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ABOUT BAKU ARMENIANS WHO TOOK A SHELTER IN DUSHANBE AND THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 1990

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At the end of the Soviet regime, the country's national problems intensified, and Gorbachev's policy of "Reconstruction" revealed the issues that had been unresolved for centuries.

Started in 1988, the national liberation movement of Artsakh, the national demand to remove NKAO from Azerbaijani illegal jurisdiction, the anti-Armenian reactions of the central authorities of the USSR and Azerbaijani power led to cruel and inhumane treatment of the Azerbaijani Armenians. Tens of thousands of the Armenians were expelled from Baku, Gandzak and other places inhabited by Armenians. A significant part of them found refuge in the Soviet republics of Central Asia, including Tajikistan. In the last period of the collapse of the USSR, turning events were also taking place here. In particular, in 1990 an inter-Tajik conflict broke out in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, followed by a confrontation between the government of Tajikistan and the united Tajik opposition.

As a result, in 1990, in February, there was bloodshed in the center of Dushanbe.

According to some Tajik and Russian researchers, the main reasons for the events could be:

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- Serious economic problems, low quality of life, uneven development of regions, wrong selection of personnel, inaction, etc.
- The arrival of thousands of Armenian refugees from Baku to Dushanbe and the provision of their lodging.
- Consumption of construction materials. In the 11th FPY period, the leadership of the republic used 76% of the volume of capital investments for production purposes and only 24% in the social, non-production sector¹.
- February events were planned in advance and had a definite purpose. By their very nature, they were a test of the strength of government and ruling leadership. To achieve their goals, the Islamist conservatives used every resource at their disposal, including the youth. They had no idea that it could lead to bloodshed².

Among the above-mentioned reasons, the role of Armenian refugees in those events is the most interesting to us, which was also covered in detail by the Russian and Tajik newspapers.

Referring to the events in Dushanbe, "Rusarminfo" stated that "although the demonstrations started with the slogan "Get out Armenians", in a very short period of time they turned into a protest against Kakhar Makhkamov, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Tajikistan."³ Before turning to the problem itself, it is important to pay attention to the circumstances how he came to power.

During the years of Gorbachev's "Reconstruction", the Tajik people enjoyed a sense of spiritual and civil freedom, and even to an outside observer, it was quite normal for a group of people to gather in front of the presidential palace to demand justice. Radical changes took place in the political life of this republic during the period of Gorbachev⁴.

Thus, by the decision of December 14, 1985, Rahmon Nabiev, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, was removed from his position, and replaced by Kakhar Makhkamov (1985-1991), who was more experienced and well-versed in the republic's potential and resources.

¹ See **Рахмонов** 2006, 26.

² **Фаридуни** 2019, 38–39.

³ <https://rusarminfo.ru/2020/02/12/s-lozunga-doloj-armyan-30-let-nazad-nachalis-bespor-yadki-v-dushanbe/> last seen 17.11.2021.

⁴ **Руденко, Сорокин** 1993, 92.

He initiated a series of reforms in various areas of the republic, up to giving Tajik the status of an official language. All this led to the creation of a number of underground nationalist groups in the country (Rastokhez, Oshkoro, Vahdat, etc.). And this in the case when the USSR still existed and the positions of the Communist Party were still stable. Therefore, these groups turned into opposition forces and became one of the main reasons for the situation in the country.

Not focusing on many political aspects of the problem, it is important to emphasize the problem of the resettlement of Armenians.

The fact that the population of Tajikistan was really concerned about the issue of providing apartments to the Armenians from Baku is an undeniable fact, but it is necessary to take into account the fact from where the source of the news was spread. In this connection, the article "Who provoked the disturbances in Dushanbe in 1990" on the analytical site "Asian terra" is very interesting, which includes the recollections of eyewitnesses about events. Mariam Eshozhonova, an Uzbek journalist working in "Paiom Dushanbe" ("Dushanbe News") as an editor of the religious section, witnessed how a 65-year-old woman, a representative of the Azerbaijani community of Tajikistan, spread anti-Armenian propaganda, and distributed leaflets demanding the editorial office to print her article⁵. After the interview the woman left, but the journalist did not lose sight of the fact that the woman also distributed anti-Armenian propaganda among the young people gathered in the street. Such a case was not unique because on the same days the journalist witnessed a young man talking in a telephone booth and shouting in the Azerbaijani language at the first shots: "It started out"⁶.

The fact that the Tajik people were friendly to the Armenian people from the very beginning can be seen from the recollections of eyewitnesses. However, manipulating the social factor, the Azerbaijanis have reached the point that, even temporarily, they have developed an open dislike for the Armenians. In 1986, tens of thousands of families of the republic were waiting for a solution to the housing issue. In Dushanbe alone, more than 20,000 people were waiting for their apartments⁷.

⁵ <http://www.asiaterra.info/history/kto-sprovotsiroval-pogromy-v-dushanbe-v-1990-godu> last seen 15.11.2021.

⁶ <http://www.asiaterra.info/history/kto-sprovotsiroval-pogromy-v-dushanbe-v-1990-godu> last seen 15.11.2021.

⁷ **Фаридуни** 2019, 76, <https://tnu.tj/Dissertatsii/RavshanzodM/RavshanzodM.pdf>.

