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TERRITORIAL CLAIMS OF THE ARMENIAN AND GEORGIAN SSRs TO TURKEY IN THE 1940s

ERMENİSTAN VE GÜRCİSTAN SOVYET SOSYALİST CUMHURİYETLERİ'NİN 1940'LARDA TÜRKİYE'DEN TOPRAK TALEPLERİ

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ABSTRACT

Immediately after the end of World War II Turkey once more became entangled with the interests of the Great Powers. Turkey's strategic importance of having territorial access to the Middle East and powerful nations' attempts to predetermine the political orientation of the Turkish government led to a revitalization of politics by the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States in relation to Ankara. Consequently, the post-war era became a turning point in Soviet-Turkish relations when the friendly relations, founded in the initial years of the Turkish Republic, were replaced with coolness and hidden enmities. The Soviet Union launched a planned "war of nerves" against Turkey by raising territorial claims and using the Armenian SSR and Georgian SSR for its own causes, which gave new impetus to the "Armenian issue" and a launch of campaign on repatriation of Armenians living abroad. It waged an intensive anti-Turkish propaganda in the mass media, and raised the question of revision of the 1936 Montreux Convention regarding the regime of the Turkish Straits with the aim of amending the treaty to its own interests.

Key Words: *Cold War, USSR, Turkey, Straits, Armenian SSR and Georgian SSR.*

ÖZET

İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın bitiminin hemen ardından Türkiye'nin bir kez daha büyük güçlerin çıkarları ile başı derde girdi. Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu'ya kara geçişine sahip olmasının stratejik önemi ve güçlü ulusların Türk hükümetinin siyasi eğilimini önceden tayin etme girişimleri, Ankara konusunda, Sovyetler Birliği, Büyük Britanya ve ABD politikalarının yeniden canlanmasına yol açtı. Sonuç olarak, Türkiye Cumhuriyetinin ilk yıllarında kurulan dostça ilişkiler soğukluk ve gizli düşmanlıklar ile yer değiştirince, savaş sonrası dönem, Sovyet-Türk ilişkilerinde bir dönüm noktası oldu. Sovyetler Birliği, Ermeni ve Gürcü Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyetleri'ni kullanarak Türkiye'ye karşı planlanmış bir psikolojik savaş başlattı. 1936 Montrö Sözleşmesi'nin revize edilme meselesini ileri sürdü. Montrö Sözleşmesi çerçevesinde düzenlenen Boğazlar rejimi hususunda tekrar bir revizyona gidilmesi konusunu gündeme taşıyarak medyada yoğun bir Türk karşıtı propaganda başlattı. Burada amaç sözleşmenin Sovyetler lehine tekrar revize edilmesiydi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Soğuk Savaş, SSCB, Türkiye, Boğazlar, Ermenistan Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyeti, Gürcistan Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyeti.*

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Introduction

As is well known, during World War II the relations between the Soviet Union and Turkey were tense, and with the beginning of the Cold war and expansion plans of the USSR they became even more complicated. Turkey's economic and military weakness, Stalin's dissatisfaction with its actions during the war (the USSR accused Turkey of letting several German military and military-support vessels through the Straits), and its personal control over the Straits, the fear that it would turn towards the hostile west camp which would mean vulnerability of the southern frontiers of the USSR – all these predetermined Moscow's attitude to Turkey.

Therefore, the Soviet Union tried to establish a pro-Soviet, puppet government in Turkey, as well as in the other neighboring and occupied countries. Regarding this, the document of the US Central Intelligence Agency "Foreign and military policy of the USSR" of July 23, 1946 reads: "The Soviet Union desired to include Greece, Turkey and Iran in its security zone through the establishment of "friendly" governments in those countries. Local factors were favorable toward its designs, but the danger of provoking Great Britain and the USA in combination kept the USSR from the open actions".[1] Besides, communists' position in Turkey was weak. Unlike in Iran, Eastern Europe and the Balkans, there were no Soviet troops in Turkey, and the formation of a Soviet-friendly government was not easy. Also, the unanimity of the Turkish political circles and government was a factor of no small importance. Therefore, Moscow decided to use other "veiled" political instruments, and in particular, to involve South Caucasian republics neighboring with Turkey – the Armenian and Georgian SSRs – to achieve its goals. Beginning with the second half of 1945 and until the end of 1947 the USSR launched a campaign on seizure of Turkish territories. Alongside with this the Soviet Union achieved its real goals – revision of the Montreux Convention on the Black Sea Straits dated July 20, 1936 to establish joint control, or if Turkey were further weakened, sole control over the Straits.

