

Musa Qasimli, USSR-Turkey: From Normalization of Relations till the New Cold War 1960-1979 (Moscow: Insan Publishing House, 2008) 576 pp. ISBN: 978-5-85840-008-0 (Russian)

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Soviet-Turkish relations began to normalize in the 1960s after a gloomy period of strong Cold War competition in the Black Sea and the surrounding region. The development of bilateral relations between these states in the 1960-1979 period is the review subject of the book written by Azerbaijani Professor Musa Qasimli. Qasimli is a well-known specialist on Turkey, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Azerbaijani foreign policy. Qasimli is a prolific author and pens many very interesting and intriguing monographs and articles all which are widely published around the world.

Qasimli's book is based on original, often rare unpublished foreign policy documents of the USSR, Turkey, United States (U.S.) and Great Britain. Qasimli worked hard and for a long time in various archival institutions of Azerbaijan, the U.S., Russia, Georgia and Turkey in order to create a forceful and convincing documentary base for his serious research work. High quality sources combined with a talent of storyteller make the book text highly interesting and attractive to read.

In the beginning Qasimli provides a general historical view of the bilateral relations. He traces the history of relations starting from the rebellious Lenin period and the October coup in Petrograd. Founders of the new states—Lenin and Atatürk—managed to lay the basis of two-pronged cooperation for the long term perspective and this basis was more pragmatic and less so ideological.

This historical account is followed by an analysis of the principal factors that influenced the normalization of Soviet-Turkish relations after the World War II. Qasimli believes that the following factors impacted relations: Turkish-U.S military cooperation, Eurasian geographical location of the USSR and Turkey, the Soviet intention to make its economy export-oriented, and a system crisis within the international socialist camp of states. The Cuban missile crisis, China and Cyprus factors, as well as Soviet support of leftist/nationalist movements in the Middle East and in the Balkans, also urged and stimulated the two states towards closer relations. Playing a role in this was the so-called 1964 quiet coup in Moscow when Communist leader Nikita Khrushchev was replaced by an authoritative party organizer and administrator, Leonid Brezhnev.

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The multilateral foreign policy of Turkey was the next factor influencing rapprochement. The political elite and generals of Turkey felt an extreme necessity for improving the two states' relations. As in its Ottoman past, Turkish diplomacy faced a serious challenge; a challenge to further foreign relations and of diplomatic maneuverability. The art of outstanding diplomatic maneuver served as a reliable tool—if not an undisputable advantage and asset—for Ankara did not wish to strain its relations with either NATO or the Warsaw Pact states.

Qasimli's book provides a thorough perspective into the workings of the Soviet-Turkish relations and the subsequent mutual visits of state officials. Qasimli's close attention to details on important developments, such as Nicolai Podgorny's state visit to Turkey, the visits Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Turkish Prime Minister Suat Ürgüplü, and the first visit of the Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin, are all very well documented and discussed in the book.

A new era of cooperation between the states began with the first visit of a Turkish President, in this case Cevdet Sunay, to the USSR in 1969. The two sides discussed key issues and problems pertaining to bilateral and multilateral relations. Ankara and Moscow's relations improved and Qasimli adds that agreements on trade and industry were signed and these concluded the period of severe crisis for they commenced a period of mutual trust. Soviet-Turkish negotiations became an integral part of the global process of Détente.

The 1969 Sunay visit provided an impetus to all spheres of the bilateral relations. Qasimli's book contains rare and, to some extent, unique facts on Soviet Azerbaijan and its role in reinforcing Turkish-Soviet cooperation. After the Sunay visit, Soviet Azerbaijan—granted permission from Moscow—took part in the 1970 İzmir International Fair. The fair pavilion of Azerbaijan demonstrated its achievements in the fields of culture, education, and industry. It also showcased its national film and literary achievements. Artists and scientists from Soviet Azerbaijan visited Turkey as guests of the fair and Azerbaijan's participation was thus a meaningful event for Soviet-Turkish relations. Qasimli stresses that Soviet Azerbaijan played a bridging role in moving two countries closer.

However, the Cold War was reanimated at the end of the 1970s. Tension at the international and West-East competition level prevailed over the normalization trend. Suspicions continued to trouble relations. Factors that prevented the development of cooperation remained while clandestine conflicts between the two states continued. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the deployment of U.S. Pershing II missiles in Western Europe worsened the situation.

