acceptance of all their requests by April 8 via sending a diplomatic note on April 6, 1918¹⁵⁴. Georgians, who were in difficulty in terms of military considerations, made a manoeuvre and on April 8 accepted to give Oltu, the south of Ardahan, the south-west of Kars and the west of Kağızman to the Ottomans at the united meeting of Transcaucasian Commissariat, and accepted the conditions of the Ottomans on the Turkish Armenia issue¹⁵⁵. This concession decision on the lands was announced to Rauf Bey on April 9; however, Rauf Bey refused this offer¹⁵⁶.

Georgians strongly believed in themselves in terms of the defence of Batum. According to Evgenii Gegechkori, the head of the Transcaucasian Administrative Body, the Ottomans did not have enough manpower to occupy Batum. The fortifications of the city were quite strong. Christians in the *Seim* were ready for a war against the Muslims, but the Muslim block declared that they would not actively support such a war due to ethnic-religious ties between the two sides¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵² Şahin, p. 417.

¹⁵³ Şahin, pp. 420-421.

¹⁵⁴ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 150-151.

¹⁵⁵ Sarkisyan, p. 350.

¹⁵⁶ Şahin, *Türkiye ve Mavera-yı Kafkasya İlişkileri İçerisinde Trabzon ve Batum Konferansları ve Antlaşmaları*, pp. 418-419

¹⁵⁷ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 153-154.

The Ottomans had delayed military operation till April 11 due to Chkenheli's explanation that they would be accepting the stipulations of Brest-Litovsk. However, no information from Tiflis was received yet by April 10. Upon this, and together with Ottoman delegates' insistant request for the final decision, Transcaucasian delegation headed by Chkenheli announced in written format that they accepted all the stipulations of Brest-Litovsk Agreement. The same night, two Armenian members of the Transcaucasian delegation, Khatisian and Kachaznuni sent a telegraph to the head of the government of Transcaucasia, Gegechkori, announcing that the Armenians too accepted the stipulations of Brest-Litovsk. For them, accepting Brest-Litovsk was the safest route in those circumstances¹⁵⁸.

With Transcaucasian delegation's acceptance of the Brest-Litovsk, Enver Pasha had received the chance to submit new requests in accordance with his Caucasia plans. In a telegraph dated April 11, 1918, sent from Enver Pasha to Vehib Pasha was written that occupation of Iğdır within a period till the end of the negotiations was extremely important. In fact, Enver Pasha was right to hurry in the occupation of Iğdır. Although the delegation headed by Chkenkeli had accepted the stipulations of Brest-Litovsk, Georgians were preparing to protect Batum in case of an attack. Therefore, Vehib Pasha ordered to the Third Army to start the operation by April 11¹⁵⁹.

According to the Third Army's secret information, Georgians in Batum had declared mobilization and gathered 10-12 thousands soldiers, which consisted of Greeks, Armenians, and university students in additional battalions. In Batum, a Georgian division with four battalions had been gathered. Cannons and the machine guns supported defence of the castle. The effort of the Georgians in Batum to bring

¹⁵⁸ Şahin, *Türkiye ve Maveraya Kafkasya İlişkileri İçerisinde Trabzon ve Batum Konferansları ve Antlaşmaları*, pp. 420-423.

¹⁵⁹ Enis Şahin, *Türkiye ve Maveraya Kafkasya İlişkileri İçerisinde Trabzon ve Batum Konferansları ve Antlaşmaları*, pp. 424-425.

support from Tiflis was, however, not successful. There were also 800 cavalry in the city¹⁶⁰. Tenth and Thirty-seventh Caucasus Divisions moving to Batum consisted of about 7000 soldiers. However, there were 10-12 thousand Georgian soldiers waiting for the Ottoman forces in Batum¹⁶¹.

Menshevik Georgian leaders were confident in terms of defence of Batum. The reality was understood as the Ottoman Thirty-Seventh Caucasus Division occupied Batum with 3000 defenders and 600 officers at the first attack within one hour¹⁶². Moreover, the Ottoman forces captured 250 cannons, 2 locomotives, and many vagoons and automobiles in Batum¹⁶³. Shortly after the Ottoman occupation of Batum, Muslims in locations like Akhalkelek and Akhalthitske of which were given to Russia by The Treaty of Edirne in 1829 used their self-determination rights given to them by Russia to apply to the Ottoman state for incorporation¹⁶⁴. In this way, an important attempt to restore the 1828 borders of the Empire was made.

The belief of the Georgians for a possible victory against the Ottomans was falsified just after the Ottoman occupation of Batum¹⁶⁵. According to Mehmed Emin Resulzade, the new regime in Russia was more aggressive and excessive. For him, only freedom and independence could save Transcaucasia from being dissolved and/or being occupied by other states. It would be worth to create an independent Transcaucasia in return for Kars, Ardahan and Batum¹⁶⁶.

After Batum's occupation, the new target of the Ottoman forces was Kars. Caucasian gate was being defended by 15.000 Armenian rifles by 30 battalions. Still,

¹⁶⁰ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, pp. 484-485.

¹⁶¹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 485.

¹⁶² Allen-Muratoff, p. 465.

¹⁶³ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 489.

¹⁶⁴ Gökdemir, p.19.

¹⁶⁵ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 158.

¹⁶⁶ Hovannisian, pp. 164-165.

the Ottoman army had power to defeat this Armenian force with the help of its strong cannons and brave bashibozuk cavalry¹⁶⁷.

A group of generals composed of General Lebedinskii, Nazarbekov, and Colonel P. Chardigny from French Military Mission realized by April 19 that the castle of Kars would be able to resist a month-long attack¹⁶⁸. The castle of Kars had been restored as a highly strong castle at the beginning of WWI with the efforts of 20.000 workers. There were 220 cannons and 66 machine guns¹⁶⁹. Kars was being protected by 3000 soldiers in 7 battalions and 80 officers and 8 artillery brigades composed of 1700 men. Most of the cannons in the city were old there were not the necessary personnel to use these cannons¹⁷⁰. Ottoman Commanders like Kazım (Karabekir) and Yakup Şevki Pasha believed that the Kars Castle could not be overcome via front attack¹⁷¹. Therefore, the best option for the Ottoman forces was siege.

By April 20, 1918, British Foreign Minister Balfour sent a telegraph to Britain's US Ambassador Lord Reading explaining his worries about the reality that in case of the Ottomans' occupation of Kars, they would be predominant in Caucasia and the way along the Middle East and India would be open to them¹⁷².

While the Kars operation was ongoing, the Republic of Transcaucasia declared its independence and decided to start peace negotiations with the Ottomans. And on April 23, 1918, all the commanders were ordered to stop fighting¹⁷³. The Ottomans, on the other hand, sent a diplomatic note to the Republic of Transcaucasia on April 25

¹⁶⁷ Allen-Muratoff, p. 464.

¹⁶⁸ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 159.

¹⁶⁹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 491.

¹⁷⁰ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle For Transcaucasia -1917-1921* (Birmingham, 1951), p. 103.

¹⁷¹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 494.

¹⁷² Kaya Tuncer Çağlayan, "İngiliz Belgelerine Göre Transkafkasya'da Osmanlı-Alman Rekabeti" *XIII. Uluslararası Türk Tarih Kongresi*, c.III, k.I,(Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2002), p. 413.

¹⁷³ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 498.

explaining that he accepted the independence of the Republic¹⁷⁴. Chkenkeli had ordered General Nazarbekov to surrender Kars. On April 25, the first Ottoman forces occupied it. In the message sent by Enver Pasha to the Third Army Commandership was written that Kars was to be surrendered to Ottomans with all the guns and equipment and the Armenians would not be allowed to carry guns and equipment from the city and in case it happened all the equipment should be taken back immediately¹⁷⁵. So Chkenkeli's hope to save and take the rich material and food stocks in Kars ended by the Ottoman forces' quick entry into the city with an aim to save Muslims from a possible Armenian attack in the city¹⁷⁶. With the occupation of Kars, 20.000 Armenians withdrew to the East. The Ottoman forces captured 589 cannons, 2525 rifles, some planes, and 2000 tons of food in Kars¹⁷⁷.

Many civilians and irregular soldiers who had left Kars and went to Erivan caused anarchy there. In Tiflis, on the other hand, aggressive Armenian groups condemned the Transcaucasian government. Moreover, it was dishonourable for both Hovhannes Kachaznuni¹⁷⁸ and Khatisian who were known for their closeness to Chkenkeli to be left outside and being uninformed about Chkenkeli's decision about the surrender of Kars¹⁷⁹. The order from Tiflis for the surrender of Kars to the Ottomans caused a reaction of Dashnak Group and Armenian civilians. The most strategical defensive region of the Armenians, Kars, was no longer an Armenian city and it was surrendered to the Ottomans¹⁸⁰. The establishment of the government could not end the protests and the reactions in Tiflis. Upon this, Chkenkeli prepared a report on May 5

¹⁷⁴ Şahin, *Diplomasi ve Sınır: Aleksandropol Görüşmeleri ve Protokolleri-1918*, p. 52.

¹⁷⁵ Şahin, p. 55.

¹⁷⁶ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 166.

¹⁷⁷ Çakmak, p.269.

¹⁷⁸ He was the chief spokesman for Dashnaksutiun in the Transcaucasian Seim.

¹⁷⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 167-168.

¹⁸⁰ Ovanes Kaçaznuni, *Taşnak Partisi'nin Yapacağı Bir Şey Yok* (Istanbul, 2006), p. 51.

announcing that Kars would in fact not be able to resist Ottoman forces, however, he could not persuade anyone with this explanation¹⁸¹.

Armenians withdrawing from Kars acted cruelly against the Muslims living between Kars to Aleksandropol, and this provided the necessary excuse to the Ottomans to restore the original borders created by Arpaçay River before 1877-78 War between Ottomans and Russians. In the message sent from Vehib Pasha to General Odishelidze in April 27 it was written that the part of the Kars-Aleksandropol railway located between Kars and Arpaçay would be occupied by the Ottoman forces¹⁸².

Soviet Russia followed the events with care and worry. On April 30, 1918 in a meeting with Chicherin, Galip Kemali Bey, Ottoman ambassador in Russia, had declared that the most important factor effective in the development of the relations between Turkey and Russia was Russian Muslims. In this way, Galip Kemali Bey had explained the strategic targets of the Ottomans to Russia openly. Additionally, he had informed Chicherin about the propaganda about the massacre of the Armenians in Russia and said that the main causes of these events in the Eastern region were Armenian bands together with Russia¹⁸³.

With the Ottoman advance, news from English agents was coming about the development of the Pan-Turkist propaganda in the Near East region. To illustrate, in a report sent from an English agent named Etherton in May 1918 it was written that Pan-Turkism was quickly being spread in Asia and this created a proper substructure to establish a Muslim Empire as part of and in relation to the common Turkish-German intentions. According to this agent, the Ottoman state had stopped holding on to Europe on territory and moved its concentration to Asia; therefore, would be seeking

¹⁸¹ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 169.

¹⁸² Şahin, *Diplomasi ve Sınır: Aleksandropol Görüşmeleri ve Protokolleri-1918*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁸³ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, pp. 409-410.

cooperation with Iran and Afghanistan¹⁸⁴. That was the reason for the need of a mission to deal with this threat based on Islamic unity established through Muslims of Russia. The British General Staff was highly irritated with the idea of Germany's use of almost all natural resources and materials he needed in Caucasus¹⁸⁵. Germany's movement into Near East through Caucasus meant that it could achieve all its economic and political objectives via war in the East. In Lord Curzon's¹⁸⁶ words, this meant the formation of a new Eastern front located between The Black Sea and India¹⁸⁷.

In fact, The Ottoman occupation of Batum, a strategically important position in the region, did not make Germany happy since it had important plans for the region as well¹⁸⁸. A meeting was held on April 22, 1918, between Germany's State Secretary Dr. Helferrich, Undersecretary of Foreign Ministry von Stumm and Head of Russia Department Nadolny. According to the decisions taken in the meeting, Ottoman rights over Kars, Ardahan and Batum would be limited; German influence and authority over Batum Port and railways would be increased; and natural resources in the Caucasus would be controlled and managed by Germany¹⁸⁹. On 29 April 1918, German Foreign Ministry drafted Germany's principles about conducting Turkey's affairs in Transcaucasia. According to these principles both Turkey and Transcaucasia would accept the stipulations of Brest-Litovsk Treaty, and Germany would have the right of nearly complete control over the Batum Port, railways and mines of Transcaucasia¹⁹⁰. These stipulations openly revealed that Germany was planning a monopolistic control over Caucasus; and even over three cities that the Ottomans had sovereignty rights according to Brest-Litovsk it was being planned to limit this right of the Ottomans.

¹⁸⁴ Stanwood, p. 121.

¹⁸⁵ Stanwood, p.138.

¹⁸⁶ Curzon was the Leader of the House of Lords.

¹⁸⁷ Stanwood, pp.146-149.

¹⁸⁸ Selami Kılıç, *Ermeni Sorunu ve Almanya: Türk-Alman Arşiv Belgeleriyle* (İstanbul, 2003), p. 153.

¹⁸⁹ Çolak, *Alman İmparatorluğu'nun Doğu Siyaseti Çerçevesinde Kafkasya Politikası*, pp. 237-238.

¹⁹⁰ Wolfdieter Bihl, *Die Kaukasus-Politik der Mittelmächte* (Wien, 1992), pp. 46-47.

II.4. Batum Conference And Ottoman-Armenian War

Despite these decisions Germany took at the meeting, Transcaucasia's power at the front was deteriorating. Ottoman State and the Republic of Transcaucasia were in reality alone on the solution of territorial problems. It was decided to make the future negotiations upon the territorial problems' solution in Batum¹⁹¹. Minister of Justice Halil Bey headed the Ottoman delegation in Batum. Vehib Pasha accompanied him at the Batum Conference. Transcaucasian delegation in Batum was composed of 45 people and Prime Minister Chkenkeli headed it. Important delegates from Azerbaijan were Hacinski and Resulzade¹⁹².

Before The Batum Conference, Talat Bey had warned Halil Bey not to allow for a strong Armenian state. Accordingly, if no intervention was made to Armenians, Armenians across the whole globe summing to 5 millions would migrate and establish an Armenian state. In fact the central idea was to establish a weak Armenia and a weak Georgia¹⁹³. In the beginning of Batum Peace Conference process, Mehmed H. Hacinski asked Enver about his ideas related with independent Armenia. In his reply, Enver Pasha said that they did not oppose an independent Armenia if Armenians stopped to engage in the plots of Russia and Britain¹⁹⁴. However Enver Pasha too had a tough attitude towards Armenia. But Halil Bey sent a telegraph on May 8, 1918 to Enver Pasha saying that Caucasia's annexation would not be beneficial for the Ottomans. For Halil Bey, establishment of a buffer state between Russia and the Ottoman State should instead be supported¹⁹⁵.

¹⁹¹ Şahin, *Diplomasi ve Sınır: Aleksandropol Görüşmeleri ve Protokolleri-1918*, p. 69.

¹⁹² Kazemzadeh, p. 109.

¹⁹³ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 474.

¹⁹⁴ From Mehmed H. Hacinski's report submitted to the common session of Muslim Groups of Seim on 1 May 1918, ARDA (Azerbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Arxivi), F.970, siy.1, iş.1, v. 32-33.

¹⁹⁵ Karal, pp. 528-529.

Soviet Russia did not want Batum to be held by the Ottomans. Chicherin had announced that they would not accept the stipulations of Batum Conference since Russia had not been invited to the conference¹⁹⁶. Chicherin, Bolsheviks' Commissar of Foreign Affairs, sent German Ambassador Mirbach a diplomatic note on May 16, 1918 saying that they would not recognize the Batum Treaty. Together with this, Chicherin wanted to send to Batum a delegate and emphasized that by sending a delegate they did not mean to accept Transcaucasian State and an agreement at the Batum Conference. Tiflis rejected Chicherin's request to send a delegate to Batum. Thus, Chicherin sent the Transcaucasian government a telegraph explaining that they would not accept the stipulations taken at Batum Conference¹⁹⁷. Count von Mirbach had initially offered Chicherin that Germany to be a mediator between Transcaucasian government and Russia. At first, Russia did not like the idea but later accepted the mediating role of Germany. Both internal problems and chaos of Russia and the sensitive relations with Germany caused this decision. However, the Russian government had always planned to meet with Transcaucasian government but had never found a chance for this¹⁹⁸.

In the diplomatic note Chicherin sent to Ottoman Ambassador to Russia Galip Kemali Bey, dated May 28, 1918, he said that despite they sacrificed much by surrendering Kars, Ardahan and Batum to the Ottomans with Brest-Litovsk, they would not be able to accept Ottoman's wish to obtain further lands along these provinces, and he was protesting the Ottoman movement through Baku by occupying Aleksandropol. Galip Kemali Bey, on the other hand, replied to Chicherin's message by May 29, saying that Russia had not fought against the cruel actions of the Armenian groups although it had accepted to guarantee the security of the region, at Brest-Litovsk; that although

¹⁹⁶ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 476.

¹⁹⁷ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, pp. 475-476.

¹⁹⁸ Kazemzadeh, p.113.

Kars, Ardahan and Batum were to be evacuated by the Russian forces, in reality, the Ottoman forces had to make bloody fights for the return of the provinces to the Ottoman side; and that Russia had not intervened with the Armenians for their cruel actions through the ongoing struggle; and that the Ottoman prisoners of war had been slaughtered and also sold like animals. Relying on these realities, Galip Kemal Bey stated that the Soviet Government should instead accept all the responsibilities and the outcomes of these events¹⁹⁹.

When the Batum Conference started on May 11, the old Ottoman demands were replaced with new ones. It was natural to replace the old demands, since the Ottomans had spent a serious effort and military force till the start of the conference. According to the new requests Vehib Pasha proposed, Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkelek and Aleksandropol to be surrendered to the Ottomans; Aleksandropol-Echmiadzin-Nakhchevan-Culfa railway to be used for the transfer of the Ottoman soldiers to North Iran; and as the war against Britain was going on, Transcaucasian railways would be under Ottoman control²⁰⁰.

Vehib Pasha requested to start the preparations for the movement towards Tiflis that had been stopped at the beginning of the Batum Conference²⁰¹. According to the action plan, most of the Ottoman forces would be moving through Aleksandropol and defeat the Armenian forces while moving to Tiflis. In this way, both the Armenian forces - that was the most troublesome military force for the Ottomans - would be broken and through entering into the political center of Caucasia, the proposed Ottoman demands would be accepted²⁰².

¹⁹⁹ Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu, *30 Senelik Siyasi Hatıralarımın Üçüncü ve Son Cildi, 1918-1922* (İstanbul, 1953), pp. 47-48.

²⁰⁰ Allen-Muratoff, p. 467.

²⁰¹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 507.

²⁰² *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, pp. 507-508.

Armenians were especially against the idea of the control of Kars-Aleksandropol-Culfa railway by the Ottomans. The control of the railways had strategic importance for Caucasia; control of the railways was an important and effective factor in a mountainous region like The Caucasus in terms of many military issues. Halil Bey and Vehib Pasha gave a guarantee to the Armenians that the railways would be returned after the war. However, Kachaznuni and Khatisian were strongly against Ottoman demands²⁰³.

To intervene to the Armenian-British cooperation in Tebriz, the Ottoman state was willing to take advantage of the Aleksandropol-Culfa railway quickly. With this aim, Yakup Şevki Pasha believed that occupation of Aleksandropol was essential. For him, even if the Transcaucasian Government allowed the Ottomans to use their railways in order to send a division to Tebriz, the Armenians would be the obstacles, and the transfer of the soldiers to Tebriz would take longer. First Caucasian Army Corps Commander, Colonel Kazım Bey (Karabekir) was not in favour of sending a military force to Tebriz before the Armenian threat was eliminated²⁰⁴. Moreover, in this period, due to the anarchical circumstances in the Caucasus and their deteriorating position in front of their enemies, on May 13, 1918, the Muslim fraction in Seim decided to send delegates to Batum and even to Istanbul to accelerate support that would be sent by the Ottomans²⁰⁵.

The Ottomans immediately attacked Aleksandropol to achieve their plans in the Caucasus. In the sudden Ottoman attack made to Aleksandropol on May 15, 11th and 5th Caucasus Divisions quickly defeated the Armenian forces. The 11th Caucasus Division surrounded Aleksandropol from three sides. By the evening, the 3000 defending forces

²⁰³ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 175.

²⁰⁴ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, pp. 508-509.

²⁰⁵ ARDA, f.970, siy.1, iş.1, v.39.

accepted to surrender the city to the Ottomans. And the 2nd Sniper Battalion that was sent to the city on May 16 occupied Aleksandropol²⁰⁶. The 11th Caucasus Division lost its 280 soldiers in total, 82 of whom were killed²⁰⁷. According to Ottoman records, in the Aleksandropol battle, 600 Armenian soldiers died²⁰⁸.

After the forces headed by Yakup Şevki Pasha occupied Aleksandropol on May 15, the Armenian Army Corps made of 6000 soldiers, headed by Nazarbekov and composed of 2 divisions and 8 brigades, which had 20 cannons, started to withdraw to east and south-east²⁰⁹. The Ottomans had decided to move forward via three sides. The first was Aleksandropol-Erivan, the second was Aleksandropol-Karakilise-Tiflis, and the third side was Karakilise-Delican-Kazakh-Baku²¹⁰.

For Nazarbekov, the defeat of the Armenians at Aleksandropol and the abandonment of the equipment and food at the battlefield were an outcome of the Ottomans' attack and pressure that they had violated the peace process²¹¹. After the defeat, most of the soldiers had escaped to Tiflis. Seeing this, Armenians of Sürmeli (in Erivan region) and Etchmiadzin started to leave the region after the loss of Aleksandropol²¹².

After the Ottoman occupation of Aleksandropol, all the Armenian forces started to concentrate mainly on Lori, Karakilise and Erivan. At this moment, Nazarbekov stated that the discipline of the Armenian forces had been totally lost; only a small Armenian force left since the Ottomans had defeated the Armenian Reserves decisively;

²⁰⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, pp. 510-511.

²⁰⁷ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 511.

²⁰⁸ Kazım Karabekir, *Birinci Cihan Harbi*, v.4 (İstanbul, 1994), p. 248.

²⁰⁹ Çakmak, p. 269.

²¹⁰ Sarkisyan, p. 399.

²¹¹ Sarkisyan, p. 361.

²¹² Sarkisyan, p. 361.

many Armenian equipment and food had been captured by the Ottomans and that therefore, the Armenians no longer had enough equipment to continue their fight²¹³.

On May 16, the commander of the group ordered to start movement to Erivan in May 17. According to this plan, Aleksandropol region and the railway lines would be covered towards northern and eastern sides and the 36th division would move to Erivan; the remaining forces would occupy Karakilise²¹⁴. The movement plan was prepared in this way, since it was believed that the Armenian force was gathered in Karakilise and it was understood that at the moment of occupation of Karakilise, there were 4000 Armenian soldiers at that location²¹⁵.

In accordance with this, 3rd Army Commandership ordered Eastern Armies Group Commandership to move to Karakilise on May 18, 1918, since it was believed that most Armenian forces gathered at Karakilise and they should not be let to reorganize²¹⁶. In the battles of Amamlı and Celaloğlu that took place between the dates May 21 and 26, the Ottoman forces that were slightly larger in number of soldiers easily defeated the Armenian forces headed by Nazarbekov and Andranik²¹⁷.

In fact, the Ottoman State sought an early peace agreement with the Armenians. Vehib Pasha was planning to meet with Nazarbekov in either May 23 or 24. Although Vehib Pasha went to Aleksandropol with this aim, Nazarbekov did not come to the meeting²¹⁸ and therefore, the Ottoman forces did not have any choice other than fighting in cost of lives of the soldiers.

²¹³ Sarkisyan, pp. 361-362.

²¹⁴ Belen, *Birinci Cihan Harbinde Türk Harbi: 1918 Yılı Hareketleri*, p. 161.

²¹⁵ Belen, p. 162.

²¹⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 514.

²¹⁷ Allen-Muratoff, p. 472.

²¹⁸ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 517.

Upon the lightning victories of the Ottoman forces against the Armenians, Transcaucasia's Georgian and Muslim political parties decided to meet and negotiate. On May 21, 1918, the meeting was held between Zhordania, Nikoladze, Surguladze and Avalov on behalf of Georgia; Hoyski, Pepinov, Yusufbekov, Sefikurdski, Hasmamedov and Caferov on behalf of Azerbaijan; and in this meeting, it was meant that the Republic of Transcaucasia would not be able with its current position to overcome the crises, therefore, there should at least be a replace of the current state with a dual structure. However, the Georgian delegates met in May 22 decided that the only solution would be the declaration of the sovereignty and independence of Georgia and the abolishment of the Republic of Transcaucasia. So, when Georgia was independent, it would invite Germany for protection in the way it wished. Georgian National Council applied to Von Lossow for German support without informing Armenians and Azerbaijanis²¹⁹. In words of Fethali Han Hoyski, the departure of Georgia from the Transcaucasian union was putting Azerbaijan into a troublesome situation as well²²⁰. Nevertheless, after the declaration of Georgia's independence in May 26, Azerbaijan was to declare her independence too in May 28.

Starting from May 21, the most intense battles between the Ottomans and Armenians were held on Karakilise and Sardarabad. At first stage units of Eastern Armies Group on May 21, 1918, reached their target without any fight. Zihni Bey's detachment defeated the Armenian detachment composed of 600 infantries and 250 cavalry, and occupied Sardarabad²²¹. However, the Armenian Commander, Silikian²²², benefited from the fact that the Ottoman forces was weaker in terms of number of soldiers, and gained a victory by counter-attacks dated May 23 and 24. With these

²¹⁹ Kazemzadeh, p. 115.

²²⁰ ARDA, f.970, siy.1, iř.1, v.57.

²²¹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 516.

²²² Kayaloff prefers to use the name of Silikoff, perhaps the reason is that Silikian had little knowledge of Armenian during the Battle of Serdarabad; Kayaloff, p.29.

victories, he took not only Sardarabad back, but he also pushed the Ottoman forces back to north by 30 km from Sardarabad. On the same days, with the support of Silikian, Armenian forces headed by Dro Kanayan fighting against the 11th Caucasus Division's 3rd Regiment, launched a counter-attack against the Ottomans in May 25 and with also the support of Silikian's infantries, drew back the Ottomans to the north of Baş-Abaran on May 29²²³. By May 1918, Silikian was commanding 12.000 soldiers. Sardarabad victory was gained by 6000 soldiers²²⁴.

One of the most severe fighting between the Ottomans and the Armenians was in Karakilise between May 26 and 28. The Armenians fought well in Karakilise; however, both the 36th and the 5th Caucasus Divisions defeated Armenians and led to the Nazarbekov army's decrease to 5000 soldiers and decreased the morale of the remaining forces²²⁵. For Sarkisyan, the Ottoman forces in Karakilise battles were composed of 10.000 soldiers, 70 cannons and 40 machine guns. The Armenians, on the other hand, had 5000-6000 soldiers, 10 cannons and 20 machine guns²²⁶.

The occupation of Karakilise was planned to be in May 27, however, due to the strong defence of the Armenians, the 9th and 11th divisions could occupy Karakilise in May 28²²⁷. Initially, Karakilise was a difficult battle for the Ottomans. But later, with the reinforcements taken from Kars and Aleksandropol, the Ottomans could defeat the Armenians²²⁸. The defeat at Karakilise did not let the Armenians to have continuous hope for victory that was initially gained after the Sardarabad victory. In the message sent to Lenin, Stepan Shaumian, Bolsheviks' leader in Caucasia, was stating that the Ottoman movement at Karakilise was a part of her goal to reach Baku through the

²²³ Allen- Muratoff, p. 476.

²²⁴ Kayaloff, p. 75.

²²⁵ Allen- Muratoff, pp. 473-474.

²²⁶ Sarkisyan, p. 400.

²²⁷ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 519.

²²⁸ Sarkisyan, p. 400.

Karakilise-Delican-Akstafa way. At first sight, war was against Armenian forces. But in reality, the main target was Baku as Shaumian had pointed out²²⁹.

While the battles were going on, Georgians were aware of the fact that only a German-protected independent Georgia could survive. For the Georgians, the key to success was to benefit from Turkish-German conflict in Caucasus. The Armenians were still highly determined to fight against the Ottomans, despite the disadvantageous situation. Noi Zhordania who saw the great optimism of Armenian leadership warned Khatisian on May 25 and emphasized that Armenians too had to make peace with Turks²³⁰. As the end of the Batum Conference was coming, Noi Zhordania declared that Georgians did not have to lose with the Armenians; that Armenians were about to experience a Turkish occupation, and that Georgians would not follow the way Armenians took²³¹.

After the Sardarabad victory, the Armenians started to move to Aleksandropol from Sardarabad. However, Dashnak leaders, Khatisian, Kachaznuni and Papadjanian had started to make peace negotiations with the Ottomans. Despite the pressure of the public opinion, Silikian decided to stop. Most probably the main reason behind his decision was the situation of the Armenians who seriously lack ammunition. In such a situation, a counter attack could possibly result in a highly disastrous Ottoman victory²³². Armenians were determined enough to fight; however, the Armenian political, military common sense would dominate the political future of the Armenians. Armenians' ammunition stocks had become empty, and moreover, the Ottomans could take reinforcement. If the Ottomans used this reinforcement chance, it could be a

²²⁹ E. A. Tokarzhevskii, *Iz istorii Inostrannoi Interventsii i Grazhdonskoi Voiny v Azerbaidjane* (Baku, 1957), p. 82.

²³⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 184-185.

²³¹ Sarkisyan, p. 363.

²³² Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 193-194.

catastrophe for the Armenians²³³. The defeat of Karakilise was making a long-term military success for the Armenians almost impossible.

The 1st and the 2nd Divisions of the Armenian Army Corps respected the cease-fire decision; however, Andranik rejected this decision by forming a new Turkish Armenian brigade and blamed the Armenian National Council and Dashnaktsutiun for betrayal. With the disappointment resulted from Batum Treaty, Andranik launched terror campaign towards Muslim villages in Caucasus²³⁴. With his armed band with some thousands men, he had declared that they would not accept Batum Agreement. Because of his rebellious behaviour, Andranik was dismissed from the Armenian army, and he moved to Nakhchevan to fight against Turks and to combine his forces with the British forces in Northern Iran²³⁵.

With the agreements signed in June 4, the Ottoman-Armenian military rivalry ended within three weeks. This resistance of the Armenians did not cause a big delay on the Ottoman movement in the Caucasus. As Allen and Muratoff state as well, the main reason of the delay of the Ottoman movement was the political manoeuvres of the Georgian leaders²³⁶. Georgians were aware that they would not be able to stop the Ottoman movement with the help of the Transcaucasian Government and they were afraid of the North Caucasian Muslims. Therefore, they were in favour of an independence guaranteed by the German force²³⁷.

²³³ Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia, v.1 The First Year, 1918-1919* (Berkeley, 1971), p. 35.

²³⁴ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 194.

²³⁵ Şahin, *Türkiye ve Mavera-yı Kafkasya İlişkileri İçerisinde Trabzon ve Batum Konferansları ve Antlaşmaları*, p. 612.

²³⁶ Allen-Muratoff, p. 476.

²³⁷ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 192.

II.5. Vassalization of Georgia to Germany and the Start of Ottoman-German Rivalry In Transcaucasia

Starting from the spring of 1918, Germans began to develop their relations with the Georgians with an aim to create either a Georgia that was supporter of Germany or a Transcaucasian Federation influenced mainly by Georgia²³⁸. Germany was suffering from being lack of raw materials by 1918. At that stage, Caucasia meant a source of life for Germany. Both General Ludendorff²³⁹ and Marshall Paul von Hindenburg were emphasizing their needs for the gasoline, copper, manganese and cotton in this region. However, as Ludendorff stated, raw material concentrated activities should be realized independent from the Ottoman effect. The Foreign Ministry of Germany had therefore planned even to take the Ottomans out of Batum. German control over Batum meant Germany to be the owner of the Baku gasoline pipeline's final destination and accelerating the export of the Transcaucasia's raw materials²⁴⁰. The vassalization of Georgia would be advantageous for Germany since it would be a defensive base in Caucasus for Germany and a base for attack against Britain in Near East region. German support, on the other hand, was the most attractive strategy for the Georgians. As Chkenkeli defined in his telegraph, the only opportunity to fight against Turkish occupation was establishing an independent Georgia under the support and protection of Germany²⁴¹.

To enter into Caucasus, Germans were following the strategy of being the intervening party of Batum Conference. In May 8, General von Lossow interfered

²³⁸ Kılıç, "Brest-Litovsk Barışı Sonrası Kafkasya'daki Bazı Askeri ve Siyasi Gelişmeler", p.334.

²³⁹ Ludendorff was Germany's Deputy Chief of Staff.

²⁴⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 178-179.

²⁴¹ Kazemzadeh, p. 119.

within the conference and in order to block the increasing Ottoman influence, suggested mediation. Georgians and Armenians accepted this suggestion²⁴².

On May 10, 1918, Ludendorff stated that Germany needed a strong Ottoman State to be world power, and for Germany to fight against Britain in Iran and India, could only be possible with the help of Ottoman State, and that the demands of the Ottomans in Caucasus could be accepted to a certain degree. For him, if the Ottomans occupied Azerbaijan and Caspian Sea, this would be for the benefit of Germany. Parallel to this, in his telegraph sent to Enver Pasha in May 11, Ludendorff was saying that Ottomans needed Kars-Culfa railway to stop the movement of British forces in the south of Musul and was supporting the idea that the railway should be under the control of the Ottomans²⁴³. However, at the meeting dated May 11, 1918, between Chancellor Graf Hertling, Kühlmann, Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Ludendorff was rejecting the idea of giving Batum-Baku railway to the Ottomans while he was stating the need for the Ottomans' transferring of her military power to Tehran to stop the British movement instead of moving into Caucasus. Ludendorff and Kühlmann were stating that Aleksandropol-Culfa railway could be given to the Ottoman state, if Germany too had control over this railway²⁴⁴. Ludendorff wished the peace and an alliance between Ottoman State and the Caucasian countries. According to him, the Ottomans should advance in Northern Iran.²⁴⁵ In May 15, General Ludendorff said General von Seeckt that it should be tried to block the Transcaucasia plans of Enver Pasha and to achieve peace in the region; according to him the situations in Tehran and Baghdad had priority²⁴⁶.

²⁴² Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 192.

²⁴³ Çolak, *Alman İmparatorluğu'nun Doğu Siyaseti Çerçevesinde Kafkasya Politikası*, pp. 248-250.

²⁴⁴ Çolak, *Alman İmparatorluğu'nun Doğu Siyaseti Çerçevesinde Kafkasya Politikası*, pp. 250-251.

²⁴⁵ Hans Meier-Welcker, *Seeckt* (Frankfurt, 1967), p. 148.

²⁴⁶ Mühlman, p. 198.

Germany had reacted to the Ottomans when they occupied the Aleksandropol-Culfa line and entered into the heart of Armenia and as a result, von Lossow had increased his influence at Batum Conference²⁴⁷. The rapid advance of the Ottomans would result in a rapid agreement between Germany and Georgia. Georgia was in a very desperate situation that Chkenkeli was explaining to Lossow in May 15 even that a German Prince or a German Viceroy could found a relation between the two sides²⁴⁸.

Through Batum Conference, Germans offered the transfer of Ottomans' rights of use of Batum railways and port to a private German-Ottoman-Transcaucasian company, and German control over Transcaucasia's natural resources. The Ottomans rejected these offers despite Germany's tolerance for the Ottoman occupation of Aleksandropol-Culfa line²⁴⁹. This attitude of the Ottomans towards Germany became more rigid through the stages of Batum Conference. In May 24, Halil Bey declared that he did not accept the mediation of Lossow, which was the most appropriate decision at that moment, and upon this, Lossow left Batum. However, before leaving, Lossow made an agreement with the Georgians and helped to declare Georgia's independence and her control by Germany and that Count von Schulenburg's arrival to Tiflis as a German delegate²⁵⁰. Colonel Kress von Kressenstein who was in Tiflis at that moment declared that in case of their gain of the control of all the railways and the acceptance of the patronage of Germany, they could protect Caucasus against Ottoman intervention. The Ottomans protested this meeting; however, Germans and Georgians had already agreed on this²⁵¹. Moreover, the agreements between Germany and Georgia did not completely

²⁴⁷ Frita Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York, 1967), p. 555.

²⁴⁸ Fischer, p. 556.

²⁴⁹ Fischer, p. 555.

²⁵⁰ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 192. Noi Zhordania stresses that arriving of German delegation to Batum Conference was a surprise for Ottomans because they saw the problem of Caucasus as their own problem. See Sarkisyan, p.367.

²⁵¹ Joseph Pomiankowski, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Çöküşü: "1914-1918" 1. Dünya Savaşı* (Istanbul, 1990), pp. 322-323.

satisfy the Germans because of the goals of the Ottomans in Caucasus. Therefore, in his telegraph dated May 25, Ludendorff forced von Seeckt to persuade the Ottomans to transfer their forces in the Eastern Front to Mesopotamia and Iran²⁵². While the Ottoman advance was going on, Berlin started by the end of May to publicly reflect her irritation from the Ottoman advance in Caucasus. Thus, Talat Pasha, Enver Pasha and Ahmed Nesimi Bey stated that the Ottoman soldiers would in no way move further from the lines drawn at Brest-Litovsk. For Enver Pasha, military movements were aiming to provide the security of the communication lines with Iran and Mesopotamia²⁵³.

Halil Bey, the head of the Ottoman delegation at Batum Conference, sent a diplomatic note on May 26, 1918 to Transcaucasian delegation explaining that hundred thousands of Turks and Muslims living in the neighbourhood of Baku were experiencing cruelty, that the situation at other regions of Caucasia was not so different, and that the Ottomans were highly sensitive and caring about the security of the people sharing the same religion and race as the people within its lands, and he was implying that a military intervention to Caucasia could be made²⁵⁴. However, there was no longer an official platform that could reply back to Ottoman side on behalf of Transcaucasia, because the Republic of Transcaucasia had resolved with the efforts of Georgia.

Halil Bey and Vehib Pasha were determined about Georgia and in case of a rejection of the Ottoman diplomatic note, an advance towards Poti and Kutaisi on May 30 was among the plans. However, due to Germans' highly determined existence in Georgia, the Ottomans took a backward step²⁵⁵. The inability of the Ottomans to use the Georgian lands to implement their plans over Caucasus would be a real obstacle for the Ottoman advance in Caucasus.

²⁵² Trumpener, p. 179.

²⁵³ Trumpener, p. 180.

²⁵⁴ Mirza Bala Mehmetzade, *Milli Azerbaycan Hareketi* (Berlin, 1938), p. 134.

²⁵⁵ Allen-Muratoff, p. 477.

Germany was not planning to limit her area of influence with Georgia. Kazım Karabekir explained that he had met a German Officer in May 28 during the Battle of Karakilise and that there were 50 soldiers with that Officer in Karakilise who were German prisoners became free after the Bolshevik Revolution. This military unit's existence in Karakilise during the battle with the Armenians was a sign of a bargain between the defeated Armenians and Germany. Not surprisingly, an official explanation was published in May 30 from the Group Commandership that both the Armenians and the Georgians had applied for German patronage in South Caucasus²⁵⁶.

According to the agreement signed between Germany and Georgia on May 28, 1918 in Poti, Georgia would allow Germany to use Georgian railways till the end of the war and in this way, German actions against British army in Mesopotamia front would be supported, all the railways and Poti Port would be controlled by Germany, Germany would also control and use the mines of Georgia²⁵⁷. In Ludendorff's words, with German protection the Christian Georgia would be secured against greedy Turks²⁵⁸. This agreement of Georgia motivated other parties in Caucasus to seek similar solutions²⁵⁹. By Georgia's vassalization to Germany, Caucasus would officially be dissolved from Russia.

Reichstag recognised the Republic of Georgia in June 11 and the diplomatic mission headed by Colonel von Kress arrived to Tiflis together with some German military subdivisions²⁶⁰. 1st Bavarian Reserve Force, Jager and 11th assault battalions

²⁵⁶ Karabekir, p. 289.

²⁵⁷ James Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918: Documents and Materials* (Baltimore, 1936), p. 53.

²⁵⁸ Z. A. B. Zeman, *Germany and The Revolution in Russia, 1915-1918: Documents from The Archives of The German Foreign Ministry* (London, 1958), p. 134.

²⁵⁹ Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918: Documents and Materials*, p. 53.

²⁶⁰ Bunyan, p. 51.

had arrived at Poti in June 8 and moved to Tiflis in June 12²⁶¹. The German Consul in Tiflis had armed the old German prisoners and covered the railway stations with German flags with the help of these German units. Moreover, German migrant villagers located in various regions of Caucasus had also been armed²⁶². As Kazım Karabekir stated, 3000 soldiers of Bavarian force that entered into Poti commanded by Kress von Kressenstein was aiming to occupy Baku²⁶³. Therefore, at the further stages of the Ottoman movement in Caucasus, the Ottomans would face with a certain German threat as well.

II.6 The End of Batum Peace Conference

After the Ottoman victories in the region, Enver Pasha's attitude towards the Armenians had become tougher. In the instruction sent from Enver Pasha to Vehib Pasha in May 27, it was pointed out that an independent Armenia would have a high population with the migration of Armenians living abroad especially in Western Countries and in that case Ottomans would face with an even worse enemy compared to Russia and therefore Armenian territory should be divided between Georgians and Azerbaijanis so that occupation of places like Erivan where the Muslim population was high would be preferable instead. However, in his response, Vehib Pasha was emphasizing that they would not be able to completely eliminate the Armenians by this way²⁶⁴. In May 29, Enver Pasha sent an instruction to Vehib Pasha, and stating that Armenia would be surrounded from Karakilise and Nakhchevan sides to make it have

²⁶¹ Anita L. P. Burdett, *Armenia: Political and Ethnic Boundaries 1878-1948* (Slough, U.K., 1998), p. 393.

²⁶² Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p.215. Russians had created German villages in Caucasia to diminish the German population in Russo-German border and to strengthen Christians in Caucasus. See Naki Keykurun, *Azerbaycan İstiklâl Mücadelesinin Hatıraları (İstanbul, 1964)*, p. 27.

