

**Andro Kacharava**  
**Alexander Daushvili**

***The Democratic Republic of Georgia:  
Struggle for Independence  
1918-1921***

*The book transcribes in a **popular form** the creation of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, its political development, its domestic and foreign politics, and the fascinating and dramatic story of fight for freedom and independence.*

*The book is intended for readers interested in history of Georgia.*

***This book is dedicated to the memory  
of those who fought for the  
independence of Georgia***

# Contents

<b>Foreword.....</b>	<b>6</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 1. Preconditions .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Georgia's Aspiration to Freedom and Independence XIX-XX cc. ....	7
Social Democracy and Georgia .....	8
 <b>CHAPTER 2. Independent Once Again!.....</b>	<b>8</b>
World War I and Georgia .....	8
The February Revolution in Russia .....	8
Independent Transcaucasia .....	9
Declaring Georgia's Independence .....	10
 <b>CHAPTER 3. Political Life .....</b>	<b>11</b>
The Ruling Party .....	11
Socialist-Federalist Party .....	12
Socialist-Revolutionary Party .....	12
National-Democratic Party .....	12
The Bolsheviks .....	13
Constituent Assembly .....	13
The Degree of Democracy .....	14
 <b>CHAPTER 4. Internal Politics of the Democratic Republic of Georgia ...</b>	<b>15</b>
The Building of a New Georgian State .....	15
Committees .....	16
Local Government .....	16
Judicial System .....	16
Militsiya (Police).....	18
National Guard .....	18
Georgian Army.....	19
Georgian 'Vendee' .....	20
Agrarian Reforms .....	21
Worker Relations and Production .....	22
The Bourgeoisie .....	24
The Nobility .....	24
Church and State .....	24
Education and Culture .....	25
State of Affairs .....	26
Inter-Ethnic Relations.....	26

<b>CHAPTER 5. Foreign Policies of the Democratic Republic of Georgia ...</b>	<b>34</b>
Transcaucasia and World Politics .....	34
Relations with Germany.....	34
Relations with Turkey .....	37
British Politics in Southern Caucasus .....	38
Peculiarities of US-Georgia Relations .....	41
Georgia-Armenian Conflict .....	41
Independent Georgia and Azerbaijan .....	44
White Russia and Independent Georgia.....	46
Hopes of International Recognition.....	46
 <b>CHAPTER 6. Conclusion.....</b>	 <b>48</b>
Bolshevik Policy in the Caucasus and Near East .....	48
The Agreement of May 7, 1920.....	49
Soviet Russia's Embassy.....	50
Russia's Secret Plans .....	50
The Lore Provocation.....	51
Conclusion.....	54
 <b>Figures .....</b>	 <b>56</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Further Reading.....</b>	<b>66</b>

## Foreword

This book is dedicated to the history of independent Georgia, and it illustrates how the long-lost hope to restore Georgia's statehood became a reality in 1918 after the collapse of the Russian Empire. Unfortunately, this period of Georgian independence appeared to be rather short-lived and ended after Bolshevik Russia's occupation in 1921. This dramatic period of Georgian history has been well reflected in the work. The book describes the domestic and foreign policy of the country, with the special attention to its relations with Germany, Russia, Turkey and the Entente Alliance. It also examines the territorial disputes that emerged with Georgia's immediate neighbors – Azerbaijan and Armenia, and clearly depicts the complicated circumstances that Georgia faced after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

The book is well written, is easy to read and certainly contributes to the popularization of Georgian history.

Professor *Otar Japaridze*

*“After restoring Georgia’s independence, each citizen of the Republic of Georgia is obligated to know the history of the country... A contemporary Georgian politician may find many pertinent and thought-provoking episodes from our past that are applicable to present times.”*

*Ivane Javakhishvili, 1919*

## **Chapter 1. Preconditions**

### **Georgia’s Aspiration to Freedom and Independence XIX-XX cc.**

In 1801, the Russian Emperor, Paul I, attempted to abolish the Georgian Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti fraudulently, later the same year his successor, Alexander I did it forcefully, turning the Kingdom of Kartli and Kakheti into a governorate of the Russian Empire. He subsequently appropriated the title of “King of Georgia” and wore it with pride.

Russian governance was steadily gaining momentum in Georgia, which entailed a series of power plays: the abolishment of autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church, followed by a ban on teaching Georgian language in schools. The Russian Orthodox Church banned Georgian-language church services and changed the rules and regulations within the Georgian Church.

Anti-Russian sentiments were incited by the actions of most Russian functionaries and military representatives in the region, who practiced appalling methods of violence against local population. The Georgians responded and rose to defend their freedom, this forced Russian Emperor Nicholas I opted for a change in strategy and appointed Grand Duke Mikhail Vorontsov to Georgia. This shrewd and skillful politician managed to modernize the Russian government system in Transcaucasia and win the hearts of a significant portion of Georgian nobility. Vorontsov convinced Georgian noblemen to serve Russia by appointing them to various high-standing positions. Holding such posts in the Russian imperial system guaranteed high-paying salaries and various privileges that came with serving the Empire. It is noteworthy that during this period a group of Georgian noblemen vigorously sought to strengthen Russian rule in the Caucasus. Not only did they devotedly participate in Russian military endeavors against Iran and Turkey, but also pillaged Georgian villages when it served Russian imperial interests. This was the true Georgian tragedy. On the other hand, Vorontsov’s policy brought back a generation of well-educated Georgians from Russia. Among others, these included true patriots of Georgia such as Dimitri Kipiani, Niko Nikoladze and Ilia Chavchavadze.

Ilia Chavchavadze’s contribution to Georgian history is insurmountable. When he returned to Georgia in 1861, he saw it as his mission to awaken the Georgian people from political slumber, to revive the ideal of national freedom and to implement the notion amongst Georgians that a nation cannot be truly content unless it fights for the independence of its homeland. To achieve his dream of Georgian national revival, Ilia Chavchavadze and his friends created the society - “Spread Literacy in Georgia”, founded the print periodicals “Saqartvelos Moambe” (“Messenger of Georgia”) and “Iveria”, founded a Bank of the Nobility, which among solving economic problems, sought to regulate other affairs for Georgian society, such as supporting national revival through funding Georgian theaters and schools.

## **Social Democracy and Georgia**

By the end of the XIX century, a European doctrine took root in Georgia and turned the focus on social rather than national issues. Instead of promoting national independence and sovereignty, it endorsed international unification of proletariats, class struggle against the bourgeoisie, defiance of nobility and a revolutionary development of society. This was the Marxist, Social-Democratic doctrine. Its Georgian followers included Noe Zhordania, Irakli Tsereteli, Mikha Tskhakaia, Philipe Makharadze, Ioseb Jughashvili (later known as Stalin) and others. They were active members of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party and call for unification of multiethnic Georgian proletarians in the fight for international proletariat interests, and against the national movement.

## **Chapter 2. Independent Once Again!**

### **World War I and Georgia**

A group of Georgians saw the time of global upheaval in early XXs century as an opportune moment to begin the fight for Georgia's independence. Considering this mission, they launched an active lobbying campaign abroad to interest and involve the European public in Georgia's problems, to align Georgia with the values of European democracy and to shed light on the issue of Georgia's independence at various international conferences. Thus, 1903 saw the founding of a Georgian-French language newspaper, "Sakartvelo" ("Georgia"), the aim of which was to raise awareness amongst European society concerning Georgia's quest for independence. In addition, Georgians actively participated in the 1910, 1913 and subsequent "Congress of Oppressed Nationalities" summits. Parisian-Georgian immigrants established the "League for the Protection of Georgia's Rights" and in 1910, under the leadership of Peter Surguladze, Georgia's Liberation Group was founded.

Yet another group of Georgians declared their main goal - to restore Georgian monarchy. This group believed they could do so with the help of the German state and aligned themselves with the members of the Triple Alliance. With the help of German special services, the "Georgia's National Independence Committee" was created. The group negotiated with German political dignitaries in Europe, and in return for Georgia's independence, promised Georgia's support against Russia when war broke out.

While Georgian immigrants were actively pursuing their liberation agendas, in the summer of 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand Habsburg, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, was assassinated in Sarajevo. The First World War was ignited. 200,000 Georgians soldiers, including 7,000 Georgian officers, enlisted in the Russian Imperial Army fought to defended Russian state interests. The war's Caucasus Campaign on the Southwestern Front, involving armed conflict between Russian and Ottoman troops, was conducted along the historical borders of Georgia and consequently made Georgia a frontline territory for combat. Soon enough the entire region began to resemble a military campsite.

### **The February Revolution in Russia**

The end of February 1917 marked a historic victory for Russian revolutionaries. Russia's Social-Democratic Party came into favor with the population and began active participation in Petrograd's

ongoing political developments. The party included many notable Georgian members, several of which were assigned to high-ranking posts in the new government. A recognized leader among Russian Socialist-Democrats, Karlo Chkheidze, was appointed Chairmen of Petrograd's Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, while Irakli Tsereteli became the provisional government's functionary.

The February Revolution also worked to the advantage of the Georgian autocephalist movement, which up until that time was unsuccessful in restoring the church's autocephaly. Utilizing this window of opportunity, on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1917, a church meeting was convened at the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, located in the historic town of Mtskheta, during which Kyrion II was chosen as the new Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia. This was a victory for the Georgian nation.

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1917, The Bolshevik Party of Russia staged an armed insurrection in Petrograd and seized power from the provisional government, thus transferring authority to the II Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. It was a Bolshevik coup d'état, resulting in the creation of the Council of People's Commissars, which was headed by Vladimir Lenin. The new government's post for Commissar of National Affairs was given to Joseph Stalin (Georgian-born Ioseb Jughashvili).

## **Independent Transcaucasia**

Alongside Russia's democratic forces, Georgian right-wing social-democrats condemned the Bolshevik coup. Yet, they retained hope that the All Russian Constituent Assembly would manage to settle the key issues facing the new Russian state with fairness and objectivity. Their hopes vanished on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1918, when the Bolshevik's forcefully dissolved the assembly. The disbandment of the constitutional body led to a civil war. To protect the newfound power in face of civil unrest and to gain support within the country, Lenin made a compromise, resulting in a peace treaty with Germany and its allies.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1918, thereby terminating Russia's participation in World War I. Upon its ratification, the districts of Kars, Ardaghan, Artvin and Batumi, all fell under Turkey's jurisdiction. The Ottomans demanded the immediate withdrawal of all military personnel from the disputed regions. This did not bide well with Transcaucasian representatives, who declined to partake in the Brest-Litovsk Treaty negotiations out of protest. Furthermore, they openly rejected the separatist Brest-Litovsk Treaty, but given the demoralized state of the army, failed to procure effective resistance against the Turks on the Caucasus Front. To salvage the situation, on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1918, the Transcaucasia Seim declared independence from Russia and initiated dialogue with Turkey as the new Democratic Republic of Transcaucasia. Germany decided to take on the role of mediator in the Transcaucasia conflict. A Georgian delegation, headed by Akaki Chkhenkeli (Chairman of the Transcaucasia Government and Minister of Foreign Affairs), went to Trabzon to begin the negotiation process. The talks were terminated prematurely, given that Turkey demanded even more territories than the Brest-Litovsk treaty entailed. Seeing that diplomacy could not yield desired results, Turkey chose to attack. Ottoman soldiers invaded and occupied Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, and Batumi. Slowly, but surely, they were approaching the capital, Tbilisi.

To avert imminent military disaster, another round of diplomatic peace talks between the Transcaucasia Seim and Turkish dignitaries took place, this time in city of Batumi. Up until now Georgian social-democrats overlooked the fact that in certain historic circumstances, issues of national interest could potentially trump all other considerations. This attitude radically changed when the

Azerbaijani members of the Transcaucasian delegation sided with Turkey and acknowledged Ottoman supremacy. This act of submission perplexed the Georgian and Armenian partners and utterly disrupted the unity of the Transcaucasia Seim. Reevaluating the situation Akaki Chkhenkeli sent coded telegrams sent from Batumi to Noe Zhordania: "...if the German delegation fails to show us unwavering support, the Turks will subjugate our nation..." "Keep in mind that in case a war with Turkey resumes, Azerbaijan will sacrifice Armenia and Georgia along with it. If the Turks and Tatars [i.e. Azerbaijanis] have their way, then declaring Georgia's independence will be inevitable. Only then will we be able to come to a favorable treaty agreement."

## **Declaring Georgia's Independence**

It was an ironic twist of fate that the responsibility to restore Georgia's independence fell on the political force that had always been opposed to such a development. Declaring Georgia, a free state was never a part of the socialist-democratic government agenda, it was merely a necessity that fulfilled the arduous task of preventing a Turkish invasion. The true mission of Georgian social-democrats was the dissemination of social-democratic ideals in Russia and consequently in Georgia, given that they inherently considered the nation an integral part of the Russian state.

The movement's concessionary attitude was evident in a Georgian social-democrats' newspaper "Ertoba" ("Unity") publication, which declared: "...Our democracy, which has always fought alongside Russian democracy wished to continue down the old, proven path to victory, but alas we were forced to stray from that direction and limit the expanse of our mission to solely Georgia. On the one hand, international circumstances, external threat of invasion, and on the other hand the disintegration of a united Transcaucasia, required Georgian democracy to declare independence."

As Tbilisi was preparing to declare Georgia's independence (the task of drafting the declaration was assigned to Giorgi Gvazava) on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the Transcaucasia Seim held its final meeting in the former Caucasus viceroy palace announcing the coalition's abolishment to the world. Later that day, at 5 o'clock pm, Irakli Tsereteli made a statement from the palace: "We declare Transcaucasia annulled. We should now give Georgian people the opportunity to free themselves and others..." The attendees unanimously recognized the moment's historical significance and collectively adopted the "Act of Independence of Georgia". The Act outlined Georgia's new governing state principles: "...From now on Georgia is an independent sovereign state and Georgian citizens have sovereign rights; The political structure of the independent Georgia is a Democratic Republic; In case of international warfare, Georgia will remain a neutral state; The Democratic Republic of Georgia will allow all ethnicities residing within its borders freedom of development..."

Thousands gathered outside the viceroy palace where the "Act of Independence of Georgia" was read aloud to the enthusiastic public. A three-colored flag, representing a newly independent Georgia, was erected on top of the palace, while the joyful ceremony was accompanied by a festive toll of the Sioni Church bells. Soon afterwards, independent Georgia was given a new coat-of-arms, "White St. George" and the state anthem, "Dideba" ("Glory") (by Kote Potskhverashvili).

'White' and 'Red' Russia, univocally rejected Georgia's independence proclamation. The Bolsheviks reproached Georgian social-democrats for betraying revolutionary principles, while the "Whites" accused Georgia of willfully attempting to dismember the "united and indivisible" Russian Empire. Generals of the Imperial Russian Army, Alekseyev, Denikin, Wrangel, Kolchak and others,

reminded the Triple Entente leaders of their vows to Russia and urged them to refrain from recognizing new state structures created because of the Bolshevik coup - an outcome of German involvement. It should also be noted that the United States advised its allies - Great Britain and France - to abstain from recognizing the independence of nations that used to be part of the Russian Empire given the fact that both countries had already formed an allegiance with the Russian state. Germany and Turkey on the other hand, perceived this moment in Georgian history as a tactical opportunity to injure their chief adversary, Russia, and quickly recognized Georgia's independence. Nevertheless, the two countries' political goals and strategies concerning Georgia tended to be diametrically opposed, which soon became an obvious obstacle. Despite all its hardships, the independent Democratic Republic of Georgia was born.

## **Chapter 3. Political Life**

### **The Ruling Party**

Nowadays there is a tendency among some Georgian historiographers to claim that Georgia's right-wing social-democratic movement, with its distinctive national characteristic and inclination towards European ideology, was intrinsically different from Russian socialism. This assessment, however, has no supporting historical documentation. In fact, sources indicate the opposite, that up until the 1917 coup, Georgian social-democrats were loyal to the ideals of the Great Russian Revolution and wholeheartedly supported the indivisibility of the Russian State. As an integral member of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary Party, the Georgian fraction was strongly devoted to Russian socialist ideas. Its leaders were prominent figures in Russia's provisional government and as such they systematically and actively participated in party rallies and conferences, supervised the state's advisory committees, regulated party politics, preached unity within the proletarian class struggle and fully intended to see this unity prevail.

Irrespective of their similar ideological postulates, political reality at the beginning of 1918 forced Georgian social-democrats to abandon their Russian comrades and invest their energy in the previously unwelcome idea of creating a separate, independent Georgian state. The unforeseen change in Georgia's political trajectory provoked harsh criticism from Russian right-wing social-democrats, who condemned their Georgian colleagues' separatist tendencies, their pro-Germanic orientation and their desire to establish an independent Georgian Social Democratic Party.

Despite the politically disgruntled state of Georgia's population, the Social Democratic Party managed to sustain its political power. Regardless of public criticism, the party was yet unchallenged in its influence and organizational abilities. Alongside its cohort of experienced political leaders, the party maintained headquarters in every region of the country and originally boasted an unmatched number of 80,000 party representatives. By the time Georgia's Social Democratic Party announced its founding session on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1918, during which it formally separated from the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary Party, the ruling body had already established its superiority within the Georgian political arena.

According to the views of local politicians and foreign observers of that era, soon after its formal establishment, the social-democratic movement underwent a metamorphosis, transitioning from being an extension of the Russian party to becoming a disparate patriotic entity. Memoirs written later by social-

democrat leaders also noted this evolution among their ranks and acknowledged an intensification of devotion to their homeland following the declaration of independence, which was quite at odds with their ideological beliefs.

### **Socialist-Federalist Party**

The Socialist-Federalists of Georgia represented worthy contenders for Georgia's patriotic forces. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Socialist-Federalist Party, under the leadership of its founder, Archil Jorjadze, managed to progressively merge socialist principles with nationalist-patriotic ideology. The Federalists argued that nationalism and socialism were not antagonistic principles and advocated for the legitimization of Georgia's national rights under the broader socialist spectrum. The short-lived independence of 1918-21 and the year leading up to its culmination were especially eminent for the socialist-federalists of Georgia. This period marked an unprecedented constructive capacity for the party, which was actively involved in the National Council, the Georgian Parliament, as well as the Constituent Assembly, at which they were represented by a total of 9 MPs. The Socialist-Federalist party strategy, announced at the founding congregation, was far from divisive and emphasized the importance of improving the nation's internal socialist structure and refining it in both theory and practice.

### **Socialist-Revolutionary Party**

The social-revolutionaries of Georgia, like their socialists-democrat colleagues, were loyal members of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary Party and principally supported its unity. Much to their dismay, the post-WWI reality of 1918 forced them to establish an independent Georgian Socialist-Revolutionary Party. The party, under the leadership of L. Shengelaya, delegated 5 MPs to the Constituent Assembly and actively partook in the formation of Georgia's political and ideological course.

### **National-Democratic Party**

Unlike the other parties operating within the Georgian political sphere, the National-Democratic Party maintained a consistent nationalistic platform and advocated for national issues over socialist causes. The party was composed of distinguished representatives of Georgian intelligentsia, most of whom had dedicated their energy to Georgia's independence. Although the party numbers were sparse in comparison to other political forces, the consistency of its national position and the immense intellectual capacity of its representatives, fortified the National-Democratic Party's position as a strong, organized opposition to the ruling Social-Democratic Party. National-democratic criticism of government policy, resounding first at the Parliament session and later from the high podium of the Constituent Assembly, was notable for its meaningful, deep understanding of the Georgian issue, its distinct national position and the shrewdness of its historical analysis. A point of contest was socialist-democratic economic policy, which from the national-democrats' perspective was riddled with Marxist constriction and thereby completely neglected crucial aspects of societal development. The nationalist opposition warned the governing party to heed such blindness in economic management if an imminent collapse of the nation were to be avoided. Party leader, Spiridon Kedia, repeatedly attributed the blunders and ill-conceived political moves of the social-democratic government to the fact that it was simply psychologically unprepared of the burden of creating and maintaining a nation-state.

