

Karabakh is Azerbaijan!

Karabakh is ancestral Azerbaijani land, one of its historical regions. The name of this region translates into Russian as a “black garden”. According to another version, it is a “large garden” or a “dense garden”. Up until the region was seized by the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 19th century, Karabakh was part of various Azerbaijani states. I will not bore you with arguments about who lived in Karabakh, who ruled it in certain historical periods – materials about that are available in most of the previous issues of IRS-Heritage. I only want to note that until the beginning of the 20th century, there was not a single Armenian ruler in Karabakh and indeed on the territory of present-day Armenia. This fact is graphic evidence that the Armenians always constituted an insignificant part of the population of these regions.

On 14 May 1805, the ruler of the Karabakh Khanate, Ibrahim Khan, and the commander of the Russian troops, Prince P. Tsitsianov, signed the Treaty of Kurekchay, according to which the khanate was included in the Russian Empire. Subsequently, the Gulustan Peace Treaty of 18 October 1813 and the Turkmenchay Peace Treaty of 10 February 1828, signed as a result of two Russian-Iranian wars, formalized the final transfer of northern Azerbaijani khanates to the Russian Empire. Having taken possession of this land, Russia, striving to reinforce the Christian presence in the region, immediately began a systematic resettlement of Armenians here from Iran and the Ottoman Empire, placing them primarily on the lands of the former Azerbaijani khanates. In total, in the 1828-1911 period, hundreds of thousands of Armenians were resettled to the South Caucasus. An additional impetus to this process was given by World War I. In 1978, a ceremony was held in the Karabakh village of Maraga to unveil a memorial marking the 150th anniversary of the resettlement of the first Armenian family from Iran to the region.

On 28 May 1918, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was proclaimed. It included the lands of the Eastern and Southern Caucasus. In January 1919, the Karabakh General Governorship with the center in Shusha was established and in April of the same year, it was recognized by the Entente countries as a part of Azerbaijan. It united Shusha, Javanshir, Jabrayil and Zangezur districts of the former Elizavetpol province. In the same year, the Armenian National Assembly of the upper Karabakh officially recognized the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan in the area. This is a fact that refutes speculations that “Nagorno-Karabakh” was allegedly a kind of an “independent political entity”.

British journalist Scotland-Liddell wrote from Shusha to London at the time: “Peace has come to Karabakh. The Armenians have agreed to be governed by Azerbaijan... As the Armenians say, there has never been such peace and tranquility in Shusha and Karabakh. Both peoples are

Musa MARJANLI
Editor-in-Chief

Ganja after a ballistic missile attack by Armenian armed forces on 17 October 2020. Fourteen civilians were killed and 53 wounded



ready to continue their peaceful way of life, and if there is no provocative intervention, this will be preserved. I believe that the Armenians are to blame for the Armenian-Tatar massacres in other parts of the Caucasus. As for propaganda, the Armenian propaganda is very active but I am sure that their activity in the South Caucasus is purely provocative.”

In 1920, Azerbaijan was occupied by Soviet Russia. In response to the claims of Armenian nationalists for the upper part of Karabakh, the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, taking into account the need for national peace between Armenians and Azerbaijanis and in the interests of maintaining economic ties between upper and lower Karabakh and permanent ties between upper Karabakh and Azerbaijan, decided at a meeting on 5 July 1921 to preserve Nagorno-Karabakh within the borders of the Azerbaijan SSR and grant it broad autonomy with a center in Shusha. On 7 July 1923, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region (NKAR) with an area of 4,400 square kilometers was established and, in September of the same year, the city of Khankendi was renamed into Stepanakert after Bolshevik leader Stepan Shaumyan.

As for the 300,000 Azerbaijanis settled on the territory of the Armenian SSR (Armenia was Sovietized in November 1920), neither the Kremlin nor the local leadership was going to grant them even cultural autonomy.

The status of Nagorno-Karabakh as an autonomous entity within Azerbaijan was stipulated in the Constitution of the USSR of 1936 and 1977 and the Constitutions of the Azerbaijan SSR. In addition, a law “On

*Ganja after a ballistic missile attack by Armenian armed forces on 11 October 2020.
Ten civilians were killed and 34 wounded*



the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region” was adopted on 16 June 1981. Largely due to its autonomous status and related privileges, NKAR gradually turned into a developed agro-industrial region, while adjacent territories with the Azerbaijani population served as its supply base. The socioeconomic development of the autonomy was more advanced than that of the rest of Azerbaijan and Armenia. This led the Armenian population of the region to believe that they were enjoying certain exclusivity, which, in turn, created fertile ground for inciting separatist sentiments. Starting from the mid-1980s, leaders of the Armenian SSR and the Armenian diaspora, largely with tacit support of the Kremlin, began focused work to sever NKAR from Azerbaijan and transfer it to Armenia.

