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**TERRITORIAL CLAIMS OF ARMENIA TO THE AZERBAIJAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IN 1918-1920**

**Abstract.** On May 28, 1918, the first democratic parliamentary republic in the Muslim East was proclaimed – the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR), which from the first days of its existence relied on the principles of democracy and equality of people, granting all citizens of the country the same rights, and eliminated racial, national, religious, and social inequality. ADR sought to establish good-neighborly relations with all states of the region. However, in order to enforce its territorial claims to Azerbaijan, Armenia further expanded the boundaries of the massacres of the local population in the territories of Karabakh, Zangezour, Nakhchivan, etc. The article provides detailed information about Armenia's groundless territorial claims to Azerbaijan in 1918-1920.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Armenia, territorial dispute, conflict, Karabakh.

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**ТЕРИТОРІАЛЬНІ ПРЕТЕНЗІЇ ВІРМЕНІЇ ДО АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКОЇ ДЕМОКРАТИЧНОЇ РЕСПУБЛІКИ У 1918-1920-Х РОКАХ**

**Аноатація.** 28 травня 1918 року була проголошена перша демократична парламентська республіка на мусульманському Сході – Азербайджанська Демократична Республіка (АДР), яка з перших днів існування спиралася на принципи народовладдя та рівності людей, надавши всім громадянам країни однакові права, усунула расову, національну, релігійну, класову нерівність. АДР прагнула встановити добросусідські відносини з усіма державами регіону. Однак з метою втілення в життя своїх територіальних домагань до Азербайджану, Вірменія ще більше розширила кордони масових вбивств місцевого населення на територіях Карабаху, Зангезура, Нахчівану та ін. У статті дається докладна інформація про необґрунтовані територіальні претензії Вірменії до Азербайджану в 1918-1920-х роках.

**Ключові слова:** Азербайджанська Демократична Республіка, Вірменія, територіальна суперечка, конфлікт, Карабах.

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At the beginning of 1917, the political and economic crisis in the Russian Empire came to its peak. As a result of the 1917 revolution, the Russian monarchy was overthrown. During this period, political activity increased in the colonial outskirts of the country, including in Northern Azerbaijan. The overthrow of the monarchy was greeted with enthusiasm in Azerbaijan. The country's political and public circles began to advocate for the sovereignty and independence of the Azerbaijani state. The Musavat Party emerged from the underground, which at that moment was at the stage of transition from a small, strictly conspiratorial group to a widespread party, as well as other national parties and organizations with prohibited or restricted activities. Dozens of political, cultural and educational centers of national orientation were created in the republic. Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the South Caucasus began to realize the experience of creating new states oriented to European models.

On May 28, 1918, after 120 years of submission to Russia, the Azerbaijani people founded an independent state - the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. In the Declaration of Independence, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic announced that it is the legal heir to the lands of Northern Azerbaijan occupied by Russia on the basis of the Gulistan and Turkmenchay treaties.

The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which existed in 1918-1920, became the first secular democratic state in the Muslim East, which carried out its activities in a difficult socio-political situation. The steps taken by the state in the field of democratic state building, economy and culture, education have left a huge mark on the history of the Azerbaijani people.

The formation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, two years of its existence, its struggle for integration into the world community have become an extremely important event for the national history of Azerbaijan. The people who established the ADR in May 1918 saved the honor of the nation and realized its dreams of statehood in the form of a democratic republic (Gasanly, 2011: 6).

After the proclamation of independence, the national government temporarily settled in the city of Ganja, since the city of Baku was under the occupation of the Armenian-Bolshevik armed formations of the Baku Council of People's Commissars headed by Stepan Shaumyan. The main task of the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was the liberation of Baku from the occupation.

On June 4, 1918, according to the Treaty on Friendship and Mutual Assistance, signed between the Ottoman Empire and the government of independent Azerbaijan, the Ottoman government undertook to provide military assistance to Azerbaijan.

At this time, the Bolshevik-Dashnak troops of the Baku Council, in order to impede the further activities of the National Government of Azerbaijan, on June 10, 1918, launched an offensive in the direction of Ganja.

In places of military operations, the Muslim population was subjected to pogroms and genocide. On June 23, the Azerbaijani government declared martial law in the country. From June 27 to July 1, in the battle near Goychay, the Caucasian Islamic Army under the command of Nuri Pasha determined the outcome of war. The offensive of the troops of the Baku Council on Ganja was prevented and the Caucasian Islamic Army launched a counteroffensive in the direction of Baku. The defeated Bolshevik-Dashnak troops were forced to retreat. One after another, Goychay, Kurdamir, Shamakhi, Aghsu were liberated from the occupation.