## **The Bolsheviks**

Despite its presumed ideological detachment from democratic Georgia, in 1918-19, Bolsheviks significantly impacted the Georgian political climate. Lenin's government assigned prominent Bolshevik functionary, Stepan Shaumyan, to the post of Southern Caucasus Commissar, but an inhospitable welcome in Georgia forced him to transfer the center of the Bolshevik movement to Baku.

Following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Russian soldiers were expected to return to their motherland but the strategically chosen homebound route cut through the capital - Tbilisi. Tens of thousands of armed soldiers with Bolshevik sentiments marching on the city was a guaranteed precondition to a political takeover, and a risk that the newly independent Georgian government was not willing to take. On January 9, 1918 in the region of Shamkhori, a violent disarmament left the Russian soldiers on the Caucasus Front decimated and weaponless. This incident was denounced by Moscow as an egregious sin on the conscience of Georgian social-democrats.

Come spring, Georgian Bolsheviks retaliated and under the supervision of Aliosha Gegechkori, a troop of 1,000 armed men traveled the Samegrelo region, spreading 'Russian Bolshevism' along the way. By summer, the tension intensified and reached Georgia's military road, stretching from Mtskheta to Dusheti. Mushrooming peasant rebellions that sowed unrest throughout the country were credited to the joint effort of Georgian Bolsheviks and Kremlin agents.

The Bolshevik movement had no qualms about regularly informing the Kremlin about the developments in Georgia and often added deceit to unprofessed treason by misinterpreting realities and presenting Russia with desired information rather than facts. The partnership was dubious at best, but with encouragement and assurances of support from the Kremlin, Georgian Bolsheviks designed to stage a coup in October of 1919. Believing that the Red Army would promptly assist them in their endeavor, preparation began to ready the field for revolution. Military headquarters were established, the most strategically important of which was the Poti rebel camp with its mission to capture the marine port, thereby commanding an important economic, military and political gateway. The Poti Bolshevik organization, recognizing its crucial involvement in the cause, made every effort in preparation for the rebellion. It managed to take control of the ship "Chorokhi", whose entire fleet was made up of Bolsheviks, or Bolshevik sympathizer sailors. The meticulously thought-out plan involved blowing up government defenses, decimating its military power and taking control of the Poti harbor.

The Bolshevik revolutionaries, alongside every Bolshevik sympathizer in Georgia, were dismayed when the central government of Tbilisi arrested the heads of the rebellion, thereby putting an end to their revolutionary yearnings. The Poti rebels, however, were more fortunate and fled imprisonment with the help of a post office agent who intercepted an encrypted telegram and forewarned them of defeat. As Georgian authorities took offensive action, the existing tension diffused. An increase in Bolshevik arrests noticeably dissipated the movement's political reach and soon the party's organizational structures began to falter, transplanting their activities into the underground realm of criminality.

## **Constituent Assembly**

The politically active members of the newly independent Georgian nation saw fit that the first initiative of the democratic state should be determining the country's fundamental political and socio-economic principles. There was great confidence in the legislative capabilities of Georgia's political

spectrum and consequently Georgia's Declaration of Independence demanded that a Constituent Assembly be gathered for this specific purpose.

As political movements mobilized for the assembly's election campaigns in the beginning of 1919, the founder of the Republic of Kars, Sever Beg Jakeli urged Georgian Muslims to refrain from participating in the Constituent Assembly elections. Indeed, Muslim Georgia, Abkhazia and several mountainous regions did not partake in the electoral process, leaving the votes to a handful of prominent political groups. In truth, election results demonstrated that the chances of superseding the popular Social-Democratic Labor Party were slim. The social-democrats won by a wide margin, obtaining 109 seats from the 130 that were available, thereby becoming the dominant power in the new government.

On March 1, 1919, the lawmaker Silibistro Jibladze announced the opening of the first Constituent Assembly. Committees, dedicated to specific narrow issues were created, and unsurprisingly the social-democrats held supremacy in each category. Despite the discomfiting numerical difference and the inconvenience, it caused for other political parties, the founding congregation did its best to maintain the spirit of democracy and gave each member of the assembly freedom of speech and an opportunity to voice their opinions.

The greatest achievement of the Constituent Assembly remains the drafting of Georgia's first Constitution. Although the diligence required to complete the task took some time, the final content was commendably democratic. The first official text of the Constitution was published in Batumi by N. Khvingia. It was very progressive for its time document prized by future British Labor Prime Minister, Ramsey MacDonald, who wrote: "I familiarized myself with its constitution, its social and economic reconstruction and what I saw there, I wish I could see in my country too."

Unfortunately, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1921, the date that marked the Constitution's ratification came too late and the draft failed to be tested in practice. By then Russian Bolshevik troops were already at the city gates, looming to usher in a new era, which rendered the newly ratified Constitution obsolete.

## **The Degree of Democracy**

Georgian historians rightly deemed the First Republic's political system a multiparty democracy. The new nation-state cultivated many democratic attributes such as the ability to establish a political party, to nominate candidates for electoral posts, to freely distribute political propaganda and freedom of speech. Yet, at the time, the ruling party was still the most organized and well-oiled political machine and given its absolute majority of votes in the Constituent Assembly, they often utilized the numerical advantage in way that were far from democratic. It should be mentioned that the right-wing social-democratic movement had still not parted with its Marxist ideology, was heavily invested in the class struggle and used revolutionary tactics for state preservation in the initial stages of its ascent to power. The ruling party also used its authority to undermine its ideological and political adversaries, usually out of the bounds of legality.

For its part the opposition was free to promptly point out any violations of the basic principles of democracy undertaken by the MPs of the ruling party and its local organizations. Government opponents also accused the ruling party of deliberately delaying the adoption of the Constitution, which would noticeable reduce social-democratic hegemony in the country.

Overall, leniency would be prudent when judging Georgia's democratic aspirations, given the troublesome historical era during which the independent state was formed and the utterly inexperienced

and nascent government that headed the nation. The truth of the matter is that Georgia's political sphere yearned to develop a free and functional state, to defend human rights and freedoms, to publicly recognize democracy and adhere to the rule of law.

## **Chapter 4. Internal Politics of the Democratic Republic of Georgia**

### **The Building of a New Georgian State**

After declaring independence on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the Georgian people were faced with the onerous task of building a democratic society, one that would be graciously welcomed into the European community of civilized nations. Even if Georgia was given the opportunity to undertake this initiative under peaceful conditions and territorial security, its successful execution required herculean efforts. Yet, as fate would have it, Georgia was dealt a more difficult hand. Facing threats of occupation from Bolshevik Russia, Ottoman Turkey and Denikin's Russian Imperial Army, combined with the danger of economic collapse and internal reign of anarchy, the prospect of building a successful, democratic Georgian nation-state was virtually evanescent.

The exhaustive list of prerequisites to building an independent Georgian state included: restoration of law and order, protection of territorial integrity, provision of worker's rights, development of new socialist law and decrees, preparation of land reform, improvement of international relations and tireless diplomatic efforts to achieve recognition of independence from potential Western allies.

First and foremost, in this list was the structuring of a new Georgian state. To this end, the National Council decreed the establishment of a legislative body, which along with Georgian lawmakers included Abkhaz, Armenian, Azerbaijani, German, Ossetian and Russian representatives. Thus, the first Georgian Parliament was established. The parliament assumed all functions of the legislative branch and complemented the provisional coalition government. Initially the position of chairman was given to social-democrat Noe Ramishvili (he also performed the duties of Minister of Internal Affairs) while some of the prominent governing positions were distributed to the following public figures: Minister of Defense - Grigol Giorgadze (social-democrat), Minister of Foreign Affairs - Akaki Chkhenkeli (social-democrat), Justice Minister - Shalva Aleksi-Meskhishvili (socialist-federalist), Minister of Finance - Giorgi Juruli (national-democrat), Minister of Agriculture - Noe Khomeriki (social-democrat), Minister of Roads - Ivane Lortkipanidze (socialist-revolutionary) and Minister of Education - Giorgi Laskhishvili (social-democrat).

The Social-Democratic Party represented an overwhelming majority of the governing body, which was why the opposition rightfully feared the realization of a socialist experiment in Georgia. But the governing majority was adamant from the onset of its unwillingness to initiate an immediate implementation of socialism in the country. During the reign of the first coalition government, the political parties represented in parliament utilized democratically granted rights to freely and unreservedly voice their concerns over the errors and shortcomings of the ruling party. The nascent government, however, did not last long and after 9 months in power, a parliamentary deadlock resulted in the abolishment of the initial coalition. The creation of a new ruling bloc, headed by Noe Zhordania, incited the reshuffling of ministry positions.

## **Committees**

In Georgia, committees for worker and soldier deputies held some degree of power, but unlike its Russian constituents, these groups showed no intention of taking control over the government apparatus. This incongruity was perhaps due to the dominance of right-wing social-democratic ideology among council members. It was, therefore, not surprising that after declaring autonomy, the chairman of the Workers' Committee, Noe Zhordania, easily managed to convince the Tbilisi council that such establishments were of no use to a democratic state. Soon after the Constituent Assembly elections, the existing committees were terminated all over Georgia. While this social-democratic maneuver pleased right-wing political forces, Georgian Bolsheviks met the development with much dismay and accused the Social-Democratic Party of proletarian revolutionary treason.

## **Local Government**

The process of building democratic structures of government outside capital boundaries proved to be a challenge for the new administration. As Georgia declared independence, a system of secular governance was instated, which separated regional governments based on electorates. This arrangement granted every citizen over the age of 20 the right to vote, and delegated the task of administering regional elections to provincial electoral committees.

The disintegration of the Russian Empire, had left Georgia divided into 23 districts, and each of these areas was allotted regional representatives in the new electoral system. The first regional elections were held in August of 1918. Political campaigning for the elections was noticeably passive, except for the Social-Democratic Party, which fervently rallied support from district constituents. Their investment paid off and the ruling party managed to gain representational majority in virtually every regional government. Consequently, social-democrat deputies dominated the district executive bodies.

Reorganizing municipalities posed a problem concerning the naturalization of municipal officials. During the reign of the Russian Empire, municipalities were staffed with Armenian and Russian delegates, who sedulously served Russia's interests. While most were simply callous towards Georgia's declaration of independence, many of the envoys met the development with open hostility. A significant portion of the Russian and Armenian populations residing in Georgia outwardly refused to accept Georgian citizenship. It was therefore expedient for national interests to rid municipal governments of such members as painlessly as possible.

The Tbilisi Municipal elections held in 1919, was favorable to the Social-Democratic Party, which won 69 seats in the municipal government. The remaining positions were divided between the National-Democrats (10 MPs) and the Socialist-Federalists (7 MPs), while the social-democrat Benjamin Chkhikvishvili was appointed as head of the capital's municipality.

## **Judicial System**

Back in the XIX century, during the Peasant Reforms, Tsarist Russia carried out a reorganization of its judicial system. Among other innovations, the reforms did away with nobility courts, established a system of jury trials, strengthened judiciary independence and made judicial processes publicly accessible. To maintain its powers over local government bodies, Imperial Russia excluded Georgia and the Caucasus from the judicial reforms, citing "unpreparedness of the local population and lack of legal

culture” as the official reason for exclusion. The only change brought to this region was the elimination of nobility courts, which made all citizens, regardless of title, equal before the law.

To make up for the delay in judicial progression, as soon as Georgia declared independence, its government hastily set out to establish a democratic, European court system. The main goal was the assertion of judiciary independence and its separation from the executive branch of government. Institutionalizing judiciary elections, lawyer institutions and public access to judicial records were also deemed necessary for effective reformation of the system. This task was associated with certain difficulties. Most importantly, there was an acute shortage of trained staff. In Georgia, legally educated professionals were mostly of non-native decent and of Russian nationality, unable to speak, read or write in Georgian, which obstructed them from taking part in the building of a new court system. Yet, the government was persistent in its course and soon created the Senate, which was a Supreme Court of First Instance and regulated the handling of cassation cases. Additionally, the scope of the Senate’s far-reaching powers encompassed the supervision of the Court of Cassation, the judicial oversight of central and local government officials and law enforcement structures. It also had the ability to revoke a government decision deemed illegal by the judiciary and administered institutional reviews.

Some of the noteworthy improvements in the judicial sector included the adoption of a law concerning the “Judicial Conciliation Institute” on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1918, which required conciliator judges to hold positions in all cities and district centers. On November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1919, the state issued another progressive decree, regulating “Georgia’s Solicitor Rights and Board of Jury Determination”. Experts believe that these measures prepared the legislative foundation for democratizing the penitentiary system. This process, however, was in its initial stages and the disparity between adopting a law and seeing it successfully reinforced was still to be overcome.

Despite positive changes in the court system arrangement, the convoluted political situation prevented a successful implementation of judicial reform in Georgia.

### **Militsiya (Police)**

As a part of the state’s law enforcement reforms, Georgian social-democrats replaced the tarnished and odious Russian Empire agency, “Politsiya” with the “Militsiya”. The organization became a part of the Interior Ministry and was headed by Noe Ramishvili. It should be noted that the Tbilisi Militsiya, staffed by 903 men, was completely obedient to the municipality, which tried to govern the city amidst remnants of Tsarist bureaucracy, corruption and nepotism. Given the frequency of uprisings in 1918, the reformation of the agency proved to be a difficult process and therefore the government increasingly relied on the National Guard and Regular Army units for manpower in place of its newly founded Militsiya. Gradually, the process of formation showed relative improvement in organization and preparation among the Militsiya recruits. As a result, the Georgian state assembled a subunit in the new agency to counteract profiteering, treasury theft and the dissemination of counterrevolutionary sentiments. The special “Protector Taskforce” created for this purpose consisted of 600-1,000 men in central urban settlements and 300-400 men in peripheral regions. The subunit proved to be a successful enterprise, having completed many government assignments targeting Bolshevik conspiracies. Their missions uncovered anti-state Bolshevik activities and led to the arrests of many Georgian Bolsheviks by the “Special Taskforce”. The unit was exceptionally efficacious under Spiridon Kedia’s leadership and managed also to expose the so-called “Aramyants” house gathering and arrest representatives of the

Armenian bourgeoisie who were involved in actively recruiting young men of Armenian origin from Georgia for the Armenian Army, which was at war with Georgia at the time.

Aside from its visible preventative measures, the Militsiya also had undercover agents in various organizations and government structures who took note of political affiliations and detected possible state adversaries. Unfortunately, these freedoms were sometimes utilized unsparingly against organizations and institutions as well as private businessmen and merchants. Under the pretense of defending state interests against rampant treasonous activities, the police “Special Taskforce” was sanctioned to conduct searches without a court warrant, simply based on gathered intelligence. Moreover, the Minister of Internal Affairs was authorized to suspend newspaper publications based on operational material, without a court mandate.

## **National Guard**

Marxist Social-Democracy envisioned the creation of a proletarian state where strict boundaries between professions and the exploitation of man would cease to exist. A man free from such restrictions would have to assume responsibility for homeland security. Since Marxism saw all Regular Armies as defenders of dominant class interests, troops of revolutionary-minded people had to take on this task. This notion inclined all socialist parties to arm their supporters during the February Revolution and as a result almost every socialist movement had its individual armed militia, including the Georgian social-democrats. The remnants of the armed revolutionaries were transformed into the National Guard, which served as a reliable military base during the reign of the socialist political movement. Furthermore, the force played a crucial role in the Social-Democratic Party’s fight against anarchy and counterrevolutionary campaigns.

Formally, the National Guard was established on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1917, after taking control of Tbilisi’s Arsenal building. Initially, the government intended the National Guard to fulfill not only law enforcement duties but to counterweigh the yet non-existent Georgian Army. The National Guard mainly consisted of social-democratic-minded workers and peasants. Yet its leader, former Bolshevik, Valiko Jugeli, demonstrated great organizational skills and transformed the guard into a military unit, one that the social-democratic government fully relied on. In 1918, at the insistence of the Social-Democratic Party, the National Guard, previously known as the Red Guard, was formally incorporated into the Republic’s Armed Forces. Thus, the guard, which was already legally functioning as a police agency and was favorably supported by the ruling party, came under the direct command of the military. The National Guard leadership disregarded the change in authority and stood aloof from the main segment of the Armed Forces. Such insubordination gave rise to a paradoxical situation in which a division of the Armed Forces enjoyed a privileged position for being loyal to the social-democratic government while refusing to obey immediate superiors. The disparate state of internal military affairs, which was partially reinforced by government favoritism, prevented the development of unity and discipline within the army. The National Guard’s lack of combat experience also hindered the advancement of Georgia’s military division. In war, patriotism and social-democratic idealism were not sufficient attributes for a successful military operation and the exhaustive knowledge of military strategy, discipline and experience that was required, unfortunately those were absent among the National Guard recruits. The National Guard units were used mainly as a response to dissidence, ethnic conflict, foreign military provocations and warfare. Yet, the patriotic members of the National Guard

were not always successful in fulfilling their obligations and the partisan atmosphere surrounding Georgia's military lifestyle, its lax discipline and government appeasement to their misgivings seriously weakened their capacity for combat. The famous military expert and German representative in Georgia, General von Kressenstein characterized the National Guard as "the worst embodiment of the Revolutionary Army". His memoirs also point out that the guard "assimilated the worst types of miscreants among its ranks and was shameless in its demands for salaries and provisions... [The National Guard] terrorized the country and its government egregiously... Every restaurant and canteen assigned a 20% tax for their benefit." The unsubstantiated ambitions of the guard were based on its successful encounters with soldiers returning from nearby fronts and disgruntled revolting peasants, but opposing fragmented bands of vigilantes was vastly different than combating an enemy's regular army. This truth often revealed itself during Georgia's military conflicts with enemy troops.

## **Georgian Army**

At the time Georgia declared independence, around 7,000 Georgian officers of the Russian Imperial Army were active in the country, including veterans of WW-I and modern military experts. Many of these military officials had received tremendous combat experience during the First World War and decided to serve the newly democratic Georgia by establishing the Army Officer Corps. The men were highly disciplined in the art of modern military and mainly strived for the good of Georgia. The military men joined the mission of building a new Georgian state and offered their services to the government, but the fact that most of these officers were members of the nobility conflicted with the socialist class struggle and the distrustful social-democratic government opted to decline their offer.

In the spring-summer of 1917, a military council with a committee of 30 representatives was established in Georgia. The committee was charged with drafting the association's rulebook and program, as well as developing a plan of action for the Georgian Armed Forces. In the beginning, General Chivadze headed the committee, but due to his differing political views, he was promptly discharged from the post by the social-democratic government. In fact, subsequently only officers with distinguished loyalties to the ruling party were appointed to senior positions.