²⁶³ Karabekir, p. 291.

²⁶⁴ Şahin, "Türkiye'nin Kafkasya Politikalarında Ermeni Faktörü", pp. 389-390.

no borders with Georgia. So, Armenia would turn into a state tightly surrounded between the Ottoman State and Azerbaijan²⁶⁵. Vehib Pasha was stating at the negotiations with the Armenian delegation that the new strategy of the Ottomans was moving to the East, the roads of Kars-Akhalkelek-Borchalu-Kazakh going to Gence, Sherur-Nakhchevan-Zangezur going to valley of Kura would be the paths of the movement, and Armenians blocked Ottoman path²⁶⁶. In his explanation, by Ottoman-Armenian agreement he was in fact demanding the removing of the threats that were caused by the Armenian geopolitics based on Greater Armenia Project affecting the Ottoman projects towards the East negatively. In the same period, Erivan Muslims too were continuously asking for help from the Ottomans²⁶⁷. Many messages were arriving to Ottoman Minister of Justice Halil Bey from different locations of Caucasus stating that in these locations, the Muslim population was under threat and risk and that they needed help. By the end of May, Muslims from Erivan and Nakhchevan were sending their messages to the Ottoman Commanderships and via the delegates they sent to Halil Bey stating that they needed help due to the Armenian cruelty towards them²⁶⁸. But at the same time, Azerbaijan Turks living in Batum were asking the Ottomans to have a moderate attitude towards the Georgians since they did not want Georgians to cooperate with the Armenians. With the efforts of Halil Bey and the Azerbaijan delegation during the negotiations, the possible cooperation and unification between the Georgians and the Armenians was avoided²⁶⁹.

Armenians were under the threat of being annihilated and therefore they would be seeking for negotiation with the Germans as well. In May 20, Armenians

²⁶⁵ Şahin, p. 608.

²⁶⁶ Şahin, p. 609.

²⁶⁷ Şahin, p. 610.

²⁶⁸ İbrahim Ethem Atnur, *Osmanlı Yönetiminden Sovyet Yönetimine Kadar Nahçıvan, 1918-1921* (Ankara, 2001), pp. 27-30.

²⁶⁹ Halil Menteşe, *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin Hatıraları* (İstanbul, 1986), pp. 228-229.

communicated with von Lossow via Hamo Ohandjanian and Arshak Zohrabian, and claimed that Turks and Muslims were willing to annihilate Armenia, and they asked for protection and patronage from Germany regarding this issue²⁷⁰. On May 30, 1918, the Armenian Parliament in Erivan regarded in a way Germany as the guarantor of Brest-Litovsk and applied to Germany to stop the Ottoman movement to Erivan²⁷¹. However, it was too late for Armenia to stop the Ottomans.

According to Talat Pasha, Ottomans would establish a small-scale Armenia during the peace agreement and would create a peaceful impression regarding the Armenia problem. For the ones who were supporting tough solutions like Enver Pasha, who thought that liquidation of the Russian Armenians completely would be the best solution; however, Halil Bey and Talat Pasha's idea of creating a small-scale Armenia had prevailed at the end²⁷².

Azerbaijan's declaration of independence in May 28 too put Armenia into a difficult situation. On the Armenian side, there was a fragmentation regarding the declaration of independence. Moreover, Azerbaijan's declaration resulted in Armenia's declaration of her independence immediately as well. As an independent state, Azerbaijan's claim on the south of Caucasus caused a threat of Ottoman occupation of Erivan²⁷³.

The Peace Agreement between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Armenia was signed by Halil Bey and Vehib Pasha for the Ottoman side, and by Khatisian as the head of the delegation, Ruben Hovhannes Kachaznuni and Mikael

²⁷⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 180.

²⁷¹ Çolak, *Alman İmparatorluğu'nun Doğu Siyaseti Çerçevesinde Kafkasya Politikası*, p. 259.

²⁷² Chalabian, pp. 400-401.

²⁷³ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 190-191.

Papadjanian for the Armenian side²⁷⁴. According to the important stipulations of the peace agreement signed between the Ottoman and the Armenian delegates in June 4, Ottoman State would benefit from the Aleksandropol-Culfa railway, there would be 15 km buffer area in both sides of the new borders and the muftis selected by the Muslim society in Armenia would be contingent on the Sheikh ul-Islam, the Ottoman prisoners would be returned, the soldiers of the states the Ottomans were in fight would be deported from Armenia, the existence and establishment of the Armenian peace forces would be decided together with the Ottoman state²⁷⁵. As a result of this agreement with the Armenians, Kars-Aleksandropol-Ulukhanli-Culfa railway was captured by the Ottomans. Therefore the Ottoman State captured 24% of Caucasian railways²⁷⁶. Ottoman state moved further from the borders of 1828 by this agreement²⁷⁷. In this way, the Ottomans both became a neighbour of Azerbaijan and at the same time occupied a 12.421 km and a region with 655.000 population into their borders²⁷⁸. By June 4 agreements, Ottomans captured 20.6% of Transcaucasia and 18.5% of the overall population²⁷⁹. Sürmeli region, Aleksandropol, and most of Etchmiadzin, and some parts of Erivan and Sherur-Derelayaz were given to the Ottomans. Most lands of the Independent Armenia were composed of unproductive soil. On these lands, 230.000 Armenians, 80.000 Muslims, 11.000 Yezidis and some other people of other races made up to 321.000 people in total in Armenia²⁸⁰. With Batum Treaty, the Ottomans became the owner of Sarikamış-Culfa-Batum railway, whereas Georgia would own the railways covering Batum, Baku and Karakilise from Tiflis, and Azerbaijan would own most of

²⁷⁴ *Dokumenty i materialy po İstorii Turetskoi İnterventsii v Armenii i 1918. Godu.*Eds. Baladian-Arutiunian (Erivan, 1970), p. 154.

²⁷⁵ Fahri Belen, *XX.yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti*, p. 349.

²⁷⁶ Şahin, *Türkiye ve Mavera-yı Kafkasya İlişkileri İçerisinde Trabzon ve Batum Konferansları ve Antlaşmaları*, p. 612.

²⁷⁷ Atnur, p. 18.

²⁷⁸ Atnur, p. 19.

²⁷⁹ Tokarzhevskii, p. 84.

²⁸⁰ Sarkisyan, pp. 365-366.

the Baku-Tiflis and Baku-Petrovsk railways. The Armenians, on the other hand, would only own the 30 miles long railways between Djadjur and Karakilise²⁸¹.

Armenia was now open to any attacks from all sides, and moreover, it was lack of natural resources that would help to receive any state's help and patronage²⁸². On the other hand, Sardarabad and Karakilise resistances were the achievements providing the Armenians to make a peace agreement with the Ottomans²⁸³.

According to the Armenian archival resources, during Batum Conference, Vehib Pasha proposed that the Ottomans would be standing too close to the Armenians always ready to attack any time with the help of Kurds and Azerbaijanis²⁸⁴. It was claimed that the real goal of Enver Pasha was to make Armenians closer to themselves and occupy Armenia at a proper time²⁸⁵. However, as a result of agreements, Armenia had already turned into a weak state unable to react to the Ottomans' Caucasus operation. It was also known that the main target was Baku. As a matter of fact, on June 3, 1918, Armenian delegation's head in Batum sent a diplomatic note to the Commander-in-Chief of the Ottoman Army requesting for the safe removal of the Armenian forces in Baku till occupation of Baku by Turks and tolerance to the people who wanted to safely leave the city²⁸⁶.

The new ally of the Ottoman State in the period targeting Baku was the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Minister of Justice Halil Bey and Commander of the Ottoman Caucasian Armies Vehib Pasha representing the Ottoman side and Foreign minister Mehmed Hacinski and President of National Parliament Mehmed Emin Resulzade from the Azerbaijan side signed an agreement on June 4, 1918, covering

²⁸¹ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 198.

²⁸² Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918*, p. 53.

²⁸³ Kaçaznuni, p. 53.

²⁸⁴ Sarkisyan, p. 401.

²⁸⁵ Sarkisyan, p. 401.

²⁸⁶ *Dokumenty i materialy po İstorii Turetskoii İnterventsii v Armenii i 1918. Godu*, p. 154.

issues of military, finance and trade. The Fourth Article of this agreement was highly vital, because according to this article, Azerbaijan would have the right to request for Ottoman military support in order to guarantee her safety and order²⁸⁷. The agreements made with Armenia and Georgia were in the form of peace agreement, whereas the agreement signed with Azerbaijan was in the form of friendship and cooperation²⁸⁸.

After the Treaty of Batum, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mehmed Hasan Hacinski, applied to the head of the Ottoman delegation in Batum – Halil Bey, asking him for help to save Baku and the Muslims living in Baku from Armenian cruelty²⁸⁹. By using their legal rights, the Musavatists had applied to the Ottoman State for help from the Ottoman Army against the Red Caucasus Army controlled by Bolsheviks from Baku²⁹⁰. In the application, it was explained that Azerbaijan people had been put into a difficult position after Russian Revolution, that the Bolshevik bands had been keeping important economical regions in their hands in Baku and Caucasus, that they acted cruelly to the Muslim population, and that all sides of Azerbaijan were surrounded with the enemies. Moreover, they were requesting help from the Ottomans to cleanse Baku from Bolsheviks²⁹¹. The Ottoman State would accept this application and Azerbaijan would be the military base of the Ottoman operation towards Baku.

As a result, the Ottoman State had benefited from the chaotic situation created by Russian Revolution and through a quick military advance, could even expand its

²⁸⁷ *Osmanlı Devleti ile Azerbaycan Türk Hanlıkları Arasındaki Münâsebetlere Dâir Arşiv Belgeleri: II (1575-1918)*, (Ankara, 1993) pp. 225-235.

²⁸⁸ Kamuran Gürün, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri 1920-1953* (Ankara, 1992), pp. 3-4.

²⁸⁹ Musa Gasımov, “Bakü’nün Kurtarılması Uğruna Türk Diplomasisinin Mücadelesi: 1918 Yılı”, *Avrasya Dosyası*, Cilt 7, Sayı 1, p. 23.

²⁹⁰ Tokarzhevskii, p. 83.

²⁹¹ ARDA, f.970, siy.1, iş.1, v.47-47a.

1877-78 borders further²⁹². However, this was not enough for Enver Pasha, and the new target of the Ottoman army was Baku.

²⁹² For the Ottoman territorial advance, see Appendix B.

CHAPTER III:

TRANSCAUCASIA BEFORE THE. BAKU OPERATION

III.1. Russian Azerbaijan And Baku Before the First World War

Caucasia has always had an important place in Ottoman-Russian wars. In the struggles between the two states, this region had mostly a decisive role. Due to geographical conditions, it was never easy to establish a complete domination over Caucasia. The people of the region often suffered from the dispute between Russian-Ottoman conflicts. Muslim people in particular suffered from Russian administration's pressure since they had both religious and cultural ties with the Ottomans. On the other hand, the Caucasian people experienced at least a stable cultural and economical development during the Russian administration since they safely lived under the tutelage of Russian Empire. The Caucasian people's hardest experience was WWI. Especially after the Russian Revolution, Caucasia was left alone without a protector and therefore the people would face with bloody struggles. The difficulty in defining the ethnical and cultural borders of the people in Caucasia was probably the most important factor increasing the ethnic conflicts and making the effects of the intervention of the Great Powers, including the Ottoman Empire, more devastating.

In the fragmented structure of the population across the region, Russians' administrative reforms made in the region during the 1860s and 1870s had an important role. As a result of the removal of the Derbent gubernia, and the establishment of Elizavetpol gubernia, from the consisting territories from Baku, Tiflis and Erivan gubernias in 1867, a heterogenic ethnic structure came into existence in the region. Thus by 1870s, many Azerbaijani Turks were living in provinces in which Armenians and Georgians were higher in number in total²⁹³. In this way, Russians were weakening the demographical power of the Muslims in Caucasia, and insisting on a centralization policy that enables them more powerful in terms of administration²⁹⁴.

Baku was the biggest city of Caucasia. At the beginning of the twentieth century, more than half of the whole globe's petrol was being produced in Baku. Baku was a small city at the beginning of the nineteenth century; it became an industrial and trade center by the end of the nineteenth century with the help of especially the modernization brought by Tsarist Russia. After the discovery of the rich petrol areas in the region, the city experienced a meteoric rise. Baku had 14.000 population in 1863²⁹⁵, and, it was 214.600 in 1913²⁹⁶. First, by the lively trade activities resulted from the building of railways, then by the construction of Batum-Baku railway combining two big port centers together, Baku became the most central location between Russia, Iran, and Middle East by 1918²⁹⁷.

The Russians and the Armenians mostly occupied jobs in Baku that required talent and proficiency. At the center of the city mostly rich tradesmen, businessmen, officers and skilled workmen were living, often as being either Russians or Armenians.

²⁹³ Swietochowski, p. 33.

²⁹⁴ For administrative subdivisions of Transcaucasia, see Appendix E.

²⁹⁵ Swietochowski, p. 40.

²⁹⁶ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, N.J., 1972), p. 7.

²⁹⁷ Bülent Gökay, "The Battle for Baku", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No.1, January 1998, p. 30. For the map of Baku, see Appendix D.

Azerbaijani Turks, on the other hand, were often made of unskilled workers and agricultural laborers²⁹⁸. In the region of Baku called as “raion” by the Russians, most of the population was composed of poor and uneducated Azerbaijani villagers and these people would even remain passive in politics during the revolution process²⁹⁹. Against the Russification policy, Turks in Russia had protected their national identities with the help of their proximity to Islam³⁰⁰. However, the unbalanced influence of religion and Muslim clergy (mullahs) over society had hindered the rapid rise of Turkish nationalism among Turks of Russia during the period of revolutions in Russia.

In 1916, there were 95.000 Azerbaijani Turks, 90.000 Russians, and 63.000 Armenians in Baku. The influence of the Armenians in the city was higher than the Muslims and they were mostly speaking their own language instead of Russian³⁰¹. Different from the Muslim Turks, the Armenians in the city had a strong national awareness. By the end of 1915, almost 200.000 Armenians from Anatolia reached to Transcaucasia passing through Aras River³⁰². On the other hand, important Muslim rich people like Zeynel Abidin Tagiyev had symbolic roles in Caucasia; local bourgeoisie was weak outside Baku. Still, with financial supports, this weak local bourgeoisie in Azerbaijan would have an important role in creating the Azerbaijani Intelligentsia that would lead the modernist-national movement together³⁰³.

Russian occupation in 19th century had an important impact on the development of the national identity of Azerbaijan. Before the Russian occupation, Azerbaijan had been divided into many khanates like Baku, Gence, Garabagh, Sheki, Shirvan, Zakatali, and Lenkeran. The reaction after the Russian occupation of the region caused a more

²⁹⁸ Gökay, p. 35.

²⁹⁹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 7.

³⁰⁰ Nadir Devlet, *Rusya Türklerinin Milli Mücadele Tarihi 1905-1917* (Ankara, 1999), pp. 268-269.

³⁰¹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 21.

³⁰² Suny, p. 26.

³⁰³ Swietochowski, pp. 41-42.

frequent interaction between the peoples of khanates who share the same religion, language, and customs and this created a common Muslim-Turkish identity³⁰⁴. Additionally, the nationalist intellectuals with Turkish origin in Tsarist Russia by the end of the 19th century had spread in Russia and seeded the initial basis of the ideology of Pan-Turkism. The threat of Pan-Slavism and the activities of Russification and Christianization were making Pan-Turkism a potential ally ideology for them³⁰⁵.

Probably due to the geographical proximity, the region where the idea of unity of Turks was most popular was Azerbaijan. The Turkish movement could not establish a real political organization until 1905 in Russia. 1904-1905 Russian-Japanese War and 1905 Revolution paved the way for political organization to the Turks. 1905 Revolution enabled opposition groups and ethnic groups to establish schools, newspapers, and political parties. Secession from Russia and establishing closer relations with the Ottomans were now important alternatives for the Azerbaijani intelligentsia³⁰⁶. Within the partially free environment established after 1905 Revolution, Azerbaijan experienced a fertile development in literacy, theatre, music, press, and education³⁰⁷. Baku was the center of these activities. Zeynel Abidin Tagiyev, the founder of Kaspî in Baku as one of the rich men, was the most important financial supporter of Turkist movement in Azerbaijan³⁰⁸. By using the financial supports, a group of Azerbaijani intellectuals began to make the propaganda of Turkish nationalism. For example, in his magazine “Füyuzat”, Hüseyinzade Ali proposed a cultural unity by the common usage of the Ottoman Turkish. He tried to defend the unity of Turks against Russification and Iranism. Hüseyinzade Ali is the first advocate of Pan-Turkism ideal in which the

³⁰⁴ Keykurun, p. 5.

³⁰⁵ Landau, pp. 7-8.

³⁰⁶ Landau, p. 14.

³⁰⁷ Mehmetzade, pp. 37, 44.

³⁰⁸ Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1967), p. 97.

Ottoman State has the central position³⁰⁹. With this aim, Hüseyinzade Ali Bey had even offered to make Ottoman language as the official literal language of Azerbaijan³¹⁰. *Açıksöz* newspaper being published during WWI was claiming that people known till that period as Caucasian Muslim or Tatar were in fact having a Turkish origin³¹¹. Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey who was influenced with the racial ideas of Ernest Renan was opening the discussion of the concept of *Turan* in Baku³¹². Between the years 1905-1908, the Azerbaijani press had been very successful and played an important role in the development and strengthening of Turkish nationalist wave among Azerbaijani intelligentsia and bourgeoisie³¹³.

The effects of Russian Turks living in the Ottoman Empire like Hüseyinzade Ali Bey, Yusuf Akçura, and Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey had also started to be felt especially after the Hamidian Regime's fall and censorship's abolishment in 1908 by the effect of Young Turk Revolution. In this way, Turkish intellectuals benefiting from the environment created by Young Turks, who supported the nationalist propaganda that had moved to Istanbul, could find the chance to influence the press as well³¹⁴. However, Pan-Turkism had been limited to the intellectuals only among the Russian Turks and did not affect the whole society³¹⁵. Azerbaijani Turks, similar to all Russian Turks, were lacking a strong national leadership. Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey and Hüseyinzade Ali Bey had stayed abroad during the critical periods and had lost their influence in their country after 1914³¹⁶.

³⁰⁹ Swietochowski, pp. 88-89.

³¹⁰ Hüseyin Baykara, *Azərbaycan İstiklal Mücadelesi Tarihi* (İstanbul, 1975), p. 204.

³¹¹ Mehmet Emin Resulzade, *Azərbaycan Cumhuriyeti: Keyfiyet-i Teşekkülü ve Şimdiki Vaziyeti* (İstanbul, 1990), p. 17; For detailed information about the rise of Muslims of Russia's national movement after 1905 revolution, see. Hostler, pp. 132-137.

³¹² Zenkovsky, p. 96.

³¹³ Zenkovsky, p. 97.

³¹⁴ Landau, p. 36.

³¹⁵ Landau, p. 45.

³¹⁶ Devlet, p. 272.

Gence was the centre of nationalist movements in Azerbaijan and Baku-centered political parties saw Azerbaijan as part of Russia³¹⁷. In the following periods, Azerbaijanis except for Ali Merdan Bey Topçubaşı were remaining passive in “Muslims of Russia” movement and leaving Tatars alone in this movement³¹⁸. Socialist *Himmet* movement led by Meshedi Azizbeyov, Neriman Nerimanov and Mehmed Emin Resulzade, had been limited to a small-scale Azerbaijani intellectual community and could not take the necessary support from the Russian revolutionists due to its strong Muslim-Turk image³¹⁹.

After 1908 Jon Turk Revolution, most Azerbaijani intellectuals preferred to increase their activities in the Ottoman Empire and the intellectuals in Baku were instead busy with the establishment of a nationalist organization that would in time be the strongest political organization of Azerbaijan. A group of people who were members of *Himmet* led by Abbas Kazımzade and Mihailzade Korbolay founded the nationalist-modernist *Musavat* (equality) association in 1912. This association, despite its assertive program, interestingly could not reveal its political existence seriously till 1917³²⁰. Starting from its foundation *Musavat* had been followed by the secret police of the Tsar and it was known that its members had sympathy towards Islamic Unity³²¹.

Turkish nationalist *Musavat* Party had an inclination towards socialism. It was supporting the national rights of Azerbaijan, peace and land reform³²². In the *Musavat* Association’s program of 1911, the following issues had been emphasized: Muslims’ unity, independence efforts of the Muslim states that had lost their sovereignty and

³¹⁷ Swietochowski, p. 74.

³¹⁸ Swietochowski, p. 78.

³¹⁹ Swietochowski, p. 83.

³²⁰ Swietochowski, pp. 106-109.

³²¹ Michael G. Smith, "Anatomy of a Rumour: Murder Scandal, the *Musavat* Party and Narratives of the Russian Revolution in Baku, 1917-1920", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.36, No. 2, April 2001, p. 216.

³²² Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 174.

support to these efforts, cooperation with the associations aiming to integrate and unify the Muslims, and strengthening the financial aspects for the Muslims³²³.

Mehmed Emin Resulzade was the most influential figure in *Musavat*. Resulzade was one of the founders of *Himmet*, which was founded by the end of 1904 as a Muslim faction of Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, and he has close relations with Stalin³²⁴. Hüseyinzade Ali Bey and Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey and other figures were outside Azerbaijan. Under the circumstances, Mehmed Emin Resulzade had become the most important politician with his activities in *Açıksöz* Newspaper.

Azerbaijani National Movement, that experienced a quick development after 1905, would face with the process of their theoretical goals' turning into practice by the coming of WWI.

III.2. First World War And Azerbaijan

As soon as the WWI started, important figures of Azerbaijan reflected their attitudes explicitly. Azerbaijani industrialists and tradesmen were tied to Russia due to their economic relations; therefore, they were revealing their attitude clearly that they would protect Russia against Central Powers; some of the rich of Baku sent a letter to the general governor of Caucasia explaining that they were ready to support Tsarist Russia³²⁵. However, Azerbaijan's nationalist intellectuals were against the battle against the Ottomans³²⁶. Much before, Russia's attitude even during the Balkan Wars had

³²³ Mehmetzade, pp. 65-66.

³²⁴ Baykara, pp. 209-210.

³²⁵ Betül Aslan, *I. Dünya Savaşı esnasında Azerbaycan Türkleri'nin Anadolu Türkleri'ne "Kardaş Kömeği (Yardım)" ve Baku Müslüman Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Ankara, 2000), p. 68.

³²⁶ Elçin Neciyev, *Kafkaslarda Türk Katliamı* (Istanbul, 2006), p. 43.

caused the reaction of Azerbaijani Turks and increased the nationalist inclinations among the Caucasian Turks³²⁷.

Before WWI, Enver Pasha strongly believed in the power of Muslims living in Russia and Caucasia. In his telegraph dated October 3, 1914 Fahrettin Bey, who was Charge d'Affaires of St. Petersburg, stated that in a war between the Ottomans and Russia, similar to 1877-78 wars, Muslims could be fighting at the Russian side. However, Enver Pasha and Talat Pasha did not pay great attention to this report³²⁸. But still in the other regions where Azerbaijanis and Turks lived within larger groups, Russia was supported. In this period Transcaucasian Muslims were exempt from the military services. However, there were about 200 Azerbaijani officers in Russian army including famous generals like Samed Mehmandarov, Ali Aga Han Shihlinski and Hussein Han Nakhchevanski. Among these, Nakhchevanski was commanding the largest Muslim division made of Azerbaijani and Daghestani volunteers³²⁹.

On January 1915, the Ottomans occupied Tebriz with the force commanded by Halil Pasha (Kut) and achieved the chance to move forward to Russian Azerbaijan. At that time, the inspector of Azerbaijan and Eastern Caucasia of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), Ömer Naci, tried to gather the Azerbaijani Turks living within the boundaries of South Azerbaijan in Iran for a movement towards Baku. However, he could not succeed this because of the return of the Russians to the region after Sarıkamış battle³³⁰. During WWI, official representing CUP in Caucasia, Ömer Naci,

³²⁷ Hesenov, p. 26.

³²⁸ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 241.

³²⁹ Swietochowski, p. 110.

³³⁰ Swietochowski, pp. 113-114.

and his friends were willing the unification of North and South Azerbaijan and the existence of a united Azerbaijan state close to the Ottoman State³³¹.

Despite all these plans, Azerbaijanis could not act in favor of the Ottomans due to the continuous pressure of Russia. However, although Caucasian Turks did not openly reveal, they desired the Ottoman success in the war. To illustrate, it is understood from the memories of Naki Keykurun that during Sarıkamış Battle, Caucasian Turks became closer to the Ottoman state³³². In 1916, the Ottoman defeats at the Caucasus front and the events like the transfer of the Turkish prisoners' to Nargin Island affected Azerbaijanis negatively and therefore, rather than independence ideal, Azerbaijanis were willing to ameliorate the conditions of Turkish prisoners and Turks who were affected negatively by the war³³³.

Kardaş Kömeği Association was among the most concrete examples revealing the closeness of Azerbaijanis to the Ottomans. Upon the news stating that the Russians defeated the Ottomans, Azerbaijani Turks wanted to help the Muslim people under occupation and founded *Kardaş Kömeği Association*³³⁴. *Kardaş Kömeği* (Brother Help) organization was helping people suffering from cruelties of Armenian soldiers' serving in the Russian army and people who came to Caucasia to save their lives, sending Turkish orphans to Azerbaijan. These immigrants were being settled into immigrant dormitories by *Kardaş Kömeği Association*, and with the money gathered from society,

³³¹ Musa Gasimov, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı yıllarında Osmanlı Devleti'nin Azerbaycan Politikası", in *Osmanlı*, vol.2, pp. 598-599.

³³² Keykurun, pp. 29-39.

³³³ Aslan, p. 73.

³³⁴ Neciyev, pp. 46-48.

their expenses were paid. *Kardaş Kömeği* was a strong Association that had offices in most Caucasian cities³³⁵.

Despite this close interest to the Ottomans, Azerbaijanis would wait February Revolution to publicly declare their real political tendencies.

III.3. Transcaucasia After the February Revolution

The news on Petrograd Revolution created enthusiasm in Caucasia. Georgians, Azerbaijanis, and Armenians announced their affiliation to the Provisional Government. All the groups had the hope for the establishment of a new government upon a democratic basis. Dashnak leadership too welcomed the revolution with great enthusiasm. However, after a while, they would realize that this revolution during the war would make them more and more defenseless³³⁶.

With the February revolution, the despotic Tsarist regime having a strong police organization in Caucasia left its place to a democratic but chaotic environment in which political prisoners were given their freedom, freedom of speaking and meeting were allowed and press was made totally free³³⁷. With the revolution, many political exiles started to return to Baku and Caucasia among whom was Shaumian, who would later on become the leader of the Bolsheviks in Baku³³⁸.

After the revolution, Mensheviks became the strongest political party in Transcaucasia. They were very strong in all regions except Baku. Especially the Georgian Mensheviks were aiming to establish a government by co-operating all the

³³⁵ Keykurun, pp. 34-35. For detailed information about Kardeş Kömeği see Betül Aslan, *I. Dünya Savaşı esnasında Azerbaycan Türkleri'nin Anadolu Türkleri'ne "Kardaş Kömeği (Yardım)" ve Baku Müslüman Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Ankara, 2000).

³³⁶ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 70.

³³⁷ Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, p. 17.

³³⁸ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 69.

classes after the revolution³³⁹. This was in fact the idea of all political groups rather than the Bolsheviks after the revolution regarding the establishment process. At first, the main idea among the Georgians, as Menshevik Noi Zhordania too stated, was the existence of a culturally and regionally autonomous “single” and integrated state tied to Russia in Caucasia³⁴⁰.

Since the Armenians were wealthiest in the region, Georgians did not contend with them³⁴¹. Both the Azerbaijanis and the Georgians were irritated from Armenians since they had become the most privileged group due to their power in the Russian army and their fighting against the Ottomans³⁴². Moreover the Georgians led the Mensheviks and the Armenians in Transcaucasia led the Bolsheviks. Therefore, it can be said that there was an ethnical-economic basis of the Mensheviks’ attitude towards the Bolsheviks and the exclusion of Bolsheviks from Tiflis. Also the territorial demands of the Armenians were not only conflicting with the Azerbaijanis, but when Akhalkalek and Borchalo were the cases, there was a conflict with the Georgians as well³⁴³.

After the February Revolution, politically Azerbaijanis’ leadership problem was more obvious in comparison to Armenians and Georgians. In fact, the February Revolution was an unexpected development for the Russian Muslims. With this revolution, secret organizations like *Musavat* started to openly perform their meetings³⁴⁴. *Musavat* Organization that was active in Baku would transform from a secret political organization into a real political party after the February Revolution. Prior to independence ideal, political developments caused by the February Revolution and the democracy ideal were among the dominant issues in Azerbaijan. An important

³³⁹ Kazemzadeh, p. 37.

³⁴⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 71-72.

³⁴¹ Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, pp. 18-19.

³⁴² Devlet, p. 230.

³⁴³ Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, pp. 42-43.

³⁴⁴ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, pp. 83-84.

group in Azerbaijan believed in the Provisional Government of Post-Tsarist Russia in Petrograd; according to them this government would decrease the Tsarist regime's negative influences on the society and the deficient outcomes of the WWI³⁴⁵.

Just after the end of the Romanov Dynasty, *Adem-i Merkeziyet Fırkası* was established in Gence. This party was defending the federalist idea based on the freedom of all the nations. It was supported by many people among who existed villagers, dwellers and feudal landowners³⁴⁶. In this period, people like Ali Merdan Topçubaşı and Fethali Han Hoyski were the independent politicians³⁴⁷. In the period after the February Revolution, *Himmet* movement desired to reload actively, but it lost influence that it had previously. Due to the dissolutions experienced among the supporters of the *Himmet*, the Baku originated Himmetists following Neriman Nerimanov joined Bolsheviks and the rural organizations joined the Mensheviks³⁴⁸.

The members of the group "Islam in Russia" were the religious groups' delegates in Baku and they joined into the *İttihad-ı İslam* group in Gence on September 1917 and established the association called "Unity of Islam in Russia". This movement was guided by the Pan-Islamism and was against the idea of Turkism and secession from Russia³⁴⁹. However, İsa Ashirbekzade, who was one of the leaders of this group, would establish close relations with the Ottomans starting from 1917³⁵⁰.

Initially existing picture of the situation revealed that there was an indefiniteness regarding the political leadership among the Azerbaijani Turks.

³⁴⁵ Mehman Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu 1918-1920* (Bakü, 1998), pp. 19-20.

³⁴⁶ Swietochowski, p. 125.

³⁴⁷ Swietochowski, pp.125-126.

³⁴⁸ Swietochowski, p. 127.

³⁴⁹ Swietochowski, pp. 127-128.

³⁵⁰ Tuğaç, p. 181.

After the February Revolution, for the governance of Caucasia, a special committee named as *Ozakom* (Special Transcaucasia Committee) was established as part of the Provisional Government in Petrograd on March 22, 1917. V. A. Kharlamov from Russia was heading the committee. This committee however could not achieve to represent the peoples in Caucasia. Moreover, it left the domination of Baku to Stepan Shaumian. There was a serious lacking of food in some specific regions of Russia. However, the newly established administrative units tied to Ozakom were far to solve the problem of anarchy³⁵¹. Ozakom was directly bound to the Provisional Government led by Kerensky; however, it had a rather limited prestige in Transcaucasia. Therefore, Ozakom had never had the function of government that Transcaucasia was in need of³⁵².

The powerful groups in Transcaucasia did not accept the single-party dictatorship of Soviet Russia and was instead loyal to February Revolution's Russia since they preferred to continue their political existence in a multi-party based platform and that they had a limited sympathy towards socialism³⁵³.

Immediately after the February Revolution, the Azerbaijani Turks exposed their future projects on the basis of loyalty to Russia. On April 15, 1917, Conference of Caucasian Muslims was held in Baku and as a result of this conference; a demand based on the idea of a Russian republic founded upon a local federation system emerged. However, till this decision was made, serious arguments among Turkists, Islamists and Socialists had taken place. Turkish nationalists were demanding a local autonomy for Azerbaijan³⁵⁴.

After the February Revolution, Musavatists sharpened their expectations and started to demand local autonomies for Azerbaijan, Turkistan, Kyrgyzstan, and

³⁵¹ Neciyev, pp. 49-50; Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 76, 78, 89.

³⁵² Kazemzadeh, p. 34.

³⁵³ Kaçaznuni, p. 42.

³⁵⁴ Resulzade, pp. 29-30.

Bashkurdistan³⁵⁵. On May 1, 1917 was held the Russia Muslim Conference in Moscow and despite the Tatar bourgeoisie and the opposition of the socialists, the autonomy supporters led by Mehmed Emin Resulzade were achieving a victory and they were persuading others to their federal democratic Russia offer; moreover, the conference was requesting from the Provisional Government a permission for the establishment of Muslim military divisions commanded by Muslims. Upon the success of the Moscow Conference, the integration process between *Musavat* and *Adem-i Merkeziyet Firkası* would accelerate and the two parties would integrate on June 20, 1917 after the establishment of a common administrative committee. After the unification, secular-nationalist, and federalist *Musavat Party* became the most powerful political organization in Azerbaijan³⁵⁶. This new *Musavat Party* was supported mainly by bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. Pan-Islamism, on the other hand, was the ideological branch of *Musavat* that mainly attracted landed aristocracy and the villagers. Commonly in Caucasia, it was easier to attract villagers via the propaganda of Islam rather than applying modern political programs. The obscure political stance of *Musavat* was providing the Azerbaijani intellectuals that were willing for a national state, the Azerbaijani tradesmen that were suffering from the higher status Armenians, feudal landowners, and the people against the domination of Christians that were governing themselves with the idea that it was able to gather all these men under a single political organization³⁵⁷.

Interestingly, the initial Ottoman strategy in the region in the first phase and the strategies of the groups involved in Azerbaijan movement were almost the same. According to the instruction guide of Ottoman intelligence organization, *Teşkilat-ı*

³⁵⁵ Resulzade, p. 31.

³⁵⁶ Swietochowski, pp. 130-133.

³⁵⁷ Zenkovsky, p. 102.

Mahsusa, dated March 5, 1917, agents would be sent to centers like Baku, Kazan, etc. to provide an organizational structure to the Muslims and Turks. One of the instructions given to these agents was to cooperate with the revolutionary-left sided parties that were willing to provide the people living in Russia with the broadest rights and opportunities. Moreover, it was advised during the nations' conferences to request local autonomies and opportunities instead of secession from Russia. In this way, Russians would believe that Turks and Muslims had changed their ideas to secede from Russia and by this way Turks and Muslims would take more effective roles in political life³⁵⁸.

During the first period after the February Revolution, *Musavat Party* had been the most important political organization of Muslims; however, it did not have a monopoly over Muslim communities similar to that of the Dashnak groups had over the Armenians. In Baku, there were more than 30 political organizations of the Muslims and they were divided among themselves ethnically. To dissolve these divisions, starting from March, the Azerbaijani leaders organized meetings to make a Muslim Council and in April, they achieved this. Azerbaijani Turks formed Muslim national councils in many cities³⁵⁹. The most important of these was *Baku İctimai Teşkilatları Şurası* (Baku Social Organizations Council). This council had brought the important names of the Azerbaijani national movement together involving Mehmed Emin Resulzade, Fethali Han Hoyski, Ali Merdan Topçubaşı and Mehmed Hacinski, and Hacinski was heading the executive committee³⁶⁰. In the 1917 summer, Himmet left the Muslim National Council and this empowered the Musavatists in this council³⁶¹. In June 1917, with the failure of the Russian offensive to the Austrian front, Musavatists found the chance to publicly declare their attitude opposing to the war and the Provisional

³⁵⁸ Mustafa Balcıoğlu, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Cumhuriyet'e* (İstanbul, 2001), p. 166.

³⁵⁹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, pp. 85-86.

³⁶⁰ Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, p. 20.

³⁶¹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 87.

Government. The Provisional Government insisted on the continuation of the war and the Musavatists sharply criticized its negative attitude towards the autonomy of the Muslims³⁶². By August, the acceleration of the Russian Army's disintegration and the realization of the fact that Russians would not be able to continue to the battle would make Musavat act even tougher towards Russia. Anti-war politics were effective in Musavat Party and this was at the same time strengthening Ottoman-centric attitudes among the Muslims³⁶³.

After the events like February Revolution and Bolshevik Revolution and the disintegration of the Russian Imperial Army, the problem of large ethnical groups' wish to establish their own national armies had emerged in Transcaucasia. The old disputes between Azerbaijani-Armenian groups were deepening this problem. Azerbaijani-Armenian disputes increased especially after 1905. Tsarist Government had supported the conflict between the nations to weaken the nationalist-revolutionary movements in Caucasia after the 1905 Revolution. In the disputes, Russia had naturally supported Armenia, since it was politically closer to Russia³⁶⁴. The most intense Azerbaijani-Armenian dispute was experienced during "Tatar-Armenian War" after the 1905 Revolution. Despite their weakness in terms of number of soldiers, the Armenians were stronger in terms of industry and trade and their making of the high status and expensive workforce was the main reason of this dispute. Moreover, unlike Azerbaijani Turks, Armenians had achieved to create a strong nationalist movement under the Dashnak political structure and they were accepting the Ottomans as their enemy³⁶⁵. During the period after the Russian Revolution as well, it was unavoidable to experience Azerbaijani-Armenian dispute in the political environment mainly ruled by the

³⁶² Swietochowski, p. 136.

³⁶³ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 142.

³⁶⁴ Keykurun, pp. 10-13.

³⁶⁵ Swietochowski, pp. 66-69.

economic power of the Armenians and that they had a strong nationalist anti-Ottoman movement.

It was necessary for Azerbaijani Turks to establish a national army. At the Caucasian Muslims' General Assembly held between the dates April 15 and 20, 1917 in Baku, idea of establishing a military force had come together with the idea of establishment of an autonomy in Russia offered by the national movement leaders. According to this offer, achievement of autonomy would result in the achievement of independence in future³⁶⁶. However, there were important obstacles in front of Azerbaijani Turks. The most important of all was the inexperienced nature of Azerbaijani Turks in terms of military experience. Azerbaijani Turks did not have military education like most Muslims during both the Tsarist Period and WWI. The sole exception was Wild Division. During WWI, Russia, established a division from the so-called Tatar regiment (Azerbaijani regiment) and the 6 regiments made of many Muslim Caucasian nations such as Chechens, Kabardin. This division was not composed of regular soldiers; therefore, it was called *Diki Divizya*, meaning "Wild Division"³⁶⁷. Wild Division was one of the divisions that was opposing to the propaganda of the Russian soldiers spread after February Revolution and that respecting towards its officers. The military officers of the Wild Division were mainly composed of anti-Bolshevik Russians³⁶⁸. Some time after the revolution, Tatar regiment that was the heart force of the division returned to Gence³⁶⁹. However, despite the Wild Division members had become popular for their success in Austria Front; they had been educated according to Cossack system and many times they had experienced cruel attitudes towards the

³⁶⁶ Süleymanov, *Azerbaijan Ordusu*, pp. 21-22.

³⁶⁷ Official name of the Wild Division was "Native Caucasus Division"(Kavkazskaia tuzemnaia diviziia), Michael G. Smith, p. 224.

³⁶⁸ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 216.

³⁶⁹ Keykurun, pp. 21-22.

society³⁷⁰. Armenians, on the other hand, in opposition to Azerbaijani Turks, had been armed and organized by 1918³⁷¹.

Azerbaijani Turks started certain activities in order to found their armed forces after February Revolution. By July 1917, Süleyman Bey Efendiyev, together with the support of Gence Muslim National Committee, opened training in Gence. However, this training was insufficient against the probability of military attack Azerbaijani Turks were facing and towards the near-future military fights that were expected³⁷². The creation of Azerbaijani armed forces could only become official by the establishment of Transcaucasian Commissariat³⁷³. Nevertheless, Representative Government was trying at all opportunities to block the foundation of a Muslim force. In Baku too, due to the important force of Bolsheviks and Dashnaks, *Musavat Party* had to stand distant to the idea and activities of creation of an armed group. Therefore, Gence was the center for the activities of creating a national force³⁷⁴.

III.4. The Development of Bolshevik Dashnak-Coalition In Baku

The problem of governance emerging after February Revolution and the empowerment of the Bolsheviks in Russia after September had made the administration of Baku as being the center of petrol production across the whole globe a serious problem. On October 2, 1917 a Soviet administration was established in Baku. Soviet Russians, Mensheviks, Bolsheviks and Dashnaks were standing at one side and *Musavat Party* and Muslim Block were standing at the other side representing the benefits of

³⁷⁰ Tuğaç, p.180.

³⁷¹ Tuğaç, p.180.

³⁷² Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, pp. 23-24.

³⁷³ Süleymanov, p. 25.

³⁷⁴ Süleymanov, p. 24.

Azerbaijani Turks³⁷⁵. Musavat Party was representing the national awareness of the Caucasian Muslims.

Bolsheviks headed by Lenin replaced the Kerensky Government in Petrograd between the dates October 25 and November 7 and took the order. Within a short time, together with the Bolshevik leadership's success, Moscow as being the first, Bolsheviks took the control in most important cities. In all places of Russia, council-based governments were established. New Bolshevik government's new goal was now to establish control over the old Tsarist Russia's geography.

In October 26, just after the Bolshevik stroke, *Musavat Conference* was held in Baku and at that conference it was insisted on a Russian state based on federal republic as well as geographical and cultural autonomies of Turks of Russia³⁷⁶. Between the dates October 26 and 31, the initial meeting of *Musavat Party* was held; at the conference, the 76-stipulations program of the party was accepted. Here, one of the most important issues was the offer of the delegates for the establishment of Azerbaijan national army³⁷⁷.

At the same time, especially by the start of civil war, the issue of oil had become quite important for the Bolshevik leadership. All the efforts would be for the domination over Baku from now on. Bolsheviks had established a two-legged foreign policy. One of these was revolutionary and the other was traditional³⁷⁸. Bolshevik Russia's foreign policy on the issue of Caucasia was not revolutionary, it was traditional. Lenin, on the other hand, was strengthening the claim of sovereignty on Russia while increasing power in the center.

