

UDC: 93.94

DOI: 10.52971/18294316-2023.26.2-54

## NAGORNO KARABAKH AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF SOVIET ARMENIA

*Stepan R. Hasan-Jalalyan*

"Council of Hasan-Jalalyans" Historical, Cultural,  
Ethnographic Non-Governmental Organization, Yerevan, RA

### Abstract

**Introduction:** The purpose of the article is to show, based on the primary sources and literature related to the issue, whether Azerbaijan ever recognized Artsakh as a part of Armenia, and if so, what significance did it have on the process of settlement of the Azerbaijan-Artsakh conflict? **Methods and materials:** The article is written through a comparison and comparative study of the original sources related to the issue, as well as an examination analysis of the scientific works related to it. **Results:** As a result of joint examination of facts and documents related to the issue, as well as historical and political literature, we came to the conclusion that in spite of the decision of the Revolutionary Committee of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan of November 30, 1920, considering Nagorno Karabagh as a part of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia and in spite of the decree of the Council of the People's Commissars of Soviet Armenia adopted on June 12, 1921 that Artsakh was an integral part of Soviet Armenia, the Caucasian Bureau of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, a political body of a third country, that had no right to resolve territorial issues in this case, without any further discussions or votes, in fact, on 5 July, 1921 illegally adopted a resolution that included Nagorno Karabakh within the borders of Soviet Azerbaijan.

**Key words:** *Congress of the Armenians of Artsakh, Nagorno Karabakh, Shushi, Alexander Myasnikyan, Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region, Soviet Armenia, Soviet Azerbaijan, Defense Army of the Republic of Artsakh.*

**Citation.** Hasan-Jalalyan S. *Nagorno Karabakh as an Integral Part of Soviet Armenia.* // "Scientific works" of SCAS NAS RA. Gyumri, 2023. V. 2 (26). pp. 54-61.

DOI:

## НАГОРНЫЙ КАРАБАХ КАК НЕРАЗДЕЛЬНАЯ ЧАСТЬ СОВЕТСКОЙ АРМЕНИИ

*Степан Р. Асан-Джалалян*

Историко-культурная, этнографическая общественная организация  
«Совет Асан-Джалалянов», Ереван, РА

### Аннотация

**Введение:** На основе первоисточников и литературы по данному вопросу показать признавал ли когда-либо Азербайджан Арцах частью Армении, и если да, то какое значение это имело для процесса урегулирования азербайджано-арцахского конфликта. **Методы и материалы:** Статья написана путем сопоставления и сравнительного изучения первоисточников, относящихся к проблеме, а также экспертного анализа научных работ, связанных с ней. **Результаты:** В результате совместного изучения фактов и документов по данному вопросу, а также историко-политической литературы мы пришли к выводу, что 30 ноября 1920 года решением Революционного Комитета Азербайджанской Советской Социалистической Республики, признанный частью Социалистической Республики Советской Армении и согласно декрету, принятому Советом народных комиссаров Советской Армении 12 июня 1921г., Арцах, являющийся неотъемлемой частью Советской Армении, незаконным решением кавказского бюро коммунистической партии Советской России, не обсужденным и не поставленным на голосование партийным органом третьей страны, не имеющей права решать территориальные вопросы, то есть, по сути, не принятым, незаконным решением, был введен в границы Советского Азербайджана.

**Ключевые слова:** Съезд армян Арцаха, Нагорный Карабах, Шуши, Александр Мясникян, Кавказское бюро Центрального комитета Коммунистической партии Советской России, Нагорно-Карабахская Автономная Область, Советская Армения, Советский Азербайджан, Армия обороны Республики Арцах.

**Как цитировать:** Асан-Джалалян С. Нагорный Карабах как нераздельная часть Советской Армении. // "Научные труды" ИЦАИ НАН РА. Гюмри, 2023. Т. 2(26). сс. 54-61.

DOI:

**INTRODUCTION:** At the beginning of the establishment of the Soviet order in Armenia, Soviet Azerbaijan recognized Nagorno Artsakh as belonging to Soviet Armenia. In this context, the author has studied and presented a number of official documents that were accepted by Soviet Azerbaijan and Soviet Armenia. In the context of the developments taking place around the settlement of the Azerbaijani-Artsakh conflict, the need to make this legal fact the subject of negotiations becomes very important.

