

FRENCH TRAVELLER JACQUES FRANÇOIS GAMBA ON RUSSIA-GEORGIA RELATIONS IN THE 1ST QUARTER OF THE XIX CENTURY

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In the beginning of the XIX century, after abolishing Georgia's state system Russia started a new policy to strengthen its position in the Caucasus. In the XVIII century Russia was a defender of Georgia from aggressive muslim states. Pro- Russian policy of the King of Kartli and Kakheti Erekle II ended with the Treaty of Georgievsk. Though, the Georgian authority soon became disappointed as Russia did not implement the obligations taken by the Treaty. On the contrary, Russian rudely abrogated the articles of the Treaty, abolished Georgia's state system and began the colonization of the Caucasus in the beginning of the XIX century. The work presents the research the activities of the French council in Georgia, traveller Jacques François Gamba, in Russia and the Caucasus, namely:

- Treatment of the special plan for trade road through the Transcaucasus for the Russian Empire for simplification trade conditions of the European countries;
- Evaluation of Russian-Georgian relations in the 1st quarter of the XIX century as one of the difficult questions for the Caucasus and showing the reality of their relation in a new frame;
- The development of European trade road in the Caucasus and improvement of a trade project with Asia, which aimed using trade road through the Transcaucasus and attracting French trade capital in Asia;
- Analysis of the Russian-Turkish opposition for the supremacy on the Black Sea;
- Evaluation of the Russian ruling in Georgia;
- Analysis of Russian colonial policy in Georgia.

Keywords: The caucasus, Colonization of the caucasus, Russian colonial policy.

Introduction

Not one work is written about Russia-Georgia relation. The researches are based on as Georgian sources as information of foreign travelers. In this period, we mean the beginning of the XIX century, not one foreign traveler visited to Georgia who left us valuable notes around the abovementioned issue. We think that lots of thing about Russia-Georgia relation is still becoming the object of scientific research. Soviet historiography school obstructed the objective research on the mentioned theme, which obstructed honestly reporting of historical facts or events. In the present work there is studied Russia-Georgia relation in I quarter of the XIX century according to the French traveler Jacques François Gamba's work

when he was in Georgia. The analysis of Gamba's [1] notes helps us in terms of to study the problem with different perspective. The work was written in 1824-1826 and it is based on the impressions of traveling in Russia and South Caucasia. The Georgian translation of the work was published in 1987.

In the XXI century one of the unsettled problems for Caucasus is staying the issue of relationship with Russia. Although this problem is not only the product of our political life. It began rather a long time ago. In the XVIII-XIX centuries gaining the sphere of influence in Caucasus and conquest-adoption of the entire region was one of the tasks of Russia Empire. In South Caucasia imperial politics of Russia completed with abolition of Georgia State. The Imperial Court began oppression of the local population, who was not adapting to the rude policy of the colonialist and was arranging rebellions against violence. At the time of the Soviet Union the historiography in the area of the Soviet was reporting incorrectly the issues of Russia – Georgia relation; incorrect researching of the history and falsification of facts made society deadlocked and gave the beginning to the ethnic conflict between Caucasian people in Caucasus, which had been provoked by Russia still in the previous century. In terms of studying Russia-Georgia relation it is very interesting French traveler Jacques François Gamba's work, which shows us the existing reality in I quarter of the XIX century with new perspective in terms of relationship of two countries.

Research Problem: Caucasus Relationship with Russia

a. Analysis of Situation in Caucasus

In second half of the XVIII century political situation in Georgia became the most difficult. The King of Kartl-Kakheti Erekle II was in irrepressible searching for finding a strong ally. The Royal Court had tried several times to establish diplomatic relationship with European States and procure strong military allies for weakened country by external enemies by means of European leaders. Not one letter sent to Europe by Erekle confirms it [5; 393]. It's remarkable, that Georgian ruling politicians don't rely on France accidentally . Georgian monarchs have contacted with France for ages. It's enough to remind the letter sent by Georgian King **Giorgi V** to the King of France **Philippe VI Valua** (1328-1350), which was taken to France by monk from Francisko. King George asked French government to make free from Egyptian violence and promised to give 30 000 soldiers in case of the consent [5;314]. Political relationship between France and Georgia has developed in the following centuries. In the beginning of XVIII century Georgian politician and elesiastic figure Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani addressed Ludoviko XIV to help in getting rid of Russian-Osmalitian aggression [6;452]. Georgian Monarchs asked to be in ally with and protect from French government and other European leaders .

