

The population of Shusha

At the time of its foundation, Shusha was a small settlement with 162 families. Shusha was founded by Azerbaijanis and at first only Azerbaijanis lived here. In the subsequent period, the population of the city rapidly increased due to emigration from different parts of the Karabakh Khanate. Having become the center of the Karabakh Khanate, the city of Shusha has become very attractive for the people living around it. By the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, more than 2,000 families lived here. If we consider that each family consists of an average of five people, it turns out that during this period more than 10 thousand people lived in Shusha. In the seven years that have passed since the entry of the Karabakh Khanate into Russia since 1805, 4,845 Azerbaijani families, which were living in the Khanate, were forced to flee to Iran. In the late 18th - early 19th centuries, among those who moved to Shusha, there was a population of Albanian origin, which in the Middle Ages was Gregorianized and Armenianized under the influence of the Armenian Church. Most of them came from the Tatev, Khachin and Dizag



Virilizing type from Karabakh. Painter G.Gagarin.

mahals of the Karabakh khanate. In 1823, out of 1532 families living in Shusha, more than 1000 were Azerbaijanis and about 500 were Armenians (i.e., Armenianized Albanians). The Christian population made up a small part of the population not only of Shusha, but also of the entire Karabakh Khanate. From the statistics for 1823, it can be seen that out of 20,035 families living in the Karabakh Khanate at that time, 15,729 were Azerbaijani and 4,366 were Christian.



Woman's clothing in the Karabakh khanate

The process of Armenianization of the Christian population of Albanian origin in the region and the rapid increase in the number of Armenians occurred after the Turkmenchay Treaty signed by Russia with Iran in 1828 and the Adrianople (Edirne) Treaty with Ottoman Turkey in 1829. Under the terms of the aforementioned agreements, the resettlement of Armenians from Iran and Ottoman Turkey to the South Caucasus, mainly to the lands of historical Azerbaijan, began. According to official data, in 1828-1830 alone, Russia resettled 40,000 Iranian Armenians and 84,000 Turkish Armenians to the South Caucasus. At that time, 1,300 families were resettled to Zangezur and the former Karabakh Khanate. The social composition of the

population of Shusha was diverse. According to the data of 1830, 56 beks, 64 Muslim clergymen, 21 Christian clergymen, 200 merchants with shops and 266 artisans with workshops lived in Shusha. Starting in the second half of the 19th century, the revitalization of the city's economic life and the associated rapid population growth had a serious impact on the social composition of the population. According to the All-Russian census of 1897, 2,272 noblemen, 270 clergymen, 1,416 merchants, 2,738 artisans, 97 civil servants, 334 servicemen, etc. were registered in Shusha. Apparently, a large number of representatives of the privileged class lived in Shusha. The glorification of Shushi as a resort town played an important role in this.



Azerbaijanis from Shusha. Painter V.Vereshchagin. 1865



Khurshudbanu Natavan with her children

The city had many dining and healing springs, surrounded on all sides by alpine meadows, and the crystal clear air made it attractive to all wealthy people. For these reasons, most of the Karabakh beks preferred to live in Shusha, where they built themselves luxurious houses. The increase in demand for labor in connection with the organization of factory production since the 70s of the XIX century also significantly accelerated the growth of the population of the city of Shusha. Compared to the beginning of the 19th century, the population of Shushi increased 2.5 times and by the end of the century it reached 25,881 people. At the beginning of the 20th century, this growth accelerated even more, and in 1917 the city's population reached 43,869 people.

The Russian policy of aggression and violent Christianization in the South Caucasus has seriously affected the demographic situation in Shusha. However, this increase in

Shusha was not due to the Azerbaijanis, who are the indigenous inhabitants of the city. The resettlement policy pursued by Russian tsarism led to a disruption of the existing ethnic balance and

a rapid increase in the number of Armenians. The total population of Shusha increased from 25,881 in 1897 to 42,568 in 1913. During this period, the number of Azerbaijanis (about 10 thousand people) practically did not change. Of the 23,924 population growth observed from 1870 to 1917, 9,400 accounted for natural growth and 15,524 people - for mechanical (in fact, Armenians from abroad).

