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The Russian Colonial Perception and the Ethno-Political Reality in the Transcaucasia

The history of any empire, it goes without saying, represents a process of interethnic interaction. In order to grasp the dynamics of this phenomenon, it is first necessary to understand the colonizing ethnic unit's self-image within its own state, and how it generalizes the role of its own empire in the context of the world perception. The creation of an empire certainly implies the setting up of "own universe" and the subordination of others to this "universe" on the basis of inevitability of "justness." Bypassing these idealized causes ("justness") empire's leadership often neglects certain principles of utility and security. It is therefore important to clarify how the dominated nations regard this "imperative justness" and how they conceive the essence of the state in which they are obliged to reside. It is also acknowledged that the existence of an empire implies the presence of a certain soundproof "cultural" wall between the conquering and dominated nations, beyond which neither desires to see or listen to the other.

In 1813 Iran and Russia concluded a treaty according to which Iran, in favor of Russia, was surrendering the lands of the Georgian kingdom as well as the khanates of Karabakh, Ganja, Shaki, Shirvan and Talysh. In 1829 the same states concluded another - Turkmanchay treaty. This time Iran ceded Erivan and Nakchivan khanates to Russia. Thus, from 1930-ies Caucasia became part of the Russian Empire. Russia vigorously started to colonize this region settled with the peoples of various origin. These people differed by the level of development, tradition of statehood, language, culture, economic setup.

Before the analysis of these phenomena, it deems appropriate to first analyze the aggressive nature of the Russians and understand how the

colonial ideology and tactics of the Russian empire is related to it in general.

It has been mentioned a number of times that mass collective resettlement is not characteristic of the Russian practice. Russian colonialism was fundamentally different from analogical phenomena in Western Europe. This difference as apparent, first of all, in the nature of resettlement. Russians did not leave their own territory as emigrants but rather occupied the possessions of their former neighbors, which, was taken possession of by "their emperor" by force of arms. In other words, the key characteristic feature of Russian colonialism was the expansion of the state's borders at the expense of conquering of neighboring territories, and as a consequence of which, in the perception of the Russian population these lands were referred to as Russian lands, representing a sort of "extension" of Russia in that word's literal sense. They believed that the border of Russian state passes at the frontline of the Russian army. Such perception of the border of the Russian kingdom border is very vivid in, for example, Alexander Pushkin's work. In his well-known work "Travel to Arzrum," Alexander Pushkin writes: "This is Arpachay, Cossack told me. Arpachay is our border! I rushed to the river filled with some strange feeling. I had never seen the land of aliens. The border was something mysterious for me. I complacently galloped my horse in the river and reached the Turkish bank, but this bank had too, had already been taken in by our army: I was still in Russia."

In the perception of a Russian, the region where Russians live, which falls under the Russian rule is already Russia; but it becomes "Russia" definitively when a Russian church is built there. Often Russian peasants – new occupants whose hopes over a new lot would be dashed and they would even decide to leave this region, would ultimately remain there, unwilling to leave a newly built prayer house – a church. As a rule, Russian new occupants would settle in the vicinity of the local population, they would easily find a common language with them and did not feel