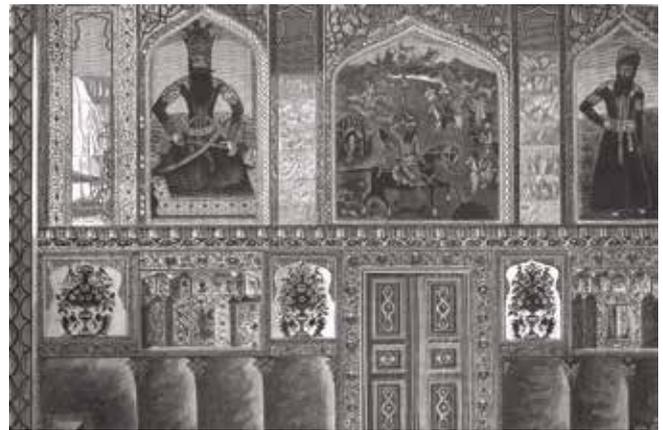


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# ACCOMMODATION OF REFUGEES FROM CAUCASIAN ARMENIA IN THE ADR (1918-1920)

*Paintings of Sardar Palace in Irevan  
in late 19<sup>th</sup> century*

The recent tragic expulsion of the autochthonous Azerbaijani population from Caucasian Armenia in 1988 is not a coincidence. It has historical roots. After the Bolshevik coup in Russia in October 1917, in conditions of anarchy, the Armenians managed to create their own state, the Ararat Republic, in the native lands of Azerbaijan, in the territory of the Erivan province. Not content with this, the Dashnak leaders declared territorial claims to neighboring countries - Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia. As a result of bloody pogroms and ethnic cleansings committed by Armenian nationalists in the Erivan province, Kars region, and Zangezur and Karabakh districts, hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were expelled from their homes and found refuge mainly in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Archival documents, as well as newspapers of that time contain numerous facts that irrefutably prove the systemic and carefully thought out character of the deportation of Azerbaijanis from the territory of Armenia. This is also confirmed by some Armenian authors. For example, A. Lalayan wrote in his "Historical Notes": "The extermination of Azerbaijanis by Armenians began long ago and was raised to the level of state policy. Is it any wonder that during the rule of the Dashnaks, during their 30-month stay in power (May 1918-November-1920), 60 per cent of the Azerbaijani population was exterminated?" [18, 80].



Note that pogroms and, accordingly, the flow of refugees began already at the end of 1917, that is, a few months before the formation of both republics. During this period, as old state institutions disintegrated, a special department at the Muslim (Azerbaijani) National Council dealt with refugee problems. With the formation of the ADR, this department was transformed into the Ministry of Health and Charity headed by Kh. Rafibayov [4, 186]. By a government decree of July 13, 1918, the ministry was instructed to take the most energetic measures to broadly organize assistance to refugees with the involvement of charitable societies and public organizations [4, 212-213]. On October 6, 1918, the ministry was divided into two independent depart-

*Map showing the territories where Armenian armed forces and regular troops carried out genocide against the Azerbaijani population in 1918-1920*

ments: the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Charity. The latter was headed by Dr. Musa bey Rafiyev [4, 240].

During 1918, most of the refugees in Azerbaijan were Azerbaijanis who fled Armenia and settled in different regions of the country. In March 1918 alone, 199 Muslim villages with a population of more than 135,000 people were devastated and depopulated in several counties of the Erivan province [14, 3-7], while 82 other villages were destroyed in the Kars region. Beginning from January 1919, under the influence of the bloody ethnic cleansing of the Azerbaijani population in Zangezur, after its incorporation into Armenia, up to 40,000 inhabitants of the upland part of this district fled to Jabrayil, Shusha and Javanshir districts of Azerbaijan.

