

KHOJALY WITNESS of a war crime

ARMENIA IN THE DOCK

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ARMENIA IN THE DOCK

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PREFACE

Before Khojaly, the Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us, they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]. And that's what happened.

Serzh Sargsyan, December 2000,
quoted in Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan
through Peace and War* (New York: NYU Press, 2004), p. 172

Serzh Sargsyan speaks with authority; in 1992 he was leader of the 'Nagorno-Karabakh Republic Self-Defence Forces Committee'. His brute candour is strong evidence of the cause and motivation behind the slaughter of 613 Khojaly townsfolk on the fateful night of 25–26 February 1992. He is currently President of Armenia and is thus the man with whom Azerbaijan has to negotiate in seeking a resolution to the Nagorno (Mountainous) Karabakh war. Despite the shocking admission quoted above, he has never been held to account for his actions in that war.

The deeds of Serzh Sargsyan and his co-militants, however, continue to blight the lives of the hundreds of thousands of people driven from their homes by the war. They comprise one in ten of Azerbaijan's population, the world's highest proportion of refugees and internally displaced people. In this book, the initial focus is on those who survived the Khojaly Massacre but for whom every day is one of grief for loved ones lost, longing for a return to their homeland and bewilderment that the world expects them to patiently await the consent of those who destroyed their lives. Sadly, for Nazile Salimova, who was interviewed for this book (page 46), that consent will now

come too late. Death arrived too early for her, as it had for Zenure Salimova's baby, carried by a pregnant mother through the snow and horror of Khojaly's night (page 55.), but surviving the stressful aftermath for just three months. Shahibe Mustafayeva's husband also somehow completed the barefoot walk through river and forest, but lived on for only ten months before finally succumbing to the effects (page 49). Many subsequent deaths were ascribed to stress by Humay Abbasova (page 34).

On page 151 is Victoria Ivleva's report in which she describes helping a woman, one of a column of Ahiska (Meskheti) Turks being marched out of Khojaly by their Armenian captors. Victoria carried the woman's two-day-old baby girl. There is a sad epilogue to that story. Some 19 years later, Victoria set out to find out what had happened to the woman, Mehriban Bakirova. She found her but the girl, Guany, had never enjoyed good health.

Indeed there had been fatalities before the final attack. Lala Askerova (page 40) told of how her husband was one of many who had not survived the stress created by being under continual siege and attack from 1988.

Times of war are inevitably times of confusion, sometimes deliberately sown, sometimes arising from force of circumstances. Many conflicting versions have been proposed as to what happened in Khojaly on the night of 25–26 February 1992, and why. So this book opens with maps for the benefit of a world still largely ignorant of the region, let alone the Karabakh war and its horrific consequences. The map of the South Caucasus will help readers to place the region, note the immediate neighbourhood and thus understand its strategic importance, politically 'sandwiched' as it is by Russia, Iran and Turkey. The areas of Georgia and Azerbaijan occupied by foreign forces are also marked. Economically, the region is of particular interest to the West for the reserves of oil and gas being extracted from Azerbaijan's sector of the Caspian Sea. The second map has more detail, showing the occupied Azerbaijani territories of Nagorno-Karabakh, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrail, Zangilan, Gubadli, Lachin and Kalbajar. The final map shows how Armenian forces channelled the Khojaly townsfolk to the guns that awaited them.

Eyewitness accounts by people who were in Khojaly, those who survived that night, provide information about its events, but the chapter of interviews is more important for the focus on the people behind the statistics. Their telling of the terror and struggle for survival on that night brought tears to the eyes and a determination to present the human side of a conflict which is too often framed in statistics and cold-blooded politics.

The international response is represented first by the considered assessments issued by human rights and other organisations. Naturally more sober and detached in tone, they nevertheless provide an objective complement to the emotional commitment of eyewitnesses.

International journalists who arrived in the immediate aftermath of the Khojaly Massacre had to work very hard to overcome the world's preconceptions and to make people look at, read and believe their accounts. Their witness is presented here too.

There follows a selection of extracts from books by international writers reflecting their views on the tragedy.

The photographs included here were taken by foreign journalists immediately after those terrible events and they remind us of the human dimension.

The Nagorno-Karabakh region of western Azerbaijan, close to the border with Armenia, is regarded by Azerbaijanis as the cradle of their culture. Many of their greatest writers, poets and musicians were born there and the beautiful Karabakh carpets are one of the four main groups produced by Azerbaijani weavers. Horse-breeding also thrived, with the golden Karabakh horse acquiring almost legendary status. Sadly, since the war, no carpets are woven in Karabakh, *mugham* is no longer sung there and the Karabakh horse is also condemned to exile.

Khojaly was certainly the bloodiest episode in the latest outbreak of secessionist violence in the region. As with many inter-ethnic disputes, the causes lie in historical manipulations of borders and populations by imperial forces. One of the early landmarks in this sorry progression was the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828 which settled the war between Persia and Russia, confirming the latter's acquisition of territory previously subject to Persian rule. The redrawn border divided the lands inhabited by Azerbaijanis; those to the north were subsumed into the Russian Empire. The victors also demanded that their Armenian fellow Christians living south of the new border should be allowed to move north. Thus many thousands of Armenians were moved, some to Azerbaijani khanates in Karabakh and others to khanates further west (which later became the state of Armenia). They commemorated this exodus by erecting a monument, *We are our Mountains*, in 1967 and celebrated 150 years since their arrival in Karabakh by erecting another monument in 1978. Although there are many records of the two peoples living in peaceful co-existence, including in upper Karabakh where Armenians gradually became the majority, there were always those with dreams of political grandeur who managed to stir up hostilities, especially in search of a 'Greater Armenia'.

In the Soviet era, Nagorno-Karabakh had autonomous status within Azerbaijan and Armenians lived there peacefully until the USSR began to fall apart in the 1980s. By 1988 ethnic Armenians were calling for union with Armenia and the Armenian Supreme Soviet voted to incorporate Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia, but this was overruled by the USSR. Violence continued, Azerbaijanis were driven out of their

homes and, in September 1991, ethnic Armenians declared themselves independent of Azerbaijan, as the 'Nagorno-Karabakh Republic' (it has not been recognised by any country and under international law remains part of Azerbaijan). The ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijanis continued.

After many months of sniper fire and night-time shelling on Khojaly, the atrocities peaked in the middle of the freezing night of 25–26 February 1992. The inhabitants fled from the final assault on their town in whatever they happened to be wearing. Shoes and heavy clothes were kicked off as these hampered progress across the snow-covered ground and chill Qarqar River, through the forest ... straight into a fusillade of bullets from guns held by men who knew exactly where the refugees would have to flee.

Such was the horror of this event that it took days for the rest of Azerbaijan to accept that it had happened. Such was the influence of the Armenian diaspora that at least one Western correspondent had trouble convincing his paper he was not confusing perpetrator and victim.

A cease-fire was signed in May 1994, by which time Armenia had occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts of Azerbaijan (approximately 15 per cent of the country's territory). Human Rights Watch estimated that there were a total of 25,000 fatalities by the time of the cease-fire. And Azerbaijan had to provide for approaching one million refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs, i.e. refugees in their own country).

More than two decades later, a state of war still exists and Armenia remains in occupation of internationally-recognised Azerbaijani territory despite four resolutions from the UN Security Council explicitly demanding the removal of its occupying forces. The UN General Assembly, the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have all made similar demands. All have similarly been ignored.

Khojaly still exerts powerful pressure on the politics and psyche of the region. In Armenia, first Robert Kocharyan and then Serzh Sargsyan ascended to the presidency; both were born in Khojaly's neighbouring town of Khankendi ('Stepanakert' to Armenians) and both were key players in the expulsion of all Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven other districts.

Azerbaijan's oil wealth has enabled it to get rid of the tent camps and begin to provide decent conditions for its IDPs, but the fact of continued occupation and the horror, especially of Khojaly, weigh heavily indeed on the national consciousness.

The politics, economics, industry and infrastructure, as well as the cultures and psychology of the whole South Caucasus are distorted by the consequences of the war.

The peoples of the region will not benefit fully from the wealth and potential that is still present until there is a just settlement.

In presenting the materials in this book we hope to get beyond statistics and stock images, to get across what this wanton destruction meant to individual people who share the hopes, fears and feelings of common humanity but who wait still to be treated with the same humanity. Let there be no forgetting that this is a continuing tragedy. Having survived the most atrocious and brutal of massacres in the Karabakh war, these people are still denied the most basic of human rights, to live in peace in the homes they have created. Let there be no more destruction; let the people of Khojaly realise their simple dream of returning to their homes.

Note on Spelling

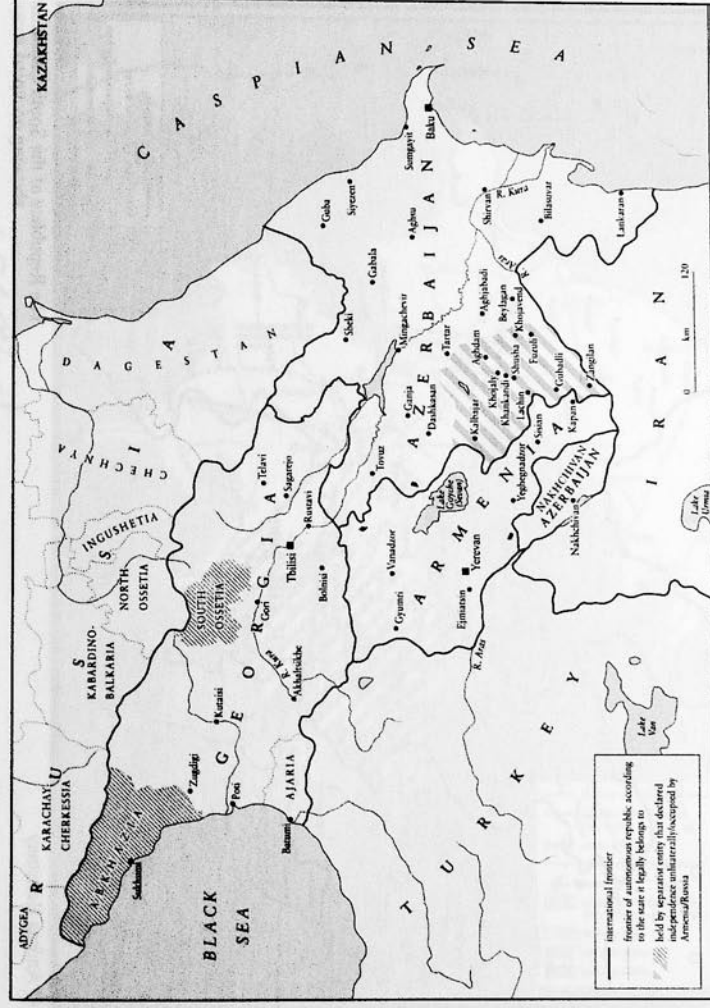
There is no internationally-accepted, single system of transliteration for Azerbaijani text. The articles and reports in this book have been reproduced as written and so the names of people and places appear in different forms.

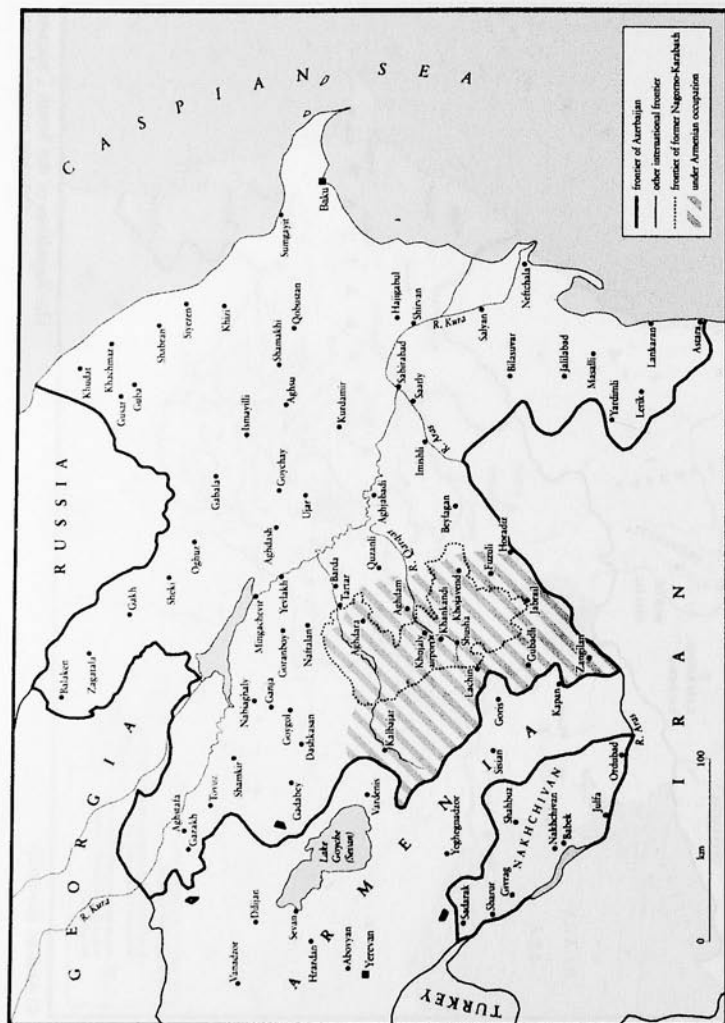
E.g. Khojaly / Xodjali / Khojalu refer to the same place and Alif Hajiyev / Alef Khadjiev refer to the same person.

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Many people have contributed to a project that aims to ensure that those who fell victim and those who are still unable to return to their land, homes and possessions are not forgotten. TEAS is especially grateful to the following: Elman Mammadov, Professor Hevva Mammadova and the U.S. Azeris Network for their help in enabling us to assemble the recollections of survivors and provision of materials. Frédérique Lengaigne, Klaus Reisinger, Victoria Ivleva, Thomas Goltz and Reza Deghati were eyewitnesses who have also communicated their personal responses to the human tragedies they recorded. Fiona MacLachlan willingly lent a sympathetic ear and photographed those who lived through that terrible night to achieve the interviews that follow. Celia Davies was key to the assembly of international records and Janice Farrell provided accurate translations of the reports that appeared. We are grateful to the international media and publishing houses for their kind permission to reprint the reports and extracts included here.

Our deepest gratitude must go to the survivors of Khojaly for reliving the most painful days of their lives in the hope that their pleas to return to normal lives will finally be heard. Our deepest sympathy goes to the family of Nazile Salimova, along with our regret that her wish to return to a house with a 15-metre balcony and host us there will never be fulfilled ... May she finally rest in peace.

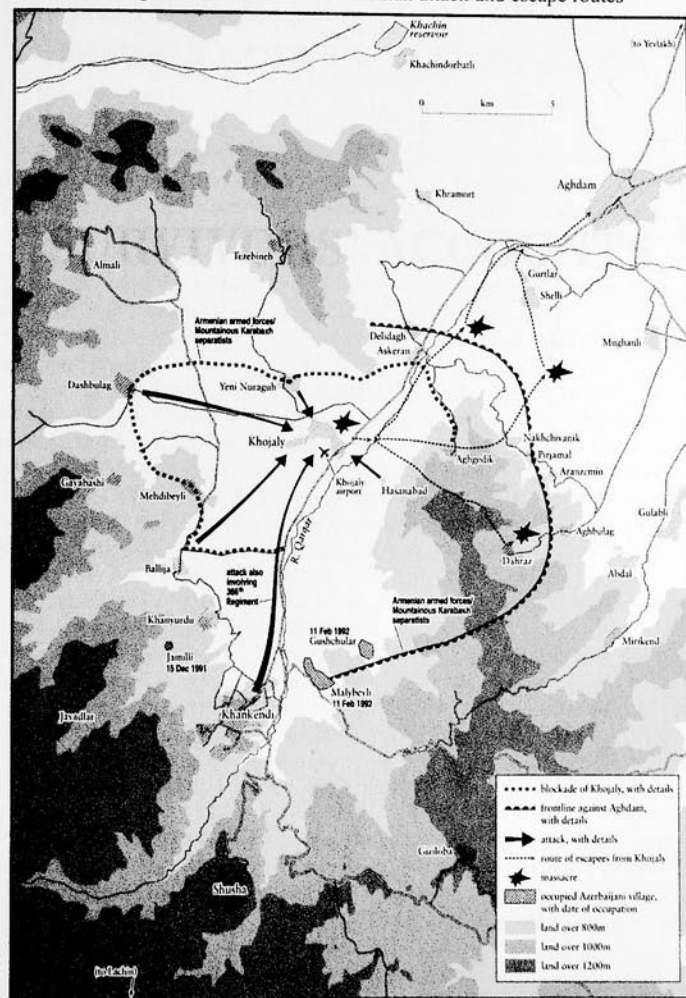




The Republics of the South Caucasus showing occupied areas

© András Bereznyay

Khojaly Massacre, 25–26 February 1992 showing the directions of the Armenian attack and escape routes



© András Bereznyay

ME Alexandrov adına
Azərbaycan Milli
Kitابخanası



KHOJALY OVER TWENTY YEARS ON

SURVIVORS' ACCOUNTS

The weather on Monday, 22 January 1978, was bright and clear. The sun was shining brightly, and the temperature was in the high 80s. The humidity was oppressive, and the air was thick with heat. The sound of the rain was a constant background noise, and the smell of the earth was a constant reminder of the past.

It was a day of many firsts. The first time I had ever seen a person who had been in the country for so long. The first time I had ever seen a person who had been in the country for so long. The first time I had ever seen a person who had been in the country for so long. The first time I had ever seen a person who had been in the country for so long.

Together with the others, I went to the market. The market was a place of many firsts. The first time I had ever seen a person who had been in the country for so long. The first time I had ever seen a person who had been in the country for so long.

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KHOJALY OVER TWENTY YEARS ON

The weather on Saturday 22 January 2011 was as grey and dull as the old Soviet sanatorium where we visited some Khojaly survivors. Its location on the shore of the Caspian Sea, next to a windswept beach and on the edge of a low-lying village that has seen little yet of the massive investment which has gone into other areas of Azerbaijan, was grim. I had been to the beach previously in winter, a great place for a good brisk walk to blow away the cobwebs from winter excesses, but hardly the place to rebuild your entire life. Especially when your previous life had, by all accounts, been close to the most beautiful and fertile mountain countryside with thick forests, rivers and of course comfortable homes.

I lived in Azerbaijan from 2004–2008 and have been a guest to the country a number of times since then. The country has a unique location and geographical attributes and is home to a booming oil and gas industry. It exhibits such a variety of climatic zones that you can grow almost any crop here, successfully and in abundance. This country is so rich in natural resources that, with independence and investment, its growth in GDP has been amongst the highest in the world throughout much of the last decade. And yet, step outside this fast changing country and into the relatively sedate UK, for example, and hardly anyone has heard of Azerbaijan.

I am also familiar with the fact that Armenia is occupying large swathes of land that, it is internationally agreed, actually belong to Azerbaijan.

Together with the stories of 20 January 1990, when Azerbaijan's capital city of Baku was 'invaded' by the Soviet army, resulting in many innocent local people being shot and killed, the conflict with Armenia is the most recent episode in a country with a long history of being subject to the desires of its covetous neighbours.

Survivors of what has come to be known as the Khojaly Massacre or Khojaly Tragedy have been asked to tell their terrible stories time and time again, but no-one has been listening.

At the time of the massacre I was living in Scotland and cannot say I remember hearing the news then. Sometimes it's hard to be certain what you really remember about a time or what you remember being told about an event sometime later.

In fact the Khojaly tragedy was definitely in the news across much of the world, as I have since discovered.

With some trepidation about what I would hear, I agreed early in 2011 that I would meet and talk with survivors of the tragedy, to hear their stories for myself, to make my own judgements and to write about it for this book.

Once inside our first home, shoes off as is the way here, the Azerbaijani hospitality took over and we were generously provided with tea and something sweet to take with it. The dining table was pulled out from the wall and we sat around it; in fact this was the setup in all the homes we visited. A family member would take a chair and recount their experience of the tragedy. There would be photos of lost loved ones and there would be young grandchildren with a stunningly strong family likeness to the photos.

As the stories emerged, I started to build up a picture of that fateful night when so many were killed. I began to wonder, what might I have done in similar circumstances? And I found myself thinking that I just wouldn't have been there, I would have left long before. I wouldn't have been so brave, so determined to stay in my family home.

I couldn't help but admire these people for their bravery, for their compassion to one another, all in the face of such adversity. The fact that their new-found enemies had been their friends – personal friends (I asked to check) – really stung.

For various reasons we all generally choose to live near people like ourselves. Or we end up with people of a similar income level or background. We don't, in general, tend to live next to people who we are not like. So it's not surprising that Karabakh comprised some ethnically Azerbaijani villages and some ethnically Armenian villages. But they were friends, they mixed, and I dare say they married each other sometimes.

The land belonged to Azerbaijan, everybody knew, so the shock was immense when Armenia laid claim to it. But still, I have the impression that our survivors never once thought that the events were going to unfold the way they did, resulting in that horrible dark winter night when finally, after months of aggression, the Armenian men (aided they say, by a Russian regiment) finally drove them out of their homes.

With a tear in their eye each story was told, and we would write, the small digital recorder on the table unobtrusively recording. How many times have these stories been told, I wonder? How many times has tea been poured?

Our translator paused, tears in her eyes, as she explained she could not continue for a moment. We were listening this time to a much younger woman, Yaseman Hasanova, who was only 12 at the time of the tragedy.

The next time I went back to the sanatorium to speak to survivors (I made three separate visits – it takes a long time to hear the stories), I was a little more prepared. I was in fact a little buoyed up by Yaseman's story (see page 52). This was because I had felt I had listened to a more recent story. No longer was I dealing with a series of events which had happened some twenty years ago.

Time after time, the people I speak to reiterate their desire to return to their homeland.

My son says, as soon as I hear we can go back, I will run all the way there, even in my bare feet.

So I am shocked and disappointed that so many of the stories end in a description of illness caused by stress. Their hopelessness is being perpetuated.

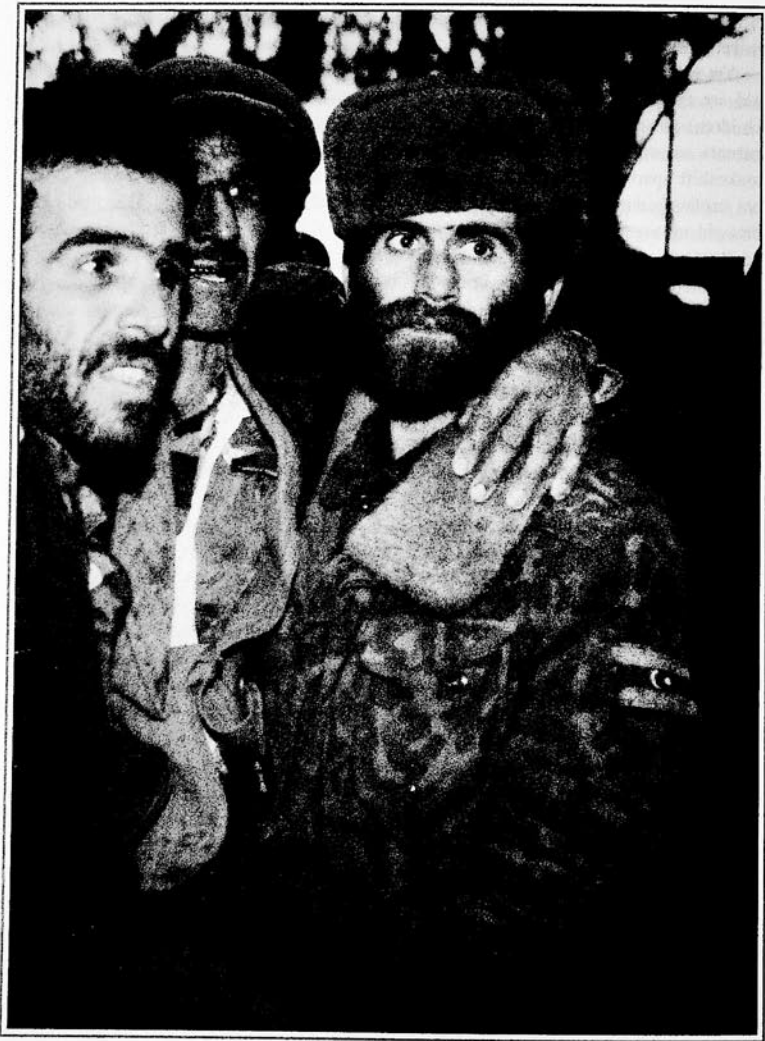
Poverty has kept the families out of work, unable to even pay for a journey to a town to get work.

Yet pride has dictated that the survivors follow a traditional way of life, where the old are cared for by the young. And so in a situation where one family (parents and children) have to care for the children of the mother's brother, because the children's parents are either dead or missing, there are two adults and nine children in a tiny, makeshift apartment. But in here, against all odds, the mother had married her son to her brother's daughter, because otherwise there would be no weddings. They had been brought up together in these squalid conditions, and still everyone lived here, even as adults. Only now there were also two young boys, grandchildren.

Thank you for coming, they would say. No matter how we talk about it, it will never finish, because so much happened that night. Thank you, thank you for coming such a long way.

You're welcome felt an inadequate response. *So sorry*, a hug, what can we do but write about it? Shout it to the world? Will anyone hear? Does anyone care?

Fiona MacLachlan, interviewer, 2011



Shamil Alekberli (photo: Frédérique Lengaigne)
Assisting the straggle of survivors who made it to Aghdam

GO AHEAD AND BUILD, BUT KNOW THAT YOU WILL LEAVE

Shamil Sabiroghlu, also known as Shamil Alekberli, chairman of the Association for Recognition of the Khojaly Massacre, came to meet me in Baku on 19 October 2011.

I was the first source of information and took many photographs. I was the first journalist to get the information into a newspaper, the 'Sheher' ... My wife is from Khojaly, and I went voluntarily to Khojaly during the time of the troubles.

Although I was only 23, our newspaper had a reputation for its serious approach. In 1990 a million copies were published. It carried the news when Baku was invaded by Russia. So my reports were taken seriously.

In 1990, Shamil explains, Khojaly was given city status. This meant that there was construction there; they were building Finnish-style wooden houses for Azerbaijanis fleeing from Armenia and the neighbouring city of Khankendi.

I worked on the construction because that was my background, as well as journalism. The Azerbaijani government funded the work.

I witnessed the build-up of aggression.

Around this time, villages around Khojaly, notably Nuraguh and others, were occupied by Armenians. In Nuraguh (Armenian for 'new village') there was a cemetery for Khojaly people but it had been destroyed by Armenians. This happened in the 1970s; Nuraguh was only two or three kilometres from Khojaly.

Even before the tragedy, the Armenians would taunt us, as we were doing the building work, saying, 'It's ok, you can go ahead and build, but know that you will leave.' They would shoot at us while we were working.

Sometimes we had to travel to Aghdam by bus, passing through Askeran. Azerbaijanis lived in Aghdam and there were Armenians in Askeran. On the way back the Armenians would throw stones at the windows and break the windows, sometimes injuring those on the bus. They threatened us and would argue that it was their land and that Khojaly was theirs. I remember this was around November 1991. I was on the bus when this happened.

Bit by bit the Armenians were making it impossible to get around. They blocked the Askeran Tower. It was through this tower (an arch went underneath it) that traffic went to Shusha from Askeran. The tower had been there for 250 years. Little by little, Khojaly was becoming isolated.

Meshali, Jamilli, Karkijahan and Kosalar were all satellite villages of Khojaly and were taken by Armenians. On 15 December 1991 they occupied Jamilli and killed four Azerbaijanis. On 23 December 1991 they burned Meshali and on 28 December 1991 they burned down Kosalar. Many people died as a result. One awful result was that in Meshali a schoolboy, aged 14, was burnt alive in the school.

I felt I was witnessing the shrinking of Khojaly and I began to get the unpleasant feeling of Khojaly being occupied.

When Azerbaijan became independent in October 1991, about a hundred Khojaly men formed a troop of amateur riflemen. Around the end of 1991 and early 1992 I published articles in a few newspapers warning about Khojaly being occupied.

Agil Quliyev from Baku was head of the military attachment. At the end of 1991 he arranged for two tanks and a truck full of weapons to be sent in support, via the 366th Regiment and the Russians. But although they were intended for Azerbaijanis, they were given to the Armenians in Khankendi instead.

Shamil explains that it seemed the President of Azerbaijan at the time was effectively forced to follow Russian instructions.

Agil Quliyev was also involved in organising a train of oil and flour but it, too, was sent to Khankendi.

On 28 January 1992, Russians and Armenians shot down a helicopter en route from Aghdam to Shusha, thus effectively blocking the air routes. With air routes and roads blocked, Khojaly was isolated. With no supplies getting through there was soon a lack of water and lack of electricity as well as a lack of food.

Construction had stopped. I had volunteered as a teacher in Jamilli, taking people to Aghdam then Barda when Jamilli was occupied.

Things were getting desperate.

On 29 January 1992 I managed to get to Baku with photos and I published an article explaining that the government was not defending our land and that our villages were being occupied one by one.

On 11 February 1992, 17 Khojaly men went with me to Baku to try and see the president. We wanted to ask for defence. We couldn't meet the president but we met some MPs and the Turkish ambassador. The Turkish ambassador promised to pass our message to the president.

A security council meeting was held at 3am on the morning of 12 February 1992. Initially they said I could go, and then not. Perhaps the meeting was held in secret so as not to alert the Armenians. A message emerged from the government that Khojaly was to be liberated.

The next day, 13 February 1992, we met with officials and obtained food to take to Khojaly. We took it first to Aghdam and negotiated with the Russians for passage via Askeran. We wanted to take the food in and take some people out. But they wouldn't allow us to go. I was so stressed that my hair went grey, even although I was just 23.

We gave the food and clothing to Azerbaijani soldiers in Aghdam in the hope that they might get some through to Khojaly. Fuzuli Rustamov managed to take some food on horseback. It was very risky and dangerous as the forest was full of Armenians. He is now a national hero.

(Later) ... we bribed the Russians and rented a helicopter to get food to Khojaly. At first we threw the food out because we couldn't land. Then we managed to land briefly, rescued 70 infirm people and took them to Aghdam.

All sorts of awful things were happening; I could tell you so much.

A small village called Garadaghli was occupied by Armenians. It wasn't a big village, but 70 Azerbaijanis were killed and buried in silage bins.

There were two brothers, one named Alov (the name means burning fire) and one named Atesh (the name means fire, as in gunfire). They were burned and shot respectively, according to their names.

An Armenian called Melkenyon killed a pregnant woman then took out the baby.

I was in Aghdam, I felt Khojaly would be next.

On 24 and 25 February 1992 the Azerbaijani government made plans to rescue the Khojaly people. The plans were delayed; who knows why?

On the morning of 26 February 1992 I was in Shelli. I met up with wounded people who were coming out of the forest and I found out what had happened. Even from a distance we had seen and heard the gunfire. We went into the forest to look for wounded. Young volunteer Azerbaijanis in the area helped. We had no weapons. The Armenians kept shooting. We could hear screaming from the forest.

We reached the petrol station. The whole area was full of wounded people; people had scattered but had still been shot. We had to leave the dead and take the wounded to Aghdam. Local people let us use their vehicles to carry the wounded.

There were three groups of people in Khojaly, the local Khojaly people, those who had moved there from Khankendi, and the Ahiska Turks. The Turks were living in the Finnish houses and had been shot first because their houses were wooden and less substantial.

All that day I was in shock and couldn't believe what had happened. By evening I remembered that I was a journalist and I had to contact Baku. I went to the post office centre in Aghdam to use their phone lines. When I told Baku that over a hundred people had been killed, they didn't believe it.

Later I learned that Azertaj (the state news agency) were saying that only two people had been killed, but I was able to confirm it was a hundred. All the newspapers followed Azertaj but my newspaper carried my headline.

On 27 February 1992, after Thomas Goltz, other journalists came to Aghdam. A special military helicopter was hired for them and they were able to see the destruction and what Armenia had done at first-hand.

But still Baku did not believe what had happened.

I developed the film from my camera. It wasn't a professional camera but I sent the photographs anyway. On 4 March my newspaper published 'Azerbaijan Red with Blood' and used my photographs.

The local authorities in Aghdam seemed scared to help us and we felt that they were embarrassed because they had been unable to stop the tragedy.

Shamil continued to explain the situation and offer his observations.

Khojaly people are known in Azerbaijan for being hardworking and good at agriculture. There are labyrinths there like the more well-known ones in Gadabey, meaning that Khojaly is most definitely Azerbaijani.

It's a major issue that no mercy was shown to children. A father was tied up with rope and set on fire in front of his eight-year-old daughter. His name was Tevekkul Amirov.

Faig Alammadov, a student from Baku, went to Khankendi and was shot in prison there.

Six hundred and thirteen people were killed in Khojaly. 83 of them were children. 155 people are still missing, unaccounted for.

The population of Khojaly had been about 7,000 but at the time of the tragedy there were only about 3,000 there, as many had left. This means that almost one in three suffered physically. Remember that many more were wounded or injured in some way.

One thousand two hundred and seventy five people were initially taken prisoner, some were returned. There is unofficial information that prisoners were taken to Armenia, then on to Libya or Syria where their organs were sold. Some were taken through Georgia.

Eight families were completely wiped out.

The figure of 613 dead is probably higher when you consider the 155 still not accounted for ... and early deaths caused by stress.

Armenia has defied all the relevant UN resolutions. The UN's resolutions on Karabakh have not been fulfilled. The whole world has been told about this but the occupation continues. It has to be stopped.

Armenia has a dream of their country reaching from sea to sea, from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea. And it seems that Russia, France and the USA are helping Armenia to achieve this dream ...

What we want is support from the international community. There is still a danger of war. We want the Khojaly tragedy to be assessed at global level. We want the 26 February to be a day of mourning in Azerbaijan.

We want the Armenian presidents, current and former, to stand trial. Serzh Sargsyan (President of Armenia at the time of interview – ed.) admitted in France two years ago

that he had participated in the Khojaly tragedy. Seyran Ohanyan (Minister of Defence of Armenia at the time of interview – ed.) was in charge of the 2nd Battalion of the 366th Regiment. He was its commander-in-chief.

We want them to be tried in a European Court, because they were directly involved and are to be blamed. They admit that they caused this tragedy.

Shamil's last words are poignant:

I would like to see a world without borders, where people understand each other. If people are indifferent to one other, that is the end of the world. We must put a stop to this indifference, and stop fighting.

Interviewed by Fiona MacLachlan



Jeyran Azizova (photo: Fiona MacLachlan)
In the Pirshaghi settlement of Khojaly survivors

USED AS A HOSTAGE

I wish we could welcome you in Khojaly, and show you our hospitality.

I was 35 years old when I left Khojaly. My three children are all married and I have three grandchildren. At the time of the tragedy my children were between twelve and eighteen.

I remember thinking it could never be like this ...

At nine in the evening they surrounded Khojaly with tanks. Like wars on TV, they started shooting from the tanks and people left their houses. The 366th Regiment of the Russian Army had turned against those in the south of Khojaly. I had been working in the communal services just 200 metres from the army position.

My husband (Vasif Mammadov), aged 42 at the time, came home and told us they (the Armenians) were shooting intensively and then he went to warn the neighbours.

The way out of Khojaly was barred by the Qarqar River. We started towards the river to head towards Aghdam. The only other way in or out of Khojaly was by air; the roads were all blocked.

We were in a hurry to make our way to Aghdam. The river was wide, icy, deep (up to our chests). We had to break the ice, the river was frozen over, we couldn't swim, it was stony; a fast-flowing mountain river. About 7,000 people were crossing; the whole town. The head of the Executive Authority encouraged people to leave; he said there was no choice ...

Everyone wanted to escape. We were not wearing warm clothes and I cannot begin to describe how we felt. There were five in our family, including my wounded husband. Nobody could stay. Everybody left.

Once on the other side of the river we realised that many people were frozen. Sick people, old ones, children ... The fit men were trying to defend the post. It was stupid. They couldn't fight tanks.

There were men in front, protecting us, and they were shot. In the forest at Nachkhivanik, an Armenian area, more were killed. We had no alternative; we had to go past Nachkhivanik. The 366th tanks were there, shooting us.

By dawn, my husband was ahead and wounded. I was wounded. My twelve-year-old son Jeyhun was shot in the shoulder. I put snow on his wound. I could never leave him.

We became a group of four. I was with my child, and there was a man, Gafar Zeymala (52) and his daughter Sevinj Aslamova (18). All four of us were taken hostage by Armenians. I asked them not to take my child. I had my handbag with me with money, jewellery, my gold watch and I offered it. My head was bleeding. They still wanted to take my child.

They took us to an Armenian family who had a son in Baku needing help. I asked for medical supplies, medicines, and I cleaned my son's wound. It was now mid-morning.

(... The storytelling paused for tea with more apologies for not entertaining us in Khojaly ...)

No-one knew we were there. The teenagers in the Armenian family were forced out to fight. The Armenians wanted to do a swap. They had a son in prison in Baku (from Soviet times, before the Karabakh War).

The Armenian family were not very hospitable but they hid us, in hope of exchange for their son. We were suffering, so they didn't torture us further.

My son said we should escape but I didn't know my way to Aghdam, only to Khankendi. The four of us were not well enough. The man was too old. The girl had frostbitten legs and I and my son were wounded. Escape would be risky, we would still get shot by Armenians. There was a 12-year-old son in the family and my son and he would go for water together. My son reported back that escape was impossible.

Both the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides had self-defence troops who would help an exchange to take place. I had hoped the man or his daughter would go to get the son to be exchanged. But the Armenians said I had to go. I had to leave my son with them.

I asked for enough information about their son so I could trace him and after eight days with this family, I was released to go and get their Armenian son from prison in Baku.

The Armenians had informed the Azerbaijanis in Aghdam that they wanted to give me back, and this was done at the Askeran/Aghdam exchange post. My family were waiting in Aghdam to take me to Baku. They had thought I was dead. When I got to Baku the rest of my family couldn't believe I had left my son with an Armenian family.

Once in Baku I had to go from place to place – still the Soviet system – it took two months – various ministries to visit etc. My relatives helped me a lot. I saw the Armenian in prison. I only heard once about my son. The Baku prosecutor's office arranged a phone call. I talked to a son of the family and assured them I was making progress, getting authorisation.

Another woman with us in the interview starts talking and weeping about her husband shot as a hostage, talking about the problems of locating and burying corpses.

The Armenian prisoner was taken to Barda and I also went there. There were 11 prisoners, Armenians from the Soviet period, ready to be exchanged for Azerbaijanis. The prisoners went by train but I went by car via Aghdam. I went to Askeran with the Aghdam self-defence troops. My male relatives wanted to go instead but I wanted to go myself. I saw the prisoner in Askeran and assured him we meant him no harm. I took him, with Azerbaijani soldiers, for the exchange.

Allahverdi Baghirov, whose headquarters was in Aghdam, was responsible for exchanges. He was killed later by a landmine. Vitalik from Khojaly was arranging exchanges on the Armenian side. I said I would only exchange the Armenian prisoner for all three still with the Armenian family. I succeeded. The Armenian prisoner's name was Karlen Aynumyan.

That night of the tragedy my father-in-law and twenty close relatives died.

At the Askeran post, when I met my son again, I was like frozen and dumb. It was 28 April and the exchange took place between 9 or 10am and 1 or 2pm.

My son never joins these talks, when I tell my story it still stresses him. We would watch wars on TV; this was not like a war, there were no rules. No mercy for anybody.

An older son tells us that his mother was on TV in her efforts to get the Armenian released in exchange for her son.

We are being destroyed here without Karabakh.

Interviewed by Fiona MacLachlan



Humay Abbasova (photo: Fiona Maclachlan)
In Pirshaghi settlement with pictures of the family she lost

WE GAVE NOVRUZ BAGS TO ARMENIANS

Humay khanim's story reflected the feelings of those who survived but were humiliated by their experiences as hostages. She was very bitter and clearly still felt very sharply the indignity and inhumanity of the treatment she and her family had received. There remains a bewilderment about why a life that was idyllic in her memory had been shattered so brutally. Now in her 80s, she lost her husband and two of her four sons. She and her husband were captured and held hostage after escaping through the forest.

Setting out at 7pm we went through the forest, heading for Aghdam ... walking barefoot ... eating snow. My husband had frostbitten fingers and I had frostbitten feet. Many died in the forest. We were there a long time and walked a long way before we were captured. We were surrounded by forest on all sides and that helped many to survive.

One of my sons was killed. Another son was taken hostage. He was seen once on television, but has never been seen since then.

We were held and taken hostage in Askeran ... there were lots of us in Askeran ... Women and men were separated ... There were beatings ... the men had urine thrown over them ... they were tortured, spat upon, killed like animals ... We were kept in a room not much bigger than this one, crowded with women ... They threatened to burn us alive ... We were exchanged for bodies and prisoners – one commander for fifty hostages ... My husband was beaten and died on the way back ... Nobody was killed like the people from Khojaly. I am still alive, but I lost two sons.

Khojaly had recently got gas, water and phone connections. It was a beautiful town, with natural springs. The Qarqar river was next to the town ... Khankendi was on the right and Khojaly on the left. There were new buildings and long roads.

It was mainly agricultural; the kolkhoz produced many dairy goods. The population was 7,000; it had a Culture House and an Executive. It was named a town in 1990. We lit bonfires for the Novruz (Spring) holiday and celebrated in the stadium. We would crack each other's eggs, there were tightrope walkers, the children would drop their hats at front doors to collect goodies and neighbours would visit each other ... The Armenians

started unexpectedly: Khojaly, Askeran, Aghdam, their children would throw stones. We gave Novruz bags (of sweets etc.) to Armenians; who could have imagined what would happen?

When we fled from Aghdam we opened the door for the poultry and threw wheat in so that the hens wouldn't die ... Many who escaped died from stress – there were many illnesses caused by stress.

The big problem now is unemployment. My son has to say we have nothing, it was never like this in Khojaly.

Interviewed by Ian Peart



Fazile Hasanova (photo: Fiona Maclachlan)
'We were crawling; it was too dangerous to stand.'

WHEN I STOOD UP, I SAW PEOPLE DYING ALL AROUND

The events of that night were still starkly clear for Fazile khanim. She was not the only one to mention the car at Nakhchivanik, which seems to have brought down fire onto the heads of people struggling through the forest. And even after surviving the first hail of bullets, there were still some prepared to return and try to help others.

That night we went to Alesker's (Novruzov – husband of Shahibe Mustafayeva, see page 50) to get news of what was happening. Some men came and said that tanks had reached the vineyard area. We decided to stay in Alesker's house; he left us some bullets to defend ourselves. Then fierce shooting started. We hoped it would stop, but it didn't.

At about 2am, some young men came to tell us that the Armenians were entering the town, they told us to leave. We went to the Finnish houses. There were many people there, it was a five-storey building; they had no possessions and were ready to leave. Alesker didn't come back and we were told to go to the forest.

Everyone got scattered in the forest, but my two sons and nephew helped me. At dawn we saw an Armenian car coming from Nakhchivanik; some youth ran to try and stop it, to stop them telling the Armenians about us. Ten minutes later the shooting started. We were crawling; it was too dangerous to stand. Our neighbour was shot next to me; my sons saw it. There were buried plants sticking to my clothes, which were being torn by other plants. When I stood up, I saw people dying all around. Those left alive continued on our way.

Those of us who escaped reached Shelli village; some went back into the forest to help, but many were taken hostage. [In Shelli] ... there were many who were wounded and some died of stress. People were crying for those who were missing; there were people dying around us.

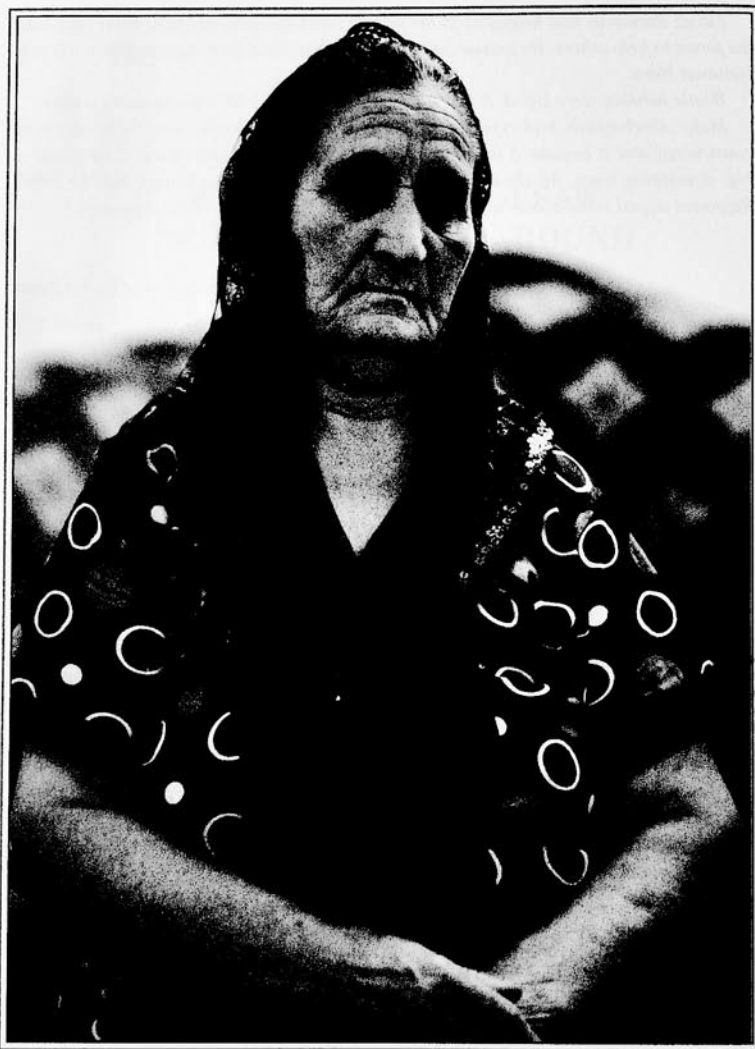
I had left with my slippers on, but when we crossed from asphalt into the forest I left the slippers behind and I could walk better. All my clothes were torn when we reached Shelli and I felt weak.

Fuzuli Rustamov had helped us to the village and with some youth he went back into the forest to help others. He looked into death's eyes without fear. He was killed. He is a National Hero.

Whole families were killed. It was a miracle we survived. We saw so many bodies.

Many Azerbaijanis had resettled to Khojaly from Khankendi, new buildings were constructed and it became a town. We thought they (Armenians) couldn't take over a big, developing town. All the other (Soviet) military had been removed, but the 366th Regiment stayed in Khankendi. Without that, perhaps it wouldn't have happened.

Interviewed by Ian Peart



Lala Askerova (photo: Eldar Farzaliyev)
 'We fled with nothing, only a blanket.'

