

The European Azerbaijan Society

The ARMENIAN QUESTION IN THE CAUCASUS

Russian Archive
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and Publications

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FOREWORD

Rare documents found by The European Azerbaijan Society (TEAS) in the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA) and The Russian State Military History Archive (RGVIA), along with several other key documents published here, are of crucial importance to objective study of historical events in the Caucasus region. As part of an extensive research project in Caucasian studies, TEAS now presents *The Armenian question in the Caucasus, Russian Archive Documents and Publications*, a landmark study in this field.

Until now, mention has only been made of Turkey and Russia in examinations of geographical aspects of the so-called *Armenian question*. However, the 'forgotten region' of the Caucasus must be included if geographical research is to continue. Researchers have not treated the Caucasus, including the Southern Caucasus, as a separate region because it was part of the Russian Empire. But a great deal changes when one takes on the Caucasus, with its specific issues and geo-strategic location. A more complete picture will emerge if the ethnic and religious constituencies of the peoples inhabiting the region are brought into consideration. In reality, the *Armenian question*, created in the Caucasus to subdue the region and keep it submissive, is one consequence of Russian imperial policy. The independent Caucasian states (the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, the Democratic Republic of Georgia and the Armenian Republic) inherited, as it were, this consequence between 1918 and 1921. Isn't the *Armenian question* at the root of the ethno-political conflicts which continue to rock the Caucasus in the present day? In modern times and with foreign support Armenia has, among other actions, occupied 20 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan and created a potential source of conflict in the Javakheti region of Georgia. There is good reason why the issue of Armenia, directly relevant to Azerbaijan, is also growing in scale and importance in the context of escalating tensions between Russia and Georgia.

Thus it is quite natural that the *Armenian question* in the Caucasus should be the subject of discrete study. A comprehensive study within the general context of the *Armenian question* which has been thrust upon the world is not possible without special research into this particular aspect. There should be a special focus here, naturally, on Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. We fully understand why V.F. Mayevskiy, once a vice-consul of the Russian empire in the eastern

regions of the Ottoman state, titled his brochure 'The Armenian-Tatar* Conflict as a Stage in the *Armenian Question*'. It was published during World War I (1915) in the printing house of the Staff of the Caucasus Military District.

Research into the meaning and substance of the *Armenian question* up to the present has not been free, to put it mildly, of tendentiousness and prejudice. As with any field, excessive politicisation of the issue has led to calculated interpretations of the facts. US historian Tadeusz Swietochowski, touching upon the response of the world's press to the Armenian-Muslim conflict of 1905-1906 noted: "In its coverage of these events, the world press usually was sympathetic towards the Armenians" (Swietochowski, T. *Russian Azerbaijan; 1905-1920: The Shaping of a National Identity in a Muslim Community*). However, everyone will agree that sympathies founded on a subjective and biased interpretation of the facts, especially in such a delicate matter as international relations, will lead inevitably to false conclusions. Indeed, unfounded conclusions, based on subjective sympathies alone, in favour of one of the peoples or states involved in a conflict will inevitably lead to undesirable resentment by the other side.

The time has come for urgent, in-depth study of the *Armenian question* in the Caucasus. For this one must turn again to history's witnesses, examine more deeply the events and the intentions of those involved. What is history? Is it just the weighty tomes of historians of days gone by when subjectivity rode roughshod over factual content? Our demands are essentially as follows: objectivity, veracity and the production of a range of documents on the subject of study. Only the irrefutable facts in authentic archive documents can meet these demands.

As stated above, the *Armenian question* in the Caucasus originated in the politics of the Russian empire and so it was decided to publish first a collection including documents and publications of the Russian empire.

The collection mainly comprises documents found in the archives of the RGIA and the RGVIA by staff of The European Azerbaijan Society, and which are published for the first time. A large proportion of the documents can, in one way or another, be traced back to the ruling circles of the Russian empire and this allows one to suppose that they reflect the state point of view on this issue.

In order to ensure scientific objectivity, individual documents contained in the files are presented together, thus preserving their context. The documents are printed in keeping with the originals.

Some public documents (a small number) from former, official publications such as the Imperial Decree of 10 November 1724 and the Turkmenchay Peace

*"Azerbaijanis" are meant by "Tatars" here

Treaty of 10 February 1828, among others, are included in the collection in order to clarify matters touched upon in our project.

Due to the large number of documents and materials we found, we have decided to publish them in three volumes.

The first volume, which consists of an Introduction and two sections, brings together documents and materials relating to the years 1724-1903. The Introduction carries a critical review of the contemporary historiography on the issue as well as commentaries on the scientific foundations of the modern view of the *Armenian question*, based on the latest documentary information from the above-mentioned archives. The first section of the volume provides a comprehensive analysis of the documents and publications in the collection and is indexed accordingly. The second section contains 18 individual documents and materials. Eleven of these documents are published in research for the first time; two of them (Nos. 3, 14) are from the RGVIA and nine (Nos. 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18) are from the RGIA.

Although the documents published here relate to events which took place between 1724 and 1903, their chronological framework is much broader: for example, the final document (No. 18) is dated 1911.

The collection comprises:

- archive documents published in context;
- documents published in the original;
- manuscripts which are difficult to read are also printed in computerised version and newspaper materials reproduced in a convenient format;
- documents and materials published chronologically and according to subject.