The king of Imereti Solomon II had addressed French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)for several times. In his letters the monarch of Georgia mentioned Russia as a conqueror, Barbarian state, which made Georgians slaves in their own country, but Georgians began to believe in restoration of the state system, when Napoleon appeared in the world politics. It's clearly shown from the speech of king Solomon II: "My lord (meant Napoleon –G.S.), you were sent by God to help and protect humanity. The furthest people on the world have the same rights as the people living very near to you, as they feel the same power of your strength and greatness. My family has already governed for 1200 years. I'm a ruler of the people living here. My kingdom earlier was situated till the Black Sea, I could feel pleasure here in freedom, till the greediness of the state of Russia had woken up the project of disturbing my freedom and had provoked foreign wars to govern my kingdom more freely, even to threaten my existence " [5; 434]. Although at that time European States avoided to involve in Caucasus politics because there were crossed interests of three powers – Turkey, Iran and Russia and Erekle had to choose Russia as political ally. Erekle's pro-Russian course was finished by the Treaty of Georgievsk [2; 27].

Aggressive Iran could not be stopped by the taken course to the north neighbor. In spite of great disappointment politics of Russia made more active after Erekle's death in Caucasus and particularly in Georgia. The Imperial Court of Russia was trying with different means to prepare fertile soil for colonial politic in Georgia. One of the important ways was to actuate spy network. Tsarism in II half of the XVIII

century sent not one travelers in Georgia, whose formal aim was to study natural recourses of country. In fact their object of observation was lots of things: social condition of people, economy of country, minerals, flora and fauna and what is important to study political attitudes of local population [3; 384]. We can imagine everything very clearly by a letter of German traveler Jacob Reinegs being in Georgia at that time, which he sent to Potemkin in 1782, we read in the letter: “All Iberia, King Solomon are allegiance... of the Emperor and prince (Potemkin); and I get Georgia (betokened East Georgia – G.S.) in such situation as you would wish” [4; 16]. At the beginning of the XIX century Russia actively began colonial digest of Caucasus. Russia needed S South Caucasia for strong trade transit way through it what would increase not only trade capital of Russia in Caucasus and Asia but European states would also use this transit way and so the Imperial Court would get very large income by the form of imposed duty on commercial goods.

b. Jacques François Gamba and His Vision on Caucasus Problems in Relationship with Russia

At first trade conditions imposed by Russia in Caucasus were quite bondage, what was blocking European capital, but gradually for the purpose of restricting trade of England and for attract Continental Europe Russia gradually softened trade conditions and liberalized them. Particularly on October 8, 1821 there was established preferential trade and transit in Transcaucasia. In what French traveler Jacques François Gamba did his great bit. He was born on December 26, 1723 in city Dunkirk. Secondary education received in Jules Monastery Collegium and high education in Paris and Leipzig. Because of his father’s death he was leading the Firm of Lumber. After bourgeois revolution of France the firm of Gamba was abolished and the future traveler began translation activities. In the period of restoration of Bourbons he drew up the improvement project of trade with Asia and presented it to the Government, which aimed to use the trade way crossing Transcaucasia by which French trade capital would be increased in Asia. This project was approved by Minister Richelieu and it was his initiative and support that Gamba traveled in Russia and South Caucasia. French traveler went to Petersburg yet and than from Petersburg on March 1, 1822 he arrived in Odessa through Moscow, Tully, Oryol, Kursk, Kharkov, Bakhmut, Taganlog, Kherson and Nikolayev. Gamba passed his plans, which aimed to make easier trade relations in Transcaucasia, to Russia Government with the introduction of High Commissioner of Caucasus Yermolov. The Chief of Navy of the Black Sea, Admiral Greig was charged to send warship in Odessa by the order of Emperor, which would arrive in Kulevi Port (Georgia) from Sevastopol, and it was the warship Gamba would be traveling with several attendants. It seems that trade interests of France found some coincidence with Russian trading plans, that’s why Russian Government promoted Gamba to implement this project.