WHEN THE LAND IS LIBERATED, HE WILL RUN THERE BAREFOOT

Lala khanim is Ilaha Abbasova's grandmother and was interviewed with her granddaughter and Humay Abbasova (see page 35). She was in Aghdam when Khojaly was attacked with her four grandchildren for whom she took responsibility when they were orphaned. The stories of the three women tumbled out and overlapped, switching from fond memories of their lives before February 1992, to the horror of the attacks and the struggle to carry on since then. It was still obviously difficult for them to understand why they had been ripped away from previously happy lives.

My son-in-law was killed in Khojaly and we brought up his four children. We had a two-storey house in Aghdam, with four rooms. We were in the richest part of Karabakh. We settled the children in different dormitories. The house was near the military base and the flour mill. They always shot at our house ... I remember a Grad missile blew up a young girl who was engaged. My husband was a builder. He died before the disaster – many died from stress after (attacks began in) 1988.

We fled with nothing, only a blanket. I was in a panic when we fled, I couldn't hear my eldest son calling ... We couldn't think about anything, only about surviving. There we were between dead and alive ... there was no advance warning, the attack came suddenly.

My youngest son says that when the land is liberated he will run there barefoot. Everyone was employed in the plants and factories.

Granddaughter Ilaha added brief comments confirming the state of siege within Khojaly even before the final attack.

My father was killed on duty with the self-defence brigade, two days before the final attack. I was seven years old.

On the day of the final attack I and my brother and two sisters were in Aghdam with my grandmother. There were no doctors in Khojaly and all the roads had been blocked by the Armenians, so we were taken to Aghdam by helicopter.

Interviewed by Ian Peart



Nazaket Huseynova (photo: Fiona MacIachlan)
 'Of course I want to return, we love our motherland.'

NOWHERE IS AS BEAUTIFUL AS KHOJALY

Nazaket khanim has the enduring pain of not knowing what happened to her husband; another aspect of the confusion and disruption felt by survivors of the chaotic violence. However, like many others she was unable to talk without mentioning the beauty of Khojaly that they longed for and her feeling of shame at being unable to offer traditional hospitality. These feelings at once magnify the horror of what was suffered and inspire some hope for the endurance of human spirit. Her father-in-law's reference to previous attacks prompted a historian with us to add that these were in 1905 and 1918; it is interesting that the three assaults coincided with, first, the weakening of the Tsar's power, then his overthrow and finally with the collapse of the USSR. It is as if each was an opportunist response to a slackening of legal authority. She lives with her son, Rustam, in Pirshagi settlement. He lost an eye on the flight from Khojaly, when he was 11 years old. Her daughter is married to a former Khojaly policeman. Nazaket's husband was lost in Khojaly.

The situation was terrible before the trouble (meaning the night they were driven out of Khojaly) constant shooting. Constant rocket fire and every evening we had to go into the cellars to sleep. We all had cellars, but we tried to collect together in one family's cellar. In the daytime the men went to the border (of the village) to try to get information. We were always expecting an attack.

The Armenians had attacked on 18 September 1988 ... There was hand-to-hand fighting. They set fire to the fences and the cattle fodder.

Why did it all start? They wanted to drive us out. They wanted the territory. We were hospitable and never expected such hostility.

Nazaket khanim's father-in-law had often talked about previous aggression as he recalled his life.

'We would cross the Qarqar river; in 1918 a woman dropped her baby while crossing'. Each time the village had been resettled: 'Why did you go back?' she had asked, 'The graves of our ancestors were there,' was the reply.

Her husband, Bakir Huseynov, had been a transport engineer. Tofiq Huseynov, commander of the self-defence battalion, was his brother. Bakir himself had joined the battalion formed in late 1991. But as the attacks intensified, they realised that a more organised defence was needed.

We hoped that Russian soldiers would protect us, but they didn't. There were Russians placed in Khojaly, but they never returned fire and they wouldn't allow us to fire back.

There were terrible stories:

In Askeran they stopped a car and burned the people alive. The bodies were buried at night by car headlights.

We never thought of leaving: it was the only Azerbaijani village left in the area and Tofiq (Huseynov) said, 'Khojaly is the only place I'll die.'

On that night (25/26 February 1992) the Armenians occupied, killing and burning people alive. We crossed the Qarqar river and fled into the forest. In the forest we got separated from my husband and his parents. They were never found ...

In 1992 we heard a rumour from a released prisoner that Bakir was being held in Armenia. In 1995 a prisoner from Fuzuli reported to the Ministry of Security that he had been held in Shusha and he had seen Bakir there. There is a State Commission working on prisoners and missing people.

The children ask, 'Where is grandfather?' or 'Is grandfather killed?' We have a video of a wedding party with Bakir there, but it re-opens the wound ...

My daughter-in-law has constant nightmares; she sees Armenians tying her son to a tree and torturing him ...

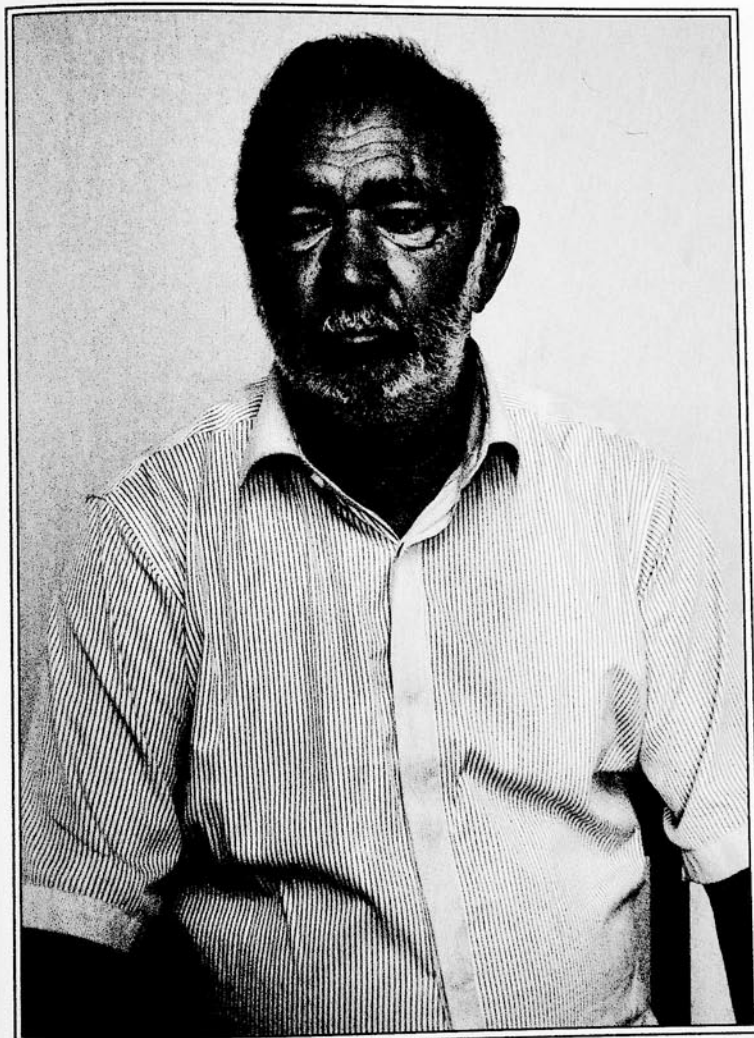
I am sorry for the state of this house. We had a very beautiful home in Khojaly and I would like to have invited our guests (i.e. the interviewers) there.

We couldn't take anything ... we just ran the way we were. We didn't have a cup for tea.

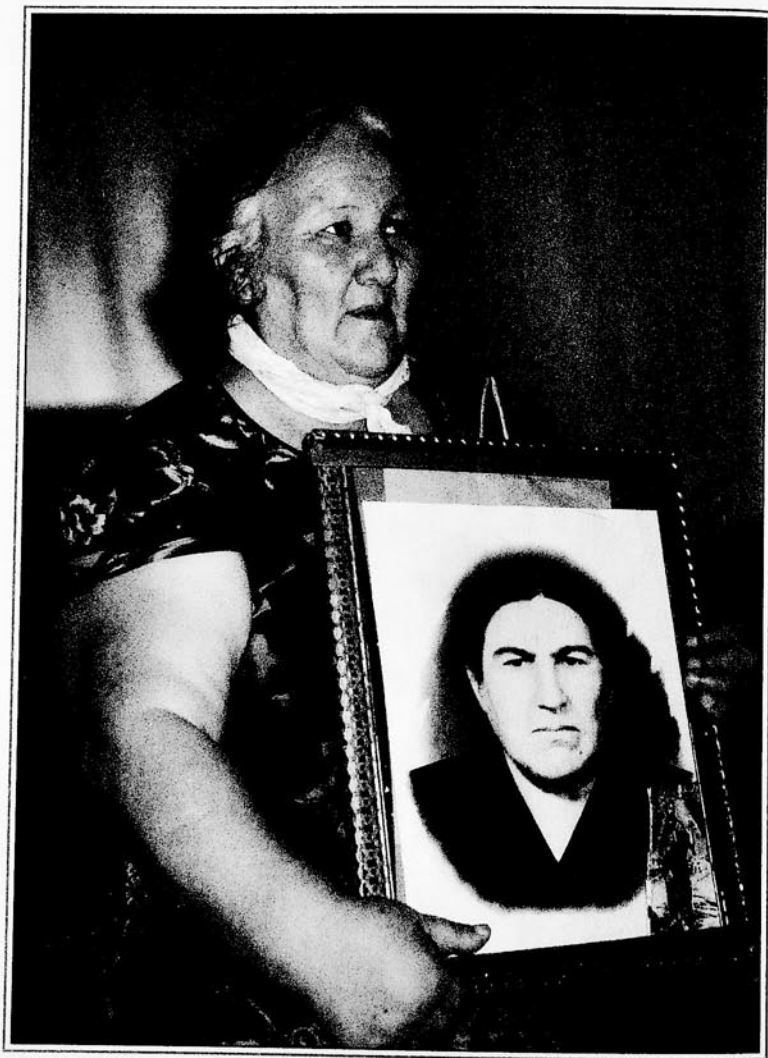
We don't even have graves to tend. My husband was lost.

Of course I want to return, we love our motherland. Nowhere is as beautiful as Khojaly.

Interviewed by Ian Peart



Fuzuli Naghiyev (photo: Eldar Farzaliyev)
In Pirshaghi settlement, remembering ...



Nazile Salimova (photo: Fiona Maclachlan)
With a picture of her mother. Nazile herself has died since our interview

CLOTHES FROZE AND BECAME TOO HEAVY TO CARRY

The accounts of Nazile khanim and Fuzuli tumbled over each other in torrents of memories; this presentation reflects the way the stories were told. There was still a lot of anger as Fuzuli vented his frustration that nothing has been done about the horrors inflicted on the people of Khojaly and that some of the perpetrators now hold positions of power and influence. But there were also the fond memories:

'We had a balcony 15 metres long, the table was on the balcony and visitors enjoyed the view. We were visited by the military and journalists ... we were known for our hospitality and respected as from a family of beys ...

We could get crops three times a year ... We had spring water, apples, walnuts, peaches, vegetables, potatoes; we never had to buy them. In twenty years in Baku I haven't seen what I saw in Khojaly. Pure water, the sound of the river, we breathed freshness, like mint ... I hope it is liberated so you can visit ... I still hope to go back, I dream of Khojaly; I saw the dowry in my dreams, I saw a house on fire ...'

But inevitably thoughts turned to:

That night searchlights were switched on, it was like daylight ... The Armenians claimed the corridor was for safety and people had to get out any way they could ...

The gas went off when heavy military vehicles broke the pipeline and shooting started. Houses on the edge of the town were on fire ... We couldn't take anything, we left in the clothes we were wearing, some were barefoot. Khojaly was surrounded by Armenian settlements; there was only one way out to Aghdam, over the river and through the forest; we couldn't take the wounded. The missiles made the forest and snow glow. Clothes froze and became too heavy to carry ... There was no mercy for Khojaly, all we could see was bodies all around ... By God's will, a miracle, I got to Aghdam.

The shooting was so intensive it was impossible to take the old and the wounded ... To cross so many barriers and carry bodies? Then you'd be shot – our only aim was to escape ...

My mother-in-law, all my mother's relatives, her brother, were all captured ... My mother was swapped after three days ... My mother was held in bad conditions, beaten, no food or drink ... She was held in Askeran and was ill for ever after that ...

There were negotiations and bodies were exchanged ... I took part in washing the bodies ... They had tortured them – burned black, wrapped in wire. Three bodies were separated from their heads. They were barely recognisable, but we matched them somehow. They were members of the Self-Defence; it was especially cruel. We couldn't bury them until their parents came to Aghdam; we matched the heads and bodies and wrapped them. Their families saw their bodies and were humiliated ... There was a three-year-old girl; they had killed her and cut all her body.

My (Fuzuli's) father was captured by the Germans in the Great Patriotic War (World War II) and was not treated as badly ...

I have four children (then) I had everything for their dowries, to marry – it was all left behind.

Interviewed by Ian Peart



Shahibe Mustafayeva (photo: Fiona MacLachlan)
'I didn't drink water for one year, because they didn't give him water.'

THEY HAD PULLED OUT HIS TEETH

Shahibe khanim gave the most graphic account of that night in the forest and you wonder how someone lives on after such an experience. She was not the only one to try to wait for her husband (see Yasemen Hasanova's interview, page 52) but she left because she did not want to sacrifice others. Imagine the fear behind 'we had to leave to save our honour', imagine the cold that froze river-soaked clothes, imagine having to hide under the bleeding body of a relative or neighbour, let alone the tortures inflicted on her husband. Conflicts are often reported in terms of politics and statistics, but every victim is a person just like us and hearing this story of the individual cost of Khojaly would surely make anyone seek every possible alternative to war. How de-humanised do you have to be to inflict such suffering?

We were in our houses and the shooting started at 11pm. I thought this was normal; this had happened for four years, it usually lasted for two hours and then return to normal. This time it was different, there was heavy bombardment from four sides, so we all went into the cellars.

My husband had left an hour before for another village where Armenians were attacking. We asked where he was going, he said: 'I've faced this for four years and we're defending our motherland.'

The firing continued until 3am, but my husband didn't return. We were three women and were told to leave, I said I'd wait for my husband, but they said we had to leave to save our honour. I thought the others didn't want to leave because of me; I thought I shouldn't make them sacrifice themselves, so I decided to leave.

We went to a half-finished building – there were a lot of people there. We stayed there for an hour and then we were told to get away; we had to leave some old men behind. Some young men told us to go through the forest.

It was cold and there was snow. We had to cross the river and everyone was wet. We got across and went through the forest for an hour; our clothes were frozen solid. I could hardly walk and had to leave my outer clothes behind. All those who could walk were in the forest.

We came to Nakhchivanik, an Armenian village. There was a good road there and we saw a car with a siren. Five minutes later they started shooting at us; there was a huge noise. The snow was covered with blood. It was about 5 or 7am. We hid under bodies ... We couldn't see anything then – there were just the bullets ... When we got to Aghdam my sister washed our clothes which were wet with blood.

Leaving our motherland ... they didn't allow us to help the old or take anything to help the children.

My father, Bahram Mustafayev, was with me; he was 62 and had kidney problems. He had to walk barefoot. He survived, but never recovered and died 10 months later.

At 9am we were at Shelli village. Some men went into the forest to help people, even though they knew there was shooting. I waited three days for my husband; he didn't come. I stayed in Aghdam until 30 March, even though they were shooting holes in my sister's gate.

My husband was Alesker Novruzov. He was from Kurd Haji village in Lachin, a physical training teacher. He was a good shot and knew how to move through the mountains. He preferred Khojaly and moved here when we were married.

That night he went out to hold off the Armenians. Some of those who survived spoke about his bravery. He formed a self-defence team, asking them to save bullets. They had amateur weapons against a professional force, but they fought to the last bullet. Their actions delayed the Armenians and allowed people to reach the forests. But he was shot in the thigh and couldn't walk. He was captured and taken to Khankendi on 26 February.

There were some Ahiska Turks from Uzbekistan in Khojaly. One was a physical training instructor. On 8 March he told us not to worry. Alesker had been shot in the leg but he was alive; they had been in the same cell for eight days. But being a wounded hostage was worse than death. Then another man was returned and he said Alesker had died from loss of blood.

We got his body on 30 March, in ice in a plastic bag. I can't describe all of how he had been tortured. They had pulled out his teeth, both his arms were broken and his face was scarred. His parents wanted him to be buried in Lachin. Two months later, Lachin was occupied and now his body is hostage. He was declared a National Hero on 25 February 1997.

I didn't drink water for one year, because they didn't give him water.

Interviewed by Ian Peart



Yasemen Hasanova (photo: Fiona MacLachlan)
'I tell them how beautiful it was.'

IT SEEMED THE PICTURE WAS CRYING

The interview with Yasemen made a deep impression. Her father, Tofiq Huseynov, was declared a National Hero as he gave his life trying to defend the town. Her mother was shot down because she refused to leave her home without her husband. Yasemen herself survived that terrible, freezing, night-long trek through the gauntlet of gunfire and is now a teacher in the school in a settlement of Khojaly refugees in a run-down sanatorium. When we asked her what she told the children about Khojaly, she said 'I tell them how beautiful it was'. She was keen to tell us about the wonderful view from the upstairs window of her home; the lights of Shusha at night. How their father often took the family to Shusha in their yellow Moskvich, to walk and walk in another world. To hear such positive thoughts from a woman forced to thank God that her mother had only been shot dead, was truly moving. There is a longer article based on this interview on the website at <http://www.visions.az>.

It was a beautiful house – two storeys – with grape vines that climbed over the balconies ... Address? We didn't have an address; everybody knew our house near the river. There was a big garden with apple, pear and plum trees, and potatoes ... my father loved boiled potatoes, and rice soup ... One of the apple trees was very small; every year it had just three apples, and we were three children. The apples smelled of honeydew melons and one day I took a bite out of one of them, but I left it on the tree; my father asked, 'Why didn't you pick it?'

A child has a good memory (she was 12 at the time). They would shoot constantly and we didn't understand it; it was like fireworks.

Mother took us into the cellar, we never wore night clothes, always day clothes. They always shot at night and so my father was always at his post (he was commander of the self-defence team). I was proud of him when he defended us. They would stop shooting at 5 or 6am.

There were food shortages, especially flour and bread, the gas and electricity was cut, we cooked on wood fires, and our boys had no weapons like tanks ... Khojaly was surrounded, like a tea glass on a saucer, the only way out was by helicopter, and they shot at that ... Once, when my uncle was taking us to our grandfather's house, they started firing and my uncle lay down on top of us; grandfather's gate was all shot up ...

They were shooting at us every day, but my father continued fixing up the house, preparing for my brother's circumcision party.

We couldn't go out at night and in the mornings we found lots of bullets. We didn't go to school; I only studied for one month in my sixth year.

The last attack was barbaric; (as well as both parents) I lost my grandparents, my uncle, my aunt and her two children.

The oldest people had to be left behind, in the top storey of a five-floor building.

My mother didn't want to leave without her husband, so we children left together with cousins.

His (her father's) body was left under the snow for a long time. They carried him back on sledges. They told us it was Grandpa's body. The day he was buried my brother Murad was given a picture of my father. His tears ran over the picture; it seemed the picture was crying.

Sixteen years after my mother's death there was a picture of her body on the internet. She had been getting water from the well in our yard. We didn't know she was dead, we thought she was a hostage.

I never imagined that any daughter could thank God that her mother was dead ... I thank God she died there, instead of being tortured by Armenians.

Interviewed by Ian Peart



Zenure Salimova (photo: Fiona MacLachlan)

'There is a wound in all our hearts'

IT WAS AS IF THE SNOW HAD A RED COVER OVER IT

Like most of the interviewees, Khojaly is still uppermost in Zenure khanim's thoughts.

We have to tell our children, it shouldn't be forgotten. In Khojaly we were friendly with Armenians, we never thought in the depths of our hearts that they were preparing traps for us; we travelled and worked together ... but also ... I describe the beauty of Khojaly to the children. I see satellite pictures of Khojaly, our house still stands. It was so beautiful, very fertile.

As for that night:

I was asleep, my husband was out with the Self-Defence. I heard my husband calling his brother to move their mother. We took her out with just a blanket and the sky was so bright you couldn't imagine that it was midnight. We went to the cellar of the five-storey building. After about 20 minutes we were told to go to the forest. It was snowing. My mother-in-law was too sick and heavy. My husband had to leave his mother.

We had to cross the river and it was too difficult in shoes, so we went barefoot. We hoped we would stay in the forest for the night and then return. We didn't think we were leaving for good.

Alif Hajiyevev was our guide as we went up and down rocks in the snow. Alif was leading six or seven of us and one woman had a baby on her back who was screaming. I slapped the child and the mother said it was hungry and needed changing. I was afraid it would attract the Armenians. There were no leaves on the trees to hide us from the shooting. We got to the road and saw a car; Alif told us to lie down. Those further behind didn't hear him and they were killed. I was pregnant and with the front group, that's how I survived ...

We crossed the road and turned back to see a horrible sight. You can't imagine what it was like; it was as if the snow had a red cover over it. No one could help, I was so stressed. We walked the whole night. I can't believe we got through that, stepping over bodies. I was very grateful when we arrived at Shelli village; we were some of the first to

arrive, but there were ambulances ready and they took the wounded to different hospitals. Not many survived; they killed us like cutting wheat in a field.

My mother-in-law and uncle were captured. Huseyn Azizov was held for five days and then his body was released; his teeth were pulled out and his head was split open. It was filled with cotton for burial. Bodies were left in the forest for 25 days.

When he had got us to Shelli, Alif Hajiyevev returned to help others. He didn't come back; he was shot through the head.

My first child only lived for three months ... stress ... There is a wound in all our hearts; we'll remember as long as we live.

Interviewed by Ian Peart

* Note: Alif Hajiyevev was head of security at the airport near Khojaly. He was declared a National Hero for his efforts to protect those fleeing the town. He is buried in Shahidlar Khiyabani (Martyr's Avenue) in Baku.



Elman Mammadov (photo: Eldar Farzaliyev)
 'Khojaly was 42 years of my life'

THEY EVEN INSULTED THE DEAD

Elman Mammadov trained as a mathematics teacher. He is now a member of the Milli Majlis (Azerbaijan's parliament). He is still head of the Khojaly community. He spoke lucidly and with passion, but was genuinely bemused by the world's lack of interest in horrific events that killed so many close to him and turned his world upside down.

My whole family is from Khojaly; I was born there and lived there until it was occupied. I was head of Khojaly city from 1987 and head of defence from 1988.

Khojaly was originally a village but was growing. In 1988 there were more than 7,000 inhabitants and in 1990, 54 families of Ahiska Turks came from Uzbekistan and settled in Khojaly; their forebears had been exiled by Stalin. Eleven of them were killed in 1992.

Every stone, tree and blade of grass was familiar to me. Khojaly was 42 years of my life. It had the railway and the only airport in Nagorno-Karabakh.

By February 1992 our only communication was by phone or walkie-talkie and we were surrounded by Armenian villages.

The 25 February was unusually quiet; there had been no shooting. We felt that preparations were being made. Khojaly was the only Azerbaijani village left. There was little food and we had few weapons. I told the bakery only to give flour to families in need, not to bake generally. We had no health care, but we had wounded people, elderly and sick people. We didn't know what to do about them.

On that day I went to monitor the defence posts and then went back home. At 7.30pm I received phone and walkie-talkie messages that troops were heading for Khojaly from Khankendi. They had been gradually surrounding Khojaly for three years and we heard later that Lt. Colonel Zatigerov of the 366th Regiment in the area was promoted to General that night as an incentive to carry out the attack.

Intensive shooting from different directions began at 11pm. They had high-level military equipment and we had basic rifles. They were out of range of our weapons. There was chaos. We had to leave behind 100 people and bodies – we couldn't take them.

It was winter, it is a mountainous area and it was 16 kilometres to Aghdam, the nearest Azerbaijani settlement. We couldn't go by road; after five kilometres it went through Askeran (an Armenian village – ed.); we had to go through the forest. We – including women, children, the elderly – had to cross the frozen Qarqar river to get to

the forest. We crossed barefoot, our shoes were soaked or torn off then, wet through; we walked on through thick snow, thorns, stones ... We came out of the forest at dawn and then there was nowhere to hide. We came to the Askeran-Nakhchivanik road and saw a UAZ (a kind of Soviet jeep – ed.). The Armenians in the UAZ saw us.

The frontline was on the other side of Askeran; we had to cross it to reach the two kilometres of No Man's Land. We had walked all night, we were tired and we didn't know that area so well. The Armenians were in their trenches, waiting for us to come. We split into groups of 10-15 to try and open a way for people to get through. The main massacre was on that road.

I was with 10 people, trying to find a way through, but I realised we were surrounded. I told the men not to shoot and to find somewhere to hide. We were stranded there for a day, five of the people with me were wounded. Finally, on the second day, we managed to get to the Aghdam frontline.

In history, wars have been fought by the military. There were no military in Khojaly. I was head of self-defence; there was no one with professional military training. The Armenians waged war against women and children; they even insulted the dead. Sixty children were killed, 106 women, many elderly people. My two grandmothers were killed. My 60-year-old mother was killed; her body was found in the forest three weeks later.

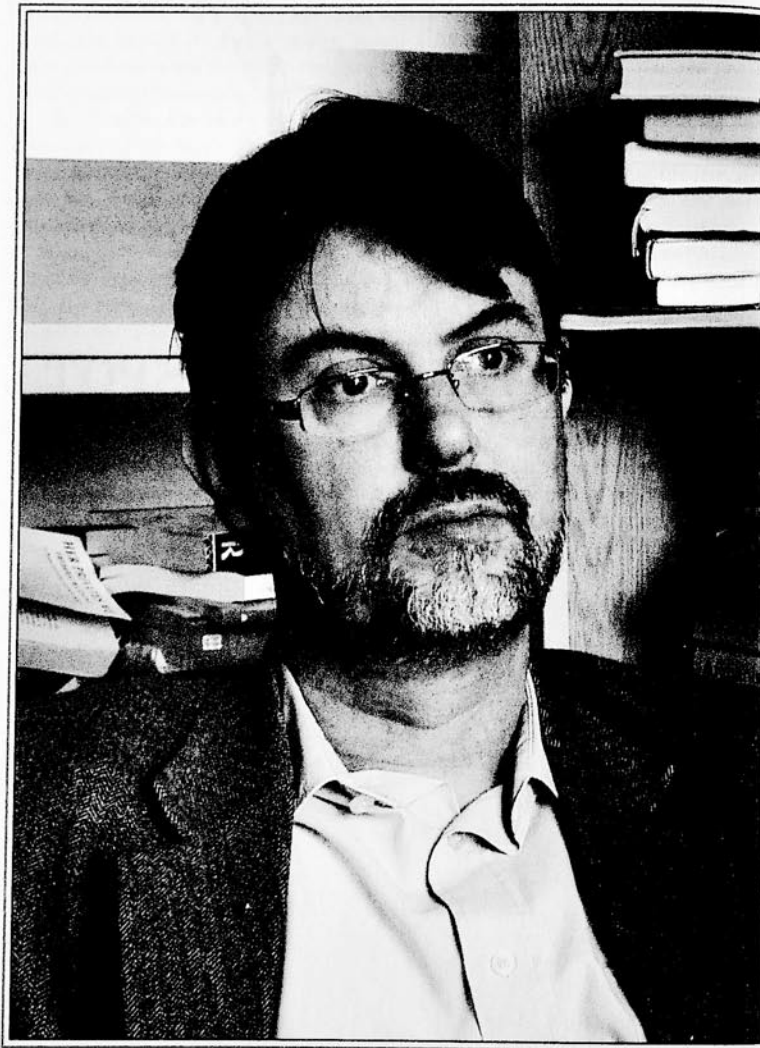
I want, I plead, I demand to go back to my native land and rebuild my home there.

The world tries to teach us democracy – why are no measures taken to restore the rights of the people of Khojaly? What is the logic? The EU and UN protect the aggressors.

I don't blame the Armenian nation, I accuse their leaders ... We are destined to live with Armenians; God created us as neighbours.

Interviewed by Ian Peart

INTERNATIONAL REPORTERS ON THE SPOT



Anatol Lieven (photo: still from filmed interview by Thomas Goltz)

KILLED AT CLOSE RANGE

Anatol Lieven, a professor in the War Studies Department of King's College, London, was in the early and mid-1990s a journalist for the London *Times* in the Caucasus. He was interviewed in October 2011 by Thomas Goltz, who had also been in Aghdam immediately following the Khojaly Massacre. Discussing the war over Nagorno-Karabakh, he first described the problem that journalists had in getting across the reality of what had happened:

The emotional sympathy was with the Armenians ... In the case of Karabakh, it was always portrayed as an Armenian national movement and very often with a sort of tone of a movement of 'liberation'.

And of course in part because of wider Western prejudices, in part because of the Armenian lobby, certain completely irrelevant and extraneous elements were added. I mean, I always remember when I was in Baku in early 1992 and then US Secretary of State James Baker came to visit, with the usual sort of enormous tail of Washington-based State Department correspondents. And I attended the press conference with Baker and his Azeri opposite number. There were questions from the Washington press corps about 'the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Azerbaijan', and those of us who were there were saying, 'What! ...' Well, the answer is of course they were simply extrapolating from what they'd been told in Washington and from their own prejudices.

He went on to give a first-hand account of what he had seen at the site:

I covered the aftermath of Khojaly as a journalist for The Times; we were there together, based in Aghdam on the Azeri side of the lines and then flown by helicopter to see the bodies up in the hills and it was always entirely clear to me that the Armenians were engaged in a programme of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, but also of course in Armenia itself, just as it must be said that the Azeris had pursued in effect the same policy with regard to the Armenians, first in Sumgait and then Baku. And that any Armenian conquest within Nagorno-Karabakh or elsewhere would be accompanied by the forced expulsion of the Azeri population, and that clearly happened at Khojaly. Exactly how so many people came to be killed in the process is to me at least still not entirely clear. The extent to which this was a systematic massacre and the extent to which it was – shall we say – over enthusiastic use of force in the context of some sort of running fight ... What was entirely clear was that a large number of women and children had been killed in the process and that a considerable number of the bodies I saw had been killed at close range.



Frédérique Lengaigne (photo: Eldar Farzaliyev)
In Baku February 2012 for an exhibition of her Khojaly photographs

PEOPLE WERE COMING TO SEE; THEY COULD NOT BELIEVE THEIR EYES

Frédérique Lengaigne is now a documentary film-maker, but in 1992 she was head photographer for the Reuters agency in Moscow during the collapse of the Soviet Union and its aftermath. With the outbreak of fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh she travelled to Azerbaijan and was in Aghdam at the end of February. She witnessed and recorded the influx of bodies and refugees from Khojaly.

In commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the massacre, in February 2012 The European Azerbaijan Society organised an exhibition in Baku of 65 of Frédérique's photographs and invited the photographer herself to Azerbaijan to share her impressions and memories. She made the following comments during an interview.

Can you give an impression of what you saw in Aghdam?

Well, we all arrived a few days after the massacre ... we didn't know what we were going to find ... if I remember correctly I thought there was just an increase in the fighting in the region ...

(In Aghdam) there was an atmosphere, panic is not exactly the right term, there was a form of hysteria. People were talking too loud, people were walking too fast; it was very busy. We went directly to, I think it was Government House; we had to register ...

Some of your pictures were taken in a mosque, where the bodies of people killed were taken, what was it like there?

First of all I didn't know if I would be able to take pictures there, I was a bit unconfident ... but the people wanted me to take pictures and it was surprising for me, being in a mosque ... photographing men ... as a woman. But people had other things on their mind, obviously. I can see in the pictures that there must have been a lot of crying, from women especially, but no matter how I try I remember it as silent, I cannot remember the noise. I thought it was actually quite silent, even though women must have cried and screamed. I think there were long periods of silence ... At the end of the day people were coming to

see; they could not believe their eyes. They must have heard the news in the street ... They were looking, just looking ... Many of the people didn't have any relatives there, but they were very silent, silent.

Other pictures were taken in a railway carriage, a kind of field hospital had been set up. How were the doctors coping?

I don't know when this hospital train had been set up, but it looked like it had been there for a while. I took pictures there but for me that was very ... you know, taking pictures of dead people is one thing, but taking pictures of wounded people, in pain, that's almost unbearable. You feel like you are doing something wrong. With the people, the doctors and nurses and the light. It looked like a movie set. I'm not trying to be offensive, but it looked like it, because of the light. They were very organised, it was not at all messy or in panic. The hospital people were very organised.

This was a particularly shocking part of the war; over 600 people were killed in one night, and your pictures show the horror and terror of that night. Do you think this had a big impact on the world generally?

There were a lot of stories in the former Soviet Union at that time; there had been Georgia; and later there would be Afghanistan. Basically, in '89, '90 and '91 people had followed all the wars or civil wars in the republics or inside the former Soviet Union, but in that case, in Aghdam, I believe people outside had no idea: What was it? Where was it? The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was very unclear for people ... I believe it was a problem for the media to tell those stories.

Last night you met a man (Shamil Alekberli – see page 25) who is in some of the photographs. Did that bring back memories?

I did remember especially that man. I have always remembered him. I remember him at the scene. We waited on that road for quite a long time, and he was there. I was very happy to see him; I was very happy to see somebody alive from those pictures.

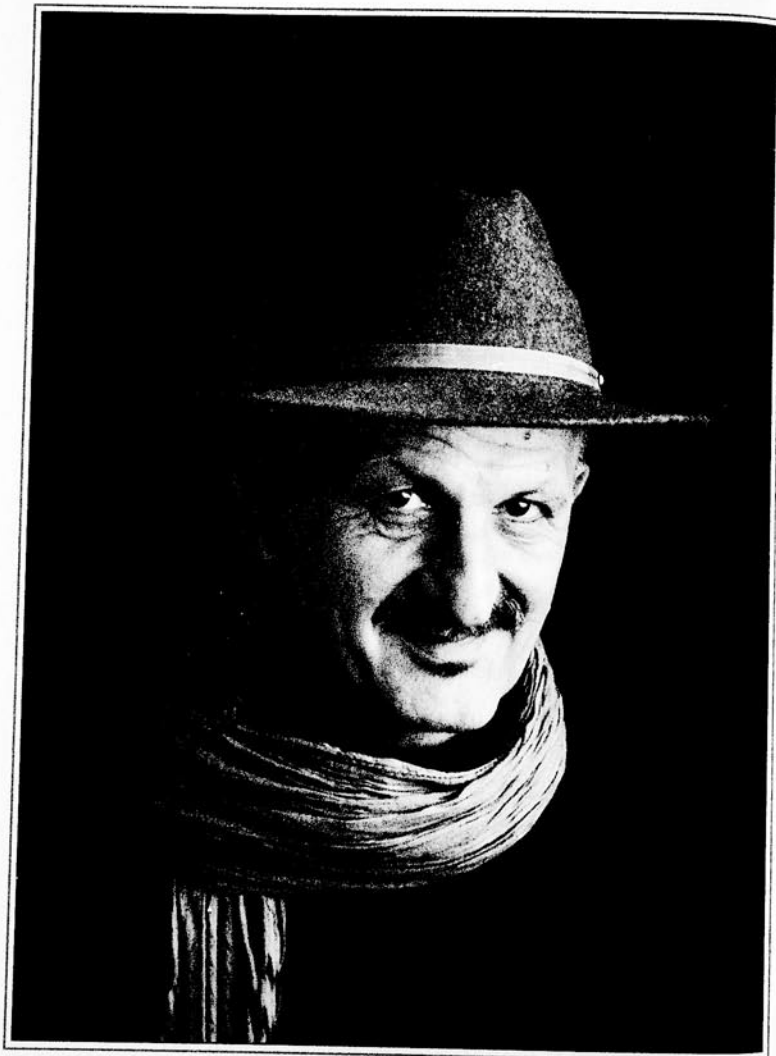
Last night you talked about guilt at the time. But now your feelings are slightly different.

Every photographer feels like that when you are taking those kinds of pictures; if you don't have a problem, you should ask yourself questions as a photographer. But when time passes and the pictures effectively become part of history, then their role, their value, becomes evident and you feel innocent.

It is obviously of interest for people of Azerbaijan why the UN resolutions are not acted on, while resolutions like the one on Libya are acted on immediately.

Of course, and my feelings, I'm sure, are nothing compared to people from Azerbaijan's

feelings, but I do wish Azerbaijan and Armenia to come to some peaceful terms and that is all that is in my mind. I know that for the people it is important to get justice, but all that is important is to be two neighbours, to find terms of peace. It's unfortunate sometimes that the UN ... doesn't really help, but there is no other way round it; Azerbaijan and Armenia have to make some kind of peace – and quickly. I mean this is 20 years ...



Reza Deghati, (photo: courtesy of Reza Deghati)
International photojournalist

A PICTURE AT AN EXHIBITION – KHOJALY, AS SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF REZA

In February 1992 I travelled to the Azerbaijani frontlines of the war in Karabakh from north to south, accompanying a group of French humanitarian doctors from different organisations before reaching the last Azerbaijani town in the region, namely Shusha.

When we arrived in Aghdam we began encountering people – mainly women and elders – who had fled the town of Khojaly on the night of 26 February and who related horrible stories of mass killings of Azerbaijani civilians at the hands of Armenian forces. Accordingly, we started gathering information and came to understand the importance of the tragedy now known as the Khojaly Massacre.

Having been in many wars, conflicts and revolutions over the course of my career working for such international media outlets as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Paris Match* and many others, I have seen the brutality of war, and reported on that brutality because I believe it is my duty and responsibility as a journalist to explain to the world what I have seen.

In the case of Khojaly, I was the witness of a massacre.

They were wandering around Aghdam Square, near a morgue, waiting for bodies after permission had been given to the International Red Cross by Armenian troops to collect corpses from the No-Man's-Land between Khojaly and Aghdam.

Most of those waiting were women, either survivors of the massacre, or their relatives, going round and round, trying to identify the bodies of their family members or any relatives or neighbours.

All had been there for days. And every time the Red Cross brought in a new batch of bodies you knew that some of the waiting women would find someone to claim as theirs, and then the whole square would become a scene of unbearable sorrow, with wailing women kissing the frozen bodies of their loved ones, still stained with frozen blood.

There was one woman in particular I noticed. She had been there for three days searching for her son and husband, in vain. But every time one of the other women found a loved one and collapsed in sorrow and anguish, she was the one who was always first at their side, trying to console them.

Then, on the third day of our presence in Aghdam, I saw her running toward me, directly into my camera.

'Gel gel,' she cried. '*Oghlumu gordum, erimi tapdim – ve gozleri yox!*'

(I saw my son, I found my husband – and they have no eyes!)

Her voice was similar to the voices of hundreds of victims of war brutalities that I have witnessed all around the world, but one that will remain etched forever in my memory.

No eyes ...

Can you imagine?

I published the picture of the Wailing Woman (along with other Khojaly-related pictures) in journals, books and exhibitions, as it is the responsibility of a witness, a journalist, to disseminate such images.

One such exhibition was mounted in the Luxembourg Metro Station in Paris in 2010, a retrospective of about thirty years of my work covering war and peace. There were pictures from all over the world, from Afghanistan to Rwanda. To portray Azerbaijan and the Karabakh war, I decided to include the picture of the Wailing Woman whom I had met in Aghdam Square, who had just discovered the eyeless bodies of her son and husband who had perished in the Khojaly Massacre. I also attached a short caption explaining the circumstances.

A couple of days after the opening of the exhibit, the Armenian ambassador to France called and said he wanted to talk to me, and invited me to have lunch with him.

In and of itself, this was not unusual. As a fairly well-known correspondent and journalist, I am used to meeting very different people, including diplomats, who are interested in my work. More to the point, he went out of his way to assure me that his invitation had nothing to do with the Luxembourg Metro Station exhibition, and so I accepted.

But during the lunch, little by little, the ambassador turned the subject of conversation to Khojaly and my portrait of the Wailing Woman mourning her dead. First, he informed me that the Khojaly Massacre had not been perpetrated by Armenia; rather that it had been perpetrated by either Azerbaijanis or Afghans; that all the people whom I had seen and spoken to were actors sent to Aghdam to fabricate the Khojaly story ...

When I protested, the ambassador changed his tone.

'You are only one man here in France talking about Azerbaijan,' he said in a scarcely veiled threat. '*We are 500,000* (Armenians – ed.) ...'

'Mr. Ambassador, I think you have read about my life, and know my work,' I replied. 'I have been in prison for my thoughts and telling the truth for three years during the time of the Shah of Iran; I was tortured for five months because I was telling the truth ... You know Mr Ambassador, Five hundred thousand – no, *five hundred million* people cannot stop me from saying the truth!'

And you know what they did?

First, they threatened a lawsuit against the French Metro authorities and myself for defamation if the image of the Wailing Woman was not removed.

The Metro authorities refused to do so; no lawsuit was ever filed.

Next, groups of 'unknowns' began to visit the Luxembourg Metro Station exhibition and scrawl graffiti over the caption of the Khojaly woman portrait, writing vicious slogans against me ...

The graffiti were cleaned up after each attack – 27 times according to the Metro authority.

Then, one day, I got another call from the director of the Paris Metro.

'We are so sorry,' he said. 'But the hooligans have come and torn out the caption.'

I could not believe my ears – doing this in the centre of Paris, the capital of freedom and human rights?

So I went to see with my own eyes – and what I saw opened a huge wound in my soul, which is still there. And it was then I realised that if those people cannot tolerate a little text in an exhibition in the centre of Paris, and feel they have to tear it out – then what are they capable of doing to the people of Azerbaijan – to the journalists, the poets and writers who dare write one sentence against them? And what about the people of Karabakh?

Do you understand?

Note: REZA (Reza Deghati) is an internationally known photojournalist for leading magazines and journals, most notably *National Geographic* and an educator of would-be future photographers in remote places, such as Afghanistan. In addition to other prizes and honours, he has also been recognised as a French Chevalier of National Merit.



REPORT BY THE MEMORIAL HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER

Report on Massive Violations of Human Rights Committed in the Seizure of Khojaly during the Night of February 25-26, 1992*

This report deals with the events of late February-March 1992 in Nagorno Karabakh connected with the storming and occupation of the settlement of Khojaly by armed Armenian units – an event which had a huge influence on military, political and moral aspects of the situation in Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh.

The report makes use of material gathered in 1991-1992 by observers of the Memorial society who were in the conflict zone, mass media reports, materials placed at the disposal of Memorial by official representatives of the conflicting parties, as well as depositions by independent witnesses.

The Memorial society observers were in Nagorno Karabakh from 7 March to 5 April 1992 gathering information on both sides of the front: they recorded interviews with the victims of Khojaly (*geographical names are given as on 1988 maps*), spoke with officials in Baku, Stepanakert, Aghdam, received information from the Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, interviewed doctors in hospitals in Baku and Stepanakert, and also on the military medical train in Aghdam (there are officially certified extracts from the medical records of some of the wounded and other victims), spoke with hostages and prisoners (on both the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides), with members of armed units, including with those who took part in the storming of Khojaly, carried out an on-site visual inspection in the vicinity of the towns of Khojaly, Aghdam and Askeran ...

EVENTS PRECEDING THE STORMING OF KHOJALY

Khojaly was virtually blockaded by Armenian armed units from autumn 1991 and it was completely blockaded after interior troops were withdrawn from Nagorno Karabakh. There was no electricity in Khojaly from January 1992. Some of the inhabitants left the

* Report of the Memorial Human Rights Group on Massive Violations of Human Rights Committed in the Seizure of Khojaly during the Night of February 25-26, 1992. In Russian, available through Helsinki Watch, and reprinted in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 18, 1992, page 5.

blockaded town. However, no complete evacuation of the civilian population was organized despite insistent requests from E. Mammadov, head of the executive authority of Khojaly.

The storming of Khojaly by armed Armenian units began on 25 February 1992.

THE ASSAULT ON KHOJALY

When Khojaly was stormed there were between 2000–4000 inhabitants there, including several hundred defenders of the town. Khojaly was defended by volunteer militia, members of the special police squad of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan and soldiers of the National Army of Azerbaijan. According to information received from both sides there were in the town three pieces of armoured military hardware as well as an Alazan rocket launcher. Men involved in the storming of Khojaly and Nagorno Karabakh officials assert that there were also two Grad multiple rocket launcher systems in Khojaly.

The attackers. The National Liberation Army of Artsakh (NLAA) is composed of detachments (companies) under territorial commanders who, in turn, are under the commander-in-chief and chief of staff who were appointed by a decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. Officials repeatedly told Memorial representatives that all Armenian armed detachments in Nagorno Karabakh were under a single command. The detachments do not have regulations or a common oath. There are army orders which are passed on to the men by the commanders. However, the Memorial observers' impressions are that even the commanders often do not have written orders and that none of the rank-and-file at all read them. Order No.1 of the National Liberation Army of Artsakh is the only document regulating the behaviour of members of armed units towards the civilian population of the opposing side. It categorically forbids any violence towards the civilian population of the opposing side or any defilement of enemy corpses but the Memorial observers in Nagorno Karabakh did not even manage to see the printed text of this order. The men know the contents of Order No.1 from what their commanders tell them.

The NLAA command ordered an inventory of all personal weapons of the men and officers and officials state that this has been carried out in the main.

NLAA sub-units supported by armoured military hardware – armoured personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles and tanks – took part in the assault.

Memorial observers did not manage to obtain any information about who specifically gave the order to storm Khojaly or who was in charge of the operation. But it follows from the statement by the NKR leadership that the situation in Nagorno Karabakh was under its complete control that it is responsible for both planning and implementing the operation to take Khojaly and for all other actions connected with resolving the problems of its population.

The involvement of servicemen of the Soviet Army's 366th Regiment. Practically

all refugees from Khojaly assert that servicemen of the 366th Regiment took part in the assault on Khojaly and that some of them entered the town.

According to information received from the Armenian side, fighting vehicles of the 366th Regiment and their crews took part in the assault on the town, shelling it but not entering the town itself. The Armenian side asserts that the participation of servicemen in military actions was not authorized by a written order from the regiment command.

How the assault proceeded. Artillery shelling of Khojaly began around 23:00 on the night of 25 February. The garrison, lying deep in a residential area, was destroyed first of all, as were defence outposts. Infantry detachments entered the town between 01:00 and 04:00 on 26 February.

Reports by members of Armenian armed units say that armed resistance by the Khojaly garrison as a whole was soon broken. The destruction in Khojaly confirms there was artillery shelling but is not typical of the destruction and damage caused by stubborn street fighting.

The last pocket of resistance was quashed by 07:00.

Some of the population started to leave Khojaly shortly after the assault began, trying to leave in the direction of Aghdam. There were armed people from the town garrison in some of the groups fleeing.

People left in two directions:

- 1) From the eastern edge of the town to the north-east along the riverbed, leaving Askeran on the left (Armenian officials noted that this was the route left as the "free corridor");
- 2) From the northern edge of the town to the north-east, leaving Askeran on the right (evidently the minority of the refugees left by this route).

