

History

The Role of Georgia in the Plans of the States Involved in World War I

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ABSTRACT. The situation existing in Georgia during the World War I and the fact that Georgia was involved in the war from the very beginning are described in the present paper. The favorable geopolitical location of Georgia drew interests of big states (Germany, England, Russia). The attitude of Germany, Austria, Hungary, Russia and others (they had different interests) to Georgia and their plans with respect to Georgia are studied. The importance of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty (March 1918) for Georgia is evaluated and the fact that the Transcaucasian government did not recognize the Soviet government and had negotiations with separatist Turkey is underscored. On 26 May 1918, in a difficult domestic and foreign political situation, Georgia was declared as an independent republic. The republic existed for three years and on February 25, 1921 it joined the Soviet system. © 2018 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: geopolitics, aggression, orientation

At the very beginning of the World War I the Caucasian region drew the interests of the warring countries - the Alliance of Central States (Germany, Austria, Hungary) and Entente (England, France, Russia).

Georgia ruled by the Russian Empire was involved in the war immediately after it was announced [1-5]. A prompt mobilization was carried out. The rule of recruitment in the army was changed and all the 21-year old young men became liable for military service. The units of volunteers were formed, mostly in Adjara (autumn 1914). About 13% of the Georgian population (about 300,000 people) took part in the war. The Muslim population of Adjara was not recruited in the army.

In August-October 1914, none of the allies were able to achieve decisive success in military operations. Both parties sought to increase their military potential. They promised potential allies the territories and other properties at the expense of the member states of the adverse alliance. There was a particularly acute diplomatic struggle for the Ottoman Empire. Germany did everything to make that geopolitically important country its ally. Their attempt made the result and Turkey became an ally of Germany. The Ottoman army started to fight against Russia. The situation was complicated for Georgia as it became a front-line country [4].

Obviously, the socio-economic and cultural level of Georgia was considerably conditioned by foreign factors. Therefore, its relation to the foreign

states was of great importance. For its part, Georgia was economically wealthy country and geopolitically favorable that aroused great interest in big states. That was especially evident during the World War I. Those states had one goal - to gain influence over Georgia. There were some nuances with that respect. Let us consider some of them.

What was the role of Georgia in the state policy of German which was the actual initiator of the war?

The **German** government was fighting to dominate over the world. They believed that the East was very important for them in achieving their goal and considered it as a favorable bridge-head. It was not occasional that at the end of the 19th and early 20th century Georgia turned out to be the object of German expansionist policy (obviously the economic situation was also important). The Germans assumed that through Georgia they would expand their aggression towards India and China and would create additional difficulties for Russia. They thought that Georgia would also be economically useful for them as Georgians could provide them with raw materials and with cheap labor force. The German government correctly evaluating strategic importance of Georgia, paid great attention to German colonists living in Georgia, who were quite a lot. It was since 1819 when the Russian government began to settle German colonists in Georgia, who built villages there: Marienefeld (Sartichala), Alexandrienfeld (in Didube), Petersdorf (near Sartichala), Elizavetali (Asureti), Ekaterinefeld (near Bolnisi) and others (In the meantime the government gave the colonists the best lands and financial aid. The Emergency Department developed a charter for them, which granted them some privileges. Colonists were actively involved in the development of craft). Germans were engaged in the pan-German propaganda among those population. They even invested capital in some industries (of their interest). This was the case with the production of manganese in Chiatura. The

Germans were trying to create an extensive network of agents in Georgia that would collect military, economic, and political information. Some groups (mostly diversionary) were created to study the combat capabilities of the Russian army in Georgia and to draw up military maps (railroads, highways, ports, etc.). There was an attempt to study the economic situation (necessary resources in the war). It is worth noting that with the initiative of Wilhelm II - the German Emperor and Prussian King (1888-1918), who was actively promoting World War I, a special department was created at German General Staff. Their mission was to identify the people of pro-German and pro-Russian orientation. Friedrich Schulenberg, a resident of Germany, established a relationship with national circles. He propagated the idea of creating a democratic Georgia under German Protectorate. This action (despite the counter-measures taken by Russians) prepared a ground for establishing German orientation in Georgian society (On November 9, 1918, the rebellion overthrew the monarchy. Wilhelm II fled to the Netherlands. He resigned from the 28th of 1918).

