

DEPORTATION OF AZERBAIJANIS FROM ARMENIA (1948-1953)

Part 1

The resettlement of the Azerbaijani population from Armenia to Azerbaijan was closely connected with the attempts of the Soviet leadership after World War II to expand their borders at the expense of Turkey. In conjunction with the resolution of this problem, active work was carried out among Armenian national groups in the United States, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East in order to repatriate them to their "historical homeland". In turn, the possibility of mass repatriation gave the leadership of the Armenian SSR a convenient excuse to hope to expand the boundaries of the republic not only at the expense of the territory of Turkey, but also of neighboring Azerbaijan. Thus, in a letter to Stalin in November 1945, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia, G. Arutinov, made a proposal to separate Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan and incorporate it into Soviet Armenia.¹ In response, the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Azerbaijan SSR, M. J. Bagirov, made counterclaims, and after that, the issue was withdrawn.² However, the Armenians still cherished the hope that Soviet leader Josef Stalin would use the growing authority of the country in the world after the victory over Germany and be able to solve the "Armenian question" by expanding the southern



Ruins of the Irevan fortress

borders of the country at the expense of Turkey. From the summer of 1945, G. Arutinov inundated the Kremlin with letters and certificates, which later evolved into two streams. The first stream was based on the desire of foreign Armenians to return to Armenia and the second one, which logically followed from the first one, was on the need to expand the territory in order to accommodate the returnees. Besides the official party leadership of Armenia, the project for the repatriation of foreign Armenians also actively involved the Armenian Church in Echmiadzin, which recovered from the

1. Депортация азербайджанцев из Армянской ССР (1948-1953 гг.). Сборник документов. Баку, 2013, док. № 2, с.75-76
2. Ibid, док.№ 3, с.77-79

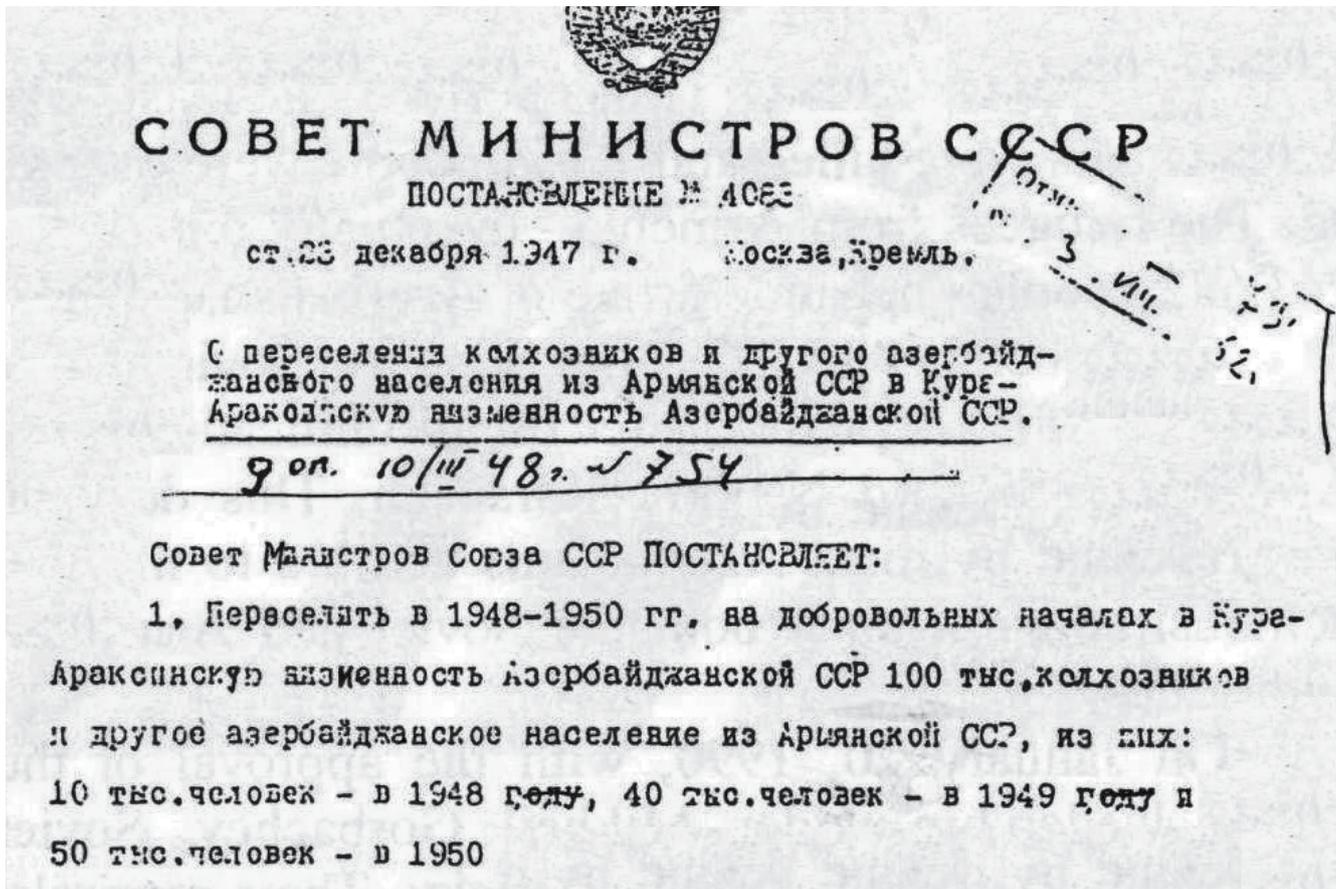
Destruction of the Palace of Irevan khans, irrefutable historical evidence

