

SOVIETIZATION OF AZERBAIJAN AND INCLUSION OF KARABAKH INTO THE DIPLOMATIC AGENDA

(continued from the previous issue)

ORDZHONIKIDZE WARNED THAT "A DIFFERENT SOLUTION TO THIS ISSUE MAKES OUR SITUATION PRECARIOUS IN AZERBAIJAN AND WE DO NOT GAIN ANYTHING IN ARMENIA. I AM PERFECTLY AWARE THAT THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT WE MAY NEED ARMENIA IS A KNOWN POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.

Decide how you find it necessary. We shall carry out everything that is prescribed to us. But allow me to inform you that this attitude towards Azerbaijan strongly compromises us in the eyes of the broad masses of Azerbaijan and creates a highly fertile ground for our opponents.¹ After the Bolshevik revolution of April 1920, Or-

dzhonikidze sided with Azerbaijan in Azerbaijani-Georgian and Azerbaijani-Armenian relations for some time, as Azerbaijan was considered the "first-born of Soviet Russia in the East", and this caused resentment in some circles in Moscow, especially in the Russian People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Chicherin, who headed this group,

blackmailed Ordzhonikidze for his position, calling him a "hidden Orientalist and Muslimophile". In response to these assaults, Ordzhonikidze told Chicherin that he has no relation to Muslim nationalism and there is not a single Tatar in his family.²

On 10 July, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the ACP (b) held a meet-

1 Напоминание по прямому проводу В.Ленину, И.Сталину и Г.Чичерину. Июль, 1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.85, оп.3с, д.2, л.8–9.

2 Телеграмма Г.Орджоникидзе Г.Чичерину. 1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.64, оп.1, д.17, л.53.



Nariman Narimanov

ing attended by Narimanov, Viktor, Garayev, Bunyadzadeh, Yegorov, Mikoyan, Armenak, Karakozov and Legran. They discussed the Karabakh issue, and in contrast to the PCFA of Soviet Russia, they came to the following decision: "The Armenian peasants do not want to join Armenia. They have a great inclination towards Russia. The road to Russia lies through Baku. And the question put forward by the center seems strange at the moment."³

Ordzhonikidze knew who muddled the water in the center, so when sending regular information on the direct line, he asks N. Alliluyeva – an employee of the apparatus of the Council of Peoples Commissars and the wife of Stalin – to take Chicherin off the list of recipients of his latest message. Ordzhonikidze asked, "Where is Stalin now? His opinion on the matter is of great interest to me and all of us in general. Tell him that Chicherin and Karakhan will put me in an impossible situation here again."⁴ Stalin's response was not long in coming. A day later, he told Ordzhonikidze: "We cannot endlessly juggle between the parties, we must support one of the parties specifically, in this case, of course, Azerbaijan and Turkey. I talked to Lenin, and he does not mind."⁵ A very different position was displayed by Chicherin, who told Ordzhonikidze in a telegram on 8 July: "We know very well that the moment for the Sovietization of Armenia will come as well, but it's too early to do so now. The maximum that can be done now is to proclaim Karabakh and Zan-

gazur as disputed areas, and to this end, we need the Azerbaijani government to give consent too. We need this, and we absolutely have to sign an agreement with Armenia. This is peremptorily required by the international situation, and to this end, we need to proclaim Karabakh and Zangezur, but no more, as disputed."⁶

Chicherin and Karakhan directed the policies of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs towards organizing a policy of cooperation with Armenia at the expense of Azerbaijan. Not being able to resist this policy, Ordzhonikidze telegraphed Lenin, Stalin and Chicherin on 16 July and asked them not to make peace with Armenia until the arrival of the Azerbaijani delegation. He wrote: "Peace with Armenia without Azerbaijan strongly irritates the local comrades."⁷ These positions were also defended by the member of the Central Committee of the ACP (B), A. Mikoyan. On 29 June, he wrote to Ordzhonikidze: "We are outraged by the policy of the Center towards Karabakh and Zangazur. You should also support our view in front of the Center. We are not against peace with Armenia, but not at the expense of Karabakh and Zangazur."⁸ As we can see, it was very strange that Soviet Russia and Dashnak Armenia were holding secret talks on Azerbaijan without its participation and consent. In any case, what was happening with Armenia was the same as what happened with Georgia a month ago. Then there were many interesting places in the encrypted part of the telegram that Ordzhonikidze and