To clarify the situation of refugees from Zangezur, the government sent a commission headed by the head of the refugee section of the Ministry of Charity, MP Klinevski. Members of the commission, who had previously met with refugees from other regions, were shocked by the state of refugees from Zangezur. Klinevski described his impressions in a report: "The appearance of a refugee from Zangezur can make even the most callous hearts, which are alien to compassion, tremble. Thin, robbed figures of refugees with inflamed eyes, shivering with cold, dressed in tattered rags, and with yellow malarial faces make an indelible impression. A particularly miserable, nightmarish impression is made by children and orphans ... I worked in the refugee organization from the very beginning of the refugee crisis on the Caucasian front, I saw thousands of refugees in the territory of Turkey and the Caucasus. Those refugees made the same depressing impression on me. But the horrors of that refugee crisis fade before the horrors of Zangezur ... Everyone has to shout about the plight of Muslim refugees, we must make full use of public and private charity. Few people know that there are Muslim refugees too and that they are doomed, if we do not come to their aid, to true extinction" [8, p. 20-24]. According to the commission, in Zangezur alone 119 Muslim villages were destroyed, and at least 50,000 people became refugees, while the material damage

*Paintings of the Sardar Palace in Irevan were a unique example of Azerbaijani monumental painting of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries*



amounted to 1 billion rubles. People died so that they did not have time to bury them, and they spent days lying near the villages unburied (8, 23). The author of the report, the future minister of charity, Klinevski, considered it inappropriate to resettle refugees in the territory of Azerbaijan on an ongoing basis. Emphasizing that all refugees want to return to their homes as soon as possible, he suggested taking the most "effective measures to protect refugees from possible attacks on them upon their return to their native villages, as well as to restore their destroyed homes" [8, 25].

Meanwhile, the atrocities of Armenian bandit groups against the Muslim population of Zangezur and other counties continued throughout 1919 and in early 1920, causing new flows of refugees [21, 123-125]. The true goals of the Armenian chauvinists were also well understood by the inhabitants of these counties. Thus, Mir Hidayat Seyidzadeh, chairman of the National Committee operating in Ordubad, in a memorandum sent to the Council of Ministers of Azerbaijan back in December





*On Russian postcards depicting Irevan in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the distinctive element of the city was Azerbaijani mosques*

1918, pointed out that “the Armenians set out to massacre the entire Muslim population of Zangezur, Sharur, Nakhchivan and Ordubad counties and cleanse all counties from Muslims so as to prove their rights to these areas at the future conference of peoples (meaning the Paris Peace Conference – K.I.), as they are sure that all people will recognize the counties free from Muslims as belonging to Armenians. For this reason, Armenians massacre our inhabitants in thousands, our blood flows, and our honor is trampled on under the feet of Armenians. Everywhere you look, there are Muslim refugees, and women and girls can be heard crying everywhere. Thus, by the time of universal peace, the entire population will be evicted from here, and when the peace conference discusses the issue of delimitating the territory based on the ethnographic characteristics of the population, we will naturally have to say goodbye to these areas forever” [15, 1989, No. 2, 130-131].

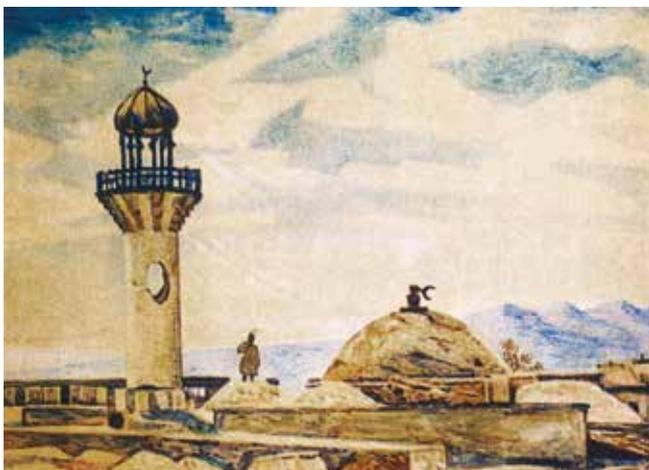
On the recommendation of the commission, it was decided to organize committees in several places - Ganja, Barda, etc. to provide urgent assistance to needy refugees [8, 20]. As for the Muslim refugees remaining in the territory of Armenia, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Charity took all measures to facilitate their situation. By

the decree by the ADR government on the formation of the governorate general in Southwest Azerbaijan, 150,000 rubles were allocated from February 28, 1919, for the needs of the Muslim refugees in the territory of the Republic of Armenia and 850 thousand rubles for the refugees of Southwest Azerbaijan (Nakhchivan). In the same resolution, the Minister of Charity was instructed to submit a plan of work for the provision of financial assistance to the refugees of this region [7, v. 1, 101].