Stalinist repression in the second half of the 1930s and resumed its activities in 1945. In 1945, the new Armenian Catholicos George VI Chorekchyan appealed to Stalin on behalf of the Armenian people: "We have great hopes that the government and diplomatic wisdom of the Soviet Union will find means and ways to eliminate this injustice, which our people suffered during World War I." On 21 November 1945, the Soviet government issued a decree allowing the mass repatriation of Armenians to Soviet Armenia, in which the church was given the role of a link between Armenia and the Diaspora. In this connection, on 27 November 1945 the Armenian Catholicos issued an appeal to the religious leaders of the Diaspora, who had "particularly important responsibilities to use their authority, skillful tongue and impressive speech" to promote the success of this campaign. The Armenian Catholicos addressed the heads of the three great powers - the Soviet Union, the US and Britain, asking them to put pressure on Turkey so that it returns 'Armenian territory' to Soviet Armenia.³ Many Armenians from Iran, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, France, Greece, America, etc. (about 100,000) believed the promises of a prosperous life when moving to Soviet Armenia. However, Arutinov

soon began to send complaints to Moscow, saying that he had nowhere to accommodate and no food for the repatriates, who had been invited hoping for new territories (however, instead of the expected 360,000-400,000, only 90,000 Armenians returned to Soviet Armenia). It is no coincidence that by the beginning of 1947 Armenian repatriates started making frequent attempts to cross the border of the Armenian SSR and

Azerbaijani tombstones in Urus village

3. Гасанли Дж.П. СССР-Турция: от нейтралитета к холодной войне (1939-1953). М.,2008,с.278



