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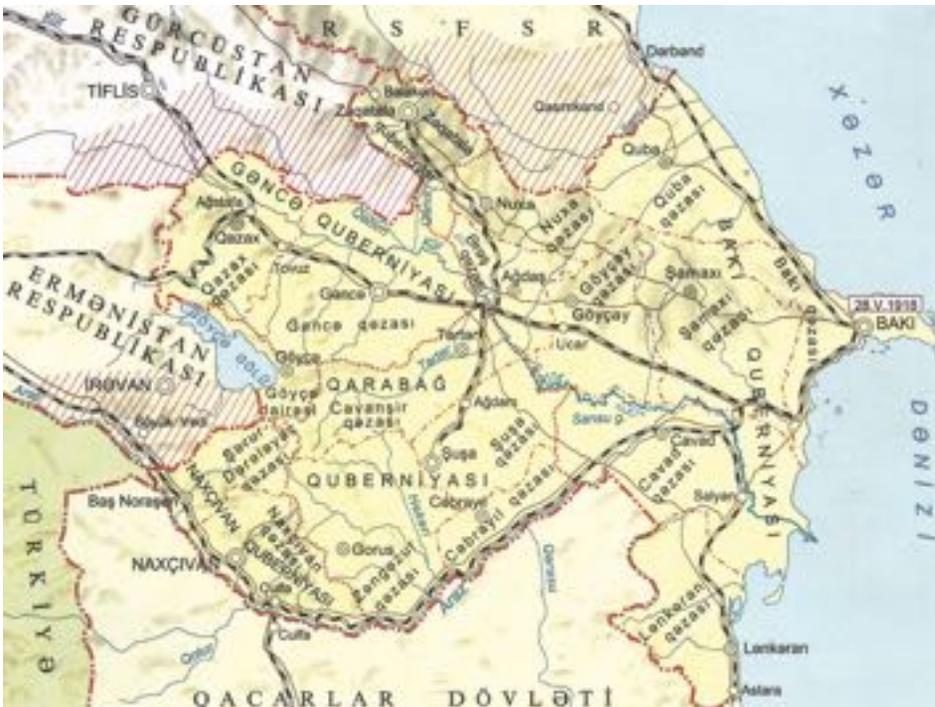
DETERMINATION OF BORDERS BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA (1918-1930)

After the Sovietization of the South Caucasus, in the process of unification of the republics within the framework of the Transcaucasian Federation, routine work began to bring their borders in line with the tasks of solving economic problems. On 22 August 1922, the Emergency Commission of the Azer-

baijan SSR, the Armenian SSR and the Georgian SSR received an order signed by the chairman of the Transcaucasian Extraordinary Commission to eliminate border checkpoints, security and control posts within 24 hours from receipt of the order. According to the order, the borders with Turkey and Persia were to be considered state borders from then on

