

THE EVER-LIVING MEMORY OF THE GREAT LEADER HEYDAR ALİYEV

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The unforgettable memory of Heydar Aliyev is very dear to every Azerbaijani. The charm of his high personality was so, that even if it was cursorily, a person who met Him would make that moment a pleasant memory of his life. But for those who worked and interacted with the Great Leader, His bright memory is more alive and dear.

I was lucky enough, as a deputy of the Supreme Assembly of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan, to pass the Great Leader's school of statehood and Azerbaijanism in 1990-1993 and to be in close contact with Him.

In the spring of 1992, Armenian diversionists entered Bichenek village of Shahbuz district from neighboring Zangezur area, Sisian district of Armenia, and killed three members of a family. At the same time, this border village was often shelled. Prior to that, as a result of shelling of the border villages of the Autonomous Republic, the village of Bichenek was also damaged. The villagers were in panic, and some even left the village. As a deputy elected to the Supreme Assembly of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic by the voters of several border villages, I came to the Speaker of the Supreme Assembly Heydar Aliyev and I told the situation. I also was among the deputies he trusted, and despite being aware of the incident, after listening to me, he told me to return to the village and be among the crowd and tell the people that Heydar Aliyev will come to the village and meet the villagers. That day, he came to the village in the evening accompanied by his assistant, went to the dead men's house and expressed his condolences to the relatives of the deceased, and then met with the people in the village center. First, he listened to some of the villagers, and then called everyone to be patient and persevering, saying that necessary measures will be taken urgently to protect and defend the village. Everyone looked at Heydar Aliyev as a savior, as an all-powerful force; they trusted him and relied his word.

That night, the only tank in the position of the Sharur region on the border with Armenia was moved by a special vehicle from a distance of about 150 km to the pass in the Batabat area of Bichenek village, and from there artillery fired at places with Armenian firing points, fires were seen in several points. After that, Bichenek village was no longer fired upon, and the tank was taken back to its position in Sharur district, and the villagers gave up the idea of leaving the village once and for all. Here, I must specially mention that Heydar Aliyev's actions in protecting the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic from the Armenian invasion and organizing its authoritative defense were exceptional. His bringing the Kars Treaty signed in 1921 between Azerbaijan and Türkiye to the political agenda and His close contacts with leaders of brotherly Türkiye became a deterrent for Armenia and thwarted the Armenians' intentions of aggression against Nakhchivan.

Because of the fact that the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic was blockaded by Armenia, the necessary support was not received from Baku, and even under the conditions of continued serious pressure, Heydar Aliyev intended to open a representative office in Tabriz and to send the author of these lines as a representative there, in order to facilitate travel from the territory of Iran. As well as the problems faced by the people of Nakhchivan should be removed from the monopoly of the Consulate General of Iran in Nakhchivan. It should be noted that in accordance with the agreement signed between Azerbaijan and Iran in 1992, the Consulate General of Iran in Nakhchivan was immediately opened and started functioning, but the Popular Front government in Baku did not ensure the appointment of the Consul General in Tabriz. Moreover, it also prevented the opening of a representation office of Nakhchivan AR in Tabriz.

On February 5, 1996, when President of Republic of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev received the author of these lines when he was appointed as the Consul General of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Tabriz, Iran, the Great Leader reminded me about his conversation with me in Nakhchivan at that time, gave the necessary instructions, put his hand on my shoulder and said: “Then you told me about the problem of

your village, I came, all measures were taken... And now I am appointing a diplomat from the village of Bichenek”. Expressing my gratitude for his high trust, I promised to be worthy of this trust.

Great Leader knew my family and my children as well. He praised my schoolgirl Nigar for her good performance of the great poet’s famous poem “Azerbaijan” at memorial evening of Shahriyar held at Jalil Mammadguluzadeh Nakhchivan Musical Theater. We, like thousands of Nakhchivani people, loved Him from the bottom of our hearts. During the five years I worked in Tehran, as designated Consul General and counsellor of Azerbaijan Embassy, I was either among those who accompanied the Great Leader on various visits and meetings, or among the official delegations, participated in discussions and negotiations. I must say that every visit, every meeting I was a participant or observed was a school of diplomacy. Once, when the Great Leader was returning to Baku after a visit to Iran, I told General Vagif Akhundov that my wife should urgently go to Baku to our children and asked if it was possible for her to fly on the President’s plane. The Great Leader had given permission, even when he came to the common saloon during the flight and cared for my wife.

Due to my sharp position against baseless criticisms and condemnations published in Iran against our country and its President, as well as my writings and speeches defending our national interests the relevant circles of Iran started to take certain actions against me, and in such circumstances, in July 2001, I was recalled from the position of temporary advisor I held. I was called, but I remained in the post of Consul General assigned to Tabriz. A few days later, on the order of the Great Leader, I started working as an Counsellor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and by the decree of the Great Leader on April 18, 2002, I was appointed as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. At the same time, I was recalled from the post of Consul General of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Tabriz, Iran. The Great Leader who received me that day asked me questions about my activities in Iran, recalled some events that happened when he was in charge of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, asked my opinion on Iran-Afghanistan, Iran-Pakistan relations and emphasized that Pakistan is very important country for Azerbaijan. He recalled his meetings during the past years with the Prime Ministers of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif, Benazir Bhutto, President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari and Pervez Musharraf. He instructed me to pay attention to the former president F.A. Legari during my activity, to meet and give his best regards to him.

I must mention that the Great Leader had personal friendly relations with the President and Prime Ministers of Pakistan in the 1990s. In 2001, I well remember the meeting of President Heydar Aliyev with the head of the Executive Power of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf in Tehran. Pervez Musharraf, who came to power in a peaceful military coup, had not yet been elected president, and heads of state were reluctant to meet him. When the Pakistani ambassador told us about the Pakistani leader’s desire to meet with the President of Azerbaijan, the Great Leader accepted this request with pleasure, and this meeting played an important role in the further development of our relations in the next years.

I would like to emphasize that as in the 1990s, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan firmly supports the position of our country in international organizations, and continues its policy of not officially recognizing the state of Armenia. This position was demonstrated with the firm political support of Pakistan during the 44-day Patriotic War of our people. Prime Minister of Pakistan at that time Imran Khan congratulated the victorious Azerbaijani soldier and all our people on the occasion of victory. During his official visit to our country on June 14-15, 2023, Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahbaz Sharif assessed these relations at the press conference held after the meeting with President Ilham Aliyev: “Pakistan and Azerbaijan are brotherly nations. Our relations are based on mutual support, sincerity and mutual trust. The fact that the mutual relations between our countries continue to this day only on a rising line and raising them to a higher level in all spheres of cooperation is the result of the successful implementation of Heydar Aliyev’s political line in this field by President Ilham Aliyev. Although almost twenty years have passed since his death, the dear memory of the Great Leader is always alive in my heart and memory. Every day, every hour, I am proud of the achievements of our country, which has become a victorious country under the leadership of our honorable President, Supreme Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev. Each victory won is a new embodiment of the ideas of Great Leader Heydar Aliyev.