Resolution on the deportation of the Azerbaijani population from Armenia

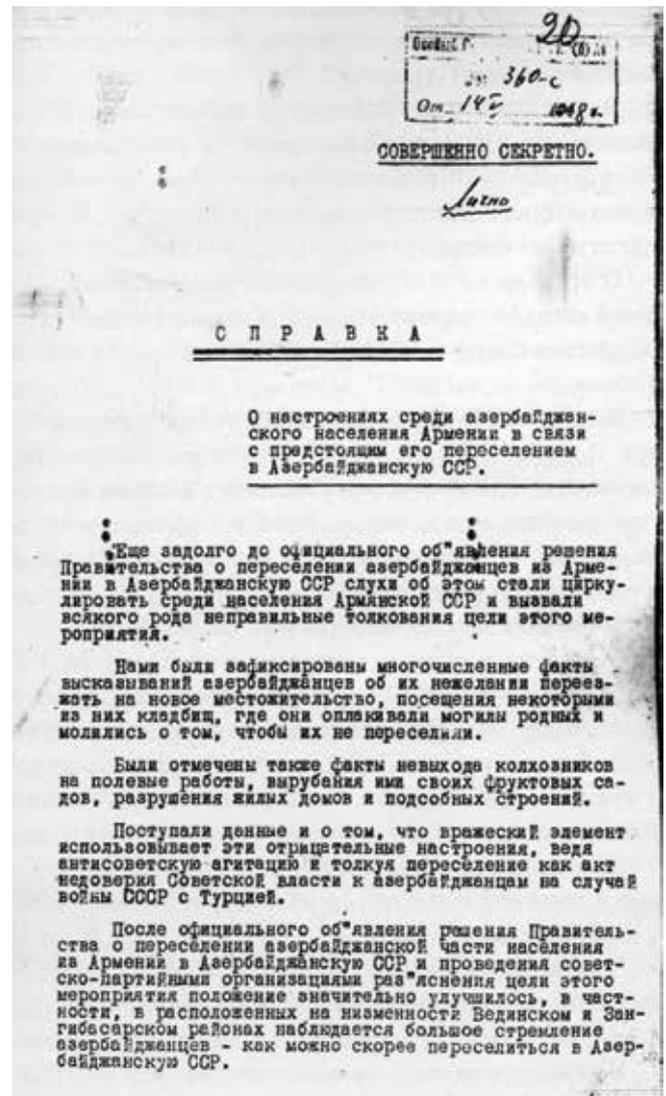
through Turkey, to return to their country, where they lived much safer lives. These attempts largely failed. People who lived in more acceptable conditions and in more democratic countries faced the Soviet reality and experienced a deep disappointment, but the way back to their home countries was already closed. Under these conditions, an idea of compensation was proposed for the dashed hopes of Armenians to expand their “historical homeland” by humiliating and violating the rights of the Azerbaijani minority in Armenia. Thus, an idea was proposed to partially resettle the Azerbaijani population from Armenia to Azerbaijan. There is no doubt that the initiative of this project came from the Armenian government and was supported by Moscow. However, in order to present this action as nonviolent and purely voluntary, Moscow had to arrange things so that the initiative came from the republics themselves who had previously agreed on it between themselves. Among archival documents, there is a draft text of a joint letter to Stalin from the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, M. J.

Bagirov, and the first secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia, G. Arutinov, dated 3 December 1947. The letter contains an explanation of the reasons for the need to resettle the Azerbaijani population from Armenia to Azerbaijan. It said: “Having exchanged views on some issues that arose as a result of economic developments in the Azerbaijan and Armenian Republics in recent years, we are writing to you with the following proposal: The withdrawal of new lands from irrigation while building the Mingechavir systems and the shortage of workers in the existing collective farms and cotton-growing regions, as well as the task of increasing the yield of cotton raises the question of the need to increase the population in these regions of the Azerbaijan SSR. A real solution to this issue would be the resettlement of 130,000 Azerbaijanis living in Armenia to these areas. The resettlement of the Azerbaijani population from Armenia to Azerbaijan would facilitate significantly conditions for receiving and putting up Armenians returning home from foreign countries. The lands and homes vacated as a result of the resettlement of the Azerbaijani population could be used

Report showing the negative attitude of the Azerbaijanis towards deportation from native lands in Armenia

for accommodating peasants from foreign Armenians arriving in Armenia.⁴ However, this document does not have its own outgoing number and the signatures of the leaders of the two republics, and the date is only on the Armenian copy.

Whatever it was, on 23 December 1947, Stalin signed a resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR "On the resettlement of collective farmers and other Azerbaijani population from the Armenian SSR to the Kura-Aras lowland of the Azerbaijan SSR". According to this document, 100,000 people were to be resettled, including 10,000 in 1948, 40,000 in 1949 and 50,000 in 1950. At the same time, the document demonstrated hypocrisy very typical of the Soviet system. It pointed to the need to resettle people "on a voluntary basis", but used the imperative - "to move". Although those resettled were granted concessions and loans, in fact, they were deprived of their property, primarily personal homes inherited from their fathers and grandfathers. This gave a start to the deportation of Azerbaijanis from Armenia. The document, which had no introductory part and immediately began with the resolution, was prepared in a hurry. The essence of such haste in the preparation of this resolution is revealed by its last 11th point. Here we read: "Allow the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR to use the buildings and homes vacated by the Azerbaijani population due to their resettlement to the Kura-Aras lowland of the Azerbaijan SSR for the resettlement of foreign Armenians arriving in the Armenian SSR."⁵ Typically, in order to implement such an action, preparations were carried out on the ground in advance. In the case of the Azerbaijani population of Armenia, such work began to be carried out only in February 1948. According to the National Economic Accounting Department and the Ministry of Agriculture of the Armenian SSR, 25,000 families or about 110,000 Azerbaijanis lived in Armenia prior to their resettlement in 1948. Of them, only 9,000 families or 35,000 people lived in low-lying areas, while the remaining 75,000 lived in the highlands of the Armenian SSR.⁶ The 2 February 1948 resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR instructed the chairmen of the executive committees of Salyan, Saatli, Sabirabad, Ali-Bayramli, Pushkin, Agjabadi and Hilli districts to carry out extensive explanatory work in the