On April 28, 1920, the 11th Red Army of Soviet Russia entered Baku without resistance and established Soviet rule in Azerbaijan. The last, Tenth Congress of the Armenians of Artsakh took place in the village of Nerkin Taghavard in the Varanda province, on May 26, 1920. Most of the deputies present were Bolsheviks. Discussing the political situation in Artsakh and around Artsakh, the Congress decides:

1. to declare Nagorno Karabakh Soviet,
2. to establish a Revolutionary Committee,
3. to elect Sako Hambardzumyan as the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee,
4. to establish a contact with the Shushi Revolutionary Committee [1, p. 34].

The internationally unrecognized Azerbaijan, which was created by the Ottoman Turkish invasion of Transcaucasia and which had appropriated the name of the province of Azerbaijan in northeastern Iran as a name for its own state, with the establishment of the Soviet regime, did not stop its illegal ambitions towards Artsakh.

On November 29, 1920, Soviet rule was established in the Republic of Armenia. Due to the establishment of the Soviet rule in Armenia, Nariman Narimanov, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of Soviet Azerbaijan, sent a congratulatory message, stating that on November 30, the Revolutionary Committee of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan adopted a decision that "Nagorno Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan are considered a part of the Socialist Republic of Armenia" [4, doc. N 420, pp. 601-602].

The above-mentioned decision of the Revolutionary Committee of Soviet Azerbaijan, signed by Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee Nariman Narimanov and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Mirza Huseynov, on December 7, 1920 was published in the 2nd issue of the "Communist" newspaper in Yerevan with an Armenian translation [5].

On the occasion of the establishment of the Soviet rule in Armenia on December 1, 1920 Nariman Narimanov, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of Soviet Azerbaijan, issued a declaration in which he had edited the previous decision on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict adopted just one day before by the Revolutionary Committee of Azerbaijan. That decision was made on November 30.

In the declaration, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of Soviet Azerbaijan, in particular, stated that "...Zangezur and Nakhichevan provinces are an integral part of Soviet Armenia and that the working peasantry of Nagorno Karabakh is given full right to self-determination..." [4, doc. N 423, pp. 604-605].

The next day, on December 2, the declaration was published in the 178th issue of the Russian-language "Communist" newspaper in Baku [6].

Despite the fact that the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of Soviet Azerbaijan adopted the November 30, 1920 decision of the Revolutionary Committee of Soviet Azerbaijan to recognize Nagorno Karabakh as a part of Soviet Armenia, he then took a step back and by his declaration of December 1, 1920, only recognized the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination, which "...recognition was equivalent to the proclamation of Nagorno Karabagh as an integral part of Soviet Armenia, as the will of its people (Artsakh – S. H.-J.) could not been distrusted" [2, p. 13].

Member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia Joseph Stalin, in a sign of the establishment of Soviet power in Armenia, on December 4, 1920 published a telegram in the "Communist" newspaper in Moscow and also an article in the "Pravda" newspaper, in which he stated in particular that "On December 1, Soviet Azerbaijan voluntarily renounced the disputed states and is giving Zangezur, Nakhichevan, Nagorno Karabakh to Soviet Armenia" [7; 8; 4, doc. N 425, pp. 606-607.].

Based on the December 1, 1920 resolution of the Revolutionary Committee of Soviet Azerbaijan Alexander Myasnikyan, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Soviet Armenia, on June 12, 1921 signed a decree stating that Nagorno Karabakh was now an integral part of Soviet Armenia. "Based on the Declaration of the Revolutionary Committee of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan and the agreement reached between the governments of Armenia and the Socialist Soviet Republics of Azerbaijan, it is declared that Nagorno Karabakh is now an integral part of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Armenia" [4, doc. N 441, p. 636].

The decree was published in the June 19, 1921 issue of the “Soviet Armenia” newspaper in Yerevan [9].

On June 22 of the same year, the decree was published in the Baku-based Russian-language newspaper “Bakinsky Rabochiy” [“The Baku Worker” Eng.] [10].

And so, two states had a dispute related to a specific territory, and for this purpose, the authorities of the given countries adopted legal acts within their jurisdiction regarding the subject of the dispute, these legal acts were published in the official press of the time. The issue seemed to be resolved. But this seems only at first glance.

On June 27, 1921 at its session the Chair of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia decided to convene an extraordinary plenum on the borders of the Transcaucasian republics [4, doc. N 448, p. 648].

On July 4, 1921, there convened a plenum of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of Soviet Russia in Tbilisi, where, in addition to its eight members, Joseph Stalin, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, was also present.

During the discussion on the issue of Artsakh, there appeared two solutions:

1. To leave Karabakh within the borders of Azerbaijan and to hold a referendum throughout Karabakh with the participation of the entire population, both Armenians and Muslims.
2. To include the mountainous part of Karabakh into Armenia, to hold a referendum only in Nagorno Karabakh, that is, among the Armenians.

