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Illarion Ivanovich Vorontsov-Dashkov as a Viceroy of the Caucasus
(1905-1916)

The First Russian Revolution had a direct impact on the ruling of the Caucasus. The crisis that occurred there was connected not only with the social and economic development of the population, but with the escalation of interethnic conflicts, which enforced a review of the ruling model of the region. Restricting the right of indigenous peoples to learn their own language and to develop their culture by the Russian government, the growth of ethnic tensions between the Christian and Muslim population, the emergence of revolutionary parties and movements with anti-Russian orientation, reflecting the desire for self-determination and an independent state - all these were just some of the reasons that turned the Caucasus region into an “explosive zone” on the eve of the First World War.

The complicated situation in the Caucasus required Nicholas II to take quick and explicit decision to revise the local government. On February 26, 1905 the Russian emperor issued a decree¹ to restore the position of Viceroy of the Caucasus, which included the functions of a civil High Commissioner of the Caucasus, commanding the troops of the Caucasus Military District, Ataman of the Caucasian Cossack troops. Furthermore, the Viceroy was a member of the State Council, the Council and the Committee of Ministers. He was assisted in his activities by two assistants in the civil and the military part. The Viceroy was also the employee who, after given royal instructions, had to

¹ ПСЗРИ, Собрание третье, т. 25 (1905), Часть 1 , № 25891

prepare the statute (polozheniye²) for the rule of the Caucasus region. He obtained extensive powers in the management of the region, as for his actions he was responsible only to the Emperor. The restoration of the Caucasian Viceroyalty was related to the choice of a suitable figure to restore order and peace, and to ensure the loyalty of the Caucasian population. After some hesitation, Nicholas II appointed Count Illarion Ivanovich Vorontsov-Dashkov.

Starting his military service in 1855, Vorontsov-Dashkov was transferred to the Caucasus in 1858. There he repeatedly participated in the military operations against the mountaineers, in the capturing of Imam Shamil, and also he was appointed adjutant of the Viceroy of His Imperial Highness in the Caucasus Prince Aleksandr Baryatinsky, and commander of the convoy³. Later he was appointed adjutant of the tsarevich Alexander Alexandrovich, and in 1865 Vorontsov-Dashkov was sent to Turkestan to inspect the military units, and furthermore he actively took part in the battles for the conquering of the Middle Asian Khanates. He was promoted to the rank Major General after the successful operations, and then he also became an assistant of the General-Governor of the Turkestan. Vorontsov-Dashkov participated in the Russo-Turkish war in 1877-1878 г. as commander of the cavalry. When Alexander III came to the throne Vorontsov-Dashkov was head of security of the Emperor in the palace of Gatchina. He was appointed Minister of Imperial Properties in 1882 (until 1897), member of the State Council, Chancellor of the Russian royal and imperial orders, and also High Commissioner of the State Horse Breeding⁴. The great experience which Vorontsov-Dashkov possessed was a determining factor for choosing him as a Viceroy of the Caucasus and he definitely showed with his actions not only management skills but a good

² Polozheniye - normative act, which has a consolidated character and is determining the structure, functions, and competency of an authority or a system of authorities, or the order of their actions, in certain cases, or is regulating a set of organizational, property, and labor relations on a particular issue.

³ Тумаков, Н.Н. Управление Кавказом И.И. Воронцовым-Дашковым. // Вестник РГУ им. С.А.Есенина, 2010, №1 (26), с. 1.

⁴ Ibid., p. 2

knowledge of the specific characters of different areas of life in the multi-ethnic Caucasian region.

