

## Not an ethnic, but a political conflict

*The following is excerpted from a report written by Armenia's President Levon Ter-Petrossian in May, entitled, "Armenia's Democracy and Soviet Imperialism."*

During the past two weeks the central authorities of the U.S.S.R. have introduced two new approaches to the solution of political problems: deportation of civilians and war on constituent republics. Both approaches were planned in detail and involved the armed forces, KGB, and interior and defense ministries of the U.S.S.R. Both were tested against the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian people. The results were mixed. The civilian population suffered much. It is doubtful that any problems were resolved. On the contrary, the increased tensions and resentments make real solutions more difficult. . . .

Beginning on April 29, subdivisions of the Soviet army and the U.S.S.R. and Azerbaidzhani Interior Ministries, supported by heavy artillery, began shelling Armenian villages in Azerbaidzhan, gradually expanding their military operations to villages inside Armenia on the Azerbaidzhani border. . . .

Last January, the world witnessed another Soviet exercise in the use of military power, when the people of Lithuania dared think of themselves as an independent nation. At the time I was sent to Vilnius on behalf of the U.S.S.R. Federation Council to ascertain the facts and find ways of ending the violence. Pointing out the illegality of the military operations and the reaction of the international community facilitated bringing that carnage to an end.

The central authorities avoided the mistake they made in Lithuania by acting under the cover of a July 1990 presidential order to disarm civilians and by marking Armenian militiamen as "armed bandits." While the policy was implemented under the cover of a legal pretext, the specific operations could not be defended even by the standards set by the Soviet government for states of emergency.

Moreover, the Soviet government has yet to present a convincing case for the use of such brutal force. During August and September of 1990, the newly elected democratic government of Armenia was able to disarm peacefully all self-proclaimed and unruly armed elements in Armenia without the help of Moscow. . . .

Armenia has instituted self-defense units as part of the regular militia that function under the command of the republic's legal authorities. . . . They could not have and did not fight the Soviet army. Yet it is these militiamen that became the targets of Soviet army operations, in some cases becoming the victims of brutal murders in the name of "disarming armed bandits."

If the help of the Soviet army was needed for domestic purposes, it is difficult to understand why the Soviet leadership decided to use the Fourth Army stationed in Azerbaidzhan to institute law and order in Armenia when the Seventh Soviet Army is stationed in Armenia. One must also wonder why doctors and journalists have been taken hostage. . . .

It is apparent that such policy decisions and large-scale military operations could not have been implemented without the knowledge and approval of U.S.S.R. President Mikhail Gorbachov himself. Under no circumstances can President Gorbachov and the central authorities of the U.S.S.R. escape responsibilities for the massive violations of elementary human rights, the Charter of the United Nations, and international treaties and conventions. . . .

The history of state sponsored terrorism and its direct link to the highest authorities of the U.S.S.R. suggest that violence has been serving clearly set political purposes.

Since the victory of popular and democratic forces last August, Armenia's parliament, led by the Armenian National Movement Coalition, has introduced a multi-party political system; implemented a policy of land distribution to peasants; initiated a policy of privatization of commerce and industry; adopted international conventions on human, civil, and political right; and accepted universal standards of freedom of conscience and religion. We are now developing legislation to introduce judicial reform.

. . . We see independence as a practical necessity for the establishment of democratic institutions. History has shown that in the long run democratic institutions are incompatible with imperial interests.

Furthermore, independence is a means to extricate ourselves from the machinations of an imperial context within which national interests are distorted to the point where all neighbors are seen as enemies and Moscow is represented as the only guarantee of national survival.

We are reconsidering our relations with all our neighbors. This includes Turkey, with whom Armenians have had tortuous relations, and Azerbaidzhan, with whom we have negotiated in good faith since coming to power on the basis of the *status quo* created in January 1990. We believe Armenian-Azerbaidzhan discussions could have led to some sort of understanding between the two republics, had other considerations not postponed what is inevitably the only road to peace and security.

Independence means neither political isolation nor economic self-sufficiency. . . . On the contrary, independence will allow us to develop more normal and natural relations

with neighbors and the rest of the world community, on the basis of mutual benefits and negotiations.

