

DIGNITY



BY

BAKHTIYAR

VAHABZADEH

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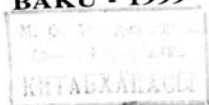
Struggle of a nation for identity, independence and territorial integrity

*No worries when wealth is gone,
Wealth returns all the time.
It is scary but, when they come,
For a nation's soul and heart,
Rip off its tongue with their knives,
Kill millions with one gun!*

by
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INTRODUCTION

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is considered a true *aghsaggal* in Azerbaijan. An expression that I could not find any English relevant for, and have used in the original form throughout the book. But, as it is explained in the following chapters, it literally means "the white bearded one." In other words an elderly or wise person within the tribe or society that everybody respects and trusts.

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is, therefore, more than a prominent poet, an elected member of the parliament and a professor of Azerbaijani literature. He is also someone who has gained his people's trust as an outspoken defender of the nation by always talking and writing about people's will and wishes.

Here are few of his articles and speeches which directly reflect Azerbaijani people's concerns, frustrations, pain and confusions at the most difficult times of struggle. This was a struggle for forgotten identities, national values and independence.

These are the views which have been expressed during the final days of The Soviet Empire and initial days of the independence. The independence cost the nation many lives of its youngest and bravest sons and daughters, more than 20 percent of its territory as well as homes of one in every seven of its innocent citizen.

The poet feels helpless and voiceless at a time when his nation is left alone, with all the doors to the global community closed and all the platforms, heard by the international community, occupied by the liars.

These articles and speeches were all written for the local population, under contrasting political circumstances. However, their more brief English translations here should still reflect the confusion, frustration, grief and nationalistic feelings surrounding these historical moments in life of a small nation.

In the early articles we come across harsh criticism of the local Soviet leaders of Azerbaijan for their lack of national sentiments, as opposed to the traditional presence of anti-Turkic Armenian nationalists within the central government and the Moscow media. On the other hand, in more recent articles the writer focuses on national unity and fears political disintegration. Now he is more alert about imperialistic Russian plots than the Armenian attacks.

Therefore, as in the case of any article printed in a daily paper or views expressed in a parliament, specially at a time of upheaval, most of these topics must be read within their own time frame.

Translator

THE POET AMONG HIS PEOPLE

Usually the global, social and ideological events in a society are reflected and spread by parallel literary movements. The revolutionary force of poetry is doubly effective when the poet turns his words into the leading waves of that movement, not only in its poetic sense but also in a literary sense.

I still remember one scene from a three-week period of nonstop revolution in Baku:

May 18, 1988. As the Caspian was revolting in the horizon, on its shores people's nervous energy and frustration were just as restless. The revolting square was like people's sea of anger. Masses that had been quiet, patient and calm until yesterday could hold back no more. In that square the pain and anger of people were roaring like a wild river. The floating boat on that river was the poet himself.

The breath of millions in revolt was sailing the lonely boat. A million hands and arms lifted Bakahtiyar and floated him to the head of the crowd. He had never been on such a high podium.

He had never felt so much unity with the people's hearts. His eyes were filled with tears. The tears of a poet joining the revolting sea of the masses, like pearls of his poems had always hung on their hearts.

When he got on the podium, his best friend, Khudu Mammadov, was standing on his right side. On his left side was Professor Nuraddin Rzayev.

Prof. Rzayev, who could not stand the poet's tears, said: "Today is not a crying day for you, just the opposite! It is a

joyous day. These masses are crops of seed that you have been spreading for the last forty years." These timely words brought tears to Khudu's eyes too.

They say that in the beginning of creation, word came first. No, word did not, the cry did.

A cry that is like the cry of an injured wolf that cuts the night, like the cry of a poet that cuts the heart and the soul...

It is interesting that word, cry and scream are expressions that have their own distinctive place in Bakhtiyar poetry. In his poetic works like the "second sound" or "scream," these words are actual titles.

Here sound is not the sound of nature, man, earth, sky or a scream on its own. It is the sound of the voice of masses crying for independence.

Sound, greeting, scream and cry always existed in Bakhtiyar's poetry. This sometimes came in the form of a whisper or even thunder.

In the works of Bakhtiyar Vahabzade we can only hear this cry in its extreme form of a scream or "thunder." Since it was not created behind a free, quiet and peaceful desk.

G. Yashar



MOTHERLAND AND INDEPENDENCE

THE WARMTH OF HOME'S HEARTH

(From the book with the same title) 1982

Oh, my Azerbaijan, my place of birth, land of my great grandfathers and my great grandchildren, my warm hearth, my only support, my motherland, I was born of your soil and will return to it. You are my permanent home, my arms and wings, my belief, my hopes, my fame, my fun, my happiness, my glory, my values and my eternity.

Of all the above, if I could only describe "my values," I would have made it clear to my readers what Azerbaijan really means to me. It reminds me of a tale by the famous storyteller,

Hans Christian Anderson; "The Silver Coin." It goes like this:

The silver coin of a country was carried to a foreign land in the pocket of a traveler. It was passed from hand to hand in that foreign land where it had no value. The coin wonders why nobody pays attention to it in the foreign land while they could buy so much with it back home.

It is only when the coin was carried back home that it was respected again and gained back its value. Every human being also has a value. Just like the value of an object, a person's value is also measured by his or her level of function. The functionality in turn is determined by the environment, situations and consequences. As valuable as an axe in the forest can be, it has little value inside the house. The needle's value for a tailor, the pen's value for the writer, and the hammer's value for the iron-smith are not as much for others.

In other words, absolute value and absolute beauty do not

exist. While Mejnun, Farhad and Romeo respectively thought of Leyli, Shirin and Juliet as absolute beauties, others may not think so.

There was a poetic gathering many years ago. One of the poets had written a piece about his homeland. Every verse rhymed with "beautiful homeland." The famous Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet was so critical of this expression. He pulled the other poet to a corner and explained to him that this expression is redundant. Everyone's homeland is beautiful to that individual anyway! To say beautiful home is to say white cotton or sweet honey.

Nazim Hikmet was absolutely right. Everyone's country is beautiful in his or her eyes. The same is true about one's mother.

Let's go back to Anderson's story. I remember this story each time I travel abroad. I feel like that foreign coin in a foreign land. Once I was in Lisbon and I lost my Azeri friend in a huge store. I walked out of the store. I was so frazzled that I broke into a cold sweat. Every passerby was ignoring me. Some looked at me like I was a useless object. I suddenly realized that in this foreign city there is no difference between me and a cigarette butt on the street.

People are like coins. They are only valued in the land they belong. Like gold, humans have different carats. Their value is measured by their beliefs, world views, thoughts and concerns. It is more likely for me to come across another person with the same beliefs, world views, thoughts and concerns in my own country than anywhere else. But this is not the only reason for me to belong to my land. There are thousands upon thousands of other ties to connect an individual with his or her country.

It is an Azeri expression: "smoke at home is better than the flame abroad." This is because even though the flame of a foreign hearth gives heat it won't warm you. It can only warm its own people. But why? Isn't flame the same everywhere?

Of course the flame is a flame but the wood that it burns, the soil that it sits on and the stones that absorb its heat do not belong to you in a foreign land.

Please do not accuse me of exaggerating. This is exactly how I understand it.

Once my grandfather had come from Sheki to visit us in Baku. He was planning to stay for a few weeks. But after only a few days when we found out that he is about to leave, we asked the reason. He said, "your tea doesn't taste the same!" This was because my mother had used an electric Samovar rather than a charcoal one. I had laughed at him then and used to think that this was just an excuse for him to go back to his own town in the countryside. Only recently I have discovered that actually the tea prepared on a charcoal Samovar tastes so much better than the other brewed on an electric one.

How? I cannot answer this.

NAGORNO KARABAKH: THE CLAIMS AND THE TRUTH

"Azerbaijan" monthly, 1988, issue 2

Coauthor: Professor of history, Dr. Suleyman Aliyarli

In the most turbulent times, Armenians always laid claims to our territory. In doing so, they somehow managed to convince some countries that these claims are fair, having been supported by their strong lobbies in these countries. Academician A. Aganbegyan said the following in Paris at the reception organized by the Armenian-French Institute and the Armenian Veterans Association: "I would like to see the Karabakh region [located at the Northwest of Azerbaijan] integrated with Armenia. Being an economist, I might say that it is more tied with Armenia than with Azerbaijan. I have come up with a proposal regarding the issue. I hope the problem will be resolved in the framework of Perestroika reforms."

His main goal in making such a provocative statement is to shatter the principles of the Soviet Constitution. Also, this action doesn't fit any logic. How could a Soviet official speculate the territorial claims of one Soviet Republic against another during an official visit to a foreign country? This statement is made on the eve of the Soviet leader's visit to the United States.

In doing so, people like Aganbegyan attempted to revise the stable national structure [of the USSR.] S. Mikoyan, holding the same views as Aganbegyan, wrote in *Literaturna Gazeta*: "There is a strong necessity to address the following issue: why should a minor nationality (ethnicity) be subordi-

nate to the major nationality's administrative borders and not to the republic where that minor ethnicity is, in fact a majority? The mistakes of the first days of the Soviet Union's existence regarding the administrative division of the country might create a problem nowadays. It is impossible to resolve the problem without going back to its root."

Mikoyan's and Aganbegyan's agenda needs to be explained: they claim that Karabakh is economically tied with Armenia to a greater degree than with Azerbaijan. This claim is hilarious because Karabakh does not even border Armenia, and is located deep within Azerbaijan. Even if Karabakh had stronger economic ties to Armenia than to Azerbaijan, this would not necessarily suggest an administrative shuffle. For example, Azerbaijan SSR's northwest region maintains economic ties with Georgia, and northern regions maintain these with the Daghestan region of Russia, but what does it have to do with their administrative status? Another discriminating aspect of this agenda is the fact that it proposes to take minority nationalities from one allied republic and administratively subordinate them to the other, where the same nationality forms not a minority, but a majority of the population. In reality, this is nothing but an attempt to advocate the idea of creating ethnically "pure," or "homogenous" republics. Thus, the very idea of autonomy is challenged; its importance is placed under a shadow of doubt.

However, while economist Aganbegyan is trying to support such claims with economic reasons, let us address the reality: the volume of goods brought to Karabakh from the two most industrialized regions of Azerbaijan-Baku and Ganja is 60 million rubles. Goods brought from the other two regions, Sheki and Arazboyu, is 16,5 million rubles. Thus, 3/4, or 76.5 per cent of the total volume of goods transported to the autonomous region (worth 100 million rubles) is brought from various Azerbaijani regions. Whereas the total volume of goods transferred to Karabakh from Armenian SSR is 1.5 mil-

lion rubles (only 1.5 per cent of the total goods brought to Karabakh).

Regarding the amount of goods exported by the Karabakh region, its total export is 150 million rubles. 1/3 of it is exported to the other regions of Azerbaijan, and the rest of it is exported to the remaining 14 Soviet Republics. Speaking of the Armenian SSR, the total amount of goods exported to that republic is 40,000 rubles, or 0.04 per cent of the total amount of exported goods. We can derive the following from the given statistics: the so-called economist Aganbegyan's claims about Karabakh being more economically tied to Armenia than to Azerbaijan are groundless. Also, the huge amount of Nagorno Karabakh's trade with the allied republics is made possible by the imports to the same region from the other regions of Azerbaijan. The amount of goods imported into the region from other Azerbaijani regions is twice as much as that of goods exported by that region to other parts of Azerbaijan.

Also, all the speculations about the so-called mistakes made during the first years of the Soviet state are of biased and distorted character. It is not due to chance that the reporter from the French *l'Humanite* interprets the words of the "Great Armenian" (quoted as it appears in the paper) as follows: "Gorbachev in his speech on November 2, 1987 emphasized the regrettable delay in resolving the ethnic problems in the USSR." Surprisingly, the appearance of the fictitiously spirited thesis addressing the resolving of the ethnic conflicts in the USSR coincides with the 70th anniversary of the October revolution.

It is known that during the first years of the Soviet state, a tremendous amount of work has been done in the sphere of creating the statehood in the Transcaucasus region, namely, creating three Soviet republics there. As Lenin stresses in his letter dated 14th of April 1921, the alliance of these states will create an example of inter-ethnic peace, unheard of to this day.¹ Narimanov wrote in *Zarya Vostoka*, a publication of the

Transcaucasus Communist Party: "Until the Sovietization of the Transcaucasus, the territory dispute was the root of all the armed conflicts in the region."¹

It has been so once upon a time. But in the first years of the Soviet state, fundamental changes have taken place there. The inter-ethnic peace and the spirit of brotherhood were restored. The way it was done and the price paid is described by Narimanov in the same article: "Immediately after the Sovietization of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the former accepts the Zangezur region as the part of Armenia, and the latter accordingly recognizes Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan. Following the Sovietization of Georgia, this republic throws out all claims previously laid to the Zagatala region of Azerbaijan.

...Azerbaijan announces its natural resources as the common wealth of all Soviet republics...

It comes as a surprise, that any official or nonofficial gathering of the people of the three republics never objected or disputed these decisions."²

So, the autonomy for the Karabakh region was seriously planned and worked out. On July 7, 1923, the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region was organized within the Azerbaijani SSR.

While Dashnaks [nationalistic radicals] were in power in Armenia, A. Mikoyan wrote in his letter to Lenin: "Dashnaks being the agents (emissaries) of the Armenian government attempt to unify Karabakh with Armenia, however, for the Karabakh population this would mean being detached from Baku (Azerbaijani capital) and being tied to Yerevan with which they have never been connected. Armenian farmers also expressed their will to recognize the Soviet Azerbaijan and to become part of it."³

The Caucasus Bureau of the Bolshevik Party, having discussed the Karabakh issue, made the following decision: "In order to promote peace between Muslims (Azeris) and

Armenians, taking into consideration the economic ties of the Upper and Lower Karabakh and the current close ties with Azerbaijan, the region is kept within the borders of Azerbaijan and granted wide-ranging autonomy.”³

All that is being forgotten nowadays. The fact is that the territorial disputes over Karabakh and Zangezur between the two republics were resolved by common consent of the two republics’ population. The concessions made by Soviet Azerbaijan to Soviet Armenia were large. As a result of these concessions the territory of Azerbaijan “shrunk” by 9,000 square kms, and consisted 86,7 square kms.

And now borrowing the expression of S. Mikoyan, let’s return to the “root” of the issue. There are clear attempts to build up some nonexistent historical background to the Karabakh issue. There are certain unsubstantiated claims that the area was once upon a time populated by Armenians and was under the Armenian rule. Supporters of this theory have gone as far as altering historical facts proven by many researchers such as K.Patkanov, N.Emin, K.Shahnazaryan, Y.Manandyan, I.Orbeli and others who have shown that Karabakh was one of the provinces of the ancient Caucasian Albania.

In a distant past, the current area of Azerbaijan was populated by the Caucasian Albanians [distinct from the Balkan Albanians.] Famous Soviet historian Trever, who devoted much time and effort to Caucasian studies, called the Albanians one of the three major ethnic groups in the Caucasus who had a very high level of cultural development.⁴ There is an anonymity regarding the issue among the Soviet historians:

“With the passage of time, the vast majority of the Albanians were assimilated into the Azerbaijani ethnicity and became Muslims. However a small number of them (especially in Sheki and Karabakh) were incorporated into the Armenian society and were assimilated by it as well.”⁵

“The Karabakh Armenians... are the successors of the ancient Albanians. Therefore, ancient Albania is a common ancestor of the Azeris and Armenians. Thus, the continuing arguments between the Azerbaijani and the Armenian scientists regarding that issue are groundless.”⁶

We would suggest that the state of affairs in the ancient times is absolutely clear. During the Middle Ages, Karabakh was a part of the feudal kingdoms of Azerbaijan. This area was part of the various Azerbaijani feudal states, such as Qaraqoyunlu, Agqoyunlu and Atabey.

Later on Karabakh became a part of the Azerbaijani state with its capital in Tabriz (1501-1736). The state was ruled by the Azerbaijani Safavi dynasty and consisted of three kingdoms, Karabakh being one of them.

A-33223 That area is addressed as the Aran Karabakh in a few ancient sources such as “Nizhat Al Gulub,” “Zeyl-e Tarikh-e gugzide” and others. [Aran is the Azerbaijani area between the two rivers, Kura and Araz.] This is supported also by the book of the Armenian historian, Arakel, who lived in Tabriz in the 17th century. According to the author, Karabakh was the Albanian land at that time: “And then Vardapet... went to the Albanian land, Karabakh.”⁷

From 1747 through 1828 all the Aran territories became part of the Azerbaijani feudal state of Karabakh kingdom. The Karabakh kingdom during the rule of Ibrahim Khan vigorously resisted the Iranian invasions and maintained close diplomatic relations with Russia. The character of these relations finds its clarification in the order of Tzarina Catherine II signed in 1783: “If Ibrahim Khan’s will to accept the Russian patronage is clear, then the same level of cooperation as the one with the Georgian tzar Irakli might be offered [by Russia.] Offering the protection under the similar conditions might result in the unification of the region with Russia with no military resistance.”

According to the terms of the pact signed on May 14, 1805

between Ibrahim Khan and the head of Russian troops in Caucasus commander Sisianov; Karabakh was unified with Russia. Thus, Karabakh having close ties with the rest of the Azerbaijani lands posed an administrative precedent. In 1822 the kingdom was abolished and in its place, the Karabakh province was created. Soon after four ministries of Russia (Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Military and Finance ministry) issued a four-volume *"Review of the Russian Territories in Transcaucasus."* (Saint Petersburg, 1834.) Karabakh was one of the territories mentioned in the *Review*. However the Armenian province which was created in the area of present Armenia in 1828 was not considered one of the Muslim provinces, even though 46,2 per cent of its population consisted of the Transcaucasian Muslims, in other words, Azerbaijanis. Also, it is necessary to mention that the percentage of the Azerbaijani population in the province was even higher, 73,8 per cent prior to the planned migration and repatriation of Armenians from neighboring Iran and Turkey. Thus, the Tzar of Russia did not regard the Karabakh province as an Armenian province, or a part of Armenia, and had found no grounds to do so.

Karabakh territories fell within the Caspian province, a newly created administrative area which included all the Azerbaijani-populated areas of the Transcaucasus since 1840. Since 1868 Karabakh was included in the newly arranged Elizabetopol (Ganja) province, and since the 1920's it became a part of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic.

So, it becomes clear that Karabakh has never been part of Armenia, neither has it been part of any Armenian province whatsoever, instead, all along the reviewed period of time, especially during the last 1600 years, it has been part of the Azerbaijani areas one way or another.

Therefore, views expressed by academician Aganbegyan about the "unfair" unification of the "ancient Armenian lands such as Karabakh and Nakhchivan" with Azerbaijan belong to his likes and veterans of the Armenian Nationalistic

Dashnaktsutyun Party, the very audience to whom he expressed such views. These groundless illusions and claims are not completely new. Back in 1904 Velichko, the Russian publicist wrote: "Let's put aside the empty Armenian rhetoric about the Great Armenia and its historical mission to enhance the culture of all its neighbors. Let's just mention the books published by the Armenian church which depict the Great Armenia's borders which include Tiflis as its capital [modern Tbilisi, capital of Georgia] and extend almost to Voronezh [a town to the south of Moscow.]"⁸

Currently there are many discussions about the fact that ethnic Armenians are the majority in Karabakh. According to the first official Russian population census of 1832, the percentage of Armenians in Karabakh was in a vicinity of 34,8 while the percentage of Azeris was 64,8.⁹ It is necessary to keep in mind that according to the treaty signed between Russia and Iran in 1828, the intensive immigration of the ethnic Armenians from the latter country has begun, and all these repatriated Armenians were placed mostly in Karabakh and some other Northern regions of Azerbaijan. In late 1880's the percentage of the Armenian population in Shusha vicinity reached 58 per cent, while that of the Azeri population dropped to 42 per cent.¹⁰

At the same period of time Russian poet and ambassador to Iran Groboedov, addressing the repatriation of Armenians from Iran to Russian Transcaucasus wrote that placing them in the new Russian territories without giving the matter the appropriate consideration was a huge mistake. He wrote in his *Remarks About the Repatriation of the Armenians from Iran Into our New Territories*: "Most of the Armenians are placed in the vicinities owned by the Muslim land lords. In the summer we could somehow bare up with that. The Muslim homeowners used to leave their homes for the summer and thus they rarely encountered the non-Muslim newcomers."¹¹

Finally, he comes to the following conclusion: "It is neces-

sary to explain to the Muslims that the current difficulties won't last long. We must not mention that the presence of the newcomers is going to be permanent. We must prevent Muslims from fearing the permanent presence of the newcomers." "

These fears were not unsubstantiated...

According to the first population census of the Russian Empire carried out in 1887, 53 per cent of the population named Armenian as their native language and 45 per cent named Azerbaijani. (Let us briefly mention that Z. Balayan, a disgraceful author of *The Hearth* wrote that some 96-98 per cent of the population of the region in the turn of the century was Armenian. How can one distort realities to such extent and lie shamelessly to his own nation?) During the World War I the number of refugees rose, and so the number of the Armenians in the region was on a rise accordingly. Thus, Azerbaijani nation under the Russian Empire gave shelter to the Armenian refugees.

However, in 1948-53, an event unheard of in the history of the USSR took place: with his decree, Stalin ordered some 100,000 Azerbaijanis to be deported from their homeland in Armenia. So, the homes of people who lived there for centuries were ruined. These innocent people still cannot understand why they were deprived of their homes in which many generations of their families lived. It became obvious that the idea of transforming the Armenian SSR into a mono-ethnic, nationally pure or in other words a homogenous republic has become an official policy and a scary reality. Then the territorial claims against Azerbaijan became more and more frequent. Up until now we might say that all these claims have resulted in losses to the Azerbaijani side. The last regretful event resulted in loss of some 5,000 hectares of irrigated, fertile land and eventually its population.

It is quite possible that all these claims produced a chain reaction which resulted in a gradual loss of our lands. Today one

can hear some muffled claims coming from the Georgian historians, claims on Sheki province of Azerbaijan. And these dangerous nationalistic claims are raised while there are still some 300,000 Azerbaijanis living within the Georgian territory and in provinces bordering Azerbaijan. Neither more than 200,000 Azerbaijanis who used to live in Armenia, nor many of those who were deported from Georgia in 1950's, were ever granted any administrative autonomy within these republics.

In 1828 the Azerbaijanis were divided in two. The Republic of Azerbaijan represents the Azerbaijanis among the other nations with pride and dignity. But the huge part of our nation who currently lives under Iranian rule in southern Azerbaijan is deprived of any administrative or national rights. The language, the culture of some 20 million Azerbaijanis living there, is under constant threat and pressure. It is not an accident that all the hopes of the Southern (Iranian) Azerbaijanis are tied to the North (Soviet Azerbaijan.)

Let us hope that the words spoken by Alexander Shirvanzadeh, the classic of the Armenian literature and a dignified son of Azerbaijan become a prophecy. He stated that all the attempts to build one's own happiness on tears and deprivation of others are wrongful and unfair. He compared the Caucasus to a tripod (referring to the three main nationalities living there) and said "if you break anyone leg, it is going to fall and crash."¹²

It is well known to likes of Aganbegyan that the Azerbaijanis coexisted with the Armenians peacefully in their native lands of Karabakh and Nakhchivan. But that is not good enough for people like him. All they want is to have it all, depriving our nation from their lawful rights. It doesn't come as a surprise that at the turn of the century, some Armenian historians came forward with similar claims laid to some Georgian territories as well. The idea expressed was that "Georgia is not actually Georgia, it is ancient Armenia." Addressing the issue, Ilya Chavchavadze, great Georgian

democrat wrote: "It saddens us when we see Armenians being scattered and forced to leave their own lands. May God give them the ability of reunifying and living in prosperity back in places they have already left. But they must not lay their eyes on our property, attempt to deprive us from what we have... No matter how much land we have, more or less, we gave you shelter, took you under protection and fraternized with you. Don't treat us like enemies in our own home."¹²

Unfortunately the thought of the great democrat have not lost its meaning today. Especially for those who raise speculations around the Karabakh dispute, trying to depict themselves as patriots of their nation. These claims are against our constitutions and principles on which this state was built. These activities will result only in the confrontation between the two nations.

In the framework of Perestroika, the friendship between the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis must be restored and a careful national policy must be implemented. That is the demand of our time.

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UNITED AND INDIVISIBLE

"Let's talk openly" (book) 1988

Regretful events taking place in Nagorno Karabakh, and the anxiousness experienced by people in regard to these events urged me to address the issue once again. On the eve of the Novruz holidays which traditionally brings joy and happiness to our lives, many telegrams and endless telephone conversations are now preoccupied with one question: What happened and who is to blame? I want to share with people my views about the history of our two neighboring nations with a friendship that is centuries old. I need to address the issues of humanism while the traditional joy of Novruz and spring is replaced with anxiety and tension.

In all times, representatives of different nations within the Soviet Union corresponded with each other and kept in touch. Correspondence also continued when a joyful event for one nation became a regretful experience for another. At times like this unity is crucial. It is the cornerstone, the common ground and the alphabet of our present and future successes.

Today any attempts to cause dispute between the nations must be stopped regardless of whom these attempts are made by and what their aims might be. They must be stopped regardless of all the reasons and justifications behind them. These attempts risk to shatter the unity, the spirit of wholeness of the nations. We are all parts of the whole, no one should be more or less important, we are all equal, and the existence of one does not endanger or deny the existence of another, but rather proves and completes it.

Nowadays some radio stations covering the events taking place in Nagorno Karabakh try to create an impression that the pathological hatred and intolerance between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis have existed for centuries, ever since Adam and Eve! This is nonsense. These two nations have coexisted peacefully for centuries as friends, and there was not a single instance of hatred or intolerance in this up until the beginning of the 20th century. To prove this fact, it is sufficient to shuffle through the pages of the love saga between the Armenian, Esli and the Azerbaijani Kerem, or to refer to the poems of the Armenian poet Sayat Nova, whose poems are mostly written in Azerbaijani.

Everybody is interested in history these days. Memory is a very important and valuable thing, but it depends on what sorts of memories we are talking about. It depends on whether we are putting the emphasis on unfortunate events, thus undermining the peaceful coexistence, placing seeds of mistrust, xenophobia, creating and widening the gap or emphasizing the moments of joy, solidarity and friendliness, hence providing a better future; an environment for trust and coexistence.

Of course, the history of the relationships between the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis, as well as other nations, is full of joyful, happy moments. Our people always keep in mind the good relationships once existed between the families of Khachatur Abovyan and M.F. Akhundzadeh, Lermontov and Qutqasin, Bakikhanov and Pushkin, and so forth.

Please don't get me wrong: in speaking about unity, I, in no way, mean to imply that one and only one opinion might exist and everybody must think the same. In terms of friendship, it would also be absolutely inappropriate to suggest that we must be alike or that there can be no room for difference between us. Friendship is a bouquet that consists of various types of flowers. As each flower in this bouquet has its own unmistakable scent and color, each nation differs due to its own set of characteristics, such as moral, culture, economics,

etc. And these differences must unify us, enrich us spiritually. Despite these differences, a human remains to be a human and everyone ought to pay his/her debts to humanity first and foremost to fulfill moral and human obligations. One who doesn't regard his neighbor's suffering or trouble as his own, who sees the neighbor through the prism of greed or jealousy must be spiritually poor, and with a limited personality. How can one maintain the peace of mind in the world where the Palestinians are subject to extermination, where our brothers in the South [Azerbaijanis in Iran] are deprived of the most basic human rights and freedom of learning, reading, writing and expressing their own opinions in their own mother tongue, where children and the elderly in Nicaragua are facing the abyss, and where the most dignified sons and daughters of South Africa are festering in prisons? The catastrophe that the Turks and the Armenians faced at the turn of the century, as well as any other catastrophe that humanity had ever faced makes my heart bleed and fills me with regret. The victims of the catastrophe are remembered.

There is a monument erected in their memory in Yerevan [capital of Armenia.] If one wants to see the face of the wrong memories kept with fanaticism, witnessing the huge and passionate demonstrations held each year on April 24 in front of that monument would be quite enough.

One should not forget that patriotic feelings are sacred and yet very vulnerable ones. You can't play dirty games with peoples' patriotism, appealing to them demands a tremendous precaution and responsibility. It is also not a secret that virtually every nation has had its own catastrophes and wars. Every nation has been through death and deprivation. How many Azerbaijanis were massacred in Nakhchivan by Andronik, who is regarded as a national hero in Armenia? Why don't we erect a memorial for those who were killed by him and those like him and all gather around and wail? Because this happened in the past. Because we are trying to rid ourselves of

the memories which can bring hatred and mistrust into our relationships with others. Is it really a good idea to raise one's youth, teaching them to hate other people, to remember the dramatic events of the past, stick to them, and try to blame them on someone even now, many decades later? Where is it going to take us? In other words, we should not make the mind of our youth fix only on the bad memories.

Once patriotic feelings are fed with hatred, the hatred shadows logical thought. There is no longer any room for logic and rational thinking. And that in turn promotes feelings of supremacy and national egoism. A nation that comprehends itself as a supreme and unique being misleads its individuals into perceiving themselves as saviors. Realistic and rational comprehension of reality and history is replaced by nationalism and chauvinism. That is how the idea of the Greater Armenia, an Armenia that stretched "From Sea to Sea" [from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea] was born. The Greater Armenia would include all of Caucasus and extend as far as Russia on the North and Aral Sea on the East. That is how these speculative theories and ideas are transformed into historical concepts.

It is clear today that the demonstrations are of the spontaneous character. The demonstrations are not a sporadic protest of the unrested people, but rather a result of the work of a group of people who desired to unify Karabakh with Armenia and have worked to make this happen for many years. Is that their final goal? Of course not. It is beyond any shadow of doubt for everyone who read Z. Balayan's *The Hearth* that even the undisputably Azerbaijani province of Nakhchivan is claimed to be Armenian. In order to snatch Nagorno Karabakh, the ethnic structure is routinely appealed to. But because of the fact that Nakhchivan has a homogenous Azerbaijani population, Z. Balayan deliberately tosses and manipulates the history, appealing to the most convenient events and omitting those that are not suitable to promote his theories.

I would think in the name of the future generations, the bad memories which widen the gap between the two peoples, promote intolerance and mistrust must be simply erased. In these troubled days, many poets, writers, scientists of various nationalities speak up on TV, radio and print media. Instead of deviating from the routine propagandist methods, all they do is rumble about the same issues, repeating over and over again the same ideas, memorizing the events of the World War II years when all nationalities of the USSR worked shoulder to shoulder to achieve the victory against fascism, and had to split a piece of bread during the years of hunger. These events in fact have taken place and nobody's trying to deny them. But in the environment when the cities, towns and villages were full of rumors, these speeches have created the information vacuum among the anxious and worried people. The latest events make it clear that such a vacuum of understanding also existed among the scholars (enlightened people) on one hand and the masses of public on the other.

We are not talking about trust in the words of a writer or a publicist here. In these troubled days, many of our colleagues couldn't find their way into people's hearts. People did not trust the words spoken from tribunes and podiums. Intellectuals who have always been engaged in the empty rhetoric and meaningless rumbling were faced with even more difficulties. People didn't trust "public figures" who used big words. It became clear to us that we have to work day and night, analyze our mistakes and deficiencies in order to win back the trust of the people. Such a process has already started in Russian literature, but we are lagging behind, only making our first steps.

The great Russian poet Mayakovski once said that words become fashionable and are being worn out just like clothes. Being a poet and a citizen, I cannot forgive myself and my colleagues for their hypocrisy and dishonesty. In all these years, being consumed with speaking about such values as

friendship with meaningless pathos, using worn-out words, we didn't see our hearts, the hearts which were filled with indifference. In the "days of the friendship" our weekly and monthly literature reviews reflect the same traditional applause, the same old speeches, same old attitude, same old words. We all know them by heart. Same old lies are spoken, especially in poetry.

It became clear that there are officials who do not speak their own native language and therefore, avoid meeting with their own people.

I recalled words said to me once by Lalezadeh, an 80 year-old woman: "We have never mentioned friendship in the past, but we used to be the neighbors and friends of the Armenians." After that I was told a real story. She said she couldn't forget something that had happened when she was a child. In her native Goybulaq village, there were two young men who used to go hunting together; one Azerbaijani and the other Armenian. Once during the hunt the Armenian accidentally shot the Azerbaijani. Thus, the only son of the Azerbaijani family falls victim to the unfortunate accident. The family and the relatives of the Armenian wanted to go to the home of the Azerbaijani and express their condolences, but for some reason they were cautious and afraid to do so. The *agh-saggal* (the white bearded one - usually the oldest and wisest person who has a great influence and respect) of the village, a man named Arakel (Armenian) comes to the mourning with the family of the Armenian young man. All people who attended the mourning stood up to extend their greetings to them. The fact that Arakel himself came to the mourning had prevented any possible atrocity. He said: "One cannot wash off the blood with more blood, but only with water." (Meaning, possible retaliation and revenge are useless and further bloodshed would not help.) This is the ancient tradition of both nations. Today we must admit that being influenced by the cliches of [Soviet] propaganda, having been relying on such

propaganda and on the modern psychology that emerged everywhere around us, we have completely forgotten the ancient traditions of respecting the *aghsaggal*.

In these terrible days, I want to talk about an event I witnessed myself. When the Karabakh problem emerged, I went to Aghdam (a town in Karabakh once populated by Azerbaijanis). I attended the mourning ceremony for the two young men killed there; Ali and Bakhtiyar. I wanted to find out more about what people thought about what had happened. Of course, most of the people with "short-fuses" couldn't stand the killings of the two innocent youth; they were enraged by the event. The death of these two young men could have led to more bloodshed and death. Some one had to extinguish this flame of rage. An old man presiding at the mourning started to talk. He called the youth to patience and tolerance, quoting the ancient poets of the Orient. He urged everybody to control their emotions.

Aghdam is an ancient town. The conduct of the people is not being determined by the laws only, but also by the traditions and views of reality. The word of the *aghsaggal* is valuable and respected here. Having considered this, the regional [Communist] party committee decided to create a council of the *aghsaggals*. This council which deals with the social development and especially the education and upbringing of the youth is highly respected by the local people.

The newly emerged reformers have created millions of names, symbols, traditions, badges and emblems [referring to the various youth organizations created during the Soviet rule.] But the extraordinary situation that emerged had proven that the traditional values, such as the council of *aghsaggals*, are respected to a higher degree.

