



Հարգելի՛ ընթերցող.

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«THE REVOLUTION» SERIES

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ARTSAKH  
OR KARABAGH  
REGION:  
PAST AND PRESENT



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I

Since mid-February 1988 the mass media of the non-Soviet countries have been reporting an unprecedented event in the Soviet Union. The 80 percent Armenian population of the Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabagh and its highest governmental body, "the deputies of regional soviet", have decided to raise the issue of seceding the region from the transcaucasian republic of Azerbaijan and uniting it with the Armenian republic. In a special session on February 20, the regional soviet has formulated the demand within the relevant constitutional disposition.

At the beginning the constitutional arguement was formulated in succinct and dense phrases as the simple and unanimous expression of the will of the region's Armenian population. But as time passed and the spontaneous demand of the people came across the crude and sabotagingly stubborn reaction of the higher authorities, there appeared more voluminous and sound jurisdic researches and arguments. In all of these well-known principles were stressed primarily: equality of nations and the right for self-determination, with their logical and political consequences.

The already mentioned February event was unprecedented in the sense that for the last 70 years no spontaneous and authentic popular movement of such magnitude has ever occurred in the Soviet Union. Especially if we consider the massive demonstra-

tions held in the region's capital Stepanakert and the capital of Armenia, Yerevan. Even it can be asserted that these massive demonstrations, with their organized, orderly and pacifist nature, became an example, and even a stimulus for the similar movements that proliferated afterwards in the advanced and politically mature Soviet republics, as well as in the once so-called satellite countries of Central Europe.

The event as it unfolded, although widely seemed unexpected, can be traced in the history of its immediate past. During 1987 a widely distributed petition, including the signatures of over 100,000 Armenians, was sent to Moscow demanding the unification of the region with Armenia. Occasionally, delegates from the region visited Moscow to keep a close eye on the developments and were accordingly given assurances from various officials for a positive solution of the problem. However, the negative response formulated by the Central Committee of the party in mid-February came as a surprise to the Armenian population creating deep resentment and indignation.

Manifestations of protest and demonstrations were soon organized in Stepanakert and culminated in the regional soviet's February 20 decision. As an expression of solidarity with the region's movement similar and massive demonstrations of protest were organized in Yerevan. These demonstrations gradually gained momentum and wide popular support and involved hundreds of thousands and even a million of people gathered from various parts of the country to join the demonstrators in the city. It was at this juncture that four high ranking party officials from Moscow were dispatched to Karabagh and Yerevan with special recommendations and plans. Meantime, a message from Gorbachev was delivered to calm down the population of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. And it was after these developments, on February 28, that aggressions of reprisal and massacres took place in Azerbaijan against the civilian Armenians, most notably the horrible incidents in the city of Sumgait.

The Soviet media, in fidelity with their traditional line of ex-

pression and subject to the decree from above, did not make any proper presentation of the events in Karabagh and in Yerevan. At best, they reported perverted information often obscured by commentaries and trivial attempts to express impartiality. Despite the fact that non-Soviet reporters were disallowed to enter the areas where the incidents occurred they, nevertheless, reported the events on a daily basis and through secondary and indirect sources. Both the press media and the television networks in the West and in the world at large became increasingly enthusiastic about the events.

However, in the absence of available and relevant literature on the subject the reporters of the non-Soviet countries were unable to adequately and exhaustively account for the events. Consequently, inconsistent and often discrepant pictures were presented and discussing them requires more time and space than is practical here. But, and for illustrative purposes, pointing out few discrepancies is noteworthy.

The non-Soviet reporters often stressed the fact that the Armenians are Christians and the Azerbaijanis are Muslims contributing to the impression that the territorial dispute between the two peoples emerges as a consequence of religious affiliation. In fact, religion did not play any significant role in the dispute and, if it did, it was only a minor or a secondary role. Other reporters stressed the fact that the Azerbaijanis are of Turkic origin without, however, accounting appropriately for its significance. Few reporters stressed the fact that Karabagh and the relevant issues that arise from it are of vital importance to the Armenians in the sense that they are closely intertwined with the question of national survival and, hence, could not be compromised. Moreover, Karabagh as an important component of the historic Armenian plateau, was seceded and was arbitrarily annexed to a foreign republic; and in order to restore justice the region with its Armenian population should be recognized as an integral part of the motherland, the Soviet Republic of Armenia. These were the basic considerations that underlie the Armenian demands regard-

less of what the ethnic composition or the religious affiliation of Azerbaijan constitutes.

It was repeatedly mentioned that Karabagh is an "enclave" of Azerbaijan. This also did not project reality since Karabagh, historically, geographically, and demographically has always been an integral part of Armenia. The dividing corridor between the region and the Soviet Republic of Armenia, about 5-8 kilometers wide at the narrowest point, is only symbolic, a consequence of capricious division without having any real significance; it has been installed by the "far-sighted" rulers not only to separate the neighbouring Armenian areas, but also to keep them under permanent siege. Immediately to the northwest of this point, a relatively wider dividing area, inhabits not Azerbaijanis but Kurds and constitutes the Latchine and the Kelbadjar administrative regions which, prior to the sovietization of the country, was known as "Kurdistan" ("Kurdkraï" or Kurdish District). Later, the "Kurdistan" District was basically disintegrated and its Kurdish inhabitants were gradually assimilated under the Azerbaijani rule.

Moreover, none mentioned that The Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabagh is only the concrete manifestation of a far graver reality, or the reality that it is only a summit of a huge iceberg. Stated differently, it is not the only area that, after the sovietization of Transcaucasian republics, was taken from Armenia and was literally given to the Azerbaijan S.S.R. To its northwest an Armenian populated region with four administrative areas was also fragmented and detached from Armenia (the areas of Shahoumian, Khanlar, Tashkessan, and Shamkhor, excluding Kedapek). This region does not enjoy autonomy nor does it assume a geographic name because in the vicissitudes of administrative apparatus it has assumed different names (such as Shakashen, Outik, Gardman, Parissos, Mountainous Gandzak). It seems that there is a general consensus among the Armenians today to refer to the region as Gardman. Like Karabagh, Gard-

man also is not an enclave of Azerbaijan but a direct and natural continuation of the Armenian Republic. After much saying about Kartman, it must be added that after almost two years the region populated by Armenians for millennia has a different image. Due to the repressions and deportations perpetrated by the Azerbaijanis Armenians no longer live in the areas of Getabek, Shamkhor, Tashkessan. They still survive only in the Shahoumian region and the Gedashen sub-region of Khanlar, but their existence is never guaranteed, since it is conditioned by the outcome of the everyday clashes.

To the southwest of Karabagh is the Autonomous Republic of Nakhidjevan which is another Armenian territory detached from Armenia and administratively attached to Azerbaijan. On the contemporary and often distorted geographic maps these areas are not explicitly distinguished which only suggests that they have been subject to an isomorphic development of national drama. And if on February 1988 only the issue of Mountainous Karabagh has been raised and only the name Karabagh has evolved it is because of its very status as autonomy which provided the region with the official and proper channels defined within the constitutional disposition. Gardman, on the other hand, is a region composed of dispersed areas and does not have a collective representation nor any constitutionally prescribed channel. The circumstances in Nakhidjevan is further complicated by ethnic and other factors.

The Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabagh officially exists only since 1923. The term "Mountainous Karabagh" also is a configuration of the same period. Earlier, the name Karabagh was given to refer to the area as a whole without complementary specifications. Although there are mountains and lowlands in Karabagh the denomination was not a common usage in any literature on the area. However, the terms were commonly used in conversational and often in journalistic languages. In various epochs of history both the mountains and lowlands of the region

were essentially, if not exclusively, populated by Armenians. However, under the pressure of foreign nomadic tribes the Armenians gradually fortified their positions in the safer mountainous area, while the incoming nomads, the Azerbaijanis of today, were gradually settled in the plains.

"Karabagh" is not an Armenian name. It is Turkish and means "black vineyard". Historic documentations show that the term was formulated later in the Middle Ages (14th-16th centuries) and arbitrarily. Hence, the philological origin of the name is unclear and subject to diverse presumptions. There are those who claim that the name emerged from the widespread trees of mulberry both black and white and, particularly, from the black mulberries which are abundantly found in the area. Others say that the name was given by those outsiders who planned to invade the area but encountered heavy Armenian resistance and were beaten on the battlefield.

The proper ancient Armenian name of Karabagh is Artsakh, a denomination unequivocally maintained during certain periods in history. It is important at this juncture to probe the remote past of the region in an attempt to revive its ancient image.

But before probing the past, it is important to represent briefly all that happened in Artsakh-Karabagh and the Armenian republic after the February of 1988, the very date the important yet tragic events unfolded.

First it should be noted that the Azerbaijanis retaliated vehemently the legal demand of the region's Armenian population. The leaders of that republic, in fidelity to their heritage, overtly or tacitly mobilized the Azerbaijani population so that the hostile struggle against the Armenians becomes "pan-national". That struggle was waged by official declarations and resolutions, by the distortions of the press and the whole media, but especially by ruthless atrocities, plunder, ravage, deportations and so on. And it must be stressed, that all these could have hardly attained

this unprecedented extent without the obvious encouraging patronage of the central authorities in Moscow.

During the events, the Caucasian policy of the Moscow center was manifested under various guises. And in general this policy was characterized by artificial postponements, by the tendency to morally terrorize the Armenians, to keep them under the pressure of the propaganda machine, and to support the anti-Armenian policy by overt sophistries. That prejudicate disposition was disclosed during the July 18th 1988 enlarged session of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (partially televised). The gathered rulers were unconstrained while discrediting the Armenian population of Artsakh and the Armenian nation as a whole, ridiculing their national just cause, and declaring its logical solution impossible.

Guided by the spirit of the "principles" adopted in that session, the January 12th 1989 decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet established a Special Governing Committee in the Autonomous Region of Nagorno-Karabagh that was partially subject to the control of Moscow. The act then was regarded as a compromising and temporary measure. But later events showed that the Committee was a puppet, had no real authority, and was constantly attacked by the interferences of the Azerbaijani authorities, whose actions, as expected, were totally anti-Armenian.

After ten months and a half from the above-mentioned resolution, on the 28th of November of the same year, the central authorities in Moscow arbitrarily composed a far more unjust and unfounded resolution, that abolished the Special Governing Committee, while the region was "returned" to the Azerbaijani Republic; i.e. the region was surrendered to its sworn slayers. The Armenians simply could not overlook the totally illegal and infuriating challenge. At that moment the constitutional status of Armenia in the Soviet federation was reconsidered, the de facto unification of the Nagorno-karabagh region with the Armenian republic was declared officially by the Armenian Supreme Soviet. The

unconstrained intrigues of the Moscow center and its destructive policy stimulated a grave upheaval in the Armenian community, thereby affecting an irreversible psychological evulsion.

The imperative of national self-defence induced the quest for new standards.

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## II

It is important at the outset to point out that since the ancient epochs the history of Artsakh with its exclusively Armenian population has been an integral part and closely intertwined with the Armenian history in general. In the course of its history there have been numerous vicissitudes and recessions, however, the ethnic-demographic composition of the region has never been disputed. This historic unity has been confirmed in numerous sources, both primary and secondary, and has been documented in the publications of classical Latin and Greek authors. Later, and beginning the fifth century, it was also documented in the newly flourished Armenian chronological and historic literature. In general, the history of the region has been documented orderly since the Sixth Century A.D.

