

# GENOCIDE AND DEPORTATION OF AZERBAIJANIS OF THE ERIVAN GOVERNORATE (1918-1920)

THE RESETTLEMENT OF ARMENIANS IN THE TERRITORY OF NORTHERN AZERBAIJAN WAS A MULTI-STEP PROCESS THAT STARTED UNDER EMPEROR PETER I. IT WAS PETER I WHO FIRST LOOKED AT THE ARMENIANS FROM A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PRAISED «THE ADVANTAGES PROVIDED BY THE MORAL TIES THAT CONNECT THE CHRISTIAN NATIONS WITH RUSSIA».



Starting the conquest of the South Caucasus at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian Empire pinned high hopes on the Armenians. This choice was driven primarily by the fact that the Armenians, making up a significant part of the Christian population of the Muslim East, lived mainly in the territory of Qajar Iran, and especially in great numbers in the Ottoman Empire - the main opponents of the Russian Empire in the battle for the Caucasus. The policy of the mass resettlement of Armenians

**52** *A sample of Azerbaijani architecture in Erivan. The “Goy mosque in Erivan”.  
 Artist Dubois de Monpere. 19th century*



in the South Caucasus began under Nicholas I after the Russia-Iran (1826-1828) and the Russian-Ottoman (1828-1829) wars. The plan was implemented at the expense of the indigenous Muslim Turkic people and their lands. Armenians were settled primarily in the territories of former Azerbaijani khanates - Erivan and Nakhchivan, as well as in Karabakh. The perpetrators of the plan followed the following lines of the «highest decree» of the Senate of 21 March 1828: «By the power of the treatise with Persia signed on 10 February 1828, we ordain that the Erivan Khanate and the Nakhchivan Khanate should be called an Armenian region in all affairs from now on».<sup>1</sup> Thus, the main task of the colonial policy was resolved: to create a support for their government and at the same time a convenient outpost for further expansion toward Iran and Turkey on the conquered territory that was hostile, had a different faith, language, ethnic groups and was still unfamiliar.

As a result of the mass resettlement of Armenians from Qajar Iran in 1828-1829, some 6,946 families or 35,560 migrants found themselves here in Northern Azerbaijan.<sup>2</sup> After the conclusion of the Treaty of Adrianople between the Russian and Ottoman empires, they began to resettle Armenians from Ottoman possessions in Northern Azerbaijan. Suffice it to note that in 1829-1830 alone, more than 14,000 Armenian families or more than 84,000 people moved from Ottoman territory to the South Caucasus, mainly to Northern Azerbaijan.<sup>3</sup> The majority of them also settled in the Armenian

region, i.e. in the Nakhchivan and Erivan governorates. Resettling the Armenians in Northern Azerbaijan, Russia concentrated them in large numbers, which allowed the Armenians to create a solid belt, especially on the territory of the Erivan governorate, created in 1849.

The whole process of the resettlement of Armenians was carried out during the 19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Primarily due to the mechanical movement, the number of Armenians in the South Caucasus increased by one million people in almost 100 years.<sup>4</sup> Most of them settled in the territory of the Yerevan governorate, where, according to data available in 1917, out of the total population of 1,120,242 people, 669,871 (59.8 per cent), or more than half, were Armenians.<sup>5</sup>

The Provisional Government, which came to power in Russia in February 1917, and the Bolsheviks, who succeeded them later in October of the same year, showed full loyalty to the policy of Tsarist Russia on the Armenian issue, which was reflected primarily in attempts to create autonomy for the Armenians from Ottoman territories. However, after the government of the Transcaucasian Commissariat concluded the Erzincan truce with the command of the Ottoman army at the beginning of December 1917, which initiated the process of the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Caucasus front, the hopes of the Armenians began to crumble. The further development of the regional situation and, in particular, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed on 3 March 1918 between Rus-



*A sample of Azerbaijani architecture of Erivan. "The residence of the Erivan Khan." Artist Prince G. Gagarin. The 1840s*

sia and the powers of the Quadruple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey) finally thwarted Armenian plans to implement the "Turkish Armenia" project. Article 4 of the Treaty stipulated that Russia "shall do everything in its power to ensure the immediate cleansing of the provinces of eastern Anatolia and their ordered return to Turkey".<sup>6</sup>

Having lost the hope for the creation of their own state here with the departure of Russian troops from the occupied Turkish areas, Armenian political circles used the general situation of anarchy and impunity and totally switched to the implementation of this project through the territories of the Erivan and Yelizavetpol governorates of Northern Azerbaijan, especially as the Armenians had considerable military forces for that. The Armenian national corps formed by the end of

1 Акты Кавказской Археографической комиссии. Тифлис, 1878, т.7, № 437, с.437

2 Шопен И. Исторический памятник состояния Армянской области в эпоху ее присоединения к Российской империи. СПб., 1852, с. 539.