Rise of "Armenian and Georgian issues" by the Soviet Union

In the middle of 1945 G. Kiknadze, the people's commissar on foreign affairs of the Georgian SSR, received confidential instructions from Moscow to collect necessary information on the eastern regions of Turkey: size and location, national composition of the population, historical and cultural monuments, and available natural resources. In turn, deputy people's commissar on foreign affairs I.Kavtaradze passed the same task to the people's commissar on foreign affairs of the Armenian SSR.[2] Thus, those operations started to be

[1] CIG, Office Research and Evaluation. ORE1, Soviet Foreign and Military Policy, 23 July 1946, p. 66.

[2] Presidential Archive of Georgia - f. 14, op. 20, d. 253, p. 31-36.

secretly realized by the leadership of the two republics.

From April till June the leadership of Soviet Armenia – the chairman of the Council of people's commissars of the Armenian SSR, A. Sarkisyan, and the first chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia, G.Arutyunov – addressed to Stalin with numerous letters which told about one million Armenians who forcedly immigrated from "Turkish Armenia" after World War I to the Arabic and Balkan countries, Western Europe, the USA, etc. and formed numerous Armenian colonies in those countries. At first the authors of the letters asked Stalin to assist in establishing diplomatic relations and exchanging diplomatic representations between the Armenian SSR and the countries where the Armenian colonies existed, instituting positions of the counselors on the work with the Armenian colonies in the Soviet embassies, strengthening connections with the pro-Soviet foreign Armenians by sending the representatives of the Council of the people's commissars of the Armenian SSR to those countries, and beginning to publish the journal under the name "Soviet Armenia" in the Armenian language specially for the foreign Armenians.[3] And in the next letters of May 15 and July 7 – to allow the foreign Armenians return to Soviet Armenia and to raise the issue at the Potsdam conference of "returning" Armenian lands by restoring the borders of 1914 and handing over the former Armenia territories of Kars and Surmali, which would ease the return of Armenians to their native land,. Appeals of the Armenian leadership were approved by Stalin.

At the same time Armenian colonies abroad stirred up their activity. In March 1945 the Armenian National Church Council in Philadelphia sent a telegram to President Franklin Roosevelt with the appeal to assist in expanding the boundaries of Soviet Armenia and to hold a just position with regard to the Armenians, i.e. according to Woodrow Wilson's precept to gather Armenians scattered around the world in their native land.[4] On April 7 the Armenian National Committee from New York addressed Stalin with a telegram expressing hope that Stalin had not forgotten the decree of Soviet Russia, "On Turkish Armenia", of December 29, 1917. [5]

Launch of anti-Turkish campaign in the Armenian Media

Except the Soviet leadership and the leadership of the Caucasian republics, soon all the Soviet press and public and religious figures were engaged in the "war of nerves" against Turkey. From the end of 1945 in particular, a wave of articles appeared in the press that openly raised territorial claims against Turkey and criticized it for violating its position of neutrality during the war.

On November 27, 1945 Catholicos of all Armenians Gevork VI sent a letter to the presidents of three great states – I. V. Stalin, H.S. Truman and C. R. Attlee in

[3] Jamil Hasanli, *USSR-Turkey: Cold War Range,* (Baku: Adilogli, 2005), pp. 154-155, 187-189.
[4] Ibid, p. 156.
[5] Ibid, p. 155.

which he made a large historical retrospective of the Ottoman Empire times and began to describe the "humiliations, oppressions and physical destruction" which the Armenian people allegedly suffered from the Turkish sultans. As a result of those repressions, according to the clergyman, 300 thousand Armenians were driven out of their lands in 1894-1896, and in 1920 after the seizure of "vitally important parts of Armenia" Kars, Ardagan and Surmali, "left helpless, Armenians were driven out of their native lands and scattered around the world". And what saved the Armenian people from annihilation was the newly-formed Soviet Republic which "liberated the rest of the Armenian lands and formed here the Armenian Soviet Republic". Summing up his statement, Gevork VI set his hopes on the support of the UN and called on that institution "to restore justice" and return "The Turkish Armenia" to the Armenians by joining it to Soviet Armenia.[6]

The next article expressing "expectations" of "eternally bypassed, aggrieved Armenians" was published in the newspaper "Izvestiya" of February 22, 1946. It read that the Armenian professor A. K. Djivelegova spoke in front of the audience of the lecture hall of All-Union lecture bureau under the committee on the activities of the higher school at the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR with the report on the topic "Armenia and Turkey". He spoke of "the tragic fate of the Armenians" living in the regions of Van, Bitlis, Erzurum who had been driven out by the Turks and then found support in Soviet power. Djivelegova raised the issue that was vitally important for the Armenian people: the reunification of the Armenian territories Kars and Ardagan, which were once part of Russia, with Soviet Armenia.[7]