The Viceroy had to deal, or at least "soften" the results of the policy of intensive "Russification" of the region, largely conducted during the G. S. Golitsin`s ruling of the Caucasus. Generally its main fields were: administrative and law unification; enhancement of the "Russian element in the European and Asian borders"; cultural and educational "Russification" of the non-Russian population⁵. The concrete actions for the implementation of this policy, concerning mostly the Transcaucasus were: secularization of the property of the Armenian Gregorian church, closing the Armenian schools, revoking the autonomy of the Georgian Church, the prohibition of studying mother language in the region, imposing any kind of obstacles to the functioning of the Azerbaijani language and to any cultural life. There is one interesting example in this direction presented by Zahida Alizade: "Very typical in this regard is the reaction of the head of the General Directorate of the Press of the Russian Empire Solovyov to the request of the famous Azerbaijani journalist, Orientalist, pedagogue and public figure Mahomedahi Shahtahtinski (1846-1931), who in the late nineteenth century tried to get permission from the royal authorities to issue the newspaper "Tbilisi" in Azerbaijani language. Refusing to grant this request during his personal meeting with M. Shahtahtinski Solovyov said: "I definitely cannot permit the issue of an Azerbaijani newspaper. Why your people need newspaper? The intelligentsia is obliged to read in Russian, just let Azerbaijanis graze their sheep."⁶ As a result, multiple political parties and national liberation movements began to operate in Transcaucasia, such as the Party of the national independence of the Caucasus, the League of freedom of Georgia,

⁵ Тумаков, Н.Н. Первая русская революция и восстановление наместничества на Кавказе. // Вестник РГУ им. С.А.Есенина, №2 (27), с. 3.

⁶ Ализаде, З. Национально-колониальная политика царского правительства на Центральном Кавказе. // Кавказ и глобализация, 2007, Т.1, №5, с. 163

Armenian Revolutionary Workers Association, the Armenian Revolutionary Union "Dashnaktsutyun", Armenian Revolutionary Socialist Party "Gnchak", Georgian Party of Socialists-Federalists, the party "Dasia". In 1905-1906, the Party of Mladodashnaktsutyun, Muslim party "Dfan" ("Defence"), Muslim Social Democratic Party "Gyummed" Muslim party "Eshems" appeared⁷.

Among the other reasons for the aggravation of socio-political situation in the Caucasus were the lack of land among the peasants, the migration policy of the government aimed at the strengthening of the Russian element in the European and Asian borders of the empire⁸. The strike movement also extended widely which grew into a huge demonstration in February 1905, covering the industrial centers in Grozny and North Ossetia. In 1903 mass strikes began in Baku, which gradually spread to other towns in the Transcaucasia. During the same period, rural unrests also increased and quickly extended their scope in Tiflis province⁹. The problem with the lack of land for the rural population was compounded by the seizure of 'surplus' of it, which was given to the migrating in the Caucasus Russians and Ukrainians, due to lack of sufficient vacant and suitable for agriculture state land. This strained the relations, on one hand, between the administration and the local population, and on the other - between the local population and the settlers.

In view of the situation in the troubled Caucasus region, the Viceroy Count Vorontsov-Dahkov were given all the rights that his predecessors possessed, but in addition he was given the same status as the ministers in the central administration and was authorised to solve all problems without having the need to adopt new laws. He could suspend the enforcement of the ministerial order towards the region administrated by him for which a decision

⁷ Рахманин, Н. Т. Исторический опыт деятельности российских властей по преодолению системного кризиса на Кавказе в 1905--1907 г. // Вестник Екатеринбургского института, 2012, №2 (18), с. 128

⁸ Волхонский М. А. Первая русская революция и причины восстановления наместничества на Кавказе // Кавказский сборник, Т. 3 (35). М., 2005, 87–106.

⁹ Агабекова, С. С. Проблема восстановления наместничества на Кавказе в начале XX века. // Научные проблемы гуманитарных исследований, 2011, №8, с. 8.

on his part, however, he had to notify and justify in front of the Committee of Ministers. All government departments in the Caucasus region were subjected directly to the Viceroy, as he had the right to appoint, dismiss or move officials in Caucasian departments¹⁰, allowing him to conduct his own personnel policy. Vorontsov-Dashkov received extensive powers and in the military police field, which means that he could declare martial law, cancel decisions of provincial or regional superiors, and had the right to use massive power measures for suppressing revolts¹¹.