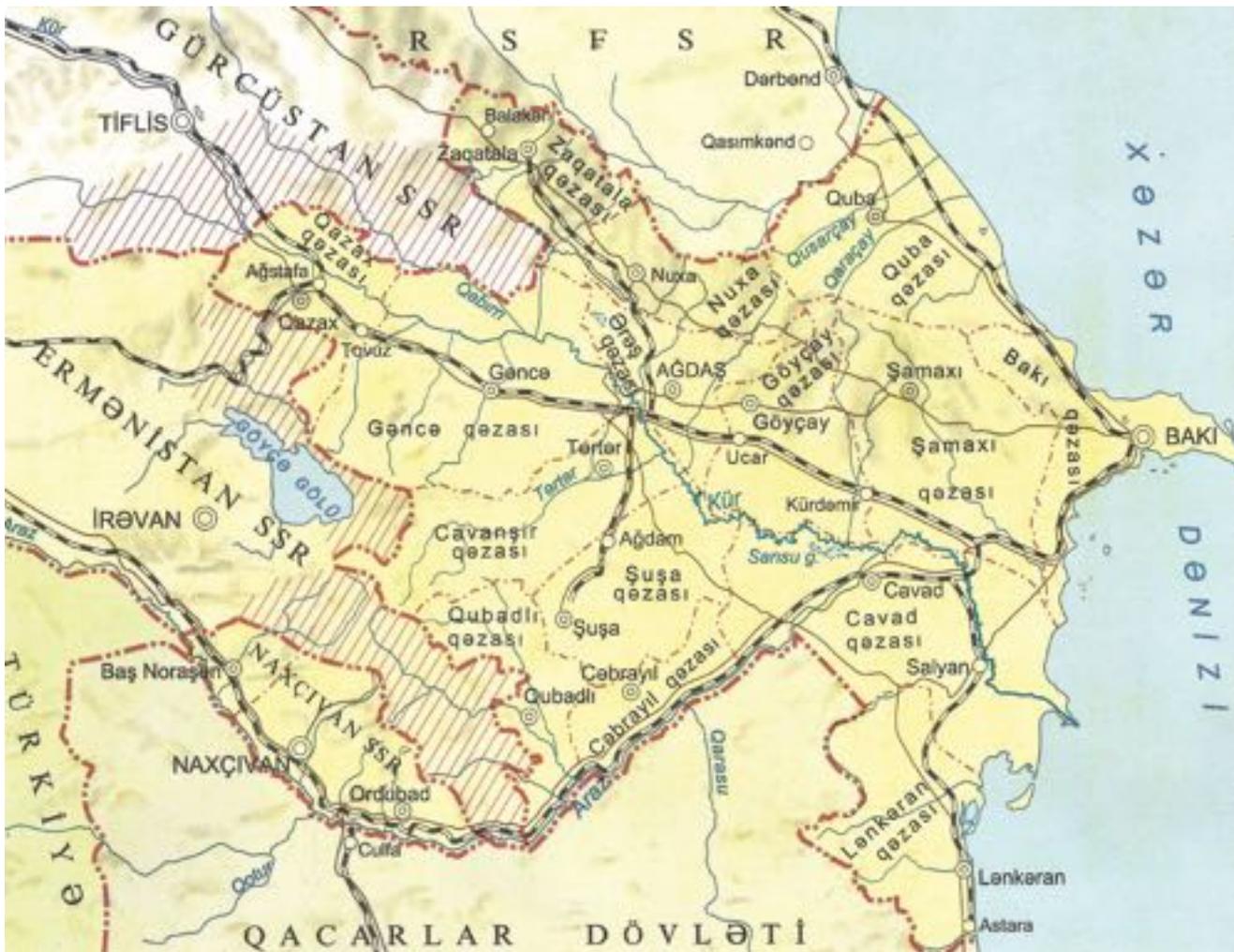
(1). The borders between the three republics of the South Caucasus became administrative boundaries.

The note issued prepared by the People's Commissariat of Agriculture dated 22 October 1922 provides detailed information about the changes in the boundaries of the Azerbaijan SSR after Sovietization: "The entire territory of the Azerbaijan SSR was 7,989,105 acres (1 acre = 0.0109 km² – author). Of the indicated total area: a) 379,984 acres went to Armenia from Gazakh district; b) 405,000 acres went to Armenia from the former Zangezur district. Thus, the territory of the Azerbaijan SSR currently constitutes 7,283,721 acres" (2).



Administrative map of the Azerbaijan SSR in 1920. It is evident that the territory of Zangezur is part of Azerbaijan

Administrative map of the Azerbaijan SSR in 1924. It is evident that the territory of Zangezur is cut off from the rest of the republic



this region, the forest is very good, but in another region where the Armenians live and where the forest enters Azerbaijan, the forests are quite bad. The commission brought a ready-made draft decision on annexing the best region to Armenia and the bad one to Azerbaijan, thereby creating a scandal for us and for the Armenians, because when the Armenian population was asked whether they want to be joined to Azerbaijan, they answered that they didn't. The same is true of the Turks who do not want to be joined to Armenia. Someone had to create a provocation here, create conditions so that later these nationalities would be at enmity with each other. I think that Armenia and Azerbaijan do not need that. The fact that small pieces of land enter Azerbaijan and Armenia does not mean anything. Let it remain so, but this commission headed by Onanov, whom many comrades describe as a Dashnak – this is my opinion and there is nothing to hide here – had exclusively provoca-

tive goals and wanted to create some kind of scandal between Armenians and Muslims" (6).