³⁷⁵ Neciyev, p. 65.

³⁷⁶ Swietochowski, p. 139.

³⁷⁷ Vügar İmanov, *Ali Merdan Topçubaşı (1865-1934): Lider Bir Aydın ve Bağımsız Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti'nin Temsili* (İstanbul, 2003), p. 78.

³⁷⁸ Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 570.

One third of the population of Baku was composed of workmen. In the first half of 1917, number of workers in Baku had reached 110.000. Workers of oil industry politically organized in the districts of Eibat, Balakhan, Roman and Sabuncu³⁷⁹. An important ratio of these men had come from Russia and was made of supporters of Bolshevism. Russian soldiers returning from Iran front were joining to them as well. According to Mehmed Emin Resulzade, military and navy at Baku port were elements of revolution as well. Bolsheviks relying on such elements had established a strong Soviet in Baku³⁸⁰. However, Stepan Shaumian, Bolshevik's leader in the Caucasus, did not have the power to establish a Bolshevik dominance over whole Caucasia. First, Azerbaijanis were equating the Soviet power with Christianity by 1917-18³⁸¹. All the workers were in cooperation no matter what their nation was at the strikes; however, as the events developing after 1905 Revolution and 1918's bloody "March Events" were revealing that national disputes were more effective in Baku in the attitudes of the worker class compared to class-based disputes³⁸². Therefore, Bolsheviks were planning to base their authority upon the Armenian masses rather than Russian workers working at oil wells. Most of the Armenians in Baku were Dashnaks and the hostility towards the Muslims was uniting the Armenians under a single umbrella³⁸³.

On September 8, 1917 Baku Soviet rejected to give *Musavat* any position at Bureau for the Struggle against Counterrevolution and alienated the Muslim political parties from the socialist parties; however after this moment, Musavatists started to politically stand closer to Bolsheviks on the issues like WWI and rights of Muslims. Musavatists had a friendly attitude towards Bolsheviks throughout 1917. Their idea that

³⁷⁹ A. S. Sumbatzade, *Sotsialno-Ekonomicheskie Predposilki Pobedi Sovetskoi Vlasti v Azerbaycane*, *Izdatelstva Nauka (Moskva, 1972)*, p. 197.

³⁸⁰ Resulzade, p. 35.

³⁸¹ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment : Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York, 1998), p. 99.

³⁸² Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 14.

³⁸³ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 479.

Bolsheviks' anti-war slogans were in favor of the Ottomans, resulted in the continuation of their positive attitude towards Bolsheviks. However, this attitude of the Musavatists who were highly strong in Baku was in the way to increase the power of the Bolsheviks in Baku as well³⁸⁴. Lenin and Stalin signed the announcement written to “All the Oppressed Muslims of Russia and the East”, and it had initially resulted in the development of *Musavat's* attitude towards Bolsheviks in a positive way³⁸⁵. *Musavat Party* was regarding Lenin's self-determination principle as an official basis for both cooperation with Bolsheviks and the autonomy of Muslims. According to this, in case self-determination was present in Transcaucasia, this principle could result in an “only Muslim” sovereignty here since the Azerbaijani Turks were the majority there³⁸⁶.

The political realities, however, would justify Armenian Bolsheviks headed by Shaumian, Anastas Mikoyan, Askanaz Mravian and Sargis Khanoyan had adapted their activities to the “April Theses” of Lenin; therefore they were against the cooperation with nationalist groups and defenders of parliamentary democracy. At first, even in regions like Kars where they were very weak, they were revealing the differentiation; they were criticizing specifically the nationalist policies of Dashnaks³⁸⁷. However, despite their powerful leadership in Caucasia, Bolsheviks were not powerful enough to become the governor on their own, and even to stand against the other groups in a strong way. Shaumian took the support of the worker class after October Revolution and desired to establish a certain Bolshevik power in Baku. However, by the strikes continuing till October, the workers had achieved the results they desired at labor

³⁸⁴ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, pp. 104-105.

³⁸⁵ Swietochowski, pp. 140-141.

³⁸⁶ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 142.

³⁸⁷ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 75.

contracts and now they were not close to political radicalism³⁸⁸. Most of the protesters of the problem of food and poverty on the roads were mainly poor Muslims³⁸⁹.

It was a realist choice for the Bolsheviks to choose Armenians as ally to themselves within those circumstances. *Dashnaktsutiun* was the power that had the monopoly over political attitude of Armenian people. Party owed this power mainly to Armenian national regiments active in Caucasus Front under its rule³⁹⁰. On the other hand, *Musavat Party* had taken the great support of native workers in Baku. At the Baku Soviet Elections held in October 22, *Musavat Party* took 9617, Social Revolutionaries(SR's) took 6305, Dashnaks took 5288, and Bolsheviks took only 3823 votes. This success of *Musavat Party* made Bolsheviks angry and the elections were cancelled³⁹¹. This election had revealed that even in Baku where Bolsheviks were sure in their power, ethnic factors were decisive in political issues. After the success of *Musavat* in the elections, Bolsheviks started to exclude Muslims from administrative positions and to establish closer relations with Dashnaks. They also tried to increase then number of armed Armenians in the city³⁹².

All the parties, some organizations and military committee in Transcaucasia made a meeting on November 11, 1917 and decided to establish a temporary government in Caucasia. The Transcaucasian Commissariat was regarding itself as part of Russia³⁹³. With the announcement of "Rights of the Nations living in Soviet Russia" signed by Lenin and Stalin, published on November 15, 1917 the nations living in

³⁸⁸ During 1917, 225 strikes were organized in oil industry and dramatically more than 65.000 workers and military servicemen attended to the "Strike of September" See Sumbatzade, p.197.

³⁸⁹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 147.

³⁹⁰ Suny, p. 85.

³⁹¹ Suny, p. 156.

³⁹² Neciyev, p.52.

³⁹³ Öztoprak, p. 127.

Russia were gaining the right of self-determination from Bolsheviks and they were gaining the right to declare their independence in case they wished³⁹⁴.

During the Constituent Assembly Elections dated November 26-28, despite the division among Muslims in Transcaucasia, *Musavat Party* took 615.816 votes and achieved a success at the second place after the Mensheviks who took 661.934 votes³⁹⁵. Bolsheviks could only take 95.581 votes. The votes for Bolsheviks did not come from local people, but of Russian soldiers in Caucasia³⁹⁶. According to the result of the election, Mensheviks had 11, *Musavat Party* had 10, *Dashnaktsutiun* had 9, and SR's had 2 delegates³⁹⁷. As clearly seen, despite their strong leadership Bolsheviks were not strong enough among the masses in Caucasia.

Dashnaks, on the other hand, contrary to other regions' situations, had made cooperation with Bolsheviks in Baku since they were afraid of Turkish expansionism in the region³⁹⁸. In this attitude, Armenians' anxiety about staying alone with the Ottomans in the case of Russia's disintegration was the main cause. Pro-Dashnak Armenians' difficulty in the establishment of an Armenia based on demographical structure³⁹⁹ desired by Armenians was among the causes that made alliance with Bolsheviks more attractive to the Armenian nationalists. At almost all locations of Transcaucasia, the Turkic-Muslim population was very high that could not be pushed too far from the geographical plans. According to the statistics of the Russian Government by 1917, the ratio between the Turkic-Muslim population and Armenian population in the provinces were in the following way⁴⁰⁰:

³⁹⁴ Kılıç, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerinin Doğuşu: Brest-Litovsk Barışı ve Müzakereleri*, p. 34.

³⁹⁵ Neciyev, p. 64.

³⁹⁶ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 288.

³⁹⁷ Hovannisian, p. 109.

³⁹⁸ Kaçaznuni, p. 42.

³⁹⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 91.

⁴⁰⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 92.

| Province | Turkic-Muslim Population | Armenian Population |
|-------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Tiflis | 106.000 | 411.000 |
| Baku | 877.000 | 120.000 |
| Elisavetpol | 783.000 | 419.000 |
| Erivan | 374.000 | 670.000 |
| Kars | 130.000(Without Kurds) | 125.000 |

Armenians were regarding the unification between Armenian lands in Transcaucasia and Turkish Armenia as a solution to their problems⁴⁰¹. However, the hopes brought by the revolution had a price as well. Armenian nationalists would understand in a short period that they were wrong in having such hopes without realizing the power of the Ottoman Army.

The exclusion of Bolsheviks from Tiflis too resulted in the increase of importance Bolsheviks gave to Baku and in the acceleration of their search for ally. Especially after the signing of Erzincan cease-fire agreement, starting from December 1917, Russian soldiers started to leave Caucasia in masses and return to their lands⁴⁰². Most of these runaway soldiers were supporters of Bolshevism. Against the increasing Bolshevik military threat in Tiflis, Georgian Mensheviks established their Red Guards. These forces captured the arsenal in Tiflis under the control of Bolsheviks on December 12, and captured 20.000 arms and ammunitions. After this success, Red Guards pushed the Kars division and Russian forces withdrawing from East to outside of Tiflis. The successes Red Guards gained successively had forced Bolshevik leadership to accept that Transcaucasia was anti-Bolshevik except Russian army and Baku proletariat⁴⁰³.

⁴⁰¹ Hovannisian, p. 93.

⁴⁰² Süleymanov, *Azerbaijan Ordusu*, p. 27.

⁴⁰³ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 111.

Upon these pressures of the Mensheviks, especially in March 1918, Bolsheviks migrated to Baku in great masses⁴⁰⁴. Baku was at that moment the only location in Transcaucasia that Bolsheviks could find support⁴⁰⁵.

In the message dated December 3, 1917 published with the signature of Lenin and Stalin, speaking to Muslim labourers of Russia and the East, freedom was being promised to the oppressed nations of the East and the agreements dividing and sharing the Ottoman Empire were being announced as invalid⁴⁰⁶. However, in the same message, it was clear that the Armenian issue too was in special consideration. Nevertheless, on December 16, 1917 it was decided to appoint Stepan Shuumian as the Commissar of Transcaucasia and give him a 500.000 rubles support by Soviet Russia⁴⁰⁷. In December 12, Bolsheviks founded the Workers' and Soldiers' Execution Committee in Baku and with the help of their declaration of "state of emergency" in December 14, started to work on the establishment of Red Army on December 21.

III.5. Tension Between Bolsheviks and Azerbaijanis: Coming of March Events

Upon the increasing Bolshevik threat, Azerbaijanis started to work on the establishment of a military power⁴⁰⁸. The organization of the Muslim Army Corps was accepted by Transcaucasian Commissariat on December 11, 1917. To the commandership of this army corps that was to be established, one of the famous commanders of Russian Imperial Army, Aliaga Han Shikhlini was appointed⁴⁰⁹. On

⁴⁰⁴ Hovannisian, p. 126.

⁴⁰⁵ Kaçaznuni, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁰⁶ *Milestones of Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1967*, pp. 33-35.

⁴⁰⁷ Süleymanov, *Azerbaijan Ordusu*, p. 30.

⁴⁰⁸ Neciyev, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁰⁹ Süleymanov, *Azerbaijan Ordusu*, p. 32.

January 1918, Muslim Army Headquarters was founded in Baku. General Talishinski was the Commander of the Garrison.

To arm the Muslim Army Corps, it was hoped that Russian soldiers in Caucasia would leave their arms. Muslims achieved their goal to capture arms in places like Lenkeran. However, Russian soldiers had rather given their guns to Dashnaks and Bolsheviks due to both the influence of the Armenian soldiers in Russian army and financial problems; therefore, Muslims could not benefit much from the left of arms⁴¹⁰. The arms of the Russian army were stocked in Tiflis, and the share of the Armenians had been sent to Erivan. However, a similar share had not been given to Muslims⁴¹¹. In 1917 autumn, native military officers were started to be educated at the military school in Baku. However, Baku Soviet and Caucasus Front Commandership were rejecting to arm the Azerbaijanis. The reason for this was the necessity of the organization of military forces according to class basis instead of ethnical basis, according to Baku Soviet⁴¹². Volunteers joined into Muslim Army Corps were not sufficient in number. Some of the volunteers that had become soldiers were disordered and desired the army properties greedily⁴¹³.

The issue of the establishment of national armies in Caucasia had been noticed by the Entente Powers as well. Moreover, because of this, Naki Keykurun claimed that behind the decision of Seim Government to establish national armies was the support of Britain and France who believed that Russia was certainly out of war⁴¹⁴. Bogos Nubar Pasha sent a telegraph to Etchmiadzine Catholicos in December 17, stating that in the defense of *Elviye-i Selase*, it was necessary for the Armenian forces to integrate with

⁴¹⁰ Süleymanov, pp. 36-37.

⁴¹¹ Keykurun, p. 53.

⁴¹² Swietochowski, p. 155.

⁴¹³ Mehman Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azerbaycan* (Bakü, 1999), pp. 52-53.

⁴¹⁴ Keykurun, p. 53.

British army in Mesopotamia instead of relying on Russian forces⁴¹⁵. On behalf of Britain and France, Colonel Chardigny helped to the establishment of Armenian and Georgian army corps in Tiflis. However, he did not have a positive attitude towards the establishment of Azerbaijani army corps⁴¹⁶.

Bolsheviks' closing of the Russian Constituent Assembly in January of 1918 was ending the hope for a Parliamentarist-Democratic Russia as well⁴¹⁷. Despite Transcaucasian Commissariat had not yet declared its independence; it had started to act independently after the dissolution of Russian Constituent Assembly on January 19, 1918⁴¹⁸. This inclination towards independence had strengthened the Allies' influence in the region as well. British Government appointed its agents to offer financial support to Armenians and Georgians to continue fighting against the Ottomans⁴¹⁹.

Britain and the US were aware that Armenians alone would not be able to stop the Ottomans in Caucasia. To hinder the Turanian movement from Istanbul to China, Britain was aiming to support a buffer state made of Armenians and Georgians. According to them, this movement was even a more important threat compared to Germany's control of Baghdad Railway⁴²⁰. Therefore, a Georgian-Armenian alliance should be established. However, Georgians always stood outside of these projects since they did not have a positive attitude towards Entente support⁴²¹.

Months before Caucasian Armenians achieved their independence, they had asked for military and financial support from London to fight against the Ottomans.

⁴¹⁵ Hasan Dilan, *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde Ermeni Olayları(1914-1918)*, Cilt 5 (Ankara,2005), p. 38.

⁴¹⁶ Tuğaç, p. 188.

⁴¹⁷ Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, p. 39.

⁴¹⁸ Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918: Documents and Materials*, p. 50.

⁴¹⁹ Bunyan-Fisher, p. 453.

⁴²⁰ Andrew Rothstein, *When Britain Invaded Soviet Russia: The Consul Who Rebelled* (London, 1979), p. 33.

⁴²¹ Çolak, *Alman İmparatorluğu'nun Doğu Siyaseti Çerçevesinde Kafkasya Politikası*, p. 220.

According to Moscow Ambassador of Britain, Sir George Buchanan, after the disintegration of the Russian army, Armenians could be the most effective force against the Turanian movement with their loyal and trustworthy soldiers, and they were determined enough to defend their lands till the last Armenian soldier left⁴²². However, on November 1 1917, the Foreign Office promised an unclear support to Armenians. Behind this abstention of Britain were the worries that a possible support to Armenia would not result in victory and that Armenia did not have logistic support similar to that of Arabian Peninsula⁴²³.

According to British reports, to establish a new army in Caucasia, 5-millions rubles were needed. However, the problem here was not to afford the money, but rather to carry and transport it. Security was very low in Russian geography, the existence of the Bolsheviks was a threat for the existence of financial properties as well, and moreover there was no guarantee for Bolshevik replacement of the local governments⁴²⁴. Together with these, according to the report of A.R. MacDonell, Transcaucasian Commissariat had taken 4-millions rubles from British Financial Board⁴²⁵.

US, on the other hand, was the most passive Great Power in Caucasia after Russian Revolution. American delegate in Tiflis, F. Willoughby Smith, stated in his report dated October 17, 1917 that the struggle in Caucasia was against Germany at that moment and therefore requesting US to send money, food and even men to Caucasia,

⁴²² Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, pp. 23-24.

⁴²³ Stanwood, p. 49.

⁴²⁴ Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, p. 51.

⁴²⁵ Çağlayan, p. 52.

offering also not starting a fight against the Ottomans⁴²⁶. The general strategy of the US in the region was not fighting against the Ottomans.

British agent in Baku, Colonel Noel prepared a report on January 22, 1918 stating that Britain should not focus only on the Armenian group and that she should also make propagandas towards Muslims supporting Turks. In this way, Azerbaijani Turks and Musavists would be kept under control who were willing to invite Turkish army to the city, and in this way a possible Turkish invasion would be avoided that could possibly result in breaking of the British communication lines between Caucasia and Don⁴²⁷. An interesting point in this report was that it revealed Musavatists plan to get support from the Ottoman Army even at the beginning of 1918. In fact, Naki Keykurun who came to Istanbul to ask for Ottoman support made a speech at Bab-ı Ali to Talat Pasha, Enver Pasha and Halil Bey (Menteşe) and stated that Russian army's effect in Caucasia had decreased, Azerbaijani Turks had founded national committees and had become highly organized in terms of administration, however, due to the fact they had been far from military discipline for a long time Azerbaijani people needed Ottoman military support. According to Naki Bey, Caucasian Turks could establish a great army with the help of the military trainers that would be sent at the initial phase⁴²⁸. In his talk to Enver Pasha, Naki Bey also claimed that Russia would sure get better and become an important force again to even threaten her neighbors. Thus, before Russia had got better, the initiative should be taken in the geography of Turkic peoples⁴²⁹.

After Bolsheviks abolished the Constituent Assembly in Petrograd in January 18, *Sovnarkom's* (The Council of People's Commissars) authority was not accepted

⁴²⁶ Barbara Jean Keller, *The United States and Armenia, 1914 to 1920 : the Armenian Mandate*, M.A. Thesis, (Ann Arbor, 1969), pp. 147-148.

⁴²⁷ Leonid V. Mitrokhin, *Failure of Three Missions: British Diplomacy and Intelligence In The Efforts to Overthrow Soviet Government in Central Asia and Transcaucasia* (Moscow, 1987), p. 28.

⁴²⁸ Keykurun, p. 67.

⁴²⁹ Keykurun, p. 69.

across Transcaucasia except Baku⁴³⁰. In February 23, Seim was opened; however, Bolsheviks protested this Seim. Membership to Seim was made according to the results of November elections. According to this, Mensheviks had 23, Musavists had 31, Dashnaks had 27, Muslim Socialists Block had 7, SR's had 5, Himmet Mensheviks had 4, and the Union group had 3 *Seim* memberships⁴³¹.

What Armenians understood from self-determination was Transcaucasia's regional autonomy and Turkish Armenia's national autonomy. Existence of a powerful Russia was necessary for the solution of Turkish Armenia problem⁴³². Moreover, Lenin changed his words on Armenia's independence and stated that they did not want disintegration and they were instead willing for a large state as it could be possible⁴³³. *Decree on Turkish Armenia* was an important turning point for Bolshevik-Dashnak relations. Poet Vahan Terian prepared the decree and the decree was published in *Pravda* Newspaper on January 11, 1918 with signatures of Lenin and Stalin. According to the decree, after Russian soldiers withdrew from Turkish Armenia, an Armenian militia force would be established to protect the security and order in the region; Armenians who had been forced to withdraw their lands would return to their lands and a temporary Turkish Armenian local administration would be organized. The Third Soviet Congress approved decree by the end of January⁴³⁴.

Despite the decree on Turkish Armenia, Russian army was disintegrating in Eastern Anatolia and Caucasia; therefore, realization of Bolsheviks' plans on Near-East had become almost impossible. Demobilization of Russian soldiers as a whole irritated Bolsheviks. However, measures to avoid this situation were quite limited in Caucasia,

⁴³⁰ Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, p. 19.

⁴³¹ Swietochowski, p. 152.

⁴³² Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 96-97.

⁴³³ Hovannisian, p. 98.

⁴³⁴ Hovannisian, pp. 99-100.

because disarming of the Russian soldiers and the fact that the national armies to be established in Caucasia would replace this vacuum meant to Bolsheviks that their power and influence in Caucasia would weaken. As a matter of fact, Bolsheviks had increased their activities to create a Red Army after the Soviet Government's decree was approved on January 15, 1918. According to this decree, the Red Army would have a multi-ethnic structure; however, all the armed forces were being composed of Russians and Armenians⁴³⁵.

In the first days of January 1918, *Baku Soviet Execution Committee* decided that demobilized Russian soldiers' arms would be surrendered in Baku to be used for the arming of Bolshevik military forces⁴³⁶. By January 1918, *Military-Revolutionary Committee of the Caucasian Army* reached Baku from Tiflis and brought soldiers and arms to Red Guards and trained them as well⁴³⁷. The multi-national Red Army being newly founded in Baku did not accept Azerbaijanis. People under the influence of SRs and Dashnaks as well as the ones who used Russian as their communication language were being accepted to Bolshevik forces. During the establishment of the Red Army, the Armenians were very active. To illustrate, the central headquarters of this army was commanded by an Armenian - A. Bagdasarov. As a result of a highly concentrated work, by the beginning of January 1918 the number of the soldiers in Red Army had reached 3500⁴³⁸. *The Council of People's Commissars* had an important contribution to the equipment of the Red Army. By February 1918, Petrograd sent 30 millions 800 thousands rubles to Baku Soviet⁴³⁹.

⁴³⁵ Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, pp. 56-57.

⁴³⁶ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azerbaycan*, p. 19.

⁴³⁷ Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford, California, 1992), p. 83.

⁴³⁸ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azerbaycan*, p. 23.

⁴³⁹ Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, p. 57.

The risk of betrayal of the Muslims together with the Ottomans had enforced Georgians and Armenians to prefer establishing national military forces instead of a multi-national Communist Army⁴⁴⁰. However, this military force was not regarded as a threat to themselves by the Armenians. Dashnaks had accepted Seim and Muslims as the opponent revolutionary forces and served its military force in Baku to Armenians⁴⁴¹. At the beginning of 1918, there were 4500 Dashnak soldiers in Baku.⁴⁴²

In fact, as they had already declared via their press media, Bolsheviks were accepting Dashnaks as serious enemies as Musavatists for themselves⁴⁴³. However, Bolsheviks were not as powerful as to fight against both of these parties. Therefore, they had to choose one of these ethnical groups. Despite the existence of an important leader like Nerimanov, Bolsheviks would choose Dashnaks for cooperation with the effect of the Armenian leaders too whom were more powerful within their groups.

Mehmed Emin Resulzade who was a member of *Executive Committee of Baku Soviet* was willing for the establishment of Muslim armed forces with the support of the wealthy Muslims to establish order in these regions. One of the most important causes for this idea of Resulzade was that he believed Soviet was only arming Russians and Armenians. Within these unstable conditions, by February and March in Baku, Red Guards, Muslim National Council's and Armenian National Committee's military forces were being established⁴⁴⁴.

Musavatists were turning into a more dangerous threat for the Bolsheviks. The anti-war agreement based harmony between Bolsheviks and Musavatists was lost by December. The most important reason for this was the activity of Muslim armed forces

⁴⁴⁰ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 198.

⁴⁴¹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 204.

⁴⁴² Manaf Süleymanof, *Eşitdiklerim, Ohuduklarım, Gördüklerim* (Baku, 1989), p. 220.

⁴⁴³ Kazemzadeh, p. 69.

⁴⁴⁴ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 204.

and groups commanded from Elisavetpol (Gence). These groups were especially committing sabotages through the Baku-Elisavetpol railway. By January 1918, the tension between Muslims and Bolsheviks increased by the fight between a Russian force moving to Baku and the forces of Transcaucasian Commissariat and the Russian forces' surrendering of their arms near Shamkhor Station. This army was moving to Baku to join to Bolshevik forces and the Muslim National Council captured their arms⁴⁴⁵. According to the numbers stated by Shaumian, 1000 Russian soldiers had been mistreated in Shamkhor and these soldiers had been forced to surrender 15.000 rifles, 70 machine guns, and 10 cannons. Just after the Shamkhor event, Shaumian stated that this murder would not be left out without punishment⁴⁴⁶.

Muslims had captured the necessary arms at Shamkhor raid. Transcaucasian Commissariat was behind this event. However, in all cases, Transcaucasia's certain role in this event took the reaction of Social Revolutionists(SRs) and Dashnaks at first, together with all the Christians⁴⁴⁷. The Russian soldiers who did not want to give their arms at Shamkhor had started the first fire. However, they had to surrender their arms because of the continuous firing of Muslims at Shamkhor Station⁴⁴⁸. In Hüsamettin Tuğaç's words, since Cossacks in the train that was carrying Russian soldiers had started fire with cannons and machine guns, the events had turned into that bloody situation. After the Shamkhor event, Russian soldiers started to go to first Batum and to Russia via steamship, instead of going Baku and Gence from Tiflis via trains. By this way, a very important problem of the Azerbaijani Turks had been resolved⁴⁴⁹.

⁴⁴⁵ Neciyev, pp. 67-69; Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, pp. 198-200.

⁴⁴⁶ *Bolsheviki v Borbe za Pobedu Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsin v Azerbaïdjane. Dokumenty i Materialy, 1917-1918* (Baku, 1957), pp. 282-283.

⁴⁴⁷ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 116.

⁴⁴⁸ Tuğaç, pp. 190-191.

⁴⁴⁹ Tuğaç, p. 191.

The events emerged as a result of the revolt in Daghestan also affected Bolshevik-Musavatist relations negatively in Baku. The revolt against the Bolsheviks in Daghestan resulted in the breaking of the relations with Northern Caucasia that was providing Baku with wheat. By December, *Musavat Party* supported struggle for the autonomy of the Daghestanis. Angered a result of this hunger in Baku would lead to the turning of the reaction towards Daghestanis to Musavatists⁴⁵⁰.

By February 1918, the tension between Baku Soviet and Musavat Leadership had reached its peak. As already pointed out in earlier chapters, the Ottoman Army was achieving successes in the Eastern Anatolian region against the Armenian voluntary forces and the Armenians were slaughtering Muslims in the region during the withdrawal process. As the fights in Eastern Anatolia became more intense, the tension between Armenians and Muslims was increasing⁴⁵¹.

With the Ottoman successes achieved, the increasing Ottoman support among Azerbaijani Turks was another irritating issue for the Bolsheviks. The most enthusiastic defenders of Ottomans in Azerbaijan were the members of Union and Progress Party of Caucasus (*İttihad ve Terakki Fırkası*). This party was close to Ottoman State and CUP with its name as well and within those circumstances, it attracted many people and gathered many supporters. The central office of Union and Progress Party of Caucasus published a declaration on March 1918 applying to the Ottoman State for the annexation of Caucasia and inviting her to Gence. İsa Ashirbekov was leading the Union and Progress Party of Caucasus that was making this invitation⁴⁵².

Again in March, Daghestani national forces commanded by Necmeddin Qotsinski took Petrovsk from Bolsheviks and established a national government

⁴⁵⁰ Swietochowski, p. 143.

⁴⁵¹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 206.

⁴⁵² Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azərbaycan*, pp. 72-73.

there⁴⁵³. These developments were almost warnings to Bolsheviks and Dashnaks in Baku. By this way, the conditions for a massacre towards Muslims in Baku had been formed. In fact, ethnical fights had been expected long before 1918 tensions. By 1917 summer, rumours about Armenians' and Azerbaijanis' armament against each other had been surrounded Baku⁴⁵⁴.

Against the increasing power of Musavatists, Bolsheviks were being armed quickly. Demobilized soldiers of the Ottoman front gave to Baku Soviet an armored train. Bolshevik administration in Petrograd was too interested in the establishment of this army in Baku. With the decision of Petrograd government by 1918 February 30 millions and 800 thousands rubles were sent to Baku Soviet for the equipment of the Communist Army. In 1918 March, the population of Bolshevik forces in Baku had reached 6.000. These forces had also 2 armored trains and an armored automobile. In armored trains, there were 4 cannons and 8-9 machine guns⁴⁵⁵. *Moscow War Office* also decided to send Baku 2 planes, 2 armed automobiles, and 5.000 guns. Armenian National Council made an announcement on March 1918 to runaway Armenian soldiers while they were fighting in Russian army to join into Dashnak forces in Baku⁴⁵⁶. Since they did not have a formidable military and political force, Bolsheviks did not use force to gain the control of Baku until March. But Bolsheviks reached the monopoly of force with the help of Dashnaks and military power in Baku merged under the command of Military-Revolutionary Committee of the Caucasian Army⁴⁵⁷.

In his letter dated March 16, 1918 sent to Stalin, Shaumian was stating that they were dealing with heavy responsibilities such as organizing and equipping the army and

⁴⁵³ Süleymanov, *Azerbaijan Ordusu*, p. 61.

⁴⁵⁴ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 110.

⁴⁵⁵ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azərbaycan*, p. 24.

⁴⁵⁶ Süleymanov, p. 25.

⁴⁵⁷ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 212.

the navy and he was demanding 10 millions rubles. Again in this letter, Shaumian added that Caucasus Army's Revolutionary Committee under their order was putting a great effort and he stated that despite the difficulties being experienced, they would keep the committee far from Dashnak, Right SR, and *Musavat* groups⁴⁵⁸. As clearly understood from this letter, Bolsheviks had accepted the army organization as the most necessary activity towards the March Events.

Possible ethnical fights in Baku would be the most appropriate option for the Bolsheviks to make their hegemony plans in the city. Short before March Events, Lenin sent a telegraph to Shaumian suggesting him to follow diplomacy and in this way to avoid being provocative in his actions⁴⁵⁹.

However, the expected fight between Bolshevik-Dashnak coalition and Musavatists took place by the end of March. In March 29, Wild Division arrived to Baku via Evelina ship to participate to the funeral of Hacı Zeynel Abidin Tagiyev's son. Bolshevik Military-Revolutionary Committee decided to disarm this division claiming that it was causing danger in the city, and this created reaction among Muslims in Baku. Muslim protests in the city increased and the tension provided Bolshevik-Dashnak coalition with the necessary opportunity for a civil war.

Mensheviks, SRs and even Kadets were providing Bolsheviks in March Events with full support against Musavatists. Musavatists were facing a total isolation⁴⁶⁰. In March 30, Neriman Nerimanov and Stepan Shaumian made a meeting and it was promised to return the arms⁴⁶¹, however Bolsheviks and Dashnaks did not keep their promises. Shaumian armed Armenians in the same day and by the evening of March 30,

⁴⁵⁸ *Bolsheviki v Borbe za Pobedu Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsin v Azerbaidjane*, pp. 318-319.

⁴⁵⁹ Kazemzadeh, p. 70.

⁴⁶⁰ Kazemzadeh, p. 71.

⁴⁶¹ Süleymanof, p. 221.

Baku had turned to a battlefield⁴⁶². In March 31, Committee of Revolutionary Defense was founded by the leadership of Shaumian. S. Shaumian, A. Chaparidze and K. Korganov were the important members of this committee. Initially, Armenians had declared that they were neutral in the fights and had sent their military forces to Armenian districts in Baku for defensive purposes. This situation created an impression that the civil war would take place between Muslims and Bolshevik forces⁴⁶³. However, after a short period, Armenians transferred their military forces to the rule of Soviets in March 31 and joined to the battle. In fact, this situation was not a bizarre situation as Suny claimed⁴⁶⁴. Dashnaks and Bolsheviks followed the civil war strategy Shaumian had been addressing for a while and caught Musavatists unawares.

During the armed fights, Bolshevik-Dashnak coalition forces did not hesitate to use machine guns, armoured cars, and heavy guns against Azerbaijanis. Especially, heavy guns caused Muslim settlement areas to face the threat of ruining⁴⁶⁵. Against the Bolshevik-Dashnak coalition armed with powerful guns, Muslims could not oppose long. Bolshevik-Dashnak coalition defeated Muslims easily in Baku. Upon this, Muslims asked for cease-fire agreement. For the cease-fire request of Muslims, Bolsheviks requested Muslims to unconditionally accept Baku Soviet's authority and take the Wild Division and Muslim armed forces back, and reopen Baku-Tiflis and Baku-Petrovsk railways closed by Muslim armed bands. Muslims accepted these conditions and disarmed their forces. However, this cease-fire break encouraged Dashnaks and they started acting cruelly in Muslim neighborhoods no matter what the political identities of these Muslim people were⁴⁶⁶; they even killed Muslims supporting

⁴⁶² Neciyev, pp. 79-80.

⁴⁶³ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 218.

⁴⁶⁴ Suny, p. 218.

⁴⁶⁵ Suny, pp. 218-221.

⁴⁶⁶ Swietochowski, pp. 159-160.

Bolsheviks. The building of İsmailiye that Muslims paid great attention was ruined; moreover, *Kaspîi* newspaper's printing office belonged to Tagiyev was set on fire⁴⁶⁷.

According to Kachaznuni's words, Bolsheviks were smashing Musavat with the support of Dashnaks after the March events in Baku. Again as Kachaznuni confessed, Muslims were being murdered cruelly during March events in Baku⁴⁶⁸. As these statements reveal, March events were in fact part of Bolsheviks' operation to annihilate the power of Musavat Party in Baku, which was the greatest political force in Baku. According to Resulzade, as a result of the March events, Bolshevik-Dashnak coalition in Baku killed almost 10.000 Muslims⁴⁶⁹.

In fact, Muslim force was not able to capture Baku after the March events. At that moment in Baku, there were 6.000 Bolshevik and 4.000 Dashnak armed forces⁴⁷⁰. Moreover, Musavat Party leaders warned local people via *Açıksöz* newspaper not to be attracted by incitements⁴⁷¹. As Resulzade stated, the reason why Musavat had been reflected as the responsible of this comprehensive terror activity was as follows; this attack was contrary to Bolshevism since it was not against a political group and rather against an ethnical group⁴⁷².

III.6. After the March Events

Transcaucasian Government's Menshevik branch's reaction to Baku events was neutral and it condemned all the participants of the events. This attitude of Georgians

⁴⁶⁷ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 224.

⁴⁶⁸ Kaçaznuni, p. 44.

⁴⁶⁹ Resulzade, p.38. The number of Muslim deaths varies in sources; it is 3000 in Shaumian's numbers(Bülent Gökay, "The Battle for Baku", p. 36); 6000 according to Ali Merdan Topçubaşı(Fethi Gedikli, "Ali Merdan Topçubaşov ve "Azerbaycanın Teşekkülü" in *YOM*, 2/2005, p. 111); more than 12.000 for Pomiankowiski(Pomiankowiski, p. 299) and dramatically 30.000 for Essad Bey(Essad Bey, *Blood and Oil in the Orient* (London, 1931), p. 94).

⁴⁷⁰ Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, p. 62.

⁴⁷¹ Neciyev, p. 80.

⁴⁷² Resulzade, p. 39.

was reacted roughly by Azerbaijani leaders and among these leaders; Mehmed Emin Resulzade and Aslan Bey Safikurdski stated that they would take their forces back from *Seim* if Transcaucasian Government did not force Bolsheviks to withdraw from Baku. Upon this, Transcaucasian Commissariat sent a group of Georgians and Azerbaijanis to Tiflis-Baku railway neighborhoods⁴⁷³.

After March Massacre, Bolsheviks were being regarded as even more important threat across the whole Caucasia. Therefore, even an attack plan to Baku was made. According to this plan, Daghestani forces commanded by İmam Qotsinski would attack from the north, Transcaucasian Commissariat' forces would attack from the west and from Shemakhi and Hacikabul, Muslim Army Corps would move towards Baku⁴⁷⁴. A 2000-soldiers force commanded by Magalov captured Hacikabul Station at the end of the fights that took place at the beginning of April. A 3000-soldiers force commanded by İsmail Han Ziyadhanov, on the other hand, started to move along Shemakhi and captured this city⁴⁷⁵. So, at the beginning Muslim forces' attacks had been successful. However, Baku was supported by many armed forces, Daghestani forces had been defeated in Hirdalan, and Muslim Army Corps had been defeated in Hacikabul; therefore, it was no longer possible for the Muslims to capture Baku. The counter - attack was done by Bolshevik-Dashnak forces commanded by Stepan Lalayev. They ruined Shemakhi and many villages around. As a result of these events, thousands of people lost their homes. Similar events repeated in Guba by Armenian forces commanded by Amazasp as well⁴⁷⁶. Cruelty ruined Lenkeran and Kurdemir regions like Shemakhi and Guba⁴⁷⁷. Mensheviks' contradictory attitude had an important role in the defeat of Hacikabul. Although the commander of the military force in Hacikabul, Prince

⁴⁷³ Swietochowski, pp. 160-161.

⁴⁷⁴ Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, p. 71.

⁴⁷⁵ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azerbaycan*, p. 62.

⁴⁷⁶ Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, pp. 72-78.

⁴⁷⁷ Resulzade, p. 43.

Magalov had demanded cannon, bullet, mitrailleuse, ammunition; Transcaucasian Government did not reply to these requests⁴⁷⁸.

After this defeat in April, Azerbaijani administration requested support from the Ottoman State as their last chance⁴⁷⁹. Azerbaijanis were afraid of the repetition of the cruel actions of March in other cities and this had been an important cause of their request for support from the Ottomans⁴⁸⁰. As Nuri Pasha stated, March events had an important effect on the acceleration of the Ottomans' operation towards Caucasia⁴⁸¹.

After March events, Bolsheviks were increasing their power step by step. In April 6, with the decree of Revolution Defense Committee, in order to arm the Communist Army, all the trade banks, credit union, petrol industry and trade industry union, fabric workplaces, and so were being taxed by 50 millions⁴⁸². In accordance with this, in the first half of April, many guns had been transferred from Heshterhan to Baku. In April 8, Committee of Revolutionary Defense declared mobilization in Baku⁴⁸³.

In the letter dated April 13, 1918, he sent to Russian National Commisariat's Parliament, Shaumian stated that they had smashed their enemy successfully and the total number of soldiers died during the fights was more than 3000 in total, from both sides. For him, Musavatists were willing to separate Caucasia from Russia and accept the administration and hegemony of the Ottomans instead. The final goal of this plan was in fact Baku. In his own words, Shaumian was restating that this was the main reason of the resistance. After this "victory", the first thing Bolsheviks were wishing at that moment was the nationalization of the petrol industry, banks and the maritime

⁴⁷⁸ Mehmetzade, p.122.

⁴⁷⁹ ARSPİHDA (Azerbaycan Respublikası Siyasi Partiler ve İctimai Hareketler Arşivi), f.276, siy.2, iş.128, v.1.

⁴⁸⁰ Gedikli, p. 112.

⁴⁸¹ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Makedonya'dan Ortaasya'ya Enver Paşa* cilt 3(İstanbul, 2003), p. 61.

⁴⁸² *Bolshevik v Borbe za Pobedu Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsin v Azerbaijdjane*, p. 337.

⁴⁸³ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azerbaycan*, pp. 62-63.

industry. In this period, Bolsheviks had left Tiflis and as Shaumian said; their knowledge about the situation of the Ottomans was quite limited. At the end of the letter, Shaumian was stating with great enthusiasm and proud that they were finally in control of the situation⁴⁸⁴. However, after March events, SRs and Mensheviks had strengthened their force in Baku as well⁴⁸⁵; Shaumian would realize this after 3 months when the issue of invitation of British to Baku was being considered.

In April 25, a local people's commissariat was founded in Baku (Sovnardom). This council took the responsibility of government in Baku had 12 commissars; 9 of which were Bolsheviks and 3 were SR. The head of the council was Shaumian. The most significant activity of this council would be the nationalization of the oil industry. Lenin ordered the government treasury for reservation of 100-millions rubles on May 22, 1918 to pay the workers in Baku, to buy oil and to transport this oil to Russia. Just after this order, Baku Sovnarkom nationalized oil industry⁴⁸⁶. However, contrary to the initial aim, nationalization of the oil industry had been an important setback to the petrol industry. This would be one of the most important prices of Bolsheviks' efforts to obtain the monopoly of power.

New Soviet Government in Baku also ordered Dashnaks to abolish their national detachments; however, Dashnaks did not obey this order⁴⁸⁷. As a result of the unification of military forces mostly composed of Russians and Armenians, by May 1918, there were in total 18.000 soldiers within 19 military battalions. The Red army in Baku had many artillery batteries, 3 armored vehicles, 3 machine gun sets, and more

⁴⁸⁴ *Bolsheviki v Borbe za Pobedu Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsin v Azerbaidjane*, pp. 347-350.

⁴⁸⁵ ARSPİHDA, F. 276,siy.2,iş.20,v.48.

⁴⁸⁶ Kazemzadeh, pp. 77-78.

⁴⁸⁷ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, p. 201.

than 10 planes. Among artillery batteries, there were 12 field artilleries, 3 mountain artilleries and 4 mortars⁴⁸⁸.

By this way, before Ottoman Army entered into Caucasia, a large military force had been gathered via the Bolshevik-Dashnak coalition in Baku. Muslim Army Corps, on the other hand, was defeated seriously at the battles of April. In spite of this, Bolshevik-Dashnak coalition forces in Baku were losing the strength of the most important potential ally of the coalition – Armenia as a result of three-weeks-long war between Ottomans and Armenians. According to the agreement signed with the Ottomans, the Armenians would only have a single division⁴⁸⁹.

While Armenia was becoming a small state, with the help of the Ottomans, Azerbaijan almost re-born on May 28, 1917. Azerbaijan declared its independence and became a democratic republic according to the declaration dated May 28 and its type of government was “People’s Republic”. New Azerbaijani State was being built upon *Musavat* Party’s principles – national state, republic, nationalism, and democracy⁴⁹⁰. The first Azerbaijani Government was established under the government of Fethali Han Hoyski⁴⁹¹.

Azerbaijan had been the name of a region till that time, however, it was now the name of a state and the people called as Caucasian Muslims and Caucasian Turks, who were named as Tatar by the Russians, had become Azerbaijani⁴⁹².

In this new period, Georgia had more chance to easily agree with both Azerbaijan and Ottoman states compared to Armenia, because there was not a large Georgian population spread within a wide area in Caucasia geography that Muslim-

⁴⁸⁸ Süleymanov, *Azerbaijan Ordusu*, p. 80.