3 Утверждение русского владычества на Кавказе. Под редакцией В.А. Потто. Том IV, часть 2. Тифлис, 1908, с. 453.

4 Шавров Н.Н. Новая угроза русскому делу в Закавказье: предстоящая распродажа Мугани инородцам. Баку, 1990, с.64

5 Azərbaycan xalqına qarşı 1918-ci il mart soyqırımı, 3 cilddə. 2-ci cild, 2-ci kitab. İrəvan

6 Документы внешней политики СССР. М., 1957. Т. 1. с. 47-51.



*A sample of Azerbaijani architecture of Erivan. The "House of Ali Khan". From the book "Yerevan". V. Arutyunyan, M. Asatryan, A. Melikyan. Yerevan, 1968, p.74*

World War I from Armenian soldiers from all Russian fronts and by recruiting volunteers from the Armenian population consisted of 30 battalions of about 12,000 people at that time.<sup>7</sup> These armed detachments with extensive military experience took a series of military actions to cleanse the Erivan governorate from the Muslim population. The physical extermination of civilians, massacres, atrocities, intimidation and panicky rumors were all used by the Armenians to force the indigenous population to leave the land where their grandfathers and great-grandfathers had lived for centuries. Thus, densely-populated Armenians areas were artificially created, which continuously expanded and swelled due to the influx of Armenian refugees from Turkey. They "flooded the

districts of Russian Armenians by the tens or hundreds of thousands," one of the leaders of the Dashnaktsutyun Party, O. Kachaznuni, wrote later.<sup>8</sup> This huge stream of angry Armenians was settled not haphazardly, but was concentrated again in areas where there were already "strongholds" - in the governorates of Erivan and Yelizavetpol, in Karabakh, Zangezur and around the Goycha Lake. The military command of the government of the Transcaucasian Commissariat systematically reported about the plight of the Muslim population of the Erivan governorate, which was subjected to armed attacks by Armenians. For example, in a telegram to the Transcaucasian Commissariat on 30 January 1918, the chief of staff of the Caucasian Front, Major-General Levandovskiy, spoke about the report of the chief of the Erivan detachment in connection with bloody clashes between Muslims and Armenians. At the same time, he warned: "If we do not prevent emerging bloody clashes between the Muslim and Armenian population in this governorate now right at the start, it is very likely that the strife will quickly spread all over the place."<sup>9</sup> Here is how Azerbaijan newspaper described these events later in its issue of 25 September 1918: "When the ground was cut from under the feet of the Armenians with the departure of the Russian army, it seemed that the Dashnaktsakans ought to review their policies and their attitude to the Caucasus Muslims and try to establish good relations with them. Instead, the previous policy continues. Instead of

going to the front, Armenian military units remain within the Erivan governorate and devastate hundreds of Muslim villages with gunfire, and Armenian refugees are resettled in the territory cleared by force. The huge Surmali district is being cleared of the Muslim population. Nakhchivan is being devastated."<sup>10</sup> To have an idea about the scale of Armenian actions to oust the Muslim population of the Erivan governorate, it is enough to study the "List of Muslim villages ruined and abandoned in the Erivan governorate before March 1918", which included the names 199 of villages in the Erivan, Surmali, Echmiadzin and Novobayazet districts of this governorate, which had been devastated by the Armenian armed troops and abandoned by the Azerbaijani population.<sup>11</sup>