Mukhtar Hajiyev also expressed a sharply negative opinion regarding the work of Onanov's commission at the meeting: "Comrade Onanov, who was sent by the Central Executive Committee to Dilijan to settle the dispute, examined 17 villages in the Aksibarin Gorge and said that what wedges into the borders of Armenia must be transferred to Armenia. It looks as though Azerbaijan is an orphan and it is necessary to appoint a guardian over it, which can only be Soviet Armenia. If we give forests to Armenia, these forests will be destroyed and Azerbaijan will be left without water. They proceed from the fact that Armenia has 7 percent and we have 12 percent of the forests, therefore we need to give them to Armenia. They are even saying it would be better to send your Azerbaijani oil to Armenia so that there is oil there too" (7).

Territory of Zangezur severed from Azerbaijan and annexed to Armenia

Speaking at the meeting, commission member M. Bagirov submitted a document that visually demonstrated the attitude of the Transcaucasian CEC to the issues of land disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia. This document sealed as “top secret”, dated August 1923, was sent by a clerk in the pastoral department of the land commission, someone named Nazaryants, from the town of Dilijan to a certain Oganezov, who worked as a surveyor of land at the border between the Dilijan region of Armenia and Gazakh district of Azerbaijan. In the document, Nazaryants writes: “On behalf of the head of the pastoral department, I am informing you that, as is seen from the presented documents, you are completely unfamiliar with the agrarian policy of the People’s Land Commissariat of Armenia and are not providing the local population (Armenians



– author) with plows and hayfields. You are trying to save pastures for nomads (Azerbaijanis – author). This suggests that you are not acting in the interests of the working peasantry, which is unacceptable for our poor peasants. It is necessary to consider the economic situation of peasants and sometimes allocate more than it is written in the protocols” (8).

Despite the negative facts revealed by the Azerbaijani side, during a meeting of the Transcaucasian Central Executive Committee on 11 January 1927 chaired by S. Kasyan, agreement was reached between the People’s Commissars of Agriculture of the Armenian SSR A. Yerkizyan and the Azerbaijan SSR D. Bunyadzadeh. It reflected the proposals of the Armenian government on the examination of Shinikh-Ayrum district of Gazakh district in September 1925. This agreement was approved by a decree of the Transcaucasian Central Executive Committee dated 18 February 1929. According to the document, a plot of 4,000 acres in the Shinikh-Ayrum district of Gazakh district of the Azerbaijan SSR was transferred to Dilijan district of the Armenian SSR.

As a “compensation”, the Azerbaijan SSR was receiving the Armenian village of Bashkend (3,485 acres) (9), but on the condition that a strip of summer pastures would be allocated to the village of Bashkend at the expense of the southern part of the Shinikh-Ayrum region, which was supposed to connect this village territorially with Dilijan district Armenian SSR. Thus, the Armenian population of the village of Bashkend was actually provided with a corridor to Armenia (10).

Most of the disputes in other areas between Gazakh district of the Azerbaijan SSR and Dilijan district of the Armenian SSR were also resolved in favor of the Armenian side. For example, the villages of Soflu, Barkhudarlu and Yukhari Askibara of Gazakh district with a total area of 3,104 acres and a population of 577 people, which were previously part of the administrative boundaries of Gazakh district of the Azerbaijan SSR, were cut off from it. A meeting of the local commission of the Transcaucasian Central Executive Committee on 19-20 July 1929 decided that the transfer of all three villages to Dilijan district of the Armenian SSR was considered the only

possible and expedient form of eliminating the enclavement of plots (11). By the same decree, the village of Kheyrumli of Gazakh district, due to the small number of its population (26 households), was attached to the village of Kunen-Kheyrumli (100 households) of Dilijan district of the Armenian SSR (12).

