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INTERETHNIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND NATIONAL MINORITY ISSUES IN THE 1920s

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Abstract. *Introduction.* The article analyses interethnic processes and the movement of ethnic groups in the 1920s, primarily using the example of the Armenian and Azerbaijani SSRs, as the most complex interethnic problems in the Transcaucasus were characteristic of these republics. *Methods and materials.* The study is based primarily on documents from the National Archives of Armenia, statistical data, existing literature, and historical methodology in general. *Analysis and results*. In 1918–1920, interethnic clashes and conflicts inherited from the past exacerbated various disasters in the Transcaucasus, leading to the departure of some national minorities, in particular Azerbaijanis, from Armenia, while a large number of Armenians left Azerbaijan. After the Sovietization of Armenia, the resettlement of Armenian refugees and national minorities began. This process took place under extremely difficult conditions. Border issues with Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as the situation of the Armenian population in Nakhchivan, Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenian-populated areas of Azerbaijan and Georgia, caused serious concern. The government of the Armenian SSR took the necessary measures to resettle national minorities in their former places of residence, providing them with land, building materials, housing and loans. According to surveys conducted in 1923 and 1926, the overwhelming majority of national minorities who had left Armenia returned. Certain attention was paid to their economic, political, educational and cultural problems. The number of national minorities increased. However, in general, in the USSR and Soviet Armenia in the 1920s, national issues were resolved mainly within the framework of the policy of "indigenisation" and were subject to the general logic of this policy. In the Soviet republics, including Armenia, there were some positive shifts in cultural and economic development during this period, and an atmosphere of tolerance developed among national minorities. *Author's contribution.* The development of the research concept, editing of the manuscript, and execution of the work plan were carried out by Vanik Virabyan, the principal investigator of the funded project. The collection of data necessary for exploring and interpreting the topic was conducted through a collaborative effort. Both authors share responsibility for all aspects of the work and have approved the final version of the article for publication. *Funding.* The research was supported by the Higher Education and Science Committee of MESCS RA (Research project № 25RG-6A113 "Interethnic developments and movements of ethnic groups of population in the Republic of Armenia (1918–1990s)."

Key words: Azerbaijan, Armenia, interethnic clashes, national minorities, Sovietization, national developments.

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МЕЖЭТНИЧЕСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ АРМЕНИЯ И ПРОБЛЕМЫ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫХ МЕНЬШИНСТВ В 1920-х ГОДАХ

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Аннотация. *Введение.* В статье анализируются межэтнические процессы и перемещения этнических групп в 1920-х гг., прежде всего на примере Армянской и Азербайджанской ССР, поскольку наиболее сложные межэтнические проблемы в Закавказье были характерны именно для этих республик. *Методы и материалы.* Исследование проведено преимущественно на основе документов Национального архива Армении, статистических данных, существующей литературы и исторической методологии в целом. *Анализ и результаты.* В 1918–1920 гг. межэтнические столкновения и конфликты, унаследованные от прошлого, усугубили различные бедствия в Закавказье, что привело к отъезду некоторых национальных меньшинств, в частности азербайджанцев, из Армении, одновременно большое количество армян покинуло Азербайджан. После советизации Армении началось переселение армянских беженцев и национальных меньшинств. Этот процесс проходил в крайне сложных условиях. Пограничные вопросы с Азербайджаном и Грузией, а также положение армянского населения в Нахичевани, Нагорном Карабахе и армянонаселенных районах Азербайджана и Грузии вызывали серьезную обеспокоенность. Правительство Армянской ССР принимало необходимые меры для переселения национальных меньшинств в места их прежнего проживания, предоставляя им землю, строительные материалы, жилье и кредиты. Согласно опросам, проведенным в 1923 и 1926 гг., подавляющее большинство покинувших Армению национальных меньшинств вернулось. Определенное внимание уделялось их экономическим, политическим, образовательным и культурным проблемам. Численность национальных меньшинств увеличилась. Однако в целом в СССР и Советской Армении в 1920-е гг. национальные вопросы решались преимущественно в рамках политики «коренизации» и подчинялись общей логике этой политики. В советских республиках, в том числе и в Армении, в этот период наблюдались некоторые позитивные сдвиги в культурном и экономическом развитии, складывалась атмосфера толерантности среди национальных меньшинств. *Вклад авторов.* Разработка концепции исследования статьи, редактирование текста рукописи, осуществление плана работы проведено руководителем финансируемой темы Ваником Вирабяном. Накопление необходимых данных для раскрытия и интерпретации темы осуществлено в контексте соавторства. В целом ответственность за все аспекты работы, утверждение окончательного варианта статьи для публикации принадлежит обоим авторам. *Финансирование.* Исследование выполнено при поддержке МОНКС РА в рамках научной работы «Межэтнические развития и перемещения этнических групп населения в Республике Армения (1918–1990-е гг.)», проект № 25RG-6A113.