The collection opens with the decree by Tsar Peter I to the Armenian people dated 10 November 1724 (No 1). This decree was most significant in the subsequent emergence of the *Armenian question*. Four interstate treaties (Nos. 2, 6, 7, 8) may be described as a special set. They clearly show the dynamics of the transformation of the *Armenian question* from covering aspects of Russian-Iranian and Russian-Turkish relations imprinted in the Turkmenchay (No. 2) and the Adrianopole (No. 6) treaties, into a multi-faceted problem within the texts of the Treaty of San Stefano (No. 7) and the Berlin Treaty (No. 8).

Three documents (Nos. 3, 4, 5) deal with the resettlement of Armenians to Karabakh, Yerevan and Nakhchivan following the conclusion of the Turkmenchay Treaty. Another group of documents (Nos. 9, 10, 11) comprises reports from Prince A.M. Dondukov-Korsakov, commander-in-chief in the Caucasus, to Tsar Alexander II. These and subsequent documents (Nos. 12, 13) show the emergence and development of the *Armenian question* in Russia itself.

A report from the secretary of the consulate-general in Erzurum (No. 14) shows the Armenians' intent to complicate relations between Turkey and Russia and their desire to achieve their aims by provoking war between them.

One group of documents deals with the confiscation of the property of the Armenian-Gregorian Church under a law dated 12 June 1903 (No. 15) and the problems in implementing it (Nos. 16, 17, 18).

We hope that this collection will become a key textbook for specialists and all those interested in the problem of The *Armenian question* in the Caucasus. The book reflects our respect for the science of history and international opinion. We present the material assembled to readers' judgement, without any change or intervention on our part.

For those with a critical eye for historical detail, much of Armenia's post-Soviet behaviour seems all-too similar to that of the pre-Soviet period. For those in doubt of this disturbing trend, the editors hope that this unique volume of archive material will serve to expose the real nature of the *Armenian question*, both historically and in the present day.

In conclusion, I am duty bound to express profound gratitude to the management of the RGIA and the RGVIA and to all their staff who lent their assistance and support during the collection of the archive documents published in this work.

Tale Heydarov
Chairman
The European Azerbaijan Society

INTRODUCTION

Let us ask ourselves a banal question: what in fact is the *Armenian question*? This is especially necessary as it has given rise to a great deal of literature on history and politics. A bibliography of this literature¹ was published in Armenia in 1998 and subsequent publications have reverberated around the relevant internet sites. However, there is no scientific and unequivocal response to this question in this literature.

THE ARMENIAN QUESTION: CONTRADICTIONARY VIEWS OF THE HEART OF THE QUESTION AND ITS HISTORY

A book entitled *Historiya armyanskogo naroda [History of the Armenian People]*, written with the involvement of renowned Armenian historians, published by Yerevan University and edited by Professor M.G. Nersisyan, says:

During the talks in San Stefano and Berlin in 1878, the issue of Western Armenia and the situation of its Armenian population began to be called the *Armenian question* - an important issue in the history of modern Armenia that concerned broad masses of the people².

Too free an interpretation of certain concepts may be identified in the quotation, which goes so far as to distort them. The concept of "Western Armenia" is not present in the texts of the treaties of San Stefano or Berlin [Volume 1, Nos. 7, 8].* Having clarified that, let's get to the heart of the matter. We are to understand from the text that:

1) The concept of the *Armenian question* emerged during the San Stefano and Berlin talks. 2) This concept implied "Western Armenia" and the situation of its Armenian population.

Ts.P. Agayan believes that the *Armenian question* has its roots in antiquity and refers to the view of an equally renowned author:

The *Armenian question* was covered extensively in historical literature. Renowned Soviet historian A.G. Leo writes that "it is as ancient as the Armenian people"³.

Thus Leo believes that the *Armenian question* is as old as the Armenian people itself and Agayan is in complete agreement with this idea. The contradiction

¹ *Armyanskiy vopros, genotsid arмян: bibliografiya literatury na russkom yazyke (1877-1997)*, Yerevan, 1998.

² *Istoriya armyanskogo naroda*, Yerevan, 1980, p 218.

*Numbers of documents and materials in Section II

³ Agayan, Ts.P, *Pobeda sovetsskoy vlasti i vozrozhdeniye armyanskogo naroda*, Moscow, 1981, p 11.

here is quite clear when one compares this to the first quotation by M.G. Nersisyan. Thus the statement that the *Armenian question* is so ancient, diverges in essence from the thesis expounded in *Historiya armyanskogo naroda*.

A wide-ranging article entitled *The Armenian Question* by V.A. Gurko-Kryazhin (1887-1931) was published in Volume 1 of the *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya (1926) [Great Soviet Encyclopaedia]*.⁴ He was well acquainted with the issue by dint of his profession, his scientific work and his public activity. V.A. Gurko-Kryazhin wrote the following about the substance of the term *Armenian question*:

The Armenian question, which is part of the so-called Eastern question, should be considered from two points of view: from the foreign policy aspect, it boiled down to the aspirations of the great powers to strengthen Turkey's centrifugal forces and thereby weaken it and facilitate its exploitation. Domestically, the Armenian question was confined to the fight of the Armenians, led by their bourgeoisie, for national self-determination and to attain the political and economic prerequisites that would allow the bourgeoisie to develop freely.⁵

The ideas expressed here were not taken into account when the above-mentioned books by the Armenian authors were published. Gurko-Kryazhin shifted the question to the plane of international relations and spoke of the need to look at it from two angles: from those of foreign policy and domestic policy, bringing the foreign policy aspect to the fore and identifying the Armenians as a tool for strengthening centrifugal forces in the Ottoman Empire.

