

The Ottoman Near East in The Republican History of Turkey: The Problem of Mosul and Hatay in The 1920s-1930s

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On 28 February 1920, the program of struggle for independence (National Oath) was adopted. Thus, the main goals become the survival of the Republic within its ethnographic borders. The peculiarity of the international situation of Turkey after the Lausanne conference in 1923 was that its former opponents acquired the status of neighbors, thanks to obtaining mandatory rights in the territory of the former Ottoman Empire: Mosul and Hatay (Iskenderun or Alexandretta). In the 1920s and 1930s, the question of these former Ottoman provinces was a serious problem in Franco-Turkish and British-Turkish relations. Britain and France, with US support, were not going to give up their old privileges. French and especially British diplomacy, tried to take advantage the Republic's internal difficulties to prevent the Kemalists to stabilize the country, to weaken its position in the region and thus further strengthen their own influence in the Near and Middle East, which markedly increased after the First World War.

The dispute over the territorial belonging of Mosul was one of the main after the Lausanne conference. This province of the Ottoman Empire was occupied by the British after the Mudras truce in October 1918. The loss of Mosul deprived the Turks of oil fields and allowed the British to constantly threaten Turkey, relying on numerous Kurdish tribes living in the province. The Turks were convinced that London provoked the uprising Sheikh Seyid in Diyarbakir in 1925 to show the League of Nations that Ankara is not able to ensure order in region. For its part the British politicians did not exclude that Kemalists provoked a revolt, to get a reason to invade Iraq. The Pro-British position of the League of Nations Commission tilted the scales in favor of London. In addition, the prospect of preserving Mosul for Iraq has forced even the most extreme opposition of the Iraqi nationalists to support the extension of the British mandate. The mandate was signed on 13 January 1926 in the form of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. Not wanting to be involved in a new armed conflict, Ankara recognized the rejection of Mosul.

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On 5 June 1926 all disputes ended with the signing of the Anglo-Iraqi-Turkish Treaty. The Treaty left Mosul within Iraq¹.

As for Alexandretta, the mandate for the administration of this territory was transferred to France on 29 September 1923. Both Iraq and Alexandretta were handed over to the colonial powers under temporary administration. France's policy of decentralization led to the formation of the autonomous Alexandretta Sanjak (Iskenderun) in the North of Syria in 1921. Unlike Mosul, the agreement with France in Turkey was considered as a temporary assignment. The French biographer of Kemal Atatürk Alexander Zhevakhov wrote that the "French hoped that the special administrative regime introduced in this region by agreement with Ankara would calm the Turks. On the contrary, these privileges only strengthened the desire of the Turks to demand the accession of Khatai to Turkey... Every time Kemal promised "liberation" of Khatai (i.e. the region in the South of Syria with the cities of Iskenderun (Alexandretta) and Antakya (Antioch))"².

Atatürk's desire to pursue an independent foreign policy irritated the diplomacy of the Western powers, which feared that his example would affect the position of other countries of the Near and Middle East. In the 1920s, the Republic of Turkey was in a state of relative international isolation. However, by signing agreements with the United Kingdom and France on mandated territories (1926 r.), Turkey ended the period of "informal diplomatic and trade relations"³. In the 1930s, Ankara's policy was characterized by attention to maintaining the balance laid down in the Lausanne peace Treaty (the policy of positive neutrality). Therefore, when dealing with controversial issues, particularly related to the areas of Mosul and Alexandretta, and with the regime of the Straits, Turkey chose to use a compromise. In the 1930s Turkey's ties with France have intensified. In 1930, for the first time since the settlement of the Mosul issue, Turkish diplomacy took a step towards rapprochement with Britain. With the support of the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, Turkey regained sovereignty over the Straits by signing the Montreux Convention in 1936⁴. No less difficult task was solving

1 Н. Г. Киреев, *История Турции XX век*, Москва: ИВ РАН / Крафт+ 2007, с. 191

2 А. Жевахов, *Кемаль Ататюрк*, Москва: Молодая гвардия 2008, с. 319

3 В. А. Гурко-Кряжин, *Ближний Восток и державы*, Москва: Научная ассоциация востоковедения при ЦИК СССР 1925, с. 191.

