

SOME ASPECTS OF GEORGIAN-AZERBAIJANI RELATIONS IN 1918-1920**Mikheil Bakhtadze**

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Abstract: The border issue was very important in relations between the South Caucasian first republics, emerged in 1918. Despite disagreements regarding the Zagatala region and some other territories, there has never been an armed conflict between Baku and Tbilisi. Both Baku and Tbilisi understood perfectly well that any military conflict would be harmful for both states. Politicians from both countries really assessed the situation, and this indicates their professionalism and dignity. The issue of determining the border between Georgia and Azerbaijan has never reached the level of complicating the resolution of other issues or, moreover, aggravating the situation between the two states. It should also be taken into account that Georgia and Azerbaijan had much more common interests than controversial issues. One of the most important issues was the export of Baku oil, which passed through the Baku-Batumi oil pipeline and required coordinated actions of both states. One of the ways for transportation of the Baku oil was via the Baku-Batumi oil pipeline, and the other was by rail. Oil transported through the pipeline was mainly destined for Europe. For its needs, Georgia transported oil and various types of petroleum products mainly by rail. The treaties on transit, telegraph communications, and postal communications were signed between neighboring Georgia and Azerbaijan. The conclusions of these treaties were of great political and economic importance for both states. The agreement on railway communication, concluded on March 8, 1919, was of great significance. In order to protect the borders and independence of their states, the Georgian-Azerbaijani mutual defense treaty was signed on June 16, 1919 in Tbilisi. The establishment of Soviet power in Azerbaijan strained relations between Baku and Tbilisi. Soviet Russia used Soviet Azerbaijan, as well as Soviet Armenia, as a springboard for the occupation of Georgia¹.

Keywords: *Georgia, Azerbaijan, First Republics, Treaties, Soviet Russia, Denikin's Volunteer Army, Military defense Pact, Economic Relations*

On May 26, 1918 Georgia proclaimed its independence, which caused demission of the Transcaucasian Seim. The Muslim faction of the Seim, seeing that the South Caucasus cannot be a union, created the Azerbaijan National Council on May 27 and the next day, on May 28 the National Council adopted the Act of Independence of Azerbaijan in Tbilisi. [Azimova (2023): 57] At that time, there was a Soviet government in Baku in the

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form of the Council of People's Commissars. In fact, there was a dual power in Azerbaijan: the Soviet government in the Baku governorate and the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in the Elisabethpol governorate and Zagatala district [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1998): 39]. The latter was in Ganja at the first stage. The government of the democratic republic moved to Baku only on September 17, 1918, after the liberation of the city with the help of Ottoman troops [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1998): 46].

Baku was actually the economic center of the South Caucasus. Therefore, it is not surprising that many Georgians lived and worked in Baku. It is also natural that the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia tried to protect them during the ongoing battles for Baku, and therefore turned to the government of Azerbaijan for help in protecting their compatriots. In response, the representative of the Azerbaijani government in Georgia stated that after the liberation of Baku, the Azerbaijani government will do everything to protect the personal and property security of Georgians living in Baku [Documents and Materials... (1919): 442].

The issue of borders was very important in relations between the states of the South Caucasus.

It should be noted that, despite disagreements regarding the ownership of the Zagatala region and some other territories, there has never been an armed conflict between Baku and Tbilisi, unlike Armenia. Armenia tried to resolve the border issue with both republics by force of arms, which was a false step. Both Baku and Tbilisi understood perfectly well that any military conflict would be harmful for both states. Politicians from both countries really assessed the situation, and this indicates their professionalism and dignity. The issue of determining the border between Georgia and Azerbaijan has never reached the level of complicating the resolution of other issues or, moreover, aggravating the situation between the two states.

It should also be taken into account that Georgia and Azerbaijan had much more common interests than controversial issues. One of the most important was the issue of Baku oil exports, which passed through the Baku-Batumi oil pipeline and required coordinated actions of both states. This oil pipeline was very important not only for these two states, but also for the entire South Caucasus as a whole. For export to the West, Baku oil passed through Georgia, so the Azerbaijani authorities had to take this fact into account and supply oil supplies to the neighboring republic in transit. However, thanks to the close political ties established between the two countries, there was no escalation between them. [Kobakhidze (2015): 137].

As you know, on June 4, 1918, the treaty of Batumi was signed between the Georgian Republic and the Ottoman Empire. After this truce, the city of Batumi remained in the hands of the Ottoman Empire [Government News (1918): No 115]. Thus, the Baku-Batumi oil pipeline at that moment ended up on the territory of three states. On the same day, a tripartite agreement on the oil pipeline was signed: between the Ottoman Empire, Georgia and Azerbaijan. According to the agreement, the parties stated that they would take care of the proper operation of the oil pipeline. The money received from the use of the oil pipeline will be divided between the three states in proportion to the length of the oil pipeline section passing through the territory of each of them. [Documents and Materials... (1919): 364].

