



MISSION OF AZERBAIJAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Corpses of civilians massacred by the Soviet army



Soviet tank raiding streets in residential areas

**THE BLACK JANUARY:
16th ANNIVERSARY OF
THE SOVIET INVASION
OF BAKY**

Sixteen years has passed since the Central Soviet Authorities perpetrated an atrocious crime against the people of Azerbaijan. On 20 January 1990 twenty six thousand strong Soviet troops invaded the capital of Azerbaijan, Baky, in a desperate, brutal and yet futile attempt to strangle the growing independence movement and to prevent the fall of the Soviet Communist regime in Azerbaijan as well as to punish ordinary people that rallied on the streets to voice their legitimate protest against violations of the territorial integrity of their homeland.



A kid mourning for the loss of his father

The invasion was launched at midnight and committed with ferocity and no mercy for children, women and elderly. The Human Rights Watch reported that "among the most heinous violations of human rights during the Baky incursion were the numerous attacks on medical personnel, ambulances and even hospitals". As a result, more than 130 civilians were killed and 700 wounded, hundreds of

people were arrested and subjected to various forms of physical pressure. Among the victims were a seven year-old boy, sixteen year-old girl, an eighty year-old man, a young doctor shot in ambulance while helping another victim, and many other innocent civilians, whom the Soviet Politburo, in a desperate attempt to conceal its crime, cynically called "hooligans, extremists and terrorists". Hundreds of other civilians have been detained, harassed and tortured by the Soviet army in the days and weeks that followed. This massacre entered the history of Azerbaijan as the 'Black January'.



A vehicle occupied by people jammed by a tank

The strong indignation and protest of the people of Azerbaijan was caused by the prejudiced and biased policy of the leadership of the Communist Party and the Government of the USSR towards the people of Azerbaijan. Soviet authorities' support of the Armenian separatists and their backers in Yerevan, who claimed a part of the territory of Azerbaijan, compelled the people of Azerbaijan to defend the territorial integrity of their country. Such a policy of the Soviet leaders led also to the expulsion by Armenian authorities of 200 000 Azerbaijanis from Armenia, in 1988-1989. Not a single Soviet mass media entity touched upon this crime and the tragedy of the Azerbaijanis from Armenia passed over in silence.

In the fall of 1989, the national independence movement had reached an incredible momentum with hundreds of thousands of people struggling for the ideals of freedom, independence and sovereignty. Along with Baltic countries, the national movement in Azerbaijan became one of the strongest in the former Soviet Union to courageously express the highest level of political discontent with the regime. As it was the case with peaceful demonstrations in Tbilisi, Georgia, and Vilnius, Lithuania, the Soviet regime responded with violent crackdown. Bloody events of 1988-1990 and the tragedy of Black January opened a new tragic chapter in the policy of genocide against Azerbaijanis, which has been executed by the Bolshevik regime and their proxies in the region – the Armenian nationalists.



In protest, people threw away their party-membership cards as an act of renouncement of the Soviet Communist party



Nearly a million people attended the mass funeral lead by the heads of three major faiths – Muslim, Christian and Jewish.

However, this did not stop the people of Azerbaijan from continuing their just struggle until the achievement of the national independence of the country, which in itself stands as the best memorial for the victims of the Black January.

Each year the people of Azerbaijan commemorate the Black January and pay tribute to the memory of the victims of this tragedy. May the souls of the martyrs of the Azerbaijani freedom rest in peace!

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