

THE PLACE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE  
IN THE RUSSO-CIRCASSIAN WAR  
(1830-1864)

A Master's Thesis

by

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BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

September 2004

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The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

September 2004

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## **ABSTRACT**

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In this work, the Ottoman policy regarding the Circassians, the indigenous inhabitants of the North-western Caucasus, and in that respect the Russo-Ottoman relations will be analyzed. This study will cover the period from 1830 to 1864 when a sanguinary war between Russia and the Circassian tribes took place, ending with the expulsion of the overwhelming majority of the local population and the establishment of the complete Russian control over Circassia.

At that time, the Sublime Porte aimed to preserve the peaceful relations with Russia. Various internal problems of the Ottoman Empire resulted in a somewhat passive policy of the Porte towards the Caucasus, with the only exception of the Crimean War period. However, the deep-rooted Ottoman-Circassian relations, especially the slave trade, never stopped throughout the Russo-Circassian war despite all the preventive attempts of the Russian Empire. Besides, the activities of the Circassians, the English and the Poles in favor of Circassian resistance were conducted mainly through the Ottoman territories, which meant that the Ottoman Empire had a more important place for the Circassian resistance when compared with its own policies concerning Circassia.

## ÖZET

Köremezli, İbrahim

Master tezi, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Doçent Dr. Hakan Kırımlı

Eylül 2004

Bu çalışmada, Çerkes olarak tesmiye edilen kabilelerin yaşadığı Kuzeybatı Kafkasya'da Rusya İmparatorluğu ile bölge halkı arasında cereyan eden ve Çerkeslerin büyük bir çoğunluğunun Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na sürülmesi ve Rusların da bölgeyi tam olarak kontrol altına almalarıyla sonuçlanan 34 yıllık savaş müddetince (1830-1864) Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Çerkezistan politikası ve bu bağlamda Rusya ile münasebatı açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır.

Bu dönemde, Bab-ı Âli Rusya İmparatorluğu ile barışın devamını amaçlamaktaydı. Zaten, Devlet içerisindeki muhtelif meselelerden dolayı Kırım Harbi dönemi haricinde Bab-ı Âli aktif bir Kafkasya politikası izleyememiştir. Ancak kökleşmiş Osmanlı-Çerkez münasebatı, özellikle de köle ticareti Rusya'nın her türlü engellemelerine rağmen Rus-Çerkez savaşı sırasında da devam etmiştir. Bunun yanında, Çerkez, İngiliz ve Lehlerin Çerkez mücadelesi lehindeki aktivitelerini Osmanlı toprakları üzerinden gerçekleştirmiş olmaları Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Çerkez mücadelesinde izlemiş olduğu politikadan daha ehemmiyetli bir yeri haiz olduğunu göstermektedir.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe many people for their assistance in the process of my M.A. study.

First of all, I would like to thank to Associate Prof. Hakan Kırımlı, who supervised me throughout the preparation of my thesis. Without his encouragements and assistance I would not dare to write on such a difficult topic.

I am also thankful to Prof. Dr. Stanford Shaw and Dr. Mitat Çelikpala. Without their valuable comments, this work would not take its final form. I am very grateful to Sefer Berzeg and Prof. Norman Stone. Mr. Berzeg, not only provided me with important source materials but also let me benefit from his deep knowledge on the subject. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Norman Stone who helped me to continue my study of Russian in Odessa.

My friends Chong Jin, Valeriy, Berat, Kostya, Mustafa and Galimcan also deserve my special thanks for their every kind of supports during the preparation of this thesis.

Last but not least, without the cordial atmosphere of my family it would not be possible for me to complete this work.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I: OTTOMAN AND RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENTS IN THE CAUCASUS BEFORE THE TREATY OF EDIRNE .....	5
A. Circassians and Circassia.....	5
B. First Involvements.....	8
C. A General Look to the North Caucasian Resistance.....	13
CHAPTER II: CIRCASSIA BETWEEN THE TREATY OF EDIRNE AND THE CRIMEAN WAR.....	19
A. An Outline of the Post-Edirne Treaty Conditions.....	19
B. The International Environment in the Near East after the Edirne Treaty.....	23
C. British Involvements in the Caucasus in 1830s and the Activities of Zanoko Sefer Bey.....	26
D. The Polish Role in the Russo-Circassian War.....	36
E. Circassia in 1840s: Russian Quarantine, Circassian Assault, Zanoko Sefer Bey and Muhammed Emin’s Activities.....	39

F. Searching the Circassian War in the Ottoman Documents before the Crimean War.....	48
G. Assessments.....	49
CHAPTER III: OTTOMAN POLICY OF CIRCASSIA DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR.....	52
A. War Diplomacy and the Aims of the Belligerents.....	53
B. First Initiatives of the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus Front: 1853.....	58
C. The Ottoman Plans regarding the Caucasus After the Declaration of War by Britain and France: 1854.....	60
D. The Caucasian Front in 1855: Last Efforts in Circassia, Russia’s Kars campaign, and Ömer Pasha’s Expedition to Georgia.....	67
F. The Polish Role and the Cossack Regiments.....	71
G. Slave Trade during the War.....	73
H. Sefer Pasha’s Diplomatic Efforts and the Treaty of Paris.....	75
I. Assessments.....	77
CHAPTER IV: AFTER THE CRIMEAN WAR: THE LAST PHASE OF THE RUSSO-CIRCASSIAN WAR AND THE OTTOMAN RELATIONS (1856-1864).....	81
A. Sefer Pasha’s Last Efforts for an Independent Circassia.....	81
B. The Russian quarantine in Circassia: <i>Kangaroo</i> and <i>Chesapeake</i> affairs.....	87
C. Last Defense during 1860s and Deportation of the Circassians.....	90
D. Assessments.....	94
CONCLUSION.....	95
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	104
APPENDICES.....	110

## INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, from the Treaty of Edirne on 14 September 1829 when the Ottoman Empire abandoned all its rights to the Circassian coast, to the final defeat of the people called “Circassians” on 21 May 1864, the Ottoman Empire’s role in the Russo-Circassian War (1830-1864) will be analyzed. Searching the place and the significance of the Ottoman Empire in the long-lasting resistance of the Circassians against the Russian aggression, on the one hand Sublime Porte’s stable policies over Circassia will be tried to be found out while on the other hand the varieties, will be discussed. Beyond political and military aspects, social, cultural and economic characteristics of the Ottoman-Circassian relations will be searched and highlighted.

How could the Circassians so long resist against Russia’s persistent attacks? Geography and the mountaineers’ commitment for the preservation of their independent way-of-life were probably the most important reasons. One other reason for this stubborn defense was the Polish and Russian deserters, who struggled on the side of the mountaineers as technical workers teaching how to make gunpowder and how to use cannons, and elaborated the nature and tactics of the Russian forces. Apart from that, there is of course a direct or indirect role of the Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Circassian War as far as the internal and international conditions allowed.

Circassia was so close to the Ottoman Empire, and the trade, especially the slave trade, was so rooted that it could not be possible for Russia to cut off Ottoman-Circassian relations throughout the war. Besides, Islam which flourished among the

Circassians in parallel to the war against Russia made the Ottoman Empire, the state of the Caliph, to be much more important for the Circassian resistance. That's why the social aspect had a great say-so in understanding the nature of relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Circassians.

The expansion of the Russian rule towards the Ottoman Empire's core territories, i.e. Balkans and Anatolia can normally be expected to result in further caution of the Ottoman government, which was concerned about the utilization of the local Muslim population in the North Caucasus as a set against the Russian advance. However, the Ottoman archival sources reveal that in the face of the internal and international circumstances, Circassia did not seem to be one of the primary concerns of the Ottoman Empire. More importantly, the preservation of peace with the Russian Empire was one of the main aims of the Porte. Not to forget, those years also coincide with the *Tanzimat* period when the Ottoman Empire was under a dramatic ideological and institutional transformation trying to reorganize its internal mechanisms. Other internal problems, especially the Egyptian question also added to this internal reformation process, the Ottoman Empire was not in a position to participate actively in the affairs of the Caucasus.

When an opportunity emerged, as in the Crimean War, the Ottoman Empire did try to exploit it. With the exception of this period; however, it is not possible to claim that the Ottoman Empire pursued an active policy (or maybe any policy for that matter) for the ongoing war in both segments of the Caucasus; it rather tried to prevent any development that might damage the peaceful relations with Russia.

The subject of this research covers the period when the so-called “Eastern Question” became the most important agenda of the Great Powers. Besides Greek, Egyptian, and Straits Questions, one other part of the Eastern Question was the war going on between the Caucasian peoples and Russia. Therefore, Caucasus was not just a part of the rivalry among the regional powers, but it also became a dimension of the Great Power politics.

As for Russia, the Northern Caucasus was a land of unruly and unreliable people, which could be an important handicap for Russia’s further advances, and therefore, as a well-established state policy, the war in the Caucasus should be concluded as soon as possible. This war was totally an internal matter, and any kind of foreign activity related to the Caucasus was treated with great suspicion, and even considered as an act of aggression against Russian interests. Therefore, Ottoman merchants or British adventurers were perceived by the Russian officials with this state of mind.

On the other hand, Britain after the Treaty of Edirne did not cease to question the legal rights of Russia over Circassia, but only through diplomatic maneuvers without risking a war. It should be underlined that there was a powerful private diplomacy, which would foster the Russophobia in Great Britain in 1830s. While David Urquhart was the pioneer of the anti-Russian campaign, journeys and residences of several “adventurers” (Stewart, Knight, Longworth, Bell, and Spencer) in Circassia all worked for the establishment of a public who is dubious about the loyalty of Russia to the preservation of the Vienna regime, and sensitive to the matters of Caucasus. This circle was not totally apart from the British official dom,

however propagated a more radical foreign policy against Russia's activities. The successive British ambassadors in Istanbul i.e. Lord Ponsonby and Stratford Canning were also more convinced of a Russian threat than the British government and the Foreign Office.<sup>1</sup>

This being the case, by and large, the British government did not perceive Circassia as fundamental issue for the security of its vital interests. Besides Circassia, Russia and Britain were also in competition in Persia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. However, the rivalry centered in the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

In this connection, Circassian question should be located in the picture of the so-called Eastern Question without ignoring, however, the special social, economic and cultural relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Circassians. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the internal developments in the Ottoman Empire, international environment, as well as the Russian and British policies and their perceptions of the Caucasus in order to understand the policy and the significance of the Ottoman Empire regarding Circassia.

Since the Edirne Treaty of 1829 is the starting point of this research, at first the question how this treaty affected the situation in Circassia both *de jure* and *de facto* should be answered. However, to understand the significance of the Treaty of Edirne, initially, first involvements of the Ottomans and the Russians in Circassia will be explained. Afterwards the Circassian War and the Ottoman role in this war will be analyzed in a chronological order.

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Ponsonby was the British Ambassador to Istanbul during 1833-1841; Stratford Canning was the British Ambassador to Istanbul during 1825-1829, 1831, 1841-46, 1848-51, 1853-58.

# CHAPTER I

## OTTOMAN AND RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENTS IN THE CAUCASUS BEFORE THE TREATY OF EDIRNE

This chapter aims to elaborate the initial Ottoman and Russian involvements in the Caucasus and the historical background of the Russian attack in Circassia. However, before explaining the historical details it is necessary to clarify the terms ‘Circassia’ and ‘Circassian’.

### **A. Circassians and Circassia**

The term “Çerkes” (in English “Circassian”) is an Ottoman (or rather Turkic) appellation which rendered three different meanings. In the general Ottoman parlance, it was an umbrella form for the most, if not all tribes of the North Caucasus. In its more sophisticated usages it came to denote either the North-Western Caucasian tribes, comprised of the speakers of Abkhaz, Ubykh and Adyge languages, or those who spoke any version of the Adyge language.<sup>2</sup> Throughout this work the Circassian resistance will mean the struggle of Adyges and Ubykhs against the Russian invasion of the Western part of the Caucasus, as in those years politically

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<sup>2</sup> Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: a Handbook* (Richmond, 2001), p. 11.

and culturally Ubykhs came closer to the Adyges.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Russian annexation of Abkhazia and Kabarda took place in a different context and circumstances; therefore they will not be covered in this study.<sup>4</sup>

Circassians were indigenous peoples of the Caucasus divided into tribes and clans. Before expulsion, Circassian tribes were living in the lands between the Black Sea to the west and the River Sunja to the east and between the Caucasus Mountains to the south and the steppes north of the Kuban and the Pyatigorsk plains to the north. The Adyges were by far the largest of the North-Western Caucasian peoples using two main dialects - Kabarda and Abzekh, and lived in the territory from Anapa to the Sashe River. In the south of Sashe River to Ingora lived Abazins (Azeğa), who were composed of Jigets, Abkhaz and Sadze. While Kabardians and Besleneys composed the Eastern branch, the most important Western Adyge tribes can be listed as such: Abzekh or Abadzekh (in the basins of river Belaia. Laba, Pshish, Psekups and their tributaries), Temirgoy (to the east of Bzhedugh and the Khatukay between

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<sup>3</sup> Russian officer F. F. Tornau who lived as a captive among the Circassians claims, "I did not meet any speaker of Ubykh language, whom I met were also speaking in Circassian". Feodor Feodorovich Tornau, *Bir Rus Subaymın Kafkasya Anıları*, translated by Keriman Vurdem (Ankara, 1999), p. 96. See also, T. Tatlok, "The Ubykhs", *Caucasian Review*, Vol. 7 (1958), pp. 100-109 and Sefer E. Berzeg, *Soçi'nin Sürgündeki Sahipleri Çerkes-Vubıhlar* (Ankara, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> The other Eastern Black Sea coastlands more rapidly transferred to the possession of Russia, Mingrelia in 1803, Imeretia in 1804, Abkhazia in 1811, and Svanetia in 1837 were put under the rule of the Russian Empire. This situation was reflected in the Russian history with the famous argument of 'voluntary adherence' of these territories to the Russian rule as also tsarist colonel Esadze claimed in his book. Semen Esadze, *Pokorenie zapadnogo Kavkaza i okonchanie Kavkazskoi voyny* (Maikop, 1993), p. 26.

On the other hand, Russia's first involvements in the Caucasus took place in Kabarda. While the first relations started during the time of Ivan the Terrible, the establishment of the Mozdok fortification in 1763 signed the first ambitious initiative of Russia over Kabarda. It was the time when Russian-Kabardian wars started. Ottoman Empire recognized the right of Russia over Kabarda with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774. Kabardian lands were suppressed by Yermolov mercilessly in 1820s. Afterwards with the exception of a few uprisings Kabarda went under the control of the Russian Empire. Actually, Kabarda was strategically very important for Russia. Russian possession of Kabarda not only provided the security of the Georgia military way but also prevented any North Caucasian unity. Therefore, Russia always tried to isolate Kabarda from Shamil's state and other Circassian tribes. For further details see, A. H. Kasumov, H. A. Kasumov, *Genotsid Adygov: iz istorii borby adygov za nezavisimost v XIX veke* (Nalchik, 1992), pp. 43-58 (hereafter *Genotsid Adygov*). Aytek Namitok, "The 'Voluntary' Adherence of Kabarda (Eastern Circassia) to Russia", *Caucasian Review*, Vol. 2 (1955), pp. 17-33.

Kuban, Laba and Belaia rivers), Makhosh (to the South of Temirgoy on the upper reaches of the river Farza), Khatukhay (on the Taman Peninsula), Natukhay (on the Black Sea coast from Anapa to river Dzubga), Shapsugh (to the east of Natukhay), and Bzhedugh (to the east of the Shapsugh). Around the river Sashe, between Adyges and Abazins Ubykhs lived.<sup>5</sup>

Until the Russian conquest, Circassians maintained a very archaic social structure altering from tribe to tribe. However, generally the Circassian society was composed of four classes: princes (*pshi*), nobles (*vork*, *özden*), freemen (*tokav*, *tlfokotl*) and serfs (*pshitl*).<sup>6</sup> Captain Edmund Spencer very well explains the social life of Circassians:

...their form of government may be said to be a species of aristocratic republic, composed of chiefs, nobles, and clansmen, in whom rank is only recognized in their public and patriarchal capacity, as chieftains, lawgivers, and elders; otherwise a perfect equality exists in all the relations of social and domestic life.<sup>7</sup>

Such a way of life prevented Circassians to develop a centralized authority but to live in a tribal confederation; however their devotion to independent way of life protected their freedom against any foreign domination. This and other cultural characteristics of Circassians played a role in the Circassian resistance against Russia.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Tornau, pp. 50, 95-96; Ramazan Traho, "Literature on Circassia and Circassians", *Caucasian Review*, Vol. 1 (1955), p. 145.

<sup>6</sup> See "Çerkes", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. II (Leiden, 1983), pp. 21-25.

<sup>7</sup> Captain Spencer, *Turkey, Russia, the Black Sea, and Circassia* (London, 1854), p. 348.

<sup>8</sup> For further information about Circassian culture and geography, see Leonti Lyulye [L'Huilier], *Çerkesya: Tarihi-Etnografik Makaleler 1857-1862-1866*, translated by Murat Papşu (İstanbul, 1998).

## **B. First Involvements**

For centuries controlling the surroundings of the Kuban River Crimean Khans made expeditions to Circassia with no aim but plundering. While for the Ottoman Empire the southern Caucasus was important strategically concerning its rivalry with Iran, it never tried to control North Caucasus, which was seen as a peripheral area, and a matter of the Crimean Khans. However, after the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca with the loss of the Crimea and Kuban, Circassia turned into the front defense line of the Ottoman Empire against Russia's further advance. At this period, the Soğucak fortress on the Northeastern coast of the Black Sea became crucial, and in the north of it was Anapa fortress constructed by French architects.

On the other hand, Russia's first initiatives to conquer Caucasus started soon after the demise of the Golden Horde as the fall of Kazan and Astrakhan opened the way to the steppes north of the Caucasus. During their never-ending wars with Mongols and Tatars, the Kabardians sought to build closer relations with Russia from whom they perceived less threat being relatively distant. Such involvements of Russia date back to Ivan the Terrible when the delegation of Kabarda Prince requested the help of the Russian state.<sup>9</sup> At the same time the Cossacks around the Terek River also asked for the protection of Ivan the Terrible.<sup>10</sup> With the failure of the Astrakhan campaign of the Ottoman Empire in 1570, it then became clear that Russia would be one of the "major players in the game of Caucasian politics".<sup>11</sup> However, the Russian desires over the North Caucasus were checked in 1605 when a

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<sup>9</sup> This resulted with the demagogy of the voluntary adherence of Kabarda (and from here all Caucasus) to Russia. For the first relations of the Kabarda and the Russians, and the discussion of voluntary adherence see, Namitok, pp. 17-33.

<sup>10</sup> Esadze, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Jaimoukha, p. 52.

combined force of the Shamkhal of Daghestan and the Ottoman Empire dealt with a blow to the Russian ambitions, and the Russian project over Caucasus was to be delayed for almost 130 years.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, though Russia's activities in the Caucasus date back to sixteenth century, real involvements came in the 18<sup>th</sup> century under the rule of Peter the Great. Before that, owing to Cossack establishments, Slavic stock in the Caucasus began to form.<sup>13</sup> With the Cossack *stanitsas* (military villages) the core of the future Russian military lines across the Caucasus was started to be established. In 1721, the Terek Cossacks submitted to Peter the Great, and from then on they became the potent force in the Russian drive through the Northern Caucasus.<sup>14</sup>

In the resulting treaty of Belgrade in 1739 after 1736-1739 Russo-Ottoman war, the independence of Kabarda was formally guaranteed. After the Russo-Turkish war of 1768-1774 ending up with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, Ottoman Empire

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> The Cossacks made their first appearance in the North Caucasus in the sixteenth century. They settled in the steppes north of the river Sunja and along the Lower Terek. Among their earliest settlements were Tarku and Andreyevo. Initially relations between the Cossacks and the Northern Circassians were friendly, no real danger being perceived by the local population. The Cossacks begin to adopt Circassian customs, and the North Caucasian way of life. By the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century relations between the Cossacks and the North Caucasians had become antagonistic as Cossack settlements penetrated into the Northern Caucasus. Thomas Barrett divides the Russian settlements in three stages: "From the 1560s up to 1721, free Cossack villages appeared along the eastern Terek, the first Russian forts were built in the same region; in 1721 the Terek Cossacks were withdrawn from the authority of the Foreign Office (*Posol'skii prikaz*), put under the command of the War College and transformed into servants of state. Only in the second stage (1722-1775) did the Russian government begin resettling significant numbers of Cossacks and other service people. Several new forts were built along the Terek, including the first permanent one, Kizliar. During the third stage (1776-1860) the military line was completed and pushed further into the mountains; Cossacks were resettled all along the line, the Zaporozhian Cossacks were reconstituted as the Black Sea Cossacks and awarded lands in the Kuban region, and the resettlement and spontaneous migration of large numbers of peasants began." Thomas Barrett, "Lines of Uncertainty: the Frontiers of the North Caucasus", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Fall 1995), p. 591.

<sup>14</sup> Jaimoukha, p. 58.

not only lost Crimea but also ceded Kabarda.<sup>15</sup> Afterwards Russia occupied the northern Kuban in 1781 and annexed the Crimea in 1783. Actually, Catherine II embarked on an ambitious and well-established plan to break the Caucasus from Turkish influence and annex it to her ever-expanding empire. The northern frontier of Circassia with its fortresses would be used as a catalyst for further expansion. The first military outpost, Mozdok, was established in Kabarda in 1763 on the left bank of the Terek. V. A. Potto underlines this incident as the start of the Russo-Caucasian war.<sup>16</sup> By 1769, Russian line of fortifications was extended eastwards to Kızlar in Dagestan, followed by a string of fortresses in the opposite direction that extended northwestwards to the Sea of Azov, forming the so-called Caucasian Military Line.

As a result of completion of the Terek-Mozdok line in 1777 and Mozdok-Azak line in 1782, establishment of two corps (Kubanskii and Kavkazskii) again in 1782, and Suvorov's harsh defeat of the Kuban Nogays in 1783, north of the Kuban and Terek entered under the Russian control.<sup>17</sup> Then in 1786 the Caucasian governorship was established, and in 1792 Black Sea Cossack Host was established in Taman peninsula.<sup>18</sup>

Russia's activities and advance in the Caucasus urged the Ottoman Empire to establish a defense system in the Northern Caucasus. In 1781, Ferah Ali Pasha, an experienced Ottoman statesman, was appointed the governor (*vâli*) of Soğucak to reinforce the defense there against Russia and to attract the Circassians to the

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<sup>15</sup> In the treaty it was stated that the adherence of Kabarda to Russia must take place in agreement with the Crimean Khan. However, Crimea did not recognize any right of Russia over Kabarda. Namitok, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Polovinkina, p. 107.

<sup>17</sup> It was actually a total annihilation of the Nogay population in Kuban.

<sup>18</sup> Esadze, pp. 16-17.

