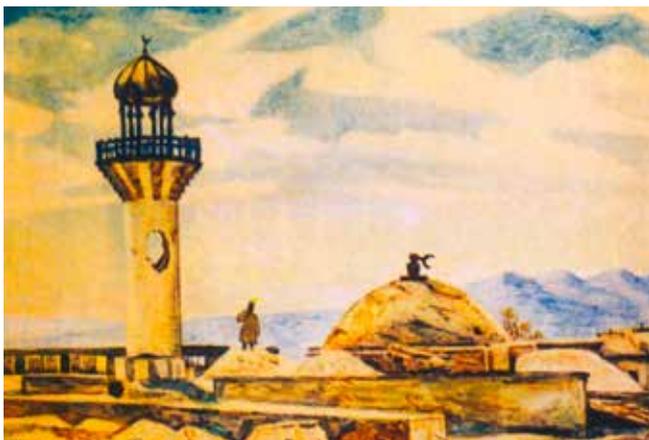


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GENOCIDE AND DEPORTATION OF THE AZERBAIJANIS OF ERIVAN PROVINCE (1918-1920)

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Painter B. Kangarli. The mosque whose minaret was broken by a shell. 1920. The painter witnessed the expulsion of Azerbaijanis from Armenia in 1918-1920 and reflected what he saw in a number of paintings in 1920-1922.

In July 1919, the government of the Republic of Armenia organized several military expeditions against the Muslim population of Boyuk Vedi. In a telegram from

the diplomatic representative of Armenia to Azerbaijan, T. Bekzadyan, the Armenian side considered the Azerbaijani government protests against such actions of the Armenian government as interference in its internal affairs. Bekzadyan, trying to justify these actions, said that the Muslims were to blame for them as they had allegedly failed to obey the government of Armenia, and cynically claimed that “there were no citizens of white and black bone in Armenia.” In response to the Foreign Ministry of Armenia on 2 August 1919, the plenipotentiary representative of Azerbaijan to Armenia, M. Tekinski, refutes the false statements of T. Bekzadyan with specific facts: “Almost daily, I receive verbal and written complaints from Muslims about killings, night attacks on their homes by Armenians in police uniform, robberies on the streets of Erivan and on the roads of Zangibasar, Vedibasar, Garnibasar and other districts. When asked why Muslims of Boyuk Vedi dared to fight Armenia, Boyuk Vedi residents point to more than 300 Muslim villages that were destroyed by Armenians and several tens of thousands of Muslim men, women and children killed by



Armenians, and based on the circumstances that occurred, especially after the murder of two of their delegates, Boyuk Vedi residents arrived at the firm belief that in any case, they would share the fate of destroyed villages and killed Muslims. In view of the incredible and unprecedented violence in Armenia perpetrated by Armenians against Muslims almost every day - robberies and murders, most Muslim villages in Armenia keep to the belief of Boyuk Vedi residents, and that's why in their protests on incorporation into Armenia, Muslims of whole areas ask to be incorporated into any state, but not into Armenia, or to temporarily establish any rule over them, but not Armenian rule until the end of the peace conference".¹

Despite repeated protests from Azerbaijan, the Armenian government did not think it necessary to take any action to improve the situation of Muslims. In a note dated 6 August 1919, the Armenian side reiterated that for the government of Armenia there were no "citizens of white and black bone." On the day of the delivery of this note to the Azerbaijani side, 17 August 1919, the Armenian administration, with the direct participation of the Armenian police, began to exterminate Muslims of Echmiadzin, Surmali, Erivan and

