



**Baku 2015**  
1ST EUROPEAN GAMES

**BAKHTIYAR VAHABZADEH**

Poet, 1925-2009

**AZERBAIJANI LITERATURE**



Ministry of Culture and Tourism  
Republic of Azerbaijan



**JAN**  
Publishing house



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Kıtabxanası

U115(2A)

## Azerbaijani Literature

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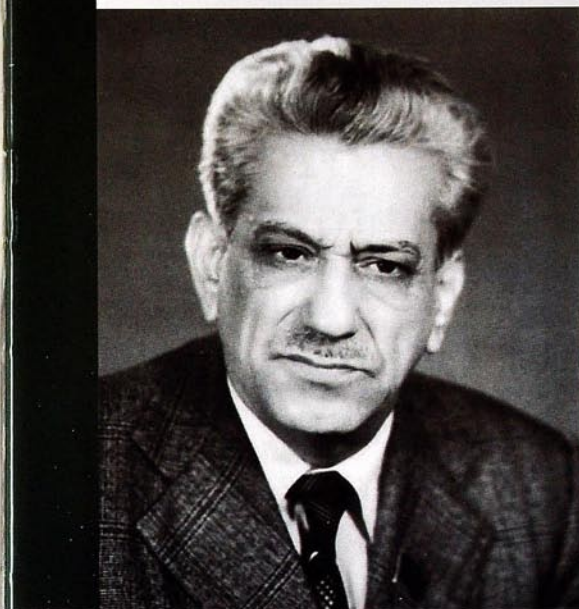
Design and graphics:  
Teymur Farzi

Art:  
Vasif Saftarov

These publications were printed by "KHAN" publishing house in the framework of "Introducing Our Writers to the World" project of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the occasion of "European Games 2015". The reference is necessary in case of extraction and replacement in e-resources. The translated literary pieces of writers were extracted from "Modern Azerbaijani Prose" and "Azerbaijani Prose Anthology" publications.

ISBN: 978-9952-405-78-1

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Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan / 2015  
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## Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, the People's Poet of Azerbaijan was born in 1925 to the family of worker in Shaki. He moved to Baku at an early age with his family. Upon finishing secondary school in 1942, the young poet had already written his first voluminous poem "Fall Nightingale" dedicated to Muhammad Hadi.

After secondary education, B.Vahabzadeh studied in the philology department of Azerbaijan State University (present Baku State University) (1942-1947). Having entered the post-graduate course of the university, he obtained the Ph.D. degree in theme of "Lyrics of Samad Vurgun" (1951). He started his literary creativity by publishing his first poem "Mother and Photo" in 1943. The lyrical poems collected in his first book "My Friends" embody the feelings and thoughts of people won in the struggle against fascism. "Second Sound", "Conscience", "After the Rain", "The Roads Make Traces", "Scream" and "Where the World Goes", "The Sword Thrusting Us", "Unpunished Sin", "Gibbet", "Competition" were performed in State Academic Drama Theatre of Azerbaijan.



*When Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh was 5 years old*



*Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's youth*

The scientific-pedagogical activity of the poet is closely connected with Baku State University. He obtained doctoral degree in the theme of "Life and Creative Activity of Samad Vurgun" in 1964. He was the professor of the Chair of Modern Azerbaijan Literature at Baku State University (1950-1990). He was elected correspondent member (1980) and active member of ANAS (2000), as well as deputy to the 10<sup>th</sup> summon of Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan and National Assembly of Azerbaijan in 1995 and 2000. He was awarded the State Premium of Azerbaijan in 1976 and the honorary name of People's Poet in 1984.



*His tomb makes the Honorary Cemetery more honorary for us.*



*From the personal photo-album of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh*



*Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh and Toghrul Narimanbayov,  
an Azerbaijani artist who was buried in France*



*The ex-president of Azerbaijan Republic Heydar Aliyev awards Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh with "Red Labour Banner" and "Istiglal" orders. 1995*

The poet expressed the sorrow of people, whose national personality was trampled on and suffered deprivations during the Soviet regime, by means of symbols and literary approaches and could evade censorship by disguising the events in his voluminous poems and plays under the history or ascribing to other states. What concerns his works directly exposing Soviet dictatorship, he published them under the title of "Sounds from the Chest" upon the collapse of Soviet Union.