Kirov had sent to Lenin and Stalin. They believed that signing an agreement with Georgia without finding out about the position of Azerbaijan leads Soviet policy to collapse. Ordzhonikidze and Kirov wrote the following: "Why, when agreeing with Georgia, do we refuse to sign an agreement with friendly Azerbaijan. If the issue of Azerbaijan is being decided differently, let us know." They then warn the Center with a special cipher: "In no case, can we name Karakhan as the manager of Eastern policy. The whole Zagatala scandal here is perceived as an Armenian catch."⁹ There is no doubt that Karakhan played an important role in the development and implementation of the anti-Azerbaijani policy by the PCFA of Soviet Russia. Whether in an encrypted way or with a clear text, documents of the time indicate his intrigues in the Karabakh issue. For example, Ordzhonikidze openly

- 3 Протокол заседания бюро ЦК АКП. 10.07.1920 // АПД УДП АР, ф.1, оп.13, д.120, л.13.
- 4 Записка по прямому проводу Аллилуевой. 07.07.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.85, оп.3с, д.2, л.20.
- 5 Ответ И.В.Сталина на запрос Г.К.Орджоникидзе. 08.07.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.85, оп.3с, д.2, л.11.
- 6 Телеграмма Г.Чичерина Г.Орджоникидзе. 08.07.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.64, оп.1, д.17, л.60.
- 7 Телеграмма Г.Орджоникидзе – В.И.Ленину, И.В.Сталину и Г.К.Чичерину. 16.07.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.85, оп.3с, д.2, л.12.
- 8 Телеграмма А.Микояна Г.Орджоникидзе. 29.06.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.64, оп.1, д.17, л.134.
- 9 Шифрованная телеграмма Г.Орджоникидзе и С.Кирова – В.Ленину и И.Сталину. 12.06.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.85, оп.2с, д.2, л.9–11.



wrote: "Karabakh is the second Zagatala of our People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. There is a colossal provocation under way here, and it's all done by the Armenians in Moscow."¹⁰

In a coded telegram on 19 July, Chicherin wrote to Legran: "Your proposal, to which Azerbaijan agrees, is that Karabakh goes to Azerbaijan and Zangazur is considered disputed. Everything else remains with Armenia. It is not acceptable to the Armenian delegation. Therefore, this question can be resolved only through direct negotiations with the Armenian government. The delegation in Moscow does see itself authorized to make such serious territorial concessions."¹¹ On the same day, Chicherin sent another telegram to Armenian Foreign Minister Ohanjanjan, assuring the minister that "all the actions of Soviet Russia in the Caucasus aim to provide friendly support for the further peaceful development of the Armenian people." He also said that the issues of "disputed territories" between Azerbaijan and Armenia captured by Russian troops will be discussed calmly and dispassionately.¹² In turn, S. Kirov assured B. Legran that "Chicherin would welcome it if the Armenians take this decision, if they agree to immediately abandon Karabakh and recognize Zangazur on condition that Nakhchivan is recognized as theirs, and Chicherin will be happy with such an outcome. Your task is to achieve this in Erivan."¹³ However, despite Kirov's strong pressure on Azerbaijan, he failed to bring its position closer to that of Armenia. Kirov's negotiations with People's Commissar M. D. Huseynov and Armenian

representatives in Tbilisi did not yield any results. On 6 August, he wrote to Chicherin that as a result, they got only one thing from Azerbaijanis - they are ready to cede Sharur-Daralayaz District to Armenia, but strongly regard the rest, that is, Nakhchivan District, Ordubad, Julfa, Zangazur and Karabakh as their own. In turn, the Armenian representatives decisively claim these regions. The main argument of Azerbaijanis is that under the Musavat government these regions belonged to Azerbaijan, and ceding these regions now will discredit the Soviet government in the eyes of the Azerbaijanis, Iran and Turkey.¹⁴