At the same time, Gurko-Kryazhin touched upon the history of the *Armenian question* and noted that:

The foundations of the Armenian question emerged as far back as the XVIII century when Constantinople's financial aristocracy headed the Armenian nation (*ermeni millet*).⁶

So as not to weary the reader with other extracts from various works, we will limit ourselves to one book published recently in Moscow, in 2005:

Kavkaz i Rossiyskaya Imperiya [The Caucasus and the Russian Empire]. It comments on the Armenian question as follows: "The Armenian question" is a movement of Armenians for the liberation of Armenia from Turkish despotism.⁷

⁴Kleyman G.A. Gurko-Kryazhin // *Sovetskaya istoricheskaya entsiklopediya*, volume 4, Moscow, 1963, p 808.

⁵Gurko-Kryazhin V. 'Armyanskiy vopros', article from *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, 1926 edition, Baku, 1990, p 21.

⁶Ibid.

⁷*Kavkaz i Rossiyskaya Imperiya: proekty, idei, illyuzii i realnost. Nachalo XIX- nachalo XX vekov*. St Petersburg, 2005, p 709.

To be blunt, either the authors of the book simply did not want to delve deeply into the history of the Caucasus and of Russia, or they deliberately distorted the obvious, turning a blind eye to the *Armenian question* in Russia⁸, linking it only to the situation in Ottoman Turkey.

And so, a brief review of the issue, and the excerpts quoted above expose the contradictions in the very concept of the *Armenian question* and its history and dictate the need for a more thorough approach to the topic.

THE ARMENIANS: FROM THE SASSANIDS AND THE EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE TO THEIR RELATIONS WITH IMPERIAL RUSSIA

It is a generally accepted fact that the Armenians are not indigenous to Asia Minor and especially not to the Caucasus. It is said that they came to these regions from Europe, from the Balkans.⁹ The 'Armenian disease' is sometimes cited as an argument to back up this idea. This disorder is widespread amongst peoples whose ancestors inhabited the shores of the Mediterranean, and also amongst Armenians.¹⁰ The Armenians were given their present ethnic name in Asia Minor and, in fact, they call themselves 'hayk'.

The Armenians became vassals of the Roman Empire in the late 60s BC. Christianity began to spread in the eastern province of the Roman Empire from the first century AD. Christians were given the right to profess their religion openly following the edict in 313 by Emperor Constantine. The Armenians officially adopted Christianity at that time. Their church was named the Armenian Gregorian Church after St Gregory. The territory called Armenia was divided in 387 between the Roman and Sassanid empires and the Armenians lost their statehood at the same time. This event was accompanied by acute changes in Armenian life:

- 1) Their church, the mouthpiece for their religious convictions, was politicized.
- 2) Political circles became backward-looking rather than future-oriented and historiography became an instrument for recreating a fictitious 'great' past instead of seeking to understand events that had actually taken place. Running a little ahead, it should be noted that yet another spectre joined this trend later - the political party Dashnaktsutyun, from 1890 [Volume 3, Nos. 7-9].

Plenty has been written about the specific features of the Armenian Gregorian Church. But one episode directly connected to the neighbouring Albanian (Caucasian) Church is worthy of note. It shows that in their ruthless fight against the Albanian Church, the Armenian clergy had recourse not so much to internal church methods as to political intrigue, and often achieved their aims perfidious-

⁸See Chalkhushyan Gr, *Armyanskiy vopros v Rossii*, Second Edition, Rostov-on-Don, 1905.

⁹Numerous works by Armenian, Russian and foreign authors discuss this.

¹⁰*Bolshaya meditsinskaya entsiklopediya*, volume XIX, p 67.

ly. What we mean here is the letter denouncing the pro-Byzantine sympathies of the Catholicos of Albania which Armenian Catholicos Ilya wrote to Caliph Abdulmalik (685-705). As a result, the caliph had the Catholicos of Albania punished.¹¹ The tsarist abolition of the Albanian Church in 1836 and its subordination to the Armenian Gregorian Church was also a result of autocephalous intrigue. And this was at a time when the much stronger churches of Rome and Byzantium were frequently having recourse to similar methods against the Armenian Gregorian Church.

As for Armenian historiography, this is the first time it has been examined in this context. To emphasize how close our intentions are to the spirit of the times, we quote the following excerpt from a work by N. Garsoyan, a contemporary Armenian historian and professor at Columbia University (USA):

Intentionally or not, the picture drawn by Faustus of Byzantium or Moses Khorenatsi reflects their own ideals - a single, united Armenia standing up against the threat from Zoroastrian Persia. They speak of a single kingdom ... They stress the unity of the Armenian Church, even when this leads them to contradictions. They ignore the profound Iranian influence on Armenian society ... What matters to us is only that it [this picture] distorts the reality of the IV century when Armenia was neither one, nor united and was not alien to the Persian world.¹²

This state of affairs, which formed the Armenians' internal moral and aesthetic world, led to conflict with their economic interests. While they were integrated into the real economic situation and enjoyed all its benefits, the Armenians, by dint of their political ambitions, posed a threat to the co-existence of their neighbouring peoples.

The Armenians' desire for political activism with the help of Western European states subsequently led them to consider conducting it with support from Russia.¹³

RUSSIA'S EASTERN POLICY: THE AIMS OF THE ARMENIANS AND THEIR DESIGNATED ROLE

The Armenians are newcomers to the Caucasus.¹⁴ The history of their migration to the Caucasus has several stages. The reign of Peter I (1689-1725) of Russia had a special role in this process.

An Armenian historian who dedicated his work to Armenian-Russian relations

¹¹ *Istoriya Agvan Moiseya Kagankatvatsi*, translated from Armenian, St Petersburg, 1861, p 239.

