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# CHRONICLE OF MASS KILLING



*Last day of Khojaly. Artist Asaf Azerelli*

THE BOOK BY GALINA STAROVOYTOVA "NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION: APPROACHES AND CASE STUDIES" (1999) OPENLY LAYS DOWN THE RUTHLESS AND BLOODY PLAN ON THE ANNEXATION OF AZERBAIJANI TERRITORIES IN AND AROUND NAGORNO-KARABAKH: 1. A SENSE OF THREAT. 2. POPULAR RESISTANCE. 3. THE CONFLICT BECOMES PART OF PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS. 4. THE IDEA OF AUTONOMY COMES TO THE FOREGROUND. 5. SEARCH FOR A RECOGNITION ABROAD. 6. THE WAR OF LAWS. 7. THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT USES COERCION. 8. RADICALIZATION OF THE PARTIES. 9. ECONOMIC BLOCKADE. 10. PARTIES TAKE UP ARMS. 11. WAR IS DECLARED. 12. A FULL-SCALE ARMED CONFLICT.



The implementation of this ignominious scheme was accompanied by Armenian terror and ethnic cleansing. Five Azerbaijanis were killed in their native land in 1988, 32 in 1989, 90 in 1990, and more than 150 in 1991.

On 25-27 February 1992, a tragedy that has eclipsed the nightmares of the Middle Ages occurred. Terror was unleashed on thousands of civilians, including women, children and old people, in the ancient Azerbaijani settlement of Khojaly. Armenian militants behaved as if they were on a shooting spree. The Meskhetian Turks, the unfortunate people who had escaped by the skin of their teeth from the Ferghana Valley and found refuge in the land of Azerbaijan, were not spared either. **Their only fault was that they were Turks.**

Peter Lukimson, an Israeli journalist, wrote in newspaper "Courier": "No-one even bothered to bury the bodies of the people of Khojaly in order to conceal this heinous crime. The bodies were just scattered on the mountains. A truly appalling and surreal picture opened to the eyes of journalists from a bird's eye view."

Mutilated corpses were taken to the Agdam mosque in dump trucks. It seemed that the bodies were plowed by tracks of tanks and armored vehicles. The last moments of these people's lives were truly horrifying. They died in agony which is probably comparable to that of crucified Jesus Christ.

Fearless journalist Yuriy Romanov, who happened to be alongside cameraman Chingiz Mustafayev on a field strewn with mutilated corpses of the people of Khojaly on 27 February 1992, remembered a girl of about six in a hospital train whose head was bandaged. In a book "I am filming war" (2001), he recalled: "The

bandage completely covered her eyes. Without turning off my camera, I leaned towards her, 'What is wrong with you, sweetie?' She answered: 'My eyes are burning... My eyes are burning... Uncle! My eyes are burning!' The doctor touched my shoulder, 'She is blind. Her eyes have been burnt with cigarette butts... When she was brought to us, she had cigarette butts sticking out of her eyes...' Such scenes do not go unnoticed: the next morning Romanov found the inevitable gray hairs on his temples.

The chronicle of the announced murder was as swift as consumption.

Immediately after the Belovezhskaya agreements in late 1991, the interior troops of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs were withdrawn from the Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region. On 1 January 1992, Azerbaijan and Armenia were admitted to the CSCE (now OSCE). Zbigniew Brzezinski compared Azerbaijan to a cork in the bottle containing the energy resources of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, as Western markets could obtain access to oil pipelines bypassing Russian-controlled territory. And as early as on **12 February 1991, the Europeans sent their first mission to the region. The geopolitical struggle between Russia and the West for leverage on the South Caucasus was aggravating.**

**By the end of January 1991, there were only two settlements with Azerbaijani population on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, once an autonomous region of the Azerbaijan SSR – Shusha and Khojaly. Both towns were blocked. Khojaly had a more serious strategic location (airport, main highway).**

It was quite obvious to me, a Russian writer who lived in St. Petersburg, that as was the case in January