The historic situation of Artsakh should be explicated within the contour of neighboring geographic areas. It should be first noted that since the ancient times various Armenian territories were located to the east of Eastern Transcaucasia, namely, between the rivers Kour and Arax that flow to the Caspian sea. In modern terms the area encompasses the Minor Caucasus mountains and the lowlands that spread to the north and east. Both the mountains and the lowlands cover almost equal areas.

On the Minor Caucasus mountains and the surrounding plains were located three Armenian provinces: Outik, Artsakh, and Paitakaran. The unified Armenian kingdom at the time, referred to as the "Greater Armenia", was divided into 15 provinces which were known as "Ashkharner" ("worlds"). Artsakh was one of the "Ashkharner" which included 12 cantons. To its north and northeast was the province of Outik which included 8 cantons and to the west the province of Paitakaran with 10 cantons. Later, the province of Paitakaran, partly because of its relatively fewer Armenian population and partly because of its geographic location that directly exposed it to foreign infiltrations, could not maintain itself as an Armenian province. Both Artsakh and Outik, on the other hand, together were able to resist the foreign assaults and maintained their Armenian image and identity. The population of both these provinces were famous by their acts of heroism and became increasingly so later in the course of the history. In fact, this part of Armenia became a strong barrier against foreign assaults not only for the provinces alone but for the whole Armenian population at large.

But the unified Armenian Kingdom was exposed to heavy external rivalries and assaults, particularly during the 4th century when the Roman Empire and the Sassanian Empire of Persia were the two contending major powers of the epoch. In 387, for instance, both these empires divided Armenia between them and within the divided territories and for a certain period of time tolerated limited and provisional governmental authority to the remnants of Arshakunian Armenian Dynasty. The peripheral provinces were further amputated by the Persians and were annexed to the newly created administrative districts (Marzpanoutioun) in the neighboring states such as Georgia and Aghvank (Albany). It was under these circumstances that the provinces of Outik and Artsakh, with their Armenian population, were annexed to the "Marzpanoutioun" of Aghvank.

The demographic composition of Aghvank district, in this context, has been a mixture of ethnic groups. On the right side of

river Kour was an Armenian populated area while on the left side resided some 26 tribal groups that together formed the Aghvan people. Recent scientific studies, bearing heavy reliance on the 7th century Armenian Atlas called "Ashkharhatsouits", reconstituted the geographic and administrative image of the area in the preceding centuries. According to these studies the actual size of the Aghvan area encompassed some 23,000 km<sup>2</sup> with 11 cantons, while the Armenian area included 20 cantons with over 26,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The border lines of "Marzpanoutiouns" were subject to frequent modifications. Professional studies calculated that in the 7th century, for example, the overall area extended to some 72,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

The territorial redistribution into "marzpanoutioun" districts had its effects on the terminology used to identify the areas. Even in the Armenian historiography the term "Aghvank" was used to identify not only the actual Aghvan areas but also the areas that were essentially Armenian and were distinctly identifiable both geographically and ethno-culturally. Minor attempts, however, were made to distinguish the Armenian section by using terms such as "Eastern threshold of Armenia".

In the beginning of the 4th century Christianity was accepted as the official religion in Armenia, Georgia and Albany, and established religious hierarchy in these countries. After the founding of Aghvank "marzpanoutioun" the Catholicosate of Aghvan, which maintained close relations with the Armenian Church, encountered new and uneasy situations. Since the actual Aghvans were relatively weak and unorganized, excluding as well the external pressures, their influence on religious affairs gradually decreased. On the other hand, the influence of Armenians on their internal religious affairs increased to the extent that they were soon able to transfer the Catholicos and the siege to an Armenian populated and relatively safer area. In the same context, one should interpret the fact that it was an Armenian spiritual leader, Mesrop Mashtots, who invented the Armenian alphabet in the be-



ginning of the 5th century as well as the alphabets of Georgians and Aghvans. For these and several other reasons, the Aghvans could not cultivate their literary ability nor could they maintain a culture of their own. The Armenians, on the other hand, continued without any noticeable interruption to remain closely attached to their internal affairs, culture and at the same time created their own share in world civilization.

Being administratively detached from the Armenian heartland, however, had its impact on the life and destiny of the Artsakh region as well as on the adjacent Armenian areas. The geographic isolation of the region forced its inhabitants to pay particular attention to the internal political organization and consolidation and to concentrate their efforts on the development and maintenance of a distinct and endemic characteristic. These efforts were surely imperatives of the prevailing political circumstances rather than voluntary secessionist attempts or centrifugal tendencies. In fact and later in history, events came to show that the Armenian population of Artsakh did not miss the opportunities to join the general course of Armenian history often assuming the leading and dirigent roles.

The local aristocracy with its various branches and consecutive generations played a prominent role in the effort of maintaining and consolidating the political and national character of the region. The Armenian principedom of Aranshahik has been the most instrumental in this regard both in Outik and Artsakh provinces. Its representatives have inherited governorship and, later, in the 5th and 6th centuries and also between 9th and 10th centuries and contingent upon the circumstances of the time, they have established principalities and kingdoms, not to mention their royal presence in later centuries.

The sense of solidarity and consolidation among the Armenian population of Minor Caucasus was strong to the extent that the continuous assaults on Armenia since the 11th century by nomadic hordes, the Seljouk-Turks, and the Tataro-Mongols were virtually unsuccessful to disrupt its ethnic unity and its inter-

nal autonomous life. The incessant combats, pillages, and massacres on all fronts constantly challenged the region but it managed to confront them successfully by relying on its own forces. Although border lines and administrative denominations have undergone changes, the region as a whole has maintained its distinct demographic and cultural identity.

In the 10th century the geographic term Artsakh has been changed to Khatchen, and in the 15th century to Karabagh. The Khatchen principality of the 10th to 16th centuries has been phenomenal in the history of the region. After its disintegration and fragmentation into minor principalities the Armenian "melikoutioun"s emerged and assumed significant historic role. In the latter part of the 17th century and early in the 18th century historic Khatchen was divided into five minor principalities or "melikoutioun"s (Gulistan, Djerabert, Khatchen, Varanda, and Dizak) which together formed a military alliance known as Khamsail Melikoutiounner (khamsa in Arabic means five) to defend itself from frequent Turkish and Persian attacks. This military alliance, or confederation, encompassed an area extending from the vicinities of the city Gandzak in the north to the river Arax in the south. The five melikoutiouns played a major role not only in defending the region and securing the life of the local population but also in initiating major endeavors on national level. It was their initiative, for example, to organize frequent expeditions to Western European countries and to Russia and mobilize support in order to free the entire Armenian nation from Persian and Turkish domination.

The Armenian meliks of Karabagh were united in conducting their foreign affairs for a long period of time, until the mid-18th century when that unity was altogether despaired. Shahnazar, who was the younger brother of Melik Hovsep of Varanda, perfidiously exterminated his brother's family and took over Varanda and declared himself "Melik Shahnazar II". Fearing retaliation from other meliks he sought to ally himself with outside forces.

The situation was exploited by a nomadic tribe leader of Turkic origin Panah Ali who had planned to station himself in the lowlands and then establish a larger principality. The Armenian meliks, well aware of his intentions and of the danger he represents to the Armenians, were united in preventing him from penetrating into Karabagh. However and despite the opposition from the meliks, Melik Shahnazar offered Panah Ali to consolidate his forces in fort Shosh. This was conducive enough for Panah Ali, who was also encouraged by the Persian royal house, to establish the first foreign and ethnically and religiously non-Armenian principality in Mountainous Karabagh, or a semi-autonomous Khanate of Karabagh. His policy of oppression and the calamities that he created forced many Armenians of the area to emigrate into nearby or remote and relatively safer areas. Panah's policy of oppression was systematically carried on by his son Ibrahim. The Khanate of Karabagh, also known as the Khanate of Shoushi, existed until 1822 after which it yielded to other administrative constructs.

In 1805 the Armenians of Karabagh voluntarily accepted the Russian domination over the area which was confirmed in the Russo-Persian peace treaty of Gulistan in 1813. Although this new arrangement did not bring real freedom for the Armenians, nevertheless, and for a long period of time it secured their physical existence free from aggressions and permanent devastations of barbaric neighboring nomads. Karabagh became a part of the Russian Empire and functioned within its administrative apparatus in all political, economic, and socio-cultural domains. Gradually the economic production revived as well as the cultural life, and new schools, theaters, and press were founded. Consequently, the local intelligentsia became very active particularly in the capital city of Shoushi which eventually became one of the most prominent centers of intellectual life for the Transcaucasian Armenians.

However, Karabagh, like other Armenian territories, suffered

from the tsarist policy of administrative delimitations. This restrictive policy, common to all empires, consists of ignoring the ethnic composition of an area and creating new artificial administrative units in such a manner that they will prevent the possibility of any ethnic or national entity in a given province or a canton to become a majority. Successive administrative restructuring, therefore, followed the dictates of governmental policy of suitable arrangements for military invasions and control. In fact, different ethnic groups and nationalities lived together without, however, being intermixed.

Along these lines the province of Elizabetpol was founded in 1868 with Elizabetpol (Gandzak in Armenian, Gandja in Turkish, and Kirovabad of today) as its administrative center. Not surprisingly, the territorial composition of the cantons within this new province did not reflect the regional ethno-political image, but it reflected an imperialist principle commonly known as "divide and rule". In this new province were included the largely Armenian populated canton of Gandzak, the cantons that fall within the Karabagh area namely, Shoushi, Djibrayil, and Djivanshir which are mostly foreign termed but with half Armenian population, and the canton of Zangezour which falls outside its borders.

The absurdity of administrative delimitations under the tsarist rule is indisputably self-evident. It was impossible to initiate any practical restructuring and administrative reform under the tsarist regime (without counting the zemstvoian attempts of local autonomy); however, in the aftermath of February 1917 Revolution, when the tsarist regime was collapsed and democratic republic was established, the tendencies of reform in Transcaucasia and the need to look at the administrative frontiers strictly on the ethno-demographic principles revived. The movement became so widespread and enforcing that the famous Armenian communist Stepan Shahoumian (1878-1918) also proposed projects of reform in the same direction.

In this synoptic view of Karabagh's history and the events germane, it would be inappropriate to overlook the Armenian-

Tatar fighting of 1905 (the Azerbaijanis of today were then referred to as Tatars). The fighting and the massacres began in February in Baku and then spread out to Shoushi, Gandzak, Yerevan, Nakhidjevan and elsewhere. The incidents sporadically prolonged well into 1906 and 1907. It is historically documented that the Tatars were the aggressors while the Armenians were defending themselves with rare occasions of reprisals. Even then the popular contention was that the aggressors were encouraged, patronaged, and even armed by the official representatives of the tsarist government, namely, governors, police chiefs, etc. The role of the tsarist regime in this fighting is interpreted as a policy of preventing the development of revolutionary fervor in the country by "punishing the rebellious Armenians" and by relying on the ignorant tatar reactionaries. Whatever the outcome, the years 1905 to 1907 have been years of uneasy experience for the Armenian people in the sense that its enemies have joined forces to destroy its national pride and existence.

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### III

The Russian Revolution of February 1917 and the democratic order that followed eventually vitalized the public life and created a conducive environment for the component nationalities of the Russian Empire. The need to develop a new perspective to look at the inter-ethnic relations or inter-national relations was the order of the day. The environment was also conducive in Karabagh; and it is proper to evaluate the situations there within the contour of larger Transcaucasian relations.