4 А. В. Болдырев "Конвенция Монтрё в прошлом и настоящем российско-турецких отношений", *Мусульманское пространство по периметру границ Кавказа и Центральной Азии*, Институт востоковедения РАН. Москва: ИВ РАН, Крафт+ 2012, с. 436-437

by Turkish diplomacy in the East. Atatürk intended to conclude a Pact with the participation of countries of the Near and Middle East. However, the position of the Arab countries did not contribute to this because of the secular nature of the Turkish Republic. As a result, the efforts of Turkish diplomacy led to the signing of the Treaty of Saadabad (1937) with the participation of a limited number of countries - Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq⁵.

Turkey, pursuing an active policy in Europe and the East, became a link between East and West. Her efforts contributed to the formation of the treaty system from Europe to the Middle East. However, before the aggravation of the situation in Europe and the Mediterranean, Britain and France did not show much interest to Turkey. Since the mid-1930s, the struggle to attract Turkey to one side or another in the confrontation of the great powers in Europe and the Middle East began. An example of this is the history of Alexandretta's Sanjak. Until 1936, Turkey officially did not return to this issue. However, after the center-left coalition "Popular Front" came to power, the French government decided to transform the subordinated territories into independent States. On 9 September 1936, the Franco-Syrian Treaty was initialed. It radically changed the fate of Sanjak, as provided for the end of the mandate of France in three years and the entry of Syria into the League of Nations⁶. According to the Treaty, the Sanjak of Alexandretta became part of Syria, which was not stipulated in the Ankara Treaty concluded by France with Turkey in 1921. Therefore, on 10 December 1936 Atatürk declared "that diplomats must find a solution to transfer Hatay to Turkey"⁷. By the spring of 1938, street clashes in Sanjak had turned into a real war between Turks and non-Turks. France had to give up, fearing to lose support for Turkey in the difficult situation that has developed on the eve of the Second World War in the Eastern Mediterranean. The decision of France was influenced by British diplomacy, which hoped for the final displacement of French influence from the Levant. On 3 July 1938 in Antakya between the French and Turkish General staffs an agreement signed that provided for the introduction of Turkish troops in Sanjak in an amount equal to the French (2500 people). On 4 July 1938 in Ankara the Franco-Turkish Treaty of friendship was initialed, after which Turkish troops immediately entered the territory of Sanjak, which formally

5 И. И. Иванова, *Эволюция ближневосточной политики Турецкой Республики [1923-2016]*, Москва: Аспект-пресс 2017, с. 27.

6 Н. Г. Киреев, *История Турции. XX век*, с. 228

7 А. Жевахов, *Кемаль Ататюрк*, с. 319

received the status of an independent “state of Hatay” (Hatay Devleti)⁸. On 23 June 1939 two documents were simultaneously signed in Ankara and Paris. The Ankara agreement declared that Hatay joins Turkey; the Paris agreement became a Declaration on mutual assistance. Its text coincided with the earlier Anglo-Turkish Declaration of 13 May 1939 on cooperation and mutual assistance in the event of aggression in the Mediterranean region and mutual consultations on security in the Balkans⁹. The Syrian government refused to recognize the transfer of the Alexandretta’s Sanjak to Turkey.

Thus, in conclusion, it should be noted that the 1920s and 1930s Turkish diplomacy successfully combined the police of balancing with the collection of the remains of the Ottoman lands. Kemalist diplomacy was based on a fundamental principle: the combination of long-term relations with the Soviet Union and the policy of maneuvering towards western powers. An example of this was the desire to establish friendly relations with Britain, France, Greece and Italy – the former enemies of Turkey during the First World War. By the end of the 1930s, the Republic had completed the process of legitimation of its international status, meeting the beginning of the Second World War as an established state.

8 Н. Г. Киреев, *История Турции. XX век*, с. 228

9 *История дипломатии*, Москва: Издательство политической литературы 1965. Т. 3, 832 с.

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