1990, massive bloodshed was being prepared in Azerbaijan. "Radio, TV and many newspapers are whipping up anti-Azerbaijani sentiments on a daily basis," I wrote in a telegram to Boris Yeltsin and Ruslan Khasbulatov on Sunday, 26 January 1992. "The mediation has failed. It is clear that Russia is cherishing plans to commit a massacre in Karabakh, which has been cast at the mercy of gunmen and a special regiment of Russian troops." I urged the Russian authorities to withdraw the **366<sup>th</sup> regiment from Khankandi and prevent the imminent slaughter. Incidentally, this motorized infantry regiment was prudently deployed in Stepanakert in 1985, at the start of perestroika, when Muradyan and other Dashnak residents of Yerevan intensified preparations for an armed redistribution and annexation of Azerbaijani lands.**

On 28 January 1992, an Armenian rocket shot down a helicopter with women and children on board that was leaving Shusha. The helicopter crashed on the city's neighborhoods. On 29 January, the Minister of National Security of Azerbaijan, I. Huseynov, issued a not very secret statement: "At the current stage, the main priority of Armenian nationalists is to capture the towns of Shusha and Khojaly, as well as a number of settlements of Goranboy District that are besieged by militant gangs and are consistently exposed to rocket and artillery shelling. Thus, the plans of the leaders of the 'Karabakh movement' to turn the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh republic into a mono-ethnic entity following the example of Armenia and to subsequently annex it to Armenia will be materialized."

It was in those days that Lt-Gen Losif Ohanyan came to Karabakh from the Staff of the Caucasus Military

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District. He brought a million rubles to encourage the officers of the 366<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment to continue serving the Karabakh Armenians. Defectors from military unit No 18920 to Khankandi reported that **about 80 per cent of officers and warrant officers in the regiment were people of Armenian nationality. The militants regularly used the armored personnel carriers and infantry combat vehicles to fire at Azerbaijani settlements.** An officer was paid 2,000 rubles a day for each rented armored personnel carrier. Servicemen of the regiment got 20 liters of alcohol from the Armenians for every shooting raid on Shusha.

As early as on 10 February 1992, the heavy weaponry attack on Khojaly began. On 11 February, militants cut off the Azerbaijani village of Malibayli from Khojaly. Some residents of Malibayli who had not managed to escape were driven into a mosque which militants intended to set on fire. During the attack on Malibayli, three soldiers of the regiment picked up a white flag trying to take out the

surviving residents of the village, but were killed by Armenian thugs right in front of everyone else to teach a lesson.

MP Serzh Sargsyan, who was the chief of staff of the Defense Council of Armenia, was also deputy minister of defense. His second position, however, was not made public, along with the fact that Zori Balayan and Robert Kocharyan (state secretary of the Nagorno-Karabakh republic) exercised control over the activities of militants on the territory of the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region. They were in charge of mobilizing the Armenian population, provision of bandit groups with military ammunition and hardware, vehicles, fuel and food. According to the decision of the staff, it was forbidden for people above the age of 15 to leave the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region. Members of the staff actively recruited mercenaries who were being discharged from the army for various reasons. Contracts were concluded for any period of time, even for one week.

The hired people were promised 5,000 rubles and \$300 per month. If they had weapons or ammunition, the rate was doubled. In case of injury or death of a mercenary, his family was promised 150,000 to 200,000 rubles.

There is a need for some explanation here. Here is a secret military message sent from Stepanakert: *"More than 20 soldiers of the regiment were killed in the operation in Khojaly. Their corpses were subsequently blown up at the unit of combat vehicles of the 366<sup>th</sup> motorized infantry regiment in order to conceal the participation of the regiment in the operation. Their names were registered retrospectively as being on annual leave, and they are currently listed as deserters."*

On the night from 11 to 12 February, an attempt to seize the Khojaly airport was repelled. A 12 February report said: "The airport is being defended by 18 police officers, which is extremely insufficient. According to Serzh Sargsyan, militants have the intention of capturing Khojaly by 16 February 1992." So **the massacre**





Artist Sabir Chopuroglu, *Khojaly scream*



**in Khojaly was not planned for the anniversary of the Sumgayit provocation, as Mr. Sargsyan will explain later.**

On 13 February, 200 people – the elderly, women, children and the sick – were taken to Ganja. This was the last evacuation flight out of Khojaly. The blockaded town without electricity, heat and water still had more than 3,000 civilians, half of them old people, women and children. These were defended by a local battalion of 80 people, 20 soldiers of the national army and 60 local police officers, including those defending the airport.