¹² Garsoyan N.G. 'Armeniya v IV v (K voprosu utochneniya terminov "Armeniya" i "vernost")' // *Vestnik obshchestvennykh nauk*. Yerevan, 1971, No 3, pp 55-56.

¹³ Ezov, G.A. *Snosheniya Petra Velikogo s armyanskim narodom*, documents, St Petersburg, 1898, p XXIV

¹⁴ Tetvadze, Sh, Tetvadze. O. *Armyane v Gruzii (s drevnikh vremen do segodnyashnego dnya)*, Tbilisi, 2008, p 3.

in the eighteenth century acknowledges that Russian-Armenian relations, which had grown deeper by the end of the seventeenth century, entered a new stage during the rule of Tsar Peter I.¹⁵

On the nature of Russian-Armenian relations, renowned Russian historian S.M. Solovev (1821-1879) said that in the seventeenth century the Armenians maintained a purely trade relationship with Russia but another kind of relationship (*political - author*) began from the eighteenth century onwards.¹⁶ Expanding from 1701, Armenian-Russian relations up to Peter I's Caspian campaign of annexation (in 1722, also called the 'Eastern Campaign') were of a political and diplomatic nature. But during preparations for that campaign, and in the course of the campaign itself, they were transformed into action aimed directly against the interests of the region. Peter I used the Armenians as an instrument of his policy of conquest and the Armenians, seizing the opportunities offered by their designated role, strove to obtain the greatest benefit from the military and political potential of the Russian empire. Distorting the true basis of these ties, Armenian historiography presents them as a strengthening of the pro-Russian orientation "of the Armenian national-liberation movement".¹⁷

Peter and his successors adopted a specific political policy towards the Armenians. Prominence was given to: 1) Intervention in the internal affairs of the region's Muslim states; 2) Changing the ethnic composition of the population by resettling Armenians to territories administered by Russia; 3) Keeping these territories under its authority with Armenian support and so forth.

At the founding conference of The World Armenian Congress on 6 October 2003, the president of the Russian Federation, V.V. Putin, said:

In one of his decrees, the great Russian reformist tsar, Peter the Great, wrote, interestingly: "Be as nice to the Armenians as you can and make their lives easier as far as you can in order to encourage them to immigrate more." Only 300 years have gone by. No sooner said than done!¹⁸

Since the road to the heart of the East lay through the Caucasus, it was there that these plans were first implemented. Thus fertile ground was created for the emergence of the *Armenian question*.

¹⁵ Khachatryan, R.G. 'Russkaya istoricheskaya mysl XVIII veka i russkaya orientatsiya armyanskogo osvoboditelnogo dvizheniya' // From *Istoriya vekovoy družby*, Yerevan, 1983, p 44.

¹⁶ Solovev, S.M. *Chteniya i rasskazy po istorii Rossii*, Moscow, 1989, p 717.

¹⁷ See Khachatryan, R.G. 'Russkaya istoricheskaya mysl XVIII veka i russkaya orientatsiya armyanskogo osvoboditelnogo dvizheniya' // From *Istoriya vekovoy družby*, Yerevan, 1983.

¹⁸ www.sarinfo.org

A NEW VIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF THE *ARMENIAN QUESTION*

The conditions for the emergence of the *Armenian question* and the meaning of that expression afford new possibilities for a correct definition of the concept. In other words, the *Armenian question*:

- 1) was an integral component of Russian Empire policy in the Caucasus, a means of subjugating the region and of keeping it submissive;
- 2) was part of the 'Eastern question', a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire;
- 3) represents the sum total of the problems created by the Armenians or through the Armenians against the local population;
- 4) is a system of measures aimed at constraining the destructive activities of the Armenians.

FROM THE HISTORY OF THE *ARMENIAN QUESTION*

The above interpretation affords the opportunity both to study the issues involved and to conduct specific and comprehensive research into them.

The *Armenian question* developed as an integral part of the policy of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus. Both Peter I and Catherine II attached particular importance to this factor in their policy of subjugating the Caucasus, especially the South Caucasus. Tsars Paul I (1796-1801) and Alexander I (1801-1825) assigned a special role to the Armenians in implementing the provisions of their imperial manifestos.¹⁹ The Armenians fulfilled this role successfully and received vast privileges and comprehensive support, reflected politically and legally in the imperial decree of Peter I to the Armenian people dated 10 November 1724, in Article XV of the Turkmenchay Treaty between the Russian Empire and Iran (10 February 1828) and in Article XIII of the Russo-Turkish Peace Treaty of Adrianople. It was on the basis of these documents [Volume 1, Nos. 1, 2, 6] that Armenians from Iran and Turkey were resettled in the Caucasus.

The position of the Armenians in their new locations was also confirmed by domestic legislation. We shall note just one fact: the unofficial political activity carried out in the region by the Armenian Gregorian Church from the fourth century onwards to consolidate its own positions won official support in the imperial statute of 1836 [No 18].

While favourable conditions were created for the Armenians, the exact opposite happened to the local Azerbaijani population; they were harassed and driven out of their homeland. This is confirmed in a series of official documents by A.S. Griboyedov, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Minister of Russia to Iran [Volume 1, No 5].

¹⁹ *Prisoedinenie Vostochnoy Armenii k Rossii*, collection of documents, volume I (1801-1813), edited by Ts.P. Agayan, academician of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR, Yerevan, 1972, pp 44, 60-62.

The articles on Armenian reform in the San Stefano (February 1878) and Berlin treaties (June 1878) [Volume 1, Nos. 6, 7] may be seen as the influence of the Caucasus experiment. Thus the *Armenian question* was 'exported' to the Ottoman Empire from the legal and political point of view.

