

Bloody memory

There are both historic and tragic pages in the history of every nation. They rarely coincide. The people of Azerbaijan lived the tragedy of January 1990 both as heroism and as tragedy. The Azerbaijani people were tested in that terrible night. Both heroes appeared which it grew up and its leaders became clear.

In 1988, fueled Armenian separatism, gradual secession of NKAO from the authority of Azerbaijan, deportation of Azerbaijanis from their ethno-historic lands in Armenia, instead of punishing separatists, Moscow's curbing of the Azerbaijani people, had run the nation from patience. The seize of power in some regions by the Popular Front in the late 1989, destruction of thorny wires at the border with Iran in Nakchichevan, secure of control by the radical wing of the national movement organizing National Defense Council, finally, perpetuation by the State Security Committee "Armenian pogroms" based on Sumgait scenario on January 13-15, 1990, gave opportunity to Moscow to punish the people of Azerbaijan. Finally, the Kremlin committed the Bloody January massacre to punish the people of Azerbaijan, protesting union of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

Coded telephonograms had been sent to the leadership of the USSR government demanding additional troops to Baku with the signatures of Abdurrahman Vezirov, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, Ayaz Mutallibov, the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Victor Polyanichko, the second secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, Victor Barannikov, deputy of Minister of Interior Affairs of the Azerbaijan SSR.

Investigation found out that more than 66 thousand of soldiers and officers of the ministries of defense and internal affairs, also special military units of the USSR had been brought to Baku and dislocated in the airports of Gala and Nasosniy, Republic Stadium and Salyan caserne.

Provision of troops, more than 300 high-ranking officers and generals dislocated in Baku, with food, transport and fuel was at the expense of the budget of the republic.

On January 15, 1990 Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of USSR Michael Gorbachev has signed the decree about introduction of state of emergency in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous region and some other areas. In 7-th item of this decree the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan SSR was offered to take necessary measures, including introduction curfew in Baku, Gandzha and other settlements. Further the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of USSR, basing on the false decision of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijani SSR from January 15, 1990, which did not have any validity, has published the decree from January 19, 1990 "About introduction of state of emergency in the city of Baku starting from 0:00 hours on January 20, 1990 ". Having signed this decree the head of the former USSR Gorbachev in the roughest form has broken article 119 of the Constitution of the USSR and article 71 of the Constitution of Azerbaijani SSR.

On January 19, 1990, The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued an order on "imposing of curfew in the city of Baku" from January 20, 00:00 pm. without consent of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan SSR.

It was found out that signing this order, M.Gorbachev, the former head of USSR has roughly violated Article 119 of the Constitution of the Soviet Union and Article 71 of the Constitution of the Azerbaijan SSR.

On January 19, because of the operation organized by the "Alfa" group of the USSR SCS (KGB) and leadership of the SCS of the republic, an energy bloc of the republic television was blasted in order to prevent the population to receive official information about the entry of the troops into the city. Nevertheless, 26 barricades had been built across the city and access to 34 military units out of 60, including the Salyan caserne, blocked.

While some of the leaders of the Popular Front were recommending the population to disperse, others to resist.

Although the curfew was imposed for January 20, 00:00 pm, troops moved to the city first from January 19, 21:00 pm, from the direction of Turkan-Gala. "Baku operation" was directly led by Dmitry Yazov, Ministry of Defense of the USSR, Vadim Bakatin, Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR and Filip Babkov, Deputy Chairman of the USSR SCS (KGB).

The troops from the Baku garrison, outside military units and landing military units from the navy attacked the city. Heavy military armors easily destroyed the barricades. The streets of the city were full of blood of the shot and wounded innocent people, olds, women and children. The militaries were firing on those who were in the street by coincidence, houses, ambulance cars and killing the wounded, burning and abusing corpses. They were crushing people under caterpillars of the heavy armors and torturing them to death.

The troops sent to Baku were being kept in closed camps. They had no communication with the people to be aware that they were unarmed. The soldiers and officers sent to Baku had been told that "Islamic

fundamentalists” and “panturkists” have seized the soviet power in Azerbaijan and that is why they must be exterminated.