Two huge crowds which might remind one of two big rivers are confronting each other in a struggle for survival. Begging, fears, laws - nothing seems to be able to help calm things down. The Armenians and the Azerbaijanis are face to face. A

terrible tragedy is bound to happen, a mistake which could never be corrected is to be made. One of the two Communist Party chiefs of the two republics came forward saying: "Kill me first, and then murder each other. I don't want to see the brotherly murders."

People were surprised. Many of them stopped to think. But a smaller non-mainstream crowd went on. That was when an elderly woman named Khuraman Abbasova climbed up to the roof of a car, so everybody could see her. She had thrown her silk head scarf down before the men ready to rip each other to shreds [it is an ancient tradition in the region for a respected woman to throw down her head cover to stop a fight.] That was an extraordinary event. No one dared to step on that head scarf and continue the fight. People stood there staring at each other. Khuraman left the arena of the fight as the last person.

I appeal to my countrymen, the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis, and especially to the youth whom Khuraman stopped from fighting and killing each other: "Let's erect a monument in memory of the woman who stopped the brotherly killings. It is because of her actions that the mind won over the emotions, and harmony and peace won over chaos and atrocities."

Dear reader, all that you have read here is not a fairy tale. What that woman did is so alive in my memory, as if it was taken from an ancient saga. Being perfectly honest, I must admit that I used to think something like that could only happen in sagas and fairy tales. But as it turns out, such morals and bravery has found their way to people's minds and were waiting there for the appropriate moment. That is why, being the son of Azerbaijan, I want to address the Sumgayit events that make my heart bleed.

Of course, the Sumgayit events are closely tied to those taken place in Stepanakert and Aghdam [two cities in Karabakh], also they are closely tied to the fact that enormous masses of people fled to Azerbaijan [from Karabakh and Armenia.] The

situation in which these refugees have found themselves, their experiences and the fact that the local government didn't show appropriate care about them; all of this led to rage. But I am curious about something else: why all the murders in Askeran didn't cause any reaction in Aghdam, and fights didn't become a war? And why as soon as the refugees arrived in Sumgait, the fights, extermination and atrocities have taken place? Sumgait was declared and considered a multinational city, a city of Komsomol [a youth organization of the Communist Party.] The city of Sumgait is only 40 years old. It was built by the youth who have arrived from various places and currently dozens of nationalities live and work there.

Why these revengeful events were not prevented in a city with thousands of scientists and propagandists? I want to speak honestly. Because unlike Aghdam, Sumgait didn't have a thousand-years-old tradition of the co-existence of various nationalities. There is enough of the Communist bureaucrats and propagandists, but all these people who like to hear themselves talk, could not help with their little slogans, nor their words for the sake of the words. If we refer to the ancient sayings, we see that all the negative attitude towards the ancient tradition that we appropriated [during the Soviet times] was wrong.

Just look at the contradiction! The people who have experienced many sacrifices have forgiven the mistakes of their neighbors, thus showing their wisdom. But at the same time, failing to abide by the same traditions and wisdom, to control their emotions, allowed murders to take place.

32 representatives of the various nationalities became victims of ill-mindedness and the lack of leadership. Simply because the victims and murderers were of different origins, we cannot regard the events as examples of inter-ethnic clashes. The fact that these events took place somewhere without a tradition, cultural roots, historical memory and *aghsaggals*, however, does not surprise me at all. Moscow also has contributed to the Sumgait events.

One day, I was invited to home of my former friends-Mamedovs. Elman Mamedov is an engineer, he is Azeri. His wife Siranus is a journalist, she is Armenian. There were traditional Oriental sweets and colored eggs on the table. The symbol of life, *samani*, which could be found in every home on the eve of Novruz fills me with joy. But their three month-old son gave me even more joy. The Mamedovs were very worried by the events in Karabakh, Armenia and Sumgait. Although the situation in Baku was relatively stable, who could know what would happen tomorrow? They said they have worked out a simple plan: if the Azerbaijanis attacked their home, Elman would have come forward to talk to them, if the Armenians did, then Siranus would. They were especially worried for the child. They have also thought about a secret place to hide their child from the extremists.

Somebody tell me please! How could one divide an undividable being? How could one separate inseparable?

That is why it is impossible to separate Karabakh from the rest of Azerbaijan. Because you cannot divide a whole. Because ever since ancient times, Karabakh used to be a part of Azerbaijan, its heartbeat, its precious pearl, the harmony of its song.

ROAD TO THE SATURDAY NIGHT

(From the book with the same title) 1991

Ever since the Karabakh events emerged, I cannot take a pen in my hand without trembling. The pen cannot transform all the anxiety and protests within me to the paper. The anxiety and the protests do not allow me to express my thoughts correctly. The human mind cannot comprehend the overwhelming injustice served to my people, and the pain it has caused.

I could never imagine the possible extent of such injustice and suffering. Even if I saw it with my own eyes, my mind fails to comprehend it. How could I express the unfairness of all the accusations that fall on us like raindrops if my mind cannot comprehend all the terrible things that happen to us? How can I construct a sentence; with what words? All the disasters that I have witnessed do not fit any grammatical structure of any language in the world. The languages are too limited to allow me express all of my feelings.

The Armenian mafia is so strong, it could overshadow the truth with its lies, and we do not know what to do about it. We are alone, and nobody hears our voice. Even R. Hamzatov, a son of our religiously-tied brothers in Daghestan, expressed an opinion from a high stage that Karabakh should be governed from Moscow. Poet N. Khazri has given him an appropriate answer in this regard in his article published in *Yeni Fikir* no.3,4/1990.

These days, when the Armenian lobby seems to have managed to manipulate the whole world, we are facing terrible and unfair accusations published in the Moscow papers, as well as in the media from around the world. In this regard, I recall the words

of I. Chavchavadze in his 1902 book of *Armenian scholars and the screaming stones*, because Armenian nationalists have given Georgians similar troubles in the past. Chavchavadze wrote: "[They make the things look] as if we have never existed and we don't exist now. The picture of our physical existence in their minds is the following: spiritually poor, mindless, illiterate, culture less, untrustworthy, hypocritical (two-faced) cowards. Look how they portray us, look who they think we have been and who we are now according to the Armenians who try to humiliate us in order to make themselves look better. They are trying to assure the world with their written and said words that we have never had dignity in the past, and now we are even worse..."

It might sound like these words were addressed to us today. He continues, "The Armenians don't just insult our national pride. They go further. In order to wipe us out from the surface of the Earth once and for all, they try to claim that everything we have; our history, monuments, historical memory, literature, virtually everything belongs to them... The only reason that stands behind all that is their wish to make the world believe that Caucasus belonged only to them in the past, therefore, it must belong to them in the future."

Russian journalist Velichko, also stressing this characteristic of the Armenian nationalists, wrote: "Armenian oilfield owners have tried to create a myth about the 'special' historical role of this small nation and its national heroes... In order to prove their historical 'mission', they have used all means, without wasting a chance. In praising themselves, they have tried to humiliate their neighbors. They shamelessly sack the Georgian archeological and historical monuments, destroy the Georgian writings on them and appropriate the small or abandoned Orthodox churches."

I am ready to bow to logic [truth.] But there is a difference between logic and lies, myths, fabrication and fraud. The myths and fraud do not promote the truth, but only lies and fabrication.

It is a challenge to face the lies and answer all these fabricated accusations. How can one be patient in dealing with such a huge lie! Only having calmed down and gaining control over emotions can one come to the conclusion that it is natural, because lies and false accusations are the only way for the liar to survive. If the liar does not lay made-up claims against the others he simply cannot survive.

According to the myth about the "Great Armenia stretched from sea to the sea" we do not have any rights for our own land. Again, as Chavchavadze said, "[They make the things look] as if we have never existed and we don't exist now." And unfortunately, Armenian nationalists have many supporters in Europe and America.

I have started to write this article to in order to describe the events in chronological order, and in doing so, to enable the future generations to learn from the past. But as I mentioned before, I am very angry, so I don't know where to start. So, if I break the chronological order, I hope the reader will forgive me.

The Pages of the History Book

In order to understand the depth and importance of the events in Karabakh and analyze them thoroughly, it is vitally important to look through similar events that have taken place at the turn of the century, despite the fact that these events might first seem to be distant. It becomes clear from the historical documents that the territorial claims Armenians laid after 1918 have very deep roots. J. Jabbarli, the Azerbaijani writer have described these events when the Azerbaijanis were massacred in their own lands by the Armenian nationalists. S. Shaumian, who called himself a "bolshhevik" and "socialist", T. Amirov and S. Lalayev, having teamed up with the Dashnaks [Armenian nationalistic party] massacred thousands of Azerbaijanis in Baku, Shamakhi and Nakhchivan. Despite all

these massacres the powerful Armenian lobby managed to spread the word about the genocide of the Armenians in Turkey and Azerbaijan.

I would consider it sufficient to quote a few documents in this regard.

The *Azerbaijan* newspaper reads: "T. Amirov, a famous leader of the robbers gang, having become a leader of the socialist army, massacred about 6 thousand helpless and innocent Muslims [Azerbaijanis] in Baku. S. Lalayev, a drinking companion of Martynov, leading his own so-called "socialist" gang, exterminated a large number of well-educated Azerbaijanis in various neighborhoods.

Having taken them out of their homes, Lalayev shot them right on the street. Shaumyan and likes of him, as it seems, have found similar methods for their leaders. "The socialists from the Red Army under the command of Lalayev and Amirov have massacred the population of Shamakhi, destroying about 40 Muslim [Azerbaijani] villages in the region."

In order to investigate these savage massacres carried out by the Dashnaks, a special investigative committee was appointed [by the Bolsheviks.] This committee, headed by Kojemyaka, came up with the accusatory act against Lalayev. Kozhemyaka called Lalayev in front of the commission and declared him under arrest. Lalayev, having offended Kojemyaka, makes a phone call to Shaumyan. The latter says to Kojemyaka over the phone that "it would not be appropriate to arrest Lalayev."

Therefore, according to Shaumyan, it was quite appropriate to massacre thousands of Azerbaijanis, and absolutely inappropriate to be arrested for that. And silly us, who thought of Shaumyan and those like him as the saviors of the nation and built monuments and wrote poems in their memory.

It is very interesting that back in 1912 the Consul General of Russia to Van, Erzurum and Bitlis [Eastern provinces of Turkey] wrote in his report called *The Van events: the*

Killings of the Armenians: "The Armenians are not victims of anybody else but their own leaders who seem to have lost their minds. Under their rule, thousands of their countrymen were killed. But despite all that they didn't manage to improve their social conditions. Quite the contrary, they have found themselves in a most difficult situation with no way out."

Unfortunately, as a result of denial of these facts by some Armenian "scientists," the historical facts have been falsified and the truth has been hidden. That is why ever since the last century all the Turks of the world were being described as a culture less and savage nation, while the Armenians were portrayed as the poorest, most helpless, most suffering people. The English who have been jealous of Turkish rule in Africa and Asia have also contributed to that. The European travelers and historians who had lived and traveled in Turkey extensively, have tried to point out the falseness of these views of the Turks and wrote interesting books about the issue.

Famous German writer and journalist Hans Bart addressed this issue in detail in his *Turk, Watch Out* paper which has been published in Rome in 1896 and reprinted many times since then both in Turkey and Germany. He wrote: "The Turks are people of a great dignity... Trust and openness, tolerance and friendliness towards people of other religion. Hospitality characterizes them. They don't drink alcohol and have perhaps an even exaggerated sense of cleanliness."

Then the author answers the question as to why the Turks are being portrayed as the barbarians by the Europeans: "Turks are seen as barbarians because of the fact that they are not Christian, and also because they have a spirit of protest and fanaticism, despite all the characteristics mentioned above."

The Armenian territorial claims against us have surfaced yet again after 70 years. Why now? Armenian nationalists have always come up with territorial claims against us in the times of change. Let us analyze the political meaning of these times of change. Why do all these groundless claims surface in sim-

ilar historical circumstances? If we think about the social and political importance of these times of change, we can make many things clear.

In these given realities of the democratization process, when we ought to give the Armenian nationalists a proper response and show them where they belong, we sit and wait for help from elsewhere and hope that the problem would be resolved fairly. All that we have been hoping for made us compromise numerous times, instead of defending our vital rights. I don't really know if the reason is because we are kind as a nation, or something else. Anyway, we have to admit that we are the ones who suffer. But we should not forget that our suffering is not justified, just as it was not justified 70 years ago. We are only worsening our situation by compromising with the aggressor.

What did we gain by compromising? And how objective were those from whom we were expecting help?

In the case when one country comes up with territorial claims against another, and when the other country defends itself from aggression, whom should the United Nations, acting as an arbitrary organization, order to stop? The aggressor, or the defending party? No doubt, it must first reason with and stop the aggressor. But our "referee" Moscow expects us to further compromise and orders us to stop. If I may ask, what did we do wrong that we are the ones who are told to stop? Maybe we should stop defending ourselves?

Just look at the contradiction: when the Karabakh Communist Party branch declared its intention not to be a subordinate to the Azerbaijani Communist Party on June 13, 1988, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union did not show any reaction to this unlawful decision. It kept silence. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR kept its silence when the Armenian SSR's Supreme Soviet and the puppet national council of Karabakh declared its intention to unify Karabakh with Armenia on December 1, 1989.

The fact that all that went unpunished by the central gov-

ernment [in Moscow] made the Armenian nationalists feel confident in their actions, and their shamelessness grew further. Immediately after that, 200,000 Azerbaijanis were forced to flee their homes and the native land [in Armenia.] The Armenian nationalists could care less that if they were to exile Azerbaijanis, tens of thousands of Armenians would be forced to leave Azerbaijan too. So, they made their nation face yet another problem.

The conscious sons of the Armenian people living in Azerbaijan have protested against these groundless demands of the Armenian nationalists and condemned them. Georgi Dorantsev, a retired pilot [Armenian by nationality] committed suicide in protest to these shameless acts of the Armenian nationalists. In the message he left for his wife, he described his decision to commit suicide as follows: "I decided to take my own life due to all the acts of extremism committed by the nationalists of Armenia and Karabakh and the inter-ethnic tensions."

The life of Ashkhen Grigorian, the worker at the bread factory in Shusha was threatened because of the interview she gave to Moscow Television in which she condemned the acts of the Armenian nationalists and their groundless territorial claims. Zori Balayan harassed her in the *Communist* paper published in Yerevan. Despite all that, Grigorian didn't stop defending her position. She wrote: "The Azerbaijanis [in this respect] are absolutely innocent. The Armenian extremists are to be blamed for everything. We used to work and live peacefully. The Armenian extremists have raised the issue of the annexation of Karabakh from Azerbaijan and its unification with Armenia. But we all knew very well, that Karabakh was Azerbaijani territory and so it shall be in the future."

After the Azerbaijanis were forced to leave Armenia and, thus, Armenia became an ethnically homogenous republic, the Armenian scholars called a session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. They felt the need to discuss the issue of provid-

ing security for the Armenians who lived in Karabakh, and in the rest of Azerbaijan. This can be regarded as interference in the domestic affairs of Azerbaijan. It became clear that these people had not seen anything illegal in forcing all the Azeris to leave Armenia, they, however, regarded the departure of Armenians from Azerbaijan as unlawful. I wonder, who gave them such rights? Let's say we have tolerated this as well, but what was the reaction of the Central government [in Moscow] which was responsible for the restoring the spirit of law and justice between the two nations? Why does Moscow keep its silence? Don't the Azerbaijanis have a right to defend themselves, just like any other nation? One can go crazy having not found the answers to these questions. Actually, there is an answer.

Currently we pretend that we are building a civil society. If so, why in these circumstances when the two contradicting interests come face to face, one party gets full support all the time and the other is always forced to compromise? Why are their unlawful demands not being condemned and why aren't they being stopped? The more we compromise, the more claims they come up with. I think that if we didn't compromise at the very beginning, despite the pressure from the Central Government [Moscow], their demands wouldn't have become so enormously huge as they are today.

We compromised a lot and we lost a lot with each single compromise. Right now there is no room for compromise. There would be no way out for us if we do. Despite all of that, the Central Government yet again pushes for resolving the matter by diplomatic means. Even after the Armenian aggression, the Supreme Soviet in Moscow did not in any way intervene in the problem and did not condemn Armenians. How could the problem possibly be resolved by diplomatic means after all that? On one hand, the Supreme Soviet declares Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, on the other it doesn't condemn the decision of the Armenian Supreme Soviet about the

unification of Karabakh with Armenia. How shall we regard that? I guess, it's quite clear. They are leading an ambiguous policy in Moscow.

Didn't the Supreme Soviet of the USSR cherish the Armenian nationalists when it dealt with the inter-ethnic clashes between the Lithuanians and the Polish, the Chechens and the Ossetians, while avoiding and postponing the Karabakh issue numerous times?

How can we comprehend the fact that after the earthquake in Armenia the whole world seemed to care and offer help, but the similar devastating earthquake in Tajikistan was completely forgotten after a couple of days? Does it mean that the Christian world is so worried by the rising number of the Muslims in the world? Maybe there are some other reasons that we are not aware of?

Let's put aside all those reasons for now. Let's talk about our own deadly mistakes.

Ignorance

The following story would be relevant here: the boy says to his father that the rabbit has built a nest in their yard. The father responds, "It doesn't say anything about the braveness of the rabbit, but it does show our ignorance" (the fact that we are asleep and don't pay attention.)

The most environmentally hazardous factories in the Soviet Union were built in our republic. Why? Because our leadership didn't mind. Do our rulers who gave their permission to all of that sleep well at night? The hazardous factories built in , Ganja and Baku; aren't they a means of genocide of our people? Some of the leaders have portrayed the fact that these factories are being built in our republic and nowhere else as a victory of our economy and we were made to believe that we ought to be happy about that. The leaders

who sought the approval from "above" (the government in Moscow) and nothing else, who have never thought about their own people have transformed into a "death zone."

Have these leaders ever thought of the thousands of Azerbaijanis who lived in boxes and mud? There are many self-made homes in Sumgayit put together out of pieces of metal and wood. Have these leaders ever thought about those who had to breathe in the poisonous waste of the chemical industry? About those whose bones were melting? The children being born to those families are dying without even embracing life. Without even making their first steps; they die, lying victims to the policy of such leaders. According to the statistics, one out of every seven children born in Sumgayit is already dead, two out of every seven are handicapped or impaired. The air in Sumgayit is so poisonous that children are dying of lack of oxygen while even inside their mother's womb. 70 per cent of pregnant women experience lack of blood, the number of people with the various types of heart diseases is 31 per cent higher than average. The strangest thing is, even in this situation, Sumgayit is not on the list of ecologically suffering cities of the country. Who should be blamed for that?

Dear reader, if you can bare it, please read about the cemetery for children in Sumgayit published in the issue #3 of the *Azerbaijan* paper (1989) and say "Thank you" to our leadership for such an act of genocide.

Isn't it an act of genocide that pesticides, herbicides, DDT and other poisonous materials are being literally spread in the air in the cotton-rich regions of our country, just for the sake of fulfilling the annual Soviet plan of cotton production? Isn't it an act of ideological genocide to part pupils from the educational process for at least 4-5 months and send them to such a hazardous environment, forcing them collect cotton from the fields? Why is it that among all the nations in the Soviet

Union, only Turkic nationalities are involved in cotton production? Is it just by accident?

I agree with the opinion that Stalin's personal attitude towards the Turkic people and the Islamic world, was terribly negative. Yagubov, the first secretary of the Uzbekistan Writer's Union, writes: "I remember a few Georgian families were deported from their native lands and have settled down in our village. All of them were Georgian Muslims. The fact that Meskhetian Turks, Balkars, Chechens and Ingushs were deported from Caucasus and the Crimean Turks were deported from the Crimea doesn't come as surprise. It was a result of Stalin's hatred towards the Muslims and Turks who lived in the USSR."

There are no non-Turkic or non-Muslim nationalities among those who have been forced to leave their lands and migrate during Stalin's rule. That tells us a lot.

Only Turks and Muslims were forced to change their alphabet during the Soviet era. Couldn't anybody ask Stalin or Mikoyan, if it was such a good idea to force nations change their alphabets, then why was the similar process not applied to Georgians or Armenians? Why did you deprive your own people of such a great pleasure? They knew well that they were not going to be asked these questions because the local leaders at that time were such cowards. It was quite obvious that the local leaders would keep their silence for the sake of keeping their privileged positions.

During the Khrushchev era, the Armenians declined the planned production of 1,000 tons of cotton, because, unlike our leadership, their leadership cared for their own people. They knew very well that only a nation that would want to exterminate itself would actually go ahead and agree to be engaged in such types of production with bare hands. I wonder if our leadership didn't know these simple things; wasn't it a given for them? Of course they did know all the consequences. But they have never bothered to think about the

future of their people, and they hadn't started thinking about it at that point either. In order to get an approval from "above" [Central government in Moscow], they would make their people suffer. As they actually did.

The local provincial leaders appointed by these leaders were promoting the same policy. Among the first activity of the newly appointed first secretaries (province leaders) was opening a Russian school (a school where all classes were offered in Russian.) Because, as they belonged to the upper crust society, their children simply could not go to an Azeri school. They would regard it as a disgrace for themselves.

Kids who attended Russian schools were not taken to work at the cotton fields, as it was banned to get the children of other nationalities involved in this type of agricultural work. We [Azerbaijanis] were the only ones "blessed" by such opportunity. Among the institutes in Baku, only students of the Azeri Faculties [where classes were offered in Azerbaijani] were taken to work in the cotton fields. The kids of the upper crust elite-Ministers, government officials and such - who looked healthy and led a very wealthy and happy lifestyles, simply could not go and work in the fields.

Writing these lines I think to myself, My God, how could we bear up all of that?

Have any leaders cared about their people thus far? All that most of them cared about was their position, they tried to hold onto the chair in which they sat. For the sake of being upwardly mobile, they could step on their own people's heads. They have never thought about the fact that they actually belonged to that people and they were obliged to serve the people. If it were not for their people, who would they be leaders of? The degree of ignorance and selfishness among our leaders has been deplorable. Yet, I have not touched upon the damage they made to the popular culture, morals, language, music and so forth.

I clearly remember a few years ago, a young female journalist, Nushabe by name, who attended the Journalists

Congress came up with the suggestion to rename Kirovabad (formerly Ganja) and to restore its original name, at least for the sake of Nizami's upcoming anniversary [ancient Azerbaijani poet and philosopher from Ganja with many epic works.] A [high-ranking] official attending from Moscow was also present at the congress at that time. In order to make the visitor from Moscow happy, the leader of the republic humiliated her and turned down her substantiated suggestion. Because he and his likes knew it very well: their job was not caring about the memory and fame of Nizami, but that of Kirov [Russian revolutionary actively involved in the establishment of the Azerbaijani SSR.] Because that leader was absolutely clueless about Nizami. He might have seen his books, but has never bothered to read them. And why would he? How can they be of any use to him? That is why our "leader" offended that female journalist. He thought he would gain some extra respect in the eyes of the visitor from Moscow. At that time, losing respect of his own people could not harm or weaken his position. But the times have changed.

I was sure back then that the very same visitor from Moscow was laughing at our leader deep inside his mind. A person who does not show respect to his own cultural and historical heritage, who is ready to forget them for the sake of his position, hardly deserves to be respected. Such person might be only scoffed at. Surprisingly, a few days later, an article by Farhad Agamaliyev was published in *Sovetskaya Kultura*. He, without even knowing Nushabe or being aware of her suggestion, also proposed to rename the city and restore its traditional name. The "leader", having read the article, grew angry and called the Kirovabad [Communist] Party Committee ordering them to "fix up" a response to that article immediately. So it was done, some three days later an opposing article called "We are Kirovabadians" was published, and the only Azerbaijani working in Moscow print media was fired on the grounds of spreading nationalistic ideas.

And nowadays we are regretting the fact that there is no single Azerbaijani working in the Russian media while there are lots of Armenian nationalists there. Why so? Because our "leadership" has never bothered to think about it. And those who somehow managed to "break through" and get a job with the "central" media, were called back to the republic and "smashed", as to keep them from "digging" into the shady affairs of the local leadership. Careers of the rest of them were undermined in a way I have just described.

Meanwhile the Armenians were doing the opposite. Mikoyan, during his work in Moscow [in the Supreme Soviet] for some 50 years, relocated hundreds, even thousands of Armenians to Moscow, offering them very good and decisive positions. Armenians were given access to the institutions and facilities closed to the other nationalities; such as military, diplomatic, etc. There is no ministry, media, institution or any other facility in Moscow nowadays where one couldn't run across at least couple of Armenian nationals.

High ranking officials of the Armenian descent such as Shahnazarov, the aide to the [Communist Party] Central Committee's secretary; Brutens, the head of the inter ethnic relations department; Aganbegyan, the economic advisor; deputy Prime Minister Sitarian, deputy director of the ITAR TASS news agency, etc., have always interfered somewhere along the line trying to muffle our voices, making sure that we will remain unheard. They have always interfered into our affairs, in every single issue; causing us problems and troubles and leaving us behind. Isn't it exhaustive evidence to this point that since the very first moment the Karabakh issue was raised [1988] up until this day, not a single Azerbaijani writer, publicist, scientist or journalist has managed to publish his/her article in the Moscow media, or to tell our side of the story?

It is not a surprise, that once upon a time, Khrushchev [former Soviet leader] said to Mikoyan, half joking, half seriously: "You have placed Armenians almost everywhere..."

Ever since I was born, I have always seen Armenians hold the highest and the most decisive positions even here, in Azerbaijan, in the Central Committee [of the Communist Party], Cabinet of Ministers, administrative institutions and virtually everywhere. I have always wondered about the reasons behind this situations, and asked the "grownups" about them. They have tried to convince me that it must be this way, because Azerbaijan is a multinational republic and has a considerable Armenian population. Then I used to ask, well, there is a considerable Azerbaijani population in Armenia as well, but why are the Azerbaijanis not holding similar influential positions in Armenia? Even in the areas with some 90 per cent Azerbaijani population [in Armenia], they were not in any way represented in the local administration, farmers unions, etc. Then, having not found a better answer, the "grownups" used to say that we should be more generous. What a great reason! Now we are facing the consequences of our generosity. According to some unofficial rule, the deputy city mayor had to be of Armenian origin, the area of the city predominately populated by the Armenians was called "Ermenikend" [Armenian village], many streets were named after the Armenians, the ethnic portrait of Baku was damaged and thus, the grounds for the "Greater Armenia" were prepared.

We could bear up with this. But the most devastating fact is, when we try to explain all these occurrences with our traditional openness, friendliness and the spirit of internationalism, they try to make things look as if our incompetence and the lack of outstanding people among the Azeris were the main reason why Armenians used to hold high positions or even why the streets were named after them.

We are facing the consequences of our own deadly mistakes. Leaving the talented national human resources behind the doors, we were offering the best positions to the Armenians. We named the streets after Shaumian, Avakian,

Osipian and other [Communist] crooks, often forgetting our own national heroes.

We have screwed it up from the very beginning. We have been lead by people whose career objective was to look good before the Central government, who did not have any feelings for their own people, their Motherland, or their lands that were being damaged and destroyed. I wonder if these people have ever shown interest in the history of their own nation, or if they have bothered to learn the strength and weaknesses of their people.

J. Nehru, who saved the Indians from the 300 year-long English rule, wrote in his "Discovery of India" that in order to serve the people, one must know and study them thoroughly. That was the main reason why he traveled all across India, visited the most remote villages, learned the psychology and the mentality of his people, and most importantly, learned its strengths and weaknesses. In other words, he discovered India for himself. That is what a leader should be like!

Paruyr Sevak, an Armenian poet, said to me once that everybody holds similar views and opinions in Armenia when it comes to the "national" issue; from the leaders of the republic to housemaids. He attracted my attention to the fact that it was completely the opposite in Azerbaijan; our leaders think one certain way and the people do not share their thoughts or opinions.

He said that to me in Baku during the "Days of the Armenian Poetry." We had numerous meetings arranged at different institutions and organizations during that week. I used to read my translations of Sevak's poems. Having seen people applaud me, he said once: "Your people love you, but your leaders don't. I am loved both by my people and my leaders."

Sevak was a poet who expressed the national feelings of his own people. During the so-called stagnation era [years of Brezhnev's rule in the Soviet Union] the poets and writers addressing the national issues remained in the shade, including

myself, all over the country [USSR.] But the situation in Armenia was completely different. Even during those times, poets and writers who addressed the "national" issues in Armenia were held in the highest regard and were respected. P. Sevak has never belonged to the Communist Party. He has gained even more respect with his poem called "Bells that do not stop ringing." This poem was dedicated to the awakening of nationalistic feelings and self-consciousness. As a result of it, he was named the honorable Doctor of the Philological Sciences in the USSR and he got elected to the Supreme Soviet (parliament). Exactly at the same time, I was criticized and bashed for my poem "Gulustan." My books were removed from the libraries and universities. Seeing all these injustices, comparing the situation at home with the neighbors, going through the struggle, we kept living and creating. When we have spoken about the necessity of the Russian language, we were labeled as "internationalists," but as soon as we started emphasizing the necessity of our mother tongue [Azerbaijani], we were labeled as "nationalists." We haven't lost our patience though. God knows how we managed.

The Stagnation Era is left behind, isn't it a great time for the awakening? Many years ago, our ancestors embraced the Armenians who were forced to flee Maragha [in Iran.] They were given shelter in Azerbaijan. Those who have been the "tenants" just yesterday, lay claims to our homes today.

Armenians who were forced to leave their town called Maragha in the Southern Azerbaijan [Iran] in 1828, gave the same name to their new settlement in the Northern Azerbaijan. 150 years later, in other words, in 1978, they wanted to celebrate the anniversary of their new settlement by erecting a memorial on a facade in which they attached a board saying "Maragha-150." But when the idea of the territorial claims emerged, they have cemented this board so it wouldn't be seen anymore. But the picture of the monument was taken by the zealous sons of the people and presented to us.

Armenian nationalists reject today what they have built/created just yesterday. How can we possibly confront such people who try to cover the truth with a curtain of lie, who come up with such enormous lies and forgeries? We have to admit that we can hardly defend ourselves against such big lies. Their lies appear to be more convincing than our truth most of the time...

In 1989, during the Gorbachev era, V. Petrosian, an Armenian writer said to his colleague at a session of the Supreme Soviet that B. Vahabzadeh in his book expressed the necessity of wiping the Armenians off the face of the Earth. What a huge lie! I still cannot find anything even slightly similar to that in any of my books or articles. I can not imagine expressing or implying such a view.

Armenian nationalists use every possible opportunity to humiliate us, no matter how obscene. It has always been this way. *Rabochaya Tribuna* dated 2/11/90 quoted a worker S. Sheykhahmedov saying:

"During the strike, we have seen many visitors, including those from the Russian Democratic Front and emissaries from Nagorno Karabakh. As soon as they arrived, they demanded to lay off Azerbaijanis including me. I am from Daghestan [currently autonomous republic in the Russian Caucasus, with a significant Azerbaijani population.] In order to make the strike committee accept this, they have given them 50,000 Rubles. Even though we haven't received wages for a long time, even though our friends needed money badly at that time, they have declined such a disgraceful suggestion from the Armenians. They ordered them out for the reason that they have tried to sow the seeds of discord among us."

Who could have thought of such a disgrace?

How can one measure such a degree of hatred and hostility? They [Armenians] actually were anxious enough to go to a remote part of Russia and offer bribe just to get rid of few poor Azeri workers.

They are not ashamed. They are able to come up with any sort of groundless accusation whenever and wherever possible. Once a person has lost his/her conscience, you can expect anything from that person. But things are getting even worse when such a disease spreads to the whole nation.

While we were asleep, Armenians were thoroughly preparing for attack. Actually, it was not our nation that was asleep, it was our leadership. Not to allow any discord, our leadership has always tried to muffle the voice of the nation.

Back in 1960, Pro-rector of the Yerevan University has openly made the claims that Karabakh and Nakhchivan were Armenian lands. And the leaders of Armenia have never criticized him and have never tried to reason him. At the gathering held in the memory of S. Vurghun at the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, Abbas Zamanov gave a proper answer to those groundless claims. But we excluded him from the Communist Party and fired him from the Academy by order of the leaders of our republic. Back then, historian M. Gasimov, professor A. Sultanli and I voted against his exclusion from the party. Right after that, the three of us also faced major complications. But Abbas has long been unemployed. That is how we as a nation once again acted against our own national interests.

Sometime soon after the Pro-rector's speech, I read my poem at one of the academic gatherings. I wrote it as a response to his claims. It was called "The land is undivided." The poem soon became popular among the nation. Soon after, I was called to the KGB. So I went there and I was criticized and attacked by them. For a long time, I was barred from appearing on TV and radio.

I am positive, if our leaders didn't stop us from giving a proper response to the Armenian nationalist's claims back then, the situation wouldn't have aggravated and it would not have gone this far. I wish our leaders have woken up now at least, for it's about time!

Z. Balayan, who initiated the process of sowing the seeds of atrocity between the two nations, he who is responsible for the death of thousands of people from each side of the conflict is a member of Parliament nowadays. But we pretended we were blind when people like Etibar and K. Reza, who have tried to respond to the lies of Balayan and other Armenian nationalists were jailed. How can we bear up with such a tragedy?

In these turbulent times we must elect the smartest persons, especially economists and lawyers to the Parliament and send them to Moscow [Soviet Parliament] to defend our national interests. Let's compare those whom Armenia sent to the session of the Parliament with those sent by us. They have delegated Ambartsumyan, the president of the Armenian Academy of Sciences; Ayvazian, a famous writer; and Igitian, a well-known forger of history. And our delegation consisted pretty much of workers and low ranking bureaucrats who didn't speak any decent Russian, and couple of scientists who didn't have any speech skills and who preferred to keep their silence all during the session rather than to speak up.

Our MP's were silent even when the Armenian MP's attacked them and our national interests, so as to attempt to produce an impression of polite and well-mannered people. Ironically, even during the rule of the Tzars in Russia, back in 1906 that is, our delegates have preferred to be silent, so as to appear to look polite and civilized as opposed to the aggressive Armenians nationalists. J. Mammadgulizadeh, addressing such a behavior wrote in a satirical *Molla Nasraddin*: "Beware, don't embarrass us, Muslims among 72 other nations [present in the Russian Duma/Parliament] behave in a way, so they wouldn't think of us as ill-mannered and uncivilized barbarians. Be very aware of what I am telling you. The best way around is to be silent and not to speak up at all."