Ключевые слова: Азербайджан, Армения, межэтнические столкновения, национальные меньшинства, советизация, национальные процессы.

Цитирование. Вирабян В. Г., Геворгян Э. Г. Межэтнические отношения в Республике Армения и проблемы национальных меньшинств в 1920-х годах // Вестник Волгоградского государственного университета. Серия 4, История. Регионоведение. Международные отношения. – 2026. – Т. 31, № 4. – (На англ. яз.). – С. 72–85. – DOI: https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2026.4.6

Introduction. Interethnic relations in the 1920s played an important role in the interstate relations of the Transcaucasian republics, specifically the socialist republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Interethnic movements from one republic to another, their regulation, and the creation of real conditions for the peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups were of immense importance for the normal socio-political and cultural development of the republics. Therefore, in the Transcaucasian republics, issues of interethnic relations, resolution of complex issues of development of ethnic minorities, and their optimal placement in different areas of these republics were of great national importance. The main goal of this system was to ensure peaceful, calm coexistence of ethnic groups and national minorities, to overcome the former tension in this area, and to maintain the necessary balance of respectability, free communication, and friendly relations with respect to national groups.

Methods and materials. This topic has not been the subject of specific research, but some details are reflected in the works of various authors. B. Rezvani concludes that one of the areas of Soviet national policy in the 1920s was indigenization (nativization – korenizatsiya), the expansion of education among representatives of various nationalities in their native languages. This served as a means of indigenization for the Soviet leadership, curbing ethno-nationalism and the nationalization of various ethnic minorities. Therefore, its significance was ambiguous, and its implementation was far from consistent. From

the point of view of the development of nationalism, the titular nations of the South Caucasus were divided in the mass consciousness of the peoples according to the degree of development of national self-awareness. Only large ethnic groups in areas of compact settlement retained the national forms of statehood acquired under the policy of indigenization. The process of indigenization began almost simultaneously with the formation of the Soviet Union. According to B. Rezvani, indigenization essentially reflected the Bolsheviks' ethnic vision of nations and can be seen as a pragmatic policy to overcome interethnic and ethno-religious clashes and mass unrest between Armenians and Muslims in the South Caucasus [50, pp. 75, 79].

According to F. Shafiev, it was of fundamental importance for the Bolsheviks, who took control of the South Caucasus in 1920–1921, to unite all ethnic groups within the newly created socialist superstate, granting formal statehood to Azerbaijanis, Armenians, and Georgians within the Soviet borders. However, according to the author, resolving the territorial disputes between the republics, inherited after they gained independence in May 1918, was no easy task; various methods were used, primarily the redistribution of territories between the republics and the creation of autonomous regions. These solutions did not satisfy any of the republics, but under the auspices of communism, the Armenian and Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republics coexisted peacefully, despite the fact that territorial disputes could at any moment open Pandora's box of border revisions between Soviet ethnic groups: Armenians and Azerbaijanis [51, pp. 199-236; 52].

T. Vardanyan-Ayvazyan [57] and A. Harut'yunyan [28, pp. 164-181, 186-204] conclude that indigenization had a certain progressive significance, characterizing it as a "policy of positive actions" and expressing solidarity with T. Martin, who believes that in the USSR and, naturally, in Soviet Armenia in the 1920s and 1930s, national issues were resolved mainly within the framework of a policy of "nativization" (indigenization), which was generally progressive in nature, characterizing it as a "policy of positive actions." According to T. Martin, this policy was aimed at weakening and preventing manifestations of nationalism among the formerly colonized non-Russian peoples [34, p. 308], which would contribute to reducing interethnic tensions, preventing interethnic clashes, and thus establishing peaceful coexistence and cohabitation between national groups. T. Martin traces in detail the evolution of Soviet policy from the early 1920s to the early 1930s, i.e., the decade that included the formation of the USSR and the period of policy that became known as korenizatsiya. According to J. Baberovskij, this policy was consistently pursued among the peoples due to fears of separatist movements emerging in these regions [6, p. 308]. According to I. Niftaliev, at this stage, national policy in the Soviet republics was manageable and generally balanced, and certain positive changes were observed in the cultural and economic spheres of ethnic communities. However, issues of territorial delimitation were not resolved and remained one of the main causes of ethno-political conflicts between the two Transcaucasian republics – the Armenian and Azerbaijani SSRs – since the Soviet government only "imposed" a moratorium on these conflicts [44, pp. 127, 196-197]. Useful materials on the ethnic history and ethnic processes among the peoples of the Caucasus and Transcaucasia are contained in the works of G. Chursin [10] and N. Volkova [58, pp. 13-14], who were among the first to draw attention to the complexity of ethno-political processes. Some details are reflected in the publications of M. Gasimli [13], T. Zeynalova [62, pp. 33-49], E. Gevorgyan [14], and G. Sharoyan [53, pp. 41-52].