On August 5, 1918, the first attempt was made to liberate the city of Baku from the occupation, but it did not succeed. However, on September 15, the two-day operation of the Turkish-Azerbaijani forces to liberate Baku ended. On September 16, in honor of the victory, a parade of Turkish-Azerbaijani military detachments was held in Baku.

After this historic victory on September 17, the capital of the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was moved from Ganja to Baku. Thus, the start of state building in the country was given.

Today, a deep interest has arisen in the true history of Azerbaijan, in the comprehension of the most complex, full of heroism, as well as irreparable losses during the period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

After the proclamation of independence, the establishment of security and stability in the region became a necessary factor for the normal development of the country. The main condition for this was the establishment of good-neighborly relations with neighboring countries. The Declaration of Independence noted that the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic seeks to establish good-neighborly relations with all members of the international community, and especially with neighboring peoples and states, and guarantees, within its limits, civil and political rights to all citizens, without distinction of nationality, religion, social status, and sex. The document also noted that the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic will provide all the peoples inhabiting its territory with a wide scope for free development (*Azerbajdzhanskaja Demokraticeskaja Respublika (1918-1920)*: 15-16).

During this period, despite the fact that the young republics in the South Caucasus received international recognition, territorial disputes arose between them regarding the establishment of borders.

The disagreements between Armenia and Azerbaijan led to conflict between the two countries and generated economic instability and security problems in the South Caucasus. These protracted conflicts have weakened the states of the South Caucasus and provided an opportunity for regional and global powers to compete among themselves for a sphere of influence in the region.

Armenia has put forward unreasonable demands in relation to neighboring countries. The Azerbaijani government, although it took active diplomatic steps to unite its historical lands within the state borders, remained out of hostilities, while Armenia chose the path of war to implement its plans of conquest.

It should be noted that after the signing of the Gulistan Treaty between Iran and Russia in 1813 and the Turkmenchay Treaty in 1828 with the aim of dividing the Azerbaijani lands, to create a buffer zone in the ancient lands of Azerbaijan, the implementation of a plan to create an "Armenian state" was launched.

To this end, up to 300 thousand Armenians living in the territory of Iran and Turkey were resettled to Azerbaijan in the first half of the 19th century and settled in the territory of Iravan (present-day Yerevan), Nagorno-Karabakh, Nakhichevan, Zangezour, Daralayaz, Ordubad, Vedibasir and other lands (Shavrov, 1911: 32).

The main goals of the Russian colonial policy in Transcaucasia were reflected in the work of the Russian historian N. Shavrov "A New Threat to the Russian Cause in Transcaucasia." In this book, the scientist wrote: "We began our colonial policy in Transcaucasia by settling it not by Russians, but by foreigners ... After the two-year war of 1826-1828, we resettled to Transcaucasia over 40 thousand Armenians from Iran, 84,600 Armenians from Turkey from 1828 to 1830, placing them on the best state lands of the Elizavetpol and Erivan provinces, with a very small number of Armenians living there" (Shavrov, 1911: 33).

It should be noted that this was the first influx of Armenians into the South Caucasus, which subsequently continued consistently for about a century. As N. Shavrov writes, "out of 1 million 300 thousand Armenians living in Transcaucasia at the beginning of the XX century, more than a million were not the local population, but were resettled here by the Russian authorities" (Pashaev, 2013: 7-19).

Thus, the artificial increase in the number of Armenians in the historical Azerbaijani lands as a result of the resettlement process, which was an integral part of the colonial policy of

tsarist Russia and continued throughout the 19th century, led to the fact that from the beginning of the 20th century, Armenians began to put forward unsubstantiated territorial claims to Azerbaijan and to pursue an aggressive policy. The biggest claim of the Armenians was the capture of Karabakh and Zangezur. The government of Armenia sent armed forces there in order to implement its aggressive plans. As a result, the Armenian armed forces, striving to seize the lands of Karabakh, destroyed hundreds of settlements, mercilessly exterminated thousands of peaceful Azerbaijanis (Gasnov, 2015: 3-12).

Armenia has always considered the territories of neighboring states as the territory of its expansion. As a consequence of this hated policy, Armenia waged a war in 1918-1920 with Georgia for Akhalkalaki, Borchali and Lori, and with Azerbaijan for Nagorno-Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhchivan.