Only two years spent as a Viceroy of the Caucasus were enough for Count I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov to prepare a complete analysis of the situation in the region and to outline possible actions on his behalf that could solve some of the most pressing problems in the troubled region, in order to achieve reduction of the tension and restoration of order. “Vsepoddanneyshaya zapiska po upravleniyu Kavkazskim kraem”¹² shows not only a thorough knowledge of conflict points in different areas of life in the Caucasus and real solutions to overcome them, but also aims to draw attention to the review of existing governance of the region by offering a particular model. Beginning with a review of the tense situation in all provinces and regions of the Caucasus, Vorontsov-Dashkov clearly outlined the weakness and poor preparation of local authorities to deal with peasant revolts, workers' strikes and terrorist acts. In this connection he remarked that the local authorities were inadaptable to careful and independent activity and were used to an outwardly implementation of the orders of the superiors. They also concealed very thoroughly everything which disturbed the common well-being and always presented the situation in a favorable light. The authorities had no potential to deal with their obligations being detached of the interests of local people and

¹⁰ ПСЗРИ, Собрание третье, т. 25 (1905), Часть 1, № 26166

¹¹ Агасбекова, С. С. *Op.cit.*, p. 11.

¹² Всеподданнейшая записка по управлению Кавказским краем генерал- адъютанта графа Воронцова- Дашкова // Исмаил-Заде Д. И. Граф И. И. Воронцов-Дашков: наместник кавказский. М., 2005, 257–373.

searching the evil only in the opposition to their infelicitous initiatives, dramatizing this opposition and explaining it without analysis of the real life but in the sense of previous official documents¹³. The lack of police and its weak professional training impeded the fulfillment of its professional obligations and its ability to provide real help to the administration.

The Viceroy also found the Caucasian army not in a very good state, its representatives committing several crimes at a government level, and the lack of strong domestic discipline and its neglect on behalf of army commanders, led to dangerous consequences for the region.

First steps that Vorontsov-Dashkov took were related to the crushing of the riots and for this purpose in some major settlements and railway stations additional contingent armies were introduced, mobile detachments of the gendarmerie were created, state of emergency was declared in some regions and a new position of temporary general-governor with exceptional powers was found. The army was assisting actively citizen's administration in crushing the riots and restore order and peace in the region. In June 1907 an unlimited martial law was introduced in the Caucasus, which practically remained until 1917, Vorontsov-Dashkov personally confirmed 73 death penalties to the military courts. There was a mass confiscation of weapons and property from the population and tough penalties were imposed¹⁴. The utilisation of such well-known force measures, the application of which was imposed by the widespread instability of the Caucasus, had only temporary character and added more to the escalation of the tension between the Russians and the local population. It is because of this that Vorontsov-Dashkov developed measures to improve the social, cultural and economic state of the population, which would further create real prerequisites for lasting peace and prosperity in the Caucasus.

¹³ Воронцов-Дашков, И.И. Всеподданнейшая записка по управлению Кавказским краем. СПб, 1907, с. 7.

¹⁴ Рахманин, Н.Т. *Op.cit.*, p. 130.

The reason behind the rural discontent and rebellion Vorontsov-Dashkov saw most of all in the hard condition of the peasants on temporary duty, caused by the indefinite amount of service in respect of the landlords (pomeshtitsi), the shortage of land and high taxes at the same time, and yet the existence of dependant population in some parts of Northern Caucasus. For these outlined problems the Viceroy developed a plan to cease the relations of dependency of the peasants to the landlords and landowners¹⁵. Mainly the plan provided for the immediate removal of these relations through buy out for the landlords, which they will receive from the government treasury, because „to assign the ransom to the peasants I found unfair because it is not their fault that the dependent relations dragged on for many years, during which they (the peasants – A/N) paid with natural service obligations, with increasing value in connection with the general rise of prices of agricultural products.“¹⁶ As suggested by Vorontsov-Dashkov an inter institutional council was created for the matters of land survey arrangements for the peasants in the Caucasus region, working also on the Viceroy’s project¹⁷ for the acquisition of the right of ownership of the peasants’ lands. On 20 December 1912 the project was established and was published as a “Law for the cease of the temporary mandatory and dependent relations of the peasants towards landlords and landowners in Tiflis, Kutais, Yerevan, Elissavetpol and Baku provinces, through buying out ownership shares with the assistance of the government.”¹⁸ The Viceroy took over securing better living conditions for the Russian immigrants. Part of the measures he took was the cease of the immigration wave in to Northern Caucasus and for those already there and suffering from lack of land to be redirected towards the Transcaucasia. A

¹⁵ Воронцов-Дашков, И.И. . Opt.cit., p. 42.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 67-68.

