

ISCKMC 2022**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****FORMATION OF NATIONAL STATE SYSTEM OF THE NORTH
CAUCASUS PEOPLES (1917–1936)**

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Abstract

Naturally, to achieve this highest level, the perspicacious wisdom of people was required, firstly, to overcome the barriers that, due to a combination of reasons, sometimes arose on this thorny path, and secondly, in order not to harbor an insurmountable historical offense that tends to be transmitted from generation to generation. Undoubtedly, such a statement is not, in the words of Eric Hobsbawm, "the result of conscious blindness" or an illusory idea of those complex contradictory processes that took place in the North Caucasus during the period when its peoples were drawn into the orbit of the Russian state. This article examines the nation-state building in the North Caucasus as a complex and controversial process, although generally progressive. From 1917 to 1936, within the framework of several stages, the practical implementation of the Bolshevik plans for the creation of autonomies for the mountain peoples was carried out. The authors of the article support the following point of view. With rare exceptions, Soviet scientists began the reckoning of this practice in the spring of 1918, that is, from the moment the Terek Republic was proclaimed. In the 1990s and subsequent decades, these frameworks were quite logically expanded in new studies, at least in terms of events. The presented article is devoted to the analysis of these aspects.

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1. Introduction

The history of any nation is an integral part of its cultural heritage. The role of the history of the people in the formation of national self-consciousness is undoubtedly great. The North Caucasus is a unique polyethnic and polyconfessional region, whose peoples took an active part in the formation and strengthening of the Russian multinational state. Highlanders in the family peoples of Russia have achieved obvious success in their development. This rich historical experience is always in demand as a valuable resource for interethnic unity.

2. Problem Statement

As a scientific problem, the history of the nation-state construction of the North Caucasus is also relevant at the present stage of the transformation of the national-state arrangement of the Russian Federation. The analysis of its multifaceted aspects is simultaneous of great scientific and practical importance. Namely, the results of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the "phenomena" of the Bolshevik practice of implementing national policy in the former tsarist empire.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the study is the multifaceted process of building the national statehood of the mountain peoples of the North Caucasus.

4. Purpose of the Study

The study is aimed at identifying and analyzing the main stages of nation-state building in the North Caucasus from 1917 to 1936.

5. Research Methods

The main methods for research are systemic and problem-chronological methods.

6. Findings

The 20th century in the history of the mountain peoples of the North Caucasus is a milestone in its particular inconsistency in terms of the scale and nature of events and their consequences. This statement is also true for entire multinational Russia as a whole. Taken together, historical processes were, firstly, of an all-embracing nature, and secondly, of a deep (modernization) dimension.

A far from rhetorical question arises: Which of this multidimensional series of events (process) undoubtedly played (in this case, within one single country taken – Russia) a cumulative role? From our point of view, the answer is obvious. We adhere to the following opinion in historiography: "The Russian revolutions of 1917, the first of which – February – led to the fall of the tsarist autocracy, and the second – October – the Bolshevik coup – proclaimed the dictatorship of the proletariat, in fact – established the supremacy of the Bolshevik party."

As researchers note, “February 1917 marked the beginning of rapid institutional transformations of the state organism “from below” (Krasovitskaya, 2015, p. 304).

This is also evidenced by the events that, starting from March 1917, took place in the regions of the North Caucasus, especially in the mountains. In this historical (in all dimensions) context, our attention is focused on only one episode. However, this episode is multifaceted and multi-vector. This event is the experience of the national-state self-organization of the mountain peoples, accumulated in the so-called transitional period from capitalism to socialism (1917–1936). The main problematic and chronological stages of this event are indicated in the works of domestic researchers, primarily North Caucasian ones. A well-known scientist from Kabardino-Balkaria, Borov (2007, p. 15), argues the need to “track the transformation of a certain phenomenon”. The data of historiography give us the opportunity to reconstruct the chronological sequence of the dynamics of the event under study, and to establish the logic of its spiral trajectory, as well as the succession of each of them.