The Ottoman Empire had maximum objectives. They did not think about just survival, but rather they thought it necessary to realize their national ideology that meant to defeat Russia and to expand the borders of the empire. Obviously, that plan implied to conquer Georgia. As for the problem of the Caucasus in general, it became the subject of disagreement between Germany and Turkey. The goal of Germany was to encourage Turkey to take part in the World War. In such a way, the troops of the Turkish army would stay on the front of the Caucasus. It should be noted that Germany would not allow Enver Pasha to carry out his plan and to create a great Turkish state ("Great Turan"). At a glance, Germany was not against giving the territories to Turkey in some districts of the South Caucasus, but it was not specified, which one. The goal of the German Imperial House itself was to conquer the world and, obviously, they

would not offer large territory to Turkey, but Turkey would not be satisfied with little. Thus, Germany made promises but did not take any concrete steps [6].

Georgia had no place in **Austria-Hungary politics**, but there is one thing worth noting. The authorities of that country were trying not to miss the negotiations of Germany and Turkey with Georgia. This mission was upon the Austrian-Hungarian Consul Kwiatkowski in Trabzon. He was receiving information from the Georgian Legion and members of the Committee for the Independence of Georgia from Trabzon.

As for the attitude of Entente to Georgia, it was somewhat different. As we have noted above, Georgia was ruled by the Russian Empire and its (Russia) partner countries (England, France) never had any claims to that part of the South Caucasus. Since the October Revolution of 1917 the situation changed. England and France divided the southern part of the former Russian Empire into the spheres of their influence - Georgia came under the state interests of England.

The Russian state (during the Tsarism period) had always had pretensions to the Near and the Middle East. Its goal was to gain a free access to the sea. That would allow Russia to have relations with the Mediterranean countries and would put an end to its isolation. Russian goods (domestic products) would enter the world market. The trade and economic necessity were directly related to military-strategic problems. Russia's goal was to dominate over the Black Sea and to have a monopolistic control over it. Their objective was to reinforce the security of the southern part of the empire to be able to use the Black Sea straits. The path for strengthening their status in Persia was passing through Georgia leading to India. According to the Russian authorities, the geographical location of Georgia would help them solve number of issues. And

naturally, the issue of Georgia was on the agenda of Russia's foreign policy.

As we mentioned above, Germany also had its claims to the Near and Middle East. The Russian state officials understood the strategic importance of the South Caucasus. Therefore, they did their best to take new measures in this region (to settle Russian officers in the coastline, to arrange a military polygon, etc.). The farther goal was to build the terrestrial routes on the Black Sea coast, the railway along the mountain pass and to strengthen the means of transport. All this was intended for strengthening the Russian military power and it was also in the interests of Georgia as it would help its economic development.

The fact is that the pro-Russian (pro-Entente) orientation was very important for Georgia. The interests of Germany could help Georgia to restore its statehood, therefore a part of people had a pro-German attitude. However, the pro-Russian (pro-Entente) attitude was predominant. Therefore, as we mentioned above, it was not accidental that in Georgia 13% of population were mobilized and fought under the Russian flag.

In general, the main military mission of the Caucasian and Georgian Army was to protect the Baku-Vladikavkaz railway road and the Tbilisi-Vladikavkaz military road, which were the important arteries leading to Russia. The objective was to prevent the Turkish army from invading the territory of the Caucasus and to defend the important industrial center - Baku.

Considering the attitude of the Georgian society to the World War I, it should be noted that most of the Georgian intellectuals did not approve the imperial character of the World War I and considered it as the war of nations. People expected national freedom from the war, but Russia, England and France ignored the national interests of the Georgian people. It should be noted that there was not a uniform attitude to the

world war. One part considered that if Enante won, they would be better off, while the others were relying on the other part. The arrival of Nikoloz II to Georgia strengthened the pro-Russian orientation in the Georgian society (1914, November). Turkey's involvement in the war stimulated Georgians for the active participation in the war. The nobility sent two battalions to the front. There were Georgian volunteers and nurses. The Georgians considered that they participated in the historic mission of rejoining of Chaneti (historic Southern Georgia). They believed that moving the Russian state borders to the south would encourage the Georgians to get closer to the fellow Georgians, who had converted to Islam (by that time they were 0.5 million) and it would create the conditions for free development of the country, but despite the sacrifices they made for Russia, the Tsarist government did not think to support the development of the national culture of any non-Russian people (in this case Georgia)