¹⁸ ПСЗРИ, Собрание третье, т. 32 (1912) , Часть 1, № 38539

reorganisation of the administration of the process of immigrants' welfare and settlement occurred, that eased the local administration and police¹⁹.

As part of the overcoming of the social crisis, Vorontsov-Dashkov undertook the development of the agriculture and the industry. They were connected to meliorative and agronomic activities, improvement of system of cultivation of the land, the raising up of the technical cultures, according to the climate specifications of the region, working on the natures deposits. This was related to the development of the banking industry in the region, with the lending of loans for agro-technical support for the peasants, the stimulation of entrepreneurship, the expansion of the network of the National bank offices, the attraction of private Russian capital and foreign investments. In respect of the industry production the Viceroy accentuated on the extraction and processing of oil, as he considered this as one of the key sectors in the economy of the Russian Empire.

For the development of the economy in the region indisputable was the place of the expansion of the transport network. A year on since the existence of the Viceroyalty the length of the local roads and motorways was significantly increased. Significant importance Vorontsov-Dashkov gave to the construction of the railway lines. In his report for 1913 he gave the following numbers for the expansion of the railway network: "In the boundaries of the Caucasus in 1905 were built altogether 3142 versts²⁰ roads Transcaucasian and Vladikavkazian with the junctions and 177 versts railway lines still under construction (Ulukhanlu-Dzhulfa). At present, there are already built or under construction 1652 versts railway network, preparation works are conducted to construct 571 versts railway and in principle approved for construction are 1122 versts. The whole length of the new lines already approved for construction, built or being build, this way reaches 3845 versts, i.e. for 8 years

¹⁹ Воронцов-Дашков, И.И. . Opt.cit., p. 78.

²⁰ 1 versta = 1,067 km

Caucasian network has doubled.”²¹ It was his idea to build a railway line through the Main Caucasian ridge, which he considered as a lifeline connection to the communication between Caucasus and the rest of Russia not only of economical but also of political importance.

The Viceroy also paid serious attention to the culture and education in the region, because in his opinion the increase in productions wouldn't be possible without the increase of the intellectual potential of the population. Besides this goal of the Caucasian school there was another one: „inculcation on the foreign language population the Russian language, which is an undoubtedly a major factor for uniting the mixed indigenous population of the region with the Empire.”²² He marked not only the lack of well-prepared local teachers to teach Russian but also the poor literacy of the population in their native language. The native language education not only in primary schools but also in secondary schools during the previous government according to Vorontsov-Dashkov contributed for the correct intellectual development of the growing up generations as well as for their conscious desire to study the state language, as they themselves saw the benefits of it and strive towards this. Within the 7 years of his ruling Vorontsov-Dashkov achieved significant increase in the numbers of the primary, secondary, specialised (preparing school teachers) and professional educational establishments²³. The quality of the teaching staff improved significantly, which on itself facilitated the increase of the financial reward for teachers work. Special attention was paid to the teachers in Muslim schools through organising special pedagogical training

²¹ Невский С. А., Лесников Г. Ю. О некоторых направлениях экономического, культурного и социально-политического развития Кавказа в начале XX века (по материалам всеподданнейших записки 1907 года и отчетов 1910, 1913 годов наместника на Кавказе графа И. И. Воронцова-Дашкова). // Публичное и частное право (МПСУ), 2012, №3, с. 52.

²² Воронцов-Дашков, И.И. *Opt.cit.*, p. 103.

²³ Невский С. А., Лесников Г. Ю. *Opt.cit.*, p. 54.

courses and increasing the grants to attend teaching seminars. Primary textbooks were published in the languages of the Caucasian people.

The university education was introduced in Tiflis with the doors opening in 1910 of private university female courses, but Vorontsov-Dashkov worked long time to open a university in the Caucasus. In 1913 a plan for the opening of a Polytechnic Institute in Tiflis was prepared and approved - it would consist of the following faculties: agriculture, mechanics, chemistry and economics. Even donations were collected; a place was chosen and the plan of the building of the institute was prepared. Unfortunately the start of the First World War prevented the successful completion of this plan.

Significant development received also the publishing sector, besides the founded in 1905 newspaper "Caucuses" - the official paper of the local administration, many other magazines were also published concerning different areas of life. Even newspapers in the different languages of all Caucasian people were published, also statistical, historical and ethnographical collections, reference books, calendars and educational literature²⁴.