It seems that Gamba’s trading-industry ideas were greatly approved in Government Circles of Russia, by that should be explained the fact that the estate was apportioned for him in West Georgia by the order of High Commissioner of Caucasus Yermolov in order to he would have thought to open trading-industry institution in Ajameti forest, although Gamba was using this estate with another purpose, he rented it and provided Military Departments with timber [1; 4] Imposition of preferential tariff promoted growth of trade capital of France in Transcaucasia that’s why for expressing gratitude Government of France awarded Gamba by the Order of Legion of Honour and appointed him as Consul of France in Tbilisi. During the period of acting in capacity of Consul Gamba helped to French merchants arrived in Georgia for implementation trading activities. In 1824-1826 Gamba published in two volumes the description of travelling in Russia and Transcaucasia. In his work there are very interesting notices about Russia-Georgia relations. It seems well from the work that French traveler had learnt quite well Georgian History; in this respect he recalled numbers of foreign sources. It seems Gamba had very good knowledge in Geography, because he transmits us about natural landscape of Georgia with enviable accuracy, describes population, their social life, practice-rules.

Talking at Russia-Georgia relationship the French traveler very often uses the term “conquered”, also “Russian provinces of Transcaucasia”, by analysis of Gamba’s notices we can see clearly the existed political picture of I quarter of the XIX century in Georgia: Russia has conquered Georgia and population

do not adapt to Russian governing, we can imagine all these very well by the example of Abkhazia one of the oldest part of Georgia. Gamba describes in detail political situation of Abkhazia when he came there from Odessa. Despite that at that time there were Russian military units in almost every populated area of Georgia Russia had not finally subordinated the Caucasus yet. During describing one of the oldest cities in Abkhazia Gagra Gamba mentions: “If stone fortification was built here five hundred men garrison would be enough for defense this part of Abkhazia bordering of Samegrelo and old Kolkheti from the Caucasus people. The location of Gagra is very convenient; Government of Russia should notice this place and its capturing should become the first meaning task for Russia if it wants finally calming and subordinating of Caucasus people. This is more necessary for during last ten years this people have been continuously fighting against it; in any case they who live on the border of Russia and have hostile attitude toward it have been fighting against it” [1; 78]. Hostile mood of local population was of course stipulated by severe colonial policy what the Government of Russia implemented in the conquered people. At that time Russia had not yet gained a foothold in Abkhazia finally.

The interests of Russia and Turkey clashed to each other here. Georgian population was troubled from Turkey violence but ruling of Russia was not less trouble for them that’s why Abkhazia did not leave Russian soldiers in peace. As Gamba transmits us:” Only Sokhum-Kale and its narrow fence are under Russians’ govern: there will be a danger at every step out of this fence. When Russian soldiers had to go out from here for bringing firewood, fearing not to abduct by Abkhazians they went armed from head to foot. Six years ago out of the fence there still were hundred or one hundred and fifty houses or huts; exactly it was the market, which was in hand of Armenian and Greek merchants; these houses were destroyed by the order of High Commissioner, as Abkhazians used them as a refuge and they could easily abduct Russian soldiers” [1; 82]. At that time Russian garrison stood in Sokhumi but Turkey did not adapt this. Gamba mentions: “Sokhum-Kale is the main fortification of Asia; it is the subject of constant dispute between Porta and Russians. Being asserted that they would cede it when they ceded Anapa and Poti if Turks had fulfilled the secret article of the last agreement. According to this article it had liability to transfer a small port built at the entrance of strait which Russia would use for standing its ships” [1; 82-83]. It should be noted that Gamba knew well not only the history of Georgia, also history of the whole Caucasus, he had information about Turkey violence and gave positive estimation of Russia’s appearance on political field: “During three centuries Circassia, Samegrelo and Georgia supplied harems of Constantinople and Mamluks’ corps in Egypt with captives; that is why Turkey suffers severely for loss of these ports. But do not exactly religion, dignity, humanity inspire Russia the duty never to abandon the fortifications and if they were again in possession of Turks they would not have other goal besides trading by own citizens again? [1;83]. From Sokhumi Gamba continued the way to the West Georgia with two hundred men escort for security he was helped by the Commandant of Sokhumi. Gamba explains all these by the frequent pirate in Abkhazia. One part of the escort should have reconnoitered the territories preliminarily to avoid attacks of the local population [1; 84]. Abkhazian pirates hijacked not one ship going from Trabzon, whose crew members were atoned by French settled in Georgia. For prevent attacks of Abkhazians Russia added two warships for patrolling on the coast of Black Sea [1; 84]. In Sokhumi Captain Egorov arranged a meeting between Gamba and the young Head of Abkhazia who according to Gamba had pro- Russian orientation. He always had danger of attack of Abkhazians and Muslim Circassians that is why the fortress of the Head of Abkhazia was protected by Russian soldiers [1; 85].