Having read B.Vahabzadeh's book "We are Passengers of the Same Ship", the great Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aytmatov wrote: "All that surround us make the poet think... This is the major goal and reason of the great thinker's primal success."



*The memorial monument of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh built up in the center of Baku*

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is known as a prominent people's poet restoring the ideas of national independence and freedom in the modern national poetry of Azerbaijan. Having merged the traditions such as sage and philosophical profundity of ancient Azerbaijani poetry with the modern style of poem, the poet created perfect epic, lyric

and dramatic works. He is also the author of a number of scientific works. The basic goal and the major theme of his poetry is Motherland. After S.Vurgun, the main development direction of poetic style of Azerbaijani poetry is basically identified by his creative activity. The poet has no poem written by the requirements of traditional Soviet ideology. The sixties are considered the years of maturity of his creativity. His literary works such as "Gulustan", one of his first voluminous poems, *Shabi-hijran* ("Night of Parting") dedicated to Fuzuli, "Mugam" about mugams, "Weeping-Laughing" dedicated to genius poet Sabir were innovation in the poetry of that time. "Independence", "Contrasts", "Price", "The Abandoned", "Martyrs" and his other poems have a great significance in his creativity and in the development of Azerbaijani poetry.



*Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh with his daughter Gulzar, 1970*

B. Vahabzadeh is the author of more than 70 poem books, two monographs, eleven scientific-publicistic books, hundreds of articles, as well as more than 20 voluminous poems with historical or modern theme. He translated the poem "The Bride of Abidos" by Byron into native language. Besides it, his translations from Pushkin, Lermontov and Nekrasov are successful literary samples. The poet's books of poems, dramas and publicistic works were translated into many languages of the world, as well as English, French, German, Persian, Turkish, Polish, Spanish, Hungarian and languages of post-Soviet nations.



*Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh  
with his wife Dilara Khanum*



*Ancient manuscripts at the Institute of  
Manuscripts of Azerbaijan Bakhtiyar  
Vahabzadeh while reading*



*From personal photo-album of  
Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh*



The prominent poet died on February 13, 2009 at the age of 83 in Baku and was buried in the Honorary Cemetery. Three documentaries about him and television films on the motives and scenario of his works were shot. His monument was built up in Shaki city.



*Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh and Najmaddin Arbakan, ex-premier of Turkey*



*The People's Poet Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh with Sabir Rustamkhanli, the deputy and Khoshgadam Hidayatgizi, the journalist*

*Appreciative statements about Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh:*

*"There are many popular poets in the world. However, when you look through the newspapers and magazines, the real poets turn out to be few. When you feel lonely in search of answer to the question "What is the life?", only the real poets whose words are made up of thought, image, spirit and breath can cheer you up, inspire to live. Our contemporary poet Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is one of those. "I was given birth by belief and I am the son of belief..." In my opinion, these lines are very symbolic and characteristic for the creativity of poet. Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is building up his magnificent temple of poetry. He is powerful. The hands building up this temple are skillful and mighty."*

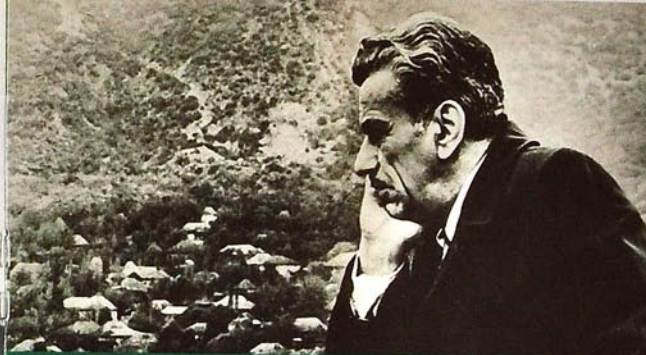
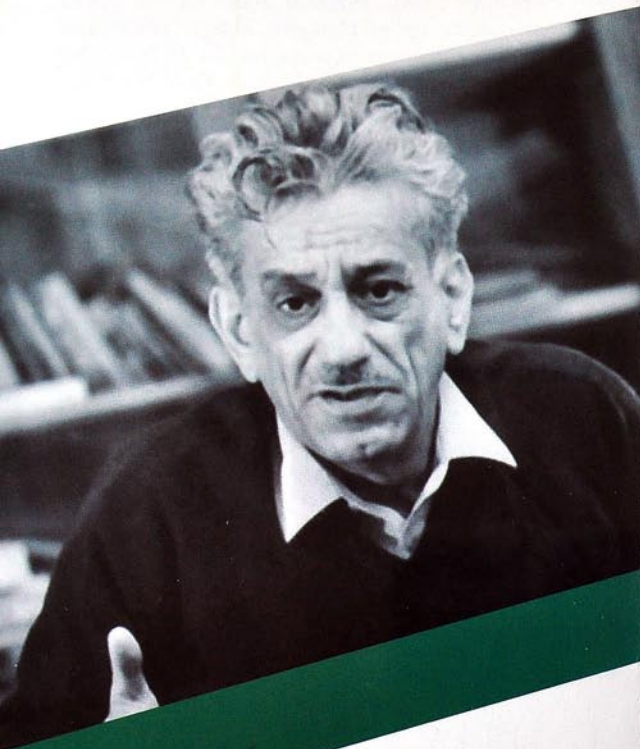
*Chingiz Aytmatov*