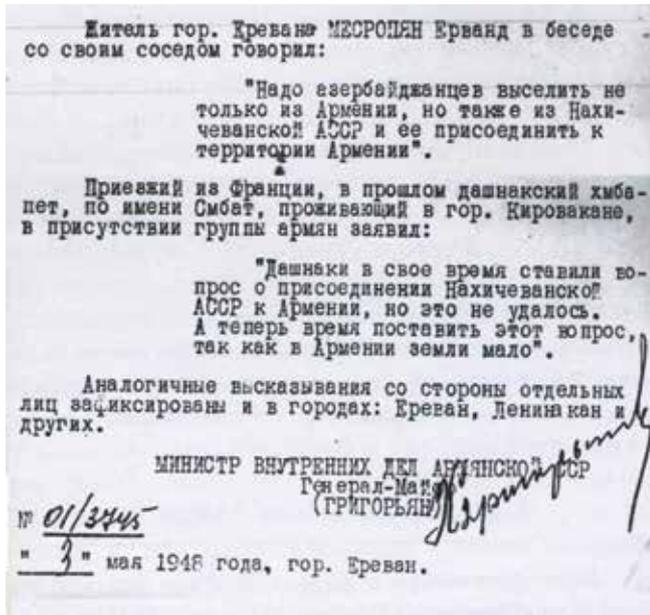
collective farms on the order, conditions and economic-political importance of resettlement in order to ensure timely preparations for the orderly conduct of all activities related to the resettlement of 10,000 farmers and other Azerbaijani citizens from the Armenian SSR to the Kura-Aras lowland of the Azerbaijan SSR on a voluntary basis in 1948.⁷ It is interesting that by the time of the publication of this resolution, the first wave of settlers began to illegally cross the administrative border of the Azerbaijan SSR and seek residence in areas remote from the Kura-Aras lowland. These facts were reported from the end of December 1947 in Gadabay, Gazakh, Shamkir, Ganja, Goygol districts and other places. Interesting information

4. Депортация азербайджанцев из Армянской ССР (1948-1953 гг.). Сборник документов, док. № 4, с.79-80

5. Ibid, док.№ 5. С.81-83

6. Ibid, док. № 239, с.542

7. Ibid, док.№ 6, с.83-86



Report showing the reaction of the Armenians to the deportation of the Azerbaijanis from Armenia

on this subject is contained in a memorandum from the chief of the Migration Department under the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR, N. A. Brutents, to the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR, T. Guliyev, on 15 March 1948 on the situation of families resettled from Armenia to Ganja and its districts in December 1947 and in early 1948. The note says that settlers, about 50 families, are mostly living in the village of Yeni-Yerevan. Before the arrival, most of them worked in the system of the Ministry of Trade and Public Catering of Armenia so due to the lack of work, they were jobless.⁸ On 23 November 1949, the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Vedi District Council, A. Mammadov, informed the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR that in 1948-1949, more than 700 Azerbaijani families moved to different regions of Azerbaijan without permission from Vedi District alone⁹. To prevent such unorganized resettlement of Azerbaijanis from Armenia, in a telegram to the chairmen of district executive committees and secretaries of district party committees of Azerbaijan on 3 March 1948, the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan

SSR, T. Guliyev, and the first secretary of the ACP (b), M. J. Bagirov, instructed them not to allow individuals and families who illegally migrated from Armenia to settle in district collective farms. The telegram demanded an immediate report on the number of illegally resettled families and their whereabouts. It was banned to receive settlers who had no relevant documents from the Council of Ministers of Azerbaijan, who had to be sent to Baku for preliminary talks.¹⁰ A similar warning was issued in March 1950.¹¹ However, despite the measures taken, according to the 1 August 1951 note from the head of the Resettlement Administration under the Council of Ministers of Azerbaijan, N. D. Allahverdiyev, in 1948-1951 more than 1,000 farms left their public property and collective farms of the Armenian SSR illegally, in an unorganized manner and without resettlement tickets and moved to certain areas of the Azerbaijan SSR.¹² Among the settlers from Armenia there were also those who had officially appealed to local authorities to resettle them in the territory of this or that district. In most cases, such appeals received a positive decision. However, since the benefits envisaged by the Council of Ministers of the USSR dated 23 December 1947 for the population resettled to the Kura-Aras lowland did not extend to these settlers, the living conditions of the arbitrarily displaced population was also unbearable.

