

## THE TURKISH-AZERBAIJANI PAN-TURKISM PROGRAMS AND ARTSAKH IN 1917–1920

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The Ottoman Empire was suffering an ideological, political and economic crisis early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Empire needed a new ideology, which would stop the disintegration and the decline of the state and would restore its former power. During that period three ideologies were discussed in the Empire. Those were Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism. The ideology of Pan-Turkism was formed in the Russian Empire and then it spread in the Ottoman Empire as well.

The Pan-Turkism became a state ideology when the “Union and Progress Party” came to power in the Ottoman Empire in 1908. The rise of Pan-Turkism during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire was brought about by specially propitious conditions, the impact of intellectuals from the Empire itself on the one hand, and from the ranks of the Outside Turks, on the other<sup>1</sup>. It's important to note that from this period the interest of the Ottoman Turks in the Turks living beyond the borders of the Empire increased. In such conditions, the programs of Pan-Turkism were organized and the final goal was to unite all the Turkic peoples and to create the Great Turan state headed by the Ottoman Empire. The Young Turks entered World War I, having such programs and thoughts. Guided by Pan-Turkism programs, they at first intended to conquer Transcaucasia, then enter the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia. Therefore, Transcaucasia was more important for the Turks at the beginning of the war. The Turks unleashed a war against Russia for Transcaucasia. During the war, the Turkish army suffered a series of defeats. However, the situation radically changed in Transcaucasia as a result of the revolution which happened in Russia in October, 1917.

Until the revolution, the Turks couldn't establish direct contacts with the Turkic population of the region. Though in that period the Turkish spies were more active in Transcaucasia. In fact, the situation, which was established after the October revolution, created propitious conditions for the Turks because they had the opportunity to cooperate with the Azerbaijani Musavatists.

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<sup>1</sup> Landau J.M., Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation, Hong Kong, 1995, p. 29.

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On the other hand, World War I appeared to some activists among the Turkic groups in the Russian Empire as the watershed for their nationalist hopes<sup>2</sup>. It has already been quite obvious that early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Azerbaijanis were highly active in terms of their Pan-Turk nationalist awakening, second only to the Tatars<sup>3</sup>. Accordingly, the Azerbaijanis accepted the opportunity of cooperation with the Turks with great enthusiasm, they shared the programs of Pan-Turkism as well. The Turks also realized that the Musavatists were their supporters in Transcaucasia<sup>4</sup>. One of the propitious conditions of the Turkish-Azerbaijani cooperation was the fact that the Russian army left the front which was immediately occupied by Turkish troops. Another part was that Russia's Caucasian army didn't organize effective resistance against the Turkish advances. At the same time the provinces of Kars, Ardahan and Batumi which Russia conquered in 1878<sup>5</sup> were given to the Turks by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. An important factor was the existence of weapons reserves left by the Russian army. The Azerbaijanis took those weapons and later used them against the Artsakh Armenians. We can say that there were real prerequisites for the Turkish-Azerbaijani cooperation, so the Pan-Turkism programs became primary. In essence, the strengthening of the Turkish-Azerbaijani cooperation would mean the realization of the first phase of the Pan-Turkism program. The October revolution and its results in Transcaucasia had a considerable influence on Artsakh. Artsakh appeared in the centre of the Turkish-Azerbaijani cooperation and unity, so the region gained significant importance for them. During this period, the Musavatists made their demands to the Armenian territories which besides Artsakh included Zangezur and Nakhichevan. It is worth mentioning, that Artsakh was a territory which was an obstacle for the Turks' plans of unification with the Azerbaijanis. For this goal, the two sides formed a joint front and tried to occupy Artsakh.

The Turkish-Azerbaijani forces were preparing to destroy Artsakh and exterminate all Armenians at the end of 1917 and at the beginning of 1918. The Musavatists were secretly meeting and negotiating with the military minister of the Ottoman Empire Enver Pasha and were preparing to support the Turkish troops.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 14–15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> **Карсеци А.** Конфликты между народами и пути их преодоления (к проблеме Нагорного Карабаха), Е., 1990, с. 27.

<sup>5</sup> ՀՍՍՀ, ֆ. 200, ց. 1, գ. 254, թ. 202:

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According to academician H. Simonyan, “Until the end of 1917, Musavat was a miserable party, but at the beginning of 1918 Musavat became the strongest political party of Transcaucasia and pretended to decide the fate of the region”<sup>6</sup>. Cafer Seydahmet, a prominent figure in the Crimean Tatar national movement who visited Gence in those days, wrote in his memories that the Azerbaijanis were enthusiastically waiting for the Ottoman soldiers<sup>7</sup>.

