

*Lekiashvili Tamriko*

*The University of Georgia, Georgia*

## **The Issue of Georgia's Borders in the Main and Additional Agreements of Bret-Litovsk**

*This article concerns The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which was signed on March 3, 1918 between the Soviet Russia (the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic) and the powers of the Quadruple Alliance (the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Bulgaria) and significantly determined relations between Georgia and the Ottoman Empire in the period 1918-1921.*

*We are interested in the fourth article of the basic treaty and the second article of the supplementary treaty between Russia and Turkey, both of which deal with Georgia, especially its borders. According to the basic treaty the question of the political orientation of Kars, Ardahan and Batumi should be discussed based on the referendum. Thereport stressed that referendum was formal. In our opinion this is confirmed by the supplementary treaty. According to this, the border between Turkey and Russia (1877-1878) where Ardahan, Batumi, and Kars belonged to Turkey must be restored.*

*According to these materials we conclude, that the result of referendum was pre-determined and formal.*

*Keywords: Georgia, Bret-Litovsk, Soviet Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Turkey, Ardahan, Batumi, and Kars.*

The article deals with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed on March 3, 1918, between Soviet Russia and The Big Four states (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria). Article IV of the General Agreement and the Article II of Additional Agreement (Russia-Turkey) will be discussed, which are directly related to Georgia, namely, its borders.

The war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1877-1878 ended with Adrianopol's temporary truce (19 January 1878), which was renewed by San Stefano truce on February 19 in the same year. According to this truce, Ardahan, Kars, Baiazeti and Adjara with Batumi became part of Russia in the Caucasus. Based on this truce, the Ottoman Empire tried to return the lost territories.

In 1917, two revolutions happened in Russia – the Revolutions of February and October. The revolution of February was a more natural phenomenon and the basis for the end of monarchy in Russia. After this event, the temporary bourgeois government was established, which created the Transcaucasian Special Committee - Ozakom entrusted with the management in the Transcaucasia. On November 15, the Transcaucasian Commissariat was established and the independent government was created chaired by Evgeni Gegechkori; the Ottoman Empire observed the ongoing events and was waiting to seize territories.

In December 1917, the Ottoman Empire offered a truce to the Commissariat of Transcaucasus – the Commissariat received the letter from Vekhib Pasha. The Commissariat of Transcaucasus agreed to receive the truce and started to prepare for negotiations. They designed appropriate instructions for delegation and established the major principles on March 1, 1918: 1. The pre-war boundaries of 1914 Russian-Ottoman war had to be basis for the truce; 2. The delegation should require the rights of self-determination for East Anatolia, particularly the autonomy of Ottoman Armenia within the frames of the Ottoman Empire.

However, as we have already mentioned, the Ottoman Empire had a completely different plan regarding the Caucasus. Simultaneously, the Ottoman Empire was trying to fulfill its territorial ambitions while conducting the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. On December 29, 1917 the government of the Soviet Union published the decree “On Turkish Armenia” in the newspaper *Izvestia* regarding the Governorate of Arzrumi, Kars, Sebasti, Vanisa, Diarbekir. The decree supported the right of free self-determination of Turkish Armenia until gaining complete independence. At the same time, the Russian government demanded the withdraw of the Turkish army from “Turkish Armenia” and the creation of an Armenian militia there.

The Turkish government decided to use the right of self-determination declared by the Russian government for accomplishing its goal. Turkey was interested in regaining the lost territories during 1877-1878 years, particularly, the district of Kars, Artaan and Batumi. Therefore the Turkish delegation demanded to withdraw the Russian army and clarify the status of this region by carrying out referendum.

The German government understood well the existing, complicated situation and the Transcaucasian government was invited to the ongoing negotiations in Brest-Litovsk on January 3 (16), 1918 in order to fulfill its goals. The telegram was sent to Commander-in-chief – General Lieutenant Odishelidze. It was also mentioned in the telegram that “...the delegates of mediator states are ready to recognize the independence of Transcaucasus... and it can send plenipotentiary representatives to Brest-Litovsk” (the history of Georgian Diplomacy; p. 455). Commander-in-chief of Turkish Caucasus army Ferik-Vehib-Medmed signed the telegram. The telegram was received on February 1 (14).

The Transcaucasian government did not receive an invitation. Later the newspaper *Ertoba* wrote about the position of the government: “we were invited to Brest-Litovsk but we acknowledged that we are a part of Russia we did not want to be separate from Russia creating its prosperity on the disaster of other nations and as a result we did not go there”. The leader of Transcaucasian government sent a message to Brest-Litovsk: “as the Caucasus is a part of Russia, the issue of a truce is part of Russia’s responsibility.” (Maghlakelidze, 1991, p. 160)

The 4<sup>th</sup> article of Brest-Litovsk declared the readiness of Germany for a universal truce and at the end of the demobilization of the Russian military removing the located territory in the east indicated in the 1st paragraph of 3rd article.