An objective approach to assessing the totality of institutional changes and phenomena of the analyzed time leads to the following conclusion:

The beginning of the processes of national-state building among the peoples of the North Caucasus is not associated with the October Revolution and the establishment of Soviet power here but with the February Revolution, in which they saw, first of all, freedom national self-determination (Borov et al., 1999, p. 48).

The crisis of state power obviously worsened after the abdication of the autocrat from the throne. This crisis, along with chaos and anarchy, provoked an unprecedented intensification of political life both in the center of the country and on its periphery. These processes also took place in the Terek region, which also included territories densely populated by mountainous peoples.

Representatives of the local elite were among the first to start organizing social forces. On March 5, 1917, by a collegial decision of the local elites, the Provisional Central Committee of the United Highlanders was established. The performance of the functions of its chairman was entrusted to Basiyat Shakhanov, a well-known Balkar lawyer and educator (Muzaev, 2007).

It should be noted that objective circumstances led to the need to create a body, at least on its own initiative, for a certain period, called upon to assume the responsibility of the governing structure. The circumstances were as follows:

The first reason is the growing struggle for power in the region.

The second reason is the deepening of the political split connected with it.

The third reason is the escalation of inter-ethnic tension, especially in the relations between individual mountain tribes, the so-called non-resident population, and the Cossack communities of districts and departments, cities, and rural settlements of the Terek region. Some of the active representatives of the Cossack communities were not always in the mood for a joint search and achievement of reasonable compromises dictated by the current agenda.

The interim Central Committee facilitated the discussion of the key issues of the initiative. A forum of mountain peoples has been convened for this discussion. Forum representatives were elected

during March and April at national conventions. Its opening took place on May 1, 1917, in Vladikavkaz. There were over 300 people. The delegates represented the population of Adygeya, Balkaria, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabarda, Karachay, Ossetia, and Chechnya. Deputies of the State Duma of Russia, Nikolaev, and Karaulov were present at the congress as guests of honor. Karaulov was at the same time the commissar of the Provisional Government in the Terek region and the chieftain of the Terek Cossack army (Karmov, 2014).

In his welcoming speech, Shakhanov specified the main goals and objectives of the forum. He expressed their leitmotif unambiguously in the following words:

And here we are at our mountain congress, the only one in the history of our peoples, a congress uniting all-mountain tribes from the Black to the Caspian Seas, freely organize into an alliance to consolidate our freedom and arrange our life on reasonable, broadly democratic principles, while emphasizing the importance of unity, both mountaineers among themselves, and with the proletariat, the revolutionary army, and the Russian organized public (Union of United Highlanders, 2013, p. 4).

Congress became an important event in the political life of the mountain peoples. Firstly, Congress demonstrated the vitality of the age-old mountain traditions to resolve urgent issues and problems collectively and democratically, especially vital, and fateful ones. Secondly, never in the past at such a high representative level have projects been discussed for the national-state arrangement of all-mountain peoples in unity, the principles of their joint relations with the Russian state, about the forms of their unifying union with Russia.

At the same time, representatives of the mountain elite declared their fundamental ideas not only rhetorically but with firm conviction. They expected that post-imperial Russia would be transformed into a democratic federal state. The idea was clearly voiced in B. Shakhanov's official speech. On behalf of the congress delegates, he expressed confidence that "a republic will undoubtedly be established in Russia, that is, a people's rule with an elected parliament and an elected government responsible to the people, headed by an elected president." And developing this thesis, the speaker noted: "A free state, a republic, will enable all the peoples included in it to arrange their lives on the basis of complete self-government, self-determination, and autonomy." Therefore the Highlanders will build a new Russian state, namely, the All-Russian Union of National Autonomies, or a democratic republic. The Highlanders will build the state "hand in hand with the great Russian people, who proclaimed the freedom and equality of all the peoples of Russia" (Union of United Highlanders, 2013, p. 57).

