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Conflict In The Caucasus - The War No One Is Talking About

Anne Wall writes about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

There is a war in the Near East – but it’s not one you’ve heard about in the news!

On 27th September 2020 Azerbaijan began a military offensive to regain control of the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. During the war that followed several attempts to broker a ceasefire were attempted but none lasted beyond a few hours.

Eventually on the 10th of November, a ceasefire was signed.

Negotiations had been headed by Russia who back the Armenian forces, while Turkey backs the Azerbaijani side. It is unlikely that this agreement will lead to lasting peace in the region as the big powers play out their rivalries through their clients.

What led to this little reported conflict? In order to get a clearer picture we need to go back to the early 20th Century.

At the start of the 1920s, Europe was in turmoil, the “Great War” had ended, there had been working class revolutions in many parts of Europe, the most notable in Russia.

The Russian revolution led to the creation of the Soviet Union, some of the countries involved were Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and the Transcaucasian Federation, which became the republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Soviet Leaders decided that Nagorno-Karabakh was to become an Autonomous region within the Socialist Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.

The population of NK was mainly ethnic Armenians but many Azeris also lived there. Towards the end of 1980s there was a lot of unrest in Eastern Europe as people grew tired of rule by fake socialist bureaucrats.

In 1988 the NK parliament voted to become a part of Armenia and began to agitate to have this demand met. However, both the Azerbaijani and Soviet governments strongly opposed this.

In 1991, as the USSR was breaking up, NK declared independence, this declaration led to full scale war in the region. Ethnic Armenians took control of NK, and other Azerbaijani territory around it, creating a buffer zone linking NK with Armenia.

Up to 30,000 people lost their lives in this conflict.

In March 1992 the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk group, co-chaired by Russia and the USA, was set up with to negotiate stability in this important oil trade region.

Azerbaijan is a key energy and trade route between the US and Asia. Its rulers want to export gas, which it has in the Caspian Sea, to European markets through the South Caucasus Pipeline Expansion Project. The pipeline currently runs from Azerbaijan via Georgia to Turkey.

Their sponsor, Turkey, wants to become a chief exporter of oil and gas to the European Union. Meanwhile, Russia wants to maintain some influence in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, but needs to contain a potential competitor to its gas exports to Europe.

As usual profit fuels the fires of war and ordinary people suffer.

A ceasefire was brokered in 1994 leaving NK, as well as other Azeri territory in Armenian control. Thousands were displaced, as Azeri residents left NK to live in Azerbaijan and Armenian residents of Azerbaijan left to move to Armenia or the occupied areas.

Ceasefire breaches occurred over the years with each side accusing the other of these breaches. Several resolutions were put forward by the OSCE Minsk group but none met with the agreement of the conflicting parties.

The US Empire sought to bring countries in the region into its orbit to cement its influence, they found willing partners among sections of the old Stalinist ruling class that was jockeying to keep its wealth and power.

After Azerbaijan declared independence, former KGB secret police chief Haydar Aliyev positioned himself as a key power broker and took control in 1993. The former “communist” bureaucrat became a favoured friend of the West, doing deals with BP and other oil companies.

Fast forward to 2020.

In July skirmishes occurred along the border between the two countries, lasting about 4 days. Demonstrations took place in Baku and other cities in Azerbaijan, calling on the government to declare war on Armenia, arrests were made, and it seemed that the Azerbaijani government were not going to take action, but on 27th September 2020, war erupted.

The real losers here are the ordinary people, many choosing to leave. Villages and towns were destroyed and thousands of lives lost. People who had lived side by side are being used as pawns in a great war game over control of resources like oil. Politicians dictate and ordinary people suffer.

An uneasy peace reigns in the Caucasus, however long it lasts is debatable. Russia is now in a major position of power and control in the region, and Turkey has raised it's profile there. While the US Empire plays games in the background.

One thing is certain as long as profit is king these greedy ruling elites will destroy as many lives as it takes to feed their hunger for more control.

The RED Network (incorporating Rebel Telly) are a network of radical socialists within the political party People Before Profit, a 32-county people power movement on the island of Ireland.

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