Indeed, nothing has changed drastically for these 83 years that passed since then. Our MPs these days do the same, they

don't speak up. They try to look civilized. We have not achieved any progress since 1906 in that area. Same old, same old... I have written a poem in which I criticized their tactics at the Congress;

*Comrade Congressman, I voted for you so
Your voice would be heard from such a high tribune.
I didn't vote for you so
You'd become deaf and blind
We voted for you so
You'd protect the integrity of our land.
So you could teach a lesson
To those who put their greedy eyes on it*

*We voted for you so
You'd become a voice for these people.
So you'd yell about
The reasons for the air, water and the nation
that are getting rotten.*

*Have you said that all? No, speak up and answer.
We were all ears waiting for you to say something.
You were silent.
How can we call you a delegate of the nation?*

*They have offended your people,
While you chose not to talk back.
Was this what you were obliged to do?
The one that fails to defend the pride and
dignity of the nation,
How can he be a delegate?*

*Did I send you there to be silent?
You didn't go there to sit and yawn,
But you went there to tell the world
About people's troubles, to be people's voice.*

*You went there being mute
And came back empty handed
When you were supposed to serve the people,
You acted like a stranger.*

*Did we vote for you
Because you are good at being silent?
We once again failed to find the truth, our rights,
Thanks to the delegates of the people
In the time of openness it turns out that we need
Deaf and mute delegates,
And we have to reject the openness
And the freedom of speech.*

Instead of learning from the poem, they have found themselves offended by it. And I told them that when I compare the Armenian MP's with ours, I have a mental picture of a soccer game between the national team of Brazil and a team from Evlakh [small town in the north-east of Azerbaijan.]

The main issue to occupy the minds of our leaders, as well as any other patriot is the refugee problem. How can such a small republic accept 250,000 refugees and provide them with a place to live and with jobs? This is a significant problem. Being precise, finding a solution to this problem is above our capabilities. [At the time of publication of this article Azerbaijan had only 250,000 refugees, mainly from Armenia. Now after the Armenian occupation of about 20% of Azerbaijan it has 1 million refugees]

Turkey, which has a population of some 70 million, which is 14 to 15 times bigger than Azerbaijan, whose annual food production may meet their consumption needs for 2 to 3 years, has experienced major problems accepting 300,000 ethnic Turks from Bulgaria. How can Azerbaijan possibly meet the needs of these 250,000 refugees while the food production in the republic barely meets the consumption volume and Azerbaijan imports most of the consumer goods. But we have no choice. We are obliged to do so. This is our moral obligation.

Armenia received aid in billions [of Soviet Rubles] after the earthquake. The earthquake with similar devastating effect that

took place in Tajikistan was soon forgotten. I am thankful to our Sheikh Pashazadeh [the spiritual leader of the Transcaucasian Muslims] who attracted the [Moscow] Congressmen's attention to this fact.

Wouldn't it be quite an earthquake that would place 250,000 refugees in a small republic such as Azerbaijan? Wouldn't it have a similar devastating effects on the economy? We cannot take this burden alone. Aren't we eligible to receive at least a part of the financial aid that Armenia is receiving?

Get it: these people are forced out of Armenia. What we gave away for decades was much less than what we got in return. Can't they pay us back during these days of need, so we can help our refugees? We are not beggars, we demand what is ours. We would wish to see this issue raised at the Congress [in Moscow] by our delegates. But unfortunately this issue was not touched upon.

I want to give just one example: how could a person like Jahangir Karimov, our Academician, a Doctor of Laws who lived in Moscow all his life, who didn't speak any Azeri, who has never shown interest to the problems of his own nation, who has no other ties to his nation except his name, possibly represent Azerbaijanis' interests in that Congress?

Leaving all this aside, in a crucial turning point of our history, he wrote in *The Azerbaijani Communist* that the borders between the two allied republics can be changed only upon the mutual agreement between these two republics according to Article 78 of the Soviet Constitution. But when there is no discord or mutual agreement on the issue, what should be done in that case? The Soviet Constitution does not answer this question. According to this logic, when the two allied republics cannot reach a consensual agreement, the issue should be brought to the Supreme Soviet, and the problem must be discussed separately in both chambers of the Supreme Soviet..."

Because of such a proposition in the dispute over Nagorno Karabakh, the Constitutional rights of Azerbaijan were trampled on.

As I heard it, when Igitian [a congressman from Armenia] called us fascists during the session, our delegates urged C. Karimov [congressman from Azerbaijan] to stand up and answer him. But he turned to them and said: "You are going to leave, and I am going to stay here, don't make them become my personal enemies." Way to go for the congressman representing the nation! Bravo! I am not blaming him, I am blaming those who made him a delegate, a congressman. Those who got him elected should have asked him if he was capable of representing and protecting the interests of his own people.

The question is, if the elections to the Congress were free and democratic, would we have elected Karimov and his likes? We shouldn't forget that Democracy literally means the rule of the people. Then why persons like Abulfaz Aliyev Elchibey, future president of Azerbaijan, K. Mamedov, N. Rzayev, who have always defended the rights of the people, who have always fought for the better future of the nation, were left behind closed doors and were not elected to the Congress?

Unfortunately, [despite the political processes in the USSR] our leaders have not yet comprehended the idea of democracy, Perestroika, reforms and freedom of speech. Our republic today lives according to the rules and laws of the 1950's and 60's, when the congressmen were appointed from "above" [political leadership.] Yes, exactly, **appointed**. The principles of democratic reforms are being trampled upon everywhere in our republic. During times when the Democratic principles work in the Baltic States and other republics of the USSR, if somebody demands Democracy and freedoms in Azerbaijan, this person is called to the Prosecutor's office and faces charges and investigation.

At the 1st Congress, while the delegates from other republics were eager to defend the rights and interests of their

nations, and when it was necessary, even argued bitterly, our delegates having sided with the conservatives, fulfilled their "plan of silence." The most surprising moment was when upon their return to Baku they tried to convince us that the silence they kept was a major victory itself. And no one seemed to bother asking what it was that they accomplished with that silence? All the abusive and offensive words said about us? In order to calm us down, they claimed that they have sued Igitian, the one who compared Azerbaijanis with fascists. And we actually believed them. But a year has passed since then. Now we ask, whatever happened to that lawsuit? Why do you lie to us all the time? Why do you try to calm us down? That seemed to be the last straw. Numerous people, including myself, wrote letters to the Congress, and to *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* papers [the two largest news papers in the Soviet Union at that time.] We have expected our articles and letters to be published in the Central [Moscow] media [as well as the pro-Armenian ones.] They neither published them, nor even bothered to respond to us.

Lies of the Moscow Media

Last year, a special type of administration was created for Karabakh. We didn't protest it. We obeyed the order silently. Some time later Armenian nationalists started protesting against that very special administration. Actually, we are the ones who should have been unhappy and protesting, as this newly created administration took away all the sovereignty of Azerbaijan over Karabakh. We found ourselves in a position where we could not regulate and rule matters on our own territory. The main aspects of life in Karabakh were now subordinate to the ministries in Moscow. Despite all these accomplishments, Armenians soon started demonstrations again, protesting the new arrangement. But we kept our silence.

How did the Moscow media cover all these events? They covered them in a way that uninformed readership could not understand who was actually protesting and initiating the public unrest, Armenians or Azerbaijanis. They have derived from the reports that Azerbaijanis started the public unrest because they were unhappy about the new Karabakh administration. I wonder, was it Glasnost? [A term for the reforms in the USSR under Gorbachev meaning somewhat openness and freedom of speech/information.] Why didn't the Moscow media write about the events clearly? Why didn't they clearly specify who was the offending party and who was the defending party in this "game"? Sooner or later you start thinking, what is the purpose of distorting and hiding the truth to that extent? Ever since the unrest in Karabakh transformed into a conflict, the party that started all that was not clearly specified by the Moscow media. The Moscow media presented us as the aggressive side who violated the rights of their neighbors. The groundless attacks of the Armenian nationalists and all the abusive expressions flung at us were left unanswered. To make matters worse, even the US Congress named us the guilty side in the escalation of the conflict. I really don't blame the US Congress, because they seem to be very far from the conflict and they are not closely involved in the dispute. Their opinion is based on whatever they read in the Moscow media and hear from the strong Armenian lobby in that country.

Academician Sakharov and his wife, Elena Bonner (whose maiden name is Alikhanian) [an Armenian last name, the author hints on her Armenian dissent], those who rose the banner of human rights in the Soviet Union, have deemed the unification of Karabakh with Armenia fair and natural. Strange, on the one hand Sakharov was defending the human rights of individuals, on the other he was advocating the violation of a nation's territorial integrity by promoting the idea of unification of one republic's province with another republic. How

can you believe in such a person's sincerity? All along his life, Sakharov's position of a scientist contradicted his position as a citizen. On the one hand, he invents the Hydrogen bomb which poses a danger to the whole civilization, on the other hand he raises the flag of Democracy and advocates the respect of human rights [in the Soviet Union.] But do the hydrogen bomb and human rights mesh well? The academician Ginsburg, who has observed such contradictions in Sakharov's personality for a long time, wrote: "If he didn't feel morally obligated to invent the hydrogen bomb and spend an enormous amount of time and effort toward its creation, he might have enriched the science of Physics enormously, having contributed to its development in other spheres."

It is hard to understand how a person who considered it his moral obligation to invent the Hydrogen bomb, could at the same time advocate respect for human rights. In the same way it is hard to understand him, when he defends the human rights of one nation (Armenia) and totally neglects the same rights of another nation (Azerbaijan).

In the beginning of August 1989, the Azeri locomotive drivers of the trains that were operated between Nakhchivan and Armenia went on strike. That is how the train schedule in that area was completely broken. The Soviet Railways Minister Konarev immediately appeared on the Soviet TV's 10 o'clock news and spread the word to the whole world. According to him, Azerbaijanis intention in going on the strike was to break the schedule of the transportation system and to prevent food supplies from being delivered to Armenia. Unfortunately, the Minister didn't mention the real reason behind the strike. He knew the reason very well, but he didn't deem it necessary to be disclosed to the public. He knew very well that Azerbaijani locomotive drivers are being beaten up and abused as soon as they enter Armenian soil and the trains are being shot at on a daily basis. He knew that among the 9 staff on the train that went to Armenia from Nakhchivan, 1 was killed recently and

8 seriously injured and taken to the hospital. He knew well that Armenians were placing bombs on the tracks and trying to blow up trains coming from Azerbaijan.

It is not surprising at all that the Armenian Communist Party Bureau, being encouraged by the Moscow media that was telling only their side of the story, has come up with the following statement: "Due to the numerous and continuing interruptions and delays in the railways, communication between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the republic [Armenia] experiences some serious shortages in technical, fuel and food supply, which resulted in the decline of the amount of the undergoing construction in the areas struck by the earthquake, and in some areas all the construction works were stopped completely."

Most likely, those who prepared this statement knew it very well that Armenians themselves are to be blamed for the unwillingness of the Azerbaijani locomotive drivers to operate trains to Armenia. But Moscow doesn't seem to care to ask them, who is stopping the trains in Armenia, who is beating up the drivers and staff, who is killing them? Who is blowing up the tracks? Moscow doesn't ask Armenians why they blame it on Azerbaijanis, while they are the ones to be blamed in the situation? Vice versa, by the biased and one-sided information that is being spread by the Moscow media, Moscow seems to solicit Armenians to continue whatever they were doing, and that seems to encourage them.

On December 7, 1989, on the first anniversary of the earthquake in Armenia, the "Mayak" radio station in Moscow broadcast a program in which it said that despite the fact that a year has passed since the earthquake, the reconstruction works in Spitak [a town in Armenia most stricken by the earthquake] are too slow and there is not much progress. Azerbaijan was directly blamed for this. The authors of the program implied that because of the strike of the Azerbaijani Railway workers, the construction materials were not delivered

to town for several days. The main purpose of this lie is to distract the attention of the public from the shortage of the construction materials that Moscow experienced itself and to blame Azerbaijan in the delays of the delivery of those supplies to Armenia, thus to stir up the situation. This is an old and very well-known tactic of the Moscow politicians.

I wonder, why did the Moscow radio and TV find it sufficient to only report the "facts" and give no comment or background of the situation? It didn't provide the audiences with any sort of analysis.

As if this false news were not enough, the 10 o'clock news of Soviet Television repeated the same news, only slightly altered.

At that time, I was undergoing a medical treatment in Essentuki [a resort on the North Caucasus, Russia.] A middle-aged Georgian man sitting in the lobby turned to me saying, "You are a nation of great patience." I asked, why would he think so? He seemed to be very surprised: "Haven't you heard the lie about you last night on the 10 o'clock news?"

In fact, I did see the news and after that I was so agitated that I couldn't sleep all night. The Georgian man seemed to have stirred up my anxiety and anger over the news, he said: "The whole world helps them [Armenians.] They have rebuilt Spitak and Leninakan [towns in Armenia almost flattened by the devastating effect of the earthquake.] But because of the construction materials shortage, they are experiencing some delays in the construction schedule. And they are blaming that on you. I don't understand why your leadership doesn't answer these accusations, don't they care?"

He was quite right. We are silent. And by blaming it all on us, the Central Government [Moscow] tries to look better. Thus, they make the whole world despise us. I wonder, what is the purpose of all that?

The one-sided, biased and sometimes even falsified character of the reports by the Moscow media once again was clear-

ly seen during the January, 1990 [Azerbaijani-Iranian] border incidents. The dissembling of the border fence between the North and South Azerbaijan [S. Azerbaijan is a province in Iran populated by Azerbaijanis; it was closed for some 70 years of Soviet rule, dividing families.] initiated by the Popular Front of Nakhchivan was presented by the media as an act of hooliganism, a deed of a gang of psychopaths, drunks and drugged people. Isn't it hooliganism itself to call people who were separated by the border from their brothers, sisters and blood relatives for a long time hooligans? Is it not an injustice to separate a nation, build a fence between two blood relatives and silence them by threats of punishment?

As I hear it, youth from the both sides of the Araz river [border river that separates the two Azerbaijan] burnt the wooden fence, entered the river in the frost of the winter to embrace each other right there and cry. It is very unfair to blame those people of vandalism, as what they did, what they experienced at that moment, might be good material for a very touching poem.

Even if in many spheres the interests of Iran and the Soviet Union differed, in the Azerbaijani issue they perfectly matched. By labeling these events as hooliganism, both countries have tried to distract the attention of the world community from the real character of the events on the border. The similarity in condemnation and labeling of the divided people's will, appearing in both Persian and Russian newspapers, is not surprising. A woman in Ordubad [a town in the Nakhchivan exclave of Azerbaijan] interviewed by Radio Liberty has stressed that the majority of the people involved in the so-called border incidents were women. And traditionally, the Azerbaijani woman has never used drugs nor consumed alcohol. Therefore, the labeling of the people involved in the border incidents by Radio Moscow and Radio Tehran as drug addicts or alcoholics, was an intentional, yet erroneous lie. The woman was telling the naked truth.

The national movement in Almaty [capital of Kazakstan] in 1986 was characterized by the Moscow media similarly as an act of hooliganism by alcoholics and drug addicts. Of course, that was the same old lie again. Such distorted news served one sole purpose - to stop the process of the rising of national self-consciousness, to hide the political character of the events, to discredit the movement on the whole. But such news cannot hide the truth.

That is how Moscow tried to justify its actions; make itself look good by labeling the people who demanded their rights and freedoms as drug addicts and alcoholics. They have done that so often, so I am afraid, people abroad might think that only hooligans care about the truth and rise to defend their rights in the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, the border troops who seemed to be in a position to protect us from ourselves, didn't bother to understand that the situation in Azerbaijan was very unique among those in all other Soviet Republics, excluding Moldova. Because the border separating the two Azerbaijan was not actually built on the soil, it was built through the hearts of once united nation. This border doesn't separate one nation from another, it separates the same people from each other, a brother from a brother.

Nowadays, we have to be happy about the fact that Iranian and Soviet officials agreed to allow these separated blood relatives to meet at least once a month. But we have to face the truth, if we didn't force these two governments to come to such agreement, it wouldn't have been reached for possibly another 100 years. The matter was resolved solely by the will of the people themselves. I might cheer up for such a strong and universal will of my people.

We have to bow to an 85 year-old man's feelings, the one who appeared on TV telling his life story, how he was deprived of seeing his own sister and how grateful he was for such an opportunity to see her again.

In the given reality of the world, when the UN knows very well about the separated nations, when these issues are discussed, revised and reviewed, the divided nation of Azerbaijan has never even been raised, to the best of my knowledge. We have to make it clear to the entire world that the two provinces called the Iranian and Soviet Azerbaijan are divided parts of a single nation.

The Supreme Soviet in Moscow doesn't seem to intend to assess the unfair territorial claims and the aggressive behavior of the Armenians towards Azerbaijan. But when the Lithuanian Communist Party declares its intention to withdraw itself from the Soviet Communist Party, the session of the Party was called instantaneously, and upon the discussion of the issue, such a decision was condemned.

Vazirov, former Communist leader of Azerbaijan, who spoke the first words negatively assessed the decision of the Lithuanian Communists. But Armenia in this case remained silent. Vazirov could have used the situation and could have asked why aren't we being supported, he could do it right there. Why doesn't anybody in the Central Government criticize or in any way react to the territorial claims of Armenia against Azerbaijan? Well, he failed to do so. Let us at least let the world know about the reaction of **our** (Azerbaijani) Supreme Soviet to the Armenian aggression. Let us at least translate this statement to the foreign languages and spread it.

Why while we all cheered and applauded when the Berlin Wall was destroyed, while we celebrated this event as a victory of the newly emerged world order and ideology, the similar deconstruction of another "wall" that separated the same nation for an even longer time was labeled as an act of extremism? Why are these similar events so differently approached? How can Moscow explain that?

On August 1, 1989, TASS wire agency declared that a group of Azerbaijanis in the Lachin province [currently occupied by Armenian troops] attacked the convoys with the construction materials brought from Armenia to Karabakh [Lachin separates Armenia from the enclave of Nagorno Karabakh of Azerbaijan.] The news of the event ends right there. TASS didn't find it appropriate to inform about the actual reasons of the attack on the convoy which actually carried detonators for the explosive devices under the name of harmless construction materials.

When our police tried to confiscate these detonators, Armenian drivers protested and that's how it all stirred up. In these circumstances, Moscow, claiming to be a "fair judge," doesn't react in any way, but blames us of blockading the neighbors, attacking humanitarian convoys, etc. Of course, if we tried to stop the humanitarian convoys, all these accusations would have been truthful and deserved. But reporting that fact without any further comment on the real reasons, without giving any background, is twice as big of a crime. These events made it clear that Armenia was providing modern weaponry to the Armenians in Karabakh.

Weapons, including missile warheads transported to Karabakh under the name of construction materials and such, were accidentally discovered at the Alat train station [on the Azerbaijani-Russian border.] If the warheads were being sent to Karabakh, it would be logical to infer that there are in fact some missiles in Khankendi [administrative center of the Karabakh Autonomy, the Armenian name is Stepanakert.] We know that the authorities who discovered the war heads at the railway station knew that too. What can we do about it? Most likely, nothing. But what about the Central Government [in Moscow]? Why don't they speak up? Why don't they investigate the issue? Why don't they care to find out who sent these weapons to whom and where and against whom were they supposed to be used? Why don't they take measures?

The most interesting thing is that the Moscow media didn't find the news worthy of publishing. But if the situation were reversed, meaning if we were sending such weapons to the Azerbaijanis in Armenia, the Moscow media would have launched another campaign against us, competing with each other in the degree of hostility, there is no doubt about that.

The article by Vil Dorofeev published in *Politicheskoe Obrazovanie* journal's 3rd issue (1989) is even more unbearable in its character (title: The Publicist's Remarks about the Natural Disaster in Armenia and that's not all!). The author holds us responsible for the fact that the Azerbaijanis fled Armenia and came to Azerbaijan in a harvest gathering time. Like if the Azerbaijanis deliberately left Armenia at a crucial time in order to harm the economy of Armenia. How can one distort the truth to such a degree? I wonder if he is truly unaware of the fact that Azerbaijanis were forced to flee their homes, that they were routinely beaten up? Who would leave their native land sweet home no reason? Isn't he ashamed of himself for telling such an enormous lie? Whom does he serve by coming up with this lie and what is he saying? Honestly, while reading the article, I was about to yell, cry out loud, urge the world to revolt against the lie.

We are being suffocated in lies and unfair accusations. But what can we do if there is nobody to hear our voice, nobody to support us? It seems to me that people like Dorofeyev, who fell under the influence of Armenian nationalists, are trying to picture us as a wild, barbarian nation. I wonder if these people who serve the Armenian nationalists have ever heard about the Azerbaijani kids being put into the pipes and welded in the pipeline in Spitak [Armenia.] If they haven't heard about it, let them find out reasons why the French who came there to render their assistance after the earthquake left two days later. These gentlemen are absolutely unaware of the fact that 48 Azerbaijanis were killed while being forced to flee Armenia. Most likely, they **are** aware of that. But this aware-

ness doesn't serve their purposes [that's why they pretend they don't know about these facts.] Furthermore, the author mentions the Sumgayit events in his article numerous times. In order to discredit us, he needs to refer to these events. According to the author, the "bloody scene of Sumgayit" unleashed the whole tragic events that followed. We would like to ask the author, what does he really wish to accomplish by tying the Karabakh events to those of Sumgayit? Why doesn't he mention the tragedy of Khojali [the whole town was massacred by the Armenian troops right after the invasion.] Why doesn't he mention the fact that 12 Azerbaijanis were beheaded and then burnt in the Gugark region of Armenia, where the total number of 70 Azerbaijanis were killed? Those who call the events of Sumgayit "a genocide" somehow prefer not to acknowledge the similar genocides carried out by Armenians: 43 per cent of the total population of Armenia used to consist of Azerbaijanis, and there is not a single Azerbaijani left in Armenia today. Why don't they mention that the number of Azerbaijanis killed while fleeing Armenia is much higher than that of Armenians killed during the tragic Sumgayit events?

Approaching the facts without a bias, it becomes clear that the Armenian Dashnaks [the Armenian name of the nationalistic party that has been banned few years ago in Armenia] have also been involved in the bloodshed in Sumgayit; they instigated it. Some three days after that, French television broadcast the footage of the events. It is quite surprising: who took the pictures, who shot the events in Sumgayit and for what reason? How come the television crew was in the right place on the right time? Did somebody know about the upcoming tragedy in advance and provided that the TV crews would be there on time?

But most surprising is that among the instigators of the events there was an Armenian national, Grigorian by name.

Ariel Kiru [the original French spelling of the name is not

available], a French journalist, writes: "Members of the Armenian National Independence Union, Ermakian and Zurabian, have made a statement that the Sumgayit events were not instigated by Azerbaijanis. They said they had a very substantial proof of that.

It is surprising, the foreign media sometimes tells the truth, while we are being driven up the wall [by the lies of the domestic Moscow media.]

Communist, a Russian language newspaper published in Yerevan, placed an article by Mirzoyan, dean of the Yerevan Veterinary Institute, titled "What Do Statistics Say?" Instead of carrying out his veterinary duties, the author, as it seems, decided to get into statistical analysis. In this article full of lies and fabrications, the author attempts to prove that some 130,000 Russians left Azerbaijan between 1959 and 1979.

Just try to comprehend what issues this dumb person is trying to raise here. I wonder whether his conscience was asleep while he wrote this article. Why didn't he question himself if he had any rights to put in words a lie like this? Just get it: there are virtually no other nationalities left in Armenia except Armenians [meaning Armenia is a ethnically homogenous country nowadays.] How can one loose his conscience to such a degree? In his article, he writes: "Azerbaijan set a very questionable record in the '70s. The total population of the smaller nations there decreased drastically, the percentage of the Russians by 8.8 per cent, that of Armenians by 1.7 per cent, of Georgians by 16.2 per cent, and of Ukrainians by 9.6 per cent."

Azerinform [the Azerbaijani wire agency at that time] asked the author a legitimate question in this regard: where did he get these figures, if there are no statistics of the people by their nationality in the Soviet Union?

But I would ask him another question: if the presence of people of other nationalities is such a good and beneficial thing, why are there no other nationalities residing in

Armenia? Why are some 200,000 Azerbaijanis forced to leave your republic, if that's is such a fine idea?

Why do the Armenian nationalists who label us as "savage" fail to see their own savagery? No other nation in the world might have vandalized graves. The people who wish to consider themselves an enlightened nation have vandalized the grave of the famous Azerbaijani ashig [bard] Alasgar and destroyed his remains. They also have destroyed the monument to the Azerbaijani writer Samad Vurghun. Writing these lines I have a mental picture of these artists and I am ashamed of being so helpless. Grandpa Alasgar, forgive us, I said. We couldn't protect even your sacred tomb.

How morally deficient one must be to vandalize the grave of a bard who inspired people to love each other, to be humane and simply brought joy into their lives! While doing so, they at least should have thought about their own poet, Sayat Nova. The same Sayat Nova who created majority of his poetry in the language of Alasgar [Azeri.] I also don't believe that the spirit of Sayat Nova might forgive such deeds.

Let these barbarians who are trying to appropriate the ancient Albanian monuments know: we have not descended to the level of destroying monuments and vandalizing sanctuaries and graves. We have never laid claims on someone else's lands and territories.

In November 1989, the Central Media [Moscow] reported that as a result of a bomb explosion in the Kazakh region of Azerbaijan, 3 citizens of Armenia were wounded and taken to the hospital. We might infer from the news that Azerbaijanis detonated a bomb and wounded two Armenians and one Russian. But what really happened? As it turns out, the very same persons have been wounded while trying to destroy the monument to the Friendship of the Caucasian Nations. They suffered from

the explosion of the very bomb they tried to detonate. If so, then why doesn't media give the details of the accident? Why do they hide the truth, thus acting in favor of the criminals?

What do the special troops of the Soviet Interior Ministry that have been sent to Nagorno Karabakh, with a special mission to create stability, think about the accident? All that mess is happening right before their eyes. We cannot travel from Aghdam to Shusha [two Azerbaijani-populated cities in Karabakh, currently both occupied by the Armenian troops.] Stones are being thrown at vehicles and the drivers are being beaten up. The Azerbaijani populated villages in Nagorno Karabakh can be reached by helicopters only. No one seems to notice the situation, and no one seems to care to speak up. But if we cease sending fuel to Armenia even for a few days, the Central media cries out about the "blockade." While Azerbaijani villages are in blockade, A. Volski [formerly appointed head of the special administration in Nagorno Karabakh by the government in Moscow] mentions the opposite in his article published in *Pravda*. He claims that Azerbaijanis are blockading Nagorno Karabakh's Armenian population. What can one say? I wonder, while denying what he sees with his own eyes, distorting the truth that he is a witness of, is he ever ashamed, even for a short moment?

The vehicles and caravans that transport food supplies to the Azerbaijani villages are being stopped on roads, the cargo is being captured, the drivers are being beaten up and sent back. Thus, the blockade of the Azerbaijani villages in Karabakh that has continued for a year doesn't inspire Moscow's concern over the situation. The situation is not discussed in the print, nor in electronic media. *Sobesednik* weekly beats around the bush, it reports: "A bridge in the vicinity of Stepanakert was destroyed; 200 people blocked the road between Shusha and Aghdam. The soldiers that convoyed the food supplies caravan were shot at from the surrounding mountains, attacked with Molotov cocktails, bottled acid and grenades."

That's it. How can an outsider who reads the Moscow media understand what really happened? Which party blew up the bridge, attacked soldiers and the caravan? Why those who blocked the road between Aghdam and Shusha, thus leaving the Azerbaijani villages without food, are not mentioned by the media?

Finally, there seems to be only one conscious journalist who attempts to cover the situation as it is and to inform his readers about the real state of affairs. G. Rozhnov of *Ogonek* visited both Baku and Yerevan, witnessed the events and wrote an article based on his own observation and analysis. But as he admits, papers and magazines in Moscow refused to publish his article. I wonder why.

The journalist continues, "All that I wrote denied and contradicted all that has been written before." Well these contradictions didn't look good for the Moscow media that has become a puppet in the hands of the Armenian mafia.

Rozhnov, who gave up a chance of getting his article published anywhere in Moscow, could publish it only in the *Baku Vishka* newspaper some four months after it was written. Is that what they call Glasnost? [freedom of speech.]

Sultanov, a correspondent for *The Communist* wrote on August 31, 1989 that "buses and one cargo vehicle were going from Shusha to Baku and other regions of Azerbaijan as a caravan and they were escorted by the armed soldiers [of the Soviet Army], but in the middle of the way, the soldiers turned back, leaving the buses behind. They said they were ordered to do so.

I wonder where this order came from and what the purpose of such order could have been? Well, the purpose is quite clear. Armenians attack the caravan on the way, and as a result, 21 people were seriously wounded. They were taken to the surgery department in one of the hospitals of Aghdam.

Whom shall we address our question to now? Whom are these special armed forces sent by the Central Government

supposed to protect in Aghdam? I'd like to quote the letter of Khanimzar Mammadova, who was forced to leave her home in Armenia. Her letter sent to *The Communist* reads: "I have had my three sons sent into military service [in the Soviet Army], so they could protect the borders of our homeland [Soviet Union.] But how shall we comprehend the fact that we are left without any protection in our native villages, in the land of our fathers? [Armenia.]"

That's a very legitimate question. A mother that sent her three sons to distant places to protect the borders of the country is now left helpless, without any protection in her home. She was beaten up and had to seek refuge. In this regard, would it be appropriate to speak about any laws, justice and human rights? Our leaders have signed the Act on the Human Rights in Helsinki. But what about the essential rights of mothers like Khanimzar?

She continues: "For 11 months, we had to hide in the border wires. We have survived despite a million difficulties. All that we had, we have lost. We went through abuse and beatings, we became refugees in our own homes, all our rights were violated. To whom can we complain? Aren't we Soviet citizens? It is so strange to see the position of the Central media in this regard. Their position amazes me. On the one hand they claim that ambulances cannot run due to the shortage of fuel. And a few lines below, having completely forgotten about what they had just written, they report about numerous caravans with construction materials that cannot proceed [to Karabakh and Armenia] because the roads are blocked. They are making the readers nervous by deceiving and confusing them like that."

Khanimzar is absolutely right. The media wants to confuse people. We have to comprehend the truth that stands behind these lies. And the truth is that the Central media forces us to compromise. But it is impossible to understand, what exactly do they mean by compromising? If they mean the temporary

special administration that was imposed, then, despite the fact that it's not beneficial for us, we have agreed to it. But there was a new game that immediately unfolded right after the special administration was imposed. They have made the economy of Nagorno Karabakh independent [from ministries in Baku.] God forbid worse things. We have to thank God that so far they don't demand that we give our own land to our neighbors this. But, little by little, we have already given up a lot.

Questions, Questions...

Haven't we given some 2,500 hectares of land in the vicinity of Kemerli village to Armenians some few years ago? Haven't we given them some more in the vicinity of the Didvan creek? Isn't that enough? I believe, that is enough. The nation is revolting, it cannot bear up the "generosity" of its former leaders. If these leaders are so generous, let them give a few rooms in their spacious houses to the refugees who have now fled Armenia. If they can't do that, then they really shouldn't demonstrate their generosity by giving away the people's land, because the land belongs to the people, to the nation.

During the latest events haven't we given them some 170 settlements where 200,000 Azerbaijanis used to live? Wasn't **that** enough? No, because they have developed a tremendous appetite, they still demand Karabakh. Let me ask something: if it were not for the instructions of the leaders of the Armenian [Communist] party and local Soviets [administrations], could they drive some 200,000 people out of their homes? We all know they couldn't, because the leaders of Armenia always obey the instructions of the Dashnaks [nationalists.] If it wasn't so, then the leaders of Armenia wouldn't have participated in the joint meetings with the Dashnaks,

where the claims for Karabakh were once again repeated. Dashnaks have tried to make their wish come true by acting behind the scenes, while all the work was done for them by the leaders of Armenia. They transformed Armenia into a mono-ethnic country. Our Azerbaijani leaders verbally attack the representatives of the Azerbaijani [Democratic] Republic, who lived abroad as decedents at that time, and call the youth who participate in demonstrations demanding preservation of the national interests a gang of hooligans. [Azerbaijani Democratic Republic existed between 1918 and 1920. It was established after the disintegration of the Russian Empire and was destroyed by the invading Russian Communist troops.]

Why should these youth who demonstrated on Freedom Square under the horrible weather conditions of the Fall for a little longer than a month should be labeled as hooligans? They only tried to convince the leaders to care for the interests of the nation. What did they do wrong? Did they burn houses, beat people up, block the roads, or did they pursue their own personal interests? Of course not. Did anybody [among the leaders] bother to inquire what these people wanted? Maybe they demanded food or consumer goods for themselves? Or, maybe they were rioting because a piece of the territory went out of control and they wanted to stand up for our national dignity and pride? Why instead of appreciating such patriotic feelings of our youth did we label them and accuse them of something they didn't do? [Instead of caring about our national interests.]

In order to discredit one of the leaders of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan, Etibar Mammadov, National TV came up with a mindless drug addict who tried to accuse him of all sorts of imaginable sins. Part of the youth who participated in these demonstrations were jailed, our intellectuals were being intimidated and called to the Prosecutor's office.

Those who tried to intimidate the people by the administrative branches [police, prosecutor's office, etc] definitely lacked

compassion towards the problems of their nation, and about patriotism, and that is why they winded up in top positions of Soviet Azerbaijan. I can't understand how those who do not speak the nation's language, who are unacquainted with its culture, could have any patriotic feelings and serve the nation. Unfortunately, the way up for people like that is quite smooth [in the Soviet Union] because he or she is not required to speak his native language while in charge, but only required to speak Russian. Those people who don't have any patriotic feelings attack people who try to emphasize the importance of the native language and surround themselves with others like them. These people hold their own personal interests and benefits in a higher regard than those of the nation. These people who have a constant fear to loose their high position are cautious of people who care for the native language.

If we have such enemies among ourselves, how can we possibly fight the enemies from outside who violate our essential rights and freedoms? Who are those who oppose the decision of the government to declare Azerbaijani the official language? Other nationalities residing in Azerbaijan demand classes that would teach them Azerbaijani, but some Azerbaijanis, being the next generation of those who wind up top, refuse to learn and speak their own native language.

