

THE KARABAGH PROBLEM: OLD STUBBORNNESS AND NEW HOPES*

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Tens of thousands were killed. Hundreds of thousands were injured. More than a million people were expelled from their homes. The Karabagh problem, the cause of these tragedies, is now 10 years old. Hopes for a solution to this problem have appeared in the late 1997. Both Baku and Yerevan have said that they accepted a well-known proposal at the Lisbon summit of the OSCE (December 1996). However, President Ter-Petrosian's resignation in February 1998 and the capture of power by political hawks have again renewed anxieties.**

Events after the spring and summer of 1993 are still a fresh memory. At that time, according to the United Nation's Security Council resolution and by U.S., Russian and Turkish guarantees, a program was accepted for the liberation of territories occupied by Armenian troops. Yerevan also accepted this program. People began to think that the war would stop soon. In contrast to this hope, Moscow conducted a military coup d' etat in Azerbaijan. The war renewed itself and this time it was much more severe in its intensity. In February-March 1998, Armenia witnessed what amounted to a military coup, but it was in a slightly different disguise it was in effect a velvet coup. Who is behind these events? Should we expect renewed military confrontation from Armenia? What are the fundamentals that drive Armenia to ignore UN resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884? Why do the Armenians repeatedly refuse to implement a proliferation of OSCE resolutions and appeals?

THE OUTRAGEOUS NATIONALISM

President Ter-Petrossian's relatively moderate stance on the Karabagh problem, his arguments on advantages for Armenia and Armenians from Karabagh to solve this problem did not satisfy a majority of Armenians. Why?

First of all, I would like to point out that Mr.Ter-Petrossian and the Armenian Pan-National Movement played an essential role in the creation of extreme nationalism and its subsequent hold over society. For a long time, Turks and Muslims were the targets of hatred by the Pan-National Movement and its virulent propaganda was spread not just inside Armenia but also to its communities worldwide. Armenian scholars and politicians told a lot of false stories, that apparently they themselves began to believe. A big problem is that they convinced many people abroad in the whole process of their exaggeration.

The first false story: Throughout history Karabagh belonged to Armenia and Armenians. Only in 1923 did Stalin present this territory to Azerbaijan.

This false history is believed widely in the West, and has been propagated by Western media. Let us highlight some important historic facts in this context.

-The Karabagh Khanate entered the Russian Empire as a small Azerbaijani feudal state; according to census data, arranged by the Russian general Yermolov in 1823, 22% of the population of this Khanate were Armenians, 78%-Azerbaijanis; in addition, we can add 'to these figures data from the neighboring Irevan Khanate which was ruled by Azerbaijanis as well; 43% of this territories population were Azerbaijanis;

-According to the official Russian census of 1916, in the population of Karabagh (Gorus and Shusha cities, Javanshir, Zangezur, Kazakh and Karyagin uyezds) - 558,823- Armenians comprised 41.1%, Azerbaijanis made up the rest (58.9%); Karabagh and Zangezur were parts of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in

1918-1920s; the Paris Peace Conference issued a resolution, according which Karabagh *remained* a part of Azerbaijan Republic;

-Zangezur and Karabagh were inside Azerbaijan after its second occupation in 1920; the Republic of Armenia and Armenians from Karabagh played a very essential role in this occupation; there were connections between the revolt in Karabagh and Soviet intervention; after the occupation of Armenia, Zangezur was presented to Armenia -instead of their service in the so-called Sovietization, and with the geopolitical objective - to destroy ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey (same goal is seen in the creation of an artificial Orenburgh oblast between Tatar - Bashkirs and the Turks of Central Asia).

Let me talk about Stalin's role. The Karabagh question was discussed in a meeting of Caucasian bureau of RCP(b) and it was accepted with only one vote, that Karabagh should not *remain* within Azerbaijan SSR; but taking into account the aggravation of question it was decided to pass this question to Moscow; next day (July 5) the Caucasian bureau ordered Azerbaijan to grant only one, mountainous part of Karabagh, autonomy; however, Azerbaijan regarded this order as an injustice and did not implement it for two years; the next step in pressuring Azerbaijan was the ultimatum issued by the Caucasian plenum in June 1923 to organize within a month the autonomous oblast in the mountainous part of Karabagh; for this purpose the leaders of Azerbaijan were changed; Sergey Kirov was

sent from Moscow; some weeks later, in June 7, 1923, Azerbaijan Central Executive Comimittee issued a decree about the formation of Autonomous Region of Mountainous Karabagh.