On 10 March 1948, there appeared a new resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR "On measures to resettle collective farmers and other Azerbaijani population from the Armenian SSR to the Kura-Aras lowland of the Azerbaijan SSR".¹³ Following this resolution, the resettlement became organized. The Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic created a Resettlement Administration, whose chief was Deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Azerbaijan SSR for Personnel Mammad Jafarov. In the Armenian SSR, a representative office of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR was opened, which was specially engaged in resettlement issues. Aztorg Director Mursal Mammadov was appointed a representative of the government of the Armenian SSR. The resolution for all practical operational issues of resettlement was assigned

8. Ibid, док. № 10, с.93-94

9. Ibid, док. № 150.с.337-338

10. Ibid, док.№ 7, с.88

11. Ibid, док. № 190, с.424-425

12. Ibid, док. № 249, с.563

13. Ibid, док. № 9,с.90-93

Soviet posters advocated friendship among peoples, while in reality whole peoples were resettled

to the deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR, Azizaga Azizbayov (son of Mashadi Azizbayov, who was executed in September 1918 among the so-called 26 Baku commissars). By the decree of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Azerbaijan on 19 March 1948, Azizbayov was instructed to develop specific practical measures for the implementation of the 23 December 1947 and 10 March 1948 resolutions of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and submit them for approval by the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR in a ten-day period. A trip to the Armenian SSR by the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR, T. Guliyev, and Agriculture Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Azerbaijan, G. Seyidov, to agree the timing and procedure of the resettlement of the Azerbaijani population from Armenia was considered appropriate.¹⁴ Soon the process of compiling lists of districts of the Armenian SSR, from which Azerbaijanis had to be resettled in 1948, begins. According to a memo from the representative of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR in Armenia, M. Mammadov, T. Guliyev and M. J. Bagirov on 12 April 1948, Azerbaijanis had to be resettled from 53 population centers of Armenia.¹⁵ The resettlement plan was finalized in the text of the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR dated 13 May 1948. According to this resolution, it was planned to resettle 2,757 households or 12,177 people from Spandaryan and Stalin districts of Yerevan, as well as from Basarkechar, Vedi, Artashat, Noyemberyan, Oktemberyan, Zangibasar and other regions of Armenia in 1948, i.e. more than stated in the 23 December 1947 resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.¹⁶ From Yerevan alone, 105 households with a total of 400 people were accommodated in the collective farms of Absheron.¹⁷ The plan was arranged so that in 1948, not a single Azerbaijani was to remain in Echmiadzin, Oktemberyan and Beria districts. Moreover, as follows from the 13 May 1948 resolution, the lack of real opportunities to accommodate all settlers in districts of the Kura-Aras lowland forced the republic's leadership to instruct the chairmen of the regional executive committee of the NKAR, the Baku City Executive Committee, the executive committees of the



district councils of deputies and workers in Mashtaga and Azizbayov districts of Baku, Gadabay, Khanlar, Shamkhor, Safaraliyev, Gasim-Ismayilov, Guba, Goychay, Agjabadi, Barda, Salyan and Agstafa districts to identify and prepare vacant houses for settling migrants.¹⁸ Earlier, in response to queries from Baku about the possible accommodation of settlers, local authorities in Samukh, Karyagin, Khudat, Siyazan, Khizi, Tartar, Zangilan, Pushkin, Imishli, Salyan and Neftchala districts, as well as the Nakhchivan ASSR and the NKAR prepared information. Basically, the local authorities explained that there is an urgent need for manpower. In general, the documents show that the geography of the planned resettlement of migrants in Azerbaijan covered almost all districts of the country.