*Abel Maharramov, the rector of Baku State University makes speech in the ceremony of 85th anniversary of people's poet Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh*

*"...Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh... is one of the happy poets who has been loved, closely followed and cherished great hopes by readers since his youth owing to his innate poetic talent... There is no contradiction between Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh and his hero."*

*Mehdi Huseyn.*



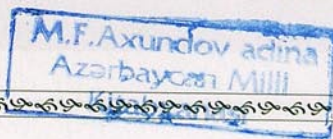
*Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh  
in his native land Shaki*



*Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh with Alparslan Turkish,  
Turkish military man and politician*

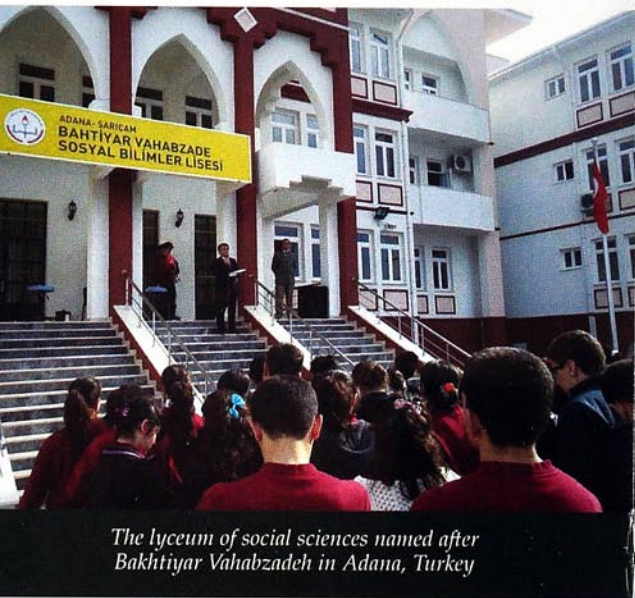
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*"Vahabzadeh's poetry is one of the interesting events of modern Azerbaijani literature."  
Rasul Rza.*



*"Vahabzadeh benefited by literary legacy of Fuzuli, Vagif, Sabir, S.Vurgun, Ashug Alesger, Shahriyar of our poetry. He plays with word so skillfully, works out so striking contrast, changes the idea so suddenly, extends it and generalizes so philosophically that you can't help getting amazed and feel extreme joy and aesthetic pleasure."*

*Mirza Ibrahimov.*



*The lyceum of social sciences named after Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh in Adana, Turkey*



*Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh with the famous Azerbaijani musicians – Shovkat Alakbarova and Habil Aliyev*

*Bakhtiyar is happy, because he is loved by people and people are happy because they have Bakhtiyar."*

