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DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN KARABAKH AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF ARMENIAN INFLUX TO THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

IN FEBRUARY OF 1917, A NEW REVOLUTIONARY DAWN FLARED UP FOR ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE ROMANOV'S FORMER EMPIRE. THE PEOPLES OF THE CAUCASUS ALSO GOT A CHANCE TO DECIDE THEIR OWN FATE, BUT THEY DID SO VERY BADLY.

The Dashnak leaders, who came to power on 28 May 1918, immediately made territorial claims to Georgia and Azerbaijan. It must be noted that in 1917, among these three nations, only the Armenians had a serious military force – the 35,000 Armenians who had fought the Turks in the ranks of the Russian army and Russian soldiers and officers who had joined them

formed the basis of the Armenian army. On the other hand, the Armenians were the mainstay of Russian Bolshevism in the Caucasus. It is not surprising that after the establishment of Soviet rule in Baku in November 1917, under Sakko Sahakyan and Stepan Shahumyan, who headed the Baku Council, the Armenians occupied important positions in several government agencies, including in the law enforcement agencies. This turn of events in the spring of 1918 resulted in a great tragedy for Baku and the surrounding districts. In three days of March, 12,000 Azerbaijanis were killed in Baku alone on national and religious grounds.¹

In the fall of 1917, Armenian armed units entered Karabakh from Armenia and devastated 12 Muslim villages. The defenselessness of Karabakh Azerbaijanis was especially obvious against the background of the bloody atrocities of the Dashnaks in eastern Azerbaijan - in the vicinity of Baku. Under the slogan of establishing Soviet rule, units of Amazasp killed 8,000 civilians in Shamakhi and 4,000 in Guba.² At the same time, in the former province of Iravan, Armenian military units began to massacre Azerbaijanis, and according to some information, 150,000 Muslims became the target of this terror. 80,000 of these refugees, hungry and homeless,

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- 1 Доклад члена Чрезвычайно Следственной Комиссии А.Е.Клуге председателю комиссии А.Хасмамедову о насилиях, творимых над мусульманским населением города Баку. Июль, 1919 // АПД УДП АР, ф.277, оп.2, д.27, л.18; For more details about the genocide of Muslim Turks in Baku in March 1918, see: С.Рустамова-Тохида. Март 1918 г. в Баку. Азербайджанские погромы в документах. – Баку, 2009.
 - 2 Решение Чрезвычайной Следственной Комиссии. 28.07.1919 // Государственный Архив Азербайджанской Республики (ГА АР), ф.1061, с.1, д.108, л.7



Surrender of the Erivan fortress on 1 October 1827, Russian artist Franz Rubo

took refuge in Azerbaijan.³ Only the proclamation of Azerbaijan's independence on 28 May 1918 saved the Turkic-Muslim population from absolute annihilation in most parts of the South Caucasus. As Georgia proclaimed its independence on 26 May and Armenia and Azerbaijan did so two days later, the Batumi negotiations launched by the government of the South Caucasus were continued by the new national republics, and each of them put forward its own conditions for peace. After the proclamation of independence, it became necessary to define the borders of the young state, and the Armenian Republic was in the hardest position. Before the conclusion of the agreement, Armenian representatives appealed to the Azerbaijani government and met with understanding. On 29 May, the chairman of the Council of Ministers, F.Kh.Khoyski, reported on talks with members of the Armenian National Council at a meeting of the Azerbaijan National Council. He said that in order to create an Armenian federation, the Armenians needed a political center. The city of Alexandropol had been captured by the Turks, and now such a center can only be Iravan, which needs to be ceded to the Armenians. Kh.Khasmammadov, M.Y.Jafarov, A.Sheykhulislamov and M.Maharramov spoke on this issue. They all called the handover of Iravan to Armenians an inevitable evil. Thus, the National Council expressed its consent to cede Iravan to Armenians.⁴ Two days later, delegates from Iravan in the National Council,