In the late 19th - early 20th centuries, the mechanical growth of the city's population due to the resettled Armenians was several times higher than the natural growth. Under the auspices of the tsarist government, the Armenians, who



Bahman Mirza with his family members

gained a numerical advantage in Shusha, began to oppress the Azerbaijanis, who were the indigenous inhabitants of the city. In 1905-1906, Armenian armed formations repeatedly staged massacres in Shusha, burned all Muslim houses on the border of the Armenian quarters and destroyed them with artillery fire. In 1918-1920. Armenians have repeatedly committed massacres in Shusha. After the establishment of the Soviet power in Azerbaijan in 1920, Armenians who held leading positions in Nagorno-Karabakh now pursued their insidious policy under the guise of "class struggle". Hundreds of Azerbaijani residents of the city of Shusha were arrested, shot and persecuted by Armenians (because of denunciations by Armenians). Many Azerbaijani families left Shusha and fled to Iran and Turkey as the only way to avoid persecution by the Armenians. This repression further reduced the number of Azerbaijanis in the city. According to the 1923 census, 6965 people lived in Shusha. Of these, 6682 were Azerbaijanis, 209 Armenians, 45 Russians, 19 Iranians from Azerbaijan, 2 Germans, 3 Mountain Jews, 5 representatives of other nationalities. In 1926, 5.1 thousand people lived in Shusha, in 1932 - 5.6 thousand, in 1959 - 6.1 thousand, and in 1963 - 6.5 thousand people. The alien attitude towards Shusha during the Soviet era had a serious impact on the size and ethnic composition of the population living here. In Shusha, once one of the largest and most prosperous cities in

Azerbaijan, the population has more than tripled in almost 50 years. So, in 1917, 43,869 people lived in the city, and in 1970 - 13,664 people.

The revival of Shusha became possible only after the election of Heydar Aliyev as the leader of Azerbaijan in 1969. A lot of has been done to revive the socio-economic and cultural life of the city. The share of the Azerbaijani population in Shusha has increased significantly. In 1970, out of 13 664 people living in Shusha, only 3577 were Armenians. According to the data of 1988, 19 thousand people lived in Shusha. The average population of the city of Shusha was 63.3 people per square kilometer, which is approximately double the figure (34.5 people) in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous



Family of Yusif Vazir Chamanzaminli

Region.



Karim bey Mehmandarov with his family members

In February 1988, because of the growth of the Armenian separatism and the territorial claims of Armenia to the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, national relations were aggravated. In September of the same year, about 15,000 Azerbaijanis living on the territory of present-

day Khankendi, and then called Stepanakert, were expelled from their homes. Some Azerbaijani

families, expelled from Khankendi, settled in Shusha, exchanging houses with the Armenians living in Shusha. Some Azerbaijanis, expelled from their historical and ethnic lands in Armenia, also wanted to settle in Shusha. On the initiative of the Chairman of the executive Committee of the Shusha region, Mikail Gozalov, a new water pipeline was laid to the city of Shusha, the Shusha-Helfeli-Gaybaly-Kerkidzhakhan road was built, and on the right side of the Shusha-Khankendi road, the Yeni-Khankendi settlement was commissioned for Azerbaijanis expelled from Khankendi. The Azerbaijani population of Shushi grew; the city developed, improved and became even more beautiful. At the time of the 1989 census, 17 thousand people lived in Shusha, and Azerbaijanis made up 98 percent of the city's population. After the treacherous murder of Mikail Gozalov on December 11, 1991, chaos reigned in Shusha. The indifference of the then leadership of Azerbaijan to the fate of the city of Shusha led to the occupation of the city on May 8, 1992 by the armed forces of Armenia. The people of Shusha, who suffered heavy losses, were scattered across many cities and regions of Azerbaijan.



Shusha residents during the Soviet period

After the cleansing of this ancient cultural center of Azerbaijan from the Armenian invaders, on November 8, 2020, the process of beautification of the city of Shusha and the return of Shusha residents to their homes began.