Incited with hatred against Azerbaijanis, under alcohol drinks, the soldiers and officers indiscriminately fired on women, olds, infants, even drivers of the ambulance cars and doctors, brutally killing them. Tanks and armored transporters were moving across cars full of people, crushing them off. Electricity of the hospitals had been cut off to prevent medical aid to the wounded. This aggression against the people of Azerbaijan had been committed systematic, provocations resulting with lootings occurred in the city.

Until the curfew was announced to the people, the militaries brutally killed 82 people, deadly wounded 20. It was found out that according to first item of The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, the Baku population would have to be announced about impose and rules of the curfew from the very moment of the signature of the order of it. However, it was not done on purpose. Official information of the commandant of Baku on the curfew had been aired on January 20, 1990 05:30 a.m., only after the mass murder of the people. Although from January 19, 21:00 a.m., tanks and various armored cars had been deployed in the operation and troops from the Caspian navy landed in the city. After announcement of the curfew, on January 20 and afterwards, 21 more people had been killed in Baku. In the regions outside of the curfew, on January 25 in Neftchala 2, on January 26 in Lenkoran 6 people had been killed.

Thus, as a result of the illegal deployment of the troops, 150 people were killed, 744 wounded, 841 illegally arrested in Baku and regions of the republic and 112 of the arrested people were taken to the various cities of the USSR and retained in the prisons. Two hundreds houses and apartments, 80 cars, including ambulance cars had been destroyed by the militaries and a lot of state and private property annihilated because of the fires caused by the flammable bullets.

State, public and private properties were damaged in the cost of 5.637.286 roubles according to the prices of that period.

The scope of the tragedy had been more accurately reflected in the report of the experts of the Russian public organization “Sheet” (shield):

- *People were shot from close distance with extreme brutality. For example, R.Rustamova had 23, Y.Meyerovich 21, D.Khanmammadov 10 bullets in their corpses;*
- *Hospitals, ambulance cars were fired on, doctors killed;*
- *“Icarus” bus full of passengers, including children was fired on;*
- *People were stabbed to death with sabres. B.Yefimtsev, a blind was among them;*
- *5, 45 mm hollow point bullets of the Kalashnikov assault rifle were used. There were non-adults, women, olds and invalids among the dead people.*

This act of aggression which had been planned in advance, aimed at strangling the struggle of the Azerbaijani people for democracy and national liberty, humiliate and morally damage the people.

All this not only did not scare the people, but also increased his hatred against the soviet empire. Not being afraid of sabres and trunks of the tanks pointed at him, people gathered his martyrs from the squares and streets.

Although canons and rifles were everywhere and the curfew, the people saw his martyrs off from the “Azadlyg” (Freedom) square to their burial site, the Alley of Martyrs. It was a matchless mass participation at the funeral in the world. The people of Azerbaijan mourned for 40 days. People endured starvation, but were on strike for 40 days.

On January 21-22, an emergency session of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan SSR at the initiative of the one third of the deputies was held. A number of high officials, expecting who of them will be appointed as a first secretary by Moscow, almost did not participate at this session, even labeling it as an “illegal” gathering.

Bloody crime of the soviet army against the people had not ended yet. The ships of the “Caspian sea oil float” that had entered the Baku bail to protest the bloody massacre, had been surrounded and fired on by the warships and dozens of sailors arrested.

The ship, “Sabit Orujov” signaled “SOS!” the world about the tragedy. On purpose to prevent an assault of the city from the sea, the Azerbaijan sailors risking their lives, gathered all ships in the Baku bail. On January 21, at 20:30 p.m., having received information on illegal cargo ship patrolled by the two warships and caters, the sailors engaged in unequal struggle with armed bandits. Because of fires opened by the soviet warships, ships, “Neftgaz-18”, “Neftgaz-64”, “Aktau”, “Shirvan-2”, “Cheleken-1”, “Atlet-21”, “Vodoley-4” had been severely damaged. The hero sailors had also been repressed because of mass repression after Bloody January.