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Against the background of strong nationalist and pro-Islamic sentiments among the population, the "news" related to the Armenian refugees served as a powder keg fire. Demonstrations began on February 11, 1990. The next day, the passions became so hot that the crowd gathered near the building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Tajikistan and began to attack the building. The wave of dissatisfaction spread throughout Dushanbe, and riots began. The army also intervened. Over the next three days, the city was filled with soldiers. The Tajik authorities were unable to establish a dialogue and control the situation. In order to protect the Central Committee building from vandals, the armed units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and KGB surrounded it with armored vehicles. Despite this, the protesters managed to break into the building of the Central Committee and set it on fire. The police tried to pacify the citizens. In response, people began to burn and destroy shops. Martial law was declared. Urban, inter-city and railway transport ceased to function, schools, kindergartens, institutes, banks, post offices, as well as most shops and enterprises were closed.

In order to control the situation, by order of the USSR Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov, military equipment was brought to Dushanbe on the evening of February 13, about 5,000 soldiers were deployed in the city and curfew was imposed. The military was ordered to open fire. By doing so, they managed to stop the riot.

In three days, according to official figures, 20 people (25 according to some sources⁸) were killed, about 600 were injured and 74 of them were shot⁹. In 1990, the February events started a civil war in the republic.

Conclusion

Thus, in presenting the events that took place in Tajikistan in the 1990s, several conclusions can be drawn:

The Republic was in a difficult socio-economic situation, the internal political situation was tense, and the contradictions between the representatives of the authorities and the opposition forces, as well as among the general population, intensified. Along with all this, false news about the provision of apartments to Armenians displaced from Baku was added, which finally was the last straw for the citizens.

⁸ Руденко, Сорокин 1993, 215–216.

⁹ Руденко, Сорокин 1993, 215–216.

The attitude of the Tajiks towards the Armenians against the background of the all-Union brotherhood was at first rather mild, but the situation was greatly exacerbated by the representatives of the Azerbaijani community, who, having received instructions from Azerbaijan, created a cooperation circle and conducted a large campaign. As a result, the Tajik people, who were in a difficult socio-economic, moral and psychological situation, felt hostile to the Armenians. Thanks to the creative work and good name left by the already-established Armenians living there, the violence against Armenians living and sheltering in Tajikistan was brought to an end¹⁰. Over time, however, circumstances forced to leave Tajikistan not only a part of the Armenians living there in the 1970s, but also those who became refugees from Baku¹¹.

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<http://www.asiaterra.info/history/kto-sprovotsiroval-pogromy-v-dushanbe-v-1990-godu>, Кто спровоцировал погромы в Душанбе в 1990 году.

¹⁰ **Ալեքսանյան** 2016, 46:

¹¹ Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1970 года 1973.

ԴՈՒՇԱՆԲԵՈՒՄ ԱՊԱՍՏԱՆԱԾ ԲԱՔՎԱՀԱՅԵՐԻ ԵՎ 1990 Թ. ՓԵՏՐՎԱՐՅԱՆ ԻՐԱԴԱՐՁՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ՇՈՒՐՋ

ՇԱԳՈՅԱՆ Ա.

Ամփոփում

Բանալի բառեր՝ Վերակառուցում, արցախյան ազգային-ազատագրական շարժում, Բաքվի հայություն, Դուշանբե, միջտաջիկական հակամարտություն, Բաքվի փախստականներ, հակահայկական քարոզչություն:

ԽՍՀՄ առաջին և վերջին նախագահ Մ. Գորբաչովի Վերակառուցման քաղաքականությունը ջրի երես հանեց Խորհրդային Միությունում երկար տարիներ առկա և լուծում չստացած խնդիրները: Դա հատկապես վերաբերում է ազգային հիմնախնդիրներին, որոնք սուր արտահայտություն գտան 1980-ական թվականների վերջին:

Հոդվածում ներկայացված են 1990 թվականին մայրաքաղաք Դուշանբեում միջտաջիկական հակամարտության մանրամասները և բացահայտվում են իրադարձությունների հիմնական պատճառները: Քննության է առնվում 1988 թ. ադրբեջանական հետևողական և հակահայ քաղաքականության հետևանքով Բաքվից, Գանձակից և այլ վայրերից բռնի գաղթած հայերի հարցը, որոնց մի մասը ապաստան էին գտել Տաջիկստանում:

К ВОПРОСУ О НАШЕДШИХ УБЕЖИЩЕ В ДУШАНБЕ БАКИНСКИХ АРМЯНАХ И ФЕВРАЛЬСКИХ СОБЫТИЯХ 1990 Г.

ШАГОЯН А.

Резюме

Ключевые слова: Перестройка, Арцахское национально-освободительное движение, бакинские армяне, Душанбе, межаджикский конфликт, бакинские беженцы, антиармянская пропаганда.

Политика Перестройки первого и последнего президента СССР М. Горбачева высветила проблемы, существовавшие в Советском Союзе на протяжении многих лет, которые так и остались нерешенными.

Это касается главным образом национальных проблем, остро выраженных в конце 1980-х годов.

В статье представлены подробности межтаджикского конфликта в столице Душанбе в 1990 году и раскрыты основные причины событий. В результате последовательной и антиармянской политики Азербайджана был решен вопрос об армянах, насильственно эмигрировавших из Баку, Гандзака и других мест, часть которых нашла убежище в Таджикистане.