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# DEPORTATION OF AZERBAIJANIS FROM ARMENIA

AFTER WORLD WAR II, THE TERRITORIAL CLAIMS OF THE SOVIET UNION TO TURKEY, STRONGLY SUPPORTED AND WHIPPED UP BY THE ARMENIANS, EVENTUALLY HAD TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES FOR THE AZERBAIJANIS. IN NOVEMBER 1945, THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY GAVE PERMISSION FOR THE RESETTLEMENT OF THE ARMENIANS LIVING ABROAD TO SOVIET ARMENIA, WHILE ON 2 DECEMBER A CORRESPONDING RESOLUTION OF THE USSR COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS WAS PUBLISHED IN THE MEDIA. THE MOVE WAS DRIVEN BY SOVIET LEADERS' PLANS TO LAY GROUNDWORK FOR FUTURE TERRITORIAL CLAIMS TO TURKEY.

Stalin intended to resettle around 360-400 thousand people to Armenia and then tell the world that the Armenians have returned to their homeland, but have nowhere to live. However, the firm stance of the Turkish government in safeguarding the country's territorial integrity dis-

rupted the Kremlin's plans. **Despite a large-scale propaganda campaign, the Soviet Union failed to move the required number of Armenians. By 1947, only 60,000 Armenians were repatriated from various countries but even they wanted to return to their previ-**

**ous places of residence after seeing the plight of their "homeland".**

Things reached a point when hundreds of Armenians illegally crossed the state border and fled to Turkey. In order to improve the living conditions of the settlers and give them land, Stalin decided to deport

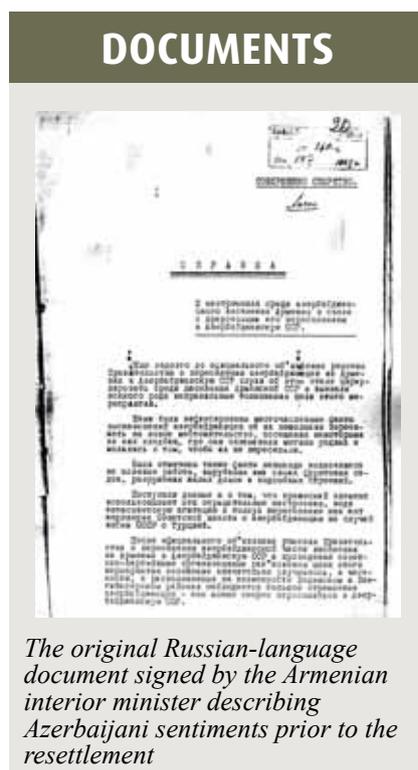
Armenia's Azerbaijani population. On 23 December 1947, Decision No 4083 was issued by the USSR Council of Ministers "On the resettlement of farmers and other Azerbaijani population from the Armenian SSR to the Kura-Aras lowland of the Azerbaijan SSR". The document signed by Stalin indicated that 100,000 "farmers and other Azerbaijani population" would be resettled to the Kura-Aras lowland on a voluntary basis in the 1948-1950, of which 10,000 people in 1948, another 40,000 in 1949 and a further 50,000 in 1950. Resolution No 115/2043 of the USSR Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars "On benefits for the rural population" dated 17 November 1937 was applied to the Azerbaijani displaced persons.

The resolution from 23 December 1947 was concocted in haste, so the USSR Council of Ministers passed a second resolution on 10 March 1948, "On activities pertaining to the resettlement of farmers and other Azerbaijani population from the Armenian SSR to the Kura-Aras lowland of the Azerbaijan SSR". It made the conditions for resettlement somewhat easier and envisaged compensation for those abandoning their property. However, **the 10 March resolution was of cosmetic nature, dealt with organizational issues only and did not alter the essence of deportation.**