However, from the perspective of comprehensive historical analysis, this topic has not been the subject of specific research. Interethnic processes that took place in Soviet Armenia in the 1920s, national policy toward minorities, and its actual results, as well as omissions and negative phenomena, have not been fully studied and evaluated. This article attempts to analyze interethnic processes and identify the characteristics of state policy toward national minorities. Undoubtedly, coverage of interethnic events, movements, and resettlements of national minorities in various republics in the 1920s requires new, comprehensive approaches.

Analysis. It is well known that the resolution of controversial issues of interethnic developments and various previously overcome conflicts depends on several interrelated factors. These include the readiness of various layers of society, state administration bodies of various states, individual republics to resolve

contradictions and difficulties, negative phenomena in the sphere of interethnic developments, the presence and effective use of modern experience, discipline, tactical training of personnel, etc. Analysis of the problems of interethnic development and the resolution of accumulated problems of ethnic groups and minorities in the 1920s allows us to get a detailed idea of the essence of interethnic processes, the effectiveness of the work of Soviet authorities responsible for the state of interethnic relations, and other issues related to the development of ethnic minorities. In order to disclose the topic of interethnic processes and movements of ethnic minorities in the 1920s, it is necessary to analyze the following issues:

1) an analysis of the development system and dynamics of the processes of interethnic developments and ethnic groups in Armenia, comparing data of regional realities, as well as the factors regulating them;

2) a clear study of the sources, as well as the functioning of the logistics system;

3) a study of the issue from the point of view of the quality of the question posed, as well as adequate satisfaction of the urgent needs of society in the field of presentation and resolution of issues of the history of experience in resolving interethnic problems, meeting the urgent needs of national minorities.

After the Sovietization of Armenia, the resettlement of Armenian refugees and national minorities began. The newly established Soviet government faced new challenges. Numerous national minorities (Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Yazidis, Russians, Assyrians, Greeks, Jews, and others) lived in the republic, most of whom needed to be settled and integrated into Armenia's socio-political, socio-economic, and cultural life.

After the Sovietization, much attention was paid to national minorities, and certain steps were taken to normalize interethnic relations. In the land-poor Armenian SSR, some attention was paid to resolving land issues and disputes among national minorities, and particularly among the repatriated Azerbaijanis, although there were also complaints and difficulties of an objective and subjective nature, even within the same ethnic group, and particularly within the Azerbaijani community.

Solutions and outcomes. In 1921–1922, the return of national minorities who had left Armenia began, which put the government in a difficult situation.

According to the 1919 census, the population of the Republic of Armenia numbered 917,297 inhabitants, of whom 122,185 were Muslims [19, p. 178]. According to Z. Korkotyan, during the Turkish-Tatar unrest in 1919, more than 200 thousand Turks and Kurds left Armenia [33, p. 184]. According to the census conducted by the Soviet government in 1922, of the 781,011 inhabitants of Armenia, only 76,555 were Azerbaijanis 9.8% [41, p. 127; 61, p. 151], and in Georgia, about 82 thousand [61, p. 149]. According to the 1922 census, Armenia had 671,451 Armenians, which constituted 89% of the entire population of Armenia [61, p. 145].

And here is the picture presented by the national composition of the population of the Transcaucasian republics according to the agricultural census data of 1921–1923, which can be seen in Table 1 [1, p. 89; 61, p. 151].