People were in fear. They were drowned in the bloodbath, humiliated and insulted. On January 21, Heydar Aliyev, who was in a retreat, came to the mission of Azerbaijan in Moscow and gave a speech in the meeting

there. He expressed his solidarity with the people in these hard days. He exposed the massacre of the people as against law, democracy and humanism and a rough political mistake because of the fault of Moscow and leadership of the republic.

The majority of political and state leaders of the Republic did not participate in work of emergency session of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, called on January 22, 1990 by demand of people and initiative of the group of parliament members. Absence of leaders of the Republic at this session has shown their indifference to the destiny of the people and complicity in a performed crime. Emergency session has made a decision on creation of Parliament Commission for investigation of tragically events. However, this commission instead of giving a political and legal estimation to events has finished the work as gathering of the information on the victims, wounded, the volume of damage to citizens, public organizations and the state. This commission has presented the conclusion to National Assembly of Azerbaijan in 1992, after two years after the tragedy and after the collapse of the USSR. National Assembly in its turn has counted this conclusion settling and has limited by its acceptance.

Through the night from 24 to 25 of January, 1990 has been leading the Plenum of the Central Committee of Communist party of Azerbaijan, which was devoted to organizational questions. On plenum, the question on a political situation in Republic has been brought in agenda. It has been created Commission for investigation of the reasons for introduction of state of emergency in Baku.

An investigation group led by V. Medvedev, colonel from the Chief Prosecutor Office the USSR, investigated the crime cases very superficial and concluded that there were no crimes in the actions of the militaries. On July 20, 1990, the case was closed and materials of the case were taken to Moscow. It is regret that the Prosecutor Office of Azerbaijan launched no crime case.

A number of truths surface as time passes and dark sides of the tragedy of January 20 become clear. The sixty-eight volumes of 100-volume crime case have been taken to Moscow from Baku, the ex-Prosecution Office of the USSR and have not given back yet.

Acquisition of a number of documents, including those retained in high bureaus of the former USSR, especially in the Prosecutor Office of the Russian Federation at present, would precisely surface the scope of the tragedy of January 20 and size of responsibility of its instigators.

The massacre of the bloody January was a part of anti-Azerbaijan policy conducted by the Russian chauvinists together with Armenian's separatists. However, the empire butchers could not break the will of the people of Azerbaijan. Bloody January led to the rise of the national freedom movement and independence of Azerbaijan.

The tragedy of January 20 has received political and legal assessment at the state level only owing to the National Leader Haydar Aliyev. Under his recommendation in February 1994, special session of Milli Medjlis has been held. Session has estimated the move of the Soviet Armed Forces in Baku and some areas of Republic on January 20, 1990, and, as a result of it, ruthless kill of the unarmed people who were on the streets for protection of the truth and justice, as the armed aggression and a crime from the side of totalitarian communist regime against the Azerbaijani people. It has been noticed that the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Soviet State and the Government, personally Michael Gorbachev, have made grave crime against the Azerbaijani people, by organising Tragedy on January 20 for suppression of national movement. At the same time it has been noticed, that responsibility for the military aggression against the people lays down also on the former leadership of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan: Abdurrahman Vezirov, Ayaz Mutallibov, Viktor Polyanichko and Vagif Guseynov.

On March 31, 1998, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan has signed the decree about the establishment of honorary title «Shehid of January 20». The Resolution about the honorary title «Shehid of January 20» has been approved on December 29, 1998. To this day 147 persons, who have been killed on January 20, 1990, during military aggression of armed forces of the former USSR in Baku and several of areas of the Republic, have received the honorary rank «Shehid of January 20». Families of shehids, missing persons and the persons who have become handicap during the events on January 20, receive every year the help from the side of the State.

The event of Bloody January 1990 is not only a tragedy for the people of Azerbaijan. It is an honorable page in the history of people ready to sacrifice everything to guard his dignity.

The tragedy of January 20 is both a nationwide tragedy and peak of the national freedom movement in the history of Azerbaijan. As nationwide leader Heydar Aliyev said, although this tragedy shocked morally our

people, made him to suffer loss, but could not break his pride and humiliate his dignity and were written as a new page in his history of heroism.

Although this page of our history opened with the sound of fires of empire, it was written with the blood of our martyrs. Forever!

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