

The Secret Diplomacy of Turkish Nationalists and the Soviets in 1919

Tea Meshvelishvili

University of Georgia, Georgia

Abstract

Following the Treaty of Mudros, a pivotal moment in the history of the weakened Ottoman Empire, Turkish nationalist forces emerged and initiated a struggle for national liberation. To achieve success in this endeavor, it became imperative to establish a strategic alliance with a party that shared common interests with Turkish nationalists and was amenable to providing military assistance. In this context, amidst the conflict against imperialist forces, Soviet Russia emerged as the sole viable guarantor of survival. The Bolshevik leadership, recognizing the need for an ally in the south, perceived the Kemalist revolution as a means of propagating socialism and replacing pan-Islamist ideologies with revolutionary nationalism.

This paper delves into the historical events at the onset of the national liberation movement in Turkey. Its primary objective is to identify the key individuals involved in negotiations between the Kemalist Turks and the Bolsheviks and to elucidate the dynamics of these negotiations. The study employs qualitative research methods, particularly the descriptive and historical event interpretation methods, to substantiate hypotheses and contextualize the alliance between the Bolsheviks and Turkish nationalists. Furthermore, this research endeavors to ascertain the identities of the negotiators through an analysis of primary sources.

Through a rigorous examination of historical facts and analysis, our study concludes that the alliance between the Bolsheviks and the Kemalist Turks was forged out of mutual interest. The initial meeting between Georgian Chekists and Turkish nationalists in Havza played a pivotal role in the formation of this alliance, which, in turn, had profound ramifications for global geopolitics and the fate of the South Caucasus.

Keywords: Bolsheviks, Ataturk, Turkish nationalists, Kazim Karabekir, Karakol