Mir Hidayat Seidov, Bagir Rzayev and Nariman bey Narimanbeyov, protested against the handover of their home town to the Armenian Republic, however, the meeting of the Azerbaijani National Council held on 1 June rejected the protest.⁵ At the same time, the National Council decided to send a delegation led by M. Seidov, B. Rzayev and M. Y. Jafarov to solve problems with the transfer of Iravan to Armenia on the spot. Then they moved on to the question of the Yelizavetpol province. Information was provided by N. Usubbeyov and Sh. Rustambeyov. The meeting decided to send N. Usubbeyov to Batumi so that the Azerbaijani delegation can familiarize itself with the realities of the day.⁶ In Batumi, the delegations of Azerbaijan and Armenia held talks on the issue of the border. It was agreed that Azerbaijan had no objection to the formation of the

Armenian state within the «Alexandropol province», while the Armenians would abandon their claims to part of the Yelizavetpol province (Nagorno-Karabakh).⁷

This fact surfaced on 8 October 1918 in Tbilisi during the negotiations between M. Y. Jafarov and the Armenian diplomatic representative, A. Jamalyan. Jamalyan submitted the following report on the negotiations to the Armenian Foreign Ministry: «Today Mr. Jafarov came to me... the conversation quickly turned on the issue of Karabakh. He mentioned the good attitude, which the Azerbaijanis demonstrated to us during the Batumi conference, the fact that Armenia's independence was recognized with their efforts, and that they gave us Erivan because they were promised that the issue of Karabakh would not be raised.»⁸ Again, the main events

3 О создании специального отдела агитации при МИД Азербайджанской Республики. 04.06.1919 // ГА АР, ф.970, оп.1, д.216, л.1

4 Протокол №3 заседания Азербайджанского Национального Совета. 29.05.1918 // ГА АР, ф.970, оп.1, д.1, л.51

5 Протокол №4 заседания Азербайджанского Национального Совета. 01.06.1918 // ГА АР, ф.970, оп.1, д.1, л.53

6 Ibid, л. 54

7 З.Авалов. Независимость Грузии в международной политике. Париж, 1924, с.57

8 Письмо А.Джамальяна в МИД Армении. 08.10.1918 // АПД УДП АР, ф.276, оп.9, д.65, л.18





took place in and around Karabakh. In the late summer of 1918, the Armenian army invaded neighboring Zangezur under the command of Andronik. Before the end of October, 115 villages were destroyed, 7,700 Muslims were killed, 2,500 were injured and 50,000 people were driven from their homes. In the mountainous part of Karabakh, the same actions were perpetrated against Azerbaijanis with extreme cruelty.⁹ The French mission to the Caucasus was forced to admit that «the actions of Andronik and the local Armenian committee in respect of the Tatars (Azerbaijanis – J. H) were inhuman».¹⁰

In late September, the Arme-

nians asked the representative of Germany in the South Caucasus, Von Kress, to help them in the Karabakh issue. On 28 September in Tbilisi, Armenia's diplomatic representative in Georgia, A. Jamalyan, urged Von Kress to prevent interference by the Turks. He assured Von Kress: «The Armenians of Karabakh have more special military abilities than Armenians in other localities.»¹¹ Despite serious attempts by A. Jamalyan, Von Kress said that because of strained relations with Nuru Pasha, he would not be able to help the Armenians.

In late September, the Ottoman-Azerbaijani forces launched an offensive against the Dashnaks

and took Shusha without a fight on 1 October. Dashnak troops entrenched themselves in the mountainous regions of Karabakh, where they proclaimed the formation of the «Nagorno-Karabakh Republic». The politicization of the problem marked the beginning of a fundamentally new stage in its development.

November 1918 saw the end of the First World War. Germany and its allies were defeated. Turkish troops left the Caucasus. At the demand of Germany, the Armenians, who hoped on Germany, ceased the offensive on Karabakh. But seeking to expand the territory of Armenia and breaking their promise not to raise the territorial issue until the Paris Peace Conference, the Dashnaks continued their provocations: one can say that at the same time, in early December, they launched an offensive against Georgia and Azerbaijan. In Zangezur, they destroyed about 40 Muslim villages. Only after strong protests by the British, were the military operations stopped.