Table 1. **National composition of the population of the Transcaucasian republics according to the 1921–1923 census**

Transcaucasian republic	Azerbaijanis	Armenians	Georgians	Other Caucasian peoples	Russians	Others	Total
Armenia	76,555 (9.8%)	671,450 (86.0%)	–	–	19,173 (2.4%)	13,833 (1.8%)	781,011 (100%)
Azerbaijan (incl. Nagorno-Karabakh, Nakhichevan region)	994,123 (56.0%)	239,183 (13.5%)	12,010 (0.7%)	295,016 (16.6%)	123,063 (7.0%)	109,896 (6.2%)	1,773,291 (100%)
Georgia (incl. Abkhazia, Ajaria, South Ossetia)	80,852 (3.3%)	290,048 (12.0%)	1,648,015 (68.1%)	142,115 (5.9%)	88,072 (3.6%)	172,905 (7.1%)	2,422,007 (100%)
Total	1,151,530 (23.1%)	1,200,681 (24.1%)	1,660,025 (33.4%)	437,131 (8.8%)	230,308 (4.6%)	296,634 (6.0%)	4,976,909 (100%)

In the first years of Soviet rule, out of approximately 85,000 Azerbaijanis who returned to Armenia, about 5,000 were resettled in the Daralayagaz district [62, p. 57]. Overall, according to data from spring 1924, out of those 85,000 Azerbaijanis who returned to Armenia, 71,029 people were provided with land, and by the end of 1924, there were no landless Azerbaijanis in the republic, having received significant assistance from the government of the Armenian SSR [53, p. 47]. According to Soviet-era historian G. Sharoyan, from the very first days of the establishment of Soviet rule, tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis who had left Armenia in 1918–1920 began to return en masse from the Azerbaijani SSR, Persia, and other places to their former settlements in Armenia. They were mainly settled in the districts and villages where they had previously lived: Yerevan, Etchmiadzin, Leninakan, Nor Bayazet, Zangezur, Lori-Pambak, Dilijan, Daralayagaz, and Meghri districts [62, p. 42].

The republic was filled with thousands of homeless refugees; most Armenian peasants did not have their own land, livestock, agricultural tools, or seeds, and now newcomers needed to be accommodated. For example, in May 1922, a large number of Armenians from Tabriz could not return to Armenia due to land scarcity. They had applied to the Armenian government and temporarily received a refusal [2, l. 26; 27, l. 74]. On August 22, 1923, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of Armenia (NKVD) requested the executive committee of the Nakhichevan Regional Council to accommodate 300 Armenian refugees from Tabriz, natives of Agulis and Julfa, in Nakhichevan [7, l. 24; 24, l. 26].

In 1923, natives of the Meghri region applied to the local authorities for permission to emigrate due to land scarcity. Many of them went to the Etchmiadzin region to participate in the construction of the Sardarapat canal. There they were provided with land and housing [46, l. 10, 12, 23]. In the same year, 1923, former residents of Meghri living in Trans-Caspian countries, through their authorized representative Anastas Gabrielyan, applied to return to Armenia. The Armenian government could not accommodate them in their native villages and allowed them to resettle in the village of Mets Shahriar in the Etchmiadzin district [4, l. 19-20]. The resettlement of the Armenian population from the North Caucasus was stopped because "the economic and food situation of Armenia was such that it could not accept any new groups into its territory" [40, p. 198].

At the same time, the repatriation of diaspora Armenians had begun. On the other hand, Azerbaijanis who had left Zangezur demanded to be resettled only in their former places of residence. How the events of 1918–1920 affected the ethnic composition of certain regions of Transcaucasia can be seen in the example of Zangezur. According to Russian researcher G. Chursin, if in 1897, out of a population of 137.9 thousand, 63.6 thousand were Armenians (46.2%), 71.2 thousand were Azerbaijanis (51.7%), and 1.8 thousand were Kurds (1.3%), then according to the 1922 agricultural census, the total population of Zangezur was 63.5 thousand people, including 56.9 thousand Armenians (89.5%), 6.5 thousand Azerbaijanis (10.2%), and 0.2 thousand Russians (0.3%) [10, p. 230; 40, p. 205].

In fact, both the Azerbaijani and Armenian governments sought to resolve the issue of resettlement to Azerbaijan and Armenia in conditions favorable to the republics, seeking to control ethnic processes. In this context, modern Azerbaijani historian Ilgar Niftaliev reflects on the pages of the recent past, expressing dissatisfaction with the administrative-territorial changes that took place. He believes that after joining the Transcaucasian Federation, processes were carried out within the borders of the Azerbaijani SSR and the Armenian SSR that did not take into account the historically established ethnic boundaries and the economic situation of the Azerbaijani population. Instead, they were aimed at yet another expansion of the borders of the Armenian SSR by fragmenting Azerbaijani SSR lands [44, pp. 196-197].