To occupy Karabakh, the Armenians continued the genocide that had begun earlier during the period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

From the statement of the Azerbaijan National Council of June 14, 1918, during a joint meeting with representatives of the Armenian National Council in Tiflis, a verbal agreement was reached on the issue of delimiting territories. This agreement was based on the agreement of the parties, reached back in Batum, that Azerbaijan would not object to the declaration of Erivan as the capital of Armenia, and in response to this gesture of goodwill, Armenia would renounce its claims to the mountainous part of Karabakh. However, at the beginning of 1919, Armenia put forward a territorial claim to Azerbaijan related to Karabakh. Thus, the first official attempt was made to annex the mountainous part of Karabakh to Armenia. The ADR government has repeatedly made proposals to solve the problem by peaceful means. But the aggressive position of Armenia prevented the implementation of these peace initiatives of the Azerbaijani state.

In order to suppress the separatist movement of Armenians, on January 15, 1919, the government of Azerbaijan separated the Shusha, Jebrail, Javanshir and Zangezur districts from the Ganja province, and formed the Karabakh General Governorship from these districts. Khosrov-bek Sultanov was appointed governor-general of Karabakh. Armenian Foreign Minister S. Tigranyan protested against the creation of the Karabakh province, but the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic pointed out the groundlessness of this protest and proved that these territories are an integral part of the Azerbaijan Republic. The governor-general of Karabakh, along with the claims of the Armenians to the land, had to work in conditions of tense relations, first with the British, then with the Americans. However, the Armenians did not allow the creation of peace on the territory of the Karabakh province (Mahmudov, Shukjurov, 2005).

It should be noted that the Armenian Republic, in order to support the subversive activities of the separatist forces in Azerbaijan, allocated large financial resources to Andronic's bandit formations and other Armenian terrorists. For example, more than 400 thousand rubles were sent to Nagorno-Karabakh alone every month. In Karabakh, under the control and leadership of Armenian emissaries, intensified work was carried out to organize rebel detachments, the main goal of which was to fight against the Azerbaijani statehood (GAAR, f.894, inv.10, case.81: 9-10).

The Armenian government called Karabakh and Zangezur "integral parts" of its territory, and even sent a state commissar to Gerus. The Armenian National Council, on the other hand, proposed separating the Armenian part of Zangezur and Karabakh into a separate governor-general headed by an English officer not subordinate to the Azerbaijani government.

On November 23, 1919, an agreement was signed between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia in Tiflis through the mediation of the US mission. According to the signed agreement, the clashes were to be suspended, and controversial issues, including border issues, were to be resolved through negotiations. However, the Armenian side grossly violated

this agreement and, sending its troops to the Azerbaijani territories, staged a monstrous massacre of the Azerbaijanis.

The English military journalist Scotland-Liddell, who was at that time in Baku, reported to London that following the signing of the November 23 agreement, “the Armenians, taking advantage of the withdrawal of Azerbaijani troops, treacherously attacked Muslims in Zangezur, where they destroyed up to forty Muslim villages” (GAAR, f.894, inv.10, case.81: 9-10)

On December 14-21, 1919, an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace conference was held in Baku, which continued the negotiations begun in November in Tiflis in order to resolve all the acute problems that had accumulated between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The most pressing issue on the agenda of the conference was the solution of territorial problems between the republics, however, due to disagreements between the parties, it completed its work without coming to any results.

At the beginning of 1920, Azerbaijani villages in Zangezur and Karabakh were subjected to new attacks by Armenian troops, supported by local Armenians. Blood was shed again, and a new wave of refugees emerged among the Muslim population. This forced the government of Azerbaijan to concentrate significant military forces in Karabakh and Zangezur, on the border with Armenia, thereby exposing the northern borders, where the military threat from Bolshevik Russia was growing (Niftaliev, 2012: 20-24).

Despite all this, during the existence of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Armenia's attempts to seize Karabakh and other historical Azerbaijani cities and regions by diplomatic and military means were resolutely suppressed. However, after the Sovietization of Azerbaijan, these territorial claims of the Dashnaks, who played a significant role in the fall of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, reappeared.

The separatist actions of the Armenians can be called one of the main reasons that weakened the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

Note that the beginning of the 20th century is one of the most difficult and tragic periods in the history of Azerbaijan. The 1918-1920 period was drenched in blood of hundreds of Azerbaijanis who became victims of the Armenian terror, as well as their patrons, who created all the conditions for Armenians to conduct an aggressive policy on the territory of the Azerbaijani state.

