

Original Article

 OPEN ACCESS

Received: December 06, 2018

Accepted: December 30, 2018

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The March Genocide in 1918 in Documents of Archive (According to the Materials of Extraordinary Investigation Commission)

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Abstract

The materials of Extraordinary Investigation Commission is the unique source for investigating the genocide against Turkish-Muslim population in Azerbaijan from March till September in 1918. These documents are proved arguments show that the genocide against Azerbaijanis is one of the horrible tragedies had been rarely met in the history of humanity. The declaration of independence in 1918 enabled Azerbaijan to investigate crimes against Turks and other Muslim population in their homeland. One of the significant decisions of the newly formed government was the establishment of an Extraordinary Investigation Commission June 15, 1918, to investigate crimes committed by dashnak gangs. This is the indicator of national memory to tragic events happened in the life of Azerbaijani people and its state powers.

Keywords: genocide, armenians, archive documents, Extraordinary Investigation Commission, Baku

We must give due to the young Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, under most complicated and hardest conditions of its existence and activities as quickly and discreetly reacted to these events and had taken concrete steps (9, 42). The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic implementing into life the desires of Azerbaijan people were a sweet surprise for them and started practical activities about investigating those events. So, in July 1918, the Council of Ministers of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic considered it necessary to express its attitude to what had been happening in the country, particularly by the facts of violence against the peaceful Azerbaijani population, according to the report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mammad Hasan Hajinski. It was mentioned in the statement: "It is already four months, Armenian extorters had been committing atrocities against the civilian Muslim population, taking their lives and belongings. At the same moment as a result of misinformation, nations of Europe had a wrong image of the ongoing processes and these factors

necessitated the establishment of a special commission" (1). It was mentioned and stressed in the report that it was necessary to create an organization which would "accurate registration of all cases of violence; the circumstances under which committed violence; establishing the perpetrators and losses caused by them as in the national interests and in the interest of affected populations" (2) He argued that the entity should be vested with extraordinary authorities. Documents to be collected by the commission should be translated into the Azerbaijani, Russian, English, French, and German languages. M.H.Hajinski especially stressed that it was necessary to organizing Investing Committee immediately "because today it is easy to take interviews, photos and other evidences, that will be more difficult afterwards, maybe will not be available then" (3). At the same meeting – July 15, 1918 the Council of Ministers of Azerbaijan Republic adopted a decree on the establishment of the Extraordinary Investigation Commission, "for the investigation of violence made against Muslims

and their property within the entire South Caucasus since the beginning of the European war” (4). It was the first attempt for giving political value to carrying genocide against Azerbaijanis and the processes of occupation Azerbaijan territories more than a century in history. According to the decision signed on the 31 August 1918 by the head of Democratic Republic, at the same time the minister of Foreign Affairs Fataly Khan Khoysky the Extraordinary Investigation Commission consisting of 7 members was organized. It was stated in the decision: “For fulfilling the government’s decision on 15 July, 1918 - lawyer Alakbar bey Khasmammadov was appointed the chairman of the investigation commission (later the chairman of the Azerbaijani Chamber of Appeals), Ismayil bey Shahmaliyev and Andrey Fomich Novatsky became members of the Ganja District Court, Nasreddin Sefikurdski was appointed the assistant public prosecutor of the Ganja District Court, and Nikolay Mikhailovch Mikhailov V.V. Gudvillo from the Ganja Migration Office and teacher Mirza Javad Akhunzade were also included into the Commission” (5). Though the Extraordinary Investigation Commission was formed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the commission was attached to the Ministry of Justice by the decision of Prime Minister Fataly Khan Khoyski on September 22, 1918. The assistant public prosecutor of Baku District Court Alexander Yevgeniyevich Kluge, the member of the grand jury Mammad Khan Tekinski, the investigator for particularly important cases of the Ganja District Court Mehiyeddin Shahmaliyev, the member of the Baku Guberniya District Court Hidayet Sutanov, members of the grand jury Aley Adamovich Litovsky, Cheslav Klossovsky, lawyer Abbasali bey Haji Irzayev, and the member of Baku District Court B.Yusifbeyov sat on the commission at various times (7, 61). Extraordinary Investigation Commission materials collected by August 1919 was 36 volumes and 35000 pages, 6 volumes (740 pages) of them reflected violent acts, performed on the Muslim population of the city of Baku and its environs. Azerbaijanis underwent attacks and lootings in Shamakhi, Goychay, Ganja, Nukha, Gazakh, Lankaran, Salyan, Javad, Garabagh, Zangezur, Irevan - in short, in all provinces of Azerbaijan. The unbridled and savage Armenian gangs used the most brutal methods to kill Azerbaijani civilians. A.Y.Kluge, member of the Extraordinary Investigation Commission, wrote in a report titled “On the Case of Violence against the Muslim Population of Baku: Based on the documents of the investigation commission, approximately eleven

thousand Azerbaijanis were killed in Baku in March of 1918 Bodies of many people were missing; according to witnesses’ testimonies, Armenians threw corpses into burning houses, the sea, and wells to cover up the crimes. It is also known that well-armed and trained Armenian soldiers attacked using numerous machine-guns (6). The invasion of Baku by the Eleventh Red Army on April 27 and subsequent subjugation of all other parts of Azerbaijan thwarted the accomplishment of the mission of the Azerbaijani government on ensuring territorial integrity of the country. A number of territories, including Zangezur, were annexed to Soviet Armenia. The massacres of the Muslim population in 1918-1920 thus proved to be a policy of genocide deliberately planned and executed by the Dashnaktsutiu toward the establishment of “Great Armenia” (8, 135). The mass genocide of Azerbaijanis by Armenians and their driving out from their homelands was the most tragic and terrible pages of the XX century history. Many years were spent silently over these events. The March genocide was not only forgotten in the period of Soviets, but it was also announced as the “civil war”. Only in 1991 after regaining of its sovereignty Azerbaijan realities kept many years along and circumstances re-establishing of objective history were printed on media. The March genocide of 1918 had been studied from the legal point of view by the Extraordinary Investigation Commission operating under the government of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and had officially historical truth in the documents that hadn’t got an excuse in any case. These meanly acts were repeatedly carried out for a long time against Azerbaijanis and never received its political-legal assessment in the chain of bloody violences.

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