The Chomcha plot with an area of 940 acres, which was disputed by the villages of Kulp of Dilijan district of Armenia and Shikhly II of Gazakh district of Azerbaijan, was transferred to the Armenian village by a resolution of a local land commission dated 27 October 1924 (protocol No. 19).

The Adji plot with an area of 1,002 acres, which was disputed by the villages of Barani of Dilijan district of Armenia and Koymakhli of Gazakh district of the AzSSR, was divided by a decision of the land commission of 31 October 1924. Its northeastern part with an area of 612 acres was transferred to the village of Koymakhli, while the southwestern part of 390 acres to the village of Barani (13).

The area of Bagmanchala with an area of about 300 acres, contested by the village of Dovekh of Dilijan district and the village of Kamarli in Gazakh district, was initially left under the jurisdiction of the village of Kamarli by a decision of the commission dated 28 September 1923, but in 1925 the Central Executive Committee adopted a resolution on the division of the area equally between these villages (14).

The Karachal plot of 700 acres, contested by the villages of Kotkand in Dilijan district and Dashsalakhli in Gazakh district, was transferred to the Armenian village by a decision of the land commission in 1926. Similarly, by a decision of the local commission dated 8 November 1924, a plot of 69 acres, which was contested by villages of Lalakend of Dilijan district and Chakhmali of Gazakh district, was transferred to the Armenian side.

The Gunesh plot with an area of 753 acres, disputed between the villages of Norashen, Moseskend and Lower Kizil Bulag of Dilijan district and Hajali and Ali-bayli of Gazakh district, was divided in two by the land commission in 1925 – 186.5 acres went to Azerbaijan, while the remaining plot of 566, 5 acres was transferred to Armenia. This decision was approved by a Decree of the Transcaucasian Central Executive Committee of 18 February 1929 (15).

In general, as is evident from the 1928 report of the land commission on the border disputes between Azerbaijan and neighboring republics, 75,904 acres of land suitable for use and 79,208 acres of unsuitable land

was transferred to the Armenian SSR from Azerbaijan's Gazakh district alone. Thus, the population of Gazakh district lost 50 percent of its pastures (16).

The annexation of the western part of Zangezur to Armenia in July 1921 and administrative changes in Karabakh in order to determine the boundaries of the Armenian autonomy aggravated the situation on the drawing of borders between the Zangezur district of the Armenian SSR and several districts of the Azerbaijan SSR. As can be seen from archive materials, these territorial disputes were not resolved in favor of Azerbaijan. According to a report by a certain Rogozin, who was the head of the land department of Shusha district, dated 26 July 1923, when resolving the border dispute between the nomads of the Zangezur and Shusha districts, 20 summer quarters were transferred to the Armenian side in order to avoid an armed skirmish. The report notes: "This case was more than extraordinary, because due to the failure to settle the border issue, dark elements started to fish in troubled waters and incite the population, thereby inciting enmity between Armenians and Muslims" (17).

A meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party (Bolshevik) on 25 December 1924 heard a report by M. Kasumov on the border disputes between Gubadli district of Azerbaijan and Zangezur district of Armenia. The speaker cited complaints from residents of 13 Muslim villages – Shahverdilyar, Aghbulag, Shirnukh, Shamsus, Kurtkalakh, Farijan, Almalukh, Zar, Takhyan, Goyan, Hajigurbanli, Firdunbayli, Aktbu, which the drawing of a new border by the land commission, found themselves in Zangezur district of the Armenian SSR. The Presidium made the decision to turn down the peasants' and implement the resolution of the land commission (18).