The forum participants also expressed their commitment to the principles of the federal structure of Russia in telegrams sent to members of the Provisional Government Rodzianko, Lvov, and Chkheidze. They specifically emphasized that "the free sons of the Caucasus will defend their freedom with all their might, in the belief that the Constituent Assembly will put this freedom into practice by establishing a democratic republic in Russia on the principle of the federation" (Union of the United Highlanders, 2013, p. 5).

Thus, the delegates of the first mountain congress quite clearly indicated their intention to participate in the construction of a new federal Russian state on the rights of autonomy. This clearly formulated and officially declared position was reflected in the founding documents of the forum.

Individual researchers sometimes speculatively distort their fundamental provisions. An example of such aberrations is the findings of Lyakhovsky (2006, p. 205) "The main idea of the congress was to seize the North Caucasus from Russia and form the independent Mountain Republic." And developing these erroneous conclusions, the author argued: "In this aspiration, the leadership of the Highlanders, despite past sharp contradictions, temporarily united with the Cossacks". Thus, his intentions give reason to believe that during the revolutionary turmoil of 1917, the highlanders and Cossacks were supporters of the idea of the collapse of Russia. However, it was during this difficult period that the highlanders declared solidarity in their intentions to preserve the integrity of the Russian state. Numerous documentary sources, including those published, testify to this fact.

Ataman of the Terek Cossacks, Mikhail Karaulov, welcomed the participants and guests of the mountain congress, and without any doubt expressed the hope that the Cossacks and mountaineers in the Constituent Assembly of Russia would be together. At the same time, the chieftain can hardly be suspected of warm sympathy for the highlanders. However, at the same time, he pointedly and not without pathos stated: "Looking through the program of your congress, I saw that it was not alien to me" (Union of the United Highlanders, 2013, p. 70).

Kuznetsov is a Russian officer, a direct participant in the Civil War in the North Caucasus, and a witness to the complex political collisions of this period. Kuznetsov (1959, p. 119) noted in his memoirs: "It is absurd to accuse the Mountain Government created on paper of Turkophile sympathies and hatred for Russia. The Mountainous Government was looking for a third force to prevent Bolshevism from flooding the Caucasus".

The final decision of the first Highlander congress was the official establishment of the "Union of United Highlanders of the North Caucasus and Dagestan". On May 7, 1917, the delegates approved its basic political and legal acts: the Political Platform, the Program, and the Constitution. That is, a package of documents was approved establishing the status of a new national-state formation of the mountain peoples, regulating the format of its functioning and the main areas of its activity (Union of the United Highlanders, 2013, p. 20).

In the first section of the "Political Platform and Program", it was stated that the constituent parts of the Union of Highlanders are "all-mountain tribes of the Caucasus, as well as Nogais, and Turkmens." At the same time, it was noted that the Union "has the goal, in the form of ensuring the peaceful cohabitation of all the peoples of the Caucasus and Russia, to rally the highlanders of the Caucasus to protect and strengthen the freedoms won by the revolution, to put into practice democratic principles and to protect the political, social and cultural mountains – national interest. The second section of the document declared:

Realizing themselves as an inseparable integral part of the Great Russian State, both for the common good of their Motherland Russia, and for their good and happiness, in this revolutionary period they

put at the head of all tasks the strengthening of the won freedoms and ensuring the free development of the liberated from the oppression of the state (Union of the United Highlanders, 2013, p. 17).

The cardinal adjustment of this doctrine and the agreed project of nation-building in the North Caucasus was undoubtedly caused by idiosyncrasy. In other words, idiosyncrasy means rejection of the power of the Bolsheviks, seized by them because of a combination of extremely difficult circumstances. As a result of this process, the prospect of establishing the dictates of the Bolsheviks emerged with a very high degree of probability. By the way, General A.I. Denikin once drew attention to the reasons and motives for the inversion of the political orientations of mountain leaders. A.I. Denikin (2006) treated most of them with undisguised irony, calling the "Union of the United Highlanders" the "nomadic" government of the "Republic of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus." However, he noted that the "political aspirations" of the mountain leaders, focused on the creation of an independent state entity, were identified "after the fall of the Russian Provisional Government" (p. 487).