In parallel with the Soviet press, "The New York Times" published an article on June 11, 1945 by a Surmelyan who demanded the return of Kars and Ardagan, arguing that it was an important region for the defense of the Caucasian region. [8]

The "Information war" between the Georgian SSR and Turkey

On December 14, 1945, first in the Georgian newspaper, "Communist", and then in the newspapers "Izvestiya", "Zarya Vostoka" and "Pravda", a letter by the Georgian scientists S. Djanashia and N. Berdzenishvili was published under the title "About our legal claims to Turkey".[9] In the letter they gave a brief history of their country from with the high antiquity until the Ottoman conquest of a number of the southern regions of Georgia and the treaty of October 13, 1921 between the Georgian and Armenian SSR on one side and Turkey from the other, according to which several more Georgian and Armenian lands "passed" to the

6 Aziz Alakbarli, "Armenian Nation is Incorrigible", *525-ji Gazet*, 12 March 2007.
7 "Armenia and Turkey", *Izvestiya*, 22 February 1946.
8 Robert Fedoovich. Ivanov, *Stalin and Allies 1941-1945*, (Smolensk: Rusich, 2000), p.534.
9 Djanashia, Simon,;Berdzenishvili Nikoloz, "About Our Legal Claims to Turkey", *Zarya Vostoka*, 13 December, 1945.

latter. At the end of the article the authors openly declare that the "Georgian people must get back its lands, namely Ardagan, Artvin, Olti, Tortum, Chekir, Beyburt, Gumushhane and Eastern Lazistan regions, including the regions of Trabzon (Trapezunt) and Giresun, i.e. only part of the territories, seized from Georgia".

This letter caused general indignation amongst the Turkish community. All leading newspapers, journalists, public figures appeared with articles in which they blamed the Soviet Union for those claims pointing out that the Georgians and Armenians were only marionettes in this "war of nerves", and that behind all those actions was standing the Soviet leadership which first put in claims on the Straits and bases, and then on territories for the Armenians and Georgians. At the same time many of them frankly pointed out that those were historically Turkish territories, and if an analysis of historical belonging began it would be found out that the Soviet Union itself consisted of nothing but occupied territories of other nations. [10]

The article by Asim Us under the title "Events in Iran may be dangerous for Turkey as well" from this series of articles published on December 30 in the newspaper "Vakit" [11], in which the author closely related the events going on in Iran with the last actions of the Russians with regard to Turkey is of particular interest. The author particularly underlines that "after the Russian occupation forces raised the Azerbaijani issue they started to incite to rising of the Kurdish issue as well. And the Kurdish issue is directed not only against Iran but as a disease may take hostile direction with regard to Iraq and Turkey".[12] Further, Us notes that for the realization of its plans in Iran, Russia started using occupation forces deployed there during the war, but as it was impossible to do that in Turkey, the Soviet Union used other methods. At the end of the article the author asks himself a question, "Is denouncement of the treaty on friendship with Turkey by the Soviet Union a preparatory action for realization of such plan of assault? At present it is impossible to give a final, affirmative or negative answer to this question. At any case, raising of the Armenian and then Georgian issues by the Russians against us within the last few days makes sense. It is possible that in Russia's probable aggressive plan with regard to Turkey, Armenians and Georgians will play the basic part, and therefore the dream about

[10] Huseyn Jahid Yalcin, "Armenian question", *Tanin,* 21 December 1945; Huseyn Jahid Yalcin, "And now the Georgians," *Tanin*, 22 December 1945; Peyami Safa, "Soviet Nazis", *Tasvir,* 22 December 1945; Sadak, "We do not buy Russian friendship at the cost of territories", *Aksham*, 24 December 1945 ; A. Tefik Rushtu, "My open appeal to the Soviet press," *Vatan*, 24 December 1945; Hikmet Bayur, "Politics of historical rights", *Hyurses*, 28 December 1945; Central State Archive of the Republic of Azerbaijan, f.28, op.4, d.47, pp. 55-60, 110-112

[11] Asim Us, "Events in Iran may be dangerous for Turkey as well", *Vakit,* 30 December 1945; Central State Archive of the Republic of Azerbaijan, f.28, op. 4, d.47, p.132-133

[12] And really the Kurdish problem, and immediate establishment of Kurdish autonomy in neighboring Iran so strongly worried the Turkish authorities that they made a decision at the end of 1945-beginning of 1946 on the resettlement of Turkish Kurds from the regions bordering with Iran and Iraq to the centre of the country. For more details, see: Koptevskiy V. N., *Russia-Turkey: Stages of Trade and Economic Cooperation*, (Moscow: Oriental Studies Institute RAS, 2003), p.102.

great Georgia and great Armenia will become the inciting instrument for these nations in the given issue".