Ottoman side by strengthening Islam there. In 1781 he would establish the Anapa fortress near the Taman peninsula, which would be the front defense against Russia. Anapa also served as the base from which the Ottomans maintained their political and commercial contacts with the North-Western Caucasians.<sup>19</sup>

In 1787, struggle resumed between the Russians and Ottomans. The former destroyed a Circassian force under Sheikh Mansur<sup>20</sup>, who took refuge in Anapa. This strategic port was taken by the Russians on 21 June 1791 by General Gudovich, and Sheikh Mansur fell into the Russian hands. However, according to the Treaty of Yaş of 29 December 1792, Russia ceded Anapa back to the Ottoman Empire. In 1807, Russians took back Anapa and other ports, and returned them back in 1812 with the Bucharest Treaty. Actually, in every defense of the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus Anapa fortress played a key role. Therefore, to protect the fortress from the Russian assault, Circassians actively participated in the Russo-Ottoman wars in the side of the Ottomans.<sup>21</sup>

However, it seems that there hardly was a unity among the Circassians as to which state they should turn to, that is the Ottomans or Russians. Circassians were

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<sup>19</sup> For the activities of Ferah Ali Pasha, and the Ottoman policies regarding Circassia till the Treaty of Edirne see, Cemal Gökçe, *Kafkasya ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Kafkasya Siyaseti* (Istanbul, 1979). Ferah Ali Pasha's activities attracted so much interest that in Turkey a number of thesis written on his role in Circassia, see, Zübeyde Güneş Yağcı, "Ferah Ali Paşa'nın Soğucak Muhafızlığı 1781-1785", Ph.D Thesis, On Dokuz Mayıs University (Samsun, 1998); Ali Barut, "Kuzey Kafkaslara Rus İlerleyişi Karşısında Anapa Muhafızı Ferah Ali Paşa'nın Askeri ve Siyasi Faaliyetleri (1781-1784)", M.A Thesis, Kırıkkale University (Kırıkkale, 1997); Ali Asmaz, "Vezir Ferah Ali Paşa'nın Hayatı, Şahsiyeti ve Çerkezler'in Osmanlı Devleti Hizmetine Kazandırılmasındaki Faaliyetleri", M. A. Thesis, Çanakkale University (Çanakkale, 1991).

<sup>20</sup> The mystical warrior, Sheikh Mansur, made his first mark on the history of the North Caucasus in 1785. He was the first leader who tried to unite the North Caucasus against Russia with the cause of a Holy War. His successes against Russia also attracted the Circassians to his side. After his defeat in Kabarda he took refuge in the Western Circassia. He then coordinated his actions with the Ottoman Empire. After he was captured by the Russians he was sent to Schlüsselburg Prison where he was (in all probability) killed in 1793.

<sup>21</sup> Esadze, pp. 17, 26, 28.

not only disunited, but also were not stable in their choices. Their relations with the Pasha of Anapa, and the Russian policies in this respect were important to understand the behavior of the Circassians. Russia was trying to attract Circassians with a profitable trade, and it was not useless. Besides, the tribes or families having difficulties in the trans-Kuban were trying to immigrate to the Russian territories around the river Kuban.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, Anapa was a city for the Circassians where they could wander, trade, and rest. The Pashas of Anapa fortress were not only giving feasts and gifts to demonstrate the generosity of Turks, but they were also marrying the daughters of the Circassian Princes or members of the aristocratic families to establish strong ties with the tribes. Without any attempt to impose Ottoman institutions per se to Circassia, the Ottoman Empire tried to establish some kind of a loose suzerainty over, or an alliance with, the Circassians.<sup>23</sup> As a result of these social bonds, prior to the Treaty of Edirne the Circassians overwhelmingly took side with the Ottoman Empire during the Russo-Ottoman wars.<sup>24</sup> No doubt, such relations would leave positive implications for the Ottoman Empire in the memory of the Circassians even after the Treaty of Edirne.

During first decades of the nineteenth century, Russia's position got stronger also in the Trans-Caucasus. In 1801, Pavel declared Russian suzerainty over Georgia, and by this way the Russo-Georgian alliance from the time of Yekaterina and Irakli was concluded with the full Russian domination. After this first step, Russia's

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<sup>22</sup> *Genotsid Adygov*, pp. 58-59, 63-64.

<sup>23</sup> In the Ottoman archives there are considerable amount of documents about the relationships of the governors of Anapa and the Circassians. Only to give an example: in 1794 Ottoman commander (*serasker*) of Anapa Mustafa Pasha had the Circassians to sign a written contract (*taahhütname*), and distributed to the Circassian princes gifts. The Ottoman Archives of the Turkish Prime Ministry [*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri*, hereafter to be cited as *BOA*] *HAT*, Dosya No.: 197, Gömlek No.: 9895. Such contracts, trusts (*amanat*), distribution of gifts to the Circassian princes and political marriages were actually the characteristics of the Ottoman relationship in Circassia.

<sup>24</sup> *Genotsid Adygov*, p. 62.

victories in 1806-12 and 1826-29 against the Ottoman Empire resulted with the Treaties of Bucharest and Edirne. In addition to the victories against the Ottoman Empire, Russia was also victorious in its wars against Iran during the first decades of the nineteenth century which were concluded by the Treaties of Gülistan (1812) and Türkmençay (1828). Thus, within a few decades, Russia had decisively eliminated two rivaling powers for the domination of the Caucasus, and it could feel itself the sole and legitimate ruler of this land. However, the genuine control of the Caucasus should yet to be realized by the pacification of the indigenous mountainous population. The Russian strategists thought that it would not take long. They were blatantly wrong; however, the defense of the indigenous population in the Northern Caucasus would be so stiff that the war was to continue for decades to come.

### **C. A General Look to the North Caucasian Resistance**

The first phase of the Russo-Circassian War was the war, which took place in the Kabarda territories. Only after the Eastern Circassia, known as Kabarda, was annexed, the war moved to the western part. The first open battle between the Russians and the Kabardians took place near the Malka River in 1771, which resulted in a Russian victory. After the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca the war in Kabarda was intensified. In 1779, the bloodiest battle was fought among the Kabardians and the Russians, in which 50 princes and 350 nobles died. Russia would establish several fortresses in Kabardian lands to isolate Kabarda, especially from the Western Circassians, and to protect the military way to Tbilisi. Kabardians sought the protection of the Porte, and revolted against Russia during the Russo-Ottoman

wars of 1787-1791 and 1806-1812. General Yermolov, the military commander of the southern tsarist forces, arrived at the scene in 1816. In 1821, Yermolov demanded that the Kabardians living in mountainous areas move to the plains to facilitate their control. Then, the Caucasian military line was pushed further into the Kabardian territory and many massacres were committed by the Russian forces.

The Kabardian resistance was localized and badly organized. The Circassian princes failed to form a united front, and the Russians took the advantage of the internal rivalries. In spite of their defeat, the Kabardians were always on the lookout for an external ally to rise up against the occupiers. They maintained contacts with Shamil and the other Circassians. However, with the exception of the year 1846, it is not possible to mention about any armed stand of a significant dimensions against Russians after Yermolov effectively crushed the organized Kabardian resistance.<sup>25</sup> Actually Russia was successful in its aim to provide the security of the military way to Tbilisi, and to prevent a North Caucasian union by controlling Kabarda.

The war in the North-Eastern Caucasus, which is more popular and widely known with its holy war and especially with its legendary leader Sheikh Shamil, took place simultaneously and with many parallels with the war in the Circassian lands. However, the nature of the resistance in the North-Western Caucasus was radically different from the war in Circassia. It was the “muridizm”<sup>26</sup> that unified the Eastern part of the Caucasus against Russia. The muridizm started in Dagestan under the

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<sup>25</sup> Namitok, pp. 27-31; Jaimoukha, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> The sufi order in the Eastern Caucasus established during the war with Russia is generally known as “muridizm”. The seeds were sown in the time of Sheikh Mansur, but muridizm took its strength during 1830s. Gazi Muhammed, Hamzat Bek, and Sheikh Shamil all tried to establish a state on the base of *sharia* to unite the North Caucasian mountaineers. All three Imams were affiliated by the Khalidi branch of the Naqshibandiyya order. See, “Shamil”, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. IX (Leiden, 1996), pp. 283-288.

leadership of the legendary Sheikh Mansur in the last decades of the eighteenth century when the Russians had newly started to establish their rule in the Northern Caucasus, and became much popular and truly organized from 1820s that is the time of Gazi Muhammed (Kazi Molla), the first Imam of the movement. After Gazi Muhammed and the second Imam Hamzat Bek Sheikh Shamil became as the third Imam who took the leadership of the holy war in the North-Eastern Caucasus. Sheikh Shamil was most successful in establishing a state with all its institutions, and even managing to unify the Northern Caucasus in certain respects. His *naibs*, especially Muhammed Emin played a prominent role in the Circassian struggle.<sup>27</sup>

The nature of the societal relations and the nature of the war in the North-Western Caucasus were significantly different from that of Sheikh Shamil's state. Contrary to the egalitarian societal relations in Dagestan and Chechnya, the Circassian society divided into the classes in which the nobility kept to exercise many rights. However, during the war against Russia, some kind of a civil war was taking place in Circassia, which reduced the power of the noble class. Secondly, Islam was still insufficiently established in Circassia. The war itself accelerated the Islamization of the region in connection with the effect of the Ottoman Empire and Shamil's *naibs* in Circassia. Thirdly, being close to the Black Sea, Circassia was strategically very important for the Ottoman Empire, and Circassians had deep-rooted contacts and relations with the Ottomans. Despite all the resistant activities

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<sup>27</sup> For comprehensive analyses of the war in Chechnya and Dagestan see, John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, (London, 1908); Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan* (London, 1994). For the role of Islam in the war in Chechnya and Dagestan see, Anna Zelkina, *In Quest for God and Freedom: The Sufi Response to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus* (London, 2000).

and diplomatic efforts of Russia, trade between Circassia and the Ottoman Empire never ended even in the very harsh times of the war.<sup>28</sup>

Circassian trade needs special attention to understand the Circassian relations with Russia and the Ottoman Empire. There were certain basic characteristics of the Circassian trade: First, in Circassia trade was overwhelmingly conducted with the primitive method of bartering goods. Second, internal trade in Circassia was insignificant and the external one was vital. The Circassians could sell slaves and certain agricultural products, and needed to buy such materials as salt, fabric, and munitions. The abundance of agricultural and animal products, as well as slaves also resulted in the decrease of the price of the export materials, thereby, presenting a very lucrative trade for the importers. Third, the main commodity was slaves, and the direction of the flow was the Ottoman lands, especially Istanbul.<sup>29</sup>

According to the Russian officials, the prerequisite of the submission of the Circassians was the end of the Circassian relations with the Ottoman Empire. To this effect, they established several forts in the Black Sea coast composing the Black Sea Coast Line. However, Russia could not succeed in preventing Ottoman-Circassian relations, moreover, this policy prevented the establishment of healthy relations between the Circassians and Russia.

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<sup>28</sup> For general Turkish works about the North Caucasian history, see, Kadircan Kafli, *Şimali Kafkasya* (Istanbul, 1942); Özdemir Özbay, *Dünden Bugüne Kuzey Kafkasya* (Ankara, 1999); General İsmail Berkok, *Tarihte Kafkasya* (Istanbul, 1958). For an analytical overview of the Circassian resistance, see, Paul B. Henze, "Circassian Resistance to Russia" in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, edited by Marie Bennigsen Broxup (London, 1992), pp. 62-111.

<sup>29</sup> V. K. Gardanov, *Obshchestvennyi stroi adygskih narodov (XVIII – pervaya polovina XIX v.)* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 111-122.

Until the Russian conquest of the Crimea, it was the Crimean Tatars who conducted the slave trade, and it was Kaffa as the main exporting center of slaves. Then, Anapa, established mainly as a military post in 1781, became the center of the trade with the Circassians.

People of the Northern Caucasus, faced with the Russian attack, soon understood that without foreign aid it was not possible to get the Russians out of their homeland. This foreign aid might only come from or through the Ottoman territories. And Britain might be the supporter of the Circassian struggle if it perceived that a Russian Caucasus would be harmful for its best interests. Therefore, the Circassian envoys would always try to demonstrate how detrimental to the British interests the fall of Circassia was.

In fact, both the Ottoman Empire and Britain were anxious about the Russian advance, and both were sympathetic to the resistance in the Northern Caucasus. However, neither the Ottoman Empire nor Britain would commit themselves to a struggle against Russia for the sake of the Caucasians; therefore their sympathies were not translated into a real alliance with the Northern Caucasians. However, the Ottoman Empire, which lost the entire Circassian coast from Anapa to St. Nicholas as a result of the Edirne Treaty, did not give up all its interests there. The Circassians not only were to play important roles against Russia in the Crimean War and the 1877-78 War, but they would also continue to be a potential leverage for the Ottoman Empire in a possible conflict between the Ottomans and the Russians as being sworn enemies of the Russian Empire.

While the rise of the threat from the North increased the strategic importance of the Caucasus for the Ottoman Empire, the importance of the Ottoman Empire for the mountaineers increased even more significantly. However, its incapability to affect the Russian war in the Caucasus directly, the Ottoman Empire could not involve actively in the Caucasian affairs. This, by no means, contradicts with the

significance of the Ottoman Empire regarding the Russo-Circassian war. First of all, it was the place where the Circassian and Polish émigrés made plans and preparations, and dealt diplomatic negotiations for the Russo- Circassian war. Moreover, the Circassian-Ottoman trade, the main financial and material source for the continuation of the war, never ceased till the final end of the war in Circassia.

CHAPTER II  
CIRCASSIA BETWEEN THE TREATY OF EDIRNE  
AND THE CRIMEAN WAR

**A. An Outline of the Post-Edirne Treaty Conditions**

The 1830s marks the beginning of a new period for Circassia. While the Treaty of Edirne on 14 September 1829<sup>30</sup> concluded that the Black Sea coasts from Anapa to St. Nicholas (south of Poti) were given to Russia, Russia interpreted it as the territory behind the coasts also became its property. The problem was that the Circassian territories had never entered under the direct Ottoman control before. Even though Circassians had firm commercial and religious bonds with the Ottoman Empire, political relations was the secondary matter till the last decades of the eighteenth century when the Russian threat was at its peak. Even then the Ottoman Empire did not engage in any initiative to make the Circassians tax-paying Ottoman subjects. Therefore, Circassians always argued that their territory had never been a part of the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman Empire had no right to yield Circassia to any other third party. On the other hand, during decades of war with Circassians, Russian authorities always argued that Circassians were only bandits who did not want to accept the legitimate authority.

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<sup>30</sup> For the Turkish version of the agreement see, Nihat Erim, *Devletlerarası Hukuku ve Siyasî Tarih Metinleri*, Cilt I (Ankara, 1953), pp. 275-289; Vak'anüvis *Ahmed Lûtfi Efendi Tarihi*, Vol. III, transcribed by Tamer Erdoğan (Istanbul, 1999), pp. 498-504.

After the Treaty of Edirne, the Russian authorities thought themselves free to accomplish the occupation of the Northern Caucasus.<sup>31</sup> Thereafter, Russia launched a fierce war of attrition, which met firm resistance for 35 years. In this struggle, Russia pursued a mixed policy to subdue the Western Circassians. While trying to co-opt the elite on the one hand, Russian government employed brutal coercive tactics on the other. Another central policy of Russia was the prevention of the supplies coming from the Ottoman Empire by imposing a naval blockade and establishing several strongholds on the coast of Circassia.

Russia, new possessor of the Eastern coast of the Black Sea, at first thought that the bond between the Ottoman Empire and the Circassians was broken, and with the rise of the Russian trade Circassians would be pacified. That's why between 1829 and 1833, Russia first engaged in pacifying the North-Eastern Caucasus, which was perceived more urgent and threatening. However, Russia soon realized that strict measures were necessary to prevent relations between Circassians and the outside world. Afterwards, besides the reestablishment of Anapa fortress, a new fortress in the Gelincik Bay, and Gagra fortress were established. Entrances to Circassia and trade with the Circassian coasts were limited only with Anapa and Redutkale. Russian authorities announced that with the exception of these two ports, any contacts with the Circassians would be illegal. Russian military circles also started their researches to construct the maps of Circassia for the future military expeditions.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> A. H. Kasumov - H. A. Kasumov, "Osvoboditelnaia borba adigskikh narodov v XIX veke", *Cherkesiia v XIX veke* (Maikop, 1991), p. 50.

<sup>32</sup> Norman Luxenburg, *Rusların Kafkasya'yı İşgalinde İngiliz Politikası ve İmam Şamil*, translated by Sedat Özden (İstanbul, 1998), pp. 80-81.

In the meantime, Circassians soon started to search a solution for the reconstruction of the pre-Edirne Treaty conditions. Yet, in November 1830 Shapsugh and Natukhays held their first public meeting after the Edirne Treaty. In the meeting they agreed to send a delegation to Istanbul under the head of Zanoko Sefer.<sup>33</sup> In Istanbul, the Circassian delegation was received and encouraged to resist Russia. The Porte not only distributed gifts, but also promised to help Circassia. After this mission, Zanoko Sefer did not return with the delegation but stayed in Istanbul. Now onwards he would be the head of all the diplomatic activities of the Circassians, and his encouragements would be influential on the Circassian defense especially in 1830s.<sup>34</sup> Actually, Ottoman help to Circassia in 1830 demonstrated that the Ottoman interests did not end abruptly. In late 1830, the Ottoman Empire sent 15 cannons and 300 barrels of gunpowder with officers who would teach Circassians how to use cannons.<sup>35</sup>

In 1833, a new delegation was sent to Istanbul. At this point, the delegation was also received by the British Embassy, which promised help to Circassia. This meeting signaled that the 1830s would be an intensive period for the Circassian-British relations and that the Circassian question would be brought to the international agenda. Circassians continued to send envoys to get diplomatic supports of both the Ottoman Empire and the European powers. In 1838, the Circassian

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<sup>33</sup> Being a Shapsugh (or Natukhay) prince and a member of the famous family Zan, Zanoko Sefer was given to the Russians as a trust (*amanat*). He studied in the Rischelevski lycee in Odessa, and was a cadet of a cavalry regiment. When he was serving as a cadet in the 22<sup>nd</sup> huntsmen regiment, he quarreled with his commander, and deserted from the army and went to the Ottoman Empire. Afterwards, he participated in the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-29 on the side of the Ottoman Empire. Then, he stayed in the Ottoman Empire for approximately 25 years till 1854, when he was sent to Sohumkale as an Ottoman Pasha. In the meantime of war he moved to the Anapa fortress. After the war he stayed in Circassia and died in 1859. Esadze, p. 69; *Genotsid Adygov*, p. 125 footnote 87.

<sup>34</sup> Polovinkina, pp. 112-113.

<sup>35</sup> However, Lapinskii claims that it was a characteristic Turkish help: the cannons were old, and the barrels were half empty. Ibid, p. 113.

delegation arrived in Britain, and met with the British Parliament and Queen Victoria. In 1839, the Circassians once more attempted to get the support of the Ottoman and British governments.<sup>36</sup> Though these petitions did not yield the desired results for the Circassians, they were not absolutely useless or fruitless. These petitions would continue until the very end of the Circassian war, and became one of the characteristics of the Circassian struggle. In this context, Zanko Sefer played an intermediary role between the foreign diplomatic circles and the Circassian missions.<sup>37</sup>

During the 1830s, the Eastern Question dominated the Russo-British relations. When Russia was trying to establish its solid rule in the Northern Caucasus with the advantage of the absence of any regional rival, Britain was also involved in the war in Circassia. Russia's advance to the south made Britain uneasy about the security of the Indian route. Besides the developments in the territories of the Ottoman Empire, the developments in Iran and the Caucasus were also affecting the relations of the two greatest imperial powers of the time. These years also witnessed a few British adventurers in the Caucasus. To what extent the British government had a role in those attempts has no clear answer. However, ambiguous (or covert) policy of Britain convinced Russians that all the events against the Russian interests in the second half of the 1830s were all the results of the British propaganda and conspiracy.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 121.

<sup>37</sup> Esadze, p. 38.

## **B. The International Environment in the Near East after the Treaty of Edirne**

After the Vienna Congress of 1815 Russia was a victorious, prestigious and powerful state maintaining the largest standing army in Europe. Thereafter, Russia would pursue two main objectives; ‘upholding a conservative cause in Europe’ for the preservation of the status quo, while adjusting the current situation in the Near East utilizing any opportunity to expand its influence.<sup>38</sup>

In 1839, a daring reformation initiative had been put in effect in the Ottoman Empire. Yet the Ottoman Empire had to deal with the nationalist uprisings as well as Russia’s antagonistic policies. Sultan Mahmud II, the initiator of these reforms, faced the Greek uprising in 1820s.<sup>39</sup> The uprising was suppressed with the help of Mehmed Ali Pasha, the Governor of Egypt. However, this was to be the beginning of new crises. A war with Russia, involvements of Britain and France and the resultant Treaty of Edirne, the crisis between Sultan Mahmud II and Mehmed Ali Pasha, and then the Straits question upon the resort of the Ottoman Empire to the help of Russia squeezed in a very short period of time when also the Circassian war was turning to be an international problem.

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<sup>38</sup> It was actually the Bosphorus that Russia wanted to control with a motivation of a mixed hope and fear as Mosely puts down: “There was a hope that her Black Sea fleet, stationed only four days’ sail from the Bosphorus, would be able, at some moment of confusion in Constantinople and of disunion among the Powers, to seize the Straits. There was fear, sometimes inclining to deadly certainty, that this bold stroke would lead to a war against the rest of Europe.” Philip E. Mosely, *Russian Diplomacy and the Opening of the Eastern Question in 1838 and 1839* (Cambridge, 1934), p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> The first attempt of Greek revolution came with the help of Russia in 1821 in the boundaries of the Principalities under the leadership of Ypsilanti; however this first attempt was failed. Uprising continued in Mora. Although with the help of Mehmed Ali Pasha this uprising was suppressed, the involvement of the European powers resulted in the destruction of the Egyptian fleet and the penetration of the Russian forces in the Principalities. While with a few subsequent protocols in London Greeks attained their independence, the Treaty of Edirne also showed the total end of the sovereignty of the Sultan in the Caucasus as a result of the loss of the Circassian coasts.

In these circumstances a year after the merciless suppression of the Polish revolt of 1832, a very surprising demand from the Ottoman Empire came to the Russian capital: the Ottoman Empire asked Russia's military support against the rebellious Mehmed Ali Pasha, who had defeated the Ottoman army in Konya, and was marching to Istanbul.<sup>40</sup> Russia sent help to the Ottoman capital, but not without compensation. The same year on 8 July 1833, the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire signed the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, according to which the Ottoman Empire promised to close the straits to the European battleships when Russia would be engaged in a war.<sup>41</sup> No doubt, suppression of the Polish revolt and the emergence of the Egyptian question during the first years of the 1830s changed the balance of power in favor of Russia threatening the British interests.

After concluding such an agreement with Russia, it would not be surprising to expect from the Ottoman Empire a more docile policy regarding the Russian and Caucasian matters. The Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi was perceived as the ratification of Russia's suzerainty over the Ottoman Empire by Britain and France.<sup>42</sup> It was also accepted as a great defeat of the British foreign policy in the Near Eastern matters.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Being deprived of his fleet in Navarino during the Greek uprising, and the silence of Sultan Mahmud II about his promises of nomination of the governorship of Damascus and Adana to Mehmed Ali Pasha resulted in an internal war between the central authority and the governor of Egypt. Ottoman Empire without any efficient army after the abolishment of the janissary corps could not stop the Egyptian forces. Under the command of İbrahim Pasha Egyptian army triumphed in the battle of Konya, which opened the road to Istanbul. In these circumstances, Sultan Mahmud II felt it necessary to resort for a foreign aid. Not having received a positive reply from Britain to protect Istanbul, he reluctantly resorted to the help of the Russian Empire. As a result, for the first and the last time Russian navy entered the Bosphorus. As a result of the Russian and French mediation a settlement established between Sultan Mahmud II and Mehmed Ali Pasha at Kütahya, according to which the Ottoman Empire granted the governorship of Suriye and Adana to Mehmed Ali Pasha's son İbrahim Pasha.