On 20 February 1988, Armenian members of the Council of People’s Deputies of the NKAR adopted a resolution to appeal to the Supreme Councils of the Azerbaijan SSR and the Armenian SSR on transferring the region to Armenia. On 22 February, a peaceful demonstration of Azerbaijanis protesting against this illegal act near Askeran settlement was fired on, resulting in the death of two people. These were the first victims of what subsequently became a protracted conflict. At the same time, massacres of Azerbaijanis began on the territory of Armenia itself, with the complete neutrality of the units of the Soviet army stationed here. As a result, 250,000 Azerbaijanis were expelled from their ancestral lands. During the events, 216 people were killed.

On 1 December 1989, the Supreme Council of the Armenian SSR passed a resolution on the “unification” of Armenia with the NKAR. On 10

*Ganja after a ballistic missile attack by Armenian armed forces on 4 October 2020.
One civilian was killed and 32 wounded*



January 1990, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR recognized this act as unconstitutional. The resolution of the Presidium noted the illegality of the transfer of the NKAR to Armenia without the consent of the Azerbaijan SSR.

On 18 October 1991, the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan adopted the Constitutional Act on Independence. On 26 November of the same year, the law "On liquidation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region of the Republic of Azerbaijan" was adopted.

In late 1991 and early 1992, the conflict entered a full-scale military phase. Taking advantage of the turmoil and confusion in the conditions of the collapse of the USSR, Armenia, with active military-political support from Russia and the Armenian diaspora, launched active hostilities. In February 1992, an unimaginable massacre of the civilian population was carried out in a small town of Khojaly with direct participation of CIS servicemen. As a result of the event known as the Khojaly genocide, thousands of civilians – women, children and old people – were killed or taken prisoner, while the town was wiped off the face of the earth. In May of the same year, Armenia occupied the city of Shusha and then the city of Lachin, which is strategically located between the territory of the former NKAR and Armenia. In 1993, vast territories of the upper and lower Karabakh were occupied – Kalbajar, Zangilan, Gubadli, Jabrayil, Fizuli, Agdam districts. In parallel with these events, the UN Security Council on 30 April 1993 adopted Resolution No. 822 demanding an immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from Kalbajar District and other

*Karabakh's biggest city of Agdam began to be called a "Caucasian Hiroshima" after Armenian occupation.
Agdam Palace of Culture*



occupied territories and, on 29 July, Resolution No. 853 on complete, immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces from Agdam District and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan. On 14 October of the same year, Resolution No. 874 was adopted demanding immediate mutual steps in accordance with the timetable presented by the OSCE Minsk Group, including the withdrawal of troops from the newly occupied territories. Finally, on 11 November 1993, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution No. 884, which condemns the occupation of Zangilan District and the settlement of Horadiz, attacks on the civilian population and the bombing of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It also demands a unilateral withdrawal of the occupying forces from Zangilan District, the settlement of Horadiz and other territories of Azerbaijan occupied shortly before that.

On 12 May 1994, the Bishkek Protocol of Armistice was signed between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which left the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict frozen for many years. Since then, a whole generation of Karabakh people has grown up in exile, having never seen the land of their ancestors with their own eyes.

In total, as a result of Armenia's military aggression, 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan has been occupied – the territory of the former NKAR and seven adjacent administrative districts, 13 villages of Tartar, seven villages of Gazakh and one village of Sadarak district. During the war, more than a million Azerbaijanis were expelled from their homes, 20,000 died and 50,000 were disabled, more than 2,000 people were taken

*Spoils of war. Armenia's military equipment was on display at the Victory Day parade.
Baku, 10 December 2020*



prisoner or hostage. About 4,000, including 67 children, 265 women and 326 old people, went missing, and nothing is known about their fate to this day.

On 30 January 1992, Azerbaijan became a member of the CSCE (now the OSCE), and since then the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict has been on the agenda of this organization. However, this has had no tangible results. The "Timetable of Urgent Measures" prepared by the OSCE Minsk Group (a body established to mediate the settlement of the conflict) for the implementation of the above-mentioned UN Security Council resolutions had no impact. The OSCE Minsk Group does not have a mechanism of sanctions for refusing to implement its decisions, and all its documents are only advisory in nature. The principle of mutual compromises the OSCE is guided by has led to connivance of the aggressor and, as a consequence, to its complete impunity. Not only did the negotiations mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group fail to eliminate contradictions between the parties, they actually revealed significant differences in the positions of superpowers that are members of the group.

However, despite the freezing of the conflict, there is no talk of a real truce on the front line. Over the 27 years that have passed since the signing of the armistice agreement, dozens of people have died and hundreds of people, mostly civilians, have been wounded as a result of regular provocations from the Armenian side. In order to avoid casualties, the government of Azerbaijan even built walls near many settlements,



but this did not bring the desired effect. There are even small children among those killed as a result of shelling from the Armenian side. It was clear that this “neither peace nor war” situation could be maintained indefinitely. The internally displaced people were tired of waiting to return to their homes. The great powers never stopped to talk about the need for peace and the fact that the conflict has no military solution and did little to achieve a real peaceful settlement of the problem. Moreover, Russia, one of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group and, accordingly, one of the main mediators in the conflict, has transferred billions of dollars worth of arms and military equipment to Armenia, maintaining the so-called “balance of power”.

