

THE CAUCASIAN KNOT

The History & Geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabagh

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Minorities in Armenia'. It was created in July with the aid of Red Army detachments from Karabagh. But it is undeniable that if Zangeneh has since been an integral part of Soviet Armenia, it was Nikolski who made it possible.

Following Andranik, he successfully implemented a 're-Armenianization' of the region, rendering even more tenuous the claims of Baku.

Nikolskiyev would not enjoy the same fate, despite the promises of Nakhichevan. Frustrated by the Turkish army, national unity provided good reason to look to Ankara. In front of Lenin, Nakhichevan directly sought the prospect of an alliance with Turkey against England which could be sealed by ending Turkish ambitions with regard to Armenia. In February 1921 he wrote to Lenin, 'If Moscow, because of the Armenian Question, rejects the Azerbaijan (Kavkazskiy), then they will be driven, in desperation, into the arms of England.'¹⁷ It was clear Nikolskiyev's objective was demonstrated. 'He is not interested in the Armenian Question.' The February and Nikolskiyev's intervention in Armenia came just at the right time. On 21 February Nakhichevan wrote to Lenin:

You already know that Soviet power has been set aside in Armenia. In the light of this fact, I propose that the Armenian Question play no role whatsoever in negotiations with the Turkish delegation.¹⁸

At the Soviet-Turkish conference in Moscow (February-March 1921), the Armenian delegate, Babunian, was never asked. There were Azerbaijan-Turkish negotiations,¹⁹ and Lenin took a pro-Turkish position:

You have already resolved the Armenian Question. If anything else remains which has not been resolved, resolve it, only adhere to it if the moment when you do so.²⁰

We have many examples of gratitude from the Turks for such an ally.²¹

In these circumstances the question of Nakhichevan was resolved by the Turks and the Soviets without the Armenians. By the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Moscow (16 March 1921), ratified by the Treaty of Kars (13 October 1921) between Turkey and the three Soviet Transcaucasian republics, Nakhichevan was declared autonomous 'under the protection of Azerbaijan' with the additional qualification that 'this protection could never be transferred to another case'.²² This was a flagrant case of Turkish treachery, since it was under pressure from Ankara that the decision was ratified to transfer to a Turkish Soviet republic a region which was Armenian by history and population, even though the territory was geographically separated from Azerbaijan.

The Separation of Karabagh from Armenia

Failure in Zangeneh, success in Nakhichevan. It was now time for Nakhichevan to go after the 'third parcel'. Discussing his declaration of December, he now