It should also be noted that the mountain leaders did not give up their expectations of encouraging changes in the current catastrophic situation and political solitaire. The mountain leaders were in no hurry to completely renounce their initially announced (at the May 1917 forum) projects. On the night of October 20–21, the South-Eastern Union of Cossack Troops, Highlanders of the Caucasus, and Free Peoples of the Steppes was created. In the preamble of the Union Treaty, the purpose of establishing a new alliance was stated: "to contribute to the establishment of the best state system, external security and order in the Russian State." Moreover, the parties involved recognized the "best form of government in Russia" as a democratic federal republic (Union of the United Highlanders, 2013, p. 37).

However, these projects, which were designed in this difficult and unpredictable time, remained in limbo. These projects did not materialize. In the metropolis and almost the entire territory of the state, a dramatic struggle for power began. Under these conditions, it is unlikely that the fate of these projects could have been decided differently. The mountain elite, relatively few, apparently clearly realized that they were deprived of real chances of success due to extremely aggravated circumstances. They could not and did not want to be even on the same flank as the Bolsheviks or Denikin because of the antagonism of strategic goals and objectives. Thus, the mountain elites found themselves in the epicenter of this fierce battle of the opposing sides, really not having the strength and means to achieve their designated goals. The mountain elites were disoriented by the intricacies of international "patrons", they found themselves on the periphery of events.

However, Timur Muzaev (1967–2019), a well-known researcher of the political history of the mountain peoples, was right when he wrote:

Despite everything, the leaders of the mountain movement continued to believe in Russia. Paradoxically, they were not separatists at heart, no matter what fools and ill-wishers – both past and present – would say about them. By the will of circumstances, the mountain leaders were forced to proclaim sovereignty and even make very harsh statements against the enslavers of the Caucasus – both whites and reds. However still, they hoped for a future Great and Free Russia and openly said

that only in a free, democratic, federal Russian state would the mountain peoples of the Caucasus be able to gain real freedom and come to their national revival (Muzaev, 2012, p. 87).

Thus, the process of nation-building in the North Caucasus during the revolutions of 1917 and the subsequent civil war is unique from the point of view of the historical dimension, including the comparative one.

Firstly, the initial search for a variant of the practical implementation of its key task was subordinated to the goal of preserving the North Caucasus, the region of the historical residence of the mountain peoples as an integral part of the new Russia as a democratic federal state.

Secondly, this orientation undergoes a radical transformation only with the coming to power of the Bolsheviks, mainly due to the social class selectivity of their doctrine, its uncompromising subordination to their goals of establishing their dictatorship.

Domestic researchers in the post-Soviet era are fruitfully studying the history of the Union of United Highlanders of the North Caucasus and Dagestan – the Mountainous Republic. However, individual author's generalizations and versions are superficial and lightweight. As a result, conclusions and assessments are ambivalent and require clarification and appropriate adjustments. At the same time, it is obvious that the results already achieved make it possible in the future to focus on a deeper understanding of certain aspects of the multifaceted historical practice of searching for and implementing optimal projects for the construction and transformation of the national statehood of the mountain peoples of the North Caucasus.

These historical plots in Russian historiography (Bugaev, 1978; Khlynina, 2003) have been successfully studied on the whole.

In the autumn of 1920, the process of nation-building in the North Caucasus became noticeably more active. From September 1 to September 8, the first congress of the peoples of the East was held in Baku, in which more than 1800 Russian and foreign delegates took part.

The work of the forum immediately acquired an unexpected sharpness and criticality, especially towards the local bodies of Soviet power.

Information about the progress of the congress was regularly sent to the leaders of the state, primarily to Lenin. Apparently, the idea originally came from him to hold a meeting of the country's top leadership with a group of Russian delegates to the Baku Congress.