I want to share one of my experiences here. Once upon a time when I was on TV, I named and criticized a few officials who didn't speak our native language. Some time later, instead of learning from this legitimate criticism, they wrote a letter to the Central Committee [of the Communist Party in Moscow] requesting them to punish me on the grounds of spreading nationalistic propaganda. These educated, yet at the same time ignorant, people think that emphasizing the importance of the native language, advocating for its use in governmental structures, is nationalistic propaganda, although the fact that Azerbaijani is the official language of Azerbaijan SSR is clearly stated in the Constitution. The most devastating fact is

that these national nihilists [people who deny all,] who consider themselves well-educated and who are being enemies of the language of their own people, are absolutely unaware of the demand of the modern age. These people couldn't even learn from our neighbors who played a dirty trick on us during the events in Karabakh, who tried to pursue their national interests by means of lies and falsifications.

Poet Gabil, in his article published in *Molodezh Azerbaijan'a (The Youth of Azerbaijan)* dated February 16, 1989, emphasizes the necessity of learning Azerbaijani, lifting its status in the republic to the level of the official language. As an answer, the two journalists who consider themselves Azerbaijanis attacked the ideas suggested by Gabil by giving an example of the United States of America being the most [culturally] developed country in the world, where all people regardless of their origin speak English, and English is the only official language. Thus, they question the importance of Azerbaijani as an alternative official language in [Soviet] Azerbaijan. According to them, we should speak Russian only.

Now do you get it? The enemy is among us. Unfortunately, there is a vast number of Russified Azerbaijanis, and they are our number one enemies nowadays. These people have no feelings for their nation and they have no ties to it except for their names. They are eager to share the joy of their nation on a good day, but not the troubles of it on a bad day. Many of those who don't know the language and the culture of their own people, go abroad leading delegations, and these people are supposed to represent us there. But deep inside their hearts they don't care for their nation, nor do they know its history, language, literature or culture. They are eager to characterize our language as poor, our people as uncivilized, and our culture as primitive. Poor nation, poor people! Just look who made fun of you!

Unfortunately, most of our leaders were from those Russified Azeris, that's how our native language was gradual-

ly alienated from offices all across the country. Would such leader care about the nation's problems? No way.

As a result of all these processes, A. Vazirov [former leader of Azerbaijan] declared the return of Armenians to Baku and expected us to be happy about the news. In order to protect Armenians who lived in Baku at that time, our leaders called in the [Soviet] Army. Did they ever think about the fate of those 200,000 Azerbaijanis who were driven out of Armenia? Did they ask themselves why did the Armenian leaders not call the troops to prevent Azerbaijanis from being driven out of Armenia?

Tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis were forced to flee Armenia and Karabakh in February and March 1988, and more were driven out in December. They had to run for their lives barefoot, with no money. Moscow didn't seem to object all these injustices, and Azerbaijan found itself left alone in terms of providing these people with the basic necessities. Sometime later, we had to embrace some 40,000 Meskhetian Turks who were driven out of Uzbekistan. Moscow didn't aid the financing of the relocation of these people either. The strangest thing is, none of these people were called refugees by the Moscow media. They preferred to refer to them as "persons who temporarily left their permanent residences." Did these poor people really leave their homes just temporarily? No, they left them for good. We knew that even back then. Time will show that they will remain citizens of Azerbaijan.

At the time when the curfew was imposed in Baku (January 20, 1990) by special order, all the families of the [Soviet] soldiers were quickly evacuated, and for some unknown reason these people were regarded as refugees. Isn't it strange? Those who are driven out of their homes are regarded as "temporarily relocated," and those who are being relocated by the

order of the Soviet government all of a sudden are regarded as refugees, and the Cabinet of the Ministers of the Soviet Union immediately passes a bill providing them with all necessary financial assistance. But who covered the expenses of the republic regarding placement of the real refugees from Armenia and Uzbekistan? Why was this issue approached with double standards? Why weren't they treated equally? And I wonder, what purpose does it serve to evacuate families of the military from Baku [while they were out of danger] and, thus, sowing seeds of mistrust between the two nations? [Russians and Azeris.]

How can one tolerate all this unequal treatment, violence, and flat-out lies? I cannot read the articles published in the Central media because they are full of bias and unfair accusations. I cannot bear them, but the only way I can go about it is to write my protest to them. I am protesting the way these events are covered by the Central media. But when they receive our letters, they don't even bother to read them, they simply discard them. Everybody knows why, because of some strong and secret power that acts behind the scenes.

The Central government doesn't seem to wish to investigate how modern weaponry found its way into the hands of Armenians, nor where, when and against whom was it supposed to be used. We capture Armenian military men wearing uniforms and carrying weapons, but Moscow turns a blind eye to these facts; these people aren't being tried. Thus, Moscow really turns a blind eye to the military preparations undertaken by Armenians.

Everything points to the fact that Moscow clearly supports the opposite party in the dispute [over Nagorno Karabakh.] Moscow has never even once openly condemned the territorial claims laid by Armenia, nor has it spoken up when the Armenians invaded Karabakh and other regions of Azerbaijan. Moscow has never specified that Armenians are the offending party in the dispute, and we are actually the defending one.

The fact that our leaders are still waiting for Moscow's intervention in the issue or any sort of arbitration despite all that, is quite ironic.

Ever since Vazirov was appointed the leader of Azerbaijan, I have been to his office numerous times and have told him that he had to have his own concept and his own principals on the issue and he must stick to them. I pointed out to him that he tried to abide by any order that came from Gorbachev instead, and didn't insist on his own position. I advised him to adjust whatever orders come from Moscow to the current realities of Azerbaijan. But all that was useless, this person simply didn't have the ability to analyze the situation and to listen to a good advice. The only ability he had is to listen to the order from the "above" and to abide by it.

The last time I've meet with Vazirov in private was on January 11, 1990. I was very nervous and excited. I told him about the activities of the Armenian mafia. He didn't say a single word. But from the way he smiled, I understood that deep inside his heart he knew I was right. I told him that he has found himself in a rather uncomfortable situation, pressured by Gorbachev on the one hand, and his own nation on the other. I tried to convince him that the times have changed and instead of obeying any order from Gorbachev, he had to listen to the voice of the people. That's why he could not gain the trust and reliability of the people, I said. I told him that a few *aghsaggals*, including me, advise him to resign from such a challenging position. He said he has spoken to Gorbachev about that twice, and the latter didn't accept his resignation. I laughed heartily and said, of course he wouldn't accept your resignation! Because it would be rather complicated for him to find a substitute for you [as you obey all the orders that come from him instantaneously.] He asked me and a few other *aghsaggals* to write a letter to Gorbachev requesting his resignation. How could I possibly answer him?

I went home directly from his office. Some 10 minutes

later, he called me on the phone. He said that there are some people who came to see him telling him that I have asked him to resign.

Having heard that, I froze in place. The only thing I could reply was that it was not only my opinion, but the opinion of a few more *aghsaggals*. "Okay, that's it," -he said to me and hang up.

I assume when he called me, there was still somebody in his office. The very same person has found out somehow about the suggestion I was to make to Vazirov and in order to get some extra points, wanted Vazirov to know about it as soon as possible. Vazirov in his turn wanted to demonstrate that he didn't receive any kind of suggestion like that from me, that's why he called me up and put up a show like that. But the "loyal servant" that came up with the rumor could not possibly hear my reply to him over the phone, could he?

The most interesting thing happened a week later, when a few respected people [*aghsaggals*] met with Vazirov in his office, including [the spiritual leader of the Transcaucasian Muslims] Pasha zadeh, N. Rzayev, I. Shikhli, and H. Hasanov [later became the ambassador of Azerbaijan to the United Nations and Foreign Minister of the country.] Vazirov asked me to step out with him for a second and tried to explain in a very childish way his phone call. He said that there was in fact somebody in his office, who came up to him with the rumor that I thought that Vazirov should resign. He said he tried to prove to that person that I am on his side and I would never suggest him anything like that.

Of course, this had occurred to me even without his explanation. But the fact that he thought he needed to reveal this "secret" to me was very funny, and made him look very naive.

Even after all these years, I still cannot understand how such a childish and naive person could work as a diplomat in foreign countries for so many years. How could a person like that

become a leader of the republic? Unfortunately, there was no other person than H. Azizoghlu who thrown all his deficiencies to the face of Vazirov, a person who was full of deficiencies from the bottom up. The only thing we are good at is gossiping behind someone's back or criticizing those who already left.

The following words said about Vazirov, perfectly characterize him as a person: "He has grown up, but his mind hasn't. He still has the mind of a Komsomol leader." [Komsomol is a youth Communist organization.]

Vazirov could never comprehend a simple fact. It never occurred to him that if Moscow didn't want the dispute between Armenians and Azerbaijanis to escalate to such high degree, they would have ordered Armenians to lay off their claims from the very beginning.

But at that point, neither Gorbachev, nor his loyal servant Vazirov, could possibly imagine that the resistance of the nation would be so bitter. And that is perfectly understood: for some 80 years, Armenians, taking advantage of the "generosity" of our leaders, managed to grab territory from us little by little. So it is sort of natural that they thought we would be immediately intimidated by their threats this time and give up our sovereignty over Karabakh. But it occurred to them too late that this nation does not have such a slavish mind set as they had thought before, that this nation would fight bitterly in order to keep its territorial integrity. Being perfectly honest, I myself didn't believe in the bitterness and positivity of my nation to sacrifice so much, turn out to be as patient and determined to face troubles but not to give away its land. But deep inside my heart, I have always had one bit of hope that eventually it would turn out this way. The "Anthem of Independence" turned out to have lived in the hearts of my people:

*Don't pass by the land you walk on, try to know it.
Think of thousands who sleep in this land forever
[having passed away.]*

*You are the son of a martyr for faith, don't make
your father suffer [be ashamed.]
Don't give away your Motherland even if you get the
whole world instead.*

*Who wouldn't sacrifice himself for this Motherland?
This soil would squirt blood if you squeeze it.
Let God take away our lives and all that we have
But not make me depraved from my homeland, ever.*

I didn't have confidence that these seeds that I've tried to sow for over 40 years would grow up to become a forest. I thought that all the suffering of 70 years of Soviet rule, especially the tragedy we've been through in 1937 [the peak of the repressions in the Stalin's era] would fill the hearts of my nation with fear, and this fear would make the braveness that we inherited from our forefathers freeze inside in our blood. I didn't think the ice of the fear will melt so quickly.

I shall tell you two stories. An event that took place on a street of Baku the day after the first curfew was imposed here in 1988 literally amazed me. The soldiers who stood on top of the armored truck fully armed were threatening the crowd that gathered around them that they would actually use their guns. That is why 5 or 6 women were using offensive language to them having come forward. They said, "if you don't shoot, then you are not a man."

The other one said in plain Russian: "The Russian army has always been an invader, aren't you ashamed?"

And the woman spits in the soldiers face.

When the soldier started talking back to the woman using abusive language, then the men gathered around attacked the truck, throwing stones at it. When the crew of the truck attempted to retreat, a young woman stood in the way of the truck and said: "Come on, run over me, if you can."

Having seen this scene, I remember thinking to myself that a nation that has such brave women will never die.

And the second observation of mine took place on January 16, 1990. I went out to the balcony having heard some people chant "Allah'u Akbar." From the balcony I could see some 5 or 6 young men who climbed up the minaret of the nearby mosque which has become an office of the renovation agency for the last 20 years. I saw them wave our national three-color banner from the top of the minaret [three-color banner was appropriated during the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and banned later as soon as Soviet rule was established in Azerbaijan.] God knows how these young men knew about this three color banner and where they got it from. I thought to myself that this three color banner, the phrase Allah'u Akbar [God is Supreme] and the spirit of Mamed Emin Rasu-zadeh have lived all the time in their genetic memory as an eternal flame always burning inside them. How couldn't I feel stunned by that scene?

We live in very strange times. The rules, traditions, and beliefs of the past 70 years are melting right before our very eyes. They are being replaced by new ones. We come up with demands like we could never do before; we criticize the Communist Party for lagging behind, for not being able to adjust to the changing realities of the era; we can demonstrate if we feel discontent. We see the members of the Politburo [leading branch of the Communist Party] not presiding the Congress of the Party, but being seated among other delegates in the hall. Delegates criticize the General Secretary of the Party at his own encouragement; for the first time they can show disagreement and argue with him. We don't see portraits of the Communist rulers on the streets of our cities. We hear that the Communist Organization of one of the Soviet republics intends to be withdrawn from the Soviet [nation-wide] Communist Organization. We make speeches under the three color national banner of the Democratic republic, the

very same republic that we had to criticize all that time.

All these changes bring up emotions of surprise and excitement. The fact is, all these events are routine for the rest of the civilized world. But what could we say, the totalitarian system suppressed free speech and free thinking for many years, thus, depriving us from our most essential rights.

Along with all this, we are still engaged in the battle of words in this transitional period. Our deeds don't match our thoughts. We still cannot make ourselves heard by the rest of the world, we still are hibernating, because our delegates to the Congress have a competence level which is much lower than average. We cannot make our voice heard at the Congress. But the most important deficiency of ours is absence of a national concept, national program and agenda. We do not bother to think of the future, we are preoccupied with current issues and problems. I would say that a nation which cannot plan its future carefully and plan the goals it seeks to accomplish, is literally "sentenced" to be beaten up. Planning the future carefully is our top priority now.

The First Congress of the National Delegates has taken a new measure. It decided to create a special sub-commission of the Supreme Soviet in order to investigate and learn the real situation in Nagorno Karabakh, (as if the real situation there wasn't already known.) I wonder, what sort of a "real situation" would this commission learn about? You see, the Soviet Government already knows very well the history of Karabakh, the situation emerged there, the claims that Armenians have come up with, and the protests of Azerbaijanis against these claims- all of it is not a nuance. Then why didn't our delegates make their point there? Why couldn't they defend the national interests? Leaving aside the fighting that all other delegates were engaged in, ours couldn't come up even with an organized defense. On the other hand, if this sub-commis-

sion was really seeking to find out what the real situation was like, then why didn't its members visit Azerbaijan and why did they find it sufficient to limit themselves to visiting Armenia only? Why didn't our delegates demand so? Why didn't the members of the sub-commission address the questions to the real owners of the disputed lands? And most importantly, why would such a sub-commission determine the destiny of our land? Does it mean that they are aware of the history of our land to a better degree than we are? Wasn't it known to them that Armenians were moved to these lands [only some 150 years ago] from [Iranian city of] Maragha? Why does this commission not respect this fact? Maybe its members are not interested in the History? The head of the special administration in Karabakh, A. Volski, unfortunately didn't clearly state his position on the issue of the so-called "annexation" of Karabakh by Azerbaijan in 1920? One could mistakenly infer from the article he wrote that before 1920, Karabakh belonged to Armenia, but in 1920 it was given to Azerbaijan. It is impossible to understand, at what time in History did Karabakh actually belong to Armenia, and why are some demanding it to "return" to them? On what grounds?

After all that is said, why do the members of the sub-commission forget, that we [Azerbaijan SSR] are a sovereign state, even if only de jure [on the paper] On the one hand, they support our status of an independent state, on the other, they create a sub-commission [that will decide on the issue of our territorial integrity for us.] Who are the members of this sub-commission? By what right can they actually reach their paws into my land and determine its future?

What does it mean to limit the budget of Azerbaijan SSR to 4 billion roubles at the given circumstances when our GNP is many more billions? Why can we retain only a small portion of our GNP [and give the rest to the Central government in Moscow?]

Should it be us who would cover the budget deficit of our neighbors who shoot at us?

For how long do we have to fill these budget gaps of our neighboring republic? Our oilmen produce oil risking their lives in the sea, our women gather the cotton from the fields swallowing poisonous pesticides, at cost of their health and womanhood [pesticides cause a side effect on females], and all that we gain we give away to the Central Government so it could cover the negative budget of some republics such as Armenia. All alone, the physical genocide of the nation has been bad enough, but for how long can we stand the ideologic genocide? It is interesting that Russians, who account for some 130-140 million people, are proud and happy nowadays about the fact that despite all the suffering of the revolution, they didn't melt and disappear as a nation, they could keep their national identity. If being assimilated was equal to a national catastrophe by the Russians, then why was it regarded as a blessing for the smaller nationalities within Russia to be completely Russified, to be completely assimilated?

In a weekly *Sobesednik* we read: "Russians have faced countless suffering in the 20th century, since the Russian-Japanese War through the "Years of Stagnation." These dangerous events have a manner of a chain reaction. But at the same time, I am quite optimistic about the future. The nation has survived, kept its spiritual and moral identity, and has not been assimilated and wiped out from the surface of Earth."

If Mamleyev, the author of this article, considers himself a just writer, then why doesn't he mention all the tricks that "Big Brother" played on the smaller nations population wise, how Russians forcefully subjected all the smaller nations to the assimilation process, and how the natural and other resources of the smaller nations were mercilessly robbed? I wish to ask the writer who is worried the possibility of such a huge nation as Russians melting and being assimilated: how worried should other nations as small as 1, 2, 3 millions be then?

While these small nations are doing their best to preserve their ethnic identity, language and history, why are you subjecting them to ruthless [ideological] attacks? There are lots of you, don't you worry.

National Egoism (Selfishness)

Nowadays, Armenians cry out loud letting the whole world know that they lack territory. The very same thought was expressed by Hitler when he created an ethnically homogenous Germany. The cornerstone of the Nazi program consisted of the idea that Germans are above all other nations. As Germans were of the ethnically cleanest Aryan race, they had all rights to claim the best territories in the world. They considered themselves unfairly omitted while the territory was divided between numerous other nations, and they wanted to claim it all back.

The very same thought about the lack of the territory is now repeated by Dashnaks. Just like the Nazis, they claim to be the most ancient, the smartest and ethnically cleanest nation in the world. Meaning, their intellectual and other abilities are so tremendous that this nation of 3 million does not fit its national borders anymore. After Armenia was struck by the earthquake on December 7, 1988, many of the wounded Armenians denied to undergo a blood transfusion, stating their unwillingness to have the blood of other nationalities flow through their veins. Just look at the degree of their national egoism! They think that Armenian blood is so superior, so they didn't want it mixed with any other blood. If they had any other blood running in their veins, that might pose a danger for their national superiority. What can one say to that?

Despite the fact that they are the most superior nation in the world, as they think, they have also suffered from other nations all along their history. Armenian intellectuals speak of their nation as the most suffered one, they feed this view of

them to the whole world, try to emphasize this fact, and seem to enjoy it- that is why at any appropriate occasion they put up a show. Their literature is especially obvious in its basis on such a "crying game." This mourning and crying about their suffering has become a national sickness. This sickness is called societal masochism. Ismikhan Yusifov in his "Letter to My Latvian friend" writes regarding the issue that usually the more the body of a masochistic person suffers, the more pleasure they derive. If we draw parallels, it becomes quite clear that the more that Armenians suffer, the more their intellectuals seem to be pleased to have grounds for talking about the suffering of their nation. Aren't there really any other nations except Armenians who faced tremendous suffering and deprivation all along the history of the human society? Well, Armenians managed to bring this self-crying to a level of art, made it a state-of-art show.

There is no other nation who had suffered, been beaten, driven out and abused as much as Jews. But they didn't constantly cry over these countless tragedies of their nation, they didn't constantly mourn, they just moved along. But their [intellectual] abilities are recognized by whole world.

According to Armenians, they must restore the once-existed Great Armenia from Sea to the Sea. Doesn't it smell like fascism really? First, the idea of the Great Armenia is a historical myth, they have never controlled all of the area between Black and Caspian Seas as they wish to think, and that's a historical fact. Plus, they cannot claim to be the smartest nation in the world, that wouldn't be civilized. It is really hysterical to divide all the nations in the world by very intelligent, moderately intelligent and not intelligent. Any nation might be superior in some characteristics, however, it isn't comprehensible to recognize the superiority of one nation above all others in all spheres. All the nations that are downgraded to such a national egoism are facing a deadly abyss. Didn't Nazi Germany fall into such an abyss because of the

very same symptoms of the very same national sickness?

As B. Oleynik, Ukrainian poet once said, "The one who tries to degrade the other in order to look superior, degrades himself." How can a nation which has such intellectuals, thinkers, writers, composers, poets such as Nizami, to whom Goethe bowed, Fuzuli, U. Hacibeyov, G. Garayev, and F. Amirov, a nation which produced masterpieces of an ancient poetry such as Dede Gorqud, Koroghlu, Ashig Garib, be savage and barbarian? Would it be just?

Thank God for the fact that our nation didn't degrade itself that much to contract the very same national exclusivity sickness. None of our intellectuals, writers or scientists has ever expressed an opinion offensive in character for any other nation, we have never attempted to make other nations look degraded. We only claim that we have our own niche among the other nations of the world. The greatness of our nation is in the fact that we have never tried to make our neighbors look bad and thus make ourselves look better.

Alan Einbern, an English playwright touched upon a very interesting issue in his play called "When There Are No Friends." He suggests that in order to resolve any argument, even if the opinions expressed appear to be antagonistic, one should take an independent, unbiased and realistic look at himself and be able to see the strength of the other person. Only having done so can people assess themselves realistically, and show respect for others.

The same applies to the relationship between nations. As long as a nation seeks the weaknesses and refuses to recognize the strengths of the other, sees only negative aspects but refuses to see the positive ones; seeking peace and stability would be as complicated as trying to find a needle in a haystack. If one sees only the weaknesses, only negative sides to the other, that indicates the ignorance of such a person, or nation. Because there is nothing necessarily good or necessarily bad in the world, everything is in relativity.

Tomorrow Was Saturday

On the night of January 19, 1990, the troops armed with the most modern weaponry entered the city [Baku] to suppress our sons and daughters who rose to defend their homeland with bare hands, to wash the streets of the city with their blood. The gold and the black gold [oil] that they took away from us for two centuries was no longer sufficient, this time they were after our blood. What did our teenagers and youth do wrong? Was it a sin to love their homeland, to want to defend it? Haven't fathers of these very youths sacrificed their own lives in order to defend Russia [from Nazi Germany] some 40 or 50 years ago? Is it the way you pay us back for the sacrifices of our nation, oh ungrateful Russians? For 200 years we have been your slaves and servants. From dawn till dusk we worked for you gathering cotton, producing oil, harvesting wheat at the cost of our lives and health. We deprived ourselves of all of that, but we sent you the goods. On our account, you became one of the leading countries in the world, so that was your way of thanking us for all that we have done for you?

It has been less than a year since we have declared and you have recognized our independence. You were quite quick to retreat from your position and attack the republic whose independence you recognized, weren't you... What is your recognition of our independence worth then? When have you observed the declarations you had made, the treaties you had signed? Never, and this time it doesn't come as a surprise. You had to bow to the demand of the era and give some limited freedom to the nations you once conquered. We had no sooner started taking advantage of this limited freedom when you stabbed us on the head once again.

It was bound to happen from the very beginning, because it is your nature to conquer, make nations suffer and betray. How could you fight your own nature?

That bloody night, the ancient Azerbaijani nation once again demonstrated the spirit of heroism to the rest of the world. It has once again proven to be still alive. It has also proven its being determined to die for its own freedom. The nation that is not ready to die for its freedom can never be free. Our youth that jumped on the armored vehicles with only their bare hands to fight with have proven that freedom for this nation has become an essential priority. The nation that regards achieving its freedom a top priority is a mature nation. With their readiness to fight the armored vehicles and the well equipped [Russian/Soviet] army, these young men and women have risen above death, they have become Shehids, martyrs of faith. They deserve the spiritual blessing from our ancient national heroes, such as Babek, Nasimi and Koroghlu. They have once again proven the axiom that the Motherland cannot rise if its sons and daughters aren't ready to sacrifice their lives for it. On account of these youth's braveness, we managed to make the rest of the world know about us and recognize us. We could never achieve such recognition by giving away our natural resources to Russia. In return for what we gave them, we have always been discriminated, intimidated and unhappy. Now we made everyone hear our voice and understand that there was a flame under the ashes, the flame of our will to be free. And one cannot play with such a fire. In this regard, I would like to ask those who sentenced our youth to death, made our mothers and young brides cry; who gave you the right to invade our homes and attempt to extinguish this eternal flame of our hearts? How can you be that conscienceless? I asked this question to one of the [Russian] soldiers who guarded the TV station in Baku [during the invasion.] He couldn't come up with an answer. I spat in his face and left. Then I actually asked myself, what conscience did I ask him about? How can you expect someone to possess something that you clearly know he cannot have from the very beginning? What kind of conscience do you expect this

nation to have, if, as Solzhenitsin wrote, they "sent two million people to gulags in just two years?" When Gorbachev inspected the areas of Armenia struck by the earthquake, Armenians blamed him for not knowing in advance that the earthquake was going to occur. Despite the fact that is a silly question, Gorbachev, being very cautious of Armenians, politely answered them that the device that would predict the upcoming earthquake with a 100 per cent reliability wasn't yet invented. But after he sent troops to our capital to kill us, none of us [our leaders] were brave enough to speak up and ask him why he did that or with what right he would do such a thing.

The biggest massacre occurred in the entrance to the city, ironically, in the area surrounding the monument for the XI Red Army [currently demolished. XI Red Army invaded Azerbaijan in 1920 and thus the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic was replaced by a Soviet government.] Nowadays, people put a black banner, a symbol of mourning on the top of it, and it is decorated by flowers every morning in memory of those who died there on the night of January 19. That is how the flame of hatred in our hearts is being extinguished. The armies that invaded us back in 1920 came here to spill our blood once again, this time right in front of its own monument. That is how it once again has proven its reputation of the invading army.

On that bloody night, we have incurred so much pain, I am sure, we shall long remember that hateful day, the pain and the suffering that we have incurred. Our ancestors will forever mark the days of January 19 and 20 as the days of our national mourning and on these days the invaders will be cursed.

*There was no justice, no truth on that night.
We have suffocated from pain and suffering on that night.
Bronze snake-like armors shed the purple blood
The truth was cornered by lies that night.*

*To whom can I complain?
To the treacherous subhumans?
The tears of 70 years were cried that night.
The chest of the mothers hurt from pounding in grief.*

*The blood of martyrs of the faith created a thunder that night.
The Motherland wore black
And no one seemed to care and comfort.
Being supposed to deliver a life*

That night delivered death.

*What can we say about this savagery?
This suffering, this tragedy?
How did God witness this scary scene that night?*

The Alley of the Shehids (martyrs of faith) has become a place where we swear to defend our freedom, and that Saturday night has become a day when we curse our invaders.

For a long time, I have been thinking about a possible sacred place for my nation. I wanted to see a place where our youth would go to swear to fight bitterly for the freedom and independence of our Motherland, to work for a better future for our homeland. I was thinking of a place like a sanctuary, a place that would make us feel spiritually pure once we visited it. What could be the best location? First I thought of the Honorary Alley [a cemetery where famous and honorary people are buried.] But then I thought, along with Uzeyir [Hajibeyov, a famous classical composer] and Mirza Jalil there are so many other unworthy people buried there, so this place can hardly become a sanctuary.

Our Shehids have given us such a sacred place now, the place where we come to bow low to their memory and the sacrifices they made to make to save us from our troubles. I would like to see our youth coming there to swear to sacrifice their lives and give all their efforts whenever the Motherland faces troubles or goes through difficult times. In these times,

and generally in good times as well, I would like to see our *aghsaggals* [respected people] come there and say: "Oh those who are buried in the land for protecting it, we hope that your spirit will inspire us."

Our children were brutally murdered. At least they should have left us alone after that... But no, they haven't. These people with no shame slandered us. They broke in the hospitals and intimidated the doctors there. Firuza, a doctor in the Siemaszko hospital in Baku says: "People washed with blood were being taken to the hospital, the number of them seemed to be countless. People, even children, gathered around the hospital willing to donate their blood. There were teenagers also among the wounded. The patio of the hospital and the roads surrounding it were shot at, and people who came to donate blood were not allowed in. The [Russian] soldiers also turned out the lights in the hospital. The doctors were forced to carry out surgeries by candle light."

Where else could such atrocities, such savagery happen? On February 8, 1990, the Radio Liberty in Munich reported that 50 tons of drugs and medical necessities were sent to Moscow from France, but Moscow didn't want to transport it all to Baku. But why? Why weren't they reluctant transporting all medical aid along with the weapons that were sent to Armenia camouflaged as drugs to Yerevan after the earthquake occurred? What does this double standard in approach [of the two Soviet republics] mean? All along that, they [Russians] didn't want to help those whom they themselves wounded and killed, but why refuse the helping hand from abroad?

All these events and occurrences have very deep roots. One cannot comprehend the depth of it looking at it with an untrained eye. One should apply logic and thorough analysis. Vice versa, it is impossible to see the importance and mean-

ing of all these events. On January 13, 1990, a few attacks on Armenian families and the Armenian Catholic Church in Baku unfolded according to a well-prepared and constructed scenario. Some youth of ours, having not seen the purpose of this scenario, had allowed some mistakes to happen. When I heard about these events, they made me cry hysterically. First of all, because I think that attacking innocent people is a deed that has no place in human civilization, and shouldn't have been allowed to happen in the first place. Being an Azerbaijani, I cannot forgive these deeds of my own people, even if they were my relatives, my own children. I cannot forgive them for playing according to the scenario and provocations of others. When it comes to the fact that the church was burnt down, this is also an unforgiven deed. Regardless of the faith that people follow, any religious sanctuary is a sacred place, and therefore, it must remain untouchable, because churches and mosques are the houses of God. The one that raises his hand to damage a mosque, a church or a synagogue is guilty and ignorant regardless of his faith. That is why I would think that the Academician Likhachev who wrote that "if Azerbaijanis were aware of the Armenian culture, they wouldn't have burnt the ancient Armenian church [in Baku]", must have had no idea about dozens of mosques destroyed in Armenia during the last 30 or 40 years. Maybe this Academician considers the church a cultural monument, but doesn't regard mosques in the same respect.

On the other hand, I cried because I knew very well that this bloody event was a prelude, a beginning of something more terrible. The events that made me assume so took place a few days earlier on Freedom Square. It was announced there that in order to contain Armenian aggression and to protect ourselves, Vazirov [the leader of Azerbaijan at that time] allowed the illegal production of weapons. I was deeply shocked when I first heard the news. But later on, it occurred to me that it was an event that would definitely lead to some-

thing very important. Along with many other people, I knew very well what kind of person Vazirov was. It was also very clear to me that we do not possess any ability to produce weaponry. That is just nonsense, an empty phrase spoken for the sake of saying something. There were many naive people who wouldn't actually care to analyze it. It became very clear to me at that point that the grounds for the army intervention in Baku were being created right at that moment. Of course, these were the preparations to suppress the already created national movement, the Azerbaijani People's Front. The *Sumgayit* events have been prepared and started similarly, the situation there was stirred up in advance. The bloodshed in Alma-Ata [currently Almaty, capital of Kazakhstan], Georgia and Uzbekistan started according to the very same scenario.

In the awakening of these bloody events, the next day on January 20, 1990, I sent a telegram to Gorbachev with the following content: "Mr. Gorbachev, the Azerbaijani people are not so underdeveloped to wish to create an Islamic state. That is just a lie you have come up with in order to justify the innocent blood that has been shed. You know that very well yourself, your conscience and your hands are covered with the blood of my people. You have gone farther than even Stalin, you have done something that even he didn't dare to do. History won't forgive you for that. It is a shameless ruse to do whatever you did to my people and then send your condolences afterwards. I would consider myself delighted to quit the Party that you are being a leader of."

That very same day, I attended the demonstration held around the building of the Azerbaijani Communist Party Central Committee and announced that I left the Party. I said there, "I am leaving the party after the bloody crime committed against my people and I urge all my people to do the same."

All along this bloody crime, the thing that infuriates me is that the leadership of this country is trying to cast aspersions

on us in order to justify the bloodshed it inspired in Azerbaijan, its own republic. That is the very same government that raised the flag of democratic changes, and thus tried to make the whole world sympathize with it, misleading the whole world community. As if the rainfall of bullets were not enough, now they have subjected us to another rainfall, a rainfall of lies and secret agendas which are much more unbearable. But they also have lost their mind and got misled by their own lies. While the Foreign Minister [of the Soviet Union] tried to justify sending of troops to the capital city of Baku, the Defense Minister admitted to the following: "The troops have been sent to suppress and contain the uncontrolled [pro-national] movement of the People's Front of Azerbaijan." And Gorbachev comes up with yet another version, different from the other two, he justifies sending of the troops with the fact that Azerbaijan intended to create an Islamic model of state, and these troops were supposed to prevent it from doing so. But actually, the truth was told by Yazov [Defense Minister cited above]- the troops arrived in Azerbaijan to suppress the emerged National-Democratic movement.

But the troops couldn't achieve their goal. It is impossible to suppress the feelings of national freedom and demands of democracy, likewise, the crime they have committed strengthened these feelings in the hearts of the nation. These events have reinforced the hatred towards this regime that always was there within the hearts of the people, because action equals to counter-action. The people would never forgive this bloody crime or those who committed it.

The army fired at windows of the houses and hospitals, shot the ambulances and civilians. It is known from the history of the world, that even the most barbarian armies during the most terrible hostilities and wars would not attack hospitals and ambulances. Many children, elderly people and nurses became victims of that bloody savagery.

In order to justify these atrocities, the army pulled the

wounded people out of the hospitals, gave them unloaded guns and made them pose for pictures taken on the streets, on the roofs of the buildings, etc. Thus, they could prove to the rest of the world that they were fighting armed groups, but not defenseless civilians. Another example: a few more days after these bloody events occurred, we heard gunshots at night. It became known later on that the soldiers were fighting themselves. The soldiers based in the Salyan Barracks were camouflaged as civilians, taken out to the streets surrounding the barracks and made to "fight" each other with empty cartridge cases. In other words, the Moscow authorities put up yet another show. The people who lived in the surrounding buildings said they couldn't fall asleep at night being disturbed by the noise of the fighting show. They would wake up in the morning to see that as a result of intensive night shootings, there were neither dead nor wounded on the scene. The only thing left from the night fights were the empty cartridges on the ground.

The statement made by Elmira Gafarova, the Head of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan reads: "On behalf of the people of Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet, we condemn the decision to impose a curfew in Baku made by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. In order to provoke the curfew imposed, military vehicles, including armored vehicles, were driven to Baku, the civilians were attacked and the population of the city was subjected to ruthless measures undertaken by the army. These measures resulted in numerous deaths of civilians. There are youth, elderly, women and children among the died. With all responsibility, we wish to declare that the decision about the curfew wasn't made by the authorities of Baku, nor by those of Azerbaijan, and they have not expressed their consent with any agreement of this sort to the Supreme Soviet [in Moscow.] The Soviet authorities are to be

held responsible for the bloodshed, as they have solely made this decision and provided its execution. The Azerbaijani people would never forgive such tragic murders of its sons and daughters."