⁴⁸⁹ Çakmak, p. 269.

⁴⁹⁰ Mehmetzade, p. 136.

⁴⁹¹ Resulzade, p. 47.

⁴⁹² Swietochowski, p. 177.

Turks were living. Therefore, problems regarding location were not possible to arise. As Talat Pasha stated, during Brest-Litovsk negotiations, Georgians had stated that they could cooperate with the Ottomans against the Armenians in case Ottomans would take only Kars and leave Ardahan and Batum to the Georgians⁴⁹³.

However, Armenians and Azerbaijani Turks were living together. The aim of these two peoples that were both willing to establish new national states was to guarantee the existence of their populations in an undivided, continuous geography⁴⁹⁴. The city that the Armenians had the highest population ratio was Erivan that they were summing to 60% of the whole population there⁴⁹⁵. In other regions, this ratio did not even reach to 50%. It was obvious that with the arrival of the Ottoman Army to Caucasia too, Armenians would be the most disadvantageous ethnical group in terms of establishment of a national state.

Azerbaijanis were the most advantageous group in the new phase. Their population was higher and they were spread in all locations across Caucasia. Turkish military support was guaranteed. As the arrival of the Ottoman army, Azerbaijanis would possibly become more radical and would wish Baku for themselves⁴⁹⁶. By the June of 1918, all preparations were made for an Ottoman-Baku Soviet war in Transcaucasia.

⁴⁹³ Çavdar, p. 407.

⁴⁹⁴ Kaçaznuni, p. 40.

⁴⁹⁵ Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, p. 4.

⁴⁹⁶ ARDA, f.970, siy.1, iş.1, v.37-38.

CHAPTER IV:

THE BAKU OPERATION BY CAUCASUS ISLAM ARMY

(JUNE 1918-OCTOBER 1918)

IV.1. Establishment Of Caucasus-Islam Army And Its Early Activities

The disintegration of the Russian Caucasus Army created a historical opportunity for the Ottomans to establish a buffer state in the Caucasus against Russians. This buffer state would act as a fortress against any future Russian expansion. Shortly, there was an urgent need to establish a Muslim state before the rebirth of Russian expansionism.

According to Akdes Nimet Kurat Enver Pasha's main objective was to establish a large Muslim state between Russia and the Ottoman Empire to erase the borders with Russia and to decisively eliminate the traditional Russian threat⁴⁹⁷. Akdes Nimet Kurat also states that Enver Pasha's Turanism rather had the aim of protecting the Ottoman Empire from Russian threat⁴⁹⁸. Expansion in the Caucasus would compensate the losses

⁴⁹⁷ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 383.

⁴⁹⁸ Kurat, p. 508.

in Arab territories⁴⁹⁹. According to Allen and Muratoff this was the main reason for the maintenance of the Third Army.

Turan dream which lost influence following the Sarıkamış defeat was regenerated with the Russian Revolution. Even Kazan Turk President of National Administration, Sadri Maksudi Bey, during his visit to the Ottoman Moscow Ambassador Galip Kemali Bey on March 10, 1918 suggested the occupation of Baku which was the passage to Turkistan⁵⁰⁰. In the April 1918 dated issue of “Yeni Mecmua” it was declared that it was time for the Turks of Russia to gain their independence⁵⁰¹.

In his report sent to Britain’s Foreign Ministry dated November 19, 1917 Sir H. Rumbold, British ambassador to Bern, stated that the Ottomans were focusing on the Caucasus and Central Asia where a large number of Turks were living in exchange for the loss of Iraq and Palestine⁵⁰². According to General von Seeckt’s report on November 4, 1918 the reason for the Ottoman Caucasus expedition was the emergence of a new area of operations in the East and the possibility of expanding Ottoman hegemony through Central Asia by the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, after the disposal of Arab territories.⁵⁰³

The overall chaos in Russia, expectations for independence in provinces such as Ukraine convinced most members of the CUP to believe that an opportunity came up for the Turks of Russia to break away from Russian hegemony⁵⁰⁴.

Once the Russian threat in Central Anatolia was eliminated, the Turkish army started to reorganize itself. In reality, Enver Pasha was hesitant to provide heavy support

⁴⁹⁹ Allen-Muratoff, p. 459.

⁵⁰⁰ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 527.

⁵⁰¹ Kocabaşoğlu-Berge, p. 154.

⁵⁰² Çağlayan, “İngiliz Belgelerine Göre Transkafkasya’da Osmanlı-Alman Rekabeti”, p. 413.

⁵⁰³ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında Türkiye’de bulunan Alman Generallerinin Raporları* (Ankara, 1966), pp. 62-63.

⁵⁰⁴ Pomiankowski, p. 297.

to those units charged with the seizure Baku. Enver devoted only a minimal amount of funds and 1,5 divisions to expedition in the Caucasus⁵⁰⁵. But later Enver Pasha changed his attitude. During his meeting with Ali Fuat (Cebesoy) in Moscow, Enver Pasha suggested that his main objective in the Caucasian operation was to establish a military power in the East against a possible invasion of Western Anatolian lands by the Entente powers⁵⁰⁶. According to Ali Fuat (Cebesoy), Enver Paşa considered the possibility of Istanbul's occupation by Allied forces after the defeat of Bulgaria, and therefore he transferred the strongest military units to the Caucasus⁵⁰⁷. Just before Mondros Armistice (30 October 1918), Enver had sent 700.000 liras to Azerbaijan and tried to collect arms and ammunition for a possible resistance movement⁵⁰⁸. Parallel to this, Enver Pasha had revealed his intention to create an independent state in the Caucasus in his letter to Ahmed İzzet Pasha dated November 3, 1918⁵⁰⁹. According to Enver, the period started after Mondros Armistice Agreement was actually second phase of the WWI for Ottoman Empire.⁵¹⁰ So, Enver Pasha might intend to establish a Turkish state in Caucasus to fight against Allies after Germany's defeat. Interestingly, according to the memoirs of Naki Keykurun, in Ottoman administration, only Talat, Enver and Cemal Pashas were supporting the immediate expedition to Caucasus⁵¹¹.

The 6th Army Command sent three officers to the Caucasus for a strategic assessment. When one of these officers, Lieutenant Muzaffer Efendi, returned to Mosul he reported on possible opportunities for establishing an organization. According to the memoirs of Nuri Pasha Artillery Lieutenant Muzaffer Bey also reported that there were

⁵⁰⁵ Erickson, pp. 187-188.

⁵⁰⁶ Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Milli Mücadele Hatıraları* (İstanbul, 1953), pp. 42-43.

⁵⁰⁷ Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Milli Mücadele Hatıraları*, P. 8.

⁵⁰⁸ Masayuki Yamauchi, *Hoşnut Olamamış Adam-Enver Paşa: Türkiye'den Türkistan'a* (Ankara, 1995), p. 20.

⁵⁰⁹ Tekin Erer, *Enver Paşa'nın Türkistan Kurtuluş Savaşı* (İstanbul, [n.d.]), pp. 15-16.

⁵¹⁰ Yamauchi, p. 19.

⁵¹¹ Keykurun, p. 70.

suitable conditions to organize in the the Caucasus⁵¹². Additionally, an Austrian prisoner of war returning from Caucasus who was also an officer gave detailed information to the 6th Army Commander Halil Pasha about the Caucasus on January 16, 1918. Halil Pasha enabled this officer to hand on the same information to Enver Pasha. The information received by Enver Pasha gave him the impression that it was the right time for the Caucasus expedition. As a result, Enver Pasha informed the 6th Army Command on February 3, 1918 that officers were being sent to the Muslim areas of the Caucasus, Turkistan and Russia in order to manage the aid that would be given to the people in need. Based on this information, Nuri Bey who was one of the officers, was to be sent to Daghestan⁵¹³.

Enver aimed to assist the Caucasian Muslims and activate them. Baku was at the center of this project. In this context, Enver was planning to appoint Kazım(Karabekir) as the commander of the new Caucasus-Army. On February 23, 1918 Enver Pasha went to Baku and asked the 1st Caucasus Army Corps Commander Kazım (Karabekir) whether he wished to organize the Azerbaijani Turks. However, Kazım Karabekir declined the offer⁵¹⁴. In reality, the second person Enver Pasha was planning to appoint as the commander of the Caucasus operation was Prince Faruk. Nevertheless, Naki Bey cautioned Enver Pasha on Prince Faruk's extravagant lifestyle and drinking habit. Naki Bey requested that Nuri Pasha lead the military establishment to the Caucasus. It appears that Naki Bey preferred Nuri Pasha as he was Enver's brother and therefore he could sustain Enver's prestige in the Caucasus⁵¹⁵.

⁵¹² Aydemir, p. 361.

⁵¹³ Nasır Yüceer, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Devleti'nin Azerbaycan'a Askeri ve Siyasi Yardımı" in *Sekizinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri I-XIX. ve XX. Yüzyıllarda Türkiye ve Kafkaslar*(Ankara, 2003), pp. 290-291; *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 553.

⁵¹⁴ Ali İhsan Sabis, *Harp Hatıralarım : B irinci Cihan Harbi v.4*, (İstanbul, 1990), p. 189.

⁵¹⁵ Keykurun, pp. 70-71.

Enver's brother Nuri was young and inexperienced. He only commanded tribes in Benghazi against the Italians during World War I. He was only a colonel in Tripolitania and directed the activities of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*⁵¹⁶. With an imperial edict, Sultan Mehmet Reşat appointed Nuri as the commander of the Caucasus-Islam Army. Also, Nuri received the "Pasha" title by this imperial edict⁵¹⁷.

During the same period *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* enhanced its operations in the Caucasus. Hasan Ruşeni Bey, went to Baku in March 1918 as a political representative. Here in Azerbaijan and Northern Caucasus, he contacted the pro-Ottoman groups and established an intelligence department⁵¹⁸. Ruşeni Bey was in the search of a new project of expansion⁵¹⁹. According to Ruşeni Bey Russians were in a very weak position and they had withdrawn their hands from the Caucasus; therefore Caucasus could be captured by the country which took the right action first. For Ruşeni Bey after Ottoman intervention in Caucasia, even the Turks of Turkestan would awaken by the effect of this intervention⁵²⁰.

Germany was against Ottoman expedition to the Caucasus. For that reason, Enver Pasha tried to generate an image that the army in the Caucasus would be formed by Azerbaijanis. Because of this, the name "Caucasus-Islam Army" was given to this

⁵¹⁶ Philip Hendrick Stoddard, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa: Osmanlı Hükümeti ve Araplar 1911-1918: Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Üzerine Bir Ön Çalışma* (İstanbul, 1993), pp. 80-83.

⁵¹⁷ Gürün, p. 6.

⁵¹⁸ Abdullah Saydam, *Kafkasya Bağımsızlık Mücadeleleri ve Türkiye* (Trabzon, 1993), p. 90; Swietochowski, p. 163.

⁵¹⁹ ATASE, K.1859, D.142, Ff. 1-3.

⁵²⁰ ATASE, K.1859, D.142, Ff. 1-4. Enver Pasha discussed the activity funds issue for Isa Ashirbekov and Ruşeni Bey with Naki Bey. Naki Bey mentioned that Ashirbekov was from Baku, and that all expenses in the Caucasus were funded by Baku. Naki Bey insisted that this request was awkward and suggested that no funds be sent to Ruseni Bey. As a result, Enver Pasha took this advice. See Keykurun, p.71.

military force which was mainly formed by Ottoman units⁵²¹. On April 5, 1918 Enver Pasha sent a letter of instruction about the Caucasus-Islam Army. According to this:

1. The purpose of the formation of the Caucasus Army is to create the base for an army that will be formed of Caucasians, to gradually expand this base, to train Caucasian soldiers, and to establish in Caucasus the interests of Islam and political and military ties with the Caliph of the Sacred Law and the Ottoman State.

2 The Army Commander is now the highest representative in the Caucasus of the Ottoman Government and of the Islamic Caliphate.

3 The Army Chief of Staff will handle only military questions and will not interfere in any other affairs.

4 The Army Commander will manage political questions on his own through a Political Affairs Department.

5 When the Army Commander decides it is necessary, he may make decisions by consulting with the Chief of Staff and the Chief of the Political Affairs Department.

6 Matters concerning the army's command and control and personnel administration and supplies will, as in other armies, be handled by the War Ministry's departments and its branches

⁵²¹ Yüceer, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Devleti'nin Azerbaycan'a Askeri ve Siyasi Yardımı", p. 291.

and accordingly the War Ministry will be addressed regarding the aforementioned issues.

7 Islamic, political, and economic questions will be addressed to the Minister of War.

8 The supply of the Army's soldiers from their region is the responsibility of the Army Command, the supply of Ottoman personnel will be handled by the War Ministry.

9 Expenses for the arming, equipping, clothing, and feeding of the Army will be met for now by the Ottoman War Ministry.

10 Legal matters and punishments for members of the Caucasus Army follow the laws and regulations that are in existence in the Ottoman Army, but on matters concerning local soldiers the Army Commander is authorized to increase or decrease some civil laws in accordance with local conditions.

11 Officers carrying honorary rank of the higher level possess the authority of the honorary rank for as long as they are in the Caucasus.

12 A special department in the Directorate of Eastern Affairs will handle and expedite the personal and family matters in Istanbul of the Army's members.⁵²²

Supreme Military Command of the Ottoman State decided to establish an army corps in Azerbaijan made of three regiments and three infantry divisions. The officers

⁵²² Michael A. Reynolds, *The Ottoman-Russian Struggle For Eastern Anatolia and The Caucasus, 1908-1918*, Ph. D Dissertation (Princeton, 2003), p. 446.

on duty at this infantry would carry a higher rank and double their salary⁵²³. Two of the officer groups would be sent via Mosul-Tebriz, and the third one via Trabzon⁵²⁴.

Nuri Pasha arrived at Mosul, the initial movement point, by plane at the end of February 1918. He went to Gence on May 25, 1918 and set up the headquarters there⁵²⁵. Nuri Pasha was greeted with high honors in Gence⁵²⁶. On May 20, 1918 immediately after his arrival in Azerbaijan, Nuri Pasha released the imperial edict inscribed by the Sultan, as the Caliph of the Muslims of Caucasus⁵²⁷.

In June 7, Enver Pasha decided to re-organize the Caucasus military command⁵²⁸. The 5th Caucasus Division was sent to Gence on June 8th as support for the Caucasus-Islam Army⁵²⁹. According to this, Mürsel Pasha's 5th Caucasus Division would go to Gence and form the core of the Caucasus-Islam Army and support Aliaga Han Shikhlinski's Azerbaijani Forces⁵³⁰. The manpower problem regarding the Ottoman Baku expedition would be solved by inclusion of the local Muslim population in the Ottoman Army. The Caucasus-Islam Army would act as if it was a separate entity and thus the Russo-German opposition against the Ottomans would lose rationale. Regarding political duties, Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey was appointed as the political advisor as an intermediary between Nuri Pasha and Azerbaijani Turks. Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey who returned to Azerbaijan 9 years later joined the Azerbaijan Parliament and became the first Turk to be a member of both the Ottoman Parliament and Azerbaijan Parliament⁵³¹.

⁵²³ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 553.

⁵²⁴ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 210.

⁵²⁵ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 553.

⁵²⁶ Nizamettin Onk, *Bakü'nün Alınışı ve Milli Meyhane : Kafkas Seferimiz 1918* (Istanbul, 1977), p. 9; Keykurun, p. 80; Resulzade, p. 46.

⁵²⁷ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 553.

⁵²⁸ Erickson, p. 187.

⁵²⁹ Çakmak, p. 269.

⁵³⁰ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 205.

⁵³¹ Fahri Sakal, *Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey* (Ankara, 1999), pp. 26-27.

According to Yigal Sheffy instead of taking advantage of the postponement of the British Offense and the four month period to support the Palestine Front, the Ottomans sent their best troops to the Caucasus just to resurrect their Pan-Turanian ideal⁵³². While Enver was deciding on the establishment of the Caucasus-Islam Army in June 1918 the British troops were organizing strong attacks in the Middle East⁵³³.

In Germany generally members of the military supported the Ottomans' Caucasus plan in order to establish a front in Iran. On the other hand, since Enver Pasha's expansionism was in conflict with Germany's interest in the Caucasus, the Foreign Ministry was against an Ottoman operation towards the Caucasus⁵³⁴. In his letter dated June 8, 1918 to Enver Pasha, Hindenburg warned Enver Pasha about respecting Brest-Litovsk's stipulations regarding Transcaucasia⁵³⁵. As a response to this reminder, Enver Pasha said that he would not abandon his commitment to aid Muslims of the Caucasus.

On the other hand Germans tried to apply their own hegemonic plans in Transcaucasia. Lieutenant Rüştü witnessed the establishment of a militia battalion formed of 300-500 local Germans with 2 machine guns in the town of Ekaterinoveld⁵³⁶. German-Georgian troops occupied all the strategic railroad stations and strategic positions, and displayed the German and Georgian flags. In addition to this battalion, two German battalions in the Crimea came to Poti in June. Troops under Colonel Kress's command occupied the roads from Tiflis to Gümrü (Aleksandropol) and Karakilise; and this highly restricted Ottomans' transportation capabilities⁵³⁷.

⁵³² Yigal Sheffy, *British military intelligence in the Palestine Campaign, 1914-1918* (London, 1997), p. 298.

⁵³³ Liman von Sanders, *Türkiye'de Beş Yıl* (Istanbul, 1968), p. 270.

⁵³⁴ Fischer, p.551.

⁵³⁵ Karal, p. 530.

⁵³⁶ Rüştü, *Büyük Harpte Bakü Yollarında* (İstanbul,1934), p. 4.

⁵³⁷ Pomiankowski, p. 324.

The order that came to the 1st Caucasus Army Corps Command Headquarters from the Eastern Military Command on June 2 1918 was almost an Ottoman declaration of war against the Germans in the Caucasus. Based on this, all firearms of the German battalions in the territory that the Ottomans were planning to seize or had already seized had to be transferred to Ottoman officials and in case of resistance, German soldiers in that area had to be sent to Kars as prisoners of war. Germans had to be evacuated from all areas surrounding the Kazakh-Gence and Tiflis-Karakilise railroads⁵³⁸.

Interestingly, Vehib Pasha ordered the Ottoman troops to march to Tiflis. In June 10 on the way of Tiflis at Vorontsovka the 9th Caucasus Infantry Division faced the German-Georgian battalion. A battle between two powers resulted in the German-Georgian defeat and thus the Ottomans captured many German prisoners of war⁵³⁹. As a result, the German General Chief of Staff threatened the Ottoman Government with pulling back all the German officers and soldiers from Turkey⁵⁴⁰. Thus, Ottomans cancelled the operation plan to Tiflis. Ottomans' objective to use Tiflis as a means of transportation was unsuccessful.

Kazim Karabekir illustrated a German map to Süleyman İzzet, Commander of the 15th Infantry Division, showing the German plan going to Poti through Odessa and Crimea, and stopping at Baku before Poti then passing through the Caspian Sea and moving towards the East. What was planned for the Ottomans was to move towards south through Sarıkamış, Etchmiadzin and Urumia. For that reason, Georgians were not permitting the usage of the Batum-Baku and Batum-Gence railroads⁵⁴¹. According to the British intelligence the main objective of the German military forces in Tiflis was to

⁵³⁸ Karabekir, *Birinci Cihan Harbi*, pp. 291-292.

⁵³⁹ Allen-Muratoff, p. 478.

⁵⁴⁰ Pomiankowski, p. 326.

⁵⁴¹ Süleyman İzzet, *Büyük Harpte 15. Piyade Tümeninin Azerbaycan ve Şimali Kafkasya'daki Harekat ve Muharebeleri* (İstanbul, 1936), p. 10.

hold back Ottomans from moving forward in the Caucasus⁵⁴². During the Spa meetings on June 3-4 Germans decided for Kress von Kressenstein to go to Tiflis and send two battalions under his command in order to stop the Ottomans from using the Georgian railroads⁵⁴³.

In the meantime, reorganization plans for the Ottoman Caucasus operation was carried on. Based on the Caucasus operation the 9th Army was formed under Yakup Şevki Pasha's command. The duty of the 9th Army was to protect Iran and Caucasus from the Bolsheviks and especially the British⁵⁴⁴.

Azeri militia force was strong enough to reach a potential of 20-30 thousand people. Additionally, Ottomans intended to gather a group of 10-15 thousand people from the Daghestani tribes⁵⁴⁵. Georgian Magalov was supporting the Azerbaijanis with an extra 200 people force. Aliaga Han Sihlinski was fighting with 300 men Tatar Regiment of the Wild Division. Within this battalion there were some officers from the White Army⁵⁴⁶.

However, Nuri Pasha realized that in reality there was not an adequate local military force in the Caucasus. Moreover, disintegration of the Russian army and the fall of the Russian Tsar were realized due to the war era conditions rather than public resistance. At that time there were many young men in Azerbaijan at the age of military service but Azerbaijani people had been exempted from mandatory military service for a long period of time. Thus, it was quite difficult to organize capable army units from inexperienced manpower. For that reason, there was much pressure and responsibility

⁵⁴² Çağlayan, "İngiliz Belgelerine Göre Transkafkasya'da Osmanlı-Alman Rekabeti", p. 416.

⁵⁴³ Mustafa Çolak, *Osmanlı-Alman İlişkileri Çerçevesinde Harbiye Nazırı Enver Paşa ve Türkçü Politikaları (1913-1918)*(Isparta, 2006), p. 112.

⁵⁴⁴ Allen-Muratoff, p. 478.

⁵⁴⁵ Allen-Muratoff, p. 479.

⁵⁴⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 554.

on the 5th Caucasian Division⁵⁴⁷. It was also not possible to make good use of those Ottoman POW's (prisoners of war) who might have been freed at that time. Thousands of Ottoman POW's at the Nargin Island were in no condition to fight, most were struggling with the problem of thirst and starvation⁵⁴⁸.

While the Ottomans were generating their own attack organizations and strategies the Baku Sovnarkom was generating their own organizations and strategies.

IV.2. The General Situation of Baku's Red Army Before the Battles and Stationing of The Ottoman Force in Azerbaijan

In his letter addressed to the Russian National Commissariat Assembly dated May 24, 1918 Shaumian mentioned that their immediate objective was to attack Elizavetpol (Gence). Shaumian asserted that if the Turkish Army in Batum came, the Evlakh Bridge would be seized and this success would motivate Armenians in Elizavetpol to revolt, and influence the Georgian villagers and this eventually would bring the end of Seim. Another point was that Mirza Kucuk Han revolting against the British in Iran was under Ottoman influence. The objective of Bolsheviks was to capture Gence. In that regard, Shaumian asserted that they had captured telegrams stating that an army of 6000 people under Magalov's command was finalizing its preparations to move towards Baku⁵⁴⁹. According to the plan designed by Shaumian and Korganov, with L. Bicherakov's army force they would attack from the Kurdemir-Evlakh-Gence side and Shamakhi-Geokchai-Kakhetia-Tiflis side⁵⁵⁰. Shaumian was also expecting Andranik's

⁵⁴⁷ Rüştü, p. 19.

⁵⁴⁸ Qılman İlkin, *Türk Ordusu Bakıda (Hatıralar)* (Baku, 2003), pp. 7-14; There were 50,000 POW's in Nargin Island before Bolsheviks manumitted them, see Süleyman Nuri, *Çanakkale Siperlerinden TKP Yönetimine: Uyanan Esirler* (Istanbul, 2002), p. 175.

⁵⁴⁹ *Bolsheviki v Borbe za Pobedu Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsin v Azerbaijdjane*, pp. 423-425.

⁵⁵⁰ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azerbaycan*, p. 31.

assistance related with Gence and then Tiflis. Andranik's advance from Zangezur to Karabagh, then to Evlakh would be a great advantage for Shaumian's plans⁵⁵¹.

Shaumian's letter to Lenin dated May 24, 1918 stated that they needed to move towards Gence but could not find commanders for the army. Here, Shaumian was pointing out the problem of command in the Red Army⁵⁵². Additionally, in May 22 Korganov wrote to Moscow that they needed a lot of officers for the operation⁵⁵³. Starting from May 29, in order to benefit from the officers and soldiers of the Russian Imperial Army in military and technical duties, mobilization was announced in Baku⁵⁵⁴. In his telegram to Lenin in May 27, Shaumian stated they did not wait for help via Northern Caucasus anymore and that help was necessarily needed via Astrahan.⁵⁵⁵

With an announcement dated May 31, the Baku Sovnarkom prohibited any men between the ages 18-50 to exit Baku and decided to benefit from those who knew how to use fire arms⁵⁵⁶. By the end of May, the Baku Soviet Army was able to form 19 hit battalions. By mid June this number reached 25. The battalions were organized in three separate hit teams within the 1st Caucasus Army Corps. These battalions were scattered from Astara to Derbent. The total number of soldiers in the army corps was 18.000 but most of the soldiers did not have adequate military training and they only knew how to use a weapon⁵⁵⁷. One of Baku Bolsheviks, T.Kachaeva's memoirs confirm that the 18 battalion force was not adequate because the Bolshevik's did not have a commanding force to establish order. Soldiers also did not have a strong ideological bond with Sovnarkom. Despite its claim for being a multi-national army, 70 percent of the soldiers were Armenians. Dashnaks had a strong influence among the soldiers. Many times the

⁵⁵¹ Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, pp. 81-82.

⁵⁵² A.B. Kadishev, *Interventsia i Grazhdanskaia Voiina v Zakavkaze* (Moskova,1960), p. 105.

⁵⁵³ Tokarzhevskii, p. 97.

⁵⁵⁴ Tokarzhevskii, p. 94.

⁵⁵⁵ Kadishev, p. 107.

⁵⁵⁶ Tokarzhevskii, p. 94.

⁵⁵⁷ Tokarzhevskii, p. 99.

SR's(Socialist-Revolutionaries) engaged in political controversy and created disagreements within the army⁵⁵⁸.

During June 1918, Russia sent various weapons to the Caucasus Red Army including cannonballs and rifles. In addition to this Russia strengthened the Caspian Fleet by sending supplementary vessels⁵⁵⁹. *Geoktepe* and *Ardahan* warships were waiting in Baku⁵⁶⁰. On the other hand, there was munitions shortage before the attack on Gence. Machine guns in stock were also insufficient for the Red Army battalions. Numbers of machine guns were not more than 60. Ten of the striker battalions did not even have a single machine gun. Moreover, their artillery force was weak. The battalions had a total of 12 field guns and mountain guns and only 4 old mortars were left. There was also insufficiency of experienced pilots and military uniforms⁵⁶¹.

In order to gain Muslim support against Ottoman attacks, the Bolsheviks introduced various means such as land reform starting from the end of May. More than 50 percent of the Azerbaijani lands belonged to private owners, landlords and nobleman⁵⁶². As a the result of the May 29 peasant meeting, the Baku Soviet proclaimed that the Soviet regime was to be formed in Azerbaijan's villages and declared war on landlords(beys) and nobleman(hans)⁵⁶³. However, this sudden reaction would not help the Bolsheviks to change the negative attitudes of the Azerbaijani villagers. Muslims could not have trusted the Bolsheviks due to Dashnak influence in the Baku Soviet and Armenian support for the Bolsheviks in the city⁵⁶⁴.

⁵⁵⁸ ARSPİHDA, F. 276, siy.2, iř.20, v.44.

⁵⁵⁹ Süleymanov, *Azerbaijan Ordusu*, p. 93.

⁵⁶⁰ Tokarzhevskii, p. 100.

⁵⁶¹ Tokarzhevskii, p. 100.

⁵⁶² A. Steklov, *Armiya Musavatskogo Azerbaidjana* (Baku, 1928), p. 53.

⁵⁶³ Kazemzadeh, p. 129.

⁵⁶⁴ Swietochowski, pp. 184-185.

Ottomans tried to deprive the Shaumian led Baku Soviet of the Armenian troops and sought Armenian support on this matter. In relation to this, Social-Democrat Kazaryan offered to remove the Armenian troops from Baku and announced that if needed, war could be declared upon the Baku Soviet⁵⁶⁵. From this point on, Armenia's policies towards the Ottomans were moderate. Even, on September 6 when the Ottoman Army enveloped Baku, Armenia's Istanbul representative Aharonian sent a letter to Dasnak representatives in Armenia. Aharonian strongly suggested that Armenians get along well with the Ottomans⁵⁶⁶. In another letter addressed to Dashnak representatives in Erivan, Aharonian and Khatisian asked for the extermination of the Armenian militia still fighting with the Ottomans and for the pacification of Andranik⁵⁶⁷.

On May 31, 1918 Nuri Pasha was already aware of the Bolsheviks' plan to seize Daghestan and Northern Caucasus and he ordered the retrieval of the Georgian army which was on their way to help the Azerbaijanis on the Baku issue. The local force was also very weak. In the Azerbaijani corps there were more officers than soldiers⁵⁶⁸. Nuri Pasha realized that 250 of the Azerbaijani Army Corps were comprised of officers. Only 23 of the officers were Muslims⁵⁶⁹. Moreover, half of the Army Corps' 1000 personnel were comprised of Ottoman POW's. In some places of Gence, Georgians were flying either their own flag or the German flag. According to the situation at hand, Baku had to be seized immediately. For that reason, Nuri Pasha requested reinforcement from the Supreme Military Command. Two advantages of the Ottoman army were the

⁵⁶⁵ Kirakosyan, p. 238.

⁵⁶⁶ Sarkisyan, p. 402.

⁵⁶⁷ Sarkisyan, p. 402.

⁵⁶⁸ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 555.

⁵⁶⁹ Nasır Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekatı , Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması 1918* (Ankara , 1996), p. 78.

enthusiastic moral support of local peoples and the vast resources of grain to feed the army⁵⁷⁰.

Vehib Pasha's response to Nuri Pasha dated June 2, 1918 indicated that following a request from the Azerbaijani Government the troops would be sent to Gence via Kazakh and cavalryman would protect the stations between Gence and Kazakh. Additionally, Vehib Pasha mentioned that the weaponry and ammunition for the Caucasus-Islam Army was ready at Karakilise and Celaloglu⁵⁷¹.

Upon Nuri Pasha's request for reinforcements, Vehib Pasha who was the commander of the Eastern Army sent the 5th Caucasus Battalion as reinforcement for the Caucasus-Islam Army. The 5th Caucasus Battalion was comprised of 9th, 10th and 13th Caucasian Regiments, one artillery branch and engineer, combat, medical corps and mobile hospital⁵⁷².

Even during the first phase of the arrival of the reinforcements the Ottoman Army was facing attacks on many fronts. Despite the treaty with Armenia, Armenian volunteers were still fighting against the Ottomans in June. In a letter addressed to the Dashnak leaders in Aleksandropol, Kazım Karabekir stated that in June 5, Armenian forces attacked the Ottoman forces in the village of Kocherli near Sardarabad with 400 infantrymen, 80 cavalrymen and one machine gun; and stated that the Ottomans had significant losses⁵⁷³.

⁵⁷⁰ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 555.

⁵⁷¹ Rüştü, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁷² *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, pp. 555-556. The 5th Caucasus Battalion was separated into two segments. The first segment had 147 officers, 2812 soldiers and 698 animals. It was comprised of the headquarters, 10th Caucasus Regiment, 26 troops belonging to the 9th Caucasian Regiment, Schneider mountain artillery regiment, engineer squad, telegram officers and a military band. The second segment had 110 officers, 2763 soldiers and 668 animals. It was comprised of the 13th Caucasian Regiment, Mountain Artillery regiment, medical corps, 24 mobile hospitals, kitchen team and transportation branch. See Rüştü, p. 24.

⁵⁷³ Sarkisyan, p. 403.

On June 15, 1918 a total number of 149 officers and civil servants, 488 non-commissioned officers and troops were sent to Gence from Mosul to support the Caucasus-Islam Army⁵⁷⁴. Nuri Pasha sent officers to places including Gence, Kazak, Zakatali, Nuha, Agdam, Akdash, Cebrail, Garabagh and east of Zangezur. By doing that the civil and military authority was established⁵⁷⁵. Nuri Pasha's activities to establish the political and military authority were going to pave the way for political troubles.

Enver Pasha was suspicious of the Fethali Han Hoyski government⁵⁷⁶. For that reason, Nuri Pasha suggested the replacement of the current government. Nuri Pasha was hoping to see an Azerbaijani cabinet comprised of people influenced by traditional and Islamist views rather than leftist, Musavatist and those influenced by Russian political thought⁵⁷⁷. During these discussions with the Azerbaijani leaders Nuri Pasha mentioned that as military personnel he did not understand too much about politics and therefore suggested that Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey should be contacted for the establishment of the cabinet⁵⁷⁸.

Nuri Pasha believed that the council was an extension of the Soviet system and for that matter he strongly opposed it. Leftist groups and members of *Himmet* Party resigned from the council as a reaction. As a result of Resulzade's efforts council members came into an agreement with Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey and approved the establishment of a government by terminating the council⁵⁷⁹. During the last words of the final session of the National Assembly Mehmet Emin Resulzade said that the interventionist force was their relatives and that when it is the right time Azerbaijan would benefit from the principles and freedoms of the Russian Revolution. By saying

⁵⁷⁴ Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekatı*, *Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması 1918*, pp. 72-73.

⁵⁷⁵ Yüceer, p. 73.

⁵⁷⁶ Qılman İlkin, p. 24.

⁵⁷⁷ Sakal, p. 27.

⁵⁷⁸ ARDA, f.970, siy.1, iş.1, v. 48a.

⁵⁷⁹ Sakal, p. 27.

that , he loosened the tense feelings at the Azerbaijan National Assembly and assisted the solution of the problem in favor of the Ottoman Empire⁵⁸⁰.

At the National Assembly meeting on June 17, Aslan Bey Sefikurdski said that as socialists they always supported the Turks, but that the Turks have been acting against the Azerbaijani people⁵⁸¹. Memmed Yusuf Caferov cried and said that the aid they were expecting from the Turks actually hurt them and took away their liberty⁵⁸².

Following the annulment of the National Assembly, on June 18th, *Musavat*'s leader Mehmet Emin Resulzade, *Musavat* member Halil Hasmemmedli, Aslan Bey Sefikurdski from the Muslim Socialist Block and Menshevik Himmet Party leader Ekber Aga Şeyhulislamov were send to the conference in Istanbul as the Azerbaijani delegation. Memmed Yusuf Caferov also was sent to Tiflis to represent Azerbaijan there⁵⁸³. Thus, Nuri Pasha was pacifying Azerbaijani leaders who were leftists and were opposed to the Ottoman annexation. On June 1918, the government acknowledged a red flag with an 8 sided star and a crescent, similar to the Ottoman flag, as the national flag of Azerbaijan Republic⁵⁸⁴. Ottoman Empire's interference in Azerbaijani national issues was going to create distraught in the Republic of Azerbaijan. In reality, Enver Pasha was against Azerbaijan's democratic republic. In his telegram addressed to Nuri Pasha on September 6, 1918 he stated that Azerbaijan needed to be under the Sultan's rule⁵⁸⁵. Also Enver Pasha had expressed his idea to Mehmed H. Hacinski about the foundation of a state like Austrian-Hungary Empire by the coalition of Ottoman State and

⁵⁸⁰ Steklov, p. 7; For Mehmed Emin Resulzade's speech in parliament, see ARDA, F.970, siy.1, iş.3, v.12-13.

⁵⁸¹ ARDA, f.970, siy.1, iş.1, v.58.

⁵⁸² ARDA, f.970, siy.1, iş.1, v.59.

⁵⁸³ İmanov, p. 101.

⁵⁸⁴ İmanov, p. 102.

⁵⁸⁵ Aydemir, p. 428.

Azerbaijan⁵⁸⁶. This idea was about Azerbaijan's vassalization by the Ottoman Empire. However, Ottoman Empire's interference in Azerbaijan internal affairs, in addition to sending military aid was causing a lack of trust towards the Ottomans. Therefore, the Pan-Turkism ideology in Azerbaijan was seriously losing prestige. Amongst the Ottoman interference, only the Turkification of the educational system by Turkish teachers was well accepted⁵⁸⁷. Following the arrival of the Ottoman Army, land reform which was one of the ideals of the *Musavat* Party and the Azerbaijani national movement became null. Azerbaijani government stooled the land reform by respecting the Ministry of Agriculture's report⁵⁸⁸.

As a result of Nuri Pasha and government friction, Ministry of War which Ali Aga Han Shikhlinski put much effort in establishing was closed down⁵⁸⁹. The Ministry of War which was present in the previous cabinet was rescinded in the new cabinet and Nuri Pasha came actively to manage war matters⁵⁹⁰.

Despite all those problems, the delegation leaving for Istanbul led by the Azerbaijan National Assembly Chairman Mehmed Emin Resulzade proved to be effective in developing Ottoman – Azerbaijan relations. The purpose of this delegation was to ask for military aid in order to seize Baku. Turkish Hearth (*Türk Ocağı*) organized a ceremony to celebrate Mehmed Emin Resulzade's arrival in Istanbul and speeches were given where Turkism propaganda was prevalent⁵⁹¹. By the summer of 1918, Turkism was once more the dominating trend in the Ottoman Empire.

⁵⁸⁶ From Mehmed H. Hacinski's report submitted to the common session of Muslim Groups of Seim on 1 May 1918, ARDA, F.970, siy.1, iş.1, v. 33.

⁵⁸⁷ Swietochowski, pp. 180-181.

⁵⁸⁸ Tokarzhevskii, p. 88.

⁵⁸⁹ Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, p. 86.

⁵⁹⁰ İmanov, p. 100.

⁵⁹¹ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 507.

Nutrition problems of the Caucasus-Islam Army also created serious problems for the Azerbaijanis and the Ottoman force in Azerbaijan. Villagers were to give one tenth of their agriculture and stock breeding crops to feed the Caucasus-Islam Army. Half of the income from the lands deserted by the Armenians was to be given to the army. Other than that horses and carriages were collected from the villagers. Increase of taxes during such a crisis period created some restlessness⁵⁹². However, the situation at the fronts was so critical that this restlessness was diminished. The struggle for Baku would first start with clashes near Gence.

IV.3. Battles Between the Caucasus-Islam Army And Caucasus Red Army(June 1918)

In June 10, the Caucasus Red Army advanced from Hacikabul to Gence. Baku Sovnarkom's Commissar of War and Navy Affairs General Korganov became the commander-in-chief of this army. The commander of the 1st Caucasus Red Army Corps was ex-colonel(in The Tsarist Army) Kazarov, and the Chief of the Army Corps's Headquarters was ex-colonel(in The Tsarist Army) Avetisov⁵⁹³.

Baku Soviet administrators adopted a quick occupation plan in the Caucasus. The Caucasus Red Army Corps' troops were assigned to the main front. This force was comprised of 15–18 infantry battalions, 2–3 cavalry squads, 2–3 light batteries and 1 air battery. They were organized in 3 brigades. In each of these brigades there were 5–6 battalions. The number of the soldiers in the occupation army was 10,000⁵⁹⁴. Pioneers of the Baku Army seized Kurdemir and its station on June 12th. On the same date they seized the road leading to Baku. During this time Shaumian was aware that a vast

⁵⁹² Mehman Süleymanov, *Azerbaijan Ordusu*, p. 90.

⁵⁹³ Kadishev, p. 110.

⁵⁹⁴ Tokarzhevskii, p. 109.

Ottoman force would be waiting in Gence. According to intelligence information he received from Tiflis, Shaumian was predicting the Ottoman Army in Gence would have a force of 15,000 men. In his letter addressed to Lenin on this matter, Shaumian was concerned about the Germans in Poti joining the clashes and according to him the objective of the German forces in Poti was to move towards Baku⁵⁹⁵.

According to the Caucasus-Islam Army Command, the aim of the Baku Soviet force at Kurdemir was to get hold of agricultural products at Mugan plain and Shemaki. On the other hand, 5. Caucasus Division did not have enough power to stop the Bolshevik advance. Mugan Plain and Shemakhi had very fertile agricultural land and nutrition of Azerbaijan people depended on having control of these lands⁵⁹⁶. In Azerbaijan, during the summer, the plains of Kura River were very hot and dry. The temperature was forcing 40 degrees. Conducting operations in this desert heat was going to be rather difficult for the Caucasus-Islam Army⁵⁹⁷. In addition, Armenians of Azerbaijan which had become stronger because of the support provided by the Armenian forces which had entered Azerbaijan territory after retreating in front of the Ottoman forces had coupled and they had started attrition operations in the vicinity of Garabagh and Gence, threatening Iran-Azerbaijan road⁵⁹⁸. In June 13, Nuri Pasha who was experiencing difficulties, requested an assault squadron fitted with two armored automobiles, flame throwers and other equipment to be sent to the region from the 3rd Army Command⁵⁹⁹.

The importance of protecting the security of Gence which was the central base for the activities of the Caucasus-Islam Army increased. There were 20 thousand

⁵⁹⁵ *Bolshevikleri v Borbe za Pobedu Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsii v Azerbaidzhan*, pp. 508-509; Kadishev, pp. 110-111.

⁵⁹⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 557.

⁵⁹⁷ Rüştü, p. 33.

⁵⁹⁸ İsmail Berkok *Büyük Harpte [334] Şimalî Kafkasyadaki Faaliyetlerimiz ve 15. Fırkanın Harekâtı ve Muharebeleri* (İstanbul, 1934), p. 5.

⁵⁹⁹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 557.

Armenians in Gence. In addition, there was an 600 strong Armenian battalion, with machine guns owned by this battalion⁶⁰⁰. In June 12, Caucasus-Islam Army Commander sent a letter to the Armenian battalion commander inviting him to surrender. Following the Armenian insistence on not to turn in their weapons, the Armenian quarter of the town was fired at by the artillery. Following this, Armenian resistance was broken and Armenians who could not stand the blockade of Gence detachment and Gence volunteers during 13-14 July, turned in their weapons after two infantry squadrons and one cavalry squadron had entered the Armenian quarter⁶⁰¹.

By June 17, 1918, the Bolsheviks were moving towards the Mususlu Station in the west of Kurdemir. 300-400 Azerbaijani and Georgian volunteers were here⁶⁰². In his message to Vehib Pasha, Nuri Pasha had written that Baku Soviet units had arrived at the vicinity of Mususlu station after moving in the railway direction and that 500-men were moving towards Karamarian, by burning Shamakhi villages and killing Muslims⁶⁰³. In 16 July, Baku Soviet units captured Karamarian following the fight which lasted for 7 hours⁶⁰⁴. But they were unable to proceed further than this point⁶⁰⁵.