In early October 1920, the country's leadership, having read a detailed report on the results of the First Congress of the Peoples of the East, decided to discuss its key provisions at a meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP (b). Representatives of the mountain delegates were instructed to prepare an appropriate report on the situation in the North Caucasus.

As part of the execution of this task, on October 13, a meeting was held with the participation of 27 delegates to the Congress of the Peoples of the East, representing at this forum the regions of Russia with a dense population of the Muslim population, including the North Caucasus.

Previously, all members of the Politburo got acquainted with the report “On the socio-economic and political situation and policy of representatives of the central Soviet power in the region (Tersk region – A. B.)”, prepared by representatives of the mountain delegates.

On October 14, 1920, the proposals formulated at this meeting were considered at a meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) with the participation of Lenin, Stalin, Dzerzhinsky and other leaders of the state. The main item on the agenda was the question of the tasks of the RCP (b) in areas inhabited by eastern peoples.

As a result of his discussion, it was recognized that “it is necessary to carry out autonomy in forms appropriate to specific conditions for those Eastern nationalities that do not yet have autonomous institutions” (Lenin, 1981, p. 502).

The People's Commissar for Nationalities of the RSFSR, Stalin, was instructed to make a trip to the Caucasus for the guiding determination of all details of the policy in the Caucasus in general in relation to highlanders in particular.

On October 16, he left for the Caucasus, and stayed there for more than a month. On October 19, in Rostov-on-Don, he spoke at a meeting of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) with a report on the tasks of the RCP (b) “in areas inhabited by the peoples of the East.” And on October 27, in the city of Vladikavkaz, he held an expanded meeting of the Caucasus Bureau, on the agenda of which the issue “On mountain autonomy” was the main one (Stalin, 1947, p. 128).

In the first decade of November, Stalin was in Baku. And on November 13, 1920, in Temir-Khan-Shura, he spoke at the congress of the peoples of Dagestan. He presented the creation of their autonomy as a step aimed at providing them with self-government “according to their characteristics, their way of life, and customs.” Being quite aware of how naive highlanders can be bribed, he emphatically stated that “The Soviet government considers the Sharia to be the same legal, customary law that other peoples inhabiting Russia have” (Stalin, 1947, p. 220). Stalin had information that in the spring of 1920 in Dagestan, and indeed among mountain Muslims, the most popular slogan was: The mosque and the court of Sheikh-ul Islam – the rest to the Soviets. It was at that time that in certain districts of Dagestan, the qadis from the poor declared that the ghazawat was made by the one who worked and fought for the liberation of the poor, and that a ghazawat could not be declared against those who proclaimed freedom of conscience and religion.

After completing his work in Dagestan, Stalin returned to the city of Vladikavkaz, where on November 15 a meeting of the Presidium of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) was held. Its participants approved the main provisions of the future Constitution of the Mountain ASSR. And on November 17, the congress of the peoples of the Terek region began its work.

There were over 500 delegates. They represented Chechnya, Ingushetia, Ossetia, Kabarda, Balkaria, Karachay, the Cossacks, as well as nonresident population. I. Stalin wrote a report “On the Soviet autonomy of the Terek region.” He emphatically noted that “the congress was convened in order to declare the will of the Soviet government on the arrangement of the life of the Terek peoples and their relationship to the Cossacks.” And then, as in Dagestan, Stalin pointedly emphasized:

Giving you autonomy, Russia thereby returns to you those liberties that the bloodsucking tsars and oppressors tsarist generals stole from you. This means that your inner life must be built based on your way of life, manners and customs, of course, within the framework of the general Constitution of

Russia.” Stalin (1947) noted that the goal of autonomy is to teach the Highlanders to walk on their own feet (p. 305).