As a result of voting from the above-mentioned two options, the second option was adopted, that is, to include Nagorno Karabakh into Soviet Armenia, to hold a referendum only in Nagorno Karabakh, that is, among the Armenians.

Immediately after the decision was made, Nariman Narimanov, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Soviet Azerbaijan, made the following statement: “Considering the importance of the Karabakh issue for Azerbaijan, I consider it necessary to transfer it to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia for its final decision” [4, doc. N 450, pp. 649-650].

Based on Narimanov's statement, the following was decided. “Taking into account that the issue of Karabakh has caused a serious disagreement, the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party considers it necessary to transfer it to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party for its final decision” [4, p. 650].

However, the next day, on July 5, members of the Caucasus Bureau Ordzhonikidze and Nazaretsyan, raised the issue of reconsidering the decision of the Bureau on Karabakh made at the previous day's session.

Judging from the minutes of the July 5 plenum of the Caucasus Bureau, one may insist that there was no discussion on the issue and then no vote as such. Without discussing the issue or putting it to a vote, the following was decided:

1. Due to the need for national peace between the Muslims and the Armenians, the economic connections between Lower and Upper Karabakh, and its permanent connection with Azerbaijan, to leave Nagorno Karabakh within the borders of the Azerbaijani SSR, giving it broad regional autonomy with Shushi as its administrative center, which is part of the autonomous region.
2. To assign to the Central Committee of Azerbaijan the determination of the boundaries of the Autonomous Region and to submit for the approval of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia.

3. To instruct the Chairman of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee to speak with the Central Committee of Armenia and the Central Committee of Azerbaijan about the candidacy of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Nagorno Karabakh.

4. For the Central Committee of Azerbaijan to determine the extent of Nagorno Karabakh's autonomy; to submit it to the Caucasus Bureau for approval by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia" [4, doc. N 451, p. 650].

In addition to the participants in the July 5 session of the Caucasus Bureau, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of Soviet Azerbaijan Mirza Huseynov was also present.

In fact, despite the fact that at the July 4 session of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, it was decided to include Nagorno Karabakh in Soviet Armenia, and then, based on Narimanov's statement, it was decided to move the issue to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia. On July 5, it was decided to bring Nagorno Karabakh within the borders of Soviet Azerbaijan without further discussion or voting on the issue.

It is necessary to note that the Artsakh issue was not transferred to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia for a final settlement, as decided at the July 4 session of the Caucasus Bureau.

Thus, in spite of the decision of the Revolutionary Committee of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan of November 30, 1920, considering Nagorno Karabagh as a part of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia and in spite of the decree of the Council of the People's Commissars of Soviet Armenia adopted on June 12, 1921 that Nagorno Karabakh was an integral part of Soviet Armenia, the Caucasian Bureau of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, a political body of a third country, that had no right to resolve territorial issues in this case [3, p. 9], without any further discussions or votes, in fact, illegally adopted a resolution that included Nagorno Karabakh within the borders of Soviet Azerbaijan. Considering the above, we can claim that by an illegal decision of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia of July 5, 1921 the territory of Artsakh was forcibly included into Soviet Azerbaijan, without taking into account the will of the people of Artsakh. Considering the above-mentioned, at least the following questions arise:

1. according to which legal act did Soviet Russia intervene in the conflict settlement between Soviet Armenia and Soviet Azerbaijan,

2. According to which legal act, the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, that is, a third country party organization, made a decision on the settlement of the conflict between Soviet Armenia and Soviet Azerbaijan?

Answering the questions mentioned above, it should be noted that there was no legal act based on which Soviet Russia intervened in the settlement of the conflict between Soviet Armenia and Soviet Azerbaijan. And the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, as a third country party organization, did not have the right to resolve territorial issues defined by any legal act.

Seeing that the government of Soviet Azerbaijan was delaying the formation of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region, the Soviet supreme authorities undertook some steps. Thus, the Transcaucasian Regional Committee on December 14, 1922 made a decision to ensure the urgent implementation of the decision made on July 5, 1921 by the Caucasus Bureau [4, doc. N 462, p. 662]. On December 22 of the same year, a similar decision was made by the Union Council of the Transcaucasian Federation [4, doc. N 464, p. 664].

After delaying the formation of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region for two years, the Central Executive Committee of Azerbaijan on July 7, 1923 adopted a decree deciding to establish an autonomous region from the Armenian part of Nagorno Karabakh as an integral part of the AzSSR (Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan) with the center at Khankendi. In order to determine the borders of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region, it was decided to set up a joint committee consisting of the representatives of the central government of Nagorno Karabakh, the Plain Karabakh, Kurdistan and Soviet Azerbaijan [4, doc. N 464, p. 664].