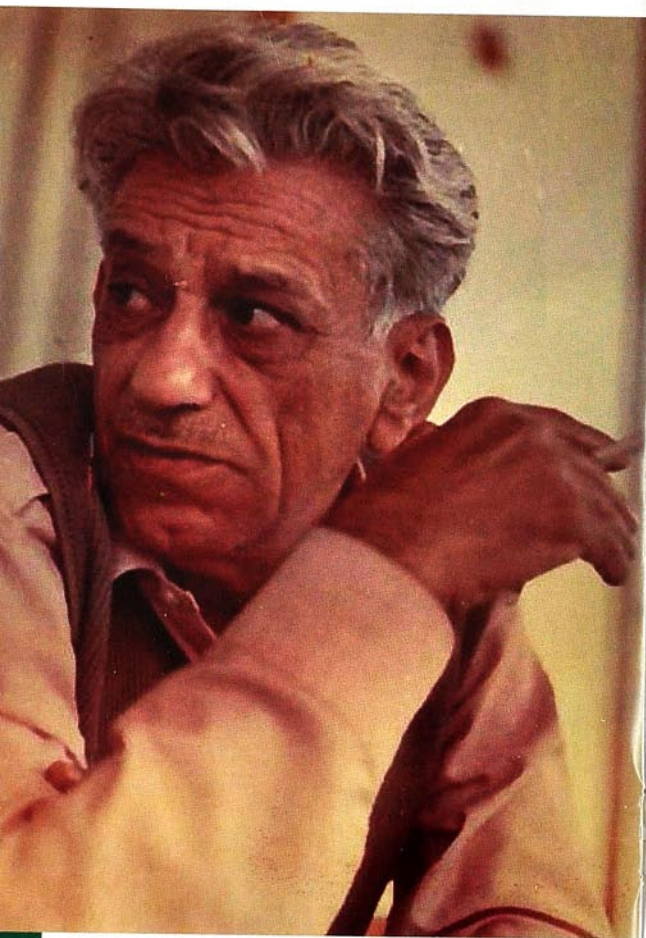
*Niyazi*



*Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh with Russian poet Yevgeniy Yevtushenko*

*"Bakhtiyar is a poet who gained people's and land's love and care. And this is the greatest happiness for a man of letter."*

*Balash Azeroglu.*



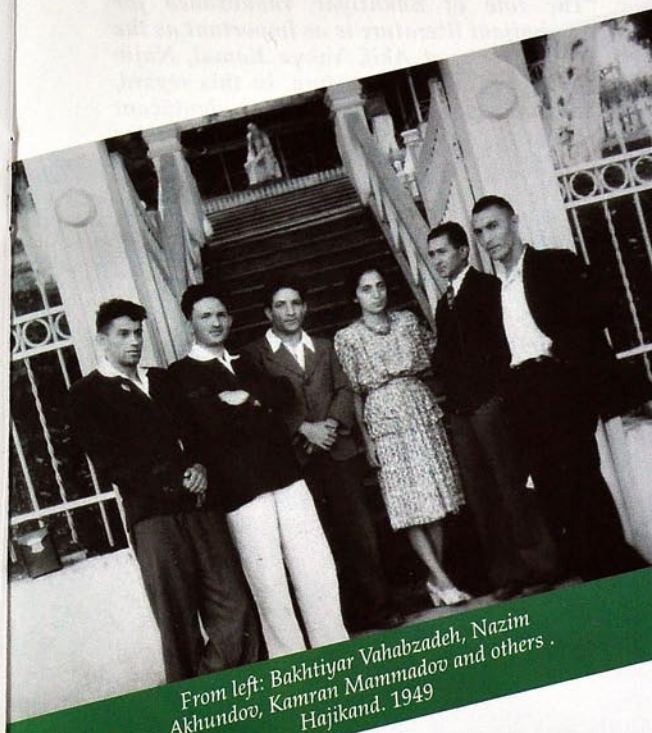
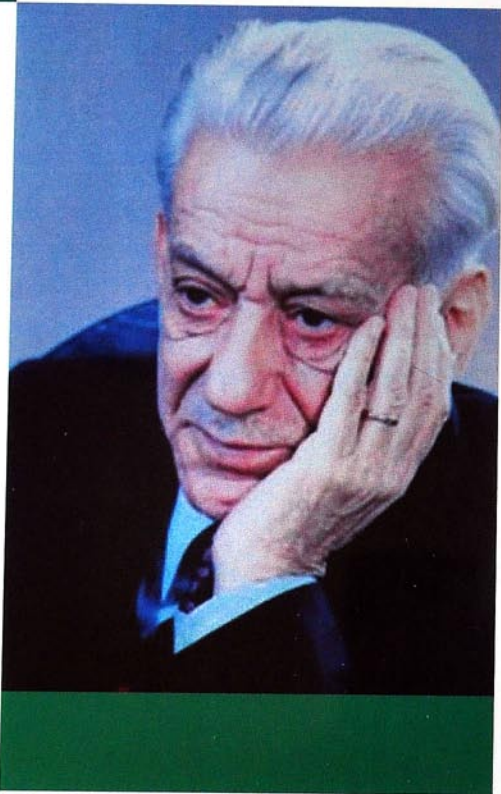
*The tanker named after Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh*