The newspaper "Ulus" published an article by Osman Turan, the docent of Ankara University's Faculty of History, Language and Geography, and then the newspaper "Vatan" published a series of articles by Professor Fuat Koprulu titled "Reply to Georgian professors". The main objective of those articles was to prove that Turkey did not take the Black Sea regions in the east of Turkey from the Georgians but that Georgia took them from Turkey, and that those territories, "twice occupied by the Georgians, could not for both times remain in their hands for a long time and again returned to their real owners". The newspapers claimed that the Georgian population in that area was not considerable in comparison with the Turkish population, and that even this small group of Georgians considered themselves completely Turkish. [13]

Some journalists claimed that even to accept the Georgian professors' logic of stating the history, the argument put forth by them for returning those territories to Georgia just because they belonged to it once was extremely insufficient. "If to rely on such kind of arguments", wrote the journalist Selim Pandol, "then the Greeks could perfectly claim to Marseille, and the French to Canada".[14]

And still, despite different arguments of Turkish journalists on the groundlessness of the Georgians' claims, all of them unanimously stated, "the claims of Georgian professors are so ridiculous that they shouldn't be paid attention to".[15]

On January 4, 1946, in response to the articles of Georgian scientists, the Turkish radio prepared a program in several languages that made a survey of modern Soviet Georgia, and the audience was offered to compare all their facts with any encyclopedic editions and historical works. At the end of the program it was noted that the country known as Georgia never owned even a handful of the land which lay behind the frontiers of Turkey.[16]

However, the USSR's propaganda campaign was also fortified by advancement of the Soviet troops towards Turkish frontiers. In particular, the English intelligence reported on the dispatch of 50 echelons with live power to Romania and the accumulation of army units in the Caucasus.[17]

After a short period of time another article appeared in the Soviet press, this time it was an article titled "Turks-aggressors must return our lands" by a

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[13] Central State Archive of the Republic of Azerbaijan, f.28, op.4, d.47, p. 212.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] "The Near East and Africa 1946", *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, Vol.7, (Washington, 1969), p. 806.

[17] M. Akgun, "Black Sea Straits: Invisible Ties", *Russian-Turkish Relations: History, Present Condition And Perspectives*, (Moscow: OSI RAS, 2003), p. 62.

member of the Religious Office of the Moslems of Transcaucasia, qazi of Ajaria Rasikh Suleyman Beridze. In the article he substantiated Georgian claims with the same arguments, but this time on behalf of Georgian Moslems, emphasizing their wonderful life in the Soviet Union and the oppression of their brothers on the Turkish side who would "gladly welcome reunion of their native places with Georgia".[18]

It should be noted that the article had its particular importance. In the course of many centuries both Georgians and Turks compactly lived on this territory. And as time went by, Georgians in many regions were exposed to assimilation and adopted Islam. And when this issue on the territorial claims arose again in 1945 many of the historical Georgians lost their linguistic, religious identity and became closer rather to Turks than Georgians living in the Georgian SSR. And this fact was confirmed by G. Kiknadze in his report addressed to the deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR L. Beriya in August 1945.[19]

It became clear from the content of the report that the Georgian leadership itself realized that the failure of the above-mentioned territorial claims was predetermined and therefore the statement of the qazi of Ajaria, Georgian-Moslem in the article was of great importance, as here the author did not separate the Georgian-Moslems from the Georgian-Christians, placing the former together with the Turks, but on the contrary recalled the consanguinity and existence of the Georgians of the Moslem religion in Soviet Georgia. "Moslem religion Islam spread among Georgians on the territory occupied by the Ottomans did not change their blood though, and did not bring about their national degeneration… Moslem-Georgians and Christian-Georgians remained brothers despite different beliefs. Moslem-Georgians recognize themselves as Georgians. They know that by nationality they belong to Georgian nation and that the difference in religion could not and will never cause national disunion from their brothers… In the great Soviet country, among the nations of different religions there are followers of Islam as well, who freely perform Moslem rites in compliance with the Koran. Here, in Ajaria, believers pray and perform readings in the existing mosques without experiencing any oppressions. In line with the Constitution of our country each person may perform the rites of his/her religion".[20]

Then another article followed, this time by the Catholicos Patriarch of all Georgia Kallistrat under the title "Catholicos of Georgia about well-founded

[18] Rasikh Suleymanovich Beridze, "Turks-Aggressors Must Return Our Lands", *Zarya Vostoka*, 29 December 1945

[19] Presidential Archive of Georgia, f. 14, op 20, d. 253, p. 31-36.

[20] Rasikh Suleymanovich Beridze, "Turks-Aggressors Must Return Our Lands", *Zarya Vostoka*, 29 December 1945

claims of the Georgian people to Turkey"[21], which was maintained in the same manner.

In all three articles the appeal is addressed on behalf of the Georgian people to the UN.