It was extremely important for the delegates, especially the mountaineers-Muslims, to hear personally from Stalin about the attitude of the Soviet government to Sharia. Stalin was aware of these expectations. Stalin (1947) declared: “If it is proved that sharia is needed, let there be sharia. The Soviet government does not think of declaring war on Sharia” (p. 265). Using such preconceived propaganda techniques, Stalin tried to veil the "patchwork" of the mountain unity (as Imam Shamil did in his time) (Butaev, 1928, p. 106). He, like no one else, realized that the disorganization of the mountain masses was a serious obstacle to the establishment of stable power in the region. Therefore, Stalin firmly promised to return to the highlanders those liberties that were once stolen from them by the tsarist satraps. Stalin purposefully sought to pedal the process of creating reliable mechanisms for pacifying, and subsequently, educating ethnic groups that, in the recent historical past (in the 19th century), had repeatedly risen to fight against tsarism.

We can say that Stalin's business trip to the North Caucasus as a whole turned out to be effective. He fulfilled the orders of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) and Lenin, one might say, successfully. On January 20, 1921, the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee issued decrees on the formation of two mountain republics – the Dagestan ASSR and the Mountain ASSR.

From our point of view, factors of a military-political nature led to the unification of the mountain peoples within the framework of a single multinational autonomy, which was the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The authorities were in search of effective political mechanisms capable of pooling regional resources (both human and material) to create a reliable buffer in the North Caucasus, namely, an outpost of Soviet power. The Bolshevik leaders needed the Caucasus as a region where their monopoly domination would have (in the person of the mountain peoples) a solid and stable base. In the autumn of 1920, they did not have such a guarantee. The forces that hatched plans for anti-Soviet revenge also made a serious bet on the mountain masses.

Stalin, back on October 27, 1920, spoke at a meeting of the communist organizations of the Don and the Caucasus with a report “On the political situation of the Republic.” Stalin noted the following: “In that fierce war between Russia and the Entente, a war that lasts three years and can last another three years, in such a war the question of combat reserves is a decisive one.” And in this regard, speaking specifically about the capabilities of the Entente, the head of the People's Commissariat of National Affairs noted: “these are, first of all, the troops of Wrangel and the young armies of the young bourgeois states.” At the same time, among those listed, he named Armenia and Georgia, the direct neighbors of the mountain peoples of the North Caucasus (Stalin, 1947, p. 325).

Kazbek Butaev, a well-known Bolshevik figure in Ossetia, spoke on August 23, 1921, at the 2nd Mountain Regional Party Conference. Kazbek Butaev (1921) said:

The mountain republic was not only well-founded and economically and politically – a unit but as a politically necessary step, necessary in the conditions of the struggle for Soviet power (the fight

against the Entente through Georgia, gangs of whites in the mountains and their nationalist agitation).
(p. 67)

The Bolshevik leaders took extraordinary measures to determine the forces from within, aimed at destabilizing the situation in the country, separating the Caucasus from Soviet Russia (Abdulatipov, 2000, p. 173). Obviously, in this situation, the question of the forms of national-state self-determination of the peoples of the North Caucasus required prompt, balanced decisions. These decisions, first of all, had to meet the tasks of the current difficult moment. Because of this, at the time in question, the North Caucasus was in the center of attention of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP (b), the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR, personally Lenin (1981), who was constantly aware of Caucasian affairs (p. 396). And Stalin, as it was wittily noted, "did not want to risk what he had already acquired" (Avtorkhanov, 1953, p. 206). Therefore, the Bolshevik leaders, no doubt, could not allow the loss of the North Caucasus. The North Caucasus is a strategically important region rich in resources, both human and natural.

These statements are confirmed by the analysis of a set of documents, sometimes, it would seem, and not directly related to the problem under study. In our opinion, the main motives for the creation of the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic were identified with sufficient transparency in connection with the emerging process of its demarcation (disintegration) along national lines. The creation of the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic began immediately after the Constituent Congress (April 1921). However, in May, almost exactly a month later, Betal Kalmykov, chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of Kabarda, officially announced its withdrawal from the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Betal Kalmykov enjoyed great confidence in I. Stalin. We note right away that the reason for such an unexpected turn of events was the decision of the Constituent Congress of the Mountain ASSR to solve the extremely acute problem of land shortage by redistributing it based on the equalizing principle (Gatagova et al., 2005, p. 141).