Yes, any war ends in peace, and this should not be forgotten in any situation. However, Armenia did not just seize foreign land relying on the comprehensive assistance of the successors of those who resettled Armenians to the South Caucasus almost 200 years ago. Armenia is insulting those it considers defeated in every possible way. At every opportunity, they make it clear that they are stronger and, therefore, do not consider it necessary to stand ceremony and prefer to humiliate the opposite side. Suffice it to recall the notorious phrase “Karabakh is Armenia, full top”. Apparently, all this is intended only to suppress the disgusting truth, the fact that the Armenians, or rather the Armenian nationalist groups, have long served as an instrument in the hands of various geopolitical actors. In this regard, the following thought of

Isaac Asimov is unlikely to ever lose relevance: "Armenia, like a ball in ping pong, dangled between the powers of the West and the East, was never a mistress of itself, never firmly belonged to any side, was always a battlefield of diplomats and armies" (Isaac Asimov. *The Middle East: A History of Ten Millennia*. Moscow, Publishing House: Tsentrpoligraf, 2006). Thus, Armenia, acting in the modern period as the "outpost of Russia in the Caucasus", is a serious obstacle to economic and political development, a factor of destabilization of the entire region. Both Azerbaijan and Armenia have lost a lot in this conflict but these losses, no matter how great, are still unequal. Azerbaijan has lost thousands of lives and huge material, cultural assets, it has temporarily lost a part of its territory, while Armenia did not lose its lands but instead lost its independence – if not de jure then at least de facto. Even if they want to return the captured lands, they cannot do it without the permission of others.

But lands are taken back, although, unfortunately, not peacefully. On 27 September, the armed forces of Armenia resorted to another provocation, yet another in 27 years of ceasefire, subjecting not only the positions of the Azerbaijani army but also peaceful settlements to intensive shelling from rocket launchers and artillery. In order to suppress the military provocation and ensure the safety of the population, the armed forces of Azerbaijan, in accordance with the generally accepted right to self-defense, launched a counter-offensive operation. This is how the second Karabakh war began. When this issue of our magazine was being prepared for publication, the operation of coercing Armenia into peace was still under way. Settlements of Azerbaijan that had remained under occupation for 27 years were liberated one after another. President Ilham Aliyev said in an earlier speech, "The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is not and never will be a subject of negotiations. Azerbaijan will not retreat one step from this position. So there will be no compromises in the issue of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The people of Azerbaijan will never put up with this occupation. Karabakh is our historical and ancestral land!"

It would be nice for Armenia and its patrons to memorize this truth. The sooner this happens, the sooner peace and tranquility will come to the long-suffering region of the South Caucasus. However, the Armenian side, reluctant to come to terms with its defeats on the battlefield, is avenging its losses on Azerbaijan's civilian population. The Armenian army regularly launches missile and artillery strikes on peaceful towns and villages, including those located far from the combat zone. As a result, there are many killed and wounded among civilians. We will cover these developments in more detail in the next issues of our magazine. Meanwhile, we look forward to the rest of the occupied lands being liberated and the long-awaited peace will finally coming to our region.

P.S. When our magazine went to print, the glorious Azerbaijani Army had already liberated the lands in Karabakh that had been occupied for years, including Shusha, the heart of Azerbaijan. After about three decades, Jabrayil was freed from the occupiers on 4 October, Fizuli on 17 October, Zangilan on 20 October, Gubadli on 25 October, and Shusha on 8 November. And on 10 November, Armenia was forced to sign an act of capitulation. On 20 November, Agdam District, on 25 November



Kalbajar District and on 1 December Lachin District were returned to the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan.

Finally, after so many years, the Azerbaijani people began to smile again, the Azerbaijani people regained their pride and dignity, the Azerbaijani people felt strong again. Azerbaijan will definitely restore the entire infrastructure destroyed by the occupying vandals. All the religious, historical and cultural sites in Karabakh will be under the protection of the state, and Karabakh will once again become a fascinating corner of our country. As was the case on the battlefield, the people of Azerbaijan will show their greatness in the field of construction. Until now, we were commemorating the dates on which our districts were occupied, but time has now come to celebrate the Day of Liberation and Victory in the Patriotic War.

In our next editions, we will have extensive coverage of all these issues, the scale and consequences of the occupation, the heroism of our servicemen, and the beauty of our country, albeit temporarily destroyed.



Turkish soldiers marching in Azadlig Square as part of the Victory Parade in Baku on 10 December