This series of articles is concluded with an article by professor E.Takayshvili "About Georgian lands occupied by Turkey"[22], in which the author supports articles by the academicians S. Djanashia and N. Berdzenishvili published earlier.

The author cites the names of a number of historical works dedicated to the material culture of the southern Georgians and remarks that "it is enough to turn to the monuments existing on these lands…, it is enough to revise the works of the Georgian and non-Georgian scientists, archaeologists studying this country and it will become clear that this territory had already been inhabited by our brother Georgians for ages". Further, as proof of the above-mentioned words, he gives examples of historical cultural monuments, churches and temples belonging to Georgian architecture and located in these territories. In his conclusion, he subscribes to the claims of his colleagues.

Simultaneously, besides the press, Moscow soon initiated one more instrument of propaganda no less powerful – the radio. In connection with this the document drawn up by the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Georgian SSR and addressed to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia V. Charkviani on November 12, 1946 is of great interest. The author of the document states that recently the USSR MFA was addressed with the issue of the possible organization of radio programs from Tbilisi for the Georgian population of the countries contiguous to Georgia (Turkey and Iran), which had to be carried out generally in the same form and with the same purposes in which the radio programs from several Soviet republics had already been carried out. The issue was met with approval by the Deputy Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the USSR, V. G. Dekanozov. The latter also authorized the purchase of several battery radio receivers at the expense of the Georgian SSR MFA, which were meant to be presented with this purpose to the Georgian villages in Iran.

The subject matter of the programs had to cover a range of issues, touching upon the history of Georgia, religion issues etc., but first of all the programs had to highlight the achievements of Soviet Georgia and systematically "objectively orient the events in international life". Thus, the materials prepared for broadcasting by the radio committee underwent mandatory

[21] Kallistrat, Catholicos- Patriarch of the Whole of Georgia, "Catholicos of Georgia About Well-Founded Claims of the Georgian People to Turkey", *Zarya Vostoka*, 11 January 1946.

[22] Takayshvili, Efimiy Semyonovich "About Georgian Lands Occupied by Turkey" *Zarya Vostoka*, 30 May 1946.

censorship in the Georgian SSR MFA, and the broadcast programs had to be coordinated in advance.[23]

Naturally, it may be assumed that similar programs were broadcasted for the Armenian populations of Turkey and Iran, both in the official languages of those countries and in the Armenian language.

The work on prevention of "informational intrusion" upon the territory of Turkey was undertaken by the Anadolu agency, on the activity of which D.Yalchin, the journalist of the newspaper "Khaber" wrote: "This agency fully published hostile words and lies said about Turkey by the Moscow radio and at the same time refuted all, resting upon the data received from the competent sources".[24]

On January 12, 1946 Soviet ambassador to Turkey S. Vinogradov sent a harsh note to the Turkish government in connection with the anti-Soviet articles under the titles "Machiavellianism is now Molotovism" and "Stalin does what Hitler did", published in the Turkish press. In the reply note the Turkish side mentioned that before this note the Turkish government had already came forward with this initiative to journalists (and actually 2 or 3 days before the note, S. Saradjoglu had warned local journalists to be restrained and careful, avoiding offences against Soviet Union); that the Turkish government regretted that the Soviet leaders found the statements in the Turkish press insulting; that the recent articles were replies to the feelings caused by the recent articles of Georgian professors in the Soviet press and on the radio claiming Turkish territories; and that the Turkish government hoped that in answer to the Turkish initiative to eliminate articles unpleasant for the USSR, the latter would take similar measures in its press as well.[25]

"Legal basis" for territorial claims

As a justification to all these Georgian and Armenian territorial claims People's Commissar of foreign affairs G. Kiknadze produces an argument that Turkey violated Article 10 of the treaty of October 13, 1921 by "deliberately conniving at extended and proactive work of the anti-Soviet organization of "pan-Turkists" on its territory, which was nothing but the German intelligence service that made the formation of "Great Turkey" at the cost of seizing the Crimea, Caucasus and other parts from the USSR its objective". Further it is said that in view of the fact that Turkey practically unilaterally terminated the treaties on friendship concluded between itself and the Soviet republics, the question of denouncement of those treaties and consequently of the return to the

[23] Presidential Archive of Georgia, f. 14, op. 20, d. 253, p. 69-70.

[24] Huseyn Jahid Yalcin, "Everyday Some Russian Lie," *Haber*, 2 June 1946; Central State Archive of the Republic of Azerbaijan, f. 28, op.4, d.50, p. 361-363.

[25] "The Near East and Africa 1946", *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol.7, (Washington, 1969), p. 808-809.

Transcaucasian Soviet republics of the territories originally belonging to them may arise".[26]

Among the territories that the Georgian republic could have claimed, the following regions were mentioned: the "southern area of the former Batumi region and entirely former Artvin, Ardagan and Olti regions".