Georgians also poised an important threat at the back of the Ottoman's front lines. The risk of weapons, ammunition and money required by the Caucasus-Islam Army being confiscated by the Georgians during transportation by land, forced the Ottoman Army to select areas other than Georgian regions for transportation⁶⁰⁶. As the result of negotiations held in Aleksandropol on 21 June 1918, Armenians allowed the Ottomans to use Karakilise-Delican-Kazakh highway for military transportation. This

⁶⁰⁰ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 557.

⁶⁰¹ Rüşti, pp. 31-33.

⁶⁰² *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 558.

⁶⁰³ Rüşti, pp. 38-39.

⁶⁰⁴ Kadishev, p. 112.

⁶⁰⁵ Allen-Muratoff, p. 487.

⁶⁰⁶ Rüşti, pp. 42-43.

highway was going to be the single line of communication of the Ottoman Army in Azerbaijan⁶⁰⁷.

Nuri Pasha arrived at Geokchai in June 18. The 5th Caucasus Division arrived at Geokchai, together with the headquarters. From then on, the division's main mission was to prevent withdrawal of forces attached to the Bolsheviks to Baku and annihilate them⁶⁰⁸. On the other hand the 5th Caucasus Division was in serious difficulties in regard to ammunition and weapons. Upon request for 3000 boxes of infantry ammunition for Gence, only 80 boxes of infantry ammunition and only 800 artillery rounds in place of 4000 rounds were sent on June 30, 1918⁶⁰⁹. In his telegram sent to Enver Pasha by means of 9th Army on June 20, 1918, Nuri Pasha had requested 20.000 rifles and ammunition, a number of organized forces and officer corps enough to organize a cavalry division. On the other hand, in the response provided by the Commander in Chief's office, it was explained that Eastern Army group was in no condition to reinforce the 5th Caucasus Division⁶¹⁰.

The strength of the 5th Caucasus Division which had gathered at Geokchai on June 21 was composed of 225 combatant officers, 5277 combatant infantry, 4342 rifles, 36 machine guns, 14 mountain artillery and 1939 animals. Azerbaijani forces was composed of 30 combatant officers, 727 combatant troops, 605 rifles, 21 machine guns and 6 artillery pieces⁶¹¹.

While the Caucasus-Islam Army was concentrated at the eve of an important clash at the Geokchai front, Armenians were threatening the Ottoman units with their activities at Nakhchevan and prevent employment of all forces. According to the

⁶⁰⁷ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 559.

⁶⁰⁸ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 559.

⁶⁰⁹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 560.

⁶¹⁰ Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekatı*, *Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması 1918*, p. 76.

⁶¹¹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 560.

information provided by Nakhchevan Islamic Committee, Andranik's forces composed of 4000 infantry, 1000 cavalry, 8 machine guns and 6 pieces of artillery arrived at Nakhchevan in June 20. Here, they blew up tunnels and bridges, in order to prevent shipment of Ottoman forces to Culfa by railway⁶¹². On June 21, 1918, General Andranik was moving towards Hoy, after forcing the Ottoman unit on the Culfa Bridge to retreat. In face of this critical situation, the 12th Division was forced to move north and repulsed the force under Andranik towards north of Aras who were trying to join with the British. As the result of this defeat, Andranik initiated mass executions of thousands of Muslims in Nakhchevan and in the vicinity of Aras River⁶¹³. In July, Andranik communicated with Shaumian in order to take Nakhchevan under his own control and was receiving positive responses⁶¹⁴.

Lessons learned from initial encounters with the Bolsheviks had shown the necessity to reinforce the Caucasus-Islam Army. In July, upon the Ottoman Army's difficulties, in his letter to Mehmed Emin Resulzade in Istanbul, Mehmed Hacinski had written that the Bolsheviks possessed high quality equipments, Enver Pasha should be urged to send a division and that the prestige of the Ottoman Government was decreasing⁶¹⁵. Mehmed Emin Resulzade, in Istanbul, stressed that the Ottoman State should send another division to Azerbaijan⁶¹⁶.

During the same period, the Caucasus Red Army was in need of reinforcements. According to the report sent in June 22 by Baku Sovnarkom to Moscow, the Caucasus Red Army required to be reinforced with 2-3 divisions, an air unit, heavy and light

⁶¹² Atnur, p. 41.

⁶¹³ Atnur, pp. 42-44, 47 ; Belen, *Birinci Cihan Harbinde Türk Harbi: 1918 Yılı Hareketleri*, p. 165.

⁶¹⁴ Atnur, p. 45.

⁶¹⁵ Kadishev, p. 112.

⁶¹⁶ Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, p. 97.

artillery, machine guns, military uniforms and medical equipment⁶¹⁷. In June 24, everybody born between 1893–1897 were mobilized and they were obliged to serve for six months⁶¹⁸.

In his letter to Lenin on July 23, 1918, Shaumian pointed out that they wanted to move towards Gence but recently an idea was born to advance towards Tiflis and that they were negotiating this idea⁶¹⁹.

During the Red Army offensive, Nuri Pasha did not get the required support from Azerbaijanis. Aktas had promised to gather a 2–3 thousand armed force⁶²⁰. On the other hand, towards the end of June, Azerbaijani Corps was composed of only 500-600 men⁶²¹. By June 25, 1918, the 5th Caucasus Division was put under the command of Azerbaijani Corps. One of the rationales for this decision was to allow the 5th Caucasian Division to use the equipment owned by this Corps⁶²².

While the Ottoman forces were fighting under very harsh conditions, Germany, dissatisfied with this situation was increasing pressure on the Ottoman Government. An accord was reached in the Caucasus in accordance with the German requests sent by Hindenburg, in his letter to Enver Pasha dated June 27, 1918. According to this, the Ottoman Government would continue to retain armed units in the 3 provinces, a force composed of 400 Georgians, 50 Germans and 50 Turks under the command of Kress von Kressenstein would be retained in the Akhalkelek and Aksa in order to provide security in these regions; Ottoman forces would be withdrawn from Caucasia and would be employed against the British in the Arabian Peninsula and Iran; a national army would be established in Azerbaijan with the help of the Ottoman Government but it

⁶¹⁷ Kadishev, pp. 114-115.

⁶¹⁸ Kadishev, p. 115.

⁶¹⁹ Kadishev, p. 109.

⁶²⁰ Rüşti, p. 48.

⁶²¹ Rüşti, p. 58.

⁶²² Rüşti, p. 58.

would not make any military operations against Baku⁶²³. Enver Pasha had ostensibly accepted these dispositions and sent written orders to Nuri Pasha to end the Baku operation, but asked Esad Pasha to forward these orders to Nuri Pasha after the fall of Baku⁶²⁴.

In 25 June, Vehib Pasha wrote that he was suspicious about the future of the Azerbaijan government and the operation in Caucasia because of logistical problems⁶²⁵. The situation getting increasingly difficult in the fronts had brought with it changes in the army command. On June 29, 1918, Enver Pasha's uncle Halil Pasha was appointed in place of Vehib Pasha as the Eastern Army Group commander⁶²⁶. Thus Enver Pasha was assigning somebody from his own family in place of Vehib Paşa, with whom he previously had differences of opinion regarding the Caucasian issue. According to the order delivered to Halil Pasha from the General Headquarters, the Baku-Enzeli sea route would be established, descend on the Persian Gulf by way of Enzeli-Kasvin-Hemedan and encircle all British forces in Irak. Thus domination would be established over the oil regions and this would force British forces to withdraw from Irak which would have immense effects on the force balance of the war⁶²⁷.

Although the situation was seen as critical on the Ottoman side, in reality the Red Army's situation was not better. Geokchia battles justified this. Fought between 27 and 30 July constituted a turning point for the Red Army⁶²⁸. At the beginning of the battles which had started in July 27 and which were called as Geokchai battles, Baku Soviet forces attacked the 10th Caucasus Regiment, with three battalions on the Geokchai-Karamarian highway and two infantry squadrons further north. Accordingly,

⁶²³ Karal, pp. 531-532.

⁶²⁴ Karal, pp. 532-533.

⁶²⁵ ATASE, K.157, D. 695, F.11-1.

⁶²⁶ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azərbaycan*, p. 121.

⁶²⁷ Halil Paşa, *Bitmeyen Savaş : Anılarım ve Belgelerle* (İstanbul , 1972), p. 220.

⁶²⁸ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 272.

the 25th battalion was put under the command of the 10th Caucasian Regiment. Towards the end of combat which continued until the evening, the 10th Caucasus Regiment organized a counter-attack but since the enemy had withdrawn, and because the time was late, the counter attack was ordered to be stopped. As the result of the fighting, Mususlu detachment was able to capture Alikent and Veyselli villages. On the Baku Soviet side during the 27 June battle, 6–7 infantry battalions, and except the Mususlu front, 11 guns, two of which with long barrels and approximately 12–14 machine guns had joined the battle⁶²⁹.

On 29 June 1918, the 5th Caucasus Division started preparations to execute the first collective assault in Azerbaijan territory⁶³⁰. The two most important factors which made the assault plans difficult were water and ammunition problems⁶³¹. Fierce fighting that continued until noon had almost halted due to the heat. Water was continuously carried to the battalions⁶³².

In his report dated 30 June 1918, Nuri Pasha had pointed out that Bolsheviks were continuously pushing forward and requested urgent reinforcements⁶³³.

On the morning of June 30, Baku Soviet forces suddenly opened artillery fire at Geokchai from Pazavant and Kirdakul ridges. The surprising force was under the command of an Armenian officer, Emirov, and composed of 1000 infantry, together with 2 pieces of artillery and two machine guns⁶³⁴. During the surprise attack, 250 Kazakh cavalry and infantry militia under the command of Ahmed Hamdi Bey were

⁶²⁹ Rüşti, pp. 59-61.

⁶³⁰ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 560.

⁶³¹ Rüşti, p. 62.

⁶³² Rüşti, p. 64.

⁶³³ Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekatı*, *Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması 1918*, p. 77.

⁶³⁴ Rüşti, p. 76.

smashed by Baku Soviet forces⁶³⁵. On the other hand, Geokchai was able to be saved after the arrival of 25th battalion and its artillery platoon, Akdash militia cavalry, Gence cavalry which had arrived together with Ahmet Bey and Geokchai offensive raid failed⁶³⁶. In June 2, Ottoman forces which had gathered at Geokchai started an offensive and pushed the Baku Soviet forces in the region towards the northern section of the area⁶³⁷.

The Red Army which was able to move to Geokchai town without encountering serious difficulties by putting Azerbaijani, Daghestani, Georgian forces out of action very easily had inflicted a defeat that caused them to adopt a defensive posture against the Ottoman forces. Cessation of the Red Army's quick advance which had continued until the Geokchai battle was to cause the trust of the people of Baku to be shaken towards the Red Army and start to seek a protector who may protect the city against the Ottomans.

Armenians had been inflicted a total of 800 casualties as dead and wounded during the battles of the last week in June. In addition to all these, after mid June, a serious loss of power had been experienced in the Baku Soviet Army, due to epidemic diseases⁶³⁸ and the number of forces at Aksu had decreased to 2000⁶³⁹. Accordingly on July 1, soldiers were at the point of fainting due to thirst and high temperature⁶⁴⁰. Even though Red Army forces were fighting very well, lack of nutrition at the front weakened the army in return⁶⁴¹.

⁶³⁵ Rüşti, p. 69.

⁶³⁶ Rüşti, pp. 71-72.

⁶³⁷ Rüşti, p. 76.

⁶³⁸ Kadishev, p. 113.

⁶³⁹ Allen-Muratoff, p. 488.

⁶⁴⁰ Kadishev, p. 116.

⁶⁴¹ ARSPİHDA, f.276, siy.2, iş.128, v.2.

IV.4. Battles Between the Caucasus-Islam Army And Caucasus Red Army(July 1918)

Due to the possibilities of being subject to another raid from the south similar to Geokchai raid, untrustworthy situation of volunteers and the possibility of local Armenians in the north and south conducting successful raids to the rear echelons of the 5th Division distressed Nuri Pasha. Nuri Pasha requested reinforcements, ammunition and airplanes to be sent to him from the 9th Army Command⁶⁴². As a result, the 9th Army informed the Caucasus-Islam Army the departure of the 38th Regiment composed of 65 officers, 2475 soldiers, 701 animals, 2092 rifles, 16 heavy machine guns and 4 pieces of mountain artillery, together with a mountain battery on July 6, 1918 from Alexandropol and estimated arrival at Kazakh on 11th of July⁶⁴³.

Volunteer units which were providing support to Caucasus-Islam Army were arming by their own efforts. Nevertheless, arms were also being collected from non-volunteers. On the other hand, arms were collected from places which were not under enemy threat⁶⁴⁴. A majority of conscripts at Gence did not obey the mobilization order. Evading mobilization became mass behaviour⁶⁴⁵. On September 1918, deserters had even been organized in a forest⁶⁴⁶. In the report regarding the fight at Geokchai dated June 27, 1918, sent by the Eastern Army Group Commander shipto the acting Commander in Chief's office, it is written that while it was expected to have 30.000 conscripts, they were able to receive only 37 people and that in order to solve the Baku issue, another division was required to be sent to the region⁶⁴⁷. In his report dated July 1, 1918, Nuri Pasha also stressed the point that Southern Caucasian Muslims preferred

⁶⁴² *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 562.

⁶⁴³ Rüşti, pp. 85-86.

⁶⁴⁴ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azərbaycan*, p. 136.

⁶⁴⁵ Tokarzhevskii, p. 89.

⁶⁴⁶ Sarkisyan, p. 408.

⁶⁴⁷ Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekatı , Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması 1918*, p. 85.

talking to doing something and that they favored their personal pleasures and money and that utilization of their help to a great degree should not be expected; accordingly, he requested reinforcements⁶⁴⁸.

Following the capture of Geokchai by the Ottomans, in the letter sent by the villagers to *Musavat* administration, it was stated that some of the Ottoman officers were exhibiting negative attitudes towards the people in villages such as Ivanovka and that they had confiscated their animals, collected some of the food stuff and pointed out that they had done the same in the surrounding villages. In addition, the Ottomans were also interfering very frequently with administrative and economic matters. For example, the Ottoman commander of Ucar station had undertaken the administration of a factory and had fired all of its employees⁶⁴⁹.

On July 3, 1918, there was Baku Soviet forces on the west of Kurdemir-Aksu line, composed of approximately 700 infantry, 20 guns and an armored train. On the other hand, Nuri Pasha's objective on July 5, 1918 was to encircle and destroy the enemy at Kurdemir and following that capture Shemakhi and after collecting 2000 cavalry there, capture Baku rapidly. Accordingly, first of all Aksu had to be captured, and attack Kurdemir over Aksu afterwards⁶⁵⁰. As of July 5, 1918, 13th Caucasus Regiment occupied Aksu⁶⁵¹. On 6th of July, local units composed of the Daghestanis and Azerbaijani militia attacked at Guba and this attack was repelled by Soviet forces⁶⁵².

After the conditions at the front started to deteriorate, The Caucasus Red Army commander initiated activities to gather support within Azerbaijan. At the beginning of

⁶⁴⁸ Yüceer, p. 85.

⁶⁴⁹ Sarkisyan, p. 380.

⁶⁵⁰ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 565.

⁶⁵¹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 566.

⁶⁵² Tokarzhevskii, pp. 121-122.

July, General Korganov requested a propaganda unit from Baku composed of expert propagandists in order to create a Bolshevik effect in Azerbaijani villages⁶⁵³.

By the summer of 1918, publications against Bolsheviks in the Ottoman press had increased. For example, in the 2 July 1918 issue of *Sabah* newspaper, very negative impressions of an American journalist were published. Also at *Yenigiin* newspaper published by Yunus Nadi Bey, a person called Atallah Bahaddin Efendi who had escaped from Bolsheviks was telling that Russia was a country where there was no justice and freedom and drew a very dark future for Bolshevik Russia. In the 8 July 1918 issue of *Tanin* newspaper, the editorial entitled “Russian Affairs” claimed that restoration of the Tsarist administration was the most feasible solution for solving Russian problems⁶⁵⁴.

By early July, Caucasus-Islam Army was fully in a position to start offensive operations. Prevention of the rallying of the disbanded Baku Soviet forces and capturing Shemakhi were very important for the Ottoman Army. But the offense which started very successfully was hindered due to lack of ammunition. At this point, capture of Kurdemir had crucial importance because of food transportation and safety of logistical communication lines⁶⁵⁵.

During the period when the Ottoman offensive was felt more powerfully, Russian efforts to cooperate with other powers also increased. In the telegram sent to Shaumian on July the 8th, Stalin wrote provided that Germany did not interfere with Armenia or Azerbaijan, he was ready to provide permission to be merged with Georgia and a certain share from Baku petroleum⁶⁵⁶.

⁶⁵³ Tokarzhevskii, p. 115.

⁶⁵⁴ Kocabaşoğlu-Berge, pp. 134-136.

⁶⁵⁵ Rüşti, p. 87.

⁶⁵⁶ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 284.

Even during the period when Ottoman soldiers had departed for Gence, in a telegram sent to Shaumian, Lenin advised him to cooperate with Noi Zhordania⁶⁵⁷. In his letter dated July 6 to Noi Zhordania which had been delivered by the Tiflis Bolsheviks on July 25, Shaumian requested Georgians not to allow Turkish units to use the railways and if they help their defense of Baku in this manner, he promised autonomy to Georgia in the future Soviet Transcaucasia. Zhordania responded to this letter by confirming that Turkish forces will not be able pass over Georgia⁶⁵⁸. On the other hand neither Georgia nor its protector Germany had the forces in the region required to stop the Ottoman Army.

In addition, Bolsheviks were not able to get the support of working class. Qualified, literate and city abiding workers were closer to Mensheviks and Right SR's. Furthermore, because of the failure of the Red Army's operation to capture Gence after the defeat in Geokchai battle caused a great deal of decrease in the support provided by the working class to the Bolsheviks. Bolsheviks still were not able to solve the food problem in the city. Especially by May it threatened the Bolsheviks' administrative sovereignty. Hundreds of people were fleeing to Astrakhan⁶⁵⁹. On July 10, Nuri Pasha sent a declaration to the people of Baku requested surrender of the city to his forces but the Baku Soviet declined this request⁶⁶⁰.

Again Kazım (Karabekir) indicated on July 10 that Armenians continuously assailed Ottoman forces on the demarcation line and said to Nazarbekov that such attacks take place between Shahtahti and Kemerli villages. Ottomans were being continuously harassed in these regions⁶⁶¹. In fact, Armenian partisans had been trying to

⁶⁵⁷ Hesenov, p. 95.

⁶⁵⁸ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 285.

⁶⁵⁹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, pp. 296-297.

⁶⁶⁰ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 534.

⁶⁶¹ Sarkisyan, p. 403.

hinder the activities of the Ottoman forces since the beginning of the combat between Caucasus-Islam Army and the Caucasus Red Army. In June 17, Armenian partisans attacked Ottoman forces at Etchmiadzin, in the vicinity of Hamamlu, killing one officer and 23 cavalymen⁶⁶². During 28-29 June, Armenians were attacking the Ottomans at Serdarabad and Aleksandropol and detonating some stores⁶⁶³. Pro-Soviet Russian volunteer soldiers also provided support to the Armenian attacks behind the front. For example, according to news given by the *Zarya Rosii* newspaper's June 1918 edition, during a fight between Armenians and Ottoman forces at Nakhchevan, about 250 Soviet soldiers were fighting alongside the Armenians⁶⁶⁴.

In view of the remarkable progress of the Ottoman Army, Baku Communists started looking for an agreement basis with Colonel Lazar Bicherakhov who was known with his atrocities in Iran. This force was a formidable one, in view of the conditions of those days. Bicherakov's forces were composed of Terek and Kouban Cossacks⁶⁶⁵. Bicherakov's forces contained two armored trains, artillery and wagons. In addition, this military power had 1500 cavalymen and one Dashnak battalion⁶⁶⁶. In his letter Bicherakov sent to the Bolshevik administration in Baku, he stated that his only desire was to ascertain Russian domination in the region and that he was submitting his services to the Baku Soviet⁶⁶⁷. After being sent to the front on July the 7th, Bicherakov commanded the right flank of the army and Korganov commanded the center and left flank⁶⁶⁸.

Bicherakov arrived at Kurdemir in July 8. On the other hand, by July 10, he encountered attacks of the Ottoman forces supported by the Azerbaijani militia without

⁶⁶² Sarkisyan, p. 404.

⁶⁶³ Sarkisyan, p. 404.

⁶⁶⁴ Sarkisyan, p. 407.

⁶⁶⁵ Kadishev, p. 117.

⁶⁶⁶ Mitrokhin, p. 45.

⁶⁶⁷ ARSPİHDA, F. 276, siy.2, iş.20, v.44.

⁶⁶⁸ Kadishev, p. 118.

getting the chance of applying his defense plans prepared by trusting his 1000-soldier force selected among the Cossacks and Baku force. On 15th of July, Bicherakov arrived at the conclusion that it was not possible to resist the Ottomans with the forces he had and from then on a retreat began to the Baku defensive line between Balacari-Bibi Eibat stations⁶⁶⁹. During the Kurdemir battles, armored cars of the Baku Soviet fired artillery and machine gun from time to time at the Ottoman lines. On the other hand from time to time Azerbaijani field artillery platoon succeeded in repulsing these armored cars and sometimes silenced the enemy artillery⁶⁷⁰. These armored cars helped in saving some Soviet units from very difficult situations⁶⁷¹.

Thirst, heat and mosquitoes kept being the greatest problems for the Ottoman soldiers during the Kurdemir battles. Most of the time it was not possible to find water even for the animals⁶⁷². As the result of condensed offensive during 8-10 July, Soviet forces evacuated Kurdemir and retreated to Kerar⁶⁷³.

The 13th Regiment attacked Kerar station in July 13, which had been previously attacked by the Mususlu detachment but could not be taken but Kerar station was defended decisively by the Baku Soviet. In addition, counter-attacks executed by two armored trains and armored cars affected the Ottoman-Azerbaijani forces negatively. Nevertheless, Kerar Station was captured on July 14, 1918⁶⁷⁴.

It was decided that the 5th Caucasus Division was to move towards Baku in two directions, one direction along the railway line and the other by means of Shemakhi-Marazi highway. Accordingly, the Mususlu detachment which was to move towards the railway line direction was to be called Southern Group and the forces in the north was to

⁶⁶⁹ Allen-Muratoff, pp. 488-489.

⁶⁷⁰ Rüşti, p. 92.

⁶⁷¹ Tokarzhevskii, p. 118.

⁶⁷² Rüşti, pp. 92-93.

⁶⁷³ Tokarzhevskii, p. 121.

⁶⁷⁴ Rüşti, pp. 99-100.

be called Northern Group. In order to hide the formation to which the two groups belonged to, the 5th Caucasus Division was to be called the Eastern Front Command⁶⁷⁵.

Although the military force connected to the Bolshevik-Dasnak coalition was disintegrating, the Ottoman force was moving rather slowly. The most serious reasons for this were thirst and dysentery. When Nuri Pasha arrived at Kurdemir, he had a force of 4.000 strong only. In addition, desertion among Azerbaijani militia had increased. Those who did not desert lacked serious fighting capability. Nuri Pasha began to request reinforcements by July 15⁶⁷⁶.

Insufficiency of reinforcements which arrived from Azerbaijan also slowed down the Ottoman Army. On 11 July 1918, Turkish command announced conscription of those to military service who were born during 1894–99. In his report submitted to the parliament in 25 February 1919, the Minister of War Samed Mehmandarov pointed out that this decision had caused a great deal of discontent, most of the time recruitment was done by use of force, and people did not want to send their children to the military service. Bad feeding conditions, insufficient clothing and harshness of the Ottoman officers (for people who were not accustomed to doing military duty, this situation was very normal) caused the new conscript to desert in the shortest possible time⁶⁷⁷.

In July 12, when the Ottoman advance continued, during the Chicherin-Galip Kemali Bey meeting, Chicherin had complained about the Caucasus-Islam Army's advances towards Baku and Galip Kemali Bey had responded by saying that the responsibility belonged to the Russians. He continued by saying that because Russians

⁶⁷⁵ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 568.

⁶⁷⁶ Allen-Muratoff, p. 489.

⁶⁷⁷ Steklov, p. 9.

did not collect weapons from the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia, Ottoman Armed Forces had to follow the armed Armenians⁶⁷⁸.

By July Ottomans also consolidated their power in Azerbaijan. With an agreement signed on July 14, 1918, the Ottoman Government had taken all active or non active railways, together with their employees under his own control for a period of 5 years in Azerbaijan. According to the agreement, all shipping operating on the Caspian Sea, together with operating rights of Baku and other ports had also been placed under Ottoman control. One way or another all of Azerbaijan was placed under Ottoman control⁶⁷⁹. As soon as management of railways passed over to the Ottomans, Ottoman officers were appointed to each train station as supervisors⁶⁸⁰.

In July, Armenia ostensibly owned the military power which enabled it to be allied to the Baku Sovnarkom against the Ottoman State. In July, there were three infantry divisions, together with six artillery regiments organized in three brigades, 40 pieces of artillery and 6 cavalry regiments under the command of General Nazarbekov in Erivan. By mobilizing the armed Armenian population, they could have 40-50 thousand combatants. Erivan was also fortified⁶⁸¹. But according to the information provided by Tokarzhevskii, administrators of Armenian Nation Council in Tiflis, Mirzoev and Arutyunyan had visited the headquarters of the Ottoman Army in July, which had attacked Baku⁶⁸². When the month of July had arrived, Ottoman artillery was being placed 4 miles away from Etchmiadzin and Armenian capital Erivan⁶⁸³. By July, the situation in Armenia was getting worse; their fertile land had been occupied by the Ottomans, thousands of orphans and refugees were in dire conditions, with cholera and

⁶⁷⁸ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 220.

⁶⁷⁹ Steklov, p. 8.

⁶⁸⁰ Tokarzhevskii, p. 84

⁶⁸¹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 541.

⁶⁸² Tokarzhevskii, p. 123.

⁶⁸³ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 201.

typhus all over the country. Even the able Aram Manukian administration was helpless⁶⁸⁴. Due to all these reasons, Armenia was not in a position to pose a threat to the Ottomans, even though it had a sizeable military potential in Caucasia.

By the month of July, the Azerbaijani delegation in Istanbul had increased its activities aimed at providing support. During the meeting with Enver Pasha, Azerbaijani delegation under the leadership of Mehmed Emin Resulzade had requested an additional division be sent to Azerbaijan and questioned the formation of a volunteer force to be organized among the local forces. Enver Pasha's response had embarrassed the Azerbaijani delegation. According to Enver, only 36 volunteers had participated in the Ottoman efforts to organize a local force. To this, the Azerbaijani delegation had commented by saying that collecting volunteers was useless and that new Army units should be sent as soon as possible to Caucasia. During the same meeting, Enver Pasha had told the Azerbaijani delegation that his Government was paying 50 thousand liras for the army in Azerbaijan and he was trying to attract their attention to the importance of tax collection there⁶⁸⁵. To be more specific, even the expenses of Ottoman forces in Azerbaijan was an important burden for the Ottoman State and that the Azerbaijani Government needed to make some sacrifices for the additional division.

When diplomatic activities continued in Istanbul, battles in the Caucasus front did not lose speed. In July 20, the 11th Division captured Nakhchevan and was able to open the road by beating the Armenian forces at Erivan⁶⁸⁶. Likewise, the Andranik threat in Nakhchevan was completely eliminated.

According to the intelligence received by the Ottoman Army from Baku, 300 soldiers of the Bicherakov force had either been killed or wounded during the Kurdemir

⁶⁸⁴ Hovannisian, pp. 210-211.

⁶⁸⁵ Message sent to Mehmed H. Hacinski from Istanbul on 19 June 19, 1918. See ARDA, F.894, siy.10, iş. 31, v.2-3.

⁶⁸⁶ Belen, *Birinci Cihan Harbinde Türk Harbi: 1918 Yılı Hareketleri*, p. 167; Çakmak, p. 270.

battle. Bicherakov was trying to gather 10000 soldiers by using the money sent by the British. During the Kurdemir battles an armored wagon of the Baku Soviet was destroyed. The Baku Soviet forces had a total of 32 battalions and two of the battalions, each of which were 150 men strong, protected the railways⁶⁸⁷.

As the result of unsuccessful offensive operation, the total loss of the Baku Soviet Army was 3.000. Because the Red units had also left the active struggle, the number of defenders in front of Baku had decreased to 3.000⁶⁸⁸. According to the intelligence received by the Caucasus Islam Army, by mid July the number of units in front of them attached to the Baku Soviet were not more than 3000⁶⁸⁹. In the letter sent by Shaumian to Lenin dated June the 14th, it was written that the morale of the Red Army personnel was very high although they had been experiencing “hunger” for 3 months⁶⁹⁰; but the point he was missing was that the effects of this hunger would soon be seen during the offensive operations. With Armenian commanders, the Red Army’s operation directed at Gence served no purpose other than directing Muslim hate on the Soviet regime⁶⁹¹. In his memoirs, one of the Baku defenders points out that in June almost all of the Red Army units were composed of insufficient Armenian veterans commanded by Dashnak officers and that these detachments provoked the Muslims by looting their villages⁶⁹². When Dashnaks were retreating, they applied violence to the population. This condition attracted Bolshevik reaction. Bolshevik officers held a meeting and declared that they were not going to accept the violence on the population by units under the command of Dashnak Ter-Avekimov and this declaration created a

⁶⁸⁷ Rüşti, p. 109.

⁶⁸⁸ Allen-Muratoff, p. 489.

⁶⁸⁹ Rüşti, p. 102.

⁶⁹⁰ *Bolsheviki v Borbe za Pobedu Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsin v Azerbaidjane*, p. 508.

⁶⁹¹ Kazemzadeh, pp.130-131.

⁶⁹² Kazemzadeh, p. 134.

serious conflict between the Dashnaks and Bolsheviks⁶⁹³. Furthermore, Kadishev accused Ter-Avekimov because of the Salyan defeat of July 12. Accordingly, intentional activities of Dashnaks' who preferred peace had serious effects on the defeat. Animosity between Bolsheviks and the Dashnaks within the Baku Soviet became more apparent with the Salyan Battle⁶⁹⁴. The organizational problems of the Soviet army had serious effects in the sudden retreat to Baku. Animosity between the Dashnaks and Bolsheviks were becoming more apparent as the result of defeats one after the other.

The most important posts of the front where the battles between the Caucasasia Islamic Army and Caucasian Red Army were fought and the locations on which the Ottoman army focused on were Kurdemir and Shemakhi⁶⁹⁵.

Nuri Pasha was planning to attack Baku after gathering what he planned to be 2000 cavalrymen, following the capture of Shamakhi⁶⁹⁶. There were 2-3 infantry battalions, several guns and machine guns in front of the Northern Group at the Shemakhi front⁶⁹⁷. As the result of the offense started by the Northern Group on 19 July, 1918, Shemakhi was captured on 20 July, 1918. While the combat was still going on in Shemakhi, Dashnak commander Amazasp withdrew his brigade. In his report to Baku Sovnarkom dated July 20, Anastas Mikoyan stated this action as high treason and wanted those who were guilty to be brought to court⁶⁹⁸.

When the 5th Caucasus Division came near Baku, it was decided to enlist the men between the ages of 19–25 living in Geokchai ve Shamakhi which had been captured earlier by the Caucasus-Islam Army. Whoever was enlisted would bring his

⁶⁹³ Tokarzhevskii, p. 124.

⁶⁹⁴ Kadishev, p. 119.

⁶⁹⁵ Tokarzhevskii, p. 122.

⁶⁹⁶ Belen, *Birinci Cihan Harbinde Türk Harbi: 1918 Yılı Hareketleri*, p. 175.

⁶⁹⁷ Rüşti, p. 104.

⁶⁹⁸ Tokarzhevskii, p. 124.

own rifle and for those who did not have a rifle, weapon and ammunition would be provided by the military administrative commissions⁶⁹⁹.

On the other hand, because the situation was becoming more grave, Shaumian had requested urgent military aid from Lenin in his telegraph dated July 20⁷⁰⁰. Due to the lack of combatants, the Red Army had begun to enlist men among the Muslims. But very few Muslims volunteered to enlist in the Red Army. For example, *Himmet* was able to deliver to the Baku Soviet only 60 of its members as volunteers⁷⁰¹. In mid July, Baku workers complied with the invitations of Baku Bolsheviks to establish their own military force. In addition to this, as it had been pointed out by Baku Sovnarkom's Assistant Commissar of War and Navy Affairs Saboldaev, as the result of mobilization, only 2000 persons complied with it, while 10.000 persons were expected to comply⁷⁰².

The most important support received after mid July was Petrov's force. The unit under the command of the young Ukrainian Colonel Petrov, which was extracted from the Ukrainian front and decided to be sent to the Baku front arrived at Baku from Tsaritsin on July 20th. In fact, this force was expected to arrive at Baku during mid June; but the activities of white Cossacks in Krasnov and the railways which had been disrupted in the Povorino, Panfilova region delayed the arrival of this force⁷⁰³. After arriving in Baku, Petrov organized an artillery battery, a marine unit composed of soldiers from the Baltic and the Black Sea and a cavalry patrol team⁷⁰⁴.

Reinforcement of Petrov's force was not going to change the balance at the front; because Bicherakov who had serious disagreements with the Sovnarkom regarding the management of the army was about to withdraw his own force from the

⁶⁹⁹ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azərbaycan*, p. 136.

⁷⁰⁰ Tokarzhevskii, p. 127.

⁷⁰¹ Tokarzhevskii, p. 128.

⁷⁰² Kadishev, p. 122.

⁷⁰³ Tokarzhevskii, p. 126.

⁷⁰⁴ Tokarzhevskii, p. 127.

front. In his telegram to Shaumian dated 23 July 1918, Bicherakov writes that Shaumian had visited and inspected the front together with him and that due to the seriousness of the situation he had requested a reinforcement of 2000 men from Shaumian within one week and that even though Shaumian had promised to send the reinforcements, the promise had not been kept. Because the situation had become more serious, Bicherakov requested reinforcements for the second time on July 14 but this request was also left unanswered. According to his own statement, the 20 days during which Bicherakov was at the front, the front was reinforced with only 200 men. Measures he had proposed in order to prevent the situation from getting graver had not been heeded. Bicherakov was stating that he was not able to take on any further responsibilities due to the existing poor conditions, and that he was leaving his command to Avetisov and requesting Baku Sovnarkom to assign a new commander in his place⁷⁰⁵.

As time passed, resistance of the Baku army under the leadership of Bolsheviks diminishing. On July 22, 1918, 2 guns and armored cars, cargo cars and transport cars were captured from the Red Army forces which were retreating towards Baku in a disorderly manner. Nuri Pasha had intended to benefit from the miserable condition of the Baku Soviet army rapidly and therefore he was against the 5th Caucasus Division Commandership's operations in order to regulate its logistics. According to him, bad morale and weakness should be exploited and Baku should be captured rapidly⁷⁰⁶. When the 23rd of July arrived, Ottoman forces were 70 km. away from Baku but they were 100 miles away from their logistics center, Kurdemir⁷⁰⁷. In addition, when the operation of the 5th Caucasus Division was the point of issue, the most serious obstacle was not the enemy but food supply and the water problem. While the Baku forces

⁷⁰⁵ ARSPİHDA, f.303, siy.1a, iř.14, v.88-89.

⁷⁰⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 571.

⁷⁰⁷ Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekati*, *Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması 1918*, p. 93.

withdrew, they destroyed railways and water installations and there were no qualified personnel in the Caucasus-Islam Army to repair the installations. The Caucasus-Islam Army instructed to commence the operation against Baku on July 26 but the Eastern Front (5th Caucasus Division) Command responded to the Caucasus-Islam Army Command by saying that the offensive operations can be initiated against Baku on July 28 due to the storage of insufficient food supply, communications problems, ammunition expected to arrive at Kurdemir not having arrived and railway related problems⁷⁰⁸. Again on July 28, Kazım (Karabekir), 1st Caucasus Army Corps Commander was promoted to Corps Commander and he was assigned to command the Baku front; nevertheless his departure to Baku was stopped⁷⁰⁹.

Reinforcements demanded insistently by Shaumian had been sent to Baku over Astrakhan, together with a large ammunition shipment. In this shipment there were 3 armored vehicles, 80 pieces of artillery, 160 machine guns, 100.000 pistols and uniforms⁷¹⁰. Quite a number of weapons had been sent but this time, contrary to the situation during early June, there were not enough numbers of men to do the fighting. During this period when Soviet Russia was ineffective, Britain emerged to be the only hope for salvation for the political groups other than Bolsheviks.

IV.5. British Intervention

Even though they had captured Baghdad on March 11, 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution had put the Britain in a rather difficult position. Since Russia was left outside the war, this had left a very large area, from the Black Sea all the way to India

⁷⁰⁸ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, pp. 571-572.

⁷⁰⁹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 545.

⁷¹⁰ Kadishev, p. 126.

open to attacks. There were a lot of German agents in Turkistan and Afghanistan⁷¹¹. Collapse of Russia not only made a German and Turkish offensive to Caucasia possible but also brought with it the possibility of offensive operations to Iran and Central Asia. British headquarters personnel were able to see the urgency of the situation at once and they wrote the following regarding the situation:

“The Russian Revolution warns us not to expect too much from the reported movement for a stable and separate Government by the Ukraine, Cossack and Caucasus Provinces or that it will present a real barrier to the Maximalists and to German aggression or propaganda.”⁷¹²

The basic factor which gave shape to British policy in Asia was the idea of protecting the safety of the empire. In September 1917, the British belief that Ottomans were preparing an expedition to the East had grown stronger. But there was no consensus as to where this expedition was going to⁷¹³. Ottoman Empire which had not been affected as much as the other empires from the self-determination principles because he had lost her Asian domain and because he had evacuated his Armenian population with the 1915 deportation was going to take advantage of the political atmosphere created by the self-determination principle by using his Muslim identity to encourage Asian Muslims and Turkic communities with economic and military aid. This was an important threat for Britain which harbored a great Muslim population in its area of sovereignty. In the telegraph sent to the Foreign Office on 25 December 1917, the Minister of the British Embassy in Teheran listed the tasks of Lionel Dunsterville who was a respected officer and reputed leader who served in India. Accordingly,

⁷¹¹ Pierre Comtois, “Battle For Baku”, *Military History*, July 2005, p. 56.

⁷¹² T. R. Sareen, *British Intervention in Central Asia and Trans-Caucasia* (New Delhi, 1959), p. 7.

⁷¹³ Stanwood, pp. 32-33.

Dunsterforce's tasks were to proceed from Northern Iran to Tiflis, to topple the Soviet Government in Baku and achieve control of Northern Caucasia and the Caspian⁷¹⁴. In his memorandum submitted to the War Cabinet in early 1918, Lord Milner, member of War Cabinet, defended intervention in Caucasia. According to Milner, Ottoman relations with the Turkic population in Northern Iran (Azerbaijan) and Russian Muslims, and the combination of the anti-British Bolshevik activities posed a great threat to all of Britain's positions in the East; Therefore anti-Bolshevik groups in Transcaucasia had to be militarily organized. Milner was assessing Transcaucasia as the most important region in the Southern Russia from the point of view of British interests⁷¹⁵. The Caucasian Committee, during its meeting on January 4, 1918, also discussed how to prevent the spread of anti-British Turan-Muslim movement from Turkey to Central Asia⁷¹⁶. Therefore, from then on one of the basic objectives of the British would be to prevent Germany and Ottomans from reaching the oil regions at the Caspian⁷¹⁷.

Britain fostered the objective of uniting Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia under one frame and organize a federation against the Germans and Turks. In his report sent to India from Baghdad, Captain Noel recommended establishment of an authority in Caucasia which was to be under the influence of a small British military asset and which would be acceptable by the Georgians, Tatars, Armenians and Daghestanis⁷¹⁸. These reports showed that Britain supported at any cost a Transcaucasian federation that might oppose the Germans and Turks. Likewise, the foundation of the project that was going to be called the Great Wall of Caucasia was laid with the Dunsterforce mission.

⁷¹⁴ Mitrokhin, p. 25.

⁷¹⁵ Stanwood, p. 63.

⁷¹⁶ Stanwood, p. 64.

⁷¹⁷ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George (volume 6. 1918)* (New York, 1982), p. 155.

⁷¹⁸ Sareen, pp. 8-9.

Members of force commanded by Dunsterville were selected according to their capabilities to become political agents rather than their military capabilities; with this approach, the Dunster group was hoping to create a Lawrence effect in the Transcaucasia⁷¹⁹. Russian and Persian speaking intelligence and counter-intelligence officers were preferred⁷²⁰. Prevention of the realization of Pan-Turkist ideals was one of the important objectives of the Dunsterville mission⁷²¹. When Dunsterville arrived at Baghdad on 6 January 1918, there were a lot of important tasks waiting for him; on the other hand, the military force allocated to him was very small⁷²². In fact, he did not need a lot of soldiers. Initially, 200 soldiers and a lot of officers were tasked as a crack unit. These officers had arrived from such fronts as France, Egypt, Mesopotamia and they were selected from among Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans⁷²³.

During the initial phase it was not very easy for Dunsterforce to reach Baku. Jangalis under the leadership of Mirza Kuchuk Khan controlled the road from Kasvin to Enzeli and they were determined to prevent the British from passing this road. Bolsheviks were also providing arms and intelligence support to Kuchuk Han's Jangalis in order to force the British to withdraw from Iran and prevent them from entering Caucasia. At the end of February, it was clearly seen that Dunsterville's Caucasia mission was not going to be as easy as it had been foreseen at the beginning⁷²⁴. Austrian and Turkish officers were also helping Kuchuk Han⁷²⁵. In Resht Ottoman officers were cooperating with the Jangali operations⁷²⁶.

⁷¹⁹ Stanwood, p. 64.

⁷²⁰ Mitrokhin, p. 29.