In respect of decreasing the ethnic tension in the region Vorontsov-Dashkov undertook few specific steps. One of the first was to cancel the order from 1903 for the closure of the Armenian schools in the churches and the secularisation of the property of the Armenian Church, which Nikolai II undertook after the intercession of the Viceroy in August 1905. To the Georgian autonomists and federalists Vorontsov-Dashkov promises teaching in the schools and introduction of the Georgian language in the judiciary system. Negotiations commence with the Georgian Ekzarh about the autocephaly of the church. Representatives of the local population had been offered state service.

²⁴ Тумаков, Н.Н. Управление..., р. 8.

Vorontsov-Dashkov worked on the protection of the civil rights of the Muslim population (more over in the Azerbaijani territories), which in many respects was discriminatory to the Christian population. For example he removed the limitations for Muslims in the elections in the town of Elissavetpol, as the number of the *glasny*²⁵ would not correspond to their number in the city and in such a way a new turmoil could be caused. During the introduction of the civil state in 1892 in Transcaucasia Vorontsov-Dashkov insisted on equal electoral rights for Muslim and non-Muslim population. He opposed the idea that citizens of the towns were to be divided into two *curiae* – for people from Russian origin and local native population, which could be perceived by the Caucasians as a mistrust towards them on behalf of the government and could bring new unrests on national base²⁶.

The Viceroy fought also against the increasing bandits in Terski region. Besides criminal measures he undertook the land survey of the mountaineers and increased their educational level by opening agricultural schools and the preparation of local teachers. To ease the work of the administration he created a special Nazran region, which contained nearly all Ingush population, distinguished from others especially with its bandits and high level of crime. Vorontsov-Dashkov ordered that the appointment of the village elders would be made not by the local administration but directly by the population.

The decrease in criminality the Viceroy linked with the increase of the capacity and financial reward of the police forces. He paid attention to the professional level of the personnel, and to transform the police force in real support of the administrative authorities he insisted in increasing the numbers in the region. Vorontsov-Dashkov introduced the position of commandant of the police in the Caucasus in this way he united different police and

²⁵ *Glasny* – members of the City Duma in the Russian Empire. Since 1785 the deputies in the City Duma were called “*glasny*”.

²⁶ Исмаил-Заде Д.И. *Опт.cit.*, p. 131.

gendarmerie bodies with the purpose of increasing the monitoring and protection of the public order and safety. His idea to reform the national military ruling which he himself thought was dated and exhausted form of ruling didn't develop any further.

It was not left aside also the question for the military preparation of the army and its main goal was the ceasing of any violations and the strict execution of military duties. According to Vorontsov-Dashkov the officers' corps had to be an example for the lower ranks in official as well as moral aspect. An entire system was developed to reward the diligence and good work of the lower ranks in the implementation of their duties. There was a severe prosecution of the political propaganda because according to Count Vorontsov-Dashkov it ruined the foundations of the military discipline and transformed it into a serious crime.

Vorontsov-Dashkov developed several other reforms but not all of them find realisation. Often the Viceroy encountered the opposition of the Council of Ministers on different matters and often the possibility he had to present directly his visions and propositions to Nikolai II did not help the realisation of his projects. Despite this his experience and real judgment of the socio political situation in the region, with his energetic actions and new approaches in the realisation of his projects Vorontsov-Dashkov undoubtedly demonstrated that the Caucasian ruling could be a constructive and developing institution, that had the potential to offer peace and prosperity to the Caucasian population. The fact that many of the pressing issues had not been removed completely, also had to be taken into account, as they were part of a long-term process which manifested itself during and after the First World War predominantly in the interethnic conflicts on one side, and the opposition of the local population to the Russian administration on the other side. The beginning of the movements for independence of the Caucasians from the Russian Empire despite the efforts of Vorontsov-Dashkov led to the separation of the region

and were also part of the entire process of the Empire falling apart. The short ruling of the Count only facilitated the postponing in the time of these processes, but not their elimination. One of the undoubted qualities of Vorontsov-Dashkov was his shrewdness which clearly marked the line of future opposition but also gave an example for its overcoming.