At the time, German military experts observed that the Georgian Army's "combat experience was extraordinarily limited. The revolutionary clout had thoroughly broken its discipline - soldiers neglected to abide by the military dress code and were negligent in their appearance, they failed to salute officers and their superiors were obviously afraid of them." Western military experts also emphasized the unrestrained nature of Georgian generosity by noting that, "the defense ministry's organizational plan - in the spirit of blatant eastern generosity - provided a small army with a very large and expensive apparatus." The generous social-democratic state was involved not only with senior position appointments, but excessively advised and commanded officers in military matters such as artillery positioning, strategic fortification and army reserve deployment. Unfortunately, the realization, that armies should be led by competent professionals and not party members, came too late and by that time a large Soviet flag, the one that would supersede the national flag of Georgia for several decades to come, was looming overhead the country.

Despite adversities, the Regular Army gradually came into formation and initially boasted 10,000 soldiers and 100 military cannons. In Tbilisi, a Military Cadet School was established to prepare young officers in the art of combat, whose graduates would later contribute to the struggle for freedom

in the outskirts of village Kodjori. During its short-lived existence, the various stages of army development saw the involvement of famous generals Mazniashvili, Kvinitadze, Tsulukidze, Odishelidze, and Koniashvili, colonels Kargareli, Muskhelishvili and Gedevanishvili among others. It was with their investment in the cause that foreign observers could note “a gradual improvement in the army’s reorganization process”. In its final stages of rule, the Democratic Republic of Georgia had an army with 25 thousand soldiers, whose quality of preparation was demonstrated in various successful military operations. From today’s vantage point it is difficult to assert that if not for the mistakes made by the government, Georgia could have developed a strong army and successfully defend its country’s independence, thus giving Transcaucasia a chance to avoid a seventy-year reign of tragedy and national degradation.

### **Georgian ‘Vendee’**

Following the February Revolution, civil unrest erupted in Georgian villages. Even the declaration of independence, on May 26, 1918, failed to pacify the turbulent situation. The Social-Democratic Party newspaper “Unity” went as far as comparing these incidents to the Vendee peasant rebellions of the French Revolution.

The revolutionary attitude in the rural areas of Georgia was a consequence of a protracted war, poor social conditions, pro-Bolshevik sentiments of returning soldiers and the increasing popularity of the Bolshevik-disseminated slogan - “Steal the Stolen!” Peasant revolts in Samegrelo, Sachkhere, Dusheti, Shida Kartli and Southern Georgia, often caused socio-economic paralysis of entire regions. The impoverished population, which sought salvation in the revolutionary redistribution of property, demanded radical improvement of living conditions and accused the government of passivity. On its part, the official government acknowledged these issues by referring to “the broken bridge between [the state] and the peasantry” and by stating that, “since we failed to provide peasants with land, the village no longer obeys the government”.

While the government radically changed its political orientation and early ideological principles when it came to power, the fact that it failed to adequately inform its citizens of the transformation led to some serious problems. One such radical change involved the social-democratic doctrine of ‘universal armament’. Early on, the social-democratic agenda demanded a force of armed civilians to offset the power of the regular army. But after taking office, the Social-Democratic Party inverted their trajectory and began to disarm the population, starting with the Dusheti district. This act incensed armed rebels in the region, who managed to forcefully occupy the military road with the help of Aliosha Gegechkori Bolshevik detachment. The revolt was quenched only after the National Guard and the Georgian Army used brutal force against the rebels.

Other areas of the country were also embroiled in various stages of public protests. In 1918-1919, Sachkhere and Lechkhumi regions, Borchalo and Dusheti districts, all Samegrelo and Abkhazia were faced with such dire problems of civil unrest that an intervention from the Ministry of Internal Affairs law enforcement agency was required. This was evidenced in the Interior Ministry's 1919 annual report, which explained the complex process of fighting ‘anarchy’ and its subsequent results. As for the military operations, they often ended in violent clashes, during which ordinary citizens suffered alongside culpable rebels and were sometimes subjected to excessive uses of force. Later in the

country's development, agrarian reforms managed to satiate the peasantry to some extent and public demonstrations gradually waned in the villages of Georgia.

## **Agrarian Reforms**

In 1918, 75 percent of Georgia's population consisted of peasants who were burdened by the lack of cultivable lands. During the Russian Empire, rural territories belonged to landowners and the Tsarist regime's failure to find a reasonable solution to the agricultural problem left Georgian villagers hoping for a radical improvement to their socio-economic troubles. To this end, the social-democrats developed two principle strategies of agrarian reform: complete land seizure (Bolshevik way) and municipalization (Menshevik way), the latter referring to the transfer of lands to local authorities, which would then lease the territories to willing clients. While private ownership was still allowed under the reforms, there were many limitations to it.

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the Transcaucasia Seim adopted a law on land cultivation that sanctioned the expanse limits for different agricultural farms. The political situation in Transcaucasia and Turkey's expansionist efforts hindered the advancement of these agrarian reforms in the region. Consequently, the development of agriculture in Georgia began only after the Constituent Assembly adopted and enforced agrarian laws. By then, the Minister of Agriculture Noe Khomeriki endorsed a law that transferred land ownership to peasants who cultivated the lands. After heated debates, on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1919 the law was passed and the peasantry was given private ownership of land with the right to buy and sell at their discretion. To further aid the development of agriculture, state and municipal agricultural communities, called "National Estate" organizations, were created in Kakheti, Kartli and other regions.

During the reforms almost six hundred thousand hectares of land was seized from landlords. The remaining 40 thousand hectares, distributed among the former feudal landowners, left each with 10 hectares of land, which was still more than their neighboring peasants owned. While the state reform aimed at limiting the land privileges enjoyed by nobility, the Bolsheviks and Social-Federalists of Georgia were critical of the government's leniency in this issue and demanded an absolute elimination of feudal land ownership. The discrepancy caused discontent among certain peasant groups as well, which called for a complete confiscation of all territories. A large part of the peasantry consisted of middle-class farmers, but rural areas were also populated with poor peasants who owned no lands and worked as hired hands to serve their wealthier neighbors. These members of the peasantry had a heightened sense of social protest and therefore were excellent targets for Bolshevik propaganda.

The Georgian Orthodox Church also hoped to make use of the reforms to regain the territories it held before the abolition of its autocephaly, but the social-democratic state found this notion fundamentally unacceptable. Much to the Church's chagrin, the government decided to secularize church lands as well and thereby prohibited convents from land ownership.

Given the high numbers of unsatisfied and landless citizens, the state resolved to invest in the development of more cultivable lands. To expand land limits, the government initiated many irrigation projects. The state also dried up swamplands near the Black Sea and cut down forests to make way for fertile sowing areas. Considering Georgia's limited geographical expanse, new land development was of utmost importance to solving rural agrarian grievances. Despite the inevitable drawbacks that accompanied the agrarian reform, the overall results were favorable for the Georgia peasantry. Taking into consideration that the reforms were completed in merely two years, during which the country was

battling outside enemies as well as internal revolts, the success of the agrarian transformation was a government achievement.

## **Worker Relations and Production**

Despite the state's benevolent disposition, Georgia's multinational working class was confronted with dire tribulations in the aftermath of the First World War. As the nascent potential of Georgia's production industry was seriously weakened during economic crisis of WW-I, the country was left with a limited number of large-scale enterprises and several small to medium size workshops. Reduced rates of production, lack of demand for goods produced in Georgia, broken economic ties and increased unemployment, all contributed to the worsening of living conditions. In search of financial salvation, many laborers returned to rural settlements.

With workers' interests in mind, Georgia's Constituent Assembly ratified many laws and decrees designed to propel the development of a viable working class. With the new legislation, the Social-Democratic Party managed to reaffirm its popularity among the Georgian public while introducing significant changes in labor and production laws. Some of the notable improvements include the following: limiting the working day to 8 hours and permitting a single day-off a week, banning child labor, prohibiting women's employment during the evening and night shifts and allowing each worker one paid vacation a year. In the industrial and agricultural sectors, where hired help was most common, overtime was sanctioned only in extreme circumstances and with double compensation. And finally, to prevent inflation and increase wages, the state determined a national minimum wage in the spring of 1919. The administration hoped that these reforms would create favorable conditions for the production industry and consequently help revive the country's economy.

In addition to the abovementioned legislative measures, the socialist government heavily invested in the development and maintenance of labor unions. Since a significant part of the working class was involved in trade unions, their active participation allowed for monitoring working conditions and employer-employee relations, arbitrating labor conflicts, upholding labor laws and advocating improvements for the working class. Government initiative also established a special arbitration committee composed of workers, employers and officials from the Ministry of Employment. Alongside bankers, government officials and production industry representatives, union members were actively involved in the arbitration process, most often negotiating settlements between workers and employers.

All in all, the critical state of the world's economy, the international economic crisis, the disruption of trade agreements with Russia and the absence of new economic partners led Georgia to an economic collapse. Bread was no longer imported from Russia and soon after the Sovietization of Azerbaijan fuel was scarcely available as well. In the meantime, large stocks of Georgian products (wine, fruit, manganese, etc.) were being accumulated and left for decay since there was no viable market to sell the goods. The result was unmanageable inflation and the rapid devaluation of Georgian bonds.

In response to these circumstances, most right-wing parties urged the government to create favorable conditions for economic development, to invite new flows of capital and to take effective measures in protecting investor interests. While the administration also understood the need for a more nurturing economic agenda, its socialist views and principles prevented the development of profitable

market relations. National-democratic leader Spiridon Kedia rightly noted that the government “overbearingly protected the worker, while fatally harming the industry”.

Evoking the memory of Georgia’s integral role in the Silk Road, its important geo-strategic location and its competent history of international economic activity, industry representatives attempted to rejuvenate Georgia’s economy through foreign initiatives and investments. Several possible economic projects were prepared with the help of businessman Akaki Khoshtaria, most notable of which was the plan to interest Western European investors with the profitable economic prospects of the Poti port.

One potential investor was internationally renowned Dutch businessman, Van Mali. He was a highly desirable partner, as he owned a transport firm in England, was adroit in the peculiarities of maritime transportation and possessed a great deal of investment capital. To attract the Dutch entrepreneur, the “Georgia-Netherlands Maritime Society” developed a project, aimed at restoring regular ship routes from Poti to Europe via Istanbul. According to the agreed terms, all ships involved with the project would fly the flag of the Netherlands and be subject to Dutch maritime law, while the company office would to be established in Rotterdam. It was determined that an initial capital investment of 5-6 million guldens (456,000-pound sterling) would be needed for the venture. On his part, Van Mali pledged to provide the society with two first-class ships, weighing 1,000 tons each and with the capacity to transport 60-70 passengers in its I and II class cabins. The ships could carry an additional 100-150 people aboard its decks and hold 800-1,000 tons of cargo. Along with a 30-percent share of the company, Van Mali could appoint two of the company’s five directors and was granted the option to buy an extra 15 percent of shares within the first two years of operation. The ownership of Georgian Transport Society’s entire capital in Poti - property, ports, warehouses, railway lines and transportation vehicles - was to be transferred to the joint-stock company. Furthermore, the Dutchman demanded that the Georgian side pay half the cost of new ships either with cash or shares, a condition that could potentially grant the foreign partner a controlling stake in the company. Despite Akaki Khoshtaria’s assurances that the deal was beneficial to Georgia given its economic realities, Chairman Noe Zhordania and his Menshevik government dismissed the offer on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1920, citing national security and commercial viability as grounds for refusal.

Khoshtaria, who had commenced his work on economic projects during the Tsarist regime, was well respected and admired. His immense business venture in Iran acquainted him with Shah himself, while his success allowed him to foster close social and economic ties with Iran’s local financial community. Georgia’s democratic government sought to utilize Khoshtaria’s economic capabilities and partnered with him to capitalize on the Rioni water resources in the district of Lechkhumi. The agreed contract included a project for constructing a hydroelectric power plant, which was never brought to fruition given the lack of time and political stability afforded to Georgia in that era.

Notwithstanding the many private and state efforts to propel the production industry, the country’s economy remained in stagnation and its lack of viability created severe social difficulties. In face of such difficulties, opposition parties criticized the government’s economic policies and called for a radical change in policy. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920, at an economic policy meeting, Noe Zhordania publicly acknowledged the country’s economic woes: “Today, each of us feels that we are no longer headed towards catastrophe, we are already there.”

## **The Bourgeoisie**

WW-I put an end to the financial activities of famous European capitalists Rothschild and Nobel, who had several operations in Georgia before the war broke out. The war, the Russian Revolution and the ongoing civil conflict, seriously spooked the foreign businessmen and put an end to their ventures in this region. During this difficult time, Georgian businessmen displayed great patriotism and used all their resources to ease their country's economic burden. Georgia's bourgeoisie was deeply concerned with the progression of its country's economic development. Whereas, the right-wing social-democratic government was willing to facilitate capitalist development and cater to the needs of a capitalist society in hopes of a future socialist revival, the relationship between the state and its troubled bourgeoisie remained tense.

## **The Nobility**

Georgian nobility was faced with serious problems in the guise of a social-democratic government. Marxist doctrine characterized nobility as the rudiment of social decay and attributed the lack of social development in Georgia to the evils of this class. Marxism vehemently dictated the urgent need to rid the world of nobility and Georgia's socialist government seemed to share these views.

In Georgia, nobility represented 6% of the population, though the number of financially well-off noblemen was scarcely mentionable. Most of Georgia's noble class was made up of mid-level noblemen, whose material status was more akin to that of farmers' than representatives of nobility.

Following the October Revolution, the Kartli-Kakheti nobility tried to aid the country's development by agreeing to transfer the collective wealth of the Tbilisi Province aristocracy to the Georgian people. This decision transferred the ownership of 15 million rubles and various real-estate properties (including the Kakheti Railway) to the common people of Georgia. Despite the nobility's dedication and contribution to Georgia's wellbeing, the social-democratic government retained its distrustful attitude towards this segment of the population during its ruling years.

## **Church and State**

In line with European Socialist tradition, Georgian social-democrats believed in the separation of church and state, the freedom of conscience and the removal of religious teachings from school programs. The attitude towards the church, was reflected in the country's first Constitution, which states: "The church and state are separate and independent; No religion is preferential; Expenditure of local and state funds for religious purposes is prohibited".

During that era, Georgia's functional churches included: the Georgian Apostolic Orthodox Church, the Armenian-Gregorian Church, Jewish synagogues, Muslim mosques, Catholic and Protestant chapels. Georgia's population was not only multiethnic, but practiced religious pluralism as well.

After the restoration of its autocephaly, the Georgian Apostolic Orthodox Church encountered numerous difficulties. All was made more difficult by the fact that the Orthodox world, with the encouragement of the Russian Orthodox Church, refused to recognize the Georgian Church's autocephaly. The Russian Church tried to stall the rejuvenation by stirring more trouble such as demanding that the Russian churches operating in Georgia, along with their congregations, be

distinguished and given special privileges and trying to oppose the Georgian Church in Abkhazia with the help of local Russian-speaking parishioners.

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1918 at the monastery of Martkopi, His Holiness Kyrion II was murdered. This further exacerbated the Church's dire situation. Catholicos-Patriarch Leonide was chosen to head the newly leaderless church. In 1919, he visited Abkhazia, urging the faithful to protect and maintain an independent Georgia, while addressing the government with the following words: "Our state is Socialist, and principally cannot accept the Church. I concur. Yes, let the Church and the socialists divorce so that they no longer must put up with one another. But even divorce must be justly administered. All we ask from the state is that the separation is undertaken properly and fairly."

Despite unyielding criticism from both sides, documents show that the Georgian government, in fact, aided the Church financially. The Ministry of Internal Affairs made yearly transfers of 143 812 rubles to the Patriarch. This precedent could be explained by the Church's grave financial difficulties, which required some interference from the state.

Other denominations functioning in Georgia did not have the privilege of state sponsorship and were mainly dependent on the contributions of their followers and the financial backing of international organizations based to their religious affiliations (Catholic, Gregorian, Jewish, etc.). On the other hand, Georgian Muslims were more vocal of their needs and demanded 80,600 rubles from the government to establish a special Muslim clergy administration. At that time, the Turkish state seriously aided the Muslim population in Georgia, especially in the Adjara region. There, the local mullahs were mainly of pro-Turkish political orientation and were known to conduct anti-Georgian propaganda and to propagate the return of Southwest Georgia to Turkey.

Overall, during Georgia's short-lived democratic era, despite the hostility between the church and state, these relations never went beyond civilized animosity and the callous disposition was not manifested in repressive policies.

## **Education and Culture**

In parallel to limiting religious teachings, the state heavily invested in the expansion and development of a network of secular education. The declaration of independence created a solid foundation for the advancement of cultural vivacity, so much so that contemporaries of this period began referring to it as the "Golden Era". After more than a century of subjugation and a legacy of dire socio-economic hurdles, the Georgian people began the process of nation-state construction, which included the essential aspect of reviving and enhancing the country's cultural heritage.

Public education turned out to be the focal point of the socialist-democratic policy program and the government committed to the rejuvenation process wholeheartedly. A positive change was visible in the size of the school network - while in 1914 Georgia serviced 80 thousand students in 864 schools, by 1920 the numbers increased to 162 thousand pupils in 1924 schools across the country. Armenian, German and Russian schools operated alongside Georgian ones and there, the state tried to involve its non-native citizens in Georgia's socio-political life, beginning with primary education. January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1918, saw the opening of the first Georgian university.

Georgia's cultural life also benefited from the newfound freedom. The nation's writers and poets met the announcement of Georgia's independence with delight and soon the honored, respected poetic voices of the older generations were joined by a talented group of younger literary artists. During this

period modernist trends gained popularity in Georgia and the famous Blue Horn society, which united the great poets of the time, was formed. With social and political publications' increased popularity among the public, Georgian prose was also flourishing. Georgian musical arts likewise experienced a cultural revival. The Tbilisi Conservatory became a creative hub for Georgian musicians and performers. New orchestral and piano compositions were being created, while singers were garnering much critical acclaim and respect from the Georgian public. The Tbilisi Opera House gradually introduced Georgian repertoire to its stage. Remarkable achievements were made in the visual arts. The older generation of sculptors and painters were joined by young talent. Art exhibitions were frequently held in cities all over the nation.

The sport industry also saw some improvements. The first Georgian sports organization "Falcon" was founded by Giorgi Nikoladze. The group was aimed to popularize a healthy lifestyle among the public, provide physical training for the youth and spread physical education to the masses.

Overall, despite its political hardships, the democratic leadership of Georgia managed to ensure a positive development of the cultural life during its reign.

## **State of Affairs**

Considering the severe economic recession brought about by the First World War, Georgia's domestic affairs were far from satisfactory. Scores of wounded soldiers were returning from warfronts, while most Georgian families were dealing with unbearable living conditions. Despite financial hardships, the Georgian people labored diligently to build a new democratic state, to create national symbols and holidays and to overcome the faults of the country's past. May 26, 1918, the declaration of independence gave the general population some joy and hope for the future of the country. Soon enough the date was established as a national holiday. In short, the nation strived for a better future. Unfortunately, this proved to be a difficult task and the malignant remnants of its 100-year colonial history were so deep-rooted in practice that swift change was close to impossible.