Having consolidated their position in the Caucasus and having become an instrument for applying pressure on the government of the Ottoman state, the Armenians began to make claims on the Russian government, too. Russia's own *Armenian question* began to emerge in the Russian Empire [Volume 1, Nos. 9, 10, 11]. Its destructive potential again assumed real forms and Armenian activities became more systematic and coordinated with the formation of the Dashnaktsutyun party. Consequently, it expanded geopolitically. As well as its general features, it also acquired specific characteristics for each of the three geopolitical regions (the Caucasus and the Ottoman and Russian empires):

- While the *Armenian question* was a permanent feature in the Caucasus and Ottoman Turkey, it manifested itself in Russia in specific incidents. From the 1880s it would flare up then die down. In his report to Tsar Nicholas II dated 23 September 1916, the viceroy of the Caucasus, Grand Prince Nikolay Nikolayevich, in reviewing the situation at that time, denied the existence of an *Armenian question* at all:

Catholicos of all the Armenians Kevork V visited Tiflis in June this year and stayed there a month. His visit was unusual in nature and was evidently occasioned by the exceptional conditions of the present time because, traditionally, the catholicos very rarely leaves Echmiadzin. Kevork was received with honours ... In conversation, Kevork V voiced complete agreement with me on various matters concerning the Armenians in general and the *Armenian question* in particular. On this issue, I said explicitly that the happiness and prosperity of the Armenians is based, both now and in the future, upon the absence of an *Armenian question* in Russia.²⁰

- While the state itself countered the Armenians' ambitions and claims in the Ottoman Empire and Russia, the peoples of the Caucasus found themselves defenceless. The Azerbaijanis were in an especially difficult situation, because the tsarist government supported the Armenians in the struggle against them. The Armenians virtually launched a war against the Azerbaijanis in 1905-1906 but the tsarist authorities concealed the true essence of the events and presented what was happening inside the empire as "disturbances", "clashes" and "carnage" [Volume 2, Nos. 1-18].

²⁰ *Kavkaz i Rossiyskaya imperiya*, p 552.

THE ARMENIAN QUESTION AND THE MUSLIM QUESTION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Another aspect of the ideology of the *Armenian question* must also be looked at. After the spread of Islam, the Armenians came under the rule of Muslim states. Not only did these states display tolerance towards the Armenian Gregorian Church, but as shown above by the example of the Albanian Church, they even often supported it. In their relations with Christian states, the Armenians always took advantage of belonging to the Christian world and always strove to exploit their dual position. Consequently, they set about consolidating their own positions using the benefits they had been granted in Muslim states and thanks to Christian solidarity.

Russian Empire dominion over the Caucasus, which was another integral feature of the *Armenian question*, was undoubtedly a factor in Armenian consolidation in the region. Russia used every means possible to reinforce Christianity in the region, including by strengthening Armenian Gregorian monophysitism. Attacks on the region's Muslims were a major element of this policy.²¹ Let us draw attention to some of the facts: while the statute on the Armenian Gregorian Church was adopted in 1836, the statute on the Board of Muslims of the Transcaucasus was approved only in 1872.²² A comparison of these two statutes clearly shows how lofty were the privileges conferred upon Armenian Gregorians, while even the most customary rights of Muslims were restricted. We will give another typical example: the rights of Muslims were restricted by the municipal codes of 1870 and 1892 and also by the Law on Elections to the State Duma [Volume 1, No. 13]. In the Russian Empire, Muslims were not drafted into the army, unlike Christians, but were obliged to pay a special tax instead. In Azerbaijan, the rights accorded the top Muslim clergy were not equal to those of the Russian religious elite, and so forth. All these factors were objective obstacles to the progress of the Muslims of Russia, especially of the Muslims of the Caucasus, where the *Armenian question* prevailed, thereby conferring upon the Armenians additional advantages.

ON A RESOLUTION OF THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

If there is a problem it must be resolved and there are ways to do so. The *Armenian question* is naturally no exception. However, the history of this issue explains attitudes towards a resolution. Two kinds of attitude emerge here: those claiming to want a resolution, that is, the Armenians; and Azerbaijan and Turkey,

²¹ See *Imperatorskaya Rossiya i Musulmanskij mir*, a collection of articles compiled by D.Yu. Arapov, Moscow, 2006, et al, for some aspects of Russia's relations with the Islamic world.

²² State Historical Archive of the Republic of Azerbaijan, F 290, list 26, file 1.

which run up against the *Armenian question*. There is a difference in these options for resolution. Armenian historian Ts. Agayan, mentioned earlier, wrote:

The fight for the establishment of Soviet rule was closely related to the resolution of the so-called *Armenian question*. History absolutely clearly identified two approaches to the resolution of this issue: the bourgeois-nationalist (Dashnak) way, which not only failed to resolve the *Armenian question* but complicated it still further; and the proletarian-international (communist) way, which resulted in the liberation and revival of the Armenian people.²³

Formulating the question in this way essentially reflects a dual approach. The first is that the *Armenian question* was resolved with the establishment of Soviet rule. The second is that this way of resolving the problem was eliminated by the end of Soviet rule, which left the "bourgeois-nationalist" (Dashnaktsutyun) option on the agenda. In fact, for the Armenians the latter option has been relevant at all historical stages.

Like the Armenians, the pro-Armenian forces do not want to lose the advantage they gained from exploiting the *Armenian question* and so they promote it. However, Azerbaijan and Turkey, have acted from positions upholding territorial integrity, national security and other principles of justice, both in the historical and more recent past, and they adhere to these same policies today.