Yazidis living in Georgia had applied to return to Armenia. They had moved to Georgia from the Kars region (282 people, 48 households) and wished to resettle in the Kotayk and Etchmiadzin districts and Ashtarak [20, l. 50-51]. The Molokans who had voluntarily left the villages of Borisovka and Bazarchay in Sisian after the Sovietization of Zangezur in 1921 returned [37, l. 3]. Incidentally, when the Molokans of these villages left for the Shamakhi district, the local authorities made efforts to persuade them to abandon such intentions. However, it was in vain. They replied, "You and the Dashnaks are Armenians, we don't believe you and don't want to stay in this country" [27, l. 3; 37, l. 10]. It should

also be noted that before leaving, they had mostly sold their property and homes. Refugees or landless/land-poor peasants from surrounding villages had resettled in these villages. Now, the former residents had returned and demanded the gratuitous return of what they had sold.

In 1923, some of the Molokans living in the Dilijan district also left for Russia. They were demolishing their homes before leaving. To prevent these illegal actions, the NKVD of Armenia proposed to the Council of People's Commissars to nationalize the homes of Molokans leaving for Russia [8, l. 138].

Nevertheless, the Armenian government took all measures to accommodate national minorities in their former settlements, providing them with land, building materials, housing, and loans. It should be noted that while the immigration of both Armenians and national minorities had largely begun, from December 1920 to the end of 1921, no accurate accounting of it was carried out. It was mainly spontaneous. Therefore, it is impossible to provide exact figures for the immigrants. To organize immigration, an evacuation department was established under the NKVD in Armenia in January 1922 [23, l. 1]. An Armenian resettlement commission was also founded [45, l. 45]. Later, by the decision of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of Armenia on January 30, 1923, the central evacuation department of the NKVD was reorganized into a resettlement department [22, l. 54; 54, l. 16]. Everything was done to improve the condition of the refugees. Material and medical assistance were organized, and feeding points were established [23, l. 4].

Azerbaijani refugees reported to the Qamarlu Revolutionary Committee that in "Maku and Persia, they not only failed to receive fraternal treatment from the local population but were also completely plundered" [31, p. 195].

However, the resettlement took place in rather difficult conditions. The problem was that the resettlement from the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR and vice versa took place in a forced manner. The Azerbaijanis who settled in the Armenian SSR were often affected by the strong-willed administrative decisions of local authorities, who arbitrarily resolved interethnic issues without taking into account their interests, which later led to ethnic clashes. For example, in 1923, the village of Nyuvadi in Meghri tried to join the Zangelan region. A representative from the Meghri region went to Nyuvadi to deter the villagers from their intention. At the same time, leading workers of the Zangelan region, including the chairman of the regional council, had convened a meeting, demanding that the villagers fight to the end for Nyuvadi's connections to Azerbaijan. They also threatened the Meghri representative, intimidating him with arrest. The Azerbaijanis declared, "There is no Soviet power here" [2, l. 5].

The Azerbaijani-populated villages of Tghut and Aonadzor, near Shvanidzor village in the Meghri region, also attempted to defy Armenia in 1923 [2, l. 4; 60, l. 24]. On September 16, 1923, the chairman of the Jabrayil district executive committee, in a letter to the Meghri district executive committee, stated that Tghut was subordinate to them. He demanded not to interfere in the village's affairs [35, l. 19]. Nakhichevan demanded the southern Armenian-populated villages of Daralagyaz and the village of Karchivan in the Meghri region [42, l. 4].

Overall, at the beginning of the 1920s, the issue of 30 Armenian villages in Zangezur became contentious through the Azerbaijanis. The point is that Azerbaijani representatives demanded that territorial borders be drawn based on the national affiliation of the villages' populations [47, l. 22].

On November 30, 1923, 38 Azerbaijani families from the village of Ilagmlu in the Vorontsovka district of Lori province applied to the district executive committee for permission to permanently relocate to the Kars province with their livestock and movable property. Investigation revealed that the main reasons for emigration were the so-called climatic conditions, infertility, and the desire to live in Turkey [42, l. 162]. In essence, while resettlement was taking place on one hand, authorities were facing emigration cases on the other.

The national policy pursued by the Armenian government was greatly hindered by disputed border issues with Azerbaijan [21, l. 7, 28, 41] and Georgia [35, l. 41]. Such disputes often came at a high cost to Armenia. For example, the village of Kyarki (in Vedi Basar), which was an undisputed territory of Armenia, was annexed to Nakhichevan [47, l. 22].