⁷²¹ Gökay, "The Battle for Baku", p. 38.

⁷²² Comtois, p. 57.

⁷²³ Sareen, p. 10.

⁷²⁴ Mitrokhin, p. 31.

⁷²⁵ C.H. Ellis, *The Transcaspiian Episode(1918-1919)* (London, 1953), p. 21.

⁷²⁶ Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, p. 33.

Major Goldsmith who was tasked to help Dunsterville arrived at Baku together with three men on February 13, 1918 and went to Tiflis in order to work together with the Caucasus Military Agency. Here he got in contact with local groups and established an effective communication circuit with the British forces in Northern Iran. Here Goldsmith was even able to get the required permission from Shaumian which allowed Dunsterville's 40 officers to travel to Tiflis over Baku, with four motor cars⁷²⁷.

Dunsterville had identified Bicherakov as his most important military ally in Caucasia. Bicherakov's unit during those days was the only Russian unit in Caucasia of any military value. Knowing Bicherakov's lust for money, Dunsterville was able to ally with him with this instrument. Bicherakov requested 5 million rubles in advance and in case of success in the Caucasian operation, an additional 10 million rubles; War Bureau accepted Bicherakov's request⁷²⁸. In addition to all these, joining of the Kazakh unit which was under the command of Colonel Bicherakov to the British forces after coming to an understanding with Dunsterville gave an important advantage. On the other hand, when Bicherakov had seen in Hemedan how small Dunsterforce was, he was most certainly disappointed⁷²⁹. The British were able to eliminate the Jangali danger with the help of Bicherakov, whose support they bought⁷³⁰.

Several months before Turks arrived at the gates of Baku, Britain afraid of Russian evacuation of Caucasia, decided to send a military force to Tiflis in order to organize resistance against the Germans. But when the force under Major Lionel C. Dunsterville's command arrived at the region Georgia was already Germany's vassal. Dunsterforce's task from then on was to prevent the Turks from controlling Baku and

⁷²⁷ Gökay, "The Battle for Baku", pp. 38-39.

⁷²⁸ Sareen, pp. 51-53.

⁷²⁹ Comtois, p. 57.

⁷³⁰ Mitrokhin, pp. 34-35, 39.

dominate the region⁷³¹. Dunsterforce's basic objective during the Baku defence was to prevent Central Forces from infiltrating Central Asia over the Caspian Sea⁷³².

Rather than transferring large forces to this region, Britain's policy was established on providing military based financial aid to the Christians and directing Armenian and Georgian leaders with the British military missions⁷³³.

Intervention of Britain on Baku was designed as part of Allied intervention on Soviet Russia. According to a letter sent by the Director of the Military Intelligence Center in London to the command center in Baghdad on 8 June 1918, invasion of Transcaucasia was to follow the interventions to materialize from the North and Vladivostok. Armed forces were required to be sent urgently to Baku if such a plan was going to become effective⁷³⁴. The British aimed at contacting the Denikin army at Kouban and Northern Caucasia after overthrowing the Soviet government in Baku and Daghestan⁷³⁵. At the end of May, MacDonnell met with Shaumian and suggested to him that they should defend Baku together against the Ottomans. But Shaumian clearly rejected this proposal⁷³⁶.

During the meeting of Lloyd George's War Cabinet in June, he said that he would prefer the Turks keeping Baku instead of the Russian bear and that re-birth of Russia would create problems for them. Again the Eastern Committee was stating that the British would be beaten by the crowded Ottoman forces and the Eastern Committee

⁷³¹ Comtois, pp. 56-57.

⁷³² Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, p. 71.

⁷³³ Artin H. Arslanian "Dunsterforce's Adventures: A Reappraisal". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2(Sep.,1980), p. 200.

⁷³⁴ Mitrokhin, pp. 37-38.

⁷³⁵ Mitrokhin, p. 39.

⁷³⁶ Ranald McDonell, *and Nothing Long* (London, 1938), pp. 211-212.

chairman Lord Curzon that in case Dunsterville transferred the units in Northern Iran to Baku, the Iran wall established against the Turks would weaken⁷³⁷.

Dunsterville imagined that in case the Turks occupied Baku, his activities over Iran would not be hindered. Therefore, Dunsterville requested the necessary permission from the War Office to transfer a British detachment to Baku. In spite of the objections of the Indian Administration, Dunsterville was able to get the permission for the Baku mission. The Eastern Committee accepted Dunsterville's request on July 5. The permission requested by Dunsterville in order to participate in Bicherakov's Baku campaign was considered suspicious by the Eastern Committee; because Dunsterville was not expected to realize this mission before the arrival of 1000 men in Ford cars and before the situation of the Kasvin road had been consolidated. One of the reasons why Dunsterville's Baku mission idea received supporters was the failure of the idea of a Caucasia unit connected to Britain because of Georgia had accepted German patronage and Azerbaijan accepted the patronage of Turks⁷³⁸.

Previously Dunsterville approached with reservation the idea of defending Baku with a small military unit. According to Arslanian the reason for changing his idea could have been the belief that after the military force have been deployed in Baku, Britain would be obliged to provide the requested military aid to him. His request for an infantry battalion and a battery of field artillery made later on supported this possibility⁷³⁹.

According to what Macdonnell, British Vice-Council in Baku had said, agents attached to Bicherakov had determined that the capture of Baku by the enemy could be prevented by three British battalions. As a result of the positive atmosphere developing

⁷³⁷ Gökay, "The Battle for Baku", p. 40.

⁷³⁸ Arslanian, p. 205; Sareen, pp. 53-54.

⁷³⁹ Arslanian, p. 205.

in favor of the British in Baku and the efforts of Dunsterville and Macdonnell, the idea of the settlement of Dunsterville in Baku with a military force had started to be considered as favorable in Britain⁷⁴⁰.

Bolsheviks who accepted help from Bicherakov did not showing the same clemency to Britain. In the report sent by the British agent Macdonnell in June, it was written that Lenin's Government did not want the British to enter the Russian domain⁷⁴¹.

In spite of the criticisms of the military headquarters, Dunsterville did not directly act contrary to the Bolsheviks. Because he knew that his small force would not be able to enter Baku alone, that Bolshevism was only an idea and that it was not possible to defeat it by military means and that an hasty attempt may create the background for fighting with the Bolsheviks. On the other hand, in July of 1918 as the result of the reports received the War Cabinet decided that the only solution was active intervention. In Russia conflict between the many different ethnic elements and distrust to Bolshevik leadership had increased. The best solution in such a chaotic situation was to send the military into Baku⁷⁴².

In the War Office's report dated July the 8th, there was a proposal to support Tatars (Muslim Turks) in Caucasia. The rationale for this proposal was the lack of a seizable British military power in the region adjacent to Baku and the search of military allies among the local population⁷⁴³. On the other hand, this proposal clearly shows how much some British were distant to the realities of the political environment in Caucasia during those days.

⁷⁴⁰ Arslanian, p. 207.

⁷⁴¹ Sareen, p. 57.

⁷⁴² Sareen, pp. 60-61.

⁷⁴³ Stanwood, p. 165.

Anti-Bolshevik fractions in Baku generally supported entrance of the British into Baku and as it was stated by Captain Teague-Jones who was the liaison functionary in the city, as long as the word British is not spelled together with the projects to restore the monarchy, this situation would continue, the single means to prevent occupation of Baku, key to the Central Asia and the Middle East, was to bring British soldiers urgently into Baku⁷⁴⁴. Armenians living in Baku believed that since there was no help from Russia, there was no choice but get assistance from the British⁷⁴⁵.

SRs, Mensheviks and Dashnaks submitted a proposal during the July 16 meeting of the Baku Soviet in order to invite the British to Baku⁷⁴⁶. During the meeting held to discuss invitation of the British force, Shaumian pointed out that invitation of the British would mean breaking away from Russia⁷⁴⁷. As it can be clearly seen from this approach, even if Soviet Russia condemned Tsarist Russia, it was using old Russia's geopolitical expansion as a rhetoric in order to establish sovereignty on the old Russias soil. From the Russian point of view in place of the experienced British colonialists, capturing of Baku by the rather weak Ottomans would be a more preferred development⁷⁴⁸. Shaumian who was trying to save the situation promised to bring artillery and 20 million cartridges from Astrakhan. Even the Astrakhan Executive Committee which knew the kind of blow the fall of Baku would have on the Soviet regime had very limited aid capability and it was unable to provide a guarantee as to when the aid would reach. While Shaumian trying to protect the Bolshevik administration in Baku, he had

⁷⁴⁴ Mitrokhin, pp. 43-44.

⁷⁴⁵ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 220-221.

⁷⁴⁶ Mitrokhin, p. 43.

⁷⁴⁷ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 308.

⁷⁴⁸ Gökay, *A Clash of Empires*, p. 31.

every right in declaring that Britain would not be able to bring more than 1000 men into Baku and that this smack British force would not be able to save Baku⁷⁴⁹ .

The motion in favor of inviting the British was accepted during the extraordinary meeting of the Baku Soviet on the 25 July 1918, with 259 votes against 226. During the voting only the leftist SRs and the leftist Dashnaks lent support to Shaumian⁷⁵⁰. Shaumian regarded this decision as treason and the Bolsheviks withdrew from the Baku Soviet 6 days later⁷⁵¹. Bolsheviks were defeated. In the message Shaumian sent to Lenin after the Bolsheviks had been beaten by 259 votes against 226, he especially accused Dashnaks with treason. According to the information provided by Shaumian, Ottomans were attacking from every direction and Baku urgently needed military support. On the other hand, arrival of British aid was very doubtful. There was an extremely tense atmosphere in the city. In such a condition Shaumian requested urgent military aid from Lenin⁷⁵². In order to profit from the opportunity, Right SRs, Mensheviks and Dashnaks who were against Bolsheviks realized a coup d'etat and established "Centro-Caspian dictatorship" and invited Dunsterforce to Baku⁷⁵³. On July 31 Colonel Bicherakov was appointed as commander-in-chief the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship⁷⁵⁴. In fact, Bicherakov's situation was uncertain but most probably because Right Socialists who were leading the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship wanted to have somebody who was in favor of the British command Baku's army and that was why they made such a decision. During this period Shaumian asked for help from the Sovnarkom in Russia but in his

⁷⁴⁹ Kazemzadeh, p. 137.

⁷⁵⁰ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 312.

⁷⁵¹ Gökay, "The Battle for Baku", pp. 42-43.

⁷⁵² ARSPİHDA, f.5, siy.1, iş.33, v.1-3.

⁷⁵³ Mitrokhin, pp. 45-46.

⁷⁵⁴ ARSPİHDA, f.303, siy.1a, iş.14, v.2.

telegram dated July 29 Lenin had responded by saying that he could not make any promises⁷⁵⁵.

Mistakes made by Shaumian had paved the way to the Bolshevik defeat. When reviewed from a strategic perspective, even though he knew that a rather strong Ottoman Army had arrived at Caucasia, mobilization of his military force for an offensive operation instead of defending the Baku line was most certainly an amateurish plan. By employing an hungry army in offense, Shaumian had lost the manpower of the Caucasian Red Army.

Nationalization of the petroleum industry had also caused the Bolsheviks to lose power in Baku. After nationalization, production of petroleum in Baku had drastically decreased and as a result workers's pays had decreased⁷⁵⁶. From then on people in Baku were looking forward to the arrival of British soldiers.

IV.6. The First Ottoman Assault On Baku And the Reorganization of Azerbaijani Force After the Failure

The assault of the Caucasus-Islam Army on Baku's forward positions began on 30 July 1918⁷⁵⁷. The Caucasus-Islam Army which had begun to move towards Baku on July 30 was able to solve its thirst problem to a great extent by taking advantage of Hırdalan River⁷⁵⁸. Ottomans who were able to benefit from the disagreements within the Baku Soviet increased pressure on July 30 and captured Eibat station and Shabandag hill afterwards which was an important location⁷⁵⁹. Dashnak commanders withdrew their forces from the defensive line. Defense of the city was very difficult because

⁷⁵⁵ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 221.

⁷⁵⁶ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, p. 201.

⁷⁵⁷ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 573.

⁷⁵⁸ Rüşti, p. 124.

⁷⁵⁹ Tokarzhevskii, p. 142.

desertion was very common and also because the Armenian National Council had rejected sending units to the front; in addition, Bicherakov also withdrew forces and the defenders were left alone. By July 30, there were only 400 men defending the line which was located 4 miles away from Baku. On the other hand, a gossip about Bicherakov striking at the Ottomans from their back had encouraged the Baku defenders and desertion had decreased. Even though the 30 July offensive had been repulsed, the Ottoman Army had greatly damaged Baku defenders⁷⁶⁰.

Upon hasty withdrawal of Baku defenders, the Eastern Front Command ordered the Southern Group to move Eibat and on 31 July 1918 participate in the Baku offensive⁷⁶¹. By 31 July 1918, Nuri Pasha had ordered the capture of Baku. Nuri Pasha knew that the enemy force was in a state of disarray, Bicherakov would leave soon and wanted to capture Baku immediately by benefiting from this situation. According to the plan of the Eastern Front Command, the offensive would begin in the early hours of July 31⁷⁶². On July 31, Ottoman forces captured one resistance center at Hirdalan, by means of artillery and machine gun fire, seized a machine gun and lots of ammunition and forced the Baku Soviet forces to withdraw⁷⁶³. Attacking Baku was important but as it had been stated by the Southern Group Command, servicemen in this group were about to faint because of thirst⁷⁶⁴. Quite a number of the Petrov force who were defending Baku had been killed or wounded during the 31 July battle. As the result of the fights, only 200 men had been left out of Petrov's force of 700 men. Consequently the number of the Baku defenders' force at the front did not exceed 4000. 3.000

⁷⁶⁰ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 317.

⁷⁶¹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 574.

⁷⁶² Rüşti, p. 125.

⁷⁶³ Rüşti, p. 126.

⁷⁶⁴ Rüşti, p. 127.

servicemen of the Armenian National Army were waiting behind the front⁷⁶⁵. Likewise the Bolsheviks had to carry the entire load at the front.

According to a letter received from Baku signed by a Hasanov, it was pointed out that the Armenians living in the city were scared and that if peace was to come up Armenians would support it. Therefore the Ottoman Army had decided to send a peace related letter⁷⁶⁶.

As the result of offensive operations initiated during the early hours of July 31, the Southern Group captured Hirdalan early in the morning and the 1st Battalion of the 38th Infantry Regiment captured Sumgait station in the afternoon⁷⁶⁷.

During an Armenian leaders' conference initiated by *Dashnaktsutiun*, it had been decided that surrendering to the Ottomans was the most rational solution; as a matter of fact Colonel Avetisov' desire to begin negotiations with the Ottomans had been discussed during meeting of the Baku Soviet on July 31st⁷⁶⁸.

Shaumian had resigned from office during a meeting held on July 31st. One of the reasons for this early resignation was because the Bolsheviks strongly believed that Ottomans would capture Baku within hours. Shaumian had intended save the remaining forces from the Ottomans' imminent occupation and stay faithful to the Russian Government⁷⁶⁹. Throughout 31st of July, Avetisov had requested from Shaumian to lift the white flag; but his requests had been turned down. Intelligence reports had shown that the city would fall within hours⁷⁷⁰. Colonel Petrov had returned to the city and had told Shaumian that his force had been inflicted heavy losses. In view of this situation the

⁷⁶⁵ Tokarzhevskii, p. 142.

⁷⁶⁶ Rüştü, p. 130.

⁷⁶⁷ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 574.

⁷⁶⁸ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, pp. 317-318; *Bolsheviki v Borbe za Pobedu Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsin v Azerbaidjane*, pp. 616-617.

⁷⁶⁹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, pp. 318-320.

⁷⁷⁰ *Bolsheviki v Borbe za Pobedu Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsin v Azerbaidjane*, p. 617.

Bolsheviks and Petrov had decided to depart from the city and boarded a ship. But the ship which had been carrying Baku commissars and Red Army soldiers had been stopped by a battle ship, *Ardahan* and forced to return to the port⁷⁷¹. Petrov ordered Centro-Caspian Government to free the Bolshevik leaders and this request was accepted. From then on Shaumian struggled to increase the prestige of the Bolsheviks in the city.

According to the telegram sent by Lev Karahan⁷⁷² to Shaumian dated August 1, German Minister Busche had told him that if the Ottomans continue with attacks, they would force the Ottomans to withdraw. On the other hand arrival of the British in the city would create a provocative situation for the Ottomans to attack the city and for that reason Germany would intervene⁷⁷³.

Following the intense rifle, heavy machine gun and from time to time artillery fire encountered during the night of 1-2 August, Baku defenders had been attacking especially the 13th regiment and the 13th regiment was defending its position⁷⁷⁴.

Fighting at the Northern Group's front had also intensified. Since the fight in this sector was of utmost importance, Baku defenders exhibited a tough defence⁷⁷⁵. Ottoman offensive which continued until August 2nd with great success could not bring down on the city the decisive blow due to insufficient artillery ammunition⁷⁷⁶.

A letter sent from the city to the 5th Division stated that the Ottoman force should attack rapidly and that the British Government would provide help from Enzeli with a force of 5000 within 48 hours and that 7 boats have been sent to Enzeli for this

⁷⁷¹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, pp. 320-321.

⁷⁷² Karahan was a member of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.

⁷⁷³ ARSPİHDA, f.303, siy.1a, iş.14, v.22.

⁷⁷⁴ Rüştü, p. 131-132.

⁷⁷⁵ Rüştü, p. 132.

⁷⁷⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 576.

purpose⁷⁷⁷. This information must have encouraged the Baku defenders as much as worrying the Ottoman Army and the mental infrastructure of the unsuccessful attack of August 5 must have been developed by directing them to a rapid operation to occupy the city. The effects of this information on both sides clearly showed the effects of psychological warfare during those days in Baku.

On August 3rd, Armenian National Council had been requested by the Caucasus-Islam Army Command to surrender the city to them⁷⁷⁸. But the Council did not entertain the idea of surrender any more⁷⁷⁹. In the telegram sent to the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship in Baku on August 3, 1918, Bicherakov had written that the Shaumian administration had not supported him at the front on purpose and that he would return to the Baku front as soon as possible and that he would receive aid from the British⁷⁸⁰.

When the first British detachment under the command of Colonel C.B. Stokes arrived at Baku on August 4th, the number of local soldiers under the command of the Baku Government was 8.000⁷⁸¹. On the other hand, a short time after the Centro-Caspian Government came to power, the attitude displayed by this Government caused the Soviet Russian units leave the city and consequently alienation of pro-Bolshevik railway and petroleum workers⁷⁸². Efforts displayed by this Government in order to get British support was about to result in full failure. Another detachment under Colonel Keyworth's command and composed of two armed cars arrived at Baku on July 4th. The arrival of these powers in Baku encouraged the local defenders to a great extent. In addition, rumors about the possibility of arrival of Dunsterforce in Baku were one of the

⁷⁷⁷ Rüştü, p. 138.

⁷⁷⁸ ARSPİHDA, f.303, siy.1a, iş.14, v.2.

⁷⁷⁹ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 326.

⁷⁸⁰ ARSPİHDA, f.276, siy.7, iş.284, v.1.

⁷⁸¹ Ellis, p. 36.

⁷⁸² Ellis, p. 37.

factors that caused the local defenders to disobey the Ottomans' invitation to surrender in August 3⁷⁸³.

Ottomans planned to realize the concluding stroke in their operation by a final attack on 5 August. The Northern Group under the command of Osman Bey, 10th Caucasian Division Regiment under the command of Selim Bey, Northern Group reserves consisted of 25-26-28th battalions, Cavalry Squadron Leader Zihni Bey's detachment, Sumgait detachment and Southern Group under the command of Habib Bey Selimov were main army groups that were prepared for the Battle of 5 August⁷⁸⁴.

At the beginning of the 5 August offensive, the Baku defenders began to withdraw to Baku step by step under the intense artillery fire of the Caucasus-Islam Army. But as the result of the attack executed by the Baku defenders under effective artillery and machine gun support, the 10th Regiment and the 13th Regiment of the Northern Group began to withdraw due to lack of sufficient artillery ammunition at the Northern Group and inability of the Northern Group Commander in using his reserves effectively. During this withdrawal, Ottoman forces were inflicted great losses. Baku defenders did not follow the retreating Ottoman forces to the end and this was a great opportunity for the latter⁷⁸⁵.

During the Ottoman offensive of 5 August, the city had almost capitulated; but Shaumian who did not want to defend the city together with the British ordered Petrov to employ the artillery and the surprise support of the Bolshevik artillery caused repulse of the Ottoman offensive⁷⁸⁶. Petrov's forces gained great popularity due to the success they had exhibited in the defence of Baku⁷⁸⁷. Everybody, from mariners to workers,

⁷⁸³ Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, p. 74.

⁷⁸⁴ Rüşti, pp. 138-139.

⁷⁸⁵ Rüşti, pp. 139-140.

⁷⁸⁶ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, pp. 326-327.

⁷⁸⁷ Tokarzhevskii, p. 150.

capable of holding a weapon participated in the 1-5 August combat. Defense of Baku had most certainly become an issue of the whole city⁷⁸⁸.

Abdülhadi Bey who was a squadron commander in 28th Battalion of 5th Caucasus Division had written in his diary that during August 1 offensive the artillery had spent too many ammunition and there were too little ammunition left and therefore the next day they had to face the enemy's heavy fire from both the sea and the land. According to him the most important reason for the defeat was the lack of artillery ammunition in the Caucasus-Islam Army. Abdülhadi Bey had very interestingly written that Baku defenders had shown with great pride the prisoners they had taken or they had killed from the Caucasus-Islam Army to the women who ran to the entrenchments after the victory⁷⁸⁹. Also according to Süleyman İzzet Bey, commander of 15th Division, one of the reasons for the unsuccessful August 5 offensive was insufficient artillery ammunition⁷⁹⁰.

Baku defenders had sacrificed 600 men and 20 officers. On the other hand, the Ottoman-Azerbaijani force had withdrawn leaving 16 machine guns at the battlefield⁷⁹¹. During the August 5 offensive 9 officers were killed and 19 had been wounded and 139 soldiers were killed and 444 had been wounded⁷⁹².

After the August 5 defeat there were 5000 combatants in front of Baku. Fighting capabilities of the Azerbaijani militia were not very high. Furthermore, these militia were in the habit of running away which had a bad effect on the Ottoman soldiers'

⁷⁸⁸ ARSPİHDA, f.303, siy.1a, iş.14, v.2.

⁷⁸⁹ Esat Arslan, "Bir Genç Subayın Gözüyle Birinci Dünya Savaşı Kafkas Cephesi" in *Sekizinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri II-(Sunulmayan Bildiriler)* (Ankara,2003), pp. 20-22.

⁷⁹⁰ Süleyman İzzet, p. 26.

⁷⁹¹ Allen-Muratoff, p. 490.

⁷⁹² Belen, *Birinci Cihan Harbinde Türk Harbi: 1918 Yılı Hareketleri*, p. 177.

morale⁷⁹³. Also Lezgi Cavalry Regiment commander who had gone to Mastagi in order to recruit Muslim population did not succeed in his efforts⁷⁹⁴.

After the 5 August defeat Eastern Army Group Commander Halil Pasha in Tiflis promised to send 2 infantry regiments for Baku⁷⁹⁵. On the other hand, the Caucasus-Islam Army Commander requested a fresh force of 5000 men, two field batteries, together with 4 heavy batteries against the Baku navy, one airplane detachment, one telephone company, 28.000 artillery shells, 1000 boxes of rifle bullets, 500 boxes of Russian infantry rifle bullets, 20 trucks for shipment of logistics⁷⁹⁶. In addition, Nuri Pasha suggested to have a group of small ships transferred over Kura River to the Caspian Sea to decrease the effectiveness of the Centro-Caspian ships but this suggestion of Nuri Pasha received no response⁷⁹⁷.

According to Mürsel Pasha, gathering of national forces of Azerbaijan at the Baku front would increase the morale of the forces. Accordingly an assault squadron, one Russian machine gun squadron, had been sent in 6 August from Gence to Alyat(Elete). Also, as Nuri Pasha had said a force composed of 7 officers and 234 soldiers had been sent from Gence to Baku via train⁷⁹⁸. Upon the Caucasus-Islam Army's request, Eastern Army Group Command sent the 107th Caucasian Regiment with 1200 combatants and 12 machine guns from the 9th Army to the Baku front from Karakilise on 9th of August⁷⁹⁹.

Ottoman military administration continuously reinforced the Caucasus-Islam army with weapons in order to occupy Baku. For example, in the letter sent by Enver

⁷⁹³ Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekati*, Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması 1918, p. 105.

⁷⁹⁴ Rüştü, p. 145.

⁷⁹⁵ Rüştü, p. 142.

⁷⁹⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 581.

⁷⁹⁷ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azerbaycan*, p. 293.

⁷⁹⁸ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azerbaycan*, p. 293.

⁷⁹⁹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 581.

Pasha to Nuri Pasha dated August 7, 1918 it was written that one thousand boxes of bullets and 5 thousand artillery shells had been sent from Karakilise to Akstafa. Again after several days the Eastern Army Commander Halil Pasha had stated that an artillery battery and all types of ammunition would be sent in order that Baku can be occupied. In addition, in August, battalions composed of Azerbaijani were effectively armed⁸⁰⁰.

Ottoman Government's Moscow Ambassador Galip Kemali Bey and Chicherin had met on August 8th to discuss Ottomans' Baku operations. During the meeting both parties accused each other of violating the Brest-Litovsk agreement⁸⁰¹.

Enver Pasha pointed out that the 9th Army should move towards Tebriz, Kasvin and further south in order to force the British to increase their forces in Iran and likewise prevent reinforcement of Baku⁸⁰². In August Nuri Pasha suggested to the 3rd Army Command to either send a force to Enzeli over Tebriz or support Mirza Kuchuk Khan in order to prevent the British from supporting Baku⁸⁰³.

In August 10 Bolsheviks decided to transfer their military force to Astrakhan. They could not encounter both the Ottomans and the British at the same time⁸⁰⁴. On August 12th representatives of the Caspian Fleet had pointed out that if they were to leave their weapons they may leave the city with their detachments. Petrov accepted this proposal and left the weapons but Shaumian and the Bolsheviks refused to leave their weapons. A small fleet containing Soviet soldiers, Bolsheviks, Left SRs and Leftist Dashnak leaders left the city but next day three combat ships of the Centro-Caspian

⁸⁰⁰ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azərbaycan*, pp. 136-137.

⁸⁰¹ Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekati*, *Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması 1918*, p. 65.

⁸⁰² *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 584.

⁸⁰³ Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekati*, *Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması 1918*, p. 109.

⁸⁰⁴ Kadishev, p. 133.

dictatorship caught up with the ships forced them to surrender; as the result Baku commissars were arrested⁸⁰⁵

After 5th August defeat the army was required to reorganize. In the reorganization process, Nuri Pasha's first charge was to dismiss Russian officers in the Azerbaijan Army Corps. At the beginning Nuri Pasha was not negative about Russian officers. According to him Russian officers could be used as an efficient fighting force against the Bolsheviks.⁸⁰⁶ On the other hand non-Muslim officers had fallen out of favor, especially after the 5th of August combat. As the result of this situation and parallel with the establishment of the new Azerbaijani military forces, Nuri Pasha dismissed all non-Muslim officers from office. In addition, Nuri Pasha justifiably felt great discomfort because most of the Azerbaijani railway personnel were Russians and Georgians⁸⁰⁷. During a period when transportation was of critical importance and especially in a geography such as Caucasia where ethnic roots had important effects on political inclinations, such ethnical positioning had great risks. Some events supported this reality. For example in the *Pravda* newspaper's 8 June 1918 edition, railway workers had tried to prevent employment of Ottoman armed forces against Baku Soviet but they had encountered threats and pressure from the Georgian Government⁸⁰⁸. Again on 8th August, Army of Islam's Commander Nuri Pasha was complaining about Georgian attacks against Ottoman forces by the encouragement of Germany and their efforts to disable Ottomans in the operation of Baku⁸⁰⁹.

⁸⁰⁵ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, pp. 330-331.

⁸⁰⁶ ATASE, K. 3818, D.4, F.27.

⁸⁰⁷ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azərbaycan*, p. 154.

⁸⁰⁸ Tokarzhevskii, p. 114.

⁸⁰⁹ ATASE, K.3819, D.7, F. 006.

There were about 7000-8000 Azerbaijani soldiers within the structure of Army of Islam located near Baku⁸¹⁰. Following the failure of the 5th of August offensive Nuri Pasha released a circular on 13 August 1918 in order to organize a new Azerbaijani Army Corps. According to the circular, organization activities for the establishment of the Azerbaijani Corps would be managed by the Caucasus-Islam Army. Small units would be attached to it until establishment of the Corps headquarters and cavalry units would be established in several units; the cavalry units would be expanded later on. All officers of the Corps would be Muslim, all enlisted men attached to the Corps would wear Ottoman uniforms. Existing Azerbaijani Corps would be abolished and material assets would pass onto the Caucasus-Islam Army's inspection. The speaking and writing language in the Army Corps to be established would be Turkish⁸¹¹.

In place of the abolished Azerbaijani Army Corps new Azerbaijani military forces began to be established under the administration of Turkish officers. These military forces were the First Kazakh, the Second Garabagh, the Third Zakatala and the Fourth Agdash Infantry Regiments⁸¹². These infantry regiments were composed of two companies and one regiment was composed of 3 battalions, a machine gun squadron, a depot squadron, an engineering squadron and other subdivisions⁸¹³. Upon abolishment of the Azerbaijani Army Corps, with the decree of August 20, 1918, 124 Muslim officers, together with Aliaga Han Shikhlinski had been posted to other jobs within the Caucasus-Islam Army⁸¹⁴.

During the reorganization phase Caucasus-Islam Army was preparing for the offensive very carefully. Baku was under siege and the people were very hungry. Before

⁸¹⁰ ATASE, K. 3819, D.7, F. 003-001.

⁸¹¹ Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusunun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekatı*, Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması 1918, pp. 78-79.

⁸¹² Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azerbaycan*, p. 129.

⁸¹³ ATASE, K. 3819, D.5, F.62.

⁸¹⁴ Süleymanov, *Qafqaz İslam Ordusu ve Azerbaycan*, pp. 154-155.

the last offensive Baku was both hungry and thirsty since 19 August Ottomans had cut off the drinking water from Guba⁸¹⁵.

IV.7. Arrival of Dunsterville (August 1918)

While Dunsterville on his way to Baku, Baku was on the point of breaking⁸¹⁶. In his letter to Dunsterville dated 15th of August Colonel Keyworth who was in Baku told about the situation at the Baku front. Accordingly, it was impossible to conduct telegraphic communication in Baku. The length of the front was approximately 21.000 yards. Defenders who had only 6.000 rifles were organized in 22 battalions, each with 150-160 men. As it was understood from observations made by airplanes, batteries of the Caucasus-Islam Army and especially if heavy artillery were brought they were capable of firing at the port and damage the ships. Baku defenders were experiencing famine. Ammunition was not under inspection, health services were insufficient and indiscipline was dominant among the defence forces. The Centro-Caspian administration was not too eager to confiscate arms which belonged to Petrov. Russian officers refused to go to the front and fight because of the gossip about Russian officers fighting together with the Ottoman Army. Armenians were not too eager to work with the Russians. Baku was not importing food for two months and according to Keyworth's forecasts there was food provisions in the city for only one week. Workers at petroleum fields were fighting against hunger. Serious problems were being encountered in the transport business⁸¹⁷. Actually during the reign of Centro-Caspian Dictatorship staples as bread and sugar was so expensive that they were nearly

⁸¹⁵ Rüştü, p. 161.

⁸¹⁶ Lionel Charles Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce* (London, 1920), pp. 221-222.

⁸¹⁷ Dunsterville, pp. 222-225.

untouchable for workers.⁸¹⁸ The decline in real wages and rise of black market also increased the devastating effect of malnutrition in the city⁸¹⁹. As Colonel Keyworth had explained in his letter, in spite of the situation, military advisors in the city agreed Dunsterville to come with a large military force rather than a small one. On the other hand, Dunsterville was determined to come to the city, even if it meant coming with a small force, since the situation was too critical to allow gathering a large force. In addition, people were sooner or later going to understand that British aid was going to be rather limited⁸²⁰.

Dunsterville arrived in Baku on August 17, Armenians were disappointed with the size of the unit which had arrived⁸²¹, because were expecting a large force. One of the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship's members Sergei Melik-Yolciyan claimed having received a telegram from the Dunsterforce Headquarters in Enzeli that a 5000 British force was ready to settle in Baku. Korganov supported this claim⁸²².

Maybe Dunsterville's force was insufficient to defend the city; but Bicherakov's Cossacks who had arrived in Baku from Enzeli by sea and ships of the Russian-Caspian fleet that had been armed by Dunsterville were all strengthening the Baku defense line⁸²³.

Dunsterville optimistically believed that if he had a sufficiently large force, he could save not only Baku but all of Caucasia. According to him, even the Muslims would support them⁸²⁴. But later the conditions in Baku caused Dunsterville to become pessimistic. In addition to undisciplined actions, Bolshevik propaganda was still

⁸¹⁸ A. Dubner, *Bakinskii Proletariat v Godi Revoliutsii* (Baku, 1931), p. 98.

⁸¹⁹ Dubner, p. 99. For the worsening economic situation of the Baku proletariat in numbers, look at Dubner, pp. 94-101.

⁸²⁰ Dunsterville, pp. 225-226.

⁸²¹ Sareen, p. 68.

⁸²² Arslanian, p. 209.

⁸²³ Comtois, p. 33.

⁸²⁴ Sareen, p. 69.

effective in the city. Lack of confidence among the local people hindered the establishment of an effective combat force⁸²⁵. According to Dunsterville there was a serious gap in the defense line after the withdrawal of the Bicherakov detachment. Local military authorities had accused Bicherakov because of this but they did not do anything for 3 weeks in order to restore this gap⁸²⁶. Dunsterville thought Baku Armenians were very different from Erivan Armenians and Anatolian Armenians whose bravery was witnessed in many cases⁸²⁷.

Rawlinson had also complained about the quality of the defenders. In his own words, the defenders were composed of men who fired at the open air and who hated encountering advancing enemy forces⁸²⁸. Baku was full of emancipated German and Austrian POW's. Furthermore Azerbaijani Turks were Pro-Ottoman. Therefore the Caucasus-Islam Army had very good access to information about the city⁸²⁹. Dunsterville's intelligence department was very weak, therefore Dunsterville's capabilities to get information about the Caucasus-Islam Army was too limited. Withdrawal of some trusted officers by Dunsterville had a lot to do with this⁸³⁰.

It was expected by the arrival of the Dunsterforce a more powerful leadership might be generated and as a result of this more disciplined and more effective defence force with a higher morale was hoped for. But due to the Armenian and Russian unwillingness to fight, these expectations failed. In fact, Baku had large stocks of weapons. Dunsterville had initiated work within the city in order to use these weapons. Approximately 50 pieces of artillery and a lot of explosives granted by the Allies to

⁸²⁵ Sareen, p. 70.

⁸²⁶ Dunsterville, p. 229.

⁸²⁷ Dunsterville, pp. 236-237.

⁸²⁸ A. Rawlinson, *Adventures in the Near East 1918-1922* (London, 1923), pp. 78-79.

⁸²⁹ Dunsterville, p. 235.

⁸³⁰ Dunsterville, p. 244.

Russia were found⁸³¹. Rawlinson observed during his searches that a great number of weapons were not being kept in good condition and no record of were kept. Unprotected explosives in great quantities constituted a great threat for the safety of the city⁸³². In fact every military equipment required for the defense of the city was present but the required united command system and political leadership were missing. The arsenal could not be used efficiently due to the deficiency of the central military command system. In addition to this, political and racial contradictions weakened the military actions of the Centro-Caspian government⁸³³.

The British and Russian soldiers did not trust the crowded Armenian soldiers. According to the British Military Intelligence report, qualified Russians, amounting nearly 1000 soldiers, called the Armenians cowards, and during their withdrawal they shot fire against the Armenians⁸³⁴. Even Victor Serge accepted that the Red Army, the majority of which was formed of Armenians in Baku, had carried out depredation activities against the Muslims⁸³⁵.

Dunsterforce was not in the position to reinforce his forces. However the Caucasus-Islam Army was reinforced with more qualified soldiers and a sufficient artillery force. People in Baku thought that Dunsterforce came to the city to set the oil wells on fire and then to take the control of the fleet and leave the city rather than defending it, since the force was small in size⁸³⁶. The British had really planned to set the oil wells on fire, in case that the Germans or Turks seized Baku⁸³⁷.

⁸³¹ Ellis, p. 39.

⁸³² Rawlinson, pp. 74-75.

⁸³³ Ellis, pp.34,36.

⁸³⁴ Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, p. 77.

⁸³⁵ Serge, p. 195.

⁸³⁶ Sareen, pp. 70-71.

⁸³⁷ Sareen, p. 62.

Great Britain had benefited from the oil and economic resources of Baku, as long as it could. The British Command sent 40 thousand barrels of oil to Enzeli in August 1918. Furthermore the British had demanded 80 thousand barrels of oil from the Centro-Caspian government to be used in the Mesopotamian front⁸³⁸. They also seized 23.5 million rubles from the Russian Bank, which was allocated for Baku⁸³⁹.

Despite all the warnings of the War Bureau, Dunsterville did not leave the city. He was an idealistic commander, determined to defend Baku. However his demand for a British brigade was rejected⁸⁴⁰. So the only hope left for Dunsterville was an early attack of the Otoman Army, so that they could counter-attack. He also hoped that the Bicherakov platoon would return and help them, in case sufficient forces were not mustered in the city. According to Dunsterville, even the possibility of Erivan Armenians to attack Turkish communication lines behind the military forces that attacked Baku, could cause panic in the Caucasus-Islam Army⁸⁴¹. However all those events envisaged by Dunsterville did not happen.

IV.8. German-Soviet Cooperation Against Ottomans

The price paid by Russia for the Brest-Litovsk Treaty was high. Russia lost one third of its railways, 73% of its total iron production, 89% of its total coal production, and 268 sugar refineries, 918 textile factories, 574 beer factories, 133 tobacco factories, 244 chemistry factories, 615 paper factories and 1073 machine factories⁸⁴². Russia was

⁸³⁸ Tokarzhevskii, p. 147.

⁸³⁹ Tokarzhevskii, p. 148.

⁸⁴⁰ Sareen, pp. 72-73.

⁸⁴¹ Dunsterville, pp. 235-236.

⁸⁴² Magnes, p. 185.

also deprived of Ukraine's bread, and Donetsk's coal⁸⁴³. Therefore, Baku had a crucial importance for Soviet Russia because of its oil resources.

Germans had supported Pan-Turkism movement so as to reach India. In theory, Pan-Turkism created a threat against the Russian dominance, and Britain's dominions, which was a great advantage for Germany under war conditions. However Germany's approach towards Pan-Turkism would change after the Bolshevik Revolution. At first the great German attack realized in the spring of 1918 was very successful, however it failed to destroy the British-French coalition⁸⁴⁴. As a result of this failure, Germans excluded Ottomans in their Caucasian strategy, rather than being closer to them.

Germans aimed at breaking the blockade of the Entente States by penetrating Siberia through controlling Ukraine, the Black Sea, Caucasia, and Caspian Sea. Apart from targetting to break the blockage of the Entente States, this plan was also attractive to the Germans because of the large grain and meat stock capacity of the region⁸⁴⁵.

At first stage, Germans approached the Ottoman military targets moderately. In the telegram sent by Ludendorff to General von Lossow in March 15, Germans supported Ottomans to dominate Azerbaijan, and Ludendorff even indicated that they could be allies with the Ottomans and reach India and Afganishtan, which were under British control⁸⁴⁶.

However Helfferich drew attention to Germany's benefits on the manganese reserves of Chiaturi in the note sent to Kühlman on April 18, 1918, and he also criticised Hans von Seeckt's ideas to leave the Batumi-Baku line to the Ottomans, and he underlined that the raw materials located in Transcaucasia and required by the

⁸⁴³ Gasimov, "Bakü'nün Kurtarılması Uğruna Türk Diplomasisinin Mücadelesi", p. 19.

⁸⁴⁴ Brigadier C. N. Barclay, *Armistice 1918* (London, 1968), p. 15.

⁸⁴⁵ Lloyd George, p. 150.

⁸⁴⁶ Mühlmann, p. 196.

German industry might be captured by the Ottomans. In his report Dr. Dieckmann, who was a prisoner of war in Russia, had also supported the same ideas as Helfferich, and underlined that the Georgians were strong supporters of Germany, and all together they could build a sound German authority here with the help of 60,000 Germans living near Tiflis⁸⁴⁷. Seeckt however, supported the Ottomans in Caucasus⁸⁴⁸. In May 27, Seeckt informed that 300,000 persons were ready to engage in the Ottoman Empire's activities in Azerbaijan. According to Seeckt, Baku had to be controlled to be able to reach the military targets in Iran and Mesopotamia, and the Ottomans had the military force to realize this mission in Caucasia⁸⁴⁹. Von Lossow had completely contradictory views compared with Hans von Seeckt. Von Lossow was a passionate advocate of Germany's superiority in Transcaucasia and explicitly objected to the Ottoman Empire's Caucasian plans⁸⁵⁰. The domination of Caucasia had to be Germany's key policy over Asia⁸⁵¹.

As a result of Great Britain's victory in the Middle East, German plans to construct a railroad between Berlin and Baghdad failed. However the idea of constructing a railroad between Berlin and Bukhara instead of between Berlin and Baghdad would fill the vacuum left from this unsuccessful plan⁸⁵². After the British captured Baghdad, the way to reach Iran and Afghanistan for Germany became the road passing over Batum, Tiflis, and Baku from the Black Sea. In fact it was impossible for Germany to realize its Caucasian policy without the approval and cooperation of the Ottoman Empire⁸⁵³. However Germans preferred not to negotiate directly with the Ottomans in order to reach their targets. According to the Germans, making agreements

⁸⁴⁷ Fischer, p. 553.

⁸⁴⁸ Meier, p. 148; Von Seeckt was the German general whom Enver trusted most. See Aydemir, p. 380.