In the aftermath of the Revolution, viceroy Nicolas Nicolaevich along with his collaborators fled from Tiflis after his project of Russification of Caucasus rendered unsuccessful. On March 9 (ancient calender) the provisional government of the Russian Republic decreed the creation of a 5 member "Transcaucasian Committee", an executive body which was also known as Ozagom. This Committee existed for a short period of time during which local inter-ethnic fray surfaced and the representatives of different nationalities pursued the interests of their national entity often to the expense of the others. Much like in other domains, in the domain of organizing community life various central and local "National Councils" emerged within each nationality.

Consequently, the Armenian National Conference was organized in Tiflis between September 29 and October 9 to discuss

various pertinent issues. The Conference then elected the "Armenian National Council" in which the representatives of different Armenian political organizations took part. The Council played a phenomenal role later and for a certain period of time in the course of the Armenian life.

After the October Revolution the political organizations of Transcaucasia refused to recognize the new Soviet Central Government and consequently "Ozagom" disintegrated. On November 27 the Transcaucasian "Seim" was created and the Transcaucasian Commissariat became its executive body. The number of representatives within Seim tripled to match the number of the representatives already elected to the pan-Russian Constitutional Assembly.

Meantime the Russian army on the Transcaucasian front began to retreat as a response to an appeal by Lenin to return home and acquire lands. Consequently, the defense of a 500 km long front against the advancing Turkish armies was left to the Armenian troops alone. Despite the armistice signed on December 5 between the two sides the Turks organized a unilateral attack during the months of February and March, 1918, as an objection to the decisions in the Brest-Litovsk accord, and forcing Transcaucasia to declare independence from Russia. Under these circumstances, on April 9, and with much obscured prospects the "Democratic Republic of Confederal Transcaucasia" was declared. Subsequently, the confederal republic was soon collapsed under the Turkish pressure and on May 26 Georgia declared its own independence followed by the independence of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In connection to the founding of independent Transcaucasian republics, it is important to point out that the terms "Georgia" and "Georgian" or "Armenia" and "Armenian" have existed since the ancient millenniums to identify the respective nationalities and their homeland. The Azerbaijani republic, on the other hand, was founded on a territory which historically was never known to be Azerbaijan. Further south an adjacent geographic area was once

referred to as "Atropatene" by Greeks (Aterpatakan in Armenian) and was later pronounced as "Azerbaijan" by the Arabs. Hence, it is from this "replacement" that the new republic of Azerbaijan has acquired its name.

The name given to identify the nationality is also obscure. The component members of the national collectivity that are known today as "Azerbaijanis" are the remnants of Seljouk-Turks, Tatar-Mongols, and other nomads that beginning the 11th Century moved into Transcaucasia, converted into Islam, and gradually settled in by exterminating, converting, and forcefully assimilating the local population. Even after converting into Islam the national characteristics of the Azerbaijanis did not develop to meet certain socio-cultural and ethnic countenance in conventional terms. During the census under the tsarist regime and also in various studies they were simply referred to as Muhammadans. They were also called "Caucasian Tatars", or simply "Tatars" by the Georgians, and "Turks" by the Armenians (the Ottoman Turks were called "Tajiks"). Their language was "Turkish" or so it was called until the mid-1930s when it was replaced by "Azerbaijani" as the "maternal language of Azerbaijanis". At the time of the founding of the republic both terms, "Azerbaijani" and "Azerbaijani", have not been a common usage, but only "Azeri" as the conversational term was used to identify the nationality. Hence, terminological and identity confusion since the beginning of the "national republic" was evident. Nevertheless, in order to avoid further unavoidable confusion in terminology, and for purposes of somewhat providing clarity to our discussion, we will follow a consistent pattern of labeling and utilize here the terms "Azerbaijan" and "Azerbaijani" conditionally.

After the founding of the three Transcaucasian republics the expansionist appetites of the Azerbaijani ruling class became increasingly evident. This ruling class was essentially proprietor in character and thirsty of expansionism and domination. Its thinking concentrated on expanding Azerbaijan to encompass not only the areas in which the Azerbaijanis inhabited but also over

half of Caucasian Armenia. The reasoning that underlies this thinking can be set as follows: the mountainous Gandzak, Karabagh, and Zangezour are the "integral parts of Azerbaijan" because during the tsarist regime they were included in the province of Elizabetpol (Gandzak); Nakhidjevan and its vicinity also and necessarily "belong to Azerbaijan" including the city of Yerevan because the Azerbaijanis so desire, despite the fact that all these regions once were included in the province of Yerevan, and earlier in the "Armenian Oblast". Envisioning such expansionism eventually dictated the policies and the activities of the Azerbaijani leadership.

In order to consolidate unilateral position and regional hegemony Azerbaijan had to pursue a policy of extermination and deportation of Armenians. The optimum opportunity to materialize such policy was created when the Ottoman armies entered Transcaucasia in 1918. Even before the entrance of the Ottoman army the Azerbaijanis made every effort and used every opportunity to attack the Armenians. Again, during the months of February and March organized atrocities against the Armenians in Aresh, Shamakh and elsewhere were widespread. Similar atrocities would have been organized in Baku if their sedition had rendered successful and if the so called "Commune of Baku" had not been created and sustained between April 25 and the end of July. The Commune of Baku, in fact, was defended by the Armenian soldiers not so much for its political and ideological purposes, but as a means to secure the physical existence of nearly 90,000 Armenians in the area. About 10 to 12 thousand Armenian soldiers have returned from the western front and have been summoned in Baku unable to return to their homeland because of the Azerbaijani barriers that blockaded all the passages. Similarly, the trail ways were blockaded and the Russian soldiers returning from the Caucasian front were also despoiled and killed. After the Ottoman armies reached Azerbaijan and entered Baku on September 15, the Azerbaijanis were further encouraged

to attack and massacre the Armenians by every possible means. In three days, for instance, nearly 30,000 Armenians in Baku were killed and heavily wounded.

The assailing Azerbaijanis did not confine their activities to the peripheral and isolated areas where innocent Armenian communities resided. The Azerbaijani government, in other words, pursued its policy of subjugation in exclusively Armenian populated areas. Karabagh was such an area in which a large portion of, and agriculturally fertile, plains was occupied by the Azerbaijani proprietors, or the so-called aristocracy. Generally speaking, over half of the Azerbaijani aristocracy was centered in the Gandzak-Karabagh region and occupied about 60 percent of the area. Mountainous Karabagh, however, was Armenian by all aspects of its life, and defended itself against Azerbaijani transgression and despotism over the region.

Hence, it can be clearly asserted that the government of the Azerbaijani republic made every effort to subjugate Karabagh, while the Armenian population of Karabagh, despite the heavy casualties and the distress it suffered, resisted the policy of subjugation and maintained its autonomy. Periodically, representative assemblies were organized by the Armenians in the region, executive bodies were elected, decisions were taken and soon implemented to meet the challenges of the crisis situations, negotiators were designated, etc. Stated differently, Karabagh dictated its own policy and its own conduct, and did not allow any outside power or any self-proclaimed authority to conduct its affairs. Although the power between the two sides was unevenly distributed, the Armenians of Karabagh were able to defend themselves and the only prospect they were ascribed to was to unite with the republic of Armenia.

Between 1918 and 1920 the representative assemblies in Karabagh and the executive bodies that emerged acquired different terminology as well as inconsistent scheduling, but they were all prescribed to maintain the Armenian identity and became intrinsically reflective to the popular need of self defense.

Notably and according to historic and documented evidences, until the arrival of the Ottoman army to the area there has been some cooperative behavior between the Armenians in Karabagh and the local Azerbaijanis. In Shoushi, for example, a political bureau was created in which representatives of both Armenian and Turkish political parties were included to conduct the political affairs in Karabagh and Zangezour. The activities of the bureau were later confined to Karabagh because of the discordant relations and communications with Zangezour. Until the summer of 1918, therefore, the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis, each in their specified zones, coexisted harmoniously and without noticeable disturbances.

After the emergence of the Ottoman army into the scene, an Ottoman officer Nouri Pasha decided to create an "Islamic army" and decreed an ultimatum to the Armenians in Karabagh to surrender immediately and subjugate themselves to the Azerbaijani government. During the First Armenian Assembly in Karabagh on July 22, 1918, it was proclaimed that Mountainous Karabagh is an administratively distinct and autonomous region and that the National Council, an elected body of 7 members, is its provisional government. The region, therefore, was prepared to defend itself against both the Turks and the Azerbaijanis who consolidated their position in the lowlands and began to attack and destroy the Armenian villages and annihilate their inhabitants. The only communication route, the passageway between Yevlakh and Shoushi, has been blocked and the population of Karabagh has been isolated from the outside world. Impeded by this blockade from the outside aid and deprived from the minimum level of subsistence, the Armenians of Karabagh became increasingly inward looking and concentrated on their own power and capabilities. During their Second Assembly on September 6, they rejected the Turkish proposal to surrender and to confide to the Azerbaijani authorities. In the meantime, the Turkish army reached Shoushi and continued its policy of extermination. The arrival of the Turkish army to Shoushi occurred in the aftermath

of the Third Armenian Assembly, between September 12 and 20, during which a decision was taken to ease the resistance and seek means to reach an agreement in order to prevent further casualties. Although disarmament of all Armenians was decreed but it was drastically rejected in the countryside. People in the villages decided to continue to organize and arm themselves, and prepare for defense against future atrocities. Eventually, the Turkish army was bound to retreat from Karabagh on October 31 as a result of its defeat in World War I. On its way out however, and once again, it destroyed Armenian villages situated between Karabagh and Zangezour and left behind secret and disguised officers and army units.

After the Turks left, the British came in. In December 1918 the commander of the British forces in Baku, colonel Shuttleworth, dispatched an army unit to Shoushi. The British, like the Turks, played equally negative and destructive role in designing the future of Karabagh. Evidently, Britain pursued a policy of encompassing Baku and Azerbaijan in its sphere of influence and, consequently, did not hesitate to appease the Azerbaijani government much to the expense of the legitimate rights of the Armenian people. Like the Turks, the British also "advised" the Armenians to recognize the authority of the Azerbaijani government over Karabagh. On January 15, 1919 and with the consent of the British, the Baku government designated the Kurdish warlord and proprietor Khosrov Bek Soultanov as the governor of Karabagh and Zangezour. This new governor, much celebrated for his anti-Armenianism, surpassed all his predecessors by his policy of oppression and atrocities. The Armenians, during their Fourth Assembly on February 19, protested against his nomination as governor as well as against other Azerbaijani policies.

A similar protest was formulated during the Fifth Assembly in Shoushi on April 23 in which Shuttleworth was also present, but these protests were simply ignored. The British, in fact, in order to implement their policy and in the name of maintaining order in

the region dispatched 400 soldiers to Shoushi along with Her Majesty's new representative Mac Mason. But in June the Azerbaijanis, under the leadership of the designated governor, began a renewed series of atrocities in Karabagh. Manifestations of protest and mass demonstrations by Armenians against these atrocities were organized in Yerevan, Tiflis and other Armenian populated cities.