Chicherin and Karakhan

On 20 July, in another telegram to Legran, Chicherin, based on Narimanov's discontent, explained the suspension of the advance of Soviet troops on Armenia not by the desire of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, but by the order of the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC). Allegedly, fearing the presence of Turks in Nakhchivan, the RMC stopped the advance on

Armenia. To calm Narimanov down, Chicherin wrote to Legran: "Explain to Comrade Narimanov that at his request, I insisted before the Revolutionary Military Council that measures must be taken to protect Azerbaijani limits from Dashnak attacks."¹⁵ But Narimanov had already understood Chicherin's double game. In the first days of August, he wrote to B. Shahtakhtinski, who arrived in Moscow on 31 July and started his work as ambassador of Azerbaijan: "Armenian gangs completely destroyed the border villages, but lately a real war or rather systematic seizure of Azerbaijani territory by Armenians has been under way. The latest reports are already saying that Armenian regular units are approaching Gerus. Comrade Chicherin writes to me: we should not allow an ethnic massacre, Azerbaijani units should not act, etc. But why are Armenians allowed to massacre Muslims along the entire border with Armenia? Didn't Chicherin foresee that the policy of the center would result precisely in what is happening now? In one of the telegrams, Comrade Chicherin says that I am blaming him for that. But when it comes to protests, I should have filed dozens of protests. To avoid these misunderstandings, a firm and clear policy should have been conducted from the very beginning with respect to this treacherous Armenia."¹⁶

As a result of the negotiations held in Moscow and Erivan, an agreement of six articles was signed on 10 August 1920. Four of the articles of the agreement were devoted to the artificially created territorial dispute with Azerbaijan. In the preamble to the agree-

10 Телеграмма Г.Орджоникидзе – Г.Чичерину. 1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.64, оп.1, д.17, л.304.

11 Телеграмма Г.Чичерина Б.Леграну. 19.07.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.64, оп.1, д.21, л.13.

12 Телеграмма Г.Чичерина Оганджаняну. 19.07.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.64, оп.1, д.21, л.12

13 Телеграмма С.Кирова Б.Леграну. 23.07.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.64, оп.1, д.21, л.20

14 Письмо С.Кирова Г.Чичерина. 06.08.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.80, оп.4, д.102к, л.1–2

15 Телеграмма Г.Чичерина Б.Леграну. 20.07.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.64, оп.1, д.21, л.14

16 Письмо Н.Нариманова Б.Шахтактинскому. Август, 1920. // РГАСПИ, ф.85, оп.2с, д.3, л.59



ment, Soviet Russia recognized the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Armenia. Under Article One of the agreement, fighting between the troops of the RSFSR and the Republic of Armenia was considered terminated from the afternoon of 10 August 1920. Article Two of the agreement stated that, apart from the area stipulated in this agreement for the deployment of the Armenian troops, the troops of the RSFSR occupy the disputed regions of Karabakh, Zangazur and Nakhchivan. Article Three of the agreement states that "the occupation of the disputed territories by the Soviet troops does not predetermine the rights of the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic to these territories. With this temporary occupation, the RSFSR aims to create favorable conditions for the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the grounds that will be established by the peace agreement that has to be signed between the RSFSR and the Republic of Armenia in the near future." Article Four of the agreement obliged both sides to stop the concentration of military forces in disputed and border areas. Under Article five, until the conclusion of an agreement between the RSFSR and the Republic of Armenia, the operation of the railway in the Shahtakhti-Julfa area was handed over to the Armenian Railway Department, provided that it could not be used for military purposes. Under Article Six, the RSFSR guaranteed free passage to Armenia for all the military units of the government of Armenia caught behind the line occupied by

the Soviet troops.¹⁷ The agreement was signed by the authorized representative of the RSFSR, B. V. Legran, and A. Jamalyan and A. Babalyan from the Armenian side. On 13 August, Chicherin reported at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) on the Russian-Armenian agreement, which was approved.¹⁸ In fact, the urgency of the signing of the agreement between Russia and Armenia was due to the fact that the Treaty of Sevres between Turkey and the Entente was signed on the same date. The Treaty of Sevres promised the Armenians big dividends, and Russian Soviet diplomats feared that Armenia would be entirely influenced by the Entente. The Treaty of Sevres was the main external factor that made Chicherin rush to conclude the agreement with Armenia. This crude diplomatic agreement was signed under pressure from Moscow, and the Azerbaijani lands occupied by the Red Army were promised to Armenia as so-called "disputed territories".