## **Inter-Ethnic Relations**

In 1918, Georgia's recorded population amounted to 3,069,548 people. 1,843,600 of this number were Georgian Orthodox Christians, while 255,809 were Muslim Georgians. Among other ethnic groups, the population included 216,676 Armenians, 148,611 Russians, 107,456 Turks and 106,083 Ossetians. Georgia has always been a multiethnic nation. Jewish, Armenian, Kurdish, Assyrian and other migrants have sought refuge in Georgia as early as the VI century B.C.E. Over the years, continuous invasions by powerful neighbors and the appropriation of numerous Georgian territories resulted in the alienation of a significant portion of the population from traditional Georgian cultural heritage. As Georgia lost its centralized power over the country, uncontrolled migration began to sweep the nation. Following its forceful integration into the Russian Empire, Estonian, German, Russian and Ukrainian settlers came to Georgia. Russia's victories in the wars of the XIX century moved Armenian and Greek settlers from Turkey to Southern Georgia (Kvemo Kartli). The situation became even more complex after WW-I, when a new wave of Greek and Armenian refugees surged into Georgian ports (Poti, Batumi, Sokhumi) in hope of fleeing Turkey's repressive political climate. Meanwhile, Russian

authorities thwarted any attempt to revive Georgian national consciousness and prevented all educational initiatives aimed at reintegrating newcomers into Georgian society.

Russia's interference was especially malevolent in Abkhazia. In 1866, the Abkhazian revolt against the Russian Empire was cruelly suppressed by Russian troops under the command of General Svyatopolk Mirskii. On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1880, the emperor of Russia, Alexander II, issued a Royal Decree, which labeled the people of Abkhazia as 'traitors' for their support of Turkey in the Russo-Turkish war and forcefully exiled tens of thousands of Abkhazians to Turkey and to the eastern and northern provinces of Russia. Regarding the depopulated Abkhazian land, the Russians were quite clear in their intentions. In his memorandum, the Sokhumi District Commander, Colonel Brakker writes: "It is desirable to save as much free land as possible for the settlement of exclusively native Russian people". This memorandum goes hand in hand with the plan drawn out earlier by the Vice Regent of Alexander II in the Caucasus, Prince Mikhail Romanov, which envisaged Cossacks inhabiting the territories from the Kuban River to the river of Inguri. According to the initiative of Prince Oldenburg, a relative of Nicholas II, in 1904 Gagra and its region were excluded from the Sokhumi district and subjected under the Sochi district.

On March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1917, a Committee of Public Security, headed by Prince Alexander Shervashidze (Chachba), was formed in Sokhumi. The Committee sent a delegation to Khakurinokhabl, a small settlement near Maikop, to attend the Congress of the Union of Mountain Peoples of Northern Caucasus in August of 1917. Later, in October of the same year, another delegation was sent to Vladikavkaz where the unification of the South-Eastern Union of Cossack Troops, the Union of Mountain Peoples of Northern Caucasus and the Free People of the Steppes, so called 'Mountainous Republic', was announced. This agreement never became fully operational due to political complications in Northern Caucasus and the outbreak of civil war in Russia.

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1917, at a congress of the representatives of Abkhaz people of Sokhumi, the Abkhazian People's Council was formed and headed by Simon Basaria. The Council was assigned the task "to carry on work towards the self-determination of the Abkhazian people". Later developments confirm that in 1917-1921, a large group of ethnic Abkhazian nobility aimed to level the field with Georgia and become a separate but equal member of the Caucasus and the Transcaucasian Federation. They did not wish for secluded autonomy under Georgian rule and an independent Georgia was a severe hindrance to their ambitions. It is worth mentioning here that in 1917, on the territory of Abkhazia, Georgians represented 42 percent of the local population, Abkhazians 21 percent and the rest of the population was represented by Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Germans, Armenians, Estonians and other nationalities.

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1918, a meeting between the delegates of the Abkhazian People's Council and representatives of the Constituent Assembly of Georgia was arranged. At the gathering, the two sides came to an agreement and the Abkhazians promised to cease contact with the self-proclaimed "Mountainous Republic". This was eventually legally fixed by an agreement signed by the government of the Georgian Democratic Republic and the Abkhazian People's Council in June of 1918. This agreement between Sokhumi and Tbilisi created some discontent among the Abkhaz population and inspired the conception of a military putsch under the leadership of famous Bolshevik, Efrem Eshba during February 16-21<sup>st</sup>, 1918. As a result, for a short period of time, Sokhumi came under the control of the members of the so-called "Military-Revolutionary Committee" and the self-proclaimed "Revolutionary Black Sea" sailors. The committee was eventually dismembered and the revolt

suppressed by the united forces (Georgian Legion and Abkhazian Squadron) of the Abkhazian People's Council.

In spring of the same year between April 8<sup>th</sup> and May 17<sup>th</sup>, because of Bolsheviks military offensive conducted by the Sochian Red Guard, the whole Sokhumi district, except for the Ochamchire area, came under Bolshevik control again. The Abkhazian People's Council approached the government of the Federal Republic of Transcaucasia for help and the latter sent the region units of Georgian Corps troops under the command of Colonel Alexander Koniashvili and Georgian National Guard under the command of Valiko Jugeli to quell the situation. These troops acted in accordance with the mandate given by the Transcaucasian Democratic Federal Republic where the Abkhazian People's Council legitimately represented the population of the region. The Bolsheviks were defeated near the village Dranda and forced to leave Sokhumi and its district.

With the dissolution of the Transcaucasian Federation and the creation of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, the Abkhazian People's Council took initiative and assumed its position as ruling government of Abkhazia. On June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918, after a series of negotiations with the central Georgian government, an official agreement was signed, which allocated local regional leadership to the Abkhazian People's Council. In turn, the central state pledged to allocate financial resources for the region. In addition, Georgian troops were sent to help the local government maintain order and create stability in the area. While the settlement did not allow for an independent Abkhazia, the terms were agreeable even to the most separatist members of the ethnic population. Abkhazian leaders understood that their people strive towards independence was of secondary importance in comparison to the real issues the region was faced with. On the one hand, the looming threat of Turkish occupation and on the other hand, the likely establishment of a Bolshevik regime in Abkhazia, made a treaty with the Georgian government more than satisfactory.

The negotiations and the eventual agreement signed in Tbilisi, by representatives of both sides, were in no way favorable to the Bolsheviks. As a response, during the summer of 1918, the Bolsheviks carried out a third raid under command of Yakov Antonov, which intended to recapture Sokhumi. They managed to go as far as New Athos before the local government decided to take swift measures to ensure the city's safety and sent an urgent telegram to the central government. On June 17<sup>th</sup>, the Minister of Defense notified General Mazniashvili of his appointment to the posts of General-Governor of Abkhazia and Commander of the Black Sea Troops. The primary mission was to organize the city's defense and prevent the Bolsheviks from entering Sokhumi. Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks, who had already captured New Athos, were awaiting reserves to move towards Sokhumi. The subsequent stage involved a counter-attack, aimed at ridding Abkhazia of Bolsheviks altogether. On June 17<sup>th</sup>, taking advantage of the enemy's abeyance, General Mazniashvili's Army attacked Bolsheviks and drove them away towards Gudauta. Unable to hold their ground in Gudauta or Gagra, the Bolshevik forces continued to retreat, and after a brief altercation, they left Sochi as well. With orders from the Abkhazian People's Council and central government of the Georgian Democratic Republic, and a request from the administration of Sochi, General Mazniashvili's forces took control of the cities of Sochi and Khosta, while the Bolshevik troops withdrew to Tuapse. As his memoirs indicate, the general was reluctant to continue the attack on Tuapse and recommended a more defensive strategy that involved constructing a defense line along the River Shaki to prevent further attacks and incursions from the North. Unfortunately, due to Georgia's severe shortage of grain and oil and the Kuban government's promise to sell the products to Georgia at low prices, the local Abkhazian and central Georgian government

declined the general's defense plan and ordered an attack on Tuapse. The goal was to take control over the last section of Maykop – Tuapse railway to facilitate transport of oil and grain. On July 26<sup>th</sup>, after a fierce battle, the Georgian troops took Tuapse, thus, General Mazniashvili successfully carried out his mission and placed the district of Sochi and most of the Tuapse district under Georgian government control.

While the Georgian Army was actively fighting against the Bolsheviks, supporters of Alexander Shervashidze and Tatash Marshania, managed to organize the mooring of a Turkish navy ship that carried a small Turkish military contingent headed by Turkish colonel Jemalbek Marshan, an ethnic Abkhaz, who was born and raised in Turkey. Having been displaced to Turkey by Tsarist Russia in 1877, the returning Abkhazians sought to take over Sokhumi with the help of Turks. Although the Ottoman Government in Constantinople tried to present this subsequent failed military operation as the Abkhazian nobility's private initiative, it soon became known that general Vehip Pasha, a Commander of the Eastern Front of the Ottoman Army, personally gave the order. The plan was unfruitful, since the Turkish troops were discovered early on and were forced to surrender.

The late August of 1918 was calamitous for the South-Eastern Bolshevik Red Army. Denikin's Volunteer Army took Ekaterinodar and Novorossiysk, and was pushing the Bolshevik forces back, towards Armavir. The defeated Taman Red Army was also trying to reach Armavir and unite with the South-Eastern Red Army. To accomplish this, the Taman Red Army needed to move toward Tuapse and pass along the Tuapse-Armavir railway. On their way through Tuapse, the Bolsheviks defeated Mazniashvili's troops and a detachment of cossacks and continue their movement towards Armavir. Georgian troops lost control over the Tuapse district and over 1/3 of the Sochi district, which was subsequently taken by Denikin's Volunteer forces while they were chasing down the Taman Red Army.

In early September of the same year, the leadership of Denikin's Volunteer Army and the Kuban government demanded that the Georgian government withdraw its troops from the remaining 2/3 of the Sochi district, since they regarded the entire Black Sea province, including the Sochi district, as a part of Kuban.

To resolve the contentious issues, Minister of Foreign Affairs, E. Gegechkori and general Mazniashvili were sent to Ekaterinodar to meet with Denikin's Army representatives. The negotiations were held on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1918. The Volunteer Army delegation, general Denikin, general Alekseyev and others adamantly demanded that Georgia recognize Sochi and Gagra districts as part of the Kuban Republic and immediately withdraw its troops from those territories. As a response, the Georgian side denied the Russian delegation's claim to Gagra and in turn insisted that the Sochi region be temporarily left under Georgian rule. The talks were a failure and no agreement was reached.

In November of 1918, after the surrender of Germany and the complete evacuation of German forces from Georgia, leaders of the Volunteer Army decided that time was right to carry out their plans and capture the remaining territories of the Sochi and Gagra districts. Thus, Denikin, who dictated the political climate in Southern Russia, decided to forcefully solve the issue of Georgia's borders once and for all. With the slogan "United and Indivisible Russia!" his army began to march towards Georgia. An anti-Georgian state rebel, Alexander Shervashidze struck a deal with Denikin's Army and tried to stage a military coup in Sokhumi. With the help of a core group within the Abkhazian People's Council, government forces recaptured the occupied buildings and on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1918, arrested the coup leaders before they managed to seize power in the city. Following these events, the Chairman and

members of Abkhazian People's Council proposed to dissolve the Council and hold new democratic elections for the new Council, which would equally represent the entire population of Abkhazia.

How could Alexander Shervashidze's and a few other Abkhazian People's Council members' persistence to oppose and distance from the Georgian Republic be explained? There were perhaps multiple motives, but the following reasons seem to be most likely: fear of the unpredictability of a socialist government, fear of such government's aggressive attitude towards wealthy landowners (a group, which Shervashidze belonged to) and the inevitable land reform that the socialist government seriously contemplated. The roots of their resistance seemed to have little to do with issues of ethnic or Abkhazian separatism.

Here it is worthwhile to mention that during last two months of 1918, Armenian Dashnak party emissaries, who actively supported the Volunteer Army's actions in the regions of Sochi and Gagra, persuaded the local Armenian peasantry to stage an uprising against the administration and support the Armenian Republic in its war with Georgia. An armed rebellion commenced in several Armenian villages near Gagra, while the Armenian rebels' 'appeal' for help and support was used by General Denikin as a justification for the advancement of his troops. On February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1919, the Volunteer Army troops attacked and disarmed a small Georgian reserve in Sochi, took control over the entire district, captured Gagra and did not halt until reaching the Baiti River. The United Kingdom's promise that it would not allow Georgia to come under attack had little to no effect on Denikin's resolve.

On February 15<sup>th</sup>, Noe Zhordania addressed the United Kingdom's 27<sup>th</sup> division commander, General Forestier-Walker, who was stationed in the Caucasus, and demanded that Denikin evacuate Gagra, warning that otherwise Georgia would have to restore the borders itself. As a result, UK representatives ordered Denikin to leave Gagra and at the same time instructed the Georgian government to refrain from taking the city by force. But Denikin had no intentions of giving up the city, he telegraphed British administration in Constantinople and explained that his actions were forced by abusive and oppressive actions of Georgian troops against local Russians, Armenians and Abkhazians. He stated that he would keep Sochi and Gagra districts under Russian control and demanded the declaration of the Sokhumi district as a neutral zone, the immediate withdrawal of Georgian troops from its territories and called for the creation of a "separate" Abkhazian state. These demands were thoroughly understood and immediately rejected not only by the Georgian government but also by the British Command. Later that month, a reserve of one hundred English soldiers under the command of Colonel Fines was sent to stand between the two opposing forces near the River Bzipi. The demonstrative British interference had no effect on the Georgian side. They had no intentions to give up the Gagra district to Russian forces, and soon the forces under the command of general Gedevanishvili, bypassed the British checkpoints, crossed the river Bzipi and in a matter of days seized territories up to the Mzimta River. Simultaneously, an uprising was organized in Sochi by so called Green Guerrilla Army led by captain Nicholas Voronovich. This rebellion was fully coordinated with the Georgian government and helped to divert some 1500 of Denikin's men. Under diplomatic pressure from the UK, Georgians were eventually forced to retreat slightly and finally ended up making camp along the Mekhadyri River.

By late January of 1920, situation with White Movement deteriorated dramatically, so heads of the Allied Powers agreed to cease their aid to the Volunteer Army, since the catastrophic state of the White Movement was already beyond repair. Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks were preparing an invasion of the Caucasus. On February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1920, Lenin demanded that Orjonikidze (Chairman of the Bolshevik

Caucasian Bureau) restore Soviet governance in North Caucasus. As a result of an invasion in March of 1920, the 'Whites' were expelled from Kuban and Northern Caucasus. To the east, the Bolsheviks took Grozny on March 24<sup>th</sup>, followed by Derbent on the 25<sup>th</sup> and on March 28<sup>th</sup>, Novorossiysk fell. On March 31<sup>st</sup>, Orjonikidze established and chaired the North Caucasian Revolutionary Committee, while the deputy chairman position was assigned to Sergei Kirov.

In parallel to the complex situation in Abkhazia, ethnic tension rose in the Ossetian-populated Shida Kartli regions of Georgia. Following the 1917 February Revolution, the Ossetian National Committee intended to create a separate "South Ossetian" administrative-territorial state. In March of 1918, before the declaration of Georgia's independence, the organization staged a revolt, which led to bloody clashes between the two opposing sides. The rebellion assumed a national character. The city of Tskhinvali was destroyed and plundered, while the small contingent of Georgian National Guard troops sent to establish order in the municipality were completely annihilated.

October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1919, marked the beginning of the second Ossetian rebellion headed by the Bolshevik Regional Committee with its center in the village of Java. The goal of this particular mutiny was to join Bolshevik Russia and so the Bolshevik organizations operating in the Caucasus region were actively assisting the rebels. The central government successfully extinguished the rebellion, but in May-June of 1920, as Russia's Red Army was invading Georgia via Sovietized Azerbaijan, Ossetians rebelled once again and declared "South Ossetia" part of Soviet Russia. The Bolshevik Regional Committee had organized and armed Ossetian force in Vladikavkaz. The detachment crossed the border into Georgia and fought on the side of local Ossetians. This uprising was marked with exceptional aggressiveness and scale. Georgian troops, led by general Kvinitadze had to suppress it with particular force.

It was obvious that the Georgian government failed to find a convenient method to deal with the Ossetian-populated Shida Kartli region of Georgia. A significant number of Ossetians that were embroiled in the Russian Bolshevik agenda were not only advocating Russian subjugation but were keenly involved in the customary act of pillaging neighboring Georgian settlements. While the majority of the ethnic Ossetian populace lived beyond the "South Ossetian" borders and had deep cultural-economic ties with local Georgians, the state was not able to utilize this advantage and failed to garner peace in the region.

Muslim Georgia also caused headaches for the central government as the Turkish state actively promoted pro-Turkish sentiments in areas populated with Muslim Georgians. In January of 1919, a rebellion, ignited by local landlords, ensued in the Akhaltsikhe district. With the initiative of the Muslim National Committee and the command of the 9<sup>th</sup> Turkish Army division, on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1919, in the city of Kars, the newly founded South-West Caucasus Republic declared its independence. The rebel objective was to appropriate the Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe districts and to detach the Batumi region from Georgia, uniting them with the Kars, Ardaghan and Olti provinces. All this was in service of expanding the South-West Caucasus Republic's territories. It should also be noted that the severity of the local Menshevik government administration, under the leadership of emissary Leo Rukhadze, also enhanced the degree of discontent among the Georgian-Muslim population. This fact was conveniently exploited by the powers closely related to the South-West Caucasus Republic and so general Makashvili's small Georgian armed forces were expelled from the cities of Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe. The unsatisfied Georgian government dismissed the experienced general and appointed general Mazniashvili as commander of the Akhaltsikhe battalion. However, Mazniashvili did not receive

the promised military support due to the war in Abkhazia and his troops were forced to retreat all the way to Atskuri. Disappointed with his failure, the central administration recalled general Mazniashvili from the region and sent general Kvinitadze in his place. The Georgian leadership refused to acknowledge the simple fact that the country needed to have a strong army if it wished to be victorious and that even the brightest generals, such as Mazniashvili, could not hope to defeat the enemy without an efficient army. It was for this reason that general Kvinitadze requested an adequate armed force from the government and refused to launch an attack until he was satisfied with the quality and quantity of the troops at his disposal. Soon, as a result of a series of successful military operations, the districts of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki were recaptured and the district of Ardaghan was restored under Georgian control. At the same time, in cooperation with the 27<sup>th</sup> division of the British Army, the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Armenia managed to take large territories of the Kars and Kazizman districts. On April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1919, the South-West Caucasus Republic was abolished and its self-proclaimed leaders were arrested. Under such circumstances, the government was slow to grant the Muslim population territorial autonomy and was therefore dragging its decision-making process. Later, Abkhazia and Muslim Georgia were granted autonomy by the Constitution, but its nature and limits were not referenced in the document.

One of the main reasons behind Georgia's interethnic tensions in 1918-1921 was the inadequate perception of political reality on behalf of the ruling party. Georgia's right-wing social-democrats, who had always opposed the dissolution of the unified Russian realm and strived for an internationalist proletarian world, were compelled to build a nation-state using outdated social-democratic illusions as their guiding policy principles. Reality, on the other hand, demanded a fundamental change to the government's national agenda. This, however, did not happen. Having never aspired to independence, the government of Georgia's Democratic Republic retained its Marxist approach to mitigating ethnic relations and attempted to rally groups around its principal slogan: "Proletarians of the world unite!" They also recognized "peoples' right to self-determination" and the need for "cultural-national autonomy", which meant that instead of territorial isolation, ethnic minorities were entitled to "extra-territorial" autonomy, a notion that could be accomplished by uniting minorities into National Committees and integrating them into the political activities of the nation. The desire to build a nation-state using Marxist and Internationalist methodology proved to be a faulted approach. The social-democrats transposed the Russian Party's interethnic agenda onto Georgia but the reality of the multi-national Russian Empire and its prospects of extra-territorial unification were drastically different than those of Georgia. Nonetheless, the government naively believed that proletarian internationalism could create a union of democratic peoples devoted to social justice. Such political naivety was calamitous for Georgia.