Thus the majority of the civilian population left Khojaly and roughly 200–300 people remained there hiding in their homes and cellars.

An unknown number of civilians died in Khojaly as a result of the artillery bombardment of the town during the assault. The Armenian side practically has refused to provide information on the number of people who died this way. (*I. Burgansky, a Gulfstream association cameraman, who was in the vicinity of Khojaly on 26 February, reported that a large part of the civilian inhabitants died as a result of mortar fire by sub-units of the defending garrison, but there are doubts over the credibility of this report since most of the circumstances of the assault described by Burgansky do not correspond to the information received from all other sources.*)

The Armenian side reports that up to 10–12 of the attackers were killed.

THE "FREE CORRIDOR" FOR THE POPULATION TO LEAVE

NKR officials assert that a "free corridor" was left for the civilian population to leave Khojaly. It began at the eastern edge of the town, continued along the riverbed and went north-east, leading towards Aghdam and leaving Askeran on the left. The corridor was

100–200 metres wide and up to 300 metres wide in some places. The Armenian armed units promised not to open fire on civilians and unarmed members of military units who were inside that “corridor.”

NKR officials and those who took part in the assault say that at the start of it the population of Khojaly was informed of this “corridor” through loudspeakers set up on armoured personnel carriers. But those who announced this information did not rule out that a large part of the population of Khojaly might not have heard the announcements about the “free corridor” because of the shooting and the low power of the loudspeakers.

NKR officials also reported that leaflets were dropped from helicopters on Khojaly a few days before the assault calling on the population of Khojaly to use the “free corridor.” But Memorial observers were not offered a single such leaflet by way of confirmation of that. Neither did Memorial observers find any traces of such leaflets in Khojaly. The refugees from Khojaly interviewed said that they had not heard anything about such leaflets.

Memorial observers interviewed in Aghdam and Baku 60 people who had fled from Khojaly during the assault. Only one of those interviewed said that he knew there was a “free corridor” (a “serviceman” from the Khojaly garrison told him about it). None of the detained inhabitants of Khojaly with whom Memorial observers spoke in the presence of deputy R. Ayrikyan in Stepanakert detention centre (the conversation was filmed by an Armenian television cameraman) had heard about the “free corridor” either.

Several days before the assault, representatives of the Armenian side informed the authorities of Khojaly by radio communication time and time again about the forthcoming assault and called on them to completely evacuate the population from the town urgently. Baku newspaper publications confirmed that this information had been received by the Azerbaijani side and passed on to Baku (*Bakinskiy Rabochiy*).

The words of Elman Mammadov, the head of the Khojaly executive authorities, quoted in the newspaper *Russkaya Mysl* on April 3, 1992, point to the existence of the “corridor”: “We knew that this corridor was intended for the evacuation of civilians ...”

THE FATE OF KHOJALY INHABITANTS

The fate of the inhabitants who fled the town. Inhabitants rushed out of the town in a panic soon after the assault began. People did not manage to take the most essential things with them – many of those who fled were dressed lightly (which caused them to suffer frostbite to various degrees) and many of the refugees interviewed in Baku and Aghdam did not even have their documents.

People streamed out of the town along the riverbed (route 1 – see the section “How the assault proceeded”). There were armed people from the town garrison in some groups of refugees. These refugees travelling along the “free corridor” on territory adjacent to the Aghdam District of Azerbaijan were shot at and many people died as a result. The refugees who survived scattered. Those fleeing stumbled into Armenian outposts and

were shot at. Some of the refugees managed, nevertheless, to reach Aghdam. Some, mainly women and children (it is not possible to ascertain the exact number) froze to death while wandering through the mountains. Others, according to the depositions of those who made it to Aghdam, were taken prisoner at the villages of Pirjamal and Nakhchivanik. Inhabitants of Khojaly who already were exchanged testify that some of those taken captive were executed.

The killing field where the refugees met their end, as well as the bodies of those killed, were filmed on video as Azerbaijani sub-units were carrying out a mission to ferry the corpses by helicopter to Aghdam. The pictures show that the bodies of those killed were scattered over a large area. The major part of the corpses filmed at the killing field were those of women and the elderly, and there were also children amongst those killed. At the same time, there were also people in uniform amongst those killed. The video showed several dozen corpses in all.

It can be supposed that it might have taken roughly seven or eight hours for the refugees from Khojaly to reach the killing field, taking into account the roughness of the terrain and the physical capabilities of most of the people (the route along the road running roughly parallel to the “free corridor” zone takes about two hours). Thus the refugees were shot at dawn.

Around 200 bodies were taken to Aghdam over four days. Several dozen corpses bore signs of mutilation. Doctors working on the medical train in Aghdam recorded at least four scalped bodies and one decapitated corpse. A state forensic medical examination was carried out on 181 bodies in Aghdam (130 male and 51 female, including 13 children). The pathologists conclude that in 151 people the cause of death was bullet wounds; in 20, missile wounds; and in 10, blows by a blunt object. Moreover, a forensic medical examination was carried out in Baku on a number of corpses brought from the vicinity of Khojaly. NKR officials told Memorial observers that “120–130 corpses were taken to Aghdam with their permission.” Ninety-six bodies were buried in Aghdam. The bodies of the others were taken to relatives.

NKR official representatives and members of the armed Armenian detachments attributed the death of civilians in the “free corridor” zone to the fact that leaving with the refugees were armed people who fired at the Armenian posts and provoked return fire, and also to attempts to break through by the main Azerbaijani forces. Members of the armed Armenian detachments said that Azerbaijani units attempted an armed breakthrough from the direction of Aghdam towards the “free corridor.” As the Armenian outposts repulsed the attack, the first groups of refugees from Khojaly reached their rear. The armed men amongst the refugees opened fire on the Armenian outposts. One post was destroyed during the battle (two people were killed and 10 wounded). But the men at the other post, which the Azerbaijanis knew nothing about, opened fire at close quarters on the people coming from Khojaly.

In their statements (including those published in the press), the refugees from Khojaly said that the armed men in the stream of refugees engaged in exchanges of fire

with the Armenian outposts but it was the Armenian side which opened fire first every time.

Also fired upon were groups of refugees taking route 2 (see the section "The assault on Khojaly") who left Askeran.

Five hundred and ninety-eight wounded and frostbite victims (moreover, the latter were in the majority) are recorded in the log of the medical train in the town of Aghdam where practically all the victims and defenders of Khojaly were seen to. The case of a person being scalped alive is also recorded there.

In reckoning the general number of inhabitants of Khojaly who died, one should take into account the fact that people did not just die when the refugees were shot (some of the bodies of those who died in this manner were taken to Aghdam) but that they also froze to death as they tried to make their way through the mountains. Memorial observers spoke to a woman who lost three of her children that way. It is not possible to ascertain precisely the number of inhabitants of Khojaly who froze to death. The Karabakh newspaper reported on 26 March 1992 that the commission for helping the refugees from Khojaly had given out grants to 476 families of those who died.

The fate of the people left in the town. Around 300 civilians, including 86 Meskhetian Turks, remained in Khojaly after it was taken by Armenian armed units.

According to statements by inhabitants, by those who took part in the assault, by NKR officials and representatives of the mass media who were in the vicinity of Khojaly at that time, all the remaining inhabitants were taken captive and over three days were taken to Stepanakert (the detention centre and transport column building), the preventive-detention cell in the village of Krasnyy and the solitary confinement block in the town of Askeran. By permission of the NKR leadership, some were taken into the private homes of Armenian families whose relatives were imprisoned on the territory of Azerbaijan.

NKR officials state that all women and children were handed over without ransom to the Azerbaijani side within one week.

According to reports received from both sides, over 700 captive inhabitants of Khojaly, seized both in the town itself and on the road to Aghdam, had been handed over to the Azerbaijani side by 28 March 1992. Women and children accounted for the majority of them.

At the same time, there are testimonies from inhabitants of Khojaly that women and children, and men as well, were held as a "means of barter." These are confirmed by the personal observations of Memorial observers: as of 13 March, inhabitants of Khojaly were still being held in Askeran as hostages, including women and young girls. There is reliable evidence that women were being forcibly held in Askeran after that date too.

CONDITIONS IN WHICH CAPTIVE INHABITANTS AND DEFENDERS OF KHOJALY WERE HELD

An inspection by Memorial observers of the detention centre of the town of Stepanakert where captive inhabitants of Khojaly and captive members of the Azerbaijani armed

units are being held (they are all deemed to be "hostages" in the conflict zone) ascertained that the conditions in which they are being held are extremely unsatisfactory. The appearance of the Azerbaijanis being held in the detention centre showed that they receive very little food and they manifest clear signs of emaciation. Verbal information was received that the prisoners were beaten regularly. It should also be noted that the observers were given the opportunity to inspect only some of the prisoners.

The chief of the detention centre, Major Khachaturyan, forbade even brief one-to-one conversations with the prisoners. It was only thanks to chance that such a conversation was possible.

According to the testimonies of the inhabitants of Khojaly, who were captured and then exchanged, and also of defenders of Khojaly, men were subjected to beatings. Most of the testimonies say that women and children were not beaten, unlike the men. However, there is evidence of rape, including of minors, confirmed by doctors of Baku and Aghdam.

THE FATE OF THE PROPERTY OF THE INHABITANTS OF KHOJALY

The inhabitants of Khojaly who fled did not have the opportunity to take with them even the basic minimum of their belongings. Those inhabitants of Khojaly who were taken out of the town by members of Armenian armed units were not given the opportunity to gather up even part of their belongings. Memorial observers witnessed active and unbridled looting in the captured town. Belongings which were left behind were carried away by inhabitants of Stepanakert and neighbouring settlements. The surnames of the new owners were written on the gates of many houses.

By a decision of the Supreme Soviet of the NKR, needy Armenians are being settled in houses in Khojaly and they are being allocated numbers for this.

THE REACTION OF NKR OFFICIALDOM TO INSTANCES OF VIOLENCE TOWARDS CIVILIANS

The NKR Supreme Soviet issued a statement expressing regret over instances of brutality during the assault on Khojaly. But no attempts were made to investigate the crimes connected with the capture of Khojaly.

Officials did not deny in conversations with Memorial observers that there could have been atrocities committed during the capture of Khojaly, as there were amongst the armed Armenian detachments embittered people whose relatives had been killed by Azerbaijanis and there were also people with a criminal past.

ASSESSMENT OF THE INFORMATION RECEIVED

There was mass violence inflicted upon the civilians of Khojaly during the military operation to take this town.

The declared provision of a "free corridor" to evacuate the population from Khojaly may be regarded as either a deliberate actions by NKR officials to "cleanse" the town of its inhabitants or as the acknowledgement by the NKR authorities that they are not capable of guaranteeing on the territory under their control the human rights of civilians regardless of nationality.

The information on the existence of the "free corridor" was not passed on to the majority of the inhabitants of Khojaly.

The civilians remaining in Khojaly after it was taken by Armenian detachments were deported. These actions were carried out in an organized manner. Many of the deportees were held in Stepanakert, which clearly points to there being a relevant order on this by the NKR authorities.

The mass murder of civilians in the "free corridor" zone and adjacent territory cannot be justified under any circumstances.

The capture and detention of civilians of Khojaly as "hostages," including women, clearly contradicts the declared readiness of the NKR authorities to freely hand over to the Azerbaijani side all Khojaly civilians. The conditions in which the "hostages" were held were extremely unsatisfactory and there was violent treatment of the detained inhabitants of Khojaly.

The inhabitants of Khojaly were illegally deprived of their property, which was appropriated by inhabitants of Stepanakert and the surrounding settlements. The NKR authorities have legalised this appropriation of other people's property, issuing warrants for occupying the houses belonging to the inhabitants of Khojaly who had fled or been deported.

Servicemen of the 366th Motorised Rifle Regiment belonging to troops of the Commonwealth of Independent States took part in the assault on Khojaly. In the opinion of the Memorial human rights centre a special investigation is required into the facts of the involvement of CIS servicemen in the military operations and combat actions in the conflict region, and also into the facts of the transfer of military property to units of the conflicting parties.

The Memorial Human Rights Center states that the actions by the Armenian units of Nagorno Karabakh towards the civilians of Khojaly during the assault on the town are a gross violation of the Geneva Convention and also of the following articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948):

Article 2 proclaims that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as ... language, religion ... national ... origin ... or other status";

ASSESSMENT BY INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

- Article 3** recognizes that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person;
- Article 5** stipulates that no one shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment;
- Article 9** stipulates that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile;
- Article 17** proclaims the right of everyone to own property and states that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

The actions by the armed units are a most gross violation of the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on 14 December 1974). It stipulates:

Women and children belonging to the civilian population and finding themselves in circumstances of emergency and armed conflict in the struggle for peace, self-determination, national liberation and independence, or who live in occupied territories, shall not be deprived of shelter, food, medical aid or other inalienable rights, in accordance with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child or other instruments of international law.

Bloodshed in the Caucasus

Escalation of the Armed Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

Source: Bloodshed in the Caucasus, Human Rights Watch/ Helsinki (formerly Helsinki Watch) Report, September, 1992, pages 19–24.

KHOJALY

On the night of February 25–26 Armenian forces seized the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly, located about ten miles from Stepanakert. As some of its residents, accompanied by retreating Azerbaijani militia and self-defense forces, fled Khojaly seeking to cross the border to reach Agdam, they approached Armenian military posts and were fired upon. The Azerbaijani government is currently conducting two investigations of the events, one carried out by a special parliamentary commission and another by the Procuracy. In addition, the Human Rights Center of Memorial, a prominent Russian nongovernmental organization, conducted an independent investigation of the incident in March 1992.¹

According to Azerbaijani Procuracy officials, before the escalation of the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh, Khojaly had a population of about 6,000; its precise population in February is unknown since some residents may have fled earlier.² In 1988 Khojaly had only 2,000 residents and had the status of a village; its numbers grew as Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia were resettled there. The Azerbaijani government had also settled in Khojaly several hundred Meskhetian Turks fleeing persecution in Central Asia. Finally, Azerbaijanis flocked there from other parts of Nagorno Karabakh, notably from Stepanakert, and continued to do so after Armenian forces overran their villages in the winter of 1991–92. It received the status of town from the Azerbaijani government only in December 1991, and, after Shusha, was the second most populous Azerbaijani town in Nagorno Karabakh.³

¹ See Report of the Memorial Human Rights Group on Massive Violations of Human Rights Committed in the Seizure of Khojaly during the Night of February 25–26, 1992. In Russian, available through Helsinki Watch, and reprinted in *Nevazisimaia Gazeta*, June 18, 1992, page 5. (see page 75 of this book).

² The investigative team of the Azerbaijani Procuracy in April was still trying to establish the exact number of inhabitants of Khojaly by checking passport registrations.

³ For a description of life in Khojaly before the February 25th attack, see Thomas Goltz, "A Town Betrayed: The Killing Ground in Karabakh," in *The Washington Post*, March 8, 1992, p. C1.

The only airport in Nagorno Karabakh is located in Khojaly. Since at least 1990, an Azerbaijani OMON militia unit was deployed in Khojaly, mainly with the purpose of defending the town and the airport. The exact number of militia deployed is unknown. Aiden Rasulov, who leads the Azerbaijani Procuracy's investigation of Khojaly, puts the number at twenty-two, although displaced persons said that as many as forty militia men fled with the town's population. In addition, Khojaly had a self-defense group of about 200.

Armenian fighters maintain that they sent ultimatums to the Azerbaijani forces in Khojaly warning that unless missile attacks from that town on Stepanakert ceased, Armenian forces would attack.⁴ According to A.H., an Azerbaijani woman interviewed by Helsinki Watch in Baku.

After Armenians seized Malybeyli, they made an ultimatum to Khojaly ... and that Khojaly people had better leave with a white flag. Alif Gajiev [the head of the militia in Khojaly] told us this on February 15, but this didn't frighten me or other people. We never believed they could occupy Khojaly.

According to nearly all of the twenty-two Azerbaijani witnesses of the Khojaly events interviewed by Helsinki Watch, the village had been shelled almost on a daily basis during the winter of 1991–92, and people had grown accustomed to spending nights in basements.

The attack on Khojaly began about 11:00 P.M.⁵ on February 25, with heavy shelling and artillery fire. Hassan Alahierov, a construction worker, told Helsinki Watch,

We were used to [hearing] shooting, but usually with machine guns. I was sleeping on the balcony and my son came to me and said that this was a different noise. I stood up and ... saw BMPs [armed personnel carriers] and tanks were shooting from all directions. ... When I went out I saw bombs falling everywhere.

Several refugees reported that they saw houses burning during the attack on Khojaly or while they were fleeing the village. Juleka Dunemalieva (whose sister died of exposure during their flight from Khojaly) said that at about midnight or 1:00 A.M. she saw the neighborhood where Meskhetian Turks lived go up in flames: "Meskhetians lived in our neighborhood in Finnish-style cottages. When their houses were burned we got out right away."

Most Khojaly residents remained in the town until about 3:00 A.M., some staying in basements in private homes. In addition, about 300 residents reportedly took shelter in

⁴ Helsinki Watch interview with A.G., a member of the PLAA, April 28, 1992.

⁵ According to S.A., a member of the OMON unit, shelling of the airport began at 5:00 P.M.

the basement of one school. Some reported that they decided to leave at 3:00 A.M. because the self-defense forces were running through the streets shouting instructions to people to run away.

Residents fled the town in separate groups, amid chaos and panic, most of them without any belongings or clothes for the cold weather. As a result, hundreds of people suffered – and some died – from severe frostbite.

The majority of Khojaly residents went along a route that took them across a shallow river, through the mountains, and, by about dawn, towards an open field near the village of Nakhchivanik, controlled then by Armenians. It was here that the most intense shooting took place. Other people fled along different routes that took them directly by Shelli, an Azerbaijani village near Agdam. A number of Khojaly survivors wandered through the forest for several days before finding their way to Agdam's environs.

POSITIONING OF THE MILITIA

Among one of these fleeing groups was the Azerbaijani OMON, led by Alif Gajiev, on retreat from the airport. Gajiev had, according to several Helsinki Watch interviewees, directed the group seeking shelter in the school basement to leave the village. At Nakhchivanik Armenians and troops of the CIS 366th Regiment opened fire on the retreating OMON militia and the fleeing residents. All Azerbaijanis interviewed who were in this group reported that the militia, still in uniform, and some still carrying their guns, were interspersed with the masses of civilians. For example, Hijran Alekpera, a twenty-three-year-old former bakery worker, described a mass of civilians who moved along "surrounded by a ring of defenders. They tried to defend us. They had guns and they would try to shoot back."

According to a twenty-one-year-old Azerbaijani woman whose toes had to be amputated because of frostbite damage, "The leaders of our group were men. The Armenians opened fire as we approached the village [of Nakhchivanik]. They surrounded us and shot. There was shooting between Armenian soldiers and ours." S.A., a member of the OMON unit, told Helsinki Watch, "We were shooting and running in the pack, but it was not an organized retreat. We were all mixed together."

Another young Azerbaijani woman, who suffered frostbite on her legs, also described the crossfire: "When Armenians saw us they began to shoot. We hid. At the same time Azerbaijanis shot back. They were Azerbaijani OMON. Some of them were with us when we fled."

FIRING ON CIVILIANS

Witnesses to and victims of the shooting at Nakhchivanik told Helsinki Watch of varying numbers of people who fell under fire, and described how they received their gunshot wounds.

Thirty-three-year-old Nigar Azizova, who worked in a vegetable store, told Helsinki Watch that when the crowd started falling over bodies, they turned back and fled in different directions.

The crowd was about sixty meters long. I was in the middle, and people in the front were mostly killed. At Nakhchivanik we saw that people in front were falling. They shouted and fell. I recognized their faces. I could see their faces as we stepped over them. We covered the children's eyes so they wouldn't see.

Mrs. Azizova listed eight people whose bodies she had to step over, and claimed that they had no guns: Elshan Abushov, Zelif Alekhpeliev, Tevagul Alekhpelieva, Sakhet Alekhpeliev (who reportedly was nine years old), Elmar Abdulev, Etibar Abushov, and Habib Abushov.

A young Azerbaijani woman who was eventually taken hostage told Helsinki Watch, "It was a cultivated field. We approached it and saw that they began to shoot. I must have seen sixty people dead in the field. Those who were running away with me fell and died."

Hassan Alahierov said: "First we ran to Nakhchivanik, but when they began shooting people we ran to the other side. There was a BMP standing on the road – I didn't see it, I just saw the shells." Alahierov's eighteen-year-old daughter, who got separated from her father, said she saw the tank: "When she tank began to shoot we ran in all directions. I saw corpses scattered, and saw all the people surrounding them fall."

Hijran Alekpera reported that:

By the time we got to Nakhchivanik it was 9:00 A.M. There was a field and there were many people who had been killed. There were maybe one hundred. I didn't try to count. I was wounded on this field. Gajif Aliev was shot and I wanted to help him. A bullet hit me in the belly. I could see where they were shooting from. I saw other bodies in the field. They were newly killed – they hadn't changed color.

Fifty-one-year-old Balaoglan Allakhiev said:

We got to Nakhchivanik at 8:00 A.M., and were in the middle of the field when they began to fire. They were shooting only from one direction – the forest. Then we ran off the field toward a canyon, where my wife and daughter-in-law were shot. They were shot from about twenty meters. My daughter-in-law was struck three times – through the skull, in her stomach and in her leg. My wife was hit from behind. [The Armenians] took off their rings.

At about 8:00 A.M. Nazile Khemetova received a gunshot wound in her left leg:

We were all crawling. Whoever stood up got wounded. I stood up to rest my legs and was wounded. I saw many people get shot, and we had to leave them as we crawled along. After I was wounded I didn't see many people pass me; they hid in the forest. I stayed in the snow until 7:00 P.M. Members of the Popular Front came and helped me escape.

Beginning February 27, Azerbaijani helicopters brought in personnel who attempted to collect bodies and assist the wounded. Some of the rescue team were wearing camouflage clothing, and they were accompanied by a French journalist, they reported that some of the corpses had been scalped or otherwise mutilated. One member of the group videotaped the mission.

DEATH TOLL

There are still no definitive figures on the number of civilians who were shot while fleeing Khojaly. According to Aiden Rasulov, more than 300 bodies showing evidence of a violent death were submitted for forensic examination. At the time of Helsinki Watch's visit to Baky, the results of these examinations had not been completed, and the investigative team was in the process of tracking down the corpses of Khojaly victims that had been removed from Agdam by family members in the first days after the tragedy. Earlier figures made available by Azerbaijan and published by the Memorial group put the number of deaths resulting from gunshot, shrapnel, or other wounds at 181 (130 men and fifty-one women, including thirteen children). In addition, an undetermined number died of frostbite. Namig Aliyev, who heads the Department on Questions of Law and Order and Defense of the Azerbaijani Parliament and who is part of the parliamentary group investigating the Khojaly events, told Helsinki Watch in April that 213 Khojaly victims were buried in Agdam. Some of the bodies received at the makeshift hospital in Agdam were identified as combatants. Many male bodies that lacked all identification were not identified as civilian or combatant.

Aliyev also reported that of those bodies submitted for forensic examination, thirty-three had been scalped, had body parts removed, or had been otherwise mutilated.

One hundred and eighty individuals from Khojaly are reported to be missing.

... the civilian population and individual civilians are not legitimate objects of attack in any armed conflict. The contending parties accordingly must distinguish at all times between civilians and combatants and direct their attack only against the latter. Moreover, the parties may not use civilians to shield military targets from attack or to shield military operations, including retreats. Thus, a party that intersperses combatants with fleeing civilians puts those civilians at risk and violates its obligation to protect its own civilians.

Although retreating combatants and civilians who assume a combatant's role while fleeing are subject to direct individualized attack, the attacking party is still obliged to take precautionary measures to avoid or minimize civilian casualties. In particular, the party must suspend an attack if it becomes apparent that the attack may be expected to cause civilian casualties that are excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.

The circumstances surrounding the attack at Nakhchivanik on those fleeing Khojaly indicate that Armenian forces and troops of the 366th CIS Regiment (who were not apparently acting on orders from their commanders)⁶ deliberately disregarded this customary law restraint on attacks. Nagorno Karabakh officials and fighters clearly expected the inhabitants of Khojaly to flee since they claim to have informed the town that a corridor would be left open to allow for their safe passage. No witnesses interviewed by Helsinki Watch, however, said that they knew beforehand of such a corridor. In addition, although witnesses and victims gave varying testimony on the precise time the shooting began at Nakhchivanik, they all indicated that there was sufficient light to allow for reasonable visibility and, thus, for the attackers to distinguish unarmed civilians from those persons who were armed and/or using weapons. Further, despite conflicting testimony about the direction from which the fire was coming, the evidence suggests that the attackers indiscriminately directed their fire at all fleeing persons. Under these circumstances, the killing of fleeing combatants could not justify the foreseeable larger number of civilian casualties.

⁶ The number of servicemen in the 366th who participated in the massacre of civilians is still unknown. The Azerbaijani Procuracy's investigative team sent a delegation to Tbilisi, where the 366th was relocated after it withdrew from Stepanakert, to inquire how many men from the regiment had been killed, wounded, and missing during their service in Nagorno Karabakh. According to Aiden Rasulov, military officials refused to meet with the investigative team, claiming that they are answerable only to Moscow. As of April, the investigative team had not asked for an accounting from Moscow military authorities.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH VICTIMS BURIED IN AZERBAIJANI TOWN

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

By [Name] in [Location]

Yerevan, Armenia. The bodies of 12 Nagorno-Karabakh victims were buried in a town in Azerbaijan. The bodies were found in a mass grave in the town of [Location]. The bodies were found in a mass grave in the town of [Location]. The bodies were found in a mass grave in the town of [Location].



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The Washington Post, 28 February, 1992

NAGORNO-KARABAKH VICTIMS BURIED IN AZERBAIJANI TOWN

Refugees Claim Hundreds Died in Armenian Attack

By Thomas GOLTZ, Special to The Washington Post

Nagorno-Karabakh Victims Buried in Azerbaijani Town

Refugees Claim Hundreds Died in Armenian Attack

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Special to The Washington Post

AGDAM, Azerbaijan, Feb. 27—Officials of the main mosque in this town just east of the embattled enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh said they buried 17 bodies today, brought from an Azerbaijani town inside the enclave that was captured Wednesday by Armenian militiamen.

Refugees fleeing the fighting in Khojaly, a town of 6,000 northeast of the enclave's capital, Stepanakert, claimed that up to 500 people, including women and children, were killed in the attack. No independent estimate of the deaths was available here. The Agdam mosque's director, Said Sadikov Muan, said refugees from Khojaly had registered the names of 477 victims with his mosque since Wednesday.

Officials in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, estimated the deaths in Khojaly at 100, while Armenian officials in their capital, Yerevan, said only two Azerbaijanis were killed in the attack. An official from Baku said here that his government fears Azerbaijanis would turn against it if they knew how many had been killed.

Of seven bodies seen here today, two were children and three were women, one shot through the chest at what appeared to be close range. Another 130 refugees being treated at Agdam's hospital include many with multiple stab wounds.

The Armenians who attacked Khojaly Tuesday night "were shooting, shooting, shooting," said Raisa Adanovi, who reached Agdam Wednesday night. She said her husband and a son-in-law were killed and her daughter was missing.

Armenian officials in Yerevan said Azerbaijani soldiers, backed by tanks and several helicopters, launched an attack this morning on Ashmaran, an Armenian-populated town just inside Nagorno-Karabakh on the road between Khojaly and Agdam.

A cease-fire negotiated Wednesday night by shelving Israeli Foreign Minister Aki Aishar Vellazari never took effect. Vayatsi called off a planned visit today to Nagorno-Karabakh and headed instead for Yerevan.

More than 1,000 persons have been killed in four years of fighting touched off by Armenian demands that predominantly Ar-



menian Nagorno-Karabakh, an enclave air-routed and controlled by Azerbaijan, should become part of Armenia.

Among the refugees who fled here over the mountains from Nagorno-Karabakh were two Turkish soldiers from former Soviet Interior Ministry forces who had taken refuge in Khojaly after deserting from their unit last Friday because, they said, Armenian non-commissioned officers had beaten them "for being Muslims."

The two deserters claimed their former unit, the 356th Division, was supporting the Armenian militiamen who captured Khojaly. They said they tried to help women and children escape. "We were bringing a group through the mountains when the Armenians found us and opened fire," said Agasabek Mutli, one of the deserters. "Twelve were killed."

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Trud Friday, 28 February 1992, No. 39

KHOJALY IN FLAMES

Despite the desperate efforts by the defenders to hold on to Khojaly, Armenian armed formations had taken complete control of the town by the morning of 27 February, having torched it and carried out reprisals on its inhabitants.

There are many killed and wounded, both amongst the self-defence brigades and amongst the civilian population. One hundred and seven inhabitants, mainly women and children who managed to flee the besieged town, have been admitted to hospital in Agdam. The fate is as yet unknown of over 200 people, also mainly women, the elderly and children who hid in Gulablin forest which was encircled by the fighters. Incidentally, neither is there reliable information about what has happened to the majority of the 7,000-strong population of the town.

With the fall of Khojaly, Shusha, beleaguered and defending itself, remains the only Azerbaijani settlement in Nagorno Karabakh and it is under fire just as destructive as in Khankendi (Stepanakert).

Meanwhile, a ceasefire moratorium in Nagorno Karabakh from 09:00 on the morning of 27 February until 09:00 on 1 March was reported on the republic's television late yesterday evening. The sides reached this agreement with the assistance of Ali Akbar Velayati, the foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, so as to allow the mediation mission to visit the conflict zone.

T. Kasumova.
Baku.



Le Monde, Saturday, 29 February 1992

THE KHOJALY REFUGEES 'ALL WE HAVE LEFT IS TO DIE'

Les réfugiés de Khojaly

« Il ne nous reste qu'à mourir »

AGHDAM (Azerbaïdjan)
de l'envoyé spécial de Reuters

Les blessés ont été traités à dix d'homme sur une dizaine de kilomètres à travers les montagnes enneigées. Les cadavres restent de ceux qui n'ont pas survécu reposent aujourd'hui dans la mosquée d'Agdam. Parmi les huit corps enroulés dans des couvertures, il y a ceux d'une jeune femme et de deux petites filles. « Nous les avons amenés dans la mosquée. Il y a un des tas d'autres là-bas », déclare Ali Rakhimov, qui ajoute : « L'unique famille a disparu. »

Des milliers de réfugiés ont été chassés de leurs villages du Haut-Karabakh campent depuis des semaines ou des mois à Agdam, porte de l'enclave sur le

château de Bakou. Depuis la chute de Khojaly (Le Monde du 28 février), un millier d'autres sont arrivés. A la mosquée, un responsable religieux parle de 477 disparus, et 27 morts ont déjà été enterrés.

« Je suis venu à minuit et ont commencé à tirer dans toutes les directions », raconte Rana Aslanova, perdue dans la foule qui attend des nouvelles devant l'hôpital d'Agdam, où sont entassés plus d'une centaine de blessés, attelés par balle ou à l'arme blanche. Dans la salle commune, on jure que le sang, les blessés reposent sur le sol, dans un concert de gémissements. Pour les vieux et les enfants, on a trouvé des lits. « Je n'ai jamais rien vu de pareil de ma vie », commente le docteur

Muhammed Shirinov, qui soigne une jeune femme gravement blessée à la poitrine. Tout près, une femme âgée, atteinte en plein ventre. Dans la file d'en face, un vieillard agonise.

Dans les rues d'Agdam, les réfugiés traînent par centaines et se lamentent : « Nous n'avons rien pour nous défendre. Il ne nous reste qu'à mourir », Tamerlan Kariev, vice-président du parlement azerbaïdjanais et un des dirigeants du front populaire, est sur place. « On attend des hélicoptères depuis des jours, mais rien n'arrive de Bakou. La nuit va être longue. Je crains une attaque, les Arméniens sont très près. » A quelques kilomètres, le ciel s'illumine et l'on entend des bruits.

ELIF KAHAN

Agdam (Azerbaïdjan)
from a Reuters special envoy

The injured have been carried for a dozen kilometres across snow-covered mountains. The stiffening corpses of those who did not survive have been laid out in a mosque in Agdam. Among the eight bodies wrapped up in blankets, there is a young woman and two little girls. 'We picked them up on the mountain. There are loads more up there,' said Ali Rakhimov,

who added, 'My whole family is missing.'

The thousands of Azeri refugees forced from their villages in Nagorno Karabakh have been camped out for weeks or even months in Agdam, where the road to Baku begins. Since the fall of Khojaly (as reported in *Le Monde* on 28 February), a thousand more have arrived. At the mosque, a religious leader says that 477 are missing, and 27 have already been buried.

'They came at midnight and opened fire in all directions,' recounts Rana Aslanova, part of a crowd waiting for news in front of the hospital in Agdam, where more than 100 injured are piled up, victims of bullets or knife wounds. In the waiting room, on the bloodstained floor, the injured are laid out on the floor, in a chorus of whimpers. Beds have been found for children and the elderly. 'I have never seen anything like this in my life,' commented Dr Muhammed Shirinov, who was tending to a young woman with a serious chest wound. Nearby, there is an old woman who has been shot in the stomach. In the bed opposite, an old man is dying.

In the streets of Agdam, hundreds of refugees lament: 'We have been waiting for the helicopters for days, but nothing has arrived from Baku. The night will be long. I am afraid there will be an attack, the Armenians are very close.' A few kilometers away, the sky lights up and we can hear shooting.

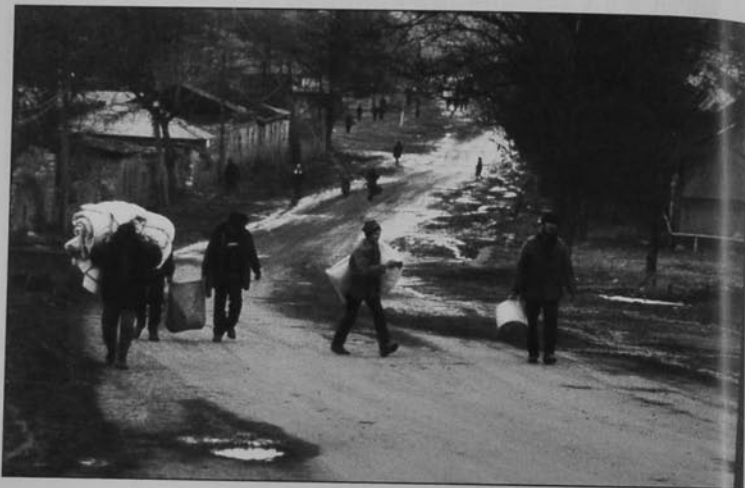
Elif Kahan



Women and children held captive after expulsion from Khojaly
Photo: Victoria Ivleva



Forced out of their Khojaly homes
Photo: Victoria Ivleva



Armenian looters descend on Khojaly, hours after 'cleansing' the town of all its Azerbaijani inhabitants.

Photo: Victoria Ivleva



Carry what you can and get out

Photo: Victoria Ivleva



2-day-old Gunay is carried from her home (see page 6)

Photo: Victoria Ivleva



Mehriban Bakirova, mother of 2-day-old Gunay, sitting in the snow with her two other children in front of an Armenian militiaman (see page 6)

Photo: Victoria Ivleva



The Armenian military making sure of their share of the loot.
Photo: Victoria Ivleva



Emotion barely containable
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



'Every available space becomes a hospital, even public offices. The slogan reads: Son of the motherland: Are you ready to fight for a free, independent and united Azerbaijan?'
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



A loved one found, and lost
 Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Beyond help
 Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne

Komsomolskaya Pravda, 29 February 1992, Saturday, No. 44

THE 366TH REGIMENT WILL LEAVE KARABAKH



Three days of nationwide mourning have been declared in the republic as of 29 February by a decree of the president of Azerbaijan in connection with the numerous casualties in the town of Khojaly and the deaths of civilians there.

Details have become known about the taking of the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly on the night of 26 February. Only 200 out of the almost 10,000 inhabitants of the township have made it to Agdam. Over 1,000 are dead and several thousand have been wounded. There are 40 Meskhetian Turk families amongst the dead.

According to information issued by the Armenian side, around 60 Azerbaijanis died in Khojaly. The Armenian losses run to 8 dead and 20 wounded, Interfax reported.

Speaking to a representative of the Azerbaijani authorities, Lt.-Gen. Sufian Beppayev, deputy commander of the Caucasus Military District, denied ITAR-TASS reports that the evacuation of servicemen's families from Azerbaijan had begun.

According to information issued by the Armenian side, a Grad launcher and munitions were seized in Khojaly.

From the KP dossier:

The BM-21 launcher (Grad) became part of the weaponry of the USSR Armed Forces in 1973. However, the Grad was first used in combat four years prior to that – during the Sino-Soviet conflict. Half of the Damanskiy peninsula disappeared under water after several volleys were fired at it from the new weapon.



The horror sinks in
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Some survived the killing fields
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne

The artillery unit of the BM-21 comprises 40 three-metre-long 122.4 mm barrels. It is difficult to get into the free-standing casing of the BM-21. Deployment of the BM-21 is allowed by international conventions. It fires a high-explosive fragmentation shell. The launcher was deployed in Afghanistan.

Interfax also reported that Marshal Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov has ordered the withdrawal from Nagornyy Karabakh of the 366th Regiment, which is stationed in Stepanakert.

Appeal by the Ministry of Defence of Armenia

The Ministry of Defence of Armenia has called upon Armenian officers serving in CIS troops to return to Armenia to form the basis of a future national army.

Yerevan thinks that a large accumulation of forces of the national army of Azerbaijan has been observed on the border with Armenia recently. A regular, well-trained army can be the only guarantee of security in these conditions. (Staff news)

The Times, 1 March, 1992

ARMENIAN SOLDIERS MASSACRE HUNDREDS OF FLEEING FAMILIES

By Thomas Goltz, Agdam, Azerbaijan

The spiralling violence gripping the outer republics of the former Soviet Union gained new impetus yesterday with the cold-blooded slaughter of hundreds of women and children in war-racked Nogorno-Karabkh.

Survivors reported that Armenian soldiers shot and bayoneted more than 450 Azeris, many of them women and children, who were fleeing an attack on their town. Hundreds, possibly thousands, were missing and feared dead.

Survivors who struggled across snow-covered mountains in sub-zero temperatures to Agdam in Azerbaijan said the massacre took place on Wednesday morning when up to 1,500 people were trapped in a gorge and surrounded by Armenian soldiers.

The attackers killed most of the soldiers and volunteers defending the women and children. They then turned their guns on the terrified refugees. The few survivors later described what happened: "That's when the real slaughter began," said Azer Hajiev, one of three soldiers to survive. "The Armenians just shot and shot. And then they came in and started carving up people with their bayonets and knives."

"They were shooting, shooting, shooting," echoed Rasia Aslanova, who arrived in Agdam with other women and children who had made their way through Armenian lines. She said her husband, Kayun, and a son-in-law were massacred in front of her.

Mass murder raises fear of total war in crumbling empire



Survivors, a woman and child arrive in Agdam after Armenian soldiers had destroyed their village. Photograph: Corbis Data

Armenian soldiers massacre hundreds of fleeing families

THE spiralling violence gripping the outer republics of the former Soviet Union gained new impetus yesterday with the cold-blooded slaughter of hundreds of women and children in war-racked Nagorno-Karabkh. Survivors reported that Armenian soldiers shot and bayoneted more than 450 Azeris, many of them women and children, who were fleeing an attack on their town. Hundreds, possibly thousands, were missing and feared dead. Survivors who struggled across snow-covered mountains in sub-zero temperatures to Agdam in Azerbaijan said the massacre took place on Wednesday morning when up to 1,500 people were trapped in a gorge and surrounded by Armenian soldiers. The attackers killed most of the soldiers and volunteers defending the women and children. They then turned their guns on the terrified refugees. The few survivors later described what happened: "That's when the real slaughter began," said Azer Hajiev, one of three soldiers to survive. "The Armenians just shot and shot. And then they came in and started carving up people with their bayonets and knives."

The survivors had to flee in an attempt to reach Agdam, where some of them had been hiding. The survivors had to flee in an attempt to reach Agdam, where some of them had been hiding.

A 45-year-old man who had been shot in the back said: "We were walking through the brush. Then they opened up on us and people were falling all around. My wife fell, then my child."

Helicopters had to abandon attempts to rescue survivors when they, too, came under fire. They returned with reports of "mountainsides filled with corpses." Others spoke of terrible mutilations, with many of the wounded being shot in the legs and groin.

The massacre has provoked fears that the already bitter fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, a mostly Armenian enclave surrounded by Azerbaijani territory, could flare completely out of control. Though more than 1,000 have died since civil war broke out four years ago, a massacre on this scale seems likely to lead to all-out war.

FLEEING AZERIS MASSACRED

Continued from P.1

The survivors said 2,000 others, some of whom had fled separately, were still missing; many could perish from their wounds or the cold. Those who made it to Agdam, some carrying their dead and wounded, said many more bodies remained behind.

The massacre began with an Armenian assault on the town of Khojaly on Monday. "It started at around 10 at night," said Bahram Nigmatov, a deserter from the army who had been hiding in Khojaly. "They overran the airport and then attacked the town. We tried to help the women and children get out. I saw 12 of our group get killed. I don't know how many others died."

An estimated 500 people were killed, and it was at that point that Major Alef Hajiev, head of the local national guard, organized a break-out through Armenian lines to lead civilians to Agdam down the Askeron gap, a 10-kilometre-long ravine.

Hajiev rounded up 33 national guards, 30 airport security officials and volunteer militiamen to form a ragtag fighting force. "The major had the woman and children and other civilians go down into the bottom of the ravine while we ran cover for them on the hillside," said Asif Usubov, another survivor.

Fleeing Azeris massacred

CONTINUED FROM P.1

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"At dawn, when we arrived in the middle of the gorge the Armenians opened fire from the ridges." The major was shot through the head and died instantly. Thirty soldiers and 19 airport guards were killed, leaving the column of women and children defenceless, Usubov said. The soldiers then moved in, shooting and bayoneting at will.

By late yesterday, 479 deaths had been registered at the morgue in Agdam's mosque, and 29 bodies had been buried in the cemetery. Of the seven corpses I saw



waiting burial, two were children and three women. Agdam hospital was a scene of carnage. Doctors said they had 140 patients who escaped the slaughter, most with bullet injuries or deep stab wounds.

Nor were they safe in Agdam. On Friday night rockets fell on the city, destroying several buildings and killing 15. Refugees fled towards Baku, the Azeri capital. "The Armenians won't stop until they get to Baku," said one fleeing government official. "That's when the real fighting will begin."

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The Times, 2 March, 1992

CORPSES LITTER HILLS IN KARABAKH

Anatol Lieven comes under fire while flying with Azerbaijani forces to investigate the alleged mass killings of refugees by Armenian troops

As we swooped low over the snow-covered hills of Nagorno-Karabakh we saw the scattered corpses. Apparently, the refugees had been shot down as they ran. An Azerbaijani film of the places we flew over, shown to journalists afterwards, showed dozens of corpses lying in various parts of the hills.

The Azerbaijanis claim that as many as 1,000 have died in a mass killing of Azerbaijanis fleeing from the town of Khojaly, seized by Armenians last week. A further 4,000 are believed to be wounded, frozen to death or missing. Armenia has denied these claims.

Seven of us squatted in the cabin of an Azerbaijani M24 attack helicopter as we flew to investigate the claims of the mass killings. Suddenly there was a thump against the underside of the aircraft, a red flash of tracer ripped past the starboard wing, and the helicopter rocked sharply. We swung round, and there was a deafening burst of fire from the cannon under our wing as the helicopter crew returned fire.

We had been fired on from an Armenian anti-aircraft post. We swung round again, tipped to starboard and appeared to dive straight down into a valley. The brown earth swooped around our heads, the helicopter swung round again and followed the contours of the ground. Our cannon fired repeated blasts.

Later it emerged that a civilian helicopter that we had been escorting had landed successfully at Nakhchivanik in the east of the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, to pick up some of the dead. We had, in fact, been attacked both from the ground and by an Armenian helicopter. I had seen the helicopter intermittently through the window, its cannons firing, but had thought that it was on "our side". We had embarked on a search-and-rescue flight that had become a combat mission. Our flight consisted of the civilian passenger helicopter and two M24 Soviet attack helicopters in the Azerbaijani service, nicknamed flying crocodiles for their armour. Our party was in the second crocodile. The civilian helicopter's job was to land in the mountains and pick up bodies. The attack helicopters were there to give covering fire if necessary.

The operation showed a striking sign of the disintegration of the Soviet armed forces because our pilot was a Russian officer. An Azerbaijani official told us that there were now five former Soviet military helicopters—and their pilots—fighting for Azerbaijan.

"They have signed contracts to fly for us," he said. The helicopter we engaged in combat was most probably flown by a brother-officer of our Russian pilot.

We had taken off just before 5pm on Saturday from Agdam airfield, and headed for the Armenian-controlled mountains of Karabakh, a sheer white wall in the distance. The civilian helicopter picked up four corpses, and it was during this and a previous mission that an Azerbaijani cameraman filmed the several dozen bodies on the hillsides. We then took off again in a hurry and sped back towards Azerbaijani lines. Azerbaijani gunners on the last hill before the plain — and safety — gazed up at us as we passed.

Back at the airfield in Agdam, we took a look at the bodies the civilian helicopter had picked up, they included two old men and small girl who were covered with blood, their limbs contorted by the cold and rigor mortis. They had been shot.

What did our Russian pilot think of the tragedy, our close shave, and the war in Nagorno-Karabakh? He gave us a cheerful grin, politely declined to answer questions, and marched off to dinner.

Corpses litter hills in Karabakh

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Komsomolskaya Pravda, 3 March 1992

KHOJALY: THAT NIGHT IS NOT OVER YET



We were given these photos by Oleg Aleksandrovich Litvin, a photographic correspondent of Khabar-Servis. He took them during the Khojaly tragedy. The first shows Major Alif Hajiyev, who was head of the town's defence. The photo shows him still alive ... He died leading a group of people out of crossfire. He leaves behind his Belarusian wife and two children.

And these boys, brothers, may be called lucky. They are alive in the hospital in Agdam. Two brothers with kindred bullet wounds – one wounded in the hand, the other in the chest.

And there are more and more graves here. But not all of the victims of that terrible night have been mourned and buried. It is difficult to extract corpses from the firing zone. Civilian memorial services have been held in mosques, Orthodox churches and synagogues in memory of those killed in Khojaly.

According to the latest reports from the Press Service of the President of Azerbaijan, over 300 hostages were taken during the operation by Armenian armed formations to capture the town. Between 500 and 1000 civilians trying to flee Khojaly were captured along the road to Agdam and some of them were killed. Tiny groups of people from Khojaly are breaking through to Agdam. Wounded and dead are being brought out of the combat operation zone. Meanwhile, fierce rocket and artillery fire is continuing upon Azerbaijani settlements in Karabakh – Lachin and Shusha. There are no communications with them.