Gamba transmits us very interesting information about the family of the Head of Abkhazia. Kelesh-Bey (Shervashidze) appointed by the Turkish Government gradually moved to the side of Russia and did not obey to the Turkish Government that’s why he was killed in conspiracy. As Gamba informs us the leader of this conspiracy was one of Kelesh-Bey’s sons, as it seems the controversy between Russia and Turkey and unremitting wish of domination on the Black Sea was also reflected on Shervashidzes’ family. The successor of Kelesh-bey was also devoted Ruler of Russia. He was awarded by Colonel Rank and St. Ana’s Medal from Sapar-Bey’s Authority although by the information of French traveler he was still connected to Islam internally. From the Sapar-Bey’s brothers opponent of Russia was his third brother Hasan-Bey who was expatriated by Russians from Kelasuri. After Sapar-Bey’s death Russians crowned as Head of Principality of Abkhazia his elder son who had been grown up in Russia and did not

know even his mother tongue. By the information of Gamba Abkhazia was ruled by his mother for a period [1; 86]. In the beginning of the XIX century Russia Government in terms of learning minerals in Caucasus sent not one science. Russia except transit way of the Black Sea had also other interests in Abkhazia, this was gold deposits, in this regard French traveler transmits us very interesting information: "We meet reach areas with graphite in six verst from Sokhumi and there is gold deposit at the village Souk-Su. As being convinced Sapar-Bey hid it carefully because he was afraid of Russia might intend to conquer this region for this deposit [1; 87]. Russia began colonial digest of Transcaucasia according to the plan. The special maps were made up in Petersburg for the implementation of the Russia policy would be uninterruptedly. Gamba himself had seen such kinds of maps in Petersburg. [1; 94] From Sokhumi Fransua Gamba arrived at the known Kulevi port at that time, the same Redut-kale where he met to Peter Gorchakov appointed as the Ruler of Imereti who by the French traveler's information was charged to supervise Samegrelo and Abkhazia. Gorchakov had arrived in Redut-kale to help Head of Principality of Abkhazia; it is supposed that local population was confrontation of the Ruler appointed by Russia and that is why he needed additional military force [1; 96]. In the French traveler's book it seems well hard social life of Georgian population. According to his notes we can tell that people were living in extreme poverty.

In terms of improvement of social conditions Gamba had hopes of Russia Government: "Although fairness requires and we must admit that Russia has just possessed this region and it continuously cares to create better conditions in the country. So we can think after all that in small period there will be eradicated unfavorable conditions mentioned by me, what has greater influence on human life than they think" [1; 97]. As in Georgia as in all Transcaucasia imposed preferential trade tariffs and simplified conditions promoted enter of European capital, Gamba notices about it: "Russian government easily allows Russian and foreign merchants travelling freely on military ships between the Crimea and Samegrelo . It's enough to ask mr. Admiral Greig in Nikolaev or vicegerent Ermolov in Tbilisi [1;99]. Russia has conquered Abkhazeti and other parts of Georgia, Guria . During Gamba's travelling government of Russia already had its representative there. Gamba writes : "Guria is situated to the left of Phazisi . There is a head there who pays a trouble of respect to Russia " [1;107]. A traveler doesn't write the reasons, but that time Russians left the fortress of st.Nikolozhi on the territory of Guria, which they used during Turkish attack , though they occupied two fortresses instead on the territory" [1;107]. Gamba , who was in Imereti, describes the buildings, which were constructed in a special way because of Turkish attacks: "the construction of the buildings and the weapons used for decorating the houses, tells about that the inhabitants of this territory are accustomed to the attacks of Turkish brigands. They raided these villages and stole live-stock and kidnapped the members of peasants families. After Imereti became obedient to emperor Aleksandre, raiding of the inhabitants stopped almost completely near the border of Akhaltsikhe" [1;163].