H. Sadigov, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, disseminated the declaration to the world community. The officials of the Ministry contacted foreign diplomats in Moscow and informed them about the declaration and generally about the whole situation.

So what? In a situation when the American President George Bush supported the invasion of Baku by the Soviet troops and the suppression of the democratic movement there, what could other countries possibly do? And what are the grounds for such a position of President Bush? Maybe because the invasion of Panama by the United States was not yet such ancient history back then? The representative of the United Nations didn't care to ask Gorbachev why when Lithuania declared its independence he would beg them on his knees not to withdraw themselves from the Soviet Union and eventually bow to their decision, and when the same thing happened in Azerbaijan, when this republic declared its intention to become totally independent from the Soviet Union he would send the army to suppress its movement towards freedom. How can one explain these two attitudes towards the events? Where is the truth, where is justice? In compliance with what logic would Gorbachev bow to the decision of Christian Lithuania to become independent, and kill innocent people when the same intention was shown by Muslim Azerbaijan? Why can't he see villages burning in Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh? Maybe the reason is the same? Exactly, the real hotbed is in Armenia and Karabakh. But in order to extinguish it, the army is driven to Baku.

Pravda newspaper has never published a single word of truth about Azerbaijan. This time, it limited itself to spreading

lies through H. Efendiev's article (February 4th 1991). According to the author of the article, the real inspirer of the events is H. Aliyev, former leader of Azerbaijan who left Azerbaijan 9 years before the events took place as he has been appointed a [Moscow Politburo Member.] [Aliyev is currently the President of Azerbaijan Republic.] Of course, these allegations would make any sane person laugh hysterically. Three leaders have come and gone in Azerbaijan since Aliyev's time, and all three were appointed by Gorbachev himself. The author implies that whatever happens now in Azerbaijan should be blamed on Aliyev who was appointed by Brezhnev many years ago, and not on persons appointed by Gorbachev himself.

What are the reasons for blaming Aliyev? Maybe the fact that Aliyev rushed himself to the Azerbaijani embassy in Moscow in the wake of the bloody events, in the morning of January 21, 1990, or maybe the criticism he expressed commenting on Gorbachev's ethnic policy during a meeting with the foreign media held right there; maybe all that irritated Gorbachev? As soon as I read Efendiev's article, I understood that this article was ordered to be written, its publication was arranged.

And as it turned out, I was right. The precious truth surfaced yet once again. In Baku *Bakinski Rabochiy* and *Kommunist*, also later on April 13 in *Pravda*, he stated that he was not aware of the article, and someone else wrote and published the article under his name.

How can we now trust to whatever is published in *Pravda*, the policy of which creates contradiction with its title? [*Pravda* is the Russian word for "Truth".] It turns out that *Pravda* would be delighted to publish whatever lies appear about us, but the articles that reflect the true state of affairs, submitted by me or people like me, are thrown out without even being read.

On a seating of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee, in February 1990, while the Azerbaijani leader Mutallibov called Armenians to peace and friendship, Armenian leader Arutunian once again repeated same old Armenians claims that Karabakh be administered directly by the Central government in Moscow. If Gorbachev showed his determination in containing and resolving the conflict, then Arutunian and his likes would have never dared to mention Karabakh once again. It looks like Gorbachev himself was not interested in finding a [peaceful] solution for the conflict. We all know very well that the troubles we had to face were not planned only by a small nation like Armenians, or even by their powerful lobby. It looks like all these events were orchestrated by Gorbachev himself, a person who directs the Armenian mafia, who supplies it with modern weaponry, even who openly supports it and attacks Azerbaijanis verbally in any dispute.

We have gathered early in the morning of January 20 in front of the [Azerbaijani] Communist Party building. All of the intellectuals who made speeches there anonymously condemned Gorbachev and the Communist Party for the massacre, and openly announced that they quit the Party. I also made a speech there and announced that I quit the party. From there I went to the National Television directly. I meant to appear on TV and call the members of the Parliament to gather in front of the Supreme Soviet building that night at 6 o'clock. As soon as I entered the patio of the National TV building I spotted a few soldiers and generals of the invader army. The TV personnel approached me asking about the reason I came there. When I told them about the reason I was there, they informed me that the Soviet soldiers have destroyed the power supply block of the TV station the night before. I was infuriated by the news. I came up to the Russian General Ovchinnikov and just said whatever was on my mind: "You have always been invaders and created devastation in whatever country you showed up. It's not enough for you, is

it? What do you want from us now? All alone you have been robbing us from our natural resources for 200 years, now you are killing us? You are fascists!"

I spit in his face. Having grown mad at me, he reached for his gun. Nazim Abbasov, a TV worker approached him from behind, held his arms and whispered something in his ear. When the Russian soldiers gathered around ready to attack Abbasov, the general ordered them to back off.

I was explained later on, that the general had the right to kill me right there. They got an order from the military headquarters to kill anyone who is showing resistance right at the spot. A few days later I asked Abbasov, what did he tell the general. He, in fact, had explained to the general that the person he was about to shoot was a very respected poet and member of Parliament, and in case I was harmed the nation would have revolted.

Later on, this event were described in the poem called "The Spit" written by Yusif Neghmekar:

*It was not a raindrop
that hit the face of the general.
It was just a spit.
The spontaneous braveness
Seemed to cool him down.*

I went to the radio station right from there. I announced the gathering of the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet's session for January, 21 at 6 p.m. This announcement was repeated by the National Radio for some 10-15 times during the remains of the day and all day the next day. From home I called up Radio Liberty. I asked Mirza Khazar [editor-in-chief of Radio Liberty in Munich] to broadcast the same announcement. Which he did.

The next day two-thirds of the MP's were there. (Most of them came from the countryside). Non of the high ranking officials, city and provincial Party bureaucrats or Ministers showed up with the exception of Hasan Hasanov. [later UN

rep. and Foreign Minister.] The opening speech was made by the chairman, Elmira Gafarova, who asked me to take over and continue the session. I asked Ismail Shikhli [popular classical writer] to assist me in the proceedings. We presided the session together from the very beginning to the very end. The MP's stood in silence in memory of those who died during the massacre on January 19-21, 1990. The following was stated by the session:

1. The session didn't have any decisive influence and power over the situation.
2. The actions undertaken by the Soviet military, KGB and Interior Ministry troops violated the applicable laws [of Azerbaijan and the USSR]
3. It was decided to create the Parliamentary Commission to investigate the circumstances and consequences of the invasion.
4. To appeal to the Soviet nations and the world community.
5. To renounce the decision of the Supreme Soviet [in Moscow] about driving the troops in Baku and to push for the total withdrawal of the troops from the city.

There were numerous political arguments during the session. The members of the Azerbaijani Popular Front insisted that another paragraph be added to the declaration saying that in case the troops are not totally withdrawn within the 48 hours, Azerbaijan renounces its treaty with the Soviet Union and ceases to be one of the Soviet Republics.

The session continued until 8 am the next morning. In order to prepare the final document, the recess was declared at 3 am. During the break I suddenly thought of Olzhas Suleymenov [a MP of the Supreme Soviet in Moscow, a delegate from one of the Central Asian republics.] I called him right from there having woke him up. I updated him about the situation and asked him to come to Baku if that was possible. He told me he would definitely come, and some 2 days later he really came down to Baku. Despite the fact that he was seri-

ously sick at that moment, being a MP of the Soviet Parliament he was able to help us greatly.

The whole city seemed to have worn black and red the morning after.

The black flags, symbols of mourning, seemed to be everywhere across the city, on the balconies of the buildings, atop the electricity lights, on the roofs, etc. I asked myself who installed them and when did they have time to do so? By means of installing these banners the nation seemed to express its hatred, protest and pain caused by the massacre. What else could we do at that point? That was truly a nationwide mourning. It was not orchestrated or directed anyhow by anyone. The sadness of the people reached such a level that it would have been inappropriate to look for reasons.

We walked around the city with Olzhas.

The people put stones on the spots where the civilians were killed, these spots were decorated by black covers and flowers. The roofs of the public buses that had millions of holes in them from the armor fire were also covered with black. One must have a heart made of stone in order to hold back the tears witnessing a scene like that. I just cannot understand one thing: aren't these soldiers and officers who created the massacre, human beings themselves? How can they walk the very same streets seeing the results of their invasion and remain humans, not confronting their own conscience?

How can they ignore feelings of millions of people who comes to the Martyrs Alley. How can they look in the eyes of the mourning mothers and fathers, in the eyes of the youth? It looks like these soldiers arrived here being armed not only by the modern weapons, but also by a traditional hatred of Russians towards 'basurmans' [That's how Russians refer to foreigners in the ancient literature. By this altered form of the word Musulman or Muslim they mainly humiliated the Turkic neighbors.] It's impossible to find any other explanation to what has happened.

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The flower peddlers from the surrounding villages who once used to charge an arm and a leg for a single coronation in the city markets, poured in millions of flowers, giving them away for free to people who came to the mourning and decorating the fresh graves themselves.

These people whom we used to look down on as dishonest peddlers and disrespected so much, but who actually earn a living with hard work and sweat, from dawn til dusk suddenly showed their true dignity by distributing tonnes of free flowers during the 40 days of the national mourning. Every single day, the graves of the martyrs of faith were decorated by countless fresh coronations with a color resembling their blood. The hatred and protest against the bloody crime seemed to have been cooled down by the red coronations.

Comparing those sincere flower peddlers with the intellectuals who hid in their shells observing the events from a distance, one would remember the poem written by Sabir [classical Azerbaijani poet of the turn of the century]:

*Hordes of "intellectuals" with big mouths,
We are senseless,
Our speech is gossip-full,
We are shameless,
We dig our nose in every affair
Pretending kindness!
Wherever we spot enlightenment,
Oppose it with harshness.
We would growl at those who need us
And wig our tails for the powerful fearless...*

The faces of millions of people who came to the Alley to mourn seemed to be sealed with the expression of hatred and pain. There was an expression of sadness on their faces, and they seemed to carry the burden of the troubles of their Motherland on their shoulders while they walked by the countless fresh graves. They seemed to ask themselves the same ques-

tion while they glanced at the pictures of the victims installed above each grave: "What was our sin, why did this happen to us? Why being the right ones we were treated as the wrongs? Who took away our rights, who made us wrong? And why? Why? Why?"

Ever since the Karabakh dispute emerged we have been the defending side, we only tried to protect ourselves from the attacks of our enemies. Moscow knows it all very well. Why then they turned the well-equipped and armed-to-teeth army against us, not against the Armenian chauvinists, those who sworn to "make Beirut out of Baku and Lebanon out of Azerbaijan?" The more one thinks, the more he approaches the borderline of insanity. At the end we are the ones killed and we are the ones held guilty at the same time.

To the Final Resting Place

On January 22, 1990 Azerbaijani people brought the innocent victims who died for the freedom and independence of their homeland to their final resting place. At 8 am in the morning, we, as a group of MP's, came to the Freedom Square from the building of the Parliament. About one hour later the square was full of people.

The first coffin was brought there at 10 am. 42 mourning processions, carrying the coffins were led by mullas, a few others were led by Jewish rabbis and Christian Orthodox priests. 7 other corpses were carried there by ambulances. As it soon became known, the soldiers had even fired at nurses and doctors who attempted to help the wounded. It was impossible to see a single smiling face in the city of 2 million people. On top of the Maiden Tower where one would see smiling faces of our youth on Holidays, there was a black mourning banner waving. The black banners were everywhere as the whole nation was mourning. That is how everyone was trying

to give condolences and comfort each other. The wailing-like whistles of the ships in the nearby port made our hearts bleed. Baku has never seen a mourning like this, ever since the ancient times it was built. Tens of thousands of women gathered on the square crying and chanting. The mourning meeting starts there. All who made speeches demanded that those guilty of that massacre be named and prosecuted by law.

At noon the mourning procession walks to the Mountain Park. The walking mourners are lead by Sheikh-ul-Islam Pashazadeh [the spiritual leader of the Transcaucasian Muslims] and intellectuals of the country.

By 4 p.m. 51 martyrs were buried to rest in peace eternally. On February 1 the 75th martyr was buried. Where would thousands of the wounded who were in hospitals end up? Who knew? Tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis dead during the massacre of 1918 organized by Armenian Communist Shaumian were buried right there, at the cemetery called "Chemberekend" back then. In order to make the new generation forget about the treacherous Armenian nationalists and their terrible deeds, the cemetery was moved elsewhere and a park was built on that hill overlooking the city. The martyrs of faith that we left to rest in peace today are embraced by the spirits of those buried back in 1918. The spirits of those whom we buried decades ago seem to rise and welcome the new victims with words "May God have mercy on your souls."

Sometimes when we read books about our national heroes such as Babek, Javanshir, Javad Khan, Gachag Nabi and others, some descriptions of their deeds make us regard their heroism with a little bit of disbelief or mistrust. Sometimes it seemed to me that the nation idealizes its heroes, creates aura of legends around their names and the heroism of such people were greatly exaggerated. When I witnessed the heroism of the people on the Saturday night, I once again believed in all the legends and stories I had heard about our heroes.

The young people we would see in the streets, being one in

a million, just the average people, had proven how different they were, what big hearts they had during the events of that night. That Saturday night was the night when they covered the distance between being "average people" and the unforgettable heroes. Who knows maybe those whose names we have respected for centuries, our national heroes, also used to be just average people once... As the time passes by, the names of these heroes wouldn't be forgotten, the people would tell the stories about them, writers and poets will immortalize their names in the books.

The truth is on our side. Wherever the truth is, the God is right there with it.

*Becoming a victim of an inhuman bullet
The martyrs of faith faced the dawn.
They have covered the Skies
With the three color banner washed with their blood*

*That Saturday night, that night of the murders
We made the impossible happen
The fear that once existed in the hearts of the people
Was destroyed by the faith of the martyrs.*

*Living the repeating history
We became a fist that night
Having torn down the cautiousness in our hearts
The martyrs built the temple of bravery there.*

*Having died for the truth, our martyrs of faith
Defeated the death itself.*

*They spoke up the truth that was hidden in silence.
They knew the price of this soil.
They have shaken the frozen conscience.
A human becomes a human through his pride.
A nation becomes a nation
Going through the good and bad days.
They sew the seeds of freedom
When their bodies were buried..*

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Our nation has been mourning for 40 days, in compliance with the tradition of our fathers. The whole republic was not working for 40 days. The nation went on strike showing its protest against the unfairness and suffering it had caused.

The workers of Baku and Sumgait didn't get their pay-checks because they had not worked. Showing their solidarity, people in the distant towns of Sheki and Ganja went on strike too. The people from very distant provinces sent money and food supplies to support those who were on strike, even though they themselves lived in deprivation. 41 vehicles of food supplies arrived from Borchali district of Georgia [populated by ethnic Azerbaijanis.] Of course, that couldn't meet the demands of the population of Baku and Sumgait. Despite all that the nation didn't bow to the problems and deprivation. The strike went on for 40 days. How could one not be sympathetic with a brave nation like this?

I once again realized that this nation can be murdered and smashed, but not broken. The mourning was everywhere across the country; in towns and villages. The mourning became the expression of hatred and protest of the whole nation against the unfair treatment and hostilities.

Oh my patient nation, I worship your big heart, conscience and dignity, those things that we didn't particularly see or properly evaluate at all times. Sometimes we disrespect and underestimate ourselves. Intellectuals are easy to be misled and influenced. But it is impossible to mislead or lie to a nation. The people instinctively distinguish between good or bad.

The fact that the nation was united and wholesome during the days of mourning must make our intellectuals think. We must analyze the unity of the nation, the nation's psychology and learn lessons from it. We have to bow to its will.

THE TEST

"Azerbaijan" September 1 - 1993

Having read the article called "The Test" in *Aydinliq*, I glanced at the date it was written. I was amazed to find out that it was actually written back in 1915! I couldn't believe my eyes. This article seems to have been written today, it seems to address the troubles and problems of our present time. The author that calls World War I "The Test" that the nations had to pass, wrote that the WWI has shown what was each particular nation worthy of. He compares us, Azerbaijanis with Armenians and Georgians, the two nations who had a more mature self-consciousness as a nation even back then. He speaks about our weaknesses as a nation which causes us all the pain. He gives the following answer to the question "What are we worthy of?":

"This test has proven that we were not at all prepared for a national struggle, that we were bound to fail. It proved that our Turkic blood has been spoiled, our Muslim spirit has been broken... It proved that we lacked initiative, braveness, stability, manhood, brotherhood and unity."

I cannot believe that these words were written back in 1915, and not nowadays, in 1993. It turns out that we have been in the same situation even back then, and nothing seems to have changed for better. Haven't we achieved any progress during all these years, even a minimal one? Haven't we derived any lessons from what the history made us experience? Why haven't we learned anything from the sufferings Armenian nationalists caused us back in 1918 and why weren't we pre-

pared? Our writers and publicists have written about these troubles that we as a nation had to suffer. Why didn't we remember them? If all these reminders, lessons we've been taught are totally erased from our memory and minds, we are really a dismantled nation.

Exactly, we have to admit it as painful as it is. We have to admit that even after 78 years, since O. Faiq wrote that article, we haven't made much progress; "we are not ready for the struggle for our national survival, for the final examination." Every condition appears to be same as what he described 78 years ago, "our Turkic blood has been spoiled, our Muslim spirit has been broken... It proved that we lacked initiative, braveness, stability, manhood, brotherhood and unity."

If this was not the case, we would have come together, we would have united against the aggressive Armenian nationalists, who seem to be thirsty for our blood. At least in these given circumstances we wouldn't fight with each other.

The author that calls our nation "sick" also specifies the reasons and the symptoms of this sickness. He wrote: "Intellectuals who have been raised and educated according to the alien [foreign] principals, cannot teach us today and lead us, they don't have the right to do so." He calls us to struggle for achieving our "own school" [educational system], "our own way of bringing up our child," our "own spirit."

What did Omar Faiq mean by "our own school," "alien school," "our education" and "foreign education"? It is so obvious that the intellectual who has been raised and educated in a foreign language, whose first words were in that foreign language and not in his native mother tongue, cannot properly serve his nation. I have tried to emphasize and advocate this point of view in numerous books and poems of mine. In order to substantiate my point of view, I always cited the great Russian teacher Ushinski. It is well known that up to the middle of the last century the higher levels of the Russian society preferred to educate their children in French, they resent-

ed their own native language and regarded it as a language of the villagers. Ushinski who could not agree with that attitude, in his article called "Mother tongue" questioned the ability of these Russian kids who were educated in a foreign language to serve their country or to have any feelings for it once they grow up.

These opinions expressed are quite similar to Omar Faiq's thoughts.

In the 2nd issue of *Ogonek* 1981 I read an article about the French Armenian by the name of Jinjian, and about his service to Armenia. This person who always believed that Ayvazovski [a great Russian painter] has also been Armenian, has gathered his paintings and presented them to the Yerevan Art Gallery.

The very same article read that Armenians who live there still educate their children in the Armenian school that was opened in Paris. They want the new generation of the Armenians to be raised in a close contact with their national heritage and to receive an education in their native language.

Having read that article I wrote in my diary back then: "Look at the paradox! Armenians who live in Paris educate their children in an Armenian school, while Azerbaijanis in Baku prefer to send their children to the Russian schools. It is very clear that an Armenian kid who grows up in Paris attending an Armenian school will always serve Yerevan, and an Azerbaijani kid who grows up in Baku and attends a Russian school will always serve Moscow. Here is the difference between us and Armenians. That is why we cannot compete with them.

A nation that teaches its children the feeling of patriotism, teaches them to distinguish an enemy from a friend can accomplish any goals. When I visit some Azerbaijani families in Baku and try to attract the attention of the parents to the fact that their children don't speak their native language, these people would laugh at me. They don't seem to understand a

very simple fact: these kids who are unaware of their native language, the history of their nation and its cultural heritage, who do not comprehend its spirit can never know how priceless the feeling for the Motherland is, will always look down on this country, its language, culture and morals.

Unfortunately, those who do not understand these simple facts outnumber those who do. Many of those who used to argue with me on the issues of the importance of the native language had to take their children from the Russian schools and get them readmitted to the Azerbaijani schools, forced by the fact that Azerbaijani was declared the official language in Azerbaijan. I would not think that they have done so because they finally understood the importance of the native language and appropriated the pro-national and patriotic thinking, not at all! They do so having realized that their grandchildren can never achieve the leading positions in politics without knowing the native language, as they see that Azerbaijani is spoken and used in all levels of the state organizations. They just want their grandchildren to climb up the social and political ladder. That's all.

God forbid, if any other barbarian language would have been declared the only official language in the country, do you think these people would care? Not at all, they would just readmit their kids to such a school with that language to assure that their kids would be able to speak the necessary language in order to find a well-paid job in the government. This is another proof for the fact that our patriotic thinking is yet very immature.

In order to educate and bring a person up to be a patriot, underestimating the native language would be the worst mistake. Native language is the Motherland, the nation, its spirit and pillars. The one who doesn't lean to these pillars is unlikely to be trustworthy.

The fact that our kids were educated in a foreign language, taught alien principals and morals have robbed our nation spir-

itually, it made us all morally and spiritually depraved. During all these 170 years of the Russian rule our kids were taught the history of Russia camouflaged as history of the USSR, the process of sowing the seeds of cultural assimilation and Russification was hidden under the slogans of internationalism. Thus, proving that O. Faiq was quite right, "our Turkic blood has been spoiled, our Muslim spirit has been broken."

If the sons of a nation conspire with the enemy and literally sell the land to them, if they betray their own people in order to climb higher on the social ladder, if the Defense Minister appropriates the money donated by the people for the defense of their country, if one is ready to lead the country to the collapse in order to keep his position, then our blood is truly spoiled and we've lost our consciousness, just like Faiq said.

What kind of national and patriotic feelings can we expect from those who surrendered Lachin and Khojali in order to force Mutallibov [a former leader of the country] out of his office, or those who surrendered Shusha in order to do the same to Elchibey [democratically elected President of Azerbaijan, former leader of the People's Front] or those who surrendered Kelbajar and Aghdere to shake the current President, Aliyev?

Thus, the symptoms of the sickness traced by O. Faiq, Our great thinker back in the beginning of the century lives among us today.

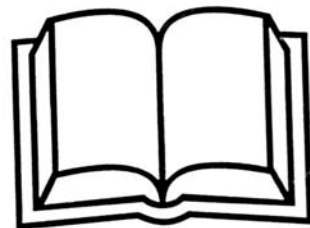
At the same time O. Faiq was quite optimistic about the future, he called the new generations to prepare for what the future holds for them. He wrote: "If we derive the lessons from this test [meaning WWI], we can prepare ourselves for the future carefully, thus we shall have left behind all the troubles and catastrophes of the past behind, we'll make them work for our better future."

We have to admit, no matter how painful it is, that all these troubles and catastrophes didn't get us any closer to the better future yet.

If only this man knew that this "better future" wouldn't be any closer in 1993, if he only knew that his nation wouldn't derive any lessons from the past and that it would face the very same problems and catastrophes once again, as we do nowadays, he wouldn't survive it. How can we, writers, who knew the history, who knew that it held many lessons to be learnt and analyzed, who witnessed the catastrophe once again, how can we survive, how can we bear up with all that?

I look up at the Heaven and praise the Lord. I ask him to let the future generations learn from our mistakes, not to repeat them.

Finally I ask the teachers who are involved in preparing the education program for the middle and high schools, as well as Universities to include articles like the one by O. Faiq, articles that encourage our youth to learn lessons from the past. I ask them to pass their pain and worries to the young generations. Maybe, with the help of these articles the new generations would be smarter than us, maybe they would not repeat the mistakes of their fathers...



THE WRITER AND THE SOCIETY

MY MOTHER TONGUE - MY ROOTS

"Let's talk Openly," Baku 1988

When the status of the national languages in the Republics were discussed at the Inter-Union plenary session in Moscow last year, it gave rise to much heated discussion. This problem is still unresolved in our Republic as well. Regardless of the fact that we have brought up this issue many times at high levels, and despite the Constitution which has established the Azerbaijani language as the official language of the Republic, our mother tongue remains to be applied in the governmental level of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.

I would like to directly refer to the 73rd Article of our Constitution:

"The official language of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan is Azerbaijani.

In the governmental and social organs, cultural and educational institutions as well as other offices; the use of Azerbaijani language is secured and its overall development is provided by the government."

How closely are we following our constitution? Is the Azerbaijani language the true official language in our Republic? We all know the answer is NO. This is because we do not protect the rights of our official language. Those who do not understand its necessity, are so alienated with their own mother tongue, that they don't even care about its survival and do not consider their ignorance as a shortcoming. In reference to this attitude, I would like to quote the great Russian writer K. Paustovski:.

"One's relationship with his/her mother tongue reflects that person's level of culture as well as national dignity. It is not possible to love the Motherland without loving the mother tongue. Only a savage person can disrespect his mother tongue."

The Ukrainian B. Oleynik was absolutely right when he said that we always talk about the necessity and need for the Russian language. This, of course, reflects our internationalist nature. But when we talk about the state of our national language, national history, and national schools, some call us "rebellious."

Oleynik was correct in this assertion. Whenever we talk about the necessity of any other language, they applaud us and call us "internationalists." But when we accidentally mention the need for the mother tongue, those who do not know their own national language and disrespect it, look down on us. At best, they call us backward. They, of course, consider themselves developed, modern, and civilized people.

Once I was having a conversation with an influential government official. When I mentioned the linguistic balance in the Republic, he said "Do not forget that we are a multinational Republic."

I told him that I am also seeking "multinationals." Multinational, literally means equality among the nations. When in official gatherings and governmental offices we use only one language and eliminate the other, which happens to be the official and national language of the Republic; are we not creating inequality? The government official could not answer my question.

Since this issue is directly related to the nature of Perestroika [reconstruction] taking place in every aspect of social life in our country; I think now is the time to seriously attack this problem.

The great Russian scholar, Likhachev, writes:
"If a big nation with a great culture and great nation-

al traditions binds its own destiny to the destiny of smaller nations, that big nation ought to be benevolent. The bigger nation must insure the survival of the smaller nation, protecting and developing its language and culture."

What do we need now? We need to feel equal to the other nations! We need to respect ourselves and our own national identity. Nobody from above is asking us not to teach the mother tongue to our children, not to respect the school's in our own language, not to accept any application filled in the official language of the Republic, or not to speak in our own language.

When Uzeyir Hajibayov's 100th anniversary was celebrated in Baku, the ceremony was presented in Russian. And yet, this internationally known writer and composer had devoted his entire life to the preservation of Azeri language and music. The same was true for the anniversary of Nasimi, a poet to whom we owe the establishment of our literary heritage.

Who ignores our mother tongue? Our national nihilists - those who deny their own roots, are alienated with their own language and history, and try to maintain a system where their illiteracy in their mother tongue would never be revealed. C. Aytomatov, in the July 1987 issue of "Ogonyok" writes:
"People with this type of inferiority complex are unfortunately respected as super-internationalists, but I call them 'national nihilists'. This is more reactionary and dangerous than nationalism. And the national nihilists who denied the national language are never exposed or criticized by the press."

Aytomatov rightly believes that alienation and elimination of the national languages are more frightening than ecological disasters such as the drying-up of rivers and lakes or the pollution of the soil.

I would like to mention a few facts. The daily paper *Communist*, published in Azeri, had complained in its February

21st, 1987 issue that some government offices, industries and ministries of Azerbaijan SSR as well as many local municipalities do not subscribe to this paper. Therefore, they never respond to the complaints and open letters addressed to them.

Communist is one of the few official daily papers which publishes people's comments, complaints and views. When the editorial board of the daily paper receives no response, under the pressure of its readers, they call the addressed offices directly. According to the same article, almost always the response is: "We haven't even seen that article."

One can conclude that not only do these offices and institutes not receive the official daily paper of the Republic, but that their staff never read it at all. How can they read it if they don't know the language?

When *Communist's* Editorial Board called the Secretary of the Communist Party at the Baku Soviet, M. Tuganov, and asked why they had not subscribed, his answer was plain and ignorant. "I don't give a damn that the office doesn't subscribe... we won't subscribe next year either." It is frightening to think about the system that supports such attitudes and gives this right to people like Tuganov.

The Azerbaijan SSR Ministry of Light Industry started subscribing to the Azeri daily, *Communist*, after its editorial board made several phone calls. But by "mistake", they ended up paying for and receiving the Russian daily *Communist* printed in Armenia!

Elsewhere under the title of "allusive announcement" in the Azeri daily *Communist*, we read "Executive Committee of Baku City Soviet never replies to the letters addressed to them. These letters are just stones thrown in the dark."

But why? Because the head of an important office like the Executive Committee of the Baku City Soviet cannot speak his own tongue. How can this person who has no respect for his mother tongue, the official language of the Republic, be the head of a government office?

If at least 10-20% of the communications within the Baku Soviet were carried out in Azeri, a person like him could never occupy such a position. But in the present situation, not only is he not ashamed of being illiterate in his own mother tongue, but he is also proud of the present system by which this is not considered a shortcoming.

If one of the conditions for appointing the staff was fluency in both Russian and Azeri, these ignorant people would have never been able to enter such high-ranking positions.

Once, the Azerbaijani writers, S. Rahimli, A. Valiyev, B. Bayramov, the poet G. Gasimzade, and I went to visit a high-ranking government official. He asked who we were and we introduced ourselves. As strange as it was for us to come across an Azerbaijani who had never read any of our works and poems or even heard our names, it would not be unusual for someone who neither reads Azeri papers, nor watches the local T.V. Of course, he doesn't watch Azeri T.V. because, despite his name and nationality, he does not understand the language. How can you talk about people's problems and issues with such an alienated person? Could anybody who hasn't read and doesn't know Fadeyov, Shlokhov, or of contemporaries; Rasputin and Yevtoshinko ever achieve a high-ranking position in the Russian SFSR? No. So why is it that such ignorant people are considered "highly cultured" and even achieve high-ranking positions in our Republic?

The State has recognized the necessity of teaching Russian at Azeri schools and Azeri at Russian schools as the second language throughout the Azerbaijan SSR. However, the Rector of the Russian Section of D. Bunyadzade National Institute of Economy all of a sudden decides that teaching Azeri as a second language is unnecessary and eliminates the Azeri department within the Russian Section altogether. We need to ask him, "How is it that learning Azerbaijani language was so important up until your time and since you got here, it became redundant? Where did you get the authority to abolish the right

to learn the official language of the Republic? We might have not expected you to be completely devoted to serving your own people, but why would you betray us?"

He had no fears to kill the national language, because he knew that no one would ever question him for it. Had it caused the slightest damage to his position, he wouldn't have dared to take such an action. People with this mentality only value their ranks and positions in the society. They have no interest in the survival of that society's language, which in turn, sustains its nationhood and protects its thousand-year-old history. They know so well that without position and rank, they are worthless in a society where they are so alien.

Azerbaijan is a cosmopolitan republic. Many nationalities are living and working here like a family. But do they all know, or at least learn, the official language, culture and history of this nation? Unfortunately, no. Is it not humiliating to us when other nationalities living in this republic never learn our language?

It is especially important that members of other nationalities working in the service industry know the official language of the republic. Why should an old Azeri lady take a translator with her to a store when she only wants to buy some sugar? Unfortunately, those who do not know the national language of the republic are not just in our service industry, but they are also occupying high-ranking positions in governmental offices. Furthermore, they look down on the locals and humiliate them by saying, "I no speak Azerbaijan."

The press has extensively covered the national demonstrations in the Baltic Republics. The *Pravda*, which analyzed the reasons behind this popular anger and discontent, has particularly mentioned the other nationalities' disrespect toward the local language as one of the causes. The paper quotes a Russian national who lived and studied for more than thirty years in Vilnius saying, "They never speak Russian, they don't even reply to your greetings in Russian."

"But that is your own fault," *Pravda* replies. "Living for such a long time in Lithuania and not learning its national language, culture and history is more than shame, it is disrespecting the local people."

After these demonstrations and expressions of discontent in the Baltic Republics, it was confessed that the national languages were not properly taught in the Russian schools and the problem began to be addressed seriously. But why is there no action taking place in the other republics?

There are many Azerbaijanis living in Armenia and Georgia. It is so sad that their language and traditions are totally disrespected in these neighboring republics. A few years ago, I visited the Azeri-populated regions throughout Georgia with this issue in mind. Seven thousand Azerbaijanis lived in the village of Kapanakchi. Facilities provided for their cultural and social development were pathetically inadequate.

The only school in this village is built to accommodate 400 students. However, there are 1,600 students registered for high school alone. The same number of students are attending the primary school in the same building. As a result of this, some of the kids are taught at private homes! In many Azeripopulated villages of Georgia, including Kaspi, Akhmeta and Telavi, there are no Azeri schools. Many collective and state farms as well as schools where only Azerbaijanis work and study are administered by non-Azeris. What is the logic behind this?

Let me remind the reader that I have sent many letters about these issues to government authorities, but I have not seen any results.

A recent version of ignorance and discrimination is to write disrespectful material against a certain nation or religion under the name of "Glasnost." For example, when I. Belyayov, attacks Islam and its teachings in his long article, "Islam and

Politics" he only reflects his misunderstanding of this religion. His "findings" directly offend all Muslim nationalities of the Soviet Union. He is scaring the reader of Islamic institutions, such as mosques and religious schools. He quotes many Western tabloids to this end, and ignores the real facts. He is ignoring that in Azerbaijan SSR, for instance, with a population of 6 million Muslims, there are only 18 mosques left. Baku, with a population of 1.5 million, has only two mosques remaining. The rest of our mosques have either been totally demolished or turned into warehouses. In Yugoslavia, where the Muslim population is a little over 2 million, 800 mosques have been built or renovated from 1946 to 1987.

I. Belyayov also forgets that in Shusha city of Azerbaijan, the amount of money spent for renovating a church exceeded the total spent for historical monuments many times over.

It is obvious that many of the family and city names are associated with religious titles of different nationalities living in this country, including Russians. Therefore, when I Belyayov suggests that all of the names linked with Islamic titles must be abolished, he is, in fact, discriminating, as he is not suggesting the same for the Christian names. There are many names such as Bogdan, Bogdanov, Bogolyubov, Bogomolov, Isaiov, Abramov, Gregoryan, Moysey, Eyosif, etc. that are associated with Christianity, and are actually more widespread than the Muslim names in the Soviet Union. It is only natural that Belyayov's article caused great anger and frustration among the Muslim population in this country and people responded with many criticizing letters. To abuse Glasnost in order to attack another nationality's heritage is against the principles of Perestroika.