Novobayazet counties. In a short time, from 17 to 31 August, they killed Muslims in up to 50 villages of Echmiadzin, Surmali, Erivan and Novobayazet counties. These horrific atrocities forced even the Armenians themselves, members of the Armenian parliament, the Socialist Revolutionary Party, to raise the following question in the Armenian parliament: "Comrade Speaker of the Parliament. Please put the following question to the Minister of Internal Affairs. Is Mr. Minister aware that in the last three weeks, in the territory of the Republic of Armenia in Erivan, Echmiadzin and Surmali counties, a number of Tatar (Azerbaijani – I.N.) villages such as Pashakand, Takarla, Gorug- Guna, Ulalik of the Tayshuruh society, Agveran, Dalellar , Purpus, Alibay of the Arzakand society, Jan Fida, Karim Arkh, Agjar, Igdalu, Karkhun, Kelani-Aroluk of Echmiadzin county and a number of other villages were cleared of the Tatar population and were subjected to looting and massacres. The local government not only did not prevent it, but even participated in the looting and riots that occurred. These events left a very heavy impression on the local population that looks at these robberies and excesses with disgust, wanting to live in peace with its neighbors, and demands a trial and due punishment for the culprits

1. Азербайджанская Демократическая Республика. Внешняя политика. (Документы и материалы), с.303-307.



Painter B. Kangarli. Refugee. 1921. Painter Bahruz Kangarli (1892-1922), a graduate of the Tiflis art school, in 1920-1922 painted a series of portraits of Azerbaijani refugee children expelled from Armenia.

that went unpunished. If all this is known to the Minister of Internal Affairs, what measures did he take to address these atrocities and violence? The question is to be considered urgent. The faction of the Socialist Revolutionaries in the Parliament of Armenia.²

Assessing the recent bloody events in Yerevan province and describing the economic plight of the Muslim population of the province on 2 September 1919, the authorized representative of the charity minister of the

Azerbaijan Republic in Armenia, T. Makinski, wrote to the ADR charity minister: "The events of recent days have made the situation of Muslims tragic. The 50-60 villages that returned to their places are devastated again, and the surviving part of the population, leaving their property and bread in the barns has run away... up to 150,000 Muslims emigrated from Novobayazet, Erivan and Echmiadzin counties. Currently, a relatively small number of Muslims remain within the borders of Armenia, but this number decreases with each passing day under the pressure of looting and fear of it. Today there are almost no Muslims in Novobayazet district. In Erivan county, in areas subordinated to the Armenian government, there are no more than 25,000 Muslims, in Echmiadzin as many (25,000), and in Surmali (again, only in areas subordinate to the Armenian government) - 15,000. Also, 13,000 refugees and locals are living in Erivan. In Alexandropol county there have always been few Muslims. Thus, taking into account the needy Muslims of Erivan Province, the figure of its population will be a maximum of 80,000 - a minimum of 70,000 souls. The position of the Muslim population is horrible: they do not have stocks of grain or seeds or agricultural equipment or livestock and for the most part - they are homeless. They are hungry, exhausted and desperate because of their plight. The vast majority of the Muslim population in the territory of Armenia has no crops, and those who were not exposed to new pogroms are unable to use their land (leased and captured)."³ In the last two months of 1919, Armenian armed units devastated again 62 villages of Echmiadzin, 34 villages of Sumali and all the Muslim villages (except Zangibasari) in Erivan county.⁴ As a result, according to the Charity Ministry, by the end of 1919 the number of refugees from the devastated Muslim villages of Novobayazet, Erivan and Echmiadzin counties amounted to 200,000 persons. Most of them settled in Nakhchivan, Sharur, Gazakh, Ganja and Shamakhi.⁵ In a report from acting governor-general of southwestern Azerbaijan, S. Jamilinski, to the Karabakh governor-general, H. Sultanov, in October 1919, the tragic fate of the refugees from Armenia was described in the following way: "The situation and the suffering of old and new refugees due to the lack of financial and medical assistance defies description: they were mown down by hunger, they die by the hundreds every day; mother desperately throw their children into the river and strangle them to save them

2. ГААР, ф. 970, оп. 1, д. 184, л. 16-17.

3. Azərbaycan xalqına qarşı 1918-ci il mart soyqırımını. 3 cildə. II cild, 2-ci kitab: İrəvan quberniyasının soyqırımını. 1918-1920-ci illər, s.194.

4. Список мусульманских селений, разгромленных армянами за последние два месяца 1919 г. ГААР: Ф. 894. оп. 10, д. 80, л. 31-33.