To coordinate assistance to the affected Muslims in Armenia, the government of Azerbaijan issued a special resolution on June 2, 1919, to establish in Yerevan a post of authorized minister of charity, [4, 312], who was Z. Makinski. Upon his arrival in Armenia, he, together with the local Muslim National Council, began active work in this direction.

The Ministry of Agriculture and partly the Ministry of Internal Affairs were also involved in the reception and resettlement of refugees. However, due to the uncoordinated work of individual agencies and the lack of a coordinating body, the issue of carrying out work with refugees of all categories remained virtually unresolved. In order to finally resolve the issue of settling Muslim refugees from Armenia, as well as return refugees and settlers who left Azerbaijan for various reasons, the government of the republic decided on June 23, 1919, to form a central commission, and in provincial and county cities - local commissions [9a, 59]. According to the Ministry of Charity of Azerbaijan, the total number of refugees within the Republic of Azerbaijan reached 107,164, of whom 97,897 were Muslims, 8,469 were Armenians, 498 were Russians and 300 were Jews [7, 197-198]. On August 11, 1919, the government approved the work plan of the central committee, granting it the right to communicate with international organizations through the foreign minister [8, 22].

Implementation of the plan to accommodate refugees was entrusted by the government to the Minis-



*Artist Bahruz Kangarli. Mosque with its minaret punched with a shell. 1920. The artist witnessed the expulsion of Azerbaijanis from Armenia in 1918-1920 and reflected what he saw in a number of paintings in 1920-1922*

*Artist N. Bayrishov. Refugees*

try of Charity. Refugees who were in Azerbaijan were divided into two categories: 1) refugees and migrants who once left Azerbaijan and returned to their former places of residence (mainly Russians and Armenians), and 2) refugees who arrived in Azerbaijan from other states (mainly Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia). On the recommendation of the Central Commission, first-category refugees could be resettled without a specific government decision, although this caused a number of new difficulties, since in some areas their homes and lands were already occupied by other refugees. Therefore, the government had to decide which of the persons who had left Azerbaijan earlier could be resettled in the same place and in what order, and taking into account the lack of suitable land and funds for accommodating refugees, whether refugees from neighboring republics would settle in Azerbaijan.

The main task of the government was to accommodate refugees from Armenia and Zangezur. As a result of the bloody ethnic cleansings committed by the Armenian regular troops (especially in the summer and autumn of 1919), the majority of the Muslim population of the Ararat Republic turned into refugees deprived of their homes and doomed to starvation. According to the authorized representative of the Ministry of Charity of Azerbaijan in Armenia, T. Makinski, no more than 200 thousand Muslims remained in the territory of Armenia [6, 60], including almost the entire Azerbaijani population of Erivan, parts of Zangibasar district and Echmiadzin county, who were also attacked many times and

had their houses and lands seized by Armenians - immigrants from Turkey. During the bloody pogroms the most able-bodied people died, and mostly helpless women, children and the elderly survived, who also died of hunger, cold and sickness in thousands without receiving necessary assistance. As noted in the Makinski report of February 11, 1920 on the situation of Muslim refugees in Armenia [6, 60-62], it was not possible to establish the exact number of dead, and it was estimated at approximately 100,000-120,000. About 50,000 Muslims, mainly from Novo-Bayazet county, moved to Azerbaijan; approximately the same number was in Erivan, Zangibasar district, the second section of Surmali county and in Echmiadzin county. The remaining refugees moved to Nakhchivan county, Sharur sector, the third sector of the Surmali county and the Kagizman county of the Kars Region [6, 60a]. According to various sources, at that time there were about 120,000 refugees in Nakhchivan [19, No. 218]. There were also those who independently moved to Turkey and the Maku Khanate [13, 10-11]. As a result of the genocide committed by the Dashnak regime, by the end of 1919 - the beginning of 1920, the Novo-Bayazet, Echmiadzin, Surmali and Irevan counties of the Irevan province were completely cleared of the Muslim population. According to M. Avdeyev, in total about 300 Muslim villages with a population of 250,000 were devastated throughout the Irevan province [1]. Another author, Z. Korkodyan, reports that during Dashnak rule (1918-1920), 565,000 Muslims were killed, wounded and expelled from Armenia, as a result,



*Artist B. Kangarli. Refugee*

at the time of the establishment of Soviet power there were only a little more than 10,000 Azerbaijanis in this republic [17, 185; 20, 33]. Unfortunately, even after the establishment of Soviet rule, ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis continued in Armenia. Even in 1922, after the return of 60,000 Azerbaijanis, the total number of indigenous people in the Armenian SSR was only 72,596 people [16, 66].