As to the territories which supposedly were the territories of the Armenian SSR originally, the following territories were mentioned – "the province of Kars (the Kars region except for the small Agbaba district of the Kagizman region), the province of Surmali (the Surmali district of the former Erivan province with a small area from the Sharur-Daralogez district)"[27]. Thus, according to the report of Kiknadze, the People's Commissar of the foreign affairs, the total area of the lands was to be nearly 26000 sq. km., of which 20500 sq. km. had to form the part of the Armenian SSR, and 5500 sq. km., the Georgian SSR. But, in the opinion of the People's Commissar of foreign affairs of the Georgian SSR, G. Kiknadze, this calculation was wrong, as besides the southern area of the Batumi region and former Artvin region, the Ardagan and Olti regions had to be included in the Georgian SSR. As a result, 12760 sq. km. would go to the Georgian SSR, and 13190 sq.km. to the Armenian SSR.[28]

But in the ensuing years, among the listed regions to which the republics laid claim, both used the same names for the regions, for example Ardagan, Trapezunt etc.[29]

Repatriation of Armenians living abroad

Besides large-scale propaganda in Soviet Armenia itself, the Armenians living in different parts of the world, in particular Armenians in the USA, France, Bulgaria, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Argentina, Brazil and other countries stepped forth to express solidarity.[30]

In this connection the fact mentioned by Turkish historian Bilgin is very interesting. The author notes that when the Soviet Union decided to first play the traditional "Armenian card" against Turkey, he drew their attention initially to Syria, which had a large number of Armenians. This choice was not made by accident. First, a large number of Armenians lived in Syria (moved there in 1939 from Hatay), and second, Syria had tense relations with Turkey because of the province of Hatay (Alexandretta). As it is known, the Hatay region, after a long

[26] Presidential Archive of Georgia, f. 14, op. 20, d. 253, p. 1-2.
[27] Ibid., p. 23.
[28] Ibid., pp. 2-3.
[29] "Meeting of Armenian-Americans in New York", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 1 May 1945.
[30] "Our Brothers-Armenians Abroad Gleefully Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Motherland - Soviet Armenia", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 22 December 1945.

struggle against the domination of the French, decided to join Turkey in 1939. However, Syria protested and brought this to the League of Nations in June 1936. "Moscow considered this "sore point" in relations between the two countries as an opportunity to further provoke Damascus through the awakening of the senses from the Armenian population of Syria" [189]. The year 1944, when two Syrian MPs in Parliament raised the issue of the return of Hatay province, became the culmination in the development of this issue. However, as noted by S. Bilgin, referring to the confidential report of the British embassy, the "Hatay campaign" was fueled by two sources: the campaign was carried out by immigrants from Hatay, a large number of who were Armenians, acting on the orders of the Soviet Union, and the activities of some deputies who had interests in the region. With the support of the Soviet ambassador in Damascus, the Armenian groups, together with the orthodox Greeks actively pursued the "Hatay campaign"; the Syrians themselves did not have any problems with the Turks. This Soviet campaign lasted until mid-1946, but, considering it insufficient, the Soviet Union drew the Armenian population of Soviet Armenia and Armenians living abroad. [31]

Civil, public, cultural, and religious organizations held meetings, demonstrations, adopted resolutions, and appealed to the UN, presidents of the USA, Great Britain and the USSR, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the USA Congress, and high-ranking officials.[32]

The most interesting fact was that despite the completely opposite political views of the Armenian public organizations and the Soviet Union, they both

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[31] Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgin "Soviet-Armenian Collaboration Against Turkey in the Post-Second World War Period, (1945-1947)", *Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol.2, No. 5, 2003.

[32] "Rally of Armenian-Americans in New York", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 1 May 1945; "Rally of Armenian-Americans in New York", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 8 May 1945 ; "Movement in United States for Supporting Decision of "Armenian National Council"", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 15 May 1945; "Speech by Hewlett Johnson", *Izvestiya,* 29 June 1945; "Appeal of "American Committee of struggle for Armenian rights" to Dean Acheson", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 9 July 1945; Rally of members of Armenian colonies in Bucharest", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 5 August 1945; "Armenian Religious Organizations in USA", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 2 October 1945; "Demands of Armenian Organizations in USA", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 9 October 1945; "Statement by American delegates of Armenians Cathedral to Church in Echmiadzin", *Izvestiya*, 21 October 1945 ; "Movement in United States for Reunification of Armenian People", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 13 November 1945; "Creation of Armenian National Council in Alexandria ", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 4 January 1946 ; "Demands in U.S. for Return of Armenian Lands to Soviet Armenia", *Zarya Vostoka,* 7 February 1946; "American Committee of struggle for Fair Treatment of Armenians Sends Message to American Delegation in UN", *Izvestiya*, 6 February 1946; "Appeal of Armenian Organizations Conference in United States to Trygve Lie", *Izvestiya*, 7 May 1946; "Demands of Armenian National Council of Lebanon", *Izvestiya*, 16 May 1946; Robert Fedoovich Ivanov, *Stalin and Allies 1941-1945,* (Smolensk : Rusich, 2000), p.534.