5. История Азербайджана по документам и публикациям, с.173, 174, 176

from the terrible suffering of starvation. Fathers abandon their families and disappear, leaving them to fate, and they do not want to see their beloved children die from hunger and disease.”⁶

On 22 September 1919, ADR Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Yu. Jafarov sends telegrams to the Supreme Allied Commissioner in the South Caucasus Colonel William Gaskell, in which he informs the latter of the latest developments in the Erivan province. The telegram expresses confidence that the Supreme Allied Commissioner would take drastic measures to stop unlawful actions and agrees to the establishment of an international commission of inquiry, which will impartially investigate the culprits and that the latter will face the retribution they deserve regardless of their status and nationality.⁷ On 14 October 1919, Azerbaijan newspaper reported that Colonel Gaskell sent a query to the Armenian government in this regard, which did not deny the available evidence of violence against Muslim citizens and promised to take action and appoint a commission to investigate these sad events on the ground.”⁸

However, the peace initiatives undertaken from time to time by the Allied powers in the Caucasus and attempts to draw a border between Armenia and Azerbaijan were doomed to failure and were to no avail. Armenia simply sabotaged and “ignored” the unsuitable decisions of the Allies Administration, continuing to pursue a policy of ethnic cleansing in the Muslim areas of the Erivan province. The long diplomatic correspondence between Azerbaijan and Armenia with the mediation of representatives of the Allied Powers failed to produce results too. The Armenians were true to themselves: verbally declaring their commitment to peace, they shamelessly violated all treaties, agreements and obligations. Asked why this was being done, one could hear the eternal reference to Turkish agents, who allegedly incited the population against the authorities, forcing them to quell the riots of the Muslim population. Thus, the Armenian authorities tried to absolve themselves of responsibility and make Turkey a culprit of their atrocities. The main reason was that the Armenian government lacked a territory dominated by its Armenian population. Armenian villages even on the territory of Armenia were surrounded by Muslim masses everywhere. To settle Turkish Armenians repatriated to their “future homeland” it was required to prepare territories cleared of Muslims. From this situation, a monstrous plan was born and carried out to exterminate the Muslims and



Painter B. Kangarli. Girl with a shawl. 1921

populate the territories cleared of them with Armenian immigrants from Turkey. The position of the Allies (Britons and Americans) on such actions by the Armenians remained neutral as a whole, and they tried to extract maximum benefit from it. In the period 1918-1920, the Western powers did not have a single policy on the conflicts between the republics of the South Caucasus. The developments in the South Caucasus were mainly considered in the context of a final solution to the issue of power in Russia.

The policy of genocide and deportation pursued by the government of Armenia in 1918-1920 against the Muslim population of the Erivan province graphically demonstrated that the Armenians, boasting of their “civility”, were in fact not mature enough to have their own state, let alone manage other peoples. In this regard, the confessions of prominent political figures of the time, including Armenians, are quite eloquent. The first prime minister of the Republic of Ararat, Hovhannes Kachaznuni, recognizes that the cause of Armenia’s constant wars with its neighbors was “its own impotence, our political immaturity and inability to lead

6. Azərbaycan xalqına qarşı 1918-ci il mart soyqırımı. 3 cilddə. II cild, 2-ci kitab: İrəvan quberniyasının soyqırımı. 1918-1920-ci illər, s.261.

7. Азербайджанская Демократическая Республика. Внешняя политика. (Документы и материалы), с.352

8. Газета «Азербайджан», 14 октября 1919 г.

the state apparatus.” Specifically referring to relations with Azerbaijan, Kachaznuni was forced to admit the existence of multiple instances of violence against the Azerbaijani population, citizens of Armenia. The reason, according to him, was the fact that the Armenian government “failed to develop acceptable relations with Azerbaijan and to establish order in the Muslim areas with administrative measures. Therefore, they resorted to arms, moved troops and destroyed and organized massacres, which undermined the prestige of the government.” According to Kachaznuni, the government had bloody battles with the Muslim population in Agbab, Zod and Zangibasar”, and in such important points as Vedibasara, Sharur and Nakhchivan, they failed to establish their authority even by force of arms, were defeated and retreated. In our time, people were being wiped out in the war and died of hunger. We destroyed such bread-rich areas as Sharur and Vedi, such an area rich in cattle as Agbaba – we ravaged them without using these resources. That’s the bitter truth. We must have the courage to recognize this truth and draw the necessary conclusions.”⁹