Robbery, cattle rustling, and road blockades were widespread in border regions. In many cases, the national policy pursued by the Armenian government was not viewed objectively by

Azerbaijan. On the contrary, they tried to present this policy only in a negative light. For instance, in December 1926, residents of Ushi village in the Etchmiadzin district were supposed to move to Azerbaijan with the consent of the Azerbaijani People's Commissariat of Land. The residents of Ushi first visited the location in Chaykend village of Nukhi district to familiarize themselves with the situation. And when they were already organized and were supposed to move with their families, the Azerbaijani authorities sent them back from Yevlakh station and then informed the Transcaucasian People's Commissariat that Azerbaijanis were not being treated well in Armenia [48, l. 194, 197].

Further developments in national policy. Representatives of national minorities who had moved to Armenia were exempted from taxes in 1923 [18, l. 5]. They were provided with comprehensive assistance for repairing old dwellings, building new ones, and engaging in agricultural work. For example, on March 14, 1924, the Zangezur District Executive Committee informed the Central Executive Committee of the Armenian SSR in a letter that comprehensive assistance had been organized for 920 Azerbaijanis settled in Kapan. At the same time, it was noted that until their problems were resolved, the refugees had also applied to the Central Executive Committee of Azerbaijan for assistance and had been left empty-handed [25, l. 10].

At the same time, the situation of the Armenian population of Nakhichevan caused serious concern. One of the peculiarities of Azerbaijan's national policy was the creation of a situation, under the threat of genocide, during periods of exacerbation of interethnic relations, where the population forcibly displaced from its native land could no longer return to its former settlement. This was the case with Armenian refugees who came to Armenia from the Gandzak and Nakhichevan provinces in 1918–1920. Of 135.8 thousand refugees, only 8.3% (12,830 people) returned to their settlements [32]. Armenian residents of Shushi also shared this fate. According to statistical data, in the region of Nakhichevan, 58.5 thousand Armenians lived in 1917 (40% of the total population) [28, pp. 164-181; 54]. But by the 1926 census, that number had decreased almost 5 times, amounting to only 11,276 people [59].

The fact is that in 1918–1920, the Nakhichevan Armenians who survived the massacres organized by Turkish troops and Musavat gangs and left their homes were repeatedly prevented from returning to their native land by special decisions of the Soviet Azerbaijani and Nakhichevan Central Executive Committees from 1922 to 1926, even though their houses were empty, doors closed, and lands uncultivated. Musabekov, the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Azerbaijani SSR, reported in a telegram to the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Armenia on June 24, 1922, that by decision of the Azerbaijani Central Executive Committee, the mass entry of the population into Azerbaijan's borders was prohibited [54]. In 1923, Azarapete Melikyan, a representative of several Armenian-populated villages in Nakhichevan, sent an appeal to the Starving Commission of the Central Executive Committee of Armenia. It stated that 1,360 peasants from three Armenian-populated villages in Nakhichevan were on the verge of starvation and that no one would agree to give them even a pound of barley. Many were forced to eat wild grass, and many were dying. A medical certificate was also attached to the appeal. They requested Armenia to send flour to the Armenians of Nakhichevan for 3–4 months. At the end of the appeal, they wrote that they could emigrate to Armenia, but this would be welcomed by the Nakhichevan government. However, they would never "leave the graves of their ancestors" [35, l. 76]. The Azerbaijani authorities of Nakhichevan conducted inspections in Armenian villages under the pretext of confiscating weapons, taking away even the last hunting rifle, even though banditry was widespread throughout the entire republic [17, l. 67-69].

Similar problems existed for the Armenian population in the field of national policy in Nagorno-Karabakh, other Armenian-populated areas of Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The situation in the field of national policy was also complicated by the fact that after the majority of minorities were resettled in their former settlements with great difficulty, others returned to Armenia with the calculated guidance of the Azerbaijani authorities and demanded to be settled as well. However, there were no free places left in the villages. The land management program had long been compiled and implemented or was being implemented. For example, the local authorities

of Zangezur, especially the district executive committees of Goris and Daralayagaz, repeatedly appealed to their superiors to demand that the Nakhichevan authorities prohibit the entry of the Muslim population into Zangezur [36, l. 43, 51].