This is the short and real history of the so-called "*granting* of Mountainous Karabagh to Azerbaijan" by Stalin! (

The second false story: The Karabagh Armenians' national-liberation movement was as a result of the creation of the so-called "Nagorno-Karabagh Republic". Thus, in this instance the story goes they gained a struggle with Azerbaijan.

Let me point out to you the following. In 1989, 145,000 Armenians and 45,000 Azerbaijanis lived in Karabagh. The total population of Azerbaijan was 7.2 million. Is it possible that 145,000 people defeated 7 million? I would like to remind you of a second fact. Moscow created national-ethnic conflicts in order to prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union. Alongside the Karabagh problem there are many conflict points such as the Trans-Dniestr problem in Moldova, the Crimean problem in Ukraine, the Ossetian and Abkhaz problems in Georgia. It is a pure speculation to say that a small mountainous enclave, which has no military production capabilities in its territory, defeated Azerbaijan by itself. There are thousands of facts proving the interference of the Republic of Armenia in Azerbaijan's internal affairs or to say it correctly the aggression of the Republic of Armenia. An aggression of Soviet/Russian Seventh Army is known as well. Actually, the main culprit in the massacre of hundreds of people is Russia's 366th battalion.

The third false story: It was alleged that the security problems force the Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh to maintain an aggressive stance. They were as if disappearing under pressure, therefore, they would not liberate so-called security zone, 6 districts outside of Mountainous Karabagh, and that is why OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairmen's stage-by-stage plan is not acceptable.

Some anti-theses proving the above mentioned baseless allegations:

-For the last 200 years Armenians have been a gendarme of Russia (Tsars/Bolsheviks/Yeltsin) in the Caucasus, and have always strengthened their position.

-The Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh were not diminished in the Russian/Soviet period at all, on the contrary, the local Azerbaijanis were oppressed here. In the eve of the conflict they constituted 30% of the whole population. But they later became an object of "ethnic cleansing".

-The Mountainous Karabagh was in a better situation in comparison even with Armenia in respect of average socio-cultural maintenance. There are many Armenian researches proving it.

-All the aggressors, including Fascists, covered their expansionist policy by different pretexts. Armenians have to liberate the Lower Karabagh and other adjoining districts. They must realize that the best guarantee for security is to establish normal relations with their neighbors.

Summing up the first reason for conflict - an approach of Armenians of Armenia and Karabagh again I would like to emphasize that for the solution to the problem it is necessary to carry out psychological preparations. It is necessary to create an objective idea on the history and contemporary substance of the problem, to carry the truth to the Armenian nation.

MOSCOW'S STANCE

The second author of Karabagh problem is Moscow. The latter created this problem to pressure Azerbaijan, and actively is using it. It was known that Moscow gave weapons amounting up to \$1 billion to Armenia in the last couple of years. But Moscow has to understand that the time for solving problems with weapons and soldiers is over. Russian's geopolitical reach has declined in this region due precisely to the policy of expansionist circles. The latter has to perceive that by supporting the separatist movement in Azerbaijan they reduce the life of the Russian Federation. In the last weeks 30 deputies of the Russian

Duma participated in the celebrations of the separatist movement in Karabagh. In revenge, it is proclaiming in Azerbaijan media to recognize officially the Chechen Republic, at least to send officials to participate in the independence day's celebrations. It is ridiculous that Russia claims to serve as a guarantor of peace and stability in this region, which it considers as the "near abroad". Russia's representative is one of the co-chairmen in the OSCE Minsk Group and this fact is

not for a solution to the conflict, on the contrary, it's a tactic for delay. In fact, the main factor de-stabilizing the entire area is Russia's behavior itself. Finally, some attempts on President Aliyev's and President Shevardnadze's life should be seen within the context of Russia's attempts to dominate the region.

The "Caucasian Hore" idea directs against the Russian imperialism in Caucasus. This idea has a long history. In 1919, Azerbaijan and Georgia signed a military-defense pact with the note that Armenia has right to join to this pact. However, Armenians chose a stance to be under Russian influence rather than an independent life. The leaders of Azerbaijan and Georgia accepted the document similar to this historic one, "The Tbilisi Declaration", and invited Armenia to join the declaration. Armenia remained this appeal without answer, proving that it is not ready to leave the Russian political orbit and pursue an independent policy. Creation of peace and stability in Caucasus demands support for the "Caucasian Hore" idea. The main condition of implementation of this idea is to prevent Russian military and political pressure, and Russia's readiness to see and collaborate with them as equals.