*"What Bakhtiyar writes is sincere, natural and disinterested. We don't feel fake elements in his lyrics".*

*Ilyas Afandiyev .*

*"Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is famous and favorite poet all over the country... His poetry encompasses all beautiful features specific to the East..."*

*Oljas Suleymanov.*



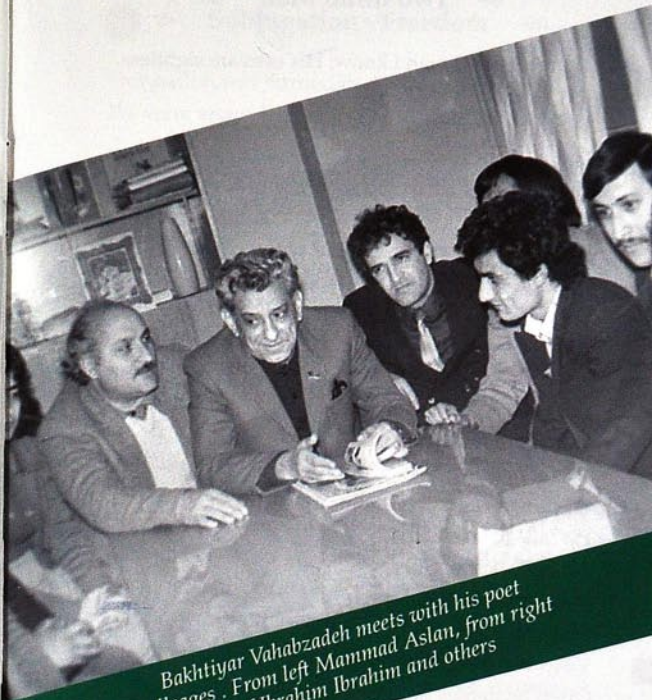
*From left: Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, Nazim Akhundov, Kamran Mammadov and others . Hajikand. 1949*

*"Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh taught us that the native language of each nation is its honour and conscience. It is the most valuable heritage of generation."*

*Ahmad Bijan Erjilasin.*

*"The role of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh for Azerbaijani literature is as important as the role of Mehmet Akif, Yahya Kamal, Najib Fazil for Turkish literature. In this regard, his tumultuous poetry played a significant role in the establishment of new Azerbaijan Republic."*

*Yavuz Bulent Bakiler.*



*Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh meets with his poet colleagues . From left Mammad Aslan, from right Vagif Ibrahim Ibrahim and others*

*"The poetry of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is as precious as brilliant."*

*Mehmet Kaplan*

## Two Blind Men

There's a blind man I know: His eyes are sightless,  
But he is not blind.

Though he sometimes gets scorched  
in the fire of sorrows,

He does not turn a cold shoulder to his passion  
And his mind.

He reads and writes day and night,  
In his mind's eye he sees, feels, knows.

But there is someone else  
Although he is not blind,  
Nonetheless, he cannot see,  
His bosom friend may die

In front of his eyes-  
"I saw nothing," he says.

Whatever is good he claims as his;  
He fails to see the bad.

He looks at the clock,  
But can't tell what time it is.

Nothing noble  
Visits his thoughts and feelings;  
Often he denies he saw something,  
Though he really has.

A sightless man need not be blind;  
Blind is he who does not want to see.

To such an ignorant fool,  
Life itself is a grave,

If you ask me.

*From "Bakhtiyar Vahabzade. Poems, Short  
Stories and a Play", edited by Hadi Sultan-  
Qurraie, and translated by Talat Sait Halman.*

*Indiana University Turkish Studies Publications:  
Bloomington, Indiana, 1998.*

## Subjugation - Freedom

Our nation was burned in the fires of slavery,  
We were wounded and scorched for the sake of  
freedom.

