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**THE ANNEXATION OF ARMENIAN TERRITORIES
TO TURKEY AND SOVIET AZERBAIJAN
IN THE 1920S–1930S**

**ՄԵՍՐՈՊ ԱՐՔ. ԱՇԺԵԱՆ
ՄԱՏԵՆԱԾԱՐ**

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The study elucidates the issue of Armenian territories annexed to Kemalist Turkey and Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1920s and 1930s on a rich factual basis.

The work gives an idea of the process of drawing the borders of the Republic of Armenia and the Artsakh Republic. It has an equally important and relevant significance both from the historical and political perspective.

The book is addressed to historians, diplomats, political scientists and the general audience.

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FOREWORD

As a result of the sovietization of the Republic of Armenia (RA) on December 2, 1920, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia (the SSRA) inherited uncertain state borders, unresolved territorial-border issues with three of the four neighboring countries: Kemalist Turkey, Soviet Azerbaijan and the Georgian Republic. The exception was Iran, with which there were no border disputes, the Armenian-Iranian state border being the border between the former Russian Empire and Iran as of the beginning of the First World War (1914).

No international treaty signed during the existence of the Republic of Armenia (1918–1920) (be it the Treaty of Batumi, Sèvres, or the Treaty of Alexandropol, which had no legal force from the moment of its signing) determined the entire territories and borders of the Republic of Armenia; only the issue of the Armenian-Turkish borderline demarcation was resolved in them. As for the demarcation of the Armenian state with Azerbaijan and Georgia, though multi-format discussions were held in that direction in 1918–1920, however, due to the uncompromising positions of the parties, no final decisions were reached.

Agreements and contracts on the clarification of the territories and borders of the Armenian statehood with Kemalist Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia were signed, decisions were made during the Soviet years. As a result, the two Armenian states – the Republic of Armenia (1920–1990) and the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous

Region (NKAR, 1923–1991) suffered significant territorial losses in favor of Turkey, Soviet Azerbaijan and partially Soviet Georgia.

A comprehensive study of the process of the annexation of Armenian territories by Kemalist Turkey and Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1920s and 1930s is highly important taking into account the tragic consequences of the Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression against the Artsakh Republic (NKR) and Armenia in general in the 2020 autumn.

The work presents the belligerent and hostile policy of Turkey and Azerbaijan towards Armenia and the Armenians, the process of sovietization of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia in 1920, the issue of Armenian territories passed to Turkey and Soviet Azerbaijan under the 1921 Moscow and Kars agreements, the illegal annexation of Nakhijevan and Nagorno Karabakh to Soviet Azerbaijan, the process of seceding and annexing the territories belonging to the Armenian border settlements to the Azerbaijani border regions by the Central Executive Committee of the Transcaucasian Federation and its various commissions, etc. A separate chapter presents the process of NKAR formation and the future “clarification” of its borders by Soviet Azerbaijan to the detriment of the Armenian autonomy.

The basis for sourceological study mainly served archival documents whose majority has been first put into scientific circulation. The primary material for study are the documents preserved at the National Archives of Georgia and Armenia.

From the researched funds it is worth mentioning the documents of the National Archives of Georgia (Tbilisi) studied from the funds No. 607 (Central Executive Committee of the

Transcaucasian Federation), 612 (Union Council of the Transcaucasian Federation), P-617 (Council of People's Commissars (the Sovnarkom) of the Transcaucasian Federation). These are the minutes and decisions of the meetings of the chairmanship of the Central Executive Committee of the Transcaucasian Federation, their detailed reports attached, the minutes of the meetings of the land commissions of the Central Committee, decisions, official correspondence, letters-applications sent from the republics, reports, collections of maps, etc.

Valuable archival documents were found in the funds of the National Archives of Armenia: NAA No. 1 (CPA Central Committee), 112 (Central Executive Committee of the SSRA), 113 (Government of the SSRA), 114 (Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the SSRA), 132 (Executive Committee of Zangezur province of the Workers' and Peasants' and Red Army's Deputies of the SSRA).

The documents kept in the State Archive of the Artsakh Republic (AR) (Stepanakert) are also important for the study of the topic. The materials contained in Fund 1 (NKAR Regional Executive Committee), Fund 250 (Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan) and others present especially important information.

About two dozen remarkable, extremely valuable maps were found in the archive, which enable us to see clearly the border changes of Soviet Armenia and NKAR to the detriment of the republic and the autonomous region.

What concerns the published sources and literature, then one can come across with some interesting facts and evidence on the topic of study in the collection of documents and materials,

statistical collections and maps compiled and published during the Soviet years¹.

However, understandably the Soviet era did not encourage the study of themes “disrupting friendship between fraternal peoples”, including the study of the main issue of territorial disputes. Only since Armenia’s independence Armenian historians have started to study comprehensively the problem of territorial losses of Soviet Armenia and NKAR in the 1920s and 1930s, collection of documents and materials, some valuable works have been published².

¹ See *Большая Советская Энциклопедия (БСЭ)*, т. 1, 3, Москва, 1926, БСЭ, 2-ое изд., т. 1, Москва, 1949. *Сборник действующих договоров, соглашений и конвенций, заключенных РСФСР с иностранными государствами*. Выпуск 3, Москва, 1922, № 79. *Севр и Лозанна. Итоги империалистической войны. Серия мирных договоров*, под ред. **Ю.В. Ключникова** и **А.В. Сабанина**, Москва, 1927, **Ключников Ю., Сабанин А.,** *Международная политика новейшего времени в договорах, нотах и декларациях*, часть 3, Москва, 1928, **Букшпан А.,** *Азербайджанские курды: Лачин, Кельбаджар, Нахкрай. Заметки*, Баку, 1932, *Великая Октябрьская социалистическая революция и победа Советской власти в Армении (сборник документов)*, Ереван, 1957, *Документы внешней политики СССР*, т. I–IV, Москва, 1957–1960, **Хармандарян С.В.,** *Ленин и становление Закавказской федерации 1921–1923 гг.*, Ереван, 1969, **Поляков Ю.А.,** *Советская страна после окончания гражданской войны: территория и население*, Москва, 1986. *К истории образования Нагорно-Карабахской Автономной области Азербайджанской ССР: 1918–1925: Документы и материалы*, Баку, 1989, etc.