During this period Artsakh lived in difficult political and economic conditions and the Turkish-Azerbaijani programs and inroads were connected with the security of the Artsakh Armenians. In our opinion, the physical existence of the Artsakh Armenians was endangered in case of the implementation of the Pan-Turkism programs. There was almost no power in Artsakh in November-December, 1917. The only local governmental body was the Executive Committee consisting of 72 members, almost completely inactive<sup>8</sup>. The Turkic-Tatar population used that situation and carried out looting, robbery and massacre. Besides, the absence of Artsakh government created favorable conditions for the Turkish-Azerbaijani Pan-Turkism programs. On the other hand, the economic and political crisis in Artsakh gradually deepened and that was also a favorable factor for the Turkish-Azerbaijani cooperation. The representatives of the Artsakh Armenians were certainly worried about the situation, predicted the danger and started to take some actions. The first step was taken, when on the initiative of former commissar of the province L. Vardapetyan a meeting was held. During this meeting it was decided to create a temporary body of local authority which was named “Karabakh's Temporary Council of the Armenian Revolutionary Parties and Organizations” (“Inter-Party Bureau” for short). The Council consisted of 14 members: five Dashnaks, three Mensheviks, three Bolsheviks and three E'sers. The member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Hayrapet Musayelyan was the elected chairman of the Council<sup>9</sup>. Though the activity of Karabakh's Temporary Council was only confined to the city of Shushi, it was of great importance as it was the beginning of the statehood building in Artsakh. It should be noted that the provinces of Dizak, Khachen, Varanda and Djraberd were left

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<sup>6</sup> Սիմոնյան Հ., Թուրք-հայկական հարաբերությունների պատմությունից, Ե., 1991, էջ 290:

<sup>7</sup> Kirimer C.S., Bazı Hatıralar, İstanbul, 1993, s. 302.

<sup>8</sup> Հարությունյան Հ., Լեռնային Ղարաբաղը 1918–1921 թթ., Ե., 1996, էջ 16–17:

<sup>9</sup> Ուլուբաբյան Բ., Արցախի պատմությունը սկզբից մինչև մեր օրերը, Ե., 1994, էջ 204:

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without authority. The Turkic population of Shushi also established the National Committee: most likely they were trying to participate in the above-mentioned processes.

Inter-Party Bureau couldn't establish order in Artsakh. The extraordinary session of Karabakh's Executive Committee was held on December 20, 1917. The Executive Committee resigned and an International or Inter-Ethnic Committee was created which included 13 people: six Armenians, six Muslims and one neutral person, as a head<sup>10</sup>. The main issue of the Committee was to regulate the interethnic relations, but it couldn't realize it and in future the interethnic contradictions became even deeper.

The independence of Azerbaijan was declared on May 27, 1918 and the threat to Artsakh became more real. The Musavatists tried to implement Pan-Turkic programs and forcibly connect Artsakh to Azerbaijan, thus establishing direct contact with Turkey. On the other hand, Turks were also guided by Pan-Turkism programs and tried to occupy Armenia. It should be noted that the presence of Turkic state in Transcaucasia was important for Turkey especially for realizing its Pan-Turkism goals. During the period under discussion, for the Young Turks to unite with the Muslims of the Caucasus was an important issue planned back at the beginning of the war. The main goal of the Young Turks was to conquer Baku, which would be a key to occupying other Turkic lands.

The British troops captured Baghdad and compelled Turks to concede Mesopotamia in early March, 1917. Moreover, the Russian influence in the territory of Iran was replaced by that of the English. In such circumstances, the defeat of the Turkish side was visible but even in this case the Turks would not give up the idea of conquering Baku. Germany also had ambitions towards this city. Enver Pasha sent his brother Nuri to Azerbaijan to achieve that purpose, and his task was to create armed forces from the local Muslims. Nuri Bey arrived in Gandzak with his headquarters on May 25, 1918. The government and people of Azerbaijan met Nuri Bey and the Turkish forces with great enthusiasm in Gandzak<sup>11</sup>. On June 4, 1918, an agreement of peace and friendship was signed between Turkey and Azerbaijan<sup>12</sup>. Once local Azerbaijani irregular units had been

<sup>10</sup> Հարությունյան Հ., op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Չարևանդ, Միացյալ անկախ Թուրանիա, Ե., 1993, էջ 104:

<sup>12</sup> Балаев А. Азербайджанское национально-демократическое движение: 1917–1920 гг., Баку, 1990, с. 30.