were able to discard their differences and unite around a single idea of creating a "Great Armenia" by rejection of the Turkish claim to the territories. [33]

Thus, the resolution adopted by "The American Committee on the struggle for the rights of Armenians" and the "Armenian National Council in America" during a mass rally organized in New-York reads:

"Taking into consideration that hundreds of thousands of Armenians – victims of Turkish oppression – at present live in the conditions of abject need in the territories of foreign countries, in particular in the Near East and the Mediterranean countries; that a considerable number of Armenians have already expressed their desire for returning to their native land; that returning of the resettled Armenians to their native land, to Soviet Armenia is possible after reunification of the Armenian provinces forcedly seized from Armenia by the Turks with Soviet Armenia and that the Turkish government in the course of generations cruelly oppressed and killed and discriminated against Armenians; remembering that the policy of the American government since Wilson's times has been the policy of friendship toward the Armenian people; that in 1920 in his arbitral award Wilson stipulated reunification with Armenia of the Armenian provinces of Kars, Ardagan, Erzurum, Trapezunt, Van and Bitlis occupied by Turkey… we, American Armenians, unanimously call on the UN to pay sympathetic attention and quickly solve the Armenian problem in line with the proposals of this resolution'.[34]

Copies of that resolution were sent to all members of the UN, and also to the US Secretary of State J. Byrnes and President Truman of the USA. The same rallies with the adoption of similar resolutions as in the USA were organized in Romania, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and other countries.

It should be noted that those were powerful organizations from an organizational point of view, with a good material and political basis. Besides, their characteristic feature was solidarity and proposing common goals and objectives. Thus, in the manifest adopted by the Armenian National Council in Alexandria the following goals, which may be considered common for other Armenian organizations as well, are set:

1) demand joining of the territories

2) encourage and assist in returning of the Armenians living abroad to Soviet Armenia

3) unconditionally entrust advocacy of the Armenian case to the government of Soviet Armenia which enjoys the confidence of the Soviet Union government and Generalissimo I. V. Stalin

4) establish cultural ties with the historically native land

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[33] Sedat Laçiner, "Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinde Ermeni Faktörü", *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, (ww.turkishweekly.net/turkce/makale.php?id=136#).

[34] "Rally of Armenian-Americans in New York", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 1 May 1946 .

5) establish solidarity and unity among the Armenians living abroad

6) achieve close cooperation with other Armenian organizations

7) strive for working out a common line of national Armenian councils abroad and create a central body for this purpose

8) respect the laws of the country of residence

9) show support to joining of all Armenians and Armenian groups and parties without exception on condition of implicit recognition by them of all articles of this Manifest.[35]

Regarding Article 2 of this Manifest it should be noted that the repatriation of foreign Armenians from all parts of the world to Soviet Armenia began at the end of 1945.[36] The incitement to this had been at first the resolution of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party of Bolsheviks in November 1945, and then the corresponding decree of the Council of the USSR People's Commissars adopted on December 2, 1945, "On events in connection with return of Armenians from abroad to Soviet Armenia".[37] The decree read: "Taking into account the appeal of the Armenians living abroad on permission to return home to the Soviet Armenia, and petition of the governing bodies of the Armenian SSR, the Council of the USSR People's Commissars sanctioned organization of return of the Armenians living abroad who expressed such desire". The aim was to resettle nearly 360-400 thousand Armenians from all parts of the world, and then to use this human factor to

[35] "Creation of Armenian National Council in Alexandria", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 4 January 1946.