Another mistake had to do with the government's misappropriation of the word 'autonomy', a notion that was very popular among ethnic leaders of the time and one that was diametrically opposed by socialist agenda. It can be claimed that the 'autonomy' granted to Abkhazia and Muslim Georgia was an illusory promise that did no more than cause irritation and distress for minorities.

As devout Marxists revolutionaries, Georgian right-wing social-democrats believed that force was the decisive impetus of historical progress. And while their reign was riddled with revolutionary terminology, their attempts to avoid the 'freed slave syndrome' were futile and many Georgian citizens unduly adopted an aura of supremacy. This was particularly true of government officials, policemen and members of the National Guard. Constituent Assembly member, P. I. Brul encountered one of the many

examples of such mentality during his visits to Armenian, German and Russian villages in the district of Borchalo: “The activities of some commissioners, National Guardsmen, officers, policemen, district administrators and local government officials are beyond description...they act like petty kings. There is a blatant mockery of human rights and freedoms and a democratic presence is barely perceptible. On the other hand, the abundance of nationalism, is bordering chauvinism.” During those years, the central government’s military interventions in different conflicts were often insensible and inadequately tailored to specific situations. As expected, the revolts in Georgian-populated regions (Dusheti, Samegrelo, Sachkhere, etc.) were countered with fierce military operations, yet the same tactic was applied to the nonethnic Georgian areas (Abkhazia, Shida Kartli, Borchalo), where leniency and prudence in military policy would have better served the government’s purpose.

Although the ruling government officially recognized the democratic rights and freedoms of its subjects, the administration still pursued revolutionary tactics of state manipulation and in service of revolutionary goals, condoned unsanctioned arrests, searches and property seizures. Many state documents indicate that the then-Minister of Internal Affairs, N. Ramishvili, frequently and uninhibitedly appealed to such methods of state control. As previously mentioned the Minister of Internal Affairs had no need of court warrants and retained the right to make arrests and close down non-Georgian media establishments based on unproven allegations of treasonous activities. The central government was known to sanction such measures in case such facilities were to cause any displeasure to the state.

On the other hand, some non-Georgian ethnic groups were also guilty of exploiting illegal means to achieve their goals. Most often than not, these acts were meant to satisfy pretentious claims and political ambitions of the ethnicities’ active members. These leaders had an interest in maintaining control over administrative processes, affirming their dominance and obtaining privileges for their respective ethnicities.

At that time, ‘democratic movements’ among ethnic groups stemmed from the influence of nobility circles and were represented by members of the dominant class, particularly in the Abkhaz and Muslim regions. The degree of authority that the aristocratic intelligentsia held in these areas was formidable and usually targeted against the Georgian state. Even the most pro-Georgian minded ethnic leader, Memed Abashidze, harbored separatist yearnings and accentuated classist, religious and regional incongruities between the Muslim and Orthodox Christian Georgian populations. While his contribution to reuniting south-west Georgia to the mainland was renowned, his program and instructions for the Muslim Georgia Liberation Committee were in fact separatist by nature. Abashidze envisioned a ‘state within a state’, where Muslim Georgia would have full religious independence, a Sharia-based court, a madrasas system of education, agricultural freedom and independent trade, among other liberties. This project posed serious threats to the existence of a unified Georgia. If realized, Georgia would be faced with a divergent ethno-social, ethno-cultural pocket in an important geostrategic area, which understandably would further delay the country’s consolidation process.

The claims that Ossetian ‘democratic representatives’ demanded were even more uninhibited. Since so called “South Ossetia” had no nobility, its leadership positions were assumed by ex-prison guards and bolshevized soldiers, who held unmasked desires to join Russia. To this end, they staged revolts and terrible incidents of looting, all the while creating dire problems for Tbilisi. Their unlawful demands and complaints towards the state gave rise to conflict and created a hotbed of tension. Ossetian ethnic leaders paid no heed to the historical and legal basis of their claims, nor to the objective realities

of the situation. Instead, blinded by political ambitions, they proposed terms that no democratic government could possibly accept, since it would lead to the misappropriation of historic lands and ran profoundly in contradiction to international law.

It should be stressed that Georgia's political culture in the 1920s was severely underdeveloped, especially in the provinces. Only 36.7% of the population was literate, with even lower numbers in rural areas and only a handful of literate citizens in ethnic regions. Given such conditions, the local populace was understandably ill-informed of the political climate and unknowledgeable in the importance of either Western or Eastern political orientations. In fact, most of Georgia's citizens had a hard time distinguishing different political groups and their affiliations from one another. Ignorance could explain several instances where the same electorate (village) voted for pro-Georgian, pro-Turkish and pro-Azerbaijani resolutions with matching enthusiasm. As already mentioned, in 1919-20, emissaries from neighboring states became active in Georgia and gathered local people with the pretexts of false promises and convinced electors to willingly vote in their favor. Thus, differing anti-Georgian resolutions were adopted in Abkhazian and Ossetian villages in Shida Kartli as well as the South-West region of Akhaltsikhe-Akhalkalaki, all depending on which political force was currently occupying the areas.

Local ethnic grievances, substandard levels of political culture, rough social realities, assumed ethnic supremacies and an absolute disregard for democratic state structures, left a portion of Georgia's population ill-disposed towards independence. This in turn aroused dangerous anti-state sentiment among the local population.

## **Chapter 5. Foreign Policies of the Democratic Republic of Georgia**

### **Transcaucasia and World Politics**

Transcaucasia's historic status as one of the main junctures of international geo-strategic interests was still intact at the beginning of the XX century. Since ancient times, the Caucasus region played a pivotal role in international trading routes, leading to numerous conflicts over Caucasian passages. In the world of medieval politics, clashing desires to subjugate the Dariali and Derbend passes was a point of contention, while establishing dominance in the region - a prevalent objective.

By the end of the XIX century, the exploitation of Baku's oil reserves and Tchiatura manganese supplies dramatically increased the region's strategic importance. At the time, Germany's interests in the Near East were primarily dictated by its growing economic demands. Consequently, members of German business circles rapidly capitalized on the Tchiatura manganese mining operation and obtained certain rights over its production. Soon afterwards, the German joint-stock company, "Gizelkirkhen", began its successful operation in Georgia, during which it systematically increased ore processing rates and exported the goods to Europe.

Meanwhile, the Baku oil industry had reached colossal dimensions by the beginning of the XX century, accounted for 40 percent of the world's oil production and attracted investors from around the globe, including Noble, Rothschild, Mirzoev and others. Interest towards Azerbaijan's oil fields became even more prominent after the initiation of the Baku-Batumi pipeline and the induction of Batumi's port into the international economic trade cycle. As a result, Batumi's relevance was dramatically augmented and soon, the city attracted the notice of major players in international business circles and their

respective nation-states. As long as the Russian Empire controlled these regions, interested states maintained a standby position and refused to interfere with Russia's sovereignty. Yet, the repercussions of WW-I and subsequent Bolshevik tribulations left the region virtually orphaned and quickly attracted the attention of leading European countries.

## **Relations with Germany**

In 1918, Germany was the major player in the Caucasus region. In accordance to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, ratified by the Bolsheviks, Kaiser Wilhelm II was able to regroup German forces and amass enormous material resources (including territories of the Baltics, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus and monetary reparations paid by the Russian side).

German diplomacy methodically undercut Russia's influence in the South Caucasus region by forming new subordinated states, whose independence was more a guise than an actuality. Despite its political alliance with Germany, Turkey also sought to strengthen its authority in the region and vigorously accommodated its Pan-Turkish political interests. This overzealous Turkish activity in the region caused understandable irritation among top German politicians. General Erich Ludendorff wrote "... we could not rely on Turkey in this matter had been once again demonstrated by her conduct in Batum, where she claimed the right to retain all stocks for herself. We could expect to get oil from Baku only if we helped ourselves."

Considering the abovementioned processes, it is understandable that Georgia's Social Democratic government was in favor of maintaining good relations with the German state. Additionally, the fact that German Social Democracy was one of the most united and powerful political movements in Europe, further aided the development of close ties between Georgian and German politicians.

As previously noted, during the pre-war period a group of immigrant Georgian established ties with the German state in hope of restoring Georgia's independence. Their collaboration with German intelligence agencies subsequently laid the foundation for future partnership between the two countries.

Thus, by May of 1918, Georgia's entire political spectrum, with the sole exception of the Bolshevik movement, supported an alliance with Germany and the Western ally was not opposed to having Georgia under its auspices. Germany's stance was further affirmed during a meeting between its representative, general von Kressenstein and Noe Zhordania, who later explained Germany's interest with the following: "...Our disposition was mutually loyal, friendly and sincere. Yet, at the same time, the Germans opted for a radically different approach in Ukraine. There they dictated the government, assigned positions at will and meddled with the country's internal politics - in short, they treated Ukraine as a conquered country."

In light of the partnership's perceived benefits, on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1918, negotiations between representatives of the German Empire and the Georgian State took place in Poti. For the Georgian side, an agreement with Germany was arguably the only optimal course to deter Turkey's expansionist efforts. Therefore, the two states signed a provisional agreement guaranteeing future voluntary association. In essence of the abovementioned agreement between the two states ensured the German Empire's de facto recognition of the Georgian government and sanctioned complete German control over Georgia's railway system in periods of war. The document also secured a contractual agreement for future economic and loan programs with Germany. Additionally, the Georgian government hoped that its ally would help settle relations with Soviet Russia and support Georgia's development towards a

stable, well-managed nation-state. In accordance to the partnership Germany took control over Georgia's railways and ports, as well as all stationed ships and vessels, including passenger ships, tugs, barges, motorized boats and other naval equipment.

Despite Germany's assurances and Georgia's concessions, the alliance failed to yield expected results. The independent Georgian government was forced to relinquish the territories of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki, along with the entire Adjara region, to Turkish rule. Nonetheless, the resulting peace provided the government with the time it needed to regroup and secure Germany's assistance in hopes of regaining its lost territories through diplomatic channels.

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918, an large German warship sailed into the Poti port. Three to four thousand soldiers, armed with cannons and machine guns, were deployed to various districts of the city, while military units of 200 soldiers used the railway system to undertake daily operational tasks in the area.

Meanwhile, German representative, general von Kressenstein and ambassador to Georgia Count Schulenburg, whose advice and criticisms were often considered in Tbilisi, became authoritative figures within the Georgian political scene. The German ambassador, then a young diplomat, was awarded Queen Tamar's Order in appreciation of his contribution to Georgia. (It is worth mentioning that Count Schulenburg later as the German ambassador in the Soviet Union prior to World War II personally delivered Germany's official declaration of war to Soviet authorities).

During Georgia's short-lived period of independence, Germany played a pivotal role in organizing the Georgian Armed Forces. Among other military measures of support, existing telegrams from general von Kressenstein refer to the allocation of armor and military equipment for General Mazniashvili and indicate German involvement in mediating tensions in zones of conflict.

Such cooperation was clearly a cause of irritation for Bolshevik Russia, which was already dealing with severe internal troubles in the summer of 1918. At that time, Russia's civil war was quickly escalating, the White movement, with the backing of the Triple Entente, was approaching Moscow, while Denikin's expanding army was posing serious threats from the south. Meanwhile, Russia's official communist press contended with venomous articles in face of impending failure. Moscow was particularly vexed by Tbilisi because of its joint military parade with Germany on Rustaveli Avenue near the Temple of Glory (presently the "Art Gallery"). At 5 pm on July 11<sup>th</sup>, the day of the parade, public addresses were made by both Georgian and German officials: Government Chairman Noe Ramishvili, German Ambassador Count Schulenburg, Minister of Defense Giorgadze and Lieutenant General Baber. After conducting an inspection of the presented military formation, the Government Chairman addressed the German forces, during which Ramishvili emphasized Georgia's cooperative stance with Germany, its desire to develop friendly relations and finally expressed hope that by joining forces, the Georgian and German armies would be able to establish and maintain order in the country. In response to this, Count Schulenburg reaffirmed the commitment to defend each other's legitimate interests and further stressed his hopes of a continuous partnership between the German Imperial Army and Georgian forces.

Apart from its supplied military aid, Germany had significant economic interests in the region. Given its state of war and need of resources, Germany utilized its position in the Caucasus for access to raw materials: manganese, timber and coal. Furthermore, Georgia provided a direct transit for Baku's oil, while the Georgian and South Caucasian Railway allowed passage to Northern Iran, the British colonies in India and other territories. Given these factors, the alliance between Georgia and Germany seemed mutually beneficial at the time. Despite numerous incongruities surrounding the partnership, the

Georgian government was wary of worsening its relations with the Western ally and often turned a blind eye to its misgivings. Since, the newly established nation was in dire need of assistance, it agreed to many concessions to secure Western patronage. The social-democratic government vindicated this course of action with ideological reasoning and urged the public to appreciate and support this policy of cooperation.

From June to October of 1918, a delegation from the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was sent to Germany to negotiate with German colleagues. During the stay, they worked tirelessly to draft a general agreement of cooperation. The main obstacle was Soviet Russia's objection to the *de jure* recognition. In the end, Germany managed to pressure the Soviets into accepting the new arrangement and although Russia refused to recognize Georgia's independence, it nonetheless conceded Germany's recognition in accordance to paragraph 13 of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. On October 3, 1918, arrangements had been made for the official ratification of the partnership, yet this time Germany was unable to fulfill its side of the bargain due to a government crisis, which soon turned into the November Revolution. Germany lost the war and Georgia's partnering strategy suddenly lost all traction. The prepared economic and political agreements that were merely a signature away from being realized were never put into action. Before leaving Germany, Zurab Avalishvili, a representative of the Georgian delegation, met with Dr. Gropert at the German Foreign Affairs Ministry, where he was given the following friendly advice: "Try to rally the Triple Entente countries to your side as soon as possible. This will be a difficult task since the Allied Powers, whose wish is to restore Russian unity will stand against Russia's bordering states. Moreover, the Armenians will probably become Entente favorites. And the Entente will try to appease them by satisfying their claims to your two districts - Borchalo and Akhalkalaki". Soon enough, these prophetic words proved to be true.

## **Relations with Turkey**

Georgian politicians and diplomats, who wished to arrange a non-annexation peace treaty with Turkey, failed to do so and the Turks unapologetically appropriated the territories lost during its war with Russia in 1877-1878, along with the Akhaltsikhe district, which was lost in 1829. On June 4, 1918, under pressure from Turkey, Georgia had to sign a "Peace and Friendship Agreement" that recognized Turkish supremacy over the forcefully seized lands.

The situation in the annexed areas was already highly unstable. Entranced by its appealing geo-strategic location, Russia fervently tried to establish and strengthen Russian influence in these historic Georgian provinces. They did so by settling Russian colonists, retaining a large contingent of troops in the area and disseminating anti-Georgian sentiments among the existing Muslim population. Meanwhile, the Georgian National Liberation movement, whose ideologues often risked their lives in attempts to restore national consciousness among Georgian Muslims, was left to its own devices. After the Turkish occupation, the patriotic effort to achieve unity between Christian and Muslim Georgians was under serious threat.

Turkey spent enormous amounts of money to maintain its influence in these territories. To a certain degree such expenditure was justified, as a significant portion of the dominant class of Georgian Muslims strictly abided Sharia rules and were part of the pro-Turkish organization "Sedai Millet" and dreamt of being a part of the state of Turkey.

During WW-I, Turkey was dealt a series of blows, including the obliteration of its army's best divisions near Murguli and the surrender of Trabzon to the Russian Army. Between Russia's dreams of appropriating Constantinople and the Armenian wish to restore the 'Great Armenia' of Tigran the Great, the Entente powers envisioned the collapse of Turkey and the creation of new nation-states in its stead. It should be emphasized that the Entente leaders, including Russia, facilitated Armenia's utopian hopes and strengthened their anti-Turkish disposition. Subsequently, after the collapse of the Russian Army, this threat to territorial integrity was used by Turkey to justify the massacre of the Armenian population. Borjomi, Poti and other cities were soon overflowing with expelled Georgians, Russians, Greeks and Armenians.

Enver Pasha, the Turkish Minister of Defense, visited Batumi and solemnly declared that Turkey successfully recaptured its forcefully seized lands and that "Batumi and its province have been returned to the homeland". Soon enough, the Turks strengthened the region's pro-Turkish orientation and the activities of "Sedai Millet". Several thousand residents were killed as a direct result of Turkish violence in the Akhalkalaki province. Based on the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, Turkish authorities decided to hold a referendum in the occupied territories. To this end, they intensified their activities: members of the "Sedai Millet" organization and the local Muslim clergy were vigorously supported in their propagandist measures, the remaining Christians were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere, while the non-Christian population was compelled to vote in line with Turkey's directives. The referendum was held in such violation of the law that even Soviet Russia voiced its objections. An address by Soviet Foreign Affairs Ministry Commissioner, Giorgi Chicherin, in September of 1918, reads as follows: "Russian People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs objects to Turkey's violation of the terms of the Brest Treaty. The aforementioned is guilty of using violence against the local populations of Kars, Ardaghan and Batumi. Furthermore, right after its establishment, Turkish authorities have forcibly conscripted 19-year-old men into military service. Throughout the election process, the residents of these districts were stripped of their free will and were terrorized and belittled. Prior to the elections, people with anti-Turkish sentiments were exiled, imprisoned and in some cases even executed. The referendum was held under pressure from the Turkish government. The results of such elections were undoubtedly predetermined. The apparent violence against the populations of Russia's detached districts is a clear violation of Article IV of the Brest agreement, which is why the Soviet government does not recognize the results of the so-called free elections in the districts of Kars, Ardaghan and Batumi."

Nevertheless, Turkey's use of force on the Eastern Front failed to improve its political and military standing and the disastrous setbacks it experienced on the Macedonian and Palestinian fronts eventually lead to its brutal defeat in WW-I. The Turkish Empire collapsed and broke away into the Arab states of Syria, Palestine, Jordan and others, which in turn were divided amongst the Entente powers. According to the Armistice of Mudros, Turkey agreed to all of the Entente's demands, including the surrender of Batumi and its province. The victorious countries then decided to subject Batumi to the authority of Great Britain's Expeditionary Force.

### **British Politics in Southern Caucasus**

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1918 the Royal Navy ship "Liverpool" and two cruisers of the British fleet sailed into the Batumi port. The Brits revealed their political loyalties and initially established connections with the city's Russian organizations before inviting Georgian representatives aboard their

vessels. These meetings were intended to acquaint the British delegation with the region's political climate and its local leaders. During the discussions, Russian community representatives declared that the district of Batumi was an organic and integral part of the Russian state. After some deliberation the Brits announced their verdict: since the Batumi region was considered an integral part of Tsarist Russia and as Great Britain wished to restore Russia's legitimate government, the Batumi district administration would be transferred to the local Russian National Council under the systematic control of the British Governor General James Cooke-Collis.

On December 25, 1918, the British expeditionary corps entered Poti. The following day, German military troops vacated the city's port, while a special force sent from Tbilisi, hastily took control over the remaining military equipment. Upon arrival, the Brits made it clear to everyone that they represented the winning side and thus demanded unconditional obedience from the Georgians. They also assessed the country's Black Sea ports and sent some of its navy back to Batumi. Soon after, three British cargo ships and one warship anchored in Poti. The foreign officials also insisted that the head of the harbor grant them rights to inspect all its ships, cranes and barges and transfer its destroyer and auxiliary crane ship to the British fleet. Despite being told that their demands were impossible to accommodate without central government permission, in January of 1919 the abovementioned crane ship was willingly handed over to the Brits.