The question of Armenian atrocities and violence against the civilian Muslim population in the territories listed above was repeatedly raised at meetings of joint factions and the Muslim faction of the Transcaucasian Seim set up in February 1918 in Tiflis. At the joint meeting of the factions of the Seim on 2 March 1918, during speeches made by members of the Muslim faction, G. Agayev, M. Maharramov, Sh. Rustambayov and M. B. Rzayev, special attention was paid to acts of violence committed by Armenians on 17-21 February 1918 in the Erivan governorate, as a result of which 21 Muslim villages were completely destroyed.<sup>12</sup> On 10 April 1918, at a meeting of the Muslim faction of the Transcaucasian Seim, a member of the Seim, Mir Hidayat Se-

7 Корганов Г.Г. Участие армян в Мировой войне на Кавказском фронте (1914-1918) с 19-ю схемами. М.,2011, с.151

8 Качазнуни О. Дашнакцутюн больше нечего делать. Баку, 1990, с. 13

9 Перинчек М. Армянский вопрос в 120 документах из российских государственных архивов. М., 2011, с. 154

10 Газета «Азербайджан», 25 сентября 1918 г.

11 Список разоренных и брошенных жителями мусульманских селений в Эриванской губернии до марта 1918 г. Из книги «История Азербайджана по документам и публикациям». Баку, 1990, с. 216-220.

12 Musayev İ. M. Azərbaycanın Naxçıvan və Zəngəzur bölgələrində siyasi vəziyyəti və xarici dövlətlərin siyasəti (1917-1921-ci illər), Bakı, 1996, s. 39-40.



vidov, made a report on the latest developments in the Erivan governorate. He noted that the systematic massacre of Muslims launched in the Erivan governorate two months ago continues without interruption and has become especially acute in recent days, which is evidenced by the telegrams that have just been received. The massacre of Muslims by Armenian military units pursued a specific task - to clear the territory for Armenian refugees from the Ottoman Empire and create a solid belt for a future autonomous Armenia.<sup>13</sup> This laid the territorial foundation for the creation of the first ever Armenian state in the South Caucasus and the basis for new claims against neighbors. In general, in the short period of the work of the Seim (10 February - 26 May 1918), members of the Muslim faction repeatedly raised the question of taking effective measures to curb the atrocities of the Armenian gangs against the Muslim population of the Transcaucasia. However, the protests of the Muslim factions were not heard as Armenian and Georgian factions comprised two thirds of the Seim.

After the division of the South Caucasus between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia at the end of May 1918, their boundaries are originally and crucially determined by external geopolitical and military forces. Initially, these boundaries were established in relation to the Ottoman Empire and received legal approval following the Treaty of Batumi in June 1918. As a result, the territory of the Republic of Ararat included two districts - Erivan and Echmiadzin with a total area of 10,000 square kilometers and 400,000 inhabitants in both.<sup>14</sup> However, during 1918-

1920, based on the principle of actual settlement, Armenia tried to expand its borders and establish control over all the districts and parts of the Erivan and Yelizavetpol governorates, which bordered on the Azerbaijan Republic and in which Armenians lived, even if they were a significant minority here.

During the negotiations at the Batumi peace conference in May 1918, the heads of the Armenian and Azerbaijani delegations reached an agreement that Azerbaijan will not object to the proclamation of Erivan as the capital of Armenia and in response to this gesture of goodwill, Armenia will give up claims to a part of the Yelizavetpol governorate, i.e. the mountainous part of Karabakh. Members of the Azerbaijani National Council (ANC), H. Khasmammadov, M. Y. Jafarov, A. Sheykhulislamov and M. Maharramov, described the report of the prime minister of the Azerbaijan Republic, F. Kh. Khoyski, at the ANC meeting on 29 May 1918 about the decision to cede Yerevan to Armenia as a necessary evil. Sixteen delegates from the 28 members of the ANC voted for solving the issue in favor of the Armenians, one voted against and three abstained. At the meeting of the ANC on 1 June 1918, the ANC members representing the Erivan governorate who voted for the independence of Azerbaijan - Mir Hidayat Seyidov, Mir Bagir Rzayev and Narimanbay Narimanbayov - protested against the decision to cede Erivan to Armenia. However, the ANC attached this protest to the minutes of the meeting without discussion. At the same meeting, members of the Council decided to send a delegation to Erivan in connection with the issue of ced-