Among the archival documents, we can find numerous complaints from settlers about difficult living

14. Ibid, док. № 13, с.99-100

15. Ibid, док. № 11, с.95-96

16. Ibid, с.43

17. Ibid, с.171-176

18. Ibid, док. № 59, с.168-170



Fortress Agtala. Lori mahal of the Irevan khanate (nowadays - the Tumanyan area Republic of Armenia)

and cultural conditions. Numerous examples about the disadvantaged situation of settlers are listed in notes of the Republic's Resettlement Department sent to the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR. They show that in the Azerbaijan SSR, compatriots were not received with outstretched arms. For example, in August 1948, 131 families (570 people) were resettled to Martuni District in Nagorno-Karabakh. However, the settlers ended up in extremely difficult conditions. The leaders of the region ignored signals and complaints from settlers about their difficult living conditions. District organizations did not provide the settlers with their benefits and pensions for war veterans, mothers with many children and disabled veterans of the Great Patriotic War. School and cultural services for migrants were in a poor condition.¹⁹ As a result, under the pretext of internal resettlement, 132 households, 529 Azerbaijanis were evicted from the NKAR to Khanlar District in 1949.²⁰ Thus, the Azerbaijanis were evicted from the NKAR, although in the 27 May 1949 report by the chief of the Resettlement Department of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan Republic, it was proposed to resettle the population to Mardakert

District of the NKAR, especially as this district was part of the Kura-Aras lowland zone. The settlers themselves also insisted on it.²¹ At the T. Guliyev farm in Agjabedi, three families lived in one room. Many migrants had their roofs leaking and had no doors and windows.²² In April 1949, the Hero of the Soviet Union and deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR, Khidir Mustafayev, complained to the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR about the authorities of Khanlar District who had put up his relatives in a basement and a shed that did not meet elementary living standards.²³ In December 1949, 30 households moved to the Azizbayov collective farm in the village of Garalar in Imishli District. In a note from the Commission of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR, which was engaged in verifying the economic situation of migrants, we read: "The 15-strong family of Kamal Hasanov lived in a room with an area of 14 sq. m, settler Murad Ali Nuriyev and his family of eight souls lived in a shed, settler Mukhtar Valiyev with a family of 8 souls lived in a dugout, settler Khanum Oruj gizi Mammadova, whose son died in the war, lived in a dugout without doors, covered with straw and so on

19. Ibid, док. № 98, с.251-254

20. Ibid, док. № 134, с.318

21. Ibid, док. №124, с.291-293

22. Ibid, док. № 97, с.248-250

23. Ibid, док. № 116, с.279



Fortress Agtala. Here ancient Azerbaijani burials are found. Since the XIII century there is the Georgian monastery, since the XVIII century – Greek. The first Armenians lodged here only in 1922. However nowadays all monuments (Turkic, Georgian, Greek) are declared by the Armenians as their own

with her family of eight souls.”²⁴ In November 1950, a telegram from Ujar stated that 52 families brought to the Ujar station for resettlement in Zardab District have been spending the night under the open sky for a month.²⁵ In a statement by residents of Vedi District of the Armenian SSR resettled to the village of Goshagovag in Agdash District, which was forwarded to the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR on 23 April 1953 on behalf of 24 families, we read: “In October 1952, we moved from Vedi District of the Armenian SSR to Agdash District. Upon arrival, they promised to build new homes for us, but we are still squeezed in homes whose owners demand that we vacate them as soon as possible. 10-12 people are living on 15-16 square meters.”²⁶

Interestingly, not only the Azerbaijani population of Armenia, but also the Azerbaijani Department of Yerevan Pedagogical Institute and Azerbaijani Pedagogical College was also subjected to relocation. Apparently, the authors of the resettlement plan hoped that with the eviction of the entire Azerbaijani population from

Armenia, training for Azerbaijani pedagogical staff will no longer be needed. As a result, on 1 July 1948, the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR adopted a special resolution under which the Azerbaijani sector of Yerevan Pedagogical Institute was to merge with Azerbaijan Lenin State Pedagogical Institute. As a result, the relevant departments and courses of Azerbaijan Pedagogical Institute accepted 149 students of literature, history and physics-mathematics faculties. Azerbaijan State Pedagogical Correspondence Institute accepted 257 teachers. According to the same decree, Azerbaijan Pedagogical College, located in Yerevan with a student population of 232 people and with a correspondence department of 108 people, was fully transferred and relocated to Khanlar.²⁷ The mass exodus of Azerbaijanis from Armenia also coincided with the renaming of local Turkic names. The period 1945-1950 saw the peak of this campaign, which resulted in more than 240 Turkic place names being replaced with Armenian ones on the territory of the Armenian SSR.²⁸ 🌱

24. Ibid, док. № 202, с.448

25. Ibid, док. № 216, с. 481

26. Ibid, док. № 283, с.653-654

27. Ibid, док. №70, с.193-194

28. «Vandalizm: tarixi adlara qarşı soyqırım» kitabında gətirilən cədvəllər əsasında hesablanmışdır. Bakı, 2006, s.7-42