ILL-GOTTEN GAINS OR THE BLACK SPOT OF THE "WHITE GOLD"

"Lets talk openly" (book) 1988

Most of our oral literature, especially our fairy tales addresses the issues of absolution, of fair gain, they are about the justice and the fairness. We have heard and read a lot about the sweetness of the fairly gained piece of meal, the victory of the good over the evil. We have been brought up this way by the literature and the spirit of our nation. In other words, the nation's wisdom taught us so.

But I have to admit with the pain in my heart that lately meanings of fair gain and ill gain are being confused and neglected. It becomes more and more difficult to distinguish between them, to draw the line. That is a catastrophe!

No one would wish to see his child become dishonest or a thief. All the parents try to teach their children true meanings of a fair gain and honesty. But the ways parents act behold more meaning and pose a stronger example for a child's learning than their words. In other words, fathers and mothers are the role models, and children tend to derive lessons from what they do, not from what they say.

The child is confused and affected by the parent's hypocrisy, by the fact that his deeds don't match his words. If a child with a pure conscience was brought up in an environment like that how can we be sure that the same child would become an honest adult?

The press lately addresses the issue of deliberately exag-

generating the figures for production and harvest in order to steal money from the government. Who are the criminals who face trials? The people who were the heads of the collective farms, administrative bureaucrats of the Communist Party, even ministers. They are heads of the collective farms who are traditionally respected by the people, as *aghsaggals* [usually an elderly leader in the village.] They used to be well respected people, they used to give advice to people and families. Their opinions used to be highly respected.

In M. Ibrahimov's book called "The Big Support," as well as in the movie based on this story *aghsaggal* Rustam becomes detached from the problems of his people, thus he loses the support of his own people. The writer who could foresee these processes become a big problem for the "leaders" by attracting the attentions to their misdeeds back in 50's and 60's. Nowadays it is very usual to see the former heads of the collective farms in the Courts of Justice, facing various convictions. Unfortunately it's become usual [for them] not to care about the problems of their own people, to detach themselves from the people. Black Volga's [Soviet Limousines] run on a hectic schedule, they can hardly transport their owners from one meeting to another, from one office to the other. These bureaucrats neither have time, nor the will to meet their own people and to listen to their problems.

In one of the newspapers the activities of a provincial communist leader were criticized. They were found to be inappropriate, as they didn't meet the standards of the Perestroika process [democratization of the society.] The facts that I read enraged me. That person literally spent all his time in the office of the first secretary of the province [top party position in the province], according to the article, he refused to meet with people who came to his office, he also hired someone to guard the doors of his office and turn back the visitors. How can a person like that be in charge of a big province? A person like that doesn't deserve to be called human, let alone his

high administrative position. But who cares, he used to be the head of the provincial administration for five years. And it occurred to us only now that he wasn't worth it.

The cotton is among the most valuable natural resources of Azerbaijan. It is not by accident that we call it "the white gold." We used to be proud of our cotton production for years, of the people involved in its production.

But later on we have discovered that a group of people actually broke the laws of the "fair gain," just to earn some ill-gained glory. They used their position and sowed cotton in the fields where other products were supposed to grow. In order to hide these fields from the cense, they have caused a fraud, deliberately exaggerating the cotton production volumes. And they did it all for the sake of achieving the [Soviet] goal or plan.

We hear everyday, here and there that some brigade [a group of workers] or some individuals have fulfilled the plan ahead of time. How can that be possible to fulfill the plan for 150 or 180 per cent ahead of the time? Either the planned volume of the production must be deliberately reduced from the very beginning, or the production figures are fictitious, that's very clear. Wouldn't it make more sense to fulfill the planned production on time? If we are creatures of the nature, let us learn from it, live according to its rules and not break them. Otherwise it can cost us too much in the future, the price the whole humanity might have to pay would be just too enormous. In the nature the sun rises and goes down on time. The trees blossom on time. If the summer heat came earlier than usual the trees would blossom earlier accordingly. But then the rains would destroy the fruits.

If a child is born much earlier than 9 months, there is a big chance that he/she would be immature. These are the rules in the nature. If we wish to have high quality products, we have to let go of this "plan rush", we have to forget about fulfilling the plan ahead of time. We have to harvest it all right on time

and assure the quality.

Sometimes we add the phrase; "ahead of time." We say that we have to "fulfill the plan ahead of time at any costs." Let us think about the meaning of it. What does it mean, at any cost? It generates fraud, exaggerated outcome figures and theft. It even costs human lives.

Exaggerated figures, fake time-tables and wages and fake signatures come as a whole package with such a "plan" ideology. When the winter comes it becomes known that there is no forage for the cattle just because all the farms have been sowed the seeds of cotton. But those who learnt how to blow the figures artificially don't seem to have problems with that, they do the same again, they just exaggerate the figures.

Have we forgotten about the fact that the harvest collected by a group of people is usually reported as that collected just by one person? As a result this person would be honored, and he/she may not be ashamed to look into the eyes of those who were left out and those on whose shoulders he/she has climbed up.

We have known those who all of a sudden became poets and writers, using their good connections and high-ranking positions. They manage to publish whatever nonsense they have written. How can we still believe in justice and laws?

Last year *Trud* newspaper reported about the trial of the former Cotton Industry Minister F. Salmanov. The article was called "The Black Cotton." That cotton that never existed or been gathered becomes the source of wealth for some dishonest individuals. "White gold" becomes a "black stain."

There is a term like "professional duty." This term is usually associated in our minds with honesty and dignity. If the personal interest and gain becomes a priority for some high ranking person, then the meaning of the "professional duty" is devaluated, and the position of such a person is viewed by him exclusively as a source of personal wealth.

I'd like to remind just one fact I read in *Ogonek's* article about the life of N. I. Bukharin [a Russian revolutionary.] In 1935 Bukharin used to be the editor-in-chief of *Izvestiya* newspaper and the member of the Academy of Sciences. He viewed his Academician salary sufficient, and the salary he received as the editor of the newspaper was donated to the Communist Party Fund. Just compare this with what goes on today.

Nowadays the first secretary of the Regional Communist Party is tried for misappropriation of the state funds, for fraudulent figures. A minister is sentenced to 12 years in prison on similar charges.

Back in 1937 when Bukharin was announced the "Enemy of the People" by the Central Committee, he went on a hunger strike expressing his protest. When he lied in the bed almost unconscious due to hunger, his wife would try to give him some orange juice instead of water. Bukharin would refuse the glass and throw it on the floor screaming: "Do you want me to become a liar before the Communist Party?"

Another fake reports mentioned at one of the conferences devoted to the cattle problems in one of our regions must be revealed. It is a known fact that the fleecing period comes in Winter and Summer. Lambs usually breed in and after January. But when there is premature breeding and birth, the lambs might be bred in December, even in earlier months. This is a natural process, and it is impossible to speed it up or to slow it down deliberately.

At the aforementioned conference, it became known that the lambs bred in November and December weren't reported. The leaders of the collective farms wait till the first of January because the lambs bred before that date are to be reported and attributed to the past year. As the result of this practice, it becomes quite complicated to fulfill the plan of having 150 new lambs bred from 100 adult lambs. That is why for three months or even longer, the newly bred lambs remain unreported, and

the appropriate staff member who ought to be reporting these newly born lambs simply don't see them and only start noticing them after January 1. The specialists from "above" who await the reports from the farms are well acquainted with this practice, but they don't seem to mind, and, as a result, the reports of the fleecing are fake.

Nowadays, the print media often addresses the negative issues of our everyday life; those that remained unmentioned for many years. Those who read these articles often wondered about the solutions to the current situation; about what could have been done to overcome the negative issues in the society. Of course, all these new processes in the society reflect the new policy of Perestroika and democratization.

The media often addresses the negative impact of the economic policies of the past. But who is to assess the moral and social aspects of these negative policies and events? Who is to restore the faith and mind set of the people; those that existed, but disappeared as the result of all of the negative processes in the society?

We have addressed the issue of the fake and deliberately inflated figures regarding the cotton production at the highest levels. But our republic has won the "Socialist Competition" numerous times and we received honorable banners [the practice existed in the USSR, when the winner of the economic competition used to receive the red banner], we used to celebrate these achievements. But eventually, we have forgotten all of that. We were eager to declare to the whole country that "One million tons of Azerbaijani cotton is ready!" Today it becomes clear that this slogan was supported by fake figures.

How can we teach the lesson of fair achievement to boys and girls who were brought up witnessing the events of that "fake figures era?" Having been raised during those years, these kids now can hardly distinguish between fair gain and ill gain. They have chosen role models for themselves- the chief of the warehouse, the sales person at a store, etc. [In the USSR

people of these professions were usually quite prosperous, as they had unlimited access to the consumer goods that were unavailable to the population.] Because unfair practices are being continued. Unfair people still misuse the resources of our country for self purposes, still continue to sow the seeds of unethical gain.

It is impossible to make an assessment of the negative impact of these practices on the teenagers and children who are being raised witnessing all of that on an everyday basis. As a result the calls of the parents to be fair; to strive for honest gain become empty words for the young generations. That is when the principals reflected in the ancient fairy tales and legends come in handy.

The new policies that are being implemented lately aim to cease the negative processes in the society. If we all become not only the witnesses of these policies, but also actively participate in them; if we all try to restore the fairness in our own sphere of work and activity, then we might make sure that these policies do not just remain words on a piece of paper. We all might make them work. That is a time when every single individual of the society must turn to the moral heritage of the nation. As we say; "a dishonestly gained meal breaks the tooth."

PERSONAL THOUGHTS - COLLECTIVE CONCERNS

"Let's talk openly" (book) 1988

When a personal thought doesn't serve the purposes of the individual, but the common goals and interests [of the nation], then such a thought reflects the feelings of the whole society. That is why we can call such a personal thought "an expression of the feelings of the whole society." The feeling of the society doesn't emerge out of nothing. It is being influenced by the processes going on in the society itself. Such thought reflects dreams, hopes, and demands of the nation at a given period of time and the pain that it is going through. An ancient saying of ours says it all:

"Without the pain in the heart, there would be no tears in the eyes."

If it were not for the problems that make us all think and worry, that cause us pain, such anonymous feeling in the society wouldn't emerge. The main purpose now is to nurture this thought that occupies the minds of the nation, causes us all pain, and that becomes topic for discussion virtually everywhere. In order to make the consequences of our mistakes we have made in the past disappear, stop the pain that was caused by all that we have done wrong in the past, and preserve the society that was built by our fathers, we must not cover up or hide these mistakes or pretend that they simply do not exist. We must find the cure for all these troubles.

We all remember the times when one person would become an irreplaceable specialist in all sciences, would teach the painters, engineers, biologists, composers, physicists,-virtually

all the scientists from "above" what to do and how to do it. In a situation like that, an individual becomes dumb. He loses his own way of thinking and relies on orders from "above." All s/he can do is to agree with those orders and fulfill them.

But in reality each person must have his or her own feelings and opinions. The main goal is to free such personal opinions and thoughts from the burden of selfishness, make these thoughts serve not the personal purposes but to make them serve the purposes of the whole society. The interest of the society is a product of the feeling of the society.

We must admit that lately the societal feelings have weakened, and "I" rose above "We." Whenever we see something that bothers us, we choose to turn our blind eye on all that, it is easier for us to pretend that we see no wrongdoing. This indifference is not something that our society must appropriate. In the past, Sabir [Azerbaijani satirist and poet] also addressed these issues, saying, "Oh Heaven, what can we do about the indifferent among us?" But what about now? Why can't we revolt against the indifference?

Safura Isayeva who lives in Ermaki village in Quba district is a mother of twelve. Because of the fact that she is homeless, she turned to M. Abdullayev, Member of Parliament from that district for help. Despite the fact that he literally knocked on every door in the appropriate state organizations and agencies, he could not help her in that issue.

What would be the appropriate name for such indifference shown by the state agencies to the fate of the mother of 12, who is supposed to bring her children up and educate them?

Our lands are being damaged as a result of the cutting of trees in our forests and fighting the insects by means of spreading dangerous pesticides in fields and farms. We think of today and often forget about tomorrow. And that's when the personal thought, or decisive opinion of a person in charge could have made a difference. The society's opinions are not taken into consideration. That's a pity.

I went to Lithuania a few years ago. The Nature Preserving Committee sued the region's administration head for allowing the cutting down of a single tree during construction of the road between two villages there. I remembered our Sultanbud forest that has been destroyed. I was thinking of those who ought to be held responsible for all the senseless destruction and damage made to nature [in Azerbaijan.]

It is a crime against our culture and science to involve high school pupils in the fields during the cotton gathering season. The future generations would not forgive us intellectuals for such an indifference that we are showing towards that issue. How could these kids from villages have a fair chance in competing with the pupils from Baku schools in passing the exams to Higher Education Institutions? They are being distracted from their studies and cannot learn whatever they have to learn in order to compete successfully. On the other hand, those professors who carry out and supervise entering exams at the Universities are well aware of the situation with the education in the province. How can they demand these students to be fully acquainted with the Educational Program, how can they ask them to answer their questions on the same level as they ask those who are attending the exams having graduated from one of the schools in Baku?

Being a member of the selection group for the State Award Committee, I once suggested to give the award to a movie about a national hero. I suggested to give priority to this particular movie among others nominated for the award.

That is when I witnessed one of our famous actors abuse the memory of that national hero, just because he got upset with the fact that the movie he was starring in was not going to be awarded.

I was literally speechless and infuriated. How can an actor humiliate a national hero in public like that, a person whom the whole nation respected, just because he was after his own interests; that is, he wanted his own movie awarded! How can

one believe in whatever rightful images such a person has played? How can we refer to persons like that as citizens when they can humiliate literally everybody and turn their backs to the history of their own people just for the sake of their own personal benefit?

The most interesting thing about all that is that this person's personal opinion cannot be of any interest to others, just because in expressing his opinion he cares only about himself, his own personal gain, benefit and interest. Unfortunately, nowadays we see a group of people newly emerged who hold themselves above the Motherland, and their relatives and surroundings above the whole nation. Our primary goal right now is to fight this limited group of people who could sacrifice the interest of the whole country to benefit personally. We have to fight for the meaning of the true citizens.

Who is a citizen? The one who holds himself morally obligated to do something for the rest of his people, not the one who holds the rest of the people morally obligated to do something for him. The one who thinks about his duties to his country first, and not about his privileges. The one who can be a torch, a lighthouse for the rest of his people, the one who forgets about his personal benefit for the sake of the interest of his people.

In order to bring our kids up like that, to nurture their feelings of citizenship, we must start with the schools. Along with the regular education, we must offer classes that would educate our future generations civic duties, obligations and morals. We must educate our children so they would become truthful citizens of their country.

One intellectual said it quite right: "The mind of a pupil is not an empty jar, something that one could pour knowledge into. The objective of every teacher is to light the torch of the desire to learn in the heart of each child." I guess, if a teacher manages to light such a torch, such a child will be able to enlighten the dark spheres of science one day.

I greet the articles in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* [of Moscow] that appeared as an answer to those who suggested to cut the volume of the Literature classes in high schools in favor of the technical subjects. The authors of this article points it out very clearly that boosting the volume of the technical subjects taught at school must not be achieved as a result of cutting the humanities classes, such as Literature. Even if the technical subjects and classes educate the kids and give them necessary knowledge and skills, Literature classes educate them, show them the way to become caring citizens, nurture the feelings of patriotism, and introduce them to the right role models. The main goal of the high school is, along with offering real knowledge to the pupils, is to light the torch of desire to study that we have mentioned above. Its main goal is to help the kids develop into caring citizens of their homeland. No technical subject can help bring these kids up in the atmosphere of love towards their homeland, sow the seeds of love, teach them the distinction between right and wrong, and morally educate them. That is why, first and foremost, we must teach our children real ideals, show them the reasons why they should become good specialists, and why they should study. We must enrich their morals. That is the object of literature. It would be a grave mistake to cut the number of the literature classes in the high schools in favor of adding technical subjects to the educational program.

A personal opinion develops from free thinking. We must nurture free thinking in our children right from the very beginning. Unfortunately, instead of helping our kids develop skills of thinking freely and independently, we teach them to repeat whatever the teacher says, and we make them do it without thinking, just like parrots would. O. Chaikovskaya, addressing this issue wrote: "Aren't we disabling our kids to think freely, to develop free and creative opinions doing so [at schools]?"

Here's another example. The documentary called "Me and the Others" produced at Kyiv Film Studio poses an interesting

point of view. It depicts 12 six-year-old children gathered around a table. Two pyramids are placed atop of the table, one is white, the other is black. The researcher that carries out the experiment tells the kids: "A boy named Peter is to enter this room very soon. You all must tell him that both of the pyramids on the table are black. Please tell me now, what color are these two pyramids?" And all the kids anonymously repeat that these both pyramids are black. That's when Peter enters the room. The researcher repeats her question. All the kids answer, that both of the pyramids are black. Then the researcher turns to Peter and asks him about the color of the both pyramids, he answers identically just as he heard the other children answer the question. He says that both of the pyramids are black. Then the researcher asks Peter to give her the white pyramid. He does so. She asks him why then did he say that the both pyramids were black a minute earlier, for, he demonstrated that he can distinguish between two of them. The boy starts crying saying he doesn't know why.

What makes the boy cry in this case? He is confused by what he knows to be true and what he was told. He says he doesn't know why he answered initially that the both pyramids on the table were of the same color just because he is really confused about what is going on, because he is made to lie.

We must be very cautious about the gap that can be created between the individual and the society once such an individual grows up. We must teach our children not to be afraid of telling the truth, telling what they really think from elementary school on. Only those who are not afraid to express their opinions and beliefs regardless of the possible consequences can upgrade themselves to becoming individuals, real personalities and thus, becoming useful for their motherland. Those who chose to lie in order to not look different from the others grow up into two-faced people without a personality. O. Chaikovskaya described one such person: "He became a master of the 'not understanding' science." What kind of science

is this? I've got an explanation of such a science later on from a Ministry official. He said to me: "I am being paid my salary for not understanding what is going on. For instance, a director of the factory comes up to me and says that in order to increase the output of the facility, he needs such and such investments, such and such number of new workers and materials. Being an engineer, I understand that the man is right. But as a Ministry official I must cut his needs by half, I should not understand him."

Get it: to understand a person as an engineer, but not to be able to understand him as a Ministry official! As long as the practice of our thoughts and feelings continue mismatching our deeds, how can we possibly reach our goals as a society?

AS A LEADER STEPS DOWN...

Excerpts from the speech made at the Supreme Soviet's Session
on February 8, 1991

Distinguished Members of Parliament! I was absent yesterday during the hearings on the Karabakh situation due to health problems. But having watched the session on TV from the very beginning to the very end, I might say, I am very disappointed. The rules of the society made us so impaired, affected us so, we have become toadies for those who are in power and enemies of those who have stepped down. We tend to forget about our sacred feelings, about being humane. That's how we have found ourselves in such a situation.

I listened to Heydar Aliyev's speech yesterday very attentively. He called for a deep analysis of the Karabakh problem. He wanted to point out that during these three years that the conflict has emerged, we had failed to come up with a consistent concept. Wasn't he right about that? He said that we have always been a defending party. Finally, he called us to attack. As one of the best strategies says, the best defense is the best offense.

Instead of addressing our current problems, we have put these problems aside and are engaged in the same old enmity with Aliyev and we are trying to get our revenge. I am not going to defend Aliyev. Doubtless, there have been numerous mistakes during the period of his rule. But most of these mistakes were made due to the specific demands of that [Soviet] era. I was stunned while watching TV yesterday. I was deeply concerned witnessing the destruction of the moral principals and code of humane behavior that we have inherited from our

fathers. What about our tradition of not degrading the ones who become weak? I wonder why we annihilated our culture to such a degree. I could not fall asleep all night last night. Our fathers would never do such a treacherous thing. Does it take more heroism to abuse a person who has stepped down from power, the one to whom we all bowed to at one time, and were afraid to show any disagreement to now, as it takes to attack an unarmed person while being armed. Just try to imagine, if our enemies watched whatever happened here yesterday, wouldn't they laugh at us, because we have shown such ungratefulness in acting in such a cowardly manner?

We also shouldn't forget that despite the fact that they were fully ready to start carrying out their hostile plans, Armenian nationalists have waited till Aliyev stepped down from his position of the leader of Azerbaijan. He stood like a rock in their way. But today we have disregarded his services, we have forgotten about the fact that this is a person who has always been engaged in politics and professed in that sphere, and instead of using the great experience of our compatriot, we are engaging in personal vendettas nurturing our personal ambitions. Is the session of the Supreme Soviet a perfect place for seeking revenge on personal matters?

Adding our personal revengeful sentiments in the discussion of the Karabakh problem yesterday, was it an honorable thing to do? Today, instead of devoting all our efforts to finding the solution to the gravest Karabakh problem, we are standing in line to get to the Parliament microphone in order to humiliate a person who has stepped down from power even more, and thus, gain receptiveness from those who are in power now. Is that all our ethics and morals are about?

Watching that scene on TV yesterday, I remembered the scene of the so-called "exposure" of Gambay Mamedov. They lined up in front of the microphones just like yesterday, in order to get their chance to attack him and thus gain a couple of favorable glances from those in power. I don't doubt, those who attacked

Aliyev expect some favors in return from those who are in power now. Being perfectly honest, I was expecting our distinguished Chairman to raise his voice, to calm down those who attacked Aliyev and to direct the discussion back to the Karabakh issue. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. Those who watch Aliyev being attacked and humiliated with a gape of amazement and joy on their faces nowadays shouldn't forget that the same fate is awaiting them in the future. Why can't we derive lessons from our experiences? We mustn't forget that the Earth continues spinning, and Summers and Winters come again.

Those who have been brought to politics by Aliyev some few years ago, nowadays don't even say "hello" to him. They refuse to look him in the eye. It turns out that even saying hello to those in power was considered by them as some sort of a bribe. Whatever happened to the tradition of our fathers? Are their positions gained due to treachery considered to be a fair gain? These people appear to lack all the essential norms of humanity, they can sacrifice all the benefits of the people to their own personal benefits.

Who are those who attack H. Aliyev now? Those who were among his flatterers just yesterday? Oh God, isn't it scary to witness a flatterer becoming a hangman?

It turns out that these people didn't respect his personality while he was in power, the only thing they respected in him was his high political position, his power, and the perspective of getting some favors in return for their flattery.

We know these people very well. They used to decorate the walls in their offices with his portraits, lecture us about his achievements, called us all to bow to his greatness. But what happened to the very same personality now? Or did he lose his personality along with losing his power?

Poor nation, poor people! Look at those who behold your fate in their hands! I wonder if these people managed to rise due to the fact that they have sacrificed their humanity and moral principals somewhere along the way to achieve higher

political positions. Or maybe it's a natural process that ought to be this way. Maybe that's a requirement for those who want to climb up the political stairs and remain on top for a longer time: to loose their humanity, morals and ethics. It seems to have become a moral norm in our society.

In the United States when a President steps down his personality doesn't suffer from attacks. He just loses his position. The attitudes of the people towards him remain unchanged.

It means that in our totalitarian system, the respect for the human being doesn't depend on his personal qualities, but on the position he holds. It means that first of all, we have lost our humanity. We have to be deeply concerned with this fact nowadays.

The so-called "patriots" who created the organization called "Birlik" (Unity), while being engaged in the attacks on Aliyev's personality at the Supreme Soviet's session, seemed to have forgotten the mission of their organization- to unite the people. No one seemed to ask them about whatever happened to their calls for the unity of the nation or whatever happened to their mission statement, because their actions clearly contradicted whatever they have claimed their mission to be. Where were their slogans calling to national unity at that moment? Whom and what were they serving by doing so? What was their position as Parliament Members? No one seemed to ask them why they lied to their electorate, coming up with pre-election promises and acting as if they have forgotten them completely? It seems that these people were elected for these purposes.

Weren't there any deficiencies in Kunaev's performance when he was Kazakstan's leader? Oh, there were **numerous** deficiencies and mistakes. Kunaev is the very same person who signed the agreement to place the Soviet Space Program's main launching facility on Kazakhstan land, and thus, mainly contributed to the emergence of environmental problems there. But despite that fact, Kazak people hold him in the highest regard. What about us? We seem to be eager to blame whatever problems we have on him [Aliyev.], even the things that we are

responsible for ourselves. Whatever happened to the tradition of respecting the *aghsaggal* [wise elderly]? I have a question for those who have lined up yesterday to get a chance to speak. Why didn't you dare to speak up back then [when Aliyev was in power]? If you were afraid to do so back then, don't be so proud of your so-called "heroism" now. Those of you who were shaking a few years ago whenever Aliyev came into sight, and who confront him with their allegations now that he has stepped down, don't consider it an act of manhood or bravery.

We all know that our nation is going through the hardest times ever. We are all alone at the most critical time when the future of our nation and of our territorial integrity is at stake. It is not that difficult to fight the visible enemies. If we all realize that these problems do exist, if we comprehend them, then we have no right to deal with our personal feelings, to let them interfere or to waste time on them. We have no other choice than to forget the insignificant personal enmity among us, and to restrain our personal feelings and to commit all our efforts to building a hope for the Motherland.

It is not a secret that our national psychology that we have inherited has always had it that we think about ourselves first: to think about individuals rather than the benefits of the whole nation. We have always tried to prove that our position is right and that we are supreme.

However, nowadays, when the nation's and Motherland's fate is at stake, we must let go of the thoughts about personal benefit, as well as of personal vendettas. We have to unite, make a fist to resolve the problems our nation is facing. We have to recall the words of M.E. Rasul Zadeh, the creator of the first independent Azerbaijani state [1918-20.] He said: "The nation that didn't achieve its independence doesn't have a right to waste time on interpersonal conflicts."

Let us not forget these words of wisdom as well as the old saying:

"You don't talk behind the one who just left the room."

"I AM BURNED AND BLAMED FOR THE FLAME!"

(an old Azeri expression)

"Akhtarish" daily, February 1992

If the attitudes didn't change with the passage of time, if all the "Number One Communists" stuck to their obsolete way of thinking, that would have been another problem and a rather simple one too.

Surprisingly, when the forces beyond their control, such as the new realities of the new time, started influencing events, these people were the first ones to abandon their old attitudes and ways of thinking. They were the first ones to leave their old steed behind. They started talking about democracy faster and louder than anybody else. They have come up with pretentious speeches condemning the Communist regime, the very same regime that served as the main source of benefit for them and those that surrounded them. There were also those people who used to climb up the administrative stairs during the Communist times, and having been standing on the top of these stairs declared to the whole world that they have never been Communists.

Those who used to lecture us about internationalism, friendship between different people, mortality of Marxist ideology and who criticized those who stepped away from the right path as it seemed to be just yesterday, today quote M.E. Rasul Zadeh's speeches [founder of the Independent Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in 1918] with the same passion, speak about the importance of our national self-

consciousness, and yet again lecture others. Well, this is the thing that I find extremely difficult to bear up with.

Those who criticized Turkey, who called it an underdeveloped, underprivileged country, who turned their eyes on Moscow as the brightest example of virtually everything, today refer to the Turkish experience as the only right way to do things. They turn their eyes to the Turkish consumer goods market, constantly speak of Turkey as being a very progressive country and criticize us for not seeing how progressive Turkey is. Those who considered their kids to have adopted the culture just because they spoke Russian and went to Russian speaking schools, who thought of us, who sent their kids to Azeri speaking schools as obsolete and lagging behind in overall development, send their kids to Turkish schools and seem to be very proud that their kids speak a Turkish dialect. Those who have come up with millions of aspersions against the leaders of Musavat party such as Rasul Zadeh, Khoyski, Topchubashov, Nasibbeyli, nowadays stress out their tremendous services to the nation.

I remember clearly, Emin Sabitoghlu [composer], Yusif Samadoghlu [writer and son of Samad Vurghun, famous poet] and I have received our portion of tongue lashing for not having [Russian style] "ov" suffixes in our last names. These people are still in power today.

I recall two dialogues in which I participated. This dialog took place between my Communist countryman and I. I will refrain from naming him, but I think that if he reads this article (supposing that he reads magazines and newspapers at all,) he would recognize himself.

These were the days when the Communist Party was the sole ruler. And that "friend" of mine was presiding at his top position desk. We came face to face at one of the ordinary Communist meetings. Having noticed the badge that I wore

with the tricolor of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, he approached me and having glanced on the badge, asked me in an unmistakably Communist manner: "What is it, you are wearing the badge with the tricksters' flag?"

We have met once again some time later. The Communist party was no longer a ruling one. But that "friend" of mine still kept his high position along with his desk with quite a few telephones on it. But what attracted my attention were not these telephones, a symbol of importance in Soviet times, but the very same Musavatist tricolor that served as another decoration on his desk. My old friend was eager to show this flag to me, to demonstrate the overwhelming changes that took place in his mind set and ideology.

I couldn't make myself ask him, what was it, did he have the tricksters' flag on his desk now? Yes, I literally couldn't make myself ask him that, as I was stunned. Also, because I knew very well what his answer would be. I knew that I shall face yet again the two-faced faithlessness and fickleness. He tried to convince me that it should all be that way, that was the demand of the changing realities of time. But deep inside he would have just laughed at me. Yet again I would be the one who cares and suffers, and the bad one. He would go back to his work without a second thought. He would have hid behind the tricolor and would march towards the Bright Communist future.

At this point I don't deem it expedient to put the Bright Communist future expression inside quotation marks. Don't the very same fickle Communists live in its bright future today? They are still in power, they rule this non-Communist society using their Communist mind set and ideology. And the nature of their activity didn't change a bit, it is still about misappropriating people's property, state funds, deprive people from what is theirs by right. Former Communist district administrators have become district governors. They still are

doing the very same thing- capitalizing on the illegal trade of apartments and property. The very nature of their activities consists of that, but they have also some other items on their agenda. That is done in a broad daylight, and everybody is aware of that. These people used to have Brezhnev's, Andropov's, and Gorbachev's portraits hung above their desks in their offices, particularly in that order, and used to have local "tzar's" portraits arranged in the corner of their desks. Their own portraits, smaller in dimensions but brighter in colors would be somewhere there too. That all served a single dirty purpose- to hide the real character of their activities. All this entourage served as a curtain for them to hide behind.

I have visited with a few ministers and other bureaucrats, recently I have been to their offices. I couldn't believe my eyes: these very same walls and desks of theirs were not "portrait less" again. There usually would be a huge portrait of Rasul Zadeh hanging on the wall and the President's smaller color portrait atop the desk. Just look at the transition from Brezhnev's and Andropov's to Rasul Zadeh's portrait!

Witnessing this situation which itself symbolizes the prevailing faithlessness and fickleness, one would wonder if these people- ministers, administration leaders, bosses of all kinds, are ever ashamed of themselves? God knows how they could combine these contrary ideas, ideologies, even personalities whose portraits they have in their offices. How could this miraculously fast transition in their minds occur?

At the very same time, I think to myself: their minds, if one could call it a mind at all, didn't change. There were no miraculous changes in their perception of life. And these changes were not even possible. They all are still in captivity of their altered, limited and narrow internal universe and mind. They are still playing same old "Portrait" game as I call it, and want to sell this game as a new ideology to us, to the people.

Being burnt inside by the flame of all of these contradictions, I think to myself that one cannot blame these people with their Communist ideologies, actually I should say, even "ideology-less" people. Because, beliefs and ideology, the mind set is a very valuable asset and blessing. These are the qualities of a human being, they come hand in hand with the maturity of the mind. In order to be able to comprehend or adopt the ideas, believe in something truly, it is not sufficient enough to be a pure and honest person. One should also reach the certain cultural and intellectual level. But would we really expect yesterday's "partocracy" [a term that in the post-Soviet literature characterized Party bureaucrats, combination of the two words, party and bureaucracy] to wait some time before robbing their people now, from being engaged in illegal trade of land property, apartments, and so on and to think about a higher state of consciousness?

These are the regrettable problems of our present days. But the most regrettable fact is that we are the ones who have suffered from the 70 years of ruling of this inhumane and illogical regime, and we are still considered to be "the bad guys."

But let us not complain about our bitter fate. We don't have a right to complain. Because we all- the burning ones and the blamed ones at the same time are helpless and irrational people, in other words, imperfect we are human beings. We seem to be able to make mistakes only, and nothing else.

And the Communist-turned-Rasul Zadeh followers see that and they use that. That is one regrettable thing!

DO WE HAVE A RIGHT FOR ENMITY?

"Khalg Gazeti" daily, September 5, 1992

Ever since I have become able to comprehend the world that surrounds us, I have understood the fake and deceptive nature of Communist ideology and the Soviet model of society, and within my ability I have attempted to stress all these mismatches and abominations of it.

Back in 1959 in my poem "Shabi-Hijran" that I devoted to Fizuli I wrote:

*No worries when wealth is gone,
Wealth returns all the time.
It is scary but, when they come,
For a nation's soul and heart,
Rip off its tongue with their knives,
Kill millions with one gun!*

Of course, the Soviet empire didn't deprive us of our material riches only, but also of our moral heritage, it took our language, our spirit and our history from us.

All along my life as a poet, I have predicted that the day will come when the Soviet empire is disintegrated, I have tried to address the troubles that it brought upon us in my numerous poems such as *Gulustan*, *Roads and Sons*, *Crying and Joyful*, *Controversies*, *Marziya*, etc.

The events of the last five years have given us a strong faith and confidence that we shall eventually be delivered from the leashes of the empire. It would be unfair not to mention the

role of the Azerbaijani Popular Front in this regard. At the time when the A.P.F. while in opposition was literally engaged in a fistfight with the ruling Communists, I had hoped that all of the issues would settle immediately following the forthcoming disintegration of the Soviet Union. I thought that the nation would eventually break free. But unfortunately, my hopes didn't come true.

As the powers have shifted, we have faced a completely different sort of problem. I have done all that I could in order to help the Popular Front come to power, both with my pen, as a writer and with my activities, as a citizen. Now that I observe whatever is done by the ruling party and by those who are in the opposition to it, I can't help regretting the situation that we all have found ourselves in.

Being perfectly honest, I didn't expect us to fall in a situation like this.