On June 28, the Sixth Assembly in Karabagh decided to send 3 envoys to Baku and negotiate with the Azerbaijani government. One of the envoys was assassinated on his way to Baku, while the other two arrived safely and succeeded to negotiate and reach a mutual agreement with the government. As a result of these negotiations the National Council Karabagh, during the Seventh Assembly between August 12 and 16, decided to "temporarily recognize" the Azerbaijani authority over its territory contingent upon the Peace Conference of Paris in which the allied powers, along with other pertinent issues on the agenda, will finally resolve the Karabagh issue. Notably, the Council agreed to accept the authority of the Azerbaijani government only temporarily and not permanently.

Generally speaking, the year 1919 was conducive for the republic of Armenia. The government extended its authority over Nakhidjevan and Kars with its vicinity. But the Turkish-Azerbaijani collaboration, both tacit and overt, attempted to undermine that authority by provoking anti-government (anti-Armenian) seditions in Karabagh-Zangezour-Nakhidjevan and Sourmalou-Kars zones. Moreover, the attempts to create Islamic "independent republics" and "shoura" (councils) as well as the constant efforts to create united Turkish-Azerbaijani front were directly aimed against the Armenian as well as the Georgian republics.

The Armenian Zangezour, in turn, began to organize itself. In this region also, colonel Shuttleworth attempted to impose his authority but confronted popular rejection and eventually was expelled. Zangezour was also an isolated region, but it managed to govern itself through the "Central National Council of Zange-

zour" or "Zangezour-Karabagh Regional Council". Unlike Goghten and other parts of Nakhidjevan where atrocities were committed and people were massacred, Zangezour successfully confronted and survived the Turkish-Azerbaijani attacks.

As mentioned above, the Armenians in Karabagh categorically refused to consider their subjugation to Azerbaijan to be permanent and final. This rejection induced further anger and animosity on the part of the Azerbaijani government and culminated in the movement of almost the whole Azerbaijani army against Karabagh in the spring of 1920. On March 23, the Armenian section of the capital city Shoushi was barbarically ravaged.

On April 28, and with the collaboration of the Turks and the consent of the Azerbaijani Parliament, the Russian army also penetrated from the north without encountering any resistance. On May 12, one of the divisions of the Russian army entered Shoushi, and on May 26, as reported in various documents, *"the Tenth Assembly of the Armenians in Karabagh declared the region to be a Soviet territory"* (the Eighth Assembly took place in February 28, 1920, and the Ninth Assembly on April 23 of the same year).

After the sovietization of Azerbaijan, the government in Baku continued to send ultimatum to Yerevan demanding the immediate *"evacuation of the territories of Karabagh and Zangezour"*. It further and persistently continued its vigorous anti-Armenian policy in Karabagh and Zangezour by exploiting the newly created circumstances. Whatever the circumstances and the outcome were, the status of the Armenian territories, namely, Karabagh, Zangezour, and Nakhidjevan under the occupation of the Soviet army remained outstanding and indecisive. Notably, the August 10, 1920 accord concluded in Tiflis between the Soviet Russia and the Republic of Armenia clearly stated that these territories are *"temporarily"* occupied by the Russian army.

The new leadership of Azerbaijan, disguised under communist ideology and patronaged by the communist regime, continued the anti-Armenian and expansionist policy of its predecessors.



Numerous archives and other documentations indicate the way in which the new leadership "propagated and defended the soviet rule" in the Armenian areas.

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## LANDSCAPES AND CULTURE OF ARTSAKH, ARMENIAN HOMELAND



#### ▲ Tulips in Mountainous-Karabagh

-Karabagh is my tulip.

Red, but black at the heart-

From the poet Hovhannes Shiraz



▲ A 13th century church (recently dynamited)  
village of Kard Hadji, Latchin region of the Azerbaijani SSR  
(area directly annexed to Azerbaijan).

restructured church, village of Varazgom, Latchin region



▲ Church and khatch-kar (1348)  
Village of Vank, Nagorno-Karabagh, Hatrouth sub-region



▼ Village of Dogh, a panoramic view  
Nagorno-Karabagh, Hatrouth sub-region

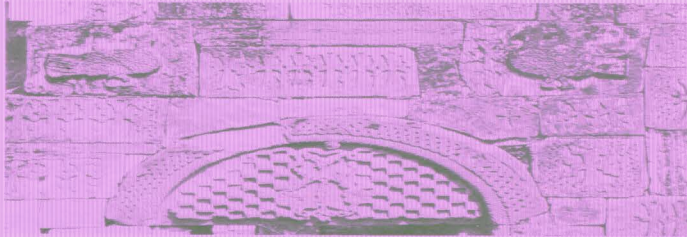


▲ Abandoned khatch-kar, village of Dogh



▲ Monastery of Bri Yeghtsi (1270)  
Village of Hatsi, Nagorno-Karabagh, sub-region of Martouni

▼ The monastery of Bri Yeghtsi, the main gate



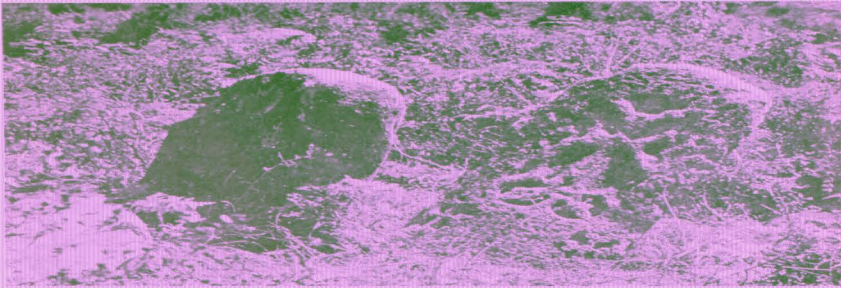
Village of Hin Shen, panoramic view  
Nagorno-Karabagh, Shoushi sub-region



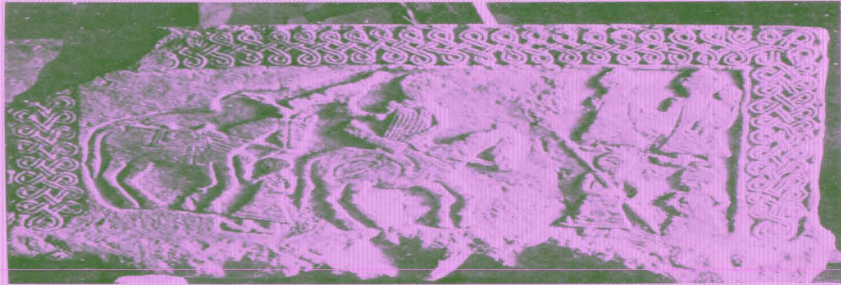
▲ Fragment of a khatch-kar, Okhte Yeghtsi monastery  
▲ Village of Patara, Nagorno-Karabagh, Askeran sub-region



▲ Khatchkar-altar  
▲ Village of Tahrav, Nagorno-Karabagh, Askeran sub-region



▲ Fragmented khatch-kars: «Djokhdak Kar»  
Village of Khantsk, Nagorno-Karabagh,  
Askeran sub-region



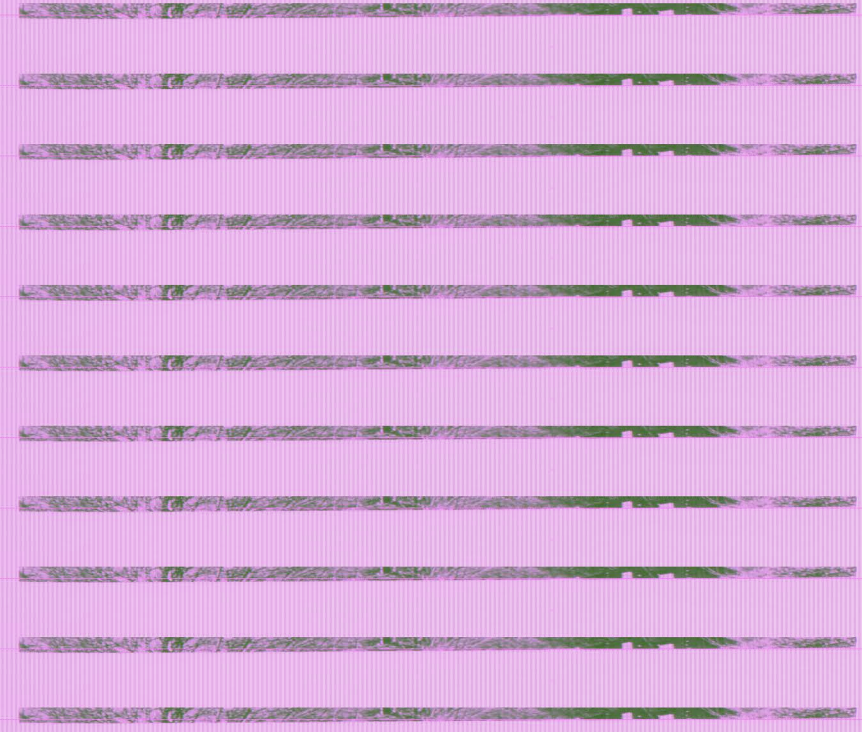
Epetaph (detail)  
Khachmach village,  
Nagorno-Karabagh, Askeran sub-region ▼



▲ A panorama of the Gantzassar monastery complex (1238)  
Nagorno-Karabagh,  
Martakert sub-region.



Landscape, village of Vaghouhas  
Nagorno-Karabagh, Martakert sub-region ▼





▲ The Mrav mountains, as seen from Vaghouhas



▲ Monastery of Yeghtsou Ktor, Vaghouhas village

Khatch-kar  
Vaghouhas village, on the way to Khatravank ▼







Monastery of Amenaprkich (12th-13th centuries)  
Boghossagomer village  
Nagorno-Karabagh, sub-region of Martakert



▲ Monastery Tarkmanchats ("of Translators", 15th-16th century)  
Dachkessan region of Azerbaijani SSR  
(annexed Mountainous-Gantzak)

Khatch-kar  
Monastery Tarkmantchats (Khatchakap village) ▼



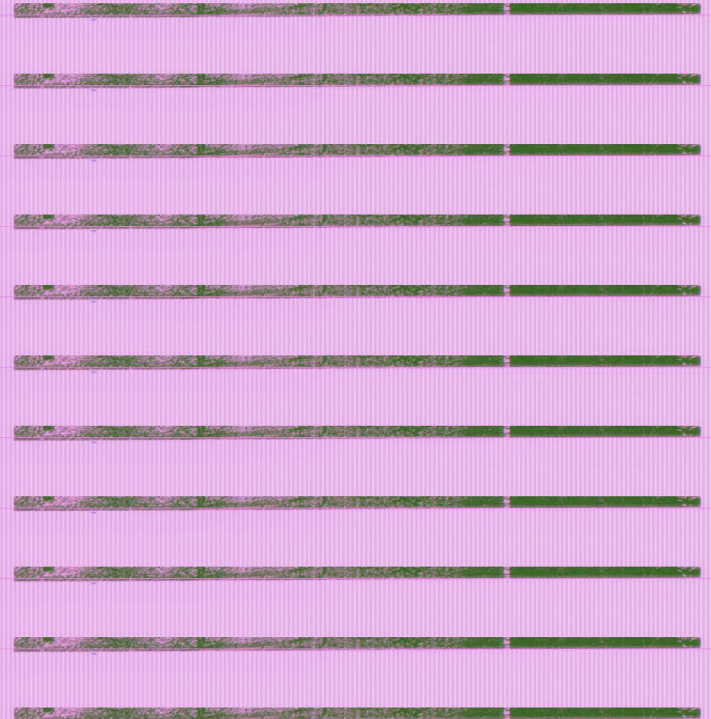


▲ A khatch-kar in a cemetery  
Khatchakap village



▲ A panorama of Khatchakap village

▲ A panorama of Banants village  
Dachkessan region of the Azerbaijani SSR  
(annexed Mountainous-Gantzak) ▼