The leading circles of Armenia often hinted to Moscow that, compared with Georgia and Azerbaijan, Britain was allegedly attaching more importance precisely to Armenia. They explained this by saying that the geographical location of Armenia allowed it to act as a bridge for the spread of British rule to the Middle East, and on the other side, Armenia could be artfully used against the Muslim and Turkic world.¹⁹ As for Soviet policy, the document stated: "If the Entente and its minions decide to use the slogan of 'freedom to the unfortunate peoples of Turkey groaning under the Ottoman yoke', they can be success-

ful in Asia Minor." In this case, Armenia will be needed to take the initiative of freedom and create a buffer state in Turkish territory. This state, though not purely Soviet, can enter into the sphere of influence of Soviet Russia.²⁰

From the first days of the Sovietization of Azerbaijan, preparations were under way to ensure that the undisputed lands of Azerbaijan are declared disputed, which we saw in the Russian-Armenian agreement. Seconded to Azerbaijan, Ordzhonikidze said in a telegram to Lenin and Chicherin on this occasion on 19 June 1920 that Soviet rule had been proclaimed in Karabakh and Zangazur and both considered themselves to be part of Azerbaijan. He warned: "Azerbaijan cannot do without Karabakh and Zangazur. Actually, in my opinion, it is necessary to invite a representative of Azerbaijan to Moscow and resolve with him all issues relating to Azerbaijan and Armenia, and it must be done before signing an agreement with Armenia. A repeat of the Zagatala story by Armenians will finally knock us down here."²¹

The agreement of 10 August signed between Soviet Russia and Armenia secretly from Azerbaijan was a result of the policy chosen by the central Bolshevik government, and especially the Foreign Commissariat of Soviet Russia aimed at suppressing the interests of Azerbaijan. This agreement gave the Dashnaks such confidence and untied their hands so much that Armenia did not consider it necessary to discuss any territorial or border issues with Azerbaijan. In response to M. D. Huseynov's proposal to convene a conference to

17 Текст договора между РСФСР и Республикой Армения. 10.08.1920. // АПД УДП АР, ф.1, оп.169, д.249/II, л.11–12

18 Выписка из протокола №24 заседания Политбюро ЦК РКП (б). 30.06.1920. // АПД УДП АР, ф.1, оп.1, д.2а, л.10

19 О значении Армении и условиях укрепления там Советской власти. 20.07.1921 // РГАСПИ, ф.17, оп.84, д.183, л.8

20 Ibid. л.8–8 об.

21 Телеграмма Г.Орджоникидзе – В.И.Ленину и Г.Чичерину. 19.06.1920 // АПД УДП АР, ф.1, оп.169, д.249/I, л.34

22 Телеграмма Оганджяна Комиссару иностранных дел Азербайджана Гусейнову. 23.08.1920 // ГА АР, ф.28, оп.1, д.104, л.2



discuss controversial issues, Armenian Foreign Minister Ohanjanyan reported on 23 August that “according to the preliminary agreement signed between the government of Armenia and the authorized representative of the RSFSR, Le-gran, on 10 August 1920, territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan should be resolved on the basis that will be established by the peace agreement to be concluded between the RSFSR and the Republic of Armenia in the near future.”²² The Azerbaijani side offered to host the conference in Gazakh and the Azerbaijani delegation included two Armenians (I. Dovlatov and A. Mikoyan) and one Georgian (Lominadze). However, the Armenians refused to participate in the conference.²³ Armenia’s calm was due to the fact that in May 1920, the Armenians appealed to Soviet Russia to mediate in disputes with Azerbaijan. L. Karakhan (Armenian by nationality – J. H.) responded on behalf of the government of Soviet Russia and Azerbaijan: “Until the territorial disputes are settled in order to avoid mutual ethnic strife, the disputed areas will be occupied by the Russian Red Army. This has already been ordered by the Russian military command.”²⁴