Minister of National Security I. Huseynov said in a four-page address to Ayaz Mutalibov on 18 February 1992 that *“in the near future Armenia will be ready to begin a full-scale military campaign in order to annex parts of Azerbaijan. It is not ruled out that this campaign will reach its peak in the latter half of February 1992, on the eve of the anniversary of the Karabakh events.* Evidence of this is the stepped up activity of Armenian bandits, which has resulted in the **eviction of Azerbaijani population from virtually all the villages of the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region.”**

Huseynov further stated in the message: “The dangerous expan-

sion of Armenia’s military presence is happening directly on the territory of Azerbaijan. The Armenian Ministry of Defense is consistently deploying regular army units and militia with all the necessary equipment in Armenian-populated areas in order to conduct major combat operations. For instance, *two regular regiments and two separate battalions of the armed forces of Armenia staffed with conscripts from Armenia and Karabakh are currently concentrated in the mountainous part of Karabakh.* In addition, there are 16 detachments (25-30 people each) manned by servicemen of the Armenian Defense Ministry, which replace each other every 15 days, five to six detachments (15 people each) of the Dashnaktsutyun Party, which also include two to three Armenian instructors from Syria, Lebanon, Libya and other countries. A paratrooper unit (25 people) from the so-called “mountain special forces” of Dashnaktsutyun is deployed in the Zardanashen village of Martuni District. At the same time, Armenia has made considerable efforts to accelerate the militarization of Azerbaijan’s Armenian population. Weaponry, including artillery systems, military hardware and equipment for the so-called local self-defense units, are delivered to the republic by helicopters.”

The doomed town was subjected to heavy fire from Khankandi and Asgaran on a daily basis. As a result, many were killed and wounded, there was extensive destruction and fires. On 23 February, Tamerlan Garayev, the then deputy chairman of the Azerbaijan Supreme Council, left for Agdam. A day later he sent a telephone message to Ayaz Mutalibov: “The situation is critical. In Khojaly and Umudlu our forces are depleted. Helicopters have not been flying for more than two weeks. There is very little resistance to Armenian militants. There is no management of the armed forces and there are no resources. Any delay will lead to unpredictable consequences. Waiting for your decisions.”

On 25 February, Khojaly was fired at from Khankandi using 122-mm shells filled with cyanide.

In a book called “End of the Second Republic” (2006), Zardusht Alizadeh recalls that on the morning of 25 February 1992 the President of Azerbaijan Ayaz Mutalibov issued the mandate for talks with Boris Yeltsin to his brother Araz Alizadeh. At 18.00 on the same day, the latter met with the President of Russia in Moscow. “Yeltsin listened to him glumly, called Defense Minister Marshal Shaposhnikov and asked him whether it was true that Russian soldiers together with Armenian militants were burning Azerbaijani villages in Karabakh and killing civilians. Shaposhnikov said this was all a lie and slander. Then Araz asked to double-check the information with the chairman of the KGB, General Barannikov, who had been the deputy minister of internal affairs of Azerbaijan before. He confirmed that what Araz was saying was true and that there were deserters from the regiment who spoke on national television. Yeltsin listened to



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Barannikov and said angrily:

- Go to Shaposhnikov and sort it out with him. I will give him the order on withdrawing the regiment right now...

After a telephone conversation with Ayaz Mutalibov, Marshal Shaposhnikov told Araz:

- The regiment will receive the orders to withdraw from Stepanakert today.

This is how the events developed in Moscow.

According to radio intercepts, **at 19.50 on 25 February 1992, the commander of the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia declared a full combat readiness throughout Armenia and all Armenian armed units. We note that this order was issued just two hours after the telephone conversation between Ayaz Mutalibov and Marshal Shaposhnikov.**

Zardusht Alizadeh completes the sinister plot quietly: "On the night from 25 to 26 February 1992, Armenian militants supported by several armored vehicles of unidentified affiliation attacked and burned the settlement of Khojaly."