R. Agayev, presidential press secretary, has said that numerous groups of Armenian armed formations with armoured equipment are concentrating on the Armenian side along a 120-kilometre-long sector of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

O. Tekhmenev

The committee of independent journalists of Azerbaijan and of foreign mass media accredited to the republic, for objective coverage of events in the region, invites their journalistic colleagues to Azerbaijan to see for themselves what is happening and to draw their own conclusions.

Telephone: 928537, 936494. Fax: 948953, 937340.

The committee is prepared to lend organisational support and to defray trip expenses.

The Irish Times, 3 March 1992

CORPSES SCATTERED OVER KILLING FIELDS OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Stephane Bentura, Agdam, Azerbaijan

Stiffened by death and cold, the mutilated corpses of Azeris mown down as they fled an Armenian offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh clung to the snow-covered hillside yesterday almost one week after the attack.

Journalists flown in by army helicopter from Agdam just east of the disputed enclave within Azerbaijan counted 31 bodies, many shot through the head at point-blank range, while some had been scalped. Still others among the dead men, women and children had fingers missing.

Volunteers had collected another 20 bodies and were to take them back to Agdam where they are to be displayed today at the local mosque.

The journalists saw the corpses in the hills above the village of Askeran amid charges by Azerbaijani authorities and refugees that more than 1,000 people were killed after Armenian forces attacked the Azeri village of Khodzjali.

As the last former Soviet soldiers began withdrawing from the enclave, Armenia reiterated denials that its militants had massacred men, women and children fleeing the carnage across snow-covered mountain passes. But dozens of corpses scattered over the killing fields of Nagorno-Karabakh lent credence to Azeri reports of a massacre.

The attack came as the refugees fled an onslaught on the airport of Nagorno-Karabakh's main town Stepanakert, located at Khodzjali, a village of some 3,000 people.

The corpse of a woman – her eyes half-open – clutched her baby in death, drawing tears from the Azerbaijani militiamen accompanying the journalists, who spent 15 minutes in the area.



Corpses scattered over killing fields of Nagorno-Karabakh



The refugees scarcely had time to dress before fleeing from Khodjali into the night. Many of those killed had their arms spread wide as if they had tried to surrender.

According to an Azeri pilot, several dozen corpses were still in the nearby woods, but too close to Armenian positions on the 'front line' in Nagorno-Karabakh to be viewed.

The 20 bodies recovered by the volunteers were stacked in piles. They had been gathered during a fragile truce agreed with Armenian fighters a few hundred yards away.

Mr Zakhid Dzhabarov (32) said he lost his wife and son in the 'massacre' by the Armenians. He said about 60 bodies were collected yesterday, while 50 residents and fighters from Khodjali had already been buried.

According to Mr Dzhabarov, after hours of desperate flight across the mountains, several hundred Khodjali refugees reached hills between Askeran and Nakhchivanik at dawn last Wednesday.

Then, he said, 'two armoured vehicles opened fire without warning. Everyone began to run and tried to return to the forest. Armenian infantrymen came up from Askeran and opened fire on everything that moved.'

He said he saved himself by diving into a snow-filled ditch with three friends.

According to Mr Dzhabarov, the Armenians captured 300 people after surrounding them in the woods. 'The 200 others were killed, or wounded and finished off at point-blank range.'

Mr Dzhabarov claimed that 'youths, old men and women then came from Askeran and looted the corpses' - (AFP, Reuter).

The New York Times, 3 March 1992

MASSACRE BY ARMENIANS BEING REPORTED

Agdam, Azerbaijan, March 2 (Reuters)—Fresh evidence emerged today of a massacre of civilians by Armenian militants in Nagorno-Karabakh, a predominantly Armenian enclave of Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani press agency Azerinform reported renewed Armenian missile fire on the Azerbaijani-populated town of Shusha on Sunday night. It said several people had been wounded in another attack, on the settlement of Venjiali, early today.

The republic of Armenia reiterated denials that its militants had killed 1,000 people in the Azerbaijani-populated town of Khojaly last week and had massacred men, women and children fleeing the carnage across snow-covered mountain passes.

But dozens of bodies scattered over the area lent credence to Azerbaijani reports of a massacre.

SCALPING REPORTED

Azerbaijani officials and journalists who flew briefly to the region by helicopter brought back three dead children with the backs of their heads blown off. They said shooting by Armenians had prevented them from retrieving more bodies.

"Women and children had been scalped," said Assad Faradzhev, an aide to Nagorno-Karabakh's Azerbaijani Governor. "When we began to pick up bodies, they began firing at us."

The Azerbaijani militia chief in Agdam, Rashid Mamedov, said: "The bodies are lying there like flocks of sheep. Even the fascists did nothing like this."

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Near Agdam on the outskirts of Nagorno-Karabakh, a Reuters photographer, Frédéric Lengaigne, said she had seen two trucks filled with Azerbaijani bodies.

"In the first one I counted 35, and it looked as though there were almost as many in the second," she said. "Some had their heads cut off, and many had been burned. They were all men, and a few had been wearing khaki uniforms."

Ethnic violence and economic crisis threaten to tear apart the Commonwealth of Independent States, created by 11 former Soviet republics in December. The commonwealth has been powerless in the face of the ethnic hatred rekindled in the age-old dispute between Christian Armenia and Muslim Azerbaijan.

The 366th Motorized Infantry Regiment, the last frail buffer separating the two warring ethnic groups, started its withdrawal, the Inter-Tass press agency said. The two sides made no attempt to interfere, the news service said.

Four years of fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh have killed 1,500 to 2,000 people. The last week's fighting has been the most savage yet.

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The Times, 3 March 1992

Ethnic feuding spawns open conflict as former Soviet periphery crumbles

BODIES MARK SITE OF KARABAKH MASSACRE

From Anatol Lieven in Agdam

Scattered amid the withered grass and bushes along a small valley and across the hillside beyond are bodies of last Wednesday's massacre by Armenian forces of Azerbaijani refugees.

From that hill can be seen both the Armenian-controlled town Askeran and the outskirts of the Azerbaijani military headquarters of Agdam. Those who died very nearly made it to the safety of their own lines.

We landed at this spot by helicopter yesterday afternoon as the last troops of the Commonwealth of Independent States began pulling out. They left unhindered by the warring factions as General Boris Gromov, who oversaw the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, flew to Stepanakert to ease their departure.

A local truce was enforced to allow the Azerbaijanis to collect their dead and any refugees still hiding in the hills and forest. All the same, two attack helicopters circled continuously overhead, watching the nearby Armenian positions.

In all, 31 bodies could be counted at the scene. At least another 31 have been taken into Agdam over the past five days. These figures do not include civilians reported killed when the Armenians stormed the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly on Tuesday night. The figures also do not include the other as yet undiscovered bodies.

Ethnic feuding spawns open conflict as former Soviet periphery crumbles

Bodies mark site of Karabakh massacre

FROM ANATOL LIEVEN

in Moscow

SCATTERED amid the

withered grass and bushes

along a small valley and

across the hillside beyond

are the bodies of last Wednesday's

massacre by Armenian forces of

Azerbaijani refugees.

From that hill can be seen

both the Armenian-controlled

town Askeran and the outskirts

of the Azerbaijani military

headquarters of Agdam. Those

who died very nearly made it

to the safety of their own

lines.

We landed at this spot by

helicopter yesterday afternoon

as the last troops of the

Commonwealth of Independent

States began pulling out. They

left unhindered by the warring

factions as General Boris

Gromov, who oversaw the

Soviet withdrawal from

Afghanistan, flew to

Stepanakert to ease their

departure.

A local truce was enforced

to allow the Azerbaijanis to

collect their dead and any

refugees still hiding in the

hills and forest. All the

same, two attack helicopters

circled continuously

overhead, watching the

nearby Armenian positions.

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undiscovered bodies.



Zahid Jabarov, a survivor of the massacre, said he saw up to 200 people shot down at the point we visited, and refugees who came by different routes have also told of being shot at repeatedly and of leaving a trail of bodies along their path. Around the bodies we saw were scattered possessions, clothing and personnel documents. The bodies themselves have been preserved by the bitter cold which killed others as they hid in the hills and forest after the massacre. All are the bodies of ordinary people, dressed in the poor, ugly clothing of workers.

Of the 31 we saw, only one policeman and two apparent national volunteers were wearing uniform. All the rest were civilians, including eight women and three small children. Two groups, apparently families, had fallen together, the children cradled in the women's arms.

Several of them, including one small girl, had terrible head injuries: only her face was left. Survivors have told how they saw Armenians shooting them point blank as they lay on the ground.

The Guardian, 3 March 1992

ARMY LEAVES KARABAKH TO ITS KILLINGS

Corpses attest to massacre by Armenians, report Karl Waldron in Stepanakert and Brian Killen of Reuter in Agdam, Azerbaijan

The last soldiers of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Nagorno-Karabakh were pulling out of the Caucasian enclave last night as fresh evidence emerged that Armenian militants had carried out a massacre of Azerbaijani civilians.

The Russian news agency, Itar-Tass, said the 366th Armoured Division of the former Soviet army, had started its withdrawal, effectively removing the last buffer separating warring Armenians and Azeris. The division began leaving Stepanakert, the capital of the enclave, under the direction of General Boris Gromov, the man who oversaw the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. "Columns of equipment and personnel are being withdrawn with all types of combat support and cover. The opposing sides in Nagorno-Karabakh are not hindering their movement," Tass quoted the Transcaucasian military headquarters as saying.

Before the withdrawal, CIS soldiers and paratroopers armed with rapid-fire rifles had been deployed extensively around the city in defensive positions amid the rubble of shell-torn buildings. Tanks were also positioned around the perimeter of the city and in its central square, their turret guns pointing outwards in warning.

Armenia, which yesterday called for United Nations involvement to avert "further tragedy", continued to deny that its militants had killed 1,000 people in the Azeri-populated town of Khojali last week and massacred men, women and children fleeing the carnage across snow-covered mountain passes.

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skirts of Nagorno-Karabakh, said "When we began to pick up bodies, they [the Armenians] began firing at us. The bodies are lying there like flocks of sheep. Even the fascists did nothing like this."

Near Agdam a Reuter photographer, Frederique Lescage, saw two trucks filled with Azeri corpses.

"In the first one I counted 30 and it looked as though there were almost as many in the second. Some had their heads cut off and many had been burned. They were all men and a few had been wearing khaki uniforms," she said.

The evidence of the slaughter has now been seen, filmed and documented by independent observers. Dozens of people were also reported yesterday to have been killed in the Azerbaijani town of Shusha from Armenian artillery and rocket fire. Such actions do not augur well for

But dozens of corpses lent credence to Azeri reports of a massacre. Azeri officials and journalists who flew briefly to the region by helicopter brought back three dead children with the backs of their heads blown off. Shooting by Armenians, they said, had prevented them from retrieving more bodies.

"Women and children had been scalped," said Assad Faradzhev, an aide to Nagorno-Karabakh's Azeri governor. Rashid Mamedov, a militia leader from Agdam on the outskirts of Nagorno-Karabakh, said: "When we began to pick up bodies, they [the Armenians] began firing at us. The bodies are lying there like flocks of sheep. Even the fascists did nothing like this."

Near Agdam a Reuter photographer, Frederique Lengaigne, saw two trucks filled with Azeri corpses.

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The evidence of the slaughter has now been seen, filmed and documented by independent observers. Dozens of people were also reported yesterday to have been killed in the Azerbaijani town of Shusha from Armenian artillery and rocket fire. Such actions do not augur well for the Armenians in Stepanakert and Azerbaijan at large: acts of revenge are likely.

In the four years of fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 people have been killed. The past week's fighting has been the most savage.

A CIS military commander, Lieutenant-General Saryan Baneyev, told Russian television his men would smash any attempt by either side to hinder the pullout.

Armenia's president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, criticised the withdrawal. "This regiment, though not involved in military operations, was a stabilising factor. I think this measure is poorly thought through," he told parliament. "Taking this division out could further destabilise the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh."

Izvestiya, 4 March 1992, Wednesday, No. 53

BAKU REPORTS A TRAGEDY IN KHOJALY. YEREVAN REGARDS THE STORMING OF THE TOWN AS A MILITARY SUCCESS

Vasif Samedov, Sergey Taranov, Izvestiya

On 3 March Izvestiya received an appeal by Azerbaijani writers to colleagues from the former USSR dedicated to the recent (26 February) storming and capture by the Armenian side of the town of Khojaly in Nagorny Karabakh.

'... An entire town with 10,000 inhabitants has been destroyed,' the document says. 'Thousands upon thousands of people have perished, thousands of others have been wounded, have been left crippled for their whole lives, have been driven out of their homes which are no more ... If analogies have been drawn with Lidice, Khatyn, Songmi vis-à-vis the Azerbaijani towns razed by Armenian fighters, the Khojaly tragedy is for us comparable to Hiroshima. Yes, for Azerbaijan, with a population of seven million,

the utter destruction of a town with a population of 10,000 is as deep a wound as the destruction of Hiroshima with a population of 200,000 is for Japan with its population of many millions ... God forbid you should ever experience your own "Khojaly".'

No matter how emotional and 'unobjective' such a statement is, it cannot be ignored or left without further investigation. If an entire town with all its inhabitants has indeed been wiped off the face of the Earth then the war born of the interethnic conflict in Nagorno Karabakh has entered its most terrible stage - war for mutual destruction.

What did happen in Khojaly on 26 February?



Let us mention right away that it is impossible to find today unbiased, precise, absolutely trustworthy information about the events in Karabakh. Each of the opposing sides presents its own version and each has its own 'irrefutable' heart-felt arguments. There is no longer either a union centre which would have its spokesmen on the battlefield. One can hardly fully trust the assessments by the command of the CIS Armed Forces since it is accused of deploying the 366th Regiment which is still in Stepanakert (Khankendi). Nonetheless ...

Zaur Rustamzade, plenipotentiary of the Azerbaijani Republic in Moscow:

'According to preliminary information, around 1,000 people have died in Khojaly and almost 1,500 are missing – the majority are civilians of the town. Our greatest misfortune is that there is nobody now to count or even to give a decent burial to those killed on their native soil. Khojaly has been captured and razed by Armenian fighters. Perhaps the film shot by Azerbaijani and foreign journalists from a helicopter will clarify the situation. This film will be brought to Moscow on 4 March and we will show it to the Moscow press and the public.

'Alas, the destruction of the town came as no surprise to us. There are no doubts that the aim of the Armenian side is to drive Azerbaijanis out of Karabakh once and for all. As of today, Armenian fighters have captured 53 out of 54 settlements of the former autonomous region. Only the town of Shusha is still holding out. There is utter devastation in all the other villages in the hands of the enemy – the houses have been razed and their inhabitants killed.

'Generally speaking, a terrorist attack tends to follow talks about a truce. The storming of Khojaly is a kind of reaction to the meeting between the Azerbaijani and Armenian delegations in Moscow with the mediation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Now we can see what lies behind Armenia's "peace initiatives". Are talks that serve as a smokescreen really what is needed?'

Robert Arakilov, adviser to the permanent representative of the Armenian Republic in Moscow, said: 'The talk about the destruction of Khojaly is nothing other than a propaganda ploy by Azerbaijan. It is, in fact, not at all a town with a population of 10,000 but a small village a few kilometres from Stepanakert along the road to the other Armenian (in terms of population) town of Askeran.

'When military actions began, the Azerbaijani leaders well understood the strategic importance of Khojaly. The village, whose name did not figure in any serious directory (in actual fact Khojaly is not mentioned in the Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary of 1980 – Editor), was hastily awarded the status of town. Azerbaijani families from districts in the interior of the republic, as well as Meskhetian Turks driven out of Uzbekistan, began to arrive there.

'In Khojaly, one can have full control of Stepanakert airport and at the same time strafe the whole of Stepanakert with gunfire – which happened every day over the past few months. Azerbaijani special police squads and other armed formations deployed artillery. From Khojaly, they did spotting for the Grad missile launcher fire from Shusha.

The enemy also managed to blockade the airport after which we were not able to receive even medicines and provisions. This is why the leadership of the Nagornyy Karabakh Republic decided to eliminate that seat of banditry. Khojaly was indeed successfully stormed on the night of 26 February.

'How many civilians were there in Khojaly when the storming occurred?

'Practically none since the majority of them had left the town earlier due to the intensive combat operations. I repeat, Khojaly had become one of the war's base stations. The logic of the war itself dictated its capture. When the Armenian troops entered the town, the remaining civilians had to pass through a "corridor" between the warring parties. In keeping with the statement by the NKR government, 40 Meskheti Turk families were taken under guard. It was suggested to them that they should remain but they decided, voluntarily, to leave the town.

'Incidentally, shelling of Stepanakert has died down now. And this is a direct consequence of managing to drive the bandits out of Khojaly.

'Did soldiers and officers of the 366th Regiment engage in the battles for Khojaly?

'No, the town was taken only by Armenian self-defence forces.'

And here are further details of the events. They were announced at a briefing in Baku.

E. Mammadov, the chief of the executive authority of the town of Khojaly, is one of

the few surviving eyewitnesses to the tragedy. Twenty-two of his relatives, including his mother, perished during the barbaric extermination of civilians. This is what he told journalists:

'Road links with Khojaly were broken on 30 October 1991. From then on, links with the town were maintained only with the help of helicopters. Khojaly was without electricity from 2 January. Despite this, the town was holding out and fighting. We pinned our hopes on the help of the republic. We phoned Agdam every day and assurances were given every time: we will launch an operation tomorrow and break the blockade. Thus, the town's unarmed inhabitants were left facing the bandits one on one.

'On 25 February a report came in at 2030 that enemy tanks and



infantry fighting vehicles were taking up combat positions around the town. We informed everyone of this via the portable radio transmitter. I asked for helicopters to be sent in to evacuate the elderly, women and children. No help came ...

'Artillery bombardment lasting around two hours marked the start of the storming of the town,' E. Mammadov continues. 'Armenian fighters fired from tanks and armoured personnel carriers and they also fired Alazan rockets. We were blockaded on three sides. Only the Askeran direction was open. By the time the infantry joined in the attack, everything in Khojaly had already been destroyed. Many of its inhabitants perished. We defended ourselves in trenches until two o'clock in the morning. Unable to withstand the onslaught, the defenders and the townsfolk began to retreat. Having crossed the icy waters of the river, we retreated towards Ketyn mountain. A lot of people died along the way - in the forest where they froze to death. We walked until seven o'clock in the morning until we came out upon a field near the Armenian village of Nakhchivanik. Men with automatic rifles, machine guns and an armoured personnel carrier awaited us there. The mass annihilation began of unarmed people who fell under the hail of fire. Many women and children perished. Some people headed for the village of Gyulably and the Armenians took around 200 people hostage there.'

The statement made at the briefing by Atakishi Atakishiyev, the prosecutor of the town of Khojaly, highlights another aspect of the tragedy. Up until 25 February, the Armenian formations were not capable of taking the town, he said. As soon as they were joined by subunits, mainly of military hardware belonging to the 366th Regiment, they took advantage of this.

The statements by four soldiers who left the 366th Regiment also testify to this: Privates Yuriy Yakhovich, Aleksey Bondarev, Pavel Antipin and Pavel Zuyev. Although they left their unit before the Khojaly events, they cited numerous instances of the 366th Regiment's involvement in combat actions against the inhabitants of Azerbaijani villages. Aleksey Bondarev said that since the previous autumn the regiment's officers had been taking APCs out fully armed on so-called 'night watches'. They would come back 'empty' in the morning - all the shells had been spent.

They also named the regiment's battery commanders, Major Yeganyan and Captain Arutyunyan, who personally took part in the bombardment of Azerbaijani settlements. 'We saw with our own eyes our regiment shell the village of Kyarkidzhakhan,' A. Bondarev said. The soldiers said that a certain 'ideological work' was carried out on them. 'It was drummed into us that we were Christians and should fight against Muslims,' Yu. Yakhovich said. 'We were kept in inhuman conditions. We couldn't stand it all and had to leave the regiment and go over to Khojaly.'

THE REPUBLIC MEETS FAILURE ON THE KARABAKH FRONT

But scores a victory in diplomacy

Aydin Mehtiyev

РЕСПУБЛИКА ТЕРПИТ НЕУДАЧУ НА КАРАБАХСКОМ ФРОНТЕ,

но одерживает победу в дипломатии

Айдын Мехтиев

Азербайджан

ТРАГЕДИЯ, разыгравшаяся в ночь на 26 февраля в азербайджанском городе Ходжалы близ Ханкенди (Степанакерт), потрясла все население республики. 2 марта, в последний день объявленного указа президента общенационального траура, пресс-служба президента провела брифинг, на котором перед журналистами выступили очевидцы трагедии. Один из них - глава исполнительной власти г. Ходжалы Эльман Мамедов, чудом выживший из осажденного го-

рода. По его словам, этот населенный пункт с 6 тысячами жителей был отрезан от внешнего мира с 13 февраля, когда здесь применялись последние военные вертолеты с гуманитарной помощью.

Мэр Ходжалы сообщил, что по сей день нет никаких сведений о судьбе 200 семей - жителей уничтоженного города.

2 марта международное движение «За демократические реформы и права человека в Азербайджане» послало в дипломатические представительства зарубежных стран в Москве текст обращения «К народам мира», в котором говорится: «В ночь на 26 февраля 1992 года армянской национальной армией по участку 366-го полка СНГ был стел с (Окончание на 3-й стр.)

Azerbaijan

The whole population of the republic has been shaken by the tragedy which unfolded in the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly near Khankendi (Stepanakert) on the night of 26 February. Eyewitnesses of the tragedy spoke to journalists at a briefing held by the Press Service of the President on 2 March, the last day of the nationwide mourning period announced by presidential decree. Elman Mammadov, head of the executive authority of the town of Khojaly, who managed to escape from the beleaguered town by a miracle, was one of them. He said that the

settlement of 6,000 inhabitants had been cut off from the outside world from 13 February when the last military helicopter carrying humanitarian aid arrived here.

Khojaly's mayor said that to this day there is still no news about the fate of 200 families who lived in the destroyed town.

On 2 March, the international movement For Democratic Reforms and Human Rights in Azerbaijan submitted to foreign diplomatic missions in Moscow the text of an appeal 'To the Peoples of the World' which says: 'On the night of 26 February 1992, the town of Khojaly was wiped off the face of the Earth by the Armenian National Army with the involvement of the 366th CIS Regiment. One thousand, three hundred and twenty-four Azerbaijanis were killed that night. The attackers did not spare women, children or the elderly. Those fleeing in horror were machine-gunned at point blank range and crushed by tanks. This crime is comparable only to the actions of the fascists.' The document goes on to call for 'an understanding of the tragedy of a people which is being subjected to genocide on its native soil'.

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Meanwhile, the Social Democratic Party of the Federal Republic of Germany has accused Turkey of allegedly sending to Azerbaijan weapons which were delivered to Turkey under the present German-Turkish agreement 'On Military Aid' from the stock of the former GDR People's Army. However, the FRG government has denied this information and announced that Turkey is abiding by the commitment not to supply any weapons it receives to a third country without the agreement of the German side.

The New York Times, 5 March 1992

FORMER SOVIET TROOPS BLAMED IN ETHNIC STRIFE

MOSCOW, March 4 (AP)—Azerbaijan accused former Soviet troops today of joining with Armenian forces in killing Azerbaijanis trying to flee a besieged town in the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

At a news conference, officials played a videotape showing dozens of corpses. An Azerbaijani presidential spokesman, Rasim Agayev, said at least 1,000 people died in the attack last week at Khojaly.

Mr. Agayev said armored personnel carriers and tanks of the 366th Motorized Rifles, a force now under the control of the Commonwealth of Independent States that has been ordered to withdraw from the region, surrounded Khojaly on Feb. 25 and 26.

A spokesman for the commonwealth army, Col. Ivan Skrylnyk, denied Azerbaijan's allegations.

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The New York Times, 5 March 1992

ENCLAVE HORROR ECHOED IN A CAMERAMAN'S SOBS

Karabakh: Film is shown in Moscow as Azerbaijanis and Armenians again trade charges over Khojaly attack.

By Carey Goldberg, TIMES staff writer

MOSCOW—As the camera panned from sere winter weeds to the frozen corpse of a small child in a red snowsuit, then to a cluster of five dead women with bloodied, discolored faces, the cameraman's own sobs made up the soundtrack.

The horror of the scene overpowered him, Azerbaijan Television cameraman Chingiz Mustafayev admitted Wednesday at a Moscow news conference called to bring world attention to the deaths at Khojaly, the Nagorno-Karabakh town stormed by Armenian militants last week.

"A square with a radius of 500 meters was just scattered with corpses," Mustafayev said, describing what officials in Azerbaijan have termed a massacre.

Azerbaijani spokesmen say that as many as 1,000 people were killed and 300 taken hostage on the night of Feb. 25 when Khojaly was taken; Armenian officials in Nagorno-Karabakh say the Azerbaijani account "does not correspond to reality" and estimate that 80 Khojaly residents died.

The Nagorno-Karabakh Parliament's press center also says that Mustafayev's video was falsified; the corpses it shows were part of a general exchange of Armenian and Azerbaijani dead that occurred on Sunday, rather than in the aftermath of a single massacre, the press center says.

Whatever the exact death count, Khojaly clearly constitutes the latest tragedy in four years of internecine Azerbaijani-Armenian fighting over the mountainous enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. The warfare had already left more than 1,000 dead, wrecked the local economy and turned thousands of villagers into homeless refugees.

At Wednesday's news conference presenting Mustafayev's videotape along with eyewitness accounts and official comments, Azerbaijani presidential adviser Rasim Agayev also accused the last regiment of former Soviet soldiers left in Nagorno-Karabakh of participating in the assault on Khojaly.

"This crime was committed by the 366th Regiment of the Commonwealth of Independent States armed forces to frighten Azerbaijan out of its pursuit of a full-fledged national army," Agayev said. "This can be qualified as a war crime. This can be qualified as a genocide because only Azerbaijanis were killed."

Enclave Horror Echoed in a Cameraman's Sobs

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Times Staff Writer

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But Ivan Skrylink, the Commonwealth Defense Ministry spokesman, denied outright that the regiment, whose role is officially neutral, could have helped Armenian militants surround Khojaly and occupy it. He acknowledged, however, that deserters who have reportedly absconded with several armored vehicles could have participated in the battle.

The 368th, a motorized infantry regiment long caught helplessly between the two warring sides, was set to withdraw by land on Monday, but its departure has been blocked by fighting in the area. Its commanders announced Wednesday that its equipment would have to be airlifted to neighboring Georgia.

And that most of its personnel were already being flown out. Khojaly residents are convinced the regiment helped in the town's capture because, they told reporters, they were surrounded on three sides by at least 40 armored vehicles. They insist, the cameraman said, that the Armenian militants do not have nearly that number of armored vehicles.

The field of corpses that Mustafayev said he taped last Friday lies east of Khojaly, between the Armenian towns of Askeran and Nakhichevanik, on the escape route that Khojaly residents took toward the nearest Azerbaijan town, Agdam.

Oleg Aliev, a 40-year-old Khojaly bookkeeper who survived the assault, said a large group of people fleeing the fighting had just emerged from the forest into the field when at least two armored vehicles manned by Armenian fighters, apparently waiting in ambush, opened fire on them with machine guns. "They thought they had already reached a safe place," he said of his neighbors and relatives. "They were just a little way from Agdam. And then they were all shot."

Mustafayev said he had counted more than 100 bodies in the field. Many of the three dozen or so corpses shown in the tape were women and children, some with head wounds but others with no visible injuries. Much of their clothing was in disarray, as if they had been searched.

The cameraman said that a survivor had told him that militants seeking gold and money had put guns to the heads of those already wounded as they lay helplessly on the ground. They demanded their valuables and then shot them. That would explain the many point-blank head wounds, he said.

When Mustafayev returned to the town last Monday, he said he found two corpses with parts of their scalps removed and one dead woman with one side of her face cut away. He speculated that the corpses had been mutilated to intimidate opposition fighters, or perhaps that soldiers brought back body parts to their commanders to show they had been actively killing people.

Commonwealth television carried a small fragment of the tape, commenting that "it's a horrifying picture" and that the residents of Khojaly, formerly a town of about 7,000, had met a "tragic fate."

Armenian officials have insisted that Khojaly and the surrounding area had largely been cleared of civilians. They said the town was inhabited mainly by Azerbaijani fighters who used the few remaining local residents as human shields while employing the town as a base to rain down shells on the Armenian-populated capital of Stepanakert, since Khojaly was taken, they say, the shelling of Stepanakert has halted.

Reacting to the escalating fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, Russian President Boris N. Yeltsin dispatched special mediators to the region to try once again to break the four-year cycle of war in the disputed enclave.

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said of his neighbors and relatives. "They were just a little way from Agdam. And then they were all shot."

Mustafayev said he had counted more than 100 bodies in the field. Many of the three dozen or so corpses shown in the tape were women and children, some with head wounds but others with no visible injuries. Much of their clothing was in disarray, as if they had been searched.

The cameraman said that a survivor had told him that militants seeking gold and money had put guns to the heads of those already wounded as they lay helplessly on the ground. They demanded their valuables and then shot them. That would explain the many point-blank head wounds, he said.

When Mustafayev returned to the site again Monday, he said he found two corpses with part of their scalps removed and one dead woman with one side of her face cut away. He speculated that the corpses had been mutilated to intimidate opposition fighters, or perhaps that soldiers brought back body parts to their commanders to show they had been actively killing people.

Commonwealth television carried a small fragment of the tape, commenting that "it's a horrifying picture" and that the residents of Khojaly, formerly a town of about 7,000, had met a "tragic fate."

Armenian officials have insisted that Khojaly and the surrounding areas had largely been cleared of civilians. They said the town was inhabited mainly by Azerbaijani fighters who used the few remaining local residents as human shields while employing the town as a base to rain down shells on the Armenian-populated capital of Stepanakert; since Khojaly was taken, they say, the shelling of Stepanakert has halted.

Reacting to the escalating fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, Russian President Boris N. Yeltsin dispatched special mediators to the region to try once again to break the four-year cycle of war in the disputed enclave.

Izvestiya, 5 March 1992, Thursday, No. 54

NAGORNY KARABAKH: SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS OF THE CIS ARMY ARE FIGHTING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CONFLICT

Photo: ITAR-TASS specially for Izvestiya, Sergey Taranov, Izvestiya

The video footage shot by Azerbaijani documentary film makers testifies that women, children and the elderly were shot dead in Khojaly, that corpses were scalped.

Two video reports filmed by the cameraman, Chingiz Mustafayev, on 28 February and 2 March at the scene, it is reported, of the mass murder of civilians of the town of Khojaly by Armenian fighters, were shown in the permanent mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Moscow on 4 March.

The footage shows the corpses not of soldiers killed on the battlefield but of civilians. Dozens upon dozens of children aged from two to 15 shot (the majority at point blank range, in the head), women and the elderly. How the dead are lying testifies that they were killed in a cold-blooded and calculated way. There are no signs of struggle or flight. The commentary by the film maker says that some were killed individually, taken aside. Many were killed in whole families, all at once. Several wounds can be seen on some corpses, one of them unfailingly in the head – which means that the wounded were finished off.



The camera filmed several children whose ears had been cut off. The skin had been cut off the left side of the face of an elderly woman. Men had been scalped. There were corpses showing signs of evidently having been robbed.

'We visited the scene of the shootings for the first time on 28 February accompanied by two military helicopters,' Chingiz Mustafayev says. 'From the air we saw an area covering a radius of approximately 500 metres which was practically entirely strewn with dead bodies. The pilots were afraid to set down because the territory is controlled by Armenian fighters. But when we nonetheless did land and got out of the helicopter, shooting began. The policemen accompanying us were to load on the corpses to be delivered to relatives. They only managed to load four of the dead on to the helicopter. Moreover, we were all in real shock. Two of the lads passed out from seeing such a number of killed and mutilated people. A lot vomited ...'

'It was the same on 2 March when we arrived with foreign journalists. Many of the bodies were even more badly mutilated. Several days had been spent desecrating them ...'

Rasim Agayev, the press secretary of the president of Azerbaijan, also spoke at the press conference in the permanent mission:

'Even war, no matter how terrible it is, has its rules set down in the Geneva Convention,' Agayev said. 'For instance, defenceless civilians should not be killed during combat operations. However, the events in Nagorno Karabakh testify that the Armenian side has adopted the tactic of the mass extermination of civilians. Their corpses are still lying in the streets and destroyed houses of Khojaly.'

'We have irrefutable facts testifying that soldiers and officers of the 366th Regiment of the CIS Armed Forces took part in the crimes committed by Armenian fighters,' Agayev continues. 'They killed and looted in Khojaly after the town was stormed, which can be deemed a real war crime ...'

Rasim Agayev also rejected reports by the Armenian side about the alleged 'humane' treatment by Khojaly's occupiers of the Meskhetian Turk families. Eyewitnesses who managed to flee recount that Meskhetian Turks were killed along with Azerbaijanis.

The Azerbaijani president's press secretary drew the attention of the press to the continuing information blockade of the republic. Practically none of the mass media, apart from Komsomolskaya Pravda and Izvestiya, have reported on the Khojaly tragedy. Separate complaints were raised against the central television, which showed just a small part of what had managed to be filmed in Khojaly at the scene of the mass shootings.

On 3 March, the Supreme Soviet of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic disseminated via the Pro Armenia information centre its version of the events.

'... To avoid unnecessary casualties among the civilian population, the Armenian self-defence force brigades left a corridor for them to leave the combat operations' zone. However, soldiers of the National Army of Azerbaijan used this corridor and tried to break through using civilians as cover. Some civilians, around 200 inhabitants, including up to 40 Meskhetian Turk families, remained in the township (Khojaly – ed.). According



and there were no fatalities among civilians of Azerbaijani nationality in the township itself.' According to Pro Armenia, 30-40 soldiers of the Azerbaijani army died and over 100 were taken prisoner in the battle at Khojaly. As for the corpses of the civilians, the Azerbaijani army itself 'put' them there along the road from Khojaly to Agdam. Moreover, the head of the Internal Affairs Directorate said that the cold killed many of them.

On 3 March, O. Kazaryan, an Armenian MP, also gave approximately the same interpretation of the events. 'The desire to juxtapose two events is patently obvious - the anti-Armenian pogroms in Sumgait and the tragedy in Khojaly,' he stated. 'But this is a very tenuous parallel as Khojaly was taken as the result of a military operation to destroy enemy weapon emplacements. It was namely the Azerbaijani troops who prevented the civilian population from getting out of the encirclement unharmed.'

One doesn't need to be a prophet to foresee a sharp deterioration in the situation in Nagorny Karabakh and around it following the unprecedented number of casualties and fatalities resulting from the storming of the town of Khojaly.

On 3 March, President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan said that he considered the withdrawal of the 366th Regiment to be 'an ill-considered step'. Unless measures are

taken to their wishes, they were all handed over to the Azerbaijani side, unconditionally ... The chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the NKR has stated with regret that the hostages of Armenian nationality who were in Khojaly - 34 women and children - were also taken away by the retreating subunits of the National Army of Azerbaijan and their fate is yet unknown. The chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the NKR has set up a commission and a search group to determine the whereabouts of the missing NKR inhabitants of Armenian nationality and to identify them among the dead in Askeran district.'

The Pro Armenia agency also gave the point of view of the chief of the Internal Affairs Directorate of the NKR, who said: 'The combat operations were brief

taken to restore equilibrium to the region, the president of Armenia thinks it will be the start of a major war.

According to reports from Baku, neither the leadership of Azerbaijan nor the various political forces are inclined towards peace initiatives. A session of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Azerbaijan is to convene on 5 March at which what is most likely to be discussed are measures for the armed defence of state sovereignty and territorial integrity. But it seems that even now the warring sides have cast off once and for all any restraints on mutual cruelty.

An Mi-26 military helicopter belonging to the CIS Air Defence Forces was shot down on the border of Azerbaijan and Armenia on Tuesday evening. It was carrying women and children from Shaumyanov district of Nagorny Karabakh who had been left homeless and was attacked by a Mi-8 military coloured helicopter near Armenia. Then ground missiles were launched at the Mi-26 following which the helicopter caught fire and was downed near the Azerbaijani village of Seydilyar. Six people died. The rest - 31 passengers - were taken to Armenian hospitals by a rescue team.

Meanwhile, just as dramatic events are unfolding in Stepanakert (Khankendi). Vadim Belykh, an Izvestiya special correspondent, gave the following report by telephone and fax from Baku on 4 February:

'The 366th Regiment has not been able to withdraw from Nagorny Karabakh after all. It was blocked by a crowd of women and children who are convinced that Stepanakert will be destroyed once and for all and its inhabitants will be exterminated when the last CIS troops are withdrawn. The regiment's commanders are in talks with the Armenian inhabitants, which have so far been fruitless. There are many wounded amongst the servicemen. According to unverified information, two paratroopers from the incoming support echelon have been killed over the last 24 hours. Deserters from the 366th Regiment say that following mass desertions no more than 300-350 men (as opposed to the regulation 1,500) are left in the unit, and practically half the tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and trucks are in need of repair. In charge of the operation to withdraw the regiment from Nagorny Karabakh is Col.-Gen. Gromov, former commander of the 40th (Afghan) army, whose headquarters are located in Ganja.'

Vadim Belykh will go to Stepanakert soon if he can and then Izvestiya will have its own staff news from the theatre of military operations.

The Independent, 5 March 1992

Refugees and fresh graves confirm massacre by Armenians AZERIS HUNTED DOWN AND SHOT IN THE FOREST

From Helen Womack in Agdam, Azerbaijan

Refugees and fresh graves confirm massacre by Armenians

Azeris hunted down and shot in the forest

THE EXACT number of victims is still unclear, but there can be little doubt that Azeri civilians were massacred by Armenian fighters in the snowy mountains of Nagorno-Karabakh last week.

Refugees from the enclave town of Khojaly, sheltering in the Azeri border town of Agdam, gave largely consistent accounts of how their enemies attacked their homes on the night of 25 February, chased those who fled and shot them in the surrounding forests. Yesterday, I saw 75 freshly dug graves in the mosque where we arrived in Agdam late on Tuesday. I also saw women and children with bullet wounds in a makeshift hospital in a string of railway carriages at the station.

Khojaly, an Azeri settlement in the enclave mostly populated by Armenians, had a population of about 6,000. Rashid Mamedov, Commandant of Police in Agdam, said only about 500 escaped to his town. "So where are the rest?" Some might have taken prisoner, he said, or fled elsewhere. Many bodies were still lying in the mountains because the Azeris were short of helicopters to retrieve them. He believed more than 1,000 had perished, some of cold in temperatures as low as -10C.

Standing outside the Khojaly mosque, where women beat their breasts in anguish, a refugee, Rami Nasiru, described how residents at first thought the attack was no more than the routine shooting to which they had become accustomed in four years of conflict.

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But when they saw the Armenians with a convoy of armoured personnel carriers, they realised they could not hope to defend themselves with machine guns and grenades, and fled into the forests. In the small hours, the massacre started.

Mr. Nasiru, who believes his wife and two children were taken prisoner, repeated what many other refugees have said — that troops of the former Soviet army helped the Armenians to attack Khojaly. "It is not just my opinion, I saw it with my own eyes," he said.

So angry are the people in Agdam that it could be very risky for commonwealth forces due to withdraw from the enclave's capital of Stepanakert to drive through this town, as they must do to reach Russia. The 366th Motorised Infantry Regiment yesterday seemed to have postponed its planned pull-out. Commonwealth forces say they had to attack Khojaly because it was used as a base to attack Stepanakert.

Woman, many of whom had followed Azeri tradition and scratched their cheeks to give the impression of tears of blood, knelt at the graves, producing a high-pitched ritual wailing. Graves decorated with dolls were those of young men who were due to be married. A middle-aged man stood over the grave of his nephew, Abulfat Aliev: born 1963, died February 1992. "He went back twice into the forest to save women and children. The third time he got killed himself. Write the truth," the man said, expressing a common view that the Western Press has favoured Christian Armenia and been unfair to Muslim Azerbaijan.

The mosque and graveyard were harrowing enough, but worse were the railway carriages with the wounded. Dr Eldar Sirajev, from Baku, said 256 people had been treated since 26 February. Nubar Dunimalieva lay on her stomach with bullet entry and exit wounds in her back. She had been in the forest with her four children and elderly mother. Two children had disappeared, but the other three escaped with her. They were lucky in that they were shot close to Azeri-held territory and managed to crawl to soldiers from their own side.

Another surgeon, Satar Jagoubov from Baku University, appealed for antibiotics. Before Khojaly he had believed in the possibility of peace, but now the only solution was to clear Nagorno-Karabakh of Armenians, he said. "I cannot bear to see an Armenian any more." The urge for vengeance, even among people as civilised as Dr Jagoubov, bodes ill for the chances of settling this conflict.

On the way back, the fighters apparently decided to unnerve us by driving us into a cemetery whence they reconnoitered for Armenian snipers in the nearby fields. Seeing my fear, one of them said: "Are you scared? Now you now how our women feel."

A team sent to the region by the medical aid organisation Medecins sans Frontieres said yesterday that up to 35,000 Azeri civilians were heading towards Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, to escape Agdam, which is under fire by Armenian fighters.

In Baku, the powerful Popular Front opposition yesterday called for President Ayaz Mutalibov's resignation after the massacre. Azerbaijan's parliament opens an emergency session today, where President Mutalibov is likely to face increased pressure to quit.

In the Armenian capital, Yerevan, survivors from an Armenian helicopter downed in Azerbaijan said it came under fire before plunging to the ground in flames, killing at least 14 people.

Trud, Friday, 6 March 1992, No. 44

THE KARABAKH TRAGEDY

Over one thousand killed, including women, children and the elderly, hundreds wounded, missing in action, taken hostage — this is the toll of the capture of the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly by Armenian armed formations. This was announced at a press conference for local and foreign correspondents organised in Baku by the Press Service of the President of Azerbaijan.

E. Mammadov, the chief of the executive authority of Khojaly district, called what had happened, a tragedy of a scale hitherto unparalleled in all the four years of the conflict. He said that the town had been completely blockaded from 20 January. The last link, by air, with the outside world was broken after a civilian helicopter was hit and brought down in the sky near Shusha. Therefore, even knowing about the imminent storming of the town, its defenders could not evacuate even the women and children. After Khojaly had been subjected to several hours of mass bombardment, the survivors tried to break out of the ruined and blazing town. But the fighters fired point-blank at the columns of people, sparing neither women nor children. Fewer than 2,000 made it to Agdam. Besides those killed and wounded, there are many frost-bite victims and many who were subjected to finely-honed torture and mutilated.

Elmir Kafarov, the chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the republic, tendered his resignation on health grounds at an emergency session of the parliament of Azerbaijan which opened in Baku yesterday. The deputies accepted the parliamentary chief's resignation. Y. Mammadov, the dean of the Medical University of Azerbaijan, and a corresponding member of the republic's Academy of Sciences, was elected the new parliamentary chairman.



The deputies are to discuss the situation which has arisen in the mountainous part of Karabakh as well as the social and political situation in the republic.

T. Kasumova. Baku

The bombardment by Armenian armed formations of the Azerbaijani village of Sirkhavend which began on the evening of the previous day ended only yesterday morning. According to information from the Directorate of Internal Affairs for the Karabakh Zone, around 10 people were killed following the bombardment of this settlement and there are wounded. Armenian formations' attempt to capture Sirkhavend yesterday morning, with the support of armoured equipment, failed.

The Independent, 6 March 1992

ARMENIANS 'HOLD AZERIS HOSTAGE'

From Helen Womack, in Agdam, Azerbaijan

Azeri officials say as many as 600 civilians may have survived last week's massacre in the mountains of Nagorny Karabakh and are trying to negotiate their release from Armenian captivity.

Yesterday the prosecutor in the Azeri border town of Agdam interviewed a woman who was among five Azeri hostages swapped on Wednesday for the same number of Armenians held in custody here. His office was trying to arrange further exchanges yesterday.

Durdana Agayeva, 20, a telephonist from the Azeri settlement of Khojali which was captured by the Armenians last week, said she had been held in a cell with about 30 other women in the police station of the Armenian town of Askeran. She said she had been taken there when Armenian fighters, who she says shot scores if not hundreds of her neighbours from Khojali, found her hiding in the woods around the town.

Armenians 'hold Azeris hostage'

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Azeris at Agdam's cemetery may be those killed in the Armenian assault on Khojali in Nagorny Karabakh last week.

Photograph: Lee Hong Sheng/AP

Armenians say as many as 600 civilians may have survived last week's massacre in the mountains of Nagorny Karabakh and are trying to negotiate their release from Armenian captivity.

Her brother, two other girls and a child were released with her yesterday, but they were 100 seriously hurt to be questioned immediately and were sent to hospital in Baku. Miss Agaeva, who wore a warm black coat given to her since she arrived in Agdam, hobbled into the prosecutor's office with a bullet wound in her foot.

The prosecutor, Zahid Tagiev, said the five had been exchanged for Armenians in jail for ordinary crimes they committed on Azeri territory before the present conflict. He denied reports that the Azeris were planning to recover more of their people – and the bodies of the dead still scattered on the mountainside – by paying the Armenians in petrol, although he admitted that individuals had got relatives back this way in the past.

Since the fall of Khojali, Armenians virtually control Nagorny Karabakh with the exception of the town of Shusha.

Emotional crowds in Agdam say the Armenians want the hostages so they can force them to lie down in the road to stop a convoy of former Soviet forces from leaving Stepanakert. But the prosecutor said he had no evidence of this and he did not believe the Armenians would be so inhuman as to do it.

Miss Agaeva said she and others held in Askeran had been beaten and the Armenians had subjected her to mental torture. "One said he was going to cut off my head. He was not joking. But then another calmed him down and said it was better to swap me. I refused to go unless Elshat [her brother] came with me."

The prosecutor showed an Azeri television film of the dead from Khojali scattered all over the mountains. The Muslim Azeris, who accuse the Western Press of having favoured Christian Armenia in the four-year conflict, want reporters to tell the world that they have suffered genocide. This is an exaggeration, but there is no doubt the Armenians killed considerable numbers of helpless women, children and elderly people fleeing Khojali. The prosecutor said 200 bodies had been recovered and up to 1,500 might still be lying out on the frozen mountains.

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia has announced new plans to mediate in the conflict, but there seems little chance he or any other outsiders can achieve anything. After Khojali, the Azeris want revenge. Even if the politicians in Baku urge restraint, the fighting men on the ground will almost certainly ignore them – men such as the former sculptor, Jagub Rzaev, the bearded commander of an autonomous defence unit called the Hawks of Karabakh. He lost his son at Khojali but said that was the normal price of war. What enraged him was seeing women and children killed by the Armenians. They would receive an answer to that soon. "The Armenians know me and they know I'll never forgive them," he said. "As long as I live they will never live in Karabakh."