During the existence of the Soviet Union, the Armenians, with the support of the central authorities, purposefully conducting a propaganda campaign against Azerbaijan, achieved the formation of negative public opinion. Armenian ideologists, openly falsifying facts about the historical, socio-economic development of Azerbaijan, disseminated them throughout the Union.

In February 1988, the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict began, which was provoked by the demands of the ethnic Armenians of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region of the Azerbaijan SSR to join the Armenian SSR, which was provoked by the open support of the ruling circles of the Armenian SSR and the tacit consent and inaction of the central authorities of the Soviet Union.

As a result, thousands of Azerbaijanis became victims of the aggressive policy of the Armenians, who were patronized by the ruling circles of the USSR. Unfortunately, the fact that the Armenian nationalists were not repulsed at the very beginning of the events, led to an even greater deterioration of the situation. As a result, the Armenians, with the help of armed groups and military equipment sent from Armenia to an area that the Azerbaijani government could no longer control, began to carry out even more bloody crimes against Azerbaijanis.

At the beginning of 1992, the armed forces of Armenia, one after another, occupied the last settlements in the mountainous part of Karabakh, where Azerbaijanis lived. On the night of February 25-26, 1992, with the help and participation of the 366th motor rifle regiment of the former USSR army deployed in Khankendi, and heavy equipment attacked the city of Khojaly

and leveled it to the ground. Due to numerous heavy equipment, the city was completely destroyed and burned down, and the inhabitants were killed with extreme cruelty. As a result of this genocide, according to official figures, 613 people were killed, including 63 children, 106 women, and 70 elderly. 8 families were completely destroyed. 487 people became disabled, 76 of them are children. In addition, 1276 people were taken prisoner, 150 were missing.

Since 1992, the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has become a problem of international significance.

In 1988-1994, as a result of the policy of state terrorism and genocide carried out by Armenia, there were totally 373 terrorist acts (in passenger buses, passenger and freight trains, the Baku Metro, air transport, in passenger water transport, in settlements, civil and state facilities), during which 1200 people were killed and 1705 were injured. As in previous times, the aggressive policy of the Armenians was accompanied by mass killings. For example, in 1988-1993, as a result of the military occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia, 20,000 Azerbaijanis were killed, more than 100,000 people were injured, and 50,000 people who received injuries of various severity became disabled (Ahmedov, 1992: 497-518).

On the morning of September 27, 2020, as a result of a large-scale provocation carried out by the Armenian armed forces and intensive shelling of the positions of the Azerbaijani army and settlements located in the front-line zone from large-caliber weapons, mortars, and artillery cannons of various calibers, in order to prevent the combat activity of the Armenian army and ensure the security of the civilian population, under the leadership of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, President Ilham Aliyev, in response to prolonged provocations and new aggressive plans of Armenia, as well as in order to liberate the territories from occupation, starting from September 27, the Azerbaijani army began its victorious march.

The command of the Azerbaijani army decided to start a lightning-fast counter-offensive operation along the entire front. As a result, the martial law and nation-wide mobilization were announced in Armenia. As for Azerbaijan, the martial law and curfew were announced; the partial mobilization was announced on September 28 as well. In a short time, armed clashes escalated into a full-scale second Karabakh war.

In these battles, Azerbaijan achieved great successes with significantly smaller losses. Having initially liberated a number of villages and strategic bridges from occupation, the Azerbaijani Armed Forces on October 22 completely liberated the border of Karabakh with Iran in the south and on October 23 began advancing in the direction of the Lachin corridor. The Lachin Corridor was the only major highway connecting Armenia with a fictitious formation in Karabakh. Control over the highway would have prevented the flow of fuel, ammunition and military reinforcements from Armenia. In the course of the ongoing war, the following cities were liberated from the occupation: October 4 – Jabrail, October 17 – Fizuli, October 20 – Zangilan, October 25 – Gubadli, and November 8 – Shusha.

The liberation of Shusha completely disarmed Armenia, deprived it of the opportunity to maneuver, and all attempts to further deceive the Armenian and world community have lost their meaning. The enemy had no choice but to wave the white flag and surrender.

Gaining the historic victory in 44 days, Azerbaijan liberated its historical lands occupied by Armenia and dealt crushing blows to the enemy. As a result of this defeat, Armenia was forced to sign an act of capitulation and surrender. Thus, the end of the thirty-year occupation policy of Armenia was brought to an end. During 44 days of military activities in Karabakh, the Azerbaijani army has shown its ability to solve the most difficult tasks using the most modern weapons. Azerbaijani forces have managed to take positions along the defenses, which have been strengthened for decades.

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