Oil transportation via the Baku-Batumi oil pipeline was resumed in December 1918. Here I would like to note that in addition to the fact that Batumi was the last point of the oil pipeline, the port of Batumi was also very important for Azerbaijan.

Therefore, Azerbaijan had its own interests in Batumi and Adjara with the Muslim population, and this had certain significance in the conditions of that time. At the beginning of September 1919, the Chairman of the Government of Azerbaijan, Nasib Bek Usubbekov, visited Tbilisi. On September 10, a gala dinner took place, which, in addition to the heads and members of the governments of Georgia and Azerbaijan, was attended by guests from Adjara: Memed Bek Abashidze and Jemal Bek Khimshiashvili. The Prime Minister of Azerbaijan stated: "The idea of common interests of these two republics is deeply rooted in the knowledge of the peoples of Georgia and Azerbaijan... Usubbekov then touched upon the results of this union and pointed out the great importance of this union for strengthening the true independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan. This connection has already given us the desired visible result: it has helped crown the Adjarian issue with success. At present, the Adjarians are completely free to self-determination and must be deeply convinced that their appeal within the Republic of Georgia is confirmed as the free expression of the will of friendly union of Georgia and Azerbaijan." In his response, Jemal-bek Khimshiashvili emphasized: "In Adjara there were some what hesitations. Who will he team up with? With fellow believers or blood brothers. The matter was decided in favor of an alliance with the brothers. I am glad that right now I heard the first advice about joining Georgia from a representative of our people of the same faith. I will inform the Acharians about this, and they will know that their decision was happily accepted by their fellow believers." The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan noted: "Batumi is of great national importance for the allied states of Transcaucasia, and he told Jemal Bek Khimshiashvili, yes, you can tell the Adjarians that their coreligionists, the Azerbaijanis, are happy to confirm your wise decision to join Georgia." [Reception in honor ... (1919), No 205].

Transport of oil via the Baku-Batumi oil pipeline was vastly different than its transportation by rail. Oil transported through the pipeline was mainly destined for Europe. For its needs, Georgia was forced to transport oil and various types of petroleum products mainly by rail. On December 15, 1918, the newspaper "Republic of Georgia" reported: "All oil must be transported from Baku to Batumi through pipes, so it is no longer possible to fill kerosene in Ganja. In this regard, it is necessary to send trains with tanks to Baku, a total of about five trains of 50 tanks each, which will constantly run between Tiflis and Baku until all the necessary oil is delivered to the Republic of Georgia" [On Oil Transportation (1918), No 116].

On December 26, a transit treaty was signed between Georgia and Azerbaijan. The conclusion of this agreement was of great political and economic importance for both states. Georgia was allowed to export oil and petroleum products for its own needs. Free transit was established, i.e. there was no customs duty. Azerbaijan received from Georgia: coal, products for the needs of railway, and others such as beans, cabbage, car tires, etc. Azerbaijan also used the territory of Georgia for transit goods: bread from Ukraine, and manufactured goods, such as shoes and other essential products from Italy. [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1998): 96; Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Foreign Policy (1998): 90-91].

Another transit treaty was signed between the two states on February 5, 1920 [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Foreign Policy (1998): 451-454].

On June 21, 1918, the representative of Azerbaijan in Georgia, Mammad Jafarov, met with the Chairman of the Government of Georgia, Noe Ramishvili. The conversation touched on various issues. Among them is the division of property of the no longer existing Transcaucasian Federation. And also the current situation in Borchalo. Both sides agreed that all controversial issues should be resolved only through negotiations. [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Foreign Policy (1998): 22].

On January 3, 1919, the treaty on telegraph communications was signed between the two neighboring states. According to the document, telegraph communication was established between Georgia and Azerbaijan and various issues, related to the telegraph, were clarified; citizens were allowed to use the telegraph and send telegrams, and tariffs were established [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Foreign Policy (1998): 98-99].

The next day, on January 4, the treaty on postal services was signed [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Foreign Policy (1998): 100-102].

Of great importance was the treaty on railway communication, concluded on March 8, 1919. Proper operation of the railways was very important for both countries, given that railways transported a large amount of goods. The treaty discussed various issues regulating the operation of the railway and the movement of trains. It is interesting that locomotives and carriages were declared the property of the state in whose territory they were located on May 26, 1918. A single timetable was established for the railway in accordance local time of the city of Tbilisi, that is, trains ran on Tbilisi time [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Foreign Policy (1998): 144-147].