■ MOSCOW – At least 57 people were killed in clashes between Azeri and Armenian forces yesterday in Nagorny Karabakh, according to a toll compiled by several news agencies, AFP reports.

The Russian Information Agency said 25 people were killed in a fierce battle for control of the Armenian settlement of Kazanchi, while Interfax reported 15 Armenians and seven Azeris were killed during fighting in the village of Mardakert, and 10 died in an Armenian rocket attack.

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Pravda, 7 March 1992, Saturday, No. 49

THE KARABAKH KNOT "HOT SPOTS" STRETCH TO THE FRONT LINE

The Khojaly Tragedy



Elman Mammadov, the head of the town's executive authority, lost 22 of his relatives within a few hours, amongst them his mother. Khojaly, which was besieged, first of all suffered mass artillery bombardment, he recounts. Alazan missiles, weapons from tanks, armoured personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles were being fired at the town from all four sides continuously. Under the cover of armoured hardware, infantry fighters launched their assault when everything around lay in ruins, scorched, after artillery had first pounded away for many hours to destroy the town. The few surviving defenders of the town and civilians retreated to the forest, fording an icy river. 'All night long our column including women, children, the elderly and the wounded made its way through the

forest. By morning we were out of the forest – the fields of the Armenian village of Nakhchivanik lay ahead. It was here that we were met by point-blank fire from machine guns and automatic weapons. They fired mercilessly at the exhausted live targets. A good many of my compatriots, friends and relatives fell here. Seven of my comrades and I, armed with automatic weapons, tried to give them cover. But to no avail. Cut off on all sides, we lay in the snow in the gorge for 12 hours, unable even to raise our heads due to the shooting.'

Atakishi Atakishiyev, the prosecutor of the town of Khojaly: 'The town has been wiped off the face of the Earth. The help on which we pinned our hopes for so long did not come after all.'

Here is what privates of the 366th Regiment Yuri Yakhnovich, Aleksey Bogdanov, Pavel Antipin and Pavel Zuyev, a group of soldiers who left the regiment because they did not want to participate in the interethnic conflict, have to say. Aleksey Bogdanov: 'Many of the regiment's officers, practically all the warrant officers and some of the soldiers are Armenians. They would take out from the unit at night armoured personnel carriers which were fully kitted out and they would come back "empty" in the morning.'

The frontiers of the war are spreading and it is growing in scale.

Zaur Kadymbekov
(Pravda correspondent)

The Sunday Times, 8 March, 1992

MORGUES FILL AS AZERIS HEAD FOR ALL-OUT WAR

Thomas Goltz, the first to report the massacre by Armenian soldiers in the worst violence since the breakup of the Soviet Union, reports from Agdam

Khojaly used to be a barren town, with empty shops and treeless dirt roads. Yet it was still home to thousands of people who, in happier times, tended fields and flocks of geese. Last week it was wiped off the map.

The final toll of the massacre, in which Armenians were accused of shooting and bayoneting fleeing Azeris, may never be known; the area in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, in far-flung Azerbaijan, has been sealed off as the territorial dispute develops into all-out war.

Yesterday, hundreds of Azeri troops backed by nine tanks and 20 armoured personnel carriers were said to have surged into the enclave, claimed by Armenia and Azerbaijan, to launch a fierce attack in which 200 Armenians were reported to have been killed. Armenia later claimed to have blunted the offensive, which was launched on Friday night with an attack on the town Askeran, near the Nagorno-Karabakh capital of Stepanakert.

The offensive came after the resignation of Ayaz Mutalibov, Azerbaijan's president, who had resisted pressure to step up attacks against Armenians. It had all the hallmarks of revenge.

As sickening reports trickled in to the Azerbaijani border town of Agdam, and the bodies piled up in the morgues, there was little doubt that Khojaly and the stark foothills and gullies around it had been the site of the most terrible massacre since the Soviet Union broke apart.

Morgues fill as Azeris head for all-out war

REPORTERS used to be in the town of Khojaly, with its empty shops and treeless dirt roads, for a reason. It was the site of the worst violence since the breakup of the Soviet Union, reports from Agdam

Thomas Goltz, the first to report the massacre by Armenian soldiers in the worst violence since the breakup of the Soviet Union, reports from Agdam

Khojaly used to be a barren town, with empty shops and treeless dirt roads. Yet it was still home to thousands of people who, in happier times, tended fields and flocks of geese. Last week it was wiped off the map.

The final toll of the massacre, in which Armenians were accused of shooting and bayoneting fleeing Azeris, may never be known; the area in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, in far-flung Azerbaijan, has been sealed off as the territorial dispute develops into all-out war.

Yesterday, hundreds of Azeri troops backed by nine tanks and 20 armoured personnel carriers were said to have surged into the enclave, claimed by Armenia and Azerbaijan, to launch a fierce attack in which 200 Armenians were reported to have been killed. Armenia later claimed to have blunted the offensive, which was launched on Friday night with an attack on the town Askeran, near the Nagorno-Karabakh capital of Stepanakert.

The offensive came after the resignation of Ayaz Mutalibov, Azerbaijan's president, who had resisted pressure to step up attacks against Armenians. It had all the hallmarks of revenge.

As sickening reports trickled in to the Azerbaijani border town of Agdam, and the bodies piled up in the morgues, there was little doubt that Khojaly and the stark foothills and gullies around it had been the site of the most terrible massacre since the Soviet Union broke apart.



Left: Armenian soldiers massacre hundreds of fleeing families. Right: Azeri soldiers in the town of Khojaly, near the Nagorno-Karabakh capital of Stepanakert. The town was wiped off the map last week.

Just days before the assault, Khojaly knew it was doomed. The town had already been virtually cut off from the outside world, and the inhabitants predicted a bloodbath as Armenian forces advanced against Azerbaijani towns in the mainly Armenian enclave.

The only way in was by helicopter, an appallingly dangerous journey: 22 helicopters had been hit by fire from the ground in November and December, although, miraculously, only one had been shot down.

I was the last Westerner to visit Khojaly. That was in January and people were predicting their fate with grim resignation. Zumrut Ezoya, a mother of four on board the helicopter that ferried us into the town, called her community "sitting ducks, ready to get shot". She and her family were among the victims of the massacre on February 26.

The town had become immobilised by tension. People stood in small groups on the streets, muttering furtively to each other and waiting for what they regarded as the inevitable. At night, they huddled in their candlelit houses — electricity was cut off long ago — listening to the gunfire as the small garrison struggled to hold the outskirts against Armenian militiamen.

"The Armenians have taken all the outlying villages, one by one, and the government does nothing," Balakisi Sakikov, 55, a father of five, said. "Next they will drive us out or kill us all," said Dilbar, his wife. The couple, their three sons and two daughters were killed in the assault, as were many other people I had spoken to.

Some had already fled the town on the precarious helicopter flight — the road having been cut off — but then returned to Khojaly because the government in Baku, the Azerbaijani capital, gave no succour to refugees. Better to die in Karabakh than beg in the streets, they said. Then the helicopter link was severed, too.

The town had learnt from Armenian prisoners that an attack was coming. "We begged Baku to open up the air corridor and at least get the women and children out," said Elman Mahmudov, the mayor and one of the survivors. "The government did nothing. We were utterly sold out."

On February 25, the gunfire became louder. The Armenians had broken through. "They opened their barrage at about 8.30pm, attacking from three sides about two hours later," said Mahmudov. "They wanted us to run the gauntlet. We had no choice."

A group of Azeris took up positions to fight the attackers while the mayor and a large group of civilians were led eastwards by other Azerbaijani militiamen to safety. "By dawn we had managed to work our way through a wooded area and had entered an area filled with brush," said the mayor.

"It was close to the Armenian lines we knew we would have to cross. There was a road, and the first units of the column ran across. Then all hell broke loose. Bullets were raining down on us from all sides. We had just entered their trap."

The Azeri defenders were picked off one by one. Survivors say that Armenian forces then began a pitiless slaughter, firing at anything moved in the gullies. A video taken by an Azeri cameraman, wailing and crying as he filmed body after body, showed a grisly trail of death leading towards higher, forested ground where the villagers had sought refuge from the Armenians.

"The Armenians just shot and shot and shot," said Omer Veyselov, 55, lying in hospital in Agdam with shrapnel wounds. "I saw my wife and daughter fall right by me."

People wandered through the hospital corridors looking for news of the loved ones. Some vented their fury on foreigners: "Where is my daughter, where is my son?" wailed a mother. "Raped. Butchered. Lost."

Azerbaijan has said as many as 1,000 refugees were killed as they tried to flee. The Armenians have denied this, saying the civilians were caught in "crossfire". The killings unleashed a wave of fierce nationalist anger in Azerbaijan, leading to the president's resignation.

His removal prompted expectations of a tougher approach, apparently borne out by yesterday's fresh Azerbaijani offensive. Thousands of troops were reported to have advanced on Armenian-populated villages in the enclave. "The situation is very difficult," said Vazgen Sarkisyan, Armenia's minister of defence. "The Armenians don't have tanks or heavy weapons. But the Azeris do."

The Independent, 8 March 1992

KARABAKH FALLS PREY TO REVENGE

Helen Womack confronts the evidence of a massacre on her arrival in Agdam

"WHEN Armenians get killed you simply report it. When our people die you say they were 'allegedly' killed." This is an Azeri soldier speaking. He was showing Western reporters the bodies of civilian refugees in a mosque in Agdam. They were slaughtered by Armenian guerrillas when they took the town of Khojaly on 25 February. "You come here and show sympathy but we know you will go away and write something different," the soldier said.

The Muslim Azeris are convinced the West favours Christian Armenia in the four-year war over the mountain enclave of Nagorny Karabakh. Armenians are equally adamant that they are misrepresented. It is a mine-field for outsiders.

Just before I arrived at the Azeri border town of Agdam on Tuesday, Armenian officials denied that civilian refugees had been murdered after the fight for Khojaly. They implied the Azeris were not only exaggerating the death toll by claiming more than 1,000 killed but were staging a show to make battle deaths look like a massacre. I did not know what to believe.

The night I got to Agdam I was taken to the mosque where the bodies were. They were hideously mutilated, deliberately said the Azeris. Why only four? I asked the soldier. Because relatives had already buried scores of others. Hundreds more corpses were still lying in the mountains, he said. The four bodies had not been claimed, perhaps because their relatives also died.

Each day brings more evidence that innocent people are being killed; they are not just caught in the crossfire. I have little doubt that on this occasion, two weeks ago, the Azeris

Karabakh falls prey to revenge

Helen Womack confronts the evidence of a massacre on her arrival in Agdam

When I arrived in Agdam, the Azeri border town, I was taken to the mosque where the bodies of civilian refugees had been murdered after the fight for Khojaly. They were hideously mutilated, deliberately said the Azeris. Why only four? I asked the soldier. Because relatives had already buried scores of others. Hundreds more corpses were still lying in the mountains, he said. The four bodies had not been claimed, perhaps because their relatives also died.



Left: Helen Womack confronts the evidence of a massacre on her arrival in Agdam. Right: A body lies on the ground in Agdam.

were the victims of Armenian brutality. In the past it has been the other way round. So much hatred has accumulated on both sides that the future seems to hold only endless revenge and counter-revenge.

Early on Wednesday a large crowd gathered outside Agdam's mosque; some people were survivors from Khojaly, some were relatives, desperate because they said Armenians were shooting at Azeris trying to recover the dead from the hills. The chief of police, Colonel Rashid Mamedov, said only about 500 Khojaly residents reached Agdam safely.

The accounts of the slaughter were consistent; these were simple people. They described how the Armenians surprised them with the heaviest attack on the town so far, how they realised they could not defend themselves and fled at about midnight into the surrounding woods, how a column of refugees tried to walk down the Askeran Gap to Agdam and how in the small hours of the morning Armenian fighters trapped them there and fired indiscriminately on women, children and old men. Many of those who did not die by the bullet froze to death on the mountainsides.

Ramiz Nasiru, a shoemaker who believes his wife and two children were captured alive, said he saw Russians from the former Soviet army supporting the Armenians with armoured personnel carriers. Other survivors spoke of Russian involvement.

Last year the Armenians accused Soviet Interior Ministry troops of joining Azeri raids on their villages. At that point it seemed as if Mikhail Gorbachev had come down on the side of Azerbaijan in the fight for the disputed enclave. The Commonwealth of Independent States, which is now withdrawing its remaining forces from Nagorny Karabakh, says it was always neutral in the conflict. I think it is possible that some Russian officers, facing a future of uncertainty back home, are helping fellow Christian Armenians as mercenaries.

The crowd outside the mosque was swelled by hundreds of people from all over Azerbaijan who had come to arrange funerals for their relatives. They were distraught because the bodies had still not been retrieved. Agdam's judge, Adil Qasimov, said about 200 bodies had been brought down from the mountains but he believed as many as 1,500 bodies were still up there. A further 600 people from Khojaly might be held captive by the Armenians.

At Agdam railway station, a passenger train was turned into a makeshift clinic after the town's hospital was damaged by artillery fire in an earlier battle with Armenians. Since the assault on Khojaly, 256 patients had passed through the train's doors. Nubar Duniamaliev, 43, was still there. She described how she had crawled to the safety of Azeri lines with a bullet in her back. Two of her children had escaped with her, two were missing. Sayale Zenalova, 60, lifted her skirt to show a bullet wound in her thigh. Her daughter Valide was with her, also wounded in the leg. Sayale said two of her five sons had been shot dead before her eyes, the others were missing.

The doctor on the train, Eldar Sirazhev, said a terrible tragedy had taken place but the world was silent. "The West has always supported the Armenian side because they have a large, eloquent diaspora," he declared.

Agasy Babaoghlu, a journalist and one of the few Azeris I met who was prepared to admit Armenians were suffering too, hoped that with "imperialist" Soviet forces out of the

way and a democratically elected government in Baku, Azeri and Armenian leaders might be able to compromise over Nagorny Karabakh. But it is more likely that a new government in Azerbaijan will press on with the fight for Nagorny Karabakh which Azeris say was theirs for centuries and which Armenians say they lost as a result of boundary changes made by Lenin.

"We will forgive the Armenians only when they get out of Karabakh," said Yagub Rzaev, the grey-bearded commander of the autonomous defence unit "Hawks of Karabakh". And indeed yesterday it seemed that the Azeris were already taking their revenge for what happened at Khojaly. Armenia said 200 of its fighters had been killed in a new thrust by the enemy into the disputed enclave.

CRISIS IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Sir, — To enable your readers to have a more objective assessment of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh the following points should also be undelined:

The fact of this matter is that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of the territory of Azerbaijan. The territorial claims by the Armenians over that region and the attempts to change the status quo by the Armenians is the main cause of the conflict. Azerbaijan is entitled to assume the public order in this particular region and the local Armenians should accept this prerequisite without objection, let alone to challenge the constitutional authority by force and terrorism.

The Azeris living in the Nagorno-Karabakh region have been subjected to continuous threats and attacks by the Armenians whose aim is to drive the Azeri people away from their homeland. As a result thousands of Azeris have been forced to flee their houses and villages. The Armenian militia last week brutally massacred about 1,000 Azeri civilians, killing indiscriminately children, women and the elderly. This massacre should be openly and strongly condemned by all.

On the other hand, as you rightly pointed out in your editorial of March 9th, involvement of the third parties in the conflict by taking sides with either of the parties will aggravate the situation further.

All questions related to Nagorno-Karabakh should be settled through negotiation between the Azeris and the Armenians, without any outside intervention, on the basis that boundaries can be modified only by the countries concerned and that the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh should fully enjoy their human rights. — Yours, etc.,

Aydin Durusoy
Counsellor, Turkish Embassy
60 Merrion Road, Dublin 4

CRISIS IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

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AYDIN DURUSOY,
Counsellor,
Turkish Embassy
Trin Road,
4

NAGORNY KARABAKH: THE PLAIN HORROR OF WAR

Vadim Belykh, *Izvestiya*

TO THE OFFENSIVE – BY BUS

Crammed full of men armed to the teeth, the bus rattled as it sped through the half-empty streets of Agdam. It flashed its indicators from time to time and then the passengers holding Kalashnikovs shouted out slogans in one voice. Somewhere up ahead exchanges of fire burst out then died down and explosions thundered – this was day two of the offensive by Azerbaijani military forces against the Armenian village of Askeran and the volunteer militia brigade, in its utterly peaceful carriage, was rushing to join the attackers.

Squashed between the butt of somebody's gun and a steel handrail, I couldn't help being suspended over the driver, Yusif Badirov, who without slowing down, showed me a crumpled photograph:

Нагорный Карабах: ОБЫКНОВЕННЫЙ УЖАС ВОЙНЫ

[illegible][illegible]

'This is my brother, Tofik. He fought in the people's army here. Practically nobody survived from their mortar battery. Ten men are missing in action. I have come from Baku and I want to find my brother – dead or alive. I was in battle yesterday. Though they gave me only grenades, but I have a submachine gun today ...'

Incidentally, the volunteer militia didn't get to join the battle that day. The bus braked at the approach to the positions and the order was given to suspend the offensive.

The exchanges of fire began to die down and only the Grad hidden in a hollow stubbornly launched its missiles from time to time which screamed towards the hills where the roofs of the distant village could be seen.

Another day in the Karabakh war had come to an end and the sides could already count their losses – the killed, the wounded and the prisoners. Askeran was not taken after all. With the support of infantry fighting vehicles and armoured personnel carriers, the Azerbaijanis only managed to put down firing positions on the approaches to it as well as to destroy two small Armenian villages – Nakhchivanik and Khanabad.

The operation, which was designed to revenge Khojaly, failed.

NO WARMING HANDS OVER THE FIRE

People assemble at the branch of the Agdam Popular Front from morning every day. They have come here from all over Azerbaijan for the corpses of their relatives who died. Only a few are lucky. Most of those killed are in places which are in the hands of Armenian formations today. They are mostly victims of the Khojaly tragedy. Quite a lot has been said about the bloody storming of the little town near Stepanakert (Khankendi) but we will not find out soon what really did happen there on that terrible February night. Only ever new eyewitness accounts are helping in some way to reconstruct the events.

'On 26 February, I had taken wounded out of Stepanakert and was returning through the Askeran Gates,' Major Leonid Kravets, deputy commander of the helicopter squadron, says. 'Some bright patches below caught my eye. I went in lower and my flight engineer shouted: "Look! There are women and children!" And I myself had already caught sight of around 200 killed, scattered around the slope, and men with guns were walking amongst them ... We flew later and tried to gather up the corpses. A local militia captain was with us. I have forgotten his name. He found there his four-year-old son whose skull had been smashed and he went out of his mind. Another child we managed to pick up, before they began firing at us, was headless. I saw the mutilated corpses of women, children and the elderly everywhere ...'

They are thought to be refugees from Khojaly. An ambush was waiting for them around 800 metres from the frontline Azerbaijani posts. Only a little girl managed to survive by a miracle ...

Unbridled looting and slaughter were already under way in the captured town then. They broke into Murvat Mammadova's at three o'clock in the morning. By that time her husband had been seriously wounded on the defence line and two of her elder sons had

been taken prisoner. She was dragged out from under the bed with three small children and they killed a neighbour and her daughter in front of her and then they started to torture her, demanding that she should hand over money and valuables to them. Later they were taken hostage. Then they were released and suffered the terrible fate of refugees: homelessness, poverty, endless waiting for any news of relatives taken prisoner ... Such fates are innumerable. The Azerbaijanis put the number of their dead in Khojaly at roughly 1,500 in total. Mostly civilians, a further 700 are listed as hostages. I am a witness: refugees were heading for Agdam even on the twelfth day after Khojaly was stormed – frostbitten, looking like skeletons, bewildered ...

Nevertheless, there is something strange here. The Armenian side gave a warning about the impending attack a month beforehand but the Azerbaijani side did nothing to evacuate civilians from the town. The military operation to break the blockade of the besieged township kept being postponed. No attempts were made to evacuate the civilians by helicopter. Fighters from the Azerbaijani brigades defending Khojaly, who survived by a miracle, recount that they stopped receiving food, medicines and munitions long before the bloody events took place. And that night they had to meet practically empty-handed the enemy who was attacking under the cover of fire from armoured equipment. Intentionally or not, the terrible outcome was being prepared on both sides. And hundreds of innocent people became hostages in this game ...

A HERO BY THE GRACE OF GOD

Shell fire rumbled rather close by again.

'The twenty-seventh, I think?' Rustam Gadzhiyev, a member of the board of the Agdam branch of the Azerbaijani Popular Front, said, throwing me a questioning look.

It was evening and we were sitting on the first storey of the House of Children's Arts which had been turned today into something mid-way between a headquarters, a military depot and a barracks and in between our snatches of conversation we tried to count the bursts of the missiles falling on the town in the darkness. Generally speaking, Agdam is being shelled methodically and intermittently. But all around the clock. Mainly by Alazan and Kristall rockets. In peace time they were used to chase away clouds which threatened to bring down hailstones. Today, both sides are successfully using these rockets to destroy each other. Their killing and destructive power is small but the psychological pressure they impose is more terrible. Nobody in Agdam is safe from being killed at any moment by a blast or by a Kristall rocket falling on his house and destroying the simple property which he has accumulated over the years.

Everybody here in Agdam is a player in a great and terrible lottery: will he be lucky or unlucky ...

'Believe me, we could have helped the people of Khojaly,' Rustam argues. 'We had the forces and the opportunities. But the leadership of the republic wanted to show the

people that we did not have the forces and to call upon the CIS army for help, at the same time putting down the opposition with the help of this army.'

Time will tell whether this is the case or not. Although dissatisfaction with the actions of the national armed forces is growing in Azerbaijan. Against all expectations, after the withdrawal of the CIS troops temporarily stationed in Nagornyy Karabakh, the Armenians not only repulsed all the attacks by their enemies but also captured and destroyed the majority of the 54 Azerbaijani villages and towns in the former autonomous republic. Once-peaceful Agdam became a frontline town. According to comments, the Armenian detachments are well-armed, disciplined and well-trained. They use cunning ambushes, snipers and competent field engineers.

Their opponents have nothing in particular to boast about. Azerbaijani police subunits, battalions of the people's army and armed detachments of the Popular Front are operating on the Agdam front. All these various troops have armoured personnel carriers, tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, artillery and are formally under a single command. In actual fact, any leader of a dozen men with submachine guns prefers to act as he himself sees fit, paying little heed to orders from above. The town is full of men in pretty dappled uniforms, with submachine guns in their hands and grenades sticking out of every pocket who nonetheless have nothing in common with the military, other than looking good ...

TO THE FRONT BY TAXI

A new morning in the besieged town of Agdam began with another order by Col. Mammadov, the town commandant: 'Thirty days arrest for attempting to take a correspondent to combat positions.' They explained to me later that this toughness was due, in the first instance, to concern about journalists' safety and, second, 'to 80 per cent of their ranks being agents of various special services whose aim is not to prepare reports but to spy for Moscow and Yerevan'.

But this order, like any other, could not be carried out either. By a happy coincidence, reporters (myself included) often managed to get to the frontline positions by taxi and in passing vehicles. And to see there, with amazement, instead of terrible fortifications ... untrained soldiers sitting right in the snow, hiding behind stones and in ditches. Soldiers unable to (or not wanting to!) dig themselves even a simple trench to somehow shelter from bullets flying from the other side ... Practically every day sees more and more shocking results of this 'tactic'.

Azerbaijani servicemen opened fire right away when, from the post at Karagaya, they saw two Armenian infantry fighting vehicles coming towards Askeran from the village of Nakhchivanik. It was a good thing that their armoured personnel carriers were standing nearby. They failed to hit them and the armoured vehicles which they had shot at managed to hide behind a pig farm. The lull in the crossfire did not last long. First of all a helicopter circled around the area of the skirmish, then a vehicle which broke cover hit the post with the first missile it fired: two Azerbaijani fighters were killed on the spot,

another two died a little later and four were wounded. A terrible panic broke out. None of those who took part in that battle were able to recount clearly what happened later. It seemed to them that they were being attacked and fired upon from all sides. And soldiers of the Azerbaijani army on duty here were afraid even several days afterwards to approach the scene of the tragedy. So everything was left at that post as it was: pools of blood, a tent ripped to shreds by shrapnel, abandoned caps, an unfinished glass of tea ...

... Before the offensive on Askeran, a military bulldozer was sent out in front of the military vehicles to clear mines, as should be. But the driver-cum-engineer forgot to lower the special scoop and as a result the armoured vehicle's track ran over two anti-tank mines at once. The vehicle was put out of commission and its forgetful driver ended up in hospital with two broken legs ...

There are a great many examples like this but nobody learns from them. The armed detachments of the Azerbaijani Popular Front are still the most combat-ready force here and they are made up mainly of local inhabitants or people from other regions of the republic that have lost their relatives in Karabakh. But they are not able to change the overall picture, nonetheless.

The supreme leadership prefers to put its military failures down to assistance to the Armenian formations by the former Soviet army and to certain foreign mercenaries ...

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

The four boys sitting in front of me were embarrassed and the conversation was awkward to start with. And I myself didn't know what to call them: deserters, turncoats, runaways ... Pavel Zuyev from Sverdlovsk region, Yuriy Lyakhovich from Crimea, Aleksey Bondarev and Pavel Natipin, both from Penza. Former gun-layers and gunners, former soldiers of the now disbanded 366th Stepanakert Regiment. Thrown by fate and the commanders into the very eye of that very cruel inter-ethnic conflict ...

'We ended up in the regiment after training in Samara,' they say. 'Generally speaking, we were all being trained there for serving in Germany but anyone who was found to have an illness was sent to Transcaucasia. Beforehand, they made us sign a statement that we had no objections. And then it began! They took our uniform away and gave us a threadbare replacement. There was no bread, no salt and no letters from home. We slept on a bare mattress. We washed just twice in a year ... The whole regiment - from the last soldier to the senior commanders - have lice. We've got abscesses from their bites, legs are festering. If you go to the medical unit they say: "You'll get treatment at home." Pay for tablets or injections. Civilians move freely around the regiment offering local hooch, vodka. Where does a soldier get the money from? The lads agree with a sentry, they 'steal' zinc from bullets, sell it and spend the money on drink. So everybody in the unit goes about drunk - the soldiers and the officers. There are fights all the time. It's a disaster if you end up in the guardhouse. The officers come with sticks during the night: they beat you, make you crawl naked on your stomach along the tarmac, pour cold water over

you in winter. The attitude towards locals is hard to understand. Everything was fine when we were shelling the town of Shusha from tanks. Then Armenians came to the checkpoint and they shot a Kazakh soldier right in the eye and wounded another.

The commander of the first battalion was once planning with the commander of an artillery division what they would do on operational duty – they would take out equipment and at their own risk would break out of Karabakh. The regimental commander got wind of this and he stood them down from duty. But soldiers will run away anyway. Three to five men every day. Although this is also very dangerous. We remember two taking to their heels. A report was received a few days later: the corpses are lying between Khojaly and Askeran – fetch the bodies. One of them was Aleksandr Gorokhov from the artillery division, and the second one, his comrade, wasn't found.

Once, 11 men ran away in one go. They walked along the road carrying a white flag. They came under fire in Mardakert district. Only six made it to Aghdam alive. The Armenians caught a further two of the runaways and turned them back into the division in exchange for 800 litres of diesel fuel. We were fired at as well and we only escaped by a miracle.

Since October, men have been going out of the regiment on combat duty at night. But only officers and trusted old-timers, mainly driver mechanics and sometimes gun-layers, on armoured personnel carriers and tanks, taking guns with them. They would come back in the morning drunk and all the munitions would be spent. The soldiers said that first of all they would drink with the fighters and then, at their bidding, drive out to Azerbaijani villages and shoot ...

Such is the neutrality of the CIS army. Moreover, there is also quite a lot of evidence that the combat hardware of the 366th Regiment played a fateful role in the storming of Khojaly, giving fire support to the attacking Armenian detachments. To be fair, I will note that the military do not harbour any sympathies for the warring sides. They routed the Armenians with similar inspiration no less than a year ago in the vicinity of the villages of Getashen, Martunashen and Voskepar. The Azerbaijanis did not note anything unnatural here then either ...

Moskovskiy Novosti, 15 March, 1992

ONLY THE DEAD REMAIN IN KHOJALY

I WAS WITH THEM ...

I went on a photo shoot in Stepanakert on 25 February. As it turned out I was engulfed in the middle of events. That night the Armenian detachments launched a ground attack on the village of Khojaly. Azerbaijani forces were firing on Stepanakert from there and the only airport in Nagorny Karabakh was right there.

I was in the second attack echelon with the doctors. Several kilometres before Khojaly we suddenly saw something in the distance coming towards us. In the darkness it resembled a cloud. We heard groans, cries and curses in both Azerbaijani and Armenian. The 'cloud' turned out to be a crowd. There were people half-naked, a lot of children ...

The Armenian soldiers moving them explained – They are



Meskhetian Turks and we have taken them prisoner.

Last in that big crowd of Turks on the march was a woman with three children. She was walking barefoot on the snow. She barely moved and fell quite often. As it turned out later the youngest of her children was only two days old. Two days!

I took the baby in my hands and started walking with the Turks. We were both – I and that woman – crying bitterly. Dark night, huge mess ... Even though my clothing distinguished me from the Turks I was clubbed several times and cursed at to move quicker. I knew that I was under no threat but for a moment there I felt like a prisoner. I wouldn't want anybody to go through that.

The captive Turks were the most horrible thing I saw during those days in Khojaly. They were people who had fled Uzbekistan three years earlier and been sent to Nagorny Karabakh, to the action zone, by the Azerbaijani government. Among those exiled from Khojaly there were older women who must have remembered the 1944 deportation from Georgia. This was their third exile ... Would it be the last?

Victoria Ivleva



Я шла вместе с ними...

Я приехала на съемку в Степанакерт 25 февраля. Как оказалось, к событиям. В ту ночь армянские отряды штурмовали село Ходжалы, откуда азербайджанские силы обстреливали Степанакерт и где находится единственный в Нагорном Карабахе аэропорт.

пой. Полуслетым людям, много детей...

«Эта турецко-мексиканцы, мы их звали в плен», — объясняют комсомольцы, а затем уже довольно спокойно, и эти женщины. Ночь, переперхнула... Хотел у меня по одежке, были знаешь, по которым шуток мовалящие отлучались. Ах, да, да, пару раз меня ударили

[illegible]

послали под автоматным огнем. Стреляли засевшие в одном из домов верблюджаки-омоновцы.

Бой возле этого дома продолжался до вечера и закончился для армянской стороны двумя убитыми и несколькими ранеными. Что стало с омовонцами: погибли они или смогли в сумерках уйти — не знаю.

[illegible]

НИКОЛИН МІЛЧЕВ

Вместе с врачами я шла во второй корпус атакующих. В нескольких километрах от Хаскины мы вдруг увидели, что наверху нам движется что-то, в темноте мажущееся обрывками. Мы услышали стоны, крики из американских и британских, советских, югославских «облаков» пехоты, то

Milliyet, 15 March, 1992

I SAW THE MASSACRE IN KARABAKH

Rahbar Bashiroghlu

I was born and grew up in Karabakh. I wouldn't change a stone of Karabakh for the most beautiful mountain towns of Switzerland. Now blood streams down the cold, clear valleys of my native village which once was a place of heavenly beauty ... Those streams are the blood of thousands of my compatriots ... The streets, the roots of the bushes are full of my neighbours whose stomachs were riddled by the bayonets of cruel Armenians, my uncles whose nails were pulled out, their ears and noses cut off, my nephews and brothers on whose hands cigarettes were extinguished and whose eyes were put out ...

All this is what I saw ... However, there is witness that your heart cannot stand to hear:

AT FIRST THE BABY SUCKED MILK AND THEN BLOOD

'We met our compatriots who had escaped from Khojaly and been tortured in Garagaya forest. People whose eyes had been put out did not know where they were going. The ears and noses of some had been cut off ... During the Armenian attack an old man who had lost his foot was killed by the frost ...'

All this was reported by Zahid Agdamli, one of Aghdam city's volunteer army commanders; he had tears in his eyes ...

But, for me, the story I heard from another was the scariest:



'A young woman was killed while she was breast-feeding her baby. Her breast was cut off. The cut-off breast was still in the mouth of the six-month-old baby. The baby sucked milk for a while and then blood. Later the baby froze to death ...'

Elman Mammadov, head of the Khojaly municipality, spoke bitterly in his review of the massacre: 'Neither the German fascists during the Second World War, nor fighters in Vietnam had been so brutish. However, the Armenians in Karabakh subjected Azerbaijani Turks to such savagery.

STORIES OF WITNESSES

I talked with witnesses of crimes in each village I visited. Seventy-two-year-old Huseyn Ibrahimoghlu was one of them.

'I am a Turk. I was exiled twice – from Ahiska in Stalin's times and from Uzbekistan in Gorbachev's times. However, I had never seen such atrocities committed against us. Armenians razed our village to the ground within two hours ... The whole village was in flames. While they were brutally killing our children and infants, they cried, "You are Turks."'

Sixty-nine-year-old grandma Khatun's story is more bitter still:

'My two grandchildren – a boy and a girl – were killed in front of my eyes. I was badly wounded. The Armenians were saying: "We are not going to kill you but you must watch how your grandchildren die." I begged them to kill me and not to touch my grandchildren but they did not listen to me.'

Nizami Sultanoghlu, a 23-year-old soldier in the National Army, reported what he had witnessed:

'In Garagaya village in Khojaly the Armenian soldiers ploughed (buried) Azerbaijanis into the ground with tanks.'

Milliyet, 15 March 1992

Milliyet, 15 March 1992



Karabağ'da soykırımı gördüm



The West witnessed the scene of the Armenian massacre. Russian soldiers admit: 'We were persuaded to fight Azerbaijanis'

'DEATH IS WANDERING THE GREEN HILLS'

Foreign Press Centre

While it was said that there had been a confrontation between forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) leaving Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenian militiamen (police officers), Russian soldiers withdrawing from the region said, 'We were persuaded to fight Azerbaijanis.' Meanwhile the hills of Karabakh were covered with the bodies of Azerbaijanis killed by Armenians. Western journalists taken to the hills of the region by helicopter viewed the Armenian massacre in horror, witnessing the savagery committed against Azerbaijanis.

A correspondent from the French news agency AFP said that he counted 31 bodies of women, children and elderly people killed by projectiles. It was said that there were up to 50 bodies of people shot at close range in those bloody hills and that all were from Khojaly, which had been occupied by Armenians.

ID cards establishing their Khojaly origins were found near 31 bodies. Azerbaijanis said that another 20 bodies had been carried to Aghdam by volunteers.

The pilot of one of three armoured helicopters belonging to the CIS army testified that there were still dozens of dead Turks [Azerbaijanis - ed.] in the hills of the region, unchecked because of their proximity to Armenian forces.

Thirty-two-year-old Zahid Jabbarov, who lost his wife and son in the massacre, told the AFP correspondent that about 60 dead bodies collected the previous day were due to be identified in the Aghdam mosque.

CIS-ARMENIAN CONFRONTATION

On the other hand Armenians, bloodlust unquenched, then took on CIS forces.

Regional commander Sufian Beppayev explained to journalists in Tbilisi that an arm of the CIS forces withdrawn from Karabakh clashed with Armenian forces outside Stepanakert [the Armenian name for the town of Khankendi - ed.].

Beppayev said that the confrontation occurred in the village of Ballurja, but he did not provide further information.

After CIS Commander-in-Chief Yevgeny Shaposhnikov gave the order to withdraw detachments from Karabakh last week, some Khankendi-based detachments began to pull out.

ONE RUSSIAN DEATH

It was also stated that a CIS army soldier had been killed in Karabakh during an attack the previous night. According to a CIS military representative in Moscow, Sergeant A. Ruder lost his life in the attack while fulfilling an order to withdraw a motorised infantry detachment under his command. The spokesman stressed that it had not yet been ascertained which side attacked first.

The Interfax news agency also said that the order to withdraw the motorised infantry detachment had been delayed and the detachment was waiting for orders to renew the attack.

FOUR SOLDIERS CONFESS

Four soldiers of the 366th Motorised Infantry Regiment which began to withdraw from the Karabakh region stated that they were encouraged to struggle against Azerbaijanis 'As a sacred duty.'

According to the Azerbaijani ASSA-Irada press agency, four soldiers named as Pavel Antipov, Yuri Lyakovich, Pavel Zuyev and Alexey Bondarev stated at a press conference that they underwent 'brainwashing' and as a Christian Russians they were called by the Christian Armenians to struggle against Muslim Azerbaijanis.

The agency said that the four soldiers had deserted from the 366th Regiment on February 20.

By the way, Elman Mammadov, headman of the occupied village of Khojaly, stated that the bodies of 15 Russian officers had been taken away by Armenians in order to eliminate evidence of Russian participation in battles on their side.

LEADERSHIP ACCUSED

The headman of the occupied village of Khojaly in the Nagorno-Karabakh region accused the government of Azerbaijan, naming head of state Ayaz Mutalibov, of not defending Azerbaijanis against Armenian aggression.

Mammadov held a press conference in Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan, and declared that

The Azerbaijani leadership constantly assured us of rescue today or tomorrow. We were told to wait but unfortunately they did not come.

The headman said that 22 members of his family had been killed during the attacks and he continued his speech in tears:

We relied on the government of Azerbaijan. We were sure that they would not leave us alone. But no help arrived from them. There were no helicopters and no other kind of assistance from the government.

Izvestiya, 17 March 1992, No. 64

NAGORNO-KARABAKH: THE PLAIN HORROR OF WAR

Vadim Belykh, Izvestiya

GOOD FRIENDS IN UNIFORM (Final part. Began in issue No. 62)

Dappled armoured personnel carriers were hiding in the foothills of the mountain.

'Who is that?' I asked the strapping Azerbaijani militiaman who was accompanying me. He was girthed in machine-gun ammunition belts.

'It is our national army. Do you want to take a look?'

But we did not make it to the mountain. A militiaman with a pistol came out to meet us, shouting

wildly, and turned us back unceremoniously. Although it was not so far off that one could not help noting that the soldiers were light-haired and were speaking Russian amongst themselves. Later, I was told that it was the airborne assault battalion which was to cover the withdrawal of the 366th Regiment. It was because of it, they say, that the Azerbaijanis halted the offensive on Askeran, fearing a blow in the back.

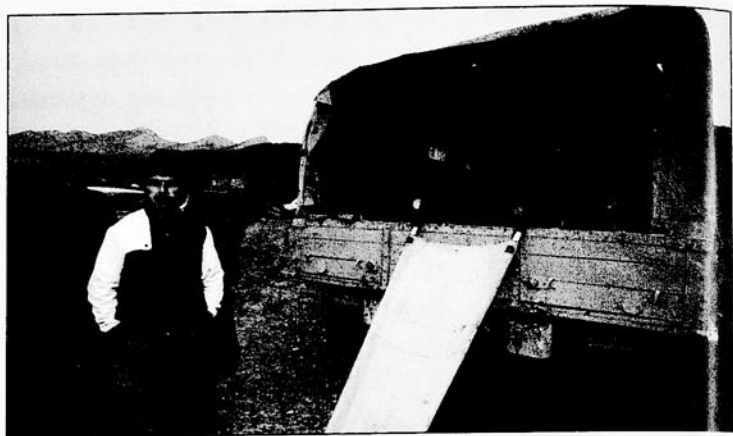
The paratroopers disappeared as mysteriously as they had appeared, running over the foot of a Turkish journalist with the tread of an armoured personnel carrier in farewell. But then, at roughly the same time, I met on Agdam square a tank colonel I knew whose first and family names were akin to mine. He was, unusually, dressed in civilian clothes, was supported at the elbow by a local leader and had an enigmatic look. A day later we came upon each other at a post. The colonel (now wearing the uniform of a local militiaman!) was sunning himself and gladly chatted with me – his compatriot – about Moscow, the weather. But he had little to say about what he was doing in this hot spot and noted only: 'We have to help the boys here.'

Incidentally, the colonel's 'friends' have already given such substantial help to the 'boys' of both warring sides. The fact that both the Armenian and the Azerbaijani



No mercy for women or children

Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



The bodies kept arriving
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



The lucky ones?
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Their guilt?
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



None unscathed
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Shamil Alekberli (right, see page 24) helping those who got through
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Refuge in a railway carriage
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Hoping for survivors, wary of attack
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Rigid in death and disbelief
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Shock, exhaustion, grief
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Somehow, life must go on
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Emergency field hospital – in a railway carriage
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Looking for dear ones in the makeshift morgue
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne



Burial in Martyrs' Avenue, Baku, 5 March 1992
Photo: Frédérique Lengaigne

detachments are quite well armed now is the sole merit of the former Soviet Army which gave them (or traded them!) substantial stockpiles of its armaments. And if a Karabakh fighter until quite recently had to pay five roubles on the black market for a submachine gun cartridge and ten for a machine gun cartridge, today they are receiving them in unlimited quantities. For free. That is why the shooting is going on day and night. When the gunpowder smoke finally disperses, and that will happen sooner or later, it is unlikely that any of those doing the shooting who survive will say thanks to the 'kind uncles' with stars on their epaulettes ...

FALSE RUMOURS ARE RIFE. MERCENARIES ARE HERE.

'... and suddenly, he saw a woman, two metres tall, all covered in armour, and carrying a weapon. Men fear her,' the story teller said, animatedly catching his breath at this sentence.

I was listening to a legend from the infinite series entitled 'Armenian mercenaries' for the umpteenth time. The topic of foreign soldiers in Armenian detachments is on everyone's mind in Agdam and all sorts of stories and rumours are rife. It is the dream of every Azerbaijani soldier to shoot a mercenary dead and of every journalist in the field to photograph that dead mercenary. This leads to the most implausible information: 'Four Negroes were taken prisoner in Shusha'; 'Another two Negroes were killed near Askeran'; 'A corpse found in Karabakh was taken to Baku. Forensic analysis has shown that it is not an Armenian, an Azerbaijani or a Russian.' Indeed, the simplest checking is usually enough to show that all these tales are pure fabrication. Although one black (mercenary?) was indeed killed in battle. His corpse was exchanged for Azerbaijani hostages.

Soldiers of the 366th Regiment also claim to have seen more than once in Stepanakert (Khankendi) foreigners wearing uniforms and carrying weapons. Many of them themselves had an offer to join the ranks of the Armenian Fedayi, with a salary of 3,000-4,000 roubles a month guaranteed by contract, in addition to as much free food as they could eat, wine and women ...

Incidentally, the Armenian side itself is no longer particularly hiding the fact that it is hiring foreign soldiers of fortune.

The Azerbaijanis so far strenuously deny that there are mercenaries serving in their brigades. However, there are quite a few Chechen volunteers in Karabakh. And they are usually sent to the most dangerous places. Observers from South Ossetia appear from the Azerbaijani side from time to time. It is said that quite a few of those wanting to take part in the war come to Agdam from Russia. Some – for money. Others, just like that. However, the latter are sent packing on principle.

But journalists from all over the world are working on the battlefields ...

For roubles and dollars

'Have you got a pistol, at least?' the young Azerbaijani soldier asked me, giving me a pitying look.

'I really don't need one.' I said, shrugging my shoulders.

'But you ought to have one. It is war, after all.' The soldier thought for a moment. Then he smiled, took a grenade out of his pocket and handed it to me. 'For peace of mind. It's a present.'

I did not take the grenade but I was sincerely grateful to my new comrade – even just for the sympathy he showed for a journalist of a country we once had in common. Alas, the CIS reporters in the combat zones are a rather sorry sight in comparison to their colleagues working for Western companies and agencies. Gripped in the vice of a paltry budget, with primitive equipment, and sometimes without any at all, they lose out hands down to their well-off colleagues.

As sorry to say as it is, they have a much better knowledge abroad about what is happening in our nearby Nagornyy Karabakh than we do. While our home-grown television is broadcasting the opinions of the permanent representatives of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Moscow and the none too fresh reports received from Baku and Yerevan journalists, anybody switching on a television set in the USA or in any European country sees events which happened in one of our oldest 'hot spots' just hours earlier.

Permanent brigades of foreign editorial offices are operating on both sides of the front. Their staff, generally in flak jackets, insured for vast amounts of money, and quite flushed for means, deliver the hottest news to their customers several times a day by satellite. Practically everything ends up on screen, in the newspapers, on the radio right away. They are always ready to pay for any information or any assistance. A member of a foreign television crew boasted that they had even managed 'to buy' volleys from Grad missile launchers for a substantial sum to get good footage ...

However, journalists from all over the world have enough problems in common in Agdam. One of them is the complete unwillingness on the part of local leaders on all sides who are concentrated in the combat zone, from a commandant to spokesmen of the Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan, even to talk to journalists, let alone help them. You can be insulted at the drop of a hat, no matter where you came from, be it Moscow or Paris. The only exceptions, perhaps, seem to be made for journalists from their own republic, from Turkey and Lithuania.

And the Agdam branch of the Popular Front was practically the only place where, despite the suspicion, they always tried to help incoming journalists. It was there, in the general frontline confusion, that you could always find a glass of hot tea, a kind word and at least some information about what was happening around, no matter what your nationality. And strange as it may seem, in the local branch of the security service and in the district prosecutor's office as well ...

TELL ME WHO YOU ARE

'It's best not to walk around the streets of Agdam unaccompanied,' they instructed as we parted in the Ganja Directorate of Internal Affairs. 'No, on the whole, we have good

relations with Russians in the republic, as you have seen for yourself. But where you are going, people are on edge and embittered by the war and anything might happen.'

However, their fears were unfounded. At least, the appearance of somebody Slav-looking (at any time of the day or night) in this frontline zone does not evoke in locals the burning desire to grab him right away. On the contrary, I heard kind words and saw good deeds. The proximity of the war is manifested in the endless regrets over the peaceful life which has been destroyed ...

You mainly hear about 'Russian imperialism', the 'Russian threat' in the offices of officials vested with power. New versions of the much-talked-about events are also heard from them. Such as, for instance, Armenians practically not being involved in the Khojaly events and of all the brutality being unleashed by Russian soldiers of the 366th Regiment.

I got the offer to go and look at a smashed armoured personnel carrier, beside which a corpse in a Soviet Army uniform was allegedly lying. But, unfortunately, my attempt to get to it and to verify everything with militiamen failed.

There are indeed other extremes. Such as for instance frequent tales about the imminent arrival at the front of 'a national Russian company' of volunteers made up of Baku residents.

But all this talk generally ends when one crosses the office thresholds into the streets. People under fire have other problems and worries.

THE TRAIN OF BLOOD AND TEARS

They were trying to save a young nurse in the operating car. The sniper's bullet which passed right through her as she was binding a wound left her with practically no chance. No miracle happened and yet another name was added to the huge list of those killed in the Karabakh conflict.