<sup>41</sup> Erim, pp. 293-299.

<sup>42</sup> Prince Adam Czartoryski wrote to Zamoyski: "Turkey is now just a Russian province – what is more wanted?" He suggested to Palmerston 'a strong common stand of the Western Powers against Russia.' Marian Kukiel, *Czartoryski and European Unity 1770-1861* (Princeton, 1955), p. 229.

<sup>43</sup> John Howes Gleason, *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain* (Massachusetts, 1950), p. 146.

Suspicion of the existence of the secret clauses of the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi fed antagonism against Russia in Britain.

Russia's control over Poland, the involvement in the Greek revolution, and the Egyptian question, as well as the secret clause of the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi all convinced the British politicians that Russia was enlarging and strengthening against the British interests. The question was whether the fate of the Ottoman Empire would resemble that of Poland or not. However, for Britain the Ottoman Empire was too important to be sacrificed. Gleason very well portrays the effect of the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi to the British policy-making:

If the conclusion of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi produced a revolution in English policy toward Russia and Turkey, it constituted a landmark not so much because at the moment of its signature Russia enjoyed greater power in Constantinople than at any other time, as because the implications of the treaty satisfied the foreign office that Russia was pursuing a policy carefully calculated to secure for herself the ultimate possession of the European portion of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>44</sup>

As Temperley claims, "Unkiar Skelessi is a true turning-point in the attitude of English statesmen towards Russia." After 1833, Britain would pursue a more cautious policy in the Near Eastern affairs not to lose any opportunity to prevent further Russian profits and to reverse the Russian gains. As the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi showed that inactive policies in the Near East would harm the British interests, thereafter, Britain tried to pursue a more active policy till the conclusions of the Treaty of Balta Limanı in 1838 and the Treaty of London in 1840, which

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

established the commercial preponderance of Britain over the Ottoman Empire, and reset the balances in the Near East along the lines of the British objectives.<sup>45</sup>

In 1833, strengthened its position in the Near East, Russia was hereafter more determined to suppress the North-Caucasus. However, there were difficulties for Russia: first and foremost Circassia was *terra incognita* for the Russians; second, as the Circassians became aware of the Russian threat they started to unite (they gave oaths not to trade with Russians, etc.); and third, Britain showed off itself as a participant of the game in Circassia. What is more, by then intensive activities of the Polish émigrés and the Circassian missions were visible.

### **C. British involvements in the Caucasus in 1830s and the activities of Zanoko Sefer Bey**

No doubt, Circassia so much attracted the interest of the British public opinion in the second half of the 1830s with the print of *Portfolio*, the *Vixen* affair and journeys of David Urquhart, James Stanislaus Bell, John Longworth, and Edmund

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<sup>45</sup> Temperley discusses the effect of the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi to the British policy-making as well as the public opinion. Harold Temperley, *England and the Near East. The Crimea* (London, 1964), pp. 69-78.

Spencer to Circassia.<sup>46</sup> By the end of 1837, Russophobia was a major part of the English opinion, for which David Urquhart<sup>47</sup> was mostly responsible.

During nineteenth century, the British government sent missions, amongst David Urquhart would be the most popular one, to the Near East about commercial opportunities. While the driving force of the Russo-British rivalry was desires and plans of two imperialist powers, rendering the calculations of Britain as only protection of the route to India would not be adequate. Near Eastern countries were providing a huge market for the British goods.<sup>48</sup> British exports to the Ottoman Empire would increase by 800 per cent between 1825 and 1852.<sup>49</sup> Not only the trade with the Ottoman Empire, but also the trade with Iran, the Caucasus, and even Russia was considered and evaluated in the foreign policy circles of Britain.<sup>50</sup> In this connection in 1830s, Anglo-Russian trade was becoming less significant, and commercial treaties were being negotiated with Turkey and Austria. On the other

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<sup>46</sup> These British adventurers wrote books about the Circassian resistance and their residences in Circassia, which are so valuable for the Circassian history, while we learn many details about Circassia of that time from these books, as a result of the lack of written literature among the Circassians. John Longworth, *A Year Among Circassians (1837-38)* (Two volumes) (London, 1840); J. S. Bell, *Journal of a Residence in Circassia* 1836, 1837, 1838 (Two volumes ) (London, 1840); Edmund Spencer, *Travels in Circassia, Krim-Tartary, etc.* (Two volumes) (London, 1839); Captain Spencer, *Turkey, Russia, the Black Sea, and Circassia* (London, 1854).

<sup>47</sup> David Urquhart was a Scot, an ardent Turcophil and an expert of the Near Eastern matters. After his visit to the Caucasus in 1834, he acted as an advocate and spokesman of the Caucasians in the West. He was admired and backed by Sir Herbert Taylor, the King's private secretary, and his writings greatly appreciated by the King William IV. He published the polemical journal *Portfolio*, and wrote several books about the importance of the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus, as well as the Russian threat against the British interests. Gleason, p. 146.

<sup>48</sup> In his note, General Raevskiy complained about the establishment of a company of the British merchants in Trabzon: "This Company captured the whole trade in the Asia minor and Iran. Like other British companies it tries to be influential upon the political affairs of these countries". "Note of General Raevskiy about trade with the mountaineers and immigration to the western coast", Proceedings of the Caucasian Archaeographical Commission, 1866-1904 [*Akty Sobrannyi Kavkazskoiu Arheograficheskoiu Kommissieiu*, 12 Volumes, (Tiflis, 1885), hereafter to be cited as *AKAK*], Vol. IX, p. 474.

<sup>49</sup> Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War 1853-1856* (London, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, while Russia was uneasy about the policies of Britain against its quarantine along the Eastern Black Sea coast, it bought British steamers to strengthen the quarantine. Luxenburg, p. 142.

hand, it was obvious that British goods would not drive into the territories under the Russian rule as easy as it entered into a territory under the British influence.<sup>51</sup>

David Urquhart's visit to Circassia in 1834 was important for the future British involvements in Circassia. He had a mission to research the resources of Turkey, especially those which could be bought from Turkey instead of Russia. Before his arrival to Istanbul he became famous with his book *Turkey and its Resources*.<sup>52</sup>

Encouraged by Lord Ponsonby, the British Ambassador in Istanbul, Urquhart with Captain W. Lyons<sup>53</sup>, the captain of a private ship named *Turquoise*, started a journey on the Black Sea.<sup>54</sup> During his visit to Samsun, Urquhart met Zankö Sefer Bey who was at that time organizing "the illegal trade" between Turkey and Circassia. While Captain Lyons and Urquhart visited Circassia with reference letters of Sefer Bey, shortly after this meeting Sefer Bey went to Istanbul to get the support of the European powers for the Circassian cause. His residence in the British Embassy in Istanbul demonstrated his close relations with the British diplomatic circles.<sup>55</sup>

Lord Ponsonby wrote to the Foreign Ministry that it was time to support the Circassians, as he thought that the Circassian war was a part of the Eastern Question

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<sup>51</sup> Gleason, p. 170; According to Raevskiy the British Company in Trabzon did not want a Russian control over Circassia, because the British merchants were trying to enter the Circassian market. *AKAK*, Vol. IX, Note of General Raevskiy, p. 474.

<sup>52</sup> He received from the Secret Service 200 sterlin, and from the Foreign Office budget 300 sterlin for this mission. Luxenburg, p. 92.

See, David Urquhart, *Turkey and Its Resources* (London, 1833).

<sup>53</sup> He would participate to the Crimean War as an admiral of the British navy.

<sup>54</sup> After a residence of 3 days in Circassia Urquhart returned to Istanbul, and presented a report to Ponsonby. After receiving this report Ponsonby stated that Urquhart's visit would be the start of great developments. *Genotsid Adygov*, p. 79.

<sup>55</sup> "From Baron Wrangel to Baron Rosen, 16 [28] August 1835", *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, p. 890; "From Baron Rosen to Graf Nesselrode, 31 October [12 November] 1835", *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, pp. 891-892.

and the balance of power.<sup>56</sup> In one of his reports, Ponsonby stated that he had sent a message to Circassia about the establishment of a government and the announcement of an independence declaration.<sup>57</sup> He also pointed out that the invasion of the Caucasus would yield more power to Russia than the suppression of Poland.<sup>58</sup> However, the Foreign Ministry refused Ponsonby's claims on the necessity of rendering support to Circassia.<sup>59</sup> Palmerston thought that the Circassians could not resist long; therefore, British monetary and military help would be useless. British aid would not only exacerbate the relations between Russia and Britain, but also would lengthen the war and increase the pain.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, encouraged by the success of his previous pamphlets, Urquhart undertook the publication of the *Portfolio*<sup>61</sup> in 1835 and established a junction between his cause and that of Poland. From Prince Adam Czartoryski and his nephew Zamoyski, he obtained the copies of the Russian diplomatic correspondences, extracted from the archives in Warsaw during the revolution. During the summer of 1836, Stewart, a fellow conspirator, went to Circassia and distributed the copies of the *Portfolio*.<sup>62</sup>

Russian government was well aware of the activities of Ponsonby, Urquhart, and Sefer Bey. The Russian documents within the years 1835-1837, demonstrate the uneasiness of Russia about the Britain-Circassian relations, and especially Zankov Sefer's influence over Circassia from the Ottoman territories. According to the

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<sup>56</sup> Luxenburg, p. 96.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 100.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 101.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> The *Portfolio* first published in November 1835 with the print of Russian documents. Russians suspected that Palmerston was behind this periodical.

<sup>62</sup> Gleason, p. 191.

Russian government, it was the rumors spreading in Circassia by Sefer Bey's letters via the British adventurers and the Turkish merchants that caused the continuation of the Circassian war. In order to prevent the activities of Zankko Sefer Bey, Russia contacted to Osman Pasha, Trabzon *Serasker*. Baron Rosen wrote to Osman Pasha:

This friendship itself and as well as the agreement existing between two powers makes me to turn to you with the request to take measures for retention of Sefer Bey from the frequent relations with the people subject to us, living on the Eastern Shores of the Black Sea. He is confusing the minds with his letters promising that very soon the Sultan will come with a strong army and fleet.<sup>63</sup>

Osman Pasha expressed his willingness to collaborate; however, he claimed that Sefer Bey was not in Trabzon but was living in Istanbul in the British Embassy now.

Sefer Bey now lives with the British Ambassador in Constantinople, but as soon as he returns I will apply the strictest rules for him.<sup>64</sup>

During the fall of 1835, Baron Rosen repeatedly claimed the necessity of the removal of Sefer Bey from Istanbul and Black Sea coasts of Anatolia, from where he could get into contact with the Englishmen and the Circassians:

I think it will be useful for us, if our envoy in Constantinople manages to make the Porte completely take away Sefer Bey from the influence of the Europeans, and more necessarily from Trabzon and Constantinople whence he will always have the capability to communicate with the mountaineers and to harm us with his appeals.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Baron Rosen continued to say that the Circassians naively believed such words and this situation increased their pain while the war brought them poverty as the Russian army was destroying Circassia. He concluded his letter with stating the necessity to prevent the activities of the merchants who were conducting secret trade with the mountaineers. "From Baron Rosen to *Serasker* of Trabzon, 29 June [11 July] 1835" *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, p. 887.

<sup>64</sup> "Report of Baron Wrangel to Baron Rosen, 16 [28] August 1835" *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, p. 890.

<sup>65</sup> "From Baron Rosen to Rodofinkin, 4 [16] September 1835" *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, p. 891.

In his reply to Rosen, Nesselrode stated that Butenev, the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, was instructed to use all possible means to prevent harmful activities of Sefer Bey. He also gave the essence of the dispatch of Butenev, according to which the Reisülkütab promised to take the necessary steps against the rumors distributed by Sefer Bey.<sup>66</sup> While, according to Butenev, Sefer Bey was not powerful enough to be harmful for the best interests of Russia, Baron Rosen had absolutely the opposite view. In a dispatch sent from Veliaminov, the commander of the forces of the Caucasian Line, to Baron Rosen it was written that this year the Shapsugh and Natukhays were more committed to resist as a result of the promises of Sefer Bey about the forthcoming help of the Egyptian Pasha, the Sultan, England, and France. What is more, Sefer Bey sent 80 barrels of gunpowder to Batum, which he received via British Embassy. Rosen claimed:

... Sefer Bey does not live in an uncertainty as our [Russian] ambassador in Constantinople wrote, but he uses the special position of the mission of the Great Britain, which can be claimed to support his harmful actions against us.<sup>67</sup>

As a result of the Russian coercive diplomacy, he was forced to live out of Istanbul to prevent his relations with the Circassian missions and the Europeans. Butenev answered Baron Rosen's request for expelling Sefer Bey from Istanbul with a favorable news: "... according to the personal order of Sultan, Sefer Bey in these

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<sup>66</sup> "Sefer Bey actually lived a certain time in Samsun on the northern shore of Anatolia, and then met here with Captain Lyons when he was sailing in the Black Sea in 1834. Afterwards he came to Constantinople where he has been living for one year. There he actually used the benevolence of the British Embassy. However, in Constantinople he wasted all his resources, and now lives in uncertainty with his several compatriots settled similarly in Constantinople. Although Butenev does not assume Sefer Bey in the present situation as harmful for us, it will be useful for the friendly relations between Russia and the Porte to report *Reisülkütab* about the intrigues of Sefer Bey to put an end to those activities. ... Reisülkütab promised to take the necessary steps to assure justice about the spread of rumors of Sefer Bey, and now will take measures against the mountaineer." "From Graf Nesselrode to Baron Rosen, 24 January [5 February] 1836", *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, p. 892.

<sup>67</sup> "From Baron Rosen to Graf Nesselrode, 14 [26] July 1836", *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, p. 893.

days was exiled to Pazarcık (near Filippopoli)...”<sup>68</sup> In another letter, Butenev claimed that from now on any contact with Sefer Bey could only be conducted with great difficulty. According to Butenev, not only Sefer Bey, but also the Circassian deputies in Istanbul were in a miserable situation economically.<sup>69</sup>

In 1838, Sefer Bey was permitted to return to Istanbul.<sup>70</sup> However, in 1838 he was assigned to Meğri county in the Gelibolu province as a *voyvoda*.<sup>71</sup> According to the Ottoman archives, a few years later, Sefer Bey was in Edirne.<sup>72</sup> Then as a reply to his request he was transferred to Zağra-i Atik [Staro Zagora in today’s Bulgaria].<sup>73</sup> Before the Crimean War, he was again in Edirne.<sup>74</sup> However, in a nutshell, his exile in Rumelia continued till the Crimean War, which demonstrated the Ottoman policy to preserve friendly relations with Russia by removing Sefer Bey from the sight.

Even though he was exiled from Istanbul, Sefer Bey continued to meet with the Circassian delegates, and to send letters to encourage resistance. In August 1836, the representatives of the Shapsugh, Natukhays, and Jigets came to Istanbul. Sefer Bey, though in exile, was able to meet them. Having the representatives returned, the Circassians made a meeting near the river Atakum in January 1837.<sup>75</sup> At this meeting, the Circassians accepted Sefer Bey’s advices to continue to resist. At that

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<sup>68</sup> It was Tatarpazarcık near Filibe. “From Butenev to Baron Rosen, 6 [18] October 1836”, *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, pp. 893-894.

<sup>69</sup> “From Butenev to Baron Rosen, 8 [20] March 1837”, *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, p. 894.

<sup>70</sup> *BOA C.DH*, Dosya No.: 2413, 27 Zilkade 1253 [22 March 1838].

<sup>71</sup> “From the *Vâli* of Edirne to *Sadaret*, 27 Rebiulevvel 1254 [20 June 1838]”, *BOA HAT*, Dosya No.: 58100.

<sup>72</sup> *BOA İ.DH*, Dosya No.: 31, Gömlek No.: 1475, 6 Zilkade 1256 [29 January 1841]

<sup>73</sup> *BOA HR.MKT*, Dosya No.: 7, Gömlek No.: 10, 29 Safer 1260 [20 March 1844].

<sup>74</sup> *BOA İ.DH*, Dosya No.: 282, Gömlek No.: 17709, 7 Muharrem 1270 [10 October 1853].

<sup>75</sup> In Circassia the names of the places were drawn generally from the rivers, and therefore when pointing out a place it was enough to give the name of the river.

time, Bell was also in Circassia, and shortly afterwards Longworth and Sefer Bey's messenger Nago İsmail came.<sup>76</sup>

Besides the activities of Sefer Bey, another matter that bothered the Russian government was the British adventurers in the Circassian mountains. After the arrival of James Bell and John Longworth, Raevskiy also reported about the alleged British agents of, Marrin and Iddo, who came to Circassia with two ships full of arms. According to this report, Captain Marrin and the Polish Polinsky swore to return the Caucasus again with Longworth.<sup>77</sup>

The fact that those adventurers were not prevented, if not encouraged, by the British government to act in Circassia promoted the belief in Russia that they were the agents of the British government. However, the British Government and the Foreign Office were very careful in their actions and attitudes towards Russia. Nonetheless, the anti-Russian circles in Britain, which also enjoyed the sympathy of the King William IV, fostered the Russian anxiety that the British Foreign Office was intervening in Russia's internal matters. The British ambassadors in Istanbul also harbored similar views to those of the Russophobic society in Britain. Ponsonby and Stratford Canning enjoyed not only special influence and respect in Turkey, but at the same time they had undeniable pro-Turkish and anti-Russian tendencies.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> "From Golovin to Chernyshev, 6 [18] May 1838, report of General Raevskiy on 8 [20] April *AKAK*, Vol. IX, p. 454.

<sup>77</sup> "Report from General-adjutant Lazarev to Baron Rosen, 24 November [6 December] 1837", *AKAK*, Vol. VIII; "From Golovin to Chernyshev", *AKAK*, Vol. IX, p. 453.

<sup>78</sup> "Stratford, it is true, was more deeply committed to the Turks than Palmerston; he may had personal animus against the Czar... If Palmerston was distrustful of Russia, Lord Ponsonby at Constantinople was still more so." Temperley, pp. 74-75.

For the influence of Stratford Canning, British ambassador in Istanbul from 1842 to 1857 with only short intervals, over the Ottoman court and government see E. F. Malcolm-Smith. Though the author seems to exaggerate Canning's influence, yet the book gives clues of the dependence of the Ottoman government to Britain, especially during the periods when Russian pressure and threat acute. The

They thought that the profits of Britain lied in the protection of the well-being of the Ottoman Empire, and the prevention of the future Russian expansion. In this context, the independence of Circassia was essential to prevent the Russian advance.<sup>79</sup>

On the other hand, the official view and declarations of the British government cannot be regarded as anti-Russian.<sup>80</sup> There seems to be a clash between the views of the British Foreign Minister Palmerston and the British ambassador Ponsonby in Istanbul. Palmerston, in all his acts, tried to abstain from any conflict with Russia without getting the support of Austria and France. On the other hand, Ponsonby and Urquhart supported a more active policy for the protection of the Indian route. They believed that, if Circassia fell, then the Ottoman lands would come to the fore. Therefore, not only the Russian expansion should be prevented, but also a powerful Turkey should be restored for the future benefits of Britain.

After the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi and with the publication of *Portfolio* while the Russo-British relations were getting worse, a new crisis popped up with the seizure of the British schooner *Vixen*<sup>81</sup> by the Russian naval forces. Before the *Vixen* affair with two incidents Russia and Britain checked each other, and finally, in 1836,

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author mentions that Canning was known as the Padishah of the Padishah. E. F. Malcolm-Smith, *The Life of Stratford Canning. Lord Stratford de Redcliffe* (London, 1933).

<sup>79</sup> Temperley, pp. 75-76.

<sup>80</sup> When Prince Czartoryski demanded support for the Circassian war from Palmerston in 1839, he answered that "... John Bull [the British people] will not go to war to save the Circassians." Kukiel, p. 240.

<sup>81</sup> It was Urquhart's plan, who was now secretary of the British Embassy in Istanbul. A ship was to be sent under the British flag loaded with supplies to the Circassians. As the Russian annexation of the part of the coast near Soğucak was not recognized by the British government, Britain's right of trading freely with the inhabitants would be attained by a *fait accompli*. A schooner owned by George and Stanley Bell was used for this purpose. The schooner was officially loaded with salt; however there were also ammunition and arms. *Ibid*, p. 237.

Russia's precautions of strengthening the blockade along the Eastern Black Sea coasts resulted in a crisis.<sup>82</sup>

From the very beginning Britain was uneasy about Russia's blockade along the Eastern shores of the Black Sea. On 19 August 1835, Ponsonby wrote to the Foreign Minister Palmerston that this blockade was giving great damage to the British trade.<sup>83</sup> However, though Britain was persisting in not recognizing Russia's claims over Circassia, it also did not want to involve in any serious conflict with Russia. In this connection, although both Palmerston and Ponsonby were informed about the *Vixen* initiative, they both avoided any commitment without insisting upon the cancellation of the expedition. Laden with 100 tones of salt and sailed towards the Caucasian coasts, *Vixen* was seized near Sucukkale on November 1836 by the Russian brig *Ajax*, and was confiscated.<sup>84</sup> A sharp diplomatic conflict pursued, and war seemed as a possibility in 1837. However, Britain did not want to bring the matter to a bitter conflict, and accepted the right of Russia's quarantine along the coasts. This did not mean that Russia's rule in Circassia was overall recognized, but it was really a diplomatic success of Russia, which fostered the Russophobia in Britain.

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<sup>82</sup> Actually, after the Treaty of Edirne there occurred two previous incidents that might have resulted with such a crisis. The first incident was the travel of an English warship *Blonde* along the Black Sea coasts for two weeks in the very end of 1829 shortly afterwards the Treaty of Edirne. It was under the initiative of the Ambassador of Britain in Istanbul Robert Gordon, and contrary to the directives of the foreign minister Lord Aberdeen. However, Captain Lyons was very well received by Count Vorontsov, and this incident did not cause any negative result in terms of Russo-British relations. Luxenburg, pp. 77-79.

However, for Russian Empire, which did not wait any foreign intervention after concluding the Treaty of Edirne it was a shocking act, and led Russia to act more carefully to prevent repetition of such an initiative against the immunity of the Russia's preponderance in the Black Sea. The other incident was the seizure of the schooner of Lord Charles Spencer by the Russians; however this also did not result in a crisis.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 109.

<sup>84</sup> "From Baron Rosen to Chernyshev, 24 December 1836 [5 January 1837]", *AKAK*, Vol. XIII, p. 859.