The official position of the Republic of Azerbaijan in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an example:

- This conflict can be resolved only on the basis of the norms of international law and the execution of four resolutions of the UN Security Council (822, 853, 874 and 884).

- The occupying forces should be withdrawn from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

- Azerbaijani citizens - refugees and displaced persons - should be returned to all the occupied territories, including Nagorno-Karabakh, following which its status should be determined.

- The status of Nagorno-Karabakh can be determined only within the framework of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

- Nagorno-Karabakh may be granted the highest degree of autonomy existing in world practice, and so on.²⁴

²³ Agayan, Ts. P. *Pobeda sovetskoy vlasti i vozrozhdenie armyanskogo naroda*, p 11.

²⁴ The newspaper *Azerbaijan* (in Azerbaijani), 15 April 2010.

КАРТА КАВКАЗСКАГО КРАЯ

Масштаб



ИЗДАНИЕ

Картографическаго заведения А. ИЛЬИНА



I PART
COMMENTARY ON
DOCUMENTS AND MATERIALS

**PETER I'S IMPERIAL DECREE TO THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE,
10 NOVEMBER 1724**

*Ezov G. Snosheniya Petr Velikogo
s armyanskim narodom, St Petersburg, 1898*

After occupying Caspian littoral regions (1722-1723), Russia did not have enough military forces or support from the local population to gain a decisive foothold there.

In this situation, all attention was focused on the Armenians. S.M. Solovev wrote that Tsar Peter I regarded the strengthening of the Christian population and reduction of the number of Muslims as the best way to improve Russia's positions in the territories it had seized. It was the Armenians that the tsar had in mind for this.¹ Peter I emphasized this in May 1724 in his special instruction to Major-General Matyushkin, who had previously occupied Baku.²

Having strengthened its positions through a series of treaties (the Treaty of St Petersburg of 1723 between Russia and the Safavids, which was not recognised by Shah Tahmasp II; the Treaty of Constantinople of 1724 between Russia and Ottoman Turkey)³, Russia began to implement its plans to resettle Armenians to the Caspian littoral regions. Prince A. Rumyantsev was sent to Istanbul to exchange instruments of ratification. In his handwritten instruction to the prince on 24 September 1724, Peter I ordered him to identify on his travels the positions and forces of the Georgians and Armenians.⁴ It is in these circumstances that documents appear indicating that the resettling of Armenians to newly conquered territories, specifically to Caspian littoral lands had been transformed into state policy. Abandoning all diplomatic convention in his rescript to Rumyantsev on the resettlement of the Armenians, Peter openly said that if the Turks raised this issue, they should be told that the Armenians had invited Russia as their co-religionist to protect them and it had not turned down their request for the sake of Christianity, and so on:

Armenian deputies came^{*} to us asking us to protect them from their foes; and if we were not in a position to do so, to allow them to move to our newly-acquired Persian provinces. We told them that we could not help them with troops due to our treaty with the [Sublime] Porte, but we allowed them to settle in our Caspian provinces and sent them our char-

¹ Solovev S.M. *Chteniya i rasskazy po istorii Rossii*, Moscow, 1989, p 717.

² *Ibid*, p 715.

³ *Dogovory Rossii s Vostokom politicheskie i torgovye*. Collected and published by T. Yuzefovich, St Petersburg, 1869, pp 185-189; *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoy imperii*, volume VII, St Petersburg, 1830, document 4531.

⁴ Solovev S.M. *Chteniya i rasskazy po istorii Rossii*, p 736.

*This and subsequent quotations are reproduced in the orthography of the original documents.

ter of reassurance. If the Turks raise this with you, tell them that we ourselves did not appeal to the Armenians, but that they, as our co-religionists, asked us to take them under our protection; for the sake of Christianity, we could not turn down this request from the Armenians as Christians and, as the vizier himself has often said, it is impossible to turn down your co-religionists' request for protection; it is necessary to ensure that the lands belong to those who are named under the agreement, and peoples should not be prevented from moving to this or that side: it will be of greater benefit to the Porte when the Armenians leave, because then it will take over their lands without resistance. Add that if the Porte wants to invite *basurman*⁵ from the provinces we have acquired from Persia, we will not be displeased with that; if a charter of reassurance is demanded, give it.⁶

The package of documents dated 10 November 1724 includes the imperial charter to the Armenian people and the imperial edicts on the resettlement of Armenians to Caspian littoral regions. The imperial charter is about the resettlement of the Armenians to Gilan, Mazandaran and Baku. The imperial edicts are about the creation of favourable conditions for the settlement of Armenians on these lands:

We have placed you together with your households and families under our imperial protection and have ordered the allocation of comfortable areas for your free stay henceforth in our newly acquired Persian provinces lying along the Caspian coast, where you can live calmly and profess your Christian faith by law without hindrance. As we hold the honest Armenian people, for the sake of Christianity, in our special favour, we grant this request of yours most graciously and have sent the necessary decrees from ourselves to the governors of our newly acquired Persian provinces so that they not only receive you in Gilan, Mizendron, Baku and other comfortable places when any of you arrive there, but also allocate comfortable places for you to live and settle in and keep you in good grace and in safety. (p 51)*

Thus, one is led to the conclusion, reinforced by documents, that starting with Peter I, the organization of Armenians' migration to the Caucasus and their use in the region was raised to the level of state policy in the Russian Empire.

⁵ Adherents to a different faith, in this case, Muslims.

⁶ Solovev S.M Chteniya i rasskazy po istorii Rossii, pp 736-737.