I returned often to the medical military train which was standing near Agdam station. The real face of that cruel and meaningless war can be seen well here. A guardsman with his shrapnel-hit guts hanging out. Frost-bitten women refugees. A three-year-old child with a bandaged stump in place of a leg shot off by a large-calibre machine gun. A little girl with her face slashed by a knife ...

Day after day, hour after hour, more and more.

'Even we at home in Baku did not suspect what was happening here,' Khanlar Hajiyev, the chief of the medical service of the Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan, says. 'Our train was sent here because local doctors were unable to cope with the flood of wounded. All the doctors are volunteers. They were prepared for anything but even they are shocked.'

We are sitting in a compartment of the mobile hospital train known only from old films, leafing through the admissions ledger. Over half the casualties are civilians – women and children ... The wounds are from bullets, shrapnel, knives, frostbite.

Generally speaking, there are a huge number of frost-bite casualties. These are generally refugees from Khojaly who hid in the forest for a long time, or hostages returned from imprisonment. I saw some of them on their release from captivity. They were practically all barefoot and had lost feeling in their feet over the long frosty days. Many were facing amputation following their release. Their stories are rambling and terrible. They tell of how policemen, militiamen and soldiers were hauled out of the crowd of prisoners and how their heads were cut off right there in front of everyone. How they were kept in the cold. How they were raped. The Azerbaijani side claims that girls taken hostage generally do not return. They are immediately separated and driven off in an unknown direction. I do not know whether that is true or not. I know something else: that there are many women now who, when the shelling of Agdam becomes particularly heavy, begin to prepare themselves for self-immolation, fearing a sudden assault on the town. And the five-year-old daughter of local doctor Malik Ismailov asked of him a far from childish thing:

'Dad, if it begins, kill Mum and me first before you shoot yourself ...'

I repeat: I personally did not see how Armenian prisoners were treated. Despite all my requests, I wasn't taken to see them. I would like to hope that they are not being raped, or tortured, starved or frozen. I very much hope they are not ...

War cripples the living and it does not leave the dead in peace either.

From time to time, they bring to Agdam the bodies of their dead exchanged for living hostages. But what you see is unimaginable even in a nightmare: gouged out eyes, severed ears, scalps removed, severed heads ... Bonds on several bodies which were dragged along the ground behind an armoured personnel carrier by a rope for a long time ... The torture is limitless. But the Armenian side is distributing photographs from a village which was taken (temporarily) by the Azerbaijanis. And there, too, are corpses which have been burned, slashed by knives, mutilated and senselessly desecrated.

Is there any point at all in reckoning which of the two warring peoples is the blood-thirstier? A war without any rules is being waged in Karabakh. What are called armies are essentially bands of the most diverse people. Amongst them there are those who are defending their home, those who are taking revenge for the death of their kin, as well as those for whom everything that is happening is just a pretext for looting, pillaging, raping and killing with impunity ...

And this ceaseless war is also destroying the future of this once-rich region.

'We often observe strange psychological disorders in the children who come to us, especially those who have been held hostage,' military doctor Khanlar Hajiyev tells us. 'We even thought at first that they had been given some kind of substances. But then it all turned out to be both simpler and more terrible. The children have endured most terrible nervous stress which will most likely have irreversible consequences for them for the rest of their lives.'

There are other dangers as well. Thanks to the contents of Armenian depots, the fighters have also unleashed a war of mines in Karabakh. Both anti-personnel and anti-tank mines

are being laid all along the entire frontline zone now. Again, it is mostly civilians who are blown up by them. Three mine victims were brought in to the hospital in the last hour alone which I spent there. One of them died right away. Two will be left cripples. These blasts will keep going off years after the war is over ...

BUT WHEN WILL IT END?

There is a radio in Agdam today which is tuned to the same frequency as an Armenian radio in Askeran. They reach agreement on it on exchanging prisoners, removing the dead from the battlefield, on meetings of duty officers. There is also a sign: if the radio is quiet, expect a bombardment or an attack. It is so far the only real thread linking the two warring parties. Perhaps it will one day help real peace talks to begin. Or will silence tend more and more to be the answer to questions?

Passport Magazine (Moscow), January, 2011

1992: A MINEFIELD FOR OBJECTIVE REPORTING

Helen Womack



The collapse of the Soviet Union created a number of "hot spots" of ethnic conflict. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Christian Armenians and Muslim Azeris fought a nasty little war over the mountainous territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Each side accused the West of bias in favour of their enemy. It was difficult for reporters to be objective.

In February 1992, news came out that something terrible had happened in Khojaly, an Azeri settlement in the disputed enclave,

mostly populated by Armenians. Hundreds of Azeri bodies were said to be strewn across a snowy mountainside. Were they battlefield casualties? Or had there been a massacre?

With a group of Moscow-based correspondents, I flew to the Azeri border town of Agdam, to which refugees from Khojaly had fled. We arrived in the middle of the night, tired, but instead of being taken to lodgings by our Azeri hosts, we were bussed straight to the mosque to examine four mutilated corpses.

At three in the morning, I didn't know what to make of this. My rational mind said: "Four bodies don't equal a massacre." But at the deepest level of my being, I was shocked. "So when we are dead, we all look like broken dolls," I thought. I was young then and all I had seen of death was the closed coffin of my grandmother at a stiff English funeral.

The next day, we went to the cemetery, where Azeri women were wailing over 75 freshly dug graves. Following tradition, they had scratched their cheeks bloody and were producing a ritual, high-pitched howl. Graves decorated with dolls were those of young people due to have been married, we were told. More bodies were still out on the mountainside, waiting to be retrieved.

This was beginning to look like a massacre, I had to admit.

At the Agdam railway station, a train had been turned into a makeshift hospital, full of women, children and old men with gunshot wounds. The survivors spoke consistently of how Armenian forces had attacked their town, of how civilians had fled into the forests, of how they had been trapped in a mountain pass and fired upon indiscriminately.

"A terrible tragedy has taken place but the world is silent," said Dr. Eldar Sirazhev. "The West has always supported the Armenian side because they have a large, eloquent diaspora."

I drew my conclusions and filed a report that on this occasion, the Azeris had indeed been the victims. Other times, it was the other way round. "Six of one and half a dozen of the other," as my mother used to say about playground fights. But the victims of Khojaly were Muslim.

I did my job, went home and unraveled. Some correspondents become war junkies but I had a kind of nervous breakdown. Having seen death like that, I suddenly became afraid of everything. Alcohol helped but it wasn't a long term solution. Mediation was better medicine, enabling me in middle age to embrace life.

As these as the morning I didn't know what to make of this. My rational mind said: "Four bodies don't equal a massacre." But at the deepest level of my being, I was shocked. "So when we are dead, we all look like broken dolls," I thought. I was young then and all I had seen of death was the closed coffin of my grandmother at a stiff English funeral.

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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

THE KHOJALY MASSACRE

Petr Kvyatkevich



The Soviet empire was consigned to history once and for all but the great-power ambitions of the Kremlin remained. Meanwhile, the opening balance did not look promising for the Russian Federation – the legal and political successor of the USSR. Mired in the chaos of system change, the state was incapable of continuing successfully a foreign policy which embraced even the former Soviet territories. All that the new Kremlin masters could afford was to preserve the last remnants of influence in them. The stance of the Yerevan government substantially facilitated this aim. Armenia's geopolitical location made it an ideal candidate for interests in the Caucasus region. Nevertheless, for the time being, they concentrated not on them but on the latter's political principles.

In late January 1992, separatists attempted to seize the last Azerbaijani enclaves in Nagorno Karabagh which were surrounded and isolated from the rest of the country. They made use of the help of the 366th Motorised Regiment, which was part of the former 23rd Soviet Division. This support allowed them in early February to retake Karkijahan from where their positions in neighbouring Stepanakert (Azeri: Khankendi) were being shelled. They also succeeded in taking villages down the Shusha – Khojaly road and to encircle Khojaly in a noose.

After the settlement of Karadagly was seized, its defenders and the majority of its inhabitants were executed following the principle of collective responsibility. The bodies of 150 victims were dumped into potato trenches. It seemed that this act of genocide, greater in scale than any other atrocity committed previously during the conflict, should have been completely without parallel but this was not so. It was only a lamentable prelude to the subsequent slaughter which occurred on 25 February. At around 21:00, Armenian detachments, most likely along with soldiers of the Russian 366th Motorised Regiment billeted in Stepanakert, entered the settlement of Khojaly which lay between them and Askeran.

Khojaly was not chosen by accident as its location made it an important strategic point. This was not only where the Aghdam – Shusha and Askeran – Stepanakert roads met, it was also where the only aerodrome in the region was located. Many Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia had found refuge in Khojaly, as had Meskhetian Turks and many of those who had fled from Fergana. The last military helicopter carrying food and fuel flew into Khojaly on 13 February.

The operational readiness of the local garrison was impaired by many days of being isolated from the world and by the need to be on constant alert. It was barely 150 strong, was poorly armed and was actually not prepared for offering resistance for any length of time to the superior enemy forces. Although the Azerbaijani authorities had sufficient information about the units assembled by the enemy, and importantly, had an idea of the plans hatched by the separatists to seize the town, they did nothing to avert the tragedy.

The rebels launched their attack on 25 February at around nine o'clock at night. As expected, the first blow was struck at the airport. The 22-man detachment commanded by Alif Hajiyeve, which was charged with defending the airport, fulfilled its mission and repulsed the attack. Having assessed the numerical superiority of the enemy and the hopelessness of the situation in which he and his men found themselves, he ordered the command and control centre to be blown up so that it would not fall into enemy hands. This was one of his final orders for soon afterwards he died in battle.

The commander of the Khojaly garrison, Tofiq Huseynov, and his men put up fierce resistance and tried to stall for time to allow the civilian population to escape. Many civilians were saved because of him. He did not lay down his weapons even after being surrounded but shot himself in the heart with his last bullet.

The suddenness, the panic and horror of the surprise attack completely overwhelmed the people of Khojaly. The eyewitness accounts gathered shortly afterwards are very disjointed and they allow the course of events to be only partially reconstructed.⁵⁶

Although these accounts are linked essentially in many issues, for instance, the brutality of the attackers, and even although they supplement each other,⁵⁷ one cannot yet draw far-reaching conclusions on the basis of them. Accounts which are subjective with

⁵⁶ ... It was a Russian regiment. They came from the village of Hasanabad and started to kill people. First of all in such Turkish districts. Turks were killed first. I myself survived by running away into the woods ... Dilbar Sadykhova.

⁵⁷ ... Detachments surrounded the town on all sides. Many people died. The rest survived by running away to hide in the forest. There was shooting on all sides in the forest. My elder son was killed the other side of Khojaly. Foreign journalists later brought his body. My younger son, aged 23, was taken prisoner. There has been no news of him since. Entiga Gakhramanova. Or ... We were taken to the Armenian cemetery. It's hard for me to recount what happened ... Four young Meskheti Turks who had fled from Uzbekistan during the years of perestroika and found refuge in Azerbaijan were sacrificed on the grave of an Armenian separatist along with three Azerbaijanis. The victims were beheaded. Then soldiers and separatists began to torture and kill children right in front of the parents of these children. The bodies were then bulldozed into a hole. Still lusting for blood, these beasts with men's faces brought along two Azerbaijanis in national army uniforms and gouged out their eyes ... Sariya Talybova. And also ... The history of mankind has not yet known such brutality. After they had destroyed the Finnish-type houses,

regard to victims of the attack who themselves suffered or who lost members of their family are, of course, extremely important investigation material in their own right but they should not be treated as completely verifiable proof of guilt.⁵⁸

One and the same scenario, although in places quite incomplete, arises out of the known accounts. There are no grounds either for thinking that this is copied from account to account. No matter how it is looked at, unfortunately, it does not allow a lot of facts to be gleaned.

Undoubtedly, the utter unexpectedness of the attack comes to the fore. The same holds true of the racist nature of the crime: the victims were solely of Turkic ethnicity. Those who survived did so because they ran towards the woods and that is the last precise conclusion that may be drawn on the basis of the accounts gathered from eyewitness survivors in the wake of the tragedy.

Some of them note the presence of Russian soldiers as the main strike force.⁵⁹ The

they turned on the five-storied buildings. People were hiding in the cellars. Young people, children were killed brutally. Eyes were gouged out. A son was decapitated right in front of his mother. God, how brutal they were to do that! Nobody survived there. They set fire to houses, went in and finished off the children. They cut up an old woman into pieces ... Imani Aghababa.

⁵⁸ The huge emotional charge carried in these accounts is quite understandable considering the circumstances and it also adds weight to their authenticity. With regard to the course of events, there are no substantial divergences in these accounts to call them into doubt.

⁵⁹ The following account also touches on this: *Everything looked very terrible. My ears were buzzing, either from cold and hunger or from the pain in my arms. I remember that my friends were gathering up bodies but I could not. How could one corpse be taken and the others left behind? I did not even begin to count them because some of the corpses could not be counted. I recall how a few days later, the Armenians were haggling with the relatives of the dead over the price of the corpse. The Armenians allowed us to go into the burned-out houses. But I could not pick the corpses. I do not think that the Armenians would have dared to attack Khojaly themselves. It was the Ivans who fired right and left while the dirty work was left to the Armenians – to mutilate bodies and torture the wounded. Many questions remained after these events. Ilham Mammadov.*

Opinions and conclusions drawn after the event can be noted here. They contain a whole host of information heard subsequently which influenced the accounts. When the attack was taking place, Dilbar Sadykhova could not know whether it was a Russian regiment or tell the nationality of the soldiers. The last part of Ilham Mammadov's description, which was mainly his speculation, as he himself notes, is even less suitable as a source to confirm the involvement of soldiers of the Russian regiment.

The following account sheds a bit more light on the matter: ... *Entering the town, the tanks and armoured personnel carriers destroyed houses and crushed people. Armenian fighters followed behind Russian soldiers. Grabbing my five-year-old grandson and 14,000 roubles, I ran off towards the forest. In the morning, I set off for the nearest Armenian village of Nakhchivanik after I realised that the child wouldn't survive. We were met there by armed Armenians whom I begged to take the money and to let us go to Aghdam for the sake of the child. Their reply was to beat me, rob me and take me off to the village commandant. He ordered us to be locked in a barn where there were already Azerbaijani women and children. We were held in the barn for four days and given nothing to eat or drink. But evil knows no bounds. When my grandson and I were taken to Askeran District four days later, such things happened there that made me remember the barn in Nakhchivanik as paradise. Foreign mercenaries (I know Armenian and can tell a local Armenian from an outsider) pulled out my toenails. Amongst the Armenians were negroes, who jumping up high, kept kicking me in the face. After I was tortured for several hours. I was exchanged for an Armenian who had been arrested. But my grandson was taken away. I don't know anything about what has become of my wife and daughter ... Jamil Mammadov*

active involvement of the 366th Regiment is recalled. Statements by former soldiers of this unit who left its ranks for various reasons are often cited.⁶⁰

Having weighed up everything carefully, one should consider that it is highly likely that deserters took part in these events or that there was even the unauthorised use of detachments of this unit by officers recruited to the separatists' ranks: not only did they act without orders, they reported neither to headquarters nor to the commander-in-chief.⁶¹

This information is still classed as 'unconfirmed' owing to the lack of literally clear material evidence of the involvement of the Russian regiment in the carnage: in the form of testimony by soldiers on carrying out the order; of documents testifying that these orders were given or even of photographs allowing anything at all to be identified.

Hypothetically, something already mentioned should be considered the most likely scenario; that of the treachery of some of the officer corps who, without the agreement of the command, used, in exchange for material gain, the men and military equipment left there.⁶²

Nonetheless, the act of mass murder and the unparalleled brutality of the murders remain historical facts. What could be seen on the ground was grim and, at the same time, overwhelming evidence of the crime committed.⁶³

The picture of the aftermath of the violence was captured on camera and video because the Azerbaijani mass media and foreign war correspondents arrived at the scene of the tragedy shortly afterwards.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Of prime importance is the account by Private Yuriy Yakhovich who served in the 366th Regiment: ... It was drummed into us that we were Christians and should fight against Muslims. We were kept in inhuman conditions. We could not stand it all and we had to leave the regiment ... Of course, objections can be raised as to the reliability of what a deserter says. Nevertheless, there may be doubts only about his personal attitude and the reasons why he left the regiment but about no more. Unhealthy attitudes and the lack of discipline were daily phenomena in the Soviet and then in the Russian army at the time the system was changing and it would be a strange thing to claim this was not so. Attention is drawn to the phrase 'we had to leave the regiment ...' which demonstrates clearly the scale and mass nature of this situation. Therefore, in this context, the very presence of people in Russian uniform on that fateful day in Khojaly did not mean that this regiment took part in the events, despite eyewitness accounts testifying to that.

⁶¹ Yu. Yakhovich's account is of key importance to this issue. It heightens the historical value as a source of the testimonies mentioning the involvement of Russian soldiers. Nevertheless, although it seems to reconfirm that facts were as he described; for instance, that there were Russians amongst the attackers; these facts remain only circumstantial evidence.

⁶² This explained the promotions and posts which those who left the ranks of the 366th Regiment later received in the Nagorno Karabagh defence structure.

⁶³ The horror and shock from what they saw when they arrived the next day is reflected in the following testimony: ... On 26 February I had carried wounded from Stepanakert and was returning via the Askeran gap. Some bright flecks below caught my eye. I went in lower and my flight mechanic suddenly cried out: 'Look, there are women and children.' I myself had already seen about two hundred killed, scattered on the slope, among which armed people were wandering ... We flew later and tried to collect the bodies. There was a local militia captain with us. I forget his name. He found his four-year-old son there with his head split open and he went out of his mind. Another child whom we managed to pick up had been decapitated. I saw the mutilated bodies of women, children and old people everywhere ... Major Leonid Kravets, pilot.

⁶⁴ Journalists themselves tell us their emotions and feelings: ... We arrived at the scene of the executions on 28 February for the first time escorted by two military helicopters. From above we saw an area around 500 metres in radius which was practically entirely covered in dead bodies. The pilots were afraid to land because the territory was controlled by Armenian separatists. Shooting began when we finally landed and got out of the helicopter.

Sources put the losses thus: 613 dead, around 200 missing, 487 wounded most of whom had extremities or eyes missing. They also note that 1,275 women and children were kidnapped for ransom. The Armenian side rejects these figures, considering them to be grossly exaggerated and does not want to assume responsibility for the crimes committed. And even although there is copious material documentation on the number of victims, what lay behind the carnage remains unclear. All that is certain is the carnage itself.

Mutalibov himself added a whole series of new ambiguities which gave rise to questions. In an interview to a journalist from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* three months afterwards, he laid responsibility for what had occurred on the Azerbaijan Popular Front:

'The survivors say that all of that was organized to give grounds for my resignation. Some forces tried to discredit me as president. I do not think that the Armenians, who have a very clear and competent approach to such situations, could allow Azerbaijanis to obtain documents incriminating them in the perpetration of fascist acts. It may be supposed that somebody was interested in showing these pictures at a Supreme Soviet session later and at focussing it all on me.'

And although a deep-seated resentment can be felt in these words, there is in them a series of weighty arguments representing in a completely new light many still unclear aspects of the tragedy. The subjectivity of the accusations levelled by Mutalibov does not make them any less rational. Logical answers can be found there to many unclear questions. The second part of the interview may be of particular interest from this point of view:

'When I say that responsibility for this tragedy should be placed on the opposition, I may be accused of making insinuations. But it is known that the Armenians as usual left a

The militiamen who were guarding us were to load the bodies to hand them over to the families. They only managed to get four bodies. We were all in real shock. Two of the lads passed out from such a number of dead and mutilated bodies and many of us prayed. The same thing happened again on 2 March when we flew with foreign journalists. They saw the mutilated bodies ... some had been shot individually, having been taken to the side. Many were killed in whole families, all at once. Several wounds could be seen on some bodies, one of which was always to the head - that means that they finished the wounded off. We filmed several children who had had their ears cut off. Men had been scalped. Bodies had been searched after death ... Chingiz Mustafayev, Azerbaijani television correspondent.

... We saw hundreds of bodies of people who had been killed - old people, women, children and defenders of Khojaly. We were given a helicopter and we were filming from a bird's eye view everything that we saw around Khojaly. But the Armenians opened fire on our helicopter and we were unable to finish filming. The picture was a terrible one. I have heard a lot about wars, about the brutality of German fascists. But the Armenians outdid them all, killing five- and six-year-old children, the civilian population. We saw many wounded in hospitals, railway wagons, even in kindergartens. Jean-Yves Junet, French journalist.

... Sometimes they bring to Aghdam the bodies of their dead, received in exchange for live hostages. But such things are not dreamt of even in nightmares: gouged-out eyes, severed ears, missing scalps, decapitated heads ... several bodies tied together which had been dragged behind armoured personnel carriers on a rope for a long time. There was no end to the hellishly refined torture. V. Belykh, Izvestiya correspondent.

corridor to allow the civilian population to flee. Why would they shoot at them, then? Moreover, based near Aghdam then were strong enough Azerbaijani detachments which could have come to their aid. Or as was usually the case, agreement could have been reached with the enemy to allow the civilian population to leave the town. Why wasn't either done?

"I was told all the time that Khojaly was holding the line, that they needed weapons, people and food. I gave orders for what was needed to be helicoptered in. The civilian population should have been evacuated when Khojaly was surrounded. I do not understand why that was not done.

"I spoke several times with Mkrtchyan, the chairman of the Karabakh Supreme Soviet, during that period. I said: 'You have killed thousands of people. Let us at least retrieve their bodies.' However, he replied that he knew nothing about any corpses but that they had our prisoners whom they were feeding although they themselves had nothing to eat and that they would willingly exchange them for their people being held hostage."

Fifteen years later Mutalibov suddenly withdrew these accusations, most likely guided by the same considerations that led him to make them, which has not lessened their significance at all.

Iz voyni i khaosa Azerbaydjan: Formirovanie nezavisimogo gosudarstva,

Torun: Adam Marszalek Publishing House,

2009, pp. 151–159.

KHOJALI

Thomas de Waal



Beginning in the New Year of 1992, the Armenians began to break out of the Karabakhi capital, Stepanakert. They captured the Azerbaijani villages that surrounded the town, expelling the hundreds of Azerbaijanis who remained there. Their main target was now Khojali, five miles northeast of Stepanakert and the base for the region's airport. Khojali had been the focus of a large Azerbaijani resettlement program. In 1991, it had a population of 6,300.²¹

In October 1991, the Armenians cut the road connecting Khojali and Aghdam, so that the only way to reach the town was in a helicopter: a quick flight from Aghdam followed by a rapid corkscrew descent. In January, when the American reporter Thomas Goltz made this terrifying trip, he found the town cold and poorly defended. "There were no working telephones in Khojali, no working anything—no electricity, no heating oil, and no running water" Goltz wrote. The only link with the outside world was the helicopter—and these were under threat with each run." By the time the last helicopter flew in to Khojali on 13 February 1992, perhaps fewer than 300 people had been evacuated by air and about 3,000 people remained. The town was defended by the OMON commander of the airport, Alif Hajiyev, and 160 or so lightly armed men. The inhabitants waited anxiously for the expected Armenian attack.²²

The Armenian assault began on the night of 25–26 February, a date probably chosen to mark the anniversary of the Sumgait pogroms four years earlier. Armored vehicles from the Soviet 366th Regiment lent their support. They surrounded Khojali on three sides before Armenian fighters went in and overwhelmed the local defenders.

Only one exit out of Khojali was open. Hajiyev reportedly told the civilians to escape

²¹ Arif Yunusov, "Tragediya Khojaly", [The Tragedy of Khojali], *Zerkalo* No. 25, 13–19 June 1992.

²² Goltz, *Azerbaijan Diary*, 119; Elman Mamedov, head of Khojali town administration, interviewed in Aghdam by ANS Television, February 1992. Yunusov, "Tragediya Khojaly", [The Tragedy of Khojali], *Zerkalo* No. 25, 13–19 June 1992. Goltz says that Hajiev had 60 OMON policemen under his command; Yunusov puts the total number of defenders at 160.

and make for Aghdam, and that his OMON militiamen would accompany them for their protection. In the middle of the night, a large crowd fled through the woods, which were ankle-deep in snow, and started to descend the valley of the small Gargar river. In early morning, the crowd of Khojali civilians, interspersed with a few militiamen, emerged onto open ground near the Armenian village of Nakhichevanik. There they were hit by a wall of gunfire from Armenian fighters on the hillside above. The militiamen returned fire, but were heavily outnumbered and killed. More fleeing civilians keep on coming onto a scene of appalling carnage. A Khojali resident, Hijran Alekper, told Human Rights watch:

By the time we got to Nakhichevanik it was 9:00 a.m. There was a field and there were many people who had been killed. There were maybe one hundred. I didn't try to count. I was wounded on th[is] field. Gajiv Aliyev was shot and I wanted to help him. A bullet hit me in the belly. I could see where they were shooting from. I saw other bodies in the field. They were newly killed—they hadn't changed color.²³

A few days later, a terrible aftermath greeted the reporters and investigators who came to these hillsides. Torn bodies littered the snowy ground. Anatol Lieven of *The Times* noted that "several of them, including one small girl, had terrible injuries: only her face was left". The Azerbaijani prosecutor Yusif Agayev saw powder around the gunshot wounds and concluded that many of victims had been shot at point-blank range: "They were shot at close range. We went to the place where it had happened. It was obvious to me as a specialist."²⁴ As well as those shot down, dozens of victims died of cold and frostbite in the woods. More than a thousand Khojali residents were taken prisoner, among them several dozen Meskhetian Turks, refugees from Central Asia.

There are varying estimates of how many Azerbaijanis were killed in or near Khojali. Probably the most reliable figure is that of the official Azerbaijani parliamentary investigation, which put the death toll at 485. Even taking into account that this number includes combatants and those who died of cold, it still dwarfs any body count of the Nagorny Karabakh war. The number of Azerbaijanis who returned the fire was small; this could not excuse the clear targeting of hundreds of civilians, including children, in an open space and the shooting of defenseless people on the ground.²⁵

²³ Human Rights Watch, *Bloodshed in the Caucasus*, 22.

²⁴ Anatol Lieven, "Bodies Mark Site of Karabakh Massacre," *The Times*, 3 March 1992; interview with Agayev, 25 November 2000.

²⁵ Many different statistics have emerged from the Khojali tragedy. This is not surprising, considering the circumstances. Access to the killing grounds near Nakhichevanik was difficult; hundreds of people were taken prisoner and for many days were unaccounted for. A general phenomenon of these tragedies—true also of the pogroms in Sumgait and Baku—also has to be taken into account: lists of dead are compiled that include people who are missing and later turn up alive, or who were seen lying motionless but were in fact wounded rather than dead. In ascending order of magnitude, the following figures have variously been given: Namiq Aliyev, one of the parliamentary investigators, told Helsinki Watch in April 1992, that 213 victims had been buried in Aghdam. Another Azerbaijani

Slowly the news got out that a massacre had taken place at Khojali. At first many in the outside world were reluctant to believe it because most international media coverage of the conflict had hitherto portrayed the Armenians as the main victims of the conflict, rather than aggressors. A self-justificatory newspaper interview given in April 1992 by the former Azerbaijani president Ayaz Mutalibov did not help. Mutalibov, seeking to minimize his own role in the failure to defend the town, put the blame for the massacre on the Popular Front. His interview was much quoted in Armenia.²⁶

Yet Armenians now do admit that many Azerbaijani civilians were killed as they fled Khojali. Some blame irregular Armenian fighters, acting on their own behalf. An Armenian police officer, Mayor Valery Babayan, suggested revenge as a motive. He told the American reporter Paul Quinn-Judge that many of the fighters who had taken part in the Khojali attack "originally came from Sumgait and places like that."²⁷

Asked about the taking of Khojali, the Armenian military leader Serzh Sarkisian said carefully, "We don't speak loudly about these things." "A lot was exaggerated" in the casualties, and the fleeing Azerbaijanis had put up armed resistance, he claimed. Sarkisian's summation of what had happened, however, was more honest and more brutal:

But I think the main point is something different. Before Khojali, the Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us, they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]. And that's what happened. And we should also take into account that amongst those boys were people who had fled from Baku and Sumgait.

Sarkisian's account throws a different light on the worst massacre of the Karabakh war, suggesting that the killings may, at least in part, have been a deliberate act of mass killing as intimidation.

Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War,
New York & London: New York University Press, 2003, pp. 169–172

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official, Aiden Resulov, told the same team of researchers that more than 300 bodies showing evidence of violent death—and presumably not including those who had died of cold—had been submitted for forensic examination. (The two foregoing figures come from Human Rights Watch, *Bloodshed in the Caucasus*, 23.) The newspaper *Karabakh* reported that the Commission for Aid to Refugees from Khojali had distributed benefits to 476 families of those who had been killed (letter to the author from Arif Yunusov, April 2001). The imam in Aghdam showed the Thomas Goltz an incomplete list of 477 reported dead by their families (Goltz, *Azerbaijan Diary*, 122–123). The Azerbaijani newspaper *Ordu* (issues 9, 16 and 20, 1992) printed a list of 636 victims (Yunusov letter).

²⁶ Reporting from Aghdam, Thomas Goltz had considerable problems persuading editors to take his story seriously. The Mutalibov interview was on 2 April 1991 in the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*.

²⁷ Paul Quinn-Judge, "Armenians, Azerbaijanis tell of terror; Behind an alleged massacre, a long trail of personal revenge," *Boston Globe*, 15 March 1992.

A CRY FOR KHOJALY

Yury Pompeyev



The final straw in the four years of the bloody maelstrom of Karabakh was the wild reprisal against the sleeping inhabitants of the town of Khojaly during the night of 25–26 February. No comparisons with Songmai or Khatyn are relevant: unlike Khojaly, the soldiers then did not collect their victims' scalps or ears. They just killed.

'Only dead people were left there in Khojaly,' *Moscow News* informed the whole world angrily. God seemed really to have left the Khojaly people. Correspondent Victoria Ivleva wrote that she had been in the second wave of attack, not the first. When they approached the town of Khojaly, she saw '... something that resembled a cloud moving towards us'. The cloud turned out to be a crowd of half-dressed people: 'Last in the crowd was a young woman walking barefoot with three kids.

She was walking with difficulty, falling frequently. It was found out that the youngest of her kids was two days old.'

What happened to this woman, as well as many others from that 'cloud', I could see later on the videotape of which the sound-track consisted of the cameraman's sobs. People had been shot point-blank, falling on their backs, with their faces turned to God, who had left them forever.

One of Victoria Ivleva's photos – called something like Victory! – depicts four Armenian 'heroes' standing over the prostrate bodies of Azerbaijanis; just like the Nazis in their triumphant frenzy against the background of the gallows.

Not daring to suggest to readers that they even look through Victoria Ivleva's photo-report, I want to show how Konstantin Voevodski, a corrupt 'democracy-monger', rights defender from KriK (Committee of Russian Intelligence on Karabakh) and, to my regret, my countryman, described the equipment of the 'heroes of the national liberation war' whom he saw in these pictures in *Pro-Armenia* magazine.

'Most of them are wearing black or khaki commando fatigues. They put cartridge belts around their waists and across their chests. A gun, sometimes two, is a necessary addition as well as pineapple-shaped grenades.' Has this scared you enough? If not, then here is a continuation. 'There are several small handmade bombs on the tops of the pens in their breast-pockets.'

Enough!

Aren't these pictures documents for the court in the Hague? And these are not the only samples of the bloody mercilessness. Simply, *Moscow News*, which began to praise the 'heroes' initially, could not hide this barbarism from the informed West for more than three weeks as they did with the Chernobyl catastrophe.

This is what I thought at first, but then realised that there will not be any trial, as the executors had carried out the order 'Only dead people should be left in Khojaly' perfectly and were enjoying themselves with impunity. Like the devil in the maelstrom. Did the Karabakh committee of Russian intellectuals condemn this inhumanity? It seems that the committee has learned how to tell whether this red liquid, pumped by the heart through our bodies, belongs to Muslims or Christians. War is fond of blood; it needs blood. Consider the defenders and rights advocates of Karabakh.

My heart breaks, as I remember Krikun Nuykin's shameless acknowledgement: 'We fought for Karabakh with our hands.'

Now he also has the right to add Khojaly.

It was clear to me, a Russian writer, a month before the ransacking of Khojaly that massive massacres were being prepared for Azerbaijan like in January 1990. On Sunday, 26 January 1992 I wrote in my telegram to Boris Yeltsin and Ruslan Khasbulatov: 'Radio and TV are inflaming anti-Azerbaijan passions. Mediation has not worked out. It is clear that under Russia's patronage reprisals are being prepared in Karabakh, the militias and Russian special regiments are being empowered.' I called on the Russian authorities to withdraw the 366th Regiment from Khankendi (Stepanakert) and to prevent battle preparations.

Victoria Ivleva did not see the soldiers of the 366th Motorised Infantry Regiment, as she was travelling with her camera in the second attack echelon. But she saw the military hardware and gunfire in the town before the occupation.

It is also significant for the story that, at that time, on 26–27 February the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran, Ali Akbar Vilayeti, was in Ganja on a peace mission for a day and a half. He could not fly to Khankendi, as the Armenian side did not guarantee safe passage, although a cease-fire agreement had been reached. This moratorium was a death sentence for the inhabitants of Khojaly. Vilayeti's visit to the undeclared war zone was interrupted deliberately and brazenly. The professional killers who were Armenian 'heroes' and soldiers of the Russian special regiment showed everyone that they did not need any peace mission or agreement. The way they chose to do this was through an escalation of aggression and violence.

On Wednesday, 26 February 1992 I wrote in my diary:

'The lack of true information, the flow of commentators' lies keeps the desire for life down. Film sequences of Shusha burning are shown, followed by the texts of Vesti and Novosti about Stepanakert burning. This is not mere chance: according to Radio Liberty, the Azerbaijani side has no Grad rocket launchers, the armed marionette forces of the NKR are destroying Shusha, Khojaly and a great number of Azerbaijani villages in the Karabakh plain and also firing projectiles towards their capital. In the centre of Stepanakert they burn old car tyres and rubbish that smokes for weeks.

The truth shows that there are mercenaries among the Armenian fighters. I read about two of them – Alik Kan and Volodya, who were deserters from the Georgian Army – in one of the issues of *Russkaya Mysl* (Russian Opinion), published in Paris. And *Russkaya Mysl* is not only full of wild spite against Soviet Russians (maybe it is valid, but it also paid very handsomely for it), but also aims to stir up hatred and to set everyone against each other, without exception, Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims, Azerbaijanis and Russians, civilians and militias, realists and vanguards, Russian Church and foreign priests etc., etc. Peace in our land is unacceptable for them. The seeds of hostility have to be sown also in the defeated side, mercilessly and shamelessly. *Russkaya Mysl* publishes articles by or interviews with foreigners from KriK in every issue: they are everywhere. The opium of this information blanket causes not only nausea but even heart decay. The stinking lies are dead and poisoning us.

Yelena Bonner challenged the number of Khojaly victims in her hoarse voice: they are few, some dozens, but not hundreds or thousands. And they believed her, Andrey Dmitriyevich Sakharov's widow. Human rights defender Sakharov did not defend the rights of Meskhetian Turks, who exposed repression in the apotheosis of perestroika, but defended the terrorists of the New Armenia party Zatikyan, Stepanyan and Bagdasaryan, who organised the explosion in the Moscow underground, causing the death of dozens of innocent people in January 1977. Why does this Nobel laureate discriminate?

This will be spoken about.

Now, let's remember the words written by a foreign Armenian terrorist, approving once more the participation of Armenian terrorists in Karabakh in the 15th March 1992 edition of *Moscow News*. Asked, 'Are there terrorists in the Armenian Diaspora?', Iosif Verdinian answered curtly 'Yes, there are.' He gave a broad, angry statement by his 34-year-old interlocutor Vazgen Sisilyan, who had come as a tourist from Lebanon. This fighter of the Armenian Secret Liberation Army, which was found to have been involved in the taking of 60 hostages in Paris and the assassination of the Turkish ambassador, Badraddin Tunbash, in Budapest, now defends his national pride by killing a two-day-old child in Khojaly. Why not? 'The law is on the side of might,' claimed Vazgen Sisilyan and his Russian protectors from the Russian intelligentsia's Karabakh committee. Do our intellectuals not see the simple truth that the professional murderer and rapist, who chooses to trade in hostages, children and women as his profession (a head for a canister of oil), lost his nationality and dignity long ago?

Journalist Y. Arakelyan said that in 1970 a monument was erected in honour of the communards M. Aliyev, M. Mammadov and S. Shakibayov, who delivered oil, bread and grain to the Armenians and surrendered in 1920. The Armenian stonemason scraped a wise aphorism: 'Bread and salt are not shot.'

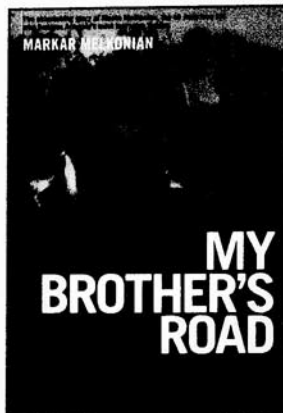
This memorial has now been destroyed. The bread was shot and so was the salt.

Karabakh's Bloody Maelstrom

Baku, Azerbaijan publishing house, 1992, pp. 8–12

MY BROTHER'S ROAD*

Markar Melkonian



There have been many Armenian claims that the Khojaly massacre has either been exaggerated or was a case of Azerbaijanis killing their own people. The difficulty in getting the West to accept that Armenia was the aggressor is remarked on elsewhere in this book (see pages 179, 196). There are some on that side of the war, however, who acknowledge Armenia's responsibility. The preface herein opens with comments by Serzh Sargsyan, Armenian military leader in the war and current president of his country (see page 5) which go some way to dispel such stories. There is another Armenian account that confirms that Khojaly was not a gruesome Azerbaijani scheme to win sympathy for its cause.

Monte Melkonian was born in California and was a member of the terrorist organisation ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of

Armenia), which killed Turkish diplomats and notoriously bombed Orly airport (15.07.1983), killing non-Turks. He is regarded as a national hero in Armenia.

In *My Brother's Road*, Markar Melkonian gives an account of his brother Monte's leading role in the war over Nagorno-Karabakh; he pulls few punches in describing the brutality of war, and gives a stark account of the Khojaly events.

Markar asserts that his brother was opposed to the harming of captives, but faced brazen insubordination and, ten days after hearing about the massacre of 38 captive Azerbaijani villagers in Karadaghly, he was confronted by events with even bloodier results:

... on February 26, he [Monte] stood on a slope near Khojalu, the site of his first recon operation three weeks earlier, and surveyed the trail of bloody shawls strewn across the brown grass and snow. As soon as he had arrived in Khojalu in response to reports of fighting, he had begun piecing together the story of the massacre that had just wound down, perhaps only an hour before his arrival.

Website comments on this book reflect the adoration Armenians feel for Monte Melkonian as a national hero and it might be expected that his brother would play down the ferocity of an assault on civilians that took place under Monte's nominal command. The clarity of Markar's description, however, certainly gives the impression of telling it like it was.

At about 11:00 p.m. the night before, some 2,000 Armenian fighters had advanced through the high grass on three sides of Khojalu, forcing the residents out through the open side to the east. By the morning of February 26, the refugees had made it to the eastern cusp of Mountainous Karabagh and had begun working their way downhill, toward safety in the Azeri city of Agdam, about six miles away. There, in the hillocks and within sight of safety, Mountainous Karabagh soldiers had chased them down. 'They just shot and shot and shot,' a refugee woman, Raisha Aslanova, testified to a Human Rights Watch investigation. The Arabo fighters had then unsheathed the knives they had carried on their hips for so long, and began stabbing.

Again, there have been claims that the scalplings and mutilations found on the corpses were inflicted by Azerbaijanis seeking to dramatise events even further. The Melkonian account gives a clear indication of who wielded the knives and left their 'leader' a horrific exhibition of their ruthlessness:

Now, the only sound was the wind whistling through dry grass, a wind that was too early yet to blow away the stench of corpses. Monte had arrived in Martuni twenty-two days earlier, and since then he had staggered across two killing fields soaked with the fresh blood of captives and unarmed peasants ...

Pity is a rare feature of times of war and the difference between life and death for the innocents caught up in conflict can be a simple matter of tactics or bargaining power. As recorded in the interviews in the opening section of this book, the women and children of Khojaly suffered as either targets or as items for barter.

... When it came to adult males, fighters on both sides seldom distinguished between combatants and non-combatants. But until Khojalu, Armenian fighters had spared women and children, either releasing them or holding them hostage for prisoner exchanges. On this score they had a better track record than their enemies. The attack on Khojalu, however, had gone some distance to even the score.

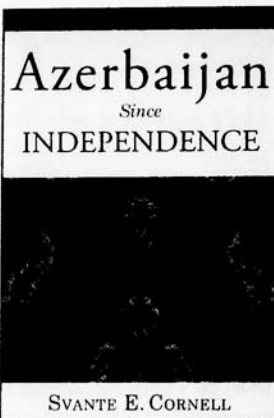
Monte Melkonian's recorded response was to regret the carnage of innocent victims as evidence of military indiscipline among his troops.

Monte crunched over the grass where women and girls lay scattered like broken dolls. 'No discipline', he muttered. He knew the significance of the day's date: it was the run-up to the fourth anniversary of the anti-Armenian pogrom in the city of Sumgait. Khojalu had been a strategic goal, but it had also been an act of revenge.

* I.B.Tauris, London & New York, 2008, pp. 213–214.

THE KHOJALY TRAUMA AND MUTALIBOV'S FALL

Svante E. Cornell



The unsuccessful August 1991 coup against the government of President Mikhail Gorbachev was a defining moment in the conflict over Mountainous Karabakh. The three days of the coup are said to be the only three days of 1991 when no gunshots were heard in Karabakh—an indication of the fears of what the coup might bring in terms of repression.¹ But once Azerbaijan proclaimed independence, so did the Mountainous Karabakh oblast Soviet on September 2, 1991, laying claim, in the process, to the district of Geranboi (in Armenian Shaumyan), to the north of the autonomous province. Azerbaijan responded by seeking to restore control over Karabakh. All military hardware in the republic was nationalized, and Azerbaijani conscripts were recalled from the Soviet military. Yet the Azerbaijani forces were powerless compared to

the much more organized and better-equipped Armenian forces that gradually established military control of village after village in Karabakh. With its hold on the province rapidly slipping, The Azerbaijani Parliament made a largely symbolic decision on November 26 to abolish Karabakh's autonomous status.

On February 25 and 26, 1992, the small Azerbaijani-populated town of Khojaly in Mountainous Karabakh was overrun by Armenian forces, supported by the Russian army's 366th Infantry Regiment. Khojaly had strategic value, as it controlled the airport of Stepanakert, the nearby Karabakh capital. The attack was timed, in all likelihood not coincidentally, to occur on the anniversary of the Sumgait killings of Armenians four years earlier. The combined forces of ethnic Armenians and the Russian infantry regiment attacked the town from three sides, leaving a funnel through which the population might escape. But as the fleeing residents of Khojaly reached the outskirts of a nearby village,

Nakhjivanli, they were met by a "gauntlet of lead and fire."² More than 600 civilians were killed, and several hundred more went missing. Autopsies by the International Committee for the Red Cross indicated that numerous dead bodies were mutilated.³ Although Khojaly was the sole instance of a premeditated massacre of this scale recorded during the conflict over Karabakh, it had a great impact, since the killings spared Armenian forces the trouble of evicting civilians from the Azerbaijani regions they subsequently conquered in and outside Karabakh. Thereafter, when Armenian forces moved in, civilian Azerbaijanis invariably had already fled, fearful of being massacred should they decide to stay. Creating this kind of fear was probably an objective of the Khojaly killings, which, unlike the massacres in Bosnian war, have yet to be investigated. While pro-Armenian authors have put forward the claim that the civilians were killed by Azerbaijanis themselves, no one other than current Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan in an interview with British author Thomas de Waal seems to make the narrative clear:

Before Khojaly, the Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us, they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We were able to break that [stereotype]. And that's what happened.⁴

Khojaly made headlines in the West only gradually, as the event flew in the face of the ready-made Western picture of the conflict, in which Armenian diasporas had successfully managed to portray Karabakh Armenians as the victim of Azerbaijani aggression. The Azerbaijani government's attitude did not help, either. Mütalibov infamously tried to downplay the situation in Karabakh during the events, obviously understanding the impact that his inability to manage the situation would have on his weakening position. But of course, this was a futile attempt: the magnitude of the massacre ensured that the news quickly spread to Baku and, eventually, to the rest of the world, through the reporting of journalists such as Thomas Goltz, Anatol Lieven and Hugh Pope. The Popular Front sought to prevent demonstrations, as anti-Russian feelings were mounting on account of the 366th Infantry Regiment's involvement in Khojaly, and there were fears of anti-Russian rioting in the city. The only protest events were silent demonstrations by the Azerbaijani Writers' Union calling on Mütalibov to resign; they drew several hundred people.⁵ The National Council called an emergency meeting of the Supreme Soviet on

¹ Thomas Goltz, *Azerbaijan Diary* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe), 1998, p. 122.

² Goltz, *Azerbaijan Diary*, pp. 117–130; Goltz, "Nagorno Karabakh Victims Buried in Azerbaijani Towns," *Washington Post*, 28 February, 1992; Goltz, "Armenian Soldiers Massacre Hundreds of Fleeing Families," *Sunday Times* (London), 1 March, 1992; Anatol Lieven, "Corpses Litter Hills in Karabakh," *The Times* (London), March 2, 1992; "Massacre by Armenians Being Reported," *New York Times*, March 3, 1992; Hugh Pope, "600 Azerbaijanis Slain at Khojaly, Investigator Says," *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1992.

³ Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York: NYU Press, 2004), p. 172.

⁴ Goltz, *Azerbaijan Diary*, p. 132.

⁵ A fact pointed out to the author by Thomas Goltz in 1999.

March 5, which attracted thousands of protestors demanding Mutalibov's resignation, Parliament elected a new speaker, Yagub Mamedov, known mainly by his nickname, "Dollar," allegedly derived from his preference for that currency when accepting favors as rector of Baku's Medical University. Against the wishes of the former Communist Party members of the Supreme Soviet but on the urging of the crowd outside and Khojaly's mayor, Mamedov allowed the screening of video footage of Khojaly shot by the late Azerbaijani journalist Chingiz Mustafayev.⁸ As Thomas Goltz, present at the meeting, stated, the shocking footage of dead "changed the history of the country."

A literal wake of stiff, dead bodies trailed back into Karabakh. Many had their hands raised as if shot after having surrendered. Others were mutilated, with fingers cut off and eyes gouged out. Some were apparently scalped ... Then the film was over. But the reaction had just begun: groans and sighs and whispers welled up from the chamber floor as the magnitude of the event began to penetrate ... the deputies. Something big had broken, and there was no going back. New scapegoats were needed and heads had to roll.⁹

Azerbaijan since Independence

M.E. Sharpe Inc.