One question remains open: why was Britain interested in preserving peace in Karabakh? We can assume that, along with natural sympathy for the Christians, the desire to beat the trump card out of the hands of Russia played a significant role. We should not discard Britain's attempt to build a geopolitical «Christian barrier» in the way of Turkey.

In early January 1919, the commander of the Allied forces in the region, Major-General V.M.Thomson, sent a representative of the Azerbaijani government, Khosrov bey

9 For more details about the destabilizing actions of Armenia in Karabakh in 1918-1920, see.: Дж.Гасанлы. Внешняя политика Азербайджанской Демократической Республики (1918-1920 гг.). - Москва, 2010. - 576 с.

10 Le Lieutenant-Colonel Chardigny, Chef de la Mission Militaire Française au Caucase, à Monsieur le Ministre de la Guerre (Etat-Major de l'Armée, 2^e Bureau). Le 15 avril 1919.// Ministère des Affaires Etrangères de France, Archives Diplomatique, vol.832, folio 55

11 Письмо А.Джамалыана в МИД Армении. 28.09.1918 // АПД УДП АР, ф.276, оп.9, д.65, л.15



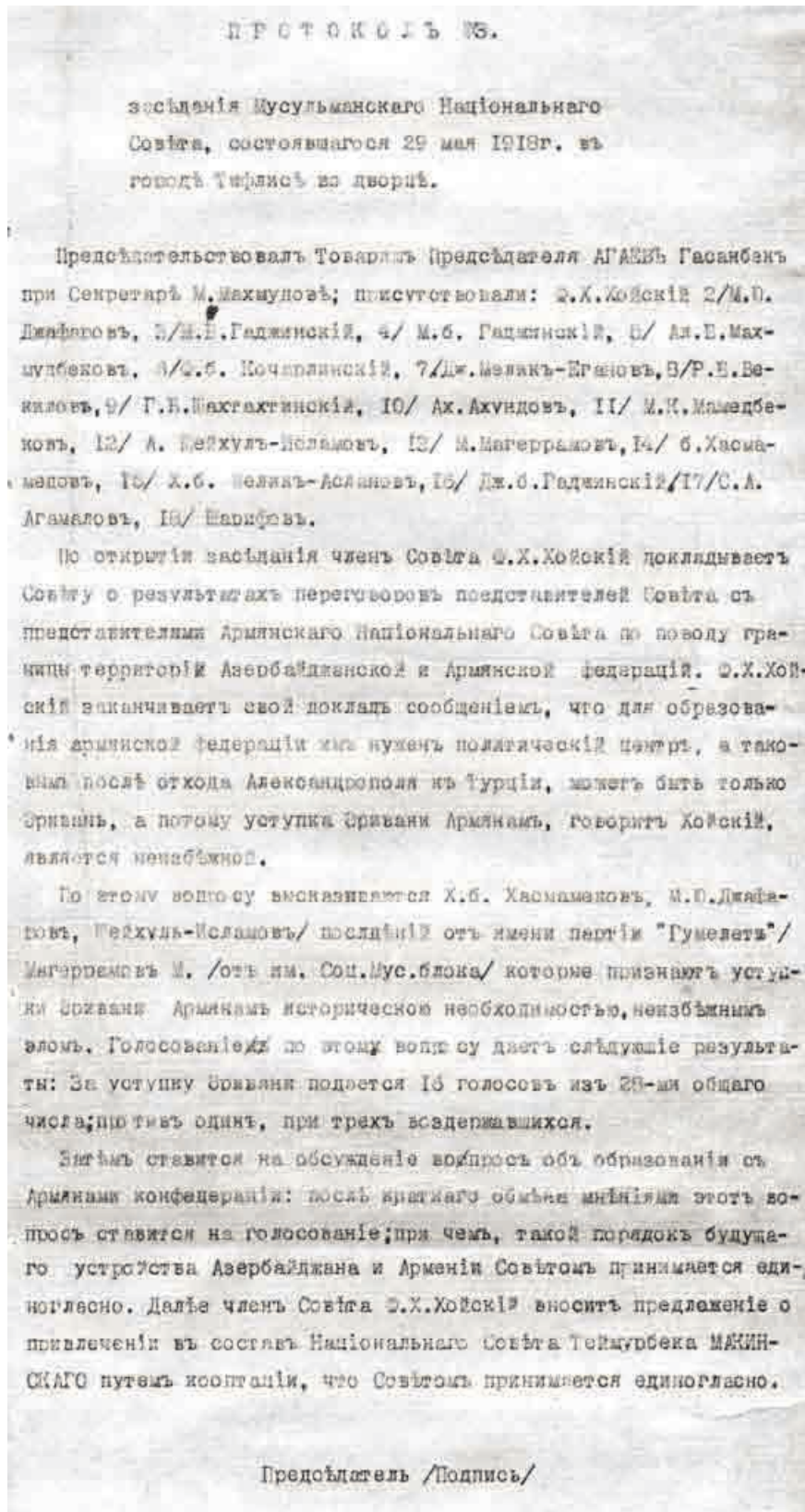
Sultanov, to Karabakh and Zangezur as governor-general of the region.¹² The council consisting of three Armenians, three Azerbaijanis, and one Briton, a member of the mission of the Allies, was subordinate to Kh. Sultanov and his Armenian aide. However, the Dashnak leaders of Karabakh rejected this compromise project. General Thomson told the protesting Armenians: «The point is that some Armenians are very saddened by the fact that they cannot use the occupation of Azerbaijan by Britain for revenge. They must understand that the issue will be solved not by military force, but by the Peace Conference.»¹³ In early December 1918, General Thomson sent a telegram to the leaders of the Armenians living in Ganja, Gazakh and Javanshir districts, demanding that they stop illegal things and looting. He ordered: «Notify all the Armenians: sit quietly in your homes. If they do not obey this order, they will be responsible for the bloodshed and lawlessness perpetrated.»¹⁴