It is also noteworthy that national minorities, especially Azerbaijanis, resorted to all means to prevent others, non-Muslims, from settling on the surplus lands of their villages, and also to prevent new villages from being established near them [29, l. 47]. However, sometimes Azerbaijanis, as a national minority, dissatisfied with the national policy pursued by the authorities of the Armenian SSR, filed complaints with the authorities of Soviet Azerbaijan. For example, in 1925, a complaint was submitted to A. Rykov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, in Tiflis on behalf of several Azerbaijani villages in the Daralayagaz district, accusing the Armenian government of alleged discriminatory policies against Azerbaijanis living in Armenia. Names of villages such as Qisr Kharabah – Qisr Kharabah (Ky'sy'r Xaraba – Ghy'sr Xaraba) village of Sharur-Daralagyaz district of Yerevan province [26, p. 123] and others were mentioned in the complaint. Land disputes arose in border provinces and regions, as a result of which the republic lost land territories [30, l. 63].

Despite the above facts, the vast majority of national minorities were resettled in Armenia, becoming its full citizens. More normal and secure conditions were created for the lives of Armenia's national minorities. A Turkish section operated under the Agitprop Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia (Bolsheviks) [39, l. 1], and a commission for national minorities was established under the Central Executive Committee of Armenia in 1926, with its local bodies [12, l. 159]. Continuous serious studies were carried out among minorities to check their economic, political, educational, and cultural life. Schools were opened for them, teaching staff were trained, and education and correspondence were conducted in the native language by a decision of the government on May 11, 1924 [11, l. 173, 175]. Non-party conferences of national minorities were convened to discuss issues concerning them, which were invariably given attention by the Armenian government. For example, on December 30–31, 1925, a non-party congress of Yazidis from the Etchmiadzin district was held in Shamiram village, which adopted several decisions on making Yazidis sedentary, raising their educational and cultural level, and improving living conditions. It was decided to show intolerance towards tribalism, polygamy, bride price requirements for marriage, and other vicious phenomena [33, pp. 98-99]. On May 23, 1926, the First All-Armenian Kurdish Congress was held with the participation of 75 delegates. It discussed issues of agriculture and cooperation, education and culture, living conditions, and current affairs [3, l. 97-103].

On December 13, 1924, the inaugural meeting of Armenia's land management workers noted that there were no landless or land-poor peasants among the national minorities within the republic's borders [48, l. 163].

In 1926, the Etchmiadzin District Executive Committee thoroughly investigated the condition of the Jews in the village of Pokr Shahriar and familiarized itself with their demands. It was found that the village's Jewish community comprised 17 households, with 114 individuals, that they did not own their homes, lived in rented accommodation, and that all of them were provided with land. To improve the situation of the Jews, the District Executive Committee took several measures and allocated long-term loans [3, l. 112].

Great attention was also paid to the education of minorities. Schools, preschools, and other educational institutions operated almost everywhere, and personnel were trained and retrained for them. In December 1924, Assyrian and Yazidi teachers held their congress in Yerevan [38, l. 58]. In 1924, there were 18 Azerbaijani, 5 Russian, 3 Assyrian, and 1 Greek schools in Yerevan Province, and 2 Azerbaijani and 1 Yazidi school in Etchmiadzin Province [9, l. 20]. In the same year (1924), there was also an Azerbaijani orphanage in Yerevan with 60 children [48, l. 37].

In the 1925–1926 academic year, 12 schools for national minorities, with 421 students, operated in Etchmiadzin Province [56, l. 124]. Through the efforts of the Armenian government, the Kurdish alphabet was created, among other initiatives.

Archival documents attest that in other union republics, national minority issues were not resolved as quickly as in Armenia. For example, the Georgian government repeatedly applied to Armenia to provide posters in Kurdish for organizing the Soviet election campaign. Doctors and other specialists

working among Kurds and Azerbaijanis also traveled from Armenia to Georgia [49, l. 8].

Undoubtedly, there were also difficulties, but these were not entirely the fault of the Armenian government. For instance, there were no teachers or village council secretaries who could teach in national languages, and this work was carried out by Muslim clerics (mullahs), while Azerbaijanis complained that they were not given enough attention. The same applied to courts and other matters.

The Soviet resolution of ethno-territorial issues between Soviet Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1921–1923 was partial and unjust in the eyes of both nationalists who had moved abroad and some communists.

The humanitarian policy pursued by the Armenian authorities yielded results. This was primarily reflected in the demographic profile of the Armenian population. The population of the republic significantly increased. This is evidenced by the 1923 and 1926 census data.