The monastery Tarkmantchats Anapat  
Banants village, Dashkessan region



Cemetery in the village of Nor Saradovka  
Azerbaijani SSR (annexed Mountainous-Gantzak)



Pedestal of khatch-kar (1477)  
Cemetery of Banants



Pedestal of khatch-kar (1477)  
Cemetery of Banants



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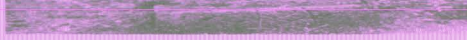
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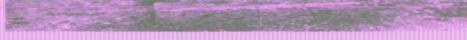
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Cemetery of Banants



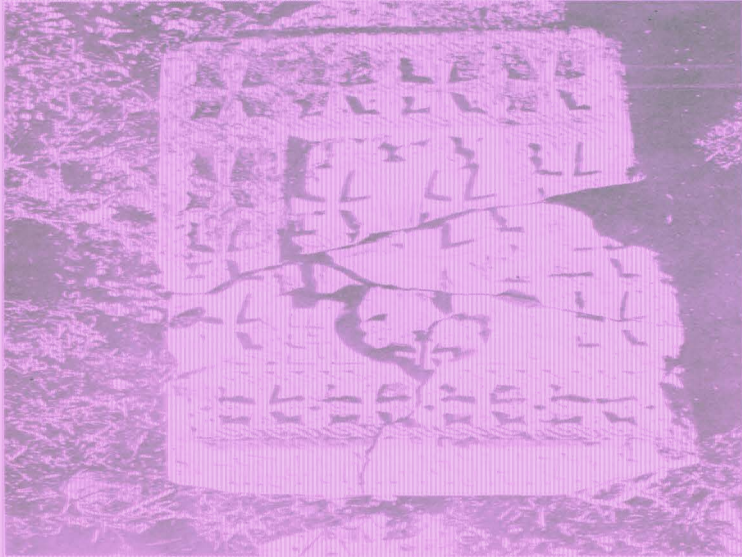
Pedestal of khatch-kar (1477)  
Cemetery of Banants



▲ Nor Saradovka cemetery, detail



▲ Nor Saradovka cemetery, detail



▲ A destroyed khatch-kar, Khamshi monastery (17th century)  
Metz Gharamourad village, Getabek region,  
Azerbaijani SSR (annexed Mountainous-Gantzak)

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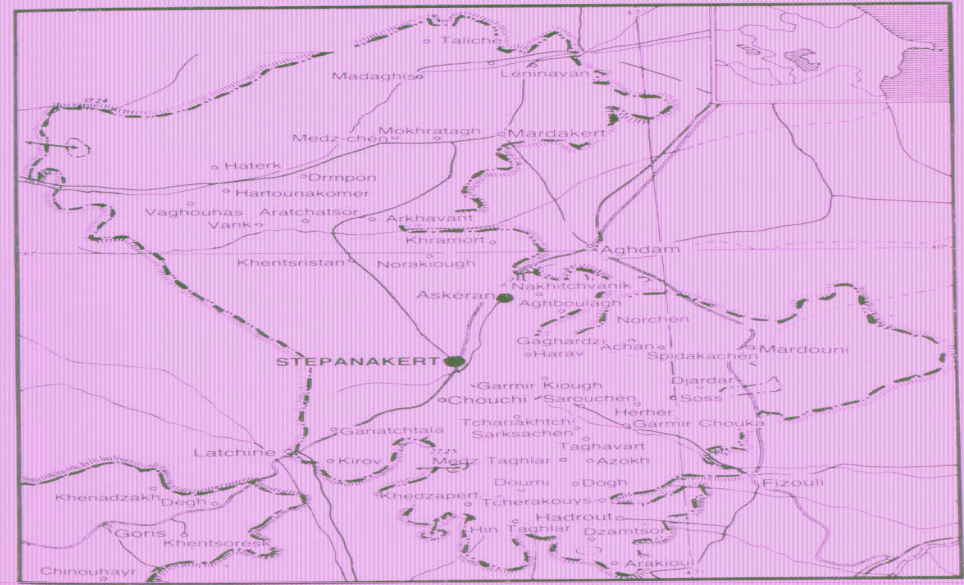
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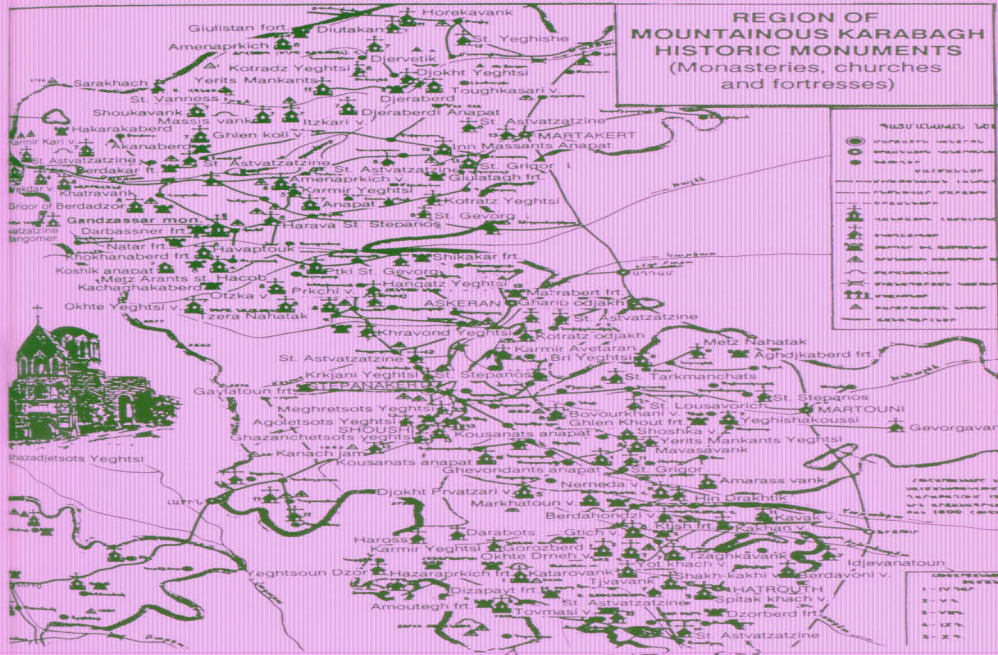
Azerbaijani SSR (annexed Mountainous-Gantzak)



# THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF MOUNTAINOUS (NAGORNO) KARABAGH

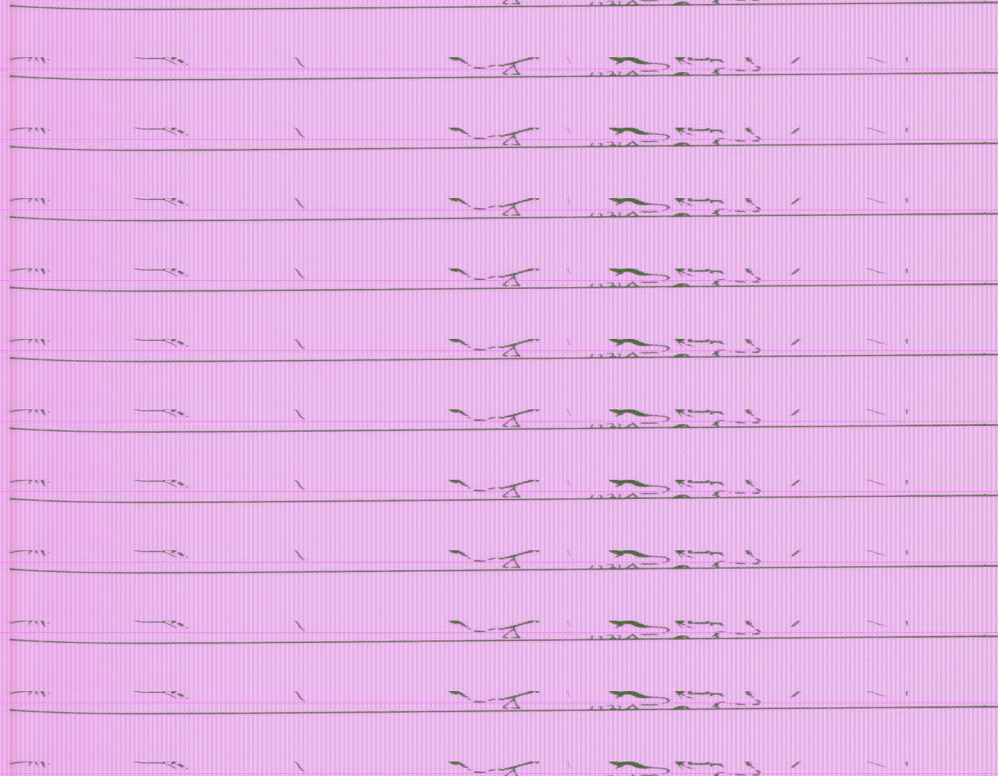


**REGION OF MOUNTAINOUS KARABAGH  
HISTORIC MONUMENTS  
(Monasteries, churches and fortresses)**



Regional capital: **STEPANAKERT**  
 Sub-regional capitals: **ASKERAN**  
 Regional religious center: **Gandzassar**

Vank (v.) or Anapat = Monastery  
 Yeghtsi = church  
 Berd or frt. = fortress





#### IV

The demand to unite the Armenian territories with the republic of Armenia was opposed not only by the newly established government of Soviet Azerbaijan but also by a number of Armenian communists. The arguments they presented involved such monolithic conceptions as "bourgeois" Armenia, in servitude with "imperialists", etc., by which they only attempted to gain ground for sovietization of the Armenian republic. Subsequently, on November 29, 1920 a group of Armenian communists along with Russian soldiers and a number of Armenian militiamen entered from Azerbaijan into the bordering village of Idjevan, declared Armenia a soviet republic, and addressed telegrams in this regard to Moscow and Baku. In the meantime, a sensational news information was also being disseminated capturing wide public attention.

In the following day, on November 30, the joint session of political and organizational Bureaus of the Central Committee of Azerbaijan's Communist Party (in presence of Narimanov, Kaminski, Stasova, Sarkis, Yegorov, Husseinov, Gassoumov, Garaiev, Cerebrovski, and Ordjonikidze) authorized Nariman Narimanov in the name of the Revolutionary Committee of Soviet Azerbaijan to address a telegram of felicitation to the Revolutionary Committee of Armenia and to prepare a declaration with such statements as,

territorial disputes between Soviet Azerbaijan and Soviet Armenia no longer exist, both Zangezour and Nakhidjevan remain integral parts of Armenia, Mountainous Karabagh has the right for self-determination, etc. Hence, on December the first, when Armenia had not yet been sovietized (the sovietization of Armenia was confirmed on December the 2nd), and during the formal session of the Baku Soviet which "took upon the issue of the sovietization of Armenia", Narimanov read out the following declaration:

*"From now on no territorial problem can induce bloodshed between the two peoples, the Armenians and the Muslims, that coexisted for centuries. The provinces of Zankezour and Nakhidjevan are integral parts of Soviet Armenia and the working masses of Mountainous Karabagh are accorded with the complete right for self-determination".*

This and similar declarations were published in the local press, and were much advocated by Serko Ordjonikidze and by Stalin himself. In addition to being published in the local press the declarations were also and widely proclaimed and written up in Pravda as a significant step forward in the direction of promoting friendship between the peoples. The declaration of restitution of Armenian territories naturally engendered a feeling of gratitude among the Armenians. It was only a matter of awaiting for the appropriate time for the publicly announced promises to be implemented through official channels, juridically, politically, and administratively. However, months after the declarations were made it became clearly evident that they were nothing but intentional misstatements and that they only aimed to accelerate the process of sovietization of the Armenian republic.