The Russian government was well aware that these British adventurers played a significant role in uniting the Circassians. However, this awareness caused exaggerations about the British involvements in the Caucasus to some extent. In Russia, there was some kind of xenophobia for the external involvements in its affairs. Being an autocratic and an ambitious imperialist state, and having at the same time many internal difficulties with uncertain and problematic boundaries, Russia became very sensitive to any kind of foreign intervention. Russia's reactions to the British or Ottoman contacts with the mountaineers of the Caucasus seemed to be a result of this mood. However, the uneasiness of the Russian government about the British involvements did not produce any important crises with the exception of the *Vixen* affair. According to Luxenburg, Russia was unwilling to turn the issue into an international matter, and to solve its "internal affair" by using its own means and methods.<sup>85</sup>

#### **D. The Polish Role in the Russo-Circassian War**

The Polish question, being a part of the Eastern Question and more importantly owing to the roles of Poles in the Russo-Circassian War, should also be added to the analysis of the Russo-Circassian war. Poland, which was partitioned by Russia, Prussia and Austria, in the second half of the eighteenth century was mainly under the Russian rule. After the 1830 revolt the Poles were suppressed harshly by the Russian government. However, this uprising established a special link between the Polish patriots and the Caucasian mountaineers. Thousands of Poles were sent to the

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<sup>85</sup> Luxenburg, pp. 108-109.

battlefields in Caucasus by the Russian government. Of course they were not the most devoted soldiers of Russia, and many of them fled and participated in the Caucasian resistance.<sup>86</sup> Many of the Polish captives also were sold as slaves to the Ottoman Empire. The village Adampol near Istanbul was established by those former slaves with the help of the Ottoman government and the Polish Diaspora in Europe.<sup>87</sup> This small village that was founded by the men who cherished the ideal of an independent Poland was destined to play an interesting role in the struggle for the independence of Circassia.<sup>88</sup>

After the suppression of the Polish uprising in 1831 including Prince Adam Czartoryski, the President of the National Government, thousands of Poles fled from Poland. Czartoryski, after a short stay in London, resided in Paris where he conducted his political activities. Named after the hotel where he chose as his political headquarter, the circle of Polish nationalists was called “Hotel Lambert”.<sup>89</sup> Istanbul was also another center for Polish nationalists. In order to observe and evaluate the developments in Istanbul, the Polish immigrants there established the Eastern Agency (*Şark Ajansı*). The head of the Eastern Agency was Michal Czaykowski.<sup>90</sup> According to Czartoryski, a war between Russia and the Great

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<sup>86</sup> “From Butenev to Baron Rosen, 8 [20] March 1837”, *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, p. 895; A. H. Kasumov, H. A. Kasumov, “Osvoboditelnaia borba adigskikh narodov v XIX veke”, p. 51; according to Teophil Lapinskiy, a Polish soldier who lived among the Circassians during 1857-1860, in Circassia there were about 4 thousand deserters who were mainly Russians during 1857-59. T. V. Polovinkina, *Cherkesiia – bol moia* (Maikop, 1999), p. 140.

<sup>87</sup> Jerzy S. Latka, *Lehistan’dan Gelen Sefirler: Türkiye-Polonya İlişkilerinin Altı Yüzyılı*, translated by Antoni and Nalan Sarkady (İstanbul, no date).

<sup>88</sup> For an overall summary of the Polish-Circassian relations from 1830-1864 see, Stefaniia Skochen, “19. Yüzyıldaki Polonya-Kuzey Kafkasya İlişkileri”, *Tarih ve Toplum*, Vol. 29, No.: 174 (June 1998), pp. 55-59.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21. After Czartoryski bought the old Hotel Lambert on the Ile-St.-Louis in 1843, this place not only became his home but also the seat of his political affairs, his wife’s charitable activities and educational institutions. Kukiel, p. 227.

<sup>90</sup> He was a soldier, novelist, and politician from Ukrainian descent. Very soon he won popularity and influence in the Ottoman Empire. Later he became Muslim and took the name Mehmed Sadık Efendi (later Sadık Pasha) Kukiel, 245; see also Ivan L. Rudnytsky, “Michal Czajkowski’s Cossack Project

Powers of the Europe was inevitable in the near future as a result of the Eastern Question. Therefore, the Polish nationalists always supported a powerful Ottoman Empire and an independent Circassia as a prerequisite for their aim of an independent Poland.

There was a steady flow of Polish soldiers escaping from the Russian army to join the Circassian war. However, many of the fugitives were treated as other slaves captured from the ranks of the Russian army, and sold to Turks. While the Polish agents were trying to free them from slavery, the problem of their settlement in the Ottoman territory was solved by the foundation of Adampol [current day Polonezköy] on the Asian side of Istanbul. The situation of the Poles in Turkey was well-known by the Hotel Lambert. Via Lazarist priests those slaves coming from Circassia was bought and then freed, however those coming directly from Russia had no documents, therefore they should be yielded to Russia back according to the Küçük Kaynarca agreement. To solve these problems Czaykowi agreed with Lazarist priests for establishment of a Polish village in the lands of the Lazarists in the Çingene Konak. In 3 March 1842 it was agreed that the Poles would accommodate in the Çingene Konak as renters. This village was called Adampol from the first name of Czartoryski. This plan, which was against the Russian interest, and which was not under the control of the British officials got the support of the French Embassy in Istanbul. French gave the citizenship to those members of the village as the East Agency members. By this way Poles were now under a diplomatic protection, and there was not any reason to be given back to Russia.

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During the Crimean War: An Analysis of Ideas”, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, edited by Peter L. Rudnytsky (Edmonton, 1987).

Adampol was a very suitable place to act against Russia with its very geography. Situated in deep forest, Polish residents of Adampol could prepare themselves for an imminent war against Russia. There also lived Kazimierz Gordon, an expert of explosives, who established a laboratory of explosives in order to produce bombs to be used in Circassia. Adampol was both a wonderful place of preparation for the war in the Caucasus for the Poles, and as well as a rest place for them.<sup>91</sup>

The revolt in Circassia and Georgia, if supported and supplied with arms and equipment, seemed to provide an opportunity for decreasing Russia's military power and checking the Russian pressure in the Near East. Since several thousands of former Polish soldiers had been dispatched by the Russian government to the Caucasus to serve with Russian troops, there was some possibility of organizing mass desertions and of inciting the Poles in the Caucasus. For this purpose, in 1835, a Polish mission was sent to the Caucasus, and links were established between Prince Czartoryski and the Circassian mountaineers.<sup>92</sup> This special bond with the Poles and the Circassians would continue to the very end of the Circassian war.

#### **E. Circassia in 1840s: Russian Quarantine, Circassian Assault, Zankö Sefer Bey and Muhammed Emin's activities**

The hearsay about new adventurers among the Russian diplomatic circles continued in 1839. Butenev claimed that he received news from Lazarev that a few

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<sup>91</sup> Latka, pp. 24-30.

<sup>92</sup> Kukiel, p. 236.

British engineers left Istanbul for Samsun from where they would go to the Circassian mountains. He also warned that a British trade steamer named Robert under the control of Skipper Pratt, loaded with weapons would come to Circassia soon.<sup>93</sup>

However, Russian official correspondence about the secret deals of Englishmen did not continue in 1840s. Similarly, from 1840s on till the Crimean War, Caucasian matters very rarely appeared in the British correspondences.<sup>94</sup> In a correspondence in 1843, Canning was warned by the Foreign Office not to encourage the Circassian delegates, and he was even instructed to prevent the Circassians to come to Britain.<sup>95</sup> This message clearly demonstrates the change in the British policy in regard to the Near East and particularly to following the solutions of the Egyptian and Straits problems. The signature of the Straits Convention in July 1841 inaugurated a new and significantly different chapter in the Anglo-Russian relations and in the British opinion about the Russian Empire. Their cooperation in settling the Straits question not only reduced the Russian threat against the British interests, but also the Russophobia among the British public.

After Sefer Bey was pacified and relations with Britain were normalized, Russia resumed its efforts to conclude the war in Circassia. However, Russia was in a search of new strategies to pacify the Circassians during 1839 and 1840, and the role of trade was also under discussion.

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<sup>93</sup> "From Butenev to Golovin, 7 [19] March 1839", *AKAK*, Vol. IX, pp. 458-459.

<sup>94</sup> Luxenburg, p. 237.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 237-238.

As mentioned earlier, Russia established several fortifications along the Circassian coast to prevent the contact of the Circassians with other countries. Thus, Russia took pains to blockade the entire Black Sea coastline, which served as points of commercial contacts for the Circassians, now was trying to be isolated. During 1838 and 1839, Russia completed several fortifications: in Sochi Alexandria (later Navaginsk), in Tuapse Veliaminovsk, in Psezuape Lazarevsk, in Sucukkoy Bay Novorossiysk, and near the river Shahe Golovinsk fortifications. In order to provide a secure communication between the Black Sea coastal military line and Kuban, the fortress of Raevskiy, which connected Anapa and Novorossiysk, and the fortresses of Gostagaevsk and Varenivkovsk fortifications near Kuban were established. Thereby the establishment of the Black Sea Coast Military Line was concluded.<sup>96</sup>

According to Raevskiy with the completion of the Black Sea coastal military line the number of the Turkish vessels arriving in Circassia was now less than one tenth of the previous years.<sup>97</sup> Besides, Russia also completely changed the nature of the economic order in Circassia, which prevailed in the Ottoman times. Before the Russian conquest only in the Sucukkale there had been 150 Turkish shops, which

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<sup>96</sup> In the meantime of 1831-39 the following fortifications were established in the Black Sea shores:

In the mouth of river Doba to the South of Sucuk Bay fortress of Kabardinsk

In the mouth of river Pshad fortress of Novotroitsk

In the mouth of river Sochi fortress of Navaginsk

In the mouth of river Bulana fortress of Mihailovsk

In the mouth of river Shahe fortress of Golovinsk

In the mouth of river Tuapse fortress of Veliaminovsk

In the mouth of river Psezuape fortress of Lazarevsk

In the mouth of river Shapsuho fortress of Tenginsk

In the mouth of river Meskage fortress of Raevsk

In the mouth of river Tsemes fortress of Novorossiysk

In the Gelincik Bay fortress of Gelincik

Gardanov, p. 120.

The residence of the commander of the Black Sea Coast Line was Kerch. Esadze, p. 35. Esadze explains the wars with the Circassians during the establishment of these fortresses. Esadze, pp. 45-55. For a well-detailed discussion of the Russian Black Sea coastline and the motives behind its establishment, see, A. Soht, "Chernomorskaia beregovaia liniia: sushchnost i funktsii", *Rossii i Cherkessii (vtoraia polovina XVIII - XIX vv.)* (Maykop, 1995), pp. 138-165.

<sup>97</sup> Polovinkina, p. 123.

provided all the necessary goods for mountaineers. Until the Russian occupation of Anapa, there were 60 villages, where only merchants lived. Raevskiy claimed that Russians destroyed about 50 villages and markets located in Tseme and Gelincik.<sup>98</sup>

Nonetheless, Turkish merchants with small boats or vessels continued their trade with Circassia in spite of the Russian threat.<sup>99</sup> After the Treaty of Edirne, this trade not only became much more dangerous but also more profitable, which encouraged the Turkish merchants to continue their dealings.<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, the slave trade, which continued to be one of the important aspects of the Ottoman social life, could not cease immediately.<sup>101</sup> According to Gardanov, the slave trade also linked the Circassian feudals to the Ottoman Empire, as it was the main source of their wealth.<sup>102</sup> What is more, the Circassian immigrants in the Ottoman territories were also involved in the Circassian trade.<sup>103</sup>

Failure in stopping the trade between the Ottoman Empire and Circassia led Russia to develop different strategies. In 1839, General Raevskiy suggested the construction of markets under the control of the Russian army in the places where Turkish merchants were frequently visiting. According to this plan, at first Turkish

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> In 1830, from Turkey 200 Turkish and British ships came to the Circassian coasts. Ibid. In 1832, Russians sold 15 Turkish ships, which were captured when they were trading with Circassians. Russian military forces destroyed in 1833 three and in 1835 two Turkish ships. In 1844 twelve, in 1845 ten and in 1846 six Turkish ships were captured. *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza (konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.)*, edited by A. L. Narochitskii (Moscow, 1988), p. 180 footnote 10, and p. 136.

<sup>100</sup> *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza (konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.)*, p. 132.

<sup>101</sup> A good description of the meaning and significance of the slave trade for the Circassians, see, George Leighton Ditson, *Circassia or a Tour to the Caucasus* (New York, 1850), pp. 189-193. Ditson compares the desire of Circassians to go to the Ottoman Empire as slaves with the wishes of the farmers of America to go to a bigger city to reach to the wealth. On the other hand, he also points out that without slave trade such a costly war with Russia could not be maintained.

<sup>102</sup> Gardanov, p. 114.

<sup>103</sup> 370 Circassian families immigrated to the Black Sea coast of Anatolia. They were not only practicing farming but also conducting trade with the Caucasus. They were bringing slaves to sell in the Ottoman territory. *Genotsid Adygov*, p. 86.

merchants would not pay tax; however, after the trade was well established, then Russia would apply tax. Raevskiy was suggesting Novorossiysk as a convenient place for such an initiative.<sup>104</sup> With this scheme, Russia would not try to stop the female slave trade, but Russians would buy them in exchange for salt or money and marry them with Russian soldiers. Raevskiy received 20.000 rubles from the Russian government to conduct commercial relations with the mountaineers. Soon in all the fortresses salt trade started; however, the amount of salt, which was involved in this trade was not sufficient for the mountaineers.<sup>105</sup> Anyway, Russian attempt to regulate the Russian-Circassian trade through a quarantine line of trading posts and salt magazines was unsuccessful. The value of the contraband trade was overwhelmingly higher than that of the official trade.

Therefore, in the same year Russia reversed its policy completely and trade with Circassians was completely forbidden. The prohibition of trade and bad harvest brought a terrible hunger to the mountaineers in the winter. The Russian commanders categorically forbade the exchange of bread with the mountaineers.<sup>106</sup> By doing so, they tried to bring the starving mountaineers to their knees. Things did not go in that way, however. This policy caused great hatred against the Russians among the mountaineers, and any possibility of peaceful solution of the war again faded away. 1840 was a landmark in the history of the Circassian resistance. While the Russians were planning to end the war in Circassia after their victory in Ahulgoh against Sheikh Shamil, the Circassians succeeded in capturing the fortresses Veliaminovsk,

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<sup>104</sup> “Report of Graf Chernyshev to General Golovin, 19 [31] October 1839”, *AKAK*, Vol. IX, pp. 461-462. Actually there was a similar initiative in 1835. However, in that case, the Russian merchants instead of the Turkish ones were planned to conduct commercial relations with the mountaineers in the Russian garrisons. *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza (konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.)*, p. 180 footnote 10.

<sup>105</sup> Polovinkina, p. 125. See, “Note of General Raevskiy”, *AKAK*, Vol. IX, pp. 470-480.

<sup>106</sup> Polovinkina, p. 125

Lazarevsk, Mikhailovsk, and Golovinsk in 1840. Struck by the famine resulting from an unusually harsh winter, and isolated from the outside world by the Russian cordon, feeling that they had nothing to lose, the Western Caucasians attacked with all their forces. In a few months the southern section of the Caucasian Black Sea Line was isolated.<sup>107</sup> Russia's humiliating situation in the Western Caucasus would also help Sheikh Shamil to reorganize his state after his defeat in Ahulgoh once more. In 1840, it became obvious that the end of the war in Caucasus could not be reached in the near future.

In 1841, the Circassian tribes held a general congress in the village of Pshekha in the Abzekh lands with the participation of Ubykhs, Shapsughes, Abzekhs, and Natukhays. The aim of the gathering was the unification of all the Circassians in the war against Russia under the rules of the *Shariat*. It was resolved that no tribe was to enter into a separate agreement with the Russians.<sup>108</sup> In the 1840s, the Circassians continued to storm the Black Sea coastal military line to preserve their trade and communication with the Ottoman Empire and Britain. In 1841, the Circassians stormed the forts of Tenginsk and Navaginsk. In 1844, about 7.000 Circassians stormed Golovinsk and Lazarevsk.<sup>109</sup>

While war was continuing in Circassia with all its intensity and violence, isolated Sefer Bey was in a search of different strategies. While hoping of the break-up of a war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the near future, he was also

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<sup>107</sup> Tatlok, p. 102; Polovinkina, p. 126-127; According to Esadze, Circassians could not succeed to capture Golovinsk, and Natukhays trying to storm Abinsk fort near Kuban were heavily defeated in the same year. Esadze, pp. 55-62.

<sup>108</sup> A. D. Panesh, "Deiatelnost Hadji-Magometa i Suleimana-Efendia na Severo-zapadnom Kavkaze (1842-1846 gg.), *Cherkesiia v XIX veke* (Maikop, 1991), p. 92; Polovinkina, p.127.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p.128.

searching a way to return to his fatherland by reaching an agreement with the Russian authorities. In 1842, he informed his desire to the Russian mission in Istanbul stating that he would help Russian authorities in settling problems of North-Western Caucasus. According to Felitsin, in 1844 Zanko Sefer appealed to the Circassians via Hustan Hacı to abide by the conditions of the Treaty of Edirne and live with the Russians in peace.<sup>110</sup> On the other hand, Russian authorities were not totally indifferent to Zanko Sefer's desire to return to Circassia. Rear-Admiral Serebriakov and General Aid-de-Camp A. I. Budberg were thinking of using Sefer Bey for the Russian plans in Circassia. Budberg proposed to send Sefer Bey to Kerch under the control of Russian authorities. He was to be allowed to contact with the Circassians and be granted a pension of thousand silver rubles for a year in return for his service.<sup>111</sup> However, Sefer Bey did not want to live in Kerch as a Russian officer but wanted to return to Circassia.

In a letter he wrote in 1845 to Circassia, Sefer Bey claimed that he was waiting for eighteen years for a change in the Russo-Ottoman relations. He stated that a war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire would occur soon. However, meanwhile the Circassians should hold on, without concluding an agreement with the Russians, and abstain from atrocities, they must be prepared for the prospective Russo-Ottoman war. He also gave a vent to his desire to return to Circassia, but claimed that the Russian measures made such an initiative impossible. The keynote of his letter was his belief for a change in the international conjuncture, when the Circassian war

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<sup>110</sup> A. Kerashev, "Politicheskaia deiatelnost Kniaz Sefer-Beya Zanko v gody Kavkazskoi voyny," *Rossiia i Cherkessia: vtoraiia polovina XVIII v. – XIX. v.* (Maikop, 1995), p. 106.

<sup>111</sup> Kerashev, p. 106.

could be resulted.<sup>112</sup> However, Sefer Bey continued his relations with Russia to come to an agreement for his return and for the end of the war.<sup>113</sup>

The war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia that he waited for more than twenty years broke up in 1853, and a year later Britain and France joined the war on the side of the Ottoman Empire. Not surprisingly, Sefer Bey hoped to become the leader of the Circassians; however, Circassia changed a lot during the Russo-Circassian war, and now he had an important rival: Muhammed Emin, the *naib* of Sheikh Shamil.

Sheikh Shamil's involvement in Circassia started in the first years of 1840s. He sent envoys to the Kabardians and the Western Circassians.<sup>114</sup> The first envoy Haci Muhammed was sent in 1842; however, he died soon in 1845. The second envoy was Süleyman Efendi sent in 1845, but he also could not succeed in uniting Circassia. Then, in April 1846, the Imam took things into his own hands and led a foray into Kabarda to urge them into revolt, but this campaign also failed. However, even after the failed Kabarda expedition, Shamil maintained his hope of a united North Caucasus. In 1848, he sent another envoy, Muhammed Emin to the Abzekhs.

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<sup>112</sup> "Report of General-lieutenant Zavadovski to General Neidhardt, 9[21] January 1845", *AKAK*, Vol. IX.

<sup>113</sup> In the beginning of 1850s son of Sefer Bey Karabatır (In Ottoman documents there is no word of Karabatır, but only about İbrahim Bey who served for the Ottoman army. Most probably, İbrahim Bey and Karabatır was the same person) swore an oath for becoming a subject of the Russian Empire and obtained family estates around Anapa. This also affected Zanoko to write Serebriakov a letter in which he showed his acceptance of protectorship of Russian Empire, but rejecting to live in Kerch. He insisted on living in Circassia as an ambassador of Circassians. However, this proposal would be rejected by Russia. Serebriakov replied that Circassia is a part of the Russian Empire, therefore such a service for Sefer Bey is unacceptable, and Sefer Bey should accept the legitimate authority of the Russian Tsar. By this way negotiations between Zanoko Sefer and the Russian authorities ended, which led him to turn again Ottoman Empire and Britain.

<sup>114</sup> For the activities of Sheikh Shamil's *naibs* see, A. D. Panesh, "Magomet-Amin na severo-zapadnom Kavkaze 1848-1859 gg.," *Rossia i Cherkessia: vtoraiia polovina XVIII. v. – XIX. v.* (Maikop, 1995); A. D. Panesh, "Deiatel'nost' Hadji-Magometa i Suleimana-Efendia na severo-zapadnom Kavkaze (1842-1846 gg.)," *Cherkessia v XIX veke* (Maikop, 1991); Polovinkina, pp. 130-147.

At the end of January 1849, Muhammed Emin participated in the meeting of the Circassian elders and chieftains and declared his purpose to unite all Circassians. In his first attempts to broaden his order to the Western Caucasus with Hacı Muhammed and Süleyman Efendi, Sheikh Shamil encountered the well-established customs of Circassians as a barrier.<sup>115</sup> However, simultaneously with the activities of the *naibs* of Sheikh Shamil in the Western Caucasus, an internal social war was augmenting among the Circassians.<sup>116</sup> War conditions and the strengthening of muridizm movement with the egalitarian world-view of Islam fostered the process of declining the power of the aristocracy.<sup>117</sup> The authority of noblemen was undermined, and political activity of the ordinary peasants rose significantly during the war years.<sup>118</sup> According to Teophil Lapinski, a Polish officer fought in the side of the Circassians, Muhammed Emin succeeded in the spread of Islam to such a degree that the Ottomans could not achieve in fifty years, especially in promoting the ongoing war with Russia.<sup>119</sup> Muhammed Emin initially tried to evade from any conflict with the Russian army, as he engaged in the establishment of the internal order and the organization of military forces. He created a military and governmental order in the land of Abzekhs similar to the Shamil's state in Chechnya and Daghestan.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> A. D. Panesh, "Magomet-Amin na severo-zapadnom Kavkaze 1848-1859 gg.," p. 115.

<sup>116</sup> A. H. Kasumov, H. A. Kasumov, "Osvoboditelnaia borba adigskih narodov v XIX veke," p. 56; as a result of a rising in the lands of Natukhays and Shapsugh free peasants emancipated 8.500 houses (about 50.000 serfs). *Istoriia norodov severnogo Kavkaza*, p. 164.

<sup>117</sup> This situation of course led the noble class to seek the ways to protect their privileges. While they resorted to the help of Russia, Russian government also looked for their collaboration to complete the occupation of the Caucasus. The Ottoman Empire also would continue to resort its traditional policy of conducting relations through nobles.

<sup>118</sup> A. D. Panesh, "Magomet-Amin na severo-zapadnom Kavkaze 1848-1859 gg.," pp. 120.

<sup>119</sup> Polovinkina, p. 140.

<sup>120</sup> A. D. Panesh, "Magomet-Amin na severo-zapadnom Kavkaze 1848-1859 gg.," pp. 118-119.

Being a competent organizer, Muhammed Emin coordinated the Circassian resistance for ten years. Nevertheless, a united North Caucasus could not be realized even under the leadership of Muhammed Emin in Circassia. He, in late 1850, took the control of a significant part of Circassia.<sup>121</sup> He was influential among free peasants as he preached the Islamic teachings, which promoted an egalitarian society.<sup>122</sup> His effect would decrease the authority of Sefer Bey, and result in a dichotomy in the leadership of Circassia during and after the Crimean War.