⁸⁴⁹ Mühlmann, p. 199.

⁸⁵⁰ Fischer, p. 555.

⁸⁵¹ Fischer, p. 558.

⁸⁵² Çağlayan, *British Policy Towards Transcaucasia 1917-1921*, p. 37.

⁸⁵³ Mühlmann, p. 198.

even with Russia and Georgia would have created more positive results⁸⁵⁴. For Kühlmann, if the Ottoman Army captured Baku, German-Soviet relations would be affected negatively, for this reason Germany had to reach an agreement with Russia to eliminate the Ottoman danger⁸⁵⁵. Germany became unsuccessful in the Western Front during the spring attack, therefore relations between Germany and Soviet Russia were sensitive.

According to the report dated June 6, 1918, submitted to the British Government by the British General Staff, 9000 tons of oil resource extracted from Caucasia would have doubled Germany's war power alone⁸⁵⁶. Accordingly, in the letter written by Ludendorff to the Imperial Chancellor on June 9, 1918, it was indicated that Georgia had to be recognized and protected by Germany, which was the only way to secure Georgia from Ottoman intervention. Ludendorff supported the idea that a conciliatory approach should be adopted towards the Ottoman Empire regarding its Caucasian plans, however in return for this the Ottomans had to give up their goals on Baku. The Georgian Army should be constituted under Germany, and any kind of intervention to benefit from the raw materials of Caucasia had to be accepted as an indication of hostility. At this point, if the Ottomans captured Baku, this would have led to the destruction of the oil industry here, which would also destroy Germany's vital interests⁸⁵⁷.

The Ottoman press evaluated Germany's domination plans over Baku as a threat against the new expansion project over the Turkic world, which would start from Caucasia, and Germany was harshly criticised. Germans could not see that they were

⁸⁵⁴ Pomiankowski, p. 300.

⁸⁵⁵ Kılıç, *Ermeni Sorunu ve Almanya*, p. 175.

⁸⁵⁶ Çağlayan, "İngiliz Belgelerine Göre Transkafkasya'da Osmanlı-Alman Rekabeti", p. 412.

⁸⁵⁷ Erich Ludendorff, *The General Staff and Its Problems: The History of the Relations Between The High Command and the German Imperial Government as Revealed by Official Documents (volume 2)* (Freeport, N.Y., 1920), pp. 572-573; Z. A. B. Zeman, *Germany and The Revolution in Russia, 1915-1918*, pp. 134-135.

about to be defeated in the Western front, and that Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary Empire would get out of the war, in the case of the collapse of the Macedonian front. Instead they were dreaming of domination over the Arabic provinces and Caucasia⁸⁵⁸. It was written in the *Ati* newspaper dated May 8, 1918 that Russia would engage in close economic relations with Germany again in the near future⁸⁵⁹.

According to Lossow, if the Ottomans captured oil resources in Baku, the Ottoman Pashas and the upper management of the Committee of Union and Progress would become rich. For this reason, maintaining the oilfields would enable Germany to benefit from these resources easier than it would be under Ottoman control⁸⁶⁰.

As it was mentioned earlier, Russia experienced a great economic loss by the Brest-Litovsk Agreement, therefore it had to intervene in the Baku case. However it was almost impossible for the Soviet government to intervene in Baku, since the government was dealing with the counter revolution problem in Caucasia, Siberia, and South Russia. The most effective method that the Soviet government could apply was to mobilize Germany against Turkish expansion.

As the first step to develop friendly relations between Germany and Russia, Count von Mirbach, the German ambassador, came to Germany on April 23, 1918, and Joffe, the Russian ambassador, reached Berlin on April 20, 1918⁸⁶¹.

On June 28, Kaiser Wilhelm informed Bernstorff, who was in İstanbul during that time, that preparing a basis for the restoration of the Transcaucasian State was significant for Germany to control the economic resources of the whole region. Again, 4

⁸⁵⁸ Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim, Volume 1* (Istanbul, 1997), pp. 362-363.

⁸⁵⁹ Kocabaşoğlu-Berge, p. 150.

⁸⁶⁰ Pomiankowski, p. 324.

⁸⁶¹ Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918: Documents and Materials*, pp. 126-127.

days later, Ludendorff emphasized in the conference held with the Foreign Office representatives in the German General Staff that Germany required both the military power of Georgia and the oil of Baku, and that therefore the expansion of the Turks towards Baku should be hindered⁸⁶².

One of the most significant issues taken up in the Kühlmann-Ioffe meeting realized in June 29, was the Caucasian policy of the Ottoman Empire. Kühlmann stressed a possible German-Soviet cooperation, and within this framework reminded Ioffe of a Turkish threat towards Baku. According to Kühlmann, Turks had to be stooped before they reached the Caspian Sea, which would be better both for Germany and Soviet Russia. However there was also a price for that. If Germany succeeded in stopping Ottoman activities in Caucasia, it would have had the right to use the significant portion of the oil produced in Baku⁸⁶³.

Lenin, who was anxiously monitoring the Ottoman progress towards Baku, welcomed the offer proposed through Ioffe, and he explained to Stalin that this was an important chance to be able to hold Baku. In return, Stalin agreed with Lenin. Accordingly, Ioffe noted in the meeting held with Kühlman that Germany would accept the offer. Furthermore Lenin also declared that they were ready to accept Georgia as a German protectorate. Kühlman thought that Bolshevik Russia meant weak Russia, and though he supported the idea of cooperation; on the other hand Ludendorff and Count von Mirbach supported military action against Russia, and defended the restoration of Russia together with a government supporting Germany. However in the meeting held in the Royal Council, it was decided that Bolshevik Russia would anyhow fall sooner or later, and that military action was not urgently required. Lenin's answer regarding the

⁸⁶² Trumpener, p. 186.

⁸⁶³ Richard K. Debo, *Revolution and Survival: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1917- 18* (Toronto, 1979), p. 304.

Caucasia issue was also accepted. Accordingly, if required Germany could even send troops to the Caspian region in order to prevent the entry of Turks into Baku⁸⁶⁴.

In the Spa meeting held on July 2, 1918, Ludendorff indicated that Germany would be much in need of oil and raw material during the course of war, and the oil provided from Romania would be insufficient, therefore Germany should guarantee oil flow from Caucasia. Also the usage of crops obtained from Ukraine, also depended on the continuous flow of oil to Germany⁸⁶⁵. In the Spa meeting organized on July 2, 1918, it was decided that the oil to be obtained from Baku was crucially important for Germany. Therefore the German General Staff requested from Enver Pasha to cease the operation towards Baku via General von Seeckt, and on the same day Joffe indicated that they could reach an agreement with Germany on the Baku oil⁸⁶⁶.

Germany did not only develop diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia, but also used Georgia in diplomatic terms so as to prevent the Ottoman Empire to expand towards Baku. The attempt to organize the Istanbul Conference with the support of Germany is a concrete example to this.

Immediately after the Batum Agreement was signed on June 4, 1918, the Georgians brought forward the idea to organize a conference to sign a new agreement with the help of Germany in order to nullify the Batum Treaty. Kühlmann agreed with the Georgians, and decided to hold the conference in Istanbul as an answer to the Georgian note dated June 6, 1918⁸⁶⁷. The Ottoman Empire accepted that the conference would be held in Istanbul. However Ottomans also invited the Northern Caucasian States, Armenia and Azerbaijan craftily without the approval of Germany. The

⁸⁶⁴ Debo, pp. 305-308.

⁸⁶⁵ Kılıç, *Ermeni Sorunu ve Almanya*, p. 176.

⁸⁶⁶ Çolak, *Osmanlı-Alman İlişkileri Çerçevesinde Harbiye Nazırı Enver Paşa ve Türkçü Politikaları*, p. 119.

⁸⁶⁷ Serpil Sürmeli, *Türk-Gürcü İlişkileri 1918-1921* (Ankara, 2001), p. 275.

Armenian and Georgian delegations came to Istanbul on June 19. The head of the Georgian delegation was Gegechkori, and of the Armenian delegation, Aharonian⁸⁶⁸. The Azerbaijani delegation, which came to Istanbul later, was composed of significant names such as Mehmed Emin Resulzade, and Aslan Bey Sefikürdski. Halil Bey would chair the Ottoman delegation. Germany and the Austria-Hungary Empire also participated in the conference⁸⁶⁹. The main issue of the conference was the border disagreements among the Caucasian States. Georgians asserted that the Borchalu, Kazakh and Shamkhor regions, the majority of the population of which was Caucasian Turks, were their lands, while the Azerbaijanis protested this situation. Both the Armenians and Georgians requested the Kazakh region. However Kazakh was located on the single supply road of the Caucasus-Islam Army on the Karakilise-Delican road. Borchalu formed a corridor between the Azerbaijani and Ottoman borders. As understood from these requests, it was clear that the Georgians and the Armenians tried to partially prevent the Ottoman army to expand towards Baku⁸⁷⁰. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire delayed Georgia and Armenia, which came to Istanbul to sign a peace agreement in parallel with the Brest-Litovsk agreement, but never held a conference in Istanbul. After a while the representatives, who came to Istanbul for an agreement, realized the fact and left Istanbul⁸⁷¹.

Although Germany and Soviet Russia had developed good relations against the Ottoman expansion in the summer of 1918, this situation was not stable. According to the report submitted by Chicherin to the Seventh Congress of the Soviets on November 6, 1918, the relationship between the Soviet Russia and imperialist Germany had entered into a critical phase with the murder of Mirbach by a Social Revolutionist(SR) of

⁸⁶⁸ Sürmeli, *Türk-Gürcü İlişkileri*, p. 276.

⁸⁶⁹ Sürmeli, *Türk-Gürcü İlişkileri*, p. 277.

⁸⁷⁰ Sürmeli, pp. 278-282.

⁸⁷¹ Sürmeli, p. 298.

the Left in Moscow on July 6, 1918. After this murder, Germany had the opportunity to increase its impact over Soviet Russia and requested to send a battalion composed of German soldiers to Moscow for security reasons on June 14⁸⁷². However this request might even end in war. During the Mirbach crisis, the Ottoman army was at the gates of Baku. Unstable relations between the two countries prevented them from developing a common strategy against Ottoman expansion. The lack of confidence between parties helped the Ottoman army to advance towards Baku.

On the other hand, Germans also tried to prevent the Ottoman forces from entering Baku, despite the ongoing crisis with Soviet Russia. In his message dated August 4 sent to General von Seeckt to be submitted to Enver Pasha, Ludendorff indicated that if the Ottomans did not cease military action towards Baku, he would recall the German army officers serving in the Ottoman army. As a justification to this Ludendorff indicated that he did not want a new war with Russia⁸⁷³. As understood from Ludendorff's message, Germany had serious concerns on the tension between Germany and Russia, and this time military action of the Ottomans was reacted to for different reasons. Moreover Chicherin threatened Germany in August that the workers would put the oil on fire if the Ottoman army would be allowed to enter the city⁸⁷⁴.

Ludendorff was partially right in his concerns. Germany had been defeated disastrously on the Western front on August 8⁸⁷⁵. As a result of the Battle of Amiens of August 8 and 11, Germany had lost more than 75,000 soldiers⁸⁷⁶. Even Ludendorff had lost hopes⁸⁷⁷. Military victory was almost impossible and losses could only be reduced

⁸⁷² Bunyan, *Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918: Documents and Materials*, p. 128.

⁸⁷³ Mühlmann, p. 207.

⁸⁷⁴ Söylemezoğlu, pp. 129-130.

⁸⁷⁵ Barclay, p. 20.

⁸⁷⁶ Barclay, pp. 32-38.

⁸⁷⁷ Barclay, p. 40.

with an early peace process⁸⁷⁸. Ali İhsan (Sabis), commander of the 6th Army, evaluated the situation as Germany could not hold on much longer, and was obliged to make a peace agreement very soon⁸⁷⁹. However Germany's failure in the western front in July did not lead Berlin to give up its plans over Caucasia, on the contrary the Baku oil became more important for Germany⁸⁸⁰. Although the German anti-Ottoman Caucasia policy turned out to be a failure following the seizure of Baku by the British, Germans continued their uncompromising approach towards the Ottomans⁸⁸¹.

The Mirbach crisis between Germany and Russia came to end, after the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship, backing the British, took over control by a coup. After the Shaumian administration was toppled, and British soldiers entered Baku, conditions changed for Germans. When Ioffe returned to Berlin in August, Germany demanded from Russia to accept their military help for the Baku issue. However, since the Bolshevik administration including Lenin did not have any information regarding the situation in Baku, they thought that Shaumian would return to his post, so they took the offer lightly. However the Germans had already commenced activities to assault Baku. When Lenin learnt that Shaumian was imprisoned, he accepted the German offer⁸⁸².

Britain's entry into Baku also softened Germany's approach towards the Ottomans. According to the military report dated August 18, Germany now changed its harsh approach against the Baku operation of the Ottoman Empire, and started to implement a rather moderate policy. The most important reason for that was Germany preferred Ottomans to capture Baku rather than the British⁸⁸³. However at the same time Germany followed an irrational policy by stressing the issues of Armenian fugitives,

⁸⁷⁸ Barclay, p. 41.

⁸⁷⁹ Sabis, p. 285.

⁸⁸⁰ Fischer, p. 561.

⁸⁸¹ Pomiankowski, pp. 332-333.

⁸⁸² Debo, p. 348.

⁸⁸³ Artem Ohandjanian, *Österreich-Armenien, 1872-1936: Faksimilesammlung Diplomatischer Aktenstücke, V.9* (Wien, 1995), p. 7091.

status of the Three Provinces and amendments required to be realized in the Batumi Agreement⁸⁸⁴.

In the note dated August 19, 1918, submitted by the Russian representative to the German Foreign Ministry, it was indicated that the attack of the Ottoman Army towards Baku should cease. Accordingly, the German military trainees were responsible for the success of the Ottoman Army⁸⁸⁵. Again in the note sent by Chicherin to German Consul General Hauschild on August 19, 1918 he indicated that Ottoman entry into Baku would result in a disaster, and that Germany should stop the Ottoman army so as to prevent this disaster⁸⁸⁶.

Istanbul was aware that negotiations took place between Soviet Russia and Germany on the usage of oil in the mid-July⁸⁸⁷. Talks between Russia and Germany gained pace towards the end of August, and finally they reached an agreement on the Baku issue. After long discussions, the agreement was signed on August 27. The agreement known as the Supplementary Treaty for the Brest-Litovsk Agreement, was signed, when even Ludendorff thought that they were defeated⁸⁸⁸. The Supplementary Treaty was signed by Ioffe from Soviet Russia, and by von Hintze and Johannes Kriege from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to part VI of the Treaty:

1. Russia would not oppose German recognition of Georgia;
2. Germany would refuse to assist the military operations of a third power in areas beyond the borders of Georgia;
3. Germany would strive to prohibit a third power from entering Baku.

⁸⁸⁴ Ohandjanian, pp. 7092-7094.

⁸⁸⁵ Gasımov, "Bakü'nün Kurtarılması Uğruna Türk Diplomasininin Mücadelesi", p. 31.

⁸⁸⁶ Gasımov, "Bakü'nün Kurtarılması Uğruna Türk Diplomasininin Mücadelesi", p. 32.

⁸⁸⁷ ARDA, F.894, sıy.10, iş. 31, v. 2.

⁸⁸⁸ Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, pp. 623-624.

Russia would deliver to Germany either one-fourth of the petroleum tapped in Baku or a certain monthly minimum to be determined later.⁸⁸⁹

Although the Germans requested Baku at first, they gave this up in return for one fourth of the oil in Baku⁸⁹⁰. Furthermore Russia undertook to pay for the damages that resulted from the Tsarist government, and to pay 6 billion deutsche marks to Germany in return for the economic burden stemming from the Russian prisoners of war⁸⁹¹.

According to Article 13 of the Supplementary Treaty, Russia recognized Georgian independence⁸⁹². Consequently Transcaucasia was being explicitly separated from Russia.

In the 5th Article of the German-Russian treaty, it was indicated that Germans would help Russia to quash the General Alekseev upheaval. This meant that Germany and Russia together would open the Caucasian way for the Bolshevik forces; therefore Germany would have the chance to benefit from the promised oil⁸⁹³. In the letter sent to Ioffe by Hintze in August 17, he emphasized that Germany tried to move the Ottoman army out of the Baku region, and that German soldiers could also be used to clean Baku from British soldiers⁸⁹⁴. So Germans put forth their agreement with Russia to use German soldiers in Baku. As required by the Treaty signed on August 27, Germany guaranteed that Baku would be seized from the British and granted to Soviet Russia again. However as Kress von Kressenstein wrote on September 2 that such a situation was out of the question for Caucasia, and that the decisions taken by Berlin were

⁸⁸⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 222-223.

⁸⁹⁰ Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, pp. 663-664.

⁸⁹¹ Pipes, pp. 664.

⁸⁹² Gasımov, "Bakü'nün Kurtarılması Uğruna Türk Diplomasisinin Mücadelesi", p. 36.

⁸⁹³ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 229.

⁸⁹⁴ Trumpener, p. 192.

incompatible with the facts of the front⁸⁹⁵. It was impossible for Germans to stop Ottoman expansion as required by the Supplementary Treaty, because they had to concentrate military forces in the French front, where they were stuck in a difficult situation⁸⁹⁶.

IV.9. Ottoman Capture of Baku

Although the Treaty was signed between Russia and Germany on August 27, it was too late for both of them to intervene in Baku, since the Caucasus-Islam Army's last strike process had begun. On the same day, the 15th Division and a brigade from the 36th Division, moved towards Gence to reinforce the Caucasus-Islam Army⁸⁹⁷. Upon Nuri Pasha's request for reinforcement, Enver Pasha incrementally sent the 38th and 56th regiments of the 15th infantry division, the artillery units and the 106th and 107th regiments of the 36th Infantry Division to the Caucasus-Islam Army. The 15th and 5th divisions were composed of a total of 11,564 soldiers and 448 officers⁸⁹⁸. After the unsuccessful assault of August 5, the Commander of the 9th Army informed Süleyman İzzet, , that conquest of Baku had political urgency. Süleyman İzzet also thought that moving towards Baku with strong military forces would also increase the Azerbaijani morale⁸⁹⁹. The 15th Division gained war experience from the Gallipoli and Rumanian fronts, and was composed of distinguished, disciplined soldiers and artillery with machine guns, and bombs. The fire force, military equipment and trained forces were of

⁸⁹⁵ Çolak, *Alman İmparatorluğu'nun Doğu Siyaseti Çerçevesinde Kafkasya Politikası*, p. 275.

⁸⁹⁶ Gökay, "The Battle for Baku", pp. 43-44.

⁸⁹⁷ Çakmak, p. 272.

⁸⁹⁸ Yüceer, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Devleti'nin Azerbaycan'a Askeri ve Siyasi Yardımı", p. 293.

⁸⁹⁹ Süleyman İzzet, p. 25

very high quality with logistic services behind the front, arsenals, food supplies and health services⁹⁰⁰. Therefore the Caucasus-Islam Army had sufficient assault forces.

According to the report prepared by Colonel Faviell, who was in charge of the 39th Brigade, the Ottoman Army assaulted Mud Volcano in the morning on August 26 by the help of its strong military forces and artillery. The North Staffordshire Regiment, protecting the Mud Volcano, responded with machine guns and rifles. In the afternoon, it was too late too late to sustain the position. However the British soldiers defended the section so successfully that the advance of the Ottoman soldiers was brought to a halt, and as Dunsterville said, “the British soldiers saved Baku”⁹⁰¹.

During the Binegadi Hill assault on August 31, 2 British officers died, and 34 British soldiers were either killed or injured. Ottoman forces decisively attacked the Binegadi line, and were about to destroy the adversary, which did not have any reserve forces⁹⁰². During the seizure of the Binegadi Line, a total of 23 soldiers, including 3 officers, died from the Ottoman Army’s 13th regiment. Three soldiers were killed from the 29th battalion and 1 cannon was out of use⁹⁰³. As a result of the assaults that took place in August 26 and 31, British staff officers realized that native soldiers and native staff officers were not trustworthy⁹⁰⁴.

Dunsterville hoped to receive military support over Iran after the reinforcement of the Caucasus-Islam Army. However, Ottomans realized this, so they eliminated this option by advancing to Kasvin over Tabriz⁹⁰⁵.

⁹⁰⁰ Süleyman İzzet, pp. 32-34.

⁹⁰¹ Dunsterville, pp. 265-267.

⁹⁰² Dunsterville, p. 272.

⁹⁰³ Rüşti, p. 171.

⁹⁰⁴ MacDonnell, p. 262.

⁹⁰⁵ Dunsterville, pp. 256-257.

On August 31, Dunsterville decided to withdraw his forces from Baku⁹⁰⁶. World War I was about to end, so it was necessary to inflict casualties in the case of a Turkish attack. Dunsterville was very hopeless about the organizational skills of the Centro-Caspian government. Therefore he himself even organized the ships to carry the British forces out from the city⁹⁰⁷. As understood from this haste, Dunsterville expected the Ottoman occupation earlier. On the same day, the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship notified Dunsterville that the British forces could only leave the city when their own military forces leave⁹⁰⁸.

Colonel Chardigny was in Baku and they discussed how to destroy the oil production facilities and refineries together with Dunsterville, before they left the city⁹⁰⁹. According to the information submitted to the Eastern Committee of Great Britain on September 3, Baku was about to fall, and British soldiers were helpless⁹¹⁰. Then on September 11, the Eastern Committee heard that Ottomans hesitated to capture the city for unknown reasons⁹¹¹. This news shows that the British expected and anticipated Ottomans to capture the city earlier.

The Ottoman Army started shelling Baku more frequently and cannons started to hit targets, where especially British headquarters, ships and arsenals were under serious threat⁹¹².

The Ottoman Army started to attack Balahan and Zabrat on September 6. Then the Ottomans started shelling the city from the top of Çemberekent on September 7. In

⁹⁰⁶ Mitrokhin, p. 48.

⁹⁰⁷ Ellis, p. 57.

⁹⁰⁸ Dunsterville, p. 281.

⁹⁰⁹ Dunsterville, p. 260.

⁹¹⁰ Stanwood, pp. 174-175.

⁹¹¹ Stanwood, p. 176.

⁹¹² Rawlinson, p. 87.

the telegram sent to Lenin on September 10 by Sergo Ordzhonokidze⁹¹³, he indicated that Baku was helpless after this dense shelling, and Dashnaks and Mensheviks were preparing to surrender the city⁹¹⁴.

Bolsheviks also made arrangements to regain Baku from the British in September⁹¹⁵. Accordingly, Russia sent gold amounting to 250 million deutsche marks to Germany on September 10, as required by the Supplementary Treaty⁹¹⁶.

The Ottoman-German relations got worse, after Germany and Russia reached an agreement about Baku and the Ottomans became stronger in the Baku front. Talat Pasha went to Berlin on September 7 to solve the Caucasian disagreement. There, Talat Pasha was more considerate and comforted the Germans. During these talks, Germans explicitly said that they were opposed to a Muslim state in Caucasia⁹¹⁷. At the same time the Germans indicated that they would recognize Armenia. Talat Pasha presented Istanbul's proposals to the Caucasian issue against the latest German-Soviet treaty. Accordingly, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan would become buffer states against Russia; Georgia would leave a part of its land to the Ottoman Empire; Baku would be part of Azerbaijan, and 14 million Muslims living in Turkistan would be organized in military terms with German support and this force would turn into a battle force against Great Britain and Russia⁹¹⁸. However in his reply to Talat Pasha on September 12, von Hintze disagreed with all the proposals of Istanbul. Hintze requested that Ottomans should exchange places with German soldiers in Baku, and underlined that Turkistan

⁹¹³ Ordzhonokidze was Commissar for Ukraine, but took part in fighting at the Caucasus.

⁹¹⁴ Tokarzhevskii, pp. 157-158.

⁹¹⁵ Debo, p.371.

⁹¹⁶ Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 666.

⁹¹⁷ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, pp. 522-524.

⁹¹⁸ Trumpener, p. 194.

was part of Russia, therefore Ottomans should exclude Berlin from their Turkistan plans⁹¹⁹.

Germany also made preparations to capture Baku. The Caucasus forces of the German Army were composed of 214 officers and 5050 soldiers by August 20, 1918. According to Kressenstein's report dated September 4, Germany made great progress in forming the Georgian Army. As a result, 45.000 soldiers were in gear. Ludendorff insisted on a military action against Baku⁹²⁰. For Germans, Ottomans had to be prevented from acting independently without Germany.

Germany planned to control Baku by including another German battalion located in Tiflis, in the Ottoman attack. Nuri Pasha notified Abdülkerim Pasha, the Ottoman envoy residing in Tiflis, that Ottomans could not accept Germans' request⁹²¹. When Baku was under siege, Kressenstein informed Halil Pasha that a few German battalions would join the Baku attack both to capture the city and to ensure order in Baku⁹²². Instead of rejecting this fait accompli, Halil Pasha sabotaged the railway bridge at the Georgian border and cut the telegram lines, so that Kress's forces could not join the Baku attack⁹²³.

In the meeting participated by the Caucasus-Islam Army Command and the Azerbaijani Army Corps Commander on September 10, Süleyman İzzet emphasized that the 5th Division had to attack Baku at night with all its forces, and the 15th Division to attack Balacari ridges at dawn together with shelling from the east of Balacari. Then the enemy should be surrounded together with the local cavalry by an attack from Sabuncu towards Ahmedli direction, so adversaries could be taken as prisoners of war.

⁹¹⁹ Trumpener, pp. 194-195.

⁹²⁰ Mühlmann, p. 210.

⁹²¹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekati*, p. 584.

⁹²² Halil Paşa, p. 223.

⁹²³ Halil Paşa, p. 224.

The 5th Division was inside firing range located in the Caspian region. Moreover the forces defending Baku also gathered in the area of the 5th Division as a result of continuous battles. Therefore an attack to be realized from the east of Balacari could be more successful. However the army commanders did not furnish any information on how to carry out the attack⁹²⁴.

In his mandate dated September 10-11, 1918, Nuri Pasha ordered to attack in accordance with Süleyman İzzet's plan, apart from minor organizational amendments. The 15th Division cannons would play important roles in this attack⁹²⁵.

The structure of Caucasus-Islam Army on 10 September 1918 was as follows⁹²⁶:

Commander of the Army: Nuri Paşa

Head of Staff: Nazım Bey

5th Caucasus Division(9th,10th,13th Caucasus Regiments, 56th Infantry Regiment, Artillery Regiment with 33 guns): Mürsel Pasha

15th Infantry Division(38th Infantry Regiment,106th Caucasus Regiment, Artillery regiment with 12 guns,Zihni Bey detachment, Tevfik Bey detachment): Süleyman İzzet Bey

Southern Group(4th Azerbaijan Infantry Regiment,3 cavalry militia squadrons,2 mountain guns): Cemil Cahit Bey

The headquarters of the Eastern Army Group,Caucasus-Islam Army, and the 5th Caucasus Division of were located in Gözdek, while the headquarters of the 15th Infantry Division was in Binegadi⁹²⁷.

⁹²⁴ Süleyman İzzet, p. 30.

⁹²⁵ Süleyman İzzet, pp. 36-37.

⁹²⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 585. See also Appendix F.

The weather was too hot, land was sandy, and water did not taste well during the time of attack. Although water used by the Baku citizens were brought from Daghestan through pipes and then distributed to drinking fountains, water ways were blocked because of the operation. Therefore there was a serious drinking water problem for the military forces defending Baku⁹²⁸.

By the order of Süleyman İzzet, the mountain battery opened fire against Balakhani on September 12. Then a plane belonging to Baku administration bombed the positions of the 15th Division, and many soldiers were injured as a result. Following this assault, Süleyman Bey ordered shelling, but many soldiers defending the positions near Balacari died as a result of this⁹²⁹. From time to time the Baku forces assaulted Ottoman positions with air bombardement⁹³⁰.

An Arab prisoner who escaped from the Turks on September 12, told Dunsterville that the Ottoman Army would commence a huge attack on September 14. This information was very helpful for Dunsterville in terms of his withdrawal plans. The British garrison was strengthened by sending 500 soldiers and 10 machine guns. The British were advantageous during the withdrawal by the help of their telephones and planes⁹³¹.

Immediately before the September 14 assault, the number of Cento-Caspian and British forces was less than 8.000⁹³². The British forces were not more than 900⁹³³. The 39th British Brigade was in charge of defending Baku with 900 rifles⁹³⁴.

⁹²⁷ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 586.

⁹²⁸ Süleyman İzzet, p. 40.

⁹²⁹ Süleyman İzzet, pp. 38-39.

⁹³⁰ Süleyman İzzet, p. 40.

⁹³¹ Dunsterville, pp. 291-293. Colonel Rawlinson asserts that this man was an Armenian officer known by Cento-Caspian Dictatorship's Minister of War. See Rawlinson, p. 90.

⁹³² Allen-Muratoff, p. 494.

⁹³³ Dunsterville, p. 230.

⁹³⁴ Dunsterville, p. 298.

The September 14 Operation was commenced by the 5th Division of Caucasia and the 9th Caucasus Regiment attached to this Division progressed through southern part of the Şabani-Baku road, and the 56th Infantry Regiment through the northern part of this road. The severe attack to cease 2 km from Baku because mountain and field guns could not advanced due to the harsh weather conditions⁹³⁵.

Although soldiers defending Baku fought decisively against the 5th Caucasus Division and the Ottoman forces lost soldiers because of machine guns on September 14, the defending soldiers were not successful at counter-attacks and the defenders with machine guns had to go out from their barracks against the fire of the Ottoman batteries. As a result of this the 13th Regiment captured 3, and the 56th Infantry Regiment captured 5 machine guns⁹³⁶.

As a result of the Baku attack, the 38th Regiment attached to the 15th Division climbed the Balacari ridges and occupied the region by paralyzing the enemy⁹³⁷. According to the information furnished by Süleyman İzzet, the 38th Regiment captured the Balacari ridges by advancing with a small force under the protection of 4 Krupp cannons, when compared to 1600–2000 enemy soldiers with 16 machine guns and 12 field guns. However the Azerbaijani soldiers in the regiment hardly advance, since they did not have a proper training and instruction; they even had no fighting strength⁹³⁸. On the same day, the Mashtagi Platoon (Tevfik Bey) captured the Sabuncu Station. The Platoon of Zihni Bey attacked towards Ahmedli⁹³⁹.

After capturing the Balacari ridges, the 38th Regiment started to attack at dawn on September 15. Battalions attached to the 38th Regiment advanced quickly until

⁹³⁵ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 587.

⁹³⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, pp. 587-588.

⁹³⁷ Süleyman İzzet, p. 42.

⁹³⁸ Süleyman İzzet, p. 44.

⁹³⁹ *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*, p. 588.

Ermeniköy and captured some prisoners of war, 8 field, and 2 mountain guns, and 1 plane by fighting. During the fighting the Russians and Armenians defending the city panicked and ran away⁹⁴⁰. The 1st Battalion followed the enemy escaping, and started to occupy the regions dominating the Chernigorod section of Baku. However the Armenian forces located in Ahmedli rapidly moved back against the militia of the Caucasus-Islam Army and reinforced the forces in Baku, and stopped the tired regiments under Süleyman İzzet with intense fire⁹⁴¹. The Ottoman forces got closer to the city, and a car carrying the Iranian Ambassador with an Iranian flag and a white flag also came. The authorities in the car informed that a delegation composed of foreign consuls, the British commander and an envoy of Baku government would talk to the Turkish commander in the front to decide terms of surrender. Then, the Staff Officer of the 5th Division, Lieutenant Rüştü was sent to accompany the delegation⁹⁴². The messages received from the defenders notified that they would surrender after 4 o'clock. The street battles came to an end, and those defending the city started to surrender. The 38th Regiment occupied Chernigorod in Baku and took the defenders as prisoners, and collected their guns⁹⁴³. Therefore the 2nd Baku attack lasted 36 hours⁹⁴⁴. Muslims captured Baku for the first time since 1806⁹⁴⁵.

According to the information supplied by Süleyman İzzet, 6 officers and 84 soldiers died, while 12 officers and 373 soldiers were injured from the 38th and 56th regiments of the 15th Division⁹⁴⁶. The local defenders in Baku, actively resisted Ottoman

⁹⁴⁰ Süleyman İzzet, p. 45.

⁹⁴¹ Süleyman İzzet, p. 46.

⁹⁴² Belen, *Birinci Cihan Harbinde Türk Harbi: 1918 Yılı Hareketleri*, p. 183.

⁹⁴³ Süleyman İzzet, pp. 46-47.

⁹⁴⁴ Yüceer, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Devleti'nin Azerbaycan'a Askeri ve Siyasi Yardımı", p. 301.

⁹⁴⁵ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, p. 337.

⁹⁴⁶ Süleyman İzzet, p. 48.

forces on September 14, however it was too late⁹⁴⁷. Armenians decisively fought back with many losses, since they were afraid that the Ottoman-Azerbaijani forces would take revenge of the March Massacre⁹⁴⁸.

The commanders of the Baku defenders were not qualified enough to develop counter-attacks against the Caucasus-Islam Army⁹⁴⁹. The Caucasus-Islam Army did not cover the distance that they could easily cover during the course of the operation because they hesitated to advance. The British realized a successful defense with two planes, 6 armored-cars and the reinforced lines⁹⁵⁰. Machine guns and cannons were managed by the British⁹⁵¹. The number of Dunsterforce's losses was 92 during the defense of Baku⁹⁵². Dunsterville had destroyed all the armoured vehicles, mechanized carriers and the plane during the withdrawal. He only took the cannons with him, while returning to Enzeli⁹⁵³.

According to Süleyman İzzet, if the 5th Division attacked continuously, it could have captured Baku on August 1, by benefiting from the weaker situation of the defenders. The hesitation of the 5th Division, enabled defenders to reinforce their forces and to strengthen their fortifications. During this period, the Russian and Armenian platoons came to Baku via Caspian Sea, while the British soldiers came from Enzeli⁹⁵⁴

The most significant criticism forwarded by Süleyman İzzet regarding the Baku attack was allowing the enemy to escape by ships because of the mistaken operation

⁹⁴⁷ MacDonnell, pp. 264-265.

⁹⁴⁸ Süleyman İzzet, p. 57.

⁹⁴⁹ Dunsterville, p. 299.

⁹⁵⁰ Dunsterville, p. 300.

⁹⁵¹ Süleyman İzzet, p. 57.

⁹⁵² Angus Hay, "Dunsterforce: The British in Northern Persia and Baku, 1918" in *Asian Affairs*, Volume 34, Issue 3, November 2003, p. 391; For Comtois Dunsterforce's loss was 180 at the end of Baku adventure. See Comtois, p. 72.

⁹⁵³ Sareen, p. 74.

⁹⁵⁴ Süleyman İzzet, p. 52.

plan, and sustaining unnecessary battle casualties⁹⁵⁵. Accordingly, although the 5th Division was excessively reinforced, the 15th Division had only one regiment with 3 battalions, 5 Krupp cannons and militias weaker in terms of fighting strength. The 5th Division was reinforced with machine guns, and had 12 Infantry battalions and 38 cannons. Furthermore, 6 reserve battalions also reinforced the 5th Division from the back. Although the 38th regiment was a small force and occupied the Balacari ridges and fought against a larger enemy, the 5th Division, which was reinforced irrationally, could not move faster and though capture the back of the Balacari ridges, and also could not take British captures, seize arms or arsenals, but also experienced more war lossess, when compared to its power, due to its slow pace. However the Baku defenders could not benefit from this situation, since the command team was not qualified⁹⁵⁶.

Moreover although the 5th Division had more soldiers and cannons, especially the cannoneers could not completely benefit from this power, and could not provide the required cannon support to the 38th regiment⁹⁵⁷. The Caucasus-Islam Army had a serious coordination problem. For example Süleyman İzzet complained about lack of information regarding the enemy forces and the status of the army⁹⁵⁸.

Abdülhadi Bey thought that the success of the second attack resulted from rapid infantry attack supported by the cannons. Accordingly the Ottomans were even shelling the withdrawing enemy ships. Abdülhadi Bey was surprised that even the Russian women (probably they were Armenian women) defended Baku with heart and soul,

⁹⁵⁵ Süleyman İzzet, p. 53.

⁹⁵⁶ Süleyman İzzet, pp. 54-56.

⁹⁵⁷ Süleyman İzzet, pp. 56-57.

⁹⁵⁸ Süleyman İzzet, p. 59.

while the local Muslim people did not help the Ottoman Army⁹⁵⁹. Dunsterville also praised the bravery of Armenian women⁹⁶⁰.

As a result of the last Baku attack, 1151 Armenian, 383 Russian, 4 British soldiers; and 17 Armenian, 9 Russian, and 10 Georgian officers were captured. Various arms, cannons, war vehicles, and planes were seized by the Ottoman Army⁹⁶¹. Some Armenian soldiers led by General Bagratuni, escaped from Baku and reached Enzeli⁹⁶².

After occupying Baku, the Ottomans also acquired 30 million pounds of crude oil, 40 million pounds of crude petroleum, 9 million pounds of machine oil, 11 million pounds of oil, 1 million pounds of half-product raw material, and 800 thousand pounds of fuel products resources⁹⁶³.

Halil Pasha indicated that they witnessed great violence when they entered the city. Armenians tortured Muslims when they were in control of Baku. For that reason, Muslims took full revenge on the Armenians after the Ottomans captured the city, and the Ottoman Army could not stop Muslims, confessed Halil Pasha⁹⁶⁴. According to the figures of the Special Commission of the Armenian National Council, a total of 8.988 Armenians were massacred⁹⁶⁵. In the telegram sent to Enver Pasha by Nuri Pasha on September 22, he indicated that compared to the Armenian massacre realized in March, Muslim slaughter realized in Baku at the day of seizure, was nothing⁹⁶⁶.

On September 16, the Ottoman forces took control in the city and stopped the bloody events⁹⁶⁷. The Caucasus-Islam Army Command took harsh measures against

⁹⁵⁹ Arslan, pp. 22-23.

⁹⁶⁰ Dunsterville, p. 261.

⁹⁶¹ Onk, p. 11.

⁹⁶² Kazemzadeh, p. 143.

⁹⁶³ Pomiankowski, p. 335.

⁹⁶⁴ Halil Paşa, p. 227.

⁹⁶⁵ Kazemzadeh, p. 143.

⁹⁶⁶ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 236.

⁹⁶⁷ Arslanian, p. 212.

robbery, slaughter and pillage that occurred immediately after the seizure of the city, and more than 100 people, even those who were involved in such kinds of actions, were executed⁹⁶⁸. In the announcement issued by Nuri Pasha on September 18, he ordered that everybody without taking the nationality into consideration had to submit all kinds of arms except shotguns⁹⁶⁹. During the seizure process of Baku, preventing actions of pillage and massacre was already adopted as a principle at the beginning in August in the command center of the Caucasus-Islam Army⁹⁷⁰. To ensure law and order in the city, an announcement published by Nazım Bey, who was appointed as the commander of Baku, ordered that everybody had to submit their arms on September 21⁹⁷¹.

By protesting the massacre against Christians, Germany and Austria tried to find legitimate reasons to be able to send troops to Baku⁹⁷². Germans offered to send troops to Baku to ensure law and order, however Enver Pasha rejected this offer⁹⁷³.

After the seizure of Baku, the majority of the municipal committee was formed of Muslims. After the Ottoman Army entered the city, fruits such as grape, watermelon, and other products started to be sold at very reasonable prices and the people of the city experienced a considerable increase in welfare. Moreover law and order was re-established in the city⁹⁷⁴.

After the Ottomans captured Baku, Daghestan roads were open to them. So the Ottoman Army captured Daghestan on September 20, 1918, Derbent on October 5, 1918, and Petrovsk on November 8, 1918⁹⁷⁵.

⁹⁶⁸ Süleymanov, *Azerbaycan Ordusu*, p. 139.

⁹⁶⁹ ARSPİHDA, f.276, siy.7, iş.254, v.1.

⁹⁷⁰ Rüşti, p. 127.

⁹⁷¹ ARSPİHDA, f.276, siy.7, iş.255, v.1.

⁹⁷² Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 235.

⁹⁷³ Pomiankowski, p. 335.

⁹⁷⁴ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 539.

⁹⁷⁵ Koral, p. 493.

IV.10. The Aftermath

When the Ottoman Army had entered Baku, Germany was trying to survive in the Western front. Germany has nearly lost all of his resistance force during the combats in September⁹⁷⁶. This situation made both the Ottoman victory and the Russian-German agreement meaningless.

According to Lloyd George, the Baku defeat was not so important, because Dunsterforce realized its mission; it achieved to delay the Ottoman forces' entry to the city, and therefore kept the Ottomans away from the oilfields for an important period of time. It was too late for the enemies of Great Britain to use the oil in Baku, and Turkey would also be out of the First World War six weeks after the Baku battle⁹⁷⁷.

Soviet Russia reacted harshly to the Ottoman success in Baku. The leaders of Soviet Russia requested evacuation of the city⁹⁷⁸. Ioffe threatened Hintze to annul the supplementary treaty on September 16, 1918. Chicherin evaluated the situation as violation of the Soviet-German agreement of August 27. Chicherin, Commissar of Foreign Affairs, blamed Germany for not taking action to prevent Turks from entering Baku. The Berlin-Moscow treaty was about to be annulled nearly one month after signature. In the note sent to the Ottoman representatives on September 20 by Chicherin through Ioffe, he blamed the Ottomans for violating the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, and he noted that the allegation that Baku was captured by irregular units, but not by the Ottomans was not realistic⁹⁷⁹. One of the issues the Soviet Government was very

⁹⁷⁶ Barclay, pp. 42-53.

⁹⁷⁷ Lloyd George, p. 181.

⁹⁷⁸ Gürün, p. 4.

⁹⁷⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, pp. 227-228.

discontented was that the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper used words of gratitude for the capture of Baku by the Ottomans⁹⁸⁰.

In the article entitled “Turkey”, published in *Izvestia* newspaper on September 21, 1918, Karl Radek indicated that Turks intended to come to Crimea⁹⁸¹. Karl Radek also wrote that Turks might have surrendered Baku to the British, and if Baku remained under Russia, then Germany could continue to benefit from the oil in Baku. The arrangements realized in the economic benefits of the treaty also legitimized Radek’s assertions. Radek also put forward that Soviet Russia still demanded Germany’s help on this issue⁹⁸².

