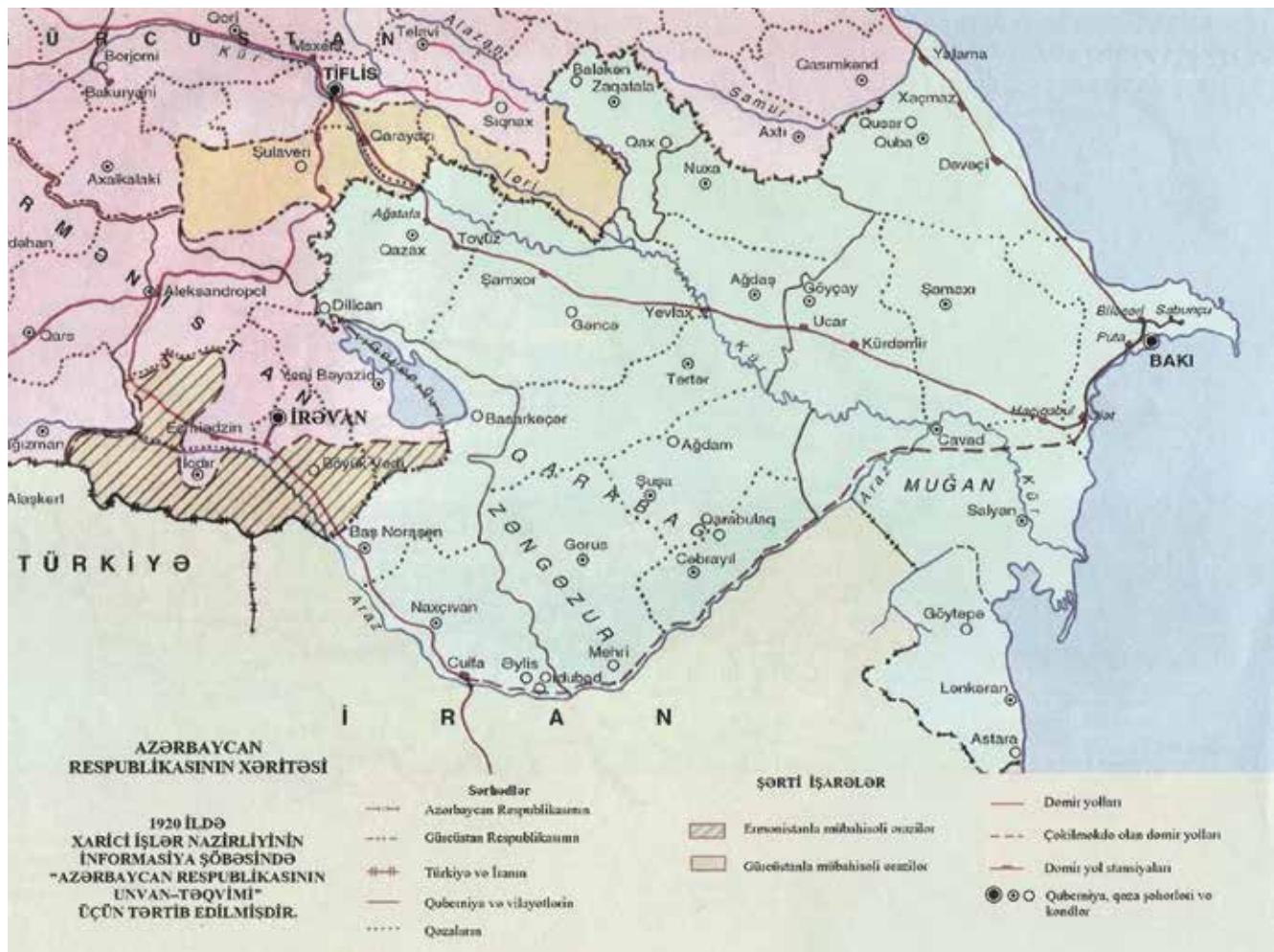


## NATIONAL SECURITY CONCEPT OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN IN GOVERNMENT DECLARATIONS OF 1918-1919

In the complex military and political situation that developed both inside and around the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918-1920 against the background of acute geopolitical rivalry between the great powers in the entire Caucasus-Caspian region, the primary task facing the Cabinet of Ministers was the development and implementa-

tion of a set of important practical measures to ensure the country's national security. The national security concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan found its clearest expression in the declarations of the third, fourth and fifth Cabinet of Ministers read out from the parliamentary rostrum on 26 December 1918, 14 April and 22 December 1919.