On March 16, 1921, a Turko-Soviet treaty signed in Moscow was intrinsically anti-Armenian in nature. It was decided that Nakhichevan should be amputated from Armenia and should be declared an autonomous region. The Moscow treaty was further "confirmed" in a conference in Kars between September 26 and October 13 of the same year which intended to "regulate" the relations between Turkey and the transcaucasian republics and

concluded in the treaty of Kars in October 13. The development of these events point to the fact that since the early months of the year the Turko-Soviet cooperation further improved and that Moscow was interested more in appeasing the Turks and less in satisfying the legitimate Armenian demands.

The question of border lines between the soviet republics of transcaucasia was, once again, a salient issue in early May 1921, at a time when the three national republics were finally sovietized, and as such, it was possible to embark upon a reglementary effort to solve the border problems. Consequently, party leadership held various closed meetings regarding the determination of borders and they ultimately reached to "solutions" that were both fundamentally unjust and to the detriment of the Armenian people. Interestingly, none of the negotiations pondered upon seriously set principles of right and justice nor the negotiators were concerned with the prevalence of just solutions. In fact, they constantly changed opinions and eventually created situations in which preponderant factions could take arbitrary decisions.

On May the 2nd the Caucasian Bureau of the Communist Party appointed a special commission to deal with the territorial problems of the transcaucasian republics. The commission was presided by Serguei Kirov and involved Svanidze and Todria from Georgia, Housseinov, Hadjinski, and Rassoulzade from Azerbaijan, and Bekzadian from Armenia. It was authorised to reach a conclusion in regard to territorial modifications, ultimately to be ratified by the Bureau. However, the unequal ethnic composition of the commission, since its inception, indicated that the outcome is pretty much prescriptive and predesigned. The meetings of the commission were held in Tiflis between June 25 and 27.

During the very first session, the representative of the Armenian republic, Bekzadian, stressed the need to take into consideration the unjust administrative divisions of the transcaucasian ter-

ritories that prevailed since the tsarist regime, and the need to give particular attention to the grave situation in Soviet Armenia. Bekzadian demanded the territorial concessions should be made in favor of the Armenians particularly concerning the areas that are heavily Armenian populated. He pointed out the cases of Akhalkalak (Djavakhk) province which was annexed to Georgia but had 72 percent Armenian population, the neutral zone of Lori in which the dominant majority of the population was Armenian, and the region of the Mountainous Karabagh with 94 percent Armenians. In connection to the Karabagh issue he also mentioned that during his discussions with both Miasnikian and Stalin in Moscow, Stalin particularly was totally supportive of the Armenian view. However, the Georgian and Azerbaijani members of the commission fervently opposed to the propositions he made and rejected the idea of territorial modification. Interestingly and strangely enough, the presiding member of the commission, Kirov, was also in agreement with them.

The Georgians, on their part, saw it perfectly appropriate to demand the land of Garaiaz from Azerbaijan and extensively argued to this end. The polemics the sides were involved became so intense that members of the Caucasian Bureau of the Communist Party, Ordjonikidze, Orakhelashvili, and Eliava were compelled to attend the June 26 session of the commission in order to intervene personally and to settle the disputes. However, even then the territorial problems remained unresolved and the Armenian envoy, Bekzadian, in turn, submitted the problem directly to the Caucasian Bureau.

A relevant event in this connection is noteworthy. On June 3 and during the plenary session of the Caucasian Bureau, a decision was made to immediately liquidate the insurrection in Zangezur to the south of Armenia. In the text of this decision it was stipulated that the government of Armenia, in conjunction with its declaration to denounce the insurrection, should state that Mountainous Karabagh belongs to Armenia. Based on this specification made by the Bureau, the Armenian government, in turn, pub-

lished a proclamation in the June 19th issue of the official organ Soviet Armenia. The proclamation, signed by Alexander Miasnikian and dated June 12, clearly stated that:

*"Based on the declaration of the Revolutionary Committee of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan and the agreement between the Socialist Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia, it is hereby declared that Mountainous Karabagh is henceforth an integral part of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Armenia".*

The situation in Zangezur, on the other hand, was the following. After the sovietization of Azerbaijan, the 11th Russian army occupied the provinces of Karabagh, Zangezur, and Nakhidjevan. The Armenian population in Zangezur opted for armed and popular insurrection in October 10, 1920, and eventually declared Zangezur an independent territory with appropriate governmental body and representation. The experiences of Karabagh and Nakhidjevan, in fact, compelled the population of Zangezur to take this preventive move and avoid the annexation of the region to Azerbaijan. Both Armenian and non-Armenian communists made every effort to delude and disarm the Zangezur population but the latter obstinately continued their struggle until July 1921. Thanks to this popular resistance, Zangezur remained within the borders of Soviet Armenia. Of course, the main initial objective of the initiators - unlike the understanding of their Armenian counterparts - of June 12, 1921 Declaration was to suppress Zangezur and its struggle, and to disorient the political course of the Armenian people.

Given the June 12 presumed accord the Armenian government appointed Askanaz Mravian as the official representative of Mountainous Karabagh. On June 25 Mravian, accompanied by Assad Garaev of Azerbaijan, took the train from Tiflis to Karabagh. At Eviakh station Garaev unexpectedly informed Mravian that they should first go and convene in Baku, an arrangement made by Narimanov, in order to clarify the Karabagh issue. Mravian refused to go along with this new arrangement and on the same day sent a letter to Ordjonikidze in Tiflis protesting against

this fait accompli situation. Mravian's letter coincided with, and further complicated, the discussions and border disputes of the special commission convened in Tiflis. Hence, on June 26 both Ordjonikidze and Kirov sent the following urgent telegram to Narimanov in Baku:

*"The interruption of negotiations with the Armenians to settle the border lines creates an unfavorable situation given the intense and prevalent conditions in Zangezur. We ask you to invite the Political Bureau and the Soviet Commissaries of the People immediately and resolve the Karabagh issue in such a manner that it will enhance our negotiations and conclude them by tomorrow, June 27. In our opinion, the principle that underlies the need to achieve the optimum outcome and establish permanent cooperation, and which also should guide the attempts to resolve the Karabagh issue, is the following: Not a single Armenian village should be annexed to the Azerbaijanian territory nor a single Azerbaijanian village should be annexed to the Armenian territory".*

The Political Bureau of Azerbaijan's Central Committee in a joint session with the government took the exact opposite decision. It was clearly decided that Karabagh should not be united with Armenia, otherwise the government warned that it would decline to assume any responsibility in this regard. In this obscure circumstance the presidency of the Caucasian Bureau decided to hold a special plenary meeting and discuss the border problems of transcaucasian republics, and called upon Narimanov and Miasnikian to be in Tiflis urgently.

In the meantime, Stalin was in Naltchik (Northern Caucasus) for medical treatment. From Naltchik he went to Tiflis to join the plenary sessions of the Caucasian Bureau between July 2 and 7 and discuss various issues, particularly those pertaining to the relations between central soviet bodies and the republics. On July 2 and 3 enlarged plenary sessions of the Bureau were held in

which 51 officials from various positions participated. The evening session on 4th of July examined the issue of Mountainous Karabagh.

In this session all 8 members of the Bureau were present (Georgians: Ordjonikidze, Makharadze, Orakhelachvili; Azerbaijani: Narimanov; and Jew: Figatner) as well as Stalin himself. During the discussions two points of view were revealed and four propositions were voted on. (Orakhelachvili was not present during the voting process. In retrospect, it is difficult to see the exact motivation of his absence. But considering the political milieu and the mood of the day, it is reasonable to state that his absence was consistent with the general pattern of behavior of Georgian communists who, like the mensheviks before them, conceded to the Azerbaijanis and did not miss an opportunity to harm and weaken Armenia. In fact, much of the responsibility for the anti-Armenian decisions made during the 1920s should be placed upon them).

The propositions made were the following:

- 1) *Leave Karabagh entirely within the borders of Azerbaijan. (In favor voters were Narimanov, Makharadze, and Nazaretian. Against voters were Ordjonikidze, Miasnikian, Kirov, and Figatner).*
  - 2) *Organize a referendum in the entire Karabagh area with the participation of the Armenian and Azerbaijani populations. (In favor voters were Narimanov and Makharadze).*
  - 3) *Unite the mountainous region of Karabagh with Armenia. (In favor voters were Ordjonikidze, Miasnikian, Figatner, and Kirov).*
  - 4) *Organize a referendum in Mountainous Karabagh only; in other words, within the Armenian population. (In favor voters were Ordjonikidze, Miasnikian, Figatner, Kirov and Nazaretian).*
- Thus, it was decided to unite Mountainous Karabagh with Armenia and organize a referendum only in that region. Narimanov immediately protested against the decisions and demanded to transfer the issue to the Central Committee of Soviet Russia's

Communist Party for further examination. Yielding to the protest, the Caucasian Bureau soon decided to forward the issue to the Central Committee as a superior body for final decision.

Although Stalin, as a member of the Central Committee, had the right to vote, but he declined to do so. Previously and on various occasions Stalin's pretensions indicated that he was in favor of uniting the Armenian populated areas with Armenia, but his behavior during the plenary sessions of the Bureau suggests otherwise, that he was not sincere. Inevitably, it was Stalin's recommendation to reverse the decision taken on Mountainous Karabagh. The consensus reached on July 4th to submit the Mountainous Karabagh issue to the Central Committee was drastically reversed during the July 5th session and a new decision totally disfavoring the Armenians was passed. In fact, both Ordjonikidze and Nazaretian in the July 5th session proposed to review the previous decision and, then, without any objection, it was determined not to transfer the issue of Mountainous Karabagh to the Central Committee but "accord it with larger autonomy" within the Azerbaijani borders.

Two years later, on July 7, 1923, the "Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabagh" was officially declared which included 4,400 km<sup>2</sup> area. The adjacent Armenian populated areas were excluded from the region, creating a much worse situation for their Armenian inhabitants.

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#### V

The Armenian uprising of February 1988 led many observers to raise the question as to why the Armenians revolted only after decades of silence, or, why at this time? A familiarity with the history of the issue would have exempted the type of curiosity raised. Stated differently, it can be unequivocally asserted from the outset that the Karabagh Armenians, and the native Armenian people, within the homeland or elsewhere in the world - have never considered the detachment of Karabagh and other Armenian territories and their annexation to foreign political entities as legitimate moves. And the silent or manifest struggle for re-integration of these Armenian territories with the homeland is being waged for the past 70 years, during both the pre-soviet and post-soviet periods.