After establishment of Russian authority, local inhabitants were protested against Russian colonial politics, there were several popular uprisings that time. Government of Russia took up arms against the displeased people. Russian armed forces were placed on the whole territory of the south Caucasus . The French traveler writes about this: "Russians had their posts everywhere in the south Caucasus. Gamba lets us know that there were Cossacks from the Don ." It is noticeable, that Cossacks had an active three-years service in Georgia " [1;131]. Russian soldiers came to Georgia with their families , this fact was more difficult for local inhabitants. From Gamba , the immigration of Russian soldiers was Ermolov's idea : "Ermolov persuaded the government of Russia and they had just sent soldier's wives to the south Caucasus. Government of Russia made so called constant colonies where the inhabitants can easily adapt to the new places because of their devoted trustee wives they don't feel themselves isolated "[1;197]. Gamba gives special place to Imereti popular uprising of 1820 in his work. He doesn't mention the reasons, caused by violence of Russians. It was expressed by the huge taxes and physical oppression of the population. By his information Imereti popular uprising was put down by prince Gorchakov : " There are mostly brave inhabitants in "mazra", they took very active part in Imereti popular uprising of 1820 and prince Gorchakov disarmed exactly them. After the defeat they melted again the confiscated swords and daggers and made nails and locks for the newly constructed barracks in Khotevi "[1;192]. Georgians couldn't adapt to the lost freedom and the dissatisfaction against the government of Russia was increasing

more and more. Government of Russia tried to win distinguished people over, to have more influence upon lower levels.

We can imagine the situation on the example of Gamba's description of princes of Imereti : "we stopped in Djikhaishi after two hours travelling: this is a very big village situated on a wonderful place, which is the part of the huge lands of three Imeretian princes devoted to Russia . They had the ranks given during the service in the (armed) forces . One of them is the major and got a gold sword as a present from his majesty emperor for the courage and devotions shown during the 1820 popular uprising " [1; 149]. Many distinguished people in Georgia began to service for Russia. The personal prosperity given from the emperor had the main meaning for them: "Imeretian distinguished people , who got rid of obedience and despotism of the chiefs, kept the authorities on their slaves except the right of beating them. They are eager their country to join his majesty emperor's state" [1; 154]. Local princes had their bit in the suppressing of Imeretian popular uprising of 1820. For a long time Gamba lived in the family of local princes serving in Russian forces: "these two Imeretians had very good temper and that's why they were invited to the parties. They had heroic aspiration for showing courage during the popular uprising of 1820 in Imereti. They did their best to be devoted to the emperor Aleksandre and got Russian military titles and other awards " [1; 179]. Gamba evaluates positively the establishment of Russians control over Georgia . This was conditioned by two reasons :

1. Russian government enjoyed his confidence , supporting his traveling and implementing several projects . In other way he couldn't write these projects;
2. Gamba noticed very well the hard social conditions of Georgians and he thought that the main way to improve the situation was the establishment of Russian's control over Georgia.

This fact is confirmed by his words : " Justice demands us to recognize ,that after Russia has changed the barbarian regime there , many positive changes became noticeable in people's life. To confirm the idea with the facts , we may say, that during 20 years , when Russia was ruling this land, there were only two or three murders "[1; 216]. As one of the French influential Minister Rishelie, as a traveler Jacques François Gamba thinks , that the South Caucasus and especially Georgia can play an important role in inculcating upon European trade capital . Gamba writes: " the Caucasus , especially the West Georgia would be very wining for Europe making trade relationship or agricultural enterprises , because the labour power was very cheap here "[1; 139]. Gamba also mentioned Georgian church in his work. Government of Russia canceled the century-old independence of Georgian orthodox church and subordinated it to Russian synod. A French traveler confirms the fact : "Georgians recognize Greek Christian faith till they were conquered by Russians . They were subordinated to their own patriarch so called Katholikos not to the patriarch from Constantinople . Today Georgian bishops get instructions from Russian archbishops and they are under the control of the synod of St.Peterburg " [1; 217].

Conclusion

The book of the French traveler Jacques François Gamba, who was an ex-consul from France in Georgia, is the important source for the point of view of the first quarter of 19-th century for stating the relationship between Russia and Georgia. Analyzing the information given the French author, it's possible to restore the picture of colonial politics of Russia in the South Caucasus, particularly in Georgia. It is fact that this politics is continuing from the Russia side in spite of that the French traveler does not criticize Russia politics according to Georgia and to Caucasus in wholly.

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