On December 30<sup>th</sup>, another four English vessels reached Batumi, this time, carrying 15,000 soldiers, commanded by General Foster Walker. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, an additional detachment of 600 English soldiers was brought into Poti. Upon visiting the port's trade union house, the Brits decided that the facility was to their liking and took over the building. None of the objections from the Georgian side had any effect on their decision to claim the property. In fact, the British outright refused to speak with local municipality representatives regarding this issue. The incident prompted an indignant and angry reaction from harbor workers, who voiced their grievances to the central government. The trade union leaders sent a telegram to Tbilisi, asking the state to coax the British expeditionary corps leadership into compliance and stop their soldiers' unbridled raids, a condition without which the workers would have to go on strike.

The unlawfulness of the Brits seemed inexorable at the time. It was obvious that Georgia's central government wished to avoid worsening its relationship with Great Britain and agreed to many concessions. This compliant attitude was evident in the statements given by Georgian officials in the early days of British occupation in Southern Caucasus. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Evgeni Gegechkori officially declared that the Georgian government agreed to accept British infantry and artillery brigades into Tbilisi and soon enough, British troops were camped in the capital, as well as in Georgia's Black Sea harbors. Upon arrival, the capital's abundance of red flags and portraits of Marx amazed the foreign officials, who inquired to their meaning with Georgian statesmen. The soothing answers they received assured them that the profuse symbolism did not refer to the state's socialist nature and had nothing to do with Bolshevism. Yet, the British representatives, especially their leaders, were distrustful of the social-democratic government and often aired their suspicions.

While Great Britain was entering Georgia, Armenian state representatives invited the Englishmen to Yerevan for an official visit. The presumed cooperation between the countries was clearly demonstrated by the Brits' pro-Armenian inclinations during their stint in Southern Caucasus - a development that consequently prevented the Georgian government from protecting its legitimate interests from Armenia. When Georgia was involved in a military conflict with Armenia, the British

sided with the Armenians, thereby forcing the Georgian government to divide the Borchalo region into three districts and hand over one piece of land to the opposing side.

The UK also defended the “White Russian General” Denikin’s interests and categorically demanded that Georgia vacate the Sochi district, which Georgian troops had occupied after extinguishing a Bolshevik insurrection. When negotiating with Georgian government officials, the foreign mediators were adamant that the Georgian state join forces with Denikin’s army and attack Bolshevism with a united front. At one of the talks, General Briggs straightforwardly told Evgeni Gegechkori that, “The Englishmen and the Italians will eventually leave, but the Russians will remain and you must be on good terms with them. This is my advice to you - surrender your pride, lend a hand to Denikin and tell him ‘We are with you!’ All small nations are weak, instead of fighting amongst one another, they must unite”.

Anti-Georgian sentiment was especially evident in the British-occupied Batumi district, where opinions regarding the future of this region were widely differing. First and foremost, was the notion that Batumi must be handed over to the restored Russian state. Another perspective proposed transferring the territory to Turkish rule. Meanwhile, some English officers, with close ties to the Azerbaijani state administration, demanded giving the Batumi region to Azerbaijan. And finally, there was the idea to rename Batumi and declare it as “Porto Franco”.

General Cooke-Collis had transformed Batumi into a nest of anti-Georgian intrigues. Since it became significantly difficult for pro-Georgian organizations to function in the city, many institutions resorted to underground operations. On the other hand, the pro-Turkish “Sedai Millet” movement exhibited a newfound freedom of development and established their own newspaper, a publication aimed at fighting pro-Georgian sentiment and propagating the idea of joining Turkey.

By 1920, Great Britain’s Caucasian policy underwent a transformation. The change came about after a Bolshevik victory over the Entente-backed White movement and the emergence of a Communist Russia. Given the new circumstances, Cooke-Collis pondered over “the possibility of returning Batumi to Georgia if appropriate conditions were met”. In March of 1920, the Brits were still hesitant to make a definitive choice, but the Sovietization of Baku notably accelerated the decision-making process. General Cooke-Collis finally announced that the Batumi district would be transferred to Georgian rule.

While the Bolshevik military success greatly influenced this outcome, it was not the only impetus that drove this decision. Other contributing factors included an aggravated domestic situation in Great Britain, a European proletariat exhausted by the war, a rampant depletion of state resources and a prevalent desire to end blood-shed. British soldiers yearned to return home. Before departing, General Cooke-Collis declared: “Batumi and its district have been given over to Georgia. All those who oppose its military will be considered an enemy of Great Britain and alongside Georgia we will take severe measures against the offender”.

On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920, Georgian troops entered Bartskhana (the Batumi pier). By July 7<sup>th</sup>, the city of Batumi was returned. An English officer, presiding over the ceremony dedicated to Georgia’s recapture of the region, stated: “Batumi and its district has returned to Georgia. We welcome this day and hope to see Georgia develop into a democratic country worthy of a place in the civilized international community”. After these words were uttered, the British flag was slowly taken down from the flag post and replaced by the tricolor Georgian flag.

## **Peculiarities of US-Georgia Relations**

The United States was relatively late in entering the Entente, but soon after joining, it became an active member of the partnership. At the time, it was not particularly interested in the Caucasus, but nevertheless strongly defended its former ally's, Russia's, interests in the region. America saw Bolshevism as an accidental event and the US administration was zealous to see the movement defeated. At the time, United States found the collapse of the Russian state simply unacceptable.

US-Georgia relations were seriously hindered by America's principled position of maintaining Russia's territorial unity and restoring its government. The United States government, in accordance to its principled stance, recognized Georgia only as a de-facto state. In 1919 the United States Consul, Charles Moser, arrived in Tbilisi and established the US mission in the city center, on Veliaminov Street. A plan to create a US-Georgia ore company was being seriously considered. A group of American businessmen approached the Georgian government with a proposal aimed at developing the nation's maritime transport for commercial purposes. Despite its qualms about Russian sovereignty, the US was still active in the Southern Caucasus through the humanitarian mission of "America's Near East Aid Committee", which supplied food and clothing to people in conflict regions. The committee also owned a warehouse where it employed Georgian citizens and systematically delivered aid to various regions of the country.

## **Georgia-Armenia Conflict**

Because of Byzantine aggression, Armenia lost its statehood in the X century. Over the subsequent ten centuries, the Armenian nation vainly struggled to regain its national independence. Nonetheless, Armenians managed to maintain their Monophysite religion, the supreme power of the Catholicos of Echmiadzin and consequently developed an enviable sense of national identity.

In Georgia, most of the population living in Javakheti was Muslim, with only a minor segment identifying as either Orthodox Christians or Catholic. In the XVII-XVIII centuries, most Georgians who refused to accept Islam, or in extreme cases Catholicism, were either executed or exiled from the region. During the Russo-Turkish war, Muslim Georgians - Javakhs - displayed fierce resistance against Russian forces and eventually were forced to flee their homes for Eastern Turkey. With Russian domination of South Caucasus, Armenia found itself a powerful patron. Russia voluntarily began to settle Armenian refugees from Turkey onto Georgian territories. In the post-war years of 1828-1829, approximately 30 thousand Armenians were settled in the Akhalkalaki district. Since Tbilisi was considered the viceroy's capital in the Caucasus, many wealthy Armenians migrated to the city. A clear majority of those Armenian immigrants became loyal defenders of Imperial Russian's interests.

During WW-I, many Armenians dreamed of restoring the 'Great Armenia' of King Tigran and with the major encouragement and promise of military support from Russia and other Entente leaders, decided to launch a revolt against Turkey. This promised support never materialized and uprising had tragic consequences – several hundred thousand of Armenians mostly civilians were massacred and driven away from their homes by Turkish regular army. Georgian cities of Batumi, Poti and Sokhumi had quickly become refugee havens for many displaced Armenians.

Soon after Georgia declared its independence in end of May 1918, Armenia followed course. With German troops present in Georgia, the Armenians were wary of revealing their territorial

ambitions. But as soon as Germany was defeated in WW-I, representatives of Armenia's administrative elite (many of whom had officially served in Tbilisi - including Alexander Khatisov, who was head of the city for many years) became entranced with the desire to expand Armenia's territory at the expense of Georgia. Armenia claimed rights over the Kars, Ardaghan and Olti districts (nowadays these lands represent the Kars region of Turkey). The Borchalo and Akhalkalaki regions were also a point of contention for Armenia. They attempted to legitimize these claims by referencing certain periods in history when these lands were under Armenian rule. It should be objectively stated that Georgia's right-wing Social Democratic government, with its revolutionary phraseology and encouragement, gave hope to Armenian government at the Transcaucasian Ethnic Conference in Petrograd, where Georgian social-democrats assured Armenian nationalist party members to reevaluate some of the Caucasus' administrative borders based on ethnic distribution. Although the commitment was never made official, the mere existence of such a promise arguably encouraged Armenia's territorial aspirations, but their professed entitlement to Borchalo, Ardaghan and Olti districts was not entirely justified in term of ethnic constituencies, given that most of the local populations were of Turkish, German and Russian decent. With territorial expansion in mind, Armenia's state was able to recruit a segment of the Armenian population living in Southern Georgia and convince them to register for their military units.

Armenian military troops attempted their first attack on October 18, 1918. The vanguard entered the Borchalo zone (previously occupied by the Turks), crossed the demarcation line south of the village Kamenka and took hold of the Koberi Railway Bypass. As a response, Georgia's military leadership sent in two armored trains with a detachment of 250 men, thereby forcing the opponent to flee Koberi on October 20<sup>th</sup>. Armenian commanders rejected the Georgian ultimatum to withdraw the forces south of the demarcation line to Shagal Station and instead attacked Karindja on October 23<sup>rd</sup>; the fierce fighting persisted from October 25<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>, during which the village was held intermittently by both sides. Finally, the engagement of armored trains advantaged the Georgian side and on October 26<sup>th</sup>, Armenia's Prime Minister sent a telegram to the Georgian government stating that the attack on Karindja was simply a result of a misunderstanding. The cable also proposed suspending military operations and convening a conference to resolve border issues. Military action was thus, temporarily suspended.

What caused the October incident between Armenia and Georgia? It is entirely possible that by instigating the conflict, Armenia tried to prove its loyalty to the Entente. With this demonstration Armenians tried to show that they were worthy of the promises made to them by Entente leaders prior to the onset of WW-I. The Armenian government was also interested in seeing Georgia's reaction to a military threat in disputed territories. Turkey's role in the conflict must also be acknowledged - by sowing enmity between two Christian nations the Turks safeguarded themselves from the possibility of a united Georgian-Armenian military force. To this end, Turkish General Khashim Pasha visited Erevan on September 5<sup>th</sup>, where he offered his Armenian hosts the opportunity to hold not only the Turkish-occupied part of the Echmiadzin district, but the buffer zone of Lore (south of Kamenka) as well. At the same time, Turkey's representative in Georgia, Pasha Abdul-Keri was proposing the same offer to the Georgians earlier.

In November of 1918, negotiations began between Georgian and Armenian delegates. Through its special representative in Erevan, the Georgian government offered to hold a conference in Tbilisi. The Armenian side largely accepted this proposal however it did set many preconditions to the meeting. On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the conference opened in Tbilisi. Representatives of Georgia, Azerbaijan and the Mountainous Republics were present for the negotiations. The Armenian delegation did not arrive.

The conference was postponed first till November 20<sup>th</sup>, then once again till November 30<sup>th</sup>, but it was clear that the Armenians were not going to show and were simply biding their time. On December 5<sup>th</sup>, in the village of Uzunlara (Borchalo district), a Georgian officer was killed, while his remaining garrison was disarmed and taken prisoner. Armenia's regular army units began a large-scale attack four days later December 9<sup>th</sup>. The Armenian force of 4 500 soldiers was opposed by the Tbilisi governorate battalion and its armored trains. In addition, three hundred soldiers were dispatched from the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment stationed in Alaverdi, and another hundred from the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, but the number of Georgian forces still did not exceed 550. Such disparate ratios required a great deal of strategic shrewdness from the Georgian side, a feat, which they carried out exquisitely. Initially, the Armenian forces, due to its numerical advantage, gained some tactical success by forcing the Georgians to retreat in the direction of Sadakhlo. Though, once at Sadakhlo, the Georgian military unit annihilated the Armenian rearguard. On December 19<sup>th</sup>, after hours of combat near Ekaterinenfeld, Georgia gained another important victory and forced its enemy to retreat. On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, Armenian forces moved towards Shulaveri and came as far as the Khrami River, thus significantly advancing their positions in the direction of Tbilisi. By then, the Armenians had managed to gain control over the entire disputed territory of the Borchalo district, with the sole exception of Ekaterinenfeld, a strategically important western pass to Georgia's capital. On December 24, 1918, the Armenian commander in Borchalo, general Dro Kanayan gave Georgians an ultimatum: should the Akhalkalaki district not be immediately handed over to Armenia, Armenian troops would cross the Khrami River and move the conflict further westward. The Georgian government, whose forces had managed to maintain control over the Akhalkalaki district despite many Armenian advances, rejected the ultimatum and instead, launched a counterattack.

By the end of December, the Georgian military operation of Shulaveri was conducted splendidly. According to military experts: "In terms of combat tactics, the final battle of Shulaveri on December 28, 1918, was a successfully executed attack from the Georgian side and was a culmination of a series of military strikes that occurred between December 25<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>." The comprehensiveness of its planning and the pacing of its implementation made it a brilliant example of an offensive operation." Aside from such praise, experts also indicated that despite achieved success, Georgia's strategic intentions were not carried out to their full extent, as they failed to completely surround and destroy existing Armenian forces. The Georgians could not capitalize on their military successes due to the Armenia's British patronage. In mid-December, Great Britain had offered to mediate peace negotiations between the two countries, thus allowing Armenia to diplomatically achieve its desired results. Georgia declared its readiness to negotiate and sent a telegram to Yerevan, listing its primary clauses for a peace agreement. Military action, however, was not avoided.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919, per Britain's request, hostilities were temporarily ceased and peace talks commenced, first in Karaklis, then in Tbilisi. The Peace Conference, held between January 9<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, was dedicated to ending the war and there, the two opposing sides officially agreed to the terms and conditions of peace. As a result of the peace talks, a government agreement was signed, which put an end to the war and established a neutral zone in Lore. Another outcome of the negotiations was the division of the disputed Borchalo territory into three segments: the northern part was given to Georgia, the southern - to Armenia, while the Lore territory, with its copper-rich deposits and the Georgian monastery of Akhtala, was decreed a so-called 'Neutral Zone' and was transformed into a British military base. As some historians argue, Armenia would never have initiated a military operation

without the UK's assurance and support. Yet, Georgia's unexpected success on the military front, forced the British to change their aid strategy. In short, under British pressure, Georgia was forced to forfeit its military superiority and concede its sovereign rights over Lore. Despite the loss of territories, many Georgian soldiers and officers (771 men) were awarded the St. George's cross and medal for their courageous and valiant efforts to protect their homeland.

As a result of the four-week war, Georgia lost hundreds of its citizens, suffered enormous material damages and lost a part of the Borchalo district territory. The military incident also harmed the country's world image and negatively affected the international recognition of its independence. Unfortunately, neither the Georgian government nor the Armenian leadership managed to draw appropriate conclusions from this fratricidal war. Their border skirmishes concerning the Batumi district and the Ardaghan and Olti regions of Kars continued throughout the years of 1919-20. Armenia unabashedly demanded control over half of the Akhalkalaki district, two-thirds of the neutral Lore zone, the entire Olti region, one-third of the Ardaghan district, the Batumi Port, the left bank of the Chorokhi River, as well as complete jurisdiction over the Alexandropol-Batumi railway line. Georgia was willing to grant Armenia some territorial concessions, including half of neutral zone in Lore and the entire Olti region. On the other hand, Georgia forthrightly refused to give up even an inch of the Batumi and Akhalkalaki districts and although it insisted on having total control over the Ardaghan region, Georgia was open for negotiations in regard to one-third of the Ardaghan territories. Due to their extended territorial disputes, Georgian and Armenian representatives at the San-Remo Conference in April of 1920, were expressly told that unless they found a 'common platform' and resolved all of their disputes, appealing to the Entente High Council would not be tolerated.

The Georgian-Armenian controversy left a huge dent in the neighboring countries' relationship and its improvement later required a great deal of time. This conflict strengthens the opinion among many leading figures in cabinets of Great Britain and France, that was once expressed by Arthur James Balfour: "If they (Transcaucasian countries) want to cut their own throats why not let them do it... I should say we are not going to spend all our money and men in civilizing a few people who do not want to be civilized. We will protect Batumi, Baku, the railroad between them, and pipeline".

During British occupation, Armenia evaded further deterioration of its relations with Georgia, but with Britain's departure and the commencement of the Sovietization process, Armenian Bolsheviks found a new avenue to sow discord in the region.

## **Independent Georgia and Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijani leaders were the first to violate the ideological integrity of a united Transcaucasia at the Trabzon and Batumi conferences, where they took a pro-Turkish stance. Their position consequently led to serious confrontations with Armenia and a worsening relationship with Georgia. The reality of the political situation in Southern Caucasus gave rise to a conflict of interest between the abovementioned countries: Georgia was dependent on German support and Azerbaijan relied on Turkey, while Armenia anticipated the Entente's aid in restoring the 'Great Armenia'.

In the summer of 1918, by the time Georgian social-democrats chose to partner up with Germany, Russia's official Bolshevik press released a statement alluding to the rumor that Germany was planning to give Georgia authority over Baku's oil deposits. This rumor had no basis in reality. In fact, at that time, Baku had established a Soviet government, under the leadership of Stepan Shaumyan, and

Moscow greatly cherished this Soviet connection for its ability to preserve control over one of the world's most important oilfields. The Bolsheviks, however, could not retain their power, Baku's Commune fell, while their leaders (Shaumyan, Japaridze, Fioletov and others) were shot. Baku was soon dominated by nationalists - Musavats.

The Georgian government yearned to establish long-term peace in South Caucasus, a feat that they hoped to accomplish by gathering an International Conference of Caucasian States. Organizing such a conference was difficult due to the region's politically turbulent situation as well as the numerous border disputes between participating countries.

Relations with Azerbaijan was complicated due to the fact that Georgia's historic lands of Saingilo, which was part of the Tbilisi governorate even under Tsarist Russia, had become a point of contention between the two countries. By autumn of 1918 the Zakatala district was officially a part of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Having the support of Turkey and the convenience of a shared Islamic religion, the Azerbaijani state heavily enforced anti-Georgian propaganda in the region. With the help of local mullahs, the Muslim-Georgian population easily came under Azerbaijani influence, which in turn created the illusion that Zakatala was fully incorporated into Azerbaijan. There was, however, a distinct partiality towards Georgia on behalf of the Ingil population. Unfortunately, Georgia's difficult political and economic circumstances prevented the state from adequately investing in this opportunity and the Zakatala issue was never discussed between the neighboring countries' leaders. On the contrary, Azerbaijan tried to broaden its territorial claims during British occupation by utilizing Europe's interest in Baku's oil fields and endeavoring to convince Great Britain's Governor-General of the necessity to incorporate Batumi into the Azeri nation.