In full accordance with the totalitarian spirit of those days, the first sentence of the 23 December 1947 resolution spoke of a "voluntary basis" of the process. The emphasis on the voluntary nature of the campaign was intended to add a touch of humanism to the deportation. But what actually happened and what was the reaction of the Ba-

sarkecher, Vedi and Zangibasar population? To answer these questions, we will cite a document prepared by the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Armenian SSR, Maj-Gen Grigoryan, on 3 May 1948. The document describes "the mood of the Azerbaijani population of Armenia over the forthcoming resettlement to the Azerbaijan SSR". The 11-page paper exposes the "voluntary" nature of the resettlement. It says, "Long be-

**relatives are buried and prayed for staying."** Considering the fact that some nations who have been subjected to deportation in the past are now raising the issue with the Council of Europe, we would like to disclose this rare historical document that reflects the attitude of Armenian authorities towards the deportation of Azerbaijanis from their ancestral lands and demonstrates the general cruelty of those days.



*The original Russian-language document signed by the Armenian interior minister describing Azerbaijani sentiments prior to the resettlement*

fore the official announcement of the government's decision on the resettlement of the Azerbaijanis from Armenia to the Azerbaijan SSR, there were rumors circulating in the Armenian SSR that led to a wrong interpretation of the purpose of the process." Further, the document says, **"We have documented numerous statements by Azerbaijanis expressing reluctance to move to a new place. Some have visited cemeteries where their deceased**

### STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

#### **On the mood of the Azerbaijani population of Armenia over the forthcoming resettlement to the Azerbaijan SSR.**

"Long before the official announcement of the government's decision on the resettlement of the Azerbaijanis from Armenia to the Azerbaijan SSR, there were rumors circulating in the Armenian SSR that led to a wrong interpretation of the purpose of the process. We have documented numerous statements by Azerbaijanis expressing reluctance to move to a new place. Some have visited cemeteries where their deceased relatives are buried and prayed for staying. There have been cases when farmers refused to do field work, cut down their own orchards, destroyed houses and ancillary buildings.

Reports have been coming in that hostile forces are taking advantage of these sentiments to conduct anti-Soviet propaganda and **interpret the resettlement as an act of Soviet authorities' distrust towards Azerbaijanis in the event of war between the USSR and Turkey.** After the official announcement of the government's decision to resettle the Azerbaijani population of Armenia and the work



want to go ourselves." The chairman of the collective farm in the said village, Ali Karimov, told farm workers, "The issue of resettlement of Azerbaijanis has been raised in vain. Many farmers do not want to go." In the villages of Ibish, Dashkerin and Chivinli, farmers Abdulla Bayram oglu Mamedov, Ali Abdulla oglu Alahverdiyev and Dzhaar Irza gizi Mamedova are destroying their homes and selling construction materials.

## 2. ON ZANGIBASAR DISTRICT

Farmer from the Zangilar village Sultan-Ali Rahim oglu Namazov said in a conversation with village farmers, "I have been to the Karakishlag village, where a representative of the Party's Central Committee told a meeting that the Azerbaijanis would

the collective farm office, "Why are we working on the farm after all? All our efforts are in vain and will only benefit the Armenians. In general, it is difficult to live with them, they are oppressing us and aren't giving us suitable jobs even on the farm."

Resident of the Khirda-Demirchi village Mashadi-Teymur Iskender oglu Mirzoyev said in the presence of farmers Ali Mammadov, Abdul-Ali Hasanov, Kulam Kerimov and others, "The Azerbaijanis are not being moved out of Armenia to settle Armenian immigrants. They are being moved because **the Soviet government has no hope for us in the possible war with Turkey. This is the main reason for our resettlement, because in the case war, most Azerbaijanis living in bor-**

ARMENIANS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD WERE SUPPOSED TO COME TO THEIR HOMELAND, JOIN NAKHCHIVAN TO ARMENIA AND OUST ALL AZERBAIJANIS.