Members of the Azerbaijani government had to come to Batumi several times for various reasons. This is understandable, given that Batumi was the sea gate of the South Caucasus. At the beginning of October 1919, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Mamed Jafarov, arrived in Batumi from Baku. He accompanied the head of the US mission, General Harbord. On the way back, he met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Evgeni Gegechkori, and talked with him about current issues [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Foreign Policy (1998): 325].

From October 28 to November 2, 1919, meetings of the joint commission of Azerbaijan and Georgia were held. The commission worked on a very important issue: establishing a temporary border between the Zagatala district and Signag district. The problem was complex and could not be easily solved. Moreover, the members of the commission, and these were representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Internal Affairs, did not have such powers. Basically, there was an exchange of views and discussion of issues related to the daily life of the population living in the border region. It was said that the border issue is important and should be resolved soon [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Foreign Policy (1998): 336-342].

On May 26, 1919, the Georgian representation in Azerbaijan solemnly celebrated the first year of independence. The newspaper "Ertoba" wrote that on the occasion of the anniversary of Georgia's independence, the Georgian mission in Baku was visited and congratulated by all ministers under the leadership of Prime Minister Usubbekov, the representative of the presidium of parliament Pepinov, the mountaineer delegation, the diplomatic representative of Armenia Begzadyan, the representative of the National

Council of Armenia Paronian, Ter-Mikaelian, Chubarian, and “Musavat” party representatives Rasulzadeh, Shefi-beg Rustambekov, Doctor Rakiev, representatives of Ukraine, Jews, Germans, representatives of the National Council of Georgians, the governor of Baku and others” [News (1919) No 119].

On May 29-30, the conference of the Caucasian states was held in Tbilisi, at which the difficult situation was discussed. By this time, General Denikin’s troops had already occupied almost the entire territory of the Mountain Republic. Delegates from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Mountain Republic took part in the conference. Representative of the North Caucasus Alikhan Kantemir addressed the conference participants with an interesting speech and said that there is only one question - the Caucasian question. They want to destroy us. They want to destroy all four republics. One of them has already been destroyed, and that is us, the Mountain Republic. We believe that the attack is coming through us to you, Denikin is coming against you, and I ask you whether you will fight against him. You may think that he is not at war with you, that he is not coming at you, but I declare that the front is open. The front that we have been holding back for three months is open to attack, we took it upon ourselves... For us, it doesn’t matter what you do in terms of help, we have already died... We were defeated without you. I just don't want them to defeat you one by one. I know that Denikin will not attack you now. Denikin will wait, create a base in Petrovsk, but I assure you that in a week he will attack you. The positions of Georgia and Azerbaijan were almost identical. The Georgian delegation advocated for the conference to express its position and declare an official protest. Georgian delegates also demanded that military preparations begin. As for the position of the representatives of Armenia, they were against even expressing official protest and in the event of a possible military confrontation they only promised to maintain neutrality in relation to their neighbors [Georgian State Historical Archive. Fund 1861, Inventory 1, file 58 art. 39-47].

On June 1, 1919, interesting information was published in the newspaper of the Social Democratic Party “Ertoba”: “Mobilization has been announced in Azerbaijan. The situation has not changed. Over the past two days, a large number of young people are leaving Tiflis for Azerbaijan” [News (1919) No. 119]. Naturally, mobilization was announced in Azerbaijan, and those young people, obviously, went to protect the independence of Azerbaijan. It is difficult to say anything, but most of them were probably ethnic Azerbaijanis but citizens of Georgia. It is possible that Georgian youth also went to defend a neighboring and friendly state. Moreover, it was clear that if General Denikin captured Azerbaijan, then the next goal of the general, who dreamed of restoring “united and indivisible” Russia, would be Georgia. What is even more interesting is, that at the beginning of September, mobilization of Georgians was announced in Baku, which affected persons born in 1896-1898. They had to report to the Georgian Embassy before September 8 [News (1919), No 199].