#### **F. Searching the Circassian War in the Ottoman Documents before the Crimean War**

Considering this phase of the Russo-Circassian War, there are scarce documents in the Ottoman archives. What is more, in the chronicle of Ahmed Lütü Efendi<sup>123</sup>, which narrated the period of 1825-1879, there is absolutely nothing about the ongoing war. This is one of the indications of the indifference of the Ottoman Empire to the Circassian war.

When the documents are analyzed, there are a few topics that come to the fore: the trade<sup>124</sup>, the activities of the Circassian immigrants,<sup>125</sup> the banishments of Sefer

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<sup>121</sup> Polovinkina, p. 134.

<sup>122</sup> *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza (konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.)*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>123</sup> He was the official historian of the Ottoman Empire during 1866-1907.

<sup>124</sup> “Boats en route Circassian and Abkhazian coasts for trade cannot enter the forbidden lands and cannot transfer the forbidden loads... On this matter, Trabzon, Bolu and Sinop governors will receive regulations that they should obey.” *BOA C.DH*, Dosya No.: 1034, 19 Zilhicce 1255 [23 February 1840].

<sup>125</sup> “Jajoglu Ali Bey, a member of the Circassian aristocracy, in contrary to the will of the Ottoman government, escaped to go Circassia through Sinop, therefore people who helped him should be investigated immediately.” “From the Grand Vizier to the Governor of Bolu, 5 Receb 1260 [21 June 1844]”, *BOA HR.MKT*, Dosya No.: 5, Gömlek No.: 63.

Bey,<sup>126</sup> and the activities of Sheikh Shamil's men in the Ottoman territory.<sup>127</sup> However, there is a common point for all these topics; the preservation of the friendly relations with the Russian Empire was the main aim of the Porte.<sup>128</sup> After the 1848-1849 revolutions, as a result of the rising tension between Russia and the Ottoman Empire on the issue of the Polish and Hungarian refugees in the Ottoman lands, there seems to be a shift also in the Ottoman policy towards the Circassian matters.<sup>129</sup>

## G. Assessments

One of Russia's main aims in the war in Circassia until the Crimean War was the break up of the Circassian-Ottoman relations. However, all its efforts were in vain. Trade with the Ottoman Empire continued till the very end of the war. Russians also accepted the difficulty to break up the tight bonds between the Ottoman Empire

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<sup>126</sup> The best examples of the passive policy of the Ottoman Empire were those documents about Sefer Bey. He was exiled in Rumelia and lived there in exile approximately for sixteen years till the Crimean War.

<sup>127</sup> "As a result of the request the Consul of Russia in Trabzon, Vâli of Erzurum will try to prevent the activities of Hasan Hasbi, Sheikh Shamil's murid, who is trying to collect men in the Ottoman territory." "From the Grand Vizier to the Governor of Erzurum, 8 Zilkade 1261 [8 November 1845]", *BOA A.MKT.MHM*, Dosya No.: 1, Gömlek No.: 86; A commission was established in Istanbul to try Hasan Hasbi who used fake firmans and decrees of the Grand Vizier (*buyruldu*), and seals to collect people for the war in the Caucasus. *BOA A.AMD*, Dosya No.: 1, Gömlek No.: 60, 24 Rebiulevvel 1262 [22 March 1846].

<sup>128</sup> *Serasker* Osman Pasha of Trabzon actually seems as pro-Russian. Maybe the geographical proximity of Trabzon to Russia forced him to act so much in favor of Russia, or maybe he had some kind of a special relationship with Russia: "... Osman Pasha of Trabzon always treats us with a most satisfactory disposition, and even active assistance to our consul, not only in the completion of the commands of the Porte, but frequently without waiting until the afore-mentioned orders." "From Butenev to General Golovin, 7 [19] March 1839", *AKAK*, Vol. IX, p. 459. Osman Pasha received a present from the Russian Tsar, for which he had to present an explanation. He claimed that this present was only about his careful control of the transit to the Circassia. *BOA HR..MKT*, Dosya No.: 1, Gömlek No.: 2, 4 Ramazan 1254 [21 November 1838].

<sup>129</sup> After 1848 changing conditions also changed the policy of the Porte: This time local governors would not prevent a murid of Sheikh Shamil who came to find two miners, and what's more he was to be given 7.500 *kuruş*. *BOA A.AMD*, Dosya No.: 19, Gömlek No.: 1, 23 Receb 1266 [4 June 1850]; Circassians who would return to their homeland were given 7500 *kuruş*. *BOA A.MKT.MHM*, Dosya No.: 18, Gömlek No.: 85, 7 Safer 1266 [23 December 1849].

and the Circassians despite the collaboration of the Ottoman officials. Butenev claimed:

However, together with this attitude of the Porte and its administrators in the Anatolian coast, it is necessary to admit that it is extremely difficult to stop the contacts between the inhabitants of Anatolia and the Circassians completely due to location of the territories as well as the usual habit in Turkey to have the slave trade with that area.<sup>130</sup>

Kasumovs stressed the colonial policies of the Russian Empire in its failure to conduct peaceful relations with the Circassians.<sup>131</sup> The reaction of the Circassians to the Russian policy of the isolation of Circassia from the international environment was an important dimension of the Circassian struggle. Russian efforts to suppress the Circassians helped the unification of Circassians, which lacked before the Treaty of Edirne. By this measure, the process of nationalism and the internal war between princely families and peasants went along with the war with Russia.

For the Ottoman Empire, Circassia was considered a matter of importance, only when it had the potential to cause a problem with Russia. Throughout the period between the Treaty of Edirne and the Crimean War, no strategic calculation by the Ottomans can be visible. It proved itself; however, the trade with the Ottoman Empire was the backbone of the Circassian struggle. Besides, despite the Ottoman effort to preserve peace with Russia, the British and Polish activities regarding Circassia was mainly conducted through the Ottoman territories.

In the Near East an unusual calm continued until the 1848 revolutions. Then, with the Crimean War of 1853 not only the international environment but also the

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<sup>130</sup> "From Butenev to General Golovin, 7 [19] March 1839", *AKAK*, V. IX, p. 459.

<sup>131</sup> *Genotsid Adygov*, p. 87.

military, social and psychological circumstances of Circassia altered. It was actually the setting for which the Circassians waited for more than two decades. After the war this era would always be remembered as the 'lost opportunity'. On the other hand, however, during the Crimean War the Ottoman Empire would pursue its more active policy regarding Circassia after the Treaty of Edirne, and try to carry out plans to strengthen the Caucasian barrier against Russia.

CHAPTER III  
OTTOMAN POLICY OF CIRCASSIA  
DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR

During the initial stages of the war, the Caucasian front, traditionally one of the two fronts in the Russo-Ottoman wars, was a possible venue whence the Allied offensive against Russia would be conducted. When the Crimea was selected as the main theater of the war, the Caucasus became the second front, in which a possible Russian success might have brought a modest treaty although the Allies were the victors of the war.

From 1854 until the end of the war, the Black Sea was under the complete control of the Allied Powers; Russia had great difficulties in transportation and reinforcement. However, the Russian forces managed to stand fast in the Caucasus and the Porte could neither provide the necessary aid to Sheikh Shamil, nor succeed in stimulating the Circassians to participate in the war actively. Zanko Sefer, at that time an Ottoman Pasha, was the agent of the Porte in Circassia. Nevertheless, this important personality of the Circassian resistance was not only unsuccessful in uniting Circassia, but even worse; he reduced the influence of Muhammed Emin, by further dividing the Circassians.

Throughout the Crimean War, the battles in the Caucasian front took place on and around the Russo-Ottoman border and never spread to the North Caucasus, since

the Porte could not succeed in utilizing the mountaineers against Russia. During the Crimean War, which was actually the opportunity for what the Circassians had waited impatiently for more than two decades, interestingly Circassia remained by and large silent. This war was also a chance for the Ottoman Empire either to reverse its former territorial losses or to establish buffer zones for more secure borders. That's why, apparently, the Ottoman Empire as well as the Circassians could not make use of the opportunities efficiently. However, besides these lack of success of the Ottoman Empire and the Circassians, the actual limits of the military capabilities of the Porte and the mountaineers of the Caucasus, as well as the war aims of Britain and France should also be considered.

#### **A. War Diplomacy and the Aims of the Belligerents**

No doubt, the rivalry over the Ottoman Empire, namely the Eastern Question, was the main reason for the war.<sup>132</sup> The diplomatic crisis, which ultimately led to the war, erupted in 1850. The war broke in the form of a Russo-Ottoman war in 1853, and only in late March 1854 it developed into a European war. The relative tranquility in the European state of affairs after the Straits Convention of 1841 was followed by a series of crises in the late 1840s and early 1850s: the revolutions of 1848-1849 the Russian attempt to find a common ground with Britain for the partition of the Ottoman Empire, and the Russo-French conflict over the Holy Places in Palestine. The diplomacy before and throughout the war demonstrates that the

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<sup>132</sup> For a detailed analyses of the diplomacy of the war, see, Temperley, pp. 251-384 and Cezmi Karasu, "Kırım Savaşı Sırasında Osmanlı Diplomasisi (1853-1856)", Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Ankara University (Ankara, 1998); Ann Pottinger Saab, *The Origins of the Crimean Alliance* (Virginia, 1977), pp. 51-77; Norman Rich, *Why the Crimean War: A Cautionary Tale* (New York, 1991).

great powers did not want a war, but the crisis could not be managed: actually the Great Power's determination not to lose the pride and prestige, as well as the influence over the Porte led to a European war instead of peace.

Explaining the causes of the war only with the policies of the great powers would be redundant. In fact, this war did not start as a European war, but as a Russo-Turkish one. The Menshikov Mission and the 'Vienna Note'<sup>133</sup> aroused the religious and national feelings in Turkey and became one of the motives of the declaration of war by the Porte on Russia.<sup>134</sup> Most importantly; however, the confidence in the western support led the Porte to adopt such a bold policy against Russia.<sup>135</sup>

After the suppression of the 1848-1849 revolutions in Europe with the Russian moral and military support, Russia had all reasons to feel itself more powerful. Yet, Nicholas I was in the opinion that only with a concerted action with Britain, Russia could attain its objectives in the Near East. During the first months of 1853, the Tsar repeatedly explained his opinions and plans about the partition of the Ottoman Empire to Hamilton Seymour, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg.<sup>136</sup> Seymour reported to John Russell, the British Foreign Minister: "The mind of the Tsar is now clearer. What he wants is the partition of Turkey by excluding France."<sup>137</sup> However,

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<sup>133</sup> In July 1853, diplomatic activities continued under the chairmanship of Austria in Vienna. However, the text of the Vienna Note, which was based on the French proposal, was declined by the Porte as it was perceived to increase the power of Russia over the Greek Orthodox subject of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman refusal of the Vienna note brought the Russo-Ottoman war. The weakest point of this diplomatic effort in Vienna was that the Turkish side was supposed to accept whatever the European powers wanted. For comprehensive discussions of the Vienna Note see, Rich, pp. 66-88 and Saab, pp. 51-77.

<sup>134</sup> There was a succession of demonstrations in Istanbul for a Holy War in late August and early September. Rich, p. 82.

<sup>135</sup> W. E. D. Allen – Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828-1921* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 58.

<sup>136</sup> Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi: Başlangıçtan 1917'ye Kadar* (Ankara, 1999), pp. 326-329.

<sup>137</sup> Hayrettin Bey, *Kırım Harbi*, prepared by Şemsettin Kutlu (İstanbul, no date), p. 176.

the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was one of the established aims of the British foreign policy to protect Britain's interests in the Near East, as well as to provide the security of the route to India. Therefore, the Russian initiative could not find a positive response from Britain; on the contrary it made a Britain-France alliance possible against the Russian desires.

The apparent reason of the war was not the partition of the Ottoman territories, but another phase of the Eastern Question, seemingly a more trivial matter between France and Russia: The dispute over the holy places of the Palestine. While it was a minor issue at first, the overstress of Russia and France transformed it into an international crisis. The acceptance of the French wishes over the Holy Places by the Porte seemed to injure the Russian pride. It was actually a defeat of the "Gendarme of Europe"<sup>138</sup> against Napoleon III, who came to throne in opposition to the very basis of the Vienna system.

Ostensibly connected with the problem of the trusteeship of the Holy Places, in May 1853, Prince Alexander Menshikov, the special envoy of Nicholas to Istanbul, declared an ultimatum about the recognition of the Russian protectorate over all the Orthodox subjects of the Porte. However, the actual demand of Russia was the conclusion of a secret treaty along the lines with the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, which would guarantee the Russian influence over the Porte. Menshikov and his activities in Istanbul kept the European diplomacy busy for a few months. While Britain and France pursued a conciliatory policy during the crisis, completely undiplomatic behaviors of Menshikov harmed the Turkish pride and strengthened the pro-war

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<sup>138</sup> A pseudonym for Nicholas I, which refers his devotion to protect the current order in Europe with his energetic involvement to any revolutionary movement.

circles. Starting from Menshikov's ultimatum to the last efforts for the Ottoman recognition of the Vienna Note, the diplomacy never ceased to function. However, after the rejection of this note the war became unavoidable.

Actually, when diplomacy was ongoing, the initial preparations for a war were also under way. During the summer of 1853 when the Vienna Note was under discussion, in June the fleets of Britain and France sailed towards the Dardanelles, and on 2 July the Russian troops crossed the river Pruth and invaded the Principalities. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire tried to strengthen its armies in both the Caucasian and Balkan fronts throughout the summer.

As a result of the failure of the diplomatic efforts, and not having the evacuation of the Principalities, the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia on 4 October 1853, and in the same month the hostilities started near the river Danube. The so-called "Sinop massacre"<sup>139</sup> on 30 November 1853 accelerated the decisions of Britain and France to join the war and in the late of March 1854 the war became a European one.

The Crimean War was actually designed as a limited war aiming only to enforce Russia not to engage in any activity at the expense of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the war played in a peripheral theatre, in the Crimea, and throughout the war diplomatic activities of the belligerents to find a common ground did not cease. There were also some grandiose plans under discussion, as an independent Poland and a Caucasus, however such great ideas or plans could not turn

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<sup>139</sup> The Russian Admiral Nakhimov destroyed the Turkish fleet in Sinop harbor, and this battle was named as "Sinop massacre" in the British media as a sign of the anger of the British public.

into a war aim of the alliance.<sup>140</sup> In addition, as the cost of the war increased and the war tragedies reflected to the British and the French masses thanks to the new technological innovations in photography, the Crimean war would lose its public support, and any grandiose project, which would prolong the war, could not be employed.

In addition, the war aims of the allied powers could hardly be regarded as identical. While Britain was the most enthusiastic to give a hard blow to Russia, Napoleon III was just in search of an easy victory, which would strengthen his position and prestige in France, as well as in Europe.<sup>141</sup> On the other hand, the Porte aimed to guarantee its security as much as possible as a result of this war since it enjoyed the support of the Great Powers.

Having provided the security of the Balkans and Istanbul thanks to the policies of Britain, France and Austria,<sup>142</sup> the Ottoman Empire aimed to engage in a successful war in the Caucasus front. The Porte not only strengthened the Batum and the Anatolian armies, but also developed policies to encourage the mountaineers to participate in the war. Russian troops in the Caucasus were dispersed over a vast territory and their duties and problems were numerous. Therefore, fighting “took the

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<sup>140</sup> In Britain, during the Crimean War there was a great enjoyment for the people of the Caucasus and hatred for the Russians similar to the Russophobia of 1830s. British public opinion was so favor of the freedom of Circassia that Russia was perceived as “the barbarian of the north”, and there was an idea of creating an Asian Switzerland from Circassia. Captain Spencer, pp. 298, 394.

In 1854, several articles about the Circassian independence, many of which were written by Urquhart, appeared in the British press. Luxenburg, p. 245.

<sup>141</sup> Malcolm-Smith claims that “Napoleon III saw in the war nothing but a means to secure his throne and dynasty by reviving military glories of the First Empire, and he cared nothing at all for the principles at stake. Malcolm-Smith, p. 293.

<sup>142</sup> While Austria was not a participant of the Crimean war, the Austrian policy provided the Ottoman Empire a secure Balkan front after its initial successes. Actually, the Austria not only refused the partition plan of Russia over the Ottoman Balkan territories in 1853, but furthermore, the Austrian ultimatum in June 1854 provided the Russia’s evacuation of the Principalities in August. Rich, pp. 118-123.

form of a Turkish offensive and of a relatively passive defence of the frontier by the Russians”.<sup>143</sup> However, as Allen and Muratoff claimed, “the Turkish army remained incapable of efficient manoeuvre and therefore unsuitable to carry out any offensive operation”.<sup>144</sup> Actually, the unsuccessful offensive against Ahıska and the defeat in Başgedikler, and the destruction of an Ottoman fleet in Sinop in the fall of 1853 were the first signs of the ineffective and unsuccessful Ottoman role in the Caucasus throughout the war.

### **B. First initiatives of the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus front: 1853**

When the Batum and the Anatolian armies were under preparation, in August 1853, Sheikh Shamil raided into Kakheti with 10.000 murids, most probably in order to show his desire to collaborate.<sup>145</sup> On the other hand, the Porte also wanted to make use of Sheikh Shamil and his *naib* Muhammed Emin. On 9 October 1853, a firman, calling for the ‘Holy War’, was sent to Sheikh Shamil. The firman, asked Sheikh Shamil to assault on the Russian positions. Sheikh Shamil replied with his letter to Abdulkerim Nadir Pasha (known as Abdi Pasha), the Commander-in Chief of the Anatolian army, in December 1853. In his letter, Sheikh Shamil claimed that with a joint action Russians could be forced out of the Caucasus. However, this letter was directed to Istanbul only in May 1854.<sup>146</sup> In December 1853, Sheikh Shamil held a gathering of all his *naibs* in New Dargiyya, after which all the Chechens were

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<sup>143</sup> Allen - Muratoff, p. 59.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Gammer, pp. 267-268.

<sup>146</sup> Mustafa Budak, “1853-1856 Kırım Savaşı’nda Kafkas Cephesi”, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, İstanbul University (İstanbul, 1993), pp. 21-27.

instructed to be ready for a campaign.<sup>147</sup> In the fall 1853, Muhammed Emin was also engaged in successful operations against the Russian fortifications in Circassia.<sup>148</sup>

In order to be effective in the Caucasus, the Porte also planned to use the influence of the Ottoman subjects of the Caucasian origin. In October 1853, Zankö Sefer Bey had been recalled from his exile in Edirne to Istanbul,<sup>149</sup> and in November together with Behçet Bey, another Circassian, got the title of *Mir-i miran*.<sup>150</sup> On 15 October 1853, Hacı Mehmed Efendi, Sefer Pasha's man, was sent to Circassia. Besides, the Dagestani Beys in Istanbul, being charged to organize the Dagestanis, were sent to Dagestan via Erzurum and Batum.<sup>151</sup>

However, the prerequisite of any possible Ottoman engagement on the Northern Caucasus was the accomplishment of the military supremacy of the Ottoman armies in the Russo-Ottoman border and the Southern Caucasus. The Ottoman victory at St. Nicholas on 26 October 1853 was actually a good start for the Ottoman army, however, a series of defeats followed. Russia guaranteed the security of the Southern Caucasus against the Ottoman offensive in 1853, as a result of its successes in Gümrü (15 November), Ahıska (26 November), and most importantly in Başgedikler (1 December). Moreover, the destruction of the Ottoman fleet in Sinop on 30 November 1853 would prevent further Ottoman involvements in the Caucasus till the active participation of Britain and France in the war.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Gammer, p. 270.

<sup>148</sup> Budak, p. 44.

<sup>149</sup> *BOA İ.DH*, Dosya No.: 282, Gömlek No.: 17709, 7 Muharrem 1270 [10 October 1853].

<sup>150</sup> *BOA A.DVN*, Dosya No.: 94, Gömlek No.: 2, 25 Safer 1270 [27 November 1853].

<sup>151</sup> Budak, p. 44.

<sup>152</sup> Allen - Muratoff, pp. 61-65.

In this first phase of the war it became clear that the Ottoman Empire would pursue a Caucasian policy on the base of the utilization of the mountaineers for the Ottoman success in the Russo-Ottoman border, instead of a real involvement in the Northern Caucasus.

### **C. The Ottoman plans regarding the Caucasus after the declaration of war on Russia by Britain and France: 1854**

When Britain and France declared war in late March 1854, they hardly had any plan other than giving a lesson to Russia. At first, neither the war arena, nor the war aims were clear. The first attempts concentrated in the Balkans against the Russian presence in the Principalities. However, after the withdrawal of the Russian forces from the Balkans, the Crimea and the Caucasus came under discussion as to where the Allied offensive would be conducted.<sup>153</sup> When the plans of the allied powers clarified, and the Crimea was assigned as the war ground, then the importance of the Caucasus decreased. This did not mean, however, that the Caucasian front was overall abandoned. Throughout the war, plans for an effective utilization of the mountaineers were still under discussion; however, there was hardly any coordination among the allies regarding how to use the mountaineers.

The allied navy powers entered the Black Sea to protect the Turkish coasts against the possible Russian onslaught on 5 January 1854. Afterwards, Russia took a

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<sup>153</sup> *Genotsid Adygov*, p. 110. While the war named 'the Crimean War' referring the most significant campaign of the war over Sevastopol, the war also waged in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and as well as in the Baltik, Pacific and the White Sea. For the discussion of the battles in these fronts, see, Baumgart, pp. 167-176, 185-192.

defensive stance, and not only brought back its navy to Sevastopol, but also abandoned forts and garrisons on the eastern Black Sea coast with the exception of Anapa, Novorossiysk, Gelincik and Sohumkale.<sup>154</sup> Actually, the Caucasian command of Russia was very pessimistic for the future Russian presence in the Caucasus. Prince Mikhail Vorontsov, the viceroy of the Caucasus, left the scene, thinking there was no possibility for Russia's success. General Read, who was appointed in his stead, was more pessimistic. He advocated the evacuation of all the Muslim territories in the eastern Caucasus, and even the temporary sacrifice of Georgia, Imeretia, Mingrelia and Guria. He proposed a Russian defense along the rivers Kuban, Sunja, and Sulak. While these fears were to some extent exaggerated, the opportunity of the Ottoman army in the Caucasian front was obvious as also Allen and Muratoff put down:

The possibility of widespread attacks by the Cherkesses – with Allied support from the sea – and the likelihood of an invasion of Kakheti by Shamyl were real dangers, and there was no absolute certainty that the 'peaceful' Muslim population of eastern Transcaucasia would remain loyal if they were disturbed by the news of Allied and Turkish successes or Persian intervention.<sup>155</sup>

In the presence of the Allied navy in the Black Sea, Ottoman navy could be used to help the mountaineers of the Caucasus to strengthen the front in the Caucasus. For this aim, Adolphus Slade, a British who served in the Ottoman navy with the name "Müşavir Pasha", gave a note to the Kaptan Pasha, in which he argued that if Sohumkale had been captured, then the Ottoman navy could have moved along the Abkhazian coasts to Anapa to conquer all the military positions of Russia along the Black Sea coast, and moreover to handle military aid, including even

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<sup>154</sup> *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza (konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.)*, p. 186. Gelincik and Sohumkale also would be evacuated soon in consideration of the difficulty to defend.

