

Liberated East Zangazur

During the First Karabakh War in 1991-1994, the Armenian state, which occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory, was confident that it would keep hold of those territories forever. The signing of a ceasefire agreement between the parties in May 1994 and the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group to preserve the status quo by all means, which was entrusted with the task of resolving the conflict, allowed Armenians to illegally settle in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and plunder the region's underground and surface resources. President Ilham Aliyev was patiently negotiating for the liberation of our territory through negotiations without bloodshed. However, relying on its supporters, Armenia did not want to give back the lands of Azerbaijan. Armenians were in a state of euphoria, considering themselves “invincible”. Armenian Defense Minister David Tonoyan threatened Azerbaijan with a new war for new territories, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said, “Karabakh is Armenia, and full stop”. However, the Armenians did not understand that the Azerbaijani people would never put up with the occupation. Meanwhile Azerbaijan was making serious preparations for the liberation of the lands with pinpoint accuracy. Armenians also did not take into account that after the national leader Heydar Aliyev’s return to power in June 1993, the chaos was reversed, a regular army was established, and oil contracts signed to strengthen the economy bore fruit, bringing Azerbaijan to the ranks of rapidly developing countries. The strengthening of Azerbaijan's position in the international arena and improved military potential created the conditions for the army to start the Victory March. The counter-attack, which began on September 27, 2020 in response to the Armenian provocation, ended in victory in 44 days.

From the first day, steady advance of the Azerbaijani army along the border with Iran and the liberation of the Jabrayil region from occupation created conditions for the cleansing of the **Zangilan** region from the enemy. On October 20, 2020, Zangilan city and Havalı, Zarnalı, Mammadbeyli, Hakari, Sharifan, Mughanli villages of the region were liberated from occupation. The next day, Minjivan district of Zangilan region and Khurama, Khumarlı, Sarıl, Babaylı, Uchunju Aghalı, Hajallı, Girakh Mushlan, Udgun, Turabad, Icheri Mushlan, Malikli, Jahangirbeyli, Baharli villages were liberated. On October 22, Aghband district of Zangilan and Kollugishlag, Malatkeshin, Zangilan village, Genlik, Veligulubeyli, Garadere, Chopedere, Tatar, Tiri, Amir Khanlı, Gargulu, Bartaz, Dallaklı villages were liberated from the enemy. The next day, the villages of Vanadlı and Mirzahasanlı of Zangilan were liberated. On October 25, Birinji Alibeyli, İkinci Alibeyli, Raband, Yenikend villages of Zangilan region were cleansed of Armenian bandits. Unable to withstand the force of the Azerbaijani army, the Armenian army withdrew from the villages of Birinci Aghalı, İkinci Aghalı, Uchunju Aghalı and Zarnalı on October 28, sustaining heavy casualties. On October 30, the Azerbaijani army, advancing at lightning speed, liberated Aladin, Vejnalı villages and Vejnalı gold deposit of Zangilan region. On November 4, Mashadiismayilli and Shafibeyli villages of Zangilan region were liberated from the enemy. With the liberation of Beshdali village on November 7 and Kechikli, Ordekli, Sobu, Garagoz, Iskenderbeyli villages and Bartaz district of Zangilan region on November 9, the Zangilan region was completely liberated from occupation. The Azerbaijani army has strengthened its position along the borders of Zangilan region with Iran and Armenia.

The rapid advance of the Azerbaijani army in the direction of Zangilan created conditions for the liberation of **Gubadli** region from occupation. On October 23, Zilanli, Kurd Mahrizli, Muganli and Alagurshag villages of Gubadli region were liberated from occupation. The city of Gubadli and Padar, Efendiler, Yusifbeyli, Chaytumas, Khanlig, Sariyatag, Mollaburhan villages of the region were liberated from the enemy on October 25. On October 28, Giyasli, Adilja and Gilijan villages of Gubadli were liberated. On October 30, Kavdadig, Mamer and Mollali villages of Gubadli were cleansed of Armenian bandits. Ishigli, Muradkhanli, Milanli villages of Gubadli region were liberated on November 2, Basharat, Garakishiler, Garajalli villages on November 4, Gazyan, Balasoltanli, Mardanli villages on November 7, and Garamanli, Khandak, Hamzali, Mahrizli, Hal, Balligaya, Ulashli, Tinli, Khojahan, Boyuneker, Garagoyunlu, Charali villages were liberated from occupation by the victorious Azerbaijani army on November 9.

On November 9, Gulabird, Safiyan and Turkler villages of **Lachin** region were liberated from the enemy.

Liberation of Shusha from occupation on November 8 decided the fate of the war. On November 10, the Prime Minister of Armenia signed an act of capitulation. Armenia surrendered, raised a white flag and sank to its knees. After that, the occupied territories of Aghdam, Lachin and Kalbajar regions were returned to their owners without a single shot being fired.