On June 1, 1919, during his speech at the constituent assembly, Foreign Minister Evgeny Gegechkori said: “You know that Denikin's Volunteer army occupied Petrovsky and Derbent. The government and parliament of the Mountain Republic laid down their arms, and today Denikin is the ruler of the Mountain Republic... Today, Denikin’s black army has already approached the border of the Republic of Azerbaijan. You know, citizens, what the situation is on the second front, on the front where we stand face to

face with Denikin. This is the Sochi region, it is already becoming clear that Denikin's detachments will begin to operate there, and it is possible that in a few days we will already have a clash with them... On May 29, the conversation with Denikin's representatives clearly showed us what the general was interested in; that he is interested in Georgia as an independent state and he will draw his sword only when he surrounds the Georgian Republic with his dark forces... We already have proof of this that the Azerbaijan Republic is with us... Let everyone see who is now calling on the Caucasus' peoples to fight in solidarity and do a common cause. We, citizens, still do not have documents to declare to you that there is no such unity between us. We only express doubt about the current sad time and hope that this doubt will not be justified. But in any case, I must declare here, before you, that if Georgia and Azerbaijan are left alone in this battle, victory will still be ours!" [Constituent Assembly of Georgia (2019): 49-52].

Minister of War Noe Ramishvili stated: "I declare with full right that the military force called upon to defend our freedom and independence will fulfill its duty" [Constituent Assembly of Georgia (2019): 56].

During this extremely difficult period for Azerbaijan, the only Georgian deputy, Vladimir Bakradze, spoke at a meeting held on June 5 in the Azerbaijani parliament. He declared, "Citizens, deputies! I am glad that I have the opportunity to speak on behalf of Georgians living on the territory of Azerbaijan, when the bond between these two neighboring and friendly peoples is strengthened in the face of a common threat, when the unity of interests and the need for coordinated actions is recognized as a necessity. I am glad that at this very important historical moment I can convey to the highest representative body the interests of the Azerbaijani people, the sentiments of Georgians not only living within Azerbaijan, but also beyond its borders. A black cloud of black reaction has already appeared over Azerbaijan, the victim of which has already become one of our neighboring republics, the Mountain Republic. I will not talk about the circumstances under which the Mountain Republic fell; I will only allow myself to declare from this rostrum that the Republic of Azerbaijan will not suffer such a fate (long applause). Let me also express my deep conviction that the entire people will stand up to defend the sovereign rights of the Azerbaijani people, the democracy of Azerbaijan and defeat the black reaction coming from the north and threatening to destroy all our revolutionary gains. At the same time, I must state that the democracy of Azerbaijan will not be alone in this struggle. The entire democracy of Transcaucasia will support him in this fight. First of all, the democracy of Georgia and the Georgian regiments, those that are hardened in the struggle for freedom and independence of Georgia, will quickly come to the aid of the fraternal people defending their rights, their homeland and independence. No black forces can resist the army of democracy, imbued with high and holy goals and excited by one thought, one feeling, the motto of which is: either death or victory. Citizens! We live in a terrible atmosphere, a web of lies, provocations and hypocrisy is woven around us, but let me declare from this rostrum that Transcaucasian democracy will not fall into this web, and we already know who our enemy and friend are (applause). Citizens! Let's join forces to create a united front of Transcaucasian democracy against Denikin's reactionary front. And if we unite, if the Transcaucasian democracy turns its breast to the enemy who is destroying its rights, then the Denikins will not be dangerous to us, and we will easily defeat them. From this rostrum, I call on

Transcaucasian democracy to recognize the seriousness of the moment, forget their differences and unite their forces in the face of the threat coming from the north. Victory over Denikin's black forces promises us preservation of revolution's achievement, freedom and independence." [In the Parliament... (1919a), No. 130]

On June 15, a charity reception was held at the State Theater in Tbilisi. The speakers spoke about a possible campaign by General Denikin's army against the states of the South Caucasus. Georgian Foreign Minister Evgeniy Gegechkori noted: "Citizens, the purpose of my speech is to appeal to you for moral and material assistance in the war that black reactions waged against us... Our government has never pursued a policy of aggression, but the black general of the black reaction has challenged us gauntlet, and we accept it... Now the situation is this: the mountain republic has fallen, but do not think that it is defeated on the battlefield. No, the Mountain Republic was the victim of a terrible betrayal. Khalilov betrayed the people. This explains why the mountaineers rebel and attack the Volunteer Army. We are not alone in our struggle with Denikin. The proletariat of Baku and the entire Azerbaijan Republic are with us" [Morning Speeches (1919) No 130].

The position of Georgia and Azerbaijan was largely due to the fact that Denikin's troops were stationed at the borders of these states. The danger was serious. General Denikin's main goal was to march on Moscow and overthrow the Bolshevik government, although no one knew what kind of military operation he was planning in the Caucasus. Moreover, Georgia had experience fighting against the Volunteer Army.