* The reference paginations indicate the relevant page in Section II.

**THE RUSSO-PERSIAN TURKMENCHAY TREATY,
10 FEBRUARY 1828**

*Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoy imperii.
Second Collection, volume III, 1828, St Petersburg, 1830*

Tsarist Russia was unable to defend its positions in the Caucasus after the death of Peter I (1725). On the basis of the treaties of Rasht in 1732 and Ganja in 1735, signed with Safavid Iran, Russia in fact left the South Caucasus.¹ Under Catherine II (1762-1796) a policy aimed at consolidating Russia's positions in the Caucasus was stepped up and the attempt to establish an Armenian state on Azerbaijani lands revived. However, the Russo-Turkish wars of 1768-1774 and 1787-1791 forced the shelving of the plan.²

In the early nineteenth century, tsarist Russia took new steps to strengthen its positions in the South Caucasus. One such step was to abolish the Kingdom of Kartli Kakheti, under the manifesto of Tsar Alexander I (1801-1825) of 12 September 1801, and to annexe it to the Russian Empire.³

The tsarist government again assigned a major role to the Armenians in implementing its expansionist plans. The Russian Empire continued to use the Armenians for its own ends in its war against the Azerbaijani khanates in 1803-1813, in the Russo-Iranian wars of 1804-1813 and 1826-1828, and the Russo-Turkish wars of 1806-1812 and 1828-1829. The systematic resettlement of Armenians to the newly-occupied Azerbaijani lands got under way.⁴

Immediately after Russia had strengthened its positions in the region following the 1812 Russo-Turkish Peace Treaty of Bucharest and the 1813 Russo-Iranian Treaty of Gulistan⁵, it gave increased attention to resettling Armenians in the territories it had conquered and made this state policy. This became particularly evident during the talks following the 1826-1828 Russo-Iranian war. According to Armenian historians, Nerses Ashtaraketsi raised the issue of resettling the Armenians and then shortly afterwards prepared the whole project for practical implementation.⁶ However, the work done before the Turkmenchay Treaty by the Russian government, which used the Armenians as a political tool and implemented its plans to settle Armenians on the newly-occupied territories, shows that the

¹ *Dogovory Rossii s Vostokom politicheskie i torgovye*. Collected and published by T. Yuzefovich, St Petersburg, 1869, pp 194-202, pp 202-207.

² *Ibid*, pp 24-41, pp 41-49.

³ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoy imperii*. First Collection, volume 27, 20620.

⁴ *Prisoedinenie Vostochnoy Armenii k Rossii*. Collection of documents, volume 1 (1801-1813), Yerevan, 1972, p 240, et al.

⁵ *Dogovory Rossii s Vostokom*, pp 49-58; *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoy imperii*. First Collection, volume 5, pp 61-645.

⁶ Parsamyan V.A. 'A.S. Griboyedov i pereselenie arмян' // From *Istoriya vekovoy družby*, Yerevan, 1983, pp 136-137.

issue was not so simple. In fact, N. Ashtaraketsi and A.S. Griboyedov were implementers of the official policy and plans of the Russian rulers to settle Armenians in Karabakh, Nakhchivan, Irevan and other historical and ethnic regions of Azerbaijan. The resettling of Armenians was regulated by Article XV of the Turkmenchay Treaty (pp 55-65):

Article XV. His Majesty the Shah, motivated by the good and salutary intention to restore the tranquillity of his state and protect his subjects from anything that might increase even further the trouble inflicted upon them by the war so happily ended by this treaty, grants a complete and full pardon to all inhabitants and officials of the province called Azerbaijan. None of them, regardless of their rank, may be persecuted or insulted for their opinions, deeds and behaviour during the war or in the course of the temporary occupation of the aforesaid province by the Russian troops. Moreover, these officials and inhabitants will be granted a year's grace, beginning from today, to move freely with their families from Persian provinces to Russian ones, to take out or sell their movable property unhindered by the government or local administrations, and the property and things they take out or sell shall be free of any duties or taxes. As far as immovable property is concerned, a period of five years is granted for selling it or for its administration. This pardon does not apply to those who commit a punishable offence or a crime during the aforesaid one-year period. (p 60)

As we can see from the text, the word 'Armenians' is missing here, however, this article provided precisely for the resettlement of Armenians. It is clear from the text that Peter I's intention [No. 1] to resettle the Armenians, which was advanced secretly in interstate relations, was officially reflected for the first time in the Turkmenchay Treaty. Thus, Armenian migration to the Caucasus became mass-scale from then onwards and cramming an alien ethnic group into the thick of a historically shaped traditional environment very soon became a destructive factor in the region.

№ 3
**ON THE RESETTLEMENT OF ARMENIANS FROM (SOUTH)
AZERBAIJAN TO IREVAN AND NAKHCHIVAN REGIONS,
5 APRIL-10 JUNE 1828**

*Russian State Military History Archive (RGVIA)
f 846, roll 16, file 978*

This archive file (pp 66-141) contains the first official documents concerning the organization and implementation of the Armenians' resettlement after the conclusion of the Turkmenchay Treaty in 1828. The first document is a report by Paskevich, adjutant general of the Special Caucasus Corps, to Count Diebitsch, chief of the General Staff, dated 3 March 1828.