Following Armenian-Georgian hostilities, Georgian state authorities were especially keen to normalize relations with Azerbaijan. This measure was also required due to the worsening situation in North Caucasus, where opposing Russian forces were interlocked in fierce military conflicts and power sporadically shifted from Denikin's Volunteer Army to Bolshevik forces. Denikin, on his part, did not recognize the breakaway states of the Russian Empire, which he labeled as separatists, and if victorious, vowed to restore the 'united and indivisible' Russian state. The latter possibility was unacceptable to neither Azerbaijan nor Georgia, and thus established a common cause for union between the two neighboring nations. On June 16, 1919, a military agreement was signed between Georgia and Azerbaijan, which essentially delineated the common interests of the two nation-states. According to the agreement, "signatory states are obligated to join military forces against any attack that threatens the independence or territorial integrity of one or both participants of the agreement".

The significance of the agreement was augmented by the fact that it was also approved by the Georgian opposition. The most notable opposition leader of the National Democratic Party, Spiridon Kedia declared: "This agreement confirms that our country's leaders have finally renounced their party principles, which until now had hindered a Georgia-Azerbaijan partnership. I repeat, this is a joyous development, which demonstrates that we are gradually moving forward to acquiring a true concept of a nation-state." The Socialist-Federalists and the Social-Revolutionaries also commended the agreement. On the other hand, the partnership was scorned and opposed by Armenia, who worried of Turkey rather than their great northern neighbor - Russia. Yet, regardless of the partnership's merit and diplomatic attributes, unless implemented, the agreement had no actual impact and was virtually futile, as was subsequently proved.

Soon, after Sovietizing Dagestan, the Kremlin Soviets turned their attention to capturing Baku's oil-rich fields, and on the morning of March 27, 1920, Russia invaded Azerbaijan. They remembered Stepan Shaumyan's last admonition in a telegram to Lenin and Stalin, which conveyed his thoughts on the Baku-Moscow relationship: "Baku's separation from Russia! - would be a terrible blow to her wellbeing. If we support Russia's independence but willingly hand over our oil supply to Britain, are we not committing the greatest crime against the Russian Revolution?" Four armored trains headed towards Baku, crossed the Samur River without encountering any resistance. By midafternoon, the local Bolshevik delegation demanded the resignation of the Azeri government. Their forces quickly occupied key strategic positions throughout the capital, seized the city's arsenal, disarmed the police, released political prisoners and took control over Baku's oil fields. As expected, two regiments of the Baku garrison defected to the Bolshevik side. Within two days, the 11<sup>th</sup> Soviet Army division managed to capture the larger part of Azerbaijan. On 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1920 Lenin in his speech noted that the revolutionary triumph in Azerbaijan meant "that we now have an economic base that may put life into our whole industry".

With Azerbaijan's Sovietization, the fate of Transcaucasia was decided, and the last phase of Bolshevik aggression began in Transcaucasia.

### **White Russia and Independent Georgia**

The White Movement was dedicated to restoring the 'United and Indivisible Russian Nation', but leaders were aware that some structural and social changes would have to be made in order for the Russian state to continue its existence. Still their first and foremost task was restoring the nation's unity, only then could new political transitions take place. Such recovery was only to be accomplished through the use of force.

As a distinguished leader of the White Movement, general Denikin had the political and financial support of the Entente. Since the Russian general represented the Entente's interests in the area, his army was both politically and militarily supported by the British Caucasian Corps leadership. It is worth mentioning that some high-ranking Georgian officers shared his perspectives and fought alongside Denikin under the White Russian banner. Among them were general Baratov (Baratashvili), general Natishvili, colonel Eristavi, officers - Dadiani, Akhvlediani, Mgeladze and others.

In 1918-1919, Denikin successfully limited Bolshevik authority in the region and established a military base in Southern Caucasus, thus seriously undermining the stability of Transcaucasian states, especially that of Georgia and Azerbaijan. Obviously, the Georgians could not trust Denikin's goodwill since his cause and actions could not be reconciled with an independent Georgia.

### **Hopes of International Recognition**

Georgia's political leadership was well aware of the fact that the country could not maintain its independent existence in a complex geostrategic location without the support and protection of the international community. For this reason, the Georgian government was anxiously awaiting the commencement of the Paris Peace Conference.

The grand opening of the Paris Peace Conference took place on January 18, 1919, at the Palace of Versailles. At the conference, three of the world's most powerful leaders, Clemenceau, Wilson and Lloyd George, were deciding the world's future political trajectory.

In Paris, the Georgian State delegation (Karlo Chkheidze, Irakli Tsereteli and Zurab Avalishvili) presented a memorandum to the conference participants, where they delineated the country's need of independence and requested its official recognition. The Georgian's territorial claims were based on Ivane Javakhishvili's methodical account of Georgia's historical lands.

Back in 1919, the Big Three, still had hopes for a "united and indivisible Russia" and the White Movement was firmly standing its ground, consequently Georgia's plea of recognition was left unanswered. It is worth recalling that in post WW-I Europe, colonialism was still an intrinsic feature of European 'democratic' states. To some extent, European colonists were wary of recognizing the freedom of other states' colonies in fear of setting a precedent in their own empires and thus were extremely cautious when dealing with the issue of independence. The only exception to this rule was the dismantlement of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which left Austria with a significantly smaller landmass than it had entering the union.

Georgia's status remained unchanged by the time the Versailles gathering was concluded. The Paris Peace Conference set in place a new political world system one that favored European unity over lasting peace, a decision, which arguably led to World War II. At that time, however, nobody foresaw the ramifications of their long-desired peace...

The only positive development for Georgia was that some countries granted it de-facto recognition, first among them was Argentina (September 15, 1919), followed by Great Britain and France (January 1920), later trailed by Japan and others. This minor improvement in status was not, however, enough to protect Georgia's independence.

As a result of the Peace Conference, an intergovernmental organization was established. The League of Nations (which later proved to be remarkably spineless and ineffectual institution) sought to establish global peace and foster goodwill among peoples, but the organization's good intentions failed to alleviate any of Georgia's burdens. On the other hand, the support of the international workers' movement - Second International - managed to boost Georgia's morale. Since the Georgian Socialist-Democratic state was the first socialist government in the world, the visit of Second International leaders gave its government hope of broader political repercussions, more specifically hopes of positively impacting public opinion in Europe. In the fall of 1920, Ramsay MacDonald, Karl Kautsky, Estel Snowden and other leaders of Second International arrived in Tbilisi. While the observers were keen to notice the Georgian government's many problems and difficulties, they were still hopeful about the country's future, as demonstrated in their address: "Georgian democracy, which declared war against all imperialists, even those who mask their true colors with revolutionary guises, managed to retain liberty with a strong and firm hand while standing at the forefront of internationalism. In this struggle for freedom and independence, Georgia can rely on the full understanding and support of the international proletariat". At that time, social-democratic leaders were virtually weightless in the political scene and had no real support in Europe consequently despite their efforts they could not have stopped the dramatic events that took place at Georgia's borders in early 1921.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

### **Bolshevik Russia's Policy in the Caucasus and Near East**

Communist doctrine originated from Marxism. The Bolsheviks, began to fetishize the proletariat's capabilities and the power of its political leadership - the Communist Party. In blatant disregard of objective political and socio-economic circumstances, they insisted on a direct transition to socialism. This meant the immediate termination of private ownership in various production industries. "Factories to workers! Land to peasants!" - these slogans, propagating the redistribution of property, emboldened many people that had been left impoverished by the WW-I. The Bolsheviks had found their main ally - poverty.

In early 1920, the Bolsheviks won the Russian Civil War, thus strengthening their position on the world stage: communist organizations and parties were set up in a number of European countries; the Third Communist International was established. The Bolsheviks were not passively waiting a 'Workers' Revolution', but actively planning revolutionary wars, the deprived people's totalitarian campaign against capitalism, in other words the 'Permanent Revolution'. Within this campaign, Lenin did not rule out the use of weapons and the so-called Export of Revolution in order to achieve the desired end results. According to statement he made during those years: "There is one, and only one, form of true internationalism, and that is - working wholeheartedly for the advancement of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in one's own country and supporting (through propaganda, compassion, material aid) this struggle, and only this, in every other country". Evidently, this was the Bolshevik's ideological justification of violence.

Stalin, in his address to the Transcaucasian nations, revealed the communist leadership's true intentions: "The Caucasus' significance to the Revolution is determined not only by its sources of raw material, fuel and nourishment, but also by its geographical location between Europe and Asia, more specifically between Russia and Turkey, as well as its strategically important economic routes... After all, who should take root in Caucasia, who should benefit from the oil-rich fields and deep passages into Asia, the Revolution or the Entente? - This is the issue at stake". This was a remarkably frank admission on his behalf... In its quest for world domination under the guise of a proletarian revolution, Bolshevik Russia could not tolerate the loss of such a strategically important region and would try to capture it in any way possible, regardless of how deplorable the means were.

In light of such circumstances, the Georgian government required a great deal of diplomatic flexibility and was in dire need of a powerful patron, one that could potentially thwart the fanatical communist hordes. As referenced above, the West failed to provide such a patron. Within this context, Noe Zhordania and his political team decided to fight for the survival of an independent Georgia, even if it meant partnering with a potential enemy.

### **The Agreement of May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1920**

The Sovietization of Azerbaijan created major threats to Armenia and Georgia. As soon as the Bolsheviks secured their positions in Baku, the Red Army marched towards the Armenian and Georgian borders. On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Sergo Orjonikidze, asked Lenin permission to launch military action against Georgia and Armenia, but the Soviet leadership chose to delay this feat for a couple of reasons: first of

all, the army divisions Orjonikidze required to undertake his military operation were needed in Ukraine to fight Polish opposition; second of all, the Brits had begun negotiations with the Soviet government concerning the capitulation of the Volunteer Army, and on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1920, British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, sent a telegram formalizing the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement in connection with ending the military hostilities in Crimea and Caucasia. Moscow attached great importance to its trade partnership with the UK and believed it to be an effective measure for strengthen Russia's international standing.

The above-mentioned circumstances could explain the encrypted, unsigned telegram from Moscow that Sergo Orjonikidze received (Its content and authoritative tone allows us to assume that the author was Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin): "Stop your advances... You will engross us in an international fiasco... Violating Georgia's borders is absolutely forbidden... Our armies must defend the inviolability of Georgia's boundaries. A weak, bourgeois Georgia may still be of use to us".

As Noe Zhordania's memoirs suggest, Tbilisi also displayed efforts to negotiate with Bolshevik Russia. They even selected a mediator - a good friend of Lenin's, Grigol Uratadze. As mediator, he opened a dialogue with the Deputy Commissioner of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, Lev Karakhan, and was pleasantly surprised with the outcome of the negotiations. On May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1920, an agreement was signed, according to which Moscow recognized Georgia's independence and Tbilisi's right to control its borders, including the Poti Port and Batumi district. On their part, the Bolsheviks retained control over the strategic mountain passes and roads towards the heart of Georgia. Furthermore, in exchange for the release of all prisoners sympathetic to Soviet Russia and the legitimization of the Georgian Bolshevik Party, Moscow gave assurances that no enemy would use its territories to attack Georgia. Russia's recognition of Abkhazia, Muslim Georgia and Zakatala as part of the Georgian nation, was also essential to the agreement, as was the dismissal of all allied military personnel from Georgian territories.

The duplicitous nature of this agreement was confirmed in a telegram that Lev Karakhan sent to Sergo Orjonikidze the day after its official signing: "It is more convenient for us if the British are driven out of Batumi at the hands of the bourgeois Georgians, than us engaging in a war with Great Britain. We need Georgian as a temporary buffer. If it were Soviet, it could not perform this essential function..."

Once thoroughly acquainted with the contents of this agreement, it becomes clear that the agreement was well thought out by Russian diplomats, who made sure that it came into effect immediately upon signing and required no further forms of ratification. The treaty gave Moscow the freedom to send the Red Army into Georgia through Russian-controlled passes and to overthrow the Menshevik government at Soviet discretion. As a justification of such an attack Russia could cite Georgia's violation of the any one of the terms of the agreement.

The Georgia-Russian treaty gave rise to a number of disparate opinions among the Georgian public, but in May of 1920, all qualms were overshadowed by the euphoria stirred by the fact that "Russia recognized us!"

We must not forget that in 1920, the restoration of the legitimate Russian ('democratic') government was still considered a viable option and as a result, European states were slow to recognize Soviet Russia. At the time, Lenin's government was virtually illegitimate, nor was Georgia given a de jure status. Ironically enough, the above-mentioned agreement involved two legally unrecognized nation-states, one of which (Russia) completely lacked any basis of legitimacy. As Georgia's first ambassador to Russia, Gabriel Khundadze rightly observed: "In an era when enormous powers are

breaking at the seams, formal contracts and agreements do not carry any significant weight, moreover - they do not determine actual relations between states”. Khundadze’s reflection remains true to this day.

The euphoric state of the Georgian people was, for a time, truly enviable. Later, after analyzing the agreement in more detail serious shortcomings were noted, faults that eventually contributed to the disastrous fate of independent Georgia. The third and fifth articles of the treaty were especially disconcerting: the first referred to the neutralization of the Caucasus passes, while the second prohibited any military action on Georgian territory that could potentially threaten Russia’s sovereignty. Among other concessions, Georgia was obliged to disarm and send the remaining anti-Russian naval forces stationed in Georgian harbors to Russia. The small Georgian nation took on so many responsibilities that were difficult to uphold in such a tense international climate, that it basically gave its powerful neighbor a pretext for future aggression.

### **Soviet Russia’s Embassy**

Sergei Kirov was the first Soviet ambassador to Georgia. At the beginning of his term, his team consisted of 51 men, which very quickly increased to 300 bureaucrats. They were Russian agents who mediated the relationship between local Communists and the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, i.e. RKP (Bolshevik). Kirov had direct contact with the Central Committee’s Caucasian Bureau of Baku’s RKP (B), which was headed by Sergo Orjonikidze.

Soon, Aron Sheinman replaced Kirov, who was called back to Moscow, and as new ambassador, he faithfully continued to defend communist Russia’s interests in South Caucasus. During this time, encrypted telegrams were systematically sent to Moscow, which informed the Soviet government of Georgia’s political situation and offered exaggerated accounts of its anti-Communist activities and repressive measures against Soviet agents. The Russian embassy was especially keen to observe Georgia’s foreign policy and its distressing connections with European states.

### **Russia’s Secret Plans**

By October of 1920, the political situation in South Caucasus was rapidly escalating. After Turkey’s Nationalist Revolution and the victory of Kemal Pasha’s political group, a Russo-Turkish (short-lived) alliance was created to counteract the Western Allies.

Following the Armenian ‘revolution’ and sovietization of Azerbaijan, the situation in Georgia began to deteriorate. Azerbaijan ceased its oil sales to Georgia, while Armenia occupied the contested region of Borchalo. The Georgian Communist Party was given an opportunity to reveal the state’s anti-communist repressive activities. Citing a violation of the Russo-Georgian treaty agreement, the party appealed to Moscow for help. But the Kremlin was not ready to act. On November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1920, the Politburo of RKP (B) Central Committee decided against deploying the Red Army to Georgia. Meanwhile, the Georgian Menshevik Party was holding talks with Turkish nationalists and other Western allies. They wanted assurance that Turkey would not violate Georgia’s territorial sovereignty, including the districts of Batumi and Ardaghan. The response from Ankara stated that for Turkish nationalists, “the existence of an independent, strong and friendly Georgia was of utmost importance”. Realizing the potential threat from Soviet Russia, Georgian Mensheviks were hastily trying to eliminate the danger. For this purpose, they sent Georgia’s Foreign Minister to Western Europe, where he vainly

attempted to persuade states to grant Georgia de jure status, admit the country in the League of Nations and offer financial assistance.

On January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1921, the circumstances of Georgia's political future changed. During a session of the Central Committee, Krasin reported on his meeting with British Prime Minister Lloyd George, which underlined the UK's apparent indifference towards Georgia. The big treaty, Russian Bolsheviks were negotiating with Great Britain, was signed on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1921 the day before Georgian Democratic Republic ceased to exist.

What steps did the Bolsheviks take to rid the Caucasus of British presence? First was quick and energetic move which led to the occupation and Sovietization of Azerbaijan with complete control of Azeri oil fields. Second - Bolsheviks focused their attention on Iran in order to reduce British influence in the region. After the Sovietization of Azerbaijan, Russia attempted to expel British troops from the south coast of the Caspian Sea in northern Iran and managed to establish a pro-Soviet government in the Gilan province. Thus, Soviets were granted the opportunity to trade with Iran. The partnership amplified the Soviets' prestige in Iran and all of Asia. Bolshevik Russia was cast as a friend of the oppressed Iranian people - an image Russia always benefited from. This move was an aimed blow to British interests in Iran and potentially India. Brits, who could not allow even a slightest risk of crippling of their interests in Iran, looked for a deal with Russians. Bolsheviks offered simple solution by abandoning British hold on Transcaucasia in favor of a strong standing in Iran. The agreement was reached and Great Britain left Transcaucasia, on return pro-Soviet government in Gilan province fell, and attempts to undermine British dominance in Iran seized.

How hypocritical sounds those words" ... with regard to countries which formed part of the former Russian Empire and have recently become independent..." British government recognize Russian interests there and hopes that Russians will not support "any of the peoples of Asia (meant Iran, Afghanistan, India) to actions hostile to British interests anymore, especially in India and Afghanistan."

Prior to Krasin's report, Central Committee members developed two opposing positions regarding the Georgian issue: the first emphasized a political approach, while the second considered use of force. After the report on successful peace treaty with Brits no doubts were left, the Central Committee demanded that the Caucasus Bureau prepare the Red Army for invasion of Georgia.

### **The Lore Provocation**

Could the Georgian Communist Party manage to successfully realize a political coup in early 1921? As documents suggest, the Party was unable to do so given the state's persistent attacks on its party ranks. The organization was fragmented and somewhat confused. Well-known communist, Mamia Orakhelashvili brought this fact to the attention of the RKP (B) Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee during its December 1920 meeting. Other sources indicated that, "In Georgia, our [Bolshevik] organizations were destroyed". For this reason, the party leadership in Moscow chose to orient its political strategy towards newly Sovietized Armenia.

After the establishment of a Soviet government, Armenian communists worked diligently in the neutral Lore zone. Finding a common language with the local Armenian population posed no difficulty for the Caucasian Soviets. Observable social tensions in the region further intensified the Communists' anti-Georgian propaganda.

At a certain point, before its Sovietization and under the threat of Turkish aggression, Armenia's bourgeois government offered Georgia the control of the neutral Lore zone (after Brits left the region, it was alternately controlled by Georgian and Armenian forces). According to the agreement dated November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920, Armenia and Georgia had three months to divide the neutral zone and definitively settle their territorial dispute. If the aforementioned condition was not met, Georgia had to vacate the land and reinstate the previous arrangement of interchangeable control. This section of Georgia's geographical boundary presented particular significance in case of a Bolshevik army assault, since it increased the distance to Tbilisi and gave the capital more time to prepare its defenses against Soviet attack. Maintaining this area cost the Georgian government upwards of 2 million rubles and an army force of 7000 soldiers. The military was exceptionally diligent in guarding the Shagal Bridge, which was mined to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy. It was near this strategic site where the Bolshevik intelligence chose to open a gathering place for leisurely Georgian soldiers and to mollify Georgian vigilance.