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formed, Nuri Bey was promoted to the rank of Pasha and was named the as the commander of the new “Army of Islam”. Additionally, Enver Pasha gave his uncle, Halil Pasha, the command of the Eastern Army unit. At the request of Nuri Pasha, the Army of Islam was strengthened by the transfer of the 5th Turkish Caucasian division<sup>13</sup>. The Turkish forces moved to Baku headed by Nuri Pasha who proclaimed himself the surrogate of sultan and started the attack on June 28, 1918<sup>14</sup>. According to Enver Pasha, the Turks would conquer Transcaucasia, Northern Iran then the Trans-Caspian regions and Central Asia. The Turkish-Azerbaijani forces entered Baku on September 15, 1918. Not unexpectedly, in October, 1918 Enver ordered the Ottoman military commander in Baku Nuri Pasha to clean Azerbaijan from Russians and Armenians, in order to ensure the continuity of the Turkish-Turkic lands<sup>15</sup>.

The conquest of Baku was a serious danger for Artsakh. In such conditions the Inter-Party Bureau was self-dissolved on July 16, 1918. As a replacement for Inter-Party Bureau “Karabakh's Armenian People Temporary Government” was formed (“Council of Commissars”) the head of Karabakh's Armenian Revolutionary Federation Hayrapet Musayelyan was elected as its chairman. The Council of Commissars established local bodies, and its representatives were working on convening the first congress of the Artsakh Armenians. These processes were accelerated when the Musavat government of Azerbaijan and Nuri Pasha planned quickly to organize the union of Artsakh with Azerbaijan. The Artsakh Armenians decided to meet this challenge by establishing a real and complete government. The first congress of the Artsakh Armenians was convened in the hall of diocesan school of Sushu on July 22, 1918 and which continued until July 28<sup>16</sup>. This congress was an exceptional phenomenon in the life of the Artsakh Armenians. First of all Artsakh was declared a separate administrative-political unit. The National Council was elected and on the coalition principle the new government was formed. The latter was named “People's Government of Karabakh”. The government consisted of seven people that represented nearly all

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<sup>13</sup> Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi Kafkas Cephesi 3 ncü Ordu Harekati, Ankara, 1993, Cilt II, s. 555–556.

<sup>14</sup> **Ղարիբյան Ա.**, Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի հիմնախնդիրը 1918–1920 թթ. և Մեծ Բրիտանիան, Ե., 2012, էջ 26:

<sup>15</sup> **Landau J.M.**, Pan-Turkism in Turkey: a Study of Irredentism, London, 1981, p. 54.

<sup>16</sup> **Ուլուբաբյան Բ.**, Արցախյան գոյապայքարը, Ե., 1994, p. 24.

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political views of Karabakh<sup>17</sup>. The “People’s Government of Karabakh” was the highest governing body in Artsakh and its jurisdiction was spreading on the whole province. The next important event was the adoption of the declaration of “People’s Government of Karabakh” on July 24, and there the main issues of the new state power<sup>18</sup> were mentioned. The organizing process of “People’s Government of Artsakh” was completed by the adoption of this declaration. In fact, the long lasting and difficult process of creating the Armenian independent authority of Artsakh was ended by this event. The Artsakh Armenians confirmed their independence and the aspiration to have a state. In essence, the Artsakh Armenians were in this way answering the Turkish-Azerbaijani Pan-Turkism programs.

On the other hand, the importance of Artsakh was reflected in the fact that Nuri Pasha’s troops moved to Artsakh after seizing Baku. The conquest of this region would give an opportunity to the Turks to finally unite with Azerbaijan. On the initiative of the Turks, the Azerbaijani side presented an ultimatum to the Artsakh Armenians and demanded that they make a decision to join Azerbaijan<sup>19</sup>. The Turks occupied a series of territories, in particular Askeran with surrounding villages and approached Shushi. The city was occupied on September 25, when the Turks entered Shushi and were based in the Tatar part of city<sup>20</sup>. At the same time it was already obvious that the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I. It adopted its defeat and left the war by the armistice of Mudros which was signed on October 30, 1918. Turkey was also obliged to remove its troops from the territory of Azerbaijan<sup>21</sup>. In this period the troops of Allies approached Constantinople and England demanded Turkey’s capitulation. In such conditions from Constantinople a directive to remove the Turkish troops from Karabakh<sup>22</sup> was received. However, the Turkish army did not hasten to leave Transcaucasia.