In newly captured Petrovsk (Makhachkala), A. Denikin gathered his army, moved south and reached the northern borders of Azerbaijan. The parliament and government of the mountain republic were dissolved, and members of the government took refuge in Tbilisi. The Mountain Republic was a kind of buffer state between Azerbaijan and Russia, so its liquidation posed a direct threat to Azerbaijan. The mountain republic was in the strategic interests of Azerbaijan. After reaching the border of Azerbaijan, units of the Volunteer Army crossed the border in some areas and stood near the Yalama station. [Bogveradze Grigol (2002): 34-35]

The Mountain Republic played a "buffer" role in relation to Georgia, and after its fall, Denikin's Volunteer Army began to directly neighbor Georgia and could invade from Vladikavkaz. Although this road and direction was much more difficult to cross than Petrovsky-Baku, which also had a railway line, it still posed a threat to Georgia. Moreover, if we take into account that parts of Denikin bordered on Georgia and on the side of Abkhazia.

In the summer of 1919, Denikin had enough strength to capture Azerbaijan. His armies by this time had become even stronger and included 104,000 troops, 56,200 sabers, about 600 cannons, over 1,500 machine guns, 34 armored trains, 19 aircraft, 1 cruiser, 5 destroyers, 4 submarines and 20 armed ships. [Bogveradze Grigol (2002): 36]

Therefore, it is quite natural that in order to protect the borders and independence of their states, the Georgian-Azerbaijani Military Defense Treaty was signed on June 16, 1919 in Tbilisi. The parties agreed to defend the independence and territorial integrity of their countries with joint forces in the case of military aggression [Agreement Between... (1919): No. 133]

This treaty was one of the first serious steps towards uniting the forces fighting for independence and freedom in the Caucasus.

On June 22, 1919, during the ratification of the treaty by the Constituent Assembly, Georgian Foreign Minister Evgeny Gegechkori stated:

“On our initiative and at our insistence, on April 26, representatives of four states gathered at the Caucasus Conference. Our first meeting was promising... Despite some issues around which there is disagreement and confusion between us today, there is one thing that should bind us closely: this is the defense of the inviolability of our independence within the Transcaucasia... This is the common basis that should unite us and which should form a unity between these neighboring peoples... The Transcaucasian Conference resolved none of these issues... Here only two nations united against a common enemy... This treaty is directed only against those who want to destroy these two Transcaucasian republics and their democracy; this treaty is directed against the government that wants to enslave our people. [Speech by the Minister (1919): No. 136].

Further he said that this agreement is not aggressive in nature, being an act of self-defense, and it is clearly stated in the treaty from beginning to end. Gegechkori also indicated the this alliance is directed against external powers who would overthrow our republics, and, of course, one article, the third, says that only if any of our neighbors, which I do not want to think, would want to take advantage of this common difficult situation to realize their goals and solve their own internal affairs, in this case, unfortunately, this is a hostile situation. Under these circumstances, of course, we must act as our interests and the interests of democracy dictate... The Government of Georgia will use this treaty only to protect its interests, in order not to expose the people to all kinds of dangers, no matter where they come from. [Ibid, 136]

The treaty was also supported by representatives of opposition parties of Georgia. Federalist socialist Giorgi Lashkhishvili stated:

“This historical document in itself is excellent in many respects. First of all, it should be noted that this act is not a product of secret diplomacy. It was publicly, truly publicly, signed by democratic governments of democratic states; There are no double-edged, ambiguous or hidden thoughts in it; Its goals are clearly, directly and simply expressed as is characteristic of true democracy. It does not have any aggressive goals or offensive intentions, but is only reflective and defensive in nature; Its goal is the independence of our republics, the defense of our freedom and the gains of our revolution from external enemies with united forces. An important point of this document is that it does not isolate the neighboring republic that has not yet reached an agreement with us. On the contrary, it opens its doors wide to accept the Third Republic as a legitimate partner in the great cause of concord and union” [Constituent Assembly of Georgia (2019): 228].

Spiridon Kedia, leader of the People's Democratic Party, emphasized in his speech that on June 16, an act was signed, between Georgia and Azerbaijan, the purpose of which is only self-defense and struggle and action by common means for the independent self-existence and freedom of each of them. [Constituent Assembly of Georgia (2019): 231-232]. Further he noted:

This treaty demonstrates that our responsible leaders have, from the very beginning, gotten rid of the party principles that hindered Georgian-Azerbaijani relations... But today one thing is missing: today, along with the defense agreement signed here between Georgia and Azerbaijan, we do not confirm another agreement, by Armenia. And it's not our fault” [Ibid]

Socialist Revolutioner Leo Shengelaya said:

“Today a new era begins in the international life of our republic, today we are no longer alone on the battlefield, we already have an ally, we have a friend! Thus, with the presented convention, the elimination of the isolation of our nation begins, and this is a great factor, a source of new hopes, a guarantor of a new victory! ... the convention concerns Georgia and Azerbaijan, and not the three Transcaucasian republics, as wanted and expected. The Ararat Republic has not yet said its last word on the Convention, it is still silent.” [Constituent Assembly of Georgia (2019): 236-237].