Armonk, NY & London, pp. 61–63

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XODJALI

Thomas Goltz



February 26, 1992 seemed like a regular working day. Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati was back in town to finally bestow diplomatic recognition on Azerbaijan, as well as to respond to American Secretary of State James Baker III's recent comments about the growing threat of Iranian influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

It was not the Islamic Republic of Iran that posed a threat to the region, remarked the wiry Iranian emissary, but the United States of America. In addition to being the country responsible for continued bloodshed throughout the world, America was actively fomenting conflict in Karabakh. The Islamic Republic, in contrast, was a country interested in peace between nations and people. To that end, Dr. Velayati had brought a peace plan for the increasingly bloody and senseless conflict in

Karabakh—and one that Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to sign. He himself planned to visit Karabakh the next day.

This was newsworthy, and I was getting ready to file a story on the subject to the *Washington Post* when Hijran came rushing into my work room. She had been on the telephone with the information section of the Popular Front, and had some very distressing news; sources in Agdam were reporting a stream of Azeri refugees from Karabakh filling the streets of the city, fleeing a massive attack.

There had been many exaggerated reports about the conflict from both sides, and perhaps this was just another, but I thought it best to start working the phone. Strangely, no one in government answered. Perhaps they were all at the Gulistan complex, having dinner with the Iranian delegation. So, I waited for a while, and then started calling people at home. Around midnight, I got through, Vafa Gulizade.

"Sorry for calling so late," I apologized. "But what about this rumor—"

"I can't talk about it," said Vafa, cutting me off and hanging up.

A sense of unease filled my gut. Vafa was usually polite to a fault. Perhaps he had been asleep? I decided to call again, but the number stayed busy for the next half hour. Maybe

⁸ Portions of the videos are available at In Memory of Chingiz Mustafayev, "Video Archive," www.chingiz-mustafayev.com/video_arxiv.php (downloaded July 2, 2009).

⁹ Goltz, *Azerbaijan Diary*, p. 135.

he left it off the hook, I thought, and made one last effort and the call rang through.

"Vafa" I said, apologizing again. "What is going on?"

"Something very terrible has happened," he groaned.

"What?" I demanded.

"There has been a massacre," he said.

"Where?"

"In Karabakh, a town called Xodjali," he said, and then he hung up the phone again. *Xodjali.*

I had been there before. Twice, in fact. The first time was in September, when we had staked out the airport waiting for Boris Yeltsin to come through. The last time had been a month before, in January 1992.

By then the only way to get to Xodjali was by helicopter because the Armenians had severed the road link to Agdam. I remembered that little adventure all too well. Doubting of the many reports coming from the Armenian side that the Azeris were massively armed and that their helicopters were "buzzing" Armenian villages, I had traveled to Agdam with Journalist Hugh Pope, then of the [London] *Independent* to chat with refugees about their situation.

Refugees were easy to find in Agdam. In fact, they were all over the place. The heaviest concentration was at the local airfield for the simple reason that many of the refugees did not want to be refugees anymore: they were going back to their homes in Xodjali. Their pride had silenced their better sense. One was a 35-year-old mother of four by the name of Zumrud Eyvazova. When I asked why she was returning, she said it was better "to die in Karabakh" than beg in the streets of Agdam."

"Why can't the government open the road?" shouted Zumrud in my ear over the roar of the nearby chopper's engines, "Why are they making us fly in like ducks, waiting to get shot?"

I didn't have an answer.

Then someone lurched toward me from across the airfield. It was Alef Khadjiev, Commander of Airport Security at Xodjali and the gentleman who had saved us from the Agdam drunks during Yeltsin's visit three months earlier. He had been pretty chipper then, but despite the broad smile that he gave me, it was no longer time for fun and games. I asked him what the situation was in his hometown.

"Come on," said Khadjiev. "Let's go to Xodjali—you'll see for yourself and you can write the truth if you dare."

Behind him stood an MI-8 helicopter, its blades slowly turning. A mass of refugees were clawing their way aboard. The chopper was already dangerously overloaded with humanity and foodstuffs, and waiting on the tarmac was even more luggage, including a rusted 70mm cannon and assorted boxes of ammunition.

"I'm not going," said Pope, "I've got a wife and kids."

The rotor began to twirl faster, and I had to decide quickly.

"See you later," I said, wondering if I ever would.

I got aboard, one of more than 50 people on a craft designed for 24, in addition to the numerous munitions and provisions.

I thought to myself: *There's still time to get off.*

Then it was too late. With a lurch, we lifted off the ground and my stomach smashed through my ears. I could see Pope waving at me as while walking away from the field and I wished I was with him on terra firma.

The MI-8 corkscrewed up to its flight altitude of 3,500 feet—high enough to sail over the Askeron Gap to Xodjali and avoid Armenian ground fire. Two dozen helicopters had been hit over the past two months, including the one filled with officials in November, as well as another 'bird' a week before. The machine we were flying in had picked up a round through the fuel tank the week before, the flight engineer told me. It was lucky that the fuel was low and the bullet came in high. This was all very reassuring to learn as we plugged through the Askeron Gap, bucking headwinds and sleet.

Through breaks in the cloud cover I could see trucks and automobiles driving the roads below—Armenian machines, fueled by gas and diesel brought in via their own air-bridge from Armenia (or, purchased from Azeri war profiteers).

Finally and mercifully, after a trip that seemed to take hours but really only lasted maybe 20 minutes, we began our corkscrew descent to the Xodjali airfield. No one who has not been aboard such a flight can appreciate what I felt when the wheels touched ground.

I am alive! I wanted to shout, but thought it most appropriate to stay cool and act like I did such things twice a day.

"How do you feel?" Alef Khadjiev asked me.

"Normal" no," I lied in Russian, cool as cake.

Meanwhile, the chopper was mobbed by residents—some coming to greet loved ones who had returned, others trying to be the first aboard the helicopter when it went back up and out. All were there to get the most recent news from the rest of Azerbaijan: newspapers, gossip, rumors. The reason for the excitement was pretty obvious: there were working phones in Xodjali, no working anything—no electricity, no heating oil, no running water. The only link with the outside world was the helicopter—and those were under threat with each run.

The isolation of the place became all too apparent as night fell. I joined Khadjiev and some of his men in the makeshift mess hall of the tiny garrison, and while we dined on Soviet army SPAM with raw onions and stale bread to flickering candlelight, he gave me what might be called a front-line briefing.

The situation was bad and getting worse, a depressed Khadjiev told me. The Armenians had taken all the outlying villages, one by one, over the past three months. Only two towns remained in Azeri hands: Xodjali and Shusha, and the road between them was cut. While I knew the situation had been deteriorating, I had no idea it was so bad.

"It's because you believe what they say in Baku," Alef chortled. "We have been utterly sold out!"

Baku could open the road to Agdam in a day if the government wanted to, he said. He now believed the government actually wanted the Karabakh business to simmer on, to distract public attention while the elite continued to plunder the country.

"If you write that and say I said it, I'll deny it," he said. "But it's true."

The sixty men under his command lacked both the weapons and training to defend the perimeter, he told me. The only Azeri soldiers worth their salt were four veterans from the war in Afghanistan. The rest were greenhorns. If the Armenians shot off one round, they would answer with a barrage of fire, wasting half their precious ammunition.

So it was that night: I was awakened from sleep by a distant burst of fire coming from the direction of a neighboring Armenian town called Laraguk. The Armenian sniper fire was returned with at least 100 rounds from the Azeri side.

The firefight continued sporadically until dawn, making it impossible to sleep. No one knew when the Armenians would make their final push to take the town, but everyone knew that some night they would. Xodjali controlled the Stepanakert airport and was clearly a major objective for the Armenians. I thought to myself: I would take it, if I were them. But what would the residents do when they did?"

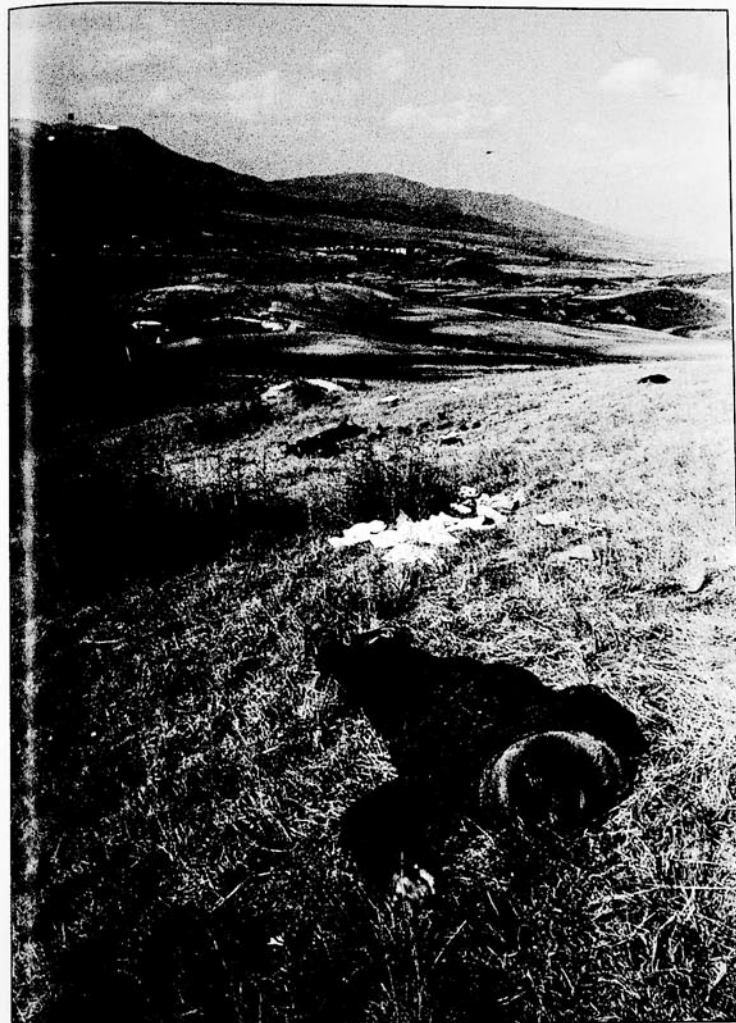
In the morning, people were just standing around—literally. There was not a single teashop or restaurant in which to idle away the time, so people just stood in small knots in the mud and gravel streets, waiting. Waiting for what? The only person I saw actually doing something was a very fat girl who worked as a sales clerk in the fabric shop where there was nothing to sell. I first saw her waddling in to work in the morning, I next saw her in a video, lying dead on the ground with a pile of others—but that was later.

We whiled away the morning around the airport, waiting. A photographer from an Azeri news agency happened to be around, so the soldiers put on a good show, rolling out of their bunkers and running behind the old BTR, recently acquired from some Russian deserter. It was the only mechanized weaponry I saw in the hands of the Azeris in Xodjali.¹

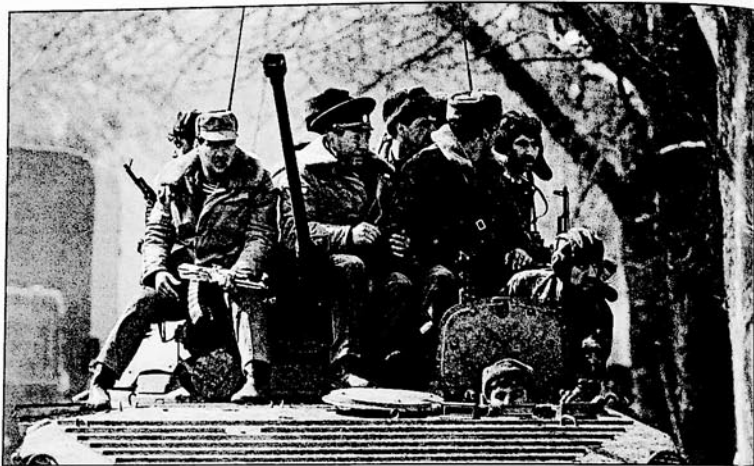
"These guys are going to die," I said to myself. "And I don't want to die with them just because they think war is theater." Alef Khadjiev seemed to agree. We sat together in silence, watching his men run hither and yon, brave looks carved on their physiognomies for the sake of camera. I felt sick and refused to take a picture or write a note.

Finally, around noon, I heard the tell-tale whine of a chopper moving high over the Gap. *Thank God!* I silently crowed but tried to look indifferent. I made my way toward

¹ Armenians would later justify taking out Xodjali because it was a 'major military base' used to mount rocket attacks on Stepanakert. This charge can be dismissed as propaganda. The main Azeri base was up in Shusha, the 'impregnable fortress' overlooking Stepanakert. Hicran had traveled there in late December and found the place an armed camp under the command of Popular Front member Rahim Gaziyeu. Morale was high because Gaziyeu had brought up some 'secret weapons': GRAD multiple missile launchers, which he subsequently used to rain indiscriminate death and destruction down on Stepanakert from the heights.



The end of the 'safe corridor'. Azerbaijanis killed by the troops of Armenia
Photo: David Brauchli/Sygma/Corbis



After the Khojaly Massacre; troops prepare
Photo: Georges de Keerle/Sygma/Corbis



Fall of the innocents
Photo: David Brauchli/Sygma/Corbis



Chingiz Iskenderov, right, weeps over the coffin containing the remains of his brother as other family members grieve in the background at an Aghdam cemetery Thursday, 5 March 1992
Photo: AP /Liu HengShing



Brought together in sorrow
Photo: David Brauchli/Sygma/Corbis



Survivors straggle in to safety
Photo: Klaus Reisinger



Everyone is touched by the tragedy
Photo: Klaus Reisinger



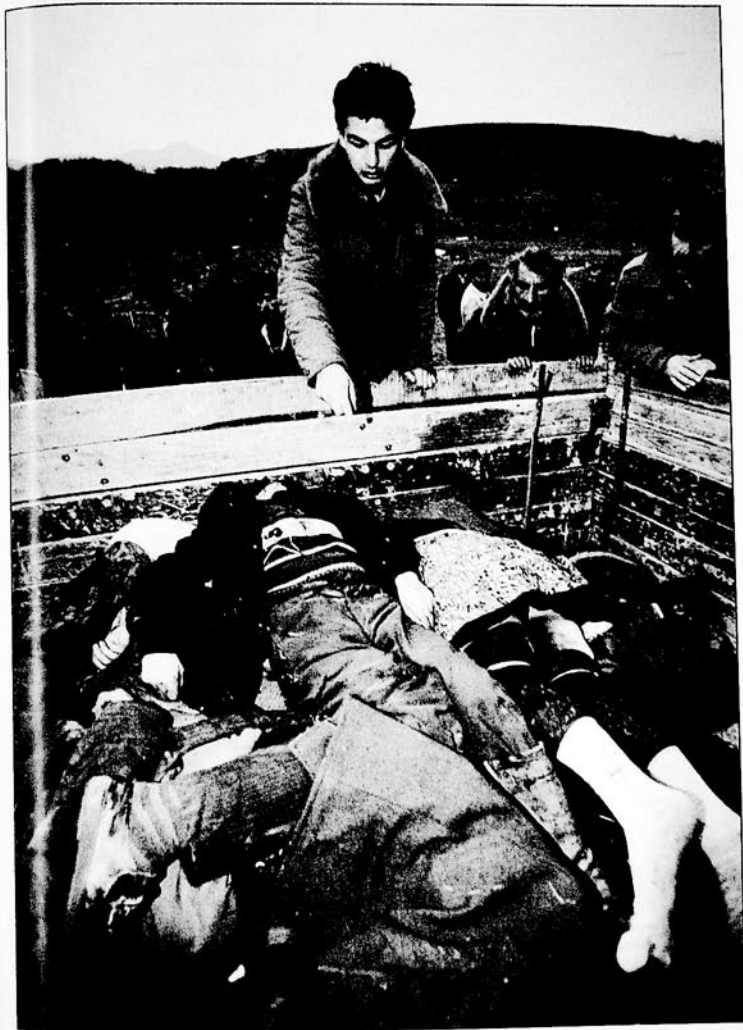
Grief without bounds
Photo: Klaus Reisinger



A prayer for the lost
Photo: Klaus Reisinger



Weeping 'tears of blood'
Photo: Klaus Reisinger



Counting the cost
Photo: Klaus Reisinger



The graveyard, Aghdam
Photo: Klaus Reisinger

the airfield, and arrived just in time to see the overloaded bird disgorge its cargo of food, weapons and returning refugees. One kid got off with a canary in a cage, or maybe he was getting on. I cannot say for sure. When those getting on seemed more than those getting off, I tried to get on myself. I did not care that the chopper was carrying twice or three times its weight limit, nor did I mind that part of the weight was a corpse—one of Khadijiev's boys picked off by a sniper the night before. I wondered if we had had Soviet-style Spam dinner together, but thought it impolite to pull back the death sheet and stare.

The engines gunned and whined, and we lifted with a lurch—but this time I was not afraid of the flight. I just wanted out. We climbed and climbed, corkscrewing high in the sky and blowing over the Askeron Gap at 3,500 feet with tailwinds. Maybe we took some ground fire; I don't know. But this I did: I would never go back to Xodjali again.

There was no need for vows. The last helicopter flight into the surrounded town was on February 13th. The last food, save for locally grown potatoes, ran out on the 21st. The clock was ticking toward doom. It struck on the night of February 26th—the anniversary of the massacre of Armenians at Sumgayit in 1988.

We were in the car at seven and drove as quickly as we could across the monotonous flats of central Azerbaijan. Brown cotton fields stretched to the horizon in all directions, and men stood along the roadside waving dead ducks at us as we roared by, hoping for a sale.

We stopped for gas at a town named Tartar and asked the local mayor what was happening in Agdam. He said he didn't know anything. We stopped again in another town called Barda and took a moment to inquire about events and rumors. Clueless looks greeted us.

We were starting to think that the whole thing was a colossal bum steer when we arrived in Aghdam and drove into the middle of town, looking for a bite to eat. It was there that we ran into the refugees.

There were 10, then 20, then hundreds of screaming, wailing residents of Xodjali. Many recognized me because of my previous visits to the town. They clutched at my clothes, babbling out the names of their dead relatives and friends, all the while dragging me to the morgue attached to the main mosque in town to show me the bodies of their relatives.

At first we found it hard to believe what the survivors were saying: The Armenians had surrounded Xodjali and delivered an ultimatum: "Get out or die." Then came a babble of details of the last days, many concerning Commander Alef Khadijiev.

Sensing doom, Alef had begged the government to bring in choppers to save at least some of the noncombatants, but Baku had done nothing. Then, on the night of February 25th, Armenian "fedayeen" hit the town from three sides. The fourth had been left open, creating a funnel through which refugees might flee. Alef gave the order to evacuate: the fighting men would run interference along the hillside of the Gorgor River Valley, while

the women, children and graybeards escaped below. Groping their way through the night under fire, by the morning of February 26th, the refugees made it to the outskirts of a village called Nakhjivanli, on the cusp of Karabakh. They crossed the road there and began working their way downhill toward the forward lines and the city Agdam, only some six miles away via the Azeri outpost at Shelli. It was there in the hillocks within sight of safety, that something horrible awaited them—a gauntlet of lead and fire.

"They just shot, and shot and shot," wailed a woman named Raisha Aslanova. She said her husband and son-in-law were killed in front of her eyes and her daughter was missing.

Scores, hundreds, possibly a thousand had been slaughtered in a turkey-shoot of civilians and their handful of defenders. Aside from counting every body, there was no way to tell how many were dead. Most of the bodies remained out of reach, in the no-man's land between the lines that had become a killing zone and a picnic for crows.

One thousand dead in one night? It seemed impossible. But when we began cross-referencing, the wild claims about the extent of the killing began to look all too true. The local religious leader in Agdam, Imam Sadik Sadikov, broke down in tears as he tallied the names of the registered dead on an abacus. There were 477 that day, a number that did not include those missing and presumed dead, nor those victims whose entire families had been wiped out and thus had no one to register them as dead before God. The number 477 represented only the number of confirmed dead by survivors who had made it to Agdam and were physically able to fulfill, however imperfectly, the Muslim practice of burying the dead within 24 hours.

Elif Kaban of Reuters was stunned into giddiness. My wife, Hicran, was paralyzed. Photographer Oleg Litvin fell into a catatonic state and would only shoot pictures when I threw him at the subject: corpses, graves, and the wailing women who were gouging their cheeks with their nails. Yes, it required stomach, but it was time to work, to report: a massacre had occurred, and the world had to know.

We scoured the town, making repeated stops at the hospital, morgue and the growing graveyards, out to the ends of the defensive perimeter for horrible spot interviews with straggling survivors as they stumbled in, and then back to the hospital to check on new wounded and then back to the morgue to watch truckloads of bodies being brought in for identification and ritual washing before burial. I looked for familiar faces and thought I saw some people I knew: one corpse was identified as that of a young veterinarian who had been shot through the eye point-blank. I tried to remember if I had known or been introduced to such a man in Xodjali, but could not be sure. Other bodies, stiffened by rigor mortis, seemed to speak of execution: arms were thrown up as if in permanent surrender. A number of heads lacked hair, as if the corpses had been scalped. It was not a pretty sight.

Toward late afternoon, someone mentioned that a military helicopter on loan from the Russian garrison at Ganje would be making a flight over the killing fields, and so we traveled out to the airport. There was no flight, but there I found old friends.

"Tomas," a man in military uniform gasped, and grabbed me in an embrace, and wept, "*Nash Nachal nik ...*"

I recognized him as one of Alef Khadjiev's boys, a tall, skinny man named Asif who had been in KGB before volunteering for duty in Karabakh. He was speaking in Russian, babbling—but only one word got through the tears: the commander ...

A few other survivors from the Xodjali garrison stumbled over and seized me. Of the forty-odd men under Alef Khadjiev's command, only ten were left alive. Dirty, exhausted and exuding what can only be described as survivor's guilt, they pieced together the awful night and next day and the death of their commander, Alef Khadjiev. He was killed by a bullet to the brain while defending the women and children. Most of the women and children died anyway.

Toward evening, we returned to the government guesthouse in the middle of town to look for a telephone and there we met a drained and exhausted Tamerlan Garayev. A native of Agdam, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament was one of the few government officials of any sort I saw there. He was interrogating two Turkmen deserters from the Stepanakert-based 366th Motorized Infantry Brigade of the Russian Interior Ministry forces. They had taken refuge in Xodjali a week before. The last piece of the tragic puzzle suddenly dropped into place: it was not only Armenians who had assaulted the doomed town, but the Russians.

"Talk, talk!" Tamerlan demanded, as the two men stared at us.

"We ran away because the Armenian and Russian officers beat us because we were Muslims," one of the pair, a man named Agha Mohammad Mutif, related. "We just wanted to go home to Turkmenistan."

"Then what happened?" Tamerlan demanded.

"Then they attacked the town," said the other. "We recognized vehicles from our unit." I thought of Commander Sergei Shukrin and wondered if he had been involved.

The two fled along with everyone else in town and were helping a group of women and children through the mountains when they were discovered by the Armenians and the 366th.

"They opened fire and at least twelve were killed in our group alone," Mutif recounted. "After that, we just ran and ran."

A Russian-backed assault by Armenians on an Azeri town, which resulted in up to 1,000 dead? This was news. But it was at this point that things started becoming strange. No one seemed interested in the story we had stumbled on. Apparently, the idea that the roles of the good guys had been reversed was too much: Armenians slaughtering Azeris?

² After three days of denials that anything at all untoward had happened in Xodjali, the government picked up this emotionally inflated number as 'fact.' Later the head of the commission of investigation into the massacre gave me the still 'provisional' number of 688 confirmed dead and buried, with 400 more left unaccounted for. This

"You are suggesting that more people died in one attack in Karabakh than the total number that we have reported killed over the past four years?" observed BBC's Moscow correspondent when I tipped him on the slaughter. "That's impossible."

"Take a look at Reuters!"

"There's nothing on the wire."

Indeed. While Elif Kaban was churning out copy on her portable Telex, nothing was appearing on the wires. Someone was either spiking her copy, or was rolling it into a larger, anodyne regional report of 'conflicting allegations.' The BBC stayed silent for three days, without so much as an 'alleged' or 'reported.'

To be fair, the government and press in Baku didn't exactly support our reporting. While we were off in Agham trying to get out the news, the presidential spokesman was claiming that Xodjali's scrappy defenders had beaten back an Armenian attack and suffered only two dead. Just a regular night at Mountainous Karabakh.

We knew differently, but it was the three of us against the Azerbaijani state lie machine.

Finally, I got a line through to the Moscow bureau of the *Washington Post* and said I wanted to file a story. The staffers there were too busy to take a dictation but reluctantly patched me through to the Foreign Desk in Washington when I insisted. I used 477 as the number of dead, as religiously reported to Imam Sadikov, and was dragged over the coals by editors: Where did I get this number from, when Baku was still reporting that only two had died? Had I seen all the bodies? What about a little balance? The Armenians were reporting a 'massive Azeri offensive.' Why was not that in my report?

I was about to answer that this bit of information was not in my report for the very good reason that it had not happened, when the first *Kristal* missile crashed into Aghdam, about a mile away from the government guesthouse I was calling from. Then came others; and when one crashed into the building next door and blew out all the windows in our downtown *dacha*, we thought it best to get off the phone and into the basement before we were blown to smithereens.

After about an hour of huddling under mattresses, we came up for air and decided it was probably a good idea to leave Aghdam. So did about 50,000 other people and we discovered ourselves in the middle of a mass exodus of trucks, cars, horses and people on bicycles, all rushing to flee eastward.

provisional number was unofficially confirmed by the Aghdam-based representative of the International Committee for the Red Cross on the basis of the number of body bags supplied by ICRC. Of the recovered dead, autopsies were performed on 187, revealing all manner of barbarity—severed penises, breasts, etc. Armenian sources, meanwhile, consistently maintain that 'only' 200 died—most of whom were allegedly caught in crossfire when Azeri troops from Aghdam allegedly sallied forth in a counterattack—that is, the Azeris killed their own. Most recently—and most outrageous!—in 1997, the Armenian Foreign Ministry cited Human Rights Watch/Helsinki Report on Karabakh, and the response from Jeri Laber of the HRW/H was to demand an immediate retraction and apology from the Armenian Foreign Ministry, because nothing in the HRW/H report even vaguely hinted at the Azeris killing their own.

I broke the story about the Xodjali massacre with a February 27 world exclusive on an inside page in the *Washington Post*.¹ This was followed by a European front page of the London *Sunday Times*. By then, the international hack-pack had started parachuting in to count bodies and confirm that something awful had really happened. The first Western reporter to actually get into the killing fields and perform the grisly task of checking documents on the dead was Anatoli Lieven of the London *Times*. His companion was the late Rory Peck of *Frontline News*, another cool professional and friend.

Others performed less well. One reporter from Agence France-Presse, arrived in Aghdam the night we left and found the city 'quiet,' apparently having confused the silence that followed the missile-induced exodus of 50,000 people with peacefulness. Still another, while a guest at my house, abused the confidence of Vafa Guluzade by grossly misquoting him. At the height of the crisis, Douglas Kennedy, son of Robert, showed up with a KGB minder/translator from St. Petersburg, and thought he might do a little poking around. After I convinced him that his translator would probably get killed by a mob, Kennedy took my advice and hired my two 'kids,' Vugar and Elchin, and then failed to pay them.

The government of Azerbaijan, meanwhile, had performed a complete about-face on the issue. The same people who had remained unavailable during the early days of the crisis were suddenly asking me to provide telephone numbers of foreign correspondents in Moscow whom they could invite down, at government expense, to report on the massacre.⁴

I did not react very well. I almost physically assaulted the Presidential Press Secretary, Rasim Agayev, and publicly accused him of lying. The spokesman was not pleased and began a rumor that I was an Armenian spy sent to Xodjali to ferret out 'military secrets' during my January visit to the doomed town. I was temporarily detained, thanks to that charge, and started to slide into a very bad mood. For the record, the man who interrogated me was Mahir Javadov, brother of Rovshan Javadov, a name that would figure large in subsequent political developments.

¹ Due to bad communication and my own churlishness, I started bad-mouthing the foreign editor David Ignatius and the rest of the Post foreign desk for 'eviscerating' my copy, and announced I would no longer write for them. Certain writers and researchers of a pan-Turkic persuasion began lionizing me for my 'principled resignation.' Hogwash. Months later, when I received tear sheets of my several files over this period, I discovered to my deepest chagrin that David and his team had run virtually every word I had filed. For the record, then: I screwed up, and David Ignatius had the courage to run with a story many others would not touch.

⁴ The government also began churning out pamphlets and picture books on Xodjali, replete with the most gruesome images imaginable to use as 'press packs' for visiting dignitaries. The publications were so badly produced that they became counterproductive. When in Yerevan, I stopped in the Foreign Ministry information section and discovered a stack of the Azeri literature on Xodjali on display. When I asked why the Armenians were passing it around, the response spoke volumes about the Azer-prop effort: "We keep these on hand to show visitors," smirked the information clerk.

When I was released, I went downtown and found myself sitting around in a commercial shop with a bunch of black marketeers, vaguely waiting for rubles to arrive in exchange for my dollars, when the whole thing hit me and hit me hard.

The evening streets were still filled with smiling shoppers, apparently oblivious or indifferent to the fate of the citizens of Xodjali. It was the same men in leather jackets and the same woman with far too much rouge on their cheeks and they were all smiling and laughing and parading and I have to say I hated them all. Maybe they didn't know what I did. Maybe they knew but didn't care lest it drive them insane.

I canceled the dollar deal, walked out of the shop and wandered the streets. I think it rained, but I can't be sure. I wandered and wandered, unable to stop anywhere or see or talk to anyone for hours and hours.

"Ha ha," someone cackled, as they turned the key to their car.

"Ho ho," someone else chortled, as they lurched out of a *Komisyon* shop, bottle of Finnish vodka under their arm.

I wanted to slash their tires, smash their noses, burn houses—do something, and violently. But I did nothing but wander streets and avoid humanity. It was better like that. When I got home, I sat down and poured myself a long drink and drank it, and Hijran asked me where I had been.

"Xodjali," someone said, in a voice I did not know.

I was there with the ghosts in a dumpy town with no food to speak of or water to wash and all the people I knew or had known there were dead, dead, dead, and I just started to cry and cry and cry.

There were not too many bodies. Most were still in the hills, waiting for the higher temperatures of spring and for rot to set in. Some, the few, were being spaded into the shallow ground of the growing Martyrs' Cemetery across from the parliament building in Baku. One of those was Alef Khadjiev. I liked to think of him as a friend because we had consumed a few drinks together. A jocular cop with a big swagger and smile, Alef had managed to galvanise the Xodjali community around him in the belief that despite the odds and an almost total lack of support from Baku they could hang on and survive. But now Alef Khadjiev was dead. He had bought a bullet through the brain and after rotting for a week in the mountains of Black Garden his body was bought for 100 liters of gasoline and then brought back to Baku to be buried with military honors.

Despite the proximity of the parliament across the street, no one from the government came to the funeral, and maybe that was out of good taste, because had they been there, whispering eulogies about courage and fortitude, Alef, the hero and then martyr of Xodjali, might have broken free of the bonds of death and climbed out his grave and strangled the hypocrites with his own cold hands. He was that sort of guy.

But they were not there, and the funeral procession was small because Alef was a native of Xodjali and all or at least most of the would-be mourners were either dead or

had become refugees and had to be brought to Baku by truck or bus or by train for the last rites.

The exception was Alef's widow, Gala, a chubby Russian girl with a hint of a moustache who lived in Baku. We had met in Agdam in the aftermath of the massacre and she refused to believe that her husband was dead. Aside from an overwhelming sense of grief, she was frightened out of her wits, wondering how she could live without him.

"I am just Russian, a Russian!" she cried. "And now everyone looks at me with hatred!"

I gave her my telephone number in Baku and told her to call if there was anything I could do. She called a few days later, babbling into the phone:

"Tomas," she wailed. "Alef is here."

At first, I thought a miracle of mistaken identity had occurred and that Alef was still alive. But Gala was only calling to tell me that Alef's remains had been recovered in an exchange with the Armenians for several gallons of gasoline and then had been shipped to Baku for burial. It was tough for me to understand her Russian on the telephone, and probably a lot tougher for her to have to pick up the phone at all. But she stayed coherent long enough to give me her address and the time of the funeral procession. I went, not knowing what to expect: A week-old cadaver in the living room? Mutilated like others? Scalped like some? I got in a taxi and traveled through a wasteland of hissing, blue-and pink-belching pipes of the oil-refining area of Baku, driving over streets that seemingly had never seen repair. We drove and drove, and it was a drive through an utterly depressing landscape, the sort that no one ever sees or admits to having seen: broken, diseased and bad. It was a symbol of the rapacity and ugliness of Azerbaijan. How can you allow people to live and die like this?

Complicating my dark mood was the fact that the Azeri taxi driver only wanted to make jokes, and in Russian. I told him what I thought. I told him that I was going to attend the funeral of my friend Alef Khadjiev, martyr of Karabakh, and that all the people of Baku were greedy cowards and that only good men died and the filth remind behind. He agreed, refusing to take the money for the ride. It was his contribution to national defense, or something.

I got out of the taxi in front of the series of high-rise, Soviet-style buildings. Walking through the mourners, I saw people I knew or at least recognized, and embraced them. Then I saw Gala. She was standing in the back of a truck carrying the flag-draped coffin, holding the hand of her smiling child, who was still oblivious to what had happened to her father. I said something stupid like 'be strong.' I tried to plant a hand-extended kiss on the coffin perched on the back of the truck, but I could not reach it, and decided against climbing up on the truck, and just waited for the procession to proceed.

There were plenty of people crying. Everyone but me. My eyes were dry; I do not know why. Then someone, somewhere responsible for formalities, gave the word, and the column started out toward the Martyrs' Cemetery in the heights above Baku. The funeral train in was the same as my journey out, although the route was different: another broken

road leading through another industrial wasteland. It was Alef's route to anywhere, nowhere, death.

We arrived at the Shehidler Xiyabani, or Martyrs' Lane Cemetery, the place where victims of the Soviet army crackdown on January 20, 1990, were buried in a long line along a granite wall shaded by dwarf cypress trees and pine. I had visited the cemetery before and I have visited it since, but it was different this time. I was not there as a journalist covering the event or even a political/cultural tourist. I was there as a mourner for Alef Khadjiev, the most recent addition to the second tier of graves, where the dates of death are different from those in the first row. There was no third row, yet, but it was a place that would continue to grow.

Alef's was the 127th grave, a hole in the ground surrounded by freshly dug earth. His casket was lifted down from the truck, and I joined the pallbearers as they hoisted it on their shoulders and brought Alef's remains down the line, as a local man of religion recited the *Fatiha*, or Muslim creed of faith. This seemed odd because I was not sure that Alef was actually Muslim except in the formal sense of the word. He never expressed anything approaching piety to me, and he was a drinking man. He did not smoke, and that was really odd, because Azeris usually smoke all the time, even at funerals. Another strange thing about Alef was that he didn't like Turks. He once told me that he had found too many 'Made in Turkey' labels in the trash cans of Stepanakert to believe in any pan-Turkic ideal.

I was thinking thoughts like these because I was remembering, which is what you are supposed to do when you put bodies in the ground. Alef Khadjiev was the first of a whole string of people I knew who died violently over the next few years, so he got more thought than most.

Alef's wife, Gala, and her Russian relatives were confused by the ritual placement of the body, the pious incantations, and the fact that the week-old corpse had to be lifted out of the casket to be put in the hole dug in the muddy ground. They put the body in. An honor guard clicked heels, slapped dummy slugs in their Kalashnikovs, and let off three volleys. The empty shells fell clattering on the granite walkway. I picked up one and put it in my pocket. Then the family and the intimate friends began covering the body with dirt and the wailing really began. Women scratched their cheeks and men sobbed last regards. I was invited to say something into the grave, but declined. I had quite a bit to say but I didn't want to say it, even in a language no one would understand. Cultural differences and all. I would do it differently today.

Then another, larger funeral procession started moving down Martyrs' Row. They were heading for the shallow grave next to Alef's. It was the corner spot and the next corpse will start a new row, even then being dug among the dwarf cypress trees in anticipation of the next to die in that horrible place called Karabakh. More young men would soon lie here, and their numbers would soon exceed all those killed in Xodjali, and the events of February 25-26, 1992, would soon become just a detail, just another grim statistic in the ongoing litany of death and destruction in Karabakh, the Black Garden.

I swore, I would remember Alef and all the others, whose names I never knew but whose faces were etched on my memory forever.

Yes, I would remember Xodjali.

It was a dump. But now it was dead.

Azerbaijan Diary

M.E. Sharpe Inc.

Armonk, NY & London, pp. 117-130

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APPENDIX

UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERALS/RES/822 (1993)
30 April 1993

RESOLUTION 822 (1993)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 3205th meeting,
on 30 April 1993

The Security Council,

Recalling the statements of the President of the Security Council of 29 January 1993 (S/25199) and of 6 April 1993 (S/25539) concerning the Nagorny-Karabakh conflict,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General dated 14 April 1993 (S/25600),

Expressing its serious concern at the deterioration of the relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan,

Noting with alarm the escalation in armed hostilities and, in particular, the latest invasion of the Kelbadjar district of the Republic of Azerbaijan by local Armenian forces,

Concerned that this situation endangers peace and security in the region,

Expressing grave concern at the displacement of a large number of civilians and the humanitarian emergency in the region, in particular in the Kelbadjar district,

Reaffirming the respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States in the region,

Reaffirming also the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory,

Expressing its support for the peace process being pursued within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and deeply concerned at the disruptive effect that the escalation in armed hostilities can have on that process,

1. Demands the immediate cessation of all hostilities and hostile acts with a view to establishing a durable cease-fire, as well as immediate

withdrawal of all occupying forces from the Kelbadjar district and other recently occupied areas of Azerbaijan;

2. Urges the parties concerned immediately to resume negotiations for the resolution of the conflict within the framework of the peace process of the Minsk Group of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and refrain from any action that will obstruct a peaceful solution of the problem;

3. Calls for unimpeded access for international humanitarian relief efforts in the region, in particular in all areas affected by the conflict in order to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population and reaffirms that all parties are bound to comply with the principles and rules of international humanitarian law;

4. Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Chairman-in-Office of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe as well as the Chairman of the Minsk Group of the Conference to assess the situation in the region, in particular in the Kelbadjar district of Azerbaijan, and to submit a further report to the Council;

5. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

UNITED
NATIONS

Security Council

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Distr.
GENERALS/RES/853 (1993)
29 July 1993

RESOLUTION 853 (1993)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 3259th meeting,
on 29 July 1993

The Security Council,

Reaffirming its resolution 822 (1993) of 30 April 1993,

Having considered the report issued on 27 July 1993 by the Chairman of the Minsk Group of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) (S/26184),

Expressing its serious concern at the deterioration of relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijani Republic and at the tensions between them,

Welcoming acceptance by the parties concerned of the timetable of urgent steps to implement its resolution 822 (1993),

Noting with alarm the escalation in armed hostilities and, in particular, the seizure of the district of Agdam in the Azerbaijani Republic,

Concerned that this situation continues to endanger peace and security in the region,

Expressing once again its grave concern at the displacement of large numbers of civilians in the Azerbaijani Republic and at the serious humanitarian emergency in the region,

Reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Azerbaijani Republic and of all other States in the region,

Reaffirming also the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory,

1. Condemns the seizure of the district of Agdam and of all other recently occupied areas of the Azerbaijani Republic;

2. Further condemns all hostile actions in the region, in particular attacks on civilians and bombardments of inhabited areas;

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/...

3. Demands the immediate cessation of all hostilities and the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces involved from the district of Agdam and all other recently occupied areas of the Azerbaijani Republic;
4. Calls on the parties concerned to reach and maintain durable cease-fire arrangements;
5. Reiterates in the context of paragraphs 3 and 4 above its earlier calls for the restoration of economic, transport and energy links in the region;
6. Endorses the continuing efforts by the Minsk Group of the CSCE to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict, including efforts to implement resolution 822 (1993), and expresses its grave concern at the disruptive effect that the escalation of armed hostilities has had on these efforts;
7. Welcomes the preparations for a CSCE monitor mission with a timetable for its deployment, as well as consideration within the CSCE of the proposal for a CSCE presence in the region;
8. Urges the parties concerned to refrain from any action that will obstruct a peaceful solution to the conflict, and to pursue negotiations within the Minsk Group of the CSCE, as well as through direct contacts between them, towards a final settlement;
9. Urges the Government of the Republic of Armenia to continue to exert its influence to achieve compliance by the Armenians of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic with its resolution 822 (1993) and the present resolution, and the acceptance by this party of the proposals of the Minsk Group of the CSCE;
10. Urges States to refrain from the supply of any weapons and munitions which might lead to an intensification of the conflict or the continued occupation of territory;
11. Calls once again for unimpeded access for international humanitarian relief efforts in the region, in particular in all areas affected by the conflict, in order to alleviate the increased suffering of the civilian population and reaffirms that all parties are bound to comply with the principles and rules of international humanitarian law;
12. Requests the Secretary-General and relevant international agencies to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the affected civilian population and to assist displaced persons to return to their homes;
13. Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Chairman-in-Office of the CSCE as well as the Chairman of the Minsk Group, to continue to report to the Council on the situation;
14. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.



Security Council

Distr.
GENERALS/RES/874 (1993)
14 October 1993

RESOLUTION 874 (1993)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 3292nd meeting,
on 14 October 1993

The Security Council,

Reaffirming its resolutions 822 (1993) of 30 April 1993 and 853 (1993) of 29 July 1993, and recalling the statement read by the President of the Council, on behalf of the Council, on 18 August 1993 (S/26326),

Having considered the letter dated 1 October 1993 from the Chairman of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) Minsk Conference on Nagorno Karabakh addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/26522),

Expressing its serious concern that a continuation of the conflict in and around the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic, and of the tensions between the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijani Republic, would endanger peace and security in the region,

Taking note of the high-level meetings which took place in Moscow on 8 October 1993 and expressing the hope that they will contribute to the improvement of the situation and the peaceful settlement of the conflict,

Reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Azerbaijani Republic and of all other States in the region,

Reaffirming also the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory,

Expressing once again its grave concern at the human suffering the conflict has caused and at the serious humanitarian emergency in the region and expressing in particular its grave concern at the displacement of large numbers of civilians in the Azerbaijani Republic,

1. Calls upon the parties concerned to make effective and permanent the cease-fire established as a result of the direct contacts undertaken with the assistance of the Government of the Russian Federation in support of the CSCE Minsk Group;

S/RES/874 (1993)
Page 2

2. Reiterates again its full support for the peace process being pursued within the framework of the CSCE, and for the tireless efforts of the CSCE Minsk Group;

3. Welcomes and commends to the parties the "Adjusted timetable of urgent steps to implement Security Council resolutions 822 (1993) and 853 (1993)" set out on 28 September 1993 at the meeting of the CSCE Minsk Group and submitted to the parties concerned by the Chairman of the Group with the full support of nine other members of the Group, and calls on the parties to accept it;

4. Expresses the conviction that all other pending questions arising from the conflict and not directly addressed in the "Adjusted timetable" should be settled expeditiously through peaceful negotiations in the context of the CSCE Minsk process;

5. Calls for the immediate implementation of the reciprocal and urgent steps provided for in the CSCE Minsk Group's "Adjusted timetable", including the withdrawal of forces from recently occupied territories and the removal of all obstacles to communications and transportation;

6. Calls also for an early convening of the CSCE Minsk Conference for the purpose of arriving at a negotiated settlement to the conflict as provided for in the timetable, in conformity with the 24 March 1992 mandate of the CSCE Council of Ministers;

7. Requests the Secretary-General to respond favourably to an invitation to send a representative to attend the CSCE Minsk Conference and to provide all possible assistance for the substantive negotiations that will follow the opening of the Conference;

8. Supports the monitoring mission developed by the CSCE;

9. Calls on all parties to refrain from all violations of international humanitarian law and renews its call in resolutions 822 (1993) and 853 (1993) for unimpeded access for international humanitarian relief efforts in all areas affected by the conflict;

10. Urges all States in the region to refrain from any hostile acts and from any interference or intervention which would lead to the widening of the conflict and undermine peace and security in the region;

11. Requests the Secretary-General and relevant international agencies to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the affected civilian population and to assist refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in security and dignity;

12. Requests also the Secretary-General, the Chairman-in-Office of the CSCE and the Chairman of the CSCE Minsk Conference to continue to report to the Council on the progress of the Minsk process and on all aspects of the situation on the ground, and on present and future cooperation between the CSCE and the United Nations in this regard;

13. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

UNITED
NATIONS



Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/RES/884 (1993)
12 November 1993

RESOLUTION 884 (1993)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 3313th meeting,
on 12 November 1993

The Security Council,

Reaffirming its resolutions 822 (1993) of 30 April 1993, 853 (1993) of 29 July 1993 and 874 (1993) of 14 October 1993,

Reaffirming its full support for the peace process being pursued within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and for the tireless efforts of the CSCE Minsk Group,

Taking note of the letter dated 9 November 1993 from the Chairman-in-Office of the Minsk Conference on Nagorno Karabakh addressed to the President of the Security Council and its enclosures (S/26718, annex),

Expressing its serious concern that a continuation of the conflict in and around the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic, and of the tensions between the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijani Republic, would endanger peace and security in the region,

Noting with alarm the escalation in armed hostilities as consequence of the violations of the cease-fire and excesses in the use of force in response to those violations, in particular the occupation of the Zangelan district and the city of Goradiz in the Azerbaijani Republic,

Reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Azerbaijani Republic and of all other States in the region,

Reaffirming also the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory,

Expressing grave concern at the latest displacement of a large number of civilians and the humanitarian emergency in the Zangelan district and the city of Goradiz and on Azerbaijan's southern frontier,

1. Condemns the recent violations of the cease-fire established between the parties, which resulted in a resumption of hostilities, and particularly condemns the occupation of the Zangelan district and the city of Goradiz,

attacks on civilians and bombardments of the territory of the Azerbaijani Republic;

2. Calls upon the Government of Armenia to use its influence to achieve compliance by the Armenians of the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic with resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993) and 874 (1993), and to ensure that the forces involved are not provided with the means to extend their military campaign further;

3. Welcomes the Declaration of 4 November 1993 of the nine members of the CSCE Minsk Group (S/26718) and commends the proposals contained therein for unilateral cease-fire declarations;

4. Demands from the parties concerned the immediate cessation of armed hostilities and hostile acts, the unilateral withdrawal of occupying forces from the Zangelan district and the city of Goradiz, and the withdrawal of occupying forces from other recently occupied areas of the Azerbaijani Republic in accordance with the "Adjusted timetable of urgent steps to implement Security Council resolutions 822 (1993) and 853 (1993)" (S/26522, appendix) as amended by the CSCE Minsk Group meeting in Vienna of 2 to 8 November 1993;

5. Strongly urges the parties concerned to resume promptly and to make effective and permanent the cease-fire established as a result of the direct contacts undertaken with the assistance of the Government of the Russian Federation in support of the CSCE Minsk Group, and to continue to seek a negotiated settlement of the conflict within the context of the CSCE Minsk process and the "Adjusted timetable" as amended by the CSCE Minsk Group meeting in Vienna of 2 to 8 November 1993;

6. Urges again all States in the region to refrain from any hostile acts and from any interference or intervention, which would lead to the widening of the conflict and undermine peace and security in the region;

7. Requests the Secretary-General and relevant international agencies to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the affected civilian population, including that in the Zangelan district and the city of Goradiz and on Azerbaijan's southern frontier, and to assist refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in security and dignity;

8. Reiterates its request that the Secretary-General, the Chairman-in-Office of the CSCE and the Chairman of the CSCE Minsk Conference continue to report to the Council on the progress of the Minsk process and on all aspects of the situation on the ground, in particular on the implementation of its relevant resolutions, and on present and future cooperation between the CSCE and the United Nations in this regard;

9. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

**"LETTER BY HOLLY CARTNER, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS
WATCH/HELSINKI, ADDRESSED TO MR.
ALEXANDER ARZOUMANYAN,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA"**

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 24 March 1997

Dear Mr. Arzumanyan,

As Executive Director of Human Rights Watch/Helsinki (formerly Helsinki Watch), I wish to respond to the March 3 Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement regarding the 1992 slaughter of Azeri civilians in the town of Khojaly in Nagorno Karabakh. In it, the Ministry argues that the Popular Front of Azerbaijan was responsible for the civilian deaths, supporting this argument by referring to an interview with former President Ayaz Muttalibov and, incredibly, to a 1992 report by our organization. The report, *Bloodshed in the Caucasus: Escalation of the Armed Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh*, documents violations of humanitarian law in the conflict committed by both Azerbaijani and Karabakh Armenian forces. Neither our overview and version of the events, nor the individual interviews with Azeri refugees from Khojaly and other villages in Nagorno Karabakh published in the report, could possibly support the notion that Azerbaijani forces wilfully prevented the evacuation of civilians or that they shot their own citizens. We are deeply distressed that the Ministry has, wittingly or unwittingly, linked our report to views which we reject and which our report does not reflect. The Ministry statement reads: "... the militia of the Azerbaijani National Front actively obstructed and actually prevented the exodus of the local population through the mountain passages specifically left open by Karabakh Armenians to facilitate the flight of the civilian population. On this matter, the September 1992 Helsinki Watch non-governmental organization report quotes an Azerbaijani woman who says that Armenians had notified the Azerbaijani civilian population to leave the town with white flags raised; in fact the Azerbaijani militia shot those who attempted to flee."