<sup>17</sup> Հարությունյան Հ., *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> Нагорный Карабах в 1918–1923 гг. Сборник документов и материалов, Е., 1992, с. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Барсегов Ю. Нагорный Карабах в международном праве и мировой политике. Комментарии к документам, т. II, М., 2009, с. 71.

<sup>20</sup> Ղարիբյան Ա., *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>21</sup> Sinan Ateş, Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Kafkasya, 21. Yüzyılda Eğitim ve Toplum, Cilt 2, Sayı 5, Yaz 2013, s. 175.

<sup>22</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 200, ց. 1, գ. 57, թ. 215:

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On the other hand the Kemalists also continued the Pan-Turkism program of the Young Turks and they tried in every way to ensure the unity between Turkey and Azerbaijan. It wasn't accidental that departing from Transcaucasia, the Turkish army left great reserves of weapons to the Azerbaijanis, as well as high-ranking officers and commanders (the most famous were Nuri Pasha, Halil Pasha and Kyazim Bey) for the formation of the Azerbaijani combative army<sup>23</sup>. The leader of the Kemal Movement Mustafa Kemal was trying hard to finally solve not only the problem of Artsakh but also that of the Republic of Armenia. M. Kemal wrote to the Turkish politician Ali Fuat Cebesoy, “to start a successful war with the Armenians for the purpose of uniting Turkey and Azerbaijan”<sup>24</sup>. The Kemalists began a war against the Republic of Armenia at the end of September, 1920<sup>25</sup>.

Until the Turkish-Armenian war Soviet Russia began the process of establishing its authority in Transcaucasia. The sovietization of Transcaucasia started from Azerbaijan. The 11th Red Army entered Baku on April 28 and took the power almost without resistance. The government of Musavat collapsed and the establishment of Soviet regime in Azerbaijan<sup>26</sup> was announced. This fact was used to include Artsakh in the territory of Azerbaijan. It should be noted that the troops of the Republic of Armenia headed by Dro entered Artsakh on April 14, 1920. The meeting of the representatives of the Armenian population of Dizak and Varanda was held in the village of Nerqin Taghavard on April 18, 1920. During the meeting it was decided to form a temporary government and Dro was elected as the general commander of the army. The first session of the Government was convened on April 23, 1920 and it was decided to insist on the decision to recognize Artsakh as an inseparable part of Armenia<sup>27</sup>. The units of the 11<sup>th</sup> Red Army entered Shushi on May 12, 1920. Negotiations began between the member of military council of the Caucasian front S. Ter-Gabrielyan and Dro on May 19 in the village of Aknaghbyur. Dro agreed to leave Artsakh with troops on May 25.

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<sup>23</sup> **Ուրտաթյան Բ.**, Արցախյան գոյապայքարը, էջ 35:

<sup>24</sup> **Киракосян Дж.** Младотурки перед судом истории, Е., 1986, с. 334.

<sup>25</sup> **Սաֆրաստյան Ռ.**, Թուրք-հայկական պատերազմի շրջանի թուրքական վավերագրեր (1920 թ. նոյեմբեր), Մերձավոր և Միջին Արևելքի երկրներ ու ժողովուրդներ, հ. XXV, Ե., 2006, էջ 412–442:

<sup>26</sup> **Манасян А.С.** Карабахский конфликт. Ракурсы правового подхода, Е., 1998, с. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Карабахский вопрос. Истоки и сущность в документах и фактах, Степанакерт, 1989, с. 34.

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The 10th conference of the Artsakh Armenians took place on May 26, 1920 in Taghavard village of Artsakh and the province was declared Soviet<sup>28</sup>. Headed by Saqo Hambaryan a revolutionary Committee was established.

In essence, the sovietization of Artsakh meant that the Turkish-Azerbaijani Pan-Turkism programs had failed. On the other hand, it would be naive to think that the sides gave up those programs. The future events testified to this. Soviet Azerbaijan adopted the policy of Musavat towards Artsakh and had a purpose of first occupying Artsakh then Zangezur. The consistent policy of Soviet Azerbaijan's government was undoubtedly the visible result of the Soviet-Kemalist agreement<sup>29</sup>.