be moved out of Armenia so that Armenian immigrants could be settled there." In this regard, many farmers from the said village no longer go to work and, when asked by the collective farm chairman about the reason, they say, "Who and what are we supposed to work for if the Armenians are moving us out?" Resident of the Bakhilyar village Guli Abbas gizi Yusubova says, "There are plans to relocate us and pass all our possessions and livestock on to Armenian immigrants. Some are already selling out and slaughtering their cattle. I have also sold my cow." In the same village, farmers Kubish Davidov, Alosh Mamedov, Abdulla Abdullayev, Hasan Hasanov, Sabo Tashev, Yusuf Aliyev and Abbas Mamedov have refused to go to work. In the village of Gay-Humbat, farmers Abbas Aliyev and Ismayil Rahimov said in a conversation outside

**derline districts will go to Turkey."** In the Ranchpar village, farmer Ibrahim Nasirov told Seid Mukhtarov, Asker Tanmazov, Jafar Mahmud oglu and others, "All Azerbaijanis will be moved out of Armenia before 1950. This is being done because the Soviet government, fearful of a Turkish attack, does not trust Azerbaijanis living near the border with Turkey. Secondly, **Soviet Armenia intends to bring all foreign Armenians home to establish a state independent from the Soviet government."**

The same Nasirov said in the presence of other farmers, "According to a plan of the former secretary of the Armenian Communist Party (of Bolsheviks), A. Khandzhyan, **Armenians from all over the world were supposed to come to their homeland, join Nakhchivan to Armenia and move all Azerbaijanis**

**to Azerbaijan.** And Khandzhyan's dream is about to come true. I recently heard that the Armenian government has been demanding that Nakhchivan be joined to Armenia, but the Azerbaijani government has refused."

In the Shurakend village, former POW Hamid Mamedov (has relatives in Turkey) told farmers, "Can Armenians and Azerbaijanis ever live in peace? **Historically, there has always been enmity between us. This is why the Armenians have decided to move us out. I personally have already knocked down my home, so that no-one can have it afterwards."**

The collective farm chairman from the Shurakend village, Humbat Aliyev, told farmers after visiting the district center, "A commission from Azerbaijan has arrived, and all Azerbaijanis will be relocated from Armenia soon. The delay in the resettlement is only due to the fact that the secretary of the Armenian Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) has refused to pass the farm's property on to Azerbaijan. Had he agreed, the resettlement issue would have been resolved long ago." Following the statement by the chairman, farmers lost heart and stopped going to work, saying, "If we are not masters of our work, then why should we work in vain?"

In the villages of Shurakend, Zangilar, Kelanlu, Agamzalu and other, there have been cases of farmers not reporting for work. Some cut down fruit trees in their gardens. Many refuse to pay taxes. Villager from Zangilar Seyfulla Suleymanov (who returned from an exile in 1947) told fellow villagers at the farm stables, "We should no longer stay in Armenia. If the war breaks out, the Armenians will kill us all, so

we should move to Azerbaijan as soon as we can.”

Resident of the Sarijalar village Khalil Abuzar oglu Khalilov (convicted of desertion in 1942) said, “Our farmers are paying taxes in vain, we will be relocated anyway. **The Soviets have completely robbed the people. The policies of Bolsheviks are built on deception, and it seems to me that we will be moved to Siberia, not to Azerbaijan, and all our possessions will be embezzled by the state.**”

### 3. ON VEDI DISTRICT

During January and February, residents of the Boyuk-Vedi village Tarlan Abdullayev, Urbaba Mamedova and Mamedula Khuda-Bakhshi oglu knocked down their homes,

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while Mikayil Eyvazov, Akber Mamed Ali oglu, Bilal Aliyev, Useyn Zeynalov, Oruj Kalashev, Rza Ali and others destroyed their fruit trees. Some villagers, such as Humbat Aliyev, Akbar Karimov, Janbakhish Kerimov, etc., sold their possessions. Resident of the Taynan village Karim Mammadov knocked down his cowshed, while farmer from the Shirazlu village Kurban Kurbanov destroyed one room of his apartment. Mustafayev Huseyn Bashir oglu with a family of two and Mustafayev Ismail with a family of three people left the village of Geravan to settle down in the Nakhchivan autonomous republic.