This short and cold text interestingly indicates the hardware of *unidentified affiliation*. Indeed, not only the numbers but also the bodies of ultramodern tanks and armored vehicles of the Russian regiment were painted with white like ghosts in the night attack on a peaceful Azerbaijani city.

"The city was subjected to a barrage of artillery fire," said one of the soldiers of the 366<sup>th</sup> motorized infantry regiment S. Tangirov who refused to participate in the carnage. "I will never forget what I saw... Homes and people in them burned like candles, the cries of the wounded and dying groans are still ringing in my ears..."

When the Armenians, supported by military equipment, were entering the town, we, together with the few survivors, left it, but were fired on near a village (I later learned its name - Nakhchivanik). People could not expect that they would come under militant attack here. They were falling down like felled trees... Many of the seriously wounded and dead remained there near that village. We could not take them out because we had to save the survivors..."

It is indicated in a book by Yuriy Girchenko "The army of a state that does not exist" (2002) that the operation to seize Khojaly was prepared by the 366<sup>th</sup> regiment according to the rules of operational warfare and with the participation of experienced Gen N. Ter-Grigoryants. Preliminary reconnaissance was conducted with gunners sitting in the ambush. The final plan for seizing the town was prepared on 19-20 February. According to the plan, on orders of the regiment commander, servicemen with combat equipment left Khankandi on 23 February and took initial positions in Armenian villages. The main striking force was the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion commanded by Maj Seyran Ohanyan and the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion under the command of Maj Yevgeniy Nabokov. The two battalions were stationed in and around village Ballija, while the less reliable 1<sup>st</sup> battalion, based in village Chanakhchi, was to cover the rear.

**The "military cooperation" with Armenian murderers and rapists, tragic for the people of Azerbaijan and shameful for the 366<sup>th</sup> regiment, in an effort to destroy the town of Khojaly and its civilians has been proved by irrefutable facts, documents and testimonies from victims and eye-witnesses.** The "alibi" of regiment commander Y. Zarvigorov seems quite curious.

He said he was not personally involved in the genocide of civilians in Khojaly because he had been dead drunk from 23 February. The order on storming Khojaly was issued by his wife after an obscene carousal. The armored vehicles were led by the "double" of the regiment commander, an Armenian named Zhora.

It is not too difficult to guess the purpose of Y. Zarvigorov's two visits to Khankandi after his military unit had been withdrawn and disbanded.

Three days of mourning were declared in Azerbaijan. The report was hurriedly broadcast on Russian television followed by the flickering half-naked beauties dancing the samba during the carnival in Brazil. This was another attempt to conceal the truth about the atrocities of Armenian gangsters and their patrons in Karabakh in order to provide yet another human rights activist such as Starovoytova with ammunition to declare without shame or conscience: "Hundreds killed in Khojaly? Never heard of that. I have official information that only two people were killed there."

"In those days, the large-scale military operation affected the fate of the Azerbaijani population of Karabakh for the first time. Although self-defense units left a corridor for the exit of civilians, it was impossible to avoid casualties," human rights "champions" Igor Babanov and Konstantin Voyevodskiy said in a book called "The Karabakh Crisis" (1992).

That night, people rushed out of their homes into the snow, half-dressed, some barefoot, daring the February weather to escape from this inferno. The flow of frightened and demented people fled from the Neanderthals with guns. Children were screaming as they were falling and hurting their knees and heads. The slippery trails in the rugged moun-



tains, treacherously and ruthlessly covered with a blanket of snow, were dangerous not only for children but also for adults on a cold winter night. This disastrous exit from Khojaly was subsequently branded as the *Armenian corridor of death*.

V. Savelyev, head of a Russian counter-intelligence unit which was also involved in the cruel massacre of Khojaly, admitted in his book "Secret information" (2008): "I could not help writing about it all. I can not forget the riddled bodies of men, women and children, pregnant girls. Let the Azerbaijanis forgive me for not being able to do anything in all those bloody and ruthless events. I simply wrote and sent this secret information to the Kremlin, to the generals of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense. Read and see how tarnished the Russian officer's honor is now."