But having reached freedom in this temple,  
We made our thanksgiving prayer without the  
Qiblah.\*

Now we are free, but free from the honor we had  
That once protected us from evil.

Now that we are free from the fury and anger of  
the enemy,

Our nation has become the target of its own  
hatred.

Having freed ourselves from others' subjugation,  
We have succumbed to our own slavery.

We are free from benevolence and mercy,  
We must reject the nation's right.

We became the brutal plunderers  
Of our own Motherland.

No other nation can replace us in deception,

This one blames that one, and that one accuses  
this one.

While we plunder and pillage our Motherland,  
We are free from the fear of Allah.

My freedom is my enemy;

Fate itself cannot make heads or tails of this  
secret game.

The rope that pulled me out of the deep, dry well  
Is now wrapped around my neck like a noose.

*\* Muslims face Mecca when they pray.  
Translated by Aynur Hajiyeva*

☞ Alone ☞

I always feel alone even among people,  
My days have become longer and nights come later,  
When I am alone with my thoughts  
Each of my thoughts becomes a friend to me.  
Even the leaves of that lone tree would turn yellow,  
If it didn't have support.  
I wish for the lion not to be alone,  
While it is the king, sultan of forests.  
If there were no fire, water could not boil in a pot.  
A bird cannot fly over a mountain with a single wing.

*Translated by Aynura Huseinova*





Life is as short as an inch, they say  
 Sometimes Death brings tragedy to 100 families.  
 By God, in a blink of an eye,  
 Death is there waiting for you.  
 What was it like to live?  
 I never knew.  
 What is your measurement to assess life?  
 I've witnessed those who have lived for a century,  
 150 years,  
 And still left the world with empty heart and brain.  
 Do not measure life by its length,  
 Measure it by its depth.  
 There are those who confuse their right with their left,  
 Being respected by both,  
 Seeking superficial feelings.  
 To live a life full of meaning.  
 Isn't Honor what you should build your life upon?  
 No matter what it takes,  
 Or else one is really dead while being alive.  
 If we could live  
 Each day to its fullest,  
 We should be thankful for our fate,  
 And shouldn't complain about the passing of time.  
 I've witnessed those who lived a century, 150 years,  
 And still left the world with empty heart and brain  
 Don't measure life by its length,  
 Measure it by its depth.

*Translated by Aynura Huseinova*

In my left hand there's an old wound -  
 A legacy from my childhood,  
 Unaware that wood burns,  
 I seared my hand on a piece of charcoal.  
 A warning hissed at me,  
 The sound of flesh singeing,  
 But I wasn't afraid,  
 I felt fear only when I burned my hand.  
 The real experience of life began with that fire.  
 Colorful flames from the embers  
 caressed my childish eyes.  
 I don't know why everything  
 I've touched since birth has burned me.  
 I wasn't afraid until I was burned;  
 I didn't know fear until I left my childish ways.  
 Since being burned, I'm careful when playing  
 with fire,  
 And so life begins, and continues as a habit.

*From "Bakhtiyar Vahabzade. Poems, Short Stories and a Play", edited by Hadi Sultan-Qurraie, and translated by Talat Sait Halman. Indiana University Turkish Studies Publications: Bloomington, Indiana, 1998.*

American chemist Linus Pauling (1901-1994), the focus of Vahabzade's poem "Dawn," was awarded the International Lenin Prize (1970) "For Consolidating Peace Among Nations" and the distinguished honor of two Nobel Prizes, one for Chemistry (1954) for his work on chemical bonds. His second, the Nobel Peace Prize (1962), was awarded for his efforts on behalf of the nuclear test ban treaty that was signed in 1963.

During the 1950s, Pauling became a victim of the McCarthy-era "witchhunts" in the U.S. His passport was withdrawn by the State Department because his "anti-Communist statements were not strong enough." In fact, this travel restriction almost prevented him from going to his own Nobel award ceremony. Pauling was targeted because he spoke out repeatedly against official U.S. government policies during his campaign for peace, disarmament and the end of nuclear testing.