In general, resettlement sentiments in this district are particularly strong. This is confirmed by the number of applications for resettlement, which had reached 9,915 by

28 April. According to the plan, only 500 people were to be moved to the Azerbaijan SSR in 1948.

### 4. ON BASARKECHER DISTRICT

As a result of speculations in the Chirchaklu village suggesting that Turkey had allegedly declared war on the Soviet Union and that Azerbaijanis must be relocated, farmers did not go to work for three days in February. In a number of villages (Dashkend, Chirchaklu, Zod) it was rumored that the secretary of the local committee of the Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) Musayev, the chairman of the local executive committee Mamedov and other senior Azerbaijani officials had allegedly been replaced by Armenians.

As a result of such provocative rumors, farmers from the Zod village started showing negligence in work. The departure of the chairman of the local party branch, Gurzali Nasirov, and of the chairman of the village council, Bala Hajiyev, has

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had a particularly negative impact on overall sentiments in the village. In the Shishkaya village, many farmers explicitly announced their refusal to move to the Azerbaijan SSR. Some harsh statements have been made by Azerbaijanis in Artashat, Karabakhlar, Oktemberyan, Kafan, Meghri and Sisian districts. For instance, the chairman of the Varta-

nidzor village council in Meghri district, Abdulla Hamidov, when asked why the irrigation canal was not being laid, said, “Why should we build it after all? It will be used by the Armenians anyway.” In the village of Dargalu of Artashat district, which is home to 20 Azerbaijani families, villagers stated, “Come what may, we will not leave the village.”

In the Akhund Baovand village of the same district, Azerbaijanis said, “**We are not going anywhere, let them kill us here.**” The collective farm chairman in the village of Siznak of Kafan district, Bashir Tagiyev, told fellow villagers, “It is better to die in our native village than to move to a new place.” Resident of the Urut village of Sisian district and a member of the Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) Salman Iskenderov said in a conversation with colleagues that **as a Soviet citizen he has the right to live anywhere in the Soviet Union and has no intention of abandoning his home, property and homeland.** According to the Stalin Constitution, no one has the right to force him to move to another location. A similar statement has been made by an accountant from the said village, Kuvat

Farzaliyev. He said he had written to Stalin about his reluctance to move to Azerbaijan.

A resident of the village of Dzhomartlu of Sisian district and a member of the Communist Party (of Bolsheviks), Jalal Kurbanov, said after a meeting of farmers in which everyone expressed a desire to move to Azerbaijan, “... Most people don't

know how hot it is in Azerbaijan. **In 1918-1919, we fled from Armenia to Nakhchivan. We were 14 then but two years later only three people survived. The other 11 died of the heat and disease. Mingachevir is even worse.** There will be very many casualties.”

Farmer from the Aravyus village of the said district Asli Ganiyeva said, “Maybe if I change my nationality and register as an Armenian I can stay in Armenia and not move to Mingachevir.” There have been speculations regarding the resettlement on the part of Armenian population. Some were of clearly nationalist nature. For example, teacher Minas Arakelyan said, “The need for moving Azerbaijanis outside Armenia is beyond doubt. Those living on the banks of the Aras and Ahuryan riv-

ers will be moved first. They will be followed by those living in Yerevan. The removal of Azerbaijanis from borderline districts is understand-

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able – they often cross the border illegally, while Turkey creates its spying network there.”

A resident of Yerevan, Yervand Mesropyian, told a neighbor, “**Azerbaijanis must be removed not only from Armenia, but also from Nakhchivan, which must then be joined to Armenia.**” The wife of Levon Akhverdyan, who was sentenced to six years of imprisonment, told her Yerevan neighbors, “Turkey, Britain and America will soon declare

war on the Soviet Union. Therefore, the Azerbaijanis living in Armenia are being moved to the rear, i.e. to Azerbaijan. Tell your relatives abroad

not to come to Armenia.”

After returning to Armenia from France, a former Dashnak named Smbat told a group of Armenians in Kirovakan, “**The Dashnaks once raised the issue of joining the Nakhchivan autonomous republic to Armenia, but failed. Now is the time to raise this question again because Armenia has little land.**” Similar statements have been made in the cities of Yerevan, Leninakan, etc. ■