The only thing that is beyond any shade of doubt now is that we have gained the independence that we all were longing for. Going through the battles, we are building a republic, a statehood that would gain respect of the rest of the world. Now we all have to protect our independence as the most sacred achievement of ours, we must help our newly established state in its first independent steps, each of us must do whatever is within his/her limits. It has been almost two hundred years that we have been taught how to live and told what is good and bad for us; our destiny was decided for us by somebody else, and intellectuals such as Akhund zadeh, Mirza Jalil, Mahammad Hadi who couldn't bear the realities of the situation were hoping for a better day. Thank God, there are more than one hundred states that have recognized our independence to this day, our country is represented in the United Nations and now we have our own say among the league of nations. If all that is indeed a reality, what else might we possibly want? We all know that these days were not given us as a birthday present. We have achieved all that at the price of

our lives. Why would we think that this price that we had to pay for whatever we have now was too cheap?

As a citizen who is preoccupied with the fate of our nation and with its future, I consider it a duty as a citizen to speak up and share my thoughts.

Nowadays, parties and newspapers, the ruling party and the opposition exchange fire and blame each other. Those who have stepped down from power, the rulers of our Communist past, seem to enjoy the situation, asking us with a share of sarcasm, "Here it is, the power that you all wanted so much. What do you now fight each other for?"

The most terrible thing in all that is that those who observe our situation from the Kremlin, yesterday's hangmen, are on alert, waiting patiently for a chance [to interfere.] Armenian nationalists who have sworn to turn Baku into Beirut and Azerbaijan into Lebanon seem to enjoy seeing us fight each other, they also are waiting to use their chance.

I am asking now, are those who are engaged in the internal fights, arguments and disputes aware of the possible consequences, do they know where this situation might eventually lead us? If they do know, why do they knowingly assist our enemies, making their goals easier to achieve?

Let's think of the obstacles that the Popular Front had to overcome, difficult paths and distances they had to go and attacks they had to survive.

Having analyzed all of that, it's easy to understand why the Front was eventually divided into smaller groups and factions. It is understood and goes without saying that there is and should be a diversity of opinions, along with healthy competition. The only thing I can't comprehend is why this competition had to transform into intolerance and enmity.

The opposition is a sort of a mirror for the ruling party. One shouldn't be scared [of whatever image he sees in that mirror.] But as we all see, whatever the ruling party says and does, the opposition doesn't seem to be willing to accept, and vice

versa. I beg both parties to cease this standoff, especially given the current realities of the war we are involved in. I totally agree with the thought of S. Rustamkhanli that as long as we are involved in a [full scale] war, we have to stop any political activity and close down the political parties. It is not the right time for political arguments and standoffs. We all must sing from the same sheet now.

We aren't ready and mature enough for political fights. We aren't aware of the conditions in which the political parties could and should compete given the current circumstances of war. When the problem of Cyprus came up, didn't all political parties in Turkey unite and thus, resolve this problem instantaneously? Why can't we derive a lesson from that event? This is a world where we all should learn from others' experiences.

What makes my heart ache is that those who literally growl at each other used to be brothers in arms just yesterday, they fought together for the beliefs they shared, they have gone through the same pain and troubles together, shoulder to shoulder. Those people were gambling with their lives for their nation and motherland. Whatever happened to them now that they have come to power, what are the circumstances that made them grave enemies? What difference and diversity of opinions are they talking about now, when the fate of the nation, its whole future, to be decided in the war for our territorial integrity in Karabakh?

The fact that these people were united by the same goal and idea just yesterday, but now that they have come to power, they are fighting each other for the positions in the government, makes the whole nation disappointed and makes our strength fail us. It is unfair at least to the spirit of our soldiers who have sacrificed their lives for the very same idea.

I have recently read the article in *The Nation's Paper* wrote by Garay Fazli titled "Our dream Karabakh." He passionately advocates the idea that all the parties, [national and

political] movements and theories must serve the sole purpose to achieve our goal in the battlefield, in Karabakh.

We read the very same words in all the newspapers that fight each other and in all the manifests of the political parties that compete with each other. But what can we do; this all remains on paper, just a slogan. We read and see such terrible things in newspapers and TV that it all makes our blood freeze in our veins. What do they mean, giving up the territory for the sake of becoming a ruling party? I can't believe all that. How could these people who were ready to sacrifice their own lives just yesterday for the sake of their own nation sell the territory to the Armenians now, just for the sake of getting a position in the government? I think that's the most shameless thing and I have never heard of something more terrible and shocking. But as it became known from the interview with Iskander Hamidov [former Interior Minister in the Popular Front government, currently imprisoned for allegations that he himself was involved in selling the territory to the enemy] there are numerous people who sold the government's secrets to the enemy.

I have been to several provinces recently where I have witnessed strange things. Former brothers in arms who used to fight shoulder to shoulder just yesterday now turn against each other when it comes to the sharing of positions in local administrations. Whatever happened to the idea and beliefs that united them in the battle just yesterday? There is a logical inference that could be made, whatever used to unite them wasn't an idea, belief or something of that sort. They were united by whatever the prize they might claim for themselves having come to power. If we all have such ulterior motives, then poor us!

Confucius used to say, that if the people trusted their rulers then they would have been able to overcome any obstacles and problems.

If those who are ruling us today are involved in fistfights

with each other and the whole nation witnesses this disgrace, how can the nation that gives moral and material sacrifices day by day bear with the problems? I can't understand what right these individuals have to shatter the hopes of their own people? Why don't they let the nation be consumed with its everyday problems, why do they make the nation face even more problems, now coming from their own government? I wish to complete my thought with this poem:

*It appears that there are
Far too many of those
Who want to reach their paws
To this soil,
Who set their greedy eyes
On this land and its oil.*

*While there are many many more
Enemies than friends of ours
We have no right for enmity
Between ourselves
Among loves.*

A RESPONSE TO THE ASPERSION

"Let's talk openly" (book) 1988

I was shocked an article by S. Romanyuk, special correspondent of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper, published in the paper's January 16, 1988 edition. The article was titled "When There Are No Reasons." The article argued with A. Tokombayev and criticized his point of view about the necessity of the people of Kirghizistan to learn both Kirghiz and Russian, it also addressed the speech Chingiz Aytmatov [Kirghiz writer and poet] made at a scientific conference there. Both Tokombayev and Aytmatov advocated the necessity of opening kindergartens and elementary schools where kids would learn their native Kirghiz language.

Romanyuk wrote: "Aytmatov declared from the tribune of the conference that the process [of mandatory teaching to the non-Kirghiz population of the republic the Kirghiz language] is absolutely irrelevant and asks rhetorically yet passionately: 'If the Kirghiz themselves don't speak their native language, then with whom would Russians communicate in that language assuming they have finally learnt it?' Don't these words show that the nation is limited and arrogant?"

I wonder why it seems to Romanyuk that these words show that the nation is limited and arrogant. Isn't it an essential right of a nation to wish to see the kindergartens and schools in their native language opened? Isn't it natural to love the native language, to care for its future and for its development? Romanyuk was the one who wrote earlier on November 29, 1987 that there is only one school in the Kirghiz language in all of Frunze, the capital of Kirghizistan.

I wonder, why this tragic fact doesn't worry the distinguished journalist? If something like that would have taken place in a foreign country, we would be hollering about it in the media.

The opinion of the journalist that "the Kirghiz, including C. Aytmatov don't want to see their kids educated in their native language, therefore, there's no need in opening more schools in Kirghiz language" is quite shocking. If he is an objective journalist, why doesn't he seem to want to know the facts that led to this dramatic situation, why doesn't he do the necessary research?

If it were not for very serious intervening circumstances, no nation in the world, including Kirghizistan, would ever let go of their native language. And one shouldn't forget that we are not talking about a language of some culturally underdeveloped tribe, we are talking about the Kirghiz, the nation that has its own outstanding achievements in various spheres of culture, arts, cinema, literature, etc. We are talking about the nation that has given the world one of its ancient literary masterpieces, the "Manas" ballad. What does he mean the nation doesn't want to educate its children in their mother language? How can you expect a nation to deny its own native tongue? Thus we come to the most terrible aspect of the problem. Why this journalist who has undertaken a mission of defending "truth" and "justice" isn't worried? Maybe looking deeper into the issue doesn't serve his purposes?

In all the republics of the USSR, excluding the Baltic states, Armenia and Georgia, all the official paperwork was done in Russian. Russian was the sole language in which all the conferences were held be they about politics, science or literature. And it was quite logical that the parents who observed the situation wanted their kids educated in Russian, as this language prevailed and became the only official language in all these republics. That is the main reason why schools in the native language were neglected and literally abandoned.

How can one believe in the objectivity of journalists such as Romanyuk, or the paper that published his biased material, if it is so offensive towards Chingiz Aytmatov, a person that has seen the situation as it was and tried to reveal the real reasons that stood behind such a dramatic situation with the native language in his republic?

As the spirit of internationalism dictates, the respect of the nations to each other must be mutual. Addressing the importance of this postulate, Y. Kudryavtsev, famous expert in law, wrote: "Can we consider it fair when a representative of an equal nation (let's assume a Russian national) who lives in another republic, and quite often holds very important positions with the government there, doesn't find time to learn even the most basic phrases in the language of the nation he lives within?"

Okay, lets leave this aside, but what about those who don't speak their native language?

Unfortunately, many of the intellectuals and those who rule Azerbaijan also don't speak their native language. Recently, I have visited with O. Zeynalov, the head of the Baku City Municipal Administration. That person couldn't say even a couple of words in our native language. As a matter of fact, the status of Azerbaijani is set out in the Constitution of the republic, which declares it the official language of the state. He doesn't speak his native language, okay, that's his problem. But in the circumstances when this very same native language is the official language in the republic, isn't he required to know it now that he has become a high ranking official?

The most intriguing thing is that the people like him, whom I call "national nihilists" aren't troubled by the situation, furthermore, they are proud of the fact that they don't speak their native language, they consider it some kind of an advantage for themselves. Look how lowly our native language is regarded now that it is considered advantageous not to speak it!

S. Romanyuk in his article, discusses the results of the

experiment carried out in Frunze Pedagogical Institute. Among 246 students who wrote an essay in Russian, 138 flunked the exam. We must admit with sorrow that this fact has nothing to do with the alleged negligence of the students towards their skills in Russian, but it indicates the problems we have in the sphere of education all across the Soviet Union. Because, I am quite sure, if the same experiment were conducted among the students of the Russian speaking departments and schools the results wouldn't vary much. Furthermore, I am confident that if the same experiment were to reveal the skills of the same students in the Kirghiz language, the results would have been much more worrisome.

The correspondent that is greatly irritated by the fact that 4 per cent of the Kirghiz students don't have satisfactory skills in Russian doesn't seem to care about how many percent of the Kirghiz students didn't have the same satisfactory skills in their native language. I would believe in the objectivity of this journalist only if he had been irritated by the huge percentage of students who hadn't spoken their native language.

Doubtlessly, it is important to speak Russian, and to speak it well. But the argument of the correspondent that Russian is the nationwide and universal language for the whole Soviet Union comes as a huge surprise. We would like to know from which official document did this idea come from. There is no article that would include such a statement in the Soviet Constitution. Why? Let's refer to Lenin:

"In the labor democracy absolutely no preference shall be given to a particular nationality or language."

Article 36 of the Soviet Constitution adopted on October 7, 1977 reads: "Soviet citizens that represent various races and nations are equal in their rights. They have a right to use their own native language and languages of other Soviet nations."

It is quite surprising that Romanyuk comes up with such destabilizing statements about the "nationwide" and "universal" status of Russian. These emotions are quite similar to

those chauvinistic sentiments and views existing in the Russian Empire prior to the Socialist Revolution. It is important to emphasize the fact that there is a chauvinistic movement emerging in Russia lately, namely, "Pamyat" [Memory] and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* is among the media that constantly criticizes it.

Romanyuk constantly addresses the postulates of internationalism and argues that the word "internationalism" means unity of nations. But advocating the popularization and prioritizing of one certain language, he thus breaks the fundamentals of internationalism. He quotes A. Tokombayev stressing that "lately there are facts and occurrences of emerging nationalistic exclusivity observed [in Kirghizistan.]

That is ridiculous. Isn't it an essential right of the nation to demand opening schools where their native language would be taught? If a nation is deprived of the right to be educated in its native language, what kind of nation is it then? How did such nation benefit from the October Revolution? Aytmatov in his speech demanded only these essential rights of his people be fulfilled. Is it an act of national chauvinism to demand schools and kindergartens where the kids would be able to learn their native language?

It is at least an act of political blindness and ignorance to accuse the writer who wrote most of his novels in Russian, who devoted his all life to propagandizing of the ideas of internationalism in sowing the seeds of nationalism and chauvinism. I wonder if the Kirghizistan correspondent of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* who lived in the republic extensively speaks the Kirghiz language himself. I am sure he doesn't speak one-tenth as good as Aytmatov speaks Russian, the correspondent's native language. And now who should accuse who of being a narrow minded nationalist?

I wish to repeat myself, the words about the Kirghiz not knowing their language that the correspondent quoted Aytmatov saying are completely true.

If Aytmatov, a person who dared to tell the truth at times when it next to impossible to do, in the stagnation period of the Soviet Union when lies were the standard fare, why would he lie to us now, in circumstances when democracy and the freedom of speech finally found its way to our everyday lives?

"How can one 'cancel' a language? A language isn't an Aeroflot flight that can be canceled or destroyed. A language exists despite the will of those who make decisions. Romanyuk neglects a very obvious fact, if there are no Kirghiz-speaking kindergartens and schools, eventually students, intellectuals and scientists who use this language will disappear as well. Thus far, the language of "Manas" somehow survived. Will it survive any further if there are no changes in the already dramatic situation? A nation whose intellectuals don't speak its native language is sentenced to disappear. That goes without saying.

But the attacks on Aytmatov undertaken by Tokombaev are nothing but the personal animosity that exists between the two. I have my own reasonable doubts about Tokombayev's patriotic feelings once he opposes the essential rights of his own nation just for the sake of the personal animosity with the writer that advocates these rights. It is impossible to believe that a person who turns against his own people and its language might somehow respect those of another nation. We have gone through terrible periods of our history when people were labeled as nationalists and chauvinists just for the sake of the interpersonal enmity. This accusation won't stick to Aytmatov and if people like Tokombayev and Romanyuk come up with those false accusations, they must be very well aware that these accusations might eventually hit them like a boomerang. The contemporary society doesn't need national nihilists, nor does it need nationalists.

DIGNITY

"Let's talk openly" (book) 1988

Dignity is a universal value, it is a quality of humanity. The one who loses his/her dignity also loses all of his/her human value and all his attributes as a human. That is why it is essential that each person cherishes his own dignity and doesn't lose it. As Chekhov wrote in letter to his brother, one can comprehend the absence of dignity only having comprehended the perfection of nature.

Even if the greatest sons of our nation live in poverty, they have always kept their dignity and didn't let it bow to khans or shahs.

Not to bow to the holders of the highest positions, to preserve our dignity—that was the testament of our ancestors. In these cases, preserving the dignity of those who are under their command is one of the most important duties of those who hold high positions. The one who demonstrates his power, his higher position [in the society] in order to humiliate the other is unknowingly, losing his own dignity. That's because by doing so, he shows that he is not fit for the high position he is holding.

Lives of those who trade their personal dignity, which is a measure of the moral richness of a person, for cars, furniture, or other material goods is a swampy path through flattery. Those who step through the mud of such a swamp no longer have morals or personal dignity. According to some rule, they wag their tails in front of those who hold higher positions, and demand worshipping and same wagging of tails from those who stand on a lower step of the social ladder.

These are the truths. But actually no one would want to see his/her dignity humiliated. Sometimes a human is forced to face the humiliation by those shameless individuals who are in power. When dignity is violated, humiliated and lost, there is no room for humanity.

There is a saying: "By pushing and chasing the brave one, they made a coward out of him."

These days by attacking the dignity and personality of some of our dignified and honorable citizens, some powerful persons make them lose all respect.

In provinces, the "chief" is considered to be "impeccable", "sinless" and "faultless", beyond criticism. The chiefs use the situation for their own personal benefit and they reinforce the existing attitudes towards them. Thus, there grows a division between those who, having lost their dignity and pride, report to and bow to the "chief" and those who prefer to stick to their dignity and personal beliefs and try to argue with him. It is natural, that the first category continues to get along by bowing constantly. The latter face problems, difficulties and their lives become miserable. Sooner or later though, justice finds its way.

It often occurs that the fate of the whole collective [of workers] is decided by one individual who has lost his dignity completely. Such a person, using the situation for his own benefit, doesn't bother to think about the future of those who depend on him as well as the future of his nation, the society he is a part of.

Didn't the People's Agricultural Institute named after D. Bunyadzadeh fall victim to a group of such shameless people who cared about nothing but their own personal benefit? Wasn't a huge Higher Education Institution closed down just because of a group of people who have lost their dignity and shame completely and turned it into an instrument of personal enrichment? Why? Why weren't there any honorable individuals among those who worked there and who would prevent the closing down of the whole Institute?

Of course, along with the shameless people there were also pure and dignified persons, conscious scientists among the staff of the Institute. But it seems that the shameless and unconscious ones have overwhelmingly outnumbered them. And that is a tragedy!

Last year, the Supreme Court was reviewing the case of a group of people who stole a large amount of the government's money in one of the provinces.

In order to conceal their criminal activities, these criminals have registered the money as fake salaries and bonuses for farmers. And those farmers were called to testify during the trials, although they never knew about the salaries they were supposed to receive, or who had never signed the necessary documents about the receipt of this money. These people would refuse attending the trials, let alone offering their testimonies during them. They would say "Why should I turn to the militia or the court, what would people think?" That was a means of protest of these "ordinary" people against the deeds of their regional bosses. Most importantly, it was an attempt to preserve their own dignity. That was the way an ordinary farmer who gained his share of food by hard labor would try to preserve his own dignity. And those shameless people who once were entrusted with a high position in the provincial government were seated around the defense table in the court, having lost their pride and dignity completely.

Long after these events took place in that particular province, there were no workers who would volunteer to be the chief of the [working] brigade [in the collective farm.] Because the former brigade chiefs have found themselves in the criminal web of the former province chiefs and faced several degrees of punishment. And there was nobody who would guarantee them that nothing of that kind would repeat in the future.

One of the provinces stricken by the very same disease of "fake figures" [when the output data was knowingly faked

towards the increase] is the Barda region. It has happened a few years ago. I was supposed to make a speech at the session of the Supreme Soviet (Parliament). I have just returned from Barda where I had seen an Orphan House, and even its yard was transferred to some sort of cotton field. There is no doubt that depriving the children of a place to play while chasing the fulfillment of the [cotton production] plan, the consciousness of the provincial chiefs who gave these orders did not suffer much as they did not worry about the children.

While speaking at the Parliament session, I addressed this issue. I was having dinner in the Parliament building cafeteria during the brief recess. That is when the provincial leader who was responsible for the situation approached me and said: "Please get back to your poetry, leave it on us to decide where to seed cotton, what's your problem?"

"Leave it on us." This was the biggest tragedy of the times we now refer to as "The Stagnation Era." That means, the higher levels would know what to do, and the lower level, the ordinary people, didn't have any right to interfere the decisions.

You see, the person I was talking about lost his dignity to a degree when he sacrificed the comfort of the children to his own personal benefit and gain. Instead of being ashamed of his deeds, he would oppose me in the argument. In response to my criticism he suggested that I minded my own poetry business. He could never get it, what actually was the business of a poet. On the other hand, he would never comprehend the simple fact that I was not just a poet for the purposes of that particular session, I made a speech there being a member of the Parliament, being an ambassador of the People who have voted for me. But unfortunately, he also has been a member of Parliament, and could also speak on behalf of the People.

The very same person was accused of falsifying the output figures a few years later. He also became a victim of his shamelessness and loss of dignity. Wasn't it too late?

I would like to acknowledge that I am for the changes in our election system, and for the implementation of the free democratic principles in that process. I liked the experience of "multiple-choice" elections, let the people decide whom to vote for.

But we are dealing with very strange policy now: if one is appointed to a certain position, he automatically becomes a member of the Parliament. What does that mean? Is it the position that one holds that makes him a member of Parliament? Sometimes an unworthy person finds their way to the highest positions, and it is a tragedy when such person gets the right to speak on behalf of the People.

Let us think about it. Let us reassess our losses in these given circumstances of the freedom of speech and democratization process. Let us correct our mistakes. Otherwise, we shall never be able to restore our dignity and humanity.

I have read about a terrible event in one of the Central papers. A 13 year-old boy named Sasha while waiting in line at a store is told that his mother's condition has worsened and he has to rush himself to the hospital. The kid becomes completely disoriented by the news, paying for the groceries he forgets to pay for the sour cream he has bought. The salesman stops him, calls the militia, and they take the kid to the militia station. They keep him there for hours, file a report. While the kid swears that he has simply forgotten to pay the price of the sour cream just because he was stunned by the news about his mother's worsened health condition, they don't believe him, and they make him write an explanatory document.

After all these formalities he finally goes to the hospital to see his mother. He does not mention the events with the militia. He returns home and starts doing his Mathematics homework for the next day at school. After solving some equations, he hangs himself in the apartment. This is how a child who is unable to solve the problems of real life finds his way out-in death.

Look at the degree of consciousness of the kid, he completes his homework. He pays his moral debts before his suicide. Can a conscious child like this be ever involved in a theft?

Are the sales people at the store so wise that they have labeled him a thief for a minor mistake in 25 Kopeks?

The investigation has proven that this store was shy of some 1,000 Rubles that were supposed to be in Cashier's desk just a few days before that incident occurred. Maybe these people wanted to cover this vanished sum of 1,000 Rubles with some 25 Kopecks that the kid failed to pay? While yelling at the 13 years-old kid for some 25 Kopecks why were these big time thieves not ashamed of themselves? During the investigation the militia chief of the village where this event occurred was asking sheepishly: "What rule did we break that you are holding us responsible for all this?"

No, chief, you did not break any rule, but what about the life of an innocent child? Being a slave of the militia protocol, you and your likes have no idea about the fact that human dignity and pride should remain untouchable. In order to be able to respect another human you must be a human yourself in the first place.

I bought an airplane ticket to Moscow. I had to return the ticket because I got sick all of a sudden. They tell my son at the airline booth that he had to bring the passport of the owner of the ticket. I sent the passport with him. This time they told him that either I had to show up personally or send a verification document. Is it just another fact of causing somebody problems knowingly? And if it is just a matter of lack of trust to other people, where does it come from?

In this regard I would like to touch upon another issue. In order to fly to another city one has to make the arrangements at least 10 to 15 days in advance. Why is that? Why there are problems with the air transportation, is it adjusted to the volume of the prospective travelers? I wonder, in a huge country

like ours, if there is a lack of planes or fuel? There is no lack whatsoever. These issues are made more complicated on purpose. We all have seen the travelers who would buy a ticket on the date of the scheduled travel at any cost.

The circumstances force us to beg for ordinary things, and thus, begging for something we are entitled to in the first place, we inadvertently lose our dignity.

It is a tradition that when there is a water pipeline or a bridge or a house for a poor family built in the village, in extreme situations like these the people of the village get together and offer their help. Currently, people of all professions in the provinces are forced to help the farmers with their harvest. Why is that? There are some instances when there are plans imposed on the volumes of sales. The people are being forced to buy the goods that aren't sold by a certain date. For instance, according to the order, an organization has to make its staff buy a certain number of carpets regardless of the need. The heads of the organization "sell" one or two carpets to each staff member, and withhold the price of them from their salaries. What kind of a practice is that? How can you force someone to buy something? Maybe those who give these orders know my needs better than I do?

Is the dignity of a person being violated in a situation like this? What morality can we talk about when a person is told what is good and what is bad for him? Do we actually comprehend what we gain and what we lose with those practices? Do we win or lose in the long run? Let us calculate all that. Let us think about our children now.

There is a tower at the Seaside Boulevard in Baku with a huge thermometer on top of it. I was walking with my grandson on the Boulevard and explained to him that this device shows the temperature. This summer he asked me once why the device was turned off, why wasn't it showing the temperature. Of course, I knew the reason why they turn off the device. They do it all the time when the temperature in the city

exceeds 40 degrees Celsius. Everybody knows it, when the temperature exceeds 40 degrees the work at the organizations must be stopped immediately because the work done in such heat cannot be fruitful whatsoever. That is why the device is turned off, to conceal the real temperature in town. How can I, being a writer who propagandizes the truth, a citizen, and a grandfather, truthfully explain the reasons why the device is turned off to my grandson. If I tell him the truth, will he grow up becoming a dishonest person? Do we teach these kids lessons of lies, theft and dishonesty from the very beginning?

Let us think about the future generations at least. Let us preserve our human dignity in the name of our children.

The truth cannot be broken. The whole philosophy of life tells us so. I have met many artists, scientists, intellectuals all along my lifetime. I have had sincere conversations with them. It is great that most of the people do realize the value of such meanings as pride and dignity and keep them in the highest regard. If it were not so, the very meaning of life would vanish.

TIME and MAN

A timeless observation!

The biggest achievement of man in the twentieth century has been speed. This has been realized for a wish. Wishing to get more done in a short period of time. It has been due to this wish that man has moved from horse to car, car to plane, letter to phone, raiser to electric shaver, wood burning stove to microwave, and feather pen to word processor. These are all tools to help gain time and achieve more.

Thanks to our new speeds we can do in an hour what our ancestors did in a day. But we are still running out of time. We all complain about this. We all have no time for socializing, no time to visit our family members and no time to go to the cemetery to remember our dead. We don't even find time to finish our daily duties properly. And the most important of all, we have little time to sit and sort out our concerns, process our thoughts and attend to our inner world. Why is this? What has happened to the extra time gained by the speed of new inventions? What happened to the extra 23-hours that we recovered by being able to do a 24-hour task of our ancestors in one hour? If anybody could give me the right answer to this question, I would grab that individual's robe and follow that person to achieve so much more.

While my grandfather spent an hour to travel five kilometers between Sheki and Kish (two neighboring towns in the northern part of Azerbaijan) I can fly from one continent to another within that period of time. Therefore, how could one hour mean the same for both of us? I should have been able

to create a new time scale. I could deduct the extra 59 minutes of an hour and make an hour equal a minute.

The man who is now able to achieve in one minute what would have taken an hour for his ancestors, is now living one hour in a minute and one month in a day. As a result the tension of this speed has changed the man's personality and existence. In turn, personality and taste gap between the generations has widened extensively. This gap represents the events, inventions, evolutions and revolutions of a century. Therefore, one can say that we owe our differentiating thoughts, tastes, and views among the generations to time saving inventions.

Has the gap between two centuries always been this wide? Was the difference in view, thought and taste between my grandfather and his grandfather the same as those between me and my grandfather? Society always changes. Surely these differences existed between my grandfather and his grandfather. Nevertheless, the most recent gap has been the greatest. This is not only evident in the social developments but also in the moral values. The saturation of our century with huge social events, revolutions, discoveries, inventions and miracles, has deeply widened the generation gap. An obvious example: while seven consecutive generations before my father used horse and carriage as the only means of transportation, my father suddenly started using a car and I got on a plane! Now we are so scared of this SPEED that we almost want to say "STOP." We are begging to be slowed down. This jump in the twentieth century has caused its people to have impulsive personalities.

American Indians used to say: "tomorrow is another name for today." This is to say that tomorrow is going to be no different than today. After all, in those days, time used to pass slowly. Everyday felt the same. In those days there could not have been a great difference between the world views of a son and a father or a daughter and a mother.

Even up to this day, among many tongues of India, includ-

ing the Hindu, people use the same word for yesterday as tomorrow. But now, as we are always rushing, we are also constantly thinking about the negative side effects of being in a hurry. This dilemma creates great amounts of tension and frustration in our lives. No matter how much we rush, nature won't change. And maybe nature even laughs quietly at us, jumping up and down. While we keep hurrying our daily lives, nothing is speeding in nature's steady pace of events. Wouldn't our odd enthusiasm look funny to an outsider who has not parted with nature? At the same time it remains a fact that if we don't use the time available for us, it will fade away. The value of time is directly related to our demands and expectations. Everything is relative in the universe. The value of time is also measured by the amount of work achievable within it. In fact, little and much do not exist, they are simply born out of expectations. The same length of time may seem to be shorter or longer, depending on the amount of work done in that period of time. As it is said in a famous Azeri folk lyric (Bayati): "one year worth less than a day and a day may be worth a thousand months."

It is not possible to grab and hide time, to save it for the future and to use it when you really need it. We must use it and spend whether we need it or not. Business people divide their time among various tasks. Work can be defined as a tool of materializing a wish or will. The time may be divided into days, months, or years, but not into wills or wishes:

*Our lives are measured by months and years,
I wish it could be measured by its true nature;
Thousands of wishes.*

Contrasts and opposing forces which constantly change and become more complicated are forming our personalities and perceptions.

The struggling hands of watches we wear run us from here to there in order to reach the new speeds we have invented, can never catch up with it. However, we forget that as we run after time we run away from ourselves, isolating ourselves from our own nature, distancing further from our reality.

*Once I used to look like myself
With my own springs and autumns
Then I was unique as a person.
What happened that I denied myself?
My word was one, I was truth,
I became doubtful, with many words.
Now I am not me, I am this and that person
I am the burglar of my own life.*

*For meeting myself,
For sharing inner pains with my heart and soul,
I find no time.
My time is passed here and there.
I have been melted in the heat of concerns.
In this field of similarities,
In this market of competitive products,
I have lost myself, I am puzzled.
I am now missing myself.*

Here merges a new question in this collision of contrasts; can the time gained by the invention of speed make man happier? At this point what we have gained is faced by what we have lost.

*We head toward water sometimes,
Sometimes we seek power in the fire,
We have lost as much as we have gained
In this world.
Even milk has to be shaken from within
To turn into butter.
Nothing is gained
Without losing something else.*

We have no control over the extra time that we have gained from our speeds. In contrary we have turned into slaves of the time.

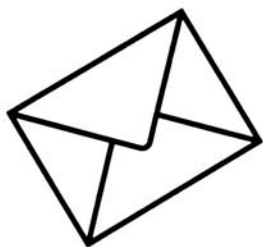
*This gain has two sides:
The benefit and the calamity.
The accidents on the roads
Are the expenses we pay for the new speeds.*

This is nothing yet. When one thinks of the speeds of tomorrow's robots its possible reality is scary. The global literature has already drawn many scary images about it. In many science fictions we read about the man made robots destroying thousand year old civilizations.

In the ancient literature the flying carpet, perhaps representing the modern planes, were symbols of happiness. In those days our fathers could only associate speed with achievements.

The man of our century, however, is suddenly becoming scared of the speed.

*Fantasies became reality
But this moment of time
We can only thank the one
Who invents relaxation
And not the speeding tools.*



MEETINGS, LETTERS, INTERVIEWS

AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT HEYDAR ALIYEV VISITS THE POET IN HOSPITAL

HEYDAR ALIYEV: We sent you to Turkey to undergo the necessary treatment and come back a healthy man. On your return You said everything was okay with you. What happened to you that you are ill again?

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh: You sent me to Turkey. They welcomed me at the Ankara Experimental Hospital. I was being treated there under the supervision of President Demirel and here under your supervision. I cannot understand it myself, how I could become sick again, while being surrounded by the attention of the Presidents of the two nations.

The doctor in Turkey removed the prostate swelling but a part of it was not removed, and that's what caused problems. I called you after coming back from Turkey. I have also spoken on the phone with the doctor in Turkey. He told me that everything was going to be OK eventually.

Then I realized that it wasn't in fact going to be OK. I have turned to the member of the Azerbaijani Parliament Prof. Sudeif Imamverdiyev. As soon as he examined me he told me that I had to undergo another surgery immediately. He conducted the surgery, and the rest of the prostate swelling was removed. It's been a couple of days that I feel better.

H. A. Okay, let's hear it from the doctor, I want to hear a report on your current condition.

Sudeif Imamverdiyev. - Mr. President, on Tuesday we conducted the surgery. It has been quite successful from all points of view. It's been quite complicated to remove this swelling in Turkey, as they did it with a special device. The remainder of

the swelling was causing problems, that is why the condition of Mr. Bakhtiyar was worsening day by day.

Prior to conducting the surgery we carried out a thorough examination. As a result of it we made a decision to conduct the surgery and to remove the rest of the swelling.

Now Mr. Bakhtiyar's condition is going to improve. We think that it's going to improve with a passage of time, and stabilize eventually. The treatment is planned thoroughly, and Mr. Bakhtiyar is quite happy that he is doing better with each passing day.

B. V. Mr. President, how did your visit to France pass?

H. A. - My visit to France was very successful. We had very fruitful negotiations in order to promote the French-Azerbaijani relations on a higher level. We had very interesting discussions with President Jacques Chirac of France. We also met with the Foreign Minister, some other Government Ministers, members of Senate, high ranking officials. We signed the fifth Oil Contract there, at the Elisees Palace.

B. V. - Have you also discussed the issue of France becoming the co-chair of the Minsk Group?

H. A. - We have had extensive talks on that issue. But these talks are to be continued. We shall see what happens.

B. V. - I pray to the God that everything is good eventually.

H. A. - You know, the healthcare and doctors in Azerbaijan are great. Sometimes we just underestimate what we have. While being the leader of Azerbaijan back in '70's I noticed that people would complain about that syndrome. I helped when I could, our surgeons conducted very complicated surgeries, and the results were quite successful. For the sake of the objectivity we must admit that there were very bright specialists in that sphere in Moscow as well.

B. V. - All of the specialists were being educated there.

H. A. - Yes, all of the specialists were being educated there. Just like Sudeif Imamverdiyev. The best urologist of Azerbaijan, Javadzadeh, Imamverdiyev, and others have developed

their skills there. Back then the highest level of acknowledgment for the specialist in our republic was practice in Moscow. We must admit that the healthcare system that existed in the Soviet Union was a great one, and I am sorry to see it disintegrated.

B. V. - The same can be said about the educational system. There is no other example of an educational system like ours anywhere in the world.

H. A. - There is nothing as good as Russian, Soviet educational system. There is no university as good as Moscow University anywhere in the world. My son Ilham graduated from the Moscow Institute of International Relations. This is one of the most famous universities in the world. Many of the most famous diplomats graduated from that institution. There is no second university like this anywhere in the world. But we didn't evaluate it all properly in the past. We kept thinking that there was something better than that.