In the meeting between Talat Pasha, Ahmed Nesimi and Ioffe in Berlin in September 21, Talat Pasha insistently rejected the relation between the Ottomans and the Caucasus-Islam Army and Nuri Pasha⁹⁸³. However on September 22, Talat Pasha made concessions to Russia, since he thought that the war would come to an end very soon and Germany did not support them. He guaranteed to Russia that Baku problem would be solved⁹⁸⁴.

After those events, a secret protocol was signed between Germany and the Ottoman Empire on September 23⁹⁸⁵. Accordingly, the Ottoman Empire would withdraw from Caucasia and leave Baku to Germany. In return, Berlin would provide oil to the Ottomans and try to convince the Soviet Government to recognize Armenia and Azerbaijan. However it was hard to expect from the Soviet government to accept

⁹⁸⁰ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 550.

⁹⁸¹ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 553.

⁹⁸² Yerasimos, pp. 30-31.

⁹⁸³ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p.554.

⁹⁸⁴ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, pp.554-555.

⁹⁸⁵ Mühlmann, p. 212.

this offer at a time which Mesopotamia and the Balkan fronts collapsed, and the Ottomans had to transfer their soldiers from Caucasia⁹⁸⁶.

In the meeting of September 24, Ioffe notified that the Ottomans had to surrender Baku to Soviet authorities; in response, Talat Pasha indicated that they would not interfere with the internal affairs of the Azerbaijan Republic⁹⁸⁷.

Remzi Pasha, who was the Ottomans' official responsible for the situation of Ottoman prisoners of war, talked with Chicherin before going to Berlin from Moscow towards the end of September. In this meeting, Chicherin told Remzi Pasha that the Soviet government would help the Ottomans through Azerbaijan, if they were in need of oil⁹⁸⁸. According to the telegram sent to Babiali by Rifat Bey, Ambassador from Berlin, on September 29, Russians stopped to return Ottoman prisoners of war until the Baku issue was solved⁹⁸⁹.

On October 3, Talat Pasha informed that the Ottoman Government ordered its soldiers to withdraw to the determined borders as indicated in the Brest-Litovsk Agreement⁹⁹⁰. However, Talat Pasha also emphasized that Baku would not be surrendered to Russians, and that the Bolshevik government had to give self-determination right to the Caucasian people⁹⁹¹.

The Ottoman Empire was seeking negotiation with the Soviet government so as to prevent a possible Soviet assault to Azerbaijan. Despite the efforts exerted by Talat Pasha and Hintze, Moscow was determined that Caucasia had to be surrendered to Russia. In the message sent to Ioffe by Lenin on October 7, he ordered that any

⁹⁸⁶ Debo, pp. 371-372.

⁹⁸⁷ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 555.

⁹⁸⁸ Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, p. 557.

⁹⁸⁹ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, p. 243.

⁹⁹⁰ Gasımov, "Bakü'nün Kurtarılması Uğruna Türk Diplomasininin Mücadelesi", pp. 53.

⁹⁹¹ Gasımov, pp. 53-54.

agreement, which did not require Baku to be surrendered to Russia, could not be signed⁹⁹².

According to the note sent by Chicherin to Nesimi Bey on October 10, he claimed that the Ottoman Empire had broken the provisions of the Brest Litovsk Agreement with the military operation to Caucasia, and therefore demanded that all Transcaucasian territory, as recognized by Germany, till the Georgia border should be surrendered to Russia, the Ottoman officers including soldiers and teachers should be recalled from Caucasia, and the Brest-Litovsk Agreement should be in effect again⁹⁹³.

In fact all diplomatic actions were meaningless due to the situation in the front. It was possible that the commander of the Entente forces in the Thessalonica Front, Franchet d'Esperey would attack Istanbul⁹⁹⁴. In the Battle of Megiddo, British Forces under the command of Edmund Allenby had severely defeated the Ottoman Army on October 1 and captured Damascus. This victory had changed everything. The collapse of the Ottoman army completely washed away the fears of Great Britain⁹⁹⁵.

In the press meeting organized at the beginning of October after his return from Berlin, Talat Pasha noted that they had eliminated all problems regarding the Caucasian issue. However in the meeting that he held with Ahmed Emin Bey (Yalman) immediately after the press meeting, Talat Pasha admitted that they lost the war and everything was over⁹⁹⁶. The only significance of the capture of Baku was that it was the last Ottoman victory. The Empire gradually began to wait its own end, which started with the Mondros Armistice Agreement signed on October 30, 1918. Despite all of his efforts after escaping abroad, Enver Pasha could never take command of military power

⁹⁹² Debo, p. 372.

⁹⁹³ Gasimov, "Bakü'nün Kurtarılması Uğruna Türk Diplomasisinin Mücadelesi", p. 54.

⁹⁹⁴ Sabis, p. 291.

⁹⁹⁵ Stanwood, pp. 180-181.

⁹⁹⁶ Yalman, p. 368.

that was settled in Caucasia both for expansionist and defensive purposes in the East⁹⁹⁷. But despite the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Baku's surrender to Great Britain, and Bolsheviks' establishment of dominance in the *Turan* geography step by step, Enver Pasha and his followers continued the adventure after the Baku expedition to realize the Samarkand dream as Malraux portrays in his work:

-What the hell is he (Enver Pasha) interested in, then?"

-Ottomanism, the union of all Turks throughout Central Asia from Adrianople to the Chinese oases on the Silk Trade Route. Nations are born, here as much as anywhere else; we shall not prevent the existence of Greece or Serbia. The point is to go ahead; then, once an acceptable peace has ensured us the Turkish provinces of Europe, to let our old Christian provinces go to hell and, instead of dreaming of a ridiculous Republic of Constantinople, to put in its place the Young Turk Empire, with Samarkand as the capital.⁹⁹⁸

⁹⁹⁷ Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Moskova Hatıraları* (İstanbul, 1955), pp. 7-8.

⁹⁹⁸ Andre Malraux, *The Walnut Trees of Altenburg* (Chicago, 1992), pp. 48-49

CHAPTER V:

CONCLUSION

The feeling of national isolation, experienced during the Balkan War, reflected frequently by Ömer Seyfettin in his stories, moved the Ottoman statesmen towards a geostrategic expansion centered on the identity of Turkishness under the leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress.

The advocates of “Turan” ideal had selected Russia as the main theater of expansionist policies. The aim was to unite with the brothers outside. *Turan* started in the Caucasus and extended to Central Asia. The only way to realize the *Turan* ideal was to defeat Russia. It was possible to compensate the lands lost by the Ottoman Empire in the Arab provinces by dominating the geographical area on which “Turks” lived.

From this perspective the Russian Revolution created a historical opportunity for the Ottoman Empire to exploit the ethnic and geographical conflicts to its own advantage. Shift of the optimistic approach of the Ottoman public opinion towards Soviet Russia to the opposite, provided a suitable political atmosphere to those, who were in favor of expansion like Enver Pasha to realize their own plans. It was inevitable for the Ottomans that Russia would revive as a strong state even under the identity of a communist regime. Therefore the Ottomans planned to establish an independent Muslim

buffer state before the resurgence of Russia. The Ottoman Government in Istanbul had decided to establish a Muslim state in Caucasia and the Baku operation was the vital part of this plan.

At this point, one should emphasize the importance of the role of Enver Pasha in the Caucasia expedition. After the disastrous defeat in Sarıkamış, the Ottomans never fully concentrated their forces on the Caucasus front. Enver Pasha's main target was to launch an attack in Mesopotamia until the military offensive in Caucasia in 1918. Enver Pasha's interest in the Caucasus front rather than Mesopotamia, which had a strategic priority, could be explained by his imagination always on alert, consequently by his faith on Turan ideal.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, Enver Pasha became more optimistic about Caucasian Muslims and success of the Caucasian operation. One should also stress the negative effects of the Turkish-Muslim intellectuals from Russia after the February Revolution on Enver Pasha as the reasons of Enver's optimism. Within this framework the dialogue between Naki Bey (Keykurun), coming from Azerbaijan and Enver Pasha is striking:

“...Enver Pasha greeted me and said “The explanation you made yesterday made me very happy. I am still very happy and joyful. The militias, which have not been properly trained in military, were such an incredible body and invincible force.” I immediately replied “Yes, Sir, this miracle was created by the Turkish nation. Sir, my explanation was about the Azerbaijani Turks. There are 35 million Turkic and Muslim people living in Russia. These are Turkistan, Idil,

Ural, Crimea, North Caucasia and others. Those Turkish peoples had driven Russians away from their lands”⁹⁹⁹

After Tsarist Russia collapsed, non-Russians started to demand their independence and autonomy. As also indicated by Nadir Devlet, the Russian Turks could not use the opportunities or benefit from the chances arising from the political environment of the February Revolution. The most important reason for this was that national consciousness not sufficiently developed¹⁰⁰⁰. Musavatists, Socialists and supporters of the *Himmet Party* were against total dependency on the Ottomans in Azerbaijan. However the Azerbaijani politicians and the intellectuals saw that the only way to solve their problems was the Ottoman intervention. It was impossible for Muslims, who were close to Turkey, and for the Georgians and Armenians, who favored Russia to achieve political stability under a single state. Because of the confidentiality created by the oppression and censorship policies under the Russian imperial administration, ethnic conflicts and struggle for hegemony played on Caucasia by the great powers, Caucasia became a region, which was open to the destructive effects of gossips and rumours¹⁰⁰¹. For that reason, it was inevitable for Baku to experience an ethnic conflict that resulted from the rivalry between the Great Powers, revolutionary forces and ethnic groups.

The Ottomans would take the opportunity to transfer their military power to Caucasia under suitable conditions first with the help of Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty. It was Enver Pasha who insisted to recover the borders of 1877 in Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference. He undertook every possible initiative to accomplish this purpose. He informed Germany through General von Lossow and their Ambassador in Istanbul Graf

⁹⁹⁹ Keykurun, p. 69.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Devlet, p. 268.

¹⁰⁰¹ Smith, p. 222.

von Bernstorff about Ottoman plans on Eastern Anatolia and Caucasia. He produced strategies after he had observed the general tendencies in his dealings with military and political circles¹⁰⁰².

The Ottoman Empire had a cleverly planned policy on Caucasia operation. First, the Ottomans would seek the support of Germany against Russia in order to be able to re-take Kars-Ardahan-Batum. When Kars-Ardahan-Batum would be handed over the Ottomans, then the bases for an advanced operation in Caucasia would be at hand and the borders of 1877-1878 would be restored. When the Caucasian operation would progress into an active phase, conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijani Turks would be exploited. As a rule, in Caucasia, all politics were shaped according to ethnicity.

While the Ottomans were building their expansion strategy over Caucasia, Bolsheviks were building their own to claim the geographical heritage of Russia. The local resources of raw material, the region's strategic position regarding the Ottomans and Iran and the strategic importance of Transcaucasia route already caused a very clear Russian interest on Caucasia¹⁰⁰³; it was very obvious that the Bolsheviks had their Caucasia policy built in accordance with the classical geopolitics of Russia because the Tsarist Russia's collapse did not mean the collapse of the Heartland called Russia. The Bolsheviks were small in number, therefore the majority principle had no use for them in the power struggle. But they seemed to be the most important alternative able to govern the new Russia because of their characteristics of powerful will, patient leadership, clear planning and the ability to mobilize and use the armed forces efficiently.

¹⁰⁰² Kılıç, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerinin Doğuşu: Brest-Litovsk Barışı ve Müzakereleri*, p. 124.

¹⁰⁰³ Swietochowski, p. 21.

The Turkish Armenia Decree issued by Bolsheviks during the Brest-Litovsk Conference was exactly a counter-demand against Ottoman demands on the Caucasian Front. The Armenian Decree has shown that the Bolsheviks' standing was not friendly towards the Ottomans and they were maintaining the same objectives as the Tsarist regime regarding the Armenians. The Bolsheviks were arming the Armenians and in that way they were delaying the advance of the Ottoman forces in Eastern Anatolia. The objective here was to gain control of Caucasia before the Ottomans. The Muslims were the majority population in Caucasia and Bolsheviks' sceptical approach towards the Muslims was effective in their decision to exploit Armenians. While Bolsheviks did not accept Azerbaijan's autonomy, they championed Armenian autonomy on Turkish territory as can be understood by the Turkish Armenian Decree. As a result of this document there was considerable improvement in the relations between Dashnaks and Bolsheviks. The parallelism between the facts that Shaumian had built an army composed of Armenians in Caucasia and that the Decree No:13 had remained in force for a period under Bolsheviks showed that the Bolsheviks were close to the idea of building a powerful Armenia under their control in Caucasia and Eastern Anatolia. The idea of an Armenian militia and that Shaumian has elected to rely on the armed forces with majority Armenians are both consistent. The document as the base of Shaumian's military strategy in the Caucasus is principally the Turkish Armenian Decree No:13. It had been announced during the negotiations of Brest-Litovsk, and such an announcement has been forcing Ottomans to be aggressive against Soviet Russia. In that way the Decree No:13 was a serious strategical mistake of Soviet Russia.

The reluctance of Bolsheviks to retire from Eastern Anatolia and The Decree on Turkish Armenia had increased the support of Ottoman statesmen for an offensive policy. The success of Brest-Litovsk and the weakness of Bolsheviks in Caucasia paved

the way for the Ottoman government into being aggressive as the elements increasing the chance of success for an offensive foreign policy towards Caucasia. By inviting the Transcaucasian Government to Brest-Litovsk, the Ottomans were planning to create a buffer state between themselves and Russia and to guarantee the status of independence of Transcaucasia from Russia by making the Great Powers to accept this independence. The Transcaucasian Commisariat did not agree with the invitation of Ottoman Empire to Brest-Litovsk and they missed the chance of being recognised by Great Powers; therefore they became totally defenseless against the military campaign of Ottomans in later periods. As a state without being subject to the new Russia they stood alone against the Central Powers. In their negotiations with the Ottomans the Transcaucasians had built their strategy upon subjection to Russia. But their decision was a great strategic mistake. That's why they could not attend the the Brest-Litovsk negotiations and missed the opportunity to obtain German support against Ottomans.

During the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, by taking advantage of the political environment the Ottoman Empire would start a military operation in Caucasia to regain the territories they lost during World War I by military force against the refusal of the Bolsheviks and the defense of Armenian national regiments. The Ottomans would make a quick advance and take Erzurum on 12th of March and thus end the Great Armenia dream for which the Armenians had sacrificed so much.

The quick advance of Ottomans in Eastern Anatolia would cause the increase of tension in Baku. Against the increasing threat posed by Musavatists, Shaumian would put his civil war strategy on to establish an absolute domination in Caucasia. Shaumian would use Muslim nationalists' intention of making Baku the capital of Azerbaijan as a pretext to his civil war strategy¹⁰⁰⁴. During and after the March Events, the Bolshevik-

¹⁰⁰⁴ Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918*, pp. 208-211.

Dashnak coalition would organize massacres on Muslim people in Baku and the regions like Guba and Shemakhi. The idea of annexation by the Ottomans had never been approved by a majority among the Muslim political groups in Caucasia. What Caucasian Muslims wanted was the creation of a federal democratic Russia. But the Bolsheviks chose the civil war option against a political power they would never been able to dissolve like they did in Russia with the slogan “all power to soviets”, therefore this atmosphere of conflict in Caucasia brought the call for help of local Muslims to Ottomans as anticipated by Enver Pasha. The ethnic violence applied to the Muslims in Muslim-Turkic territory in Caucasia provided Ottomans the opportunity of intervention to this territory.

Despite the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, the Ottomans fought and took back the territories that had to be peacefully evacuated and surrendered to themselves. The fact that the Ottomans had casualties in recovering the territories would cause them not to be content with the restoration of 1877-1878 borders. The operation would officially go beyond the Brest-Litovsk limits and alter the status of Caucasia following an Ottoman-Armenian lasting three weeks.

The rights acquired through the Batum Treaty would provide Ottomans great advantages for an assault they would launch on Caucasia. Armenia became a small country after the Batum Agreement. In that way the Ottomans, before an operation against Baku, ensured the security at the rear front by reducing Armenia to a weak state.

The Republic of Azerbaijan appeared to be the first democratic republic in the Turkish-Islam History thanks to the Batum Treaty. A national ideal that the Bolshevik-Dashnak coalition have tried to destroy, was then coming to life as a democratic and national state.

The foundation of independent states in Caucasia was the important success of Ottoman diplomatic and military strategy. Naturally the Bolsheviks were not pleased of such a move on the part of Transcaucasians. Stalin believed that the independence of Tiflis Mensheviks would inevitably turn into a dependence on Turks and Germans¹⁰⁰⁵, and time would testify to this. Georgia would be vassal of Germany and Azerbaijan of Turkey.

At the time when the Ottomans signed the Batum Treaty, the Bolshevik-Dashnak coalition in Baku launched a military operation to realize its domination plan over Caucasia through armed force, and invaded Shamakhi in the north, and came to the gates of Kürdemir in the south. The Azerbaijani Government residing at Gence at the time faced the threat of annihilation. In this situation Ottomans used the rights given by the Batum Treaty and sent their military power to Azerbaijan.

Enver Pasha had already established the Caucasus-Islam Army, and equipped this army with a considerable military force. However the Ottomans did not receive anything in return even though they have dedicated all the military support to Caucasian Muslims. In fact that should not have surprised the Ottomans. While the intellectuals in Azerbaijan were taught in the Russian education system, they were getting familiar with some Western ideas like nationalism. But that was not the case for ordinary people. They were passive and unconscious of an urgent militarization project. There were a good number of Azerbaijani officers in the Russian Imperial Army, but in general the Azerbaijani people were not used to fight. The passive behaviour of South Caucasian Muslims was very well known even during the Crimean War.

The pacification of Azerbaijani political leaders by Ottomans to make it a vassal had caused a serious crisis between the two states. But the situation at the front

¹⁰⁰⁵ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, p. 172.

prevented the crisis to deepen. Baku Sovnarkom's Caucasus Red Army had some successes at the beginning but following famine and some political strife it would nearly disintegrate before the Caucasus-Islam Army which was also facing serious problems. This disintegration would bring the end of Bolshevik domination in Baku and by the end of July, Baku would be controlled by the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship.

The most important move of the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship during their control of the city was their invitation of the British to Baku. Britain was looking for means of increasing its influence on the old geography of Russia when the latter was left out of action. Transcaucasia had a central meaning for such intentions. However Britain's operations towards Transcaucasia were not presented as an imperial expansion but actions to prevent the German-Turkish threat against India¹⁰⁰⁶. The British Government was displaying constant indecisiveness regarding the Caucasian intervention plan. At the beginning they wanted to mobilize the Armenian force, but recognised that this would be useless. Then they sent Dunsterforce from Iran to Baku but the mission has turned out to be a strange adventure in history. The role of the small force under Dunsterville in delaying the capture of Baku by the Ottomans remained controversial. This force displayed some successes during the engagements of August 26th and 31st but they did not have any serious impact on the events other than improving the spirit of the city defenders when they heard that British soldiers would join the Baku defences at the beginning of August.

The unstoppable advance of Ottomans in Caucasia had forced the Bolsheviks to seek cooperation with the Germans. The Bolsheviks and Germans intended to stop the Ottoman advance. But they were not able to do it on their own. The main concern of

¹⁰⁰⁶ Mitrokhin, p. 27.

both parties was Baku and their common target was to protect Baku against Ottoman invasion. Therefore they partially united their forces against the Ottomans.

Enver Pasha believed that the Caucasian assault would serve the victory of Central Forces. But in this case Germany was an intervening power, not an ally¹⁰⁰⁷. At the beginning Germany supported the Pan-Turkist policies of Enver Pasha. But following the collapse of Tsarist Russia, Germany was guided by the principle of controlling the resources without sharing them and continued its uncompromising behaviour towards the Ottomans at times even when it was in serious difficulties on the Western Front. Seeckt believed towards the end of the War that German activities in Turkey were disastrous; the main cause for this was the activities of the German Foreign Ministry and German office in Turkey against each other and the lack of interchange of intelligence with the Turks. According to him, the preference of Turks in contacting the Germans in Berlin instead of those in İstanbul offices indicated well the weakness of these German offices¹⁰⁰⁸. Fears like the possibility of Baku oil to be burnt by Baku defenders and Russia's re-entering to the War could make the attitude of Germany towards Ottomans reasonable. But the move of Germany to conquer the resources of Caucasia through Georgia and the aggressive behaviour assumed by Germany during the Mirbach crisis display Berlin's contradictions.

The Ottoman-German conflict in Caucasia requires to review claims that Enver Pasha was in favor of Germany. Despite Germany's opposition, Enver Pasha sent a powerful military force to the Caucasian expedition; moreover he even dared to engage in a battle with Germany to realize his plans. The transfer of soldiers from Syria and Mesopotamia fronts, accelerated defeat, since these fronts were desperately in need of

¹⁰⁰⁷ İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Alman Nüfuzu* (İstanbul, 1983), p. 139.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Kurat, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında Türkiye'de bulunan Alman Generallerinin Raporları*, pp. 65-67.

military forces; however this action might also show how Enver Pasha was decisive in realizing the Pan-Turkism ideal¹⁰⁰⁹.

Baku's fall means the fall of the most important Bolshevik base in Transcaucasia. After Baku was captured by the Ottomans, Bolsheviks would have to struggle for two more years to dominate over Transcaucasia.

The last victory of the Ottomans came to end with the Mondros Armistice Treaty. The effects of the Ottoman success lasted too short when evaluated in terms of Ottoman aims; which makes the Baku affair an odd military-geopolitical attempt. Enver Pasha always showed serious political weaknesses during the strategic processes, while he was always alert when it came to tactics. He made a serious strategic mistake by using a huge military force in the Caucasus adventure at the end of the war, although the Ottoman Empire was under the threat of occupation from the North and South. Enver Pasha's overconfidence on the Turks living outside of Anatolia was the most important reason of his individual psychology regarding his policy which eventually proved to be an adventure.

When the targets are taken into consideration, the Baku expedition of the Caucasus-Islam Army was far from a victory. The Ottoman Empire obtained no important gains but lost financial resources and human power as a result of this operation. However the historical actions cannot be evaluated only by comparing the rate of success in the realization of aims. Historical actions may create both intended consequences and unintended ones. Within this framework when the unintended consequences are evaluated, the Baku expedition gave rise to several incidents. At first, further Dashnak atrocity towards Muslims was hindered. The Azerbaijanis also regained

¹⁰⁰⁹ Landau, p. 54.

their capital city as a result of the Ottoman Army's Caucasian operation, and Baku has become the capital city of the Republic of Azerbaijan since September 1918.

When Caucasia was on the agenda, the Bolsheviks, who relied on the traditional nationalism policy of Russia, had lost their trust on Armenian nationalism, those who left Russia alone as a result of panic came with the advance of the Ottoman Army. Bolsheviks had learnt from the disasters stemming from the conflicts arising among different groups, and implemented a more balanced policy of nationalism. Moreover they also changed their negative approach to the Muslim-Turkic people living in Caucasia.

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APPENDIX A

STAFF OF CAUCASUS-ISLAM ARMY¹⁰¹⁰

Commander of Caucasus Islam Army-Nuri Pasha

Army of Islam's Chief of Staff- Major Mehmet Nazım

Chief aide-de-camp of General Staff- Lieutenant Colonel Edip

Aide-de-camp of General Staff- First Lieutenant Asaf(Kılıç Ali)

General Staff Officer of Army of Islam- First Lieutenant Muzaffer(Tuğsavul)

Director of Action Office- Major Tevfik(Bıyıklıoğlu)

General Staff Officer of Army of Islam-Major Naim

Army of Islam's Artillery Inspector-Major Kemal(Doğan)

Army of Islam's Inspector of Communications Zone- Lieutenant Colonel Şefik

Political Consultant-Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey

5th Caucasus Division

Commander of 5th Caucasus Division-Mürsel Pasha

5th Caucasus Division's Chief of Staff- Lieutenant Rüşti

Commander of 9th Caucasus Regiment- Lieutenant Cemil Cahit(Toydemir)

Commander of 10th Caucasus Regiment- Lieutenant Colonel Osman

Commander of 13th Caucasus Regiment- Lieutenant Colonel Ahmet Rıza

Commander of 2th Cavalry Regiment- Major Zihni

Commander of Caucasus Artillery Regiment- Major Abdullah

¹⁰¹⁰ Excerpt from İsmet Görgülü's *On Yıllık Harbin Kadrosu, 1912-1922: Balkan-Birinci Dünya ve İstiklal Harbi* (Ankara, 1993), pp. 128-129.

15th Division

Commander of 15th Division- Lieutenant Colonel Süleyman İzzet

15th Division's Chief of Staff- Lieutenant İhsan

Commander of 38th Regiment-Lieutenant Selim

Commander of 56th Regiment- Major Fehmi(Tınaz)

Commander of 15th Artillery Regiment- Major Süleyman Avni

Commander of 107th Regiment- Lieutenant Colonel Fazlı

Commander of 107th Regiment- Major Adil

Azerbaijan Army Corps

Commander of Azerbaijan Army Corps- Ali Aga Han Shihlinski

Northern Group Commander- Honorary Colonel Osman

Commander of Arkaz Group- Alihazade Kayıtmaz

Commander of Gümrü(Aleksandropol) Group- Colonel Mehmet

Commander of Salyan Detachment- Major Ahmet Hamdi

Commander of Mususli Detachment- Lieutenant Colonel Habib Selimov

Commander of Nuha-Zakatali District- Colonel Yusuf

Commander of Geokchai Detachment- Major Recep

Commander of Mestaghi Detachment- Lieutenant Colonel Hasan

Commander of Mestaghi Station- Major Tevfik

Commander of Gence Militia- Lieutenant Hakkı

Commander of Tevfik Bey Detachment-Major Tevfik

Commander of Karayazi Cavalry Regiment- Lieutenant Colonel Nuh

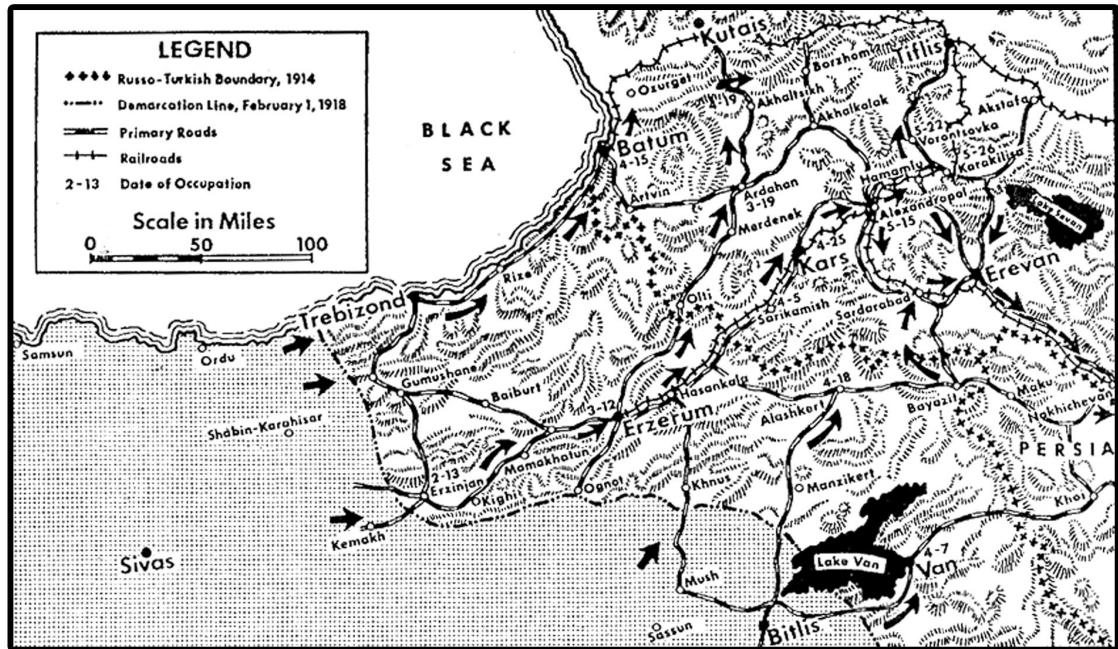
Commander of Cavalry Regiment- Major Zihni

Commander of Lezgi Cavalry Regiment- Lieutenant Colonel Husrev Mirza Kachar

Commander of Hachmaz Detachment- Lieutenant Colonel Saadettin

Commander of Kazakh Point –Lieutenant Colonel Kemal

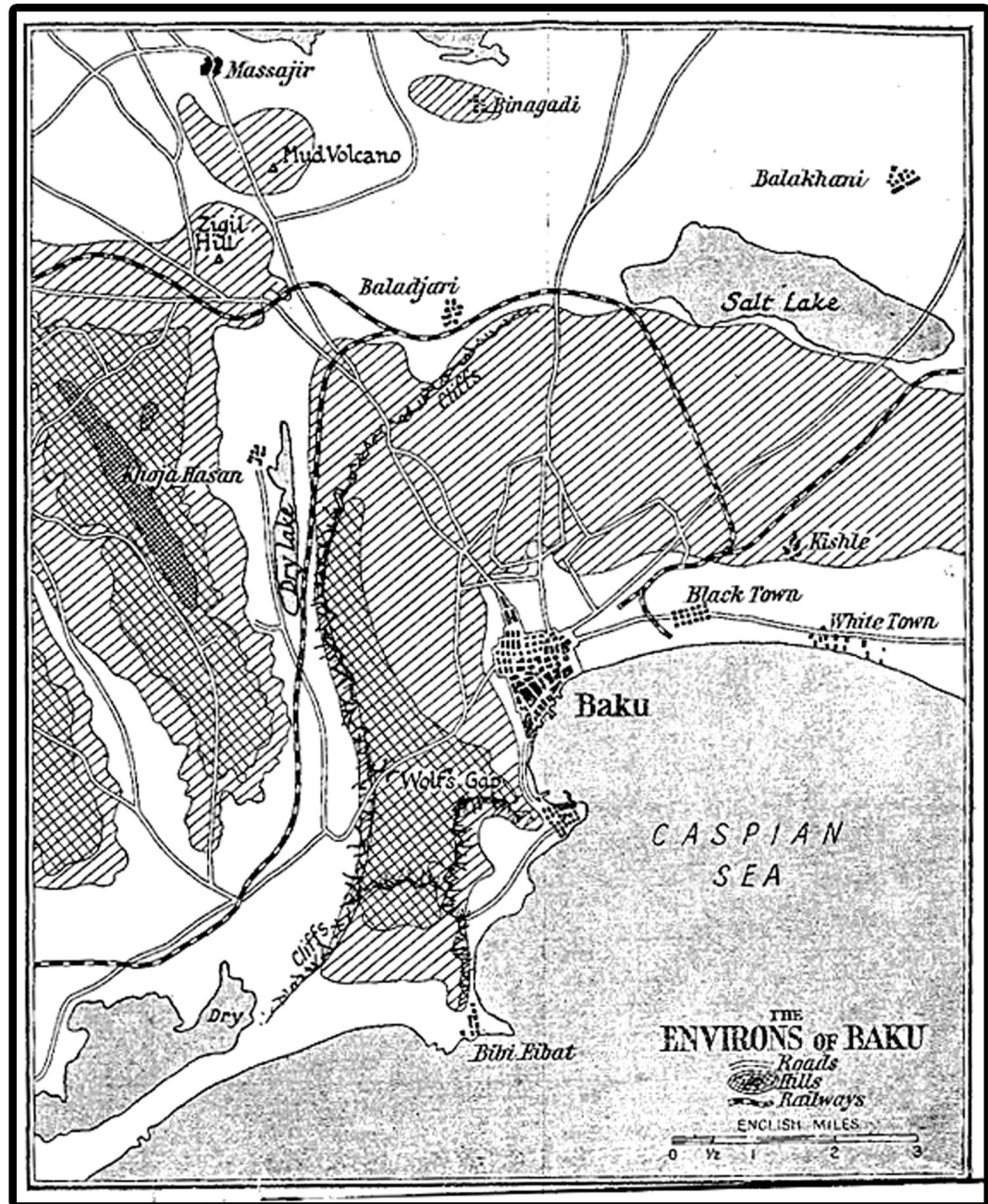
APPENDIX B



OTTOMAN OFFENSIVE ON CAUCASIA(1918)¹⁰¹¹

¹⁰¹¹ Excerpt from Richard G. Hovannisian's *The Republic of Armenia, v.1 The First Year, 1918-1919*.

APPENDIX D



MAP OF BAKU(1918)¹⁰¹²

¹⁰¹² Excerpt from Lionel Dunsterville's *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*.

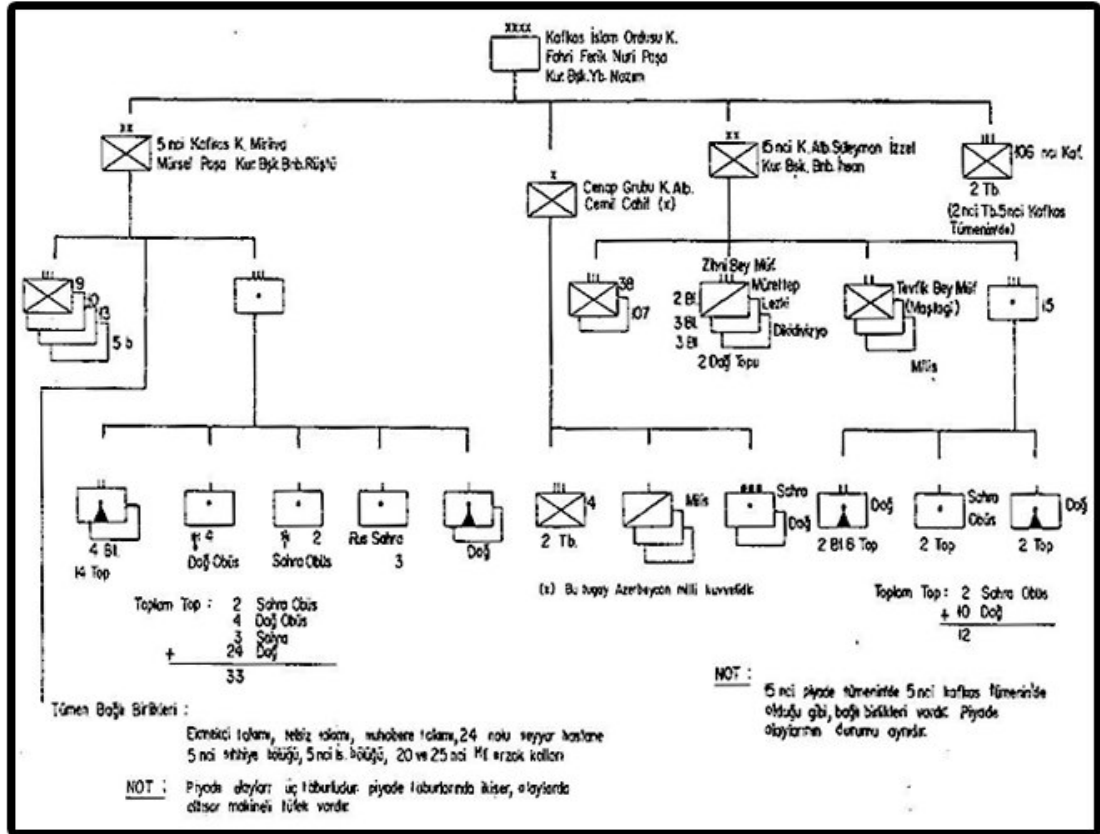
APPENDIX E



ADMINISTRATIVE SUBDIVISIONS OF TRANSCAUCASIA¹⁰¹³

¹⁰¹³ Excerpt from Richard G. Hovannisian's *The Republic of Armenia, v.1 The First Year, 1918-1919*.

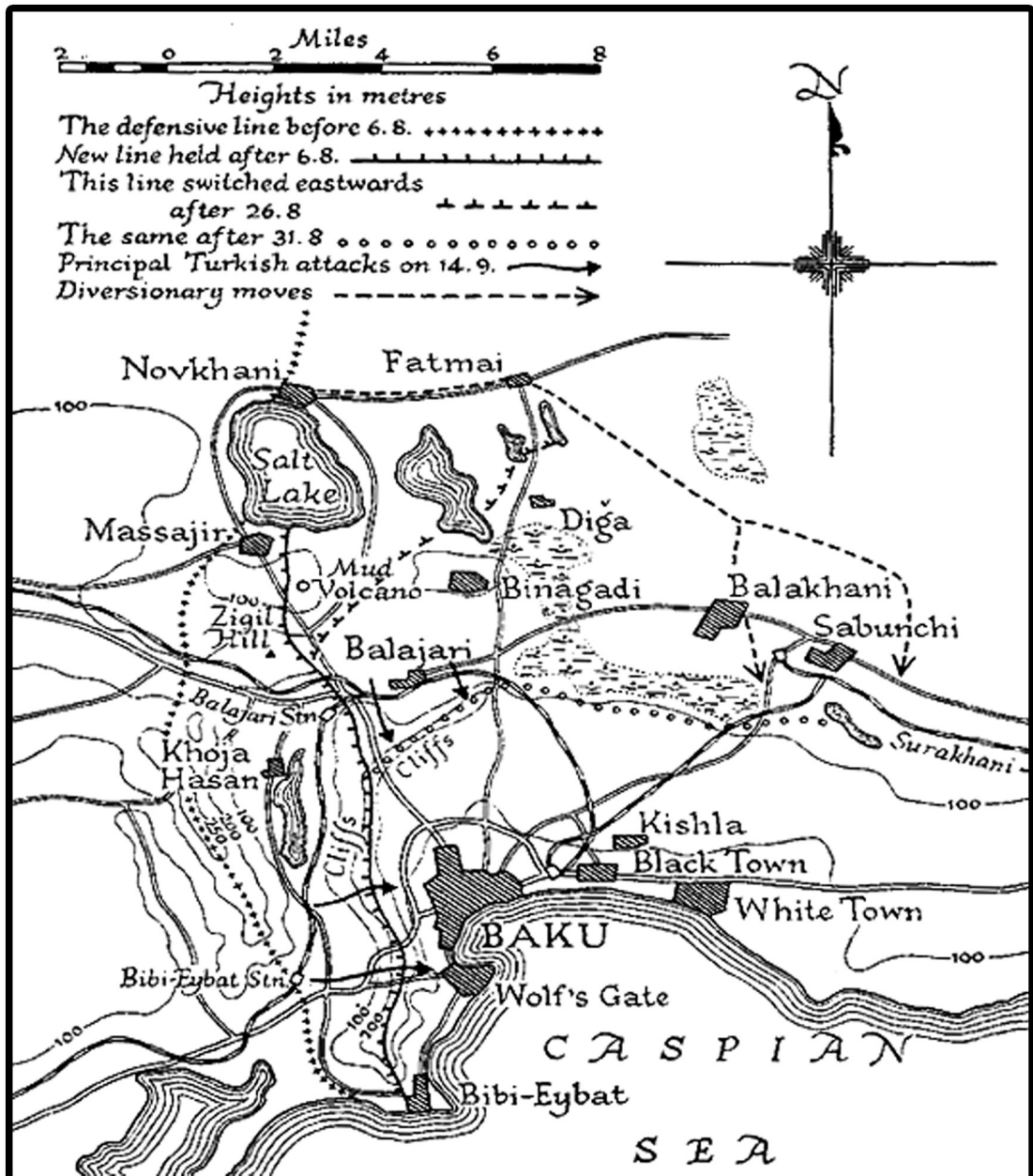
APPENDIX F



FORMATION OF CAUCASUS-ISLAM ARMY BEFORE SEPTEMBER 14 ATTACK¹⁰¹⁴

¹⁰¹⁴ Excerpt from *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Üçüncü Ordu Harekatı*. Ankara: T.C. Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, 1993.

APPENDIX G



THE OTTOMAN ASSAULT ON SEPTEMBER, 14, 1918¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰¹⁵ Excerpt from Allen and Muratoff's *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of The Wars on The Turco-Caucasian Border 1828-1921*

APPENDIX H



NURİ PASHA



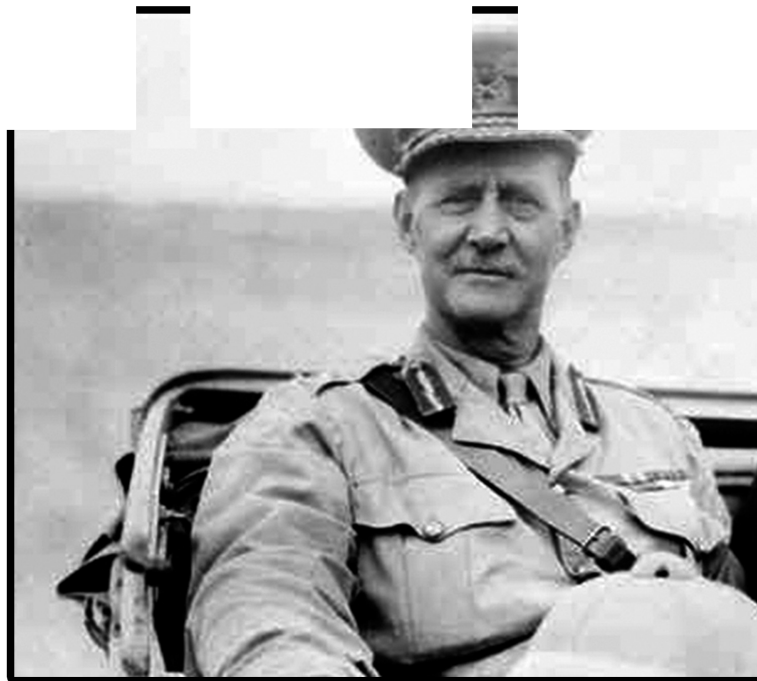
MEHMED EMİN
RESULZADE



FETHALİ HAN
HOYSKİ



STEPAN
SHAUMIAN



LIONEL DUNSTERVILLE

APPENDIX I



ENVER PASHA