The Azerbaijani parliament unanimously approved the treaty on June 27. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Mammad Jafarov spoke at a meeting of the Azerbaijani parliament. He emphasized the very great importance of this treaty and added: “Only two nations did not join our treaty. These are highlanders and Armenians. As you know, the highlanders lost their independence, and if not for this sad fact, then, of course, the highlanders would be with us. The Armenians took a completely different position... We hope that the territorial disputes between Georgia and Azerbaijan will be resolved through mutual concessions.” Representatives of various parties also spoke. Rasulzade, leader of the Musavati party stated: “Today this treaty will be adopted not only by the parliament, it will be supported by the entire Azerbaijani people..” Abilov, representative of the socialist bloc, said: “It is necessary to establish a strong connection between the peoples of Transcaucasia to repel the black reaction.” Karabegov, representative of the Ittihadists noted: “This agreement is democratic and does not contain any aggressive goals.” Effendi, member of the Ehrar group said: “This connection is an indicator of correct solidarity and we congratulate and support.” Deputy Vladimir Bakradze also spoke and said, “June 16 should be considered a historical day in the history of Georgia and Azerbaijan. This treaty does not pursue any aggressive goals, it is only defensive in nature and its purpose is to protect the sovereign rights of the two nations and the inviolability of the territory. On behalf of Georgians living in Azerbaijan, Bakradze welcomes the agreement and expresses hope that it will bring the desired results. The parliament meeting was attended by Georgian Minister of Agriculture Noe Khomeriki, diplomatic representative Nikoloz Kartsivadze, Grigol Alshibay and others. [In the Parliament... (1919b), No 147]

Newspapers published in Baku wrote that new period begins in the life of Transcaucasian democracy. The period of differentiation gives way to federation... The reader will see from the contents of this treaty that the purpose of this union is a strong defensive bond. The need for such a connection is dictated by recent events, when Denikin decisively threatened these two republics... If in the face of this danger only two republics managed to understand each other and find a common language of struggle, then this is explained by the fact that, firstly, these two peoples are under immediate threat, and secondly, that, despite some differences, there has always been peace between the Turks and Georgians. Traditional friendship, not hatred... The signatory republics spent a lot of effort trying to attract the third Transcaucasian nation in the person of the government of Armenia to participation in this union. But this desire was in vain. We had to sign a contract only with representatives of Azerbaijan and Georgia, for which, without a doubt, we are not to blame. That we did not want to isolate Armenia is evident from the fact that we included in the agreement a clause allowing Armenia to join our Union, albeit belatedly... This historical act is all the more valuable as it will strengthen the traditional friendship between the two neighboring peoples and will push the peoples of

Transcaucasia towards broader and stronger cooperation [Speech by the Minister (1919): No 136].

The great significance of the treaty of June 16 is also evidenced by the fact that the document translated into French was sent on July 24 to French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau with a corresponding explanatory letter from Nikoloz Chkheidze and Alimardan bey Tobchibashov [Topchibashi A.M. (2016): 53].

Already in exile, Rasulzade wrote: “The Azerbaijani people came to the idea of defending their national existence, because they perfectly understood that there was no salvation for them except the political union of an independent confederative Caucasus!” This idea was partially implemented in the form of military-defense treaty between Georgia and Azerbaijan” [Rasulzade M.E. (1930): 35].

The assessment of the Georgian-Azerbaijani treaty by the Chairman of the Government of Azerbaijan Nasib-bek Usubbekov is very indicative. In a conversation with a correspondent on September 10, 1919, he said that without Georgia they cannot come to an agreement with General Denikin, and then added that the alliance with Georgia is very popular and the strength of alliance is hidden in this combination of popularity and interests [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Foreign Policy (1998): 285-286].

Soon a joint military council was created. Meetings were held alternately every month in Tbilisi and Baku. This body monitored the fulfillment of the obligations assumed by the parties to the treaty, and during the war it was supposed to draw up a joint plan of action for the armed forces of both republics. The joint council included heads of the military departments of both countries. The Council did not have a permanent chairman; it was elected by the members at each session by majority vote. [Bogveradze Grigol (2002): 64].

After Denikin’s volunteer army virtually occupied almost the entire territory of the Mountain Republic, a large number of North Caucasian politicians took refuge in Tbilisi. The capital of Georgia became the political center of their national liberation movement. The North Caucasus Committee was active [GSHA. Fund 1864, Inventory 2, file 34 art. 15-16].