[36] "Arrived from Beirut, Third Caravan of Armenians Returning to Their Homeland", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 23 July 1946; "Departure of Armenians from Tabriz to Soviet Armenia", *Zarya Vostoka*, 30 July 1946; "Departure of Armenians from Tabriz to Soviet Armenia", *Zarya Vostoka*, 30 July 1946; "In Batumi group of Armenians arrived from Romania", *Zarya Vostoka,* 7 August 1946; "Departure of Armenians from Iran to Armenia", *Zarya Vostoka,* 7 August 1946; "Departure from Lebanon, Fourth Group of Armenians", *Zarya Vostoka*, 13 August 1946; "Departure of Armenians from Iran to Soviet Armenia", *Zarya Vostoka*, 17 August 1946 ; Zolin I. "In the Straits", *Zarya Vostoka*, 22 August 1946; Armenians Living in Brazil Demand Joining of Lands Occupied by Turkey to Soviet Union", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 11 May 1947; "Departure of new group of Armenians from Syria and Lebanon to Soviet Armenia", *Zarya Vostoka*, 6 July 1947; "Departure of group of Armenians from Greece to Soviet Armenia", *Zarya Vostoka*, 21 August 1947; "Attempts of Greek Reaction to Prevent Repatriation of Armenians to Soviet Union", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 29 August 1947;"Iranian Government Delays Departure of Armenians to Their Homeland", *Zarya Vostoka*, 13 September 1947;"Departure from France, Syria and Lebanon to Soviet Union of Group of Armenians and Georgians", *Zarya Vostoka*, 31 September 1947; "Arrival of New Group of Armenians Living Abroad", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 5 November 1947.

[37] "Workers of Armenia Welcome Decision of USSR People's Commissars to Allow Armenians Living Abroad to Return Homeland", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 4 December 1945.

declare to the world that the Armenians returned home, but they had nowhere to live.[38]

After the publication of the decree of the Council of the USSR People's Commissars, the Turkish Armenians living in Istanbul approached the Soviet consulate general in Istanbul with an appeal to afford them an opportunity to depart to the USSR. This circumstance caused deep discontent among Turkish community. During the second half of December Turkish newspapers published a number of articles in which they accused the Soviet Union of interfering in the domestic affairs of Turkey, claiming that the USSR artificially invented the Armenian issue with the purpose of seizing from Turkey parts of its territory. With the accusation against the Soviet government regarding the Armenian issue appeared the newspaper "Vakit", which published the article by Asim Us titled "Turkish Armenians' on December 16. In this article, the author, not without reason, linked the decision of the Soviet government on Armenians with the claims of the USSR with regard to Kars and Ardagan. The author was also puzzled that even after the decision of the Council of People's Commissars had been declared, the Soviet consulate in Istanbul started registration of Armenians who expressed a wish to move to Soviet Armenia without agreeing upon this issue with the Turkish government in advance.

Apparently, "having won the war the Soviet Union was so confident that it would take the territories of Kars and Ardagan from Turkey, that Political Bureau even confirmed some A. Kochinyan's appointment as the secretary of Kars regional committee of the Communist Party of Armenia".[39]

This campaign was realized under the direct support and organization of the Soviet representations-consulates and diplomatic corps in foreign countries where Armenian colonies existed. Dispatch of the repatriates was mainly carried out by means of Soviet passenger motor ships and trains.

At the same time a monetary fund for aid to the foreign Armenians was established in Soviet Armenia, where different public organizations, factories, and kolkhozes transferred money.[40] Also, housing construction was launched throughout the country with the purpose of providing the newcomers with housing.[41]

In addition, to improve repatriates' living conditions and allot them lands, Stalin adopted a resolution on December 23, 1947 "to deport Azerbaijanis from Armenia. And the houses, courtyards, and farms of the deported were taken away at that. They, like those exiled to Siberia and Kazakhstan, were allowed to

[38] *Jamil Hasanli, "Azerbaijanis' Deportation from Armenia",* Zerkalo, *19 February 2005.*

[39] Ibid

[40] "In the Relief Fund", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 10 April 1946

[41] "Homes for Armenians Living Abroad", *Communist (Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia)*, 21 April 1946.

take only personal living essentials".[42]

This action caused violent discontent among the Azerbaijani population of the Armenian SSR, as evidenced by the reference drawn up by the major-general of that republic, Grigoryan.[43]

Conclusion

However, despite its large-scale campaign, "the Soviet Union failed to resettle to Armenia the required number of Armenians living abroad. In 1947 the number of Armenians repatriated to Soviet Armenia from different countries made up only 60 thousand people. And even they, having seen local conditions, tried to return abroad by all means. It came to a point where hundreds of Armenians escaped to Turkey violating state borders".[44]

As a result, this large-scale action on repatriation of foreign Armenians ended in failure for the Soviet leadership and soon Moscow completely withdrew from that idea.

Regarding the issue of the joining of the Turkish territories, which was responsible for beginning the repatriation of the Armenians, it also did not succeed. As the recent events showed, from two issues raised by the Soviet side against Turkey – on revision of the Montreux Convention and "return" of the Kars and Ardagan regions – in view of the firm position of the former allies and the existing international conditions, Moscow preferred the former. And this issue has not been raised henceforth.

As to Georgian question, it was not successful either, and by 1947 publications in the media as well as the claims of the Georgian scientist were over.

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[42] *Jamil Hasanli, "Azerbaijanis' deportation from Armenia"*, Zerkalo, *19 February 2005.*
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