*A sample of Azerbaijani architecture of Erivan. The "House of Panah Khan". From the book "Yerevan". V. Arutyunyan, M. Asatryan, A. Melikyan. Yerevan, 1968, p.89*

ing Erivan to Armenia and organizing relief for refugees. The delegation included M. H. Seyidov, M. B. Rzayev and M. Yu. Jafarov.<sup>15</sup> Speaking on the issue at the next meeting on 7 June 1918, M. B. Rzayev uttered prophetic words: "I am sure that none of you will go to the Erivan governorate, we, Erivan people, will go there, me and Seyidov, but we ask you for one thing: having formed your own independent Azerbaijan, do not forget about us left on the territory of the Republic of Armenia."<sup>16</sup> At the meeting of the ANC on 13 June 1918, a member of the Council, Ibrahim Aga Vakilov, reported about the plight of 150,000 Erivan refugees roaming the districts, saying that epidemics are rampant among them and there are daily deaths from starvation; so there is a need for help with food, clothing and household utensils. He finished his speech by listing the number of victims and named 206 devastated

13 Государственный Архив Азербайджанской Республики (ГААР), ф. 970, оп. 1, д. 1, лл. 26-27.

14 Гурко-Кряжин В. Армянский вопрос. Баку, 1990, с.27

15 ГААР, ф. 970, оп. 1, д. 1, лл. 51, 52.

16 ГААР, ф. 970, оп. 1, д. 1, лл. 55, 56.



*A sample of Azerbaijani architecture of Erivan. "A pool outside the Goy mosque in Erivan". From the book "Lynch H.F.B. Armenia, travels and studies. 1901, vol.2, p.214"*

Muslim villages of the Erivan governorate.<sup>17</sup>

On 19 June 1918, the Armenian government moved from Tiflis to its new capital. An editorial in the government newspaper Azerbaijan on 25 September 1918 expressed the hope that "now that the center of an old Muslim khanate – the city of Erivan – has been ceded to the Armenians with a pain in the heart, Dashnaktsakans should, no matter how difficult it is, forget enmity toward the Muslims of the Caucasus and try to establish good relations with them."<sup>18</sup>

According to Paragraph 6 of the 4 June 1918 Treaty of Batumi with Ottoman Turkey, Armenia undertook to ensure the safety and free development of Muslims living in its territory and create conditions for education in their mother tongue and for their religious rites. However, the policy of ethnic cleansing carried out by the govern-

ment of Armenia in 1918-1920 to drive the Azerbaijanis out of their native lands had truly tragic consequences for the Azerbaijani population, first of all, in the Erivan governorate. According to the Caucasian calendar for 1917, the Azerbaijani population of the Yerevan governorate was 423,123 (37.7 per cent) people.<sup>19</sup> Azerbaijanis were in a majority in three (Nakhchivan – 59 per cent, Sharur-Daralagoz - 66.7 per cent and Surmali – 63.6 per cent) of the seven districts of the Erivan governorate. In addition, as stated above, before the formation of the Republic of Ararat, Armenian gangs destroyed about 200 Azerbaijani villages in the districts of the Erivan governorate, where Azerbaijanis were outnumbered by the Armenians (Alexandropole – 6.7 per cent, Echmiadzin – 31 per cent, Novobayazet – 23.7 per cent and Erivan - 45.5 per cent).<sup>20</sup>

As a result of the successful offensive of the Turkish troops in May 1918, a significant part of the Erivan governorate came under their control. The Treaty of Batumi with Armenia legally confirmed the presence of Turkish troops in these areas. After the declaration of the independence of the Azerbaijan Republic, Armenia made claims to the districts of the Erivan governorate, which were under the military control of the Turkish army and the Muslim population of which considered themselves to be part of the Azerbaijan Republic, and tried to clear the districts of the governorate, which became part of Armenia, from Muslims once and for all. A report from the chairman of the Azerbaijani delegation

in Istanbul, M. E. Rasulzada, to Foreign Minister M. Hajinski on 4 August 1918 noted that Armenia is not leaving attempts to revise the Treaty of Batumi, sending drafts of the border they want to Enver Pasha. These drafts were accompanied by maps and statistics, in which Armenia demanded Turkish sanjaks: Surmali, Nakhchivan, Akhalkalaki, Echmiadzin and Erivan; Borchali District from the Georgians, and Gazakh, Karabakh, Zangezour and Ordubad districts from Azerbaijan. They tried to substantiate these claims by saying that the Armenians allegedly constituted 70 per cent of the population of these territories.<sup>21</sup> After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the withdrawal of its troops from the territory of the South Caucasus began in November 1918. From that time, the Muslim population of the Erivan governorate was once again massacred by the Armenian armed forces.