In the article “On Armenian imperialism” in 1919, another well-known Armenian politician Anastas Mikoyan called the policy of the Dashnak government of Armenia towards Muslims “Armenian imperialism with its specific and reactionary nature.” Mikoyan wrote: “As a result of this policy, the entire Muslim population of Armenia was removed from power, terrorized by bandit gangs who were ready to reduce the foreign ethnic element in Armenia out of their love for blood and for patriotic reasons, and wipe out as many of them as possible.” He described all this as “rampant Black-Hundred Dashnak chauvinism.”¹⁰

The former US ambassador to Turkey, Rear Admiral Mark Bristol, made a very definite statement about the policy of the Armenian government against the Muslim population: “In the last two years (1919-1920 – I.N.) Armenians in the Russian Caucasus have shown an absolute inability to manage themselves or treat minorities under their authority.”¹¹

Facts of mass violence against the Muslim population of Yerevan province are also reflected in the works of Armenian historians. B. Boryan wrote: “In the Armenian republic, politicians have established state power not for the purpose

of governing the country, but for the extermination of the Muslim population and the seizure of their property.”¹² Armenian historian A. Lalayan noted: “During the dictatorship of counter-revolutionary Dashnaksutyun (1918-1920) all non-Armenians were considered beyond the law. During the two and a half years of its rule, Dashnaksutyun waged an armed struggle against the Azerbaijanis living in Armenia, killing and looting civilians indiscriminately and destroying peaceful villages.”¹³

After the overthrow of the ADR government and the Sovietization of Northern Azerbaijan in April 1920, in the face of the continued aggression of Dashnak Armenia, the flow of refugees from Armenia and territories of Yerevan province bordering on it under the control of the government of Soviet Azerbaijan did not stop. Under the pretext of “stopping the confrontation” in Zangibasar and Vedibasara, the Dashnak government tried to clear these areas up to Julfa from the Azerbaijani population. According to the preliminary calculations of representatives of the Nakhchivan Zangibasar delegation, the results of which were published in Communist newspaper on 15 October 1920 in the article “On the situation in the Nakhchivan-Zangibasar area”, it was established that the property of the residents of Zangibasar, Vedibasara, Nakhchivan, Sharur, Shahtakhti and Daralagoz was totally looted, 500,000 people were literally impoverished, more than 45,000 refugees died from hunger and diseases and some 70,000 refugees were in Iran. The rest of the 400,000-strong population settled in the suburbs of Nakhchivan in the open air, hungry and half-naked.¹⁴

Violence committed by the Armenian armed units against the Azerbaijani civilian population caused serious concern in the government of Soviet Azerbaijan. The telegram sent on 5 July 1920 by the People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan M. D. Huseynov to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia (copies to G. Chicherin, the diplomatic representative of Armenia to Georgia T. Bekzadyan, and diplomatic representative of the Russian Federation to Georgia, S. Kirov) said: “My government considers such aggressive actions of the Armenian government as the start of a war against Soviet Azerbaijan and demands the immediate cessation of any attack by Armenian military units.”¹⁵ However,

9. Качазнуни О. Дашнакцутюн больше нечего делать, с.33

10. Российский Государственный Архив Социально-Политической Истории (РГАСПИ), ф.5, оп 1, д.1202, л.8

11. Армянский геноцид: миф и реальность. Справочник фактов и документов. Баку, 1992, с.245

12. Борьян Б.А. Армения, международная дипломатия и СССР: В 2-х томах. Т.1, М.; JL.: 1928, с.83

13. Лалаян А.А. Контрреволюционная роль партии Дашнакцутюн // Известия АН Азерб. ССР. Серия Истории, философии и права, 1990, № 1, с.58-59

14. Газета «Коммунист» 15 октября 1920 г.

15. ГААР, ф.28, оп.1, д.99, л.119