As mentioned above, Georgia was controlling the neutral Lore zone for a three-month period in accordance to the agreement signed with the Democratic Republic of Armenia on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920. Yet, following the termination of Armenia's democratic government, the new Soviet leadership decided to annul the treaty and demanded the withdrawal of Georgian troops from Lore. Georgia proposed to settle the issue through negotiations, which began in December of 1920. But from January of 1921, the talks were losing momentum and were becoming scarcer. At the beginning of the negotiation process, the delegation from the Soviet Republic of Armenia, vigorously protested Georgia's presence in the region and insisted on the return of its claimed territories, but soon the Armenian representatives became less active and exacting throughout the talks. It was evident that the tangible change in Armenia's disposition was driven by some underlying motive, one that would soon be revealed. Georgia's three-month trial in Lore was due to expire on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1921, after which the Georgian troops had to immediately evacuate the region. With the evacuation, the most obvious justification of a territorial conflict would be avoided. To prevent this and to make sure that Georgians couldn't meet their deadline and evacuate the region according to agreement, the Soviet government of Armenia together with the Caucasian Bureau staged a 'rebellion' on 11<sup>th</sup>, 1921 under the pretext of stalled negotiations and the plight of the local population under Georgia's leadership. Professional revolutionary, Bolshevik Lazian was put in charge of organizing the revolt that was designated to launch on the night of February 11<sup>th</sup>. The head of the Russian 11<sup>th</sup> Army division, Hecker, allocated troops which were later joined by ethnic Russian volunteers living in Lore.

The element of surprise allowed the rebels to seize the Shagal Bridge as well as the Dzikhi and Gergeri areas. A great battle took place near Vorontsovka, where Georgians were able to temporarily suppress the enemy forces and capture large number of Russian soldiers, but by then the Soviet Army had entered the Lore valley, definitively deciding the fate of the battle. Over the next several days around 36000 troops of 11<sup>th</sup> Red Army crossed into Georgia.

Noe Zhordania later recalled this tragic incident: "Borchalo 'Armenians' rebelled on February 11<sup>th</sup>. They captured and ousted many of our soldiers... I immediately called for Odishelidze and demanded an account of this shameful event. He offered the following explanation: 'The Army was defeated because the troops were scattered and could not reform in time...' This was the doing of Akaki Chkhenkeli, the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly's Military Committee". Clearly, the government

leader had poor understanding regarding the overly active military intervention of a military incompetent civilian party functionary.

At the onset of the conflict, the Georgian press kept silent. By February 15<sup>th</sup>, information began to spread throughout the country: “Our troops are engaged in battle south of Vorontsovka and Sadakhlo. Detained captives claim that they acted on behalf of the Armenian and Russian Soviet armies.” Soviet Russian Ambassador Sheinman officially denied Russia’s involvement in the rebellion and guaranteed that the attack was organized by the Armenian government. At the same time, Georgia’s government received an official statement from Soviet Armenian representative, Shavardov, which specifically underlined Armenia’s innocence in the Lore conflict.

The Georgian government was quick to replace the head of its military division and assigned general Kvinitadze to organizing the defense in Lore. In his later memoirs, the general reprimanded the Georgian military officers who, despite excess military force, could not properly plan the army’s deployment, a laxity that eventually led to the worsening of Georgia’s military standing in the region. As for his own contribution to the conflict, general Kvinitadze could not compensate for Georgia’s preceding military setbacks and the Georgian Army was forced to retreat. By February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1921, Stalin had already sent Orjonikidze a telegram: “Attack now, we have confirmation, take the city”. On February 15<sup>th</sup>, cavalry units of the Red Army crossed over to Georgia via Azerbaijan. On February 16<sup>th</sup>, Noe Zhordania phoned Moscow, but the Deputy Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Karakhan, refused to speak with the Georgian leader.

On February 16<sup>th</sup>, Philippe Makharadze was named head of Georgia’s Revolutionary Committee in Shulaveri. Other committee members included: M. Orakhelashvili, S. Eliava, B. Kvirkelia, G. Elisabedashvili and A. Nazaretian. These men guided the 11<sup>th</sup> division of the Russian Communist Army into Georgia. Georgia’s Constituent Assembly dubbed all Revolutionary Committee affiliates as outlaws and on February 21<sup>st</sup>, Zhordania addressed Chicherin via radiogram, demanding a justification of the war. Ironically on the same 21<sup>st</sup> of February Earl Curzon, the British foreign secretary cabled colonel Stokes in Tbilisi “You are authorized to inform Georgian Government that His Majesty’s Government grant them de jure recognition.” With this statement British Government formally in the eyes of general public fulfilled their promise to Georgian people.

When Zhordania did not receive a convincing answer from Chicherin, on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the President appealed to Lenin and Trotsky, asking them to cease all war activities. As a response to Zhordania’s plea, Russia attacked from three additional frontlines, targeting: Georgia’s military road via Vladikavkaz, Kutaisi via the Mamison Pass and the Black Sea harbor via Sochi. The 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> divisions of the Red Army took part in the attack on Georgia, alongside Budyonny’s and Zhloba’s cavalry troops. Thousands of Georgian volunteers responded to Noe Zhordania’s appeal to defend the homeland, and came forward, but government did not have resources to quickly arm them. Unacceptable delay, hesitation, indecisiveness and suspicion of Georgian Government in the matter of building a strong, effective regular Georgian Army was the explanation to the paradoxical situation when country possessed large number of excellent officers, who have gone through extensive military training, have war experience, but could not be utilized effectively in the event of aggression from Bolshevik Russia. Colonel Stokes wired London “I hope His Majesty’s Government will immediately assist Georgia in her gallant struggle which compels admiration”. No positive answer could have come from London, since UK was already constructing future merchant plans with Bolshevik Russia. The answer came three day

later 25<sup>th</sup>, 1921 from Lord Curzon: “Our sympathies are with the Georgian people, who have done well, but they must now depend on their own policy and resources.”

Georgia’s regular army and Georgian Military School cadets showed the enemy staunch resistance in Kodjori during February 18-22<sup>nd</sup> and managed to slow the advance of Bolsheviks. Meanwhile on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, once negotiations between Turkey and Russia were concluded, the Turkish state issued an ultimatum to fighting Georgia, demanding the release of the Ardaghan and Artvin districts. The Georgian government, which could no longer provide protection for those provinces, was forced to temporarily accept the proposition, while retaining hope that an international tribunal would retract Turkey’s illegal actions.

Due to security concerns, Georgia’s government left Tbilisi and fled, first to Kutaisi, then to Batumi. Before vacating the capital, the Constituent Assembly ratified the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, though its enactment never came to pass.

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1921, Georgian Bolsheviks heralded Russia’s 11<sup>th</sup> Army division into Tbilisi. From Baku, Orjonikidze sent a telegram to Lenin and Stalin: “The red flag of the Soviet government is flying above Tbilisi. Long live Soviet Georgia!” Amidst a series of battles, Georgian troops gradually retreated to Batumi, where commanders hoped to organize a durable defense with the help of the city’s strategic layout. In addition, Zhordania’s government naively believed that France and Turkey would come to Georgia’s aid and oppose the Bolsheviks. Turks meanwhile invaded and seized the provinces surrounding Batumi. Throughout all of February, the Georgian government vainly awaited a French intervention. At the beginning of the military activities, France had helped Georgia protect its Black Sea coast, but deploying expeditionary forces was never part of Paris’ plan. Meanwhile, under direct orders from the UK, the British Navy stationed in Batumi, passively observed the conflict from afar.

## **Conclusion**

Such were fateful circumstances that convinced the Georgian government to summon Turkish assistance. Turkey, on its part was delighted with the run of events. The Turks promptly took control over the historic Georgian lands of Kola-Artani and Tao-Klarjeti and moved towards Batumi. By taking advantage of Georgia’s political troubles, they hope to regain the Batumi district. Upon entering Batumi on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1921, the Turks announced the Grand National Assembly’s decision to reintegrate the Batumi province into Turkey. Afterwards, they tried to forcibly capture the city’s public establishments and fortified strategic positions, while demanding the disarmament of the Georgian Army stationed in Batumi. Armed conflict broke out between the Turkish and Georgian forces in the city. Soon, the Georgian government and political leaders of the opposition arrived in Batumi. The opposition accused the government of disorganization and inadequacy. As Giorgi Kvinitadze recalls, some political figures even advised the arrest of Noe Zhordania.

Lenin, wary of the international response to Russia’s aggression, attempted to negotiate with Zhordania and even offered him residence in Georgia in exchange for a peaceful agreement. Faced with its biggest quandary, the democratic government of Georgia chose to compromise and began talks with its enemy. The representatives present at the negotiations included: Grigol Lortkipanidze (Democratic Georgia), Mamia Orakhelashvili (Bolshevik Georgia) and Sergo Kavtaradze (Bolshevik Russia). The agreement reached between the participants comprised the following: the Georgian Army under the command of general Mazniashvili should engage the Turkish garrison, retake Batumi from the Turks,

where Kazim Bey already declared himself a military governor, and relieve the entire Batumi district from Turkish occupation. This would follow by peaceful disbanding of the Georgian Army. Bolshevik leaders were aware of Batumi's geographical importance as the shortest and most convenient route for transporting Azeri oil to Europe. And in their minds, if one held Baku, then not taking advantage of an opportunity to seize Batumi was an unforgivable offense. At the same time, the Bolsheviks were understandably against to open warfare with Turkey. To avoid open hostilities with their neighbor, the Bolsheviks contacted Georgia's military leadership and offered them a chance to singlehandedly rid the city of Turks. Batumi's Revolutionary Committee representative, Tengiz Zhgenti, got in touch with General Mazniashvili and asked him to attack the Turkish occupants with all the forces at his disposal. Under General Mazniashvili's command the military divisions of the Democratic Republic of Georgia managed to clear the region from Turkish occupants in a matter of days. Only after this, Bolsheviks took control over the Batumi and its district. Subsequently, in accordance to Moscow's agreement, Turkey had nothing to do but to renounce all claims to the Batumi district.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1921, Georgia's three-year struggle to restore its independence came to an end; the social-democratic government left the country on an Italian steamer and immigrated to France, while Georgia and its people were subjected to a seven-decade existence under Soviet occupation...

## Figures



**Figure 1. Maps of Georgia Democratic Republic and Georgian SSR**



**Figure 2. Constituent Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Georgia**

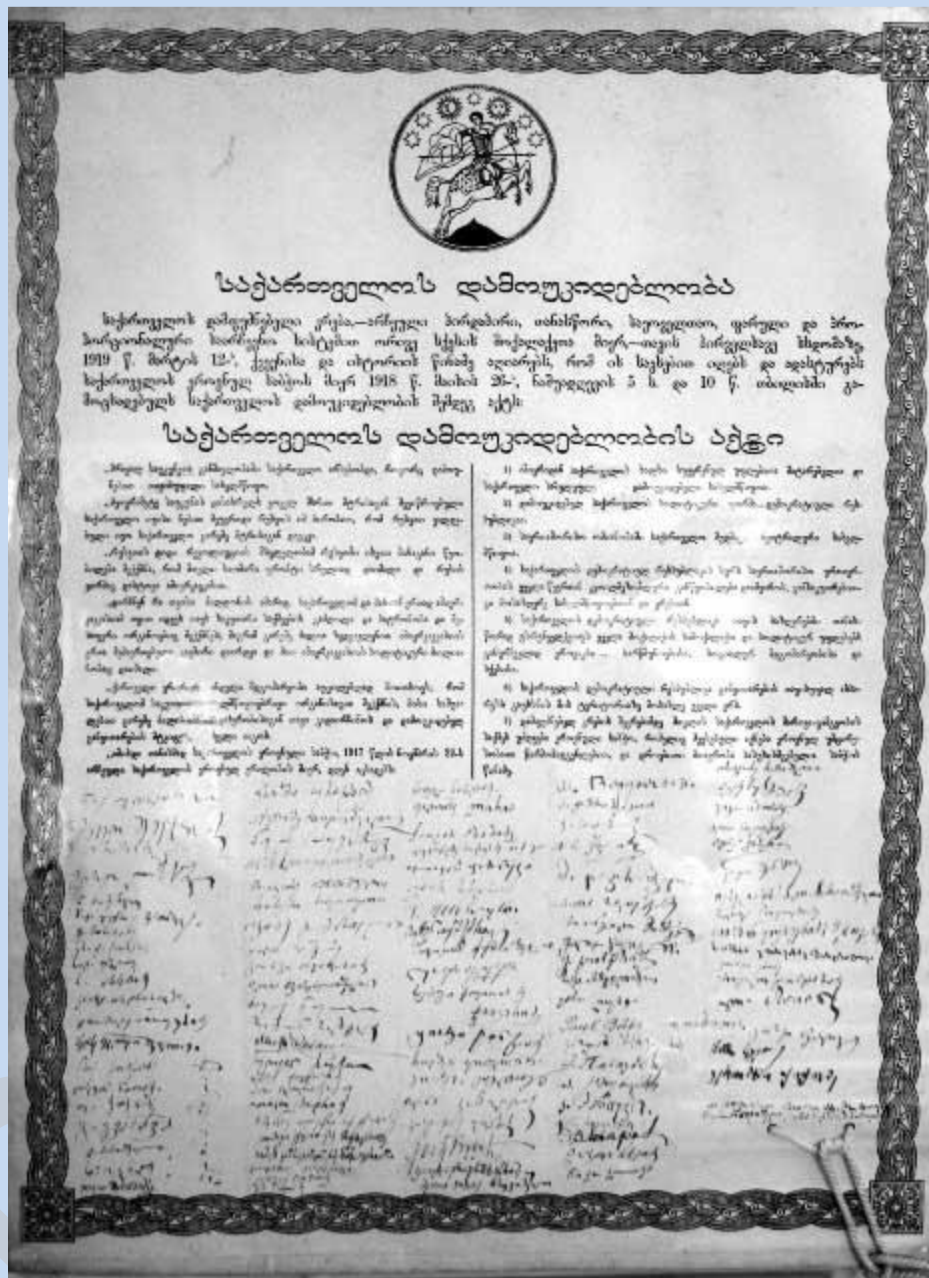
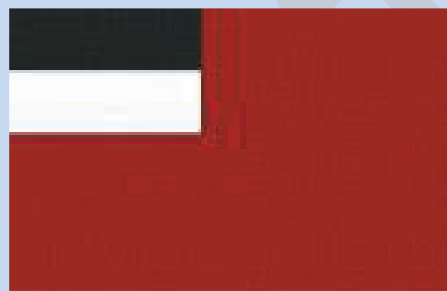


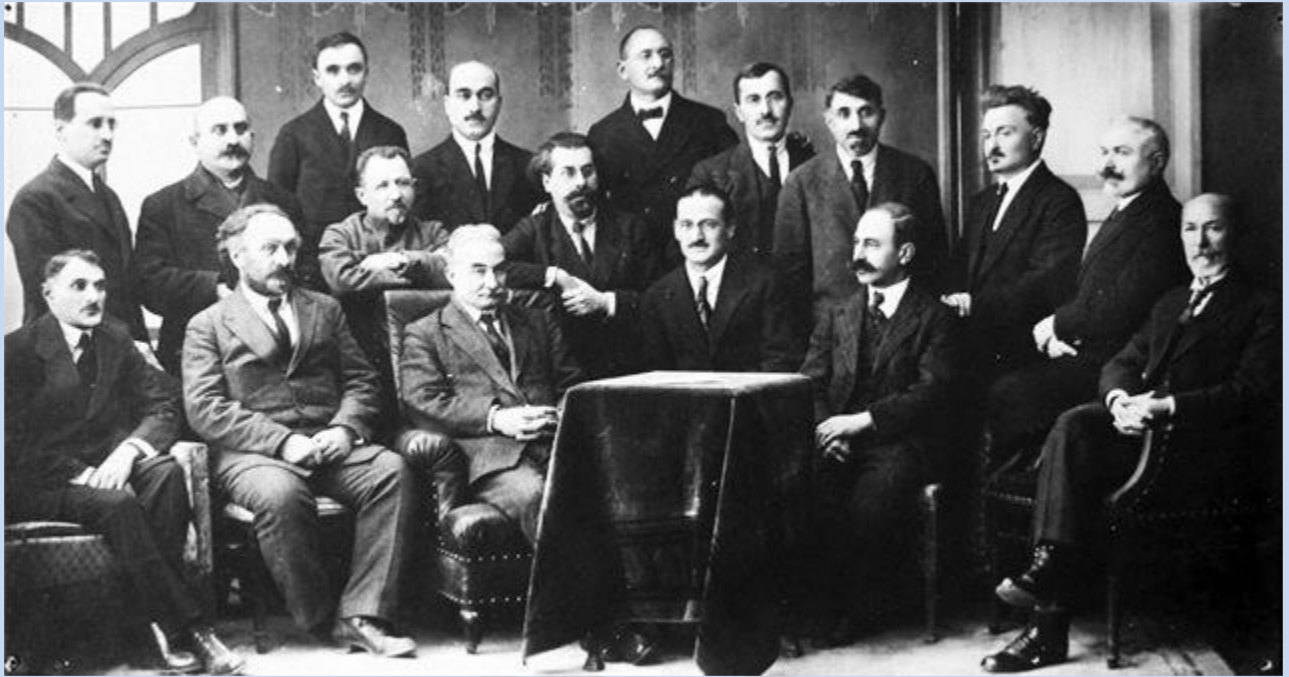
Figure 3. Georgia's Declaration of Independence



**Figure 4. The National Coat of Arms and Flag of the Democratic Republic of Georgia**



**Figure 5. Noe Zhordania**



**Figure 6. Founders of the Tbilisi State University**



**Figure 7. General Giorgi Kvinitadze**



**Figure 8. Count Friedrich-Werner von der Schulenburg - German Ambassador to Georgia**



**Figure 9. German Military Forces in Tbilisi**



**Figure 10. British Military Forces in Tbilisi**



**Figure 11. The Second International Leaders in Tbilisi**



**Figure 12. Murdered Youngers near Kodjori village.**



**Figure 13. Military Parade of Russia's 11th Soviet Red Army in Tbilisi**

## **Acknowledgements**

Authors would like to thank Professor Otar Japaridze for agreeing to review the book, to provide critical commentary, and to write a foreword to it. We would like to thank Professor Andrew Andersen for the permission to use the figure with the maps of Georgian Democratic Republic and Georgian SSR. We are also grateful to Ms. Anna Tabukashvili for her hard work and excellent English translation. Finally, many thanks to our families for their support and encouragement which we felt all the time while working on the book.

## Further Reading

- Andersen, Andrew. *Abkhazia and Sochi: The Roots of Conflict 1918-1921*. Asteroid Publishing, Inc, 2014
- Avalishvili, Zourab. *The Independence of Georgia in International Politics: 1918-1921*. London: Headley Brothers Press, 1940.
- Chervonnaya, Svetlana. *Conflict in the Caucasus: Georgia, Abkhazia and the Russian Shadow*. Somerset: Gothic Image Publications, 1994.
- Debo, Richard. *Revolution and Survival: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1917-1918*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979.
- Debo, Richard. *Survival and Consolidation: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1918-1921*. Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992.
- Hovannisian, Richard. *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 1918. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.
- Kazemzadeh, Firuz. *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1951.
- Lang, David. *A Modern History of Soviet Georgia*. New York: Grove Press, 1962.
- Zhordania, Noah. *My Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968.
- Lee, Eric. *The Experiment. Georgia's Forgotten Revolution 1918-1921*. London: Zed Book Ltd, 2017.