Conclusion: The Turks had an opportunity to establish a contact with Azerbaijanis as a result of the events which happened in Transcaucasia in 1917–1918. The Azerbaijani leadership shared the Pan-Turkism ideas, so making a point of cooperating with Turkey. Artsakh had a great importance for the Turkish-Azerbaijani Pan-Turkism programs, because this region was a barrier for the unity of Turkey and Azerbaijan. That was the reason why in this period the Turks and Azerbaijanis tried to annex Artsakh to Azerbaijan. The twofold answer of the Artsakh Armenians to the Pan-Turkism programs had two main aspects: the first they laid the foundations of the statehood in Artsakh and the second they started to organize their self-defense. On the other hand, the failure of Pan-Turkism programs was connected with the sovietization of this region and in such conditions Turkey couldn't establish any kind of relations with the Turkic peoples. However, in our opinion, the foundation of the state of Azerbaijan and the adoption of this fact by other regional powers were the success of the Turkish-Azerbaijani cooperation. Besides, subsequently the issues of Artsakh and Nakhichevan were solved in favor of Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, we think that in this period the Artsakh Armenians solved their problems because predicted the future path of their existence which was to create a statehood and to confide to it.

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<sup>28</sup> **Дадаян С.** Факты и вымыслы политической истории Нагорного Карабаха (1918–1923), Степанакерт, 2016, с. 112.

<sup>29</sup> **Ղարիբյան Ա.**, op. cit., p. 153.



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## ԹՈՒՐԲ-ԱԴՐԲԵՋԱՆԱԿԱՆ ՊԱՆԹՅՈՒՐԿԱԿԱՆ ԾՐԱԳՐԵՐԸ ԵՎ ԱՐՑԱԽԸ 1917–1920 ԹԹ.

ՄԻՆԱՍՅԱՆ Ն.

### Ամփոփում

Երիտթուրքերն Առաջին համաշխարհային պատերազմ մտան պանթյուրքիզմի ծրագրերով: Նրանց նպատակն էր միավորել թյուրքական բոլոր ժողովուրդներին և ստեղծել Մեծ Թուրան պետությունը: Մյուս կողմից, Այսրկովկասում իրավիճակը փոխվեց 1917 թ. հոկտեմբերին՝ Ռուսաստանում տեղի ունեցած հեղափոխության հետևանքով: Նման պայմաններում թուրքերը հնարավորություն ստացան համագործակցել ադրբեջանցիների հետ և միասին փորձեցին կյանքի կոչել համաթյուրքական ծրագրերը: Թուրքիան ու Ադրբեջանը ձգտում էին միավորվել, իսկ Արցախը հիմնական պատնեշն էր, ուստի նրանց համագործակցությունն ուղղվեց այդ տարածաշրջանի դեմ:

Արցախահայությունը համաթյուրքական ծրագրերին պատասխանեց երկու հիմնական գործողությամբ՝ Արցախում պետականության հիմքերը դնելով և ձեռնամուխ լինելով ինքնապաշտպանության կազմակերպմանը: Հետագայում համաթյուրքական ծրագրերի չիրականանալը կապվեց տարածաշրջանի խորհրդայնացման հետ, որի պայմաններում Թուրքիան չկարողացավ որևէ բնույթի հարաբերություններ հաստատել թյուրքական ժողովուրդների հետ: Այս փուլում արցախահայությունը լուծեց իր առջև դրված խնդիրները՝ կանխորոշելով իր գոյության ապագա ուղին, այն է՝ ստեղծել պետականություն և ապավինել դրան:

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МИНАСЯН Н.

### Резюме

Младотурки вступили в Первую мировую войну, преследуя пантюркистские планы. Целью младотурок было объединение всех тюркских на-

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родов и создание государства Великий Туран. В связи с революцией, произошедшей в России в октябре 1917 г., ситуация в Закавказье изменилась. В этих условиях турки получили возможность сотрудничать с азербайджанцами и совместными силами пытались реализовать пантюркистские планы. Турция и Азербайджан стремились к объединению, а Арцах был главным препятствием на этом пути, поэтому их сотрудничество было направлено против Арцаха, который в ответ на это приступил к организации самообороны.

Помимо этого неудача пантюркистских программ в будущем была связана с советизацией региона, в котором Турция не могла установить каких-либо отношений с тюркскими народами. На этом этапе армяне Арцаха решили поставленные перед ними задачи, предопределив свое будущее, а именно – создание государственности.