The summer pastures of Alagel or Alagellar on the border of Gubadli district with Daralagez and Novo-Bayazet districts of Armenia, covering an area of about 12,000 acres, were also claimed by the Armenian side, which raised the issue in 1923 of including them in Novo-Bayazet district. The CEC of the Armenian SSR, in a telegram to the chairman of the Azerbaijan CEC dated 23 June 1926, stated that back in 1921 the pasture plot of Alagellar with an area of 13,170 acres was provided to Daralagez district. In response, on 5 July 1926, the Presidium of the Azerbaijan CEC requested that the Armenian CEC specify the date of the decision of the Transcaucasian CEC on the transfer of Alagellar pastures to Daralagez district. The request was repeated

by the secretariat of the Azerbaijan CEC on 25 December 1926, but there was no answer from the Armenian CEC. On the other hand, on 9 October 1926, the chairman of the land commission of the Transcaucasian CEC sent an enquiry to the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the Azerbaijan SSR asking which rural communities were using the Alagel pastures. In response, the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the Azerbaijan SSR, which did not communicate directly with the land commission of the Transcaucasian CEC, telegraphed the information requested by the land commission to the Azerbaijan Central Executive Committee on 18 December 1926. According to the telegram, in 1925-1926 and earlier, the Alagel site was used by the nomads of Kabirli village of Aghdam district of the Azerbaijan SSR (19). By a decree of the Central Executive Committee of 18 February 1929, the decision was made to leave the entire area of summer pastures Alagellar to Gubadli district of Azerbaijan (20). In addition, disputes arose between the same provinces over nine plots of Dig district with a total area of 1062.25 acres. By a unanimous decision of the Small Presidium of the Transcaucasian CEC dated 7 November 1928, 361.3 acres of the disputed territory were transferred to the Armenian side and 703.96 acres went to Azerbaijan (21).

On 18 February 1929, the Transcaucasian Central Executive Committee adopted a resolution on the transfer of the villages of Nuvedi, Eynadzor and Tugut of Jabrayil district of the AzSSR to the administrative supervision of Meghri district of the Armenian SSR. The same decree rejected the claims of Zangezour district of Armenia to 21 Azerbaijani villages of Jabrayil district (22).

Contrary to the terms of the Treaty of Kars, according to which the Armenian SSR officially recognized the autonomy and borders of Nakhchivan as part of the Azerbaijan SSR, a telegram of the People's Commissariat of the Azerbaijan SSR dated 29 December 1923 raised the issue of borders between Armenia and the Nakhchivan region with the Council of People's Commissars of the Azerbaijan SSR. The telegram stated that the villages of Gurdgulag, Horadiz, Khachik, Agbin, Agkhach, Almali, Dagalmali, Itgiran, Sultanbey and the pastures adjacent to them up to the watershed ridge and the village of Gorchevan of the Nakhchivan SSR "are currently occupied by Armenia". In 1926, the Transcaucasian Central Executive Committee asked the Azerbaijan CEC: "Were the administrative and economic borders between the Republic of Armenia and Nakhchivan established earlier and by what agreement?" In response, the Azerbaijan

CEC on 4 December 1926 and the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the Azerbaijan SSR on 29 December 1926 reported that the borders between these entities had been established by the Treaty of Kars. At a meeting on 12 March 1927, the Azerbaijan CEC decided to "request orders from the Transcaucasian CEC to establish a firm border between the Armenian SSR and the Nakhchivan SSR in accordance with paragraph 5 and Annex III of the agreement between the Azerbaijan SSR, the Armenian SSRA and Turkey" (23). However, by a decree of the Transcaucasian Executive Committee of 18 February 1929, without any grounds and the consent of Turkey as a guarantor of the status of Nakhchivan, its borders were changed and the said nine villages, as well as the village of Gorchevan and some lands of the village of Kilid in Ordubad district were transferred to the Armenian SSR (24). As a result, as of 1 January 1933, the total area of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was reduced to 5329.6 km² (25). All this was a gross violation of the terms of the Moscow and Kars treaties on the status and borders of the Nakhchivan Autonomous SSR.

Thus, the determination of borders between Soviet Azerbaijan and Armenia in the period after the formation of the Transcaucasian Federation was the result of a controversial combination of ethnic and economic criteria in the absence of a well-thought-out plan of the territory. As a result, from the very beginning, due to the clash of local group interests and economic priorities, constant adjustments were made to the process. In general, during the period under review, the main objective of the authorities was to bring the borders between republics (albeit much to the detriment of the Azerbaijan SSR – author) into line with the new priorities for the development of the region's economic infrastructure. 🌟

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