**(Addressing the U.S. government)**

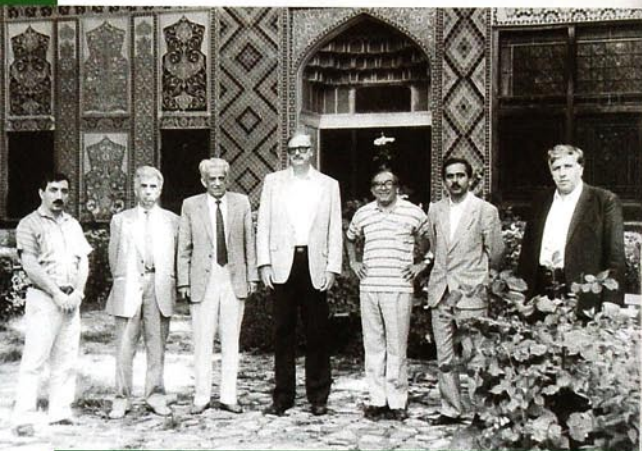
You have your own position  
 In the line-up of governments.  
 You have atomic and H-bombs,  
 You have tanks and cannons,  
 You have these weapons,  
 You have those weapons!  
 Can the country that has such guns  
 be afraid of anything?  
 But you are afraid of everything even today  
 and yesterday, you were afraid.

One bright mind,  
 One worrying heart  
 Are more frightening to you  
 Than thousands of H-bombs!  
 You were never afraid of atomic bombs  
 As much as you are afraid of such thoughts  
 of such minds!  
 Why did you become afraid of one mind  
 Which was able to separate colored lies  
 from the truth,  
 To distinguish truth from abomination?  
 -I know why!

If Linus is a slanderer, if he is a liar,  
 Then why do you hold back what he has said  
 from the people?

And why are you arresting him?  
 (Addressing courageous ones like Linus Pauling)

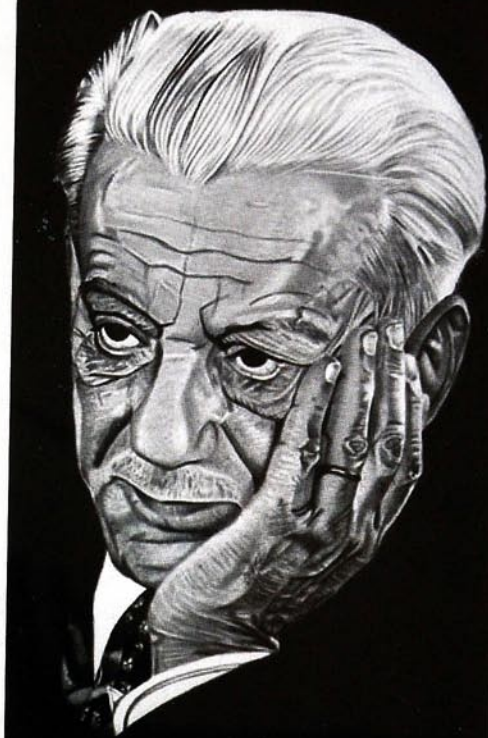
You who suffer because of the Motherland,  
 You who don't keep silent but ever speak,  
 You were destined for death and jails!  
 (Again addressing the U.S. government)  
 You have atomic bombs; you have missiles,  
 In spite of all these weapons, you are afraid.  
 The heaviness of this fear  
 Is the weight and price  
 Of the harm you have done.  
 Look at that scarlet horizon,  
 It is dawn,  
 It is dawn!



*From the personal photo-album  
of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh*



*From the personal photo-album  
of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh*



☞ My Mother ☞

She is illiterate.  
She cannot write her name-my mother.  
But she taught me how to count.  
She taught me the names  
of the months and years,  
And most importantly,  
She taught me language-my mother.  
I tasted joy  
And unhappiness  
With this language.  
And I created every poem  
Of mine  
And every melody  
With this language.  
Without it  
I am nobody;  
I am a lie.  
The creator of my work,  
In all its volumes and volumes,  
Is my mother!

*From "Bakhtiyar Vahabzade. Poems, Short Stories and a Play", edited by Hadi Sultan-Qurraie, and translated by Talat Sait Halman. Indiana University Turkish Studies Publications: Bloomington, Indiana, 1998.*

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