British journalist Scotland Liddell, who worked in the conflict zone in 1919-1920, also noted that Armenia was always looking for conflict, and once they found one, they immediately called it «an instrument of pressure,» and indeed, it became a

12 See: Le Lieutenant-Colonel Chardigny, Chef de la Mission Militaire Française au Caucase, à Monsieur le Ministre de la Guerre (Etat-Major de l'Armée, 2^e Bureau). Le 15 avril 1919.// Ministère des Affaires Etrangères de France, Archives Diplomatique, vol.832, folio 55

13 См.: Le Lieutenant-Colonel Chardigny, Chef de la Mission Militaire Française au Caucase, à Monsieur le Ministre de la Guerre (Etat-Major de l'Armée, 2^e Bureau). Le 15 avril 1919.// Ministère des Affaires Etrangères de France, Archives Diplomatique, vol.832, folio 55

14 Azerbaijan, 1918, 3 December.



Minutes of a meeting that established Erivan as the capital city of Armenia





real punishment for them. «Armenia is unhappy because of the fact that the Dashnaksutyun party is in power there. This is a revolutionary terrorist organization that has for years deliberately encouraged the Armenians to attacks Muslims. After sustaining a well-deserved retribution from the latter, they talked about it to cause the world's sympathy for the «poor Armenians... For the Dashnaks, a killed Armenian is valuable. If they use such a case properly, it can yield many benefits for the cause of propaganda.»¹⁵

This position taken by the national board of the Karabakh Armenians under the influence of the Dashnaks greatly angered the British, and they promised to remove the Dashnaks from these places. The tough stance of the Allies bore fruit: the Arme-

nians, even with minor amendments, recognized the authority of the Azerbaijani governor-general and both sides began to look for a suitable form of cooperation. On 25 June 1919, the Azerbaijani government offered the Armenian leadership to set up a mixed government-parliamentary commission of representatives from both sides and the Allied powers to settle disputes. In early July, the member of the Azerbaijani parliament, M. Rustambeyov, attended the sixth congress of Armenians of Karabakh as a representative of the government. Finally, the fourth morning session of the 7th congress of Armenian peasants living in the mountainous part of Karabakh decided on 15 August 1919 to obey the Azerbaijani government and to live peacefully with

the Azerbaijani population inside Azerbaijan.¹⁶ On orders from the Azerbaijani government, the chairman of the Azerbaijani delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris, A. M. Topchubashov, presented the chairman of the conference with a document on 9 September 1919, which stated that «representatives of the Armenian population of Karabakh decided to obey the Azerbaijani government».¹⁷