In the territorial disputes between the two republics, someone really wanted Armenia to win. To this end, some senior officials in the Center did not shy away from deceptions and provocations. Long before the signing of the agreement, Chicherin deluded Lenin into thinking in a note: “The Azerbaijani government claims Karabakh, Zangazur and Sharur-Daralagoz District along with Nakhchivan, Ordubad and Julfa. Most of these areas are in fact in the hands of the Armenian Republic. It

s one of the two - either Azerbaijan had to send its Muslim units of those same askars, who rise up against the Soviets, to take these districts. Sending Tatar units against Armenians is completely unacceptable and would be the greatest crime. It is especially unacceptable now that the Turks, whom the Muslim Azerbaijani units, if they are sent there, will immediately support, are advancing precisely on these areas from the south. In general, the issue of these units seems rather difficult to me. They are already raising revolts, and the approach of the Turks will strengthen this trend in them. The best thing would be to send them to Persia, but I am not well informed to know whether it is possible at the moment. In any case, there can be no talk of sending Azerbaijani askars against Armenians to take from the latter the areas Azerbaijan claims.”

Chicherin, in his own words, was poorly informed about the domestic policy of Azerbaijan and painted a terrible picture of the future if the demands of Baku were not satisfied. He wrote: “Another way to satisfy Azerbaijan is that our forces occupy all the mentioned places and hand them over to Azerbaijan as a gift. It is this combination that Narimanov has in mind. The comrades who have come here say that it was planned to withdraw the Muslim askars to the rear front. The Baku Soviet government, whose domestic policies have led to a dramatic encounter with a large part of the Muslim masses, wants to create compensation and bribe the nationalist elements by acquiring for Azerbaijan the areas it proclaims disputed. Performing this combination with the help of Russian troops is totally unacceptable. Our role should be ab-

solutely unbiased and strictly impartial. It would be a fatal mistake for all our policy in the East if we started to take one national element as a basis against another national element. Taking any part of Armenia away and handing it over to Azerbaijan would mean giving a completely false color to our policy in the East.” Artificially complicating the situation, Chicherin saw a solution only in the establishment of a Russian occupation regime in the territories that had been proclaimed disputed. According to him, before a good situation develops, these areas cannot be given neither to Azerbaijan nor to Armenia. Chicherin considered this problem only from the perspective of the Russian-Armenian agreement. He wrote: “Only on the basis of the military status quo, can we hope for an agreement with Armenia, which is necessary for our peace policy in the South Caucasus. Thus, there is ample evidence that we should abandon the occupation of any other places besides those already occupied. We should try to sign an agreement with the Armenian Republic as soon as possible.”²⁵

Chicherin was able to turn some of his proposals into an official form, and in instructions sent to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Caucasian front, on behalf of the Central Committee of the party, he issued instructions not to allow Azerbaijani or Armenian authorities into the disputed territory.²⁶ But proclaimed disputed, these territories actually belonged to Azerbaijan and were under the control of the Azerbaijani authorities. Thus, Chicherin’s instruction was viewed in Baku as a gross violation of the sovereign rights and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Five days before the conclusion of this

23 Н. Нариманов. Азербайджан и Армения. Август, 1920 // АПД УДП АР, ф.609, оп.1, д.21, л.40

24 Телеграмма Л. Карахана Министру иностранных дел Армении. 15.05.1920 г. // ГА АР, ф.28, оп.1, д.99, л.100

25 Копия памятной записки В.И.Ленину. 29.06.1920 // АПД УДП АР, ф.1, оп.1, д.2а, л.13–14