Our report indeed found that many residents of Khojaly may have had advance warning of the impending military operation, since Armenian forces had given an ultimatum to Alif Gajiyev, then head of the Khojaly militia, who in turn warned civilians. Our research and that of the Memorial Human Rights Centre found that the retreating militia

fled Khojaly along with some of the large groups of fleeing civilians. Our report noted that by remaining armed and in uniform, the Azerbaijani militia may be considered as combatants and thus endangered fleeing civilians, even if their intent had been to protect them. Yet we place direct responsibility for the civilian deaths with Karabakh Armenian forces. Indeed, neither our report nor that of Memorial includes any evidence to support the argument that Azerbaijani forces obstructed the flight of, or fired on, Azeri civilians. For clarity's sake I cite our 1992 report (page 24):

"... Thus, a party that intersperses combatants with fleeing civilians puts those civilians at risk and violates its obligation to protect its own civilians ... [T]he attacking party [i.e., Karabakh Armenian forces] is still obliged to take precautionary measures to avoid or minimize civilian casualties. In particular, the party must suspend an attack if it becomes apparent that the attack may be expected to cause civilian casualties that are excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated." "The circumstances surrounding the attack ... on those fleeing Khojaly indicate that [Karabakh] Armenian forces and the troops of the 366th CIS Regiment ... deliberately disregarded this customary law restraint on attacks. Nagorno Karabakh officials and fighters clearly expected the inhabitants of Khojaly to flee since they claim to have informed the town that a corridor would be left open to allow for their safe passage ... Under these circumstances, the killing of fleeing combatants could not justify the foreseeably large number of civilian casualties." Please allow me to clarify another reference to our 1992 report, regarding the 1988 Sumgait pogrom. Our report reads: "The most brutal of these events was the anti-Armenian pogrom in Sumgait, Azerbaijan, which took the lives of thirty-two Armenians, wounded hundreds more, and intensified the fears of ethnic Armenians living in other parts of Azerbaijan," which differs from the citation used in the Ministry statement. We further cited the estimate of 300,000–350,000 ethnic Armenians who fled Azerbaijan, not 600,000 as the Ministry statement seemed to attribute to our report.

We welcome the use of our reports by governments and intergovernmental organizations, and we sincerely hope that there will be no further misrepresentation regarding the contents of our 1992 report.

I thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

Holly Cartner
Executive Director
Human Rights Watch/Helsinki

cc: Mr. Hasan Hasanov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Mr. Rouben Shugarian, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the U.S.
Mr. Hafiz Pashayev, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the U.S.
Ambassador Peter Tomsen, United States Ambassador to Armenia
Ambassador Richard Kauzlarich, United States Ambassador to Azerbaijan.

Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire



Doc. 9066 2nd edition
14 May 2001

Recognition of the genocide perpetrated against the Azeri population by the Armenians

Written Declaration No. 324

2nd edition, originally tabled on 26 April 2001

This written declaration commits only the members who have signed it

Genocide became an integral part of the Azeri history starting from the partition of the Azeri lands with the treaties of Gulistan in 1813 and Turkmenchay in 1828.

The Armenians carried out massacres against the Azeris in 1905-1907 in order to achieve "the Greater Armenia".

In March 1918 the Armenians purged the Azeris from Baku, Shamakhy, Guba, Garabakh, Zangezur, Nakhchivan, Lankaran and other regions of Azerbaijan.

With the help of the Soviet regime, Armenia annexed Zangezur and other Azeri lands in 1920.

The Communist regime deported the Azeri population from their historical lands in Armenia to Azerbaijan from 1948-1953.

From the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 1988 hundreds of thousands of Azeris were deported from their historical lands.

On 26 February 1992, Armenians massacred the whole population of Khojaly and fully destroyed the city.

Armenian separatism in Nagorno-Karabakh and the ongoing Armenian occupation of 20 per cent of the Azeri territory has resulted in thousands of deaths and more than a million refugees.

The undersigned, members of the Assembly, appeal to all the members of the Parliamentary Assembly to take the necessary steps to recognise the genocide perpetrated by the Armenians against the Azeri population from the beginning of the 19th Century.

Signed ¹ :

Aliyev I., Azerbaijan, EDG

Akçali, Turkey, EDG

Akgönenc, Turkey, EDG

Aliyev G., Azerbaijan, EDG

Begaj, Albania, SOC

Cerrahoğlu, Turkey, EDG

Davis, United Kingdom, SOC

Dokle, Albania, SOC

Giesener, Luxembourg, EPP/CD

Gül, Turkey, EDG

Gülek, Turkey, SOC

Gürkan, Turkey, SOC

Hajiyeva, Azerbaijan, EPP/CD

Huseynov R., Azerbaijan, EPP/CD
 Ibrahimov, Azerbaijan, UEL
 İrtəmçelik, Turkey, EDG
 Iwinski, Poland, SOC
 Kalkan, Turkey, EDG
 Loutfi, Bulgaria, LDR
 Mutman, Turkey, SOC
 Položhani, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", EDG
 Saele, Norway, EPP/CD
 Sağlam, Turkey, EPP/CD
 Seyidov, Azerbaijan, EDG
 Shakhhtinskaya, Azerbaijan, EDG
 Tanik, Turkey, EDG
 Taylor, United Kingdom, EPP/CD
 Telek, Turkey, EDG
 Vakilov, Azerbaijan, EDG
 Jones, United Kingdom, SOC

Total = 30

- 1 SOC: Socialist Group
 EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
 EDG: European Democratic Group
 LDR: Liberal, Democratic and Reformers' Group
 UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
 NR: Not registered in a group

UNITED
NATIONS

E



Economic and Social
Council

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GENERAL

E/CN.4/2002/186
23 April 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
 Fifty-eighth session
 Agenda item 9

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS
 IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Letter dated 23 April 2002 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights

With reference to documents E/CN.4/2002/164, E/CN.4/2002/165, E/CN.4/2002/166 and E/CN.4/2002/167 of 2 April 2002, circulated by the delegation of Armenia under item 9 of the agenda of the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, I am compelled once again to note with regret that the delegation of Armenia continues to submit grossly distorted information which does not correspond to the facts.

In connection with the documents circulated by the delegation of Armenia, I wish to state that they contain the usual barefaced propagandistic lies which are characteristic of the representatives of Armenia.

I would like to point out that the myth of Armenia's non-participation in the occupation of my country is used by that country with one single purpose - to justify its own crimes perpetrated during the aggression against Azerbaijan. Furthermore, what can be the true worth of the circulated documents and all the statements made by representatives of Armenia, in view of the fact that, in 1989, the Parliament of Armenia, in violation of all the principles and norms of international law, adopted a decision to annex part of the territory of another State - the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan?

By depicting Armenia's claims over the territory of another independent State Member of the United Nations as the struggle of the Armenian population of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan for self-determination, the representatives of Armenia are attempting to consign to oblivion the well-known facts concerning participation by the armed forces of their country in military operations on Azerbaijani territory, the holding of a significant number of citizens of Azerbaijan in Armenia as hostages and prisoners of war, and many cases of murder and aggression against them. Nor must we forget the terrorist acts committed by Armenia against citizens of my country both in Azerbaijan and in other States.

In this connection I wish to point out that the Republic of Armenia supports terrorism at the State level. Much could be said about the fond friendship between the authorities and ideologues of independent Armenia and Armenian international-style terrorists. I will dwell on only one example: as early as the mid-1990s a campaign was conducted to collect signatures in support of the terrorist Varuzhan Karapetyan, who had been convicted by a French court to life imprisonment for an explosion at a Turkish Airlines luggage counter at Orly Airport in Paris in 1983. The terrorists had calculated that the bomb would explode in the air, but by happy accident the flight was delayed and the deadly device went off on the ground. Eight people died as a result, including six French nationals. There should have been many more victims, according to the terrorists' calculations. As the Armenian mass media boasted, 1,227,473 signatures were collected from Armenian citizens in support of the terrorist. Moreover, in Armenia a school was named after this terrorist, and in Echmiadzin, the "Vatican of Armenia", an exhibition of his works of art was held. These efforts were crowned with success, and in May 2001 the French authorities released the terrorist from prison. Varuzhan Karapetyan then set off for Armenia, where he was welcomed as a national hero. Comments are superfluous, I think.

Concerning the expression "no people - no problem", which representatives of Armenia have added to their armoury and often make use of, I would like to remind you that in 1918 more than half a million Azerbaijanis lived in what is now Armenia. I would like to enquire of the representatives of Armenia as to the fate of these people. I hope the representatives of Armenia are not going to claim that they willingly left the places where they had always lived. Is this not eloquent testimony of the fact that the so-called principle of "no people - no problem" has long since been used in a planned way by the official authorities of Armenia itself?

One of the most monstrous crimes committed by the Armenian occupiers during what we call the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict was the savage killing of the Azerbaijani population of the town of Khojaly. In a single night from 25 to 26 February 1992, 613 peaceful inhabitants were slaughtered, including 106 women and 83 children; 487 citizens suffered injuries of various kinds (including 76 minors); and 1,275 people were taken hostage. Although most of them managed to return to their motherland, the fate of 150 individuals is still unknown. Ten years have already passed since the day of that terrible tragedy, the scale and nature of which are fully in keeping with the definition of genocide which was reflected in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, approved by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1948.

The events in the town of Khojaly were witnessed and recorded by independent international sources, who confirmed that Armenia had committed genocide against the Azerbaijani population of the town. The testimony of the independent sources has been circulated by the delegation of Azerbaijan at the current session of the Commission under item 9 of the agenda in document E/CN.4/2002/151 of 22 March 2002. I hoped that the representatives of the Armenian delegation would not deny this fact, which was confirmed by documentary evidence from witnesses from independent international sources.

However, Armenia continues to deny its responsibility for the act of genocide committed against the inhabitants of the town of Khojaly, attempting to falsify the facts and supply its own interpretation of them.

Proof may be found in this excerpt from a letter sent to Alexander Arzumanyan, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, on 24 March 1997, by Holly Cartner, the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch/Helsinki:

"As Executive Director of Human Rights Watch/Helsinki (formerly Helsinki Watch), I wish to respond to the March 3 Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement regarding the ... slaughter

of Azeri civilians in the town of Khojaly in Nagorno Karabakh. In it, the Ministry argues that the Popular Front of Azerbaijan was responsible for the civilian deaths, supporting this argument by referring to an interview with [the] former President [of Azerbaijan Mr.] Ayaz Mütəllibov and, incredibly, to a 1992 report by our organization. The report, *Bloodshed in the Caucasus: Escalation of the Armed Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh*, documents violations of humanitarian law in the conflict committed by both Azerbaijani and ... Armenian forces. Neither our overview and version of the events, nor the individual interviews with Azeri refugees from Khojaly and other villages in Nagorno Karabakh published in the report could ... support the notion that Azerbaijani forces willfully prevented the evacuation of civilians or that they shot their own citizens. We are deeply distressed that the Ministry has, wittingly or unwittingly, linked our report to views which we reject and which our report does not reflect.

"Yet we place direct responsibility for the civilian deaths with ... Armenian forces. Indeed, neither our report nor that of Memorial includes any evidence to support the argument that Azerbaijani forces obstructed the flight of, or fired on Azeri civilians.

"We welcome the use of our reports by governments and intergovernmental organizations, and we sincerely hope that there will be no further misrepresentation regarding the contents of our 1992 report."

I would also like to refer to the same authoritative independent source, concerning whose impartiality the representatives of Armenia can hardly harbour any doubts. In its publication *Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh*, Human Rights Watch states that from the legal viewpoint, the participation of Armenian armed forces in military actions on the territory of Azerbaijan makes Armenia a party to an international armed conflict, specifically that between the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

I should also like to draw your attention to the fact that the delegation of Armenia is circulating for a second time, without modification, the information contained in document E/CN.4/2002/164 of 2 April 2002. I wish to emphasize that this is at variance with the established procedure concerning the submission of material to the secretariat and its distribution.

Concerning the issue of the events in Sumgait, which was raised by the Armenian delegation, I wish to remind you that the leading figure in the pogroms in Sumgait was a certain Edvard Grigoryan, an Armenian born in the town of Sumgait, who took an active and direct part in the killings and attacks on Armenians during the pogroms in the Armenian neighbourhoods.

On 22 December 1989 the Supreme Court of the Azerbaijani Republic sentenced Grigoryan to 12 years' imprisonment. The court found him to be one of the organizers of the disorder and large-scale slaughter. Written evidence from witnesses and victims showed that Grigoryan had a list of flats in which Armenians lived. All his Armenian victims agreed that Grigoryan was one of the organizers of and active participants in the pogroms and violence which occurred in Sumgait.

Concerning the issue of peace talks under the auspices of the CSCE Minsk group, which was raised by the representatives of Armenia, it must be recognized with regret that as a result of Armenia's destructive position, the negotiating process is currently deadlocked.

I wish to underline once again that, despite the extremely uncompromising and aggressive stance adopted by Armenia, Azerbaijan remains committed to the peaceful settlement of the armed conflict. The relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the decisions of CSCE and other international

12.12.12 Letter from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent

organizations on the conflict continue to form the basis for the settlement of this tragic conflict.

Armenia must acknowledge that it can guarantee its own security only by establishing relations of good neighbourliness and cooperation with all the States in the region.

We call on Armenia to take a civilized approach to the settlement of the conflict on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized frontiers of States, and also for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that Armenia's membership of the Commission on Human Rights runs counter to common sense. I have no doubt that the time will come when Armenia will receive its due at the hands of the international community.

I request you to circulate this letter as an official document of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 9.

(Signed) Murad NAJAFOV
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

CONGRESSMAN DAN BURTON'S SPEECH IN THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

17 February 2005

Mr. Burton of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, for years a number of distinguished Members of this House have come to the Floor of this Chamber every April to commemorate the so-called Armenian Genocide—the exact details of which are still very much under debate today almost 90 years after the events. Ironically and tragically, none of these Members has ever once mentioned the ethnic cleansing carried out by the Armenians during the Armenia-Azerbaijan war which ended a mere decade ago.

Khojaly was a little known small town in Azerbaijan until February 1992. Today it no longer exists, and for people of Azerbaijan and the region, the word “Khojaly” has become synonymous with pain, sorrow and cruelty. On February 26, 1992, the world ended for the people of Khojaly when Armenian troops supported by a Russian infantry regiment did not just attack the town but they razed it to the ground. In the process the Armenians brutally murdered 613 people, annihilated whole families, captured 1,275 people, left 1,000 civilians maimed or crippled, and another 150 people unaccounted for in their wake. Memorial, a Russian human rights group, reported that ‘scores of the corpses bore traces of profanation. Doctors on a hospital train in Agdam noted no less than four corpses that had been scalped and one that had been beheaded ... and one case of live scalping.’ Various other witnesses reported horrifying details of the massacre. The late Azerbaijani journalist Chingiz Mustafayev, who was the first to film the aftermath of the massacre, wrote an account of what he saw. He said, ‘Some children were found with severed ears; the skin had been cut from the left side of an elderly woman’s face; and men had been scalped.’

Human Rights Watch called the tragedy at the time “the largest massacre to date in the conflict.” The *New York Times* wrote about “truckloads of bodies” and described acts of “scalping.” This savage cruelty against innocent women, children and the elderly is unfathomable in and of itself but the senseless brutality did not stop with Khojaly. Khojaly was simply the first. In fact, the level of brutality and the unprecedented atrocities committed at Khojaly set a pattern of destruction and ethnic cleansing that Armenian troops would adhere to for the remainder of the war. On November 29, 1993, *Newsweek* quoted a senior US Government official as saying ‘What we see now is a systematic destruction of every village in their (the Armenians) way. It’s vandalism.’

This year, as they have every year since the massacre, the leaders of Azerbaijan's Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities issue appeals on the eve of commemoration of the massacre of Khojaly urging the international community to condemn the February 26, 1992 bloodshed, facilitate liberation of the occupied territories and repatriation of the displaced communities. And every year, those residents of Khojaly, who survived the massacre—many still scattered among one million refugees and displaced persons in camps around Azerbaijan—appeal with pain and hope to the international community to hold Armenia responsible for this crime. I am pleased to say that on January 25, 2005 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe overwhelmingly adopted a resolution highlighting that “considerable parts of Azerbaijan’s territory are still occupied by the Armenian forces and separatist forces are still in control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region.” It also expressed concern that the military action between 1988 and 1994 and the widespread ethnic hostilities which preceded it, “led to large-scale ethnic expulsion and the creation of mono-ethnic areas which resemble the terrible concept of ethnic cleansing.”

Mr. Speaker, this is not the ringing condemnation that the survivors of Khojaly deserve but it is an important first step by an international community that has too long been silent on this issue. Congress should take the next step and I hope my colleagues will join me in standing with Azerbaijanis as they commemorate the tragedy of Khojaly. The world should know and remember.

12.12.12

Early day motion 893 - UK Parliament



www.parliament.uk

Early day motion 893

ANNIVERSARY OF THE KHOJALY MASSACRE

Session: 2008-09

Date tabled: 25.02.2009

Primary sponsor: Hancock, Mike

Sponsors: Bottomley, Peter | Flynn, Paul | Russell, Bob | Taylor, Dari | Wareing, Robert N

Total number of signatures: 32

Bottomley, Peter	Caton, Martin	Corbyn, Jeremy	Cryer, Ann
Curtis-Thomas, Claire	Devine, Jim	Dobson, Frank	Donaldson, Jeffrey
Dorrell, Stephen	Drew, David	Durkan, Mark	Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul	Gibson, Ian	Godsiff, Roger	Hancock, Mike
Hemming, John	Jenkins, Brian	Lamb, Norman	Leech, John
MacNeil, Angus	McCafferty, Chris	McDonnell, Alasdair	McDonnell, John
Prosser, Gwyn	Russell, Bob	Simpson, Alan	Taylor, Dari
Vis, Rudi	Wareing, Robert N	Williams, Mark	Williams, Roger

That this House calls on the Government to recognise the 17th anniversary of the Khojaly massacre and use it as an opportunity to launch a new international peace effort to resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; notes that the non-resolution of the conflict is a threat to the whole Caucasus region, as well as to UK investment in Azerbaijan; believes that the failure in reaching a peaceful resolution is largely due to the non-implementation by Armenia of UN Security Council Resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 which call for the withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and for the return of the one million Azerbaijani refugees back to their homes; supports the resolution of the conflict while assuring the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, with high autonomy for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh; and highlights the fact that the UK is the largest foreign investor in Azerbaijan, with 5,000 expatriates and a 20 per cent share in Azerbaijani oil.

JOHN ZERWAS, M.D.

P.O. Box 2910
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78768-2910
(512) 463-0657
(512) 236-0711 Fax



District 28
TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
LAND & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, CBO
HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

Dear Mr. Babanly,

My thoughts and prayers will be with you and your family as well as all Azerbaijanis on this upcoming 18th Commemoration of the Khojaly Massacre.

My office has contacted our local and national media networks in regards to this unfortunate day in the town of Khojaly, and for the continuing struggles throughout the regions of Azerbaijan. This day in history deserves to be properly recognized and I'm here to assist in seeing that it does.

Thank you for writing me and I wish you best.

Sincerely,

John Zerwas, M.D.



Source: U.S. Azeris Network

The State of Texas



RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, February 26, 2010, marks the 18th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre in Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijanis around the world are commemorating this tragic day in their history; and

WHEREAS, On that date in 1992, Armenian forces seized the town of Khojaly in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and opened fire on civilians; more than 2,000 people were wounded or taken hostage, and some 613 were killed; and

WHEREAS, The attack was condemned by the U.S. government and numerous others and broadly covered by major media outlets; the fighting continued between Armenia and Azerbaijan until Russia brokered a cease-fire in 1994, and today the U.S. helps mediate the peace process; Azerbaijan is a U.S. ally in the Global War on Terror, and Azerbaijani peacekeepers serve side by side with Americans in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, It is indeed appropriate, on this somber occasion, to remember the Azerbaijanis who died and their loved ones whose lives were forever changed and to reflect on those admirable citizens who have worked to maintain peace in the Nagorno-Karabakh region in the years since; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 18th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre be commemorated.

John Zerwas
State Representative
District 28

Source: U.S. Azeris Network



H.R. No. 535

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, February 26, 2011, marks the 19th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre in Azerbaijan, and the observance of this somber date inspires reflection by individuals across the globe; and

WHEREAS, On February 25 and 26, 1992, Armenian armed forces, accompanied by Russian military troops, occupied the town of Khojaly as part of the bitter warfare that had been taking place in the Nagorno-Karabakh region since 1988; and

WHEREAS, When a large group of Azerbaijani civilians attempted to evacuate the area, they were fired on by the Armenian and Russian soldiers, resulting in the largest massacre of that bloody conflict; estimates of the exact number of people killed vary from 160 to as many as 1,000, with many women and children among the dead; and

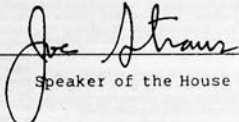
WHEREAS, The massacre was reported by major news organizations and has been viewed by the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki organization as a violation of customary law regarding the treatment of civilians in war zones; moreover, numerous governments around the world have condemned the attack; and

WHEREAS, This tragic event is a sobering reminder of the terrible carnage that can be inflicted in wartime and the enduring need for greater understanding, communication, and tolerance among people the world over; now, therefore, be it

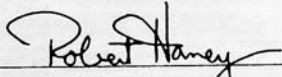
RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas Legislature hereby commemorate the 19th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre in Azerbaijan.

Murphy

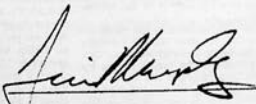
H.R. No. 535


Speaker of the House

I certify that H.R. No. 535 was adopted by the House on March 3, 2011, by a non-record vote.


Chief Clerk of the House




Jim Murphy
State Representative
District 133

Source: U.S. Azeris Network

E504

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—Extensions of Remarks March 16, 2011

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have had the time to recognize the dedication, accomplishments, and commitment of the late Major Robert Camma.

RECOGNIZING THE 19TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KHOJALY TRAGEDY

HON. TIM HOLDEN

OF PENNSYLVANIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 16, 2011

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Khojaly tragedy that occurred 19 years ago in Azerbaijan. Over the night from February 25th to February 26th, an unprecedented massacre was committed against the Azerbaijani people in the town of Khojaly. Azerbaijan has been a longtime ally and friend of the United States. On Christmas Day in 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced the recognition of Azerbaijan independence along with other former Soviet Republics. Azerbaijan has been involved in NATO's Partnership for Peace program and has participated in U.S.-led military missions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. During this time of unrest in the Middle East, the peaceful alliance with Azerbaijan is more important than ever.

Mr. Speaker, the tragedy of Khojaly was a grim and horrific event and I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering the people of Azerbaijan on this tragic anniversary.

HONORING NEW LIFE CHURCH

HON. HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.

OF GEORGIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 16, 2011

Mr. Speaker, I submit the following:
Whereas, New Life Church has been and continues to be a beacon of light to our country for well over fifteen (15) years; and
Whereas, Pastor Martin D. Harris and the members of the New Life Church family today continue to uplift and inspire those in our country and beyond; and
Whereas, New Life Church has been and continues to be a place where citizens are touched spiritually, mentally and physically through outreach ministries and community partnership to aid in building up the community;

Whereas, this remarkable and tenacious Church of God has given hope to the hopeless, led the needy and empowered our community by preaching the gospel, singing the gospel and living the gospel; and
Whereas, New Life Church has produced many spiritual warriors, people of compassion, people of great courage, fearless leaders and servants to all, but most of all visionaries who have shared not only with their Church, but with DeKalb County and the world their passion to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ; and
Whereas, the U.S. Representative of the Fourth District of Georgia has set aside this day to honor and recognize the New Life Church family as they dedicate their new Church Sanctuary and for continued leadership and service to our District.

Now therefore, I, HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, Jr. do hereby proclaim March 13, 2011 as New Life Church Day in the 4th Congressional District.

Proclaimed, this 13th day of March, 2011.

TRIBUTE TO ADRIENNE THOMAS

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 16, 2011

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Adrienne Thomas, the Deputy Archivist of the United States who is retiring after 41 years of distinguished service with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Ms. Thomas began her career of federal service straight out of Level State University as an archival trainee in the Office of Presidential Libraries. Since then, she has held a number of important policy and administrative positions. Early in her career, she was instrumental in transforming the Archives into an institution at the forefront of a revolution in public access to records, following the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act. During the 1980s, she served as the Director of Planning and Analysis and, in 1985, she was instrumental in putting in place the structure that allowed the Archives to operate as a newly created independent agency, no longer under the direction of the General Services Administration.

Perhaps her most celebrated contributions to this nation are the magnificent public spaces where she was intimately involved in overseeing construction and renovation during her time as NARA's head of Administration and Chief Financial Officer. Her vision has shown the world that archives don't have to be dark, dusty repositories. This year alone, one million people will see her attention to detail and love of history when they visit the historic National Archives Building in Washington, DC to view the Charters of Freedom and other American milestone documents, respectfully and accessibly displayed following a building renovation in 2003. Another place where her dedication to excellence for the American people can be seen is just up the road in College Park, Maryland, home to NARA's state-of-the-art facility known as "Archives II," which opened in 1994. Ms. Thomas oversaw Archives II from concept to ribbon cutting. It stands today as the premier archival research center in the world—the gold standard—and a great source of pride in my congressional district.

From archival trainee to Deputy Archivist of the United States, Ms. Thomas has mentored hundreds of employees and inspired millions of people who visit our National Archives buildings across the country. It is truly my honor to pay tribute today to Ms. Adrienne Thomas, a real "National Treasure" who worked for the American people for 41 years.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY AND AIRPORT WORKERS: SOL PRICE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION OF THE YEAR AWARD

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 16, 2011

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to proclaim that organized labor is often the sole force fighting for the rights of not just union members, but all workers.

This was seen this past fall when union workers at the airport stood up for the fight of all concession, parking and restaurant workers by bringing forward a worker relation policy at the San Diego Regional Airport Authority.

Up until then, workers had no job protections in the event of new contractors taking over business at the airport. If a shop or restaurant lost its lease, every employee working there could lose their job. Led by Airport Authority chairman Robert Gleason, the agency brought workers into the search for a solution. Workers were not only given a voice in the process, but their opinions and concerns were valued as expert testimony on the importance of the Airport Authority providing a sense of job security for workers with as many as 35 years of experience.

Even when delays in the process occurred, it was due to Airport Authority commissioners believing that they could accomplish even more through their policy.

By a final vote of 7-to-1, the Airport Authority eventually passed a worker relation policy that will protect airport workers. The vote proved that all parties can win when the voices of workers are taken into consideration. It gives me a great honor, Mr. Speaker, that in light of their passage of a worker relation policy, I join with the Executive Board of the San Diego Imperial Counties Labor Council in honoring the San Diego Regional Airport Authority and Airport Workers with the 2010-2011, "Sol Price Spirit of Cooperation Award."

A TRIBUTE TO YOLANDE NICHOLSON

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 16, 2011

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements of Yolande Nicholson.

Ms. Nicholson has been a member of the New York State Bar for more than 20 years. She earned her J.D. from Columbia University School of Law in 1989. She began her legal career practicing as a corporate finance attorney in the capital markets group at Clary, Gottlieb, Stein & Hamilton, the preeminent international law firm.

As a young lawyer, Ms. Nicholson had the opportunity to work with multinational corporations, international financial institutions, sovereign governments and their agencies, as well as domestic corporations and financial institutions. At Clary, she developed her craft as a securities lawyer. From 1997 to 2003,



FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

POINTS OF AGREEMENT ON THE ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN NAGORNO KARABAKH CONFLICT

ADOPTED ON DECEMBER 8, 2011

FROM THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE WITH POINT OF AGREEMENT ON THE ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN CONFLICT OVER NAGORNO KARABAKH

Honorable Assembly:

A resolution with point of agreement on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was referred for study and subsequent development of opinion to the Foreign Relations Committee which was introduced by Deputé Marcos Pérez Esquer, member of the Parliamentary Group of the National Action Party on September 6 2011.

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Congress, LXI Legislature, based on the provisions of Articles 39 and 45, paragraph 6, subparagraphs e), n and g) of the Organic Law of the General Congress of the United Mexican States, as well as 80, 85, 176 and 182, paragraph 3, of the Rules of the House of Representatives, subjects to consideration of this assembly this determination.

OPINION

Background

1. In late 1987 began the so-called "recent period" of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, which is identified with attacks by Armenians towards Azerbaijani in Khankandi, also known as Stepanakert.

Between 1988 and 1989, constant attacks were raised in which at least 216 thousand Azerbaijanis were killed and 154 suffered serious injuries, also a mass deportation process originated of approximately 200 000 people.



FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

POINTS OF AGREEMENT ON THE ARMENIA-
AZERBAIJAN NAGORNO KARABAKH CONFLICT
ADOPTED ON DECEMBER 8, 2011

2. In late 1991 and early 1992, taking advantage of the political instability caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan intensified shifting to a military phase which began with combat operations by Armenian forces in Nagorno Karabakh.

3. During the night of 25 to 26 of February, 1992, there was an unprecedented massacre by the Armenian armed forces against the population of Azerbaijan in Khojaly. 613 Azerbaijanis were killed, including 106 women, 63 children and 70 elderly, 275 thousand people were taken hostage, while the fate of 150 people remains unknown. In addition, 487 residents of Khojaly were maimed, including 76 minors. 26 children were orphaned and 130 lost at least one parent. The attack was fully documented by various agencies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and numerous independent sources.

After the genocide, the Armenian forces occupied the 7 districts surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Shusha (administrative center of Azerbaijan); Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Yabrail, and Zangilan Gubadli.

4. On April 30 and July 29, 1993, the Security Council of the United Nations (UN) adopted resolutions numbers 822 and 853, through which:

- a) It demanded the immediate cessation of all hostilities, with a view to establishing a lasting ceasefire and the immediate withdrawal of all forces from Aghdam and Kalbajar, and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan;
- b) Urged the parties concerned to resume negotiations to resolve the conflict and refrain from any action to obstruct the achievement of a peaceful solution;
- c) Requested that free access for international humanitarian relief efforts in the region were allowed to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population, reaffirming



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ADOPTED ON DECEMBER 8, 2011

that all parties are bound by the principles and norms of international humanitarian law; and

d) Requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Acting President of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Chairman of the Minsk Group of the Conference, assess the situation in the region and present a further report to Council.

On 14 October the same year, the Security Council adopted UN resolution number 874, by which, inter alia:

- a) Called on the parties to make effective and permanent ceasefire;
- b) Reiterated their full support to the peace process claimed in the framework of the OSCE;
- c) Requested the immediate implementation of reciprocal and urgent steps provided by the Minsk Group of the CSCE, including the withdrawal of forces from the occupied territories;
- d) Requested the early convening of the Minsk Conference of the OSCE to achieve a negotiated settlement;
- e) Called on all parties to refrain from committing any violation of international humanitarian law, reiterating the call to allow access for international humanitarian relief services in the affected areas; and
- f) Urged all states in the region to refrain from any hostile acts and from any interference or intervention which would lead to the escalation of the conflict and undermine peace and security in the region.

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ADOPTED ON DECEMBER 8, 2011

5. The armed conflict in the territories of the Azerbaijan Republic, led to the illegal occupation of almost one fifth of the territory of that state and at least one of every eight people became IDPs or refugees. 20 000 people were killed, 50 000 more

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The "roadmap" provides that to resolve the conflict peacefully, the Armenian forces must be withdrawn, according to the timetable set, the entire occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh and displaced persons within the territory should be



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able to return to their land. This plan refers to the deployment of international peacekeeping forces and the implementation of confidence-building measures between the parties.

Mexico has been characterized by championing progressive causes and fight for a fairer international order. The defense of self-determination of peoples, the refuge and asylum, international condemnation of militarism and expansionism, solidarity with developing nations, the active pursuit of peace and the adoption of nuclear weapon-free zones are examples of this. It has argued that respect for international law is a prerequisite for the establishment of aid and cooperation to be effective and fair for the solution of common problems mentioned above.

It must therefore reaffirm its adherence to international law, as formally consecrated in 1988 by incorporating the principles and purposes of the United Nations to our Constitution.

Article 89. The duties and obligations of the President are as follows:

I. ...

X. To direct the foreign policy and international treaties, as well as end, denounce, suspend, modify, amend, and withdraw reservations and formulate interpretative declarations thereon, subject to the approval of the Senate. In conducting such a policy, the Executive Power shall observe the following guiding principles: self-determination of peoples, nonintervention, and the peaceful settlement of disputes, the prohibition of the threat or use of force in international relations; legal equality of states, international cooperation for development, respect, protection and promotion of human rights and the struggle for peace and international security;



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These foreign policy principles are regulated by international law and are prior to its annexation to our Constitution in 1988 and should be interpreted in the light of the UN Charter, without exception, these constitutional principles derived from first principles regulated by international law and its legal system is linked to other international standards. Thus the principle of non-intervention is enshrined in the UN Charter, which provides in article 2., Paragraph 7, that: "Nothing in this Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of states, or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present charter, but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII".

Our country has always had a full awareness of the validity of law in the international arena and the need for the relations between states to be governed by a legal order, the source of an atmosphere of peace and security. Has been and is also aware that in all relations of coexistence which by their nature are likely to be regulated by legal principles, the conduct of states should be regulated by law and not guided by circumstantial concepts of a political order.

For the abovementioned reasons and sound arguments the Committee on Foreign Affairs, submits to the floor of the House of Representatives the following:

POINT OF AGREEMENT

First. The Chamber of Deputies of the Congress of the Union condemns the occupation of the Nagorno Karabakh territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the deaths, injuries and humiliation caused to residents of the Republic of Azerbaijan, particularly those that took place in the "Genocide of Khojaly" as well as those



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verified that follow from the violation of the ceasefire pact established between the parties, which resumed hostilities.

Second. Regrets that the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia remain, has not found the solution through the different mechanisms implemented by the parties involved and international organizations, so we call to the various involved parties to strengthen the dialogue to solve the conflict, considering it as the adequate mechanism for the exchange of views and proposals that contribute to the strengthening of international relations, and at all time safeguarding the fundamental principles of peaceful coexistence among nations, such as self-determination of peoples, non-intervention, peaceful settlement of disputes, prohibition of the use of force in international relations, the legal equality of states, international cooperation for development and the struggle for peace and international security.

Third. The Chamber of Deputies of the Congress, calls on the holder of the Federal Executive Power so that through our representation in the UN, within their respective competencies, to file a report on the humanitarian crisis prevailing in the Republic of Azerbaijan, also, that based on their powers, allowing effectively protect the human rights of civilians in that country.

Fourth. The Chamber of Deputies of the Congress, within their respective jurisdictions, respectfully requests that the holder of the Federal Executive Power, to instruct the representative of Mexico to the United Nations Organization, to promote the activities it deems appropriate in order to urge the government of the Republic of Armenia to comply with resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 of the Security Council and issued by the Council of Europe.

Fifth. It urges the holder of the Federal Executive Power, to the extent of his competence, to present on behalf of the Mexican state to international bodies, an



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exhortation to the Republic of Armenia to conduct an immediate cessation of hostilities and violence against Azerbaijani civilians, and the immediate withdrawal of their armed forces from the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and to the interested parties to refrain from any hostile act and interference or intervention that may cause a wider conflict and undermine peace and security in the region.

Presented in the Chamber of the House of Representatives on 30th of November 2011.

Proponent: Pérez Esquer Marcos (PAN), Foreign Relations Committee

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State of Maine

Be it known to all that
We, the Members of the Senate and
House of Representatives,
join in recognizing

the 20th Anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre in Azerbaijan,

February 26, 2012. It was 20 years ago when Armenian armed forces, with the support of the armored vehicles of the Russian 366th motorized rifle regiment, attacked and occupied the besieged town of Khojaly, as part of the armed aggression and ethnic cleansing that had been taking place in that region of Azerbaijan. When residents of Khojaly attempted to flee

the conflict, they were ambushed and fired on by the Armenian and Russian troops, resulting in the massacre of 613 civilians and permanent injuries to a thousand others. We join the United States Department of State in supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan and we commemorate this important date to honor the lives and memories of those who died and suffered;

And be it ordered that this official expression of sentiment be sent forthwith on behalf of the 125th Legislature and the people of the State of Maine.

HCS 1049

Given this thirteenth day of March, 2012
at the State Capitol
Augusta, Maine

Kerin L. Raye
Kerin L. Raye
President of the Senate

Joseph G. Carleton, Jr.
Joseph G. Carleton, Jr.
Secretary of the Senate

Robert W. Mulling
Robert W. Mulling
Speaker of the House

Matthew R. Priest
Matthew R. Priest
Clerk of the House

Introduced by: Rep. Anne M. Haskell
Cosponsored by: Sen. Justin L. Alford

From: Portland
From: Cumberland

Source: U.S. Azeris Network

12.12.12

Early day motion 2690 - UK Parliament



www.parliament.uk

Early day motion 2690

20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE KHOJALY TRAGEDY

Session: 2010-12

Date tabled: 06.02.2012

Primary sponsor: Henderson, Gordon

Sponsors: Blackman, Bob | Bottomley, Peter | Leech, John | McCartney, Karl | Russell, Bob

Total number of signatures: 22

Begg, Anne	Blackman, Bob	Bottomley, Peter	Brake, Tom
Dobbin, Jim	Doran, Frank	Field, Mark	Gilbert, Stephen
Goggins, Paul	Hancock, Mike	Hemming, John	Henderson, Gordon
Kaufman, Gerald	Leech, John	Llwyd, Ellyn	McCartney, Karl
Mordaunt, Penny	Ruddock, Joan	Russell, Bob	Sharma, Virendra
Stephenson, Andrew	Sutcliffe, Gerry		

That this House notes that 26 February 2012 represents the 20th anniversary of the Khojaly tragedy when 613 men, women and children were killed by invading Armenian forces; further notes that Armenia still illegally occupies 18 per cent. of Azerbaijani territory in defiance of four UN Security Council resolutions; and hopes that the Government can facilitate progress towards a peaceful resolution of this long-running conflict.



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
P.O. BOX 001
TRENTON
08625
(609) 292-6000

CHRIS CHRISTIE
GOVERNOR

KIM GUADAGNO
LT. GOVERNOR

February 26, 2012

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the State of New Jersey, we extend greetings to the U.S. Azeris Network and everyone commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre, a terrible tragedy of the Nagorno-Karabakh War in which Armenian and Russian soldiers killed hundreds of ethnic Azerbaijani civilians who were attempting to flee the town of Khojaly.

The U.S. Azeris Network deserves recognition for its pivotal role in preserving the memory of this terrible event that occurred during the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Since its inception, the organization has coordinated with Azerbaijani-American communities to educate our citizens about this tragedy and other events that are crucial to the history of Azerbaijan. Through its efforts, the legacy of those who died in the name of Azerbaijani freedom will never be forgotten. The Network has also been a valuable source of support for people of Azerbaijani descent by representing their interests on both the state and federal levels. We are pleased to commend the organization for its ongoing work on behalf of the Garden State's Azerbaijani-American residents.

We join with all of you in honoring the victims of the Khojaly Massacre. Best wishes for a solemn observance and successful commemoration.

Sincerely,

Chris Christie
Governor

Kim Guadagno
Lt. Governor

Source: U.S. Azeris Network

DECISION OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES (PARLIAMENT) OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC ON KHOJALY MASSACRE.

7 February 2013

Parliament of the Czech Republic
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

2013

6th call

219

DECISION

Foreign Relations Committee
25th extraordinary meeting, 7th of February 2013

With regard to the 21st anniversary of the massacre in the Azerbaijan town of Khojaly and offering sympathy to the people of Azerbaijan.

February 26, 2013, marks the 21st anniversary of the massacre in the Azerbaijan town of Khojaly, when Armenian military units occupied the town and brutally killed 613 defenseless civilians.

The massacre was reported by numerous news organizations and has been declared by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki to be a violation by Armenian military units of customary law regarding the treatment of civilians in war zones. It was a crime against humanity condemned by numerous governments around the world.

This tragic event is a reminder of what terrible bloodshed wars can bring and of the enduring need for understanding, mutual communication and tolerance among people all over the world.

However, the UN Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), which call on Armenian military units to cease the occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan, remain unfulfilled. The UN General Assembly, the European Parliament, Council of Europe and the OSCE Parliamentary Assemblies by their respective resolutions supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including Nagorno Karabakh.

The Foreign Relations Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic condemns all instances of ethnic cleansing, massacre and genocide against defenseless civilians, regardless of their place and time of their perpetration. We appeal for the fulfilment of agreed resolutions which condemn all such acts. In this context we still recognize the Khojaly Massacre as a crime against humanity, which we condemn and repudiate. Hereby, we commemorate the 21st anniversary of this tragic event and offer our sincere sympathy to the people of Azerbaijan.

Kveta Matusovska, v.r.
Secretary

David Vodrazka, v.r.
Chairman of the Committee

Parlament České republiky
POSLANECKÁ SNĚMOVNA

2013

6. volební období

219

USNESENÍ

zahraničního výboru

z 25-A. mimořádné schůze dne 7. února 2013

k 21. výročí masakru v ázerbajdžánském městě Chodžaly a vyjádření soustrasti ázerbajdžánskému lidu

26. února 2013 tomu bude 21 let od masakru v ázerbajdžánském městě Chodžaly, kdy arménské jednotky v tomto okupovaném městě brutálním způsobem usmrtily 613 bezbranných civilistů.

O tomto masakru informovalo mnoho světových médií a tento čin byl organizací Human Rights Watch/Helsinki prohlášen za porušení obvyklých norem týkajících se nakládání s civilisty ve válečných zónách ze strany arménských jednotek. Jednalo se o zločin proti lidskosti, který mnohé vlády země světa odsoudily.

Tento tragický případ je připomenutím toho, jak hrozným krveprolitím může docházet ve válkách, a poukazuje na neustálou potřebu porozumění, vzájemné komunikace a tolerance mezi lidmi na světě.

Stále však nedošlo k naplnění rezolucí RB OSN 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) a 884 (1993), které vyzývají arménské jednotky k ukončení okupace ázerbajdžánského území. Valné shromáždění OSN, Evropský parlament, Parlamentní shromáždění Rady Evropy a OBSE svými rezolucemi podpořili suverenitu a teritoriální integritu Ázerbajdžánské republiky včetně Náhorního Karabachu.

Zahraniční výbor Poslanecké sněmovny Parlamentu ČR odsuzuje veškeré případy etnických čistek, masakrů a genocidy na bezbranných civilistech, a to bez ohledu na to, kdy a kde byly spáchány. Apeluje na důsledné vymáhání rezolucí přijatých a odsuzujících veškeré podobné činy. V tomto kontextu stále pokládá masakr v Chodžalech za zločin proti lidskosti, který odsuzuje a odmítá. Tímto si připomíná 21. výročí této tragédie a vyjadřuje soustrast ázerbajdžánskému lidu.

Květa Matušovská, v.r.
ověřovatelka výboru

David Vodrážka, v.r.
předseda výboru

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KHOJALY WITNESS of a war crime

j-42937

It was one of the worst episodes of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. For months, the townspeople of Khojaly, Azerbaijan, had endured nightly shelling by invading Armenian forces, which gradually surrounded the town. By 25 February 1992 all escape routes had been cut off. Armenian tanks, artillery and troops moved in, and so began the calculated finale to a crime against humanity.

The inhabitants of Khojaly fled, wading across the freezing Gargar river and through the forested mountains. Emerging onto open land near the village of Nakhchivanik, they found none of the safety they'd hoped for, instead presenting easy targets for the Armenian guns awaiting them there.

The townspeople's crime? As Azerbaijanis, they were inadvertent obstacles to the abstract dream of a 'Greater Armenia'.

Western journalists reporting on these savage events encountered doubts from their editors back home: surely they had confused aggressors with victims? They had not; and to help combat such misapprehensions, this book gathers first-hand accounts from the massacre and its aftermath. Here are testimonies from survivors, international journalists and photographers; reports from international humanitarian organisations; and even the thoughts of an Armenian commander as he picked his way across the killing fields.

Resolutions condemning the atrocities were passed by the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe, but they endure only as paper: the perpetrators remain unaccountable and in occupation, and some hold Armenia's highest political offices.

Khojaly's survivors, meanwhile, are left with memories of their lost homes and loved ones, longing for justice.

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