A well trained historian, Qasimli very often pays attention to details and small

facts of historical events. For example, Qasimli discusses in detail an important Ankara press conference given by the former Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit. Two Soviet reporters of Azerbaijani origin who worked for the TASS Agency were present at this conference. Ecevit was known to be a very poet and an expert on journalism. During the conference, Ecevit alluded to a Turkish proverb but was, however, interrupted by a Soviet reporter, Ikhsan Mustafayev. Mustafayev pointed out Ecevit's error and offered a correct pronunciation of the same proverb. The poet Ecevit won over the premier minister Ecevit and responded, "You are right, Ikhsan bey" and then repeated the proverb correctly. After this occasion and when Ecevit held a press conference again, he asked Mustafayev, "Is my pronunciation correct, Ikhsan bey?" to which Mustafayev always replied, "You are right, Mr. Prime Minister". The allegory exemplifies, above all, that Soviet reporters and diplomats were prepared excellently for their service in Turkey. Secondly, Qasimli discusses the quality of the Soviet media and embassy officers used by the famous KGB and how this secret organization worked professionally. Lastly, the audience is presented the wise reaction of the Turkish prime minister and how he appreciated knowledge in the field of literature.

Qasimli's research approach and descriptive method is of the highest standards and warrants a great deal of respect. Every visit and every important negotiation meeting is told with a uniform descriptive method. Take, for example, the official 1972 Turkey visit of the Chairman of the USSR Supreme Council, Nicolai Podgorny. Qasimli details the staff of the Soviet delegation and describes the main events of the visit. Then Qasimli informs the audience of the Diplomatic Protocol peculiarities which surrounded the visit. It is very interesting to read about the political contents of Nicolai Podgorny and Turkish President Cevdet Sunay's meeting: topics on the security in Europe, the Cyprus Question, the near and Middle East, and on bilateral Soviet-Turkish relations. The visit functioned as a so-called 'cultural program'; Soviet guests visited famous and symbolic sites of Turkey history and statehood, Turkish theatres, industries, hospitals and institutions of higher education. The visit was concluded with the signing of inter-state treaties. What cannot be forgotten is the fact that only Podgorny formally held the status as the head of the Soviet State and possessed the legal right to sign international documents, while Leonid Brezhnev — the Secretary-General of the Communist Party of the USSR and actual state leader — did not.

Qasimli pays special attention to the secret war the USSR and Turkey waged against one another. One of the subchapters of the book is entitled, "Soviet illegal activities in Turkey" and another is, "Secret activities of Turkey in the USSR". Qasimli was able to refer to declassified documents and memoirs and proved that both countries were suspicious towards each other. Both Soviet and Turkish special services supported their proxy allies; for the Soviets they were the Greeks, Cypriots, Armenians, Bulgarians and some other Communist forces. Turkey, in

return, expanded its influence among the Turkic populated regions of the USSR and furthered NATO's interests in the Black Sea and the Middle East. Moscow was especially concerned of the possible impact the Azerbaijani emigration organizations had and the role Turkey could play with regard on the situation in Soviet Azerbaijan.

Although not all of the judgments and conclusions of the book can be agreed with, one must nevertheless, acknowledge the research of Qasimli as 'well-balanced'. Supporting this conclusion could be the story of how Prime Minister Ecevit spoke at a NATO summit in May 1978. Only a few know the intense discussion that took place at this summit held in the United States. U.S. President Jimmy Carter insisted on the necessity to resist the increased military power of the Soviet Union and argued in favor of building up NATO's military power. Ecevit proposed the complete opposite policy and offered a set of different ideas. According to Ecevit, the two world systems had to converge, become closer and maintain constant political dialogue. Ecevit proposed to create a reliable system of security in Europe by ceasing the unnecessary competition between the blocs. In other words, Ecevit possibly saw the coming of the new Cold War and felt a degree of concern and despair and wished to prevent the outbreak of new conflicts in the world. In this sense, he was neither pro nor anti-Soviet. He was loyal to Turkish obligations and responsible of NATO affairs. However, Ecevit sided with the supporters of balanced policy in relation to the USSR and told his colleagues that the Soviet Union did not pose real a danger to Turkey. Some commentators and analytical experts considered Turkey under Ecevit could advance its political-military cooperation with the Soviet Union. The Carter Administration was greatly embarrassed by this policy shift or even by the possibility of such a shift. President Carter labored to dissuade his Turkish colleague from developing a close cooperation with the USSR. Ecevit ultimately agreed with Carter and signed the 1978 NATO final agreement.

Qasimli maintains an objective position of analysis of both Turkish and Soviet policies. Qasimli's book definitely serves contemporary and future historians/international relations students whom wish to conduct objective research on Turkish and USSR foreign policy. This book offers a new perspective to Russian readers; they will know about the bright and gifted Soviet/Turkish diplomats and politicians. These people achieved the impossible during the Cold War and brought about the period of friendly Soviet-Turkish/Azerbaijani-Turkish relations.