Before the sovietization of the region the primordial threat was the expansionist inclinations of the Azerbaijanis and the powers collaborating with them. The struggle was carried on in the name of identity preservation, self-organization, and self-defense. After the sovietization, the dimension of the threat expanded increasingly wide because, in addition to the actual Azerbaijani pressure, the potentates of the Soviet unipartite system persistently followed a totalitarian and anti-Armenian policy, and who still manipulate the unilateral and horrifying power politics of their regime. Accordingly, the Armenian struggle had to cope with the chang-

ing circumstances, often and inevitably with manifestations of reluctance and misconducts, but also with clearly set policy dimensions and defined objectives.

The struggle to emancipate the Armenian territories was supported by different factions of the society, such as those who, in principle, have disagreed with the newly established one party system, and those who have acquiescently adapted to the new regime, but, did not tolerate the policy of discrimination against the Armenians or, generally speaking, the policy of discrediting a national entity and its homeland.

Few months after the establishment of Soviet government in Azerbaijan, for example, in Autumn 1920, an insurrection and a widely supported popular uprising in south Karabagh broke out against the new government and lasted for six months. The movement paralleled the insurrection in Zanzezour led by Garegin Nejdeh. It was headed by Tevan Stepanian from Toumi village of the Dizak (Hadrou) region in south Karabagh who was an ex-officer in a cavalry subdivision of the Russian army. Finally, on April 1921, the revolt was suppressed by three units of the Red Army compelling the leading insurgents to disperse into different areas. A number of them, accompanied by the head of the movement, went to Iran, others retreated and took refuge into the nearby forests and mountains of Dizak, and yet others left for Zangezour to join the forces of Garegin Nejdeh.

Although Tevan Stepanian and few of his associates left the country but the idea of "Tevanism" prevailed in the cognitive image of the people. "Tevanism" also remained "alive" in the thinking of the governmental authorities who frequently manipulated the term as an excuse to suppress and persecute the people for their patriotic expressions and conducts. The term has been manipulated particularly during the tragic years of 1936-1938.

The Tiflis decision to annex Mountainous Karabagh to Azerbaijan took two years to unfold as an actual formulation. In retrospect, it is difficult to figure out the real causes of this procrastina-

tion. However, it is self-evident that the authorities in Azerbaijan sought every means in order to minimize the degree of autonomy promised to the region, to limit its rights, to reduce its size, etc. Hence, it is erroneous to assume that the region today projects the exact image of what it initially was conceived to be. In rather represents the end result of secretly as well as openly orchestrated agreements, or disagreements, between the negotiating parties.

The local Armenian communists also pondered various means for an equitable solution of the Karabagh problem. Undoubtedly, a considerable number of these communists could not avoid the fact that they, as well as the people around them, belonged to a national entity. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the Armenian demands in general and the way in which the autonomous region was finally formulated and, particularly, the history of the Armenian struggle for self-defense have been poorly presented in the Soviet Armenian historiography for reasons generally familiar. Hence, not only non-Armenians but also many Armenians, particularly the new generation, are totally uninformed about the events of the 1920s and beyond as they unfolded and about the motivations and the tendencies of the people in general.

Since Azerbaijan refused to, say, "concede" Karabagh to Armenia, and the Armenians rejected to be under the Azerbaijani rule, a "third solution" was underway and being developed. Along this line, as the Soviet literature mentions, on February 15, 1923, a report about the prevailing situation in Karabagh was presented to the Transcaucasian Committee of the Communist Party at Tiflis by Souren Shatounts, a member of the Special Committee for Mountainous Karabagh. The literature also mentions that the Shatounts report, addressed to Ordjonikidze, was largely defended and included the proposition that Mountainous Karabagh along with Zangezour should be attached directly to the central government of the newly created "Socialist Soviet Republic of Federal Transcaucasia" and not to the government of Azerbaijani Repub-

lic, in the form of a "buffer" or "neutral" zone. One should assume that Shatounts was not alone in supporting this point of view. It is also probable that other points of view were presented. At any event, and regardless of the fact whether that proposition would have been acceptable or not, it nevertheless constituted another term of resistance by Armenians against Azerbaijani intentions. Thus, it is not difficult to depict the course of events if such an administrative buffer zone was created and a wall of defense was erected between Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, even this "middle solution" was also denied.

Thus, the high ranking party officials, who assumed self-proclaimed legitimacy, were involved in determining the destiny of the peoples dependent on them, without taking into consideration their inclinations, aspirations, and interests, and constantly blockading the needs and the developmental schemes presented by the Armenian people. The young Armenian communists, largely unskilled and without having relatively experienced and influential leadership, were virtually incapable to compete with the "neighboring" party groups that were largely organized in a united front. Their seniors, on the other hand, were sacrificed in the so called "struggle for the Soviet system" and they, in turn, were being victimized to the perfidious and anti-popular policy of their "comrades".

When party negotiations rendered inadequate to defend the Armenian interests, then the popular masses were appealed to for mobilization of support. In 1927-1928, for example, the local Armenian communists initiated and formulated a popular petition and collected signatures from the Armenians in Mountainous Gandzak and the vicinities. The petition demanded that the areas to the south of the bridge in the city of Gandzak should be united with the Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabagh, and the region as a whole should be united with Soviet Armenia. The revindication, in fact, perfectly conformed with the ethno-demo-

graphic and geographic composition of the area at the time.

The point is that if justice and rationality had to play any role in determining the border lines in Transcaucasia, the bridge of Gandzak should have been the uniting, or the dividing, point between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The river crossing the city of Gandzak separates the Armenian and the Azerbaijani quarters, and from the Armenian quarter, to the right of the river, extend the Armenian populated lands. Although the ethnic distribution today seems to present somewhat a different picture, because of the planned and systematic penetration of the Azerbaijanis into the Armenian quarters, but the demographic picture at the time was indisputably to the advantage of the Armenians. Despite the changing demographic image, one still can not deny the dominant Armenian presence in the area.

The effort to mobilize popular support initiated by the Armenian communists also failed because of the oppressive and heavy handed policy of the era under Stalin. Nevertheless, the deployment of the effort itself sufficiently points to the fact that the Armenians under the Azerbaijani rule were constantly aware and conscious of the malpractice imposed and that they availed themselves of every opportunity in order to set themselves free from the coercive dictates of the time. They, in other words, were confident that unjust decrees by their own nature would not be enduring and that continuous struggle and recurrent demands would restore justice and would overcome every arbitrary and deceptive decision made.

It should be noted that even during Stalin's consolidation of power and recurrent assassinations the struggle and the demand for an equitable solution for the Armenian territories have not ceased to emerge. Despite the lack of archival documentations as well as the absence of serious and reliable studies about the era, it is still possible to discern the persistent attempts of revindication by the Armenians based on some fragmented, nevertheless suggestive information. It is evident, for example, that in the wake of liquidation of the Federal Republic of Transcaucasia

(1922-1937), and given the changing structure of the federal republic, Aghassii Khanchian (1901-1936), the head of the Armenian communist party, raised the issue of restitution of the Armenian territories to Armenia, after which he was mysteriously assassinated. This and similar events are suggestive in the sense that Karabagh and other regions usurped have not been only concerns limited to the local Armenians, but they were conceived as national problems by all Armenians.

In this connection, and during the November 1936 Congress of all soviets, Stalin, in his speech about the new constitution, obscurely referred to the border problems between the republics. He particularly ridiculed those who untidiously continue to seek border changes. In the context of the given milieu, it can be clearly asserted that the reference of "rebuke" made by Stalin was exclusively addressed to the Armenians since the other republics in the Soviet Union were not interested in border changes, nor they are today, to the extent that the Armenians were, given the large portions of their fragmented lands.

Until the summer of 1988 there was little documentary literature on Mountainous Karabagh and the fate of its Armenian population. But afterwards several research works were published in Armenia, and some documents were pulled out of the drawers, that shed a new light on the history of the revindicative struggle. For instance, it became clear that before the end of the Second World War, in fall 1945, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia, Grigor Haroutiounian, had sent a special letter to the all-union Central Committee - i.e. to Stalin - suggesting the unification of the Mountainous Karabagh Autonomous Region with the Armenian Republic. Instead of considering the request, Stalin buried it in the labyrinth of the party apparatus. The solution of the problem was left to the will of the then party leader of Azerbaijan, Bagirov, a corrupt and fierce apparatchik. Obviously the request was doomed to failure, and once again Stalin forced his will.

The movement for a fundamental improvement of the situation

in Karabagh and other Armenian territories was, once again, a salient issue in the 1960s. Again, the public remained generally uninformed about the events; but based on the documentations that through various means were transferred outside the country, it is possible to determine the nature of this movement, the direction it took, and the developmental path it followed.

One of these significant documents was the petition, signed by nearly 2500 Armenians in Karabagh and Gardman, addressed to Nikita Khrushchev. The petition first referred to the deteriorating situation in the area and toward the end demanded that the region should be united with Armenia or... with the Federal Republic of Russia. The text of the document, formulated between 1962-63, begins with the following statement:

*"We, the Kolkhozniks, workers, and toilers of the Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabagh, and the Armenian population of Shamkhor, Khanlar, Dashkessan and Shahoumian administrative regions of Azerbaijan S.S.R., having reached the verge of desperation as a result of the decaying burdent of our living conditions, decided to appeal to you for your protection and justice."*

The content of the document further indicates that other and similar requests have been made directly or indirectly to the central government but were not responded to or were encountered by ferocious opposition from the Azerbaijani government :

*"An insurmountable situation has been created. The discrimination is widespread and in every domain. Our condition today is worse than it was in 1918-1920, during the period of Turco-Moussavats and British occupation. Today the same oppressive measures are being taken under the disguise of friendship and fraternity. We have previously protested that there is in fact no autonomous region. We have made attempts to explain the causes of popular discontent but the methods of treatment employed against us have been clearly impermissible."*

The petition did not render any equitable outcome. On the



contrary, it further aggravated anti-Armenian discrimination and persecution. How exactly Khroushchev himself responded to that petition is still not known. However, another document indirectly refers to Khroushchev's position in this regard. A letter dated 1965 by a communist, Y. H. Hovanissian, from Yerevan was addressed to the Central Committee in Moscow and discussed the issue of border lines. The letter also included the following significant lines: *"To my letter, written prior to the 20th Congress, N. Khroushchev responded that the Central Committee cannot deal with this question at this time. Until when?"* Probably Khroushchev has given a similar response to the petition signed by 2500 Armenians. In any event, soon after this petition was sent Khroushchev stepped down in disgrace and the "period of stagnation" in the Soviet Union followed. The Armenian movement of revindication in the post Khroushchev era, however, did not lose its potency; on the contrary, it further intensified and gained more popular support both in Karabagh and in Soviet Armenia.

The resurgence of popular discontent was reported in various studies as well as periodically in the Armenian press. Moreover, and in a larger measure, the movement was reflected in the documents that were not published in Armenia but were transferred outside the country reaching to a large number of Armenians in Diaspora.

It is noteworthy, in this regard, to note poet Sylva Gaboudikian's speech at the party meeting of the "26 Commissaries" in the city of Yerevan at the end of December 1965, and Y.H. Hovanissian's letter to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in 1965. The events marked notable evolution particularly in the year 1967. The number of Armenians covertly killed by the Azerbaijanis increased creating an intolerable environment of disgrace and outrage. The tension between Armenians and the authorities of Azerbaijan peaked to the point that these authorities of Azerbaijan peaked to the point that these authorities began to send various army units to Karabagh to keep the region

under siege and encourage further terror and atrocities. The region, in fact, was decapitated from its leading figures; the local Armenian intellectuals were ferociously persecuted and many of them were forced to seek refuge in Soviet Armenia.