All the attention of Bolshevik Russia was focused on the civil war, and Azerbaijan appeared to have stayed away. Taking advantage of this, the Western countries took some bold steps towards Azerbaijan and in January 1920, the Supreme Allied Council first recognized de facto Azerbaijan and then Georgia and Armenia at the suggestion of

15 Скотланд-Лиддел. Война с мусульманами. Армяне вновь перешли в наступление. 30.01.1920 // ГА АР, ф.894, оп.10, д.81, л.9-10

16 Временное соглашение армян Нагорного Карабаха с Азербайджанским Правительством. 15.08.1919 // АПД УДП АР, ф.1, оп.169, д.249/II, л.13-14

17 Письмо председателя делегации Азербайджанской Республики на Парижской Мирной конференции А.М.Топчубашева председателю Мирной конференции. 09.09.1919 // ГА АР, ф.970, оп.1, д.142, л.77



Shusha on postcards



Lord Curzon.¹⁸ At the same time, the serious attempts of the Armenian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference to tear Karabakh away from Azerbaijan with the help of false information were in vain.

But this situation did not last long. As recognized by the Russian People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs G. Chicherin, there was a diplomatic agreement: Britain, in spite of the international mandate, left the Caucasus very easily and with no resistance, especially because under the threat of territorial split, Turkey had managed to find common ground with the Bolsheviks. Britain packed up and the Red Army moved to the south. After learning that the Red Army was nearby and hot on the trail of Denikin's retreating army, the Armenians took advantage of the fact that the Azerbaijanis were celebrating Novruz - the advent of the Muslim new year

– and raised a revolt in Shusha and other population centers of Karabakh on the night of 23 March 1920. This revolt, raised jointly with the Armenian military units, prompted the Azerbaijani government to send all its available armed forces to Karabakh. That is how Karabakh played a bitter role in the history of Azerbaijan. Fierce fighting in Karabakh and other areas of the country became an occasion for the Azerbaijani communists to seek assistance from Russia. And even the French High Commissioner in Istanbul reported to Paris through diplomatic channels: «The Karabakh events resulted in the concentration of Azerbaijani troops in the south while the northern border remained open.»¹⁹ In those days, when the Bolsheviks occupied Baku, 8,000 soldiers of the Azerbaijani National Army had concentrated in the Khankandi sector of the Shusha district.

On 28 April 1920, Soviet troops invaded Baku, and on 29 April, Dashnaks came from Armenia, convened a congress in Nagorno-Karabakh and secured a decision to annex Nagorno-Karabakh to the Republic of Armenia. This decision was immediately delivered to G. Chicherin in Moscow through members of the Armenian delegation, which was engaged in secret anti-Azerbaijani negotiations with Soviet Russia.²⁰ However, it was not possible to take advantage of the occupation of Azerbaijan and quickly implement this decision. One month after the seizure of Baku, the Russian troops occupied Karabakh as well, and independent Azerbaijan ceased to exist. The turn of Georgia and Armenia came a short while later. Thus, after two years, the Caucasus once again fell under the sway of Russia, but this time Soviet Russia. 🌿

18 Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference. 1919, Vol. IX, US Government Printing office. Washington, 1946, p.959; Bulletin d'Information de l'Azerbaïdjan. Paris, 1920, 17 Janvier, №7, P.1

19 Telegramme a chiffrer №28-29. Haut Commissaire Francais Constantinople Pour Diplomatie Communiquer Amiral. Le 28 avril 1919.// Ministère des Affaires Etrangères de France, (MAE) Archives Diplomatique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, 1914-1940 Serie "Z" Europe 1918-1940 Sous-Serie USSR Russie-Caucase (Azerbaïdjan) Direction des Affaires Politiques et Commerciales 1 avril 1920 – 31 decembre 1929, vol.639, folio 12

20 Правда о Нагорном Карабахе. Степанакерт, 1989, с.27, 30-31