Russia will do everything in its power in order to quickly cleanse the provinces of Anatolia and return them back to Turkey.

Artana, Kars and Batumi districts will be immediately cleaned of Russian forces. Russia will not interfere in the re-organization of state-legal and international-legal relations; the local population will decide in agreement with their neighboring countries, especially with Turkey, the new system and form of governance.

From our point of view, the question of the above-mentioned breach of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk is apparently resolved in favor of the Ottoman Empire. It is more obvious from additional treaty of Brest-Litovsk between Russia and Turkey. It is written

in the second paragraph of this agreement: “Two mixed Turkish-Russian commissions should be created. The first commission restored the prewar borders from Persia to sanjaks of Kars, Ardagan and Batumi; And the second commission was assigned to define the border between Russia and the three sanjaks listed above”. (Международная политика, новейшего времени, в договорах нотах и декларациях., 1926). The borders should have been restored according to the border between Russia and the Ottoman Empire during the War. As a result, Artana, Kars, Baiazeti and Batumi entered the Ottoman Empire.

It's completely obvious that article IV of main agreement of Brett-Litovsk and the mentioned referendum regarding establishing and electing political governance in Artana, Kars and Batumi districts was entirely fictitious. As we have already seen in additional agreement the border line was directly indicated and according to it, the above mentioned sanjaks were under the governance of Ottoman Empire.

According to the truce the Ottoman authority held referendum in Artana, Kars and Batumi districts from June 12 to July 14, 1918.

Turks unified the territorial-administrative units of Batumi and Kars and called them *Elviye i Selase*. Artana was considered to be a constituent part of Kars.

The Ottomans held preparatory works for referendum in the above mentioned districts starting in 1918. A special delegation was sent led by secretary of internal supervision Abdul Hadik Bay. The delegation included: Hilmy Bay – sent to Kars; Shakiri – sent to Artana; Nedjat Bay – Oltis; Asaf Talat Bay – Kagizman.

The delegation started studying the existing administrative structure in the districts; a census of enumeration and registration was decided.

Within the framework of the preparatory work, election zones were established; in total, 62 election zones were declared; the first poll and registration was held in Artana. The men who turned 19 were given the voting right.

Confirmed: 85 villages in Artana, from it - 74 Islamic, 11 others. There were 3 175 Muslims and 1000 followers of other religions in the district.

In Batumi: 73 Islamic villages, 12 others; in total: 4312 inhabitants.

In Kars: 325 Islamic villages; 12 others, in total, 66 923 inhabitants (Sürmeli S., *Türk-Gürgü ilişkileri (1918-1921)*, 2002).

The voting procedure was carried out: primarily, information was sent to the polling stations; several polling stations were subordinated to one central district.

The referendum began on June 12. Polling boxes were put in polling stations in front of the municipality. Voting was carried out on blue and white cards. Red Crescent Moon and stars were depicted on the white cards and these cards were put in sealed boxes. Inserting white cards meant voting in favor of Turkey while the blue ones were against it.

People gathered in front of polling stations were informed about article IV of Brett-Litovsk truce. According to Turkish sources serious incidents did not take place at the polling stations.

The Russian voters demanded voting in secret in the Batumi polling station.

We should also mention one condition that voting and population registration took place simultaneously. Due to this, voting process lasted from June 12 to July 14. The vote counting process started by special commission and the results were sent to the Ottoman government.

Overall, 87 048 people were surveyed, out of them 85 129 confirmed acceptance, 441 confirmed refusal, 1693 abstained. (Sürmeli S., *Türk-Gürgü ilişkileri (1918-1921)*., 2002).

Georgian government sent protest note to the Ottoman government where it did not recognize the referendum results; the Ottoman government sent a note on August 12 in response to it, where it denied accusation regarding falsifying the referendum results.

On August 15, Sultan Mehmed VI published a rescript which stated the unification of three sanjaks to Ottoman state. The big celebration took place on August 21 regarding this event in Batumi.

On September 20, 1918 the government of Soviet Union sent a note to Ottoman Turkey which mentioned that the referendum held in Kars, Artana and Batumi districts did not show the desire of the population of these districts because it was held under the terms of occupational regime and apparent plebiscite falsification took place.

Ottoman officials denied falsification of its referendum in responsive note and tried to justify it. The Russian government still sent a note in response to this on October 10

and it stated again that Kars, Artana and Batumi districts were illegally appropriated and it was against Brett-Litovsk truce.

Besides Russia, the government of Germany considered the referendum to be illegal. The government of Germany ordered its ambassador in Istanbul to inform the Ottoman government that the plebiscite held by Ottoman was not in line with Brett-Litovsk truce; due to the fact that it was held without agreement with neighboring countries and it was not based on legal foundation.

Germany managed to get the Ottoman Empire's consent to organizing a referendum, but the victory of Antanta in the world war changed the political picture and referendum was not held.

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