Participants in the act of genocide went out of their way to conceal it, but when they failed, they started to squarely deny involvement in it. Armenian separatists opened fire at the helicopters carrying journalists to the places of mass murder. On 28 February 1992, they attacked a television crew that managed to film the disfigured corpses of dozens of children aged 2 to 15, women and elderly was attacked. On 2 March 1992, a group of French journalists that was filming the scenes of barbaric executions was fired on. The brutally mutilated bodies were filmed and, not without difficulty, shown on "Ostankino" television channel.

**Attempts to portray the Khojaly carnage as "an unpleasant episode" of war are continuing to this day. The theory is circulated that fire was opened in the "humanitarian" corridor only on Azerbaijani soldiers coming out with**



Artist Nizami Huseynov. *Victims of Khojaly*

**a weapon. As for the dead bodies of civilians, they were "planted" by the Azerbaijani army itself on the way from Khojaly to Agdam.** A

similar view is shared by the first Russian Ambassador to Armenia, V. Stupishin, a dear friend of Zori Balayan and a fan of the Karabakh mulberry vodka. He was subsequently awarded the Artsakh Medal "for providing invaluable service to the Nagorno-Karabakh republic, scientific substantiation of the right of the Karabakh people to self-determination and a great contribution to the coverage and protection of the rights of the Armenians of Artsakh". In his book "My mission in Armenia" (2002), V. Stupishin describes Azerbaijanis as "Azeri Turks", threatens Russia with Pan-Turkism and terms Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan as legitimate resistance. But 10 years after the tragedy, the former ambassador became even more candid. "Armenia has been our strategic partner from the very beginning to the present day. We have to act accordingly in relation to it and to Karabakh, for there is no independent and friendly Armenia

without Karabakh. And without them Russia will simply have no position in the Caucasus... We simply have to take Karabakh under our wing."

Azerbaijan, which has sustained unprecedented losses from Armenian terror, was among the first countries to join the anti-terror coalition. But documents of the coalition do not even mention Armenian terrorism. Moreover, **the world community has not issued a clear-cut response to the Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan. These are double standards. They are a product of the well-known Diaspora which is perhaps more branched out, influential and active than Sicilian Mafia.**

Prominent Russian philosopher and political analyst S. Kara-Murza has tried to explain the phenomenon of hushing up such inhuman punishment. In an article "Eurocentrism: the Oedipus complex of intellectuals" he writes: "In the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, the democratic intellectuals (and indeed the West) are clearly sided with the Armenians. And Armenian militants, in an effort to make war irreversible,

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entirely destroy the population of a whole town of Khojaly. Images of a UN commission walking on alpine meadows strewn with bodies of women and children were accompanied by a completely neutral commentary on television. This did not make any impression on the democratic community (while Western media did not even consider the incident worth mentioning). Some synod of spiritual leaders of civilization seems to have included the Armenians in the list of the "pure," while Azerbaijanis are not (or not yet) included. And obedient to the signals of these leaders, Russian intellectuals have made a mark in their brain about the cost of Armenian and Azerbaijani blood."

**But the most horrifying result of the Khojaly tragedy is different. None of those responsible for the destruction of the city and its residents have been brought to justice.**

One could agree with the idea of Jack Matlock, formerly twice US ambassador to the USSR, that "people in most parts of the world are mixed. It is impossible to draw a line between them. Therefore, it is really necessary to create a society where people can live together and have mutual respect for each other. They don't have to like each other, but they should respect each other and respect the rights of others."

I keep monitoring the developments in Armenia and Azerbaijan. What is the likely outcome of the Karabakh conflict? Let me refer to two wise judgments. The first is from the Koran, Sura 2:216: **"You are ordered to fight, even though you hate it."** The second belongs to great Georgian thinker I. Chavchavadze: **"The mediatrix between honest enemies is conscience."**

Before reflecting about an end of the conflict between Armenia and

Azerbaijan, I want to express some of my fears. It is obvious **as in the conditions of current globalization and European integration not only the growing nationalism of mono-ethnic enclaves, but also all the other manifestations of the cancer of extreme nationalism and xenophobia.**

With regard to the current **occupation of Karabakh and the surrounding Azerbaijani districts, I would like to note that this occupation can not be justified or washed away with any references to various events of the past:** hundreds of thousands of eye-witnesses are alive. That is my writer's position...



