



**By** Fuad Huseinzadeh

### **SOMEONE ELSE'S WAR**

*Such a particular perception of the conflict with Azerbaijan, which has established roots in the Armenian society, threatens with a defeated Yerevan*

It seems as though Nagorny Karabakh is back in the early 1990s. The conflict zone is restless again. Almost every day the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry reports that the enemy's armed forces, who settled in lands that are not theirs, are launching shells towards the Azerbaijani positions several dozen times a day, having even used large-caliber machine-guns in the past few days, and also carry out subversive and reconnaissance actions. However, the situation in the conflict zone is completely the opposite of the developments that took place 20 years ago.

Since the start of the year 2015, the Armenian armed forces have suffered heavy losses at the front line. The precise number is not known, but NGOs that monitor the area argue that the actual losses are much higher in number than stated officially. Since the beginning of March alone, Armenians have lost more than two dozen soldiers at the line of contact. Twenty of them were victims of the March19 attack on Azerbaijani positions, carried out near the village of Gulustan in Goranboy District.

The Armenians thoroughly tried to conceal the actual number of the killed soldiers and said that their losses were five times fewer. However, they stopped making these ardent claims after the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry publicized recently a video recording tape showing the elimination of these saboteurs.

Incidentally, the Armenians blame their own military for the cease-fire violation. A video report aired by their TV channels showed Armenians who live in Azerbaijan's occupied lands saying that it was Armenian soldiers who started shooting, and the return fire from Azerbaijan does not allow the population to live a quiet and prosperous life.

Even before the stir around the latest act of sabotage by Armenia collapses, just a few days later, another development took place, not in Yerevan's favor either. A soldier of the Armenian forces in Nagorny Karabakh, Andranik Grigoryan, 24, who was doing his military service in Karabakh, left his weapons and ammunition at his combat position and defected to Azerbaijan. Later, the Armenian contract soldier explained that he had done so because of the horrible situation in Armenian army units. "There are many people who, like me, are tired of this kind of life and want to defect to this side. But, speaking frankly, they do not take the risk of doing so because they do not know what awaits them here. I want to tell, from here, to my comrades who are holding weapons in their hands that Azerbaijanis are not the way our criminal authorities have told us for years at all. Do as I have done, before it is too late," Grigoryan said.

By having an attitude established over the years, Armenia and the breakaway of Nagorny - Karabakh unanimously described the defector's confessions as "an orchestrated hoax". However, Grigoryan's parents suddenly made confessions that spoiled this unanimity. They directly said that during his army service their son had problems and he reported them to the command of his military unit. Andranik's mother said that during his most recent visit home he was in a bad mood and would not answer when they asked him why. The country's military leadership did not expect this kind of a confession, and they dragged through investigative bodies

the father of the Armenian defector, who was upset about what happened to his son anyway.

Defence Minister Seyran Ohanyan was willing to provide any kind of explanation regarding the actions of the Armenian soldier, except for saying that the reason was the sorrowful state of affairs in the army: "The reason for the actions of the Armenian soldier who defected to Azerbaijan several days ago should be looked for in his family circumstances." An internal investigation and criminal proceedings have been launched regarding the defector.

Certainly, the minister's statements caused outrage, and not only in Andranik Grigoryan's family. The parents of Armenian soldiers who died in the army held a protest outside the Armenian Presidential Administration. The protesters expressed concern that the minister of defense had accused the family of soldier Andranik Grigoryan, who had defected to Azerbaijan voluntarily. They demanded an explanation, as to why their children had died, and that discipline be established and the mess be eliminated in the army, and that soldiers be provided with food and clothes.

Soon after all these developments at the front line, Azerbaijani Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov visited the front-line zone and made several statements there. Speaking about the situation at the front line, he said that the enemy is in turmoil already: "We are carrying out such strikes on them that they are frightened and are fleeing. They do not want to serve at the front, and they flee, leaving their trenches. The enemy now has to put civilians at the positions." He also said that the Azerbaijani army is capable of killing 70 per cent of the enemy forces in one strike.

These kinds of statements are not made without reason. It is well known that the "Karabakh card" has so far been the only thing allowing the Sargsyan regime to retain power. By heightening tension at the Karabakh front, this regime traditionally warms up the threat from "foreign enemy" in the eyes of the population, thereby diverting the attention of its citizens from current socio-economic problems that promise Armenians an even bleaker future. The assurance that now, after Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Union, Armenians will live a

better life and the country will strengthen its positions in the region has also not rehabilitated Sargsyan in the eyes of the increasingly more annoyed Armenian public. Armenia was not even invited to the most recent summit of the leaders of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, which are the members of the Eurasian Economic Union. This clearly shows to ordinary Armenians that the latest move by their president not only did not free the country from foreign dependence but even made this dependence stronger, and the future of their country in the integration association, which is a new thing for them, will continue to be determined without their engagement.

Now that coffins from the Karabakh front have started to flow into Armenia like a river, Sargsyan's position has become absolutely shaky. The protest held by soldiers' mothers is just the first sign of upcoming protests in support of toppling the president. "What is the Armenian soldier doing in Agdam and in other Azerbaijani lands?!" Azerbaijan's commander-in-chief Ilham Aliyev said recently, outraged. Armenians - all those whose sons, brothers, and husbands are serving and dying outside Armenia, in somebody else's war, in somebody else's land - are surely asking themselves this question increasingly more often now.

The alternative that Sargsyan has is the same - to withdraw troops from Azerbaijani territory. Today, the Armenian president and his retinue should give this a serious thought as never before. Latest developments at the contact line showed that the statements by the Azerbaijani leadership that its patience in resolving the problem of occupation of the lands is not limitless are not just a technique that [the Azerbaijani president's] speechwriters love. In contrast to the Armenians, for Azerbaijanis war for Karabakh is a liberation war and this is the best way of a motivation to lift their spirits. Also, technical support for the army is still an important component of victory, and the Armenian minister of defense cannot avoid knowing this fact. Otherwise, he would not have said recently that "Armenia is concerned over supplies of any weapons from any country".

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It is hard to say that Ohanyan is a big connoisseur of world literature, but he is for sure well familiar with the phrase by a Russian classic, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov: "If there is a rifle hanging on the wall, it absolutely must go off at some point."

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