The significance of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 3, 1918) for Georgia should be considered separately. It was an agreement between Russia, on the one hand, and German Empire, Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, on the other hand. The territories of Poland (Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and parts of Latvia) were separated from Russia. In addition, Soviet Russia had to take troops from Latvia and Estonia. Instead, the German troops entered there. Russia was imposed some other serious obligations. The conditions of the Treaty were serious for the South Caucasus. Ardahan and Kars Districts and Batumi were given to Turkey. Paragraph 4 of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty stated the following: "... The districts of Ardahan, Kars and Batumi ... are immediately cleared of

Russian troops. Russia will not interfere in the new organization of state legal and international legal relations of these districts, but rather it will allow the population of these districts to establish a new system in agreement with neighboring states, in particular with Turkey [7].

The Transcaucasian government avoided negotiations of the Soviet government with Germany and its allies in Brest. They did not recognize the Soviet government and had separate negotiations with Turkey. They thought that it would be possible to maintain Batumi, Ardahan and Kars if the people opposed to the Ottoman invaders, but that effort was not successful. On June 4, 1918, an agreement was signed between Georgia and the Ottoman Empire. The negotiation was going on in a difficult situation for Georgia and it turned to be harder than the Brest Treaty. The Declaration of Independence of Georgia, published on April 29, 1918, underscores the fact that in the revolution of 1917 the southern front collapsed. The Russian army left the Transcaucasus. Political parties created local authorities, however, under the influence of internal political crisis and external political forces the Union of the Transcaucasian Nations collapsed. One of the reasons was also the disagreement between the Transcaucasian countries. The Federative Republic collapsed. In such conditions it was in the interests of the Georgian people to create an independent state organization. That would avoid the danger of being conquered and would create the firm basis for independent development [4]. It was very important that on 26 May 1918 Georgia was declared an independent republic in a difficult domestic and foreign political situation. The republic existed for three years. On February 25, 1921, the country joined the Soviet system.

ისტორია

საქართველოს საკითხი პირველ მსოფლიო ომში მეომარ სახელმწიფოთა გეგმებში

რ. მეტრეველი

აკადემიის წევრი, საქართველოს ეროვნული მეცნიერებათა აკადემია, თბილისი, საქართველო

წინამდებარე სტატიაში ნაჩვენებია საქართველოს მდგომარეობა პირველი მსოფლიო ომის დროს. ხაზი აქვს გასმული იმ გარემოებას, რომ საქართველო ომის გამოცხადებისთანავე მასში ჩაბმული აღმოჩნდა. საქართველო გეოპოლიტიკური თვალსაზრისით მეტად ხელსაყრელი მხარე იყო, რაც მნიშვნელოვან ინტერესებს სძრავდა დიდ სახელმწიფოებში (გერმანია, ინგლისი, რუსეთი); გამოკვლეულია გერმანიის, ავსტრია-უნგრეთის, რუსეთისა და სხვათა დამოკიდებულება (ამ სახელმწიფოთა ინტერესები და განსხვავებული იყო) საქართველოსადმი - საქართველოს პრობლემა მათ გეგმებში. მოცემულია ბრესტ-ლიტოვსკის ზავის (1918 წ. მარტი) მნიშვნელობა საქართველოსათვის. ხაზგასმულია, რომ ამიერკავკასიის მთავრობა არ სცნობდა საბჭოთა ხელისუფლებას და თავად სეპარატისტულ მოლაპარაკებას აწარმოებდა თურქეთთან.

რთულ საშინაო და საგარეო პოლიტიკურ ვითარებაში 1918 წლის 26 მაისს საქართველო დამოუკიდებელ რესპუბლიკად გამოცხადდა. რესპუბლიკამ სამი წელი იარსება. 1921 წლის 25 თებერვალს ქვეყანა საბჭოთა სისტემაში ჩადგა.

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