*Artist Ismayil Mammadov. Genocide*

The methods and techniques of all-out war aiming to turn the once flourishing region into a desert and destroy innocent civilians with whom you have lived together for centuries are utterly shameful...

The town of Khojaly was burned to the ground, while its inhabitants massacred by Armenian fidains and the special 366<sup>th</sup> regiment under the command of Gen Ohanyan.

That is what is truly shameful and disgraceful!

Another shameful act has been

the relatively recent supplies of modern weaponry from Russia to Armenia, for which the then Russian prime minister, Viktor Stepanovich Chernomyrdin received a shameful nickname of Victor Stepanakertovich. In a live show on NTV Gen Lev Rokhlin said that after the supplies of a billion dollars worth of modern weaponry to Armenia he felt as though he was on death row, even more so than in a Grozny basement in January 1995. Two months later Gen Rokhlin was found dead in his bed. Like any other political assassination, this one had no chance of ever being unraveled.

Another denouncer of this story, the Russian Minister for the CIS Affairs, Aman Tuleyev, was expelled from the government and returned to the Kuzbass. He gave a newspaper interview, describing the arms supplies as criminal: "This is real theft on a large scale – the weaponry was worth more than a billion dollars. I have always been opposed to criminal arms trade, and if this process is not fought against regardless of who the arms are sold to, it will become unmanageable. In addition, I would like to put a question in the following way: **what strategic goal were we pursuing by supplying arms to Armenia? Was it for Armenia to beat Azerbaijan and take over Karabakh? But Azerbaijan is also a former Soviet republic and a member of the CIS. And has anyone ever thought about what these arms supplies have led to? Have they led to peace? Of course not! Azerbaijan will certainly buy more arms too..."**

However, this whole story was quickly hushed up after the death of Rokhlin and the resignation of Tuleyev...

I have seen Armenian refugees from Baku in Moscow and St. Petersburg and felt very sympathetic of



them. Some of these people were and still are our friends. But **how can we compare these “civilized” refugees with the plight of those who were expelled from their land, thrown out of their homes into the cold in whatever clothes they had on, without the possibility to take even the minimum of the necessary things and fleeing into the wide world to save their lives?** Human grief of this magnitude can perhaps be seen in Palestine and in refugee camps in Lebanon these days. Thank God that Azerbaijan has not been turned into another Palestine, although attempts in this direction are still being made.

Let's go back to the main topic though. During a meeting of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet in August 1988, the following conversation took place between Gorbachev and Academician Ambartsumyan.

“Gorbachev: Tell me please how many Azerbaijanis there were in Yerevan at the beginning of the century?

Ambartsumyan: At the beginning of the century, in Yerevan?

Gorbachev: Yes.

Ambartsumyan: It is difficult to say.

Gorbachev: You should know. I will remind you – **Azerbaijanis accounted for 43 per cent of Yerevan's population.** And what is the percentage now?

Ambartsumyan: Very small, perhaps around one per cent.

Gorbachev: And I have no intention of blaming the Armenians for driving our Azerbaijanis...”

There is a lot of sense in this dialogue. First of all, it is the hypocrisy of Gorbachev who did not blame the Armenians: people are not guilty but the ideology of nationalism and

chauvinism is worse than the Chernobyl radiation. It is because of such provocation that Armenia has become a mono-ethnic state...

In the eyes of the objective international community the liberation of the Azerbaijani lands, which, much to our shame, were occupied with the participation of Russian troops, is becoming increasingly imperative. As evidenced by numerous publica-

tions, these once flourishing Azerbaijani lands have been turned into a kind of Kalahari Desert...

Serzh Sargsyan will have to answer for the Khojaly genocide against a defenseless civilian population.

We will wait for that, revering those who died at the hands of the barbarians. We will remember, not lament.

Amen. ✪