Paskevich writes that after Russian troops seized Azerbaijan, Armenians and representatives of other Christian confessions petitioned him, asking to be resettled in the provinces annexed to Russia. He reports that he treated the deputations considerately and sent them home with the recommendation that they should prepare for resettlement. Archbishop Nerses sent Bishop Stefan and Archimandrite Nikolay to Paskevich shortly afterwards to confirm the Armenians' intentions. Nothing further was heard from them, even though Paskevich had issued them with letters instructing all military leaders to lend them the necessary assistance in the matter of resettlement. The commander of the Special Caucasus Corps attributes this to the onset of cold weather or the hope that the whole of (south) Azerbaijan would remain in Russian hands. The withdrawal of Russian troops from the captured territories after the signing of the Turkmenchay Treaty, the more favourable conditions with the approach of spring and Paskevich's desire to acquire new subjects for the empire, led to practical steps being taken. A three-point set of instructions was issued to this end:

1) Col. Lazarev was charged with organising the resettlement. Staff and high-ranking officers, most of whom were of Armenian extraction, or who knew the Armenian language, were attached to him; 2) A special committee was to be set up under the Irevan Temporary Administration for settling the newcomers in Irevan and Nakhchivan regions. Prince Abkhazov, the chief of the military district, was charged with deciding matters relating to Karabakh; 3) The instructions provided for financial support for the process of resettlement; 50,000 silver roubles were allocated for the process from the contributions imposed upon Iran under the Turkmenchay Treaty.

Soon after our troops had seized Azerbaijan, deputies from Armenians and Christians of other confessions living in that region began to petition me to allow them to resettle in provinces belonging to Russia. Realising the benefit we might gain from settling on empty lands hard-working and

obedient people committed to us by religion, I treated these deputies with consideration and, assuring them of the most gracious patronage of His Imperial Majesty, sent them home to prepare for resettlement.

Then, Bishop Stefan and Archimandrite Nikolay were sent by Armenian Archbishop Nerses to confirm the intentions of the Armenians living in Azerbaijan to resettle. I furnished these plenipotentiaries with open instructions to all military leaders to lend them any possible assistance in this matter. However, I have not received any reports from them so far about successes in the task they were charged with, or about what form their actions took.

It is likely that the bitter cold, or perhaps the hope that the whole of Azerbaijan would remain forever in our hands, held back the Christians still living there from resettling. But now that it has become known with the concluding of the peace treaty that our troops must vacate the entire province before long, and that with the approach of spring resettlement no longer entails any special difficulties, a large number of these Christians will begin to carry out their intentions and a start has already been made. However, so as not to deserve reproach for failing to take every measure I could to acquire as citizens for His Majesty several thousand Christian families groaning under the oppression of Muslim rule, and to this end to ensure that their resettlement proceeds in an orderly fashion, to ensure that they are not subjected to any oppression by the Persians in any instance, and to allocate grants both on resettling and on settling to all families in dire need, I have deemed it necessary to issue the following instructions:

- 1) I have appointed Col Lazarev to move the Christians settled in various places in Azerbaijan and to accompany them to the frontiers of the regions belonging to us. Several staff and high-ranking officers largely of Armenian extraction or knowing the language of that people are to assist him.

- 2) In order to lend those being resettled any possible assistance in their subsequent moving to the Irevan and Nakhchivan regions, to select places for settlement in these regions, and finally to assist the settlement of these newcomers, I have instructed the Irevan Temporary Administration to set up a special committee which, under the direct leadership of this Administration, is to oversee all matters and instructions relating to the Christians resettling in the Irevan and Nakhchivan regions. I have charged Prince Abkhazov, chief of the Military District there, directly with the responsibility for resettling to Karabakh only those families who, living nearer to this province than to our two other newly acquired regions of the Araz, insist on being resettled in the Karabakh khanate.

3) For very poor families in need of financial assistance in uprooting and resettling, I have decided that such assistance shall be granted as a loan. I have given instructions to deduct the sum of 50,000 silver roubles for this and, in general, for the expenses incurred for the resettlement of Christians, from the indemnity received from the Persian government under the treaty.
(pp 66, 68, 70)

On Paskevich's instructions, general rules were drawn up for organising the resettlement. In his view, these general rules had shortcomings, especially on the question of land allocation to the incoming settlers. Reports on vacant lands in Irevan and Nakhchivan regions were incomplete. There were more detailed reports on Karabakh, from which it may be concluded that there was more intensive settlement of Armenians in Karabakh. However, great hopes were pinned on Lazarev and on a stepping up of the work of the committee under the Irevan Temporary Administration in the implementation of the project in Irevan and Nakhchivan.

Your Excellency, pray consider the resettlement of Christians proceeding under our general rules on the basis of which I have instructed Col. Lazarev and the Committee which it is proposed to set up under the Irevan Temporary Administration. I do not hide from Your Excellency that I myself find these rules not quite up to the mark, especially with regard to determining the locations to which those being resettled are to move. This is being done, mostly, even though in reply to my preliminary request for information about our vacant lands in Irevan and Nakhchivan regions and also in our Muslim provinces, I have received from Col. Prince Abkhazov alone information in a satisfactory form. The information received from the Irevan Temporary Administration is quite incomplete and unclear and therefore I have been unable to do anything positive in this matter. And, moreover, the short timescale for the resettlement of the remaining Christians brooked no delay. Incidentally, if Col. Lazarev and the Committee being set up under the Irevan Temporary Administration carry out precisely the tasks with which they have been charged, one may hope that this most important matter of the resettlement of Christians from Azerbaijan to our provinces will be accomplished with the desired success. (p 70)

In the next part of the report, particular attention is given to the grounds for the benefits granted to the Armenians.

Your Excellency pray note that by His Imperial Majesty's special leave, I was not to give the aforementioned Christians hope of receiving financial assistance, nor of being granted exemption from taxes and obligations