However, according to the 1923 and 1926 censuses, the picture of the ethnic composition of the population of the Soviet Republic of Armenia is as can be seen from Table 2 [43, l. 6, 59; 55, l. 51; 62, p. 34].

These are mainly the data for 9 provinces (Yerevan, Alexandropol, Etchmiadzin, Dilijan, Lori-Pambak, Nor Bayazet, Zangezur, Daralayagaz, and Meghri). The total was 1,057,058 people, and according to some data, also 1,400,000 [15, l. 6, 59].

These latter data show that according to the 1926 census, about 15.55 percent (136,823 people) of the total population of the Armenian SSR belonged to national minority groups.

As we can see, there was a noticeable increase in all nationalities in 1926 compared to 1923. It should also be noted that due to natural population growth and the influx of refugees from Western Armenia, the population of Armenia increased by 22.3% in a short period from the end of 1921 to the All-Union Population Census of 1926 [16, l. 47]. Armenia, unlike its two neighboring republics, Georgia and Azerbaijan, was more mono-ethnic. However, the well-known Azerbaijani author Nazim Mustafa, examining the 1926 census data and noting that out of the 880,464 residents of Soviet Armenia, 85,554 or 9.76 percent were Muslims, 3,025 or 0.4 percent were Muslim Kurds, and 12,237 or 1.4 percent were Yazidi Kurds, and claiming that according to July-August 1919 data, out of 917,297 people, 122,185 were Muslims [19, p. 178; 61, p. 151], he then asserts that approximately 70,000 Turks and Kurds were allegedly expelled at that time, and that by the 1922 census, only 76,555 of Armenia's 781,011 residents were Azerbaijanis (9.8 percent). He considers this a very negative phenomenon and ultimately concludes that a discriminatory policy was implemented against Azerbaijanis [44, p. 127; 61, p. 151]. This, of course, does not correspond to the actual facts and is refuted by comparing the available census materials of 1926 [61, p. 15].

According to the 1926 census, the ethnic distribution of the population in the Transcaucasian Soviet Federation between the titular nation and national minorities is evident from Table 3 [1, p. 94; 5, p. 53; 59].

Results. Thus, in the early 1920s, the overwhelming majority of national minorities who left Armenia were resettled within the republic. According to the results of a 1926 survey, approximately 80% of Azerbaijanis who emigrated from Eastern Armenia to Azerbaijan and Persia returned and settled in their former places of residence [5, pp. 37, 48-49].

Table 2. **Ethnic composition of the population of the Soviet Republic of Armenia according to the censuses of 1923 and 1926**

Nationality	1921–1923		1926	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Armenian	593,791	86.39%	743,571	84.45%
Azerbaijani	54,264	7.89%	76,870	8.73%
Russian	19,173	2.78%	19,548	2.22%
Kurd	833	0.12%	3,025	0.35%
Yazidi	840	0.12%	12,237	1.39%
Greek	27	0.05%	2,980	0.34%
Assyrian	4,523	0.65%	2,215	0.25%
Other Nationalities	13,833	2.01%	20,018	2.27%
Total	687,284	100%	880,464	100%

Table 3. **Titular nations and national minorities in the Transcaucasian Soviet Federation according to the 1926 census**

Armenian SSR		Georgian SSR		Azerbaijan SSR	
Total number	743,571	Total number	1,788,186	Total number	1,437,977
Turk	76,870	Armenian	307,018	Armenian	282,004
Russian	19,548	Turk	137,921	Russian	220,545
Yazidi	12,237	Ossetian	113,298	Talysh	77,323
Karapapakh	6,311	Russian	96,085	Kurd	41,193
Others	20,392	Others	201,699	Others	211,018

Negative phenomena in the sphere of interethnic relations and their overcoming had a positive impact on the resolution of issues of the settlement of ethnic groups. Many issues of interethnic disputes were resolved through mutual agreement and mutual concessions, although they were not completely overcome. The efforts of party and government bodies were aimed, first of all, at creating a normal, benevolent atmosphere and ensuring stability in society, which largely depended on the resolution of national contradictions and disputes. At the same time, instances of artificially forcing the resolution of problems had negative consequences, often leading to increased discontent, indignation, and negative sentiments among ethnic groups. In general, both Azerbaijan and Armenia pursued a restrained and balanced policy toward national minorities during those years as part of the "nativization" policy. Thanks to these measures, national minorities became participants in the republic's socio-political, economic, and cultural life.

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