<sup>155</sup> Allen - Muratoff, p. 66.

cannons, to the Circassians.<sup>156</sup> According to Slade, the composition of the Caucasian mountaineers, Turkish navy and the Anatolian army could succeed against Russia in the Caucasus front.<sup>157</sup>

This note was accepted by the Porte, and Kaptan Pasha appointed Müşavir Pasha to discuss such a Turkish initiative to Circassia with the admirals of the allied forces. However, Britain and France were not so much enthusiastic for such an Ottoman mission. Even though this proposal was not totally rejected, Allied generals expressed that it would be better for the Ottoman fleet to wait till a British-French fleet completed an operation in the Caucasus. France and British admiralty was only in favor of an initiative in which two Ottoman ferries would move to Circassia with a mission to propagate the war against Russia, instead of an actual operation. It seems, however, that the Ottoman side believed that the British and French admirals could be persuaded. Kaptan Pasha ordered to prepare a fleet, which would transport armaments and ammunitions, as well as a few hundred Circassians including Sefer Pasha, Behçet Pasha, Sadettin Pasha (*Vâli* of Aydın), Sırrı Pasha (*Vâli* of Yemen), Ferhad Pasha, and Ramiz Bey.<sup>158</sup>

This mission aimed to invite the local population to join the war by using firmans and *nişans*. Sefer Pasha had a firman, which empowered him as a civilian and military governor of all the Circassian lands. According to the decision taken in the *Meclis-i Muvakkat-ı Harbiye* (Provisional Assembly of War) first the

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<sup>156</sup> In this note, Slade gave an outline of the conquest of the Circassian coasts from Russia. He argues that it is possible to get the support of the Circassians and Crimean Tatars by showing the greatness and the power of the Ottoman Empire. For this note, see S. Adolphus Slade, *Türkiye ve Kırım Harbi*, translated by Ali Rıza Seyfi (İstanbul, 1943), pp. 260-261.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, p. 126.

<sup>158</sup> *Vak'a-nüvis Ahmed Lûtfi Efendi Tarihi*, Vol. IX, prepared by M. Münir Aktepe (İstanbul, 1984), pp. 91-92; see also, *BOA İ.DH*, Dosya No.: 18986, 1 Şaban 1270 [29 April 1854].

communication with Muhammed Emin should be established and his help to Sefer and Behçet Pashas should be guaranteed. The Ottoman Empire would try to use the popularity of Sefer Pasha to rally the Circassians. He was also assigned to encourage Prince Mikhail Shirvashidze, the most influential man in Abkhazia, to take a part on the side of the allied powers.<sup>159</sup>

This operation would not only be useful for Circassia, but also for the Anatolian army, since an important amount of munitions and weapons would be handled to Sohumkale.<sup>160</sup> Most importantly, such a fleet would raise the Ottoman prestige in Circassia, and would provide their active participation in the war, which could not be accomplished so far. It was hoped that with the support of the Allied forces, logistic help to the Caucasus would be easier, and by this way cooperation between Sheikh Shamil and Circassians would be attained and a blow to Russia in the Caucasus would be possible.

Obviously, the Porte gave a special importance to this mission. Having these aims in mind, the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet left Istanbul on 6 May 1854 - after a day that the allied fleet under the command of Lyons started its campaign on the Circassian shores- to the Balçık Bay to consult the Ottoman operation to the Caucasus. However, according to the Ottoman plans, Ahmed Pasha, the admiral of the Ottoman fleet, would meet with the generals of Britain and France, and only after their approval the Ottoman mission to the Circassian shores would be initiated. However, Dundas, the Commander-in-Chief of the allied forces, opposed to the

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<sup>159</sup> Kerashev, p. 107.

<sup>160</sup> Budak, p. 74.

Ottoman plans stating that such an operation should be activated only after the return of the allied fleet.

After the arrival of a battleship at Balçık, which brought news about the campaign of Captain Lyons and that the Circassians shores were evacuated by the Russians, then only three battleships were assigned for the Ottoman mission. All the Circassians, who were waiting for weeks in Kavarna Bay (near Balçık), in a disorganized way and in a hurry, were transported from the twelve battleships to only three, and were sent to Circassia in miserable conditions on 24 May. During this process an outraged Pasha cried in grief, “I will never forget what was done to us”.<sup>161</sup> Of course, having landed in Sohumkale in such conditions, the mission most probably could not have a positive impact on the mountaineers for the image of the Ottoman Empire, which was actually one of the main aims of the mission. Slade complained:

For half-civilized peoples, there is a great difference between landing of officials, envoys, helping battalions, armaments and ammunitions by a big and pompous navy, and a swift leaving of them to the sea sands by a few stuffed transporting ships. Transportation to such a place [Circassia] an expeditionary team and force is not the same with carrying passengers and trade materials. Rather than to act in this way, according to the orders of the Admirals, it would be better to send everything back to Istanbul.<sup>162</sup>

As a matter of fact, this mission was a complete disappointment. It not only failed to achieve anything, but also negatively affected any possible joint attempt of the Allied powers in the course of the war. Sefer Pasha would not collaborate with the Allied powers in the following year. This operation was also one of the instances

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<sup>161</sup> Slade, p. 149.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, pp. 148-149.

that France and Britain did not see the Ottomans a real ally. Ottoman soldiers (and officers for that matter) were perceived by them as inferiors throughout the war.

The Porte continued its activities in Circassia in summer 1854. On 3 July 1854, Mustafa Pasha was appointed to Sohumkale. On 8 July an Ottoman fleet under the command of Ahmed Pasha, composed of 5 ships, arrived at Sohumkale with 160 boxes of cartridge, 30 barrels of gunpowder, and some amount of lead. Replies to the letters of Muhammed Emin were also sent with this fleet. Then, Muhammed Emin would arrive to Varna with one of the ships of this fleet (*Feyz-i Bari*) to search a common ground with the Allied commanders.<sup>163</sup>

In July 1854, when the war theater was not yet clear, Muhammed Emin as the leader of a Circassian delegation composed of 70 Circassian chieftains and elders came to Varna to discuss a joint activity. Allied powers gave special importance to the Circassian delegation.<sup>164</sup> Actually, before his arrival Muhammed Emin succeeded in giving a hard blow to the Russian forces in Daryal Pass on 26 May 1854.<sup>165</sup> However, the mountaineers of the Caucasus were not perceived as a real ally, moreover the situation of the Turkish army in the Russo-Ottoman border was not promising.<sup>166</sup>

Nonetheless, Russia's army of 270.000 soldiers, with 70.000 in the Russo-Ottoman border, was probably the most important reason for the abandonment of the Caucasus option. Russia did not withdraw its forces from the Caucasus, which was

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<sup>163</sup> Budak, pp. 84-85.

<sup>164</sup> *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza (konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.)*, p. 187.

<sup>165</sup> In this battle, Russia left 2.000 deaths and again about 2.000 wounded. They also lost three guns. Budak, p. 81.

<sup>166</sup> Allen-Muratoff, pp. 70-71.

indeed constituted a considerable figure, and a successful attack against those forces did not seem to be an easy deal. If the Russian forces in the Caucasus would move to the Crimean peninsula, then a victory in the Crimea would be more difficult. The possible future of the Caucasus in case of an allied victory was still in abeyance. After the conquest of the Caucasus, there might be needed a military protection of the Allied powers, which they could not afford.<sup>167</sup>

Muhammed Emin with the Circassian delegation passed to Istanbul to discuss the future steps with the Porte and the Padishah on 27 July 1854. In his residence in Istanbul, he was very well received, and materially assisted. However, again any clear plan for a joint action was not visible. After two months in Istanbul, Muhammed Emin left Istanbul for Batum with Ferik Mustafa Pasha, now the commander of the Batum army, the Circassian chieftains, and the Tunisian soldiers on 1 October 1854. According to Budak, after the appointment of Mustafa Pasha, the loyalty of the people of Sohumkale to the Ottoman Empire increased. Mustafa Pasha was given the power to distribute ranks and salaries.<sup>168</sup> This was actually a manifestation of the classical Ottoman policy in the Caucasus, which was based on the distribution of ranks and salaries rather than any concrete plan and action.

In short, all these efforts proved fruitless. There was not any concrete attempt of the Circassians and the Allied Powers against Russia in 1854 in the northern Caucasus. For the Ottoman Empire, 1854 was also an unsuccessful year in the southern Caucasus. Ottoman armies were ineffective nearly in all their engagements

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid, p. 70.

<sup>168</sup> Budak, pp. 86-87; *BOA İ. MVL*, Dosya No.: 13526, 28 Safer 1271 [20 November 1854].

with Russia throughout the summer.<sup>169</sup> Shamil's campaign of July 1854 to invade Kakheti also remained ill-fated. Furthermore, this was Sheikh Shamil's last serious effort, after which he took a cautious attitude and waited for the successes of the Turkish army in the Russo-Ottoman border.<sup>170</sup>

#### **D. The Caucasian front in 1855**

In 1855, as a result of the prolonged Sevastopol campaign, Britain seemed to be more enthusiastic to take measures in order to encourage the Circassians to join the war. In late 1854, Longworth was sent to Circassia by the Foreign Office in order to assess the capabilities of the Caucasians. He arrived at Circassia in 1855 in a steamer loaded with arms and gifts for the Circassians.<sup>171</sup> France also sent its agent Manduit (or Champoisser) to Circassia. According to the official explanations, they would only try to encourage Circassians to participate in the war against Russia, and would not have any politic mission.<sup>172</sup> Longworth was especially warned not to give any promise to the Circassians on behalf of the British government.<sup>173</sup>

According to Longworth, the power of the nobles in Circassia diminished significantly mainly as a result of the activities of Muhammed Emin. He stated in one of his letter that the landed forces of the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus raised the prestige of Turks. On the other hand, he complained that all his efforts were averted

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<sup>169</sup> Allen-Muratoff, pp. 72-79; Budak, pp. 90-103. Especially Çengel (16 June 1854) and Kurudere (6 August 1854) defeats were the significant ones.

<sup>170</sup> Allen-Muratoff, pp. 74, 80; Actually, in this campaign Shamil waited to see an Ottoman advance. However, Ottoman defeats made him to take more cautious steps. Therefore, he did not raid to Tiflis, where there were only 2000 soldiers. Gammer, pp. 270-272.

<sup>171</sup> Luxenburg, p. 245.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, p. 248.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p. 250.

by Turks and Sefer Pasha.<sup>174</sup> According to Longworth, Turks became uneasy about his activities, and tried to ruin all his plans. In his report, he claimed that Sefer Pasha prevented his advance to the inner spheres of Circassia. He also pronounced a complain of Muhammed Emin in which Sheikh Shamil's *naib* argued that the Porte did not want him to get in contact with the British officials. When Muhammed Emin visited the British Embassy in Istanbul, and when he got in contact with Brock and Hughs, two British agents in Circassia, his salary was terminated by the Ottoman government.<sup>175</sup>

Such a less than friendly attitude of the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasian matters towards its allies during the Crimean War was quite controversial. At least a firman was written according to the instructions of Stratford Canning de Redcliffe, and was sent to Mustafa Pasha, commander of Batum army, via Longworth. According to this firman, Mustafa Pasha would completely collaborate (*muavenet-i kâmile ile*) with the British and French agents.<sup>176</sup> However, Longworth's explanations, at least, showed that there was hardly any identical and coherent Caucasian policy of the Allied Powers, and what's more, there seemed to be some kind of an implicit rivalry among them in the Caucasus. On the other hand, the Porte also sent its agent Enis Efendi, a Daghestani, to Circassia. According to the Porte, it was necessary to send such an agent to Circassia as the other two allies sent theirs (*belki müttefikeynin memurları yanında Devlet-i Aliyye'nin dahi böyle bir memuru*

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<sup>174</sup> Kerashev also points out the cold relations and distinct policies of Sefer Pasha and the Allied Powers. Kerashev argues that "strengthening of the position of the allies in Circassia was as much as unacceptable for the mountain leader as the colonization of his native land by the armies of the Tsar". So, on demand of Turkish command he refused to permit English armies to land in the fortress of Anapa. Kerashev, p. 108.

However, the policy of the Allied powers during the Ottoman mission to the Caucasus in 1854 much more explanatory in this context. This might be reason of the unfriendly behavior of Sefer Pasha to Longworth in 1855.

<sup>175</sup> Luxenburg, p. 252 footnote 270.

<sup>176</sup> "Firman to Mustafa Pasha", *BOA İ.MMS*, Dosya No.: 166.

*bulunması kavâid-i müstelzem olacağından*). Actually, the Porte was searching the possibility to take Circassia under its influence after the war. Mission of Enis Bey was, most probably, to investigate the possibility of this, and to try once more to encourage the mountaineers to collaborate with the Ottoman officials.<sup>177</sup>

On the other hand, Mustafa Pasha wanted Sefer Pasha to establish a home guard composed of the Circassians, which was to be included to the Batum corps. He also sent Hacı İsmail to persuade the Circassians to support the Ottoman forces. However, Hacı İsmail's effort, as well as appeal of Sefer Pasha to form a home guard from the Circassians was not welcome on the part of the Circassians.<sup>178</sup>

Mustafa Pasha arrived at Gelincik on 18 May, 1855, accompanied by also Sefer Pasha. He intended to arrange a combined operation with Circassians against the Russian forts in the Circassian coasts.<sup>179</sup> At the same time, in order to relieve their forces siege the Sevastopol, the Allied navy also started an operation in the Azov Sea and the connected territories. The allied forces occupied Kerch on 25 May.<sup>180</sup> After the Allied control in Azov Sea, Russia evacuated Soğucak Bay and concentrated its forces in Anapa fortress.<sup>181</sup> On June 1855, the Allied forces this time investigated that Anapa fortress was also evacuated after the powder-magazines were exploded and barracks were burnt.<sup>182</sup> Thereafter, on 10 June 1855, Sefer Pasha

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<sup>177</sup> *BOA A.AMD*, 1272 [1855/1856], Dosya No.: 68, Gömlek No.: 63.

<sup>178</sup> Kerashev, p. 107.

<sup>179</sup> "Commander Osborn to Rear-Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons, May 18, 1855", *Russian War, 1855: Black Sea Official Correspondence*, edited by A. C. Dewar et al. (London, 1945) (Hereafter *Russian War*), pp. 153-154.

<sup>180</sup> "Telegraphic communication from Rear-Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons to the Secretary to the Admiralty, May 25, 1855" and "Rear-Admiral Sir Lyons to the Secretary to the Admiralty, May 26 1855", *Russian War*, pp. 158, 164-166.

<sup>181</sup> "Captain Moore to Rear-Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons, June 2, 1855", *Russian War*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>182</sup> "Telegraphic communication from Rear-Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons to the Secretary to the Admiralty, June 10, 1855", *Russian War*, pp. 185-186; For a description of Anapa after its evacuation

settled in Anapa fortress with considerable numbers of Circassian fighters.<sup>183</sup> During the summer of 1855, Mustafa Pasha and Sefer Pasha continued their activities in Anapa.<sup>184</sup>

From then on, Sefer Pasha's influence among compatriots increased. However, it was the very last phase of the war, and Sevastopol and Kars campaigns would say the last words for both sides. While on the one hand, Allies won the war with the successful Sevastopol campaign, Russia's success in capturing Kars, would result in its avoiding any heavy losses in the Treaty of Paris. It was actually the sign of the final failure of the Ottoman army in the Caucasus front.

In fact, the discord among the Allies prepared a way for the success of Russia's Kars campaign. Ömer Pasha, who understood the urgency of the situation in Kars best, insisted on the departure of the Ottoman troops from the Crimea. However, the refusal of France for any departure of troops during the Sevastopol campaign prevented any timely support to Kars. Only when Sevastopol fell in September 1855, then Ömer Pasha could depart for the Caucasian front. It was so late that Kars surrendered on November 23, which resulted in a more powerful Russia on the table in Paris.

If Ömer Pasha's plan had been put into practice on time, then probably an allied offensive in Georgia with the participation of Sheikh Shamil's forces would

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by the Russians see, "Rear-Admiral Stewart to Rear-Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons", *Russian War*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> According to the Russian sources Britain tried to establish a cavalry force composed of 6.000 Circassians, which would be transferred to the Crimea. *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza (konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.)*, p. 191.

also have been possible. During his campaign in Georgia, Ömer Pasha tried to establish a cavalry force composed of the Circassians. Therefore, he chose his base in Sohunkale rather than Redutkale.<sup>185</sup> Being convinced that Sefer Pasha could not attract the Circassians to the side of the Allied Powers, Ömer Pasha would try to establish contacts with Muhammed Emin in September 1855.<sup>186</sup> However, Muhammed Emin also could not be successful in establishing a cavalry force from the Circassians to be used in the Ottoman army. According to Slade the selection of Sohunkale was the one of the important reasons for the failure of the campaign as it was very distant to Tiflis, in comparison to Redutkale.<sup>187</sup>

#### **F. The Polish Role and the Cossack Regiments**

The Crimean war was the time for what the Polish nationalists were waiting for decades. Therefore, as can be expected, the Polish immigrants tried to be active in order to realize the idea of an independent Poland throughout the Crimean War. Not only many Polish officers served in the Ottoman army, but also a Polish regiment was established with the financial support of Britain.<sup>188</sup>

Sadık Pasha (Michal Czaykowski) organized a regiment of “the Ottoman Cossacks”.<sup>189</sup> The regiment would be composed of the Cossacks of Dobruca, deserters from the Russian army, fugitive Ukrainian serfs, and volunteers from the

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<sup>185</sup> Allen-Muratoff, pp. 95-96.

<sup>186</sup> To be used in the war in the southern Caucasus, Muhammed Emin claimed that he could establish an army of 20.000 cavalry and 40.000 voluntary forces. *Genotsid Adygov*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>187</sup> Slade, pp. 255-256.

<sup>188</sup> Skochen, p. 58.

<sup>189</sup> According to Skochen, these cavalry detachments were called “*Sultan Kazakları*- Sultan’s Cossacks”. Ibid.

Balkan Slavs, and commanded by the Polish officers. Sadık Pasha tried to encourage the Porte for a military cooperation with the Polish refugees. As a result, Zamoyski, Chrzanowski, Bystrzonowski, and Charles Rozyski were invited to serve as generals in the Turkish army.<sup>190</sup>

A regiment of 1400 soldiers was formed under the command of the Polish veterans. This regiment played a role in relieving the fortress of Silistre, which was besieged by the Russians. After the evacuation of the Principalities by the Russian forces, Sadık Pasha also acted as a military governor of Bucharest.<sup>191</sup>

In the army of Ömer Pasha during the expedition to Georgia, the only cavalry was the Ottoman Cossacks, recruited from among the Polish refugees and the descendants of Cossack fugitives who had settled at the mouth of the Danube.<sup>192</sup> Besides, the Ottoman agents, sent to Circassia, also included Polish and Hungarian immigrants. On the other hand, Czartoryski was invested with the power to select and dispatch Polish officers to the East and was semi-officially recognized as the head of the Polish emigration and treated as the Sultan's ally.<sup>193</sup>

After the war, the Polish troops were disbanded by the British government's orders and left to the good will of the Turks; some of them remained in the Turkish army – one regiment of the Ottoman Cossacks, and another of Ottoman Dragoons, a handful went to the Caucasus to join the Circassian insurgents, and some returned to

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<sup>190</sup> Kukiel, p. 281.

<sup>191</sup> Rudnytsky, p. 181.

<sup>192</sup> Allen-Muratoff, pp. 86, 95.

<sup>193</sup> Kukiel, p. 281.

France and Britain.<sup>194</sup> Actually, the Crimean war did not give the opportunity to the Polish nationalists to liberate their homeland from the Russian domination. The idea of independent Poland was also abandoned like the idea of an independent Circassia, and the Polish cause was left to its own destiny.

### **G. Slave Trade during the War**

The Crimean War period was also significant from another aspect for the Ottoman-Circassian relations, since at that time the slave trade was for the first time prohibited.<sup>195</sup>

During the Crimean War, the slave trade rose up significantly as captives increased, and the Russian quarantine was abandoned. In the meantime, Britain attempted to prevent the slave trade in Circassia. Stratford de Redcliffe provided a firman, which was sent to Mustafa Pasha in Sohumkale to prevent the slave trade.<sup>196</sup> Upon the British desires, the Ottoman Empire attempted to terminate the Circassian and the Georgian slave trade.<sup>197</sup> However, during the war it was impossible to cease the slave trade. Besides, such an initiative should result in a deterioration of relations with the Allied Powers and the mountaineers. The correspondent of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine very well portrayed the significance of the slave trade in Circassia:

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid, p. 304; For the Zamoyski's wish to return to Paris, see *BOA İ.HR*, Dosya No.: 7478, 5 Ramazan 1272 [10 May 1856].

<sup>195</sup> Zafer Gölen, "İkinci Meşrutiyet'in İlanından Sonra Çerkez Teavün Cemiyeti'nin Çalışmaları: Çerkez Köleliğini Önlemeye Yönelik Faaliyetler", *Toplumsal Tarih*, Vol. 10, No.: 57 (September 1998), pp. 53.

<sup>196</sup> Luxenburg, p. 244, footnote 261.

<sup>197</sup> *BOA İ.HR*, Dosya No.: 5601, 7 Safer 1271 [30 October 1854]; For the instruction given to the *Baştercüman*, 10 Safer 1271 [2 November 1854] and the instruction given to Mustafa Pasha, the Commander of the Batum army, for the punishment of the Circassians who were dealing with the slave trade, see, *BOA HR.SYS*, Dosya No.: 1190, Gömlek No.: 12.

It is a question, however, whether a traffic which is so highly remunerative to those engaged in it can be permanently destroyed. The immediate effect has been to create the greatest dissatisfaction among the Circassians themselves.... It is questionable, therefore, whether it would not have been wiser to have waited until the termination of the war, before doing anything to disgust allies whose goodwill it is so important to secure. No doubt the Circassian slave trade is utterly indefensible in a moral point of view, but it does not appeal to our feelings of humanity as does that of the traffic in negroes upon the coast of Africa. It is a proceeding which is eminently satisfactory to all parties; whereas now the young ladies are disappointed, the Turks are disconsolate, the merchants are ruined, and the papas are disgusted. 'Alas!' said a tattered old serf, 'there is no longer now the possibility of my granddaughter becoming the mother of a sultan'.<sup>198</sup>

Actually, the Ottoman Empire unwillingly accepted the British and French desires about the slave trade in order not to deteriorate its relations with its allies during the war as Toledano points out:

...as for the Ottoman side, this policy was adopted only in order to relieve European pressure at a sensitive time when the Empire depended on the military and political support of Britain and France... The sacrifice seemed minimal at that point and was viewed as part of the war effort, to be rescinded when peace returned. Ottoman interest in the continued supply of white slaves was in no way diminished...<sup>199</sup>

The prohibition of the slave trade in 1854 was the first step for the future abandonment of the Circassian slave from the Ottoman society. However, at that time neither the Ottoman society nor the Ottoman government was ready for a more radical initiative.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> "The Eastern Black Shore", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 78, No.: 481 (November 1855), p. 529.

<sup>199</sup> Ehud R. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression: 1840-1890* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 122-123.

<sup>200</sup> The actual prohibition of the Circassian slave trade would come only in 1909. Gölen, p. 57.