The Azerbaijani army, which is among the 50 strongest armies in the world, has written a new page in the world's military history with its bravery in the Second Karabakh War. Azerbaijan has implemented the UN Security Council resolutions that have not been carried out since 1993. The people of Azerbaijan have once again demonstrated to the world that they are invincible and proud. This glorious victory came at the cost of the heroism and bravery of about three thousand martyrs and thousands of veterans of the Patriotic War. Thousands of Azerbaijani soldiers who took part in the liberation of the East Zangazur region were awarded various orders and medals.

On December 10, the Victory Parade was held in Baku with the participation of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Restoration and construction works have begun in East Zangazur, as in all areas liberated from occupation as a result of the 44-day war.

On April 26, 2021, the foundation of the first "Smart Village" project was laid in Zangilan region with the participation of President Ilham Aliyev. The "Smart Village" pilot project covers the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Aghali villages of Zangilan. Leading companies of Turkey, Israel, Italy and China are participating in the project to be implemented in the village of Aghali. The Smart Village pilot project is being implemented on 5 components. These are housing, manufacturing, social services, "smart agriculture" and alternative energy. Initially, 200 private houses will be constructed in the area.

On April 26, 2021, President Ilham Aliyev laid the foundation of Zangilan International Airport. The Horadiz-Zangilan highway is being built rapidly. The Horadiz-Aghband railway, which is under construction, will connect the main part of Azerbaijan with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic through the Zangazur corridor. The opening of the Zangazur Corridor, which had separated Turkey and the Turkic world, Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan for 100 years, will create new realities in the region, which will become a corridor of mutual benefit and cooperation.

According to the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated July 7, 2021 "On the new division of economic regions in the Republic of Azerbaijan", East Zangazur and Karabakh economic regions were established. East Zangazur economic region includes Jabrayil, Kalbajar, Gubadli, Lachin and Zangilan regions. East Zangazur has a large economic potential, and that will ensure rapid increase in production in the non-oil sector.

On August 7, 2021, President Ilham Aliyev laid the foundation of Lachin International Airport. Hydroelectric power stations on mountain rivers are being restored and built.

The construction and commissioning of a new airport is of great importance in terms of using the potential of the East Zangazur economic region, as well as the export of industrial and agricultural products to the world market.

On October 26, 2021, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan laid the foundation of "Dost Agropark" in Zangilan region. On the same day, the foundation of the Zangazur corridor - Horadiz-Jabrayil-Zangilan-Aghband highway was laid as well.

On May 27, 2022, President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva participated in the groundbreaking ceremony of Soltanli station of Horadiz-Aghband railway line, "Jabrayil" energy junction and the opening of the first stage of the "smart village" project in Aghali village of Zangilan district during the visit to East Zangazur economic region.

On June 27, 2022, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev attended the opening of "Kalbajar-1" Small Hydroelectric Power Station and laid the groundwork of the "Istisu" sanatorium and the Occupation and Victory Museums in Kalbajar.

During the visit to East Zangazur on October 19, 2022 the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva attended the opening of the 14.2-kilometer Shukurbayli-Jabrayil section of the Shukurbayli-Jabrayil-Hadrut highway. The head of state also attended the groundbreaking ceremony of 35 kV substations and Digital Management Center in Gubadli and Jabrayil districts. President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva laid the foundation stone for the Occupation and Victory museums complex, the school building and the first residential building in the city of Zangilan, also attended a ceremony to launch Archimedes screw turbine Hydro Power Plant in Zangilan.

On October 20, 2022 an inauguration ceremony of the Zangilan International Airport was held. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attended the opening ceremony. The presidents also attended the inauguration of the first stage of “Dost Agropark” smart agricultural complex in Zangilan district. Ilham Aliyev and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan were attended groundbreaking ceremonies for “Azerbaijan-Türkiye International Forestry Training Center”, “Smart Seedlings” and “Friendship Forest” Complex and Gumlag railway station which is located in the section of Horadiz-Aghband railway line passing through Jabrayil district.

Azerbaijani and Turkish companies are building the Khudafarin-Gubadli-Lachin and Khanlig-Gubadli highways.

On November 16, 2022 President Ilham Aliyev signed a Decree approving the “First state program on the Great Return to Azerbaijan’s liberated territories”. The State Program envisages the territories of the Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur economic regions.

Acceleration of restoration and construction work in East Zangazur will have a positive impact on agricultural development. The country's crop turnover will increase, and hundreds of thousands of hectares will be irrigated as a result of the liberation from occupation of strategically important reservoirs. The liberated lands have great potential for the development of viticulture, grain growing, cotton growing and animal husbandry. Thanks to this potential, sustainable development of agriculture will be ensured.

The demining of liberated territories creates conditions for the population to return to their native lands. Life in East Zangazur will return to normal soon.