The North Caucasians continued to fight against the Volunteer Army, but soon another force actively joined the fight, the Red Army of Soviet Russia. This further complicated the situation and threatened not only the North, but also the South Caucasus.

On November 9, 1919, General Denikin issued an order and suspended all relations with Azerbaijan, the situation worsened. [Bogveradze Grigol (2002): 71].

On January 4, 1920, the representative of the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mirza Vekilov, wrote to his government that he met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Evgeny Gegechkori, who was concerned about the situation in the North Caucasus. Gegechkori emphasized that the creation of the Mountain Soviet Republic could be announced in the near future. This poses a threat to Georgia and Azerbaijan, so joint action is necessary. Both republics must prepare for military action [Union of United Highlanders... (1994): 354].

The Bolsheviks were able to defeat General Denikin and in the spring of 1920, the Volunteer Army was a thing of the past, but the inhabitants of Transcaucasia could not breathe freely, because new dangers and misfortunes were knocking on the door. [Firuz Kazamzade (2016): 313]. This new threat was Soviet Russia.

There were many issues to be resolved in relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan, and it was only natural that frequent meetings took place between members of the Georgian and Azerbaijani governments.

On March 26, 1920, Georgian Foreign Minister Evgeny Gegechkori arrived in Baku [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Foreign Policy (1998): 487].

At the end of March 1920, a special mission from Poland arrived in Georgia under the leadership of the Polish diplomat Titus Filipovich. "The de facto recognition of Georgia has increased the interest of the world's states in Georgia. Many trade, economic, and sometimes political missions arrived there, and one of them was the special Polish mission led by Titus Filipowicz, a close ally of Marshal Jozef Pilsutski. At the end of March 1920, his mission began fruitful negotiations on Polish-Georgian military-political cooperation, on the final initialing of the text of Union Treaty" [Wojciech Materski (1992): 8].

Probably, during his stay in Tbilisi, Titus Filipovich had a conversation about a military alliance against Soviet Russia. In this regard, interests completely coincided.

Negotiations on the Polish-Georgian-Azerbaijani military alliance could have been held in Baku, when at the end of April (April 20-27) a delegation of the Georgian military led by General Georgiy Kvinitadze was in the capital of Azerbaijan. The delegation also included: General Kirile Kutateladze, the commander of the artillery of the Georgian Armed Forces, and General Giorgi Takaishvili, the head of the Georgian Engineering Troops. The goal of the delegation was to develop plans for joint actions of Georgia and Azerbaijan in the event of aggression by Soviet Russia in the South Caucasus. It is important that Titus Filippovich was also in Baku at the same time. The latter, together with his companions, arrived in the capital of Azerbaijan on April 24 [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Foreign Policy (1998): 517].

It is significant that, together with Azerbaijani officials, the Polish delegation was met at the station in Baku by the deputy diplomatic representative of Georgia in Azerbaijan, Dgebuadze [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Foreign Policy (1998): 517].

At that time, the situation was favorable for considering a possible joint struggle between Poland and the states of the South Caucasus, Georgia and Azerbaijan against Russia. We should not forget that on June 16, 1919, Georgia and Azerbaijan signed a military defense treaty [Bakhtadze M. (2011): 215-238].

Interestingly, in 1920, the Azerbaijani government reviewed the land law, and this law was based on the agrarian law of the Georgian government [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1998): 90].

After the occupation of the North Caucasus, Soviet Russia was already preparing for an invasion of the South Caucasus. At 4 o'clock in the morning on April 28, 1920, the armored trains of Soviet Russia were already in Baku, where the creation of Soviet power was announced. Soon Soviet power extended to the whole of Azerbaijan. In early May, military operations began on the Georgian border. Units of the 11th Red Army tried to invade Georgia. At this stage, the Georgian armed forces were able to defeat the enemy and protect the independence of Georgia.

The establishment of Soviet power in Azerbaijan strained relations between Baku and Tbilisi.