It is good that the world has changed from a certain perspective, the things have become more open, we know good from bad. I have a great respect to Turkey, France, the United Kingdom, the United States-all of these countries. Every country has a very high-profile specialists in various spheres. But we mustn't forget that Azerbaijan itself has also managed to bring up fine specialists of its own. We must not underestimate our own specialists that we have in science, healthcare, medicine, education, etc. I have stressed it out numerous times that narrow-minded people tend to see it all from a negative perspective. It is not so bad. Try to think about it, where in the world could you find such artists and musicians as we have and had in Azerbaijan?

B. V. - Uzeyir Hajibeyli, Gara Garayev, Fikret Amirov.

H. A. - Where could one find personalities like these? Nowhere. Where could one find poets like those in Azerbaijan? And where are artists, composers, actors held in such a high regard as in Azerbaijan? In a foreign country an artist will paint a picture and put it in a sidewalk in order to

try to sell it. But here we put these pictures in galleries, we inspire them, we raise the level of the respect for them. In a foreign country a poet will write a poem, and it would be unclear if this poem would ever be published.

B. V. - The arts of Fikret Amirov, Gara Garayev are in two different incomparable dimensions. And each of them possesses their own greatness. Uzeyir stands on top of a completely different mountain of success. Regarding our painters. Sattar Bahlulzadeh has the universe of his own. Tahir Salahov, Togrul Narimanbeyov, Mikail Abdullayev, they all have the school and character of their own.

The very same can be said about our literature. Suleyman Rahimov, for instance. There is a small number of writers in the world with such breadth. One can compare him only to Alexey Tolstoy or Lev Tolstoy. We have been influenced by the literature of the world and Russia particularly. We must continue our tradition. If we can protect our independence I have a belief in the future of our nation.

H. A. - I don't know if there is a TV set in this room. The speech I made in France was broadcast yesterday and the day before yesterday on the National TV. There is an Institute of Foreign Relations in France. I made speeches there both in 1993 and during my last visit. All the leaders of foreign countries who come to France make speeches there. Clinton, Koehl, Mitterand-all of them do it.

There were many ambassadors of the foreign countries among the audience. The foyer was packed. I made a speech there. They asked questions. I stressed it out not only there, but wherever I spoke to the audience, that the independence of our republic is a historical achievement of ours, and it is irreversible, we shall never let it go easily. You can be sure of that. And it is a well-known fact everywhere around the world that Azerbaijan has not only gained its independence, but in fact it is conducting an independent foreign policy. I answered lots of questions there. It's not some sort of a secret, this all has been broadcast on TV.

For instance, I have been asked numerous times, why don't you join all the agreements in the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States, why do you constantly show discord with something? I answered that it is the measure of our independence. We have joined this organization, because we deemed it expedient. But we refuse to join the agreements that might limit the independence of our country in a slightest degree. And that is natural. Any other country can join these agreements, that is solely the issue of that particular country, and some country can deem it irrelevant for its own interests to do so. You see, they are quite aware of these problems in the West, that's why they ask me questions. It means that they are very well aware in the West of our attempts to strengthen our own independence, carry out independent internal and foreign policy. They used to ask me lots of questions regarding that matter in France.

You shouldn't worry about the future of our independence. Today is January, 19. Tomorrow is 20th of January. We have the 7 th anniversary of the tragic January, 1990 events coming. We sacrificed lives some 7 years ago. I spoke about this issue during my visit to France as well. I said that my visit to France coincided with the anniversary of the tragedy, with the intervention against the freedom and democracy in Azerbaijan.

Why did they undertake such an aggression against Azerbaijan? The only objective of theirs was to suppress the national liberation movement that emerged here. We sacrificed lives of our people, many were killed. No other republic faced such a dramatic turn of events as we did. All of our people can be sure now, we will never lose our independence. It's true, that's not an easy task to preserve it. But no matter how difficult it is, regardless of difficulties we might lose something, make some concessions, but we shall never make any concessions when it comes to the issue of our independence.

Mr. Bakhtiyar, taking the advantage of this moment I would like to tell you regarding the tragic events of January, 1990 that we have always acknowledged your input in these events.

You know that we made a decision in 1994 to give a political evaluation to these events. I remember, there was a session of the Parliament held the next day, on January, 21 and you were the chairman there. Get it, the leaders of the republic fled the country, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh was presiding over the session. If these people had been leading the country, they should have stayed with their people on a bad day, they should have sided with their own people. But these people chose to flee, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh came forward, put himself in the line of the fire. Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh made decisions, and they returned to Azerbaijan some 4 days later, when things seemed to have calmed down and played the judges, tried to conceal the real tragic events.

No matter how much they tried to hide the truth, the decision that you have made remains a rightfully made decision. On January, 22nd you voted for the resolution stating that if the Soviet troops were not withdrawn from Azerbaijan immediately, our republic would withdraw itself from the Soviet Union. But the troops were not withdrawn. The newly - appointed leaders, being appointed by Russia, also failed to fulfil the resolution, and the Soviet troops remained in Azerbaijan.

It wasn't only the matter of withdrawing the troops, but the people of Baku spent the entire 1990 in the curfew circumstances, under the guns pointed at the civilians constantly. The troops were finally withdrawn only at the end of 1991. It was done at the time when there was a revolt in Moscow, the USSR started to disintegrate. .

B. V. - Mr. President, back then they supported the revolt.

H. A. - Yes, they did, but it didn't work nevertheless.

B. V. - Mr. President, the only government leader present at the session was Hasan Hasanov.

H. A. - They neither participated in the session, nor attended the mourning ceremonies for the martyrs who died during the aggression.

B. V. - They limited themselves to publishing an announce-

ment in the papers some 5 or 6 days later, that the session was not constitutional, therefore, all the resolutions and decisions made during its proceedings didn't have a legal power.

H. A. - Yes, that's the very nature of the treachery, betrayal of your own people. Doubtless, these people were neither able to care about their own nation, nor to preserve the sovereignty of the republic.

No matter how tragic the events of the January, 1990 were, they clearly demonstrated the will of our people to gain independence and break free. There was a bloodshed, a tragedy, people fell victims, but we proved to the entire world how much we wanted to be free. And that was very important. And that is why every single time when I speak about these events I stress out that indeed we faced the death of the innocent civilians, but on the other hand, we have exposed the real face of the Soviet leadership, we have demonstrated to the whole world that Soviet leaders were aggressors, and thus we were able to raise the struggle of our nation for the freedom to the highest level.

B. V. - Mr. President, being in Moscow then you protested against the massacre.

H. A. - That's right, I made a speech in Moscow on January, 21. I don't want to talk about it now, I used to be no one but an unjustly accused person, I was ousted and alienated from the world of politics, I lived under the constant pressure. They always kept me under the pressure and were getting ready to arrest me.

I have told you already that I wasn't in Moscow back then. I was ill, and was resting in a sanatorium in a suburb of Moscow. But as soon as I heard about these events I rushed to Moscow at night. My children-son Ilham, daughter Sevil, her husband Mahmud were at home. I told them I was going there. They knew it was quite dangerous. They knew about the atmosphere of hysteria and danger that surrounded me. All three of them insisted that they were coming with me. I told them they couldn't come with me. Maybe, only

Mahmud should come with me. Because anything could happen there. I wanted it happen to me only, not to them. My son and daughter insisted that they were coming with me. Somebody taped it actually, we all arrived in Moscow. I said whatever was in my mind, I showed my attitude towards the situation. Me, being an ousted person; raised my voice and showed my attitude, but those in power were silent. They didn't show up.

It doesn't matter, it's been 7 years already. Of course, the souls of martyrs are alive in our hearts, and they always will be. We shall never forget that day. That is why I issued a decree about the 7th anniversary of these tragic events, so that our nation would commemorate those days again. Coming here, I have seen people gathering at the Alley of Martyrs. There is a big ceremony scheduled for tomorrow at the Palace of Republic, and I am planning to be there.

You have raised this topic, and I am repeating that we acknowledge Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's merits in the struggle for the independence of Azerbaijan. You demonstrated the bravery of a citizen and intellectual during those dramatic days. Neither me, nor the nation would ever forget that. We highly appreciate it.

I completely agree with your thoughts about the education, theatrical issues. For instance, you mentioned Suleyman Rahimov. I remember, back when I was in the office in 1970's Suleyman Rahimov and other writers of ours were decorated with the order of the Socialist Labor Hero. Back then that was the highest order of the state. One should not try to alter the meaning of these orders now. No matter who was granted the order, when, at what times and in which country, an order possesses the highest importance. Back then I recommended first Suleyman Rahimov among our writers and poets, for this order, and we finally made it come true. He became the Hero of the Socialist Labor.

You know, jealousy and unfair competition exist among people. Some asked why he was recommended for that order.

I completely agree with your opinion about Suleyman Rahimov. Because I used to hold him in the highest regard even back then. I thought he always occupied his own niche in our literature.

Generally speaking, we have many brightest stars in our literature and culture. But there are also irreplaceable, unique persons, when they go no one can replace them. These are people like Suleyman Rahimov, Mirza Ibrahimov, Huseyn Javid, Rasul Rza, Samad Vurgun, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh, Sabir, Suleyman Rustam. If we speak about those who live and create in the present, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is definitely one of these people. He is unmistakable and no one else can fill in for him.

Yes, our nation has always had great artists, in every period of its history, and we must be proud of this fact. We are not a poor nation, that is, we do not lack intellectuals. Our nation has many intellectuals and scientists.

B. V. - Mr. President, our young generation is being brought up. There is a new generation of writers coming up, they are brought up in completely different circumstances, they are not like their predecessors. I read a poem yesterday, it was called "The slap on the face from the father". I enjoyed it. His father has passed away, and the poet says that he needs a slap on the face from his father. He says he needs it in order to comprehend the realities of the surrounding world, maybe that slap on the face will make him understand what's going on. In other words, we all need advice from the fathers.

This is a new way of writing. My way of writing is completely different.

H. A. - You have your own style, you can never change it. And he has his own.

B. V. - Yes, exactly, he has his own style of writing. He must be encouraged. One must take his hand and let him become popular, gain success.

H. A. - You are right. I have spoken with Anar, I am telling that to you, too, I would like to meet the younger generation

of the writers. Because there were times when we did so. For instance some 25 years ago we met with Anar, Elchin, Yusif Samadoghlu, and they all were the young generation back then. Now they have matured. And that's why we have to meet with the current young generation of writers. We have a very talented youth.

You know, sometimes when I think about our outstanding writers, composers, artists, singers, I ask myself, who will fill in for them when they are gone. But the more I think about it, the clearer it becomes, that their place won't be vacant. There are always talented people to come forward. Maybe we shall never have somebody like Bulbul, but there would be talented people whose star will shine as brightly.

B. V. - There is a young vocal singer named Azer Zeynalov, I am so impressed with the strength and beauty of his voice.

H. A. - Yes, exactly. I used to love Rashid Behbudov's voice myself. I have always been concerned about who would fill in for him as he grew older. Now I see Azer Zeynalov singing with such a beautiful voice.

We must be proud that we once had a star as great as Rashid Behbudov. We have held his jubilee in Moscow recently. Famous Muscovites would tell me that they hadn't seen an event as huge and outstanding for a long time. The whole intellectual and cultural elite of Moscow gathered together at the "Rossiya" Hall. What does all that mean? First of all, we celebrated the anniversary of his birthday, we remembered him. Secondly, we took an opportunity to make them all acquainted with Azerbaijan music and arts. And of course, we could tie the two cultures-Azerbaijani and Russian closer together. You see how many things we achieved by carrying out a celebration like this.

B. V. - Mr. President, the jubilee of Fizule was amazing. Do you Remember, we held celebrations in Turkey, and Ihsan Dogramaci helped us a lot with that. It was good. But the jubilee that we celebrated here was just fabulous.

H. A. - Yes, we need to take every opportunity to let the world know more about our nation. I have worked on that for many years.

You have inquired about my visit to France. I stayed there for three days. I took off at 8 am from Baku. Some 30 minutes after we checked in at the hotel in Paris we had a meeting with the French President. Our meetings continued till one o'clock at night. The day after was packed with meetings as well. On the third day I completed my schedule in France and departed. We had lots of meetings that gathered a huge number of audience. These activities had various goals. But the biggest goal ever is to make them find out more about Azerbaijan, to show what our country is like nowadays. And we have achieved this goal.

The Fizuli jubilee had two major goals. First, we wanted to show a respect to his memory, also we wanted to popularize him in the whole world. We intended to say that we had a poet who wrote 500 years ago, and his poems still amaze readers worldwide.

Mr. Bakhtiyar, I don't want to take more of your time, now that you are not feeling well. I wish you the soonest recovery, I hope this is the last surgery of yours. I hope you will not have to undergo another one, recover soon, check out of the hospital, return to your work soon.

B. V. - Thank you, and God bless you.

H. A. - I came to show my respect to you. I thank the surgeon for such a successful surgery. He is a member of the Party for New Azerbaijan and he's been elected to the Parliament from this party. We are glad to have such outstanding surgeons in our Parliament. We must be proud of the fact. We must be proud that there are such intellectuals and scientists among the members of our Parliament. I am glad that this Parliament doesn't have absolutely irrelevant persons as MPs. Good bye.

B.V. Thanks for visiting, God bless you.

SULEYMAN DEMIREL: YOU ARE THE GREATEST LIVING POET OF THE TURKIC WORLD

In this article we are far from intending to speak about Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, a poet, professor, teacher and finally a Parliament Member. He is a known person regardless, there are people who accept and reject him, and there are always different opinions about his personality. We considered it important to tell our readers about his illness, his trip to Turkey in this regard and the impressions of his friend, Prof. Nuraddin Rzayev who accompanied him in this trip.

19, Husi Hajiyev Street, Apt.18. His daughter Gulzar khanum opened the door. I introduced myself to his spouse, Dilara khanum, and told her about the purpose of my visit. And then I saw the tall figure and pale face of Mr.Bakhtiyar in the corridor.

- Welcome, daughter.

- Thanks. Welcome home to Azerbaijan. How are you feeling?

- Please come in. Let's talk about it.

On the Eve of the Trip

There are three people sitting around the tea table. Mr. Bakhtiyar, Nuraddin Rzaev, his close friend, and I.

Without thinking what to start with I proceed directly to the heart of the issue.

- Mr. Bakhtiyar why did you choose Turkey for your treatment?

- That wasn't my choice actually. Let me start with the preceding events. There are some sicknesses that one cannot talk about openly. You know, I didn't often attend Parliament ses-

sions. It wouldn't be considered polite to leave the hall every 10 or 20 minutes. My absence at the sessions caused a lot of discord. Some time in November the President asked me to visit him and I told him everything about the disease that has developed. He suggested that I undergo a treatment in Turkey at the state's expense. I agreed. Three days later Farug bey, the Ambassador of the Turkish Republic to Azerbaijan called me. He told me that there was a room reserved for me at the Experimental Clinic in Ankara. I told him I couldn't go there alone. It turned out that they considered Nuraddin's stay in Ankara along with me during the entire period of the treatment. They reserved rooms for both of us. That is how my trip started to seem real. I want to clarify one thing. I mentioned that it was not due to my choice. That was a destiny. Ever since I was a kid I had a great interest towards that country. I have always thought of Turkey as our ally. Well, we went there on December 2.

- Turkish people know you and love you. Doubtless, you have lots of friends there. It must have been a pleasant experience to feel this love and respect. Would you please share your feelings and experiences with us?

- I knew that there were people who knew me and liked me. And I also knew that our bilateral relations would be in a good shape. But anyway I didn't expect such a warm reception. What can I say? Maybe Nuraddin should tell you more.

WHAT CAN I SAY ABOUT TURKEY?

- What shall I start with in order to describe the degree of warmth and respect towards Bakhtiyar-says Mr. Nuraddin. I ask him to provide me with details of their trip beginning with the very second when they arrived in Turkey and up to the very last moments there, whatever was memorable.

- When it comes to memorable events, there was no single day that we would ever forget. Bakhtiyar is modest, he doesn't want to talk about it much. As soon as we got off the plane

we were greeted by our ambassador Mammad Novruzoglu. He was accompanied by some other staff members of the embassy. We chatted and introduced each other for a few moments, and that is when a man approached us and introduced himself as Suleyman Demirel's driver. He said he came to pick us up at the airport. He said the President was in Lisbon. But before he departed he had ordered to pick us up and drive to the hospital. I should emphasize that Bakhtiyar had been suffering from this sickness for quite a long time already. And it was high time for him to start the treatment. Thanks to the initiative and will of our President this treatment was realized.

IN THE HOSPITAL

We went to the hospital. The chief surgeon Osman Muftioglu who is President Demirel's personal physician was not there. He was accompanying the Turkish president in Lisbon. We were received by his deputy Hassanbey Maras. He showed us to our rooms. There were two luxurious rooms reserved for Bakhtiyar and an adjacent room for me. Everything in that hospital was at the highest level-reception, care, service. This hospital is very well equipped, it has the capacity to treat the most serious diseases.

Examination of Bakhtiyar's condition didn't last long. They thoroughly examined him within one day. I was glad to find out that the high blood pressure was resulting only from a nervousness and excitement. But a surgery was to be conducted immediately concerning his other disease.

I CAME TO SEE YOU, POET

I must stress the fact that Bakhtiyar's treatment became somewhat a social event. Various newspapers and TV channels reported about it numerous times.

President Demirel of Turkey came to visit him as soon as he returned from Lisbon. We didn't expect such honor. We both were very glad. After an inquiry about the sickness he said:

- It is impossible that you are being treated here at the Azerbaijani government's expense. You are not only an Azerbaijani poet. You are the greatest living poet of the whole Turkic world. That is why you will be treated here at the Turkish government's expense. The chief physician is here as well. You must not worry about your health anymore.

Bakhtiyar didn't say a word. We were not supposed to interfere in this matter whatsoever. Bakhtiyar was stunned by the fact that President Demirel walked in all of the rooms on the floor after he said good bye to us, he inquired about the health of all the patients. And that characterized him as a very humane and caring person.

TV and papers covered Demirel's coming to the hospital. The correspondent of our National TV Ibrahim Nabioglu was present at all meetings.

It was two days after Demirel's visit when Prime Minister Erbakan came to see Bakhtiyar. He is a very kind person. He spent some 30 minutes there. We have had a lively conversation. He said to Bakhtiyar:

- You are a great poet not only for Azerbaijan or Turkey, you belong to the whole Islamic World. That caused some problems there, as the Islamists started to ask aloud that since when Bakhtiyar has been propagating Islam in the World, Mr. Prime Minister had hardly meant propagation of Islam, but acknowledgement in Muslim countries.

THOSE WHO ARE SAYING THEY AREN'T SCARED, ARE LYING

- All people have this fear in their nature. There are people who can conceal this fear and those who don't bother to hide it. First of all, we received an extremely warm welcoming from the very first moments there. Upon conducting of all nec-

essary examinations the date of the surgery was finally set. Bakhtiyar is one of those who cannot hide the fear. He asked me not to inform him about the date of the surgery. He wanted to be anesthetized without knowing about it. We reached an agreement, and the chief physician of the hospital knew about it. A day before the surgery was planned one of the physicians on duty walked in and announced unexpectedly: "Mr. Vahabzadeh, your surgery is scheduled for tomorrow". I was too late to signal somehow to this physician. All I saw was that Bakhtiyar turned pale. He asked what happened to our agreement?

I went to talk to the chief physician and we changed the date of the surgery. It was rescheduled for December, 11 th. All of the physicians were warned to keep it a secret.

We were watching Prime Time News on TV when we heard the announcer saying that "Famous Azerbaijani poet Vahabzadeh is scheduled for surgery tomorrow". He turned pale again, he said:

"What is it, all of Turkey knows, but me!" All I could manage to say was "Well, we somehow managed to muffle the doctors. But there is nothing we can do with the news people". Sometime later Dilara khanum (his spouse) phoned from Baku, complaining that she wasn't told about the date of the surgery either. She said she heard the news on TV. In order to calm her down I told her that on Turkish "surgery" actually stood for an examination. And that was the examination to start the next day.

The surgery was conducted by surgeon Mesut Cetinkaya who had been educated in Germany. I have known this doctor since 1989. The surgery lasted 35 minutes, without a single cut made, it was done on a very high level. Some three days later Bakhtiyar was walking.

THERE WAS NO END TO THE VISITORS

There was a great responsibility reserved for me this time. I was some sort of mediator between Bakhtiyar and the doctors.

I had to tell the physicians whatever Bakhtiyar wanted them to know, and part of things he didn't tell. And at the same time I had to tell him whatever the physicians said, and also I had to hide part of the information from him. As if that was not hard enough, I had to establish the order for the visitors, wait for them outside, decide how many people to invite in. This all was very difficult. And the visitors seemed to be countless. He was visited by all the political parties' leaders, including Alparslan Turkes, leader of the Party of the National Movement. Publishers, writers, teachers came from all across the country. Some of them came with their families. They brought Bakhtiyar's books and asked him to sign them. It was a difficult task to incorporate some order into these visits.

Sometimes I told them that "the poet was sleeping". They would wait for hours. They waited patiently till I let them in. Well, we never expected to see so much love and appreciation of the Turkish people. Try to imagine, there was a teacher from Konya who came to visit Bakhtiyar and took his family with him. Left alone all the care and attention that we received from the doctors in the hospital. Sometimes I was watching them to see if they treated other patients differently. I saw no difference, all of them received all the attention needed. In other words, as a physician, friend and a relative I was quite glad about the way the examination, surgery and post-surgery care.

SECOND MEETING WITH SULEYMAN DEMIREL

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh

On December 15th we found out that the President was in Kazakhstan and he wanted to meet with Bakhtiyar as soon as he returned. He wanted Bakhtiyar to wait for him. We had to return our airplane tickets. At 6:30 PM the next day, on December 17th we saw a car coming. I was taken to the President's headquarters. We had a discussion an hour-and-half long. We discussed all the things that interested and wor-

ried me, especially regarding the (OSCE) Summit in Lisbon. He said to me that the Armenians had raised a propagandistic noise claiming that they had won the battle. He said that it was a complete lie. He said the Summit was in favor of Azerbaijan. He was talking about that with confidence, because he is confident in our President. Then we exchanged some views about the common Turkic language. I stressed the importance of strengthening the ties between the Turkic nations. In my opinion there should be created a common Turkic language so that for instance, Kazakhs and Turkmens would easily understand each other. I also stressed the importance of establishing a Turkic Academy of Sciences. We had a very pleasant and sincere dialogue. I must point out one matter, this warm reception was a measure of their attitude toward us as a nation.

- Are we going to see Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh-Parliament Member at Parliament sessions soon?

- Not a month yet.

- If I was to make the decision, I would like to see him resting for another two or three more months. It takes some time to calm down and relax after a surgery like this, - says Nuraddin.

Mr. Bakhtiyar continues:

- I would like to thank the presidents of the two countries for their care and attention.

YOUR EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR KAUZLARICH!

I am not a politician, I am just a poet, and all along my lifetime I have looked at the politics with the eyes of a poet. The thing that I hated most since my childhood was injustice of any kind, and I have always revolted against it. Look at the paradox: I had to live in the fascist regime called Soviet Union, and have always admired the freedom and democracy in the United States.

On the 19th of May, 1994 you said the following at a press conference: "Azerbaijan hopes that we will point our finger on the guilty party. But we don't think that would be of any help to the process of resolving of Mountainous Garabag conflict. We have seen that happening in the Middle East".

Being perfectly honest, I didn't understand this statement of yours.

If the United States being a superpower has undertaken the mission of protecting the justice and truth, why is it hesitant to point on the guilty party in this conflict? Don't you know that the war has been going on for 6 years already in the Azerbaijani territory? Don't you know that Armenians with the help from Russia have occupied 20 per cent of the territory of this republic? Don't you know that Russia has its own interests in this war? Don't you know that Russia wants us kneel and allow their troops enter our country as so-called "peace-keeping and observing forces?"

Three days ago the Russian Defense Minister P.Grachov threatened us in his interview with Vesti, the evening news program of Russian RTR TV, saying, "You either allow our troops on your territory or face the total extermination"? Doesn't US

know all that? Don't you know that all that is the trap set up by Russia? Knowing all these facts, you still question the reliability of the fact that our territories are currently under occupation.

What do you think the occupation looks like?

You demand some proof of the fact that our land was occupied. It turns out that the sun's being in the sky also needs to be proven.

Yes, being a small country, we expect the superpower such as the United States to point out the guilty party in this conflict. Because this country is known as the defender of the human rights and justice worldwide. But it is hesitant defending our rights for some unknown reasons. As long as the US doesn't acknowledge who is the guilty party in this conflict, Armenia being backed by Russia, will continue its aggression into the Azerbaijani territory and will do whatever it pleases.

Meanwhile, labeling us as aggressors you even deprive us of the humanitarian aid. President Clinton doesn't address the issue of the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories by Armenians in his letter sent to our President. As if no such problem existed. But he demands that we stop the blockade of Armenia. Isn't that funny? Is it the idea of justice you think?

You said in your speech that pointing out the guilty party in the conflict wouldn't help to resolve the conflict, and you backed your opinion by the example of the Middle East peace process.

I think that's not the case. Exactly by the reason that you failed to point out the aggressor in the Middle East this conflict has lasted long. You want us to suffer the same. If those were Arabs who seized Israeli territories, you would point on them as aggressors immediately and thus, make them back off. Exactly as it happened when your interests in Kuwait were endangered you not only pointed on the aggressor, but you literally flattened Iraq with bombs. And thus you acknowledge another victory of justice.

Honestly speaking, after I have seen such indifference to our troubles from the United States, a country that I always thought of as the defender of truth and justice, I am very disappointed and don't think justice exists at all.

IT WAS MY PERSONAL INITIATIVE TO CALL THE SESSION

Alkhan Bayramoglu from the newspaper Respublika met Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, the author of the book called Road to the Saturday Night, and interviewed him about the tragic events of 1990, the situation and the mood in Baku back then.

- Mr. Bakhtiyar, was the Saturday Night of 1990 necessary?

- I have written a book about those times. Actually, I am not a politician. The Popular Front was very active, there was a national movement, the moods of the national liberation were strong, our youth comprehended the importance of the momentum. But this all doesn't allow us to speak about the necessity of the Saturday Night's events.

- What can you say about the objective and subjective factors that led to these events, being an inside observer and participant of these events?

- I felt that the activities of the youth, for instance, stopping the traffic, barricading the streets with buses, trolleys and even cars would cause some consequences. Instead of preventing the Soviet troops from entering the city, these actions gave the Empire a reason to drive the invading armies in the city, to use arms even. I said so to the young men who were trying to block the intersection on the highway that goes to the airport, these young men were trying to block the road with a compact car.

They told me to mind my own business. We all felt the possibility of the troops being driven to the city. These were the days when Armenians were being armed. But the Soviets took even hunting shotguns from us. I said so in a poem that I wrote back then, sometime between January 10th and 15th.

*The Center changes its colors many times a day.
The Center sees all our faults, but doesn't
seem to notice theirs.*

It takes away even hunting guns from us.

But doesn't seem to notice cannons that Armenians have. All that led us to think that the Empire was masterminding a dirty plan to be used against us. But by the activities that I have described above we also gave them a reason, an excuse to drive the troops into the city. We could have used some other ways to protest, but you know what eventually happened.

Because of the danger we felt coming, a few intellectuals having gathered together, went to see A.Vezirov, (the leader of the country back then). We saw Primakov (current Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, former Soviet and Russian Foreign Affairs Minister and long time USSR KGB chief, and Girenko in the lobby. I went on yelling at Primakov as soon as I spotted him, asking what was it they wanted from us, what had we ever done to them.

Having seen this, Vezirov held me and tried to calm me down. That's when head of the Office of the Religious Affairs of the Moslems of the Caucasus Sheikh Allahshukur Pashazade verbally attacked Primakov even more harshly. Primakov replied that we used to be friends. He said that he used to be a guest in his house some two months ago. Sheykh turned to him and said that back then he came here as a guest, but now it was written in the air that he didn't come with good intentions whatsoever. He said that when the security of his nation was at stake he wouldn't recognize anyone. He asked Primakov squarely, if there was a plan to shed blood. They tried to comfort us saying that there would be no bloodshed. But Vezirov was lying, when he said that he didn't know anything about this Primakov and others had arrived in Baku a week earlier. We also felt it and as soon as we exited the office, Hasan Hasanov said that he felt the bloodshed coming.

Sheikh agreed with him.

All of us, excluding Hasanov, went to the headquarters of the Popular Front. We found Najaf Najafov there and told him

about the purpose of our visit and our fears about the possibility of bloodshed. He tried to assure us that there wouldn't be any bloodshed. While seeing us off he turned to me and said that after the bloodshed in Tbilisi on 9th of April Russians faced major complications and criticism. That's why they would never repeat their same mistake and would never drive troops into the city. Honestly, his logical argumentation made sense.

- How relevant do you think was the decision to create the Committee of Self Defense made by the Popular Front back then?

I think it was just like stringing the hornet's nest. That was not necessary at all. I think emotional speeches at the Square were not relevant at all. I am an emotional person myself. But there is no room for emotions in the world of politics. One must be ruled by cold mind only. The enemy is very treacherous.

I made a speech the morning following the tragic events in front of the Presidential Apparatus building, and I threw away my Communist Party Card. It felt like a cold wind swept right through me.

I went to the TV station from there, I wanted to announce the session of the Parliament. When I entered the building I was told that the energy block of the TV was destroyed by the explosion. I started to cry just like I did the night before when I saw the devastating effect of that blast. When I exited the building I spotted a Russian general there.

- Was that General Dubinyak?

I never found out who it was actually. I spat in his face and yelled at him asking what they wanted from this people and why they did it to us. He was surprised, then he reached for his gun. He was stopped by a TV cameraman who was present there. I was put in a car and taken to the radio station building. I appealed to the MPs and announced that the session of the Parliament was scheduled.

- Was it your own initiative to call the session or did you consult with someone about that?

I didn't consult with anyone. That was my own initiative. I came home and called Mirza Khazar at the Radio Liberty. I

updated him on the events of the last night. Mirza Khazar helped us a lot in terms of reaching out to the world community.

Yes, he actually helped lots of people who called him and updated him on the events of that night to reach out to the world community.

- That's quite right. The morning after the MPs got together and we started the session at 10 am. Elmira Qafarova said that she was unable to preside over the session. We had spread a note of protest with her signature before.

This note of protest was frequently quoted on the radio. She was very scared. Then it occurred to me that I didn't have enough of experience, and I asked the late Ismail Shikhli to assist me. He presided over that particular session till the very end, and eventually managed to adopt some terrific decisions.

The very same night I called Chingiz Aytmatov and Olzhas Sulemenov, former Soviet MPs. I updated them on the news and invited them to Baku. Olzhas promised to come despite his sickness, and he kept his promise. He was indeed sick. Having spent two days in Baku, he went to see the spots of massacres around town and visited the Alley of Martyrs. He helped us a lot then.

- Do you think these events would have occurred? if Azerbaijan had been ruled by a powerful personality back then?

- I don't think so. Someone who has strong national roots, who is not afraid of the people to whom he reports would have never allowed such thing to happen. Armenians had prepared all this thoroughly. They had managed to oust H.Aliyev from power with Gorbachev's help and become more active ever since. I am sure if Aliyev had been in charge in Azerbaijan, these events would have never taken place. No one would dare to pull up something like that. By the way, while being treated in Turkey, I met President Demirel. He was fond of Aliyev's actions in Lisbon, he was amazed by the speed of and manoeuvrability of our President and by the fact that he indeed managed to gain support of 52 country leaders.

MOTHER TONGUE

Reply to a Letter

Baku 1991

I received a letter from Julfa province once. I knowingly don't specify the name of that letter's author. Because my response to his letter might be somewhat harsh. But because of the reason that the problem he raised in the letter is very important nowadays, I would like to reply to his letter with my open letter, so that everybody could be aware of the problem. Here is what the letter read:

"Dear Mr. Bakhtiyar, hello. My wife and I are both pediatricians. We have constantly found ourselves in a complicated situation because both my wife and I didn't speak any Russian, while studying in Baku, and later on when we moved to Julfa or in any other province of Azerbaijan. That is why we decided that we wanted our kids to go to a Russian secondary school. And also, back then there was no national issue. On the one hand, we now think that speaking Russian is vital now, from writing an official letter or report to representing the nation in the Parliament. On the other, my closest friends take their children away from the Russian schools to transfer them to the Azerbaijani ones. Personally I don't have any confidence in the future. Right now I need your advice badly, as you are an elder man who has a great life experience. Please write to me, even if it is going to be a single sentence, shall I transfer my kids from the Russian school or I shouldn't. Anyhow, you know what the future holds much better than we do".

I would like the reader to pay the close attention to the parts

of the letter that were stressed by me. Back then there was no national issue". In other words, that means that back then when his kids went to school the Azerbaijani language wasn't respected at all. That is why he assigned them to a Russian school! That is, if the Mother tongue had been respected back then, he would have definitely assigned his kids to an Azerbaijani school.

I "applaud" this mentality of a peddler. The man doesn't intend to hide his principles and continues: "Personally I don't have any confidence in the future". He means that the fact that Azerbaijani has gained some respect now is temporary, it will pass some time soon, and this language will lose its importance in the future. You see, the only thing he cares about is his personal benefit. Furthermore, he thinks that I know the future much better than he does, and says "you know what the future holds much better than we do".

My answer to this person would be as follows: "I am not the one who could see the future in the manner you suppose me to. If it were so as you think, I also would have assigned my children and grandchildren to a Russian school in Baku. I didn't do so. But there is something you forget about: the mother language is the conscience of the nation. The conscience isn't some sort of a clothing that you can change it due to the temperature or the season.

You are more proficient than I in measuring the political temperature in the streets. I am surprised by the fact that given your desire and ambition to climb up the societal and administrative stairs that you definitely possess, how come you are still just a pediatrician?

I would advise you to revise your activities due to the changing political climate, you wrote it yourself that you didn't have any confidence in the future. If there is no confidence, as you say, you can feel free to play with the priorities such as the Mother tongue, the conscience and pride of the nation. The likes of you shouldn't have any problems with that.

Personally I have a great confidence in the future of this nation of Fuzuli, Sabir and Uzeyir. You still can't comprehend the simplest thing: one shouldn't pick a mother tongue due to a season, just like a trendy dress, but it is an asset that should be cherished and distinguished right away. One shouldn't love his Motherland for its beauty, it should come naturally, you love your Motherland simply because of the fact that this is your Motherland.

I have a favor to ask you. I urge you to read the article by the great Russian teacher Ushinski titled "Mother Tongue". I urge you to read it very carefully!

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