In this highly tense and critical moment the residents of Karabagh sent numerous appeals to the people and government of Armenia, Central Committee of the party, and public authorities asking for their intervention and help. Consequently, the Karabagh problem as well as the problem of other adjacent Armenian territories began to appear in the documents and the literature published by dissidents who upheld the spirit and the direction of the movement. In 1977, a letter by the novelist Sero Khanzadian addressed to Leonid Brezhnev became a public record in which expectation of an equitable solution for the problem of Mountainous Karabagh was expressed. Like the previous attempts, this letter also remained unanswered.

The development of events mentioned above suggests that the February 1988 Armenian uprising should be seen in the context of its immediate past, or, as a natural consequence of persistent resistance, long awaited and unanswered appeals, and desperation, as well as an irrevocable decision to maintain the national and patriotic spirit.

The data reflecting the mood of the sixties would have been incomplete without looking closely at the real events of 1966. In a succinct article published in the July 1989 issue of the "Garoun" monthly, the then First Secretary of the Central Committee of Armenia, Andon Kochinian, offers a great deal of historical evidence about those events.

It appears from Kochinian's narrative that the momentum of the Armenian region's revindicative movement for self-determination reached its peak in the summer of 1966. A document signed by over 40 thousand people and a petition in the name of the intelligentsia and the workers of Armenia were sent at that time. These, accompanied by an explanatory report from the leaders of

the Communist Party of Armenia, were sent to Moscow on July. Kochinian recites in detail the attitude of the central leadership, naming the pros and the cons. It becomes clear that some notables "were whole-heartedly in favor" of the Armenian demand (among them Mazourov, Shelest, Voronov, Podgorni, even in a sense Brezhnev himself). But soon, due to the interference of some ill-willed officials, the execution of the adopted positive resolution was impeded, and finally the resolution itself was abandoned. Among these was naturally the infamous Souslov who played a major role, eventually influencing also the hesitant Brezhnev.

Kochinian's attestations have considerable importance especially in the sense of revealing Moscow's past stance and comparing it with its present disposition. What is more, this is the first account in Armenia by a one-time high official. It is exemplary.

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Same as for Chapter IV.

## VI

The retention of Mountainous Karabagh and other Armenian territories within Azerbaijan naturally resulted in extremely negative consequences for the Armenian population. Even if the behavior of the Azerbaijani government had been amicable toward the Armenians - an absurd assumption - the consequences would not have been otherwise. The fact is that the government in Baku has always and overtly expressed its hostility toward the Armenians and continues to do so through various means.

In the first place the hostility is evident in political and psychological domains. It is inherently impossible for a national entity to function normally within its own territory and nearby its own national government (despite the fact that it is a soviet government) yet be detached from it and forced to reckon, or at least appear, without a homeland. As long as a portion of Armenia is referred to as part of Azerbaijan it would be difficult to publicly account for the appendage of the fragmented part with its national homeland. This enforced cleavage conditioned much of the restrained and unnatural life in the region. The situation does not resemble the individuals or minority groups in foreign countries because they, sooner or later, acquiescently adapt to their environment and conform to the local conditions as a matter of survival and mere protection of own existence. But to live in

homeland and yet forced to be considered without a homeland is a tragedy by all means. And because of the overt anti-Armenian policy of Moscow the Armenian population in foreign republics had to face this tragic fate.

Political repression is inevitably followed by more or less accentuated ethno-demographic decomposition. Here, it is worth noting that census and statistical studies on the demographic composition of the so called "Azerbaijani" Armenians are largely absent. However, it is still possible to infer, given the randomly available evidences, some somber conclusions. It is sufficiently evident, for example, that the policy of systematic persecution by the Azerbaijani authorities continuously reduced the proportionally predominant number of the Armenians while the number of the Azerbaijanis increased altering the demographic composition of the area.

Various methods have been employed, both secretly and openly, to meddle with the demographic composition of the areas to the advantage of the Azerbaijanis. Many Azerbaijanis, for instance, have been transferred to settle in the region and then subject the Armenians to new and unbearable measures of treatment and force them to leave their lands. Moreover, key positions have been confiscated by the Azerbaijanis who selfishly "regulated" the outcome of the local needs. The authorities also and forcefully took over Armenian lands to give them to the Azerbaijanis despite the fact that the Armenians acquired less lands than the Azerbaijanis.

The ferocious methods employed have been most effective in the region of Nakhidjevan. It is sufficient to point out that prior to World War I the Armenian population in Nakhidjevan was equal to that of the Azerbaijani, if not the majority. Between 1918 and 1920 a large number of Armenians was exterminated by the Turks and the Azerbaijanis, others were expelled and found refuge in neighboring countries or regions without having the right to return, and the rest were gradually absorbed within the environment in the course of the following decades. According to the

1926 census the number of the Armenians in Nakhidjevan was 11,300. In 1959 the number was reduced to 9,519. Consecutively, the 1970 census revealed that the total number of the Armenians in the region was 5,828, a tiny minority of the population. These figures ironically point to what is called "friendship and fraternity between peoples".

The population of the administrative regions of Gardman (Mountainous Gandzak), on the other hand, has been predominantly Armenian, about 90 percent as the early studies show. Today, however, the statistics are so obscured and distorted that it is literally impossible to see the clear demographic picture of the regions. Nevertheless, it is conceivable to state that some 130 to 140 thousand Armenians reside in the area.

The geographic area which today is known as the Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabagh was populated by 176,000 people in 1913 of which 95 percent were Armenians. In 1923 the number of people in the area was 157,800 with the same percentage of Armenians, and in 1926 the number totaled a mere 125,300. The consecutive reduction in the number of population is suggestive and need not be explored here. The population of the region in 1976 was 157,200 inhabitants of which 80.5 percent was Armenian, 18.1 percent Azerbaijani, and 0.9 percent Russian. The results of the 1979 census have not been published rendering attempts of demographic analysis impossible.

These figures clearly depict the rate of growth of the Armenian population in Mountainous Karabagh, better yet, they point to a clean method of annihilation of the population. Under these circumstances it is inconceivable to see the Armenians gratified or content with their life and, hence, their grievance and revolt gain legitimacy.

Moreover, given that the official reports classify the constitutive elements of the population in the order of "Azerbaijanis, Russians, Armenians", and that on every occasion the region is declared to inhabit "representatives of 49 nationalities", it is not diffi-

cult to understand what policies are pursued by whom and to what end.

The policy of ethnic decomposition in the region is carried through various means including the economic ones. Industrial enterprises are ventured, for example, not to secure the employment of the local population, but primarily to introduce foreigners to the region in an attempt to change the demographic equilibrium. Hence, not enough jobs are offered to the Armenians compelling many of them to leave the region for better employment in Armenia, Russia, Baku and elsewhere. Road construction is also neglected, and lack of communication and isolation from the outside world also impelled many to leave their residences. In sum, the economic life of the region is not organized to benefit the Armenians.

In Mountainous Karabagh as well as in other fragmented Armenian territories the cultural life has been damaged the most. Although schools, clubs, theaters, cultural organizations and local newspapers exist, but they are deprived from the opportunities to flourish and from free expression and quality production. Semi-paralysed in isolation, their activities are impeded by the rare contingency of linkage with the general currents of cultural life in Armenia. The residents of Mountainous Karabagh, for example, are prevented from rejoicing the cultural festivities in Armenia; they are unable to consider publicly the socio-cultural achievements in Armenia also as their own achievements, etc.

In Mountainous Karabagh there are no monthly or periodical publications despite the fact that such publications existed as early as 1920s. Although there is the local branch of Azerbaijan's Writers Union, but the only Armenian journal in the republic, the bimonthly "*Literary Azerbaijan*", is published in Baku and its pages are saturated by translations from the Azerbaijani authors, in a sense imposing restrictions on Armenian writers. Karabagh has a rich history. But endeavors to research and write are poor because of the absence of the relevant scientific institutions.

There are no publishing houses in Karabagh, hence no Armenian book is published there. Instead, they are published either in Baku or in Yerevan in much disorderly manner.

The Karabagh Armenians, in a most bizarre way, are even prevented and disallowed to research and study their own history and cultural heritage. In Armenia also the region was neglected for some time because of imposed censorship and pressure from above. Moreover, since the 1950s a renewed endeavor to distort and falsify the history of the region began in Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani authors, in fact, retained an exclusive self-proclaimed right to discuss anything at all related to the present as well as the past of the region. They not only perverted the recent history but also and drastically deluded the historical evidences of the ancient past. In reality, they are the remnants of nomadic tribes since the 11th Century, but without a shred of reluctance they claimed to be the descendants of the ancient Aghvans and, hence, the legitimate inheritors of the land, while the Armenians are presented as the late-comers, or, not actually as Armenians, but ... forcefully converted Aghvans. This ludicrously incogruous audacity only resembles the attempts of the contemporary Turks of Asia Minor who mock the historians and impudently insist that they are the direct descendants of ancient Hattis, Urartus and others. Thus, even the history and the culture of Karabagh have been pillaged by the Azerbaijanis enhanced by their "jurisdictional", politico-administrative and other prerogatives of their colonial domination.

Of course, the Armenian reaction did not come in tardy. In 1966 a monograph entitled "*About the Literary Problems in the Aghvan World*", written by an Armenian historian Assadour Mnatsakanian was published in Yerevan. The book thoroughly and in a skillfully facile fashion reveals the futile attempts of perversion by the Azerbaijanis. In 1969 the Russian version of the book was also published. Following Mnatsakanian's inspiring book numerous articles and studies were published all in attempt to substantiate Karabagh's, often referred to as "*the Artsakh World*", quintes-

sential history. A renowned scientist, also a Karabagh native, Bagrat Ouloupapian endeavored an exhaustive research about the history of his homeland. One of his important monographs entitled "*The Province of Khatchen in the 10th to 15th Centuries*" was published in 1975. In a professional manner Shahen Mkerditchian studied the heritage of the Armenian cultural monuments in Karabagh and his studies were published in several books on the subject. An analogous study to account for the cultural inheritance in Nakhidjevan was compiled by the renowned philologist Argam Aivazian. All these studies, publications, and substantiated documentations once again and clearly state the fact that the Armenians have more to say and more to offer than others and certainly more than the Azerbaijanis of today in accounting for the history and culture of Karabagh and the adjacent Armenian territories. It is true that since 1921 a series of somber and inequitable decisions have arbitrarily annexed these regions to the Azerbaijan S.S.R., nevertheless, the cultural heritage accumulated throughout the centuries and the history of these regions are by no means Azerbaijani.

Thus, an exhaustive examination of the living conditions of the Armenian people in Karabagh and other fragmented territories reveals that no amelioration can be traced in any domain of life in the course of the last 70 years. On the contrary, the period marks the reversal of the history in the sense that retrogression of the recent centuries has been the recurrent phenomenon, and the Armenians within their homeland have been, once again, subjugated to foreign domination and exposed to the dangers of oppressive measures, to interdictions, and even to massacres, and consequently, their future prospects have been much somber.

This is why the February 1988 uprising was not unexpected. It was, in fact, a resurging movement conditioned by both objective and subjective factors emanated from historical develop-

ments. And it was enforced by the irrevocable decision to fundamentally correct the errors of usurpation that underlie the present situation.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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