The question of the Zagatala district arose again. As is known, on May 7, 1920, a treaty was signed between the Georgian Democratic Republic and the Russian Soviet Federative

Republic, according to which the Zagatala district was declared to belong to Georgia. However, five days later additional articles of the treaty were signed, where the question of belonging the Zagatala district was changed and it was decided that the issue of disputed territories located on the border of Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as in the Zagatala district, will be transferred to a mixed commission created from an equal number of representatives of the governments of Azerbaijan and Georgia, chaired by a representative of the RSFSR. Every decision of this commission will be recognized as binding by the governments of Azerbaijan and Georgia. Georgia and Azerbaijan, until the commission makes a decision on the issues mentioned in Article I of this agreement, will not introduce new public formations into the Zagatala district other than those that are there at the time of the adoption of the additional agreement. [Newspaper "Communist" (1989): No. 132]

By May 12, 1920, units of the 11th Red Army were located in the Zagatala district, and Georgia's jurisdiction did not actually extend there. At the end of the same year, due to the introduction of additional military forces into the Zagatala district, which was, in principle, a violation of the treaty signed in Moscow, the Georgian government protested to the government of Soviet Azerbaijan and the representative of Soviet Russia in Georgia, Sheinman [From the Information Bureau... (1920) No. 296]. Of course, there was no reaction to this.

No less important was the issue of oil. Here we mean the uninterrupted operation of the Baku-Batumi oil pipeline, and Soviet Russia was also very interested in this, as it received a lot of money from oil exports, as well as the supply of oil directly to Georgia.

On November 14, 1920, Georgia signed the trade and transit treaty with Soviet Russia and Azerbaijan. In accordance to the treaty, Georgia, Russia and Azerbaijan granted each other the right of free transit. Russia and Azerbaijan were obliged to provide Georgia with 750 thousand feet of petroleum products in the first month after the first train of the Georgian Railway arrives in Baku, and then one million feet every month, starting from the second month. All these petroleum products were exempt from all duties and taxes on the part of Russia and Azerbaijan and were transferred to Georgia at the following prices: tank, for the needs of the railway, crude oil and fuel oil 25 manats per foot, refined oil 50 manats per foot, gasoline from 70 to 460 manats. Prices for the needs of government agencies, residents and industry have been doubled. On the other hand, Georgia allowed the export of durable firebricks and fire clay from the Shrosha plant without paying customs duties and other government taxes. Not more than 20,000 bricks and 5,000 feet of clay per month at prices set by the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Georgia, and also the amount of coal, timber and other materials needed for the railways of Russia and Azerbaijan in the amount was determined by a mixed commission. In addition, Georgia allowed the export of various goods and products, with the exception of all wheat and sugar, the total amount of which must not exceed the total value of petroleum products imported into Georgia. Georgia undertook not to export products from Russia and Azerbaijan beyond the borders of Georgia [Commodity Transit Agreement... (1920) No. 260]

The Ertoba newspaper noted, "For us, the political moment is more important than oil products... Based on this economic cooperation, we believe that the atmosphere of mistrust should slow down and we should move closer to normal state relations. This, in turn, confronts us with some important economic prospects... The First Transit Treaty, if it does

not share the fate of the Akstaff Treaty, will become a great and powerful factor in the restoration of these relations” [Agreement (1920): No. 261].

As for the re-export of imported oil to other countries, here, as the *Ertoba* newspaper wrote, it was primarily meant, “petroleum products from Georgia will not fall into the hands of the enemies of Soviet Russia” [Again About the Agreement (1920): No 262].

The government of Soviet Azerbaijan, or more precisely the Bolshevik government of Soviet Russia, which actually ruled Soviet Azerbaijan, did not intend to fulfill the agreement. Moscow used Baku oil for political purposes and thus tried to influence the Georgian government by preventing the supply of oil and petroleum products to Georgia. “Since Georgian trains, locomotives and crews heading to Baku for the delivery of petroleum products were detained by the authorities of the RSFSR and AzSSSR on the territory of the AzSSSR from December 5, the government of Georgia, to protect the interests of the Republic and the principles of relations, blocked (banned) the property of the RSFSR until the mentioned trains, locomotives and crews will not be returned to Georgia” [Note From the Ministry...(1921), No 14].

At the same time, an official protest was sent to the representative of Soviet Russia in Georgia. It said: “Blocking the transfer of petroleum products to Georgia cannot be considered other than a violation of the trade and transit treaty of November 14, 1920” [Representative of the RSFSR...(1921), No 15].

Statements of protest did not help matters, since blocking oil supplies to Georgia was part of Moscow's policy. It is interesting that the Bolsheviks named the persecution of communists in Georgia as the formal reason for non-compliance with the agreement. “Soviet Azerbaijan has long declared economic war on us. In the very first days, it violated the economic agreement signed with us, blocked our oil products... the situation between us and our neighbors is worsening... our government is still trying to find a language of reconciliation with our neighbors” [Representative of the RSFSR...(1921), No. 15].

The “language of reconciliation” could not be found, since Soviet Russia had already decided to occupy Georgia and was using Soviet Azerbaijan and Soviet Armenia as a springboard.

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