U.S. CONGRESS STANCE

The third force supporting separatism and laying obstacles to create stability in Karabagh is the U.S. Congress. It is the Congress accepting illogical and unjust 907th Amendment and thus putting Azerbaijan together with Iran and Libya in the same category. In 1997, the Congress accepted a bill presenting humanitarian relief to Karabagh (\$12.5 million). In another words, the Congress grossly interfered to the internal affairs of Azerbaijan encouraging Armenians of Karabagh to get more uncompromising stance. Congressman Pallone claims that he did not violate international law by paying visit to Karabagh. He claims that after visiting Karabagh he began to believe more in the necessity of more illogical and unjust bill

presenting to the Congress "Peace and Stability Act". In contrast to Mr.Pallone's act, the USA accepted the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan; in addition, its representative is one of the co-chairmen of OSCE Minsk Group.

I did not want to include the Clinton's Administration, but I have to. Indeed, it seeks to cancel the 907th Amendment, and tries to broadening relations with Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, receiving so-called "minister" of non-recognized "NKR" by the U.S. State Department provokes misunderstanding. And it clarifies some questions.

The quiet high level U.S. officials affirm that the Republic of Azerbaijan is going to be a strategic ally of the U.S. in the region. Indeed, interests of the U.S. and Azerbaijan in main geopolitical questions coincide. Azerbaijan as an ally does its best; its rich oil reserves are giving to use of world; it pursues a policy of peace in the region; it considers stability as its own priority in spite of contradictions with some national interests. However, an attitude regarding Azerbaijan bears a double standard. Armenia is a violator of stability, aggressor, infringing the international law. But this country is second in receiving an American aid! Why? Maybe the Yerevan government has very rare diplomats? Maybe Armenia has rare strategic position, or rare strategic raw materials, or other strategic values? It is only Christianity that attracts some congressmen in Armenia. There is a fundamentalism in Iran, but this fundamentalism does not prevent Tehran from implementation of some things, which is demanding by state interests. The fundamentalists in the U.S. Congress are more stubborn.

WHAT ABOUT AZERBAIJAN?

The Karabagh problem happens inside Azerbaijan, it concerns mainly its citizens. That is why Azerbaijan's responsibilities are more than any other countries.

The problem rose from this situation, when Azerbaijan and Armenia did not enjoy same opportunities. First of all, the parity must be created. Armenia has big problems due to its extreme nationalism. But the problem of Azerbaijan is that nationalism here is under the satisfied level. The necessity of parity concerns as well as military field. Especially, after 1 billion Russian military shipments. One of the best means to prevent the Armenian aggression is modern, well-trained Azerbaijan Army. Existence of an army, which can defend the country and its citizens, should make capricious Armenia to think. Another condition in the reinforcement of Azerbaijan is deepening of democratization inside the society.

Until returning the refugees to Shusha, Azerbaijan will not say that the war is over. The representatives of one million refugees demand to allow them to create a voluntary refugee army, the same quantity of Armenian population of Mountainous Karabagh as 150,000 men.

On the other hand, according formal logic, Azerbaijan bears this conflict already 10 years, and it should wait other 2-3 years. During this period oil contracts will work entirely, geopolitical changes will deepen. This region is not been considered now as a "backyard" of Russia. The NATO's breath is feeling here. The Trans-Caucasian corridor began to work. The ancient "Silk Road" is restoring. GUAM and the Central Asian Union are the heralds of serious geopolitical processes. Reform processes have begun in the region. This region is rapidly becoming as a part of European political and economic system. The face of the region will radically change with the realizing of oil contracts. (According to official estimates, Azerbaijan will gain 211 billion dollars from the export of oil during 25 years).

I think that after some years the position of Azerbaijan in the negotiations will strengthen, and it will have relatively favorable chances to sign peace agreement. But I saw the refugee camps that should shame humankind. And in my country, 95% of population live under the level of poverty. The Karabagh conflict is a big obstacle for

the development in the region. I do not wish that Armenia enjoying today humanitarian help would be tomorrow hungry and angry. Its problems are directly effecting and will effect the situation in Azerbaijan. Because the Caucasus are a single organism. Plague of one part paralyzes the entire organism. Karabagh is a striking pattern: all the 15 million population of South Caucasus became hostages of 150 thousand Karabagh Armenians.

CONCLUSION

But I do believe that the situation is not hopeless. The fair solution of the conflict in the interests of both nations demands above-mentioned conditions: it is necessary to realize the true history and current essence of the conflict, and to carry active explanatory work among Armenians; Moscow has to change its Caucasian policy; the U.S. Congress has to stop encourage Armenian separatism; Azerbaijan itself has to strengthen for creation here a parity. These main conditions for the solution of the Karabagh problem are possible to obtain.

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The text of report made by author in the seminar "Karabagh problem: The Situation is hopeless?" at the U.S. Institute of Peace in March 1998.