The Soviet Azerbaijani authority, violating the illegal decision of the Caucasus Bureau, which was not discussed and adopted by a vote during the July 5, 1921 session, formed the autonomous region in only one part of the mountainous region, deliberately leaving the following geographical and historical territories belonging to Nagorno Karabakh outside the borders of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region: Shahumyan (currently occupied as part of the Goranboy region of Azerbaijan), the Shahumyan region of the present-day Republic of Artsakh (the Qarvachar region of the former Azerbaijani SSR, currently occupied by Azerbaijan), the Qashatagh region of the current Republic of Artsakh (the Lachin region of the former Azerbaijani SSR, currently occupied by Azerbaijan), Kovsakan [3, p. 10], now part of the Qashatagh region of the Republic of Artsakh (the Zangelan region of the former Azerbaijani SSR, currently occupied by Azerbaijan), Akna, now part of the Askeran region of the Republic of Artsakh (the Aghdam region of the former Azerbaijani SSR, currently occupied by Azerbaijan), Qashunig (now the Kubatlu region of the former Azerbaijani SSR, currently occupied by Azerbaijan), Jrakan, now part of the Hadrut region of the Republic of Artsakh (the Jabrayil region of the former Azerbaijani SSR, currently occupied by Azerbaijan), Varanda, which is now part of the Hadrut region of the Republic of Artsakh (the Fizuli region of the former Azerbaijani SSR, is currently occupied by Azerbaijan), etc. The aforementioned territories, which are occupied by Azerbaijan today, are de jure an integral part of the territory of the Republic of Artsakh. Those territories were to enter into the administrative borders of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region by the illegal decision that was not discussed or voted on at the July 5 session of the Caucasus Bureau in 1921.

The government of Soviet Azerbaijan designed the map of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region in such a way that Artsakh had no land connection with Soviet Armenia. For this purpose, the Central Executive Committee of Azerbaijan on July 16, 1923 established a Kurdish province called Red Kurdistan between the territories of Soviet Armenia and the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region. And after the dissolution of Red Kurdistan on April 8, 1929 the regions of Qarvachar, Lachin and Kubatlu were directly entered into Soviet Azerbaijan as its integral part.

In fact, the government of Soviet Azerbaijan without taking into account the opinion of the people of Artsakh by the decree of July 7, 1923 annexed most of the northern, southern, eastern and western parts of the territory of Artsakh as the territory of Soviet Azerbaijan.

As a result of the Azeri-Artsakh war of 1991-1994, the Defense Army of the Republic of Artsakh recaptured only a part of the territories legally belonging to the Republic of Artsakh after more than 60 years of Azerbaijani occupation. After the signing of the trilateral ceasefire agreement (Artsakh, Armenia, Azerbaijan) on May 12, 1994 some territories of the eastern parts of the Martakert and Martuni regions, the former Shahumyan region of the Republic of Artsakh with a total area of 1041 km<sup>2</sup> [11], which was about 9% of the constitutionally enshrined territory of the Republic of Artsakh, remained under Azerbaijani occupation.

Grossly violating the principles of the Helsinki Final Act in 1 august 1975 on non-use of force or threat of force and on peaceful settlement of disputes, as a result of the second aggression

unleashed by mercenary terrorists against the Republic of Artsakh on September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan occupied (violently seized) approximately 75% of the constitutionally enshrined territory of the Republic of Artsakh. Thus, summarizing the above, we can say that as a result of the two aggression wars unleashed against the Republic of Artsakh, Azerbaijan has occupied approximately 84% of the constitutionally enshrined territory of the Republic of Artsakh.

**CONCLUSION:** In spite of the decision of the Revolutionary Committee of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan of November 30, 1920, considering Nagorno Karabagh as a part of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia and in spite of the decree of the Council of the People's Commissars of Soviet Armenia adopted on June 12, 1921 that Artsakh was an integral part of Soviet Armenia, the Caucasian Bureau of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, a political body of a third country, that had no right to resolve territorial issues in this case, without any further discussions or votes, in fact, on 5 July, 1921 illegally adopted a resolution that included Nagorno Karabakh within the borders of Soviet Azerbaijan.