*Map of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. It is based on the map from the ADR address calendar of 1920*



### *Fatali Khan Khoyski*

The declaration of the third Cabinet of Ministers, which Prime Minister Fatali Khan Khoyski read out at the 26 December 1918 session of the parliament, specially noted that “the first and most important task” of the government will be the strengthening of the independence of Azerbaijan. At the same time, “independence does not mean alienation from other nations” through the construction of a “Chinese wall”. This meant that “free Azerbaijan can and will, in fact, enter into a close relationship with other states that formed in the territory of Russia, as well as with central Russia itself.” (1)

In the cause of strengthening the country’s international position the government pinned great hopes on the forthcoming participation of the Azerbaijani delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, where it was necessary to enlist the support of “free America, democratic Britain and republican France”, which favored Azerbaijan’s independence, and to secure its recognition by the world community.

As for relations with neighbors, the declaration specifically noted that Azerbaijan “has no aggressive intentions towards anyone and wants to resolve all disputable issues peacefully”. (2). The declaration expressed Azerbaijan’s willingness to act with an intermediary mission in the Armenian-Georgian armed conflict that took place in that period. In general, the peacefulness of the foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan was expressed in the desire to “establish friendly relations in the diplomatic and economic spheres” with all neighboring states.

However, given the realities of that time, the government considered the organization of a “military force capable of preserving the integrity of the country’s territory” to be one of its main tasks, i.e., the military doctrine of the Republic of Azerbaijan was purely defensive in nature. Further, the government document noted the need to provide the armed forces of the republic with “everything necessary: weapons, ammunition, food, etc”. (3) The declaration also placed considerable emphasis on ensuring the country’s food security and restoring its transport infrastructure, and envisaged a number of practical measures to solve them.

Continuity in the matter of ensuring the country’s national security can also be seen in the declaration of the fourth Cabinet of Ministers, which was read out by the chairman of the government N. Usubbayov at the 29th session of the parliament on 14 April 1919. Pointing



out real threats to the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan connected with growing separatism in Mugan by anti-Azerbaijani forces entrenched there and also the fact that “in the parts of Erivan and Tiflis provinces belonging to Azerbaijan we encounter those wishing to spread and consolidate their power in these areas”, the prime minister expressed hope for a peaceful settlement of all disputable issues through negotiations “with mutual respect for the legitimate rights of each side”. (4)

The prime minister stressed that “Azerbaijani Turks, who have been groaning under the name of ‘aliens’ for more than a century and have been limited in their spiritual and economic life, should be equally tolerant of all nationalities living in Azerbaijan, giving them an opportunity to preserve all their cultural and national peculiarities along with their religion” and that “the government will make every efforts to make Azerbaijan a home for all peoples inhabiting it... It will make every effort not to allow outbreaks of national hostility and will nip them in the bud”. (5) The declaration also expressed solidarity with the Mountain Republic, which was waging a heavy armed struggle against Denikin’s Volunteer Army (6).

The government declaration also gave significant prominence to issues of strengthening and developing the economic potential of the state as one of the most important and necessary conditions for strengthening the independence of Azerbaijan. Noting that the stable development of the country and the implementation of reforms “can be ensured by the presence in the state of a corresponding real force that guarantees the country both material and moral power”, the head of government, to the applause of members of parliament, declared that “the cornerstone of the government’s activities will be to take care of our army, and its needs will be the subject of its special attention”. (7) The government also undertook to “pay due attention to the duties of citizens, especially intelligent and compassionate ones, with respect to their sacred duty of compulsory military service, evasion from which will be punished to the fullest extent of the law”. (8)

The final part of the declaration expressed the hope that, with the full unity of all parties represented in the parliament, the government will be able to implement all the planned measures to strengthen the state in the issue of Azerbaijan’s independence.