At the time under review, the share of land per capita in the Kabardian district was undoubtedly higher compared to the same indicators in other districts, primarily neighboring ones (Balkaria and Karachay). Therefore, the leader of Kabarda, supported by his associates, naturally could not agree with such an approach, which infringes on the position of the local population for the sake of momentary political gain, rather ephemeral. Kalmykov's actions were encouraged by Stalin. On June 23, 1921, during negotiations on a direct wire, the People's Commissar for Nationalities authorized the Kabardian leader, on his own behalf, to convey to the leadership of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) "quite officially that the separation of Kabarda into an autonomous region" he considers "the only expedient solution to the issue." At the same time, Stalin was not inclined, at least at that moment, to predict the "collapse of the Mountain Republic." In our opinion, he did not allow such an outcome even in his thoughts, even when he said: "if Karachay also stands out, which is quite likely" (Gatagova et al., 2005, p. 142).

The leading figures of the Mountain ASSR, discouraged by this turn of events, severely criticized Betal Kalmykov's "splitting" position. The logic of the arguments of the opponents of the Kabardian side, reanimated by them as arguments in favor of maintaining the status quo, looked convincing. In the

summer of 1921 they were repeatedly announced by them at various plenums, assets, meetings of party committees, executive committees of the Soviet bodies of the republic and its districts. So, on June 16, 1921, a regular meeting of the Presidium of the City Regional Party Committee took place. For discussion, a "Report on the trip of members of the Presidium of the Committee (Party – A.B.) to Nalchik in connection with the issue of separating Kabarda" was presented. In particular, it was noted:

That Narkomnats comrade. Stalin of the opinion that after the formation of the Georgian Soviet Republic, the question of the existence of an integral, autonomous Mountainous Republic is of no particular importance, and since the population wants to separate, then let it stand out (Gatagova et al., 2005, p. 145).

In a letter from representatives of the Grozny Party Committee and the city executive committee, sent to them in the first half of 1922 (it is undated), one of the leaders of the South-Eastern Bureau also noted: "The Mountain Republic was created by virtue of our (read – state) general Eastern policy, and also in opposition to Menshevik Georgia" (Gatagova et al., 2005, p. 148).

7. Conclusion

These conclusions of party functionaries quite adequately reflect the causal relationships of existing trends, including those in the political plane. Therefore, we believe that the Mountain ASSR was a single form of self-determination of the mountain peoples. The mountainous ASSR at the required moment managed to demonstrate, even formally, their unity under the flag of Bolshevism. The Mountain ASSR united the peoples of the Terek within the framework of a common national-state formation. The mountainous ASSR played, albeit for a short time, the role of an outpost of Soviet power in this strategically important and at the same time extremely complex region of the country. I. Stalin managed at the right time to create a single mountain union, designed to demonstrate, firstly, the solidarity of the mountain peoples with the Soviet government, and secondly, their readiness to stand up, if necessary, with arms in hand, to protect the interests of the workers' and peasants' state. He had no doubt that "the question of the actual implementation of Soviet autonomy" is "the question of securing a revolutionary alliance between the center and the border regions, as a guarantee against the interventionist enterprises of imperialism" (Stalin, 1947, p. 22). At the same time, the creation of the Mountain Republic, as a multinational autonomy, was intended to be a demonstration of Bolshevik's consistency in the implementation of revolutionary slogans and declarative promises. The formation of the Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, not least, was also subordinated to the strategy of building the national statehood of the mountain peoples. The Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was objectively a new step, the beginning of a new stage in solving important problems. And this statement is not independent of whether this republic has justified or not justified itself from the point of view of Stalinist or Bolshevik pragmatism.

The collapse of the Mountain ASSR was inevitable. Kabarda was the first to leave its jurisdiction. Thus, the beginning of a qualitatively new stage of national-state building in the North Caucasus began, namely, the stage of formation of national autonomies of the mountain peoples.

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