² *Геноцид армян: ответственность Турции и обязательства мирового сообщества, Документы и комментарий, составитель Ю. Барсегов*, т. 1, Москва, 2002; т. 2, ч. 1, Москва, 2003; т. 2, ч. 2, Москва, 2005, *Нагорный Карабах в 1918–1923 гг.: Сборник документов и материалов*, отв. ред. **В.А. Микаелян**, Ереван, 1992, *Нагорный Карабах в международном праве и мировой политике, документы и комментарий, составитель Ю. Барсегов*, т. 1, Москва, 2008; т. 2, Москва, 2009, *Борьба армян за воссоединение НКАО с Советской Арменией (сборник документов и материалов), составители и редакторы К. Хачатрян, Г. Абрамян*, Ереван, 2011, **Galoyan G.A.,** *Armenia and the Great Powers in 1917–1923*, Yerevan, 1999 (in Arm.), *Республика Армения в 1918–1920 гг. (политическая история)*, сборник документов и материалов, редакторы **Г. Галоян, В. Казахцян**, Ереван, 2000, **Казанджян Р.В.,** *К вопросу об оценке Московского русско-турецкого договора 1921 г., «Страны и народы Ближнего и Среднего Востока»*, том XX, Ереван, 2001, **Ghazakhetsyan V.N.,** *Armenia in*

It should be noted that the topic under study was also referred by Azerbaijani historians from a completely different “perspective”. However, their works mostly have a tendency of presenting the issue predominantly in the light of anti-Armenian propaganda through distortion and falsification of historical documents and facts. Of these, the monograph of I. Niftaliev is worth mentioning¹. Although this work is not devoid of similar tendencies, nevertheless, it stands out in the sense that the author has put into circulation a number of important documents kept in the Azerbaijani archives and unavailable to us for known reasons.

Unlike the Azerbaijani historians, the composite authors of the given study set themselves the task without paying tribute to propaganda to present the issue of the forcible annexation of Armenian territories by Kemalist Turkey and Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1920s–1930s having based exclusively on historical facts.

1920–1940, Yerevan, 2006 (in Arm.), **Khachatryan K.H.**, *Armenian-Russian relations 1920–1922*, Yerevan, 2007, **Hakobyan A.M.**, *Soviet Armenia in the Moscow and Kars Treaties*, Yerevan, 2010, *History of Armenians*, v. IV, Book I (Modern period: 1918–1945), Yerevan, 2010, **Mkrtchyan Sh.M.**, *Nagorno Karabakh. Anatomy of the Genocide committed by Azerbaijan (1920–1988)*, Stepanakert, 2003, **Sahakyan A.L.**, *Armenia in the Transcaucasian Federation*, Vanadzor, 2013 (in Arm.), etc.

¹ See **Нифталиев И.**, *Азербайджанская ССР в экспансионистских планах армян (20-е годы XX века)*, Баку, 2010.

EPILOGUE

In 1920–1922, the territory of Soviet Armenia, its borders with Kemalist Turkey, Soviet Azerbaijan and Soviet Georgia were formed in several stages: by the Article 3 of the Armenian-Russian agreement on December 2, 1920 in Yerevan, by the illegal Soviet-Turkish treaties of Moscow and Kars in 1921, by separate decisions of the Soviet central and republican party bodies. As a result, if by the agreement of December 2 the territory of the SSRA was to make more than 43,000 sq. km, then already at the end of 1921 and at the beginning of 1922 it fluctuated from 32,000 to 33,000 sq. km, decreasing by more than $\frac{1}{4}$.

Bolshevik Russia did not defend the interests of Soviet Armenia and Armenians in determining the borders of the territory of the SSRA. Most of the Armenian territories were illegally handed over to Kemalist Turkey and Soviet Azerbaijan.

The territorial losses imposed on Soviet Armenia continued during the Transfederation period. Soviet Armenia suffered territorial losses both in the northeastern, eastern and southeastern parts of the SSRA – AzSSR, and partly in the Lori section of the SSRA – GruzSSR border, eventually closing in on very vulnerable borders – only 29,742,59 sq. km area.

According to the logic of the illegal decision of the Caucasus Bureau of the RCP(B) Central Committee Plenum on July 5, 1921, the territory of Nagorno Karabakh Autonomy should have been

about 8,000 sq. km. However, in violation of that decision, the NKAR in 1923–1924 was formed only in a part of Nagorno Karabakh – about 5,000 sq. km area. In the following years, the authorities of Soviet Azerbaijan continuously seceded about 600 sq. km from the NKAR, leaving only 4,400 sq. km area. Moreover, the autonomous region got artificially isolated from Soviet Armenia through the “Lachin corridor”.

Thus, as a result of the territorial-border losses suffered in 1920–1930s, the NKAR, Soviet Armenia, and today its successor, the Republic of Armenia, found themselves in strategically unfavorable conditions. And only thanks to the heroic victories of the Armenian people in the First Artsakh Liberation War in 1992–1994 some parts of the Armenian territories unlawfully seceded to Soviet Azerbaijan were liberated which before the Turkish-Azerbaijani military invasion of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh Republic) in the 2020 autumn were an integral part of the latter.

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