During the past months it has become increasingly clear that the only policy goal pursued consistently by the central authorities has been the preservation of the empire. Political and economic reform have become expendable. The U.S.S.R. government, in pursuit of its imperial agenda, has been willing to circumvent and even disregard its own laws and Constitution when it comes to dealing with the preservation of the empire.

The entente between imperial Moscow and authoritarian Azerbaidzhan must be seen in this context. The government of Azerbaidzhan, still under the control of the Communist Party, has become an ally of the anti-reformist forces in Moscow. . . . The Soviet Union has tried to represent the conflict as an ethnic one, as if a continuation of the antagonism between Armenia and Azerbaidzhan. Western governments and media have tended to accept that interpretation at face value. The two republics certainly face major difficulties. Yet the last two weeks are evidence of what I have always

believed. The essence of the question is political rather than ethnic or national.

In the short run, the military operations against Armenia, code-named, "Circle," constituted an attempt to draw Armenia into a war against Azerbaidzhan, and to turn Armenians into martyrs in a futile struggle against the Soviet Army. Any of these reactions would have justified a formal military intervention in Armenia itself. While bearing the full weight of the war machine on the civilian population of our republic, the Soviet government intended the citizens of Armenia to associate national and democratic aspirations with terror and destruction, sovereignty with insecurity and impotence. . . .

It is also obvious, that a show of force against Armenia is bound to bolster the weakening authority and position of Azerbaidzhan's President Ayaz Mutalibov, the head of the only Communist government in the Transcaucasus. Without him, Transcaucasus would drift away from the empire, since Georgia has declared independence already and Armenia, albeit in its own way, has stated its intention to achieve independence. . . .

## Eyewitnesses tell of Red Army genocide spree

Collaborators of EIR News Agency of Wiesbaden, Germany, during a recent trip to the Soviet Union, asked witnesses about the bloody measures of suppression. What follows is a small excerpt of the terrifying documentation they offered, with the help of a translator:

**G.W. Adamirovic, born 1931:** "The Army came with tanks. They hit us—first the Army, then the OMON [Interior Ministry special forces] and finally the Azerbaidzhanis. We asked the Army, why are you doing this? The Army answered, this is an order from Gorbachov. A major said that there were three sacks of money there, which someone could come for. But that was a lie. Our prisoners were mistreated by the Azerbaidzhanis. Women and men were raped. We cannot say much about the number of victims, because we don't know what happened to a lot of people, where they ended up. It all took place under the eyes of the Army. If the Army had not been there, the Azerbaidzhanis could not have done that. Before the Army invaded and only the Azerbaidzhanis came, we were always able to defend ourselves."

**A younger woman:** "On April 30, about 150 tanks encircled our village and cut it off. When they came into the village, they stormed the first house. On the same day they looted everything and killed people. Four people

were killed. The Army did not just kill people. They ran back and forth with tanks over the corpses, so nothing was left of them. Behind the houses, vials of drugs were seen. The Army soldiers had taken drugs, in order to be able to carry out such cruel deeds. Near the house of my brother, two or three vials were found. And the soldiers smeared green paint on their faces, so that no one could identify them. On one tank of the Russian Army was written 'Out with the Armenians, Long Live the Muslims' (Azerbaidzhanis).

"When I realized that the inhabitants of our village were being killed, we fled into the woods. I have a seven-month-old child. We spent three days and three nights in the woods with this child. I went to the commandant and asked, 'Why are you killing our people? You are Russians just as I am.' The commandant repeated that this was happening on Gorbachov's orders. All the houses were plundered and set on fire. I have three small children. We fled from Getashen by night into the woods with the children. Getashen had helped the people who lived in Martunashem, where the first raid occurred. The people came from there to Getashen. With the inhabitants of Getashen they fled by helicopter to Stepanakert. My mother is Volga-German. The Germans were deported. She said that Colonel-General Shatalin, the Supreme Commander of the Interior Ministry troops, was to blame. In the spring he was in Getashen. I gave him a letter because my mother lives somewhere else and I do not know what has become of her. I still have not received an answer. I still don't know whether she is alive or not."