In the declaration of the fifth Cabinet of Ministers announced at the 109th meeting of the parliament held on 22 December 1919, Usubbayov reported the establishment of control over Lankaran county. It was especially noted that “despite the endless violence, oppression and robberies that took place there, our brave troops took the county without causing any harm to any person. The government consigned all crimes committed before the liberation of the county to oblivion and thus proved that the Azerbaijani people are cultured and know how to forget all the pain and resentment in the fight for high ideals and the happiness of the homeland”. (9)

Touching upon the Karabakh issue, the prime minister pointed to the danger of the annexation of the Zangezur county by Armenia: “For hundreds and thousands of years, Zangezur has been an integral part of Azerbaijan,” he emphasized, “so it is clear that nothing will come out of this intrigue”. Here, Usubbayov recalled Azerbaijan’s commitment to the peaceful resolution of all issues and pointed the way to this goal by “accepting the condition for recognizing the cultural rights of the Armenian national minority and taking it under the real care of the government”. Pointing out the measures taken by the government in this direction, the prime minister specifically noted that “the future of Azerbaijan and Armenia is related to issues of ensuring the rights of the national minority”. (10)

The government declaration gave significant prominence to relations with neighboring states - Georgia, Armenia, Turkey, Iran and Russia. The prime minister noted with satisfaction the great importance and role of the Azerbaijani-Georgian defense pact concluded on 27 June 1919 for both states in defense against external enemies and expressed the government’s determination to further strengthen it. As for Armenia, the declaration expressed hope for a peaceful settlement of all disputable issues and that “a close relationship and a lasting friendship will be established between the Caucasian republics in the near future”. It particularly stressed that a future “confederation or other forms of union ... should also include the North Caucasus Republic”. (11) Expressing again solidarity with the mountain people, who were engaged in a heavy struggle against Denikin in the North Caucasus, the government realized that “the destruction of the independence of the mountain people is a serious threat to our independence”. (12)

Touching upon relations with Turkey, which was engaged in the elimination of the grave consequences of the war, the declaration expressed the hope that “in the future, closer relations, eternal friendship and sincere neighborliness will be established between the two Turkic states, free and independent”. Turning to relations with Iran, the prime minister noted significant positive steps to establish formal diplomatic relations between these “sister states”. (13)

The declaration noted regretfully that “none of the forces fighting in Russia can or will believe that it will not be able to reach Russia’s former borders and that the establishment of a new great-power state over self-determined peoples is an empty chimera”. Given this real threat to the independence of Azerbaijan from both White and Red Russia, the government declared its resolve “to prepare for a fight until the last gasp to protect our independence from the forces that threaten it”. (14)

Noting the great successes achieved in military building in the republic in 1919, the prime minister stressed the need to strengthen the institution of military service in Azerbaijan, which is the sacred duty of every citizen. And he pointed to the existing shortcomings in military affairs due to the crisis in the country’s economy. The situation was also greatly aggravated by the presence in the country of over 150 thousand refugees from the Erivan province. (15)

The final part of the declaration expressed confidence that despite all difficulties experienced by the republic during this period, “we are ready to sacrifice everything to

*ADR parliament building. Photo of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century*



protect our independence, and party and group interests should be sacrificed for this independence". (16)

Analyzing the contents of the declarations of the Cabinet of Ministers of Khoyski and Usubbayov, it is necessary to single out, in our opinion, the following basic parameters of the national security concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918-1920:

- Conducting a peace-loving foreign policy towards all states of the world without exception, as well as a stake on an exclusively peaceful settlement of all territorial disputes with neighbors at the negotiating table;
- The desire to ensure collective security in the region by forming a union of Caucasian states in confederal or other forms;
- Comprehensive development of the economic potential of the republic and, above all, ensuring its food security;
- Strengthening of internal political stability, especially in the field of interethnic relations through the strict observance of all democratic norms and freedoms in relation to all national minorities that inhabit the republic;
- Suppression of any manifestations of separatist tendencies within the country by all means;
- Priority government activities in the field of military building and formation of national armed forces capable of ensuring the territorial integrity of the country.

In general, many aspects of the national security concept developed during the first Republic of Azerbaijan have not lost their historical significance and political relevance for Azerbaijan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. 🌟

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