In a note sent to the Armenian government on 7 January 1919, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Azerbaijan Republic A. Ziyadkhanov protests at the seizure by Armenian government troops of the districts of the Erivan governorate which are inhabited mainly by Muslims and are an integral part of the Azerbaijan Republic. At the same time, Ziyadkhanov indicates that the number of Muslims who drowned while crossing the Aras River to escape Armenian attacks was 300.<sup>22</sup> In a response from Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ararat S. Tigranyan, the Armenian side was forced to admit facts of mass violence against the civilian border Muslim rural population, which

17 ГААР, ф. 970, оп. 1, д. 6, л. 1.

18 Газета «Азербайджан», 25 сентября 1918 г.

19 Azərbaycan Xalq Cümhuriyyəti Ensiklopediyası. 2 cildə, c. 2. Bakı, 2005, s. 53

20 Azərbaycan xalqına qarşı 1918-ci il mart soyqırımı, 3 cildə. 2-ci cild, 2-ci kitab. İrəvan

21 Азербайджанская Демократическая Республика. Внешняя политика. (Документы и материалы). Баку, 1998, с.46-49

22 Газета «Азербайджан», 7 января 1919 г.



involved Armenian officers and army units. Although S. Tigranyan tried to promise that the Armenian government was taking steps to restore order, punish the culprits, resettle Muslims in their villages and return their property,<sup>23</sup> information coming out of Armenia testified to the opposite.✿

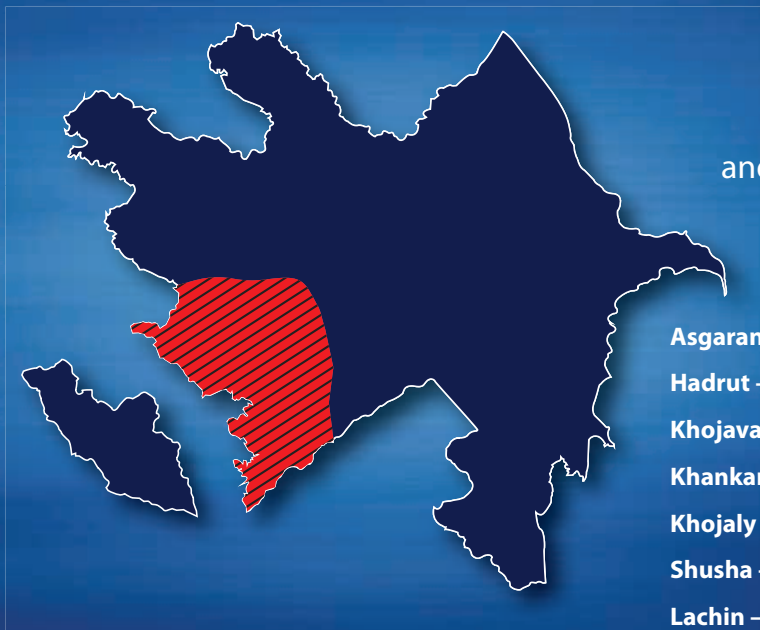
*To be continued in the next issue*

*A sample of Azerbaijani architecture of Erivan.  
“The Sardar Palace in Erivan”. Artist Prince G.Gagarin. The 1840 s*



23 ГААР, ф.970, оп.1, д.41, л.13.

## THERE IS NO AZERBAIJAN WITHOUT KARABAKH



Azerbaijani districts  
occupied by Armenia  
and dates of their occupation

|                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Asgaran – 1991       | Agdara – 07.07.1993   |
| Hadrut – 1991        | Agdam – 23.07.1993    |
| Khojavand – 1991     | Kalbajar – 02.04.1993 |
| Khankandi – 1991     | Fuzuli – 23.08.1993   |
| Khojaly – 26.02.1992 | Jabrayil – 23.08.1993 |
| Shusha – 08.05.1992  | Gubadli – 31.08.1993  |
| Lachin – 18.05.1992  | Zangilan – 29.10.1993 |