**** Robert Kocharian, the leader of Karabagh separatists, then prime-minister of Armenia under Ter-Petrossian, after electing as the president of the Republic of Armenia stated that he would not accept the Minsk group co-chairmen's proposal on stage-by-stage solution of the Karabagh problem. He also confirmed that Azerbaijan should agree to negotiate with "Nagorno-Karabagh Republic", and the Armenians will never welcome the status of autonomy for Nagorno-Karabagh within Azerbaijan.**

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NASSIBLI*X ü l a s d***QARABAĞ PROBLEMİ: əski
inadkarlıq və yeni ümidlər***Nəsim NƏSİBLİ (Xəzər Universitəsi, Bakı,
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On minlərlə insan məhv edilib. Yüz minlərlə insan şikəst olub. Bir milyondan artıq insan evindən-eşiyindən didərgin düşüb. Böyük bir region girov götürülüb. Bu bədbəxtliklərin səbəbkarı - Qarabağ münaqişəsinin başlanmasından on il keçir. Ermənilərə BMT TŞ - nin 822, 853, 874, 884 sayılı qərarlarını yerinə yetinnəməyə, işğal edilmiş əraziləri boşaltmamağa əsas verən şərtlər nədir? Ermənilər ATƏT- in və başqa beynəlxalq təşkilatların qərar və çağırışlarına niyə məhəl qoymurlar?

Hər şeydən əvvəl demək lazımdır ki, Ter-Petrosyan və Erməni Ümummilli Hərəkatı illərlə apardıqları siyasətin və təbliğatın qurbanları oldular. Bu gün ermənilər arasında ifrat millətçiliyin hakim olmasında, obyektiv fikrin qəbul edilə bilməməsində, kompleksin içində qovrulmalarında Erməni Ümummilli Hərəkatının böyük rolu var. İllərlə erməni təbliğatında türklərə və müsəlmanlara nifrət əsas vasitə olub. Erməni ziyalıları və siyasətçilərinin xeyli hissəsi o qədər saxta nağıllar quraşdırıblar ki, özləri belə bu yalanlara inanıblar. Birinci saxta hekayə: tarix boyu Dağlıq Qarabağ Ennənistanı və ermənilərə məxsus olub, yalnız 1923-cü ildə Stalin onu Azərbaycana bağışlayıb. İkinci: Dağlıq Qarabağ enənələrinin milli-azadlıq hərəkatı "DQR" deyilən qurumun yaranmasına səbəb oldu, yəni onlar Azərbaycanla mübarizədə qalib gəlmişlər. Üçüncü: Dağlıq Qarabağ ermənilərinin keskin, barışmaz mövqe tutmağına səbəb onların təhlükəsizlik problemləri imiş.

Münaqişənin birinci səbəbini aradan qaldırmaq üçün Ermənistanda və Dağlıq Qarabağ erməniləri arasında psixoloji hazırlıq gərəkdir. Problemin tarixi və müasir məzmunu haqqında obyektiv təsəvvür yaradılmalı, erməni millətinə həqiqəti söyləmək

gərəkdir. Qarabağ probleminin ikinci əsas müəllifi Moskvadır. Dağlıq Qarabağda separatizmi dəstəkləyən, burada sabitliyin yaranmasına mane olan üçüncü qüvvə Amerika Birləşmiş Ştatlarının konqresidir. Bu həmin konqresdir ki, 1992-ci ildə məntiqsiz və edalətsiz 907-ci düzəlişi qəbul etmiş, Azərbaycanı, faktiki olaraq, İran, Liviya ilə bir sıraya qoymuşdur. Qarabağ münaqişəsi Azərbaycanın ərazisində onun vətəndaşlarının problemidir. Onun boynuna daha böyük vəzifələr düşür.

Ennənistanın təcavüzü ilə bağ yaranmış böhran həll ediləndir. Münaqişənin həlli üçün yuxanda dediyim əsas şərtlərin yerinə yetirilməsi vacibdir: problemin tarixi və indiki məzmunu haqqında ennənilərə həqiqəti söyləmək, fəal izahat işi aparmaq gərəkdir; Moskvanın Qafqaz siyasətində dəyişiklik olmalıdır; ABŞ konqresi Qarabağ ermənilərini şirnikləndirməkdən əl çəkməlidir; Azərbaycan özü qüvvətli olmalıdır. Bunlar hamısı mümkün olan işlərdir

"Dağlıq Qarabağ: vəziyyət ümitsizdirmi?" adlı konfransda /Vaşinqton, 24 mart 1998/ çıxışın əsas tezisləri/