## H. Sefer Pasha's diplomatic efforts and the Treaty of Paris

Before the Treaty of Paris, on 5 March 1856, Sefer Pasha addressed to the Russian command with his letter from Anapa.<sup>201</sup> Having declared his rule over the Circassians, Sefer Pasha guaranteed that he would not undertake any military action against Russia, but in turn, he wanted from Russia not to take any oppressive attitude. He, very well knew that for the independence of Circassia the result in the Paris Congress was now much more critical than any military victory. At the same time, the Abzekhs, Shapsugh, and Natukhays decided to send a large delegation to Istanbul to request the protection of the Ottoman Empire. Muhammed Emin and Sefer Pasha's son Karabatır were also members of the deputation. Deputation was accepted by the Sultan, and it was promised for a new war with Russia to banish Russian troops forever from Circassia in return to continuation of war of the Circassians with the faith of Islam and loyalty to the Padishah.<sup>202</sup> If there really occurred such a meeting, it mean that the Ottoman Empire returned its pre-war policy of abstaining from any involvement in the matters of the Caucasus rather than a sign of support to the Circassian struggle.

During the process of the signature of the Treaty of Paris, Sefer Pasha insisted on a provision, which would put Circassia under the Ottoman suzerainty. However,

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<sup>201</sup> Kerashev, p. 108.

<sup>202</sup> Polovinkina, p. 142.

According to another source, it was Sefer Pasha who sent a deputation of 250 people to Istanbul on the advice of Britain in order to request the unification of Circassia with the Ottoman Empire. *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza (konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.)*, p. 193.

According to Kerashev, Sultan has rejected the request of the Circassian deputation for being the Ottoman subjects, having referred the provisions of the Treaty of Paris. Only after the repeated appeals of Karabatır to the Turkish court, and on condition of bringing oath of being subjects of the Sultan and obedience to the assigned chief, protection over the Circassians was promised. Kerashev, p. 109.

the Circassian question was not in the agenda of the Ottoman delegation in Paris.<sup>203</sup>

The Treaty of Paris, signed on 30 March 1856, did not include any provision that would change the situation in the Caucasus.<sup>204</sup>

The four points of the Vienna Congress, which were previously refused by the Russian government, were brought to the negotiation table again.<sup>205</sup> While Britain waited more compensation from Russia, France pursued a much more conciliatory policy. Britain actually did not overall abandon the idea of independent Poland and Circassia. Actually, during the process of negotiations Britain did not fully give up its interests in the Caucasus, and a military operation to the Caucasus remained a possibility. However, France might think that an independent or an Ottoman vassal Circassia would be under the control of Britain. The reluctance of Britain to continue the war without the support of France paved the way to such a moderate treaty.<sup>206</sup>

The most important provision of the agreement was the tenth provision about the limitation of the Russian naval armament in the Black Sea. According to this provision, Russia should have only ten ships to control the Circassian coasts.

In the short run, without battleships and without fortifications along the Circassian shores, which were totally destroyed in the course of the Crimean War,

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<sup>203</sup> Polovinkina, p. 143.

<sup>204</sup> For the Crimean War and the Treaty of Paris, see, Erim, pp. 315-363.

<sup>205</sup> It was the Allied conditions for the restoration of peace, recognized by an exchange of notes between the Austrian, French, and British governments in 8 August 1854. 1. Renunciation of Russia from all its special rights in Serbia and the Principalities, 2. Unrestricted navigation of the Danube, 3. a revision of the Straits convention of 1841, 4. Renunciation of Russia from all its claims over the Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire.

For the overall discussion of the wartime diplomacy, see Rich, pp. 140-156.

<sup>206</sup> According to Ahmed Cevdet, during the Treaty of Paris, the Ottoman government was established by Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha, who were under the influence of French policy. And their inclination towards peace affected Britain not to continue the war. Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir 1-12*, prepared by Cavid Baysun (Ankara, 1953), p. 65.

Russia could not establish its quarantine any time soon. In these circumstances, the trade between Circassians and the Ottomans also increased. However, the most important gain of the Circassians from this process was that they were spared from the Russian aggression at least for three years. Since the Treaty of Paris did not cover the Circassian question, the pre-war order was reestablished in the Caucasus.

### **I. Assessments**

In 1853 when the Russo-Ottoman war broke up, Circassians' hope to get the Russians out of their territories revived. In this war, as the previous Russo-Ottoman wars, the Caucasus was envisaged to play a significant role. The Ottoman strategy in the Caucasian front, initially, did not seem to be defensive. However, the initial Ottoman defeats in the Russo-Ottoman border and the destruction of the Ottoman fleet, which was charged to transport the ammunitions and military forces to Batum, forced the Ottoman Empire to take a more defensive stance. French and British involvements in the war, once more, encouraged the Porte to conduct an effective and offensive strategy in the Caucasus. Nevertheless, this time the Allied powers themselves did not allow the Ottoman Empire to engage in a campaign in the Caucasus, most probably having in their mind to have a limited war only in the Crimea which was deemed sufficient to enforce their terms on Russia.

Had the Ottoman Empire better investigated the current situation in the Caucasus, and started its initiative with a well-established plan, the mountaineers of the Caucasus, especially the Circassians would have been used in a better way during

the war. The destruction of the Ottoman navy and the failures of the Anatolian army in the Caucasian front prevented the Ottoman Empire to be successful in the Caucasian front. While the Ottoman army could not succeed in the southern Caucasus, the Ottoman envoys in Circassia also failed to attract the mountaineers. Not surprisingly, among the mountaineers, whose war strategy was defensive in character as it aimed at defending their homeland, calls for a war in a foreign land could hardly find a positive response.

Actually, the Ottoman Empire did not develop and pursue a clear and well-designed policy in terms of Circassia during the Crimean War. The Ottoman wish for the return of Circassia under the Ottoman suzerainty was obvious. It was contemplated at the Porte argued that for any serious move concerning the North Caucasus it would be wiser to await the conclusion of the war. However, even though the Ottomans were on the victor's side, probably as a result of the fall of Kars, they abandoned their plans over Circassia.

On the other hand, instead of unifying it, rather the Ottoman strategies even more divided Circassia. Even no use of the forces of Sheikh Shamil could be made. Nonetheless, its dependence upon the strategies and programs of Britain and France was decisive in the Ottoman failure in the Caucasus. The question to what extent the allied powers accepted the Ottoman Empire as a genuine ally does not need much elaboration. During the war, the allies concentrated on the battle in Sevastopol, and did not let the Ottoman Empire pursue an active strategy in Circassia. Throughout the ongoing process of war it became clear that Britain and France had only limited aims, which were based primarily on the delimitation of the influence of Russia on

the international arena. The destruction of the Russian Black Sea fleet became the primary target of the Allies, while all other objectives were secondary.

The Ottoman relations with the mountaineers was pragmatic in character, based on the utilization of the mountaineers during the war. The Ottoman army did not engage in any military operation in the Northern Caucasus except for transporting ammunitions to the Circassian coasts and sending envoys to encourage the Circassians to participate actively in the war. Most probably, the Circassians, being freed from the Russian assault, did not think it necessary to get involved in the war.<sup>207</sup> According to Ahmed Cevdet, Circassian silence during the war was because of the mistaken Ottoman policies. Pashas, who were former slaves, were sent to Circassia. However, in the eyes of the Circassian, the Ottoman titles were not important and they cannot be regarded as nobles. What's more the attempt to prevent the slave trade also negatively affected the Ottoman-Circassian relations.<sup>208</sup>

On the other hand, while Sheikh Shamil attacked Georgia two times, and the Ottoman navy landed 10.000 soldiers and ammunitions to Batum, any coordinated operation of offensive character in the Caucasus could not be organized. The Ottoman forces in Batum remained silent and passive. The other Ottoman army in Kars also became unsuccessful in its attempt to invade Georgia, and routed by the Russians. Consequently, the Ottoman Empire was unable to recover its losses in the eastern coasts of the Black Sea; nor could an independent Circassia be established.

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<sup>207</sup> According to Marks and Engels, Circassians, only accustomed to wage war in their own territories, were happy that the Russians were moved back, and they did not want to participate in the war on the side of the Allied forces. *Genotsid Adygov*, p. 115.

<sup>208</sup> Cevdet Paşa, p. 90.

Shortly after the Crimean War, the defense of the Caucasus completely failed and one of the most dramatic deportations in the world history took place.

CHAPTER IV  
AFTER THE CRIMEAN WAR:  
THE LAST PHASE OF THE RUSSO-CIRCASSIAN WAR  
AND THE OTTOMAN RELATIONS (1856-1864)

After the Peace Treaty of Paris the hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire was replaced with a rapprochement, which would cripple the activities of Sefer Pasha and Muhammed Emin in their struggle against Russia.<sup>209</sup> Russia's revitalized attack to Circassia did not wait long. Not only was the Russian government much determined to end the war, but also the Caucasian mountaineers were now aware that a foreign intervention, which had not come during the Crimean War, was now an even more a distant possibility. On the other hand, the commercial ships which transported the Circassian and the Polish fighters, as well as ammunitions and gunpowder to the Circassian shores, caused suspicions about the continuation of the British as well as the Ottoman involvement in the Caucasus.

**A. Sefer Pasha and Muhammed Emin's last efforts**

After the Crimean War the Porte did not cease its activities abruptly but kept on acting in Circassia via Sefer Pasha. In 1856, while he was trying to unite the

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<sup>209</sup> Mustafa Budak, "Kanguru Olayı: Kırım Savaşı'ndan Sonra Çerkezistan'a Silah ve Mühimmat Gönderilmesi" in *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, No.: 15, (Istanbul, 1997), pp. 477-479.

Circassians, Sefer Pasha would continue to enjoy receiving his salary.<sup>210</sup> In the same year, Sefer Pasha invited the nobles and elders to Anapa to discuss the situation, in which Muhammed Emin also participated. On the other hand, Karabatır was charged to operate near the river Kuban with 2 battalions of infantry and 5 cannons.<sup>211</sup>

However, as a result of the advance of the Russian armies, the Circassians evacuated Anapa having destroyed it on 14 June 1856. The discussion about the reason of the destruction of the Anapa fortress in one of the Ottoman documents showed the continuation of the Ottoman involvement in Circassia in summer 1856.<sup>212</sup>

Afterwards, Sefer Pasha moved near the river Shebzh. Actually, he tried not to take any hostile action against Russia, before having achieved full political consolidation of the Circassians under his rule. During the second half of 1856, Sefer Pasha in correspondence with the Russian military authorities tried to find a way for peace. He underlined that the Circassians as an independent people who had participated in the Crimean War in alliance with the Ottoman Empire. He wrote to G.

I. Filipson:

If You wanted to open negotiations with us, it was necessary not to enter our borders with armed-hands, but [You] should stay out of our borders and declare Your desire to negotiate with us. However, on the contrary, if you are going to open war on us, as it is well known, that so far no government could subdue our mountains with powerful weapons, and we will not be

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<sup>210</sup> His salary was ceased on 7 March 1857 with the reason that he lost his official status as a result of his residence in the Caucasus with his own desire. *BOA A.MKT.NZD*, Dosya No.:216, Gömlek No.: 9, 11 Receb 1273 [7 March 1857]. However, his salary should have been renewed because there are documents showing that after his death his salary passed to his wife, daughter and son, see, *BOA A.MKT.NZD*, Dosya No.: 303, Gömlek No.: 74, Tarih: 8 Receb 1276 [31 January 1860] and *BOA A.MKT.MHM*, Dosya No.: 244, Gömlek No.: 92, Tarih: 2 Cemaziyelevvel 1279 [26 October 1862].

<sup>211</sup> *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza (konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.)*, p. 201.

<sup>212</sup> In his letter, Bandia reported that Anapa fortress was terminated on 27 June 1856. *BOA İ.DH*, Dosya No.: 23196, 23 Şevval 1272 [27 June 1856] - 22 Zilhicce 1272 [24 August 1856].

subject of anybody. We demand that all governments should consider us as a separate people... with this purpose we have sent our special envoy to You.<sup>213</sup>

Sefer Pasha wanted to conclude an agreement with Russia as an independent government, thereby trying to put the Circassian question in the international agenda.<sup>214</sup> However, contrary to the appeals of Sefer Pasha, Russian authorities continued their military activities in Circassia.

3 November 1856, one Russian detachment consisting of two battalions, one hundred Cossacks, and some mountaineers with 4 cannons came up Novorossiysk. Sefer Pasha was compelled to leave Novorossiysk, after it was plunged into ruins, and retreated to Neberjaysk. Nineteen Turkish and Greek vessels harbored at Novorossiysk captured by the Russians.<sup>215</sup>

According to Pokrovskii, Sefer Pasha proclaimed that he got the order of the Porte to unite all the Western Caucasus for common activities against Russia, and for this aim a 4.000 force was allocated by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>216</sup>

Backed by the Ottoman Empire at least by words, and simultaneously trying to find a common ground with the Russians, Sefer Pasha was also in search of the consolidation of his rule in Circassia. To this aim, Sefer Pasha's forces clashed with those of Muhammed Emin fought near Tuapse, in where Karabatır defeated

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<sup>213</sup> Kerashev, p. 110.

<sup>214</sup> Polovinkina, p. 144.

<sup>215</sup> M. V. Pokrovskii, *Iz istorii Adygov: v kontse XVIII – pervoi polovine XIX veka* (Krasnodar, 1989), p. 288.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

Muhammed Emin.<sup>217</sup> Sefer Pasha also ruined the quays in Tuapse, which were serving as the centers of supply of Abzekhs and Bzhedughs who did not consent his position. According to him, Muhammed Emin was a traitor who had no authorization by the Sultan. Sefer Pasha seems to attain a solid position in Circassia in June 1856 by getting the support of the important portion of the Circassians.<sup>218</sup>

Most probably the Ottoman support behind him, even if a mere verbal one, helped him significantly in extending his power at the expense of Muhammed Emin. On the other hand, Muhammed Emin also sought to get the Ottoman patronage. In 1856, Muhammed Emin came to Istanbul; however, his efforts proved fruitless:

... the current wish of the mentioned Pasha [Muhammed Emin] is [a] Circassia, which would be given under his rule together with some privileges, however, since the interference of the Ottoman Empire in the [current] circumstances concerning that place [Circassia] was prohibited by the Peace Treaty ... that those who want this Pasha are [only] a few tribes [while] other tribes under no circumstances accept [him] and the conditions he is currently in seems to be quite precarious ....<sup>219</sup>

As he understood that he could not achieve the support of the Porte, Muhammed Emin wanted some financial help, which was actually realized, most probably in order to accelerate his departure from the Ottoman territory:

...this gentleman [Muhammed Emin], during the war, was hardly successful in serving [the Ottoman Empire] there [in Circassia], [and the] enmity between himself and Sefer Pasha caused the complete division [of Circassia], anyway; his departure from here [from Istanbul] will entirely be beneficial, and under these conditions he will need help for his return [to Circassia, therefore an] a funding of 25.000 *kuruş* shall be granted...<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Kerashev, pp. 109-110.

<sup>219</sup> *BOA İ.MMS*, Dosya No.: 311, 23 Muharrem 1273 [23 September 1856].

<sup>220</sup> *BOA İ.MMS*, Dosya No.: 317, 9 Safer 1273 [9 October 1856].

In April 1857, Muhammed Emin again came to Istanbul in order to provide the Ottoman backing. However, as a result of the Russian demand this time he was exiled to Damascus.<sup>221</sup> He succeeded in returning to Circassia only in November.<sup>222</sup> Then, in 1858 Muhammed Emin once more came to Istanbul. However, his last effort also ended up with no gains.<sup>223</sup>

In 1857, Sefer Pasha wrote a letter to Istanbul, which was also signed by many of the Circassian elders and noblemen. In this letter he asked the Porte not to allow Muhammed Emin to return to Circassia. He also asked for the compensation of the losses of a merchant from Trabzon, whose ship was captured by the Russian officials at the Soğucak Bay. What's more he claimed that Circassia was now united under his rule and had an established army and a state system. Accordingly, the independence of Circassia (*Çerkezistan'ın serbest kalmaklığı*) should be recognized.<sup>224</sup>

In 1857, Sefer Pasha persisted in demanding from Russia the recognition of the political independence of Circassia. He addressed to the Russian command in the Caucasus:

All tribes recognizing my authority have sworn never to cease obedience. I, from my part, will use all my diligence to ratify the inviolability of our sacred religion and our customs, to arrange and form infantry, cavalry and artillery and if the Emperor recognizes our independence we shall accept foreign consuls for conducting commercial relations with Russia as well as other powers, otherwise we do not recognize the authority of the Christians above ourselves up to the last time that we are completely exterminated.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> *BOA İ.DH*, Dosya No.: 25871, 17 Rebiulahir 1274 [5 December 1857]; Polovinkina, p. 144.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>224</sup> *BOA A.MKT.UM*, Dosya No.: 289, Gömlek No.: 79, 28 Şevval 1273 [21 June 1857].

<sup>225</sup> Kerashev, p. 112.

According to Kerashev, during 1858 and 1859 Sefer Pasha undertook numerous attempts to find a common language with Muhammed Emin against Russia, but he could not be successful in this effort till the former's death in December 1859.<sup>226</sup> Their meeting in the Abzekh lands in April 1858 proved in consequential. During the negotiations that continued for 8 days they could not find in a common ground.<sup>227</sup>

On the other hand, according to Pokrovskii, in late 1858 Ömer Bey, the personal adjutant of the War Minister Rıza Pasha, was sent to Circassia with the letter of Rıza Pasha, in order to encourage the Circassians to continue their resistance.<sup>228</sup> However, this case is yet to be confirmed by the Ottoman documents, if there are any. Nonetheless, to the very end of his struggle, Sefer Pasha never abandoned his hope to attain the support of the Ottoman Empire and claimed that he was fighting against both the intrigues of Russia and Muhammed Emin.<sup>229</sup> Most importantly, Sefer Pasha attempted several times to end the war in the Northwestern Caucasus via negotiations with Russia, however Russia's strict policy of subduing the Caucasus prevented to find a common ground.

In 1859, with the end of the war in the Eastern Caucasus the Russian army stepped up its efforts to suppress Circassia too. In that year, Muhammed Emin abandoned his struggle following the advice of Sheikh Shamil. He continued to stay

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Pokrovskii, p. 294.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid, p. 295.

<sup>229</sup> *A.MKT.UM*, Dosya No.: 332, Gömlek No.: 46, 29 Rebiulevvel 1275 [6 November 1858].

in the Abzekh lands as a religious leader, but he was no longer a political leader.<sup>230</sup> On the other hand, after Sefer Pasha's death in December 1859, the Circassians went on with their military and diplomatic efforts for a few years to come.

### **B. The Russian quarantine in Circassia: *Kangaroo* and *Chesapeake* affairs**

The arrival of the British steamship *Strambolo* (or *Stromboli*) in July 1856 in the Circassian coast was the sign of the continuation of the international contacts.<sup>231</sup> Actually, due to the lack of any fortifications on the Black Sea Coast, and only with a few vessels for quarantine, it was not possible for Russia to isolate Circassia.

1857 was one of the busiest years in terms of the discussion of the Circassian question in the international arena. In February 1857, a British steamship *Kangaroo*, which was loaded with weapons, ammunitions, as well as two hundred of Polish and Hungarian soldiers landed in the Circassian coasts.

*Kangaroo*, which was sent by the previous Minister of Post İsmail Pasha, who was a Circassian, left Istanbul during 11-16 February. After visiting Sinop on 1 March, *Kangaroo* arrived at Tuapse. This initiative was headed by Janos Bandia (Mirliva Mehmed Pasha), former colonel of the Hungarian army and now a Turkish

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<sup>230</sup> Soon Muhammed Emin went to Istanbul. There he continued to act for the Circassian cause. In 1862, he met with the Circassian delegation, and advised them to start peace negotiations with Russia. Muhammed Emin died in Armutköy of Bursa in 1899. Polovinkina, pp. 146-147.

<sup>231</sup> Kerashev, p. 110.

Pasha. Teophil Lapinski, one of the significant figures of the last phase of the Circassian defense, also came with this mission.<sup>232</sup>

Bandia, at the very moment of his arrival in Tuapse, sent his envoys to Sefer Pasha and Muhammed Emin with letters claiming that he was sent by the Turkish government to command the military forces of Circassia. Sefer Pasha met him with a large delegation of Circassians, but Muhammed Emin sent his greetings only. Bandia even married the daughter of a Circassian elder to take the local support behind in Circassia.<sup>233</sup>

In March 1857, Bandia's legion crossed the Aderbievsk near Gelincik. There were established stores for military equipments as well as houses. According to Pokrovskii, Bandia's detachments immediately accelerated the slave trade from Gelincik.<sup>234</sup> On the other hand, while Bandia and his team started their activities in Circassia, in Istanbul as a result of this initiative a diplomatic crisis between Russia and the Ottoman Empire broke out in Istanbul.

*Kangaroo* incident was noted by the Russian Consulate in Sinop to the Russian Embassy in Istanbul. The crisis troubled the diplomatic circles in Istanbul and the

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<sup>232</sup> Janos Bandia, who was a Hungarian born adventurer, became first a French, then a Russian and English spy, afterwards he searched fortune in Algeria, and then published a newspaper in Pressburg. In 1853, he came to Turkey, adopted Islam and got the rank of colonel. Pokrovskii, p. 289.

According to Kerashev, Janos Bandia's aims were not clear. While he came to Circassia secretly as an Ottoman general, his letters to the Russian officials bring suspects if he was a Russian agent. In one of his letters in August of 1857 Janos Bandia wrote to Filipson, "Russia requires people and exactly such people as Circassians who are multiplied as a locust and born as soldiers. But a Circassia, necessary for Russia, can be the one which was exterminated to the last rather than which continue to be a military power. Circassia should be internally organized and subordinated to the authority of one leader again. Russia should support and make him only its debtor, the rest will become by itself." Kerashev, p. 111.

<sup>233</sup> Pokrovskii, p. 290.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

Porte for a month and a half. During a meeting with the Grand Vizier in February 1857, Butenev, the Russian Ambassador in Istanbul, claimed that a vessel, which was loaded with gunpowder and ammunitions, departed for Circassia; moreover, a few ships were also under preparation for an expedition to Circassia. However, he also told that, he was confident that it was only an attempt of a few Circassians without any involvement of the Porte. On the other hand, the Grand Vizier stated that the Porte would not permit such actions of the Circassians. Besides, since the friendship between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire was precious for the Sultan, not only would these vessels would be destroyed, but also the necessary advices to the officials of the Black Sea coast would be written in order to provide their caution for such acts.<sup>235</sup> On April 1857, the governor of Trabzon wrote to Istanbul that he received the firman and would be watchful to curb the transportation of the Circassians and ammunitions to Circassia.<sup>236</sup>

Afterwards, Butenev also gave a written complaint, which included the Russian demand of the prevention of the activities of Sefer Pasha, Muhammed Emin, as well as Mirliva Mehmed Pasha, i.e. Bandia. Mehmed Pasha, who succeeded in carrying weapons, ammunitions and soldiers to the Caucasus, with his collaborators Osman Ağa and Ali Bey was demanded to be brought back to Turkey for the sake of peace.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> *BOA İ.HR*, Dosya No.: 7327, 18 Cemaziyelahir 1273 [13 February 1857]. According to Pokrovskii before *Kangaroo*, Butenev also reported a vessel named *Aslan*, which was prepared to be sent to Circassia. Pokrovskii, p. 288.

<sup>236</sup> *BOA A.MKT.UM*, Dosya No.: 277, Gömlek No.: 8, 7 Şaban 1273 [2 April 1857].

<sup>237</sup> Budak, “Kanguru Olayı: Kırım Savaşı’ndan Sonra Çerkezistan’a Silah ve Mühimmat Gönderilmesi,” p. 480.