### Գ ր ա կ ա ն ո լ թ յ ո ն

1. Արքահամյան Հ., 1918-1920 թթ. արցախահայության համագումարների ժողովրդավարությունը. // «Պատմա-բանասիրական հանդես», N 3, Երևան, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ «Գիտություն» հրատ., 2012, 21-36 էջեր:
2. Արցախի Հանրապետության նախագահի պաշտոնական ինտերնետային կայք, <http://www.president.nkr.am/en/nkr/generalInformation/>. (նկատվել է 11.08.2023)
3. «Նորհրդային Հայաստան» թերթ, N 106, Երևան, 19 հունիսի 1921:
4. «Կոմունիստ» թերթ, N 2, Երևան, 7 դեկտեմբերի 1920:
5. Газета “Коммунист”, N 178, Баку, 2 декабря 1920.
6. Газета “Коммунист”, N 1, Москва, 4 декабря 1920.
7. Газета “Правда”, N 273, Москва, 4 декабря 1920.
8. Газета “Бакинский рабочий”, Баку, 22 июня 1921.
9. Манасян А., *Карабахский конфликт: Минимальная папка политико-правовых фактов и аргументов*, Ереван, “Де-факто”, 2009, 47 с.
10. *Нагорный Карабах в 1918-1923гг.*, сборник документов и материалов, Ереван, “Изд. АН”, 1992, 756 с.
11. Avakian Sh., *Nagorno Karabagh: Legal aspects, fifth edition*, Moscow, “MIA”, 2015, 126 p.

### References

1. Abrahamyan H., Democracy of the Congresses of the Artsakh Armenians in 1918-1920, [*1918-1920 artsakhahayutyan hamagumarneri zhoghovrdavarutyuny*], // “Historical-Philological journal”, N 3, Yerevan, “Gitutyun”, 2012, 21-36 pp. (in Armenian)
2. Manasyan A., Karabakh conflict: Minimum folder of political and legal facts and arguments, [*Karabakski konflikt: Minimalnaya papka politico-pravovikh faktov I argumentov*], Yerevan, “De-fakto”, 2009, 47 p., (in Russian)
3. Nagorno Karabakh in 1918-1923: Collection of documents and materials, [*Nagorny Karabakh v 1918-1923: sbornik dokumnetov I materialov*], Yerevan, “Academy of Sciences of Armenia”, 1992, 756 p., (in Russian)
4. Newspaper “Communist” [*“Komunist” tert*], N 2, Yerevan, December 7, 1920, (in Armenian)
5. Newspaper “Communist” [*Gazeta “Komunist”*], N 178, Baku, December 2, 1920, (in Russian)
6. Newspaper “Communist” [*Gazeta “Komunist”*], N 1, Moscow, December 4, 1920, (in Russian)
7. Newspaper “Pravda” [*Gazeta “Pravda”*], N 273, Moscow, December 4, 1920, (in Russian)

8. Newspaper “Soviet Armenia” [*Gazeta “Khorhrdayin Hayastan”*], N 106, Yerevan, June 19, 1921, (in Armenian)
9. Newspaper “Bakinsky rabochi” [*Gazeta “Bakinski rabochi”*], Baku, June 22, 1921 (in Russian)
10. Official website of the President of the Republic of Artsakh [*Artsakhi Hanrapetutyun nakhagahi pashtonakan internetayin kayq*], <http://www.president.nkr.am/en/nkr/generalInformation/>. [date accessed: 11.08.2023].

Ընդունվել է / Принята / Received on: **22.10.2023**

Գրախոսվել է / Рецензирована / Reviewed on: **03.11.2023**

Հանձնվել է տպ. / Сдана в пч. / Accepted for Pub: **27. 11. 2023**

**Տեղեկություններ հեղինակի մասին**

**Stepan Ruben HASAN-JALALYAN:** YSU Master student in Political Sciences,  
President of "Council of Hasan-Jalalyans" Historical, Cultural Non-GO, Yerevan, RA  
e-mail: Hasan-Jalal@yandex.com, <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2567-7456>

**Ստեփան Ռուբենի ՀԱՍԱՆ-ՋԱԼԱԼՅԱՆ՝** ԵՊՀ-ի քաղաքագիտության մագիստրոս,  
«Հասան-Ջալալյանների խորհուրդ» պատմամշակութային ՀԿ նախագահ, Երևան, ՀՀ,  
Էլ. հասցե՝ Hasan-Jalal@yandex.com, <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2567-7456>

**Степан Рубенович АСАН-ДЖАЛАЛЯН:** магистр политологии ЕГУ,  
Председатель историко-культурной ОО «Совет Асан-Джалалянов», Ереван, РА  
эл. адрес: Hasan-Jalal@yandex.com, <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2567-7456>