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Andrew Andersen

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This book is about the roots of one of the conflicts in what is now a strategically important area of the world – the Caucasus. It provides detailed analysis of the military, political and diplomatic struggle for Abkhazia and Sochi in 1918-1921 between Russia and Georgia (temporarily Sovietised in 1921-91) and examines the major processes that fuelled the ethnic hatred in the region. This region is one of those hot spots where polar ideologies and economic interests of major powers collide, but which somehow gets neglected by politicians and the media, leaving the small nations involved in the conflict at the mercy of their powerful and ambitious neighbour – Russia. The recent Russian-sponsored ethnic cleansing in Abkhazia is a grim reminder of how important it is to understand the volcanic forces that may explode the region, with dire consequences for the whole world. This work concentrates only on one little-known episode of regional history – the dramatic events that took place in 1918-21 in Abkhazia and the Black Sea Riviera (the Sochi district of the Black Sea province). It demonstrates that the artificial "Abkhazian separatism" had been created and exploited by outside forces (the Ottoman Empire, the Bolshevik Russia and the anti-Bolshevik Russian “White movement”) that were interested in the acquisition of the territory of Abkhazia in order to gain control over the whole South Caucasus. At the same time, despite their mutual bitterness, both Red and White Russian leaders demonstrated a striking unanimity on the question of the status of Abkhazia and the Sochi district. Both Reds and Whites sought to prevent the integration of the two disputed territories into Georgia. Both parties worked hard with some elements of local population trying to exploit and develop their “anti-Georgian” sentiments. The book draws parallels between the post-WorldWar I imperialist ambitions of Russia (both communist and anticommunist) and the modern hegemonism of the Kremlin. Indeed, history repeated itself again after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, when the South Caucasus once again gained strategic importance. Today, it serves as a natural corridor, through which Western countries can access the vital hydrocarbon resources of Central Asia, bypassing Russia. That is why the leadership of the Russian Federation considers it crucially important to restore its political control over the recently independent states of the South Caucasus, or alternatively, to destabilize them to the extent that the newly-opened land bridge between Europe and Asia would not function. That could explain why not only reactionary Russian top brass and secret services, but also well-known “democratic” RF politicians, stood united against Georgia and her territorial integrity. Those combined efforts resulted in the wars and ethnic cleansings of 1992-93 and 2008, the occupation of Abkhazia and the breach of Georgia’s territorial integrity. However, the current situation in Abkhazia became possible not only due to the military superiority of the Russian Federation, but to a large extent due to the fact that the history of Abkhazia and her legal and cultural connections with the rest of Georgia remain unknown to the decision-makers, as well as to the politically active public both in the West and in Russia. The paucity of publicly available objective information on the Abkhazian situation opens up great opportunities for ideologically-loaded and sometimes even instigative interpretations of this sensitive issue. In view of the above, this book also aims to provide a concise description and analysis of the process of integration of Abkhazia, and, in part, of the Sochi district, into the Georgian state in 1918-1921, listing the international treaties and inter-party agreements that provide legal basis for the association of Abkhazia with Georgia. The book contains 18 full-color maps and over 20 photographs and other illustrations

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