Most probably, after the *Kangaroo* affair the Porte tried to be more careful for the sake of peace with Russia. However, another such affair occurred in autumn of 1863. A British vessel named *Chesapeake* laden with weapons and Polish legionaries came to Istanbul whence after visiting Trabzon, arrived in Vardan on the Circassian coast.<sup>238</sup> Most probably, this was the last foreign attempt to support the Circassian resistance.

Russia was determined to prevent any repetition of such acts in the future. Devoid of efficient quarantine measures, Russia aimed to try to cease the traffic between the Ottoman Empire and Circassia in terms of diplomacy. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire took pains in not deteriorating its relations with the Russian Empire.

### **C. Last defense during 1860s and deportation of the Circassians**

On 13 June 1861, the Shapsugh, Abzekh and Ubykh held a meeting in Sochi to restructure the civil administration and reorganize the military. ‘The Great and Free Assembly’ was established consisting of fifteen elders. Emphasis was laid on unity and on pleading the Circassian cause to the Western powers, especially Britain. In 1861, a delegation of the Circassian Assembly met with the Russian officials, British consul in Sohumkale, and even Tsar Alexander II in Kuban. A large delegation of the Circassians came to the river Fars. Among them, 50 representatives received by the Tsar. In this meeting, Hacı Giranduk Berzeg, the chieftain of the

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<sup>238</sup> BOA HR.SYS, Dosya No.: 1205, Gömlek No.: 2, 13 October 1863 – 18 December 1863; *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza*, p.199.

Ubykhs, asked the Tsar to accept the Circassians as his subjects and not to expel them from their homelands. However, Tsar did not give any concession and claimed that the Abzekhs (probably meaning all the Circassians in the mountains) should make the choice in one month whether to settle in Kuban or to leave the mountains for Turkey.<sup>239</sup>

In June 1862, the Assembly resolved to send a special deputation to Istanbul, Paris, and London to request support for Circassia. In order to compensate the expenditures of the deputation, the Assembly put a tax on each household from Tuapse to Adler. The head of the deputation was İsmail Barakay Dziash. The Circassian deputation in Istanbul with the help of the Poles worked actively. They collected and sent armaments to Circassia. Three members of the deputation in Istanbul went to London.<sup>240</sup> There again meetings were held to attract public to the war in Circassia with the help of the Polish nationalists and David Urquhart.

In 1863, with the Polish uprising the Circassian cause once more came to the fore of the British public discussion, and probably last aids to Circassia were sent. After the suppression of the Polish revolt, in March 1864, Fuad Pasha and Witold Czartoryski, Adam Czartoryski's younger son, came together in Cairo and discussed the Circassian question.<sup>241</sup> In the same month, the Ubykhs made their last stand.

In 1864, the Circassian war ended with the victory of the Tsarist armies. On 14 April 1864, Grand Duke Mikhail met with the Circassian leaders in Sochi and

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<sup>239</sup> Polovinkina, pp. 151-152; Esadze, p. 81.

For a broad description of the last phase of the Russo-Circassian war, see, Esadze, pp. 76-111.

<sup>240</sup> Polovinkina, p. 155.

<sup>241</sup> *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza*, p. 200.

ordered them to leave the highlands and settle in the plains. This was actually a plan of Count Yevdokimov, which had been put forward in 1860.<sup>242</sup> Those, who refused the order, were given an ultimatum to leave for the Ottoman lands within one month, or otherwise they would be considered the prisoners of war. On May 21 1864, Grand Duke Mikhail proclaimed the end of the Caucasian War.

As a result of decades of war, the Circassians faced the total expulsion from Circassia, which involved an enormous human tragedy. Hundreds of thousands of Circassians and Abkhazians were herded to Taman, Anapa, Novorossiysk, Tuapse, Sochi, Adler and Sohumkale, wherefrom they were transported in chartered vessels across the Black Sea to the Turkish ports, Trabzon, Samsun, Sinop in the Anatolian coasts, as well as Constanta, Varna and Burgaz in the Balkans.

Gardanov alleges that the slave trade was used by the Ottoman agents in their provocations for the mass immigration of the Circassians from Circassia.<sup>243</sup> Though it would be inaccurate to see Ottoman provocation behind the Circassian drama in the nineteenth century, it is important to note that the opportunity to sell their slaves in the Ottoman territory might encourage Circassians to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire as well as the desire to continue their war against Russia basing in Caliph's state.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Count Yevdokimov argued that for the complete suppression of the mountaineers, it was necessary to evacuate the land between Belaia and Laba rivers from the mountaineers and the Cossacks would be settled there. Mountaineers would be asked whether they wanted to settle to the plains or immigrate to the Ottoman Empire. Esadze, p. 76.

<sup>243</sup> Gardanov, p. 119.

<sup>244</sup> There were abundant documents in the Ottoman archives on the matter of coming slaves from Circassia. On the one hand they signify that there was abundance of slaves on the Ottoman territory after the Circassian expulsion from the Caucasus, on the other hand Ottoman Empire tried to control this slave traffic with new arrangements. In one of documents it was claimed that sale of the slaves in the age of 25-30 would not be banned. *BOA. A.MKT.UM*, Dosya No.: 561, Gömlek No.: 49, 5 Zilkade 1278 [4 May 1862].

There seemed to be a Russo-Ottoman agreement after the Crimean war for a Circassian emigration to the Ottoman territories. However, the numbers discussed between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was as insignificant as 50.000, compared to the emigration of hundreds of thousands of Circassians.<sup>245</sup> Therefore, if such an agreement was existent, it was a diplomatic success of the Russian government for the realization of the plans, which had roots from the very time after the Treaty of Edirne. In 1835 in one of his letters, Nesselrode discussed the advantages of the deportation of the mountaineers to the Ottoman territories.<sup>246</sup>

Besides the Russian or the Ottoman strategic calculations, the Circassians also had their own reasons of to immigrate to the Ottoman lands: it was the state of the Caliph which was the only Muslim power resisting against the infidels. It was the country, which did not try to subdue them, and the place where they could continue their war against Russia. The Sultan himself was their relative, and many Circassians occupied the important posts in the Empire.

The Circassians hardly endure any psychology of the foreigner in the Ottoman territory. Their role in the military and bureaucracy enhanced after their mass immigration. However, this did not mean that their tragedy ended with the settlement

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Another document explains the conditions of the slave trade, and prohibits the trade of elders, children and women sent from Circassia. *BOA. A.MKT.NZD*, Dosya No.: 396, Gömlek No.: 97, 3 Şaban 1278 [3 February 1862].

<sup>245</sup> Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Wisconsin, 1985), p. 67. For the forced emigration of the Caucasian mountaineers in nineteenth century see also, G. Mambetov, "Iz istorii nasilstvennogo vyseleniia adygov v Turtsiiu", *Rossii i Cherkessiia (vtoraia polovina XVIII - XIX vv.)* (Maykop, 1995), pp. 184-206; N. Berzeg, "Izgnaniie cherkesov", *Rossii i Cherkessiia (vtoraia polovina XVIII - XIX vv.)* (Maykop, 1995), pp. 193-207; A. Tanina, "Angliia, Rossiia i mahadzhirovstvo", *Rossii i Cherkessiia (vtoraia polovina XVIII - XIX vv.)* (Maykop, 1995), pp. 207-228; Abdullah Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkas Göçleri 1856-1876* (Ankara, 1997); Süleyman Erkan, *Kırım ve Kafkasya Göçleri (1878-1908)* (Trabzon, 1996); Hayati Bice, *Kafkasya'dan Anadolu'ya Göçler* (Ankara, 1991).

<sup>246</sup>"From Graf Nesselrode to Baron Rosen, 17 [29] December 1835", *AKAK*, Vol. VIII, p. 892.

in the Ottoman Empire. A new deportation was to come as a result of the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War.

#### **D. Assessments**

After the Crimean War, the Ottoman Empire tried to maintain the peace with Russia. Therefore, while the Crimean war represented an anomaly in the Ottoman-Circassian relations, the post-war Ottoman policy hardly had any difference with the pre-war policy established after the Treaty of Edirne. On the other hand, there were now two leaders in Circassia: Sefer Pasha in the Natukhay and Shapsugh lands, and Muhammed Emin in the Abzekh and connected territories. None of them received the moral and the material help of the Porte. While the Porte was more sympathetic to Sefer Pasha, they both could hardly get any significant help. On the other hand, the Polish and the Circassian émigrés actually tried to do their best to keep on the Circassian defensive.

## CONCLUSION

Maybe the lack of leadership, which might have united the Western Caucasus under one rule, can be mentioned as the most significant weakness of Circassia in comparison to the Eastern Caucasus. However, some kind of stately establishments and emergence of an understanding of nationhood were under way during the war with Russia, which helped Circassia to resist for decades. Characteristically, diplomatic missions became one of the main aspects of the Circassian resistance. The Circassians soon accustomed to the war and the international relations, and tried to make use of the Eastern Question for their own cause. The road to an independent Circassia would pass through the capitals of the European powers, and the Circassians were conscious of the situation. The Circassians also made use of their geographical peculiarities. Circassia was not only a difficult terrain for the invaders, but also in contrast to the Eastern Caucasus it was not isolated and had well-established contacts with the Ottoman Empire.

Though it might have seemed somewhat utopic or unrealistic, a hope for a foreign support was one of the strengths of the Circassians. While the actual foreign aid to the Circassians throughout the war remained insignificant, the belief for a prospective foreign intervention always kept the fire of the Circassian resistance. Circassians, up until the very last moment, entertained the hope that the Western powers, especially England, would intervene on their behalf in the Russo-Circassian War, or a Russo-Ottoman War would reestablish the pre-Edirne Treaty conditions.

Therefore, they gave special importance to maintain their contacts with the Ottoman Empire and Britain. That expectation reached its climax after the defeat of the Russians in the Crimean War in 1856. They were well aware that without foreign help, military as well as diplomatic, they could not maintain their defense everlastingly. Therefore, while they were resisting in the mountains, they also did not forget that diplomatic missions were as important as the military victories. That is one of the reasons why Zankö Sefer's name was so significant in the Russo-Circassian War, and maybe much more legendary than the names of Hacı Degumuko Berzeg or Hacı Kizbech, well-known tribal leaders famous with their victories against Russia.

Zankö Sefer (later Sefer Bey and Sefer Pasha) deserves the most attention in regard to his activities before and during the Crimean War as a Circassian leader as well as an Ottoman Pasha. Though he lived in the Ottoman Empire for more than two decades after the Treaty of Edirne and Russia took pains prevent his activities, Zankö Sefer preserved his connections with Circassia, and continued to be the sole Circassian abroad who carried out the organization of the diplomatic mission. It can be argued that to some extent he played the same role for the Circassians, what Adam Czartoryski played for the Poles.

It is not possible to pronounce that a considerable foreign help was guaranteed to the Circassian missions. However, Zankö Sefer and the Circassian delegates not only preserved the Circassian question in the international agenda, but they also maintained the hope of a foreign help. On the other hand, while the foreign support was modest, this was still important (or if not vital) for Circassia where during the

war many commodities were scarce, among which arms and salt were critically important.

On the other hand, the Polish émigrés and missions were actively involved in with the Circassian question quite actively. They not only supported the Circassians from abroad politically, but also participated in the war against Russia in the Circassian mountains. However, all these efforts of both the Circassian and Polish émigrés initiated from the Ottoman soil.

Actually, the Ottoman Empire could not engage in the Caucasian matters because of its internal problems. The Porte always abstained from causing any conflict with Russia, being aware of its relative weakness comparing to the northern neighbor. Therefore, it is not possible to bring an argument for the active participation of the Ottoman Empire. However, its role yet should not be underestimated. One of the important aspects of the role of the Ottoman Empire was its deep-seated relations with Circassia culturally<sup>247</sup> and commercially. For the Circassians, the Ottoman Empire was almost a second fatherland not only because it was the Caliph's state, but also due to many historical cultural, commercial and social bonds. The mass immigration of the Circassians to the Ottoman territories after their defeat also should be understood in this context.

The Circassians carried out their commercial relations exclusively with the Ottoman Empire, while the Ottoman lands were the sole market for their most important commodity – slaves. The war in the commercial arena brought two

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<sup>247</sup> The Hajj affair and the Mollas coming from Ottoman Empire also should be added to the Circassian-Ottoman relations, and needed to be elaborated, which this work could not accomplish.

important results: while on the one hand, trade with Russia decreased dramatically, on the other, agricultural and animal production decreased and the slave trade became almost the sole income for the Circassians to meet their needs. The Circassians totally depended on the importation of salt, fabrics and ammunitions. They had to pay back with their agricultural products and of course slaves. The main market and the distribution center of the Circassian slave trade was Istanbul, as it had been for centuries. Slave trade also had a significant place in the Ottoman society.<sup>248</sup> Not only it was the base of the harem system in the Ottoman society, these slaves were also virtually absorbed by the society as servants, officials, generals etc. In the Ottoman Empire, it was possible for a talented slave to reach the highest social ranks since the Ottoman society was not of a caste structure.

In addition, in the Ottoman soil Circassians also conducted relations with the European powers, Polish émigrés and the Ottoman officials of the Circassian origin, which played a role in favor of the Circassians. In fact, the Porte was not the organizer, and only rarely it might encourage or condone, but in general it tried to prevent the activities of the Circassians not to deteriorate the Russo-Ottoman relations.

Ottoman archives are generally silent and only in the cases of some kind of a crisis with Russia then it became possible to see the documents on activities of the

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<sup>248</sup> In the literature also it was possible to see the effect and the role of the Circassians. *Felâtn Bey ile Râkım Efendi* and *Esaret* of Ahmet Mithat Efendi, and *Sergüzeşt* of Sami Paşazade Sezai can be given as examples, as the former optimistic, and the latter pessimistic views for the slavery in the Ottoman Empire. For a general discussion of slavery as a theme in the *Tanzimat* literature, see İsmail Parlatır, *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik* (Ankara, 1992).

Many examples of the Anatolian folk music include the themes and subjects related to the Circassians as well.

Circassians or the Poles.<sup>249</sup> While we can argue that the Ottoman Empire tried to keep the peace with the Russian Empire, it probably could not control its officials completely in the Circassian matter. As for Britain, Ponsonby acted differently from the government and Urquhart had his own diplomacy, a similar case can also be speculated for the Ottoman Empire. While the state was trying to preserve the peace and friendly relations with Russia, the Pashas of Circassian origin had their own agendas. Though a comprehensive study is needed to assess their activities completely, one can argue that Russia exaggerated their role to ascribe its own failures to the foreign undermining activities. Apart from that, there is no evidence of the dispatch of an Ottoman agent to Circassia save for the Crimean War period.

However, relations of the Circassians with the outside world, on the other hand, alerted Russia to a great extent that Russia set the insulation of Circassia, in both economic and political terms, one of the most important parts of its plan to subdue the Circassian territories fully. Russia, very soon after the Treaty of Edirne, engaged in a naval blockade, and then supported this blockade with establishment of a number of fortifications in the Eastern Black Sea shores. It was declared that any trade with the Circassians, with the exception of a few ports under its control, was illegal and would be prevented. By this way, it aimed to close the Circassian coasts to the foreign vessels. Russia had two main aims in establishing this blockade: first, it would isolate the mountaineers from Turkey and other powers, thereby preventing any deliveries of weapons, powder, salt, and the entrance of foreign emissaries; and

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<sup>249</sup> *Kangaroo* crisis, Zanoko Sefer's 15 years exile in Rumelia, or Muhammed Emin's exile to Damascus in 1857 when he came for petition to Istanbul are the famous examples of Ottoman Empire's careful and defensive policy against Russia.

second, simultaneously to make the Russian trade protected from any foreign competition, and thus to connect the Circassians to Russia via trade.<sup>250</sup>

In addition, considering the Caucasian wars absolutely its internal matter, Russia tried hard to prevent any discussion on the Caucasian matters among the international circles. Russia was always uneasy about the activities of the Polish and the Circassian émigrés, though it was not always possible to press the Ottoman Empire to prevent their activities, when Britain or France were also involved in the issue.

As for the British policy in the Near East, it had two main characteristics: To preserve the security of the way to the India, as well as those of the British commercial rights and privileges in the Near East. For both concerns the Caucasus had a certain role, though the Caucasus was rather on the periphery since the main competition was going on in the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

In the course of the Russo-Circassian war, the Crimean War constituted an exceptional period. It changed the international context for three years though afterwards the previous order was reestablished. The inactive stay of Sefer Pasha in Sohumkale for months, the Ottoman support for both Sefer Pasha and Muhammed Emin all showed that the Ottoman Empire could not develop a clear-cut plan and could not pursue any strategy, and the war years passed with absolutely no gains for both the Ottomans and the Circassians. However, to the failures of the Ottoman Empire policies of Britain and France also should be added. With the desire of the

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<sup>250</sup> Vladimir Degoev, *Bolshaia igra na Kavkaze: istoriia i sovremennost* (Moscow, 2001), p. 77.

Allied command the Ottoman army and navy to a large extent pacified and only played the role of walking-on part in the war, therefore it was also difficult to develop and pursue an efficient Caucasian policy for the Ottoman Empire.

Throughout the war, the Russian policy was extremely strict and bloody. Esadze, after describing a storm and the destruction of a Circassian village, underlined the importance of such attacks for subduing the Circassians. He argued that these attacks forced the Circassians to refuge to the mountains where they could not resist long, leaving the productive farms to the Cossack settlers.<sup>251</sup> The Circassians were faced with only two options: the resettlement in the plains in the Russian territory which promised only a dubious future under the rule of their most hatred enemy and the emigration to the Ottoman lands abandoning all their material and spiritual possessions behind. They chose the latter. However, they did not forget their country, and many continued their struggle during their lives in the Ottoman Empire hardly losing their hopes to return Circassia.

Russian conquest of Circassia undoubtedly changed the destiny of the Circassians. The previous conquest of Circassia by Huns, Mongols, and Tatars before, did not bring any significant change in the demographic picture of the Western Caucasus. However, the Russian invasion changed the local demography significantly. The Russian conquest was followed with the nearly total expulsion of the Circassians. It was the result of the imperialist understanding of the Russian Empire: the invaded land had to become a part of the core of the country and the Russians perceived themselves not as invaders but simply as the new masters.

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<sup>251</sup> Esadze, p. 75.

Following incorporation of the South Caucasus, and Russia which had plans to advance further to the south did not want a land enjoying an independent way of life. The complete suppression of the North Caucasus was seen as an absolute necessity for two main reasons: First, the North Caucasus was seen as the internal matter of the Russian Empire, and the war was merely a struggle against the rebels who did not obey the legitimate authority. Second, the people who inhabit the Russian borderlands and had special relations with the Ottoman Empire should be somehow eliminated to provide the secure boundaries.

After the Russian conquest in 1864, the number of Circassians in the North-western Caucasus drastically declined. Actually, the immigration from Circassia started after the Edirne Treaty, accelerated after 1860s, and then came the exodus of 1864. Even after 1864, the Circassian immigration continued. Less than 200.000 remained in the Caucasus scattered over a wide area extending from Mozdok in the east to the Black Sea in the west. The Russian and the Cossack colonists gradually occupied the places left by the Circassians, especially along the strategically important Black Sea littoral, which was cleared of the Circassian presence except for a few tiny pockets.

To sum up, any active policy of the Ottoman Empire in the affairs of Circassia throughout the Russo-Circassian War of 1830-1864 could hardly be discerned with the exception of the Crimean War period. The Ottoman Empire, known as “the sick man of Europe”, was in search of cures for its own disorders. It tried to provide its security against Russia by pursuing a politics of balance, and a war with Russia was the last thing the Porte desired. However, geographical proximity and accessibility of

the Ottoman Empire for the Circassians played a vital role during their resistance. In this context, Russia's apprehensions were not absolutely groundless. The activities of the Circassian and the Polish émigrés as well as of the European diplomatic circles were mainly conducted through the Ottoman soil. Therefore, it can be argued that the role of the Ottoman Empire was broader than its policies in case of Circassia. That was probably one of the reasons why the Russian Empire saw the total expulsion of this people as the only solution for the complete control of the Circassian territories.

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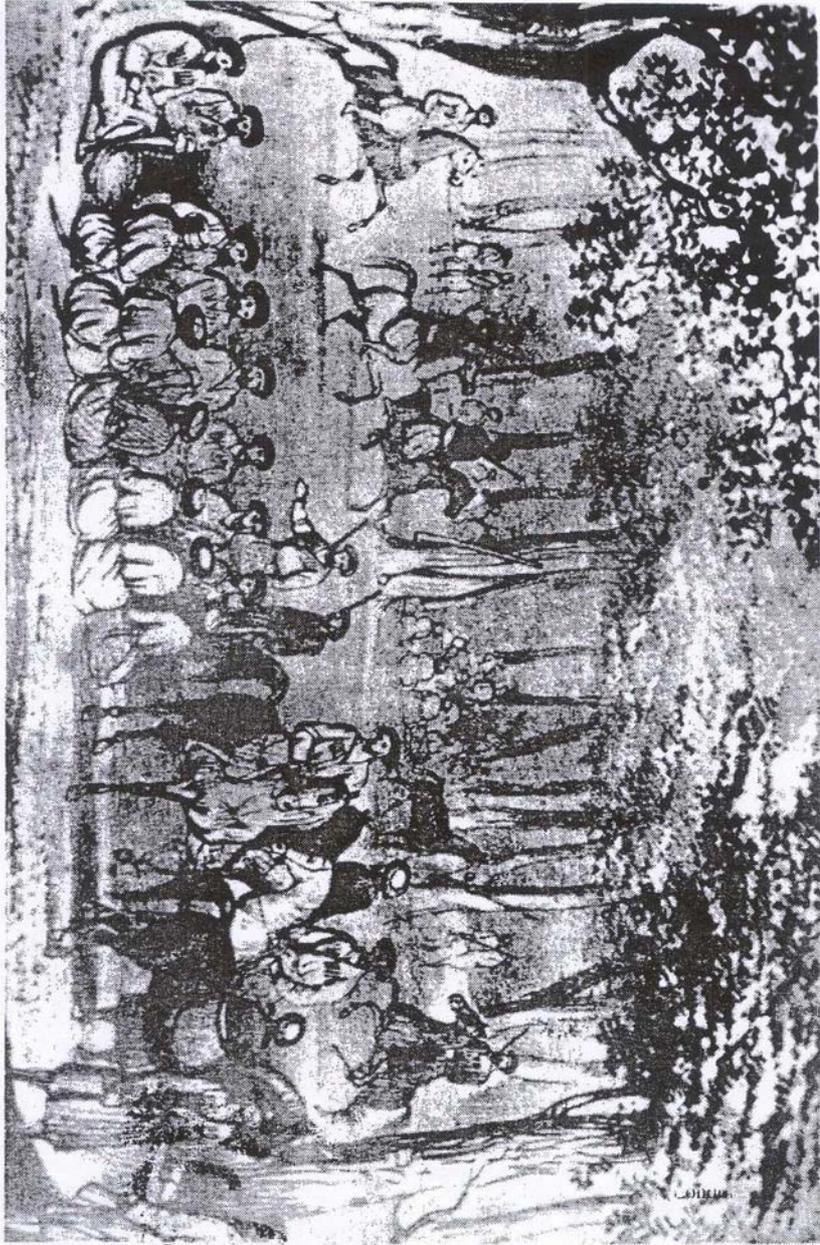
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Zanoko Sefer Bey



Muhammed Emin



A Meeting of the Circassian Chieftains



Source: Captain Spencer, *Turkey, Russia, the Black Sea and Circassia* (London, 1854).