26 Инструкция Реввоенсовету Кавказского Фронта. 04.07.1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.17, оп.3, д.94, л.7



agreement, the PCFA of Azerbaijan prepared a document entitled "Description of the borders of the undisputed territory of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic with Armenia", which was signed by the chairman of the Azerbaijani Revolutionary Committee, Nariman Narimanov, and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs M. D. Huseynov and sent to Moscow. The document stated that the border of the undisputed territory of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic with Armenia lies on the administrative border first of Gazakh and then of Borchali districts, then of the Gazakh District with Aleksandropol and Novobayazet as far as Mount Maralja, from which it descends directly to the Lake Goycha approximately 1.5 miles east of the village of Chubuglu. Then cutting the Goycha Lake in half, it goes along its southern coast to the west. On the southern shore of the Lake Goycha, the border begins between the villages of Zagalu and Gedak-Bulak, then rising through the village Yarnuzlu, Gizil-Vank, and Upper Aluchalu to the upland areas of the southern shore of the Lake Goycha, where it goes through the peaks of the Gizil-Kharaba and Armanagan to Mount Small Ag Dag in the west on the border of Erivan and Novobayaz districts, separating the Muslim-populated highlands from the coast occupied by Armenian villages. Then the border goes from Mount Ag Dag to the north-west of the Lake Togmagan-Gol, and thence in the westerly direction to the village of Tazakand, and then along the River Garni Chay as far as the village of Upper Agbash before which it turns to the north to Peak 3,620, from where it goes to the south-west towards

Ulukhanli passing midway between the village of Ulukhanli and the Ulukhanli train station, and on to the Aras River, which it reaches north of the village of Ranjbar. From the village of Ranjbar on the Aras River, the border extends to the west, coinciding with the old administrative border between Surmali District and Echmiadzin and Kars regions as far as Mount Tandurek at the old Russian-Turkish border.²⁷ When the agreement with Armenia was being prepared, Narimanov and Huseynov promptly sent this document to Moscow, but such important information about the border line was completely ignored.



Administrative division of the Azerbaijan SSR

As we can see, the new government of Azerbaijan had a hard day. On the one hand, obeying the revolutionary spirit, the Azerbaijani Soviet government considers itself close to Soviet Russia, and on the other, the workers and peasants' ally - Soviet Russia - took away the lands that undoubtedly belonged to Azerbaijan under the previous government. Ironically, having occupied Azerbaijan with the help of Muslim communists, Soviet Russia finds new allies in the South Caucasus at the expense of Azerbaijani territories, concludes an alliance with Armenia and

Georgia, and thus forms its "peaceful" image in Europe. These processes took place in such an ugly form that even Soviet officials seconded from Moscow to Azerbaijan acknowledged the injustice of such an attitude to the republic. One of these witnesses, the chairman of the National Economy Council of the Azerbaijan SSR, N. Solovyev, said in a copious dispatch to Lenin: "There was hope on Moscow. But the peace agreements with Georgia and Armenia, which gave part of Azerbaijani territory with a Muslim population to these republics, have shaken, if not killed, this hope: the conclusion of the Muslim masses is that Moscow not only took over Azerbaijan, but awards Georgia and Armenia at its expense. It seemed like a mockery that the delegation from Azerbaijan in negotiations with Georgia included Georgians and with Armenia - Armenians. Muslims wonder why Georgia was represented only by Georgians and Armenia only by Armenians, without Muslims. The agreement with Armenia, under which part of Azerbaijani territory with a totally Muslim population and the railroad of huge strategic and economic importance were taken away and the only corridor directly connecting Azerbaijan and Turkey was destroyed, made an especially heavy impression. What can we say about rank-and-file Muslims if some members of the Azerbaijan CP explained this treaty by the fact that it was drafted on an instruction from Armenians who are influential in the center and call themselves communists, but are in fact conscious or unconscious nationalists?"²⁸ ❀

(to be continued)

27 Описание границы бесспорной территории Азербайджанской Советской Социалистической Республики с Арменией. 05.08.1920 // АПД УДП АР, ф.1, оп.169, д.249/II, л.15–16

28 Информация Н.И.Соловьева В.И.Ленину. Наша политика в Азербайджане за два месяца /май–июнь/ после переворота. 1920 // РГАСПИ, ф.17, оп.84, д.58, л.15