Under these circumstances, Makinski proposed to resettle Muslim refugees - residents of Erivan, Zangibasar district, Surmali county and Kars region partly to Sharur and Nakhchivan, and partly to other regions of Azerbaijan [6, 61]. In our opinion, this proposal was erroneous, as it actually led to a reduction in the number of Azerbaijanis on the territory of Armenia and changed the national composition in favor of Armenians. Unfortunately, the leadership of Azerbaijan occupied the

same position in 1948-1953 and 1988-1989, thereby essentially contributing to the policy of Armenian nationalists to turn Armenia into a mono-ethnic republic. As for the refugees who stayed on the territory of the Republic of Armenia, Makinski offered to help them on the spot. When providing assistance to refugees living outside of Azerbaijan, he proposed to divide them into three categories: 1) those who live in Erivan, Zangibasar district, second section of Surmani county and Echmiadzin county; 2) those who live in the Sharur section and Nakhchivan county; 3) those who live in the third sector of the Surmali country and neighboring Kagizman county. Due to the lack of sufficient food, assistance was provided only to refugees of the first category [6, l. 61a]. In a memorandum to Azerbaijan's Minister of Charity D. Rafiyev, Makinski offered to supply refugees with food, seeds and agricultural equipment, organize shelters for children and almshouses for women and old people and open dining rooms and hospitals. The ministry submitted to the parliament a bill on rendering assistance to the Muslim population of Armenia. The allocated funds in the amount of 3 million rubles [10, 1] were used at the end of July 1919 to send 15 wagons of flour, wheat, millet and barley to Erivan. The aid was distributed at a rate of 10 pounds per capita for 1 month, and an outpatient clinic for Muslims was opened. To help Muslim refugees traveling from the Erivan province and the Kars region to Azerbaijan, in November 1919 a representative of the Ministry of Charity was sent to Tiflis to organize mobile buffets along the route of refugees and give cash grants for the journey.

Two of such buffets were opened - at the Ashagi Sarap station and near Tiflis [2, 301]. By the decree of the government dated October 15, 1919, an additional 2 million rubles were allocated to provide material assistance to the Muslim refugees in Armenia [3, 1919, October 26].

Along with the above, the ADR undertook political and diplomatic efforts for the prompt and, as far as possible, painless resolution of the refugee problem. To this end, the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs repeatedly sent a note to the government of Armenia demanding "effective measures to eliminate encroachments on the sovereign rights of Azerbaijan and to stop the atrocities being committed by the Armenian troops over the Muslim population both within the Azerbaijan

*Artist B. Kangarli. Refugee boy*

Republic and in Armenia itself". On June 10, 1919, a telegram was sent to the foreign minister of Armenia signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Adilkhan Ziyadkhan. The telegram stated that after the proclamation of the independence of the Transcaucasian peoples, bloody events took place within Armenia and Azerbaijan, which resulted in the emergence of "a huge number of refugees, both Armenians and Muslims". Considering that an "impartial and fair investigation of these events and their causes and the adoption of radical measures to prevent a possible recurrence of them in the future, as well as the resolution of a very acute refugee issue can serve as the only reliable guarantee for the establishment of desirable normal relations", the government of Azerbaijan invited the Armenian side to set up a mixed government-parliamentary commission of representatives of both republics for this. The Azerbaijani side did not oppose the admission of representatives of "civilized nations of Europe and America" into the commission if the government of Armenia finds it necessary [3, 1919, June 25; 11, 6].

Unfortunately, the further course of events did not make it possible to achieve the goals. Moreover, in late 1919 - early 1920, as a result of the purposeful policy of expelling the Muslim population conducted by the Armenian Dashnak government, a large number of Azerbaijani refugees were forced to leave their homes and seek shelter in Azerbaijan. ❀

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